



BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS MARRUGEKU'S

Jurrungu Ngan-ga

[Straight Talk]

CREATED BY
MARRUGEKU

SHOWING
15 - 23 SEP

WHERE
HEATH LEDGER THEATRE





JURRUNGU NGAN-GA IS DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN CUSTODY WITHIN AUSTRALIA'S CARCERAL-BORDER ARCHIPELAGO, AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN THEIR OWN LIVES IN RESPONSE TO THE TRAUMA OF INCARCERATION. WE STAND WITH THEIR FAMILIES IN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE AGAINST INJUSTICE AND RESPECTFULLY HOLD THE NAMES OF THEIR LOVED ONES WHO HAVE PASSED SO THEY WILL BE REMEMBERED.

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA AND MARRUGEKU ACKNOWLEDGE THE WHADJUK PEOPLE OF THE NYOONGAR NATION WHO ARE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY ON WHICH STATE THEATRE CENTRE STANDS. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ALL FIRST PEOPLES, TO THEIR ANCESTORS AND ELDERS. IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE TOGETHER ON NYOONGAR COUNTRY.

Total running time

81 minutes (no interval)

Content warnings

Jurrungu Ngan-ga contains depictions of violence, racial abuse and police/border security brutality as well as references to self-harm. This performance contains the names of people who have passed away. The performance also contains partial nudity, low-level strobe light and is recommended for ages 15+

Commissioning Partners

Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk] was commissioned by Carriageworks, International Summer Festival Kampnagel, Hamburg with Körber-Stiftung and the City of Melbourne through Arts House.

Funding Partners

Marrugeku is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and the Indigenous Language and Arts Program and is supported by the WA State Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and Create NSW, the Nelson Meers Foundation, the Körber Foundation and the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation.

Photography

Prudence Upton

Design

Troy Barbitta



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THE BLACK SWAN TEAM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Synopsis

THROBBING WITH SADNESS, ANGER, JOY AND RESISTANCE *JURRUNGU NGAN-GA* IS A POWERFUL AND PROVOCATIVE NEW DANCE, SOUND AND INSTALLATION WORK THAT INTERROGATES OUR CAPACITY TO LOCK AWAY AND ISOLATE THAT WHICH WE FEAR.

Jurrungu Ngan-ga confronts Australia's shameful fixation with incarceration by connecting outrageous levels of Indigenous imprisonment to the indefinite detaining of asylum seekers.

Set within 'the prison of the mind of Australia', the exceptionally talented performers appear as figments of the Australian psyche. Individually and collectively, they draw on cultural and community experience to move deftly between horror, truth telling, and bodily resistance.

Marrugeku's unique intersectional choreography channels the impact of 'denial under pressure', colonial haunting and government-sanctioned brutality. Searing truths blend with dark humour, fear, sadness and courage to shine a light on new ways to resist and abolish.





About MARRUGEKU

MARRUGEKU IS AN UNPARALLELED PRESENCE IN AUSTRALIA TODAY, DEDICATED TO INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP NEW DANCE LANGUAGES THAT ARE RESTLESS, TRANSFORMATIVE AND UNWAVERING.

Marrugeku builds bridges and breaks down walls between urban and remote dance communities, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and between local and global situations. Our works are created out of urgent and insurgent reciprocities, believing, on our watch, we face major change in Indigenous Australia and that telling stories together is one of the simplest and hardest things we can do.

Marrugeku is led by Co-Artistic Directors: Choreographer/Dancer Dalisa Pigram, and Director/Dramaturg Rachael Swain. Working

together for 27 years, they co-conceive and facilitate Marrugeku's productions and research laboratories, introducing audiences to the unique and potent structures of Indigenous knowledge systems and the compelling experience of intercultural performance. Marrugeku's performers come from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, collaborating to co-create each production. Marrugeku's patron is Yawuru cultural leader and national reconciliation advocate, Patrick Dodson.

Working from our bicoastal operations in the remote town of Broome, Western Australia, and the urban Centre of Carriageworks, Sydney, Marrugeku harnesses the dynamic of performance exchange drawn from remote, urban, intercultural and trans-Indigenous approaches to expand the possibilities of contemporary dance. Our productions tour throughout urban and remote Australia, to other Indigenous contexts internationally and throughout the world.



Artist Statement

MARRUGEKU'S DALISA PIGRAM AND RACHAEL SWAIN

SADNESS, ANGER, RESILIENCE AND JOY: THE MAKING OF *JURRUNGU NGAN-GA*.

In July 2016 we sat down with Yawuru leader, Patrick Dodson, to discuss jurrungu ngan-ga - a Yawuru kinship concept that enables certain relatives to communicate "straight" or directly with one another. 30 years earlier, Patrick had been one of six commissioners and the only non-lawyer who sat on the Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Thinking about jurrungu ngan-ga as a concept to inspire a new work for Marrugeku, Patrick said: "Because we lack the ability to straight talk to one another, this fear grows in each generation, holding community and society back in multiple ways". He made the critical link between the rampant imprisonment of Indigenous Australians, who remain proportionally some of the most incarcerated peoples in the world, and the locking up of refugees in offshore and onshore detention centres, suggesting: "This linked scenario stems from our history as a penal colony. We

are a nation of jailers; we lock up that which we fear". Patrick then posed a crucial question: How would we work to embody fear on stage? Researching this question led us to the groundbreaking autobiographical novel *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (2018); a collaborative work written in Farsi by Kurdish Iranian journalist and filmmaker Behrouz Boochani, and translated into English and edited by Iranian Australian scholar-activist Omid Tofighian. Behrouz's account of his perilous journey to Australia in search of safety and protection, and his subsequent incarceration in the Australian-run immigration prison on Manus Island (PNG), was translated by Omid from thousands of WhatsApp messages typed into a smuggled phone.* In Behrouz's and Omid's culturally situated, philosophical and political framing of Australia's carceral-border regime, we found critical tools, approaches to genre and key scenes that helped us to activate Patrick's questions.

*Most of the messages were collated first by Boochani's other translator, Moones Mansoubi.



We invited Behrouz and Omid as guest cultural dramaturgs to join Patrick in this long-term role with the company, working alongside Flemish dance dramaturg Hildegard de Vuyst. Through this intersectional dialogue, we extended Marrugeku's existing intercultural and improvisational devising processes to produce three distinct performance genres for the work: "straight talk", "horrific surrealism" and "this is Australia". In this way, we have continued Marrugeku's core mission to work through the methodologies of Indigenous governed intercultural performance to create art that interrogates the burning issues of our times.

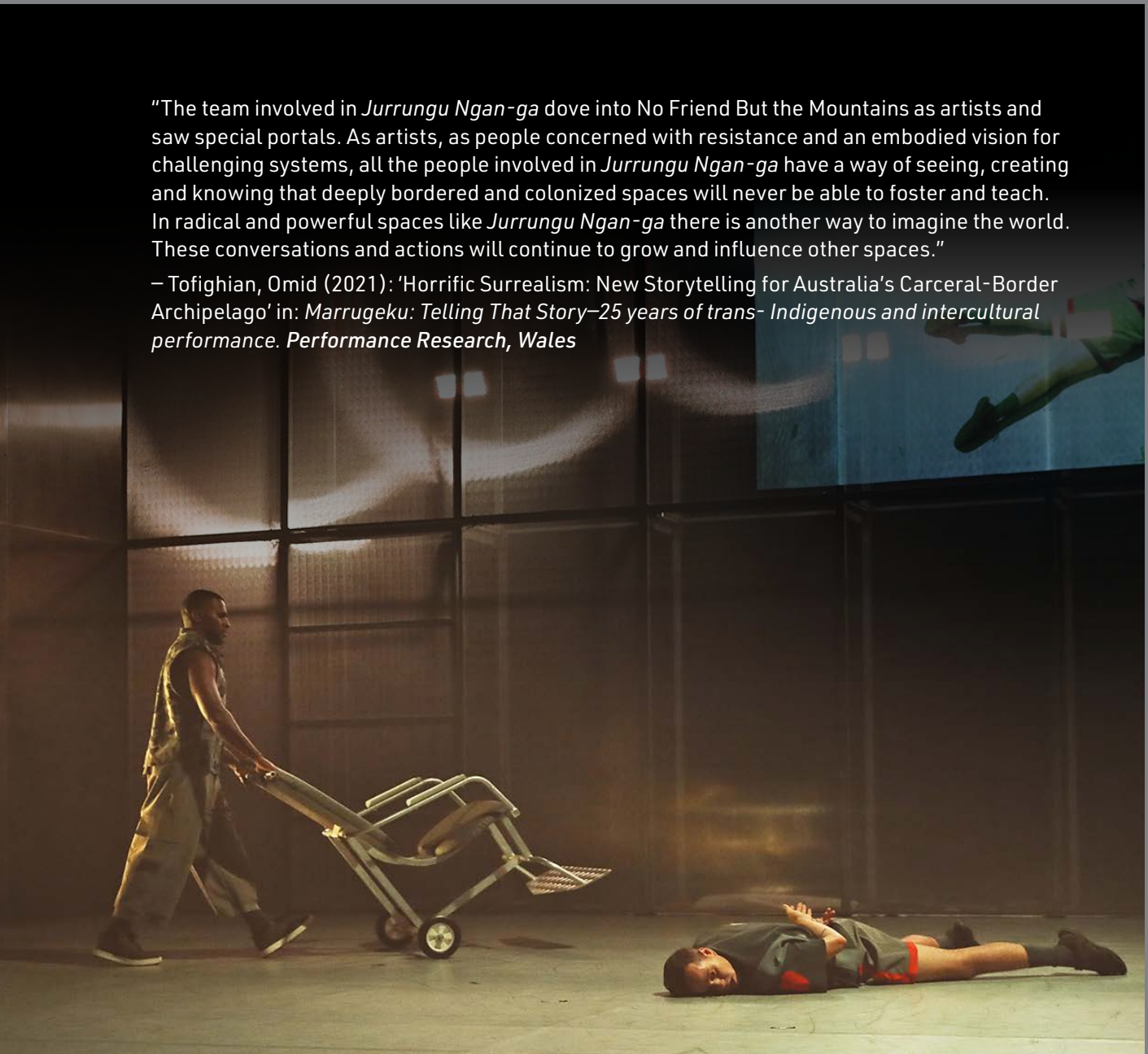
Jurrungu Ngan-ga is set in the "prison of the mind of Australia", expertly designed by Abdul-Rahman Abdullah to both foreground the 'inside' and the 'outside' and at once to reveal

its flimsy construction. The multi-talented cast and creative team draw on their intersecting yet distinct cultural and community-informed experiences (Indigenous, people seeking asylum, transgender and settlers of many backgrounds) to ask: "Who really is in prison here?" Together this extraordinary team have responded through choreography, sound and visual art to investigate that which Australia wishes to lock away, to put behind walls and to isolate.

The making of *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* has required a constant engagement with sadness, anger, resilience and joy. We are honoured to work with this amazing team of collaborators who have brought their own lived experience, bodies, politics, spirit and passion to the making of the show.

"The team involved in *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* dove into *No Friend But the Mountains* as artists and saw special portals. As artists, as people concerned with resistance and an embodied vision for challenging systems, all the people involved in *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* have a way of seeing, creating and knowing that deeply bordered and colonized spaces will never be able to foster and teach. In radical and powerful spaces like *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* there is another way to imagine the world. These conversations and actions will continue to grow and influence other spaces."

– Tofighian, Omid (2021): 'Horrific Surrealism: New Storytelling for Australia's Carceral-Border Archipelago' in: *Marrugeku: Telling That Story—25 years of trans- Indigenous and intercultural performance. Performance Research, Wales*





A note from the Scenic Designer **ABDUL-RAHMAN ABDULLAH**

THE SET IS BOTH INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR, A CAGE AND A STAGE, AN IMPENETRABLE SPACE THAT WATCHES AND IS WATCHED.

It is a site that exposes the thin-skinned brutality of a system built on violent exclusion, and a place where humanity is embodied through resilience.

Based around the structure of a monolithic wall, perforated aluminium frames the living movement of performers with cold, oppressive architecture. Chandeliers populate the space, suspended low on long chains and imbuing it with an otherworldly light that can be domestic, celebratory, isolating, or volatile. A single surveillance camera keeps vigil. The palette is

drawn from the industrial materiality of steel and glass in modular repetition. Everything is replaceable.

While the design reflects the idea of Kyriarchy - a social system built on interconnected measures of oppression that reaches into all aspects of life to divide and diminish - I wanted it to allow space for hope and ask the question: who is really contained by the walls we build?

The set is intended to be constructed in modular sections to allow for easy storage, transport, and customised installation. Standardised panel sizes, replaceable surfaces and easily sourced chandeliers will ensure repeatable outcomes and longer term use.



"For all the sadness and anger at its heart, Jurrungu Ngan-ga burns with ferocious, life affirming passion."

THE AUSTRALIAN
(FROM SYDNEY JAN 2022 WORLD PREMIERE)

"A radically provocative piece of dance theatre where audiences learn in emotive detail about systems of power and control."

THE CONVERSATION
(FROM SYDNEY JAN 2022 WORLD PREMIERE)

"A throbbing protest...a whirlwind ride of bodies perpetually resisting."

THE CONVERSATION

"It is harrowing, horrifying at times and darkly amusing at others, and finally, very moving."

LIMELIGHT MAGAZINE



"Powerful and beautiful."

ARTSHUB



"It is exquisite and unmissable."

ARTSHUB



"We need the politicians to see this."

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

"Honestly one of the best and most cathartic works of art I've seen in a very long time."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

"Unforgettable. This was one of the most powerful works I've ever seen."

AUDIENCE MEMBER

WINNER: 'Best Ensemble', Green Room Awards 2022

WINNER: 'Outstanding Contribution to Critical Race Performance Studies', Performance Studies International, 2023





Jurrungu Ngan-ga is collaboratively created by

CO-DEVISING PERFORMERS

Czack (Ses) Bero
Emmanuel James Brown
Chandler Connell
Luke Currie-Richardson
Issa el Assaad
Macon Escobal Riley
Bhenji Ra
Feras Shaheen
Miranda Wheen

CO-DEVISING PERFORMER (2018 – JAN 2022)

Zachary Lopez

CO-DEVISING PERFORMERS IN INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

Eric Avery and Yilin Kong

CREATIVES

CONCEPT

Dalisa Pigram and Rachael Swain
with Patrick Dodson

CHOREOGRAPHY

Dalisa Pigram with the performers

DIRECTION

Rachael Swain

PERFORMANCE DRAMATURGY

Hildegard De Vuyst

CULTURAL DRAMATURGY

Behrouz Boochani
Patrick Dodson
Omid Tofighian

MUSIC

Sam Serruys
Paul Charlier
Rhyan Clapham aka DOBBY

LYRICS

Beni 'Bjah' Hasler

SOUND DESIGN

Sam Serruys and Paul Charlier

SCENIC DESIGN

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah

COSTUME DESIGN

Andrew Treloar

LIGHTING DESIGN

Damien Cooper

ADDITIONAL CHOREOGRAPHY

Krump Army: Stacy Peke aka Red Ladybrui5er

ADDITIONAL MUSIC

Far from Home

Farhad Bandesh and Anna Liebrezeit
(composition)

Farhad Bandesh (recorded vocals sung in
Kurdish)

The Ha Dub Rewerk'd

MikeQ (composer and performer)

Jalangurru Wiyi

Emmanuel James Brown

(live vocals sung in Bunuba)

ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTAL RECORDINGS

Natasha Rumiz – Viola

PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCTION MANAGER & LIGHTING OPERATOR

Aiden Brennan

AUDIO TECHNICIAN

Raine Paul

COMPANY MANAGER

Denise Wilson

PRODUCER & TOUR MANAGER

Natalie Smith



DALISA PIGRAM
ARTISTIC CO-DIRECTOR &
CHOREOGRAPHER

A Yawuru/Bardi woman born and raised in Broome, Dalisa is also proud of her Malay and Filipino heritage. Dalisa has worked with Marrugeku since the first production *Mimi* (1996) and has been Co-Artistic Director of Marrugeku since 2008 alongside Rachael Swain. Dalisa has been a co-devising movement artist on all of Marrugeku's productions, touring extensively overseas and throughout Australia. Dalisa's solo work *Gudirr Gudirr* (2013) earned an Australian Dance Award (Outstanding Achievement in Independent Dance 2014) and a Green Room Award (Best Female Performer 2014). Dalisa co-conceived Marrugeku's *Burning Daylight* (2006) and *Cut the Sky* (2015) with Rachael Swain, co-choreographing both works as well as Marrugeku's *Le Dernier Appel* (2018) with Serge Aimé Coulibaly, for which she also received a Green Room Award (Best Performance 2020). Together with Swain, she co-directed *Buru* (2010), *Ngalimpa* and co-curated Marrugeku's four International Indigenous Choreographic Labs and *Burrbgaja Yalirra [Dancing Forwards]*. Dalisa co-conceived with Rachael Swain and Patrick Dodson Marrugeku's *Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]* (2021), co-choreographing the new work with the performers. Dalisa has most recently co-created and co-choreographed Marrugeku's *Mutiara* which premiered in Broome for Shinju Matsuri (2023). Dalisa also co-choreographed and performed in Marrugeku's new digital work, *Gudirr Gudirr* video and sound installation. In her community, Dalisa teaches the Yawuru Language at Cable Beach Primary School and is committed to the maintenance of Indigenous language and culture through arts and education, working closely with and for her community. Dalisa is co-editor of *Marrugeku: Telling That Story—25 years of trans-Indigenous and intercultural exchange* (Performance Research 2021).



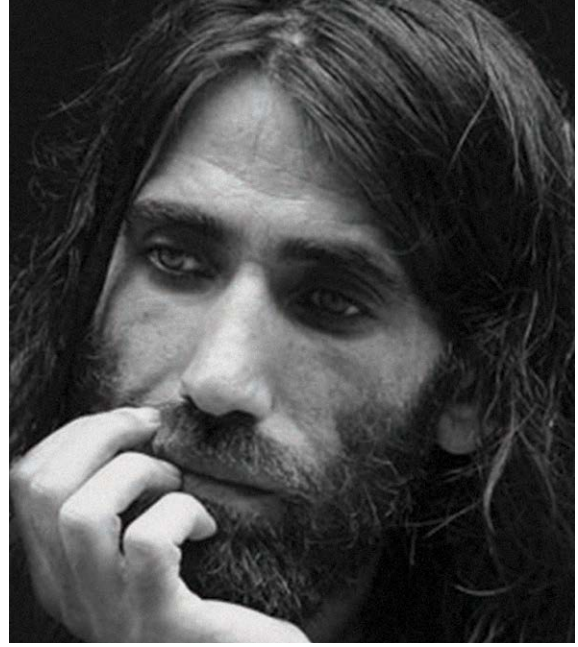
RACHAEL SWAIN
ARTISTIC CO-DIRECTOR & DIRECTOR

Rachael Swain is a director and dramaturg of Scottish, Irish and English descent, born on the land of the Ngāi Tahu, Aotearoa, and living and working between the lands of the Gadigal (Sydney) and the lands of the Yawuru (Broome). Rachael specialises in concept development, direction and dramaturgy for intercultural, intersectional and trans-disciplinary dance and theatre. She is a founding member and Co-Artistic Director of Marrugeku with Yawuru /Bardi dancer and choreographer Dalisa Pigram. She has co-conceived and directed Marrugeku's productions *Mimi* (1996), *Crying Baby* (2001), *Burning Daylight* (2006), *Cut the Sky* (2015), and *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* (2022), and co-directed *Buru* (2010) and *Ngalimpa* (2018) with Pigram. Her dramaturgy credits include *Gudirr Gudirr* (2013), the video installation *Gudirr Gudirr* (2021) directed by Vernon Ah Kee, *Burrbgaja Yalirra 1* (2018), *Le Dernier Appel* (2018), and *No New Gods* by Bhenji Ra, *Nyuju* by Emmanuel James Brown for *Burrbgaja Yalirra 2* and Marrugeku's most recent production *Mutiara* (2023). She conceived and directed *The Demon* (2022) written by Michael Mohammed Ahmad and commissioned by Sydney Opera House and OzAsia Festival. Rachael gained a Masters in Advanced Theatre and Dance Research from DAS ARTS, Amsterdam and a Doctorate in Theatre Studies from Melbourne University. She is the author of *Dance in Contested Land— new intercultural dramaturgies* (Palgrave Macmillian, 2020) and co-editor of *Marrugeku: Telling That Story—25 years of trans- Indigenous and intercultural exchange* (Performance Research 2021).



PATRICK DODSON
CULTURAL DRAMATURG

Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru cultural leader from Broome and currently a Senator for Western Australia, and Special Envoy for Reconciliation and the Implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. He has dedicated his life work to being an advocate for constructive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people based on mutual respect, understanding and dialogue. He is a recipient of the Sydney International Peace Prize. He was a Royal Commissioner into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, inaugural Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and Co-Chair of the Expert Panel for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. Patrick lives in Broome with his family, where he is involved in social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability through his roles as Chair of the Lingiari Foundation and previously as Executive Chair of Nyamba Buru Yawuru. Patrick is Cultural Advisor on all Marrugeku projects collaborating on the cultural dramaturgy of all productions.



BEHROUZ BOOCHANI
CULTURAL DRAMATURG

Behrouz is a Kurdish-Iranian journalist, human rights defender, writer and film producer. He was born in western Iran. He was held in the Australian-run Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea from 2013 until its closure in 2017. He remained on the island before being moved to Port Moresby along with the other detainees around September 2019. In November 2019, he arrived in Christchurch, New Zealand on a one-month visa, to speak at a special event organised by WORD Christchurch, as well as other speaking events. His visa expired and in July 2020, Boochani was granted refugee status. Boochani is now a Senior Adjunct Research Fellow at the University of Canterbury. His memoir, *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (Picador 2018), won the Victorian Prize for Literature and the Victorian Premier's Prize for Nonfiction in January 2019. The book was typed out on a mobile phone in a series of single messages over time and translated from Persian into English by Omid Tofighian.



OMID TOFIGHIAN
CULTURAL DRAMATURG

Omid is an award-winning lecturer, researcher and community advocate, combining philosophy with interests in citizen media, popular culture, displacement and discrimination. He is affiliated with University of New South Wales; Birkbeck Law, University of London; and University of Sydney. His publications include *Myth and Philosophy in Platonic Dialogues* (Palgrave 2016); translation of Behrouz Boochani's multi-award-winning book *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison* (Picador 2018); and co-editor of special issues for journals *Literature and Aesthetics* (2011), *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* (2019) and *Southerly* (2020).



HILDEGARD DE VUYST
DRAMATURG

In 1994, Hildegard started working as a dramaturg with les ballets C de la B for *La Tristeza Complice* which led to a longstanding collaboration with director Alain Platel, including *Iets op Bach*, *Wolf*, *Vspsand Pitié !*, *Out of Context*, *Requiem pour Elle*, *Nicht Schlafen* amongst others. In 2001 she started working at the Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (KVS) as a dramaturg and part of the artistic team who transformed KVS into one of the most vibrant and locally engaged production houses in Europe. Hildegard is currently resident dramaturg for both Marseille Festival and les ballets C de la B running the CoLabo platform.



SAM SERRUYS
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Sam is a guitarist/composer who graduated from the Dutch Tilburg based Rockacademie in 2003 and attending the audio engineering training course at the School of Audio Engineering in Rotterdam. He toured Belgium and Holland as a member of Bertus Borgers' band (saxophonist with Herman Brood and Raymond van het Groenewoud). In 2005, he started working at Les Ballets C de la B as sound engineer and composer for Koen Augustijnen in *IMPORT/EXPORT*, *Ashes*, Ted Stoffer in *Aphasiadisiac*, Lisi Estaras in *primero, patagonia*, Alain Platel in *Out of Context*, *Gardenia* and Rosalba Torres Guerrero: *Pénombre*. Sam now works as a freelance composer/designer/engineer and works for Ultima Vez (Wim van de Keybus), Nadine Ganasse, Virginie Thirion, B!ndman, Needcompany and others. Sam was Musical Director and Composer of Marrugeku's *Gudirr Gudirr* and *Burrgaja Yalirra*.



PAUL CHARLIER
ADDITIONAL MUSIC & SOUND DESIGNER

A long time ago, Paul played with the industrial bands SoliPsiK and SPK. Since then he has composed the music and sound designs for nearly 200 theatre, dance, radio, television and film productions. His credits include National Theatre of England's *Afterlife*, Out of Joint's *Dreams of Violence*, *Deuce* (Broadway), DV8 Physical Theatre's *The Cost of Living*, Sydney Opera House and Malthouse's *Honour Bound*, Legs On The Wall and IWC's *The Crossing*, Force Majeure's *Already Elsewhere*, Griffin's *Prima Facie*, Belvoir Theatre's *A Room of One's Own*, *Dance of Death*, *Faith Healer*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *Buried Child*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, and Sydney Theatre Company's *Uncle Vanya*, *Tot Mom*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Copenhagen*. He was the Composer for the feature films *Adam Goodes - The Final Quarter*, *Candy*, *Last Ride* and *Suzy & the Simple Man*, Music Supervisor for *Holding The Man*, Sound Designer for *Looking For Alibrandi* and Sound Designer and Music Mixer for *Paul Kelly - Stories of Me*. Paul wrote and produced the radio features *A Plan For Eurydice* for ABC Radio and *The Touring Machine* for The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. In 2017 he co-directed the poly-media dance work *Wireless*.



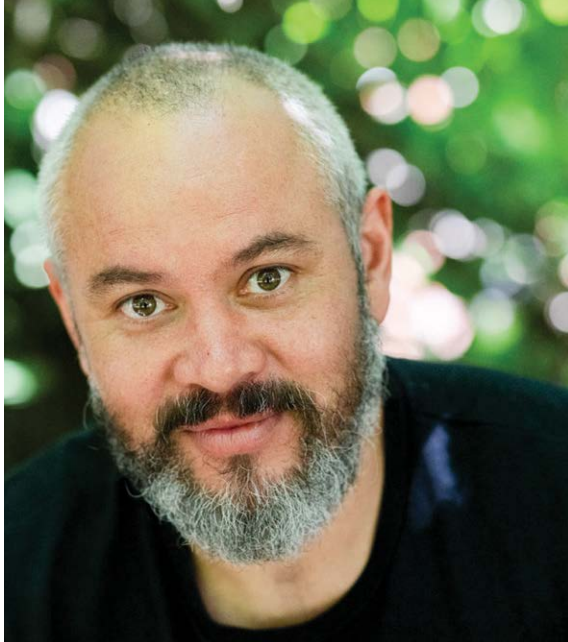
**RHYAN CLAPHAM AKA “DOBBY”
ADDITIONAL MUSIC**

DOBBY is a rapper, drummer and music composer. He proudly identifies as a Filipino and Aboriginal musician, whose family is from Brewarrina on Ngemba land, and is a member of the Murrawarri Republic in Weilmoringle, NSW. He has performed extensively locally including BIGSOUND and Sydney Opera House, and internationally in Germany, UK, USA and Netherlands.



**FARHAD BANDESH
SINGER**

Farhad is a multidisciplinary Kurdish musician and artist from Ilam, Iran. He works in a range of media including painting, working with stones and gems, drawing and graphic art. He is a guitar-builder, musician, singer, poet and wine-maker. He created many songs and artworks while imprisoned in Australia’s offshore and onshore immigration prisons. He states: “Making art has helped keep me alive. When I create something, when I make it, it means I am not forgotten.” *Far from Home* is a song sung in a traditional Kurdish style about being far from home and surrounded by no one. It is by Farhad Bandesh and Anna Liebzzeit.



ABDUL-RAHMAN ABDULLAH SET DESIGNER

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah (b. 1977) is an artist living and working on Wadjuk Nyungar country, on a cattle property in the Peel region of Western Australia. Working primarily in sculpture and installation, he explores the intersections of identity, culture, and the natural world. Living and working in an agricultural environment, his practice offers alternative perspectives across diverse, and often disparate communities.

Since graduating from Curtin University in 2012, Abdul-Rahman has exhibited widely around Australia including Adelaide Biennial 2016 and 2022 (AGSA), The National 2019 (MCA) and Tarrawarra Biennial 2023. His work is held in public, corporate, university and private collections. In recent years he has been active as a board member for PICA, Arts advisor for City of Perth, state, national and regional peer assessor and set designer for Marrugeku. He has recently completed a fellowship with Regional Arts Western Australia.



DAMIEN COOPER LIGHTING DESIGNER

Damien is a lighting designer working in opera, theatre and dance. He has designed over 300 shows. Damien's career highlights include Neil Armfield's production of *The Ring* for Opera Australia, *Exit The King* on Broadway starring Geoffrey Rush and Susan Sarandon, Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* for the Australian Ballet which was presented in New York, London, Paris and Tokyo, *Keating! The Musical* and Australian Dance Theatre's *Birdbrain* which played over 60 venues around the world.

Damien works with many leading dance companies in Australia and this work has toured extensively around the globe. Highlights include *AB Intra*, *Cinco*, *Ocho*, *Grand*, *Air and Other Invisible Forces* and *Orb* for Sydney Dance Company, set and lights for Shaun Parker Company's *Am I*, lighting design for Tasdance's *Affinity*, Chunky Move's *Mortal Engine*, Bangarra Dance Theatre's *of Earth and Sky*, Stalker Theatre Company's *Shanghai Lady Killer*, Australian Dance Theatre's *The Beginning of Nature* and *Be Your Self* and The Australian Ballet's *The Happy Prince*, *Murphy*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Firebird* and *The Narrative of Nothing*. Damien has won three Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Lighting Design and four Green Room awards for Best Lighting Design. He won the Australian Production Designers Guild inaugural Award for Lighting Design for his work on Opera Australia's *The Ring*, and the Showreelfinder Award for Live Performance Lighting Design for *The Glass Menagerie* at Belvoir.



ANDREW TRELOAR
COSTUME DESIGNER

Andrew Treloar is a visual artist, dance performer and designer of fashion, costume and set. His purpose-built dance and art studio is located on the un-ceded lands of Wurundjeri country, a home of the Woiwurrung language and part of the Kulin nation. He is grateful to have been invited to work amidst the concepts and stories woven together into *Jurrungu Ngan-ga*.



**CZACK BERO AKA “SES”
ASSOCIATE ARTIST & PERFORMER**

Ses is a proud Indigenous man from both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background coming from the Kunjen people of Western Cape York and the Erub and Meriam people of the eastern part of the Torres Straits. Ses was born and raised in Townsville, North Queensland, where his family always practiced their culture and performing in traditional ceremonies, celebrations and in everyday life. Ses studied at NAISDA Dance College where he completed his diploma in Professional Dance. As part of his training, Ses has taught workshops in schools, community centres and youth detention centres. Working and creating with children for a better future is one of his passions. In 2019, Ses was cast as an ensemble performer and dance captain of Opera Australia’s remount of the musical *Bran Nue Dae*. Ses is an Associate Artist with Marrugeku and performs in their most recent work *Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]* which premiered at Carriageworks and went on to tour to the Kimberley, Melbourne, Adelaide and Europe. Ses has also performed extensively for large-scale events and festivals during his career.



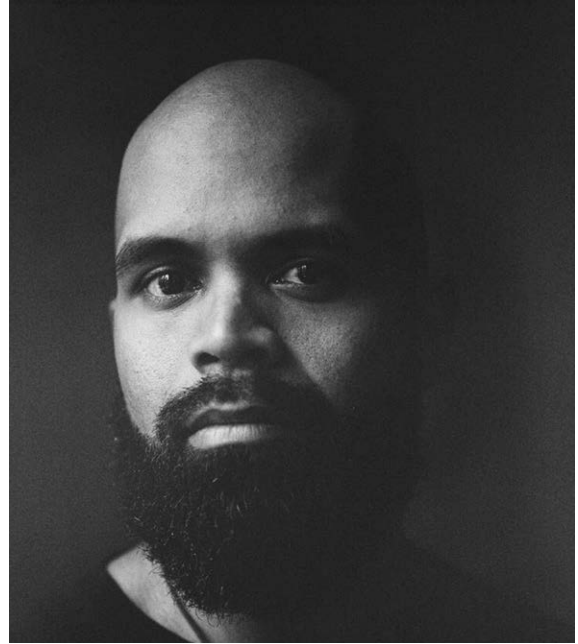
**EMMANUEL JAMES BROWN AKA “EJB”
ASSOCIATE ARTIST & PERFORMER**

EJB is an actor and traditional dancer who lives in Fitzroy Crossing. When not acting, he works with his grandfather as a cultural tour guide. He has bush skills, cultural knowledge, and fluency in the Bunuba language. EJB completed the one-year intensive course at WAAPA for Indigenous students, giving him a Cert IV Aboriginal Theatre and went on to play Ilaji in *Jandamarra* by Steve Hawke for Black Swan State Theatre Company in the 2008 Perth International Arts Festival. He played Darudi in the drama/documentary *Jandamarra’s War* for Wawili produced by Electric Pictures and directed by Mitch Torres for ABC TV. In 2014, he played Jandamarra in the concert version of the story for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House. He also worked with Yirra Yaakin in *So Long Suckers*. EJB has performed in Marrugeku’s most recent work *Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]* which premiered at Carriageworks, Sydney, and went on to tour to the Kimberley, Melbourne and Europe.



CHANDLER CONNELL AKA “CHEEKY” PERFORMER

Chandler Connell (also known as Cheeky) is a young emerging Indigenous story teller from The Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal countries. Chandler graduated with a Diploma in professional dance from NAISDA Dance College in 2020. Since graduating, Cheeky has worked as a collaborating performer on the highly acclaimed *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* by Marrugeku which has toured extensively nationally and internationally, as a performer for Gary Lang’s NT Dance Company, and has joined the team of Alice Can Dance, an award-winning youth dance initiative created by GUTS Dance // Central Australia. In 2022, Chandler joined the cast of *Garabari* by Joel Bray. As he learns to rise within the performing arts industry, Chandler has been influenced by many surrounding Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists who have become his leaders and mentors. These mentors have and continue to guide Chandler on his journey as he continues to share, inspire, and Gari Yala (speak the truth).



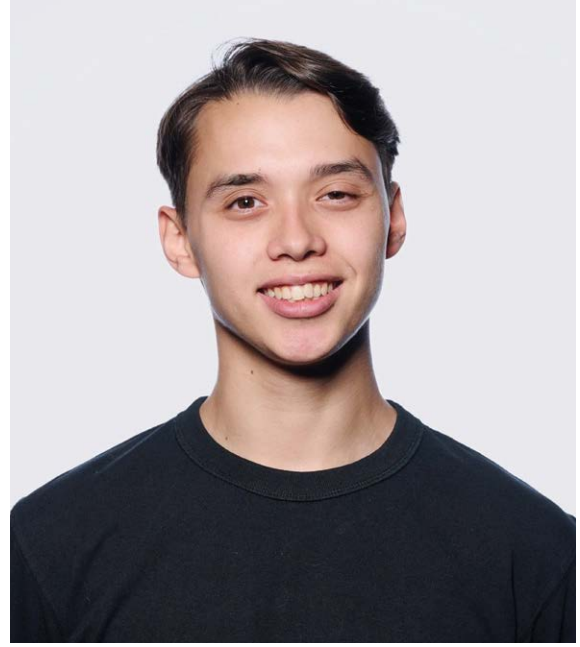
LUKE CURRIE-RICHARDSON PERFORMER

Luke is a descendant of the Kuku Yalanji and Djabugay peoples, the Mununjali Clan of South East QLD, the Butchulla clan of Fraser Island and the Meriam people of the Eastern Torres Strait Islands. Luke’s passion for dance began in 2002 while traditional dancing with Gerib Sik Torres Strait Islander Dance Group with his family in Canberra. His first introduction to contemporary dance came as a member of QL2. Luke studied dance at NAISDA Dance College and in 2010 commenced a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) at Queensland University of Technology. In 2012, Luke appeared in Wesley Enoch’s *I Am Eora* for Sydney Festival. From 2012 to 2018, Luke was a company dancer in Bangarra Dance Theatre. Luke continues to explore different avenues as a storyteller to represent and showcase his culture. In 2019, Luke was the host of *Pay the Rent*, a short documentary about reparations in Australia produced by BuzzFeed Australia. Luke is a sessional teacher at NAISDA, commenced as a mentor with Aurora Foundation earlier this year and was co-host of 2019 NAIDOC in the City. He is currently a member of Muggera, a traditional Aboriginal dance group based in Sydney.



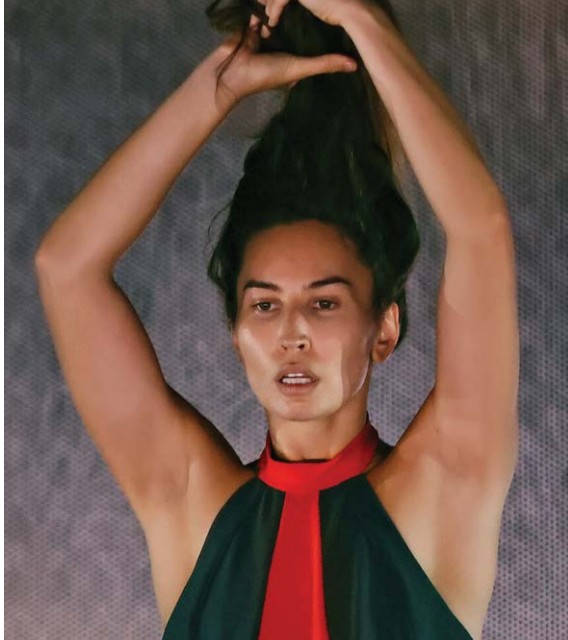
ISSA EL ASSAAD
PERFORMER

Issa el Assaad is a graduate of architecture and a multi-disciplinary artist. Born as a Palestinian refugee in the United Arab Emirates, he is now based in Melbourne Australia. Issa's dance practice is informed by a love of spatial movement and interrogation of how displaced bodies inhabit and demand space. Issa's critical approach to decolonising architecture and expanding upon systems of community care in design has led to a dance practice that draws upon personal experiences of embodied empowerment. He is particularly interested in how political and social norms can be explored through interpretive movement and storytelling. Originally trained within an Arabic folklore dance tradition, Issa pursued professional dance specifically for Marrugeku's production of *Jurrungu Ngan-ga*.



MACON ESCOBAL RILEY
PERFORMER

Macon is an Australian-Filipino dancer and performer. Recently graduating from tertiary study at WAAPA in 2022, Macon has worked on a varied range of projects with independent practitioners and contemporary dance companies. Since graduating, Macon has performed in Co3's season of *Archives of Humanity* (Perth Festival 2021), Offbase Dance's season of *You Are* (Peth Fringe 2022), and joined the team of performers in Marrugeku's production of *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* (Carriageworks Sydney 2022). His practice, while still in development, has a focus on exploring the duality of identity and is inspired by spontaneity, lineage, and evolution.



BHENJI RA
ASSOCIATE ARTIST & PERFORMER

Bhenji Ra is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice combines dance, choreography, video and installation. She attended the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York in 2008, followed by studying a B.A. in Dance at WAAPA. Bhenji exhibited two group works in 2015, *You Own Everything* for Performance Space Day4Night exhibition, and *Bowling Club Medley* for Underbelly Arts Festival and at the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, in collaboration with artist Justin Shoulder. In 2016, she was the Dance WEB scholarship recipient for Impulstanz Dance Festival, Vienna, undergoing a mentorship program with artist Tino Sehgal. Bhenji is also a performer and collaborator in Marrugeku's most recent work *Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]*, which premiered in Sydney in 2022 and went on to tour to the Kimberley, Melbourne, Europe and Adelaide.



FERAS SHAHEEN
PERFORMER

Feras Shaheen's art practice spans across performance, semiotics, street dance, readymade art and digital media. Shaheen was born in Dubai, to Palestinian parents, and moved to Western Sydney at the age of 11. Shaheen traverses different roles within the arts, working as a director, performer, teacher, choreographer and digital artist. He holds a Bachelor of Design from Western Sydney University (2014). Feras is currently working with Marrugeku presenting *Jurrungu Ngan-ga*, a collaborative production that addresses both local and global issues regarding the fear of cultural difference. In an ongoing capacity, Feras works on a duet titled 'Klapping' with Ahilan Ratnamohan, a contemporary project that consists of choreographic research into football, initially commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre (2017). In 2021, Feras has conceptualised and designed 'Forum Q' - a hybrid art form between public art installation and recreation space for the community in collaboration with CAC and Campbelltown Council. Feras has been awarded The Australian Ballet's Telstra Emerging Choreographer (TEC) in 2021.



MIRANDA WHEEN
ASSOCIATE ARTIST & PERFORMER

Miranda Wheen is a Sydney-based freelance dancer. Her practice is rooted in contemporary dance performance and spans intercultural collaboration, improvisation, advocacy and choreography. She is an Associate Artist with Marrugeku, and has performed in their last three works *Cut the Sky*, *Burrbgaja Yalirra* and *Le Dernier Appel*. She has performed and collaborated with many companies and choreographers within Australia and internationally including; Stalker Theatre Company, Mirramu Dance Company, Martin Del Amo (as Associate Artist on his Australian Dance Award winning *Champions*), Ghenoa Gela, Shaun Parker and Company, Rakini Devi, Restless Dance Theatre, Cadi McCarthy and the Tsai Jui-Yueh Dance Foundation in Taiwan, among others.

Miranda is a founding member of Dance Makers Collective and directed their standout work *Dads*, which was short-listed for a 2017 Australian Dance Award, and *The Rivoli*, which premiered at Sydney Festival 2020. She trained at Western Sydney University where she was awarded the Dean's Medal and attained a First Class Honours at Macquarie University. In 2007 she studied at L'Ecole des Sables, the International School for Contemporary and Traditional African Dance in Senegal.



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Marrugeku gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of our commissioning partners International Summer Festival Kampnagel, Hamburg with Körber-Stiftung, City of Melbourne through Arts House and Carriageworks for their unwavering dedication to Jurrungu Ngan-ga through our multiple attempts to premiere the work between 2020 and 2022.

We thank the following for their support: Diane Appleby, Alison Croggon, Patrick Dodson, Wes Francks, Dylan Voller, Mostafa Azimitabar, Rasoul Ghafournejad, Asrin Rajabi, Roza Germian, Peter Yu, Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Range Business Services and the support of our families, close colleagues and loved ones who have sustained us through the development of this ambitious work.





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