

CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN

Artist Commissioning

Stages Theatre Group
Supported by KNH Sri Lanka



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INTRODUCTION

CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN is a commissioning programme, initiated in 2021, that supports artists to work with children, helping them deal with the challenges of the pandemic.

This project, curated by Stages Theatre Group and supported by Kindernothilfe (KNH), will commission artists in Sri Lanka to respond creatively to the theme of ‘Children in Lockdown’ by either producing artworks such as plays, books, visual art, scripts, films, music, research etc...; or conducting workshops for children or institutions that support children (schools, child rights organizations etc.).

COMMISSIONING PROCESS

Stages Theatre Group put out an open call to artists in Sri Lanka to contribute to this project in mid-February. Applications were open for artists (both adult and child artists) to propose projects (in any language – Sinhala/ Tamil/ English) that relate to the challenges and experiences of children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Open Call received an immense response, and a total of 80 applications from artists around the country were received in a range of art forms such as visual art, dance, theatre, research, animation, creative writing, workshops, magic and puppetry. 36 artists (including 9 child artists) were shortlisted by the curators – Ruwanthie de Chickera and Malith Hegoda – based on the originality of their idea; relevance of the theme; artistic vision; outreach of artwork; and the artists’ experience.

The following document will introduce you to the 36 shortlisted artists (20 of whom will be commissioned), and their proposed art projects for the programme.

‘CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN’ FESTIVAL

The Children in Lockdown Artist Commissioning hopes to showcase the commissioned artists and their artworks in a festival which will be open to public, in December 2021.

COMMISSIONED ARTISTS

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COMMISSIONED ARTISTS' PROFILES

TASMIN ANTHONISZ

Theatre Artist

Dramatist - (Female) with teenage performers

Immersive Theatre production – Colombo

Language – English

Involvement of children – children as performers

CHATROOM 2021

Performed Play

This project builds on an adaptation of Enda Walsh's 2005 play 'Chatroom', produced through Studiolumen in 2017. The play explores the effect of cyberbullying on teenagers with social anxiety and depression, and offers clarity and hope for those who may find themselves faced with these issues. The 2021 version, however, will be rethought with a group of teenagers to address the issues faced by young children on the internet today, in the midst of the pandemic.

"...For many children and teens, social distancing during the pandemic means the only contact they have with their peers is virtual. While virtual platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat allow kids to stay connected with the outside world, they are also more vulnerable to cyberbullying, shaming, and exploitation. It takes a conscious effort to unplug...."

Tasmin Anthonisz

Click [here](#) to see more of Tasmin's work.

PATHUM DHARMARATHNA

Dancer

Dancer (Male)
Mlechayan – Colombo
Language – None

MLECHCHAYAN (BARBARIANS)

Research-based Solo Contemporary Dance Performance

This will be a research-based performance where the artist will use elements of the Indian martial art Kalariyapaattu in creating a solo contemporary dance performance on how domestic violence on the rise has been affecting parents, children and families during the pandemic.

“...I believe that contemporary dance and Kalariyapaattu are two mediums that will enable children to express themselves through movement when words fail them. This will also be something that they can learn to practise in their free time as they are physically inhibited during lockdown; it is bound to boost their confidence...”

“Parents’ behaviour in front of their children has undoubtedly affected during children during lockdown, as some of them are now fulltime witnesses to the kinds of aggressions or domestic violence that can occur in some households. This will leave a deep impact on children’s mental wellbeing. Through this project I hope to use contemporary dance and martial art forms as mediums of communication to listen and work with children and create a piece that will make larger community aware of the consequences of domestic violence.”

Pathum Dharmarathna

Click [here](#) to see more of Pathum’s work.

SULOCHANA DISSANAYAKE

Puppetry Artist

Puppetry Artist (Female)

Live performance and discussions – Colombo

Language - Sinhala/ English

MAHADENAMUTHTHA AND CORONA

One hour long puppet show

(followed by a 30 min long Q & A)

Interactive performance pertaining to the familial issues faced by families during Lockdown with intertwined messaging of positive parenting, self-compassion, kindness and mutual respect to promote gender equity and provide safe and nurturing spaces for children experiencing an unprecedented global pandemic. Will also look at it from a rights angle where we should be ideally respecting rights of children day-to-day and best practices to follow at home where everyone is accepted and respected as members of the household.

“...interactive performance pertaining to the familial issues faced by families during lockdown with intertwined messaging of positive parenting, self-compassion, kindness and mutual respect to promote gender equity and provide safe and nurturing spaces for children experiencing an unprecedented global pandemic. Will also look at it from a rights angle where we should be ideally respecting rights of children day-to-day and best practices to follow at home where everyone is accepted and respected as members of the household....”

Sulochana Dissanayake

Click [here](#) to see more of Sulochana’s work.

YASAS GUNARATNE

Magician

Magician (Male)

Workshops - Colombo/Kandy

Language - English and Sinhala

Involvement of children – 100 child participants for workshops

MAGIC FOR KIDS

5 training workshops, in Colombo/Kandy,
for 100 children in children's homes.

A series of magic training workshops of children confined to children's care homes, to help them build their confidence, communication skills and pique their curiosity and interest in the art of magic. In the 6 hour workshop that will be conducted at each Home, the children will each be given a magic toolkit and taught how to perform and present these tricks publicly.

"The project will help them to have a mental relief, develop skills such as confidence, presentation and creativity. Also, I believe it will give them a true sense of Magic to build and a liking towards being a hobbyist/professional Magician. It will help children discover the art of magic in this time of pandemic agony"

Yasas Gunaratne

Click [here](#) to see more work by Yasas.

MALEEN JAYASURIYA

Amateur Filmmaker/ Academic Researcher with

NISHAN CASSEEM

Social Media Marketer

CHRISJIT XAVIER

Medical professional/ researcher

PIUMI WIJESUNDARA

Theatre Artist

Filmmaker (Male) and collaborating artists (M/F),
with 6-10 child artists as collaborators/ performers
Workshops, research and short form PSA Videos – Islandwide
Language - English/ Sinhala/ Tamil
Involvement of children – children as collaborators/performers

#RECONNECTUS

12 Digital wellbeing PSAs for kids by kids

This involves the development and dissemination of public service announcement (PSA) videos in all three languages (E/S/T) with kids as researchers and performers, covering the following four key areas related to digital wellbeing: social media addiction, misinformation, privacy and bullying. The PSA's will be researched and developed by children for children.

"We believe that raising awareness about the issues articulated above is the first step in inspiring the next generation to reconnect with each other more holistically while also re-engaging with the ever-changing space of digital technology with a broader and more informed perspective."

Maleen Jayasuriya

Click [here](#) to see more of Maleen's work.

RASAIHAH LOGANATHAN

Dramatist

Dramatist (Male) in collaboration with 5 other dramatists

Theatre workshop and performed play – Bogawanthalwa

Language – Tamil

Involvement of children – children chosen for workshops and as performers

PILLAIHALEY ELUVEER (CHILDREN WILL AWAKEN)

Theatre workshop and performed play with 20 children aged 12-16

This will be a workshop series and performed play created by children of the Hill Country plantation population. The artist will help the children identify the issues that affect their community and create a play on this subject matter. This play will then be taken to other schools and performed to students there.

*“...The training process will include theatre exercises and games.
They will also be provided the opportunity to discuss the effects of COVID19
that they faced. Using the training that we provided and the discussion,
the children will produce a play for the general public and schools
on the effects of COVID19.....”*

Rasaiah Loganathan

INOKA PALLIYAGURU

Writer

Writer (Female)

Short Film – Islandwide

Language – Sinhala

Involvement of children – child actors

PETALS

12-minute short film

A short film that hopes to address the issue of child abuse, based on the writer's own lived experience of sexual abuse in her childhood. The story follows a little girl who is sexually abused and is entrapped in a love story with her adult abuser. The cast and the crew working on the production are all persons who have experienced child abuse in some form.

Inoka Palliyaguru, an amateur script writers will be accommodated in the Children in Lockdown project through the Mentoring programme, thereby being given the opportunity and the funds to work closely under the guidance of a professional screen writer who will serve as her mentor and guide and help her develop the film script of her film.

"I feel it's important to know the situation that the children are faced on a lockdown than actually judging it from a distance. Even though in my childhood, I was not in a lockdown situation, I was raised in a conformed family environment, which in reality felt more or less of a lockdown. The emotional trauma that a child in need, is beyond words that could be expressed. Therefore I believe it is important to express it through mediums such as cinema and theatre."

Inoka Palliyaguru

N MANIVANAN

Filmmaker

Filmmaker (Male)

Short film - Islandwide

Language – Tamil

Involvement of children – child actor

THOTTI MEENGAL (TANK FISH)

20 minute Short film

The story is about a 10 year old girl – Vidusha – who finds herself in the confines of her home, barred from talking to her neighbour friend; then barred from watching TV, subsequently barred from using the phone and constantly irritated at the thought of zoom schooling. She feels she is a prisoner in her own home, imprisoned by jail guards – her own parents.

*“...This story discusses the effects of lockdown on children.
This story also discusses the importance of parents and teachers
understanding student’s need to play and will encourage them to
create conditions to fulfil those needs....”*

N. Manivanan

SHAVINDRI ASHVINI RUTH PEIRIS

Child Artist

Poet/researcher (Female) – 17yrs

Research and Illustrated Poetry - Colombo

Language – English

Involvement of children – self and interviewed children

HEALING TEARS

Research and Illustrated Poetry

This is a research project inspired by the young artists' own concern regarding the mental breakdown she observed amongst her peers on account of lockdown. The young researcher will identify 9 mental health issues which she will interview families, children and educationists on. She will analyse the research and also write 9 poems on each of these areas of concern. The poems will be illustrated accordingly.

Shavindri Peries, an amateur poet and researcher will be accommodated in the Children in Lockdown project through the Mentoring programme, thereby being given the opportunity and the funds to work closely under the guidance of a professional psychologist/researcher who will serve as her mentor and guide and help her develop her creative research into mental health.

"...I hope that my project if I am selected, will be able to help others as well as myself to understand, break through the stigma surrounding mental health and develop mechanisms to combat mental health issues..."

Shavindri Peiris

URVI PERERA

Child Artist

Writer (Female) – 14 yrs.

Novel Publication - Colombo

Language – English

Involvement of children – self

CAT NAMED MOUSE

Novel publication

A story written by the writer during the pandemic, re-imagining herself as her pet cat (named Mouse). During lockdown the writer has had a lot of time to ponder on what life must be like for a cat, and one so ironically named. And so, this is the story that she has developed which she wishes to publish to reach out to parents and children around the country during this lockdown.

Urvi Perera, an amateur writer will be accommodated in the Children in Lockdown project through the Mentoring programme, thereby being given the opportunity and the funds to work closely under the guidance of a professional children's fiction writer/publisher who will serve as her mentor and guide and help her develop her book to a level it can be published.

“...As a 14 years old child of the modern world who is also facing this corona pandemic situation I have to say that most of us are stuck at home and most of us have our faces glued to computer/ laptop/tab/iPad and phone screens. But through my book I want to tell all of the other children in this to take your eyes off those screens and look around you. Look at the nature. Look at the animals. Open the doors to your imagination!”

Urvi Perera

UMESHI RAJEENDRA *Dance Artist*
HOPE RAJASINGHE *Dance Artist*
SHONAKA RANATUNGA *Dance Artist*
AYUMI FERNANDO *Dance Artist*
EVA PRIYANKA WEGENER *Dance Artist*

Artists (Female)

Workshops/ research/ performance/discussion

UDA households - Colombo

Language - Sinhala/English

Involvement of children – children chosen for workshops and as collaborators

REIMAGINING OTHERWISE

Performance and research article, based on research
with kids and parents in UDA housing schemes

‘Reimagining Otherwise’ performance art and research aim to bring to light the intellectual, social, and creative value that movement art can play in creating a vibrant educational and artistic environment for the children by the children. The artwork aims to create interest, provoke thought, and encourage the youth of the UDA Housing complexes to reimagine how they move in their immediate surroundings, while simultaneously researching the multiple ways one can approach movement within confined spaces as a meditative and play practice.

“...We believe this project will provide value to the children long after the project is completed since the skills and awareness gained can be used in the future whenever they need it. Our aim is to empower the children and equip them with skills that will help them broaden their minds and gain a new perspective – one that sees hope and possibility even in the most confining of times and space.....”

Umeshi Rajeendra

Click [here](#) to see more of Umeshi’s work.

PASAN RANAWEERA

Actor/ Voice Artist/ Comedian

Actor (Male)

One-man show performance – Colombo

Language – English/Sinhala

BAD TOUCH

One-man show performance

A one-man show, stand- up comedy which brings to light the artist's personal story of having been abused as a child and having kept it a secret for many years to come. This performance, targeted to parents, teachers and children alike, attempts to comprehend and understand the damage or lasting impact of not only being abused but also of keeping it secret throughout their lives. As far as facts and figures go, "children in the pandemic" have been subjected to unprecedented forms of abuse including cyber abuse. This performance attempts to address these issues progressively.

*"... let's face it... there's never gonna be a group of 6 year olds holding boards
with slogans n shouting "child abuse is real... please save us!!" etc etc...
So.... I'm hoping to share my story..."*

Pasan Ranaweera

Click [here](#) to see more of Pasan's work.

KING RATNAM

Filmmaker

Filmmaker (Male)

Short film - Island wide

Language - Tamil/English/Sinhala

Involvement of children – children as actors

UNTITLED

Short film

The film is based on the filmmaker's lived experience. The film explores a precarious situation of a divorcee father being denied access and communication to his sons owing to his inability to cover divorce settlements during lockdown. The story depicts how parents use children as pawns for emotional blackmail in broken marriages.

“Children are used as pawns by adults – especially in broken marriages. The lockdown has caused immense pressure on relationships between parents and children especially in broken families. Do parents behave like parents? I hope to deal with questions such as these in my film..

King Ratnam

Click [here](#) to see more of King's work.

IRFAN SHAHID

Theatre Artist

With ISABELLA and LUCKY

Child artists

Dramatist (Male) with his two young daughters (11 and 15yrs) as performers

Performance – Colombo

Language – English/Sinhala/Urdu

Involvement of children – Father/Daughters collaboration

GIRLS COMBAT LOCKDOWN

Live performance

Irfan and his family are in Sri Lanka as they have sought asylum having to leave their own country – Pakistan.

The performance is based on the lived experience of Irfan as a refugee and father of two young girls who have been pushed into further alienation due to lockdown. Through the script and performance created with his own two daughters, Irfan will be addressing the issues of the challenges faced by asylum seeker families and children during the pandemic.

“Being children it wasn’t easy for them to pause their activities which they loved and enjoyed a lot, they were confused, distressed, and unanswered. It was a disturbing time for both of them but after a time period they realized that they have to go through this difficult time with positivity and supportive behaviour towards each other, for it is only love and support that can hold everything together in bad times. I hope this project will play a vital role for the betterment of children’s mental and physical health”

Irfan Shahid

RAMITHU LITHUM SELLAHEWA

Child Artist

Writer (Male) – (13 years)

Published Book – short stories - Colombo

Language - English

Involvement of children - self

ISOLATED: TEENS AND THE LOCKDOWN

Published book – collection of short stories

The Fiction “Isolated: Teens and Lockdown” will be a collection of short stories written by a teenager, which revolve around fictional teenagers going through real-life situations during the COVID-19 Pandemic, which would deal with the struggles most teenagers face due to the challenges they face, while isolated and confined to the boundaries of their homes.

Ramithu Sellaheewa, an amateur writer will be accommodated in the Children in Lockdown project through the Mentoring programme, thereby being given the opportunity and the funds to work closely under the guidance of a professional children’s fiction writer who will serve as his mentor and guide and help him develop his short stories to publishing level.

“...This fiction would also take inspiration from segments of my life as well, and I believe I want to inspire aspiring teenagers, who can set their boundaries loose by looking through the eyes of others through a gateway known as a Book. I also hope to donate any grants received to charity to help change the world for the better to share my story...”

Ramithu Sellaheewa

LEETH SINGHAGE

Child Artist

Actor (Male) - 17yrs

Artistic research and public performance talk – Island wide

Language – English/Sinhala

Involvement of children – 50 children interviewed/self

LOCKED DOWN

Research/ interviews of up to 50 children and subsequent performance talk

Leeth is an A/L student who hopes to conduct interviews with approximately 50 children of various ages, genders, and geographic backgrounds in Sri Lanka. The interviews will document children's ideas, feelings, and stories about their experiences in the pandemic. After assimilating the information shared by the children, Leeth will prepare and deliver performance talk about children's views on Lockdown.

Leeth Singhage, a budding young actor will be accommodated in the Children in Lockdown project through the Mentoring programme, thereby being given the opportunity and the funds to work under the guidance of a professional writer/director who will serve as his mentor and guide and help him develop the material of his interviews into a script and then a performance.

“Locked-Down” will be a research-based talk that explores the various perceptions school going Sri Lankan children had (or have) about lockdown. The idea behind this research is to really try and understand children's own opinions about the pandemic. Sometimes their opinions will be quite different to what society and adults will assume.”

Leeth Singhage

Click [here](#) to see more of Leeth's work.

ENCELLETTA SOLOMON

Child Artist

Visual artist - (Female) (18 years)

Visual Art and sculpture - Colombo

Language – None

Involvement of children - self

TRAPPED

Three dimensional sculpture and painting (2x2m),
created out of electronic waste and face masks.

A three dimensional sculpture and painting will be created by the artist, out of electronic waste and face masks that will essentially consist of a child's face being carried by her own hands, both made out of e-waste, and red strings made out of face masks binding her to the borders of the box she's placed in. The idea is to address the effect of mass digitization, isolation and the resultant anxiety on children during the pandemic. This would approximately be a 2x2 m sculpture contained inside 1/4 of a wooden box that is only closed on one side. This will be created in an eco-friendly manner with only waste material.

Encelletta Solomon, a budding visual artist will be accommodated in the Children in Lockdown project through the Mentoring programme, thereby being given the opportunity and the funds to work closely under the guidance of a professional visual artist who will serve as her mentor and guide and help her develop her art work.

“Children struggle to overcome rising anxiety and depression levels as a result of the family's economic downturn, stress, high mortality rates, uncertainty and the disma tling of long-distance relationships, among other factors. All of these factors can be individually symbolized,”

Encelletta Solomon

Click [here](#) to see more of Encelletta's work.

NATALIE SOYSA

Photographer

LUCAS

child artist - 9 yrs

Photographer (Female) and son (9 yrs.) collaboration
Digital Book – Island wide and Large Prints - Colombo
Language – English
Involvement of children - Mother/Son Collaboration

LUCAS IN LOCKDOWN

An illustrated book of writings and photographs plus enlarged canvas prints for exhibition.

2020 was a tough year for 9 year old Lucas. Not only was he stuck all alone at home with his mom Natalie, but they both had to deal with her discovery and treatment of breast cancer. In 'Lucas in Lockdown', Lucas will reflect, draw and share with us stories of his lockdown experience with his single mom Natalie. Natalie will be illustrating, photographing and helping Lucas tell his story.

"Lucas missed his school friends, he missed playing outside and in his own words, "I missed having fun". I also missed the few precious hours I had to myself when he was at school and not having time to myself made me even worse company. Lucas played up. I played up. And unknown to me, a tumour had begun to grow in my right breast that would lead the two of us down yet another crisis path that year. 2020 wasn't our year. Lucas and I want to be honest and true to how difficult life was and how strained our relationship became"

Natalie Soysa

Click [here](#) to see more work by Natalie.

STAGES JUNIOR ENSEMBLE

*ensemble of child artists 9-15 yrs.
with Artists from Stages Theatre Group,*

Ensemble (Children)

Film – Island wide

Language – English/Sinhala/Tamil (to be confirmed)

Involvement of children – created by 18 child artists

ONLINE SCHOOL

A 40-60 minute film, written, directed, and devised by
a group of 18 child artists of the Stages Junior Ensemble.

The Stages Junior Ensemble, a children-led ensemble theatre group with child artists aged between 9-15 years – functions under the guidance of the artists of Stages Theatre Group. The Stages Junior Ensemble will develop a 40 - 60 minute ensemble performance on the theme 'Online Schooling'. Online Schooling is a humorous look at the experiences of Sri Lankan children during lockdown, as they and their teachers and families struggled to adapt to the challenges of online schooling. Online schooling has been created by children during the lockdown through devised theatre workshops over zoom and will be rehearsed and performed by an ensemble of up to 18 children. Online Schooling will be a scripted, performed, shot and edited film ready for release.

*"As the pandemic drags on, it's clear that not all kids are all right.
Social distancing and the pressure of 'keeping up' through 'zoom school'
is getting to them. This comedic, devised ensemble film production
will showcase to adults, parents and educators the first-hand
experience of children of 'online schooling.'"*

Stages Junior Ensemble

Click [here](#) to see more about the Stages Junior Ensemble.

KASUN THIWANKA

Theatre practitioner

Dramatist (Male)

Theatre workshops – Galle

Language – Sinhala

Involvement of children – children chosen for workshops

SPACE FOR THE OPPRESSED

Workshops and Performed play

Field research in selected villages and communities that are marginalised and face social oppression, where drama, drama therapy and story-telling will be used as tools to reach out to families and children to empower them to deal better with the new problems brought on by the pandemic situation.

“Enriching man intellectually is a social responsibility. When a section of society is oppressed, they should be socially, politically and economically developed through making them aware of social realities to reconnect them to society...”

Kasun Thiwanka

Click [here](#) to see more of Kasun’s work.

VELUSAAMI WEERASINGHAM

Gender Advocate

SULOCHANA DISSANAYAKE

Puppetry artist

Gender Advocate (Male) collaborating with Dramatist - Female
Workshops - Jaffna/ Kandy/ Colombo
Language - Sinhala/ English/ Tamil

MALE GENDER ROLES

3-4 workshops with men (fathers) in 3 districts

Workshops targeting young males and fathers who have shared these roles and have lived experiences which can be shaped for the better going forward. This would be done by reorienting the monochanging gender roles and divisions of labour at household level which is more equitable and bucks the patriarchal social and cultural norms dominating individual behaviour.

“...This program is expected to contribute to longer term catalytic attitudinal change of youth and young men in countering social norms which are adverse to neutral gender roles.”

Velusaami Weerasingham



SHORTLISTED ARTISTS' PROFILES

PRASAD ALUTHWATHTHA

Filmmaker

JAYAMPATHI GURUGE

Dramatist

Filmmaker (Male) and Dramatist (Male)

Film - Colombo

Language - Sinhala

MUTE

Film

This film follows the story of a 6 year old speech and hearing impaired child from an impoverished family. The story looks at a family in a dire situation as well as the impact of the pandemic on a hearing and speech impaired child whose main access to communicating with the outside world (lip-reading) is also now impaired owing to mandatory mask-wearing.

“...This film attempts to give voice to a sect of children who are further marginalised in society during the pandemic; children who are impoverished economically as well as children with disabilities. This time is difficult for children... even more so for this sect of children....”

Prasad Aluthwattha

Click [here](#) to see more of Prasad's work.

SAHLAH ANEES

Child Artist

DEWANGA MUNCHANAYAKE

Child Artist

Actor (Female) 19 years and Dancer (Female) 19 years

Collaborative movement piece - Colombo

Language – None

Involvement of children - selves

UNTITLED

Recorded movement piece

A performance piece about friendship and its importance during lockdown. The two collaborators are best friends and have been so for years in school. During lockdown, they were both at a transitional phase: A-Levels, strained relationships, and the stress of having to start thinking about more adult things! This is a collaborative performance where the two performers reflect the trials and errors of their friendship and how they both managed to keep each other afloat.

“...We believe that other teenagers have suffered with their friendship during lockdown too. While this performance piece is for both of us to reconnect and heal from our experience, it is also to help teenagers understand how to overcome problematic situations and continue to maintain a friendship for lifetime....”

Sahlah Anees

LANKA BANDARANAYAKE

Filmmaker

Filmmaker (Female)

Short film – Islandwide

Language – Sinhala

Involvement of children – children as actors

HIDE-AND-SEEK

Short film

A girl around 10 years who lives in an apartment is playing the game, Hide and Seek with a friend from next house of the parallel floor. It is not the same Hide and Seek which everyone plays. The girl and her friend have found a novel version of Hide and Seek during the pandemic.

“...Major challenge the children have been facing is they are not allowed to meet their friends or they are not allowed to play with their friend during the pandemic. This project will tell the story of children who are creative enough to overcome the challenge.....”

Lanka Bandaranayake

THE BUTTERFLY PEACE GARDEN

Collective of artists

Artist Group

Workshops/ Art packages and Street Drama performance – Batticaloa

Language - English/Tamil

Involvement of children – chosen for workshops

CREATING A HEALTHY MIND-SET COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS

Workshops for 500 parents/ students/ teachers and art training for 100 students

This project involves three phases: 1) Conducting workshops for kids for creative outputs including street plays. This is to raise awareness and help them to independently function and handle similar situations in the future. Workshops will also be conducted for 500 parents, teachers and students under 10 modules to raise awareness, learn to handle feelings and to learn to bring about their creativity by using their skills and talents. This will be held in Batticaloa.; 2) Art Package - Providing and training 8 art packs containing 8 creative learning and art activity related equipment for 100 children and students in Koralaipatru, Koralaipatru West area (within Calcutta Education Zone) of Batticaloa District; and 3) Street Drama Training and Village Awareness of the Street Arena – This is to enhance the capacities for creativity among parents and teachers in the community.

“Children living in a state of paralysis during the Covid 19 period have undergone massive psychological and physical changes in them and are making changes in their normal way of life and habits, questioning their independent lives.”

Butterfly Peace Gardens

Click [here](#) to see more of Butterfly Garden’s work.

SH'LOM JEDAI FERNANDO

Child Artist

Actor (Male) – 13yrs

Film and photography - Islandwide

Language – English

Involvement of children - self

WINDOWS INTO LOCKDOWN

1 video combining film and photographs spelling “Lockdown”

This project will elaborate on the ways in which Lockdown has affected our lives in the most imperceptible ways. A mix of film and photography, the actor will be captured engaged in regular home activities, through a window. The artwork will merge photography and short videos to create a visual art piece.

“...My project will focus on how much lockdown has affected our lives even in the ways we don't realize. For example, the time taken to open the fridge and drink a box of juice will not be the same during my physical school schedule as it was during lockdown. This was my perspective towards lockdown, and I feel this project will relate to many other kids as well as adults...”

Sh'lom Fernando

SHYAMALA PINTO JAYAWARDENE

Visual Artist

Visual Artist (Female)

Fine art installation - Colombo

Language – English

Involvement of children – children as artist/collaborators

STRUGGLING TO BE CONNECTED

Fine art installation created with 15 teenagers in art school

A fine art installation to be created using the photographs and artwork created by teenagers in art school during the lockdown attempting to capture the emotions they went through during this period.

“...Children are losing the ability to adjust to others and have inclusive behaviour. Children have very low concentration power and very short temperaments. There is an independence bordering on stubborn nature developing due to the use of technology such awareness must be brought out in public area...”

Shyamala Jayawardene

Click [here](#) to see work by Shyamala Art School.

BAVANEEDHA LOGANATHAN

Graphic Novelist

Filmmaker and writer (Female)

Cartoon Series published in local news papers – Kilinochchi (Islandwide)

Language – Tamil

Involvement of children – Based on a child's experience

DOORS - COMICS FOR BOYS

Graphic novel in cartoon format – serialised in local newspaper.

A comic strip published in local news papers - that follows the story of two children who enter a magical world through a mysterious door. The graphic novel is written for young children, especially young pubescent boys, now trapped and paralysed indoors during the pandemic season. It intends to help them cope with not only their physical, but psychological inhibitions during this uncertain time.

The story stems from the writer's own lived experience of domestic violence and her observations of her young brother's response to the pandemic, as well as her keen interest to use the comic medium to reach out to educate and relieve young children restricted to the boundaries of their homes.

"The protagonist of my story is a young boy, who, like many young boys during this time, is paralysed by his experience of being locked indoors. Through this story, where I follow two young children as they journey to a fantastical land, I attempt to relate how a child's lonely world can be compensated through their imagination and how they can reclaim their disintegrating world. Once we enable them to open up the doors in their minds, the impacts of the physical doors restricting their physical movement can be duly addressed."

Bhavaneeda Loganathan

Click [here](#) to see more work by Bhavaneeda.

SHAANEA MENDIS

Painter

Visual Artist (Female) and two daughters as collaborators (2 and 5yrs)

Visual Art/ Painting - Colombo

Language – None

Involvement of children – Mother/daughters collaboration

C – IS FOR COVID

Large 6x6 canvas painting or a series of smaller works

This work of art will be a collaborative mother-daughter effort to look back on lockdown days as a parent to two very young children going through many milestones during the pandemic. The artist hopes to meld together the paintings produced by her children during lockdown, to-date, in a layered canvas painting that adds her visual artwork as well to reflect their journey during the pandemic together.

“...The work my 4 year old produced for her online school assignments and the many drawings and paintings her sister and she painted during these times are a testament to the hard-work and resilience of these children through these times. In the first week of lockdown itself, my 1.5 year old was daubing paint calling it a virus , my 4 year old was drawing and painting hospitals , ambulances and ‘corona virus’ , on her own accord. I would like to use this work done in lockdown, as well as encourage new work in the coming months with my kids, as research and collaborative tools into making a large scale painting...”

Shaanea Mendis

Click [here](#) to see more of Shaanea’s work.

RASHMI SAMARAKOON

Child Artist

Painter (Female) 8 years
Paintings – Colombo
Language – None
Involvement of children - self

MYSELF DURING COVID

Book of Paintings

Paintings drawn during lockdown along with the artist's cousin sister. The two young artists had a great time creating these paintings together during lockdown and would like to share them with other children.

".... I was with my cousin sister and I had the best time. I am willing to share about the feelings I went through. I believe my art works will create an impact on the friends who are watching my booklet with paintings...."

Rashmi Samarakoon

ANUSHKA SENANAYAKE

Theatre Director

NATASHA SENANAYAKE

Music Composer

Dramatist (Female) and Composer (Female) collaboration
Workshops, Immersive Theatre and Sound Installation – Colombo
Language – English
Involvement of children – child collaborators and performers

FROM MY WINDOW

An immersive theatre and sound installation
production workshopped with a select group of 10-12 children (9-18years).

A series of theatre, writing and sound design workshops with children where they will discuss their experiences of lockdown and come up with a series of monologues which will then be melded together as an immersive theatre and sound design installation where audiences will get to experience what children went through during the time, in their own voices.

“We hope to guide the young artists to paint an honest picture of their experience. We hope that through this process, we will be able to equip the young artists involved with some tools and exercises they can use to inform their own creative process while exposing them to how we create work. For an audience, it will be a unique experience as it will provide an insight to the questions, challenges and triumphs faced by children during this unprecedented time.”

Anushka Senanayake

Click [here](#) to see more work by Anushka.

SUMATHY SIVAMOHAN

Theatre Practitioner/ Academic

Dramatist - (Female) with child artists as performers

Workshops and Short film - Jaffna

Language – Sign/Tamil

Involvement of children –

children chosen for workshop and as performers/creators of film

SONGS AND SIGNS

Workshop led, 20 – 40 min short film developed
with 10 hearing-impaired students (12-19yrs)

The product is a workshop led creative process, culminating in a film of 20-40 minutes collaboratively formulated and created with hearing impaired children/students of Nuffield School, Jaffna. The product is a) cultural expression of children b) makes a marginal community of children enter the public space of artistic creation c); introduces SIGN language as a visual medium that challenges mainstream conceptions of language, speech and visual grammar.

“...The hearing impaired children have many stories to tell, to each other and to mainstream society. The pandemic created enormous problems with mobility, and communication at the very basic levels, like touch. Yet children are quick to learn and respond to new situations creatively.....”

Sumathy Sivamohan

Click [here](#) to see more of Sumathy's work.

IRUSHI TENNAKOON

Stop-motion artist and animator

AMANDHI CALDERA

Child-psychologist

Animator (Female) collaborating with child psychologist.

Workshops - Colombo

Language - English/ Sinhala/Sign

Involvement of children – children chosen for workshops and creation of films

INDOOR HEROES

Stop-motion animation workshops for
hearing impaired children (10-15years) and Stop-film

A series of stop-motion animation workshops with learning impaired children to encourage them to share their experiences of lockdown, to partake in activities that will help them to share and understand their emotions and feelings during isolation, and to explore how their relationships with family and friends have changed in the last year. The project uses both visual and performing arts to express these stories and emotions.

“Through our workshop we hope to show that a mobile phone and simple materials lying about the house can be powerful tools to express ideas and feelings. As a result, we hope to give children the self-assurance that the possibilities for entertainment and learning are endless despite being restricted by lockdown and their own physical challenges.”

Irushi Tennakoon

Click [here](#) to see more of Irushi's work.

THUJIBA VIJAYABALAN

Painter

Painter (Female)

Paintings - Colombo

Language - None

COVID – 19 CHILDREN’S CHALLENGES

Paintings and Exhibition

Drawings centred around the various effects of lockdown on children and society. These paintings are aimed at helping to bring attention to the feelings of the children affected. The paintings will be exhibited for the public to view and to help bring attention to the problem.

“...A child’s world is free and full of imagination. But lockdown has made this statement a questionable statement....”

Thujiba Vijayabalan

CHALANA WIJESURIYA

Psychologist/ Theatre Artist

Dramatist (Male) collaborating with Dancer/dramatist (Female)
Drama Therapy Workshops and Performance – Colombo/Galle/Jaffna
Language - English/ Sinhala/ Tamil
Involvement of children – children chosen for workshops and as performers

TABLE-TOP STORY-TELLING

Therapeutic Table-Top Storytelling workshops and created performance.

A series of therapeutic Table-Top Storytelling workshops for children under 18yrs. The workshops and training will culminated in filmed performances.

Through Table-Top story telling, the children will be able to project important aspects of their lives into inanimate objects that they pick and choose from their own household. Using these household objects, the children will be trained in story telling and performance skills. Each of them will create their own Table Top performance. The lead artist, himself a psychologist, will also be using techniques of Drama Therapy to help children navigate sensitive issues that they may encounter in this creative process.

“Simply being able to project their problems creatively onto other objects that are characters, act as a therapeutic process that would assist the children in dealing with the challenges that would have come about through the pandemic.”

Chalana Wijesuriya

Click [here](#) to see more of Chalana’s work.

COMMISSIONING PROGRAM TEAM

Lead Artist Curators

Ruwanthie De Chickera *Theatre director/ playwright*

Ruwanthie is artistic director and founder member of Stages Theatre Group, an ensemble theatre company set up in 2000 to produce socially and politically conscious original Sri Lankan Theatre. Ruwanthie is an Eisenhower Fellow. Her award-winning film “Machan” (which she scripted) has been screened in over 50 countries. Within Sri Lanka, Ruwanthie works with students, teachers and schools to help strengthen and introduce creative processes into formal and informal learning. She has a strong belief in the practice, politics and philosophy of ‘devising’ – a theatre approach of collective creativity and leadership that challenges existing structures of authorship, power-sharing and change.

Malith Hegoda *Filmmaker*

Born in 1984, Malith Hegoda, started as a photographer and a publicist for theatre and film. After completing his associate’s degree in 2007 he moved to London where he worked in photography for two years. On his return, he worked with various theatre directors and groups and studied the application of various acting and staging techniques. *Dekala Purudu Kenek* (The Strange Familiar) is his directorial debut. In his latest collaboration with long-term friend and screenwriter Boopathy Nalin, Malith is currently completing a documentary on the vanishing of Tamil cinema in Sri Lanka as a result of the 30-year ethnic war.

Lead Artist – Communications and Festival Curation

Piumi Wijesundara *Theatre director/ playwright/ actor*

Piumi is a graduate of the University of Colombo, and obtained her Masters’ in Theatre Directing at the University of Essex, UK. Piumi has a keen interest in devised theatre, particularly children’s theatre, and has directed award winning original, devised plays with the cast of Methodist College in 2017 (TTYL - co-director), 2018 (Train to Chaos) and 2019 (Ovaryacting!). She has acted in and produced plays directed by Ruwanthie De Chickera at International Theatre Festivals in both UK, and Rwanda. Piumi works as a full-time artist at Stages Theatre Group, Sri Lanka.

Project Manager

Shazna Zuhyle

Shazna is a Research Fellow at LIRNEasia, an ICT policy think tank and has over 13 years experience in the IT / ICT sector and periodically consults for the International Telecommunication Union, a specialized agency of the United Nations. She has recently taken on managing an artist commissioning project for Stages and works closely with the core team of artists at Stages. She holds a MSc in Telecom-

munication from University College London.

