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Image by Tiffany Garvie

Rachael Maza to Step Down as Artistic Director and Co-CEO of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company After Almost Two Decades of Groundbreaking Leadership

After 18 years as the driving force behind ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Rachael Maza, a proud Yidinji, Meriam and Dutch woman, has announced that she will step down from her role as Artistic Director and Co-CEO at the end of 2025.

Rachael joined ILBIJERRI as Artistic Director in 2008, bringing with her a wealth of experience in acting, directing, and dramaturgy, as well as a fierce commitment to First Peoples' self-determined storytelling. Under her leadership, the company has grown from a small team of three to an established organisation with 12 core staff members. More importantly, she has set a bold and dynamic course for First Nations theatre in Australia and beyond, creating a platform for sovereign storytelling that is both powerful and unapologetic.

Reflecting on her time with the company, Rachael shared, "I am so proud of how far we've come. To see the next generation of leaders rising up—staunch, talented, and ready to take the reins—fills me with excitement. I am ready to step aside and watch them soar."

During her tenure, ILBIJERRI has garnered widespread acclaim, receiving numerous awards such as multiple Green Room and Helpmann Awards, the 2017 Melbourne Award for Contribution to Community by a Community Organisation, and the 2012 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, to name just a few. Rachael's strategic and artistic vision has been instrumental in positioning ILBIJERRI as one of Australia's most respected theatre companies, dedicated to amplifying First Peoples' voices.

Her work has not only elevated the company but also paved the way for many First Peoples emerging artists. From directing ground-breaking works like *Jack Charles V The Crown* (2010), *Foley* (2011), *Which Way Home* (2016), and *Heart is a Wasteland* (2021), to co-directing *Black Ties* (2020) and *Big Name, No Blankets* (2024), Rachael's creative achievements have left an indelible mark on the Australian theatre landscape.

ILBIJERRI's Chair of the Board, Eugenia Flynn, praised Rachael's incredible impact, stating, "Rachael's leadership has been transformative, not just for ILBIJERRI, but for the entire cultural landscape of First Nations theatre, and the Australian performing arts sector. She leaves a legacy of passion, strength, and creativity, and while we will miss her day-to-day presence, her groundwork will continue to guide us."

The ILBIJERRI Board of Directors will now begin the process of careful and considered planning for the future. By the end of 2025, Rachael will be handing the reins to a new, creative visionary, knowing that she will be leaving the company in good hands.

As a passionate advocate for First Peoples in the arts, Rachael's influence extends far beyond the stage. She has guided and strengthened ILBIJERRI's Social Impact program and ensured it is embedded in all of our projects. Rachael is a prolific artist and her personal accolades reflect this, having been awarded the 2017 Touring Legend Drover Award, the 2019 Australia Council for the Arts Award for Theatre, an Honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from Edith Cowan University, and an Order of Australia (OAM) in 2020.

ILBIJERRI's Executive Director and Co-CEO Angela Flynn, also added, "Rachael's influence on Australian theatre will resonate for generations. She has laid a strong foundation for the future of ILBIJERRI, and we are excited to carry her vision forward."

Rachael began her journey with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company in 2002 when she directed *Stolen*. Now, after two decades of pushing boundaries and creating opportunities for her community, she is ready to take some well-earned time for rest and reflection before embarking on her next creative chapter. However, this is certainly not a goodbye.

As Rachael looks toward the future, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company remains in a strong position, poised to continue its proud tradition of producing groundbreaking works led by First Peoples artists.

The next generation of leaders, mentored and inspired by Rachael, are ready to step forward—ensuring that our stories continue to be told with strength, authenticity, and vision.

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