Welcome to this performance of *Waldo's Circus of Magic and Terror*, written by Hattie Naylor and Jamie Beddard, and directed by Claire Hodgson, Billy Alwyn and Jenny Davis, with music by Charles Hazelwood.

The performance lasts for around two hours including an interval and will be described by Willie Elliott.

Waldo's Circus of Magic and Terror takes place in a travelling circus, in Germany in 1933. There is a single set that remains unchanged for the whole of the performance with alterations in lights, and the addition of pieces of furniture or circus equipment, taking us from one location to another.

As you take you seat the stage is open to you. It's a wide space with plenty of room for circus acts to perform in.

We are inside the big top. The back wall is a painted backdrop, illustrating the centre of the tent roof, as though we are looking high up from the middle of the ring. The roof is blue and patterned with a myriad of red stars.

In front of the backdrop, a set of bleachers arcs around the back of the space from left to right, with six rows of bench seats where an audience might sit.

The side sections of the bleachers can wheel forward and be joined together to form a pyramid of seats at the front of the space.

The floor is silver and reflective, absorbing the colours of the lights, from red, to blue and purple.

Above the bleachers, a raised platform houses a band of musicians, with the keyboard and percussion on the left, the drummer in the centre, and a guitarist on the right. Beneath the drummer, an exit, covered with red velvet curtains, and bordered with light bulbs, leads through the bleachers to the world outside, whilst others on the left and right, lead to other parts of the circus.

There is a mixed heritage company of twelve disabled and non-disabled performers, some of whom play more than one role.

The costume design reflects the period in which the play is set, but adds a modern twist, giving the piece a sense of timelessness. The costumes are based on the 1920's designs of the ballet Russe, performers wearing a base layer, like a onesie, with more over the top, as they move from their performance costumes to everyday wear. Circus costumes are decorated with pom poms, soft ruffs and flowers, whilst the band are in leather jackets influenced by military design, combined with Jeans and big boots.

**Waldo** is the owner and ring master of the circus. He's a stocky framed man in his 50's with a bald head and round face. He uses a manual wheelchair and dresses in a a rather dowdy version of a traditional ring masters costume, a red coat over a white shirt, gold waistcoat, black trousers and black leather shoes, with a black topper on his head and black gloves.

**Peter** is the downtrodden ring boy, and Waldo's son, who spends most of his time sweeping up after one show and preparing for the next. Played by a woman, Peter is a fresh faced young man in his 20's, with light brown hair pulled back severely off his pale face. He wears an aqua marine coloured jacket over a white T shirt and blue trousers, held up with braces.

**Renee** is around the same age as Peter, often looking at him with an intense gaze. He's an aerialist, performing on the trapeze, crossing his legs and strapping them together with a belt. Renee wears a lilac, purple and red ombre stretchy leotard embellished with matching coloured frills, this is paired with red flowing trousers and red socks. Renee is a manual wheelchair user with a short torso, long muscular arms and a thick mop of hair. He's a confident, flamboyant character and one of the most skilled and experienced in the circus.

A new performer in the company is **Darragh**, who's in his 30's with a slim build and sharp featured face. He has a messy shock of strawberry-blonde hair and moves with a strange grace and gentleness despite his ragged appearance. He always seems poised and listening intently. Darragh is a juggler, who spends a lot of the time in the background perfecting his act, juggling bowler hats from his head to his elbows and high into the air. The bowler hats are part of his character, a white faced hobo clown, who's clothes may have once been fine and formal, and probably belonged to several different people - for now they are frayed, mismatched, oversized and undersized. His trousers are high waisted, and he wears a long tailcoat.

Another clown is **Dora.** Dora has short ginger hair in a bob to her collar and blue eyes. She wears a red and white flowery calf-length dress with a green trim. with grey socks and brown shoes. She also wears a brown checked pinny over my dress and a juggling hat. Later she wears a grey shirt with a red patterned neckerchief, baggy blue denim trousers and her juggling hat.

**Mish and Mosh** are a clown double act, who are both deaf and use BSL to communicate. They dress similarly. Mish has light brown skin with long waist length extensions and a slender frame. Mosh is white with short hair, and black framed glasses. They wear grey suits with baggy pants and tailcoats with a diamond, Harlequin, pattern. They have a large tulle, red and grey ruff around their collars and cone shaped hats on their heads.

**Krista** is the star of the show. In her 20's, Krista is short statured, with pale skin and a round face. Her ankle length dress is pink silk with a sequined applique that catches the light as she moves, and she wears under a gathered grey tulle waistcoat.

**Queenie** is a seer and fortune teller. When not looking into the future, Queenie is a contortionist, pressing up from the floor in the crab, standing on the tips of her ballet point shoes, or flipping onto handstands. Her costume blends from green to gold, a loose fitting top that flares out from the bust to the waist, and harem pants. She wears her dark hair pulled into a ponytail and pulls on a long fur coat to go out.

**Vat-Slav** is the ’Strongman’ of Waldo’s Circus. He is dressed in a fitted, purple wrestling-style singlet with a low neckline, with a pair of baggy red silk shorts banded at the waist with a wide gold belt, and dark boots. He is tall, with a waxed moustache and dark hair, slicked perfectly into a side parting.

Gerhard and Margot, a brother and sister, visit the circus,

**Gerhard** is a tall athletic white man in his 30's, with short dark hair. He wears a white linen suit over a white shirt and yellow tie.

Later in his circus gear, he wears a leotard made of Jersey material with an added sparkle of sequined applique.

**Margot** is a stern faced; serious woman more concerned with how others see her respected position as a doctor. She dresses smartly in a cream linen skirt suit and round wire framed glasses.

**Joseph Benowitz,** a tall man with brown slicked back hair, is the manager and owner of a successful static circus, and rival to Waldo. He is dressed in an immaculately presented red ringmaster’s outfit, with a top hat and dark smart shoes. Later he is dressed in a white civilian shirt and dark trousers.

**Wilhelm** is a man who seems to be the most drunk of this trio of brownshirts. He sways, trying to keep his footing, as if a string is attached to the top of his head - just about holding him upright. He wears a brownshirt in uniform with his two allies. Otto and Kurt.

The performance has integrated British sign language interpretation from Max Marchewicz (MARK-uh-vitch). Although they are unnamed in the script, they are there to embody all non-signing characters, the music, and a sense of time passing, an outside eye looking back on the events in the story. Max is a white nonbinary person with shoulder length blue hair and a black beard. They use a power wheelchair.

Other characters are played by the company and will be described as they appear.

**Cast and production credits**

Waldo is played by Gary Robson

Peter, by Tilly Lee-Kronnick

Renee, Johnny Leitch

Gerhard, Laurence Swaddle

Darragh, Ryan Murphy

Dora, JoAnne Haines.

Mish, Raphaelle Julien

Mosh, Brooklyn Melvin

Krista, Abbie Purvis

Queenie and Margot, Mirabelle Grimaud

Vatslav and Joseph Benowitz, Jack Reitman

British sign language interpreter, Max Marchewicz (MARK-uh-vitch)

The band are;

Dave Johns, Associate musical director and guitars.

Harriet Riley, Percussion

Johnny Leitch, drums.

Sound design is by Andy Rose

Lighting designer, Katy Morrison.

Set and costume designer, Ti Green.

Composer and music director, Charles Hazelwood

Choreography is by Vicki Igbokwe-Ozoagu

*Waldo's Circus of Magic and Terror* was written by Hattie Naylor and Jamie Beddard and directed by Billy Alwyn, Claire Hodgson and Jenny Davis