

# THE WRONG GODS

3 MAY - 1 JUNE



**BELVOIR ST  
THEATRE**

By **S. Shakthidharan**  
Directed by  
**Hannah Goodwin &  
S. Shakthidharan**

# THE WRONG GODS

**RUN TIME:** 90 minutes

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## **WARNING**

*The Wrong Gods* contains mild coarse language and features the use of haze, smoke, aromatic effects, and strobe lights.

Co-Produced with  
**Melbourne Theatre Company**

Supported by  
**The Hive - Supporting emerging talent at Belvoir**

# THE WRONG GODS

## CAST

**Manali Datar**

Devi

**Nadie**

**Kammallaweera**

Nirmala

**Radhika Mudaliyar**

Isha

**Vaishnavi**

**Suryaprakash**

Lakshmi

## CREATIVES

Writer and Co-Director

**S. Shakthidharan**

Co-Director

**Hannah Goodwin**

Set and Costume

Designer

**Keerthi Subramanyam**

Lighting Designer

**Amelia Lever-Davidson**

Sound Designer

**Steve Francis**

Associate Sound

Designer

**Madeleine Picard**

Composer

**Sabyasachi (Rahul)**

**Bhattacharya**

Tabla performed by

**Aman Pal**

Indian soundscapes  
recorded by

**George Vlad** ([mindful-audio.com](http://mindful-audio.com))

Movement & Fight

Director, Intimacy

Coordinator

**Nigel Poulton**

Vocal Coach

**Laura Farrell**

Stage Manager

**Madelaine Osborn**

Stage Manager

**Steph Storr**

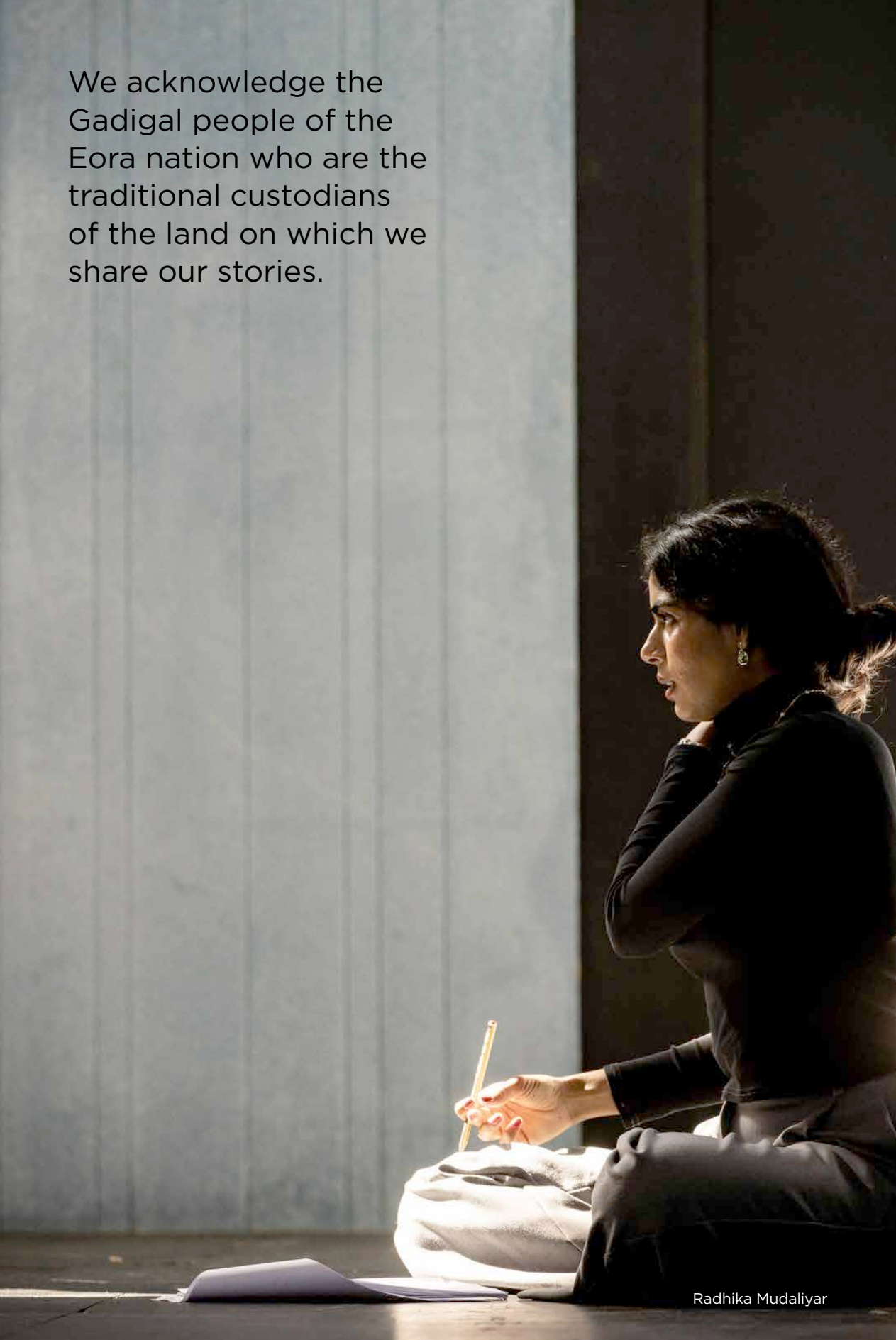
Assistant Stage Manager

**Mia Kanzaki**

Assistant Stage Manager

**Grace Sackman**

We acknowledge the  
Gadigal people of the  
Eora nation who are the  
traditional custodians  
of the land on which we  
share our stories.



Radhika Mudaliyar

Cover photography by

**Daniel Boud**

Rehearsal photography by

**Brett Boardman**



S. Shakthidharan

## 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.

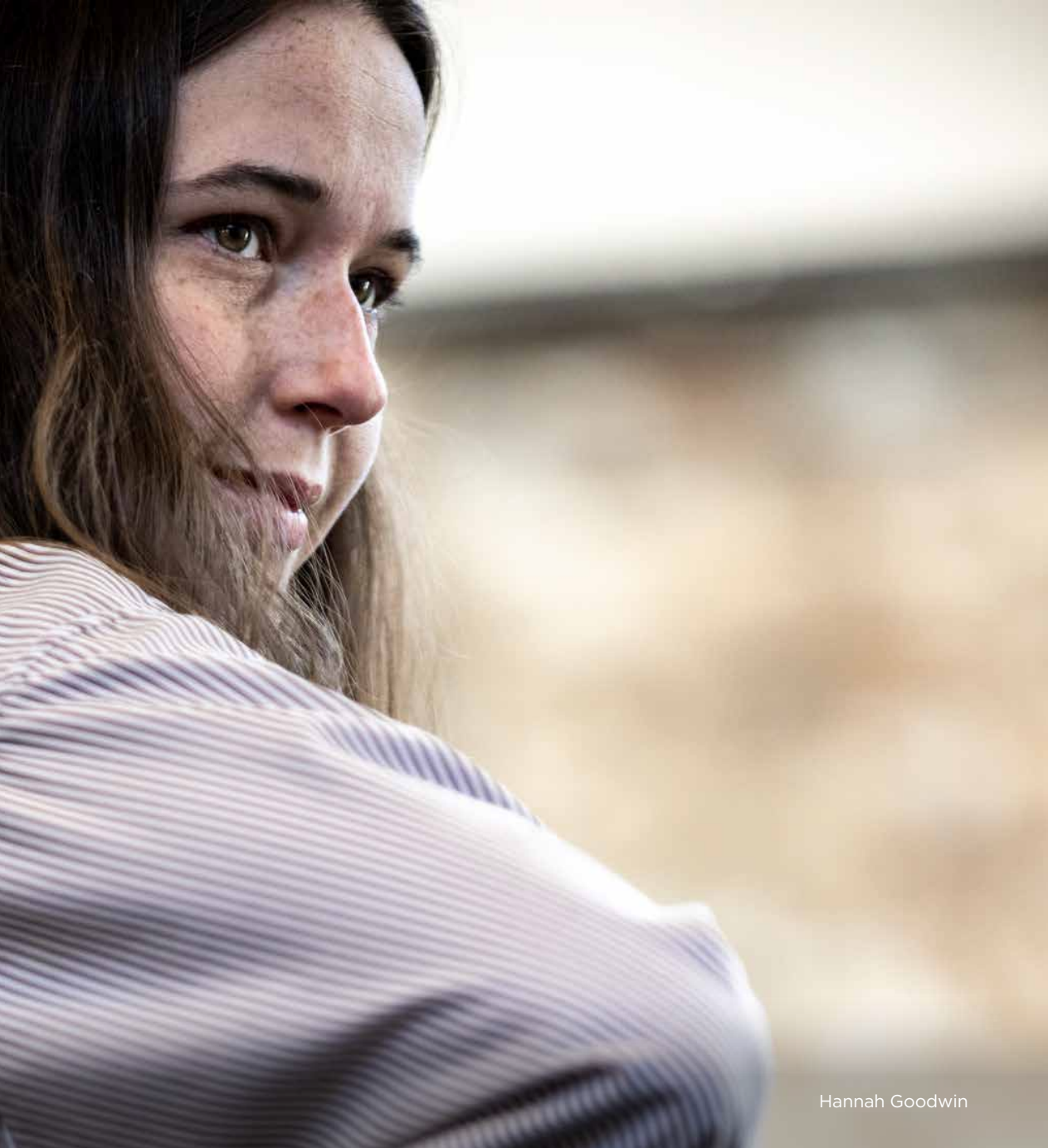
What will it take for us city folk to go through the same process? To question our own gods, and be prepared to meet new (or old) ones? We believe we have broken from the shackles of communal life and can be our full individual selves - but has there ever been a time in the history of our earth more 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?





Hannah Goodwin

## 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 is set 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.

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?







Nadie Kammallaweera



Vaishnavi Suryaprasath



Manali Datar



Radhika Mudaliyar & Nadie Kammallaweera



Keerthi Subramanyam



Hannah Goodwin and Madelaine Osborn





S. Shaktidharan & Radhika Mudaliyar



Radhika Mudaliyar, Nadie Kammallaweera & Vaishnavi Suryaprakash





Nadie Kammallaweera, Manali Datar & Vaishnavi Suryaprakash



Radhika Mudaliyar

# 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.

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.





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Award-winning Australian drama of sex, secrets and a city of lies.

16 Jan – 02 Feb

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History, politics, Spain – a new play from the great Andrew Bovell.

13 Feb – 23 Mar

## BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY

Love and revolution in the streets of Redfern.

05 – 27 Apr

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Local justice, global power – from the prize-winning writer of Counting & Cracking.

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Helen Garner. Judy Davis. Elizabeth Alexander.

07 Jun – 13 Jul

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The literary sensation – now a profound new play.

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Virginia Woolf's classic through a fresh, bold, theatrical lens.

30 Aug – 21 Sep

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Hilarious fractured fairytale by the peerless cabaret legend.

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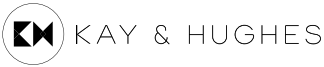
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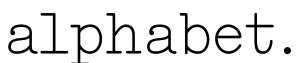
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