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Alberto Denis and Marissa Nielsen-Pincus during rehearsal for "Then She Fell," by Third Rail Projects. Photo by Jeff Bachner



ALICE IN HOSPITAL

W'burg site's backdrop for play

BY LORE CROGHAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

AN OLD Williamsburg hospital that's been closed for 30 years is getting a world-famous patient — Alice in Wonderland.

A performance group is staging an interactive theater piece in the old outpatient building of Greenpoint Hospital that will bring audience members face-to-face with Alice, her creator Lewis Carroll and the creatures of his imagination.

"We want people to feel like Alice, which is pretty magical," said Jennine Willett, co-director of Third Rail Projects, which is now in rehearsals for "Then She Fell."

They'll turn the basement of the Kingsland Ave. building into a mysterious 18-room realm that is simultaneously a hospital setting and Alice's world.

An audience of just people 15 per show will go on individualized journeys to discover a Mad Hatter's shop, an

"interrogation room" for the White Rabbit and a "room of tears" that recalls the pool of tears Alice weeps in the Victorian tale. Characters will dance, sing, recite dialogue and serve spectators tea.

"All of this is in the characters' heads, among their dreams, memories and nightmares," said Zach Morris, a Third Rail co-director. "This is part hospital and part psychological Wonderland."

The long-derelect building now belongs to a North Brooklyn community group, St. Nicks Alliance, which fixed it up and turned the basement into an arts venue called Arts@Renaissance.

The Daily News recently got a sneak peak at a rehearsal in the building, where Third Rail members will start set construction next month.

Marissa Nielsen-Pincus, who plays Alice, slithered on a narrow green-tiled ledge, a remnant of a partly demolished shower stall in a hospital bathroom. As eerie music played, she crawled onto a windowsill, gripped a bar hanging overhead and trod fearlessly on the tops of the windowpanes.

It was a haunting dance in a strange-looking space — which the theater group plans to leave just as it is.

Later, Lewis Carroll, played by Alberto Denis, joined her for a wordless duet on the green ledge.

In another room, the Red Queen, played by Rebekah Morin, sat on a window ledge and slowly rocked side-to-side like a human metronome.

Part of the action will take place in a corridor lined with oddly skinny green doors — which neighborhood residents remember when they came to the hospital as kids to get immunizations.

"Lewis Carroll was a world-maker — that's what we're trying to do with this 'immersive' theater piece," said Tom Pearson, another Third Rail co-director. "New Yorkers are looking for events and experiences — the antidote to our digital lives."

Third Rail was founded in Williamsburg and often stages performances in Brooklyn venues. It's now based in Woodside, Queens.

The group has been raising money on website Kickstarter to help bankroll the production. The fund-raising campaign ends on Thursday.

They've already surpassed their \$4,500 goal. If they raise additional cash, they might use it for advertising or hiring a publicist.

The show will be staged in October. See www.thenshefell.com for info on ticket sales.

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