

Review – Aladdin at The King's Theatre



Year after year, a trio of talented actors holds the King's Theatre pantomime together. **Allan Stewart** as Widow Twankey, **Andy Gray** as Wishy Washy and **Grant Stott** as Abanazar the Wizard are the lifeblood of this show. *Aladdin* tells the story of Abanazar's attempts to steal the Magic Lamp while Aladdin tries to marry the Princess Jasmine against the wishes of her father, The Emperor of China. So far so normal, but with this trio you never quite know what to expect.

There's a tremendous sense of fun on stage and a feeling that the three main actors are truly comfortable with each other and the audience. The best scenes are the ones with only these three on stage – look out for the “one short-sleeved shirt short” sequence, and the “fur coat” scene. There are plenty of nods to Edinburgh and the jokes come thick and fast, ranging from the obvious to the more subtle:

“Get down off your high horse.”

“You don't get down off a horse, you get down off a duck!”

“It's dark and dank and smelly!”

“You didn't tell me we were going to Musselburgh!”

However, there are disadvantages to hinging the whole show on the camaraderie of Stewart, Gray and Stott, as the other actors on stage can appear at times to be slightly left out. The plot is thin at best. Many of the characters lack motivation for their actions: why does Jasmine love Aladdin, a boy she has just met? Who is the Slave of the Ring and why is she enslaved? The character of the Emperor feels surplus to

the plot, muddying the lines between baddy and goody. The addition of the ring as a get-out clause takes away from the importance of the Lamp. There's very little sense of peril and the final dénouement, a sword fight between Aladdin and Abanazar, lacks authority. **Greg Barrowman** and **Miriam Ewell-Sutton** are good value as Aladdin and Jasmine, but their storyline feels like an afterthought.



The sets are, however, spectacular. Credit must go to **Hugo Durrant** and **The Twins FX** for the huge cobra and genie puppets (the Genie being a poignant reminder of Robin Williams' creation, and credited simply "as himself"). Whilst the finale of Act 1 felt a bit skittish with its nod to *Wicked* (now showing at the Playhouse) Widow Twankey actually flew into the audience – flew! – on a remarkable magic carpet. A high moment for the show was the addition of the children of the **Edinburgh Dance Academy** with the Ensemble. The dancing in this show is certainly one of the strong points, and the children displayed talent, excellent discipline- in one scene they hold a pose for almost ten minutes – and genuine enthusiasm, which was delightful to see.



It's a frothy, fun night out and sure to entertain the kids. The sets, special effects, acting, dancing and jokes are impressive as always. Adults in the audience might find themselves slightly disappointed, especially if they've visited this panto in previous years, by the failure to deliver sufficient plot or emotional punch, but it's panto, and these three panto pros have been at it for some time.

Aladdin runs till 19 January 2015.