

OVARACTING!

a devised play for children



written by
PIUMI WIJESUNDARA

(devised with the cast)

stages
theatre
group

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First public performance 2019

A Methodist College Colombo presentation

In collaboration with Stages Theatre Group

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First performed in,
Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 2019
Lionel Wendt Theatre.

Piumi Wijesundara

Piumi is a playwright, actor and theatre director.

She is an English Honours graduate of the University of Colombo and obtained her Masters' in Theatre Directing at East 15 Acting School, University of Essex, UK. Piumi has directed award winning plays with the cast of Methodist College in 2017 (*TTYL*) and 2018 (*Train to Chaos*) as well. She has acted in plays directed by Ruwanthie de Chickera at International Theatre Festivals in both the UK, and Rwanda.

Piumi works as an artist at Stages Theatre Group, Sri Lanka.

The Birth of *Ovaryacting!*

Ovaryacting! is a devised ensemble performance that addresses the myths and taboos surrounding female menstruation. It was first performed by a cast of school students from Methodist College Colombo.

The production was devised with the cast of Methodist College Colombo to compete at DRAMACOMP 2019, the annual interschool drama competition organized by Royal College Colombo staged at the Lionel Wendt.

In preparation for the play, the girls brainstormed about the many things that affected them, that they wanted to say and one of the issues that was on everyone's list was the 'period stigma'.

The Workshops

Workshops began in late February. The first few days were dedicated to honing the actors' acting skills and creating a sense of ensemble. The girls talked about their own personal experiences due to period stigma, and embarked on further research and interviews to find more stories to relate on the issue.

Ovaryacting! was a culmination of all the young girls' stories of coming to terms with living with their periods in a society that was neither empathetic nor understanding enough.

The Devising Process

What became most interesting for the cast to explore following discussions, was a young girl's struggle with understanding her own body upon the occurrence of her first period, and the bizarre ways in which family, friends, and wider society responded to the event.

The girls wanted to bust taboos surrounding female menstruation, while also educating the audiences on the biological and psychological impacts periods have on young girls such as themselves.

With this in mind, the plot gave life to the 'period' as a character and followed the tale of a young girl who first meets her period. By devising moments from their own experiences the cast explores the reactions of family, friends, educational institutions, and wider society to this conundrum.

The period party had started, and it was here to stay...

Ovaryacting!

Reviews of *Ovaryacting!*

“Such a warm, witty, and wonderful way of dealing with a sensitive issue that spoke to students and parents alike.”

Tracy Holsinger, Mind Adventures Theatre Co.

“If a play could be both thought provoking and entertaining, ‘Ovaryacting!’ was the best example of this. One moment the audience is roaring with laughter. The next moment your conscience speaks to you and reminds you that the laughter is at your own expense. They tackled the taboos of female menstruation in our society.”

Priyanwada Perera, Ceylon Today

“An empowering and educational depiction about menstruation...”

ARTRA Magazine

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website www.stages.lk

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Characters *in order of appearance*

NARRATOR

SASHA Our protagonist, the brave girl who sets out to discover what is happening to her

PERIOD Visits once a month for most of a girl's life.

MALLI Sasha's little brother, concerned about his sister, curious about the commotion

AMMA Sasha's mother – Sasha's strength, except when she panics and forgets her role

THATHA Sasha's father – loves his little girl, but allows his wife to lead in 'girls' issues'

NANGI Sasha's younger sister, watches everything with keen interest

ACHCHI Sasha's grandmother – knows what's best for everyone. It was the way things have always been done, of course.

MAID Grandmother's faithful support. Terrified that something will happen to these young girls in the city.

AUNTIES Their way of showing love is to criticize, interfere, control, watch and then complain.

TEACHER A regular teacher who signed up to teach her subject, not deal with her student's personal crises.

BOY/GIRL Classmates of Sasha

AMANI Classmate of Sasha, eager to help, has lots of borrowed knowledge

AKKAS Members of the girl gang, they hold the keys to all female knowledge

THE 'AKKA' 'All-knowing' teenage mafia leader, admired and feared from afar.

MUDALALI The friendly corner store-keeper. Good at his job, knows what each customer needs, even if they don't know it.

HELPER Faithful help to the Mudalali.

CUSTOMER Average passerby.

ADVERT GIRLS Everything the world thinks a girl ever wants to be.

Scene Breakdown

Scene 1	New Friend
Transition 1	Escape from Room to School
Scene 2	Health Lesson
Transition 2	School to Big Girl's Den
Scene 3	The 'Akka'
Transition 3	Walk for Products
Scene 4	Procuring Products
Transition 4	Back to Square One
Scene 5	The 'Talk'

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Prologue

Narrator center stage with a book in hand. Turns first page.

Narrator: This is the tale of a girl.... *(Pause. Looks up)* ... scratch that...

This is the tale of EVERY girl when that special “friend” enters their life. *Ovaryacting!* is the tale of a young girl, in search of answers about her curious predicament. Who has the answers? What is the answer? Let’s see if she finds out...

Narrator walks off stage. Rest of the narration is done offstage.

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Scene 1

New Friend

Narrator: **Once upon a time there lived a girl named Sasha.** (*Ensemble of girls enter one by one doing various activities corresponding to Narrator*) **She used to love doing things that every little girl loved to do: read books dress up..... play with dolls kick ass at martial arts.... ride bicycles code on her computer ... basically...everything little girls her age loved to do.**

But little did she know... that one day... she would go through tremendous change.

Period enters and inspects every girl onstage for a moment or two.

Period spots Sasha center-stage, and taps her on shoulder.

Period: Hi! (*waves arm and her red ribbon in the air*)

All girls in ensemble clutch stomachs and get period pains... start moving off stage. Sasha left with Period who starts prancing around waving her red ribbon in air. Sasha groans in pain.

Malli: (*running on stage*) Akki? Err.. akki ...? Are you... ok?

Sasha: I'm fine (*Period attacks again, and her tone changes to happy*) I'm fineee...

Malli: (*puzzled*) Akki... are you... sure?

Period attacks again and this time, Sasha is irritated and angry.

This Period attack continues for a while until both Sasha and Malli notice something on the ground: the Period's red ribbon...blood!

Sasha & Malli: AMMAAAAAAAAAA.....

Enter Amma and Nangi running, panicked.

Amma: Akki what's wrong? What's wrong? Is everything ok?

Both Malli and Sasha are talking over each other

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Sasha: Amma my stomach is killing me-

Malli: she was dancing like the devil -

Sasha: and then it went to my legs -

Malli: and then she was screaming -

Sasha: and I have so many cramps -

Malli: and now there's ... there's..... (*Points at the Period's red ribbon*) AND I THINK SHE'S DYING...!!

Amma realizes what has happened. She tries to get a word in but everyone else is panicking

Amma: 'It'' happened!

Malli: (*puzzled*) it happened?

Sis: it happened...?

Enter Thatha.

Thatha: What happened??

He notices the havoc and panics.

Thatha: Janaki....Janaki...Now Janaki I keep telling you to send this child to church!

Amma: Sarath what... what are you saying?

Thatha: Can't you see what's happening to her?

Amma: What?

Thatha: (*inspecting Sasha*) THE DEVIL HAS GOT HER! The devil... the devil!

Amma: Sarath! What are you saying? This is our daughter you're talking about!

Thatha: Yes, yes... daughter only Janaki... now, you wait...

Thatha starts chanting The Lord's Prayer.

Nangi: (*panicked*) oh no mama is ...is Akki dying?

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Nangi and Malli panic and start praying for their sister

While all this is going on Period is still with Sasha

Amma: (tries to calm everybody down) will everybody please SHUT UP!

Thatha is still fanning Sasha, muttering the Lord's Prayer under his breath.

Thatha: Interrupting my prayer also...

Amma: (turning on Sasha's two younger siblings) what are both of you still doing here?
Get up and go to your room!

Malli: අක්කි මැරෙයිද? (Is Akki dying?)

Amma: JUST GO!

Exit Malli and Nangi.

Amma turns to face her husband.

Amma: Sarath... Sarath... 'it' has happened!

Thatha keeps interrupting

Thatha: What has happened Janaki? Be clear. Will you?

Amma: You know... our little girly...

Thatha: Which girl Janaki? There, one left... One still here... we have two girls!

Amma: You know what... (Fed up) Sarath... I need some time to think.

Thatha: (taken aback) ahhh... so you're asking me to leave, no? Ahh... so, you're saying you can handle this (pointing towards a writhing Sasha) 'situation' alone? Fine.
කරගන්න! කරගන්න! (Do it yourself!)

Amma: No, Sarath... wait...

Thatha: නෑ නෑ නෑ ඔයාම ...කරගන්න. (No... no... no you do it by yourself)

Thatha stomps off stage.

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Amma sighs. Turns to Sasha

Amma: Erm... now Sasha now this is normal ok ... you go freshen up...

Sasha: But Amma! What's happening to me..?

Amma: Erm... you go freshen up love, I'll tell you. I'll come and explain, alright?

Sasha and Period exit.

Enter Grandmother, slowly waddling on to stage with her walking stick.

Achchi: පුතා! මොකද්ද පුතා වෙලා තියෙන්නේ? (Child what is happening?) What is happening?

Achchi cranes her neck to listen as she is hard of hearing.

Amma: Ah... Amma... you know our little girl Sasha...

Achchi: Ye...s?

Amma: She's not little anymore -

Achchi: (*unamused*) ah now I always tell you she's not little ... නොත්ත කර කර ඔයා නලවනවනෙ. (It's you who always mollycoddle her like a toddler.)

Amma: No...No Amma... she's BIG now....!

Achchi contemplates for a moment, and it suddenly dawns on her. Gasp! She claps, calling to someone off-stage.

Achchi's Maid appears with a giant scroll of generational wisdom. Achchi whips out the scroll and starts reading a list.

Achchi: (*to Amma*) so erm... What time did this happen?

Amma looks at her watch baffled.

Amma: Err... Amma what? Why is that important?

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Achchi: Why?? We must look at her horoscope (*reads off her list adjusting her reading glasses*)

Entourage of Aunties start appearing on stage one by one. Each of them is reading.

Aunties: අපේ පුතාට හරියයි... (Good match for our son)

අනාගත නැන්දම්මා... (your future mother-in-law)

Achchi: (*reading scroll*) has to stay in her room for seven days.

Aunty ensemble vigorously agrees

Auntie: දවස් හතකි. (Seven days)

Achchi: කණ්ණාඩිය බලන්න බෑ... (She can't look at her reflection in the mirror)

Sounds of shattering glass in the background

Aunties: අන්න හරි... කඩන්න කඩන්න... ඔක්කොම කඩන්න...
(That's right. Break it all).

They all vigorously nod in agreement.

Achchi: Can't eat oily food, or the "Kalu Kumaraya"¹ (*Kalu Kumaraya pops out and waves*)
will get her. (*To Amma*) Can't you remember...? He came for you also!

Main maid enters.

Maid: දැන් නෝනා බබාට කැවුම් කන්න බෑ... මාළු කන්න බෑ... කොකිස්
කන්න බෑ... පොල් කන්න බෑ (Now madam the little can no longer eat oily
food, coconut oil, fish...)

Thatha: (*yells from off stage.*) මගේ නම ආයෙන් කියනවා...! (You're bringing me up
again)

¹ Also known as The Black Prince; a mythical character from Sri Lankan folk lore who is believed to come for young virgin girls who reached puberty.

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Aunties: පොල් කන්න පුළුවන්ද? (Can she eat coconuts?)

Maid: කවුද බං මේ දවස් වල පොල් කන්නේ? පොළුත් බෑ නෙළුත් බෑ ඔවා දැන් .
.බෑ! (Who would eat coconut during this time? No coconut, no coconut oil!)

Achchi: She cannot look at men.

Thatha tries to enter the stage and is chased away by the Aunties

Aunties: තාත්තවචන් බලන්න බෑ යන්න යන්න ...යන්න!!!
(Can't even look at her father...out...out....out!)

Achchi: She can't sit with her legs spread!

Aunties: ඩී... ඩී... ඩී... කකුල් දෙක එලියෙ දාගෙන හැමොටම පේන්න... (Disgusting!
So that everyone can see her legs?!)

Achchi: Can't wear shorts.

Aunty: අපේ කාලේ ඔය වූවිට කැලි ඇඳගෙන හිටියොත්... උස්සගෙන යයි! (If
she'd worn those short shorts in our day she would be abducted!)

Achchi: Can't do sports where she spreads her legs too much!

Aunties: එහෙනත් කෙල්ල මොනාද කරන්නේ? (Then what can the girl do?)

Achchi: Board games are fine!

Aunties: ආ ඇයි වෙස්! වෙස් ගහන්න පුළුවන්! එක්කෝ ඒවා ඕනි නෑ. ඔය උයන්න
ඉගෙනගෙන ... ගවුමක් මහන්න ඉගෙනගත්තොත් ඇති (Ahh maybe
chess? Or better yet, let her learn how to sew a nice dress... or cook a good meal.)

Achchi: තාත්තගෙ ඔඩොක්කුවෙ ඉඳගන්න බෑ! (Can't sit on her father's lap)

Aunties: ඩී ඩී ඩී..... (Disgusting!)

ඒ මදිවට තත්තගෙ ඔඩොක්කුවෙ? (And her father's lap of all places?)

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Aunties: පුටු තියනකොට ඇයි ඔබොක්කුවෙ ඉඳ ගන්නේ? (Why do you need a lap in the first place when there's so many chairs?)

Achchi: Can't run around, not a little girl anymore.

Two little girls run onstage. The Aunties chase the running girls offstage

Aunties: සුමති, කොස්ස දෙන්න (Sumathi... give her a broom...)

One Auntie chases after one little girl to give her the broom.

කොස්සක් අතින් අල්ලලාවන් නෑගිහින් අතු ගාන්න... දුවනවා මෙනත..
(She hardly knows how to handle the broom, go sweep the house instead of running around!)

Achchi: Can't eat pineapples!

Aunties: (*in wide eyed horror*) acid acid acid acid! It affects your respiratory system... reproductive system... all these systems... I got this message on Whatsapp, I swear.

අන්න හරි ඔය ඔක්කොම ලෙඩ ටික හැදෙනවා.

(That's right she's bound to fall sick)

Amma: Amma! What are you saying? We are not going to do any of those things! Let's just tell her!

Achchi: (*offended and disgusted*) all these 'modern woman' things only.

Goes back to her list ignoring Amma's protests.

Achchi: Cannot play with the neighbor's sons anymore. They are **boys**, no.

Aunties: He's a boy, she's a girl. NO.

අම්මෝ! පොඩි ළමයි පොඩි ළමයි එක්ක සෙල්ලම් කරොත් නව පොඩි
ළමයි හැදෙන්න බැරි නෑ!

(Good lord! If little ones play with little ones, they are bound to produce even more little ones!)

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Achchi: Can't play with dogs!

Aunties: බල්ලා බුරයි, හපයි, කයි, බොයි, නිදාගයි. Rabies! කෙල්ල මැරෙයි!(The dog will bark. Bite. Eat. Drink. Sleep. The girl will die.)

Achchi: Have to call the closest aunt.

Grandmother starts to ponder who the closest aunt is. Aunties immediately jump in to remind her.

Aunties: කවුද... අර මෙයාගෙ නංගි... අර සොමපාල බැන්දේ...? (Who? ah that one's sister? The one who married that Somapala.) Ah. GEETHA...!

Achchi: Ah! Geetha! She'll be very happy to hear this ... කාලෙකින් කතා කරන්න නෑ.
(Couldn't have a chat in quite a while)

Achchi takes out her mobile phone to dial. Aunties teach Achchi to operate the phone.

Amma: Amma don't tell Auntie Geetha! She'll tell the entire neighborhood!

Achchi: So good noh putha... whole neighborhood will come for the ceremony!

Aunties: (thrilled) ගමටම පාටියක්! (The whole village can party!)

Amma: Amma what ceremony??

Achchi: (on phone already) hello Geethaaaaa! පණිවිඩයක් කියන්න ගන්නේ...(I'm calling with some news)

(comes back to Amma) she can't breathe too loudly.

Aunties: ඔව්... ඔව්... ඔව්... ගැණු ලමයෙක්! ගැණු ලමයෙක්!
(That's right. She's a girl. She's a girl)

All the Aunties hold breathe to set an example.

Amma: (looking at the Aunties. Unamused) amma what?!

Achchi: (firmly) she can't even think without our permission...

Grandmother exits telling Auntie Geetha the big news over the phone.

Aunties turn to Amma and start coming down on her with list.

Aunties: දැන් අම්මා වැඩ ගොඩයි !(Now Amma dearest! We have lots to do!)

They crowd in on Amma with lists of other instructions.

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Aunties: පොල් ගෙඩි දෙකයි... දවස් හතයි... බිත්තර කෝපි එකයි!
 (Two coconuts... seven days... one egg coffee!)

The Aunties push Amma offstage.

Sasha and Period enter and sit center stage.

The Aunties turn around and notice her. The Aunties giggle.

Ovaryacting!

Transition 1

Escape from Room to School

Sasha and Period are trapped in a small room by the Aunties who form the room's walls.

Narrator: **Sasha's world had turned upside down. Why was she suddenly in the confines of her room? This was all so strange.**

Sasha and Period look around room looking for an escape. Suddenly, Sasha stands up determined.

Narrator: **She was determined. She knew she had to escape.**

Sasha breaks her door down and escapes. Period follows.

Amma walks into room to check up on Sasha. Sees the empty room.

Amma: **Sasha?!**

Aunties who had been guarding the door have been caught unawares.

Aunties and Amma go out looking for Sasha, the run-away

Narrator: **This was all so confusing... (Enter Sasha and Period) Things were happening to her body that she didn't understand... and her family? Her family was acting... to put it rather mildly... ABSOLUTELY LOONEY! And she just couldn't seem to get rid the strange things going on in her body all day... and all this pain... (Period prances around vigorously causing Sasha to double down in pain). She knew she had to find answers... and so, she went to the one place that always seemed to have answers.**

A loud school bell is heard offstage. Voices of children.

Students start rushing into class dragging their chairs behind them. The classroom is set up and the students settle down. Sasha takes a seat.

Teacher arrives.

Scene 2

Health Lesson

Teacher: ආයුබෝවන් ළමයි! (Greetings children!)

All Students: ආයුබෝවන් මිස්! (Greetings teacher!)

Boy 1: Miss... you're wearing a nice saree Miss.

Teacher bashfully thanks him.

Teacher: Right... now... children, did I give you any homework?

Boy 1: Miss this is health... you never give us homework for health.

Teacher: Ah ... (*nervous giggle*)... yes Putha you sit. Now, children (*scanning the pages of text book*)... where were we..... Tell me which page we were at last.

All Students: 68!

Teacher: Right, now, somebody read. (*Scans class. Points to a kid at the back*) you...at the back...read!

Boy 3: (*slightly uncomfortable*) secondary (*unintelligible mumble*) characteristics...

Teacher: Louder Putha, so the whole class can hear!

Boy 3 takes a deep breath, and speedreads the extract in the health book about puberty and menstruation.

Boy 3 Secondary sexual characteristics of males these appear between ages 13 to 16 years old action of testosterone is responsible for this.... pubertal hair grows on face chest genitals larynx enlarges...secondary sexual characters in females these appear between ages 10-14...hair on armpits ..., mammary glands grow... releasing ova from ovaries.. The cycle of menstrea-

The other children are giggling. Both students and teacher are uneasy while reading goes on.

Ovaryacting!

Teacher looks very uneasy.

Teacher: ආහ් හරි හරි පුතේ ඒ ඇති! (Ok child. That's enough) Thank you... meh....
 හරි! (Ok) page 68 neda...? හරි(ok) good. Very good okay... (*Flustered*) exams
 also close know... why we don't quickly head to page 77... so little time children.

Children mutter in confusion.

Girl 1: But Miss-

Teacher: now... now... exams also coming up... must cover syllabus-

The students look muddled and start murmuring among each other.

Girl 2: but Miss, we skipped two chapters-

Boy 2: miss we didn't finish no....?

Teacher: (*talking over him*) now here, this is why I tell you to go for tuition classes. I don't
 have all the time in the world... ... you go learn in your classes or ask your
 mothers...now page 78... (*Starts reading*)

Amani: Erm... Miss...

Sasha's Period enters classroom and starts prancing around. Sasha clutches stomach in pain.

Boy 1: Miss.... සාෂට පොඩි අවුලක් (something's up with Sasha)

Teacher: Sasha... now what's this...?

Teacher moves to Sasha and takes her to a corner of the room. Sasha points at Period.

Several different reactions from classmates.

Teachers: My God child! (*whispers*) Can't you see there are boys in the class (*louder*) erm...
 children ... I have to take Sasha to the little girls' room-

All Students: Miss, I'll take her!

Teacher notably ignores all the boy and signals for Amani.

Ovaryacting!

Amani accompanies Sasha to the 'girls' room. Period follows.

Girl 2: *(frantically waving her arm)* miss... Miss! Can I go too...? I also have a stomachache!

Teacher: *(signaling the child to sit)* No. Now children, why don't we go to the home science room?

Ovaryacting!

Transition 2

School to Big Girl's Den

Children leave classroom. Chairs are taken away.

Sasha and Amani are seen walking. Period still follows Sasha, prancing around.

Narrator: **Sasha thought school had answers, but it only confused her even further. So, she thought she would turn to a friend...**

Sasha catches up to Girl 3, who is walking in front of her. Starts telling her classmate her troubles.

Sasha: Amani wait! I've been feeling terrible lately. My body is doing all sorts of strange things... one moment I'm happy... one moment I want to kill everyone around me! Then there's the *(points to Period dancing with red ribbon)* and my family's acting so weird. *(Exasperated)* I don't know what to do!

Amani: *(looks all-knowing)* now now.... No need to worry. You see, it happens to everyone. *(shrugging it off)* So normal aney!

Sasha: Really? What do you mean?

Amani: You listen will you... so now this is very normal ok... *(rambles on)* there's so many remedies for this *(points at Period)* .. Eggs and coffee... paracetamol...Panadol... lime juice... chocolates... *(Drones on a list)*

Sasha: All that will get rid of *(points at Period)*? So, you've tried this?

Amani: Tried and tested darling. Not by me. But well... by people! Anyway... like I was saying, this is so normal aney nothing to worry!

Sasha: So, it has happened to you?

Amani: No... no... so... it hasn't happened to me. Not yet. I actually heard this from that grade 11 akka.-

Ovaryacting!

Sasha: what akka?

Amani: *(looks around to see if anyone else can hear them)* THE 'Akka'! Listen. Wait. I'll give you an address *(takes out paper and scribbles)*. Don't tell anyone where you got it from. You should probably go there alone *(starts slowly trailing behind Sasha)*, she doesn't really like little girls like us.

So when you do find out, let me know too!

Narrator: And so Sasha took her friend's advice, and made her way to meet the mysterious, seemingly all-knowing, Akka. She hoped that at least here, she would find more answers to her curious predicament.

Atmosphere changes.

Sasha is now in a dark and seedy looking place. Period and Sasha fearfully tread ahead.

They suddenly hear ominous footsteps.

Ovaryacting!

Scene 3

The 'Akka'

One by one the Akkas move center stage, to the lair of the 'Akka'. They all scrutinize Sasha as they pass her. They start interrogating her with hostility.

Finally, The 'Akka' enters the stage and sits on her throne, center stage.

Akka 4: Name?

Sasha: *(Fearfully)* Sasha.

Akka 1: Age?

Sasha: Fourteen.

'Akka': *(Smirks. Looking at entourage)* we have a bit of a late bloomer here!

Akkas looks at each other and giggle...mutter

'Akka' silences them gesturing with her arm.

Akka 3: Hmmm... so, date of occurrence?

Sasha: To-today?

All the Akkas gasp in utter shock and horror.

'Akka': HOW and WHY aren't you in your room???

Both Sasha and Period are terrified. They frantically try and make excuses.

Sasha: I escaped... but please... please... they tell me you know everything. They tell me you know the answers!

Akka 2 warns Sasha not to speak out of line. The 'Akka' gets up.

'Akka': First off.... You must swear a solemn oath as you are now part of this holy organization....

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All Akkas stand up and place their palms on their chests.... everyone mechanically repeats the oath:

I AM NOW A WOMAN AND I WILL SHUT UP ABOUT IT!

‘Akka’: Right. Now that you’re sworn in.... let me enlighten you. I see *(looks at Period)* nasty one... but that’s alright...it’s your first time. *(Starts speaking in cryptic language)* You must first venture out to find the vendor *(all Akkas nod in agreement and repeat ‘the vendor’)*.

And from the vendor you must procure some *(looks around to see if anyone is listening...)* ‘THINGS’!!!*(Entourage repeats ‘some things’)*

Period begins acting up. Akka looks at Period and makes a snide remark.

Hmmm... Looks like a bit of a nasty one.

Period gets angry and starts to fight back. All Akkas cover to protect the ‘Akka’

Akka 1: Calling for back-up! Class 11-A.... Class 11-A!!

‘Akka’: *(regains composure)* so... as I was saying.... From the vendor you must procure the ‘things’... *(moving in closer)* I’ll give you a tip... ask for the ‘things’... with WINGS!

Sasha: *(confused)* ermm... what ‘things’?

‘Akka’: *(looks around at her entourage)* see the thing is I usually stock up a supply so I can give newbies like you... but the thing is...*(looks at all her Akkas who look guilty)*... the thing is we are all... at the same time.

Sasha: What things??

‘Akka’: *(shushes her)*... the things. Now... now dear one... I know you’re confused, but not to worry... this happens to everyone... girls... boys... fruits ... flowers-

Sasha: erm... *boys?* Are you sure... I don’t think-

The Akkas immediately shush Sasha.

Ovaryacting!

‘Akka’: So now what has actually happened is there’s eggs.....so they’ve broken...hormones dropped ...and then fallopian tubes and then your wall is breaking and then it goes down and down... and then procreation is possible or not and (*blabbers on convoluted explanation that makes no sense*)

Sasha: Erm... wait? I what?

‘Akka’: (*shushes her again*) Now...now don’t worry... like I said normal process happens to everyone... (*Sasha clearly confused and tries to interrupt*) Shhhh...

Now... you will know you have arrived at the right place when he starts safely wrapping your ‘things’ so that nooooo-one sees. VERY important that no one sees... repeat after me-

Sasha & ‘Akka’: very important that no one sees!

‘Akka’: Yes... It’s VERY important that no one sees the ‘things’, (*wide eyed*) especially boys. Because if they do... they will go.....

BLIND!!!

Akkas gasp in horror. One Akka faints at the thought.

Sasha terrified, keeps nodding.

Period mimes an apology to boys in the audience.

‘Akka’: Now go.... (*dramatically gestures towards exit*)

leave...

procure...

procure...

Exit Sasha and Period. The Akkas watch them leave.

Exit Akkas.

Ovaryacting!

Transition 3

Walk for Products

Sasha and Period walk out of the Akkas' lair to find the place with the 'things'.

Narrator: And once again Sasha was on her way: this time in search of the 'place' with the vendor who had the 'things' with the 'wings'. Sasha felt that everything the 'Akka' had said sounded rather cryptic, and although everyone seemed to think the 'Akka' had all the answers Sasha was not too sure. She didn't seem a very credible source, she thought, until.... out there before her-

Mudalali and Helper open up their shop.

Customer walks in.

Mudalali, and Helper arrange products in their shop

Amma enters shop exasperated in pursuit of Sasha.

Amma: මුදලාළි! පොඩි ගැණුණු ළමයෙක් දැක්කද? (Shopkeeper...did you see a young girl pass this way?)

Mudalali and Helper look clueless.

Exit Amma.

Narrator: she saw.... yes... it was the place! She edged her way closer.

Enter Sasha, carrying Period on her back. Both notice shop and come to a halt.

Scene 4

Procuring Products

Mudalali and Helper are serving a customer. Sasha and Period watch.

Customer: අල කිලෝ හතරයි. (4kg potatoes)

Helper: (checks) හරි.... (Check)

Customer: Brinjal ගෙඩි දෙකයි... (2 brinjals)

Helper: (looks confused and then realizes). වම්බටු ... හරි. (Check)

Customer: Razor එකයි...toothbrush දෙකයි... Signal එකයි. (one razor...two toothbrushes...one toothpaste)

Helper: හරි. හරි. හරි. (Check. Check. Check.)

Puts goods in a shopping bag.

Customer: ගාන දාන්න මුදලාළි. (Please give me the bill.)

Mudalali: දෙසිය පනහයි මහත්තයා (Rs. 250 Sir)

Customer gasps.

Mudalali: (coyly) එහෙම තමයි... දැන් එළවළු ගණන් නෙ මහත්තය. (Vegetables are rather pricey these days Sir)

Sasha waits in line patiently to be served. Period grows more and more impatient.

Mudalali: (noticing Sasha) ආහ් එන්න පුතා මොනවද ...? කියන්න. වොක්ලට් ටොෆි, පොන්, පැන්සල්...? (come come child.. we have anything you want...chocolates...toffees...pens...pencils)

Sasha: (awkwardly) Uncle... do you have the 'things'?

Ovaryacting!

Mudalali: *(confused)* ටින්? මොන ටින් ද පුතේ? සැමන්ද? (Tins? What tins? Salmon?)

Helper: *(feeling smart)* ටින් කිරි! (Tinned Milk!)

Sasha: No... no... Uncle... මෙව්වා *(signals with her hand, drawing a square in the air)*

Mudalali: *(looking clueless. To Helper)* මොනාද බං මෙව්වා? (What are the things?)

Helper: *(Shrugs. He is just as clueless)* මම දන්නේ නෑ බං (I've got no clue)

Mudalali and Helper look to Sasha and back. Suddenly it hits them. They look each other in horror. Disappear into the shop to procure the 'things'.

They surface with pad packet and awkwardly hand it to Sasha. Mudalali and Helper awkwardly giggle.

Sasha: මෙහ්... අංකල්... ඕක with wings තියනවද...? (Uncle, do you have that with wings?)

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a bunch of Advert Girls in tight white pants appear. They are jogging, muttering, whispering and giggling under their breath as they leave stage.

Helper: පියාඹනවද? (Is she flying?)

Mudalali: *(to Helper)* හොඳ බඩු ඉල්ලන්නේ (No, she wants the good stuff)

The two disappear into shop again. The strange Advert Girls in tight white pants appear again prancing and frolicking in glee. Signal Sasha to be silent.

Mudalali and Helper reemerge, this time with a fancier sanitary napkin brand.

Sasha: කීයද අංකල්? (How much uncle?)

Mudalali: හාරසිය පනහයි! (450)

Helper: නෑ නෑ පන්සියයි! (No... no...500)

Mudalali: දන්නේ නැද්ද? Luxury tax නෙහ්...! (Don't you know... it's the luxury taxes?)

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Sasha digs into pockets to find money. Hands it to Mudalali.

Helper: ආන් මිස් ඉන්න පොඩ්ඩක් ! (Hang on a minute, Miss.)

Mudalali: *(holding out his hand)* පත්තර... (papers...)

Helper hands Mudalali newspapers and they both start ritual of wrapping. Sasha is waiting on the clock... Mudalali and Helper continue wrapping the pad packet in newspapers.

Narrator: **Akka's words reverberated in Sasha's mind: the things... the wings... the wrapping. Well, at least she seemed to have come to the right place.**

Enter Boy 1.

Boy 1: Uncle!!!! ගෙදර ටොයිලට් පේපර් ඉවර වෙලා (The toilet paper supply at home has finished!)

Helper: මු ආයෙන් ඇවිත් ණයට ඉල්ලන්න. (He's here again to ask for goods on credit)

Mudalali: *(to Boy 1)* ඊළඟ පාර තමුසෙට දෙන්නෙ toilet paper නෙවෙයි වැලි කඩදාසි
(Next time I'm sending you off with sand paper... not toilet paper) *(throws a toilet paper roll at the boy who catches it)*

Boy befuddled.

Boy 1: Uncle... Bag?

Mudalali and Helper look at boy, offended. They both yell:

 මිවා වලට බෑග් නෑ! (NO BAGS FOR THOSE!)

They return to paper wrapping ritual. Sasha is confused. Period annoyed.

Mudalali: පත්තර... පත්තර... පත්තර ... (papers...papers...papers)

Mudalali hands over heavily wrapped pad packet. Sasha tries to ask questions but Mudalali and Helper scoot off.

Exit Mudalali and Helper.

Ovaryacting!

Transition 4

Back to Square One

Sasha with heavily wrapped sanitary napkin packet, walks around with Period in confusion.

Narrator: **Baffled at the turn of events... her ‘things’ wrapped up in a zillion newspapers as if it were a ticking time bomb... Sasha walked on. She was disappointed that she still hadn’t found all the answers she was looking for. All everyone seemed to give away were little bits and pieces of information.**

Various people start entering stage engaging in different activities. Sasha tries to approach them for answers. People either waver her off, or are offended she approached them with a pad packet.

Narrator: **Why didn’t anyone want to talk about this? Why was no one telling her? Why was everyone whispering and overreacting?**

Period watches Sasha’s confusing journey sadly.

Narrator: **Disappointed, tired, and hungry, not having found all the answers she was looking for... Sasha thought she’d keep going. As she walked on, she met so many people...**

Choreographed scene of Sasha’s search for answers with Period.

Narrator: **People had so many opinions... but nobody seemed to be able to help her understand what was happening to her. They didn’t seem to want to understand themselves. Some people were kind and considerate... some were disgusted... some ran away... and some... were oblivious.**

She had almost given up hope...until... she heard a familiar voice.

Amma’s voice off stage.

Amma: **Sasha...**

Sasha: **(relieved) Amma!!!**

Scene 5

The ‘Talk’

Enter Amma.

Amma: *(running to Sasha)* I was so worried! I was worried sick! I thought I lost you... and on a day like this! Where were you...? Why did you leave...? Look at you. *(Starts dusting down a very tired Sasha)*. You poor thing...

They embrace.

Sasha: Amma I was so confused! So many things were happening... and you were all acting so strange! Nobody was willing to talk to me...

Amma: I’m so sorry my love, it’s all my fault. I should have just sat you down and had a talk first. It’s the first thing I should have done. I should’ve tried to remember what it was like for me. It was such a confusing time and I kept wishing someone would explain things to me... like I should’ve to you...

Amma takes Sasha by the hand and sits her down.

Amma: It’s important that you know this...

Amma sits down.

Narrator: And so, finally, Sasha begun to get the answers she had been looking for everywhere, in the comfort of her own home.

Amma: What you’re going through right now... is puberty.

We all go through this at a point in our life and what you’re going through right now, my love, is menstruation.

Amma It’s nothing you should fear or be ashamed of ... or hide, because it’s a beautiful process of nature that every woman goes through. Let’s just say your ovaries are acting up a little bit. Periods are a sign that your body is just doing its thing. We shouldn’t have to be quiet about it and this is not something that limits the things

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you did every day before this. You can still ride your bike (*Enter Malli riding his bicycle*)...you can still do your karate... and you can still play with your Nangi...

One by one, everyone who had thus far run away from her and the topic enter from all sides to listen.

Amma mimes explanation to the crowd parallel to Narrator.

Narrator: Finally Sasha was beginning to see clearly. She could finally understand what was going on. Her mother explained the changes occurring in her body and the reason behind her mood swings. Her body was producing hormones that were telling her she could have babies!

Her uterus lining was shedding because she hadn't conceived.

This was so much information... why did no one want to tell her this?

Amma: (*Notices wrapped pad packet*) what's that in your hand? Ah... well yes, this is going to come in handy. But this is not all that you'll find out there. There's all sorts of products out there now my love... (*demonstrates pads, tampons and period cups*)

Achchi: (*butting in*) ඕවා ඕනි නෑ. අපේ කාලේ වගේ රෙදි කැල්ලක් දෙන්නකෝ!
(You don't need all that! Just give her a rag like we did in our times!)

Mother rolls her eyes

Amma: Amma! We live in the 21st century!

(*To Sasha*) It's important that you stay clean during these times... and (*to Malli*) Malla.... Try not to give Akki a hard time... (*to Nangi*) Nanga you too, because when your time comes... Akki will help you through it.

Amma: (*to Thatha*) Sarath... මේ වගේ වෙලාවට පොඩ්ඩක් කඩේට යන්න.

(Just go to shop in this situation) I'm sorry I left you out. Sasha needs both of us and there's no need to keep her behind a locked door.

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Narrator: **And they all realized looking around that someone they loved went through periods: friends, sisters, aunts, and of course their mothers.**

Everyone looks around at the women around them.

Narrator: **They learnt that periods were not a sign of impurity, but a sign of life. It's a sign of your existence... my existence... the existence of the entire human race.**

They couldn't share her pain, but they could make her feel good.

With this knowledge, Sasha was comforted. And she lived happily ever after.

Period.

Period stands up. Thrusts her hand towards Sasha.

Period: **I'm sorry I never properly introduced myself... (*Shakes Sasha's hand*)**

Guess I'll see you next month kid!

Period leaves.

Everyone settles back, happily waving Period off the stage.

Period throws in her red ribbon from off stage, which lands on Amani's lap.

Amani gasps.

Everyone reacts...

(Yes, this time they just react. They do not OVERreact.)

Freeze.

END

Production Credits

Ovaryacting! was first performed at the **Lionel Wendt Theatre, Colombo, Sri Lanka**, on 27th March 2019, for the **33rd Royal Interschool English Drama Competitions**, with the following cast and crew:

CAST

Narrator	Acsah Kulasingham
Sasha	Tahsha de Silva
Period	Keilah D’Rosairo
Amma (Sasha’s Mother)	Khadeejah Irishad
Thatha (Sasha’s Father)	Amanda Siriwardena
Malli (Sasha’s Brother)	Amandhi Marasinghe
Nangi (Sasha’s Sister)	Shanoli Ratnayake
Achchi (Sasha’s Grandmother)	Ambisha Varatharasan
Teacher	Laila Suleiman
Classmates	Maria Edirisinghe Yumna Hussein Sayumi Jayasuriya Leanne Melder Aneeka Razeen Prashali Tharmendra
Amani/Advert Jogger	Dewanga Manchanayake
The ‘Akka’	Lauren Bastians
Akka/ Aunty/ Advert Jogger	Hashendri Wanigasooriya

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Akka/ Aunty/Advert Jogger	Sahlah Anees
Akka/Aunty/Advert Jogger	Zuleika Buhar
Akka	Sara Shibly
Mudalali	Dhyani Hapuarachchi
Helper	Adele De Silva
Customer	Shainsa De Silva

DESIGN TEAM

Director	Piumi Wijesundara
Writer	Piumi Wijesundara
Design and Choreography	Jayampathi Guruge/ Piumi Wijesundara

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage manager	Nimshee Fernando
Backstage	Nimshee Fernando Shaariha Fazeel
Light operator	Kasun Ukwatte
Sound Operator	Piumi Wijesundara
Cast care	Amanda Van Eyck
Production Manager	Amanda Van Eyck

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Production team	Acsah Kulasingham Amanda Van EycK Sahla Anees
Publicity Team	Acsah Kulasingham Keila D’Rosiaro Sahla Anees
Photography	DramaComp Official Photography Pramila Samarakoon
Video	Pramila Samarakoon
Producer	Methodist College Colombo

The play made it from the semi-finals of Royal Drama Comp 2019 onto the finals and was staged once again at the **Lionel Wendt Theatre** in June 2019. At the DramaComp finals *Ovaryacting!* won awards for **Best Play, Best Original Script, and Best Supporting Actor** (Lauren Bastianz for her role as The ‘Akka’).

By popular demand, a public show was staged at the **Methodist College Auditorium** in August 2019, which was followed up by a **panel discussion on ‘Menstrual and Reproductive Health Awareness’** led by the following **panelists**:

Dr. Sanath Lanerolle (Gynecologist/ Obstetrician at Castle Street Hospital for Women)

Manisha Dissanayake (Founder, ARCA Initiative)

Acsah Kulasingham (Student of Methodist College and cast leader)

moderated by:

Piumi Wijesundara

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website www.stages.lk

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