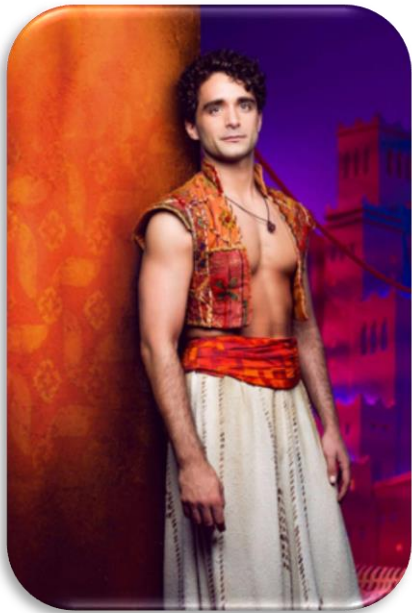


WildCATS

Interview: Matthew Croke on being the West End Aladdin and Working at Caterham Summer Camp



Following UK tours of *West Side Story* and *Singin' in the Rain*, plus West End roles in shows such as *Wicked* and *Grease*, Matthew Croke who currently stars as the West End lead in Disney's hit production *Aladdin* will be coming to Caterham School this summer.

We ask Matthew a few questions before he heads the team Caterham's Summer Camp *Aladdin Jr*

Were you a fan of *Aladdin* growing up?

I remember as a kid genuinely running home from school wanting to put it on. I fell in love with it when it was released - it was my favourite *Disney* film, and as a musical it made me feel like I was on cloud nine.

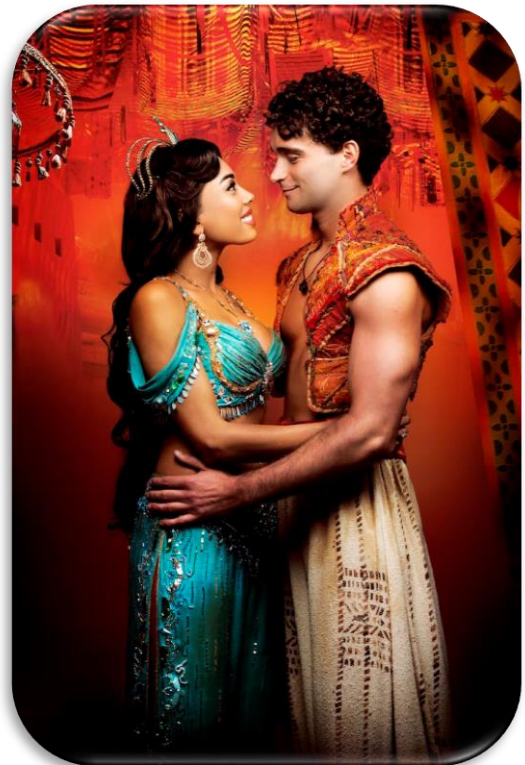
Matthew Croke in *Aladdin*

What do you love about it?

There's so much there. Everyone loves a good love story, and then *Aladdin* and the *genie* are best mates - we all know how much that can mean. The musical brings a bit more details to those relationships, like the romance with Jasmine. People who loved the film will get that nostalgic feeling of something they grew up with and see all the bits they remember, but they'll also get so much more - and leave with a big smile on their face!

How does it feel to take on your first West End lead?

I can't tell you how much of a different feeling it is - I'm still pinching myself! It's an amazing feeling; I'm forever grateful. I've taken on big roles before, but nothing like this. Jade [Ewen] and Trevor [Dion Nicholas] have been so supportive, and it's really exciting to bond as the three of us and kind of make it new again for them. We're having so much fun.



Jade Ewen & Matthew Croke in *Aladdin*

What's your favourite number?

I'm having a whale of time with everything! So far, it's probably *Proud of Your Boy* - it's a beautiful song and I can really relate to it. Aladdin's singing to his mother and I'm close to everybody in my family. That's a special one.

My parents and my brother and sister know how much I've been working towards this moment. As actors, we all go through those times of just waiting for that phone to ring, hoping for good news. This makes it all worth it - they were in tears more than me! All my teachers as well - I'm from Sheffield, and they encouraged me so much to pursue my dreams.



Trevor Dion Nicholas in Aladdin

What was your experience of musical theatre at school?

I always did drama class at school but it was my experience out of school with amateur companies in Sheffield that I learnt so much from and discovered my love for musical theatre. I had the opportunity to take on lead roles in some great shows and also be an ensemble member in many other shows and loved experiencing it all.

What was your route from school to the West End?

At 16 I left school and attended stage school. Trained for three years and managed to get offered a role in *Grease* the musical when it returned to London in 2007.

How important is it to develop song, dance and acting?

In musical theatre being able to do all three aspects is very important. Although I do believe it's important to really key in to the one you enjoy the most as it may help you shape out your career later on in life.

What advice would you give the children who would like to develop their theatre experience?

The one thing I always say is that you should never lose belief in yourself as the industry can be very tough. People have a lot of knock backs but as long as you believe you can do it then one day someone will think the same.

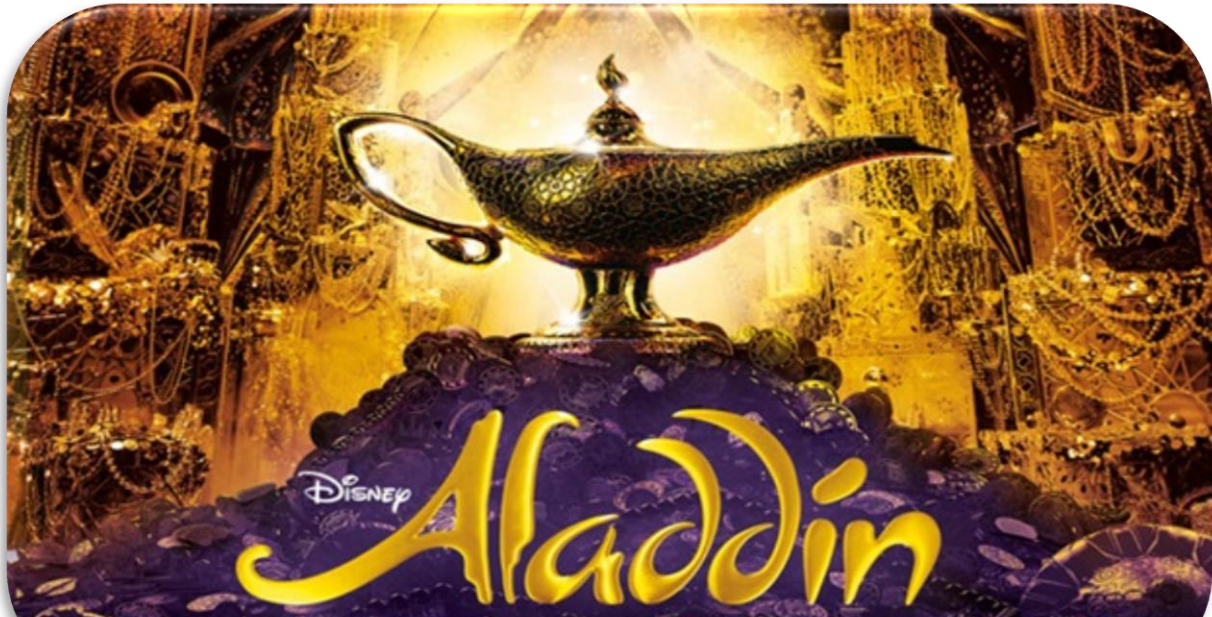


Are you looking forward to coming to Caterham and working with the children on the Aladdin Jnr summer camp?

I'm very much looking forward to coming to Caterham and working with the children on Aladdin. I've been in the show over a year now and have great knowledge and understanding on the show that I can't wait to share with everyone.

What advice can he give someone who is taking one of the lead roles?

Taking on a lead role can be quite overwhelming at first but as long as you stay true to that character and act out the scenes as that character you can't go wrong.



Caterham School Summer Musical: Monday 16 July – Friday 20 July 2018, 9.00am – 4.00pm