

WORLD PREMIERE

Fri 19 Feb–Sun 14 Mar 2021

A Perth Festival Commission

WITNESS STAND

**PERTH
FESTIVAL**

WITNESS STAND

CREATED BY

Kylie Bracknell
[Kaarljilba Kaardn]
Madeleine Flynn
Tim Humphrey
Barry McGuire

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Witness Stand is an unlikely place to listen.

Across a city, in water bodies and reserves and forgotten sites, *Witness Stand* is an invitation to gather and spend learning time together.

On a series of bespoke seating tiers extending from Mandoon (Guildford) to Walyalup (Fremantle) and through to Wadjemup (Rottnest Island), audiences will experience a series of specially commissioned sound works paying homage to the ancient stories of Whadjuk country and acknowledging the interruptions to this place caused by colonisation.

This new commission invites audiences to consider the Derbal Yerrigan as a source of life. To listen anew and to witness as one.

WITNESS STAND

The idea for *Witness Stand* started with Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey's persistent image of an audience gathered on a stand outside in a place where the water rises and falls, listening, witnessing the landscape and her people: now, in the past and creating a future.

Perth Festival seed-planted an opportunity to ground Maddie and Tim's concept in their 2021 'Bilya' themed program, fostering the chance to collaborate with the extraordinary Barry McGuire and Kylie Bracknell [Kaarljilba Kaardn]. Whadjuk Noongar custodians Barry and Kylie welcomed and hosted Maddie and Tim across the initial stages of the project, providing a solid creative platform for the evolution of their idea to become *Witness Stand*, a complex visual and sonic experience created with ten Perth sound and music artists responding to seven special Noongar boodjar sites along the Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River) carefully chosen by Barry and Kylie.

In one of the conversations held along the bilya (river) Barry, as a custodian and caretaker of this place, asked us "...how can I hold you [safely]?". This question echoed deep into the boodjar (land) he knows well, almost as if boodjar herself had asked him to relay the message.

Images of an audience gathering outside in a place where the water rises and falls, listening, witnessing the landscape and her people, has been an age-old ritual for Noongar people. This bilya ritual is still in practice today and *Witness Stand*, paying homage to gatherings of yesterday and today, is made to be experienced by attending all sites.

The artists, committed to the extensive on-Country consultations with Barry and the Festival team, embraced the unique collaborative process. They covered a wide spectrum of approaches and genres, sharing thoughts and materials, and often worked together to realise their pieces absorbing deeply the sonic riches and potentials of each significant site.

Maddie and Tim, unable to be in WA in person, collaborated from the garden city on Wurundjeri lands. '*Witness Stand* has given us some of the more energising and enriching video conferencing sessions of the past year and we have been held tenderly on Noongar boodjar, albeit through devices'.

Our collective hope now is that you, each and every one of you, feel held tenderly here on Noongar boodjar too. For we are the people of this place now, of long ago and nurture those who become our future. There is no future without a place where the water rises and falls. Witness this.

One of the joys of curating a festival lies in being able to commission works from artists of the highest pedigree – Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey here working closely alongside Barry McGuire and Kylie Bracknell. Maddie and Tim’s idea – so distilled in simplicity that it belies its inherent complexity – is to listen. Together. And through that listening gain a new and deeper perspective on how we see our country and our river. The profound and extraordinary generosity of Barry and Kylie as the conduits through which Noongar stories were shared cannot be underestimated, and it remains one of the highlights of my year travelling to the *Witness Stand* sites with them both during the development of this work. It’s also been a joy (especially with my previous life as a composer) to talk to and enjoy the offerings of the sound artists and composers with whom the lead artists have collaborated.

Iain Grandage ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, PERTH FESTIVAL

Kylie Bracknell (formerly Kylie Farmer) [Kaarljilba Kaardn]

Kylie is an accomplished actress, voice-over artist, television presenter, public speaker, writer, director and producer from the south west of Western Australia – the Noongar nation. Passionate about language revival, Kylie has developed innovative works completely in Noongar language, including the reimagining of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* titled *Hecate* (2020), performance of Shakespearean sonnets at Shakespeare’s Globe in London (2012), two re-voiced episodes of the award-winning animation series *Little J & Big Cuz*, and most recently *Fist of Fury Noongar Daa*, the first feature film to be dubbed in an Australian language. Kylie hosts the children’s television program *Waabiny Time* (NITV) and has raised awareness of Indigenous languages via platforms including TEDx (2014) and ABC television’s *Q&A* program (2016). More information about Kylie’s work is available at boomerangandspear.com

Madeleine Flynn & Tim Humphrey

Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey are Australian artists who create unexpected situations for listening. Their work is driven by a curiosity and questioning about sound in human culture and seeks to evolve and engage with new processes and audiences, through public and participative interventions. Their practice intertwines local, national and international relationships. They have an award-winning long term collaborative practice. In 2017 their practice was awarded the national Australia Council Award for Emerging and Experimental Artforms. Their current areas of interest are the sound of existential risk, the audio agents of artificial intelligence in public space, and long form socially engaged public art interventions. Their work is documented at madeleineandtim.net

Barry McGuire

Barry McGuire is a Balladong, Whadjuk, Noongar who is highly regarded as a public speaker, facilitator and negotiator. Barry has worked as a consultant and cultural advisor for Local, State, and Federal Government. In addition to his role as Managing Director of Redspear Safety and Chairman to Safespear Pty Ltd. He is currently a member of the cultural advisory board to the Chevron Corporation and he is a Director to the Spear Foundation a not for profit organisation providing cultural understanding and support to organisations working with the Aboriginal community in the metro areas. This allows him to exercise his passion for sharing cultural understanding and safety across all nations of Australia.

WITNESS STAND

Witness Stand is located at seven sites.

The work is experienced in its entirety by visiting all the sites over the course of the Festival. However, each site is also a self-contained experience, specific to each location.

DATES

Fri 19 Feb – Sun 14 Mar 2021

TIMES

Witness Stand operate on a rotating schedule at 6am, 7.30am and 6pm daily.

DURATION

60 minutes

LOCATIONS

Mandoon / Guildford

Fishmarket Reserve

With compositions by Tessa Darcey, Mei Swan Lim and Cathie Travers

Djiidjalalap / Perth

Ozone Reserve

With compositions by Tessa Darcey and Della Rae Morrison

Kariinap / South Perth

Mill Point Reserve

With compositions by Tessa Darcey, Mei Swan Lim and Kobi Morrison

Mt Pleasant

Deep Water Point Reserve

With compositions by Chris Cobilis, Tessa Darcey and Rachael Dease

Nyiiabap / East Fremantle

John Tonkin Reserve

With compositions by Tessa Darcey, Rachael Dease and Benjamin Witt

**Wheelchair accessible venue*

Wadjemup / Rottneest Island

Natural Jetty
and

Walyalup / Fremantle

Bathers Beach

With compositions by Clint Bracknell, Tessa Darcey and Alice Humphries

Witness Stand framing texts and textures by Kylie Bracknell, Madeleine Flynn, Tim Humphrey and Barry McGuire.

6.00am

7.30am

6.00pm

WITNESS STAND

LOCATIONS



Wadjemup/
Rottnest Island

Nyjiabarap/
East Fremantle

Walyalup/Fremantle

Mt Pleasant

Kariinap/South Perth

PERTH

Djijjalap/Perth

Mandoon/
Guildford

PERTH
FESTIVAL

Clint Bracknell

Uncle Barry McGuire's generosity with his knowledge of Country in and around the river cannot be understated. Rather than re-present his depth of understanding, I've responded with music to perhaps convey the sense of place that discussions with him evoked. The 'Wadjemup' track is built on sampled water, struck sticks, whistles and breaths from our visit to that place. The foundation of other track, 'Painted Like a River' is inspired by something Uncle Barry said in one of the last Witness Stand meetings we had and is a pretty straightforward articulation of the connection between water, life and everything. It arrived almost fully-formed – charting its own unexpected path as an 80's synth-pop odyssey – and took me along for the ride. My young son heard the song and shared his ideas about the river too, Country he has responsibility for through his mother's family line.

Clint Bracknell is a musician and researcher from the south coast Noongar region of Western Australia and Associate Professor at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and Kurongkurl Katitjin Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research, Edith Cowan University. His stage credits as composer, sound designer and musical director include *Hecate* (Yirra Yaakin/Bell Shakespeare), *The Cherry Orchard*, *Water*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Black Swan), *Skylab* (Black Swan/Yirra Yaakin), *Mission Songs Project: 1957 Palm Island Strike* (Sydney Festival, Darwin Festival), *King Hit* (Yirra Yaakin), and *The Red Tree* (BGTC), which was nominated for 'best original score' in the Helpmann Awards. Recent screen credits include *Fist of Fury Noongar Daa* (Fortune Star/Perth Festival/Boomerang and Spear) and *Hi is for Happiness* (Cyan Films/The Koop). Clint's PhD in Music from UWA was awarded the 2016 Robert Street Prize for most outstanding thesis.

SITES

Wadjemup/
Rottneest Island
Natural Jetty

Walyalup/Fremantle
Bathers Beach

Chris Cobilis

The setting in which the piece unfolds is a current-disturbance layer of time recorded from multiple viewpoints. Coffee beans are grown in equatorial regions and brought on the surface of the water via boats into the Swan River Colony. I asked the barnacles and mussels if they knew the missing songs and stories of the area and they replied in a language I couldn't understand (to me it sounded like 'click click click'). I asked the coffee beans and they replied: 'We don't know. We're not from here, do you know the way out?'

Browsing melvillecity.com.au returned details about Deep Water Point Reserve including:

- Accessible parking
- BBQ facilities
- Boat ramp
- Swimming jetty
- Toilets and showers
- Changing Places Toilet (full sized change table and hoist for people with disability)
- Playground (unfenced)
- Picnic tables
- Drinking fountain (located near toilet block)
- Footpaths and benches
- Dogs prohibited
- Café

I make the loudest sound I can to alert anything in the vicinity: 'HELLO I AM HERE DO YOU KNOW THE NAME OF DEEP WATER POINT? IT IS NOT FOR ME TO KNOW BUT FOR YOU TO REMEMBER'.

Chris Cobilis is a musician, composer and sound artist. His 20+ years toiling as an improviser and playing in bands has informed an ad-hoc practise taking in conceptual composition, installation and original music for feature films, dance and theatre. Chris has performed internationally since 2006 and in 2012 undertook an Asialink Arts residency in Taiwan. In 2016 Chris released *This Is You*; a conceptually-driven musical work centred on the birth of user-generated media: the emergence and endurance of Australia's and America's Funniest Home Videos, which was released on the Room 40 label and performed by Kenneth Goldsmith and Spektral Quartet.

SITE

Mt Pleasant
Deep Water Point Reserve

Tessa Darcey

My culture teaches that humans are separate, superior to nature. My culture speaks about the land as though it exists purely for our consumption and exploitation in leisure and investment. My culture gave me no stories to understand connection and no language to help me navigate a conscious and gentle path on this country. My ancestors stomped noisily and maliciously over the earth and were infuriatingly self-assured in doing so. My elders didn't make sense and they fussed over me as too sensitive and soft-hearted.

As a child, I thought I was an alien – like somebody had scooped me up and accidentally plonked me in an entirely wrong reality. The only thing that really gave a sense of belonging was sitting in nature and harmonising with sounds around me. I learned to find balance there. Nature knew how to hold me like that.

My music practice today is rooted in this experience. As part of this work, I spent many hours visiting place in quiet reflection, holding Barry's stories of the land in my heart and letting the land hold me. The piece itself is one improvised vocal recording that flows throughout many locations and emotions. It is an expression of deep respect, love, regret, sorrow and awe for the place that continues to hold us all. I am so grateful to Barry, Kylie, Maddie and Tim for providing space and trust for me to honour this connection.

Tessa Darcey has been working as a sound artist, educator and producer on Noongar country since 2011. Formally educated as a production designer, Tessa has predominantly worked in design for performance throughout the past decade. This professional practice, and continuing studies in political history and environmental science, have highlighted for her the importance of knowing place and understanding the sickness inherent in the atomisation of human beings in relation to space, culture and responsibility to the natural world.

Tessa's music practice explores these relationships through sound, informed by meditation, intuition and the meaning making we experience spiritually when engaged sonically. She utilises voice and live looping technology to build swelling and haunting dedications to frequencies deep inside the earth – an expression of longing to be held inside them. There is an intricate and ancient biosphere of sound that many of us have forgotten or can no longer hear over the roar of modern civilisation and the dominating insistence of productivity, efficiency and survival at all costs.

Tessa's improvised compositions provide space for reconnection and the processing of reverence, in elation and pain, that often accompanies deep listening and profound awareness of one's reality in place.

SITES

Mandoon / Guildford
Fishmarket Reserve

Djidalalap / Perth
Mill Point Reserve

Mt Pleasant
Deep Water Point Reserve

Nyjiabarap /
East Fremantle
John Tonkin Reserve

Wadjemup /
Rottnest Island
Natural Jetty

Walyalup / Fremantle
Bathers Beach

WITNESS STAND

Rachael Dease

Inspired by the journey from river to ocean, from child to adult, from life to death. Organic sounds from the site blend into the orchestral and return with whale song. Barry told us the story of the little boy and the whale, which spoke to me in a myriad of ways. The pursuit of the child to adventure and the pursuit of the parent to child. There is a sadness evoked while acknowledging the strength of blood and country.

Rachel Dease's artistic practice encompasses art music, film and theatre scoring, installation and songwriting. Graduating from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, she won the inaugural Martin Sims Award at Fringe World, the Melbourne Fringe Music Award and received critical acclaim at New York Fringe Festival for her contemporary song cycle 'City of Shadows'. Her composition and sound design for theatre include the Helpmann Award-nominated *It's Dark Outside* (The Last Great Hunt), *Sunset* (Strut Dance/Maxine Doyle) and *Rest* (WAYTCO). Installation includes *Black Mass* (PICA) Winter Feast 2018 & 2019 (Dark Mofo), *Museum of Water* (Perth Festival), and *Like Embracing Ice* (Fremantle Arts Centre).

Rachael was awarded the 2017 Department of Culture and The Arts Performing Arts Fellowship, won the Performing Arts WA award for Best Music for *Let The Right One In* (BSSTC) and has been a Besen Fellow at Malthouse Theatre. Residencies include PICA, Proximity Festival, Lumen Studios Italy and The Arctic Circle. She is currently a Prelude Composer In Residence at Gallop House, Western Australia.

SITES

Mt Pleasant
Deep Water Point Reserve

Nyjiabarap/
East Fremantle
John Tonkin Reserve

Alice Humphries

Nyiibarap to Wadjemup

Searching, yearning

Rock, breaking

Sand, and water flowing.

Beginning at Nyiibarap where the Waygul rested, travelling out along the Derbal Yerrigan to Wadjemup this work responds to the stories and knowledge shared at, and between the two sites.

Alice Humphries is a highly versatile composer working across and in-between the contemporary classical, jazz and experimental worlds. Her music has been described as 'bursting with life and fun, as well as great, great beauty' and 'deeply thought-provoking...offering both moments of incredible intensity and sublime serenity'.

Her output includes electro-acoustic, chamber and orchestral music, as well as music for dance, documentary and film. She seeks to create evocative and engaging sound worlds that take inspiration from natural phenomena, and intersections between humanity and nature.

Alice's music has been performed across Australia and internationally by artists including Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Syzygy Ensemble, Blair Harris and Caroline Almonte, and the Letter String Quartet. She also works extensively as an arranger and has collaborated with some of Australia's finest orchestras and pop artists including Josh Pyke, Kate Miller-Heidke, Katie Noonan and Missy Higgins.

SITES

Wadjemup/
Rottneet Island
Natural Jetty

Walyalup/Fremantle
Bathers Beach

Mei Swan Lim

'What's the purpose of this for?

To understand how this 'ere, how she vibrates. What's she trying to tell us?

What's she still holding?

As long as we can sit down and listen, we will always hear the light within the land.'

These attuned and wise words from Barry McGuire inspired this piece, from trying to hear the light within the land. Listening is active and generous, and a means to learn many things – if we are humble enough to listen! I was also especially inspired by the words of Baha'u'llah:

'Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is ... the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory.'

To acknowledge where our prosperity comes from, and to treat that source with respect is our task in this age. How can we not take for granted what gives us life?

The first part of the piece is of a meditative, slow pace – where thoughts can drift in and out of consciousness, guided by Barry's voice. The musical compositions in the middle and end are striving to transport you to an otherworldly place, alluding to the many secrets and mysteries joyously held by the land.

Mei Swan Lim is a practicing sound and visual artist whose work centres on the environmental, emotional and spiritual importance of place, interdisciplinary investigation and cultural storytelling. Her works have appeared at Proximity Festival, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth Festival and Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery. Mei completed her Bachelor in Visual Art at Edith Cowan University in 2017.

SITES

Mandooon/Guildford
Fishmarket Reserve

Kariinap/South Perth
Mill Point Reserve

WITNESS STAND

Della Rae Morrison

For Witness Stand I was drawn to the Fanny Balbuk story. She was an amazing, fearless and staunch Whadjuk woman, who throughout her life in Boorloo (Perth) fought for the rights of her people. She was an inspiration to her people, as well as a huge inspiration to me. I keep asking the question, 'Why isn't her story being taught in our schools?'

But until then, I hope audiences enjoy my soundscape of what I imagined her days must have been like, and get to know Fanny Balbuk. And next time we're walking the streets of Boorloo let's remember those who walked and fought before us.

Della Rae Morrison is a Bibbulmun woman of the Nyoongar Nation of the South West of Western Australia. Della has been in the Arts professionally for 30 years, beginning her career in Jimmy Chi's musical *Bran Nue Dae* in 1989. She played Mrs Egg in the Channel 9 TV series *Lockie Leonard*, is a WAMI award-winning songwriter and WA NAIDOC Artist of the year, and she has performed in theatre productions across WA and nationally.

SITE

Djijidjalalap / Perth
Ozone Reserve

Kobi Morrison

Derbarl Yerrigan, also known as the Swan River, has provided life for many millennia. All around the river there are locations of importance that have provided for the Noongar people for countless generations. In this short recording some of these important locations are elaborated upon. The locations each relate to a different stage in the cycle of family creation, due to this, the recording is titled wininup, the place of life.

Kobi Morrison is a 26-year-old Bibbulmun Noongar who was born and raised in Perth. While working at the UWA Centre of Social Impact and Propel Youth Arts WA, Kobi spends his spare time playing music, being involved in various music projects such as Moombaki, Koondarm, Koorlong, Madjital Moorna and Endeavourous. These are projects that earned him the 2018 Perth NAIDOC Youth of the Year award.

SITE

Kariinap/South Perth
Mill Point Reserve

Cathie Travers

I've called my piece Listening Song. I haven't set out to make a representation of the river; it's an attempt to encourage a meditative ambience ... to listen, ponder, absorb, imagine, reflect, connect. And maybe inspire one or two wadjela to further explore Noongar culture and learning, just as this project has done for me ... I have much admiration, love, and respect for an ancient culture that has embraced our environment [and all its elements] at such a profound level.

Cathie Travers roams across musical boundaries in key roles as performer, composer and/or studio producer. She has collaborated with artists from around Australia and internationally in works for theatre, dance, film, radiophonic and concert performance, and appears on many Australian artist CD releases encompassing jazz, tango, contemporary art music, afro-kreol, celtic folk, punk and indie-rock.

Cathie has performed around Australia and internationally with many dance and/or theatre companies and music ensembles, including Australian Chamber Orchestra, Berliner Ensemble, Compagnie József Trefeli, Black Swan Theatre, Deckchair Theatre, VitalStatistix, Nova Ensemble, Magnetic Pig and WASO. She also appears with cabaret artists, jazz musicians and pop-up opera companies around Perth.

Her passion for electronica has not abated since the analog 1970's: in the digital 21st century Cathie creates solo repertoire for acoustic accordion with laptop.

SITE

Mandoon/Guildford
Fishmarket Reserve

WITNESS STAND

Benjamin Witt

My objective was to create a series of immersive soundscapes that could activate the imagination and facilitate observance, contemplation and the development of what Barry McGuire calls an 'understanding and sense of place.' The work is designed not to impose but to complement, so that the natural ambience should feel like it is a part of the music.

All the sounds in the work are informed, or inspired, by the natural ambience the site has known, the dreaming stories Barry shared with us and the tensions between what was and is. Using field recordings, digital processing, synthesiser, electric guitar, kalimba, percussion and voice, I've tried to explore what sound can reveal to us about a place, its history and the prevailing social conditions and culture it hosts.

On the fourth movement of this work, Della Rae Morrison sings 'Dabakan Nidja Walyup Boodja', which translates to 'Walk slowly here over the land of Fremantle'. The work is an invitation for the audience to do just this.

Benjamin Witt is a WAM Award Winning artist and multi-instrumentalist hailing from Perth, Western Australia. After studying at WAAPA, early success was found with alt-rock outfit The Chemist, with extensive national touring and multiple accolades. The former frontman then released two independent solo albums in the form of 2015's freak folk *Audio-Illogical Backyard Dog* and 2016's afro-synth pop *Future Reset*.

As a session musician, Benjamin has worked with Empire of the Sun, The Sleepy Jackson, Kevin Parker, Pond, Bob Evans, Meg Mac, Katy Steele and Megan Washington.

SITE

Nyiiabarap /
East Fremantle
John Tonkin Reserve

WITNESS STAND

Acknowledgements

CREATED BY

Kylie Bracknell [Kaarljilba Kaardn]
Madeleine Flynn
Tim Humphrey
Barry McGuire

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Clint Bracknell, Chris Cobilis,
Tessa Darcey, Rachael Dease,
Alice Humphries, Mei Swan Lim,
Della Rae Morrison, Kobi Morrison,
Cathie Travers and Benjamin Witt

PRODUCED BY

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