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Northumbria students to perform at Northern Stage

Two thought provoking plays are being performed at Northern Stage next week as graduating Performing Arts students from Northumbria University, Newcastle stage their final degree shows.

The performances of Anthony Neilson's play *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* and *The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Elisabeth Hauptmann will provide the students with an opportunity to showcase their skills to potential employers and industry professionals.

The Threepenny Opera is set on the 19th of May 2018, Meghan Markle will marry Harry, Prince of Wales. Windsor scrubs up for a royal wedding. While

the rich and famous brush shoulders with the royal and entitled; the pickpockets, prostitutes, beggars and street-dwellers are still working. Although the police are cutting deals to keep it quiet. Thanks to the Royal Nuptials and the FA Cup Final, nearby London is teeming. Mr and Mrs Peachum are looking forward to a good day in the beggary business. However, their daughter Polly didn't come home last night. In less salubrious circumstances, she got married too! It looks like London's most notorious criminal MacHeath is back in town.

Conceived with magnificence such as only beggars could imagine, and an economy such as only scroungers could afford, Third Year Performance students will present this iconic tale for an audience of today.

The Threepenny Opera is directed by Fiona MacPherson, senior lecturer at Northumbria. Commenting on why it was chosen she said: "In Brecht's words, art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer [with] which to shape it. A piece like The Threepenny Opera is timeless and therefore has something to say about today. The students have really embraced the ways in which an opera from 1928 can still reflect the world in which we live. Although the original story foregrounds Queen Victoria's Coronation, comments on the establishment still resonate in our production, which follows the days leading up to the Royal Wedding. I've seen the cast develop as actors, singers, and theatre makers, they have made this a most enjoyable experience."

The Wonderful World of Dissocia is a weird and magical play that takes a trip away from reality, exploring a world of psychological disconnection. Lisa Jones is on a journey. It's a colourful and exciting off-kilter trip in search of one lost hour that has tipped the balance of her life. The inhabitants of the wonderful world she finds herself in - Dissocia - are a curious blend of the funny, the friendly and the brutal.

Produced originally for the 2004 Edinburgh International Festival, The Wonderful World of Dissocia wowed critics and audiences alike. This is a hugely original play, both magical and moving, that confirmed Anthony Neilson as one of major voices in contemporary British Theatre.

Steve Gilroy, playwright and principal lecturer at Northumbria, directs The

Wonderful World of Dissocia. He said: “I saw the Anthony Nielson’s production of The Censor while working at the Royal Court Theatre in 1997 and was impressed with the audaciousness and complexity of his writing. The same is the case with The Wonderful World of Dissocia – not only is it a brilliant play for student actors to explore and perform; it is also a challenging, provocative and hilarious work that defies categorisation.”

The plays mark the end of the students’ three-year Theatre and Performance BA (Hons) degree course and aim to replicate the experience of auditioning for, rehearsing and staging a professional theatre performance.

Both Steve and Fiona have extensive professional experience working within the performing arts, including directing, writing and running their own production companies, meaning students can benefit from their industry connections and advice.

For more information about Northumbria’s Performing Arts courses please visit <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/courses/drama-uusdrm1/>

For more information about this year’s Performing Arts Degree shows and how to buy tickets visit

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/northumbria-university-performing-arts-showcase/>

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