



Some of the performers who will be at the Hat Fair this year

Full line-up announced as Hat Fair gets ready to return

The three-day event will take place in a different format from previous years due to the Covid pandemic, but it will be no less entertaining

By Sophie Day

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DETAILS of this year's Hat Fair have been released but will take a different format compared to previous years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Play to the Crowd has announced the line-up and arrangements for the Hat Fair Outdoor Arts Festival due to take place from Friday July 2 to Sunday July 4.

Due to the ongoing pandemic the annual event will take a different format to previous years with all three days taking place in the same neighbouring venues – North Walls Recreation Ground and the Winchester School of Art car park, close to Winchester city centre – rather than throughout the city. This allows audience numbers to be controlled to provide a safe and secure festival.

The main festival site – North Walls Recreation Ground – features some of the world's most brilliant street performers (or 'hatters') including Jones and Barnard

– exploring the eccentricities of the British through the universal language of eccentric dance, circus skills, comedy and song; Tit for Tat – using fiasco and mayhem to share our love of stories; and *Dizzy O'Dare's The Giant Balloon Show* – feverous balloon sculptures and high energy comedy.

Opera North make their Hat Fair debut with a new whistle stop performance inspired by Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*; The Enchanted Flower Globe and Floris the mystical flower nymph will glide through the festival site; the dazzling and surreal The Lips will be re-animate favourite songs celebrating popular music and Etta Ermini Dance Theatre and Van Huynh Company bring *Glam* – a gloriously vibrant dance and circus show filled with acrobatics, disco, feathers and glitter!

Hat Fair is part of Without Out Walls – a national consortium of festivals that commissions artists to produce Outdoor Arts work. This year's commissions performing at Hat Fair in-

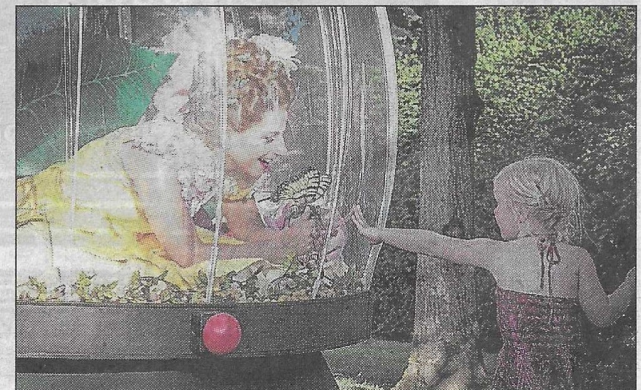
clude Jeanefer Jean Charles' Black Victorians - a dynamic dance piece inspired by the discovery of hundreds of portraits of Black people in England during the Victorian era. The characters in the portraits are brought to life through movement, text and music; *Pif-Paf's TOAST* – a celebration of food, song, story, dance and fire performed on and around their ever-moving kitchen cart and includes a mixture of songs, stories and recipes from musicians and cooks all around the world; Charmaine Childs, the Strong Lady – a familiar face to Hat Fair audiences – brings *Strong Enough* – a powerfully optimistic show that uses circus physicality, comedy and feats of strength to find strength in unexpected places.

In addition to the main festival site, the Winchester School of Art car park will be the venue for two double bill events featuring *Gravity* and *Levity's Why?* – a tender and exhilarating aerial duet exploring themes of life, loss, surrender and acceptance

in a soft and moving way (Friday and Saturday); the Britain's Got Talent finalist Ben Hart returns to his home city with his astonishing sleight-of-hand, set against a backdrop of comedy and stories of wonder (Friday); and Yorke Dance Company – the dynamic contemporary ballet company will perform *Dance Awakening* (Saturday).

The festival also provides a platform for local artists, musicians, dancers and talent with performance interspersed throughout the weekend. The Friday session on the North Walls Recreation Ground site has a more local community focussed programme and features the Top Hat competition - a competition for University of Winchester's performance students and graduates to compete to win mentoring with Andrew Loretto, the Hat Fair director; to develop a brand-new show to appear at next year's Hat Fair. Last year's winner, Lottie Clist, will also showcase her new show.

The Hat Fair festival has



Enchanted Flower Globe

previously been free to attend, it originated as a Busker's festival with audiences traditionally throwing money into a hat after a hatters performance. However due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, rather than audiences crowding together and throwing money into a hat, hatters will be paid a fee from the ticket money raised.

Ticketing the event also allows organisers to limit the audience numbers to help

to provide a Covid safe and secure event for audiences, staff, volunteers and artists alike.

Tickets for North Walls Recreation Ground are £8 per person (£6 on Friday), the double bill event tickets in Winchester School of Art Car Park are £5. Family group discounts are available. Tickets on sale now.

For more information and to book tickets visit hatfair.co.uk.