

Michael Ball & Alfie Boe – Together Again (2017)

Written by bluesever

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1. *West Side Story Medley* 2. *As If We Never Said Goodbye (Sunset Boulevard)* 3. *The Prayer* 4. *He Lives In You (The Lion King)* 5. *Evermore (Beauty And The Beast)* 6. *The Rose (The Rose)* 7. *Bring Me Sunshine (Morecambe & Wise)* 8. *Some Enchanted Evening (South Pacific)* 9. *Hero (Boyhood)* 10. *Not While I'm Around (Sweeney Todd)* 11. *Stranger In Paradise / This Is My Beloved (Kismet)* 12. *You're The Voice* 13. *New York, New York (New York New York)* 14. *White Christmas featuring Bing Crosby (White Christmas)* 15. *You'll Be Back (Hamilton)* 16. *Once Upon A December (Anastasia)*

You can't help but admire artists who surely know how to play to their strengths. To make matters even better, you can't help appreciate when those artists happen to be famed vocalists Michael Ball and Alfie Boe. They surely showcase what they do best with their second collaborative album, *TOGETHER AGAIN*, released October 27, 2017 via Decca Records. This album is a follow up to their 2016 joint album, *TOGETHER*. This new album features not only tracks from shows the actors are known for, but also for roles that are on everyone's wish list for them to play. With classics from shows like *SOUTH PACIFIC* and *WEST SIDE STORY* to modern masterworks like *HAMILTON*, these two exhibit how their talent runs the gamut of their innate abilities.

These two are no strangers to the stage, so to have them share one together and preserve the music not once, but twice, is doubly a treat. Alfie Boe is well known for his work on Broadway production *LA BOHEME*, and numerous concert appearances. However, the Tony honoree is arguably best known for his performance in the venerated role of Jean Valjean in the *LES MISERABLES IN CONCERT: THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY* performance at London's O2 Arena, leading other names in the cast like Ramin Karimloo, Lea Salonga, Norm Lewis, and Nick Jonas. Michael Ball, another incredibly esteemed name to the entertainment and theatre world, is known for his roles in such shows as *HAIRSPRAY*, *SWEENEY TODD*, and *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*. He has been featured on countless cast recordings, solo, and compilation albums. Teaming up for the second time, these two create a theatrical and vocal force that is not to be

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reckoned with.

Ball and Boe really play to their strengths with the song variety for this album. They tackle some of the most well-known tunes from theatre and film, but they add their own distinctive style and vibe that gives each selection a revitalized perspective. While their two voices might sound similar to some, the duo's vocals tend to complement each other more than they compete with one another. For example, they both put a solid operatic spin on the track "He Lives In You", from THE LION KING, while remaining steady to the roots of the tune. The two tackle melodies originally performed and written for one performer or soloist. However, their voices seamlessly complement each other, which brings a feeling of totality and synergy to the whole album.

The compilation encompasses a large array of classical theatre anthems, but also has its fair share of modern and topical theatre hits as well. For example, the duo take on the hit "You'll Be Back" from Lin-Manuel Miranda's HAMILTON. Splitting up the parts and harmonizing on the uptempo track, which is sung by the character of King John III in the show, the ditty may seem a little forced at first. However, by the end, it comes around to display the tell-tale talent of the two. On the topical side of things, the duo also tackle melodies such as "Once Upon A December" and "Evermore". The former is the hit written by Ahrens and Flaherty from the 1997 animated movie ANASTASIA and more recently, the Broadway musical, helmed from the same creative team as the film. The latter of the two tracks was written for the 2017 live action film THE BEAUTY AND BEAST, by original film composer and lyricist Alan Menken and Tim Rice, respectively. This one suits the two singers very well. With its grandiose arrangements and epic scale and power it calls upon in a vocalist, the two are able to deliver what they do best. These more contemporary selections speak to the versatility of Ball and Boe alike. It exemplifies how their semi-archetypal vocal styles can be adjusted and modernized to fit a wide variety of times and pieces.

The deluxe edition of the album features a rendition of the title song from WHITE CHRISTMAS, which is just another "boe" on top of the gift that this album is already. The track is just another reason that this gift is a perfect stocking stuffer for any theatre or film fan alike. Connoisseurs of exceptional music selection and impeccable vocals alike will have a "ball" giving this one a spin. Listening to this second collaborative endeavor from the two in two years will leave you hoping they keep up the pace with another follow up in the years to come. ---Tori Hartshorn,
broadwayworld.com

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