

PARADISE OR THE IMPERMANENCE OF ICE CREAM




Sydney
Festival
2023

PARADISE OR THE IMPERMANENCE OF ICE CREAM

Indian Ink Theatre Company | New Zealand
AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

Riverside Theatres, Parramatta

17-22 January

80 minutes (with 15 minute interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Writer and performer Jacob Rajan

Writer and Director Justin Lewis

Dramaturge Murray Edmond

Puppeteer and Puppet maker Jon Coddington

Set Design John Verryt

Costume Designer Elizabeth Whiting

Lighting Designer and Technical Manager Andrew Potvin

Composer and Sound Designer David Ward

Sound Operator Adam Ogle

ABOUT THE SHOW

At the heart of *Paradise* lie a series of mysteries. What led to the near extinction of India's vultures? Where do we go when we die? What happens to the dreams of our youth as we age?

To tackle these hefty topics requires a light touch and who better to give us that than a former chaiwallah and unlikely guru turned electronic goods salesman? Kutisar is one of Indian Ink's most loved characters, a buck toothed chameleon who now finds himself trapped in limbo where his only companions are a vulture and the sins of his past.

To embody the loneliness of limbo and evoke the bustling streets of Mumbai you either need a cast of thousands or one gifted actor. Supported by a breath-taking vulture puppet and brilliant sound design, Jacob Rajan transports us from the afterlife to Malabar hills, Parsi fire temples, heaving slums and a humble ice cream shop.

Paradise celebrates the joy of youth and the wisdom that comes with age. It speaks of the need for action and the freedom to be found through acceptance. We also hope it expresses our belief in the power of the imagination and love of the magic of theatre.

A NOTE FROM THE CREATORS

This show was inspired by Ernest Becker's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Denial of Death* but it really found its form when we were in Mumbai. There we discovered a city full of life, rich with diverse cultures and we stumbled upon the Towers of Silence.

Set amongst some of the most expensive real estate in the world is a vast green area with these forbidden towers where people of the Parsi faith lay out their dead for a sky burial. You don't burn the bodies, you don't bury them - you leave them out for the vultures. But what do you do when all the vultures have disappeared?

India's skies were once filled with millions of vultures but in just over a decade they vanished and no one knew why. Following this mystery led us to fall in love with these creatures; brutishly ugly and feared as harbingers of death, they do mankind an incredible service by cleansing the environment and in flight are one of the most magnificent birds on earth.

We hung our story loosely on *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. It's a tale of friendship, a hero who journeys to the underworld seeking eternal life and finds happiness only by accepting their mortality. It's also a story with its roots in ancient Persia - just like India's Parsis.

If you haven't heard of the Parsi community, you're not alone but we can almost guarantee that you've been influenced by at least one. Parsis have made an enormous contribution to India and the world. In politics, industry, medicine, finance, science, music, art and theatre this ethnic group has been extraordinarily influential out of all proportion to their numbers.

The eclectic bunch of Parsis portrayed in this play are entirely fictional and we hope to cause no offense to a people we hold in extremely high regard. If you're reading this and happen to be Parsi we cling to one generalisation about your kin we dearly wish to be true: they have a great sense of humour.

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INDIAN INK THEATRE COMPANY

We're guided by the 'Serious Laugh', a love of mask and of story. We aim to make theatre that is beautiful, funny, sad and true - to leave an indelible imprint on your heart.

Indian Ink began 25 years ago as a partnership between Jacob Rajan and Justin Lewis. Since then we've gathered a team of long-term collaborators, made eleven shows together and had the great pleasure of performing around the world.

Our home is Aotearoa New Zealand and it's a long way from these islands to India. We've always had to use our imaginations and be led by our curiosity with theatre we make, so please forgive the artistic licenses we take. We hope to capture something of the essence of what makes us all human while celebrating the flavours that make each of us unique.



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