



A Nice Indian Boy was first produced by East West Players in Los Angeles, CA under EWP Producing Artistic Director, Tim Dang.

A Nice Indian Boy

By Madhuri Shekar

Directed by Anjana Menon

Naveen	—	Taher Lokhandwala
Keshav	—	John Dunn
Megha	—	Indira Kapoor
Archit	—	Shiva Juturi
Arundhati	—	Tejal Master
Assistant Director / Stage Manager	—	Nidhi Verghese
Assistant Stage Manager	—	Kanu Priya
Lighting, Sound Design and Intimacy Direction	—	Andrew Roblyer
Costume Design	—	Anjana Menon
Set Design	—	Anjana Menon
Carpenters	—	Edgar Guajardo and Johnny Halliburton
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Director's Note

Let me begin with a clarification: I've been touting this show as my directorial debut, but in reality, that would have been in the fall of 2015 when I directed a staged reading of this very play. Since then, I've carried the hope that one day I would return to complete the work I had only just scratched the surface of. Little did I imagine that day would arrive nearly a decade later alongside the release of a film adaptation—one that, when it premiered at SXSW a year ago, left me with mixed feelings. Yay for a mainstream film about queer Indian love, but also—aw, man—how will I get to tell this story on stage now?

That reaction, I now realize, came from a scarcity mindset that is so often ingrained in the arts—the idea that if someone else is telling a story, there's no room for another telling, because opportunities and resources are finite. But art is not a zero-sum game. The telling of one story doesn't diminish another—it expands it. Stories aren't meant to be hoarded or guarded. They are meant to be shared, experienced, and told in infinite ways, each version adding something new. The existence of the movie doesn't diminish our play—it reinforces how vital and resonant this story is. And there is space, more than enough, for both.

At its core, *A Nice Indian Boy* is about love—whether it's the love we find within our families, the love we discover in ourselves, or the love we seek in marriage. So often, queer narratives center pain, struggle, or loss, but

this play gives us something else: queer joy; that, in a way, mirrors the joy we've found in this process. Anecdotes and inside jokes flowed freely as we told our own stories not antithetical to themes of this play—of queerness, identity, Indianness, family, love, and marriage. One evening at rehearsal, in a fit of side-splitting laughter, I realized that this is why we tell these stories—to bring people together, to commemorate and commiserate, to remember and to forget, to heal, and to connect. Storytelling in theater becomes an act of love when it invites performers to share vulnerable, authentic moments with one another. This love grows with each telling, expanding beyond ourselves, reaching audiences, and connecting us all. That love, as Megha says in the play, “you realize one day, it will never stop growing. It is exponential.”

And it is my hope that while the stories told in the rehearsal room may remain there, their spirit lingers in the ether of this show, growing exponentially to engulf you within it.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for making space for stories.

Enjoy the show!

Anjana Menon

Biographies

Playwright **Madhuri Shekar**'s award-winning plays include Dhaba on Devon Avenue (commissioned by Victory Gardens), House of Joy (California Shakespeare Theatre), Queen (Victory Gardens, NAATCO), A Nice Indian Boy (East West Players) and In Love and Warcraft, Antigone, Presented by the Girls of St. Catherine's, and Bucket of Blessings all at Alliance Theatre. Madhuri's bestselling audio drama, Evil Eye, was released as a feature film on Amazon in 2020. She is a staff-writer on Netflix's Three-Body Problem, Madhuri is a New Dramatists Resident Playwright.



Anjana Menon (Director) is honored to make her directorial debut with Shunya Theatre, the same company where she made her Houston theater debut! An architect by training, she began her theater journey in Chennai, India, as a core member of the company Masquerade. She moved to Houston in 2011 and appeared in The Prophet and the Poet (Narrator) that same year.

She found herself involved in many subsequent Shunya productions, if not onstage like in Partition (Namagiri of Namakkal), then as assistant director for their critically acclaimed productions of Art and The Adventures of Hanuman. Her recent stage credits include Synapse (Takoda) with Octarine Accord and Creative Movement Practices; The Honeycomb trilogy (Shirley) with Octarine Accord; Macbeth: A Fluid Retelling (Duncan/Porter/Apparition 1/Doctor), and Much Ado About Nothing (Rev. Francis) with Zoom Shakespeare Productions; and Dance Nation (Connie) with Rec Room.



Taher Lokhandwala (Naveen) is making a return to the stage after a 10-year hiatus! Previously, Taher played (Ramanujan) in Partition with Shunya and even tested the waters of this very play in a reading as Naveen in 2015. Taher is thrilled to be back doing what he loves, immensely grateful to everyone for putting up with him, mildly concerned about remembering all his lines and hopeful you will enjoy this labor of love!



John Dunn (Keshav) – has appeared in numerous shows in the Houston area, including *The Turn of The Screw*, *Speeding Motorcycle*, *Jim Lehrer and the Theater and Its Double*, *Donald Barthelme’s Snow White*, *The Pine*, and in Tamarie Cooper shows since 2012 at Catastrophic Theatre; *Winter Solstice* at Rec Room; *Born Yesterday* at The Alley Theatre; *Enemies*, *Wolf Hall* at Main Street Theater; *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Rossum’s Universal Robots (R.U.R)*, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, *Enemy of the People* at Classical Theatre; *See How They Run* at Unity Theatre; *Almost Maine* at Mighty Acorn Productions; *Bob: A Life in Five Acts* at Firecracker Productions; *Mac Wellman’s Dracula and Carnival 'Round the Central Figure* at Mildred’s Umbrella; *A Man of No Importance* - Lone Star CyFair; various shows at Theatre LaB; *The Boundary* - Dirt Dogs Theatre; and *Chinglish* - Black Lab Theatre.



Shiva Juturi (Archit): This is Shiva’s second acting gig with Shunya Theatre at MATCH . Shiva has been into acting since his childhood from his father - LakshmiNarayan's inspiration as a renowned Theater Actor himself from South India. Shiva has acted/directed in a number of plays, skits, mono-acts , short-films , tv series & independent feature films in English , Hindi , Telugu & Punjabi in US & India. His recent work includes – *The Waiting Room* with Shunya Theatre; Telugu Feature Film ‘*Rahasyam Idam Jagath*’ and TV Mini Series ‘*Little India*’ & ‘*Metro Park*’. IMDB Profile - <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm11269682>



Indira Kapoor (Megha) is excited to be making her acting debut in A Nice Indian Boy. She is a software engineer, who, when not writing code, enjoys watching Bollywood films and blogging about them.



Tejal Master (Arundhati) is thrilled to be part of Shunya Theatre again, after her previous performance as Raksha / Messua in Shunya's rendition of Jungle Book in 2014. Her other notable roles include (Frazzled but loving mom) in The House of Master, (Heroic sister / Rebellious daughter) in Growing up Shah, Bad ass senior manager in The Consulting Life, and of course her favorite role of all – Sarcastic and steadfast wife in Marriage, Margaritas, and Mayhem. Tejal would like to thank her husband and children, Shunya Theatre, and her ANIB family for their constant support and encouragement.



Nidhi Verghese (Stage Manager) is so excited to be a part of the team bringing you A Nice Indian Boy! Almost two decades ago she acted in various productions with the Madras Players and Masquerade, in Chennai. A writer by trade, Nidhi has worked as a copywriter at Ogilvy and won the Academy Nicholl Fellowship for screenwriting in 2009. More recently her scripts have been optioned by Ashutosh Gowariker and Leena Yadav. While she currently spends most of her time force feeding her two young boys broccoli, she's thrilled to be getting back to theatre and has had the best time working with this wonderful group at Shunya!



Kanu Priya (Assistant Stage Manager) is deeply grateful to be a part of Shunya and the team behind A Nice Indian Boy. A Chartered Accountant and finance professional by day, Kanu has harbored a passion for theatre since her school days, performing in various school and college plays in India. In 2015, Kanu relocated to the UK, where she trained in short-form and long-form Improv at the Bristol Improv Theatre. From 2017 to 2020, she performed in several long-form improv shows, including Detect This, Stuff of Dreams, and Bite Me with Unscripted Players. She also participated in short-form shows such as Theatre Throwdown, Women's Day Specials, and Monthly Jam Nights. Now based in Houston since 2023, Kanu is excited to continue pursuing her passion for theatre and is eager to find new opportunities to perform!



Andrew Roblyer (they/any) (Lighting/Sound Designer and Intimacy Coordinator) is a queer, nonbinary, neurodivergent storyteller and multi-hyphenate theatre artist based in Houston, TX. They currently serve as the founder and artistic director for The Octarine Accord, Houston's first and only theatre company dedicated entirely to speculative fiction. Andrew was voted Best Lighting Designer in the 2022 Broadway World Houston awards, is an MFA candidate from Randolph College's MFA Theater program with a focus in directing. www.andrewroblyer.com

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A Message from the Board

Over two decades ago, an accidental stop at the Shunya auditions sparked my love affair with community theater. Like many of you, I had dabbled in theater during school and college, but I had never imagined a platform that would allow me to stay creatively engaged into my “real adult life” — a life expected to be defined by career, marriage, and responsibilities.

At Shunya, I met doctors, engineers, lawyers, bankers, homemakers — all moonlighting as actors, directors, stagehands, makeup artists and more. Each one uniquely talented, all united by their love for theater. They worked full-time jobs, raised families, and still carved out time to pursue their passion.

A chance encounter with Shunya showed me that it was possible to stand under the spotlight on a stage while excelling in the kitchen, the boardroom, or any other arena. It broadened my horizons — as creative freedom so often does.

But Shunya gave me more than a creative outlet. It gifted me a sense of community. As someone fresh off the boat, it instantly connected me with a warm, supportive, and vibrant circle of people who made Houston feel like home. Many of those friendships, forged in rehearsals and green rooms, have endured to this day.

Beyond my personal journey, I've come to realize, and appreciate, the larger role Shunya — and South Asian community theater — plays in our lives.

Stories are powerful. They shape identity, foster understanding, and preserve culture. Shunya creates space for our stories — stories that are meaningful, bold, and distinctly ours. It nurtures unique voices and helps us stay rooted in our heritage while reaching for creative expression. That kind of space is rare. And irreplaceable.

Several months ago, a group of us theater mavericks gathered over chai and poha. The one thing we all agreed on? It was time for Shunya to return. After many passionate debates and countless hours of planning and hard work, we are beyond thrilled to welcome you to Shunya's comeback show.

Thank you to our families, friends, and supporters — your encouragement has meant everything. We hope this marks the beginning of a renewed and thriving creative journey. And we hope you'll continue to support community theater — especially Shunya — for many, many years to come.

With love and gratitude,

Preity Bhagia

President, Shunya Board of Directors



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