

# THE COMMEDIA ALADDIN

*By Lane Riosley*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

The zany antics of the commedia style, with lots of bumbling, scheming, incorrigible improvisations and very physical comedy, allows just four traveling actors to create this fast-paced story of Aladdin. Arelquin, Punchin, Columbine and Rosetta portray all the many roles in the story of a lazy young boy who needs to work to help support his mother. Aladdin almost falls for the machinations of an evil magician, but instead he saves himself and gains access to the Genie of the Ring and the even more powerful Genie of the Lamp. Aladdin is soon able to marry a beautiful princess and provide a grand castle in which to live, but he discovers his problems are not over! A magic carpet ride helps him find a happy ending. The show's scenery, atmosphere, special effects and stage enchantment are all created by the actors. Performance time is about an hour, and audiences will find the time flies by!

**THE CHARACTERS** (2 m, 2 w)

**ARLEQUIN:** The trickster.

**PUNCHIN:** The big-nosed buffoon.

**COLUMBINE:** The clever leader.

**ROSETTA:** The prissy lady.

**TIME AND PLACE** is anywhere.

**SETTING** is a bare stage. The sets and props are brought in by the players. The Commedia dell'arte troupe or mountebanks are traveling players who perform the story of Aladdin. These players make their own props and costumes from things they find along the road, and it looks like it. Their clothes are castoff finery and everything fits into a bag and a cart on small, low wheels. The trunk has a flat wooden top with a ragged Persian carpet fastened to it, making a platform. The show's scenery, atmosphere, special effects and stage magic are all created by the performers.

Commedia dell'arte was a folk theatre popular in Europe for several hundred years. It survived into the 20th century with performers such as Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields who used the old art in the new media - film.

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*(The ACTORS march on, singing, blindfolded. They enter in formation, singing and pulling a cart. Some are ringing ropes of horse bells tied to flagpoles covered with long, thin strips of cloth and some are beating frame drums. At first, they maintain their orderly march around the stage, but soon they become lost and befuddled since ARLEQUIN has pulled his blindfold up over one eye and is nudging people out of formation. Each time he does this they barely miss running into each other, off the stage, into the audience and narrowly avoid tripping over the cart, which Arlequin also pulls in front of them. He becomes increasingly frustrated as, more and more, they achieve near-misses instead of collisions. Finally, as COLUMBINE pulls up her blindfold and winks at the audience, we realize that they are on to Arlequin's mischief and are having their own joke at his expense.)*

**ALL:** *(Sing.)*

When I was a tiny child,  
Once upon a time,  
I would drive my parents wild,  
For all my words would rhyme!

Attenzione! Sing, sing, sing!  
Attenzione! Ring, ring, ring!

"Stop that rhyming," they would say,  
"Or you'll drive me mad!"  
Rhyming night and rhyming day,  
Oh, I was so bad!

Attenzione! Sing, sing, sing!  
Attenzione! Ring, ring, ring!

Now I sing my marching song!  
As I walk around!  
Everyone can sing along!  
Make a happy sound!

Attenzione! Sing, sing, sing!  
Attenzione! Ring, ring, ring!

*(As THEY come to a stop they are all in correct formation. They pull off their blindfolds and congratulate each other on such a perfect entrance.)*

**COLUMBINE:** Hello, everyone!

**PUNCHIN:** Salve!

**ROSETTA:** Buon giorno!

**PUNCHIN:** Such a magnificent entrance!

**COLUMBINE:** Perfect! Absolutely perfect!

**ARLEQUIN:** *(Baffled.)* Eh, uh, didn't you notice something, eh, wrong?

**COLUMBINE:** Wrong?

**ROSETTA:** We were perfect! I was perfect! *(PUNCHIN applauds ROSETTA and she applauds him.)*

**ARLEQUIN:** *(Walking around with the Big Book of Stories in his hands.)* What is the story today? Oh, I think I will choose something with a good-looking hero! A clever young hero! Most of all, a brave hero!

*(COLUMBINE pulls a huge, flat wooden scimitar out of the wagon and turns just as ARLEQUIN walks toward her. He sees the sword, squeals, throws the book up in the air and PUNCHIN catches the book, but falls backward and sits down hard as he does.)*

**ARLEQUIN:** *(Cont'd.)* Oh! You scared me!

**PUNCHIN:** Arlequin! You dropped the book! Such disrespect! *(ARLEQUIN hides behind PUNCHIN and mimics him, something he does all through the play.)* But I saved the book! Ow!

**COLUMBINE:** ARLEQUIN! Keep your hands off of the book!

**ARLEQUIN:** But why!?

**COLUMBINE:** Because you never, ever wash! Look at your hands! They are very, very dirty. Do you walk on them, and not your feet?

*(As SHE walks away and takes the book from PUNCHIN, ARLEQUIN tries walking on his hands, but he only succeeds in stepping on his own fingers. He howls.)*

**ARLEQUIN:** Oh! I hurt myself!

**ROSETTA:** Columbine, tell me, why did we have to drag this old carpet all the way here? It's so heavy!

*(She pulls the carpet off of the cart and, since it is attached to a board, it slams onto the floor.)*

**COLUMBINE:** We need this carpet for our story! And I will have you know, this is a fine wool carpet from the Far East! Very expensive! *(SHE tugs a couple of dangling threads loose.)*

**ROSETTA:** *(Watching ARLEQUIN try to pick up the carpet from the edge and fail.)* Those must be some pretty strong sheep in the Far East to have such heavy wool!

*(ARLEQUIN laughs, a big laugh, though silently.)*

**PUNCHIN:** Ah, a story of the Far East! And a sword! This must be the story of a great general! A great general of a great army!

*(He picks up the scimitar and struts around. ARLEQUIN pulls a mop from the wagon and prances behind him as if he is on a horse.)*

**COLUMBINE:** No, Punchin.

**PUNCHIN:** Of course, you will ask me to play the role of the great military leader!

*(PUNCHIN waves the scimitar at ARLEQUIN who grabs it and chases Punchin with it, all around the stage, swatting at him. As they pass COLUMBINE she casually reaches out and grabs the scimitar, leaving Arlequin to run around the stage swatting with nothing in his hand.)*

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