





Bangarra Dance Theatre Company

## Company Profile

Bangarra is Australia's premier Indigenous performing arts company. Established in 1989, Bangarra produces distinctive dance theatre productions that tour each year to capital cities, regional towns and remote communities of Australia. As cultural ambassadors, Bangarra presents its truly Australian contemporary Indigenous theatrical experiences throughout the world.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Stephen Page since 1991, Bangarra embraces, celebrates and respects Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures. Always uplifting and deeply moving, Bangarra unifies the past and the present by connecting traditional Indigenous culture with our contemporary lives.

Bangarra has created an extraordinary signature body of work that has secured the company's national and international reputation. Stephen Page is committed to developing the next generation of Indigenous storytellers by mentoring creative artists and providing opportunities for Indigenous young people.

Four artists-in-residence have been appointed to Bangarra in 2011: Kathy Marika, Jacob Nash, David Page and Frances Rings. A new Indigenous trainee program has enabled three young Aboriginal theatre practitioners to join Bangarra for formal training and career development.

# Belong Education Kit

With studios based in the arts precinct at Walsh Bay in Sydney, the company has 15 dancers who come from all over Australia reflecting many Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures. Bangarra is a significant Indigenous employer with 70% of its 34 full time staff being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent. The board is chaired by Larissa Behrendt who is a leading Aboriginal lawyer and academic.

Supported by our enthusiastic audiences, the Commonwealth and NSW Governments, a loyal cohort of corporate sponsors and a number of outstandingly generous private donors, Bangarra plays an important role in Australia's creative and cultural future.

## **Bangarra Dance Theatre**

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Bangarra Dance Theatre rehearsals



Stephen Page



*'... a mature, distinctive, contemporary dance ensemble with a sophisticated sense of theatricality and a unique repertoire'* THE AGE

**Bangarra's logo represents:**

- a flame
- the headdress of a Torres Strait Island warrior
- the point of a spear used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island hunters

**'Bangarra' means:**

'To make fire' in the Wiradjuri language of New South Wales

**Vision**

Bangarra Dance Theatre is fuelled by the spirit, energy and inspiration derived from the culture, values and traditions of Indigenous Australians.

From these roots, we create theatre that is artistically innovative, technically outstanding and truly exciting to audiences throughout Australia and the world.

## Company Chronology

- 1989            Bangarra Dance Theatre founded by Carole Johnson  
                  Tour to Japan and New Zealand
- 1991            Stephen Page appointed Artistic Director  
                  *Up Until Now* by Stephen Page (Sydney, North Coast NSW, Brisbane, Indonesia)
- 1992            ***Praying Mantis Dreaming*** by Stephen Page (Canberra, Central Western NSW, Melbourne, Brisbane)  
                  Bangarra tours to China and Hong Kong
- 1993            *Praying Mantis Dreaming* (Sydney, Cairns, WA, North East Arnhem Land)  
                  Bangarra tours to New York, Los Angeles and London
- 1994            ***Ninni*** By Stephen Page (Sydney, NT, QLD)  
                  *Best of Bangarra* (Adelaide Festival)  
                  *Ochres* presented as a 'work in progress' at the '94 Nambundah Festival at Belvoir Street Theatre
- 1995            ***Ochres*** by Stephen Page and Bernadette Walong-Sene (Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Arnhem Land, Berlin, Tokyo, Noumea)
- 1996            *Ochres* (Berlin, Japan)  
                  Bangarra tours to Hong Kong, India and Indonesia  
                  Flag hand over ceremony, Closing Ceremony Atlanta Olympic Games
- 1997            ***Fish*** by Stephen Page (Premiers at the Edinburgh International Festival for the Arts, Edinburgh, South Korea, Festival of the Dreaming, Sydney)  
                  ***Rites*** with The Australian Ballet (Premiers at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, Melbourne, Sydney)
- 1998            *Fish* (Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Canberra NSW, VIC, Noumea)  
                  Bangarra tours to Korea, Taiwan, Italy and Germany  
                  *DanceClan*
- 1999            *The Dreaming* (New Zealand, USA, UK)  
                  *Fish* (QLD, NT, WA)  
                  *Womad* (Adelaide, Johannesburg, Rivermead, Seattle)  
                  *Rites* with The Australian Ballet (Sydney, Melbourne, New York, Washington, Toronto)  
                  *DanceClan 2*
- 2000            ***Skin*** by Stephen Page (Premiered at the Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane)  
                  *Awakenings* (Sydney 2000 Olympic Games)

- The Dreaming* (Hawaii, Fiji)
- DanceClan 3*
- 2001 **Corroboree** a triple bill (*Roo, Turtle, Brolga*) by Stephen Page (Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, USA16 City tour)
- The Dreaming* (Noumea, NSW)
- 2002 **Walkabout** A double bill - *Rations* by Frances Rings and *Rush* by Stephen Page (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane)  
*Skin* (Adelaide)
- Corroboree* (Beijing, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Monaco)
- The Dreaming* (VIC, SA)
- 2003 **Bush** by Stephen Page and Frances Rings (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane)
- The Dreaming* (NSW, NT, QLD, ACT)
- 2004 **Clan** A double bill - *Unaipon* by Frances Rings and *Reflections* by Stephen Page
- Bush* (Washington, New York, Hawaii)
- Spirit* (QLD)
- 2005 **Boomerang** by Stephen Page (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane)
- Spirit* (QLD, VIC, TAS, NSW)
- Bush* (Japan, New Zealand)
- 2006 **Gathering** with The Australian Ballet (Melbourne, Sydney)
- Clan* (NT, WA, QLD, NSW)
- Bush* (UK)
- Spirit* (Hobart)
- 2007 **True Stories** A double bill *Emeret Lu* by Elma Kris and *X300* by Frances Rings (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Canberra, Wollongong)
- Clan* (SA, VIC, TAS, NSW)
- 2008 **Mathinna** by Stephen Page
- (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Canberra, Wollongong)
- True Stories* (SA, NT, QLD)
- Rites with The Australian Ballet* (London, Paris)
- Awakenings* (Washington, New York, Ottawa)
- 2009 **Fire – A Retrospective** by Stephen Page

(Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Canberra, Wollongong)

*True Stories* (NSW, WA)

*True Stories* (Hungary, Austria, Germany)

2010 **of earth & sky** A double bill: *Artefact* by Frances Rings and *Riley* by Daniel Riley McKinley

(Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, Wollongong)

*Mathinna* (VIC, TAS)

2011 **Belong** A double bill: *ID* by Stephen Page and *About* by Elma Kris

(Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Wollongong)

*Spirit*

(Italy, Germany, Switzerland)

*Mathinna*

(NT, QLD)

***'This is compelling, enriching dance that takes us all to a deeper place and a stronger connection'*** Herald Sun

## Belong



Rekindling Indigenous culture, internationally acclaimed Bangarra Dance Theatre has created an original and breathtaking theatrical experience - *Belong*.

*Belong* features two new dance theatre works: *ID* by Artistic Director Stephen Page, and *About* by Elma Kris, choreographer and dancer with Bangarra.

Stephen Page investigates what it means to be Aboriginal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, asking important questions of identity. Based on personal observations of people tracing their bloodlines and re-connecting with traditional culture, *ID* provokes perceptions in contemporary society.

Torres Strait Islander Elma Kris is inspired by customs passed down through families for generations. Reflecting the strong links between communities and their natural environment, *About* explores the mood of the winds as they move across land, sea and sky signifying key moments in time.

At the heart of Bangarra Dance Theatre are challenging social and political questions. As Indigenous people, who are we and where do we belong?

Bangarra creates a truly Australian theatrical experience that connects the spirit of traditional culture with our contemporary lives. Always uplifting and deeply moving, *Belong* transforms perceptions of the places we call home.

## Production Credits

<b>Artistic Director</b>	Stephen Page
<b>Choreographers</b>	Stephen Page ( <i>ID</i> ) Elma Kris ( <i>About</i> )
<b>Composers</b>	<i>ID</i> by David Page <i>About</i> by David Page and Steve Francis
<b>Set Designer</b>	Jacob Nash
<b>Costume Designer</b>	Emma Howell
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Matt Cox

## Dancers

Sidney Saltner, Elma Kris, Yolande Brown, Patrick Thaiday, Deborah Brown, Jhuny-Boy Borja, Waangenga Blanco, Tara Gower, Leonard Mickelo, Daniel Riley McKinley, Jasmin Sheppard, Ella Havelka, Tara Robertson, Travis De Vries, Kaine Sultan-Babij

## Set List

### **About**

*Choreographer: Elma Kris*

*Storyteller*

*Zey*

*Kuki*

*Naygay*

*Kaima Eso*

### **ID**

*Choreographer: Stephen Page*

*Initiate*

*Caste*

*Fractions/Class 7B*

*Totem*

*Discriminate*

*Kinship*

## Stephen Page

Artistic Director and Choreographer of *ID*



Born in Brisbane, Stephen is a descendant of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh tribe from southeast Queensland.

Stephen studied at NAISDA and after graduating in 1983 he began his professional dancing career with Sydney Dance Company. During 1988 he toured internationally with Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre (AIDT) and in 1989 was artistic director of NAISDA's production *Kayn Walu*. After returning to Sydney Dance Company for two years, Stephen was appointed Artistic Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre in 1991 and has since created 12 new dance theatre works for the company.

Stephen has developed Bangarra's distinctive performance style drawing on over 50,000 years of Aboriginal culture and translating the traditional stories, music and dance into a contemporary theatrical experience.

Under his leadership, Bangarra has built a strong reputation touring throughout Australia and the world, including New York, Washington, Paris, London and Germany. Memorable works *Ochres*, *Skin* ('Best New Australian Work' and 'Best Dance Work', 2001 Helpmann Awards), *Bush* ('Best Dance Work', 2004 Helpmann Awards), and *Mathinna* ('Best Dance Work' and 'Best Choreography', 2009 Helpmann Awards) have become milestones in Australian performing arts.

Significantly, Stephen has choreographed *Rites* to Stravinsky's score – a collaboration between Bangarra and the Australian Ballet and he directed Indigenous sections for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies. As Artistic Director of the 2004 Adelaide Festival of the Arts, Stephen was praised for reinvigorating the event with an impressive and highly successful world-class program. Stephen's film and theatre credits include the contemporary operatic film *Black River*, numerous music video clips, directing his brother David Page in the highly acclaimed *Page 8* which toured Australia and the UK and most recently he choreographed the film *Bran Nue Dae*.

In 2008 Stephen was named NSW Australian of the Year in recognition of his efforts to bring cultures together through the performing arts and his commitment to developing the next generation of Indigenous storytellers by mentoring emerging artists.

In 2009 Bangarra celebrated 20 years with *Fire: A Retrospective* presenting the signature works of Bangarra's repertoire. For this celebration Stephen invited over one hundred artists who had worked with Bangarra, including the founders of the company, to a special performance of *Fire* at the Sydney Opera House.

Stephen received the 2010 Helpmann Award for 'Best Choreography' for *Fire* and a further two awards for the company; Best Ballet/Dance Work for *Fire* and Best Regional Touring Production for *True Stories*.

# Belong Education Kit

In 2010, Stephen was also honoured at the Australian Dance Awards for his Services to Dance and accepted Bangarra Dance Theatre's award for 'Outstanding Performance by a Company' for *Fire: A Retrospective*. Continuing his commitment to the next generation of indigenous storytellers, Stephen commissioned and mentored Frances Rings and Daniel Riley McKinley in their new works for Bangarra's season of *of earth & sky*.

In 2011 Stephen is also working in collaboration with Wayne Blair and Kathy Balngayngu Marika, is writing and directing *Bloodland* for Sydney Theatre Company in association with Bangarra Dance Theatre and choreographing for the feature film *The Sapphires*.

This year is Stephen's 20<sup>th</sup> year as Artistic Director of Bangarra and *ID* is his 13<sup>th</sup> work for the company.



Photos by Jess Bialek

## Elma Kris

Company Dancer and Choreographer of *About*



Elma was raised on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. She is a descendant of the Wagadagam, Kaurareg, Sipingur, Gebbara, Kai Dangkal Buai of the Western and Central Islands of the Torres Strait. Elma's tribal totems are Wagadam, Kigus, Kadal, Snake, Dangkal, Waru, Warup, Umai, Serra, Walisirsir, Pibi, and Umailag. Her language is Kulkagau Ya, Kala Kawaw Ya and Kala Lagaw Ya.

Elma completed a Visual Arts course in 1993 and taught at the Thursday Island TAFE. In 1994 she joined NAISDA choreographing and performing in *Bupau Ipikazil* and *Bupau Mabigal*.

Elma has appeared in the films *Oscar and Lucinda*, *Reef Dreaming*, *Farscape* and the ABC radio broadcast; *Not Your Mob Next Door*. In 1997 Elma joined Bangarra under NAISDA's ADAPT Program and performed in *Fish*. After graduating Elma joined the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre Company for her first international tour with *Warup Kodomir*. She later performed in Albert David's *Bipotim* for *Dance Clan*.

Elma founded her own dance group named *Bibir* (Strength) and choreographed *Malu*, presented as part of *Artyfact* at the Opera House. Her work *Bupau Ipikazil* appeared as part of *Fusion* at the Sydney ANA Hotel. In 1999 Elma joined Bangarra and toured the UK with *The Dreaming* and was part of *Dance Clan 2*.

Elma danced at the Olympic Arts Festival and at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, and choreographed the Torres Strait Island element of the Opening Ceremony. She also danced in Gail Mabo's *Koiki*, Bangarra's *Bush* in the UK, *Walkabout*, *Unaipon*, *Boomerang* and *Gathering*.

In 2007, in her choreographic debut for Bangarra, Elma created *Emeret Lu*, as part of Bangarra's *True Stories* program. *Emeret Lu* was named 'Best New Work' in the 2007 Critics' Survey and in recognition of her outstanding achievements as a dancer, in 2007 Elma received a Deadly Award for 'Dancer of the Year'. In 2009 after a highly successful European tour, it culminated in a special performance in Mer Island.

In 2008 Elma Kris performed the title role in *Mathinna* and in 2009 danced in Bangarra's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary program *Fire – A Retrospective*. During 2010 she featured in Peter Sellar's *Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms* as part of the Sydney Festival, performed in Bangarra's *of earth & sky* and the regional tour of *Mathinna*.

*About* is Elma's second choreographic work for Bangarra.

## Choreography Notes: *ID*

### *Stephen Page*

*ID* is a personal observation of why we are passionate about celebrating our heritage and culture through dance theatre. We are standing back, observing what has been happening to our people over the last two decades from different perceptions and having a dance theatre conversation about it.

I believe we are obsessed as a western culture by wanting to understand: we want an answer now. We want to understand the complexities rather than to just accept them.

What's inspired me for this work is the question of 'what is the real Aborigine?' It's been in our social consciousness and in the media. So there's this 'outside' discussion from mainly a non-indigenous perception about Aboriginal identity – urban versus traditional – and this has sparked an internal debate amongst Aboriginal people.

Our people are entitled to find out where, and what, we are supposed to be. I believe this country really struggles with what the Australian identity is. We still struggle with who we are but we all want to belong and to feel proud of our identity.

This debate has me putting up a mirror to look at what we do here at Bangarra. Are we authentic? Are we true in our passion and our loyalty to our heritage?

For instance the *Totem* section in *ID* is inspired by living traditional social customs, language and culture that are still practised in communities today. Even with 21<sup>st</sup> century distractions, communities hang on to these cultural principles. *Totem* pays respect to that through abstract and symbolic expression.

Another aspect of *ID* is to question the degree of Aboriginality based on skin colour. It's more of a psychological exploration: we are all Aboriginal but we're all different skin colour. It is important in our work to break down stereotypes.

Our mob enjoys sitting around and hearing stories about connecting to kinship and clans. Clans are such an embedded part of Aboriginal life. We're really showing kinship within Bangarra; in our contemporary and professional family. All the dancers learn these customs and principles that immediately draw them into the company. It's like a web in a way, it challenges them to work together in a clan and yet they're from all over the country – this is part of their initiation. They're learning these cultural experiences at the same time and they naturally bond and connect as one.

There are many ensemble pieces on stage for Bangarra; they represent our signature work as they unify us in one spirit. It's what we identify in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a moving visual symbol of unity. With David's music and the visual form on stage you see this blend of contemporary and traditional.

In our cultures we have a thousand dialects; it is so complex, so diverse and vast but there's one spirit unifying it all. It's an innate spirit that gives us our distinctiveness. The character of our land has been shaped by Indigenous people for thousands of years. Our dance theatre is abstract, it is a psychological observation, yet it pays homage to traditional cultural customs that still exist today.

The beautiful thing about dance theatre is that it's like visual art, you can push the boundaries to create symbolic imagery, and a powerful new media. We pay respect to identity through theatrical Indigenous expression to inspire the next generation in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Choreography Notes: *About*

### *Elma Kris*

The title of my new work *About* expresses my curiosity of the four winds (Gub) that make up the seasons we have in the Torres Strait Islands. I want to look at the influence it has on the land, sea and sky. I will be exploring Zei, Kuki, Sager and Naigai. I wanted to share my connection with my culture and pass it on to future generations, both Torres Strait Islanders and all Australians alike.

I have always admired how my parents talk about the winds, which are a daily part of our islander life. The winds move and shape themselves in a magical and mysterious way. They paint colour in the day, the sky, and the seas.

They are like spirits swiftly passing by, and merging with nature; they guide and nurture day-to-day life. I wanted to take a journey with them, travel with their moods and see how I could bring them to life through dance.

As the work took shape, it would always send me somewhere new. I felt it could be sometimes calm, aggressive, subtle or swift. I have drawn on my traditional dance knowledge, to reform some contemporary island dance movements that express how I felt as I looked into these winds. Each wind also has a colour that represents how I see them. I wanted this piece to use all the senses.

Zei is like a cool breeze; it is the 'south wind'. To me I felt it had a female energy and so I will use a female dancer to act as a metaphor for this 'cool wind'. Zei lures your body to the motion of that breeze and it captures you. I match Zei with the colour blue to showcase the fluid and cool character of this wind.

Kuki is the time of tropical storms and rough seas, it is the 'northwest' wind. Kuki has an energy that comes with a force. To me, I see Kuki as having a male energy. In early development I struggled with the balance of the male and female dancers. It was confusing, just like the turbulent Kuki wind. It was like it was taking me for a rough ride, like Kuki's destructive winds. I could not grasp what exactly this was. The wind patterns inspired my choreographic direction, such as creating the many levels of movement, just like wind changes in Kuki. I've given this wind a charcoal black colour to represent the cloud changes. The headdress is inspired by the elaborate 'dance machines' used in the Torres Strait and represents the lightning that comes with Kuki.

Naigai is the calmest, most gentle wind; the 'northwind'. I use silver to represent the calmness and reflect the glistening of the sun off the dead calm sea. I begin this piece with a warm glow of light, which sets a new day. I coupled the dancers in this piece to represent the new day as well. I also use a language chant to help us herald in the new day. The couples layer their movement of energy on top of each other and they create little whirly winds, that form patterns by shooting out into rays of directions, eventually shaping towards building a wall of stillness, that represents the dead calm sea.

Sager is the dominant wind, it's the gusty southeast. We used to use this wind in the Torres Strait to know when to go hunting or pearl diving. In this piece I wanted to bring a character along the journey of the wind and have them travel together side-by-side, experiencing the elements of the wind and being one. I wanted the dancers movements to visualise the movements of the dust, sand and wind. I chose a chalky white as the colour for Sager to match the dust that the wind picks up when it blows.

Looking into these elements they create an atmosphere. They morph as they move in different directions and in different ways. These elements are so important to me, where we have language to describe their character and show a sense of feeling. I can feel, when a wind is blowing strongly; I feel another energy is present when the environment is so quiet, so calm, and the environment show's colour in the sky, sea and land.

I invited Peggy Misi to be my cultural advisor on this work. She helped with the use of Kala Lagaw Ya language in the piece, and we also used Torres Strait Kriol, which I speak. The use of language to describe the characters of the winds, brings it all to life and adds colour, depth and movement. It was so lovely to work with Peggy again at Bangarra and I thank her for all her wonderful help.

# *Belong* Education Kit

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I acknowledge Bangarra Dance Theatre, especially Stephen Page for allowing me to create my second work. As a Torres Strait Islander woman, I am very excited to once again bring a new story from the Torres Strait Islands to you that has inspired me. This is a new journey; it's more contemporary than my other choreography. It's like I'm painting and it's like that journey where you're not sure what's coming next. You create your own emotions as you sit, watch and experience the performance. I hope everybody will enjoy the journey and travel with it as I did.



Photo by Jess Bialek

## Music Notes

### David Page

It's another year and again, another amazing time in my life. Being the music man for Bangarra Dance Theatre, I am fortunate and thankful to be part of such an important cultural creative team. Thank you to my brother for his vision and belief in the creative dreaming that motivates me to help keep our culture alive.

#### *About*

I was so pleased to have worked with Elma Kris this year. With *About* I was very excited to experiment with the Torres Strait Island musical elements and fuse them with contemporary sounds. I asked my old friend Steve Francis to collaborate musically with me once again. He brings a new and fresh, abstract feel to this unique dance work soundtrack. Working with language is so rewarding especially when this beautiful instrument is so easily accessible. Elma Kris and Peggy Misi are masters at adapting the Torres Strait Islander language translation and poetry. Fusing this with original composition allows us to create something special. Inviting the Bangarra dancers and various singers to sing the language adds colour to this score. The language story telling is the hook of the *About* soundtrack. The story concept is simple: it is about the winds. Complimenting the dance musically can be very challenging. The music must support the dance not over power it. These winds, featured in relation to the people that the story is about, are unpredictable but powerful as well. Thank you Elma, for allowing Steve and I to explore your world of dance. Hopefully the audience will capture the beauty and truth of your story telling when watching as we did while working with you.

### **Naigai Chant**

*Naigai kaipa gabu yudi*

*The naigai cool breeze*

*Padau dhadha kasiya*

*Is going through the hills*

*Urabau boeythail*

*The coconut fronds*

*Kalan uminu*

*Are swaying in the breeze*

#### *ID*

It's been 3 years since Stephen's last work *Mathinna*. As the composer I was anxious to discover what this new work was going to be. *ID* is very clever and daring (like my brother) and who else could attempt to tackle such a subject? Once again I am challenged to approach a new concept and create music that is different from previous productions, but still keeps the Bangarra essence alive. I never know how it will be until all the creative elements – the direction, the set, lighting, costumes, choreography and dancers – are finally on stage together; that's when the magic begins.

Being part of this creative team is that magic and if it is working on stage, that is when you know you have done well. Creating music for *ID* has been a real challenge. I experimented with different sound wave forms, vocals and languages to create something new. I love working with new sounds and there are some amazing samples available. I want to thank the Spectrasonics and Native Instruments teams and Matt Jones from Soundseasy for their help. We are privileged to have some amazing artists featured on this soundtrack. Thank you to Djakapurra Munyarryun, Kathy Marika, Ursula Yovich, Ningali Lawford Wolf and Wayne Blair for their contribution. When exploring the subject 'Identity' you can't help but reflect on your own experiences. I love my work because I have a passion for it. Being happy with who you are and where you come from is a major step in the right direction of accomplishing anything you put your mind to. I think at 50 I've come to a point in my life where I am happy with what I have achieved, have gratitude to the people that have helped me and can't wait for what's around the corner.

## **Lyrics from Initiate**

*Djinal nhunu/ dhawal/wuyaninam/yutana nayinga*      *From here you are born into a new world*

*Yol dhanga nhunu yolnum?*      *Who are you?*

*Nala nhugu nayambalk'ma?*      *Where's your country?*

*Nha nhunu bapurrum?*      *Who's your tribe?*

*... ga dharuk'ma?*      *Ga dharuk*

*Dhawurun nhunu narru marngyim*      *From here you will learn*

*nhunguru djalkiri'wum, ga rom'gum*      *Your identity*

*Naya nhuna narra gunga'yunma*      *Your future*

*I will guide you*

*Wangany nalingu gulan*

*Wanany nalingu bapamingu ga nandimingu*      *This is just the beginning of your journey*

*bili rrambangi yaligu rutnbal*      *Believe where you come from*

*yo yapamanytji nail dhangu*      *Believe in who you are*

*narru waripunuuy nayambalk puy*      *Believe in where you're going*

*Because you know*

*Dhayum yana yuta nhungu*      *Who you are*

*Guyaniya nalanuru nhunu dhanu*

*Guyaniya yol nhunu*

*Guyaniya nalambal nhunu narrunga yaka*

*Yolnu*

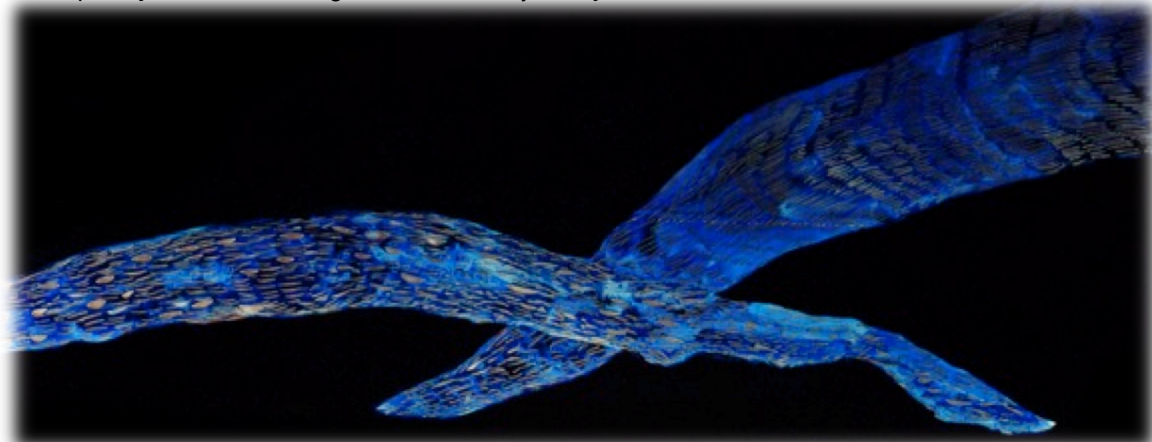
## Set Design Notes

### Jacob Nash

This year's double bill of *ID* and *About* are two very different works with their own distinct visual language and imagery. The creative journey I have been on creating these works with both Stephen and Elma has been both rich and rewarding. Elma is telling stories from the Torres Strait and investigating how the four winds of the Torres Strait affect, inform and guide people's lives throughout the seasons of the year. The challenge for Elma and me was how to translate the natural element of wind into a visual form of contemporary design onstage. Fortunately, we were able to travel to the Torres Strait at the end of last year and I was able to experience the heat and humidity of the wet season – the rain, the clouds and the ocean during that time of the year. From this journey I began to understand more fully the relationship between the wind and the ocean and how seasonal weather conditions affect this part of the world and play a huge part in the lives of the people who live there. Even though it was a short trip, being a part of the landscape and observing it change throughout the day whilst listening to Elma describe what we were experiencing added a deep layer of understanding, inspiration and greater knowledge to the birth place of Elma's story. Creatively this journey filled me up opening the possibilities of what we were going to create and from this point I began to explore the abstract concepts of wind, rain and water in the context of a contemporary theatrical setting. It is at this point where the design process really takes shape as you began to explore different materials and textures to visually describe the natural elements, such as wind. It begins by asking questions; for example what is wind? What form does it take? Can it be created through lighting and smoke effects? Should it be a sculptural element, an organic form that suggests several elements of the sky and earth? It is these type of detailed questions and the visual responses to these questions that shape the look of the show and complement the story that Elma is telling.

Working on *ID* with Stephen was a really close to home process of looking at contemporary Aboriginal identity. We talked a lot, and the reference material we looked at was vast – from photos out of the newspaper to music video clips, to more traditional material from Arnhem Land. The more we looked the more we were informed. We ended up with a wall of imagery that began to tell the visual story of what Stephen was describing and creating. The beautiful aspect of both these design journeys is that they are really organic. As the set designer I was allowed the freedom to explore ideas and images with choreographers and thus the process was fluid and reactive. Stephen and I explored several different design possibilities for most of the sections of the work but were always trying to create layered contemporary Indigenous images that made you really engage and question what is in front of you.

At the start of this year, I was appointed an Artist in Residence at Bangarra and this has significantly shaped the process of how these two works were created. By becoming a part of the company it has not only strengthened my relationship with Bangarra but more importantly given Stephen, Elma and myself the opportunity to create these works in a really focused but organic way. The journey of collaborative creation is an exciting, rich, unexpected and often frustrating, but ultimately a very rewarding experience. You begin on a path together and the further you explore along the way the better the end result. Being 'under the same roof' as the rest of the show developed at Bangarra, I have been able to explore ideas and images in depth but also respond to them rapidly informing the next stage in the design process. Often it is an unexpected conversation that will actually inform the work in a really significant way, it is these moments of clarity that are always the most precious and rewarding part of the design process. Collaboration is about sharing and trust and the journey of *Belong* has travelled many paths. Hopefully both these designs reflect these journeys of collaboration and the stories we want to tell.



## Costume Design Notes

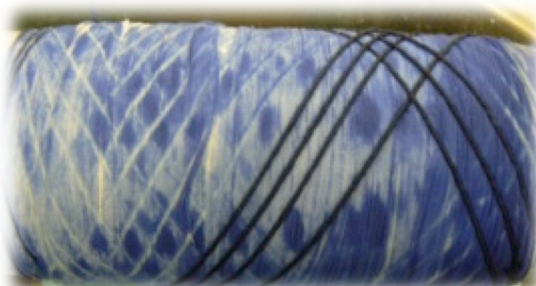
*Emma Howell*

Working with Stephen and Elma on their two very different pieces has meant I have had many opportunities to use hugely varied fabrics, textures, and techniques to create costumes that enhance the feel of each work. Designing for dancers is fantastic – such wonderful bodies to display and work with, and the movement factor often calls for creative thinking when designing a costume.

Elma's work, *About*, tells of the different personalities of the winds, and each section called for a specific feel. The idea of all the debris and dust getting swirled up and collected by a hurricane was my inspiration for *Kuki*; I have incorporated feathers, grasses and tattered fabrics into the costumes. *Zei* uses fabrics that move in a fluid motion with the body, and we experimented with ombré dyeing techniques to portray the feel of the cold wind. *Naigai* called for shimmering, shining details which we have created through cut-out panels and layered fabrics.

Stephen's work, *ID*, is a particularly modern and statement-making piece. I worked closely with him to produce costumes that are in some cases an abstract version of streetwear, and in others very dreamlike and poetic. The film sequence, *Initiate*, needed each person to have a distinct "character" whilst still staying in black and white. We achieved this through art finishing, painting patterns of lines and dots to show each person's journey. The *Totem* section is straight from the earth – the stories of clouds, bark and trees called for an abstract interpretation. For this I used shibori dyeing, crinkle pleating and soft draping. The final section, *Kinship*, tells of each dancer's continuing journey, their connections and the paths they will tread. We chose a heavy grey painted with toned horizontal sections, suggesting layers of rock sediment, and I used quite modern, pared down tailoring, with flashes of midnight blue to accent the bodies.




Working with the choreographers, composer, and set designer, as well as some very talented costume makers, has really made my design process a memorable experience. Also, having a work space next door to rehearsals has meant I have felt a part of the creation from day one. Being able to sneak in and show bits of fabric or dye work to the choreographer and the dancers is invaluable and has made the process truly collaborative.




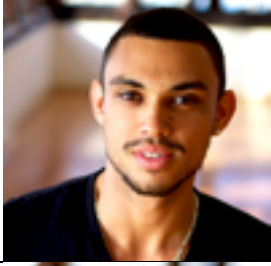




Images of costume design by Emma Howell/ Images of Set design by Jacob Nash

## Bangarra Dance Ensemble

The Bangarra dance ensemble is made up of 15 dancers: 8 male and 7 female. Their indigenous heritage spans across Australia and the Torres Strait and each has their own story to tell. Some of the Bangarra dancers have been with the company for over 10 years.

	<b>Sidney Saltner</b>	Sidney is from the Wulli Wulli people of central Queensland. He was born in Theodore, Queensland.
	<b>Elma Kris</b>	Elma was raised on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. She is a descendant of people from the Wagadagam clan and the Torres Strait Kaurareg of the North and also from the Eastern, Western Top, Western and Central Islands of the Torres Strait. Elma's language is Kulkagau Ya, Kala Lagaw Ya and Kala Kakaw Ya. Elma's tribal totem is Kigus and Warup.
	<b>Yolande Brown</b>	Yolande is a descendant of the Bidjara clan of the Kunja nation, central Queensland and also shares Celtic and French origins.
	<b>Patrick Thaiday</b>	Patrick was born in Biloela, Queensland and grew up in Mackay. His parents come from Iama and Erub in the Torres Strait Islands. Patrick's parents' ancestors originated from Lifu, South Sea Islands and Jamaica.
	<b>Deborah Brown</b>	Born in Brisbane, Deborah is a descendant of Wakaid Clan, Badu Island. Her grandmother is a descendant of the Mer people, Murray Island, Baizam Clan. Deborah is also of Scottish descent.

	<b>Jhunoy Boy Borja</b>	Jhunoy was born in Manila, The Philippines, and was brought up in the outback town of Katherine in the Northern Territory.
	<b>Waangenga Blanco</b>	Waangenga Blanco is a descendant of the Meriam Island people and of the Meriam Island people and of the Pajinka Wik, Cape York. He grew up in Mission Beach, North Queensland. His father is from Meriam Island and his mother has Scottish/English ancestry.
	<b>Tara Gower</b>	Tara is a Yawuru woman from Lake Eda in the Kimberleys.
	<b>Leonard Mickelo</b>	Born in Ipswich, Queensland, Leonard is from the Wakka Wakka tribe, Bidjara nation, Gungalu tribe and Juduwa mob from Springsure black water and Barramba station (Cherbourg). His parents are from Cherbourg.
	<b>Daniel Riley McKinley</b>	Daniel is a descendant of the Wiradjuri people, from the Wellington area in western New South Wales. His Indigenous bloodline runs through the Riley clan from that area.
	<b>Jasmin Sheppard</b>	Jasmin was born in Brisbane and raised in Melbourne. She is a descendant of the Walangamma tribe in the gulf of Carpentaria.

	<b>Ella Havelka</b>	Born in Dubbo, Ella is a descendant of the Wiradjuri people.
	<b>Tara Robertson</b>	Born and raised in Darwin, Tara is a descendent of the Munanjali people from the Logan River area of Queensland.
	<b>Travis De Vries</b>	Travis is a Gamilaroi man who was born in Muswellbrook, NSW.
	<b>Kaine Sultan-Babij</b>	Kaine was born and raised in Whyalla, South Australia. Of Aboriginal, Afghan and Yugoslavian decent, Kaine's cultural and spiritual connections are to the Arrernte people of the Central Desert regions in the Northern Territory.

## Torres Strait Islands



Smilar Simak in *Emeret Lu* (2007) photo by: Justine Walpole

*"Whereas Djakapurra is my aboriginal cultural consultant creatively, Peggy Misi really is my Torres Strait Island consultant. I talk to her about a myriad of stories, about the island, about the water and she just laughs at me and says "you just dream and we'll see what happens". Torres Strait Island people celebrate differently to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal stories are quite earthbound, whereas Torres Strait Islander song and dance is obviously inspired by the water."* Stephen Page, Artistic Director

### Where are the Torres Strait Islands?

The Torres Strait Islands are located in between the tip of Northern Queensland and the Southern Coast of Papua New Guinea. There are approximately 100 islands in the Torres Strait but only 19 of these islands are inhabited.

The islands are divided into five regions :-

Top Western - Dauan, Saibai, Boigu

Western - Badu, Mabiug, St Pauls Village, Kubin Village

Central - Masig, Yam, Poruma, Warraber

Eastern - Mer, Waier, Daur, Darnley, Stephen

Port Kennedy, Tamwoy - Thursday, Hammond, Muralag, Narupai, Seisia, Bamaga

## Daily routines of the Torres Strait People

Prior to European settlement the people of the Torres Strait relied on hunting and the gathering of food and vegetables, trading of items and objects made of pearl and turtle shells, human heads, hair, stone tools and weapons collected during warfare.

Nowadays with the introduction of Christianity in 1871 the London Missionary Society on Darnley Island; which is celebrated on the 1st of July every year, the people still rely on traditional methods for daily existence to insure that their culture is still kept alive through fishing, hunting, dancing and language both on the islands and the Mainland.

The Torres Strait is traditionally an oral culture; they pass their culture, language, song and dance down verbally. The Torres Strait has two main languages spoken by the people on different islands: Meriam Mir and Kala Lagaw Ya. Many Torres Strait Islanders also speak Creole, which is a combination of Australian English and their traditional languages.

## Main Instruments used in the Torres Strait Islander Dancing

Warup - Bass Drum  
Kulap/ Gorr - Shaker  
Lemut/ Marap Thrum - Bamboo Drum

## Costumes of Torres Strait Islander Dancing

Dhibal/Dhari/Dheori - Head dress  
Mak Mak - Ankle ties  
Zazi - Grass skirt  
Kalico - Material sarong  
Augem Wali/Ko sau soth - Island dress

## Everyday Words used in the Torres Strait Islander Language

Ahkan - afraid, scared, ashamed, embarrassed  
Wanem - I beg your pardon, what  
Youpla - All of you  
Mepla - Us  
Bala - Brother  
Sisi - Sister  
Launga - no  
Wah - yes  
Weis way - Hello how are you?  
Sabe - Do you know? Do you understand?

## Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Statistics from the Australian Human Rights Commission: *Indigenous Deaths in Custody 1989 – 1996 Report*, October 1996  
[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/publications/deaths\\_custody/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/publications/deaths_custody/index.html)

- There have been 96 Aboriginal deaths in custody in the seven years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody completed its investigations. (between 1989 and 1996)
- In 1995 there were 22 Aboriginal deaths in custody, the highest number since the Royal Commission.
- A change in the definition of a death in custody in 1989 means that only deaths in institutional settings, as opposed to police pursuit, can be examined when comparing the Royal Commission and post-Royal Commission periods.
- The average number of institutional deaths in the Royal Commission period was 10.4. In the post-Royal Commission period it was 11.4.
- The frequency of deaths in various jurisdictions has changed significantly since the Royal Commission. The proportion of deaths in New South Wales and Victoria increased while they have decreased in Western Australia.
- There has been a significant decline in the proportion of deaths in police custody and an increase in deaths in prison.
- In both periods the majority of deaths were the result of self-inflicted hanging and natural causes. The Report shows that deaths from these causes disclosed breaches of recommendations as serious as deaths resulting from more direct involvement by custodial officers (eg, gunshot).
- Indigenous people were 16.5 times more likely than non-indigenous people to die in custody between 1990 and 1995. This rate reflects the disproportionately high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody.
- The disproportion in the rate of death was the highest in South Australia (31.7) followed by Victoria (18.8), New South Wales (17.0), Queensland (16.8), Northern Territory (7.7) and Tasmania (2.8).
- Indigenous prisoners were 1.26 times more likely to die in prison than non-Indigenous prisoners.
- Indigenous people who died in custody are significantly younger than non-Indigenous people. The rate of death for Indigenous women in custody was higher than the corresponding rate for Indigenous men.
- The proportion of deaths in police and prison custody was similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Approximately one-third of deaths occurred in police custody while two-thirds of deaths occurred in prison.
- Deaths from police pursuit have increased for both groups while deaths in police institutional settings have declined.
- Indigenous people were more likely to die from natural causes while non-indigenous people were more likely to die from gunshot and drug overdoses

### Mr Ward Story: Additional Links

WA Today *Charges laid over death of Mr Ward in roasting prison van* 19 January 2011 <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/charges-laid-over-death-of-mr-ward-in-roasting-prison-van-20110119-19w5y.html>

Four Corners: *Who Killed Mr Ward?* 15 June 2009 <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2009/s2595622.htm>

Deaths in Custody Watch Committee WA <http://www.deathincustody.org.au/ward>





## Stephen Page: Unrelenting in

**B**angarra Aboriginal Dance Theatre is housed within a converted wharf space in the Walsh Bay district in inner Sydney.

It sits on the harbour with the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge towering nearby.

This is an interesting artistic precinct with larger than life revamped industrial surroundings.

The Sydney Theatre, home of Bangarra is closely.

It's a good dancers' fitness walk to the end of the wharf, inside Bangarra is buzzing.

And key, the creative energy is almost able to be touched when you enter the space occupied by Stephen Page, choreographer and artistic director of the dance theatre.

I had been lucky enough to get to the community night of the latest production Spirit a couple of days before.

I found it brilliant, intoxicating and transforming and enthusiastically received by the audience of more than 800 blackfellas and friends.

Bangarra matched the funds from tickets and donations and the proceeds are going to a small community on the Dawson River in Queensland, to the Theodore Recovery Appeal Trust, to help the Aboriginal Medical Centre there rebuild after the floods.

The community night was a great opportunity to catch up with people, before the show and at interval, lots of hugs and cries of recognition outside and in the foyer.

The whole occasion was electric; full of excitement but during the dance performance there was hardly a breath to be heard, true respect.

Bangarra, meaning to make fire in the Wiradjuri language, gives us a sense of what is possible from our own cultural roots.

We loved it.

When I remark on the wonderful audience engagement Stephen says "Yeah it was more like a rock concert reaction, eh?" We laugh together, just loving the way that our mob shows their appreciation by calling out, whistles and a rapturous standing ovation.

And what dances! How perfectly synchronised and precise were their movements.

What a wonderful concept this Spirit that embodies so many stories of creation and survival.

Stephen explains that this production is a new mix of various pieces from productions over the years, pieces too good not to showcase again and originally brought together as a performance to celebrate Bangarra's 20th anniversary in 2009.

Of the seventeen performances developed since 1992, twelve contributed to this anniversary performance.

Spirit has developed from that and is not as extensive; it contains pieces from previous performances including Ochre, Bush, Boomerang, Skin and Walkabout landmark productions that fans of Bangarra will readily identify.

The performance on the night after the community night was also billed as a fundraiser and also very successful - Bangarra raised funds toward the artist-in-residence and traineeship programs, helping Bangarra to honor its relationship with leading Indigenous artists: choreographer Frances Rings, composer David Page, designer Jacob Nash and cultural consultant Kathy Marika, and to take on four young Indigenous trainees in behind-the-scenes roles.

This dance theatre company performs to an annual audience of more than 50,000 people.

I had a few favourite pieces from the performance of Spirit to ask Stephen about.

In one dance I thought that I recognised quinkins from far north Queensland, Stephen says these are very similar but in NE Arnhemland they are nanook, he says "You know, nini" Here he is referring to the south east as he knows that is where I am from.

Yeah, I'm thinking, I know nini or min min from way back and had no idea they look like this.



Photograph by Andy Solo

### The enigmatic Stephen Page

Stephen became artistic director of Bangarra Aboriginal Dance Theatre in 1991. With his works, Praying Mantis Dreaming, Nini, and Ochres, Stephen established milestones for Australian dance.

In 1996, Stephen made his creative debut with The Australian Ballet, choreographing Alchemy. The following year, he brought The Australian Ballet and Bangarra together in Rites, to Stravinsky's Rite of Spring. The following year Stephen choreographed Fish for Bangarra, with its world premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Stephen Page choreographed the flag handover ceremony for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games and co-directed segments of the ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. He also created the ceremony that opened the Olympic Arts Festival. Stephen also choreographed Skin, which premiered at the festival and won the coveted Helpmann Award for Best New Australian Work and Best Dance Work.

In 2000 Stephen's triple bill Corroboree toured internationally, in a sell-out tour of the US with appearances at BAM in New York and Washington's Kennedy Centre. This work earned Stephen the Helpmann Award for Best Choreography.

The following year, Stephen was honoured with the Matilda Award for his contribution to the arts in Queensland and choreographed Totem for The Australian Ballet's principal dancer, Stephen Heathcote.

2002 saw the World Premiere of Bangarra's double bill, Walkabout which Stephen co-choreographed with Frances Rings.

Stephen and Frances Rings later co-choreographed Bush for Bangarra that sold out on its Australian tour as well as its 2004 tour to the United States. Also in 2004 Bangarra returned to the Sydney Opera House with another sell-out production co-choreographed by Stephen and Frances, Clan. The following year Stephen choreographed Boomerang for a sell-out Australian tour.

As Artistic Director of the 2004 Adelaide Festival of the Arts, Stephen was praised for reinvigorating the event with an impressive and highly successful world-class program. Stephen's film and

theatre credits include the contemporary operatic film Black River, numerous music video clips and most recently directing his own brother David Page in the highly acclaimed one-man show Page 8 which toured the UK.

In 2006 Stephen and The Australian Ballet created Gathering, a double bill consisting of a reworked Rites and Amalgamate. Also in 2006, Queensland Art Gallery director asked Stephen to create a new dance work for the opening of the Gallery of Modern Art. Stephen, along with his son and nephews, created Kin, a special project that opened Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art.

In 2007 Stephen directed a spectacular traditional smoking ceremony in honour of the historic celebration marking the 75th anniversary of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Later in the year, during Bangarra's True Stories season, Stephen directed Victorian Opera's Orpheus and Eurydice in Melbourne and presented another sell-out season of Kin at the Malthouse Theatre.

In 2008 Stephen was named NSW Australian of the Year, receiving the award from Deputy Premier John Watkins in a ceremony at the Art Gallery of NSW.

In 2008 Stephen created for Bangarra a new, full-length work Mathlana (Best Dance Work and Best Choreography, 2009 Helpmann Awards). Stephen then took Rites with The Australian Ballet to London and Paris, and Bangarra's Awakenings to Washington, New York and Ottawa. Later in 2008 Stephen set off for Broome, WA as Choreographer on the film adaptation of Bran Nue Dae.

In 2009, after returning from a highly successful tour of True Stories to Germany, Hungary and Austria, Stephen and the dancers spent 10 days in Arnhem Land on a cultural exchange. Stephen celebrated Bangarra's 20th Anniversary with Fire - A Retrospective (Winner, Outstanding Performance by a Company, 2010 Australian Dance Awards).

In 2010, Stephen was honoured with the Services to Dance award at the Australian Dance Awards and received a Helpmann Award for Best Choreography for Fire, Bangarra's 20-year Retrospective work. Bangarra received a further two Helpmann Awards - Best Ballet/Dance Work for Fire and Best Regional Touring Production for True Stories.

Aboriginal Dance Theatre are from the whole diversity of upbringings that are possible for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia today, urban, rural, remote, imbedded in grassroots or in mainstream societies, always very eclectic groups.

The one strand that unites them is the connection to the cultural forms, the ability to use their bodies to express this connection.

And Bangarra itself is built on creative kinship ties with north east Arnhem Land, the Central Desert, the Kimberleys and the Torres Strait particularly Saibai and Murray Island.

Bangarra has always attracted people from these communities to be full-time dancers in the city and also draws on the cultural dance forms of these people and places for the development of the repertoire.

The kinship is particularly developed with the cultural custodians of dances, the elders are always present as advisors when their dances are being worked on.

The relationships fostered are those of trust, that Bangarra will respect and observe the cultural protocols when working with the music, song and dance of the various peoples across the country to develop performance.

The program for this year includes a Return to Country to Arnhem land to nurture Bangarra's relationship with the Aboriginal people there, to pay respects to the leaders and to foster cultural and creative exchange.

Stephen's passion is to develop the theatrical, the level of performance to suit the context of the modern venue and larger, often less informed non-Indigenous audiences.

He says his engagement is in developing ways "to get that spirit out there", into the mainstream of Australia.

He aims for audiences to be transported deep into culture, rather than being spoonfed what is seen as a static unchanging cultural expression.

This choreographer has a very well developed rationale for the way that he works.

The ethical imperatives and the considerations of protocol are well thought through and refined over years of practice.

He aims to show the evolution of Aboriginal cultural forms, how cultures change and develop through a seamless weaving of the old and new.

To weave these together while maintaining cultural integrity involves choosing carefully from modern western forms and applying those that enhance the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance forms.

Maintaining spiritual integrity of the work is Stephen's paramount aim, in his words: "Refining the measures of contemporary movement in such a way as to pay homage and respect to Indigenous cultural forms".

Stephen shares his insight that it is the respect that exists between blackfellas that has allowed these developments within Bangarra to occur.

He says many of us have grown up without the dancing and singing traditions of our cultural base, including himself, for various reasons to do with the disruption caused by colonialism and subsequent assimilation policies.

Those who have been fortunate enough to be able to retain these traditions, those who were reached by the coloniser later, have adopted him and others into their families, developed the relationships and the trust to allow people like him to carry the stories out to a different level of engagement with the broader society.

Over twenty-three years of engagement with the communities from further north Bangarra has developed strong cultural protocols.

There is always an elder present as a creative consultant.

Stephen feels the privilege of this deep relationship with some of our own mob when we have been vastly separated by geography, language and the impacts of assimilation culture.

Stephen mentions several times "coming out of assimilation", how for example his father and his extended family, the Namukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yungabberh tribe from northeast Queensland, have had the

## pursuit of artistic excellence

opportunity to meet the new kin as well.

All of those involved with Bangarra take this special connection and engagement with another living culture back to families and communities in various ways.

There is a sense in which Bangarra itself came out of the assimilation days.

In the 1980s there was a groundswell of Aboriginal and other Indigenous motivations to express our own cultures in a myriad of art forms.

To break free of the restrictions that characterised assimilation, swamping our cultural forms with whiteness.

There were early connections for example, with Koori Radio and Tiga Bayles, musicians such as Black Lace and Mac Silva and the Black Theatre established in Redfern that became a mecca for new talents under the mentorship of people such as Bob Maza, Bryan Syron, Justine Saunders.

There was then as now, an idea of the importance of Black culture as well as Indigenous cultural expression and all that overlap that exists there.

Carol Johnson an African American was the person with dance credentials who took on the task of establishing a dance company and Bangarra was formed in 1989.

Stephen was then a dancer with the Sydney Dance Company and by 1991 was the artistic director of Bangarra.

It was something of a coup and Stephen now wonders himself at the brashness of a twenty-five year old who believed that this was the task for him.

However, Stephen and Bangarra have not looked back.

Stephen Page has arguably become the choreographer for Australia's premier events where we showcase our culture to the world

– see the summary of his career highlights in the box below.

The three Page brothers are legendary within Indigenous creative cultural circles in Australia.

All three came onto the burgeoning Sydney arts scene at the same time, including David, the multiple award-winning composer who joined the company as resident composer in 1990.

He has composed the score for thirteen Bangarra works.

His studio, Nikinali Music, is next door to Bangarra at the wharf.

Then brother Russell, the dancer.

Stephen is somber when he speaks of the death of his much loved brother Russell in 2002 at the age of thirty-four years through suicide, a tragic personal and creative loss.

Stephen and other members of his family now belong to a loose association of other Aboriginal families that also suffer the inexplicable loss of a member by suicide.

Russell was the male muse of Bangarra and his legacy is still celebrated in the work of his brothers and the dance theatre.

Then there is Stephen the choreographer.

What does he do in his spare time? The answer is what I was expecting – his involvement with Bangarra, family and culture is his life.

As for what downtime there is, that is spent with close and extended family, his son now eighteen years old and in his final year at school, the children of Russell who he sees as his own and who are also young adults.

While working and travelling Stephen yearns to connect with family and so this is his major preoccupation when free of professional responsibility, doing the simple things, hanging out, taking in a movie.



Fire-Moth, Photo-Jeff Busby



Bangarra dancers 2010. Back row left to right: Yofande Brown, Tara Gower, Jhuny Boy Borja, Ella Havelka, Leonard Mickelo, Elma Kris, Perun Bonser. Middle row: Deborah Brown, Tara Robertson. Bottom row: Daniel Riley McKinley, Sidney Saltner, Patrick Thaiday, Jasmin Sheppard, Waangenga Blanco Photo supplied by Bangarra

**A**s a child, Damien Welch would gamely perform in his brother Stanton's backyard dance productions. Musicians Joseph and James Tawadros and Slava and Leonard Grigoryan would engage in robust musical duels in the family lounge-room, while Stephen and David Page would put on elaborate shows around the kitchen table with the rest of their many siblings in tow.

As boys they fought together, played together and created together. As men, these brothers represent some of Australia's most prominent creative tag teams, melding their talents in award-winning collaborations that seem to draw their potency from the family bond. Can having a shared genetic link enrich the artistic process? Is it true, as Greek philosopher Antisthenes said, that "when brothers agree, no fortress is so strong as their common life"?

**Joseph Tawadros and James Tawadros, instrumentalists:**

WITH their musical instruments in tow, Joseph and James Tawadros make for an interesting study as they sit side by side in a small room. Joseph, 27, is a virtuoso of the beautiful pear-shaped oud, a traditional Egyptian fretless string instrument with a delicate carved rosette on the front. James, 22, is a rising star of the req, a small hand-held tambourine with a stretched goat skin surface and five pairs of cymbals.

The two have forged a lauded partnership in recent years, acclaimed not just for their dazzling virtuosity but for the deep bond they demonstrate on stage. A European reviewer commented: "The brothers seem to share a type of rhythmic telepathy, completing each other's phrases in a way that is frequently uncanny."

The brothers say there is a definite sense of being almost telepathically linked on stage. They're somehow able to anticipate mistakes and catch each other when one falls, and they say they often surprise each other by simultaneously weaving the same musical riffs or in-jokes into the performance. "It's pretty incredible, actually," says Joseph, who feels this mirroring instinct stems from close proximity since childhood. It creates an unparalleled feel for each other's playing, he says, almost re-wiring the synapses so mind and ear are acutely attuned. James nods. "It's weird, but it sort of shapes a part of the brain, I think."

The pair made their duo recording debut in 2006 with the ARIA-nominated *Visions*, followed by *Epiphany* and *Angel* and last year's *The Hour of Separation*. Their ease of communication is born of shared memories, histories, values and reference points, and, as Joseph says, there was a ready-made playing partner to rehearse with from a young age. The two started playing together casually at home when James was 12.

This promotes a tendency to greater musical synchronicity, something particularly crucial in their particular form of music-making. It is defined by the complex, slippery modal improvisations, known as *taqsims*, of Arabic music. James, who also plays the bendir, or frame drum, can easily adapt to and match Joseph's complex harmonies, sometimes hair-raising speed and shifting melodic directions.

"I never play with any other percussionist these days because James makes me feel so safe," Joseph says. "James knows these

## Two by four

Creativity is more than doubled when pairs of siblings work together, writes **Sharon Verghis**, who talks to a quartet of talented brothers

pieces so well he can actually play certain phrases out of the piece and know when to sneak them back rhythmically."

In the flesh, Joseph is driven and eloquent; James is the quieter, more reserved presence. Perhaps this is what sustains the delicate balance of the working relationship; two alpha males could potentially cause an implosion, you'd imagine. All the duos here say they see each other as more friends than brothers and all carve breathing room for themselves by having independent lives and projects. When they join forces on a project, they contribute equally.

In the case of the Tawadroses, Joseph comes up with the overall compositional idea and concept while James provides the rhythmic shape and feel. "We're both very individual but we come together and create the whole. It's like that Khalil Gibran marriage quote" — Joseph entwines his hands gracefully — "drink the same wine but not from the same glass."

They agree there's potential for sibling rivalry to be writ large but say arguments are rare and rivalry nonexistent. It's largely due to the age gap and the fact they play different instruments, they feel. "It's great that James is doing so well on the percussion and me on the oud. If it was another oud player, it might have been a little different," Joseph says candidly, citing the distressing discord between two Palestinian oud-playing brothers he saw in a recent documentary.

He shoots his brother a fond glance. "It could be brotherly bias, but I think he's the best req player. Ever. It's his variety." James smiles. "I think Joe's composing style is amazing. It's one thing to have technical ability, it's another to have soul."

**Stanton Welch, choreographer and artistic director, and Damien Welch, former principal dancer at the Australian Ballet:**

IN a rehearsal room at the Sydney Opera House, Stanton Welch, 41, a small, cat-like figure in a checked shirt, is overseeing the



Bangarra Dance Company collaborators and brothers Stephen and David Page

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## 06 COVER STORY

Continued from Page 5

restaging of his 1995 ballet *Madame Butterfly*, eyes intent on a flock of Australian Ballet dancers immersed in a complex sequence of steps. Also watching closely is younger brother Damien, 38, formerly a much-loved principal artist at the company and Stanton's assistant in the work's restaging. (Damien will play the role of Butterfly's formidable uncle the Bonze when it opens in Adelaide this month and then Sydney following its Melbourne opening last month.)

After a run-through of a short section, the two brothers discuss the work quietly. The robust bond between the men, both strong, self-willed personalities, is the first thing you notice when they sit down for a chat. They trade inside jokes and family stories, an easy affection and mutual respect coming through behind the boyish rivalry, occasional prickly asides and mock arguments.

Their work partnership began in 1991 when Damien danced in Stanton's *Of Blessed Memory*, before taking the lead role in 1994's *Divergence*, a year before Stanton, now artistic director of Houston Ballet, was appointed the AB's resident choreographer.

This was followed by 1996's *Red Earth*, 1997's *Cinderella* (featuring Damien in the lead role of Dandini), 1998's revival of *Madame Butterfly* (Damien danced Pinkerton), 2003's *Velocity* and 2006's *The Sleeping Beauty*, with Damien as the Prince.

They put the strength of this bond down to knowledge of the same references, seeing the same films and "watching mum and dad dance", says Damien. Their parents are former celebrated AB principals Marilyn Jones and Garth Welch.

Stanton says Damien is his muse and his template of the "perfect male dancer". It's a mysterious thing to define, he says, "but the way Damien's body moves makes more sense to me than other people's." Damien nods. There's a kind of ingrained feeling, a muscle memory, for the way each other moves, he says, and "it must be something innate. It feels natural for me to make the shapes that he demonstrates."

Stanton's ballets are the ones he has most intimately connected with in his career, principally because of their melding of technical difficulty with great characterisation and partnering (he cites *Butterfly* as a prime example).

Stanton, he says, has taught him the most about acting and interpreting a scene.

Knowing the limits of each other's abilities is "maybe another sibling thing", Stanton says. "With a work like *Divergence*, which is about exploring that edge, I could get him to that edge because I knew pretty comfortably where that was." It has allowed for a richer and riskier result. "His ballets are always harder than you're capable of doing," Damien says, adding with macabre satisfaction that he has been at the point of "dry retching" in some of Stanton's work.

The sibling bond can sometimes prove tricky. The brothers have faced accusations of nepotism and have also had "full-blown" fights at times at work, mainly triggered by the emotional baggage that comes with being siblings. These days those battles are a distant memory. Damien has even ventured into Stanton's domain, making his choreographic debut in the AB's *Bodytorque* season in 2009. "He even wrote the music for it," Stanton says proudly as they walk back to rehearsal, clapping his brother on the back.



STUART MCEVOY



JANE DEMPSTER



JANE DEMPSTER

Three sets of brothers, clockwise from left, Slava and Leonard Grigoryan, James and Joseph Tawadros, Stanton and Damien Welch

hasn't been a problem for them, the brothers say, primarily because of their nine-year age gap and the fact they're not straightforward classical guitarists, where competitiveness can be heightened. "There could be tension but there isn't, because we almost grew up separately," says Leonard, 25.

It's easy to see the genuine affection and the strong protective bond between the two (Len and Slav to each other). They share the same agent and a partnership that has yielded four duo albums in less than 10 years with a fifth planned. (They released their first duo album, *Play*, in 2003.)

Apart from the built-in companionship — the solo life is a lonely one, Slava says — and the fact the duo guitar repertoire offers more diversity than the solo, there is an added empathy that comes through in performances. Critics have noted their "seamless linear interleaving" and "the pleasant shock of their chordal synchronicity". Like the Tawadros brothers, they testify to a kind of musical telepathy at work and believe it stems from being able to read physical cues, as well as the weight of shared history, of similar aesthetics developed from early exposure to the same teacher — their father — and the same musical influences and language.

"It's something siblings have, it seems, that other non-sibling musicians don't. In a way it's like listening to yourself," Leonard says. "The classical guitar is a very difficult instrument to play with another guitarist. If something is not quite together, it's very obvious. With others, I have to work very hard at achieving that synchronicity, but with Slava I don't. There's definitely something special that goes on."

As with the Tawadroses, they say they often surprise each other by trying something new musically on stage simultaneously. "There's a kind of unspoken communication," Slava says. "It's common in the jazz world, but a bit rarer in classical music." They each come up with ideas and concepts, do arrangements and "there's no lead guitar as such, we swap and switch roles all the time," he says. "It's almost like we're the same person, and there's one right way and one wrong way to do it."

There are differences, though. In the past few years Leonard has started composing more and is drawn to a more fluid, improvisational style stemming from his love of jazz. (He now has hankering for a solo album.)

Slava, though also a jazz lover and adept improviser, is more at home as a traditional classical guitarist.

They are big fans of each other's musicality — Leonard admires Slava's expressive melodic skills while Slava cites Leonard's brilliant technical ability and his lack of fear of performing — "a rare thing" — that helps calm Slava as well. "It's an incredible connection," he says. "I'm so glad it happened when Len was young and that we've gone to make some great music."

**Band of Brothers**, featuring the Tawadros and Grigoryan brothers, WOMADelaide, tonight; Blue Mountains Folk Festival, March 19-20; regional Queensland March 22-25; Sydney, March 31; Melbourne, April 6; and dates in May.  
**Madame Butterfly**, Adelaide, March 18-23; Sydney, April 7-27.  
**Bangarra Dance Theatre's Belong** opens Brisbane, July 1, then tours until September.

Stephen Page, artistic director of Bangarra Dance Company, and David Page, Bangarra's resident composer:

STEPHEN Page sits quietly in a small room, waiting for his older brother David to arrive. He's somewhere nearby, tinkering away on a score, but finally the door opens and he comes in. The two men — one fair-skinned and baby-faced, the other dark, lithe and impressively fit — embrace, casually pecking each other's cheek. In that one small, unselfconscious act, the bond between the two is made tangible.

The brothers have been melding their talents for more than 20 years on scores of Bangarra productions, from *Praying Mantis Dreaming* in 1992, to *Ochres* (1995), *Skin* (2000) and *Boomerang* (2005), among others. Next month they'll begin work on yet another collaboration, *Belong*, a double bill of two new works. They cherish their deep artistic bond ("We're like twins," Stephen says), and say it has been intimately shaped by their close-knit childhoods, their Aboriginality, complementary talents and temperaments, and deep, fierce loyalty to family and clan.

"David is rare," says Stephen, 45. "God, I do get jealous sometimes, when David will just take that spirit of the *Dreaming* out there and filter it through the music." David, 49, credits Stephen for being the central force of the partnership, for helping him conquer his nerves and playing an instrumental part in helping him stage independent projects such as his 2004 one-man show *Page 8*. "He's the key, it's his optimism and energy."

Dancer Russell Page, the youngest of the 12 Page children, was, for 10 years, a vital member of this sibling team until his death in 2002. The trio joined forces at Bangarra more than 20 years ago, launching a tight-knit group built on a potent melding of their individual talents of storytelling, dance and music. Russell, in particular, was a muse for the other two. They always held firm to a decision to "bury the ego" and accept direct, sometimes brutal, critical honesty from each other. "He'll tell me straight away if it's

shit," David says cheerfully of Stephen, who pulls a wry face.

Having created together from childhood, they found it natural to assume separate but equal creative roles as adults. Stephen, the storyteller, would come up with the ideas, David would help flesh out the concept before going off to work on the music, and Russell "would hang around quietly in the background, just listening", Stephen says, before heading to the studio to translate the music into movement.

The process mimicked the form of traditional Aboriginal performances, David notes. "Where there's the didge and the clapsticks, the song man, the storyteller, there's dancing." Russell's death (he committed suicide, age 34, after the opening night of the company's 2002 show *Walkabout*, in Sydney) proved a huge blow. Stephen and David say they came close to quitting Bangarra as a result.

The working relationship had been so intimately informed by the talent of all three that his death irretrievably altered the dynamic. Grief completely derailed any thoughts of creativity. After much soul-searching, they decided to continue, "and I'm so glad we did", Stephen says. The partnership has absorbed the loss and gone on to flourish (they say 2003's *Bush* was the "healing work"), but Russell, it seems, is still very much alive in the studio.

"Even now, when I'm creating, one of the boys will move a little bit like Russ, and I'll go, 'That's weird.' He comes to us all the time," says Stephen.

Slava Grigoryan and Leonard Grigoryan, guitarists:

THE Grigoryans ply their craft in the same profession as the Tawadros brothers. Indeed, the four are good friends who are touring together this month in a combined side project. But, unlike the Tawadros boys, the Grigoryans play the same instrument, a potentially tricky situation that can engender fierce rivalry for the "better gig and biggest headlines", Slava, 34, concedes. Luckily, it

stateby state

# company life

by Jasmin Sheppard

## Bangarra on tour in Europe



Jasmin is shot warming up at the 100 year old theatre, Stadttheater in Furth, Germany.

**Jasmin Sheppard - Bangarra Dance Theatre**  
A descendant of the Walangamma tribe in the Gulf of Carpentaria Jasmin joined Bangarra Dance Theatre in 2007.

[www.bangarra.com.au](http://www.bangarra.com.au)

16 [dance@ain.com.au](mailto:dance@ain.com.au)

It is our first night in Italy. The company is meeting for dinner before a rest day, and then our work begins! I wander down to the restaurant sleepily and order a pizza. Everyone is exhausted, feeling the effects of a long 32 hour travel.

My pizza arrives, a gorgeous thing with fresh eggplant, tomato and cheese, but after a few bites my body rejects it. I am so over-fired that I can't eat! If I take one more bite I may just be sick. Annoyed that I cannot stomach my first pizza in Italy itself, I go back to the hotel and sleep solidly for 12 hours.

It normally takes a few days to recover from a long trip, so I try to eat as well as I can to give my body the energy it desperately needs! After a day of sightseeing we arrive at the theatre to bump-in. Pilates and ballet class is on the menu today and collectively we are grateful for the Pilates! Our rehearsal room overlooks the snow-capped Dolomite Mountains that surround this town of Trenton. What a treat to be dancing here!

**Our whole tour is jam-packed. One week in Italy precedes 4 weeks in Germany. We are working 6-day weeks (a show almost every day, 5 days off throughout the entire tour). I've made up my mind to take it one day at a time - if I live in the moment then I'll be fine!**

When we arrive onstage for spacing the show, we are greeted by our crew, and discover that the stage has one of the steepest rakes I have ever danced on. Yikes! The show will be a great challenge! We keep warm and work hard loosening out our bodies for the first show of tour. At half hour call we are notified that the stage is free for us to warm-up on, and this is the perfect time to adjust to the rake by moving through my yoga practice. The yoga centres me and prepares my body and mind for a calm and accurate performance. We set side stage at beginners call and start the show.

It feels as though I'm on a boat dancing on a rake like this! We all heave our bodies uphill when we move onstage, then spill uncontrollably downstage. What an experience! Our show is a success, as are the next three in Italy.

The whole company pack-up and board the bus for a 4-hour trip to Milan Airport. From here we fly to Frankfurt, then another 4 hours bus ride to a little town called Schweinfurt. We'll be here for the next week, which means rest time! There's a company dinner once again where we all meet to eat the local German food and marvel at the size of German beers! Our theatre in Schweinfurt (meaning pig's trough in German) is wonderfully spacious. The people in this town are lovely, and welcome us like we are old friends.

The shows seem to whiz by so quickly, perhaps because I am enjoying them so much. After our week in Schweinfurt we hit the road for a full on week of one night stints. This means for every new day there is a new venue, new town and another show. In just 6 days we perform in Villingen, Zug (Switzerland), Seigen, Iserlohn, Saarlouis and Lingen.

There's little time to see any of the towns, just one hour once we get off the bus and check into the hotel before we reboard the bus to the theatre.

I try to massage out my muscles daily and do my physiotherapy exercises to cope with the strange schedule. Yoga each night before the show is proving to be my saving grace!

The whole company is glad once we arrive in Ludwigshafen where we spend 3 whole nights! Our next venue, Furth, is also a 3-night stay, and we have the privilege of performing in a hundred year old theatre with enchanting chandeliers, beautiful red velvet and gold embossed balconies.

We'll conclude our tour with one more week of one night stints in Offenburg, Freidrichshafen, Ludwigsburg, Leverkusen and Marl. What a mouthful!

**Bodies are getting tired, but spirits are still high. We'll push out every last drop of energy for our final week, and then we can breathe a sigh of relief and accomplishment.**

We have a short holiday after the tour, so I'm heading to Paris for some much needed rest and relaxation!

## state by state **company life**

by Jasmin Sheppard

On the 12th of January, at 6 am, I am already awake for my first day at Bangarra for the year. I'm up because my flight from Europe is concluding. I step off the plane and sleepily make my way toward passport control and customs.

I have just spent five weeks in cold, snowy Romania and Turkey for my holidays. The rest of the company resumed work on the 5th, but due to family matters on the other side of the planet, I was generously given extra sympathy leave.

After a full year of dancing and performing, everyone relishes their Christmas break, and I was happy to leave the year behind and delve into a snow white dreamland for a while. My enchanted escape creatively inspired me with traditional Romanian folk dancing, Turkish whirling dervishes, light Romanian opera, and Romanian pop star back up dancers. Stepping out of my own artistic world and into another always relights the artist's fire within me.

Now I'm fresh, rested and ready for an exciting year ahead, albeit a little tired and jetlagged from my 24 hour flight! I'd love to stay at home and rest today, but I know I have lots to catch up on, so, today I must go to work... My heart is ready - my body will eventually catch up!

It takes almost an hour to pass through customs, and by the time I reach home I have just enough time to shower, have a cup of coffee, then scoot off to Bangarra.

It's good to see everyone at work, most are brown and sunkissed. I on the other hand am sun deprived!

Our yoga teacher walks though the door to my delight and relief! This will be the best remedy for my poor body. I'm tired, but not unfit. I knew I would be starting work late, so in the little town of Constanta, Romania, I signed up to a gym. Every day ten days prior to my leaving Romania, I rugged up warm and trudged through the snow to the gym to run five kilometres and cycle 2 kilometres. It felt nice to get moving again, and my body appreciated the cross training.

My body unwinds with the soothing yoga class, and I find that I feel better than before-yes! All day I work hard, pushing through the sleepiness, then end my day by falling asleep with the TV on and my meal half finished!

The next day I sweat it out again. I'm acclimatising to the humidity still, so I keep reminding myself to keep my fluids up. We get stuck into our work immediately, with strict 15 minute breaks only. The reason for this intensity is that we are set to fly to Europe in a month for our first tour of the year, Germany and Italy, so we have much to do in such a short time. What a start to the year for me! I return from the northern

hemisphere, work for a month and then go back! I love to travel, so it's thrilling for me...You'll hear no complaining from me!

The repertoire that we'll perform overseas is a mixture of a few past shows, similar to a short version of 'Fire', our retrospective show from 2009. I have performed most of the work before, so I find my body remembering the choreography long before my conscious mind has time to analyse the movement. What a strange and amazing experience this is!

We ceremoniously work through each separate dance and section, running them, breaking them down, cleaning the messy parts and bringing to life the small details and intention in the stories we are telling. These are the things that give every dance the chance to really move audiences.

Every morning I relish all the variety of contemporary teachers we are having, as when we start our tour, our options will be very limited to lots of ballet - although it's essential and very good for me! - and a few contemporary classes from company members.

The whole company is working hard for our ultimate tour goal, but now also for a charity performance for the flood victims in Queensland. What a special way to use our gift to perform, helping others in great need.

Day by day I leave the cold memories of Romania behind and become engulfed in the hot and sweaty reality of my home, Sydney, that is, until we set off once more for the chilly winds of Germany and Italy. Auf Wiedersehen!



Jasmin Sheppard  
Bangarra Dance Theatre A descendant of the  
Walangamma tribe in the Gulf of Carpentaria  
Jasmine joined Bangarra Dance Theatre in 2007.  
[www.bangarra.com.au](http://www.bangarra.com.au)

PIC: Deborah Brown and  
Jasmin in Bangarra Dance  
Theatre TRUE STORIES Emeret Lu  
choreographed by Elma Kiliš

## Other Media Links:

*Bangarra Feels a sense of Belonging in Brisbane*, ABC Online, July 2011

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/07/07/3263402.htm>

Stephen Page on ABC Radio Brisbane, July 2011

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/07/07/3263402.htm>

*Bangarra's main man Stephen Page celebrates 20 years at the helm*, The Australian, June 2011

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/belonging/story-e6frg8n6-1226075019694>

Australian Stage Magazine, April 2011

<http://www.australianstage.com.au/201104104346/features/melbourne/stephen-page.html>

Enough Rope with Andrew Denton, Episode 23 May 2005

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s1374589.htm>

Talking Heads with Stephen Page, 2007

<http://www.abc.net.au/talkingheads/txt/s1895494.htm>

## Suggested Questions

### Questions about Bangarra Dance Theatre

- Do you feel that a company such as Bangarra Dance Theatre is an important part of Australian culture? Why?
- How does Bangarra Dance Theatre performance differ from other theatre experiences?
- What are your initial impressions of the work?
- Watch the additional videos on the Bangarra Dance Theatre youtube page ([www.youtube.com/bangarradancetheatre](http://www.youtube.com/bangarradancetheatre)) Describe in your own words what is unique about the style of Bangarra Dance Theatre.

### Questions about *Belong*

#### Dance Questions

- Why was the title *Belong* chosen for the work? How do the choreographic intents of both *About* and *ID* relate to this core theme?
- What aspects of the dance stay with you after you see the performance?
- What do you like/dislike about watching dance onstage?
- How does the work use space (levels, direction, shape, dynamics, dimensions and floor patterns)?
- How are the body parts of the dancers articulated during the dance?
- How are speed and duration of movement manipulated in each section of the work- include the use of beat, tempo and rhythm? Provide examples of how this affects the mood/atmosphere of the work.
- What do you think are the main inspirations in the creation of the two pieces of work?
- What messages are the choreographers trying to communicate?
- Within the choreography are there any recurring themes/issues?
- What does the choreography suggest about identity?

#### Music Questions

- Identify both traditional and contemporary sounds and instruments in the score.
- Explain how the music affects the mood of the dance piece. What impact do the sounds have on the dancers movements and the messages of their performance?
- How has traditional language been used in the music and soundscape?

#### Media Questions

- Find a press review of the production and write about whether you agree with the review or write your own review.
- What influence do you think media had on the work *ID*?
- Bangarra dancer, Jasmin Sheppard has her own column in *DanceTrain*. Write your own blog post or column about your Bangarra experience or another dance experience you've been involved in.

#### Design Questions

- Jacob Nash is an Artist-in-Residence at Bangarra and designed the sets for *Belong*. He is Bangarra's first Indigenous set designer. Why is it important for Indigenous people to represent their own stories?
- Discuss the set design and use of props in *Belong*.
- Discuss the costume design in *Belong*. How do they contribute to the storytelling?
- What do the different design elements suggest about identity?

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Questions (OVER PAGE)

- Research 3 different types of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island ceremonies and explain their purpose and origins.
- Compare examples of traditional and contemporary Indigenous art.
- Interpret images and objects from a variety of cultural and historical perspectives.
- Research Aboriginal deaths in custody. Consider how this is presented in the section *Discrimate*. Discuss the impact of this issue in both Aboriginal and Western culture.
- Research 3 different types of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island ceremonies and explain their purpose and origins.
- What are totems? And what do they represent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture? Further, find out about other indigenous people from other countries, and whether totems are significant to their culture, and how?
- In Indigenous culture, what role does the elder take? Is there are difference between male and female elders? Can you find examples of this role in other cultures (either Indigenous or non-Indigenous?)Research the history and current information about The Torres Strait Islands. Where are they? How many islands are there? What is everyday life like In the Torres Strait?
- Who was the first non-indigenous person to 'discover' the Torres Strait Islands?
- Name the main instruments used by Torres Strait Islander people.