

MEDIA RELEASE

The Birth of the Blues Piano

When: Cabaret Fringe Festival 2015

Performances: June 7, 11 & 13

At: La Bohème, 36 Grote St, Adelaide

Media Release Date: 22.5.15

THIS year's Cabaret Fringe Festival in Adelaide will herald the launch of a new club and a new show celebrating the music and history of the blues piano.

The Blues Piano Club will officially come into being when it stages *The Birth of the Blues Piano*, an original production exploring the emergence of the blues piano in America around the year 1900, through songs, beat poetry, anecdotes and animated visual art.

The Blues Piano Club host and the show's creator, Mary Harrington, says the idea for the club and the show sprang from a flight of fancy and the love of the blues piano and its history.

"Early in 2014 I was thinking about how great it would be to have a blues piano club within walking distance from home, just a little one tucked somewhere into a side street," says Harrington, who lives in the city centre of Adelaide. "I began writing a song about that fantasy club and the song, *The Blues Piano Club*, grew into a show with The Blues Piano Club as its musical driving force.

Harrington says her dream to stage the show as a live performance received a boost when a window of opportunity allowed blues and boogie-woogie piano player Paul Hay to take time off from his residency as entertainer on the historic *Murray Princess* paddleboat to be a special guest on the show.

"Once Paul agreed to come onboard, I could see the club and the show now was more than a dream, it could actually happen," Harrington says. "His musical advice and knowledge have been invaluable."

The fact the two are husband and wife is an "enormous plus", not only as a creative venture but also as a logistic advantage preparing for the show. "We're lucky with that shared love of the blues piano," Harrington says. "We met through music in 2008 and we've been on a blues journey ever since."

The show also involves Harrington's daughter Jess Underwood who created its animated visual art from her base in Los Angeles. "Again, I'm very fortunate to benefit from another creative member of the family," Harrington says. "Jess is a huge asset, her artwork helps to bring the show to life."

Harrington says The Blues Piano Club is part on-line community and part live entertainment, with plans to expand both it and the show's concept. "For now the show is a one-hour, stand-alone piece of entertainment involving Paul and me – with the fabulous Peter Allan joining us on drums for this year's Cabaret Fringe Festival. But I've also factored in some elasticity, allowing the show to expand occasionally to include other piano players and musicians, making it a broader showcase."

Harrington says *The Birth of the Blues Piano* is an entertaining musical journey for anyone who loves music and its history. She says blues music speaks all languages, whoever you are, wherever you live.

"I've been fortunate to see some great blues and boogie-woogie piano players perform live, including the wonderful Pinetop Perkins who was still playing into his late 90s," Harrington says. "I might live in a country far removed from the birth of the blues piano but once its sounds take a hold of you, it doesn't matter where you live."

The Birth of the Blues Piano

When: Sunday, June 7 and Saturday June 13 at 4pm

Thursday, June 11 at 8pm

Show Details: 60-minute performance. Part of the Cabaret Fringe Festival

Where: La Bohème, 36 Grote St, Adelaide, South Australia

Tickets: \$25 (adult) and \$20 (concession), via cabaretrfringefestival.com or
Box Office: 08 8243 0001



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PAUL HAY

Paul Hay has performed across Australia and overseas – from playing the live music circuits in Adelaide and Sydney, to blues festivals in Britain, and a 2-year residency on the *Murray Princess* paddleboat as the Pianoman. Paul is the founder of bluesy-swing outfit Club 88 and acclaimed 4-piece Rhumboogie. In 2014 he recorded 2 studio albums that received national recognition in the Australian Blues & Roots Airplay Chart, with one reaching No. 4.

MARY HARRINGTON

Mary Harrington is a songwriter, composer and creative writer, including more than 30 years as a professional writer. One of her original songs appears on Paul Hay's 2014 album "Together". She is the founder of The Blues Piano Club and created its inaugural production, *The Birth of the Blues Piano*.



PHOTOS: Samra Teague