

**adelaide festival 2002**

1 - 10 MARCH

# Skin

## Bangarra Dance Theatre

**gold coin  
contribution**

The Adelaide Festival 2002 has undertaken a series of partnerships with community groups in the city and at Murray Bridge. Your gold coin contribution for this program will provide direct benefits to both the Adelaide Festival and those community groups, including;

## HOMELESSNESS SA

Every night in South Australia there are enough homeless people to fill the Festival Theatre more than three times over! One in every 200 people in South Australia is homeless. Crisis accommodation services assist between 1,800 and 1,900 people every night, but there is not enough affordable housing for them to move on to. Many others - including those who are parents of small children - are forced to sleep rough or in their cars because accommodation services are full.

HOMELESSNESS SA is a National first. It is the result of a merging of various interest groups, in particular the Council to Homeless Persons SA, the Youth Housing Network and the Women's Emergency Services Coalition of SA. It is open to a much wider membership of people and organisations who share a concern for homeless people, and who work with and for them than the previous bodies.

Homelessness SA provides the opportunity to advocate collectively for the needs of homeless people to be addressed, and to develop co-operative partnerships that will reduce the effect of complex and unwieldy barriers to people securing appropriate services and secure housing.

The numbers of homeless in Australia have been variously estimated to be between 50,000 to 100,000 at any one time.

The Australian Bureau Statistics collected information on homelessness as part of the 1996 census. For this census they made a special effort to count those people in crisis services, staying temporarily with friends, living in squats and in streets and parks. The homeless rate in South Australia was 48.1 per 10,000 of the total population, or one in every 200 people!

For those who can access SAAP services, there is often nowhere to go from the crisis service as there are no viable exit options. The length of stay has increased, in some cases doubled, over the past five years as a result, making it harder for others to get in. Up to 20 families who have escaped domestic violence have been forced to stay in motels in a single week. At the time of the 1996 census, SAHT housing stock was 60,460, it is now 53,300, a reduction of 7,000 in four years!! (At its peak the SAHT held over 64,000).

It can take up to six months for an emergency housing allocation through the SAHT. Private rental vacancy rates have fallen below 1.5%, with the greatest pressure on the lower end of the market. Changing employment conditions such as the growth in contract, part-time and casual work does not support saving and makes it harder to obtain a mortgage to buy a house. Home ownership rates in Australia are falling. Desperate people seek assistance from many other agencies. These include schools, hospitals, mental health services, employment agencies and emergency relief services. The group most likely to have unmet demands and be unable to access services are families, who are commonly forced to sleep in cars waiting for housing to become available.

# Bangarra Dance Theatre - Skin

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Festival Theatre, Adelaide Festival Centre

March 7 to 9 2002

**Skin****Shelter**

Artistic Director/Choreographer: Stephen Page  
Composer: David Page  
Music Producers: Steve Francis and David Page  
Set Design: Peter England  
Lighting Design: Karen Norris  
Lighting Transfer: John Colvin  
Costume Design: Jennifer Irwin

## Performers:

Yolande Brown  
Elma Kris  
Peggy Misi  
Hunter Page-Lochard (child)  
Frances Rings  
Desley Roberts  
Peta Strachan

**INTERVAL****Spear**

Artistic Director/Choreographer: Stephen Page  
Cultural Consultant and Performer: Djakapurra Munyarryun  
Composers:  
David Page and Steve Francis (underscore)  
Archie Roach (songs)  
Music Producers: Steve Francis and David Page  
Set Design: Peter England  
Lighting Design: Karen Norris  
Lighting Transfer: John Colvin  
Costume Design: Jennifer Irwin

## Performers:

Wayne Blair  
Joel Blanco  
Victor Bramich  
Russell Page  
Hunter Page-Lochard (child)  
Archie Roach  
Sidney Saltner  
Sani Townson

Performance rights for use of an excerpt from *The Cake Man*  
kindly given by playwright Robert J Merritt.

**Production**

Assistant Artistic Director: Jasmine Gulash  
Production Manager: John Colvin  
Stage Manager: Narelle Lewis  
Head Mechanist: John Matkovic  
Assistant Stage Manager: Ebony Williams

**Adelaide Festival Centre Trust**

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Bangarra Dance Theatre would like to thank the following Sponsors and Funding bodies for their generous support:

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This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



*Skin* was commissioned by SOCOG and the Brisbane Festival with assistance by the Australia Council through the Commonwealth Government's Major Festivals Initiative for presentation at the 2000 Sydney Olympics Arts Festival and the Brisbane Festival 2000.



Official Airline

#### Special Thanks

Bangarra 'Totem' supporters  
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As you enter the theatre for *Skin*, you are entering a timeless sacred space. Barely visible in low lighting, a woman and a boy start to unfold a story. This is a point on a journey between two worlds. The mother heart, the bonding spirit of the women in *Shelter* lay the foundation for the men of *Spear* to survive.

*Shelter* is inspired by the ravishing works of the late Aboriginal artist, Emily Kame Kngwarrye, and draws on the cultural practices of the women of Australia's Central Desert and Utopia regions, to create images of extraordinary beauty.

It is an abstract portrayal of the traditional hunting and gathering process, inspired by living off the land. It begins with the women hunting small animals, gathering berries and bush medicines, using the digging sticks to get nutritional roots from the ground.

Mothers and daughters live off the land. A daughter conceives a spirit through the land, and a birthing sequence follows her progress through to the grief of a stillbirth and the cleansing of the spirit that follows. The modern world invades their lives through mining projects that bring toxic pollution to their desert homeland. *Shelter* shows how the spirit overcomes this new kind of invasion, a chemical invasion.

*Spear* marks the first-time collaboration with Bangarra of award-winning indigenous songwriter and performer, Archie Roach. *Spear* explores the problems Aboriginal men face in urban and remote communities, starting in childhood. Spiritual forces are represented by an elder spirit from a traditional homeland, an urban spirit who has worked through so much that he is cleansed by his own efforts, and a new spirit in the body of a child.

Interlaced with jokes, yarns and songs, a series of social concerns and issues is addressed. The first is Aboriginal deaths in custody, followed by an initiation ceremony for a young man being given his totem. Then the destructive influences of alcohol and petrol sniffing are tackled.

Finally, a male ceremony led by the elder spirit cleanses the effects of these modern influences and the new spirit of the child offers hope for the future.

## Director's Note by Stephen Page

'My first inspiration was family kinship. I have seen how remote traditional families live. I have watched urban Aboriginal families live. I have watched my professional family - Bangarra - live. And my immediate family. I have been inspired by the traditional family kinship - about the way it respects the gender of men and women. I have always believed the Dreaming is led and seeded by mother earth and that the male energy is the son of mother earth - that the spirit in mother earth is what makes the male energy.

That's why I felt with *Shelter* that we put down the foundation of the spirit - that it's seeded by the mother earth, which then allows a sense of protection and security for the *Spear* to go on its journey, to walk through the fire and come out the other end knowing that the spirit of mother will always be there.

I think this comes from my sisters, from watching my child with his mother. It's from inspirations of Emily Kngwarrye's paintings, to contemporary heroes of today like Banduk Marika, Fiona Foley, Tracey Moffatt, Frances Rings - to the myriad of Aboriginal women, urban and traditional, who have influenced my life.

For *Skin*, I went back to kinship and family and said, I want to respect both genders. I want to lay down the foundation of the spirit - and of black communication. I think that is what keeps kinship together: the constant story telling, whether you are passing on to children or giving direction and elder advice to your peers.

We have to wear many survival totems. We have to have tough goanna skins so that we can survive and evolve through this next century. *Skin* is about the complexities of our kinship: about accepting and respecting it - and that it is still alive.'

'There's a wonderful trust and exchange with the audience of a Bangarra performance. We guide you on a journey. It is a meeting of the urban social, traditional dreaming and pure abstract dance - that is why we can speak to all peoples. Passion, emotion and respect - this is what people need to survive.'

Stephen Page, Artistic Director.

Bangarra Dance Theatre is one of the youngest and oldest of Australia's dance companies. Its living traditions go back at least 40 000 years but it also reflects the lives and attitudes of indigenous peoples today. This unique company blends traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture with international contemporary dance influences to create a truly Australian dance language.

Under the artistic direction of Stephen Page since 1991, Bangarra has stunned audiences throughout Australia and the world with electric, startling and inherently spiritual dance works of immense theatrical presence.

Already a major force in Australian contemporary dance, Bangarra first galvanised international audiences with *Rites*, choreographed to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and performed in collaboration with The Australian Ballet. The work premiered at the 1997 Melbourne Festival and then toured to overwhelming acclaim to New York's City Center. The company has also appeared in major cities such as Washington, Edinburgh, Seoul, Athens and returned to New York in 2001 for sold out performances of *Corroboree* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

At the heart of Bangarra's uniqueness is Stephen Page's vision for a theatrical style that remains true to the Indigenous spirit which remains at the core of the company's work. With music composed by David Page and laced with traditional voices and sound, Bangarra Dance Theatre speaks with an ancient yet completely contemporary voice to people everywhere.

### Stephen Page - Artistic Director

Descended from the Noonukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambah tribe in Queensland Stephen danced with the Sydney Dance Company until 1991 when he was appointed artistic director of Bangarra Dance Theatre. With his works, *Praying Mantis Dreaming*, *Ninni*, and *Ochres* Stephen established milestones for the company and for Australian dance.

In 1996, Stephen created *Alchemy* for the Australian Ballet and in the following year brought the Australian Ballet and Bangarra together for *Rites* to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* which performed at the Sydney Opera House and New York's City Center.

In 2000 *Fish* premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival before going to the Sydney Opera House for the Indigenous Festival of the Dreaming. Stephen choreographed the Festival's opening event and the company premiered *Skin* for the Olympic Arts Festival, which won Australia's coveted Helpmann Award 2000 for Best New Australian Work and Best Dance Work. He also choreographed for the flag handover ceremony for the Atlanta Olympic Games and directed the Indigenous segments of the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games.

Stephen's other credits include: Indigenous Australians' participation in the opening of the 1993 World Youth Soccer Championship in Sydney; the contemporary operatic film *Black River*, winner of the Grand Prix Opera Screen '93 in Paris; *Pride* for ABC TV; *Black Vine*, a celebration of Indigenous song and dance; the Australian musical *The Wedding Song*; numerous rock videos and most recently *Awakening*, a documentary about the Indigenous section of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony.

Stephen Page has been appointed as the Artistic Director of the 2004 Adelaide Festival.

For more information visit: [www.bangarra.com.au](http://www.bangarra.com.au)

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