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Northumbria Performing Arts students take to the Northern Stage

Two thought provoking plays are being performed in the North East for the first time this week as graduating Performing Arts students from Northumbria University, Newcastle stage their final degree shows.

The performances of Edward Bond's play *Human Cannon* and *Love and Information* by Caryl Churchill are taking place at Northern Stage and will provide the students with an opportunity to showcase their skills to potential employers and industry professionals.

Human Cannon is set during the Spanish Civil War and tells the story of the village of Estaroban and peasant farmer, Agustina Ruiz. As the war takes over the village and the play, Agustina becomes a member of the Republican resistance and learns to fire her enemies' cannon, becoming the most effective weapon in the armoury of the revolution.

The play is directed by Fiona MacPherson, senior lecturer at Northumbria, who believes the issues it raises resonate strongly in light of recent global events. She said: "This is a play about what it means to be human in a world that can often feel inhuman. It explores war, morality, democracy and social justice – all issues which are as pertinent right now as they ever have been."

Love and Information is a fast moving kaleidoscope of a play, featuring over one hundred characters. Described as a highly intelligent piece of theatre, the play depicts our fractured and fragmented society and explores human connections and the role of love and humanity in an age of continual access to more and more information.

Steve Gilroy, playwright and principal lecturer at Northumbria, directs *Love and Information*. He said: "The students have taken a highly professional approach to an important play which speaks directly to these modern times. This is the first time this play has been produced in the North East and it is a fantastic opportunity for Northumbria students to contribute to the cultural offer and vibrant artistic landscape of Newcastle."

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 plays were carefully selected to challenge the students and allow them to gain new skills and experience. For example, in *Human Canon* the students also perform live music to accompany the play, while in *Love and Information* the students play numerous characters.

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.

Fiona said: “We aim to create a professional environment, giving the students an authentic experience of what being involved in a theatre production entails and preparing them for the real world once they graduate.

“We encourage them to take part in the promotion of the shows and generate their own audiences through publicity and building connections with agents and industry representatives. This is their opportunity to make connections, network and meet potential employers.

“We have been incredibly impressed with the talent, creativity and enthusiasm of the students this year and are sure they will deliver a thoroughly professional and thoughtful interpretation of both plays.”

Human Cannon will be performed at Northern Stage at 1pm today (Thursday 1 June), 7pm on Friday 2 June and 1pm on Saturday 3 June. More information available [here](#).

Love and Information will be performed at 7pm today, 1pm on Friday 2 June and 7pm on Saturday 3 June. More information available [here](#). Tickets are £10 or £8 for concessions.

The musical director for *Human Cannon* is Jeremy Bradfield and the sound design and composition for *Love and Information* is by Nick Williams. The lighting for both has been designed by Kev Tweedy.

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

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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