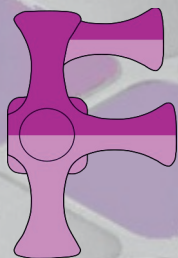
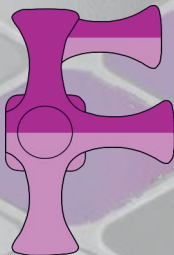


Durham



ree



ringe

2026

Durham Free Fringe is a super-inclusive five-day event taking place over three venues in Durham City. If you have an act to show, and you can make it work outside the traditional fringe theatre space, we want to give you the space to perform.

We do not vet acts by level of ability, nor do we curate to any artistic taste – we instead believe in letting artists connect directly with audiences. Whether you see the free fringe as a first step to a curated programme, a long-term arrangement, a place for experimental work or extra performances alongside another festival, everybody is welcome.

The Free Fringe is free to both performers and audience. There are no charges for taking part, and no charges to watch any show. All we ask is that if you enjoyed a show, you donate to the performers after so that they can continue to do this.

Join us for five days, three venues, dozens of shows ... and a stage for everyone.

Comedy



The Durham Improv Jam *Ben Bradley*

The Durham Improv Jam is your chance to come and play some improv games, or watch other performers take to the stage, in a relaxed and unscripted interactive show. Join us for an hour jam-packed full of laughs!

Market Tavern: 30th July, 6.45 p.m. (60 min)



Erasmus Croc's and Aaron Wright's Guide To Life

Aaron Wright

Erasmus Croc is the world's first poetry crocodile, performing alongside his young protégé, Aaron Wright. Together they present their guide to life, the universe and everything through spoken word, poetry, low-tech props and bubbles. Expect tales of possessed tumble dryers, blinged-up slugs and other surreal wonders. Soak in sumptuous visuals and audacious auditory skills as a crocodilian delivers rhythm and rhyme, aided and abetted by his star pupil. A playful, poetic, and joyfully strange Fringe experience.

Miners' Hall: 31st July, 7.10 p.m (60 min) & 1st Aug, 3.25 p.m. (45 min)



It's Not Cluedo! *Chris Neville-Smith in association with the Rotunda Theatre*

There's been a murder! And we have one hour to solve it! Choose your own six suspects, six weapons and nine locations. The comedy game show with a panel of Fringe performers comes to Durham. Comedy nominee, 2024 Scarborough Fringe.

Market Tavern: 29th July, 6.45 p.m. (60 min)



Jimmy and John's Sharing Platter

Johnson and Pease Productions

Working on the sound principle that two is almost always better than one, Jimmy and John, aka Johnson and Pease, bring you half an hour each of their choicest cuts. Darlings of York's burgeoning comedy scene, these two erudite manchildren will delight and amuse with a combination of: words, facial expressions, judicious silences, 3D effects, circus animals, lies. Their only guarantee – you won't leave the same as you came in ...

Market Tavern: 29th & 30th July, 8.00 p.m. (60 min)



John Hobson: Funny Onion *John Hobson*

A standup comedy performance poetry show featuring poems about vegetables as well as Rebecker the double decker, a useless football referee and a stovepipe hat. Funny Onion made its debut earlier this year in Sheffield to a sell-out audience and has played at multiple venues at the Buxton Festival Fringe during July.

Miners' Hall: 1st Aug 4.15 p.m. (60 mins)



Tom Priestley performance poet *Tom Priestley*

Comedic poetry aimed at celebrating and criticising the poetry scene. Filled with observations of mundane every day life whilst satirising social habits. Think John Cooper Clarke meets George Carlin.

Miners' Hall: 31st July, 8.15 p.m. (60 mins)

Events



Durham Free Fringe launch

Join us for the start of a bumper programme of free fringe events. Featuring an introduction from the organisers and snippets from upcoming shows, come to see what's on offer, find out what the Free Fringe means, or just mingle.

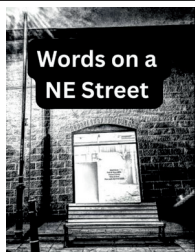
Market Tavern: 29th July, 5.00 p.m. (90 mins)



The I'm OK project *Richard Eysers*

Mental health has never been more important. I'm OK is a series of photographs and words from North East photographer and storyteller, Richard Eysers and the people that he meets. The words are their own; what they have chosen to share. They are unedited. Each portrait is inspired by conversation and the words that have been shared. Exhibition in the Miners' Hall cinema room, with talks at points through the day.

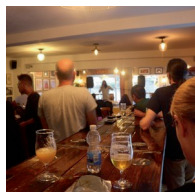
Miners' Hall: 1st Aug, from 3.00 p.m.



Words on a North East Street *presented by Dan Husband*

Andrew Mears has led a call for 100 poets from the NE to produce a book of 100 poems about homelessness. This has helped support homelessness charities all over the North East and is growing into community led talks, fundraisers and awareness meetings.

Miners' Hall: 2nd Aug, from 3.00 p.m.



Durham Free Fringe closing party

Congratulations, punters and performers, you made it. Whether you've been here this week for the free fringe, the other fringe, or you don't care which is which, come and celebrate the end of an extraordinary week until the bars close.

Holy GrAle: 2nd Aug, 9.30 p.m. (90 mins)

Magic



LEDGE: Principles of the Mind *LEDGE*

What if the impossible was just a matter of belief? Join psychological entertainer Ledge as he demonstrates the hidden powers of YOUR mind through stunning mentalism. In this 45-minute journey, discover how belief, visualization, silence, and change shape reality itself. You'll witness thoughts read, predictions revealed, and the boundaries between possible and impossible blur. This isn't just a show—it's proof of what becomes possible when you truly believe. Prepare to question everything you think you know.

Miners' Hall: 1st Aug, 5.30 p.m. (45 mins)

Music



Adam Kelly *Adam Kelly*

Adam Kelly and Chris Little, hosts of the Holy GrAle popular Open Mic night, will be debuting an unreleased album for their performance with live music. Three tracks will be pre-released, and rest will be debuted live.

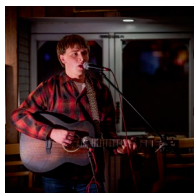
Holy GrAle: 2nd Aug, 8.15 p.m. (60 mins)



Annis Rallis *Annis Rallis*

Annis Rallis is a local singer-songwriter with Greek roots, with cinematic sound, theatrical emotion, and powerful storytelling. Her debut singles were featured on BBC Introducing and Amazing Radio UK & US, and she's continued to build a reputation for music that feels both intimate and true to herself. She has toured Europe in major stage productions including Dirty Dancing, Berlin-Berlin, West Side Story, Rock of Ages, and Tanz der Vampire. Performing a mixture of originals and covers in her own style, her music always stays rooted in raw emotion and truth.

Market Tavern: 30th July, 5.45 p.m. (45 mins)



Dan Lyons: Old Time Country Music *Dan Lyons*

An event of traditional-style Country music. He'll be performing a mixture of original songs and Country classics by artists such as Johnny Cash and Hank Williams. His style is primarily Folk Country and Country Blues.

Holy GrAle: 30th July 7.00 p.m. & 2nd Aug, 6.20 p.m. (40 mins)



Helen Cooper's Lost Numbers *Helen Cooper Trio*

Helen Cooper runs the Elm Tree Acoustic Sessions – and that's great, except she always needs to play up-beat numbers as she's usually beginning each performance section. Hence her appearance at the free-fringe in her one-woman-plus-band showcase of familiar and forgotten light and comedy jazz numbers. She's hoping to take you on a sentimental journey which will make you sing and smile – with maybe just one or two little tears...

Holy GrAle: 30th July, 8.00 p.m. (60 mins) + 30 min solo 29th July 8.45 p.m



John Brindle: Songs and Stories *John Brindle*

John is a Durham based acoustic singer songwriter. Inspired by classic artists, he performs songs that entertain and inspire.....with a dash of humour.

John teaches guitar and organises the talent at Music In The Gardens (Old Durham Gardens) in July. He also has several CDs of original material.

Holy GrAle: 30th July, 5.45 p.m. (60 mins)



Lef' Debris *Lef' Debris*

Lef Debris is a dynamic and powerful punk band that combines the elements of spoken word, electronic beats, and raw energy to deliver thought-provoking social commentary with a splash of dark humour. With both male and female members, the band's diverse voices and perspectives add depth and complexity to their performances.

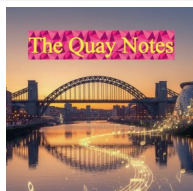
Holy GrAle: 2nd Aug, 7.20 p.m. (40 mins)



Orla Weinkove *Orla Weinkove*

Sixteen year old guitarist and singer-songwriter Orla Weinkove performs a set of equally energetic and intricate originals. Inspired by alternative rock legends such as Radiohead, Orla's songwriting provides an unfiltered look into the teenage experience. Former lead guitarist of a rock cover band, Orla has experience gigging in a group, but now moves towards refining her sound as a solo musician.

Holy GrAle: 29th July, 6.30 p.m. (45 mins)



The Quay Notes *The Quay Notes*

The Quay Notes – a local trio – female singer, keyboard player and guitarist, playing popular cover songs, both old and new.

Holy GrAle: 2nd Aug, 5.00 p.m. (60 min)

Spoken Word

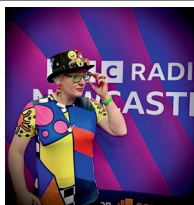


Anne-Marie Draycott: The Good Girl is Revolting

Anne-Marie Draycott

She was taught to stay quiet & small. Not anymore. A sharp, funny spoken word show about women taking up space and reclaiming their voice. Raised to keep the peace, Anne-Marie learned early that staying small meant staying safe – but at what cost? Through honest and at times light-hearted spoken word, she draws on her experience of growing up around domestic violence and unpicks the invisible rules that teach girls and women to be polite, quiet and accommodating. But no more. The “good girl” is revolting.

Miners' Hall: 2nd Aug, 6.00 p.m. (45 min)

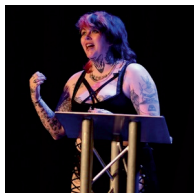


Domesticon. An Antifragile Poetry Play

Pip McDonald / The Notorious PIP

An experimental solo spoken word & comedy performance unpacking lived (and dead) experience of domesticity, consumerism, grief, mothers (mams), relationships, supermarkets, education, and health through performative poetic outputs. Trigger warnings: grief, death and Tesco.

Miners' Hall: 1st Aug, 7.15 p.m. & 2nd Aug, 3.30 p.m. (60 min)



Georgia Goodson: Terrible Beautiful Things

Georgia Goodson

Georgia builds a set around her latest publication, with bits and pieces thrown in from the previous, as well as some unpublished work that is building for a potential future release. Big themes of grief, nature, loss, love.

Miners' Hall: 1st Aug, 6.30 (30 min) & 2nd Aug, 6.50 p.m (20 min)



Keith Ford *Keith Ford*

Keith Ford is responsible for: 6% of the musical talent in Mr Ford and Mr Gibbs; 11% of the beauty and brains in Mr Ford and Mrs Ford; 3% of the inherent hiphoprisy in Georgie Genes; 49% of the cheerfulness in DJ Cheap and Cheerful; 17.3% of Speech Therapy's hosting history; 0.2% of his own browsing history. However, he is entirely 100% responsible for any of the nonsense in his poetry. You do the math....

Miners' Hall: 2nd Aug, 8.35 p.m (60 min)

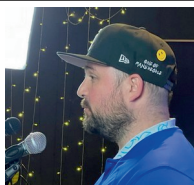


Liam Overend: Do Poets get Encores?

Liam Overend: @JustLiamPoetry

If you haven't done so already, forget the poems they taught you at school; you'll find none of that here. Instead, let Liam share with you his heart-warming anecdotes and poetry inspired by real life events (mainly his), from changing nappies, fighting with a cactus, being terrorised by peacocks and a brief bout of Bell's Palsy.

Miners' Hall: 31st July: 3.15 p.m. (40 min)



Luke Caley: Spiritual Traveller in the ghetto

Another Perspective

A performance about educating people on the importance of helping the elderly and the most vulnerable in the ghetto while creating a peace movement worldview and creating a humanistic mind heart and soul to create alignment and safety in the ghetto through self awareness self knowledge and helping charities.

Miners' Hall: 31st July: 4.00 p.m. (30 min)



Mwelwa Chilekwa: ReSistance *Mwelwa Chilekwa*

Women are the villains and society is the judge, jury and executioner. Our heads lay bare on the guillotine and with one false move... But this show changes our story and empowers others. A passionate and emotive one-woman show featuring poetry to SMASH the patriarchy. From light-hearted topics like school life and dating to the more darker aspects: abuse and sexual assault. Trigger warning for those topics, this is how the world is. Experiences far too many women and girls, myself included, face. Why? Together, no matter your gender, we are going to put the sis in resistance!

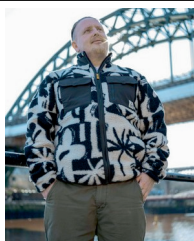
Miners' Hall: 1st Aug 8.20 p.m. & 2nd August, 4.35 p.m. (60 min)



Stories from the Streets: Brogan Brannan

Born in Somerset, raised in Scotland, sullying the north east for the past 6 years, Brogan is a spoken word poet and performer with salty rants, structured rhymes and no reservations. Her work often illuminates how deeply personal experiences are often universally felt and she doesn't shy away from the grisly details. Grab her anytime she's not on stage to buy a QR code to download her audio album and take some pieces of her home!

Miners' Hall: 31st July, 5.20 p.m & 2nd Aug, 8.00 p.m. (30 mins)



Stories from the Streets: Dan Husband

'Stories from the Streets' strays away from the one hour show to be broken down across a weekend, whilst allowing other spoken word talent and opportunity to showcase their style alongside me! Think less all my ramblings, think more 'Husband Material presents:'

D.L. 'Dan' Husband is a North East England born & bred writer, poet and performer. With two collections (HMY & HMY II) published alongside a score of individual pieces in various publications, he pens poetry and prose with acid in the inkwell & compassion in the heart. Unflinching writing and performances at various venues and Fringe festivals discussing addiction, homelessness, life, love, growth and all that lies in between. He has also featured on BBC upload 'best of 2025' show and the Northern Voices podcast. "He's absolutely FAB" (Emma Millen, BBC UPLOAD)

Get after his work @husbandmaterialpoetryandprose

Guests: Gary the Hat, Gaeran Southern, Kev Robson, Adam Berkeley

Miners' Hall: 31st July, 6.00 p.m (50 min); 1st Aug, 6.15 p.m. (10 min); 2nd Aug, 7.15 p.m. (30 mins)

Theatre



This Is Your Life *Chris Neville-Smith*

Durham Free Fringe is proud to present comedy legend Jimmy Conway. Hear of his journey – from humble beginnings on the stand-up circuit, to his unforgettable London Palladium appearance. There is just one problem: Jimmy has never performed stand-up in his life. Based on the book by John O'Farrell.

Market Tavern: 30th July, 3.00 p.m. (90 min)

Wednesday 29th July

- 5.00** Durham Free Fringe Launch (90m, events, MT)
6.30 Orla Weinkove (45m, music, HG)
6.45 It's Not Cluedo! (60m, comedy, MT)
8.00 Jimmy and John's Sharing Platter (60m, comedy, MT)
8.45 Helen Cooper (30m, music, HG)

Thursday 30th July

- 3.00** This Is Your Life (90m, theatre, MT)
5.30 Annis Rallis (45m, music, MT)
5.45 John Brindle: songs and stories (60m, music, HG)
6.45 The Durham Improv Jam (60m, comedy, MT)
7.00 Dan Lyons: old time country music (40m, music, HG)
8.00 Jimmy and John's Sharing Platter (60m, comedy, MT)
8.00 Helen Cooper's Lost Numbers (60m, music, HG)

Friday 31st July

- 3.15** Liam Overend (40m, sp word, MH)
4.00 Luke Caley: Spiritual Traveller in the Ghetto (30m, sp word, MH)
5.20 Brogan Brannan (30m, sp word, MH)
6.00 Dan Husband (50m, sp word, MH)
7.10 Erasmus Croc's and Aaron Wright's Guide To Life (60m, comedy, MH)
8.15 Tom Priestley Performance Poet (60m, comedy, MH)

Late changes?

For any additions or alterations to the programme after publication of this paper programme, see durhamfreefringe.co.uk for the most up to date information.

Saturday 1st August

- From 3.00:** The I'm OK Project (events, MH)
3.25 Erasmus Croc's and Aaron Wright's Guide To Life (45m, comedy, MH)
4.15 John Hobson: Funny Onion (60m, comedy, MH)
5.30 LEDGE: Principles of the Mind (45m, magic, MH)
6.15 Dan Husband (10m, sp word, MH)
6.30 Georgia Goodson: Terrible Beautiful Things (30m, sp word, MH)
7.15 The Notorious PIP: Domesticcon (60m, sp word, MH)
8.20 Mwelwa Chilekwa: ReSiStance (60m, sp word, MH)

Sunday 2nd August

- From 3.00:** Word on a north-east street (events, MH)
3.30 The Notorious PIP: Domesticcon (60m, sp word, MH)
4.35 Mwelwa Chilekwa: ReSiStance (60m, sp word, MH)
5.00 The Quay Notes (60m, music, MT)
6.00 Anne-Marie Draycott: This Good Girl is Revolting (45m, sp Word, MH)
6.20 Dan Lyons: old time country music (40m, music, HG)
6.50 Georgia Goodson: Terrible Beautiful Things (20m, sp word, MH)
7.15 Dan Husband (30m, sp word, MH)
7.20 Lef Debris (40m, music, HG)
8.00 Brogan Brannan (30m, sp word, MH)
8.15 Adam Kelly (60m, music, HG)
8.35 Keith Ford (60m, sp word, MH)
9.30 The Durham Free Fringe Closing Party (90m, events, HG)

MT = Market Tavern, HG = Holy GrAle,
MH = Miners' Hall