

MEDIA RELEASE: Thursday, 31 October 2019

EPIC RITUAL OF GURRUMUL'S CULTURE

Bungul (February 7-9)

PERTH FESTIVAL COMMISSION

Gurumul's Mother's Bungul

Gurumul's Grandmother's Bungul

Gurumul's Manikay

Produced by Skinnyfish Music and Perth Festival with West Australian Symphony Orchestra



Image: Jacob Nash

A bungul is a ceremony, a meeting place of dance, song and ritual. **Bungul** is an epic celebration of great Australian songman **Gurumul's** Yolŋu culture as a centrepiece of an entire first week of First Nations performances at **Perth Festival**.

Bungul invites us into the culture that inspired Gurumul's final album *Djarrimirri* (Child of the Rainbow), in an extraordinary live audio-visual spectacular by Yolŋu dancers, songmen and the **West Australian Symphony Orchestra**.

Directed by Senior Yolŋu **Don Wininba Ganambarr** and **Nigel Jamieson** (*Boorna Waanginy: The Trees Speak*), Perth Concert Hall will be transformed into a traditional Yolŋu ceremonial ground for this ground-breaking live event to celebrate one of the transcendent albums of our time.



Bungul is created on country in North East Arnhem Land. It is conducted by **Erkki Veltheim**, who collaborated with Gurrumul and producer-musician **Michael Hohnen** on the orchestral arrangements for the album.

Dancers from Elcho Island will perform the traditional dances that accompany the ancient Manikay (songs) that form the genesis of the album. Audiences will be enthralled by the dozens of live musicians and dancers as well as projected imagery of landscapes and paintings that reflect the spiritual and geographical source elements of the traditional Manikay.

Djarrimirri was Gurrumul's gift to the world. An astounding achievement of music acclaimed the world over, it presented traditional songs and harmonised chants from his traditional Yolŋu life with hypnotic orchestral compositions.

Now, in his honour, his family add a further cultural and immersive visual dimension to this historic work, performing the songlines that have forged their identity and every aspect of their existence since the beginning of time.

Bungul represents a majestic union of two disparate worlds. It points to a potential contemporary Australian identity grounded in, and drawing upon the extraordinary knowledge, understanding and wisdom of First Nation People, which inspires us all to listen to and care for the precious land we share.

'*Djarrimirri* was the first Indigenous language album to top the ARIA charts, debuting at number one, and is in my opinion the single finest work of recorded art to emerge from Australia in the last decade,' **Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage** says.

'It is the perfect marriage of two vastly different worlds – north-east Arnhem Land Yolŋu culture and European orchestral music. This union reveals a roadmap for our country that both acknowledges our histories and creates a possible path forward.'

WHAT: Bungul

WHEN: Fri 7- Sun 9 February, 7pm (6.30pm Sun)

WHERE: Perth Concert Hall, Perth CBD (Dyedyallalup)

HOW MUCH: \$39 - \$89

BOOKINGS AND FESTIVAL INFO: perthfestival.com.au

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We thank and pay our respects to the Yolŋu people of North East Arnhem land, with whom this work was created, and their country on which the work was created. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.

This project was initiated by the Yunupingu family and skinnyfish music and supported by Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre - Yirrkala Arts Centre, The Mulka Project.

Produced by Perth Festival and skinnyfish music.

Djarimirri (Child of the Rainbow) produced by Michael Hohnen & skinny fish music with musical orchestrations by Erkki Veltheim.

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Perth Festival acknowledges the Noongar people who continue to practise their values, language, beliefs and knowledge on their kwobidak boodjar.

They remain the spiritual and cultural birdiyangara of this place and we honour and respect their caretakers and custodians and the vital role Noongar people play for our community and our Festival to flourish.

Perth Festival

Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, Perth Festival is the longest running international arts festival in Australia and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival



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has developed a worldwide reputation for excellence in its international program, the presentation of new works and the highest quality artistic experiences for its audience. For 66 years, the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with hundreds of thousands of people each year.

Iain Grandage is the Artistic Director 2020 – 23.

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