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Feature Articles for *Aspects of Love*

Broadway And The West End Not Immune To Reality TV

Andrew Lloyd Weber was the first to bridge the gap between reality television and professional musical theater. Weber is the composer of many of Broadway's most beloved productions such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats*, and *Aspects of Love* which is currently playing at The Walnut Street Theatre through Oct. 23rd. In 2006, Andrew Lloyd Weber created and produced *How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria* for BBC. The format of this show and its spinoffs is a cross between Donald Trump's *The Apprentice* and *American Idol*. The process starts with an open audition for those wishing to compete for a leading role in a West End or Broadway production. In the case of *How Do You Solve...*, the prize was the role of Maria Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. During each episode, contestants perform challenges to prove they're a triple threat meaning they can sing, act and dance with equal expertise. Contestants are eliminated each week and the last person standing is offered a contract for the production. Weber produced four other shows with this same format, most recently *Over the Rainbow*, searching for the next Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. Weber stated that this may be his last reality show venture.

Weber's formula influenced NBC to produce *Grease: You're the One That I Want* in 2006 to find Sandy and Danny for the *Grease* Broadway revival. These shows can launch a lifelong career. Laura Osnes won Sandy in *Grease* and has subsequently performed in a plethora of Broadway productions. She can next be seen as Bonnie in the production of *Bonnie and Clyde* premiering November in NYC. Not only can this process make an actor's dream come true, but also for those not familiar with the theater, these programs can bring a little bit of Broadway into their homes and quite possibly the soaring melodies of Andrew Lloyd Weber into their lives.

Aspects of Relationships

Human relationships- it seems to be everybody's favorite topic. Flip through gossip magazines. Turn on the television. Peek inside a book. Listen to a singer's album. Why are people so interested? Relationships are something everyone can relate to. It's a universal understanding. I'm not just talking about finding the love of your life. There are relationships between friends, family, and God. And if it is not relatable, it is something people like to easily imagine. Why do you think little girls love Justin Bieber? People like to be social and with people they love. Walk inside a high school cafeteria and you will see people eating in groups, talking and socializing.

At birth, your family is the first humans you have a real relationship with. And from there on out till the rest of life, we grow. We bond over new relationships, sometimes we let go of old ones. We ponder over the ones we have, or the possibility of starting a new one. It is over relationships that we cry, but love too much to let go of. Our lives are built over relationships, and it is something we cherish and enjoy. Andrew Lloyd Webber's musicals over the years have revealed different kinds of relationships that had interest us and intrigue our minds. The relationship between a phantom and a girl he wants. The relationships cats have with each other. The relationship between Joseph and the God he worships. The relationship between Jesus and the people He touched. One musical, however, has taken love relationships to the extreme.

Aspects of Love is a musical that zooms in and focuses on relationships, perhaps a little too much. It takes the normal love relationships that people have to the extreme. In *Aspects of Love*, a woman falls in love with a younger boy, breaks off the relationship, and marries his uncle. And there is even more relationships and complications in this musical. Relationships are constantly changing and moving in *Aspects of Love*. This musical shifts through the aspects of love very quickly between characters that think they are in love, or at the very least want to be.

"Love changes everything." A quote heard multiple times in *Aspects of Love*. "Love triangles," age differences, "affairs." Each term displays a different topic relating to relationships. Each word is just an example of a component of a relationship.

Andrew Lloyd Webber seems to always include a relationship in the shows I've viewed. When comparing two of Lloyd Webber's shows, I see a similarity between Eva Perón, the female lead in *Evita*, and Rose Vibert, the female lead in *Aspects of Love*. Eva starts off her career through a relationship with a man named Agustín, who is twenty one years older than she. Throughout the show, Eva has affairs and many different relationships with older men.

In *Aspects of Love*, Rose first starts a relationship with a big fan, Alex Dillingham, who is eight years younger. Once Rose meets Alex's uncle, George Dillingham, she begins a new relationship with him. The age difference is unknown, but it is explained that he is in fact much older. Later in the show, Alex meets Rose and George's daughter, his cousin Jenny, and develops a relationship with her. This relationship includes a 20 year age difference.

When comparing *Aspects of Love* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, I see another similarity with the type of relationship component used. Each show has a love triangle. In *The Phantom of the Opera*, Lloyd Webber made it so the female lead, Christine, has a surreal attraction to the Phantom and, at the same time, is in love with Raoul. In *Aspects of Love*, Rose finds herself stuck in a love triangle too. She puts herself between Alex and George, making it hard to love just one. Also, George, who was already involved in an affair with Giulietta Trapani, fell in love with Rose. He placed himself in between the two women and created an issue for himself as well.

Aspects of Love is solely about the ups and downs of multiple relationships. None of the relationships are typical. As a well known quote from the show says, "All the rules we make are broken."

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love*, is an elaborate musical that leaves the audience asking the question "What just happened?" It follows five people as they learn that, as the opening number states, "Love changes everything." The musical deals with first love, young love, forbidden love, and love triangles. Along with its detailed story, *Aspects of Love* contains a large amount of scene changes, that include changing rooms in a house, cities, and even time periods. To combat these changes, the Walnut Street Theatre used a projector for backgrounds, and a double donut turn table to move props.

Instead of using large, bulky backgrounds, Assistant Production Manager, Melissa Buffalo explained that "The Set Designer, John Farrell, created images from various types of medias (paintings, images. Etc.) based on the location and emotion the director envisioned for each scene. There are approximately 21 slides to put us in different locations." The use of projections reduces the amount of money spent on props and backdrops, as well as on the amount of time it takes to set up each scene.

Another way that the Walnut Street Theatre cut down on set up, was by using the double donut turntable. The two circles in the center of the stage rotate together and in opposite directions. In addition to cutting down on time, it makes it easier to move larger pieces into place. This allowed two scenes to be set up at the same time without cutting the space of the stage.

The Walnut Street Theatre's use of projections and turntables helped them put on an incredible show. The backgrounds used to portrayed the French vistas and Italian villas were spot on, and created a relaxed, romantic mood that fit perfectly with the musical's passionate love affairs.

There was a quote that I kept remembering throughout *Aspects of Love*. It was “If you love something, set it free... If it comes back, it's yours, if it doesn't, it never was yours”. I kept thinking that since the play was called *Aspects of Love*, it would have some reference to famous quotations like that, but, it rarely did. The only thing that echoed that quote was Alex always coming back to Rose. But Rose, being difficult, seemed to only want to hurt Alex. She had feelings for him, though. I could tell. But, do they really love each other by definition of that quote? I mean, he came *back*, they always seemed to want to be together, but, yet there always seemed to be a wall. It was like a game of tug of war, always just one giving in. But in the end, the rope does break from all the stress on it. The ending was kind of depressing. But, it was also not the classic ending of a regular love story, so I'm really happy about that.

Jessica Markowitz

Aspects of Love is a controversial play, and for good reason. The story alone is scandalous, what with the mismatched ages of the characters, the family ties between rivals, the family ties between those in love, two women in love, and a union of three people. Seeing such a story unfold on stage is even more so. While the way intimacy is hinted at but never shown is admirably handled, those hints are rather shocking for the unprepared viewer. On top of that, the character Rose goes through a few onstage costume changes. In fact, the first change is only a couple seconds into the first act. Needless to say, there is a plethora of scenes in which the characters are a tad underdressed.

While this play is obviously not meant for a young audience, there is no need to write it off; its message is undeniably valuable. Love comes in many forms, and many of those forms are not accepted by society. The characters in *Aspects of Love* know this only too well. The departing message is that what's important is to live in the moment and follow your heart. For as Rose states numerous times, we only have one life, not two.

Alicia Darcy

Sitting in the mezzanine, my mother and I were watching a love scene from the play *Aspects of Love*. The part we were watching happened to be a little on the risqué side. At that moment, my mother looked over at me with embarrassment on her face. She definitely did not want to be watching three adults be involved with each other while sitting next to her 16 year old daughter. Yet, teenagers are at their most curious times in their lives. Why is the subject of sexuality so awkward between adults and teens?

As times move on, teenagers and young adults are exploring their sexualities and becoming more comfortable with whom they are, but for some reason, adults have a hard time excepting teenagers as “sexual beings.” Although I am not saying all teenagers are promiscuous, I am saying that they know what they are interested in and are more open to showing it as they get older. Unfortunately, most of them have to hide it because they know their parents are afraid to think that their children are growing up and not necessarily to their “wishes.”

My question is, when will society ever allow for an open communication between teenagers and young adults with their parents about topics such as sexuality? Why is it so absolutely absurd for us to discuss these things together? This feeling does not only apply to sexuality but the fact that my peers and I do have the “state-of-mind” that adults feel we need in order to have love for others. Even in *Aspects of Love*, the youngest child Jenny falls in love with a much older man. Her father wants her to be the only man that she loves, and can not fully except the fact that she has the ability to love a person, just as much as he loves his own wife. Until society will open up and accept that teenagers are just as exposed to all forms of sexuality in their lives as adults are, the subject is bound to be a taboo in households all around the country.

Andrew Lloyd Webber, one of the most well-known Broadway composers of all time, has written the score for over 10 musicals, *Aspects of Love*, now playing at the Walnut Street Theater until October 23rd, being one of his most famous. All of Webber's works are unique and very emotional. They give the audience a sense of both joy and dismay, comfort and uneasiness, elation and apprehension. Any Andrew Lloyd Webber play is like a roller coaster ride and this is certainly evident in *Aspects of Love*.

The show's leading lady, Rose, is confident yet hopelessly confused. She falls in love with a young, immature Alex, who has been admiring her work and attending every show in which she appears. They try to escape their troubles by running away to Alex's villa. Then, Alex's uncle, George, who happens to own the villa where the two lovers are staying, enters the picture. Rose falls for George almost instantly. She leaves Alex behind to pursue an affair with George, but Rose soon realizes that as much as she loves George, she is still in love with Alex. Throughout the story, we see Rose attempting to cope with this dilemma.

For any theater goer who has witnessed other Webber productions, this "love triangle" in *Aspects of Love* looks very familiar. In *The Phantom of the Opera*, the audience follows the story of Christine Daaé, a young and very talented opera singer. After Christine's sudden rise to stardom, her childhood sweetheart, Raoul, takes an interest in her. Christine is happy until she meets the Phantom. He becomes obsessed with her talent. With that obsession came passion and then love. As the show progresses, it is revealed Christine is in love with both men. She is torn between them, just like Rose is torn in *Aspects of Love*.

Both Rose and Christine tell the audience that love is not always what it seems. Love is complicated, confusing, and often terrifying. They are proof that love truly changes everything.

Austin Kelly

While I sat in the Walnut Street Theatre preparing to view the final dress rehearsal of their production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love*, I didn't have the slightest idea of what to expect. I consider myself a fan of Andrew Lloyd Weber, but never had I heard of this musical, and after asking around and researching, I expected nothing other than to leave the theatre confused and dispirited. But after viewing the spectacle on stage I left feeling I knew the characters for a while, and I was with them with every bar sung in the show. The acting was phenomenal, the singing, superb, the directing was daring and dazzling, but what really grabbed my attention during the show were the massive projections used as backdrops during the course of the show. With each development and setting change in the characters' lives, the projections would beautifully reflect them. From the busy, bustling and beautiful streets of Paris from the eyes of the lively young Chris, to the Van Gough-esque, Impressionistic sprawling landscapes at George's villa to the large and beautiful views of Italy which look as if El Greco painted them to specifically embody the show's current emotion. The Walnut's unprecedented budget for these stage projections was well spent, as it enhances the show in ways I have never seen a show enhanced in all 17 years of my life.

Aspects of Love was a phenomenal musical, especially recognizable for the music, the set design, and the lighting.

The music was written by Andrew Lloyd Webber, composer of *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and many more. He has won 7 Tony Awards, an Oscar, 7 Oliviers, 3 Grammys, and so many others for his amazing works. The music from *Aspects of Love* has a soothing and beautiful feel to it, and you'll forget that you're in a theater and feel like you're drifting through the air along with it. After you see *Aspects of Love*, you'll be humming "Love Changes Everything" and "First Man You Remember" to yourself for the rest of the night!

The sets stood out perhaps even more than the music. Designed by John Farrell, a donut at the center of the stage moves with each scene, giving the illusion that a character is going outside, into a different room, or a different city altogether. The props were also very diverting: the curtains were positioned around doorways, so as to show a large room, or several tables were placed around the donut, so as to represent a restaurant. You'll be blown away by how much someone can make a stage look like real life.

The lighting, designed by Jack Jacobs, was also a key factor in making *Aspects of Love* a great success. For instance, in one scene two characters are walking through a forest, and the shadows of the lights make it look like they really are walking under trees. The background lights show landscapes or buildings that give you a feel for the environment, as if you were right there by the shore or in Venice with the characters.

You'll never regret seeing *Aspects of Love*, and watching it will be a memory you keep for the rest of your life.

Think back to when you were 17; try to remember the thrill of early romances, the eagerness of taking on the world. By 34, are the same feelings still present or are you more settled into life, more experienced? In *Aspects of Love* at the Walnut Street Theatre the characters have to experience 17 years of life in about two and a half hours, stepping through years as if they were revolving doors.

Alex Dillingham, played by Charles Hagerty, has one of the most significant age changes, 17 to 34, changing from boy to man. In the beginning of the show, Alex is a wide-eyed child getting his first real taste of the world, meeting his first love, and gaining new experiences. By Act II, Alex is a 34-year-old man with experiences, relationships, and a history.

While it may look effortless to an audience member, Hagerty has put a lot of thought into his character. Hagerty mentions that posture plays a significant role in portraying Alex, "At 34, he's had years of a military career - his formal posture is ingrained. As a 17 year old, he wants to appear more mature to Rose, so he 'puts on' what he thinks is an older man's pulled-up posture, but maybe doesn't wear it very well." This technique creates an illusion, making audience members believe Alex is truly growing and aging as the show progresses. Hagerty also mentions that the energy of young Alex and older Alex is extremely different. While everything is new and exciting for 17-year-old Alex, older Alex experiences less of the original thrill of life.

Aging for the stage is a skill that takes time and effort to perfect, especially without the help of extensive makeup to add time to the face. Alex Dillingham goes through multiple stages in his life while scenes transition. The actor portraying Alex, Charles Hagerty, needs to make the passage of time go smoothly without making it look overly dramatic or seemingly nonexistent. With a little help from changing hairstyle, Charles Hagerty allows the audience to experience Alex's growth over 17 years.

I can identify with the many transformations the characters experience in *Aspects of Love*; when I was five, I acted and dressed differently than I do now at the age of sixteen. Today, I want to express myself and make a statement with the clothes I wear, just like the character, *Rose Vibert* from *Aspects of Love*. This production takes place over the course of seventeen years; between the 40's and 60's. It is a significant challenge for actors and costume designers to portray the changes that characters experience over a long period of time. Actors must analyze when they're acting and reacting on stage and ask themselves, "Is this what I would do at this age?" Such a task requires talent, reflection, and concentration. This production is not only focused on how the actor performs, but the costumes as well. Their costume designers have to explore the decades of fashion to accurately depict costumes of that era. In the 40's, during WWII, all types of cloth were needed to support the war effort; this caused material for clothing to be severely rationed. Due to the limited amount of materials, and despite prior social norms, short skirts were prominent and women were encouraged to expose their bare legs. By the late 40's and into the 50's, the "Minimalist" style became passé. Designers thus pushed for luxurious clothing, incorporating full skirts, small waists, and emphasis on shoulders calling it "The New Look." Many complained about the extravagant use of materials because rationing was still imperative. During the 60's many women began the "Mod Movement" which is translated as "up to date and modern." Women rebelled against the traditional styles and created their own trends. The amount of research devoted by the costume designer and actor to achieve the character's extensive transition is a vast challenge; yet, *Aspects of Love* beautifully tracks the passage of years and captures the essence of character's lives along the timeline of Webber's production.

I saw Aspects of Love back on September fourth. The thing that intrigued me most about the story line is that love is something that spans generations, and the characters' view of love changes as they grow older. For example, when Alex is seventeen he whole heartedly believes that Rose is the only women he will ever love. However a few years later, when they meet again, Alex sees Rose for who she really is. an opportunist with a fear of being alone. Similarly, at the beginning of the show George only believes in lust. But later he finds familial love and happiness in his daughter Jenny.

I've decided to expand on this topic by asking the people closest to me, my friends and family, what they believe the aspects of love to be. I first consulted my parents. Having been married for thirty plus years, I decided they would be good source of wisdom.

Me: Mom and Dad, what do you guys think the aspects of love are?

Dad: Friendship and common values.

Mom: There are many different aspects. There is love between a kid and puppy. Love between a parent and child.

Dad: And a child and parent.

Me: Good one Dad.

After a slightly uncomfortable conversation with my parents, I wanted to hear about the aspects of love from a teenage perspective. I was not aware how difficult it is to get teenage girls to talk openly about their relationships. However my friend, Maddie, a hopeless romantic and Taylor Swift enthusiast was more than happy to share me her opinion of love with me

Me: So, Maddie what do you think the aspects of love are?

Maddie: Ahh love, so simple yet so complicated. It can be beautiful, but also tragic. It can be between friends and family. But all of the tragedies of love are just lessons learned for the heart. Never regret love.

She then went to quote Taylor Swift. She did, however, mention something else. "Once you're in love nothing will ever be the same". By doing this. Maddie unintentionally summarized the main theme of the show made famous in the opening song "Love Changes Everything."

Written by Kelly White, a junior at Central Bucks East High School. Special thanks to Mom, Dad and Maddie for their help on this article.

If clothes make the man, then music definitely makes the show. The Walnut Street Theater's production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love* has phenomenal music that sounds quite familiar. The music utilizes a lot of piano and string instruments, with very renaissance and romantic-type sounds to the songs, especially "Love Changes Everything", which is repeated multiple times. If you close your eyes as many of the songs play, you suddenly realize: the music reminds you of music from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*.

The song sung between the characters George (played by Paul Schoeffler) and Alex (Charles Hagerty), "She'd Be Far Better Off With You" with conversational lyrics sung back and forth and a very upbeat tempo is very reminiscent of the opening number from *Beauty and the Beast*, "Belle (Bonjour)". Both of these songs are extremely upbeat and contain many humorous lyrics, even though they go by so quickly, and you do not realize how funny it is until well after the lyric was sung; a sort of "Oh, now I get it!" moment.

The entire score of the show rarely changes throughout, repeating and reprising "Love Changes Everything" as its main theme, only varying the words from time to time, which gives the show a sense of continuity. The Song "Seeing is Believing", sung between Alex (Hagerty) and Rose (Jennifer Hope Willis), is a very romantic song, reminiscent of the title track of *Beauty and the Beast*. Both songs portray a love story between two unlikely lovers, whether it be an actress and a big fan in *Aspects*, or between a woman and a hideous beast, there are a lot of parallels.

Although the shows differ a lot, the music is wonderfully similar, yet at the same time different, mainly the lyrics. As the score from *Beauty and the Beast* lingers in your head long after it is done, so does the score of *Aspects of Love*. The brilliant voices of the actors stick with you as well, and you find yourself singing "Love Changes Everything" for weeks upon end.

Genevieve Naklicki

Andrew Lloyd Webber never seems to disappoint. His shows always end up having that little extra special feature that makes seeing a live performance become more than just that. In his version of *Aspects of Love* currently playing at the Walnut Street Theatre, you can expect more than just beautiful music and an amazing story. You get to travel through Europe by projections. As the story goes on, the background switches from France to many places in Europe. Certain projections are more realistic looking than others, being that some were against a curtain and you could see the ripple. But, even so, this is a new way to enjoy theatre. These projections allow you to change locations smoothly and quickly. There is no awkward scenes used to cover up scene changes behind curtains.

In many scenes the projections were just beautiful, such as views of Paris or mountain landscapes in France. I enjoyed this new take on theatre. It became much easier to imagine where the characters were located at that given moment, considering in this show there is much moving around throughout Europe. The way the projections were portrayed gave a very calm, elegant feel to the show. It was very beautiful and flowed together easily.

I would recommend this show to anyone, as long as they are mature, for that is definitely needed. Whoever goes to see this wonderful show will not be disappointed, for the music is amazing as well as the acting. I would recommend you see this if you want to experience a different way to view theatre. I consider this production theatre of the future. For technology is always growing. The amazing things we do with it, are astounding. I can't wait to see more shows with this type of production.

Aspects of Love

The production of *Aspects of Love* currently showing at Philadelphia's own Walnut Street Theatre has exceeded some expectation of previous opinions. The lights are spectacular, the blocking is extremely creative (courtesy of "the donut"), and the production is well above what one could imagine. However, the performance of the actors is by far the most impressive. Andrew Lloyd Webber has composed many hits in the last twenty years, likewise arranging many misses. I feel *Aspects of Love* is a miss. The plot is overwhelmingly scattered, the music is very reminiscent of Webber's past work, and you did not walk away from this musical wishing you could relieve the experience. Altogether, the show is not fantastic, making the portrayal of the characters that much more important, the voices that much more memorable. I did not leave the theatre wishing to watch the show again, but wishing to hear Jennifer Hope Wills (playing the role of Rose Vibert) sing another or song, or Charles Hagerly personally serenade you. The voices in this show definitely bring the audience out of the possible uncomfortable atmosphere surrounding the show, and into the magical world of music. Without the remarkable talent in this show, it probably would not sell half as what it does. The work and ability present in the production is of greater importance than the show itself. Talent is the Aspect that matters.

Love changes everything - this is the sentiment echoed throughout the Walnut Street Theatre's production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love*, and, indeed, it is an apt summary of the musical. The relationship between the characters Rose and Alex, in particular, exemplifies just how dynamic an agent of change love can be. Rose Vibert (Jennifer Hope Wills), an aspiring actress working in France, and Alex Dillingham (Charles Hagerty), an adoring teenage fan of hers, are brought together by chance, and what ensues can only be described as tumultuous.

What is so striking about their relationship is that although the novel that the play was based upon was written in 1955, and the play is set in the 1940s, their relationship is highly evocative of those in the literature of the 1920s. Rose is much like Ernest Hemingway's Lady Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises* – beautiful and charismatic, yet fearing solitude and using any means to prevent it; while Alex embodies Jake Barnes, an American expatriate who falls in love with Brett.

Alex is more strongly reminiscent of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*, losing whom he perceives to be the love of his life to another man. Gatsby loses Daisy Buchanan, another woman noted for her beauty and charm, to Tom Buchanan, who then enters into a feud with Gatsby over Daisy, much like Alex's quarrel with his uncle, George Dillingham (Paul Schoeffler).

Another thing to note about all three of the relationships is that a reconciliation is attempted within each one – Daisy and Gatsby appear on the verge of a reunion, although ultimately this falls through as Daisy remains with Tom while Gatsby faces death; and at the conclusion of *The Sun Also Rises*, Brett and Jake find themselves in the back of a taxicab pondering what could have happened.

The two novels take a highly pessimistic view of love, but this is not the case with *Aspects of Love*. The play shows love as both positive and negative, and the only clear stance it takes is, indeed, that love changes everything.

Kiss and Tell

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love* has more than just a few kisses and intimate moments. With so many moments of intimacy, the actors must perfect the challenge of making it look real – making the audience believe in that moment of love, a first kiss, or a passionate rendezvous. Isn't that the job of an actor anyway; to make the audience believe their character? By the time the audience members view the final product, the kisses flow effortlessly and easily, but what were the challenges in making these kisses so perfect?

Authenticity is the challenge. The four main characters in *Aspects of Love* that must make the audience believe the love in the story are Rose Vibert, her admiring fan Alex Dillingham, his uncle George, and George's mistress, Giulietta Trapani. When these actors are performing their moment of affection, (whether with the opposite sex or not) they are acting as their character, not themselves. A stage kiss is just like any other real kiss only, without the real feelings. The actors only portray those feelings through their characters emotions.

The type of kiss or level of passion in the scene helps the director and the actors make decisions about the quality of the kiss. For *Aspects of Love*, the director, Bruce Lumpkin, had to decide if the kiss was too quick, not passionate enough, or too passionate, or if it was believable. Did the kisses between George and Rose, Rose and George, George and Giulietta increase the audience's belief in their love? I think so, and for the number of kisses they performed, they must have had a lot of practice because all of them were believable. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect.

Andrew Lloyd Webber: What is Love?

Andrew Lloyd Webber, a renowned English composer, has scored 13 musicals in a variety of genres. He has written songs that emote fear, humor, suspense, and relief; however, all of his compilations share one common theme, love. Webber's musicals demonstrate numerous "aspects of love," which are always presented by unique relationships between diverse characters. As an audience, we are drawn to these relationships, curious about the form through which love will express itself. Three of the most distinct forms of love portrayed in Webber's works are reverent, physical, and obsessive love.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, originally written for an elementary school performance, focuses on a reverent love between one God and His followers. Joseph, the title character, praises his God in even the most depressing situations, believing that "children of Israel are never alone." This faith perfectly exemplifies the strong devotion that religious people feel toward their God.

Aspects of Love, a slightly disturbing portrayal of physical relationships, centers itself around the theme of physical love. Complex love triangles develop as characters fight for each other's affection, meeting with both success and failure. Using exaggeratedly unsettling scenarios, this musical highlights the complexities of physical passions and exposes the dilemmas of physical connections between uncommon couples.

The Phantom of the Opera, arguably Webber's most successful musical, illustrates a situation of obsessive love. An opera company is faced with disaster when an "opera ghost" falls in love with Christine, a chorus girl. When this alleged phantom lures Christine into his dark home and threatens the life of her childhood love Raoul, he proves his obsession to be "past the point of no return." This eerie expression of love exemplifies how obsession can arise from unrequited love.

Each of these musicals, though distinctly original in many ways, provides an example of a specific type of love. Through his music, Andrew Lloyd Webber illustrates the belief that "love changes everything." Whether this love brings strength, pleasure, rejection, or pain, it will certainly "never let you be the same."

"Love will never, never let you be the same," is one of the familiar themes of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love*. The show proves that no matter how long you disregard true love, it will never die. The show contains various love triangles among Alex (Charles Hagerly), Rose (Jennifer Hope Wills), George (Paul Schoeffler), and Giulietta (Danielle G. Herbert).

Theatre goers might know some of Webber's other works, such as *Cats*, *Starlight Express*, and *Phantom of the Opera*. Webber is the only composer to ever have three musicals running in New York and three in London at the same time. He has been awarded six Tony Awards, four Drama Desk Awards, three Grammys, and five Olivier Awards. He has changed musical theatre history tremendously, but not everyone believes it has been in a good way.

Some people think that his shows tend to be overly dramatic and sappy. Take college musical theatre major, Patrick Henkel, for example. In Henkel's opinion, "Andrew Lloyd Weber is like the Britney Spears of musical theater. His works lack in complexity, both in story and in music. That is not to say that he, like Britney Spears, doesn't have any catchy tunes."

Others, like teen theatre enthusiast, Ranae Jenson, acknowledge Webber's shortcomings, but admire his ability to attract the masses. "To me it is like a guilty pleasure. His musicals are like 'gateway' shows. They are appealing to larger groups of people, which may bring in a lot of new musical theatre fans."

Webber's *Aspects of Love* clearly has its big moments; some may say that the operatic song "Love Changes Everything" serves as a perfect example of his "melodramatic" music. However, this show can be simple, using limited props and projections. "They really just take the place of large backdrops and therefore do not interfere much with the actual performance," says the Walnut Street Theatre's Rob Weinstein.

So, theatre fans, choose your side. Do you think Andrew Lloyd Webber's musicals are too exaggerated and overdone or do they sit with your collection of songs by Schonberg and Sondheim, enjoyable, albeit slightly over-the-top favorites?

While watching the dress rehearsal for *Aspects of Love*, I saw many similarities to *Miss Saigon*. *Miss Saigon* is a musical by Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil. The lyrics are by Boublil and Richard Maltby, Jr. I saw this show at the Walnut Street Theater last year.

In *Aspects of Love*, Alex tries to steal starving actress Rose Vibert's heart, just to have an unexpected twist leaving him heartbroken. Later on in the story, Alex breaks his underage cousin, Jenny's heart. In *Miss Saigon*, Kim is betrayed by her lover John, whom said they would be together when he came back for her, but instead, married someone else. In these ways, both plays share a tragic tale of bad romance. In the end, someone's going to get hurt.

True to the name, *Aspects of Love* shows many different viewpoints to situations where love is involved. *Aspects of Love* focuses on the Alex Dillingham's attempts at love with actress Rose Vibert, dealing with unwanted advances from his underage cousin Jenny, having his uncle George indirectly meddle with his affairs, learning about George and his mistress, sculptress Giulietta Trapani. The musical/chamber opera shows the viewpoints of the characters involved and their takes on each situation. In *Miss Saigon*, the audience sees the majority of the story through Kim's eyes, but also through her lover John's. *Miss Saigon* mainly focuses on Kim's affair with John and her entanglements in his future, of which she is not welcome. *Aspects of Love* and *Miss Saigon* reveal the very confusing, sometimes sweet, and even harsh reality of love.

Miss Saigon, and *Aspects of Love* are musicals that share a similar plot, but both leave audiences with tidal waves of emotion. The actors and actresses of *Aspects of Love* (and *Miss Saigon*) give a riveting performance. They portray the characters so well that while you're watching, you start to root for certain characters, and possibly hate some. You might even catch yourself believing that Alex is really living out there in Pau, France. These actors love what they do, and with their performances in these plays, it shows. Love *really* does change everything.

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Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love* begs the notion "Love Changes Everything". While I don't doubt the truth in that statement, I did doubt something else; whether or not the characters were actually in love. My problem with *Aspects* lies not in the near flawless production but in Webber's words.

Throughout the musical, we're told time and time again about the intense emotions the characters feel for each other. Despite this, the only proof we're given are make out scenes on trains or words of an apparent engagement. While I myself could not be considered an expert on love, I've learned from enough romantic comedies that you need at least a montage of the characters playing house in an IKEA to prove to the audience that they're falling in love. (Or any other furniture store, I'm not picky)

Instead, Webber chooses to show the audience how volatile love can be. He shows us every variation of couple. He puts a woman between uncle and nephew. He hints at lesbianism. He even throws us a curve ball with a 15 year old girl falling for her 34 year old cousin.

The truth is: *Aspects* is uncomfortable. It's as if Webber thought of the most awkward romantic situations and came up with a tag line to rationalize all of them (i.e. "Love Changes Everything"). It takes all the melodrama of a soap opera and adds sickly sweet show tunes.

Unlike a soap opera, there is one key difference: it's live. Which meant that unfortunately for me, (and I suspect some of the other teenagers watching with their parents) I was not given the opportunity to strategically get up and go to the kitchen for a cup of tea right when the actors start taking off their clothing.

When the curtain closed and the lights came back on in the Walnut Street Theatre I pondered the meaning of love. Prior to the performance I, the inexperienced 16-year-old, had a blurry vision of it shaped only by pop culture. After *Aspects*, I still had no solid definition for love; I just knew I didn't want it to be anything like that.

As the train compartment spins around to face the audience, the chemistry between the two characters becomes almost palpable. *Seeing is believing...* as he sings, he glances toward the beautiful woman besides him, as if half expecting her to go up in smoke. But she only smirks and readjusts her legs. The tension between them is made almost touchable. But how do you create that feeling? How is it that actors make you feel the longing and the heartbreak of a love scene?

Because feelings of love and desire are such essentially human conditions, they are extremely common themes in our plays and musicals. Making those feelings believable is one of the great challenges of stage acting. When doing a love scene, you don't necessarily like or even know the person you're acting with. It's important to try and establish a connection though, be it by getting to know them better or pretending that they are that special someone in your own life. Once the awkwardness and embarrassment is set aside, it becomes easier to be open. When the script says that she "flies passionately into his arms," then you "fly passionately into his arms." Rehearsing a lot is key. Once the actors are comfortable, they loosen up and become more confident in the romance they're in the process of illustrating.

In the afore mentioned scene, the major thing that stuck out was not the romantic song, but the body language of the two actors. Through little half glances and shy advances, it felt as timid and quietly passionate as first love really is. At this point, the man, Alex, is only seventeen years of age, and his shyness comes through. His uncertainty and awe is totally apparent in his expressions, and every inch of his body seems alive with the passion of a schoolboy. Love scenes aren't all about the lines and embraces. What really make them come alive are the little things that we can all connect with, like those moments of indecision and shyness. And when we connect with the acting, the theatre really comes alive.

Opera? Musical? Operetta? *The Aspects of Love*, composed by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, is a dramatic story in which the sexual tension between a very unlikely love triangle is told entirely through song. *All* the lines are sung instead of spoken. But what is it? Lloyd Webber was one of the first modern composers to re-embrace the concept of a story told entirely through music. The musical style is very hard to define using traditional definitions. Perhaps it is an operetta. The operetta has an interesting history, originating in France around the middle of the 19th century. An operetta is defined as a "Light Opera," usually a comedy, with classically trained opera singers. *Aspects* is far too dramatic to be an operetta. Even the playful songs between Jenny and Alex carry such a complex overtone of drama and deceit that they become anthems to awkward, misunderstood emotions. Maybe an opera? The show does contain many elements that are used in opera. There is a complex plot, expressed entirely through music and song. There are multiple arias, in which the character sings out his or her emotion to the audience. Alex sings out his feelings for his lover Rose to the audience in the train station in Pau. One catch: these actors may not be classically trained in opera singing, and that makes it hard to classify *Aspects* as an opera. These actors and actresses use the loud, clear voices of musical theater to play out the story. So, if it is not an operetta, or an opera, it must be a musical? Musicals cover a wide variety of plotlines, from light hearted comedy to dark drama. All musicals use music to help tell the story and move along the plot, but unlike opera many scenes are spoken. Regardless of how it is classified, the deep emotional songs in *Aspects* serve their purpose. The dramatic story unfolds and we travel with the characters over the seventeen years of their lives, reeling with the twists and turns. We feel their lives in the music we hear.

All "Set" for Aspects of Love

The excellent thing about Aspects of Love besides the thrilling plot twist is their set. The rotating floors, projections of different scenery and white shear flowing curtains came in handy for curtain scene changes. Speaking of scene changes, they were clean and well thought out. It took between five to ten seconds to get from a dressing room to a restaurant or a patio to a circus. Just when the scene was done the actors would get off the rotating part of the floor and the floor would spin the items from the finished scene out of sight and the next's scene items into plain view.

An audience member said, "My favorite scenes were the patio of the cottage because it actually felt like you were in the country side in France. I also liked the circus because it's great use of the curtains, trapeze swings and the lighting effects." The circus scene was one of my favorites as well considering the set. To create effect they put all of the circus people behind a curtain upstage to create the circus ring and the main characters Alex Dillingham (Charles Hagerly), Rose Vibert (Jennifer Hope Wills), George Dillingham (Paul Schoeffler) and Jenny Dillingham (Jenna Brooke Scannelli) in front of the curtain downstage to create the audience. I asked some audience members how they felt about the scene and they said it was very cool, some said it was because of the lighting and others said it was the illusion that the projections and the curtain made.

Other scenes that were mentioned that were great setting wise was the forest in which Alex Dillingham and Young Jenny (Claire Norden) would often spend their days together, the restaurant where Alex Dillingham takes Rose Vibert to after one of her performances, the carnival that opens up two years after Rose Vibert and Alex Dillingham split up, and the funeral at the end of the show. Many of these scenes were the best to the audience members because of the lighting or the use of projections or the way the scene was created in a scene change. Most of the settings looked bright, colorful and made you feel like you were actually there in these places.

It would be an understatement to say that teenagers don't have the greatest reputation when it comes to love. We are notorious for falling too fast, ignoring reality, and becoming completely engrossed in drama. So as a teenage girl, I walked into *Aspects of Love* at The Walnut Street Theater hoping to be enlightened on the topic and to leave knowing all there is to know about first love, dealing with heartbreak and betrayal, and knowing just what to do when the person you love doesn't feel the same way. But to my surprise, in watching this musical adapted by Andrew Lloyd Webber, I discovered that many of the characters struggle to answer precisely the same questions.

Alex Dillingham, a young man, encounters first love when he meets Rose Vibert, an older woman and aspiring actress. He becomes immediately infatuated and convinces himself that they are meant to be together, only to find that Rose has other intentions. She tragically leaves Alex for his richer and more successful uncle, George, who plays a more promising role in her fantasy of fame and fortune. This heartbreak lingers with Alex throughout the entire show, who much like a teenager, struggles to move past rejection and the loss of his first love. And as he grows older, Alex's experiences with love become even more dramatic and blurred when his young niece, Jenny –Rose and George's daughter- falls in love with him. He is left to deal with a difficult position that is far from our typical views of love.

We all want to believe that love is as simple and wonderful as the fantasies that we recognize from movies and fairy tales. But in reality, it is quite the opposite. Sometimes love more closely resembles the dramatic teenage version. And that concept is what sets *Aspects of Love* apart from other romantic musicals: it reveals the truth about the struggle, the heartbreak, and confusion that present themselves as some of the real aspects of love.

Christine Palazzolo

Aspects of Love: Love Changes Everything

The most captivating element of *Andrew Lloyd Webber's Aspects of Love* playing at the Walnut Street Theatre is the very tender hearted lyrics sung by a star stricken Alex Dillingham (Charles Hagerty) in the opening scene. After bounding out of his seat at the site of the highly talented and striking Rose Vibert (Jennifer Hope Wills), Alex proclaims the transformative effect love has on an individual. The phrase that "love changes everything", as he so boldly sings in the first number, foreshadows his own fate in the ensuing drama. Members of the audience, old and new, can see through these simple lyrics that Mr. Dillingham is going on the emotional equivalent of a stroll through a forest path laden with bear traps.

Alex Dillingham finds himself stumbling over the fate of sharing his bed with Rose, only for it to soon be short lived as a change in events takes her from him. From that point forth, Alex finds himself struggling to hold onto her memory, and to somehow revisit the connection they first formed.

Though Alex Dillingham remains the central character affected by this pernicious emotion, other characters will have to watch the placement of their footsteps as well. Just as Alex sings, "love will turn your world around and that world will last forever", his former paramour Rose finds that she is in love with more than one man. Alex's Uncle George (Paul Schoeffler), marries Rose, yet still finds refuge in the arms of a former lover, Giulietta (Danielle G. Herbert), and Giulietta with Rose! Clearly the forest has not only bear traps, but lots of foot traffic.

By introducing the simply stated, yet highly intricate idea of love being able to "change everything", Andrew Lloyd Webber almost instantaneously captivates an audience with a relative and personal subject. This idea, although innocently established by the young Alex Dillingham, results in a whirlwind of drama and complex interpersonal relationships.

The Walnut Street Theatre most certainly puts a unique spin on their production of the musical *Aspects of Love*. The plot revolves around a core group of characters, each in turn discovering themselves and each other through love. The often complicated and constantly changing relationships between the characters span the course of twenty years, and these intertwining storylines, full of mysterious affairs and moments of passion, are a true testimony to one of the show's recurring themes – “life goes on, love goes free.”

What enables these various stories to come to life and for the characters to develop is the stage itself. Here, we must address the brilliant set, characterized by a double turntable, which allows for the show to flow ever so seamlessly from one scene to another, one location to another, and most impressively, from one plot to another. Thus, the moving set not only uses the provided space effectively, but also permits the constant coming and going of characters, further contributing to the sense of unpredictable change that the musical instills.

The double turntable is also expertly used to create new scenic perspectives. The outer turntable, known as a donut, comes to be used for this purpose. At one point during the performance, the young spontaneous couple of Alex Dillingham and Rose Vibert (Charles Hagerty and Jennifer Hope Wills) find themselves “riding” on a train carriage; at another, the turntable is used to display different areas of a room, by spinning the tables of a restaurant suddenly into view, or by having the furniture of a bedroom come whirling around from upstage.

Because of these quick scene changes, the rotating stage is a perfect fit. However, having a moving set is far more than just a technical investment – it also brings a quick and exciting liveliness to the show as a whole, especially because of the fact that the story is set over a long period of time. Similar to its use in shows such as *Les Misérables*, the rotating stage symbolizes this passing of time, highlighting every moment as the stage spins along with the plot itself.

Emily Falcone

You can tell a lot about a person by the way they look, and that is usually intended. In The Walnut Street Theatre's production of "*Aspects of Love*" that is clearly represented in their costuming, hair, and make up. Each character's appearance is a clear vision of them as a character. This holds true for most performances of anything, you have a dark, evil character so they are dressed in dark colors and often masks. Someone who is sweet and innocent will usually be dressed in white fluid clothing. So a young woman, like the character Jenny in *Aspects of Love*, would be dressed modestly in light colors and floral prints, because is a young innocent girl.

More examples of this are found in each character of the show. Rose is dressed often in floral prints, representing her name, and also possibly her blooming as a person and an actress. In this production she has fiery red hair and light skin, something that while innocent, can also be passionate and energetic. Rose exudes all of these qualities through the progression of the show, going from a young unknown actress with only a few fans, to a woman of great acknowledgement and emotion. George is dressed entirely in white throughout the entire show. This could be because of his free and optimistic ways. He goes with the world as it does, lives to enjoy, loves freely, and has a strong sense of general calm. Which may be, when that is disturbed he must die, because he cannot handle that turmoil.

It is not only this show that has these physical statements of character. It is also found in other Andrew Lloyd Webber shows show you may see. Examples of this can be found in Phantom of the Opera.

In Phantom of the Opera, Christine is dressed in white and the phantom in black, until the end, when she is slightly corrupt, and dressed in red and black, with her face hidden, as the phantom's is masked. It can be as complex as, as the character develops the costumes and make up change with them, it can be as pervasive as to who they are at the core. This is shown very clearly in *Aspects of Love*, look around and you should be able to find it anywhere.

Emily Falcone, Senior at Spring-Ford High School

Malorie Murray

She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not: Plucking the Rose-petals of Social Networking

Love changes everything. Andrew Lloyd Webber is back in town, opening the Fall season at the Walnut Street Theatre with a frenzied look at romance from every angle. It is tempting to wonder if *Aspects of Love* is outdated... stuck in the past.. "used." However, there's this *something* about main character Rose that carries this musical forward to a reality spectrum we are happy to inhabit. She's.. she's... well, let's put it this way: If Rose had a Facebook, *everyone* would want be her friend. She'd be that girl - you know, the one who always has the funniest posts, the prettiest pictures, and the attention of every drooling male. Her relationship status would be ever changing - "In a civil partnership with Alex"... "In an *open* relationship with George", so on and so forth. We all know what "open" means. It means that somehow, the pretty-perfect-popular girl gets her way again. Oh, it's just like high school, isn't it? Don't we all remember those "it" girls who ran figure eights through the cafeteria, giggling and smiling, swapping out their boyfriends with the turn of each fashion season. Yes, we've all been there, watching.. jealously watching, "ooing" and "ahing", wishing we could be in their sparkly, platform shoes...wishing we were Rose.

Interesting how we are drawn into *Aspects of Love*...that we somehow *become* the characters on stage. It's a funny thing, isn't it? Whether we envision ourselves as Charles Hagerly's young and love-crazed "Alex", Paul Schoeffler's wealthy charmer, "George", Jennifer Wills' seductive and beautiful "Rose", or perhaps even Jenna Scannelli's pretty and innocent "Jenny", it seems there's a character we all *long* to be.

Exactly what is it about this Andrew Lloyd Weber classic? It's surely nothing like *The Phantom of the Opera* or *Jacob and the Magic Technicolored Dream Coat*. Maybe what's so special about *Aspects of Love* is what it is *not*: It's not your typical boy meets girl love story, not your superhero adventure - boy meets girl, who is falling out of a building into the hands of a villain, and must be saved. Happy happy.. the end. How often in the real world do we hear the perfect love or rescue story? There's a "reality factor" in *Aspects of Love* that works its magic on the audience, both young and old. Snag some tickets to *Aspects of Love* while they are still available to see how love changes everything, and time changes nothing. Romance. Excitement. Intrigue. Lust. Now there's something you can "like".

Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Aspects of Love* contradicts the traditional view of love as having ups and downs while continuing to move forward. Of course, love will get rough at times and can become easy and carefree in the blink of an eye, but according to Weber, love does not want to push forward. Instead it cycles back.

At the start of the show, we find Rose Vibert, a young actress, single, and aspiring to be the leading lady. She focuses steadily on her career and doesn't concern herself with the frivolities of a relationship. That is, however, until Alex Dillingham nudges his way into her life. Thus begins Rose's twisting cycle of love.

But before their love can even begin to bloom, George Dillingham, Alex's uncle, steps in and sweeps Rose off her feet and carries her into the sunset and away from Alex. Rose gladly goes with her new interest. But two years later, regret pains her as Alex comes to visit. Rose comes to terms with her love for not just George, but Alex as well. Her heart is stuck and circles between an uncle and his nephew.

Advance thirteen years and Rose has settled into the arms of George. Once again Alex visits, this time after Rose's successful performance as the leading lady in her most recent production. Rose greets Alex as an old friend, and Alex greets Rose as an old love. Their intertwining circles of relationships seem to be drawing to a close. They both rest at high points in life, both happy with their station.

But of course, what goes up must come down. Yet another two years pass and we can see where everyone finally stands. George is gone, for reasons better left unsaid, and Rose has one hope: Alex. But Alex, unlike Rose was able to break his cycle of love and loss and finds a new interest. When he runs off with another girl, Rose is left alone. And just like that, Rose comes to rest right where she started, by herself with only her career.