**Still Alice – Introduction**

Good afternoon, Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Theatre Royal, Plymouth for the stage version of “Still Alice”, based on a novel by Lisa Genova, and adapted for the stage by Christine Mary Dunford. This is a Leeds Playhouse production and is directed by David Grindlay, with designer Jonathan Fensom, lighting designer Jason Taylor and sound designer Gregory Clarke.

I am Gwen and will be audio describing the first part of the play, with my colleague Veryan taking over halfway through. The play lasts for approximately 90 minutes, and there is no interval.

**The Set**

The set is a jumble of household furniture, representing the rooms in Alice’s house. The furniture is moved and rearranged for different scenes. As the play begins, Alice’s kitchen is portrayed, with a heavy wooden round kitchen table to the front and a pine chair on which Alice sits to work at her laptop. Behind this, from left to right, is a cooker, with a stainless steel kettle on the hob. Then a kitchen unit with a mug rack, bowl of fruit and a microwave. An American-style fridge freezer with postcards stuck on the doors, and to the right of this a kitchen sink unit with a filter coffee machine beside it. Furniture which will be used in other scenes can be seen behind, a brown leather sofa, a standard lamp, a chest of drawers, and a computer on a desk. To the right of the set are positioned a stepladder, a blue suitcase on wheels, and kitchen chairs.

As the play progresses, some furniture is removed from the stage and gaps appear between the remaining pieces, in the same way that Alice’s dementia progresses, with gaps in her memory. Post-it notes start to appear stuck on furniture around the room. The items gradually dwindle, until just 2 camping chairs remain at the very end.

To the rear, above the set, the width of the stage, is a rear projection screen which shows a cloudy sky, changing its lighting depending on the time of day. At the start of some of the scenes, the date on which the scene occurs is shown on this screen. Scene changes are denoted by a few bars of music, while the set dims and furniture is rearranged or removed.

**The Characters**

In the title role is **Alice Howland**, a woman of 50, of medium height and build, ash-blonde hair pinned up. She is a successful professor of psychology, deeply committed to her work, though about to be diagnosed with Alzheimers. She remains on stage throughout the play. At home she dresses in a casual style, checked shirt and jeans, and for social occasions in floral dress tied at the waist, with high-heeled shoes. Later, when she gives a speech, she wears a formal navy blue jacket and trousers.

A character to whom the script refers as “Herself” is played by a younger woman with short brown hair. She shadows Alice and speaks her thoughts, sometimes prompts or reminds her. She helps Alice make sense of things and often sees things which Alice does not. But her insights become less during the course of the play, reflecting Alice’s own loss of ability to make sense of the world. Only Alice can hear “Herself” speak. Often the two women speak together and it can be difficult to distinguish which of them is speaking. Only the words spoken by Alice can be heard by the other characters. “Herself” is usually dressed in black t-shirt and jeans.

Alice’s husband, John, is a man in his 50s, stocky with greying hair and short grey beard. He is a biology researcher and professor. At home he wears a casual checked shirt and grey trousers, sometimes with a sweater, and for work he dons a jacket, or suit with shirt and tie.

Alice and John have two children in their twenties, Thomas and Lydia. Lydia is slim with shoulder-length brown hair. Her normal attire is t-shirt and jeans. She is trying to make a career in acting.

Thomas is tall with short dark hair. He is casually dressed. He is married and refers to his wife, Mattie, who we never see.

Dr Tamara is Alice’s doctor. She is tall and slim with fair hair pinned up in a roll. She wears a burgundy cardigan with black leggings and flat shoes. She talks expressively with her hands.

Dr Davis is a neurologist, specialising in Alzheimers and dementia. He is dark and bearded with very short hair. In his consulting room he wears a shirt, tie and trousers.

Two minor characters also appear, they are Alice’s student, Dan and his wife, Beth.

The lead role of Alice is played by Sharon Small. “Herself” is played by Eva Pope. The role of Alice’s husband, John is taken by Martin Marquez. Alice and John’s son, Thomas, is played by Mark Armstrong and their daughter, Lydia, Ruth Ollman. The part of Dr Tamara is acted by Anna Andresen (who also plays Beth), and Dr Davis is played by Micah Balfour (who also plays the part of Dan)