Pre-show notes for Audio description of Bangarra Dance Theatre’s

The Bogong’s Song: a call to Country

Welcome to Bangarra Dance Theatre’s production of The Bogong’s Song: a call to Country.

These notes, as well as the Audio Description that is heard during the performance, are prepared and written with children and adults with visual challenges in mind, however they will also be useful for people with other sensory disabilities to assist them to have the best possible experience of the production.

When you arrive at the theatre you will find three light box posters displayed in the foyer. A large one where you can pose for photos and two smaller ones which tell you how to become a Moth Tracker, as well as information about the Bogong Moth’s place in the natural environment and its importance in the Cultures of our First Nations Peoples. There are also a couple of QR codes on display so you, or the adults that come with you, can access the Program and the Learning Pack.

As you enter the auditorium and find your seats, feel free to ask the theatre’s staff to help you if you need any assistance. The lights in the auditorium are on but will start to dim as the show is about to begin. There are a couple of loud parts in the music, and some strong wind sounds in one of the scenes, but it’s all part of the theatre magic and nothing to worry about.

The Bogong’s Song involves acting, dancing, stage set pieces, props, puppetry, (including shadow puppetry), music, sound effects, video animation, lighting effects, other special effects, and a little bit of audience participation. There is a lot going on, so it’s impossible to describe everything during the show. But here is some information which should help.

Before the show starts, the stage is all set up for the story to take place. A large pale coloured carpet mat takes up most of centre of the stage. The carpet is surrounded by a thick spread of green eucalypt leaves. Not real leaves, but they look very real. A large screen forms the back wall of the set where blue, green and brown colours swirl to give the effect Sky Country. Lots of little lights are all over the screen, the outside walls and the floor. They look like they are slowly moving around and towards us. This represents the migration journey of the bogong moths from the lowlands in Queensland and NSW to the Alpine regions in the southern part of our continent.

At the back, on the right of the stage, is a white desk, three drawers on the left side, a few shelves, containing books on the right side. A space in the middle. A small model of a campfire sits on the desk. Toward the front, also on the right side of the stage is a doll’s house - white timber, two stories plus an attic. On the left of the stage is a white timber bunk bed with a built-in ladder leading from the floor to the top bunk. There is a Brisbane Broncos doona on the top bunk and a pale grey doona on the lower one. A pale white curtain covers the front of the lower bunk. In the centre of the stage is a white desk chair on wheels.

During the show lots of images and animations are projected onto the screen - various landscapes, both winter and summer, the inside of a moth’s cave, a bedroom, and ski fields. Pathways are revealed and swarms of moths are also projected onto the screen and the carpet floor at various times.

As mentioned, the production involves the use of several set pieces, props and puppets.

1. The dolls house**.** It’s a typical doll’s house and is on the stage throughout the show. Sitting at just under a metre high, it has two stories and an attic. Each room represent a scene in the show, replicating the stage setting. Each room contains mini versions of the puppets, props and some of the characters.

2. The campfire**.** Small sticks, about 30 centimetres long, lean up against each other with a red glowing material inside the sticks. The campfire is portable and is moved around in various scenes.

3. The marngrook. The marngrook is the traditional Indigenous football, which was made from possum skin, tied with kangaroo sinews, and stuffed with native grasses or feathers.

4. The chips packet. Myth’s Chips. This is an oversized version of regular packet of chips. In the show it serves as a tanning blanket but also signifies the rubbish that is left on busy ski fields.

5. Shadow puppets.Thesetake the roles of various characters that help tell the story. They are made from stiff cardboard and mounted on sticks – a bogong moth, a pygmy possum, a mountain, the moon, a bunch of hands, circle of ancestors, a crow, and a skink. The shadow puppets are operated by the actors. They hold them in one hand, in front of a torch which they hold in the other hand.

6. Hand puppet. The only hand puppet is TJ the Guthega Skink helper. It is operated like a glove. The actor’s hand makes the mouth open and shut. Its silver, shiny and very cool.

**Dances and movement expression**

Throughout the show, there are a number of dances, and sections of spoken words that are enriched by the performers embodying the words they are saying and the story they are telling. These actions, or movements are not literal but are an extension of what is being expressed. There are quite a few scenes where Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) is woven seamlessly into the script and the movement expression.

**Who is in the show?**

The Bogong’s Song involves two human characters, a number of creature characters, and a few other people that are spoken about but not actually present on the stage. Let’s introduce them.

* Myee is a 12 year old girl who likes learning about nature and really misses her little brother Joey who is in a detention centre. She has long dark hair, plaited into two braids. She wears pale pink PJs. She also plays the part of the Pygmy possum where she wears a grey hoody that has ears and a tail added, and as well she plays the meandering grass, where she wears a large white shirt.
* Boe is 13, a young fulla who likes footy and cricket. He wears black track suit pants and an AFL jersey. He also plays the role of the Guthega Skink and the Crow, and he also misses his little brother Joey.
* Joey, Myee and Boe’s younger brother is not seen but is a main character in the story. Joey is d/Deaf and so the sign language that is seen throughout the show, keeps his presence strong.
* Bogong Moth E22456 - is represented by a shadow puppet and also as an animated moth – very brightly lit.
* Pygmy Possum, Guthega Skink, Crow and the grasses are represented as shadow puppets, and also as live characters
* Uncle Snow Gum is represented by an animation of alpine trees and a voice.
* Nan, the children’s grandmother, is spoken about but not seen.

Its takes about twenty creative professionals, several Cultural consultants and many more people behind the scenes to bring the show to the point where it’s ready to share with audiences. Here they are.

Director, co-writer and choreographer. Yolande Brown

Co-writer and provocateur, someone who uses different ideas to generate characterisations. Chenoa Deemal

Music. Brendan Boney

Songwriting and composition. Yolande Brown

Set and costume designer. Richard Roberts

Set design associate. Annaliese McCarthy

Lighting design. Ben Hughes

Lighting design associate. Eben Love

Video design. Justin Harrison

Illustrator. Cheryl Davison

Puppet Master and Maker. Vanessa Ellis

Traditional dance. Brent Watkins

Accompanying music. Uncle Sean Ryan

The show is performed by Benjin Maza who plays Boe, Crow, Guthega Skink, and Tjilala Brown-Roberts who plays Myee, Pygmy Possum and Meandering Grass.

Cultural consultants for the show were Aunty Doris Paton (Gunai, and Monaro Ngarigo) and Arthur Little (Wiradjuri, Gamileroi, Nginnawal and Yuin) and the Ngarigo Cultural Authorities.

Thank you. We hope you enjoy The Bogong Moth - a call to Country.