

Michael Pinchbeck: This is a Love Story

[Nicki and Ollie step out of shoes and share text]

This is a story
This is a love story
This is a story about how we fall in love
This is a love song
This is a dedication on the first page of a book
This is a love letter
Sealed with a loving kiss
And scented
And stamped
And posted
To this address
So that you know how much we love you
And how lucky we are to be standing here now
Talking to you today
Tonight
You are why we do this
You are the reason
We wake up in the morning
We warm up
We learn our lines
We wait in the wings
We put ourselves through this for you
But when we come out of the theatre at the end of the night
And you smile at us
Or you buy us a drink
Or you offer us a cigarette
Or a cuddle
Or a kiss
Then we think
This is what we do it
This is why we perform
This is why we stand onstage in front of an audience
This is why we love it
We love you
We want to ...
But we can't do any of those things

[Michael puts a card with 'The Contract' written on it and starts to dot dot dot]

In the beginning
We wanted to write a contract
So you would know

What to expect from us
And what we expect from you
And what we give
And what you take
And what you pay
And what you get
Because we want you to get your money's worth
The last thing we want to see is someone sitting there
Who doesn't want to be there
Holding someone else's hand
And whispering in their ear
,I can't believe we got a babysitter for this'
Or someone sitting there
Who doesn't want to be there
Touching someone else's knee
And whispering in their ear
,Shall we leave in the interval'
The contract will say
There is no interval
Or someone sitting there
Slowly making their way towards the exit
Whispering ,Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me'
As they shuffle sideways to the end of the row
Hoping no one on stage will notice
But we have noticed and we will notice
And the contract will say
If you leave, we leave
If you get up and go, we get up and go
So you see, we are all in this together
You and us
We are professionals
We have learned our lines
We are ready to make our entrance
We are ready to begin
And we ask you for the same commitment
So we invite you to sign a contract between us
Each one of you
Individually
One by one
On the dotted line

[Michael puts a cross next to the dotting line and lies the pen on the card]

And to make it easier for you
To sign this contract
I'm going to sing you a song
I'm going to do a little dance
With this guitar
In these clogs
That will let you know
How we feel about you

Ollie: A song that speaks to an audience
That tells you what it's like
To stand here talking to a stranger
A song that says it all
So we don't have to
A song that does not begin
In the way it usually does
A song that is not sung
In the voice it usually is
A song without an ending
A song that won't stop playing
A song that says anything we want it to say
So we can stop saying anything
A song that takes us somewhere
Without us going anywhere
A song about today
A song about tomorrow
A song about love
A song about sorrow
A song about something you lost
And something you found
A song that makes you smile
A song that frowns
A song you might know
Sung in a way you might not
A song that will be remembered
More than forgotten
A song that tells you how to stop
But makes you want to begin
A song that when you hear it
Makes you want to sing
A song that sounds like a love song
But is actually about this
About us. About you. About here. About now.
About standing in front of an audience

Nicki: As we sing this song and dance this dance
We are going to pass this contract around
And ask you to sign it.
On the dotted line.
With a black pen.
Or maybe a red pen.
And if you don't sign it
Please take a moment
To think about why you have not
And whisper

Ollie: Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me

Nicki: As you make your way slowly towards the exit.
And out of the theatre.

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Michael Pinchbeck is a writer and theatre maker based in Nottingham (UK). He has devised a trilogy of performances inspired by Shakespeare plays - The Beginning, The Middle, The End. This text is an extract from The Beginning. www.michaelpinchbeck.co.uk