

PROGRESS
THE  TRE

14 - 22 April 2023
www.progresstheatre.co.uk



DINNER

BY MOIRA BUFFINI

Directed by Dan Clarke

This amateur production of "Dinner" is presented by arrangement with
Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

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). Our patron is Sir Kenneth Branagh.



The artwork on display in the foyer was created by Tina Barns

Tina Barns is a self taught artist with many decades of experience, who is enjoying dedicating more time to art in retirement.

This artwork was commissioned specifically for Progress Theatre's performance of *Dinner*. All the artwork will be auctioned off to raise money for Reading's local food bank, Readifood:

<https://readifood.org.uk>

Throughout the run you are invited to make an offer. At the end of the run the artwork will be awarded to the highest bidder. Details of how to bid are displayed alongside the art in the foyer. Alternatively ask a member of the Front of House team for information.

All prices listed are a suggested guide. Please feel free to bid below the guide price if you can not afford the suggestion. You may still be lucky and win the artwork and any donation however small will always be gratefully received.

11 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.

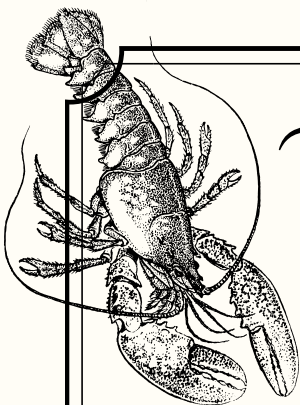
Many past members maintain an interest in theatre and numerous aspects of performance art as adults, some of them professionally!



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.



DINNER

BY MOIRA BUFFINI

A PLAY IN FIVE COURSES

RESERVATIONS FROM 7.45PM

CARRIAGES 9.55PM



SET MENU

STARTERS

DIRECTOR

DAN CLARKE

**COSTUME DESIGN AND
SOUNDING BOARD**

LAURA BARNES

**LIGHTING DESIGN AND
OPERATION**

JON CHURCHILL

**SOUND DESIGN AND
OPERATION**

CAROLE BROWN

**SET DESIGN AND HAD
AN OPERATION**

ANTHONY TRAVIS

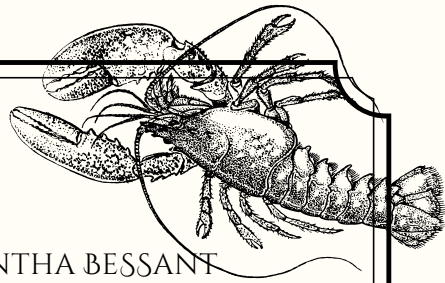
STAGE MANAGER

ISABEL VERNON



WE THANK YOU TO:

- not smoke
- keep the aisles of the auditorium clear at all times
- not take photos or recordings of the performance
- turn off your mobile devices during the performance



MAINS

PAIGE

SAMANTHA BESSANT

LARS

TAN BELCHER

WYNNE

EMMA KELLOW

SIAN

PIXIE NASH

HAL

LAURENCE MCNAUGHTON

MIKE

MEGAN TURNELL WILLET

THE WAITER

NICK GALLO



DESSERTS

PROPS

LOUISE BANKS

ASSISTANT
STAGE MANAGERS

ALEX MCCUBBIN, POPPY
PRICE, SAHAR HEMAMI

PHOTOGRAPHY

RICHARD BROWN

INTIMACY
CO-ORDINATOR

STEPHANIE GUNNER-LUCAS

PRODUCTION
ASSISTANT

TOBY BARNES CLARKE

SET BUILDERS &
WALLPAPERING

STUART MCCUBBIN,
EMILY GOODE

APPRENTICE

MILLIE CHARLESWORTH

A detailed black and white illustration of a lobster, shown from a side profile, facing left. It has its claws raised and its antennae extended.

À LA CARTE

Allergens in bold, indicating cross-contamination of ingredients

Samantha Bessant

Paige

A local creation through and through, Sam hails from the town of beer, bulbs and biscuits. Bringing a zesty freshness to the stage in *Teechers*, aromas of heartbreak in *Colder Than Here* and a spicy sauciness in *Closer*, Sam has been well seasoned at Progress Theatre. If you enjoy a bitter sweet flavour, tonight will most definitely tickle your tastebuds.



Ingredients: *Closer*, *Teechers*, *Colder Than Here*, *Steel Magnolias*, Progress Premieres: *Liar's Teeth* and ***The Swastika Party***, with a pinch of a few other shows and a dash of appearances at other theatres.



Ian Belcher

Lars



Served at Progress as though a particularly eccentric comet, swinging by the stage for a close encounter every few years before disappearing from the table into outer space again. Slathered with such performances as *Pertruchio*, *Don John*, *Van Helsing* and the *Marquis de Carabas*. Glazed over with some predictability, he is planning to vacation in the Kuiper Belt again soon.

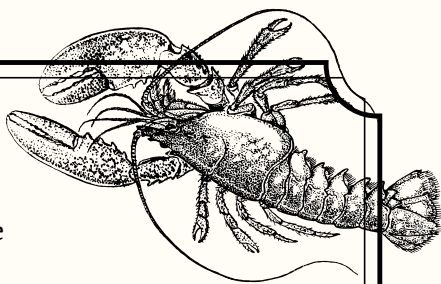
Ingredients: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Of Mice and Men*, ***Much Ado About Nothing***, ***Dracula***, *Nowhere*, ***The Three Musketeers***.

Emma Kellow

Wynne

Delicately simmered in Devon for her formative years and later steeped in drama school here in Reading, Emma joined Progress in 2012 and plunged straight into a veritable smorgasbord of three delicious repasts within her first six months. Since then, she has poured herself generously into a wide variety of shows, including four al fresco Shakespearean offerings. These exploits are topped with sprinklings of scriptwriting for two WriteFest plays, pepperings of prop work, a spicy seasoning of set-building and an aroma of ASM-ing.

Ingredients: *Macbeth*, *Birdsong*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *WASP*, ***Much Ado About Nothing***, *The Fifth Elephant*, Progress Premieres: ***The Swastika Party***, ***Brewster's Millions (à la mode)***.



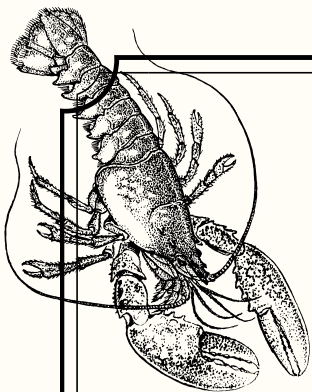
Pixie Nash

Sian

Marinated in a spicy combination of dance, musical theatre and performance art, Pixie's dish boasts a complex palette of autobiographical and confessional writing. Featuring subtle hints of cathartic practice, this dramatic culinary experience is bursting with the punchy flavours of Theatre of Cruelty, devised performance and the heady aroma of Marina Abramovic. It is delicately finished with a drizzle of Theatre in Education and a fresh garnish of teaching. Bon Appétit.



Ingredients: *Annie*, *The King and I*, *42nd Street*, *We Will Rock You*, *Blackout*, *Nine*, *Peace*, *Hayfever*.



Laurence McNaughton

Hal

This 1982 vintage offers a smorgasbord of delights to suit all tastes. Laurence's signature dish presents the classical stylings of urban Manchester, jazz festivals of Rotterdam and the warm pink sands of Bermuda. The RNCM pairs well with the sizzling postgraduate environment of



Southampton, offering aromas of Bach, Busconi and Bill Evans, with a soupçon of Miles Davis and Kapustin for good measure. Oak-aged in musical theatre and performances of his own composition, this medley of interests is garnished with UEFA coaching and FA refereeing on a bed of grassroots football. Piano teaching and local council work add to an eclectic and intriguing dish.

Ingredients: *Private Lives*, *Absolutely Murder*, *Mamma Mia*, *The Pajama Game*, *Hairspray*, *The Wiz*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Dumb Waiter*.



Megan Turnell Willett

Mike

A versatile actor plucked from the Tees Valley region, Megan is a 7-year-matured member of Progress, following a 36-month aging process at the University of Reading, generously seasoned with a decadent combination of production, performance, and musical elements. Pairs well with comedy and cross-casting.

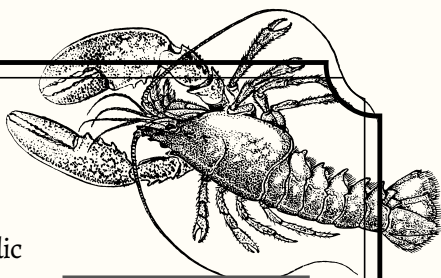
Ingredients: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ***Dracula***, *Hamlet*, *A Clockwork Orange*, Progress Premieres: ***The Swastika Party***, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Top Girls*, ***Brewster's Millions (à la mode)***, *Angels in America*, *The Welkin*.

Nick Gallo

The Waiter

An acting experience beginning with a comedic starter from original contemporary ingredients. Predicated by a focus on the procurement of healthy source to table produce, Nick's acting experience has seen the combination of various culinary modes, a sampling of romantic comedy with warm notes, essences of historical commentary coated by religious frosting, and a large helping of drama garnished with social commentary, set to music.

Ingredients: *Back to the Office*, *Heart of Lightness*, *WriteFest: An Angel with One Wing*, *A Song in a Strange Land*.



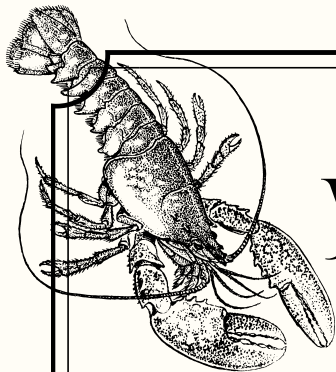
CHEF'S SPECIAL

Dan Clarke

Director

A directorial effort combining a history of Shakespeare à la carte with adaptations of novellas. Founding this amateur background with a sampling of non-speaking roles in educational institutions, Dan's directorial experience is built upon an acting base topped with a steady foray behind the scenes. A flavour of comedies of his past, mix the fresh *Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense* with an older *Intimate Exchanges* via a 'full-bodied' Michael Palin en *No Naughty Bits*.

Ingredients: *Ajax*, *The 39 Steps*, ***The Three Musketeers***, *Henry IV Part One*, *Buddy Cop 2*, *Two Way Mirror*, *Love's Labour's Lost and Won*, *King Lear*, ***Dracula***, ***Brewster's Millions (à la mode)***.



WINE LIST

Laura Barns

A versatile accompaniment to many diverse roles including stage management, technical operation and directing. With floral top notes of Suddenly Last Summer and sun-kissed flavours of Open Air performances including Henry IV and Loves Labour's Lost.

Jon Churchill

Brewed in the University vats of bad beer and greasy food, Jon has progressed his lighting to a healthier more nuanced palette of colours and subtle technical spices and wizardry over the years. Most recently appreciated in The Welkin, Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense and the technical tour de forces of Dark Sublime, Radiant Vermin and the Wyrd Sisters - complete with flying witches and flaming torches!

Carole Brown

A robust stayer that ages well, with spicy top notes. An executive producer in the Reading Abbey Ruins region.

Anthony Travis

An impressively versatile vintage still drinking well despite its age and predilection for dangerous power tools. A combination of set designer, writer, actor and cinematographer.

Isabel Vernon

A dedicated stage manager with strong flavours of organisation and passion, and subtle notes of stress. Goes well with WriteFest and Great Expectations.

Louise Banks

An obscure blend, known to suit dishes that have very few pairings, recently provided an air of dystopia to Liar's Teeth and a cacophony of jollity to Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense. One to call on when you need something special and have no idea how to achieve.



Alex McCubbin

Full-bodied and colourful, can be served on-stage with a main (Moonlight and Magnolias, Noises Off, A Midsummer Night's Dream) or a sweet side (Birdsong, No Naughty Bits). Alternatively, can be used to support meals offstage, such as The Lonesome West, Hangmen, The 39 Steps and Radiant Vermin.

Poppy Price

A bubbly variety with moderate acidity, found both off and on stage. Recently at the forefront of The Welkin and behind the 16th Annual WriteFest.

Sahar Hemami

An aspiring writer of a Persian variety, currently channelling her judgmental side, masquerading as a Writing Workshop leader and PPC member.

Richard Brown

This multifaceted vintage reliably delivers flavour with a dry aftertaste. Acting in Macbeth, Julius Caesar, The Bacchae and The Good Woman of Szechuan.

Stephanie Gunner-Lucas

Earthy and distinct, with brackish notes that caramelise over time. Actor, writer, director best served at room temperature.

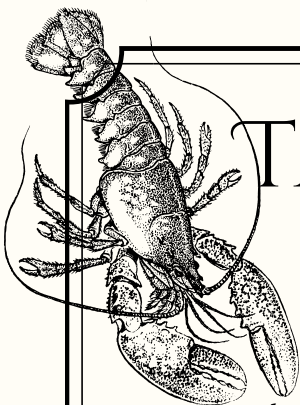
LOW & NO-ALCOHOL

Toby Barns Clarke (0.0%)

Incredibly fresh and unnuanced. First tasted recently in a cameo for The Welkin after initially sampling backstage life for Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense.

Gratuuity not included

Additional donations can be made at: progresstheatre.co.uk/fundraising



TASTING NOTES

Often, I come to write notes on a play with a detailed personal connection to the piece that has long driven me to want to see it staged, yet with *Dinner* I can lay no such claim. The staging of this play came about from personal connections not to a play, but to a person and a place.

A good friend had long spoken about their own love of *Dinner* and yet I never got around to reading it. Instead, I spent those years sporadically insisting that they take up the director mantle themselves. It seems all my efforts were in vain on that front, so this fine play on fine dining never took to this stage.

Plays are selected at Progress by putting in a proposal to a committee a year in advance of our season. I had a play that met my usual criteria, one that I'd been wanting to sink my teeth into for years, but I also had another motivation. As we emerged from the Covid period, it was evident that personal passion, however great a driving force for an individual

creative, may not be in the best interest of the theatre itself when there were other commercial interests at stake. I was going to ask the theatre to consider the play true to my heart but also thought it best to offer an alternative, one that might offer a better balance to the overall season or have a better chance at ticket sales.

I read a couple with no inspiration. Then I was reminded of *Dinner*.

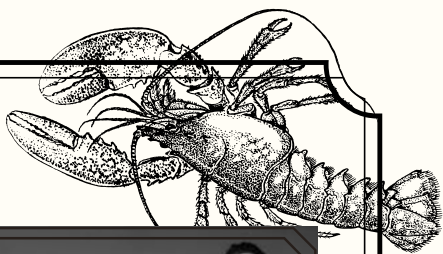


At first it was a case of seeing how it was possible to make it work. It was a very well written play and exactly my kind of humour. It worked as the perfect back up. Universally the committee preferred it to my first choice, we wouldn't be here if they hadn't, and so the new challenge became how to approach a play without that connection.

Thankfully for me, and hopefully for those of you watching this evening, it became easy. There are so many layers to *Dinner*, that it kept offering more on each read. The cast and crew that came on board did so with such passion and enthusiasm, that every step of the way it has been infectious and fun to work on. Much like the characters in the play, I may not have had the smoothest relationships with *Dinner*, not even one I ever saw happening, but one I am so glad came to be.

This is my tenth directorial effort at Progress, should it transpire to be my last then I can truly say that I will have gone out on a high. Enjoy.

Dan Clarke – Director



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70+ years of

PROGRESS
YOUTH

1950 - 2022

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2022/23

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Helen Wernham

PPC

Sahar Hemami

Mikhail Franklin

Peter Knightley

Thomas Ripper

Digital Theatre

Aidan Moran

Tony Travis

Archivist

Dan Clarke

Our 76th Season

2022

2 - 10 SEPTEMBER

Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense by P.G. Wodehouse, adapted by the Goodale Brothers

10 - 15 OCTOBER

The Pride by Alexi Kaye Campbell

2 - 5 NOVEMBER

The 16th Annual Writefest

16 - 19 NOVEMBER

Progress Premieres presents *Liar's Teeth* by Emily Goode

7 - 10 DECEMBER

Life is a Dream by Pedro Calderon, translated by Rhys Lawton

PROGRESS
YOUTH

2023

20 - 28 JANUARY

The Welkin by Lucy Kirkwood

3 - 11 MARCH

Lonesome West by Martin McDonagh

14 - 22 APRIL

Dinner by Moira Buffini

19 - 27 MAY

Silver Lining by Sandi Toksvig

19 - 24 JUNE

The Silence of the Sea by Paul Vercors, adapted by Peter Cheeseman

12 - 22 JULY

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare
Open Air at the Abbey Ruins

PT.▲