

DURHAM BOOK FESTIVAL

20 October 2017

Press release: for immediate release

Record year for Durham Book Festival

*Still time to catch Do Not Enter the Monster Zoo
children's theatre tour until 29 October*

It has been a bumper year for Durham Book Festival, with a record number of people attending the annual 10-day event. The festival ran from Friday 6- Sunday 15 October at venues across the city, launching with a special screening of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* at Durham Cathedral in celebration of 20 years since the book's first publication.

The three Harry Potter screenings sold out within 12 hours – the first record broken for the festival this year, but by no means the last. The festival also broke its own box office figures, with sales worth more than £46,000, a 40% increase on 2016. The number of people attending the festival has also increased to more than 12,000, and with the children's theatre tour *Do Not Enter the Monster Zoo* still underway, that figure is only set to increase.

The festival organisers believe that the reason for such a high turn-out this year lie in the strength of the programme, which sought to interest a wide range of people. Television and radio stars including Tony Robinson, Robert Webb, Jenni Murray, June Sarpong and Stephen McGann were programmed alongside exciting artists such as poets Andrew McMillan and Sinéad Morrissey, graphic novelists Una and Mary Talbot, and North East writer Carmen Marcus. Popular fiction events included names such as Kamila Shamsie, Tracy Chevalier and Booker-prize winners Roddy Doyle and Alan Hollinghurst, and emerging novelists including Chibundu Onuzo and Jen Campbell.

Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North with support from Arts Council England and Durham University, whose academics bring their world-class research and writing to the programme. Highlights from the University this year included historian and BBC Next Generation Thinker Dr Eleanor Barraclough, award-winning theoretical physicist Dr Tom McLeish and acclaimed writer and creative writing professor Claire Harman.

For this year's Big Read, 3000 people across County Durham received a free copy of the short story collection *Half a Creature from the Sea* by North East writer David Almond, with many more attending both reading and writing workshops across the county and events based around the book.



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Author David Almond said: “It was a privilege and a joy to be part of such a wide-ranging and intelligently curated festival. And of course I’m delighted that my own book was used so creatively for the Big Read. Definitely one of the finest festivals of the year.”

Cllr Simon Henig, Leader of Durham County Council, said: “It’s fantastic to see the book festival breaking records this year. The number of people who attended the event is testament to the hard work involved in putting together what has become a varied and high quality programme.

“Culture is extremely important to Durham’s economic prosperity. Events such as the book festival bring visitors into the city and help to promote our area as a thriving, exciting and welcoming place to live, work and visit.”

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North said, “We are delighted with how this year’s festival has been received. I’ve lost count of the number of people who have told me this has been their favourite Durham Book Festival yet, and I would have to agree with them. It has been so wonderful to have so many inspiring writers, artists and thinkers here in Durham. Together with Durham County Council and Durham University, we are looking forward to next year’s festival, which we hope will be better than ever.”

Meanwhile, there is still time to catch the children’s theatre tour, *Do Not Enter the Monster Zoo*, which tours the North of England, including many County Durham community centres, until Sunday 29 October. The tour has been a massive hit with young families and many dates are now sold out. Full details are available on the website www.monsterzootour.com.

www.durhambookfestival.com

For all media enquiries, including interview requests, please contact Laura Fraine, Senior Marketing and Communications Manager at New Writing North laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com 0191 204 8850

High res images from Durham Book Festival 2017 are available at https://www.dropbox.com/sh/314uwafc70cczc2/AAOF9Kj8JlfjMW_G8hu28Y2a?dl=0



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