

MRS KRISHNAN'S

You're invited

Step into the back room of Mrs Krishnan's corner shop where garlands decorate the ceiling, music flows and Mrs Krishnan is throwing a party like no other. Food simmers on the stove, laughter abounds and strangers become friends in this joyous celebration of life.

Watch the actors juggle cooking, music and guests in an unfolding drama where no two nights are the same. Kalyani Nagarajan and Justin Rogers have reviewers singing their praises and audiences leaping to their feet in appreciation.

I feel revived. I don't know when I've left the theatre feeling so refreshed and renewed Colin Thomas, Vancouver

So different, so original, so creatively fresh and so much fun no one wanted to go home Waikato Times

Indian Ink Theatre Company

The extraordinary partnership of Justin Lewis and Jacob Rajan is now well into its second decade. Alonaside a team of multi-talented collaborators, they have mined the collision of East and West, creating spirited, fresh and vibrant theatre that combines artful storytelling, mischievous wit and theatrical magic to unearth the simple truths of life.

"We are storytellers drawn together by a love of mask and invention, pursuing our idea of the 'Serious Laugh' - opening mouths with laughter in order to slip something serious in. We go to the theatre to be transported by a great story and to enjoy characters who live large in our imaginations. We make theatre that is beautiful, funny, sad and true. We want the experience to leave an indelible imprint on your hearts. That's why we're called Indian Ink!"







Production Summary

Tour party: 3 or 4 (2 actors, 1 tour manager. Director as required)

Seating Capacity: 100 – 180 seats (can go up to 250)

Running time: 75 minutes – no interval

Post show: 30 minutes for audience to share food

Suitable for: 10+ (when accompanied by an Adult)

Venue Requirements

The show is staged in traverse with the audience seated in and around the performance space.

The Party has been performed in black boxes, on the stage of proscenium theatres, flat floor venues (using some raked seats) and found spaces.

Key requirements:

- Playing area of 40' x 40' but can adapt to smaller/larger spaces as required
- 15' grid height
- Black-out is required
- Flat floor playing space/seating
- Ability to hang lights
- Risers may be required for seating
- Power for LX, SX and cooker
- Smoke isolation may be required for cooking on stage (no flame)
- Note: we will work with you to ensure local regulations for food preparation are satisfied
- We can sketch up the production in your venue to access viability for you.

Technical Requirements

In general the following will be required:

- Lighting desk, lamps and dimmers
- A custom LX rig
- Lamp numbers depend on the venue but there is nothing complex or unusual in the rig
- A custom SX set up of 4 speakers is required but it is not complex
- High speed wi-fi connection

Set, Staging and Consumables

- Set and props travel with the company in 6 bags
- Presenter needs to provide:
 - 2 risers and a set of treads
 - o A large table and loose chairs
 - Balloons
 - A selections of cardboard boxes

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- Plastic water container
- Cooking ingredients for dhall
- Plates and utensils for audience to eat from

Venue Tech Staff:

- 4 for load in and out
- 2 for each show call

Max number of performances per day

Time between performances

3.5 to 4 hours*

*eg. 2pm show ends at 3:35pm, next show at 7pm or 7:30pm

Max number of performances per week

6 in load in week 8 in subsequent weeks

Minimum Pack In time

8-12 hours when pre rig is done

Minimum Pack Out time

2 to 2.5 hours

NOTE: This is a summary only.

Contact us for the full Rider.







MRS KRISHNAN'S

Marketing and Sales

We've got some really great resources to help you sell the show. Here's a quick sample:

The most effective way to sell this play is to talk about it as a party. The party gives a sense of fun and sets people up to enter into the immersive experience without having to use the word 'immersive'. All audiences know what a party is and so bringing this to the fore makes the play and its cultural content very accessible to a wide range of people.

The party celebrates the South Indian festival of Onam and we find it useful to frame Onam as similar to Diwali, Holi, Christmas, Hanukah or Easter. The party is also a useful way to talk about the Indian cultural elements without making the play feel like it is a traditional Indian cultural event for the Indian community only.



The core audience will be your theatre audience. To them you can add / grow South Asian audiences.

This is a party but there is a story to be told as well. We find that Mrs Krishnan's dilemma of whether to sell her shop and return to India or stay in her adopted home is very relatable.

While Mrs Krishnan's story may appeal more to mature audiences, James appeals to younger audiences. James is a wannabe DJ trying to figure out his path in life. He's a failing university student who is lying to his parents.

As writers we're looking for the universal, relatable, human elements of the stories within the specific cultural context of our work.



Audiences really engage with the live cooking on stage and in our experience at least half will stay after the show to meet the actors and eat together.

Because the staging and the seating is not traditional, careful communication especially at the ticket purchase stage really helps. Talking about the seating in the context of the party gets people warmed up to a different kind of experience but also lets them know they can engage in the way that suit them best whether you're a "Wallflower" or a "Party Animal" there's a place for you at the party.

This show sells really strongly on word of mouth. Audiences are free to take photos, make videos, post live to socials which really supports that.

How to talk about the show: It's a party!

- ⇒ It's a party so we talk about fun, people being together, music, dance and food. Communicate that the experience is joyous and that the audience will have a good time. Communicate that the audience are our guests at this party.
- ⇒ Once the audience have bought their tickets, invite them to come in their party clothes. It's a great way to build deeper engagement ahead of the show. Do this via social media as well as emails to ticket purchasers. We find maybe 10% of the audience will dress up a bigger percentage from the Indian communities.
- ⇒ Briefing your ticketing team and setting up the web site with good imagery and explanations is critical to convert sales of people who need help understanding the immersive / party experience.
- ⇒ We've got a great selection of short videos and ideas for socials campaigns. Campaigns around what makes a great party? Food to celebrate with? Your favourite party music? What is Onam? are examples.
- ⇒ Encourage audiences to take photos and even film whilst they are watching the show. This works because it's a party. We find that people naturally share and this generates a lot of word-of-mouth. Encourage them to post as they wish.







A little behind the scenes action

Use the videos below to help describe to your audience what this show is all about. How it came to be and a little detail about the storyline from the people behind the scenes.

What is Mrs. Krishnan's Party?

1. The Teaser Video

A short 37 second video that is packed full of dancing, fun and audience interaction



2. Justin Lewis (Writer & Director) & Jacob Rajan (Writer) speak about Mrs Krishnan's Party
Justin and Jacob give some insights into what Mrs Krishnan's Party is all about "Leave the exepections" at the
door and come ready to PARTY!"



3. Mrs Krishnan's Party – Meet the Actors

Justin and Kalyani talk a little bit about the show and their characters





2

2 WHAT MAKES A GREAT PARTY

Ever asked yourself this question? Find out below!

What makes a great party?

1. A fun video where random people are asked this exact question Different perspectives on what it take to throw a good party



2. What is your FAVOURITE festival?
Different perspectives on what is the BEST festival!









We know that some people love the idea of anything 'immersive' or 'interactive' but others can be put off. So, we've devised a way of letting people engage in the way they want to. These seating categories are a key tool in helping people identify where they want to be in the party.

This is where you get to decide what kind of partygoer you are and where you want to sit.

THE OPTIONS:

TOP TABLE - VIP

Prize seat at the center of the room. First class treatment all the way, and a place to rest your drink

INNER CIRCLE

Premium seat, close to all the action. You can see and be seen. Perfect for the in-crowd

WALLFLOWER

A little shy? Prefer to hang back? Want to see the big picture from afar? This is the seat for you with a perfect view of everything. This might be just your style.

CHEEKY SEAT

Not too hot and not too cold. Close but not too close.

PARTY ANIMAL

You don't care if you have a seat, you came to party! You need room to move, you are gonna dance like no one is watching.

The explainer video

This video will help your audience better understand the seating options for the party and help them feel safe about the audience participation.









Dhal recipe to share with the audience

Ingredients

1 cup of red lentils

2 cups of water

1/4 tin canned tomatoes (or a chopped tomato)

1 clove garlic

1 tbsp vegetable oil

1 small white onion

1 tsp turmeric

1 tsp garam masala

1 tsp cumin powder

1 tsp chilli flakes

Salt and pepper (to taste)



Method

Put lentils, tomatoes and bruised whole cloves of garlic into a large pot of boiling water and simmer til lentils are soft (15-20 mins). Stir occasionally to stop from burning.

5 minutes before lentils are ready, heat oil in a frying pan and add onions and sauté til translucent. Add all the spices expect white pepper and salt to the onions and stir for a minute.

Tip the onion spice mixture into the pot of lentils and simmer for five minutes. Add salt and white pepper.

For added deliciousness add a dash of white vinegar and a big knob of butter right at the end then sprinkle with chopped fresh coriander.

Yum!









Residency Workshops

1. Acting at the level of Mask

In this workshop, Indian Ink actors, Kalyani Nagarajan or Justin Rogers, will demonstrate the transformative power of mask employed in the creation of their characters in *Mrs Krishnan's Party* and lead workshop participants in developing their own characters that operate at the level of mask.

Duration: 90 minutes (or length as agreed with Presenter)

Leader: Kalyani Nagarajan or Justin Rogers

Other: Text will be provided. Please wear comfortable clothes suitable for movement.

2. The Art of Audition

This workshop seeks to provide actors with simple tools to enhance their audition technique. This will include methods for:

analysing text and performing scenes in quick turn-around scenarios

• preparation of monologues for theatre general auditions.

NB. students are expected to prepare by having one short Shakespearean monologue or a contemporary monologue.

- preparing choices pre-audition and making adjustments on the spot
- taking direction

Duration: 90 minutes (or length as agreed with Presenter)

Leader: Justin Rogers

Other: Prepare and bring one short Shakespearean or contemporary monologue.

Please wear comfortable clothes suitable for movement.

3. The Play's the Thing

This workshop seeks to explore foundational principles for creating rich characters for stage and screen. Kalyani Nagarajan combines the Michael Chekhov technique with her own methodology to give actors a practical and comprehensive set of tools to release their sense of play. Working with contemporary screen texts and stage plays, Kal seeks to embolden the actor's unique presence:

- in quick-fire auditions
- on the rehearsal floor
- in front of a live audience
- on camera

Duration: 90 minutes (or length as agreed with Presenter)

Leader: Kalyani Nagarajan

Other: Text will be provided. Please wear comfortable

clothes

suitable for movement.



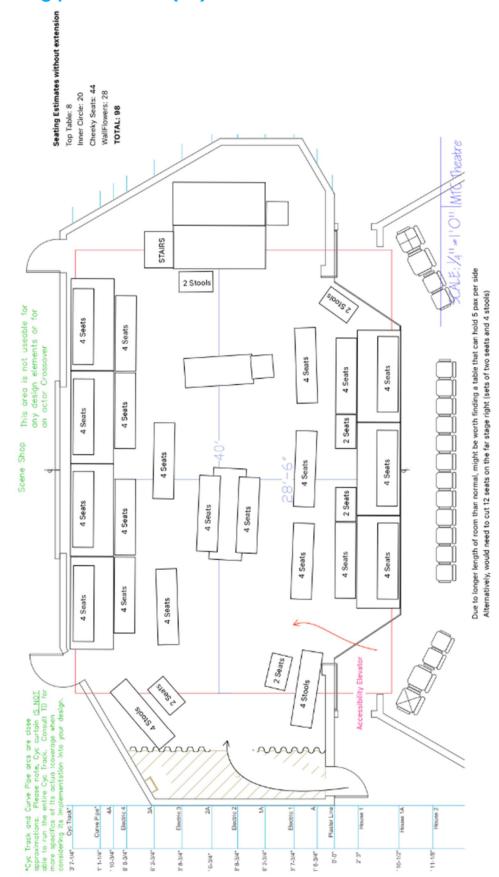


Photo credit: Natalia Bueno PRAx of Oregon State University



MRS KRISHNAN'S PARTY INDICATIVE SEATING PLAN

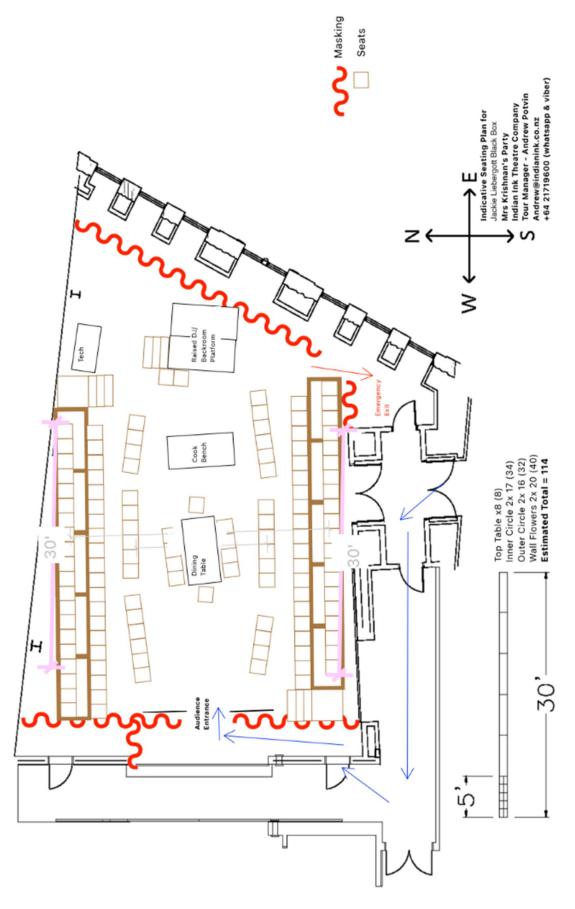
Indicative seating plan – Small (98):







Indicative seating plan – Black Box – Small to Medium (114):





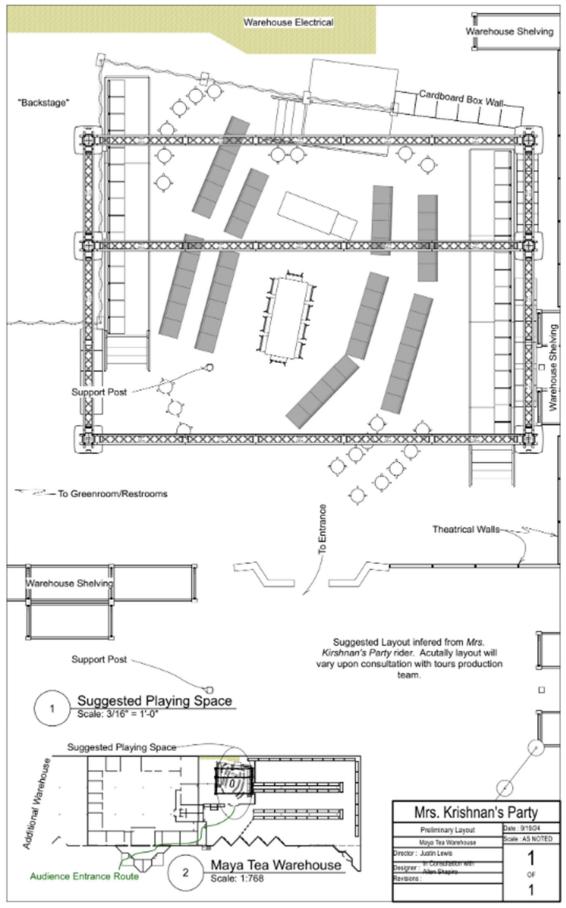
Images of 2 different small seating plans:







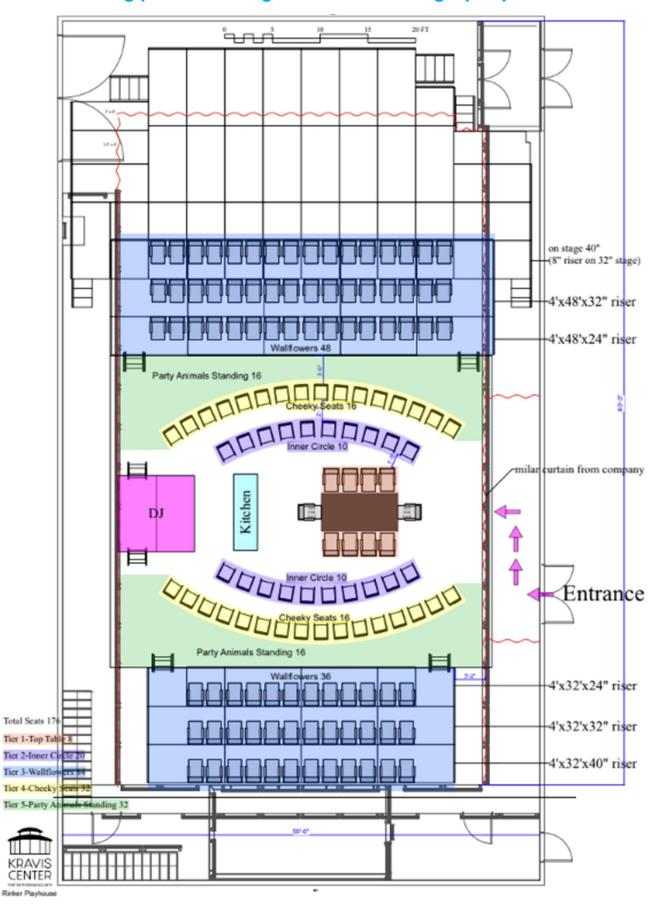
Indicative seating plan – "Found" Space – Medium (160):







Indicative seating plan – On Stage – Medium to Large (176):





Images of two different medium seating plans, "Found" space & Black Box:

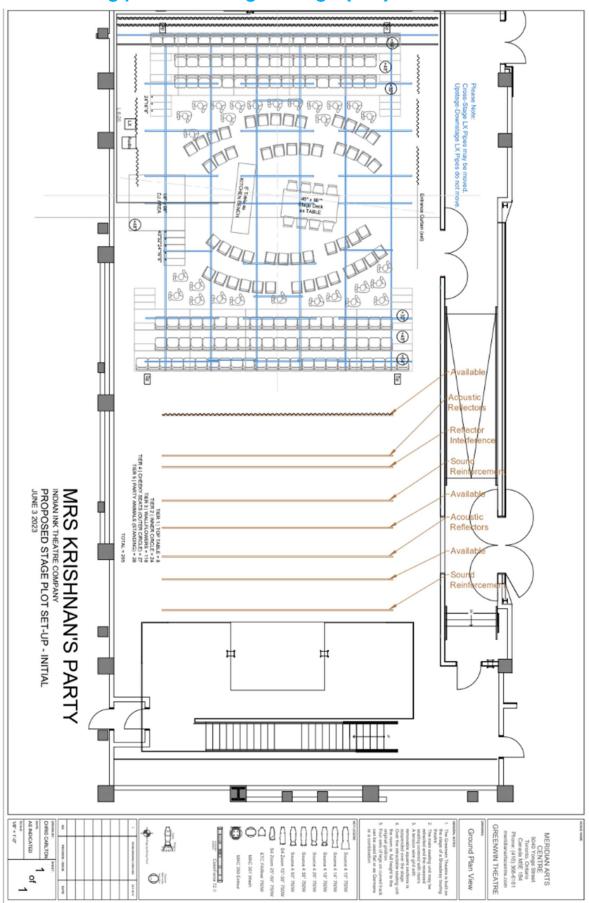






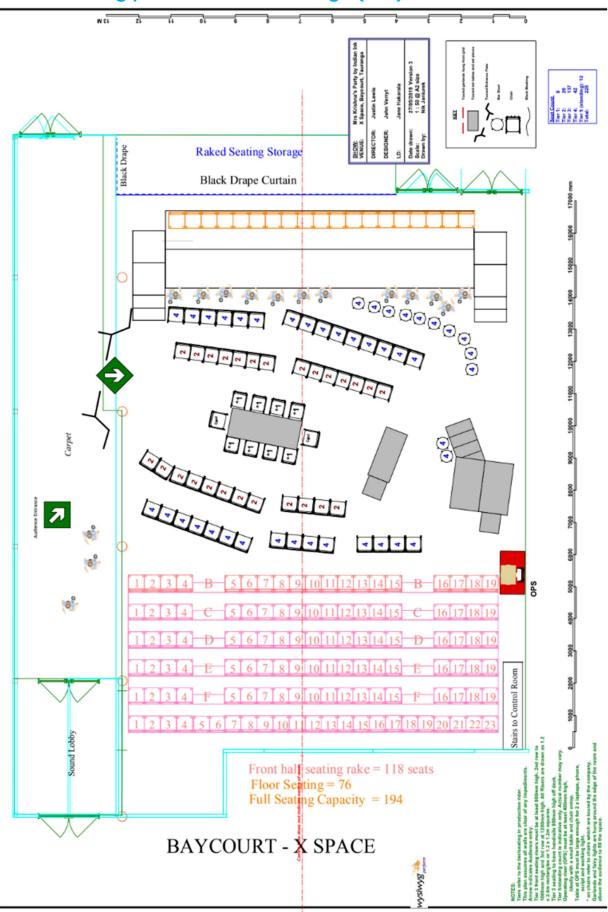


Indicative seating plan – On Stage – Large (205):





Indicative seating plan – Black Box – Large (225):

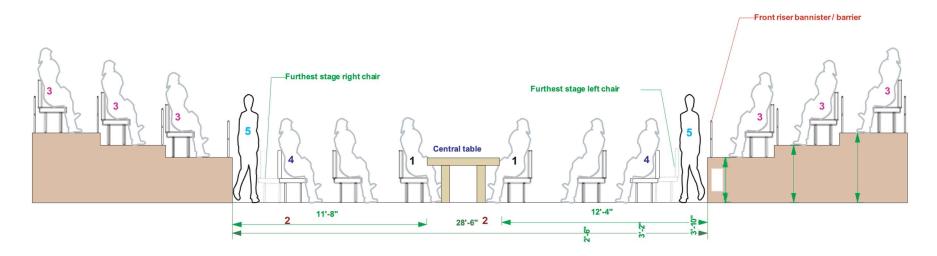




Large, Black Box, pull-out seating block on left, refer Baycourt plan above:







SIDE ELEVATION SKETCH FOR MRS KRISHNAN'S PARTY

based at the centre line by the main table, for medium/large venues with 3 rows of risers

For clarity's sake, the downstage entrance flats and the upstage tables and risers are not detailed in this sketch.

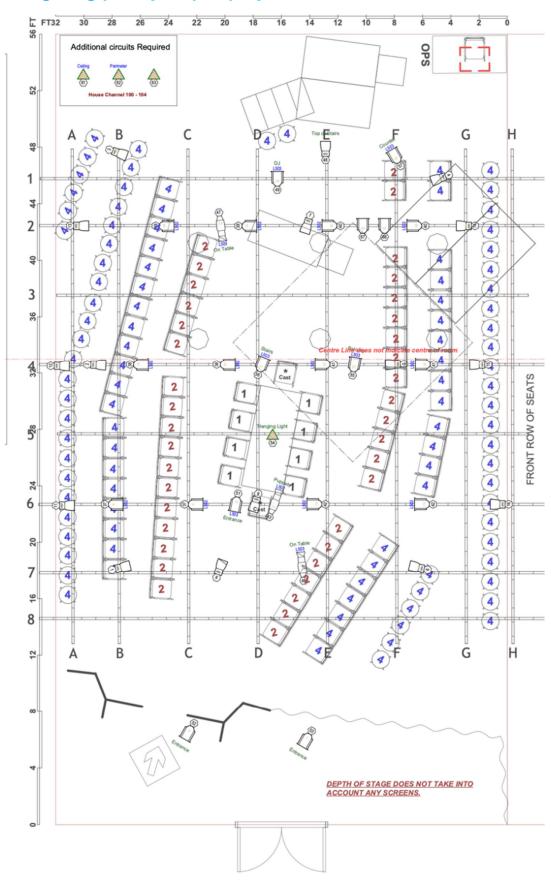
SHOW: VENUE:	Mrs Krishnan's Party by Indian Inl Standard Side Elevation
DIRECTOR:	Justin Lewis
DESIGNER:	John Verryt
LD:	Jane Hakaraia
Date drawn:	19/12/2018 Version 1
Scale:	1:50 @ US Arch B size
Drawn by:	Nik Janiurek

Stage width measurements are guidelines and can be adjusted to suit wider venues; however, the set and seating is purposefully designed to be cramped and intimate.





Indicative lighting plan (150 people):





MRS KRISHNAN'S

A selection of quotes and reviews

FROM NEW ZEALAND

Joyful - NZ Herald

Fun - Stuff

Heart Warming - Waikato Times

Sheer brilliance - Theatreview

An absolute delight - Theatrescenes

Colourful, light and fun! – Theatreview

A gem of a show – Taranaki Daily News

A joyful, highly theatrical celebration - NZ Herald

Hilarious, touching and rewarding - Theatreview

Joyous energy of a Bollywood routine – NZ Herald

Open, welcoming and very, very fun! - Wellingtonista



FROM NORTH AMERICA

Everything about this show is perfect – Two Cents and Two Pence

Awesome! - Vancouver Sun

Enchanting. Captivating. Enticing. Inventive. Ingenious – Broken Leg Reviews

Fabulous - The Georgia Straight

A party you won't want to miss – The Georgia Straight

Mrs Krishnan's Party truly is the best party of the year, you won't want to miss it – Arts-

Lousiville.com

For 80 minutes, we forget the world outside – Tucson.com



jo ledingham THEATRE REVIEWS



MRS. KRISHNAN'S PARTY Posted January 19, 2019

Hands down, Mrs. Krishnan's Party is the best-smelling show in town. Also the most fun. After a boisterous beginning with colourfully, ethnically costumed James (Justin Rogers) showing us to our seats then pumping up the East Indian music and dancing, little Mrs. Krishnan (Kalyani Nagarajan) arrives and starts cooking. The smell of onions and spices soon fills the Culture Lab followed by the mouth-watering fragrance of stewed tomatoes, red lentils, more spices and basmati rice.

The widowed Mrs. Krishnan lives in the back of her little corner store and James, a university student, is her boarder. He's a party animal and although not East Indian he's dressed in brilliant green harem pants, a heavily beaded and jewel-encrusted vest, curly-toed slippers, jewelled armbands, and an outrageous gold headdress.

It's Onam, a Hindu harvest festival and James has, unbeknownst to Mrs. Krishnan, invited us to a party. Not dressed for a party, we soon find ourselves with colourful silk scarves and flower garlands around our necks. And when Mrs. Krishnan enters the kitchen/dining area, James tells us to shout "Surprise". Shocked and not at all amused, feisty Mrs. Krishnan invites us to leave but James prevails and she starts cooking.

Forced gaiety is hard to pull off and James' over-the-top enthusiasm wears a bit thin with us as well as with Mrs. Krishnan but her story gets more and more interesting as the evening wears on. And just when you begin wondering what all the balloons, little lights and hanging garlands are leading up to, a real story – a sad story – kicks in and holds on before rising to new heights.

Written by Justin Lewis and Jacob Rajan and produced by Indian Ink Theatre Company (New Zealand), the show is joyfully interactive: stir the

onions, add the spices, blow up the balloons – James and Mrs. Krishnan keep us involved.

Even in her mousy little cardigan, granny glasses and sensible shoes, Nagarajan is charismatic as she manoeuvres Mrs. K through a huge range of emotions: she dithers and rails against James; coyly tries match-making in the audience; efficiently manages a rice cooker that will eventually feed all of us; shyly talks on her cellphone; grieves over her absent son; and eventual- ly completely blows us away in a colourful, musical, soul-uplifting finale that you have not imagined Mrs. Krishnan capable of.

On top of it all, Nagarajan is a mistress of on-the-spot commen- tary. On opening night, the 'volunteer' actually broke the can opener; Mrs. K immediately chided the fellow's girlfriend for not teaching him how to use a can opener. There wasn't a backup device and Nagarajan continued cooking and toying with us until a Cultch staffer arrived with a second can opener. I don't know what Nagarajan would have done had a utensil not been made available but chances are she would have chewed the top off the can if she had to!

Directed by Justin Lewis, Mrs. Krishnan's Party is presented corridor style with a dining table between the two sections. The wallpaper is mismatched and dated; shelves hold various knickknacks including a grad photo of Apu, Mrs. Krishnan's son. It's typical curtained-off, back-room, corner store; a little ringing bell reminds us now and again that a customer has arrived and Mrs. Krishnan must attend to it.

But there is nothing typical about Mrs. Krishnan and nothing typical about this production: it's unique, it's fun, it's a party – and you're invited.



Updated August 2025 V4









Mrs. Krishnan's Party: accept this invitation January 18, 2019 by Colin Thomas

I feel revived. So many things in the world these days are so depressing and alienating—the endless Trump news, for instance. Grounded, personal, and celebratory, Mrs. Krishnan's Party is the perfect antidote for all of that. I don't know when I've left the theatre feeling so refreshed and renewed.

The set-up is both simple and original. Mrs. Krishnan runs a small general store and her boarder, a young guy named James, has arranged for about a hundred guests, the audience, to celebrate the Hindu harvest festival of Onam in her stock room.



James lets us in on all of this, Mrs. Krishnan arrives, and we all shout "Surprise!" Mrs. Krishnan is horrified and tries to get us to leave. But, of course, hospitality wins out and we launch into the collective effort of putting on a party.

The genius of this show is that is that it exploits so successfully the essence of theatre, which is communion. Even if we're just sitting in a dark room contemplating the behaviours onstage, it matters that we're meditating as a group: theatre is essentially social. It is also essentially live, unfolding in a unique flow of time.

Mrs. Krishnan's Party runs with all of that. Some audience members sit at the long table that's at the centre of the playing area. And we're all actively involved, dancing with James, who is an aspiring DJ, and helping Mrs. Krishnan by getting her garlic, onions, tomatoes, and rice.

The spontaneity of the performances keeps us firmly rooted in the present moment. There's a lot of improvising going on. I'm thinking of the vegetarian Mrs. Krishnan's interactions with a chatty kid in the audience on opening night, for instance—and the look of horror that crossed her face when he said his favourite Indian dish was butter chicken.

The physical experience of the show is crazy sensual. Garlands and garlands of fake red flowers hang from the high ceilings in the Culture Lab. As the food cooks, dizzying scents weave their way into your nostrils.

And the performers are insanely buoyant and charming. James (Justin Rogers) meets you at the door and takes you to your seat dressed as King Māveli, a major player in the story of Onam. He is resplendent in gold. Rogers is so ebullient—and, let's face it, so handsome—that I was soon fantasizing about how quickly he'd put everybody at ease at the reception that would follow our wedding.

Kalyani Nagarajan, who plays Mrs. Krishnan, is also ridiculously endearing. At one point, she was talking on a cell phone to a character we hadn't met. All she said was, "What is it? Tell me. No tell me!" and she was so hilariously coquettish that I was instantly hooked.

There is also substance in Mrs. Krishnan's Party—and pain. I won't give away the details, but I will say that this is where King Māveli comes to the fore. Throughout the evening, we hear bits of his story, how he was pushed into the underworld but allowed to return once a year, because of his goodness and his devotion to Vishnu.

Similarly, Mrs. Krishnan's Party is a story of rebirth or, perhaps more accurately, endurance. Family relationships are difficult. Making your way in the world is difficult. Both Mrs. Krishnan and James have suffered. But, through the rituals of Onam—and the rituals of theatre—they find a community of love.





Best Onam Ever (Mrs Krishnan's Pary at Actors Theatre) December 14, 2023 by Kate Barry

When a young student enthralled by Indian culture throws a celebration, he invites everyone he knows. Described as "a combination of Christmas, Easter, and Coachella," the student wants to throw the biggest Onam party of the year. Just one slight problem, the not-so-close family friend with whom he lives does not know about this party, nor is she keen on the festivities. "Mrs. Krishnan's Party" comes to Actors Theater of Louisville courtesy of Indian Ink Theater Company. Fully immersive and interactive, the production is a feast for the senses and a fun fable of community as an unlikely pair creates their traditions.

Justin Rogers and Kalyani Nagarajan are a mighty duo as James and Mrs. Krishnan. They are a tight-knit force with impeccable timing and improvisational skills that fit well within the script's light-hearted banter. Both actors extend trust to their audience to ensure a rapport for some audience participation throughout. As James reveals a secret he has been holding from Mrs. Krishnan, Rogers and Nagarajan face conflict with ease while recovering their relationship with enough forgiveness to tighten their bond.

Separately, Rogers and Nagarajan are equally charismatic and handle solo stage time flawlessly. Dressed as a Hindu God with boundless energy to match, Rogers plays James with high octane as he is determined to make this the best Onam ever. Rogers holds on steady to James' curiosity about the Indian culture as an outsider. A student fascinated by access to a world he finds beautiful without risk of appropriation. At times, he uses it as an escape to cope with reality and failure.

It's Kalyana Nagarajan as Mrs. Krishnan who is the real star, though. A hardworking store owner in a new land, Nagarajan's Krishnan has no time for fun and suffers no fools. She brings a rigid, bluntness with each inconvenience but is not afraid to show you how to make flavors brighter in her kitchen. Yet underneath the exterior is a mourning widow who only wishes for her son to come home. In overcoming Krishnan's sadness, Nagarajan's performance reaches an emotional peak as the title character embraces the Onam celebration.

To dive deep into this play would only spoil the engaging audience interaction. I can only provide a few hints and subtle suggestions. Prepare yourself for selfies. If you are feeling shy, request a "wallflower" seat and leave the "cheeky" and "table" cards to the outgoing patrons. Cooking and food are major plot points in this play as well. The Victor Jory Theater is consumed by delicious smells by the end of the show with an opportunity to try the cuisine after the final curtain as well. If "Mrs. Krishnan's Party" truly is the best party of the year, you won't want to miss it.









Audiences will have a great time at Marin Theatre's Mrs Krishnan's Party March 21, 2025 by Jean Schiffman

Here's a promise: You've never seen a play—or been to a party—quite like "Mrs. Krishnan's Party." Mostly funny but also at times sad, it's wonderfully immersive and to a (high) degree improvised. Produced and created by New Zealand's Indian Ink Theatre Company (cowriters Justin Lewis, who also directs, and Jacob Rajan), the two-hander has been touring the United States for a while and is now in a short run at Marin Theatre.

For this special production, the audience is seated onstage in an expanded area that includes backstage; some people are at a long table in the middle of the room and others are on peripheral folding chairs. Everyone is in the back room/kitchen of Mrs. Krishnan's convenience store, which she's planning to sell so she can move back to India. Her lodger and helper, college student and DJ wannabe James, greets theatergoers at the door costumed as apparently an ancient Indian king in a tall sparkly hat, silky Aladdin bloomers and curly-toed shoes. He's planning a surprise party for Mrs. Krishnan to celebrate the Hindu harvest festival of Onam, and we're the guests.

The intermission-less, 100-minute play may at first seem like a raucous comedy. Mrs. Krishnan (a wonderfully convincing Kalyani Nagarajan as the high-strung, strongminded shop owner) is completely taken aback and upset about us, the group of strangers yelling "surprise!" in her back room.

The more James (an equally impressive Justin Rogers) tries to ratchet up the forced merriment by turning up the music and jollying up Mrs. Krishnan and us, the more Mrs. Krishnan becomes unnerved, running around with a broom and dustpan to tidy, shrieking at James.

The interaction with the audience is a major part of the play's success, and the quick-witted actors are more than prepared for ad-libbing.

As Mrs. Krishnan whips up a feast of dal (yes, cooks it right there in the playing area, with help from James, who merrily shakes every possible cannister of seasoning into the bubbling pot, and from coerced and volunteer audience members who pitch in), a gradual picture emerges.

This scene of merriment covers up plenty of the kind of human sadness, even despair, that we all experience: "My husband used to say, if you work hard enough, you can have anything you want," says the hardworking widow, and her story of struggle and disappointment gradually unravels, and, eventually, James' does, too.

It's a beautiful, delicate way for us to get to know, and even identify with, these characters.

Along the way, Mrs. Krishnan dances, a graceful and even surprising traditional Indian dance, on the tabletop; audience members (whose names we learn along the way) sweep up spilled rice on the floor, carry big pots and obediently follow Mrs. Krishnan's orders; and significant telephone calls take place. If you're willing to participate—even if as minimally as donning a flowing Indian-style scarf and blowing up a balloon, or as maximally as leaping up to help stir the pot of simmering dal—you might very well leave the theater feeling deliciously partied out and emotionally connected to these two characters—and to the audience, too.

BOOKING:

david lieberman ARTISTS' www.dlartists.com info@dlartists.com