

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE



SANDSONG

Stories from the Great Sandy Desert

WELCOME TO SANDSONG

Following two years of substantive disruption, it is a joy to be back in front of audiences Australia-wide again on one of our most extensive regional tours throughout Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Regional touring is an intrinsic part of our annual calendar – every year we strive to share our work with as many different communities as possible across Australia.

Never before has the importance of gathering together for the purpose of sharing and uniting through story, felt more fundamental. The power of storytelling allows us to make sense of the world, to address the past and the present, to cleanse and to heal.

Now in our fourth decade as Australia's first major Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performing arts company, we remain grounded in our history and the shared cultural knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. *SandSong* includes stories from one of the many brutal parts of Australia's recent colonial history, a history that is often white-washed and erased. It also tells the story of Community, of cultural resilience, and of maintaining and rebuilding culture and connection to Country. With this work, we pay respects to our friend and sister, proud Wangkatjungka woman, Ningali Lawford-Wolf. Ningali was a trail-blazing artist and activist, and her voice and spirit is woven throughout this work.

Over the last two years we were very fortunate to be able to safely make two visits to Fitzroy Crossing, to spend time on Bunuba Country with Wangkatjungka and Walmajarri Cultural Knowledge Holders. Thank you to Cultural Consultants Putuparri Tom Lawford and Eva Nargoodah for their guidance, and to the Lawford and Nargoodah families for welcoming us and being so generous with their time. As part of this regional tour, we are excited to return *SandSong* to Country, to share it with the Community at Fitzroy Crossing who entrusted us with their stories and who granted us permission to share this story with you all.

Tonight's performance would not be possible without the continued support of the Australian Government, through the Australia Council for the Arts and Playing Australia. A special thank you to all our corporate partners and our many donors who have demonstrated their commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures on and off the stage.

Thank you for joining us.



Stephen Page
Artistic Director



Lissa Twomey
Executive Director

SANDSONG

Stories from the Great Sandy Desert

Albany Entertainment Centre 26 Oct 2022	Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre 29 Oct 2022	Queens Park Theatre, Geraldton 2 Nov 2022	Red Earth Arts Precinct, Karratha 5 Nov 2022	Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs 18 - 19 Nov 2022	Darwin Entertainment Centre 25 - 26 Nov 2022
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CREDITS

Choreographers
Stephen Page
Frances Rings
and the Dancers of
Bangarra Dance
Theatre
Cultural Consultants
Putuparri Tom Lawford
Eva Nargoodah
Cultural Consultancy
Wangkatjungka
& Walmajarri Elders
Composer
Steve Francis
Set Designer
Jacob Nash

Costume Designer
Jennifer Irwin
Lighting Designer
Nick Schlieper
AV Designer
David Bergman
Rehearsal Director
Daniel Roberts
Aerial Movement Consultant
Joshua Thomson
Rigging Consultant
David Jackson
Lighting Realiser
Chris Twyman
Sound Recordist
Brendon Boney

BANGARRA DANCERS

Beau Dean Riley
Smith
Rikki Mason
Glory Tuohy-Daniell
Ryan Pearson
Lillian Banks
Courtney Radford
Kallum Goolagong
Gusta Mara
Kiarn Doyle
Emily Flannery
Maddison Paluch
Daniel Mateo
Janaya Lamb
Jesse Murray
James Boyd
Chantelle Lee
Lockhart

PRODUCTION CREW

Production Manager
Cat Studley
Company Manager
Lachlan Steel
Stage Manager
Rose Jenkins
Head of Costume
Jessica Hodgkinson
Head Rigger & Head Mechanist
Katie McDonagh
Sound & AV Technician
Raine Paul
Assistant Stage Manager
Ashleigh King

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this program contains the name and images of someone who has passed away. Use of Ningali Lawford-Wolf's image and name within this publication have been approved for use by Ms Lawford-Wolf's family.

Bangarra Dance Theatre pays respect and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which our Company calls home, where much of *SandSong* was created – the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation.

ABOUT SANDSONG

THE STORY

SandSong tells the unique story of the Kimberley and Great Sandy Desert regions, and the survival of its People.

Between the 1920s and 1960s, many Aboriginal people were removed from their Country and onto pastoral stations where they were forced into hard labour, usually for no wages and only minimal rations. Despite this displacement and cultural disruption, the Traditional Peoples of the Western Desert have maintained unbroken connection to Country – keeping songs, stories, kinship and lore strong.

This is the Country of Wangkatjungka woman Ningali Josie Lawford-Wolf (1967–2019), a close cultural collaborator of Bangarra, whose spirit, stories and artistic contributions have inspired a number of the company's works and enriched the broader arts landscape.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE

The Kimberley is home to the Wangkatjungka and Walmajarri people, where the ancient knowledge of People and of Country is preserved through *Songlines* that have endured for hundreds of generations.

At the heart of this land is Jila – the Living Water – that resides in desert waterholes across the region and is the basis of cultural beliefs and practices.

INTERESTING FACTS

- Geological origins of the Kimberley region reach back nearly 2000 million years.
- The Wangkatjungka people have lived in the desert of Western Australia for over forty thousand years, living a nomadic life knowing they could always retreat to their sacred waterholes.
- There are 16 smoke machines in the show.
- 1 litre of Gold paint is used per show.
- It takes around 10 hours to handmake a coolamon skirt (used in the Act 2 Parranga).

MUSIC CREDITS

Music composed and performed by Steve Francis except:

Vocals on *Skin*
Vocals and words on *Coolamon, Labour, Homeland and Fringe*
Ningali Lawford-Wolf

Voice on *Spinifex*
Putuparri Tom Lawford

Voice and words on *Build Up / Walk Off*
Vincent Lingari

“Gurindji Blues”
Written by: E. Egan
Universal Mus. Publ. MGB Australia Pty L
Administered by: Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd

Thank you to the Lingiari Family and to the Gurindji Aboriginal Corporation.

Violin on *Fringe*
Véronique Serret

Excerpt of “Fitzroy Crossing” in *Fringe*
Warumpi Band: Neil Murray, Sammy Butcher
Written by: Sammy Butcher / Neil Murray
Universal Music Publishing Pty. Ltd.
Administered by: Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd

Vocals on *Lore Time*
Rika Hamaguchi, Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Lillian Banks and Courtney Radford

Score also includes Traditional songs:

Marrjarrka: Men's Traditional Dance Story
Marrjarrka Ceremony Archival Footage –
Courtesy of Putuparri Tom Lawford
Belongs to Lawford Family, Tighe Family, Cox Family and James Family

Karnti: Women's Traditional Bush Potato Dance
Performers: Mayarn Julia Lawford, Eva Nargoodah, Jean Tighe, Jenet Spinks, Elsie Dickens, Doreen Button, Malachi Hobbs

Junta: Women's Traditional Bush Onion Dance
(Recording from 2002)
Performer: Mayarn Julia Lawford

Kurtal (Recording from 2020)
Performers: Tommy May, Mayarn Julia Lawford, Eva Nargoodah, Jean Tighe, Japeth Rangie, Jenet Spinks, Elsie Dickens, Doreen Button, Malachi Hobbs

SANDSONG

80 minutes (no interval)

ACT 1 MAKURRA | COLD DRY SEASON

Poison
Time and space collide in a cloud of black collective consciousness, foreshadowing dark times ahead. But the Land is always present, the breathing womb of resilience.

No cast

AV Credits
Excerpts from report by Alexander Forrest regarding the expedition he led into the NW Kimberley in 1879. Published by WA Times on 23 September 1879
National Library of Australia

Group of prisoners in neck chains, Wyndham, Western Australia (1898)
State Library Victoria

Operation "Buffalo" The Footage Company Australia / British Movietone
ABC News Report on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Australian Broadcasting Corporation Library Sales

Dry
The vibrant energy of the seasons unfolds to reveal the enduring cycle that sustains life in the Great Sandy Desert.

Cast: Full ensemble

Skin
A young woman is guided through kinship and affirms her place amongst her skin group. She is given her name and told of her responsibilities to family, and to the women's business knowledge that she will inherit one day.

Cast: Lillian Banks, Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Courtney Radford, Emily Flannery, Maddison Paluch, Janaya Lamb, Chantelle Lee Lockhart

Junta: Women's Traditional Bush Onion Dance
This traditional dance is about collecting the Junta Bush onions, cooking them, rubbing them together and finally winnowing them in the coolamon till they are clean and ready to eat and share with the family.

Cast: Lillian Banks, Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Courtney Radford, Emily Flannery, Maddison Paluch, Janaya Lamb, Chantelle Lee Lockhart

Spinifex
The men are carrying smoking spinifex to make a shelter. They are burning off, vaccinating, maintaining the health of Country. The old people are talking to Country, they can sense the change coming. The colonisers and their cattle have brought a dust storm with them which breaks the Land apart, displacing families.

Totem
The men are preparing a young man for Ceremony. Through the lens of male energy, ritual transformation connects the men to their totems. The totemic shapeshifters move through the space, evolving as they reaffirm story to place, and their responsibility to the maintenance of men's sites.

Cast: Beau Dean Riley Smith, Rikki Mason, Ryan Pearson, Kallum Goolagong, Gusta Mara, Kiarn Doyle, Daniel Mateo, Jesse Murray, James Boyd

Marrjarrka: Men's Traditional Dance Story
This tells the true story of how Wurtuwaya (Yanpiyarti Ned Cox's grandfather) and Wirrali (Ningali Lawford-Wolf's great-grandfather) recovered their stolen Marrjarrka totemic object from a group of men who had taken it and were using it to perform their own ceremony. Wurtuwaya and Wirrali managed to retrieve the sacred totemic object, and created this important ceremonial dance, which is performed by both senior and younger men.

This dance belongs to the Lawford Family, Tighe Family, Cox Family and James Family.
Source: National Museum of Australia.
Cast: Beau Dean Riley Smith, Rikki Mason, Ryan Pearson, Kallum Goolagong, Gusta Mara, Kiarn Doyle, Daniel Mateo, Jesse Murray, James Boyd

ACT 2 PARRANGA, HOT DRY SEASON

Coolamon
The women hunt during cold weather time. This year is different though, it's dry and there is a drought, water and food are scarce. A meditation on fragility, survival, balance, knowledge, life and death.

Cast: Lillian Banks, Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Courtney Radford, Emily Flannery, Maddison Paluch, Janaya Lamb, Chantelle Lee Lockhart

Cast: Full ensemble

ACT 3 KARTIYA

Auction
The land has been interrupted. Mobs have left the desert, forced to leave the memories of bush life behind them. People begin their new life as laborers and domestics, in servitude to the pastoral industry, victim to the lawlessness of a new frontier and the whims of the station owners.

Cast: Full ensemble

Station Labour
The men toil from dawn to dusk in the stockyards, labouring in a relentless cycle, paid only in rations of food and clothing.

Cast: Beau Dean Riley Smith, Rikki Mason, Ryan Pearson, Kallum Goolagong, Gusta Mara, Kiarn Doyle, Daniel Mateo, Jesse Murray, James Boyd

Build Up / Walk Off
Wet season lies in the distance, reflecting the growing tensions of the people. A cyclone is brewing as the people stand up for their rights.

Vincent Lingiari's voice fills the space, stabilising the energy, awakening the memory of the proud desert men that they once were, and giving them the strength and solidarity to walkoff the stations.

Cast: Full ensemble

ACT 4 YITILAL, WET SEASON

Fringe
A young boy is lost, an internal storm brewing, ready to explode from social trauma and intergenerational grief. Wet season reminds him of his grandfather and the resilience of the Lore Men who came before him. His sister steps out from the shadows of his fear, carrying the spirit to cleanse him.

Cast: Lillian Banks, Kiarn Doyle, Beau Dean Riley Smith, Kallum Goolagong, Daniel Mateo

Lore Time
Mobs come together for Ceremony and to begin the healing.

Cast: Rikki Mason, Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Lillian Banks, Ryan Pearson, Courtney Radford, Emily Flannery, Gusta Mara, Kiarn Doyle, Jesse Murray, Janaya Lamb, Chantelle Lee Lockhart

Karnti: Women's Traditional Bush Potato Dance
This traditional dance is about looking for the Karnti bush potato. You look everywhere with your digging stick for the roots. You see a crack in the ground and that is where the Karnti is and you can dig it up.

Cast: Lillian Banks, Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Courtney Radford, Emily Flannery, Maddison Paluch, Janaya Lamb, Chantelle Lee Lockhart

Painting Mob
Painting Country brings the people closer to their desert homeland, which they have not seen for forty years.

Art transports them back to their traditional lands, reconnecting and reaffirming ties to Country. This cultural awakening empowers and strengthens them to rebuild family, community and their future.

Cast: Full ensemble

Homeland
Through oppression, multiple displacements and decades of upheaval, the spirit of people and place endures to stand strong in their kinship and belonging. They come together in wet season for Lore time when everyone gathers for Ceremony. Unbroken, the cycle continues.

Cast: Full ensemble

Descriptions of traditional dances provided by Eva Nargoodah, Mayarn Julia Lawford and Putuparri Tom Lawford

GLOSSARY

Walmajarri language translations:

Kartiya	White Person
Makurra	Cold Season
Parranga	Hot, Dry Season
Yitilal	Wet Season
Ngurti	Coolamon
Marrjarrka	Men's Traditional Cone Dance
Karnti	Women's Traditional Bush Potato Dance
Junta	Bush Onion

ON COUNTRY

In May 2021 the company visited Fitzroy Crossing as part of its research for *SandSong*.

Photos by Rikki Mason, Beau Dean Riley Smith & Cassidy Waters



ABOUT US



WE ARE BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

We are a company of professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers.

We are storytellers. We are fire makers.

As one of Australia's leading performing arts companies, we share our culture with Communities and audiences across Australia and the world.

We are contemporary dancers, drawing on 65,000 years of culture.

We create powerful works of theatre with dance, music, poetry and design.

We tell the stories of our Elders, create works on Country and return the works we create to the place they were made.

Each of our dancers is a professionally trained, dynamic artist with a proud Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background. Together, they represent the best of Australian talent.

We have been making our indelible marks on the Australian theatre landscape for 32 years. We were born in 1989 from the energy of NAISDA (National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association) founder Carole Y. Johnson, along with NAISDA graduates, and Rob Bryant and Cheryl Stone.

Today, Artistic Director Stephen Page, Executive Director Lissa Twomey and Associate Artistic Director Frances Rings lead the company in our mission to promote awareness and understanding of our cultures.

Every year, we tour a world premiere work across the nation and embark on an international tour. We are at home performing on Country, in regional centres and on Australia's most iconic stages. We run education workshops, programs and special projects to nurture the next generation of storytellers.

We are for the hundreds of First Nations Communities across Australia — and for anyone who wants to be a part of our story.

REGIONAL TOURING

Regional touring is a crucial part of the company's annual calendar, connecting Bangarra with the Communities that inspire its stories, as well as exposing new audiences to a positive representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

PHOTOGRAPHY

Main images and production image Daniel Boud

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ON AND OFF THE STAGE.




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**BANGARRA DANCE
THEATRE AUSTRALIA**

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