

# It's in-genie-ous

Aladdin is bright, happy and unrelentingly silly

**COLIN MACLEAN**  
Special to the Sun

This ain't your father's *Aladdin*.

Neither is it Disney's – so if you're waiting for Robin Williams's genie, you'll be disappointed.

This is Ross Petty's *Aladdin*.

Petty is the actor/producer who has been staging distinctly Canadian versions of the British traditional Christmas pantomime in Toronto for the past decade or so. Petty's grab bag of familiar tunes, knockabout buffoonery and old jokes that should have mercifully died off with Vaudeville, has settled in for a run at the Jubilee Auditorium through Sunday.

Bright, happy and unrelentingly silly, this is a family show with enough going on for all ages.

It is also handsomely produced with an ace band in the pit and some very talented clowns on stage supported by a large cast and some of the cheesiest special effects you've ever seen.

All pantos feature a man dressed as a woman.

This time it's the widow Bender (Derek McGrath). Her late husband was, of course, called Fender (Bender). For no particular reason, she speaks in a broad Newfie accent asking, "How's ya getting' on B'y?"

Widow Bender has two loutish assistants, Weenie (Jonathan Ellul) and Beans (Mark Allan). "One does nu-thin' and the other helps."

then do her in so he can inherit the kingdom. No one can get his name right – it comes out as A Brassiere.

How evil is he? Well, at one point when everyone is booing him he snarls,

"If you don't cut that out I'll shut down the Low Level Bridge again."

The jokes don't get a whole lot better than that, but they are low down enough to be really funny.

Aladdin comes across the disguised princess in the street and, not knowing her

name, kisses her. Aladdin (breathlessly): "I suppose we should exchange names."

Princess: "Why? I don't want a boy's name."

The ragbag of well-delivered music comes from everywhere – *Willy Wonka*, *Disco Inferno*, *Puttin' On the Ritz* – and we all get to sing along with a rousing version of, *If I Had a Million Dollars*.

The genie is the top billed Bret (the Hitman) Hart.

The ex-wrestler is a bit glum on stage but gamely

fakes a dance or two and is real good at saying, "I am the genie of the lamp. Your wish is my command."

The direction by (ex-Edmontonian) Ted Dykstra is sure and works the material well and the dances by (ex-Edmontonian) Tracey Flye are lively and eye-catching.

This *Aladdin* is irreverent and unpretentious and everyone on stage seems to be having such a good time making bad jokes it would be churlish not to join in.



Our sleek narrator/Sheherazade is the foxy Jennifer Dale. She first appears as a librarian but is soon tricked out as Sheherazade, the alluring spinner of Persian yarns.

Widow Bender's son Aladdin (Jamie McKnight), turns out to be a skateboarder.

He's a lazy kid. "How lazy is he?" yells the audience who obviously are party to this travesty.

"He's so lazy he thinks manual labour is his Spanish teacher."

Running at the same time is the story of the Persian Princess Jazuzzi (Rhoslynne Bugay) who will only marry someone she

loves. The evil court magician Abanazeer (Ross Petty) desires to marry her and



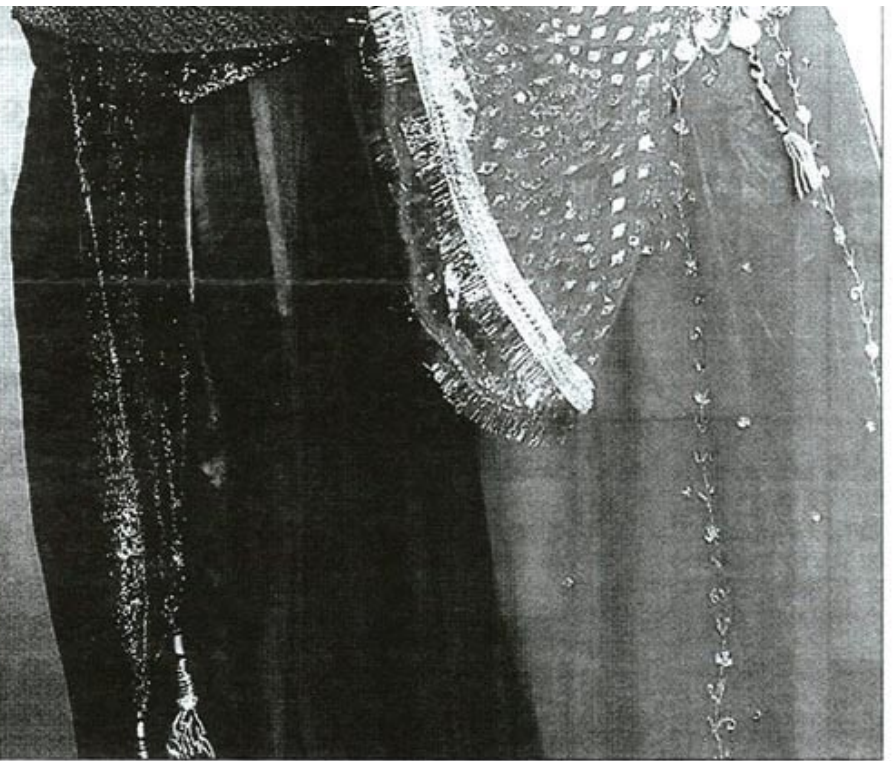
## CENTRE STAGE

**PLAY TIME:** *Aladdin*.

**COMPANY:** At the Jubilee Auditorium through Sunday.

**COLIN SAYS:** 'Irreverent and unpretentious.'

**CURTAIN CALL:** 4 SUNS (out of 5)



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Bret (the Hitman) Hart as the genie and Jennifer Dale as narrator/Sheherazade star in *Aladdin*. The fun-for-the-whole-family event is at the Jubilee Auditorium through Sunday.