

THE PASSING STAGE PROJECT

*A resource pack to the Passing Stage writing project
and the Cast as Mother dramatized reading.*



stages
theatre
group

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RESOURCE PACK
Passing Stage Project

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Passing Stage Project

It began as a self-reflection by Ruwanthie De Chickera on her own experience of being both a mother and an artist. In November 2010, she invited twelve other women of the Sinhala and English stage to take part in a writing process on their experiences of motherhood through the lens of theatre. Maintaining anonymous identities, for one year they wrote about their families, the education system, God, paediatricians, marriage, truth, forgiveness, their country and of course, the Theatre. This process resulted in a bilingual manuscript of 300 pages titled Passing Stage. The play – ‘Cast as Mother’ – is a collection of performance pieces inspired by this manuscript. It was staged on the 24 May 2012 at the Lionel Wendt Theatre.

CAST AS MOTHER

A play created by thirteen performing mothers.

First performance :

Lionel Wendt Theatre, Colombo Sri Lanka

24th May 2012

Running time – 1 ½ hours

Language - English & Sinhala

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Cover photograph:

'The Lists', performed by 13 women artists.

photo by Ruvin de Silva

Other photographs:

The Passing Stage - Stages File Photo

Cast as Mother rehearsal - Pasan Ranaweera

Cast as Mother venue rehearsal - Ruvin de Silva

Cast as Mother performance - Deshan Tennekoon and Ruvin de Silva



Introduction to the resource pack

Dear Reader,

This resource pack provides a guide to the creative process behind The Passing Stage Project. It could be of use to artists, or teachers and students of drama, or anyone interested in understanding a collaborative writing and dramatic process better. The Passing Stage Project started as a writing project called “Passing Stage”, which lasted one and a half years and culminated in a 300-page manuscript of collected writings. Selected writings from this manuscript were then presented through a dramatized reading to an audience – in a one-off show. This dramatized reading was titled “Cast as Mother”.

Together, and for purposes of this resource pack, we have titled this entire undertaking The Passing Stage Project.

What is included in the resource pack of The Passing Stage Project?

This resource pack documents the creative processes which led to the manuscript (Passing Stage) and also the dramatized reading of the manuscript (Cast as Mother). In this resource pack you will understand how the Passing Stage writing process started, how the writing process developed and how it was finally consolidated; you will also understand how this writing process was then transferred into the performance Cast as Mother, what the decisions taken were, what challenges were faced and what the final outcome was.

Thank you for your interest in learning about the creative process behind The Passing Stage Project. We hope you find this resource pack useful and insightful.

Very best wishes,

Stages Theatre Group



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the collected writings of 13 artist mothers

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PART ONE :

THE PASSING STAGE

the collected writings of 13 artist mothers

What is the Passing Stage?

How did it begin? How did it end?

Following a period of self-reflection on her own life as an artist and a mother of young children, in the year 2010 playwright Ruwanthie de Chickera, Artistic Director of Stages Theatre Group, invited twelve other women, who were also artist mothers, to reflect on their experiences of motherhood through the lens of theatre.

Maintaining anonymous identities, the group was guided by Ruwanthie through a reflective writing process that spanned a period of one and a half years. In this time, the women wrote about their families, their marriages, their beliefs, their views about their country, education, the economy, the health system, religion and more. All writing was done through the perspective of being both a mother and an artist.

The material produced through this writing process gave rise to three creative productions.

The Passing Stage Manuscript

– a collection of writings by 13 Artist Mothers collected over a period of one and a half years, during which they responded to a series of writing tasks set by Ruwanthie de Chickera.

Cast as Mother

– a selection of dramatized readings from the Passing Stage manuscript, staged on 24 May 2012, in Colombo, at the Lionel Wendt Theatre.

Kalumaali : A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups

– a Stages Theatre Group production directed by Ruwanthie de Chickera and written by Nadie Kammallaweera and Ruwanthie de Chickera, based on the Passing Stage project. Kalumaali was first performed in September 2012, in Colombo, at the Lionel Wendt Theatre.

This resource pack contains background information on the first two outputs of The Passing Stage Project – the Passing Stage manuscript and the Cast as Mother dramatized reading.

Kalumaali – a fairy tale for Grown Ups has been developed as a separate resource pack, although its origins are deeply connected to the Passing Stage project.



The journey begins

“I thought I would resume my practice as an artist, by trying to understand what I had gone through when I stopped. What had changed in me?”

*Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*

The Passing Stage project came out of Ruwanthie de Chickera’s own life experience as a mother and an artist. When the concept behind the Passing Stage project first started taking root, she was a theatre practitioner and a mother of two young children. Ruwanthie had made a conscious decision to temporarily take a break from theatre in order to give her full attention to her role as mother. This hiatus lasted five years.

The Passing Stage project started as a self-reflection of her life over these five years, her experience of motherhood, and her role as an artist. However, though the impetus for the project began as a personal reflection, Ruwanthie decided to extend the invitation to engage in a similar reflective process to twelve other women artists who were also mothers.

She first approached Nadie Kammallaweera, her closest friend, a writer and an actress, about the idea. Together they approached other artist mothers known or suggested to them. The two friends did not have a set number of women in mind. The group finally settled at thirteen artist mothers, including Nadie and Ruwanthie.

Right throughout the process, Ruwanthie and Nadie were helped by a third artist – Nadya Perera – writer and film maker, who contributed towards the thinking, the organising, the translating and the baby sitting that needed to be done in order for the project to move forward smoothly.

It all began with a letter...

The Passing Stage had a very clear beginning. It started with a letter written by Ruwanthie to the group.

Ruwanthie's first letter to the Artist Mothers

Subject : The Passing Stage : a play created by performing mothers

hi,

I am writing to you because I think you might be able to help me put together a play I have been thinking of, for a while.

As you know, I am a playwright and a director. Since about 1994, my uncontested passion in life has been the theatre. Through it, I have encountered a depth and breadth of life and experience that has shaped who I am. However, for the last four years, since my two children have been born, I gave up this passion and have been looking after them.

To say this experience has rocked me to my very core, is an understatement. I am deliberately leaving it as an understatement because I know you will understand the levels at which moving from this one world to the next, or trying to straddle the two worlds of the stage and motherhood, can affect a person.

We all know, (now!), what a marathon motherhood is. But that is something all mothers know. What I want to explore, through this play, is the particular experience of women like you and me - as we make our way through all of this. What specific insights can we, as South Asian women of the stage, add to the understanding of experiences like marriage, motherhood, domestic life etc...

Obviously, for this play, I am looking for a level of honesty, with oneself and with the others involved in the process. Who these other people are, I am not prepared to reveal right now. At this moment, what I need from you is to place your trust in me, in my intentions and my desire to explore this reality as honestly as possible in order to move to a deeper understanding of our current realities.

This will be a play created through the collective writings and workshop exercises of a limited number of women chosen to be part of this process. The women selected are women from the Sinhala and English stage, who, at some point in their lives, were good enough performers to make a career out of it. Women, who subsequently married and are now bringing up children.

The process can be roughly divided into three sections. First is a writing stage, where you will all maintain your anonymity – and will communicate through me. The second stage is the workshop stage, where the (anonymous) writings produced in the first stage will form the basis of our workshops. Then, a script will be put together with whatever has been produced through these two stages, and we will move into rehearsal stage. My intention is to have two parallel dramas – one in English and one in Sinhala. (same script, translated into the two languages).

For now, I am asking you to be part of the writing process.

I would like to give ourselves a framework within which to work (though, of course, of course!, this will be flexible). So I am thinking of eight weeks of writing, six weeks of workshoping and four weeks of rehearsal.

If all goes well, we should have a play in four - five months. (haha)

In terms of your commitment, for the writing stage, you will need to complete certain writing tasks I send you, and either email or post them back to me.

I would like to reiterate that what you write will not be attributed to you (unless of course you want it to be). Maintaining our anonymity is central to this project. We have taken steps to conceal your identity from even us. So, I will assume that if you wish to be identified with what you have written, you will say so. Otherwise everything that is written will go into a common pool.

I am really happy to have this opportunity to work with you on something this close to all of us. I hope we will be able to create something unique out of this effort.

Love,

Ruwanthie



About the women in the group

“ I initially entered into the process with only myself in mind. There were times when I felt that no one had gone through what I was going through. But then, (luckily!), I raised my head long enough to notice that there were actually a lot of other Artist Mothers around me. Women who were powerful, crazy, obsessed artists; who had suddenly become mothers. ”

*Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*

The first email to the group formally invited the twelve artist mothers to become a part of the Passing Stage project. The group consisted of women from both the Sinhala and English theatres. Ruwanthie and Nadie tried very hard to involve artist mothers from the Tamil theatre in the group but were unfortunately not able to do so.

The group of thirteen comprised women from different backgrounds, ages, religions, and ethnicities. It was also a group which included actresses, directors, singers and script-writers. At the point of joining the project the women also had varying relationships with their artform. A few like Ruwanthie, had decided to take a break from theatre during their children's early years. There were those – like Nadie - who had completely given up their craft since becoming a mother and then there were artists who had never stopped working or taken a break at all.

The Passing Stage project hoped to consolidate the experiences of all these artist mothers.

**Reflecting on the
women in the project
in 2011, Ruwanthie de
Chickera wrote:**

I have chosen, for this project, unconventional women. Before marriage and motherhood, these women have, with considerable ease, been able to be the exception to the standard South Asian woman – in image, lifestyle, pursuits.

Because of theatre, all these women have been given the chance to live their lives closer to the truth of their essential selves. Within the magic of theatre – its allowance for experimentation, freedom, unconventionality etc... these women have all experienced the space and the potential to let their spirits grow and have witnessed their potential. However, the power of theatre is not limited to the individual artists' experience. I have focussed my search on the theatre because, through the theatre, these women have received public endorsement of their lives the way they choose to live it. Sri Lanka has a vibrant and non-discriminatory theatre culture and women are given the same respect and freedom in the theatre that men are given. Overwhelmingly, audiences have accepted, valued and praised these women for what they have stood for, challenged and achieved through theatre.

However, after the experience of motherhood, these women – with startling similarity – have found themselves being forced back into very conventional feminine roles. Their relationships with themselves, with those close to them, with their audiences, have changed.

The shift seems to take place when the individual takes on the responsibility of being a mother. This shift, in a woman's life, moves her away from being an individual, to being a social construct.

There are many things that women did, which mothers can't do. That women were, which mothers aren't.

Through her child, through her husband, through her own family, through her support system, through educational institutions, religion, the health system – through all of this and much, much more, the woman is taken away from her essential self.

This project hopes to challenge the societal structures and values that we have inherited in relation to home and family, in relation to women, marriage and motherhood. It hopes to examine our accepted norms of family life, of child rearing, of sexuality, of health, education, religion etc, and break all these elements down to a place of honesty, with oneself – in order to build them again from a place of truth.

The women of the project are already established and respected in society as artists, as intelligent, talented and discerning individuals with visions for society. What they collectively have to say about marriage and motherhood, I hope, will have a considerable impact.

Why “Motherhood”?

“I feel that other than through qualities such as self-sacrifice, commitment, patience, the role or the image of the mother had not been addressed with any real honesty in society. We were all subject to a very male-centred perspective of who a mother is.”

*Interview with Nadie Kammallweera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*

Before we continue with the journey of the Passing Stage project, it may be worthwhile to take a moment to understand how and why the project explored the topic of motherhood.

Often, the term “motherhood” is associated with the singular narrative of it being a joyous, lifechanging, life-affirming experience for women. The image of a happy, glowing woman, laughing and playing with her new-born child, comes to our minds when we think of a new mom. This image, created through popular culture, is not entirely inaccurate, it is simply incomplete. Motherhood can be joyous at times, and very difficult at others. The problem with the singular narrative is that it isolates women at a time of their lives when they might need the most amount of support and understanding from society for the complex and contradictory experiences they may be facing.

The Passing Stage project began with one woman deciding to try and understand, for herself, these complex contradictions within her own life. Ruwanthie had taken a five-year break from her work as a playwright and theatre director when she had her two children. At the point of resuming her role as an artist, she decided to do so by examining what had changed within her since becoming a mother.

What started as an intense self-reflection soon morphed into a comparative undertaking involving 12 other artists. Automatically, by involving the writings of 12 other people, the project challenged the trap of a single narrative of motherhood.

However, when the project began it did not have an agenda or even an end goal. The writings were nothing but what they actually were – the deeply honest thoughts, views and confessions of thirteen women trying to make sense of their roles as mothers, women, and artists. Of course, the most potent base ingredient of an artwork is honesty...

“ I was a mother of two young children aged 4 and 2. I had taken a conscious decision to stay away from my active practice as an artist in order to focus on the children when they were very little. This decision was difficult. Because for as long as I could remember my artwork had been my life. But I knew intuitively that I would not be able to balance childcare with an active arts practice. I knew it would be unfair on the children. So, I decided to take a break from my arts practice for about 5 years.

When I was getting to the end of those five years and contemplating getting back to my practice, I thought of stopping and looking back at the last five years of my life. I thought I would resume my practice as an artist, by trying to understand what I had gone through when I stopped. What had changed in me? I had been an artist workaholic for as long as I could remember. That had been my passion. Now suddenly I was a mother. I was an artist mother. A woman with two competing passions in my life. My work and my children. How had I navigated this balance and this change? I decided I would reflect on this entire experience.

The title of the project came out of the most common piece of advice I received from everyone whenever I was beside myself with despair about some new catastrophe connected to motherhood – 'Don't worry. It's a passing stage.' It was quite difficult to keep convincing myself that all the overwhelming challenges I was facing were, in fact, transient. Of course, they were, but it's difficult to get this perspective when I was overwhelmed.

Motherhood is such an incredibly life-changing experience. It alters a person in every imaginable way, in the deepest manner – it changes your body, your equilibrium, your instincts, your balance in life, priorities, sense of self, future and your negotiation with the world and everyone else around you. It alters everyone else's perception of you as well. It is possibly the most intense transformation a person can go through. It all happens in a few months and then it stays with you for the rest of your life.

Of course, because it happens to almost everybody, it is normalized. And it should be. But normal does not mean ordinary. A normal experience can be extraordinary. And any extraordinary human experience has the potential to be turned into art. ”

*Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*

Creating the Manuscript

“It began very, simply. If someone told me when I started that this exercise would yield a manuscript of approximately 300 pages, and two professionally produced productions, and a published play, I would not have believed it.”

*Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*

The creative process used in Passing Stage was very much an organic and flexible process that evolved with the project. While the project now can be discussed in terms of the steps that were taken from the original idea to the producing of a 300-page bilingual manuscript and stage performance, neither the shape nor scope of the project was ever predetermined. It evolved gradually and organically. It was a process in which as one step was ending, the next became clearer. What started as one writing task expanded into seven. What might have been imagined for just a few weeks, lasted one and a half years.

Unlike many writing projects where there is a clear plan and structure from the start, in this instance, Ruwanthie did not have the tasks planned out in advance. Instead, it was a process in which the idea for the next writing task became clearer as the responses to the previous one came in.

Another interesting aspect of this project was that tasks were not accompanied by any deadlines. This meant that each task would come to an end naturally, instead of in adherence to an enforced structure. This meant that the thirteen artist mothers were given the kind of flexibility they needed to respond to each task. This also, quite

importantly, reflected one of the core experiences of motherhood – that childrearing takes as long as it needs to take. To expect it to happen to a pre-determined schedule is one of the most frustrating mistakes one can make.

The process took one and a half years because this is the time it needed. Not because it was the time it was allotted. When each task was sent out there was no idea of how long it would last. It naturally came to an end. This way there were sometimes months and months between tasks. But always with a fresh task, there was a renewed commitment and incredible answers came in. This kind of flexibility was important I realized, because practically, the women needed time to answer.

*Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*



Writing anonymously

“ I think not writing as Tracy Holsinger allowed me to write about a whole range of things in a style that kind of evolved. I hadn’t really considered myself a writer as such, so these tasks opened up a form of creative expression for me that I hadn’t really explored. ”

*Interview with Tracy Holsinger
Passing Stage Reunion – January 2020*

Maintaining anonymity was an important element of the writing process. It allowed the women to write freely and honestly. It allowed them to take risks if they wanted to. Ruwanthie, Nadya and Nadie went to great lengths to ensure that the writers’ anonymity was maintained throughout the process, even from Ruwanthie herself.

New email accounts with pseudonyms were setup for each of the thirteen writers. Tasks were emailed to these anonymous email accounts and writers either emailed or posted their written work to Ruwanthie. This writing structure gave rise to another aspect of the project which later became integral to the writing and dramatic process. As responses to the tasks started coming in, Ruwanthie noticed that each writer often preferred to write using a specific font type.

“... when the writing came in through email, the women habitually used certain fonts – Calibri, Cambria, Arial etc... - and I started saving these documents under these names. Then I realized that these names were, in fact, quite beautiful and decided that they could be character names. And so I allotted the names of these fonts to the writers and we continued in this manner. ”

*Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*

These font names grew in significance in the project; they became pseudonyms for the writers and later characters in the dramatized reading. The thirteen pseudonyms used by the thirteen writers were :

Calibri

Kefa

Perpetua

Bradley

Didot

Monaco

Lucinda

Arial

Cambria

Consolas

Chalkduster

Sathu

Skia

The writings tasks of the Passing Stage project

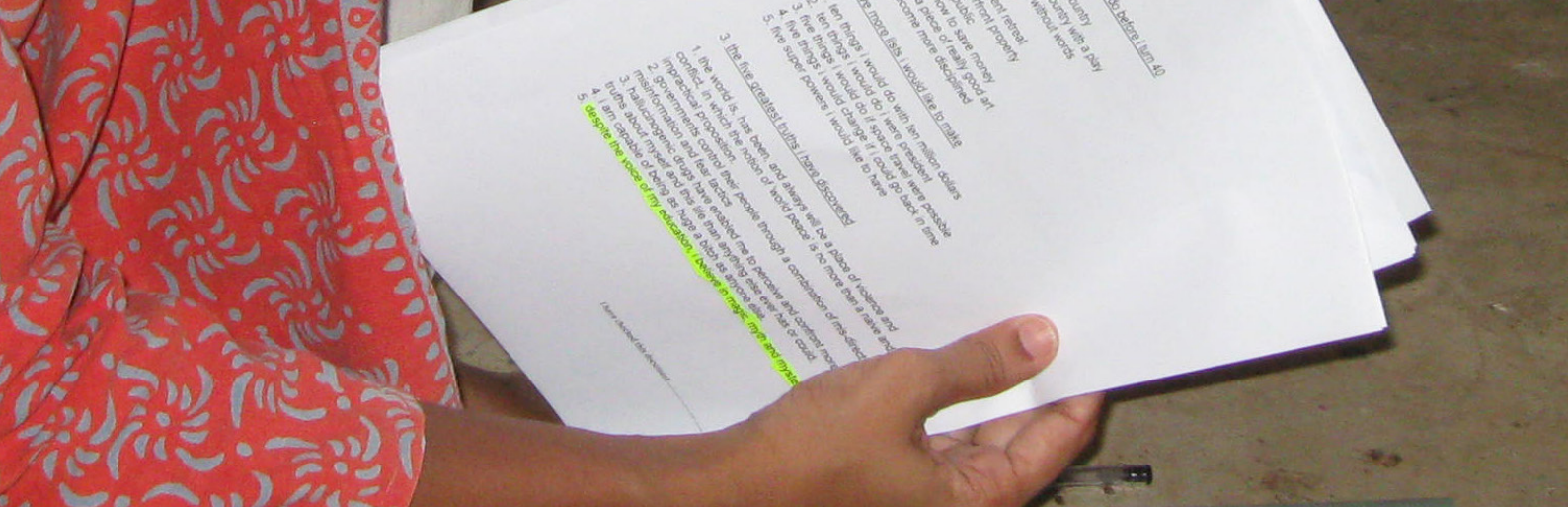
“ It was only when I received the answers to the first writing task, when I saw the honesty and the brilliance in the writing, that I realized that this project could go quite far. I think it was at this point that I began to see it as something more extensive. But I still didn’t have an idea of what the next question would be.

The answers to the first writing task trickled in at different speeds. And this was very much the nature of the entire writing process. There was no set time as to how much one task would last or when the next one would begin. There was just a sense that the time for something to end and something new to begin had come. And so we would move on.

The next question was also determined very much by the material that was submitted for the previous task. Obviously, I was reading everything obsessively. I was also writing answers myself. When I got a sense of the material that I had with me at any point, I would be able to imagine what the next task could be.

Even the ending of the project happened like this. There was a feeling that the project had ended. And this was when we stopped. ”

***Interview with Ruwanthie de Chickera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019***



During the one and a half years of the Passing Stage, Seven Tasks were sent out to the women. Let's take a quick glimpse at these writings tasks.

TASK ONE - Letters

The response to Task One was overwhelming. The depth and quality of the writing that poured in from the group was much more than Ruwanthie and Nadie ever expected. It made them both realise that this project could become something much larger than what they had initially anticipated.

“I used to write letters. I really enjoyed writing letters. Now it's mainly snappy emails and texts. But I would love to sit down and write a few letters. I would like you to do the same.”

TASK TWO - Lists

For their second task, the group were asked to make a minimum of five separate lists from a list of topics assigned by Ruwanthie. As mothers and women with busy lives, making lists is a part of everyday life, so this task resonated with the group.

“I hate them, but I can't get by without lists.
So, let's do lists.”

TASK THREE – Phone conversations

Task three was phone conversations. The group were asked to come up with three phone conversations on any topic and with anyone they wanted. While not everyone found this task easy, there were a few who did and everyone, including those who found it difficult, submitted several phone conversations.

TASK FOUR – Songs

In the fourth task, the group were asked to write songs and stories based on the themes provided to them. Task Four was far more successful than Task Three with songs, especially lullabies and satirical children's songs coming very easily from the group. One of the stories submitted under Task Four titled 'Kalumaali' became the starting point of the 2012 Stages Theatre Group production of **Kalumaali – a fairy tale for grown-ups**.

TASK FIVE – Questions and Answers

In Task Five, things became interactive for the first time. The 13 women – so far writing in complete isolation about their issues - were about to interact, through writing, with each other.

Task Five consisted of two phases. In the first phase, the artist mothers were asked to write down one question and one statement. The question was on something they were struggling to understand and would find helpful to hear other's experiences and thoughts on. The statement was related to an important decision they had taken. In the second phase, the writers had to respond to each of the questions and statements sent in by others. In this manner, each woman's question and statement had 12 responses from the others participating in the group.

Everyone participated very enthusiastically in this exercise.

TASK SIX - Reviews

In the sixth task, the group were asked to write a media article (for example, a press release, interview, review etc.) about themselves from the perspective of an outsider. Being reviewed was something most of the women would have experienced as theatre artists.

TASK SEVEN - Discussion

For the seventh and final task, the group met face to face for the first time after starting the project. This meeting was planned meticulously by Nadie, Ruwanthie and Nadya. As one would expect when working with a group of mothers, several of them brought their children with them to the meeting. There was great anticipation before the meeting.

At this first meeting and final task, the women had a moderated discussion. They were asked to speak about their beliefs and values – what they had inherited, what they believed in, what they would pass on. The women discussed areas such as the ones given below.

*My country. My countrymen. War. Politicians.
My Religion. Other religions. Spirituality.
Education. Schools. Teachers.
Sex. Sexuality. My body. Masturbation.
Husbands. Children. In laws.
Money. Class. Wealth.
Truth. Forgiveness. Justice.*

The group sat round in a circle and spoke in turn, about the beliefs and principles they had inherited as opposed to what they would pass on to their children. The discussion was recorded and later transcribed as the seventh task.

There was a big decision to be taken with the women. They had so far written anonymously. Were the women interested in revealing their identities – even to each other? The decision was unanimous - the group still decided to maintain their anonymity



even at this stage.

“ There were moments during the writing when it was like holding a mirror to my face. And that was difficult. I think there was this public persona that probably still remains about being this stoic, resilient, confident person but there was a lot of breaking inside, a lot of heartbreak. So it was kind of that mirror to hold that said you know what? life didn’t really turn out the way you planned it. That was hard. ”

Dilrukshi Fonseka



Translation of the writings

After one and a half years of writing, the Passing Stage had come to a natural halt with the culmination of Task Seven and the meeting of the women. Ruwanthie and Nadie now had a pile of incredible, original material with them – far more than they could have anticipated when this journey had been embarked upon.

The very obvious question was... Now What? And under an email titled the same – Now What?? – the artists began to pull together the next phase of the project...

From an email from Ruwanthie to Nadie and Nadya:

Recording the process...

- All material submitted for this project will be preserved in the form of a publication and on a web site.
- The material will be recorded in the language that it was submitted in, and it will also be available in translation.

Translation residency

- We will go on a residency – maybe of three or four days – to complete this task.
- Nadie is in charge of the delegation of the material and also the working schedule.
- Hasini is in charge of the logistics.
- Ruwanthie will make the initial contact and pass on the info to Hasini.
- We will have this material laid out and published in time with the opening performance.
- The idea is to preserve the original material as it came in – so that it exists as a separate and much larger document to the actual script.

The translation process took nearly 4 months. The group working on translations were Nadie Kammallaweera, Nadya Perera, Hasini Haputhanthri and Ruwanthie de Chickera. Like the rest of the project, this undertaking too, was done without compensation. The translation of the documents was undertaken with great seriousness, with several rounds of checking and re-checking the material, in an attempt to preserve the unique identity and style of each of the 13 women in both English and Sinhala.



End of the Passing Stage

The Passing Stage writing process finally came to an end in April 2012. The work of the thirteen women writers over a period of 1.5 years produced a 300-page manuscript. It was a bilingual manuscript, with the Sinhala and English text side by side. Unfortunately, the group was not able to afford the time and expense needed for a full Tamil translation of the work.

“ This project starts with an analysis of the women themselves and moves out in slowly widening circles, from immediate family to wider family, to attitudes towards education and health and values to areas of religion and politics.

The objective is to reach insight, through honest reflection on ourselves and our surrounding realities – and an unravelling of the baggage that we inherit as women, caught in the cross roads of modernity and tradition, choices and blame, and struggle to carry, as we try to hold on to the essence of our individual spirits.

For nothing, in my experience, subverts the private and public – smudging and sometimes completely inverting the boundaries between the two – like the experience of having a child. The decision to administer a vaccine, to leave a failed marriage, to stop worshipping a statue we no longer pray to – these are no longer personal decisions.”

Ruwanthie de Chickera
Reflections on the Passing Stage project, 2011

Contributing artists

Chamila Pieris | Dilrukshi Fonseka | Izhara Huzair Zubair

Kaushalya Fernando | Kishani Pilapitiya | Malkanthi Jayasinghe

Nadie Kammallaweera | Nayomi Samudrika Gunasiri

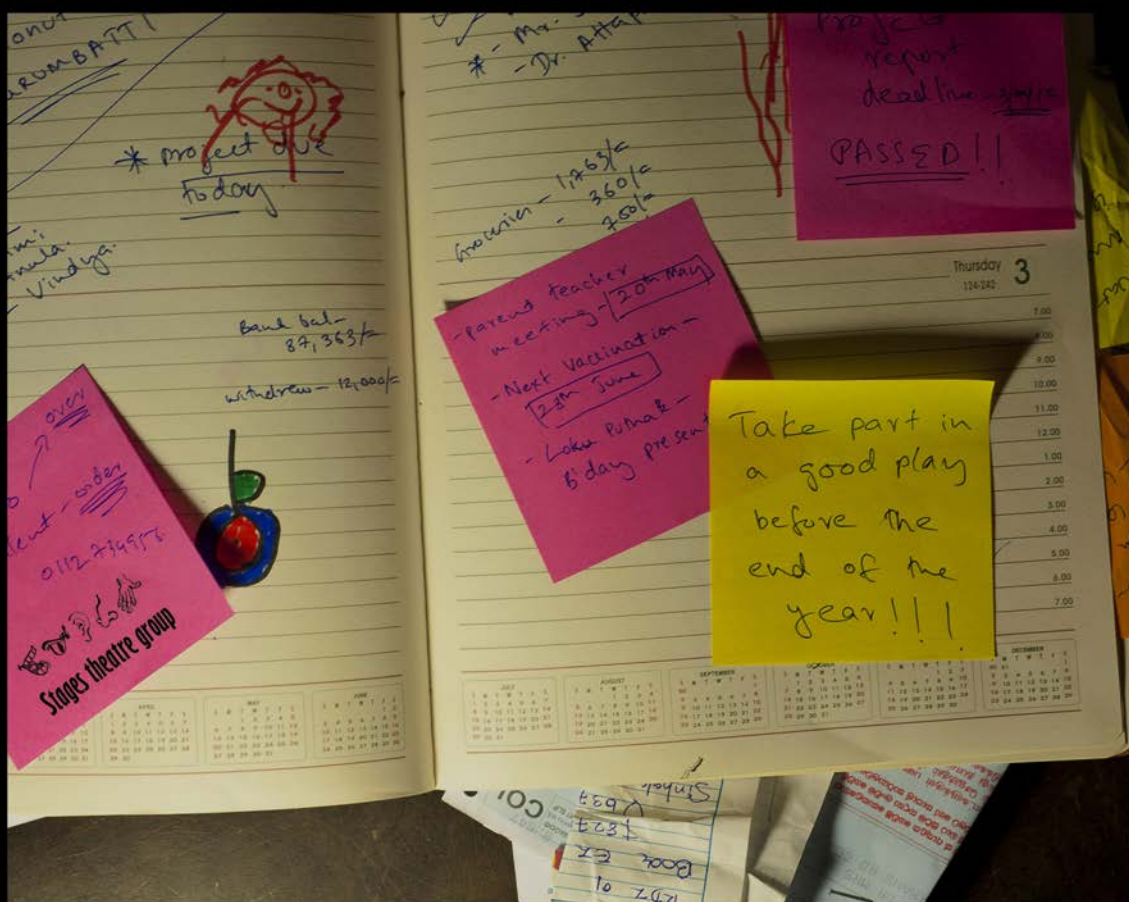
Niranjala Manjarie | Ruwanthie de Chickera | Sudeshna Gunawardena

Tracy Holsinger | + One more

PART TWO :

CAST AS MOTHER

a dramatized reading of the Passing Stage



For one year 13 women of the stage wrote about their experiences of motherhood, through the lens of theatre. *Cast as Mother*, a play based on these writings, will be staged in September. An exclusive reading of excerpts will be presented by the writers themselves in May.

CAST AS MOTHER

A READING 24th MAY 2012 AT 7:30PM

AT THE LIONEL WENDT THEATRE

CHAMILA
PIERIS

DILRUKSHI
FONSEKA

IZHARA
HUZAIR ZUBAIR

KAUSHALYA
FERNANDO

KISHANI
PILAPITIYA

MALKANTHI
JAYASINGHE

NADIE
KAMMALLAWEERA

NAYOMI
GUNASIRI

NIRANJALA
MANJARIE

RUWANATHIE
DE CHICKERA

SUDESHNA
GUNAWARDENA

TRACY
HOLSINGER

and
ONE MORE

ENTRY BY INVITATION
PLEASE CONTACT
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BEFORE MAY 22ND

People behind Cast as Mother

Cast as Mother was a dramatized reading of the Passing Stage project. It was performed only one day and was a free event held at the Lionel Wendt Theatre in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Some of the women who wrote for the Passing Stage project performed in Cast as Mother. However, not all of the women who wrote, performed. And not all of the people who performed in Cast as Mother were writers of the Passing Stage manuscript.



Cast and Crew

Cast

**Chamila Pieris
Dilrukshi Fonseka
Hasini Haputhanthri
Izhara Huzair Zubair
Kaushalya Fernando
Lakmini Seneviratne
Malkanthi Jayasinghe
Malshani Delgahapitiya**

**Nadie Kammallaweera
Nayomi Gunasiri
Niranjala Manjarie
Pasan Ranaweera
Prasad Pereira
Ruwanthie de Chickera
Shenali Rajkumar
Tracy Holsinger**

Production Team

**Director
Producer
Production Coordinator
Stage Manager
Lights
Sounds
Poster Design
Production Team**

**Ruwanthie de Chickera
Sandamali Wijeratne
Nadya Perera
Themal Ellawela
Thushara Hettihamu
Dino Corera
Deshan Tennakoon
Bimsara Premaratne, Megal Perera, Kaushalya Attygalle,
Thanuja Jayawardena, Chathura Hewamallika,
Mayanthi de Silva, Adam Kenny, Pasan Ranaweera,
Gihan de Chickera, Sabreena Niles, Imani Perera,
Chinthaka Fernando, Udesch Hetti, Amal de Chickera
Sanjaya Senanayaka
Pasan Ranaweera, Ruvin de Silva, Deshan Tennakoon**

**Filming
Photography**

" I personally feel that the theme of motherhood hasn't been discussed broadly in terms of different aspects, except for a few highly subjective concepts such as sacrifice, dedication and tolerance. This subject has been viewed mostly through a patriarchal perspective. We are women. As loving mothers and brave women with strong expression, we shared our story in different ways. And we believed that this story was highly important for the general public as well. "

*Interview with Nadie Kammallaweera
conducted by Kaushi Attygalle, October 2019*



Significance of Cast as Mother

Cast as Mother, in many ways, was a pioneering piece of theatre. At its very outset, it gathered onto one stage, some of the most respected contemporary women artists of the Sinhala and English Theatres in Sri Lanka. Seeing these women perform together was captivating in itself; but even more powerful was seeing them performing something so deeply personal – their lives as mothers. Motherhood had not been deconstructed and laid bare in this manner on the Sri Lankan stage before.

Bilingual, Verbatim Reading

There were two important aspects of the performance of Cast as Mother. The Passing Stage brought together, in an intimate writing process, artists of the Sinhala and English Stage in Sri Lanka. In performance of this manuscript, the bilingualism of the project was protected. Great care was taken to integrate the two languages in performance and also creatively combine the skills and styles of the artists of the different language theatres. The play was truly bilingual, rather than translated – in that it actively drew on the energy of a bilingual cast – in its conception, development and performance. This pioneering bilingual theatre effort in Sri Lanka introduced audiences to artists they were not familiar with.

The decision to stick strictly to the words of the Passing Stage manuscript was also an important creative decision. It led to artists having to find creative ways to work within the tasks which led to breakthroughs in interpretation.



Structuring Cast as Mother

Once it was decided that the play would be a dramatized reading of the Passing Stage project, there was a natural structure that emerged for the performance. This structure was, quite simply, the Seven Writing Tasks of the Passing Stage project placed in chronological order, held together by a prologue.



Prologue :

Gathering the 13 women artists for the Passing Stage project.

Mirroring the beginning of the project, which literally began as a casual conversation between two friends, this play too begins with a casual conversation – under house lights, before the THIRD BELL. Ruwanthie and Nadie meet and talk about their idea. By the time the THIRD BELL rings, 13 artist mothers have joined the project.



Scene 1 :

The first task of the Passing Stage – Letters

In a series of short scenes, and in pairs, the women read out 7 letters of the manuscript. The letters are all read Verbatim. There is a mix of languages – and a blend of actresses from the Sinhala and English stages reading.

The 07 letters are - a letter to my mother, a letter to Siddhartha, a letter to my husband, a letter to my maid, a letter to my child's paediatrician, a letter to the principal, a letter to my child.



Scene 2 :

The second task of the Passing Stage - Lists

13 actresses took part in this scene – signifying the 13 women who wrote. They read excerpts of the several lists of the Passing Stage project. The choreography of the scene is a mix between the staid, seriousness of making lists and the mad chaos of motherhood. For this scene, something akin to the children’s game ‘Musical Chairs’ was used.

The women list the following things – The Biggest Lies I have uncovered, The Greatest Truths I have discovered, The way I have changed beyond recognition, What I want my kids to know about me, What I don’t want my kids to know about me.



Scene 3 :

The fourth task of the Passing Stage - Songs

For the 4th Task of the Passing Stage project, the women were asked to write subversive songs, lullabies, children's stories; merging form from childhood and content from adulthood. The song chosen for performance was about the guarded sex that takes place between parents in a house with small children. Sung to the popular children's song 'The Wheels of the Bus go round and round', the first line of the song is 'The children of the house have fallen asleep'.

This scene was performed by four actresses using one of the male presenters as a man prop.



Scene 4 :

The sixth task of the Passing Stage - Reviews

Considering an artist's familiarity with being reviewed, the 6th Task was an invitation to the women to view their own lives from an outside perspective. Of the several reviews that came in – two were selected for performance. (1) A student review of a play in which two students discuss their analysis of a neurotic, complicated woman. (2) Kalumaali – a fairytale - in which two women tell the story of the fairy tale of Kalumaali, the antitheses to a heroine princess .



Scene 5 :

The seventh task of the Passing Stage - Group Discussion

In the writing process, it was only during the seventh and final task that the women ultimately met. And when they met, they sat round in a circle and participated in the final task of the project. Everyone contributed their opinions on a range of topics ranging from politics, religion, country, marriage, sex, education... etc...

In the final scene of the play, the women replicate this casual and intimate structure on stage. 13 actresses sit down in a circle and read out opinions under what we have inherited, what we believe, what we will pass on.



Rehearsing Cast as Mother

Rehearsals for this play were a riot. Why wouldn't they be? The cast was utterly motivated, full of respect for each other and determined to have a good time.

The material of the manuscript was brutally honest and terribly funny. Anyone who was a mother had lived it. Anyone who had a mother could relate to it. The different ages of the cast – younger, single artists as well as older artists with children - created an added dynamic around the subject matter of the manuscript. The artists were eager to get into the material of the manuscript. They were happy to spend hours analyzing it, connecting with their own experiences, comparing notes. There were several journeys that began at rehearsal, which the audience never knew..

For instance, when rehearsals first began, the gathered crowd was so enthusiastic about the material in the manuscript that they wanted to write completely new plays based on it. And they did... in fact they actually made 15 such short scripts.

The women artists were excited to work together. Some of them had admired each other from afar for a long time. The women were keen to stand shoulder to shoulder with each other – as mothers, as artists, as leaders - and say something deeply personal, supported by a powerful collective.

Rehearsals took place in homes, in play schools, amidst children, and in schools. Babysitting was arranged at several rehearsals so women could bring their children with them. And they did. Readings, devising, rehearsals were all well attended. Someone always brought some good cooked food. Rehearsals always had games. Lots and lots of games. And there was always also lots of storytelling.

No one got paid. This entire play was done on a shoe-string budget. No money was made. No tickets were sold. The women had something to say. This is why they had written. This is why they were performing. The cast was stellar, the material was original and the topic was controversial. We were ready to go.





Performing Cast as Mother

So how did the play actually move from Manuscript to Performance, or from Page to Stage? To understand this process a bit better, we will be examining the making of ONE SCENE in this chapter of the resource pack. We will be looking at how the artists moved from a manuscript of material to a concept for a scene that could be performed. For this exercise we chose the Task LETTERS.

Choosing the letters

In the Passing Stage manuscript the LETTERS were the most powerful component. But there were over 60 letters in the manuscript. So how was the selection to be made for performance? What letters would we read? How many would we read? These were all questions that had to be considered.

The decision was taken early to pick letters which, when put together, represented many different vital aspects of a mother's life – her relationship with her own mother, her child, husband, her religion, maid/nanny, paediatrician, and school principal. That would be 7 letters. Within a project of 7 tasks, this number seemed to have resonance.

So we now had balance and we had some rationale for moving forward.

Analysing the letter

The letters had to be grouped and scrutinized further. Obviously we were now looking for the letters that would be best to perform. But what makes a letter performable? A strong structure? Good expression? A dramatic situation? Yes all that but then, how do you perform a letter? Obviously a letter could be just read, from beginning to end by one person – and this would be a performance, but the artists were keen to bring something more on to the stage. We kept reading the letters at rehearsal, experimenting with them and then we stumbled upon a breakthrough.

A letter to a principal

In a letter addressed to a school principal, a mother apologises profusely for the crime of forgetting the first day of her five-year old son's school. Within the intimidating culture of schools in Sri Lanka and the harsh criticism that mothers face from society in relation to their children's education, missing the first day of your child's school could be a mortifying experience for a parent. In the letter, the mother agonizes over her guilt, her wretchedness, her frustration, fear and self-loathing for the crime she has committed, coming up with several plans in her head on how to face the situation.

Voices in the letter

When the director analysed this (very funny) letter, she discovered that this emotional rollercoaster of a letter actually had two clear and distinct voices. The mother in this letter had two clear cut and contradictory emotions. The first, obvious voice was the voice of fear, self-loathing and panic. The second voice was a voice of frustration built on a sense of entitlement, outrage and confidence.



Devising exercise

The artists were given the letter to workshop – and to pull the two voices apart in performance. Two entirely coherent letters, almost equal in length emerged from the single document. What it did reveal, of course, was that within the submissive voice of the mother was also the voice of confidence and anger and indignation at the grovelling and scraping that was necessary before the education system.

Dramatizing the letter

Now that it was clear that there were two distinct voices in the single letter – the next set of questions were about the performance of this document. Should it be performed by one person reading it twice? Or two people reading the letter together? Or should the letters be read separately?

Then came the idea to separate the two voices in the letter into two languages. Now, because the Passing Stage Manuscript already existed in both English and Sinhala, this could be done instantly.

The letter was divided into the Confident voice - performed in English and the Intimidated voice - performed in Sinhala. A situation of two mothers – both guilty of the same crime, both speaking to the same principal, but one who has some confidence and the other completely intimidated.

The reading worked. It was funny. It had balance. It was dramatic. But much more importantly it had achieved something vital for it to be powerful in performance – it had achieved an added resonance. The lines, when performed, now spoke of things which were more subtle and deeper than the original lines of the letter when they lay dormant on the page.

Suddenly this letter was dealing with power structures of class and language within an unfair education system. The original letter, when performed, was a political commentary on the power dynamics of language.



Layering the letters

This breakthrough gave us the vital ingredient for the structure of performance that we needed for the letters. Through this exercise we decided that the 07 letters we picked would be performed by two artists each – and the letters chosen would be ones which contained an added voice, a hidden conflict, a unarticulated contradiction – in other words, the potential for another layer of interpretation.

And so it was in holding these two voices together - allowing them to coexist, permitting them to acknowledge each other, reject each other or be oblivious to the other - that we would be revealing some of the deeper contradictions within motherhood. Mothers who hate and need their own mothers. Mothers who fall in love with the gods they pray to and the doctors they visit. Mothers who intimidate weaker, poorer mothers. Mothers who loathe but also pander to authority and power.







Analysing one scene of Cast as Mother

In this section of the resource pack, we will be taking you through the various steps which we took in moving the Letter to the Principal from page to performance. We hope you find this practical analysis useful.

Step 1 : Read The Original Letter In Full.

CALIBRI - LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Principal Sir,

When I reflect on why I am this terrified of you, I am deeply ashamed. Who are you? Who am I? How did you become so powerful to render me so full of fear? How did you gather this amount of power? Why do we bestow this amount of power on you?

I forgot the first day that I was supposed to bring my child to school... Actually, what happened was I confused the dates. However, in a letter bearing your majestic signature, a sentence, underlined, for emphasis, stated that it was imperative that the child be brought to school on the 7th morning. However, I managed to register this sentence only on the 7th and that too after twelve noon. I cannot put into words the immense dread and terror I felt when I first saw this sentence. A wrenching pain from deep within my gut, spread all over my whole being. I could not speak. I felt a violent shuddering inside me. I was rendered hideously helpless. How did you rise to possess such power? I have only met you on one occasion. You know nothing about me. But now you may judge me and reach a conclusion - 'an irresponsible parent.' 'an absolutely

disorganised adult.' 'a mad person.' 'a mother who does not give a damn about her children.' 'what is the use of such mothers?' Now you can arrive at any of the above conclusions.

You are a hero. I am a maggot.

I don't know the difference in age between us. But I am a 35 year old adult. Earning on my own, putting up with immeasurable hardship, bringing up my child, caring for my parents, keeping my husband safe - a real life adult. In addition to this, I am an actress. I have, on stage, given many inspired performances, and have enjoyed the admiration of many theatre-goers. People know who I am.

I am a graduate. I have won several awards. People regard me as an intelligent woman. I even have a good, keen sense of society and politics. I write on important matters. I am aware that my sense for language is extremely refined... I have many things more to say about myself. Several men have loved me deeply - some of them still love me... But whatever the heck else I have, (and am) is useless. Before your awesome presence I am nothing but a helpless, maggot, severed in two and writhing.

I have committed a heinous crime. I forgot the very first day that I had to bring my child to school. I destroyed his opportunity of getting accustomed to his class atmosphere, of getting to know his teacher. I am a mother worthy of being stoned to death.

It is possible for me to fall at the feet of my child and ask for his forgiveness. I believe that he will not view this great sin as any reflection of the measure of my love for him. I believed I have loved him enough to redeem myself and secure his forgiveness. But.... Can't say... what I have done is an oversight that should not have been committed, on any count, by a mother. Dear Lord Buddha. Help me.

Now what do I say to you when I come to school on Monday? If I trash the lie and stick with the truth, you will form such a low opinion of me. I should create a big, fat fib. If not. 'I didn't see this section of the letter. It's amazing. I have read this letter more than ten times to date. But, sir, I did not see that sentence. I only saw it on Friday afternoon ... then it was much too late....' Forget it. That will be suicide.

I clutch my heaving stomach and call Cambria. 'Cambri.... I am dead...' She tells me not to be frightened. Cambria is someone who possesses a much stronger personality than me. She tells me that I have not committed a wrong. But that it's a pity that I was not able to attend this event. 'Cambri... shall I tell the truth?' 'No. say that due to an unavoidable situation, you could not make it.'..... an unavoidable emergency situation!

My heart knows that I am a mother, deeply committed to my responsibilities by my child. But I make mistakes. People older than me tell me I make mistakes.

Please understand me. Whatever lies I conjure up for you on Monday, don't judge me. I intend to tell you that, because I was in hospital, I was not able to bring my child to school. That I was struck down by some serious illness and that my (poor) husband was so completely distraught and distracted that I was not able to send the child to school even with him... is what I think I will say. When I say this, the expression on my face should be one of self confidence. Skia Akka advised me that the reason I put forward should be that I had come down with the flu and had to be hospitalised and that because of the risk of it turning into pneumonia the doctor refused to discharge me.

Please do not judge me based on this incident. Please be so kind as to release me from this mountain of guilt. You will see, in the future, that I am not a bad mother.

Calibri Basnayaka
(Aquila Basnayaka's mother)

Step 2 : Read the letter again and separate the two voices of confidence/outrage and submission/fear.

Principal Sir,

When I reflect on why I am this terrified of you, I am deeply ashamed. Who are you? Who am I? How did you become so powerful to render me so full of fear? How did you gather this amount of power? Why do we bestow this amount of power on you?

I forgot the first day that I was supposed to bring my child to school...

I forgot the first day that I was supposed to bring my child to school...

Actually what happened was I confused the dates. However, in a letter bearing your majestic signature, a sentence, underlined, for emphasis, stated that it was imperative that the child be brought to school on the 7th morning. However, I managed to register this sentence only on the 7th and that too after twelve noon.

I cannot put into words the immense dread and terror I felt when I first saw this sentence. A wrenching pain from deep within my gut, spread all over my whole being. I could not speak. I felt a violent shuddering inside me.

I was rendered hideously helpless. How did you rise to possess such power? I have only met you on one occasion. You know nothing about me.

But now you may judge me and reach a conclusion - 'an irresponsible parent.' 'an absolutely disorganised adult.' 'a mad person.'

STEP 3 : NOW SEPARATE THE SINGLE INTO TWO INDEPENDENT LETTERS IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE OF TONE.

MOTHER 1 – CONFIDENT and Outraged

Principal,

Why do we bestow this amount of power on you? Who are you? Who am I?

I forgot the first day that I was supposed to bring my child to school...

Actually what happened was I confused the dates. However, in a letter bearing your majestic signature, a sentence, underlined, for emphasis, stated that it was imperative that the child be brought to school on the 7th morning. However, I managed to register this sentence only on the 7th and that too after twelve noon.

I was rendered hideously helpless. How did you rise to possess such power? I have only met you on one occasion. You know nothing about me.

MOTHER 2 – SUBMISSIVE – and Fearful

Sir,

When I reflect on why I am this terrified of you, I am deeply ashamed. How did you become so powerful to render me so full of fear? How did you gather this amount of power?

I forgot the first day that I was supposed to bring my child to school...

I cannot put into words the immense dread and terror I felt when I first saw this sentence. A wrenching pain from deep within my gut, spread all over my whole being. I could not speak. I felt a violent shuddering inside me.

But now you may judge me and reach a conclusion - 'an irresponsible parent.' 'an absolutely disorganised adult.' 'a mad person.'

Step 4 : now translate one voice into another language, put the languages back together for performance.

Two women are on stage – parallel to each other. They both have a letter in their hand and look out to the audience. Mother 1 is seated comfortably in a chair. Mother 2 is standing nervously.

Mother 1 : Principal ...

Mother 2 : සර්... ඔබට මා මේසා බිය වන්නේ
ඇයිදැයි සිතෙන විට මට ඇතිවන්නේ මහත් ලැජ්ජාවකි.

Mother 1 : Who are you? Who am I ?

Mother 2 : මා මේ තරම් භීතියකට පත් කරන්නට තරම් ඔබ බලවත් වූයේ කෙසේද?
ඒ සා බලයක් ඔබ හිමි කරගත්තේ කෙසේද?

Mother 1 : Why do we bestow this amount of power on you?

Mother 2 : මගේ පුතා මුල්වරට පාසලට රැගෙන ඒමට තිබූ දිනය මට මතක නැති විය...

Mother 1 : I forgot the first day that I was supposed to bring my child to school...
Actually what happened was I confused the dates. However, in a letter
bearing your majestic signature, a sentence, underlined for emphasis,
stated that it was imperative that the child be brought to school on the
7th morning. When I saw this, it was afternoon.

Mother 2 : ඔබ දුටු මොහොතේ මා තුළ ඇති වූ අධිකතර කම්පනයත් හයංකාරත්වයත්
කොපමණදැයි මට වචනවලට නැගිය නොහැක. මගේ ආමාශය තුළින් කැකෑරෙමින්
ආ වේදනාවක් මුළු ශරීරයම වෙලා ගත්තේය. මට කතා කළ නොහැකි විය.

Mother 1 : I was rendered hideously helpless. How did you rise to possess
such power? I have only met you on one occasion.
You know nothing about me!

Mother 2 : ඉතිං ඔබ මා විනිශ්චය කර තීරණයකට එළඹෙන්න.
"වගකීමක් නැති දෙමාපියෙක්", " කිසිම පිළිවෙළක් නැති වැඩිහිටියෙක්",
"පිස්සු මනුස්සයෙක්"

"

Ending of Cast as Mother

Earlier on in this resource pack we mentioned the manner in which the performance of Cast as Mother began. It began with a casual conversation on stage between Ruwanthie and Nadie – much in the same way that the process of the Passing Stage began. Well the ending of the play was as significant... because the artists continued to weave into the format and structure of the play, their experience of motherhood. The presence of young children was very strong right through the 1 ½ year writing process of Passing Stage and the rehearsal process of Cast as Mother. Not only were the women writing about their children, they were also having to absorb them in the process itself.

Mothers are used to constant interruption and distraction and hold on tightly to anything that will provide them with a solid structure to make it through one day to the next. So yes, the Passing Stage and Cast as Mother provided these women artists with this kind of structure – be it the routine of writing in solitude at the end of one's day, or making it for rehearsals three times a week, or practicing one's lines locked up in the bathroom.

But whatever provides mothers such breaks or structure or higher purpose, there is nothing that levels priority faster than the genuine needs of a child. No matter whose child it may be, when a child is in need, everything stops. Many-a-time rehearsals were scrapped, shortened, interrupted, postponed because of a child-related emergency. There were many children, and there were various emergencies. But this was the unspoken non-negotiable in the process. Everyone implicitly agreed. No one complained. Not even when the most interesting thing about to happen was scuppered by the needs of a small child.

But back to our final question - How then did Cast as Mother end?

Let's return to the Lionel Wendt Stage – where the audience and performers have been wrapped up in a riotous deconstruction of motherhood for the past hour... We have now reached our final task. Task 7. Group Discussion.

13 women are seated on stage discussing their country. What did we inherit? What do we believe? What will we pass on? The women are speaking with great sincerity...

- Kaushi : මගේ තාත්තා මට කියලා දුන්නේ මගේ රට හුඟක් විශේෂයි කියලා.
ඒ වගේම මගේ රටේ මිනිස්සු - ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ මිනිස්සු ඉතාම සුහද,
කරුණාවන්ත අය කියලා.
- Dil : My parents... they love Sri Lanka.
And this was always something that they held onto.
- Manjari : මගේ අම්මා තාත්තා මට කියා දුන්නේ කොන්දේසි විරහිතව තමන්ගේ රටට ආදරය
කරන්න කියලයි. ඒ ගොල්ලන්ට අනුව මේ තමයි ලෝකෙන්ම සුන්දරම රට.
- Ruwa : what has life taught me about my country?
- Izaara : I am increasingly disappointed and disillusioned with what my
parents told me Sri Lankans were. I look around me and get so upset
with how foolish and selfish my countrymen are becoming... it's very
difficult to keep on living here.
- Chamila : මගේ වටේ ඉන්න මිනිස්සු හිතන පතන විදිය ගත්තහම, මම එන්න එන්නම
මගේ රට වැසියන් නාඳුනන කෙනෙක් බවට පත්වෙමින් ඉන්න බව මට හැඟෙනවා.
මට ලොකු හුදෙකලා බවත් දැනෙනවා.
- Tracy : I think that my countrymen just grow stupider every day
and our vision gets smaller and smaller and more petty every day.
- Nayomi : මේ රට ගැන මට කියන්න ඕනෙ දේ කියන්න... විවේචනය කරන්න දැන් ඉඩක් නැහැ...
ඒකට තවදුරටත් කිසිම වටිනාකමක් නැහැ. මිනිස්සු විවේචන වලට හරි බයයි.
ඒකට ඉඩක් නැහැ. මේක බේදනීය තත්ත්වයක්.

The women pause and look at each other.

Tracy : Ok! I'm going to jazz it up a bit girls. I want to talk about - Sex... Sex.
Sexuality. My body. Masturbation. The whole works... So ready to start?
There is a trickle of expectation and general enthusiasm from the women
seated in the circle.

Tracy : Ok so....

Suddenly, Kaushi interrupts.

Kaushi : Excuse me Tracy. Did you see Haimi anywhere?

Nadie : What? Here? She was backstage... Haimi? Haimi?

Nadie gets up and runs backstage. Kaushi follows.

A few of the other women also get up and follow.

Ruwa : House lights! Put the house lights on... Has anyone seen a little girl...?

House Lights come on

Chamila runs in from backstage

Chamila : මෙනන මේ.

Kaushi starts yelling

Kaushi : අයියෝ! කොහෙද ගියේ? කෝ මල්ලි? Aney Excuse රුවා

Kaushi walks off stage yelling

Now the other women are all standing up.

Picking up bags, putting on shoes etc...

Izara : Ru I have to go anyway love — kids need to be put to sleep.
Manjarie : මටත් බන් . පොඩි එකා අඩනව ලු . කෝල්ස් එනවා අම්මානට.
Nadie : Ok. Ok machang.

General confusion and disintegration
as the women all leave the stage abruptly.

End of the play.



End of the resource pack.

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

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

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

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