

DAREBIN ARTS

SPEAKSY

and **Elbow Room** proudly present



Crocodiles



**Darebin
Arts**

Darebin Arts Speakeasy: Celebrating 10 years of supporting local art

Darebin is thrilled to celebrate 10 years of supporting local artists through the Darebin Arts Speakeasy program. Since 2013, the program has been an influential hub for performing artists to develop and present innovative new work across contemporary dance, circus, theatre and multi-disciplinary work that speaks to issues that matter to the community and celebrates cultural diversity.

As we celebrate 10 years of the Darebin Arts Speakeasy program, it is with great pride and joy that I reflect on its impact and success. Over the past decade, Darebin Arts Speakeasy has supported over **1,500 artists** to create over **150 original works** presented to over **75,000 patrons**, receiving **40 creative industry awards** and a further **116 nominations**. It has been a highlight of our cultural calendar and has brought people together in a way that has enriched our city and our lives.

The Darebin Arts Speakeasy is not just a program, but a reflection of the vibrant arts precinct that exists across our suburbs. It showcases the rich talent and creative energy that we are so lucky to have in our community.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the artists, partners and patrons who have made this program a resounding success!



Cr Julie Williams
Mayor

Writer's Message

I wrote *Crocodiles* in 2018, before the pandemic. When I wrote it, I was ostensibly responding to a prompt in a scriptwriting workshop to write a play about “families in contemporary Australia”.

A little while before that workshop I'd been working in the health space after university, and part of my job involved looking at complaints in the privatised residential aged care sector. The more time I spent with people - residents and workers - the more I felt like I was watching a slow-moving car crash about to happen. Anyone - from the families who entrust their loved ones to care, to the staff who keep it running - could have told you that though. And yet, action from government was slow and media interest was minimal. It was perhaps too nebulous, too unsexy, too undramatic - that is until an “unprecedented” virus snuck into the cracks of the sector, making them larger and more visible.

There's a version of this play that leans into the drama of a virus, or a courtroom trial, or the “brave migrant” story - but for me this would be a disservice to what I feel is at the heart of this play and the truth of these systems: that cruelty is often tiny and procedural, that there are lives we cannot see, and that these lives often undergird the functioning of what we experience as society.

There are a few types of family in this play, but the starting impetus for me was the connection of a kind of forced family between two disparate groups of people: older Anglo-Australians in care and the newer migrant labour from the Global South. Bodies that don't look like mine and bodies that do, held together in precarious symbiosis; brought together not entirely by choice and shaped by class, race, immigration and profit.

I want to thank Elbow Room for shaking this play out of the bottom drawer I'd put it in. I also want to thank a number of aged care workers who I consulted in the lead-up to this production. They shared their stories and looked over the script so that I could make sure I was representing the residential aged care space as it is today - sadly, not much has changed since my time there. An odd indication of this is that I cannot name these workers in this note - they all requested strict anonymity - the risk to visas and job security still too real.

Vidya Rajan
Writer

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Darebin stands. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging

Director's Note

I used to be able to pay attention for longer.

At Elbow Room, we first read *Crocodiles* in lockdown, when our script development program - so carefully planned for 2020! - pivoted online. By a happy accident, this meant we were able to extend it from Victorian writers to a national callout, and it's our good fortune that Vidya sent through this triple threat; an urgent situation (a labour crisis in aged care), a compelling voice (hilarious and humane), and an unusual form that really responded to the subject.

As a director, I was struck on first read - and I still am - by how Vidya asks us to spend time with several characters in turn. It might be more 'usual' to establish these characters in their different circumstances, and cut between them to build tension; and were we making television, we might do exactly that, although some of the best television of recent years deliberately breaks these conventions also.

There's something else happening here, though; something which draws on theatre's unique transaction, of being present with the story in time. The more time that I spend with this story, the more I've come to think of time as a character in it; specifically, the time of the marginalised and powerless. The way that time feels when we aren't in control of it; both endless and brutally scarce. The time of the aged care resident, and the time of the precarious worker.

I used to be able to pay attention for longer. Even as control over our own time is wrested away from us, we're also increasingly used to asserting our control over this story or that, to suspend or comment or dismiss. Staring across the fire while the storytellers weave their epic has become a luxury product; a symbol of status, signalling that you've got time to take, that your work will wait for you.

Crocodiles runs for approximately seventy-five minutes, in four scenes between fifteen and twenty minutes apiece. It's been our privilege to assemble this great team, and to strive towards making it worth your time.

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The creative team would like to thank KXT Bakehouse Storytellers Festival, Kate Washington, Adelaide Fisher, Samantha Butterworth, Polyglot Theatre, Rainbow Sweeny, Julie Wright, Sarah Fitzgerald, Ian Pidd, Anna Nalpantidis, Lucy Pitt, Lauren Sheree, Thaila Azaria and Xioaran Ma for their continuous support for this project.
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CREATIVE TEAM

Written by: Vidya Rajan
Performers: Rachel Kamath, Shamita Siva, Marta Kaczmarek, Tom Dent and Emily Tomlins
Director: Marcel Dorney
Assistant Director: Antoinette Tracy
Production & Stage Manager: Kaite Head
Composer: Saieesh Shanmugarajah
Production Designer: Rachel Nankin

Lighting Designer: Kris Chainey
Sound Engineering: Chris Wenn
Language Consultant: Dilpreet Taggar
Movement Director: Devika Bilimoria
Produced by: Elbow Room
Image by: Darren Gill

This production received additional support from Creative Victoria.



Artist Bios



Rachel Kamath (Performer) (she/her) is an Indian-Australian actor, producer and qualified engineer based in Melbourne. She studied at the Stella Adler Academy in Los Angeles. She has since performed in various productions on stage and on screen, including her recent appearance as a series regular in *Shantaram* (2022) on AppleTV+. Her recent theatre credits are *Reigen* (Periscope Productions, 2022) and *What Every Girl Should Know* by Monica Byrne (2020) and screen credits include *The Taverna* (2019), *Jack Irish Season 2* (2018), and the US short film, *Please Don't Call the Cops* (2017). She also produced *She Wrote The Letter* by Kieran Carroll (St Martin's Theatre & La Mama 2022), and is a co-founder of the theatre company, Empty Seat Theatre.



Shamita Siva (Performer) (she/they) is a multi-faceted performance artist and theatre maker specialised in movement. She holds a BA Performing Arts from Monash University. Shamita has trained at Stella Adler AoA Los Angeles, AAFTA, Brave Studios and 16th Street. Recent theatre credits include *Nosferatu* (Malthouse), *Mara Korper* (Citizen Theatre) and *Let Men Tremble* (The Danger Ensemble). On screen, she has won Best Supporting Actor awards in films *Dashboard Dogs* and *Someone Else*. Recent feature films include *FOE* (Garth Davis, Amazon Studios), *La Famiglia* (Tom Conyers), and upcoming *Coconut* (Saloni Chopra). Shamita's own written and produced dance film, *Twin Flame* premiered in January 2023.



Marta Kaczmarek (Performer) (she/her) Marta Kaczmarek graduated from the Academy for the Dramatic Arts in Poland. In Perth she co-founded the iconic Theatre Zart and worked as a dancer, actor, waitress, cleaner, real estate agent and a lecturer at Edith Cowan University. In Melbourne she ran Lifestyle Programs in Aged Care. Marta performed in Dostoyevski's, Toystoy's, Shakespeare's, Becketts' repertoire and won Green Room Best Actress Award for Masha in A. Zabel's *Café Scheherazade*. Her screen credits include *Shine*, *Rake*, *Underbelly*, *The Circuit*, *Wildcat*, *Blue Hillers*, *Wentworth*, *Harrow*, *Jack Irish*, *North Shore*, and *Ricky Stanicky*. Marta received a Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta for cultivation of Polish Culture in Australia.



Emily Tomlins (Performer) (she/her) is co-founder and co-artistic director of Elbow Room. She has worked as an actor, creator, and director with various companies and festivals including Elbow Room, Polyglot Theatre, Playable Streets, VIMH, JOF, Musica Viva, Sydney Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, La Boite, State Theatre Company South Australia, Malthouse Theatre, Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company's Neon Festival, the Melbourne, Brisbane, Darwin, Perth, Poppyseed and Flight Festivals, Fabricated Rooms, Everybody Dance, Collyer/Kerridge, Restaged Histories Project, Qld Arts Council, Bell Shakespeare, Four Larks, Daniel Schlusser Ensemble and The Hayloft Project.

Emily was in Queensland Theatre's Emerging Artist Ensemble in 2006. She is a Sidney Myer Fellow and Associate Director at Polyglot Theatre.



Tom Dent (Performer) (he/him) has appeared in Elbow Room's *The Motion of Light in Water* and the award-winning trilogy *After All This* ('Best Live Performance' – Melbourne Fringe Awards; 'Best Ensemble' – Green Room Awards), *As We Mean To Go On* and *Now More Than Ever*; *Salomé*, *Danergous Liaisons* and *Psycho Beach Party* ('Best Ensemble' nominee – Green Room Awards) for Little Ones Theatre; *The Absence Of Unknowing*, *In The Solitude of the Cotton Fields* and *The Darkening Sky* for Richard Murphet/La Mama/Theatre Works; ABC TV's *Australia On Trial: The Eureka 13*; Marcel Dorney's *Kassandra*; *J.A.T.O* and *22 Short Plays* for MKA; and Daniel Schlusser's adaptation of *The Hollow*. Short film roles

include *To The Beach*; *I, The Other*; *Gutter Crawler* and *Drenched In Glorious Light*. Tom trained at the Victorian College of the Arts.



Marcel Dorney (Director) (he/him) is an award-winning playwright and director, Marcel is a founding member and co-artistic director of Melbourne based performance company, Elbow Room.

As a playwright, Marcel's work has been commissioned, developed and produced by QTC, Malthouse Theatre, Merrigong Theatre Company, Hothouse Theatre, La Boite, Griffin Theatre, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse, Artslink, and the Next Wave Festival, and published by Playlab Press. He has been an affiliate writer with QTC, La Boite and Griffin Theatre, has worked as a screenwriter for Matchbox Pictures and as a dramaturg and

script consultant for national and state bodies. His awards include the 2010 Queensland Premier's Drama Award.



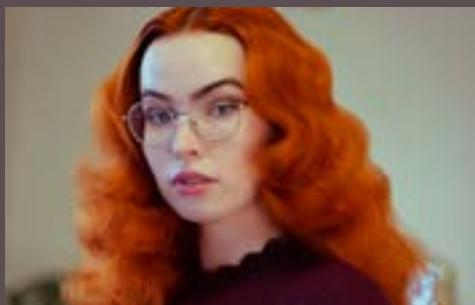
Vidya Rajan (Writer) (she/her) is a writer and performer currently based in Australia. A former writer-in-residence at the Malthouse Theatre, Vidya is a graduate of the VCA, and a recipient of Screen Australia's Developer Program. Some past projects as a writer and performer include *Looking for Alibrandi* (Malthouse/Belvoir), *Deadloch* (Amazon), *Respawn* (MICF, Darwin Festival), *The Feed Comedy* (SBS).

Vidya was awarded the 2022 AWGIE award for Best Comedy Writing and Best Experimental Artwork at the 2022 Melbourne Fringe.

She can next be seen as a writer/story consultant as well as core ensemble on the new sitcom series, *Aunty Donna's Coffee Cafe* (2023, ABC).



Antoinette Tracy (Assistant Director) (she/her) is a Naarm-based actor and theatre maker. Her practice aims to offer spaces of understanding, compassion, and celebration, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of the BIPOC community. Antoinette is a graduate of the VCA Theatre Making course and the co-founder of Tedious Theatre, which was awarded the 2020 Digital Realisation Green Room award for its premiere work *Shadow Piece*. Antoinette has also collaborated on works with *Born in a Taxi* and the National Gallery of Victoria and looks forward to making more work that explores and exposes human behaviour and connection.



Kaite Head (Production & Stage Manager) (she/her) is a producer and stage manager based in Naarm, and a 2019 VCA graduate who has worked across theatre, dance, opera, and interactive devised work.

In 2023 she produced two works at The Melbourne International Comedy Festival for comedians Ange Lavoipierre and Jane Watt to critical acclaim. This year as a Stage Manager she toured Australia with *Operation Ouch!* (Andrew Kaye) and then travelled to Singapore to develop and present *Come Back Home* (Polyglot / Esplanade).

She is currently trying to find a hobby that does not include dressing in all black and welcomes suggestions.



Rachel Nankin (Set & Costume Designer) (she/her) is an emerging production designer and maker based in Naarm/Melbourne. She completed her BFA Design and Production at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2022. She worked as the Associate Designer for *The Marvellous Elephant Man The Musical* working with Designer Roberto Surace (2023). As well as her work at VCA, she has been Costume and Set Designer for the *Alter Kintetic* (2022), Set Designer for *Merrily We Roll Along* (2022), Associate Set Designer for *The Hello Girls* (2021), Workshop Leading Hand for three devised works: *Rats on Cocaine Prefer Jazz*, *Dead Serious*, and *B**ch* (2021).



Saieesh Shanmugarajah (Composer) (he/him) is a Boorloo-born artist raised in a Tamil household. His initial release, *A.Y.A.A.* focuses on their journey through childhood and adolescence with the constant cast of the east and west weighing upon them and the diaspora alike. Genre-defining in some ways, Saieesh lets us experience sound with no barrier, whilst maintaining a constant energy that binds their work together. He received rave reviews for the album *A.Y.A.A.*, with Liveschool describing it as “one of the best underground pop records of the past decade”.



Chris Wenn (Sound Engineer) (he/they) is an award-winning sound designer for theatre, based in Melbourne, Australia. His sound design and compositions have featured in productions by Malthouse, Elbow Room, St Martins Youth Theatre, Red Stitch Actors Theatre, and Sarah Austin & Collaborators.

Chris has received Green Room Award nominations for Sound for his work on *The Trouble With Harry* (MKA/Darebin Arts Speakeasy/ Melbourne Festival 2014) and *Rust and Bone* (La Mama, 2016), and was the recipient of the Straits Times ‘Life!’ Theatre Award for the Sound Design of *In The Silence of Your Heart* (2018) at Esplanade

Theatres by the Bay, Singapore.



Kris Chainey (Lighting Designer) (he/him) is a Naarm-based lighting designer. Notable credits include *The Leenane Trilogy* (2014) and *Shrine* (2017) for The Kin Collective, *The Absence of Knowing: Four Men and Dog Play* (2017) with Richard Murphet, *Point8Six* (2016/22) with Kirsten von Bibra, the multiple award winning *Bighouse Dreaming* (2018-21) with Declan Furber Gillick, Mark Wilson and Susannah Day and *Technique* (2022), *Prehistoric* (2018) *We Get It* (2015-16), and *The Motion of Light in Water* (2014-15) for Elbow Room.

About Elbow Room

Elbow Room was founded by Emily Tomlins and Marcel Dorney in 2008, with the mission to 'ask big questions in small spaces'. The company has created 17 works in collaboration with a diverse and highly regarded selection of artists, and developed and presented our work around Australia and in the United Kingdom, in partnership with major arts organisations and festivals including MTC, Brisbane Festival, Carriageworks and Summerhall (UK). Elbow Room has been recognised by critics, peers and audiences as one of the leading independent theatre companies in Australia, and has received multiple awards.

www.elbowroomproductions.com

About Darebin Arts Speakeasy

Darebin Arts Speakeasy is Darebin City Council's award-winning year-round independent performance and development program. For 10 years, the program has curated and invested in contemporary dance, circus, theatre and multi-disciplinary artists whose works offer audiences a dynamic and diverse mix of stories that matter to the community, celebrate cultural diversity and reflect the times we're living in.

Since 2013 Darebin Arts Speakeasy has supported over **1,500 artists** to create **over 150 original works** presented to **over 75,000 patrons**, receiving **40 creative industry awards** and a further **116 nominations**. Darebin Arts has backed many of the groundbreaking artists and companies that make Melbourne's art sector so iconic: RAWCUS, Ilbjerri Theatre Company, The Hayloft Project, Little Ones Theatre, Stephanie Lake Company, Elbow Room, MKA, Double Water Sign, and lead artists like Joel Bray, Michele Lee, Emilie Collyer, Anna Seymour, Stella Young and Sammy J.

Coming up at Darebin Arts Speakeasy



Animal Farm by Bloomshed

Farmer Jones has lost control. The animals of Manor Farm are rising up to seize the means of production, and soon these downtrodden freedom fighters will be ruling the roost themselves.

But who's got the chops to lead this rowdy bunch? They need a leader – a captain – a hefty hunk of ham with equal parts wit, strength and streaky bacon. Enter: Napoleon, a pig who's ready to take the reins, and no qualms breaking a few eggs if that's what it comes to.

Rebellion, comrades! It's time to throw hooves, splatter some cow patties, and paint the walls red with freedom!

Green Room Award winning ensemble Bloomshed (*Paradise Lost*) return to Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre with an epic rework of George Orwell's riveting response to the Russian revolution and the Soviet slide to totalitarianism. With their signature satirical style - and a political climate that's ripe for a good roasting - this bolshy take on *Animal Farm* will have you ready to storm the barricades yourself.

12 - 23 July

Wed - Sat 7.30pm | Sun 5pm

Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre

\$38 Full | \$30 Conc. | \$33 Darebin Residents | \$20 Preview | \$10 Blak Tix

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