

chichester festival theatre

Thursday 13 February 2025

Receiving its world premiere at Chichester Festival Theatre this spring:

Mark Addy and Jenna Russell in
THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY
A new musical

Based on the multi million-selling novel by **Rachel Joyce**
Book by **Rachel Joyce**
Music and Lyrics by **Passenger**
Directed by **Katy Rudd**

5 May – 14 June, Minerva Theatre
Press night: Thursday 15 May



The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry, a joyous new musical adapted by **Rachel Joyce** from her own multi million-selling novel, featuring irresistible modern folk songs by the chart-topping indie musician, **Passenger** (*Let Her Go*), has its world premiere at Chichester Festival Theatre's Minerva Theatre this spring.

Funny, profound, deeply moving and uplifting, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* will be directed by **Katy Rudd** (*Ballet Shoes* National Theatre), and will star **Mark Addy** – known to an international screen audience for *The Full Monty*, *The Rig* and *Game of Thrones* – as Harold; and **Jenna Russell**, whose award-winning musicals include *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Hello, Dolly!*, as Maureen.

Harold Fry – grey, tired and lonely – receives a letter from an old friend and heads out to post his reply. And keeps walking. From South Devon to Berwick upon Tweed. Leaving his bewildered wife Maureen behind.

Because Harold is trying to make up for lost time, confront the ghosts in his past, and – perhaps – keep someone alive.

As word spreads of his unlikely pilgrimage, a whole company of lost souls join him on his quest. And the horizons for both Harold and Maureen open wider than they could ever have imagined.

Rachel Joyce is the award-winning author of the Sunday Times and international bestsellers *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, *Perfect*, *The Love Song of Miss Queenie Hennessy*, *A Snow Garden & Other Stories*, *The Music Shop*, *Miss Benson's Beetle*, *Maureen Fry and the Angel of the North*, and the forthcoming *The Homemade God*. Having originally been written as a short radio play for BBC Radio 4, the full-length novel *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize, shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize, and published in 37 languages. It was subsequently adapted by Rachel for the 2023 film starring Jim Broadbent and Penelope Wilton.

She has also written many original plays for Radio 4, dramatising both classic and new novels, including the entire Bronte collection. She moved to writing after a 20-year career in theatre and television, performing leading roles for Chichester Festival Theatre, the RSC and National Theatre.

Passenger (aka Mike Rosenberg)*, the multi award-winning and multi platinum-selling artist, has recently celebrated a decade since the release of his seminal album *All The Little Lights* featuring the global hit single *Let Her Go*, which soared to #1 in 19 countries and stands out as the second most Shazamed song of all time, with billions of streams across all platforms.

To date Passenger has released 15 studio albums, on several of which he has donated 100% of profits to charities including Unicef, Shelter and The Trussell Trust. Over the years, he has delivered show-stopping performances from street corners to stadiums, winning a global fanbase. He has recently returned to the UK after another world tour, including notable shows such as Red Rocks in Colorado, as well as two sold out Sydney Opera House gigs.

*Please note: Passenger is not performing in *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*.

Mark Addy made his film debut as Dave in *The Full Monty* for which he was nominated for a BAFTA, and later reprised the role on TV. His many leading television and film roles include *Game of Thrones*, *Atlantis*, *The Thin Blue Line*, *Downton Abbey*, *White House Farm*, *Sherwood* and *The Rig*; while theatre includes *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Collaborators* and *London Assurance* at the National Theatre.

Jenna Russell's extensive theatre work includes *Sunday in the Park with George* in London and on Broadway, for which she won an Olivier Award and was nominated for a Tony; *Hello Dolly!* (London Palladium); and *Flowers for Mrs Harris* (Riverside Studios). She previously appeared at Chichester in *Woman in Mind* and *Celebrating Sondheim*. Television includes *Midsomer Murders*, *Gentleman Jack*, *EastEnders* and *Call The Midwife*.

Director **Katy Rudd** makes her Chichester debut. The Baylis Director at the Old Vic (2019–21) and the recipient of the Stage Debut Award for Best Director for *The Almighty Sometimes* at the Royal Exchange, her productions include *Ballet Shoes* (National Theatre) and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (National Theatre, West End and on tour); *When Winston Went to War with the Wireless* (Donmar Warehouse); *Eureka Day* and *Camp Siegfried* (Old Vic). She is currently developing a new musical adaptation of *Nanny McPhee* alongside Emma Thompson.

The designer is **Samuel Wyer**, choreographer **Tom Jackson Greaves**, arranger and orchestrator **Jeremy Holland-Smith**, musical supervisor **Phil Bateman**, lighting designer **Paule Constable**, sound designers **Ian Dickinson** and **Gareth Tucker** for **Autograph**, musical director **Chris Poon**, and casting director **Anna Cooper CDG**. Adaptation co-created by **Rachel Joyce**, **Peter Darling** and **Katy Rudd**.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry is sponsored by Bishops Printers.
Minerva Season Principal: Charles Holloway OBE

BOOKING INFORMATION

Priority booking for Friends & Champions of Chichester Festival Theatre opens:

Saturday 22 February (online and booking forms only)

Tuesday 25 February (phone and in person)

Booking for Groups and Schools opens:

Thursday 27 February

General booking opens:

Saturday 1 March (online only)

Tuesday 4 March (phone and in person)

Tickets from £10

cft.org.uk Box Office **01243 781312**

Prologue: £5 tickets for 16 – 30s

9,000 £5 tickets are available for 16 to 30 year-olds across all Festival 2025 productions; sign up for free at **cft.org.uk/prologue**.

For further information please contact Lucinda Morrison, Head of Press & Publications on 01243 812917 or lucinda.morrison@cft.org.uk