

REVIEW OF THE MUSICAL ARABIAN NIGHTS

Reviewer: Tsin Tak Shun

Date: June 30, 18:00–20:40 (with a 15-minute intermission)

Venue: Hall of the YMCA of HK Christian College



Synopsis

Arabian Nights tells the story of Shahrazad, the brave and intelligent daughter of the vizier, who marries King Shahrayar in order to save the women of her country from his murderous wrath. After discovering his first wife's unfaithfulness, the King vows to marry a new woman each night and execute her the following morning as revenge. Shahrazad, however, devises a clever plan to spare her life. Each night, she tells the King a captivating story, leaving him in suspense by morning. Compelled to hear the conclusion of each tale, the King continually delays her execution. Over time, Shahrazad's engaging and meaningful stories soften the King's heart, and he ultimately falls in love with her, deciding to live with her in harmony forever.



A group of highly talented performers

Review

I was happy to be invited by the director of the musical, Jennifer, to attend this wonderful performance of *Arabian Nights*.

The theme of *Arabian Nights* was incredibly inspiring, focusing on the transformative power of storytelling. The production beautifully highlighted how compelling stories not only captivate audiences but also have the ability to transform lives, inspire humanity, and teach profound moral lessons. This timeless message resonated deeply, reminding us that great teachers and leaders, like Jesus or Buddha, have historically used storytelling to impart wisdom and inspire change.

The students' performances were exceptional. Their singing, dancing, dialogue delivery, and ensemble work were all of a high standard, reflecting their dedication and preparation. What was particularly remarkable was that almost all backstage duties were handled by the students themselves, showcasing their versatility and commitment. This approach of involving students in both on-stage and backstage responsibilities reflects a process-oriented method of drama education, which fosters growth, collaboration, and creativity.

The impact of this production on the students was evident. Through their participation, the 40+ students demonstrated growth in various dimensions, including language skills, non-verbal expressivity, communication, collaboration, creativity, and cultural appreciation. These are core principles of drama education, and the director, Jennifer, succeeded in bringing these concepts to life.

When asked about the production, Jennifer humbly shared, *"I'm truly thankful for Principal Diana Lo's support, which gives me the freedom to create this musical. As a theatre student myself, I firmly believe the high school musical experience plays an important role in a student's development."* This statement reflects Jennifer's passion, dedication, and belief in the transformative power of theatre education.

In an era where many schools adopt a product-oriented approach—hiring professionals for backstage roles or focusing solely on polished performances—this production stood out as a testament to the true essence of drama education. Jennifer’s emphasis on student involvement in every aspect of the production ensured a holistic learning experience, and for that, she deserves heartfelt congratulations.

Jennifer’s dedication as the director was also deeply admirable. Directing a 2+ hour musical with over 40 students is no small feat, especially with only one Assistant Director assisting with the singing and music. Despite the challenges, her directing skills were evident in the nuanced picturizations and overall cohesiveness of the production.

The high quality of the script also stood out. Upon inquiring, I learned that the script was purchased for around HK\$2000, and it was undoubtedly a worthy investment. The script’s depth and relevance added significant value to the performance, enriching both the audience’s experience and the students’ learning.

Arabian Nights was not just a successful musical but also a shining example of how drama can be a powerful educational tool. Congratulations to Jennifer on this major achievement—she is truly a blessing to her students. This production serves as a source of inspiration for educators, encouraging us to continue using drama as a transformative tool in our teaching journeys.

