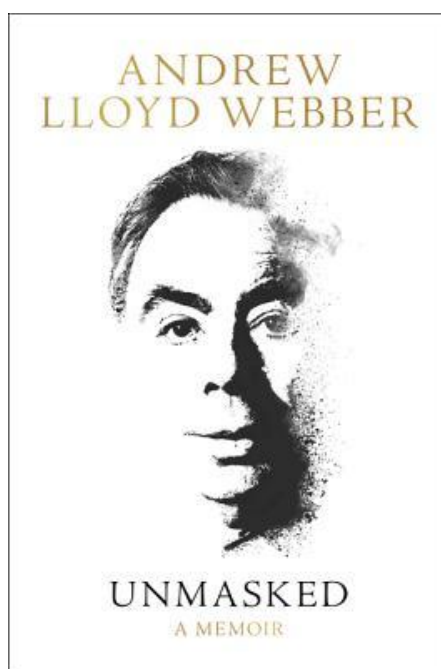




Unmasked: A Memoir

Andrew Lloyd Webber

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Unmasked: A Memoir Andrew Lloyd Webber

"You have the luck of Croesus on stilts (as my Auntie Vi would have said) if you've had the sort of career, ups and downs, warts and all that I have in that wondrous little corner of show business called musical theatre."

One of the most successful and distinguished artists of our time, Andrew Lloyd Webber has reigned over the musical theatre world for nearly five decades. The winner of numerous awards, including multiple Tonys and an Oscar, Lloyd Webber has enchanted millions worldwide with his music and numerous hit shows, including *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita*, *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*—Broadway's longest running show—and most recently, *School of Rock*. In *Unmasked*, written in his own inimitable, quirky voice, the revered, award-winning composer takes stock of his achievements, the twists of fate and circumstance which brought him both success and disappointment, and the passions that inspire and sustain him.

The son of a music professor and a piano teacher, Lloyd Webber reveals his artistic influences, from his idols Rodgers and Hammerstein and the perfection of *South Pacific*'s "Some Enchanted Evening," to the pop and rock music of the 1960s and Puccini's *Tosca*, to P. G. Wodehouse and T. S. Eliot. Lloyd Webber recalls his bohemian London youth, reminiscing about the happiest place of his childhood, his homemade Harrington Pavilion—a make-believe world of musical theatre in which he created his earliest entertainments.

A record of several exciting and turbulent decades of British and American musical theatre and the transformation of popular music itself, *Unmasked* is ultimately a chronicle of artistic creation. Lloyd Webber looks back at the development of some of his most famous works and illuminates his collaborations with luminaries such as Tim Rice, Robert Stigwood, Harold Prince, Cameron Mackintosh, and Trevor Nunn. Taking us behind the scenes of his productions, Lloyd Webber reveals fascinating details about each show, including the rich cast of characters involved with making them, and the creative and logistical challenges and artistic political battles that ensued.

Lloyd Webber shares his recollections of the works that have become cultural touchstones for generations of fans: writings songs for a school production that would become his first hit, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; finding the coterie of performers for his classic rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*; developing his first megahit, *Evita*, which would win seven Tonys Awards, including Best Musical; staking his reputation and fortune on the groundbreaking *Cats*; and making history with the dazzling *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Reflecting a life that included many passions (from architecture to Turkish Swimming Cats), full of witty and revealing anecdotes, and featuring cameo appearances by numerous celebrities—Elaine Paige, Sarah Brightman, David Frost, Julie Covington, Judi Dench, Richard Branson, A.R. Rahman, Mandy Patinkin, Patti LuPone, Richard Rodgers, Norman Jewison, Milos Forman, Plácido Domingo, Barbra Streisand, Michael Crawford, Gillian Lynne, Betty Buckley, and more—*Unmasked* at last reveals the true face of the extraordinary man beneath the storied legend.

Unmasked: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Unmasked: A Memoir for online ebook

Renata says

mmm I mean there are some good anecdotes in here, I think ALW could have written like a couple of good BuzzFeed posts. It's very rambling though and I don't think ALW has a good sense of what a dirtbag he's making himself come across as, esp w/r/t his child bride. And also his pervasive sense of himself as an underdog, rather than like...one of the most commercially successful composers of all time? Who had success from a very young age?

more on the podcat, but in short, only recommended for diehard fans :

<http://www.frowl.org/worstbestsellers...>

Rusty says

Very interesting if you're a musical nerd. I can't say I love ALW as a person after reading all his unexamined privilege (he says his family had no money growing up, but he lived in South Kensington and spent holidays in the French Riviera...) or his treatment of the women in his life. But I did like his willingness to engage in some dishy gossip.

Mo says

This book was due back to the library before I had time to finish it. No great loss... it was only mildly interesting. There was a lot of detailed background information that I really didn't care about.

Koren says

This guy has written some of my most favorite musicals. I could watch Phantom and Joseph over and over. Living in a rural area we mostly get our musicals with summer civic theater. Time and again while reading this book I wondered if he talked the way he wrote and by that I mean going on and on and on. At 500 pages, he only makes it through around 1985 and states there is a possibility there could be a Book 2. I haven't seen all of his work so the long stories about his work I haven't seen mostly got skimmed. He wrote the book in his speaking voice quite often I was left guessing what the English vernacular meant. I would recommend this if you are a die-hard Andrew Lloyd Webber fan, otherwise skip it.

Liz says

Just superb. I usually have a non-fiction book going all the time that I pick up and put down by time/chapters. This one pretty much demanded to have more attention paid to it and I did!

Am writing a review for Madison Public Library's book blog MadReads and will add the link once it is posted.
Free e-book from the library.

Brian Willis says

Most autobiographies are entirely self serving and relatively dull. Who really wants to air any legitimate dirty laundry or mull over failures? While detractors of ALW will have lots to pick over here, it is inimitably his own voice (certainly not ghost written) and it is at times surprisingly revealing. He does gloss a little over personal failings although admitting them, and at certain times crossing lines into "men talk" about those times, but it is definitely mind opening if you are looking at the musical theatre scene in the 70s and 80s. The book ends with Phantom's premiere but it does cover those initial years in detail including the inspirations and changes to scores in detail as well. Essential if a fan, important if a fan of a few of those musicals, though certainly not going to convert detractors.

Tom Grover says

The title of the book is most certainly meant to be a play on Webber's most famous work, the Phantom of the Opera. However, he seems reluctant to actually "unmask" himself as he tells his story. A good memoir allows the reader to experience the life and times of the author as the author experienced it. Yet, Webber seemed unable or unwilling to open up. The memoir is mostly a travelogue account of the creative process and history behind his most famous works. That is interesting, but it really isn't a memoir.

For example, Webber left his first wife and children for Sarah Brightman, who was the original Christine in Phantom. Webber devotes just a few paragraphs to this, and as to his adultery, has a dismissive one line account to the effect of, "and some people disapproved of what I did." Really? That's it? That's hardly candid or self-aware. Perhaps Webber is incapable of opening up and telling that story, but he comes off as very callous.

A person who is intimately familiar with Webber's works will probably love this book. I have a real pedestrian familiarity. I've been to Phantom, listened to Superstar and Evita, and that's about it. Even so, I thought hearing the play-by-play of the creative process was interesting.

Linda says

Jag älskar ju flera av Webbers musikaler så det var ganska intressant att lyssna på hur dessa skapades. Det är ju dock en ganska lång lyssning och riktigt allt och alla han nämner är väl inte lika intressant...

LH Johnson says

It's an interesting book this, furiously wordy and weighty and rather deliciously careless in tone. One thing is clear, Andrew Lloyd Webber has learnt to care very little about what other people think and his book is full of a sort of self-deprecating, somewhat fey humour that is undoubtedly appealing. He comes across well, I

think, despite a few deliberately blithe moments which skim over the top of complex personal situations and creative tensions.

It could, however, do with some fierce editing. There's too much here to comfortably grasp or take away from the book, unless you're possessed of some in depth theatrical knowledge and have the ability to remember who is who when they're mentioned several hundred pages later. I lost track quite a few times of the finer detail. In a way, I think had much more time for the reflective tone of the earlier chapters concerning his childhood and creative naissance, as opposed to the frantic, though undoubtedly fascinating, detail of the final third of the book.

Simon Howard says

I picked this up because the reviews I read suggested that it was better than one might expect it to be - and that's exactly how I found it. This is the first volume of Andrew Lloyd Webber's memoirs, which covers the early part of his career - up to the opening night of *Phantom of the Opera*.

It would be interesting in any case to have some insight into the creative process of a man who has had musical successes writing everything from Elvis Presley songs to stage musicals to a requiem mass. But - perhaps surprisingly - this book is also very funny, packed with amusing anecdotes.

There are bits that are a little cringe-worthy - female professionals always get '-ess' versions of their titles; there's a bit where he makes a joke about the large size of his penis; there's more than a little bit of score-settling - but he strikes the right note far more often than the wrong one.

Ella (????) says

Anyone who's a "theater buff" this is a must read!!! Enjoyed it very much, can't wait for the next book, continuation of book 1. Audio book is highly recommended for this one.

Judy says

I loved this autobiography of Andrew Lloyd Webber that ended with the opening of *Phantom of the Opera*. I actually listened to this book while on a 12 hour road trip to St. Louis and I found myself turning off the book for a few minutes to warble some of the most famous songs from the shows he was describing. My specialty, apparently, is the soundtrack from *Cats*. I'm eagerly looking forward to the next installment.

John Amory says

Exceedingly verbose and dull. This book is over 500 pages long, yet it still only covers less than 40 years of Lloyd Webber's life and ends with the London opening of *Phantom of the Opera*. On the one hand, this memoir does track the creation of his biggest hits at the height of his career, so many readers will be satisfied. But we don't get to see SO MUCH of his life, including the more interesting parts. Throughout this book, Lloyd Webber is on top. He skirts over what few failures there were between *Joseph...* and *Phantom*,

such as the dissolution of his first marriage, but the actual juicy stuff that happened in his life all happened after 1986. I want to read about the neverending drama of *Sunset Boulevard*, especially the Patti LuPone fight. What about the string of flops that followed *Phantom*? The disastrous first staging of *Whistle Down the Wind*? The casting process of the *Evita* film in the mid-1990s? The *Phantom* film? His divorce from Sarah Brightman? I want to read about his freaking kitten deleting the ENTIRE SCORE to *Love Never Dies* and how someone even recovers from that. (Actually, I'd read a whole second memoir just about *Love Never Dies*.) How did he come to write his first musical success in decades from such unlikely source material as *School of Rock*?

All of this is more interesting than what Lloyd Webber actually writes about: going to bars, looking at architecture, spending time with his aunt, and flying on the Concorde all the time. The chapters on *Superstar*, *Evita*, and *Cats* are fun, but the rest is really boring and even sometimes confusing. Like I'm still not sure when or how *Joseph...* went from a 20 minute musical to a full-length production. And I read probably 80 or so pages about it.

There's also a sort-of uncomfortable vibe of straight male privilege running throughout. Lloyd Webber writes of lunches at men's-only clubs. He writes matter-of-factly and flippantly about his affairs, without any kind of emotional connection or remorse, while he was married to his first wife (whom he also calls "Sarah 1" at one point, as if she's not even a person... which is kind of fair, considering her presence seems to only be for an accurate representation of his life, not to add anything to the narrative or his life, besides kids). He also tells stories of the men around him (one of whom was Tim Rice) placing bets on who could have sex with the most actors who played Mary Magdalene at the height of *Jesus Christ Superstar*'s popularity. He brags about his penis size. And he seems obsessed with pointing out the effeminate nature of any gay (or gay presenting) man he meets, using words like "camp" and "fey" to describe them. It's weird.

So all in all, I can't say I recommend this... but I also know that if another volume comes out covering the years from *Phantom*'s Broadway opening to now, I'll read it.

Breanne Tuttle says

I wanted to like this book, I really did. But oh man, it is so dull. Also - did he even realize how he comes off in these pages? Chauvinistic male pig, really. I ended up skimming most of it, just looking for interesting snippets. The very end got better as he was talking about *Phantom of the Opera*, but it was too little too late for this one.

Kate Henderson says

Listened to this on audible and surprised to see that Andrew Lloyd Webber only narrates the opening and closing chapters- so less than 10 mins in total. Disappointing!

I'm a huge theatre fan, and therefore a big fan of Andrew Lloyd Webber. I was brought up with his shows. I found the majority of this book really interesting and a great backstage insight into the making of a show. But there was also quite a lot of 'waffling' going on too. Lots of bits that I found completely irrelevant. But luckily the bits about creating the shows outweighed the faff!
