

VOICE of the PEOPLE

He has performed for royalty, former US presidents and the Pope and now, one of the world's most prominent tenors is singing in Richmond, writes Laura Proto.

Despite Russell Watson's first album, *The Voice*, reaching the top spot in the UK and US charts in the same week and performing at large venues around the world, the classical singer is swapping the big stage to tour smaller venues across the country.

Watson says: "It is a trip to the more provincial areas in the UK I have never visited before and a way to take the show out of the major cities.

"I have a mature fan base and they don't always like to go out on the buses into the big towns. I have scaled the show down and it has a much more intimate feel."

While Watson has not performed at Richmond Theatre before, he is looking forward to returning to the borough which is the home of England rugby.

He says: "The closest I have performed to the

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Music

theatre is at the stadium. It is incredible. I did *Swing Low Sweet Chariot* there a few times and they always go wild when you do those types of songs and it was always a thrill there. It would be great to get back there."

For his up-close-and-personal tour at theatres across the UK, Watson will be joined on stage with a string quartet, pianist, classical guitarist and local choirs with up to 100 people. Last year, Watson also embarked on a small venue tour and received great feedback, which encouraged him to produce a similar show this year.

He says: "The reaction last year was fantastic – this time we have a bigger set-up than last time. For three or four shows last year, I just sang with a piano. It was an idea I got from a Pavarotti show and I thought that it was a great idea."

Despite being comfortable singing in front of thousands of people, Watson admits it is the smaller

shows that often make him more nervous.

He adds: "When I was singing at the Vatican to the Pope, there was a sense of occasion and the butterflies seemed to fly a bit more. On the intimate set-up, I have more of a connection with the audience."

"It will be a great night. I have been around for a very long time and I have had incredible career highlights, and there has been some downers as well like my health scare. It is the building of layers for an artist. When you have turbulence, it gives you a better relationship with music. The position I have now is totally different to 15 years ago."



The Vibe interview

RUSSELL WATSON

■ An Intimate Evening with Russell Watson; Richmond Theatre, Little Green, Richmond; April 25, 7.30pm; £30.90 to £52.90; call 08448 717651 or visit atgtickets.com/venues/richmond-theatre



SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Picture: Nobby Clark

DISCO DANCING

Musical

Iconic musical Saturday Night Fever comes to Richmond Theatre in a new production of one of the most-loved dance stories of all time.

It is 1976 in New York and Tony Manero, a young man from a tough Brooklyn neighbourhood with a dead-end job has one ambition in life – to dance.

Every Saturday night, he dons his flares and hits the

dancefloor, creating a stir as he wows the crowds with his unbelievable routines.

The spectacular classic show is packed full of legendary hits by the Bee Gees including classics like Stayin' Alive, Night Fever and Jive Talking.

Tony is played by Danny Bayne, who made his debut as Danny Zuko in Grease in

the West End, while Naomi Slangs, who has performed in Mamma Mia, plays Stephanie.

If you fancy a boogie, do not miss this iconic play when it comes to Richmond next month.

■ *Saturday Night Fever*; Richmond Theatre, Little Green, Richmond; March 24 to 28, evening shows 7.30pm, matinees 2.30pm; £10 to £45.90; for more information, visit atgtickets.com/richmond.

Picture: Simon Bennett



STRIKE IT PLUCKY

Music

Touted as one of the UK's finest banjo players, Dan Walsh, pictured, performs at Twickenham to celebrate the launch of his new album.

Incidents and Accidents is Walsh's follow up to *Same But Different*, featuring a more stripped-back format with guest appearances from the likes of Patsy Reid on fiddle, Nic Zupardi on mandolin and Canadian singer Meaghan Blanchard.

Having made his name with the duo Walsh and Pound and as a member of the Urban Folk Quartet, Walsh takes to the stage as a soloist.

He begins his tour in Twickenham before travelling across the country and finishing his tour in Scotland.

■ Dan Walsh; Twickenham at the Cabbage Patch, London Road, Twickenham; March 1, 7.45pm; £10, £8 advance; visit wegottickets.com/event/302154.

