

STAY WOKE

BY ARAN THANGARATNAM



PROGRAM

26 MARCH - 17 APRIL

A Malthouse Theatre Production

DARLINGHURST THEATRE COMPANY

**MALTHOUSE
THEATRE**

Acknowledgment of Country

Darlinghurst Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of this land.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal Land.

A NOTE FROM THE WRITER

THE ICE BOX

Going away for a weekend in your 20s is like playing back alley poker with the mob. You could win big or lose it all.

Sure, you've spent some time with them before but... three days straight? With no breaks?

What if they eat all the food, never cook, and are conveniently asleep any time you're supposed to be doing chores?

Who knows who these people really are?

They may be friends, acquaintances, or old friends who are now little more than strangers.

You change every year: new interests, new philosophies, new wardrobes—desperately searching for a costume that fits.

You say yes constantly and discover personal boundaries through moments of realisation and discomfort. Sometimes you find joy and brand new love through moments of adventure and euphoria.

Other times, bleh.

You look forward to a chance to get away, have some fun. You aren't yet wise enough to know that it may destroy something inside of you irreparably, and you'll never even notice it's gone.

For the past two years we've been locked in our houses, forced to interact with our families in ways we hadn't before. We've all had that one night we still regret. A few too many glasses of wine and you said something insensitive or thoughtless—but maybe it's how you really feel.

Stay Woke takes that feeling and drills down on the arguments that arose between us as the world publicly burnt. Deep lines were drawn in the sand between friends and loved ones. How much of what you believe is who you are?

Like lockdown or a weekend away we constantly find ourselves stuck in place by social contracts, forced to do things we would never do on our own voluntarily. It'll be fun, your friends tell you. Three days away in the snow! These people are great! You deserve a break!

Ah fuck it, let's just go. What's the worst that could happen?

ARAN THANGARATNAM / Writer

SYNOPSIS

A play about two brothers, Niv and Sai, heading to the mountains to bury the hatchet on a lifelong rivalry.

Big brother Niv has gone vegan. He's madly in love, he's starting his own business, and seems to have finally found himself after years as the black sheep of the family. In an attempt to reconcile their differences, Niv invites golden child Sai and his new girlfriend Kate on a ski trip where they can put the past aside for the sake of family. But when party banter turns political, Kate stumbles into a minefield, and finds herself the focal point of an all-out war.

This original comedy by Aran Thangaratnam stars Green Room Award-winning Dushan Phillips (Red Stitch Actors' Ensemble) and newcomer Kaivu Suvarna. Funny and feisty, it's all about the bitter warfare behind brotherly love.

Content warning: includes themes of racism, references to genocide, drug use and occasional coarse language.

★★★★ "This sharp, authentic comedy gives Australia's woke generation a voice" — The Age

★★★★ "A crowd-pleasing ripper" — TimeOut

"Humorous, thought-provoking theatre" — Limelight

Stay Woke is a Malthouse Theatre Production. This script was commissioned by Malthouse Theatre through the support of the Malcolm Robertson Foundation.



Production images by Phoebe Powell

CAST & CREATIVES



ARAN THANGARATNAM (He/Him) PLAYWRIGHT

Aran Thangaratnam is a playwright and improviser from Melbourne whose play *Stay Woke* was commissioned by Malthouse Theatre and premiered in March 2022. During the regular times, he improvises at the Improv Conspiracy and wrote his first play for the Melbourne Fringe Festival, *The Aussie Ethnic Identity Crisis* in 2019. Aran seeks to tell interesting stories seldom seen in the Australian landscape, mostly about the business of growing up in Australia with a last name like Thangaratnam.

BRIDGET BALODIS (She/Her) DIRECTOR



For Malthouse, Bridget was Assistant Director on the large-scale immersive work, *Because The Night* and has directed *The Lockdown Monologues* (digital production) and *Hello, World!* (digital production). Her other recent directing credits include *HYDRA* (Darebin Arts), *She is Vigilante* (Theatre Works), *MORAL PANIC* (Darebin Arts), *Desert, 6.29pm* (Red Stitch and Wuhzen Theatre Festival, China), *GROUND CONTROL* (Next Wave and Brisbane Festival), *Jurassica* (Red Stitch and Critical Stages) and *Kids Killing Kids* (Next Wave).

Bridget was Assistant Director on *The Dream* (Bell Shakespeare) and *The Histrionic* (Malthouse Theatre/Sydney Theatre Company). In 2015 and 2016 she lived in New York, where she worked with downtown legends Elevator Repair Service and for Wooster Group alumna, Anna Kohler.

She was a part of the inaugural Melbourne Theatre Company's Women Director's program in 2014 and has been the recipient of the Ian Potter Cultural Trust Award, Mike Walsh Fellowship and Dame Joan Sutherland Award.



MARK PRITCHARD (He/Him) DRAMATURG

Mark Pritchard is a dramaturg, and the New Work Manager at Malthouse Theatre. Recent credits for Malthouse Theatre include *Because The Night*, *Hello, World!*, *Atomic*, *Going Down*, *Heart is a Wasteland*, *Little Emperors*, *Turbine*, and *Blak Cabaret*. He was also dramaturg on *Mormon Girl* (Hot Mess Productions) and *Wael Zuaiter: Unknown* (Next Wave Festival). He co-directed *Shotgun Wedding*, *The Séance*, and *Unfinished Business* (NO SHOW). Mark is chair of the Green Room Awards Association Independent Theatre Panel, a recipient of the Mike Walsh Fellowship, and an alumnus of the Australia Council's Future Leaders Program. He is one half of the Centre for Dramaturgy and Curation.

ROSE ADAMS (She/Her) ACTOR, KATE

Rose trained at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), graduating in 2019. Her recent stage credits include: *F*CKED* (MPAVILLION); *DNA* (Chapel Off Chapel); *Mad Forest*, *Fucking A* and *The Comedy of Errors* (VCA). Rose's recent film credits include: *Toilettes* (dir. Lotte Sweeney); *The Carpenters' 1981 Christmas Special* (dir. Aaron Warwick); *Coming of Age* (dir. Colin Budds); *The Big Forget* and *The Dress* (VCA). *Stay Woke* was Rose's professional stage debut at Malthouse Theatre.





BROOKE LEE (They/Them)
ACTOR, MAE

Brooke Lee is a proud queer Chinese Australian actor. A graduate of the Acting BFA from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), Brooke has performed in *Hello, World!* (Malthouse), *Let Me Know When You Get Home* (National Theatre of Parramatta), *Slaughterhouse* (Belvoir 25A), *Puffs or: Seven Increasingly Eventful Years At A Certain School Of Magic And Magic* (Life Like Touring), *The Echo of The Shadow* for Melbourne Festival (Teatro de los Sentidos), *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *Peter Pan*, *Henry V* (VCA), and *Mamasquito* for Melbourne Science Gallery (Gesundheit).

Alongside acting, Brooke is a budding director and designer. Most recently Brooke was assistant director of *Yellow Face* by David Henry Hwang (Kings Cross Theatre), and their animation work in 落叶归根 (Luò yè guīgēn) *Getting Home* was nominated for the 2021 Green Room Award in Design.

DUSHAN PHILIPS (He/Him)
ACTOR, NIV

Experienced across both stage and screen, Dushan won a Green Room Award for his performance in *Angels In America*, for Dirty Pretty Theatre (2017). He has also performed in Australian Shakespeare Company productions of *Romeo & Juliet* and *Macbeth* and worked with Red Stitch Theatre Company on *Fury*, *The Antipodes* and *Right Now*. Recent television roles include *Fires*, *Jack Irish - Hell Bent* and *Glitch* for the ABC, Stan original series *The Gloaming* and Channel Ten's *My Life is Murder* and *Offspring*, Foxtel's *Wentworth*, Stan's *Romper Stomper* and the American TV series *Hunters*. He was also main cast in Channel 31's *Sonnigsburg*. Regularly developing his skillset, Dushan has graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts Foundation Program, The Melbourne Actors Studio (Bruce Alexander), The Actor's Playhouse (Meisner Technique) and 16th Street (Chubbuck Technique). In London, he is a member of the Actors Centre.





KAIVU SUVARNA (He/Him)
ACTOR, SAI

Kaivu is a recent graduate of the VCA based in Naarm who made his debut at the Malthouse with *Stay Woke*. His recent credits include *Pool (No Water)* (VCA) and *Earthquakes in London* (VCA). He also wrote and performed in the *Melbourne University Law Revue* as well as *All I Want for Christmas is Revue*. Kaivu believes the stories and jokes we tell have a profound effect on national consciousness and is excited to craft work that reflects and elevate the values of an evolving Australia.

MATILDA WOODROOFE (She/Her)
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER



Matilda Woodroffe is a set and costume designer with a diverse body of work spanning across theatre, dance, film/TV and events. Design Associate credits include *Because the Night* (Malthouse Theatre), *Going Down* (Malthouse Theatre/ Sydney Theatre Company), *Random* (Belvoir St Theatre) and *Minnie and Liraz* (Melbourne Theatre Company).

Select set and costume design credits include *POONA* (Next Wave), *A Normal Child* (Ridiculusmus/National Disability Slapstick Plan), *Air Race*, *Trapper* (Arena Theatre Co), and *Sunshine, You Got Older* (Red Stitch Actors Theatre).

Select screen credits include *Spear* (Bangarra Dance Theatre), *2040* (Madman Productions), *Get Krack!n S1&2*, *Cleverman* (ABC) and *Preacher S4* (Sony Pictures and DC Entertainment).

Matilda co-created *Studio Fantasy*, a portrait project for children as part of Artplay's New Ideas Lab in 2016. Matilda completed a year long Emerging Designer artist placement with THE RABBLE in 2016. Matilda was nominated for a Green Room Award for Outstanding Set and Costume Design (Independent Theatre) for *Mad as a Cute Snake* (2020).



RACHEL LEE (She/Her) **LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Rachel is a Singaporean-Chinese lighting designer and artist based in Naarm. She enjoys the collaborative nature of her process and her works reflect her interest in exploring and interrogating the social ecosystem of her cultures. As an artist, Rachel is concerned with the politics of spaces and challenges that notion in the visual spaces she creates. She also works primarily with new writing and is a member of theatre collective, New Working Group. Rachel designs across several companies and festivals including The Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre, Western Edge Youth Arts, Stephanie Lake Company, Sydney Mardi Gras, ButohOut!, Yirramboi, Midsumma, Fringe Circuits, AsiaTOPA, RISING: and Melbourne International Comedy Festival. She co-produced and designed award-winning 落叶归根 (Luò yè guī gēn) *Getting Home* (Melbourne Fringe). She was awarded Best Production (Green Room Awards Association). Rachel was part of the 2020 Besen Family Artist Program and 2019 MTC Women In Theatre Program

DANIELLA A ESPOSITO (They/Them) **COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER**

Daniella is a gender-queer sound designer and composer from Naarm/Melbourne. They specialise in sound design and composition for theatre, immersive works and film. Selected Malthouse Theatre shows include the Malthouse Theatre's 2020 Season Launch. Daniella has also sound designed and composed *Hydra* (Double Water Sign Theatre), *Guerilla Sabbath* (Midsumma Festival), *Cactus* (La Mama Theatre), *Punk Rock* (Patalog Theatre), *Slut* (The Burrow), *The Dream Laboratory* (Essential Theatre), *Treats* (Fever103 Theatre), *Land* (Three Fates Theatre Company); *Never Said Motel* (Writers Festival, OK Motels), *Adam* (Midsumma Festival), *Tram Lights Up* (Bighthouse Arts), Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA – In School, Artist In Residency). Daniella is a design graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), holding a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Production). Daniella is a proud member of MTC's industry leading Women in Theatre program for 2021 and as an advocate for the arts, Daniella is driven to champion gender equity in technical design fields.





MAREE DELVECCHIO (She/Her) **STAGE MANAGER**

Maree first fell in love with theatre when she performed in the children's cast of Packemin Productions' *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* in 2011. During high school she discovered the backstage world and her love for working as part of the crew. After graduating high school, she got a job as a venue technician at The Concourse in Chatswood and Parramatta Riverside. Starting as a stage management secondment on *The Wizard of Oz*, she has built up her career working in various positions in the stage management and props departments on several musicals including *Frozen the Musical*, *The School of Rock*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *The Book of Mormon*, Bell Shakespeare's national tour of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Trevor Ashley's *The Lyin' Queen*. Most recently she was the stage manager for Darlinghurst Theatre Company's *A Chorus Line* at the Sydney Opera House.

CESSALEE STOVALL (She/Her) **INTIMACY CHOREOGRAPHER**

Cessalee Stovall (she/her) is an Intimacy Director, Cultural Consultant and an Equity, Access and Inclusion Specialist, with a focus on the performing arts sector and an unapologetic champion for the physical, psychological, and cultural safety of all humans in the arts. As Intimacy Director, Cessalee has trained with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, Intimacy Coordinators of Colour, and Theatrical Intimacy Education in the US and studied under the founders of Intimacy Coordinators Australia. As a Cultural Consultant, she works closely with productions to support artistic vision, identity, and communication. Cessalee draws on her 20+ years of experience as a professional actor, director and choreographer, her certification as a Mental Health First Aider, her degree in theatre, two certificates in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from Purdue University and Cornell University, and her lived experience as a Black woman. With a consent-centered practice, Cessalee's work balances the needs of the individuals with the vision of the project to empower communication and collaboration for all stakeholders. Currently, Cessalee is the Equity and Inclusion Manager at Malthouse and the founder of Stage A Change.





RYAN SHUKER (He/Him)
LIGHTING DESIGN REALISATION
SYDNEY SEASON

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM



Effie Nkrumah (she/her) is Benumah, an interdisciplinary artist, writer and performer brought up on Gadigal and Darug countries. She is the voice of Astra, the first Ghanaian Agent in Valorant by Riot Games, creators of League of Legends, and a contributor in Maxine Beneba Clarke's *Growing up African in Australia* anthology. She is also swing in the Melbourne cast of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

Her practice relies on memory and the archive and is driven by the concept of challenging the single story of Africa through stories of continental Africans in diaspora. She thinks and writes about the concept of Blackness, the construct of race and how these shape lives, creating work that is entertaining, aesthetically pleasing and discussion prompting. Her installation series *See What I See* has been performed in Sydney, New York and Accra. She is currently a community engagement producer for Darlinghurst Theatre Company and holds an MA in Arts Politics from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Shetu Simone (she/her) is a performer at heart but a media specialist by trade who loves the arts. She is currently the Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator at Darlinghurst Theatre Company.





Priyanka Bromhead (she/her) is an eela thamizh antidisiplinary artist, writer and educator who lives and works on unceded Darug land. The daughter of refugees from the island known as Sri Lanka, she has worked with young people in South West and Western Sydney for 15 years presenting decolonial and antiracist perspectives. Her educator role goes beyond the classroom, seeing her work in the arts, cultural and community spaces for various youth organisations , Blacktown Arts Centre, Darlinghurst Theatre Company and Sydney Story Factory. Priyanka's own writing chronicles the intersections of her identity, as well as her observations of Western Sydney life, through poetry, prose and creative non-fiction. She is inspired by the words of Oodgeroo Noonucal, Toni Morrison, Lauryn Hill and Mathangi Arulpragasam. Her debut anthology, *mozhi (Girls on Key, 2021)* is a meditation on the tensions of language, loss and life as the displaced and the displacer. Priyanka is the founder of we are the mainstream, a grassroots collective dedicated to unpacking internalised White supremacy, building cross-community solidarity and resisting and dismantling White heteropatriarchy, to bring about individual, intergenerational and collective healing.

Priyanka's work is a provocation to show up in solidarity with occupied and oppressed people everywhere, especially in so-called Australia, where Eela Thamizh folk have not just been able to survive, but to thrive. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Thinesh Thillai (he/him) is an Eelam Tamil Queer creative hailing from Toronto, Canada. Thinesh is the creative producer of Hot Sauce, a roving dance party that aims to create an intentional space to celebrate the lives of queer people of colour. His other work includes writing which was recently featured in *Growing Up in Australia*, and he s currently producing a mini-series diving into the political landscape impacting the Murugappan family's claim for protection and asylum here in Australia.





Prinita Thevarajah (she/her) is an artist living across Darug Land (Western Sydney) and Lenape Territory (Brooklyn). She works primarily in glass and writing.

SHORT EATZ



Short Eatz, a celebration of *Stay Woke* and everything Tamil.

Short Eatz is all about pushing back on traditional ideas that are attached to going to the theatre. This space has been cultivated by Tamil folks from the area, for Tamil folks from the area! A kalai mālai (கலை மாலை) unlike any other, Short Eatz allows for the reclaiming of theatre while taking up space, loudly and proudly.

We'll be serving tasty treats (think, palaharam) and vibing to homegrown Tamil Artists and DJs providing the kothu, the kuttu and the all round Kollywood spice. Get ready to dance like it's your Thamby's wedding, because we're bringing Jaffna to Darlinghurst.

Free with your *Stay Woke* ticket on Saturday 2 & 16 April.

PODCAST: WAKE & BAKE

Wake + Bake

Episode 1: Sri Lankan Tamil? Sri Lanka? Eelam Tamil? Eala Thamizh?
ft Sujan Selven + Shankari Chandran



A podcast created by the Community Engagement Team to explore the themes of *Stay Woke*.

Thinesh Thillai and Priyanka Bromhead consider all the ingredients, the messy, contradicting, and occasionally chaotic parts of ourselves that often do not see the light of day, and try to reconcile them. Sometimes questionably :/. We swear we are not baked!

Are you betraying your race by dating outside of it? How do you navigate the South Asian community as queer, trans and gender diverse humans? Are you Tamil if you do not listen to hip-hop? We pass the mic (read: mic), we tackle these difficult questions, and leave you with more. Let's Wake and Bake!

Episodes and order:

- Ep 1 - Tamil Identity
- Ep 2 - Queerness
- Ep 3 - Interracial Relationships
- Ep 4 - Anti-Blackness

[LEARN MORE](#)

VIDEO ARTWORK INSTALLATION



Priyanka Bromhead is an eela thamizh antidisiplinary artist, writer and educator who lives and works on unceded Darug land. The daughter of refugees from the island known as Sri Lanka, she has worked with young people in South West and Western Sydney for 15 years presenting decolonial and antiracist perspectives.

Priyanka's arts and cultural practice is rooted in conscious collectivism. Her writing via @thelongstoryshortis has allowed for her to reach the Eela Thamizh/Tamil diaspora beyond these lands known as "Australia" and as a result, the images and footage displayed is a carefully curated collection of photos, film and stories from across the globe. It is a story of our past, present and a story of Thamizh resilience and resistance in the face of displacement, erasure and genocide.

Priyanka's work is a provocation to show up in solidarity with occupied and oppressed people everywhere, especially in so-called Australia, where Eela Thamizh folk have not just been able to survive, but to thrive. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

CALL OUT: I shared images on my IG stories and had nearly two dozen individuals from across the globe show an interest. It was a fun experience for me, digging up old photos from the 80s and 90s, reflecting on how my own Amma and Appa entered the UK as refugees and then Wangal and Darug lands as migrants and our stories in between.

DARLINGHURST THEATRE COMPANY

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Ryan Shuker
Head of Production

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SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Share your *Stay Woke* pics and tag us on socials: [@darlinghursttheatreco](https://www.instagram.com/darlinghursttheatreco)

THANK YOU

All the team at Malthouse Theatre.

Leaf Klevjer and Abbivathana Deva-selliah who showed up with cars full of trinkets and goodies to support with the foyer activation.

Ranjini Thevarajah for her translation support.

The Tamil diaspora from every continent who sent in photos and video content to collectively create a video montage of our 90s/00s experiences.

Radhika for the villakus.

Amma for translation.

All partners and family of our cast, creative team and staff who listen, support and endure with patience and love.

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



**CITY OF
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