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Northumbria academic helps launch international arts programme to mark 70th anniversary

A performing arts academic will stage her one-woman play about the Holocaust in the Czech Republic this week to launch a two-year international programme of events.

Jane Arnfield, Reader in Arts at Northumbria University, Newcastle, will perform her award-winning play *The Tin Ring* by Zdenka Fantlova, in Terezín on the 70th anniversary of the city's liberation. Her performance, organised as part of the 2015 Schächter Institute, will launch a two year programme of

events called Suitcase of Survival, which is being developed by arts organisation The Forge and Northumbria University.

The three way relationship between these organisations further demonstrates Northumbria's commitment to research-rich teaching, international collaboration, and employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship for staff and students. This programme, building up to 2017, will include a large-scale performance of Verdi's Requiem in Durham Cathedral, the creation of a new musical composition to be performed by young people, a showing of the film *The Defiant Requiem*, plus academic research and an educational programme in schools.

Jane, who is also Director of Fine and Visual Arts programmes at Northumbria, said: "It is both humbling and enriching to be performing and developing my research on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Terezín."

Jane's performance of *The Tin Ring*, which she adapted from the book with Mike Alfreds, will help launch the two-year Suitcase of Survival programme, which has been developed by The Forge and Northumbria University, in association with The Defiant Requiem Foundation. The performance will take place on Friday 15 May as part of the 2015 Schächter Institute.

The Forge Executive Director Tony Harrington said: "This is just the beginning and over the next two years we want to involve as many people as possible in the Suitcase of Survival programme. I am very excited at the prospect of this partnership and the great things that we can achieve together. The Forge exists to make great art and to use it as a tool for reflection and learning. The arts are a central part of what makes us human and this was never better exemplified than by the powerful art that was created in Terezín."

The Tin Ring tells the story of Zdenka Fantlova, a holocaust survivor and a member of the Terezín artistic community who performed in plays during their war-time incarceration in the concentration camp. Zdenka, a Czech-Jewish woman, who fell in love at the age of 18 but whose life was changed forever when her country was invaded by the Nazis. While in the ghetto of Terezín, her soul-mate, Arno, gave her a ring made from tin as a token of his love. Jane's academic research at Northumbria University is focused on Theatre of the Real and explores the retelling of Zdenka's eye witness account of the war in the attic where the choir sang and where she acted in many of the plays.

Discussing the play, Jane added: “This is Zdenka’s story, Zdenka’s truth. The resonance of Zdenka’s story with a contemporary audience provides another vehicle in which to remember the very best of what it is to be human and the very worst.”

Since premiering at The Lowry theatre in Salford in 2012, *The Tin Ring* has been staged nationally and internationally. Performances include the Edinburgh Fringe Festival part of the British Council International Showcase; the Lit & Phil Library, Newcastle; Speaker’s House Westminster; New York University, and the Fourth Mumbai International Literature Festival in India.

The Rafael Schächter Institute for Arts & Humanities was founded in 2011 under the auspices of The Defiant Requiem Foundation, which seeks to honour the memory of the courageous prisoners at Terezín (Theresienstadt), who found hope and inspiration in the arts and humanities in the midst of suffering, depravity and death. The annual Institute is named after one of Terezín’s inmates, Rafael Schächter, a young, talented Jewish conductor who chose to counter evil by organizing and training a choir of fellow prisoners to perform the monumental Requiem by Giuseppe Verdi.

Northumbria offers a range of courses in the Arts and was rated in the UK Top 10 for research power for Arts and Design following the Research Excellence Framework 2014.

To find out more about Performance, Fine and Visual Arts at the University, register for Northumbria’s Open Days on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 June at www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday

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