

bangarra
DANCE THEATRE
AUSTRALIA



Bringing the connection to the arts



“Broadcast Australia is proud to partner with one of Australia’s most recognised and iconic performing arts companies, Bangarra Dance Theatre. We are committed to supporting the Bangarra community on their journey to create inspiring experiences that change society and bring cultures together. The strength of our partnership is defined by our shared passion of connecting people across Australia’s vast landscape in metropolitan, regional and remote communities.”

PETER LAMBOURNE
CEO, BROADCAST AUSTRALIA

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a bai communications company

Photo: Daniel Boud



DARK EMU

SYDNEY | Sydney Opera House, 14 June - 14 July

CANBERRA | Canberra Theatre Centre, 26 - 28 July

PERTH | State Theatre Centre of WA, 2 - 5 August

BRISBANE | QPAC, 24 August - 1 September

MELBOURNE | Arts Centre Melbourne, 6 - 15 September



WE ARE BANGARRA

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE IS AN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORGANISATION AND ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S LEADING PERFORMING ARTS COMPANIES, WIDELY ACCLAIMED NATIONALLY AND AROUND THE WORLD FOR OUR POWERFUL DANCING, DISTINCTIVE THEATRICAL VOICE AND UTTERLY UNIQUE SOUNDSCAPES, MUSIC AND DESIGN.



Led by Artistic Director Stephen Page, we are in our 29th year, but our dance technique is forged from more than 65,000 years of culture, embodied with contemporary movement. The company's dancers are dynamic artists who represent the pinnacle of Australian dance. Each has a proud Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, from various locations across the country.

Our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are the heart of Bangarra, with our repertoire created on Country and stories gathered from respected community Elders.

It is this inherent connection to our land and people that makes us unique and enjoyed by audiences from remote Australian regional centres to New York.

Bangarra's annual program includes a national tour of a world premiere work, performed in Australia's most iconic venues; a regional tour allowing audiences outside of capital cities the opportunity to experience Bangarra; and an international tour to maintain our global reputation for excellence.

Complementing Bangarra's touring roster are education programs, workshops and special performances and projects, planting the seeds for the next generation of performers and storytellers.

Authentic storytelling, outstanding technique and deeply moving performances are Bangarra's unique signature.

WELCOME TO DARK EMU

On behalf of everyone at Bangarra, welcome to our 2018 production of *Dark Emu*.

We are delighted to present *Dark Emu* in Sydney, Canberra, Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne, following the extraordinary success of *Bennelong* last year and an exciting start to 2018. Already this year, the company has presented a successful regional tour, a sold-out season of *Bennelong* at Adelaide Festival, and an acclaimed performance at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

As we approach the company's 30th anniversary in 2019, it is an absolute privilege to collaborate with Bangarra's world-class ensemble of 18 dancers and a group of Australia's most accomplished theatre creatives to bring the incredible stories from Bruce Pascoe's award-winning book to life through our unique dance language.

Everything we do at Bangarra is inspired by our land and our people. With this in mind, we are committed to delivering real impact through initiatives that support the development of future cultural leaders. In 2018, we welcomed two emerging dancers into the company thanks to the Russell Page Graduate Program, which provides them with 12 months of professional dance experience and mentoring. Our growing Safe Dance and Dancer Further Education programs also exist to empower our artists – all of whom are future cultural leaders of Australia – to ensure that they have longer, healthier careers and, when they do retire from the stage, vital support to transition into the next phase of their careers outside of dance. We are proud to nurture our dancers to tell their own stories and develop as choreographers. Former dancer Yolande Brown, and current dancer Daniel Riley, were both instrumental in the creation of *Dark Emu*.

Given we are the only Major Performing Arts company in Australia with its cultural origins in this land, we dedicate an enormous amount of energy and passion into ensuring that we are connecting in meaningful ways with communities across the country. We do this through an extensive program of regional touring, and through the Rekindling youth outreach program, which continues to inspire pride, kinship and strength in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through intensive dance residencies in regional, remote and urban communities.

We embark on our 26th international tour later this year and will return the 2016 production of *Nyapanyapa* back to the home of the artist who inspired its creation – Nyapanyapa Yunupingu of Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land – with thanks to the generous support of the Annamali Foundation. When we Return to Country we connect with culture, learn from our Elders and give back to the communities from where our stories originate.

Our core Government funding and box office income contributes to the creation of large-scale productions such as *Dark Emu*, but those funds do not extend to our work off the stage. For these powerful initiatives, we rely on the incredible support of generous individuals, forward-thinking corporations and inspirational trusts and foundations who back our vision.

Tonight's performance would not be possible without the support of the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts and the NSW Government through Create NSW. Thank you for your continued support of Bangarra as a Major Performing Arts company.

In the midst of creating *Dark Emu* we moved into a temporary new home at Barangaroo while the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct undergoes a major redevelopment. We would like to thank the NSW Government for their support and extend our thanks to International Towers Sydney for their incredible generosity, and for being so welcoming as we settle in.

Thanks to our fantastic major corporate partners – Broadcast Australia (a BAI Communications company), Boral, Lendlease and Qantas – who we thoroughly enjoy working with to deliver on our mission of creating inspiring experiences that change society.

Lastly, thank you to our Chair, Michael McDaniel and the Board for their drive, dedication and passion.

We hope you enjoy the story of *Dark Emu* tonight.

Stephen Page
Artistic Director Bangarra Dance Theatre

Philippe Magid
Executive Director Bangarra Dance Theatre





DARK EMU (2018)

Artistic Director

Stephen Page

Choreographers

Stephen Page, Daniel Riley, Yolande Brown, and the dancers of Bangarra Dance Theatre

Costume Designer

Jennifer Irwin

Set Designer

Jacob Nash

Composer

Steve Francis

Lighting Designer

Sian James-Holland

Dramaturg

Alana Valentine

Author of original book

Bruce Pascoe

Dance stories inspired by Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?*

Cultural Consultant

Yuin/Biripi Nation Woman, Lynne Thomas

Language Consultant

Yuin knowledge holder, Warren Foster

CREDITS & SPECIAL THANKS

Blowflies, Massacre, Thank You My Country © Copyright Alana Valentine 2018

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PRODUCTION

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COSTUME

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Kathy Trelease

Juliette Whitney

SYNOPSIS

"The stain is deep in our chalk and until we can accept what the explorers saw as part of the national story our debate of national origins, character and attributes is hobbled by ignorance."

-Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?*

Bruce Pascoe's award-winning book provides an historical account of the sophisticated farming, fishing and land management practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the continent prior to colonisation, exploding the hunter-gatherer myth which has been perpetuated to support the colonial lie of terra nullius. *Dark Emu* chronicles what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have always known, that their reciprocal and interconnected relationship with the environment is both sustainable and sacred.

Inspired by these stories of respect and connection, Bangarra's *Dark Emu* is a dramatic and evocative dance response to the assault on land, people and spirit. We celebrate this sharing of knowledge, the heritage of careful custodianship, and the beauty that Bruce Pascoe's vision urges us to leave to the children.

SEGMENTS

Dark Spirit of the Sky

Looking into the void

Ceremony of Seed

Working with the cycle of life

Forged by Fire

Fertilised by ash

Bogong Moth Harvest

Oiling and feasting

Crushed by Ignorance

The calamity of disregard

Escape Through Dust

A resilient lone spirit prevails, moving onwards

Bowls of Mourning

Tears mix with the earth in caps of clay

Trampled by Indifference

A scourge of hooves, of flies and disease

Rebirth Ritual

Carefully we are restored

Rocks of Knowledge

Weaving traps with stone and skill

Whales of Fortune

The pinnacle of reciprocity, trust is shared with the cetaceans

Smashed by Colonisation

A final, climactic massacre, an uncomprehending destruction

Resilience of Culture

The wonder and power that nurtures earth, sea and sky

Baiaime

The spirit of resilience and hope, singing up the land.

THANK YOU MY COUNTRY

I am the rock that holds the heat, after the sun
has set
Thank you, my country

I am the grain that takes the oil, after the pouring
is done
Thank you, my country

I am the stone soaking up water, long since
retrieved from the pool
Thank you, my country

I am the spirit of country, still giving all life to the
land
Thank you, my country

FROM STEPHEN PAGE

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
AND *DARK EMU* CHOREOGRAPHER

Bruce Pascoe's landmark book *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?* had a huge impact when it was published in 2014. It was a monumental work of scholarship, disproving the long-held and convenient myth that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were only nomadic hunter-gatherers before European colonisation. Presenting this research, and these stories, was a huge achievement, one that rightly captured the attention of Australia and audiences around the world.

Dark Emu resonated with me so deeply because it reflected the stories that we, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, have grown up with: stories of a symbiotic and reciprocal relationship with the land; sophisticated farming and fishing practices; stories of harmonious exchange and respect, of working in sympathy with the seasons. For some communities, these practices are ongoing and it's been within those communities as a young man that I was able to be part of the living breath of those practices, cultural customs and values. But in many more communities where people have been assimilated and where the land is suffering from the constant assaults of the past two centuries, these practices are only just beginning to be revived. It seems to me that *Dark Emu* reflects an important political and spiritual moment, a growing movement of reconnection to Country.

This relationship and respect for Country is at the very heart of why Bangarra exists, and has driven our artistic practice for the past 29 years. I met Bruce in 2017 while I was in rehearsals for *Bennelong* and invited him to the opening night performance. After he saw the production we half-jokingly spoke about what a dance response to *Dark Emu* would look like. While translating a non-fiction work to the language of contemporary dance is no easy feat, especially one as deep and as complex as Bruce's book, the challenge stayed with me. Alana Valentine, who I previously collaborated with on *Bennelong*, *Patyegarang* and *ID*, was fundamental in helping me uncover the theatrical richness of *Dark Emu*, as well as developing its cohesive structure as a dance work. We saw a rich hunting ground of ideas in the text, presided over by Baiame, the spirit emu.

In a series of interconnected dance worlds, *Dark Emu* explores the sacred and creation spaces of the cosmos; the relationship between sky and earth, between land and the seasons, and between animals, plants and people. *Dark Emu* explores the rituals and ceremonies that are in step with the pulse of the land, but also the devastating assaults on land and spirit that came with colonisation.



I'd like to thank Bruce Pascoe for his support throughout and for sharing this journey of re-awakening, bringing these stories back full circle into an embodied form. Steve Francis has been instrumental in helping shape the work through the strength and beauty of the soundscape. I decided to focus on Yuin Nation stories, songs and Language, and my thanks go to Yuin/ Biripi Nation Woman Lynne Thomas, for her generosity of spirit in sharing stories and songs in Djirringan and Dhurga language with myself and Steve. She also granted us permission to include an important recording of her father Guboo Ted Thomas, *Calling the Spirit*, within the production's soundtrack. I pay my respects to him and to all Elders past, present and future whose lands these stories are founded in.

To bring *Dark Emu* to the stage, I've worked with Bangarra dancers/choreographers Yolande Brown and Daniel Riley – both avid readers, both passionate about land management – who were moved by the book, and driven to find their own truth within it. It's been incredible to share the creation process with them, and see our very different approaches come to life through the dancers.

Thank you to Bangarra's dancers, whose stories, songlines and spirit are the lifeblood of the company, to Yuin knowledge holder Warren

Foster for sharing his Djirringanj traditional songs, and to *Dark Emu's* creative team: Composer Steve Francis, Set Designer Jacob Nash, Costume Designer Jennifer Irwin, Lighting Designer Sian James-Holland and Dramaturg Alana Valentine. Working with this very talented and diverse creative ensemble is a gift: every day in the studio brings something new and unexpected. Supporting the creation of *Dark Emu* from the sidelines was our Director of Production and Technical John Colvin, Rehearsal Director Anton and the Safe Dance Team, who looked after the dancers with such care and passion.

Finally, thank you to the Bangarra Board and wider team for their ongoing support, and to you, our audiences for your continued passion for what we do.

I hope you all enjoy *Dark Emu*.

Stephen Page
Artistic Director Bangarra Dance Theatre

THE CHOREOGRAPHY: YOLANDE BROWN

**AFTER ALMOST TWO DECADES WITH BANGARRA,
DARK EMU CHOREOGRAPHER AND FORMER DANCER
YOLANDE BROWN CONTEMPLATES HER CONNECTION TO LAND
AND PRIDE FOR HER MOB: “AS A 21ST CENTURY INDIGENOUS
WOMAN AND ARTIST I AM ALWAYS INSPIRED BY OUR INCREDIBLE
COUNTRY – THE LAND, HER STORIES, OUR HISTORIES.”**

What is Bangarra's *Dark Emu* about?

This work cultivates a physical and visceral dialogue in response to Uncle Bruce Pascoe's book and our deep Australian knowledge. Whether we embrace it or not, we are of this country – we are of the land, the water, the grass, the stars and the dark in between. As Australians awoken from a kind of collective amnesia, these are stories, ideas and practices we should all be able to access, learn from and respect.

How did you feel after reading Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*?

I thought it was funny that it took a book to justify what I'd always felt was our pre-colonial reality. From the stories my grandmother shared and from my work in communities, I already knew that the premise of our people being nomads was fallacy and that our sacred mythology could be better understood as wonderfully creative non-fiction. The detailed stories in the book filled me with a great sense of pride for my mob, who have been denigrated through the controlled extinguishment of our history.

How does Bangarra express these stories through physical movement?

Dance is a brilliant form for communicating the heart of complex ideas. Through movement, music and design, we're exploring how, for tens of thousands of years, First Australians propagated sustainable and harmonious societies and evolved ingenious

land management practices founded on the importance of reciprocity. Dance can transcend the human form. We're able to use our bodies to emulate the physicality of anything, from molecules to plants to raw emotions.

What was the process for developing the dance story?

Stephen, Daniel and I discussed the key areas within the book that jumped out for us. Our amazing dramaturg, Alana Valentine, worked closely with Stephen to mould these ideas into passages of storytelling that fostered flow of intent, emotional drive, and strength of story.

How much consideration is given to the set and costume design when choreographing?

The set, costumes and props have their own energetic pull, helping drive the story, as do the dancers. We support each other in the space and work very closely to marry the elements harmoniously.

Why do you think the *Dark Emu* story is one that needs to be told right now?

I feel like Australia is ready. There's a lot more discussion about Indigenous issues in the public domain, and that, in itself, shows there's a deeper level of understanding emerging. I think that one of the most important things people might take away from *Dark Emu* is a sense that we are a part of something greater. We're a thread within the bigger picture – of the universe.

THE CHOREOGRAPHY: DANIEL RILEY

FOR CHOREOGRAPHER AND BANGARRA DANCER
DANIEL RILEY, *DARK EMU* IS AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE
SPIRIT OF BRUCE PASCOE'S BOOK. IT REAWAKENS THE
"CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LAND AND SPIRIT, HUMAN
AND ANIMAL, ELEMENTS AND CULTURE" THROUGH THE
POWERFUL PHYSICALITY OF DANCE.

How does Bangarra's *Dark Emu* expand on Bruce Pascoe's non-fiction book?

What the book did was prove that Aboriginal Australians weren't hunter-gatherers. It proved there were farming practices, reciprocal relationships between Aboriginal Australians and animals that worked symbiotically to aid each other in farming and feeding. Our interpretation of *Dark Emu* aims to awaken the spirit of Bruce Pascoe's book by finding the underlying black spirit and ideas, and exploring the deep connections between Indigenous people and the land.

What motivated you during the creation of this work?

It is a privilege to be involved in this visual feast, and to create a physical, visceral work that we can share with our audiences around Australia. *Dark Emu* aims to reflect the deep spiritual connection Indigenous Australians have to this land and create the time and space for audiences to contemplate the connections that have been severed by European settlement and invasion. Translating these connections physically presents a really interesting challenge.

As both a choreographer and dancer in *Dark Emu*, what have you enjoyed most about the process of developing this work?

Translating a book like *Dark Emu* is a great challenge. I've enjoyed exploring ways of reawakening these cultural practices physically through dance and movement and the challenge of telling a story, smartly and cleverly, and with respect to the stories, traditions, and history. I've wrestled with the difficulties of

choreographing a work that doesn't have any formal characters, and discovered new ways to use the massed ensembles to convey the spirit of the elements and explore their underlying importance, as opposed to being the elements. Working with Stephen is always very collaborative. He is so good at directing and facilitating the story, and allowing that to filter through our bodies as dancers.

How does the music capture the essence of the story?

The *Dark Emu* score is cathartic. When you listen to the music you get the sense of something bigger than us, which is creation. And even bigger than creation is the Dark Emu In The Sky. It's the Dark Emu who is the creator.

How do you hope people respond to *Dark Emu*?

Dark Emu is an immersive experience for the dancers and the audience. *Dark Emu* draws the audience into the narrative and impels them to feel a real connection to the story. We are aiming to open their eyes and minds to ideas about respectful land and water management and connection to creation. I hope this work opens a conversation. Bangarra is very good at opening conversations to political, social, current, and historical stories. We're told every day that the world is falling apart around us, but maybe if we just gripped onto something that was there before all of this, it would ground us a little. *Dark Emu* reminds us to take a breath and cling to our piece of land; not just for yourself, but for your family, and for your people. I think that's important.

THE COSTUMES

JENNIFER IRWIN HAS BEEN CREATING COSTUMES FOR BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE SINCE THE COMPANY'S VERY BEGINNING, AND HAS BEEN COLLABORATING WITH STEPHEN PAGE EVEN LONGER. THE RESULT OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY PARTNERSHIP IS AN ENTIRELY UNIQUE COSTUME AESTHETIC: SCULPTURAL, RICHLY TEXTURED, WITH A STRONG CONNECTION TO THE LAND.

Jennifer describes Bangarra's costumes as "evolving art pieces". With every performance, ochre – the earthy pigment dancers paint their bodies with – inevitably rubs off on the costumes, the layers building over the course of the season. "I love the fact that how a costume starts out at the beginning is often completely different at the end," says Jennifer, "but you still have the bones of the original." Incredible care goes into each piece – they're painstakingly handmade and often hand-painted – but Jennifer has been known to slash a skirt in half if it inhibits movement. "You can't be precious," she says. "The number one priority is that the dancers have to dance."

Dark Emu's costumes are driven by the work's exploration of earth and sky, with a strong emphasis on woven elements. Unlike 2017's *Beneelong*, there are no hero roles or hero costumes – the power comes from massed ensembles. Jennifer is primarily inspired by fabric. "It was about finding the essence of the feeling of land, or kangaroo grass, or water," she says. "It was about finding a great piece of fabric that can represent a moth."

In *Dark Emu*, kangaroo grass is conjured with shredded silk linen. Fire is painted on the inside of loosely crocheted skirts, bleeding out from under the hems. Tissue-thin fabrics are intricately cut and layered upon each other to create optical illusions, and Jennifer plundered her local fish market for fishing net. While audiences may not see every detail, they experience its accumulated power. Every fibre, every piece of moss, every leaf, every feather contributes to Bangarra's rich visual universe.

Although Jennifer has been creating costumes for more than 35 years, designing for most of Australia's major performing arts companies, she still finds the process all-consuming. "When I'm working on a production, I don't stop until it's done – I wake up thinking about it, I go to bed thinking about it. I'm designing in my head when I'm walking the dog. Strangely, I walk a lot where Bangarra began, in the old police boys club across the road from Redfern Park. There's a big mural of Djakapurra Munyarryun painted on the side of the building, and its incredible to think that's where this all started."



THE SETS

LIKE BANGARRA'S DANCERS, BANGARRA'S CREATIVE TEAM IS A TIGHT-KNIT ENSEMBLE. HERE, HEAD OF DESIGN JACOB NASH EXPLORES COLLABORATION, INSPIRATION, AND HOW BANGARRA CREATES ITS RICH VISUAL UNIVERSE.

***Dark Emu* is your sixth collaboration with Stephen Page for Bangarra. What does that collaboration look like in practice?**

The creative process always begins with discovery, because Stephen doesn't have the answers then, and I don't either. There are always things he'll repeat in conversations, things that emerge as important, and it's a case of interpreting that in the designs. You try and turn it into a visual sentence, into a visual world, but you never want to land on something too early. You need to know all the ingredients, throw them up in the air, and see what sticks.

What are the driving visual ideas behind *Dark Emu*?

We had a conversation about what it would look like if the sky was looking at the earth, and the earth reflected the sky. We imagined if we all respected the sky around us, the atmosphere, space, the stars, the moons, and what that would look like as a homage to the land and its people. The next question was how we'd create that world, and how people would move through it.

How important is colour in Bangarra's works?

Colour is important, but Bangarra really focuses on negative space through black as well: anything you put on stage becomes quite focused. We go for strong, emblematic images. When we do use colour, it comes from a place of knowing; for instance we're choosing red because it's the colour of ochre found in the earth.

Where do you seek inspiration?

I photograph a lot, and I try to connect with a place. I like to stand on the Country where a story comes from, and get a grounded emotional response within my own body. From there, you open your eyes, and start looking at what's around you, what's in an environment, and how it changes through the day. Inspiration may come from the tonal qualities of light hitting a surface, and you might explode that out to the most contemporary reference possible.

Are there any motifs that occur regularly in your work, especially your work for Bangarra?

You don't see a lot of straight lines. You don't see a lot of straight lines in the dancers' movements either, and if you do, it's a deliberate choreographic design based on the story. I think we're surrounded by things that don't let us dream, visually. I try to find the magic in the unstructured; give people the ability to imagine and breathe, to see things in a way they don't usually.

Is there anything that might surprise people about Bangarra's designs, especially people who haven't experienced the company before?

We're called Bangarra Dance Theatre because we combine visual art, design, sculpture, music and dance: we're always trying to break through the Western norm of what design is. We're playing within that theatrical box, but we're always trying to break the rules, or reinterpret them so we re-own the world we're creating.



THE MUSIC

BANGARRA'S MUSIC IS WHOLLY UNIQUE. SCORES ARE CONTEMPORARY, BUT DEEPLY CONNECTED TO THE LAND. THE ORGANIC AND THE SYNTHESISED EFFORTLESSLY COALESCE. AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, DANCERS MOONLIGHT AS SINGERS. "I DON'T ANALYSE WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO," SAYS COMPOSER STEVE FRANCIS. "I JUST TRY AND FIND A JUMPING-OFF POINT AND LET THE MUSIC GUIDE ME."

How do you begin working on a score for Bangarra?

It all starts with the story and also, quite often, Stephen Page will have some wonderful visual idea. It's very rare that he dictates the feel of a piece - he's more interested in the intent and the story, and lets me interpret how that should sound. With every piece I try and find the 'key', and by key I don't mean whether the music is in D minor for example, but the key that unlocks the piece. It might be a traditional element, or it might be a sound, a melody or a even a single word. As an example, in "Bogong Moth Harvest", I started with some sounds of butterflies and moths I'd previously recorded. In the end, I manipulated the wing flaps. As a result they became less literal and more of a texture within the score. How the flaps led to a conversation between some pizzicato strings, I'm not sure, but it was the definitely the rhythm and timbre of the sound that was my kick-off point for the piece.

How much of the *Dark Emu* score is from live or organic sources, and how much is electronic?

There are atmospheric elements: wind, rain, moths, flies, cattle. And there are also recordings of live instruments such as cello,

percussion, guitars, piano and a couple of seventies synths. The vocals are obviously also recordings. As for the other elements, I wouldn't quite describe them as electronic. Even though they are drawn from instruments on the computer, they are often based off real instruments that have been sampled and then reworked to sound nothing like the original recordings. I have a number of guitar effect pedals that I run unconventional sounds through to completely re-voice them. On this production I've also used some great new string libraries that were recorded at Air Studios in London. To be clear though, even with all these computer tools, I still have to write the score and play in every note you hear. When the deadlines are looming I sometimes wish the computer could do it for me.

Can you explain how cultural consultants contribute to Bangarra's scores?

A lot of pieces that we've taken from the book for Bangarra's production of *Dark Emu* belong to the language of the Yuin region. For Stephen it's always important to show respect and to include the cultural elements from the areas that relate to the story we are telling. We have been blessed to collaborate with both Lynne Thomas



and Warren Foster on this production. Warren came and sang a “Whale” song, a “Baiame” song as well as vocals and language for “Forged by Fire” and the “Rocks of Knowledge”. Lynne is contributing her voice and some language as well as being our cultural consultant. She also brought us a recording of her father, Guboo Ted Thomas, singing a song, which is about the ancestors moving through the land. The gift of having this song incorporated into the score is very special. Another special guest is *Dark Emu*’s author Bruce Pascoe reciting some of his own words and a poem by Alana. As always the cultural elements are hugely important – without them, Bangarra’s scores would just be music.

Bangarra’s dancers often sing on scores. Tell us a little bit more about that process, and how important it is to the finished work.

We’re really lucky to have that diversity of talent in the company. In the opening section, “Dark Spirit of the Sky”, Beau Dean Riley Smith sings a melody. Choreographer (and former dancer) Yolande Brown has leant her voice to all the choral sections in “Bowls of Mourning”. Similar to last year’s *Bennelong*, I’ve worked with Dramaturg Alana Valentine to incorporate text into the score. In the section “Crushed by

Ignorance” you will hear Tara Gower perform a poem that Alana wrote, and “Smashed by Colonisation” features Waangenga Blanco, Daniel Riley and Rikki Mason performing another poem of hers. These are combined with the singing of Elma Kris, Jasmin Sheppard and Tara Gower. Similarly to the cultural elements I think having the cast perform on the score they dance to, creates a connection that transcends the music. As I did last year, I have referenced a melody and also some lyrics from an earlier score by the late David Page. It feels appropriate that his music lives on in this new score that owes so much to him.

What do you listen to when you’re not working?

I listen to FBI Radio in the car: it’s my favourite radio station because they play a lot of local bands. There’s a couple of Icelandic composers I really love: Olafur Arnalds, who writes very moving scores as well as solo work, and Jóhann Jóhannsson, who created beautiful, beautiful work: on the face of it very simple, but undercut with wonderful complexity and detail. I suspect they both have had an influence on *Dark Emu*, not by design, but mostly because I just love the worlds they create with music.



THE MUSIC

DARK EMU MUSIC CREDITS:

All music composed and performed by Steve Francis except:

Dark Spirit of the Sky

Vocal: Beau Dean Riley Smith

Forged by Fire

Words and Voice: Warren Foster

Bogong Moth Harvest

Cello: Peter Hollo

Song and Vocal "Guboo" Ted Thomas

Crushed by Ignorance

Words: Alana Valentine

Voice: Tara Gower

Bowls of Mourning

Vocals: Yolande Brown

Words and Melody: David Page

Words and Voice: Lynne Thomas

Trampled by Indifference

Words and Voice: Bruce Pascoe

Rebirth Ritual

Words and Voice: Bruce Pascoe

Rocks of Knowledge

Cello: Peter Hollo

Words and Voice: Warren Foster

Whales of Fortune

Song, Words and Vocal: Warren Foster

Smashed by Colonisation

Words: Alana Valentine

Voices: Waangenga Blanco, Daniel Riley, Rikki Mason

Voices: Yolande Brown, Elma Kris

Resilience of Culture

Cello: Peter Hollo

Baiame

Song and Vocal: Warren Foster

Vocal: Beau Dean Riley Smith

Words and Voice: Lynne Thomas

Words: Alana Valentine

Voice: Bruce Pascoe



BORAL & BANGARRA

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Boral has proudly partnered with Bangarra
for more than 15 years.



THE BOOK

BRUCE PASCOE'S *DARK EMU* WAS PUBLISHED IN 2014, A LANDMARK BOOK ILLUMINATING THE SOPHISTICATED FOOD PRODUCTION AND LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES USED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE BEFORE COLONISATION. IT WENT ON TO WIN THE NSW PREMIER'S BOOK OF THE YEAR IN 2016, AND BRUCE WAS AWARDED THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL'S AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT TO LITERATURE IN 2018. HERE, HE TALKS ABOUT THE KEY THEMES THAT BANGARRA HAVE INTERPRETED FOR THEIR DANCE WORK OF THE SAME NAME.

What does the term 'Dark Emu' refer to?

The title refers to the shape of the *Dark Emu* in the night sky, which represents Baiame, one of the spirit creator figures of Aboriginal Australia. The emu is also a grain feeding bird, and plains bird, so the reference is to the creator spirit and to Aboriginal food production.

One of the key concepts explored by Bangarra in our interpretation of *Dark Emu* is kangaroo grass and its role in communities. Why is it such an important plant?

Kangaroo grass is just one of 130 grasses in Australia, but it is very important because a form of kangaroo grass appears in most parts of the country. It's highly nutritious so it's a very important component of the Aboriginal economy, and the shape of the seed head is like a kangaroo's foot, so it has an emblematic importance as well.

A key section in the work looks at the bogong moth: could you explain its significance for us?

People went to the bogong moth festival from all over the South East corner of Australia, from as far afield as Melbourne to Lakes Entrance to Mallacoota, Eden, Bega, Albury-Wodonga: all of those places. They ate bogong moth, obviously: it's so rich in oils that Europeans who saw the people coming down from the mountain after

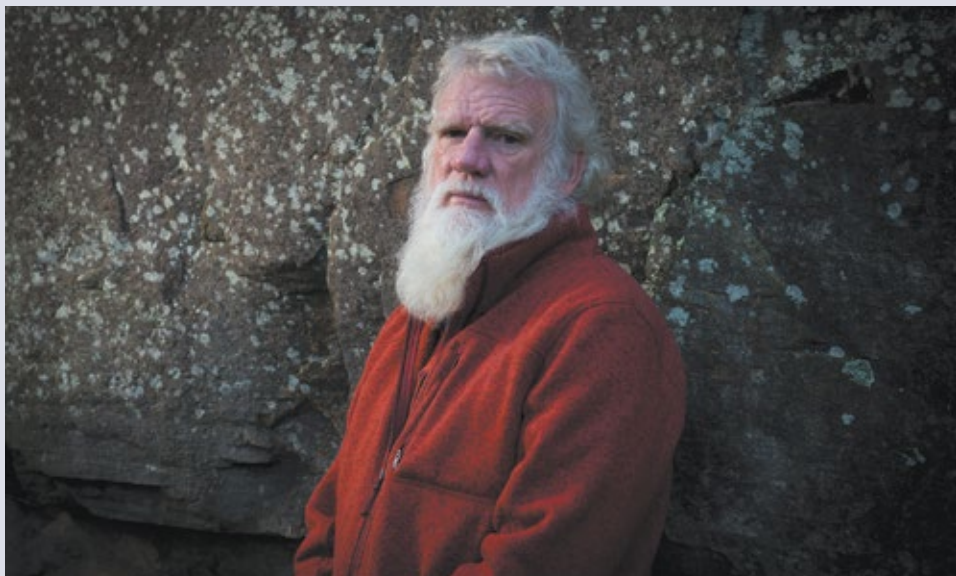
that festival said that their bodies glistened with the fat from the moth exuding from their skin. They were very strong and tall people, and Europeans were very impressed by their physical wellbeing.

Another key section looks at the impact of the introduction of the blowfly. Can you tell us a little bit about the differences between the giant, noisome flies so common in Australia today, and the native flies that came before them?

The blowfly was introduced unintentionally with the cattle. It was an insect which, in its own environment, was not a pest, but here quickly became one. It's really representative of a change in the environment. It's much the same with bees. Native bees are stingless and produce beautiful honey, but not in the same volume as the European honey bee. The European honey bee had a huge impact on the environment, because it's taken over the nesting holes of Indigenous bees, as well as the nesting holes of some birds.

The introduction of cattle is something Bangarra unpacks in the section 'Trampled by Indifference'. What was the impact of these hard-hooved animals on Australia's land?

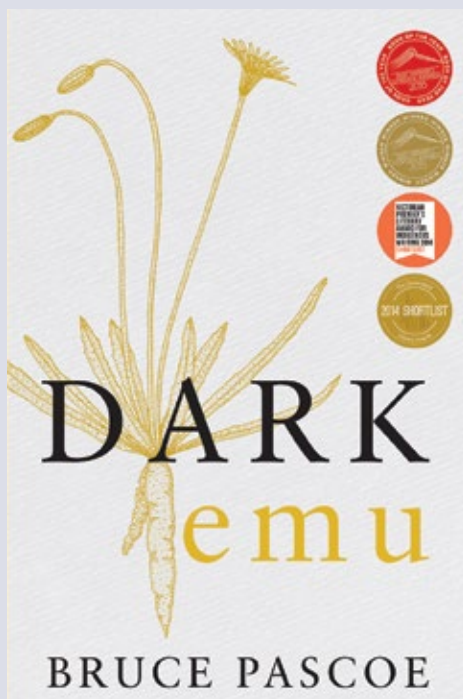
When the British first arrived in Australia they



noted how light the soils were and how the tilth of the soil was very deep: you could run your fingers through the soil. Those who reported on it also noted that within only a few months of sheep being introduced, the soil became hard, and the water ran off the land and created floods, which was an experience that the Aboriginal people hadn't had before.

Have you had any positive stories from farmers around Australia who've read your book, and are interesting in incorporating traditional practices to get the best out of the land?

There are a number of people working in this area. There seems to be a different mood in the country now to acknowledge and respect Aboriginal culture, and a greater movement to respect the earth itself. There are two books of note here: Bill Gammage's *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, and Charles Massy's *The Call of the Reed Warbler*. What has impressed me is the huge numbers of young people who are interested in Australian Aboriginal foods and care of the earth. Permaculture groups, land care groups, and farmer's associations have been very active in taking up some of these ideas. We're finding Indigenous groups and land care groups across the globe are realising that we can't continue to abuse the earth to the extent that we have and that we have to undertake a program of repair.



THE LIGHTING

LIGHTING DESIGNER SIAN JAMES-HOLLAND DISCUSSES THE ART OF SCULPTING AND PAINTING WITH LIGHT, TO CONVEY THE BEAUTY AND EMOTION OF *DARK EMU*.

What was your process for designing lighting for *Dark Emu*?

The journey of the lighting design began by turning to the land for inspiration and direction. Bruce Pascoe's book passionately puts forward the argument that before colonial settlement the land was being manipulated and farmed, complex irrigation and architectural structures were being built, river courses were altered and dams were constructed – all through the traditional owners' understanding and working with the land.

What influenced your choice and use of colour?

My lighting design draws on the colours of the Australian landscape, which holds a diverse and beautiful collection of subtle and unique colours that are instantly recognisable. Whether it is the vast and dramatic sunsets over our beaches, the break of day enhancing the richness of the deep red earth or the spontaneity of changing colours of reflected water from a riverbed – the light of the land remains unchanged throughout the centuries and creates such beauty. It's from this study that I attempted to capture the truly unique look of the Australian landscape and find the visual heart of *Dark Emu*.

When designing lighting for Bangarra, how do you know when you've got it right?

Often the sense of completion is purely intuitive. Lighting design follows many principles of painting on canvas. One of the most captivating things about Bangarra performances is the collaborative effort onstage. When I can look at the stage with the design, costumes and dancers flowing as one, I can instinctively feel the lighting design seamlessly combines with

all performance elements and supports the emotion conveyed by the dancers and the expression of the choreographer.

How did you feel after reading Bruce Pascoe's book, *Dark Emu*?

As I sat down to read Bruce Pascoe's passionately written words, I became consumed by his work. *Dark Emu* was an absolute page-turner. Everything that I was reading was completely contrary to what I had previously been taught. I did further reading and became consumed by the research.

What challenges did you face during this project?

Ensuring that as a non-Indigenous person and artist, I honour the culture and tradition of the ancient peoples of this land without leaving my own mark on the work. To support and assist the cultural integrity of the work, my approach to the collaboration was listening rather than speaking. Stephen said something I found to be quite profound during the initial meetings for the project, "Indigenous people look at the darkness between the stars, while Europeans look only at the stars". I knew early on that I had, and still have, much to learn of Indigenous history, of this land, and the culture of Aboriginal peoples. I had to look past the stars to see the answers.

What are your favourite aspects of Bangarra's work?

I love the detail in the choreography and the passion in every Bangarra performance. The energy of the dancers and creatives involved in every production bounces right off the stage.



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NATHAN BURROWS



THE STORY

“A DRAMATURG IS PART CHISEL, PART WATER-DIVINER”, SAYS ALANA VALENTINE. THE AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT TALKS ABOUT HER ROLE IN TRANSLATING BRUCE PASCOE’S BOOK TO THE DANCE STAGE.

When did you first read *Dark Emu*, and what impact did it have on you?

Dark Emu is a formidable achievement of scholarship and it is an astonishing act of generosity for Bruce to share this knowledge and understanding with Australia and the world. I read the book soon after it was published in 2014 and esteem it as one of the seminal texts of Australian history. When I met Bruce and told him how in awe I was of his achievement he said, ‘It’s just the old stories you know and they were always there and that’s the thing that breaks my heart.’

How closely have you engaged with the text in your work for this production?

I’ve read the work innumerable times and it is the heartbeat of every conversation Stephen and I have had. If I can put it this way, *Dark Emu* has been like the deep well from which we have drawn words and ideas and understanding. We have given them a new flow and a new form but it is Bruce’s insights and cultural gifts that speak in the music and through the dancers.

Can you describe how you collaborate with Stephen Page on works like *Bennelong* and *Dark Emu*?

A dramaturg is part chisel, part water-diviner, it’s like being a useful tool that the primary artist can use to chip away down to the deepest source of their inspiration, like a feather that quivers when you are close to truth and spirit and joy and pain. I collaborate with Stephen by listening to his profound motivation for making the work and then reminding him of that through the process and resourcing him with notes from the book or found images or lines of poetry or news or whatever might complement and support his artistic vision. The way Stephen works is also

to combine a dazzling array of elements into a cohesive work of dramatic beauty and the structural experience of a playwright can be useful to draw on in that process.

Dance is largely a movement-based vocabulary: how important are words and language in Bangarra’s works, particularly those you’ve contributed to?

The elements that all artists are working with are unnameable emotions and innovative ideas – a writer tries to corral those things in words, and a choreographer in movement – but in essence both have to structure those emotions and ideas so that they build and gain power over the time of the work, and struggle to express ideas in ways that are subtle and complex. In both *Bennelong* and *Dark Emu* the language and English words are an interpretive element of the music, a flash of cognition that thread through the work like light or colour and add to the power of the storytelling.

What qualities do you love about Bangarra’s dancers?

I love the abundance of their generosity in using their bodies and their artistry and their discipline and their cultural knowledge and their deep, deep connection to spirit to tell stories to the Bangarra audiences. I love their playfulness and their resilience and I adore how eager and open and flat-out tight they are with everyone who works with the company. I love the complexity of the personalities – they are a stylish, hipster, deep and earnest, frivolous, radical cocktail of individuals. But most of all I love that they are so profoundly proud of their identity and so reverent about the sacred responsibilities they carry in their bodies and hearts.



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



STEPHEN PAGE

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

Stephen is a descendant of the Nunukul people and the Munaljali clan of the Yugambah Nation from South East Queensland. In 1991, Stephen was appointed Artistic Director of Bangarra and has developed a signature body of works that have become milestones in Australian performing arts.

Stephen continues to reinvent Indigenous storytelling within Bangarra and through collaborations with other performing arts companies, notably directing the Indigenous sections for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies and creating a new dance work for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

In 2017, Stephen's monumental work *Bennelong* became the most successful production in the history of Bangarra. In 2016, he received both the 2016 NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award and JC Williamson Award, and he premiered *Nyapanyapa*, his 23rd work for Bangarra, as part of the *OUR land people stories* triple bill.

In 2015, Stephen curated Bangarra's new work *lore*, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Creative Arts by the University of Technology Sydney. To celebrate Bangarra's 25th anniversary in 2014, Stephen choreographed *Patyegarang*.

Stephen directed the chapter *Sand* in the feature film *The Turning* (2013) and was Artistic Associate for Sydney Theatre Company's production of *The Secret River* as part of Sydney Festival in 2013. He also choreographed the feature films *Bran Nue Dae* (2009) and *The Sapphires* (2011). His first full-length film *SPEAR* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival before screening at various arts festivals around Australia in early 2016.

In 2017, Stephen was honoured with the Australia Council Dance Award for significant contributions to the cultural and artistic fabric of the nation, and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO).

DARK EMU



DANIEL RILEY

CHOREOGRAPHER / DANCER

Daniel is an Indigenous man who traces his heritage back through the Wiradjuri nation of Central New South Wales.

Since graduating from Queensland University of Technology in 2006, Daniel has danced for Leigh Warren & Dancers, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre UK and New Movement Collective UK. He has been nominated for Best Male Dancer at the Australian Dance Awards (2010, 2013) and for Deadly Dancer of The Year at The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deadly Awards (2010, 2012 & 2013). Daniel's film credits include *Dan Sultan: Under Your Skin* and Stephen Page's *SPEAR*, where he made his film debut as well as working as Director's Attachment.

His choreographic credits include QL2 Youth Dance Company (2013), Queensland University of Technology (2013), Third Row Dance Company UK (2014), Louisville Ballet USA (2015) and Sydney Dance Company (2015). *Dark Emu* is Daniel's fourth work for Bangarra, following *Miyagan* (2016), *Scar* as part of *Blak* (2013), and *Riley* (2010).



YOLANDE BROWN

CHOREOGRAPHER

Yolande is a descendant of the Bidjara Clan of the Kunja Nation, Central Queensland, with French and Celtic ancestry. A Bangarra dancer from 1999 to 2015, Yolande is now a choreographer for the company. She is also instrumental in delivering the company's Winhanga-rra Teachers' Workshops and developing the new Knowledge Ground digital platform, which will be launched this year.

Yolande received the Australian Student Prize, completed a C.Mus.A (AMEB) in piano performance and a BA (Dance) at the Queensland University of Technology, where she has guest lectured and choreographed and received the Outstanding Alumni Award for the Creative Industries (2005).

Yolande has performed extensively nationally, regionally and internationally. Her highlights include dancing On Country and forging friendships with the Pitjantjatjara and Yirrkala people, performing in *Rites* (a collaboration with The Australian Ballet - New York and Paris) contributing her interpretations to the role of Lady Jane Franklin in *Mathinna*, and performing in Stephen Page's 2016 film, *SPEAR*.

Yolande has contributed vocals and keys to many Bangarra productions over the years and has recently been working with Radical Son as a vocalist. In 2012, Yolande associate directed and choreographed *I Am Eora* for Sydney Festival. In 2013, she created Imprint for *Dance Clan 3*, as part of Corroboree Sydney. In 2010, Yolande was honoured to receive the Deadly Award for Best Dancer.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



JENNIFER IRWIN

COSTUME DESIGNER

Jennifer's career spans 38 years constructing and designing costumes for drama, opera, film, dance and ballet. She designs regularly for all major Australian companies and has designed for some of the largest scale spectacular productions ever staged in Australia, including the Sydney 2000 Olympic Opening Ceremony, co-designed all the costumes for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Closing Ceremony, The Official Commemorative Ceremony marking the Centenary of Australian Federation, and recently the "Totem" segment of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

She has worked closely with Stephen Page, designing for Bangarra Dance Theatre since its inception. Costume commissions include multiple shows for Sydney Theatre Co, Sydney Dance Company, The Australian Ballet, Belvoir, WA Ballet, Opera WA, Qld Opera, Singapore Dance Theatre, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Universal Ballet of Korea, Melbourne Theatre Co, Joffrey Ballet and Opera Australia.

Jennifer designed the International box office phenomenon *Dirty Dancing, the musical*, still playing worldwide since 2004. She was nominated Best Costume Design AACTA awards for *SPEAR* the feature film and was awarded Service to Dance at the 2017 Australian Dance Awards; a Theatre Board Grant to Study at La Scala Opera Milan, Italy, and a Centenary Medal for Service to Community and the Arts. She has been recognised for her contribution to design with multiple Helpmann, Green Room and Australian production design nominations and awards.



JACOB NASH

SET DESIGNER

Jacob is a Murri man who grew up in Brisbane. He graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) Design Course in 2005. In 2010, he designed the set for *earth & sky* for Bangarra and received a Green Room Award for Best Design in Dance. He was appointed Artist-in-Residence at Bangarra the following year and is now Head of Design.

Jacob received a Green Room Award nomination for his unique set design for Bangarra's season of *Belong* (2011) and has designed sets for each of Bangarra's annual productions since, including *Bennelong*, *Patyegarang*, *lore*, *OUR land* *people stories*, *Terrain*, *Blak*, *Dance Clan 3*, and *Warumuk - in the dark night* for the company's collaboration with The Australian Ballet.

His other theatre credits include *The Lonesome West*, *Ruben Guthrie* and *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* (BSharp); *Yibiyung and Ruben Guthrie* (Belvoir St Theatre); *Macbeth* (Bell Shakespeare); *The Removalists*, *Tusk Tusk/ Like a Fishbone* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Rainbow's End* (Parramatta Riverside Theatre); *Into: Belonging* (Sydney Festival/Parramatta Riverside Theatre). In 2006, he wrote and directed *Blood Lines*, a five-minute short film.

Jacob was the specialist production designer and creature designer on *Cleverman* season one and production designer and creature designer for season two. He was the production designer for Stephen Page's 2015 film *SPEAR*; has been the Design Director for Bangarra's past five Vivid Sydney video installations; and creates the beautiful illustrations that adorn Bangarra merchandise.

DARK EMU



STEVE FRANCIS

COMPOSER

Steve is a composer and sound designer originally from Adelaide. An opportunity to produce and mix David Page's work on *Alchemy* for The Australian Ballet in 1997 led to an ongoing collaboration with Bangarra. The *Dark Emu* score is his 13th for Bangarra.

As composer and sound designer, Steve has worked with Sydney's premier theatre companies, including Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Belvoir and Griffin. He has composed for a number of films, including *The Turning*, the multi award-winning *dik*, Leah Purcell's *She Say*, the Dendy Award-winning film *Black Talk*, Berlin Festival winner *Djarn Djarns*, the MMF Award-winning documentary *Mr Patterns*, the AFI Award-winning short film *Box* and the documentaries *How the light Gets in*, *Macumba* and *Picture the Women*.

For television, Steve has scored for the Channel Nine series *Cops LAC*, the mini-series *Dangerous for Fox* and the internationally released series *Double Trouble*. With David Page, Steve also composed and produced music for the Sydney Olympic and Rugby World Cup opening ceremonies.

As well as two nominations for sound design, Steve has won two Helpmann Awards for Best Original Score for two Bangarra productions (*Walkabout*, 2002 and *Belong*, 2011 with David Page). He has also won two Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Music and Sound Design.



SIAN JAMES-HOLLAND

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Sian is an Australian based lighting designer, collaborating on productions both nationally and overseas.

Over many years, Sian has created work for a variety high-profile companies and projects such as Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir St Theatre, The Banff Centre Canada, Theatre of Image, Circus Oz, De Quincey Co. and the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale in collaboration with Aileen Sage Architects.

With an educational background in lighting for live performance, Sian has studied at The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, The Banff Centre, and is currently completing a Masters of Architectural Science (illumination) at The University of Sydney.

She has received award nominations for Best Lighting Design of an Independent Production at Sydney Theatre Awards for *Inner Voices*, Don't Look Away/Redline Productions (2016); Best Lighting design for Stage at the Australian Production Designers Guild for *The Rivers of China*, Theatreworks (2015) and Best lighting design of an independent production at Sydney Theatre Awards for *Of Mice and Men*, *Sport for Jove* (2015); and Best Lighting Design of a Mainstream Production at Sydney Theatre Awards for *Henry V*, The Bell Shakespeare Company (2014).

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



ALANA VALENTINE

DRAMATURG

Alana Valentine previously worked as dramaturg with Bangarra on *Bennelong* (2017), *Patyegarang* (2014), and *ID* from *Belong* (2011).

In 2017, Alana's *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, co-written with Ursula Yovich, was nominated in the Sydney Theatre Awards for Best New Australian work and Best Original score, and *Ladies Day* was nominated for the Nick Enright Prize for Drama NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Alana is the recipient of two Tasmanian Theatre Awards 2017 for *The Tree Widows*, and was also nominated for an Errol for Best Director. Last year, Venus Theatre Company (USA) world premiered *The Ravens*, which also won the BBC International Radio writing Award in 2013 and the NLA published *Dear Lindy*.

This year, Belvoir presented *The Sugar House*, Sport For Jove will present *Ear to the Edge of Time*, Merrigong Theatre Company will tour *Letters to Lindy* nationally, and a jazz song cycle *Flight Memory*, written with composer Sandra France, will be presented at The Street Theatre in Canberra. Alana is the co-recipient of a writing fellowship at the Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney. In 2013, she won three AWGIE Awards, including the Major AWGIE, the inaugural David Williamson Prize and the Youth and Community Theatre AWGIE for *Grounded*.

Alana has collaborated with many of Australia's most highly regarded First Nations artists and is known for her rigorous use of research, evident in her 2010 play *Head Full of Love* and 2007's *Parramatta Girls* at Belvoir.



BRUCE PASCOE

AUTHOR OF *DARK EMU*

Bruce Pascoe was born in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond and is of Bunurong, Yuin and Tasmanian heritage. He is an award-winning Australian writer, editor and anthologist.

He is a member of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative of southern Victoria, has been the director of the Australian Studies Project for the Commonwealth Schools Commission and is a Board member of First Languages Australia.

Bruce edited the *Australian Short Stories* magazine from 1982 to 1998 and is the winner of a number of awards for his writing, including the Australian Literature Award (*Shark*) in 1999, Radio National Short Story 1998, FAW Short Story in 2010, and the Prime Minister's Award for Literature (*Young Adult*) in 2013. His books include *Night Animals*, *Fox*, *Shark*, *Nightjar*, *Ocean*, *Bloke*, *Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with Your Country*, *Fog a Dox* and *Dark Emu*, *Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?*

Dark Emu was published in 2014 and was shortlisted in the Victorian and Queensland Literature awards and won the NSW Premier's book of the Year in 2016. Bruce was awarded the Australia Council's Award for Lifetime Achievement to Literature in 2018.

Bruce has had a varied career as a teacher, farmer, fisherman, barman, fencing contractor, lecturer, Aboriginal language researcher, archaeological site worker and editor.



ANTON

REHEARSAL DIRECTOR

Anton has been teaching at Bangarra since 2006 and joined as Rehearsal Director in 2015. He brings 21 years professional experience as a director, choreographer, producer, performer, movement director and dance teacher. Anton's current arts practice sees him annually dedicated to ongoing creative projects allowing him to extend and develop as a professional artist.

His teaching credits include Sydney Dance Company, The Australian Ballet, Legs on the Wall, T ASDANCE, Expressions Dance Company, Dance North, Australian Dance Theatre, Australian Opera, Sydney Theatre Company and Beijing Modern Dance LTDX, Dream Dance Company, Tanya Pearsons, Brent St, Ev and Bow, Studio Tibor, AC Arts South Australia, Australian Centre of Physical Education, NAISDA, Western Australian Academy of Performance Arts, Queensland University of Technology and QL2.

Over the last three years, Anton has extended Bangarra's Safe Dance program to include new warm up and warm down protocols, created new dance training and coaching opportunities through the Russell Page Graduate Program, and encouraged professional development for dancers through leadership and teaching opportunities.

Anton has assisted with 11 Bangarra works, including main stage seasons of *Bennelong* (2017), *OUR land people stories* (2016), and *lore* (2015), regional tours of *OUR land people stories* (2018), *Terrain* (2016/2017), *Kinship* (2015) and *Ochres* (2015). He has also assisted with international tours to Copenhagen, Berlin, Bonn, Istanbul, Paris and New York.

DANCER BIOGRAPHIES



**ELMA
KRIS**

Elma was raised on Thursday Island (Waiben) and her clan is from the North Western and Central Islands of the Torres Strait. Elma has had a rich and rewarding career as a dancer, choreographer, actor and teacher. She studied at NAISDA and joined Bangarra in 1999.

Her many choreographic credits include *Bupau Ipikazil* and *Bupau Mabigal* (NAISDA, 1994) *Malu* (Bibir dance company, 1998), the Torres Strait Island element of the Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony (2000), *Emeret Lu* (Bangarra, True Stories, 2007) and *About* (Bangarra, Belong, 2011). Elma's film credits include *Oscar and Lucinda*, *Reef Dreaming*, *Farscape* and *SPEAR*.

In 2007, Elma won a Deadly Award for Dancer of the Year and in 2017 she was Nominated for a Helpmann Award for Best Female Dancer for her title role in Stephen Page's *Nyapanyapa*, part of Bangarra's triple bill *OUR land people stories* (2016).

In 2015, she was one of five artists who took part in *Unsettled*, an exhibition at the National Museum of Australia.



**WAANGENGA
BLANCO**

Waangenga is a descendant of the Mer Island people and of the Pajinka Wik, Cape York. After studying at NAISDA, Waangenga was invited to join Bangarra in 2005. His career highlights include the company's return to Meriam Mer in the Torres Strait Islands to perform *Emeret Lu* by the ocean and also dancing on the football field in Yirrkala for the community.

In 2015, he made his choreographic debut with *I.B.I.S* as part of the *lore* program. He won an Australian Dance Award and Green Room Award for his performance in 2014's *Patyegarang* and was nominated for a Helpmann Award and Greenroom Award for Male Dancer of the Year in 2012.

Waangenga appeared in films *Bran Nue Dae* (2009), *The Turning* (2013), *Dive*, Stephen Page's *SPEAR* (2016), and Dan Sultan's music video for "*Under Your Skin*".

He aims to inspire through his deep love and connection to Country and culture, and draws strength from his family and curiosity to learn from our rich tapestry of stories.



**TARA
GOWER**

Tara is a Yawuru woman from Broome with Aboriginal, Filipino, Irish and Spanish ancestry. Tara grew up on Yawuru country at Morrell Park community, which gave her the strength to pursue her dreams and join Bangarra in 2006.

Career highlights include performing at Sadler's Wells in London, *Rites* in Paris and Awakenings in New York. Local milestones involve returning to Western Australia to perform for her family and being nominated in Dance Australia's Critic Choice Awards.

She created her first choreographic work, *Nala*, for Bangarra's Dance Clan 3 in 2013. The piece returned to Country in 2014 and a section of her work was performed on Cable Beach for the community. Tara has also appeared in the film *Bran Nue Dae* (2010) and in Dan Sultan's music video for "*Under Your Skin*".

Performing *Ochres* is a lifetime achievement for Tara, alongside inspiring the next generation through culture and dance.

DARK EMU



**JASMIN
SHEPPARD**

Jasmin is an Aboriginal woman with a heritage of Irish, Chinese, and Hungarian Jewish ancestry. Her Aboriginal heritage is from Savannah country; the Tagalaka and Kurtijar peoples from Normanton and Croydon in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In 2002, after graduating from the Dance Factory, Melbourne, Jasmin made her professional debut in *HAIR* the musical and studied Contemporary Dance at NAISDA. In 2006, she performed in *The Migrant Project* (Curious Works) and Vicki Van Hout's *Wiradjurni*.

Since joining Bangarra in 2007, her highlights include performing the title role in *Patyegarang* (2014); performing in Stephen Page's *Warumuk - in the dark night*, in collaboration with The Australian Ballet; and debuting her first choreographic work, *Macq*, as a part of *Dance Clan 3* (2013) and *OUR land people stories* (2016).

She has collaborated with musicians such as Ben Ward (Sydney Symphony Orchestra) and Briggs, and in 2017, she created dance film/aerial installation, *No Remittance* for Legs on the Wall's Parachute Festival.



**TARA
ROBERTSON**

Tara is a descendent of the Munal djali clan, with a mixed heritage of Scottish and Irish. She grew up in Darwin and attained a Bachelor of Dance Performance at Adelaide Centre of the Arts.

Prior to joining Bangarra in 2011, Tara performed professionally with Gary Lang NT dance company, TRACKS and other youth dance projects, and was part of a dance film by Jason Lam, *What Remains*, which screened in Berlin 2008.

At Bangarra, Tara has enjoyed being part of the creative process of developing a new work; teaching regular company classes, hosting workshops and performing in communities around Australia. She treasures the memories of her lead performance in *Brolga* in her hometown; performing Ochres for the 21st anniversary of the work; being part of the *Clan* dance photography book; and being featured in *EORA - Dark Emu* at Vivid Sydney 2018.



**KAINE
SULTAN-BABIJ**

Kaine is a proud descendant of the Arrernte people of Harts Range in the Central Desert region of the Northern Territory. He also celebrates his Croatian and Afghan ancestry. He joined Bangarra in 2011.

Kaine studied at both NAISDA and the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (ACPA), graduating with an Advanced Diploma in the Performing Arts, majoring in Dance. He danced with Expressions Dance Company and Leigh Warren and Dancers before joining Bangarra.

In 2012 he was nominated for a Green Room Award for Best Male Dancer for his role in Frances Rings' *Terrain*.

Personal highlights include touring extensively around Australia and the world with Bangarra, including Copenhagen, Berlin, Bonn, New York, Mongolia, Vietnam and Holland. His screen credits include *SPEAR, Sharing Stories in Tasmania* (produced for Qantas) and Dan Sultan's music video "*Under Your Skin*".

DANCER BIOGRAPHIES



**LUKE CURRIE-
RICHARDSON**

Luke is a descendant of the Kuku Yalanji and Djabugay peoples, the Mununjali Clan of South East Queensland and the Meriam people of the Eastern Torres Strait Islands. He joined Bangarra in 2012.

Luke studied Dance at NAISDA and in 2010 commenced a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) at Queensland University of Technology. He has danced with the Gerib Sik Torres Strait Islander Dance Group (2002) and QL2 (Quantum Leap).

In 2012, Luke appeared in Wesley Enoch's *I Am Eora* for Sydney Festival. That same year he joined Bangarra as a trainee dancer. His dance highlights with Bangarra are performing *Blak* in Vietnam and performing traditional Yolngu dances as a part of a funeral ceremony in front of the community.

Luke is honoured to be part of the Bangarra family and aspires to be a role model for young children, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.



**BEAU DEAN
RILEY SMITH**

Beau was born in Dubbo and grew up on the South Coast of New South Wales in Culburra Beach on Yuin country. He is an Aboriginal man from the Wiradjuri Nation of Central New South Wales. He joined Bangarra in 2013.

His career highlights include performing the title role in Bangarra's *Bennelong* (2017), *Black* from *Ochres* for the first time in Vietnam, and performing the Wiradjuri solo from *ID* on the Kinship regional tour on Country in Dubbo.

Miyagan, part of the 2016 triple bill *OUR land people stories*, was his first choreographic work for Bangarra – a work that Bangarra returned to Country as part of the 2018 regional tour.



**RIKKI
MASON**

Rikki is from Inverell in North West New South Wales and is a descendant of the Kullili people from South West Queensland.

He grew up playing football and studying Koshiki Karate, and was named Junior World Champion in 2000. He took his first dance class in 2007 at the age of 17 and went on to train at the Australian Dance Performance Institute (ADPI) and L'Ecole-Atelier Rudra-Bejart and the Bejart Ballet Company in Switzerland.

Rikki has performed with the Brisbane City Youth Ballet, Queensland National Ballet, Lucid Dance Theatre and Televisions shows including *Everybody Dance Now* (2012) and *So You Think You Can Dance* (2014).

Rikki joined Bangarra in 2014, and has since toured nationally (*Bennelong*, *Patyegarang*, *lore* and *OUR land people stories*), regionally (*Kinship*, *Spirit*, *Terrain* and *OUR land people stories*) and internationally (Copenhagen, Berlin, Bonn, Holland, Turkey, France and USA).

DARK EMU



**YOLANDA
LOWATTA**

Yolanda was born on Thursday Island and grew up in Mackay. She is a descendant of Yam Island in the Torres Strait and is also of Papua New Guinean and Fijian heritage. She joined Bangarra in 2015 as a recipient of the Russell Page Graduate Program.

Moving to Brisbane in 2011, Yolanda graduated from the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (ACPA) in 2013. An actor, singer and dancer, her theatre credits include *MABO*, directed by Rachel Perkins; *Stolen* directed by Leah Purcell and *Up The Ladder* directed by Wesley Enoch and choreographed by Penelope Mullen.

Yolanda has also appeared in *Beguiled* for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Judith Wright Centre commission, *Danse Noir*, both choreographed by Penelope Mullen.

Yolanda danced with Ochre Contemporary Dance Company in 2014 before joining Bangarra. In 2016, Yolanda won a Helpmann Award for Best Female Dancer in *Sheoak* as part of the *lore* program.



**RIKA
HAMAGUCHI**

Rika is from Broome in Western Australia. She is a descendant of the Yawuru, Bunaba, Bardi and Jaru people in the Kimberley Region. Rika also shares Japanese, Chinese and Scottish ancestry.

Before joining Bangarra in 2015, Rika studied dance at NAISDA Dance College, where she was awarded the prestigious Chairman's Award.

She has worked with a number of choreographers including Iquail Shaheed (Horton Technique), Shaun Parker, Craig Bary, Frances Rings, Gary Lang, Patrick Thaiday and Raymond Blanco, as well as many cultural tutors from communities around Australia.

Since joining the company Rika has toured nationally (*Bennelong, lore* and *OUR land people stories*), regionally (*Kinship, Terrain* and *OUR land people stories*) and internationally (Copenhagen, Berlin, Bonn, Turkey, France and USA).



**TYREL
DULVARIE**

Tyrel is from Far North Queensland Cairns, and is a descendant of the Yirriganydji (Cairns), Umpila (Nesbit River), Mamu (Millaa Millaa), Kalkadoon (Mt Isa), and KukuTipan (Musgrave) peoples.

In 2011, Tyrel began formal dance training at ACPA (Aboriginal College of Performing Arts) and graduated in 2013. He joined Ochre Contemporary Dance Company in Western Australia in 2014, and also performed in Penelope Mullen's *Danse Noir*. Tyrel took part in Sydney Dance Company's Pre-Professional Program in 2016, before touring with Hugh Jackman's *Broadway to Oz* musical production.

Tyrel joined Bangarra in 2016, as a recipient of the Russell Page Graduate Program, making his debut season with *OUR land people stories*. The following year, Tyrel was fortunate to play the lead role of *Bennelong* as an understudy in the main stage production. Since joining Bangarra, Tyrel has toured nationally, including regional Australia, and internationally to New York, Paris, Copenhagen, Bonn and Berlin.

DANCER BIOGRAPHIES



**GLORY
TUOHY-DANIELL**

Glory is a descendant of Indjalandji Dhidhanu and Alyewarre Aboriginal tribes, in the North West Queensland, and of Scottish, English, Irish, Welsh, Chinese and Spanish heritage. Glory joined Bangarra in 2016, one of two Russell Page Graduate Program recipients. She studied dance at NAISDA.

The experience that has made the biggest impact on Glory was attending a cultural residency, learning and performing cultural dance in community on Saibai and Moa Islands, in the Torres Strait and Elcho Island, North-East Arnhem Land.

Glory first saw Bangarra in 2011's *Belong*, and it has been a long-held goal of hers to join the company. *OUR land people stories* in 2016 was her debut season with Bangarra, and she has since toured nationally with *Bennelong*, regionally with *Terrain* and *OUR land people stories*, and internationally to Copenhagen, Berlin, Bonn, Paris and USA.



**BADEN
HITCHCOCK**

Baden's family is descended from Saibai in the Torres Strait Islands and is of Papua New Guinean heritage. He joined Bangarra in 2017 as part of the Russell Page Graduate Program.

In 2015, Baden completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance at Victorian College of the Arts. In 2016, he took part in Dance Massive, performing in Antony Hamilton's work *Nex*, and was a participant of the Indigenous Choreographers Residency at Arts House, the Time Place Space Laboratory, and a delegate at the Water Futures conference as part of *Asiatopa*, where he collaborated with scientists on dance as a means of sharing Indigenous knowledge of sustainable land and water management.

He choreographed *In the Absence of* for Yirramboi First Nations Festival supported by Public Art Melbourne and was a member of Short Black Opera company, working with Deborah Cheetham on regional workshops focused on Indigenous youth and the production of *Pecan Summer* (2014) in Adelaide.



**RYAN
PEARSON**

Ryan is a Biripi, Minang, Bulang and Baladgung man born and raised in Taree, New South Wales. He joined Bangarra in 2017 as part of the Russell Page Graduate Program.

He began his dance training at NAISDA at age 16, after taking part in the NSW Public Schools' Aboriginal Dance Company, facilitated by Bangarra's Youth Program Team in 2012. During his time at NAISDA, Ryan learnt from a number of renowned teachers and choreographers.

One of Ryan's highlights during his training at NAISDA was attending a six-week Professional Division Summer Intensive at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in New York City.

Bennelong in 2017 was his debut season with Bangarra, and he has since performed the regional tour of *OUR land people stories* (2018), *Bennelong* at Adelaide Festival (2018) and at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

DARK EMU



**BRADLEY
SMITH**

2018 Russell Page Graduate Program Dancer

Bradley is a descendant of the Gumbaynggirr people and also has Fijian and English heritage. He is a Gumbaynggirr man, born and raised in Coffs Harbour, on the north coast of New South Wales.

Bradley joined Bangarra in 2018 as one of two Russell Page Graduate Program recipients, after completing four years of dance training at NAISDA Dance College.

He was praised for his standout performance in the college's annual showcase, *RESTORATION* at Carriageworks in 2017.

Having enjoyed contemporary dance since high school, Bradley is inspired to learn more about his culture and share knowledge and traditional stories through dance.



**LILLIAN
BANKS**

2018 Russell Page Graduate Program Dancer

Lillian is a Yawuru woman from Broome, Western Australia.

In 2013, Lillian left her hometown and travelled across the country to study dance at NAISDA Dance College in Sydney.

After graduating, Lillian joined Bangarra in 2018 as one of two Russell Page Graduate Program recipients. She was applauded for her thoughtful contemporary solo in the college's annual showcase, *RESTORATION* at Carriageworks in 2017.

Lillian has fond memories of watching Bangarra productions at Sydney Opera House and is excited to perform alongside dancers she has looked up to throughout her training.

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Bangarra Dance Theatre is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.



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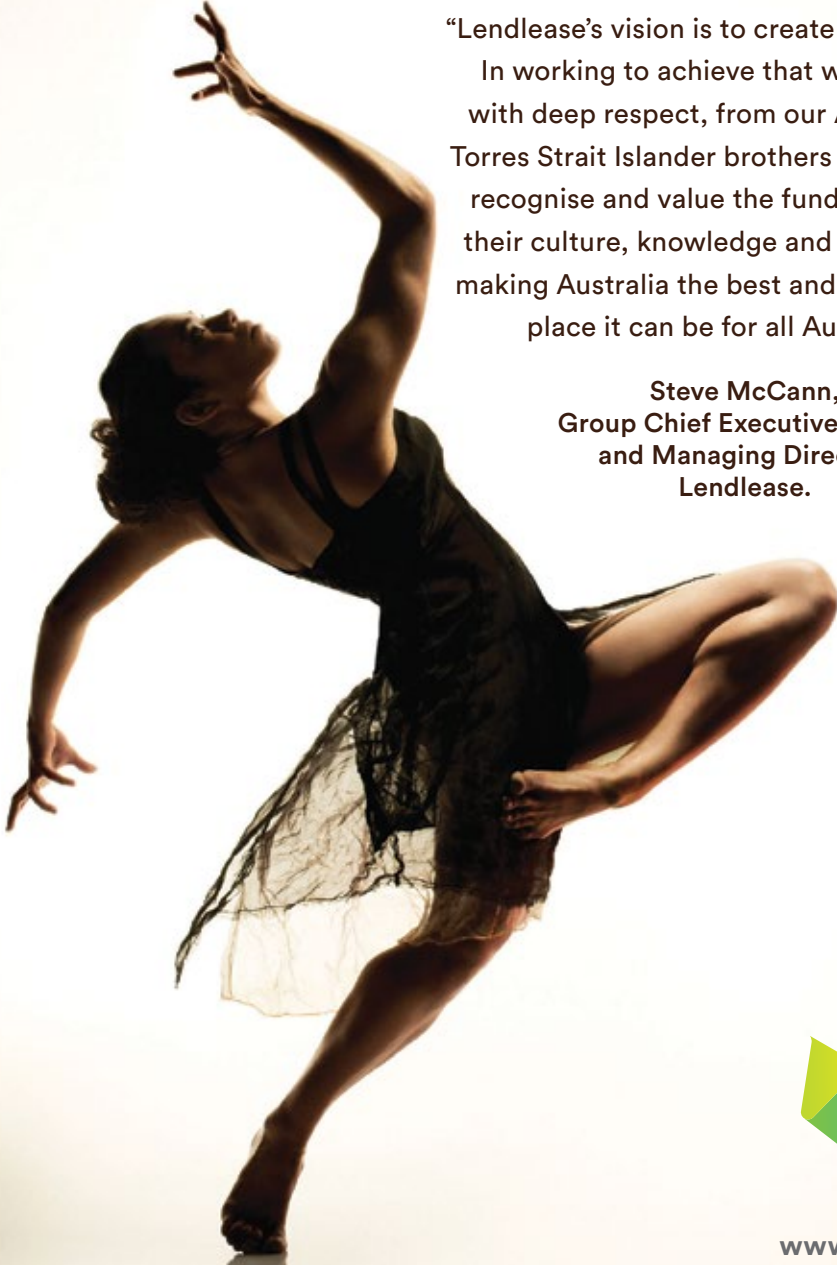


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