



# ACCESS GUIDE & VISUAL STORY

**Noël Coward's  
Brief Encounter  
Adapted for the stage by Emma Rice**

A Wiltshire Creative and New Wolsey Theatre  
Production, in association with Yvonne Arnaud Theatre.

This is a full synopsis of the show with matching  
photographs for anyone who may benefit from  
knowing the story ahead of time. Please note that  
this means it contains spoilers.

# Content

## Warning

Brief Encounter has an age guidance of 12+ and contains smoking, loud noises, moments of audience interaction and moderate sex references.

Please note: Throughout the show, several of the cast will play more than one role. There will also be loud sound effects throughout, including waves crashing, train noises, bells ringing, wind blowing, thunder and music.

For more information, please check the venue website for the full Content Warning document or contact the Box Office.

## Cast

Nicola Bryan - Myrtle Bagot

Hanora Kamen - Laura Jesson

Jammy Kasongo - Dr Alec Harvey

Samuel Morgan-Grahame - Albert Godby

Tom Self - Fred Jesson/Stephen Lynn and understudy  
Alec

Lucy Elizabeth Thorburn - Beryl

Luke Thornton - Stanley

Chioma Uma - Dolly Messiter and understudy

Laura/Beryl/Myrtle

## Creatives

Jessie Addinall - Lighting Designer

James Cook - Sound Designer

Jess Curtis - Set and Costume Designer

Daniel Denton - Video Designer

Margaret Lock - Wardrobe Supervisor

Debbie O'Brien - Casting Director

Douglas Rintoul - Director

Alexzandra Sarmiento - Choreographer

Tom Self - Musical Director, Orchestrator and Additional  
Music Composer

# Characters

The show is set in England during the winter of 1938-9.



## Laura Jesson

Laura is a middle-class woman. She is married to Fred Jesson and has two children - Margaret and Bobbie. She takes the train into town every Thursday to do some shopping.



## Dr Alec Harvey

Alec is a middle-class man. He is a doctor, married to a woman called Madeleine and with children, none of whom we meet. He works in a hospital in town on Thursdays and gets there by train.



## Fred Jesson

Fred is a middle-class man. He is Laura's husband and father to Margaret and Bobbie. At one point in the show, Laura describes him as 'medium height, kindly, unemotional and not delicate at all.'





### Myrtle Bagot

Myrtle is a working-class woman. She owns the tea room at the train station where Laura and Alec meet. She flirts a lot with Albert Godby.



### Beryl

Beryl is a young, working-class woman who works in Myrtle Bagot's tea room as a waiter. She has a relationship with Stanley.



### Albert Godby

Albert is a working-class man. He is a ticket inspector at the train station and he flirts with Myrtle.



### Stanley

Stanley is a young working-class man. He works for Myrtle at her tea room and he is in a relationship with Beryl.



## Dolly Messiter

Dolly is a middle-class woman. She is friends with the Jessons. She is unobservant and talks a lot about herself.

Other characters in the show include:

Waitress

Hermione

Margaret

Mary

Johnnie

Bobbie

Bill

Stephen Lynn

# Musical Numbers

Any Little Fish  
No Good at Love  
Mad About the Boy  
Wide Lagoon  
Go Slow, Johnny  
Romantic Fool  
So Good at Love  
A Room with a View  
Always

This show is an actor-musician show, which means that all the music is played live by the cast on stage.



# Prologue

Laura and Alec are sitting in two seats in the auditorium. They confess that they are in love with each other. Fred, Laura's husband, is away from them, calling and searching for Laura. Laura is desperate that she and Alec remain sensible. She makes the decision to go to Fred.

# Scene 1

Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room (at the train station).

Laura is having a cup of tea at the station tea room. Beryl calls for a cat called Minnie and Stanley walks in to restock on some food to sell, all the while winking and flirting with her. Myrtle Bagot scolds both of them, giving Stanley more stock and ordering Beryl to get back to work.

Albert Godby enters the tea room. He chats to Myrtle, who replies coldly. Albert isn't sure why she's being 'huffy' but apologises anyway. Laura leaves the tea room as a bell rings.



Alec enters the tea room and orders a cup of tea, sitting at a table. A train is heard rattling past and Laura runs back in, asking for a glass of water to bathe her eye. She has got a piece of grit in it from the train and is in pain. Alec helps her remove it, telling her that he is a doctor. She thanks him and another bell sounds, meaning her train is here. They both leave for their separate trains.



Song: Beryl and Stanley sing 'Any Little Fish.'



**Setting: The Jesson household.**

Laura arrives home and learns that her children, Margaret and Bobbie, have been fighting over whether or not to go to the pantomime or the circus the following day. Laura scolds them and chats with Fred about what to do.

**The song continues.**

**Setting: The street.**

Laura and Alec bump into each other in the street and exchange pleasantries.



**Setting: A busy dining room.**

Laura and Alec bump into each other again in a busy restaurant. Laura lets Alec share her table as it's so full. They introduce themselves properly, order some food, eat and chat. They discover that they are both going to the pictures (the cinema) that afternoon and they decide to go together.

As the scene changes, Myrtle and Beryl dance the 'Tearoom Ballet.'

## Scene 2

Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room

Myrtle and Beryl are chatting. We learn that Myrtle left her husband, who has since passed away. Stanley comes in and flirts with Beryl again, but Myrtle sends him back to work.

Alec and Laura come into the tea room. Alec orders them both tea and buns. While they chat, we see Albert sneak into the back room where Myrtle has gone.

Laura tells Alec that she feels like she did when she was a child and she and her sister had snuck out of the window at night and bathed in the sea. She felt adventurous and like she was sharing the danger, which is how she feels now. Alec reminds her that haven't done anything wrong.

They tell each other what their spouses are like and Alec tells Laura all about his work and his ideals, which are about 'preventive medicine.'

A bell rings - Alec's train is arriving. Alec asks if he will see her again. Laura worries he'll miss his train, but agrees to meet him next Thursday.





**Song: Myrtle, Beryl and Stanley sing 'No Good at Love.'**

**Setting: The Jessons' living room.**

**Laura arrives home and learns that Bobbie was hit by a car, but he's okay despite having slight concussion.**

**Laura sings part of 'The Wide Lagoon' to soothe him.**

**Fred is doing the crossword. Laura tells him that she had lunch with a strange man and went to the pictures with him. Fred doesn't care at all and Laura starts to laugh, realising she was worrying over nothing.**

**Beryl sings as the scene changes.**

**Song: Beryl sings 'Mad about the Boy.'**

## Scene 3

Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room

Laura sits on her own in the tea room, checking her watch. Myrtle is working and Albert comes in, flirting with her and making advances. Myrtle scolds him for being inappropriate. He hopes they'll meet tonight, but she says she'll think about it. She sends Stanley off again to work. Beryl enters saying that Mr Saunders, the station boss, wants to speak to Albert and he leaves.

Two soldiers enter the tea room and harass Myrtle for alcohol, which she cannot serve until 6pm. They verbally abuse her as she refuses to serve them. Myrtle sends Beryl to get Albert, who returns and kicks them out. Myrtle agrees to seeing him that evening.



A bell rings and Laura leaves the café for her train. On the platform, Alec runs up, apologising that he couldn't meet her because he got caught up at work. As they both rush for the train, they hurriedly agree to meet again the following Thursday. Alec gets on his train and leaves.

The sound of a huge wave crashing is heard and Laura sees herself as a child, swimming in the sea and feeling free.

**INTERVAL**





**Song: The company sing 'The Wide Lagoon.'**

**Setting: Laura and Alec are in a rowing boat on a lake.**

**Laura teases Alec about his bad rowing. Alec reaches up to a branch above them to look at the blossom and falls into the water. Laura laughs and does the same. They go into the boat hut to change out of their wet clothes, being careful to remain respectful of each other's boundaries.**

**Song: Stanley sings 'Go Slow, Johnny.'**

Laura and Alec sit on the upturned boat with their clothes hanging off it to dry. They have a small fire set up to warm them. They reveal that they are in love with each other, in a conversation that echoes the one in the prologue. Laura is desperate to be sensible, saying that they should forget what they've told each other. She says they aren't free to love each other.

The song continues. Alec and Laura gently dress each other and a train whistle brings them back to reality. They kiss, despite being in public.





**Setting: The Jessons' living room.**

The music from the previous scene is playing loudly and Fred asks to turn it down (on the radio in the new setting). Laura is sitting in a daydream. Fred goes to kiss her but she turns her head.

**Setting: The days of the week go by. It is now Thursday and Laura and Alec are at a fancy restaurant called The Royal.**

Laura and Alec drink champagne and talk about their love for each other and how every day is now a struggle, because they cannot be together. The band plays a tango and they dance.





**Song: The company sings 'Romantic Fool'**

**As the song goes on, Laura and Alec seem to fly amongst the stars.**

**Alec goes to collect their coats. In his absence, Hermione and Mary, acquaintances of Laura, turn up and question Laura about the man they saw her with. Laura lies, saying she's known the Harveys for years and that he's an old friend. She introduces Alec to Hermione and Mary when he returns. They make small talk briefly and then the women go. Laura is mortified that the women saw them having lunch.**



Alec says he is going back to Stephen Lynn's flat, implying that Laura is welcome to join him. She leaves.

Song: The company sings 'So Good at Love'

Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room

Albert and Myrtle enter, full of love and pride. They bicker over ordering Beryl around and Myrtle makes it clear that they should be sensible about not showing their relationship. The song continues and Albert kisses up her arm.



## Scene 4

Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room

Beryl is alone in the tea room. Stanley convinces her to close up early and tell her mother she was kept late so they can spend some time together.

Setting: Stephen Lynn's flat

On another part of the stage, Laura climbs up the steps to Stephen Lynn's flat, where Alec meets her. They begin to make love.

Outside the flat, they hear a key being put in the lock. Laura grabs her things and Alec leads her to the back door and lets her out. She feels humiliated and slowly pulls herself together, before going down the steps.





Stephen Lynn enters his flat and talks to Alec, noticing the woman's scarf that he and Laura have left behind. Knowing full well what it means, Stephen makes the appearance of pretending that Alec must have had a patient over to visit. Stephen asks for his key back from Alec. He returns it, aware of Stephen's disappointment in him.

**Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room**

Beryl is locking up the tea room as Laura arrives and asks for a glass of brandy, clearly shaken. Beryl fetches a piece of a paper and an envelope for Laura, who begins to write on them. Alec arrives. He tries to console Laura, who feels wretched and embarrassed. She says that they shouldn't see each other any more. He agrees, but says not quite yet - they need a proper goodbye. He tells her that he is going away. Beryl tries to kick them out so she can close the tea room, but Alec convinces her to let them stay another few minutes. Beryl goes to meet Stanley in this time.





Alec asks Laura to promise to meet him at the train station again next Thursday so he can explain about him going away. Laura asks where he is going and he says he has been offered a job in Johannesburg which he wasn't going to take, but since they now shouldn't see each other, it makes sense to accept it. Laura cries. The bell goes; Laura's train has arrived. They say goodbye as Beryl returns to lock up. Alec goes to sit in the waiting room to wait for his train.



Song: Alec sings 'A Room with a View'

## Scene 5

Setting: Milford Junction Tea Room

Alec and Laura meet for the last time. They are tense and quiet. Myrtle serves them tea. They don't know what to say to each other. They wonder if their children will ever meet. They agree not to write to each other. They know their love will never fade. Just as they have a few minutes left before Alec needs to get his train, Dolly Messiter enters the tea room with lots of parcels. She spots Laura and goes to join them, chatting away, not noticing (or ignoring) the sombre atmosphere.



Laura painfully introduces Alec to Dolly, who asks him to fetch her some tea. Dolly talks away at Laura about trivial things, Laura doing her best to pretend to be interested. Alec returns with Dolly's tea and the bell goes for his train. Alec and Laura reluctantly say goodbye, hiding their true feelings from Dolly. Alec presses a hand on Laura's shoulder, and leaves.



Dolly continues to talk. Laura listens for Alec's train leaving and hears it fade away into the distance. Dolly is telling Laura about a couple they know who are splitting up because one of them had an affair. Another bell sounds as another train approaches. Dolly goes up to Myrtle to buy chocolate and Laura jumps up and leaves the tea room, going onto the platform. The train goes past.

Song: The company sings 'Misery'

Laura is standing on the edge of the platform. She doesn't jump, but no longer feels alive.



# Epilogue

Setting: The Jesson household

Fred says to Laura that she has been a long way away and thanks her for coming back to him. He leaves the room. The sound of waves crashing can be heard and there is a feeling of emptiness. Laura goes to play the piano and starts to play. As the music continues, we see Laura swimming in the ocean, floating and free.

The End

# ON YOUR ARRIVAL

Salisbury Playhouse has two main entrances that are both automatic doors.

You can take a virtual tour of our venue by visiting our website  
<https://www.wiltshirecreative.co.uk/your-visit/seating-plans/virtual-tour/>



## IN THE FOYER

If you use the main entrance you find yourself in the foyer, if you use the automatic door you can make your way past the coffee lounge through to the foyer where you will find the bar, ticket office and toilets.



Sometimes the foyer can be quite busy before a performance while people wait to go into the theatre.



## TOILETS

We have accessible toilets available downstairs. Gentlemen and an accessible toilet to the left of the bar and ladies to the right. We also have an extra enhanced toilet downstairs near the lift.



# COLLECTING TICKETS

If you are going to see a performance you might need to collect your ticket. To do this, go to the ticket office and a member of staff will help you.



# ASKING FOR HELP

If you need any help, please ask any member of staff who can be identified by a badge or during relaxed performances they will be wearing an orange sash. They are very friendly and can help if you are worried or have any questions.

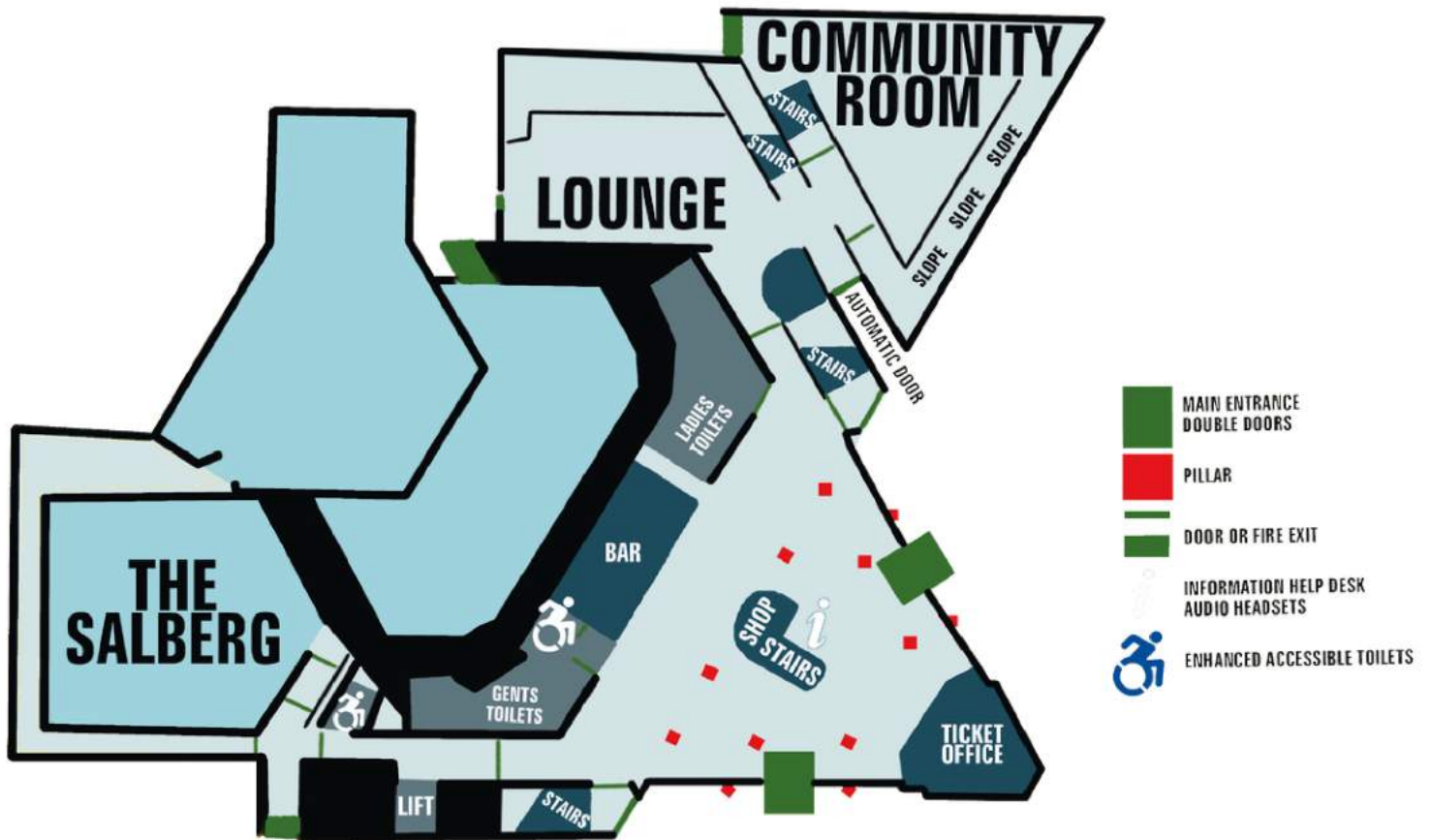
# FOOD AND DRINK

If you want to buy drinks or snacks you can buy them from the bar or the shop.

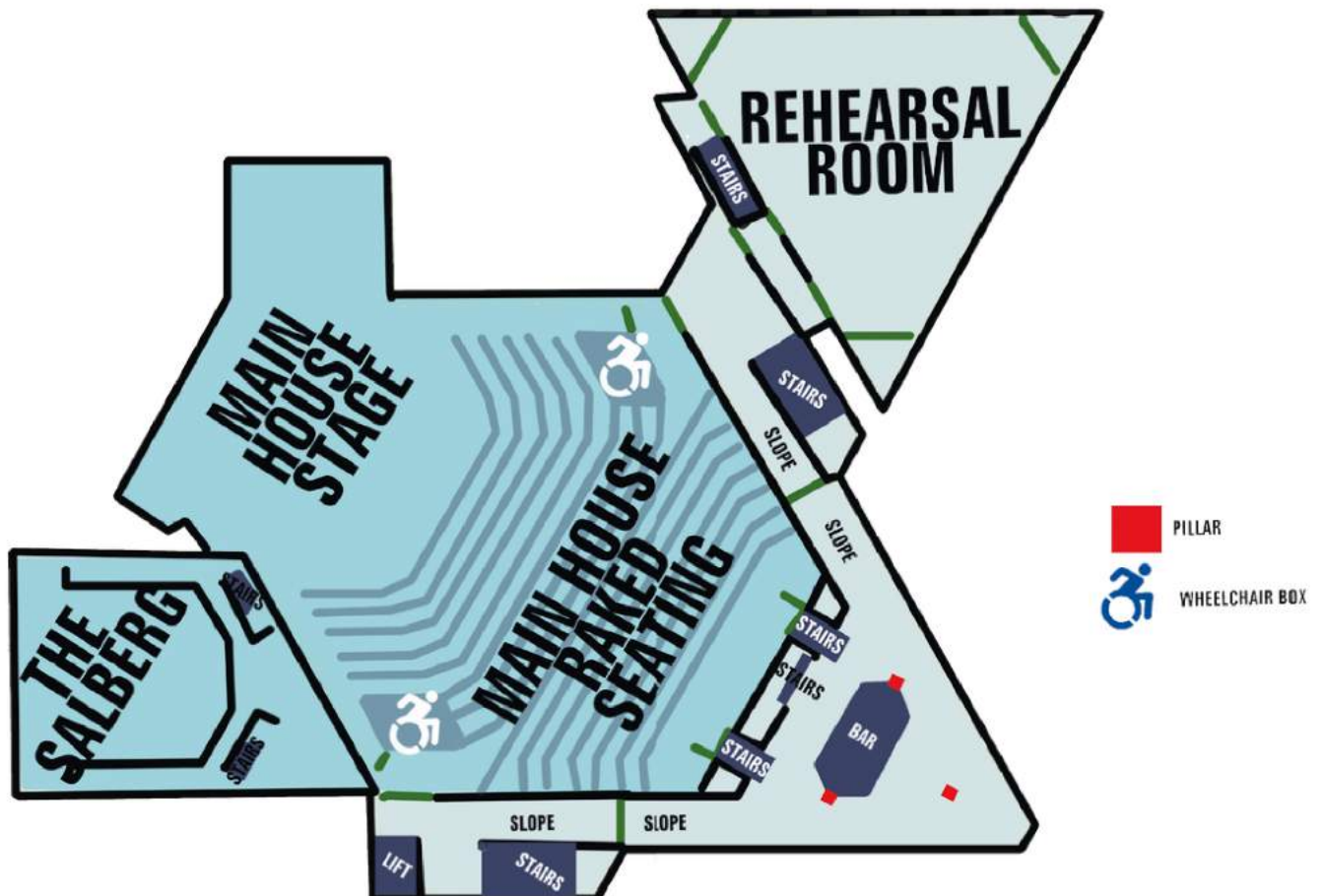


# MAP OF SALISBURY PLAYHOUSE

Salisbury Playhouse ground floor

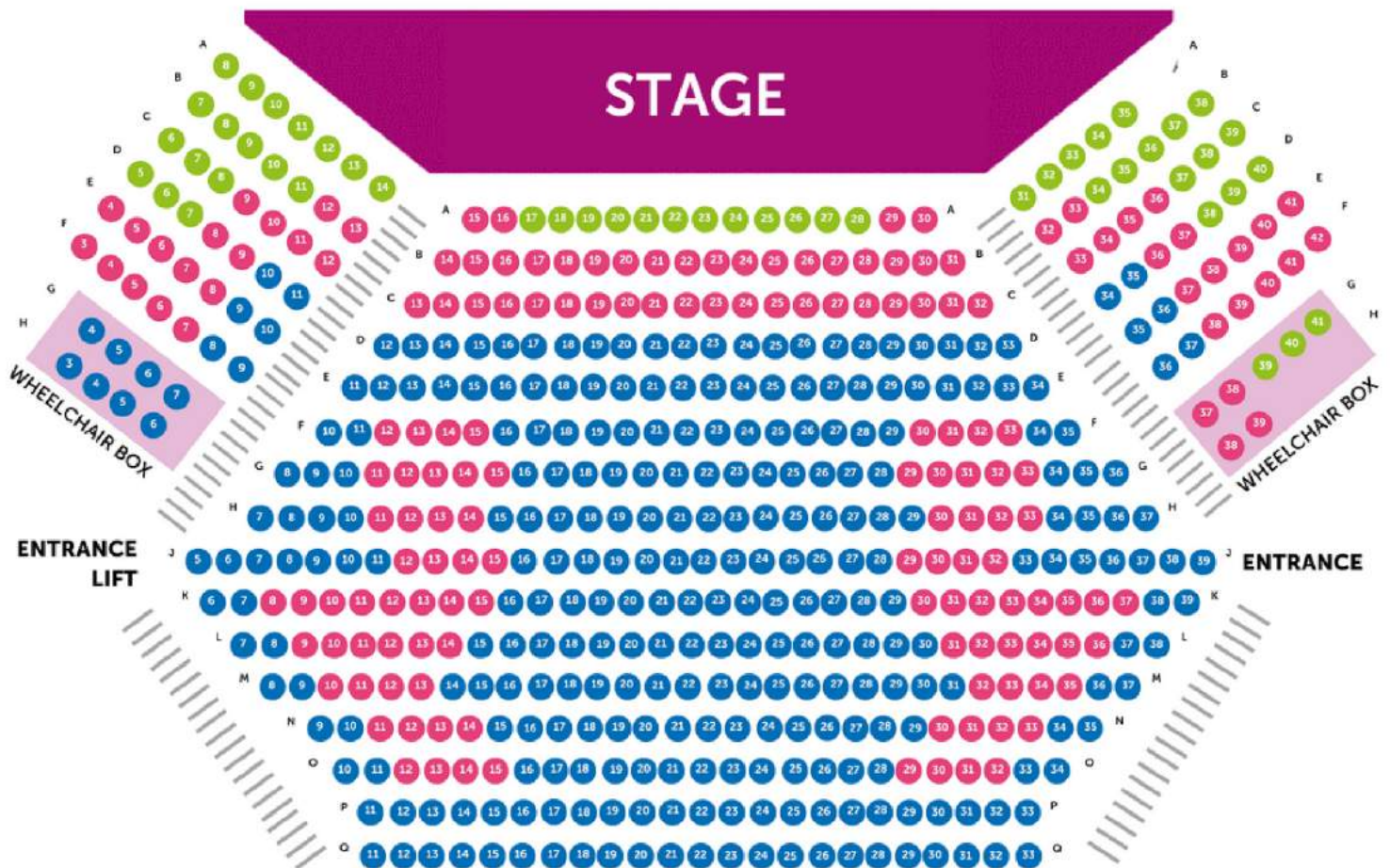
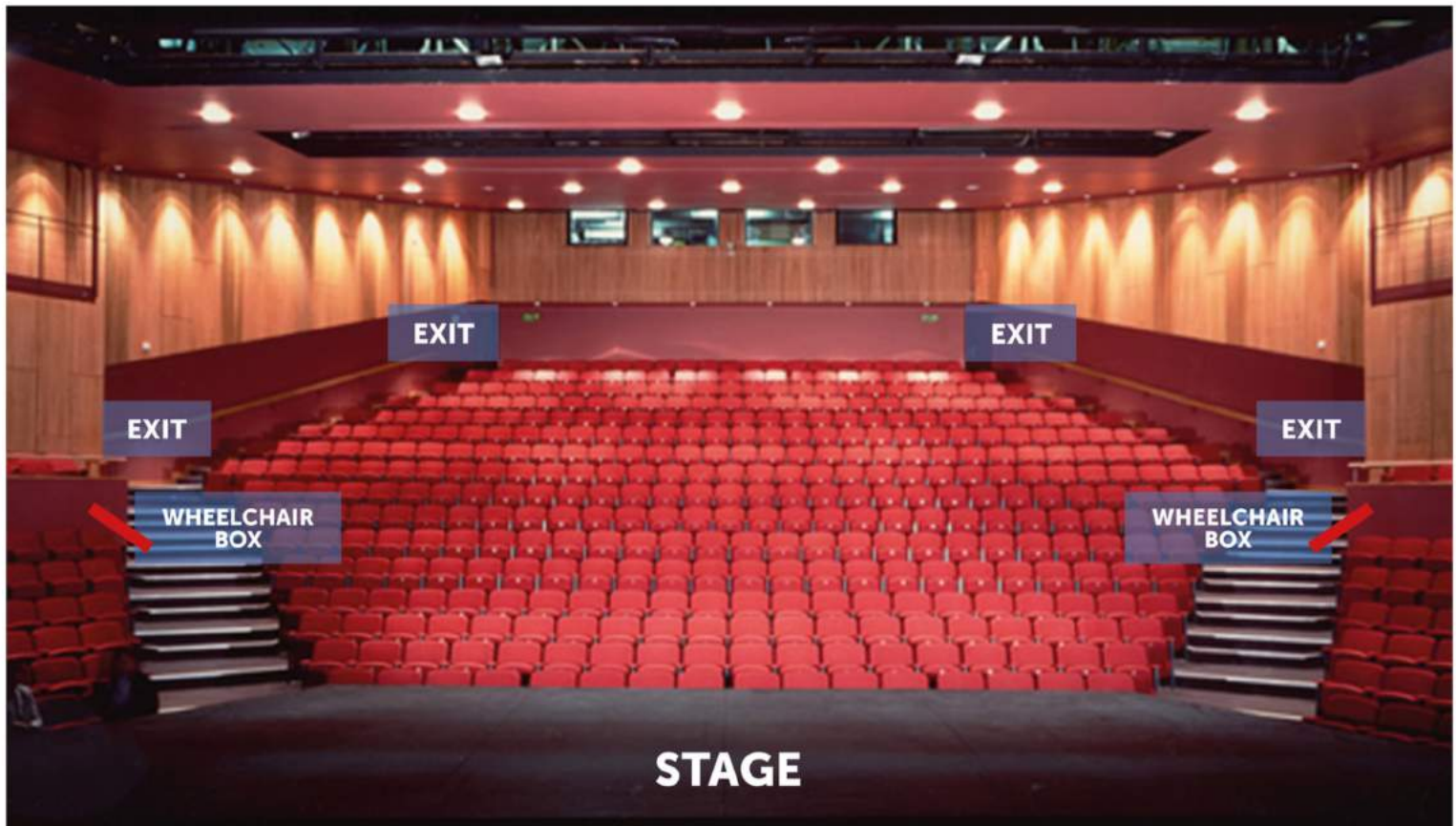


Salisbury Playhouse first floor





# INSIDE THE MAIN HOUSE





# WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE THEATRES

Your seat number will be on your ticket and an usher will show you to your seat.

When the performance is going to start the lights will dim slowly and the theatre will be slightly darker than when you arrived.

When everyone is ready the actors will come out onto the stage and the performance will begin.

During the play you might feel happy or sad. It is ok to laugh or feel sad if you want to.

If you would like to take sometime out during the performance you may leave at any time and find a seat in the foyer until you are ready to go back in.

You will know it is the end of the performance because the actors will take a bow. Everyone will clap their hands to show the actors that they enjoyed the play.

## ACCESSIBILITY

We are committed to being accessible and welcoming to everyone. To make your visit as enjoyable as possible we have put together this quick guide to Salisbury Playhouse, what to expect and finding your way around. Whether you are coming to watch a play, take part or just popping in for a drink at our cafe/bar, we want you to feel as comfortable and relaxed as you would in your own home.

If you have any suggestions for ways in which we could improve this guide to make it more helpful to you or your group, please do let us know. You can email us on [access@wiltshirecreative.co.uk](mailto:access@wiltshirecreative.co.uk)



### Captioned Performances

Speech is relayed live onto a screen, similar to television subtitles and ideal for those who may find it difficult hearing every word



### British Sign Language performances

A BSL interpreter will stand in a visible position and interpret the spoken and heard elements of the performance



### Audio Described performances

A live narrator describes the action on stage between the dialogue, via headphones.



### Relaxed Performances

Aimed at anyone who would benefit from a laid back environment, so that everyone can enjoy live performance in an environment that is comfortable and supportive.