**Online Reviews**

**Aladdin**

**Theatreworld Internet Magazine- Robert Wright- 30/11/2013**

It's that time of the year again, but there was not a sigh or yawn in sight during this enthralling traditional family pantomime.  I was most impressed with the bright, fairly simple yet effective and spacious set which coupled with the full use of the forestage made for a exciting and intimate experience.

First into the arena was David Chittenden as the evil Abanazar.  He had a great stage presence and clearly thrived and welcomed all the boos and hisses his conniving character could muster.

However, nobody was going to be more popular than James Nickerson as the Dame Widow Twankey. With the combination of  the most appalling dress sense imaginable and a character to match you were in for a barnstorming performance.  There were oodles of conventional puns, but I have to say that the Widow's facial expressions and physical antics were more than a match for them.

Always on the butt end of any jokes or just clowning around was Wishee Washee (Chris Coxon) and Hanky and Panky, both parts played by Patrick Marlowe.   The latter came out in many different forms once he was 'processed' by Wishee Washee in their laundry.

There was an enthralling aerialist display of suspended dancing by Jessica Spalis who was a most convincing Aladdin.  Her descent into the caves on aerial silk provided an intriguing and awesome display as was her ride on the magic carpet, which successfully tested her balance.  This was a great addition to the menu. However, Aladdin had other things in hand as well and that was to successfully woe the Princess Jasmine played with a suggestion of attitude by Roxanne Palmer.  Her expression said it all, and the word 'whatever' would have summed up her mood towards her overpowering mother the Empress.  That role was performed by Hannah Summers, but she also doubled up as the completely contrasting and most congenial genie.

When the group decided to chase Abanazar to Egypt, there was the most amusing and inventive screening in black and white silent film of their erratic journey.  It began from the backstage of the theatre and followed their journey through the streets of Bury St Edmunds with plenty of mishaps en-route.  As it was made in Charlie Chaplin style,  it was fast moving, full of funny twists and turns which went down well with the audience.

The Junior Chorus of Team Peking and Team Egypt gave an remarkable display and their comical marching on display with coloured mops was well applauded by the audience.

A sense of humour also filtered down to the band under the baton of Phil Gostelow.  When Wishee Washee was attempting to wallpaper a room with the intervention of Widow Twankey, it was definitely a wise decision for Phil to have his umbrella handy - just in case!

This is an excellent pantomime full of inventive ideas, great performances, toe tapping music and like the magic carpet time simply flew.

**Link to access review:** <http://www.theatreworldinternetmagazine.com/theatreworld/southrev.htm#TheatreRoyalBuryStEdmunds>

**Public reviews- Glen Pearce- 30/11/13**

**The Public Reviews Rating: ★★★★☆**

The Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds pantomime is always a traditional affair, matching its historical splendour. There’s no C-list soap stars here and no gimmickry, just all the elements of a classic pantomime that have thrilled generations of theatre goers.

All’s not well in Peking. The late Emperor has decreed that his daughter should only marry a worthy prince, scuppering the chance of low-brow Aladdin to ever find true love. The son of a lowly washer woman, Aladdin is certainly punching above his weight, but it’s a case of love at first sight for the young pair.

Of course, young love can never run smooth so throw in the traditional panto villain and we’re all set for a roller coaster (or should that be magic carpet) ride.

Daniel O’Brien’s script keeps all the traditional elements in place but includes enough modern references to keep the street-savvy younger audience entertained.  Shifting between the streets and palaces of Peking to the deserts of Egypt, Aladdin is a feast for both ear and eye. Tim Welton’s deft direction keeps the action flowing, with clever use of projection to add a magical feel to the piece.  Technology also comes to the fore in a beautifully filmed Silent Movie interlude that see’s our characters flee the theatre and take to the streets on Bury St Edmunds, much to the bemusement of puzzled onlookers.

There’s strong performances throughout the company – David Chittenden is suitably menacing as a dark and brooding Abanazar, Chris Coxon  plays Wishee Washee as the ultimate cheery children’s TV host while Hannah Summers provides regal gravitas in the dual roles of Empress and the Genie of the Lamp.

Patrick Marlowe should really be receiving double wages for his dual roles as Good/Evil sidekicks Hanky and Panky . A stream of quick changes, and vanishing tricks see’s Marlowe constantly on the go – even managing an Act two fight with himself.

There’s fine vocal performances from Roxanne Palmer and Jessica Spalis as Jasmine and Aladdin, with Spalis thrilling the audience with her spectacular aerial acrobatic skills on silks as she enters the cave of the lamp.

Like many a pantomime, though, the true star of the show here is the outrageous Dame, played to perfection by James Nickerson. Rarely off stage Nickerson instantly has the audience eating out of the palm of his hand, ready with a quick ad-lib for every situation. It’s a flirtatious style that instantly warms but also guides the audience through the absurdity of the pantomime tradition. Quick witted comments add to the fun – including a running joke with a pregnant member of the audience on the front row.

Nickerson’s comic wallpapering routine with Coxon may be straight out of the variety history books but it’s pure joy to see this slapstick masterclass introduced to a new generation.

Times may be tough for the Theatre Royal but the venue’s passion for live theatre is clearly demonstrated. It may lack the big names of some of its festive cousins but it certainly makes up for that on seasonal fun. This Aladdin will delight audiences of all ages and can’t help but warm the soul on a chilly winter’s night.

**Link for review:**

**http://www.thepublicreviews.com/aladdin-theatre-royal-bury-st-edmunds/**

**BFP Online- Emma Lake- 02/12/2013**

# Pantomime brings a joyous eastern extravaganza to Bury St Edmunds

**The Theatre Royal’s pantomime is an exuberant, eastern, extravaganza full of laughter and joy.**

The retelling of Aladdin is the most entertaining two-and-a-half-hours I have spent in a theatre.

During Friday’s [performance](http://www.buryfreepress.co.uk/what-s-on/lifestyle-leisure/pantomime-brings-a-joyous-eastern-extravaganza-to-bury-st-edmunds-1-5722902) the regency building was filled with raucous laughter as the cast ran into, tripped over, danced around and catapulted themselves into one hilarious situation after another.

James Nickerson excelled as he returned to the role of the dame, larking around the stage with son Wishee Washee and ensuring the audience was never left behind.

As well as combining all the expected elements of pantomime the show succeeded in being visually spectacular.

As Aladdin plummeted the depths of a mountain cave the auditorium was transformed into a mystical wonderland.

This production could not fail to raise a laugh and the joy of Christmas in all. [Aladdin](http://www.buryfreepress.co.uk/what-s-on/lifestyle-leisure/pantomime-brings-a-joyous-eastern-extravaganza-to-bury-st-edmunds-1-5722902) runs until January 12,

**Link for review:**

[**http://www.buryfreepress.co.uk/what-s-on/lifestyle-leisure/pantomime-brings-a-joyous-eastern-extravaganza-to-bury-st-edmunds-1-5722902**](http://www.buryfreepress.co.uk/what-s-on/lifestyle-leisure/pantomime-brings-a-joyous-eastern-extravaganza-to-bury-st-edmunds-1-5722902)

**The Stage- Hugh Homan- 2/12/2013**

**Aladdin is a terrific show, but it is a show of two halves.**

Most of the story and the spectacle happens before the interval. There’s quite a lot of padding thereafter and some judicious pruning would be to the show’s advantage - I’d take out the ghoulies/ghosties section which seems laboured.

However, your Christmas would not be complete without the manic antics of Dame James Nickerson as Twanky, a bravura exhibition of how you can manipulate an audience and endear yourself to all. In the nasty camp there is David Chittenden as a stylishly bold Abanazar. He has a beautifully oily, forceful voice and his commanding presence sends an appropriate chill throughout the theatre. Patrick Marlowe gives Abanazar remarkable support as Hanky while doubling as Panky, one side red, the other green - astonishing!

Roxanne Palmer is a lovely Princess Jasmine and Jessica Spalis a pleasantly forthright Aladdin and both sing their songs charmingly. Spalis’ impressive acrobatics in the high reaches of the magic cave has everyone’s hearts in their mouths. Hannah Summers is a stately Empress and dramatic Genie, while Chris Coxon is a likeable Wishee Washee.

As always in Bury, the set and music are superb. Nigel Hook is an inventive designer and Phil Gostelow is a wizard on the keys.

**Link for review:**

<http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/39200/>

**Whatsonstage- Anne Morley-Priestman- -4/12/2013**

**Aladdin (Bury St Edmunds)**

Tradition takes a slightly off-beat turn with "Aladdin" at the Bury St Edmunds Theatre Royal this winter.

By [Anne Morley-Priestman](http://www.whatsonstage.com/author/anne-morley-priestman_11/)  • 4 Dec 2013 • Southeast

WOS Rating: ★★★★

Question: what do you give a jewel of a theatre for Christmas? Answer: a bijou production of "Aladdin".

It's a Daniel O'Brien (aka Colin Blumenau) script which, in Tim Welton's production, compensates for a small cast and children's chorus with some inventive twists to the story – not to mention an excellent Keystone Kops filmed routine.

Over the past couple of years, the Principal Boy has seemed to bcome something of an endangered species. Not in Bury St Edmunds, for Aladdin is played by Jessica Spalis who not only has a fine acrobatic routine as the innocent hero descends into the cave in search of the magic lamp but a good sense of characterisation.

The dastardly Abanazar is Daniel Chittenden, a full-throated villain revelling in his green spotlight and the audience's vociferous reaction to his evil plans. He has a much put-upon sidekick Hanky (Patrick Marlowe) who switches costume numerous times in the course of the performance to double as the chamberlain Panky.

Feisty and strong-voiced Princess Jasmine (Roxanne Palmer) has an Empress Mother in this version, with Hannah Summers a dead ringer in costume and headgear for T'zu-hsi (Cixi). Summers, in another of the production's interesting doubling of roles, is also the imprisoned Genie of the Lamp – there's no ring to further spook the audience in this version.

James Nickerson is Sarah the Cook, slightly too much on the gabble and a little short on cuddliness. Chris Coxon has the young audience on his side as Wishee Washee from his first appearance. Phil Oostelow is the musical director and the designer is Nigel Hook.

Ashley Stafford, Sam Hilton, Tim Wragg and Ben Guy were responsible for the filmed sequence I mentioned. Great fun for all ages.

**Link for review:**

<http://www.whatsonstage.com/bury-st-edmunds-theatre/reviews/12-2013/aladdin-bury-st-edmunds_32854.html?cid=news-ticker>