Programme Notes for ‘Red” written by John Logan

**The Set**

The set comprises a number of huge canvases set on supportive structures formed from wooden slats and struts. The structures are taller than a man and the biggest, about five times the width. Before the curtain rises the big central frame can be seen vaguely through the curtains with a large deeper red rectangle within the red canvas.

The central frame is a rectangle, wider than it is high. The one to the right is taller than it is wide and the one to the left, standing alongside the left wall can hardly be seen, but when moved is also wider than high. All three of these canvases are painted a dull red, with a more vibrant red rectangle, within. There is a further structure with blank canvas, at the back left of the stage. The rectangles are not neatly drawn, but painted, boldly and irregularly. Rothko had a pulley system for hanging the canvases he was working on and the large central canvas on stage also uses this pulley system.

In front of the central canvas and to the left of it are two small work tables, covered with pain tins, bowls, pots, bottles and large paint brushes. There are also some rags on the table and somewhere concealed among the paraphernalia is an old-fashioned telephone. There are other tins and painting materials stacked under the tables along with two buckets. To the right of the central canvas is a wooden, slatted garden chair with arms. Further to the right of it is an old-fashioned gramophone. The various pieces of the set are moved around as part of the action. There is an unseen canvas, one of the series, which Rothko studies throughout the play. It is positioned directly in front of the stage, where the audience are sitting so when he looks straight out at us he is studying his painting.

At the back of the set, on the left, is the unseen door, which leads into a vestibule. Here the actors change into their work clothes and enter and exit the studio.

**The Characters**

There are only two characters in the play.

**Rothko**, played by Patrick O’Kane has a slender, energetic, but slightly stooped form. He has an almost bald head, with some black, closely-cropped hair round the edges. He also has a close-trimmed beard and moustache. Both hair and beard are sprinkled with grey. Rothko’s penetrating blue eyes are covered by black framed glasses, he has an oval face, a flattish nose and large mobile mouth. Rothko first appears in brown corduroy trousers, and a brownish beige striped shirt, liberally spattered with paint and open at the neck. He wears brown shoes and his trousers are held up by a leather belt. Later he wears a grey jacket which he wears with a flat cap. Later again we see him in a smart dark grey overcoat, smart dark grey flannel trousers, a white shirt and a burgundy tie. Rothko is in his fifties.

**Ken**

Ken is Rothko’s assistant. He is in his twenties. He is very slender, with a square face and large nose. He has very dark, neat hair, and dark eyebrows and looks very clean cut. He first appears in a waistcoat of blue and brown stripes over, with brown trousers held up by braces, a white long sleeved shirt and brown shoes. Later he turns up in a dark grey T shirt with paint spattered black jeans and on another occasion he wears a loose shirt, like a smock, covered in paint. The part of Ken is played by Thomas Finnegan.

Red is a joint production by Prime Cut and the Lyric Theatre. It is directed by Emma Jordan with set design by Ciaran Bagnall and costumes by Enda Kenny. Audiodescription tonight is by Kate Ingram. I hope you enjoy the show.