



rotterdam

BY JON BRITTAIN

PROGRESS
▶ DIGITAL

23-25 JUNE | 7.30PM | TICKETS £5

PROGRESS
THE▲TRE

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!

<https://progresstheatre.co.uk/youth-theatre>



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



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!



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.

Director's Notes



I discovered *Rotterdam* a couple of years ago and loved it – it's such a beautifully written play, and it immediately made it into my "would like to direct one day" pile. Fast-forwarding to 2020, and once the pandemic hit, Progress Theatre was looking for ways to continue to create theatre and to engage with our audiences – Zoom seemed the obvious choice, and so our Digital Season was born!

Having directed quite a lot on our physical stage over the last few years, the challenge of trying something completely new was exciting (and scary!), and so I returned to my pile of scripts to look for something that might work on zoom. *Rotterdam* wasn't the obvious choice, it has a cast of four, and the action moves through many different locations throughout the play, but the thing that jumped out at me was the focus on the characters.

The play is all about the people and their relationships – their love, their flaws, their identities and journeys - it is a completely character driven piece, and that is where Zoom shines as a performance medium – it offers a really intimate feel, even more so than our little auditorium, and that works really well for this play – elaborate sets and big staging are not needed at all.



There have been huge challenges putting together a full-length play on zoom – not least that the actors can't see each other! We have been very fortunate in that we have been able to workshop some scenes in person, before transferring them back to screen, but it requires huge amounts of work, concentration and trust from the cast to create the connections and chemistry between characters when they are in separate houses! Zoom is a great tool, but it was not designed for theatrical use, so there are constraints on what it can do, but here is where I think Progress Theatre shines – we are used to the constraints of our small (but perfectly formed) theatre, and yet we don't shy away from being ambitious – we always find a way to make things work – training that has proved invaluable when moving to Zoom!

A major theme throughout the play is, of course, the character of Adrian coming out as Trans – and his journey through the early stages of his transition. We see the effect of his journey on his loved ones and their relationships. I am not part of the LGBTQ+ community myself, but I have loved ones who are, and so have witnessed something like Adrian's journey myself, from the outside at least. I thought it tremendously important that we work hard to bring Adrian's journey to the stage in as real, honest and truthful a way as we can, and it was vital to me that the cast reflected the community we are representing and I have been very lucky to cast Katie in the role of Fiona/Adrian – who is a very talented non-binary actor.



The whole cast have undertaken a lot of research and have spent many hours discussing the important themes of the play.

I hope you enjoy this production of *Rotterdam* – it is a beautiful play, and I have had the privilege of working with a fantastic cast and crew who have worked so incredibly hard on this production. Thank you for watching and supporting Progress Theatre – we hope to welcome you back into our real-life auditorium soon.

Steph Dewar

Director

The Cast



Esther Arzola *(She/Her)*
Alice

Esther has been a member of Progress Theatre since 2018, when she first took to the stage as Lisette in *Birdsong*. She later played a philosophising cat in *Cat In A Box*, and a sinister doctor in *The Bumblebee* (both part of WriteFest 2019). Esther's first venture into digital theatre was as Amina in *The Nightclub* (2020), after which she decided to roll up her sleeves and take on the role of Marketing Manager for Progress Theatre. The role of Alice has been her greatest acting challenge to date, and she hopes you enjoy the show.



Faith Mansfield *(She/Her)*
Lelani

This is Faith's third play with Progress Theatre. She first appeared in multiple roles, including that of Pete the droog, in *A Clockwork Orange* in 2018. She then went on to perform as a demanding cat in *Cat In A Box* as part of a collection of short plays for WriteFest 2019. She is very excited to be performing as Lelani in *Rotterdam*, despite the Dutch accent being a tricky one to learn for the role!



Katie Moreton *(She/Them)*
Fiona / Adrian

Rotterdam is Katie's fourth production with Progress Theatre, having appeared as Mr. Deltoid in *A Clockwork Orange*, numerous characters in *One Million Tiny Plays about Reading*, and the ever-grumpy Mack in *Brewster's Millions*. She has also worked with Dante or Die as Debs in *Take on Me*, and with RABBLE Theatre as Lucy in *The Last Abbot*. As a genderfluid actor, it has been an honour and a challenge for Katie to tell Fiona/Adrian's story. They hope that *Rotterdam* both entertains and helps support understanding of trans identities.



Charles West *(He/Him)*
Josh

Charlie is delighted to be taking on the role of Josh in *Rotterdam*, and to be helping to tell this funny and touching story through a novel medium. Charlie started acting 4 years ago with Progress Theatre, playing the role of Lord Asriel, plus several smaller roles, in the epic production of *His Dark Materials*. This was followed by major roles in *Buddy Cop 2* and the commemorative run of *Birdsong*, which coincided with the centenary of the Armistice of World War I.

The Crew



Liz Carroll *(She/Her)*

Producer

Liz has been part of Progress for about 18 years. She enjoys all things Progress and has acted, directed, written for stage plus doing backstage and front of house duties. She's definitely not a techie though. Liz has been producer for most of Steph's productions and has loved being part of some fabulous shows like *Not About Heroes*, *Little Gem* and *Birdsong*. Liz saw *Rotterdam* in Oxford and was blown away by the production. She was delighted when Steph proposed this and was very happy to be included in the team. This zoom production gives another dimension to this well written piece. Enjoy!



Steph Dewar *(She/Her)*

Director

Steph has been a member of Progress for 10 years now and has tried her hand at most things – acting, stage management, producing, even operating lighting. Her previous directing credits include *Not About Heroes*, *Birdsong*, *Little Gem* and *Hangmen*. In her spare time(!) Steph has served on the Management Committee and Trustee Board for 4 years, starting as Members' Rep and taking the helm as Chair in July 2019. Steph is delighted to be directing *Rotterdam* to close our digital season!



Stuart McCubbin *(He/Him)*

Sound Technician

Stuart has been a member of Progress since 2010, but has been in the audience for almost 30 years. He is usually found lurking in the Tech Box doing sound, annoying the audience on front of house, or trying not to be a Health and Safety incident at a Set Build. Some of the more recent shows he has created sound for in-theatre are: *The Haunting of Hill House*, *Wyrld Sisters*, *Hangmen*, *Jerusalem*, *Birdsong*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Maskerade* and *Hamlet*. He has also been Tech for the *Women Centre Stage* and *Lessons in Life* Digital Progress productions.



Fiona McNeil *(She/Her)*

Stage Manager

Fiona has been a member of Progress for many years now, turning a hand to most things around the theatre, other than actually appearing on stage and saying lines. Moving online was rather daunting for a Zoom novice, but lots of support and pre-planning have made this transition a lot less scary than it started out as!



Special Thanks

John Churchill *(He/Him)*
Lighting

Esther Arzola *(She/Her)*
Marketing, Poster & Programme 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

