

## DAYDREAMER Spoiler Sheet

### *The Way the Story Is Told*

*Daydreamer* is staged in the Diane Cilento Studio at Queensland Theatre. It is a black box space with raised seating, including accessible options for mobility aids. Audience members will be let into the Queensland Theatre foyer before the show, then directed to the studio. This production is told in a contemporary style of spoken word theatre that mostly consists of monologue. There is movement work with red rope to accompany.

### *The Short Story*

The NARRATOR welcomes the audience to understand the experience of living with Epilepsy. He recounts personal experiences, medical knowledge, and stories from others to explain how multi-faceted the condition is. The CHORUS play multiple roles to help the NARRATOR tell stories.

### *Content Warnings*

- Strong Course Language (Swearing)
- Ableist Themes and Languages
- Ruminations of Death
- Medical Content including Malpractice (Usage of Drugs)
- Mentions of Claustrophobia
  
- References to Parental Neglect
- References to Child Endangerment
- References to Children Drowning
- References to Religious Rhetoric
  
- Black Out
- Dim Lighting
- Recommended for Ages 15+

***Support - If you or someone is in immediate danger, call 000***

**Beyond Blue**

Call 1300 22 4636 or chat online for 24/7 support for anxiety, depression, and suicide

**MindSpot**

Call 1800 61 44 34 for free telephone and online support for anxiety, stress, low mood, or depression

**Epilepsy Action Australia**

Call 1300 37 45 37 or email [Epilepsy@Epilepsy.org.au](mailto:Epilepsy@Epilepsy.org.au) for information regarding Epilepsy

**Epilepsy Foundation**

Call 1300 761 487 from Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (AEST) for support from trained Epilepsy support workers regarding the effects of Epilepsy on health, well-being and daily living issues incorporating person-centred, self-management strategies. They can also be emailed at [Epilepsy@Epilepsyfoundation.org.au](mailto:Epilepsy@Epilepsyfoundation.org.au)

**Epilepsy Queensland**

Call 1300 852 853 from Monday to Friday 9am to 4:30pm (AEST) for support and information with Epilepsy. They can also be emailed at [livingwell@Epilepsyqueensland.com.au](mailto:livingwell@Epilepsyqueensland.com.au)

**National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline**

Call 1800 880 052 for free, independent and confidential services to report abuse and neglect of people with disability. The Hotline works with callers to find appropriate ways of dealing with reports of abuse or neglect through referral, information and support.

**Disability Advocacy Support Helpline**

Call 1800 643 787 short term and phone-based disability advocacy support, no matter where you live in Australia. The Helpline may refer you to other supports in your local area based on your individual needs.

**Disability Gateway**

Call 1800 643 787, Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm (AEST), for free help for disabled people, their families and carers to find trusted information and connect to services in their area.

***DO NOT READ AHEAD IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE SPOILED***

***Note: The CHORUS (they/them) play all roles besides the NARRATOR, sometimes simultaneously and others individually.***

*The Characters (In Order of Appearance)*

**NARRATOR** (he/him): The main character who is diagnosed with Epilepsy. He talks directly to the audience and to the other characters, describing and experiencing Epilepsy.

**CHORUS** (they/them): The rest of the actors on stage play the CHORUS, who play all other on-stage roles. They do not talk to the audience or each other, but to the NARRATOR.

**DOCTOR** (they/them): A family doctor that NARRATOR, PARENT, and MUM visit frequently. They suggest multiple solutions for Epilepsy that do not help the way they want.

**PARENT** (they/them): One of NARRATOR'S parents, they try to help NARRATOR cope with having Epilepsy.

**CHILD** (he/him): The NARRATOR as a child.

**MUM** (she/her): NARRATOR's mum, she helped come up with the term "Daydreams" to describe NARRATOR's Epilepsy.

**EPILEPSY** (they/them): A character played by a CHORUS member, they play the NARRATOR's Epilepsy personified.

**FRIEND A** (they/them): One of NARRATOR's friends who thought FRIEND B and NARRATOR were still close.

**FRIEND B** (they/them): One of NARRATOR's friends who is not close with him anymore.

**FRIEND WITH EPILEPSY** (she/her): A friend of NARRATOR who had an absence seizure in class one day. SUBSTITUTE TEACHER ignored NARRATOR when he tried to get her help.

**THERAPIST** (they/them): NARRATOR's therapist who is impressed by how much he knows about himself.

**PRIEST** (they/them): A religious figure that attempted an exorcism on NARRATOR to "cure" their Epilepsy.

*Mentioned Characters (In Order of Mention):*

DAD (he/him): NARRATOR's dad who helped him through seizures.

DOCTORS (they/them): Miscellaneous doctors that treated NARRATOR's Epilepsy.

FRIENDS (they/them): Miscellaneous friends of NARRATOR, many of them do not like NARRATOR because of his Epilepsy symptoms.

BROTHERS (he/him): NARRATOR's brothers, they were all at the beach together one time.

UNCLES (he/him): NARRATOR's uncles that have dusty breath.

AUNTS (she/her): NARRATOR's aunts that have rosewood perfume.

RECEPTIONIST (she/her): A staff member at NARRATOR's school that nearly hit him.

CLASSMATES (they/them): Classmates of NARRATOR that mocked, bullied, and laughed at him when he had seizures. They did the same when EPILEPSY FRIEND had an absence seizure.

TEACHER (they/them): The teacher that picked NARRATOR up after they were nearly hit by the RECEPTIONIST's car.

TEACHERS (they/them): Teachers at NARRATOR's school that called him stupid for being inattentive.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER (he/him): A substitute teacher at NARRATOR's school in his mid-40s, he had a vibrant tie. He ignored NARRATOR when he tried to get his EPILEPSY FRIEND help.

NURSE (they/them): The nurse at SCHOOL.

FAIRY PENGUINS (they/them): A species of penguin that NARRATOR saw on a school field trip.

FRIEDRICH (he/him): A fairy penguin runt that noticed when NARRATOR had a seizure in front of the exhibit and got the TEACHERS attention.

### *The Locations (In Order of Mention)*

DOCTOR'S OFFICE: Where DOCTOR first told PARENT that NARRATOR had Epilepsy.

EPILEPTIC VOID: An absence of space that NARRATOR goes to when he has a seizure.

HOSPITAL: Where NARRATOR spent a lot of time getting treated and was offered to stay as an inpatient.

BEACH: Where NARRATOR went with his DAD and BROTHERs, everyone was worried he would fall and drown.

BEDROOM: NARRATOR's bedroom, he would often lock himself in to cope with his Epilepsy.

CHURCH: A church that NARRATOR and his family attended, it contained Epilepsy triggers.

ROLLER-SKATING RINK: A place where the NARRATOR noted Epilepsy triggers.

CORNER STORE: A place where the NARRATOR noted Epilepsy triggers.

CEMETERY: A place where the NARRATOR noted Epilepsy triggers.

SCHOOL: NARRATOR's school. He had an absence seizure and was nearly hit by a car driven by the RECEPTIONIST.

CLUB: A place that the NARRATOR mentions having physical affection ground him. It also can trigger his Epilepsy due to nicotine smoke.

FOREST: A place that the NARRATOR likes to go to be by himself and be free.

CLASSROOM: Where NARRATOR witnessed FRIEND WITH EPILEPSY have an absence seizure in front of him.

GRANITE ISLAND: An island in South Australia that NARRATOR went to on a school field trip.

FAIRY PENGUIN EXHIBIT: An exhibit on GRANITE ISLAND that displays FAIRY PENGUINS. NARRATOR had a seizure there due to overheating.

GROCERY STORE: A place where NARRATOR had a seizure and had medical interference.

CENTRAL STATION: A train station where the NARRATOR has the start of a seizure due to a flickering light.

## *Explanation of Content Warnings*

### Strong Course Language (Swearing)

The word “fuck” is used emphatically and loudly multiple times throughout the show, as well as a soft one-off use of the word “cunt”.

### Ableist Themes and Languages

Ableism is a continual and constant presence throughout the show and is seen in the language, behaviour, and attitudes from multiple characters.

### Ruminations of Death

The NARRATOR frequently reflects on their increased likelihood of dying due to being epileptic.

### Medical Content including Malpractice (Usage of Drugs)

There are references to medical interventions into Epilepsy – both pharmaceutical and holistic. These are both mentioned to be taken to extremes.

### Mentions of Claustrophobia

Epileptic seizures (known as “Daydreams” in this production) are described as being claustrophobic.

### References to Parental Neglect

There are references to the NARRATOR’s PARENTs failing to accommodate their disability or be supportive and comforting to them.

### References to Child Endangerment

There are descriptions of incidents in which a child’s life is at risk due to Epilepsy and other factors.

### References to Children Drowning

In a single scene the NARRATOR reflects on the increased likelihood of drowning as an epileptic, which they had been aware of as a child.

### References to Religious Rhetoric

There are references to attempts at religious interference (such as exorcisms) to “cure” Epilepsy, including usage of Biblical scripture.

Black Out

At certain points in the show all theatre lights are off.

Dim Lighting

At certain points in the show there are low lighting levels.

Recommended for Ages 15+

Due to the mature content (course language, discussions of death, etc), this show is recommended for people 15+

*Context and Setting*

This play frequently refers to ‘absence seizures.’ An ‘absence seizure’ is a type of seizure where the person having it looks ‘absent.’ There are not any jerking limbs, instead the person will often continue the action they were doing and becomes unresponsive to the world.

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by *Lewis Carroll* is used as a metaphor for Epilepsy. Alice’s experience of falling into a foreign, and at times terrifying, world mirrors many people’s experiences with Epilepsy.

*Frankenstein* by *Mary Shelly* is also used as an Epilepsy metaphor. Being seen as inhumane and needed to be ‘fixed’ resonates with many people that have Epilepsy.

This play refers to different treatments that have been used to try and prevent Epilepsy or deal with symptoms. They are separated into two groups: holistic vs pharmaceutical. The holistic treatments include supplements, diets, and physical therapy. The pharmaceutical treatments are a list of medications used to try and treat Epilepsy. The reason why many people have Epilepsy is unknown, so oftentimes many different types of treatments are trialled to see if they will work.

Living with Epilepsy makes people much more likely to suffer from mental illness, and people come up with many ways of dealing with this. One way is creating a ‘split identity’, where the person imagines their Epilepsy as a separate entity from themselves. This helps them mentally cope with their condition, as they can view a sense of self that is separate to their epilepsy.

## *The Long Story*

*NOTE: NARRATOR often describes situations that happened in the past, whilst the chorus act them out on stage. Whilst never mentioned directly, this play takes place during a seizure, from the beginning to an end. All the cast have a piece of red rope that is integrated in all of the movement work of the production. The rope is often tied between two or more characters at any time. The characters swap who holds the rope and how throughout.*

The CHORUS enter the stage, pulling the NARRATOR by the rope and guiding him to his seat. NARRATOR asks the audience if they enjoy being alone or are comfortable in the silence. He guides the audience through different ways of moving their bodies and making sounds. After this exercise he tells them to be as still as possible, then asks why the audience came. He remarks that the audience must be people that do not mind the dark or the silence.

NARRATOR is different as he minds very much.

DOCTOR tells PARENT that Epilepsy is caused by uncoordinated chemical or electrical firing in the brain, and seizures are a by-product of the nerve cell's regular activity being disrupted. PARENT asks if it can be fixed, and the DOCTOR says sometimes.

NARRATOR describes an Epileptic seizure, starting with the inability to talk or make sound. The next sense he lost was often sight – even with his eyes open he could not see anything. He instructs the audience to look at their hands and try to remember every detail in them. NARRATOR says that remembering is one of the few things he could do during a seizure. Hearing was the next thing he loses the ability to do in a seizure, and he describes everyday sounds that disappeared. The last sense he lost was touch, which left him with a feeling of numbness.

NARRATOR tells the audience what it feels like to lose all senses, waiting for a seizure to be over, and reminds them that he could not scream.

CHILD calls out, and MUM tells CHILD that she is here, holding his hand. CHILD asks where.

NARRATOR called his Epileptic seizures 'daydreams' as a child. He explains that MUM told him he would be dreaming or go on vacation. CHILD asks PARENT why he cannot go on a plane or have a fun vacation, and PARENT says it is just a turn of phrase.

MUM would hold NARRATOR when he was dealing with Epilepsy symptoms or treatment. DOCTORS started calling his seizures 'daydreams' as well.



NARRATOR says that he knows everyone was trying their best. It was difficult for him growing up as no one completely understands why Epilepsy happens or what causes it. 'Daydreams' was a term that helped him make sense of it.

CHORUS tells the audience that one in twenty-five people in Australia will be diagnosed with Epilepsy at some point in their life. They explain that people close to them were asked what Epilepsy is, then list their answers.

NARRATOR describes trying to beat his Epilepsy and failing.

PARENT lists different holistic remedies for Epilepsy whilst DOCTOR lists medical remedies. NARRATOR and EPILEPSY agree to all the remedies.

NARRATOR talks about taking many different medications and treatments as a child to deal with his Epilepsy, and his praise for doing so. Everyone mimics opening a child-proof medical container and taking pills. NARRATOR never tried to hide or fake taking medication, as he rebelled by thinking.

CHORUS and NARRATOR talk about the confusion and uncertainty that Epilepsy brings, using *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a metaphor. The rope is tied around NARRATOR's fingers, then woven in a maypole-style away from him. CHORUS members hoist NARRATOR up in the air and describe him being like a monster to fix, using *Frankenstein* as a metaphor. CHORUS bring NARRATOR to sit in the chair and walk away from him.

NARRATOR reflects on going to the beach with DAD and his BROTHERS, boogie boarding on the waves. A CHORUS MEMBER dances with the rope and other CHORUS members whilst the NARRATOR talks. He enjoyed how real it felt, despite being dangerous. NARRATOR was aware of the consequences of falling or having a seizure and decided to research what drowning feels like. DOCTOR describes the sensation of drowning.

DOCTOR tells the audience that Epilepsy has been known for 4000 years, affects 50 million people, and the reason for half the cases are unknown. The risk of premature death is three times higher. DOCTOR says Epilepsy negatively affects people's lives but offers a treatment at the hospital. A CHORUS member asks about being anywhere else.

NARRATOR lists different things that trigger his Epilepsy and ways people have reacted to it. As he discusses his Epilepsy, he has a seizure and panics, calling out. He is left alone experiencing a panic attack.

CHORUS take three deep breaths in sync as the NARRATOR recovers from his panic attack.

NARRATOR mourns that he does not have control of his Epilepsy, and it is not fair. CHORUS tell him that it is unfair, and NARRATOR must deal with it.

The next two paragraphs happen simultaneously:

CHORUS describe NARRATOR having an absence seizure and walking in front of the RECEPTIONIST's car at SCHOOL. A TEACHER tried to grab his wrist but was too late. The RECEPTIONIST was doing her make-up and looked away. CHORUS walk around NARRATOR with the rope around their wrist.

NARRATOR talks about being terrified to be alone and poetically describes a seizure. He has all the CHORUS ropes tied to his wrist and holds it up in the air.

The characters resume speaking individually

NARRATOR swears at himself and is enraged that his body is not working how he wants it to. He explains that he was not hit by the car due to school zone speed limits, which gave RECEPTIONIST more time to stop. CLASSMATES yelled and laughed at him, entertained. TEACHER picked NARRATOR up and took me to the side of the road, even though he could have done it himself.

FRIEND A tells FRIEND B that they do not want to invite NARRATOR to an event. FRIEND B assumed that FRIEND A and NARRATOR were friends, but FRIEND A suggests that NARRATOR's mental absence and Epilepsy symptoms are on purpose. NARRATOR tells them he does not do it on purpose. They are standing far away from him whilst he is in the chair.

NARRATOR walks over to FRIEND A and FRIEND B and moves between them during this moment. EPILEPSY is pulled along by their rope. At school, NARRATOR's CLASSMATES called him a freak, and his TEACHER called him stupid. NARRATOR refers to movies that made Epilepsy seem scary or dangerous, and religious attempts to remove his Epilepsy. He discusses being filmed during seizures and not consenting to it. NARRATOR used to hide in his room under the blankets to try and hide from his Epilepsy.

DOCTOR tells the audience that 'long term remission' or 'resolved Epilepsy' is when a person has not had a seizure in 10 years and hasn't taken medication for at least five of those years. They wonder about how long ten years is and how much can happen in that time.

EPILEPSY and NARRATOR introduce themselves and their Epilepsy. During this scene, the CHORUS tie their ropes around NARRATOR's eyes and body, and EPILEPSY to NARRATOR. NARRATOR asks for different accommodations

to prevent them from having another seizure, trying to explain why they need it and that they are not trying to be rude. They stop asking as they know the discussion is annoying whoever they are talking to. A CHORUS member tells NARRATOR they thought he didn't have it anymore.

The concept of five love languages is introduced, and NARRATOR tells the audience that he scored highest in physical affection the first time he took it. Two CHORUS members hug and hold each other close. Physical affection helps ground him and protect him, and he does it to others for the same reason. NARRATOR and EPILEPSY interlock their fingers and hug. NARRATOR took the test again a week ago and got the same results.

A CHORUS member uses NARRATOR's rope to pull him close, and two CHORUS members march NARRATOR towards the audience. As a child, NARRATOR was not allowed anywhere by himself and had to tell people what he was doing. He then began to sneak into the forest and run around to have freedom. NARRATOR tries to run away and is held back by the rope, and EPILEPSY is pulled along between two CHORUS members to where NARRATOR was standing. EPILEPSY then walks to NARRATOR.

DOCTOR describes the ways Epileptic people mentally cope with their condition, pulling NARRATOR to another part of the stage. One of the ways people cope is by having a separate identity – EPILEPSY and themselves. EPILEPSY tells him that they feel real, even if the NARRATOR doesn't think so.

NARRATOR expresses his frustration that trying to avoid symptoms was seen as an inconvenience to others, walking alongside the rope like a tightrope. CHORUS members discuss the importance of thinking words versus saying them. NARRATOR trips on the rope and falls to the floor.

The CHORUS all sit on the floor like children in a classroom, playing with the rope on the floor. In a CLASSROOM with a SUBSTITUTE TEACHER, NARRATOR sees his FRIEND WITH EPILEPSY have an absence seizure. FRIEND WITH EPILEPSY begins doing a repeated movement with her hands. He tries to get help and go to the NURSE, but the SUBSTITUTE TEACHER does not let them. FRIEND WITH EPILEPSY has another seizure but has to wait until the end of the class to go to the NURSE. NARRATOR holds FRIEND WITH EPILEPSY's hands, and she stops the repeated movement.

THERAPIST asks how EPILEPSY deals with anxiety, and EPILEPSY describes playing music or talking to themselves.

NARRATOR used to try and physically remove his Epilepsy and discusses strategies to help him sleep. He frequently has nightmares that he is having a seizure and wakes up terrified. The CHORUS tell NARRATOR things he has said to himself about Epilepsy. He describes hiding his struggles to sleep, lying about not being afraid of the dark.

PRIEST reads a section from the Bible where a person brings their Epileptic child to Jesus, asking him to remove the 'dumb spirit'.

NARRATOR reflects on a school trip he had to GRANITE ISLAND for a science class. He was excited as there were FAIRY PENGUINS, so he dressed for very cold weather. CHORUS sit like FAIRY PENGUINS on the floor. At the FAIRY PENGUIN EXHIBIT, NARRATOR met the runt of the penguins that he named FRIEDRICH. As they met, the NARRATOR had a hot flush, as the temperature was not cold at all. He had a heat induced seizure, but FRIEDRICH alerted TEACHERS by tapping on the glass.

DOCTOR reminds NARRATOR to always be aware of triggers.

NARRATOR explains that he was taken outside and stripped of his clothes and could not thank FRIEDRICH for saving him.

NARRATOR tells the audience that he often lost all privacy and choices when he had a seizure, as people had to make choices to save his life. Two CHORUS members grab EPILEPSY and bring them behind NARRATOR. He acknowledges that even though the choices were necessary, he still felt violated.

When NARRATOR was at CENTRAL STATION at some point in the past, there was a flickering light above a headache advertisement. Two CHORUS members tie their rope to the chair and make it look like train tracks. NARRATOR. had a seizure due to the lights and is frustrated that people do not accommodate his disability.

DOCTOR discusses that many Epileptic people split their identity into two: themselves and their Epilepsy. By doing so, they protect their own identity.

NARRATOR reminds the audience about the term 'daydreams', and that he grew up apathetic as it helped him cope. He tried to write this play in a pleasant way, but it did not suit him. He knows and accepts how hard it is to have Epilepsy, but he would not change his past. 'Daydreams' feels like it does not describe what NARRATOR knows as living. The play concludes, with EPILEPSY asking if it is over. NARRATOR tells them to go, but EPILEPSY will stay nearby.