

MEDIA KITS

BLACK TIES

BY JOHN HARVEY & TAINUI TUKIWAHO
ILBIJERRI THEATRE COMPANY & TE RĒHIA THEATRE
STUDIO UNDERGROUND
THU 13- SUN 16 FEB
A PERTH FESTIVAL COMMISSION

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BLACK TIES

Two families, two cultures... too much!

When Māori corporate hotshot Hera and Aboriginal consultancy entrepreneur Kane locked eyes at a Cultural Awareness session, it was love at first sight. Ambitious and career focused, Kane and Hera now have their perfect future all mapped out. But there is one thing they can't control...their families!

As the biggest mob of Aunties, Uncles and cousins from both sides of the ditch get worked up for the blackest wedding ever, reality is sinking in. Fast! Will this international love story bring two strong cultures together? Or will it blow Hera and Kane's world apart?

BLACK TIES is a hilarious and heart-warming immersive theatre experience by ILBIJERRI Theatre Company (Australia) and Te Rēhia Theatre (Aotearoa/New Zealand) that reminds us of the power of love to unite.

With a peerless cast including Uncle Jack Charles, Mark Coles Smith, Lisa Maza, Tuakoi Ohia and Brady Peeti, and created by a crack team of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori artists, *BLACK TIES* reimagines the popular wedding rom-com from a distinctively First Nations perspective. Set to a live score of Black anthems and wedding classics, it will be a party to remember.

Created by a black bold and brilliant team of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori artists, *BLACK TIES* re-imagines the popular rom-com wedding trope from a distinctively First Nation's perspective. Set to a live score of Black anthems and wedding classics, this will be a party to remember happily ever after.

CREATIVE TEAM:

WRITTEN BY JOHN HARVEY AND TAINUI TUKIWAHO
DIRECTED BY RACHAEL MAZA AND TAINUI TUKIWAHO
SET DESIGNER: JACOB NASH
COMPOSER AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR: BRENDON BONEY
LIGHTING DESIGNER: JANE HAKARAIA

AV DESIGNER: JAMES HENRY
SOUND DESIGNER: LAUGHTON KORA
COSTUME DESIGNER: TE URA HOSKINS

PERFORMERS

JACK CHARLES
MARK COLES SMITH
LANA GARLAND
TAWHIRANGI MACPHERSON
LISA MAZA
TUAKOI OHIA
BRADY PEETI
TAINUI TUKIWAHO
DALARA WILLIAMS
DION WILLIAMS
AND A THREE-PIECE BAND INCLUDING BRENDAN BONEY & LAUGHTON KORA

Black Ties is suitable for children ages 12+

Running time 150mins, including interval.

JOHN HARVEY (Saibai Island) | WRITER

John is the Creative Director of *BROWN CABS* and is a producer, writer, and director across theatre and film. He is the writer of the Green Room Nominated and highly acclaimed *HEART IS A WASTELAND*. He has been a recipient of the Footscray Community Arts Centre Writer-In-Residence. In 2018 he was a recipient of the Malthouse Theatre Sydney Myer Fund Tower Residency creating a new theatre work. In the same year he was a recipient of Creative Victoria Creators Fund. He currently has writing commissions with Malthouse Theatre, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and has a new work in development for *BROWN CABS*. In 2018, he directed new theatre work *A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN* for Orana Arts. John has many accomplishments in film including producing feature film *SPEAR*; being a producer on *THE WARRIORS* tv series; and has produced numerous First Nation short dramas. He has also directed documentary and short film narratives for screen.

TAINUI TUKIWAHO (Te Arawa/Tuhoe) WRITER | DIRECTOR

Tainui Tukiwaho has been a company director, producer, director, actor and writer of Māori theatre for a number of organisations over the last decade, leading Te Rēhia theatre, Takirua and Te Pou Theatre. His most recent directing credits include *Astroman*, presented in partnership by Te Rēhia Theatre and Auckland Theatre Company, Māori language play *He Tūrū Māu* (2018), Albert Belz's *Cradle Song* (2018). He has worked with Albert Belz as director and co-creator over many project since 2008 developing their distinctive cpmedic style.

RACHAEL MAZA (Meriam Mer/Yidinji) | DIRECTOR

Rachael is widely known for her wealth of acting, directing, and dramaturgical experience across the Australian film, television and theatre industry. Most notably, the AFI (Australian Film Institute) award-winning *Radiance*, stage production of *The Sapphires*, presented for ABC's *Message Stick*, and acting coach for multi-award winning *Rabbit Proof Fence*. Her performances have also been acknowledged with a Green Room Award and Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award. Rachael first worked with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company in 1992, as director of *Stolen*, and in 2008 joined the

company as Artistic Director. Since then she has directed iconic works such as *Jack Charles V The Crown* (2010), *Foley* (2011), and *Which Way Home* (2017). Rachael's contribution has been recognised through multiple awards, including the *Touring Legend* Drover Award, 2017 and the Australia Council of the Arts *Award for Theatre* (2019), as well as an Honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from Edith Cowan University (2019).

JACOB NASH (Murri) | SET DESIGNER

Jacob graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) Design Course in 2005. In 2010, he designed the set for *BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE's of earth & sky* and received a Green Room Award for Best Design in Dance. He was appointed Artist-in-Residence at BANGARRA the following year and is now Head of Design. Jacob received a Green Room Award nomination for his unique set design for BANGARRA's season of *Belong* (2011) and has designed sets for each of BANGARRA's annual productions since. This year he was awarded a Helpmann Award for 'Best Scenic Design' for his powerful and evocative set in Bennelong. Jacob was the specialist production designer and creature designer on the critically acclaimed sci-fi TV drama *Cleverman* season one and production designer and creative designer for season two.

BRENDON BONEY (Wiradjuri/ Gamilaroi) | COMPOSER AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Brendon has been a recording and performing artist touring the world as part of the act Microwave Jenny for the past decade. He has composed for and performed at festivals such as *Bluesfest*, *Woodford Folk Festival*, *Festival of the Sun* and *The Aussie BBQ* (UK). Theatre credits include *Dubboo* Bangarra Dance Theatre - David Page Fellowship, *Winyanboga Yurringa* Belvoir Theatre - Composer and Sound Designer and *Black Cockatoo Ensemble* - Assistant Music Supervisor and Sound Design.

JAMES HENRY (Yuwaalaraay and Yorta Yorta) | AV DESIGNER

James Henry is involved in many aspects of the music industry: from singer/songwriter to engineer to musical director. His diverse skill set has seen him perform as a guitarist on the *Black Arm Band* tour of the UK, and as a choir member and guitarist as part of *Archie Roach's* *Into the Bloodstream* tour. His composition skills have attracted commissions from City of Melbourne to compose for experimental medias. James was also musical director of *Tanderrum* for the 2014 Melbourne Festival, and AFL's *Dreamtime at the 'G* performances. James has also worked with ILBIJERRI as sound designer for the 2017 touring production of *Coranderrk*.

JANE HAKARAIA (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga) | LIGHTING DESIGNER

Jane Hakaraia is a freelance theatre and TV designer. Theatre companies she works with regularly include Auckland Theatre Company, Bullet Heart Club, Silo Theatre and Massive Company. In theatre, she is known primarily for lighting design but, in the last few years, has expanded into set design. She also works with Blue Bach Productions as Art Director on their TV offerings and is currently working with Māoriland Film Festival in the design of their outdoor spaces at the Māoriland Hub in Otaki. This year, Jane will be working with all her favourite theatre companies, including Te Rēhia and Auckland Theatre Companies on *Astroman* and Silo Theatre on *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*, both for Auckland Arts Festival. She will also work on *Half the Sky* and *Like a River, I Disagree with Massive*, and *Owls Do Cry* with Red Leap Theatre. Jane has a degree in design from Unitec and undertook an honours degree in design at AUT.

LAUGHTON KORA (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Pūkeko) | SOUND DESIGNER

Laughton Kora has been playing music since the age of six, appearing on stage as part of his father's band until he was 17 years old, when he won Smokefree rockquest. His band, *Aunty Beatrice*, toured New Zealand and released a single. He moved to Queenstown and formed *Soul Charge* with

members KP (Sunshine Sound System) and P Digsss (Shapeshifter). In 2001, he headed to Wellington and formed *Kora* (2003–2012) with his brothers. Laughton toured extensively with *Kora* to Australia, England, Ireland, Scotland, Japan, Singapore and the USA. Since 2012, Laughton has forged ahead with his own solo project and has also formed duo *Neon Ninja* with Andy Keys (*ex-Opshop*). Laughton attended NZ Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School – and has a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts. He featured on series two of *Songs from the Inside*, with Don McGlashan, Anika Moea and Annie Crummer, and starred in TVNZ's drama series *Coverband*. Laughton has Sound Designed *Amadeus* and *Astroman* with Auckland Theatre Company.

PERFORMERS

JACK CHARLES (Boon Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung)

Uncle Jack Charles is a beloved and respected elder, an actor, musician, potter, writer and gifted performer. He is acknowledged as the grandfather of Aboriginal theatre in Australia and co-founded the first Aboriginal theatre company, *Nindethana Theatre*, with Bob Maza in 1972.

Charles' acting career spans over six decades and has touched many across the globe. He has showcased his work in many nations including Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, the United States. His early career highlights include *Cradle of Hercules* (Old Tote Theatre); *Ben Hall and Rush* (ABC TV); and the feature film *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*.

In 2019, Charles memoir, *Born-Again Blakfella*, was released by Random house, and tells his extraordinary life story.

Jack Charles V The Crown, co-written by Charles and John Romeril, directed by Rachael Maza, was first produced by ILBIJERRI Theatre Company in 2010. The almost entirely autobiographical work Charles was able to bring the lived experience of being a member of the Stolen Generation to the world, with empathy and charm. The production won the Drovers Award for Best as well as a Helpmann Award for Best Regional Touring Production in 2012.

His recent credits include *Gods of Wheat Street*, *Cleverman*, *Black Comedy*, *Play School* (ABC TV); the feature film *Pan* (Berlanti Productions, RatPac-Dune Entertainment); and *Wolf Creek* (Stan).

In 2009 Charles was awarded the Tudawali Award at the Message Sticks Festival, honouring his lifetime contribution to Indigenous media. He was the recipient of a Green Room Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014 and in 2016 was named Victorian Senior Australian of the Year. Most recently, Charles was awarded the 2019 Red Ochre Award at the National Indigenous Arts Awards, a prestigious honour that recognises his outstanding contributions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts in Australia and abroad.

MARK COLES SMITH (Nyikina)

Mark is a Helpmann Award winner, for Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*, and has twice been nominated at the AACTA Awards, for *Last Cab to Darwin* and *Pawno*. He also won a Film Critics' Circle of Australia Award for *Last Cab to Darwin*. Most recent screen credits include Channel Nine's *Halifax*; ABC's *Les Norton*, *KGB* and *Shaun Micallef's Mad as Hell*; and Lucy Durack's writing debut, *Lift*. Mark also presented the ABC documentary *Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister? An* in-demand voice artist, he voiced the 2018 character of Crash in *Call of Duty Black Ops 4*, for PlayStation.

Mark works as a sound designer under the alias Kalaji, which is a Nyikina word for 'whirlwind', His

first major experimental work, *Night River*, played at the 2019 Yirramboi festival in Melbourne. He has produced across an array of genres and projects, including the sound for *Which Way Home* (Ilbijerri Theatre Company, 2018). Recent theatre acting credits include *Bottomless* (FortyFiveDownstairs); both seasons of *Bliss* (Malthouse and Belvoir); and *The Man with the Iron Neck* (Legs on the Wall theatre company). Previous screen credits include the short film *Miro; Picnic at Hanging Rock*; US series *Hunters: Old School*, opposite Bryan Brown and Sam Neill; *The Gods of Wheat Street*; American comedy *Modern Family*; *Hard Rock Medical* and *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, among others.

DION WILLIAMS (Waradjuri and Wokaman)

Dion Williams hails from Echuca in country Victoria. He played the lead role of Ruben in the Jada Alberts play *Brothers Wreck* at the Malthouse and Adelaide's State Theatre and is currently starring in a schools production of *Black Diggers / The Longest Memory* for Complete Works Theatre Company. Dion's acting career began when he won the role of Marlon in Chris Lilley's *Angry Boys*. He was a runner up in Melbourne Comedy Festival's 2017 stand up competition *Deadly Funny*. He has played roles in large scale drama series including a recurring role in the primetime drama *The Time of Our Lives* and was a lead guest in *Redfern Now*, both for the ABC. He also played a lead role in the Nine Network's mini-series *Gallipoli*. Dion is also an accomplished athlete and footballer.

DALARA WILLIAMS (Wiradjuri/Gumbaynggirr)

Dalara Williams graduated from the prestigious National Institute of Dramatic Art in 2017. Dalara made her feature film debut in Wayne Blair's *TOP END WEDDING*, which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, and she has recently completed production on her follow up feature, Victoria Wharfe McIntyre's *THE FLOOD*. Her recent television credits include *GET KRACK!N* and the third and fourth series of *BLACK COMEDY* for the ABC, which went on to win the 2018 Casting Guild of Australia Award for Best Casting in a TV Comedy. Dalara's short film credits include *LAST DRINKS AT FRIDA'S* which premiered at the 2017 Sydney Film Festival and *ORIGINS*.

Her stage credits include *WINYANBOGA YURRINGA* for Belvoir, *BLACKIE BLACKIE BROWN* for the Sydney Theatre Company and the Malthouse Theatre, and whilst at NIDA her stage credits included *REALISM*, *LOVE AND MONEY* directed by Judy Davis, *THE SEASON AT SASPARILLA* and *TWELFTH NIGHT*. She was also awarded the Hazel Treweek Shakespeare Award during her time at NIDA. Prior to NIDA, Dalara studied Aboriginal Theatre at Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and performed in *CROWBONES AND CARNIVORES*. She also performed as Goneril in *THE SHADOW KING*, a reworking of Shakespeare's tragedy King Lear as part of the Darwin Festival. Her professional acting debut was starring in the Tiwi adaptation of *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS; WULAMANAYUWI AND THE SEVEN PAMAUI* directed by Eamon Flack which toured nationally.

TAINUI TUKIWAHO (Te Ararwa & Tuhoe)

Unitec graduate (2001) Tainui Tukiwaho has multiple short films and television shows and theatre productions in Aotearoa and abroad to his name. In 2011 he took on the challenge of playing legendary entertainer Billy T James, for telemovie *Billy* and other notable roles includes *Tangiwai - A Love Story*, playing Dave's boss in TV series *Step Dave*, and co-starring in feelgood fishing movie *The Catch*, as a man trying to win a Kaipara fishing contest. His latest work includes *The Sounds* (2019), The Australian channel 7 comedy *Fam Time* (2019), *The Gulf* (2018) and *Fluent* in te reo Māori, Tukiwaho also hosted Māori Television talk show *O Whakaaro* and featured in te reo Māori drama *Kōrero Mai*.

BRADY PEETI (Te Ati Hau Nui A Paparangi, Ngati Maniapoto)

Brady is a Takatapui actor and singer hailing from the Whanganui region. They have worked on multiple productions in and around the Auckland region and has been awarded the NAPTA Award for 'best Supporting male actor in a musical' for their role as 'Jimmy' in *Dreamgirls*. Recent credits include a Auckland Theatre Company's "*Astroman*", Fine Fatale's "*The Heels Are Alive*" programmed in the Cabaret Festival with Auckland Live and a directorial debut of "*Sinarella*" with the Mangere Arts Centre. Brady's single of Allen Toussaint's "*It's Raining*" made it to the top of the 2016 New Zealand Blues Charts twice and their "killer voice" and "soulful vocals" have been praised in productions including '*Dominion Road The Musical*', '*Larger than Life*' and '*The Wizard of Otahuhu*'

ILBIJERRI THEATRE COMPANY

ILBIJERRI is one of Australia's leading theatre companies, and the longest running First Nations theatre company in Australia. We create, present and tour powerful and engaging theatre creatively controlled by First Nations artists that gives voice to our cultures. Since 2010 we have presented 18 new works, performed 621 times in 312 venues to 99,417 people across Australia and around the world. Born from community, ILBIJERRI remains grounded in telling the stories of what it means to be First Nations in Australia today. ILBIJERRI supports self-determination for First Nations voices through programs that foster emerging First Nations theatre makers and industry professionals. ILBIJERRI works to reclaim First Nations ways of working within the Australian arts sector, through programs and projects grounded in deep listening with and for community and country. We engage purposefully and promote discussion around key issues facing First Nations community. There is a growing hunger for ILBIJERRI's work across Australia and around the world, and we are committed to continuing to develop meaningful relationships with audiences through sharing the stories we are uniquely placed to tell.

TE RĒHIA THEATRE

Established in 2012, Te Rēhia Theatre is a proudly Māori theatre company, championing Māori playwrights, tikanga Māori arts practice, te reo Māori and the presentation of our diverse stories. Te Rēhia Theatre, named in honour of the atua of leisure is led by Amber Curreen and Tainui Tukiwaho based at Te Pou – The Auckland home of Māori Theatre. We're passionate about te reo Māori in theatre and the exploration of innovative ways of telling Māori stories.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

RACHAEL MAZA, Co-Director, and ILBIJERRI's Artistic Director:

The big highlight for me is that I finally get to work with an all First Nations creative team and what a team: Jacob Nash, Brendon Boney, James Henry, John Harvey, but especially my old and new whanau from NZ: Tainui Tukiwaho, Amber Curreen, Jane Hakaraia, Laughton Kora and Te Ura Hoskins. On and off stage this work is a celebration of who we are as Blackfulla's and Māori's: the resilience, the humour, the passion, strong family, culture, thriving despite our shared experiences of colonisation.

I think about the trajectory of black theatre in this country to where we are today and this cocktail of hard hitting/political and the humour has always been there - how else could we have survived.

JOHN HARVEY, Co-Writer:

When we started out on this journey we wanted to make a show that our Elders, our Aunties and Uncles – in fact all of our community could enjoy. And in BLACK TIES we have spades of that! BLACK TIES celebrates our rich cultures and our connection across the water between our

people.

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company is leading the way in creating paths for our stories on an international level and the company's perfectly placed to embark on a bold First Nations collaboration of this scale thanks to the support of AsiaTOPA and MFI. I think as First Nations people we often have conversations with other Māori sisters and brothers across the water, but rarely to we embark on these types of collaborations - it's been amazing experience for me as writer.

TAINUI TUKIWAHO, Co-Writer and Co-Director

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

This whakatauki or proverb from home speaks to the importance of people and relationships to ngai Māori. *Black Ties* brings these relationships to the stage, blows them up, re builds them and allows us to love and laugh with our people from both sides of the ditch. We empower our people by bringing our mums, our aunties, our cousins to the stage and sharing what is important for them; it is family, it is laughter, it is music, it is kai! Whether we are fighting for our land and our language, mourning our loved ones or having a party, these same things remain. It is the ultimate act of self determination for us as first peoples artists to create theatre at the scale of *Black Ties* for our people, by our people and about what we think is important. We've started a mean party, can't wait for everyone to join us.

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