

SYD FEST 19

COUNTING AND CRACKING

எண்ணிக்கை, இல்லையேல் கையோங்கு
எழுதீ நோதனீ நமீ எழுதீ கரந்த

BELVOIR AND CO-CURIOUS | AUSTRALIA | WORLD PREMIERE

COUNTING AND CRACKING

BELVOIR AND CO-CURIOUS | AUSTRALIA
WORLD PREMIERE

SYDNEY TOWN HALL
11 JANUARY – 2 FEBRUARY
3 HRS 30 MINS WITH TWO INTERVALS

Written by S. Shakthidharan

Director Eamon Flack

Cultural and Costume Advisor Anandavalli

Set & Costume Designer Dale Ferguson

Lighting Designer Damien Cooper

Sound Designer & Composer Stefan Gregory

Associate Sound Designer Jessica Dunn

Movement and Fight Choreographer Nigel Poulton

Accent Coach Linda Nicholls Gidley

Assistant Director Carissa Licciardello

Associate Artist Suzanne Pereira

Sri Lankan Meal Dish Dining & Events

With

Prakash Belawadi, Nicholas Brown, Jay Emmanuel, Rarriwuy Hick, Antonyhasan Jesuthasan, Nadie Kammallaweera, Ahilan Karunahan, Monica Kumar, Gandhi MacIntyre, Shiv Palekar, Monroe Reimers, Hazem Shammass, Nipuni Sharada, Vaishnavi Suryaparakash, Rajan Velu, Sukania Venugopal, Janakan Raj, Kranthi Kiran Mudigonda

Counting and Cracking was made through ongoing collaboration between Belvoir and Co-Curious, and S. Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack – across writing, producing and direction.

Presenting Partner Singapore Airlines

CITY OF SYDNEY



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, in association with the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc., Sydney Festival, Adelaide Festival.

BELVOIR

CO-CURIOUS



WRITER'S NOTE

Ten years ago I was hungry to learn about my mother's homeland. To know my history. I read everything there was to read on the subject. I had conversations with so many gracious and intelligent Sri Lankans from all around the world. I was reeling from the overload, but very slowly, a story was being born. It was a story about coming together and breaking apart – in our families, our countries.

And this story became something bigger than my own hunger. It became something that had the power to help my mother reconcile with her homeland. To connect people across deep divides. To collapse time and join continents.

It became less about fitting my community into a simple narrative, and more about presenting a group of people in all their glorious complexity. It became less about discovering “the truth” of what happened in Sri Lanka, or what brought us to Australia, and more about understanding the stage as a sacred space where many truths can gather at once.

The stories we choose to believe in underlie all our actions, thoughts and feelings. In *Counting and Cracking* I hope to provide audiences with a new story to believe in: about Australia, about Sri Lanka. It's a story in which migrants are not asked to discard parts of themselves to fit in, but instead are asked to present their full selves, to expand our idea of what this country can be. It's a story of how the politics of division can win the battle, but never the war, around how power is gained in this world. It's a story in which love may not triumph over adversity, but through sheer persistence and resilience can eventually overcome it. And finally it's a story about reconciliation: between parents and children, between neighbours and enemies, between your new home and your old home, between society and its institutions.

S. Shakthidharan

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This is an Australian story. It's not *only* an Australian story, but it is definitely an Australian story. Much of it takes place in Sri Lanka: the story of Australia is the story of many places, many people. Ours is a migrant nation on Aboriginal land. At its best it is a land of refuge and new beginnings. With each successive wave of arrivals, from the earliest times to the English boats to now, the country has changed, and the national story has changed. *Counting and Cracking* is a new offer to that big unfolding story.

It is about many things, but at the heart of it is the fundamental need every one of us has to connect to each other, the world, the past, and the future. Most of our lives are spent making and nurturing these connections. We do this on every scale of life, in small ways and big ways. The small ways are usually age-old, closely-held things – love, family, language, story, belief, food, home, place, the passage of time from one generation to the next. The big ways are more likely to be newer, more public inventions – the big shared narratives of national identity, political negotiation, economic purpose.

Counting and Cracking is about the relationship between the big stuff and the small stuff, and what happens when the big stuff tears apart the small stuff. A language shattered, a family torn apart, a place torn down – these things are fragile. They cannot be taken for granted. We inherit them, they are in our keeping. The big stuff must take care of the small stuff. We cannot be a nation or a whole person if we cannot keep hold of these connections. And when a person or a group of people have been torn apart then the only thing to do is to begin again – to revive the old connections, or make new ones. Fortunately, new connections are always possible. New stories are always possible. We mix from here and there, from now and the past. Water and water.

Eamon Flack

S. SHAKTHIDHARAN

Writer

Shakthi is a western Sydney storyteller with Sri Lankan heritage and Tamil ancestry. He is the current Artistic Director of Co-Curious, the sister company to CuriousWorks, where Shakthi was the Founder and Artistic Director from 2003-2018. Shakthi was Associate Artist at Carriageworks from 2013-2015. He was awarded the Phillip Parson's Playwright Award from Belvoir in 2015 and the Kirk Robson Award by Australia Council for the Arts in 2011.

AMON FLACK

Director

Eamon is Belvoir's Artistic Director. He was born in Singapore and grew up there, Darwin and Brisbane. He has made shows around Australia from the Tiwi Islands to Palm Island to Perth. His productions of *The Glass Menagerie* and *Angels in America* both won Best Play at the Helpmann Awards.

THANK YOU

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