ANNUAL REPORT 2020



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be advised that this report contains images of deceased persons.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Country that we travel through and share stories on.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners, Elders, Ancestors and young leaders.

We acknowledge, with full respect, the strength of First Nations people and communities fighting to protect and look after Country, Community, Language and Lore, in the face of ongoing colonial interruption and cultural genocide.

In particular, we acknowledge and pay our respects to the sovereign peoples of the Kulin Nations on whose unceded land ILBIJERRI Theatre Company is based.

Always was, always will be, Indigenous land.



OUR CHAIR



- Kareena Gay, Chair

If there's one thing that's certain, 2020 was an extraordinary year.

It began with the tour of one of our most exciting and most significant productions; BLACK TIES, an ambitious collaboration with our First Nations partners from Aotearoa, New Zealand. It showed us the powerful connections we can make with a shared story.

We also welcomed Sarah Greentree as our acting Executive Director and eagerly looked forward to another year. Then, of course, COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill; everything changed, and everyone had to adapt.

The arts sector was particularly devastated; without live audiences to entertain and almost all interactions via a computer screen, new operating methods were required. Despite this, ILBIJERRI continued to grow, albeit in ways we would never have expected a year ago.

Work continued on our productions with ubiquitous Zoom meetings and creativity channelled in new ways. As always, our young people inspired us and led the way with Ensemble and BlackWrights, embracing the online medium and leveraging the broader reach it can provide.

We were treated to a special online season of JACK CHARLES v THE CROWN, hosted by Arts Centre Melbourne, an unexpected encore of one of our most successful productions.

Our Social Impact team rose to the challenge and showed agility in developing VIRAL to film, while continuing to drive the critical work of developing ways to engage and work in community.

Finally, and most importantly, after a tumultuous year that has reminded us to appreciate what we have, our sincere and humble thanks to all ILBIJERRI's supporters and contributors and our hardworking, dedicated, and inspiring team. It's been a challenging year that has required tremendous determination, resilience and commitment, and we are very grateful.

We look forward to a new year and a new home at Collingwood Yards, with renewed enthusiasm for the incredible First Nations stories that our nation needs to hear.

FROM

OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



- Rachael Maza AM. Artistic Director CEO

The year started on a high!

An incredible First Nation to First Nation collaboration with Maori theatre company Te Réhia Theatre based in Auckland Aotearoa-and our largest work to date-BLACK TIES premiered at Sydney Festival to a sell-out season.

Rave reviews followed before the show went on to Perth Festival, Melbourne's Asia TOPA Festival, then across the ditch to Aotearoa's New Zealand Festival in Wellington, and finally Auckland Festival.

And then BANG! We were doing the final night of the season at Auckland Festival when the borders closed due to COVID-19. We flew home the next day to commence a 14-day self-quarantine.

The impact on the performing arts sector was devastating-independent artists being the worst affected. All live art events were immediately cancelled without remuneration and yet those same artists were not eligible for the governments COVID stimulus packages. No-one expected it to go on for so long.

The extraordinary tenacity and determination of our sector to adapt and

innovate and find ways to continue to make their art must be celebrated. The expectation was for everyone to simply 'go digital' which presented huge logistical and ethical challenging for those of us in the business of the live experience. We knew it is not possible to substitute the unique exchange that goes on between artist and audience in live performance.

Although 2020 saw much of ILBIJERRI's program postponed or cancelled, there were many surprising discoveries and learnings (many of which will be incorporated permanently going forward). One great example was the way ILBIJERRI's Ensemble adapted workshops to digital, under Nazaree Dickerson and Producer Caleb Thaiday. On the plus side, this meant we were able to open it up to participants regionally and nationally. We were also able to bring in inspirational established artists to work with the Ensemble: such as Deb Mailman and Tony Briggs.

Our Artist Development program
BlackWrights saw the 'new writers'
development program expand to include
the development of 'new dramaturgs',
facilitated by the extraordinary Kamara
Bell-Wykes and producer Caleb Thaiday.



Going digital made it possible for participants and guest artists to join in from across Australia.

Our Social Impact team, led by Kim Bennett, with associate producer Lauren Sheree, were able to adapt and ensure the work in Community kept going.

VIRAL will be adapted to film becoming a permanent educational resource, THE SCORE has been the pilot for a whole new way of utilising theatre within target communities to more deeply engage, and we were also able to grow our pool of facilitators.

Mainstage works were developed over Zoom: BIW A GITHALAY, LAK MALUAI, BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS and HEART IS A WASTELAND. Despite it being one of the most disruptive years - the impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of the sector are very real - acknowledgement must be given to the extraordinary resilience, tenacity, and passion of our sector to 'get up and get on with it'.

At ILBIJERRI we exist to tell the stories of this country that need to be told; the stories by the First Peoples of this land; the stories that define who are as a nation.





OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company creates challenging and inspiring theatre by First Nations artists that gives voice to our cultures.

VISION

Our voices are powerful in determining the future of Australia. Our Cultures are respected, celebrated and embraced.

VALUES

THE POWER OF FIRST NATIONS VOICES

We work with First Nations storytellers (writers, directors, actors, key creatives, theatre practitioners) to tell our stories through high quality theatre as a continuation of our Culture.

SELF DETERMINATION

We ensure First Peoples drive all key decision making processes within ILBIJERRI.

RESPECT

We always give full respect to our people, Elders, Culture and Country – and to all peoples with whom we share our land.



DIVERSITY OF FIRST PEOPLES

We respect, celebrate and embrace the cultural diversity of First Peoples, our stories, our Culture and our experiences.

FIRST NATIONS PROTOCOLS AND WAYS OF WORKING

We respect our people, community and artists by working in accordance with the protocols of our own Community and those on whose Country we are working.



THEATRE PRESENTATIONS

'...a rom-com that doesn't simply entertain the audience... it makes them feel like part of the family.'

THE AGE/SMH



THEATRE PRESENTATIONS

BLACK TIES

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.

BLACK TIES was commissioned by AsiaTOPA, a joint initiative of the Sidney Myer Fund and Arts Centre Melbourne; and has been assisted by the Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by the Australian Council, its arts funding and advisory body, in association with the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc., Sydney Festival, Perth Festival, New Zealand Festival, Auckland Festival, AsiaTOPA Festival and Brisbane Festival BLACK TIES is also supported by Creative New Zealand and The Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts & Cultural Development.



CREATIVE TEAM

Writers John Harvey & Tainui Tukiwaho

Directors Rachael Maza & Tainui Tukiwaho

Set Design Jacob Nash

Composition & Musical Direction Brendon Boney Lighting Design Jane Hakaraia

AV Design James Henry

Sound Design Laughton Kora

Costume Design 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

BAND

Brendon Boney Mayella Dewis Laughton Kora Image: Garth Oliander









ASIATOPA



BIW A GITHALAY (THE CRAB AND THE MANGROVE TREE)

This work for children is being developed in Community, by Community, for Community.

BIW A GITHALAY'S development and presentation includes a reference group of cultural advisors and creative attachments from Saibai Island of the Torres Strait.

Guided by a strong community of Saibai Island mothers, Aunties and grandmothers, the work is told through story, dance and song, introducing children to the island's language, Culture and people. The four performers for this project will represent each of these four Communities. Guided by our First Nations core creatives, Saibai reference group and Elders, the performers become critical collaborators to the process, ensuring there is shared ownership, protocols adhered to, and visibility for all Saibai communities and Torres Strait Islanders.

BIW A GITHALAY was significantly delayed in 2020 as the groundwork for development requires faceto-face and on Country work in Brisbane, Bamaga and Saibai Island. The Torres Strait was inaccessible for the whole year. Work scheduled for 2020 has been pushed out to 2021.



DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Project Facilitator (Brisbane): Nancy Bamaga & Bamaga Productions

Elder / Cultural Consultant (Brisbane) & Project Facilitator (Saibai): Milton Walit

Elder / Cultural Consultant (Brisbane): MacRose Elu

Project Facilitator (Bamaga, Seisia, New Mapoon, Umagico, Iniinoo): Leonora Adidi

Elder / Cultural Consultant (Saibai): Sedrick Waia

Elder / Cultural Consultant (Saibai): Mariana Babia

Writing Consultant: John Harvey

Director: Rachael Maza







BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS

BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS is a major scale rock'n'roll theatre show that celebrates the phenomenal journey and impact of Australian music icons, the Warumpi Band.

Created in collaboration with Warumpi band member, Sammy Butcher and the families of Warumpi band members, BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS speaks untold truths about the band's extraordinary ride from the bush to international fame.

Warumpi Band created the Black Anthems of Australia: *Jailanguru Pakurnu, My Island Home* and *Blackfella/Whitefella*. Their songs have been used at protests to empower First Nations people to stand up for their rights, culture, land and children since the 1980s.

They became one of the most influential bands in Australian music history, scaling personal and cultural conflicts along the way.

Named after the title of Warumpi Band's second album, BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS showcases Luritja/ Pitjantjatjara, Gumatj (Yolngu Martha) and Warlpiri languages, culture and dance from Central Australia and North East Arnhem Land, and features Warumpi Band hits.

Packed with humour, iconic songs and rock star performances, BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS celebrates how music can influence change across a nation.



DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Concept: Emily Anyupa Napangarti Butcher

Musical Director, Story & Cultural Consultant: Sammy Butcher Writers: Ursula Yovich & Anyupa Butcher with Sammy Butcher & Kumanjayi Butcher

Director: Rachael Maza with Anyupa Butcher

Producers: Nina Bonacci & Lisa Watts















BAGURRK

BAGURRK is a ground-breaking First Nations theatre project that will bring to life the stories of generations of Victorian Koorie women. The project received the Victorian Government's first-ever Creative State Commission. It follows the matriarchal line of Boon Wurrung woman Louisa Briggs, merging the stories of her ancestors and descendants into a multi-generational story of female resilience, with relevance to contemporary conversations around colonisation, #metoo, and #blacklivesmatter.

Working closely with Elder in Residence N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, the project will research and establish innovative consultation protocols and create a blueprint used by other projects in both the performing arts and broader creative sectors that tell First Nations stories. The groundwork for development requires face-to-face and on-Country work.











TRACKER

TRACKER is the first work in development emerging out of our support for creative practitioners through our Executive Leadership Program.

Proposed to be a dance-theatre work, Wiradjuri dancer and choreographer and ILBIJERRI's Creative Associate, Daniel Riley, will be the principal creative. This piece tells the story of his great, great uncle Alec 'Tracker' Riley, a NSW police officer. This work continues our support for dance within ILBIJERRI after the success of Jacob Boehme's BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR in 2019.

The early stages of development were adjusted and redesigned in response to the year's challenges. Breaks in the lockdown were used to work with the stories' cultural researcher (Wiradjuri). First-stage story and form development with Rachael Maza, Ursula Yovich and Daniel Riley took place in Melbourne in the brief window before Victoria's second lockdown.



RISING: ARTS HOUSE



LAK MALUAL PARU (FACE OF THE SEA)

The impacts of climate change on low lying islands in the Torres Strait planted the seed for this first major work by mainland-born Torres Strait Islander and award-winning multi-disciplinary artist, Ghenoa Gela. Is culture inextricably linked to place? And what does it mean if the islands sink? What will the legacy and consequences of this issue be for future generations of islanders?

This new dance theatre work marks a new producing partnership between Sydney's renowned physical theatre company Force Majeure and ILBIJERRI Theatre Company. Co-Directed by Rachael Maza and Ghenoa Gela, this show features an extraordinary all-female cast of Torres Strait women. LAK MALUAL PARU has a focus on language and will be bilingual in Creole and English.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Ghenoa Gela Rachael Maza Danielle Micich (Force Majeure)







FUTURE PRESENTATION



HEART IS A WASTELAND

Raye, a struggling country music star in the making, plays pub to pub along Australia's vast desert highways, flogging demo CDs in the hope of returning home to her son Elvis. But when she meets Dan, another broken wanderer, a love affair unfurls over their four-day drive home to Alice Springs.

HEART IS A WASTELAND—originally conceived and performed in a sell-out season by Malthouse Theatre and Brown Cabs—combines First Peoples storytelling with live music, in a whisky-fueled battle of egos. It cuts to the country's heart, recognising everyone's individual right to love.

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's re-staging of HEART IS A WASTELAND is a brand new production—in both vision and scale—featuring freshly conceived sets, musical arrangements by Gary Watling and adventurous audio-visual design; all reimagined to match the energy of its new young leads.

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer: John Harvey
Director: Rachael Maza
Songwriter: Lydia Fairhall
Dramaturge: Mark Pritchard
AV Design: Sean Bacon

Set & Costume Design: Emily Barrie Sound Design: James Henry

PERFORMERS

Monica Jasmine Karo Gary Watling Dion Williams







RISING:



SOCIAL IMPACT PRESENTATIONS

VIRAL

This Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) commissioned work focussing on blood-borne infections was due to have its third and final community tour in 2020. In response to the unlikely chance of getting the work out into community spaces, prisons, and health centres, the production was re-imagined. The work is now being developed as a mixed-media work – animation and recorded live performance – to be accessible online.

In collaboration with DHHS and the original creative team, this new incarnation was developed and commissioned through 2020 for roll out in 2021.





HEPATITISVICTORIA



OTHER SOCIAL IMPACT PROJECTS

Alongside VIRAL, other DHHS commissioned work commenced in Community in 2020. One project highlights women's health in later life, and the other covers stigma and sexually transmitted diseases.

Both projects also required significant face-to-face collaboration with Community and in person workshops. These opportunities were also disrupted by lockdowns and work will continue on them in 2021.





SOCIAL IMPACT PRESENTATIONS



SCAR TREES

Another DHHS commissioned work focussing on family violence was unable to present its second season in 2020. The work will now be presented in 2021 in collaboration with a presenting partner and align with family violence awareness initiatives.

The changes in 2020's programming and development opportunities opened the door for some timely thinking, discussion and forward planning of the Social Impact Program. This time enabled us to look closely at the current model; develop contemporary criteria for program design and rollout, refresh the program's evaluation framework and design skills development programs.

A significant long-term partnership has been struck with the University of Melbourne, which will work with the Social Impact team to develop research and tailored evaluation methodologies for this work. This work will run in parallel with the current development program, informing method and delivery structures.

A structured artist training program has been developed in partnership with Kamarra Bell-Wykes and Stefor Nantsou, focusing on Creative and Cultural Development skills.

Several Victoria-based performers will be invited to participate in early 2021 and this cohort will start work on two new health-focused programs in early 2021.







ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE AND THE BLACKWRIGHTS PROGRAM

Our artist development programs were successful in continuing to run throughout the year. The ILBIJERRI Ensemble and BlackWrights programs were the most suitable to adapt to the challenges presented. The Ensemble team delivered both programs online in their entirety.

Each was able to adapt so that no compromise in their ambitions and design were needed - new methods also produced new experiences. Additionally, both programs demonstrated their capacity to deliver nationwide via online methods and not just in-person in Melbourne.

A cohort of six First Nations writers developed radio plays with mentorship from industry professionals - dramaturge and workshop leaders.

The Ensemble was able to run a nationwide program with support from workshop leaders and industry mentors. Highlights were presentation of work online as part of a First Nations festival in Canada and guest workshop leaders Deborah Mailman and Tony Briggs.













SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET (APAM) - FIRST NATIONS LEAD 2019-24

As the First Nations Lead for APAM, ILBIJERRI brings the company's extensive expertise and leadership as a successful and internationally engaged First Nations led organisation. The partnership comprises two producers employed by ILBIJERRI and based in the APAM office, and the APAM First Nations Advisory Group, made up of performing arts sector leaders from First Nations across the country.

The First Nations Advisory Group (FNAG) supports APAM's decision making, providing advice, engagement, and guidance to the APAM Office. Collectively, the FNAG also supports the programming, cultural and creative decisions of our First Nations Lead Producers.

APAM FIRST NATIONS FRAMEWORK

During 2020, the APAM First Nations framework was developed. The Framework outlines the role of the First Nations Advisory Group, sets out the foundational principles of the First Nations Lead arrangement, and defines focus areas for the First Nations Program.

APAM GATHERING AT ASIA TOPA

Taking place over five days in February 2020, the APAM Gathering at Asia TOPA had two major First Nations program elements.

First Nations Industry Program

Open to First Nations producers and self-producing artists, this initiative brought together a cross-generational network to share knowledge, expertise and build connections nationally and internationally in a pre-market one-day intensive. Daily touchpoints were also offered in the Blak Lounge. The program covered a range of multi-artform markets, key hubs for artistic exchange, and First Nations-to-First Nations networks, and formed a supportive cohort throughout the duration of the Gathering. It was developed and facilitated by Erica McCalman.



SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Blak LAB

In 2020, Asia TOPA's annual LAB evolved to Blak LAB; a lab curated and led by Australia's First Nation artists and cultural leaders in partnership with APAM and ILBIJERRI Theatre Company. Blak LAB invested in future works through artist-to-artist collaborations between First Nations people across Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

Curated by the APAM First Nations Advisory Group, and facilitated by two senior First Nations artists, Blak LAB is part of a growing and celebrated movement of international First Nations-led creative incubators. Over eight days the LAB artists worked within their group and as a whole. Blak LAB artists connected with national and international colleagues as part of the APAM Gathering at Asia TOPA, including two curated visits to the LAB, and a showing during the Gathering which widely considered one of the Gathering's highlights. The aim of Blak LAB was to seed developments and future commissions for contemporary First Nations performance.

The four Blak LAB lead artists were Axel Gee (VIC), Thomas E.S Kelly (QLD), Gary Lang (NT) and Rachael Wallis (NT), and their collaborators were artists from Taiwan and Aotearoa/New Zealand. Blak LAB was facilitated by Kamarra Bell-Wykes and Raymond Blanco, and co-ordinated by Naretha Williams.

Outcome:

- + 12 Australian Artists engaged
- + 5 International Artists engaged
- + 34 Members of the Industry attended the Meet & Greet
- + 28 domestic + international guests in attendance at Studio Visits
- + 412 attendees at the Blak LAB Sharing







LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE LEADERS PROGRAM (ELP)

From 2018 to 2020, ILBIJERRI has been delivering an on-the-job professional development program for two Associate Producers. The aim is to address current training, experience and pathways gaps in the First Nations performing arts industry and facilitate skills development for leadership positions at ILBIJERRI and across the First Nations sector.

One of our ELP producers, Daniel Riley, was promoted to the role of Creative Associate in 2020; his development of a new major work, TRACKER, is mentioned earlier.

Detailed discussions of how to take this essential work forward for ILBIJERRI and the First Nations sector took place through 2020 in collaboration with our colleagues across the country.

ELDERS IN RESIDENCE

Vital to the company's operations has been the role of our Elders as cultural authorities and leaders. This ongoing program acknowledges the importance of Elders in our Community as leaders and keepers of Culture and knowledge.

Our Elders, N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs and Uncle Larry Walsh, contribute to ILBIJERRI's strategic, artistic and cultural direction, with a particular focus on nurturing future generations.











THANK YOU

Thank you to all our generous Partners and Donors for believing in ILBIJERRI, our vision, and the future of First Nations theatre.

KEY PARTNERS







PROJECT PARTNERS

Asia TOPA

Australian Government through the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program

Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by Australia Council for the Arts

Brisbane Festival

Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc.

Creative New Zealand

City of Melbourne

Dennis Osborne Clarke Trust

Gandel Philanthropy

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

Hepatitis Victoria

The Ian Potter Foundation

Melbourne International

Arts Festival

Melbourne Theatre Company

New Zealand Festival of the Arts

Performing Lines

Perth Festival

Playking Foundation

Queensland Performing

Arts Centre

Ross Trust

RISING

Sydney Festival

Te Rēhia Theatre

University of Melbourne

VCA Theatre Faculty of Fine Arts & Music

VicHealth

Victorian Aboriginal

Community Controlled Health

Organisation (VACCHO)

Victorian Aboriginal Child

Care Agency (VACCA)

Victorian Aboriginal

Health Service

Victorian Government: Department of Health

and Human Services

Wilin Centre for Indigenous



INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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FINANCIALS

		2020	2019			2020	2019
		\$	\$			\$	\$
INCOME &	INCOME			STATEMENT	CURRENT ASSETS		
EXPENDITURE	Event Income	689,573	448,878	OF FINANCIAL	Cash & Cash Equivalents	352,943	3,035,895
STATEMENT	Philanthropy & Donations	35,314	282,843	POSITION	Trade & Other Receivables	337,066	107,159
	Other Income	166,023	56,465		Other Current Assets	17,836	30,782
	Government Grants	925,891	1,270,689		TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	3,607,845	3,173,836
	ATO Covid Cash Flow Boost	100,000	О				
	TOTAL INCOME	1,916,801	2,058,875		TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	1,916,801	2,058,875
					TOTAL ASSETS	3,607,845	3,173,836
	EXPENSES						
	Salaries, Wages & Fees	1,322,810	1,418,973		CURRENT LIABILITIES		
	Presentation & Touring	287,865	360,813		Trade & Other Payables	206,284	193,217
	Other Programs	O	7,500		Short-Term Provisions payable	166,710	83,306
	Marketing	79,502	59,992		Income in Advance	2,792,773	2,528,232
	Infrastructure Costs	153,627	131,620		TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	3,165,767	2,804,755
	TOTAL EXPENSES	1,843,804	1,978,898				1,978,898
					Long-term Provisions Payable	0	0
	NET SURPLUS	72,997	79,977		TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	0	0
					TOTAL LIABILITIES	3,165,767	2,804,755
					NET ASSETS	442,078	369,081
					NEI ASSEIS	442,078	369,081
					EQUITY		
					Retained Earnings	369,081	289,104
					Current Earnings	72,997	79,977
					TOTAL EQUITY	442,078	369,081



BOARD AND STAFF

ELDERS IN RESIDENCE

N'arweet Carolyn Briggs & Uncle Larry Walsh

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Kareena Gay Secretary: Gavin Somers

Treasurer: Anthony McCartney

Director: Eugenia Flynn

Director: Lisa Maza

Director: Erica McCalman

Director: Glenn Shea

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Creative Associate: Daniel Riley
Associate Producers: Caleb Thaiday.

Lauren Sheree and Laila Thaker



JACK CHARLES V THE CROWN online season hosted by Arts Centre Melbourne in 2020

"Steeped in decades of our history, surprisingly upbeat... a warmhearted, very entertaining evening."

Sydney Morning Herald







We look forward to sharing our 30th anniversary with you in 2021

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