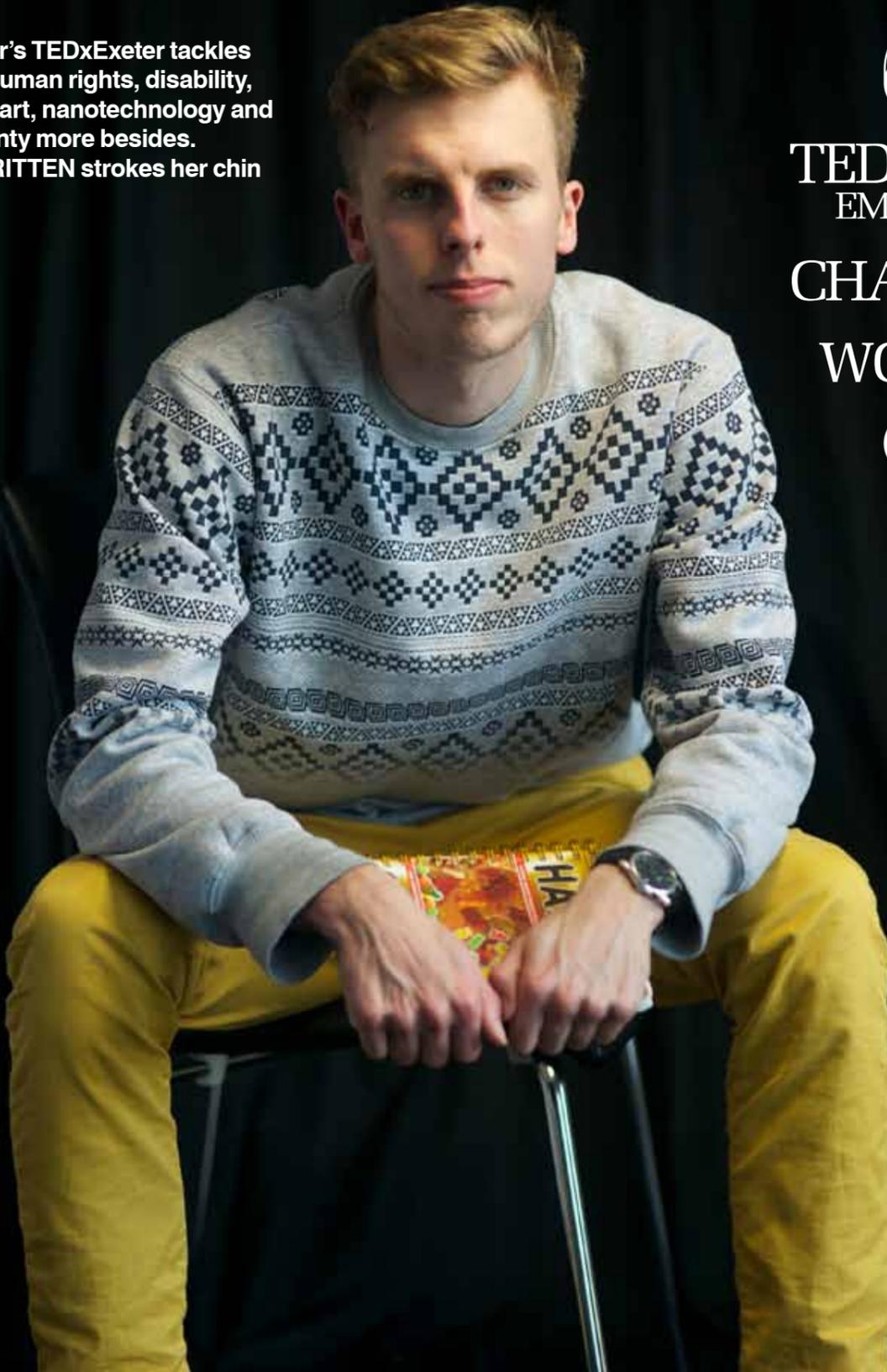


IT'S ALL TALK

This year's TEDxExeter tackles peace, human rights, disability, feminism, art, nanotechnology and plenty more besides. ANNA BRITTEN strokes her chin



“
TEDX CAN
EMPOWER
US TO
CHANGE
THE
WORLD
”



Left: champion slam poet Harry Baker. Above: Artist Peter Randall-Page. Below right: Michelle Ryan

ALSO ON THE BILL

Clive Stafford Smith (pictured below), a lawyer specialising in representing prisoners facing the death penalty... **Carmel McConnell**, founder of Magic Breakfast, which provides hungry children with a good breakfast as fuel for learning... **Celia McKeon**, a peace-builder who has worked in post-Yugoslav states, Colombia and Northern Ireland... **Chetan Bhatt**, professor and director of the Centre for the Study of Human Rights at LSE, and writer on wars, human rights, and extreme religious violence... **Dan Jones**, historian, author and award-winning journalist... **Dick Moore**, campaigner on adolescent emotional well-being... **Kieron Kirkland**, magician, technologist, and social innovation geek... **Matthew Owen**, who works with indigenous communities to keep their rainforest standing... **Rachel McKendry**, professor at the London Centre of Nanotechnology, integrating nanotechnology, telecomms and big data to track and treat infectious diseases... and **Sara Hyde**, leading thinker on women and criminal justice, and theatre writer and performer.



Whether it's a festival, a gadget or a dress worn by Kate Middleton, the speed at which something sells out has become, increasingly, something for its creators to shout about. Back on 1 December, it was the turn of the TEDxExeter team to do the shouting. Tickets for their fourth event sold out in only two hours. The waiting list filled up immediately afterwards. Then, tickets were released for the concurrent livestream and they were snapped up in record time, too.

Pretty incredible when you consider TEDxExeter isn't Glastonbury, an iPhone or an ASOS maternity frock but a day of, well, people talking. Sure, very clever and inspiring people talking about very clever and inspiring matters, but it's about as far from a typical hysteria-inducing phenomenon as you can get.

TEDxExeter is an authorised spin-off from international, not-for-profit 'ideas forum' TED – and is one of several such local, self-organised events (the x denotes an independently organised TED event) in the UK. Organised by former refugee lawyer Claire Kennedy, with the help of a huge and dedicated team of volunteers, this year's event takes place on 24 April at the Northcott Theatre, with live streaming at Exeter Library (and, of course, to your own gadget of choice).

'Taking The Long View' is the theme this time around – "both the long view back into the past and the long view ahead into the future".

We asked some key speakers what to expect...

MICHELLE RYAN

Professor at Exeter University and researcher into the phenomenon of the 'glass cliff', in which women and minorities are likelier than men to be put in leadership roles during periods of crisis or downturn, when the chance of failure is highest.

What will your talk be about?

I'll be talking about work-life balance and questioning whether it really is all about balancing time at work and time at home. My research suggests that while time conflict plays a small role in perceptions of work-life balance, feeling a fit between yourself and leaders within your organisation or profession is also an important antecedent.

Those who feel they don't fit in tend to experience poorer work-life balance, because of reduced compatibility between who they are at home and who they are at work and because of lower expectations of success and willingness to make sacrifices. Further research suggests that the most significant differences between male and female middle managers is that women are less willing to take risks or make sacrifices.

Importantly, this can be explained by the fact that women are less likely than men to feel that their risks and sacrifices would be rewarded. Who feels like sacrifice and risk will be rewarded? Those expecting to succeed in the future, those who have role models and support at work, those who perceive that organisational success is meritocratic. This all has implications.

What do you think is the single biggest issue currently facing women/feminism?

I think one of the biggest remaining barriers are the subtle and often implicit stereotypes we have about men and women – and how these fit with what we like, value and reward in our society. We like women, but we still don't value and reward them.

Can TEDx change the world?

Anything that can open up people's minds to new ideas can surely make a difference. ▶



HARRY BAKER

UK, European and world champion slam poet

What can we expect from your 10-minute slot?

Poems and adventures, as always! With the theme of 'Taking the Long View', I'll be talking specifically about my experiences when first arriving at university, and how that has shaped me now and in the future.

Can TEDx change the world?

It already is. The fact that people can be inspired in their own homes by something somebody they have never met before has thought of. It's a fantastic platform for spreading ideas, and the nature of people being inspired to then, in turn, share these talks means the web continues to weave its way through the world.

Can poetry?

Poetry has been changing the world ever since the ancient prophets. It's definitely changed my world. I think it's exciting to see now the effect that spoken word and performance can have, and the immediate impact of that, whether it's bringing someone to laughter or tears, or just getting a message later that night letting you know you made them feel something.

PETER RANDALL-PAGE

Artist and sculptor

What will your talk be about?

The title of my talk is 'Theme and Variation in Nature and Culture'. All my work is informed and inspired by a study of natural phenomena, and what I hope to draw out in the talk is something that is so pervasive and ubiquitous that we hardly notice it. The seemingly infinite variety of forms in organic and inorganic phenomena are rooted in the laws of physics that determine how things fit together in our universe.

The hexagonal columns of basalt in the Giant's Causeway, for example, were caused by the rapid cooling of molten magma, shrinking and causing a regular cracking pattern. Exactly the same hexagonal packing is also found in honeycombs, created by the instinctive behaviour of highly social insects. However, neither the hexagonal patterns in the Giant's Causeway or the honeycomb are geometrically perfect. They are approximations of, or variations on, the general theme of hexagonal packing.

This tension between a tendency for spontaneous pattern formation and an equally strong tendency for random variation is what drives the evolutionary process itself. The talk is also about how these ideas relate to my practice as an artist.

You don't often find artists speaking publicly to large audiences. Should they?

I feel it's important because art is such a broad church that people can find it difficult to know



Above: Some of Peter Randall-Page's nature-inspired work

how to find their way into art. I think it's good when artists can help to draw people into art.

JENNY SEALEY

Artistic director of inclusive theatre company Graeae and co-director of the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games

What will your talk be about?

My talk is a verbatim piece looking at deaf and disabled people's place in the working world, with particular reference to the arts. It also outlines the barriers we are facing in light of the cuts to the Access to Work and Independent Living Fund.

Tell us more about Graeae, and how you're making access artistic?

Graeae Theatre is the most extraordinary theatre company to work for. It is founded on social injustice and a fuelled passion to claim the rights for deaf and disabled people to take centre stage as actors, writers, directors etc. Our current co-production with Dundee and Derby Theatre is *Blood Wedding* which has a deaf mother, a bride who is a wheelchair user, whose father is visually impaired. The cast never leaves the stage and takes turns to audio describe scenes they are not in or operate the captions, which are projected onto the set. This all adds to the pressure cooker effect in that everyone is watching, and everyone is implicit in the terrible tragedy at the end.

Can TEDx change the world?

I think TEDx informs the world of what it does not know – and as we share thoughts, exchange ideas and alert people to what is happening, it can empower us to join forces to work together to change the world. **EL**



FIRST EXETER. THEN THE WORLD

Two talks at last year's TEDx Exeter have reached global audiences after TED editors decided to host them on the main TED website

KARIMA BENNOUNE (pictured) 'When People of Muslim Heritage Challenge Fundamentalism' Link: ow.ly/L7dvJ Total views: **1,264,429**

HARRY BAKER 'A Love Poem for Lonely Prime Numbers' Link: ow.ly/L7dzQ Total views: **540,532**

TEDxExeter takes place on 24 April at the Northcott Theatre; www.tedxexeter.com