



Disney *Aladdin*

THE HIT BROADWAY MUSICAL

STUDY GUIDE



THE
NATIONAL THEATRE
FOUNDATION

Aladdin the Musical

The National Theatre

April 19–30, 2023

Broadway, February 2014

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Howard Ashman and Tim Rice

Book by Chad Beguelin

Directed and Choreographed by Casey Nicholaw

Packet prepared by Dramaturg Leayne C. Dempsey

Discover a whole new world at Disney's ALADDIN, the hit Broadway musical.

From the producer of *The Lion King* comes the timeless story of ALADDIN, a thrilling new production filled with unforgettable beauty, magic, comedy and breathtaking spectacle. It's an extraordinary theatrical event where one lamp and three wishes make the possibilities infinite.

Hailed by *USA Today* as "Pure Genie-Us," ALADDIN features all your favorite songs from the film as well as new music written by Tony® and Academy Award® winner Alan Menken (*Newsies*) with lyrics penned by the legendary Howard Ashman (*Beauty and the Beast*), Tony Award winner Tim Rice (*The Lion King*, *Aida*), and book writer Chad Beguelin (*The Wedding Singer*).

Directed and choreographed by Tony Award winner Casey Nicholaw (*The Book of Mormon*, *Something Rotten!*), this "Fabulous" and "Extravagant" (*The New York Times*) new musical boasts an incomparable design team, with sets, costumes and lighting from Tony Award winners Bob Crowley (*Mary Poppins*), Gregg Barnes (*Kinky Boots*), and Natasha Katz (*An American in Paris*). See why audiences and critics agree, ALADDIN is "Exactly What You Wish For!" (NBC-TV).

ALADDIN begins April 19, 2023 and is a theatrical performance recommended for children 6 years of age or older. The show runs for two hours and thirty minutes, including one intermission.



For almost 200 years, The National Theatre has occupied a prominent position on Pennsylvania Avenue—"America's Main Street"—and played a central role in the cultural and civic life of Washington, DC. Located a stone's throw from the White House and having the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site as its "front yard," The National Theatre is a historic, cultural presence in our Nation's Capital and the oldest continuously operating enterprise on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The non-profit National Theatre Foundation oversees the historic theatre and serves the DC community through three free outreach programs, *Saturday Morning Live! At The National*, *Community Stage Connections*, and *Teens Behind the Scenes*. These programs provide the greater Washington area with access to high quality performing arts experiences while promoting and employing local and regional artists.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE FOUNDATION

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Madeline Meszaros, Executive Assistant

Written and Curated by Leayne Dempsey, Dramaturg

Designed by Carolyn Donarski

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DRAMATURGICAL ESSAY

"Riffraff"

"Street rat"

I don't buy that

If only they'd look closer

Would they see a poor boy?

No, sirree

They'd find out

There's so much more to me...

Stands for Video Home System. VHS tapes were made popular in the late 70's and through the eighties. VHS tapes were used to record films and then playback on a VCR (videocassette recorder).

There are so many amazing lyrics in *Aladdin* the hit Broadway musical. In fact, I can remember purposefully using the captions on my tv to learn song lyrics while watching the VHS tape of the animated movie. Alan Menken's music has a knack for remaining timeless. Yet, the lyrics above are the words that often stay with me the most. Perhaps it's because they are words that ring so true to the human experience; to me and to you.

How often do we all find ourselves wishing that people knew who we truly are on the inside? How often do you wonder, if only they knew my dreams and passions and thoughts, then maybe they'd understand me a little better?

There is something innately human about wanting to find your place in the world. And there is something innately human about wanting to feel known. We long to have others realize that our outside appearances aren't always reflective of how we feel about ourselves on the inside. And we long for others to know that no matter how much money we do or do not have, the amount in our pockets (or in our Apple Wallet apps) doesn't exactly match the potential of how much impact we're going to have on this world.

It's very much like *Aladdin*, wouldn't you say? Or even Jasmine. The two, from very different worlds, found themselves out of place in the societies they've been born into, and their coincidental encounter leads them on a "magic carpet ride" to a new life together.

Disney Theatrical Group's *Aladdin* the hit Broadway musical whisks the audience away to a fictional city called Agrabah, set somewhere in the Middle East. Like the *Arabian Nights* stories that were inspired by Asian and African cultures, the creative team of this stage production incorporates elements of both continents within its theatrical design. Fabrics, crystals, song styles, and actors from cultures all around the world blend beautifully together to tell this ancient tale. It's not just the story of a poor boy turned sultan; but is also the story of one who dared to defy the circumstances they've been given, for the sake of finding something entirely new; a whole new world.

Leayne Dempsey, Dramaturg

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW BY THE END OF THIS PACKET:


- What is a folktale?
- Who is Alan Menken and the production's creative team?
- What are the Arabian Nights stories?
- What is the role of the costume designer?



Michael Makiavel as Aladdin in *Aladdin* on Broadway.
Photo by Matthew Murphy ©Disney

THE CREATIVE TEAM

ALAN MENKEN The composer of the beautiful Broadway production, *Aladdin* the hit Broadway musical. Menken is a composer who is very familiar with the Walt Disney Company. He has composed music for Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. He has also composed music for *Sister Act* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Menken has received prestigious awards such as Golden Globes and Grammys. He has won the most Oscars than any other living person; and eight Academy Awards.

DC Connection: The Kennedy Center featured Menken's musical hits in a concert in 2019. The concert featured the National Symphony orchestra, and Broadway stars like Megan Hilty, Norm Lewis, and Patina Miller. [Watch it here.](#) 

HOWARD ASHMAN The late Howard Ashman wrote the lyrics for the musical *Aladdin*. Ashman was a stage director, lyricist, and playwright. In addition to *Aladdin*, Ashman wrote the lyrics alongside Alan Menken for *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*.

DC Connection: Howard was born in nearby city and state, Baltimore, Maryland.

CHAD BEGUELIN A six-time Tony nominee who wrote the book for *Aladdin*. Beguelin is also known for his work on: *The Prom*, *The Wedding Singer*, and *Elf The Musical*. He was nominated for Best Original Book and Best Original Score for his work on *Aladdin*.

DC Connection: Wrote the book and lyrics for the musical *The Rhythm Club* which debuted at Signature Theatre in 2000.

TIM RICE Sir Tim Rice is no stranger to writing lyrics for hit Broadway musicals. Tim Rice is a lyricist who is known for his work on Broadway musical hits such as: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Lion King*. After Howard Ashman passed, Tim Rice stepped in to work with Alan Menken on the completion of *Aladdin*. Tim Rice and Alan Menken created the very popular song, "A Whole New World," together.

DC Connection: Tim Rice's musical, *Evita*, made its Washington, D.C. debut at The National Theatre in 1981.

CASEY NICHOLAW The director and choreographer of *Aladdin* the musical. Nicholaw has also directed and choreographed popular shows like: *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Mean Girls*, *The Prom*, and more. Casey Nicholaw is currently the director for the on screen adaptation of *Spamalot* the musical.

DC Connection: *Mean Girls* the musical, directed by Nicholaw, had its world premiere at The National Theatre in Washington, DC, in 2017.

ADDITIONAL CREATIVE TEAM:

BOB CROWLEY Scenic Design

GREGG BARNES Costume Design

NATASHA KATZ Lighting Design

KEN TRAVIS Sound Design

JEREMY CHERNICK Special Effects Design

DESIGNER'S CORNER EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH ALADDIN'S COSTUME DESIGNER GREGG BARNES.

Behind the Scenes of Broadway's 'Aladdin': Interviews with Courtney Reed, Gregg Barnes

BY BRIANNE NEMIROFF | JANUARY 18, 2018

How much inspiration for the design did you take from the film. Where did you make it your own?

Broadway's "Aladdin" is inspired by the animated film which uses a lot of anachronistic design references. The design for the show is equally irreverent in a way.

In some cases, we were faithful to the film (especially with the principal characters), but I also looked outside the box and made a marriage of what an audience expects to see with my own vision.

Some of the things I looked at:

Belly dancers, "Dancing with the Stars", Roxy ushers, The Cotton Club (believe it or not), Hollywood Kitsch and MGM musicals, modern wedding dresses, tattoo art, Islamic architecture, jewelry (both ethnic and Cartier), carved wood blocks, and calligraphy.

All of these things and many more were then used to inspire the shapes and the palette of the finished design. The story of "Aladdin" is set in the city of Agrabah, which is a fictional place. "Aladdin" is a fable and by mix-mastering all of these images and inspirations, we hopefully ended up with a design vision that is unique to the particular telling of this wonderful story.

"SHINING,
SHIMMERING,
SPLENDID."

— A Whole New World, Aladdin



Michael James Scott as Genie-Michael Mallikel as Aladdin in Aladdin on Broadway. Photo by Matthew Murphy ©Disney

What's the first thing you do when you find out you got a show? Sketch, source potential fabric, read into the story? What's your process?

I always begin by listening to the other members of the creative team. We work as a collective and you never know where the best idea might come from. It has happened more than once that the solution for your finale costume might come from the fight director or your opening palette from the lighting designer. As things start to percolate, (and after extensive research), I begin the drawing and painting process. In the case of "Aladdin", that might take six months, hundreds of sketches to be created, and then shoe drawings, hat drawings, beading samples, detail drawings, back views. It goes on and on. While that work is being accomplished and revised, there is a team seeking out textiles and embroideries and feathers and all of the elements you will eventually need to realize the design. After all of that is on paper, you get bids from the various shops that will create the clothes and off you go!

A lot of people don't realize certain fabrics, colors, and styles are off limits for the sake of movement on stage and lighting. What do you have to avoid using for a show like this?

I always say that a costume must look like a butterfly and wear like an iron maiden. There are many tricks to making this happen and a lot of experimentation and learning from

past mistakes help in the process. Collaboration is always the key. Careful meetings with the set and lighting designer help with color and for durability; no one knows better than the Wardrobe Supervisor—what to avoid to keep things looking like they were just delivered to the theater that day. We use a lot of silk in "Aladdin", which some might think is excessive, but it lights the best and it paints beautifully so the color is always extraordinary. A careful blend of the fragile and the sturdy, the exotic and the ordinary can make magic when balanced in the right way.



Shoba Narayan as Jasmine in Aladdin on Broadway.
Photo by Matthew Murphy © Disney

COSTUME TRIVIA

answers below

1. How many custom made shoes are in the show? A. 50 B. 250 C. 161
2. How many fabrics and trims are used in the costume design? A. 165 B. 617 C. 2,039
3. How many costumes are in the show? A. 75 B. 337 C. 285
4. How many hours did it take costume designer Gregg Barnes to paint and sketch one design? A. 2 hours B. 4 hours C. 6 hours
5. How much does Jasmine's wedding dress weigh? A. 5 lbs B. 7 lbs C. 12 lbs

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 2 million Swarovsky crystals used in the costume design of the show!

Answer Key: 1(C) 2(C) 3(B) 4(C) 5(C)

WHERE DID THE STORY OF ALADDIN COME FROM?

After great success in writing another Disney favorite, *The Little Mermaid*, Alan Menken created another masterpiece; *Aladdin*. The animated Disney version of *Aladdin* is inspired by the original story of *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*. The story of *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* can be found in the Arabian Nights stories, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*. The animated movie debuted 1992 with great success and recognition.

It wasn't until 2009, that the Disney Theatrical Group set out to create *Aladdin* the Broadway hit musical. As the show was developed, some of the original ideas of Menken and the late Howard Ashman were put back into the production. One of the most obvious changes is that Aladdin's furry friend and sidekick Abu is replaced by his "street friend" trio: Babkak, Omar, and Kassim. And although Abu is no longer present, Babkok, Omar, and Kassim bring the classic trio motif that we see reoccur in other works by Menken. (Hint: The three urchins in *Little Shop of Horrors*). The Genie also received a transformation for the Broadway production that was a part of Menken's original idea. In the stage production, the Genie's style and character is inspired by the culture of the famous African-American jazz singers like Cab Calloway. Despite these changes, there are many elements of the animated film that remain in the stage production. One of those favorites that remain is the Academy Award winning song, "A Whole New World." The moment is as magical on stage as it is in the animation.

Aladdin, the Broadway hit musical, had a successful opening on Broadway in 2014. Since then, *Aladdin* has opened a national Broadway touring cast, and international runs in places such as: Germany, Japan, and the West End.

Now, how could such a story become such the focus of intrigue for a company like Disney? What is it about the story of *Aladdin* that makes it so magical and exciting? It all has to do with where the story came from in the first place; the *One Thousand and One Stories*, or *One Thousand and One Nights*, or the *1001 Arabian Nights*. These stories were written by many authors, and some of its stories come from as early as the 8th century.

Why so many titles? In English, we often refer to these stories as the Arabian Nights stories, but over time and throughout Middle Eastern, Asian, African, and European history, these stories have been referred to as *One Thousand and One Stories* or *One Thousand and One Nights* (1,001 Nights).

1,001 Nights uses the story of a king who is embittered by his prior wife's infidelity. As a result of his embitterment, he vows to slay each of his wives after the first day. Sheherazade becomes the king's wife, and in order to save her life, she plans to tell the king 1,001 stories to prolong her time alive. The stories that are then told, are the stories of those 1,001 nights. Originally, the king in this story was said to be of Indian or Chinese descent. In fact, even the story of Aladdin originated as a Chinese story prior to it becoming a Middle Eastern folktale. In the Chinese tale, Aladdin is merely a lazy boy who upsets his father, and not an orphaned poor boy. That's the beauty of a folktale. As it gets passed on through generations, it takes on various versions and cultures depending on where it ends up. Webster's Dictionary defines a folktale as, **"a characteristically anonymous, timeless, and placeless tale circulated orally among a people."** These tales are thousands of years old! And the story of Aladdin is a part of that tradition.

The full title of Aladdin's story is, *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* or *Aladdin and the Magical Lamp*. Although it wasn't originally a part of the 1,001 Nights, the story of Aladdin was added once a 16th century manuscript of the story was found by French traveler Antoine Galland. As the story has been told and retold, the story of Aladdin has captured many hearts, inspired many film adaptations, and has graced many stages around the world.



Michael James Scott as Genie and Ensemble of Aladdin North American Tour. Photo by Deen van Meer

MAKE WAY FOR... THE GENIE!

One of the most memorable characters in Disney's *Aladdin*, the Broadway hit musical, is the Genie. His "big energy", and show stopping performances throughout the show bring joy and laughter.

The word genie originates from the Arabic words "jinn." Jinni are spiritual beings in pre-Islamic Arabian cultures and African cultures. They were often called upon for magical help, and at times were often bound to a specific object, like a lamp.

In *Aladdin*, the hit Broadway musical, Genie not only provides magical aid to the protagonist of the show, Aladdin, his style, singing, and dancing allude to many different cultures. This use of allusion and style is best seen in the Genie's performance of the song "Friend Like Me." Take a look at the lyrics in this song, and how many allusions the creative team used to create this masterpiece.

FUN FACT

The voice of the Genie in Disney's original animated motion picture was played by the late actor Robin Williams. Robin Williams was known for his vocal dexterity and his ability to become different characters using his voice.

Listen to Robin William's version to hear his voiceover talent.



Have you ever wanted to be a cartoon?! Voiceover artistry is another career in the performing arts that you could pursue! So cool!

A FRIEND LIKE ME

The style of singing we see here is called "scat singing". Some of the Genie's style was inspired by "scat singing" styles of popular African-American jazz singers like Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway. Scat singing uses wordless sounds, and often sounds like an instrument being played when you close your eyes.

[GENIE]

(Scat fill) Can you give me a "bada-yada-yada"?

(Aladdin repeat)

Good! Scotty-wop

(Aladdin repeat)

Everybody! Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo

(Audience repeat)

(Scat fill) Hit it!

Wah-wah-wah! (Oh my!)

Wah-wah-wah! (Oh no!)

Wah-wah wah!

Well Ali Baba had them forty thieves
Scheherazade had a thousand tales

"Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" is a story found in the Arabian Nights and 1001 Nights stories.

Scheherazade is also a character in the Arabian Nights story. She is actually the main narrator who has decided to tell the Sultan 1001 stories in order to save her life. You see, the Sultan vowed to slay each of his wives after the first night. These stories The story of Aladdin is one of those stories.

So what happens after Scheherazade tells the last story? You'll have to read Arabian Nights and a 1001 Stories to find out!

But master you in luck 'cause up your sleeves
You got a brand of magic never fails
You got some power in your corner now
Some heavy ammunition in your camp
You got some punch, pizzazz, yahoo and how
See all you gotta do is rub that lamp

And I'll say:
Mister Aladdin, sir
What will your pleasure be?
Let me take your order
Jot it down
You ain't never had a friend like me
No no no

Life is your restaurant
And I'm your maitre d'
C'mon whisper what it is you want
You ain't never had a friend like me
Yes sir

We pride ourselves on service
You're the boss
The king, the shah
Say what you wish
It's yours! True dish
How about a little more Baklava?

A Middle Eastern
dessert made of
a thin pastry, nuts,
and honey.

A shah is the title of
an Iranian ruler in the
past. The last Iranian
ruler was during the
Iranian revolution.

There it is
C'mon fellas, help me out
Have some of column "A"
Try all of column "B"
I'm in the mood to help you dude
You ain't never had a friend like me
Now watch me sell it

Wah-wah-wah! (Oh my!)
Wah-wah-wah! (Oh no!)
Wah-wah wah!

This word may sound
familiar if you've been
to a magic show.
Historically, abracadabra
has been used as a
magical word used as an
incantation on amulets.

Can your friends do this?
Can your friends do that?
Can your friends pull this out their little hat?
Can your friends go, poof?
Well, looky here
Can your friends go, Abacadabra, let 'er rip
And then make the sucker disappear?

Someone who is
"charged with business",
and have similar duties
to an ambassador.

So doncha sit there slack jawed, buggy eyed
I'm here to answer all your midday prayers
You got me bona fide, certified
You got a genie for your chare d'affaires

I got a powerful urge to help you out
So what-cha wish? I really wanna know
You got a list that's three miles long, no doubt
Well, all you gotta do is rub like so
C'mon, yes

Mister Aladdin, sir, have a wish or two or three
I'm on the job, you big nabob
You ain't never had a friend like me

Can your friends do this?
No really, can they?
You're welcome

A nabob refers to a
provincial governor of
the mogul empire in
India. In this case, Genie
is using it to refer to
Aladdin as a rich and
powerful person.

Or maybe, our lucky contestant
Would like to wish for a talent of fame
Welcome to, Dancing With The Scimitars

Grab Aladdin by the hand
Swing him 'round 'till he can't stand
Chicken in the baskets
Barrel in a tree
Never had a friend like me

A single edged, and
curved sword that is
often associated with
Middle Eastern, South
Asian, and Northern
African cultures.

It's time for a Disney song
mashup! Use your pencil
to see if you can identify
which Disney shows are
alluded to in this part of
the song!

Hint: They are also shows
composed by Alan Menken!

I would like to bring the house down a little bit
Sing a few old classics
Couple of favourites of mine
I'll get back to you in a second
Thank you!

Tale as old as time
True as it can be
Barely even friends
Beauty and the...

Look at this stuff
Isn't it neat?
Wouldn't you think my collections complete?
Wouldn't you think I'm the genie who has everything?

Babadabop bop
Badop bop ba-dop
Babadabop bop
Badop bop bop

And you'll never hear the wolf cry
To the blue corn moon
For whether we are white or copper skinned

I want adventure in the great wide

Ever just the same
Ever a surprise

Though he's sitting here
Watch Al disappear
Right before your eyes

Yes!

Can your friends do this?
Can your friends do that?
Can your friends do tap?

Can your friends do this?
Can your friends do that?
Can your friends go, Abracadabra, let 'er rip

Gimme a doggy bag, I'm takin' it home

Mister Aladdin, sir, have a wish or two or three
I'm on the job, you big nabob
You ain't never had a friend, never had a friend
You ain't never had a friend, never had a friend
You ain't never had a friend like me
You ain't never had a friend like me



Michael James Scott as Genie.
Photo by Deen van Meer



BEHIND THE SCENES

HEAR FROM THE
CREATIVE TEAM!

Casey Nicholaw



Alan Menken



Gregg Barnes



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A STEAM

(Science, Technology, Arts,
Engineering, or Mathematics)

CAREER?

Check out this cool video on the 3-D printed
magic lamp used in the show!



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