

NEW WRITING NORTH

Press release: for release Friday 12 June

New poem from Tony Walsh calls for radical unity as we emerge from lockdown

Covid-19 has divided us – whether locked in our homes, working day and night, furloughed, sick or caring. Our experiences have been as diverse as we are.

In ‘The Sum of Us’, poet Tony Walsh has written a powerful and thought-provoking new poem to bring the country back together as we begin to emerge from 12 weeks of lockdown, and show that collectively the sum of us is greater than its parts.

‘The Sum of Us’ is commissioned by New Writing North, the writing development agency for the North of England and is released on video. The poem has been made into a set of engaging, site-specific posters for street level display by designer Craig Oldham. The poem is now live, having been displayed by Jack Arts on their 10 individually framed poster sites on Newton Street, M1 1ED, in the heart of Manchester's Northern Quarter.

Tony Walsh has performed his poetry since 2004, everywhere from grass-roots poetry gigs to international literature festivals, but his work came to worldwide attention in May 2017. His poem ‘This Is The Place’ was broadcast globally from the vigil for victims of the Manchester arena bomb. The poem has now entered the folklore and the fabric of the city he’s still proud to call home. Burning Eye Books released his first collection, *SEX & LOVE & ROCK&ROLL*, in 2013.

Tony Walsh said: “There have been as many experiences at this time as there are people and I wanted to bear witness to that, to allow people's differing experiences to feel acknowledged, and to understand that we each may be having many complex emotions all at once. I was looking for a thread of hope to link them all and, with the Black Lives Matter campaign gaining prominence as the poem was finalised, it struck me that now, perhaps more than ever, is the moment to unite in our common humanity.”

Claire Malcolm, Chief Executive of New Writing North, said: “We’re living through unprecedented times and for us at New Writing North, the way we try to make sense of the world is through art, creativity, and especially writing. We have worked with Tony Walsh a couple of times and couldn’t think of a better person to capture the way life feels right now and how we might come through it. ‘The Sum of Us’ is such a poem. I hope that people will listen to and read it and feel that they are less alone in their experiences, and ultimately feel hopeful for a future in which we are more united.”

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Watch 'The Sum of Us' on the New Writing North YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHPiRsobjRU>

For all media enquiries, please contact Laura Fraine at New Writing North
laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com 07411 164 837

Notes to editor

New Writing North

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England, and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The organisation works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers' Awards, the Gordon Burn Prize, Read Regional, Young Writers and Durham Book Festival.

New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and act as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters across the creative industries. Partners include BBC Radio 3, Channel 4 Drama, Faber & Faber, Northumbria University and Durham University.

As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects. www.newwritingnorth.com

Jack Arts

Jack Arts is the leading creative out-of-home agency in the arts and culture space. An agency with a difference, it runs poster schemes in 10 cities across the UK and produces one of a kind special builds, murals, installations, ambient and experiential marketing campaigns to cause a welcome disruption on the street. Jack Arts is part of the BUILDHOLLYWOOD agency family with Jack and Diabolical.

Website: <http://www.jackarts.co.uk/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/jack_arts (double underscore)

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/jack_arts/ (double underscore)

Office Of Craig

Office Of Craig is a Manchester-based creative agency founded by leading designer, Craig Oldham. Consistently ranked in the top 20 agencies in the UK, their work for brands and audiences has earned multiple awards and is held in numerous public collections internationally. www.craigoldham.co.uk.