



Jane Arnfield in her new play Year of Wonders

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Northumbria academic brings new play to the North East stage

It is 1666 and the plague has arrived in a small isolated Derbyshire village. As hope and humanity battle against despair and superstition, we follow the story through the eyes of housemaid Anna Frith, played by actor, writer and Northumbria Associate Professor Jane Arnfield.

Year of Wonders is Jane's latest play, which she has adapted for the stage alongside director Mike Alfreds. Based on the book of the same name by Geraldine Brooks, the play is being staged in the North East this week, after

making its debut at The Lowry in Salford last week.

Reflecting on real life events that occurred in the village of Eyam during the plague year of 1666, the one-woman play details how Anna Frith finds the strength to confront the disintegration of her community and the lure of illicit love.

As Subject Head for Drama at Northumbria, the play forms part of Jane's research and exploration of solo performance and has been supported through an Arts Council England Award.

Jane said: "There is an exploration in the play around the ethics of quarantine and migration relevant to today's fears around epidemics, such as Ebola, and their control. Ultimately, it is a story of ordinary people struggling to cope with extraordinary circumstances and making pragmatic decisions in the face of adversity.

"My research will investigate the potential the novel and stage adaptation offers to explore how pandemic threats are managed and conceived – this is of course particularly relevant to the Ebola crisis.

"There will be a rigorous investigation on the impact of storytelling performance on an audience; examining how one biographical story can represent the many whilst serving as a document to raise interest in the authentic, historical narrative."

Year of Wonders is being performed at the [Alphabetti Theatre](#), in Newcastle on Tuesday 26 and Wednesday 27 June and at the [Gala Theatre](#), in Durham on Thursday 28 June. Special student discounts are available for both venues.

In addition, Jane and Mike will be discussing the creative process they have been through in adapting the play during a free Artists' Talk at [The Lit & Phil](#), in Newcastle on Friday 29 June.

Find out more about Year of Wonders by visiting www.yearofwonders.org where you can hear interviews by both Jane Arnfield and Mike Alfreds about the play.

This is not the first time Jane and Mike have collaborated on a project – they

have previously worked on a stage adaptation of Zdenka Fantlová's book *The Tin Ring*, which has toured to over 14 countries and played to thousands of people.

Jane is a member of [Northumbria University's Centre for International Development](#), which brings together academics, practitioners and students to promote research, consultancy, teaching, training and public engagement on issues of global poverty and inequality, the communities and individuals who experience this, and the policies, practices and approaches that seek to address it.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk