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]

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' 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

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

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