

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE



“Awakenings”

“There’s a wonderful trust and exchange with the audience of a Bangarra performance. We guide you on a journey. It’s a meeting of the urban social, traditional dreaming and pure abstract dance – that’s why we can speak to all peoples. Passion, emotion and respect - this is what people have to have to survive, its got to be part of the human immune system. If you are honest to the process it will naturally attract those people who want to listen.” Stephen Page, Artistic Director.

Tonight’s program *Awakenings* features pieces from Bangarra Dance Theatre’s award winning show *Skin* and other favourite shows such as *Ochres* and *Fish*.

Dry Mud

Women’s business. An abstract portrayal of traditional hunting and gathering methods, with a particular female energy inspired by Aboriginal women who nurture and maintain Mother Earth.
Dancers: Yolande Brown, Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Desley Roberts, Peta Strachan

Black

Men’s business. An ash storm has blown over. The call and pain of young men’s initiation can only be viewed from a distance.

Dancers: Victor Bramich, Lewis Lampton, Joel Blanco, Sani Townson

Toxic

A raw and powerful story about the effect of mining projects on traditional desert homelands and culture. Jagged bodies struggle and convulse with toxins.

Dancers: Yolande Brown, Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Desley Roberts, Peta Strachan

Dingo

A sacred and powerful initiation ceremony from traditional Aboriginal men’s law – a young boy becomes a man and is given the totem of the Dingo.

Dancers: Joel Blanco (solo), Victor Bramich, Sani Townson, Lewis Lampton

Rhythm Dance (Torres Strait Island)

A vibrant traditional rhythm dance featuring seed pod shakers and the infectious energy of hand clapping and drums.

Dancers: Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Sani Townson.

Turtle Shell (Waru) (Torres Strait Island)

Song written by Helen Anu, choreographed Peggy Misi. A celebration of the wind, the sea and the different patterns on turtle shells.

Dancers: Yolande Brown, Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Desley Roberts, Peta Strachan

Cocoon

A lost spirit travels and searches for a meeting ground, a place of rebirth.

Dancer: Victor Bramich

White

At dawn, Mother Earth yawns; her call engulfs the white ochre spirits.

Dancers: (Trio) Peta Strachan, Yolande Brown, Peggy Misi (Duo) Elma Kris, Sani Townson (TSI Trio) Lewis Lampton, Peggy Misi, Elma Kris/Desley Roberts (Flying Fox) Peta Strachan (Duo) Victor Bramich, Yolande Brown (Final trio) Desley Roberts, Peta Strachan, Lewis Lampton (Joel Blanco ensemble sections)



BANGARRADANCE THEATRE

Bangarra Dance Theatre is one of the youngest and the oldest of Australia's dance companies. Its living traditions go back at least 40,000 years encompassing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. Bangarra also reflects the lives and attitudes of Indigenous people today.

Steps that have pounded the dust of a dry continent for so long are the source of a truly Australian dance language, that mingled with international dance influences, creates its own unique shapes and rhythms. Stories that are entwined with Indigenous spirituality and philosophy help to mould the presentations that Bangarra puts on stage.

Bangarra Dance Theatre was formed in 1989 by Carole Johnson, founding director of NAISDA (Australia's national indigenous dance school) along with NAISDA graduates. In 1991, Stephen Page was appointed artistic director and the following year he choreographed the company's first full-length work *Praying Mantis Dreaming*.

While his creative talent had already been noted, it was as chief choreographer for Bangarra that he developed a dance language, which combined his Aboriginal heritage with his urban lifestyle. In 1995, *Ochres* was a breakthrough, both for the company and for Australian dance. Choreographed by Stephen Page and Bernadette Walong with artists from Bangarra Dance Theatre, it was a hit with audiences and a revelation for dance critics in Australia and overseas.

The key to *Ochres*, and the works that follow, is the close collaboration of the creative team. Djakapurra Munyarryun is Bangarra's cultural consultant as well as a leading dancer, didjeridu player and songman. In consultation with the elders of the Munyarryun Clan in Dhalinbuy, North East Arnhem Land, where he grew up, Djakapurra is the source of Bangarra's traditional knowledge.

Other members of the creative team include Stephen's brother David Page, and Steve Francis, who have composed and produced music for most of Bangarra's works, as well as projects of their own. David and Steve's music follows a similar line to Stephen's dance in bringing together elements of past and present, traditional percussive instruments and modern technology. Above all there are the dancers. It is their dedication and willingness to journey with Stephen that has enabled him to realise his creative vision.

In 1997 Stephen developed another benchmark work called *Rites* in which Bangarra Dance Theatre joined forces with the national flagship classical company, the Australian Ballet. *Rites* premiered at the 1997 Melbourne Festival and was taken in 1999 to New York's City Center in 1999.

Following *Rites* audience anticipation for the next work grew - and they had plenty to look forward to in 2000. Stephen directed the Indigenous segment of the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games as well as *Tubowgule*, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Arts Festival. At that time Bangarra Dance Theatre also premiered a new work created for the occasion, *Skin*, at the Sydney Opera House, which has since won Stephen and Bangarra the coveted Helpmann Award for Best New Australian Work and Best Dance Work in 2000.

Through Bangarra's involvement with the *Awakenings* segment of the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games new connections were made Indigenous communities in the Central Desert. As a result, in April 2001, 12 dancers and 7 production crew traveled to Umuwa, 500 kilometres south of Uluru, to run youth workshops under the watchful eyes of elders from the region. (The land is Pitjantjatjara land and belongs to the Anangu people.) The visit to the Central Desert ended with a one-night-only sell-out performance of *Awakenings* at Araluen.

Following these outstanding successes, Stephen Page has created a new triple-bill work titled *Corroboree*, which will tour to Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney in 2001. A rich visual feast and a return to a purity of dance and tradition, Stephen Page's new triple bill embraces the Dreamtime, a time when animal spirits occupied the land without the influence of humans.

Also scheduled for 2001 is a tour of regional NSW further consolidating Bangarra's connection with communities in rural Australia. The year will culminate in a 16 city North American tour (with New York artists' agency ICM), a highlight of which promises to be the company's New York debut as part of the prestigious *BAM, Next Wave Down Under* festival.

AWAKENINGS PRODUCTION TEAM

Jasmine Gulash - Assistant Artistic Director
John Colvin - Production Manager
John Matkovic - Set designer & Mechanist
Ebony Williams - Assistant Stage Manager
Narelle Lewis - Stage Manager
Nina Veretennikova - Rehearsal Director
Sandy Ireland - Business Manager

Bangarra Dance Theatre
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