



Nathan Bishop Drama Club and the Queen of Hearts singing the soulful new tune, "Off, off, off with your head!"

Alice: Looking Through A New Lens

How A New Musical Is Bringing The Community Together At Nathan Bishop

By: Beth Adamo

All photos courtesy of Cheryl Adams Johnson Photography.

"Curiouser! Curiouser, curiouser and curiouser..." chants the chorus of Nathan Bishop Drama Club students as they circle around Alice, bewildered by a world she doesn't understand. This opening scene from *Alice – A New Musical* sets the stage for the rest of the show, a new work based on the Lewis Carroll classic, which will be premiering May 15-17 at Nathan Bishop Middle School.

Now in its second year, the Nathan Bishop Drama Club is an after-school program offered through the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), whose mission is to provide quality after-school learning opportunities for the youth of Providence. This year, the Drama Club is collaborating with the Brown University/Trinity Repertory Consortium in this musical production specifically designed for middle school students.

"The lens of this show is adolescence and the changes that happen right in middle school," explains Glenn Zienowicz, director of the drama club and co-writer of the production. "First Alice eats something and grows too big for her body; then she eats something else

and grows too small. She's talking about how she doesn't know who she is, how she doesn't fit in, how everything's awkward."

Alice – A New Musical is an original work co-written, staged, and directed by Zienowicz and Ian McNeely, a third-year MFA candidate in the Brown/Trinity Rep Consortium. It's a collaboration that Tyler Dobrowsky, associate artistic director at Trinity Rep says helps them fulfill their mission of promoting arts education: "We are thrilled to be part of this fantastic program and partner with Nathan Bishop Middle School on such an exciting piece."

For middle school students to have an opportunity to not only perform the world premiere of an original work, but also to have creative input, is truly extraordinary. "Kids need an opportunity to learn how to express themselves and it's not something that's always served in the day-to-day curriculum of the public schools," adds McNeely. "It's something that sets this production apart."

What also sets *Alice* apart is the music, which spans practically every genre—rock, country, ska, gospel, rap... even the



The Nathan Bishop Drama Club after performing at the Queen of Hearts Ball in February, with Glenn Zienowicz and Nathan Bishop Principal Kim Luca.



Alice and cast members performing "Curiouser!" at the Queen of Hearts Ball.

lobster quadrille is set to a disco beat. Written by McNeely with lyrics by Zienowicz, "it's very stylistic and every song is different," says Zienowicz.

Everyone involved with *Alice – A New Musical* is beyond excited about the show. However, putting on a production of the caliber envisioned by Zienowicz and McNeely requires more funding than is available on the program's shoestring budget. In February, Zienowicz and a group of dedicated parents organized the Queen of Hearts Ball to raise awareness about the program

and raise funds for the production. While successful, the group still needs community support to make the vision a reality.

To purchase tickets or make a donation online, please visit www.gofundme.com/NathanBishopDrama. *Alice – New Musical* is playing at 7 p.m. on May 15 and 16, and at 2 p.m. on May 17 at Nathan Bishop Middle School, 101 Sessions Street, Providence. For more information, please call the school at 456-9344. Beth Adamo is a freelance writer living on the East Side. Contact her at beth@bethadamo.com.