

## Ruwanthie de Chickera – CV

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Date of Birth 16<sup>th</sup> September 1975

### Profile

I am a freelance script-writer, theatre director and lecturer.

I am a Founder Member and Artistic Director of 'Stages Theatre Group', a theatre company committed to producing cutting edge, socially conscious, original Sri Lankan theatre.

### Works - Written/Directed/Translated/Edited

2014 – *Director/Co-writer/Co-conceptualiser – **Grease Yaka** – (Full length play. Lang – English/Sinhala)*

A devised play created with students of a leading State boys school, that looks at the creation, manipulation and spread of social phobia through the strange Sri Lankan phenomenon, the infamous Grease Yaka (Grease Daemon). This play was performed at the Lionel Wendt Theatre in August 2014.

2014 – *Writer/Co-conceptualiser – **Walking Path - a play without words** – (Full length play. No language)*

A non-verbal, devised play about the widespread urban beautification drive in post-war Sri Lanka. This play was conceptualised with Jayampathi Guruge. It was performed at the Lionel Wendt Theatre in July 2014, re-run in November 2014 and performed at THESPO, in Mumbai in December 2014 – where it won several awards.

2013 – *Supervisor, Dramaturge - **Sellotape** – (Full length play. Lang – Sinhala) the final year student production of the Students of the Performing Arts Campus.*

Sellotape is a piece of devised theatre, created entirely out of a piece of sticky tape. It looks at the concept of human attachment – in relationships, to religion, to materialism and ambition – through the analysis of the various qualities of sticky tape.

2012 – *Director/Co-writer/Translator - **Kalumaali – a fairy tale for grown-ups** – (Full length play. Lang – English/Sinhala)*

A play which looks at the experience parenting in the modern world, through the telling of modern fairy tales. Kalumaali opened in Colombo in September 2012. The same cast performed this play in English and in Sinhala.

2012 – *Director/Co-writer/Actor - **Cast as Mother** – (Full length play. Lang – English/Sinhala)*

Thirteen actresses from the English and Sinhala stage read and performed pieces on the subject of being an artist mother. Performed in May 2012, in Colombo.

2011 – *Conceptualizer/Co-translator/Co-Editor - **The Passing Stage** – (A manuscript. Lang – English/Sinhala)*

A collection of 300 pages of material collected over a period of a year, where 13 women of the Stage, wrote about their experience of motherhood, against the backdrop of their lives in the theatre.

2011 – *Supervisor/Director/Dramaturge/Editor - **In Search of Sivaramani** –(Full length play. Lang Sinhala/Tamil) The final year student production of the Students of the Performing Arts Campus.*

Four Sinhala student writers search for the true identity and story behind the illusive Tamil Poet – Sivaramani – who in the 80s, against the backdrop of mounting ethnic war in Sri Lanka, set fire to her poetry and killed herself. Performed in March, 2010, in Colombo.

2009 – *Co-Editor - **The Chinaman** – (Novel. Lang - English)*

Award winning book by Shehan Karunathilake. ‘Chinaman’ won the Gratien award for best creative writing in Sri Lanka, and the Jaipur award for best South Asian Literature.

2008 - *Co - Screenwriter - **‘Machan’**– (Full length feature film. Lang – Sinhala/English)*

A tragicomedy based on the true story of 23 Sri Lankans who form themselves into a bogus Handball team in order to evade immigration laws. Directed by Uberto Pasolini, producer of ‘The Full Monty’. The show ran for a 100 days in Cinemas in Sri Lanka and has won several international and national awards.

2008 – *Director - **‘Forum at the Punchi’** – (Full length Play. Lang English/Sinhala)*

Five nights of Forum Theatre examining the issues of The Ethnic Conflict and Marital Rape. Performed at the Punchi Theatre, Colombo in March 2008.

2007 – *Conceptualizer/Writer - **The Unfortunate Incident** – (working title) (Installation Theatre. Lang – English/Sinhala/Tamil)*

A verbatim theatre style installation/performance which examines the history of mass massacres in Sri Lanka – through an examination of the Bindunuwewa massacre. This project was commissioned by the University of Manchester as part of their In Place of War project. It was developed in collaboration with three Sri Lankan lawyers. Its production in Sri Lanka is currently under discussion.

2007 - *Playwright/Director - ‘Colombo – her streets’ – (Dance performance. Lang – English/Sinhala/Tamil)*

The piece looks at being young, Tamil and female in a society where racism on the streets is increasing. The performance evolved out of a series of workshops conducted with the senior students of a girls’ school in Colombo. It was developed with a Bharatha Natyam dancer. Performed at the Bishop’s College Auditorium in December 2008.

2007 - *Director - ‘CHECKPOINT – three strangely normal plays’ – (Full length play. Lang - English)*

‘Checkpoint’ is an evolving production that captures the strange political realities of current life in Sri Lanka. Checkpoint comprises three short plays. A one-man show, verbatim theatre and forum theatre. CHECKPOINT was first performed in Colombo, in 2001. It was re-created for performance in Colombo in 2006. It has also been toured to the following cities in India - Delhi, Calcutta, Lucknow, Varanasi, Boobaneshwar and Mysore, in 2006. CHECKPOINT was selected for performance at the National School of Drama in Delhi, 2006 and the ‘MetroFest’ international theatre festival organised by ‘The Hindu’ (the newspaper), in Chennai, 2007.

2006 – *Playwright/Director - ‘24 hrs’ (One act verbatim play. Lang – English)*

A verbatim style examination of events, reported in the Sri Lanka media, within a time frame of 24 hours. 24 hrs is part of the production ‘Checkpoint’.

2005 - *Playwright/Director - ‘A poet, a puppet and papadam’ – (Two one act plays. Lang – English/Sinhala)*

Two plays based on the works of Indian writer, Mahasweta Devi, performed by the students of the University of Colombo, in Colombo. The plays look at the life giving but destructive relationship between an artist and his work of art.

2005/6 - *Director - ‘Measure for Measure’ – (Full length play. Lang- English)*

A play produced with secondary students, which looked at the emerging culture of ‘reality shows’ through Shakespeare’s text. The all-girl cast performed in Colombo and were invited to perform at the National School of Drama, New Delhi, at their annual International Theatre Festival ‘Bharatrang’, in 2006. They were the first student cast to perform at this festival.

2004 - *Writer/Director - ‘Babur - Memories of a Legend’ – (Full length play. Lang – English/Hindi/Sinhala/Urdu)*

This project, commissioned by the Japan Foundation, brought together fifteen artists and five directors from five countries. The script was an amalgamation of the Memoirs of the First Mogul emperor to invade the Indian Subcontinent and the writings of current Islamic political bloggers on the internet. The play was premiered in Tokyo and then toured to Kyoto and Delhi.

2003 - *Playwright/Director - ‘The Mirror Making Factory’ – (Full length play. Lang – English/Sinhala)*

A play devised through a year long series of workshops with the clients of the Institute for Mental Health in Sri Lanka. This satirical play looked at the impact of social conditioning against the stigma against mental patients within Sri Lankan society.

2003 - Director - **'Romeo and Juliet'** – (One act play. Lang – English)

A shortened version of the original which focused on the developing lives and relationship between the three female leads - Juliette, Lady Capulet and the Nurse. Performed by an all girl cast, of Methodist College, the play won the highly competitive Island wide Inter-School Shakespeare Drama Competition.

2002 - Director/Dramaturge - **'Filling the Blanks'** (Full length play. Lang – English/Sinhala)

A play written by five new writers for the 'Contacting the World' festival. Performed in Colombo, Manchester and Jaffna. The play, written and produced at the point of the historic ceasefire in Sri Lanka, looked at the issues of ownership of land, within a situation of prolonged warfare. This play was one of the first to travel up the re-opened road to the North of the country for performance.

2002 - Director/Dramaturge - **Untitled Kurdish play** – (Lang – Kurdish/English)

A play developed through a series of workshops with a Kurdish Refugee group in Manchester, based on the legend of a Kurdish rebel leader who stood up against the British rule. This was performed for the Refugee Festival held in Manchester.

2002- Assistant Director - **'Female Parts'** (Lang – English)

Four short plays by Dario Fo, performed by university students at the Contact Theatre, Manchester.

2001 – Writer/Director - **'Porcelain Bricks'** – (One act play. Lang – English)

A one-man-show on the issue of incest, developed with a performance artist and shown as part of ShowReal, at the Contact Theatre, Manchester.

2001 - Director - **'Last Bus eke kathawa'** (the story of the last bus) – (One act play. Lang – English)

A one-man-show – originally in Sinhala written by Dhananjaya Karunaratne – which examines the late 80s 'Reign of Terror' in Sri Lanka. This show has been show-cased in Colombo, Kandy, Tokyo, Delhi, Chennai, Calcutta and Manchester.

2000 - Dramaturge/Director - **'The Absentee'** – (Full length play. Lang – English)

An abstract play, developed through a series of writing workshops with 14 – 18 year old students, about a girl who never appears on stage.

2000 – Playwright/Director - **'Two times Two is Two'** (Full length play. Lang – English)

An absurd play which examines the workings of the subconscious. Performed in Colombo and later invited for performance to Delhi for the 2003 Bharatrang Festival of the National School of Drama.

1999 - *Co-playwright - "Something Blue" – (Full length internet play. Lang – English)*

A group play developed over the Internet with 11 other writers. Presented at Interplay, the Festival of Young Playwrights, Australia.

1998 – *Playwright - 'Middle of Silence' – (Full length Play. Lang – English)*

Premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London, directed by Indu Rubasingham (under the title 'The Crutch'), later produced in Colombo by Jerome de Silva, and in Bangalore and Mumbai by Arundhati Raja. Most recently translated into Pilipino and produced in Manila.

## **Awards Won**

### **Film**

2009, 2008 – Awards for the film '**Machan**'

Venice film festival - Europa Cinemas Label Award (Best Film) and FEDIC Jury Prize

Kerala Film Festival - Audience Award

Palm Beach Festival - Best Feature Award (joint winner with SKINS)

Transilvania Film Festival - Audience Award

Art Film Fest, Slovakia - Honorary Award of the Mayor of Trencin

Magna Grecia Film Festival - Golden Column Special Jury Award

Brussels International Film Fest - Golden Iris and RTBF for best Film

Amsterdam Rialto Film Festival - Audience Award

Durban International Film Festival - Best Screenplay Award

Sao Paulo International Film festival - Nominated for International Jury Award

Sarasavi Awards, Sri Lanka – Six awards, including Best Film, Best Script

SIGNIS Awards Sri Lanka – Nine awards, including Best Film, Best Script

**Machan** has been screened at over 25 international film festivals, including - Venice, Toronto, Hamburg, Eurasia, Sao Paolo, Dubai, Kerala, Chennai, Pune, Palm Springs, Rotterdam, Miami, Hong Kong, Palm Beach, Washington, Seattle, Shanghai, Brussels, Amsterdam, Durban, Cambridge, Rio.

### **Theatre**

2014 – Best Production, Best Ensemble and Best Direction for "**WALKING PATH – a play without words**" – at the THESPO international youth theatre festival, Mumbai.

2013 – Short listed for the Gratiaen Award for "**Kalumaali – a Fairy tale for grown ups**"

2006 – Theatre Pasta International award for outstanding achievement in theatre, New York.

2000 - The Gratiaen award for the Best Sri Lankan Creative work in English, "**Middle of Silence**"

1999 – The Presidential Scholarship Award for Drama presented by the Government of Sri Lanka

- 1998 - Semi-Finalist World Student Drama Trust Award for the 22nd International Student Playscript Competition, London
- 1997 - British Council International New Playwriting Award for South Asia, presented by Harold Pinter, The British Council, London
- 1997 - Government of Australia Award for a young playwright to attend World Interplay.

#### **Arts Committees/Boards served on**

- 2010 – 2011 – Judging Panel, Youth Drama Festival of Sri Lanka
- 2009, 2010 – Judging Panel, State Drama Festival of Sri Lanka
- 2009 - Board Member – The National Literature Panel of Sri Lanka (under the Arts Council of Sri Lanka)
- 2007 – Board Member - The National Drama Panel of Sri Lanka (under the Arts Council of Sri Lanka)
- 2008 - Judging Panel, Sri Lanka Advertising Awards
- 2005 - Chairperson – Judging Panel, Gratiaen Award for Best Sri Lankan work in English

#### **Workshops**

I conduct workshops for theatre professionals and students in areas of Directing, Acting and Scriptwriting.

I work with groups of non-actors in the process of devising their collective stories into performance narratives.

I also have a deep interest in the use of arts in Education – for creating more critical and creative learning processes.

I have experience conducting workshops both in Sri Lankan and also overseas.

#### **Residencies/International projects/Fellowships**

- 2014 – Eisenhower Fellowship (World programme)
- 2009 – 2010 – *In Place of War* – University of Manchester (an international research project which looked at artistes and theatre groups working in places of conflict and war)
- 1998 - “*International Summer Residency for Playwrights and Directors*”, The Royal Court Theatre, London
- 1997 - “*World Interplay, Festival of Young Playwrights*”, Australia

#### **Academic Qualification**

- 2002 - MA Hons – First Class with Distinction: MA in Applied Theatre, University of Manchester.
- 2001 - BA Hons – Second Upper: Specializing in English Literature, University of Colombo