



MAGIC 8 BALL

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I'm sure that history will suggest otherwise but, after seeing George Steeves perform his one man show, I couldn't help but think that Stevie Wonder must have written his song "Lately" with him in mind. Its frequent reference to 'a man of many wishes' seems very appropriate, given what Steeves tells us about his young self—not least his overriding determination to enter (and of course win) US television talent show American Idol.

Steeves is a bold performer, a fine singer, and a survivor.

Children very early on develop aspirations as to what they want to achieve when they grow up, and Steeves is quite clear about just how determined he was regarding participating in American Idol. As the show's title suggests, this is partly because Steeves has Asperger's Syndrome. This pervasive developmental disorder – if you pardon the medical term – has had a significant impact on his entire life. While there's the possibility of a happy ending for this talented singer, actor and writer, it's not easy hearing about his slow and painful progress through the American education system.

With any show based on the performer's own life and experiences, there's always the question of just how much has been tweaked slightly for the convenience of retelling. However the sentiment feels genuine here. As the show develops, Steeves reveals his ambition to raise more awareness of Asperger's, and to help 'neurotypical' people understand more about the condition. Steeves' message is very simple, of course - just treat people with Asperger's like people.

He knows he's lucky - not least because, as someone categorised as “high functioning”, he's in a position to speak out for those who aren't so lucky. There's real anger too, not least about the current US administration. Thankfully though, he pulls back just enough to avoid the show becoming a diatribe. Yes, there's still much to do, but Steeves is doing his bit.