

THE BELL – a Hans Christian Andersen Musical

*The Triumph of Goodness *The Victory of Genius*

Danish Composer Johnny Runner Debuts his Hans Christian Andersen-Based Rock Musical on the World Stage

“A large-scale work needs a big audience to match, so I’m aiming for the international market right away,” says Johnny Runner, the composer behind the new Hans Christian Andersen rock musical, The Bell. It’s his life’s opus—a work that has consumed him for 25 years.

14 soloists, 4 choirs, one rock band, 31 song titles, and 200 people on the stage at times, all supported by a live orchestra, dancers, actors and other artists in this two-hour musical drama combining rock, rap, opera, gospel, ballet and aboriginal dance.

The new Danish rock musical, based on Andersen’s story The Bell, hopes for its broad spectrum to reach the 17 countries where the Danish storyteller is the biggest—and beyond! Tour stops include China, Japan, Australia, several European countries, and the USA, all of this after its scheduled appearance on both Danish and Australian television.

25 Years and Half a Million Dollars

The televised concert is slated to air on TV in 2017 as ‘proof-of-concept’ for the worldwide tour songwriter/composer Johnny Runner plans for the following years.

The big names backing his project include well-known Danish mogul Lars Kolind on the advisory board, along with the Danish Royal family’s clergy and H.C. Andersen experts Johannes Norregaard Frandsen and Niels Jorgen Langkilde connected as personal mentors and advisors. The first 19 songs have been published in Denmark, and renderings by famous Danish and Australian artists may be previewed through the musical’s web page.

“It’s important to me that the project is delivered right. I’ve already been contacted by a London-based theater wanting to use my songs, but I said no, because the musical wasn’t yet finished. It is now – after 25 years and \$500,000 out of my own pocket—some of that from my retirement pension,” says Johnny Runner, who is also celebrating his 50th anniversary as a songwriter.

A Multicultural Musical

Knowing the five million people of his home country wouldn’t be quite enough to sustain such a large-scale production, Runner chose to use Hans Christian Andersen as a gateway to global audiences, all of whom interpret the beloved Danish fairytale poet differently.

“My musical is globally adapted. It literally takes ‘color’ from its surroundings and the culture it’s being introduced to. In Europe there’ll be ballet on stage – in China the same passage will be choreographed with dancers and dragons. People are shaped by the world they live in. We are all different and therefore you can’t launch a musical containing the message of companionship and a better world without adapting to the context of the world the message is sent into,” he says. “Hans Christian Andersen was a man of the world – and I have created a musical designed to connect with the world... the world that loves H.C. Andersen.”



JOHNNY RUNNER DENMARK

Idea, lyrics & composition

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Caption – photo 1:

Ultimately I want to be a part of creating a better world for children. A greener and happier world. Therefore I'm introducing a musical that connects in different cultural languages visually and musically. I'm trying to make a global musical – it's not a one size fits all.

Caption – photo 2:

When Johnny Runner wrote his first song at the age of 8, his life in music began. By the age of 12 he signed a record deal as part of Denmark's youngest boy band – and as a grown-up he entertained the jet-set of Danish society. This year he celebrates his 50th year as a songwriter.

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