

# Lessons in Life; An Evening of Monologues



19th-21st May 7.45pm. Tickets £5.  
[www.progresstheatre.co.uk](http://www.progresstheatre.co.uk)

**PROGRESS**  
▶ DIGITAL

A Selection of Monologues by; William Shakespeare, Sophocles, Nick Whitby, Charlotte Keatley, Amanda Whittington, Anton Chekhov, Laura Wade & Benjamin Kuffuor.

**PROGRESS**  
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# Welcome to Progress!

**Founded in 1946, we're the oldest  
producing theatre in Reading.**

A self-governing, self-funding theatre group, run entirely by volunteers. We are members of the Little Theatre Guild and the National Operatic and Dramatic Association, and are a registered charity in England (no. 1182798).



# 12 shows per year

We put together a varied and challenging programme of shows every season, including our traditional Open Air Shakespeare production at Reading Abbey Ruins each Summer.

# An Intimate Venue

Our intimate 96 seat venue has a fully licensed bar. There is wheelchair access and a hearing loop, and we are committed to making further improvements in the coming years to make our building more accessible.

# Youth Theatre

We have a vibrant and happy Youth Theatre, split into 4 groups by age. Regular workshops involve theatre games, improvisations and skills development. Youth Theatre shows are often challenging and always performed to a high standard. Many past members maintain an interest in theatre and numerous aspects of performance art as adults, some of them professionally!

# Award Winners

In June 2020, we were very honoured to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

This award is equivalent to an MBE (*Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire*), and is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK, to recognise outstanding work done in their own communities.

# Get Involved

[www.progresstheatre.co.uk](http://www.progresstheatre.co.uk)



## Onstage, Offstage or Backstage

Whether you fancy yourself onstage, offstage or backstage, there are a variety of ways you can get involved.

## We're All Volunteers

There's always room for more in our open and welcoming community. So if you want to pick up a new skill, perfect an old one, or share your expertise with us, we'd love to have you!



# Monologues

## Electra

By Sophocles



Clytemnestra is one of my favourite women in Greek literature. The language is so powerful, the traditions so strong, and yes, the women are often strong too. Powerful words and sentiments in female mouths have been all too lacking at times in the western traditions, and so we revel in Clytemnestra's story.

She is a much overlooked influence in the text of Electra. We hear reams from Electra that amounts to propaganda in its content and style, and this is her mother's answer to her complaints. This is written as a plea in a law court, and as such the language has a firm structure. This is contrasted with moments of real vulnerability and genuine agony for Clytemnestra. Her husband sacrificed her youngest daughter to gain a victory in war. As a mother I can understand her arguments and feel for the pain she bears. What is your judgement?



# Colder Than Here

By Laura Wade



Living in a freezing house, Alec makes a frustrating phone call to try and get his boiler fixed. But why is this call so important?

I was instantly drawn to this monologue, such a simple setting and yet an unexpected emotional journey for Alec.

Wonderfully written to allow us to relate to the type of complaints calls we have to make, but also to show how human nature allows us to express our feelings in the most unusual of settings.



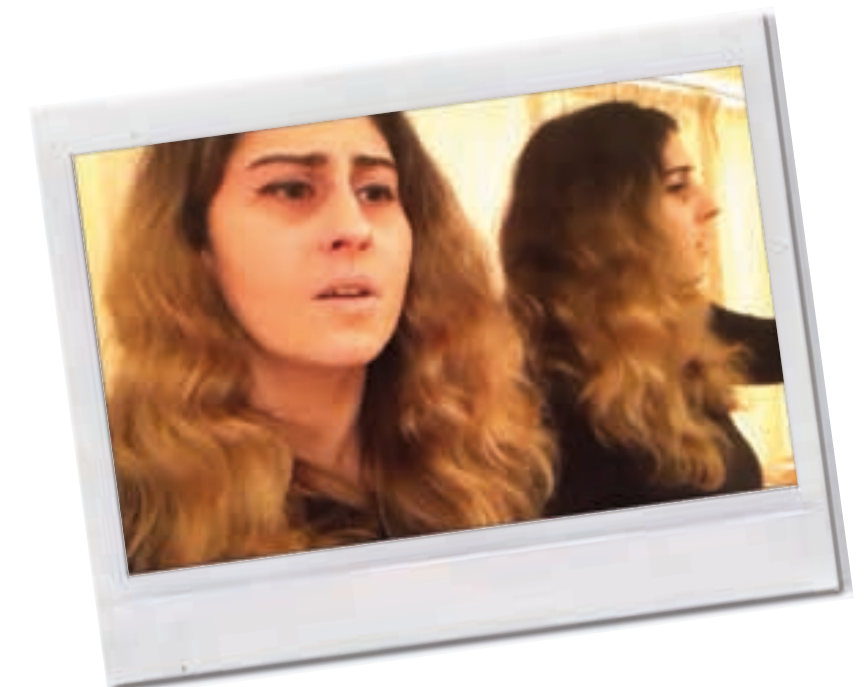
# The Seagull

By Anton Chekhov



Nina is a beautiful young woman, damaged by life and its cruelties. She tells us of her dreams.

Nina is an endlessly fascinating character. From the Realism tradition of the mid-19th century, she is written with endless facets and is discovered anew with each reading. Such is the genius of Chekhov's writing. A visitor to the big house, Nina is in love with the wrong person. Haven't we all been there!?



# To the Green Fields Beyond

By Nick Whitby



A group of tank drivers in the WW1 explore a variety of experiences faced in these challenging circumstances.

Ain talks to the group about how far they have come and what it means to make a decision.

I selected this monologue for a different setting to all the others and to give us an insight into the world of war.



# Ageless

By Benjamin Kuffuor



A play set in the future, this charts the development of a drug that will change the course of ageing. A house can not only cook your food on voice command, but can actually serve you with it.

This is a world where there are two distinct groups in society: the AY (artificially young) and the TY (truly young). There is no room for both groups as the AYs have the jobs, homes and lives of the TYs. Temples is the inventor of the drug that reverses ageing.





# Anthony and Cleopatra

By William Shakespeare



A play well-known for its portrayal of a passionate love affair, yet in this extract Cleopatra is faced with the unknown, a life without her Anthony.

A a great lover of Shakespeare, this play was one I always wanted to explore more.

I wanted to allow the audience to explore how love is affected when our deepest fears are met.



# Ladies Down Under

By Amanda Whittington



I've wanted to direct *Ladies Down Under* for a couple of years now. This is a gentle gem of a play. A group of ladies who work in the fish factories 'up north' win the pools and decide to take a trip to Australia. Many of them have never been out of their hometown before.

Their journey is not just a physical one and they learn much about themselves and the world, as they meet beautiful characters like Koala along the way.



# My Mother Said I Never Should

By Charlotte Keatley



Battling to keep a relationship with Rosie, Jackie has no other choice but to tell the truth and hope she can mend the broken bond between them.

I love this piece, it was one I used for a Lamda exam as a teenager and it still stays strong in my memory. Being a mother myself I can relate to the pressures we experience. We hope motherhood comes naturally, but society, family and inexperience sometimes force us to make tough choices.



# Oedipus the King

By Euripides



We all have heard of Oedipus, and if we haven't we will! We hear much about Freud's Oedipus complex and can be unsure about the literary reference it connects to. He DID marry and bed with his mother, and he DID kill his father – these are the bare facts. In this monologue Oedipus relates his story. The circumstances surrounding those fateful decisions, the human errors he is responsible for and the tragic aftermath come together to tell a pitiful story of such tragedy, that we cannot but help feel for the man, rather than the myth.



# Alice

By Charlotte Keatley



Alice is lost, unsure how she arrived and looking for a solution. If only it were that simple.

I feel this adaptation of the original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was a perfect setting for a zoom performance. Fun, crazy and full of surprises. I felt it gave me the scope to bring Alice to life through a different medium and have thoroughly enjoyed experimenting.



## Tech Issues



If your internet fails during the show, simply click the Zoom link again and we'll re-admit you to the show.



If you have any questions for the organisers, please use the Q&A function at the bottom of your Zoom screen.



If we experience significant technical difficulties or an issue that means the performance has to pause or stop, we will communicate with you either through Zoom or using the email address you booked with. We will aim to contact you as quickly as possible, but your patience will be appreciated.

# About The Directors

## Beckie Moir



Beckie's been active in creating theatre for many years as a teacher, performer, stage manager and director. She's been an acting teacher for 20 years and worked with hundreds of young people.

Beckie has enjoyed all her projects at Progress Theatre, which include stage managing youth productions (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Poetry of War* and *The Oresteia*). She's also acted in *WriteFest 2018* and *Mother Courage and her Children* as Mother Courage. In June 2019 Beckie directed *Top Girls* and, more recently, entered into the online world of Progress Digital, performing in *Women Centre Stage*.

This is her first foray into directing online and she is excited to be bringing different technical marvels as well as varied performances to your screens!

## Lara Collins



Lara has always been passionate about all aspects of the theatre whether that be acting, directing or script writing. She's been a drama teacher for the past 18 years working with a wide age range of children.

Lara attended Progress Theatre as a youth and played Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* she also stage managed another production (*Sped*). She worked with Thame Players performing in *A Present Laughter* as Monica and in *The Ghost Train* as Peggy.

She returned to Progress Theatre in 2019 and performed in *Wyrd Sisters*. During Covid she was involved with *Women Centre Stage* and was inspired to develop her scriptwriting. She is delighted to be directing *Lessons In Life* for Digital Progress.

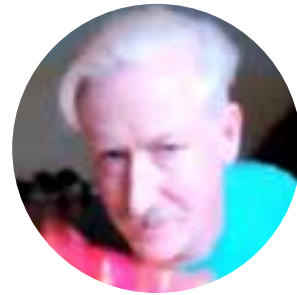
# The Cast



## Ali Carroll

Clytemnestra – *Electra*

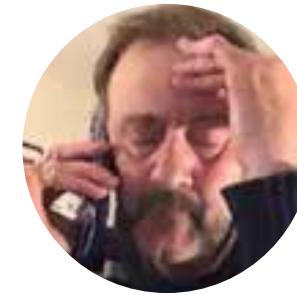
Ali has been a member of Progress Theatre for over 19 years and has worn many hats in that time: actor, director, youth leader, set builder, lighting and sound operator, writer, Front of House, production manager, assistant stage manager and Inclusion Officer. At Progress itself she most recently directed *The Children* in Oct 2019 and acted in *Wyrld Sisters* in Jan 2020 and *The Cord* (14th *WriteFest*) in Sept 2019. She is very grateful to Digital Progress for the opportunities they have provided during the pandemic. She is proud to have acted in a recorded piece (*A Love of Sorts*), directed (*Women Centre Stage*) and been involved in panels and Q&As as part of our vibrant digital season.



## Niall Costello

Koala – *Ladies Down Under*

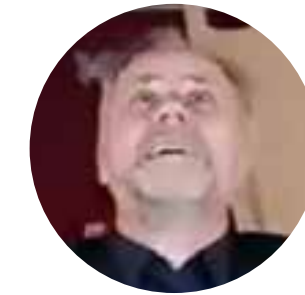
Niall Costello has lived in Reading since 1997 and was previously from Merseyside. He started doing drag three years ago to help a friend out at Pride and has done a few little functions since then. Niall really enjoys the thought that goes into an outfit and making of it. He's helped Progress before lockdown and really enjoys the family atmosphere.



## Mikhail Franklin

Alec – *Colder Than Here*

Mikhail is one of only two survivors of the first Open Air Shakespeare *Henry V* in 1995 and has done a fair few since then. His last show at Progress was as the dying Dr Rank in *A Doll's House* in 2019 and that and his former profession taught him much of observed grief. He is pleased to be acting again at Progress (or anywhere in fact) and using a different medium. This role suits him as he has a boiler at home that hates him and he loathes technology and call centres - in *Mother Russia* we still think clockwork is pretty neat.



## Paul Gallantry

Oedipus – *Oedipus the King*

Paul joined Progress Theatre in 2016 and has played a wide range of roles since, including Dr. Montague in *The Haunting of Hill House*, Leonato in the 2018 Open Air production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, The Chaplain in Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Robert in Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*, and various roles in the annual *WriteFest*, including a dog and a self-removing corpse. During lockdown, he participated in several of Progress Theatre's online offerings. He studied Drama and English Literature at UCNW Bangor and has performed in both stage and screen productions. He is a voiceover artist and an English Language teacher and lecturer.

# The Cast



## Max Hijmering

Temples – *Ageless*

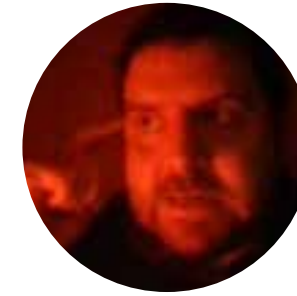
Max has been a member of Progress for the last 5 years during which he has had opportunity to participate in many wonderful productions including *His Dark Materials*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Poetry of War* and *The Oresteia*. Max is currently still in college and has accepted a place on a READ College Foundation course for his upcoming school year. Max is really excited to be able to do his first real show since Covid struck, feeling as if the last year has been a period of hibernation. Being able to get back into the room (figuratively) with such a wonderful cast and directors has been a dream come true.



## Anita Sandhu

Nina – *The Seagull*

Anita has been involved with theatre since she was 11 years old, however this is her first show with Progress. She has performed in various local productions and has completed LAMDA Grade 8 in Acting as well as Musical Theatre. Anita really enjoys being part of the show, and is looking forward to everyone seeing it.



## Adam Lines

Ain – *To the Green Fields Beyond*

Having joined Progress 18 months ago, Adam has already been cast in a handful of productions with the theatre, adding to previous on-stage turns as a soldier, drag queen, orator and spacecraft doctor. It's been quite the journey. Enjoying writing, directing and tech alongside treading the boards, jumping into the bright lights of digital theatre has been a new adventure keenly undertaken here tonight.



## Amelia Sammons

Alice – *Alice*

Amelia graduated from the Guildford School of Acting in July 2019. She was involved in various plays at GSA including *Her Naked Skin* by R. Lenkiewicz and *The Sea* by E. Bond. Since graduating Amelia has toured around schools in the UK with Quirky Bird theatre company with the play *DNA* by Dennis Kelly, where she played the role of Brian. She hopes to return to work with the company when things open back up again. As well as this, she is currently in the process of writing her own play and comedy shorts. This is Amelia's first show with Progress Theatre.

# The Cast



## Melanie Sherwood

Cleopatra – *Antony and Cleopatra*

Melanie has been acting for most of her life with several local clubs. The last few years she has been in many shows with Progress Theatre including *Maskerade*, *Wyrd Sisters*, *The Children*, *Happy Jack* and *Top Girls*. Since lockdown she has been fortunate to take part in five shows, including this one, online.



## Emma Starling

Jackie – *My Mother Said I Never Should*

This is Emma's first show with Progress Theatre. She is a Drama teacher by trade and wants to be able to show her students that she still acts too, having taken part in shows with Reading Operatic Society in the past. Emma wanted the challenge of trying a show online after watching so many during lockdown. She is really looking forward to being part of this cast for such a great show.

# The Crew

## Becki Moir & Lara Col

Directors

## Ali Carroll

Producer

## Stuart McCubbin

Sound

## Laura Mills

Stage Manager

## Esther Arzola

Marketing & Programme Design

## Paul Payne

Poster Design

# Our 74th Season

**2020**

**OCTOBER**

Women Centre Stage - A Double Bill

**2021**

**JANUARY**

*The F Word* by Conor Hunt

**MARCH**

*Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons*  
by Sam Steiner

**MAY**

*Lessons in Life - An Evening of Monologues*

**JUNE**

*Rotterdam* by Jon Brittain

**JULY**

*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare  
*Open Air in Reading Abbey Ruins*

