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## ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

1-17 MARCH 2019



2 – 3, 5 – 9 Mar / Ridley Centre,  
Adelaide Showgrounds

Duration 3hours 30mins, including two intervals

*Counting and Cracking* 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 and Belvoir; supported by Macquarie Group Foundation, Naomi Milgrom Foundation, Neilson Foundation, Nelson Meers Foundation, Oranges and Sardines Foundation, Thyne Reid Foundation and Belvoir's visionary Gamechangers.

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THEATRE / AUSTRALIA

# Counting & Cracking

Belvoir & Co-Curious

**BELVOIR** 

**CO-CURIOS**  
STORIES FROM UNUSUAL ANTHROPS

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## An epic story...

of love and political strife, of home and exile, of parents and children. On the banks of the Georges River, Radha and her son Siddhartha release the ashes of Radha's mother – their final connection to the past, to Sri Lanka and its struggles. Now they are free to embrace their lives in Australia. Then a phone call from Colombo brings the past spinning back to life.

Sixteen actors play four generations of a family, from Colombo to Pendle Hill, in a story about Australia as a land of refuge, about Sri Lanka's efforts to remain united, about reconciliation within families, across countries, across generations.

## From the writer

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

## From the director

This is an Australian story. It's not *only* an Australian story, but it is an Australian story. Ours is a migrant nation on Aboriginal land. At its best it is a land of refuge and new beginnings. With each new 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's about the big and small connections that hold everything together - place, language, family, nation... It's about what happens when the big connections tear apart the small ones. It's about the idea that the big stuff has to take care of the small stuff, and that new connections are always possible. New stories are always possible. We mix, from here and there, now and then. Water and water.

Eamon Flack

## The Writer S. Shakthidharan

Shakthi's a western Sydney storyteller with Sri Lankan heritage and Tamil ancestry. He's the Artistic Director of Co-Curious and was Founder/Artistic Director of sister company CuriousWorks from 2003-2018. He was the inaugural Carriageworks Associate Artist and has received both the Phillip Parsons and Kirk Robson Awards. Recent projects include the film and VR exhibition *Laka*; and *Riz*, an audiovisual performance at Carriageworks adapted into a feature film for the Sydney Film Festival. Both *Laka* and *Counting and Cracking* form part of Shakthi's *Colony* body of work, a universe of interconnected stories stretching from before colonisation through to an imagined 22nd century.

## The Director Eamon Flack

Belvoir's Artistic Director was born in Singapore and grew up in Singapore, Darwin, Brisbane and Cootamundra. He trained as an actor at West Australian Academy of Performing Arts from 2001 to 2003 and has since worked as a director, writer and dramaturg, from the Tiwi Islands to Melbourne, from Geraldton to Palm Island.

For Belvoir, Eamon's directing credits include *Sami in Paradise*, *Ghosts*, *The Rover*, *Ivanov*, *Angels in America*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Babyteeth*, *As You Like It*, and *The End*. His dramaturgy credits for Belvoir include *Neighbourhood Watch*, *The Wild Duck* and *The Book of Everything*. His adaptations include *Ghosts*, *Ivanov*, *Summerfolk* and *Antigone*. *Ivanov* won four Sydney Theatre Awards in 2015 including Best Mainstage Production and Best Direction. Eamon's productions of *The Glass Menagerie* and *Angels in America* won consecutive Helpmann Awards as Best Play, in 2014 and 2015.

## Belvoir One building, six hundred people, thousands of stories

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner-city Sydney.

Over thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Sue Donnelly, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

## Co-Curious Stories from another Australia

Co-Curious tells stories from Another Australia. Our unique model of story development supports writers to bring their stories to life with their own sense of authenticity and deep community collaboration, while at the same time attracting prominent theatre and film industry partners. We co-produce with these partners all the way from script development through to distribution, pioneering groundbreaking projects that change the predetermined model for writing, casting, producing and audience development. We believe Australian audiences are hungry for the kinds of stories that reflect contemporary Australia, that include all Australians as a critical part of the national story.

## Credits

**Writer** S. Shakthidharan  
**Director** Eamon Flack  
**Set & Costume Designer** Dale Ferguson  
**Cultural & Costume Advisor** Anandavalli  
**Lighting Designer** Damien Cooper  
**Composer & Sound Designer** Stefan Gregory  
**Adelaide Musical Director** Alan John  
**Adelaide Sound Designer** David Bergman  
**Associate Sound Designer** Jessica Dunn  
**Movement & Fight Director** Nigel Poulton  
**Accent Coach** Linda Nicholls-Gidley  
**Assistant Director** Carissa Licciardello  
**Associate Artist** Suzanne Pereira  
**Stage Manager** Luke McGettigan  
**Deputy Stage Manager** Jennifer Parsonage  
**Assistant Stage Manager** Julia Orlando  
**Musicians** Shenzo Gregorio, Arjunan  
 Puveendran, Vinod Prasanna

## Cast

**Prakash Belawadi** Apah and others  
**Nicholas Brown** Hasanga and others  
**Jay Emmanuel** Young Thirru and others  
**Rarriwuy Hick** Lily and others  
**Antonythasan Jesuthasan** Older Thirru and others  
**Ahilan Karunahan** Sunil and others  
**Monica Kumar** Young Dhamayanthi, Swathi and others  
**Gandhi MacIntyre** Priest, Hopper Cart Man and others  
**Arky Michael** Ismet, Mr Levy and others  
**Shiv Palekar** Siddhartha and others  
**Monroe Reimers** Jailor, Vinsanda and others  
**Nipuni Sharada** Young Nihinsa  
**Kalieaswari Srinivasan** Older Radha  
**Vaishnavi Suryaprakash** Young Radha  
**Rajan Velu** Fundraiser, Bala, Maithri and others  
**Sukania Venugopal** Older Nihinsa, Aacha, Older  
 Dhamayanthi and others



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THE UNIVERSITY  
of ADELAIDE