



I FOUGHT THE LAW

itv stv *Hera*[★]

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I FOUGHT THE LAW

Press Pack

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**We also ask that the interviews in this press pack are used within ensemble pieces only.
Permission isn't granted to use any of the quotes for solo features.**

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I FOUGHT THE LAW

I Fought The Law is a brand new four part drama series from ITV and Hera Pictures starring BAFTA winning actor Sheridan Smith.

Sheridan portrays Ann Ming in the heartbreaking and inspiring real-life story of a mother who, driven by unimaginable grief, finds strength to challenge the centuries-old Double Jeopardy Law to see her daughter's murderer finally brought to justice after a 15 year battle.

Produced by Hera Pictures (*What It Feels Like For A Girl, Mary & George, Hamnet, Temple, Honour*) the four-part series is written by Jamie Crichton (*All Creatures Great and Small, The Last Kingdom, Grantchester*) and is based on Ann Ming's book 'For The Love of Julie'.

The drama follows the tragic, moving, and deeply inspiring journey of the Ming family after the murder of their beloved 22-year-old daughter, Julie. In the wake of multiple police failings, Ann relentlessly pressures the authorities to uncover the truth and ensure the man responsible is brought to justice - despite initially seeming he will get away with murder.

I FOUGHT THE LAW

Driven by love, grief, and extraordinary determination, Ann and her family campaign tirelessly in Julie's name. In her steadfast and indomitable style, Ann takes on the entire justice system - challenging the Crown Prosecution Service, the Law Commission, prominent defence barristers in television debates, the Government, the Lord Chancellor, the Attorney General, and two Home Secretaries - as she bravely 'fought the law.'

Commissioned by ITV's Director of Drama Polly Hill, *I Fought The Law* also features Daniel York Loh (*Scarborough*) as Ann's husband, Charlie Ming, and Enzo Cilenti (*The Crown*) as DS Mark Braithwaite.

The series also features Marlowe Chan-Reeves (*Doctor Who*), Olivia Ng (*Phoenix Rise*), Jake Davies (*Grace*), Victoria Wyant, Kent Riley (*Mr Bates vs. The Post Office*), Jack James Ryan (*Passenger, Vera*), Andrew Lancel (*Unforgotten*) and Rufus Jones (*Hijack*).

Hera Pictures produced the series in association with All3Media International. The Executive Producers for Hera Pictures are Liza Marshall and Charlotte Webber. The series is directed by Erik Richter Strand (*The Crown*) and produced by Mark Hedges (*Time*).

I Fought The Law will air on ITV and STV and be available to stream on ITVX and STV Player this autumn, followed by *I Fought The Law: The Ann Ming Story* documentary, produced by MultiStory Media.

INTERVIEW WITH ANN MING



INTERVIEW WITH ANN MING

How did you feel when it was suggested your story could be made into a TV drama?

I was quite surprised, I wondered if people would be interested in the story. I wrote a book, *For the Love of Julie*, which was really cathartic for me, and I got down what I wanted to say. Hera Pictures got in touch and said they were interested in doing a drama, but I just didn't know if anyone would watch it. But it has already been mentioned on TV, and lots of people have asked me when it's coming out, so I know for a fact that people in Teesside will watch it, at least!

It was a bit strange reading the scripts for the first time. I said to the writer, Jamie [Crichton], that he could come to me with any queries, even if he called me every single day, because I wanted it to be right and as close to the truth as it could possibly be. I'm really pleased with the scripts.

How did you react when you heard Sheridan Smith would be playing you?

I was really pleased. I've watched everything Sheridan has been in and she's got an amazing ability as an actress to take on a role and just become the person. When I met her she was just so down to earth and ordinary. I felt really comfortable with her, there was no pretence, she was just an ordinary person with such an amazing ability to act. I felt so confident she would do her best with our story, and when I watched the drama it was like she'd just got inside of me. It was so strange and hard to explain. She sent me a lovely message at Christmas saying it had been a privilege to play me, and I said it had been the highlight of my year watching her becoming me. It must have been strange for her thinking that I'd be watching, so she had to get it right.

Sheridan was also in a drama called *Care* with Alison Steadman a few years ago, she was playing a character fighting for her mum's place in a nursing home. I had to do the same thing for my husband when he got Parkinsons and dementia and even then it was like watching her play me in another role!

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You have already seen the series – what was it like for you to watch?

I watched the episodes and cried all the way through them. I didn't think I'd be as emotional as I was, but as I was watching I was going through every emotion I was feeling at the time. I'd love to sit and watch it again with Sheridan, just so she knows how much she has affected me with her performance. It was a different feeling to doing the book, it was more emotional somehow. The drama portrays my journey and what it's like behind the scenes when you're fighting a law. People might think it was easy, but it wasn't. If I saw any politician opposing the change, I'd write to them, and they were hand-written letters. When David Blunkett took over from Jack Straw as Home Secretary I even got my letter translated into Braille. I wasn't easy to live with – I'd be up in the middle of the night and my husband would ask what would happen if we didn't succeed, but I didn't want to hear any negativity. I had post-traumatic stress from finding Julie, so it wasn't easy, and I was mentally and physically drained. There was a lot of waiting between meetings and various stages to get through – I didn't know anything about politics before I did this, or how to get a law change through Parliament.

What inspired you to take on such a huge fight to overturn the double jeopardy law?

It was when the man who killed Julie confessed to her murder, but he could only be sentenced to perjury because of an 800-year old law – that just did not seem right. If there's a proven wrongful conviction, I'd be the first to say that person should be freed, but when there has been a proven wrongful acquittal such as ours, surely the same principles should apply. If you think about it logically, it's just common sense. The second thing that inspired me was when he was sentenced to two counts of perjury because he'd lied at two trials, and he was only given a six-year sentence, that was terrible. At the time I'd looked into the maximum sentence for perjury and it was seven years, so in our ignorance we thought that would be 14 years total sentence. It was horrible – he was bragging in pubs about committing the perfect murder, but he only got six years in prison, I was absolutely incensed.

INTERVIEW WITH ANN MING

We went straight to our MP and I said I was going to look into this law change. My solicitor said I was wasting my time and that no matter what the government told me, they would never, ever change this law retrospectively. My husband told me to listen to the solicitor, but I didn't care what anyone said. I said, "I can't rest until I get justice for Julie and if there's an 800-year old law standing in my way then so be it". That's what I said out loud, but inside I was thinking I couldn't carry on, especially when people in government were opposing the change – these were official people and lawyers, and I was just a retired nurse. A lot of people think there was a team of lawyers behind me and that wasn't the case, I was a one-man band, it was just me. But I'm glad I carried on and stuck it out.

A big moment in your campaign was meeting Home Secretary Jack Straw, was that an intimidating encounter?

Honestly it wasn't. I had gathered my strength and momentum as we were walking there and I was thinking that he's not just the Home Secretary, he's a man with a family, so how would he feel if it was his son or daughter? Our MP said to us just before we went in that he would do all the talking, and I said to my husband, "No he won't". I walked into the office and I had a picture of Julie and a picture of her killer from one of the papers, and I said "That's our daughter, that's the man who has killed her. I'm not happy with the perjury sentence, what are you going to do about it?". I don't think Jack Straw knew what to say. He said that retrospective law is a very grey area and I said I didn't care what colour it was, it needed to be changed.

I said, "Why don't you set a precedent with our case and get this law change applied retrospectively, and let us and other families get justice. This murderer is making a mockery of the British justice system – how can you stand up in court and confess to murder but because of an 800 year old law you can only be sentenced to perjury, does that sound right to you?" Jack Straw was a bit gobsmacked. Years later, he was on a documentary and I think it turns out he was quite intimidated by me – I didn't give him chance to get a word in, so that was that!

INTERVIEW WITH ANN MING

Do you ever have a moment to reflect on what you've achieved?

I think about it when I see another case – there have been 15 cases after ours in this country that have been affected by the same law, and I think “Thank God I carried on”. I don't have any airs and graces, I'm a normal working-class person, but I just said it how it was. It was so strange to see my name in official paperwork. When it all went through and we succeeded I honestly just couldn't believe it. Obviously my daughter wasn't coming back, but it could make a difference to other families. I got an MBE and I went to the Palace to receive it from Prince Charles, as he was then. I'd have given anything to have my daughter instead of getting a badge. After the drama is out I'd love ITV to send Trump a copy of the DVD and a letter, and ask him to change the law in America, because double jeopardy still stands there.

Did the fight for justice change you as a person?

I became very obsessed with it, I must have driven my family mad. My husband worried I would crack up if we didn't succeed, but I had to think positively. I suppose it was only other people who realised what a massive thing I was doing, but for me, I just needed justice. We've lived with this every day since our daughter went missing, from those frustrations in the very beginning when the police seemed to think she could have just taken off to London to start a new life, it felt like people weren't listening to me. And then without justice you're just left in a state of limbo.

What does your life look like now?

I'm living a full life sentence, it's the same for anyone whose loved one has been murdered, you're forever haunted by what happened. I'll be 80 this year, so I'm not campaigning anymore. The one thing I love is doing my line dancing, and I still go. If I was younger I'd be looking at the parole system because I've had to fight so that her killer doesn't go to an open prison.

Julie's son, Kevin is 39 now, he has a son of his own and he works helping other victims' families. Julie was a quiet child and when she had Kevin she came out of her shell. The thing that has changed for me is that I'm not frightened to die now, because I know Julie will be there waiting for me.



INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN SMITH

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How did you first hear about Ann Ming's story?

I was performing Shirley Valentine in the West End, and Liza at Hera Pictures came to me with the script for episode one of I Fought the Law. I read it, and it was a wow moment, learning about this amazing lady. I instantly knew that I had to play Ann – because of her story, her resilience, her strength and everything she went through to fight an 800-year old law, she just wouldn't give up. After reading the script, I started researching Ann online and reading interviews with her, and I just became so excited that they would want me for this role, and that Ann would approve of me playing her. I was on board straight away and I'm so pleased that it all came together, I'm very honoured and privileged that we get to tell her story.

Were you shocked when you learned the extent of Ann's long fight for justice?

Yes, I read her book, 'For The Love of Julie', which is all in Ann's words. I took it away on holiday with me to read, and I just couldn't believe what she'd been through, and how everyone around her had got it so wrong. It wasn't just losing her child – which now as a mum I can't even imagine how you cope with that – but also the fact that she came up against so many different people and was just was ignored. But Ann was like a lioness and she would not take no for an answer. She kept fighting and fighting for years and they all underestimated her. She was this little lady from Middlesbrough, but there she was in the Houses of Parliament fighting to change the law for Julie and to right the wrongs that had been done. She paved the way for so many other people too, and we all owe her a great deal of respect. It's brilliant that we are able to get her story out there.

How did you feel when you met Ann for the first time?

I had read so much about Ann, so I was in awe of her already, which meant I was really nervous when I met her. I just wanted to give her a hug! We met in London and she was there with her grandson, Julie's son Kevin. She was just amazing and I loved her straight away. She was probably looking at me with my tattoos thinking, "How are you going to play me?!" but she couldn't have been kinder. You see her strength straight away, but she's also so warm.

INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN SMITH

Ann is so unassuming, and she doesn't see herself the way that I see her. She knows I love her, we've stayed in touch, and we're still good friends. I get nervous around her still, I'm starstruck in a way, because I've got such empathy for her. It's the result of playing these scenes and feeling all those feelings, knowing it's just the tiniest bit of what she went through. Every time I see Ann I keep hugging her and she must think I'm mad, but I just can't believe all that she's done, she's such an inspiration.

How did you approach playing Ann?

When I'm working on someone's true story it's both a massive honour and a big responsibility. I really just wanted Ann to be pleased with the series and to feel we had done her story justice. So firstly I read the book to get her words in my head. I knew that Ann was very involved with the scripts on I Fought The Law, so I was happy that the truth and the facts were in there, and then I did a lot of research, watching her online in documentaries she has been part of. We filmed one scene that there is real footage of online, and it was really important to me that I played that exactly right – I even moved my handbag from one shoulder to the other, like she does in the clip. It's little things like that, which nobody else will notice, but I just really wanted to embody her as much as I could. Whenever I play a real person, I really want to feel how they felt. I didn't go to drama school and I haven't been trained as an actor, so I don't really know how to turn those feelings on and off, I just really try to go there emotionally. Ann was obviously was in a state of angst from the minute Julie went missing, because she had that mother's instinct, she just knew. And she fought and fought for justice. So she was in a state of anxiety for years, and I really tried to go there.

Did you consult Ann about any scenes during filming?

No, once we started I didn't want to ask her too many traumatic questions. I got a lot from the book and from meeting her. It was all there in the way she talks and her passion, she's an amazing woman.

INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN SMITH

She told me I could ask her anything, but I didn't want to bother her too much, and it's more about embodying the essence of her and that resilience, strength and determination. She lost her little girl and was let down by the system, so she fought it, she won, and she paved the way for so many people.

How did you tackle the more harrowing scenes in this drama?

This is the first real life story I've taken on since becoming a mum, and there are different things I tap into now being a mother myself, especially with what Ann went through. I've played parents that lose their kids before, and having lost my older brother, I would always think about what my mum must have gone through. Playing Ann, those feelings were much more raw to tap into, but at the same time I'm able to come home to my child and realise how lucky I am – all I'm giving is a performance, but Ann went through that pain for real. I love playing real people because this job is all about people's hearts and getting their stories out there, so if it causes me a few months of distress, that's nothing. It's just important for me to do Ann justice. There were some really intense days on this job, but the emotion was a fraction of what it must have felt like for Ann, so you just get on with it. I do find it hard to turn those feelings off, but when I get home at night I've got my son and I become mum again, it's a good reality check. I've also got into yoga and meditation lately. That helps to switch your brain off, because your body doesn't know you're pretending to go through trauma. Playing real people is a privilege and it's why I do what I do. Difficult emotions just help me to connect with the person I'm playing even more, because I'm just acting, but how are they still standing after going through that in their real life?

You undergo quite the physical transformation for this role, did that help you find Ann?

Hair and costume did a great job to help me embody Ann, and when you play these roles it does really help to look different. When I played my lovely friend, Lisa Lynch in *The C Word* I wet shaved my head, and it was really hard to switch off from that when I got home, because I still looked the same. For Ann it was easier that I could take the wig off, but I did

INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN SMITH

wear it on set all day, and even people I worked with forgot it was me in there. I was walking differently, because I'm playing someone a lot older, so they would ask me if I needed a chair. I was only 43! It's incredible what they can do with costume, and the longer the shoot goes on, you start looking in the mirror and you can't really see yourself anymore, it's so surreal.

How did you find the challenge of picking up Ann's accent?

I love doing accents and it helps you get into character, but this one was harder than most. Ann has such a specific accent. She's from Middlesbrough, so it's not Newcastle or Yorkshire, it's very specific and it changes over the years. So I just studied her voice as much as I could. Eventually you have to try not to think about it, and just try to embody her, otherwise it becomes a thing. I had Ann in my ears a lot between scenes – I had clips of her saved to my WhatsApp, so I would play them if I felt I was coming out of the accent. I took on a lot of her mannerisms too, little things that I didn't realise I was doing, people would just tell me.

Alongside some incredibly dark moments, there is an uplifting story in this drama too, isn't there?

Absolutely, there are moments of light and shade, and really uplifting scenes. That's what is so brilliant about Ann, she's actually so funny. She told me off on set when she saw me having a cigarette one day, she said "I wouldn't be smoking, so put that out!". I instantly put it out! Ann has such great humour, and there's a real sassiness about her in the scenes where she's standing up to all these men who tell her she's wrong. Her resilience is unbelievable and she's a character, I love her so much.

You've given such powerful, dramatic performances as real people over the years, were these always the kinds of roles you wanted to play?

It's funny, my little boy has just started at the school that I went to as a child, and they showed me something I'd written

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when I was a kid there, saying how much I loved singing and dancing. I always enjoyed performing, but I didn't ever think I'd be doing roles like this on telly, it wasn't something I ever planned. I never went to drama school, so I'm just so grateful for every job. I loved doing *The Royle Family*, *Two Pints...*, *Benidorm* and *Gavin & Stacey*, I loved them all, but I never thought I would have the opportunity to play women like Ann. I remember when Mrs. Biggs came along, I so wanted to play this woman that goes on such a journey, but I thought there was no way I'd get the role. I was really determined, but lots of actresses went up for it. I couldn't believe it when I got it, but then something just happened where I started to get more real-life stories and I loved it so much. There's such a responsibility that comes with playing a real person, and I connect with that so much, it's an honour to tell these stories. You have to choose them carefully because they stay with you, and there's a part of all those people that I have played with me even now. Playing Ann has hit me more than any other role, but all of them remain a part of me. So I'm very honoured, privileged and grateful to play these kinds of roles, but it wasn't something I ever planned.

How do you feel about the series airing, having worked on it for so long?

I cannot wait for people to see how inspiring Ann is, and to know her story. It's amazing that we don't all know her name already, but I hope that after this drama airs lots of people will be able to see what she's achieved. She took on an 800-year old law and she would not give up for 15 years, even though everyone said it couldn't be changed. But she was determined, and she did it all herself. It's incredible that one woman's strength could do that, and not just in this country. It changed things in the Stephen Lawrence case, and for lots of other people going forward. You wonder how much one lady can take, but being a mum now I see that lioness thing – you would do anything in your power for your children, wouldn't you? I really hope everyone takes a little bit of Ann with them in their lives, she's amazing. Ann is a hero, but she doesn't have a clue how incredible she is. I hope when the series comes out that she's not too overwhelmed by all the love she will receive.

INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN SMITH

If I've done my job right there will be a lot of love. She's so unassuming – she came on set one day and we burst into cheers for her, I was crying and cuddling her, and she didn't understand the reaction, I could get emotional now just thinking about it. These are the stories that need to be told – a lovely, ordinary, working-class lady from up north who achieved so much.

Of course, Ann has seen the drama already and I'm just so grateful that she's so happy with it, that was my biggest fear that she wouldn't be. I'm very grateful to have been part of this show, and intense as it was I did love it. I'm relieved to come out the other side and to see that Ann is happy, all I really wanted was her approval.

What kind of roles are you looking to play next?

Well, there's only one Ann! I don't know really, it's always such an honour to play real life stories, but I'm just grateful to be working. I did have a break after I Fought the Law, I managed to have Christmas with my son, and then I've just finished filming a new Tony Schumacher drama in Liverpool, which was very different to this, but I really enjoyed it. I've got my little boy, I've got my health and I just want to keep working and see what comes next. I should have a plan, but I never have! I'm just grateful to still be acting after all these years and that people still trust me to play roles like Ann Ming, giving me opportunities to tell people's stories and get them out there for their families. I'm thrilled to be a single working mama.



INTERVIEW WITH WRITER JAMIE CRICHTON

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How did you first hear about Ann [Ming]’s story, and why did you want to adapt it for TV?

I first came across Ann’s story via my brother who mentioned her story to me. He had seen a documentary about individuals who had helped change British law, and he thought Ann’s fight for justice was so inspiring. As soon as I watched that documentary, I was completely drawn in, Ann’s determination and courage were immediately evident, and her story, while not widely known, struck me as one that truly deserved to be told. Her triumph over such horrendous adversity was so compelling. Often, this genre can risk becoming voyeuristic, dwelling on the crime in a way that can feel intrusive, and I didn’t want to do that, but I was so moved by Ann’s strength and resilience that even before I discovered that she had written a memoir, I had written a treatment. Liza Marshall from Hera Pictures, who shared my belief that Ann’s story needed to be told, secured the rights, and from there, we took it to ITV.

How did you approach the script, given that you wanted to write a different sort of crime drama?

Three quarters of the series focuses on Ann’s extraordinary journey, her fight for justice and her role in changing the law. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to take a very different approach from traditional crime dramas. Most true crime stories centre on the police investigation or the perpetrator, but this one had to be told from Ann’s perspective. That was the real challenge: finding a way to tell the story without breaking the point of view from the mother. We’re so used to seeing detectives drive the narrative, making discoveries and piecing the case together, that’s often seen as the “hero’s journey.” But with this story, the emotional and dramatic core belongs to Ann. That meant we had to leave out major parts of the investigation, which at first felt counterintuitive. But once I fully committed to that choice, it became clear it was the right way to tell Ann’s story.

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER JAMIE CRICHTON

Once I'd made the decision to stay in Ann's POV I felt the show had found its own unique DNA.

From day one I was also obsessed with the fact we weren't going to name the killer, not even in the credits. Jack James Ryan, who plays the murderer, was incredibly collaborative with us on this point, and we're so grateful that he kindly agreed to keep his name out of the end credits. That was really important because it's Ann's story. Often crime drama sensationalises murder and makes it all about the killer, and I understand that because humans are interested in the dark side of life, there's something macabre in us. But so many of the victims of these horrendous murders are names that the public just doesn't know, and that's not how it should be. Julie Hogg and Ann Ming are the names we should know.

Is it difficult to translate a 17-year legal battle into four hours of drama?

The difficult thing with writing about real people and events is partly the weight of responsibility – you're not just crafting a story, you're honouring lives and you can't play fast and loose with the truth. But, of course, real life has a habit of not organising itself into a perfect narrative structure. We had to streamline some moments, for example there were a lot more court appearances than ended up on the screen. This was a 17-year struggle, it went on for so long, but you have to move the story along for the audience. Changing an 800-year old law is a long and complicated process, it's not a simple thing to do, so we couldn't use every single thing that happened in Ann's real story. My job was to make sure Ann's emotional journey always took priority over the legal intricacies.

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER JAMIE CRICHTON

How would you describe your working relationship with Ann?

Ann's blessing wasn't just important to this project, it was absolutely essential. More than anything, I wanted her to feel that her story had been told with honesty, care, and integrity. From the very beginning, she was incredibly generous and supportive, and I honestly couldn't have asked for a more gracious collaborator. Her book, *For the Love of Julie*, is a powerful and deeply moving piece of writing, and it gave me a wealth of insight to draw from.

We first met over Zoom, then in person over lunch, and had many conversations over the phone. I would use her book as a starting point and ask her to share more about those moments in her own words. Ann is a force of nature, she's incredible – not just in terms of her bravery and tenacity, and the fact she doesn't suffer fools, but she's funny as well. She's always got this wry sense of humour just below the surface, which was one of the things I wanted to get into the script.

Even through those incredibly testing dark times she still had witty quips that she would come up with, she's one in a million. She also has this ability to speak to anyone like they are on the same level as her, be it a waiter or a government minister, it's like she's just talking to a next-door neighbour. That ability is such a gift, and it's echoed in Sheridan [Smith]'s ability to appeal to such a broad demographic.

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER JAMIE CRICHTON

Were you nervous about showing Ann your first draft of the script?

I was incredibly nervous because it would have been awful if she hadn't liked it. I had pre-warned her that we were making a drama not a documentary – she's very used to documentary teams by now, but obviously a drama is different. Before she read the script I just reminded her that we could always have a conversation about anything she didn't feel comfortable with, and there were a few things along the way that we worked through, but she was so supportive. We were depicting such raw emotions – even though these events happened such a long time ago, they are still so close to the surface for Ann and we had to be respectful of that, while also telling the story without flinching.

The drama also beautifully depicts Ann's marriage to her husband Charlie, was it important to get that relationship right?

Yes, as an audience when we start watching this story play out with such a tragic beginning, we think we know how their relationship is going to go.

I think the statistics are that 9 out of 10 marriages fall apart after a massive tragedy like that, so we think we know what's going to happen. But while Ann and Charlie didn't have the perfect marriage 100% of the time – who does? – the amazing thing to me is that they managed to find a way to make it work and to support one another. I felt an enormous responsibility to get that right – to make sure the relationship didn't feel too smoothed over and saccharine, but to acknowledge that they were there for each other. It had to have a little bit of the warts and all feel, some of the grit and emotional truth that it wasn't always easy. I've always found it extraordinary to think how it must be for a partner in this situation. Once Ann decided to go down that path of changing the law and she knew she was not going to give up, it must have been incredibly hard not just for Charlie, but for the rest of her family. Daniel [York Loh] gives an extraordinary performance, he brings so much to the role of Charlie.

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER JAMIE CRICHTON

Why was Sheridan Smith the perfect person to play Ann?

Sheridan was top of our list from our very early conversations about casting, but we didn't believe we'd get her. She's one of our greatest living actors and I keep pinching myself that she said yes. She's done an extraordinary job playing Ann – it's a tough task to be in every single scene with such an intense emotional journey, but her acting instincts are so spot on, she knew exactly where to pitch the performance. When she does a take she'll have the entire room in the palm of her hand, and the magic in the room bursts out from the screen, you can't take your eyes off her.

I confess I choked up on a couple of occasions just watching her on set. Ann came to set one day as well, and watching Ann watching Sheridan's performance was so moving. There was such an extraordinary energy that day. When we gave Ann a round of applause at the end of the day, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

How do you hope the audience will respond to *I Fought the Law*?

I definitely want the audience to feel angry about what happened to Julie and to Ann. I also want people to be moved and inspired not just by what Ann achieved, but by what any one person can achieve.

This is a call to action – if there's something that makes you angry, or that feels unfair or wrong then speak out, even if it feels like there's no chance of change. 800 years of English law going back to the Magna Carta is a massive thing to contend with, and people were convinced there was no way anything could be done about the double jeopardy law, but Ann took on incredible odds and achieved it.

That's what I want everyone to take away, the fact that passion, courage and tenacity are such powerful things.

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER JAMIE CRICHTON

It's the idea that just one person with no political influence or experience can make a big difference. It's not just inspiring, it's also reassuring because sometimes we feel that we are such small cogs in a big machine that's out of our control. You can change things, even when the most experienced and revered experts tell you that you can't.

Has working on this series shaped the kind of stories you want to tell in the future?

Absolutely. Of course, this series marks a significant milestone in my career—it's the first project I've written solo that's been greenlit and brought to screen. But way beyond that, it is much more meaningful. This was someone's story, Ann's story, and telling it to help bring it to a wider audience has been an immense privilege. I feel incredibly proud and just hope I've done it justice.

Over the course of making this series, I've developed a strong bond with Ann, and I truly hope that continues. I'm looking forward to the moment when the drama airs and people across the country get to witness her remarkable story. I hope we'll be able to share a few messages or phone calls after that—it will be a very special moment for the world to see it and see that element of light, of resilience, of strength, and hope that Ann's story offers.



INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LIZA MARSHALL AND CHARLOTTE WEBBER

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How did you first become interested in televising Ann Ming's incredible story?

Liza: It was [writer] Jamie Crichton, who first made me aware of Ann's book [For the Love of Julie], probably around four years ago. It immediately struck me as an extraordinary story. I couldn't believe we didn't know about Ann Ming, or her fight to repeal the double jeopardy law, even though it's such an incredible achievement and changed a centuries old law. At Hera Pictures, we're really interested in foregrounding women's stories, and I thought this was one that needed to be told. We took it to ITV, who shared our passion to tell Ann's story and commissioned a script.

Charlotte: I joined at an early stage in development, and when I read the scripts I just couldn't believe I didn't know this story already. How could I not have heard of Ann or know what happened to her daughter Julie? Ann is a very pragmatic person, and you feel that keenly in her book *For the Love of Julie* – in extraordinary detail, she lays out everything in chronological order and tells us exactly what happened, and how she changed the law. A drama provides space to explore the emotional stakes of Ann's fight, and bring something beyond what the book, and subsequent documentaries, can give us.

How did you collaborate with Ann on the drama?

Charlotte: Early on, I went to visit Ann, to show her the scripts, and to look at photos and documents she has kept – every newspaper cutting, every letter sent and received, relating to her fight to change the law. She said to me there and then that she would always be straight with me, but she expected me to be straight with her as well. I stuck to that to the letter – even if there was an inconsequential change to something we discussed I would ring her to tell her, because I couldn't bear the thought of letting her down. You have to remember that her story is based on years of being told things by people that turn out not to be true. When Ann met Sheridan, they immediately got on beautifully, and that was really wonderful to witness. It was so important that Ann trusted Sheridan, and she did from day one; she knows her work and the integrity with which she approaches the role of a real person. Then when Ann read the final scripts – we had made the changes she had asked for and she could see we were going to do what we promised.

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Liza: Ann is indeed an incredible woman, very matter of fact and plain speaking as Charlotte says, but she also has a great wit, despite the tragedy she has endured and we tried to show that, alongside her passion and her relentless drive for justice. There are two important elements to balance in this drama – the horror of a mother’s grief, and the underdog story of Ann’s fight for justice.

Was it tricky to get that right?

Charlotte: Yes, it can feel like a series of two halves in that way. Firstly, we needed to show what happened to Julie, to ensure the audience understands what has happened to Ann and why it’s so desperately important and remarkable that she goes on to achieve what she does. You’ve got the story of the following three episodes where Ann is somehow is able to channel her grief into action.

Liza: We were always very drawn to that element of Ann's story, her fight for justice. It was during the pandemic that we first started talking about this project, and there was something in the air then – we were all so frustrated with what was going on at a government level and felt powerless. But here was Ann, who had actually done something and made real change, it was inspiring. In this world where we sometimes think we have no power, here was an ordinary woman, a mother, a nurse, who did this extraordinary thing and really did get a law repealed that nobody thought she would be able to, particularly with the forces of the patriarchy stacked against her. That’s really inspiring and was always going to be a key takeaway in how we presented the drama.

Does it feel like a big responsibility, bringing Ann’s story to the screen?

Liza: Yes, it’s a huge responsibility, and completely different from doing a fictional drama. We’ve talked to as many of the real people involved as we can, including Mark Braithwaite, the detective who worked on the murder case. And we’ve taken a lot of time and care.

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For Ann, the drama is also about trying to make sense of this terrible tragedy, and to stop it from happening to anybody else. Justice for Julie was always at the forefront of our minds, and as you can see in our title sequence – we really wanted her to be present in the show, and not just a forgotten victim.

Did you always have Sheridan Smith in mind to play Ann?

Liza: Sheridan was attached very early on, before we got the drama greenlit. She's so brilliant and it was a total privilege to work with her. It was a traumatic part to play and she's in every single scene, so it was relentless for her. She also worked really hard on the accent especially; she listened to Ann's voice in her ears a lot and it's note perfect. Sheridan is a chameleon and one of our very best actors.

Charlotte: And it wasn't just the accent, she really mastered Ann's rhythm of speaking too. The same is true of her physicality as well as the accent, it was amazing to see her in full costume and make-up and moving in the same way as Ann. We couldn't have asked anything more of Sheridan – not only was her performance fantastic, but she was also so respectful and generous with the real family. It was such a unique position for her to be in, and she did an incredible job. I know Ann feels the same as me on that!

Liza: We were so lucky with our entire cast. A special mention to Daniel [York Loh], who played Ann's husband, Charlie.

Charlotte: Daniel took the role so seriously. Like Sheridan, he talked to Ann a lot, who loves him, and he really tried to understand from her who Charlie was. That really shows on screen.

Can you tell us about some of the locations you used for filming?

Liza: We always wanted to shoot in the North East, where the drama is set, and it was fantastic to be based in Newcastle. We worked with a lot of local crew, and it was a really good place to shoot – very few dramas are filmed there, so we found a lot of really great locations and interiors, it was a really positive experience. Our director, Erik [Richter Strand], has done an extraordinary job of making the series feel really cinematic. The nature of a domestic drama like this means that essentially the story is set in quite a lot of small rooms, but he managed to let it breathe in the landscape of the surrounding area, which was really important.

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Charlotte: Liza had a vision from the very beginning, one that would tell Ann and Julie's story against the backdrop of the real life North East landscape. With that note in mind, we really wanted to show the scale of the local coastline and industry, which is so much part of the community. The local crew were brilliant to work – many of them were aware of Ann from local news coverage, so it was a real point of pride for a lot of them to be taking part in something that highlighted the area and told the story of an amazing Teesside woman too. The locations all turned out incredibly well, including Middlesbrough Town Hall and a disused police station in Hartlepool. Filming the scenes set in Julie's house was a challenging week for everybody. We were on a real residential street, and it caused a lot of interest because everyone who lived there knew what we were filming. I know that the team had thought long and hard about where to shoot those scenes, because we were mindful of the sensitivities of the local area, and the real life locations. Our locations manager Mark Valentine, did an amazing job of finding locations in different Teesside areas, that reflected very accurately the real life settings.

Did you have a duty of care plan in place, given the subject matter of the drama?

Charlotte: Yes, for the really difficult scenes such as when Ann discovers Julie's body in the bathroom, we were obviously concerned to look after Sheridan and Buddy, our child actor who played Julie's son, Kevin. But also the crew – it doesn't matter who you are and where you're from, you will be affected by those scenes and that performance. There was a very calm atmosphere on set that day, and everybody did their best to look after each other.

Liza: Those scenes were very cleverly shot to protect Buddy – he's very young so he was never in the scene when Sheridan was actually crying as Ann for example. There was a lot of safeguarding in place, so he was never exposed to anything upsetting.

How do you reflect on the experience of making I Fought The Law?

Liza: Every show we make at Hera Pictures is a labour of love for us; we only make things that we're completely passionate

INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LIZA MARSHALL AND CHARLOTTE WEBBER

about. Budgets are always challenging for these uniquely British stories, but we had a great script, director, cast and crew, and ITV were so brilliant to work with. I'm excited for Ann's story to be out there now.

Ann's story and what she has achieved is extraordinary. In bringing her fight for justice to the screen, Hera Pictures felt a profound responsibility to honour both the truth of her story and the lasting impact of her courage. The drama, starring Sheridan Smith as Ann, in a remarkable central performance, depicts the real-life struggle of a mother who challenged the legal system after her daughter's killer walked free, ultimately overturning the 800 year old double jeopardy law in the UK.

For Hera, this was not just a compelling narrative, but a vital story about channelling grief into action through sheer will and tenacity. Every step of the production was approached with care, consultation, and respect for the real events and people involved.

Having Ann Ming involved from the very beginning was central to Hera Pictures' approach in telling her story with integrity and authenticity. Her insight, strength, and lived experience shaped every stage of the production from early script development through to filming ensuring the drama remained grounded in truth. For Hera, this wasn't just a portrayal of a landmark legal case, but a deeply human story of a mother's unwavering determination, that eventually resulted in systemic change.

With Ann's guidance and Sheridan Smith's powerful performance, the series honours both the personal and national impact of her extraordinary fight for justice.

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Charlotte: We all believe vehemently that Ann's story should be told, and that as many people as possible should know about what Ann has achieved. We wanted to make sure Ann was happy with the final result, and so a lot was naturally riding on that. Sheridan has done the most incredible job of capturing Ann's energy beautifully; as you watch, you get the very accurate sense of her as a very relatable, down to earth person. It's very important to me, to make and to see working class stories on screen, and Ann's story is an exceptional one. I still just find it incredibly moving talking about this show and watching it in the edit, it's been a life-affirming experience to make it, and a privilege to be involved in the process.

Why are true stories like this so compelling to audiences?

Liza: I think the fact that they are true heightens the audience's emotional engagement and the story becomes all the more inspiring and moving because it really happened. These stories are hard to make and take far more work than fiction, but the results are worth it. I defy anyone not to be moved by the very end of the show!

Charlotte: Ann has said many times how nothing can undo what happened, and of course she would give anything not to have lost Julie, but in the desperate tragedy, Ann has found a way of making an institutional change that will positively affect normal people in society. I think audiences are naturally compelled by seeing the determination and resilience of others on screen, particularly when one person has managed to achieve the seemingly impossible. For so long nobody was listening to Ann; she was pushed from pillar to post and nobody believed what she had to say about her own daughter. They told her she was wasting her time and would never change the law, but she just wouldn't accept that. She has told us she's excited for this drama to be out there and for people to see exactly what happened, that she fought on, without a team of lawyers behind her One woman, taking on every man who stood in her way, in the name of justice for her daughter.



SERIES SYNOPSIS

SHORT:

Powerful true crime drama starring Sheridan Smith as Ann Ming, who campaigned to overturn the British double jeopardy law following the disappearance of her daughter, Julie

LONG:

Powerful true crime drama starring Sheridan Smith as a mother who fights to get justice for her daughter.

When Ann Ming's 22-year-old daughter, Julie, goes missing from her home in Billingham in 1989, Ann pleads with the apparently unconcerned police to help her. Eventually launching an investigation, the police fail to find Julie. Three months later, it is Ann herself who discovers what has happened to her.

Ann channels her grief into finding justice for her daughter, but when a violent local man is charged with murder, a series of blunders sees him walk free. Safe in the knowledge that the Double Jeopardy law protects him from being tried again for the same crime, the man openly and publicly brags about having murdered Julie.

Incensed, Ann begins a 17-year campaign to overturn this archaic law, in a courageous and tenacious fight that takes her all the way to the House of Lords in an attempt to see justice for her daughter.

SERIES SYNOPSIS

EPISODE 1:

In Billingham, in 1989, we meet Ann Ming and her 22-year-old daughter Julie. They share a close bond, spending time together every day, along with Julie's five-year-old son, Kevin.

Ann is distraught when Julie goes missing. The police shrug off Ann's concerns, suggesting that Julie must have fled to London to reunite with her estranged husband. Knowing in her heart that Julie would never leave Kevin behind, Ann doggedly pursues the police. After an exasperating battle to get them to listen to her, Ann finally persuades the police to search Julie's home. The search lasts for five days; the police find nothing.

Eventually, the police return Julie's keys to Ann, who goes back to the house. A horrible smell leads her to the bathroom, where she is subjected to the unthinkable: she finds Julie's body behind the bath panel. It is a mother's worst nightmare.

EPISODE 2:

Haunted by nightmares of discovering her daughter's body, Ann channels her grief into pressuring the police for answers, whilst battling to save her marriage from crumbling under the pressure.

Ann's hopes of getting justice are boosted when a local man is arrested. Yet when it comes to the trial, the accused seems to be scrutinised less than Julie. But with the evidence against the accused substantial and compelling, at least the verdict seems certain...

... Except the jury fails to reach a verdict: the bungled 'missing from home' investigation along with a fierce defence barrister, create uncertainty over the precise cause of Julie's death. The exasperated judge calls a retrial. Ann is distraught – not only has she been through a mother's worst nightmare; she must relive the ordeal all over again.

SERIES SYNOPSIS

EPISODE 3:

At the retrial for Julie's murder, the jury once again cannot reach a verdict, so Julie's killer walks free. Ann finds herself at her lowest point as she faces the challenge of rebuilding her life whilst her daughter's murderer is at large in the community. Horrifyingly, he begins to brag about how he got away with the 'perfect murder' of Julie, knowing he is protected by the double jeopardy law, which states that an accused person cannot be tried on the same charges following an acquittal.

Following a wire-tapped confession, the courts manages to convict him of perjury, but his meagre six-year sentence devastates Ann – she's adamant that Julie's killer deserves a life sentence. With the courts now having seemingly exhausted its powers, it's down to Ann to find justice for Julie. She is determined that he will pay the full price of murder – and if that means she must change an 800-year-old law, that's exactly what she'll do.

EPISODE 4:

Determined to overturn double jeopardy, Ann takes her fight to the Home Secretary. Meanwhile, Julie's son, Kevin, now a teenager, starts to ask questions about how his mother really died.

Ann's crusade takes her to the House of Lords. If they don't support Ann, her entire campaign could collapse. She digs deep, speaking not as a politician but as a grieving mother, and wins them over unconditionally.

Eventually the law is repealed, meaning that Julie's killer can be retried. In a tense court room, he is finally convicted of murder and given a life sentence. Her ordeal finally over, Ann breaks down in tears. She is comforted by Charlie, their marriage having weathered an impossible storm.

Having achieved the impossible, Ann finally finds closure, safe in the knowledge that she has got justice for Julie.



CAST CREDITS

ANN MING.....	SHERIDAN SMITH
CHARLIE MING.....	DANIEL YORK LOH
DS MARK BRAITHWAITE.....	ENZO CILENTI
ANGELA.....	OLIVIA NG
GARY.....	MARLOWE CHAN-REEVES
MATTHEW.....	JAKE DAVIES
KEVIN HOGG.....	BUDDY WIGNALL-HO
KEVIN HOGG (14-17YRS).....	HARRY JONES
JULIE HOGG.....	VICTORIA WYANT
DI KEITH ARNOLD.....	KENT RILEY
FRANK COOK MP.....	RON COOK
MR AHMED.....	DANA HAQJOO
GUY WHITBURN QC.....	ANDREW LANCEL
COURT CLERK.....	SARAH VICKERS
LORD GOLDSMITH.....	RUFUS JONES
D.C.C NIGEL JOHNSTONE.....	NIGEL BETTS

CAST CREDITS

BEV FOWLER.....	JESSICA JOHNSON
ALAN WILKIE Q.C.	STEVE FURST
SEAN FOWLER.....	BILLY GUNNION
WPC ELLIOT.....	BRYONY CORRIGAN
SARAH GRAY.....	AIMÉE KELLY
SGT MURPHY.....	LUKE CINQUE-WHITE
CPS RECEPTIONIST.....	VICKY HALL
JOURNALIST 1.....	SAM PAMPHILION
INSPECTOR WILKINSON.....	GEORGE POTTS
SENIOR CROWN PROSECUTOR.....	RICHARD HUW
LORD GITTENS.....	IAN BARRITT
JOURNALIST 2.....	GEMMA NICHOLS
TV INTERVIEWER.....	JAMES CHALMERS
ROBERT CARNWATH.....	ANDREW HAVILL
RUNNER.....	SKY FRANCES
NURSE.....	VICTORIA HOLTOM
JUSTICE CALVERT-SMITH.....	RICHARD RYCROFT

CAST CREDITS

CONSTITUENT.....	DAVID TARKENTER
REPORTER.....	JAMES CHALMERS
JACK STRAW MP.....	JAMES TUCKER
SPECIALIST.....	SUSAN JAYNE-ROBINSON
PRODUCER / DIRECTOR.....	TOM BELL
LINE DANCING CALLER.....	CHRIS LANE
IMRAN KHAN.....	ASH TANDON
MARION (BILL'HAM NEIGHBOUR).....	ALISON WARD
APPEAL JUDGE.....	ANDREW P STEPHEN
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT.....	PAUL HAMILTON
PENNY PETERS.....	CHARLOTTE HUDSON
SC. STUNT COORDINATOR.....	DEAN FORSTER
SP1. STUNT PIZZA WOKRER.....	YUSUF CHAUDHRI
SP7. STUNT POLICE OFFICER.....	EDDY BECKETT



PRODUCTION CREDITS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER..... LIZA MARSHALL
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER..... CHARLOTTE WEBBER
WRITER & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER.....JAMIE CRICHTON
DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER.....ERIK RICHTER STRAND
PRODUCER.....MARK HEDGES
LINE PRODUCER.....MARIA PAVLOU
HEAD OF PRODUCTION.....EMMA FOWLER
HEAD OF FINANCE.....ROB HARPER
STORY PRODUCER.....BRIA THOMAS
PRODUCTION MANAGER.....LYNSEY MUIR
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR.....JOJO KEY
ACTION VEHICLES.....IAN BURR
PRODUCTION DESIGNER.....HANNAH HILL
SET DECORATOR.....NANDIE NARISHKIN
ART DIRECTOR.....JADE BROOKLAND
GRAPHIC DESIGNER.....NATALIE CONNELL
1ST ASST DIRECTOR.....CHARLIE CURRAN/FINN MCGRATH
2ND ASST DIRECTOR.....CATHERINE KINSON

PRODUCTION CREDITS

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY.....	BEN WILSON
CASTING DIRECTORS.....	AMY HUBBARD & SHANNON DOWLING
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR.....	RACHEL CRAWFORD
COSTUME DESIGNER.....	JAN SIMPSON
COSTUME SUPERVISOR.....	SOPHIE BARLOW
FLOOR RUNNERS.....	BEVERLEY BARNFATHER & ALEX NICOL
CONSTRUCTION MANAGER.....	STEVE SMITH
FACILITIES MANAGER.....	ANDREW DEVLIN
GRIP.....	ELLIOTT PATE
GRIP ASSISTANT.....	JAMES MUSTARD
HAIR & MAKE UP DESIGNER.....	EMILY SILVERSTONE
HAIR & MAKE UP SUPERVISOR.....	LAURA MCDOWELL
HAIR & MAKE UP ARTIST.....	NATASHA RICHARDS
HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISOR.....	JIM RANYARD
LIGHTING GAFFER.....	TONY COOK
LOCATIONS MANAGER.....	MARK VALENTINE

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UNIT MANAGER.....JOEL SHELDRAKE
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PROP HOUSE.....NORTHERN STUDIOS, TS24
PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER.....STEVE PECKOVER
1ST ASST SOUND.....JACK HOBBS
2ND ASST SOUND.....ALEX LEWIS
STUNT COORDINATOR.....GORDON SEED
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