



# Lost Lear

## Familiarisation Guide

# Welcome to Lost Lear at Project Arts Centre

We are thrilled to welcome you to this performance of *Lost Lear*.

This welcome pack contains information about the **venue**, **content to flag** in the show, images of the **cast** and a brief **synopsis** of the play.

Our aim is to provide information in order to ensure our audience members know what to expect and feel comfortable in this space, whether you've been here a thousand times or never at all.

## This is a Relaxed Performance

That means you should feel free to **leave the auditorium if you want.**

You can come back to your seat when you're ready!

**It's ok to make noise**, shuffle, cough, fidget or whisper if you need to. That's fine with us. And we've asked for the other audience member's understanding too.

We do ask that you **don't look at your phone** if possible. The lights can be distracting.

# Project Arts Centre - Access information

You can find all our most up to date access information [here](#)

There is a virtual Tour available [here](#)

Find our [Social Narrative PDF](#) here for a guide through the building

Find our [Backstage Social Narrative PDF](#) here for a guide through Project's backstage areas.

If there is anything else you would like to know or see, please don't hesitate to contact our Head of Project Potential at [cathy@projectartscentre.ie](mailto:cathy@projectartscentre.ie)

## Things to know

Run time: 80 mins

Doors open at: 19.15

There is no interval

This show contains flashing lights and loud noises

## What is the plot of *Lost Lear*?

Our story centres on Joy, a retired female actor, who now lives with dementia.

Joy is being cared for by a professional carer named Liam.

Liam works in a home that practises an unusual form of care. They actively encourage the person with dementia to be in a time that makes them feel happy and empowered.

In Joy's case, her memory is of a time that she played Lear in a production of 'King Lear' by William Shakespeare.

The audience sees Joy as she sees herself - a woman in her 30s.



Joy

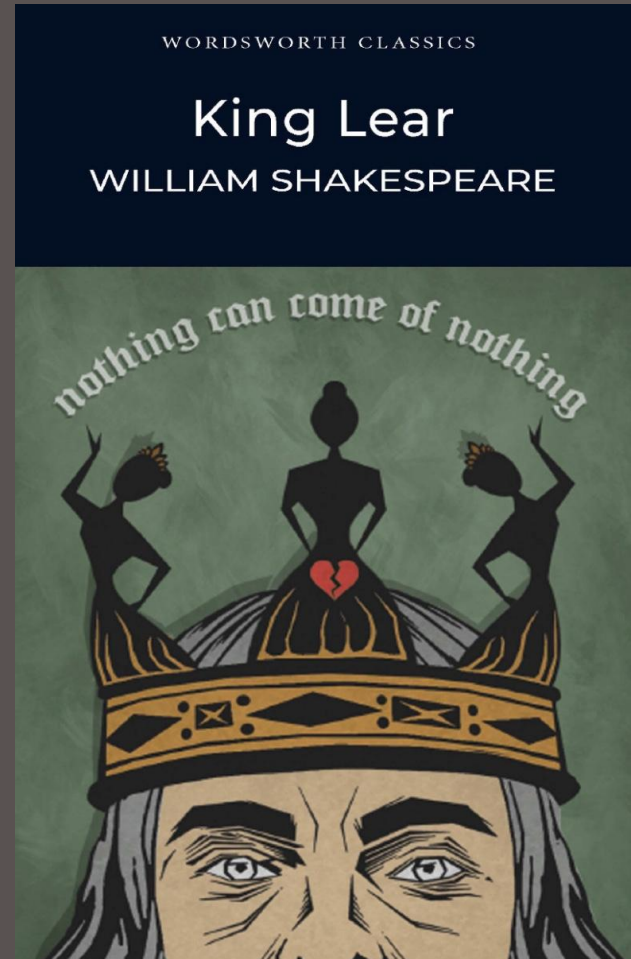
# About 'King Lear'

'King Lear' is about a King who retires and gives his kingdom to his three daughters.

He divides it up based on how he feels about their answer to the question; how much do you love me?

His two older daughters flatter him. His youngest daughter, Cordelia, tells him the truth; that she loves him as much as is her duty. No more.

This makes him furious. He banishes her. This is something he comes to regret. Before the end of the play, he reconciles with Cordelia who forgives him.



# What is the plot of *Lost Lear*?

Conor, Joy's son, placed Joy in this care facility long before we meet them both on the stage. Their relationship is strained, and was so long before Joy had dementia.

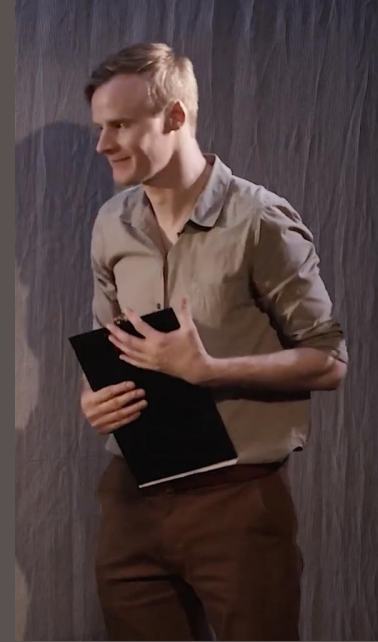
Conor has just recently made an effort to visit his mother. He feels they have unfinished business. Joy doesn't recognise Conor and is living in a time when he was just an infant.

Liam has to find a way to incorporate Conor into Joy's reality without breaking it.

'Lost Lear' is ultimately about Conor and Joy finding some way to connect with one another through the drama of 'King Lear'.



Conor



Liam





## Venetia Bowe as Joy

Joy is Conor's mother

# Manus Halligan as Liam

Liam is a professional carer. He cares for Joy.





## Peter Daly as Conor

Conor is Joy's son

# Em Ormonde and Clodagh O'Farrell as Ensemble



Ensemble perform as employees of the care facility

# A Sensory Guide

## Sounds

- There is a composed score underneath much of this play. It usually contains complex drums.
- Joy raises her voice to shout sporadically throughout.
- Loud music begins at approx. 13 mins and lasts for the length of a song
- A thunder and lightning sound effect occurs at 25 mins accompanied by two large fans and again at 1 hour and 5mins

Ear defenders are welcomed for use by audience members.



## Smells

- There is no use of dry ice or smoke
- There are no smells employed in this production

# A Sensory Guide

## Taste

- There are no elements in this production that would require tasting

## Feel

- If you sit in the front row, you may feel a gentle breeze from the fans but otherwise, there are no elements in this production that require a tactile interaction.

## See

- The lightning aforementioned at 25 mins and 1hour and 5min consists of a brief two second flash of white light from two light sources on opposite sides of the stage
- Faces of Conor and Joy will appear projected onto the stage throughout
- On the second lightning strike at 1hour and 5min, a large amount of envelopes are dropped from above

## Content to note



Joy is a character living with dementia. It means she may be forgetful, experience emotional outbursts and repeat words or conversations. This may be a sensitive subject if you are familiar with dementia in your own life or with family and friends.

We have worked with **Alzheimer Society Ireland** in the research and development of this piece. ASI can provide you with information or help if you require it.



**1800 341 341**



**helpline@alzheimer.ie**

# Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

This play is in three acts: there are no intervals but it's helpful to imagine the story that way

## Prologue

We meet Joy as she is projected onto the sheet curtain. She appears to be putting on makeup

Liam appears and begins to tell us the condensed version of King Lear.

Lear makes his daughters declare their love for him and in exchange, will provide them with land. Goneril and Regan comply but Cordelia, the youngest, will not say that she loves her father any more than it is her duty to. Lear banishes her and he goes to live with Goneril and Regan on their new land.

He eventually gets kicked out by Goneril and Regan and takes himself into a storm to be angry and feel his feelings. In the storm he realises he was wrong and begs to find Cordelia in order to be forgiven.

Conor appears then, and we realize Liam is telling him the condensed version, as though to catch him up on what he has missed.



## Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

### ACT 1

Lights come up on the care home setting. However, there are elements of this dreamy King Lear world through Joy's outfit, the images on the back of the stage and the fact that Joy only communicates in Shakespearean text.

Joy performs the entirety of the first scene of King Lear, with the aid of Liam and the ensemble.



Conor looks on, bewildered as to what is going on. Joy no longer recognises her son.

After her performance, Liam tries to introduce Conor to Joy. She understands him to be the understudy and asks to rehearse another scene.

## Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

### ACT 1

The character of the Fool is introduced. Liam plays this role.

Joy, as Lear, worries that she might be going mad. She quickly shakes it off and transitions into performing the opening action of King Lear - a party.

In the party, Joy, as Lear, sings a song about having a good time. However, underneath we get a sense that Lear feels a lot of guilt about banishing Cordelia.

The party exhausts her and Liam guides her to her chair. On sitting down she asks for her daughters to declare their love for Lear. Liam acts out Goneril. Liam tries to bring Conor into the Regan role but Joy declares the understudy useless and gets very angry.

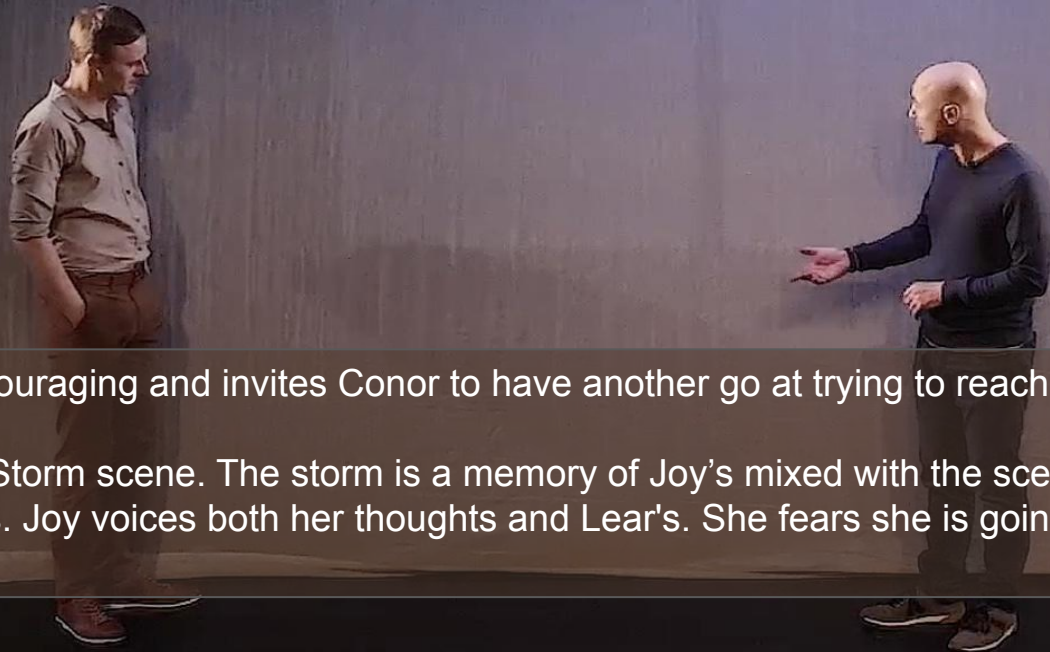


## Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

### ACT 1

The stage changes to Liam and Conor having a discussion about Joy's care.

Conor appears upset at himself. He feels out of place as he hasn't been attending Joy's care facility and is not familiar with King Lear and her memory theme.



Liam is very encouraging and invites Conor to have another go at trying to reach his mother.

We enter in the Storm scene. The storm is a memory of Joy's mixed with the scene where King Lear wanders in the wilderness. Joy voices both her thoughts and Lear's. She fears she is going mad.

# Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

## ACT 1



The Fool finds Lear and we see in real time how Liam as the Fool keeps Joy calm.

Conor tries to join the scene after mistakenly hearing a line and thinking Joy is speaking to him. The scene breaks. Joy is not too phased however, and moves on to the scene where Cordelia forgives Lear. She plays both parts, crucially.



Liam and Conor step downstage to have another debrief and Conor voices more fears. He is skeptical about the method of care and that all he wants to do is reach her and talk to her normally.

Liam explains that because of Joy's dementia it's not practical to talk to her as himself. He tells Conor to come back and try again.

## Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

We're back in the care home. Conor immediately breaks Liam's rule about mentioning time to Joy and becomes embarrassed.

Liam redirects Joy and she decides to perform Act IV Scene VII which is the Scene in King Lear where Cordelia forgives her father for his treatment of her.

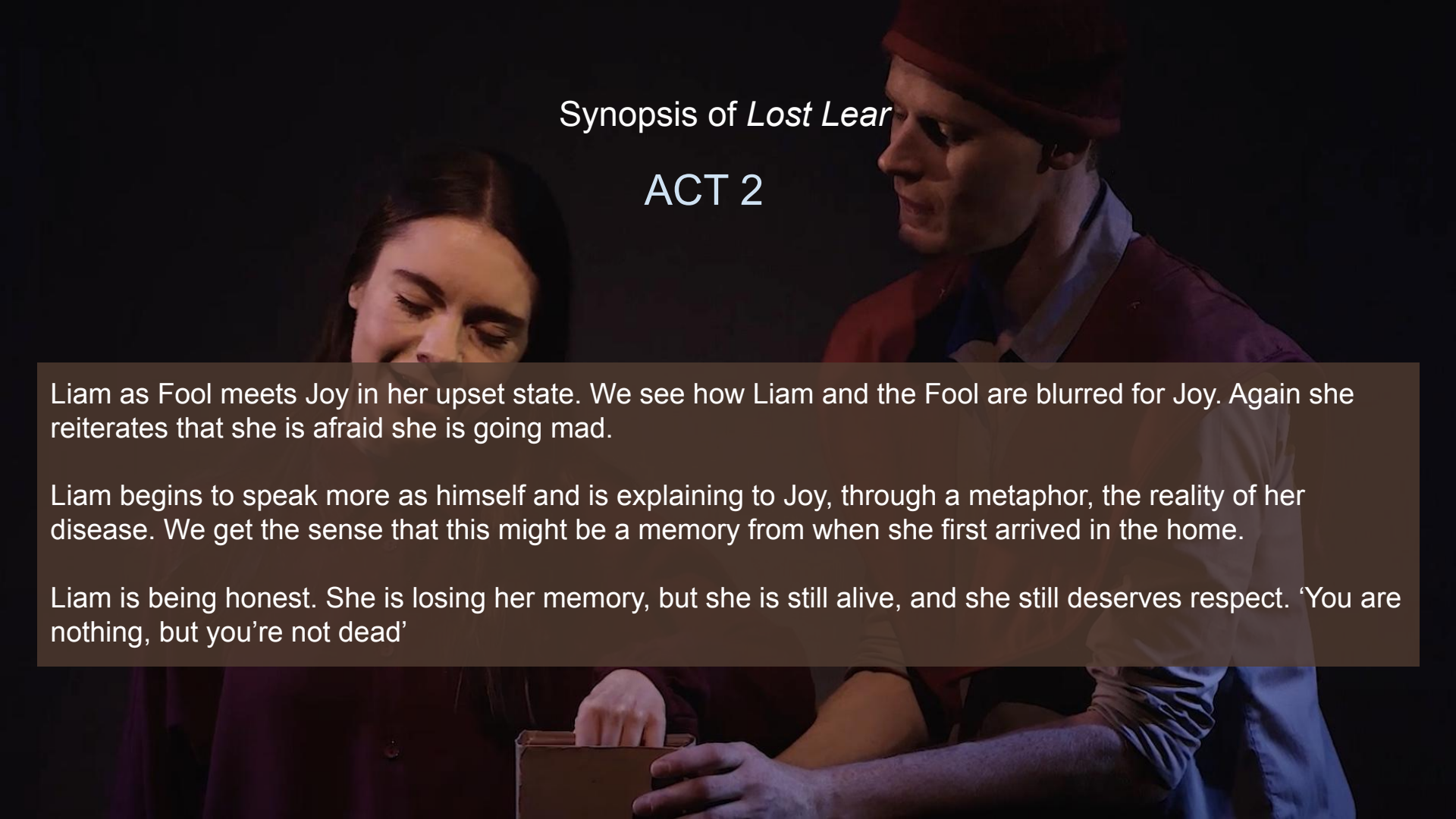
Conor continues to try and insert himself into the 'rehearsal' of this scene and it eventually makes Joy very angry.

### ACT 2



In response to Joy's anger, Conor retaliates, undermining the care that Liam is providing. He just wants to talk to her and he doesn't care for "this nonsense"

There is a crack in the sanctity of care and Joy, at her actual age, is seen projected as if she sees herself in the mirror.



## Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

### ACT 2

Liam as Fool meets Joy in her upset state. We see how Liam and the Fool are blurred for Joy. Again she reiterates that she is afraid she is going mad.

Liam begins to speak more as himself and is explaining to Joy, through a metaphor, the reality of her disease. We get the sense that this might be a memory from when she first arrived in the home.

Liam is being honest. She is losing her memory, but she is still alive, and she still deserves respect. 'You are nothing, but you're not dead'



## Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

### ACT 3

The mood of the scene changes and it feels as though Liam is speaking to a family member at the beginning of Joy's diagnosis. Joy is alone.

The lights go up on the stage behind the sheer curtain and we see a repetition of the previous scene but Joy (Venetia) is watching herself (a puppet) as an outer-body experience.

We see a number of snapshots of memories from long before her time spent in care as Joy watches on. We learn that she was very independent, she was not the most loving mother, that Conor looked after her when she was first getting sick and the most toxic aspects of their relationship became more pronounced.

It's hard for Joy to watch and she falls into one final storm.

# Synopsis of *Lost Lear*

## ACT 3

The storm indicates just how chaotic it is in Joy's mind. She can only grasp onto fleeting thoughts and moments.

Underscoring this chaos is Conor reading letters he wrote to Joy as a child. He resents her for never writing back. He admits that she made him feel like he was 'nothing'



The storm falls away and we see Conor wanting to walk away from puppet Joy. In a more aged voice than we've heard up until now, she begins the forgiveness scene again and offers an olive branch of sorts to Conor. There is only a sliver of recognition, but it is something.

Conor sits with his mother.

It ends with a sequence in which the puppet joy is left on stage as music plays and light flickers and goes out.





We look forward to welcoming you to this performance of *Lost Lear*.

If you have any further questions, feel free to contact the venue ahead of arrival.

Thank you!