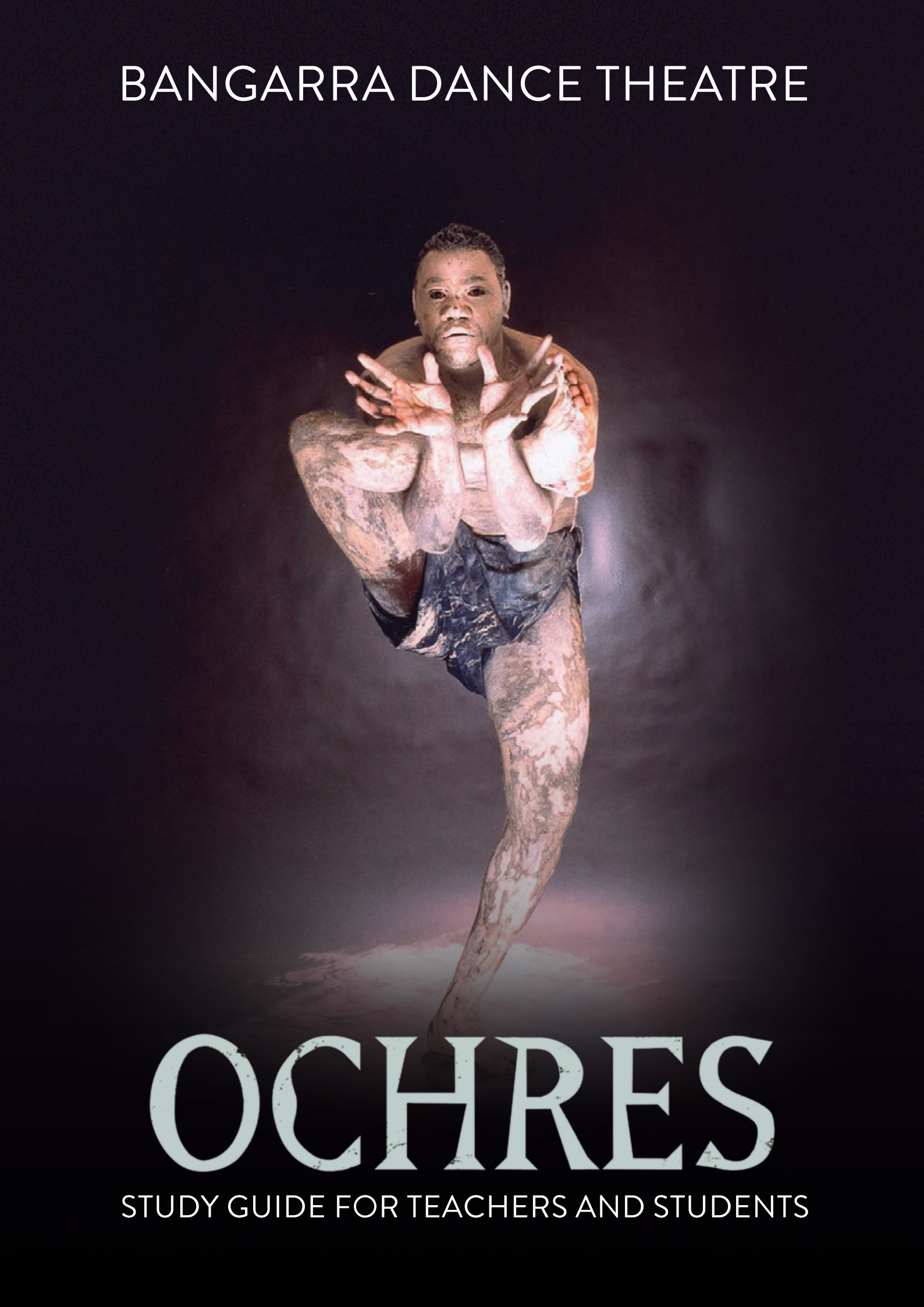
BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE



OCHRES

STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Bangarra Dance Theatre pays respect and acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, create, and perform.

We also wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose customs and cultures inspire our work.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (ICIP)

Bangarra acknowledges the industry standards and protocols set by the Australia Council for the Arts Protocols for Working with Indigenous Artists (2007). Those protocols have been widely adopted in the Australian arts to respect ICIP and to develop practices and processes for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultural heritage. Bangarra incorporates ICIP into the very heart of our projects, from storytelling, to dance, to set design, language and music.

Last updated September 2019

WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this Study Guide contains names and images of, and quotes from, deceased persons.

Photo Credits

Front Cover: Djakapurra Munyarryun, photo by Greg Barrett

Back Cover: Tara Gower, photo Edward Mulvihill

INTRODUCTION

“Ochres plays an essential part in Aboriginal traditional life. Working with cultural consultant/dancer Djakapurra Munyarryun has provided us with valuable insight into the presentation of traditional paint up and preparation.

As a substance ochre has intrigued us. Its significance and the myriad of purposes, both spiritual and physical has been the driving force behind this collaboration.

The portrayal of each colour is by no means a literal interpretation, but the awareness of its spiritual significance has challenged our contemporary expressions.”

– Stephen Page, 1995

CONTENTS

USING THIS STUDY GUIDE

Rikki Mason and Rika Hamaguchi in *Ochres* (2015), photo by Susannah Wimberley

This Study Guide has been designed to assist teachers and students in engaging with one of Bangarra's most acclaimed works – Ochres.

When viewing a Bangarra performance, the audience is engaged in a conversation about Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, about contemporary reflections on ancient traditions, and about the relationship between cultural inheritance and cultural renewal.

The audience is granted access to the Australian Indigenous world through storytelling and theatrical presentation. This access can be referred to as 'outside knowledge' – knowledge that may be shared (as opposed to 'inside knowledge' which by its nature is not be shared outside of a given community).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and language groups around Australia work to maintain this knowledge, and ensure its integrity for future generations. Bangarra plays a vital role in making sure that our whole society is aware of, and feels a sense of mutual responsibility for, maintaining cultural knowledge, sharing in its richness and recognising its vulnerability in contemporary times.

We hope that the information, suggested activities, and additional resources provided in this Study Guide assist in enriching students' experiences of contemporary Indigenous dance theatre, while offering a range approaches to incorporating Bangarra's works across the curriculum.

We hope you enjoy *Ochres.*

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITY
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

GENERAL CAPABILITIES
Intercultural Understanding
Critical and Creative Thinking
Literacy
Personal and Social Capability

LEARNING AREAS
The Arts
(Dance, Music, Visual Arts)
Aboriginal Studies
History
English
Science and Technology

CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS DANCE THEATRE

PERSPECTIVES, VOICES AND CULTURES

The concept of contemporary Indigenous dance theatre cannot be understood as a categorised genre or a particular form because it exists as part of a continuum that responds to a diversity of culture and developing perspectives. Any contemporary Indigenous dance production that incorporates music/sound, design and other conventions of the theatre will inevitably have a deep purpose and an essential spirit that is, and will always be, about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. While drawing on traditional stories and cultural ways of being, Indigenous dance theatre provides an important platform for Indigenous people. It gives voice to the experience of living in a modern world that experiences constant change, where the threat to cultural identityis relentlessly present.

The growth in availability of technical resources, an increasing number of performance venues, and the proliferation of new arts festivals and digital platforms, has greatly supported the development of new Indigenous dance theatre, as well as the careers of the many creative artists involved. As more new work is created, support for the infrastructure and training that underpins these forms has also grown, resulting in a critical mass of professional artists involved in producing high quality productions that increase the demand we currently see from audiences in Australia and internationally. One of the most important outcomes of these developments is the fact that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people are able to see their cultures reflected in this unique form, and are able to celebrate the resilience of Australia's First Nations people and their ancestors through the sharing of works that depict Indigenous stories, cultures and perspectives.

It is important to consider the language we use when talking and writing about Indigenous cultures in the context of art: when it is made, how it is made and where the source material comes from. The general application and understandings of the terms 'traditional' and 'contemporary' can be problematic when critiquing Indigenous dance theatre. By fixing the term 'contemporary' to the form, it could be argued that we are implying 'post-colonial', 'modern' or 'non-traditional'. Yet with many new works sourcing their inspiration from the Indigenous cultures that have existed since ancient times, what is 'traditional' and what is 'new' can exist simultaneously. This is often expressed by saying Indigenous Australian cultures are the oldest living, and continuous cultures in the world.

FORM, ACTIVATION AND PROCESS

One way of exploring the development of Indigenous dance theatre over the last three or four decades is to trace the journeys of some of the artists who have been significant contributors to that development. It should be noted that while many opportunities have been opened up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to develop in their choreographic work and their leadership roles, the true force behind this development has been the commitment and determination of the individual artists themselves.

Artists and leaders like Carole Y. Johnson, Stephen Page, Frances Rings, Raymond Blanco, Vicki van Hout, Gary Lang, and Marilyn Miller, are some who have paved the way. More recently Elma Kris, Deborah Brown, Yolande Brown, Daniel Riley, Mariaa Randall, Sani Townsen, Jacob Boehme, Ghenoa Gela, Thomas E. S. Kelly, Joel Bray, and Amrita Hepi are contributing to the ever-growing critical mass of Indigenous contemporary dance in Australia.

Building a skills base has been both a challenge and a significant contributor to the development of Indigenous contemporary dance and dance theatre. The establishment of training institutions like National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) Dance College in Sydney, and Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts (ACPA) in Brisbane, have been fundamentally important to increasing technical skills to support the creation of new works. Market development initiatives, the growth of touring networks, and a range of strategic programs to address identified gaps in the infrastructure, have been and continue to be critical to the growth and sustainability of this work.

From the mid-20th Century, contemporary forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expression emerged across all art forms and began to infiltrate mainstream arts programs that largely drew on western cultures and/or western forms of presentation. By the 1960s, young black theatre makers, playwrights, writers and actors were creating works that reflected their culture in both the pre-colonial and post-settlement worlds. Writers Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis, and actor/directors Bryan Syron and Bob Maza were among some of the black theatre makers who lay the foundation for the strong

Indigenous theatre scene that exists today. Novelist Faith Bandler, and poet/artist/educator Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) were also strong voices in the new wave of Indigenous writers whose works now form part of Australia's rich and diverse literary landscape. The wave of contemporary Indigenous artists that followed in the wake of the Papunya Tula art movement in the 1970s has seen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work acquired for major collections around the world, which command impressive prices in auction houses globally. Many, if not all, of these artists also consider themselves activists, and there is no doubt that their work has had a significant impact on the way non-Indigenous people have learned about Indigenous cultures and the ongoing political struggle of First Nations people in the context of post-settlement life.

The creative processes of any artist tend to emerge through a range of influences, discovery and personal experience. Yet for Indigenous artists, these processes are more complex. Respect for cultural protocols, the need for community engagement, and a strong commitment to enforce care for traditional knowledge that is shared, and/or provided through a process of request, invitation, permission and transmission, are all things that need to be considered and upheld as new expressions are created by Indigenous artists. Navigating all these considerations is complicated and takes time. However, the ongoing development of Indigenous dance (and other contemporary art forms) is dependent on these protocols and practices being observed and implemented to ensure cultural continuity. Stories, songs, dances, and connection to Place are sacred, and are passed on through oral transmission, so there is no central knowledge source, and written information is usually second hand. Indigenous Cultural & Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights are variously enshrined both Australian and international conventions and statements, and are an important safety net that seeks to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures survive and thrive.

COUNTRY, RELATIONSHIP AND CONNECTION

'Country', as a western construct, is mostly understood as a defined place, marked by borders, (natural and/or imposed), and operating on principles of sovereignty and the governance of the nation by the state. Ethnicity, religion, environment, and histories of colonisation and conflict are signifiers that overlay the identification of a 'country'. As history shows, these factors have often been the cause of conflict between groups who claim their right to a 'land' is justified. Land ownership and other interests in land have been closely associated with human rights, where groups can show a perpetual connection to the land in order to justify their right to occupy.

At a community level, the concept of public, private, individual, or collective ownership of property (e.g. land, a house, a business) has developed over just a few thousand years. The right to own property that has a capital value, possesses certain features and resources, can be bought and sold for profit, and the protection of these interests and capacities by law, is the enduring assurance of the western capitalist system.

The concept of Country and Land for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is extremely different.

The spiritual dimension of Country cannot be detached from the physical. Country can mean a person's Land where they were born, as well as the sea, sky, rivers, sacred sites, seasons, plants and animals. It can also be a place of heritage, belonging, and spirituality that is inseparable from the land. Hence, the impact of displacement from Country, and the disruption to that sense of belonging to one's Country, can be catastrophic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultural and economic wellbeing. Story, song, dance, and ancestral lineage provide the foundation for an existence on this earth, and a passage to and from the worlds beyond life on earth – and those stories and songs all link to Country as a home for Culture.

For Indigenous people, these complex relationships are like threads in a tapestry of exploration that has no beginning and no end, yet is founded on, and maintained through, specific information that is transmitted by 'walking on Country', oral transference and a range of other traditional practices.

When artists draw from the concept of Country, they are the bearers of Culture, illustrated and made meaningful in many ways to many different people. In this way, the dance theatre worlds within this work provide the opportunity to delve into the concept of Country and all it holds in the way of knowledge, spirituality and cultural meaning.

Luke Currie-Richardson and Tara Gower in ‘Red’
Ochres photo by Zan Wimberley

CULTURAL INHERITANCE AND TRANSFERAL OF KNOWLEDGE

Storytelling in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life is the means by which cultural systems, values, and identity are preserved and transferred. Telling stories through song, music and dance, in order to connect people to land, and teach them about their culture and the traditions of their ancestors is the way knowledge is passed from generation to generation. Knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander totemic systems, the histories of peoples, clans and tribal associations, language, land, and concepts and connections of kinship, are maintained though these stories.

Many of Bangarra's productions are based on or include stories from the Dreaming, which are allegorical representations of contemporary existence and the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and people. Expressing and maintaining culture through contemporary interpretations and rich theatrical realisations enables the world of Australian Indigenous culture to be shared with the full diversity of today's audiences.

THE DREAMING

Indigenous spirituality exists in the concept of the 'Dreaming'. Dreaming connects Indigenous people to the past, creates relevance to the present, and guides them for the future. Dreaming stories can illustrate the phenomena of creation, transformation, natural forces, and life principles. They are specifically related to landforms, places, creatures and communities. The ancestral beings that populate the stories form the spiritual essence of the stories. Bangarra's portrayal of stories of the Dreaming through the contemporary dance theatre form requires a diligent process of connecting and building a relationship with the traditional custodians of those stories so that the integrity and authenticity is respected.

CONSULTATION AND OBSERVANCE OF PROTOCOLS

For all of its productions, the Bangarra Creative Team researches and explores the stories of Indigenous cultures in close consultation and collaboration with their traditional custodians, before embarking on the process of creating the production. Each year, Bangarra spends time in specific Indigenous communities, meeting with Elders and traditional owners and living with the people of that community – learning about the stories that connect the people, the land, the language, and the creatures of the land. Everyone who works at Bangarra feels very strongly about their role in the company's work. They make sure that the stories they tell are true to the traditional owners of those stories and uphold the integrity of the stories' meanings.

EXPERIENCING DANCE IN A THEATRICAL CONTEXT

It is important to note that dance theatre works are essentially artistic invention, and are created to express a broad range of ideas and thoughts. While some information is provided in the program notes of each production, the viewer is free to interpret the work according to their individual perspectives, emotional responses, and level of experience in the viewing of performing arts. Repeated viewing of the work, along with the cumulative process of learning about the themes, source material, cross-referencing of the range of subject matter and creative processes involved in the making of the work, contributes to personal and critical responses to the work. Bangarra invites its audiences to share, learn, and appreciate the critical importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in order to understand their own relationship with the cultures and the people of Australia's First Nations.

RESOURCES

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Carole Johnson — Delving into Dance with Ausdance Victoria (2017) https://www.delvingintodance.com/podcast/carole-johnson?rq=carole%20johnson

Bangarra Dance Theatre YouTube Channel - interviews with Artistic Director Stephen Page and other Bangarra Creatives. https://www.youtube.com/user/bangarradancetheatre

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

Frances Rings, Djakapurra Munyarryun, and Marilyn Miller, photo by Greg Barrett

Bangarra Dancers, photo by James Morgan

Carole Y Johnson, Matthew Doyle, and Phillip Lanley, photographer unknown

Bangarra Dancers and Crew, photo by Tiffany Parker

BANGARRA'S BEGINNINGS

Bangarra Dance Theatre was founded due to the efforts of an American woman, Carole Y. Johnson, who toured to Australia in the early 1970s with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company from New York.

Johnson had experienced the full impact of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and been a part of the proliferation of new modern dance exponents across America, who were focused on freeing dance from its institutionalised bases and using dance to make commentary on the contemporary world. She studied at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York and was awarded scholarships to work with communities in Africa. Johnson knew the power of dance as a practice, and as a communication platform.

During her time in Australia in 1972, she was asked to conduct dance workshops. These were very successful and resulted in a Johnson's new dance production that depicted Australia's own civil rights actions. *The Challenge – Embassy Dance* was about the Moratorium for Black Rights initiated by workers' unions in 1972, and the challenge to uphold the presence of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Johnson quickly realised that there was a lack of contemporary dance expression in the Australian sociocultural environment, and decided that she would do something about it. On the back of her workshops, she established the Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Scheme in 1976, which was to later become the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association – known today as NAISDA Dance College. At the same time, black theatre makers, playwrights, writers, and actors were creating works that reflected their culture in both its pre-colonial and post-settlement states (see Form, Activation and Process, p. 5)

By the 1980s, NAISDA had developed a performance arm called the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre, which showcased the development of students into professional Dancers and also gave opportunities for these Dancers to develop as Choreographers. Raymond Blanco, Marilyn Miller and Dujon Nuie were some of the artists who took on the role of Choreographer and paved the way for many more to come.

In 1989, Johnson founded a new company, Bangarra Dance Theatre. Bangarra is a Wiradjuri word meaning 'to make fire'. In 1991, the artistic directorship was handed to Stephen Page and he premiered his first work, *Up Until Now* for the company in October of the same year.

BANGARRA TODAY

Today, Bangarra is one of Australia's leading performing arts companies, widely acclaimed nationally and around the world for its powerful dancing, distinctive theatrical voice and utterly unique soundscapes, music and design. The company is recognised globally for critically-acclaimed theatre productions that combine the spirituality of traditional cultures with contemporary forms of storytelling though dance. Bangarra is supported with funding through the Australia Council for the Arts (the federal Government's arts funding and advisory body), Create NSW (NSW arts policy and funding body) and a number of private philanthropic organisations and donors. The company also derives earnings from performance seasons, special events and touring.

Based in Sydney, Bangarra presents performance seasons in Australian capital cities, regional towns and remote areas, and has also taken its productions to many places around the world including Europe, Asia and the USA.

Bangarra provides the opportunity for people of all cultural backgrounds to share knowledge about, and have a contemporary experience of, the world's oldest living cultures. Bangarra has nurtured the careers of hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional artists, including Dancers, Choreographers, Composers and Designers.

Since 1989, Bangarra has produced dozens of original works for its repertoire, collaborated on the creation of new productions with other Australian performing arts companies such as The Australian Ballet and the Sydney Theatre Company, and played an integral role in opening ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the 2018 Commonwealth Games. In 2016, Bangarra created its first feature film, *SPEAR*.

Bangarra's Dancers and collaborating artists come from all over Australia, including the major groups in relation to location, for example: Torres Strait Islanders, Queensland (Murri), New South Wales (Koori), Victoria (Koorie), South Australia (Anangu and Nunga), Arnhem Land, Northern Territory (Yolngu), Coast and Midwest Western Australia (Yamatji), Southern Western Australia (Nyoongar), Central Western Australia (Wangai) and Tasmania (Palawah). Some of the Dancers are graduates of NAISDA Dance College (NSW), or Aboriginal College of Performing Arts (QLD), and others are graduates of dance courses delivered by universities around Australia.

OCHRES

Bangarra's production *Ochres*, officially premiered in Sydney in 1995. As the work was being developed, sections were shown in September 1994 at Belvoir St Theatre's Nambundah Festival, and again in October of the same year at the National Gallery Canberra for the launch of Prime Minister Paul Keating's 'Creative Nation Policy'.

The success of the work was remarkable for such a young company. Following sell-out shows in Australia, the company received numerous invitations to take their work to overseas audiences.

Ochres is a work in four main parts with a prologue, which explores the spiritual significance and the traditional uses of ochre, while also illustrating the essence of culture – its strength, its contemporary relevance, and its power to heal and nurture.

Elma Kris in 'The Light' from *Ochres* (2015), photo by Susannah Wimberley

Djakapurra Munyarryun in 'The Light' from *Ochres* (1995), photo by Ashley de Prazer

THE LIGHT

Music David Page
Vocals Kirk Page

YELLOW

Choreography
Bernadette Walong-Sene

Music
David Page

Tjipari Dreaming –
Ngarti Language Group
(Western Desert Women)

Women's Funeral Dance –
Etanyanu Language Group
(North West Cape York Women)

Bangarra Dancers in 'Yellow' from *Ochres* (2015), photo by Edward Mulvihill

This is the woman spirit – mother earth in all her forms as represented by the women and the yellow ochre. Many of the movements in *Yellow* are inspired by female energy and their connection to the land – the nurturing of children, feeding, gathering, water, bathing, birthing.

BLACK

Contemporary Choreography
Stephen and Russell Page

Traditional Choreography
Djakapurra Munyarryun

Music
David Page

Vocals
Djakapurra Munyarryun – Yolngu (North East Arnhem Land), Pinau Ghee – Meriam Mer (Torres Strait)

Yidaki Djakapurra Munyarryun

Buffalo Dance and Stick Dance –
Yolngu (North East Arnhem Land)

Daniel Riley in 'Black' from *Ochres* (2015), photo by Edward Mulvihill

This is male energy – when they wipe ochre across their forehead, it's a protective action, to protect and maintain the male spirit before they go on the hunt. This dance features animal mimicry, which is integral to traditional dance; the swatting movement with the hands, like the swatting of flies, the crouching and rearing up, the shaking of the body – that is kangaroo.

In *Black* we also have the hands covering mouths – a political statement about petrol sniffing, an abstract move we included to comment on the social dilemma that is an ongoing issue in a lot of communities.

RED

Choreography
Stephen Page and
Bernadette Walong-Sene

Music
David Page

Vocals
David Page – Yugambeh (South East Queensland), Djakapurra Munyarryun – Yolngu (North East Arnhem Land), Glenda Aragu – Kala Kawaw Ya (Western Torres Strait)

Yidaki
Djakapurra Munyarryun

Luke Currie-Richardson and Tara Robertson in 'Red' from *Ochres* (2015), photo by Susannah Wimberley

Red is about male and female relationships. It is playful, sensual, powerful and challenging, like human relationships can be. There are four sections – *Youth, Obsession, Poison*, and *Pain* – looking at genders coming together from youth to adulthood.

WHITE

Contemporary Choreography
Stephen Page,
Bernadette Walong-Sene
and Bangarra Dancers

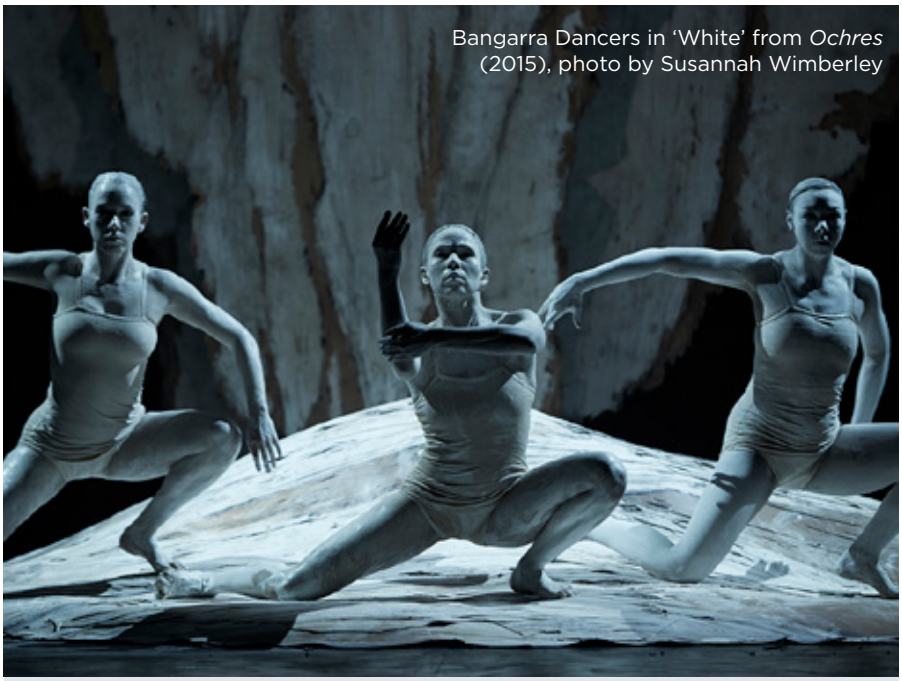
Traditional Choreography
Djakapurra Munyarryun

Music
David Page

Vocals
David Page, Djakapurra Munyarryun – Yolngu (North East Arnhem Land), Ursula Yovich

Yidaki
Djakapurra Munyarryun

Traditional Ochre Dance Song – Yolngu (North East Arnhem Land)



Bangarra Dancers in 'White' from *Ochres* (2015), photo by Susannah Wimberley

White takes inspiration from what has come before and the impact it has on our future. Our history is protecting us, it informs who we are and it is a source of rejuvenation. *White* is that new spirit world: the dancers embody the spiritual energy of the future. We acknowledge the continuation of life by embracing our history.

WHAT IS OCHRE?

Ochre is a natural substance found in many parts of the world including Europe, Britain, North America and Australia. Typically, ochre is made up of two forms of iron oxide (Fe 2O3 and FeO) that are often found mixed with clays, silicates and other minerals. The colours can range from deep purple to light yellow, with the most common form being red. Ochre is found in sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks, in weathered products and soil.

Ochre has been used in many ancient cultures as a colouring and/or painting substance for cultural expressions including art, ceremony, decoration and body painting. Paints are made by grinding the source rock to a powder and then mixing with fluid (water, saliva, blood, the fat of fish, emu, possum or goanna, or occasionally orchid oil) to form a fixative so that the pigment can be painted on rock, skin, tools and ceremonial objects. Ochre is extremely significant in traditional practices. The themes in Bangarra's production *Ochres* are portrayed as separate colours. This is not a literal interpretation, but is themed to illustrate ancestry, culture and people. For example, red ochre is often used to portray the blood of ancestral beings; within art and ceremony it can represent strength and protection.

Ochre has been mined by Aboriginal people in various quarries and pits across Australia for over 40,000 years, and continues to be extracted and used for art and ceremony. There are over 400 recorded Aboriginal ochre pit sites all over Australia, with many more that elude public record. Most mines were open cut; some were small operations, while others quite extensive and up to 20 metres deep. Ochre is excavated with stone and wooden tools, and traded across quite vast distances between clans, communities, and language groups.

Bangarra Dancers 'painting up' with ochre photos by Tiffany Parker

Bangarra Dancers 'painting up' with ochre photos by Jacob Nash

CREATING OCHRES

Bangarra Dancers in *Ochres* (2015), photo by Susannah Wimberley

Bangarra's *Ochres* is a dance theatre work birthed by a large Creative Team –Choreographers, Dancers, Cultural Consultant and Songman Djakapurra Munyarryun, a Composer, and Costume, Set, and Lighting Designers. As with all of Bangarra's productions, the whole Creative Team works collaboratively to develop the ideas of the Choreographers, interpreting the material that is brought to the process by the Cultural Consultant.

The Choreographers, Rehearsal Director and Dancers work together in the Bangarra's studio over several weeks, to create the choreographic elements for the dance, exploring, inventing and shaping the movements into sequences that slowly build into the fully structured dance work.

RE-IMAGINING OCHRES (2015)

When a work is restaged some years after its premiere, certain original ideas are reconsidered. As a result, some changes to the original choreography may occur; this is not unusual nor unexpected. When *Ochres* was reimagined in 2015, it was no exception. The Choreographers were revisiting the work 20 years after its creation, with decades of experiences that were brought into the process of restaging the work. Choreographers and Dancers recreated, rearticulated, and revived the work, embodying the essence and spirit of the original work and processing the choreography for their own bodies. Importantly though, the traditional elements of the work remain unchanged. The embedded cultural information must always remain respected and intact, and this is why the guidance and collaboration of Djakapurra Munyarryun, Cultural Consultant, was critical to the restaging of this work.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

CHOREOGRAPHERS
Stephen Page
Russell Page
Bernadette Walong-Sene
Djakapurra Munyarryun
Bangarra Dancers

CULTURAL CONSULTANT
Djakapurra Munyarryun

COMPOSER
David Page

COSTUME DESIGNER
Jennifer Irwin

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Joseph Mercurio

SET DESIGNER (2015)
Jacob Nash

Bangarra Dancers in *Ochres* (1995), photo by Greg Barrett

DISCUSSION GUIDE

PRE-PERFORMANCE

Familiarise yourself with the themes of *Ochres*, and the additional resources provided on Page 15. Use the following concepts as a starting point for discussion.

- The significance of ochre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in traditional cultures and ceremonies.
- The use of ochre in the context of art – both traditional and contemporary.
- The mineral content of ochre; its extraction and use. What are the uses of ochre? How is ochre prepared for use?

POST-PERFORMANCE

After experiencing *Ochres*, students will have a more tangible sense of the production. Their responses can be captured and explored across through written, oral, or more creative responses, in a wide variety of contexts – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures, Creative Arts, Science, History and/or English. Use the below questions as a starting point.

- How are the four main sections in *Ochres* connected or separated? What linking techniques are used?
- What is the significance of the solo dancer in the 'The Light'?
- In what ways do the different sections reflect the themes of the four different colours/ochres?
- How important is it for the Dancers to contribute to the creative process?
- How are elements of dance incorporated into the choreography?
- How are props and costumes utilised to tell the stories and enhance the choreography?
- What use of technology is involved in the performance and how effective is it?
- How does the music interact with the dance and assist with the storytelling?
- In what ways does the Choreographer use individual solo performers, duets and the full ensemble to reflect ideas about culture, gender, personal life experiences and/or communities?

Bangarra Dancers in *Ochres* (2015), photo by Susannah Wimberley

RESOURCES

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bangarra
DANCE THEATRE

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE AUSTRALIA

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