



Apr 18, 2016 10:35 BST

Shakespeare – but not as we know him

Four hundred years after William Shakespeare's death, his plays and prose continue to impress and inspire audiences around the world.

This month, the Bard's legacy will be celebrated up and down the country – a testament to his undeniable impact on our culture.

But for those of us not so familiar with his work, it can be difficult to see how a man who put pen to paper – well, quill to parchment - so long ago could still be relevant in 2016.

In an age of smartphones, sat-navs and social media, is there still room for Shakespeare?

Academics from Northumbria University's English department will seek to answer this question and more at 'Shakespeare Now' - a free series of talks to be held next week at the Lit & Phil.

Audiences will have the chance to discover some of the ways Shakespeare is considered in contemporary culture – including in graphic novels and in relation to modern extremism.

[Dr Adam Hansen](#), Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Northumbria, explained:

"Shakespeare can sometimes seem scary and separate from most people's lives. But Northumbria University is proud to be a big part of events celebrating Shakespeare in Newcastle, which will show he isn't that scary and that he has a lot to say about how we live now.

"He still has huge cultural and political significance, and we can understand this if we look at how people have used and interpreted his work over the years. In fact, what we say about Shakespeare, and what we do with him, changes over the years. As we realise this we see how 'we' change, and what makes cultural and political change possible or desirable. This helps us understand Shakespeare – and ourselves – better."

The event is part of the week-long 'Celebrating Shakespeare' programme at the Lit & Phil which will run from Monday 18 – Saturday 23 April and comprise of a series of discussions and public lectures, dramatic and musical performances and free film screenings.

Highlights from the programme include a fascinating lecture entitled 'Who Wrote Shakespeare?' by John Thomas Looney – an event which sold out during the Books on Tyne festival – and a whistle stop tour of the Bard's work with Newcastle College actors performing a 90 minute abridged version of The Complete Works of Shakespeare.

Dr Hansen added:

“All the events at the Lit and Phil will bring people together to share ideas about what Shakespeare meant in the past and what he means today. Our ‘Shakespeare Now’ talks will help you learn more about Shakespeare and his place in our modern world. But we will also challenge what you may think you know about Shakespeare too – so expect to be surprised!”

There will also be a free opening event with refreshments on Monday evening at 7.30pm, hosted by Northumbria University.

And from Monday until Saturday 14 May, an exhibition – curated by Dr Hansen - will take place in the main library highlighting the wealth of Shakespeare related material that the Lit and Phil have on offer.

For a full itinerary and to book places on any of the events, please visit <http://www.litandphil.org.uk/whats-on/>

For more information about English at Northumbria, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/english

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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