



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Faringdon Dramatic Society (FDS)  
Production : Aladdin  
Date : 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020  
Venue : Faringdon Junior School  
Report by : Rob Bertwistle

---

## Show Report

Thank you to you for the customary warm and friendly welcome to this year's seasonal panto offering from the ever resourceful Faringdon Dramatic Society (FDS). Once again FDS member Peter Webster had been busy penning another amusing romp into panto land with his take on the boy and his adventures with the magic lamp – Aladdin.

As ever the costumes were colourful the scenery looked good and the cast were all filled with seasonal fun and enthusiasm.

### Principals:

Miriam Wells played the title role with relish with some splendidly over the top cast interactions and great audience rapport. Miriam used the stage well and her diction and projection were both very good.

Verity Roberts made an engaging 'Dame' as Widow Twankey. I liked her audience interactions and the very funny Northern accent perfectly fitted her characterisation. Good comic timing and some very amusing facial expressions made this a very pleasing performance.

*Unfortunately for any panto production to be considered for a NODA panto award the 'traditional' panto elements should be on display - one of which is that a male actor must play the role of the 'dame'. Of course, this is not always possible or indeed required by the director but only 'traditional' productions can be considered for district winner.*

Kia Howard gave a mature and confident performance as Princess Pearl with clear diction and good projection at all times too. I was particularly impressed with the way Kia's acting, singing and stage craft has improved in recent productions.

Katie Dyet had lots of fun as the Sultana suitably strutting around and giving orders while having the vapours all at the same time! Very funny! Katie always displays good stage craft and has clear diction and good projection. I liked the scenes with you and the young actor playing the Vizier. You gave him lots of support Katie – well done!

And the said young actor Dexter Kent as the Vizier gave a very assured and confident performance with good diction. Make sure you always project Dexter. I enjoyed your performance very much. You really brought this well-known panto character to life.

The villainous Abraxas was played with relish and in suitable panto villain style by Jacob Bayliss who elicited the customary hisses and boos from the delighted audience. This was a fine performance with

good audience and cast rapport. You also looked very good in the costume and excellent make-up. Well done Jacob - your diction and projection made for a well-rounded performance.

Alison Morris and Lynn Puddifoot as the comedy duo Fumble and Blunder worked well together and had some good comic timing and audience rapport. I liked your facial expressions which were very funny. Both projected well and had clear diction. I did feel the 'recipe' scene could have moved along at a much faster pace but generally you both kept the action moving along well. Well done!

Adrian Wells and Millie Long proved to be good choices in casting as the Genie's of the Lamp and Ring respectively. You both looked splendid in your colourful costumes and this no doubt helped with your characterisations – both very strong and most effective as the magic 'entities'. Your diction and projection were good and I'm sure you had fun playing these familiar panto characters.

This strong principal line-up was complimented and supported by a well-rehearsed and energetic ensemble.

#### Ensemble:

With such a large cast it would be impossible to name everyone but each one of you did very well. The ensemble cast all played their various roles convincingly and were fully engaged with the action - acting and reacting to the action on stage – always focused and in character lending strong support to the principal players.

The groups of Aladdin's friends and the Princess's friends all worked well together with some great facial expressions. The 'Citizens' used the playing area to good effect, always in character, while the Sultana's servants were always on hand for their master or should that be mistress? I particularly liked the Cave Spirit's and the lovely dance sequence which you all performed expertly.

If I might just add a general word about diction and projection, always strive to make sure each line is clear and audible to the whole audience. Even 'one-liners' need to be clear and able to be heard.

#### Director:

Director Debbie Lock had taken a refreshing and enlightened view of her cast by using many youngsters in principal roles which can only be a move for the good. As Debbie said to me before the performance, she had also encouraged the younger members to get involved with the production side too which was a wonderful way to get more of our young people interested in putting on 'live' shows. Debbie had assembled an experienced adult cast which must have been useful to give help and advice to the younger members of the cast.

The action moved along well, and the cues were generally picked up quickly. We did talk about how it was quite challenging to get younger performers to project. I'm afraid I have no 'quick fixes' for that particular problem but no doubt improvement comes with experience and gentle reminding! I'm sure the input of assistant director Matthew Warner was of invaluable use.

#### Musical Director:

Musical Director Martin Waymark had ensured that all the members of the cast were word perfect and the singing was of a high standard with the small five-piece band never over-shadowing the ensemble and soloists.

Choreographer:

The choreography by Caitlin Nicholls was very well suited to all levels of attainment and performed with energy and precision. I was particularly impressed by the Cave Spirits' sequence.

Stage management:

Stage Manager Sam Tate ensured the proceedings flowed smoothly with no noticeable hitches.

Lighting:

The lighting design and operation by Ian Chandler and Henry Marlow provided some atmospheric touches to the action and certainly gave the 'Genie' entrances extra dramatic effect. The 'lightning' effects were most impressive particularly as the 'cave' opened.

Sound:

Steve Greening and Jo Garrard in the sound department ensured the special sound effects happened right on cue and the mike balance was just right.

Make-up:

The make-up design and application by Anna Marlow, Kitty Marlow and Sara Elvidge-Tappenden looked very good under the lights and gave each character good definition. I thought the make-up design for Abraxas was particularly effective.

Set Design:

I liked Charlotte White's simple but effective set design. The scene changes were carried out quickly and the scene locations were easily recognisable by effective use of token pieces of 'portable' set dressing. The set painting was colourful and was enhanced by the lighting effects.

Props:

The props assembled by Carole Tappenden and Jo Webster all worked well and the cast had great fun using them especially in the 'cooking' scene.

Costumes:

What a fantastic set of colourful and eye-catching costumes! Joan Lee, Helen Tate, Jan Crowdson and Sharon Gerry had certainly been working hard to provide such wonderful costumes. I was very impressed with the 'Genie' costumes in particular which were very good indeed!

Programme:

Programme design and compilation by Dave Headey followed the fairly familiar FDS format with some clear principal head shots and biographies and the cast and production team credits. The text is always clear and easy to read even in semi-darkness.

Front of House:

Thanks to all the Front of House team – coordinated by Gary Field - for the usual warm welcome and hospitality. It's always a pleasure to catch up with the FDS members.

Thank you to everyone involved in the production. All your hard work certainly paid off and I hope you all enjoyed being part of the production as much as the lively audience enjoyed watching it.

Best wishes,

Rob

Rob Bertwistle  
Regional Representative  
District 12  
NODA London

Facebook: @NODARegCounLondon

***Keep in touch with Curtain Up! - NODA London's e-newsletter.***

*Follow us on Twitter:*     [@NODA\\_London](https://twitter.com/NODA_London)

***NODA London Festival Weekend 13th/14th June 2020***

***NODA THEATRE SUMMER SCHOOL 25th JULY - 1st AUGUST 2020***