

ANNUAL REPORT

2019



**IL
BIJ
ERRI**
THEATRE COMPANY



We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Country that we travel through and share stories on, and in particular the Country on which ILBIJERRI Theatre Company is based - the unceded lands of the Kulin Nations.

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

We acknowledge the strength of First Nations people and communities in continuing to practice culture, and connection to Country.

We acknowledge the resilience and tenacity of First Nations peoples and communities fighting to protect and look after Country, Community, Language and Lore, in the face of ongoing colonial interruptions and cultural genocide.

Always was, always will be, sacred Indigenous lands.

MESSAGE FROM ELDERS

IN RESIDENCE



I'm Larry Walsh, Taungurung Elder of the Taungurung people, and a member of the Kulin Nations. I am also an Elder in Residence for ILBIJERRI Theatre Company.

I have worked for the last 30-40 years in Aboriginal Heritage, Culture and Arts. Over that time I've watched the development of our return to the reclamation of our Traditional Arts and Cultures, and how the modern Arts have been using some of the traditional ways of doing Arts.

ILBIJERRI Theatre is traditional in the sense that it tells stories of Aboriginal People and their ways of life - 'cause every time Aboriginal people got together they told stories of creation, daily life, the good and the bad - and that's what theatre does.

So whilst it's a modern theatre - its roots are at least 60,000 years old.

- Uncle Larry Walsh

I have been involved with ILBIJERRI for quite a number of years and my role as Elder in Residence has given me the opportunity to be involved in the development and observation of various productions.

One of these productions was BLACK TIES, which I must have seen 4 or 5 times. It took me on a journey - to another level. It is also taking ILBIJERRI to another level. Now, I'm seeing from across the ditch, two First Nations Peoples coming together to create a universal project - a story that plays out across many dimensions and cultures ... a story of love and conflict! It is probably the biggest scale work we've seen, which travelled around Australia and New Zealand.

We want to keep pushing ILBIJERRI's role in developing and training the next generation of performers in Victoria, giving them the same opportunities that are afforded to interstate Indigenous youth. Programs such as ILBIJERRI's Executive Leadership Program are opportunities to elevate this process, as well as employment opportunities. That's what the opportunity is - helping people to grow. And that's what we hope and envisage - a stronger ILBIJERRI in productions, core business, etc.



I am keen to see ILBIJERRI continue to grow to another level and have it move more into the training area. I welcome the news of ILBIJERRI's partnership with VCA/Wilin, so we can continue to grow the pool of young creative energies and create new productions.

We've just got to keep building - the Board, the Elders in Residence, more productions.

- N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs AM

MESSAGES FROM CHAIR



Kareena Gay, Chair

After another year of growth that continues to inspire us, it is with great pride that we look back at 2019.

It was a year of change for ILBIJERRI and we are very grateful to Gavin Somers, who stepped down after 6 years as the Chair of the Board and to Lydia Fairhall, who moved on from her role as our Executive Producer. They have given us a company that continues to thrive, building on its strong foundations laid over many years. Our financial performance continues to impress with increased revenue and a healthy surplus in 2019. Most importantly, we have been privileged to share amazing First Nations theatre with the world, including BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR, MY URRWAI, VIRAL and SCAR TREES.

We know emerging First Nations playwrights, producers and artists are our future, and in 2019 we saw what can happen when you invest in that future. Our BLACKWRIGHTS playwrights showed us just how powerful and beautiful their voices are with a showcase of their original works at Melbourne Festival. Our ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE team showed us the strength of our young people by carrying the heavy weight of history in

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD. Our First Nations producers show us every day with their talent and potential that our EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM is a core part of our operations.

The year finished with production ramping up to get ready for opening night of one of our most exciting and biggest projects yet, BLACK TIES. ILBIJERRI joined forces with Te Rēhia Theatre Company from across the ditch in Aotearoa/New Zealand and it reminded us all of the power of collaboration, the strength in unity and the endless potential of First Nations stories. What a fitting way to end the year.

- Kareena Gay, Chair

AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ILBIJERRI's home is based on the lands of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung of the Kulin Nation, and we pay our respects to their ancestors and Elders. I'd also like to pay my respects and deepest gratitude to ILBIJERRI's Elders-in-residence: Uncle Larry Walsh (Taungurung) and N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs (Boon Wurrung) whose graciousness, wisdom, humour and guidance keep us spiritually strong.

In 1991 ILBIJERRI was born out of a passion to create a platform for Black voices, to be able to see and hear our stories and our narratives on the stage; to practice the basic human right of self-determination in all aspects of our lives. Including the stories we tell and how we tell them.

It's this same fire and passion that continues to burn at the heart of ILBIJERRI today.

2019 has been another big year for ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, as it continues on its trajectory of growth riding the wave of what I believe is a shift in the Australian psyche, manifested in a growing demand to engage with the stories of this Country from an Indigenous perspective.

The year started with an international tour of BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR and ended with rehearsals for our biggest show to date: BLACK TIES – an all First Nations collaboration with Maori theatre company Te Rēhia Theatre – a show that would go on to have sell-out seasons at major festivals in both Australia and New Zealand.

Despite our successes, one of the challenges for the company, and the performing arts sector as a whole is, although the demand for our work has increased, the pool of skilled and experienced First Nation artists, creatives and producers has not. To

illustrate my point - there is still only one First Nations professional set designer working in Australia.

In the absence of a peak body and as one of only three self-determined First Nations theatre companies in Australia, we embrace our responsibility, to both the community and the sector.

Hence, ILBIJERRI is much more than just a theatre company. We are committed to the development and up-skilling of the next generation of theatre makers, but it's only as our capacity has grown that this has become possible. I am most passionate and proud of this work.

This year we have been able to implement several new programs specifically focused on growing the sector:

The **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM** -creating two new positions for Producers to receive training and support for a future in arts management;

The **ILBIJERRI Ensemble** - creating opportunities for aspiring actors and theatre makers, aged 15 to 25;

BLACKWRIGHTS program - creating opportunities for writers/theatre makers to develop new works informed by black ways of working.

We will continue to play an advocacy role, where relevant, as is demonstrated by our partnership with the Australian Performing Arts Market and the establishment of the First Nations Advisory Group - building inroads into international markets for Australian First Nations work and participating in the Tri-Nations dialogues between Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Last but not least I'd like to acknowledge and thank the extraordinary team that make everything happen: the incredible staff of ILBIJERRI, the Board and all the amazingly talented and dedicated artists, creatives and technical teams we have the honour of working with.

- Rachael Maza AM, Artistic Director/CEO

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.**



Pictured: TUAKOI OHIA, LISA MAZA, LANA GARLAND, JACK CHARLES AND MARK COLES SMITH IN REHEARSALS FOR BLACK TIES

WHAT WE VALUE

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.

2019 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

First Nations artists and arts workers employed - **61**

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENTS of original First Nations works - **11**

BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR toured Canada, with seasons in four cities, plus workshops and First Nations community engagements.

Two SOCIAL IMPACT WORKS, VIRAL and SCAR TREES toured regional and metropolitan Victoria, reaching a combined total of 1,944 audience members across 34 venues.

BLACKWRIGHTS Creators Program culminated in a showcase at **Melbourne International Arts Festival** featuring readings of three original scripts.

ILBIJERRI Ensemble completed its first full year with a season of **CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD** at **Arts Centre Melbourne** as part of **Future Echoes** festival.

BLACK TIES created in **collaboration** with Maōri Theatre Company **Te Rēhia Theatre** and supported by six major arts festivals across Australia and New Zealand.

Photo: Tiffany Garvie

OUR WORK

The longest established First Nations theatre company in Australia, ILBIJERRI creates, presents and tours powerful and engaging theatre by First Nations artists that gives voice to our cultures.

ILBIJERRI is committed to growing a sustainable and vibrant First Nations arts ecology and is investing in the next generation of First Nations theatre makers and industry professionals. Deep listening with and for community and Country is central to our work. We take seriously our role as cultural leaders, continuing to make work that speaks to the truth of this Country, sometimes with humour, but always celebrating the extraordinary resilience and strength of First Nations peoples.

For nearly 30 years ILBIJERRI has continued to bring the brilliance and sophistication of bold, black voices to audiences in country halls, community spaces, prisons and major venues, across Australia and the world.



Our annual program of activities falls into four streams: Major Works; Social Impact Works; Artist Development; Advocacy and Sector Development.

MAJOR WORKS

We give voice to our stories through the nurturing and touring of significant productions, such as **BLACK TIES** and **BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR**, that inspire and move broad audiences, at home and around the world.

SOCIAL IMPACT WORKS

We partner with health organisations to create and tour works such as recent productions of **VIRAL** and **SCAR TREES**. Informed by community voices, these works examine urgent social and health challenges and are taken back to communities in schools, community centres and prisons.

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Programs that support the professional development of First Nations artists have been a longstanding pillar of ILBIJERRI's work. In 2019 this was embedded in our **BLACKWRIGHTS** and **ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE** programs.

ADVOCACY & SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

We work actively to ensure a future for First Nations theatre that is blacker and bolder, with greater opportunities for more First Nations artists to tell our stories our way.

ILBIJERRI's role as the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) First Nations Lead, and our participation in the Tri Nations Performing Arts Network (an alliance between First Nations artists and companies in Canada, New Zealand and Australia) support a broadening of opportunities for First Nations performing arts. Meanwhile, our **ELDERS IN RESIDENCE** program and **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM** foster strong black leadership into the future.



BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR

***We hold memories in our blood. It connects us.
It defines us.***

A choreographer, dancer and writer from the Narangga and Kurna nations of South Australia, Jacob Boehme was diagnosed with HIV in 1998. In search of answers, he reached out to his ancestors. Through a powerful blend of storytelling, projection and movement, Boehme pays homage to their ceremonies whilst dissecting the politics of gay, Blak and poz identities.

BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR received a 2017 Green Room Award for Best Production. In 2019 BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR toured Canada, with seasons in major centres across the Country. The tour also included a range of cultural exchange activities with Canadian First Nations artists and communities. ILBIJERRI is proud to have supported the journey of this award-winning work, from writer's lab through to the international stage.

"...the show feels like a heart-to-heart with a bloke you've gotten to know incredibly well."

- GEORGIA STRAIGHT: Janet Smith

CANADIAN TOUR

24 January - 23 February 2019

PERFORMANCES: 12

AUDIENCES: 1,568

*Danceworks, Calgary
Fei & Milton Wong, Vancouver
The Theatre Centre, Toronto
La Nouvelle Scène, Ottawa*

The Canadian tour of BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, City of Melbourne and Creative Victoria.

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer & Performer **Jacob Boehme**
Director **Isaac Drandic**
Choreographer & Rehearsal Director
Mariaa Randall
Sound Designer **James Henry**
Spatial Designer **Jenny Hector**
Video Artist **Keith Deverell**
Costume Designer **Kelsey Henderson**
Movement Coach **Rinske Ginsberg**
Dramaturges **Chris Mead & Mari Lourey**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager **John Byrne**
Stage Manager **Caleb Thaiday**
Tour Consultant **Fenn Gordon**
Tour Producer **ILBIJERRI Theatre Company**

MAJOR WORKS

MY URRWAI

Produced by Performing Lines in association with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company.

Ghenoa Gela – little sister, daughter, granddaughter, comic, teacher, fighter, gold-medalist, air-guitarist, charmer, TV-star, Torres Strait mainlander, walking political statement – has made a show. This is your invitation into the complex political, social, colonial and cultural expectations she navigates every day.

Ghenoa is a recipient of both the renowned Keir Choreographic Award and the Deadly Funny Melbourne International Comedy Festival Award. Laughter and deep reflection go hand in hand in this unique and intimate story told through movement and words. MY URRWAI, supported by a stellar team including director Rachael Maza and dramaturge Kate Champion, is a revealing reflection on and celebration of cultural and familial inheritance and an unflinching comment on race relations in Australia.

Following a successful premiere season at Sydney Festival in 2018, MY URRWAI toured nationally in 2019.

NATIONAL TOUR

26 March – 31 August 2019

Castlemaine Festival, Castlemaine, VIC

Frankston Arts Centre, Frankston, VIC

Bunjil Place, Narre Warren, VIC

Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, Shoalhaven, NSW

BMEC Bathurst, Bathurst, NSW

Bleach Festival at Home of the Arts, Gold Coast, QLD*

NORPA, Lismore, NSW

QPAC, Brisbane, QLD

Walter Reid Cultural Centre, Rockhampton, QLD

Desert Harmony Festival, Tennant Creek, NT Darwin Festival, Darwin, NT

Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts & Cultural Centre, Katherine, NT

The Arts House, Wyong, NSW

The Q, Queanbeyan Performing Arts Centre, Queanbeyan, NSW

The Engine Room, Capital Venues, Bendigo, VIC

Hothouse Theatre, Wodonga, VIC

Festival Unwrapped, Sydney Opera House, Sydney, NSW

CREATIVE TEAM

Creator/Performer **Ghenoa Gela**

Director **Rachael Maza**

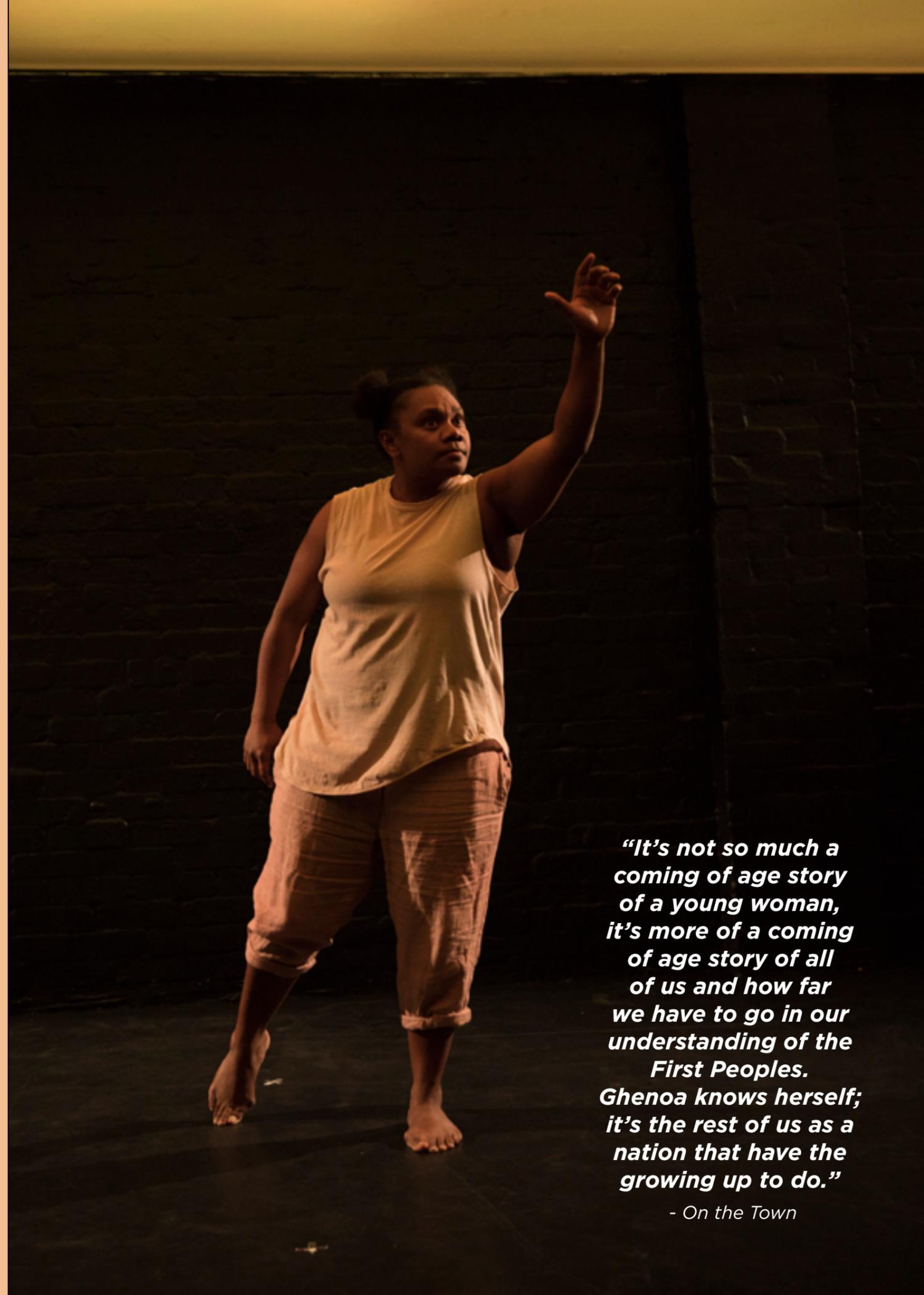
Dramaturg & Movement Consultant

Kate Champion

Composer **Ania Reynolds**

Lighting Designer **Niklas Pajanti**

Set & Costume Designer **Michael Hankin**



“It’s not so much a coming of age story of a young woman, it’s more of a coming of age story of all of us and how far we have to go in our understanding of the First Peoples. Ghenoa knows herself; it’s the rest of us as a nation that have the growing up to do.”

- On the Town

SOCIAL IMPACT WORKS



“Deadly. Keep the strong storytelling that makes us think and feel stronger.”

- Audience Member

VIRAL

Ally and Kev live up in the flats, they’ve got their own little place, a brand new baby and dreams for the future. Life should be good but sometimes life has its own plans. Just ask Merv; he hasn’t been feeling too good lately. Years of tough luck, bad choices and hard living have finally caught up with him. He’s dreaming of one final chance to make things right. As though that’s not messy enough, they’re all being filmed for some documentary! #ITSCOMPLICATED

One thing’s for sure, things are about to go VIRAL....

Created through an in-depth engagement process, including community workshops and yarning circles, VIRAL was remounted for a second regional tour in 2019, following its inaugural tour in 2018, and once again performed in community centres, schools and prisons.

VIRAL is a highly topical health intervention theatre work commissioned by the Victorian Government, and Department of Health and Human Services.

VICTORIAN TOUR

19 August - 6 September 2019

PERFORMANCES: 17

AUDIENCE: 1,241

VIRAL 2019 tour was supported by the Victorian Government through the Department of Health and Human Services, with additional assistance from Hepatitis Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS).

ILBIJERRI would like to thank community members from Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC); Star Health; Loddon Prison Precinct, and the 2018 cast of VIRAL (Jesse Butler, Laila Thaker and Blayne Welsh) for their vital contributions to the development of this project.

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer **Maryanne Sam**

Director **Kamarra Bell-Wykes**

Performers **Jesse Butler, Blayne Welsh, Nikita Tabuteau & Shannon Hood**

Set & Sound Designer **small sounds**

Costume Designer **Jacinta Keefe**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Lead Producers **Lisa Parris**

Associate Producer **Emily Anyupa Butcher**

Production Manager **Caleb Thaiday**

Community Engagement Manager **Richie Hallal**



SCAR TREES

Kirra-Lee and Bryce are at the servo. The jerry can is half-full. One phone's flat and the other one's out of credit. Garren's on his BMX. The shit one. He knows all about what it can do, and its limits. He knows the tracks he doesn't want to go down. Fightin' an' that. He knows there's other ways. There's gotta be other ways. Uncle Laurie does his wood carving and runs a men's group. He's been off the grog for a while now. They're all trying to get to Uncle Pat's funeral. But when they get there, what stories will be told, and what will be left unspoken?

Created in 2019 with the support of Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and VicHealth, SCAR TREES premiered at Northcote Town Hall and toured throughout Victoria.

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer **Declan Furber-Gillick**
Dramaturg and Director **Kamarra Bell-Wykes**
Performers **Dion Williams, Maurial Spearim & Racheal Oak Butler**
Set and Sound Design **small sound**
Costume Consultant **Jacinta Keefe**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Lead Producers **Lisa Parris**
Associate Producer **J-Maine Beezley**
Stage and Production Manager
Brock Brocklesby
Family Violence Support Coordinator
Nazaree Dickerson

VICTORIAN TOUR

28 October - 15 November 2019

PERFORMANCES: 17
AUDIENCE: 703

BLACKWRIGHTS

BLACKWRIGHTS is a playwrights development program aimed at developing new writers and bringing new First Nations work to the stage. The program, initiated in 2018, creates a culturally empowering and nurturing space for First Nations artists to share our stories. BLACKWRIGHTS consists of two program streams – our Master Labs series, and Creators Program.

BLACKWRIGHTS MASTER LABS

The BLACKWRIGHTS Master Labs are a series of hands-on theatre workshops open to First Nations artists and creatives.

KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Project Director

Kamarra Bell-Wykes

Dramaturges

Carly Sheppard, Damien Millar, Shiralee Hood, Kamarra Bell-Wykes & Rachael Maza

Master Lab Facilitators

Pongjit Saphakhun, Richard Barber, Louise Gough, Kamarra Bell-Wykes & Rachael Maza

Creators Program Participants

Blayne Welsh, Nazaree Dickerson & Monica Karo

Producer **Laila Thaker**

BLACKWRIGHTS CREATORS PROGRAM

The BLACKWRIGHTS Creators Program is an opportunity for selected First Nations artists to develop a new work, over a twelve-month period, with intensive support from ILBIJERRI. In addition to attending Master Labs, Creators Program participants work regularly with experienced dramaturgs and mentors to develop texts which are then tested and developed further in week-long creative developments with actors on the floor.

2018-19 BLACKWRIGHTS Creators Program participants presented their work at a featured showcase event as part of Melbourne International Arts Festival.

BLACKWRIGHTS 2019 PROGRAM

Master Labs: 2

(3 in series, including 1 in 2018)

Creative Developments: 6

Showcase events: 1

In 2019 BLACKWRIGHTS was supported by the Australian Government through the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program and Melbourne International Arts Festival, with thanks also to Melbourne Theatre Company and City of Melbourne.



'I learnt how to have confidence in my own story...'

- Participant, INTRODUCTION TO DRAMATURGY MASTER LAB

ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE

The ILBIJERRI Ensemble, initiated in 2018, is a professional development program open to First Nations emerging and aspiring artists in metropolitan Melbourne.

The program consists of open fortnightly workshops throughout the year, as well as opportunities to work intensively, as professional actors, alongside established First Nations artists. Ensemble members build an essential tool kit of performance skills, experience, network connections and confidence.

It is our privilege to support the growth of this next generation of powerful, culturally and politically savvy First Nations voices. In 2019, ILBIJERRI Ensemble participants were featured in Arts Centre Melbourne's Future Echoes festival, with a highly successful four-night season of CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD by Richard Frankland, directed by Shareena Clanton.

ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE 2019 PROGRAM

WORKSHOPS: 17
PARTICIPANTS: 21

KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Workshop Facilitator **Nazaree Dickerson**
Producers **Davey Thompson & Daniel Riley**

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD

“Imagine that you’re a Koorie, that you’re in your mid-twenties, that your job is to look into the lives of the dead...Imagine.”

Jack, a young, ambitious Koorie is juggling the contradictions of working in both black and white worlds. How does he stay true to his cultural responsibilities whilst the justice system he works for fails to understand the pain and rage of his people? CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD is Richard Frankland's response to being an investigator during the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1987-1991).

ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE unanimously selected to perform CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD as they were moved by its relevance and the urgency of its message. This important work of First Nations playwriting resonated deeply, as their generation and communities are still affected by the contents of this report, the 339 recommendations of which are yet to be acted upon.

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer **Richard Frankland**
Director **Shareena Clanton**
Cultural Safety Coordinator **Shiralee Hood**
Set & Costume Design **Darryl Cordell**
Sound Design **James Henry**
Lighting Design **Richard Gorr**
ILBIJERRI Ensemble **Zachariah Blampied, Jyden Brailey, Benjamin Fei, Kayra Meric, Kalarni Murray, Corey Saylor-Brunskill & Caleb Thaiday**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer **Daniel Riley**
Production Manager **Bianca Eden**
Stage Manager **Blaze Bryans**

FUTURE ECHOES

PERFORMANCES: 4
AUDIENCE: 769

In 2019 ILBIJERRI ENSEMBLE was supported by Annamila Foundation, Arts Centre Melbourne, The Australia Council for the Arts The Australian Governments Arts Funding & Advisory Body, The Department of Communication & The Arts Indigenous Languages and Arts Program, Creative Victoria, City of Melbourne, Gandel Philanthropy, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust, Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts & Cultural Development and VCA Theatre Faculty of Fine Arts & Music, University of Melbourne.

“I’ve enjoyed every part of the workshops and the joy they bring to my life as an actor who is passionate about acting. It is also another way to connect to the culture and be around like-minded people who can really understand who I am culturally. It has...reignited the fire that I had about acting and working together with others to get a message across to an audience.”

- Kayra Meric, ILBIJERRI Ensemble Member

MAJOR WORKS: IN DEVELOPMENT AND PRE-PRODUCTION

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.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Original concept developed by: **Kamarra Bell-Wykes, Albert Belz, Amber Curreen, John Harvey, Rachael Maza & Tainui Tukiwaho.**

The 2019 creative development, rehearsal and pre-production of BLACK TIES was supported by Australia Council and Asia TOPA, a joint initiative of Sidney Myer Fund and Arts Centre Melbourne.

Thanks also to:

Te Rēhia Theatre

Asia TOPA

Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by Australia Council for the Arts Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc.

Perth Festival

New Zealand Festival of the Arts

Auckland Arts Festival

Brisbane Festival

Creative New Zealand

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

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producers **Nina Bonacci,**

Amber Curreen, Laila Thaker

Production Manager **Nick Glen**

AV Mentor **Sean Bacon**

Audio Engineer **Jake Luther**

AV Operator **Sean Bacon,**

James Henry

Stage Manager **Casey Norton**

Assistant Stage Manager

Nazaree Dickerson

Company Manager **Jamara Maza**

Technical Consultant **Paul Lim**

Design Assistant **Hannah Murphy**

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

*- The Age & Sydney Morning Herald ****(4 stars)*

MAJOR WORKS: IN DEVELOPMENT

HEART IS A WASTELAND

HEART IS A WASTELAND tells the story of Raye, a struggling country music star in the making. Riding her luck, Raye is playing pub to pub along Australia's vast desert highways, flogging demo CDs for twenty bucks apiece until she can go home to Alice Springs and look her son Elvis in the eye. Raye's life becomes entwined with that of another broken wanderer in Dan, and a love affair unfurls over their four-day drive to Alice Springs.

Combining live music with First Nations storytelling at it's strongest, HEART IS A WASTELAND is an intimate portrait of two achingly beautiful characters that cut to the Country's heart through a whisky-fuelled battle of the egos, hidden scars and reverence.

HEART IS A WASTELAND is a luminous journey towards the recognition of everyone's worthiness of, and right to, love.

Following a hugely successful sold out 2017 season at Malthouse, ILBIJERRI reimagines John Harvey's epic love story. Directed by ILBIJERRI's Artistic Director, Rachael Maza, with original folk-country ballads by Lydia Fairhall and an all new creative team.

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer **John Harvey**
Director **Rachael Maza**
Songwriter **Lydia Fairhall**
Dramaturge **Mark Pritchard**
AV Design **Sean Bacon**
Set & Costume **Emily Barrie**

CAST

Nelson Baker
Monica Karo
Gary Watling

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HEART IS A WASTELAND is being developed in partnership with **Brown Cabs**. Thanks also to the creative team and cast who contributed to the May 2019 creative development.





MAJOR WORKS: IN DEVELOPMENT

BAGURRK

BAGURRK is a major-scale theatre production, which uses one family's story to illuminate lived experiences that are shared by First Nations people internationally. The story follows the matriarchal line of Boon Wurrung woman Louisa Briggs, merging the stories of her ancestors and descendants into a multi-generational women's story of resilience, with poignancy and relevance to contemporary conversations around colonisation, #metoo and #blacklivesmatter.

First Nations women have always been leaders and trailblazers, fighting for justice and empowering their communities. Their stories of power and resilience are only now starting to be properly recognised in public discourse. BAGURRK will connect First Nations people across cultures, encouraging the sharing of stories of matriarchal resistance from their own families and communities.

CREATIVE & CULTURAL TEAM

N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs

Caroline Martin

Rachael Maza

Kamarra Bell-Wykes

Producers **Nina Bonacci & Emily Anyupa Butcher**

BAGURRK is supported by our partnership with Yalukit Marnang. In 2019, development of BAGURRK was also supported by the Australian Government through the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program and Creative Victoria. Thanks also to Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne International Arts Festival, Brisbane Festival & City of Melbourne.

MAJOR WORKS: IN DEVELOPMENT

TRACKER

TRACKER, a multidisciplinary work exploring the life and story of Alec 'Tracker' Riley, a Wiradjuri elder from Dubbo NSW, who served the NSW Police Force as a tracker for 40 years through the beginning of the 20th century. TRACKER aims to be a culturally rich and ambitiously original work, exploring the legacy of Alec Riley's decisions in the face of a forcefully implemented colonial system, a legacy that fuels our continued cultural resilience.

Featuring interwoven dance, music and text, TRACKER will be made collaboratively by an experienced team of First Nations creatives, led by Daniel Riley, who will explore and navigate Alec Riley's complex decisions in crossing racial divides, to be juxtaposed against today's continually strained relationship between First Nations Peoples and the Police Force.

TRACKER will be presented in intimate ceremonial grounds where audiences will engage with a reframed First Nations storytelling experience in a space full of generosity and warmth. TRACKER, a multidisciplinary work exploring the life and story of Alec 'Tracker' Riley, a Wiradjuri elder from Dubbo NSW, who served the NSW Police Force as a tracker for 40 years through the

beginning of the 20th century. TRACKER aims to be a culturally rich and ambitiously original work, exploring the legacy of Alec Riley's decisions in the face of a forcefully implemented colonial system, a legacy that fuels our continued cultural resilience.

Featuring interwoven dance, music and text, TRACKER will be made collaboratively by an experienced team of First Nations creatives, led by Daniel Riley, who will explore and navigate Alec Riley's complex decisions in crossing racial divides, to be juxtaposed against today's continually strained relationship between First Nations Peoples and the Police Force.

TRACKER will be presented in intimate ceremonial grounds where audiences will engage with a reframed First Nations storytelling experience in a space full of generosity and warmth.

CREATIVE & CULTURAL TEAM

Co-Director/Choreographer

Daniel Riley

Co-Director **Rachael Maza**

Cultural Consultant

Bernadette Riley

Writer **Ursula Yovich**

Dramaturg **Jennifer Medway**

Sound Design **James Henry**



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.

2019 development of BIG NAME, NO BLANKETS was supported by Dennis Osborne Clarke Trust.

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**

Translator **Lance McDonald**



CRAB AND THE MANGROVE TREE

A collaboration between ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and Bamaga Productions, CRAB AND THE MANGROVE TREE tells a story from Saibai Island of the Torres Strait. This universal and immersive theatrical experience for children aged five and over, is told through story, dance and song, introducing children to the language, culture and people of Saibai Island. This new work is guided by a strong community of Saibai Island mothers, aunties and grandmothers. In 2019 we brought the first creative development of this exciting new work to QPAC Clancestry Festival.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Script Consultant **John Harvey**
Director **Rachael Maza**
Language and Protocol **Milton Waitet**
Producers **Nancy Bamaga & Laila Thaker**

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2019 Creative Developments of CRAB AND THE MANGROVE TREE were supported by the Australian Government through the Indigenous Languages and the Arts program, and by Queensland Performing Arts Centre.

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 of Force Majeure

ELDERS IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

ILBIJERRI's second year of our ELDERS IN RESIDENCE program.

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.

ILBIJERRI's Executive Leadership Program is a multi-year mentorship and executive leadership development and mentorship program to prepare mid-career First Nations arts workers for executive positions within ILBIJERRI and the performing arts sector more broadly.

This program is a model for increasing black leadership for the arts sector, whilst also ensuring ILBIJERRI's continued growth toward a self-determined First Nations organisation with strong governance and internationally acclaimed artistic outcomes. In 2019 the positions of two Associate Producers, Emily Anyupa Butcher and Daniel Riley were supported through this program.

ILBIJERRI's EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM is supported by Creative Victoria and The Ian Potter Foundation.



APAM FIRST NATIONS LEAD

In 2019, ILBIJERRI was appointed the First Nations Lead for the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM).

Based in Melbourne and working nationally, the APAM Office provides services and year-round support to connect international artists, presenters and partners with Australian contemporary performance. ILBIJERRI brings to APAM our 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. The Advisory Group is made up of First Nations performing arts sector leaders, with significant international market experience, with a remit to guide the producers' work.

BLAK LAB is a key initiative produced by the APAM First Nations Lead. An exploratory lab for Australian First Nations artists to seed new works in collaboration with Asia Pacific Indigenous peers, BLAK LAB was curated by the APAM First Nations Advisory Group. Artists were selected to be supported in the development of new collaborative works in 2020.

ILBIJERRI's APAM FIRST NATIONS LEAD works in partnership with Australian Performing Arts Market.

TRI-NATIONS PERFORMING ARTS NETWORK

ILBIJERRI is a member of the Tri-Nations network (for Indigenous contemporary performing arts). The network is made up of First Nations arts leaders from Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Through our participation, ILBIJERRI works actively to maintain and strengthen its connections, relationships and strategic activity

within a global First Nations context. ILBIJERRI attends international First Nations networking and dialogue platforms whilst also developing international collaborations with other First Nations performing arts companies, such as BLACK TIES.



KEY GATHERINGS ATTENDED IN 2019

GFNPN (Global First Nations Dialogues and Presenter Network)
New York, USA.

WAA (Western Arts Alliance)
Los Angeles, USA.

YELLAMUNDIE *Sydney, Australia.*

NAC (National Arts Centre) *opening of the inaugural Indigenous theatre and Moshkimo Festival, Ottawa, Canada.*

AUSTRALIAN
PERFORMING
ARTS MARKET

APAM

FINANCIALS

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

	2019	2018
INCOME	\$	\$
Event Income	448,878	456,950
Philanthropy and Donations	282,843	63,948
Other Income	56,465	17,828
Government Grants	1,270,689	1,114,285
TOTAL INCOME	2,058,875	1,653,011
EXPENSES		
Salaries, Wages & Fees	1,418,974	1,095,605
Presentation & Touring	360,813	232,530
Other Programs	7,500	131,448
Marketing	59,992	61,835
Infrastructure Costs	131,620	125,851
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,978,898	1,647,269
NET SURPLUS	79,977	5,742

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2019	2018
CURRENT ASSETS	\$	\$
Cash & Cash Equivalents	3,035,895	1,927,408
Trade & Other Receivables	107,159	437,099
Other Current Assets	30,783	38,512
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	3,173,836	2,403,019
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	0	0
TOTAL ASSETS	3,173,836	2,403,019
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade & Other Payables	150,918	44,859
Short-Term Provisions Payable	125,606	202,717
Income in Advance	2,528,232	1,866,339
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,804,755	2,113,915
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	0	0
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,804,755	2,113,915
NET ASSETS	369,081	289,104
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	289,104	283,362
Current Earnings	79,977	5,742
TOTAL EQUITY	369,081	289,104



BOARD & STAFF

BOARD & STAFF

ELDERS IN RESIDENCE

N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs
Uncle Larry Walsh

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair **Kareena Gay**
Vice Chair **Eugenia Flynn**
Secretary **Gavin Somers**
Treasurer **Tony McCartney**
Director **Erica McCalman**
Director **Glenn Shea**
Director **Lisa Maza**

STAFF

Artistic Director/Co-CEO **Rachael Maza**
Acting General Manager **Graham Coffey**
Senior Producer **Nina Bonacci**
Associate Producers **Daniel Riley**,
Emily Anyupa Butcher & Laila Thaker
Production Coordinator **Caleb Thaiday**
Finance Manager **Jon Hawkes**
Marketing Manager **Kendra Keller**
Office Amin **Corey Saylor-Brunskill**

APAM FIRST NATIONS LEAD TEAM

Senior Producer **Kath Papas**
Associate Producer **Sarah Bell**

We would like to thank all other members of the 2019 ILBIJERRI team including:

Lydia Fairhall (Executive Producer/Co-CEO),
Kathy Morrison (General Manager), **Kamarra Bell-Wykes** (Creative Director), **Elizabeth Walsh** (General Manager/Acting Executive Producer), **Davey Thompson** (Associate Producer and Office Manager), **J-Maine Beezley** (Associate Producer), **Lisa Parris** (Acting Social Impact Producer), *as well as the many artists, community members and contractors with whom we have worked closely.*

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Graphic Design: **Phillipa Clark**

COVER PHOTO:

Pictured: **Uncle Jack Charles** in BLACK TIES
Photo: **Luke Currie-Richardson**



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

PARTNERS AND DONORS

KEY PARTNERS



CITY OF MELBOURNE



MELBOURNE IS A CREATIVE CITY

The City of Melbourne proudly supports major and emerging arts organisations through our 2018–20 Triennial Arts Grants Program

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| African Music and Cultural Festival | KINGS Artist-Run | Melbourne Symphony Orchestra |
| Aphids | Koorie Heritage Trust | Melbourne Writers Festival |
| Arts Access Victoria | La Mama | Multicultural Arts Victoria |
| Australian Art Orchestra | Liquid Architecture | Next Wave Festival |
| Australian Centre for Contemporary Art | Lucy Guerin Inc. | Polyglot Theatre |
| BLINDSIDE | Malthouse Theatre | Speak Percussion |
| Chamber Made | Melbourne Festival | St Martins Youth Arts Centre |
| Circus Oz | Melbourne Fringe | Victorian Youth Symphony Orchestra |
| Craft Victoria | Melbourne International Comedy Festival | West Space |
| Emerging Writers' Festival | Melbourne International Film Festival | The Wheeler Centre |
| Human Rights Arts & Film Festival | Melbourne International Jazz Festival | Wild@Heart Community Arts |
| ILBIJERRI Theatre Company | Melbourne Queer Film Festival | |

PROJECT PARTNERS

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Annamila Foundation | Creative Victoria | Te Rēhia Theatre |
| APAM | City of Melbourne | VCA Theatre Faculty of Fine Arts & Music, |
| Arts Centre Melbourne | Dennis Osborne Clarke Trust | University of Melbourne |
| Asia TOPA | Drama Victoria | VicHealth |
| Auckland Arts Festival | Gandel Philanthropy | Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) |
| Australia Council for the Arts | Helen Macpherson Smith Trust | Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) |
| Australia Council for the Arts: Catalyst | Hepatitis Victoria | Victorian Aboriginal Health Service |
| Australian Government through the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program | The Ian Potter Foundation | Victorian Government: Department of Health and Human Services |
| Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by Australia Council for the Arts | Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust | Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts & Cultural Development |
| Auspicious Arts Projects | Melbourne International Arts Festival | Yalukit Marnang |
| Brisbane Festival | Melbourne Theatre Company | |
| Brown Cabs | Monash University | |
| Canada Council for the Arts | New Zealand Festival of the Arts | |
| Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc. | Performing Lines | |
| Creative New Zealand | Perth Festival | |
| | Queensland Performing Arts Centre | |
| | RE Ross Trust | |
| | Sydney Festival | |

DONORS

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Casey Grammar School | Samara Pitt | Kim Sutton |
| Danielle Clarke | Carolyn Poon | Ann Tonks |
| Christine Kirkpatrick | Claire Stokes | Claire Wilcock |

melbourne.vic.gov.au/triennialarts



ILBIJERRI

THEATRE COMPANY

Meat Market

5 Blackwood Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051

T 03 9329 9097

F 03 9329 9105

info@ilbijerri.com.au

ilbijerri.com.au