

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY



காடும் கடலும் குதலதலுது

THE JUNGLE AND THE SEA

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
S. Shakthidharan & Eamon Flack

14 AUG—12 SEP 2026
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

EDUCATION PACK PART A

Contents

3	Melbourne Theatre Company
4	About the play
5	Cast and creatives
6	Context
10	Characters
14	Writing and directing
16	Set design
18	Theatre styles
20	Elements of theatre composition

Throughout these notes, look out for these icons for opportunities to learn more:



Activity



Discuss



Read



Video

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the support of the Department of Education, Victoria, through the Strategic Partnerships Program.



Department
of Education



Digital Education resources are generously supported by the Ian Potter Foundation

Melbourne Theatre Company's Education activity is generously supported by our Education Giving Circle Donors.

Editor Nick Tranter

Graphic designer Sarah Ridgway-Cross

Rehearsal photographer Sriram Jeyaraman

Cover photographer Daniel Boud

Melbourne Theatre Company thanks Jane May, Nicola Denton and all at Belvoir St Theatre for their assistance with this education resource.

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, create and gather. We pay our respects to all First Nations people, their Elders past and present, and their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. As a Company we remain committed to the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for voice, truth and treaty.

Melbourne Theatre Company

At Melbourne Theatre Company we believe theatre is for everyone. We are Melbourne's home of live storytelling, producing an annual season of plays created for and about the world today.



Southbank Theatre
Photo: Benjamin Healley

Beyond the stage, we run a range of initiatives that support artist development, champion new writing, invest in future audiences and address underrepresentation across the industry.

OUR VISION

To be recognised as one of the world's preeminent theatre companies, leading the cultural conversation and chosen as a favourite destination for Australians.

OUR PURPOSE

To share remarkable stories that enable people to better understand the world around them.

MTC HQ Virtual Tour

Walk the halls of MTC HQ in this virtual tour and explore the spaces where plays are rehearsed, sets are built, costumes are sewn and wigs are created one strand of hair at a time: mtc.com.au/eduhub

About the play



Emma Harvie, Prakash Belawadi, Anandavalli & Nadie Kammallaweera

SUMMARY

When an unexpected act of destruction splits her family apart, Gowrie takes a radical vow of defiance: she blindfolds herself, refusing to see the world again until her loved ones are reunited. This sets the stage for one family's epic journey to retain their dignity and safety, as they live through Sri Lanka's decades-long civil war.

Grand in scale and deeply human at its core, this touching work honours those who endured unimaginable loss – and upheld their capacity for love, connection and pride, even amid devastation. Built out of real-life testimonies from the war and woven through with elements of seminal Indian text the *Mahābhārata* and the Greek myth of *Antigone*, *The Jungle and the Sea* is a theatrical epic of resilience and the pursuit of justice through love.

Featuring live Carnatic music and a cast including Bharathanatyam dancer Anandavalli and *Counting and Cracking* alumni Prakash Belawadi, Nadie Kammallaweera, Shiv Palekar, Dushan Philips and Rajan Velu, this evocative theatrical monument is a stirring meditation on survival.

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

This production contains themes of war, trauma, sounds of artillery, the use of haze and loud sound effects. For detailed information about the production's content, visit our **production content guide** at mtc.com.au/production-content-guide.

DURATION

Approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes, including two intervals.



Behind the scenes



Watch the video, S. Shakthidharan on *The Jungle and the Sea*, and answer these questions:

- This play draws on personal testimony about the final stages of the Sri Lankan civil war and which two other sources?
- What themes can you see emerging in this story?
- What predictions can you make about theatre styles in this production?



Download the synopsis

Read a summary of the entire play in this synopsis document at mtc.com.au/eduhub

A BELVOIR ST THEATRE PRODUCTION

CO-PRODUCERS



Cast and creatives



Anandavalli
Gowrie – Amma



Prakash Belawadi
Siva (Sivapalan) – Appa



Emma Harvie
Lakshmi – Thangachi



Read their bios

Explore the digital programme
to read the biographies of the
cast and creatives working
on this production:
mtc.com.au/programmes



Nadie Kammallaweera
Madhu – Akka



Shiv Palekar
Ahilan – Thumbi



Dushan Philips
Kishan



Kalieaswari Srinivasan
Abi (Abirami) – Akka



Rajan Velu
Himal



Aswin Selvanathan
Musician (from 27 Aug)



Hari Sivanesan
Musician



S. Shakthidharan
Co-Writer/Co-Director



Eamon Flack
Co-Writer/Co-Director



Dale Ferguson
Set & Costume Designer



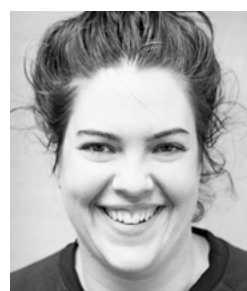
Damien Cooper
Lighting Designer



Arjunan Puvendran
Composer / Musician (until 26 Aug)



Steve Francis
Sound Designer



Véronique Bennett
Original Lighting Designer



Mehmma Malhi
Assistant Director



Nigel Poulton
Fight Director



Laura Farrell
Vocal Coach



Thinesh Thillainadarajah
Community Liaison

Peter Sutherland
Stage Manager
Mia Kanzaki
Assistant Stage Manager
Jasmine Power
Assistant Stage Manager

Context



Civilians being displaced from parts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts in 2009.
Photo: K. Sathees

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 Tamil people by the Sinhalese Sri Lankan government. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese people are the majority, and the Sri Lankan Tamil people are the minority.

During the Sri Lankan civil war, approximately 800,000 people were displaced, with many forced to move repeatedly to survive. Human rights organisations and the UN documented instances where civilians were displaced 10 to 24 times across nearly three decades, often fleeing from crossfire, forced conscription and military blockades. Families living in conflict zones, particularly in the northern Vanni region and the Jaffna peninsula, were repeatedly uprooted as front lines shifted.

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 9 July 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 Feb 2009

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.

MULLIVAICKAL MASSACRE May 2009

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.



SBS World News



Watch the SBS World News video above, then answer these questions:

- How does S. Shakthidharan describe the effects of the Sri Lankan civil war on the family in the play?
- When was the Sri Lankan civil war?
- What reasons do the artists in this video give for the importance of telling this story on stage?
- How might you describe the enduring impact of war?

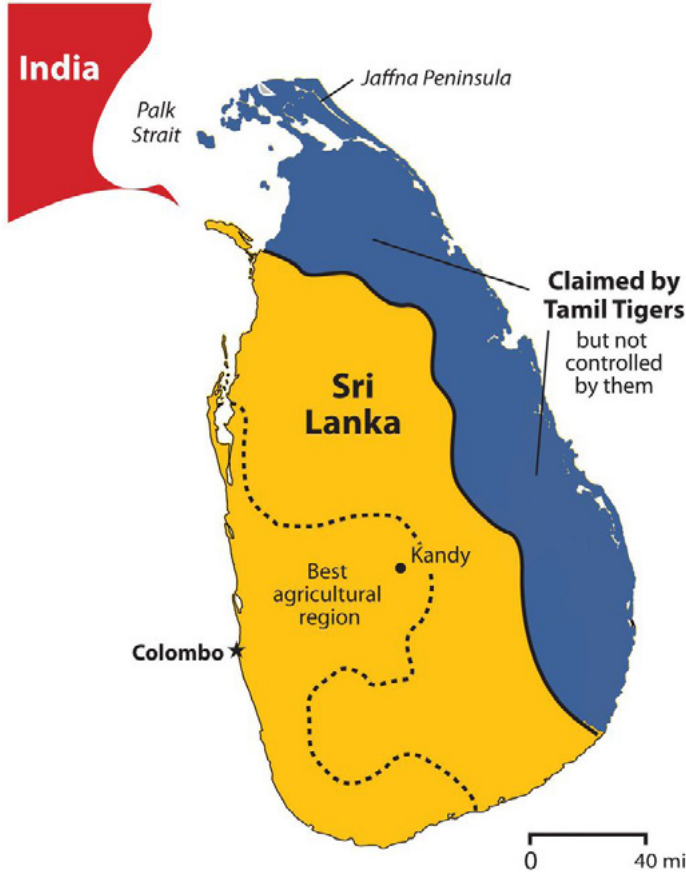
‘This show is about trying to honour those people who lived through the war and survived it, and found ways to keep their dignity when everything else was falling apart around them.’

S. SHAKTHIDHARAN

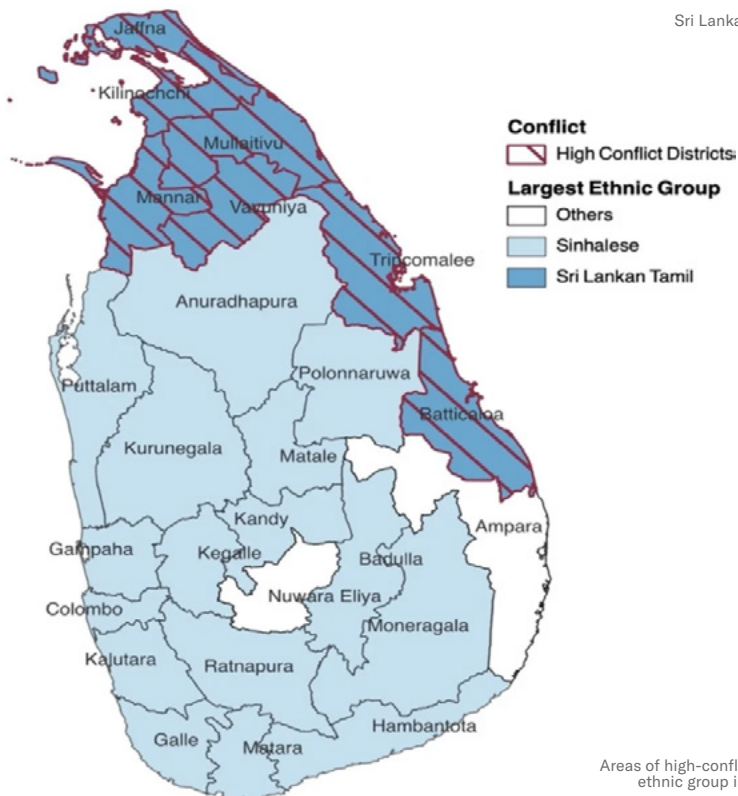
SRI LANKAN TAMILS

Tamil refers to both an ethnicity and language that has its origins in the southern parts of the Indian subcontinent. Unlike Sri Lanka's majority ethnic Sinhalese, who are primarily Buddhist, Tamils are largely Hindu or Christian. Other minorities in Sri Lanka, such as Muslims, also speak Tamil.

During the Sri Lanka civil war, an estimated 100,000 people were killed – mostly Tamils – and huge numbers of Tamils sought asylum overseas. An estimated one-third of all Sri Lankan Tamils now live outside of the island nation, with large diaspora communities in Australia, India, Canada and the UK.



Sri Lanka civil war map



Areas of high-conflict and largest ethnic group in each district



A manuscript illustration of the Kurukshetra War, fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, recorded in the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*

MAHĀBHĀRATA

The *Mahābhārata* is a massive ancient Indian epic (one of the longest poems ever written) about a brutal 18-day war between two sets of royal cousins – the Pandavas and the Kauravas – fighting for control of the Kuru kingdom. Almost everyone dies in the war. The Pandavas win, but they’re left ruling an empty, ruined kingdom. One lesson of the story is that war has no true winners and that righteous duty (the concept of doing the right thing) must be upheld.

Both the *Mahābhārata* and *The Jungle and the Sea* explore the conflict of duty in times of chaos and what it means to act righteously when trapped in a cycle of political violence.

ANTIGONE

Antigone is an ancient Greek tragedy by Sophocles. The writers of *The Jungle and the Sea* have woven threads of this old story into their play.

The play *Antigone* begins after a civil war. Antigone's brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, have killed each other in battle for the throne (their father Oedipus was the former king of Thebes). Their uncle Creon becomes king – he honours Eteocles with a proper burial, but bans anyone from burying Polynices, labelling him a traitor. The heroine Antigone defies King Creon by giving her brother Polynices a proper burial. Creon sentences her to death, triggering a tragic chain of events.

A blind prophet named Tiresias warns Creon that the gods are angered by his refusal to bury Polynices and his punishment of Antigone. You may see parallels between *Antigone* and *The Jungle and the Sea* in relation to civil war, defying unjust law and characters who prophesise.



Geneviève Picot as Antigone in the 1981 Melbourne Theatre Company production
Photo: David Parker

CHOREOGRAPHER & CULTURAL ADVISOR'S NOTE

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.



Anandavalli



Discuss

- Locate the places Anandavalli mentions in the maps earlier in this pack. What do you now know about the events that took place in this region?
- How might you describe the function of Gowrie in the story? Make reference to the Banyan Tree image Anandavalli describes.
- Anandavalli plays the Tamil matriarch in this play. Who is her real-life son? What is Anandavalli known for?



Nadie Kammallaweera & Anandavalli

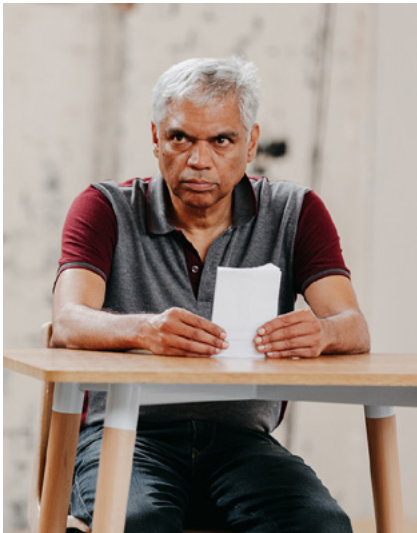
Characters



Anandavalli

GOWRIE Played by Anandavalli

The mother, referred to as Amma by her children. Gowrie is Sri Lankan Tamil and Hindu. When the war splits her family across Sri Lanka and Australia, Gowrie vows to wear a blindfold until her family is reunited. Anandavalli only plays Gowrie.



Prakash Belawadi

SIVAPALAN Played by Prakash Belawadi

Sivapalan (often called Siva) is the father, and is referred to as Appa by his children. Sivapalan is Sri Lankan Tamil and Christian. He escapes the war and travels to Sydney with his daughter, Lakshmi. Prakash also plays Father Joseph, a Tamil Catholic priest, and a farmer.



Emma Harvie

LAKSHMI Played by Emma Harvie

The youngest daughter of Gowrie and Sivapalan, Lakshmi is unapologetically atheist. She builds a new life in Sydney and eventually qualifies as a lawyer. Emma plays other minor characters including Sri Lankan civilians and soldiers.



Discuss characters



Watch the video above, then answer these questions:

- How might each actor manipulate their acting skills to portray their character?
- How might costume be used to enhance character?
- Which actors play other characters?
- Use the family tree on p. 13 to describe the relationships between characters.



Nadie Kammallaweera

MADHU

Played by Nadie Kammallaweera

Madhu is the second-oldest daughter of Gowrie and Sivapalan. She stays in the war zones with her mother, Gowrie, and sister, Abi, instead of migrating to Australia, so they can search for her brother, Ahilan. Madhu is Christian. Nadie also plays Devla-Ma, a prophetic woman who lives in the jungle (a parallel to the seer in *Antigone*).



Shiv Palekar

AHILAN

Played by Shiv Palekar

Ahilan is the younger son of the family – the younger brother to Abi and Madhu and the older brother to Lakshmi. Ahilan is Hindu. In the aftermath of a church bombing, Ahilan is recruited into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers) and disappears into the war zones. Shiv also plays a Sri Lankan Army Soldier.



Dushan Phillips

KISHAN

Played by Dushan Phillips

Kishan is a Sinhalese and Christian man and the father of Himal. Kishan is a government officer who plays an important bridging role in the community. Dushan also plays a surgeon, commander, United Nations (UN) worker, doctor and administrative government official.



Kalieaswari Srinivasan

ABIRAMI

Played by Kalieaswari Srinivasan

Abirami (often called Abi) is the eldest daughter of the central Tamil family. She marries a Sinhalese man named Himal across ethnic and political divides. Abi is strong-willed and fiercely loyal to her family. Abi defies a government ban on performing funeral rites for rebels, a direct parallel to *Antigone*.



Rajan Velu

HIMAL

Played by Rajan Velu

Himal is Sinhalese and Buddhist, and the son of Kishan. He is a family friend of the central Tamil family and in love with Abi. His character offers a window into the complex and interconnected relationships between families in Sri Lanka during the civil war. Rajan also plays a waiter, Salim (a young Tamil Muslim man whose baby is killed) and soldiers.



Arjunan Puveendran

MUSICIANS

Arjunan Puveendran (until 26 Aug)

Aswin Selvanathan (from 27 Aug)

Hari Sivanesan

Two musicians create Carnatic music live on stage in the production, including sound cues like drumbeats to represent gunshots. The instruments you'll hear are the veena (a large, fretted, pluckable stringed instrument), mridangam (a double-barreled wooden drum played with both hands), ghatam (a large, heavy clay pot drum) and kanjira (tambourine-like drum).

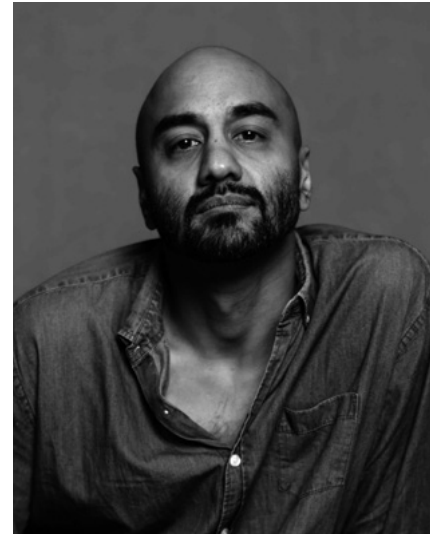
Family tree



Writing and directing



S. Shakthidharan in rehearsal



S. Shakthidharan

DIRECTOR'S NOTE BY 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.



Discuss playwriting

- Describe the themes of this play in your own words.
- Which aspects of *Antigone* are woven into this play?
- What connections can you identify between this play and the *Mahābhāratha*?

'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.'

S. SHAKTHIDHARAN



Eamon Flack in rehearsal



Eamon Flack

DIRECTOR'S NOTE BY 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 *Mahābhārata* 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 and memory, at work on the characters.

The music performed is Carnatic. In the same way that the choreographic storytelling of Bharatnatyam dance is accompanied by structured Carnatic improvisation, our two musicians 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 மறக்கவே மாட்டோம்



Discuss

- At what point in the production process was the decision made to use a revolve and why?
- Which theatre styles do you expect to see (or hear) in this play?
- What predictions can you make about how theatre styles will be manipulated to enhance the production?

'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.'

EAMON FLACK

Set design



Set model by Dale Ferguson



Dale Ferguson

The action of the play moves back and forward in time between three years: 1995, 2009 and 2026, and is set in various locations in the north of Sri Lanka and Sydney, Australia.

The year in which each scene takes place is indicated on the stage on a physical signpost. The play is performed on a revolving stage, which turns constantly, at different speeds, during the show. Learn more about the world of *The Jungle and the Sea* in this Q&A with Set & Costume Designer Dale Ferguson.

What's the world of this show and your set/costume designs?

The world of the play is really embedded in the title and the design – jungle and sea. The revolve was written into the text to be continually moving and therefore the play was a journey. From that premise, I arrived at 'landscape' and that was a place with contrast and a roughness or earthiness that informed the props and other storytelling devices. There needed to be a sparseness so that no location was specific. This sparseness was important as locations were very disparate, across Sri Lanka or Sydney in particular, but more so because the text always told us where we were or characters described what they were looking at.

What's a big challenge in designing this show that you've enjoyed solving?

The challenge was finding an affecting but unobtrusive image that could be sparse and yet evoke the brutality of a long, sustained war coupled with delicate familial moments. I designed the set with a horizon line at chair rail height. The particular sea and sky photograph I was using had a wave breaking and the sea spray reminded me of a spray of bullets. This served what I was aiming for. The holes also served as stars or lights across a harbour, which was an unforeseen surprise.



Discuss design

- Dale mentions the deliberate sparseness of the design. What theatre style might you connect to this?
- How is the brutality of war symbolised in the design?
- How is the element of rhythm evident in the design?
- What theatre technologies are being used in this design?

'The challenge was finding an affecting but unobtrusive image that could be sparse and yet evoke the brutality of a long, sustained war coupled with delicate familial moments'

DALE FERGUSON
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER



The main reference photo of Marawila Beach in Sri Lanka that informed Set & Costume Designer Dale Ferguson's vision.

Photo: Dale Ferguson

How do you think about rhythm in your work as a designer with regard to the storytelling?

The revolve was written into the script, so the important rhythmic element was already decided. The design in Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney – where the show was created and first performed – doubled down on this forward motion by having the seating steps continue around, as if to sweep the audience into the action. This scenic element became the musician platform and props area in the stage left side.

Where have you drawn inspiration from to create your design?

The photographic images that I gathered during the audition tour of the original version of *Counting and Cracking*, which I was fortunate to be included in, served as a bottomless well of inspiration for both that show and *The Jungle and the Sea* – so, in a word, Sri Lanka was the inspiration. I return to that source to solve every prop and scenic challenge I've faced in various incarnations of each play.

What's an example of symbolism in your design?

I felt the thread of the Antigone story within the play was significant. I had designed the 2008 Belvoir St Theatre production of *Antigone* and the sense of being corralled by war, or hoarded into a corner, stayed with me. It is fortuitous that the corner is so present at Belvoir that little had to be created to serve this idea. The people being subjected to an unrelenting firing squad in the open air of their own country was a symbol, but I need it to be clear that they were theatre flats that were shot up, not the theatre walls. I did this by showing the painting divisions of the panels and making the foam and plaster panels look like the explosive action had just happened – very energised like an action painting. Perhaps like capturing or freezing danger.



Design Associate Keerthi Subramanyam and Set & Costume Designer Dale Ferguson.

Photo: Sriram Jeyaraman

Theatre styles



Musician Indu Balachandran in rehearsal for the original Belvoir St Theatre production.

***The Jungle and the Sea* is an epic story of survival that seamlessly blends traditional South Asian performing arts with classical Western theatrical conventions.**

Directors S. Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack create a fluid, poetic stage landscape by combining aspects of Bharatanatyam dance, Carnatic music, poor theatre and epic theatre.

Bharatanatyam

The dance in this play is called Bharathanatyam. It's a classical Indian art form still practiced widely today. Its ancestral home is Tamil Nadu in the South of India, but it's also part of the fabric of life for the Tamil people in the North of Sri Lanka (these groups also share the same language). Bharathanatyam is a vibrant, emotive dance form made up of two primary movement types 'jathis' or passages of complex, energetic footwork and rhythm; and 'abhinaya' or passages of highly emotional and suggestive mime, focusing around the face and hands.

The Bharatanatyam in this play is co-produced alongside the Lingalayam Dance Company and choreographed by cast member Anandavalli. *The Jungle and the Sea* is bookended by Anandavalli's character, Gowrie, performing Bharatanatyam.



Music in the play



Cast member Anandavalli and Composer & Musician Arjunan Puveendran discuss dance and music in the play. Watch the video, then answer these questions:

- How might aspects of these styles be evident in the work of different production roles?
- How do Anandavalli and Arjunan describe the impact of incorporating Bharathanatyam and Carnatic music into the production?
- How might the directors manipulate these theatre styles to convey the intended meaning of the script?

Carnatic music

Carnatic music is the classical music system of South India. It is primarily vocal-driven and heavily emphasises improvisation within a structured framework of melody and rhythm.

The production uses continuous, live, onstage musical accompaniment that acts as a driving dramatic force. Two onstage musicians use traditional Carnatic singing, drumming (mridangam) and veena (plucked stringed instrument) to provide a musical score composed by Arjunan Puveendran. During the performance, the musicians blend the structured underlying melodic frameworks (ragas) and rhythmic cycles (talas) with free-flowing, improvised singing and drumming to heighten the emotional intensity.

Poor theatre

This production uses aspects of poor theatre. With minimal set and symbolic props, actors use their skills to transform the performance space into various imaginative worlds. A revolve is used to symbolise relentless walking, displacement and journeys through decades of time.

Poor theatre was a theatre style developed by Polish director Jerzy Grotowski in the 20th century. He rejected the idea that theatre should (or could) match the spectacle of film, and argued that the most important aspect of theatre was the actor–audience relationship.

Epic theatre

This production includes aspects of epic theatre, including multi-rolling (actors playing more than one character), a fractured timeline, montage and a signpost showing the year events take place.

Epic Theatre is a theatre style created by Bertolt Brecht in early 1900s Germany. His work had a strong political voice, as Brecht served as a medical orderly during the First World War and fled Germany when the Nazis came to power in 1933. His most acclaimed work is *Mother Courage and Her Children*, often regarded as one of the finest anti-war plays. Brecht sought to distance or 'alienate' his audience from emotionally investing in the characters so they could think critically about the message in his drama. To do this, he used conventions such as breaking the fourth wall, narration, direct address, placards, multi-rolling, minimal set/costumes/props, montage and episodic scenes.

Elements of theatre composition



Nadie Kammallaweera & Rajan Velu



Elements of theatre composition

Refresh your memory of the definitions with our dramatic elements flashcards at mtc.com.au/eduhub

The following questions are intended to help you consider how *The Jungle and the Sea* might be interpreted onstage through the lens of VCE Theatre Studies.

COHESION

- How might cohesion be seen in the costume and set design across the entire production?
- How might theatre styles be manipulated to ensure the vast array of characters and locations in the play feel part of a cohesive production?

MOTION

- How might the constant motion of the revolve be used symbolically?
- How might different areas of the stage (e.g. the edges of the moving revolve; the revolve's centre; upstage areas off the revolve etc.) be used?

RHYTHM

- How might the speed of the revolve be used to manipulate the rhythm of a scene?
- What role might music play in manipulating rhythm?
- How might different characters have their own unique rhythms? Make predictions based on what you already know about each character.

EMPHASIS

- Which aspects of the play would you choose to give a particular focus? From reading the directors' notes, what aspects of the real history might this production emphasise?
- Some characters die in this story during warfare. How might the tragedy of war be emphasised theatrically in these climactic moments through the use of production areas?

CONTRAST

- Can you identify contrasting characters where tension might brew in the story?
- How might the costume designs use contrast to differentiate characters?

VARIATION

- How might tension and intensity be manipulated by production areas?
- How might intensity and energy be used in moments of conflict?

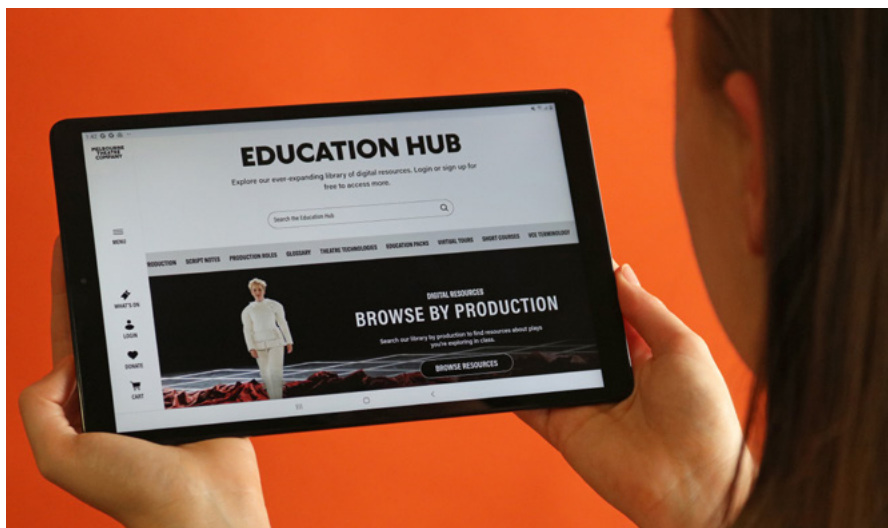
Learn more



Read the programme

Read the bios of the cast and creative team, and see more photos from the rehearsal room, in the immersive digital programme.

Read the programme at mtc.com.au/programmes



Learn more online

Watch videos and read interviews in our ever-expanding library of digital learning resources.

Explore the Education Hub at mtc.com.au/eduhub



The Sumner virtual tour

Explore the Sumner at Southbank Theatre, where *The Jungle and the Sea* will be performed in Melbourne, in this interactive virtual tour.

Go backstage at mtc.com.au/eduhub

Sources

Kandasamy, N. (2022) *The Jungle and the Sea reminds us war is profoundly local, with the intimate negotiation of human relationships* on theconversation.com; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2002) *The Situation of IDPs in Sri Lanka: Report of a mission by the Internal Displacement Unit*, April 2002 on unocha.org; Walden, M. (2021) *Australia deems Sri Lanka safe for Tamils like the Murugappan family from Bilola. But is it?* on abc.net.au; Williams, R. & Weaver, M. (2009) *Timeline: Sri Lanka conflict* on theguardian.com.

Additional photography

Production photos by Brett Boardman; Sathees, K. (2009) *Civilians being displaced from parts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts* (CC BY 2.0); Unknown, *The Battle of Kurukshetra*, c. 1598–1600, painting, Wikimedia Commons, wikimedia.org.