

# bangarra

DANCE THEATRE



## OUR

LAND PEOPLE STORIES

### TEACHERS NOTES

**Includes Australian Curriculum &  
NSW Syllabus links for  
Stages 3 - 5 (Years 5 - 10)**



Dear Teacher,

The information in this pack provides essential information and contextual background for the three dance works, *Macq*, *Miyagan* and *Nyapanyapa*, which make up the program, *Our Land People Stories*.

We hope this resource will be useful in preparing your students to experience the work of Bangarra fully, and provide guidance for your focus on any curriculum material you wish to incorporate into the excursion. The material provided is not prescriptive in term of intent or meaning, and allows for individual responses to the works.

The resource includes links to the Australian curriculum:

**Cross-curricula priority:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories & Cultures;

**General Capabilities:** Critical and Creative Thinking, Intercultural Understanding and Literacy.

## Contents

Bangarra Dance Theatre .....	3
Connecting to the source.....	3
<i>OUR land people stories</i> .....	5
<i>Macq</i> .....	5
<i>Miyagan</i> .....	9
<i>Nyapanyapa</i> .....	10
Key words / Glossaries .....	16
Bringing the stories to the stage .....	17
Acknowledgements.....	19
Curriculum links .....	20
Australian Curriculum Stage 3 (Y5 & 6).....	20
Australian Curriculum Stage 4 (Y7 & 8) .....	21
Australian Curriculum Stage 5 (Y9 & 10) .....	21



## **Bangarra Dance Theatre**

### **... who is Bangarra?**

Bangarra is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation and one of Australia's leading performing arts companies, widely acclaimed nationally and around the world for its powerful dancing, distinctive theatrical voice and utterly unique soundscapes, music, and design.

Bangarra was founded in 1989 by American dancer and choreographer, Carole Johnson. Since 1991 Bangarra has been led by Artistic Director and choreographer, Stephen Page.

The company is based at Walsh Bay in Sydney and presents performance seasons in Australian capital cities, regional towns, and remote areas. Bangarra has also taken its productions to many places around the world including Europe, Asia and USA.

### **... why is the work of Bangarra important?**

Bangarra exists to create a foundation for the preservation and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural life. Through its performance seasons and touring of dance theatre productions, Bangarra provides the opportunity for people of all cultural backgrounds to be able to have a contemporary experience of the world's oldest living culture. Bangarra has nurtured the careers of hundreds of Indigenous professional artists, including dancers, choreographers, composers and designers. Over the last 26 years, Bangarra has produced over thirty original works for its repertoire. Bangarra has also collaborated on the creation of new productions with other Australian performing arts companies such as The Australian Ballet and Sydney Theatre Company.

### **... who are the artists?**

Over Bangarra's 26 years, the dancers and collaborating artists have come from all over Australia, including the major indigenous groups in relation to location, which are: Torres Strait Islanders, Queensland (Murri), New South Wales (Koori), Victoria (Koorie), South Australia (Anangu), Arnhem Land, Northern Territory (Yolngu), Coast and Midwest Western Australia (Yamatji), Southern Western Australia (Noongar), Central Western Australia (Wangai) and Tasmania (Palawah). Some of the dancers are graduates of The National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) Dance College (NSW), while others received their training at the Aboriginal College of Performing Arts (Qld), and others are graduates of dance courses delivered by universities around Australia.

## **Connecting to the source**

### **... telling the stories**

Story telling in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is the basis for transferring traditional knowledge and keeping cultural identity strong. Stories can be told through song, music, dance, and art, connecting people to land and language. Stories are critical to cultural maintenance.

### **... sharing and transferring knowledge**

Each year Bangarra spends time in specific Indigenous communities, meeting with elders and traditional owners and living with the people of that community - learning about stories that connect the people and the natural life to the land. Everyone who works at Bangarra feels very strongly about their role in the company's



work. They make sure that the stories they tell are true to the traditional owners of those stories and uphold the integrity of the stories' meanings.

**... experiencing dance in a theatrical context**

It is important to note that dance theatre works are essentially the creation of artistic invention to express a broad range of ideas and thoughts. While some information is provided in the program notes, the audience is free to interpret the work according to their individual perspectives and emotional responses.



## OUR land people stories

### Macq

**Choreography: Jasmin Sheppard.**

*“The seed for Macq started when I first became aware of the 1816 massacre at Appin while living in Liverpool in Western Sydney around a decade ago. An encroaching statue of Lachlan Macquarie’s head there prompted in me the question: who was this man? It was as though the more I saw his name, the more I saw his name”.*

**Jasmin Sheppard, 2016.**

*Macq* is a dance theatre piece created by Bangarra artist Jasmin Sheppard. The work focuses on the true story of the Appin Massacre of 1816, involving the Dharawal people of the coastal regions south of Sydney, the colonial NSW military (under Governor of NSW, Lachlan Macquarie), and the white settlers of the region.

### The Dharawal People

The traditional land of the Dharawal (Tharawal/Turawal/Thurwal) people stretches from south of Botany Bay down to Wreck Bay near Nowra, west to Goulburn and up to the Georges River through Appin.

For maps and further information see link: *Murni Dhungang Jirrar / Living in the Illawarra* (Page 9 of this resource).

Dharawal is the language spoken by the people who have a relationship with this Country. The Dharawal language and culture is kept alive by the descendants of the ancient Dharawal people.

By 1813, white settlers had occupied much of the Dharawal lands. They erected fences and set up farms over the top of kangaroo feeding grounds, interrupting the sustainable land management and food supply cycles that Aboriginal people had successfully practiced for thousands of years. Despite this, the relationships between farmers and the Dharawal were mostly friendly and peaceful.

In times of drought the neighbouring Gundungarra people of the Blue Mountains area would be given permission by the Dharawal to hunt on their land. In 1813 a severe drought occurred and endured to 1815, creating a shortage of food supply for both groups of Aboriginal people, as well as the settlers. In 1815, there was an additional tension between the Dharawal and the Gundungarra over the banishment of a Gundungarra man from the Dharawal lands over a breach of traditional payback.

The conflict between these two groups made Aboriginal people more vulnerable as the white settlers made their determinations towards eliminating so-called ‘hostile’ Aboriginal people.

### Lachlan Macquarie

Lachlan Macquarie was Governor of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. He has been called the ‘Father of Australia’. He campaigned to have the name ‘Australia’ made official and initiated over 250 public works, such as buildings, roads, parks, institutions, and government infrastructure. He introduced Australia’s first currency and opened its first bank - the Bank of NSW, now Westpac. Macquarie was determined to transform the colony into a respectable and progressive community, reflecting British society, as well as his own values and priorities. He set aside the land in Sydney we now call Hyde Park as a horseracing track for colonists to



gather and enjoy the British lifestyle they had left behind. He initiated the current traffic convention of driving on the left hand side of the road and implemented many regulations for construction and town planning.

Macquarie Street, Macquarie University, Macquarie Radio, Macquarie Pass, Macquarie River, Lachlan River, Port Macquarie, Lake Macquarie, Macquarie Shire, and Lachlan Shire are just a few examples of Lachlan Macquarie's legacy and presence in modern Australia.

A great deal of information about Lachlan Macquarie, the fifth Governor of the colony, has been preserved - including his own very detailed personal diaries. He arrived in Sydney in 1810. The colony had been without a governor since the Rum Rebellion, which resulted in the arrest of Governor William Bligh in 1808, and Macquarie's mission was to improve the productivity, the moral behavior, and the governance of the colony.

Macquarie's policies and actions towards Aboriginal people included the setting up of the Native Institution in Parramatta, an Aboriginal Farm at Georges Head, and an annual picnic/market (*durbur*) in Parramatta where people would gather to sell produce and crafts, share food, sing, and dance. Macquarie befriended several Aboriginal men – for example Bungaree, to whom he presented a breastplate as part of his first Aboriginal Congress (which Macquarie initiated in Parramatta). Macquarie's personal diaries show a level of humanitarianism towards Aboriginal people as evidenced in a public proclamation in 1814: *"Any person who may be found to have treated them [Aboriginal people] with inhumanity or cruelty, will be punished."* This comment followed a specific atrocity where white settlers murdered an Aboriginal woman and her children.

However Governor Macquarie was not effective in bringing about any lasting peaceful stability between Aboriginal people and the colonists, and there were many incidents of violence as the British exerted their push west to cultivate land. Competition over food supply, as well as the lack of understanding or respect that colonists had for indigenous culture and traditional systems of caring for land also contributed to the conflict.

In 1816, as trouble escalated, Macquarie made another proclamation: *"I have this Day ordered three Separate Military Detachments to march in to the Interior and remote part of the Colony, for the purpose of Punishing the Hostile Natives, by clearing the country of them entirely and driving them across the mountains; as well as if possible to apprehend the Natives who have committed the late murders and outrages, with the view of their being made dreadful and sever of if taken alive"*.

### **The Appin Aboriginal Massacre – 17 April 1816.**

2016 marks exactly two hundred years since the Appin Aboriginal Massacre. This event, and other massacres around the country are frequently referred to as 'declaration[s] of war' upon Aboriginal people.

In April 1816, Macquarie authorised the military, that should they meet resistance from the Aboriginal people, they should *"fire on them to compel them to surrender, hanging up on Trees the Bodies of such Natives as may be killed on such occasions, in order to strike the greater terror into the Survivors"*. It was reported by Captain James Wallis that fourteen men were killed in the main attack. This is recorded as the 'first hit'.

Macquarie reinforced this edict though a proclamation that was pinned to the trees and subsequently served as a signal for a 'free for all', where disgruntled settlers went out and embarked on a second wave of killing. During this 'second hit' the women and children ran off and were pursued by a civilian militia made up of farmers. They chased the women and children to a cliff top, and drove them over the edge. It is speculated that many more of the Dharawal people were murdered over the course of the next few days in a frenzy of settler violence.

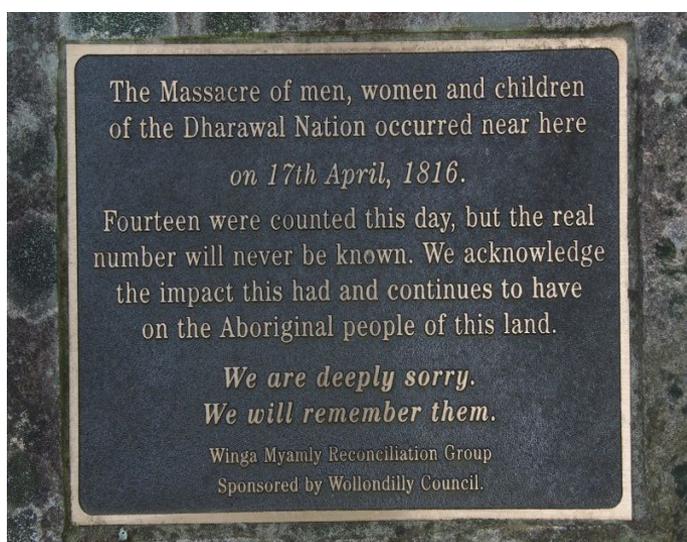
In July of the same year another Proclamation was published in the Sydney Gazette. Nine men and one woman were *'deemed and considered to be in a State of Outlawry'*. Macquarie decreed that [...] *all and every of His Majesty's subjects whether Free Men, Prisoners of the Crown, or Friendly Natives, are hereby*

*authorised and enjoined to seize upon and secure the said ten outlawed Natives’.*

A further incentive was offered in the form of a £10 reward for capture or proof *‘of their having lulled or destroyed them...’.*

In April 1817, Macquarie reported to the British government that all hostilities between the colonists and Aboriginal people had ceased and went to some trouble to *not* report the details of atrocities that were occurring. Conflict continued throughout the Nepean and Hawkesbury River areas, and efforts to assimilate Aboriginal people to European culture proved to be both futile and destructive.

The years of conflict in NSW, from the time of settlement through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, has been referred to as the ‘forgotten war’. From the time of British settlement, and through much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were similar warfare situations in various parts of the continent, such as: the Black Line in Tasmania (1831), the Fremantle Massacre (1830), and The Gippsland Massacres in Victoria (1840s).



While Australia’s presence in overseas campaigns, such as WWI, WWII, Vietnam and the Middle East, is acknowledged through significant official commemorations such as ANZAC Day, those who lost their lives or suffered as a result of colonial conflicts remain largely unacknowledged. A small plaque to mark the Appin Massacre, is one of the few memorials to the warfare that occurred in colonial Australia.

*Plaque commemoration in small clearing on the Cataract Rd, Appin.*  
Photo: P F Williams

## Creating *Macq*

One of the main motivations for Jasmin Sheppard to create the work *Macq* was her awareness of the enormous presence Lachlan Macquarie has in modern day Australia. With so many public buildings, institutions, businesses, and place names honouring this man, she wanted to uncover more of his story. This led her to the Dharawal people of southwest Sydney and in particular to Aunty Frances Bodkin and Uncle Gavin Andrews, descendants of the Dharawal. Aunty Frances is a direct descendent of one of the Dharawal men who died in the Appin massacre, and her insights into the background of this event were critical to the work’s creation. Sheppard also consulted with collecting institutions and museums, including NSW State Records and the Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie Archive at Macquarie University, enabling her to build more layers into this important story. In the course of her research, details of the Appin Massacre emerged, as did the contradictory elements to Lachlan Macquarie himself.

Exploring Macquarie’s personal diaries, and holding them up against the recorded history reveals a man who is highly conflicted, suggesting a more complex narrative to the generally acknowledged history of this time. Macquarie’s efforts to implement humanitarian approaches, and then effectively sanctioning the murder of Aboriginal people provides us with a broader lens with which to view colonial history - from both Aboriginal and white settler perspectives.

The work makes use of a major set piece – a long table. The table is a key part of the choreography in the way it is used to represent important elements of the story. Tables can be the site of social gathering, as well



as discussions and meetings. It is shared territory, and is something that symbolizes people coming together. The table also creates a place to hide under, or a way to elevate things above the ground and give them priority status. There are a number of interpretations that can be imagined and discussed in relation to the use of the long table in *Macq*.

The use of recorded voice in the work presents the character of Lachlan Macquarie in a very literal way, exposing his actual words, as written in official diaries. This element of the production stands in contrast to other elements of the work, which are much more abstract.

## Presenting *Macq*

Bangarra's production of *Macq* is presented in 7 sections. Each section is a response to aspects of the stories about the Appin Massacre, through a distinctly indigenous perspective. The sections are:

<b>Mourning</b>	The women mourn the loss of their brothers, husbands, fathers and sons with ceremonial red ochre.
<b>Picnic</b>	Picnic ( <i>durbur</i> ) at Parramatta Park.
<b>Territory</b>	The fight over land and ownership - Two worlds meet.
<b>Declaration</b>	The troops are sent out. The declaration of war upon Sydney Aboriginals is proclaimed. Macquarie resigns himself to this.
<b>Bodies in the Trees</b>	A warning to all others.
<b>Diary</b>	Macquarie's diaries. The breakdown of a leader.
<b>Hope</b>	From 30,000 Dharawal to 1,670. We are resilient.

## Links & further reading

### Online

#### **D'harawal Dreamin Stories: 'Stories my mother told me' – Frances Bodkin.**

Stories will teach you about the ancient culture of the D'harawal people ... the natural rhythms and lessons, language, and the integration of land, animals, nature and people that underpins Aboriginal life in Sydney.

<http://dharawalstories.com>

#### **Dharawal: the story of the Dharawal speaking people of Southern Sydney.**

A collaborative work by Les Bursill, Mary Jacobs, Artist Deborah Lennis, Dharawal elder Aunty Beryl Timbery-Beller and Dharawal spokesperson Merv Ryan.

<https://lha.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@lha/documents/doc/uow162226.pdf>

#### **Secret Service: Governor Macquarie's Aboriginal War of 1816. Michael K. Organ, University of Wollongong, 2014.**

<http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1496&context=asdpapers>

#### **Dictionary of Sydney (the Appin Massacre)**

[http://www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/appin\\_massacre](http://www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/appin_massacre)

## Australian Dictionary of Biography

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macquarie-lachlan-2419>

The Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie Archive (LEMA), Macquarie University initiated in 2011.

<http://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/lema/>

Murni Dhungang- Living in the Illawarra. Wesson, Sue. Illawarra Regional Aboriginal Heritage Study.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cultureheritage/illawarraAboriginalResourceUseIntroduction.pdf>

## Books

**Biographical list:** Books about Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie.

<http://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/lema/bibliography/lachlanelizabeth.html>

*Forgotten War*, Reynolds, Henry. NewSouth Publishing, 2013.

*Seven Versions of an Australian Badlands*, Gibson, Ross. University of Queensland Press, 2008.

## Film

*Lachlan Macquarie: The Father of Australia*, Ronin Films, 2010. Directed by Les Wilson.

<http://www.roninfilms.com.au/feature/6093/lachlan-macquarie-father-of-australia.html>



Daniel Riley rehearsing Macq.

Photo: Tiffany Parker



## **Miyagan** (me-ya-gun) - our family.

### **Choreography: Beau Dean Riley Smith and Daniel Smith**

*“Miyagan came from wanting to tell a Wiradjuri story, and reconnect back to our shared culture and heritage – it is narrated by the Wiradjuri kinship system.*

*Kinship, and the bonds we all share as Indigenous people of this land, are what connects us to land, to each other and to our cultural responsibilities. It also influences our social behavior. There is nothing more valuable than miyagan, without kinship/family there is no life”.*

**Beau Dean Riley Smith & Daniel Riley, 2016**

The work *Miyagan* is co-choreographed by Bangarra artists Beau Dean Riley Smith and Daniel Riley, who are both Wiradjuri men from the north-western part of NSW around the towns of Dubbo and Wellington. The work explores Kinship systems in Aboriginal society and the way these systems are designed to sustain culture and support families and communities through sharing, reciprocity, and a highly sophisticated set of social and familial guidelines.

The work *Miyagan* centers around the Riley families who for many generations have lived on and around the Talbragar Reserve just outside the town of Dubbo. The choreographers are researching their own families, cultural inheritance and the communities to which they are both connected. Two members of their family, Lynnette Riley and Diane McNaboe, worked closely with the choreographers in the research phase of *Miyagan*, guiding the artists and enabling them to meet and talk with the broader family and community.

*Miyagan* also draws inspiration from the cultural inheritance of the Wiradjuri people, their land, their language and their stories.

### **Aboriginal Kinship systems**

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, Kinship systems provide the fundamental connection for people to each other, to their families and communities, and to the universe. Kinship determines responsibilities towards others, as well as towards land and resources.

Within the more than five hundred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations in Australia, there are hundreds of clan groups, and within these there are family groups. Clan groups can share a common language and are connected through the Kinship system.

There are three levels of Kinship – Moiety, Totem, and Skin names. For more information about these categories see **Kinship Module: Teaching and learning framework** (further Information and links page 12 of this resource).

### **Talbragar Reserve.**

Talbragar Reserve is about 4 kilometers outside the town of Dubbo, located between the valleys of the Macquarie and Talbragar rivers, up to where these rivers meet. Talbragar was established in 1898, about 5 years after the NSW Aboriginal Protection Board was officially set up. Talbragar was a relatively large community that grew even larger (about 500 people) in the 1950s following the flooding of other nearby Aboriginal camps at Black Bridge and Devil’s Hole. In the early 1900s, a school was established on the reserve in a slab structure built by mission residents before a permanent building was erected in 1935. Families from around the area came to live there to access education as well as employment opportunities in nearby farms and businesses.



With the advent of assimilation policies in the 1950s, many people were moved off the Reserve and were given housing in the town centre. Gradually the numbers at Talbragar reduced and the buildings were abandoned, with the last family leaving Talbragar in 1970.

### Protection policies in Australia.

From the time of British colonisation in Australia, areas of land were being allocated as Aboriginal reserves in response to the dispossession of Aboriginal people from their native lands. This policy demonstrated the level of European ignorance of Aboriginal systems and practices and how removal of access to tribal land, hunting grounds, and sacred sights, as well as the disruption to kinship systems and tribal politics would impact communities.

As white settlements grew and conflict over land and food resources increased, a number of so-called 'protectors' of Aboriginal people came forward to create missions and reserves in areas where Aboriginal people could be 'protected'. These missions were primarily run by Christian churches, whose religious teaching and western values greatly influenced day-to-day life on the reserve.

The formal history of Protection laws started with the Report on Aboriginal Tribes in 1837 to the British Parliament, providing a validation to the work of protectors and missionaries. The recommendations of the report included:

- *The protection of Aborigines should be considered as a duty belonging to the executive government*
- *Religious instruction and education be provided to Aborigines.*
- *Missionaries be encouraged to work with Aborigines.*

From the report: Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes: House of Commons, British Parliament, Great Britain, 1837.

Between 1901 and 1938, many grants of land were assigned to Aboriginal people. Housing, education, and health care were provided. Stories from these reserves serve to illustrate how these policies had such a significant impact on the traditional cultural systems and connections within Aboriginal society. This growth in the number of reserves and missions resulted in many people being displaced from their homelands, while at the same time initiating a 20<sup>th</sup> century weave of cultural connection as several clans and families came to live in one community. It is largely due to the Kinship system that the various communities and families have been able to remain strongly connected and their traditional knowledge preserved.

### Presenting *Miyagan*

<b>Yanhanha</b>	The women
<b>Gugaa (Wiradjuri)</b>	The Wiradjuri nation on Talbragar Reserve and its totem, the <i>Gugaa</i> (Goanna).
<b>Moiety</b>	The two Wiradjuri Moiety's and their cultural responsibilities - <i>Dilbi, Kupathin</i> .
<b>Wilay (Clan)</b>	The third level of totemic system. Brush tail possum and its connection to Dubbo.
<b>Wamboin / Marri (Family)</b>	The fourth level of the totemic system. Family totems, names (Riley) and lineage, Red Kangaroo and Grey kangaroo.

### *Miyagan - Further information and links:*

#### *Online*

Kinship Module: Teaching and learning framework. Lynette Riley and Deirdre Howard-Wagner. University of Sydney, 2014.

[http://sydney.edu.au/kinship-module/documents/learning/Kinship\\_Module\\_Teaching\\_Learning\\_Framework-web.pdf](http://sydney.edu.au/kinship-module/documents/learning/Kinship_Module_Teaching_Learning_Framework-web.pdf)

Indigenous Kinship, Australians Together.

<http://www.australianstogether.org.au/stories/detail/kinship-and-skin-names>

The AustKin Project, Australian National University, launched March 2016.

<http://www.austkin.net/index.php>

*Remembering the mission days: Stories from the Aborigine's Inland Missions.*

Exhibition focus on Aborigine's' Inland Mission and its influence over Aboriginal people from 1905 to 1966.

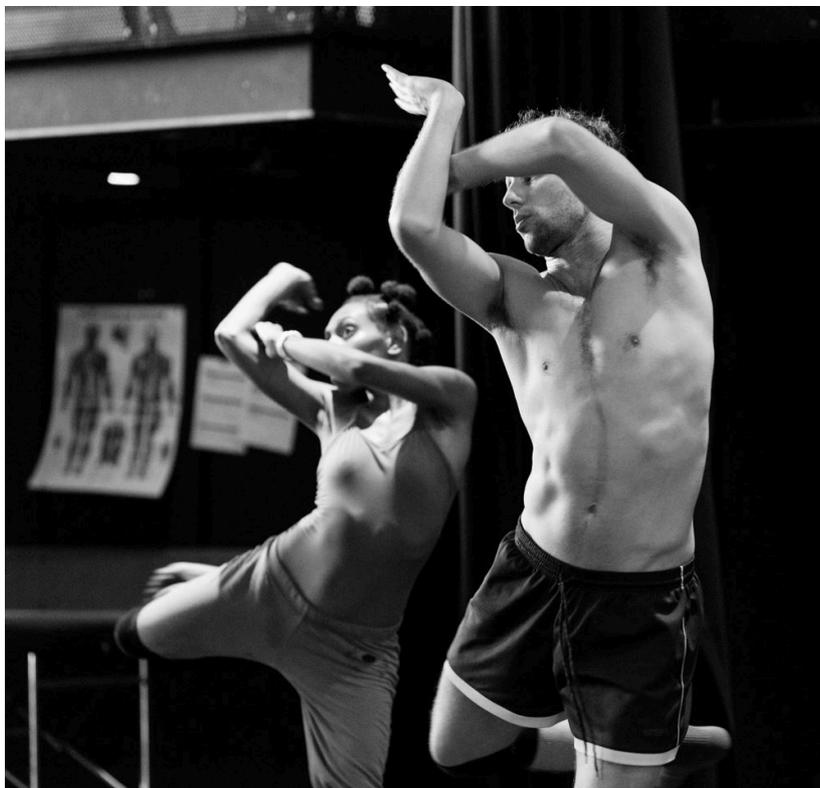
<http://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/remembering-mission-days>

'Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve'. Exhibition. Michael Riley: Sights Unseen. 1998.

<http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/riley/Default.cfm?MnuID=2&GalID=6>

#### **Book**

*Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve: stories by the original inhabitants and former residents photographs by Michael Riley.* Riley, Michael. Book published by Dubbo Regional Gallery, Dubbo, 1999.



*Yolanda Lowatta and Rikki Mason rehearsing Miyagan*

*Photo: Tiffany Parker*

## Nyapanyapa

### Choreography: Stephen Page

*"Nyapanyapa Yunupingu is an inspiration. She is a proud Yolngu woman from the Gamatj clan of North East Arnhem Land, a strong figure in her community who creates her art simply because it's in her blood. Painting for her is meditative process – a place of reflection, embedded in her life and history. It reminds me of why I started dancing as a young man – because I had, because it was my calling, and because it took me to a safe and spiritual place.*

*Nyapanyapa is so innately talented that her works give endless joy to those who see them. Each time I visit Yirrkala, I've always felt drawn to her energy, her spirit. I've long admired her paintings and her last series featuring young dancing girls fascinated me and sparked the idea for a creative exchange. But it was her Buffalo Story painting, which won her the prestigious Telstra Art prize in 2008 that was a jumping off point for this work".*

**Stephen Page, 2016.**

### The artist – Nyapanyapa Yunupingu

Nyapanyapa Yunupingu was born around 1945 in Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land. Her moiety is Yirritja, her homeland is Biranybirany.

Nyapanyapa comes from a family of painters and has been painting most of her life, though her style and the themes depicted in her work are quite different from other Yolngu artists who mostly depict traditional stories and spiritual aspects of their culture.

In contrast to other Yolngu bark painting artists, Nyapanyapa's work explores experiences from her own life, as well as her personal experience of the actual process of painting. She paints to please herself, and tells her thoughts through painting. The Yolngu word that describes her work is 'mayilimiriw' which translates to English as 'meaningless', however Nyapanyapa's work is not without substance. It is innovative in its 'telling' of landscape and events, beautifully crafted in its use of tone and texture, and idiosyncratic for the quiet and mesmeric atmosphere it conjures.

As Francesca Cubillo, senior advisor at the National Gallery of Australia, says, *"...Nyapanyapa [is] working outside of previous conventions. She does not paint ancient Dreaming narratives, she does not paint clan designs, she does not paint in conventional north-east Arnhem Land styles; she paints stories of her life and she paints spontaneously".*

Though Nyapanyapa has been painting since she was a girl, her work only came into prominence from about 2008. Her work started to attract art dealers and arts centre curators for its distinctiveness when she produced a work that illustrated a traumatic event in her own life - being badly injured from an attack by a water buffalo. The work was entered into the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award and won the prize for three-dimensional work.

Since 2009, Nyapanyapa's work has concentrated on form, line, and colour (noting that many of her more recent paintings are predominantly white tones), while working in her own form of cross-hatching technique.

### The Art of Yirrkala, North East Arnhem Land

Yirrkala is located on the Gove Peninsula at the northeast tip of Arnhem Land in Northern Territory, Australia. The community is cared for by a town council made up of representatives of the main Clans in the region. Languages spoken there include Gumatj, Rirratjingu and Djambarrpuyngu.



Yirrkala has a rich tradition of bark painting, which from the 1960s was finding its way to art dealers in the southern states, making a significant contribution to the international demand for Aboriginal art that exists today. Yirrkala artists are known for using their art to influence political change and inform mainstream society about Aboriginal culture and their connection to land, as well as stories and cultural practices that serve to sustain their culture and well-being.

The most recognised example of this was the Bark petitions of 1963. This served to galvanise the momentum for the Land Rights Act of 1975, moving to the Mabo decision of 1994, which formally overturned the legal status of 'terra nullius' of 'no man's land'.

Yirrkala artists have maintained a strong discipline in their art - using only natural materials like ochre, clay, and coal mixed with water or vegetable liquid. The bark is also prepared using traditional methods, and is mostly sourced from the stringy bark tree during the wet season when it is soft and pliable. The bark is then heated over hot coals to be pressed flat as it dries out. The bark sheets can be seen drying under heavy weights for a few days before painting the bark can begin.

### Presenting *Nyapanyapa*

<b>Buffalo Story</b>	Story of Nyapanyapa's award winning painting
<b>Bush Apples</b>	Hiding in the trees
<b>Seashells</b>	Lost and found
<b>Niblets</b>	Humbugging
<b>Lost Wendy's</b>	Forest of women
<b>In Her Mind</b>	Homage. Meditation through art.

### Further information and links for *Nyapanyapa*

undisclosed – 2<sup>nd</sup> national Indigenous art triennial. Cubillo, Francesca. NGA, 2012.

<http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/unDisclosed/Default.cfm?MnuID=ARTISTS&GALID=34475&viewID=3>

Yirrkala drawings: Nyapanyapa Yunupingu talks about her painting on hollow logs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJsILPiDE88>

*Nyapanyapa: painting with light*. Art Collector, Issue 58, Oct – Dec 2011.

<http://www.artcollector.net.au/NyapanyapaYunupinguPaintingwithlight>

Buku –Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre (Nyapanyapa Yunupingu page)

<https://yirrkala.com/buku-art-centre/artists/nyapanyapa-yunupingu>

The Bark Petitions of 1963

<http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/the-1963-yirrkala-bark-petitions#axzz468sOz9Ay>



Stephen Page and Bangarra dancers rehearsing Nyapanyapa.  
Photo: Tiffany Parker

## VIEW

Nyapanyapa Yunupingu's buffalo story as told by Nyapanyapa herself.

<https://vimeo.com/53651870>



*Incident at Mutpi*, natural pigments on bark, 128 x 36cm, created 2008.  
Winner of Wandjuk Marika 3D Memorial Award in 2008.



## Key Words / Glossary

<b>Matrilineal</b>	Tracing ancestral descent through the maternal line. Unlike western ancestry, which is <i>patrilineal</i> and traces ancestry through the paternal line (mainly through surnames), <i>matrilineal</i> societies understand their history and ancestry by tracing back through the mothers' side.
<b>Moiety</b>	This refers to a mode of social organisation whereby all people within a particular social group are divided into two distinct groups or <i>moieties</i> . A person is born into one or other group and this does not change throughout their life, and it's predominantly used to determine whom an individual can marry. Within this system, you should only marry someone of the opposite moiety. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Homeland</b>	Traditional land of a particular Tribe, Clan or Nation. The 'Homelands movement' gathered strength in the 1970s with many people who had been relocated to missions/reserves returning to their traditional land, to reconnect and gain a sense of 'home'. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Clan</b>	A clan is a group of people with a common territory. These people have the same <i>totems</i> and have their own group name. It consists of groups of extended families. Generally, men born into the clan remain in the clan territory. This is called a patrilineal group. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Skin Name</b>	In societies where <i>moieties</i> are divided into four, or even eight sub-sections, individuals are given <i>skin names</i> at birth (based on the skin names of his or her parents) in order to define their place within their <i>moiety</i> . <sup>4</sup>
<b>Totem</b>	A totem is an animal, plant or other natural object that is believed to be ancestrally related to a person. It is a spiritual emblem that determines one's responsibilities towards others and the environment. Totems can either represent one's <i>clan</i> , <i>skin name</i> , <i>moiety</i> , or can be given specifically to an individual. You can have more than one totem. <sup>5</sup>
<b>Yolngu</b>	The Yolngu (or Yolŋu) are the indigenous people who live in the <i>Miwatj</i> or northeast Arnhem Land region. Their society is divided into two distinct moieties: Dhuwa and Yirriŋja. <sup>6 7</sup>
<b>Protocol</b>	This refers to the rules that are outlined by communities that pass on their stories to performers. <i>Protocols</i> differ from community to community and encourage ethical conduct based on good faith and respect. It determines how stories are presented so that they can be passed down correctly through generations. <sup>8</sup>

**General Bangarra Glossary:** <http://bangarra.com.au/education-resources/glossary>

<sup>1</sup> Horton, David. *The Encyclopaedia Of Aboriginal Australia*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Korff, Jens. "Aboriginal Homelands & Outstations". *Creative Spirits*. N.p., 2015. Web. 20 May 2016. Source: <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/aboriginal-homelands-outstations#toc1>

<sup>3</sup> Welch, David. "Traditional Life - Social Organisation". *Aboriginal Culture*. N.p., 2016. Web. 20 May 2016. Source: <http://www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> "Kinship And Skin Names". *Central Land Council, Australia*. N.p., 2016. Web. 20 May 2016. Source: <http://www.clc.org.au/articles/info/aboriginal-kinship>

<sup>5</sup> Paulson, Graham. "Indigenous Spirituality". *Australians Together*. N.p., 2016. Web. 20 May 2016. Source: <http://www.australiansaltogether.org.au/stories/detail/indigenous-spirituality>

<sup>6</sup> Hutcherson, Gillian. *Djalkiri Wānga. The Land Is My Foundation*. [Western Australia]: University of Western Australia, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, 1995. Print.

<sup>7</sup> "The Yolngu". *National Museum of Australia*. N.p., 2016. Web. 20 May 2016. Source: <http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/yalangbara/yolngu>

<sup>8</sup> Janke, Terri, et al. *Performing Arts*. Sydney, N.S.W.: Australia Council for the Arts, 2007. Print.



## Bringing the stories to the stage: the creative process

### ... research and preparation

Prior to working with the dancers in the studio, the choreographers, the composers, and the set and costume designers spend a great deal of time researching both written and oral sources. They speak at length with cultural consultants, historians, and other experts who are close to the subject matter. On many occasions the creative teams spend time 'on Country' experiencing the exact locations of the stories they are telling and the cultures they are depicting.

The artists work closely with the cultural consultants who bring their traditional knowledge to the processes and discuss any cultural protocols that need to be observed in regard to using material that has been shared.

The journey of research and discovery, as well as the creative processes involved in the making of *OUR land people stories* are closely linked into the journey of emotional response, and the processing of these ideas into dance, music, and design.

### ... dance practice

*Macq, Miyagan, and Nyapanyapa* were created by the choreographers in close collaboration with the dancers, the composer, and the costume, set, and lighting designers. The people who take on these roles form the creative team. The whole creative team collaborates closely during the entire creative process to enable the dance to reflect the choreographer's overall vision.

The choreographer, the rehearsal director and the dancers work together in the dance studio for many hours each day over several weeks to create the choreographic vernacular and motifs for the works they are creating. Together they invent movements that reflect their artistic interpretations by building dance sequences into a cohesive structure and transforming all the parts of the processes into a holistic artwork.

### ...dance skills

Using their dance technique and performance skills, the dancers work to blend the movements, refine them, and make them technically achievable, before eventually settling on a final version of the choreography.

The rehearsal director is present throughout this process in order to rehearse the dance, so that the key qualities and details of the choreography as set by the choreographer are retained and remembered. As the work moves closer to its premiere date, the rehearsal director works with the dancers to make sure they can perform the dance consistently at the highest standard possible. At this point in the process, the technical elements of the production – costume, set, and lighting – start to be physically incorporated.

### ... dance production processes

In the week of the premiere performance, the dancers, rehearsal director, creative team and production crew move from the Bangarra dance studios to the theatre where they rig the set, position and program the lighting, check the sound levels, and make necessary adjustments to the choreography to fit the space of the stage. This is called 'bump in' and the production crew is largely responsible for coordinating this stage of the process. There is much excitement during this bump in week because no one has actually seen the finished work. How the work looks in the theatre is always different to the way it looks in the studio.

There is often a media call on the day of the premiere where photographers take pictures of the dancers in dress rehearsal, and journalists conduct interviews with the creative team. On premiere night reviewers will attend to write about the work for their respective newspapers, websites, and blogs. These reviews are usually published as soon as possible after the premiere.



Costumes detail – Miyagan.  
Design: Jennifer Irwin  
Photo: Tiffany Parker



Nyapanyapa cloths.  
Design: Jacob Nash  
Photo Jacob Nash

### ...the life of a dance

During the lengthy process of creating a new Bangarra production, ideas will change and surprising shifts in the original plans will occur. This is the normal nature of the creative process, and probably one of the most exciting things about making a new work. Importantly, the elements that do not change are those where traditional content such as stories, protocols, and specific references to culture are involved. These elements remain respected and intact. As the dance is performed over time, the work is passed from one dancer's body to another as different dancers are taught the choreography.



## Acknowledgements

### *Macq*

Choreographer	Jasmin Sheppard
Cultural consultants	Francis Bodkin and Gavin Andrews
Music/sound designer	David Page
Set designer	Jacob Nash
Costume designer	Jennifer Irwin
Lighting designer	Matt Cox

### *Miyagan*

Choreographers	Beau Dean Riley Smith and Daniel Riley
Cultural consultants	Diane McNaboe and Lynette Riley
Music	Paul Mac
Set designer	Jacob Nash
Costume designer	Jennifer Irwin
Lighting designer	Matt Cox

### *Nyapanyapa*

Choreographer	Stephen Page
Cultural consultant	Nyapanyapa Yunupingu
Music	Steve Francis
Set designer	Jacob Nash
Costume designer	Jennifer Irwin
Lighting designer	Matt Cox

***OUR land people stories*** is performed by the Bangarra dance ensemble:

Elma Kris, Deborah Brown, Waangenga Blanco, Tara Gower, Leonard Mickelo, Daniel Riley, Jasmin Sheppard, Tara Robertson, Kaine Sultan-Babij, Luke Curry-Richardson, Nicola Sabatino, Beau Dean Riley Smith, Rikki Mason, Yolanda Lowatta, Rika Hamaguchi, Tyrel Dulvarie, Glory Tuohy-Daniell.



## Australian Curriculum references

### Stage 3 (Yrs 5 & 6)

#### ARTS

##### Dance

- Explain how the **elements of dance** and production elements communicate meaning by comparing dances from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance (**ACADAR012**)

##### Music

- Explain how the **elements of music** communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (**ACAMUR091**)

##### Visual Arts

- Explore **ideas and practices** used by artists, including practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent different views, beliefs and opinions (**ACAVAM114**)
- Explain how **visual arts conventions** communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks (**ACAVAR117**)

#### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

##### Inquiry and skills

- Develop appropriate questions to guide an inquiry about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges (**ACHASSI094**)

##### Evaluating and reflecting

- Evaluate evidence to draw conclusions (**ACHASSI101**)

##### Knowledge and Understanding

... **sources, continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathy and significance.**

- The nature of convict or colonial presence, including the factors that influenced patterns of development, aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants (including Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) and how the environment changed (**ACHASSK107**)
- The role that a significant individual or group played in shaping a colony (**ACHASSK110**)



## **Stage 4 (Yrs 7 & 8)**

### **ARTS**

#### **Dance**

- Identify and connect specific features and purposes of **dance** from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their dance-making, starting with dance in Australia and including dance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (**ACADAR019**)

#### **Music**

- Identify and connect specific features and purposes of **music** from different eras to explore viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (**ACAMUR098**)

#### **Visual Arts**

- Respond to **visual artworks** and consider where and why people make visual artworks, starting with visual artworks from Australia, including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (**ACAVAR109**)

## **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

### **Investigating the Ancient Past.**

- The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (**ACDSEH148**)

#### **Historical skills**

- Identify a range of questions about the past to inform a historical inquiry (**ACHHS207**)
- Identify the origin and purpose of primary and secondary sources (**ACHHS209**)
- Identify and describe points of view, attitudes and values in primary and secondary sources (**ACHHS212**)
- Develop texts, particularly descriptions and explanations that use evidence from a range of sources that are acknowledged (**ACHHS213**)

## **Stage 5 (Yrs 9 & 10)**

### **ARTS**

#### **Dance**

- Analyse a **range of dance** from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their dance making, starting with dance from Australia and including dance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider dance in international contexts (**ACADAR026**)

#### **Music**

- Analyse a **range of music** from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (**ACAMUR105**)



### Visual Arts

- Present **ideas for displaying artworks** and evaluate displays of artworks (**ACAVAM129**)
- Evaluate how representations **communicate artistic intentions** in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making (**ACAVAR130**)
- Analyse a range of **visual artworks** from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider international artworks (**ACAVAR131**)

### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

#### **Movement of peoples (1750-1901)**

- Changes in the way of life of a group(s) of people who moved to Australia in this period, such as free settlers on the frontier in Australia (**ACDSEH084**)
- The short and long-term impacts of the movement of peoples during this period (**ACDSEH085**)

#### **Making a nation**

- The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (**ACDSEH020**)

#### **Historical Skills**

- Identify and select different kinds of questions about the past to inform historical inquiry (**ACHHS166**)
- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources (**ACHHS169**)
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument (**ACHHS170**)
- Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past (**ACHHS172**)