



The story of *Kismet* is played out over the course of one day, with Act 1 set during the morning, and Act 2 set during the evening. The epilogue, containing the songs and dances is played out in a street in front of the Mosque of the Carpenters. Hajj, a beggar who we soon gather was not always so, chances upon a bag of gold flung at him by his one-time enemy, Sheik Jawan when he foolishly prophesises that the Sheikh will meet his long lost son before the day has ended. Meanwhile, the young Caliph Abdullah, who is in disguise, meets Hajj's only child, the beautiful Marsinah and falls instantly in love with her. She in turn falls for him, but is under the impression he is the gardener's son. Puffed up with pride Hajj promises his daughter that she will have a rich marriage. He undergoes a series of adventures, which includes tricking some tailors out of fine garments, and ends with him being hauled before the wicked Wazir Mansur on stealing charges. The Wazir plies Hajj with wine and puffs up his pride even further, promising to marry his daughter if Hajj will kill the young Caliph Abdullah. When Hajj's attempt to kill the Caliph fails he is thrown into the same prison as the Sheikh Jawan, whom he had denounced to Wazir Mansur as a robber. Hajj kills Jawan, breaks out of gaol and escapes in his clothes, rescues his daughter and the Caliph, and kills the Wazir (who proves to be Sheikh Jawan's long lost son) by holding him under the water of his own women's bath. Although Hajj has helped the Caliph, and become his father-in-law, he is banished from the city, and the play ends with him returning to the market place (where only that morning he had been a beggar) as he makes his pilgrimage to Mecca to atone for his sins - proving that "many strange things may happen to men by the will of Allah between sunrise and sunset."



A revival of *Kismet*, with the authorship again attributed solely to Edward Knoblock, was staged at the New Oxford Theatre, London, beginning 9 April 1925. The relationship between this production (and later versions) of *Kismet* and those staged by Oscar Asche between 1911 and 1914 remains unclear. (For details regarding the 1925 version see 'New Oxford Theatre' *Times* 9 April 1925, 8). Later productions also include Charles Lederer's version, staged at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York on 3 December 1953. Although the book was co-adapted by Lederer and Luther Davis from Knoblock's play it retains Asche's title. The music and lyrics were by Robert Wright and George Forrest. The director was Albert Marre.

A four reel (4,000 ft) silent film adaptation of *Kismet* was made in 1914 by the Zenith film company (Britain). Directed by Leedham Bantock, who also adapted the screenplay, the film starred Oscar Asche, Lily Brayton, Caleb Porter and Herbert Grimwood. It is presumable, too, that other members of Asche's company at that time also appeared in the film. Art direction was by Joseph Harker.

**1911:** Garrick Theatre, London (England); 19 Apr. 1911 - 27 Jan. 1912.

- **Dir/Prod.** Oscar Asche; **Lse.** Arthur Bouchier and Herbert Sleath.

- **Cast** incl. Oscar Asche (Hajj), Lily Brayton (Marsinah), R. Ian Penny (The Guide Nasir), Caleb Porter (Sheikh Jawan), Bessie Major (Narjis), Nancy Denvers (The Almah), Tripp Edgar (The Begger Kasim), Murial Hutchinson (Miskah), Sara Raleigh (Kut-al-Kulub), Athol Forde (Amru), R. F. Anson (Zayd), Ben Webster (Caliph Abdullah), Ewan Brooke (Wazir Abu Bakr), Herbert Grimwood (Wazir Mansur), George Relph (Kafur), A. Winspeare (Afife), J. Fritz-Russell (The Gaoler Kutayt).

#### **Oscar Asche in *Kismet* (1914 film)**

Source: Australian National Library

**1911:** Knickerbocker Theatre, New York (USA); 25 Dec. 1911 - 1 June 1912.

- **Dir.** Harrison Grey Fiske; **Prod.** Klaw and Erlanger (in association with Charles Frohman).

- **Cast** incl. Otis Skinner (Hajj), Rita Joviet (Marjanah), Sheridan Block (Sheik Jawan), Fred Eric (Caliph Abdullah), Miron Leffingwell (Wazir Abu Bakr), Hamilton Revelle (Wazir Mansur), Georgia Woodthorpe (Narjis), Eleanor Gordon (Kut-al-Kulub), T. Tamamoto (The Muezzin), Del De Louis (Imam Mahmud), John Webster (A Mufti), Sydney Mather (The Guide Nasir), Macy Harlan (The Begger Kasim), Daniel Jarrett (Amrus), Harrison Carter (Zayd), Gregory Kelly (Amru's apprentice), George Relph (Kafur, Mansur's sworder), Bennett Kilpatrick (Afifa, mansur's secretary), Richard Scott (Captain of the Watch), William Lorenz (Mansur's attendant), Thomas Audley (A Chamberlain), Martin Sanders (The Gaoler Kutayt), Ameila Barleon (Kabirah), Merle Madden (Muskah), Violet Romer (The Almah). Before the curtain: Ernest Leeman (The Man), Roma Devonne (The Woman), Mervyn Rentoul (The Storyteller), Youna (The Juggler), Violet Romer (The Dancer).

**1912:** Theatre Royal, Melbourne; 6 Apr. - 31 May.

- **Dir.** Oscar Asche; **Prod.** J. C. Williamson's Ltd; **M Dir.** F. Wynne Jones; **S Art.** Joseph Harker; **S Mngr.** J. Fritz Russell. **Cost.** Percy Anderson.

- **Cast** incl. Oscar Asche (Hajj), Lily Brayton (Marsinah), Caleb Porter (The Sheik Jawan), Herbert Grimwood (Wazir Mansur), Frederick Worlock (Caliph Abdullah), H. R. Hignett (Wazir Abu Bakr), Frances Wetherall (Kut-al-Kulub, Mansur's first wife), James Plinge (The Muezzin), Neville Brook (The Iman Mahmud), K. Macalaster (A Mufti), R. Ian Penny (The Guide Nasir), Bessie Major (Narjis), Zara (The Almah), Vernon Kelsall (The Beggar Kasim), Arthur Trainton (Amru the shopkeeper), R. F. Anson (Zayd the shopkeeper), Norman Harle (Kafur, Mansur's sworder), Alfred Bristowe (Afife, Mansur's secretary), Alexander Onslow (Captain of the Watch), Ernest Horrs (Mansur's attendant), Newton Griffiths (A Blind Man), Chas Skillan (Chamberlain of the Caliph), J. Fritz Russell (The Gaoler Kutayt),

Florence M. Allen (An Old Woman), Olive Noble (Miskah, a slave). Before the Curtain: H. R. Hignett (The Storyteller), Penderell Price (The Man), Lilian Burton (The Woman), Houna (The Sorcerer), Zara (The dancer).

**1912:** Theatre Royal, Sydney; 22 June- 3 Aug.

- Cast and production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.

**1913:** His Majesty's Theatre, Brisbane; 22 - 31 Mar.

- Cast and production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.

**1914:** Globe Theatre, London (England); 10 Mar. - 9 Sept.

- **Dir.** Oscar Asche.

- **Cast** incl. Oscar Asche (Hajj), Lily Brayton (Marsinah), Caleb Porter (Shiekh Jawan), Bessie Major (Narjis), R. F. Anson (Kasim the beggar), Murial Ashwynne (Miskah), Suzanne Sheldon (Kut-al-Kuluh), Frederick Worlock (Caliph Abdullah), H. R. Hignett (Wazir Abu Bakr/The Storyteller), Herbert Grimwood (Wazir Mansur), J. Fritz-Russell (Afifie), Penderell Price (The Man), Lilian Birtles (The Woman), H. B. Hasleton (The Snake Charmer), Nancy Denvers (The Dancer).

- This revival was advertised as presenting entirely new costumes and scenery. The premiere was also advertised as the 381st production.

"Bath Play: Novel Effects in Mr Oscar Asche's New Production, A." *Pall Mall Gazette* 19 Apr. (1911), 10.

"**First Production of *Kismet*: A Great Spectacle.**" *Age* 8 Apr. (1912), 6.

"Garrick Theatre - *Kismet*." *Times* (London) 20 Apr. (1911), 8.

"Gorgeous East, at the Garrick, The." *Pall Mall Gazette* 20 Apr. (1911), 4.

"*Kismet*." *Age* 6 Apr. (1912), 9. [see also advert. - A: 6 Apr. 1912, 16]

Macqueen-Pope, W. *Carriages at Eleven*. (1947), 201-3.

"**Theatre Royal - *Kismet*.**" *Argus* 8 Apr. (1912), 9.

Last updated: 15/09/2015

Expanded and updated from Clay Djubal, "What Oh Tonight" (Appendix C), Ph D Diss (2005) U of Qld.

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