

corroboree

From the Brolga plains of Arnhem land to the cool swirling waters of the Torres Strait, *Corroboree* journeys through the songlines of three Dreamings that are central to Indigenous people.

Commentary by Artistic Director, Stephen Page

Brolga (Gudurrku)

Brolga is inspired by an ancient Dreaming. It is a story about a young girl who goes to a sacred ground and transforms from human to a Brolga. It's the original Swan Lake.

In *Brolga*, we start with two figures, one is a traditional spirit (Grant Nundhirribala) and the other is a young girl (Frances Rings). She enters the sacred ground that belongs to the Brolgas, she plays, she mimics, and she discovers the sensuality of the Brolga. But she has to learn to respect the secret Brolga knowledge. The traditional spirit guides and protects her on this journey. It could be that he has set her a challenge for the journey for her initiation as a woman.

Then he sings her to sleep, he calls her back to another realm in her Dreaming, another time, and prepares her spiritually for the ritual painting. She emerges with the totem markings of the Brolga. She is transformed.

Roo (Garrtjambal)

In *Roo* I wanted to develop on themes we explored in *Spear from Skin*. *Roo* deals with urban men who have had their social and religious values taken away from them and survived. Men who are victims of social dilemmas – whether it's part of the stolen generation, child abuse, domestic violence or substance abuse.

We see a line up of men who are about to be convicted; they are being interrogated about who they are. There's a lot of strong language and violent outbursts. What we want to do through the next twenty minutes is cleanse them before their exterior selves go into confinement, give them the tough skin to service out their punishment. The mist is their state of cleansing, they wash off the stolen generation X painted across their chests and their spirits are called back to the bush, to the Red Kangaroo meeting ground.

In the next section called *Hunt* we explore the energy of the hunt, the difference between Aboriginal and white ways of hunting, the relationship between hunter and prey. Joe's lighting is a character in itself and so is the music; the sweep and stab of the 4WD spotlight, the fear, the startled creature, the music pounding like a heart, like an engine, a killing machine.

This is followed by a section called *Skinned* which is partly about raw meat and what it means to people, but it's also about being tortured, burnt and things being taken away from you, and the pain of being wounded.

Today we live in a society where no one can hide, we are all hunted, and everyone is identified whether we like it or not.

Turtle (Waru)

Turtle's my favourite. This is my tribute to the Torres Strait Islander people and the beautiful, melodic water that surrounds this country and what the Pacific means to people in general. Torres Strait Islander people celebrate differently to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal stories are quite earthbound, whereas Torres Strait Islander song and dance is obviously inspired by the water.

In *Turtle* we start with this wonderful visual of sand pouring from the roof onto three bodies that represent the Mother Turtle. She goes to her sacred territory and digs to lay her eggs. All the choreography is no higher than a foot.

This is followed by a section called *Hatch*, which captures the energy of the Baby Turtle. Some survive and some don't and there are thousands of them, racing down to the water. *Kasa Kab* is a traditional play dance that celebrates the Turtle.

Then comes *Aigudau Tonar*, where the dancers are all oiled and they slide to the music. This represents the meat, the delicacy of the Turtle and the egg which is a great bush medicine. We explore the sensuality of food, the gourmet and the feast.

Torres Strait people do a rhythm dance with seed pods as rattles, it's usually done standing up but we do it all on our backs. This depicts the frustration of a Turtle stuck on its back, but it also highlights the humorous and lighthearted aspect.

Brolga (Gudurrku)

Journey	Frances Rings, Grant Nundhirribala, Male Ensemble
Dream/Arrival	Frances Rings
Mimic/Feeding	Frances Rings, Female Ensemble, Male Ensemble
Lust	Russell Page, Frances Rings
Elders	Victor Bramich, Yolande Brown, Frances Rings, Grant Nundhirribala
Traditional Brolga (Gudurrku)	Grant Nundhirribala Ensemble

Roo (Garrtjambal)

Victim/Mist	Lewis Lampton, Sidney Saltner, Russell Page, Victor Bramich, Sani Townson, Joel Blanco, Grant Nundhirribala
Traditional Roo (Dhum Dhum)	Grant Nundhirribala Male Ensemble
Hunt	Male Ensemble
Skinned	Full Ensemble
Smoking	Grant Nundhirribala, Russell Page, Lewis Lampton, Sidney Saltner, Victor Bramich, Joel Blanco, Sani Townson

Turtle (Waru)

Mother Turtle (Soeywal)	Elma Kris, Peggy Misi, Victor Bramich/Sani Townson
Hatch (Kakurau Thonar)	Frances Rings, Yolande Brown, Desley Roberts, Peta Strachan
Tsi Play Dance (Kasa Kab)	Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Sani Townson, Ensemble
Aigudau Tonar	Ensemble
Rhythm	Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Sani Townson, Ensemble
Big water	(Koi Maluya) Female Ensemble
Spirit/Cleansing (Kayan Igil)	Ensemble

Creative Production Team

Director/Choreographer	Stephen Page
Creative Cultural Consultant	Djakapurra Munyarrun
Composers	David Page & Steve Francis
Music Producer	Steve Francis
Set Design	John Matkovic & Stephen Page
Lighting Designer	Joseph Mercurio
Costume Designer	Jennifer Irwin
Additional Choreography (<i>Turtle</i>)	Peggy Misi, Elma Kris, Sani Townson

The Victorian Arts Centre, BHP Billiton and Bangarra Dance Theatre wish to acknowledge that we come together on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people who are part of the Kulin Nation. We join the Wurundjeri people to thank the spirits of their ancestors for nurturing this land.

The Victorian Arts Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of its donors through the Arts Angels Programme.

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Victorian Arts Centre warmly welcomes BHP Billiton as a corporate partner

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"We greatly appreciate BHP Billiton's investment in the Victorian Arts Centre's Melbourne season of Corroboree. Their support enables us to share our indigenous cultural heritage, encouraging greater understanding of our origins and traditional belief system."

Stephen Page
Artistic Director
Bangarra Dance Theatre



BHP Billiton