



SYNOPSIS

'HENRY - A TUDOR MUSICAL'

An original new work showing at the Cecil Hepworth Playhouse, Walton on Thames from **13th - 16th June 2018**.

The Stringers Production Company, formed by the three writer/composers, premiered this new musical, the story of Henry VIII and his six wives 4 years ago. This is the first time the work will be performed by a musical theatre company with orchestration and a fully singing cast. The Tudors is one of the best loved periods in British history, with Hampton Court Palace being less than four miles from the theatre.

Henry's life is explored from his own perspective, giving rare insight into his battles with church, country and conscience. As if he had written the words himself, Henry's character has several solo songs, exposing his emotional turmoil, disappointment and confusion as he tries to leave England a healthy male heir to follow his rule.

Will Somers, the King's fool, becomes narrator and guide. As the piece covers six marriages, three births, political undercurrent, numerous "disposals" and other diversities, the narrator's everyman task, in allowing the audience and the common folk surrounding the palace to eavesdrop, is key. The fool also has the final word.

The courtship, marriage and eventual replacement of each of Henry's 6 wives are played out in overlapping scenes, as in history. Henry, his Fool, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr each have powerful solos and duets. Catherine of Aragon provides a strong character part for a less powerful singer, but all female cast members double as Handmaids throughout. Other strong female roles include the Nurse and the Flowergirl.

For the men, as well as gardeners and courtiers, Wolsey, Cromwell and Henry's other advisors plot, scheme and plan through carefully crafted dialogue and melodies. Act II enjoys a powerful male ensemble number "Proposition."

There is a crowd ensemble for all those who want a less demanding role or are new to musical theatre.

At all times a blend of life at court and the rough justice facing the servants and peasant folk is delivered by various ensemble members with the Fool, acting as a link between the two worlds. It is he who quietly ends the story before bringing the entire cast back on stage in typically rousing Tudor style.

“Henry” is clean, family viewing and historically accurate for those studying the Tudor period and promises a wonderful and entertaining evening. The writers were delighted at the reception their first run received and are now excited to know that this new cast with the same Director and a highly experienced new Musical Director will help take the show to the next level.

Further information on “Henry” from Tess Townsend
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REVIEWS :

I saw the show in the company of five friends and colleagues, all heritage professionals with decades of experience of telling the story of Henry VIII between us. Everyone enjoyed the evening and the first thought to come to us was that the show thoroughly deserved to be developed and put before a wider audience. I for one hope that this will be the case.

David Packer, professional tour guide and historical advisor on the RSC’s production of Wolf Hall/Bring up the Bodies. July 2014

The piece, in conception and production, is fast-paced, holds audience interest from beginning to end, and is hugely enjoyable at many levels. It is overall a work of talent and imagination with great potential for the future.

Charles Evans, GODA

Congratulations to the team on presenting a well-rehearsed production of this new musical. Your interpretation and presentation of the facts of Henry’s complicated and much chronicled life was well put together and very entertaining.

.E. Gloria Smith (NODA reviewer, but personal comments)

I have worked as the Music Director or composer for numerous Music Theatre productions for both adult and teenage performers. The book is well structured and, with such a massive topic to cover (it) does so without loss of drive or dramatic impact. The use of the Jester to link scenes and fill out non-dramatic, but essential background information is highly successful as this story could easily drown in detail. The Jester adds great humour to an otherwise serious play and brings the issues down to a level the common man - or in the modern sense, the audience member with little historical knowledge - can fully understand.

Robin F.C. Fenton (B.Mus., M.Mus(Hons), PhD)

... like all the best told stories, the tale was as clear as a bell. For the first time I actually got the history bit. A lot of potential - this should have a future as big as Henry’s girth!

Lesley North, Actress and Scriptwriter

Just wanted to congratulate you, the production team and cast on a most

wonderful show. We all say you should be in the West End. We all had a brilliant evening and wish you lots of luck for the show.

Karen Wright