

# THE WAITING ROOM

by Tanika Gupta  
directed by Bree Bridger



## Director's Note

"Live each day like it's your last." Like most adages, I could do better to follow this advice. If we all are as lucky as Priya, the afterlife will give us three days to make amends and say what's left unsaid. How would you spend that time? Who would you reach out to? Not everything about our relationships is within our power to change, but I hope we can leave tonight thinking about what those aspects are -- and how to take action while there's still time. This play has been an adventure and an education. Many thanks to our actors, designers, and crew for late nights and hard work. Many thanks to Shunya Theatre for their commitment to bringing Tanika Gupta's work to Houston audiences. Many thanks to you for joining us in the home of the Bannerji family to witness their story.

- Bree Bridger

# The Waiting Room

By Tanika Gupta

Directed by Bree Bridger

Priya Bannerji — Lubaina Latif-Dubey

Dilip Kumar — Nipun Kakkar  
Khurram Hamid

Akash — Anvesh Yalamachili

Firoz — Sriram Vengalathur

Pradip — Siva Juturi

Tara — Saumya Rana

Producer — Sanjay Mediwala

Stage Manager — Neha Singhal

Set Design — Lee Barker

Lighting Design — Kris Phelps

Sound Design — John Peeples

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*The Waiting Room* is produced by arrangement with  
Alan Brodie Representation Ltd.

# Biographies



**Bree Bridger** (Director) This is Bree's first project with Shunya Theatre and MATCH, and it's been filled with laughter, learning, and more. Bree is a freelance director and stage manager in Houston. She is a company member at Mildred's Umbrella, and has also worked with Firecracker

Productions, Horse Head Theater, Black Lab Theatre, and Blueprint Theatre. Favorite projects include *Late: A Cowboy Song*, *Eurydice*, and *Duck Variations* as director, and *Dry Land* and *Measure for Measure* as stage manager. She originally hails from Waco, TX. Texas A&M University, Bachelor of Arts – Theatre Arts, Political Science. [breebridger.com](http://breebridger.com)

**Lee O Barker** (set designer) is a Houston based scenic designer and fabricator. Recent designs include: *Outside Mullingar* (Queensbury Theatre), *Plenty of Time* (Ensemble Theatre), *Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?* (University of St. Thomas), *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (Actor's Equity Showcase), *Mac Wellman's Dracula* (Mildred's Umbrella Theatre Company), *Cloud Tectonics* (MUTC), and *Late: A Cowboy Song* (MUTC). He recently joined the Alley Theatre's staff as a Carpenter. He has a BA in Theatre Arts from Texas A&M University.



**Khurram Hamid** (Dilip Kumar) This is Khurram's first Shunya Theatre and MATCH project. It has been an amazing learning experience working with the team. Khurram is an actor who loves story writing and poetry.

Khurram has performed in the past with the Pakistan Student Association at the University of Houston, of which he is now the Vice President, the film *Roxanne* by Indus Arts Council, a music video by Paulina Sjoberg, and an

advertisement for Escape Hunt. Currently, Khurram is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Marketing at the University of Houston, while also following his dream to become one of the greatest actors of all time.



**Siva Juturi** (Pradip) This is Siva's first acting role with Shunya Theatre. Siva has been into acting since his childhood from his father's inspiration as renowned South Indian theater actor. Siva has acted in a number of plays, skits, mono-acts & short-films with Houston Indian community. He

has a flair for comedy acts and loves imitating Bollywood/Tollywood celebrities. He also loves to direct plays, especially social satires like *Dollar Dreams* & *Social Network* (on YouTube).



**Nipun Kakkar** (Dilip Kumar) This is Nipun's first project with Shunya Theatre and it's been a fun ride with lots of learning. Nipun hails from the city of Jaipur in Rajasthan, India and has been involved in the performing arts since his high school days. He moved to the states in 2007 and

has absolutely loved living in the diverse city of Houston. He is a cancer researcher, life coach and an avid tennis player in his other life. Nipun loves to indulge in new experiences, and meet new people. His strengths in acting are playing intense roles and is currently learning improv at a theatre in Houston. One day he would like to delve in standup comedy. He writes about his musings about life, health and wellness at [nipunkakkar.com](http://nipunkakkar.com)



**Lubaina Latif-Dubey** (Priya) Lubaina's only interaction with theater since she was 4 was as a very attentive and starry-eyed member of the audience. Her love for theater eventually led her to audition for the role of Priya Bannerjee and it has been an experience of a life-time! Even though

this is her first theatrical role, her long-term roles include “wife” to the sweetest man ever, who is her true stage partner in life and “mamma” to two spunky little girls who make up 66% of her fan club! Lubaina sews for fun, loves chocolate and can’t cook to save her life!



**Sanjay Mediwala** (Producer) is currently serving as Shunya Theatre’s Managing Director. He has been with Shunya since 2005 - as an actor in *Bricks and Lyrics*, and has previously produced *Partition*, *The Adventures of Hanuman*, *Art*, *The Prophet and the Poet*, *1-888-DIAL-INDIA*, *Partition*,

*A Widow of No Importance*, *The Jungle Book*, and *Bhopal*. Sanjay is thankful to Shunya for introducing him to his wife, Parul, who is willing to tolerate so much in the name of art. He sends his love to Soham and Anil.

**John Peeples** (Sound Design) is a graduate of the University of Houston with a BFA in Theatre Production. Recent sound design work includes: *The Johns*, (*Mildred’s Umbrella*), *Our Town* (UH), *Ten Ways on a Gun* (Landing Theatre, Co), *Lidless* (Horse Head Theatre, Co), *Fool For Love* (Landing Theatre, Co), *Becky's New Car* (*Mildred’s Umbrella Theatre, Co.*), and *The Hunchback Variations* (Catastrophic Theatre) which was nominated by the Houston Press for best sound design of 2015. Other recent work includes working as the audio editor and sound engineer for the Houston Shakespeare Festival (2015-2017) and working as sound engineer for *Hand of God* (Alley Theatre), and *The Alley All New Festival* (Alley Theatre). John is currently assistant audio supervisor at Miller Outdoor Theatre and is a member of USITT. <https://www.peepsound.com/>

**Kris Phelps** (Lighting Design) is pleased to be working with Shunya again, having previously lit *The Adventures of Hanuman*, *Partition* and *Bhopal* for the company. She has designed for live music, dance and theater in the US, Canada and Mexico, and has

been honored to receive 4 Gorgee awards for best lighting design of the season from the Ensemble Theatre, Houston. She earned a Bachelor of Environmental Design from the University of Colorado, Boulder.



**Saumya Rana** (Tara) is studying for her PhD in Economics at the University of Houston and is thrilled to be in her first project with Shunya! Theater has always been a passion. She has particularly fond memories of directing Woody Allen's 'Death' and taking the production to various cities across India and internationally to Pakistan. Acting roles include *Suddenly Last Summer* by Tennessee Williams, *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, and an adaptation of *The Little Prince*. She is looking forward to many more with Shunya!



**Neha Singhal** (stage manager) is currently serving as Shunya Theatre's Volunteer Coordinator. She finds the journey so far a very rewarding and fun-filled learning experience. She co-wrote and acted in skits on social issues during her Master's studies in Mumbai. She completed her PhD in biomedical science from The Ohio State University and is currently working on prostate cancer for her postdoctoral research. She enjoys reading, arts, designing and furniture making in her spare time.



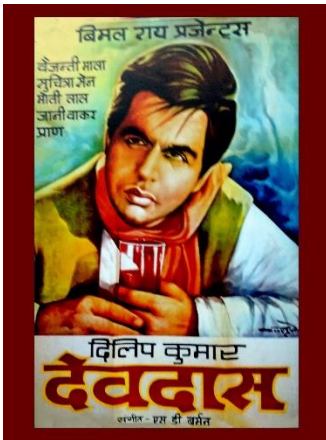
**Sriram Vengalathur** (Firoz) has always been considered a "natural born actor with a flair for drama" per his wife, however, he has substantiated this statement by participating in various productions through his entire student and adult life. He debuted his acting abilities while attending Texas A&M and participated in several English and regional language plays while pursuing a degree in

Mechanical Engineering. Most notably, he has been a part of Shunya Theater since 2005, acting in *Bricks and Lyrics*, *Final Solutions*, *The Talk*, *Satyagraha* and *Everybody loves a Good Tsunami*. His directorial credits include a short play in *The Talk* as well as *1-888-Dial-India*. Sriram has also participated in *MADCAP24* at the Country Playhouse has acted in short films.



**Anvesh Yalamachili** (Akash) loves the journey of his first play with Shunya. Anvesh is a full-time graduate student. His interests include arts, technology, philosophy, chess, combat sports. He is based out of Houston, TX.

## A Word About Dilip Kumar



Dilip Kumar is considered one of the greatest and most influential Bollywood actors of all time. Kumar is considered a pioneer of method acting, predating Hollywood method actors such as Marlon Brando. He has influenced the acting style of his peers as well as been credited with inspiring the future generations. His career has spanned 6 decades and over 65 movies.

He has been felicitated by both Indian and Pakistan's governments for his contribution to film-making and cinema. He is currently 96 years old and still revered by the Indian film fraternity and its members.



## Founder's Note

Shunya was formed fifteen years ago by a small collective of South Asian theater lovers with the mission to provide a voice for the South Asian American experience.

Shunya serves our participants. From the beginning, we have been dedicated to providing a platform for our local artistic community. Rather than bringing in outside artists, every production comes together after an open audition process in the community. Over the years, we have partnered with local dance troupes, musicians, and visual artists to showcase a variety of talents. By participating in our productions, some of our artists have found their callings and gone on to pursue art as a full-time career. Others have found the perfect outlet to fulfill their artistic impulses while continuing to thrive in careers in unrelated professions.

Shunya serves our community. By providing a voice to the South Asian experience, we not only serve the South Asian community, but the larger Houston artistic community as well. We have always performed our plays in art and theater venues rather than suburban community halls to establish ourselves as another voice in Houston's rich theater scene. South Asians should be aware of our city's art scene, and members of that art scene should be aware of the large South Asian audience. We serve as a bridge with the hope that both groups will benefit from the interaction.

Over the past fifteen years as a troupe, we've had our ups and downs. We've had years that we've been extremely active and years that we've struggled. As a volunteer organization, our strength and our ability to produce theater relies completely on your interest and generosity. Today more than ever we need your help. If you believe in our organization and our mission, please support us in any way that you can. Attend our monthly readings. Sign up for our regular volunteer meetings. And make a tax-deductible charitable contribution. With your help, we hope to continue serving the community for many years to come!

Sincerely,  
Soham Mehta  
Founder & Board President

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## **Tell your friends!**

The Waiting Room, by Tanika Gupta runs August 25, 26, 27, 31, and September 1, 2, 3, 2017; Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows are at 8 pm, and Sunday shows at 3 pm

Location: The MATCH, 3400 Main St, Houston, TX 77002

# Thanks for additional support from

Shweta Narayan-Gursahani

Jodi Bobrovsky / Stages Repertory Theater

Houston Arts Alliance Capacity Building Initiative

## Upcoming Events



We have informal play readings monthly where volunteers read and discuss English language plays relevant to Shunya's mission. This is a great opportunity to learn about Shunya and South Asian themed theatre. Our next reading is scheduled for September 2017. Email us at [info@shunyatheatre.org](mailto:info@shunyatheatre.org) to join the fun.

### CONTACT US



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