

ON THE BALL

Issue 41



Hi everyone,

What an amazing few months it's been since the last issue of *On The Ball*. Not one, but two trips to New York to see Michael perform. We thought that Michael had been outstanding in the *Woman In White* in London, but his role as Reginald Bunthorne in *Patience* was to top even that performance. Once again it was very different to anything we had seen Michael in before but the whole company were a joy to watch.

Our second trip to New York was for Michael's opening night in the *Woman In White* which you can read all about in this issue. We should also tell you all that we sent Michael, on behalf of all the members of the fan club, a huge bunch of helium filled balloons to wish him well on opening night. He said they looked wonderful and to thank everyone.

Somehow we appear to be at the end of another year, and what a year it's been. On a personal level it started in the worst possible way when our father passed away in January. But within days we were being told by Michael that he'd been asked to take over the role of Count Fosco after Michael Crawford had fallen ill. Then came the UK tour, another series of *Ball Over Broadway*, *Patience*, a new album and now the *Woman In White* on Broadway. And we thought it was going to be a quiet year!

One other thing we should mention is that you will notice a slightly different style to *On The Ball*. Fan club member James Gaden approached us asking if we'd give him a go at designing the magazine. We hope you'll agree that it's always nice to try something different and like what he's come up with. You can find out more about James at www.solitaryvision.co.uk

So it just leaves us to say our usual thanks to everyone but especially Brian, Simon, Jackie, Keith, Pat and all our friends at Alphaprint. Our family, as always, have been our strongest supporters. Merry Christmas and a very happy and healthy New Year.

Maureen and Gill



Front Cover photo – Sharon Scarrott Back Cover photo – Carol Bethwaite

Photographs, unless stated, by Eliza Gentry, Laura Tiedt, Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse and Carol Bethwaite

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Compiled by Gill Oakley and Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse

Website: www.mbfc.co.uk

Dear Everyone,

I can't believe this is the last "On The Ball" letter of 2005. Where does all the time go? And what a year this one has been.

I've always tried to keep busy and give you new and varied things that I hope you'll enjoy but I don't think I can remember a year that has packed so much in and been more exciting and fulfilling, and here I am finishing the year in my first Broadway show for 15 years. I love what I do and I never forget how lucky I am.

So what have we done this Year? Well, my best memories are, in no particular order, playing a role that I never imagined would be offered to me and getting the chance to recreate it in America, doing what I think has to rank as the most enjoyable and different concert tour we



have done, debuting at N.Y.C. Opera, hosting This Morning (and managing to shamelessly plug W.T.W. in every show) and of course the new album "Music" which I heard today has gone gold. I couldn't be more thrilled with the way it has all gone and the constant factor throughout it all has been you being there, encouraging and supporting me, making me feel that no challenge is too difficult. I can't tell you how important that is to me.

But the biggest success story in my life this year is the news that R.O.C has realised all its dreams and goals and can now leave it to the experts to spend the money raised for research on finding the answers to this hideous disease. That is worth everything and on behalf of all of us at R.O.C. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for everything you have done for us over the years. It is nothing short of spectacular and you will always know that you have actively helped to save the lives of

women everywhere who, because of your help, have been diagnosed and treated before its full, devastating effects can be felt. I feel very proud.

Well, as I write this, winter is really starting to hit New York and everywhere people are preparing for Christmas. Its going to be hard being away from all the family this year but I suppose that is the price you pay for doing what you love.

If, for any reason, you find yourself seperated from those you love at this time just remember you will be in our thoughts and prayers and if you have those you love around you, cherish them, but you already know that.

I'll close by sending you my love and I hope that it won't be long before we see each other somewhere, sometime in 2000.

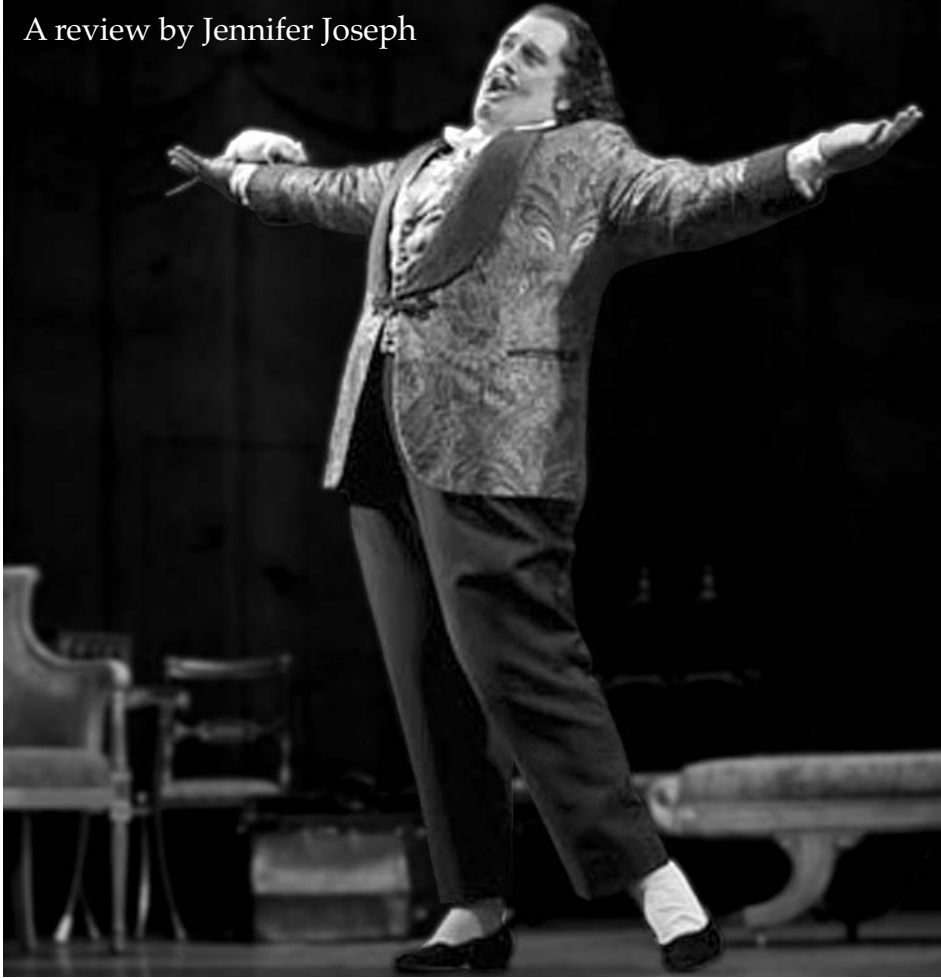
Keep Safe and well and a big kiss is coming from N.Y.

all my love

Diana
X

WOMAN IN WHITE

A review by Jennifer Joseph



I have seen a myriad of performances on various Broadway stages. I have enjoyed the talent, creativity and brilliance of Andrew Lloyd Webber as well. Most importantly however, for my reading audience, I have seen Michael Ball.

The first time I saw him was in London in October 2000. I accompanied my mom to London to see Michael in concert. He had the Royal Albert Hall packed and disproved every critic who has described the British as "stuffy." Everyone was dancing! Everyone was singing along! It was fabulous!

It got better though! In 2001 (arriving for his first Ball Over Broadway) I was able to see him at the JFK airport. (His 'performance' was absolutely fabulous. He looked so natural deplaning and walking from baggage claim!!!) In actuality, this experience (mundane for him, exhilarating for his fans) established MB, in my mind, as a genuine and sincere individual. I remember thinking how

cool it was that a man of such talent and fame was taking time to say hello to and take photos with his fans.

Throughout the past five years I have tagged along with my mom on many of her MB adventures. While I may tease her about her level of fandom, I really do think it's cool. I've also become somewhat of (almost) a super fan. (Shhhh...)

I think it's cool my mom's a groupie. Sure when I mention that to my friends they picture more of a Dead Head than a Ball(?) Head! It says a lot though, about the fans' dedication and MB's generous celebrity, that she and her fellow fans have taken pictures with him, hugged him or spoken to him at nearly every Stage Door moment. I bet there's a small few Grateful Dead groupies who could say that!

Alright so MB comes to NYC! While he's been on Broadway and performed in NYC before, this was my first time seeing

him on Broadway. I aided and abetted my mom in her postcard drive. I want him to be on Regis and Kelly just as much as she does! Wouldn't MB be a great Regis fill-in for the day? Of course, there are the other 10 or so shows he could be on, but I love Regis and Kelly!

So first was Patience. Honestly, Operettas are not my thing. There is no doubt, however, that they are one of MB's things. What a hoot! He was fantastic!

The thing is Michael Ball has many 'things!' He's an absolutely captivating stage performer. It is incredibly impressive how he competently and flawlessly sings show tunes and rock in the same set. It's a treat to be in the audience and wonder 'what's coming next!?'

As an actor, musical, dramatic and comedic, MB takes the cake. I love musicals. I love music. I am very critical – a borderline music snob! I can say with all honesty that MB is an extremely gifted, talented and enigmatic musician. Randomly I have found myself imagining (I shouldn't admit this really...) how much fun rehearsals must be for MB's cast members. While they are all talented, I bet MB has them laughing so hard and making 'work' seem like play!

Then there was The Woman in White. How can one not look forward to an Andrew Lloyd Webber show? Add MB into the mix, I was eager to see this show!

My mom had read the book and seen the show in London. I knew a little about the story, but not that much (which I prefer, I love watching the story unfold before my eyes.) I knew two things: The Woman in White had a 'seeecret' and MB played the fat, evil Count Fosco. With that knowledge I sat back and enjoyed the show.

Aside from the amazing set, which I could discuss forever, I enjoyed the mix of acting and singing in the show. Being a secret MB fan, I watched eagerly waiting for him to make his entrance. And boy did he make an entrance! He was phenomenal! I was sitting in the very last row of the theatre. After tending to my altitude induced nosebleed, I laughed as

MB devilishly pranced about with his caged rats. (From where I was, I thought they were all birds. Later I realized of course a 'rat' would keep rats as pets!) MB actually convinced me he was an overweight Italian con artist. I listened carefully to see if he'd lose the accent, but he was able to stay true to his character the whole time. He was comic relief in a somewhat dark and disturbing musical. The scenes where Glyde was being cruel and abusive to Laura and Marian were quite intense. What I noticed was that although MB wasn't speaking, his presence on stage was able to reduce the stress I was feeling. And when he stepped in to protect the girls, his character's evilness was momentarily forgotten. But the next scene reminded us that he was rotten and although he protected the sisters, he had ulterior motives. It was this complexity of his character and his ability to pull it off successfully that really made me see why MB has such a loyal fan base.

RATS! I eventually remembered that my mom had told me that MB had to work with trained rats for this show and that they had been giving him some trouble lately. I guess the NYC rat problem affects working rats too! I was in the majority of the audience who had never seen the show before and was not sure what to expect when MB had the rat running across his shoulders. Turns out, MB wasn't so sure either! But boy oh boy, is he a master of improv! Ewww, can you



imagine a RAT crawling down your shirt! And he had so much padding and clothing on, what if it got trapped in there! Goodness, he really handled that wayward rat well! And with such professionalism and humor!

Before the show I thought, 'I'm kind of proud of Michael for being on Broadway.' Later I read that it wasn't his first time, but like I said, it was my first time seeing him here and I was so happy for him! The Stage Door wait was incredibly long and cold. Of course the make-up artist told us it took over 70 minutes to get him all Foscoed up, so of course, it would take him some time to undo all that. Wouldn't you know it though, MB exited the stage door, chipper and gracious as always.

The Woman in White was definitely my favorite MB show so far. While I haven't seen nearly as many as my mom or the other fans, I've seen enough to have a fave! Based on his performance, I look forward to his future Broadway performances.

Though I am not quite at the 'groupie' level, I can say that I am a fan. I truly appreciate his magnanimous personality, talent and what that brings to the stage. Broadway shows are always a great time. But seeing someone you 'know' and admire perform in one is very special. I look forward to my future trips to Broadway because I know that, at least a few will include another spectacular performance by Michael Ball.

WE'RE A LUCKY LOT!

I've always felt privileged and proud to be in Michael's fan club, but I never truly realized what a lucky person I am to have found him on PBS until October 2, 2005. Four family members and I flew to New York City from Michigan to see Michael in the Sunday matinee performance of *Patience* on that day. We gathered by the stage door with the rest of the crowd and watched him as he graciously worked his way through his fans. My daughter Deb and I were lucky to have our picture taken with him. I couldn't get over how young (32-ish) he looks in person, and how kind and patient he is!

The operetta was excellent and Michael played his role with perfection, as usual. His talents have no end, it seems. After the show it was back to the stage door to see him emerge once again. This time it brought all of my sense of him to a real focus - the look on his face as he saw the even bigger crowd standing above him, clapping, showed what a loving person he is to all of his fans - to all of us. You can just tell

how much he loves his job, and how he enjoys sharing his talents with us. We're a lucky lot... we really are!

- Joyce Beauchamp - Fan #8139
- Debbie and Dave Blunt (daughter and son-in-law)
- Joanne Beauchamp (daughter-in-law)
- Sarah Avink (granddaughter)

PS - The new CD is marvellous!

From left: Debra Blunt, Michael and Joyce Beauchamp



A SMALL BITE OF THE BIG APPLE

Pictures by Carol Bethwaite, words by Susan Feeney

A trip to New York to see Michael in 'Patience' very quickly changed from a "we would like to go" to a "we are on our way". We both had a fabulous time and laughed, walked and ate our way around NYC. Michael in 'Patience' was everything we had read about and more, he was funny, petulant and brilliant. The rest of the cast played up to Reginald beautifully and the whole production was amazing and thoroughly enjoyable. It was so nice to see all the people who had travelled to see 'Patience' and to meet some wonderful new friends. All in all we had a BALL.



Meet the "Fokker 10" Mount Kilimanjaro our KLM Plane to Amsterdam.



A room with a view, this is a photo from our room of The Empire State Building.



OK how did we get up here and more importantly WHY? Friday morning at the top of the Empire State Building



A fabulous view. One of many from the top of the Empire State.



A walk through Manhattan. Who lives here?



Don't look now but another tall building. The Rockefeller Centre.



Outside of The Lincoln Centre.



Our destination,
The Lincoln Centre
the upper hall.



It's too late now, no going back!
How do we talk ourselves
into these things?



The Statue of Liberty from the
Helicopter Trip we took on the
Saturday morning.



Ground Zero



Saturday night in Times Square



Let's find a Cab.



"Patience" the reason for our trip.
Carol, Michael and Susan.



Michael on Sunday 2nd of October
2005



Who am I? Who are all these people?



Ok Curly, another fine mess... a bike ride
around Central Park



Another fine view in Times Square!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



TO BE CONTINUED.....

GUYS IN PINK GET ALL THE CHICKS

by Chris in NYC

After seeing the “Opera For All” concert Thursday night, September 8th, I commented on the Forum that Michael returned to the stage at the end of the concert in a suit and pink collared shirt. I have seen him wear pink several times and the first time I met him in SLC he was wearing a pink and white check shirt. My husband is not a man to wear pink and I know some men do not. I thought, good for Michael for wearing pink and I think it is a great color on him.

When I was in London to see Michael in “The Woman in White” one of Michael’s fans had an extra black short sleeved tee shirt with Michael’s linked hearts logo and I bought it from her. She let me borrow a scarf to wear with it as I had black slacks on with the shirt and she offered the scarf to add a little color.

I was planning to wear black slacks and the black tee shirt when I attended “Patience” on Saturday, September 10th and that morning went to the store to get a scarf. After finding one and still in the store I came upon these tee shirts and one was pink and caught my eye. When I picked it up there was a kind of stick figure of a “guy” with a girl on each side and the saying, “Guys In Pink Get All The

Chicks.” I thought this was too much of a coincidence and bought it for Michael.

I was at the stage door early on Saturday and was off “shopping” with a few of Michael’s fans when we were walking down the sidewalk and realized he was at the stage door. We quickly walked to the stage door and were able to say hello before he went down the stairs. I had the tee shirt for him in a gift bag, and was able to give it to him.

I put a note in the bag telling him how I came upon the shirt and would understand if he chose not to wear it in public but I knew there were some “chicks” at the stage door who would get a kick out of him wearing the shirt.

I did not attend the second performance of “Patience” on September 15th and one of my friends attending the performance had strict orders to check in with me as soon as she returned home with a “full review.” We chatted about the performance, who was at the stage door, she told me Michael’s Dad was there, and then I finally asked what he was wearing when he arrived, never thinking he would wear the tee shirt.

She said, “He had on this pink tee shirt that said “Guys in Pink Get All the Chicks”. She did not know I had given the shirt to Michael and I almost fell down when she was describing it to me. I was immediately thrilled that he wore it, and then was so touched by the fact that he felt comfortable wearing it. I guess he thought some of the “chicks” at the stage door would get a kick out of it as I had suggested to him.

When I arrived at the stage door for the September 17th performance Carol Cox was there and handed me one of the two photographs Eliza took of Michael wearing the tee shirt. I thought if I just showed the photo to him I could put a “face” to who “Chris in NY” was and I could thank him for wearing it and being such a good sport.

When he finally arrived strolling down the sidewalk towards the stage door I worked my way over to him and showed him the photo. He acknowledged it and I am sure I thanked him and said I appreciated his being such a good sport, yet I cannot remember what I said or what he said. Does that happen to anyone else or just me??

While standing next to him I asked if he could autograph the photograph and without my knowing my friend Bev took a photograph of Michael autographing the picture. Thanks Eliza for allowing me to include your photographs in this story.

Music is a passion for me and has been for as long as I can remember. Up until about three years ago I enjoyed and listened to all types of music, and then I was “touched” by the most beautiful voice I have ever heard. Thank you Michael for sharing your most beautiful gift with all of us but most of all allowing us to have what I call a little “Michael magic.” You’re the best!!





From left: Pam Hancock, Michael and Mary Dryden

PATIENCE

by Mary Dryden

I'd gone to the travel agent on the off chance, to see if she could help. I'd already looked through the small print in the ticket information, and things were not looking too hopeful. It appeared that it would be a very expensive exercise to change my return flight home from our holiday in the UK, to travel through New York instead of Singapore. I'd already had to deal with the disappointment of missing the end of Michael's UK Tour by not-very-much, as our holiday in the UK was to begin in August. But it was a bit rough to think I was about to miss another opportunity to see Michael. We were to return to New Zealand at about the same time that he would be in New York – but our flight plans would take us the wrong way round the world!

The travel agent was sympathetic as she confirmed my conclusion. But then she added, "You know, you'd be better to go to New York from the UK, then return to the UK before flying home." That sounded overwhelming, until the solution dawned on me. A great idea! I could travel with the UK Fan Club group!

Now back home in the real world, with work commitments and daily routines, my thoughts drift back to those days in New

York. Yes, there were precious moments with Michael at the stage door, and that opportunity to see him as we have never seen him before!!!, in his role as Reginald. Such fun!

But I also think of people... being able to spend time with good friends I have made through the Fan Club forum. And my room-mate, Pam. We had not made contact until we met at Heathrow – and immediately we got off to a good start. (Was it something to do with supplies from Duty Free...?) It's always a bit of a risk, agreeing to spend a week with a stranger - but what fun we had together! A special time. I loved " - getting lost with confidence" in New York!

And then the stage door. Who was that lady who brought along prints of photos she had taken within the previous few days, to hand out to respective people? What a kind thing to do!

Frankie – also from New Zealand. So good to meet you. I just wish I'd insisted on **that** photo. There were others of you with whom I was able to spend brief moments - some for the first time, others, an opportunity to say hello again. And then there were those people whom I

knew of through the forum... caught your eye, but through a moment of hesitation / shyness, did not meet. And, thank you Carol, for your kindness on our last night in New York. So many good memories of special people and good times.

And, of course, there were those Michael Moments... I enjoyed his immediate response when he glanced in the bag containing an All Blacks memento, as I mentioned something about November 5. "Ah, yes," he said. "**We're** going to win!" So quick off the mark! November 5 would be the day that our All Blacks team would meet Wales at the Millennium Stadium, in Cardiff.

He was somewhat surprised to hear that I was going home via the UK, not through Los Angeles, which he thought would be easier for me. Considerate as ever. They were special moments with Michael.

But then, my new friend Pam was determined that I should go home with an extra special memento of the good times in New York. It came right out of the blue, and caught me completely by (a lovely!) surprise. A kiss from Michael!

Thank you, Michael, for enriching my life. I hope it won't be too long before we meet again.

Jen, Michael, and Rose, NYC Opera (last performance of 'Patience')



A TASTE OF THE BIG APPLE

by Jen Garner

'I had a dream'..... New York, a place that has been top of my 'wish list' for as long as I can remember and what better reason for going than Michael! Although I've now been home for nearly a week, amongst all the hustle and bustle that brings, the events of Michael on the Move - New York are still crystal clear, so I thought I must put pen to paper.

New York was as much and more than I'd hoped and imagined it would be - the buzz, the lights, the exciting atmosphere, the skyscrapers and the Manhattan Skyline, Broadway and Times Square, Hudson Bay, The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. There were the impressive Dakota Apartments where John Lennon was assassinated and where such people as Elton John and Steven Spielberg now live. I will never forget watching the sun go down from the top of The Empire State Building with panoramic views all around, the beautiful Brooklyn Bridge in the distance and the spectacular Chrysler Building lit up like a pyramid in the foreground. Here, I must mention Ground Zero which was so very sad and moving with the two steel girders that have been left as they fell, in the shape of a cross with a jacket hung over one end. Just across the road is a chapel with every pane of glass intact.

The sycamore tree in front of the building had taken the full impact of the blast - simply amazing. Survivors found refuge here and firemen changed their melted boots and scuffs on the pews where they rested, are still apparent.

Our hotel was ideally situated not far from Central Park where Rose and I spent a few happy hours writing postcards, eating and strolling amongst 'Strawberry Fields' and 800 acres of a manmade sanctuary away from the city mayhem. Here, we saw the filming and set of 'The Devil You Know' and also a photo-shoot which was all very interesting. How can I NOT mention the shops, Madison Avenue and designer shops galore - viewed only from the windows of our tour bus! Having said that, we did manage a shopping spree at Macy's (well you have to, haven't you?)

Our first visit to see The New York City Opera was on Friday 30th September. This is a beautiful building surrounding a huge fountain. Michael appeared about 6:45pm around the corner by the stage door relaxed and his face beaming. He greeted fans from all over the world with the utmost 'patience' and seemed only too happy to do signings, accept gifts and have photos taken. At the

following Sunday matinee, October 2nd and Wednesday 5th October's evening performance, Michael was just the same both before and after each show.

On Friday he arrived wearing the most gorgeous white jacket with silver thread on the sleeves and all over the back, together with pale blue shirt and jeans. On Sunday he wore a maroon and blue shirt with jeans and on Wednesday - the same gorgeous jacket, 'wise guy' T shirt with his designer jeans! Needless to say looking fab!

On Friday night Michael's mum was in the audience and left with him looking so happy and proud. Before the last performance Rose and I managed to have a photo taken together with Michael, (thank you John for taking the photo) when he was interested to know what we thought of New York and had we enjoyed ourselves and the show? Well the show! 'Patience', the music and lyrics were really great and even if you are not particularly fond of opera (as I'm not) you would have loved this! It was totally hilarious, so very, very funny and clever and Michael was just fabulous as Reginald Bunthorne. Complete with flamboyant clothes, full make up, purple nail varnish and flowers in the hair - he strutted his stuff as a very camp poet. Oscar Wilde certainly springs to mind!

Near the beginning of the first act he recites a poem he has written called 'Oh Hollow, Hollow, Hollow' and he's an absolute scream! Soon after this he frolics across the roof of the house declaring that he is an aesthetic sham and is so funny! We always knew he would be brilliant at comedy and his timing was perfect especially when he fell off the wall, as cymbals struck up behind him resounding in his ears. This is not to mention him being - quote 'thwarted and crushed again and again' when he finds he is no longer loved by anyone. Also - quote 'damn, damn, damn' when Michael takes off his cloak and swishes it backwards and forwards on the ground whilst ranting and raving - what a hoot!!

I should explain that twenty lovesick maidens are pining for Reginald's affection and he professes this can be cured medically. Reginald, in turn, is in love with Patience, a dairymaid (played excellently by Tonna Miller) who has never loved anyone except her aunt. When Archibald Grosvenor appears, (portrayed brilliantly by Kevin Burdette) she realises she'd known him as a child and they fall in love. Patience is loathe to marry 'such perfection' thinking that true love is 'utterly unselfish' so she agrees to marry Bunthorne who she doesn't like at all. In the meantime Bunthorne has decided to raffle himself off to one of the twenty maidens but when they think he is marrying Patience after-all, they transfer their affections back to the dragoon guards to whom they had been engaged the previous year.

At the sight of the handsome Archibald Grosvenor the fickle maidens decide to pursue him instead and desert the guards, although Lady Jane (hilarious Myrna Paris) still declares her love for Reginald and offers to help him win back the maidens attention and that of



Patience. The dragoons win back the maidens and Reginald persuades Archibald to cut his hair, so that he becomes less attractive, resulting in Patience agreeing to marry him, because he is now more ordinary and Reginald is left with the 'not so beautiful' Lady Jane. In the end the Duke marries Lady Jane and Reginald is thwarted yet again! At one point Michael recites 'Midnight, all alone in the moonlight' and 'I dreamed a dream' which has everyone in stitches!

I haven't even spoken about 'The Dance' which apparently Michael and Kevin devised between them. This was just hysterical and brought the house down. It seemed to vary with each performance - the second time we had a bit of a jive and on the last night Michael gave a pelvic twirl when the fans screamed and other people looked puzzled. If I had to choose - this would probably be my favourite bit! 'Patience' was a complete joy from beginning to end and Michael seemed to be enjoying himself as much as the audience. Twice I heard the Conductor say laughingly, as he left the theatre 'I used to be the star here!'

Ah well, all good things must come to an end but where Michael is concerned there's usually something not far round the corner. Whilst in this great city we did get to see 'The Producers' and 'Hairspray' - both very entertaining and lots of fun. 'Hairspray' has a real feel good factor about it. Across the road was the first preview of a new musical called 'Jersey Boys' and we saw the cast and a couple of stars leaving. Thank you Arena Travel for such a memorable trip and of course to Michael for helping to make a dream come true. We found everyone, fans and taxi drivers alike very friendly and the weather was hot and sunny every day!



Michael receiving his bouquet



THE WOMAN IN WHITE

Opening Night, Broadway, by Gill and Maureen

When it was announced that Michael would be starring as Count Fosco in the Broadway production of the *Woman In White* we just knew we wanted to be there for the opening night. We booked tickets for the last preview and first performance following opening night plus the Sunday matinee together with flights to and from New York.

Imagine our delight and excitement when a week before we were due to travel we were told that we'd been invited to the opening night show – we were just thrilled and used it as a good excuse to get new glittery outfits!

We arrived in New York on Tuesday 15 November, which meant we were able to see the same show that all the critics attended which was on Wednesday 16th. In New York it works slightly different to London in that the show is “frozen” before opening night

and all the critics see the show then so they can have their reviews ready for the morning after opening night. We spoke with members of the cast after the show and they said that everyone had been very nervous and felt that it had shown in their performances – can't say that we could tell in the audience. Everyone loved it and they got a standing ovation the minute the first person took their bow.

Thursday morning a quick telephone call told us that we had 2nd row seats for the evening's performance – can this get any better? Well yes, actually. As we were getting our glad rags on another telephone call invited us to drinks before the show, where we would collect our tickets for both the show AND THE AFTER SHOW PARTY!!!! Oh my word! One of the biggest nights on Broadway and WE were going to be there!!!

Once the show started all the nerves from the previous night seemed to evaporate and the whole cast gave the best performance we'd ever seen. The standing ovation at the end was more moving than words can describe with Andrew Lloyd Webber, Trevor Nunn and Sonia Friedman (Maria's sister and one of the producers of the show) joining them on stage to present bouquets of flowers. It was doubly poignant bearing in mind the fact that Maria had been through surgery only 10 days earlier. For those of you that didn't hear the story, Maria found a lump in her breast on the Monday, and had a mammogram in the afternoon. She was diagnosed with stage 1 breast cancer on the Tuesday and by Wednesday she'd had the lump removed. She returned to previews several days before opening night and gave a truly outstanding performance. She is a remarkably courageous lady and a real star.

The show over we caught a cab to the Tavern on the Green in Central Park, which is where the after show party was being held. What an amazing

Members of the cast applauding Maria as she takes her bow



Gill, Michael and Maureen



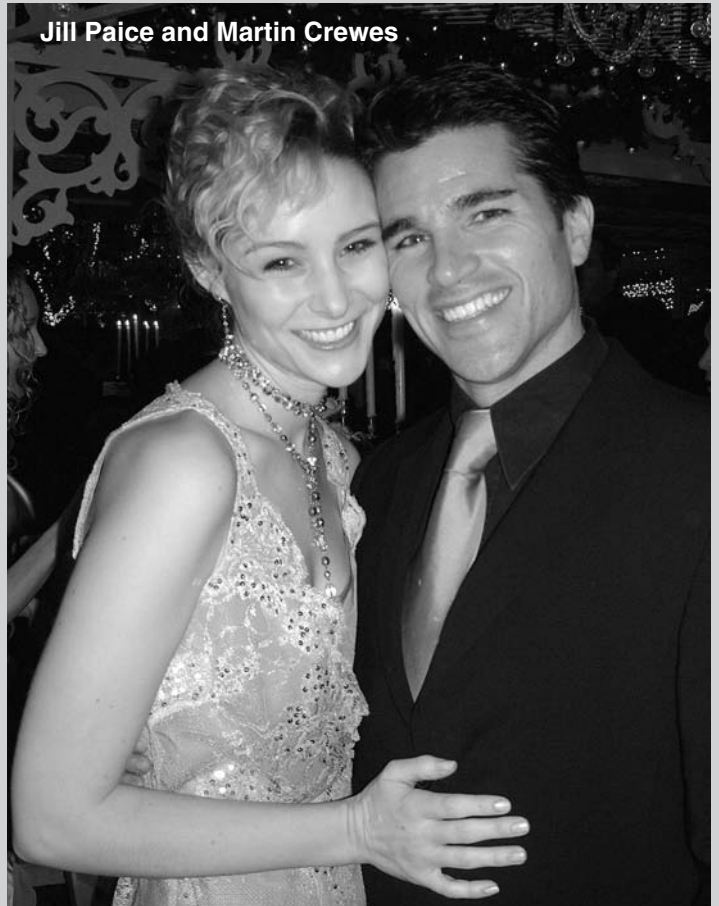
Maria getting a hug from her sister Sonia,
one of the shows producers



Daniel Torres and Andrea Christian



Jill Paice and Martin Crewes



venue with the most opulent décor we've ever seen. There were amazing Tiffany and crystal chandeliers and stained glass windows all beautifully lit. We were told to get a drink, help ourselves to the hot buffet and then find a table. All the members of the cast, production team, etc., had their own reserved tables but they didn't sit at them for long, instead they mingled with the guests.

We did a bit of celebrity spotting and saw Cilla Black (she's the sort of person you feel you know so well you just have to say hi to!), Michele Lee (Knotts Landing), Barbara Cook, Dr Ruth and last but not least Sir Cliff Richard. Cathy was with Michael along with Callum McLeod and his wife, and we also saw Andrew Lloyd Webber and Trevor Nunn.

We managed to get some lovely photos of various cast members including one with Michael. We floated back to the apartment around 2am with Michael's words echoing in our ears "You'll never forget this night, will you?" No, and I don't think you will either Michael.

Maria and friends



Andrew, Maria and Michael



MEET THE PARENTS

by Lori Davis

My parents (Dad Gene and Mum Judy) both love music. In particular they enjoy the great singers of the 1940's, 50's & 60's; Perry Como, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Matt Monro (you get the idea). Although Michael has a bit more of an eclectic musical repertoire, I felt that my folks would really enjoy his music. So, for the past two years I've been giving them copies of Michael's CDs. They loved his voice instantly, and through stories of my travels to the UK to see Michael, they have become interested in all aspects of his career. They are both fans of Musical Theatre as well, so it was a natural progression. They've always said that if Michael ever came to the US they would want to see him. So, for their Birthdays (my Dad turned 77 and my Mum 76 earlier this fall) my husband Glen and I decided to take them to NYC to see *Woman in White*.

We journeyed down to the city on November 20th (a beautiful sunny Sunday), with my folks very excited at the prospect of seeing a new Broadway Musical. The highlight for both of them, without a doubt however, was meeting Michael at the Stage Door. We arrived there about 1:15pm and I was able to introduce them to Ann, Lila, Eliza, Cheryl, Gill and Maureen. It was wonderful for them to meet some of the people they'd heard about and seen in photos.

We had a great time talking and laughing, and Ann shared with my Mum how she always seemed to be the one to spot Michael first. We all joked that he never seemed to come from the same direction twice, and that most times it seemed like he just "appeared" behind someone. No sooner had we changed the subject when I heard my Mum exclaim "There he is!" (yes, different direction...again). Not a bad spot considering she had never seen him in person before!

Although Michael was running late he took the time to let me introduce my Parents and Glen. He was absolutely wonderful, friendly and attentive as usual and my Mum was particularly enthralled (big surprise!). I never anticipated either of my parents wanting a photo so I didn't have my camera with me. But as Michael was getting ready to say his goodbyes to the group and head in the stage door it became evident to Glen and me that Mum really wanted a picture. Michael picked up on our signaling and graciously came back over to oblige. Thankfully, Eliza and Cheryl came to the rescue with cameras, and my Mum was beaming as Michael got her snuggled under his arm.

I'm happy to report as well that my folks loved the show. While both loved the music, my Dad was particularly intrigued by the Projection Sets. I was pleased that Maria was performing that day, as I really wanted them to see her. They raved about her performance, as well as Michael's. Our original plan had been to leave the city immediately after the show but we did end up waiting at the stage door to see Michael come out. (Mum's idea...she wanted to tell him how much she had enjoyed the show and his performance). Fortunately, the weather was still fairly mild and Michael did not keep us waiting long (wish I could say the same for the valet parking attendant at the Garage across the street!). My Mum was able to say goodbye and have a few words (and to reiterate her invitation to him to come perform in Maine – good going Mum!).

It was an absolutely wonderful day for my folks and thanks to Gill, Maureen, Lila, Ann, Cheryl and Eliza for sharing it with us. And, of course, thanks to Michael for being so amazingly considerate, warm and friendly to my family. You made the day for my parents!

Here's Eliza's beautiful picture of my Mum and Michael (a memento she treasures from our trip).



THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

You can find our website at

www.mbfc.co.uk

Our site has recently been given a revamp and features a very active forum where many a debate has gone on between fans from all over the world. You can also find all the latest news and photos - why not check it out today?



MOVING HOUSE?

Don't forget to let us have your new address so you don't miss out on any important information

Please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you want a reply to your letter

INFOLINE NUMBER

UK Members:

0871 221 7811

Overseas:

+44 8767 422224

PEN PALS / TRAVEL TALK

This section is for those of you who either want to meet up with fellow fans in your local area or get in touch with people from further afield. Maybe you want to find a travelling companion or maybe you simply want to arrange a get together to chat about Michael. To be included simply drop us a line with your details at our usual address.

DILYS BEARD

32 BRANSTON ROAD, CLACTON
ON SEA, ESSEX CO15 3HE

Dilys (aged 55) would love to hear from anyone, any age group, either sex, who lives in Colchester, Clacton or the surrounding area. She says it would be nice to have a travelling companion to concerts and also the occasional meeting/chat.

MARTINE POWICK

123 ABBERLEY AVENUE, ARELEY
KINGS, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN,
WORCS DL13 0LU
email: martyfloss@yahoo.co.uk

Martine is 28 years old and enjoys the theatre and going to Michael's concerts. She would love to hear from anyone, anywhere in the world. You can either write to Martine or email her at the address above.

SAMANTHA SCOTT

88 HAZELHILL CRESCENT,
BESTWOOD PARK, NOTTINGHAM
NG5 5NJ

Email: s.scott993@ntlworld.com

Samantha would very much like to go to New York to see Michael in the Woman In White but unfortunately was unable to go at the time of the fan club trip. She would love to hear from anyone else who wants to go and is looking for a travelling companion.

LINDA DAVIES

P.O. BOX 73154, DUBAI, UNITED
ARAB EMIRATES

Linda is 49 years old and a huge fan and would love to hear from anyone who wants a pen pal somewhere other than the UK. She has been living in Dubai for 3 1/2 years.

FRANCES MORRIS

"YWORRI", 10A MOUNT
PLEASANT AVENUE, EXMOUTH,
DEVON EX8 4QD

Francis wonders if anyone got a photo of Michael holding the yellow rose that she gave him at the end of the concert in Plymouth earlier this year. She has a super one of him in the doorway of the bus as he is leaving that she can swap with.

MARK GILLIGAN

(414) 225 9683
email: hummelcrech@netzero.net

Mark would love to hear from any other guys who live in the USA. He says it would be cool to go to see Michael in New York with another guy who would appreciate the experience.

