

beginning

BY DAVID ELDRIDGE

Resources Content Warnings & Self Care Pack



Self-Care Guide: Beginning

This document has been designed to support audiences attending performances of Beginning By David Eldridge
16 February – 11 March 2023.

We've created this document for those who would be comfortable with more information and give you a little insight into the show. We hope the information and resources in this document will help audiences experiencing the show, and support planning for anyone who may be concerned about their visit.

Contents

1. Content Warnings
2. About the show
3. Cast
4. Interviews and Rehearsal Snaps
5. AI Design Interview and Insight
6. Draw Your own set
7. Combatting Loneliness and Wellbeing Guide
8. Local Events
9. Quiz
10. Wordsearch



Show Information

Content Warnings

- Partial Nudity
 - Sexual References
 - Mild Drug References
 - Mild Smoking references
 - Strong Alcohol References
 - Very Strong language throughout
 - For ages 14+
 - Loud use of music at points
-



Running Time

2 Hour running time with NO interval. Please make all students aware.

Travel Recommendation

If your school or college is near a tram stop you can get your students to us for just £1 each and £2 per teacher. A great way to save money on coaches and also give students the life experience of how a lot of our audiences use public transport to access our theatre. [More information here.](#)

Fares and passes for young people | [Transport for Greater Manchester \(tfgm.com\)](#)

A bit about the show

AN INTIMATE AND BEAUTIFULLY COMIC PLAY ABOUT RISKING IT ALL AND WEARING YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE. BEGINNING WAS A SMASH-HIT WHEN IT PREMIERED AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE IN 2017.

"I feel like my whole life's on the toss of a coin."

The house-warming's over. The place is a mess, but Laura doesn't give a toss, not even about the fag burn on the carpet; she has other things on her mind. She's 38, single, and has just bought a 'fancy' one-bedroom flat, but she's sick of being sensible. Tonight though, she has a feeling in her bones. Then there's Danny, whose 'radar' is out of battery, ketchup on his work shirt and a peroni in his hand ...just to calm his nerves.

In the post-party chaos, Laura and Danny slowly orbit each other – awkward moves, first dances, fish finger butties, embarrassing banter. Together they navigate infinite possibilities, and as night shifts into day, an unthinkable, impossible and life-changing opportunity becomes clear. Amongst the missteps and butterflies, there might just be.... a beginning?

Joint Artistic Director Bryony Shanahan directs this intimate, beautiful, funny play about risking it all and wearing your heart firmly on your sleeve. BEGINNING was a smash-hit when it premiered at the National Theatre in 2017.



Meet The Cast



Gerard Kearns

So you will know Gerard Kearns is instantly recognisable to fans from the hit TV show Shameless as Ian Gallagher. But he has gone onto have worked on more incredible projects with the likes of Mike Leigh (Peterloo) and Ken Loach (Looking for Eric) and gripped viewers on the small screen in dramas such as Chernobyl and The Last Kingdom. But it is not the first time the wonderful Gerard has graced our stage. Ten years ago he made his Royal Exchange Theatre debut in the play The Accrington Pals.



Erin Shanagher

If you are an ITV drama fan then you will have seen our wonderful Erin Shanagher in the hit show The Bay. Soap stars might recognise her from Emmerdale or if there are any BBC enthusiasts out there you may have seen her in Peaky Blinders. Fun fact about Erin and her connection to The Royal Exchange Theatre is she used to work here in the front of house team selling chocolates.

Interview Time

Also why not listen to Erin and Gerard tell you a little bit about the show. Scan the QR code below or click the link.



Scan Me



**Erin and Gerard
Interview**

Rehearsal Snaps



 Chris Payne



 Chris Payne



 Chris Payne

Production Shots



Helen Murray



Helen Murray



Helen Murray

Interview Time



At the Royal Exchange we are always pushing boundaries and coming up with new innovative ways of showcasing stories. For “Beginning” we have brought on designer TK Hay who’s phenomenal set design incorporates the use of AI. Here is TK explaining all about the design elements in this article below.

The architecture of the Royal Exchange invariably evokes the epic and theatrical. Beginning seemingly presents a foil to both traits, being an intimate two-hander set within the naturalistic confines of the aftermath of a raucous housewarming party.

Any reservations about how the play and the space might be at odds were quickly put to rest in my initial conversations with Bryony. The epic quality of the space became the lens through which the loneliness of Laura and Danny would be magnified. The challenge of siting the interior of a flat on a heptagonal stage became an opportunity: What statement could we make and what effect could we achieve in doing so?

As the setting was being relocated to Manchester, I visited Altrincham and Chorlton for inspiration. During my walks, I found myself staring a lot at tarmac. Although tarmac is obviously not exclusive to any locale, I found its liminality fascinating. It is a material encountered only in transit between destinations, uncannily reflecting the deep sense of direction-lessness and angst experienced by both characters.

As a designer, I endeavour to try something new on every show I work on. In Beginning, I dabbled with AI-generated imagery. Using text prompts but avoiding references to any other artists, I was able to quickly generate images on Mid journey to capture the gist of my ideas. Using these images, Bryony and I were able to home in on the qualities we were interested in exploring and accentuating in the space.

The naturalistic aspect of the design was more straightforward. A thorough script analysis alongside multiple conversations about Laura informed every detail of the design. These ranged from the circumstances under which her couch was procured, to the decor she has curated for her guests, and the unglamorous contents of her fridge.

Scale models are an integral part of most theatre designers’ processes, helping the team visualise the space. For Beginning, both physical and digital models were employed. The physical models kept everyone on the team on the same page at all stages. However, specific properties of the venue and design necessitated a 3D digital model that would allow us to examine sightlines from every seat in the round. This ensured that every audience member would have a clear view of Laura's and Danny's back-and-forth on stage: Will it be a brief dalliance between the two, or the beginning of something more?

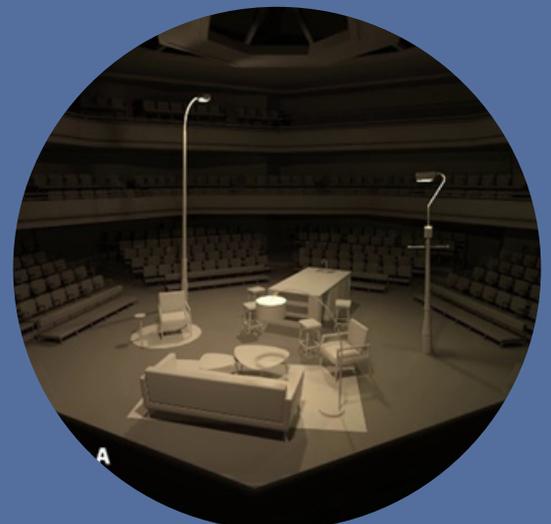
You can see some of TK's design process on the lead up to the show below.



Scan Me



Hear TK discuss more about the design here



Self-Care Guide: Beginning

Loneliness

Beginning really explores the theme of loneliness throughout the show. In total, 45% of adults feel occasionally, sometimes or often lonely in England. This equates to twenty five million people. So with that statistic we thought it would be a good opportunity to open up a discussion on loneliness and put together these mental health tips and recommendations to perhaps offer some help.

Tips to combat loneliness

1. Keep in touch with those around you

Talk to friends and family. Sometimes a friendly chat can make a big difference, whether someone is around the corner or further away.

2. Join a group

Find a group with a shared interest. Being part of an offline or online group or club is a great way to make connections and meet people. Think about activities that you would like to try out and look for groups centred around these.

3. Do things you enjoy

Filling your time doing more things you like can stop you from focusing on feelings of loneliness and is good for your wellbeing.

4. Share your feelings – but do not compare

Being able to talk about how you feel with others can help with loneliness, and hearing a familiar voice or seeing a friendly face makes us feel less isolated.

5. Help someone else feel connected

Reach out to others – think about people you know who might be feeling lonely and make an effort to connect with them.

6. Invite someone along to activities near you

There are many free and low-cost activities you can take part in throughout the year.

https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/lifes-challenges/loneliness/?gclid=CjwKCAiA_vKeBhAdEiwAFb_nreVQRJB2kfDmJkdA0CRRu1kkPOp-fphgnOPrFcfYISCqeBeecVfW0hoCWxkQAvD_BwE



You can read the full tips list in full here on “Every Mind Matters”



Facts About Loneliness

Loneliness is seen by many as one of the largest health concerns we face. Why? Here are the facts.

- In 2016 to 2017, there were 5% of adults (aged 16 years and over) in England reporting feeling lonely "often/always" – that's 1 in 20 adults. Furthermore, 16% of adults reported feeling lonely sometimes and 24% occasionally. [10]
- According to the ONS, women reported feeling lonely more frequently than men. They were significantly more likely than men to report feeling lonely "often/always", "some of the time" and "occasionally" and were much less likely than men to say they "never" felt lonely
- Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 26% (Holt-Lunstad, 2015)

Read more facts here below

The facts on loneliness | Campaign to End Loneliness

Local Events

Listed below are some events and places around Manchester that can help combat loneliness.

Manchester Cares



Manchester Cares is a community network of younger and older neighbours hanging out and helping one another in our rapidly changing city.

Find out more here

<https://manchestercares.org.uk/home>



House of Books & Friends



New bookshop and cafe to help combat loneliness opens in Manchester City Centre
A new independent bookshop, cafe and events space has opened its doors in Manchester City Centre
Based in the Manchester Club building on King Street, House of Books & Friends aims to combat loneliness by providing a space for local people to establish connections and make friends



<https://houseofbooksandfriends.com/>

Speed Mate-ing with GirlGangMCR



Speed Mate-ing with GirlGangMCR

It can be hard making new friends as an adult, can't it? Speed Mate-ing with Girl Gang Manchester is here to help.

Read more



<https://www.girlgangmcr.com/speed-mate-ing-1>

Next Event



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/speed-mate-ing-with-girlgangmcr-tickets-528279687767>

Young Company



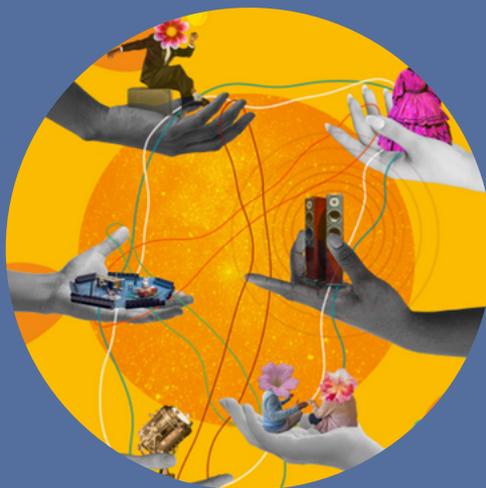
Sometimes doing activities outside of school time can open up some great new friendships and connections. The Young Company is the Royal Exchange Theatres', award-winning, resident Company of Young People aged 14 – 21. Providing weekly workshops, production opportunities and free tickets to our main house shows.

[Young Company](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Royal Exchange Theatre](#)



Read more

Young Collective



Want to meet some like minded people? Under 26? Become a Collective Member to access a year round programme of workshops and projects, unlock discounts and offers at the theatre, and join a growing network of young creatives in Greater Manchester.

[Young Company Collective](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Royal Exchange Theatre](#)



Read more

Helplines & support

If you're affected by the show's themes and need support, or just want someone to chat to, you can call The Samaritans on 116 123.

If you don't need immediate support but would like to learn more about services that may be available for yourself or someone you know, we'd recommend looking into the organisations Andy's Man Club, Great Get Together and The Samaritans.

The Samaritans <https://samaritans.org>

Andy's Man Club <https://andysmanclub.co.uk>

Great Get Together <https://www.greatgettogether.org/>

Self Care Suggestions

If you're concerned about attending the show, there are a few things we'd suggest that might help.

Before the show

Read the content warnings before deciding to see the show.

Sit with a friend

The show can tackle some tough themes so maybe sit with a friend, family member or someone you trust.

After the performance

If you've found something in the show triggering we'd suggest talk to someone you trust or one of the organisations we've listed above. You can also talk to a member of our staff who will be able to signpost you organisations around the area

Quiz Time!

Now you have seen the show, here are some nice activities to do on the way home

1. What beer does Danny say he is getting from the fridge?
2. What hashtag does Danny's nan use on twitter?
3. What area of Manchester is Laura's flat located?
4. What type of wine does Danny pour for Laura?
5. Does Laura choose a dirty Ginsters or Jamie's?
6. What popular BBC One Show is referenced in the show?
7. What sandwich does Laura make for Danny?
8. On which day of the week does Laura not want to be alone anymore?
9. West Didsbury, Chorlton and Altrincham is called the what triangle in the show?
10. What job position does Laura have at her company?
11. Who is the writer of Beginning?
12. Name both the actors in Beginning?

Answers



1. Peroni, 2. #Nanstweets, 3. Didsbury, 4. Chablis, 5. Dirty Ginsters, 6. Strictly Come Dancing, 7. Fish Finger sandwich, 8. Sundays, 9. Pesto Triangle, 10. MD, 11. David Eldridge, 12. Erin Shanagher & Gerard Kearns

Wordsearch

Find all the words relating to the show

Beginning

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other. Use the word bank below.

T Z W S J Q J K M A R K T N S
B V E E F Y C L M X O V R N S
E C L M E E X N J D Y E H R E
G F M S D R H N A N A Y O Y N
I I A C K O T L Q S L Z U G I
N S N V G L A A O F E P E T L
N H C R L U H Y E U C G O H E
I F H K R J N Y B H N L M E N
N I E A O N L S A A T S R A O
G N S C A N S R H M K A T Z L
T G T D V A R C P Y X I G U U
N E E N M A X I K M H Q J H C
Q R R J P E N S K I F E O H M
E S A I G Y M Y Y T F I H P R
N M P A R T Y O U H L I M U F

Word Bank

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. beginning | 2. nan | 3. laura | 4. loneliness |
| 5. exchange | 6. royal | 7. danny | 8. theatre |
| 9. party | 10. fishfingers | 11. manchester | |

What's coming up at The Exchange

Thank you so much for reading and we hope the resources were useful. Here is what we have coming up over the next few months, we hope to see you again soon.



CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

A PULITZER PRIZE WINNING CLASSIC, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF IS A TURBULENT AND BRUTAL COMIC DRAMA FROM LEGENDARY PLAYWRIGHT TENNESSEE WILLIAMS.

24 MAR 23 - 29 APR 23



NO PAY? NO WAY!

THIS FEROCIOUS AND FEISTY POLITICAL COMEDY IS AN URGENT EXPLORATION OF OUR GLOBAL ECONOMIC REALITY.

12 MAY 23 - 10 JUN 23



UNTITLED F*CK M*SS S**GON PLAY

STUNNINGLY OBSERVED AND SHARPLY-COMIC, THIS WORLD PREMIERE WAS THE INAUGURAL WINNER OF THE INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR THE BRUNTWOOD PRIZE FOR PLAYWRITING IN 2019.

24 JUN 23 - 22 JUL 23