

British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

Aspects of Love

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics by Don Black and Charles Hart, book by David Garnett, adapted by Andrew Lloyd Webber

New Victoria Theatre, Woking, and touring
(2008)

Billed as Lloyd Webbers most romantic musical, romance is most notable for its absence. There is love, certainly passionate love, inappropriate love, love obsessive and love possessive. There is even a flash of the love that dare not speak its name, but the main focus for the four main characters is love of themselves, making it very hard to love (or even like) any of them. It is not intended to be autobiographical, but apparently the original author had a very unconventional love life and he married a girl twenty six years his junior, as does George, our hero in this tale, abandoning his former partner who (surprisingly) does not seem to mind at all and a loving relationship begins to blossom between the two women. There is much swapping of partners in a story which spans twenty years and covers three generations and three countries.

Beginning with The Prologue in 1964, the two abandoned loves are reflecting on their life and the fact that Love Changes Everything the only song immediately familiar from the original 1989 production before they flash back seventeen years and embark on their Journey of a Lifetime. Tim Rogers is Alex, a seventeen year old boy obsessed with a glamorous, but penniless, actress. His powerful voice could fill a theatre without any amplification, and he gives full value to the passionate emotion in the song, assisted by sweet voiced Poppy Tierney as Giulietta, Georges former love.

The intricate tangled relationships begin with Alecs obsessive love for the glamorous, but penniless actress Rose (Shona Lindsay), who in turn falls for an older man Alexs Uncle George, who leaves his present partner to marry her. I have never been as happy says Rose two years later or indeed as wealthy retorts a cynical Alex. .

Everything revolves around George, played sympathetically and with dignity by David Essex, who has aged gracefully and attractively. You can understand Rose falling for him certainly his many female fans in the audience did. Just the same he is at his most endearing in his grandfatherly (oops fatherly) role with the other familiar song (I want to be) The First Man you Remember sung to his fifteen year old delightful daughter (Rachel Lynes) who in her turn has fallen for an older man, Georges nephew Alex, and history begins to repeat itself.

The twenty year time span involves a great number of diverse venues which calls for many of the ensemble cast doing double duty as scene shifters shadowy figures constantly whisking props on and off and rotating the scenery a task they performed with precise and quiet efficiency, but so much movement did tend to distract. The dialogue is also sung throughout an operatic style which didnt quite come off, and much of Act One was frankly boring. Act Two did have some comic touches with George being more concerned about the possibility that a bullet might have damaged his precious painting than worrying about his wifes injury.

All in all - an unremarkable show with a couple of good tunes and some musical phrases which seemed oddly familiar. The four main characters performed and sang with passion and conviction, the two women particularly beautifully, but left me strangely unmoved. Giuletta's quotation at George's funeral....."Set down the wine and the dice, and perish the thought of tomorrow" may be an attractive maxim for life - provided you have no thought for anyone else.

Touring to Canterbury, Truro, Birmingham, Eastbourne, Nottingham, Darlington, Hull, Belfast, Cambridge, Swansea, Wimbledon, Bristol, Cheltenham, Liverpool, Ipswich

Peter Lathan [reviewed](#) this production when it opened at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle

Reviewer: [Sheila Connor](#)