

# ON THE BALL

Issue 46



What an amazing few months we've had since the tour ended. The end of June saw *Kismet* open to some pretty mixed reviews, and it was hard to disagree with the opinions expressed about the set design, choreography etc. Even Michael admitted that although he had a great time the production certainly had some flaws.



During the run of *Kismet* Michael performed at the first outdoor concert of the summer at Repton School, which fortunately hadn't been affected by the bad floods the UK were experiencing at that time. This was followed on August Bank holiday firstly by the Faenol Festival and then Michael's very own Prom concert at the Royal Albert Hall. You can read more about all the above in this issue. We had no room for a Peterborough review in this issue so will include one next time.

The most exciting news of the summer was that Michael is to star as Edna Turnblad in *Hairspray* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London's West End. The first photos of "Edna" have already been published and as you'll see, we have printed a little teaser here. The Christmas issue will have reviews and stories from the opening few weeks of *Hairspray* - we're sure it's going to be a great deal of fun.

Thank you for all your reviews - we always like to hear what you think about Michael's performances and are always looking for varied articles to include in the next issue - so put pen to paper, or finger to keyboard and let us know what you think.

Maureen + Gill

P.S. Congratulations to Michael for winning £64,000 on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* with Elaine Paige, Michael's half being donated to St Richard's Hospice.



Cover photo by Nicky Johnstone. Photo of Gill, Michael and Maureen by Carol Cox.

Layout by James Gaden - [www.solitaryvision.co.uk](http://www.solitaryvision.co.uk)

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Dear Everyone,  
What an extraordinary year this is turning out to be. I don't think there has ever been a time that has been so varied, exciting, challenging and fulfilling. I am just loving it.

This is being written having just finished what had to be the hardest working week of my life. Two major concerts back to back (faenol & the Proms), a full week of rehearsals and a third and final concert of the year in Peterborough. And we made it.

I can't describe the feeling of appearing at the Proms. I was so proud of what we achieved. The nature of the event meant that virtually no rehearsals could take place other than an hour before the show and for the musicians, under Calum, to pull off such an event of varied, difficult music was a triumph. I had one of the best nights of my life on a stage and if you were there, thank you for helping to create the most magical of atmospheres.

It seems there will always be a, sadly, small minded element who will

take pleasure in trying to exclude or denigrate artistes or genres from these events but they will never be able to diminish the joy of participating in a ground breaking and overwhelmingly successful night of music.

Now we come to Hairspray, which I have been rehearsing for the last 2 1/2 weeks. OH! MY! GOD! It is the funniest, most exciting and touching piece of musical theatre and I just hope we can do it justice. The cast are just so talented, (I hate them all for being about 12 years old and extremely beautiful), and fun to work with. Mel Smith is going to be quite brilliant and my only worry is learning to dance in high heels. How the hell do you girls do it!!

If you get a chance please come and see us. You really won't be disappointed. Well, Edna calls, so I'll close now by saying thank you as always for being a huge part of this amazing time in my life. I send you a big kiss and loads of love and will see you soon.

God Bless

Mike  
X

P.S. I've just received the finished Album, which I think we are going to call "Back to Bacharach", and a copy of the "One voice" D.V.D. How happy am I?

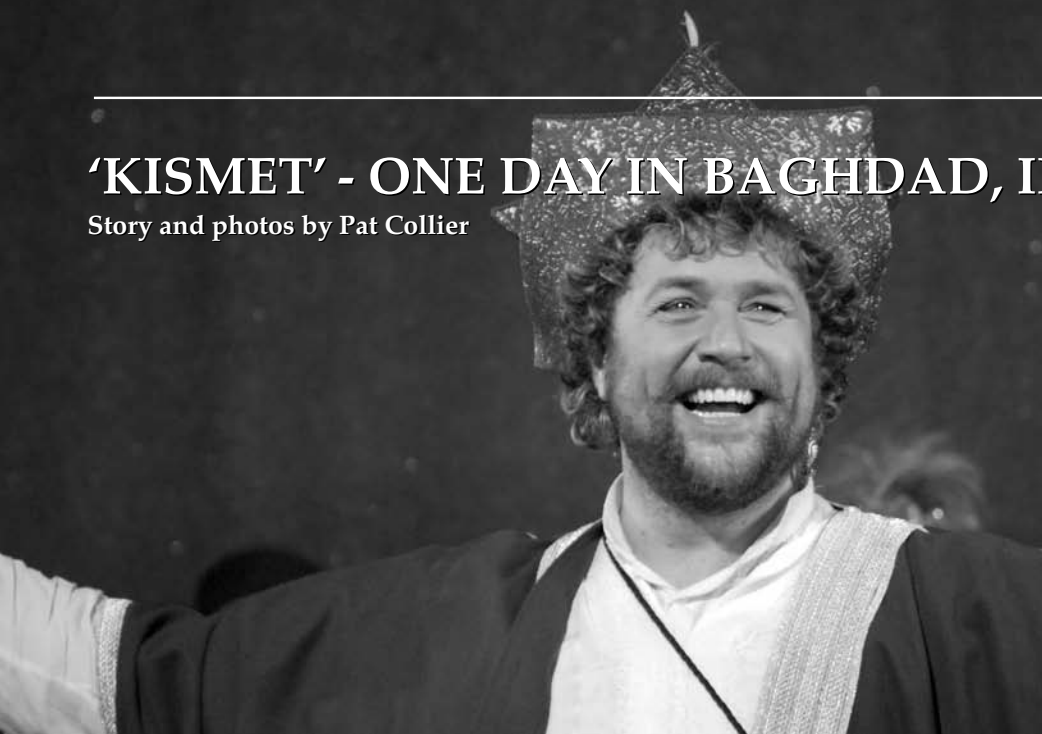
The Album sounds just how I dreamed it would. I love Bart Bacharach's music and have wanted to dedicate a whole album to him for some time. It has a really late night, laid back and sophisticated feel to it. (just like the man himself) and the production and arrangements are sublime. I hope you like it as much as I do.

As for the D.V.D, if you were there at one of the tour's dates then I think this captures the feeling of those shows exactly. Do you get the feeling in having a good time at the moment? Thank you for being such a major part of it!

Love you  
M  
X

# 'KISMET' - ONE DAY IN BAGHDAD, IN BYGONE DAYS

Story and photos by Pat Collier



Michael with  
Pat Collier

It had been over ten months since we had bought the tickets to see Michael perform in *Kismet*, but the morning had finally arrived when The Lancashire Lassies boarded the train at Preston Rail station to make the journey to London and The London Coliseum - home of the E.N.O. The journey was filled with excitement and of talk of Michael and *Kismet*, and also of the less than glowing reviews we had read, but we had all decided we would make our own minds up on the performance of *Kismet* and not be swayed by the reviews.

After quickly unpacking at our hotel, and getting ourselves ready for our first of two trips to *Kismet*, we set off late afternoon for the stage door of The London Coliseum in the hope that we may see Michael...with the new facial hair he had grown specially for *Kismet*! After a short wait we were lucky to see Michael strolling down the road towards us, and we did get a chance to chat to him about the show when he arrived at the theatre. Michael asked if we had seen the show before and said that the show was a "bit of fun" and that he was enjoying himself. Michael's new beard was a big

talking point amongst the fans present, and he told us "that he had a new toy to play with", as he twirled the ends of his moustache. I had decided after seeing earlier photos of Michael with the beard and moustache that I liked the new look, but seeing it there in the flesh... well I make no bones at saying I am well and truly in the 'pro beard' camp and told Michael so... what a pity that he will have to lose it for his next role on stage. Sue and Marie had decided that the beard was ok on Michael, but Babs was in the camp of preferring the clean-shaven look.

On entering The London Coliseum for the evening performance we were immediately taken with the magnificence and grandeur of the theatre, and settled down in our seats to await the start of *Kismet*.

I do have to agree with what others had said about the production of *Kismet* in that I felt a little let down. The settings and scenery were very sparse to say the least, when I felt for a production of that kind, the sets could have been more lavish and exotic in keeping with the 'Arabian Nights' theme... and there was much too much red. The orchestra, although a very accomplished one, was very loud and unfortunately did drown out some of the lyrics of the songs at times, although that said, on our second night it did seem a little improved. Again we should have been able to expect lavish costumes, but unfortunately again the E.N.O. opted for the minimalist look. I have been to many musicals and seen some magnificent settings, costumes and scenery and I suppose I did expect the same of the E.N.O. production of *Kismet*.

Right, that is all my negatives out of the way,

because despite my comments on the actual production I did thoroughly enjoy the actual show, thanks to the brilliant cast who excelled with great performances and many funny amusing moments.

Michael played a superb part as the Poet (Haji), and I felt his acting skills certainly came out in his performances. He had a strong stage presence and his actual facial expressions and body movement were priceless. To me he portrayed his role as a real chancer, and a roguish womaniser. Although Michael did not sing the better known of the songs in *Kismet*, he excelled in what he did have to sing. There was no mistaking that voice when in the opening scenes you heard the words 'Rhymes Have I' being sung off stage. Michael came out on to the top of the steps on stage to loud applause, and delivered a wonderful rendition of 'Rhymes Have I'. 'Fate' - the meaning of *Kismet*, was another favourite song I enjoyed Michael singing. 'The Olive Tree' was one of my favourite songs to be given 'the Ball' treatment - a brilliant song, performed superbly and one I am still humming and singing a week later. The other favourite song Michael performed has got to be 'Gesticulate'. Michael had me laughing so much with his actions in this song and he sang it so well. The scene I enjoyed and felt showed Michael's acting off was the throne room of the Wazir of police, when The Poet was about to have his hand chopped off. I found Michael's expressions and body language hilarious, especially the cradling of his hand highly amusing. Being a Michael Ball fan it was a delight to have Michael on stage a great deal throughout the whole show, and to my mind he did indeed pull the show through. Michael never ceases



to amaze us when he takes on new roles, he embraces each role as though that part was made just for him, and The Poet was no exception.

Alfie Boe (The Caliph) had a marvellous tenor voice when he sang and performed the lovely song 'And This Is My Beloved' and then duetted 'Stranger In Paradise' with Sarah Tynan (Marsinah). However I personally felt his actual stage presence could have been better. That said I must support Alfie, after all he is a fellow Lancastrian.

Sarah Tynan (Marsinah) who played the daughter of The Poet (Michael) had a beautiful soprano voice and sang the duet 'Stranger In Paradise' to perfection. When she first appeared on stage in the opening scenes, alongside Michael, she reminded me for the minute of Eponine from *Les Misérables*.

The role of Lalume was played by Faith Prince (pictured with Michael top right) who acted out some good comedy scenes, although I was a little amused by her American accent when it was set in Baghdad. I particularly enjoyed Faith singing 'Not Since Nineveh'.

I have made mention previously of not being particularly approving of the stage settings, however I did find the divided set of the two rooms on the terrace setting particularly clever and one that worked well with the actor's performances. The Poet and his daughter Marsinah were in one room, whilst next-door The Caliph and the Wazir stood, and I did enjoy the way each pair sang 'And This Is My Beloved' simultaneously, giving a beautiful medley performance.

One of the sets I found interesting yet puzzling was the Bazaar scene, where the main singing and acting was being

performed on the front strip of stage, whilst the bazaar scene was behind the curtain which had been cleverly arched with net covering at the bottom enabling you to see the traders behind. I had to wonder if the use of the full stage would have been better to stage the bazaar scene, but that said the wonderful song of 'Baubles, Bangles and Beads' was performed excellently in this scene.

The arrival on stage of the three Princesses of Ababu had me laughing, when their legs just appeared out of a paper covered box followed next by their three leather clad bodies... I have to admit the use of leather clothes had, and still has me puzzled. However their dance routines were excellent, though where ballet comes into 'Arabian Nights' scenes baffles me.

The star scene of the night in my mind has got to be the scene in the harem with Michael and Faith Prince and the rest of the harem. Michael's body language and facial expressions were priceless... and somewhat naughty in parts. I was in hysterics at the brilliant interaction between Michael and Faith Prince (Lalume) during the seduction scene, and then when the Wazir appeared on scene Michael disappeared down the back of the seating only to roll out of the bottom again a short while on... it was so funny and so cleverly executed. A little later we saw Faith (Lalume) struggling in an upended position (rear in the air) on the same seating whilst Michael (the Poet) tried to help her up... laugh? It was hilarious!!

I particularly liked the end of the show, when it had Michael alone on the side of the stage looking up at the closed curtain, and you could see the words *Kismet* in tiny lights, it had me believing he was pondering 'Fate'.

That was my first visit to *Kismet* with my



fellow Lancashire Lasses and after a discussion back at the hotel, we decided that some of what the critics had written was correct as far as production was concerned, but that the cast had put such an excellent performance on, that overall we liked and enjoyed our visit to *Kismet* - we took it as fun as Michael had said to do so.

On our next day visit to the London Coliseum and *Kismet*, I decided to ask Michael at the stage door prior to the show what many others were asking: "Could I please have a photograph of him with his beard, before he lost it?" I am so pleased he said yes, as it may be the only time Michael has a beard. Sue, Babs and Marie were equally pleased, as they too had their photos taken with Michael. We met up with many friends and fans at the stage door over the three days and had time to catch up with people that you only meet up with at stage doors.

May I thank Sue, Marie and Babs for their wonderful friendship and their company on this trip down to London to see Michael and the production of *Kismet*. It was another memorable trip to see our favourite star in action. A big thank you to Michael for continuing to do what you do best - please and entertain us!



Michael with  
Babs Cross



Michael with  
Sue Gellert



Michael with  
Marie Richards



## MUSICALS & MORE... REPTON SHOOK!

By Alana Wadkin. Photo by Sue Wilde

It was a lovely day; the sun came out and shone... This was my second time at a Michael open air concert and I absolutely loved it. I took my mum, dad and younger cousin Maura, who hadn't seen Michael live before. I met several other fans and Maureen and Gill, which was really lovely. We weren't impressed at the way the actual event was arranged – we queued up for ages like everybody else then a gang of people pushed to the front of the queue and after we got in, my dad had to push my wheelchair a long distance just to get on to the grass. Luckily my mum and cousin went ahead to find us a place near the stage. The designated area for disabled was a long way from the stage so we decided to go on the grass.

I actually liked the supporting act; they were good – really nice voices. Coming to the actual concert, before Michael was due to come on – I happened to look around and

there was Michael coming out of a building, smiling and waving. The overture started and Michael walked on stage to rapturous applause and screaming. Michael was wearing a cream suit, very smart! The first thing he said was "come down here", within a minute all around the stage was packed with people then Michael added "that's better I can see you now." Michael spotted me (sung out my name) and acknowledged me throughout the concert waving and giving gorgeous smiles. My cousin couldn't believe Michael recognised me. I was delighted and amazed! For the first half I had a restricted view with people standing. In the interval we moved near the stage to see better...

The concert was fantastic, mostly dedicated to the musicals with several up-tempo songs included. Michael was fabulous and his voice seemed a lot stronger and more powerful! The special

guests were John Owen Jones, Michael McCarthy, Celia Graham and Emma Williams. The opening song was 'This Is The Moment', a very significant and special song to me. Then Michael sang 'I'm Feeling Good' and 'Do You Mind', which I really enjoyed because it reminded me of the tour. Michael talked about the most debated beard and said he is shaving it off after *Kismet*. This was followed by 'Stranger In Paradise' paired with 'And This Is My Beloved', both of which were sung beautifully. I think Michael then sang 'Phantom Of The Opera' and 'All I Ask Of You' with Celia Graham. They too were sung amazingly. On to the *Les Miserables* medley, one of my highlights. It was brilliant and included all of the special guests – outstanding voices. All of the songs were sung with passion but my favourite was 'Empty Chairs, Empty Tables' and everybody loved 'One Day More' judging by the audience's response. In the interval, I asked my cousin

what did she think of the concert – she actually liked it and thought Michael worked hard. This surprised me because she isn't into this kind of music normally!

The second half I really enjoyed, I had a better view (still trying to see past people's heads though) - Michael walked back on to the stage wearing a black suit. 'Oh What A Circus' was the first song, Michael's performance of it was fantastic and he seemed at ease. I was glad to hear 'High Flying Adored' next because at the Manchester concert it wasn't performed and I think the lyrics are so beautiful. Michael sang a *West Side Story* medley with all of his special guests, which was well received by the audience.

Another highlight was Michael's duet with Emma Williams; they sang a breathtaking version of 'The Prayer'. Michael then sang 'Tell Me It's Not True' and 'The Show Must Go On', which I love. 'Crazy' was also a firm favourite with the audience, everybody was up dancing and this was the start of party time... I was in my element dancing and screaming! 'Don't Stop Me Now' was next to be given the Ball treatment, followed by 'Since You've Been Gone'. 'I Don't Feel Like Dancing' was also a crowd pleaser – another highlight! It was sung magnificently and how can you forget the dance moves! Michael said his thanks and goodbyes then walked off the stage to deafening cheering and clapping (cue the encore). Michael returned to sing 'Love Changes Everything' and told everybody to sing along. The special guests sang the last part with Michael.

After another encore – they sung 'Do You Hear The People Sing', which was just amazing. What a wonderful concert!!

# FAENOL 2007 - A STRANGE LOOKING PARASITE!

by Maureen Veney

Photo: Carol Bethwaite



Anticipating heavy bank holiday traffic, we set off early from Liverpool. It is many years since we visited North Wales and we were amazed at how the roads have changed (for the better). We had a trouble free, speedy journey which resulted in us arriving at Faenol mid afternoon, and what an afternoon it was!

With the sun shining down we settled ourselves on the grass just across the lake from the concert stage. Soon we were being serenaded with Connie Fisher's 'Something Good' followed by Bryn's booming vocal of 'One Day More'. Laying back, soaking up the sun, watching ducks glide past on the still water, disturbed only occasionally by leaping fish, I was drifting away and when the orchestra struck up with 'Stranger in Paradise' Michael's voice carried me to seventh heaven! Then crash, bang, wallop, I was back down to earth with a bump - I couldn't believe what I was hearing! He can't help himself can he! He decided to change the lyrics from 'Stranger in Paradise' to "Strange Looking Parasite"! Thanks Michael, I'll never be able to listen to this song again without laughing!

So this was just the rehearsal and in response to all the applause that broke out Michael suggested that they should send the hat round.

Now to the 'real' concert, where do I start? I can't begin to convey all the emotions I felt on that fantastic moonlit summer night. I am sure others will record the details far better than I, so I will briefly pick out my highlights.

John Owen Jones, dare I say, reminded me of a younger Michael as he belted out 'Bring Him Home' and 'Music Of The Night', performances well worthy of a Broadway star!

Connie Fisher, in her duet with Michael of 'All I Ask Of You' risked being lynched by the crowd for the embrace she got from Michael! As ever Michael could not suppress his joy and proceeded to skip across the stage announcing "I love my job, I love my life!"

I could wax lyrical all night, every performance was outstanding. The

duets of Michael and Ruthie Henshall ('You & Me' from *Chess*), Bryn and Ruthie ('If I Loved You'), John Owen Jones and Ruthie ('Last Night Of The World') and Ruthie and Connie ('I Know Him So Well') were all brilliant.

The individual performances: Michael ('This Is The Moment', 'The Boy From Nowhere' and 'Anthem') were just heart stopping, but unbelievably, the concert was to reach another level!

As the full moon shone in the cloudless sky, with the blue and pink lights illuminating the stage, the enthralled audience was blown away when everyone returned to the stage for the finale. Goosebumps covered my arms and I thought my chest would burst with emotion as 'One More Day' echoed around the Welsh hills. Everyone stood, sang, clapped, cheered and demanded more. Unforgettable! My heart is actually pounding now as the memories come flooding back.

To tumultuous applause, Michael returned to the stage with an invitation to us all to join him as he sang 'Love Changes Everything' and the crowd did not disappoint! The singing was amazing. Connie, Ruthie, John Owen Jones and Bryn all returned and joined in as well.

After yet another standing ovation and refusal of the crowd to go home, all the artists returned to the stage once more and gave a performance of 'Do You Hear The People Sing' (and they did), that I will take with me to my grave, unbelievable!

The performers finally left the stage to thunderous applause and a kaleidoscope of coloured explosions filling the sky above. As the fireworks subsided there came the most wonderful sound as the twelve thousand strong crowd spontaneously burst into song with a passionate rendition of the Welsh National Anthem, it was a truly amazing end to an amazing day!

Not bad for a STRANGE LOOKING PARASITE and his friends!

# HOT FUZZ!

With Michael growing a beard for *Kismet*, and then having to shave it off immediately after for *Hairspray*, we thought it would be a nice idea to pay tribute to this milestone with a stunning Beard Pictorial Tribute, made up of some fabulous photos courtesy of Carol Bethwaite!





## OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY - IT MUST HAVE BEEN FATE (KISMET?)

**A review of Kismet (sort of) by Sue Lane. Photographs taken by Robert Hollis and Allen Lane.**

In the beginning was the Ball, well that's how it started for us and "it" is a very small word to describe everything that has happened since. Suffice it to say that my friend Barbara Hollis (from Bargoed) and I (from Merthyr Tydfil) met through the fan club in 1997 and have had some great times since at concerts, shows and Events etc. We've shared the highs (Albert Hall concert) and the lows (Duffryn Gardens - great concert but we've never been so wet before with all our clothes on.) We've become truly good friends over the years and our husbands Allen (mine) and Robert (hers) have become friends too.

F/FWD to July 2006. Great news that Michael will be starring in the E.N.O.'s production of *Kismet* in 2007- tickets a bit pricey but we have to go if possible. Well Barbara will be reaching a landmark birthday on 5th May 2007. I won't embarrass her by telling you which one but she was born in 1957. What better way of celebrating that event, if a little late, by seeing Michael in *Kismet*. As it is to be a special occasion, we will let our husbands take us. We buy the tickets

almost a year in advance and Barbara suggests the 7th July as that will also be Robert's birthday - a trip to London, what could be nicer? Well, we find out nearer the time that Rod Stewart is appearing at the Cardiff International Arena on that date and he would really like to have gone there but we couldn't have known that way back then!

F/FWD to 6th July 2007. Of course now we also know that the British Grand Prix is on Sunday 8th and as both the hubbies are F1 fans, they would rather be going there or staying at home to watch it on the box, especially with Lewis Hamilton doing so well. Let's hope they can find somewhere to watch it or we'll be in the doghouse.

We're also a bit worried now about being blown up by terrorists and let's face it, a show set in Baghdad with possible references to Allah might be considered a target - we're a bit worried about Michael too. Glad it's a short run.

My arthritic back is also quite bad at the moment, probably as a result of

standing for three hours in the pouring rain at the Donny Osmond concert in our local park last week - but that's another story (good though not as good as Michael, but the bin liner skirt worked very well and I wish I'd had it at Duffryn Gardens - real sexy too!)

London is also going to be jam-packed as the Tour De France is starting from Trafalgar Square on Sunday - a million people are expected and some of the roads will be closed. Is any of this going to put us off? Well hell, NO!

SKIP/FWD to 8th July. Husbands get to watch the Grand Prix in a bar in Leicester Square in case any of you were worried about them - as if!

REWIND to 7th July. At least it's a lovely day (remember those?) and we have a great courier on our coach. Pam is 70 years young and very helpful but also very funny, not always intentionally. She thinks that the Tour De France involves cars, she tells us that another coach from her company is taking people to see Justin Timberland in concert and she gives us

directions in London using the show "Shamalat" as a reference point, thus we spend a lot of time laughing.

None of us are particularly opera fans and don't quite know what to expect, although Barbara and I have recently watched the film version of *Kismet* starring Howard Keel so we are familiar with the story, songs etc. We have also read the critics' reviews on the website but we've come with open minds. Hey, they hated *Les Mis* - Right!

F/FWD to *Kismet*. The theatre is gorgeous and we have seats in the second row of the dress circle so we have a great view. The show begins and now I feel I must quote from The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

*Ah Love! Could you and I with Him conspire,  
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits - and then,  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!*

It could have and should have been fantastic. The main performers are all excellent - we particularly like Sarah Tynan's Marsinah. The storyline is very funny, having changed little from the Howard Keel film but the production has an amateurish quality about it.

Minimalist scenery is fine - remember *Passion* with three beds, a desk, a table and a couple of chairs? That was brilliant! Why, in this, is everything so red? Sand coloured I would have understood. Allen thinks they've had a 'BOGOF' deal on red paint from B&Q or Homebase. Someone on the website thought that the garden looked like a Christmas wreath and we have to agree. Minimalist doesn't have to be odd, does it?

The members of the chorus don't seem to be able to either sing or dance in time with each other - either too many people or too little rehearsal and why are they playing aeroplanes with poor Alfie Boe when he's trying to sing "Night Of My Nights"? The choreography seems a little weird to us.

Having said all that, Michael's performance is epic. He is very professional, extremely funny and his voice is astounding, seeming to have gained an added depth and richness recently (wonder why!). He more than holds his own with the opera singers,

indeed Robert and Allen think his voice better suited to the material than most of the others (and they're not biased!)

Perhaps it only goes to show that musical theatre is better left to those who know it best and that opera singers,

with some notable exceptions, should stick to opera.

We have, however, enjoyed the performance overall, whilst conceding that it is not the best we've ever seen and I appreciate that these are only our



**During the ten years Sue and Barbara have known each other, they have shared many experiences. Here are a selection of them:**

*Main picture: At the stage door for 'Kismet', July 2007*

*Above: With Michael at the stage door for 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang', April 2002*

*Bottom Left: Barbara (right) and Sue (left) at the Fan Club Event 1998.*

*Bottom Right: At the 1998 Event after coming second in a competition, winning signed bottles of wine from Michael.*



views and not necessarily shared by anyone else.

F/FWD to stage door. The dilemma now is, do we wait for a glimpse of Michael leaving and risk missing our coach back to the hotel. My back is really aching and London is bursting at the seams, making the prospect of alternative transport as rare as a complimentary critic. But it is Barbara's birthday treat and Michael doesn't have much makeup to remove so we decide to wait for a while. There are about thirty or so people waiting with us and after about a quarter of an hour the man himself appears looking devastating, complete with beard. I stand rooted to the spot while others are getting autographs etc. But Barbara, with remarkable self-possession if not downright cheek, has grabbed (did I say grabbed - I meant persuaded) Michael to have a photo taken with her and is calling me to join them. Michael then says "come on then" to me (he's in a hurry, poor man). I rush to his side and get a cwtsh (welsh hug) and Robert takes the photo you see here. It does take two attempts though, prompting Michael to say "hurry up butt" in his valleys accent - can't think how he knows we're Welsh! I do manage to blurt out "You were wonderful Michael" to which he replies "Thank you darling".

He then just saunters off down the street on foot and we are tempted to stalk him but of course we don't, besides, we can still catch the coach!

The funny thing is that my back doesn't feel so bad now and I am so animated on our way back to the hotel that Allen asks me if I've been drinking. I tell him that it's probably the cocktail of pills I've been popping all day (but it might have been something else!)

F/FWD to now. Barbara and I would like to thank Allen and Robert for their forbearance and continuing support (we'll try to avoid the Grand Prix next year boys) and of course Michael for not only sharing his great talent with us but also for the kindness, patience and generosity that he always displays to his fans.

Most of all we'd like to thank him and the fan club (Maureen and Gill) for our wonderful friendship. Here's to the next 10, 20, 30+ years!

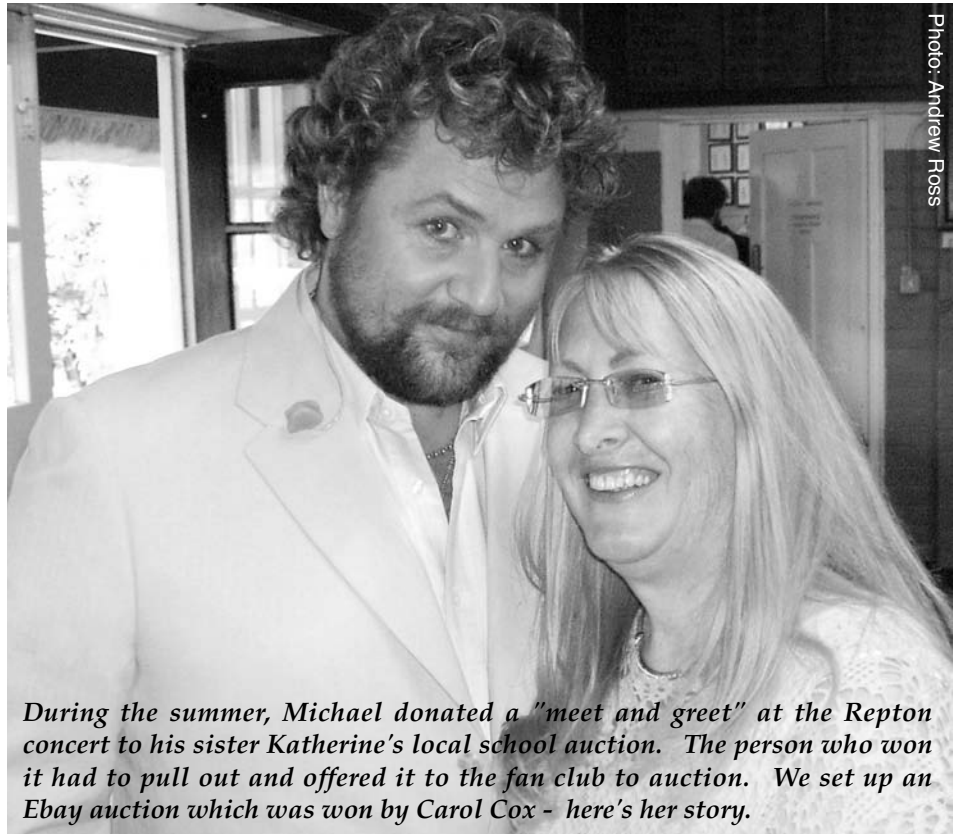


Photo: Andrew Ross

*During the summer, Michael donated a "meet and greet" at the Repton concert to his sister Katherine's local school auction. The person who won it had to pull out and offered it to the fan club to auction. We set up an Ebay auction which was won by Carol Cox - here's her story.*

## **'I AM PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!'** by Carol Cox.

*"Patients and families come first"*

*"We take care of each other"*

*"I'll do my best today and do even better tomorrow"*

*I am proud to make a difference"*

Those are the five 'values' on the back of the ID cards every employee wears at the hospice where I work. The last one is especially true for me. When my father died of cancer in 1994, I decided then that somehow, some way, I would do something to make a difference. When I started working for the hospice several years ago, I felt that was perhaps what I could do to help make a difference but it was still not enough.

I've always admired Michael for helping support several charities and especially with his involvement in R.O.C. Since he was able to help R.O.C. achieve their goals and they were able to cease functioning as a result of that success, I was happy when Michael began supporting the St. Richard's Hospital Trust near his 'other home'. I made a few small contributions to the Trust in the past year or so but I always wanted to do

something more. My opportunity came at Repton. My heart was pounding as I watched my computer screen... three seconds, two seconds, one second... oh my, I won! For once, I put my money where my mouth was. I immediately thought of St. Richard's Hospital trust and how maybe I could make at least a small difference... oh, and meeting Michael was just the icing on my cake!

I sat in the queue along the sidewalk at Repton School, waiting for what was going to be what I consider Michael's best concert ever! The sun was shining (you should have seen me stuffing all that sunshine into my suitcase before I left Florida... I left it open on the patio then quickly zipped it up when it was full...). It was a beautiful day and there were thousands of beautiful people there. Before the concert started, I was invited to come meet Michael. He was so handsome in his beige suit and looked absolutely fabulous (the beard was very becoming on him).

Gill and Maureen had come along as well as my friend Lila (pictured right with Michael) and we all had a nice chat with Michael. I asked him 'do you mind'... ('if I

said I loved you, do you mind?' yes, I really said that....) if I give part of the money to St. Richard's Hospital Trust and part of it to Kat, (Michael's sister) for her school fund? He was very happy with that. He said St. Richard's hopes to meet their goal by the end of next year... wow, that is great! Again, I am proud to help make a difference, be it large or small. St. Richard's Hospital Trust has been raising money for their Cancer Day Unit, of which Michael has been a great supporter. I urge everyone to please help them out and make a donation, however large or small, to help them care for patients with cancer. You can make an online donation at the St. Richard's Hospital Trust website. The link is:

[www.rwst.nhs.uk/about-us/st-richards-hospital-charitable-trust/get-involved/make-a-donation](http://www.rwst.nhs.uk/about-us/st-richards-hospital-charitable-trust/get-involved/make-a-donation)  
or  
<http://www.justgiving.com/cduappeal>

or send a check (make that a cheque for the U.K. residents) or by credit card, to help them achieve their goal. Let's help them do it before next year! Then Michael suggested we take a few photos (gosh... I wasn't even going to ask!) and was just as cordial as humanly possible. What a warm, sensitive, caring, (gorgeous), friendly, charismatic, (gorgeous), funny (ask John Owen Jones...), incredible (and edible... oops!) lovable man! I consider myself very lucky to have had this wonderful opportunity to meet Michael and do something that will help make a difference.

Michael then put on what I consider the best concert he has ever done. A perfect blend of 'his' songs, songs from



the tour and musical theater. When he saw the 'gap' between us in the front and the stage, he told everyone to "come down here so I can see you". Obviously the security people didn't know the drill when it came to Michael Ball fans! Michael was in top form, singing beautifully, songs such as 'This Is The Moment', 'High Flying Adored' (boy, was I flying high all the way home after the concert... and I don't think I needed a jet to do it!), 'Tell Me It's Not True' (my favorite musical theater song! Thank you, Michael!), wonderful duets with Celia Graham (I hadn't seen her in a few years - she looks absolutely gorgeous!), Emma Williams ('all grown up now') and John Owen Jones and Michael McCarthy singing selections of songs from *West Side Story* and *Les Miserables*. Michael gave us the 'best of' songs from the tour as well... 'And This Is My Beloved' from *Kismet*, (hey, if he can't sing them in *Kismet*, he

can sing them at his gigs!), and my favorites 'Crazy', 'I Don't Feel Like Dancin'', 'Don't Stop Me Now' (if Michael continues to 'move' like that on stage, there are gonna be laws passed someday!) and of course, my all time favorite Michael song, 'Love Changes Everything'... absolutely every word so true! It just doesn't get any better than that!

It was truly a concert for everyone. Each time I think he can't get any better, Michael kicks it up a notch! Needless to say, I had one of the best days I could imagine! Sunshine, suds and a superstar! Michael has certainly made a difference for me. I urge everyone to please, please, help make a difference... for Michael, for yourself and for everyone at St. Richard's Hospital Trust. Thanks as well to Maureen and Gill for helping me to be able to say 'I am proud to make a difference'.

Many of you will know our 3 lovely girls from Newcastle who we've been friends with since our first meeting 14 years ago at the recording of one of Michael's TV shows. We are deeply saddened to have to tell you that Adrienne passed away peacefully in her sleep on 5th July 2007. She'd been unwell for some time and was admitted to hospital shortly after we last spoke to her.

Here are the three girls, with the two of us, in happier times at an open-air concert in 1999. Adrienne is in the middle with Linda on the right and Yvonne on the left.





# A SUMMER'S TALE

*Or Betty's Grand Adventure Part 2 by Bev Melbourne*

It is my pleasure to write the second instalment of Betty's Surprise.

Like Dee Colker, I had been emailing Betty for several months and we had become friends. During our several phone conversations we discussed the possibility of meeting up one day, regardless of how unlikely it seemed at the time.

So, five months and one Fairy Godfather later it was the opening night of *Kismet*.

We made plans to meet for lunch at Browns in St Martin's Lane, but after missing our train Shirley, Elaine and I were late arriving in London. Betty had been and gone but we had a pretty good idea of where she might be found. Sure enough on our arrival at the stage door we saw her happily chatting to Julia and Kerstin, Joan and other dear friends. After many hugs and kisses and getting acquainted (or re-acquainted as the case

may be) we settled in to await the arrival of the Birthday Boy.

Due to unavoidable traffic snarls Michael arrived later than expected. May I say at this point, that when he appeared, walking down the street, looking absolutely grand, he was the most welcome sight that I had seen in a very long time ! I apologise for 'gushing' but it had to be said.

A rousing rendition of 'Happy Birthday' followed and gifts presented, then all too soon he was gone. However the best was yet to come and after a quick coffee we hurried back to the theatre to change into our glad rags (in the loo – very elegant!) then made our way to our seats.

I can't add to what has already been written about *Kismet*, except to say that Michael sounded and looked superb and I was one very happy girl. After the show we waited at the front of the

theatre for Michael, who emerged looking very happy and pleased with himself. Betty and I and the other long distance travellers received a lovely welcome from him – the perfect ending to a very exciting day. We said our goodbyes to Betty after promising to be on time for lunch on Saturday.

Saturday dawned bright and su... no, wait a minute... actually wet and windy (it is summer isn't it??) It was a rather soggy wait at the stage door for all concerned, but so much fun catching up with new and old friends. Thankfully the rain eased when Michael arrived and he was his usual charming self.

We enjoyed the matinee even more than the opening night performance. The cast members seemed to have settled in and were more relaxed – Michael was enjoying himself as usual.

Afterwards we walked to Covent Garden, had a look at the Opera House and then enjoyed some late afternoon tea at the market place. We didn't have tickets for the evening performance of *Kismet* which enabled us to enjoy a relaxed dinner at Browns before heading to the stage door to say goodnight to Michael. I asked if Betty and I could have a photo taken with him (for 'On The Ball') and he replied, in his best Aussie accent "Geez, of course you can". When Michael had departed our little foursome headed off to Betty's hotel for a belated Birthday Supper. Betty and I share a birthday and I had bought a cake for the occasion. After scrounging for the cups and tea bags our party was in progress and a good time was had by all.

All too soon it was time to say goodbye to our new friend and we set off to our hotel.

The next morning Betty flew home while Shirley, Elaine and I headed for Paris – but that's another story!!

Thank you Betty for being the lovely lady that I expected you to be – I'm looking forward to our next meeting.

Also an extra special thank you to Michael – you have enabled me to add another name to my growing list of wonderful 'Michael friends.'

# THE ADVENTURES OF SUMMER

by Betty Hubbard

With two visits to the UK to see Michael Ball, first the 2007 One Voice Tour in April, then *Kismet* in June, I was flying high, literally. The world's most beautiful people are not the famous and wealthy – they are Michael Ball fans from all over the globe, some of whom I met on these two trips.

The fun began as I entered a British Airways 747 cabin in April and a flight attendant saw the luggage tag on my roll-on. I'd paused in the doorway for traffic in front and I heard "Michael Ball" as the attendant reached down and picked it up. Yes, I told her, I'm on my way to see him in concert for the first time. "Lucky you" was the response. Good beginning.

My tour companions, Dee Colker, Lila Lindemann, and Carol Cox gathered at Heathrow on the morning of 16 April and we were met by our driver, Don, a most congenial companion. Mid-tour we were joined by Cheryl Curran and Suebee Wilde and her daughter. Our first concert was Manchester, followed by Scarborough, Northampton (twice), Ipswich, and Cardiff – long hours on the road and great concerts at night. I loved seeing the English countryside from the road, the gorgeous yellow fields of rape seed in bloom, rolling hills, stone walls, hedge rows, wild pheasant, and architecture unlike that at home. It filled the senses.

Michael in concert is such a joy: overwhelming energy and that gorgeous voice giving us all he has. I loved the new music included and will welcome the DVD this fall, the embroidered stories... and I love the way he varies his performance for stage and CD – they are different mediums and it is reflected in how he sings songs in the different settings.

Seeing him in action at stage doors is to love him even more. I'd watched Julia & Kerstin's videos and had an idea of what to expect. It was delightful to see him close and being Michael; he is generous with his time and makes us feel that he enjoys his few minutes with us. It is appreciated.



In June came *Kismet*. There's not much I can add to the commentaries of my fellow fans about the production. Michael's presence filled the stage and brought life to the production, and I suspect did much to help pull the ensemble together, making it gel into an entertaining evening, the production problems notwithstanding. I saw it four times and wished for more. Originally it was to have been three performances, but Eliza took me to the half-price ticket booth in Leicester Square on Thursday, making it four in a row and the opportunity to watch the ensemble come together on the stage. I met three couples in the audience over two nights that had seen the original London production with Alfred Drake. A bit of nostalgia for them, and a good time, and fun people to talk to.

Dee Colker had planned the concert tour for me and we met in Winston-Salem, North Carolina for the first time – such a pleasure you can't imagine to walk across the parking lot and finally meet this beautiful lady I'd been e-mailing and sharing my life with for so long. I have much to thank her for, including her friendship.

*Kismet* brought the opportunity to meet with Bev Melbourne, and what a treat to meet her at last after wondering if it would ever happen – Australia is a long way from Virginia. She is another lovely lady I'm happy to call friend. She found the tickets for this show and they were marvelous. Love her stories and joy of life.

I've met many Michael fans now and you are a lovely group of gals (haven't met the guys yet). You give so much to each other and you were exceedingly kind to me and welcoming. Thank you so very much. Maureen and Gill were a joy to meet; they work hard for all of us, do such a great job. They also knew about my trips before I did!

I want to add another thank you, to Arlene Freedman whom I have yet to meet. She originally planned to attend the tour and was unable to do so. I used her tickets for the tour and they were also the best seats in the house.

I have had two fabulous trips to the UK and London and dearly hope to do it again.

# ONE NIGHT AT THE PROMS

by Chris Kitchen



Well, after a disastrous trip down to London, things could only get better, and oh boy did they! I had booked to see the afternoon prom, which was called the Water Diviners tale, and was a newly commissioned piece for children to perform. It was truly amazing but I did also get a huge urge to giggle out loud when the children were depicting the sea rising, and out came lots of blue Marks & Spencer sheets! I wonder did they do a musical job lot, or did the Prom borrow them from E.N.O.?

Once that had finished a quick trip to the stage door to meet up with lots of friends and to see a very rushed and nervous Michael arrive. Then across the road to the gardens to have a lovely picnic with lots of more M.B. friends, which had been arranged by Ruth and Di from Gloucester. The weather really played BALL for us - neither too hot nor too cold and definitely dry!

Then back to the Royal Albert Hall for the doors opening - but what was this we could hear? The dulcet tones of a very recognisable voice, obviously still deep in rehearsal. Eventually we are let in, to buy programmes, meet more friends including Jennie, who I hadn't seen for a couple of years, and Alana, who I had never actually met before.

Take your seats please - the show is about to begin! Everyone had bated breath - I wonder just who was the most nervous, Michael or the fans? Was there any need to worry? The orchestra and Callum arrived on stage and the overture began. Michael arrived on stage, to be greeted by applause before I had even seen him.

What a wonderful performance he put on! From the beginning of 'This Is The Moment' (so apt a song for the occasion) through the wonderfully camp *Patience* songs which I hadn't seen before and on to *Kismet*. A wonderful introduction for my most anticipated song - 'Les Pecheurs de Perles' duet with Alfie Boe. What a wonderful moment. The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end and I got goosebumps. Alfie's solo rendition of 'Torna a Surriento' was also amazing and I cannot wait for his CD which will include that song.

I did wonder what on earth Michael could follow that up with, but the pairing of 'Prepare Ye The Way Of The Lord' from *Godspell* and the passionate 'Gethsemane' from *Jesus Christ Superstar* were the perfect choice and the greatest end to the first half.

More anticipation, and star watching - we could see the BBC 4 interview area, and saw the Andrew Lloyd Webber interview taking place. Then enter the orchestra and Callum yet again to play in for the *Sunset Boulevard* section. Michael's voice really does justice to these wonderful songs - some of Lloyd Webber's best, as Michael said. The choice of songs in this second half was just wonderful. Talk about Michael taking us on a journey, from one masterpiece to another! The rousing 'Anthem' from *Chess* followed by love songs by the genius of Lloyd Webber and Sondheim, going straight into 'Something's Coming', and then culminating in 'Empty Chairs, Empty Tables'. This was followed by Queen's 'The Show Must Go On' (that raised eyebrows in some areas!) and a duet with Laura Michelle Kelly of 'The Prayer'. What an emotional rollercoaster!

The official final two songs were in a slightly lighter vein - 'Let The Rivers Run' followed by what was a masterpiece - 'Music'! What energy bounded from the stage during that song, and Michael does so love banging those drums during the violin solo! He deserved to let off a little steam.

But what was this - 10 o'clock and no sign of 'Love Changes Everything'? That couldn't be right! And of course it wasn't. Michael bounded back onto stage, saying he was going to be in trouble with the BBC as it was after 10pm but he had to sing this one song. He also suggested we all joined in, which we duly obliged. A wonderful end to what had been a triumphant evening. I looked around, and there was virtually a complete standing ovation. If any of the doubters had been there, they were definitely converted by Michael's professionalism, quality and charisma. We all knew about that, but there were none present left in any doubt about it after two packed hours of wonderful entertainment and music, which is what the Proms should be all about! I don't think Michael was the only one left misty eyed.

## THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

You can find our website at

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

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

There is also a Fan Club Members Forum for fan club members only. The password to access it is 'forever'.



## MOVING HOUSE?

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

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

## INFOLINE NUMBER



**UK Members:**

0871 221 7811

**Overseas:**

+44 8707 422224

## PEN PALS / TRAVEL TALK

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

### MICHAEL BALL GET-TOGETHER: ON SATURDAY, 22ND SEPT '07.

Bournemouth International Centre, in the café area inside.

Meet from 2:00pm - 4:00pm.

Anyone interested please join us!

**JO-ANNE PHILLIPS**  
FLAT 2, BLOCK 7, HOLTON CLOSE,  
OFF PARK LANE, BIRCHINGTON,  
THANET, KENT CT7 0AZ

Email: [jo\\_destiny\\_70@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jo_destiny_70@yahoo.co.uk)  
Jo-Anne is 37 years old and a dedicated member of the fan club. She would love to hear from anyone, anywhere, who would like to become genuine penpals and will write to all who respond. As well as being a card designer, Jo-Anne is also a musician, and is passionate about musical theatre, and loves to see Michael in

concert whenever the chance arises. She is currently looking for other Michael fans in, and around her own area to join her in coffee mornings, and of course to chat about Michael.

**DOT NIXON**  
14 CHARLES STREET, HUDERSFIELD  
HD4 5RW

Email: [dot.nixon@ntlworld.com](mailto:dot.nixon@ntlworld.com)  
Dot is 74 years old and a new fan of Michael's who would love to hear from anyone. She likes singing and is a member of the U3A Ladies' Choir and her Church Music Group. She also enjoys going to concerts and shows.

**PATRICIA ANN BROWN**  
31 GELT CRESCENT, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING, DH5 0HX  
Patricia would love to hear from anyone, anywhere.

### CALLING ALL SOUTH YORKSHIRE FANS!

We have monthly meetings at Meadowhall for coffee and Michael chats and would love you all to come along and join us.

Anyone interested just drop me a line or email to:

**Ann Watson**  
44 Constable Close, Flanderwell,  
Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S66 2XG

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Michael Gane  
FAN CLUB

