

# 2020 Annual Report



*Bennelong* rehearsal photo, featuring  
(L to R) Elma Kris, Beau Dean Riley  
Smith, Rika Hamaguchi and Nicola  
Sabatino (Jan 2020)



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## CHAIR'S REPORT

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I was honoured to take on the role of Chair of Bangarra Dance Theatre in April 2020, after acting as the Interim Chair for the previous five months. I have long admired the qualities of kinship, respect, cultural integrity and connection inherent in the company, and in this challenging year I witnessed these values provide the strong foundation for facing adversity with resilience and strength.

During the year we welcomed three new Board members – in March we welcomed back Lynn Ralph to assist Bangarra navigate COVID-19 impacts and new appointees Richard Eccles and Ian Roberts who joined the Board in August 2020. It was an extraordinary time to join as we continued our connection online and met more frequently so we could be responsive and provide support to the organisation. Our immediate priorities at the start of the COVID-19 restrictions were to ensure that we maintained a safe and supportive work environment for our Dancers and staff, preserved our organisational culture and protected the organisation's cash reserves.

Our new Executive Director Lissa Twomey, in an unusual first week in a new role, joined the company the very day the first COVID-19 public health orders were introduced. Lissa's more than 25 years' experience in the arts and cultural sectors were immediately apparent and we are thankful for her

guidance and leadership navigating our way through this year. Our thanks also goes to Stephen Page, Frances Rings and all the Bangarra team for their agility, resilience, energy and focus on connecting with our audiences and caring for our Community.

I acknowledge the support of the Federal and NSW governments, and the many private companies and individuals that support us. I would also acknowledge International Towers, for providing such a welcoming temporary home whilst our studios at the Wharf underwent renovation. Returning to Walsh Bay was a fitting end to 2020, but we will miss the connection with the Barangaroo community in what was a serendipitous alignment of culture and values.

Inspired by a major gift from Phil Rounsevell and Nelson Estrella, we established our Cultural Integrity Maintenance Fund. The Fund provides support to ensure continuation of cultural maintenance and preservation of songs and stories.

Our return to the Wharf at the end of December 2020 was a joyful company event, not just to celebrate a stunning new working environment, but to honour the contributions of past board members, funders and supporters to achieve this great milestone in the company's journey. I thank the NSW government for its vision and significant investment in the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct.



Nicola Sabatino rehearsing for  
*Bennelong* (Jan 2020)

As we emerge from 2020, our minds go to those communities in other parts of the world less fortunate than us. I would like to thank Tony Grybowski for his valuable contribution as Interim Executive Director and my fellow Board members for their expertise and determination to ensure Bangarra's sustainability and continued evolution. The stringent measures the Board and our team put in place to respond quickly and effectively to the impacts of COVID-19 has meant that we are well placed to meet the challenges and uncertainty ahead.

We continue to deliver our impactful work and connect in meaningful ways with our audiences and communities, though remain cautiously optimistic as we approach the 2021 world premiere of our new work *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert* and cross borders with our national and regional tours.

**Phillipa McDermott**  
**Chair, Bangarra Dance Theatre**





## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2020 saw Bangarra enter its fourth decade. The company had just undergone a period of regeneration and renewal, and we looked forward to commencing a new cultural creative cycle, which included returning home to our newly refurbished studios on Gadigal Country.

All of Bangarra's works speak to the resilience and strength of People, Land and Story, but in a year in which the Black Lives Matter movement entered the international mainstream consciousness, and on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, *Bennelong* in particular is a work which speaks to the core issues of contemporary Australian identity, colonial mythmaking, and the legacies of structural racism still experienced today. We were very grateful to have the opportunity to present *Bennelong* at Perth Festival and to then tour to communities across regional Western Australia, sparking reflection and dialogue.

Whilst in Western Australia, I travelled with Associate Artistic Director Frances Rings, Head of Design Jacob Nash, Composer Steve Francis and Community Engagement Manager Libby Collins to spend time on Country with Wangkatjunga and Walmajarri Elders and representatives of Ningali Lawford-Wolf's family for the development of *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy*

*Desert*, a work which will honour and pay tribute to Ningali's life and legacy. Time on Country provides the cultural creative seeds which Bangarra is then entrusted to carry home to cultivate further – all the while maintaining and tending the integrity of the cultural knowledge shared.

When COVID-19 hit, the impact on the arts industry was immediate and severe, but as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collective, Bangarra is innately resilient. Our immediate concern was to ensure the health and wellbeing of our extended Bangarra clan, and to provide the necessary support so that the Dancers remained safe and strong during lockdown.

Lockdown provided a valuable opportunity for reflection on our purpose, our obligations within the community and our purpose within the cultural landscape of Australia. What became quickly apparent was people's need for continued connection, and the unique importance and role of storytelling as a conscious human medicine. Bangarra launched a new digital engagement initiative, *Nandhu*, which allowed audiences to journey through Bangarra's digital archive *Knowledge Ground*, we moved our Youth and Education workshops online, and – in collaboration with Sydney Opera House, the ABC, and The Australian Ballet – streamed some of Bangarra's most iconic works, *Bennelong*,

*Terrain, Ochres and Warumuk - in the dark night* online.

We reached new audiences through two new documentaries. *FREEMAN*, the inspirational story of Cathy Freeman and her historic win at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, which reached an audience of 1,450,000 and was the most watched documentary of 2020 on ABC iView. *Firestarter: The Story of Bangarra*, also had its world premiere screening. This film, which tells the story of Bangarra's evolution as a unique cultural foundation, was received with critical acclaim and went on to win numerous awards.

A few days prior to lockdown, we welcomed new Executive Director, Lissa Twomey, to Bangarra. She and I immediately began to work with the Board to ensure that the company was able to emerge intact at the end of 2020. Sincere thanks to Lissa, our Chair Phillipa McDermott, and my fellow board members for their steadfast leadership and governance of the company.

The Dancers demonstrated incredible fortitude and adaptability to working remotely, and I would like to thank them all for their sustained creative curiosity throughout. Frances and I used time in lockdown to continue to workshop and creatively develop *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*, as well as learning repertoire from the last 31 years - feeding dancers' bodies and minds with cultural knowledge. Thank you to Sidney Saltner, Sani Townson, Daniel Roberts, and the Bangarra team who worked with passion and commitment during such a difficult year.

Despite the challenges of 2020, we were still able to provide professional development pathways for emerging artists. We welcomed a new Russell Page Graduate Program

dancer, Kiarn Doyle, to the company and launched a new Russell Page Graduate Program Scholarship program in partnership with Sydney Dance Company, offering scholarships for two early-career dancers, Maddison Paluch and Edan Porter.

In December we returned to our home stomping ground at the Wharf. We are enormously grateful to be able to resume creating in a place that represents the achievements and legacy of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Creatives, Artists and Cultural Knowledge Holders from across Australia who, since 1997, have collectively created an incredible 50 works on this site to date. I would like to pay special tribute to my brothers, David and Russell, who inspire us always.

A final thank you to my creative collaborators Frances Rings and Jacob Nash, for walking with me shoulder to shoulder throughout this last year, and for their incredible wisdom, creativity, humour and grace. Within this challenging start to the new decade we have found strength in knowing Bangarra's value in this world, in realising how important our voice is to the peoples and cultures we represent, and the message we send to the world. It gave us a tough goanna skin to know that even though we were isolated, we had strength in this together. We knew that if we could stay connected to story and Country, then when theatres eventually opened back up and audiences and artists were able to come together in person again, our shared cultural resilience would allow us to walk forward, stronger together, into this changed world.

**Stephen Page**  
**Artistic Director, Bangarra Dance Theatre**



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2020 was an extraordinary year, not the year I had imagined would be my first at Bangarra.

Following the completion of a hugely successful tour to Western Australia and regional NSW, our Dancers gave their last performance for 2020 on 14 March at the Sydney Coliseum. With the first public health orders introduced by governments on 16 March, we closed the office and studios and sent the company home on 19 March, my fourth day in my new role as Executive Director.

Our priorities during this period were clear – first and foremost, take care of Bangarra's staff and Dancers, ensuring their health, safety and physical and mental wellbeing; continue strong external communication with audiences, communities and supporters to maintain connection; and to use the 'down-time' productively.

We made the difficult but necessary decision to postpone our national tour of *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*, representing 90% of our box office revenue for the year. Cancellation followed for our *Rekindling* programs in Communities, along with our regional and international tours. With no regular touring activity in sight and production development on hold, we made adjustments to become a leaner organisation, implementing a number of containment measures to mitigate and protect the company's cash reserves.

We managed to use the 'down-time' productively to build business disciplines, review operational effectiveness, adapt to the environmental risks, and invest in creative development and repertoire maintenance whilst navigating the challenging operating environment.

Bangarra's funders, presenters, supporters and donors responded generously in this time of crisis, providing strength and understanding when we had to quickly adapt our plans and activities, and transform our vital connections with Community to the digital sphere. In addition to our existing partnership with BAI, we were pleased to renew multi-year partnerships with Boral and Lendlease and see a significant increase in individual donations from 2019, including many ticket holders for the postponed premiere season tour of *SandSong*. We acknowledge the impact the pandemic has had on our official airline Qantas, and look forward to them once again connecting us with our audiences across Australia and internationally in the future.

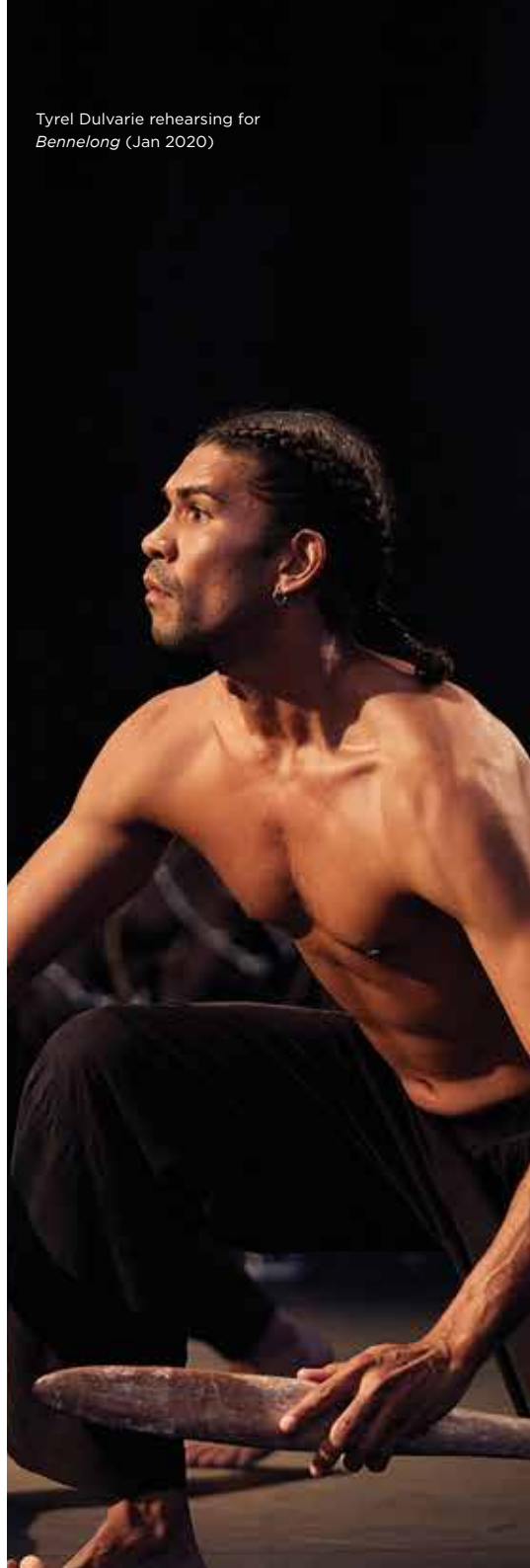
Before significant 2020 non-recurring COVID related federal support is taken into account, the underlying 2020 operations result is a deficit of \$274,303 (2019: surplus of \$707,780). The deficit would have been considerably higher without a combination of rapid action to control

Tyrel Dulvarie rehearsing for  
*Bennelong* (Jan 2020)

expenditure, deferral to 2021 of touring and creative development activity, and the very generous support of donors and sponsors, including a restricted major gift of \$400,000. Non-recurring federal support came in the form of Jobkeeper and an ATO cash boost with a combined positive impact of \$1,315,750 contributing to an overall surplus of \$1,041,447. While this paints a generally positive picture, we cannot afford to be complacent. We remain vigilant to respond to changing conditions and residual COVID impacts. As a national company our touring and *Rekindling* activity across borders, representing more than half our yearly activity, remains challenging in this environment.

I thank our staff and Dancers for their extraordinary hard work and the support they've shown each other this year and the Board for its immense stewardship and guidance. It is likely that COVID will continue to impact on our activities in different ways in 2021, but I'm confident that we will take Bangarra forward with the same commitment, hard work and resilience shown by our people in 2020. And finally, thanks to Stephen Page, Frances Rings, our creative team and the Bangarra Dancers for continuing to create work of profound beauty, power and cultural significance.

**Lissa Twomey**  
**Executive Director, Bangarra Dance Theatre**







**bangarra**  
DANCE THEATRE

**bangarra**  
DANCE THEATRE

airbus



Bangarra's first Studio performance at its newly renovated Walsh Bay home on 9 December, 2020.

# COMPANY PROFILE



Bangarra Dancers with Frances Rings, Daniel Roberts and Stephen Page standing at the end of wharf celebrating the company's return to Walsh Bay (Dec 2020)



We are Bangarra, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation charged with carrying and caring for stories through a dance form that is forged from more than 65,000 years of culture.

We are storytellers. Music makers. Visionary dance theatre creators. A clan of dynamic artists, each with a proud Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage. We represent the pinnacle of Australian dance.

We are embraced by Australians from remote communities to bustling city metropolises. We are ambassadors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, sharing and exchanging with First Nations peoples across the world.

Our spirit is fed by our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Australia. We create our works on Country, learning from and





listening to the stories that our people need us to share. We take great responsibility in providing a platform for the stories that are in this landscape — stories that provoke us politically and spiritually.

It is this unbreakable connection to Land and people that makes us unique and sees us performing on basketball courts or creek beds in remote communities one week, and in the Sydney Opera House or on the stages of Tokyo or Paris the next.

Each year we share our spirit with more than 50,000 people who pack theatres in capital cities, regional centres and international locations. For 31 years we have been

scratching the surface of stories that span 65,000 years. We are working to ensure that this cultural fuel, which feeds Bangarra's flame, is honoured and continues to burn well into the future.

We exist because of the Communities who trust us to share their stories; because of the audiences who embrace the importance of our knowledge; and because of the people, partners, governments and organisations who believe in the vision and passion of Bangarra Dance Theatre.

*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre,  
Rooty Hill (Mar 2020)



Stephen Page after watching  
the Dancers first performance in  
the renovated Walsh Bay space  
(Dec 2020)





# A YEAR IN REVIEW



**5,715**  
BENNELONG ATTENDANCES  
FEB/MAR 2020



**1,209**  
*FIRESTARTER*  
'LIVE' ATTENDANCES



**1.45M**  
*FREEMAN BROADCAST*  
COMPLETE AVERAGE AUDIENCE  
(TV AND IVIEW)



**21**  
AWARDS  
& NOMINATIONS



**58,779**  
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS  
1.79% INCREASE



**30,256**  
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS  
6% INCREASE



**24,202**  
YOUTUBE FOLLOWERS  
5.8% INCREASE 111.2K VIEWS



**8,762**  
TWITTER FOLLOWERS



**36,679**  
SONGLINES FOLLOWERS



**1,336**  
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS  
WITH MORE THAN 50%  
ATTENDING FROM REGIONAL  
AND REMOTE LOCATIONS



**1,527**  
INDIVIDUAL DONORS  
2019: 374



**10**  
NEW DIGITAL ONLINE  
INITIATIVES



**7**  
OVERSEAS DESTINATIONS  
REACHED THROUGH ONLINE  
ACTIVITIES



**413K**  
WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS  
101K USERS



**28**  
CULTURAL CONSULTANT/ELDER  
ENGAGEMENTS

Tyrel Dulvarie in *30 Years  
of 65,000* (2019)



# AWARDS



Our productions and programs are inspired by Country, and brought to life through creative partnerships between our Creatives and Cultural Knowledge Holders, who proudly keep their stories, cultures, and languages alive. We acknowledge and honour the many contributors to our work and share this public recognition with gratitude and respect.

## FREEMAN

### **Festival International du Film Océanien (FIFO)**

Winner, Prix Spécial du Jury

### **Sports Australia Industry Awards 2021**

Highly commended, Best Sport Profile - Broadcast

### **Australian Industry Documentary Conference (AIDC) 2021**

Nominated for Best Documentary/Factual

## FIRESTARTER: THE STORY OF BANGARRA

### **Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) 2021**

Nominated for Best Feature Documentary

### **Australian Academy Cinema Television Arts (AACTA)**

Winner Best Documentary Award

Nominated for Best Editing in Documentary

Nominated for Best Sound in a Documentary

### **Adelaide Film Festival**

Winner Feature Documentary Award

Winner Inaugural Change Award

## AUSTRALIAN DANCE AWARDS

(2018 and 2019 years announced in December 2020)

### *30 Years of 65,000* (2019)

Winner of Outstanding Performance by a Company

Winner of Outstanding Performance by a Male Dancer - Tyrel Dulvarie

### *Dark Emu* (2018)

Nominated for Outstanding Performance by a Company

### *Stamping Ground* (2019)

Nominated for Outstanding Performance by a Male Dancer - Ryan Pearson

Sidney Saltner

Nominated for Services to Dance (2018)

## KNOWLEDGE GROUND

Website by Northmost

### **Good Design Australia**

Good Design Award

Winner of Digital Web Design and Development

### **Melbourne Design Awards 2020**

Gold - Digital Entertainment and Leisure

### **The Communicator Awards 2020**

Excellence in Websites - General - Performing Arts

Award Level: Excellence Winner (Gold)

Distinction in Websites - General - Blog - Cultural for Websites

Award Level: Distinction Winner (Silver)

### **AVA Digital Awards**

2020 Award of Excellence Website General/Performing Arts

## NANDHU

### **Time Out magazine**

Nomination Time In Award - Favourite Digital Arts Platform

## OUR MISSION



To create inspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences that promote awareness and understanding of our cultures

## OUR VALUES



- Reciprocity and Mutual Obligation • Cultural Exchange and Collaboration
- Kinship • Cultural Protocols • Cultural Integrity • Respect
- Connection and Care for Country • Resilience •

## OUR COMPANY GOALS



1

**Create inspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences for all**

- National Footprint 2021 - 2022
- Winhanga'rra Workshops for Teachers
- Wilay Program
- Digital and Film

2

**Strengthen and maintain meaningful relationships with Communities**

- Community Nights
- Rekindling
- Cultural Integrity Maintenance Fund
- On Country
- Return to Country

3

**Develop and nurture the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Leaders of the future**

- Russell Page Graduate Program
- Dancer Further Education Program
- Production Traineeship
- Creative Fellowships
- Future Cultural Leaders
- David Page Music Fellowship

4

**Realise the opportunities afforded through the redevelopment of the Walsh Bay Studios**

- Secondary Touring Production
- Bangarra at Home

5

**Enhance financial sustainability and organisational strength**

- Operational Efficiency
- Organisational Culture
- Revenue Management
- Commercial Activity
- Capital Campaign
- Endowment Fund

Kiarn Doyle, Cassidy Waters and Tyrel  
Dulvarie after the first performance in the  
renovated Walsh Bay studio (Dec 2020)





*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre,  
Rooty Hill (Mar 2020)



# Experiences



Bradley Smith, Beau Dean Riley Smith and Tyrel Dulvarie in *Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill (March 2020)



# STAGE | BENNELONG

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Created by Artistic Director Stephen Page in 2017, *Bennelong* explores the life of one of history's most iconic Aboriginal figures.

Woollarawarre Bennelong was a senior man of the Eora people, who led his community to survive a clash of cultures. Through striking dance language, soul-stirring soundscapes and exquisite design, Bangarra unpacks Bennelong's legacy and its reverberation through contemporary Australian life.

The performances in Perth, regional New South Wales, Western Australia and in Western Sydney were warmly received, with a sell-out season in Perth and strong attendances on the remainder of the tour. A generous donation from The Balnaves Foundation resulted in 119 Community tickets sold for the performances at Sydney Coliseum Theatre in Rooty Hill, Bangarra's first performance in the new venue. There were 1443 tickets sold in Western Sydney - an increase of 35%, since Bangarra's last performance of *Terrain* in Parramatta.

*"It's easy to see why Bennelong was honoured with seven Helpmann Awards following its premiere season in 2017; it's a masterful, moving and exquisite work"* (Arts Hub)

*"From the soaring soundscape, which ranges from dreamy electronica to layered vocal samples, to the conceptual set and clever costuming, every element is an intentional work of art to convey a deeper message about race politics and the "other" — both past and present."* (Weekend West, Perth)

**"a benchmark in Australian dance creativity"**

**SYDNEY MORNING HERALD**

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**13**

**TOTAL PERFORMANCES**

**5,226**

**PAID ATTENDANCE**

**5,715**

**TOTAL ATTENDANCE**

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## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Perth Festival**  
**Heath Ledger Theatre**  
Perth 6-9 February

**Albany Entertainment Centre**  
Albany 15 February

**Red Earth Arts Precinct**  
Karratha 22 February

## NSW

**Civic Theatre**  
Newcastle 28-29 February

**Glasshouse**  
Port Macquarie 4 March

**Dubbo Regional Theatre**  
Dubbo 7 March

**Sydney Coliseum Theatre**  
Rooty Hill 13-14 March

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## CREDITS

**Choreography**  
Stephen Page in collaboration with the Bangarra Dancers

**Cultural Consultant**  
Matthew Doyle

**Music**  
Steve Francis

**Additional Traditional Composition**  
Matthew Doyle

**Set Design**  
Jacob Nash

**Costume Design**  
Jennifer Irwin

**Lighting Design**  
Nick Schlieper

**Dramaturg**  
Alana Valentine

# DIGITAL | BENNELONG/TERRAIN



Digital streaming of Bangarra performances was an immediate response to the impact of COVID-19, providing an important connection to audiences utilising digital platforms at ABC iView and a new digital program from Sydney Opera House, *From Our House to Yours*.

This allowed Bangarra to deepen relationships with existing audiences, and develop new audiences across the world.

## BENNELONG

Bennelong was the most in-demand production of Sydney Opera House's 2020 digital season, garnering over 21,000 views.

## TERRAIN

Choreographed by Associate Artistic Director Frances Rings, *Terrain* transports us to Kati-Thanda – Lake Eyre in South Australia, the place of Australia's inland sea: one of the few untouched natural waterways in the world.

Created in 2012, *Terrain* explores the fundamental connection between Aboriginal peoples and Land – how our Land looks after us, how we connect with its spirit, and how we regard its future.

*"I want to thank you for organising the transmission of your performance of Bennelong last night through the internet. I saw this extraordinary work when it opened, but I really appreciated the opportunity to watch it personally on my big computer screen."*

- Digital audience member

*"I enjoyed the opportunity to share Bennelong last night with many thousands of people from around Australia and the world. It was great too to know that I was sharing the moment with some friends in the UK and NZ who I had encouraged to watch.....most of them loved it!"*

- Digital audience member

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**BENNELONG**  
Sydney Opera House  
15 April–5 May

**21,500**  
VIEWS

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**TERRAIN**  
Sydney Opera House  
4 May–11 June

**3,200**  
VIEWS

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**Viewers' Country of Origin:**  
Australia, New Zealand,  
Canada, United Kingdom,  
United States, Germany, Brazil

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## CREDITS

### *Terrain*

**Choreography**  
Frances Rings

**Cultural Consultant**  
Reginald Dodd

**Music** David Page

**Set Design** Jacob Nash

**Costume Design**  
Jennifer Irwin

**Lighting Design**  
Karen Norris

### *Bennelong*

**Choreography**  
Stephen Page in collaboration  
with the Bangarra Dancers

**Cultural Consultant**  
Matthew Doyle

**Music** Steve Francis

**Additional Traditional Composition**  
Matthew Doyle

**Set Design** Jacob Nash

**Costume Design** Jennifer Irwin

**Lighting Design** Nick Schlieper

**Dramaturg** Alana Valentine



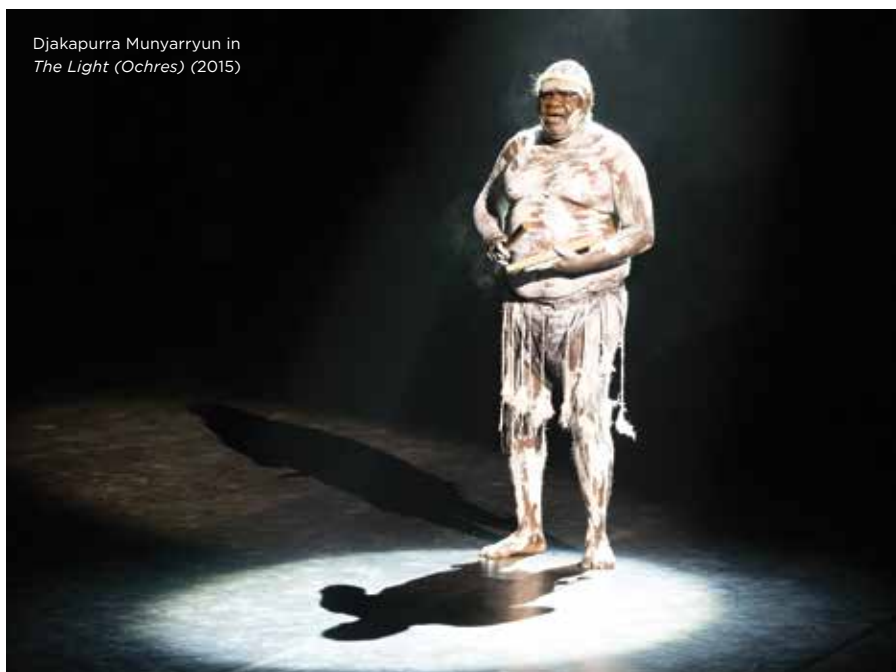
Deborah Brown in *Terrain* (2016)



*Yellow (Ochres) from Spirit: a retrospective 2021 (Jan 2021)*



*Djakapurra Munyarryun in The Light (Ochres) (2015)*



# DIGITAL OCHRES/WARUMUK - IN THE DARK NIGHT

## OCHRES

*Ochres*, first performed in 1994, became a watershed production for Bangarra leading to sell out shows around the country. For its 21st anniversary return season in 2015, Bangarra's Artistic Director Stephen Page reimagined this iconic work that revealed Bangarra to the world, for the company's debut season at Carriageworks in Redfern.

In all its forms and colours, ochre is essential to the life of Aboriginal communities. This four-part contemporary dance work - yellow, black, red and white - is a portrayal of each colour of this earthy substance, its myriad of purposes and the spiritual significance to Aboriginal people.

Regarded as "Bangarra's most perfect show" (*Sydney Morning Herald*), *Ochres* put Bangarra on the map, and continues to inspire audiences across Australia and the world.

## WARUMUK - IN THE DARK NIGHT

Choreographed by Stephen Page, in collaboration with Bangarra Dance Theatre and The Australian Ballet, *Warumuk— in the dark night* explores the myths that resonate within the night sky expressed from a contemporary perspective.

*"What a treat! If you are new to appreciating contemporary dance, or have never watched Bangarra Dance Theatre, this is one that will have you on the edge of your seat! Incredible choreography, dancers, and soundtrack! I love how dance has played such an important role in how humans communicate across time and space (much like languages - my other love). This story is one to watch and one so close to home."*

- ABC iview audience member

## OCHRES ABC iview

1 May–30 July 2020

**1,200  
VIEWS\***

## WARUMUK - IN THE DARK NIGHT ABC iview

1 May–30 July 2020

**2,500  
VIEWS\***

\*Based on video player measurement (VPM) average audience

## CREDITS

### *Ochres*

**Executive Producer** Peter Butler

**Producer** Stephen Burstow

**Technical Producer** Ian Monk

**Lighting Director** Derric Wright

**Choreography** Stephen Page, Bernadette Walong-Sene

**Cultural Consultant**  
Djakapurra Munyarryun

**Music** David Page

**Traditional Music**  
Djakapurra Munyarryun

**Costume Designer**  
Jennifer Irwin

**Lighting Designer**  
Joseph Mercurio

### *Warumuk - in the dark night*

**Choreography**  
Stephen Page

**Cultural Consultants**  
Banula Marika  
Kathy Balngayngu Marika

**Music** David Page

**Set Design** Jacob Nash

**Costume Design** Jennifer Irwin

**Lighting Design**  
Padraig O Súilleabháin



# FILM & TELEVISION

## FIRESTARTER: THE STORY OF BANGARRA

*Firestarter: The Story of Bangarra* is a historically important film that tells the story of Bangarra's evolution as a company and the many inspirational creatives, artists and Traditional Knowledge Holders who have generously given their creative and cultural energy and spirit to the company.

It takes the viewer through Bangarra's birth and spectacular growth to today, as the company enters its fourth decade. It recognises Bangarra's early founders and tells the story of how three young brothers, descendants of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh Nation - Stephen, David and Russell Page - turned the newly born dance group into one of Australia's leading performing arts companies.

Through the eyes of the Page brothers and company alumni, *Firestarter* explores the loss and reclaiming of culture, the burden of intergenerational trauma and crucially, the extraordinary power of arts as a messenger for social change and healing.

The documentary features remarkable archival footage and interviews with those integral to Bangarra's establishment, including co-founders Carole Y Johnson and Cheryl Stone along with a number of former dancers and creatives.

*Firestarter: The Story of Bangarra* had its world premiere at the Brisbane International Film Festival on 11 October 2020, followed by screenings at film festivals across Australia. At the time of writing this report, the film had been released nationally in cinemas (Feb 2021) and was garnering international interest.

***Bangarra Dance Theatre would like to acknowledge all of Bangarra's cultural foundation families, its board of directors, artists, staff, creative collaborators, cultural teachers, community advisors and their families past, present and future for the sharing of their knowledge, stories and language, entrusted to and cared for by the company.***

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**18**  
**SCREENINGS**  
**1,209**  
**ATTENDANCES**

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### NSW

Byron Bay Film Festival

### QUEENSLAND

Brisbane International Film Festival, Brisbane

Travelling Film Festival, Townsville

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Adelaide Film Festival, Adelaide

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Revelation Perth International Film Festival, Perth

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### CREDITS

#### **Written & Directed by**

Nel Minchin & Wayne Blair

#### **Produced by**

Ivan O'Mahoney

#### **Cultural Producers**

Bangarra Dance Theatre

#### **Edited by**

Karen Johnson  
& Nick Meyers ASE

#### **Music by**

Steve Francis  
& David Page

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Screen Australia & The Australian Broadcasting Corporation present in association with Screen NSW an In Films Production

# FREEMAN

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Co-directed by Laurence Billiet and Stephen Page, with Production Design by Jacob Nash and featuring Bangarra Dancer Lillian Banks, *FREEMAN* tells the story of Cathy Freeman's iconic win at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. The film reflects on how her story became the symbol of a much larger struggle for equality, and the rise of a people's movement which supported and called for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. *FREEMAN* premiered on ABC TV + iview and was the most watched documentary of 2020 on Australian TV.

*"The most inspired and buoyant aspect of the documentary's narrative is the addition of Yawuru woman and dancer Lillian Banks, who is choreographed sparingly but brilliantly by Stephen Page of Bangarra Dance Theatre, who doubles as the doco's co-director."* (Screen Hub)

**"Thank you to Cathy for her powerful truth-telling and for sharing her inspirational story."**

**STEPHEN PAGE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

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## 1.45M

**COMPLETE AVERAGE AUDIENCE**

(Television and iview)

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### CREDITS

**Written, Produced & Directed by**  
Laurence Billiet

**Co-directed & Choreographed by**  
Stephen Page

**Executive Producer**  
Helen Panckhurst

**Archive Producer**  
Catherine Panczak

**Associate Producer**  
Joany Sze

**Editor**  
Daniel Wieckmann

**Assembly Editor**  
Katie Flaxman

**Director of Photography**  
Bonnie Elliott Acs

**Music Composer**  
James Henry

**Sound Design**  
Byron Scullin

**Production Designer**  
Jacob Nash

**Script Editor**  
Rachael Antony

**Assistant Editor**  
Stuart Willis

**And featuring**  
Catherine Freeman  
& Dancer Lillian Banks

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In association with the  
ABC and Film Victoria

A General Strike and Matchbox  
Pictures Production

Distributed Worldwide by  
NBC Universal





Bangarra Dancer Lillian Banks on set during the filming of *FREEMAN*



Bonnie Elliott, Laurence Billiet, Cathy Freeman, Jacob Nash and Stephen Page on set during the filming of *FREEMAN*



Sidney Saltner leading Indigenous Youth in a *Rekindling* workshop (Feb 2020)





Connecting  
with  
Community

# ON COUNTRY



## FITZROY VALLEY

*SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*

In February 2020 Artistic Director Stephen Page, Associate Artistic Director Frances Rings, Set Designer Jacob Nash, Composer Steve Francis and Community Engagement Manager Libby Collins visited the Fitzroy Valley area of the Kimberley for the new mainstage work, *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*.

This is the first time Bangarra has created a mainstage work inspired by the Land and People of the Kimberley region. We thank the Wangkatjunga and Walmajarri Elders and custodians who generously endorsed and gave permission to use elements of their cultural knowledge in this new production.

Bangarra commissioned two cultural consultants; Putuparri Tom Lawford and Eva Nargoodah, siblings of the late Ningali Josie Lawford-Wolf, who took us on Country and shared their family history of living in the Fitzroy Valley area.

An invaluable part of the research came from connections with Indigenous organisations Goolari Media, Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre and Mangkaja Art Centre, who gave us resources and support to document song, dance, story and language sessions with the Elders and Custodians.

This research and engagement is a vital component of the creation of a production in accordance with Bangarra's Indigenous

Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols. *SandSong* continued to have further development throughout 2020, for the first time using Zoom, with Dancers contributing to the development from their own homes.

As a gift back to the Community and people who generously shared cultural information and inspired this work, we plan to return to Fitzroy Valley in 2022 to present a performance of *SandSong* and undertake workshops on Country. Elders will take our Dancers onto Country to allow them to experience the energy of the people and place that inspired *SandSong*.

The reciprocal nature of working with Communities and traditional Knowledge Holders is at the heart of all of our work. These relationships enable us to remain connected to, and honour, our past, whilst also ensuring that we work to build an empowered future.

## ROEBOURNE

*Bennelong*, Western Australia regional tour

We thank Traditional Owner Peter Jeffries and the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation for showing us around Murujuga (Burrup Peninsula), Danny Brown from IBN Group for assisting us coordinate the exchange, Big hART and Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi and Banjima Elders for their warm welcome and stories.

*Bangarra Dance Theatre would like to acknowledge cultural consultants Putuparri Tom Lawford and Eva Nargoodah, Wangkatjunga and Walmajarri Elders and their families past, present and future for the sharing of their knowledge, stories and language, entrusted to and cared for by the company.*



Frances Rings, Mayarn Julia Lawford and Stephen Page  
at Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia (Feb 2020)

# NANDHU

## ‘TO BE CLOSE’ (in Wiradjuri language)



### Curated journeys through Knowledge Ground

A new digital offering, *Nandhu*, meaning ‘to be close’ in Wiradjuri Language was launched using Bangarra’s extensive digital archive platform, *Knowledge Ground*. To date, more than 5000 viewers have explored the Community connections, cultural stories, creative research and development underpinning Bangarra’s productions.

The *Nandhu* stories were designed and curated as journeys through some of Bangarra’s hallmark productions – *Terrain*, *Ochres*, *I.B.I.S.* and *Nyapanyapa*. Each of the four journeys featured interviews, articles, behind-the-scenes video content, excerpts from the productions and creative activities.

*Nandhu* journeys are for everyone interested in further inquiry and discovery of Bangarra productions. For teachers this can be a cross-curriculum project or within a specific learning area, where students can look closely, reflect, learn and respond to the information encountered along the way with imagination and creativity.

“Cultural Consultant and Yolngu Song Man Djakapurra Munyarryun, has long taught me about the importance of hunting quietly, and about the value and the equal importance of each season. COVID–19 was our rainy season, a time for listening and learning, a time in which practical and spiritual knowledge was able to grow in other, more subtler ways.”

STEPHEN PAGE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR





Throughout 2020, Dancers, Creatives and staff zoomed into the studio and connected with each other online. Youth Programs and Education workshops were also held online.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth participating in Bangarra's *Rekindling* Program, which connects young people to their Culture and Community Elders.

# REKINDLING



*Rekindling* provides a framework for the Community to strengthen bonds between generations, and support the maintenance of cultural practices. It's a safe space and aids in sharing stories, exchanging knowledge, expressing culture, and creating contemporary ceremonial experiences. Since its inception in 2013, *Rekindling* has engaged with more than 850 young people from 33 communities across Australia.

*Rekindling* has identified links to the Australian Curriculum's general capabilities framework, through the development of skills such as intercultural understanding, critical and creative thinking, literacy, personal and social capabilities, and ethical understanding.

In 2020, introductory workshops were held in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, in Cairns, Cunnamulla, Raukkan and Bendigo before COVID-19 restrictions disrupted the remainder of the year.

Bangarra's *Rekindling* is generously supported by the Besen Family Foundation, James N. Kirby Foundation, John Villiers Trust, The Metamorphic Foundation, Patterson Pearce Foundation and many generous individual donors.

*Rekindling* is led by Sidney Saltner, one of Bangarra's most acclaimed alumni artists, who became Youth Program Director after 25 years as a performer. Sidney is a descendent of the Wulli Wulli and Wakka Wakka people of Central Queensland.

*"I've always loved dance. When I was growing up I'd sneak in to watch classical ballet on the ABC on Sunday afternoons, when my family wasn't watching sport."*

*"It's important that we help educate not just our own mob but also non-Indigenous Australia."*

*"When we go on Country, we have to remember that everyone's cultures is different. Even though we are all Aboriginal, we're not all the same. Every Community is different – different protocols, different Language. I am still learning wherever I go."*

**Sidney Saltner, Youth Program Director**

## THE ARTS UNIT NSW

Bangarra continued its successful partnership with The Arts Unit, through New South Wales Department of Education, delivering seven face to face workshops in the first two months of the year before COVID-19 restrictions came into place. The team then shifted its focus to devising and planning two new online programs for the partnership with The Arts Unit, which will be delivered in 2021.

**"Being on Country is so important, not just for our learning, but for our spirit and wellbeing, it's where we learn about our land, ancestors, bush food and medicines."**

**SIDNEY SALTNER, YOUTH PROGRAM DIRECTOR**



# EDUCATION



Bangarra managed to maintain a high level of engagement throughout 2020 with schools, teachers and students across Australia, despite the disruption to face to face learning due to COVID-19.

## LIVE PERFORMANCE AND WORKSHOPS

School groups attended our season of *Bennelong* at the Coliseum Theatre in Western Sydney. Alongside the performance, our Education team conducted a professional development workshop for teachers in the local area.

Bangarra's Youth Program team also delivered seven workshop programs for The Arts Unit NSW in the first quarter of 2020, attracting almost 500 participants.

## RESPONSE TO COVID-19

With the cancellation of live performances and face to face learning, Bangarra adapted education programs to be delivered online.

## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Revised online professional development programs were well received, allowing more teachers from regional and remote schools to access programs. Of the 120 teachers who attended *Winghanga-rra* (hear, think, listen), more than 50% were located in regional and remote locations.

The Education team conducted two special workshops for NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC) teachers who, as part of HSC Dance curriculum delivery, are tasked with guiding students through the study of Frances Rings' 2012 work *Terrain*. Working in partnership with the Dance Educators Professional Association (NSW), more than 40 teachers were able to work directly with Frances to explore the sources of inspiration for the

work, and the layers of creative storytelling in response to that inspiration.

Bangarra was also commissioned by the NSW Education Standards Authority to produce an Audio Description for *Terrain*. Audio Description enables sight impaired students to also be able to experience this unique Bangarra work.

## CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Alongside the workshop programs, the use of Bangarra's suite of digital classroom resources, the digital archive *Knowledge Ground*, (including new *Nandhu* journeys), the distribution of Study Guides and streaming on the Education platform ClickView increased markedly from previous years. Throughout 2020 more teachers and students discovered the full value of Bangarra's range of comprehensive curriculum resources.

Cancellation of activities due to COVID-19 provided an opportunity for the Youth Program Team and Bangarra Dancers to work closely together like never before. The Youth Program Director, Youth Program Coordinator and the Bangarra Dancers devised a range of workshops, cultural classes and masterclasses, designed for both online and in person delivery. This opportunity provided valuable professional development for the Dancers, equipping them with enhanced skills to teach a range of classes.

*"Thank you for holding space and sharing knowledge. I am so grateful to have been a part of it."*

- Teacher, QLD

*"Thanks so much everyone. It is so inspiring and so much planning is going on in my head...it was just what I needed."*

- Teacher, WA

# WORKSHOP SUMMARY

# 92

TOTAL WORKSHOPS

# 1,334

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

## COMMUNITY ONLINE

	WORKSHOPS	PARTICIPANTS
Melbourne Indigenous Transition School	1	29
Grasmere Primary School	2	26
Edi Upper Primary	2	9
Kalianna School, Bendigo	3	57
Myrrhee Primary	2	12
Whitfield District Primary	2	36
Horsham High School	2	4
Heywood High School	2	58
Dandenong High School	1	23
Cabbage Tree School, Ballina	2	43
Kurruru Arts Hub, SA	1	7
NAISDA Dance College	1	18
ACPA, QLD	1	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>329</b>
Winhanga-rra (May to November)	10	
- Regional participants		60
- Capital city participants		60
- Remote participants		1
Winhanga-rra, Western Sydney (March)*	1	17
Exploring Terrain (NSW HSC) (June)	2	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Regional &amp; WA.</b>		
Perth*	2	39
Albany*	2	18
Roebourne*	2	48
Karratha*	3	71
Newcastle*	2	34
Port Macquarie*	2	55
Dubbo*	3	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>Rekindling</b>		
Raukkan (SA)*	3	14
Cairns (QLD)*	3	11
Cunnamulla (QLD)*	3	27
Bendigo (VIC)*	3	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>The Arts Unit</b>		
Wollongong*	4	54
Ambarvale*	4	70
Port Macquarie*	4	51
Nepean*	4	44
Coffs Harbour*	4	99
Evans Head*	4	43
Rutherford*	4	99
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>460</b>

\*face to face

Kiarn Doyle dancing in  
*Bennelong* (Feb 2020) *the Vigil* (2021)



# RUSSELL PAGE GRADUATE PROGRAM



Initiated in 2015, the Russell Page Graduate Program encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance graduates or early-career artists to develop through training, mentoring and performance.

The program covers critical knowledge and skills required by professional dancers working at Bangarra, or other companies and independent contexts. At present, nine current Bangarra Dancers have been graduates of this program.

Named after Stephen and David Page's brother, the late Russell Page, who passed in 2002, the Program was established to build on his legacy and passion for sharing knowledge with younger dancers.

## **Kiarn Doyle, Russell Page Graduate 2020**

In 2013 Kiarn Doyle participated in Bangarra's youth program, *Rekindling* in Western Sydney. Kiarn, from the Dughutti Nation, was born in Mullumbimby (Bundjalung country) and raised in the Blue Mountains (Darug/Gundungurra country).

After his early experience with Bangarra, he auditioned for the NSW Department of Education's Aboriginal Dance Company where he worked with Bangarra's Youth Program team, performing in State Dance Festivals and the Schools Spectacular. He studied at NAISDA Dance College, graduating in 2019 and auditioned at the end of that year for the Russell Page Graduate Program.

In 2020, Kiarn was selected to join the company as a Russell Page Graduate Program Dancer. His first on-stage performance with Bangarra was in *Bennelong* at Perth Festival, followed by Western Australia and NSW regional tours and performances at Rooty Hill's Sydney Coliseum Theatre. For the remainder of the

year Kiarn, like all other Bangarra Dancers, worked to maintain fitness and artistic focus during lockdown, which he did so with remarkable calmness and diligence.

In 2021, Kiarn was offered a full time contract with Bangarra and will perform in the premiere season of *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*.

The Russell Page Graduate Program is made possible by the generous support of the Sherry Hogan Foundation and individual donors.

## **Sydney Dance Company Bangarra Scholarship Program**

In 2020, Bangarra partnered with Sydney Dance Company to create a unique opportunity for two early-career Indigenous Dancers to experience the professional environment of both companies.

Maddison Paluch and Edan Porter were the recipients of this inaugural Scholarship which enabled them to participate in the Sydney Dance Company Pre-Professional Year Program for ten weeks followed by a period of five weeks at Bangarra working with the ensemble during the rehearsal period for the regional tour.

## **Looking Ahead**

The Russell Page Graduate Program continues to attract high calibre artists and Bangarra welcomes the next round of emerging leaders to the 2021 program:

**Maddison Paluch** – Russell Page 2nd Year Graduate

**Daniel Mateo** – Russell Page Graduate

**Mitchell J Nalingu Harrison-Currie** – Russell Page Youth Program Graduate

**Nicholas Currie Inns** - Russell Page Professional Development Scholarship

# RETURNING TO THE WHARF



In December 2020, friends, supporters and the whole company celebrated the return to our newly refurbished home at The Wharf with a smoking ceremony, open rehearsal and gathering in our new function space overlooking the water.

The Walsh Bay Arts Precinct development has been a critical partnership with the NSW Government and the redeveloped premises provide significant improvements benefitting our Dancers, administration and creative teams, audiences and supporters.

Benefits for the Dancers include the addition of treatment rooms for onsite physiotherapy and massage treatments and a gym for Dancers to support their health and well-being.

Improved rehearsal facilities include: a main studio with air-conditioning, natural light, new seating bank and upgraded lighting and dock access for sets and props; the addition of a new studio dedicated to youth program activities; the addition of physiotherapy and treatment rooms; and the removal of a

central pillar from Studio 2 making this an excellent and now fully usable dance studio. The project also included the rebuild of the David Page sound and recording studio on its original footprint.

Company administration will now enjoy larger office spaces and the creative team their own dedicated space overlooking Studio 2. Our costume department has an improved costume making workshop with professional facilities filled with natural light.

Audiences and visitors to the premises will notice the magnificent new foyer and box office to support performances in the main rehearsal studio theatre. A new function space opening on to the apron of the Wharf boasts spectacular waterfront views of the harbour bridge and beyond.

The foyer and gallery areas provide opportunity for Bangarra to further celebrate its beginnings through the development of the Homelands exhibitions space.

**“We are so excited to return to our stomping ground of 24 years on the Bay of the Eora Nation Waters. We feel so grateful to be the beneficiaries of this incredible project – to step into purpose built dance studios and a beautiful office space is a dream. This space will reignite the flame of our company and support our mission to share Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge with the world.”**

**STEPHEN PAGE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**



Frances Rings and Stephen Page in the foyer of the newly renovated Walsh Bay home (Dec 2020)



Stephen Page and Matthew Doyle at the smoking ceremony (Dec 2020)



The foyer space at Bangarra's Walsh Bay homeland



The harbourside function space at Bangarra's newly renovated premises



# THE YEAR AHEAD



2019 was a landmark year for Bangarra, celebrating our 30th anniversary with an ambitious program, while remaining true to our vision of creating inspiring experiences that change society.

2020 was a reminder that Bangarra's values of reciprocity, mutual obligation and kinship keep us grounded when we experience both triumph and adversity.

2021 sees Bangarra embarking on a period of renewal, rehearsing back home at the Wharf in our newly renovated studios, and connecting with new audiences through the documentary film *Firestarter: The Story of Bangarra* released in cinemas nationally and around the world.

Connecting with audience members through live performance was most eagerly awaited at the beginning of 2021, and our season of *Spirit: a retrospective (2021)* in the Sydney Festival was an exhilarating start to the year.

Our productivity during 2020 has reaped creative rewards. In a typical year, we produce one new work, but in 2021 we will produce three:

- Our mainstage national tour – *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*, opening at the Sydney Opera House in June.

- *Waru – journey of the little turtle*, a new work for young audiences. Inspired by the Torres Strait Islander connection to the natural world and what it teaches us - the story is told through the eyes of Waru as she undertakes a journey of discovery and survival.

- The development of a third mainstage work, yet to be announced which will be the largest work Bangarra will have produced to date.

In addition to our *SandSong* national tour, regional touring continues as a crucial part of our calendar in 2021. Regional audiences in Victoria and South Australia will see the return of *Ochres*, one of Bangarra's landmark productions.

The company is invigorated with the addition in 2021 of three Russell Page Graduates – two dancers and a new position of Russell Page Youth Program Graduate. Bangarra's Youth Program team will expand the reach of Indigenous young people in regional and remote areas, with our *Rekindling* program at full capacity. We will continue online workshops in 2020 in the knowledge that this approach enables a far greater reach, particularly into regional areas.

“As the year unfolds, we look forward to exploring the opportunities our new home at the Wharf presents, creating new experiences for our audiences and communities that promote awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.”

LISSA TWOMEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lillian Banks, Bradley Smith and Rika Hamaguchi  
in *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*,  
touring nationally June - September 2021



The Dancers with (L to R) Frances Rings, Stephen Page and Lissa Twomey, socially distanced at International Towers which the Company called home for two years (2018 - 2020) while Walsh Bay was under renovation.



# The Company





# THE DANCERS



ELMA KRIS



TARA GOWER



BEAU DEAN RILEY SMITH



NICOLA SABATINO



RIKKI MASON



RIKA HAMAGUCHI



TYREL DULVARIE



GLORY TUOHY-DANIELL



BADEN HITCHCOCK



RYAN PEARSON



LILLIAN BANKS



BRADLEY SMITH



COURTNEY RADFORD



KASSIDY WATERS



KALLUM GOOLAGONG



GUSTA MARA



KIARN DOYLE

# THE STAFF



## EXECUTIVE

### Artistic Director

Stephen Page

### Executive Director

Lissa Twomey  
(From March 2020)

### Interim Executive Director

Tony Grybowski  
(until March 2020)

### Associate Artistic Director

Frances Rings

### Executive Administrator

Laura Hough

## ARTISTIC

### Head of Design

Jacob Nash

### Rehearsal Director

Daniel Roberts

## PRODUCTION

### Director, Technical & Production

John Colvin

### Redevelopment & Touring Manager

Phoebe Collier

### Production Manager

Catherine Studley

### Company Manager

Cloudia Elder

### Stage Manager

Lillian Hannah U

### Head Electrician

Ryan Shuker

### Head of Wardrobe

Monica Smith

### FOH Sound & AV Operator

Emjay Matthews

### Head Mechanist

Dave Tongs  
(until March 2020)

### Production Assistant & Assistant Stage Manager

Stephanie Storr Clark

## COMMUNITY

### Manager, Community Engagement

Libby Collins  
(until March 2020)

## EDUCATION & YOUTH PROGRAM

### Youth Program Director

Sidney Saltner

### Youth Program Team Leader

Chantal Kerr

### Youth Program Coordinator

Sani Townson

### Education Consultant

Shane Carroll

## DEVELOPMENT

### Director, Marketing & Development

Sarah Hunt  
(until March 2020)

### Development Director

Anna Matthews  
(from July 2020)

### Acting Development Director

Chloe Gordon  
(January - July 2020)

### Development Manager

Anna Shapiro  
(Parental Leave from February 2020)

### Development Manager

Amber Poppelaars  
(Parental Leave cover from February 2020)

### Development Manager

Alexander Bellemore

### Development Coordinator

Jacob Williams

## MARKETING

### Marketing & Communications Director

Harriet Cheney  
(from August 2020)

### CRM Manager

Thida Kyaw  
(until October 2020)

### Marketing & Digital Manager

Sophie Raper

### Office & Engagement Coordinator

Ivana Radix

### Knowledge Ground Coordinator

Yolande Brown  
(Parental Leave from April 2020)

### Ticketing and Administration Coordinator

Emily Windsor

## ADMINISTRATION

### Chief Financial Officer/ Company Secretary

Ashwin Rathod  
(until October 2020)

### Financial Consultant/ Company Secretary

Rachel Hadfield  
(from November 2020)

### Finance & Operations Manager

Elizabeth Timbery Tierney

### Human Resources Manager

Natsai Mutema  
(until November 2020)

### Human Resources Manager

Claire Diment  
(from November 2020)



# PARTNERS

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## GOVERNMENT CORE FUNDING PARTNERS



Bangarra Dance Theatre is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.



Bangarra Dance Theatre is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

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## OTHER GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Bangarra's Bendigo residency is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.

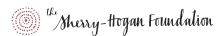
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## CORPORATE PARTNERS



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## PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

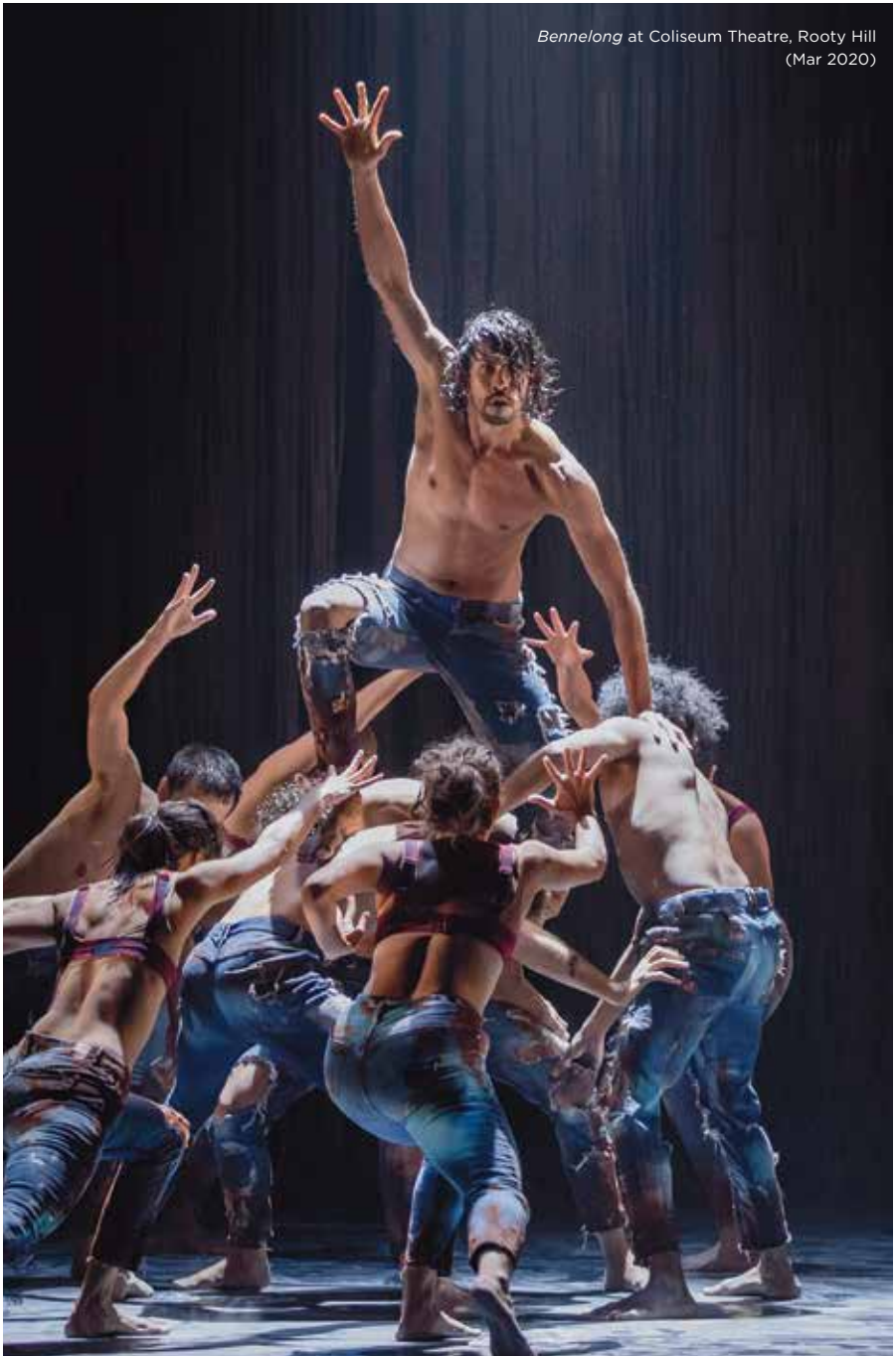


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## SUPPORTING PARTNERS



*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill  
(Mar 2020)



# PATRONS



In consultation with Wiradjuri Elders, we have taken inspiration from the word ‘Bangarra’ – a Wiradjuri word meaning ‘to make fire’ – to describe the levels of donor support. This use of Wiradjuri language is part of Bangarra’s ongoing commitment to the survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Bangarra Dance Theatre would like to thank the following patrons for their generous contributions to the company.

## **FOUNDATIONS**

Annamila First Nations Foundation  
The Balnaves Foundation  
Besen Family Foundation  
Colonial Foundation  
Crown Resorts Foundation  
James N Kirby Foundation  
The John Villiers Trust  
Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation  
The Metamorphic Foundation  
Packer Family Foundation  
The Ross Trust  
The Sherry-Hogan Foundation  
The Tony Foundation

## **GUYA – FISH (\$50,000+)**

Canny Quine Foundation  
Nelson Estrella & Phil Rounsevell

## **BILAWI – SHEOAK (\$20,000–\$49,999)**

Robert Albert AO & Libby Albert  
Marion Heathcote & Brian Burfitt

LL Group Holdings  
Patterson Pearce Foundation  
Turnbull Foundation

## **WIINI – FIRE (\$10,000–\$19,999)**

Anonymus (1)  
Larissa Behrendt AO & Michael Lavarch AO  
Carolyn Charles  
Dr. Russell  
& Mrs. Jane Kift  
Sue Sheldrick  
Sisyphus Foundation  
Lissa & Peter Twomey  
The Wiggles

## **BARGAN – BOOMERANG (\$5,000–\$9,999)**

Arenamedia  
Susan Bear  
Mark Blumer  
Meredith Brooks  
Chrysanthemum Foundation  
R Clay  
Heather Drew  
Jenny Durack  
Helen Eager & Christopher Hodges  
Edwina Kearney  
Angela & John Rutherford  
Scovell Gardner Family  
Jane Thorn

## **BIRRIMAL – BUSH (\$1,000–\$4,999)**

Anonymus (16)  
Annette Adair  
Michael Adena & Joanne Daly  
James & Belinda Allen  
David Ashley  
Damaris Bairstow & Robin Hutcherson  
Shane Batchelor  
Tracey Blazic  
Diana Bosworth  
Mike Bowen  
Susan Burnett  
Alison & John Cameron  
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Narina Dahms  
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Wesley Enoch  
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 & Els Wynen

**GARRABARI –  
 CORROBOREE  
 (\$500-\$999)**  
 Anonymous (23)  
 Janice Adie  
 Dora & Michael Aitken  
 Atelier 6 Centre  
 de danse  
 Jeanette Baird  
 Baker Family  
 Minnie Biggs  
 Kaye Blaiklock  
 Margot Boetcher  
 Karyn B & friends  
 Jennifer Bourke  
 Sarah Brasch  
 Cath Brokenborough  
 The Bowden Marstan  
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 Tamara Cirkel  
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 Diane Grady  
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 Alice MacDougall  
 Helen McCormack  
 Casey-Rae McCrickard  
 Margot McDonald  
 Robyn McKay  
 Caitlin Medley  
 Robert Mills  
 Mara Moustafine  
 & Andrew Jakubowicz  
 Mei-Guin Ng  
 Adrian Norris  
 James O'May  
 Darragh O'Brien  
 Friends of Wendy P  
 Rosamund Palmer  
 Don & Leslie  
 Parsonage  
 Maria Pate  
 Christine Paterson  
 Yvette Peterson  
 Chris Puebla  
 A O Redmond  
 Eda Ritchie AM  
 Juliet Roberts  
 Robin Rodgers  
 Peter Sands  
 Leisa Sargent  
 Deena Shiff  
 Jann Skinner  
 Leeanna & Ziggy  
 Spencer  
 Patrick Sze Tho  
 Chris & Cheryl Thomas  
 Chris Thomson  
 Stephanie Toole  
 Jacqueline Tosi  
 JS & NS Turnbull  
 Neil Twist &  
 Leon McEncroe  
 Vera Vargassofoff  
 Meredith Verge  
 Christine & Paul  
 Wand AM  
 The Warning Family

Jan Williams  
 Peter Wolfe  
 Gail Wright  
 Mark Wright  
*Bangarra Dance  
 Theatre also thanks the  
 many generous donors  
 of less than \$500 who  
 support our vision, of  
 which there are too  
 many to list here.*

#### **DHULUBANG – SPIRIT GIFTS**

*We gratefully  
 acknowledge those  
 who have supported  
 Bangarra through a  
 gift in their Will.*

Carol Cruikshank  
 Marena Manzoufas  
 Sally Nicholson  
 Elizabeth Roberts

#### **DHULUBANG – SPIRIT CIRCLE**

*We gratefully  
 acknowledge those  
 who have made the  
 visionary gesture of  
 including Bangarra  
 in their Will.*

Anonymous (4)  
 Margo Garnon-  
 Williams  
 Teresa Handicott  
 Linda Herd  
 Nicola Kaldor  
 Belinda Kendall-White  
 Yvonne Langley-Walsh  
 Mary McMenamin  
 Keith & Marguerite  
 Mobbs  
 Jane Packham  
 Lynn Ralph  
 Eric Roussac  
 Anne Therese  
 Roussac-Hoyne  
 Stephen Scrogings  
 Anna Viale  
 Kelvin Widdows  
 Jan Williams

*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre,  
Rooty Hill (Mar 2020)





# Governance





# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## PHILLIPA MCDERMOTT, CHAIR

(April 2020 - present)

Phillipa is a Wakka Wakka and Mununjali woman. Phillipa is a committed public advocate and champion for diversifying the media, arts and workforces to best reflect contemporary Australia. With over 25 years' experience in media, arts and employment, she provides strategic thought leadership and direction on implementing corporate strategies, governance and change. Phillipa's goal is for an Australia that acknowledges and embraces our shared history and culture to build authentic, purposeful relationships with First Nations Peoples. Phillipa is the Head of Indigenous Employment & Diversity at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and a Board Director at the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. Phillipa has a BA in Communications from UTS and is the current UTS Indigenous Alumni recipient.

## ANNA BLYGH AC

(February 2013 - February 2020)

Anna Bligh AC was the 37th Premier of Queensland from 2007 to 2012, and was the first woman to be appointed Premier of Queensland. Her previous roles include Deputy Premier, Treasurer, and Minister for Finance, State Development, Trade and Innovation, Minister for Infrastructure and Queensland's first female Education Minister, with additional responsibilities for the Arts portfolio.

Anna received a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia award in the 2017 Australia Day Honours list. Anna is the first woman to be appointed CEO of the Australian Banking Association and is a former CEO of the YWCA NSW. She is a non-Executive Director of Medibank Private.

## NADINE MCDONALD-DOWD

(December 2019 - present)

Nadine McDonald-Dowd is a proud Yuwibara woman. She is Executive Producer at Queensland Performing Arts Centre and a Board Member of the Aboriginal Art Company. Nadine was formerly the Artistic Director of Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts Company from 2001 to 2004. She first joined Kooemba in 1996 facilitating workshops in youth detention centres and schools on theatre, music, reconciliation and performance. Previously, Nadine has been a Director on the Boards of the Queensland Theatre Company, Queensland Government's Premier's Indigenous Advisory Board and Q150 Advisory Committee, and the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts. Nadine was a Senior Producer with Major Brisbane Festivals in 2010, was the Manager of the kuril dhagun, State Library of Queensland from 2006-2015, and Creative Producer for the Commonwealth Games Arts and Cultural Festival 2018.

## RICHARD ECCLES

(August 2020 - present)

Richard is a company director and consultant, with a background in senior Government positions. He has a deep and ongoing interest in the arts, sports and media sectors, and provides advisory services across these sectors. He is a director on several boards, including the Copyright Agency Ltd; the Public Interest Journalism Initiative; Epilepsy ACT; and the Federal Golf Club. Previously Richard enjoyed a successful career as a leader in the Australian Public Service, having held Deputy Secretary positions across several

portfolios, including the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Health and Aged Care; Regional Affairs, Local Government, Arts and Sport; and Communications and the Arts. As a Deputy Secretary in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Richard led reforms in Indigenous Affairs, with a strong focus on community led economic development activity, and local social policy reforms. More recently (from 2016 to early 2020) as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Communications and the Arts, Richard was responsible for the arts, cyber safety, copyright and media.

#### JOHN HARVEY

(November 2019 – present)

John is of Torres Strait Island (Saibai Island) and English descent. John is a producer, director and writer working in theatre and film. He is Company Director of Brown Cabs Productions Pty Ltd. working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creatives to bring their stories to the stage and screen. He produced Stephen Page's debut feature film *Spear*. John is the former General Manager and Co-CEO of Ilbijerri Theatre working alongside Rachael Maza. Previously he has worked at Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts and at Access Arts. He has been a Peer Assessor for the Theatre Board, and was a member of the Community Cultural Development Board, at the Australia Council.

John's recent work as a playwright includes *Black Ties*, a collaboration between Te Rēhia Theatre (Aotearoa) and Ilbijerri Theatre, which premiered at the 2020 Sydney Festival.

#### STEPHEN PAGE AO

(June 1998 – present)

Stephen is a descendant of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh Nation. In 1991, Stephen was appointed Artistic Director of Bangarra and has developed a signature body of works that have become milestones in Australian performing arts. Stephen continues to reinvent Indigenous storytelling within Bangarra and through other creative collaborations, including directing the Indigenous sections for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony. Stephen has choreographed over 25 works for Bangarra, and directed films including *FREEMAN* (2020) (co-directed with Laurence Billiet), *SPEAR* (2015), *Sand* (*The Turning*, 2013). He also choreographed the feature films *Bran Nue Dae* (2009) and *The Sapphires* (2011). Recent awards and honours include: Honorary Doctorate of Creative Arts by the University of Technology Sydney (2015), NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award (2016), JC Williamson Award (2016), Australia Council Dance Award (2017), appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) (2017).

#### LYNN RALPH, BA, MBA, SFFINSIA (LIFE)

(Appointed March 2020 – present)

Lynn is a professional Non-Executive Director and has served on numerous boards including the Sydney Swans, AFL (NSW/ACT) Commission Pty Ltd, NRMA Limited, NRMA Insurance, Financial Industry Complaints Service, Chunky Move Ltd and the Sydney Institute. She has been Chairman of BT Financial Group's superannuation

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



funds, the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust, the AMP Foundation, and the Private Health Insurance Administration Council. Her executive roles included: Deputy Chairman of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission; CEO of the Financial Services Council, and CEO of Sydney Dance Company. She was co - founder of Cameron Ralph Pty Ltd.

## IAN ROBERTS

(August 2020 – present)

Ian Roberts is currently the Chair of the Annamila First Nations Foundation and a Trustee of the Victorian Arts Centre Trust. He is also a freelance writer specialising in speeches and editing for daily press. Previously Ian served as CEO of the Harold Mitchell Foundation, General Manager of the Melbourne Festival, General Manager of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, and as Interim CEO of Arts Centre Melbourne in 2014. Ian's board appointments have included terms as Chair of the Victorian Australia Day Committee, Deputy Chair of the Melbourne International Film Festival, and as Deputy Chair of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Ian has also served as a Board Director of Arts Centre Melbourne and a member of the Major Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts.

## LISSA TWOMEY

(January 2021 – present)

Lissa was appointed Executive Director of Bangarra in March 2020. Lissa has more than 25 years' experience in the arts and cultural sector having worked in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Her previous roles include Artistic Director of the New Zealand International Arts Festival, Artistic Director of the inaugural Wellington Jazz Festival and Associate Director of the Sydney Festival. Between 2013-2020, Lissa held a position as part of the Executive at the Australia Council for the Arts, as Executive Director Major Performing Arts and National Engagement.

Board and panel positions include: Board Member of the Festivals Board, Create NSW (current), Member of the local Government Authority Round Sub-Committee, Creat NSW (2020-2021), Board Member at 107 Projects Inc. (2013-2014)

# GOVERNANCE



Bangarra continues to build good governance structures to encourage value creation. The Board also provides accountability and control systems in keeping with the risks involved.

## **Development of a sound strategic plan to deliver on the vision and identified outcomes**

In 2020 the Board met twelve times to provide management with strategic oversight and support as the Coronavirus pandemic continued to impact the Company's ability to rehearse, perform and tour. During this time the Board reaffirmed the mission of the Company as being: *To create inspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences that promote awareness and understanding of our cultures.*

The Board also restated the Company's values and a sound strategic two year Recovery Plan was developed to navigate the Coronavirus pandemic against which management reported on a monthly basis throughout the year.

All decisions were driven by the set of values and a commitment to developing the culture of the organisation and staff. Bangarra continues to deliver our Safe Dance program, within which we offer mental health support to monitor and manage staff wellbeing. Our values-driven approach extends to every relationship and partnership, and includes a robust approach to managing community relationships ethically and responsibly.

## **Monitor and review systems**

The Board monitors and reviews the company's systems and instigated a review of all company Policies in 2020 which is now drawing to its conclusion. The Audit, Finance and Risk Committee has met regularly to ensure appropriate financial accountability and management of Bangarra's finances in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and best practice principles. Board and management continue to remain committed to transparency during the audit process with KPMG.

## **Manage risk and compliance**

The Board has ultimate responsibility for overseeing the risk management framework and monitoring business risks and is assisted in discharging this responsibility by the Audit,

Finance and Risk Committee in accordance with the Committee's charter. Our Audit, Finance and Risk Committee remains focused on identifying and mitigating any potential artistic, financial, legal, reputational and operational risks. Any major risk is brought to the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee meeting to be discussed and addressed in order to ensure risks do not interrupt business operations. The Board conducts a review and audit of the company's Risk Register twice yearly.

## **Ensure diversity**

As part of our commitment to diversity, Bangarra's Board is majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment level remains stable at 55%. Our hiring process is inclusive of race, gender and sexuality, as reflected in our Company Constitution, which strongly outlines our commitment for a majority Indigenous Board, and sets the tone for the leadership of the organisation.

## **Engage with stakeholders**

Board members recognize the varying needs and expectations of a wide range of stakeholders including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Dancers, staff, patrons, government, sponsors, donors and the arts community. We distribute our Songlines eNewsletter on a monthly basis to a growing database of more than 35,000 people, and continually work to increase our strongly engaged online community of more than 200,000 across our social media platforms.

## **Remunerate fairly and responsibly**

Our Nomination and Remuneration Committee is dedicated to ensuring remuneration is set fairly and by industry standards. Artistic Director and Executive Directors' salaries are reviewed annually, and salary benchmarking research is monitored. The Artistic Director and Executive Director maintain oversight of all staff appointments, and are committed to ensuring diversity and competitive salaries in order to hire and retain high quality staff. The company looks to hire and retain the best talent possible with a range of benefits, including parental and cultural leave and flexible workplace arrangements.

The smoking coolamon in the corner of Bangarra's Walsh Bay function space after the company smoking ceremony (Dec 2020)



# IMAGE CREDITS

## Cover

Stephen Page and Frances Rings at the return to the Walsh Bay wharf smoking ceremony (Dec 2020), photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 2

*Bennelong* rehearsal photo, featuring (L to R) Elma Kris, Beau Dean Riley Smith, Rika Hamaguchi and Nicola Sabatino (Jan 2020), photo credit Lisa Tomasetti

## Page 5

Nicola Sabatino rehearsing for *Bennelong* (Jan 2020), photo credit Lisa Tomasetti

## Page 9

Tyrel Dulvarie rehearsing for *Bennelong* (Jan 2020), photo credit Lisa Tomasetti

## Page 10

The company's first studio performance at its newly renovated Walsh Bay home on 9 December, 2020, photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 12

Bangarra Dancers with Stephen Page, Frances Rings and Daniel Roberts, standing at the end of wharf celebrating the company's return to Walsh Bay (Dec 2020), photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 14

*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill (Mar 2020), photo credit Vishal Pandey

## Page 14

Stephen Page after watching the Dancers first performance in the renovated Walsh Bay space (Dec 2020), photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 16

Tyrel Dulvarie in *30 Years of 65,000* (2019), photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 19

Kiarn Doyle, Kassidy Waters and Tyrel Dulvarie after the first performance in the renovated Walsh Bay studio (Dec 2020), photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 20

*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill (Mar 2020), photo credit Vishal Pandey

## Page 22

Bradley Smith, Beau Dean Riley Smith and Tyrel Dulvarie in *Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill (March 2020), photo credit Vishal Pandey

## Page 25

Deborah Brown in *Terrain* (2016), photo credit Zan Wimberley

## Page 26

*Yellow (Ochres)* in *Spirit: a retrospective 2021* (Jan 2021), photo credit Daniel Boud

Djakapurra Munyarryun in

*The Light (Ochres)* 2015 photo credit Jhuny-Boy Borja

## Page 28

*Firestarter: The Story of Bangarra* film poster (2020/21) photo by Daniel Boud, poster by Jacob Nash and Mark Campbell

## Page 31

Bangarra Dancer Lillian Banks on set during the filming of *FREEMAN*.

Bonnie Elliott, Laurence Billiet, Cathy Freeman, Jacob Nash and Stephen Page on set during the filming of *FREEMAN*, photo credits Daniel Boud

## Page 32

Sidney Saltner leading Indigenous Youth in a *Rekindling* workshop (Feb 2020), photo credit Sidney Saltner

## Page 35

Frances Rings, Mayarn Julia Lawford and Stephen Page at Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia (Feb 2020), photo credit Jacob Nash

## Page 37

Throughout 2020, Dancers, Creatives and staff zoomed into the studio and connected with each other online. Youth Programs and Education workshops were also held online, photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 38

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth participating in Bangarra's *Rekindling* Program, which connects young people to their Culture and Community Elders, photo credit Sidney Saltner

## Page 42

Kiarn Doyle dancing in *Bennelong* (Feb 2020) and *The Vigil* (2021) photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 45 (clockwise)

Frances Rings and Stephen Page in the foyer of the newly renovated Walsh Bay home (Dec 2020)

Stephen Page and Matthew Doyle at the smoking ceremony for the renovated Bangarra premises (Dec 2020)

The foyer space at Bangarra's Walsh Bay homeland

The harbourside function space at Bangarra's newly renovated premises, photo credit Daniel Boud

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Lillian Banks, Bradley Smith and Rika Hamaguchi in *SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert*, touring nationally June - September 2021, photo credit Daniel Boud

## Page 48

The Dancers with (L to R) Frances Rings, Stephen Page and Lissa Twomey, socially distanced at International Towers which the Company called home for two years (2018 - 2020) while Walsh Bay was under renovation, photo credit Daniel Boud

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*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill (Mar 2020), photo credit Vishal Pandey

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*Bennelong* at Coliseum Theatre, Rooty Hill (Mar 2020), photo credit Vishal Pandey

## Page 62

The smoking coolamon in the corner of Bangarra's Walsh Bay function space after the company smoking ceremony (Dec 2020), photo credit Daniel Boud



# Connecting people and enriching communities

“At BAI Communications, we’re dedicated to connecting communities. The strength of our partnership with Bangarra is defined by our shared passion of connecting people in metropolitan, regional and remote communities. We are proud to be a Bangarra partner, helping to elevate our country’s rich national identity and inspire the next generation of Australians.”

PETER LAMBOURNE,  
CEO, BAI COMMUNICATIONS AUSTRALIA

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THEATRE AUSTRALIA**

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