

MEDIA KIT

BENNELONG

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE
HEATH LEDGER THEATRE
THU 6 – SUN 9 FEB
TICKETS: \$39 - \$79

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BENNELONG

Bangarra Dance Theatre is acclaimed worldwide for its authentic storytelling, distinctive voice and moving performances. After a triumphant national tour and seven Helpmann Awards they bring their extraordinary *Bennelong* to Perth Festival.

Bennelong explores the life of one of history's most iconic Aboriginal figures. Woollarawaree Bennelong was a senior man of the Eora, who led his community to survive a clash of cultures.

Through striking dance language, soul-stirring soundscapes and exquisite design, Bangarra unpacks Bennelong's legacy and its reverberation through contemporary Australian life.

Bennelong is Bangarra at its best. In a unique Australian dance language, the company celebrates the continuation of life and culture through the power, brilliance and passion of its outstanding artists. It will leave you in awe of Australia's history – and its power to repeat.

After a triumphant national tour in 2017, a debut at Adelaide Festival, 7 Helpmann Awards wins and a successful Australian regional tour in 2019, Bangarra take *Bennelong* to Perth Festival in 2020. In a unique Australian dance language, *Bennelong* celebrates the continuation of life and culture through the power, brilliance and passion of Bangarra's artists.

COMPANY CREDITS:

Choreographer Stephen Page
Set Designer Jacob Nash
Music Steve Francis
Costume Designer Jennifer Irwin
Lighting Designer Nick Schlieper
Dramaturg Alana Valentine
Cultural Consultant Matthew Doyle

Director, Technical & Production John Colvin
Production Manager Cat Studley
Company Manager Cloudia Elder
Stage Manager Lillian Hannah
Head Electrician Ryan Shuker
Lighting Realiser Chris Twyman

Head of Wardrobe Monica Smith
Head Mechanist David Tongs
AV Technician Emjay Matthews
Assistant Stage Manager Stephanie Storr Clark

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

Bangarra is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation and one of Australia's leading performing arts companies. They are widely acclaimed nationally and around the world for their powerful dancing, distinctive theatrical voice and utterly unique soundscapes, music and design.

Led by Artistic Director Stephen Page, the company is currently in its 30th year but its dance technique is forged from over 65,000 years of culture, embodied with contemporary movement. The company's 18 dancers are professionally trained, 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.

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

STEPHEN PAGE | CHOREOGRAPHER

Stephen is a descendant of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh 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 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

In 2018, Stephen collaborated with Choreographers Daniel Riley and Yolande Brown to bring *Dark Emu* to the stage. Inspired by Bruce Pascoe's award-winning book of the same name, *Dark Emu* was a dramatic and evocative dance response to what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have always known, that their reciprocal and interconnected relationship with the environment is both sustainable and sacred.

In 2017, Stephen's monumental work *Bennelong* received widespread acclaim from both audiences and critics alike. 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).

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 *of 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 *Dark Emu*, *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. This year he was awarded a Helpmann Award for 'Best Scenic Design' for his powerful and evocative set in *Bennelong*.

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.

ALANA VALENTINE | DRAMATURG

In 2019 Belvoir will remount the AWGIE Award nominated *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, co-written with Ursula Yovich. First presented in 2017 it was nominated in the Sydney Theatre Awards for Best New Australian work and Best Original score. Also in 2019 a jazz song cycle *Flight Memory* will be presented at The Street Theatre in Canberra and the Seymour Centre will present *Made To Measure*, a commission from the Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney, where Alana was Writer in Residence in 2018.

In 2018, *Ear to the Edge of Time*, winner of the 5th International Playwrighting Award, premiered at the Seymour Centre, directed by Nadia Tass. *Letters to Lindy*, first produced by Merrigong Theatre Company in 2016, completed a 21 venue National Tour, *The Sugar House* premiered at Belvoir and was nominated in the 2018 Sydney Theatre Awards for Best New Australian Work. Currency Press published *Bowerbird: the Art of making theatre drawn from life*. Alana also worked with Bangarra Dance Theatre as dramaturg on *Dark Emu* and *Dubboo: Life of a Songman* and in 2017 on their Helpmann-Award winning Best New Australian work *Bennelong*.

Alana is the recipient of two Tasmanian Theatre Awards 2017 for *The Tree Widows*, which received the Best Writing in a Professional Production Award as well as the Judges Award for 'creative integration of community, culture and heritage'. Alana was also nominated for best director for a Professional Production for that work. In November 2017, Venus Theatre Company (USA) world premiered *The Ravens* which also won the BBC International Radio writing Award in 2013 and the

National Library of Australia published *Dear Lindy*. Her plays *Parramatta Girls* and *Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah* are both currently on the NSW Schools Syllabus in Drama and English respectively.

In 2016 Griffin Theatre Company presented *Ladies Day* and Campbelltown Arts Centre presented *One Billion Beats* (co-written and co-directed with Romaine Moreton). In 2015 *Head Full of Love* completed a National Tour and *Barefoot Divas* appeared at the Hong Kong Concert Hall. In 2014 Alana worked as dramaturg on Bangarra's *Patyegarang*. Alana co-wrote *The Fox and the Freedom Fighters* with Dharug Elder Aunty Rhonda Grovenor-Dixon, won the BBC International Radio Competition for *The Ravens* and an AWGIE Award for Community/Youth Theatre for *Comin' Home Soon*. In 2013 she won three AWGIE Awards including the Major Award and the Inaugural David Williamson Award for Excellence in Writing for the Australian Theatre for *Grounded*.

Her writing has also been nominated for a 2011 Queensland Premier's Award for Best Drama Script, 2007 Helpmann Awards for Best New Australian Work and Best Play, awarded the 2004 Queensland Premier's Award for Best Drama Script, the 2003 NSW Writer's Fellowship, the 2002 Rodney Seaborn Playwright's Award and an International Writing Fellowship at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London. She also received a 2001 commendation for the Louis Esson Prize, a 1999 AWGIE Award, a residency at the Banff Playwrights' Conference in Canada, the ANPC/New Dramatists Award in NYC and a Churchill Fellowship, the NSW Premier's Award and a Centenary Medal.

Alana's plays are published by Currency Press.

MATTHEW DOYLE | CULTURAL CONSULTANT

Matthew Doyle is a descendant of the Muruwari people from the Lightning Ridge area of NSW and grew up in Southern Sydney on Dharawal land. He is a professional musician, composer, dancer, choreographer, cultural consultant and educator, with a passion for passing on the indigenous languages of Sydney.

From 1985-1988 Matthew completed an Associate Diploma in with the prestigious Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre (now, NAISDA Dance College). In 1990 he returned to AIDT to become a founding member of their professional company, where he worked on several productions.

Matthew's company Wuriniri Music & Dance, is comprised of professional indigenous musicians and dancers who create and present both contemporary and traditional performances.

Matthew has toured extensively in Australia and abroad performing in many countries as both a Soloist and a Collaborator. He has performed as part of many major international events including the 1996 Olympic Games Closing Ceremony in Atlanta and the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Matthew played didgeridoo on top of the Sydney Opera House as part of the ABC Millennium Broadcast. Matthew has also performed at the opening of the Indigenous Gallery Musee Du Quay Branly in Paris, World Expo Japan, World Youth Day 2008 and took part in the production of "I am Eora" at the 2012 Sydney Festival.

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