

MEDIA RELEASE: Wednesday, 18 November 2020

RIVER SPEAKS OF OUR EVER-PRESENT PAST

Witness Stand

Created by Madeleine Flynn, Tim Humphrey, Barry McGuire and Kylie Bracknell

A PERTH FESTIVAL COMMISSION

WORLD PREMIERE



Cr. Cam Campbell and Bosco Shaw

Across a city connected by its river, **Witness Stand** is an invitation to sit, listen and reflect together at special sites of cultural and historical significance along the banks of the Swan.

On a series of tiered seating stands from Mandoon (Guildford), to Walyalup (Fremantle) and out to the ancient mouth of the river at Wadjemup (Rottnest Island), audiences can sit and experience sound works that tell the timeless stories of Whadjuk Noongar country and the interruptions of colonisation.

Witness Stand is the latest **Perth Festival** commission from **Madeleine Flynn** and **Tim Humphrey**, the artists behind the 2019 Festival's celebrated **Five Short Blasts** oral-history boat tour of the lower reaches of the Swan River. *Five short Blasts* was described by [The West Australian](#) as 'a profound listening experience that opens participants to a deeper engagement with the Swan River, its estuary and port, highlighting its geological, cultural and economic importance and the way it is treasured in people's everyday lives'.

For *Witness Stand*, Flynn and Humphrey will be working with Noongar artists **Barry McGuire** and **Kylie Bracknell** and other Noongar storytellers, along with local composers, sound artists and musicians **Clint Bracknell**, **Chris Cobilis**, **Tessa Darcey**, **Rachael Dease**, **Alice Humphries**, **Mei Swan Lim**, **Della Rae Morrison**, **Kobi Morrison**, **Cathie Travers** and **Benjamin Witt**.

Witness Stand invites audiences to consider the Derbarl Yerrigan as a source of life as we celebrate the 2021 theme of **Bilya** (river) this summer.

Perth Festival Artistic Director **Iain Grandage** said *Witness stand* was paradoxically both a large-scale and intimate work spanning the entire length of the river while providing the listener with an evocative, reflective encounter with each setting.

‘Sitting on the banks of the river listening, you will have a sense of quietude as you bear witness to the magnitude of the sky and the glory of the river while learning about the rich histories of this place, and adoring it even more for that deeper understanding.’

This project’s development has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body; Dark MOFO; Live Umbrella Finland; Vitalstatistix and the APRA/AMCOS Art Music Fund. Produced by Bureau of Works and supported by Spinifex.



WHAT: Witness Stand

WHERE: Various sites along Swan River and Wadjemup (Rottneest Island)

WHEN: 5 – 28 Feb

HOW MUCH: FREE

MORE DETAILS AND FESTIVAL INFO: perthfestival.com.au

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

Stephen Bevis

+61 8 6488 8618 / 0448 927 281

sbevis@perthfestival.com.au

Belinda Sherry

+61 8 6488 8582 / 0415 346 803

bsherry@perthfestival.com.au

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 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.

