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NewsLetter

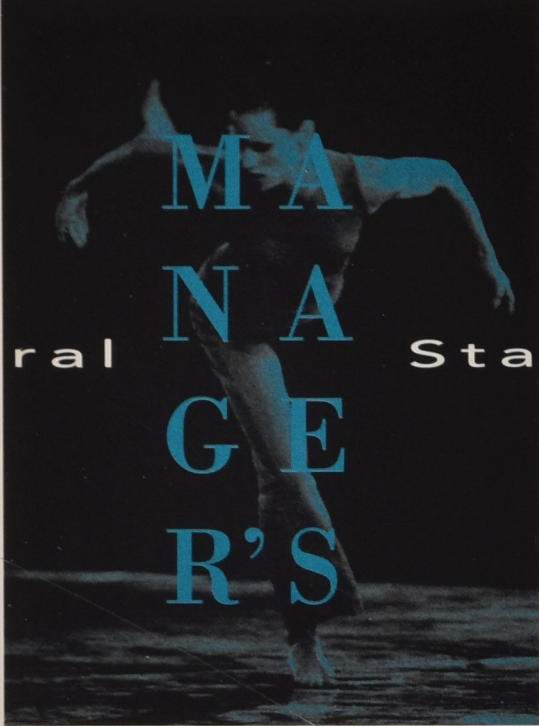
Spring

1996

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General Statement



The past three months has seen another hectic period for us - there was the South Australian Regional tour, preparation for Atlanta, Atlanta itself and all the "comment" that ensued. Experts on major events and real indigenous performance came out of the woodwork; then immediately back from Atlanta, first port of call was Ballarat, followed by Geelong, Bendigo, Ararat, Warrnambool and finally Warragul. The Warragul performance was the very last performance of Ochres in Australia for 1996. It was also Kate Dunn's last performance within the company. We have loved having her with us over the last eight months, and wish her well in the next stage of her career, with Chunky Move. She has been replaced by Vicki Van Hout, recently returned from New York.

Stephen in the meantime has been busy in Melbourne creating a new work *Alchemy* for the Australian Ballet.

From October the company will tour to Indonesia, India and Hong Kong.

And just so things don't get dull we have had to contend with a bit of budget reduction pressure. We feared the worst, however I am pleased to report that whilst we will carry some of the burden of cuts to the Australia Council's funding, we will be able to manage with a small reduction to our 1997 and 1998 funding.

I would very much like to thank those who called and wrote to offer words of support, and also to our friends whose financial contributions make a real difference.

Jan Irvine



Jan Irvine, General Manager, stays home and keeps shop.



Artistic Director
Stephen Page

General Manager
Jan Irvine

Rehearsal Director
Bill Pengelly

Production Manager
Jo Mercurio

Stage Manager
John Colvin

Financial Controller
Jeanette Cheung

Public Relations Manager
Jo Dyer

Admin Assistant
Angelina Hurley

M
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COMPANY

Dancers

Albert David

Vicki Van Hout

Gary Lang

Marilyn Miller

Djakapurra
Munyarryun

Kirk Page

Russell Page

Frances Rings

Gina Rings

8
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a
f
f

Photography by:
Ashley de Prazer
David Karonidis
Fairfax Photo Library
Marilyn Miller

Inflatable kangaroos aside, I guess it's been obvious that the dancers, Bill Pengelly and I have been very busy. Recently we had the extraordinary experience of representing Australia in the Closing Ceremony of the Atlanta Olympic Games. I enjoyed the challenge of creating something lasting only eight minutes that would give people overseas a taste of our country. I'm really glad it turned out to be so controversial - I would have been devastated if the response had been a bland "wasn't that nice?!" And who knows what the potential is for an emblem - dare I say mascot? - based around a huge inflatable roo?

From our point of view, both the atmosphere and being in Atlanta was fantastic. Lots of adrenalin leading up to the ceremony, great fun performing in such a large arena to millions of people, and then a big party to cap it all off. Watching the life-savers, the Brent Street Boys, the 24 boys and girls - NSW Performing Arts high school students, talking and sharing dances with the

best I can. It's certainly a challenge to work with such technically amazing dancers - all hungry for new influences. And with David's deadly music, and the collaboration of a great design team - Fiona Foley (sets), Jennifer Irwin (costumes) and Jo Mercurio (lighting), everything is coming together for the premiere season of *Alchemy*, opening in Melbourne on September 13. *Alchemy* is also part of the Ballet's Sydney season, opening on November 6 at the Opera House.

The journeys I am making outside the comfort and safety of Bangarra have been creatively and politically demanding.

extraordinary opportunity to show people the world over the Indigenous cultures of Australia, and to allow them to experience it not as an artefact but as an essential part of contemporary culture. That's the kind of challenge that feeds my spirit and keeps me dancing.

And yet there is much work to do in our own backyard. The funding cuts to ATSI concern me greatly. It's all very well for us as artists to get a chance to develop our work and be everyone's favourites. My concern is for the maintenance of essential services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote areas, and the ongoing provision of social services to urban communities. Many times on tour we have been affected by the

Globe and country trotting Artistic Director, Stephen Page, pictured here at the *Australian Ballet*, with Lynette Willis.



Munyarryun brothers from Arnhemland gave me a vision of one big family. And, thankfully, we were not aware of the negative reaction back here since everyone around the world seemed to love and accept the taste of Australia we gave them.

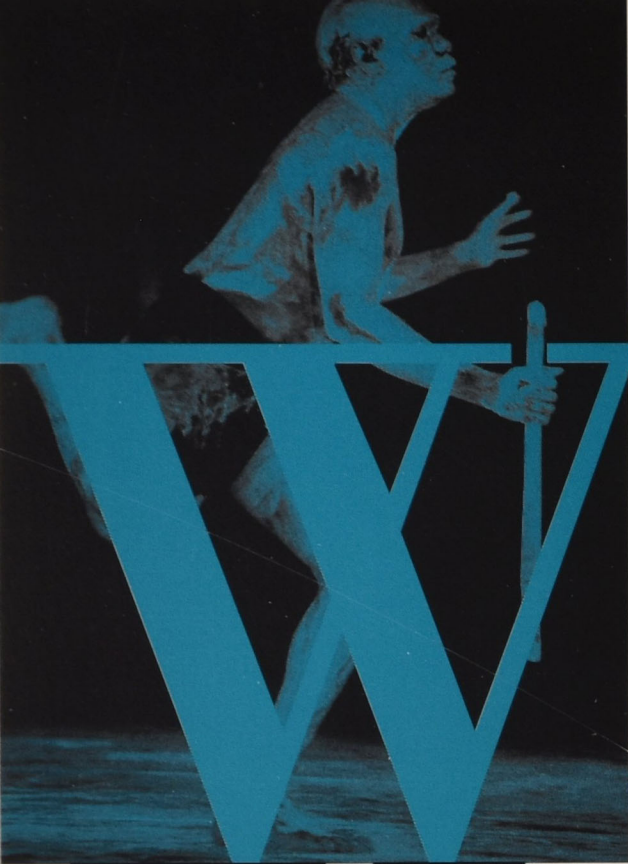
My next creative assignment has been to mount a new work for the Australian Ballet. In fact, I'm writing this from Melbourne, and yes! I have the 'flu! It's probably better not to dwell on the weather down here!! What a challenge it is to be grounding a company of aerialists. Ballet dancers' training and technique is all about being as light as a feather, weightless, ephemeral. With my style of dance coming from an entirely other direction, I'm telling them stories, painting them images, and bringing them down to earth as

Both the Sydney Olympic Committee and the Australian Ballet are very high profile organisations which enable me to show my work to a broader, more mainstream audience. Bangarra's dancers have also been touring extensively throughout Australia, performing *Ochres* in both capital cities and regional areas. We have collaborated with the ABC to present *Ochres* to a national television audience, and will have toured *Ochres* to Europe, Asia and the Pacific. The awareness of my work, and of Bangarra's work, is at an all time high.

This year will have been one of great exposure. That's both an exciting and daunting prospect. Ultimately our work is being judged on a broad scale, by huge numbers of people; that can be scary. The main benefit remains the

difficult circumstances our people face in their daily lives. I have described Bangarra as the band-aid company, trying to heal and bring communities together. I know we can achieve a lot through our work, but the task at present seems hard.

Every level of government in Australia has to respect the particular needs of the Indigenous peoples and their right to receive support from taxpayers' funds. People need to become familiar with the harsh conditions, both socially and physically, that most Indigenous peoples experience simply trying to survive. My plea is that as Australians - the public and Governments - have begun to recognise the value of Indigenous culture through the Arts, they must also recognise and support the basic needs and rights of our people in their everyday lives.



Since our last Newsletter, Bangarra has farewelled Roma Dainus, who left to take up a position as Development Officer with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, where she will be working with Mary Jo Capps, Bangarra's former fundraising consultant. Two new staff members have joined the administrative team, Angelina Hurley, our new Administrative Assistant, and Jo Dyer, filling the newly created position of Public Relations Manager.

Angelina comes to Bangarra from the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association (NIAAA), where she had been working in Administration for the past three years. During her time with NIAAA, Angelina was heavily involved in the organisation of the Survival Concerts, assisting with the coordination of the concerts since their inception on Australia Day, 1993. Prior to this, she spent four years jaunting around the world, travelling through the United States and Europe, and living in France for two years - a tough life for some!



Angelina Hurley obligingly demonstrates her photogenity...

COME



...in stark contrast to Jo Dyer, pictured here with many chins.

Jo Dyer is a graduate in Law and Politics from the University of Adelaide. Throughout her time at university, she worked casually with the State Theatre Company of South Australia, which she then joined full time as Administration Co-ordinator after graduating.

She moved to Sydney in 1995 to join the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, where she worked in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Unit, under Commissioner Mick Dodson. Before joining Bangarra Dance Theatre in July, Jo laboured as Sydney's Queen of Clowns as Entertainment Administrator at the Darling Harbour Authority. "That was sort of interesting, in a feral kind of way", Jo said, "But I must say I'm delighted to back in the arts proper, particularly working with such a fantastic company as Bangarra".

He came, he ate airport food, he went back home again. Between mouthfuls, David found time to bid the company farewell.



Jo, Russell and Gary grin boyishly, as boys do.



WHERE TO NEXT?

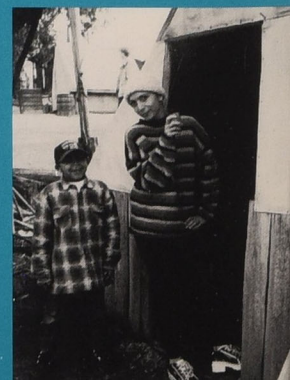
With the Victorian regional leg now complete (see pictures), the Ochres' Australian tour is finally over. In keeping with their apparent desire to cover as many kilometres in as short a period of time as possible, Bangarra Dance Theatre is soon to leave Australia's sunny shores and take up the role of roving Cultural Ambassadors throughout the region. Doing the neighbourly thing, we're initially off to Indonesia, performing in Jakarta in early October. After a brief stint back home, we're then off to India, where we participate in the Australian Government's Integrated Country Promotion, Australia India: New Horizons. Bangarra performs in the cultural programme at the invitation of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. After another Sydney sojourn the final leg of the tour is Hong Kong in early December.



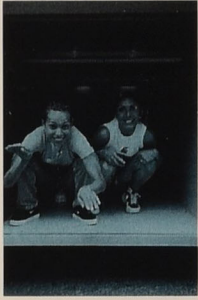
The visit to the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-op was one of the highlights of the tour. Gary and Causela make their point

We look forward to reporting on the tour in our next newsletter!

Gina drinks coffee with her nephew, Aidan, in Sovereign Hill. Despite their best efforts, they found no gold.



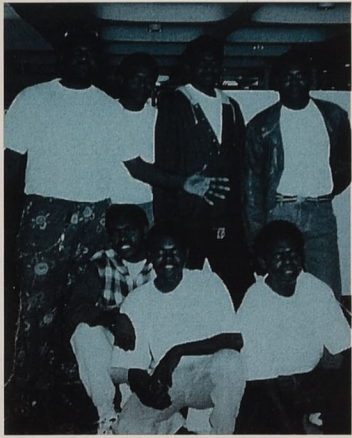
Frannie and Gina
prepare to leap
into action.



Flags, the Opera
House, Marilyn &
Gina. Who could want
for anything more....?



Ready for take-off, the Yirrkala boys
pose at the airport. Note
Djakapurra's fine Balarinji pants -
Balarinji provided the Bangarra
mob with some lovely civvies for
their Atlanta trip, and Bangarra and
Balarinji hope to announce more
exciting cross-promotional projects
before the end of the year.



Watched by an audience of an estimated 3.5 billion people, Bangarra dancers took centre stage at the Closing Ceremony of the Atlanta Olympic Games, and provided the centrepiece for Australia's seven and a half minute contribution. The piece was choreographed by Stephen Page, in collaboration with Ric Birch; "I brought some form of indigenous intergrity to the piece", said Stephen. Whilst Bangarra's dancers were singled out for praise from a variety of people, including Premier Bob Carr, the rest of the presentation provoked a storm of controversy from observers back home in Sydney, claiming it presented a "stereotypical and cliched" view of Australia. Stephen's response? "It was Anglo Saxon males over 50 who had a problem with it, but they'll always have a problem; they wouldn't know what to do".

When one observes the stunning images, as captured by the AAP photographer in the bottom shot, there seems no real case to answer. Says Stephen, "I took the criticism with a grain of salt, and just chilled out".



Frannie relives
Cathy Freeman's great
moment.



The lifesavers make
waves in rehearsal.

Great Atlanta Moments



This fantastic shot of Bangarra and other dancers was provided courtesy of founding sponsor, AAP. Bangarra appreciates the continuing generous support of AAP - look out for a profile of them in the next newsletter.

It was back in 1994 that the idea of a national touring, subscription-based contemporary dance programme was first mooted. From its very inception, Playing Australia found itself the recipient of many an application from dance organisations, all keen to take their shows on the Australian roads. But many companies were small, and lacked the necessary infrastructure and resources to mount successful tours. Whilst venues around the country

Confident there was a better way to facilitate a strong dance programme than a piecemeal approach to funding, Playing Australia commissioned Justin MacDonnell to investigate the feasibility of setting up a national dance circuit. The proposal met with strong enthusiasm from venues consulted all around the country. A nationally coordinated programme presented obvious promotional benefits, and economies of scale would allow budgetary savings, at the same time as maintaining high levels of quality and diversity. It would enable small dance companies to take advantage of the venues' expertise, and tap into markets for contemporary dance that high sales

commitment and tenacity of Greg Hordacre, Rob Brookman, and their loyal band of venues. Said Greg, "One of the exciting things about this project is that this is a purely market led initiative, devoted to servicing, promoting and expanding contemporary dance in this country".

Andrew Ross, from the Theatre Royal in Hobart is a strong supporter of the new organisation. "Made to Move has generated significant interest and coverage across the country in its own right. The quality of companies presented in the first season, including Bangarra and the Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Theatre, (MTADT) has been a major



MADE to move:



the first year

had resources and marketing expertise, no strong relationships existed between the venues, and between the venues and dance companies to facilitate successful collaboration on programming and touring. "Made to Move was born of our concern for Chrissie Parrot, really", says Playing Australia Chair and General Manager of the Perth Theatre Trust Simon Dawkins. "There she was, producing some fantastic work, but geographically isolated with a relatively small audience base". In the end, Made to Move came too late for the Chrissie Parrot Dance Company, which closed earlier this year.

There were, however, other companies facing similar situations.

for festival presentations of international dance indicated existed. With Rob Brookman at the helm, the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust was nominated as a venue possessing the requisite resources and experience of tour production to co-ordinate the initial programme, and after securing the talents of Greg Hordacre in April 1995, Made to Move was born!

Initial expectations were of a 1997 launch. Overwhelming enthusiasm and demand dictated a more ambitious timetable, however, and ultimately 1996 was the inaugural year. The lead time for the formulation of a new body, a new touring circuit was extraordinarily short, and was achieved largely through the

attraction", he said. In most capital cities, subscription targets have been met or exceeded, providing an exceptionally strong base for future audience development, and further increases in the burgeoning profile of contemporary dance in Australia. Ironically, it is in Chrissie Parrot's home town of Perth where enthusiasm is slightly muted. "Initiatives like Made to Move tie up a lot of money in one project" says Simon Dawkins. "It was set up with the specific objective of audience building. To what extent this objective is being met can only be accurately assessed at the end of the season". With Dance North and Expressions still to come, the Perth Theatre Trust has to date hosted only the Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Theatre. After just one performance,

Bangarra's Melbourne *Made to Move* season was held in conjunction with *Green Mill's Dance Project*. General Manager Jan Irvine enjoys some rare Melbourne sunshine with Zi Hua Yun, Director of the China National Arts Academy (far left), and colleague Ou Jian-Ping, Director of Foreign Dance Studies, who are assisting with a possible Chinese tour. Also pictured is Julie Dyson, Executive Officer of Ausdance.



the dancers of MTADT succumbed to the 'flu, necessitating the cancellation of the rest of the season, with the poor old Perth Theatre Trust having to pick up the tab. With that

in mind, it is perhaps understandable they are reserving judgement at this stage. There is, however, a strong expectation that 1996 will be the first of many Made to Move seasons.

Tentative plans have already been made up to the year 2000, with the possibility of commissioning works or participating in co-productions in later years being explored. ■

BANGARRA AND MADE to move

Bangarra Dance Theatre was one of the first companies to sign up to Made to Move, involved from the beginning in what it perceived to be an exciting and valuable new initiative. Bangarra was hotly in demand from all venues, even in those cities that had already hosted Ochres. "We had presented a short season in 1995, which had gone very well", said Kara Miller, Programming Executive at the Adelaide Festival Centre, "But we felt Ochres had not reached its full audience". The 1996 season proved this was the case, "The last few shows were standing room only!". Kara's enthusiasm was matched by Geoff Street, Programming Manager of the Victorian Arts Centre. "Without doubt, the involvement of Bangarra in our opening Made to Move season contributed considerably to the enormous success of the subscription campaign", he commented. Melbourne led the country in the number of subscribers it attracted. "The Bangarra season was a wonderful experience for us all".

With unanimous support from the consortia of venues for Bangarra for future tours, and a strong following for its work all around the country, Bangarra is looking forward to participating in Made to Move in 1998 and beyond.

Bangarra would like to acknowledge the following organisations for their support...



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Our founding sponsor



The New South Wales Government through the Ministry For The Arts.

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Indigenous Arts and

Culture:



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CUTS

On Friday August 2, arts practitioners and administrators from around the country met at a National Summit meeting held at the Eora Centre to discuss their concerns about rumoured cuts to ATSIC, and the impact reduced funding would have on the Indigenous cultural industry. Called by Chris Bonney, Indigenous Arts Officer of the National Association of Visual Artists (NAVA), the summit was a response to fears that mooted cutbacks to ATSIC would place Commissioners in the invidious position of having to choose between providing essential services and infrastructure to remote communities - basic citizenship entitlements denied Aboriginal and Islander peoples by culpably negligent state governments - and cultural maintenance and promotion.



Those present at the Summit included (left to right): Chris Bonney (NAVA), Brett Leavy (National Indigenous Media Association of Australia), Jo Dyer (Bangarra), Christine Christopherson (ANKAA), Elaine Namatjira (artist), Paul Canet-Senior (Tandanya) & Geraldine Tyson (Desart).

With representatives from all peak Indigenous arts and crafts bodies, those attending the Summit pooled information and resources, and debated the best strategies to employ to combat reductions the industry could ill afford. Resolutions were proposed that set out the twin benefits that flow to Indigenous peoples from the cultural industry: it enables the development of an economic base for communities and restores self-esteem, pride and activity. These are both key human imperatives lost to many Aboriginal and Islander peoples after dispossession.

For Indigenous Australians, their worst fears have been realised, with the first Coalition budget containing cuts of over \$450 million to ATSIC over the next four

years. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator John Herron made the announcement with a two page press release, issued the day before the meeting with the Summit's delegation. Said Christine Christopherson, Executive Director of the Association of Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists, of the by then somewhat superfluous meeting "He pulled a painting by Albert Namatjira from behind his desk and said he was a great supporter of Aboriginal art". The delegation also held meetings with the ATSIC Commissioners. Commissioner Thomasina Mann, holder of the cultural portfolio, made a special trip to the Northern Territory University's conference, *Kaltya: Aboriginal Arts, Industry or Culture*, held in Darwin in late August to reassure delegates that funding from the culture and heritage section of ATSIC's budget would be quarantined for one year. Whilst this news was greeted with some relief, Geraldine Tyson from DESART pointed out that, as a major industry, much artistic endeavour is funded through training and development programmes, and many of the major arts centre were born from women's centres. Both of these areas have suffered severe cuts, and there is no money to continue work on the development of the Cultural Industry strategy, let alone its implementation.

Some may say it is the height of hypocrisy for the government to be slashing funding for Indigenous cultural programmes at the very time it seeks to represent Australia through and by it on the world stage on occasions such as the Olympic Closing Ceremony. We couldn't possibly comment. Despite the welcome

reprieve for some of the key cultural programmes, the enormity of the cuts being made to ATSIC's overall budget are a blow to the reconciliation process, abandon commitments made to Aboriginal and Islander peoples by the Government before the election and exacerbate the harsh conditions experienced by some of the most disadvantaged people in our country.

We call on all our friends and supporters to voice their opposition to these inequitable cuts and counterproductive policy approach.

This month we profile Gina Rings, our youngest female dancer, and mother extraordinaire!

Gina grew up in South Australia, spending most of her childhood years in Murray Bridge and Port Maclay. "I wanted to be a dancer from a very young age", she says. "I remember watching classical ballet when I was about four years old, and being amazed. I was just infatuated by the grace and elegance". These images stayed with her as she grew up, and when Gina reached high school, she began her formal study of dance. This continued at the Performing Arts School in Adelaide, where she stayed for two years, before her acceptance into and subsequent transferral to NAISDA in Sydney. During her time at NAISDA, she was inspired by her journeys to the Torres Strait, where students visited traditional communities. "This was undoubtedly a highlight of my training and growth".

After graduating from NAISDA, Gina was offered an apprenticeship with Bangarra. She joined the company in time to perform in the highly acclaimed, Ninni. "My career has been influenced by many successful and talented people over the years. And I really

enjoy the idea and the process of hard work", she says, "But from my own

community, I really admire Stephen Page and Christine Anu". Smiling wryly, she adds, "Who doesn't?".

Over the years, Gina has been a key member of many of Bangarra's tours, both domestic and international, travelling all through regional and metropolitan Australia, as well as Europe and Asia. Touring can be very draining, and whilst she enjoys being on the road, Gina is always keen to return home. "I'd like to say I get home to a relaxing, steaming hot bath, with essential oils, and

PR O F I L E

(husband) Aaron there to massage my feet, before retiring to bed with the television and the remote, not to emerge for two days", she says ruefully.

"But no such luck! Being a mother, I need to attend to the needs of my son, Ikaika, and spend my precious time at home nurturing my family". Ikaika is a regular visitor to the Bangarra studios, and has almost as many fans as his mother.

Looking back over her time with Bangarra, Gina believes the company has undergone a transformation since she began working with them. "There has been drastic change since I first started. I think we have really developed since 1994", she says enthusiastically. "Having dancers like Bernadette Walong work with the

company was great. Her collaboration with Stephen enabled us to find a truly unique approach to dance and dance style". It is this unique fusion of traditional and contemporary that has brought Bangarra's dancers to international prominence, highlighted by their participation in the Atlanta Olympic Games Closing Ceremony. "What a buzz that was!", Gina hoots. The increased profile that Bangarra now enjoys means that many Aboriginal people look to them for inspiration. "I hope I can be a role model for our young Koori kids. And who knows? Maybe even the older ones".

And with many dances yet to dance, and career goals still to achieve, it is likely that Gina Rings is already providing inspiration for many with grace, elegance, charm and talent to rival any of the ballet dancers on the television screen she watched as a four year old.



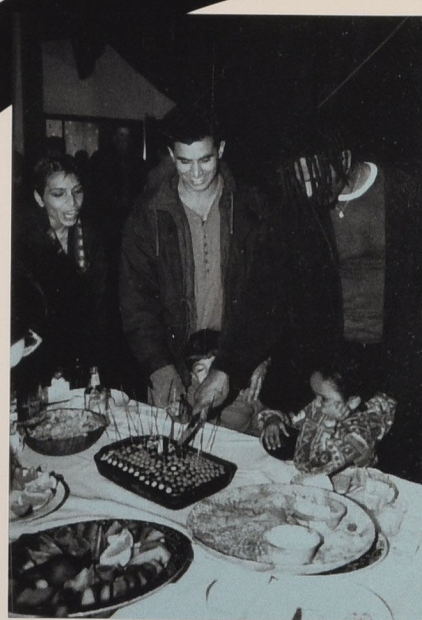
GINA RINGS



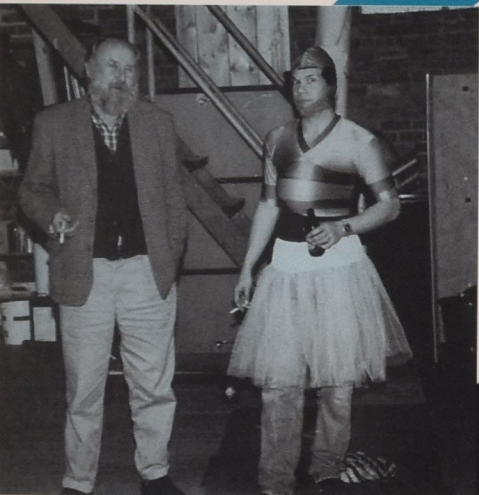
OFF TO ATLANTA: FAREWELLING THE DANCERS



Impatient for the party to begin, the dancers passed time plundering Bangarra's wardrobe. Principal dancer and cultural consultant, Djakapurra Munyarryun, pictured here with brother Mark, proudly displays the results.



Birthday boys Albert David (right) and Gary Lang are embarrassed by all the fuss, but the kids love it, as does Gina Rings (far left).



Veteran actor and ALP supporter, Bill Hunter (pictured here with another victim of the dress-up drive, wild-eyed Kirk Page) had a minor fit of pique when the only beer left was light, or American. Then again, who can blame him? Chardonnay, anyone?

On the afternoon of July 26, Bangarra's admin team turned domestic, and chopped cabanossi, baked cakes, tossed around lettuce leaves and packed the fridges full to the brim with assorted beverages.

WHY?

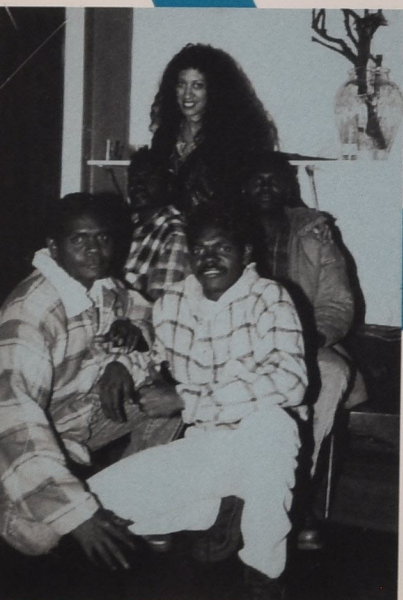
That evening, Bangarra's studios were transformed from rehearsal space to party venue, as friends, family, sponsors, and associated hangers-on converged on William Street to bid a fond farewell to our dear departing dancers as they left to strut the world stage in Atlanta.

Many a drink was drunk, many a tale was told, and later, when the crowds had gone and friends and family remained, the lads and lasses got right on down and danced many a dance, which is, after all, what we're all about.

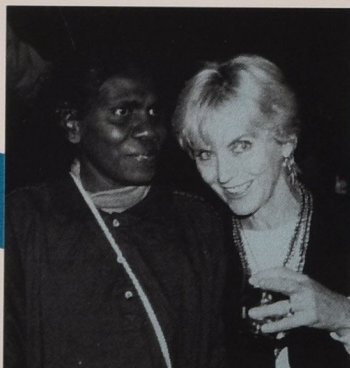
A good time was had by all!



Angelina Hurley (left) doesn't let the Australia Council's Lydia Miller get a word in.



Bangarra's Chair, Lola Forrester, uses stand over tactics with the Munyarryun boys, Daniel and Mark (front, right to left), and Laurence and Terry (back, right to left).

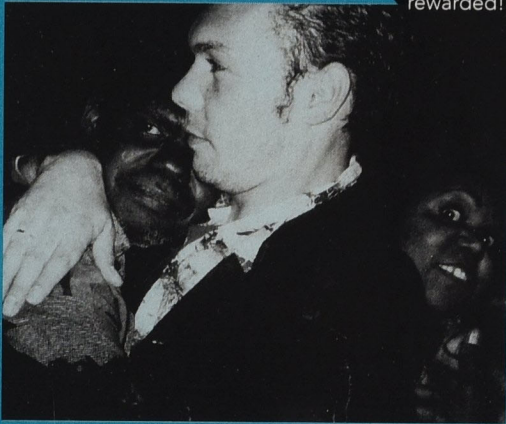


Janet Munyarryun (left), former dancer and long time friend of Bangarra, has better things to do than look at the camera, despite the entreaties of Friends of Bangarra head honcho, Robyn Heras.

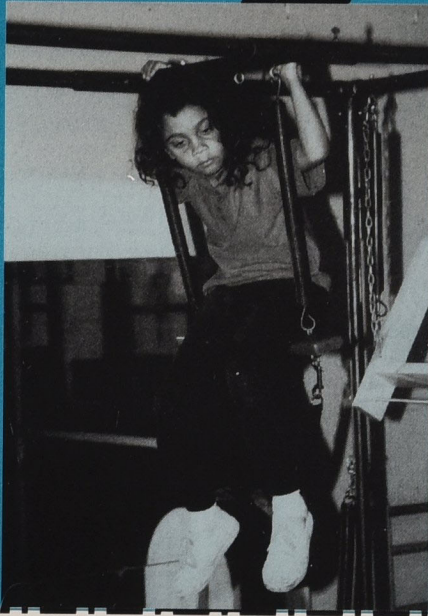


Former Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Robert Tickner, roughs the red with Bangarra's Jan Irvine (right) and Jo Dyer.

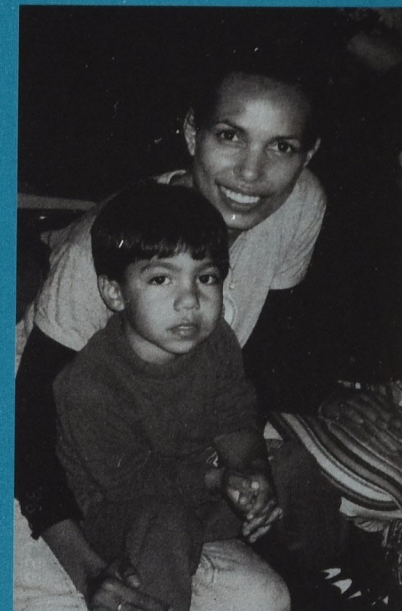
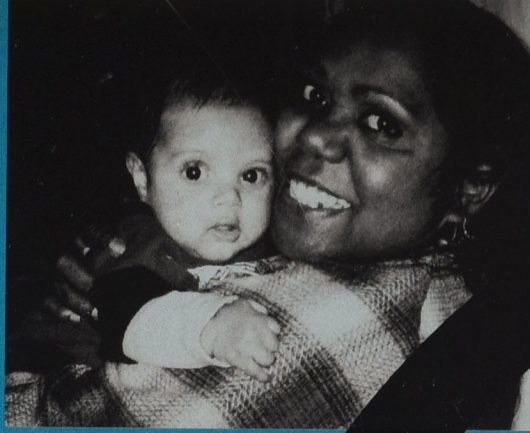
Stephen Page was on a late flight from Melbourne, but came straight to join the party. He greets here Jeffrey Munyarryun. Lillian was keen to make it into the shot, and her persistence is hereby rewarded!



Overwhelmed by all the carry-on, one of the younger guests takes refuge in Cynthia Lochard's Pilates studio.



The youngest and potentially most popular guest was baby Kuiam, the six week old son of Albert David and Christine Anu. He held court for quite a while, and is pictured here with Lillian Crombie.



Frances Rings and Hunter Page look impossibly engaging whilst watching the dancing action.

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Dance Theatre



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Designed by Chris Cason Design

Bangarra Friends Application Form

To join, simply fill out this form and return with your payment to:

Bangarra Friends P.O. Box 224 Leichhardt 2040

Membership is valid for one year from date of joining. Please select your membership choice below and indicate all names in Dual and Family Memberships. One membership will be issued in each name.

Single Adult Membership	\$25
Dual Membership	\$40
Family/House (4 persons)	\$60
Concession (Students/Pensioners)*	\$15
Life Membership	\$1,000

*Student/Pension No: _____

Name 1: _____

Name 2: _____

Name 3: _____

Name 4: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: (W) _____ (H) _____

Enclosed is my cheque or money order for \$ _____

Please credit my:

Bankcard Mastercard Visa Amex

Card Number: _____

Expiry Date: _____ / _____

Name of cardholder: _____

Signature: _____

Subscribe Now

Please make your cheque or money order payable to Bangarra Friends.

Any other support you can donate to help build this young, dynamic company would be appreciated.

Please indicate any skills or interests you are able to contribute.

The Bangarra Dance Theatre Australia Fund is included on the Register of Cultural Organisations under Sec 78 (1) (a) of the Income Tax Assessment Act (1936). For further information on donations please contact Jeanette Cheung our Financial Controller.