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Dramatic Publishing

ALADDIN

A participation play by
MOSES GOLDBERG



ALADDIN

An American master in the participation form retells an Arabian classic with great theatricality. Recommended especially for children ages 5 to 8, with a maximum audience of 250. Performed in the round with the audience sitting on the floor, this professionally proven play may be presented in any large room.

A participation play. By Moses Goldberg. Cast: 3m., 2w., 1 either gender. A group of peddlers decide to stage the play *Aladdin*. After choosing roles and setting the stage, they enact this classic with novel flourishes. The audience is asked to help by participation from their places. Comedy, suspense and the excitement of helping Aladdin defeat the evil magician make this an ideal theatrical experience. Actors play simple music (included in the script). Arena staging of simple boxes and a prop trunk. Peddler costumes, capes, turbans, etc. Approximate running time: 65 minutes. Code: AD4.

Bangkok Community Theatre, Bangkok Thailand.

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Aladdin



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ALADDIN

A PARTICIPATION PLAY

Created by

MOSES GOLDBERG

and

THE ORIGINAL ACTING COMPANY

Doug Kaye.....Burgundo
Victoria Wells.....Cordova
Kerry Shanklin,.....Dahlia
Morris Matthews.....Domino
Richard Jacobs.....Zampano
Burton Clarke.....Pico

with special acknowledgements to

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(ALADDIN – A Participation Play)

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ALADDIN: A PARTICIPATION PLAY

PREFACE

The fact that this play carries the subtitle, "A Participation Play," is not to suggest that other plays are not participatory. All plays, if they move an audience, can be said to be participation plays. In fact, few people would ever become actors if it were not that they crave the sense of being the focal point for the projected energies of an enthralled audience. That focused energy, which shapes the performance from night to night, is the audience's participation. But it is an "aesthetic" participation—it takes place at a remove; through the audience's ability to perceive the truth of the world of the play, while simultaneously holding onto the other truth, that they are sitting in a theatre and watching a rehearsed sequence of lines and gestures.

In recent years, however, producers of children's theatre have used the term "participation theatre" to mean a different kind of event; not the aesthetic participation of sophisticated audience members, but a less sophisticated, perhaps more natural, kind of response: an *active* participation. This event takes advantage of the fact that the young child has not yet learned to delegate the task of playing out his fantasy to the "actor," but tends to want to play out the conflicts himself. In my work, I have generally seen the role of these kinds of plays as actually helping the child to learn not to participate; or—more correctly—of teaching him to substitute *aesthetic* participation for his natural *active* participation. By giving him a chance to respond actively at some points in the play, we are helping him to distinguish moments in the play when active help is not appropriate. By the time the child is nine or ten, he should have developed this ability, and therefore outgrown his need for this kind of play.

But during those critical years, from approximately four or five to eight or nine, it is ideal to capitalize on that transition from active to aesthetic participation by presenting plays of this type. It is also desirable that these same plays subtly teach the new audience member some of the conventions of our theatre tradition. In *Aladdin: A Participation Play* we have tried to incorporate—in an enjoyable way—concepts like onstage *vs.* offstage, the use of costumes to set milieu; changing of locales by changing scenery; the process of the actor; etc. Of course, the main purpose has been, and should remain in the production, to entertain the children.

In my conversations with producers of this or others of these participation plays, several points invariably emerge, and perhaps it will be of some benefit to list them here for those considering production of this script:

1) Once the convention is established that the audience can effect the course of the play's action, that convention cannot be changed. Should a significant portion of the audience respond at times or in ways not planned, those responses must be dealt with—either actually incorporated into the show, or, at the least, acknowledged. The audience must be thought of by the company as the seventh member of the cast; which means, among other things, that the same honesty that goes into communication between actor and actor must be present in all actor-audience communication.

2) The direct involvement of the audience is best achieved when the performance is in-the-round with a maximum attendance of 250 children. In such a setting, no child need be further than four or five rows from the acting area. Before the dialogue in the script begins, it is especially desirable that the actors (the family of peddlers) move among the children—seating them, engaging them in conversation, etc. The performance should not start until each individual child has been “looked at particularly” by at least one of the actors. Resist all inducements to bring in more than 250 children; no matter how it is handled it always weakens the bond of intimacy on which this kind of play depends.

3) When the moment for active participation arrives, the actors must:

- a) need help (sincerely),
- b) provide security (make sure they know what they are asked to do, what the limits are, when to start),
- c) encourage creativity (reward, by mentioning, the most different, novel, or unusual solutions to the problem), and
- d) end the active participation before going on (resolve the need for help and thank the audience).

These steps are detailed in the text where appropriate, but it may help the actors to actually be aware that there is a sequence of these four steps behind each of these moments.

4) This kind of play is basically an actor's theatre. Simple, but effective, costumes, and a minimum of props are all that is needed from the technical department. The fullest resources should be committed to casting creative actors who can relate honestly to children and each other, who can think on their feet, and who can find ways to physicalize their characters or thoughts. The primary values of the theatre—dynamic actors in an intimate relationship with a participating audience—have helped this script to enjoy its previous successes; and I hope those values will continue to be there whenever it meets its audience of young theatre patrons.

MOSES GOLDBERG
Huntington, New York
January, 1977

ALADDIN

CHARACTERS

BURGUNDO

CORDOVA

DAHLIA

DOMINO

ZAMPANO

PICO

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The audience arrives to discover the Prologue characters in the final process of setting up the area in which they will operate. This consists of a square about 15 feet on a side, with aisles in the four corners. The audience is separated from the "stage" by bright ribbons marking the aisles and sides of the square. As the audience comes in they are seated by members of the company; who chat with them, and then try to show off their wares, hoping for a sale. These wares all come from a huge trunk presided over by *Pico*, who never speaks. Among them we see silks, jewelry, a few lamps, etc. — all the articles which eventually become props or costumes for the play. Next to the trunk is a set of three brightly painted nesting wooden cubes (20", 18", and 16" are the right sizes.) These will become the set of the play. Now the actors use them as stands on which to display merchandise. *Burgundo* is the nominal head of the troupe, and eagerly tries to interest the children in his goods; but *Cordova*, his wife, spends more time criticizing Burgundo than selling. Burgundo takes most of her abuse mildly, perhaps confiding in individuals in the audience of his need to stop being bossed so much. *Domino* is the lazy son of this pair, and he comes in for much abuse from his Mother, too. *Dahlia*, his sister, is quiet and helpful — she serves to protect her brother and father from Cordova. *Zampano* is Cordova's brother, and largely ignores her — which of course is the best thing to do with a bully. *Pico*, the mute, is Zampano's sidekick, from so long ago that neither remembers how they met. He could be played as female, but was male in the original production. He must be careful never to speak when there is anyone present from outside the company.

By the time the audience, which should be limited to 250 for best results, is assembled, the members of the company have made some sort of personal contact with each child. This rapport is essential to the success of the play. The Prologue characters, although strange types, must be realistic human beings, who can interest the audience in the lives they lead as itinerant peddlars with real family relationships. When the audience is assembled and the signal given, Burgundo renews his efforts to sell some cloth to a group of audience members. Cordova comes to him and again is criticizing his display methods, his sales pitch, everything about the poor man. Finally Burgundo erupts, loudly enough to signal everyone else that a significant action has begun.

BURGUNDO: All right! I'm not going to sell any more of this junk! You are always telling me I'm doing it wrong. OK. I'm not going to sell anymore, so there. From now on, I'm going to do what I want to do!

ALADDIN

CORDOVA: No!

BURGUNDO: Yes! What I want to do!

DAHLIA and DOMINO: No, Papa. (*Burgundo sets his jaw.*)

BURGUNDO: I said, “What I want to do,” and that’s it!

DAHLIA: Papa, what do you want to do?

DOMINO: Yeah, Papa, if you don’t want to sell things?

BURGUNDO: Well . . . you won’t laugh?

DAHLIA: I won’t laugh, Papa.

BURGUNDO: I’ve always wanted to be an actor . . . (*Cordova’s snort cuts him off.*) Yeah! And do plays.

DOMINO: Hey, that sounds like fun—doing plays.

ZAMPANO: Come on and do a play, Burgundo. (*They watch him eagerly.*)

DOMINO: Do a play, Papa?

BURGUNDO: No, no. I can’t do it alone. I need some help. (*blank looks*) I need other actors to help me do a play.

DOMINO: Oh. I’ll help you, Papa.

DAHLIA: Me too.

ZAMPANO: And I’ll help you, Burgundo.

PICO: (*Indicates he will help too.*)

BURGUNDO: OK, all right.

DAHLIA: Well, what play are we going to do?

BURGUNDO: Oh. Well. (*gathers courage*) I’ve been reading this book and it’s full of magic and faraway places—Aladdin, the story of Aladdin.

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- DOMINO: Wow! (*The others ad lib agreement*)
- CORDOVA: (*tired of being ignored*) And what sort of a part could there be in that for a marshmallow like you?
- BURGUNDO: You . . . or . . . that is . . .
- DOMINO: (*he and Dahlia have taken the book*) Hey, look!
- DAHLIA: There's a Sultan in here—a Father. I think Papa would make a good Sultan.
- BURGUNDO: Yeah, I can play a Sultan. And the Sultan needs a beautiful daughter—the Princess.
- DOMINO: Dahlia! (*spoiling Cordova's attempt to offer herself.*)
- BURGUNDO: Dahlia, you can be the Princess. And Domino, you can play Aladdin.
- DOMINO: Aladdin!
- BURGUNDO: Yes. Oh, it's a really great part for you; he's really lazy! And Zampano, the Evil Magician. And you're the Mother.
- CORDOVA: The Mother! I'm not going to be in this play.
- BURGUNDO: Oh, yes you are. (*somewhat hesitatingly*)
- DAHLIA: (*still with the book*) Papa, there's a Genie of the Lamp here.
- BURGUNDO: Oh, a Genie. Well, I can play the Genie of the Lamp. I can play the Genie and the Sultan.
- CORDOVA: Two parts! Well, if you get to play two parts, I get to play two parts.
- DOMINO: Papa, there's a Genie of the Ring.
- BURGUNDO: (*Making peace*) Would you like to play the Genie of the Ring? The *beautiful* Genie of the Ring?
- CORDOVA: Do I get to play both parts?

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- BURGUNDO: Yes, yes you can.
- CORDOVA: Well, if you really need me so much.
- EVERYONE: You'll do it? Hurray! Thank you. (etc.) Let's get ready!
- ZAMPANO: Wait a minute! What about Pico? Pico doesn't have a part.
- DOMINO: *(shows in book)* Well there are all kinds of other parts. Pico can do all of these.
- BURGUNDO: Would you, Pico? *(He agrees)*
- ALL: Let's get ready! *(they all scurry about and exit, leaving Domino.)*
- DOMINO: Get ready? Oh, well. I'm already ready. I'll just take a nap before the play starts. *(curls up on floor for a nap.)*
- PICO: *(is horrified to find Domino sleeping. nudges him with foot.)*
- DOMINO: Huh? What? What do you want?
- PICO: *(get up)*
- DOMINO: No, Pico, I'm trying to take a nap before the play starts.
- PICO: *(let's do some warm-up exercises.)*
- DOMINO: You want me to do exercises? What for? Oh, warm-up exercises. No, Pico, I'm playing Aladdin and he's really lazy. I don't have to do exercises. You do the exercises and wake me when it's time for the play.
- PICO: *(thinks, then walks around him nudging him and kicking at him.)*
- DOMINO: *(sleeping)* Wake me when it's time for the play. No, Pico, wake me when it's time for the play. *(getting*

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madder) I said, wake me when it's time . . ., (*jumps up*) WAKE ME WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE PLAY!

PICO: (*put up your dukes!*)

DOMINO: Oh, you're going to get tough about it, eh? Wanna fight a little bit, huh? put 'em up, put 'em up! (*They spar quite actively, just out of range of each other.*)

PICO: (*laughs and points at Domino, then mimics him sparring.*)

DOMINO: What are you . . . Pico, you tricked me into warming up for the play. Come on, come on! (*They mock fight some more.*)

CORDOVA: (*entering*) You boys stop this, this instant.

(*Domino and Pico laugh at Cordova and exit together*)

CORDOVA: Now, What was that all about? (*goes to trunk and rummages*)

ZAMPANO: (*enters singing and goes to box opposite trunk where the magician's costume is still on display. He is singing to himself.*) Oh, I'm Zampano – tre, la, la, and I need a costume for the Evil Magician. Oh, this turban should be perfect. It is! Now, I need a robe, and I think this one's a beauty. Look it even has stars on the sleeves. That way everyone will think I'm the star of the play! (*spots Cordova*) I think I'll try it out on Cordova. (*taps her and jumps back in grotesque pose.*)

CORDOVA: (*screams*) Zampano! What are you doing in that get-up?

ZAMPANO: This is my costume for the Evil Magician. Don't you think I look evil?

CORDOVA: Yes. Yes, you do. Stay away from me!

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- ZAMPANO: Where's your costume for the Mother, Cordova?
- CORDOVA: I already am a mother; I don't need a costume.
- ZAMPANO: No, Cordova. No, no, no. It's the wrong style, the wrong country, no. Go over there and try something on.
- CORDOVA: *(goes to trunk and pulls out Genie's turban)* I always wanted to wear this.
- ZAMPANO: Oh Cordova, that looks ridiculous on you. Here, try this on, it looks pretty to me. *(helps her on with the Mother's overskirt.)*
- CORDOVA: Oh, it's stunning!
- ZAMPANO: It's going to be perfect. *(they get it on, she poses.)* That's just how Aladdin's mother should look. *(she moves)* But no, no, no. That's not the right way to walk. This play is in a different country, remember. Let me show you; just follow me. Place your right foot out, your left foot down, up, right, in, in, out, up down. *(He has her doing impossible steps)* That's right, you're doing fine. Up, in, right, down . . . *(they exit together.)*
- BURGUNDO: *(enters, finds Genie's turban and puts it on.)*
- DAHLIA: *(entering)* Papa, what are you doing?
- BURGUNDO: Oh, I'm practicing to be the Genie of the Lamp.
- DAHLIA: Oh! Well, let me watch you practice, Papa. I know! I can be Aladdin and rub the lamp, and then you jump out!
- BURGUNDO: Oh, OK. Er . . . uh . . .
- DAHLIA: *(with lamp from display table)* Here goes! *(rubs it)*
- BURGUNDO: *(very much himself)* Excuse me. I am the Genie of the Lamp. How's that?
- DAHLIA: *(with astonishment)* Oh, that was good . . . But, it might be a little better if you were, well, taller. You know? Hold your shoulders back, stick your chest out?

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BURGUNDO: Oh, look strong! I've got it. How's this? (*He looks strong, but still speaks weakly*) Hello, I'm the Genie of the Lamp.

DAHLIA: Yes, Papa, but you have to be real loud so everyone can hear you.

BURGUNDO: Oh, loud. HELLO, I'M THE GENIE OF THE LAMP. (*Still no power.*)

DAHLIA: Yes, but you have to say it like you mean it, Papa. You have to sound strong, too.

BURGUNDO: Like I mean it. (*Practicing to self*) I'm the Genie . . . I am the Genie . . .

CORDOVA: (*enters laughing at him*) Who do you think you are?

BURGUNDO: (*snaps at her*) I am the Genie of the Lamp! (*Cordova wilts and exits.*)

DAHLIA: Yes! Papa, that's right!

BURGUNDO: (*advancing on her*) I am the Genie of the Lamp! (*she turns and exits, he follows her in character.*)

ZAMPANO: (*enters*) Genie of the Lamp? Genie of the Lamp? Oh, I feel so evil already. Would you all like to take a peek at that little Genie of the Lamp before anyone else does? (*Like all direct addresses in the play, this is an honest question. If they say "No," Zampano has to say "Well, I do."*) All right, all you have to do is rub the lamp. (*he does.*) Hmm? I'll rub the other side. (*Still nothing.*) Hmm? Genie? He's not coming out! (*Getting frantic*) Genie? Oh no? There's no Genie in the magic lamp. Now we can't do the play! What are we going to do? We can't do the play without the Genie in the Lamp! Genie, Genie, Genie, Genie, Genie, Genie? Pico! (*who is watching all of this, having just entered.*) There's no genie in the magic lamp. Now we can't do the play!

PICO: (*laughs at him*)

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- ZAMPANO: What's so funny?
- PICO: *(Don't worry, I'll take care of the Genie.)*
- ZAMPANO: You're going to put the Genie in the magic lamp?
- PICO: *(of course)*
- ZAMPANO: Hah! I'd like to see that trick!
- PICO: *(Stand back. Warms up and with a series of contortions, leaps, and spins "puts" the genie in the lamp.)*
- ZAMPANO: Is he in there?
- PICO: *(Sure. He looks in, not expecting much, and is shocked to discover that there is now a genie in there!)*
- ZAMPANO: He's really in there? Well, let me see the Genie. I want to see the genie. Show him to me.
- PICO: *(No. He's asleep)*
- ZAMPANO: What? He's sleeping? Well, I'll be quiet. Let me take a look at him.
- PICO: *(hands him over gently and opens lamp for Zampano)*
- ZAMPANO: *(too loud)* Lullaby!
- PICO: *(quickly pulls the lamp away and closes it up.)*
- ZAMPANO: *(Amazed)* He really put the genie in the lamp! Hey, Pico. Will you be able to wake him up by the time we need him in the play?
- PICO: *(I think so)*
- ZAMPANO: Well, we're depending on you.
- BURGUNDO: *(entering with the book)* Why don't you guys have the set up? Come on, hurry up! Here's the book. See what the first scene has to be. Pico, help him!
(exits)

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- ZAMPANO: The first scene takes place outside Aladdin's house. We need a step. (*Pico sets up two boxes opposite the trunk to make a step.*) Yeah, I think that's perfect. Now, will you be able to change that for scene two? (*Pico nods and they start out*) Scene two takes place in a cave, so we'll need . . .
- DAHLIA: (*enters and picks up remaining costumes and props, putting them in trunk. Cordova enters practicing her walk.*)
- CORDOVA: Now that Zampano has taught me how to walk right, I must look very beautiful. Dahlia?
- DAHLIA: (*turns, and manages to keep from breaking into hysterics.*) Mama? Oh, oh! You've been practicing! Oh, you look . . . beautiful.
- CORDOVA: Look at this. (*a fancy turn*)
- DOMINO: (*enters, and seeing his mother's antics, begins to laugh and scream at the sight. Dahlia fails to stop him until it is too late.*)
- CORDOVA: What is he laughing at? I'm ugly? You think I look ugly! I'm not going to be in this play! I look ugly! (*In tears, retreats to the "step"*)
- DAHLIA: (*Simultaneously with above*) I don't know Mama. No, Mama! Domino, be quiet. Mama, you don't look ugly. (*Catching hold of Domino.*) Now look, you've hurt her feelings.
- DOMINO: I didn't mean to hurt . . .
- DAHLIA: Well, go give her a compliment and tell her she looks pretty.
- DOMINO: OK. Aw, Mama, you look pretty.
- CORDOVA: I don't believe you! (*Still in tears, and not hearing the following*)
- DOMINO: She doesn't believe me. Now what are we going to do? We can't do the play without Mama.

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DAHLIA: We need more compliments. More people to tell her . . .

DOMINO: Dahlia! (*indicates audience*) Hey, maybe they . . . Will you help us? (*Must be asked honestly so the audience knows they have to answer. If they don't reply, ask again, specific individuals if necessary and working up to the whole crowd; but don't make it seem automatic, they will help only if they believe you really need them to. So really need them to, because the play can't go on till they say "Yes".*)

DOMINO and DAHLIA: (*simultaneously talking to half the audience*) Everybody think of all the different nice things you could say to Mama to make her feel better, and when we count to three, you shout out your best compliment. Shout it to Mama as loud as you can. And say it like you really mean it, all right? The nicest thing you can think of. Are you ready? (*The two actors playing Domino and Dahlia have to judge the length of this by the physical readiness of the audience to shout. It must last until they all understand what to do, but no longer, since that would dampen enthusiasm. Throughout the play the same sense of timing is necessary to know when to give the signal for the audience to start. Lines may need to be added or cut to adjust to the audiences' tempo.*) One, Two, THREE! (*They shout, and Cordova responds to the main thing(s) she hears.*)

CORDOVA: I look pretty? (*or whatever*) Oh, do you really think so? Well, what are we standing around for? Let's do the Play!

DOMINO & DAHLIA: Hey, it worked! Thank you!

DOMINO: Say, if we need your help again later, will you help us then? Thanks!

(By now the others have entered and all take their places for the overture. In the original production we used a guitar, several kazoos, a xylophone, cymbals, kalimba, etc., but any rudimentary orchestra will suffice – even all kazoos and percussion. The company “tunes up” until Zampano stops them with a tapping sound.)