

# DEAR CHILDREN, SINCERELY ... SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA

*Directed by* **Ruwanthie de Chickera**

## Production Design Document

*Lighting, Set and Costume Design* **Jayampathi Guruge**

*Original music composed by* **Ranil Goonawardena**

*Choreographer* **Pradeep Gunarathna**

*Produced by* **Stages Theatre Group**

*In collaboration with* **Mind Adventures Theatre Company**

*First performed on* **November 2016, Panibharatha Theater, UVPA, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

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## *Dear Children Sincerely...*

### *Seven decades of Sri Lanka*

**DCS - Seven Decades of Sri Lanka** is a part of the wider arts research project Dear Children, Sincerely... (the DCS project).

The **DCS project** comprises a collection of memories, stories and experiences of the generation born in the 1930s in Sri Lanka. The DCS project aims to creatively present these stories to contemporary audiences through live performance.

**DCS - Seven Decades of Sri Lanka** comprises seven scenes that highlight seven politically decisive historical moments in post-colonial Sri Lanka. The seven scenes each represent a decade and the play charts a journey of the country through these seven decades from 1948, (Sri Lanka's Independence), to 2009, (the end of the civil war).

**Scene 1 - Sri Lanka in the 40s – The Story of Independence.** Six actors take the audience through the events and emotions surrounding Sri Lanka's Independence using a series of images and tableaux. This is a high energy, animated scene which moves through snapshot recollections of Independence gathered across several DCS interviews. There was no consolidated people's movement to end colonization in Sri Lanka. There was, however, a great respect for India's heroic independence struggle. Interestingly, though we now give such great importance to the Sri Lankan flag, it seems that, at the point of Independence, it didn't play a significant role at all. No one interviewed even remembered a flag.

**Scene 2 - Sri Lanka in the 50s – The Story of 'Sinhala Only'.** The construct and visual for this scene is a group of people being permitted to drive a bus for the first time. The ensemble stands huddled together, as if in a crowded bus, facing the audience, ready to start their bus journey. The characters in the bus initially travel together, enjoying the thrills of receiving the reigns to their country; however as Sinhala majority paranoia and insecurity grows, the Tamil leadership and people are squeezed out of the system (and out of the bus!) and by the end of the scene the people in the bus are quite simply 'Sinhala Only'.

**Scene 3 - Sri Lanka in the 60s – The Story of The Ceylon Coup.** This scene is presented as a story narrated by two characters – an aristocratic Lady and her faithful butler - Wijesoma. The Lady tells the story of the infamous and intriguing 'Gentleman's Coup' of 1962, which marked the beginning of the end of rule of the almost exclusively Anglo-Christian ruling class, with the language of power beginning to shift from English to Sinhala and ensuing shift in political culture. Wijesoma, who stands respectfully by her side, provides his own comments, interpretations and information on the main narrative.

**Scene 4 - Sri Lanka in the 70s – The Story of the Youth Insurrections.**

This is a non-verbal scene which attempts to capture the tragic incidents of the two Marxist youth insurrections which occurred in the country. The insurrections happened 19 years apart and were both crushed. The second insurrection in 1989 is referred to as the 'Time of Terror' in Sri Lankan history. It is characterized by its intrigue and its escalating horror wherein hundreds of thousands of young people were tortured, killed or disappeared. The ensemble performs this scene through high-energy dance and choreographed movement, which reflects the explosiveness of the youthful energy of these movements and how they were brutally destroyed.

**Scene 5 - Sri Lanka in the 80s – The Story of Black July.** Most people interviewed agreed that 1983 was the turning point in Sri Lankan history. July 1983 or Black July marked the beginning of the 30-year civil war brought about by the 5-day pogrom against the Tamil people of the country in which many lost their lives, livelihood and property. This scene is acted out by the entire ensemble. The scene begins in a synchronized movement and then splits suddenly, as one member of the ensemble is isolated (this actor represents the Tamil community) and watches helplessly as the rest of the ensemble descend into chaos, destruction and violence which they ultimately turn on him.

**Scene 6 - Sri Lanka in the 90s – The Story of the Big Match.**

This decade witnessed an exponentially escalating death toll in the civil war, a spate of political assassination, the rise of private media channels but is most easily remembered for the historical cricket World Cup victory. It was during this decade that violence and death became normalized in Sri Lanka. The sensationalisation

of the war by the media, the openly thriving war industry, the political intrigue and the daily casualty scoreboard marked this decade with a macabre dark quality. This scene gathers together the cricket World Cup victory and the game of war into a single construct and the audience is presented the civil war in Sri Lanka in the form of a live update of a cricket match.

**Scene 7 - Sri Lanka in the 2000s – The Story of Menik Farm.** This is a story told to the audience from the perspective of an elderly Tamil lady from Jaffna who is displaced right at the end of her life and moved to the infamous Menik Farm refugee camp. The lady recites her memories of Menik Farm to the audience, while the ensemble occupies a discreet space on the stage behind her, partly in the shadows, mostly in stillness, but providing her story with a soundscape created through percussion instruments that they carry with them.



## *Production Design*

The spine of this production is the ensemble. In the ambitious task of traversing 7 decades of turbulent Sri Lankan history through 7 short scenes and within a period of just 70 minutes, this play needs to have a core that is dynamic and well as flexible. The DCS Ensemble provides this nucleus. The DCS Ensemble has to have the capacity to expand to capture meta narrative events like the 1983 riots and the JVP insurrections, it also has to have the ability to focus itself on deeply personal human situations like an elderly Tamil lady struggling to comprehend the callousness of society at the end of the war, or the complex companionship of dependence and trust between an aristocratic lady and her faithful butler.

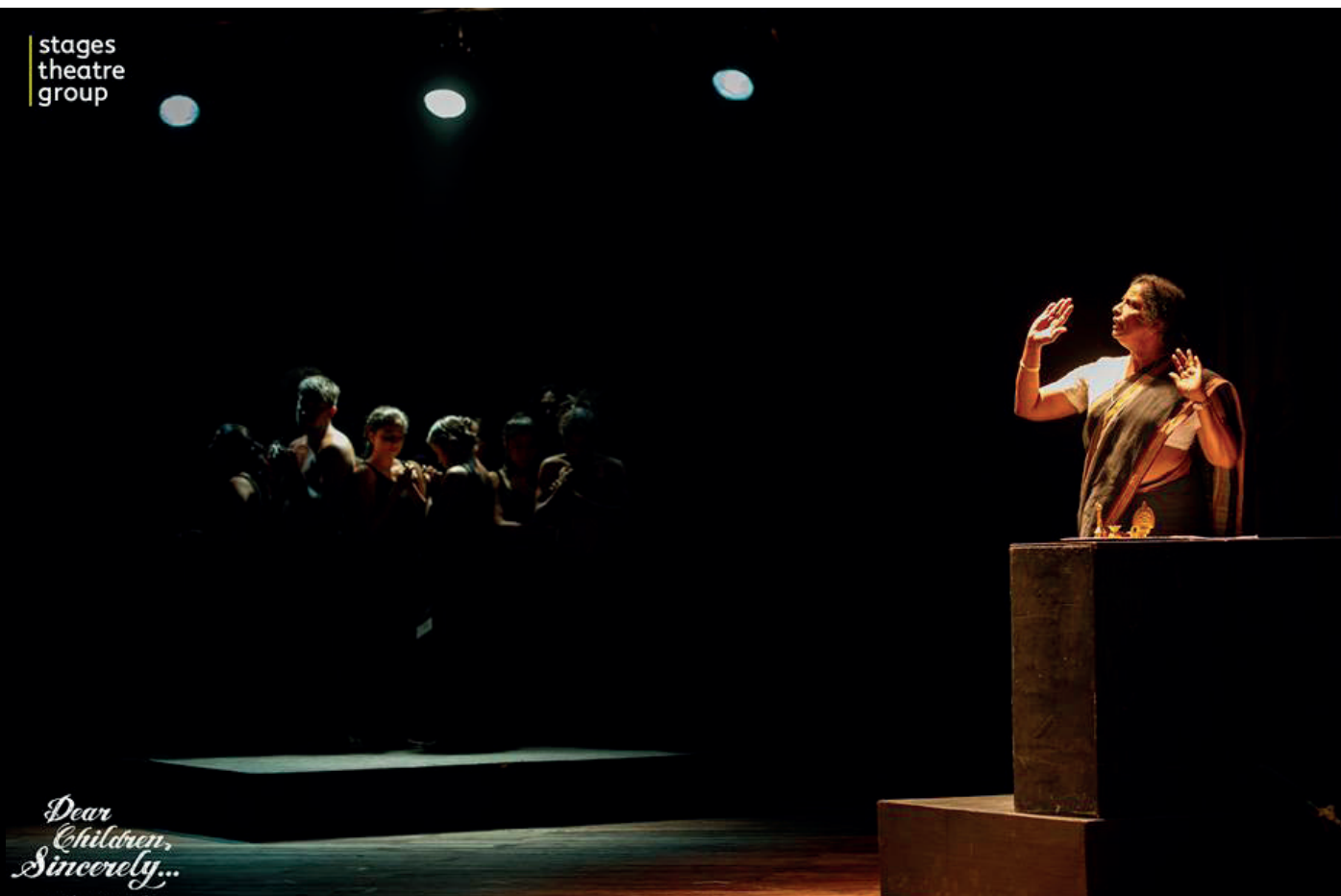
In terms of the production design of this show, every aspect of the production – the publicity, set, costumes, music, choreography - needs to feed the flexibility and vitality of the central ensemble. Every other aspect of the production needs to fade into insignificance. For it is through identifying with the ensemble that the audience can be transported on the tour de force journey of this play, embracing the events they witness on stage as their own, partaking in an experience of shared history.



## *Set & Props Design*

The play straddles seven decades of turbulent Sri Lankan history, through a very fast-paced performance. This called for a flexible set that could be manipulated to create different worlds according to each successive scene. Black was chosen as the colour of the set, in order to provide a neutral setting. A platform was created to enable different levels of performance. Eight boxes of identical size were used in multiple ways throughout the seven scenes.

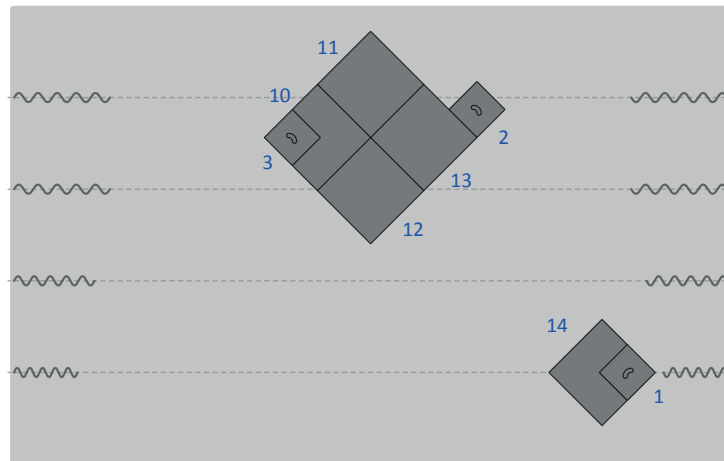
Pens and paper were used as props for the scene from the 1970s to represent the element of education in the young Marxist revolutionaries. The commentators from the 1990s carried a file with necessary official documents and data, as relevant to the scene. The ensemble playing refugees in the 2000s were given percussion instruments which were used to create a soundscape for the narration of the story. A lamp, incense sticks, a small bell and a musical instrument used to accompany chanting were used for the religious ritual performed by the Tamil lady in the same scene.



## Set Design - Arrangements

### Scene 1

Sri Lanka in the 40s – The Story of Independence

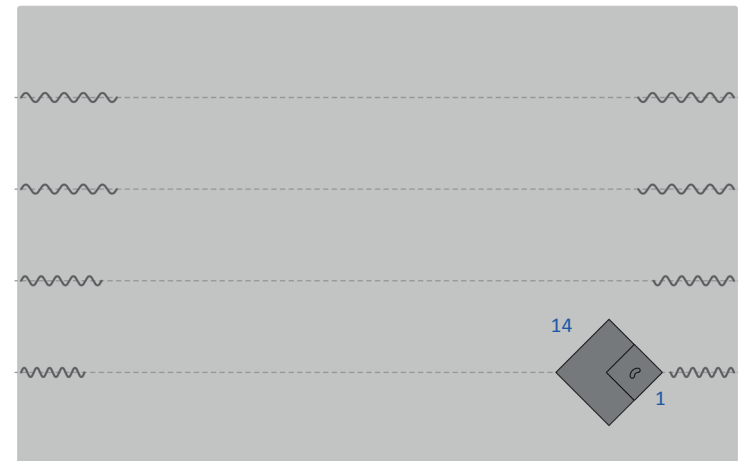


AUDIENCE



### Scene 2

Sri Lanka in the 50s – The Story of 'Sinhala Only'

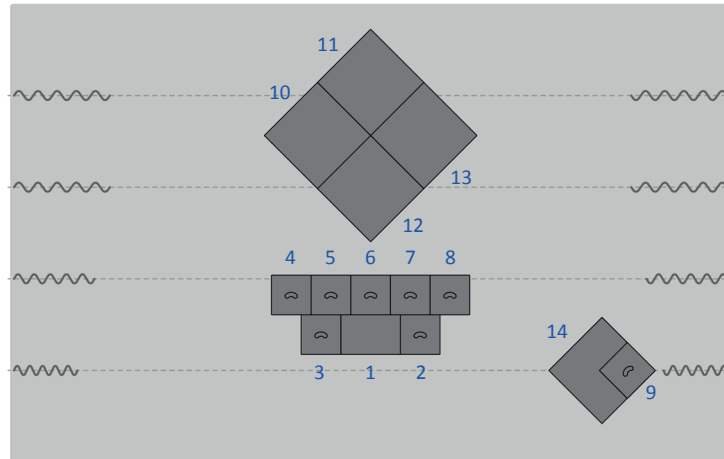


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**Scene 3**

Sri Lanka in the 60s – The Story of the Ceylon Coup

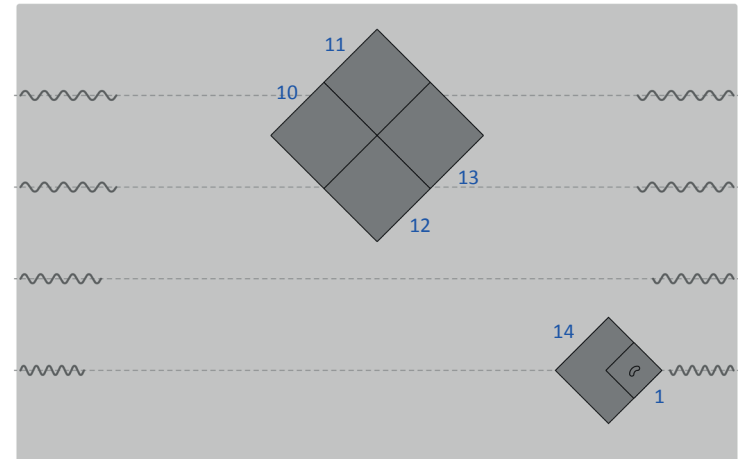


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**Scene 4**

Sri Lanka in the 70s – The Story of Youth Insurrections



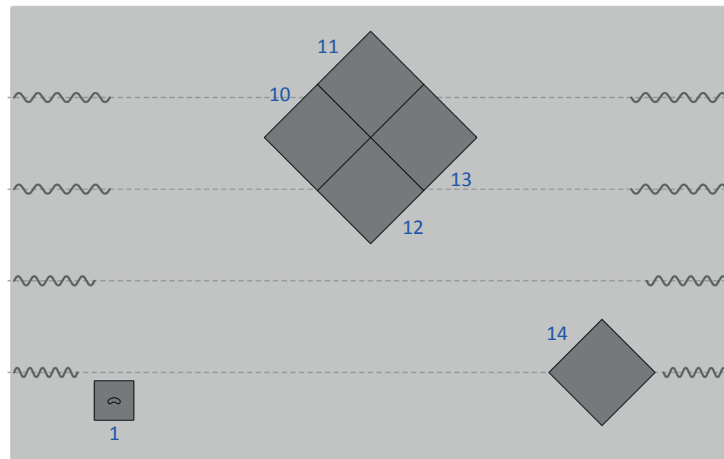
AUDIENCE



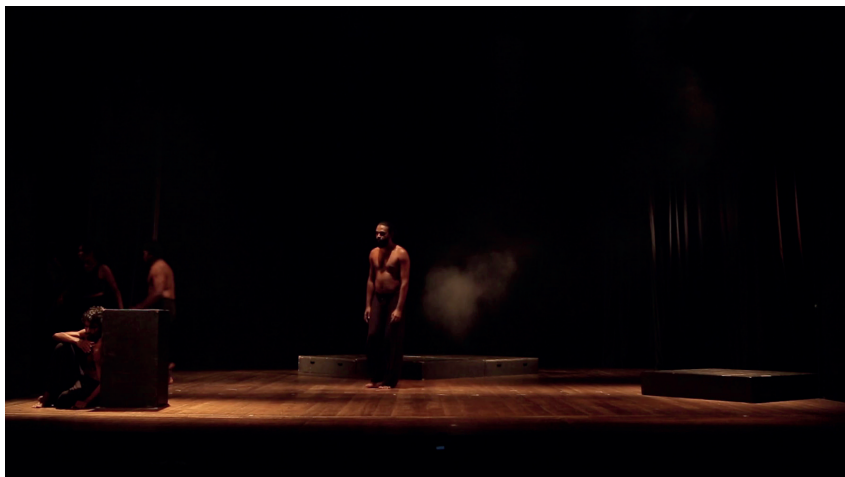


**Scene 5**

Sri Lanka in the 80s – The Story of Black July

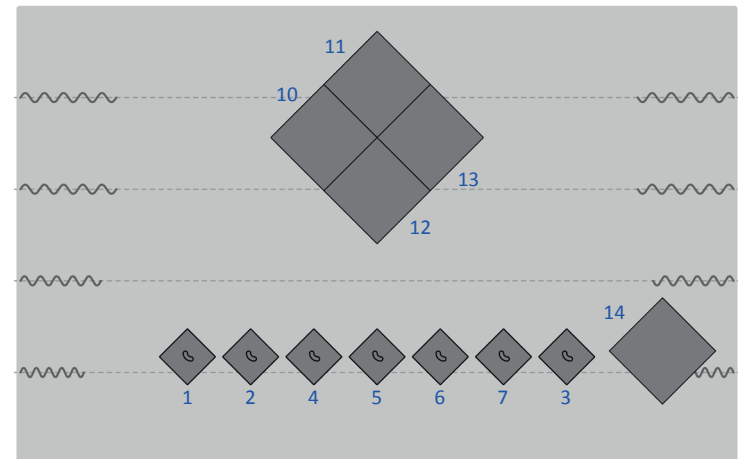


AUDIENCE



**Scene 6**

Sri Lanka in the 90s – The Story of the Big Match



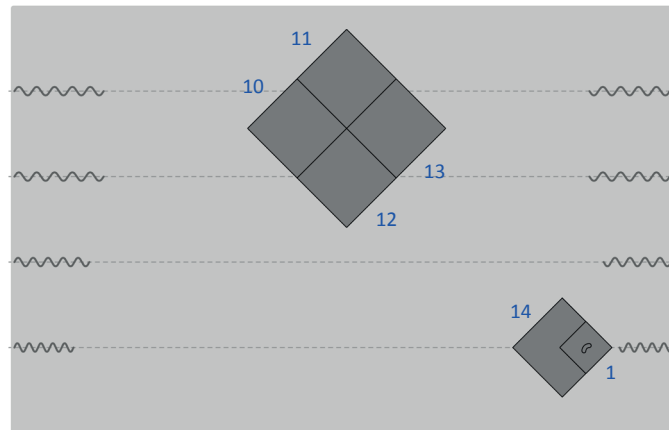
AUDIENCE





***Scene 7***

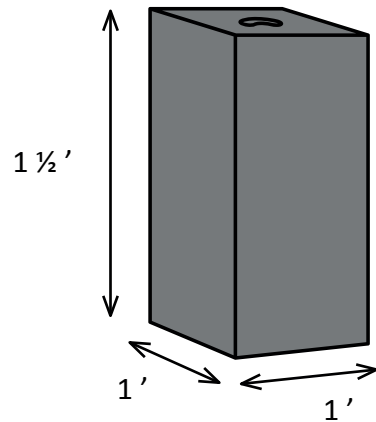
Sri Lanka in the 2000s – The Story of Menik Farm



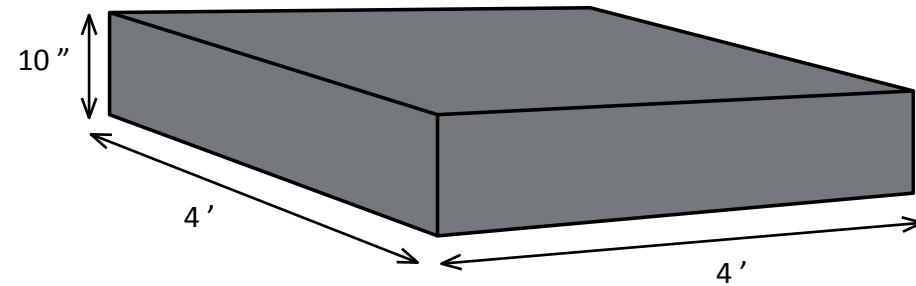
AUDIENCE



## Set Design - Dimensions



1 - 9 Set : **Box**  
 Material : **Plywood**  
 Colour : **Off White, Matte**  
 Quantity : **9**  
 Load Bearing : **1 Person**



10 - 14 Set : **Platform**  
 Material : **Plywood**  
 Colour : **Black, Matte**  
 Quantity : **5**  
 Load Bearing : **6 People**

## PROPS - List & Details



Prop : **File Cover**  
 Material : **Cardboard**  
 Colour : **Off White**  
 Quantity : **8**  
 Scene : **50's, 60's, 70's, 80's**



Prop : **Pen**  
 Material : **Plastic**  
 Colour : **Blue**  
 Quantity : **8**  
 Scene : **50's, 60's, 80's, 90's**



Prop : **Bell**  
 Material : **Iron**  
 Colour : **Gold**  
 Quantity : **8**  
 Scene : **70's**



Prop : **Bell**  
 Material : **Iron**  
 Colour : **Gold & Black**  
 Quantity : **1**  
 Scene : **2000's**



Prop : **Bucket**  
 Material : **Plastic**  
 Colour : **Black, Gloss**  
 Quantity : **2**  
 Scene : **60's**



Prop : **A4 Sheet**  
 Material : **Paper**  
 Colour : **White**  
 Quantity : **8**  
 Scene : **70's**



Prop : **Pearl Roll**  
 Material : **Wood & Metal**  
 Colour : **Black & Silver**  
 Quantity : **1**  
 Scene : **2000's**



Prop : **Copper Tray**  
 Material : **Copper**  
 Colour : **Copper**  
 Quantity : **1**  
 Scene : **2000's**



Prop : **Shaker**  
Material : **Plastic**  
Colour : **Black**  
Quantity : **1**  
Scene : **2000's**



Prop : **Big Symbol & Hammer**  
Material : **Brass, Wood**  
Colour : **Brass**  
Quantity : **1**  
Scene : **2000's**



Prop : **Small Symbol**  
Material : **Brass**  
Colour : **Brass**  
Quantity : **1**  
Scene : **2000's**

## Light Design

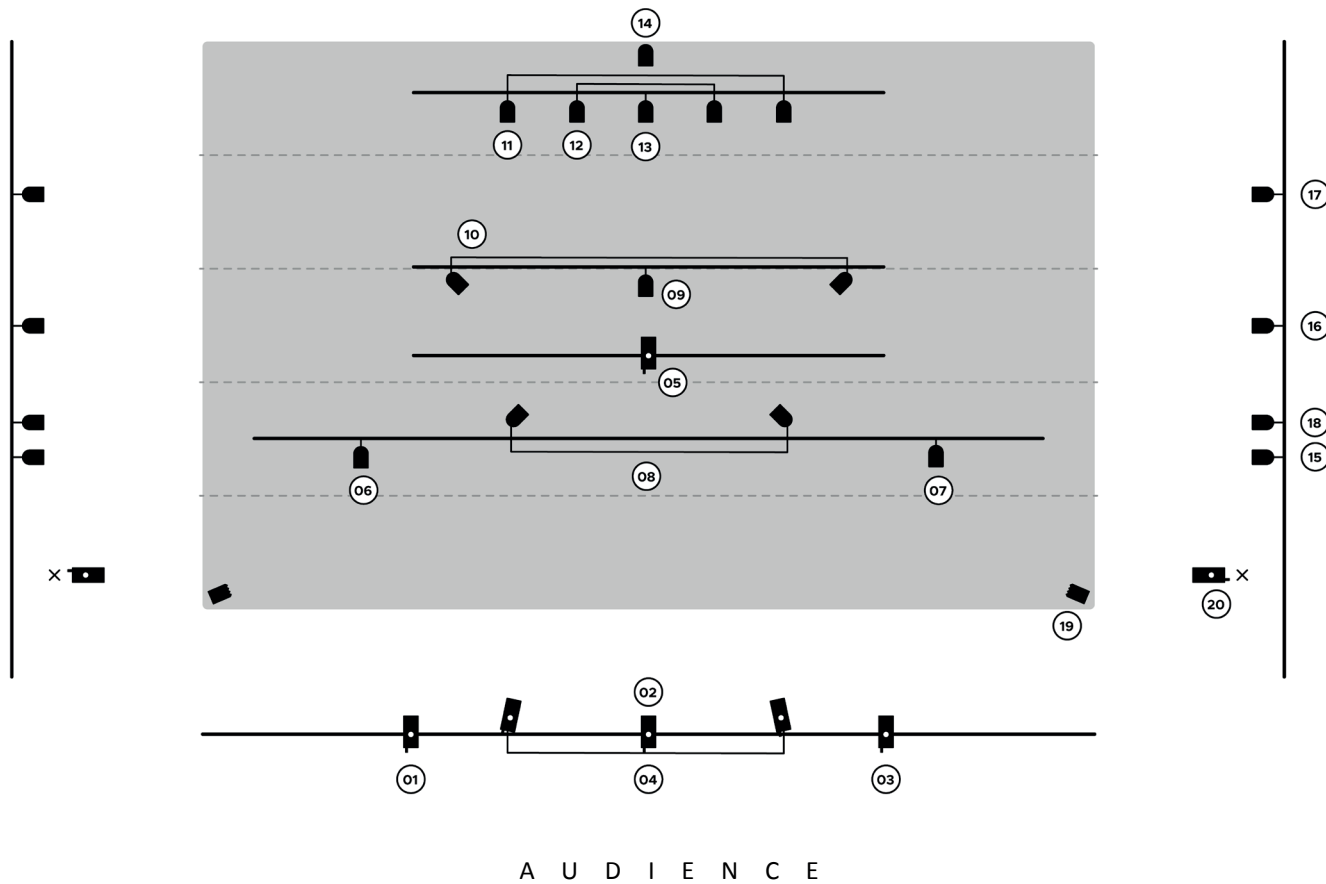
Events that took place during a lengthy span of seven decades unfold in the 70 minutes of this play. The light design has to allow for the creation of seven different scenes which portrayed seven distinctly different worlds on stage. Lighting followed a black and white theme because of the play's historical nature. However, since it was also a high energy ensemble performance, subtle colours were combined to highlight the bodies of the performers. It is important that a feeling of nostalgia is created, as the scenes reflect on important historical events. Haze is used to create this sense of nostalgia.

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## Lighting Design - Floor Plan & Lights Requirement



 Parcan - 1000w (21 Nos)
  Profile Spot - 1000w (08 Nos)
  Fresnal - 650w (02 Nos)

Haze Machine (01 Nos)

Foot Stand (03 Nos)

Light Stand (02 Nos)

No	Light Type	Filter
01	Profile Spot 1000W	NO
02	Profile spot 1000W	DAYLIGHT
03	Profile spot 1000W	NO
04	Profile spot 1000W	DAYLIGHT
05	Profile spot 1000W	NO
06	Parcan 1000W	NO
07	Parcan 1000W	NO
08	Parcan 1000W	DAYLIGHT
09	Parcan 1000W	NO
10	Parcan 1000W	NO
11	Parcan 1000W	NO
12	Parcan 1000W	NO
13	Parcan 1000W	NO
14	Parcan 1000W	NO
15	Parcan 1000W	NO
16	Parcan 1000W	NO
17	Parcan 1000W	NO
18	Parcan 1000W	DAYLIGHT
19	Fresnal 650W	NO
20	Profile spot 1000W	DAYLIGHT

## *Costume Design*

DCS - Seven Decades of Sri Lanka is a very physically demanding ensemble performance. The ensemble was dressed in a neutral black costume in order to enable multiple characters to be portrayed by each actor throughout the seven scenes. The costumes were designed to highlight the body shapes, appearance and energy of the ensemble. The pants worn by the ensemble are split open on either side to allow for the costumes to be used in multiple ways.

Male performers are of bare upper bodies and female performers wear short crop-tops, which enable maximum expression through the body. Shawls are used when the body needs concealing. Shawls of grey, red and green are used to build characters that need to stand out from the ensemble.

The two artists who were not part of the ensemble, the Lady in The Ceylon Coup scene and the Tamil Lady in Menik Farm are dressed in black, in order that they blend with the costumes of the ensemble.



## Costume Design - Look & Feel

Colour Palette



- Character : **Ensemble**  
 Quantity : **Entire ensemble**  
 Base costume :
  - **Fourway Black Skinny**
  - **Fourway Black Pants**  
 Accessories :
  - **Black Hairbands**
  - **Red Shawls**
  - **Turquoise Shawls**
  - **Black Shawls**
  - **Off White Shawls**
  - **Black Long Sleeve T Shirts**
  - **Black Tie**



- Character : **Tamil Lady**  
 Quantity : **1**  
 Base costume :
  - **Black Saree**
  - **White Jacket**  
 Accessories :
  - **Gold Jewellery**



- Character : **Aristocratic Lady**  
 Quantity : **1**  
 Base costume :
  - **Long Sleeved Black Jacket**
  - **Black Trouser**  
 Accessories :
  - **White Shawl**
  - **Silver Jewellery**
  - **Black White Shoes**





## *Make up Design*

This is an ensemble performance and also a very physically challenging play. As such the DCS ensemble has minimal make up on. This is because the members of the ensemble have to represent several characters in the seven different acts. The marked exception to this rule is the make-up for the character of the Lady in The Ceylon Coup. This character needs to look elderly but also extremely dignified and so the actress wears a sleek white-haired wig and has slight aging make up applied to her face.



## *Publicity Design*

The publicity design of this production evolved over several months and through several shows and finally settled in a strong design created for the first time for the DCS – Seven Decades show in July 2017. Central to this design was some excellent and dynamic photography taken of live performances of the show by one of the Stages photographers – Prauda Buwaneka. Several of these photos became central to the public image of DCS Seven Decades – that of a powerful ensemble piece of theatre of a roller coaster ride of emotions and a overwhelming demonstration of energy. Infact, in addition to the overall production images, the publicity design also highlighted 7 images - one image per decade – which gained recognition as central DCS Seven Decades images.

Also significantly, this is the first time that the production design initiated a name change in the show. The highlighting of the DCS letters in the publicity moved the name of the production from the rather cumbersome “Dear Children, Sincerely... Seven Decades of Sri Lanka” to the much more digestable DCS Seven Decades of Sri Lanka, or even DCS Seven Decades. This image was created by Stages Graphic Designer Venura Navod Balasuriya.





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presents

**DEAR  
CHILDREN  
SINCERELY**

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA

Directed by  
Ruwanthie de Chickera

**5<sup>th</sup> | 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017**  
**At Lionel Wendt Theatre**  
**7.00pm**

Contact - 076 878 1095 | [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)



On the 70<sup>th</sup> year since Sri Lankan Independence...

The Eisenhower Association of Sri Lanka  
presents

**DEAR  
CHILDREN  
SINCERELY**

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA


Directed by  
Ruwanthie de Chickera

**10<sup>th</sup> January 2018**  
**Lionel Wendt Theatre**  
**7.30pm**

Box office from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan.  
0112 695794

10.30am - FREE School Show  
Call 077777777 for bookings

Media sponsors



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**EISENHOWER  
FELLOWSHIP  
SRI LANKA**

On the 70<sup>th</sup> year since Sri Lankan Independence

The Eisenhower Fellowship Association of Sri Lanka  
presents

**DEAR  
CHILDREN  
SINCERELY**

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA

Directed by  
Ruwanthie de Chickera



DCS - Seven Decades of Sri Lanka is a highly charged ensemble performance that travels back through 70 years of Sri Lankan history, highlighting seven singular events that changed the course of this country's journey.

Created through conversations conducted with the generation born in the 1930s, the play traces the dramatic socio-political twists and turns of the Sri Lankan people, from Independence in 1948 through to the end of the 30 year civil war in 2009.

Performance in **all three languages** - with subtitles

**10<sup>th</sup> January 2018**  
**Lionel Wendt Theatre**  
**7.30pm**

**Duration**  
90 mins  
with an interval  
Suitable for  
**all age groups**

**FREE School Show!**

**TICKETS**

- Online @ [Kapruka.com](http://Kapruka.com)
- **Java Lounge** 0112556633
- **Lionel Wendt** from 1<sup>st</sup> January (0112 695 794)

**Contact**  
+94 76 878 1095  
[info@stages.lk](mailto:info@stages.lk) | [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)  
[f StagesTheatreGroup](https://www.facebook.com/StagesTheatreGroup)



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**DEAR  
CHILDREN  
SINCERELY**

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA

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Ruwanthie de Chickera

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Social Media Posters



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# DEAR CHILDREN SINCERELY

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA

Directed by  
Ruwanthie de Chickera

5<sup>th</sup> | 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017  
At **Lionel Wendt Theatre**  
7.00pm

Tickets now available at the wendt.  
Contact - 076 878 1095 | [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)

"My eyes were too old. Too old to see what I saw.  
Too old to understand what I didn't see."  
Sri Lanka in the 2000s - The Story of Manik Farm

This play is part of the wider DCS project, a research and theatre project begun in 2015, encouraging senior citizens to look back critically and reflectively on their country's journey in order to try and understand what went wrong and why.

Don't miss it!

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# DEAR CHILDREN SINCERELY

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA

Stages Theatre Group cordially invite

to 'Dear Children Sincerely' Seven Decades of Sri Lanka

4<sup>th</sup> July 2017  
At **Lionel Wendt Theatre**  
7.00pm

Sponsor Logos

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# DEAR CHILDREN SINCERELY

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# DEAR CHILDREN SINCERELY

SEVEN DECADES OF SRI LANKA  
Directed by  
Ruwanthie de Chickera

Independence

Sinhala Only

Youth Insurrections

the Big Match

5<sup>th</sup> | 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017  
At **Lionel Wendt Theatre**  
7.00pm

Tickets now available at the wendt  
Contact - 076 878 1095 | [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)

Social Media Posters

*Gallery*













































## Credits

*Campaign Photographer* **Prauda Buwaneka**  
*Production Photographers* **Prauda Buwaneka, Dhananjaya Rathnayaka**

### Production Team

*Director* **Ruwanthie de Chickera**  
*Writer* **Ruwanthie de Chickera**  
*Producer* **Stages Theater Group**

*Choreographer* **Pradeep Gunarathna**  
*Designer* **Jayampathi Guruge**  
*Composer* **Ranil Goonewardene, Palitha Abeyrathne**

*Lights Technicians/Operators* **Jayampathi Guruge**  
*Sounds Operator* **Pramila Samarakoon, Stefan Tirimanne**  
*Subtitles/Multimedia Operator* **Dharini Gnanapragasam**

*Backstage Crew* **Himashi Withanage, Sisila Dilshan, Kelum Gamlath  
Dulanja Dilshan**

*Stage Manager* **Akalanka Prabhashwara**

*Set Construction* **Chathura Dasanayaka**

*Graphic Design* **Venura Navod**

*Media Coordinator – Head* **Gehan de Chikera**  
*Social Media Coordinator* **Ransaka Uththunga**  
*Print Media Coordinator* **Akalanka Prabhashwara, Jayampathi Guruge**  
*Electronic Media Coordinator* **Malshani Delgahapitiya**  
*Website* **Ransaka Uththunga**

*Souvenir – Head* **Ruwanthie de Chikera**  
*Souvenir – Write ups* **Ruwanthie de Chikera, Pemanthi Fernando**  
*Souvenir – Translation* **Nipuni Sharada Pathirage, Pemanthi Fernando  
Dharini Gnanapragasam**  
*Souvenir – Layout* **Venura Navod**

*Assistant Producer* **Jayampathi Guruge**  
*Production Assistants* **Pemanthi Fernando, Nipuni Sharada Pathirage  
Piumi Wijesundara**  
*Production Manager* **Jayampathi Guruge**

### Cast

**Palitha Abeyrathne**  
**Prabhath Chinthaka**  
**Tehani Chitty**  
**Sisila Dilshan**  
**Nikita Fernando**  
**Kelum Gamlath**  
**Dharini Gnanapragasam**  
**Pradeep Gunarathna**  
**Kithmini Hemachandra**  
**Saluja Peiris**  
**Akalanka Prabhashwara**  
**Duminda Sandaruwan**  
**Sanjeewa Upendra**  
**Himashi Withanage**

### Guest Performance

**Tracy Holsinger**  
**Selvi Sachithanandam**

Re-Production Cast (2017)

**Ranmali Mirchandi**  
**Biyanka Amrasinghe**  
**Pathum Dharmarathna**  
**Dulanja Dilshan**  
**Madhawa Perera**  
**Nipuni Sharada Pathirage**

Re-Production Cast (2019)

**Chamanee Darshika**  
**Pemanthi Fernando**  
**Kanchana Malshani**  
**Dinara Punchihewa**  
**Piumi Wijesundara**



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*This production design document 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).*

*The production design documents, were compiled to give a wholistic insight into the design aspects and elements of these productions. Along with these production design documents, sixteen resource packs which provide insight into the creative processes behind Stages theatre productions have also been created in Sinhala, Tamil and English. In addition to this, supporting video material has been created as part of this initiative. All material produced through this research project can be found at **[www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)***

*This project was supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Sri Lanka.*

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*Layout and Graphic Designer: Sanjaya Ekneligoda*

*Writers: Ruwanthie de Chickera, Piumi Wijesundara*

*Design Editors: Jayampthi Guruge, Rajitha Pavithra Madhubhasha*