

UTP AND SWEATSHOP IN ASSOCIATION  
WITH SYDNEY FESTIVAL PRESENT

# SEX, DRUGS & PORK ROLLS



# Dr Michael Mohammed Ahmad

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“And I, for one, will join in with anyone – don’t care what colour you are – as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.” These were the closing words of black civil rights leader, Malcolm X, at the Oxford Union on 3 December 1964, just three months before he was assassinated.

Growing up in Sydney over the last thirty years, it was common for me to attend theatre productions in my teens and twenties which were one-hundred percent created by white artists – from the writers, to the directors, actors, producers, dramaturgs, sound and lighting designers, to the video artists, photographers, costume designers and stage managers. As an Arab-Australian Muslim from Western Sydney, whose picture of Australia was always a cultural melting pot, witnessing this kind of shameless white-washing was vomit-inducing at best and a stab in the heart at worst.

Deeply inspired by the life and times of Malcolm X throughout my entire professional career, I established a Western Sydney-based literacy movement in 2013 called Sweatshop, which was devoted to empowering people of colour through reading, writing and critical thinking. While Sweatshop remains a self-determined organisation that is run exclusively by people of colour for people of colour, Malcolm’s words have always guided us toward solidarity: Sweatshop will collaborate with anyone – black, brown and white – who is serious about transforming the structural and systemic inequalities in the Australian arts sector.

*Sex, Drugs & Pork Rolls* is the realisation of an eight-year vision from Sweatshop, in partnership with our allies at Utp, to unapologetically reflect the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of contemporary Australia. When I first conceived the idea for this project, I had a very simple premise in mind: What would it look like to create an Australian theatre production that is one-hundred percent developed by people of colour?

The answer is everything our citizens deserve from the modern-day experience of attending the theatre: an intersectional work that is fresh, unique, uncompromising, tragic, hilarious, honest, and most importantly, complex in its portrayal of this nation.

There’s a chance that you won’t quite know what to do with yourself by the end of *Sex, Drugs & Pork Rolls*. Whoever you may be on your way into the theatre, please accept these comforting words from my ancestors on your way out: Asalaam alaikum.

## Dr Michael Mohammed Ahmad

Script Editor, *Sex, Drugs & Pork Rolls*  
Founding Director, Sweatshop

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## Dr Jessica Olivieri

Utp is committed to supporting artists to be in control of their own stories, whilst at the same time providing a deeply supportive framework for them. This was particularly important for *Sex, Drugs & Pork Rolls*.

When Michael Mohammed Ahmad, Sweatshop Director, brought us the script it was on the condition that the project be run entirely by a CaLD or POC identifying team, only natural considering this sharply written cinematic project is based on the intersectional experiences of growing up CaLD or POC in Western Sydney. This saw Utp work with some of the most talented people, at the apex of their careers. People like director S. Shakthidharan, writer Omar Sakr, performer Emily Havea and artist/DOP Akil Ahmat, to name-drop just a few.

Thank you Mo for trusting us with this incredible piece of Western Sydney oral storytelling and congratulations to the whole team for generating this cutting yet tender project.

Enjoy your roll!

## Dr Jessica Olivieri

Artistic Director, Utp

## Writers

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WINNIE DUNN is a Tongan-Australian writer and arts worker from Mt Druitt. Winnie's work has been published in the *Sydney Review of Books*, *The Lifted Brow*, *The Griffith Review*, *Meanjin*, *SBS Voices*, *Southerly* and *Cordite*. She is the editor of several anthologies including *Sweatshop Women*, *The Big Black Thing* and *Bent Not Broken*. Winnie is currently completing her debut novel as the recipient of a 2019 CAL Ignite Grant.



SHIRLEY LE is a Vietnamese-Australian writer from Western Sydney. She is a Creative Producer at Sweatshop: Western Sydney Literacy Movement and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Macquarie University. Her short stories and essays have been published in *Overland*, *The Guardian*, *SBS Voices*, *The Griffith Review*, *Meanjin* and several Sweatshop anthologies. Shirley is currently working on her debut novel as the recipient of a 2019 Affirm Press Mentorship.



STEPHEN PHAM is a Vietnamese-Australian writer from Cabramatta. Stephen's short stories and essays have appeared in *Overland*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Seizure*, *The Vocal*, *Meanjin*, *The Griffith Review*, *The Big Black Thing* and *The Sydney Review of Books*. Stephen received the 2018 Create NSW Writer's Fellowship to develop his debut manuscript.



OMAR SAKR is an award-winning poet born and raised in Western Sydney to Lebanese and Turkish Muslim migrants. He is the author of *These Wild Houses* (Cordite Books), and *The Lost Arabs* (UQP), which was awarded the 2020 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry and shortlisted in the Queensland Literary Awards, for the John Bray Poetry Award, and for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. *The Lost Arabs* has also been released in the US through Andrews McMeel Universal. In 2019, Omar was the recipient of the Edward Stanley Award for Poetry.

## Lead Performers

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EMILY HAVEA  
Performing the words of Winnie Dunn.



AILEEN HUYNH  
Performing the words of Shirley Le.



HENRY VO  
Performing the words of Stephen Pham.



HAZEM SHAMMAS  
Performing the words of Omar Sakr.

## Director

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S. SHAKTHIDHARAN is a Western Sydney storyteller with Sri Lankan heritage and Tamil ancestry. He's the Artistic Director of Kurinji; a writer, director and producer of theatre and film, and composer of original music. He was the inaugural Associate Artist at Carriageworks and is the recipient of both the Phillip Parson's and Kirk Robson awards. His most recent play *Counting and Cracking* with Belvoir and Co-Curious received community, commercial and critical acclaim at the 2019 Sydney and Adelaide Festivals and won 7 Helpmann Awards. Shakthi was Founder and Artistic Director of community arts company CuriousWorks from 2003-2018.

## Script Editor

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DR MICHAEL MOHAMMED AHMAD is the founding director of Sweatshop Literacy Movement and editor of the critically acclaimed anthology: *After Australia* (Affirm Press). His debut novel, *The Tribe* (Giramondo), won the 2015 *Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Novelists of the Year Award. His second novel, *The Lebs* (Hachette), won a 2019 Premier's Literary Award and was a finalist for the 2019 Miles Franklin Literary Award. Mohammed completed his Doctorate of Creative Arts at Western Sydney University in 2017. His forthcoming novel, *The Other Half of You*, will be published by Hachette in June 2021.

# Sex, Drugs & Pork Rolls

20 – 23 January 2021 | Lennox Theatre, Riverside Theatres

## Utp

Utp has been at the forefront of art and social change since 1979. Utp is leading a not so quiet revolution of art that is socially responsive, inclusive and that reflects the diverse nation we live in. We lead from the lands of the Darug people and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Utp is a unique commissioning and producing organisation. We make long-term investments in collaborations with artists and/or communities from outside the dominant culture to give form to extraordinary ideas. We never do this alone, working with an exceptional set of partners to co-produce a year-round program of performance, dance, visual art, learning and community-led projects, unlike anything you have seen before.

## Utp Team

Artistic Director CEO: Dr Jessica Olivieri  
Executive Producer & Development Manager: Adam McGowan  
General Manager: Bronwyn Papantonio  
Creative Producers: Eddie Abd & Frank Mainoo  
Marketing Manager: Sidney McMahan  
Administrator & Marketing Coordinator: Veronica Barac-Gomez  
Finance: Take Care of Books  
PR: The Press Society

## Thank you

Maryam Azam, Karilyn Brown, Quyen Chung, Jasmine Dinh at Banh Mi Bay Ngo, Wesley Enoch, Craig Hull, Samuel Kanaan-Oringo, David Kirkpatrick, Michelle Kotevski, Robert Love, Peter Polites, Yana Taylor, Austage Events, Maria Tran from Phoenix Eye, I.C.E., The Neilson Foundation, the Western Sydney University Interns - Elisha Mondonedo, Chelsie Sta Romana, Jarrod Leonard, Narjess Tlais and Rizqi Kusuma Putri, Utp Producers' Circle, and the staff at Riverside Theatres.

*Sex, Drugs & Pork Rolls* has been made possible thanks to the generous support of the following partners:



And all of the generous donors to the LOVE Utp fundraising campaign

## Creative Team

Writers: Winnie Dunn, Stephen Pham, Shirley Le and Omar Sakr  
Director: S.Shakthidharan  
Script Editor: Dr Michael Mohammed Ahmad  
Director of Photography & Film Editor: Akil Ahamat  
Lead Performers: Emily Havea, Aileen Huynh, Hazem Shammam and Henry Vo  
Performers: Mert Altunsoy, Alissar Chidiac, Taofia Pelesasa and Susan Young

## Production Team

Production Manager (Presentation): Amber Silk  
Production Manager (Filming): Takashi Hara  
Costume/Make-up Artist & Photographer: Nancy Trieu  
Composer: Aimée Falzon  
Sound Mixer : Mayu Ganeshan  
Sound Recordist: Paul Pham  
Lighting Assistant: Adrian Castro

## Utp Board

Amanda Brisot  
Michelle Hanna  
Dr Robert Lang (Chair)  
Craig McMaster  
Dr Jessica Olivieri  
Theo Psychogios  
Catherine Sullivan  
Nina Trofimova CPA CA  
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