



HOPELESS ROMANTICS

by Nick Lane & Fiona Wass
Info for Assistant Directors

Thank you for your interest in The Courtyard's production of Nick Lane and Fiona Wass's *Hopeless Romantics*, which will take place at The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, Hereford, in July 2021. This page provides some general information about the production and The Courtyard.

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In an age of internet dating, speed dating, blind dating and Tinder, isn't it harder not to find someone these days? Alan doesn't think so. And he should know; aside from the girl with the pigtails and the lisp in Primary School, he's spent his entire life as a "non-elective celibate." Or to put it another way, he's single. Very, very single.

Not that that's a problem – lots of people are happy in their own company, but when your sisters are all living romantic dreams and everyone's on your back to know when you'll be bringing someone home, the pressure tends to mount somewhat. So with his family gathering for an anniversary dinner, Al does something rather reckless – he pays Zoe, a girl on work experience, to pose as his girlfriend for the night. Unfortunately for Al, Zoe's got romantic problems of her own... amongst other things!

The Courtyard Centre for the ARTs, along with Nick Lane (*The Goal*) and Fiona Wass (*Murder at Berrington*), invite you to spend an evening with this mismatched pair. Will it be the start of a beautiful friendship or the end of the world as they know it? Find out this summer!

Production Details

Overall dates:	Monday 5 July 2021 to Saturday, 24 July 2021
Rehearsals:	commence on 5 July in Hereford, Monday to Saturday
Performances:	from 20 July to 24 July 2021 (6 in all)
Producer:	Ian Archer
Director:	Nick Lane

The Courtyard

The Courtyard, built in 1998, is Herefordshire's major centre for the arts. Situated near the centre of Hereford it comprises a 400-seat main house, 120-seat studio, café bar and restaurant, a gallery, workshops, rehearsal spaces and meeting rooms. The Courtyard has an excellent reputation for in-house productions, which in the past have ranged from full-scale musicals to Shakespeare, comedy and original pantomimes and national tours.

Hereford

The cathedral city of Hereford is approximately 3 hours from London and is equidistant (approx 50 miles) from Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff. Herefordshire has lots of pretty market towns (Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye, to name but two), picturesque black-and-white villages and some stunning countryside.

The Courtyard Centre for the Arts
Edgar Street
Hereford
HR4 9JR

Tel: 01432 346507
Website: www.courtyard.org.uk

Character Breakdown

AL – Late twenties. Geeky, awkward, naïve, funny. Al is a very romantic young man with an overbearing mother, an underwhelming father and a trio of sisters who all think he's doomed to remain single all his life. The decision he makes – offering a girl from work (Zoe) some money to pose as his girlfriend at a family gathering for the night – is an attempt to get his family off his back, but also a far-fetched, Hollywood romcom idea of love. Plus, as we discover, there's more to his arrangement with Zoe than initially meets the eye.

ZOE – Early twenties. Smart; streetwise, sarcastic, funny. On the surface Zoe is a young, capable, fun-loving girl who doesn't seem to have a care in the world. Up for an adventure, she accepts the challenge – and the money – from an almost complete stranger (Al) to pose as his girlfriend for the evening. Underneath it all, however, Zoe is spinning plates. Her overly-dependant wreck of a dad needs her, her ex won't leave her alone, her Uncle is dying, her best mate is at art college and she's desperate to get out, get off the estate, out of Hereford and never come back. The role requires a performer who is good with comedy. It would suit a recent graduate.

UTILITY FEMALE: Avril, Alison, Abi, Amy, Kath – a utility role for a female actor with skill with comedy and multi-roleplaying experience. Playing range early twenties – early fifties. The roles break down as follows: Avril – Al's mother. Judgmental, a little smothering, a bit of a Hyacinth Bucket (*Keeping Up Appearances*) type. Keeps her husband in check and has seemingly given Al passive/aggressive grief since he was in nappies.

Alison – one of Al's sisters. Married to Sean and mother of three, she seems to have it all but her husband is having an affair that she won't even acknowledge, let alone talk about with others.

Abi – another of Al's sisters. A bright woman, though so terrified of her mother's judgment and outdated opinions on things she has not only kept her sexuality a secret, she has lied about her partner Sam (who her parents have never met), saying she's a man.

Amy – The youngest of Al's sisters. Amy has told her parents she's single but is having an affair with a married man and is desperately unhappy.

Kath – Zoe's aunt, a warm, loving mother substitute. She only wants the best for Zoe.

UTILITY MALE: Philip, Rob, Josh, Des, Colin – a utility role for a male actor with skill with comedy and multi-roleplaying experience. Playing range early twenties – early fifties. The roles break down as follows: Philip – Al's father. Monosyllabic, craven and robbed of a voice by Al's mother Avril, Philip does as he's told or knows about it.

Rob – Zoe's ex-boyfriend. A malignant narcissist and gaslighting nightmare. An awful example of humanity. He'd be threatening if he wasn't so idiotic and self-absorbed.

Josh – Zoe's best friend. A confident, sweet young gay man, desperate for her to join him in London and live it up. He's going to any means possible to help her achieve her goal.

Des – Zoe's father. A broken man; jobless, hopeless and despairing, he has retreated into himself to such an extent that he relies on Zoe for practically everything... and has gone to rather underhanded lengths to keep her with him.

Colin – Zoe's next-door neighbour. A nosey letch. Takes his dog for far too many walks.