

**'SO GOOD...
LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FUNNY AND
TEARS-TO-THE-EYES MOVING'**
THE TIMES

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SHIFTERS

A FIERCE NEW ROMANCE

by **Benedict Lombe**

directed by Lynette Linton



Self-care guide & content warnings

What is this document?

This document was originally designed to support audiences attending performances of Benedict Lombe's *Shifters* at the Bush Theatre in Spring 2024, and has been re-purposed for the West End production from 12 August - 12 October 2024 at the Duke of York's Theatre.

We know this show might be challenging to engage with for some audiences, especially if you're affected by the content. This document contains information about ways to look after yourself before you watch, while you're at the theatre or after the play.

It also contains information about the show in order to describe what you should expect when attending.

All of the information here was accurate when we put this guide together. As the production is in development, the details may change.



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What is self-care?

Self-care is a choice to listen to our needs and look after ourselves, so we are able to keep going and live our best lives, despite the difficulties we experience in life and how they make us feel.

Thank you to Clean Break for bringing their care practices, including Self-Care Guides, to the Bush Theatre during our co-production of Favour (2022). Clean Break is a theatre company working with women with lived experience of the criminal justice system or at risk of entering it. cleanbreak.org.uk

“The concept of self-care comes from the Black Feminist movement. Self-care is important because it’s about recognising that we experience discrimination and oppression because of how others react to who we are, or what we’ve experienced.” - Clean Break

In writing this document, we were also inspired by recent approaches taken by several other companies, especially the Nouveau Riche and Royal Court teams.

About the show

The below information contains key plot points.
Skip this section if you want to avoid spoilers.

The play jumps between present day and eight years in the past, when Dre and Des were at secondary school, and moments in between.

The play opens in the present day. Dre is at his grandma's funeral. Des, who now lives a plane ride away, arrives late and misses the service. So many years have passed so after the funeral they decide to go for a drink and catch up. Her plane home is a matter of hours away.

In the past, Dre moves to a new area to live with his grandma after the death of his father and starts at a new school. He meets Des, an outspoken and opinionated classmate. Dre persuades her to join the debate team with him, and the pair work closely to prepare for a big competition with a significant cash prize.

Back in the present, and we discover how much their lives have moved on. Dre is now a father and owns a local restaurant, having achieved his ambitions. Des is newly engaged, and working as an artist. After heading to Dre's restaurant, which they find closed, they decide to continue the evening at Dre's grandma's where there is always a strong supply of good alcohol. Over Grandma's whisky, they talk, reminisce and question what might have been.

In memories, we see them grow closer, we uncover their pasts, their loves and losses, including the death of Dre's brother and his mum moving back to Lagos leaving him with his grandmother, and Des' experiences of sexual abuse in her childhood leaving her experiencing panic attacks. On the day of the big debate, Des has one of these panic attacks, meaning their lose shot at winning the prize money. Dre reveals it was never really about the prize money, but about spending time with her.

As a tapestry of moments and memories, past and present, unravels, Des and Dre attempt to unpick whether they were truly destined for each other, or if they should ultimately part ways.

Content guidance

This show contains:

- A depiction of a panic attack
- Use of strong language throughout
- Depiction of alcohol consumption and drunkenness
- Infrequent references to sex
- Themes and discussion of illness, death and grief
- Discussion of disability and neurodiversity
- Allusions to sexual abuse
- One mention of suicide.

Lighting and Sound

This production also contains:

- Flashing, flickering and pulsating lights
- Infrequent moments of darkness
- Sudden lighting changes
- Loud noises.

**Running time: approximately 1 hour 40 minutes
with no interval.**

Helplines & Support

Mind

Provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem

[mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk) or **0300 123 3393**

Black Minds Matter

Provides free, 1:1, culturally relevant therapy for Black people in the UK. blackmindsmatteruk.com

BAATN

Provides various services for psychological support for people who identify as Black, African, South Asian and Caribbean. baatn.org.uk

At A Loss

The UK's signposting website for the bereaved. They can help you find bereavement services and counselling, as well as resources. ataloss.org

Hub of Hope

UK-wide mental health service database. Lets you search for local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support. You can filter results to find specific kinds of support.

hubofhope.co.uk

Samaritans

Provides 24/7 emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.

[samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org) or **116 123**

Self-care suggestions

Watch with someone

Bring a friend or someone you trust to watch the play with you.

Talk to someone

If you find the content distressing try talking to someone you trust, or try one of the organisations suggested above.

Breathe

Breathing is a great way to help you feel calm. Try breathing in for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds and holding again. Repeat this for as long as you need.

Find some nature

Look out of the window or go for a walk if you can; experiencing nature can help us feel grounded.

Know if you need to step away

There is nothing wrong with deciding this isn't for you. Listen to your body. You might feel uncomfortable or tense that you decide it's too much.

Leave the auditorium, walk away, take a break. Do what feels right for you.

Self-care suggestions

Try a grounding exercise

Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the present moment.

There are many ways you can do this. Here are some ideas:

1. Notice five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.
2. Sit with your feet on the floor and back against your chair and either gently tap each leg or cross your arms and tap your shoulders.
3. Wash your hands or drink some water. Concentrate on the sensation of water.

