

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction | 7 |
| Chapter One • THE EARLY YEARS | 11 |
| Chapter Two • A FLAIR FOR THE THEATRE | 27 |
| Chapter Three • HER FIRST BIG BREAK | 43 |
| Chapter Four • A CHANGE OF FAITH | 67 |
| Chapter Five • A MUSICAL DEBUT | 77 |
| Chapter Six • THE 'DIFFICULT SECOND ALBUM' | 107 |
| Chapter Seven • STORMY SEAS | 129 |
| Chapter Eight • #donutgate | 151 |
| Chapter Nine • THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM | 161 |
| Chapter Ten • TRAGEDY AND TERROR | 183 |
| Chapter Eleven • FROM THE ASHES | 193 |
| Chapter Twelve • LOOKING TO THE FUTURE | 205 |
| Discography | 211 |
| Awards | 213 |
| Bibliography | 214 |
| Picture Credits | 215 |
| Index | 217 |

INTRODUCTION

The sun was shining but events in the closing weeks of spring in 2017 shrouded Britain in darkness. There was no darker moment than the one in which a young man attacked Ariana Grande's Manchester concert, killing twenty-two people and injuring 250. Within days of the bombing, Ariana announced that she would stage a benefit concert back in Manchester. Preparations began for an event that it was hoped would heal the wounds of a nation.

Then, the evening before the concert to be staged at the Old Trafford cricket ground, terrorists struck once again, this time in London.

Yet Grande, the small girl with a big name, would not be cowed. She pressed ahead with the concert. Some 50,000 people attended the show, where the likes of Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, Take That and Liam Gallagher performed. Then, Ariana took to the stage. Her set was to be the climax of the show, and the pinnacle of her

set was her rendition of the classic show tune ‘Over the Rainbow’.

Ariana looked so small on the stage, which stretched in front of the vast audience. She sung the song beautifully, despite the almost throttling emotion of the moment. Yet near its end, her emotions bubbled over and she stood holding a hand to her face, her famous hair caught up in her fingers. In the audience, too, feelings began to run higher than ever as fans, some of whom had been at the fateful first concert, broke down in tears. The musicians stopped playing as Ariana composed herself and the audience roared its encouragement. Then she began to sing again, nailing the song’s big climax and blowing a kiss to the audience. Despite her small stature – she stands at a little over five feet tall – she had been a giant on the night. There is a concept in Kabbalah, Ariana’s spiritual belief system, known as *tikkun olam*. It means an act that helps put back together the shattered parts of the universe. Ariana had performed a model act of *tikkun olam* and become a global hero.

Or, as a writer for the respected and sombre business news website *Bloomberg* put it: Ariana was ‘the leader of the free world for a day’.

‘Over the Rainbow’, which connects with people’s hopes and dreams and their yearning for a place where the troubles of the world magically disappear, was a fine choice for the big moment – and it held extra

INTRODUCTION

significance for Ariana. As a child, she loved the music of Judy Garland, who originally sang it in the movie of *The Wizard of Oz*. Ariana also appeared in a stage production of *Oz* as a kid in Florida, so to sing it on the biggest stage, to a global audience, made the choice of song all the more significant.

Those productions came as a welcome distraction for her, an escape from a sometimes testing childhood. Yet even as she trod the boards of the local youth theatre, she could never have imagined that she would eventually sing Garland's big ballad in such charged circumstances. When the moment came, the whole world was watching, and Ariana captured it perfectly.