



BELVOIR ST
THEATRE

11 JUL – 2 AUG

THE JUNGLE AND THE SEA

காடும் கடலும்

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Written and Directed by
S. Shakthidharan & Eamon Flack

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RUN TIME: Approx 2 hours & 50 minutes
(includes 2 intervals)

WARNING

The Jungle and the Sea includes themes of war, trauma, sounds of artillery, the use of haze and loud sound effects.

If you have been directly affected by the events featured in this performance and would like some support you can contact;

STARTTS (NSW Service for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors) -

02 9646 -6800 or **startts.org.au**

LIFELINE - 13 11 14

Co-Produced by **Kurinji & Lingalayam**

Supported by **Gamechangers**

THE JUNGLE AND THE SEA

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CAST

Anandavalli
Indu Balachandran
Prakash Belawadi
Emma Harvie
Nadie Kammallaweera
Shiv Palekar
Dushan Philips
Arjunan Puveendran
Aswin Selvanathan
Hari Sivanesan
Kalieaswari Srinivasan
Rajan Velu

CREATIVES

Co-Writer & Co-Director
S. Shakthidharan
Co-Writer & Co-Director
Eamon Flack
Set & Costume Designer
Dale Ferguson
Composer
Arjunan Puveendran
Original
Musical Supervisor
Alan John
Lighting Designer
Damien Cooper
Sound Designer
Steve Francis
Original Lighting Designer
Véronique Benett
Assistant Director
Mehhma Malhi
Stage Manager
Peter Sutherland
Assistant Stage Manager
Mia Kanzaki
Assistant Stage Manager
Jasmine Power
Community Liaison
Thinesh Thillainadarajah

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories. We also pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Cover photography by

Daniel Boud

Rehearsal photography by

Sriram Jeyaraman



S. Shakthidharan

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

S. SHAKTHIDHARAN

During war, life goes on. Even amidst violence and degradation there is still love, determination, cheekiness and delight. *Counting and Cracking* was written in honour of those who tried to halt Sri Lanka's descent into civil war. *The Jungle and the Sea* is written in honour of those who lived through the war, and the ways they found to uphold their dignity even when everything else was falling down around them.

After war, a nation is at a crossroads. How its leaders decide to tell the story of that war will shape the country's future for decades to come. Seventeen years since the civil war ended in Sri Lanka, there is still so much unresolved; so much unfinished business. A nation cannot heal in this state.

Sri Lanka is at a crossroads again today. I hope this play can be one small part of a process which helps my community turn an open heart to its past; and resolve to not repeat those mistakes in our future.

The Mahābhāratha and Antigone radically opened up the process of writing *The Jungle and the Sea*. These ancient texts gave us permission to depict the lives of ordinary people as that of something extraordinary - almost mythic. The result, somehow, is something even more true, even more real. The final work is fiercely its own thing, but we are indebted to these texts for the potential they were able to unleash in its form.

It took 10 years to research and write *Counting and Cracking*. 6 years to convince the wider industry it was a story worth telling on the mainstage. 4 years to cast that incredible ensemble of actors. Compared to all that, *The Jungle and the Sea* feels like it has happened in a flash. That a Sri Lankan story, with an international ensemble, might be part of the new normal here in the Australian arts industry does feel like genuine change. It needs to be a change that will continue.

S. Shakthidharan



Eamon Flack

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

EAMON FLACK

In her essay 'The Iliad, or Poem of Force', Simone Weil writes about the "force" unleashed by war:

"From its first property (the ability to turn a human being into a thing by the simple method of killing him) flows another, quite prodigious too in its own way, the ability to turn a human being into a thing while he is still alive."

The characters in this play refuse to become a thing while they are still alive.

The actions they take in defiance of the forces unleashed on them are inspired by real stories of real people in Sri Lanka, and by characters from two great works of ancient literature. From the Mahābhāratha and from Sophocles' Thebes plays we picked out moments when characters insist on making choices in the face of war's chaos and absurdity, and from these assorted seeds we grew our own characters and storylines. Those of you who know Sophocles' Antigone will recognise the shadow of that great play in our Part Four.

Our characters are fictional, but the events that intervene in their imaginary lives are real events which took place in the north of Sri Lanka in recent decades. The facts and details that make up the circumstances of the play are drawn from the mass of uncollected testimony that forms the history of the Sri Lankan civil war, and the situations faced by the characters were a reality for hundreds of thousands of people.

The revolve was written into the play from the outset, and a lot of what we wrote was imaginable because of what a revolve makes possible. A much broader range of physical action becomes possible with a revolve, but it became more than a useful tool for things like moving through time and space. It also opened our imaginations to the thematic possibilities of these stories and it has ended up as a kind of force of history, fate, memory at work on the characters.

The music performed by Arjunan and Indu is Carnatic. In the same way that the choreographic storytelling of Bharatnatyam dance is accompanied by structured Carnatic improvisation, Arjunan and Indu are improvising

within the dramatic structures of this play, not so much accompanying the actors as working on the hearts and minds of the characters. Like the revolve, the music is a force at work inside the world of the play.

This show is a collaboration with Lingalayam Dance Company, founded and led by Anandavalli. Lingalayam is one of the country's great independent arts companies, and its proud history of using traditional artforms in new ways to tell stories about the contemporary world is an inspiration. There is a lot that is new and bewildering about the 21st century, but more and more I find myself thinking that there are some human experiences that you can only get a grip on through the deep wisdom and rigour of old forms. I certainly think that when I see Anandavalli dance.

Many of these characters were written specially for these actors. This is a heroic team of artists and crew, full of joy and love and rigour. Their contribution to this show goes far deeper than is normal.

“Maratamaatom. We will never forget.”
Gowrie, Part Five.

நாங்கள் மறக்கவோ மாட்டோம்

Eamon Flack



ANANDAVALLI

CHOREOGRAPHER & CULTURAL ADVISOR'S NOTE

ANANDAVALLI

Somewhere in 2019 Eamon called to ask whether he could have a chat with me, I presumed it was to do with *Counting and Cracking*, but when he asked me to play the role of Gowrie in *The Jungle and the Sea*, to say I was dumfounded is putting it mildly!

The Jungle and the Sea, written on the heels of the overwhelming success of *Counting and Cracking*, deals predominantly with a family being torn apart in the aftermath of war and Gowrie the mother is the central figure.

Reading the script of *The Jungle and the Sea* I soon realised that the role of Gowrie had been written with me in mind – the dancing, the family and my yet unresolved relationship with my motherland, Sri Lanka.

Relevant to the 2026 restaging of *The Jungle and the Sea*; I spent the first three months of this year in Jaffna and Kilinochi working on another project. This time spent in the North of Sri Lanka opened my eyes and soul to the resilience, perseverance and above all the dignity with which the survivors of the war - especially the women, continue on their journey of making and living a life after the war. Those three months have had a great impact on me, and that experience has injected itself into Gowrie's character.

My visual image of Gowrie has always been that of a Banyan Tree-its branches letting down roots symbolising her family and a mother's dream for her children, till one by one they are dragged away from her and until finally she is left rooted to the soil, she is unable to walk away from. This is so true of the mothers that have survived the war and are still living in the North of Sri Lanka, they epitomise *shakthi* the inner strength that keeps them living.

The Jungle and the Sea is an outstanding script, soulfully crafted and directed on an ensemble of vested actors carefully chosen to unfold the life of each character in the play. This has been complemented with the addition of two live musicians who have seamlessly embodied the emotions of the play.

I am immensely grateful for this unanticipated opportunity to play Gowrie, especially at this stage in my life. I am humbled by your presence and that you are here to partake in this journey with myself and our incredible cast and crew.

Warmly

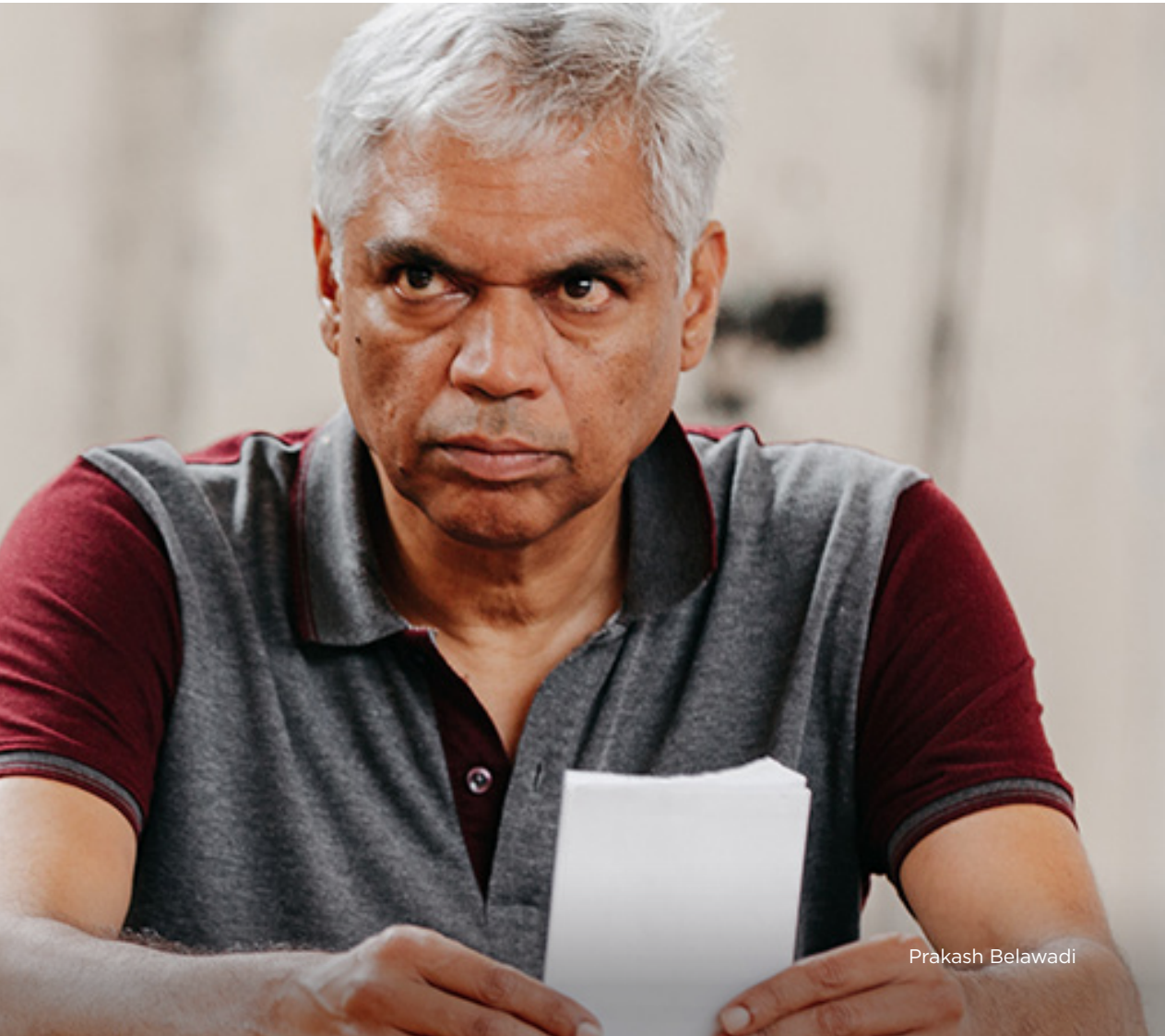
Anandavalli

Artistic Director Lingalayam





Nadie Kammallaweera



Prakash Belawadi







Rajan Velu



Arjunan Puveendran



Anandavalli, Nadie Kammallaweera &
Kalieaswari Srinivasan



Dale Ferguson



Luke McGettigan



Emma Harvie & Prakash Belawadi



Anandavalli & Kalieaswari Srinivasan



Nadie Kammallaweera &
Kalieaswari Srinivasan



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

2026 SEASON



DEAR SON

Letters of love by First Nations fathers and sons

8 – 25 Jan

AMPLIFIED

Sheridan Harbridge as Chrissy Amphlett

29 Jan – 8 Feb

A MIRROR

A smart new play from London about art and power

21 Feb – 22 Mar

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Pamela Rabe and Eamon Flack take on the
Nobel Prize-winner's whodunnit

28 Mar – 10 May

THE BIRDS

Paula Arundell goes wild in a new take on Daphne du Maurier's classic

16 May – 14 Jun

THE JUNGLE AND THE SEA

S. Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack's acclaimed play returns

11 Jul – 2 Aug

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A ROOM WITH A VIEW

E. M. Forster's classic tale of living boldly, together

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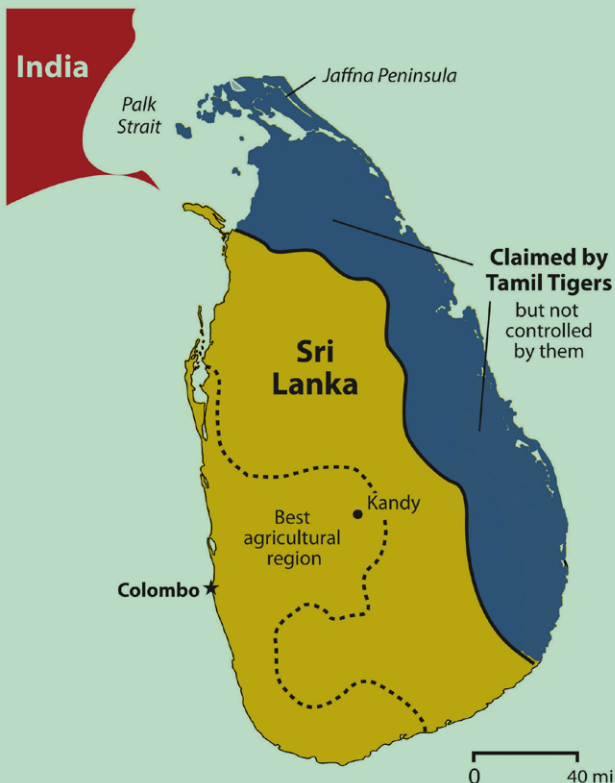
Vivian Pham's breakout novel comes to the stage

21 Nov – 20 Dec

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HISTORICAL & FAMILIAL CONTEXT

The action of the play moves back and forward in time between three years; 1995, 2009 and 2022, and is set in various location in the North of Sri Lanka and Sydney Australia. The year in which each scene takes places is indicated on the stage on a physical signpost.



THE SRI LANKAN CIVIL WAR

The Jungle and the Sea is set during and after the Sri Lankan civil war.

The Sri Lankan civil war was fought in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2009 (over 25 years). The war was fought between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE also known as the Tamil Tigers). The LTTE fought 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 people by the Sinhalese-majority Sri Lankan government. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese people are the majority, and the Sri Lankan Tamil people are the minority.

The Jungle and the Sea makes reference to the following key locations and events that took place during the Sri Lankan Civil War:

NAVALI CHURCH BOMBING

●
9th July 1995

Bombing of the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Church in Navali in 1995

On the 9th July 1995 the Sri Lankan Air Force bombed the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Church in Navali, in northern Sri Lanka. It is estimated that 125 Tamil civilians who were taking shelter in the church were killed.

PONNAMPALAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BOMBING

●
6 February 2009

Ponnampalam Memorial Hospital bombing (PTK Hospital Bombing)

In February 2009 Sri Lankan Armed Forces bombed the Ponnampalam Memorial Hospital in Puthukudiyiruppu in the Mullaitivu District in the north of Sri Lanka. The hospital was destroyed.

MULLIVAIKKAL MASSACRE

●
May 2009

Mullaitivu Beach and Nanthikadal Lagoon (also Nanthi Lagoon / Nandikadal Lagoon)

In 2009, during the final days of the Sri Lankan civil war, around 300,000 civilians were trapped on Mullaitivu Beach between the Indian Ocean and the Nanthikadal Lagoon.

FAMILY TREE

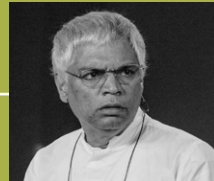


KISHAN



GOWRIE

The Mother



SIVAPALAN

The Father



HIMAL

Husband



ABIRAMI

Oldest
Daughter



MADHU

Older
Daughter



LAKSHMI

Younger
Daughter



AHILAN

Younger Son

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Mehhma Malhi
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