

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2019 – Henry Box Brown

Henry Box Brown, the acclaimed musical inspired by the true story of an escaped 1850s slave, is returning to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Performed by a superb cast of New York Gospel singers and Broadway actors it was described by The Times as “compelling ... bold ... wonderfully written and portrayed” and as “an inspiring tale” on BBC1’s Sunday Morning Live.

This emotional musical journey follows the story of a young man’s bid for freedom, transported across America by train and boat while nailed inside a box just 3ft by 2ft, after his children and pregnant wife were sold by the slave owner.

Many of the themes are highly resonant today – oppressed people forced into exile by brutal regimes, the destruction of families when parents and children are forcibly separated. But it is equally about the triumph of the human spirit – and the discovery of decency and kindness in the most unexpected places.

Last year’s Fringe performance earned a string of excellent reviews ★★★★★ Fringe Review, ★★★★★ The List, ★★★★★ Broadway Baby ★★★★★ Broadway World plus a nomination for Best Musical from Musical Theatre Review.

The show has been updated with new music and choreography and will feature live African drumming. Appearing at The Gilded Balloon Patter Hoose – Big Yin, Henry Box Brown is a compelling and crowd-pleasing fusion of Gospel, R&B, bluegrass, traditional and original negro spirituals.

Mehr Mansuri, the show's writer (who had to escape from her native Iran due to the regime's persecution of the Baha'i religious community), said: "Henry's story truly resonates today – a father thrown into despair and exile after the brutal separation of his family by the greedy and the powerful.

"But it's also about just how profound Henry's faith was in the face of evil, maintaining his belief in the simple goodness of people and the human capacity to make great sacrifices for others. It is *Les Misérables* set in the American south.

"And it's also that very rare thing – a musical with an African American hero."

Brown's escape to freedom was made possible by the help of African American and white abolitionists. Some members of the cast are the descendants of African American slaves and some are descendants of slave owners.

Presenters, CTC New York Ensemble, wanted to retrace Henry's steps to the UK and Scotland, but also to return to Edinburgh in part as a "thank you" to the Fringe for helping propel it to wider success.

Since last year the show has been performed for over 25,000 people and will soon be touring to six major US cities including Chicago.

Henry Box Brown is directed by Tony Award winner Ben Harney (*Broadway's Dreamgirls*) with original compositions by New York Composer, Frank Sanchez and Mehr Mansuri; arrangements by renowned Gospel Music Director, Eric Dozier and topped off with Co-Director Najee Brown's popping choreography.

The score is by Oscar nominee – Best Original Score, Jack Lenz (Mel Gibson's Passion of Christ) with new contributions by top NYC recording artist, Davon Redmond and the show's star, Paul Gee.

For more about Henry Box Brown see <https://www.henryboxbrownthemusical.com>

- Venue: The Gilded Balloon Patter Hoose – Big Yin (Venue 45)
- Dates: Jul 31 Aug 1-11, 13-18, 20-26
- Previews: 31 July to 2 Aug
- Time: 19:30
- Duration: 60 mins
- Ticket prices: £11 to £13 (previews £8)
- Box office: 0131 622 6552
or <https://gildedballoon.co.uk/programme/>
- Advisory: Ages 5+ (contains distressing themes)

