

Lyric

Welcome to this introduction to **Closer** by Patrick Marber. It is a Lyric Hammersmith Theatre production and has been directed by Clare Lizzimore.

The audio described performance at the Lyric will be on Saturday 30 July at 7.30pm. There will be a touch tour at 6pm and the introductory notes will start at 7.15pm. The performance lasts for approximately 2 hours and 25 minutes. This includes a 20 minute interval. Each act is about 65 minutes long.

Please note that *Closer* makes use of haze, strobe lighting and flashing lights. The performance also contains smoking, strong language, sexually explicit language, adult themes and scenes of a sexual and violent nature. The live audio description will be given by Ruth James and Alison Clarke.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the play's premiere, Olivier Award-winning director Clare Lizzimore stages a radical new production of Patrick Marber's cult-classic about longing, lust, sex, and desire. She writes in the programme: 'I had to find a way of preserving *Closer*'s late 1990s setting, but acknowledge that we're viewing it in a very different time... I immediately thought of Brecht, and how creating a distance between the production and the play allows for politics. So I hope this production allows us to see that what we are watching is constructed. But it is truthful in the moment-to-moment intensity of the drama'.

Closer takes place in the chaos of London in the 1990s over a period of four years when four strangers meet, fall in love and fall apart.

There is a cast of four central actors, two women and two men, who wear modern dress. They act naturalistically in the central area of the stage, unlike the silent chorus of four – also composed of two men and two women. Their actions are very stylised, silently reflecting on or patterning the action in the main acting area, remaining, for the most part, in the shadows at the back. The chorus all wear black – leggings or trousers, with sleeveless tops, leaving their arms and hands brightly lit at times as they move fluidly. The two young women have their dark hair smoothed back into tight buns; so does one young man with his long hair. The other young man has short, neatly cut blond hair.

Alice is first to appear, described in the script as 'a girl from the town'. She is petite, and at 24 seems very worldly-wise. She wears street-smart, mainly black clothes. Initially she wears a purple wig cut into a thick bob that pales to lilac at the ends, high-top black Doc Marten boots with yellow stitching, fishnet tights and a micro skirt and blouse tied at the waist. The wig covers her own shiny brown bobbed hair, which she sometimes sweeps up into a short ponytail, away from her pale, heart-shaped

face. Alice later wears a variety of short black dresses, ending halfway up her thigh, with minimal jewellery, occasionally adding a long black coat with fur collar and cuffs.

Dan joins her. He's 'a man from the suburbs', tall and slender with a relaxed poise. His chestnut brown hair is initially held back in a ponytail, but for the most part is loose, sweeping in unruly locks to just past his shoulders. He always wears grey, a loose but well-cut suit, over a grey shirt, worn with black suede shoes. Dan carries a brown leather satchel and wears black-rimmed glasses on his long face – whose mild and initially shy expression is belied by his strong chin.

Larry next arrives, 'a man from the city'. He's a doctor, a dermatologist, and wears a white coat over his smart black suit, a white shirt, open at the neck, and expensive black shoes, adding a black mac later. Larry has a slightly distracted air, his short light brown hair ruffled, as he sweeps his hand through it, pushing it back from his high forehead. He is white, with a full, neatly trimmed light brown beard with a few grey hairs at the chin.

Lastly, we meet **Anna**, described as 'a woman from the country', but seeming far more sophisticated than this would imply. She is a tall, elegant black woman, in flowing, wide-legged trousers over slip-on platform sandals, with a loosely draped sleeveless top. Over this she often wears a thin black wrap, draping down to her knees. Anna's black ringlets are swept back from her face on one side, revealing dangling silver earrings, and confined by a thin black slide, to fall in a sweep of hair over her left ear, sometimes in front of her intensely dark eyes.

As we enter, the stage is open to us, all the way to the black back wall. At the front, in the centre, a glowing, richly red square is inserted level with the black shiny floor of the stage. The square is 5 metres on each side and is the main acting area throughout. It is level with the stage and protrudes out into the auditorium by about a metre.

The rest of the set and most of the costumes are monochrome with the props and structures all black, except for two red and two white chairs and the pale wooden top of a dressing table. This dressing table is just behind and to the left of the red square, forming one of several distinct areas, set out on the stage, behind and to the sides of the red square. They are used by the chorus and by the four main actors as their personal spaces when not directly involved with the action on the red square.

The main actors' areas are to the left and right.

On the left of the square is Larry's area. It's his office in the hospital, with a tall white chair behind a tall white table. On it is a black phone, a black angle poise lamp and a white keyboard – over which Larry looks as he types, facing out towards us, as if watching the computer screen. Behind it on the left is Alice's area - the dressing table, with a mirror surrounded with bulbs above it and on it, a wig block. Anna's area is directly opposite Alice's, on the right side of the stage. Anna has a white chair with her camera on a tripod beside it, in front of a line of large A4 photographs strung across from a tall lampstand with a black shade. Dan's area is at the back on the far right –

he has a red chair beside a side table, with a bottle of whisky and a glass and a pile of A4 paper. He also has a table in front of this, with a computer keyboard, an angle poise lamp and a Newton's cradle - one of those executive desk toys of small steel balls that are suspended on strings so that they click against each other.

To the left of this table is the musician's area – set out in a row centrally behind the main acting area. First, there's a set of drums, played by **Radhika Aggarwal** during the show, with a table holding **Arun Ghosh**'s keyboards to their left. Further left is a large 1990s boom box, then a guitar on a floor stand.

Behind this row of musicians and their instruments is a long walkway, crossing the width of the stage. It's black and about 3 metres high off the ground, with steps leading up to it on each side and many props stored underneath. This is the chorus's main area. Here they stand behind, on top and in front as needed, using the props or standing in couples as they reflect the action.

The lights are suspended high above the stage on black gantries, with other square lights on both sides of the red square. Other effects sometimes appear on the back wall, such as rippling water or letters. Sometimes scenes overlap or alternate with the actors' emotion still carried over and audible from the previous scene.

Finally, there are four black wooden bench seats. At the beginning, one is placed on the red square, facing us, with a brown leather satchel resting against it, while two others stand on the right side of the square and the last on the left.

The Lyric's website quotes from the play:

'What do you want?'

'To be loved.'

'That simple?'

'It's a big want.'

Due to the nature of the production and the quick-fire dialogue, the audio description will be minimal.

CAST

Dan is played by **Jack Farthing**

Alice by **Ella Hunt**

Anna by **Nina Toussaint-White**

Larry by **Sam Troughton**

The chorus are: **Kane Feagan, Georgia-Rose Oliver, Sam Purkis and Wilf Walsworth**

CREATIVES

The Musicians are **Radhika Aggarwal** and **Arun Ghosh**

The Movement Director is **Malik Nashad Sharpe**

The Sound Designer is **Christopher Shutt**

Composer, Arranger and Musical Director is **Arun Ghosh**
The Lighting Designer is **Richard Howell**
The Set and Costume Designer is **Soutra Gilmour**
Directed by **Clare Lizzimore**