

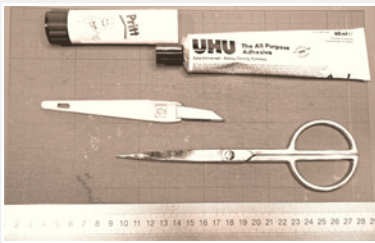
# Aladdin Paper Toy Theatre: Building Instructions

Please read in full before starting to build your toy theatre. The numbers in brackets (1) correspond to the keys in your toy theatre. This theatre is full of fine detail and designed to look equally good up close and miniature as well as from the average toy theatre viewing distance.

Don't worry if you can't cut out around all the details. Theatre is about suspension of disbelief. Cutting out each element in a broad way is also fine; the details are in the drawing which I've already prepared for you.

For fuller instructions with detailed videos visit: <https://www.theperfectbrush.co.uk/watch> and scroll down.

## -MATERIALS-



- 1- scissors
- 2- ruler
- 3- cutting mat
- 4- glue (UHU works well, otherwise PVA or Elmer's glue)

- 5- scalpel or paper craft knife/Stanley knife with a sharp blade (use with care)
- 6- copper wire or chopsticks

## -STEP 1-

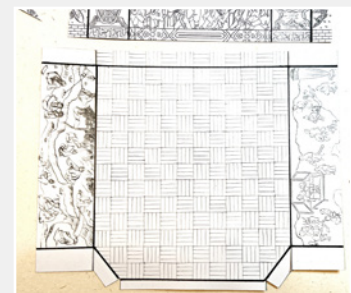
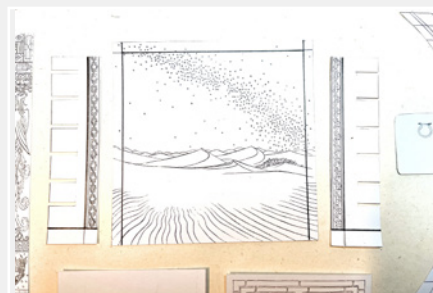
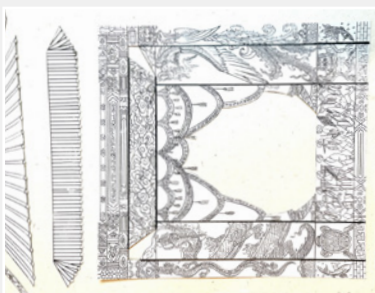
If you've got a black and white 'penny plain' toy theatre, paint or COLOUR it in. Take it slowly, don't rush and enjoy the process. Flatten and let dry if necessary. If you've got a coloured 'twopence' theatre you can skip this step.

## -STEP 2-

LAY all materials out: You can also separate each page of the book.

## -STEP 3-

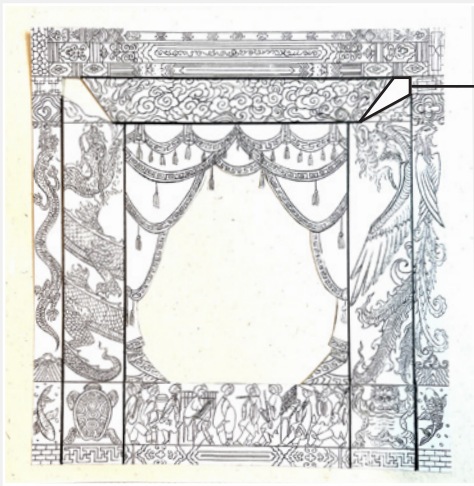
CUT everything out as shown: first broadly with scissors to separate them then neatly with a scalpel. Exercise appropriate caution. Adult supervision is necessary for children.



Cut against a ruler. Strengthen weak areas with more paper glued onto the back or matchsticks. You can use the same trick if you've accidentally lopped off a Character's hand or two to stick it back on. You do not need to cut out around every single tiny finger and detail of the characters. Broader strokes are ok; it's a toy theatre.

When cutting out the Characters, leave a little space around the base to make them more stable. SCORE the lines shown in bold here with the back of the scalpel, or use a butter knife. If making the optional stairs, score each horizontal line of each step too.

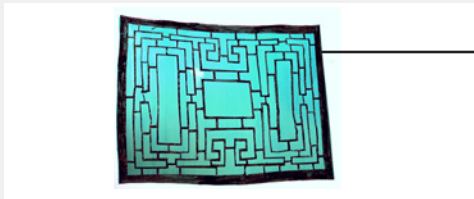
Take it slowly and don't rush.



**Tip:**

When cutting out the Proscenium (1) you will need to cut out the small kite shapes as shown. You can retain these and add coloured threads to them, then stick them onto the wings (26) as real kites.

You'll also need to cut off 2 excess rectangles later, but that will become clear in the gluing stage. The Roof Ridges (18,19) and chiwen little fish-dragon figures for the Roof Corners (16,17) are optional but they do look nice when added to the Roof.



**Optional:**

You can further cut the holes out of the Chinese Lattice Screen (11), which is an intermediate cutting project in itself.

**-STEP 4-**

In pencil, WRITE on the reverse of each scene and character what they are (use the corresponding keys).

Tip: you can use the miniature characters (7) to perform a mini play-within-a-play in the theatre-in-a-theatre in Aladdin's Palace (5).

**-STEP 5-**

If desired, you can STICK the cut pieces to thick card for durability and ease of use and cut them out again, but not as finely for the characters (will hurt your hands after a while!). A way to reuse Christmas and Holiday cards!

## -STEP 6-

Steps 6 and 7 are taken together. FOLD everything as shown.



Proscenium (1) front



Proscenium (1) back



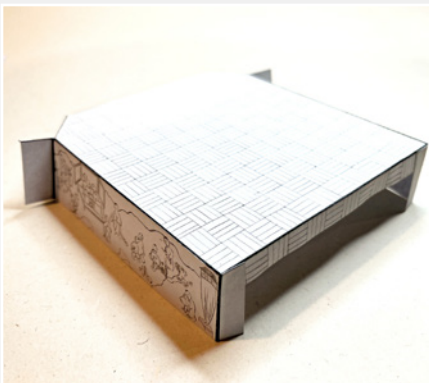
Backdrop (2)

Pay attention to the direction of folding in the Proscenium; sometimes you will need to fold inwards and sometimes outwards, according to the photos.

The Proscenium's former 2 kite shapes have now disappeared and join up together. You end up with a recessed Proscenium ceiling and a protruding gap for the Stage.

## -STEP 7-

GLUE everything together as shown.



Stage (13)



Proscenium (1) glued to Stage (13)



Proscenium (1) and stage (13): side view

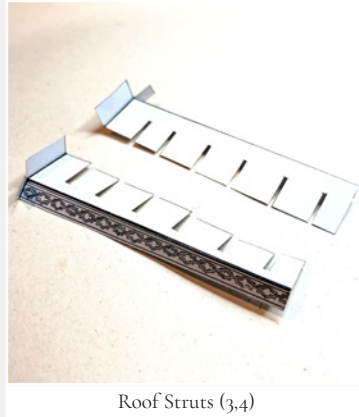
Use glue sparingly and spread just enough. 2 rectangles at the top of the Proscenium columns now disappear since you glue those to the topmost piece: see photo of Proscenium back.

You can cut off the 2 excess rectangles at the top left and right corners of the proscenium now and discard (or reuse by sticking them onto another bit of the theatre if you like).

Glue the Stage's back together as shown. The Stage's front sides fit onto the Proscenium as shown. Glue the Backdrop together as shown, then glue it to the Stage as shown. Fit and glue the Struts (stage supports) to both the Proscenium and the Backdrop as shown. Glue the bottom half of the Roof Support horizontally to the back of the Proscenium, as shown.



Stage, Proscenium & Backdrop



Roof Struts (3,4)



Roof Struts glued to Proscenium & Backdrop (2)

The Roof Support fixes the Chinese Roof to the Proscenium. Glue the top half of the Roof Support horizontally to the Chinese Roof. You'll notice that when affixed together the Roof Support also lends a nice slight 3D feel to the roof as a whole. Now the basic structure of the theatre is in place.



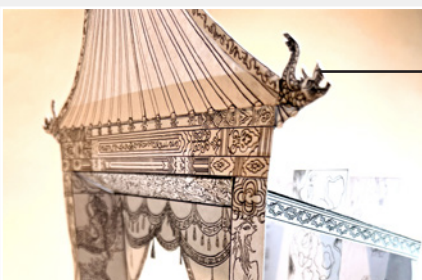
Roof Support (15) affixed to top of Theatre



Chinese Roof (14) glued to Theatre



Side View



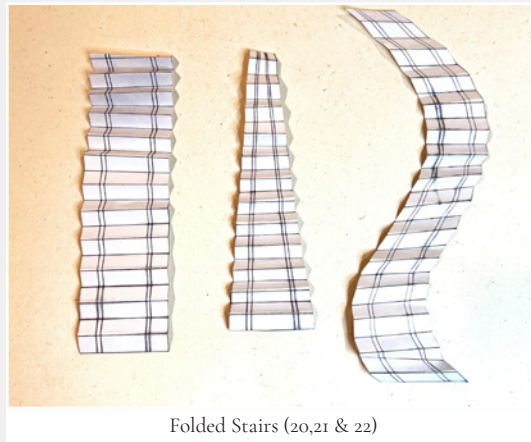
**Optional:**

Glue the Roof Ridges and the chiwen little fish-dragon figures as Roof Corners as shown – optional, but highly effective and atmospheric so worth doing, albeit fiddly.

The Scenes and Wings fit into the slots of the Struts as shown, in any combination you like & the Curtain goes into the front slots.



Scenes and Wings fit into the slots of the Struts



Folded Stairs (20,21 & 22)

The Stairs can be folded, and appropriate slits made in the Stage and Backdrop, to keep them in place (or use Blu-tack or similar).

**Tip:** use clothes pegs to hold pieces in place while they're drying so you don't have to.

## -STEP 8-

Attach the characters to their Chinese Fan Tabs (38).

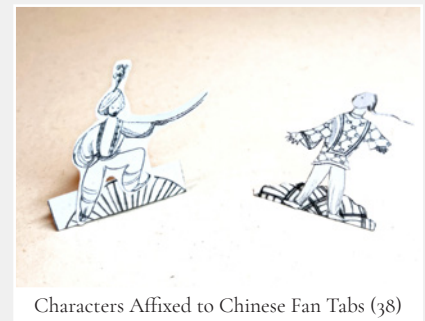
First fold the Tabs in half horizontally then glue the character onto it. Then attach a metal wire as a slider; I like copper for its warm colour but it could equally be a repurposed coathanger. Or, you could make a series of simple cardboard strips as sliders, and be inventive with paperclips. Or - and this is aligned with the Chinese theme - use chopsticks!



Cut-out Character



Chinese Fan Tabs (38) and Characters



Characters Affixed to Chinese Fan Tabs (38)

## -PERFORMING THE PLAY-

Decide on the music, whether it's prerecorded or live. Make sure everything is loud enough for your audience in the auditorium (or living or dining room). Be creative with sound effects; use things around the house (aluminium foil for thunder, rattling empty tin cans, rainmakers, coconuts, wooden spoons etc). Lighting can be LED strips, Christmas lights, fairy lights, torches, anglepoise lamps. Flickering LED candles can add atmosphere. Practice sound and light effects.

Practice Curtain down and up and Scene changes. Prepare each Character in the position they're facing to the side of the stage, ready to go on. While each Character is speaking you can wiggle them slightly to emphasise their speech. You can change your voice for each Character; use a voice changer or perform with other people.

Plays that last longer than 25 minutes can feel a bit long.

Rehearse.

Provide popcorn, programmes and tickets to your audience.

Perhaps employ an Usher too for added ceremony.

Make sure they're in comfy seats and that everyone can see and hear, although they should ideally be in darkness and only the theatre is lit. Consider the size of the auditorium, dining room or living room. Opera glasses can help.

Turn down the lights and...

Let the show begin!

Merry theatre making! Enjoy!

**Tip:** you can affix a piece of paper or card to the tops of the Wings to join them together, so when performing you can take both Wings in and out at the same time more quickly.

If you've cut out the Chinese Lattice Screen (II), you can affix coloured cellophane to the back and this will give a 'paper stained glass' effect when light shines through. It will also create coloured shadows. Prepare Scenes ready to be changed.



### -LEARN MORE-

For more tips and tricks, and for background information about each of the details in each scene if you are interested in finding out more, please view my social media posts @vaishaliprazmari and at [www.vaishaliprazmari.com](http://www.vaishaliprazmari.com) > Toy Theatres. Teachers and people interested in Chinese heritage may like to use this toy theatre to teach introductions to Chinese culture as well as in-depth specifics; educators may teach the mechanics of setting up and putting on a play, talking and thinking about Orientalism and the story of Aladdin and its wider context of the 1001 Nights and can use the resources on my website for more ideas. For how-to videos, see [www.theperfectbrush.co.uk](http://www.theperfectbrush.co.uk).

Paper theatres, miniature theatres, model theatres and toy theatres allow you to play many roles. You can be an artist, architect, theatre director, costume and set designer, stage manager, FX supervisor and actor all in one. And you can even film and record your plays! If you do, I'd love to see so please do share and tag @vaishaliprazmari if so!

If you would like to learn more about the fine art of Indo-Persian manuscript miniature painting, which is a technique you can use to paint your toy theatre, please visit: [www.vaishaliprazmariteaching.com](http://www.vaishaliprazmariteaching.com).

Specialist painting brushes for this technique and for painting your toy theatre are at: [www.theperfectbrush.co.uk](http://www.theperfectbrush.co.uk).