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Foreword

In every field of human endeavour there are, inevitably it would seem, charlatans. At the other end of the spectrum is Michael Cartwright. To meet him and experience his work, to learn about his life, to discuss with him his purpose and intent, is to know that he is the genuine article, the Real McCoy.

In his autobiography, he tells the story of his life and times as a young lad in England, inescapably drawn to the stage. His involvement with the performing arts (with ballet, opera, orchestral performances and live theatre) will lead him to tour throughout the British Isles, across Australia, South Africa and Europe.

Michael's story encompasses danger, a brush with the secret service, the high life and meeting some very talented and famous people. It is also a story of earthly passions embracing the highs and lows of human emotions, and finally to meeting his Soul Mate, his beloved Gretha.

Along the way, Michael is little by little drawn into communication with Spirit and as his life evolves, so does his acceptance and appreciation of these communications. Much later in life he is guided towards Mediumship and enters his apprenticeship, an extended period of learning and meditation. During this time he will meet his own Spirit guide, the venerable Mr Ling. Thus begins a new phase of life for Michael as a practising Medium, bringing hope and peace to those seeking reassurance about the Life hereafter.

Chris McCubbin

CHAPTER 1

Early Beginnings

Most Mediums claim to have been aware of their gift of Mediumship from very early in their lives. I cannot claim this. However, coming from three generations of former Mediums, it seemed that Spirit had thought it more prudent for me to live a varied and “normal” life during my earlier years.

Those earlier years were in fact the foundation for my future work as a Medium. I had to learn about people, life, and the world in general before I could relate to what would be coming through from Spirit. I would first have to suffer, lose, fail and then succeed with love. Then I would become a better instrument for Spirit.

I shall begin my story at the age of eleven years. The year is 1949. I had just successfully auditioned as a student of Margarita Hoare’s School of Ballet, at the Sadler’s Wells Ballet School in

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Barons Court, London. It was believed by Arnold Haskell, the director of the school, that I had the attributes to be a successful dancer. My father who had accompanied me to the audition, was highly surprised, for it had been my mother who had given me the chance to study ballet, much against my father's wishes.

I was to commence as a student in September of 1949. This moment I remember as my introduction to the world of the performing arts and a period of my life that was to go on until 1981.

I watched others like Moira Shearer and Margot Fontein rise to stardom from virtual obscurity at that time. Others such as Graham Usher who was a fellow student who surged forward to principal status. I watched an older student, Leslie White, become a member of the Sadler's Wells Company, the former name for the Royal Ballet Company. Leslie was to reappear in my life much later and become a personal friend and colleague.

Alas however, my period with the Sadler's Wells School was not to last a year. Each term the staff of the school assessed students' work and during this first year it was considered I had not progressed enough for their high standards. This decision seemed to please my father's pocket, for he was hard pressed to keep me there at the school.

Never the less, the seeds of a theatrical career had been sown. First I would have to get over a few hurdles at home, before the subject of theatre was allowed to be brought up again. It was to be the first obvious time Spirit would intervene, helping me on my path of life.

My mother's parents and grand parents had all been Spiritualists and Mediums. According to my mother, they had

often used their gift of Mediumship to help others during their life times. However I knew very little about my forebears' abilities and achievements. If any reference to my mother's family and their Mediumship were mentioned, my father would dismiss the topic very quickly.

I would learn much later in my life about the full extent of my relatives' link with Spiritualism.

Shortly after I had left Sadler's Wells Ballet School, I was at a Lyceum Meeting (Sunday school) in Welwyn Garden City. That afternoon the man taking Lyceum, John Bunn, had noticed me during the service. Not being my usual extrovert self, he had mentioned to my mother after the service that he noticed something wrong. She told him that I was very disappointed in being forced to give up a promising dancing education. He then spoke to me during tea.

As a well-known Medium his advice was often sort after. He gently took me to one side and said, "Your disappointment in having to give up ballet will not last for ever. For you will dance again. When you do, you will be a professional dancer and will perform in London and in many other countries. In the meantime, there will be other opportunities for you in the theatre." "Also," he added, "after your career is over, you will become a Medium like me."

Then half to my mother he said, "In the meantime, he will have to go through much emotional stress and searching. Then like steel once tempered, he will much later in life be ready for work with Spirit."

Well of course this meant very little to me at the time. After all, how was I possibly going to be allowed to dance again, let

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alone dream of earning my living from ballet? Secondly, although I liked John Bunn immensely and respected what he said, I could not understand at the time why he thought I would become a Medium. It all seemed too good (to dance again) and becoming a medium seemed dull anyway. Well time would tell.

While my fate as to which school I would be sent was being decided over the long summer holidays of 1951, I joined the local boys club where they had regular drama classes conducted by John Hart, a local producer. He had learned about my ballet days and gave me great encouragement to look to drama as an alternative.

I was cast in the J.M. Barrie play, *The Boy David*, in the leading role of David. The play was to be entered in the local Drama Festival at the Welwyn Theatre. This was the first stage presentation I was to appear in. For me it was a most spiritual occasion. At the conclusion of the play I was required to stand on stage and say the lines: "Other One, David is in darkness, please tell him what to do."

I was standing alone on stage, with a huge spear in my hand, prior to going off to fight Goliath. Here I was asking God to assist me. A single spotlight shone onto me, as though it were a beam of light from God himself. The music rose as the curtain came down. For a moment I was not only saying those lines, but I truly felt as though I had asked at that moment for a reply to my whole desire to know about my future. As the spot shone onto me, Spirit said, "Go on with your acting, your work in the theatre, we will help you succeed." I was now happy; I had been given a sign.

After the performance, backstage, a rather large Jewish lady who was rather overwhelming for a little boy, rushed up to me and said "Dear David, that was wonderful tonight. My readers

will read all about you in the paper tomorrow. Even Elizabeth Bergner with her performance of your role in London did not do it better. You are a true discovery.” The next day the Welwyn Times printed those very words.

I was sent to sit an exam to enter St. Albans Grammar School for Boys. I certainly was no academic. I wanted a life in the theatre. I thought, I would never see anything of theatre in a Grammar school. So when I sat in their huge assembly hall with all the other boys writing the exam, I just took my paper wrote my name on the top and starred out of the window until the examiner, in his academic robes called “Time boys!”

My parents at the time thought that I had simply failed, with my father saying that probably the wasted year at ballet school had been the cause. It would be years later before they were to learn the truth.

As a last resort left open to me for schooling, I was sent to St. Mary’s Secondary School in Old Welwyn, Hertfordshire. Although mother’s friends concluded that this was the bottom of the barrel for a son who was originally going to go places in the performing arts, it had its rewards for me. The school was well known for its drama productions each year. The headmaster being a very keen thespian who for a number of years had presented plays at the school for short seasons around Christmas times. He learnt about my ballet days and my success in the local drama festival in “The Boy David.”

When I had joined the school he had already chosen a J.M.Barrie play “Peter Pan,” for that Christmas season. I was immediately auditioned for the part of Peter’s friend Tootles. Here I was, only at this school for a few days and I was to begin

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rehearsals for a play. A play that would be in rehearsal throughout most of the day during the first term. Now this was a good reason for being at school!

My father thought it absurd that I should be wasting my first term at a new school by being in a play. So when the time came for the season to be presented, he refused to attend on the grounds that they could not afford it! However mother and my eldest sister Zena attended. For me at least it was recognition.

As a direct result of this and my previous play, my parents were approached by a man called Anthony Thomas, an adjudicator and local producer, offering me a scholarship to attend a new boarding school, which was to open in Hampshire. It was to be specifically for teaching drama and the arts. It was called Stanbridge Earls and was the first school of its kind to open in England since the War. The two most prominent names behind the venture were John Gielgud and Michael Redgrave (now both Sirs) and a number of other enthusiastic academics and music teachers.

On September 15th 1952 Stanbridge Earls, near Romsey, Hampshire opened with its first eight pupils. I was one of them. Over the next two years the school grew in numbers each term by attracting many boys from other schools which were bent on sports, high academic pursuits and the like; boys who were not comfortable in such establishments.

Stanbridge was different. Other than the obligatory subjects required by the Ministry of Education, we learnt drama, music and all the allied facts of theatre. Leisure time was taken up with visits to performances at the theatres in the district, with a broad diet of drama, opera, ballet, orchestral and vocal concerts.

We also paid visits to cultural centres, historic sites and museums to give us a sense of appreciation and value for our British roots in history.

Our teachers of Art, embraced scenic design, lighting, costume and set design. This gave each boy an opportunity to develop something within his own range of artistic abilities. Mine remained with acting.

In February 1954, my mother's financial ability in keeping me at Stanbridge ran out. Mother had been charring in people's homes in order to pay for the shortfall between my scholarship grant and the extras that were required to keep me at the school. The Principal, Anthony Thomas advised my mother that the amount owing was building up and he recognized that she would very unlikely be able to pay off the debt. Rather than place more pressure on her, he advised her to remove me from the school and all monies owing would be written off.

I was shattered once again. This time it meant that I would be leaving school for good. My father insisting that although I was not yet sixteen, I would have to get a job. Mother, he said, had done quite enough for me!

It was my friend Brian Sherrill's family who told me the police were starting to recruit young boys as cadets. The Hertfordshire Constabulary were engaging boys for three or so years and giving them a thorough training prior to the boys being accepted as members of the full time force. I would be paid a wage and receive a cadet uniform and be stationed at one of the police stations within the county.

Shortly after Easter that year, my application was approved and I became one of Britain's first police cadets. My position was

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at police headquarters in Hatfield, attached to the Road Safety department. Spirit was not to be out done! Here I was not much older than 15 years, wearing a uniform and going all over the county assisting at Road Safety demonstrations, Agricultural Shows, schools and the like. You might have called it my first experience of touring a show!

As the year 1954 progressed, in addition to my work, I performed in one or two local drama productions in the evenings. One of my friends often remarked that for someone who had such a love for theatre, why was I following a career in the police force? Well I was not sure I knew either. Soon I would have to take the police force seriously. There were courses to do, flexible hours and the like, which might mean not being able to accept a part in any further plays in case I was required for rehearsals and performances.

These thoughts put me in a dilemma. Should I keep dad happy and stay in my job, or was it possible to make a new start in the direction of the theatre? The answer came from a newspaper article about young boys setting out as migrants to Australia through the "Big Brother Movement."

Some years earlier my parents had tried to emigrate to Australia, but were told that the family at the time was too large. My parents had been very disappointed. But now, here was a chance for me to go alone through the auspices of "The Big Brother Movement."

My mother instantly said I should make application to the organization, through their London office in Australia House. I was promptly sent application papers, followed shortly afterwards by a medical examination, and an interview at the Movements

office in London.

The officials made it clear to my mother that my father being the only one authorized to sign papers of custody, in legal terms, would have to agree to my migration. This was upsetting at first for mother, as she believed that dad would never agree to such an idea.

Surprisingly she was wrong. He readily signed the documents, saying, “We can’t stand in the lad’s way of getting on in the world, if that’s what he wants.” I did not realize at the time that my absence would make things just as easy for him as I, emotionally, as well as financially for him.



Michael as a boy actor



*Stanbridge Earls School,
Romsey England*