

MEDIA RELEASE:

BLACK BRASS PLAYS STRAIGHT TO THE SOUL

Black Brass
By Mararo Wangai

A PERTH FESTIVAL COMMISSION
WORLD PREMIERE
Produced by Performing Lines WA



Image cr. Christophe Canato

Black Brass is a theatrical feast inspired by the experiences of Perth's African-Australian community and proudly presented by **Perth Festival**.

Written and performed by Festival Lab Alumnus **Mararo Wangai**, joined onstage by composer-musician **Mahamudo Selimane**, this soulful and nourishing show celebrates personal resilience and private victories through the power of music and stories.

Black Brass is set in a music studio over the course of a single night. Cleaning the studio, Sleeper (Wangai) finds his past rekindled by a recording session by Trumpet (Selimane). This stranger – half griot, half oracle – only speaks through music and interrupts Sleeper's evening to unlock a window that sets them both on a journey to uncover the choices we make and how they shape our lives

Through flashback narrative and music, moments of darkness are tempered by joyful songs as the pair hurtles towards the pivotal decision that must be made by sunrise.

Directed by **Matt Edgerton** (*A Ghost in My Suitcase*, *Fully Sikh*), *Black Brass* draws inspiration from interviews with Perth's Zimbabwean, Sudanese, South African, Central Congo, Mauritius, Nigerian, Congolese and Kenyan communities on the theme of resilience.

Black Brass gives voice to the marginalised in the wake of Black Lives Matter, and the public discussion around representation, opportunity and freedom, says Wangai, a Kenyan-born Perth writer, performer and media graduate with a passionate interest in diverse forms of storytelling.

‘My hope is to challenge contemporary notions of resilience that one must overcome in a big or dramatic way,’ Wangai says. ‘By reaching out to people on the fringes of society and bringing to light their narratives, I hope to create a work that speaks to the whole rather than the few.’

Shortlisted for the **2018 Patrick White Award** for playwriting, Wangai has most recently been seen in shows by The Last Great Hunt, Black Swan State Theatre Company’s *Unsung Heroes* and Fremantle Theatre Company’s *The Other Place* alongside Kate Walsh.

Mahamudo Selimane is a musician, singer, songwriter and composer from Mozambique who first performed in Australia at Perth Festival 2002. He migrated to Australia in 2004 and is now part of several bands in Perth and has performed and toured in festivals around Europe and Africa.

Black Brass offers an intimate and nuanced window into the lives of many groups in Western Australia who must tap into huge reserves of resilience every day to stay afloat and keep moving forward. We do not hear much about these voices, about the energy required to get through each day.

In highlighting one journey, *Black Brass* celebrates those who walk this fine line between a present unwilling to accept them and a past that refuses to let go.

‘We are proud to be able to commission *Black Brass*, an important work that reflects the diversity of Western Australian stories as well as the breadth and reach of our Festival community,’ **Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage** says.

‘*Black Brass* is a wondrous blend of music, theatre and storytelling from two Perth based African-born performers who possess effortless charisma and a thrilling facility in their shared musical language,’ Grandage says.

Produced by Performing Lines WA, *Black Brass* features dramaturgy by Sudanese-born poet and playwright **Afeif Ismail**, with set and costume design by **Zoe Atkinson**, lighting by **Lucy Birkinshaw** and sound design by **Tim Collins**.

Black Brass is supported by the WA Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

WHAT: Black Brass

WHERE: Studio Underground / Yandilup / Northbridge

WHEN: Thu 4, Fri 5, Sun 7 Mar 6pm, Wed 6 Mar 6pm

HOW MUCH: \$39

BOOKINGS AND FESTIVAL INFO: perthfestival.com.au

Click here for a [media kit](#) and [images](#). For further information, interviews or images please contact:

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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.

ABOUT 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 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 67 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.

