



From left to right, actor Chris Connell, Associate Professor Steve Gilroy, actor Dave Johns, Dr Heike Pichler, actor Sharon Percy and actor Jackie Lye.

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Famous faces prepare to take to the stage to bring a research-based performance to life

Award-winning North-East actors have joined forces with academics to showcase stories of true Geordie grit – and the dialect used by the generation behind tales from post-war Tyneside.

Written and directed by Deputy Head of [Arts at Northumbria University](#), Associate Professor [Steve Gilroy](#), *From You to Me* will see the accounts of

older adults take centre stage by using the recorded delivery technique to share their life stories in their own words and accents.

Dave Johns and Sharon Percy, stars of award-winning film *I, Daniel Blake*, will be reunited to perform alongside Chris Connell of the *The Pitmen Painters* and Jackie Lye of BBC Radio 4 soap opera, *The Archers* at events for students and invited guests at Newcastle's Alphabetti Theatre, Northern Stage and Northumbria Students' Union.

Testimony collected from Tynesiders aged 70 years and over, by sociolinguist Dr Heike Pichler from the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics at Newcastle University, became the script for the performance. It is based on research that aims to develop a nuanced understanding of language variation in later life. It asks: How does language use vary across older individuals who all grew up and retired in the North-East? Why do they not all speak exactly the same?

"The accounts from the research participants are all amazing; moving, lyrical and funny testimonies which are really valuable to the region," said Steve.

"There's no doubt many recall living in a deprived environment but, although they acknowledge it was a tough existence, their journeys beyond growing up are all so diverse."

Four scenes featuring 14 characters will be played out by the cast, each of whom will have an audio version of the stories from the research participants played live into headphones.

Steve added: "This allows the actors to recreate not only what was said, but the way it was said, and the dialect. It brings the audience as close as they can get to the real-life interviewees."

Award-winning actor, writer and comic Dave Johns takes on a lead role in the performance and said it was great to be back on stage in Newcastle.

"This is important research centred around the unmistakable North-East dialect and it's a pleasure to be able to help bring the project to life in an authentic way," he said.

“There’s no doubt the testimony of those brought up in post-war Tyneside is powerful and shows the strength of character of those who lived through it.”

It is hoped the performance will give older voices in the region a platform to share their lived experiences, while illustrating the research findings on language variation in the region.

Dr Pichler explained: “We’re particularly interested in how factors such as social isolation or contact between generations affect older adults’ speech: how they pronounce words, what expressions they choose, whether they pick up language innovations.

“A better understanding of language variation among older adults from Tyneside will help to challenge common language biases against this age group, which in turn will promote age-friendly and inclusive communities.”

The first invitation-only performance will take place on September 15. Anyone interested in receiving ticket details for future performances can email fromyoutome@ncl.ac.uk.

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