

ON THE BALL

Issue 84



Hi Everyone

So here we are at the end of another year. As Michael says in his letter there have been quite a few highs and lows. The best news for us is that Gill is now in remission and doesn't require any more treatment at the moment.

It was very sad that Aspects had to close early but Michael's "Different Aspects" Memoir is brilliant! You can imagine how honoured we felt to get a couple of mentions along with two photos.



Michael's plans for his solo tour "On With The Show" sound wonderful. So does the fact that the rights have been bought for his first novel "The Empire" to be turned into a TV series, and he's busy writing book two which will be published later next year.

Our thanks go to James Gaden for another fabulous issue, Chris Oakley for all his technical skills, along with everyone who has contributed. We hope that you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

Compiled and designed by James Gaden - www.halo-graphic.com. Email: james@halo-graphic.com

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Dear Everyone,

You find me writing this as the Christmas season is starting to get under way and I don't know if you're like me but it's always the time of year where we marvel at how quickly the year has flashed past, what has happened to us, what didn't happen, who we are missing, what's been achieved and what we hope we can do to make the next year as positive, productive and perfect as we can. Inevitably plans don't always work out and life throws things at us that we hadn't expected but we do what we always do when that happens..... meet those challenges head on, adapt and navigate our way through as best we can.

This year for me has been full of surprises, great highs, inevitable lows, new challenges, old faces and always making me want to do each new project to the very best of my ability, be it writing the memoir, revisiting the West End in aspects, appearing in concert or on T.V. or hosting my beloved radio show.

So many great and exciting things have happened and sometimes when I look back at what's been achieved it's a little overwhelming. It's always a challenge to get the work, rest and play balance right in our lives but as I love my work so much it's sometimes hard to differentiate between them. I try my best.

The new year starts with me gearing up for the 'On with the Show' tour and it's got me thinking hard about what to present to you all. Having the incredible Amy Wadge join me is so exciting and if you don't yet know her work and talent you are going to be blown away.

I want this tour to be my most personal ever with the songs, old and new, that really define me as an artist, that I love to share with you and that can bring us all together for the time in the theatre that we share. I want us to laugh, cry, sing, dance and rejoice in spending precious moments with each other and for us to leave at the end of the

evening feeling just a bit better than we did when we came in.

We are all aware of the challenges we may face over the next weeks and months on a personal and more global level and I know we will face those challenges head on with the compassion, care, kindness, fairness and dignity we all aspire to and making sure we take those moments to join together, to rejoice and to do whatever we can to make a positive difference wherever we can.

For many this is the most wonderful time of year, for others the hardest and most challenging but for all of us it is the opportunity to reflect, take stock and decide how the future can be better and how we can help to make it happen.

So wherever you are, whatever you are doing, wherever we meet up together again I'm always sending my heartfelt love and thanks for being such a beautiful, positive and glorious part of my very lucky life

I bloody love you
God Bless
Phil

ASPECTS OF



ROUNDUP PART TWO

Picking up from where we left off last issue, many more fans were able to attend performances of *Aspects Of Love* before it unfortunately had to close early. Here are some of their experiences...

A couple of years ago I wrote in *On The Ball* about my lack of confidence when near Michael and ended with "well, maybe one day".

When I heard *Aspects Of Love* was returning I was determined to meet him for the first time in 20 years. My first visit was on May 27th with my daughter Molly. We just walked by the stage door after the show and there he was!! Molly pushed me forward and I stood, heart racing, until he signed my programme. I managed a quiet "thank you" and stepped away glowing! Molly managed

to take some great photos.

So progress towards my goal of actually speaking! My second visit was on July 1st with my elderly parents and friend. Mum had broken her arm shortly before the trip and was in a cast. We waited at the stage door and Michael came out smiling and chatting and signing programmes. Mum was suddenly at the front and he looked at her and said "what have you done?" in a lovely caring manner. He signed her cast and told her to take care. I again managed a thank you but it was Mum's time to glow. We made sure to keep the cast

when it was removed!

So I had met him twice and barely said a word! I knew I had to try harder so I suggested to my husband Nigel that we go to London and I would try one last time. Nigel is not a fan of musicals (weird I know!!!) but he agreed to take the photos so I booked the evening show on Tuesday 25th July for myself and got the middle of row A.

The day arrived and I was so excited. I planned to wait at the theatre for Michael to arrive as I really wanted a picture with him. We got there early at about 4.30 but I was not going to move. 4.45, 5pm and 5.15 came and went and no Michael. We were staring at each car in turn hoping it would be him and finally at around 5.20 a black car pulled up and out stepped the man himself!

Now I haven't mentioned yet but I was the only one there so when he came towards me and said "hello there" I could barely contain



the excitement. I had brought the photo of us taken in the Dress Circle shop and I showed it to him and said we had the photo taken 20 years ago and he said "well, we had better have another one then!" Nigel took some great photos and then Michael signed the original photo for me. I managed to tell him I was in the front row and then he went inside.

I have been beaming ever since and at the end of the show I am sure I got a quick nod from him (or was that just wishful thinking?) He was so lovely, warm and caring and it was a moment I shall treasure forever. The photo is now framed and in my kitchen so I look at it every day!

So I did it! I met him and managed a few words - couldn't have asked for more! A memory of a happy moment indeed!

Jackie North

Wow! The show was truly amazing! I had booked to see *Aspects Of Love* with my mum in September. When we heard the show was ending earlier than expected, I decided to make the trip from Manchester to London on my own as unfortunately my mum couldn't attend any of the earlier dates - so on Wednesday 26th July I saw the matinee performance of AOL - I am so glad I did, as I managed to get a picture with Michael at the stage door!

Alyson Shuttleworth



Claire Wilson captured these moments at the stage door.





I hadn't seen Michael or *Aspects Of Love* for a while, so I was super-excited at the prospect of seeing him and the show again.

Thanks to Carolyn Hurley, the photo was taken outside the stage door in between the matinee and the evening show when Michael came out regularly to have photos and sign programmes etc. During this time, he was gracious, generous and patient. (I think he needed the patience!)

Anyway, regarding the show itself, I loved it! I thought it was beautifully produced, loved the score, lyrics, staging and thought the whole company and orchestra were outstanding. It was so well cast and of course Michael made a fabulous 'Uncle George', aging to perfection.

I was sad when it ended prematurely but unfortunately, this was a sign of the times and as Michael said in his book... 'That's Showbiz'!

Jen Garner

I travelled from Savannah, Georgia to see the musical and although so disappointed that I didn't meet Michael, I loved the show! Maybe I can come next year to a concert and attend a meet and greet.

Beth Brooks



As the sun sets over Shaftesbury Avenue and *Aspects Of Love* draws to a close. I thought I would write down a few thoughts from our recent visit to the show.

I did not see the original AOL production but I did know the Original London Cast recording very well. I went to the show as a 60th birthday present along with my daughter Hannah and granddaughter Nuala. It was their first time in London. Nuala had seen *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia*, *Heathers* and *Spongebob* and been in youth productions of *Oliver*, *Wind in the Willows* and *We Will Rock You*. This however was to be her first ALW proper grown up type musical. I did wonder if she would enjoy as much, but I needn't have worried. She turned to me in the interval and said she was well impressed and really enjoying it. She must have been too, because the next morning she was playing the Original London Cast recording at full blast. Hannah and I loved the show too, and I would have definitely revisited had it completed it's full run.

The screens were used to good effect to demonstrate where the action on the stage was taking place, or depict something happening off stage to move the story along. There was not a bad voice or performance among the cast especially Laura Pit-Pulford and Danielle De Niese who were both stunning. The show seemed to concentrate more on the Alex, Rose, George and Gullietta saga and only touch on the Alex and Jenny relationship. And George came across as a father just trying to protect his daughter from an older man.

And what of uncle George? Michael's George is charismatic and witty, it worked well giving George 'Love Changes Everything' to sing, as his is the character that has enough years behind him to wisely recall everything love can do. Having heard it sung in concert many many times, it was lovely to see and hear it sung in context.

We were lucky to see Michael at the stage door before the matinee and as always Michael gave everyone as much time as he could, before disappearing inside....and finally after 30 years I got a new photo with him!

Marie Thompson

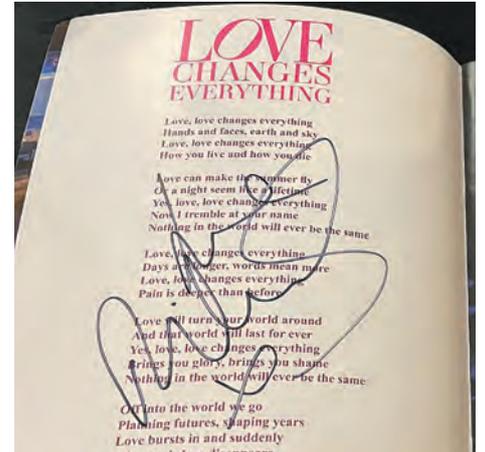




My husband Graham and I went to see *Aspects of Love* on 24th June to celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary. We both really enjoyed the show and Michael was brilliant in it.

I had a return visit with my friend Nikki during the final week of the show. She loved it as much as I did and was thrilled to meet Michael for the first time at the stage door.

Fiona Gardiner



My husband and I went to see *Aspects Of Love* on Friday 19th May. I was so looking forward to it but was nervous that it would not be as good as the original production. It was hard to think of Michael playing the older part as his wonderful performance in the original show as Alex was unforgettable. I need not have worried, he and the show was wonderful. Beautiful music and lyrics. The most brilliant voices, at times mesmerising and spine tingling!

Marion Stopp





Aspects Of Love has always been very special to me because this soundtrack introduced me to Michael all those years ago. I saw it in it's original format but sadly not with Michael, I didn't even know who he was at that moment in time so had no comparison or expectation.

I never in my wildest dreams think that I would have an opportunity to see Michael in this Andrew Lloyd Webber masterpiece.

When it was announced that a re-imagined revival was to take place with Michael returning as Uncle George I knew I



couldn't let this opportunity pass me by.

I managed 4 trips in total, it could have been more had the run not been cut short but each of those trips were special.

The rewrites and tweaks did not ruin this beautiful piece. Michael was the perfect George with brilliant comic timing in parts and a joy to witness 'Love Changes Everything' in the musical, as I'd only witnessed it in concerts before.

Laura Pitt-Pulford was a truly wonderful Rose Vibert and her heartbreakingly, raw and vulnerable performance of 'Anything But Lonely' made me cry each time.



Jamie Bogyo gave a brilliant performance as Alex Dillingham though Michael will always be my Alex.

Danielle de Neise was a perfect Guilletta and her rendition of 'Hand Me The Wine (and the Dice)' was beautifully executed.

Anna Unwin made her West End debut as older Jenny and she was delightful.

The show left me wanting more, so beautifully sung and delivered...

"A memory of a happy moment, that's what this time will one day be."

Emma Louise





JANUARY 2024

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DECEMBER 2024

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single day - often all day - as I came to accept the inevitable. Michael's music was to play at my pre-arranged funeral. He raised my spirits and even got me to giggle in my darkest hour. No mean feat!

Miraculously, a donor was found and on March 7th my life was saved! I had been given a second chance and I'm not going to waste a moment.

I booked tickets for both matinee and evening performances on July 15th. And I couldn't wait! Why twice in one day?

I have a very special reason for travelling to see Michael perform - his music and his banter (with Alfie Boe) is a good reason I'm here today!

I was diagnosed with multiple organ failure last year and this February was given a few months to live unless a donor could be found as soon as possible. I listened to Michael's music and watched videos every

Everyone asked me what I wanted to do now and my reply was always the same: "I want to see Michael Ball live on stage". I never had the chance before, so it was about time to change that.

So I booked tickets to go to fulfill my dream - twice in one day! I hope to have the opportunity to thank him personally at some point - his music reaches out and comforts so many people when they need it. To some it might be "just a job", but not Michael - he was born to perform and share his gift.

Jules Watkins

I went to the last night of *Aspects Of Love* and it was amazing. It was very emotional though. A big thank you to Michael and all the cast/crew for bringing so much joy to lots of people and for all the hard work.

I also visited Wogan House in October and took this photo of Michael there.

Julie Vidler



I have had such an amazing 2023 visiting London to see *Aspects Of Love* at the beginning and ending of its run. I met Michael at Wogan House as well at the stage door.

What an amazing person and performer. He made sure that everyone got their photo and or autograph. What a sweet man.

My family album was broadcast on Father's Day. He presented it beautifully. When I mentioned that I was his family album, his face lit up with a huge smile.

Best of all I had the opportunity to meet several fellow members of the fan club. My birthday was on August 16. While standing in line at the stage door that day prior to a matinee, fellow members recognized me and invited me for a quick bite prior to the show. I was also invited to dinner prior to the final performance.

I'm traveling again to London for his London concert. I hope to meet more fans there! Thank you to this Fan club for everything! I hope everyone has the best Christmas!!

Susan Fiers



Audio Described Performance of Aspects of Love

by Sue Ashton and Nicola Pamphilon



When *Aspects Of Love* was first announced, we were thrilled, as an Audio Described Performance was arranged, right from the start for Saturday 9th September. It seemed a long time to wait but Nicola, my daughter, who is visually impaired said we would not go before, as she knew the plot was quite complicated, so wanted to wait for the description.

So we avidly followed all the reports on Facebook, patiently waiting our turn. So when the notice came out to say the show was ending prematurely on 19th August, our hearts sank. I had an email to say click here to rebook, but no mention of a new date for an AD performance.

I phoned the theatre and they said we will do our best to rearrange it before the show closes. We finally received the new

date – 12th August and oh no, I was due to go to a wedding that day, so we went ahead and changed our tickets for Wednesday 26th July, with Nicola being very brave and saying, “Oh well never mind, it can’t be helped”. However I thought about it... and in the end said we are going to see Michael so the Lyric kindly changed our tickets once again. They said they were trying to arrange a touch tour and would let us know, however no message came.

A touch tour is held before the show, when VIP (Visually Impaired Person) guests are allowed to go backstage, often on the stage and feel the scenery, some props and costumes and sometimes meet some backstage staff and occasionally some of the cast will also come.

When Nicola listened to the pre-show

notes on the Wednesday she realised she knew Jenny, one of the describers, so she contacted her and asked “Is there going to be a touch tour?” and the reply was yes, it would be at 1.30pm, an hour before the show!

So we left home at 8.30 in the morning thinking that should allow us to get to London from Oxford, have some lunch and be there in good time. What we didn’t anticipate was the problems that were awaiting. The Oxford Tube bus runs every 10-20 mins from the centre of Oxford to London, stopping a few times on the way from the city and at a park and ride, where we catch it. After an hour of waiting and 5 buses having come and gone with sorry full signs, one of the drivers said “there are over 100 waiting in Oxford to get the bus, you are not going to get on here. You would be better going into Oxford and joining that queue”. So that is what we had to do, a very kind driver allowed us to travel on a bus returning from London and stay on it, thereby not having to join the Oxford queue. So at 11.00am we were at last on our way, but thoughts of the touch tour were disappearing fast, along with the idea of having lunch!

We arrived in Victoria at 1.15pm, I waved a taxi down, who narrowly avoided a crash with a bus and the driver said he would do his best to get us there in time.

We arrived at the theatre at 1.35pm! The staff at the Lyric were brilliant. The way to the stage was down about 20 steps and then up a couple more and through the narrow door onto the stage, not easy when you are blind, excited and you walk with a stick.

As we stepped onto the stage we could hear Michael’s voice explaining his role in the show. He is so brilliant, having already met fans outside the theatre, done the warm up and knowing he had two shows to do. As we know, on matinee days he goes outside to meet fans again and chat, have photos, sign autographs. We couldn’t believe how lucky we had been and how wonderful people had been to help us.

When Michael had to go and get ready, Jenny and Kerry from VocalEyes then took us round the stage explaining how the scenery came and went, describing some of the sets

including Rose's first dressing room, feeling her costumes and the dressing table with the cosmetics and the lights around the mirror. They let me take some photos of Nicola, in front of the french doors, sat in the railway carriage and feeling "The Red Dress" Being able to experience things like this are so brilliant for a blind person and really brings the show to life. I was allowed to pose by the "Genuine Baptiste" painting.

We were then shown to our seats and the headsets brought for the VIPs and tested to make sure that they were working. Before the show the descriptors had watched the show at least twice and made their notes, written the description and then tested it. They then describe through the headsets what is happening on the stage, who is talking or singing all in between the actors talking. It is amazing the amount of details they are able to give, making the experience so great. Nicola said she would never have been able to follow the plot or even know which of the female cast were singing without the description.

We didn't go to the Stage Door, but we have been lucky to meet Michael on several occasions before, often at touch tours,



where he always tries to come and say hello.

We know we were very lucky that VocalEyes – the company doing the

description and Nimax managed to re-arrange the AD performance at short notice and we managed to get there, we are so very grateful!



The Adventures of a Danish Newbie

by Amy Kruse Nielsen



live was in *Hairspray* at the London Coliseum in August 2021 with Norwegian long-time fan Hanne Pedersen. I was amazed that, solely on the basis of correspondence via Messenger, she would agree to meet me in London so we could see the show together and at the same time celebrate her birthday. Hanne and I had seats on the second row in the stalls, offering us an excellent view and allowing us to fully appreciate Michael's acting / facial expressions.

Hanne and I speak/write to each other in our own language, and only once in awhile do we have to resort to English if it sounds like the other person is speaking gibberish! It can be quite funny when, for instance, a word means 'nice' in Danish but 'odd/weird' in Norwegian! And when she asks if I'm ready to go to lunch, she means breakfast!

While there, I also met up with other new friends, among them Les & Hazel Strong with whom I also watched *Hairspray*, and we sat in the front row in the dress circle, giving me a very different view of the stage, and

In late 2019, I was surfing on YouTube, looking for anything musical related – my favourite genre in music. I was new to YouTube and was only just discovering the treasure trove of videos.

One of the results of this random search was Michael belting out 'Gethsemane' at Andrew Lloyd Webber's 50th birthday concert at the Royal Albert Hall. I am not religious by any stretch of the imagination, but when he'd finished singing he nearly had me convinced! Yes, he looked absolutely divine, but it was his powerful voice and his acting that really caught my attention. I became an instant fan, and this is now my go-to video

whenever I need cheering up – or a good cry! Or both!

Sadly, I was too late to the party to catch *Les Misérables – The Staged Concert* in London, but luckily I was later able to see it in a Danish cinema, twice! 'Stars' is my favourite after 'Gethsemane'. Just wow!

I soon found the Fan Club, and since then Facebook has been a source of joy, information, new friends and lovely videos. For someone who doesn't have access to British television, it's wonderful that there are fans who will post videos so we can all enjoy Michael and his talents.

My first time seeing Michael





I really enjoyed that. Les is now my English teacher and enjoys trying to teach me some Northern expressions – with varying success!

Everybody I met on that first trip to London welcomed this newbie with open arms, and I was buzzing for weeks after I returned home to Denmark, processing the experience. Needless to say, I was hungry for more!

My second adventure was a short solo trip to London in December 2021 to see Ball & Boe at the O2 Arena. I had made contact with a fan who had agreed to meet me in London and attend the concert with me, but in the end she decided not to risk it (Covid-19). I had a few sleepless nights, debating whether to go or stay home, but feared I might never get another chance so in the end I decided to go on my own.

Covid-19 and a tube strike made it a huge challenge. My only means of getting from Heathrow Airport to the hotel was by black cab, and I spent half my budget

on that trip as I had to swing by a Covid-19 test centre on the way! Luckily I tested negative so I was allowed to attend the concert the next day, phew! Gino the Cabbie was the friendly, chatty type, so by the time we said goodbye I knew all about what it takes to become a licenced black cabbie!

The day after the concert I called Gino the Cabbie - we'd exchanged phone numbers the day I arrived - and he drove me back to Heathrow. The tube strike was still in effect, so that was the second half of my budget gone, but so worth it. I enjoyed the concert and again met up with friendly fans for dinner before the show. I had seen lots of videos with Ball & Boe on YouTube, so it was a thrill to see them live.

My third adventure was in June 2022 where I first visited a dear friend, fellow fan Karen Threlfall, in the south of England. We had been "talking" on Messenger for a long time, but, apart from a very brief encounter at the Caffé Concerto the year before – arranged with



Karen's mum as a surprise - this was the first time we met for real, and we had a great time. Back in London, I met up with Hanne Pedersen who had once again agreed to spend a few days with me in London. The highlight of this holiday was a Ball & Boe concert at the beautiful Hampton Court Palace. Needless to say, we had a fabulous evening. Not even the rather large lady sitting on my left who took up half of my seat as well as her own, the rain at the end while Michael had a, well, ball, belting out 'Reach' by S Club 7, nor the mad dash to catch the last train (yet another train strike would take effect from midnight) could take away the absolute joy I felt afterwards.

The fourth, and so far final, time I saw Michael perform live was in June of this year. First, I spent a few days with my dear friend and fellow fan Janice Lazarus who has so far put me up no less than three times. She'd met me twice, but always in the company of others, and we'd only exchanged a few messages on Messenger, when she invited

me to come for a visit, but I'm so happy she took a chance on me as we are now good friends. This time we saw *Guys & Dolls* at The Bridge Theatre starring Marisha Wallace whom I first saw as Motormouth in *Hairspray*. We met other Michael fans for dinner before the show, and we had a lovely evening.

After my visit with Janice, I checked into a hotel where I shared a room with Hanne Pedersen. A few days later we met her English friend and long-time fan Stella for dinner, and then we all went to the Lyric Theatre and thoroughly enjoyed *Aspects of Love*. His rendition of 'Love Changes Everything' made the hairs on my arms stand on end. Truly wonderful. At the stage door after the show there was quite a crowd, but somehow I managed to get my programme signed.

The next day, we went to Wogan House and met up with lots of other fans. I was very lucky and had my picture taken with Michael, by Ste, Michael's radio



producer, no less! Originally, the plan was for another lovely friend, Valerie Self, to take the picture if I was lucky and got Michael's attention. When he exited with Ste, Valerie 'ambushed' Ste, asking him if he'd mind very much taking the picture as she was not very good at it! To Ste's credit, he just smiled and said "of course"!

Hanne had brought pictures of her with Michael taken at a previous visit, and she managed to get Michael to sign them. As you can imagine, both Hanne and I were chuffed!

In addition to these four trips, I have been to lots of virtual concerts with Michael these past few years! I am also friends with Claire, a lovely fan from Scotland, and she and I go to concerts in our living rooms! We each make a play list on YouTube, and on the agreed date/time we send each other our list via Messenger and watch them "together". It sounds weird, but I assure you it absolutely works! It's always a thrill to see what gems the other one has found, and we have had some truly enjoyable evenings. Last Summer, I finally had the

pleasure of meeting Claire in person when she and her family visited Copenhagen on their tour of Scandinavia.

Besides making new friends and buying all the CDs and DVDs I could get my paws on,



I have also improved my rather poor IT skills – necessary for using Facebook and Messenger – and learned new words in both English and Norwegian.

I am still pinching myself that I have actually managed to see

Michael perform live and made so many wonderful friends, and I try not to dwell too much on all the years I've missed. I am by nature an introvert and a very nervous traveler with absolutely zero sense of direction, and I have never really been a proper fan of anyone or even understood what it was like. In fact, before finding Michael I had rarely traveled anywhere on my own, and I don't make friends easily as I am shy. Thanks to you, my new friends, I have grown more confident and accomplished things I never would have thought possible. You have made my life richer, and I am very grateful.

Michael does indeed have the best fans!

And of course, thank you to the man himself, Mr Michael Ball OBE! Your music and your kindness towards everyone you meet is so special. You say 'never meet your hero', but I can now say that you are the exception to that rule.

Here's to my next adventure for the tour in March 2024!

MICHAEL GUESTS WITH ALFIE BOE

Michael joined Alfie on stage at one of Alfie's concerts in Oxford on October 11th. Fortunately Sue Ashton was in attendance to capture these great pictures.



Aspects Of Love - The New Revival

by Steve Lunt



I took my daughter Blossom to see *Aspects Of Love* and I was looking forward to seeing the updated version. This has always been one of my favourite Andrew Lloyd Webber scores, the music is perfect, can't fault it. The book, now sensibly rewritten, is very strong and holds your attention and the cast are also perfect. Now perfect is a strong statement but I stand by it!

The big major change is 'Love Changes Everything', the song that propelled Michael Ball to stardom is now sung by Uncle George and not Michael's original character of Alex as it used to be. And who plays Uncle George? None other than Mr Ball of course! Speaking of 'Love Changes Everything', that song is the stand out moment of the night. As someone who's heard Michael sing it literally hundreds of times live before, what I'm about to write sounds unbelievable.... the one and only Michael Ball doesn't just *sing* this song, oh hell no, he *acts* the song. And he does it like I've never seen done as well on stage before in my life, and I've seen thousands of musicals! The words are the same but the way he acted it in the show changed the song



completely, it was like listening to a brand new song. The meaning of the song seems to change totally from a love song to almost a lament and it's very hard to describe. I guess you have to be there but it's an absolute work of genius and a masterclass in musical theatre from Michael. Judging by the absolutely thunderous applause at the end then I certainly wasn't the only one to think this, I literally had to force myself not to stand up and give it an ovation!

On to the show itself, the staging is so very clever the way they incorporate digital screens and the set. It's been very well worked out. Indeed it's quite sad that so much work has gone into this when it's such a limited run, the show deserved to run a lot longer. The cast as I said are perfect, Michael Ball delivers the performance of a lifetime – I've not seen him as good as this before and considering how amazing he's been in other things then that's about the biggest compliment I can pay anyone! The other cast ably back up Michael and the way they all effortlessly change up their characters 20 years on is brilliant. They all convince as both the young and older versions and you don't for one moment doubt the time frame. I'd booked to see it 5 or 6 more times but I hope other fans also decided to give it a go, even if they had doubts, as they won't have regretted it. So a massive well done to everyone and in particular Mr Michael Ball, who has



just cemented his position as the true number one of the West End. There's not a person on this planet with his ability to perform as he does consistently in every show. Bravo to all, bravo indeed.

If that wasn't enough, we were lucky enough to see Michael at the stage door, much to Blossom's delight, which made a brilliant trip absolutely... perfect!

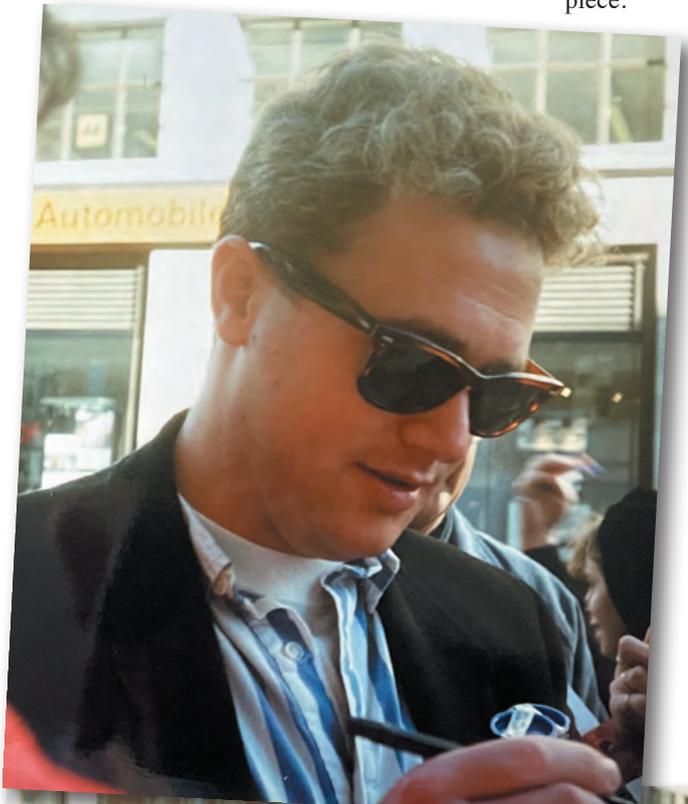


Different Aspects

by Isobel Balaam

Michael has written a book comparing his experiences of *Aspects Of Love* in 1989 with now, and I realised I have my own take on this too.

Standing at the stage door of *Aspects Of Love* this summer waiting to see Michael with my 14 year old daughter brought home to me the parallels in her and my experiences of the show. I was the same age in 1989 when *Aspects* opened as she is now, and waited at the stage door then too. And of course Jenny was 14 in the original piece.



“Chanson d’enfance”

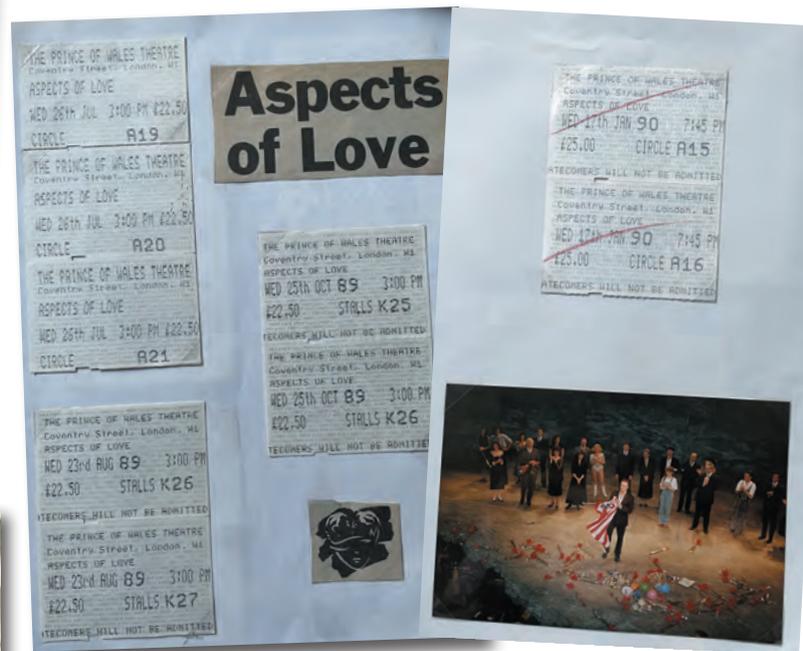
As a teenager in 1989, my friends were all more interested in pop music, but I had always loved musicals and cast recordings, and I was lucky enough to have family who took me regularly. Dress Circle was definitely my favourite shop and my bedroom was covered in musicals merchandise. Back in the day we had bought our tickets for *Aspects* before we knew much about it, and well before it opened. *Phantom Of The Opera* had been Andrew Lloyd Webber’s previous show, and expectations were high.

“This is where my eyes were opened”

Soon after we had bought the tickets I heard Michael perform ‘Love Changes Everything’ on David Frost’s programme, and for me “nothing in the world [would] ever be the same again”. I became a lifelong fan of both the show and Michael.

“A dedicated fan - been in every evening”

I went as many times I could to see the original London cast - five in total - including Michael’s last night in the show in London before going to Broadway (which is still my favourite theatre experience ever).



I remember putting in multiple entries for a Radio Times competition in 1990 to try to win a trip to see Michael in *Aspects* when it opened in New York (but I didn’t succeed!).

I’ve seen many other performances of the show too – various casts in London, including Sarah Brightman as Rose, the touring version with David Essex as Uncle George in the mid-2000s, the Menier Chocolate Factory revival in 2010 and a revival at the Southwark Playhouse in 2019.

“If I could hear/ The music I heard then”

This summer though I wasn’t sure how my teenage daughter would take the show, which has meant so much to me for over 30

years. She's been brought up on musicals and her favourites are shows like *Juliet, Six* and *Mamma Mia*. *Aspects* is a bit different though and I hadn't bought a ticket for her originally as I wasn't sure if she'd like it. Circumstances meant I later bought her one to accompany my friend and me to a matinee.

She knows 'Love Changes Everything', of course, because I have always played it, and I had introduced her to some other songs from the 1989 London cast album in the week or so leading up to the trip. I'd tried to explain the story, but realised it was probably better to just let the show do the talking!

seeing the whole piece with my daughter's fresh perspective. She really enjoyed it (maybe she felt the pressure?) and was very positive at the interval. Phew! I could relax in the second half.

"A stage door Jonny swooning"

After the show we persuaded my daughter to come to the stage door with us. She had actually met Michael as a baby at the stage door at *Hairspray* but despite it being a seminal moment in her life she doesn't seem to remember it...



Her main experience of Michael had been from his radio show, and from hearing his albums and cast recordings, but this was the first time she had seen him perform live.

"A memory of a happy moment"

So it was with a little trepidation that we arrived at the Lyric. I had seen this production already – including the first preview and the opening night - but I knew this would be a different experience with my daughter. Of course, 'Love Changes Everything' doesn't open the show any more, although Michael sings it. Just hearing him sing it in character in the show - as opposed to in a concert – takes me right back to being that 14 year old in the Prince of Wales Theatre.

"Have I changed? No not a bit"

In this production, I notice all the changes in the show compared to the original version, especially the altered lyrics, but was different



There were a few more people at the stage door than there had been in 1989, but Michael was as charming as ever, as were the other cast members. We'd walked past the Prince of Wales Theatre earlier and I had shown my daughter the stage door in Whitcomb Street, where I had gone as a 14 year old many times myself when *Aspects* was on



there! That took me back, perhaps almost as much as seeing the show itself had.

"Oh turn that thing off"

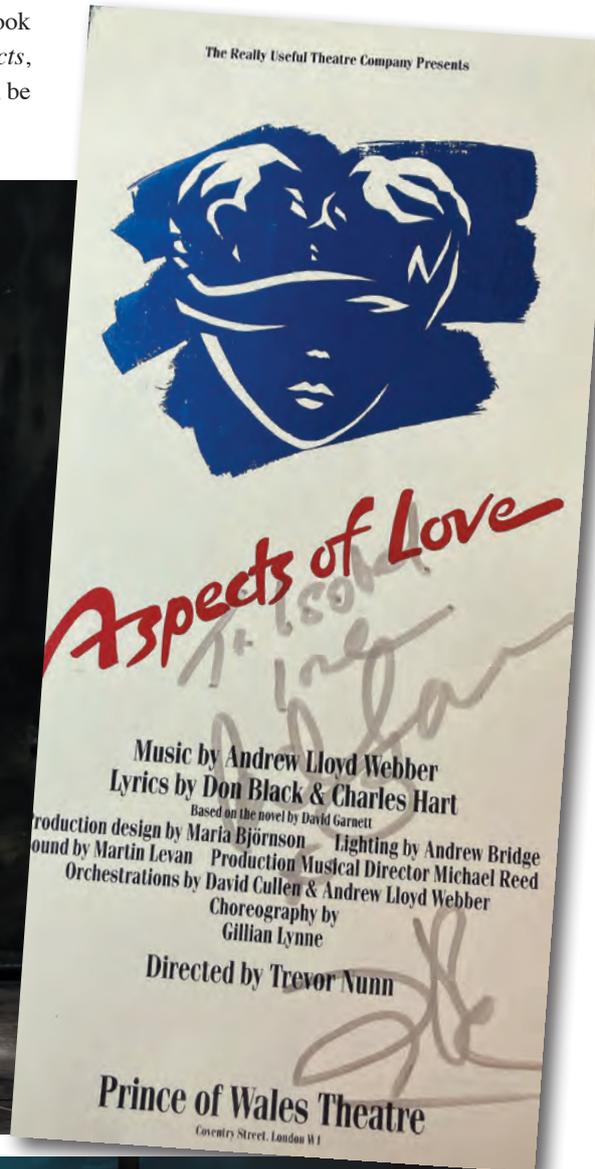
Coming home that evening, I showed my daughter the clips of Michael singing 'Love Changes Everything' on the David Frost show from 1988, and the Newsroom South East piece covering the opening night in 1989. I had videos of these and had watched them so many times back in the day. It struck us how much picture quality, lighting and camera angles have moved on, and my daughter was amused rather than impressed I think, but it certainly made me remember being 14 again!

My daughter has voluntarily put on the *Aspects* London cast recording a number of times since (as a change from Taylor Swift!) so I think she's definitely a convert.

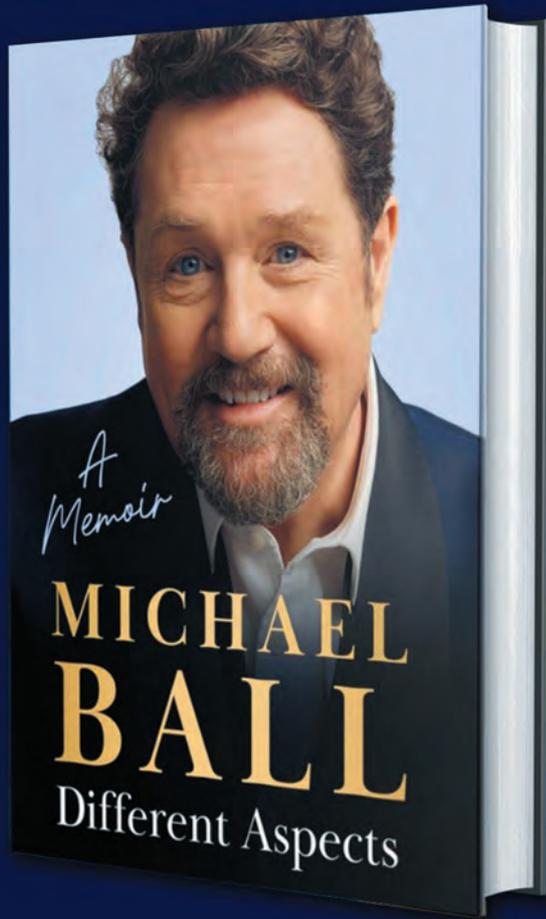
"Come back and see us now and then"

It was a shame the production closed early (although I did my best to keep it in business!) and that there was no cast recording or film of this 2023 version, but "we'll always have wonderful memories". Hopefully one day it will be re-staged again. I'll definitely be there!

I will be fascinated to read Michael's book looking at his two experiences of *Aspects*, nearly 35 years apart. And of course, I will be encouraging my daughter to read it too!



DIFFERENT ASPECTS - THE BOOK OF THE YEAR?



Different Aspects - the book of the year
Tales of the theatre sure to endear

A story of life lived on the stage,
Full of memories on every page

There's laughter, some tears, some sweat and some blood
Roger Moore too, although not famously enough

With Cameron, Trevor and Andrew Lloyd Webber
This heartwarming book couldn't get any better

Taking us backstage of a West End hit
Full of anecdotes and lots of wit

From *Aspects of Love* to *Sweeney Todd*,
Hairspray and *Phantom*, he's done the lot

This feelgood book is a joy to read,
Whilst relaxing with a cup of tea

A musical treat for theatre fans
Hope book number two is in Michael's plans!

by Julie Vidler

PENPALS

The fans below would love to hear
from other fans of Michael:

PAT ALEXANDER
email: alexanderpatricia20@yahoo.com

LINDA STROUDE
email: lindastroude4@gmail.com

KATHRYN HORNER

Interested to know if anyone wants to
meet up once a month in Wigan?

email: kathrynhorner47@gmail.com

Sandra Rhead
email: sandra.rhead@outlook.com

Sandra would love to hear from
anyone living in the Dorset area.

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: **MBFC30**



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