

PRESS KIT

WONDERLAND

 Tara Birtwhistle & Jacelyn Lobay in *Wonderland*
photo: David Cooper



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Heather Saxton
Publicity Manager
Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet
204.957.3447
hsaxton@rwb.org

WONDERLAND

Choreographer **Shawn Hounsell**
Artistic & Dramaturge Assistant **Alejandro Alvarez**
Composers **John Estacio, Brian Current, Josef Strauss**
Costume Design **Anne Armit**
Set Design **Guillaume Lord**
Lighting Design **Hugh Conacher**
Soundscape Design **Nicolas Bernier**
Video Projection Design **Jimmy Lakatos, TURBINE**
Make-Up Design **Jane McKay**

Length 2 Hours, 20 Minutes

***One of Canada's "MUST-SEE EVENTS" in
dance for 2011***

- The Globe and Mail

***"... unusual and beautiful interpretation ...
one of the most unique shows in [RWB's]
repertoire."***

- The StarPhoenix

***"We all create our own Wonderland inside
our heads. I'm inviting the audience to join
Alice as she invents her special fantasy
world."***

- Shawn Hounsell,
Choreographer of *Wonderland*

RWB Alexander Campaign in Wonderland
photo: David Cooper



This is Alice like you've never seen her before! **Wonderland** is a dynamic re-interpretation of **Lewis Carroll's** beloved characters, events and themes that is sure to surprise and delight. The Queen of Hearts, The White Rabbit, and the Mad Hatter are all on hand, displaying generous doses of wit, camp and humour. The surreal and dark elements that lurk at the original story's fringes are bravely realized in explosive passages of breathtaking dance and innovative multimedia. **Shawn Hounsell**, acclaimed choreographer and RWB alumnus, has transformed *Wonderland* into a multi-sensory experience, with edgy and athletic movement, an inventive electro-acoustic soundscape and unexpected visual treats. Watch the making-of *Wonderland* at www.rwb.org/wonderland

Contemporary interpretation of story. Themes suitable for age 6 and older.

World Premiere (Royal Winnipeg Ballet): March 9, 2011

Wonderland was co-produced with The Banff Centre

WONDERLAND | Program Notes

Written in 1865 by British mathematician and author Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the tale of a young girl who follows a white rabbit down a hole and discovers a strange and fantastic world full of surprise and bewilderment, a place where the unexpected is expected and nothing is quite as it seems.

Alice in Wonderland has been interpreted and reinterpreted countless times over the last 150 years. Why the adult preoccupation with a children's story? What is so special about this little girl? I believe we recognize ourselves in the character of Alice, that her desire to escape from the ordinary appeals to our own yearning for escape. That, like her, we use fantasy to hide from the mundane reality of our everyday lives. This is why we have chosen to follow her down the rabbit hole time and time again.

In my *Wonderland*, Alice is an older woman looking back and remembering a beautiful dream. Slowly, as bits of memory stitch together, the tale is told anew, this time coloured by a lifetime of impressions and experiences, as much ours as they are Alice's. Our systems of fantasy – from literature, to theatre, cinema, the Internet, celebrity, fashion, sports and the infinite number of other ways we distract ourselves – are reflected and refracted throughout the work, so that, this time, we are not watching from the outside. This time, we are on the inside of Wonderland, experiencing it for ourselves. This is *our* Wonderland.

But, like Alice, we cannot escape forever. The beautiful dream must end. Wonderland may be an illusion, but the story of Alice's adventure goes on and on, and so, too, does fantasy. And just before the curtain goes down, we are met in that place between wakefulness and dreaming, by the inevitable realization that we are the fantasy and that we, too, will end.

Shawn Hounsell

 | Jacelyn Lobay in *Wonderland*
photo: David Cooper



WONDERLAND | Synopsis

ACT 1

Alice revisits the infamous dream, falling back into the world of her imagination, but the story is a little different this time. Alice is chasing the White Rabbit. She follows him down a deep hole – tumbling through the spinning vortex – and, reaching the bottom, is mysteriously surrounded by a bizarre gang of ‘Tooney Loons.’ Madness ensues.

Attracted to an unexplained bottle, Alice drinks its contents and shrinks to a fraction of her original size. Here, she finds herself in a hall of doors and is faced with the impossible task of sorting out which door leads where. Her investigation is interrupted when a delicious looking cupcake appears and the words “Eat Me” appear. After taking a bite, Alice grows to ten times her normal size.

Frustrated by the incoherence of it all, Alice cries and cries and, at the same time, she shrinks and shrinks. Her tears form a pool of water that the now pint-sized Alice must swim through to avoid drowning. Accompanied by a coy mouse with a sleeping disorder, a seductive group of winged companions and a strange assortment of other creatures, Alice conquers this challenge and carries on.

Next Alice encounters the sly Cheshire Cat, who steers her toward the house of the Duchess where a terrific brawl is taking place. Frightened, Alice takes refuge in the forest where she is stopped by a mysterious Caterpillar who envelopes her in smoky self-reflection with the enigmatic and unsettling query, “Who ... are ... you?”

From here, Alice happens upon a private party hosted by the Mad Hatter and the March Hare. Alice, always the odd one out, is very much confused by the frenzied activity and greatly concerned about her impending rendezvous with the dreaded Queen of Hearts.

ACT 2

We discover Tweedledee and Tweedledum in a garden, engaged in a frantic but dubious attempt to convert all of the white roses to red. Alice staggers into the garden unknowingly and is swept up in the anticipatory preparation for the Queen’s arrival.

Red carpet and all, the Queen of Hearts enters and a crazed and demented game begins. The Queen proceeds to wreak havoc on the event and on poor Alice herself. Accidentally finding herself alone with the Queen, Alice is enticed into trying one of the Queen’s tarts.

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With the help of Tweedledee and Tweedledum, Alice escapes to another part of the forest where she discovers a sensual Garden of Live Flowers and, shortly thereafter, a Gryphon and a Mock Turtle. By this point, Alice is vaguely aware of how far she has come and how much has happened to her, however she has absolutely no idea how she might find her way home. As she ponders this, the White Rabbit appears again and Alice is reminded of how this outlandish adventure began.

Meanwhile, the Queen's tarts are gone and Alice's name is all over it. Slowly, characters begin to reappear in anticipation of the Queen's final verdict and the spectacular showdown that is most certain to erupt. Frightened and confused, Alice escapes through the front door.

She wakes up. The story begins again.



SHAWN HOUNSELL | Choreographer

Originally from Saskatchewan, Canadian choreographer Shawn Hounsell danced professionally with Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal between 1989 and 2003. Noted for his versatility and theatricality, he danced soloist and principal roles in works by world-renowned choreographers such as Jiri Kylian, Ohad Naharin, Nacho Duato, Rudi van Dantzig, Anthony Tudor and Jose Limon.



An award winning choreographer, Shawn has created and staged pieces for numerous Canadian companies including the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Les Grands Ballet Canadiens de Montréal, Les Ballet Jazz de Montréal, Les Jeune Ballet du Quebec and Festival Dance Company. Many of his duets have been performed in galas across the globe including the Prix de Lausanne Gala (Tokyo, Japan) and the Cincinnati International Gala of Ballet Stars (Cincinnati, Ohio). In addition his works have been performed by American companies such as Ballet Pacifica and in Europe by the Ballet of the National Theatre of Prague.

Projects in the tele-visual field include dance shorts for BravoFACT, choreography for the CBS mini-series *The Reagans*, choreographer and principal artist for the Montréal Symphony Orchestra's live national broadcast of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with maestro Kent Nagano, and choreographer for the CBC production of the Lieutenant Governor's Centennial Gala in the presence of H.R.H. Queen Elizabeth II. Mr. Hounsell also acted as rehearsal director and assistant for the world tour (2006 – 2009) of *Amjad* by Edouard Lock and LaLaLa Human Steps.

Based in Montréal and continuing to pursue independent projects, Mr. Hounsell recently premiered his new creation *sweet* as part of Ballet British Columbia's dance series Volo and is very pleased to be a part of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's 2010-2011 season with *Wonderland*.

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JOHN ESTACIO | Composer



JUNO nominated composer John Estacio has served as composer in residence for the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Calgary Opera, and Pro Coro Canada. His residencies have yielded numerous orchestral works, several of which appear on *Frenergy, the Music of John Estacio*, released by CBC Records.

The last decade has seen Estacio focus on operatic works. Together with librettist John Murrell, he has written three operas including *Lillian Alling* which premiered in October 2010 by the Vancouver Opera. *Filumena*, his first opera, premiered in 2003 in Calgary and Banff and went on to receive four Betty Mitchell Awards including the award for outstanding production of musical theatre work. Additional productions soon followed in Ottawa and Edmonton. *Filumena* was filmed for television and received its national television premiere in 2006.

Estacio is the recent recipient of the National Arts Centre Award for Composers which will result in three commissioned works for the National Arts Centre Orchestra in upcoming seasons. Other awards include an AMPIA Award for his film score for *The Secret of the Nutcracker*, and his frequent performances and broadcasts have earned him several SOCAN Concert Music Awards.

In the 2010/11 season the Toronto Symphony Orchestra will give the Carnegie Hall premiere of *Frenergy*. The Montréal Symphony, Edmonton Symphony, the Jacksonville Symphony, the Charlotte Symphony are among several other ensembles presenting his works this season.

During the past few seasons, the National Youth Orchestra of the Americas toured the US and Canada with Estacio's *Bootlegger's Tarantella*. The Los Angeles Philharmonic, along with acclaimed tenor Ben Heppner, toured Europe with Estacio's arrangements of *Seven Songs of Jean Sibelius*. In 2008, the Vancouver Bach Choir, the Richard Eaton Singers, Chorus Niagara and the Grand Philharmonic Choir premiered his cantata *The Houses Stand Not Far Apart* with text by John Murrell. In 2009, the Victoria Symphony premiered his sinfonietta *Triptych*. Other recent performances of his works have been given by the St. Louis Symphony, Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, Allentown Symphony, and numerous community orchestras across Canada. Estacio's music that is featured in *Wonderland* can be found on the CD *Frenergy: The Music of John Estacio*, available on iTunes. johnestacio.com

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BRIAN CURRENT | Composer

A 2005 Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of the 2003 Barlow Prize, Brian Current has been repeatedly recognized as one of the leading composers of his generation in North America. His music, lauded and performed internationally as well as broadcast in over 35 countries, is renowned for its energy, wit and daring bravado.

Current's music has been performed across North America and abroad by the Esprit Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra (Carnegie Hall), the Oakland Symphony, the Indianapolis Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Warsaw National Philharmonic, the Vancouver Symphony, the CBC Radio Orchestra, the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia (Koussevitzky commission), Monday Evening Concerts (Los Angeles), the VOX festival of the New York City Opera, the St. Lawrence String Quartet, Winston Choi, the Honens International Piano Competition and others.



Raised in Ottawa, Current studied music at McGill University in Montréal with Bengt Hambraeus and John Rea. He later completed his Ph.D. in composition on full fellowship from the University of California at Berkeley in 2002, where he was also active as a conductor. He has since been featured as a conductor with numerous ensembles, including the Kensington Symphonietta, Soundstreams, CBC's *In Performance* and *On Stage*, as well as the Esprit Orchestra's New Waves Festival. Upcoming engagements include concerts with the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra and New Music Concerts. Since 2006, Current has been the artistic director and conductor of the Royal Conservatory of Music's New Music Ensemble, which performs several concerts each year of international contemporary works.

In October of 2009, Current was the artistic director of *Nuit Blanche* at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto. In celebration of the opening of the Conservatory's new Koerner Hall, Current directed over 200 musicians, singers, staff, volunteers and electronics in a 12-hour installation of James Tenney's *In a Large Open Space* which spanned the entire building. An estimated 15,000 people attended throughout the night.

In 2001, Current won the Grand Prize in the CBC National Competition for Young Composers for his piece *For the Time Being*, which then went on to win Selected Work (under 30) at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. In 2002 it opened the inaugural concert of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, conducted by Antoni Wit. Recently Current's new disc *This Isn't Silence: Works for Symphony Orchestra*, was nominated for a Juno Award, and featured Current conducting in a first-ever CBC broadcast of Classical Juno nominees.

Current has received residencies from Yaddo, MacDowell, JUSFC (Japan) and Bogliasco (Italy) and is the recipient of assistance from numerous foundations and arts councils. He lives in Toronto and is on the board of directors of the Toronto Arts Council, the Canadian League of Composers and other organizations.

JOSEF STRAUSS | Composer

Josef Strauss was born in 1827 in Vienna. He was trained as an engineer and worked for the city for many years during which time he designed the horse-drawn forerunner of today's revolving-brush street-sweeping vehicles. He also published two textbooks on mathematical subjects.

Strauss wrote 283 opus numbers, many of which reveal a composer of remarkable talent. He wrote a number of waltzes that are still in the classical repertoire, including: *Sphären-Klänge* (Music of the Spheres), *Delirien* (Deliriums), *Transaktionen* (Transactions), *Mein Lebenslauf ist Lieb'und Lust* (My Character is Love and Joy), and *Dorfschwalben aus Österreich* (Village Swallows from Austria), polkas (most famously the *Pizzicato Polka* with his brother Johann II), quadrilles and other dance music.

His pieces tend to be of a serious character. This was reflected in the waltz *The Mysterious Powers of Magnetism* (Dynamiden) where his use of minor keys imparted an almost wistful quality, and invariably distinguished his waltzes from those of his more popular elder brother. In particular, Strauss stamped his personal mark on the polka-mazurka, of which he wrote many including *Die Emancipierte* and *Die Libelle*.

ANNE ARMIT | Costume Design

Anne Armit was born in St. Andrews, Scotland and moved to Ottawa at age four. She attended Seneca College in 1972, was named Student Designer of the Year in 1975 and was awarded a scholarship to the Ontario College of Art.

After graduation, she worked for one year in the fashion industry before obtaining work as a seamstress at the St. Lawrence Centre. Armit also freelanced for organizations such as The National Ballet of Canada, Shaw Festival, Stratford Festival, Charlottetown Festival, the National Arts Centre and the Canadian Opera Company. A promotion to Junior Cutter at the St. Lawrence Centre was followed by an offer of employment from The National Ballet of Canada.



From 1979 to 1989, Armit ran her own business creating costumes for film, television and theatre, including the contract for *Cats*. She joined Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet in 1989 as Director of Wardrobe and this position has given her the opportunity to travel and design productions such as *L.I.F.E.*, *La Bayadère*, *Raymonda*, *Creaturehood*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Peter Pan*, *Moulin Rouge® – The Ballet*, *Quantz by Quanz*, *In Tandem* (commissioned by the Works & Process Series of the Guggenheim Museum in New York City) and more. Anne has also designed costumes for several Ballet Jörgen productions in Toronto.

GUILLAUME LORD | Set Design



Guillaume Lord started his college studies in communications but soon switched to design and production, which he studied at Collège Lionel-Groulx from 1990-1993.

With over 15 years of professional experience as a designer, Guillaume has created sets for theatre, dance, circus, variety (*Arturo Brachetti's* world tour), rock concerts (*Eros Ramazzotti's* 2009 world tour) and musicals in Canada and abroad.

For the stage, he has created remarkable designs for many Quebec productions including Maureen Hunter's *L'Atlantide/Atlantis* (Théâtre de la Manufacture), Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt's *Le Libertin* (Just For Laughs), Steven Berkoff's *Décadence* (Théâtre de Quat'Sous), Botho Strauss' *Le Temps et la chambre* – which won the Masque Award for best set and the Gascon-Roux Award – Yasmina Reza's *Art and Pacamambo*, an opera for children.

Besides working with Quebec directors such as Serge Denoncourt, Lorraine Pintal, Claude Poissant and André Brassard, Guillaume has explored the dance scene with choreographers Shawn Hounsell (the Czech Republic National Theatre and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet), Ginette Laurin (*O'Vertigo*), Marie Chouinard (Compagnie Marie Chouinard) and Jean Grand-Maître for whom he designed the sets for the Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris, Milan's Balletto della Scala, the Stuttgart Opera Ballet, the Munich Opera Ballet, the Norway National Ballet and Alberta Ballet.

He designed the set and props for Cirque du Soleil's production in Macau, *ZAIA*, directed by Gilles Maheu, as well as sets for Cirque Eloize's renowned productions *Rain* and *Nomade* which both are touring the world. He is working on the set design for the newest *Cavalia* production.

He has also worked as art director on feature films and documentaries and designed sets for art exhibitions at the Musée du Québec.

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HUGH CONACHER | Lighting Design



Hugh Conacher has collaborated with choreographers, dance companies and theatres across Canada for over 30 years. His most recent collaborations with Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet include the ballets *Rodeo* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. Conacher's work has been seen across the country with such companies as the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Theatre Calgary, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Gearshifting Performance Works and Chartier Danse. Conacher has expanded his process beyond traditional lighting design to include various forms of interactive media and photography, as recently seen in *Hybrid Human* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Jolene Bailie's *Sensory Life*, *Infinite World*, Freya Olafson's *Avatar* and the upcoming world premiere of Michael Nathanson's *One of Us*, being produced by Winnipeg

Jewish Theatre, for which he is designing set, media and lighting. His photographic work resides in private collections and has been published throughout North America and beyond. hughconacher.com

NICOLAS BERNIER | Soundscape Design

Electroacoustic artist, surround sound composer, occasional curator, old typewriter aficionado and sandcastle manufacturer. Careless about aesthetic tags, Nicolas Bernier navigates through live electronics, installations and art video, as well as music for dance, theatre and cinema.



In the midst of this eclecticism, his artistic concerns remain constant: the balance between the cerebral and the sensual, and between organic sound sources and digital processing.

He is the founder of the sound art microorganism Ekumen, member of the media art organization Perte de Signal and he is the art director of Rseaux, a major Canadian electroacoustic concert producer. His works have been awarded and broadcast in festivals around the world including Prix Ars Electronica (Austria), AKOUSMA (Canada), Mutek (Canada), DotMov Festival (Japan) and Transmediale (Germany). www.nicolasbernier.com

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JIMMY LAKATOS, TURBINE | Video Projection Design

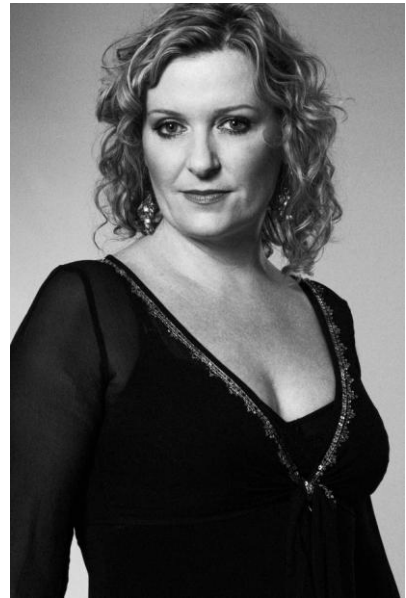


Jimmy Lakatos escapes labeling. His work led him to what he describes as video-scenography. Intrepid artist, he likes cracks and the risks they imply. Technical saltimbanco, he transposes his artistic preoccupations in voluntarily unstable setups, finding equilibrium thanks to a very personal language. The broad spectrum of his professional achievements confers him a unique perspective on the arts community and on the social impact of digital technologies.

<http://www.mutek.org/blog/205-illusions-of-grandeur>

JANE MCKAY | Make-Up Design

There isn't a single colour that Jane McKay dislikes. She excelled in art in high school and, enamored of colours and textures, envisioned a career in interior design until she had the epiphany that the human face was more compelling than a room. McKay found herself in aesthetician school in Calgary, and was soon running the makeup school at John Casablanca where she worked on fashion shows. Not long after she pulled together a portfolio, she was introduced to the Franks. Once she had M·A·C artist training running smoothly, she moved on to run global sales, her team setting up M·A·C sales in global markets including London, Asia, Japan, France, Italy and Hong Kong.



Then McKay had a baby. *"I took nine months off and reflected on my life and decided to get back to my roots - doing makeup as a senior artist in Toronto,"* says Jane. That job involves travelling and everything from fashion shows in Europe to the Sundance Film Festival. Now McKay has taken on another new role: she's part of a task force that's creating a senior artist training academy, and also heading up training and development for senior artists.

Jane has been with M·A·C for 21 years. What she still loves about M·A·C: *"People ask me if I have other products in my kit, but I don't; I only have M·A·C. We have so much variety and diversity in our products that you can create unlimited images. Every experience for me is different. Every day is different."* McKay also finds it thrilling to work with key artists at international collections. She is exposed to the best people in the world - the masters like Tom Pecheux and Sharon Dowsett.