

AUSTRALIA

DRAMA

MUSIC

# BRAN NUE DAE

BY JIMMY CHI & KUCKLES

Presented by West Australian Opera in Association with Perth Festival

## EDUCATION RESOURCE



Image: Ben Symons

**PERTH  
FESTIVAL**

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# SYNOPSIS

Set out on the road trip of a lifetime with a spunky teenager running away from school, two hippies, a wily Uncle and a German priest. By the time you shake the red dust from your feet, you'll know what it means to come home.

Jimmy Chi's coming-of-age musical *Bran Nue Dae* is an exuberant ride through 1960s Western Australia. Young Willie hitchhikes his way from mission school back to Broome, determined to win the heart of the girl he left behind.

A feel-good mash-up of rock-and-roll, gospel, country and blues music made the first-ever Aboriginal musical a sparkling success in 1990. The stage is a recreation of the historic Sun Pictures open-air cinema in Broome, and the costumes are delightfully nostalgic. Chi's semi-autobiographical musical is packed with humour and hope.

It's a story for all Australians, the late musician said "*It is my story but it is also yours and everybody else you know who seeks love and happiness in a world clouded by injustice.*"

# CREDITS

**Musical Directors** Kuckles (Patrick Bin Amat, Gary Gower, Michael Mavromatis, Stephen Pigram)

**Indigenous Advisor** Michael Mavromatis

**Director** Andrew Ross

**Associate Director** Naomi Pigram

**Set & Costume Designer** Mark Thompson

**Choreographer** Tara Gower

**Lighting Designer** Mark Howett

**Sound Designer** Michael Waters

**Band** Patrick Bin Amat, Mia Brine, Ben Ingvarson, Manny Mavromatis, Bart Pigram

## CAST

**Ernie Dingo** Uncle Tadpole

**Marcus Corowa** Willie

**Teresa Moore** Rosie

**Andrew Moran** Father Benedictus

**Danielle Sibosado** Marijuana Annie

**Callan Purcell** Slippery

**Ngairé Pigram** Aunty Theresa

**Female ensemble** Adi Cox, Damar Isherwood, Tehya Jamieson

**Male ensemble** Czack (Ses) Bero, Taj Jamieson, Bojesse Pigram, Tai Savage

# BIOGRAPHIES

## JIMMY CHI 1948 – 2017

Jimmy Chi was a songwriter, playwright, author and brilliant performer from the pearling town of Broome. He was studying engineering at University when a near-fatal car accident threw his life off on a different trajectory. He returned to Broome, feeling a failure, unable to work.

On the steps of the Roebuck Hotel verandah with his old people and countrymen, he was accepted without expectation or judgement. Their stories made him laugh again. His knowledge of his mother's language and kinship connections deepened. His first love song, *Nyul Nyul Girl*, in Bard and English, belongs to this time, as does the haunting ballad, *Acceptable Coon*. During the 1970s and 80s he wrote a feast of songs, many with Stephen Pigram, Michael Manolis and Kuckles. Music had become his therapy, purpose and career.

Inspired by *My Fair Lady* and *Mary Poppins* Jimmy conceived the idea of a musical about his formative experiences. The story, dialogue and dramatic setting would come from the life around him. *Bran Nue Dae*, a masterpiece of musical satire, was born.

## KUCKLES

Kuckles, a talented band from Broome formed in 1981. The band consisted of Jimmy Chi – lead singer and songwriter; Stephen Pigram – rhythm guitarist, vocalist and songwriter; Mick Manolis – lead guitarist, vocalist and songwriter; Duttoo – bass guitarist, vocalist; and Garry Gower on the drums.

Whilst they were studying at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music in Adelaide in 1982, they recorded an audition tape, *Milliya Rumurra*, which won them an invitation to Germany to the Third Annual International Cologne Song Festival. After finishing their two years of studies they returned to Broome to continue with many more recordings.

Their style of music is a mixture of calypso, rock'n'roll and reggae. Most of the material was composed by three members although each member contributed to the overall sound. Lyrics are in creole / pidgin, using traditional language, with a touch of humour and a subtle snipe at bureaucracy.

Kuckles is Broome kriol for cockles.

## ANDREW ROSS

### DIRECTOR

Andrew Ross is a theatre director from Western Australia, who has directed a number of iconic Western Australian plays including *The Dreamers* and *No Sugar* by Jack Davis, and *Bran Nue Dae* and *Corrugation Road* by Jimmy Chi. He has adapted and directed *The Merry-go-Round in the Sea* and *Tourmaline* by Randolph Stow for Black Swan Theatre in Perth Festivals. His productions have toured nationally and internationally and won a number of best production awards including a Green Room Award, an Age Critics Melbourne Festival Award and a Western Australian Equity Award.

He was foundation director of Black Swan State Theatre in Perth from 1991 – 2003. He worked for the Indonesian Government, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy producing the Indonesian Performing Arts Market in 2013. He was a board member of the Australia Indonesia Institute, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade from 2016 – 19.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## TARA GOWER

### CHOREOGRAPHER

Tara is a Yawuru woman from Broome with Aboriginal, Filipino, Irish and Spanish ancestry.

Tara joined Bangarra in 2006 and career highlights include recently performing in India and Japan for the 2018 International Tour along with London, Paris and New York several times over the past 13 years. Along with returning to her home in Western Australia to perform for her family and being nominated in Dance Australia's Critic Choice Awards as Dancer to Watch.

She created her first choreographic work 'Nala', for Bangarra's Dance Clan 3 in 2013 which later returned to Country, performing in her hometown of Broome on Cable Beach. Tara has also appeared in the film *Bran Nue Dae* (2010) and in Dan Sultan's music video for *Under Your Skin*. She has also led Liyan Dance Workshops at Woodford Folk Festival for the last two years for children, adults and elderly. This cultural sharing combines Yawuru language in song, painting and weaving with contemporary Indigenous dance. Tara believes growing up on Yawuru Country has given her the strength to pursue her dreams into reality.

## MICHAEL MAVROMATIS

### MUSICAL DIRECTOR & INDIGENOUS ADVISOR

Born in a sleepy pearling town of Broome known today as Rubibi by the original Yawuru inhabitants, Michael was born as Michael Manolis and has been known as that through most of his life. He was born to a Greek father and Yawuru Filipino mother and is a speaker of the Yawuru language now working part time with Nyamba Buru Yawuru restoring Yawuru language for future generations. Nyamba Buru Yawuru are the native title holders in and around the Broome township.

Manolis is a musician who learnt guitar at the age of 14 when he attended the Christian Brothers College in the south west town of Albany. He learnt from the other Aboriginal boys who boarded there. He went on to form the Broome band Kuckles in 1980 with Jimmy Chi, Garry Gower, Patrick Bin Amat and Stephen Pigram. They attended the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music at Adelaide University in 1981 – 82 and in March 1982 they performed in Cologne Germany for "Australia night".

## NAOMI PIGRAM

### ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Recipient of the 'Too Solid' female vocalist of the year award Naomi Pigram is a proud Indigenous person of Yawuru and Wadjarri people. A singer, songwriter, performing artist and community service worker from Broome Naomi's professional performing career began at the age of 15 starring in *Bran Nue Dae* cabarets. She studied dance at Naisda and, at the age of 17, toured nationally in the role of Christina with *Corrugation Road* across three different tours. In 1999 she played the lead in the Dendy-award winning short film *Kulli Foot* and has supported many major Australian artists including Missy Higgins and Archie Roach. In 2013 Naomi appeared in a film written and directed by her sister Ngaire Pigram entitled *Dark Whispers*, which earned her a WOW award for her leading performance.

With over 25 years of experience in the performing arts and community service sector Naomi has combined her knowledge of the complex social issues in the region and creative talents to develop and implement projects to encourage and promote self-discovery, acceptance and change for its participants.

## PATRICK BIN AMAT

### MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Patrick Bin Amat or 'Duttoo' as he is known, is a Yawuru man from Broome. He grew up playing music in the backyard with family and friends.

He is one of the original Kuckles band members and has played bass with them since 1980. They were the first Indigenous band to perform in Europe in Koln Leiderfestival in West Germany in the early 80s. He worked with Jimmy Chi on the original music for *Bran Nue Dae*, played in every performance of the original stage play and was also the bass player in the movie. Duttoo went to Centre For Aboriginal Studies and Music (CASM) in Adelaide in 1981 – 82 to learn more about music and create music with Jimmy Chi and Kuckles. He performed in the 1992 Festival of the Arts at Rorotonga in the Cook Islands. He has made a number of recordings with musicians throughout the Kimberley, including *Corrugation Road*, *Didj'un* and Stephen 'Bammba' Alberts Bard album. These days he plays at different events but mainly plays music for family and friends.

For complete cast images and biographies <https://brannuedaemusical.com.au/cast/>



# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

*Bran Nue Dae* is a cultural, groundbreaking Aboriginal musical written by West Australian artists Jimmy Chi and Kuckles. It is set within our West Australian landscape and places our Indigenous community front and centre stage. It tackles dark and sensitive issues with humour and although it first premiered 30 years ago in 1990, it is perhaps even more relevant today, as noted by Naomi Pigram, Associate Director:

“We’re touching on issues like having some of the worst suicide rates in the world and this play gave me pride and a sense of ownership in terms of our story.”

## MAJOR THEMES

The themes within *Bran Nue Dae* may not appear to be easily identified. The musical is deceptive in its (outwardly appearing) use of humour and exuberant music and choreography. The musical number ‘Nothing I would rather be’ addresses the first two themes of Dispossession and Colonisation.

### DISPOSSESSION

Dispossession was experienced by many Aboriginal peoples who were forced off their land and disconnected from their way of life, culture and community. Willie being sent from his hometown of Broome to stay in a boarding school is an example of this.

### COLONISATION

The effects of colonisation and the introduction of white man’s law in place of traditional Aboriginal law are still seen today and led to displacement, violence and assimilation. Two key scenes that are an example of this are The Sun Pictures scene when all stand for ‘God Save our Queen’ and Uncle Tadpole and Willie being kept overnight in jail, which has links to Aboriginal deaths in custody.

### RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is the strengthening and understanding of Aboriginal people, communities and traditions for all Australians. The finale sees hope in a ‘Bran Nue Dae’ and all people coming together.

## KEY IDEAS TO EXPLORE

Key ideas to explore with students could include:

- Examination of perspectives and influences on Australia’s national identity
- Cultural impact of Australia’s Stolen Generation
- Being a stranger in your own world
- Home as a sense of place and belonging

## RESOURCES

<https://brannuedaemusical.com.au/>

*Bran Nue Dae* – Documentary ( Tom Zubrycki, 1991): <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-21/bran-nue-dae-landmark-musicals-anniversary-tour/11004470>

‘Nothing I Would Rather Be’ Lyrics: <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Bran-Nue-Dae-Cast/Nothing-I-Would-Rather-Be>

News Article: <https://theconversation.com/refugees-in-their-own-land-how-indigenous-people-are-still-homeless-in-modern-australia-55183>

*Bran Nue Dae* promo video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6G76sYn6TO>

# BEFORE THE SHOW

## STEREOTYPES IN SOCIETY

*(Please be aware that this activity may raise some sensitive issues amongst students. Encourage an open learning environment and sense of safe space, and tailor the activity as suitable for your class. Students should be respectful where there are differences of opinion.)*

### OBJECTIVE

To identify ways in which stereotypical representations may reinforce habitual ways of thinking about the world and its people, and to consider how such representations may also perpetuate community prejudices.

### ACTIVITY

*Bran Nue Dae* incorporates a number of caricatured stereotype characters within the text (e.g. Slippery, a German tourist and Father Benedictus, a Catholic priest). These caricatures are used to confront sensitive issues through humour.

Lead a discussion with students around what kind of stereotypes of individuals or groups they encounter day to day? You might encourage students to consider dramatic text, pop culture, social media, conversations with family etc.

Draw up a table with 5 – 6 group headings (it may include headings such as police, teenagers, teachers, religious groups, nationalities, LGBTQI+, women etc.)

Ask students to work in groups to identify up to five associated stereotypes for each group (e.g. women are caring and soft, Australian's are laid back and surfers).

Come together as a class and identify any commonalities between stereotypes.

Back in their groups, ask students to select one common stereotype for a group that was identified. Students should then research and look for material that challenges the stereotype. This might be news media, art, pop culture, suburban planning, music etc. Ask students to identify and explain how the material challenges the stereotype and what the impact / effect of the challenge is.

Bring the class together to share their findings. Lead a class discussion "How do you think a stereotype might cause someone to act unfairly toward another person? Have you been influenced by representation of stereotypes?"



Image: Prudence Upton

# PERFORMANCE PROTOCOLS

## MAKING THE MOST OUT OF THE PERFORMANCE

These activities are intended to maximise the theatre experience for all audience members. These activities guide students through a series of engagements intended to get them thinking about how and why they should behave in particular ways and what their behaviour means in this context.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will develop their awareness and understanding of:

- Theatre etiquette
- Appropriate behaviour for an audience
- Relationship between performers and the audience

### DISCUSSION POINTS

Live performance involves performers acting and interact in real time, before your eyes. The audience is active in the way they view the performance. The performers on stage can hear and see you; your reactions and your behaviour can contribute to, disrupt or disturb their performance. The audience can have a big influence on the energy, pace and vibe of the actors and the performance as a whole.

### ACTIVITY

Talk to your students about whether they have been to the theatre before. Use the following questions to guide their discussion:

- What show did you see?
- Who did you go with?
- Where did you see it?
- What was the show about?
- Were the performers professional or amateur?
- What did it make you think about?

Split the class into small groups and ask them to create a list of behaviour they consider appropriate and inappropriate for different settings. Assign the groups the following settings:

- Footy match
- School assembly
- Cinema
- Rock concert
- Theatre

Come back together as a whole group and ask groups to feed their thoughts back to the group. Create a matrix that compares different kinds of behaviour across each setting. For example:

	Footy Match	Assembly	Cinema	Rock Concert	Theatre
Talking	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Eating					
Walking in and out					
Laughing / crying					
Booing / shouting					
Using your mobile phone					

Based on the above, discuss the conclusions students have come to about attending a live performance and compile a series of protocols to guide their behaviour. Ensure elements in the appendix at the end of this document are included.

# AFTER THE SHOW

## POST SHOW ACTIVITY: PREJUDICE IN ART & LIFE

*Bran Nue Dae* is a musical comedy that addresses important social issues for Indigenous Australians in a way that speaks to all.

### OBJECTIVE

To critically analyse, respond to and identify prejudices within various *Bran Nue Dae* texts and compare to real life events.

### ACTIVITY

Select a scene from *Bran Nue Dae*, for example Willie arriving at the boarding school in Perth. Father Benedictus states “My greatest desire is to see der native people be edercarted und trained in der skills ov der modern world. To become citerzens ov dis country dat is truly deres.”

This has strong connections to the theme of dispossession and Australia’s Stolen Generation. Willie is sent from his family and home in Broome to Perth to live with another ‘family’ so that he can learn to be a ‘respectable citizen’.

Research Australia’s Stolen Generation. Lead a class discussion focussing on the impact of the Stolen Generation. Consider whether this has taken place with other Indigenous communities (e.g. Canadian, New Zealander and American).

Compare this sensitive social issue and how it is represented within other texts (for example John Marsden’s *The Rabbits* which is also a musical theatre work). What are similarities and differences?

“They ate our grass. They chopped down our trees and scared away our friends. And stole our children.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJlc7gDkfcs>

Other texts you might consider exploring include:

- *No Sugar* by Jack Davis
- *The Secret River* by Kate Grenville
- *Dead Heart* by Nick Parsons
- *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara AM



Image: Prudence Upton



# REVIEWING LIVE PERFORMANCE

There are many different ways to write a review, as reviews express an individual's thoughts and feelings about a show.

Traditional reviews will often:

## **Give the reader brief background information about a production**

- Title of show (mention playwright or choreographer if relevant)
- Is it an adaptation of another text? An original work?
- Identify the company presenting or performing the show
- Where is this show being performed?

## **Briefly outline plot and themes**

- Make sure not to include any spoilers
- Were the themes/issues effectively conveyed to the audience?
- How do the characters and relationships communicate these?
- Does the design (e.g. set, costumes, lighting, sound and filmic elements) contribute to the conveyance of themes/issues? Consider symbols and metaphors.
- How do style and form play a part in communicating these?

## **Provide an idea of what the design elements are**

- Think about set, lighting, costume, filmic elements and sound
- How did the design choices convey place, time and situation (dramatic meaning or context)?
- What atmosphere and mood were the creative team aiming for?
- How successful were they in achieving their goals?

## **Evaluate the writing, production and performances**

- You might consider things like: Were there any stand out performances or design elements? Why? What were the technical aspects of the production that stood out?

Reviews should reflect how you felt about a show, not what you think you should have felt.

In the digital age, the act of reviewing has changed immensely. It has enabled platforms for a broad range of voices to participate in the reviewing process that previously would not have been heard.

Have a go at writing a 140-character Twitter review of the work.

# SPECIFIC LINKS TO CURRICULUM

## CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES

*Bran Nue Dae* is one of the drama texts on the year 11 / 12 WACE recommended reading list for English Literature.

## HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Year 8 Civics and Citizenship:

- Different perspectives about Australia's national identity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and what it means to be Australian (ACHCK066)

## MUSIC

Year 10 Responding:

- Identification, analysis and evaluation of connections between social, cultural and historical influences and musical developments; and analysis of how the use and combination of the elements of music define stylistic characteristics and cultural and historical features (ACAMUR104; ACAMUR105)
- Consideration of cultural, social and ethical issues, comparing and evaluating audience response and performer roles across a broad range of music in formal, informal, virtual and interactive settings (ACAMUR105)

## ENGLISH

Year 10:

- Literature and Context: Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1639)
- Literature and Context: Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812)
- Texts in Context: Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749)

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

Connections to Year 12 English Unit 3: Developing students' knowledge and understanding of the relationship between language, culture and identity in literary texts. Students inquire into the power of language to represent ideas, events and people, comparing these across a range of texts, contexts, modes and forms. Through critical analysis and evaluation, the values and attitudes represented in and through texts and their impact on the reader are examined.

# APPENDIX

## **Latecomers**

The show will start promptly and latecomers will not be admitted until an appropriate break in the show. Be aware that for many shows, you will not be admitted if you arrive late.

## **Lock out**

If you leave your seat during the performance, you may not be allowed back in. Make sure you go to the toilet and have a drink of water before the performance and/or during the intervals.

## **Noise**

Food wrappers and plastic packets make a lot of noise. It is generally accepted that the audience does not eat during a performance. If you absolutely have to have lollies (such as a cough lolly), ensure it is out of the wrapper prior to the performance.

## **Mobile phones**

Please ensure mobile phones are turned off. If your phone rings during a performance, it can be very embarrassing for you and very distracting for the performers. It is inappropriate to receive a text during a performance.

## **Talking**

Allow everyone – performers and the audience – to focus on the performance by not talking. Talking is annoying for other audience members and can be very distracting for performers.

## **Photographs**

Taking photos, videos or audio recordings is not allowed.