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Northumbria graduate takes to the Northern Stage in solo tour

A Northumbria MA Theatre and Performance graduate is touring the stage to explore ideas around stress and how we deal with it in modern day society.

Holly Gallagher, who is also an Associate Artist at multi-art form performing arts centre ARC Stockton, will be performing in *Tensile Strength (or How to Survive at Your Wit's End)*, a show she was inspired to create based on her own personal experiences after finishing university.

The show, which follows a storytelling format, directs the audience into thinking about their relationship with stress and focuses predominantly on three characters: He, She, and They – three people who are leading stressful lives.

In order for Holly's show to feel relevant, she interviewed participants from around the world, asking people about their own experiences of stress in their lives, how they cope, and what relaxes them. From these interviews, she was able to form a series of narrative events and build characters.

She said: "I had the idea for this show in the first year after I graduated from my MA at Northumbria. I'm quite a stressed out person and I ended up going through a patch of unemployment, followed by taking on far too much work and wearing myself too thin.

"I wanted to make something that explored the pressures that people feel in life, as well as why so many people seem to describe themselves as stressed or worn out or living on coffee and never taking time to stop. I want to make work about the world we live in now, and so stress felt very apt in 2017 when I first started developing the show."

Holly initially applied to make her show through Bridging the Gap, a project developed at ARC Stockton, and got through to the interview stages for this process. Whilst her application wasn't successful, she went on to receive several offers of support from venues and was able to develop the show following a successful Arts Council England bid.

She also received support in producing the show through her association at ARC Stockton, and was successful in applying for mentorship from Third Angel, a contemporary theatre company, who helped to develop the show in its early stages.

The 25-year old, who is originally from Thornaby, Teeside, began her tour in Edinburgh in February this year and will carry out her final performance at Northern Stage, in Newcastle, on 14 May.

Liz Pavey, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Arts at Northumbria University, said: "It's always brilliant to see our MA graduates reaching audiences nationally with their work.

“The theatre Holly created while she was a student here was astute, sophisticated work that addressed significant topics in engaging and imaginative ways. She is a very gifted scriptwriter, theatre maker and performer and I can’t wait to see her new solo show when it comes to Newcastle later this month.”

Speaking of the support she received and the inspiration behind her projects, Holly said: “After discovering Third Angel and Daniel Bye, who is the director and part of my creative team, I became interested in making my own work.

“It wasn’t until I did my MA in Theatre and Performance that I first had a go at writing and performing my own work, and eventually created my first solo show *Before (the line is lost)* which was about cosplay (costume play), comic conventions, and consent. This had a smaller tour, but in making and touring this show I got to know a lot more venues which helped me build networks and connections for when *Tensile Strength’s* tour was being put together.”

You can find out more about Holly’s show *Tensile Strength (or How to Survive at Your Wit’s End)*[here](#).

[Holly](#) also actively works as a director and will be previewing a show called *My Mate Ren* by Tamsin Daisy Rees at Live Theatre in May, which she is hoping to put a tour together for.

To find out more about Northumbria’s MA Theatre and Performance course, visit: www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/courses/theatre-and-performance-dtft6/

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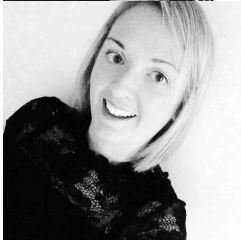
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