



COUNTING AND CRACKING

- *Counting and Cracking* is a play written by S. Shakthidharan with Eamon Flack (Associate Writer), who also previously collaborated on *The Jungle and the Sea in 2022*.
- The production, directed by Eamon Flack with S. Shakthidharan (Associate Director), premiered at Sydney Town Hall in 2019 as part of the Sydney Festival. It received significant acclaim, winning the Victorian Premier's Prize for Literature and Helpmann Awards for Best Production and Best Direction.
- *Counting and Cracking* runs for approximately 3 hours & 30 minutes including two intervals.
- *Counting and Cracking* is set in two key locations: Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Sydney, Australia. The action of the play moves back and forward in time between three years: 2004, 1977, and 1957.
- The central characters in the play are a Sri Lankan family: **Apah** (the grandfather and a politician from Colombo, Tamil); **Aacha** (the grandmother, also from Colombo and a Tamil speaker); **Radha** (their granddaughter originally from Colombo, Tamil, now living in Western Sydney); **Thirru** (Radha's husband, the son of Bala from Jaffna, Tamil); and **Siddhartha** (Radha and Thirru's son, a student living in Sydney).
- The show features sixteen performers and three live musicians. Many of the actors play multiple roles, and costume is often used to indicate the change in character.
- *Counting and Cracking* is set before, during, and after the civil war in Sri Lanka, a period of intense conflict lasting over 25 years. The war was fought between the Sri Lankan government (predominantly Sinhalese) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers. The LTTE aimed to establish an independent state called Tamil Eelam in the north-east of Sri Lanka due to decades of discrimination and persecution of the minority Tamil population by the Sinhalese-majority government. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese are the majority ethnic group, while the Sri Lankan Tamils are the minority.
- On one occasion, the characters are seen smoking marijuana and drinking (fake) alcohol on stage. In the same scene, two characters refer to recreational drug-taking in the line: "Are you high?/The pill's kinda hitting now".
- The production includes the occasional use of swear words, which are used in the dialogue between two young characters as part of everyday speech.
- The play contains references to religion. For instance, in the opening scene, a Hindu priest carries out burial rites.
- The play includes references to violence within the context of war. In one scene, a Sinhalese jailor recounts the events of his parents' deaths at the hands of a suicide bomber: 'A Tamil Tiger blew himself up in the middle of it. I couldn't properly identify my mother and father until a policeman helped me reconnect some of their body parts.' In another scene, there is a reference to a Buddhist monk being set alight and a busload of Tamils being set aflame.
- The play contains verbal references to the deaths of civilians and the description of injuries.
- This production contains emotionally intense content concerning the experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, and individuals detained in detention centers, which some students may find upsetting.
- There is the use of haze in this production.
- Some students may need to be briefed about theatre etiquette. Please turn mobile phones off completely and refrain from eating in the theatre. Students need to know that the performance is live and that the actors see and hear them in the audience.
- The dedicated school's performance of *Counting and Cracking* will finish close to **3:00 pm**. There will be no Q&A after the performance. Please email education@belvoir.com.au with any questions your students may have about the production.