

The logo for Disney's Aladdin musical. It features the word "Disney" in its classic script font, followed by "Aladdin" in a large, stylized, golden-yellow cursive font. Below "Aladdin" is the subtitle "THE SPECTACULAR WEST END MUSICAL" in a smaller, golden-yellow, all-caps sans-serif font.

Disney Aladdin

THE SPECTACULAR WEST END MUSICAL

Production Notes

Your exclusive guide to the set and costumes, as well as top tips for writing about the West End stage show. This resource will be of particular use to students studying drama, theatre and performance.

You may also find it useful to refer to the **Background to the Show resource** and **Behind the Scenes** videos freely available at aladdineducation.co.uk

ALADDIN is a live theatre show which provides a spectacular experience for its audience. With over 180 people involved in each performance, this show provides students with huge scope to explore the role of performers, designers, directors and choreographers, technicians and special effects experts alike.

Although you'll see nods to the award-winning animation, *ALADDIN* does not seek to simply recreate the film, but instead present an unforgettable live theatrical experience.

Venue:	Prince Edward Theatre, London
Director & Choreographer:	Casey Nicholaw
Costume Design:	Gregg Barnes
Scenic Design:	Bob Crowley
Lighting Design:	Natasha Katz
Sound Design:	Ken Travis
Hair Design:	Josh Marquette
Make-up Design:	Milagros Medina-Cerdeira



Set Design

What do you notice?

Research the textiles and clothing from Turkey, India, Uzbekistan, Germany, China, Italy, Guatemala and China. Where can you see these influences in the production design?

Research the original text:

You'll see that China and the Far East are the locations for the original story.

Research

When designing the set for this production, Bob Crowley and the creative team researched a range of architecture, textiles, and patterns from the Middle East to create a sense of location. The team undertook a research trip to Morocco, which also informed the design and staging.

The stage curtain (Kabuki) at the beginning (the 'top') of the show is a perfect example of the result of this research. The red and orange colour palette is emphasised by front lighting, and the shapes include intersecting triangles, vertical lines and stylized flowers. This curtain splits in two, and falls to the ground at the end of the overture to reveal Genie and the sand dunes of Agrabah.

Design considerations

The set has to be versatile enough to present a number of different internal and external locations: the street and market, rooftops, palace interiors and gates, inside the Cave of Wonders, a dungeon and inside Jafar's lair, not to mention the flying carpet and the dark night sky!

- Another design consideration for this musical is the safety of the performers in the full-scale dance numbers. At several points in the show, there are 27 people on stage who need to be able to move without the use of tracks on the floor. This might explain the 47 pieces of scenery which are stored ABOVE the stage and flown in!
- Bob Crowley creates depth by staggering flats around the market place, flying in four flats of apparently decreasing size. Crowley uses the same framing device in the Cave of Wonders, which creates a sense of size and depth to the cave.
- **The impact of lighting on design:** Look carefully at the stage - can you spot the fake proscenium arch? The lighting effects in the show are vital but as there are almost 400 lights hung over the stage, these need to be creatively concealed from the audience.
- There is also a jagged border around the entire stage (within the theatre's real proscenium arch) to create a 'picture book' feel. Crowley also uses a sense of false perspective when using backdrops showing the sand dunes.



Research Task:

Bob Crowley was inspired by Islamic patterns... where can you see influences of this throughout the production? Extend your research by taking a look at the Islamic art of paper cutting.



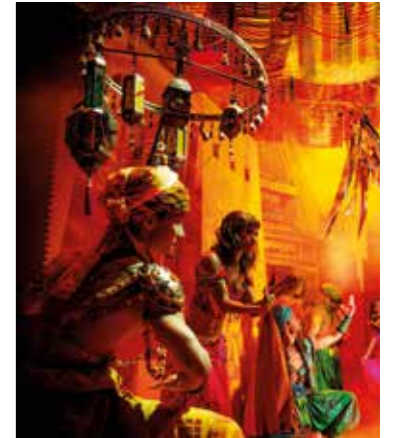
Research Task:

Another influence on the design of this production was 10th century Indian miniature paintings. Take a look at some examples and consider where they have been used in the production to create a sense of location and atmosphere.



The Market Place – Agrabah

During *Arabian Nights*, a number of hand-held items help establish setting without being permanent or static set: vendors' poles, scarves and jewellery; hand-pushed carts, baskets of fruit and urns. **Look closely at how these are used in the stage action to create the busy and exciting atmosphere of the market place.**



Creating the fictional world of Agrabah is a fantastic example of how different design and production elements work together. As well as location suggested by the set, the female ensemble dance with silk scarves. Acrobats, sword swallows and guards also move around the stage to create a sense of a busy market place. Large rugs are carried, sometimes containing dancers! A patchwork of different fabrics hangs above the stage to suggest the souk – an open air market place.

Look carefully:

What is flown in from above the market place? The canopy is made of printed artwork on poly-silk fabric which is then sewn on to mesh. Depth and interest is added by using filigree and tassels. The aim of this canopy, as well as adding even more colour, is to recreate the kind of light that is seen in souks: light filters through the slats of wood that create a cover against the intense sun.

Key moments

- In preparation for the song *One Jump Ahead*, automation is used to make the towers taller. This provides more variation in levels for the chase sequence.
- Jafar's first entrance is a dramatic contrast to the rest of the colourful location: he is dressed all in black – only Jafar and his guards wear black, creating a strong contrast between them, and their intentions, with the rest of the citizens of Agrabah.
- The design allows the downstage centre area of the stage to be clear and therefore allow the slow-motion meeting of Aladdin and Jasmine. The cyclorama changes colour to pink – the colour of romance – and the music slows down to emphasise the moment. The cyclorama then reverts to orange and the music speeds up.

Design insight:

The design team were influenced by the fact that the desert has no plant life to add colour. In locations such as the fictional Agrabah, it is textiles and objects which add colour and interest in an otherwise monotone place.



Consider this...

This show appeals to all ages. How many different ways do the performers break the fourth wall, or create spectacle to engage and sustain the audience's attention?



The art of transformation:

Bob Crowley often uses a Kabuki drop cloth in his designs. Research this, and see if you can identify where this is used in *ALADDIN*. How does it add to the sense of wonder and spectacle in the production?



Observe closely...

There are a number of illusions in this production. How many do you notice?



The Cave of Wonders in the show

The Cave of Wonders

The tiger's head is one of the few design elements from the original animated film that was deliberately retained. The tiger's green eyes and mouth dominate the upstage centre area. The mouth is slightly open and forms the entrance to the cave, also lit in green until it turns red when Aladdin touches something forbidden. Four columns are placed in a semi-circular formation, which will reveal riches in the piles of gold.

The gold surfaces present a particular challenge to the lighting team because of the reflective nature of the materials used. Look closely at the direction of the lighting, which is carefully angled to prevent glare, and to enhance the idea of a cave full of treasures.

This is the picture of an Indian palace ceiling which inspired the design of the Cave of Wonders. Can you see the similarities between the two?



Palace of Chahli Sultan in Isfahan, Iran. "Persian Art and Architecture" by Henri Stierlin - photos are credited to Henri and Anne Stierlin and Adrien Buchet



Fact

The gold finish used in the Cave of Wonders is the same used for C-3PO's costume in Star Wars.



Watch carefully....

With the exception of a staircase used in *Friend Like Me*, the stage floor is mostly free of set. Watch out for how Bob Crowley and the team have created entrances and exits for Genie that are unlike those made by anyone else. How do these appearances make him seem magical, and create a sense of awe and wonder for the audience?



The lighting for this location needs to emphasise the precious treasure that the cave holds, as well as the danger that Aladdin is in when he tries to touch a necklace, rather than just the lamp. Genie appears to set off several pyrotechnics at the end of *Friend Like Me* to emphasise the magic of the location.



The Palace

We see interior and exterior areas of the palace. The interior walls of the palace are flats with an intricate filigree pattern. Later a silhouette of the palace and its approach appears across the full size of the cyclorama, emphasising the size of the palace.

Consider:

The use of silhouette is a technique frequently used by Bob Crowley in his designs. Why do you think this is such an effective technique? What impact does it have on the mood, atmosphere and locations created for the audience?

Jasmine's chamber has intricate fretwork on the walls (like filigree). There is a sense of delicacy and innocence. The main colour is white, with white chiffon curtains around the two peacock cages stage left. The design requires various exit and entrance points to heighten drama when Prince Abdullah storms out and when Aladdin/Prince Ali is captured.



The Dungeon

This is a free-standing flat placed centre stage with textured brickwork and iron railings on either side. Smoke is used to create a foreboding atmosphere in this scene. There is a door embedded in the brick work through which Genie enters - the hidden side of the door is red, with a gold star on it, like a 'dressing room' door for Genie.

Consider:

Scene changes: what factors should be considered when designing movable scenery?

Costume Design



There are 337 costumes in this spectacular production. The Ensemble, in particular, makes a number of quick changes which adds to the opulence:

- 108 changes which occur in less than a minute
- 58 changes which occur in under 30 seconds
- 3 costume changes take place in less than 1 second.

Look particularly at the costumes worn by the Ensemble in major dance numbers. Director and Choreographer Casey Nicholaw has used a wide range of dance styles, which are reflected in and enhanced by their costumes. Closely observe numbers *Friend Like Me* and *Prince Ali*.

Discuss:

How do costumes need to be constructed to allow these quick changes to happen?

GENIE



Genie's make-up includes thick, elongated black eyebrows, and strong gold eyeshadow to highlight the eye area. Kohl liner is used to elongate the eye-line. Genie also wears glitter on his scalp, which catches the light, contrasting with the less magical characters.

Genie wears Persian-inspired shoes with a small Cuban heel to them.

Genie's costume journey:

1. Appearance in *Arabian Nights* and in the Cave of Wonders: blue velvet jacket, red and gold, wide quilted belt, swirl patterned trousers and jewelled cuffs. He also wears a wide, jewelled gold and blue circular collar piece.
2. Turquoise trouser suit with wide brimmed hat (inspired by Fats Waller): long jacket with silver threaded vertical stripes and a strip of turquoise and black leopard print around the lapel, matching waistcoat. Midnight blue bow tie with silver sequins and white shirt.
3. Genie's palace costume is a white and gold version of his previous one. The wide belt is white and gold, and the jewelled cuffs and collar are black, gold and grey.

Fact

The costume team adds specially made heels to the performers' shoes to allow them to dance safely, avoiding the tracks in the floor! The heels are wider than regular dance shoes and are reinforced to withstand the rigours of the show's choreography.

Consider:

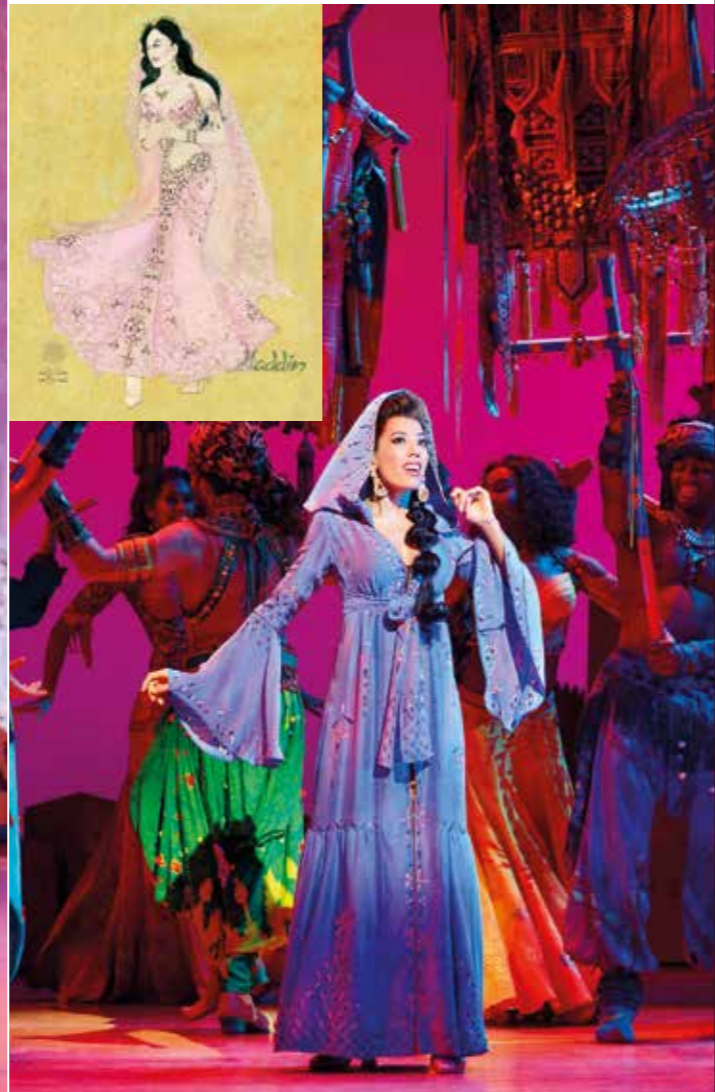
What role do these changes in Genie's costume tell us about his role in the story?

JASMINE



Jasmine has two main costumes in the show and a third when she is in disguise in the market place:

1. Light blue harem pants and matching embellished top; diamond tiara; hooded cloak with bell sleeves and a tied waist. Jasmine's hair is often loose across her shoulders but in the early part of the show, it is tied in a low pony tail, with bands at intervals down the tail, suggesting conformity and strict rules/lack of freedom. The waistband of her trousers is embroidered in pink, green and blue. The addition of short vertical strips of sequins help add texture to her trousers, similar to how they are used to ruche her top.
2. Her wedding costume is a pink, beaded and tasselled top, embellished with glass beads; diamond and pink tiara (more crown-shaped than her previous ones, with a long sequined veil at the back); long light pink fishtail skirt with embroidery, beads, and a front panel of applique. The hem of the skirt is sequined and uses filigree thread, beads and sequins. She also wears heavy gold earrings.



ALADDIN



Aladdin's costume is a visual representation of how his character changes and develops during the story:

1. Off-white harem trousers, with some flecks of pattern to make them appear dirty, orange patterned bolero style waistcoat (no shirt); flat-heeled brown boots. These dull colours reflect his poverty, creating a contrast to Prince Abdullah, and when Aladdin becomes Prince Ali. His wide trousers also allow him to climb and jump freely, which he does in numbers such as *One Jump Ahead*.
2. As Prince Ali, structured and textured white jacket (no lapels) with floral embroidery across the shoulders, the chest and cuffs; matching harem trousers with outside edge trimmed in same embroidery as his jacket. His turban has a number of purple jewels on the forehead edge, as well as a white feather. Jewelled belt holds the jacket closed. The back of the jacket has a length of cape attached with a purple and silver patterned lining.
3. In the wedding scene, Aladdin wears a jewelled turban, a heavier white embroidered coat with straight wide sleeves, necklace of pearls and jewelled beads. These items belong to the sultan and are handed to Aladdin as a symbol of him becoming the future sultan.



Consider...

How does Jasmine disguise herself in the market place. What considerations would have been made when designing this costume change?



IAGO

JAFAR

Iago wears a small bolero jacket, his trousers are extremely wide in comparison. He wears a very small hat on the crown of his head. The shape of the costume and use of odd sizing make Iago seem comic. Iago wears traditional Persian slippers with an exaggerated/oversized curl at the toes, again showing the comic element of his character.

Iago's shape and silhouette is much softer and rounder than Jafar's costume, which involves a lot of sharp angles and straight lines. This includes sculpted shoulders which sit high above his own.

 **Consider:**

Jafar's cobra staff: what does this prop convey to the audience?

Jafar's eyebrows are drawn on, in an arch, considerably higher than the actor's own eyebrows. This makes his face look longer and thinner, as well as creating a permanent look of disdain and disgust. Contouring is used to make his face appear bony and his facial shape is emphasized by a beard and thin horseshoe shaped moustache. Jafar's turban helps create height so that he appears imposing and this paired with his cobra-shaped staff makes him even more menacing.

Jafar's black, floor-length coat has a high collar at the nape of the neck and trimmings of red around the collarbone and top of the collar. It also has batons in the bottom hem to allow him to spread it out with his arms and reveal the red lining and create a swooping quality to the actor's movement. His costume is an excellent example of how costume can create a 'shorthand' for the audience about a character.

ALADDIN'S FRIENDS: BABKAK, OMAR & KASSIM



 **Look carefully!**

The costumes of Aladdin's three friends contain elements of each other's costume. For example, the turquoise of the sash around Kassim's waist matches that of Omar's main costume. How does that help emphasise their friendship?



Aladdin's friends are visually similar in style to him, the same items appear in complementary colours.

Babkak - Green. Orange patterned fez, lime green harem pants patterned with applique shapes. Jacket has ¾ length sleeves, and he wears brown leather studded cuffs on both wrists.

Omar - Blue. Slightly slimmer fitting harem pants than Babkak, very textured patterning on trousers. Full length sleeve on jacket. Blue and pink fez, with these colours repeated on the shoulders of his jacket.

Kassim - Red/Orange. Black leather, studded cuffs with red trim. Embroidered and patterned red waistcoat. Thick belt with red and turquoise scarf tied around it.

At the beginning of Act 2 (*Prince Ali*) the three friends - now attendants of 'Prince Ali' - wear white suits, white turbans with feathers and

embellishments. Their jackets have puffed sleeves and each one has intricate and individual gold threaded embroidery that matches their trousers. These are highly decorated versions of their original street clothes, indicating their change in social class and status. They change back to their previous costumes when Jafar has them arrested.

 **Consider:**

Consider how the costumes worn by Babkak, Omar and Kassim reveal a link between them (and Aladdin) but also allow the individual characters to be conveyed. For example, Babkak's costume is considerably baggier than the others.

ENSEMBLE DANCERS



Ensemble costumes are striking in their use of colour. These, combined with the brightly lit cyclorama - which is often pink, purple or bright orange to convey intense heat - create a vibrant scene for the audience.

In *Friend Like Me*, the costumes aid Genie in creating a sense of wonder and showmanship. In an already gold set, the male dancers appear in gold high-waisted trousers, waistcoats and fez hats and the female dancers wear skater-shaped dresses with thin halter-neck straps. They wear traditional gold character shoes.



The magic costume change:

Both Genie and Jafar perform costume changes as 'tricks'. Genie does so in *Prince Ali*, changing from his turquoise suit to a white genie suit, similar to the blue one he wears in Act 1.

Jafar does a similar trick towards the end of Act 2 when he becomes the Sultan. His black outfit suddenly becomes white. The cyclorama then turns red, and Jafar's clothes do the same.



Take a look!

In the opening of Act 2, the song *Prince Ali* is performed. The dancers have a number of very quick changes into various different kind of costumes including pink dresses with tassled skirts, wrist cuffs, Mongolian style long coats, full skirts and feathered turbans; they use feathered hand-held fans, fans with long strips of fabric attached, feathered fans on long poles, dombek drums, headdresses, fringed parasols, and props such as imitation peacocks. All of this creates a sense of spectacle for the royal arrival as well as giving a sense of the size of the royal entourage.



The Ensemble are required to sing, dance, act and complete acrobatic tricks throughout their performances. Dance styles include jazz and tap and much of the choreography remains faithful to the musical theatre genre. Leaps, turns, use of the hips and arms, and use of props such as feathers and fabrics help locate the action in the Middle East. In *Arabian Nights*, many of the arm movements beckon towards the audience, breaking the fourth wall and encouraging us to engage in the story. Quick costume changes also help them to create the illusion of a busy market place, and a greater number of characters than there are performers.



Consider:

Consider how the director and designer must collaborate in order to make the production look good and be practical for the performers.

Putting this into practice...

Here are some TOP TIPS for writing about Aladdin



Writing about SET?

- You could look at the market place, the Cave of Wonders or Jasmine's chamber.
- The set creates location as its main purpose but there are subtle nods to the genre of musical theatre, such as the piles of gold rotating to become New York style skyscrapers – a reference to the Broadway shows and movies of the 1940s.
- Entrance and exit points vary, including lifts (one either side of the stage) for Genie to use.
- Colour and texture are important to create the wealth of the Sultan, the treasure in the cave, Jasmine's bedroom and how it offers tempting glimpses of the outside world, and Aladdin's makeshift rooftop home.
- Also consider use of moving scenery and props that enhance the scenes.



Writing about COSTUME?

- Genie's costume becomes increasingly luxurious (with a hint of Western influence at the beginning of Act 2 as he introduces Prince Ali), as does Aladdin's as he transforms from street rat to Prince. Genie is able to 'shape shift' which is difficult to achieve on stage, so costume helps him do this.
- Aladdin's developing character and status is partly achieved through the addition of capes or long jackets as opposed to his bolero jacket, and the use of turbans and jewels/feathers.
- Jafar's costume helps the actor create a sinister and villainous character and it contrasts strongly with Iago's costume. It also has a strong influence on the way that the actor moves: the long flowing cape can create a swooping motion and the tall turban creates an imposing height.
- Jasmine's costume style does not change significantly throughout the show, but she does assume more mature and higher ranking royal dress as she moves towards her wedding costume.



Writing about SOUND?

- The most obvious moment to examine is Jafar's interaction with the Cave of Wonders – echo effect of the recorded 'Spooky Voice' which must sound sinister and threatening.
- There are thunder sound effects to create an ominous atmosphere from Jafar's discovery of Aladdin as the 'Diamond in the Rough' before the transition back to the market place.



Writing about LIGHTING?

- The way in which the cyclorama is lit throughout the performance is a key device through which location, time and mood are created. The market place is lit with a bright orange to suggest the intense heat, and the magic carpet flight is done in near darkness, lit using lights on the carpet, as well as the star cloth. During the carpet flight, much of the illusion of flight is created with lighting, which leads the audience's focus towards particular directions at specific times.

- In all of the big dance numbers, lighting is skillfully used to direct your attention to particular moments of storytelling, character or soloists. Look particularly at *Arabian Nights* and *Friend Like Me*. Look, too, for subtle references to the original animation in *Prince Ali*.
- There are 60 lighting cues in *Friend Like Me*. This includes opportunities to highlight choreography and coincide with dramatic music cues.
- You could also examine the use of pyrotechnics at key moments in the production such as in *Friend Like Me*.
- Consider the scene in Jafar's lair, including the book on the lectern that lights up, lighting Jafar's face from below.
- Consider, too, the use of rear projection on to a gauze when the 'Diamond in the Rough' is revealed to be Aladdin.
- Remember that set and lighting must work together. As Michael Odam states, "Lighting is the glue that holds the entire production together". It focuses our attention on key moments, images and performers as well as creating mood, atmosphere and location.

Technical facts to illustrate the scale of the production

Aladdin has one of the most complex lighting rigs currently in the West End. This includes 374 lighting units:

- **90 Mac Viper Permance moving lights and 24 Mac Viper Wash DX. For each of the Mac Vipers there are 10 gobos, meaning there are 900 gobos in this show!**
- 52 Source Four profile spots with various degrees of lenses
- **158 Source Four Luster LED colour changing profile spots. In previous**

West End shows, you'd expect Source Fours to use colour scrollers. Using so many Luster LEDs means that the designer can mix different colours to create exactly the colour needed.

- 3 Lycian 1295 follow spots
- **LED strip lights make up the rest of the units**
- There are also some small lighting effect techniques built into the scenery but that would be telling...



Writing about PERFORMANCE SKILLS?

- Genie and Jafar create a useful contrast.
- Think about the relationship that develops between Jasmine and Aladdin, developing from mistrust to romance. They often stand/sit in very close proximity but not always touching, particularly in the presence of the Sultan. Look particularly at the moment that they meet when the world around them goes into slow motion.
- You could also examine the relationship between Jafar and Iago as a villainous duo, the contrast between them in status. Consider, also, the creation of comedy with the evil laughter and accompanying mannerisms.
- Aladdin's relationship with his friends Babkak, Omar and Kassim creates comedy and tension at key moments such as in the dungeon, running away in slow motion whilst a man walks past at normal speed, or in their song *Babkak, Omar, Aladdin, Kassim*.
- You could also examine Genie and the Ensemble's skills, particularly in the eight-minute closing number of Act I (*Friend Like Me*) in terms of timing, precision, physicality and the pastiches of various different musical and performance styles.

Key Vocabulary

You can use these when describing different aspects of the production

SET DESIGN

Proscenium arch

Kabuki cloth

Upstage/
Downstage

Perspective

Scale

Filigree

Cyclorama

Colour palette

Portal

Stage Left/Right

COSTUME

Harem pants

Turban

Gypsy skirt

Embellishment

Beads

Chiffon

Jewels

Sequins

Cloak

Silk

Fishtail skirt

SOUND

Echo

Routing

Console

Amplification

Live

Mixer

Reverberation

Recorded

Microphone

Direction

Click track

LIGHTING

Cyclorama

Profile

LED lights

Spotlight

Star cloth

Back lighting

Back lighting

Automated lights

Bounce cloth

Pyrotechnic

Gobo

Follow spots

Fresnels

Disney
Aladdin

With thanks to:

Bob Crowley – Scenic Design

Rosalind Coombes – Associate Scenic Design

Michael Odam – Associate Lighting Designer