

# ON THE BALL

Issue 68



Hi Everyone

2015 has been yet another outstandingly busy year for Michael, the highlight of which was being awarded the OBE by the Queen. We were lucky enough to go backstage during the Chichester Festival so we could present Michael with his photo book congratulating him and he was thrilled.

So here we are with our very last issue of On The Ball. When the fan club becomes free to join/renew from April next year James Gaden will completely take over the magazine's production. We will still be contributing to it and we will, of course, still be sending out News Updates.

Many thanks to everyone who has sent us stage door photos taken while Michael has been touring with "Mack and Mabel", along with your articles. You'll see some of them in this issue. Also to those of you who let us use your photos in our free 2016 pull-out calendar.

We'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dear Everyone,

Well, my lovelies, by anyone's standards I think we can safely say that that was one helluva year!!!

2015 has been totally jam packed for me. A new album, a tour, a new character to play and take 'round the country in Mack and Mabel and a bloomin' O.B.E. Blimey how on earth do you follow that?

It's really difficult to pick out a highlight from the year but I think receiving the honour from the Queen has to be one of the biggest achievements in my life, let alone in the last year. So many of you have asked if I have been to receive the actual medal yet and I have had no time up until now but I can tell you (I hope I'm not breaking any royal protocol and you know how bad I am at keeping secrets) it looks like I shall be going to

Buckingham Palace at the end of January for the investiture ceremony and will be presented with the actual medal then. I am just so excited and grateful and I promise not to wear it all the time.

So, here we are at the end of another year together and looking forward to a new one. It seems to me that in an increasingly troubled and fractured world it is so important for us all to try to maintain the friendships and joy and support that we give to each other. I am acutely aware that without your unfailing support for me I wouldn't be able to enjoy exploring new ideas and challenges the way I am and I am so thrilled when I hear how you have enjoyed the fruits of that labour.

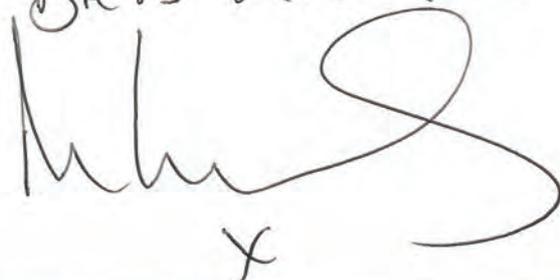
Equally, when I hear the masses of stories of how, due to a mutual enjoyment of the things I get to do, great friendships have been forged, random

acts of kindness and concern have been done, great support networks have been created and hopefully, a lot of fun has been had, it makes me burst with pride. That is the greatest gift I could hope to receive at Christmas.... apart from cashmere socks of course!! 😊

So, hopefully we will all get together whenever and wherever we can over the next year and we will enjoy the fellowship and fun that we love and we will continue to share, support and love in the best ways possible.

Until then I send you the biggest of hugs and the hope for the happiest of Christmases and New Year.

God Bless and love always

  
x

# WHEN MICHAEL MET KIMBER!

by Sue Ashton



On Saturday 8th August, my daughter Nicola and I went to see *Mack and Mabel* at Chichester.

The matinee was an audio described performance, which means that people who are visually impaired can wear headphones during the show and a person describes what is happening on the stage.

Before the performance the theatre sends out a CD which describes the stage setting, costumes, the characters, etc., and sometimes the theatre puts on a touch tour before the performance. Chichester is very good at arranging AD performances and we

were very lucky that they had also arranged a touch tour.

Some members of the production team, wardrobe staff, wig supervisor and sometimes some of the cast then join the VIPs and talk to them and show them round and let them feel some of the props, costumes and sometimes go on the stage and feel the set, which is absolutely brilliant. This all makes the show so much more enjoyable.

We were waiting outside hoping to see Michael arrive and were chatting to other fans in the sunshine but we had to go at

1:45pm for the touch tour and so missed him arriving. We were lucky to be joined by quite a few cast members including Jack Edwards and some of the ensemble. However what a wonderful surprise when suddenly Michael appeared with a big Hello! Nicola is blind and had her guide dog Kimber with her as well. He spoke to everyone, including Kimber, and then went on to describe different bits of the show. The photo below was taken when he was telling everyone about his big projector. It was lovely to be up so close and he spent a good fifteen minutes with us all. We all appreciated that so much, knowing what a busy day he had ahead with two shows and he also did the radio interview after the show that night!

We then went in to watch the show, which was absolutely fantastic. When we went to collect Kimber, who had been left in the wonderful care of the cloakroom staff, we were told that Michael had paid him a visit on one of his journeys through the foyer and even remembered his name!

We have had AD performances for *Hairspray* and *Sweeney Todd* but this one was really special as Michael came to the touch tour. We enjoyed it so much we have booked for the AD performance in Cardiff in December. Hopefully there will be a touch tour and Michael will visit again!



While *Mack and Mabel* was running in Chichester, a review was written in the Chichester Observer by Phil Hewitt. Here's what he had to say:

The tale, based in truth, is the story of the ill-fated love shared, but not really enjoyed, by legendary Hollywood filmmaker Mack Sennett and his even more ill-fated star, Mabel Normand,

Just as he was always going to be, Michael Ball is immense as Mack, giving a superb performance as the guy who knows how to bully and probably knows how to love, but is absolutely hopeless at expressing it. Ball gives us Mack the tyrant, the man who blazes a trail but can't make the transition to the new craze for talkies. At times, he is furious, at times almost grudgingly tender. Always he is superb.

But the night's revelation is US newcomer Rebecca LaChance. Yes, Mabel shows spirit, and presumably that's the point, but you get the feeling in the wrong hands it could be a rather colourless role.



It's certainly not with LaChance, who is simply lovely in the part, oozing decency, niceness and vulnerability. 'Look What Happened to Mabel' seems the highlight for so long for its sheer business – but for sheer beauty, her second-half 'Time Heals

Everything' tops the lot. Wonderful stuff in a production which is wonderful in every other respect, from the big numbers to the small, from the projections to the dancing. Warm, funny and very, very affecting.

## THE BEST OF THREE

by Gill Riddle

I was lucky enough to see *Mack and Mabel* at Chichester Festival Theatre on the last day, 5th September. We went to the stage door before the matinee and met a few old friends and found some new ones. Michael arrived in his car and was very patient with all of us that were waiting for a photo opportunity. He chatted, signed autographs and had photos taken, then moved his car forward a few feet and did the same again for the fans waiting there. He did this a number of times so it took him quite a while to reach the gates and drive in. He didn't rush anyone and was his usual lovely self, smiling and waving when he went in the door.

We went to see the matinee, our first time of seeing the show and the whole cast gave wonderful performances. Obviously Michael was superb and within minutes you were drawn into the story and were seeing Mack Sennett on stage. Michael is such a good actor and completely takes on whatever character he is playing. All too



soon the show was over, with a rousing standing ovation to finish and we couldn't wait to see the evening performance.

After what must have seemed like a very quick break, we were back in the theatre for the final performance, which must have been bittersweet for the cast. Again wonderful performances from everyone and Anna Jayne Casey was quite emotional at the audiences response to 'Tap Your Troubles Away'. Another standing ovation at the end, and even though Michael had

said he would be going straight home after the show, he still came out and signed autographs and had photos with the fans that had missed him earlier.

Then it was back to the hotel and home the next day, to wait for the tour. It seemed like an age as I wasn't going to see it again till October 22nd matinee, in Manchester with my good friend Rita McLaren and her friend Jan. We managed to get to the stage door before Michael had arrived so we were really happy when he walked around the corner. As usual he had time for everyone, signing autographs and having photos taken and made a point of going over to Alana (in her wheelchair) and having a lovely photo taken with her. It was quite a different experience with it being on a normal stage instead of the thrust stage at Chichester, but we soon got used to it. A wonderful show again and poor Lottie's custard pie in the face was thrown with quite a bit of force and seemed to knock her head back! A standing ovation as is the norm and then it was back to the station to catch the train home. A wonderful wonderful show which richly deserves a transfer to the West End, fingers crossed everyone.



stopping to sign anything anyone wanted and posing for photos. He was so cheerful and patient, as obliging as ever – even though he said he had his packing to do!

I think he was very happy about how *Mack and Mabel* had been received. I have to say it is an amazing production and I love everything about it. Michael of course as Mack, Rebecca as Mabel, Anna-Jane Casey (Lottie), Jack Edwards (Fatty), Gunnar Cauthery (Frank)... the entire cast without exception are simply superb. The orchestra and music is fabulous as is the staging, lighting and cinema effects.

It is funny, sad and witty. The dancing, singing and acting are all phenomenal and the costumes so glamorous. (I want some of those dresses and Mabel's brown fur coat!)

What's more it's a true story and I absolutely love it!



# One For The Road!

By Jen Garner. Main photo by Nikki Louise Blackstone.

Just prior to my writing these few lines, Michael finished two very successful weeks of *Mack and Mabel* at The Manchester Opera House.

With Manchester being a local venue, I feel a bit like a yoyo, having travelled backwards and forwards to see the show as much as possible. Well—when Michael happens to be in your area, you just have to don't you?

Before coming to Manchester, *Mack and Mabel* was in Plymouth and initially seven

weeks at The Festival Theatre Chichester. The show was a huge hit in Chichester and Plymouth. Manchester was no exception—it has gone from strength to strength with the audiences loving it.

My photo was taken by Nikki on the last day at Chichester, as Michael was preparing to embark on the *Mack and Mabel* UK tour.

There were crowds of people lining the road to the stage door. Michael, being Michael, drove in slowly leaning out of the car window, speaking to everyone and



## JANUARY 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				New Year's Day 1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Photo: Tina Wilkins



## FEBRUARY 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29						

Photo: Margaret Samson



## MARCH 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	Good Friday	25	26
Easter Monday	28	29	30	31		



## APRIL 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Photo: Joan Johnson

RAYMOND WEIL  
GENEVE

SONY AEG LIVE

AMERICAN EXPRESS

NORDOFF ROBBINS  
music transforming lives

NORDOFF ROBBINS  
music transforming lives

PPPL

MAY 2016						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1
Early May Bank Holiday	2	3	4	5	6	7
						8
	9	10	11	12	13	14
						15
	16	17	18	19	20	21
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	23	24	25	26	27	28
						29
Spring Bank Holiday	30	31				



## JUNE 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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27 Michael's Birthday	28	29	30			



## JULY 2016

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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



## AUGUST 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Summer Bank Holiday	29	30	31			



## SEPTEMBER 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Photo: Emifra Lum



## OCTOBER 2016

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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Photo: Maureen Wilkinson Rouse



## NOVEMBER 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



## DECEMBER 2016

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	Christmas Day 25
Boxing Day 26	27	28	29	30	31	

Photo: Margaret Samson

# A HEADACHE WITH A HAPPY ENDING

by Charlotte Bird



On Friday 2nd October I went to Plymouth with two friends to see *Mack & Mabel*. When we arrived at the Theatre we were unfortunately told that the show had been cancelled due to a death in the cast. We were all upset but I felt for the cast more. We went to the Box Office where we managed to get tickets for the Monday night. We then drove home to Barnstaple and then Bideford.

When we made the journey again on

Monday 5th October we were all looking forward to it. During Act One I realised that I was developing a bad migraine but had to wait until the interval to say anything to my friends.

I realised that I couldn't even see Act Two as my migraine was too bad. I had to go and sit in the foyer while my friends watched the rest of the show.

While I was sitting in the foyer Michael

walked passed me to make one of his entrances from the auditorium. All I wanted to do was go home after the show but my friend asked if we could go to the stage door.

I relented and we did go... and I was so happy we did, because Michael came out about ten minutes later and I had my photo taken with him which made my night. One happy Charlotte went home that night!

# FABULOUS PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Here are some great photos fans have taken with Michael while he has been touring with *Mack and Mabel*.



Nikki Blackstone, Jen Garner, Emma Smith, Donna Mulvey Jones



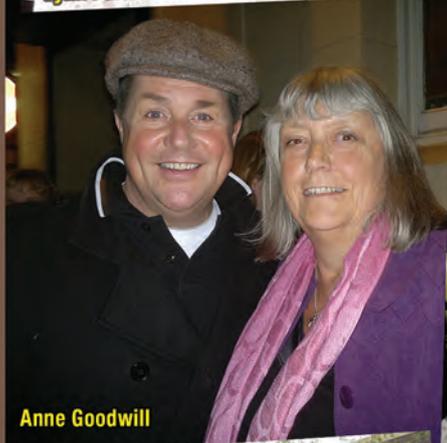
Laura Woods



Lynn Parkinson



Carolyn Bell



Anne Goodwill



Alison Shuttleworth



Valarie Bell



Tina Wilkins



Nicole Dawson



Liz Davy



Gill Dolding



Gerry Watson



Margaret Samson & Heike Kompaß



Nikki Louise Blackstone



Heather Turner



Jenna Clarke-Williams



Christine Rouse



Lynn Baker



Elaine Tabern



Annie Bainbridge



Sarah Mack



Theunsie Maree

## MEETING MICHAEL ON TOUR

Lots of fans were lucky enough to meet Michael as he performed around the country in *Mack and Mabel*. Here are some of their stories.



**CLAIRE STOCKIL**

I haven't liked to ask Michael for a photo since meeting him on the farm (*see full story in OTB 66*) as I wanted others to get the opportunity before me. However in Manchester, Babs was desperate to have her photo taken, and since I had a camera I ended up taking photos of her and Marie with Michael. So I plucked up the courage to ask for a non-farming, non-bearded photo! I was one very HAPPY girlie... I've now got both my 'bearded' & 'unbearded' pictures. Beard or no beard....I wouldn't say no to either!



**JEAN NICHOLS**

This was taken after the show on Tuesday the 13th October in Manchester. The whole show was fantastic and Michael simply superb. I am looking up to a hero!! But was actually telling Michael I had been unable to find my programme from *Pirates of Penzance* from 30 years ago which was when I first saw him at that theatre when my sister took the pic. We had travelled across the Pennine's for the show and meeting him was obviously the highlight of the week until 0.34am on Friday the 17th when my sister Margaret became a great grandma to Ella Grace - so as you can imagine it was quite a week!



**TRICIA DUCKETT**

At Southampton the last day of the tour, I had a bag which was made from a record of 'Only You'. Michael signed it for me. The photos were taken by my new partner who I met online and the picture I used online was from two years ago, when I did a meet and greet at Bournemouth. I loved the tour I did three shows. Not only that, I met some new people along the way.



**SANDRA HASSELL**

I went to see the *Mack & Mabel* matinee show in Manchester, what a brilliant show! Everything about it was fantastic... including of course the star himself, Michael. I had waited years to get a photo of him with me and my dream came true. I have never been so happy!



**ANNE MAY**

This photo was taken at "Friends of Chichester Festival Theatre" lunch with some members of the cast. I was lucky enough to be seated at Michael's table! I went from being 71 to 17. Sorry Michael, but you have that effect!

**JENNIFER DYSON**

I was lucky enough to see *Mack and Mabel* last night at the Opera House in Manchester. The show was unbelievable, the cast amazing and Michael was awesome as usual. Being on the front row was definitely a bonus! We managed to get to the stage door after the show and we didn't have to wait long for Michael to appear. I was really chuffed because he recognised me! I was able to ask for a photo and here's the result: credit to my fiancé John for taking the picture





# B.A.L.L. meets Ball

The newest member of the Fan Club - by Steve and Emma Lunt

On Monday 21st September at 6.15pm we were both delighted and so proud to welcome into the world our lovely little daughter and of course the newest member of the Michael Ball Fan Club! Weighing in at 6lb 12oz, Blossom Anna Liberty Lunt took to the stage!

For those who don't know, we met at a Michael Ball concert on the 25th Anniversary tour and were married a year later, so it's fair to say that without Michael our beautiful little daughter wouldn't even have been born! We are both Fan Club members so she can truly be called a Fan Club baby and we were both delighted and honoured when we were told that Maureen and Gill had made Blossom an honorary member of the Fan Club and her membership number was... 24601! All *Les Misérables* fans will understand that reference and Steve was particularly pleased as he had always wanted that number for his own membership!

Due to the pregnancy we had been unable to make it to Chichester, so on a cold November's morning we loaded up the car and headed up to the beautiful city of Edinburgh to see *Mack And Mabel*. Standing at the stage door beforehand was a hardy bunch of fans

and it seemed the only person nice and warm, and not suffering the bitter Scottish air, was little Blossom who was quite happy tucked up all nice and cosy in her pram!

Michael soon arrived and immediately made a beeline to the pram and so Blossom got her first meeting with Michael. I think it's fair to say that they both liked each other and she didn't even mind leaving her warm pram to get closer to him. Emma was to remark later it took her over twenty years of watching Michael before she first personally met him and Blossom did it in two months! She's already looking forward to her first Michael



Ball concert and has even been practicing her 'One Step Our Of Time' dance in her cot!

After Blossom's memorable first meeting with Michael, it was time to head into the theatre and get our first glimpse of *Mack and Mabel*.

Steve saw the last West End production of *M & M* many years ago and it's fair to say it didn't exactly leave him very impressed at the time so we entered the theatre with some trepidation.

So what did we think of the show? Sorry to say we didn't like it...

...

We absolutely LOVED it!!

What a production and what a show, we'd say it's up with *Patience* and *Sunset Boulevard* as the best thing Michael has done. It was genius making Mack more softer so the emotion was there as the end as you did care for him (the woman next to us was in floods of tears all through the bows!) and a masterclass in acting from Michael. Obviously his singing was top notch but that was always going to be the case - but the way he owned the stage as Mack was quite literally one of the greatest performances on stage we've been lucky enough to see. The rest of the cast were great also and a treat to see them all onstage.

So, a great show and it's a 10 out of 10 from us and bravo to Mr Ball and all involved!

P.S. We shall even forgive him trying to run off with Blossom before the show!





## MAKING MACK & MABEL

This display was sent to Michael by Katy Henderson and features characters that he has played built out of Lego! It went straight up on the wall in his dressing room. When we told Katy how thrilled Michael was she had another display made and gave it to him in Edinburgh.



### THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

[www.mbfcc.co.uk](http://www.mbfcc.co.uk)

Our site features a very active forum where many a debate has gone on between fans from all over the world. Why not check it out today?

There is also a Fan Club Members Forum for fan club members only.

The password to access it is: **MICHAEL19**



### PENPALS

Linda Stroude lives at 97 Five Acres, London Colney, St Albans, Herts AL2 1HY and would like to hear from any lady who she could go to Michael's concerts with. Her email address is [lindastroude1997@gmail.com](mailto:lindastroude1997@gmail.com)

Call the **Infoline** number below to hear what Michael is doing, news about concerts or where you can see him. Every **Infoline** bulletin is dated, so it's easy to keep up to date with what's going on!

### INFOLINE NUMBER

**0871 221 7811**

### MOVING HOUSE?

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



Michael Ball OBE  
Congratulations