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ROB PARKINSON: PERFORMANCES & WORKSHOPS AT PUBLIC VENUES

'Brilliant – the real high spot in the festival' - Jeremy Strong, author, Wrotham Festival organizer

'A huge favourite at family fortnight... Rob has the rare ability to hold the attention of large and small audiences, adults and children, always ready to adapt imaginatively, always lively and inspirational...' - Nicky Pickett, Education Events Officer, RHS Wisley

1. SOME PERFORMANCE & WORKSHOP THEMES

The themes listed here are examples. Special themes can easily be created to suit host organizations.

Performance Themes for children's events at theatres, arts centres etc.

These standard themes include PR blurbs and press releases, posters etc. Each one is built around the title of a popular recording by Rob and includes songs, music and stories from these as well as much additional material.

The Wonderful Store

Wild Imaginings

Will's Clogs

Fabulous Fables

** Special themes to order.*

B. For adult events at theatres, arts centres and other venues

Each programme is available with PR blurbs, press releases, poster images etc.

Further information about each is available on request.

Powerful Stories

The Duration of Life

The Miller Rides Again

(a.k.a. Tales on Tales on Canterbury Tales)

Tales of Turning

Tales of Bafflement Bewilderment

A Hall of Mirrors- a Modern Mythology.

C. Events for Children at Museums, Heritage Sites, Smaller Festivals,

Community Centres etc. For these kinds of venues, a title can be agreed with organizers or a general title such as *Parkinson's Lore* or *Minstrel Storytelling* can be used. Some example titles:-

Castles and Palaces

Magic Gardens of Imagination

Tall Tales and Wicked Whoppers

Fantasies and Fabulous Fictions.

Marvellous Trees and Magical Mazes

Special themes are often possible and programmes listed elsewhere for children can also be adapted to suit the circumstance.

D. Events for Adults at Smaller Community Venues:

General titles such as Parkinson's Lore (Imaginary Journeys with a modern minstrel) have been popular and effective. For other themes, see above under B.

E .Speeches/talks etc.

Themes around story, metaphor and performance imaginatively presented.

2. FAQs

Here are some answers to the basic questions organizers at theatres and arts centres, festivals, parks, castles, country houses, museums etc. ask but please feel free to get in touch with any further queries. A guide to fees can be downloaded from the site separately.

How do we know you'll do a good job?

I've been a professional storyteller for well over 2 decades and a lot of people like what I do well enough to invite me back over and again. I've worked at all kinds of venues in the UK and abroad, from schools and libraries, theatres and arts centres, festivals and public sites to shopping centres, pubs, restaurants and even shacks in the remote bush. I've appeared on national radio and TV and produced various recordings of stories and music. I've written extensively on storytelling, published music and songs and short fiction and spoken at international conferences. For my sins I've also been a Chair of the Society for Storytelling and a promoter of storytelling events. I play a unique range of unusual instruments to a high standard and draw on a large repertoire of tales. Most of all, though, I get people to really enjoy themselves and use their imaginations.

What kinds of audiences do you work with in performance? More or less any. Adults, teenagers and children of any age over three in any context which is suitable, large audiences of several hundred and small audiences of five or thirty.

What kinds of programme do you offer?

This varies according to the circumstance. Storytelling is by nature improvisational so every format I perform allows scope for improvisation and adaptation. Having said that, theatre and festival organizers and others producing publicity for events generally like to have titles and blurbs giving a fair idea of content - you'll find some example programme titles, themes etc. further on in this document. As I have a very large repertoire, it's also often easy to 'custom create' titles and themes to suit the host organization, especially for less formal events at public sites, museums etc.

What length of programme do you do?

In more formal circumstances at theatres, arts centres, festivals etc., I most frequently do continuous sessions of around one hour for children or the conventional two halves of 45 to 50 minutes with an interval for adults (and sometimes for children). Both of these formats can be included on a single day, usually with the performance for children earlier in the day and the adult performance in the evening. It's usually also possible to include a workshop session with children or adults in place of one of the performances. Other formats are possible too. At public sites, there's often a need to do a series of varied sessions during a day and I'm happy to discuss what will work over the 'phone.

Can you give an idea of the kind of content of a typical performance for children?

This does depend on the age - if you ask me to work with, say, children aged 4 to 7, I'll obviously handle that in a different way than if I am with 7 to 12 year olds. However, the mix can include traditional tales from a repertoire of around 500

stories, some original yarns and anecdotes, short jokes and riddles, my original fantasy songs (see under Children's Audio on the site), original guitar music and an eclectic repertoire on the various instruments I play (see *instruments and music under Performances & Workshops*). Audience participation of various kinds is an essential part of sessions too.

Can you give an idea of the kind of content of a typical performance for adults?

If the audience is largely unfamiliar with storytelling and is there first of all to be entertained very well, I usually do a mixed programme of tales, from jokes, short fables and anecdotes through to more complicated and extended stories of various kinds. The range might include folk tales, myths, legends, perhaps a ghost story or a tale with the 'scare factor', perhaps a story with an unusual moral twist, a modern magical-realist tale and so on, often starting from laughter and fun and mixing in more serious and focused moments. Where the audience is likely to know about modern performance storytelling (at clubs, festivals, as part of a series at arts centres etc.), I will do something more specifically focused (see programmes and themes below). Where the audience has a specialist interest such as therapy or education or training, I match programme content to that though introduce a few surprises. I usually discuss needs at length with organizers.

How can we publicize the event to get a good audience?

I supply a publicity package, press releases with photos, advice sheets on publicizing smaller scale events, simpler poster blanks for smaller organizations, artwork for reproduction in larger event programmes in a professional Quark Express format (or alternatives). I'll write a short special blurb to suit any brochure. I'm happy to do local radio interviews where possible and to advise on publicity in general. For children's events at non-specialist venues, I stress the 'minstrel-storyteller' image and the instruments, the fun and the fantasy and the unusualness of the experience. For adults, I emphasize the 'marvellous,

imaginative theatre within the mind' of storytelling as well as my 'modern minstrelsy' and the unique combination of music and story.

Do you or would you wear costume?

Depends. Because I can play various ancient instruments as well as doing stories, I've appeared in front of six million TV viewers in medieval tights and hose and done various costume events. However, I don't usually appear in costume unless it's essential for an event, in which case if the host is not supplying it I usually hire the costume and add the cost to the fee.

Do you use props?

My unusual range of instruments are enough for me, but I usually bring bright backdrops etc. when working at indoor locations to make a good visual impact arranged over boxes, display screens or whatever is to hand. Visual presentation is discussed in advance though is not complicated. For festival events and open-air stage events etc. where the need is for a quick set-up, I work with fewer instruments and no backdrops.

Are you happy with stage lighting and microphones?

Yes, when necessary in larger spaces etc. At theatres etc. lighting will be agreed with the technician on the day as normal. Microphone requirements may need to be discussed in advance, because of my range of instruments in combination with the voice. I don't usually use microphones and lighting in smaller, more intimate spaces.

Will you tell stories in unconventional locations?

Yes, of course. I've done that many times as mentioned in the answer to the first question in these pages. The main requirement is a space where it's possible to persuade people to listen, ideally without having to shout all the way through.

Can you give references?

Yes, very many. But don't expect me to respond immediately to requests for references as I'll need to look up a suitable one for your kind of venue and am often very busy.

FEES: For current fees, see separate download.

Contact Information

**c/o Imaginary Journeys,
27 London Road,
Tonbridge,
Kent TN10 3AB**

e-mail: Rob@imaginaryjourneys.co.uk

Tel/fax 01732 362356

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