



Sydney
Festival
2025

MULTIPLE BAD THINGS



MULTIPLE BAD THINGS

Back to Back Theatre

Presented by Sydney Festival & Sydney Opera House

Sydney Opera House, Drama Theatre

8-12 January

1 hour (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Devisors Bron Batten, Breanna Deleo, Natasha Jynel, Simon Laherty, Sarah Mainwaring, Ben Oakes, Scott Price, Tamara Searle, Ingrid Voorendt

Directors Tamara Searle, Ingrid Voorendt

Performers Bron Batten, Simon Laherty, Sarah Mainwaring, Scott Price

Set & Costume Design Anna Cordingley

Composer & Sound Design Zoë Barry

AV Design Rhian Hinkley

Lighting Design Richard Vabre

Helpline Voiceover Rachel Griffiths

Script Consultant Melissa Reeves

Creative Development Michael Chan, Mark Deans, Alana Hoggart, Francesca Neri, Tamika Simpson

Stage Manager Alana Hoggart

Production Assistant Jordi Edwards

Sound Engineer Peter Monks

Company Manager Erin Watson

Production Manager Bao Ngouansavanh

Producer David Miller

Executive Producer Tim Stitz

Artistic Director Bruce Gladwin

ABOUT THE SHOW

At a time like this, in a placeless warehouse, three employees approach a possibly pointless task. Struggling to work together, they grapple with questions of inclusion and identity. They are forced to test the limits of their bodies, their cooperation and their capacity to care. Civility slips, bad behaviour escalates and reality distorts. The witching hour is here. Who will be the scapegoat?

In the making of this new work, Back to Back Theatre

invites new voices into the devising room. Zoë Barry's score is assembled from collected field recordings of bad things. Anna Cordingley's design demands the actors' physical participation to reach its manifestation. *MULTIPLE BAD THINGS* is theatre. It is not real. But in a world where self-righteously indignant voices so often drown out the most disenfranchised and vulnerable, this theatre sometimes feels real.

Welcome to the workplace at the end of the world. They're only saying what you've already been thinking.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTORS

Tamara Searle (TS) & Ingrid Voorendt (IV)

IV: What have we paid attention to across the process of making this work?

TS: We've paid attention to creating performance tasks and dramaturgy from the perspectives of this particular group of makers and actors. We've paid attention to specific dramatic threads in relation to these actors: empathy, borders, territory, extinction, identity politics.

Can you speak about boundaries?

IV: Our perspectives are shaped by our boundaries. We see the world from our place in it. We secure our boundaries by stating our place and our perspective over and over again, cementing our identities and, perhaps, trapping ourselves inside them.

To make work together, collaboratively, we have to be prepared to shift our boundaries, to open our borders to other ways of thinking, seeing, experiencing, voicing. We have to recognise the limitations of a singular perspective. We have to leave the safety of the familiar. Different perspectives create different maps. Dramaturgy is a kind of cartography of performance.

Can you speak about the relationship between control and chaos in the process?

TS: The work is practicing letting go of control continually, ceding control to what is emergent. Inviting chaos, and waiting as long as possible to shape it. There is control in the craft, and chaos in the instincts. There is control in technique, and chaos in an ensemble devising. There is control in trust. And there is chaos in these acts of trust as well – we don't have complete control. Can a mainstage performance making process be responsive, organic and relational, like a workshop?

IV: Workshops are about experiments and conversations and play. There's space for tangential thought and for mess. Maybe it's about the degree of openness and for how long this openness is maintained. Our work is grounded in community practice, meaning relationships come first. We are always balancing care with ambition.

Can you speak about one of our visual references?

TS: In Arthur Boyd's Australian Scapegoat, a light from a setting pink sun splatters a sky and a landscape. A black goat transmogrifies its fourth leg into a human leg. This human form rises in in a trench coat and blue gumboot above the goat. The violent pink was an initial attraction, but this chimeric figure became a motif for the moral ambiguity between abuser and victim in the culture wars.

In our process we've tried to turn toward suffering, rather than away from it. We've attempted to imagine ourselves into the fault lines of human conflict, and to improvise from this place.

IV: Is it alright to live our small lives? Or is it necessary for us to take on the politics of the world, especially at this time?

TS: We are making theatre because we believe that together we can imagine new ways to be, to care, and to change.

BACK TO BACK THEATRE

Based on Wadawurrung Country, in the Victorian regional centre of Geelong, Back to Back Theatre is widely recognised as an Australian theatre company of national and international significance. The company is driven by an ensemble of actors who identify as having an intellectual disability or as neurodivergent. The company is considered one of Australia's most important cultural exporters.

From 2009 to 2024, the company has undertaken 88 national and 130 international seasons of its work. This includes presentations and screenings at the world's pre-eminent contemporary arts festivals and venues such as the Edinburgh International Festival, London's V&A Museum and the Barbican, Vienna Festival, Holland Festival and Theater der Welt, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, the Public Theater in New York, Festival Tokyo, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority in Hong Kong, and Buenos Aires International Festival.

Since 2009, we have delivered community and education workshops to over 34,000 participants, with a focus on artistic excellence and inclusive practice.

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