

ON THE BALL

Issue 76



Hi Everyone

Here we are at the end of another fun-filled Michael year!

The highlight for us was the *Les Miserables* Staged Concerts. When it was announced that there was going to be an extra concert, our first thought was to try and get tickets for it. However, due to high demand there was a ballot for the tickets and we weren't successful in our application, so we resigned ourselves to the fact that we would have to go to our local cinema to see it. A couple of days before the show we received a phone call to say that Michael would like us to be his guests at the live performance in the Gielgud theatre! We felt so honoured and were very happy to accept. The atmosphere was incredible as the cast took their places on the stage. They all seemed to wind their performances up a notch, meaning the show was beyond magnificent.



At the end of the show Cameron Mackintosh came on stage and there followed a special encore with Michael singing 'Stars' and handing Javert's coat over to Bradley Jaden who will be undertaking the role at the Sondheim Theatre, plus five different Valjeans sang 'Bring Him Home' together. All in all it was another memorable evening - one we will never forget.

Next year starts with Michael and Alfie's Arena Tour followed by "Hairspray" in the Summer.

Our thanks go to James Gaden for once again producing *On The Ball*, along with everyone who has contributed to it. We also thank Andrew Ross, Live Nation and Decca Records.

Last but not least our biggest thanks goes of course to Michael for all the love and support he sends out to everyone.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dearest Everyone,

Oh my goodness what a full on fantastic few months we have had! I thought Les Mis was going to be special but I had no idea it was going to turn into the extraordinary event that it has become. I'm so thrilled that we were able to film it and put it into cinemas world wide and there is going to be a D.V.D and CD recording.

It was such a joy to see so many of you at the stage door over the 16 weeks we were there but I know many people couldn't get to the West End to see us, so to have a permanent record of it means you will be able

to enjoy it in some way, shape or form.

And in the middle of it all Alfie and I released our 3rd album!! The response to it has been fabulous and I'm currently writing this letter in my dressing room at Elstree as we wait to start shooting our Christmas special. Amazing times and all down to you and your continued support and love.

Hopfully I will get some time off with the family over Christmas, put my feet up, snuggle the dogs and then get ready for the Arena tour. Can't wait to see you somewhere on the road or maybe at the Coliseum when we do Hairspray.

It's been an extraordinary year for us all both personally and on a global level. A time of change, uncertainty and challenge, but as the greatest philosopher once said. 'This too shall pass'.

Stay strong, stay well and stay happy, find joy where you can and deal with life's absurdities with dignity and kindness. That way we won't go too far wrong.

Thank you for giving me so much joy and showing me so much kindness, loyalty and love. I wish you the happiest of New Years and I can't wait to see you again soon sometime somewhere

God Bless
and

All my love

Phil
x



RADIO CHATTER

by Larry Wilkie

The story starts with me receiving a message from Dot while I was at work, in the week leading up to Fathers Day.

The message said that Michael had put out a tweet asking for a Father and Son (or daughter) to apply to go on the show, and do the 'On The Ball' quiz on Fathers Day, and was accompanied with a message from Dot saying "I dare you"!

Well I was game, so told her to go ahead and send in my application, along with our youngest son Daniel, and if chosen we would compete in the quiz.

The application was sent in, and a couple of days later I received an email from the Radio 2 team asking for some personal details. I thought at this point that I must have been chosen for the show on Fathers Day, however

I didn't hear any more that week and therefore obviously I hadn't been picked.

I thought no more of it, and the following weekend we had tickets for the Michael and Alfie evening at the Hampton Court Festival on the Saturday night. Here we are in the gardens before the show (no photography was allowed during the performance).



We had a lovely evening before the show, and then went to take our seats quite early before the performance to avoid the rush.

While we were sat chatting, waiting for the show to start, my phone buzzed in my pocket. It was a text message from the Radio 2 team asking if I was free on Sunday morning to do the 'On The Ball' quiz. Either just me, or my son and I if we were both free. Daniel was working, but I was happy to go ahead with it, and was in the process of sending a reply, thinking perhaps I could volunteer Dot to go on it as well, however she read my mind and said "Don't you dare!" I think she was worried that even if Michael asked her name she would get the answer wrong, as she would be all of a dither speaking to him on air!

I therefore sent a reply saying that I was happy to go on, but it would just be me. I told them that ironically I was sat waiting for Michael to come on stage at that very moment. They then replied saying thank you, they had my information from the previous email and they would call me in the morning at 9 o'clock with the final details.

The concert was absolutely fabulous, of course, then after the following firework display, we made our way back to our hotel.

The following morning, sure enough at 9 o'clock, I received the phone call to go through last minute details. They explained that the quiz is recorded just prior to the start of the show, so the next contact will be from Michael himself, he will have a little chat and then go into the quiz.

So there we waited and the phone rang just after 10.30. I answered it and there was music playing, then the man himself came on and chatted for a couple of minutes.

He asked who was with me so I told him it was Dot, and he then asked what we had been doing on Saturday night. I think my answer was along the lines of "watching a couple of old boys singing in some posh gaffe in London". He asked if we had been to watch Ball and Boe, which I confirmed, and then he asked what I thought of his garden! He joked that he usually mowed the lawns himself on a Thursday!

As we then got to the quiz, he informed me that the first contestant, Elaine Roberts, had scored 19 points – a good score!

Fortunately for me, the questions fell right, and I managed to beat Elaine's score, with a very healthy 24 points, which Michael informed me was enough, at that point, to get me into the final at the end of the year. So we shall see if that happens. It was a great experience.

I had intended to take Dot down to Wogan House from the hotel so that she could say hi to Michael and if he was not in too much of a rush and get a quick picture with him (it was also his birthday that day). So we got into the car for the drive into Wogan House, and here the surreal part came in, as we listened to the show in the car, and heard the quiz during the journey in!

After the show Michael came out and was as gracious as ever with the fans that had gathered outside. Dot was wearing a T-shirt that I had ordered for her, with a picture of her and Michael from last year's cruise, and she managed to get him to sign it for her.

While I was taking these pictures, Dot told Michael that I was the one that had been on his quiz earlier that day. I then had my picture taken with him as well.

It was a fabulous weekend, and I even

received my 'On The Ball' sticker which is now proudly displayed... in Dot's car, not mine!

Since then we have had the pleasure of going to see Michael again in the truly fabulous *Les Misérables* staged concert, which I'm sure will be reviewed by many others. A truly unforgettable night, and again Michael was very gracious pre-show allowing pictures to be taken with him and signing autographs afterwards.

I managed to buy two tickets on a re-sale for Tuesday 15th October so that we could see the show for a second time, and kept it as a surprise for Dot.

I had a conversation with her the previous week, about wanting to see another show in London (which is true) and then the following day I told her that I had bought tickets for Tuesday night, but didn't specify which show. Thankfully she didn't ask, but presumed they were for the show I had spoken about.

I wanted to add to the surprise, so, having planned to leave home in Wales at ten o'clock on the Tuesday morning, I sent an email to Ken Bruce (Radio 2), asking if it was possible for him to read out a message to Dot, any time after 10 o'clock.

We had just got in the car, and I put the radio on, and before we had even got off the



drive, he read out my message saying that, as part of Dot's retirement celebrations, we were going to London to see a show, but it is probably not the show you are expecting, as you are going to see the concert version of *Les Mis*, with Radio 2's own Michael Ball, and Matt Lucas.

The look on Dot's face was priceless and well worth all the effort, and needless to say we had a truly fabulous night at the show!

We didn't get to see Michael at the stage door this time, but had a great chat with John Owen-Jones, Matt Lucas, Carrie Hope Fletcher and Katy Secombe, and Dot now has the autographs of all the main cast from over the two shows we have seen.



PROMS IN THE PARK 2019

Michael was given the job of hosting the Last Night of the Proms celebrations in Hyde Park in September. The concert featured an eclectic array of performers such as founding member of The Pretenders Chrissie Hynde, English-Italian singer-songwriter Jack Savoretti, vocalist Gabrielle and the cast of *Les Misérables*. The event was headlined by Barry Manilow. Michael sang as well as doing his hosting duties, performing rousing renditions of 'Stars' and 'Anthem'. Julie Vidler and Janet Delasalle were in attendance to capture some moments from the show.



Photo: Julie Vidler



Photo: Janet Delasalle



LYTHAM FESTIVAL 2019

Michael performed at the 'Hollywood Proms' on Sunday 14th July 2019, the final night at Lytham Festival as part of their 10th Anniversary celebrations. Also taking part in the festival were Sheridan Smith, Tony Award winner Lea Salonga and Leanne Jones, who joined Michael on-stage for a duet. Carolyn Bell was in attendance to take these great photos.





An Exciting Week In September

By Brenda Licence

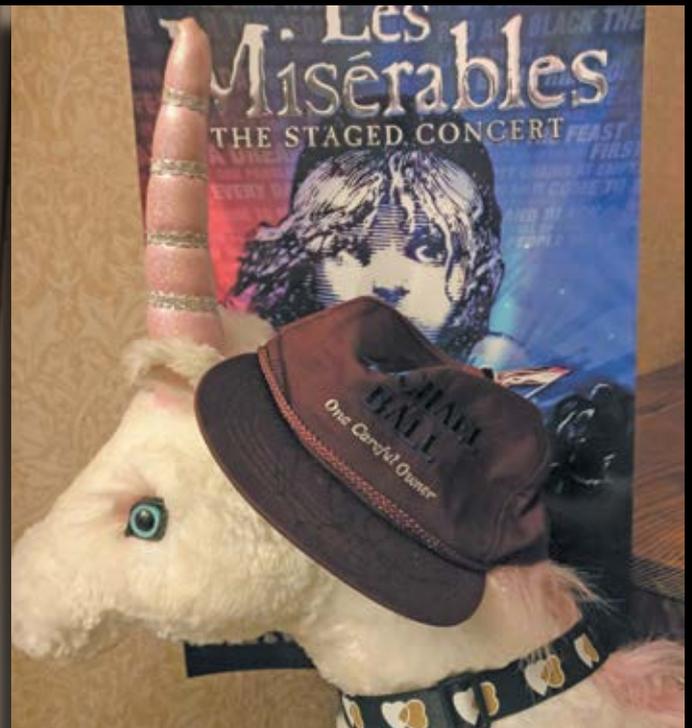
At the beginning of September I was thrilled to receive an e-mail from Maureen and Gill, informing me that I had won the first prize in their recent Fan Club raffle. Maureen and her husband were able to deliver the prize to me a couple of days later, it was a great pleasure to meet them both. The prize was a framed disc for sales of Michael's album 'The Best of Michael Ball' (with Michael's signature on the back), a signed CD, photos, Fan Club memorabilia and several On The Ball magazines.

To complete my exciting week, I went to London to see Michael in *Les Misérables*. What an amazing experience, well worth the time spent in a long queue on the computer trying to get tickets! Everyone in the cast was brilliant, Alfie Boe and Matt Lucas were outstanding and Michael was a revelation as Javert – what a stunning performance.

Thank you again Maureen and Gill for organising the raffle and for my wonderful prize!



ONE CAREFUL OWNER



In August we went to see Michael Ball in *Les Misérables*. We were lucky to speak to the man himself and he signed a cap which my Mum had from Michael's *One Careful Owner* tour. Everything was fabulous and we had a very exciting holiday. I can't wait to see Michael in *Hairspray* in July. I am also excited about seeing Michael with Alfie at the O2 in March. I am hoping to get more accessories for my pet unicorn!

From Esther, aged 10.



Photo: James Hole

JANUARY 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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Photo: Carolyn Bell

FEBRUARY 2020

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MARCH 2020

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Photo: James Hole

APRIL 2020

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Photo: Carolyn Bell

MAY 2020

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31						



Photo: Gill Oakley

JUNE 2020

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Photo: James Hole

JULY 2020

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Photo: James Hole

AUGUST 2020

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Photo: Carolyn Bell

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Photo: James Hole

OCTOBER 2020

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Photo: Claire Stockill

NOVEMBER 2020

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Photo: Carolyn Bell

DECEMBER 2020

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CHEERING UP CHARLIE

Actress and music teacher Jacqueline Hugh took to the internet in the summer, asking for help from celebrities to raise the spirits of one of her nine year old pupils, a boy named Charlie, who was being bullied by other children for liking Musical Theatre shows. A campaign carrying the hash-tag 'CheerUpCharlie' started circulating on Twitter, with several West End Performers sending messages of support. Members of the cast of *Rock Of Ages* even performed a version of Elton John's 'I'm Still Standing' for him. However it was a response from Michael that really made his day!

Michael sent a typically lovely video message and said "if you're down in London and fancy coming to see the new *Les Mis*, it's sold out but I can sort you out tickets. Why don't you come and see it and I'll introduce you to everyone afterwards as well." Charlie naturally accepted and Michael was as good as his word, making Charlie's trip very special indeed!



Look who I bumped into on Sunday... Charlie is the very special little boy who is only 9 years old and was being bullied at school because he loved Musical Theatre! Michael Ball has championed his cause and Charlie was very excited as he told me he was Michael's special guest and would be appearing on stage with him! He then asked me if I would like a photograph with him? How could I resist? His Mum Kat took this photo. Later Michael invited him to sing the finale song with the cast of *Les Mis*... what an incredibly exciting and proud moment for a very strong little boy who wants to help others by shouting from the rooftops "Bulling is never acceptable".

Val Marsh





Photo: Sue Ashton

Children in Need from The Savoy Theatre

By Julie Vidler

When Michael announced on his Radio 2 show that he was going to be doing his show at The Savoy Theatre again in aid of Children In Need, I knew I had to try and get a ticket. I went to last year's, and it was a brilliant two hours of pure entertainment in aid of such a good cause.

On the day of the show, my friends and I had all agreed that we were going to get into the spirit of things by wearing matching Pudsey T-shirts and ears. We arrived at the Savoy where we queued outside before being let into the theatre. Pudsey Bear was outside the theatre waving to people in the queue. We all decided it would be great to have a group photo with him. The excitement to the show was building and at approximately 10:45 we went into the theatre and took our seats. Before the show started Michael explained that he was feeling poorly but being the professional that he is, he battled on to bring an amazing two hours of entertainment... during which, he even managed some impressive dancing skills!

Michael's guests for the show were Rick Astley, Status Quo, James Blunt, Bonnie Langford, Alfie Boe and the *Les Misérables* cast. There were also the usual features like the Sunday Boasts and a special mother and daughter edition of the quiz 'On The Ball'.

First to appear on stage was The Rock Choir, who opened with Queen's 'Don't Stop Me Now'. They were incredible and had everyone singing and dancing creating a real party atmosphere.

Rick Astley was next up, he chatted to Michael, then sang 'Every One Of Us' and 'Never Gonna Give You Up'. The latter had everyone up on their feet dancing.

Status Quo were next. They were brilliant! They sang two songs, one of which was 'Rockin' All Over The World'. They also had a chat with Michael. Michael spoke with Francis Rossi about the band's

new album and went onto explain that he had already heard it as Andy Bown, from the band, is his neighbour. During the interview Michael went over to his table and picked up a bottle of what he thought was water from the table. As he went to drink it, Michael said to Francis jokingly in disbelief "It's not water, it's neat gin." Cue laughter from the audience!

Bonnie Langford was another of Michael's guests (for anyone not familiar with Bonnie Langford, she is currently starring in the *9 To 5* musical). She spoke about how much the cast had raised from audience collections during the week leading up to Savoy show. She then went on to chat about *9 To 5* the musical, telling Michael that David Hasselhoff is going to be the temporary replacement for Brian Conley whilst he appears in pantomime. It was funny, because Bonnie explained that she's going to be dancing with him in the show and he's 6ft 5. Michael joked "you're not the biggest" to which Bonnie replied "I'm only 5ft 1". Michael continued with "you are the bendiest". Everyone laughed. Michael and Bonnie reminisced about when he and Bonnie first shared their first stage kiss. Michael then read an e-mail from a listener which read "Michael, I hope you get that stage kiss again". Michael turned to Bonnie and said "shall we?". What followed was "oohs" from the audience as they re-enacted that moment. At the end of the interview Michael played the song *9 To 5* by Dolly Parton. Michael and Bonnie had a dance



Photo: Sue Ashton



Pictured in the theatre: Angie Taylor, Janice Lakey, Janice Lazarus, Anne Smith, Gill Riddle, Vehbiye Yonchu, Julie Vidler, Zalihe Yonchu, Helen Grenville, Gill Tee, Nikki Guttridge.

as the song played, with Bonnie displaying an impressive high kick – something I certainly can't do!

Michael's next guest was his mate Alfie Boe. Michael and Alfie sang 'Something Inside So Strong'. After they had finished, he and Alfie had a chat. Alfie said what an exciting weekend it had been and announced he and Michael's album 'Back Together' had reached number 2 in the charts. Everyone cheered. Michael acted surprised and joked adding "I didn't know that?". Alfie then joked with Michael asking him "Did you know we are going on tour in February?". Michael replied "Are we?" Alfie carried on by saying "You know you can get tickets through Ticketmaster?". Michael replied jokingly "You can't do that Alfie. I'll get told off". Michael followed this by saying "Talking of the tour, I've got a great idea for us, because, let's be honest, there ain't no party like a Ball/Boe party and I honestly think that when we're together we're able to 'Reach' for the stars and we know a song about that." Cue the playing of song 'Reach' by S Club 7. Michael then started dancing whilst pointing at Alfie. Alfie looking on with a look as if to say "you are joking". Alfie then started to move his hips from side to side. The audience laughed as Alfie gave in.

Michael's last guests were Charlie, the young anti-bullying campaigner, who set up the "Cheer up Charlie" anti bullying campaign after being bullied for his love of musical theatre, together with *Les Misérables* cast. A funny moment was when Michael said asked Charlie "of all the people starring in the West End, what's been your favourite show"? Thinking Charlie was going to say "*Les Misérables*", he paused thinking about his answer "um" was his reply, then comes out with "*Mary Poppins*" before quickly adding "*Les Misérables*".

Everyone laughed. Michael then asked Charlie is he wanted to sing with the cast. Charlie was delighted. The cast proceeded



Photo: Julie Vidler

to sing 'One Day More' as the show finale. This was an end to what was an incredible couple of hours. The highlights for me had to be Michael dancing throughout, the funniest bit being him clutching onto

two microphone stands whilst dancing in between them. I also really enjoyed Rick Astley singing 'Never Gonna Give You Up' and The Rock Choir, but, best of all, was Alfie and Michael duetting and a brilliant performance from *Les Misérables* cast.

So, at 1pm it was all over. A brilliant two hours and money well spent. I wish I could have rewound that time and seen it all again. Last year's show was brilliant and this year's was even better.

A big thank you to everyone involved in making this a fantastic show and for raising so much money for a worthy cause. The event raised over £3000.

After the show, my eleven friends and I went to Covent Garden for a lovely lunch – still dressed in Pudsey T-shirt and ears. It was a perfect end to a fantastic day.

Here's to Children in Need at Savoy Theatre 2020, to do it all over again.



Fan Club members who attended the show: Gill Riddle, Nikki Guttridge, Chris Tietjen, Janice Lazarus, Gill Tee, Angie Taylor, Helen Grenville, Janice Lakey, Zalihe Yonchu, Julie Vidler

Mr. Les Misérables

Michael signed up to play the role of Javert in a concert production of *Les Misérables* for a sixteen week run in the West End. The all-star cast also included Alfie Boe sharing the role of Jean Valjean with John Owen Jones. Many fans went down to see the show and here are some of their thoughts...





Photo: Michael Le Poer Trench



Photo: Matt Murphy



Photo: Matt Murphy



Photo: Matt Murphy

To set the scene, I only saw *Les Mis* for the first time last year and only saw Michael for the first time in the West End last year in *Chess*. So as you can imagine, I was over the moon to get the chance to see the staged concert at Gielgud. We opted for a midweek matinee for ease of travel as we do normally. I have to say what a gorgeous venue this is, and such a clever use of amazing lighting and space. The orchestra was top notch. We sat in grand circle, which is where I am comfortable, smack in middle so could see right down the stairs used for entries and exits. The view was amazing and we missed nothing across whole stage.

From the opening bars of music and the lights, it was mesmerising. Just to see Michael on one side as Javert and John Owen Jones on the other as Jean Valjean, menacingly silent while the others sang, had me hooked. To see these two legends on stage at the same time was a huge tick off my bucket list.

Michael was excellent as Javert, very imposing, wielding the baton. He was in fine voice, while John was a pure mix of

emotions for every different song. The confrontation was incredible, I tried listening to one at time and just don't know how they can sing their own lines without drifting off to the other lines, wonderful.

Matt Lucas and Katy Secombe were an outstanding combination as Thenardiers, top marks to them! Full credit to the whole cast, excellent singing and believable characters, even if you didn't know the story in full.

Highlights for me were Michael singing 'Stars' and the suicide was dramatic, right down to the ghostly exit down the stairs.

Of course John Owen Jones needs a mention for the best version of 'Bring Him Home' I think I have ever heard, such emotion, making that another huge tick off my list.

What an afternoon we had and before the show, after walking away from the busy stage door which was getting bit crowded for me, we turned a corner and Michael walked straight in front of us – bonus! One happy bunny indeed.

Janet Pearson



I was recently lucky enough to come from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania to see Michael perform.

It was a dream come true. I made it to London to see *Les Mis* concert... twice! It was all that I had hope for and more! I have been crippled by awful anxiety for years. I finally have faced those demons and beaten them. Flying to London was a huge step for me. What an experience I had. *Les Mis* was fabulous! The theatre is gorgeous. The first show I attended, I was in the eleventh row to the left of the stage. John Owen Jones was exceptional as Jean Valjean. Michael was unbelievable! His interpretation of Javert was so moving. Everyone was wonderful.

The performance was over way too

soon. I stopped at the stage door afterward and was lucky enough to get a selfie with JOJ. It was such a fantastic experience. The second night I had a seat front and centre! Oh my God! Unfortunately Alfie was ill but thankfully JOJ filled in. Once again the show was incredible! Front row was absolutely awesome!

I was expecting to receive a bit a spit from some of the performers, however I was lucky to have missed out – I did manage to get a piece of the yellow ticket though! Yay me! I was so excited I squealed like a school girl. Once again I was not disappointed!

The performance was fabulous in every way. Carrie sent shivers down my spine. I managed to get to the stage door again

and both Michael and JOJ signed my piece of the yellow ticket. I also managed to get selfies with Carrie and Matt - joined by my friend Stacey Inge Childress. There were a few handicapped ladies beside me at the end of the barricade and Michael was lovely enough to take selfies with them. Such a wonderful man! Stacey and I managed to meet some of the 'Ballettes' on Sunday at Wogan House. We met Michael and got wonderful pictures – I'm still on cloud nine and don't want to come down. I will never forget this absolutely amazing trip. I overcame obstacles to make this dream come true! I now plan to return in June with Stacey to see *Hairspray*. I can't wait to return to London. Until June...

Laura Mannella



Photo: Ruth Hawkins



Photo: Matt Murphy



Photo: Ruth Hawkins

The *Les Misérables* concert was superb. Such a huge show in a small theatre, but brilliantly put together. The staging and lighting were very cleverly done.

Act one drew you straight in from first note, then Michael walked purposefully onto the stage, you could almost feel him there before you saw him, he was totally focused on the job in hand. He was utterly convincing as Javert. When he belted out 'Stars', he sang it with such passion, his voice so powerful, the whole place erupted with cheers and applause!

Act two came, and the cast were brilliant as the story unfolded. Then came Javert's suicide. Michael's interpretation of the anguished soul that is Javert was incredible, as he turned to walk down the steps, a ghostly light engulfed him.

When it was time for the curtain call, everybody was on their feet, cheering and applauding every cast member. With the reappearance of Javert and Valjean, the cheering just got louder.

Michael as ever was so humble, he mouthed "Amazing," he is sincerely amazed at the way people react to everything he does!

This version of the show was outstanding, in every way, and will long be remembered.

Sharon Fellows



Photo: Helen Grenville

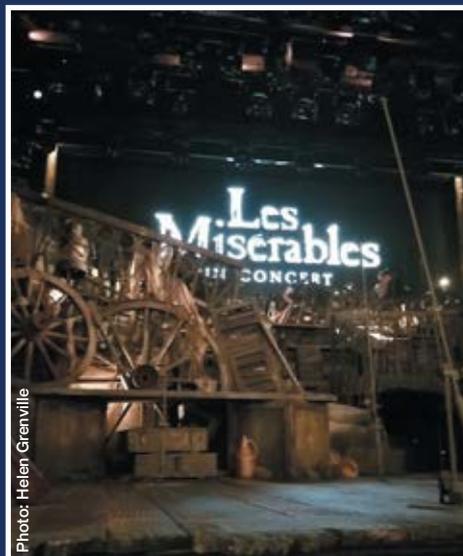


Photo: Helen Grenville



Photo: Helen Grenville

We saw the *Les Mis* concert on Thursday and it was breathtaking!

I've been a massive fan of Michael since I was about 5 years old, and we have had such a rough time this past year due to our baby son being constantly in hospital.

Michael is and has been always there for me – and has helped me through my toughest moments. To meet him was the greatest gift I could ever have asked for!

As for the concert - I've never seen anything like it! I was absolutely blown away by the talent.

Amy Ferguson



Photo: Michael Le Poer Trench



Photo: Michael Le Poer Trench

When I first heard that Michael Ball and Alfie Boe were going to be starring in the *Les Misérables* staged concert, I knew I had to get a ticket. I am a huge fan of *Les Misérables* anyway, having seen the London cast production way back in 1995 but, this was going to be an extra special performance.

Having heard good things from friends who had already seen it, I knew I was in for a treat. On the 11th August I had spoken to Michael at Wogan House and he said those exact words, that I wouldn't be disappointed and he wasn't wrong!

At 2.30 the lights dimmed in the theatre and the excitement started to build. After something funny at the start, which I'm not going to spoil for people yet to see the show, the dramatic first notes signalled the start of something completely magical. I had excited butterflies in my stomach as I couldn't believe I was here in the beautiful, intimate Gielgud Theatre with a birds eye view of the stage (Stalls row B near centre stage). I was in seventh heaven.

From the moment the show started I was completely mesmerised. Normally in shows, my mind can wander, but I was totally engrossed. *Les Misérables* certainly takes you on a rollercoaster of emotions. It has iconic songs that are sung with pure passion that they will take your breath away and have you reaching for the tissues. There are songs that will have you laughing in your seat such as 'Master Of The House' and there are

songs that you feel you want to sing along to but have to stop yourself for fear of annoying the people around you. I had to stop myself when I heard 'Do You Hear The People Sing?'

Comical touches came from Katy Secombe and Matt Lucas as The Thenardiers, who both gave outstanding performances and provided pure comedy joy. There were two stand out musical performances for me and they were provided by Michael singing 'Stars' and Alfie singing 'Bring Him Home'. When Alfie sang this classic song, it was surreal in the theatre as it was so quiet, you could hear a pin drop. I totally forgot there was an audience around me. Alfie got a rapturous applause and rightly so.

Michael's version of 'Stars' was beautiful and this also got a amazing reception. Having said there were two stand out songs, there were so many more I loved. Carrie Hope Fletcher singing 'I Dreamed A Dream' was beautiful and Shan Ako's rendition of 'On My Own' was just spellbinding.

There were so many incredible, flawless performances from everyone through this show that I couldn't single out anyone as the whole cast was equally as good. Credit does go to the two young stars of the show though, who played Cosette and Gavroche, they are stars in the making.

Aside from the cast, a huge thank you goes to the behind the scenes team. This includes those responsible for creating the set, the barricade, the lighting and the special effects, which were phenomenal. Last but not least, and without them there wouldn't be a show, the fantastic orchestra. They were beyond excellent.

Cameron Mackintosh has created a first class production and for those yet to see it your are in for a treat. It's a must see show. My friends and I came out of the theatre speechless as we were totally blown away. As I said at the start of my review, I saw the full staged production in 1995 but this surpasses that. It didn't feel like a concert as everyone put their heart and souls into creating something truly special. All the characters were brought to life. I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity of seeing *Les Misérables*. I feel like 'I Dreamed A Dream'.

Julie Vidler



Photo: Alyson Shuttleworth



Gill Tee was another fan who was impressed with the lighting, capturing these shots about which she says “many people who have only sat in the stalls for *Les Mis* will not have seen what happens to the stage when everyone has left the curtain call. This is a great view and pretty eerie I think.”



Here are some photos I took from the special evening when, at the end of concert, Michael said a few words as it was 34 years to the day that he had appeared in *Les Mis* in London. The audience joined the cast in toasting the anniversary with champagne! A nice end to a superb concert!

Peter Hartley

LES MISÉRABLES DVD ANNOUNCED



If you are missing your time at the barricades, or were unable to attend any of the shows, the good news is not only was one of the concerts from December 2nd live-streamed into cinemas, it was also recorded for a DVD release. No release date has been named as yet, the only word is it will be out in the Spring of 2020. The Fan Club will provide a release date as soon as we have one.

MEETINGS WITH MICHAEL

When Michael is doing a theatre run it gives fans a good opportunity to say hello at the stage door. Here are some lucky fans who did just that.



ELAINE BILLER



CLAIRE SHORTER



SHARON FELLOWS



AMY FERGUSON



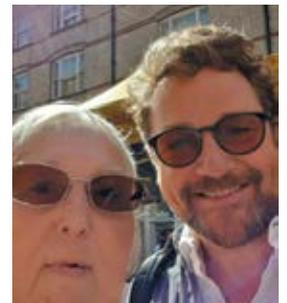
JOAN RIDDLE



ALYSON SHUTTLEWORTH



SALLY HALL



PAM AIRD



JEN GARNER



LAURA MANNELLA & STACEY INGE CHILDRESS



MARGARET SAMSON



THE NEXT GENERATION

By Lisa Bark

Being a lifelong fan of Michael (well, since I was 13, 26 years ago) then it seems only right that he meets my new family members early on!

When we chatted at the stage door in Bristol, he had some great ideas for her name (Michelle, Michaela....anyone sensing a theme?!).

So at 2 weeks old, my Mum (Michelle) and I went for a trip to Wogan House and introduced Michael to Talia along with my son, Oli, who is also a big fan (regularly asking where Michael is, turning on his music and singing along!). He was armed with his superhero toy collection to keep him busy while he's 'waiting for Michael Ball'. As always, Michael was completely enamoured with seeing a baby and gave Talia such a lovely cuddle. He also made Oli very happy talking about favourite superheroes, with them both agreeing on Captain America!

A lovely trip and I can't wait to take Oli to his first concert!



PENPALS

The fans below would love to hear from anyone with a love of Michael:

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THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

www.mbfanclub.co.uk

The Michael Ball Fan Club is now completely free to join – simply visit the website address above and register your email address and you will receive notifications every time there is some Michael Ball news to report. There is also a members area where you can download past issues of On The Ball and access Michael's past Infoline messages.

The password to access it is: **MBFC27**



—BACK TOGETHER—

MICHAEL **B** ALFIE
BALL BOE

UK TOUR 2020

22 FEB GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
23 FEB ABERDEEN P&J LIVE
25 FEB LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
27 FEB MANCHESTER ARENA
28 FEB NOTTINGHAM MOTORPOINT ARENA
01 MAR BIRMINGHAM ARENA
03 MAR CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
04 MAR BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
06 MAR BRIGHTON CENTRE
07 MAR LONDON THE O2



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