**SHADOW by Back to Back Theatre and Back to Back Pictures - Audio Description Pre-show Notes**

Welcome to this introduction to 2023 “No Limits” programme, *SHADOW* by Back to Back Theatre and Back to Back Pictures. I am Roz Chalmers, the audio describer.

The programme will be screened at JC Cube, Tai Kwun on 4 Mar, 2023, at 12pm, 2:30 and 4:30pm with free admission; and free screening on the “No Limits” website, from 15th Mar at 10am, to 10th May at 10pm. It is approximately 1 hour, performed in English, with Cantonese and English Audio Description, Accessible Captions in Chinese/ English, and bilingual Audio House Programme. The programme is classified as Category IIA and contains strong language.

Geelong-based Back to Back Theatre draws creative power from its ensemble of neurodiverse actors and has emerged as one of the leading voices in the Australian cultural scene. In 2022, the company received the International Ibsen Award, informally dubbed the “Nobel Prize for Theatre”, for the penetrating impact of its body of work on audiences.

Shadow tells the story of Simon, Scott and Sarah, a trio of Australian activists with intellectual disabilities, who hold a town hall meeting about the future impacts of artificial intelligence. Simon, considering himself a saviour for the community, quickly appoints himself the mayor, and Scott reluctantly steps into the role of facilitator. The two men often overlook and underestimate Sarah, leading to confrontation.

Before the meeting, people get together to have coffee and snacks in the airy, white painted lobby of the Geelong Arts Centre. Round white pillars support a white mesh ceiling with the soft glow of circular lights, and inner walls ripple and curve, clad with slender vertical slats of rich brown gum hardwood. Elegant grey concrete stairs sweep to the upper levels and light pours in from floor to ceiling windows.

The meeting room is very different. Its walls are black and there are two circles of plain blue conference chairs, one inside the other, set out on a black floor. Two gaps between the chairs allow people to enter or leave the inner circle and three stands, each holding three vertical red lights, are behind the chairs. Above, the ceiling has an array of white bowl-shaped lights.

High above is an LED screen where white subtitles show the words of the meeting’s participants, sometimes correcting themselves as they go. Occasionally they’re interrupted by a woman’s melodious voice that interacts directly with the participants. This is created by Artificial Intelligence, or AI.

Occasionally other items are brought in. A large rectangular white block about a metre and a half wide and three metres high is pushed in. It acts as a projection screen for grotesque cartoons showing the long history of inhumane treatment of people with intellectual disabilities. A tall stepladder acts as a podium.

There are three main characters, all intellectually disabled people in their thirties, and three minor ones.

**Scott** is tall and strongly built with thick dark hair and a full ginger beard. His blue eyes are intense under a furrowed brow. He is dressed in a loose green shirt over a beige T-shirt and tan trousers. Scott walks purposefully, barging into rooms, his temper on a short fuse.

**Simon** stands only a little taller than Scott’s shoulder. He’s slim and wiry with receding dark hair slicked back from a pale, sharp-featured face with grey eyes. Simon wears a blue jacket over a beige shirt buttoned to the neck and matching blue trousers. He has a formal, upright stance, hands sometimes fidgeting by his sides, head tilted back.

**Sarah’s** hair is almost black, styled in a short pixie cut. Her brows are thick and well-shaped and her eyes are brown. She wears discreet pink lipstick, toning with her pink linen jacket. She wears this with a pale pink shirt and wide legged brown trousers. Sarah walks with some difficulty, and she is prone to tremors.

A short young man called **Mark** is part of the audience. His dark hair is cut very short and his face is ruddy and round. His eyes have a mischievous twinkle. Mark is irreverent, putting out his tongue at people or giving them the finger if they patronise him. He’s dressed in a mustard yellow cardigan, green polo shirt and grey trousers, and generally has a plate of sandwiches in his hand.

A camera crew follow the activists around and film the audience. All of them are intellectually disabled. They’re led by the **director**, a young woman with her hair in a long honey-blonde fringe and ponytail, dressed in a beige jacket and black trousers. She hold a clipboard, referring to it as she directs the camera crew.

During the meeting a middle-aged man with black glasses, dark hair and a grey beard breezes in. He’s **Brian**, a neurotypical reporter. He’s wearing a yellow shirt, brown trousers and a khaki jacket with lots of pockets. Brian sits listening closely to the conversations, making notes.

The audience is made up of 30 or so intellectually disabled people from their twenties to their sixties. In the lobby they are often in animated conversation, but they listen attentively in the room.

This is the end of the audio description pre-show notes of Shadow. Please enjoy the performance!