



## PRESS RELEASE

March 2009

# Enjoy a great laugh every night - *at this year's Henley Festival!*

If laughter really is the best medicine – and even doctors agree this is true – then The Henley Festival's Artistic Director, Stewart Collins, clearly has the welfare of his audiences in mind. 2009 may not be the most light-hearted year on record in the world at large, but Stewart has planned brilliant comedy performances for every night of this year's Festival to delight and lift everyone's spirits.

Alongside much-anticipated appearances by Katherine Jenkins, Sir Michael Parkinson, John Barrowman, the Bootleg Beatles, Three Mo' Tenors and a quartet of international opera stars in a Puccini evening presented by James Naughtie – and an inspired set of more intimate shows - a glance at the programme reveals a comedy line-up that includes: (on Wed) the terrific **Tim Fitzhigham**, (on Thurs 9<sup>th</sup>) hugely popular **Fascinating Aïda**, (on Fri 10<sup>th</sup>) the best British female impressionist, **Jan Ravens**, (on Sat 11<sup>th</sup>) an audience with Radio 4's 'bit of rough' **Arthur Smith**, and (on Sun 12<sup>th</sup>) sizzling cabaret from **Rich Hall as Otis Lee Crenshaw**.

How do you choose from such a glorious comedy line-up? If you like a musical edge to your comedy, Tim Fitzhigham's brilliant tribute to Flanders & Swann can hardly be bettered. Tim may be best remembered as the man who broke a 383 year-old World Record by paddling an 85 per cent paper boat 160 miles down the River Thames – no stranger to Henley then!

14 Friday Street, Henley-on-Thames  
Oxfordshire RG9 1AH

Or, still on the musical side of comedy, try Fascinating Aïda, aka Dillie Keane, Adèle Anderson and Liza Pulman, whose signature brand of satirical cabaret has memorably been described as “Absolutely Fabulous meets Noel Coward as sung by the Andrews Sisters”. Finally, on the musical side there’s Rich Hall, comedian and star of TV comedy shows such as ‘Have I Got News for You’ and ‘Never Mind the Buzzcocks’, who brings his hilarious country-western-blues alter-ego Otis Lee Crenshaw to the Riverside Cabaret on Sunday to wrap up the 2009 Festival.

However, if you like your comedy straight, ‘grumpy old man’ Arthur Smith, known as ‘the compère beyond compare’ can provide stand-up at its best. Whether or not he’ll venture into extreme comedy at Henley is not known, but if he does, be warned. He has been known to strip off during his performances and, during his Edinburgh shows took the entire audience out of the theatre for a guided tour of the city!

Finally, there’s unbeatable impressionist Jan Ravens, whose performance promises to introduce Festival audiences to such celebs as *Newsnight* host Kirsty Wark, Charlotte Green of BBC Radio 4, Ellen MacArthur, Nigella Lawson, Ann Widdecombe, Hyacinth Bucket, Queen Elizabeth, a stern-faced Gillian McKeith, Fiona Bruce and Anne Robinson, not to mention Henley Festival favourite Lesley Garrett.

But with every night of the Festival being a comedy night – and a plethora of other exceptional shows on any night you pick - it’s worth remembering that 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 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.

Added to which, there is also the Festival’s signature collection of ‘Roving Eccentrica’, a superb scattering of street acts that have Festival-goers in stitches from the moment they arrive at the gates. This year these include giant stilt-based insects, a rickshaw airship, ballerinas as you haven’t seen them before and the promisingly-named Heir of Insanity.

Henley Festival 2009 runs from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July. For more programme information and to book online visit [www.henley-festival.co.uk](http://www.henley-festival.co.uk). Alternatively phone 01491 843404 at the Henley

**14 Friday Street, Henley-on-Thames  
Oxfordshire RG9 1AH**

**Tel: 01491 843400, Fax: 01491 410482**  
E-Mail: [info@henley-festival.co.uk](mailto:info@henley-festival.co.uk)  
[www.henley-festival.co.uk](http://www.henley-festival.co.uk)

Festival Box Office, 14 Friday Street, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon, RG9 1AH. 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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*For more press information, please contact Miranda Johnson on 01962 890208 or Rachel Shimell on 02380 732981 or email [mirandajohnson@btinternet.com](mailto:mirandajohnson@btinternet.com) / [rachel.shimell@ntlworld.com](mailto:rachel.shimell@ntlworld.com)*

**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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