

Review: Aladdin

By Sara Lamerton

***Aladdin*, Theatre Royal Plymouth**

After the noble, yet subdued attempt at a socially distanced compromise in 2020, a magical genie granted our Christmas wish, returning a full version of this much loved, wonderfully indulgent staple of the theatrical calendar to our precious Theatre Royal's stage.

With sparkingly exotic sets, lavish outfits, and tons of laugh-out-loud entertainment, *Aladdin's* magic carpet has firmly landed in Jannerstown ready to sweep us off our feet for two hours of unbridled family fun.

Joe Pasquale, Wishee Washee, heads up a talent-filled cast which sees Aladdin, Alistair So, Widow Twanky, David Robbins, and Princess Jasmine, Natalie Chua, rub up against the adventure of a lifetime: the unlikely gang saving the giant wish-granting genie from the suitably flamboyant hands of the pantomime baddy, Abanazar, Pete Gallagher, with more than a few bumps and diversions along the way, but living happily-ever-after in true fairytale style.

The programme cover states that Aladdin is 'everything you could wish for in a panto'. Awash with toilet humour and risqué jokes, extrovert characters, OTT dame costumes, elaborate tongue twisters, slapstick scenes, 'one-man show' style sketches, acrobatic displays from The Acromaniacs, as well as a very special flying magic carpet, a troupe of dancing pandas, a stunningly talented ensemble, and a cast with palpable chemistry, *Aladdin* boldly lives up to its claim.

The show's most memorable scenes weren't necessarily that of the main story - even though Aladdin and Wishee's jaunt into the hidden cave, and Wishee 'accidentally on purpose' falling out of a panda costume mid-dance were highlights - for me, the real magic lay not in the overt displays of pantomime grandiosity, but in the skill and precision of the casts' timing; in the scenes they'd spent hours perfecting to look spur of the moment, and in the continual interaction with, and laughter from, the audience who were simply happily engaged in the moment.

Aladdin is clearly a massive team effort. Yet, having said that, Joe Pasquale must be thanked, certainly in large part, for bringing the smiles back to our Jannerstown faces. As Co-Director, alongside Ed Curtis, as well as holding a writing credit, and a main part, Joe's child-like appeal, unmistakable style, and infectious influence can be felt throughout. His antics will certainly leave you smiling well beyond the curtain call.

The show ends humbly as any self-respecting pantomime should, with the cast



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thanking theatre staff and audiences alike, without whom the production would simply be a rehearsal; alongside a shoutout for the Funky Llama appeal who are collecting donations at the end.

Aladdin runs until 15th January 2022.



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