

NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

For immediate release Tuesday 29 November 2016



Amber Scott, Principal Artist – *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*©. Photo Justin Ridler

The Australian Ballet's 2017 blockbuster *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*© goes on sale

Audiences will discover a world beyond their imagination when they fall down the rabbit hole with The Australian Ballet's 2017 season of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*©. Earmarked as the ballet blockbuster of the year, tickets will be in high demand when they go on sale to the public on **Thursday 8 December 2016**. Telstra customers have pre-sale access to tickets from 10am today.

Created by one of the world's greatest living choreographers, **Christopher Wheeldon**, this spectacular ballet translates the wit and charm of the original tale by Lewis Carroll into a world of colour, fun and fantasy. Extraordinary choreography, a wildly imaginative set and inventive costumes will transport audiences into a world of absurdity and pure wonder. The Australian Ballet presents *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*© at Arts Centre Melbourne from 12 to 30 September 2017, before taking the production to Sydney's Capitol Theatre from 5 to 22 December 2017.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland© was created by Wheeldon on The Royal Ballet in 2011, and has since enthralled audiences the world over. Arguably the world's highest profile contemporary choreographer, Wheeldon is best known in Australia for cutting-edge works like *After the Rain*© and the rapid-fire *DGV*©: *Danse a grande vitesse*. In this highly entertaining work, he reimagines the beloved storybook classic using ballet's traditional structures, interspersed with dramatic twists and comedic turns for a modern edge.

Designer **Bob Crowley**'s thrillingly creative sets and costumes establish a new standard for stage design. The magical world of Wonderland and its absurd and fantastical inhabitants are brought to life through puppetry, optical illusion, immersive digital projections, countless wigs, masks and intricately detailed and vibrant costumes. Highlights of the design include an eerily disembodied grinning Cheshire Cat puppet manipulated by six dancers, and a sensuous indigo Caterpillar with eight pairs of bejewelled pointe shoe-clad feet.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland© will be the fifth work Christopher Wheeldon has staged for The Australian Ballet. "The Australian Ballet's dancers are a perfect combination of athletes and artists. Their style is dynamic and visceral. They are daring and expressive, sensitive and technical. Above all, though, they have great humanity. This generosity spills out of the studio and onto the stage and can be felt by their audiences," Wheeldon says.

The award-winning choreographer sums up the classic tale as a hero's journey. "Alice tumbles down the rabbit hole and follows the Knave to try to clear his name. In the end, she rightfully stands up to the Queen of Hearts and takes the fall for stealing the tart. She is an honest girl who believes in the truth. She also discovers love for the first time which makes it both a coming of age story, as well as a whimsical journey of great adventures and discovery."

Commissioned especially, **Joby Talbot**'s theatrical score sweeps the action along and reflects Alice's responses to the strange events unfolding. All the romance and theatricality of a 19th-century ballet combine with more contemporary sounds, to create a witty and melodic score.

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"Alice's journey is quite a rollercoaster ride. She shrinks, grows, nearly drowns, is threatened with capital punishment, and rescues a baby from the cooking pot. All these adventures have to be expressed musically and I have used every trick I can think of to chart her extraordinary adventures," adds Joby Talbot.

The Australian Ballet's Music Director and Chief Conductor Nicolette Fraillon, says Talbot's score is regarded as one of the finest full-length pieces ever created for ballet. "This score is brilliant theatre, with incredibly creative use of colour. It is a work of real genius, and I don't use the word lightly. From the moment it starts until its end, this score is absolutely *Wonderland*," explains Fraillon.

As Principal Partner, Telstra is offering customers a unique chance to purchase tickets before they go on sale to the general public. "Telstra and The Australian Ballet have been partners for over three decades and it is a relationship that has not just stood the test of time, but grown stronger and richer with each passing year," said Fady Taouk, Telstra General Manager Loyalty & Partnerships.

"We are incredibly pleased to be able to offer customers a chance to connect to the enchantment of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*© with this unprecedented pre-sale opportunity," continued Taouk.

THE STORY BEHIND THE BALLET

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland©

During a garden party at her family home, Alice enjoys the company of her crush, Jack, and the amusements of a family friend, Lewis Carroll. Her day takes a curious turn when Lewis transforms into a White Rabbit, and she tumbles down the rabbit hole after him. Alice finds herself in a world of wonder, as she embarks on a series of absurd, hilarious and at times frightening adventures. Jack has become the Knave of Hearts, relentlessly persecuted by the bad-tempered Queen of Hearts. Alice finds a magic cake which turns her into a giant. She swims in a lake of her own tears. She encounters a mysterious Cheshire Cat, and then a bizarre tea party presided over by a Mad Hatter. She meets a Caterpillar perched on a mushroom, and then, at last, is reunited briefly with the Knave in a magical garden. The tyrannical Queen of Hearts is torturing her subjects with dance demonstrations and a strange game of croquet, all the while blithely ordering the executions of those who displease her. The Knave is finally discovered and brought to trial, and mayhem ensues. Alice comes to his defence and together they deliver a testimony that wins the hearts of all but the Queen. When Alice attempts to flee, the court comes crashing down. The very next minute, Alice awakes.

CREDITS

Choreography Christopher Wheeldon

Music Joby Talbot

Orchestrated by Christopher Austin and Joby Talbot

Scenario Nicholas Wright

Set and costume design Bob Crowley

Lighting design Natasha Katz

Projection designs Jon Driscoll and Gemma Carrington

Original sound design Andrew Bruce

Staging Christopher Saunders

Puppet concept and design Toby Olié

Magic Consultant Paul Kieve

The production was commissioned and first performed by The Royal Ballet and The National Ballet of Canada. The Kenneth R Reed Fund generously supports the recreation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*© for The Australian Ballet.

DATES

Melbourne

12 – 30 September 2017

Arts Centre Melbourne, State Theatre

With Orchestra Victoria

Sydney

5 – 22 December 2017

Capitol Theatre

With Australian Ballet and Opera Orchestra

TICKETS ON SALE

Telstra THANKS is offering an exclusive pre-sale for Telstra customers, running from **Tuesday 29 November 2016**; for bookings visit telstra.com/ballet.

Tickets go on sale to the general public from **Thursday 8 December 2016**; for bookings visit australianballet.com.au

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