

Callum Jones

2400864

Final Production (ADPB6003)

Alice By Heart - Written Reflective Journal

Word count – 1,100

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

The aim of this piece of writing is to reflect upon the creative and academic methods I researched and employed throughout the rehearsal process of our final production, *Alice By Heart*, composed by Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik. I intend to conduct a thorough analysis regarding how my impressions ultimately shaped my creative decisions and how this was reflected in my personal development.

The initial stage of this project involved meeting our creative team and director, Dan Street-Phillips, who outlined his artistic visions for the piece. One aspect of the creative process that was significant for reflection was deriving from the musical's original context. With the original Off-Broadway production taking place in a Tube station during World War II, ours was set during modern day in an abandoned office in Cardiff, where our characters sought refuge from a fictional war. With the setting being such an intimate space, Phillips proposed the necessity of relationships between every character to enforce the connections and conflicts that appear on stage. We achieved this through the process of 'conversational dates' which allowed us to contextualize and explore the dynamics between every single character. This was a vital step in the process as character relationship speaks to the dynamic between characters in each scene. (Lee-Rekers, 2024). I discovered the impact this methodology had on my character-building process, with it predominantly giving reason to the actions behind my characters.

Within this project, I was given the roles of Dr. Butridge, King of Hearts, and the Jabberwocky. Being given three contrasting roles was both a challenge and an opportunity, and I began brainstorming approaches I could adopt to give juxtaposition to each role along with character-specific qualities. Through a one-on-one conversation with the director, Street-Phillips highlighted the ideology of 'actioning' and how each line should

have a motive behind it. This reminded me of Stanislavsky's distinguished use of 'objectives' and how it unlocks why a character does what they do in the course of dramatic action. (Merlin, 2014, p. 65). The framework of actioning each individual line across three characters acted as a cornerstone for giving each role originality. This practical application also stemmed from a text analysis which provided me with the factual backgrounds of my characters, aiding me in my actioning. The text highlighted the power dynamic between the King and Queen, with many of the Queen's lines overpowering the King and his attempts to please her. This dynamic was also prevalent in the original tale of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* written by Lewis Carroll. "The Queen turned angrily away from him." (Carroll, 1865). This provoked me to attach actions such as 'to impress' and 'to overpower' during instances where I felt the King believed he was just as powerful as the Queen before being comically devalued back into his place of authority. I also found myself drawing upon vocal exploration within each line which was vital in experiencing the shifts between one action to the next. (Moseley, 2016, ch. 3).

Through this psychological structure, there was a clear divergence from Uta Hagen's techniques of acting in relation to external circumstances, commonly recognized through Hagen's 'outdoors' exercise. Stanislavsky's approach offered areas of communal discovery allowing my peers and I to share the stage and create a dynamic performance together (Ates, 2023), whereas Hagen's approach offered an independent outlook on character-building, placing focus on knowing their world as much as possible to successfully portray a character. (Fryer-Hornsby, 2021). Personally, I believed that Stanislavsky's practice-led analysis better reflected our directors' story-telling vision for the project, allowing me to develop a grounded characterization for each of my roles.

During the rehearsal process, we were informed that our costumes would be constructed of materials found in an abandoned office. It was during this time that we were introduced to the concept of a traverse staging style; a style that offers intimacy, immersion and allows for versatility in entrances and exits. (SeatPlan, 2025). Regarding this staging, I encountered the challenge of ensuring that my costume did not obstruct the view of either side of our audience. This obstacle presented itself during 'The Trial' where my costume was a big piece of tarp that portrayed the cape for the King. To troubleshoot this obstacle, I chose to adopt the persona of a 'puppy-dog' who followed behind the Queen in a close proxemic. This permitted me to travel across the space, ensuring that my costume was never obstructing the audience's view. I also made the decision to faint and completely drop to the floor, blending comedy with practical applications to overcome this obstacle.

Another challenge I faced throughout this process was the innovation of the Jabberwocky. This was my first experience portraying a ‘villain’ in a theatrical project. As such, I undertook independent research into the origins of the Jabberwocky. Through this research I discovered that the Jabberwocky was not in the original tale of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and was instead a separate poem written by Carroll. This highlighted a deeper contextual understanding as to why Alice expresses: “The Jabberwocky?! That’s not what’s next!” (Sater and Nelson, 2019, p.55). I found it imperative that I conducted a lyric analysis of my song, ‘Brillig Braelig’, as the phrases used within the composition initially did not make sense to me. Through this study, I discovered that the phrases were not *meant* to make sense; the lyrics such as “O frabjous day!” were derived from Carroll’s poem where his use of gibberish nonsense was utilized to create the parallel of Alice’s ‘fantasy world’ being nonsense and enforcing the motif of reality. (Carroll, 1871). I altered my vocality and physicality to reflect a ‘demonic entity’ that met the directors’ vision for the Jabberwocky.

Within this process, I was selected to be a vocal coach by our musical director, Iestyn Griffiths. There were times throughout the process when my characters were not needed, so I spent this time going over my harmonies and creating note bashes for our ensemble. Furthermore, I conducted and recorded further experiments with the Jabberwocky’s vocality, arriving at my music call fully equipped and receiving positive feedback from Griffiths. “Can you guys tell Callum’s character from that performance? Because I certainly can.” (Griffiths, Personal Communication, 3rd June 2026).

To conclude, the personal and academic methods I employed throughout this process had a significant impact on my development. I was successfully able to connect my research to my practice and comply with our directors’ visions for the project. Through the frameworks I integrated, I made vital discoveries across my contrasting roles, putting them into fruition and overall strengthening my capabilities as a performer.

REFERENCE LIST -

- > Ates, A. (2023). *The Definitive Guide to the Stanislavsky Acting Technique*. [online] Backstage. Available at: <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/the-definitive-guide-to-the-stanislavsky-acting-technique-65716/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Carroll, L. (1865). *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan.

- > Carroll, L. (1871). 'Jabberwocky'. In: *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. London: Macmillan.
- > Fryer-Hornsby, J. (2021). *The Uta Hagen Technique*. [online] StageMilk. Available at: <https://www.stagemilk.com/the-uta-hagen-technique/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Griffiths, I. (2026) Personal Communication. WAVDA.
- > Lee-Rekers, A. (2024). *How to Discover Character Relationships | Mapping Want and Need*. [online] StageMilk. Available at: <https://www.stagemilk.com/how-to-discover-character-relationships/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Merlin, B. (2014). *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*. London: Nick Hern Books.
- > Moseley, N. (2016). *Actioning and How to Do It*. [online] London: Nick Hern Books. Available at: <https://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk/asset/3265?cmsAsset=1>.
- > Sater, S. and Nelson, J. *Alice By Heart*. Music by D. Sheik. Licensed digital libretto. New York: Musical Theatre International.
- > SeatPlan. (2025). *A Guide to Types of Theatre Stage | SeatPlan*. [online] Available at: <https://seatplan.com/backstage/types-of-theatre-stage/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].

BIBLIOGRAPHY -

- > Alfreds, M. (2007). *Different Every Night: Freeing the Actor*. Grantham, UK: Nick Hern Books.
- > Ates, A. (2023). *The Definitive Guide to the Stanislavsky Acting Technique*. [online] Backstage. Available at: <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/the-definitive-guide-to-the-stanislavsky-acting-technique-65716/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Carroll, L. (1865). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan.
- > Carroll, L. (1871). 'Jabberwocky'. In: *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. London: Macmillan.

- > Douglas-Fairhurst, R. (2015). *Alice in Wonderland – What Does It All Mean?* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/20/alice-in-wonderland-what-does-it-all-mean> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Fryer-Hornsby, J. (2021). *The Uta Hagen Technique*. [online] StageMilk. Available at: <https://www.stagemilk.com/the-uta-hagen-technique/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Griffiths, I. (2026) Personal Communication. WAVDA.
- > Lee-Rekers, A. (2024). *How to Discover Character Relationships | Mapping Want and Need*. [online] StageMilk. Available at: <https://www.stagemilk.com/how-to-discover-character-relationships/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Merlin, B. (2014). *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*. London: Nick Hern Books.
- > Moseley, N. (2016). *Actioning and How to Do It*. [online] London: Nick Hern Books. Available at: <https://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk/asset/3265?cmsAsset=1>.
- > Sater, S. and Nelson, J. *Alice By Heart*. Music by D. Sheik. Licensed digital libretto. New York: Musical Theatre International.
- > SeatPlan. (2025). *A Guide to Types of Theatre Stage | SeatPlan*. [online] Available at: <https://seatplan.com/backstage/types-of-theatre-stage/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Sherman, H. (2024). Casting the Net: The Creative Benefits of Multiple Actors Playing the Same Role. [online] The Stage. Available at: <https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/casting-the-net-the-creative-benefits-of-multiple-actors-playing-the-same-role> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Windsor, A. (2024). *What Is Uta Hagen’s Acting Technique?* [online] Starnow.com. Available at: <https://www.starnow.com/uk/magazine/article/what-is-uta-hagens-acting-technique-77742/> [Accessed 26 Jun. 2026].
- > Yaffe, P. (2022). Making sense of nonsense: writing advice from Lewis Carroll and the ‘Jabberwocky’. *Ubiquity*, 2022(January), pp.1–5. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1145/3506858>.

