California State University, Northridge

ALLLICE: A ROCK LIGHT OPERA

An Improvisational Theatre Project

An abstract submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Drama

by

John Daniel Biroc

June, 1972
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ABSTRACT

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Alllice: a rock light opera is an attempt at a fairly new concept in theatrical presentations: a rock light opera. Opera is divided into two separate categories, grand opera and light opera. Grand opera is totally sung, while light opera is mostly sung yet relies heavily on dialogue.

The production was staged at Van Nuys High School, Van Nuys, California on June 2, 3, 10 and 11. The cast was comprised of twenty-four high school students ranging in age from fifteen to eighteen, and five musicians--three from Van Nuys High School and two from Valley State College.

The production was arrived at through carefully structured improvisations and exercises based on Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Each improvisation was planned, played, analyzed and revised until the finished production was established. Choreography was inspired by the movement of the actors as each interpreted his character.
Music and lyrics occasionally evolved after a scene was set, but more often a particular melody would encourage the creation of a new scene.

The music for *Alice* was the basic component, the solidifying element, the driving force of the production. The compositions were created in much the same manner as were the scenes and choreography: various cast members submitted ideas which, if accepted, were expanded into a thematic whole by the arranger-conductor, Ronald Fair.

In designing sets and costumes, the nature of improvisational theatre demanded a flexible and free approach. Four simple moveable, rectangular platforms which could be positioned on stage according to the needs of each scene were employed.

Members of the ensemble wore leotards and jumpsuits. As each actor assumed the leading role in a scene he appeared in an appropriate costume which served to explain his character as well as separate him from the ensemble (of which he had previously been a member).

*Alice* was not only a rock light opera, but a multi-media rock light opera. To enhance the visual movement on stage, motion picture and slide projections were used. The effect was a cumulative sensory bombardment of theatrical experiences.