



PRESS RELEASE

January 2009

## Music for Summer Nights by the Thames *at The Henley Festival, 8-12 July 2009*

The Henley Festival 2009 offers a whole summer's worth of musical class and excitement between 8-12 July. With a spectacular range of music to choose from each night, visitors can revel in a glorious programme of stellar performances on the Floating Stage and the Festival's more intimate venues.

A nightly Henley Festival ticket buys access to much, much more than a single brilliant performance. With prices starting at just £41, tickets allow festival-goers entry to all performances on offer. Up to 7 performances in a variety of musical (and other) genres: **classical to jazz, opera to musical comedy, pop to musicals, folk to world music**, are scheduled throughout the evening on the festival's various stages, allowing festival-goers to decide on the night how many – and which combination of – performances they'd like to see.

### CLASSICAL MUSIC & OPERA

After her extraordinary sell-out concert at the Festival in 2007, **Katherine Jenkins** will be back to grace the Floating Stage on opening night, 8 July 2009. An international superstar, Katherine spends much of her time in America. Says Stewart Collins, the Henley Festival's Artistic Director, "We're very lucky to get her in 2009, as she is in such huge demand across the globe. Besides the obvious beauty of her singing voice, she's just one of the brilliant communicators performing at the Festival this year." Other starry classical performances include a **Puccini night**, including music from, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot*. The story of Puccini's monumental worldwide success will be told by the opera aficionado, Radio 4 presenter **James Naughtie**. Singers include one of the country's finest and feistiest sopranos, **Rebecca Evans**, together with **Ceri Williams**, **Gwyn Hughes Jones** and **George von Bergen**, **The Joyful Company of Singers** accompanied by the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** and directed by Henley's favourite man on the podium, **Nicolae Moldoveanu**. This concert will include a rarely heard version of the great *Nessun Dorma*.

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There will be more opera – albeit mixed with blues, gospel, swing and Motown, from Broadway giants the rave-reviewed, **Three Mo' Tenors**. Then there's musical gold with the **BBC Concert Orchestra** sharing the stage with **Sir Michael Parkinson**, singer and BBC TV's **John Barrowman** (*Torchwood*), and vocal quartet **Cantabile – The London Quartet** in a concert being recorded for BBC Radio 2's *Friday Night is Music Night*.

Also in the programme you'll find a full scale performance of **Handel's Water Music**, marking the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Handel's death, and given by one of the country's foremost 'period instrument' groups, the **New London Consort**, directed by **Philip Pickett**. This music, written for the Thames, will be performed in view of the river that inspired it. Meanwhile, you can hear the fabulous **Radio String Quartet of Vienna**, young singers **Lend Us a Tenor** or, for a mix of words and music, listen to television personality and Beethoven biographer **John Suchet**, talking about his passion for one of classical music's greatest composers, in the company of dazzling pianist **Simon Mulligan**.

## JAZZ

Henley Festival this year presents wonderful jazz performances, including one from the great **Ray Gelato**, another from home-grown young and talented multi-instrumentalist **Michael Mwenso** and a third from the red-hot **Mishka Adams**, a British-Filipina singer on the fast track to genuine jazz notoriety. There's also music from **Kamerunga**, an extraordinary Australian band that fuses everything from jazz to rap and rock; and the wonderfully sultry new-kid-on-the-block (and local girl), **Rebecca Poole**. Two major highlights promise to be **Kuljit Bhamra** and **David White's** line up, the **Ku-da-mix Orchestra** and, unforgettably, an affectionate **tribute to Dudley Moore** led by pianist **James Pearson**, director of London's legendary Ronnie Scott's.

## MUSICAL COMEDY

The Henley Festival presents sophisticated musical comedy from **Tim Fitzhigham** lustily delivering the songs of Flanders & Swann in *At the Drop of a Hippopotamus...*, the brilliant **Fascinating Aida** (who have been described as '*Absolutely Fabulous* meets Noel Coward as sung by the Andrews Sisters..'), and **Rich Hall**, who brings his country-and-western singing alter-ego **Otis Lee Crenshaw** and band to the Riverside Cabaret. There is also world music comedy from international visitors **Mundo Jazz** – and the sweet taste of burlesque with **Miss Polly Rae and The Hurly Burly Girlys..**

## POP

**The Bootleg Beatles** – the best Henley Sunday nights have always been the real party nights when everyone gets up and dances and sings along to numbers they know and love. The Bootlegs are so near to the real thing that it's almost impossible to spot the difference; and, of course, they do what they do with a style and panache of their own, never taking themselves totally seriously, but still presenting the music authentically. The concert includes additional forces – string and brass groups – to help with some of the Beatles' later music.

## MUSICALS

In a late night performance, **Showstoppers** create a brilliant improvised musical, grown before their audiences' eyes and – *as mentioned above* - **Pure Gold from the Silver Screen** is the title of a Henley first, a concert to be recorded by Radio 2 for subsequent broadcast in the *Friday Night is Music Night* slot. The line up is absolutely star-studded: **Sir**

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Michael Parkinson presents, charismatic singer and BBC TV's **John Barrowman** (*Torchwood*) together with humour and fine harmonies from **Cantabile – The London Quartet**, the group founded by Henley Festival's Artistic Director, Stewart Collins, whilst a student at Cambridge University, making a rare appearance in the UK alongside one of the nation's most versatile orchestras, the **BBC Concert Orchestra**.

## FOLK & WORLD MUSIC

Folk performances for the 2009 Henley Festival include ex-Fairport Convention's **Ashley Hutchings and Rainbow Chasers**, and blistering dance music from **Sheelanagig**. Meanwhile, World music is represented by extraordinary Spanish guitarist **Eduardo Niebla**, and 18 piece band **Ku-da-mix**. This last band is made up of 18 top musicians and is a unique collaboration in world music composition and instrumentation led by **Kuljit Bhamra** and **David White**. Wholly in the spirit of The Henley Festival, one of the only comedy world music outfits **Mundo Jazz** also takes the stage.

As an add-on – or an alternative - to stage-based shows, there are also huge **firework spectacles**, including 'in the sky with diamond', an amazing high wire and pyrotechnic spectacle accompanied by the 10-piece **Noise Ensemble**. Wander round the glorious riverside enclosure and catch ad hoc performances - anything from indigenous Australian dance, to art galleries and sculpture lawns, to comedy and street theatre from the likes of giant stilt-based insects and a rickshaw airship.

Henley Festival 2009 runs from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July. For more information visit [www.henley-festival.co.uk](http://www.henley-festival.co.uk). Many tickets have been held at 2008 prices. Generous sponsors of this year's Festival include: Invesco Perpetual, Westcoast, Laurent-Perrier champagne, Lavazza, Hotel du Vin, Southern Electric.

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**Note to Editors: Henley Festival Trust**

As in previous years, all net proceeds from The Henley Festival 2009 will go direct to parent charity The Henley Festival Trust, to finance Henley Festival's charitable and community activities. Examples of this valuable, and much appreciated work include providing: visual arts workshops at the Chiltern Centre for Disabled Children, music therapy for brain-injured attendees at Headway day centre in Henley-on-Thames, music and arts workshops in local schools, and instruments for promising young musicians.

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