Introductory Notes

1. Introductory information

Event name: **The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**

Event presenter: Adelaide Festival of Arts

Event synopsis:

**The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde** by Robert Louis Stephenson, adapted and directed by Kip Williams for Sydney Theatre Company, is presented in Her Majesty’s Theatre for the Adelaide Festival of Arts 2023

*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is a Victorian-era Gothic classic set in the all-male world of middle-class professional London in the late 19th Century. Lawyer Gabriel Utterson attempts to unravel the mysteries surrounding his friend Dr Henry Jekyll and the shadowy new presence in their lives: Mr Edward Hyde.

Two actors play the narrator and all the characters. At all times, projectionists and cameras move around the stage with them, enabling these multiple characters’ interactions to show on two, then three, then four and finally five huge screens that hang above their heads. The characters address us mostly through the camera, often with their backs to the us or behind a screen. However, the action is so tightly knitted between pre-recorded video projection, live-to-screen camera and direct stage work that the total experience is seamless.

With this mix of acting, live filming and video projection, the production draws us into the story of a splintered psyche.

Overall, this production is almost an audio book. The seamless words leave few places for any Audio Description. We hope that these Pre-Show Notes establish enough of the amazing visuals that support this presentation of Stephenson’s famous story!

**Note:**

The play includes themes and depictions of violence including violence towards children, horror, drug use and suicide, and the use of theatrical smoke and haze, and theatrical blood.

The play runs for 1 hour 58 minutes with no interval.

Audio Describers: Kari Seely and Jo Ankor

1. Set description

The set is in austere black, white and grey, with a full backdrop of 19th century industrial-style panels. At times, slender gaslights cast circles of light onto smoky fog; tall doorways wheel in, spin slowly, move out. Chairs are half seen and a Victorian lift-lid clerk’s desk combines with a floor safe to create Utterson’s office. A vertical bed is stood behind an actor but the camera shows him on the screen as lying down. The screens float and move above the action on stage; at times causing the characters’ faces to loom large and at other times the images of the actors are fractured with the chin on one screen, the mouth, nose and an eye on another. At times pre-recorded footage of another character is superimposed on the live feed, from up to three camera crews visible on stage. The screens are also used to name the next ’Chapter’ and finally, late in the show, they become a moving staircase running from stage to ceiling.

While the set and technology is indeed amazing, Stephenson’s beautiful words of narration and dialogue, and their delivery by Leslie and Backer, make this a stunning live show.

1. Characters and Costumes

**Ewen Leslie**, as both Jekyll and Hyde and **Matthew Backer**, as Mr Utterson the lawyer,

also play all incidental characters on stage, including servants and a policeman.

All costumes are of the period:

Dr Jekyll wears a three-piece tweed suit. His dark curly hair is swept back from his face. He is clean-shaven with pronounced sideburns.

Mr Utterson wears a black frock coat, black waistcoat, grey trousers and white cravat, his dark hair combed back from his face, with short back and sides. He is clean shaven, stiff, proper and contained.

Mr Hyde wears an ill-fitting baggy overcoat draped over his large, hunched-over frame, his hair a wild curly mop of bedraggled dark curls mostly obscuring his face.

Dr Lanyon wears a dark frock coat with wide grey stripes, a white waistcoat and dark trousers. He sports a moustache and has short wavy dark hair.

Mr. Guest, Utterson’s head clerk, in shirtsleeves and waistcoat, is identifiable by his white lawyer-clerk wig.

Richard Enfield, friend of Utterson and ‘man about town’ wears a grey overcoat with black trousers and carries an elegant cane.

Mr Carew, an older gentleman with white hair, is dressed in a black frock coat and trousers with a top hat and a silver-topped cane.

Incidental characters include a maid who appears briefly at an upstairs window in cloth hat and apron, and a policeman in uniform.

1. Creatives

**Production Credits**

Adapter & Director Kip Williams  
Production Manager Kirby Brierty

Stage Manager Sarah Smith

Lighting Christopher Twyman

Composer/Sound Michael Toisuta

Video Designer David Bergman  
Camera Operators Ben Sheen, Lucy Parakhina, Sam Heesen

Wardrobe Simone Edwards

1. Event details

The audio-described performance is on **Sunday 5th March 2023** at 6pm.

**Event location**: Her Majesty’s Theatre

**Ticket information**: Adelaide Festival of Arts

1. Access information

Access information:

The production takes place in Her Majesty’s Theatre, Grote Street, Adelaide.

The **Theatre** is wheelchair accessible and guide dog friendly.

There are accessible toilets in the venue. Please ask at the main reception desk.

Getting to the event: Please contact the **Adelaide Festival Centre** on 131 246 for details on current Covid requirements and the best access route to the theatre complex.

Assistance: assistance is offered by venue staff

This completes this audio introduction for **The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**.

Your Describers are Jo Ankor and Kari Seeley.

For more information on audio described performances please contact Access2Arts using the email address [audio.describer@access2arts.org.au](mailto:audio.describer@access2arts.org.au) or speak to us here tonight.