



THE WRONG GODS

By **S. Shakthidharan**
Directed by

03 MAY - 01 JUN

BELVOIR ST THEATRE PRESENTS

THE WRONG GODS

Written by S. Shakthidharan, *The Wrong Gods* opened at Belvoir on 03 May 2025 and was directed by Hannah Goodwin & S. Shakthidharan.

CREATIVES

Director | Hannah Goodwin & S. Shakthidharan

Writer | S. Shakthidharan

Set and Costume Designer | Keerthi Subramanyam

Lighting Designer | Amelia Lever-Davidson

Sound Designer | Steve Francis

Associate Sound Designer | Madeleine Picard

Composer | Sabyasachi (Rahul) Bhattacharya

Voice Coach | Laura Farrell

Movement & Fight Director, Intimacy Coordinator | Nigel Poulton

Stage Manager | Madelaine Osborn

Stage Manager | Steph Storr

Assistant Stage Manager | Mia Kanzaki

Assistant Stage Manager | Grace Sackman

CAST

Manali Datar | Devi

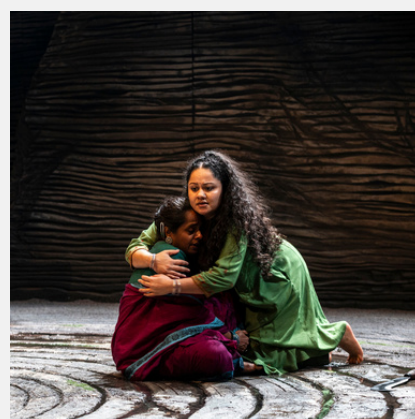
Nadie Kammallaweera | Nirmala

Radhika Mudaliyar | Isha

Vaishnavi Suryaprakash | Lakshmi

SUPPORTED BY **THE HIVE** - Supporting emerging talent at Belvoir

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St. Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

ONE BUILDING

600 PEOPLE

THOUSANDS OF STORIES

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Aaron Beach and Deputy Executive Director Fiona Hulton, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

BELVOIR EDUCATION

Our Education Program offers students and teachers an in-depth look into the work of Belvoir St. and the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings, and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work. For keen theatre lovers, Young Belvoir provides enriching experiences, while First Class supports early-career drama teachers with targeted resources and training.

Explore our education pages at belvoir.com.au/education





Manali Datar, Vaishnavi Suryapakash, Radhika Mudaliyar (2025, Brett Boardman)



Cast and Directors in rehearsal
(2025, Brett Boardman)



WRITER /

CO-DIRECTOR 'S NOTE

S. SHAKTHIDHARAN

She's sitting on the banks of her river, deep in her valley, in the remote heart of India. She's staring at me. I'm brushing off her soil from my lenses, my tripod, my cables. I've just finished an interview with her. As I head back up the mountain, to where my Australian arts colleagues are waiting, she yells: 'make sure you get our story onto that TV!' It's not a request: it's an order. Her cow bellows his support. 'I'll try, aunty,' I feebly call back down the mountain.

Some twelve years later, I can still feel the force of her words. Partly because of the shame of being a lowly theatre maker, and not a famous TV presenter that can give her story the cultural power (although probably not the nuance) it deserves. But more so, because of the sophistication of her thinking. She has come to learn, in the most brutal way possible, that the fate of her home is intimately tied up with separate events happening elsewhere in her country, and indeed all over the world. She has learnt that she must now understand the power of some new gods, gods that have never entered her valley or felt her river before. But she is not facing this challenge with fear. She and her fellow community members have summoned the strength to face these new gods head on.

What will it take for us city folk to go through the same process? To question our own gods, and be prepared to meet new (or old) ones? We believe we have broken from the shackles of communal life and can be our full individual selves - but has there ever been a time in the history of our earth more culturally homogenous than now? We think we have become more secular, more accepting of multiple faiths - but has there ever been a religion humanity has more quickly and wholly accepted than the religion of progress?

We will soon be forced to grapple with the consequences of our most deeply held faiths - whether we like it or not. It might be in the wake of the next natural disaster, fascist leader or disruptive technology - or in some strange mix of all three. But it will come.

How will we gather the acuity to deal with what's heading towards us? How do we use the coming crises as opportunities for real change? Certainly, we will need to first appreciate how much power we all wield in the modern world, with every decision we make - financial, social, political, cultural. And we will need to seriously consider that maybe we are giving that power to the wrong people. We are putting our faith in the wrong ideas. The wrong systems. The wrong gods.

That woman, in the valley. Her gods and our gods are going to need to talk to each other. They are going to have to work together. It will take an openness on both sides. They are ready. But are we?



Nadie Kammallaweera, Manali Datar
(2025, Brett Boardman)





Hannah Goodwin (2025, Brett Boardman)

CO-DIRECTOR'S NOTE | HANNAH GOODWIN

When I first read Shakthi's play I thrilled to a tension inside it, between the real-world points of inspiration and the form that the story took. I felt I had just read a new myth.

This new myth takes place in an ancient place. In a clearing, alongside a mighty river in the Narmada Valley, India. Some of you might already be connecting the dots on some of the genesis points that I've alluded to. Still in the dark? Don't worry. If the only thing you do after this is go looking for the real stories that may have given birth to what we're doing here in Surry Hills, you will find that the events of this story have and are being replayed in many different cultures and contexts, all over the world. When I became truly cognizant of this, Shakthi's use of the mythic form took on even more meaning.

This is the myth of progress. It is the story of what we put our faith in today, about what we worship without question. It is about how the world is changing and how, sooner or later, we will be forced to change with it.

Over the course of this process, I have had the confronting pleasure of questioning my own faiths - social, political, spiritual, practical... One obvious, demonstrable faith I hold is my belief in the creation of new work. Making new plays is the thing I do in my life that I believe in more than nearly anything else. Since making new mythologies rarely excludes what has come before but almost always includes what has previously been excluded, new work can reflect a kind of progress in and of itself. As the globalised world continues to develop (more and more rapidly, more and more precariously) it is inevitable that many inherited myths lose their meaning. There are times when old myths seem too confined to address, let alone contain, the complexities of our ever-transforming, ever-expanding societies. I believe we are at one of those junctures. I think we have been stuck here for a while, and I believe that it is up to artists to articulate those new myths that can embody our experiences of the world, and provide frameworks for reason, ethics and values. New myths are needed to show us who we are becoming.



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

At the same time, I can also see that some of the old myths, the old ways, have lost their meaning not because they are wrong but because we are wrong. We are at risk of losing them entirely. So, in this world, perhaps the task of the new is to partner with the old? To forge an unlikely but essential alliance, in the mammoth, audacious hope of saving us all from the brink?

That is the scale of Shakthi's tale. It takes four characters and a situation that spans pre-industrialisation to now in just seven years and two scenes, to understand the globalised modern world in all its complexity. I am grateful to have been a small part of the making of it.

**So here it is. A new myth, inspired by truth, that asks -
If we can accept that the world is changing and that we will have to change with it, who will we become?**





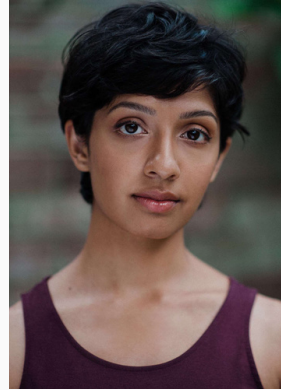
CHARACTERS



MANALI DATAR



DEVI



**VAISHNAVI
SURYAPRAKASH**



LAKSHMI



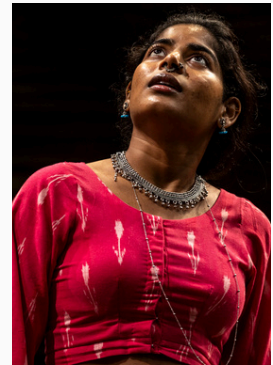
**NADIE
KAMMALLAWEERA**



NIRMALA



RADHIKA MUDALIYAR



ISHA

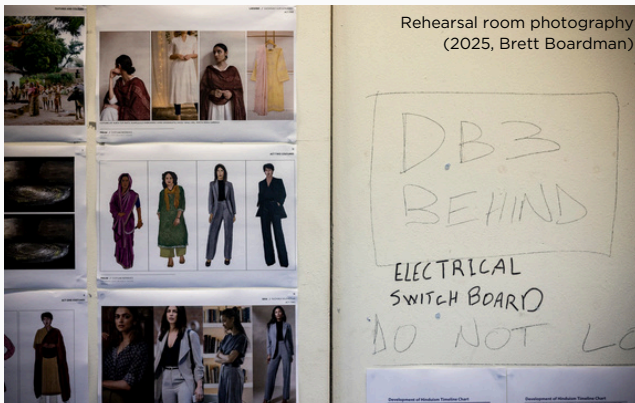
- What performance elements did the actors employ to convey aspects of their character?
- Which relationships stood out to you? Why?

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The Wrong Gods
Keerthi Subramanyam

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story. In these notes we are going to look at the costume and set design for *The Wrong Gods*.

COSTUME DESIGN



**"Each one of these communities along this valley are like their own little civilizations, completely unique. And losing each one is like losing an entire civilization."
Keerthi Subramanyam**

The clothes we wear say a lot about our culture, our beliefs, our personalities and our worldview. As characters are influenced by other cultural attitudes, a costume designer might choose to show this through a change in costume.

Take a look at the costume renderings on the next page, and answer the following:

- How did each character's costumes change over the course of the play, and what was the impact of this?
- How has Keerthi Subramanyam used colour to show elements of each character?
- How might the design of their costume impact the way an actor moves and perform on stage?

COSTUME RENDERINGS

DESIGNED BY KEERTHI SUBRAMANYAM

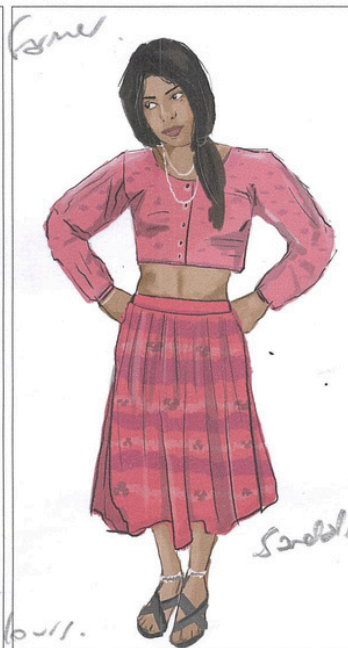
8

ACT ONE COSTUMES

Saree + blouse
for rehearsal.

"Dressed up"
old but nice.

Knee Pads.



Kurt.
white w/
gold
embroidery.

Eating.
Red
Shawl
Gold
embroidery
on back
of shawl.
shimmering.

Tuffi shoe
sho on nails

PRELIM / COSTUME REFERENCE

Pleasant in

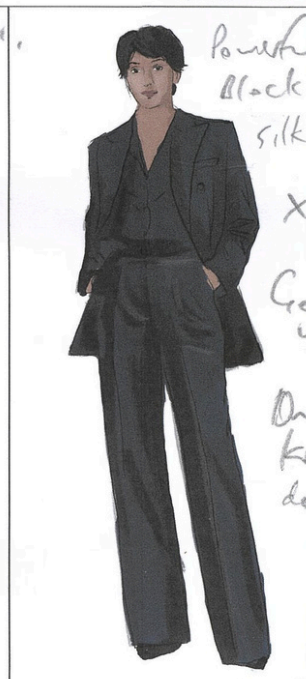
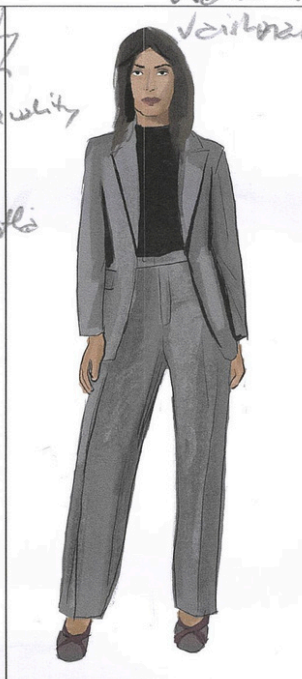
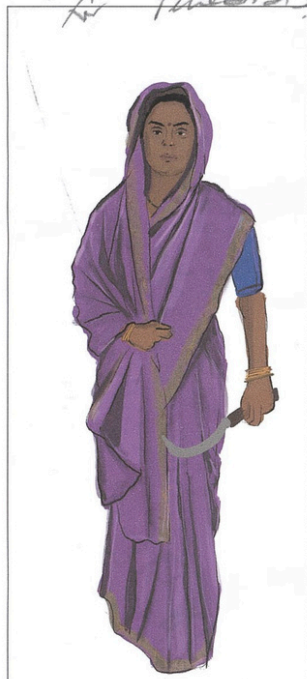
Saree + blouse
for rehearsal.

School Teacher
for the city
living in
good quality

works for
various.

ACT TWO COSTUMES

ink ready



Gets
wet.

On her
knee.
double.

Green
apply
yellow
green.

straight leg
pant.

PRELIM / COSTUME REFERENCE
THE WRONG GODS | BELVOIR ST THEATRE
24.01.2025

LAKSHMI / VAIS



COSTUME LIST: BLUE SUIT, TURTLENECK/TOP, BELT, HEELS, WATCH, EARRINGS



COSTUME LIST: BLOUSE, SKIRT, DUPATTA, EARRINGS, NECKLACE



PRELIM / COSTUME REFERENCE
THE WRONG GODS | BELVOIR ST THEATRE
24.03.2025



PRELIM / COSTUME REFERENCE
THE WRONG GODS | BELVOIR ST THEATRE
24.03.2025

COSTUME LIST: KURTA TOP, PANTS, SHAWL (GOLD EMBROIDERY SHINE UNDERNEATH), SHOES / SMALL HEEL, WATCH, RINGS, EARRINGS

Indian Version of
Shirt and/or Black T?



COSTUME LIST: GREY SUIT, LIGHTWEIGHT TOP, BELT, SHOES, TO TRY - AN INDIAN TOP, EARRINGS

PRELIM / COSTUME REFERENCE
THE WRONG GODS | BELVOIR ST THEATRE
24.03.2025

Low heel or loafers.



BLOUSE, SANDALS, NECKLACES, EARRINGS, BANGLES, ANKLET, HAIR CLIPS



SUSTAINABLE THEATRE MAKING: THE SWING & BENCHES

In line with Belvoir's commitment to sustainable theatre making, the swing and benches in *The Wrong Gods* have been crafted with a focus on reusing and recycling materials. The use of recycled and reused timber for these key set pieces was formalised from the very beginning of the design process.

The timber was sourced as reclaimed lengths from Wastewood, a sustainable timber yard in Marrickville that specialises in salvaging and repurposing wood. This means the materials not only carry a rich history but also contribute to reducing waste and supporting the circular economy.

Rehearsal room photography
(2025, Brett Boardman)



Radhika Mudaliyar (2025, Brett Boardman)



The furniture pieces are constructed using traditional joinery techniques, specifically, tenon joints, to avoid the use of metal screws and braces. This attention to detail ensures that the structures remain strong while minimising the environmental impact.

The weaves are made from unbleached, natural cotton sash, and the hanging ropes are crafted from natural sisal. This ensures that the final pieces are made from 60% reused and recycled materials and are 100% biodegradable. This sustainable approach to design and fabrication was made possible through the collaboration between Production Manager Ren Kenward, Designer Keerthi Subramanyam and Fabricator Isabell Delaurentis, who shared the vision of creating an environmentally responsible production.

Belvoir recognises that this is just the beginning and remains committed to deepening its practices, expanding its understanding, and striving toward ever more sustainable approaches to theatre making.



Nadie Kammallaweera
(2025, Brett Boardman)

MODEL BOX IMAGES

A set designer's model box is a scaled-down, three-dimensional representation of a theatre set, used to plan and visualise the staging before full-scale construction. It allows directors, designers, and production teams to experiment with spatial relationships, lighting, and movement within the performance space. Typically made from lightweight materials like cardboard or foam, it serves as a crucial tool for refining design concepts and communicating ideas to the creative team.



Radhika Mudaliyar, Nadie Kammallaweera
(2025, Brett Boardman)



Nadie Kammallaweera
(2025, Brett Boardman)



Along with the costumes, Keerthi Subramanyam also designed the set for *The Wrong Gods*. Take a close look at the model box she created.

- What key design elements stand out to you?
- How does this set create a specific mood or atmosphere?
- What challenges might come with working on a set like this?
- What makes the shape of Belvoir's Upstairs Theatre unique, and how might it influence set design?



Cast in production (2025, Brett Boardman)



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

SET DESIGN

The Wrong Gods
Keerthi Subramanyam

"When the audience looks at this space, they see a **natural** space as opposed to a human built space, they see a wide open space as opposed to a confined space, but also that they look at this world.

And it looks and feels like a very **old** place. It looks and feels like a very **sacred** place. It should feel like God's in heaven at this place, that it could be plausibly one of the origin points of the universe." - Keerthi Subramanyam



Radhika Mudaliyar, Nadie Kammallaweera (2025, Brett Boardman)

- How has the designer used stage space, texture, colour and composition to enhance dramatic meaning?
- What could the circles on the stage represent?



Cast in production (2025, Brett Boardman)



BELVOIR ST
THEATRE

Vaishnavi Suryaprakash
(2025, Brett Boardman)



Rehearsal room photography
(2025, Brett Boardman)



THE SHOW IN PRODUCTION •

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY 2025 | BY BRETT BOARDMAN

Nadie Kammallaweera, Vaishnavi Suryapakash, Radhika Mudaliyar (2025, Brett Boardman)



Which character did you feel most connected to in the show?

Radhika Mudaliyar (2025, Brett Boardman)



How did this production make you feel?



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY 2025 | BY BRETT BOARDMAN



Name a moment from the production that has stayed with you.



What do you think this play is saying about the world we live in?

EXTRAS



INTERVIEW WITH S. SHAKTHIDHARAN & HANNAH GOODWIN

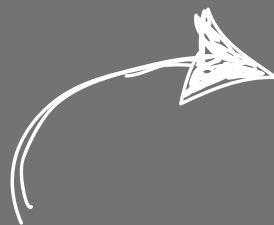
Listen to co-directors S. Shakthidharan & Hannah Goodwin introduce *The Wrong Gods* as part of Belvoir's 2025 Season Launch.



THE GUARDIAN REVIEW

Read The Guardians' 4-star review for *The Wrong Gods*.

SCAN TO VIEW THE
OFFICIAL PROGRAM



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

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