

RESOURCE PACK

Kalumaali

a fairy tale for grown ups



stages
theatre
group

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RESOURCE PACK
Kalumaali: a fairy tale for grown-ups

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Kalumaali

a fairy tale for grown ups

written by Nadie Kammallaweera and Ruwanthie de Chickera

A Stages Theatre Group Production

Directed by Ruwanthie de Chickera

September, 2012

Lionel Wendt Theatre, Sri Lanka

Sponsored by the Sunethra Bandaranaike Trust

Cover photograph:

Kalumaali implores the gods.

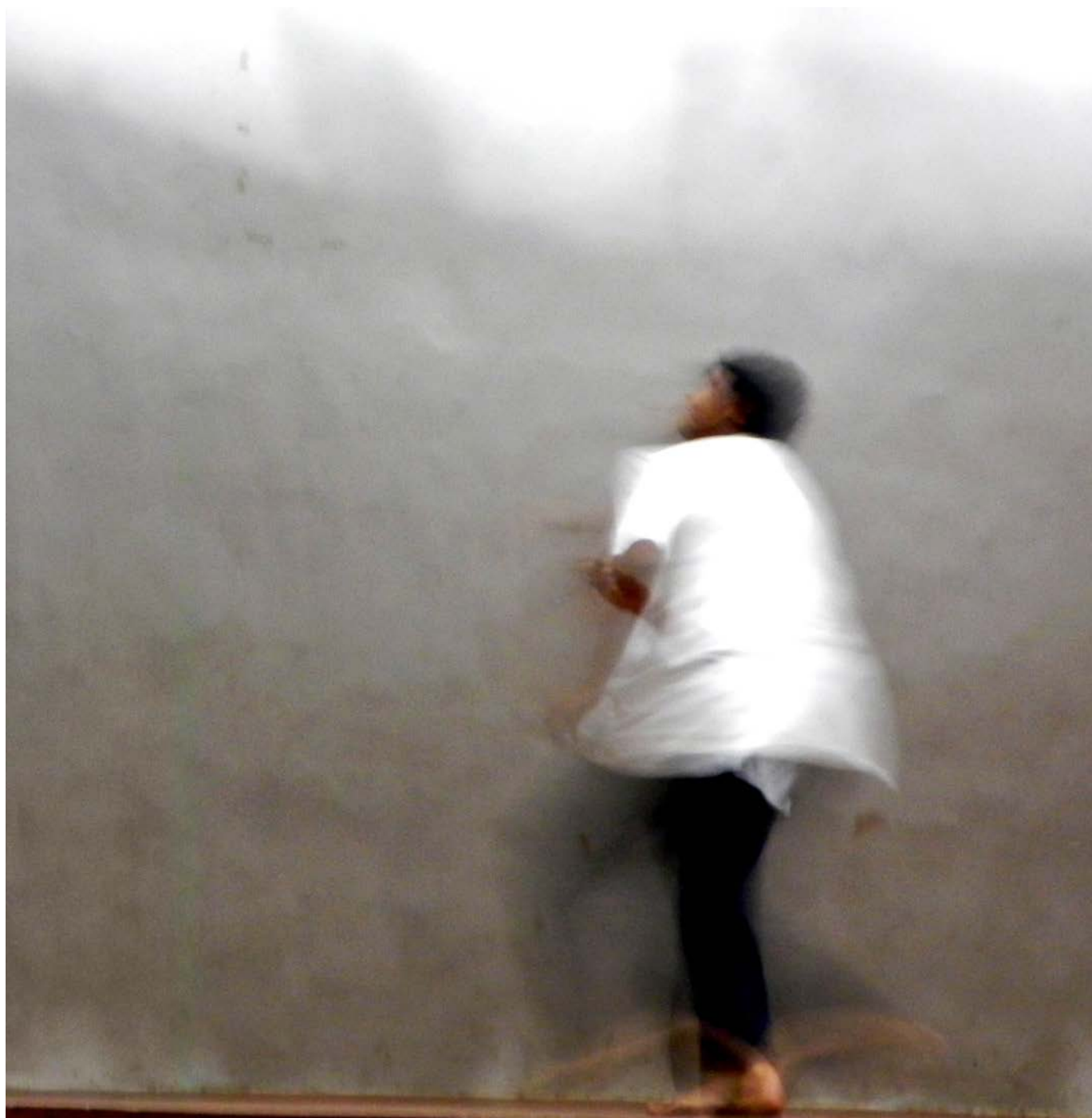
Malshani Delgahapitiya by

Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

Opposite:

Rehearsing Koombichi Kalumaali.

Jayampathi Guruge by Pasan Ranaweera



Kalumaali - a fairy tale for grown ups was one of the very first extensive and properly devised productions undertaken by Stages Theatre Group. In fact, when the Stages ensemble of artists was working on *Kalumaali*, they had not even heard of the term 'devising'. They were just responding naturally to a process which had begun 1 ½ years earlier where 13 women artists had begun writing and reflecting on motherhood (the *Passing Stage* project).

Kalumaali was the official production to emerge from the *Passing Stage* manuscript and it addressed the challenges of modern-day parenting through the story of a young woman, struggling to reconcile her personal convictions in life with her responsibilities as a mother.

Kalumaali was a defining production for Stages Theatre Group. It marked the official beginning of this group's active return to the Sri Lankan stage (after a short break of a few years) and it also cemented their identity as a Bilingual Devising theatre company. In all the productions that followed *Kalumaali*, Stages Theatre Group continued to strengthen its identity and experience as a devising ensemble and also develop itself as a functional bilingual theatre company.

This resource pack will take you through some aspects of the journey towards creating *Kalumaali*. You will realise that this journey was not unlike one undertaken by new parents trying to bring a child up together, with the best intentions at heart, the strongest possible commitment to truthfulness, but really, without much of a clue of what needed to be done.

Kalumaali was created through a mix of instinct, hard work, the willingness



*Initial design
and concept
discussions at
director's home.*
File photo, Stages
Theatre Group.

to experiment and the uncompromised commitment of the artists involved. And when the production ended, we had before us more than a new show. We had a new team, a new way of working and a new path ahead of us.

For the artists of Stages Theatre Group, *Kalumaali* was more than a production. It was a coming-of-age experience that connected artists with the pursuit of art through the pursuit of truth and life.



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The Stranger's Kalumaali.
Juanita Beling and the
Backstage Crew by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Who is Kalumaali?

Kalumaali is a baby girl who was born as a result of a great mistake caused by two sleepy fairies.

Kalumaali is a girl who had to painfully struggle to find her identity, from the mess of wrong gifts bestowed upon her by the fairies.

Kalumaali is a grown-up woman who finally discovered that she could perform magic with the wrong gifts she got.

From then on, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, ***Kalumaali*** could not do...

Kalumaali is born.
Malshani Delgahapitiya
by Pasan Ranaweera

Kalumaali is a play about a mother battling the challenges of modern day cultural and societal expectations of motherhood.

Kalumaali is made up of 5 fairy tales recited to an 8 year old little girl called Saki.

Kalumaali is a play that children and adults can watch together - but probably understand differently.

Kalumaali grew out of a manuscript of writing by 13 Artist Mothers who wrote for 1 ½ years on their experiences of motherhood.

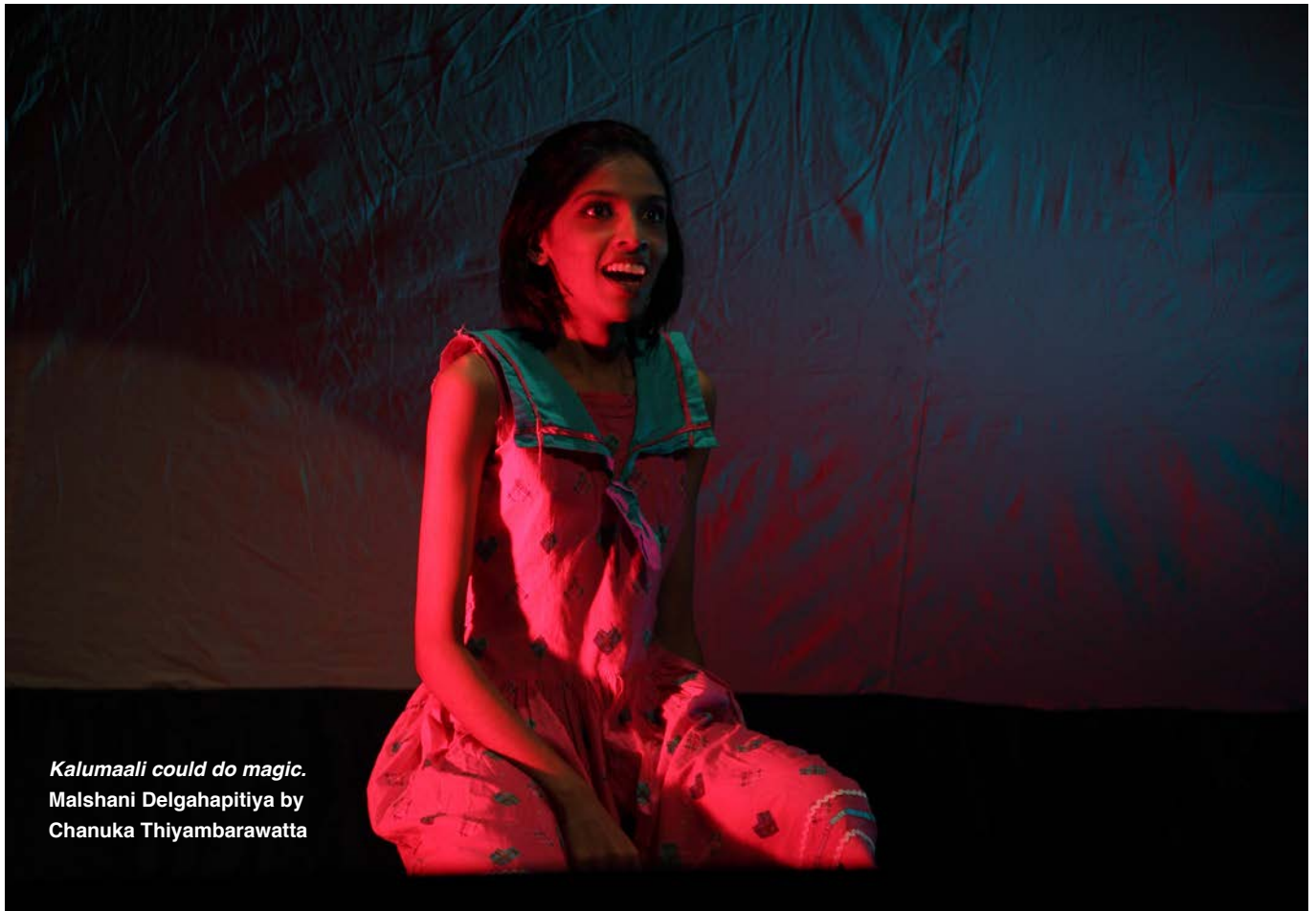
Kalumaali is a production created through the method of devised theatre. The script and the performance were developed through a collaborative ensemble of actors, writers and designers.

Kalumaali is a one-and-a-half hour long play. It was first performed in a proscenium theatre, with a cast of 11.

Kalumaali was performed simultaneously in the English and Sinhala languages. The same cast performed in both plays, some actors taking different roles in each.

Kalumaali was first staged in September 2012 at the Lionel Wendt Theatre, Sri Lanka. After the inaugural show, *Kalumaali* was performed several times in Colombo.

Kalumaali is recommended reading for the MA Programme in Literature offered by Open University Sri Lanka. It was shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize 2012.



Kalumaali could do magic.
Malshani Delgahapitiya by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

***Kalumaali* is a fairy-tale for grown ups – because magic
and dreams should not be limited to childhood.**



How was *Kalumaali* born?

***Kalumaali* was conceived unplanned...**

In this section we will follow *Kalumaali's* journey from a one-page short story to a concept for a full theatrical production.

Kalumaali was the end result of a one-and-a-half-year long writing process shared by 13 Artist Mothers in Sri Lanka. This writing process started in 2010, when theatre artists Ruwanthie de Chickera and Nadie Kammallaweera collected the group of women together. Anonymously the 13 women engaged in a series of writing tasks in which they reflected on motherhood, through the lens of theatre. A 300-page bilingual manuscript of writing - *Passing Stage* – was the end result of this writing process. (*Passing Stages* and *Cast as Mother Resource Pack*)

The seed for *Kalumaali* had been planted in the *Passing Stage* manuscript when one of the women wrote a short little fairy tale about herself and titled it *Kalumaali*. For months and months, *Kalumaali* remained hidden within the manuscript – no one quite knew what to do with her, but also, no one could quite forget that she was there.

Now *Kalumaali* would be born in a country where motherhood is considered sacred and mothers are expected to be supreme

Set up for first image of play. Dil sits amidst soft toys in a line of pre-school chairs.
Photo by Shyamal Muthumudalige

humans with a limitless capacity to sacrifice themselves for their family. So there was a very real fear that the disturbing, confusing and dilemmatic experiences of motherhood that *Kalumaali* would no doubt embody, would alienate or offend audiences.

The team of artists responsible for *Kalumaali's* development before birth agonized over every decision, poured over the writing of the Passing Stage manuscript, brainstormed late into the night, trying to nourish and grow *Kalumaali* so that she would have a good chance of survival and acceptance when she was born as a fully-fledged idea.

Everyone waited with great trepidation.

And then *Kalumaali* was born.

The small team of artists - led by writers Nadie and Ruwanthie - could finally see her form and structure clearly. She was weak and unable to stand on her own (left out 'two') feet but she had a distinct identity and strong sense of destiny.

Now... it was time to close the rehearsal door and bring *Kalumaali* up... and develop her to her full potential – a powerful play.

*Dil's Kalumaali longs to
climb the purple mountain.*
Nadie Kammallaweera by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta





How was *Kalumaali* brought up?

Kalumaali was brought up the way most children are brought up - with a lot of experimenting, a lot of conflict and through the example of strong, real-life role models.

In this next very important section of the resource pack we will examine some of the things that were important to *Kalumaali's* growth through rehearsals into a fully fledged play.

Kalumaali was created through experiments

Kalumaali was, initially, only an idea for a play. She was not even a script. And so *Kalumaali* had a long way to go to become a fully-fledged production.

She would have to be developed carefully by the ensemble of artists in the rehearsal room, who were, themselves, new to this method of developing a play - without a script, without defined characters, without confirmed lines or scenes...

It was all a very big, exciting and scary experiment which no one was quite ready for.

Film Achcha's Kalumaali could be whatever she wanted to be.

Malshani Delgahapitiya by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

Though most things in the phase of developing *Kalumaali* happened organically, there were clear components to bringing *Kalumaali* up - Writing *Kalumaali*, Devising *Kalumaali*, Rehearsing *Kalumaali* and Designing *Kalumaali* - and there were artists within the ensemble who were ultimately responsible for these things.

However, just like when a child is growing up, these stages flowed one into another and happened all together and happened in varying sequences. Unlike in a conventional play, where actors were given a script with their lines in it, or where designers visited rehearsals to decide on the design, or where writers only came to watch the play on opening night, in the *Kalumaali* creative process it was not possible to distinguish where the writing ended and the devising began or where the rehearsals ended and the designing began. All these components were happening together and were often undistinguishable.

This was the first of this kind of experiment for all of the artists of the *Kalumaali* ensemble. At this point, these artists had not even heard of the phrase 'devising' before. Most of them had been involved in plays in the conventional method - with a script, with lines, with clear characters and scenes. But with *Kalumaali*, they were invited to be part of a journey where none of this was known. They were told that they would be involved in creating their character and creating the story and direction of the play as they rehearsed it.

Rehearsals were more like a lab than like a rehearsal room, with groups of artists sitting clustered together absorbed in some kind of experimental activity.

Building a scene. Breaking it down. Breaking it down further. Building it differently. Breaking it down again. Watching it thoughtfully. Then throwing it away altogether. Starting afresh. Looking for another starting point. Trying something new. Trying something crazy.

This kind of experimentation within the rehearsal room required a lot of patience, faith, cooperation and courage from the artists - and a whole new way of approaching theatre.

Luckily there was a very committed and enthusiastic ensemble of actors gathered together to develop *Kalumaali*.

The ensemble itself had a very wide variety of people. The cast ranged from 84 years to 10 years. It had the most senior and respected artists of Sri Lankan stage and screen and it also had children. There were university students studying theatre and there were mothers who were juggling their responsibilities towards their young children with the demands of rehearsals; there were artists who worked only in Sinhala and there were artists who could work only in English.

But what they had in common was they were all bound together on an uncharted, unknown journey towards creating a play called *Kalumaali - a fairy tale for grown-ups*.

They would move forward through faith and trust and hard work and failed and successful experiments with truth, art and life.

And hopefully, they would have a play to show for it.

Kalumaali was created through conflict

Everyone knows that it is conflict that drives life, destiny and art forward.

For *Kalumaali* to develop too, the artists needed conflict. And so conflict was created in two ways.

A deep conflict was created within *Kalumaali* herself.

A conflict was created in *Kalumaali's* family.

Saki won't eat. Kaushalya Fernando,
Shyalina Muthumudalige and Peter D'Almeida by Ruvin de Silva



Kalumaali's destiny calls. Juanita Beling and the
Backstage Crew by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta





Lakmini Seneviratne as Dil by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Two Dils rehearsing. Nadie Kammallaweera and
Lakmini Seneviratne by Shyamal Muthumudalige

Kalumaali's conflict with herself

Rooted in the *Passing Stage* Manuscript

At its very core, *Kalumaali* was deeply connected to the *Passing Stage* manuscript. It was from the manuscript that the writers of *Kalumaali* drew the central conflict and the central identity of both the play *Kalumaali* and the main protagonist “Dil”.

This central conflict could be connected to the following three simple questions.

What have we inherited?

What do we believe?

What do we pass on?

These three lines sum up the central conflict within Dil, the protagonist of the play *Kalumaali*. These were also the three lines which formed the foundation for the 7th and Final Writing Task of the *Passing Stage* manuscript, written by the 13 Artist Mothers.

For Dil, facing the answers to these three questions meant reconciling the kind of mother that she was being to her daughter Saki with the kind of mother that she, herself, had enjoyed in Film Achcha (her own mother). And reconciling this was painful, because Dil was not to her daughter what her strong, free spirited mother had been to her. In fact, through the experience of motherhood, Dil, herself had changed profoundly - to a point that she could not even reconcile herself with her own self.

The central conflict within Dil was that after becoming a mother, she began to lose a sense of herself, and in losing herself, she didn't like what she was passing on to Saki.

The three questions from the *Passing Stage* manuscript formed the basis for Dil's central conflict as a mother and defined the relationship she had

with her own mother, herself and her daughter. It is the pain created by this conflict which pushes Dil into action and pushes the plot of *Kalumaali* forward.

Let us now examine these three lines in context of the characters and relationships within the play.

What have we inherited? - Or *What are the values Dil's mother had passed on to her?*

- Dil's experience of her own mother - Film Achcha - is that of a woman who surpassed the commonly accepted values and conditions of society, and instead chose to live her life in keeping with her own belief system, a woman who allowed her daughter to grow up like weeds in a garden, a woman who didn't compromise her dreams for herself or her child because of her fear of what society would think.

What do we believe? - Or *What were the values Dil was living by?*

- Dil's relationship with herself is defined by the numbing reality she experiences through her exhausting existence completely restricted and collapsed to the wants and needs of her child; however Dil does remember that in the past she was someone who went beyond the strictures of society, who lived a full and broad horizoned life.

What do we pass on? - Or *What was the example Dil was setting Saki?*

- Dil's relationship with her daughter is one built on complete dependence, where the child has no idea who her mother was before

or that she might have a life and interests beyond her, a child who loves her mother limitlessly, and knows nothing more but to orbit her continuously, turning to her for all her needs and wants.

The writers of *Kalumaali* - Nadie and Ruwanthie - were convinced these three lines and the triangle of relationship between Grandmother (Film Achcha), Mother (Dil) and Child (Saki) had to be the central conflict of the play. As artists mothers themselves, this was a fundamental conflict they were facing in their own lives. And it was clear that this was a common challenge faced by women, crumbling under the pressures of modern-day parenting.

They turned to the *Passing Stage* manuscript to look for more material to expand this conflict.

They chose three documents written by artist mothers from within the manuscript - which they felt captured the essence of this conflict and the relationships connected it.

These three documents were...

1. The fairy tale of Kalumaali

2. A letter to myself

3. A children's song about me

1. The fairy tale of Kalumaali - (What have we inherited?)

The fairy tale of *Kalumaali* was a hilarious little story written for the *Passing Stage* manuscript by the writer Calibri under the title “A fairy story about myself”. It questioned the binary understandings of male and female found so commonly within society.

“At the time when *Kalumaali* was born, those in paradise were in a deep and happy sleep. Full of sleep and unable to fly straight, two angels made their way down to *Kalumaali*’s home. They were half asleep and grumpy. The first angel who looked at *Kalumaali* with no interest, thought that she was a baby boy. And so she gifted her with hairy arms and legs, a thin line of a moustache, robust legs, muscled upper arms – things of importance to a male.

Even though the sleepy second angle was not really thinking properly either, she gave *Kalumaali* gifts one would give a girl. This is a woman’s heart, a woman’s fear, a woman’s shyness, a baby bag in her body, the need to make babies, a nature that easily gives in, gives up and forgives, all in the name of children.”

(Excerpt - *Passing Stage* manuscript, Task 4 - Songs)

This story was used to consolidate the character of Film Achcha - the strong woman who had broken the stereotypes of male and female through her life choices and opted to live in line with her own belief system and own her destiny.

The *Kalumaali* short story, developed into being Film Achcha's *Kalumaali Fairy Tale*, is told right at the very beginning of the play. This little story embodied what Dil had inherited from her own mother - Film Achcha - about what it meant to be a woman and a mother.

Dil with her mother, Film Achcha.

Nadie Kammallaweera and Juanita Beling by Pasan Ranaweera



Meeting the principal. Lakmini Seneviratne

by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



2. A letter to myself - (What do we believe?)

This was a short poem written for the *Passing Stage* project by the writer Cambria under the title “A letter to myself”.

Write to me everyday.

I miss you.

Remind me of who you are.

I am forgetting. And everyone around you seems to be forgetting too.

And your children... why, your children might never, never know.

yours,

me.

(Excerpt - *Passing Stage* manuscript, Task 1 - Letters)

This poem was used without any edits in the *Kalumaali* play - first in the very first scene, and then in a decisive moment in the sixth scene. The characters of Film Achcha, Dil and Saki all refer to this poem in a recurring litany of endorsement.

It embodied the central conflict within the protagonist Dil, a once strong, active and independent woman of the world, who, after becoming mother, had changed into someone she no longer recognised as herself.

3. A children's song about me - (What do we pass on?)

This was submitted as “A children’s song about me” by the writer Cambria to the *Passing Stage* project under the 4th Task, which called for songs and poems.

Who are you?

I am your mother.

What is your name?

Ammi.

What is your face?

Tired.

Then, what is your hand?

Restless.

Where is your head?

Far away.

Where is your heart?

Here. Mostly.

Where are your eyes?

With you.

What do you see?

A lifetime.

What do you know?
Nothing.

What do you not know?
How to stop searching.

Who do you love?
You.

When do you sleep?
When you sleep.

When do you eat?
After you eat.

When do you wash?
When I can.

When do you laugh?
When I forget.

When do you cry?
When I remember.

When do you sing?
When I am driving.



Who am I Ammi? Lakmini Seneviratne and
Shyalina Muthumudalige by Ruvin de Silva

When do you dance?
I don't.

When do you cook?
Everyday.

When do you clean?
All day.

When do you go to work?
I don't work.

Who are you now?
I don't know.

Who were you before?
I don't remember.

Who will you become?
I don't care.

Who will I become?
Someone beautiful.

Who am I?
You are my life.



***Two Dils with two Sakis.* Nadie Kammallaweera,
Lakmini Seneviratne, Sahlah Anees and
Shyalina Muthumudalige by Shyamal Muthumudalige**

(Excerpt - *Passing Stage* manuscript, Task 4 - Songs)

Excerpts of this poem were used throughout the *Kalumaali* play in a little game that Dil and Saki played together - where Saki asked the questions and Dil answered her. It demonstrated the close connection between Saki and her mother and how sensitive the child was to her mother's moods.

This song captured the overwhelming love, devotion and self-sacrifice that Dil was able to generate automatically and endlessly for her daughter - a feeling so powerful it negated her own sense of individuality. She existed only as a mother and only for the needs of her child.

In this manner, these three documents - the fairy tale, the poem and the song - formed the central conflict and identity of Dil, through her relationship with her mother, herself and her daughter. Dil was a mother who no longer recognised herself as a person separate from her own daughter. And this was completely different to the relationship she had had as a child with her own mother. This conflict provided the play *Kalumaali* with a strong spine and powerful soul connection to the original *Passing Stage* manuscript. It also provided both the play *Kalumaali* and the protagonist Dil with a deep conflict of identity, which is often the reason for the beginning of a search for destiny.

It pushed the plot forward - as conflict generally does in art.



Conflict within Kalumaali's Family

Kalumaali's and Dil's destiny had to be pushed forward not just by the conflict with herself, but also through her conflict with her closest circle - her family. This was necessary to create a crisis in the play.

So, this was the next thing that the ensemble of artists needed to focus on.

What could be the conflicts within this seemingly happy little family made up of good, well-meaning people?

And how would these conflicts manifest themselves?

However, before we get into the conflicts within *Kalumaali's* family, let's take a look at the characters of the central family.



Introducing Kalumaali's Family

Dil - "There is security in what everybody else does."

Mother - Before she became a mother she was a journalist, a woman with big dreams, a soul set afire by her search for truth beyond her own self interests.



Opposite page (left):
Family time. Lakmini Seneviratne,
Peter D'Almeida, Kaushalya Fernando
and Shyalina Muthumudalige by
Ruvín de Silva

Opposite page (right):
Dil is late for the principal's meeting.
Lakmini Seneviratne and Pramila Samarakoon
by Ruvín de Silva

This page (top):
Lakmini Seneviratne as Dil by
by Ruvín de Silva

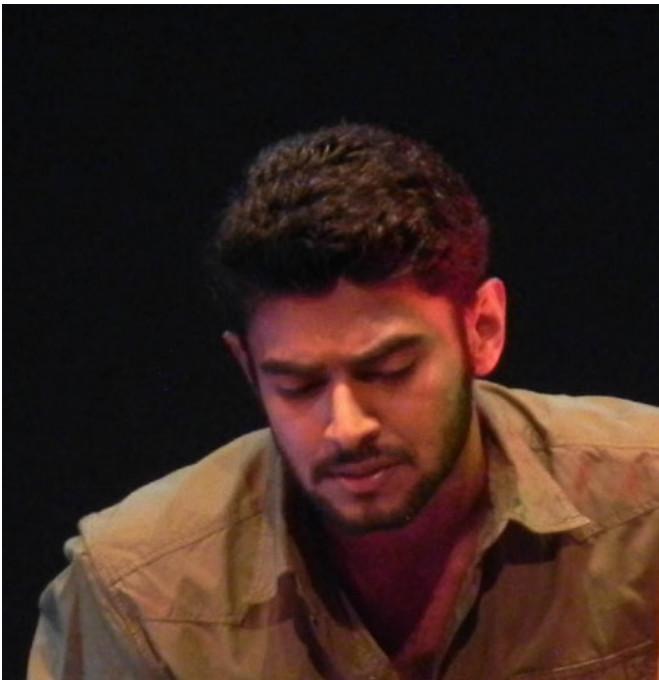
At left:
Nadie Kammallaweera as Dil by
Pasan Ranaweera



Kalana - “When I am feeling sad, I sing a song, watch a movie and my troubles go away.”

Father - A peaceful, busy, husband who works hard, plans his investments, reads the papers, provides advice on bringing up his child, leaves his wet underwear in the bathroom sink.

Peter D’Almeida as Kalana by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Miranga Ariyaratne as Kalana. File photo. Stages Theatre Group.



Saki - "Who are you Ammi?"

The child in the household - Dil's and Kalana's 8 year old daughter. Doted on by all the adults in her life. Deeply attached to her mother who she loves and needs all the time.

Shyalina Muthumudalige as Saki
by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Sahlah Anees as Saki by
Shyamal Muthumudalige



Gedara Achchi - “There is a reason that things are done the way they always have been done. There is security in this.”

Kalana’s mother - Has great faith in the ideas that have survived the ages. Is constantly on the lookout for danger and trouble. Shows her love for her family through repeated sacrifice.

**Kaushalya Fernando as Gedara Achchi
by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta**



Film Achcha - “Don’t lose your soul just because you gain a child.”

Dil’s mother - An actress. She spread her wings and flew towards the sun. Is able to live the life she believes in without fear of criticism from society.

**Juanita Beling as Film Achcha by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta**

***Opposite: Filming of rehearsals
by Sanjaya Senanayaka (second
from right; standing) and crew.
Photo by Pasan Ranaweera***



How The Conflicts Within The Kalumaali Family Were Created

In order to create believable, realistic but compelling conflicts within the Kalumaali family the writers found that they sometimes could refer back to the *Passing Stage* manuscript, but they sometimes had to create new scenes afresh.

For purposes of this resource pack, let us take and analyse one example from each of these devising methods.

Scene Derived From Manuscript

1. Title of scene - Blob of Clay

This is one of the first scenes of the play. In fact, it's the first time we see and understand some of the underlying tensions in the shared household of Dil and Kalana, who live with Kalana's mother, Gedara Achchi.

Inspiration for this scene was taken from a poem written by Monaco in the *Passing Stage* manuscript.

The original poem reads....

MONACO - LETTER TO MYSELF

Sometimes, late at night,
When all are asleep,
I retreat to the spare room,
Tired, ragged and utterly deplete.
I close my burning eyes...
But sleep slides away from me.

It's always so late...too late.
And still, there are things to be done!
My baby's teether has escaped clean up,
School shoes, a blob of clay, one sock – dot the stairs,
Pressed clothes patiently sit; awaiting despatch,
Question mark
What to pack for snack...
Completeness, tidy endings...are not for me.

(Excerpt from *Passing Stage* manuscript - Task 4 Songs)

2. Devising the Blob of Clay scene

The situation that was explored when devising this scene was how families can share a common physical space and even share common objects but continue to live in their own separate worlds. The reason for this is because their relationship with the space and the objects that they share is different.

The need was to construct a scene which created an atmosphere of the diurnal exhaustion of familiar surroundings, familiar objects and non-changing routines and tasks. What happens to people who pass through these common spaces, interacting with these common objects and continue to move in worlds that are parallel to each other?

Blob of Clay. Peter D'Almeida
by Ruvin de Silva



DEVISING EXERCISE

The tired poem of Monaco set the perfect atmosphere for this scene – the situation of the mother who moves alone through her house at the end of another day.

The actors were given a list of all the objects taken from the poem – plus a question also taken from the poem.

Blob of clay

Single sock

A pile of clothes

“what about the next meal”?

The actors were all asked to enter into the space and construct a choreography for themselves responding to these three common objects and the common question – “what about the next meal?”.

In turn, the artists playing Kalana, Gedara Achchi and Dil entered the same space, and responded to the same situation in keeping with their character.

3. Here is how the final scene was performed.

Act 1. Scene 4 - Blob of Clay

Enter GEDARA ACHCHI.

Gedara Achchi: Blobs of clay... one sock.
So many things left unfinished.

Pile of laundry there...
Then what about dinner?
Kalana putha should be home anytime now...
Late... always... so late....

Exit GEDARA ACHCHA.

Enter KALANA carrying a briefcase.

Kalana: A blob of clay... one white sock.
A pile of clothes there...
Home...
Wonder what's for dinner...

KALANA removes his shoes. Exits, leaving his shoes and briefcase behind.

Enter DIL.

Dil: A white shoe... one sock... a blob of clay.
This pile of laundry...
So much work...
What to make for dinner?

She cleans up the stage, including KALANA's stray shoes and briefcase.

Exit DIL.

(Excerpt from *Kalumaali - a fairy tale for grown ups*, Act 1. Scene 4)



Lakmini Seneviratne as Dil by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Scene Written Afresh

1. Title of scene - Newspaper scene

This scene occurs right at the end of Act I of the play (*Kalumaali* is a production that is made up of III Acts). It is the first time that we see the central family unit in this play seated together and interacting as they would in daily life.

The task that binds them is a very ordinary and pleasant weekly activity of reading the weekend newspapers together.

However, by the end of this routine family ritual, the main character, Dil, is feeling estranged from her family and very isolated.

2. Devising the newspaper scene

Often crises within families begin in the most unexpected, unremarkable ways. It is possible, within the daily life of families, for people to face crises all alone with no one noticing.

With this in mind, we picked a very routine, pleasant, family activity as the basis for this scene - reading the weekend newspapers together, as a family. The objective was to make that activity into one that would isolate the protagonist.

Performing the News Paper scene.

Lakmini Seneviratne,

Peter D'Almeida,

Kaushalya Fernando and

Shyalina Muthumudalige

by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

DEVISING EXERCISE.

The artists were all given a weekend paper to share between them. Within this single paper they had to look for items that their character would typically be interested in, and they also had to recommend to each other what they imagined the other characters would be interested in.

Immediately the actor playing Kalana began searching the paper for advertisements of devices, or prices of real estate; Gedara Achcha reached automatically for the Horoscope section of the newspapers; Dil took the political section of the newspaper and began reading on the recent political disappearances and Saki was given the children's section.

In this manner, very quickly the same paper was divided into four sections – Real Estate and advertisements, Lifestyle advice, Political Commentary and Kids section. Not one of the actors wanted to read any of the other sections. They were all very happy reading about their own separate interests. Immediately this created an image of a family that did not share any common interests.

3. Writing the scene

Much of the work of the scene had been done in that single devising session. What was needed was to insert into it tension and a sense of conflict and increasing isolation which the protagonist Dil would feel.

And so, in writing this scene, Nadie and Ruwanthie made the character of Dil, the only person who is even aware of, and uncomfortable with the parallel interests in the family. So Dil is given the role of trying to make connections with the other members of the family through creating a common interest in issues. However, all these attempts go ignored or not even acknowledged. This contributes to the isolation and disjointedness that Dil feels, which is what pushes the plot forward.

4. Here is how the scene was written in the play.

Act 1. Scene 6 – Newspapers...

SAKI is in front of DIL.

SAKI : Ammi. Ammi.

DIL : Hmmm? What?

SAKI : Ammi, what is journalist? What is journalist ammi?

DIL : A journalist? (Pause). A journalist is someone who writes.

SAKI : Stories?

DIL : Real stories. Why?

SAKI : Someone phoned yesterday asking for a journalist called...
um... something... miss Al... miss Al...

DIL : Alwis?

SAKI Yes.

DIL : What did you say?

SAKI : I said wrong number.

Pause.

DIL : Saki... before I became
your ammi, I used to be other things...

Enter KALANA and GEDARA ACHCHI.

KALANA : Papers! (*He divides the weekend papers and hands it around in sections*) For amma, for Dil, for me... (*A left-over segment he tosses into the middle of the table*)

KALANA and GEDARA ACHCHI settle down to read their sections of the paper. DIL does not read what she was given. She looks from SAKI to KALANA to GEDARA ACHCHI.

KALANA : Saw this watch in this ad? Nice no?

GEDARA ACHCHI : Hmmmm. Kalana putha, according to the stars, good day for business but not for driving...

KALANA : Hmmmm. Dil I heard there was a good offer for cameras advertised this week. Maybe we should get one for Saki...

GEDARA ACHCHI : Dil, Saki's week is very bad. It says she is prone to accidents. You better not let her out of your sight...

KALANA glances at DIL.

KALANA : What's up? Nothing interesting for Saki in the kid's supplement?

DIL glances at the section KALANA had given her.

DIL : *(Slowly)* There is an article on Poson...

GEDARA ACHCHI : Must cut that out and keep. Good god! Look at the number of robberies – see?? Daylight robberies. Nawalapitya. Makandana. Kahawatta.

DIL turns to SAKI.

DIL : Increased robbery always has a reason...

GEDARA ACHCHI : Of course, more robbers.

DIL : Well, generally poverty...

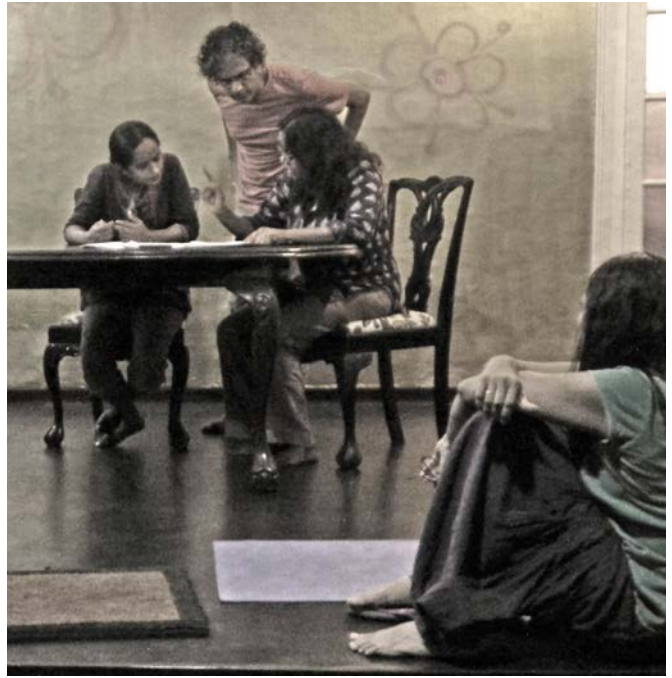
GEDARA ACHCHI : Did you close the kitchen door?

DIL : Yes... (Pause) Kalana, today Saki asked me what a journalist is...

KALANA : A journalist? Is that for Parisaraya? (Pause) I say where is that ad for cameras men? I was thinking that I should get me a camera too. You know, one you can actually feel good holding. At least look good holding...

GEDARA ACHCHI : Ah here! A good picture of the Sri Lankan flag – cut it out for Saki.

KALANA and GEDARA ACHCHI have finished skimming their respective sections of the papers. They fold them and place them aside, reach out for a new set of papers.



Top left:
Rehearsing the News Paper
scene. Peter D'Almeida and
Nadie Kammallaweera by
Pasan Ranaweera

Top right:
Ruwanthie de Chickera
watches rehearsal of
News Paper scene, by
Pasan Ranaweera

At left:
Rehearsing the News Paper
scene. Peter D'Almeida,
Kaushalya Fernando and
Nadie Kammallaweera by
Pasan Ranaweera



Backstage crew interacts with News Paper scene. Lakmini Seneviratne, Peter D'Almeida, Kaushalya Fernando and Shyalina Muthumudalige with Pramila Samarakoon and Jayampathi Guruge by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

KALANA : Amma, give me the Hit Ad.

GEDARA ACHCHI : Putha, give me that religious supplement.

KALANA tosses DIL a section too.

KALANA : Dil. "Kids' Fun Page".

DIL does not look at what he passes her. Instead, her attention is on the section of the newspaper that lies, untouched, in the middle of the table. She lifts up a corner of a page.

DIL : Here is an article on the CJ impeachment

GEDARA ACHCHI : In the kids' fun page?

DIL : No, no...

KALANA : Is everyone looking for that camera ad?

DIL moves to get a better look at the pile of papers in the middle of the table.

DIL : Did you see this article on the Dambulla incident?

GEDARA ACHCHI : Putha – when are you going to take us on that pilgrimage to Dambulla?

KALANA : As soon as I find my camera...

DIL : It looks like an interesting article. Maybe we should...
KALANA : Let me see? (He folds up what he is reading and gets up from his chair)
DIL : You want to see it?
KALANA : Ya. Let me see that...

He comes and stands behind DIL. GEDARA ACHCHI also joins him. SAKI also peers into the paper. DIL holds it up, for them all to see.

KALANA : Ah! Here it is!! See? The camera ad I was looking for. Why the devil do they hide these things in sections that no one reads men? Luckily you picked it up today no Dil? See? We can get that one for me and that one for Saki – the small pink one. Looks cute no? See amma?
GEDARA ACHCHI : Aney! That child in the ad looks just like our Saki no?
KALANA : Our Saki has sharper features. No? What do you say Dil? As a journalist? Don't you think our Saki has sharper features?

They all look at the paper. Frieze. DIL steps out and steps away and looks back at her family.

DIL : Saki! Saki.

Saki steps out of the frieze. KALANA and GEDARA ACHCHI continue to stay in it. DIL places SAKI outside the frieze and steps back in.

DIL : Saki, Saki. Who am I?
SAKI : You are my mother.
DIL : What is my name?
SAKI : Ammi.
DIL : What's the last play I watched?
SAKI : Thoppi Wellendha.
DIL : What's the last book I read?
SAKI : Uda Giya Baba. You read it to me...
DIL : What is the last film I watched?
SAKI : Kung Fu Panda!

Pause.

DIL : Saki, when do I dance?
SAKI : You don't dance!
DIL : When do I sing?
SAKI : When you are angry... during homework time...
DIL : Where is my head?
SAKI : It's still with Film Achcha no ammi?

Pause.

DIL : You heard what she said didn't you love?
SAKI : Write to me... um... write to me... everyday um...
SAKI stops. She then opens her sling bag and takes from

it the photo frame she took from FILM ACHCHA's make-up room. She reads something written on it as she walks towards DIL.

SAKI : Write to me every day.
I miss you.
Remind me who you are. I am forgetting.
Everyone around you seems to be forgetting too.
And your children, why your children may never,
never know...

Pause. DIL looks at the photograph. Looks at the note that SAKI is reading from.

SAKI : Who are you now ammi? Who are you now??

Pause.

DIL : I don't know...

SAKI laughs.

SAKI : You don't know??

(Excerpt from Kalumaali - a fairy tale for grown ups - Act 1 Scene 6)

In this section of the resource pack, we examined how conflict was used to devise and define the story of *Kalumaali*, which moved in parallel lines to the conflicts that the protagonist, Dil, faced. As explained and demonstrated, Dil's journey was decided through the conflicts she had to reconcile within herself and the conflicts she faced with those she loved the most - the members of her family. In determining what these conflicts would be, the writers of *Kalumaali* first always turned to the *Passing Stage* manuscript, to explore if there was anything there which could be used or developed. If such a document did not exist, these scenes were devised freshly with the artists of the ensemble. Either way, it was through these conflicts that the play and the self-realisation of the protagonist Dil moved forward.

Ruvín de Silva in the
poster shoot of *Kalumaali*
by Pasan Ranaweera



Kalumaali was created through real life role models

The peculiar and special thing about a devising process and also life is that often the challenges that are thrown one's way are completely unexpected, and the value of these challenges is often difficult to understand or appreciate when they happen. People take time to understand them.

The *Kalumaali* ensemble of artists had been working hard to develop *Kalumaali* through conflicts and experiments created within the rehearsal room.

However, they could never know that *Kalumaali's* black magic was about to push them towards new challenges and new obstacles. As a cast they were about to face two big setbacks that would threaten the very show. And through these setbacks *Kalumaali* was going to receive two powerful real-life role models, from within the ensemble of artists itself.

But before getting into the real life conflicts the artists had to face, let us look at the cast of *Kalumaali*...

Cast

Dil	Lakmini Seneviratne Nadie Kammallaweera
Kalana	Peter D'Almeida Miranga Ariyaratne
Gedara Achchi	Kaushalya Fernando
Film Achcha	Iranganie Serasinghe (understudy) Juanita Beling
Saki	Shaleena Muthumudalige Sahlah Anees
The Stranger	Gihan de Chickera Dhanushka Dias
Pregnant Woman	Shenali Rajkumar
Film Achcha's Kalumaali	Malshani Delgahapitya
Dil's Kalumaali	Nadie Kammallaweera Lakmini Seneviratne
Gedara Achchi's Kalumaali	Jayampathi Guruge
The Stranger's Kalumaali	Juanita Beling and the Backstage Crew

Role model One

Film Achcha (Iranganie Serasinghe)

The character of Film Achcha was written for her.

Iranganie Serasinghe is arguably the most senior, most veteran and most highly respected and loved woman artiste in Sri Lanka. To generations who have grown up idolizing her and loving her through the screen, she is the embodiment of extraordinary talent, wisdom and kindness. Those fortunate enough to know her, know of her liberated, free soul and her amazing strength and personal courage. She is a woman who soared the high skies and dwelled in the deep jungles.

The character of Film Achcha in *Kalumaali* is a free spirited, fulfilled soul. She has the bravery and strength to take extraordinary journeys in life. She is a mother who opted to make her own mistakes, rather than hide in the security of repeating the same mistakes of the majority.

Iranganie Serasinghe was Film Achcha personified. A woman who had chartered her own way, born ahead of her time. A woman who was both admired and loved for her strength and kindness.

Casting Iranganie Serasinghe in *Kalumaali* was a bold decision. Though she had begun her career in acting in theatre, it had been several decades since she had left the stage for the screen. However, Iranganie Serasinghe not only accepted the role of Film Achcha, but also expressed her delight to use this opportunity to return to the stage.

The impact on *Kalumaali* was huge.



Sri Lankan audiences too were eagerly awaiting this momentous event/occasion.

During rehearsals Aunty Iranganie grew more and more integral to the play and to the cast. It was an immensely precious opportunity for the younger artistes to rehearse with this real-life icon. The cast learnt a lot from talking with her and watching her slowly knead the character into life. In spite of her great experience in acting, Aunty Iranganie approached the character of Film Achcha with great seriousness and worked very hard on the challenging role.

Rehearsals with her were conducted in her home and this relaxing atmosphere added much to the closeness that was developing in the cast.

It seemed that *Kalumaali* was going to be born auspiciously with beautiful blessings.

However, just two weeks before opening night, Aunty Iranganie was hospitalized with a sudden illness.

Kalumaali froze!

The cast was utterly lost. They had been deeply influenced and inspired by Aunty Iranganie's charismatic personality. Aunty Iranganie had grown to be so much more than a cast member – she was the real life Film Achcha – the strength behind the legend of *Kalumaali*.

But Aunty Iranganie not being with the cast did not mean that she wasn't continuing to sustain them. From her sickbed she sent the ensemble advice and strength. She reminded the artistes that uncertainty is innate to theatre, and to life itself. She reminded them that they had chosen theatre, which meant that they had chosen uncertainty, sacrifice and challenge in life.

That was a demand and a command from her! She wanted her God-Child *Kalumaali* to raise her head and keep going without making a slightest change to the performance schedule.

On her part she was willing to give up her long-awaited dream of returning to the stage. In spite of working so hard on her performance, she had reconciled herself to the reality that this experience would not be hers.

But she promised she would be seated in the front row seat on opening night.

The idea of doing *Kalumaali* without Iranganie Aunty was something the cast initially could not think of. The entire publicity campaign of the play had already begun to be woven around Iranganie Aunty's come-back to the theatre after decades. But much more than that, she was our real life Film Achcha.

But summoning the energy and focus to continue rehearsals without her was something she wanted us to do.

And we did it. We could not let her down.

Luckily we had an excellent actress, Juanita Beling, understudying Iranganie Aunty since the beginning of the rehearsals. She had been working very closely with Iranganie Aunty for months and had already absorbed the essence of her performance.

We resumed rehearsals.

And Kalumaali, slowly stepped back onto the track.

Role Model Two

Saki (Sahlah Anees)

We had two child actors for the role of Saki: Shyalina Muthumudalige and Sahlah Anees. Both these girls were around 10 years of age, had a deep passion for the theatre, had had some kind of exposure to acting before, and they were both hard working and aspiring. Adult actors in the cast were sometimes intimidated by their utmost commitment and professionalism!

It was a beautiful, inspiring experience to have these two buds in the cast. The two girls worked well together, and it was decided early on that Sahlah would play the role of Saki in the Sinhala version of the play, and Shyalina would play Saki in the English play.

Both the young girls were excited about their debut in a professional production. They never missed a rehearsal, worked long hours with the rest of the cast and were loved within the *Kalumaali* family.

However, at the point of the Dress Rehearsal, Sahla was suddenly prevented from taking part in the production. We received just a message from Sahlah. She was not even able to come for the play. We never saw her again.

It was absolute heartbreak for the cast. But we had to do the show without her. Shyalina, the other little girl, incredibly stepped into the Sinhala role without so much as a day's rehearsal.

Sahlah stepped back from the stage she loved for a long, long time.



We thought that was the end of the story, but like a *Kalumaali* story, years later, Sahlah emerged again in the public eye, now a young woman, able to make her own life decisions.

Not unlike a *Kalumaali* story, Sahlah had bided her time, had faced her challenges patiently, until she was strong enough to take her own destiny into her own hands.

In this section of the resource pack we examined how two unexpected setbacks in creating *Kalumaali* taught us lessons in life and art which extended far beyond the reach of a performance night. These two setbacks also created two powerful role models for life and art - interestingly from the oldest and the youngest members of the *Kalumaali* cast.

And so *Kalumaali* was blessed, not just with the anticipated challenges of the journey but also with the unforeseen obstacles which threatened to destroy the play, but which called upon strength, resolve, courage and patience from the artists involved.

***Kalumaali* was blessed with real life role models.**





colours, lights and music of *Kalumaali*

Kalumaali was now almost ready to meet the world.

The artists developing her behind rehearsal doors had not only been working on her character and her story, they had also been working on her appearance - dressing her up in lights, in music, in costumes and teaching her how to move.

In this section let's look at some of the design aspects of *Kalumaali*.

The following excerpts have been taken from the Designer Notes of the production and will provide us with glimpses of the very real decisions taken in order to create the magical world of *Kalumaali* on stage.

Set Design

The set of *Kalumaali* was constructed so it could easily transition between the ordinary domestic world and the world of fairy tales. In fact, in keeping with the magical nature of fairy tales, the transformations from diurnal to fantasy were woven into the performance and the set had to allow for these swift and seamless transformations.

Gedara Achchi's *Kalumaali*.
Jayampathi Guruge by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

Backstage Crew

One element that allowed for this magical transformation of set within a live performance was the integration of the Backstage Crew and set changes into the main narrative. Set changes were done in full view of the audience and were interwoven into the performances on stage. The Backstage Crew interacted with the performers and the set changes happened in rhythm with the mood, the action and the music on stage. This created a seamlessness of structure where scenes flowed into each other and sets were transformed incrementally throughout an entire scene sometimes.

**The Backstage Crew perform a set change.
Malshani Delgahapitiya, Pramila Samarakoon,
Jayampathi Guruge and Dhanushka Dias by
Chanuka Thiyambarawatta**



The five Kalumaali fairy tales

We already know that the play *Kalumaali* was structured around five *Kalumaali* fairy tales, told to the child character, Saki, by her maternal grandmother (Film Achcha), her mother (Dil), her paternal grandmother (Gedara Achcha), her father (Kalana) and a stranger in the park (The Stranger).

In each of the fairy tales Kalumaali reflected the worldview, personality and mental state of the adult telling her story. Here is some insight into how this was achieved through the design of the play.

Film Achcha's Kalumaali Story: This is the first fairy story and it is told by Saki's grandmother and Dil's mother, Film Achcha, a vibrant and unconventional aging actress. The story, which refers to the magic of performance and the power of being able to call upon and utilize both male and female energies in life, creates the premise for the legend of Kalumaali – a fairy tale character created by Film Achcha.

Film Achcha's Kalumaali story is narrated without any set on stage – with complete focus on the body of the actor – an androgynous body which has the power to be either male or female. The performance is done under a single light foregrounding a white backdrop. The scene design directs all attention to the performer and the beginnings of the Kalumaali fairy story.

As the very first scene in the play – this story literally births the Kalumaali legend on stage.

Dil's Kalumaali Story: Dil is a woman who feels trapped and conflicted about motherhood. She is unable to access the confidence her own mother had in adopting an unconventional approach to parenting, yet she struggles within the restrictions of traditional mothering. Stuck in a world of overwhelming responsibilities by her child, Dil's Kalumaali story is located in her daughter's bedroom and emerges from the daily chores she faces as a mother.

Of course the magic of Kalumaali transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. And so while telling Saki the Kalumaali fairy story Dil is able to transform her daughter's bedroom, and all the ordinary household chores that constitute her life, into a magical world.

The mosquito net becomes a golden cottage, the umbrella on the clothes rack become a magical fruit tree, the pile of unfolded clothes on the bed grows into a tall purple mountain.

Through the transformation of this mundane world into a dream world, we understand how Dil hides her own dreams within her daughters world.

Gedara Achchi's Kalumaali Story: Gedara Achcha is Dil's mother in law and as traditional as Film Achcha is unconventional. She lives with her son and wife and is in a constant state of anxiety about the discontent she senses within the family. Her Kalumaali fairy story mirrors her experience of feeling insignificant and out of place within her son's household.

And so, the set was designed to give us an ant's perspective of the world.

The conscientious little ant works hard to look after the giants of her world, collecting giant grains of rice, giant granules of sugar, living amongst a giant toothbrush and a giant soap box.



The enormity of the props and the endless energy of the hardworking little ant emphasises the experience of the anxious mother in law, busying herself in unseen, unacknowledged little acts of kindness all day; overcome by a sense of fear that the giants she is looking after, are heading towards a huge crisis that will destroy her and them all.

Kalana's Kalumaali Story: The central concept to Kalana's *Kalumaali* story is his unawareness of the tradition of fairy stories his daughter is used to. Misunderstanding what Saki wants, feeling lost at a time when his wife Dil has suddenly left home without explanation, unaware of the *Kalumaali* legend, Kalana tells Saki a story about Bob Marley, instead of *Kalumaali*.

The set is designed to highlight the discomfort of Kalana, telling his daughter the story of Bob Marley as he struggles to prepare food for Saki by himself, for probably the first time in his life. The backstage crew keep changing the position of the set in order to add to the confusion of Kalana who cannot find the things he needs to make a sandwich and is trying his best to look after Saki so she will not miss her mother.

This fairy story follows the principles of Kalana's life – which are not unlike the easy-going Rastafarian principles of the reggae world of Bob Marley. Kalana moves forward through difficult times with music, with distraction, with avoidance of conflict and with a simple faith that everything was 'gonna be alright'.

***Koombichi Kalumaali lives in a
world of giants. Jayampathi Guruge
by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta***

The Stranger's Kalumaali Story: The Stranger is just this – a stranger who Dil and Saki encounter right at the end of the play. The Stranger is a character loosely constructed around the character of Gautama Siddhartha and alludes to the conflict of a parent who may want to walk away from his family and his child in pursuit of a spiritual/personal journey. This story talks about the challenges that await a person who takes such a decision – no matter how noble the search.

As this story strays into ancient philosophy, timeless quests and existentialist questions, it is created using shadows created against a large white backdrop. This black and white fairy tale contrasts with the colour of the other fairy tales and creates a sense of timelessness and destiny.

In this fairy tale, *Kalumaali* – seen only through shadow, adopts huge proportions on stage. The sizes of the shadows are manipulated to collapse the markers of time, proportion, significance and personality – and give *Kalumaali* a sense of inherited destiny.

Dil and Saki listen to The Stranger's Kalumaali story. Gihan de Chickera, Lakmini Seneviratne and Shyalina Muthumudalige with Juanita Beling in the background by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Costumes

The artists had quite a bit of fun with costumes.

All the main characters were given one costume that they were dressed in throughout the play. The reason behind this is, of course, that the characters of fairy tales never change their clothes.

Further there was a link between the costume of the main character and the fairy story they are narrating. The main characters are all dressed in two plain colours. And the fairy tale characters of their stories are dressed in the corresponding colours but wear printed clothes, and the design is closer to the style and design in fairy stories (traditional, archetypal kind of costumes).

Finally, The Backstage Crew, instead of being dressed in black and trying to be invisible, are dressed in casual clothes, chosen so as not to confuse the colour spectrum of the production. This is because the Backstage Crew interact with the performances and the actors during the set changes.

Kalumaali's baby bag was not empty. Malshani Delgahapitiya by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

The lazy giants didn't hear a word Koombichi said. Jayampathi Guruge by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Dil's Kalumaali and Dil. Nadie Kammallaweera and
Lakmini Seneviratne by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta



Magic Makeup

There was a moment of magical transformation created in the very first scene.

In the first scene, as Film Achcha narrates the original story of *Kalumaali*, she transports in time between her daughter's childhood and her granddaughter's childhood – in other words, she begins telling the legend of *Kalumaali* as a young mother to her daughter Dil, and when she gets to the end of the story it is several decades later and she is telling the same legendary story to her granddaughter Saki.

This effect was created through the actor applying aging makeup to her face in front of the audience as she narrates her fairy story. As a young Film Achcha begins the story of *Kalumaali* she also begins the process of aging in front of the audience. By the end of the fairy tale she has transformed herself into an old woman. This act created a magical transformation of an actor in front of the audience's eyes, ageing her in a matter of minutes.

Juanita Beling as the young Film Achcha applies make up. Photo by Pasan Ranaweera

Juanita Beling as the aged Film Achcha by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta





Curtain Call by
Ruvín de Silva

So this section of the resource pack took us behind the scenes of *Kalumaali* – into all the thinking and planning and hard work that needed to be in place in order to create a world of magic worthy of her presence.

It is said that it takes a village to bring up a child. We discovered that it takes an entire team of artists obsessing over countless details to bring a fairy story to life on stage.



The Footprint of Kalumaali

***Kalumaali* was created for the Sri Lankan stage. She existed, she had a definite impact and then she disappeared.**

In terms of how she was received, some audience members invaded backstage after the show in tears, they felt so powerfully that *Kalumaali* had depicted their own struggle. There were also people who absolutely hated *Kalumaali*.

Either way, *Kalumaali* made a significant mark on Sri Lankan theatre.

Through this final part of the resource pack we will examine something of what *Kalumaali* brought to the stage and something of what she left behind.

Deconstructing Motherhood - a risky entry into a sacred space

The subject matter that *Kalumaali* took on headlong was 'motherhood', which is a complicated and controversial terrain to occupy. In a country like Sri Lanka, questioning the role of the 'mother' is a risky undertaking, especially when the popular image of the Sri Lankan mother is something akin to the 'Buddha of the home' - an idealised symbol of sacrifice, commitment and unlimited tolerance.

***Koombichi*
Kalumaali loved
her foolish giants.
Jayampathi Guruge
by Shyamal
Muthumudalige**

In deciding to do this the *Kalumaali* team began to prise open an ancient, magnificent and heavily guarded door. The fact that the basis for the play was the writings of 13 well known artists-mothers, shone a sharp light on what was, in fact, behind the door. There was real threat of something very uncomfortable being revealed.

Kalumaali took on established social constructs such as the education system, the health service and religion, exposing the incredible pressures these place on women, showing how these pressures can actively contribute to the breakdown of families – in spite of being set up to support families. Of course *Kalumaali* also took on the considerable gender inequalities experienced in parenting. This was a big part of a very old story which needed, nonetheless, to be retold.

There were many who felt that *Kalumaali* had been particularly bold in invading the shrine of motherhood in Sri Lanka and exposing therein some unspoken injustices faced by mothers. Emerging from the writings of 13 women, *Kalumaali* was able to do this with some level of authority and impact.

One play, one team, two languages ... addressing a language divide

The theatre company that produced *Kalumaali* had begun as an English theatre group in the year 2000; but by 2010 it was working equally with artists of the English and Sinhala language theatres. Bringing artists and audiences of the different language communities together had now become a priority for this theatre company.

Bilingualism was highly valued within the creative journey of creating *Kalumaali. The Passing Stage Manuscript* - the collected writings of 13 artist mothers – was written in English and Sinhala and the *Cast as Mother* production, which was a dramatized reading of the *Passing Stage* project, was a bilingual performance.

Initially, it was decided that the play *Kalumaali* should be a bilingual play. However the *Kalumaali* team soon realized that using two languages within the same play was going to compromise the art work and the message. They then decided they would produce two separate but equal productions in Sinhala and in English.¹

Releasing the same play in two parallel Sinhala and English productions was a novel experience in Sri Lankan theatre. The *Kalumaali* team actively looked for artists who were confident or who could be trained to perform in two languages. Ultimately the team that created the two plays worked intimately together with everyone contributing to both productions.

Soon the challenge became to do two plays which were mirror images of each other. In spite of the differences in language the two plays adhered to the same timing, rhythm, choreography, delivery and length of performance. This was quite an achievement.

This turned out to be a special moment for Sri Lankan theatre. A moment that united two sets of artists and audiences, hitherto separated by language. Many of the audience members watched the play twice in the two languages – and there began interesting conversations about the politics of one language over the other.

After the performance of *Kalumaali*, other theatre groups too started following this trend. Directors of Sinhala and English stage dramas started

1
Unfortunately, during this period, Tamil theatre had suffered immensely on account of the 30 year civil war.

selecting artists from other language groups for their plays. Artists began to have a following beyond their language circles. Bilingualism and trilingualism in performance became something that artists began to aspire to achieve. A gap of culture, language and social status began to be slowly bridged.

Devising begins to be recognised...

The stage play *Kalumaali* was possibly one of the first plays to be created on the Sinhala stage which employed an extensive commitment to devising.

There had been a few previous theatre creations which utilized devising techniques. For example, Mrs. Somalatha Subasingahe is known to have followed some principles of devising in creating the drama "*Vikurthi*", in 1981. In the English Theatre, Mind Adventures Theatre Company had begun devising its productions. However, through *Kalumaali* – because of its roots in the open ended writing experiment by the 13 artist mothers who wrote for 1 ½ years, because of the subsequent experimenting across language and the entirely organic manner in which the form and shape and story of *Kalumaali* emerged from a collective process which was never pre-defined or predetermined, this play brought to the national stage the craft of devising as an exciting new way to make theatre.

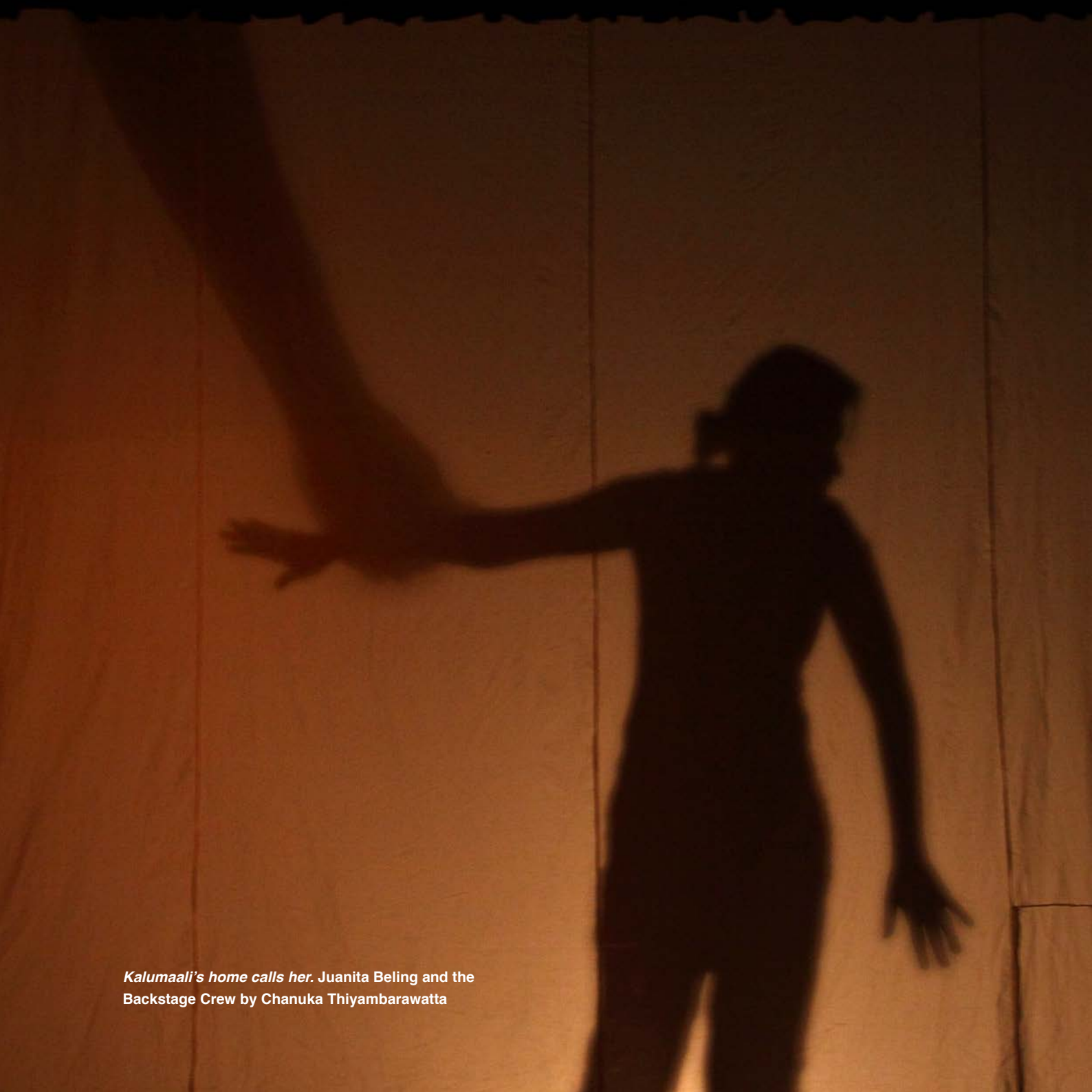
After *Kalumaali*, Stages Theatre Group continued to develop itself as a theatre company committed to exploring the art of devising, as did several other theatre groups. Slowly, terms from the lexicon of devised theatre began to infiltrate Sinhala theatre and devising theatre began to be studied and taught at universities.

Shadow Theatre

Because *Kalumaali* set itself up as a play which brought magic to the stage, it had to employ several special effects in production. Some of these techniques had not been used very broadly or seen very often in Sri Lankan stage dramas.

Shadow Theatre was one such technique. The last scene of *Kalumaali* was created entirely through shadow theatre. It was also created in a big theatre space – the Lionel Wendt. Mind Adventures, another fiercely experimental theatre company, had used shadow theatre techniques in a few of its plays before (*Ubu-Rex*, 2001) but the scale of the undertaking in *Kalumaali* and also the reach of the audience – both into English and Sinhala theatre at the Lionel Wendt, made this experience of shadow theatre a unique one for many theatre goers.

Creating this shadow play was a considerable challenge for the artists. With meagre resources and no training in the art form, the artists had to work hard in make shift conditions to experiment with this craft. The pay off was worth it – as the shadow theatre section of the play was remembered by many as a hall mark of the production. However, the shadow theatre threw light on something rather unfortunate. After performing *Kalumaali* at the Lionel Wendt in Colombo, the artists discovered that there were hardly any theatres outside of Colombo which had the infrastructure to support a shadow theatre play. Lack of backstage space, inadequate blackouts, poor lighting, no load-bearing bars – all these structural inadequacies made it impossible to perform the shadow play sequence.

A silhouette of a person, possibly a dancer, is captured in a dynamic pose against a warm, textured, golden-brown background. The person's right arm is extended upwards and to the left, while their left arm hangs down. The lighting creates a strong contrast between the dark silhouette and the glowing background, which has a slightly wrinkled or fabric-like texture. The overall mood is artistic and evocative.

Kalumaali's home calls her. Juanita Beling and the
Backstage Crew by Chanuka Thiyambarawatta

And so, *Kalumaali* never got to travel out of Colombo. Her magic had to be contained in the shadows of the oldest and arguably the only proper theatre of the country.



We have now come to the end of our resource pack, and like we released *Kalumaali* into the world almost a decade ago and watched people love her, hate her, forget her and never forget her; it is time for us to move on in good faith, hoping that you have found something of what we said useful.

Our final wish to anyone who may have encountered *Kalumaali* in any way is that you will always keep an eye on that magic fairy-tale of your own life, should it ever be written.

What would it be like?

And would you want to recite it to your children?

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This resource pack was produced as part of the 'Artist Research, Archiving and Documentation Project' of Stages Theatre Group.

Through this project, practicing artists engaged in systematic and critical analysis of their own work, analysing a decade worth of theatre productions and processes of Stages Theatre Group. The decade spanned the immediate ten years after the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka (2009 to 2019).

Sixteen resource packs, such as this one, were created for publication in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Each resource pack, written and researched by artists, examines the surrounding socio-political context within which these productions were created and analyses the creative decisions taken within the process. Supporting video material was also created as part of this initiative. All material produced through this research project can be found at www.stages.lk

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DCS Girls at Checkpoints

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