

yirra yaakin
THEATRE COMPANY
and
Bunuba
Cultural Enterprises
Present



**“SOME CHAINS ARE
MEANT TO BE
BROKEN”**

SO LONG SUCKERS

Scripted by Peter Docker in collaboration with Ian Wilkes, Emmanuel James Brown & Kyle J Morrison

Directed by Kyle J Morrison



Education Notes

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Welcome

Making the most out of this Resource

These education notes have been developed for use by teachers to enhance students' engagement with *Conversations With The Dead*. The activities and resources contained in this document are designed as a starting point for teachers in developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. We understand you as teachers have greater knowledge of your students and therefore encourage you to adapt lessons accordingly.

Icons have been used throughout this document to highlight learning opportunities and key information. These include activities, discussions and pop questions.



Activity



Question



Discussion



Case Study

The Activities can be delivered sequentially or individually and offer students an opportunity to analyse, evaluate, describe and discuss the play. It is important to note the activities are only a framework and should be adapted to meet the needs and interests of the learners.

By modifying the activities, teachers may be able to address additional learning area outcomes; or they may be able to adapt them for use by students at an earlier or later phase of development.

**** Please consult with Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal Personnel in your school or District Education Office Aboriginal Services Team to learn correct protocols before teaching Aboriginal Culture and Language.**

Curriculum Links have been made using the Western Australian Curriculum to address learning outcomes in the areas of **English, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)** and the **Arts** as well as the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures** priority. Curriculum links for each activity can be found via the curriculum links table on pages 5 & 6.

Curriculum Links

English

Language

Language variation and change
Language for interaction
Text structure and organisation
Expressing and developing ideas

Literature

Literature in context
Responding to literature
Examining literature

Literacy

Texts in context
Interpreting, Analysing, Evaluating

Drama

Drama processes and the elements of drama
Drama forms and styles
Drama conventions
Spaces of performance
Design and technology
Values, forces and drama practice

Dance

Choreographic processes
Design concepts and technologies
Performance skills and techniques
Performance qualities and preparation responsibilities
Functions and contexts of dance

Politics and Law

Civics and citizenship
Political and legal systems, issues and enquiry
Representaton and justice
Civil and criminal law processes
Democracy and the rule of law
Political and legal power
Accountability and rights

Philosophy and Ethics

Marginalisation
Governance
Communities and cultures
Ethical issues of life and death

Curriculum Links

Modern History

Investigating rights and freedom
Understanding the modern world
Movement for change in the 20th century
Modern nations in the 20th century
The modern world since 1945
Recognition and rights of Indigenous people

Aboriginal and Cultural Studies

Aboriginal Perspectives

Cultural perspectives
Place and belonging
Diversity and change
Aboriginal contributions to Australian society

Sustainable Societies

Empowering people
Relationships with the environment over time
Cultural interaction in a pluralist society
Social enquiry
Self-reflection

General Capabilities

Literacy
Information and communication technology
Critical and creative thinking
Personal and social
Ethical understanding
Intercultural understanding

Cross Curriculum Priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
Sustainability

Theatre Etiquette

We respectfully ask that you discuss theatre etiquette with your students prior to coming to the performance. Doing so will ensure you and your students will have an enjoyable experience at the theatre.



Coming and Going

Aim to arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the show beginning to avoid being late as late comers will not be permitted.



Lock Out

Please do not leave your seat and plan to re-enter the auditorium during the performance as you may not be allowed back in!



Mobile Phones and Pagers

Please ensure all mobile phones and pagers are turned off. If they do ring or beep in a performance it can be very embarrassing for you and distracting to cast and audience members. Please be aware that it is inappropriate to text message during any live performance.



Talking and Noises

A performance is rarely as loud as the movies and is often deadly quiet in parts, demanding absolute silence from the audience. Food and drink is not permitted with the exception of plastic bottled water. We don't eat, talk, put our feet on the seats in front of us and play on our mobile phones during a theatre show. Please show consideration for everyone else in the auditorium by waiting to talk during intermission or after the show.



Photographs and Videos

Taking photographs and video during a performance is not permitted. Please be advised that it is also not permissible to take photographs of the set without the permission of the producer, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.



School Bags

School bags will not be permitted inside the auditorium and will need to be left out in the foyer area. There will be a cordoned off section for this purpose.



Company Information

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company has for over 26 years successfully promoted positive cultural messages to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and audiences throughout Australia.

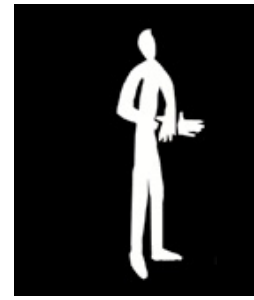
Established to provide opportunities for a strong Aboriginal voice to be heard and 'standing tall', with a foot firmly placed in two cultures, Yirra Yaakin has led the way in bridging the gap between the past and the present, redefining, creating and presenting contemporary Aboriginal theatre that provides a positive role model for all.

As one of Australia's leading Aboriginal performing arts companies, Yirra Yaakin is in a position of cultural leadership, built on and maintained by close and effective working relationships with the Aboriginal community throughout WA and Australia. These close relationships allow us to more effectively deliver key messages and interact in positive participation activities with Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people in an authentic and culturally meaningful way.

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company is committed to delivering a diverse and high quality educational program of performances and activities that promote respect, pride and cultural strength, for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous community members alike. We believe cultural empowerment is the basis of a healthy, sustainable community and provides the building blocks on which other key messages can be delivered to the community.

Our works are designed to make students and educators think, question their perceptions and expand their knowledge of theatre as well as contemporary and traditional Aboriginal culture. With a focus on the Western Australian curriculum, our program links directly to the current curriculum framework and cross curriculum priorities to meet the needs of schools, families and the wider community.

Yirra Yaakin acknowledges its relevance, its role and its place as a cultural leader with a responsibility to actively nurture, grow understanding and awareness of Aboriginal arts and culture as expressed through theatre and performance.



Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company



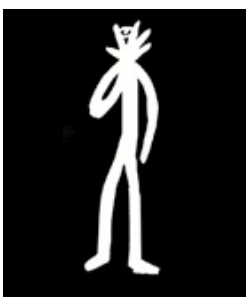
Activity

Using Yirra Yaakin's website research the following questions to find out more about the company.

1. What do the words *Yirra Yaakin* mean in Noongar language?
2. Why do you think these words were chosen as the company's name? What is the significance behind them?
3. What does *Stand Tall* mean for you?
4. Under 'Our Story' the company explains that their priority "*is to ensure Aboriginal theatre remains under Aboriginal control*". Explain what you think is meant by this and why it is important?
5. Yirra Yaakin was established in 1993, also *The Year of Indigenous Peoples*. What do you know about this event? What was its purpose and what did it mean for Aboriginal Australians? What was or wasn't accomplished for Indigenous Australia in the International Year of Indigenous People?

Resource: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/aboriginal-voices-after-year-indigenous-peoples>

6. Under 'Our History' the company states "*We look to the past to help define the present and pass stories to the future... and allow a space for an Aboriginal voice to be heard*". What do you think is meant by this? Why do you think the passing of cultural history is important to future generations and society as a whole? How do you think Yirra Yaakin facilitates this process?





Cultural Background

Storytelling / Oral Traditions

Aboriginal cultural history has been passed down orally for over forty thousand years. Aboriginal people's stories were shared between elders and younger members of the community, but were never written down as there was no need due to their traditional nomadic lifestyle. They were the oral textbooks, of their accumulated knowledge, spirituality, and wisdom, from when time began.

Oral Traditions take the form of oral histories, Creation stories, Dreaming stories, biographies and Aboriginal stories. It is through oral communication that concepts and beliefs have been passed down for thousands of years and continue to be passed on today.

Some of the traditional ways oral histories are shared include storytelling, song, dance, visual art, poetry and craft making. Additionally, contemporary society allows for stories to be shared through drama productions, radio, film, television, computers and Cd's.

Oral communication is a very important part of Indigenous culture and is used widely within Aboriginal communities. It ensures Aboriginal heritage is passed on; a significant way of ensuring the continued survival of all Indigenous nations.

So Long Suckers is a contemporary example of the sharing of Aboriginal histories. Created through a collaboration of Docker, Brown, Wilkes and Morrison's personal experiences of the issues facing Aboriginal people, and based on the accounts of Australia's historical figures Jandamarra, Yagan and Ned Kelly, the stories have been recorded and then adapted for the stage. Docker states "We wanted to come up with a true collaboration, a piece of artwork that reflects Bunuba thinking, Noongar thinking, Wadjella thinking - it's unique and almost never gets done."

Whilst contemporary oral traditions, life stories of a person, biographies and song and drama productions are often shared by non-Indigenous people, the original story must always be told by or come from an Aboriginal person. If you find an Australian Aboriginal story you wish to tell, it is courteous, to always attempt to find the source and ask permission from the Aboriginal Elders, to tell it.

Sources:

Indigenous Australia: www.indigenoustralia.info/languages/oral-traditions.html

Van Den Berg, R., (2008). *Aboriginal Storytelling and Writing*. www.thealtitudejournal.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/62.pdf

Frankland, R. (2007). *The Art, Freedom and Responsibility of Voice: Multiple Narratives of a Gunditjmarra Man. Father. Artist. Activist and Warrior* (Masters Thesis). https://researchbank.rmit.edu.au/eserv/rmit:14847/Frankland_whole.pdf

Storytelling / Oral Traditions



Activity - Storytelling

Investigate one of the storytelling art forms or artists below.

Consider any conflicts, settings, themes, characters and plots that are explored through these mediums.

Are there any similarities or differences?

What is the purpose of these stories?

What value do they have and to whom?

How can they be preserved?

- **Artists:** Laurel Nannup; Christopher Pease; Lance Chadd; Sharyn Egan; Sandra Hill; Peter Farmer; Roma Winmar - Yibiyung; Robert Campbell Jn; Wandjuk Marika; Albert Namatjira; Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri; Munmariya Daisy Andrews; Adam Hill; Alick Tiputi; Robert Campbell; Bronwyn Bancroft; Barbara McGrady
- **Craft Makers:** Tjanpi Desert Weavers – *Seven Sisters Tree Women*, 2013; Batumbil Burarrwanga
- **Dance:** Bangarra Dance Theatre; Wadumbah Indigenous Dance; Marrugeku; Ochre Contemporary Dance Company
- **Music:** Gina Williams; George Walley; Ted Wilkes; Richard Walley; Phil Walley-Stack; Lois Olney
- **Film & TV:** www.creativespirits.info/resources/movies/indigenous-film-timeline
- **Theatre:** Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, Jack Davis (playwright); Ernie Dingo; Kylie Farmer; Kelton Pell
- **Writing & Poetry:** Kim Scott; Sally Morgan; www.magabala.com/our_authors; Lionel Fogarty
- **Slam Poets:** Alice Eather; Laurie May
- **Oral Histories:** www.noongarculture.org.au/audio/; Josie Boyle; State Library of Western Australia: Indigenous WA Resources <http://slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/indigenous-wa>
- **Hip Hop:** Jimblah, Mau Power, Impossible Odds, Nooky

Where is Noongar Country?

Noongar (Noongar meaning 'man' or 'person') are one of the largest Aboriginal cultural blocks in Australia. Noongar people are made up of fourteen different language groups (refer to list on page 12).

Each of these language groups correlates with different geographic areas with ecological distinctions.

Noongar boodjar (country) covers the entire south-western portion of Western Australia. The boundary commences on the west coast at a point north of Jurien Bay, proceeds roughly easterly to a point approximately north of Moora and then roughly south-east to a point on the southern coast between Bremer Bay and Esperance. There is no evidence that there has been any other group than Noongar in the south-west. Archaeological evidence establishes that Noongar people – alternative spellings: Nyungar/ Nyoongar/ Nyoongah/Nyungah/Nyugah and Yunga – have lived in the area and had possession of tracts of land on this country for at least 45,000 years.

Noongar people lived in harmony with the natural environment. Noongar social structure was focused on the family with Noongar family groups occupying distinct areas of Noongar Country. For the Noongar people in the Perth area the main source of food came from the ocean (*wardan*), the Swan River (*Derbarl Yerrigan*) and the extensive system of freshwater lakes that once lay between the coast and the Darling Escarpment. Further south and east Noongar people lived off the resources of the Karri and Jarrah forests. In the southern coastal area around Albany, Noongar people built fish traps and hunted turtle. To the north and east Noongar people lived in the semi arid regions of what is now the Wheatbelt.

It is known that Noongar people travelled within their country to trade with other families. What is now the Albany Highway was once a Noongar track between families in Perth and Albany. Other trade routes existed in the south-west and Noongar people could often travel for hundreds of kilometers on foot between each family group.

Noongar people have a long history of culture and tradition and continue to this day to assert their rights and identity in Noongar boodjar.

Source:

SouthWest Aboriginal Land & Sea Council. (2017). *Language*. www.noongarculture.org.au/noongar/

Noongar Dialect Groups

Amangu (*A-mun-goo*)

Yued/Yuat (*You-att*)

Whadjuk/Wajuk (*Wadd-juk*)

Binjareb/Pinjarup (*Bin-jar-ab*)

Wardandi (*Waar-darrn-dee*)

Balardong (*Bal-ar-dong*)

Nyakyayaki (*Nar-kee-nar-kee*)

Wilman (*Wil-man*)

Ganeang (*Garnn-ning*)

Bibulum/Piblemen (*Bib-ul-mun*)

Mineng (*Min-nang*)

Goreng (*Gorr-eng*)

Wudjari (*Wud-jar-ee*)

Njunga (*Nung-ah*)

ABORIGINAL GROUPS OF THE SOUTH WEST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

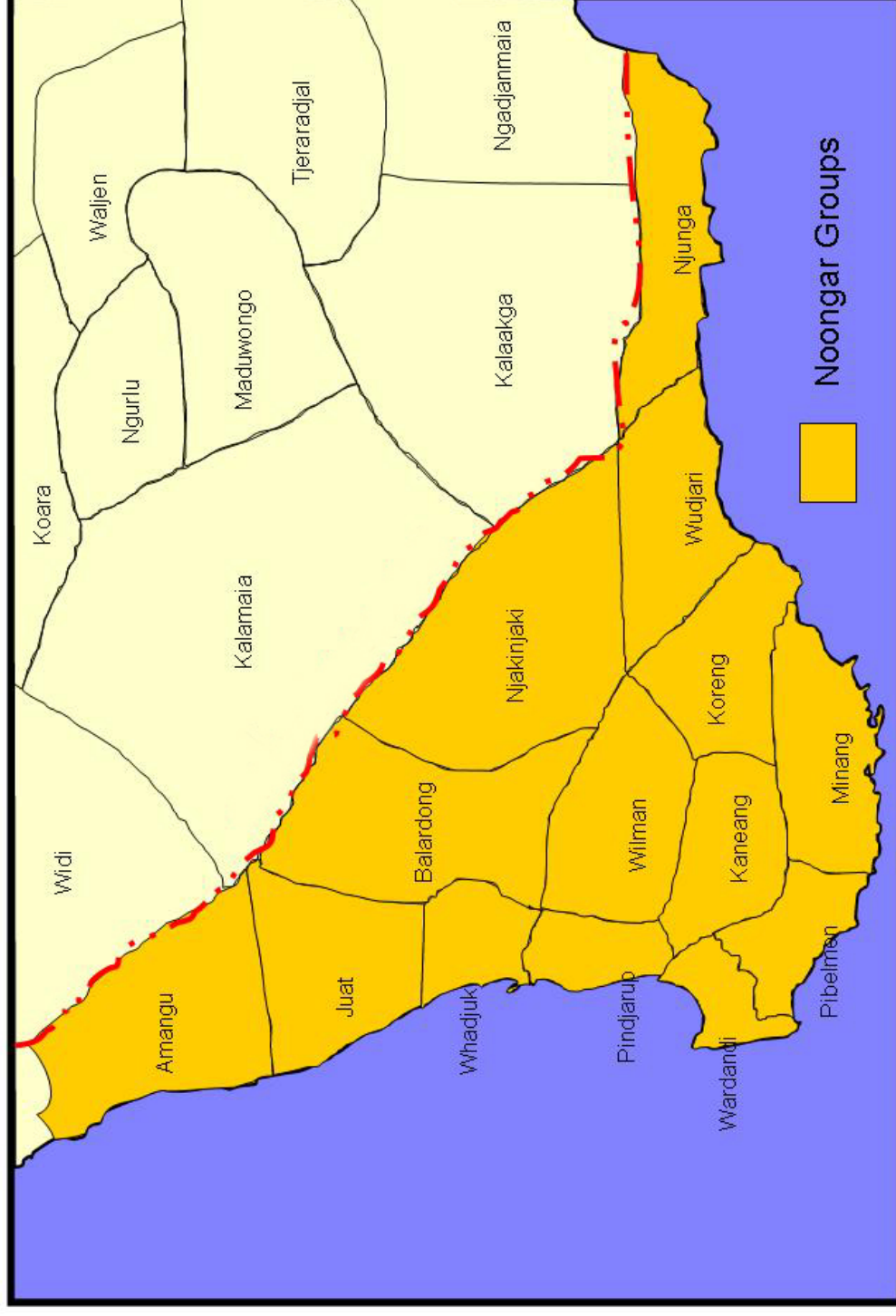
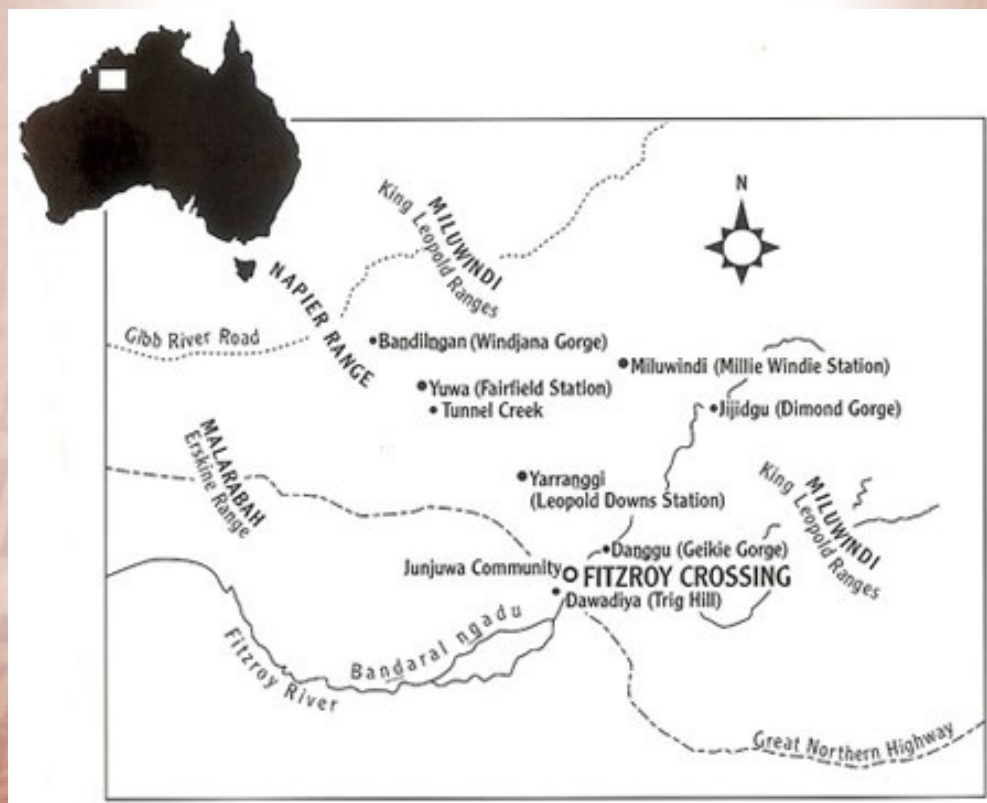


Image: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noongar>

Where is Bunuba Country?

Bunuba boodjar (country) extends from the township of Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia north along the Fitzroy River to Jijidu (Dimond Gorge), and follows Miluwindi (King Leopold Ranges) to Napier Range in the west. It includes Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) and Tunnel Creek national parks. The southern extreme extends from Malarabah (Erskine Range) to Dawadiya (Trig Hill) near Fitzroy Crossing, and includes Danggu (Geike Gorge). It takes in the cattle stations Yarranggi (Leopold Downs), Yuwa (Fairfield) and Miluwindi (Milliwindie), which are now owned by Bunuba Inc, and Gurang.ngadja (Brooking Springs).

Most Bunuba people live in the communities of Junjuwa and Darlŋgunaya in Fitzroy Crossing township, and in small outstation communities to the north and north west.



Source:

Bunuba Cultural Enterprises. (n.d.) *Jandamarra*. <http://www.jandamarra.com.au/bunubapeople.html>

Background To The Play

Synopsis

When we meet the Three Wise Men, they are drunk, lost, handcuffed and don't even know each other. They try to remember who they are but each time they remember it is a grog-police-jail memory. The Three Wise Men are prisoners haunted by memories of Freedom Fighters – Yagan, Ned Kelly and Jandamarra.

They each chase down their identities and their purpose, all the while sorting through their memories of oppression, in the process they become closer to themselves and to this reality. What is their wisdom? Will they get to the birth on time? Will their gifts be appropriate?

So Long Suckers is a first time cross-cultural, cross art-form collaboration between Yirra Yaakin and Bunuba Cultural Enterprises (Jandamarra). The play incorporates original live music, movement and storytelling. Inspired by real-life stories this provocative and powerful new work explores the destructive effects of alcoholism on Indigenous & Non-Indigenous communities.



What's In A Name?

Play titles are deliberate and created in an attempt to capture the essence of the play. What might the title *So Long Suckers* suggest about the production and therefore what might you expect the play to about?



Pre Show Discussion

What do you think are the destructive effects of alcoholism? Do you think there are differences between the effects on Indigenous and Non-Indigenous communities? Do you believe alcoholism is more prevalent in one community more so than the other? If so why? What has led you to believe this?

Why do you think the play was titled 'So Long Suckers'? Suggest another title for the play and explain your reasoning.

Discuss what some of the political or social messages of *So Long Suckers* might be from your knowledge so far?

Creative Team



Kyle J Morrison
Director



James Taylor
Assistant Director



Steve Hawke
**Concept / Assoc
Producer**



Dalisa Pigram
Choreographer



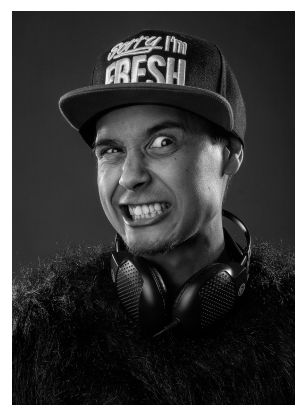
Jacob Lehrer
**Associate
Choreographer**



Chris Donnelly
Lighting Designer



India Mehta
**Set & Costume
Designer**

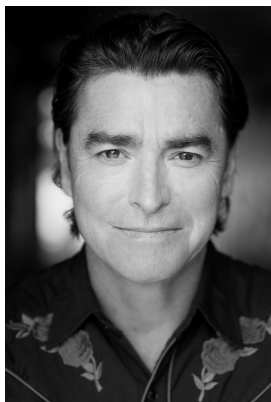


Darren Reutens
**Sound Designer /
Musical Director**

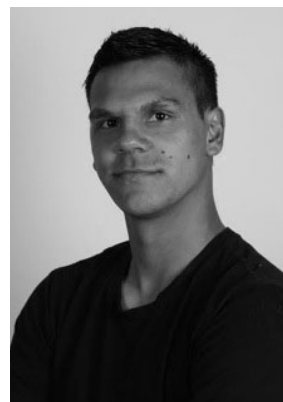
Cast



Emmanuel James
Brown
Mr Green



Peter Docker
Mr Red



Ian Wilkes
Mr White

Directors Notes



Police, grog and jail. Things that I grew up with. How do you then portray that onto the stage with humour, with authenticity, with respect? **How do you have a story about the detrimental effects of alcohol without it becoming a 'lesson'?** When Peter Docker and Emmanuel James Brown myself and Ian Wilkes joined that conversation, and once we realised where that conversation was going, we had Dalisa Pigram (Choreographer) come in and have a look at creating movement for the conversation. Darren (Daz) Reutens (Music & Sound Designer) was brought on board and the entire trajectory changed again. Having Dalisa

and Associate Choreographer Jacob Lehrer, alongside Lighting Designer Chris Donnelly's work, allowed me to look at the overall design of the show, the macro or big picture – which has been an interesting, organic process that's evolved.

When we first started the conversation about collaboration to develop *So Long Suckers*, it looked like a naturalistic play with conversations, with themes, with dialogue, with characters, but as we got into the absurdity of the world we live in and **the country we call home – this island 'prison'** – the absurdity of the situation started to infect and effect the absurdity of the play.

Once we started playing with the ideas of movement, the play went into a whole different realm. Getting Dalisa Pigram on board was a game changer. We went from a naturalistic idea of an anti-alcohol play to a movement piece about **unshackling yourself from chains**. Working with India Mehta (Set & Costume Designer) on the visualisation of these chains – an ultra masculine idea done in a feminine way – started to give a different sense of jail and **chains that we hold**.

Ultimately this play is about standing up, waking up and laughing the whole time while you do it. Our **humour is paramount to us as Aboriginal people dealing with 'stuff'**, so humour, alongside the sombre, with the articulate and the poignant is how our theatre has been done for millennia. In keeping with that we want to keep to the ideas of story, song and dance as three methods of storytelling. It's been a big journey for me to work out how you say what you need to in a really strong way but maintain the humour and the authenticity behind it. I think *So Long Suckers* achieves this in a contemporary way.



Discuss each of the bolded phrases and sentences. What insights do they offer about the play?

Writers Notes

A conversation with Emmanuel James Brown, Peter Docker and Ian Wilkes.

PD: We wanted to approach the text from the point of view of what unites us, what makes us the same, what are our shared experiences? And the most obvious one of that is our great heroes Jandamarra, Yagan and Ned Kelly. They all had their heads cut off by the invaders, the British, and taken away, and we wanted to see how that fitted into a modern context of the 'Grog, Police, Jail' conundrum that has surrounded all of us.

I wanted to work in this way with three people from different cultures and bring us together because the joy and the fun in this country is when we come together. I've worked with EJB and Ian Wilkes before, that was the fun and the joy that we were chasing.

IW: I remember the first developments on the script were just sitting around a table yarnning, and Docker recording the yarns, and going back and writing something up from the stories we told. Having fun and yarns around the table as you do, and it grew and grew, and this is what we have today.

EJB: I remember Docker first came to me and I didn't know how this was going to work, you know? I thought he was going to write a book! But sooner or later it became a play.

PD: We got in a little room in Fitzroy Crossing, it was about 45 degrees – really hot – and I made EJB dance and tell me stories and I recorded them and they are in the show. We've come full circle, after our very first meeting of EJB's country, and now we're down in Ian Wilke's country and I was born on Willman budja as well so I feel connected here and always felt welcomed here, as well.

So that was the process – we came up with stories we wanted to talk about and shaped it into this search. A search for the truth, a search for freedom, search for the tools to be strong. We look around and we see the tragic state that a lot of our people – when I say our people I mean Australians – going through a hard time; we're being locked up and were locking each other up. Aboriginal people are being locked up at a rate of knots that's increasing and as artists we want to talk about this.

Writers Notes

A conversation with Emmanuel James Brown, Peter Docker and Ian Wilkes cont...

More than ever before it feels like a war zone, especially in this state, in Western Australia. We have this tsunami of ice coming down upon us – were talking about grog in *So Long Suckers* but actually grog is a metaphor for all drugs that destroy you, like ice.

EJB: This story is everywhere, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Aboriginal people getting locked up, drugs, alcohol.

IW: It always goes back to alcohol. We have these stories about when we're drunk and they're fun but there's also a tragedy about it. It's a shame. Then when we tell our stories of when we're sober, we're actually quite powerful. That's the realization – how much better you are without alcohol, without the drugs. We found those similarities across our stories when we started telling drunk yarns, and we laughed but they are actually tragic drunk stories that turns out violent or being locked up.

PD: The “Grog, Police, Jail” in towns and communities are like drone strikes - that grog coming into Fitzroy Crossing or coming into Maddington or into Narrogin is like a drone strike from some other force. It's asymmetrical warfare. It used to be guns and steel and germs that invaders were suppressing the true owners of the country with and now they're using “Grog, Police, Jail” to do it. For me this piece is that we're soldiers on the other side, and then we meet up in the middle of No Mans Land – this play is the middle of No Mans Land and we should be hating each other but we don't, we love each other and love will always win.

PD: We wanted to come up with a true collaboration, we wanted to come up with a piece of artwork that reflects Bunuba thinking, Noongar thinking, Wadjella thinking - it's quite unique and almost never gets done. I think we've achieved that. For me the take away message for Wadjella people is to get involved in the story, find the love for your brothers and sisters. Australia was conceived of a jail, there's plenty of us that still think it's a jail and we behave like were in a jail.

The simple message is get strong. Make yourself strong. Connect to your truth. If your historical hero is Jandamarra connect to that, connect to his power. Let it come into you and make you strong. Let Yagan's desire to fight back fuel you because we have to fight with our heads and our hearts.

Notes

From Steve Hawke, Concept Associate Producer



Whilst performing in Bunuba Cultural Enterprises' 2011 production of Jandamarra in the Kimberley, as well as playing the key role of Yilimarra, Emmanuel Brown did an inspired cameo as the crippled stockman Jacky that had the audience in stitches every night. We knew we had found a great natural talent. This was one of the sparks for an initiative by BCE to develop new opportunities for performers who had emerged through the Jandamarra project.

The seeds of So Long Suckers were sown during a sweaty week that EJB put in with Peter Docker – who also appeared in Jandamarra – in Fitzroy Crossing in January 2013, exploring stories and ideas. But the stomping ground of BCE is the Kimberley, and we were not sure that we could bring the concept right through to production on our own. It was obvious whom we needed to talk to.

The concept really got legs when Yirra Yaakin agreed to come on board, making the show a unique Bunuba-Noongar collaboration. Over a series of workshops in Broome and then Perth we were able to create the bones of this show that explores profound issues from the past and the present in a completely original format, and a fearless, grounded voice.



Key Characters



Mr Green
Country: Bunuba Australian
Totem: Snake
Hero: Jandamarra
Three Wise Men: Melchoir
Element: Fire



Mr Red
Country: Irish Australian
Totem: Crow
Hero: Ned Kelly
Three Wise Men: Balthazar
Element: Earth



Mr White
Country: Noongar Australian
Totem: Goanna
Hero: Yagan
Three Wise Men: Caspar
Element: Water



Did you know?

A totem is a natural object, plant or animal that is inherited by members of a clan or family as their spiritual emblem. Totems define peoples' roles and responsibilities, and their relationships with each other and creation.

Some examples of Noongar totems are jirda (birds), kwooyar (frogs), gooljak, kooljark, koolyak (swans), yoon/yoondarn (goannas) and karda/caarda (lizards). Every individual has a spirit totem or an animal which they have a responsibility for and must treat with respect. They do not kill or eat the animal of their totem.

Children are still given totem animals today to look after and preserve. It is part of maintaining cultural traditions and a connection to all living things.



Activity

In three groups research the country, totem, hero, biblical reference and element of each character. From your research what qualities and attributes might you expect your character to possess and what has led you to believe this?

Investigating The Play

'True Australian Heroes'



Well known Australian musician, Paul Kelly, is quoted on the front cover of the *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance* as calling Jandamarra, 'a true Australian hero'

- Discuss what it means to be a true hero
- Define what you see as being essential characteristics of a hero in this context
- What examples of Australian heroes do you know? What has made these people heroes?

So Long Suckers works around a metaphor with wide and direct historical resonances; that alcohol figuratively "cuts off your head and takes it away" – a fate literally and famously suffered by the characters' outlaw heroes, the Noongar Australian Yagan, the Bunuba Australian Jandamarra and Irish Australian Ned Kelly.

David Zampatti, *The West Australian*



Case Study - Jandamarra

- **Born:** c. 1973
- **Died:** April 1, 1897, Tunnel Creek, WA

Jandamarra was born about 1870 into the Bunuba tribe in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. As a youth Jandamarra learned to ride horses, shear sheep and use fire-arms on William Lukin's neighbouring Lennard River station and won repute as the district's finest Black stockman. At 15 he returned to his traditional land for initiation and became a skillful hunter. Late in 1889 he and a fellow tribesman, Ellemarra, were captured by police at Windjina Gorge, for killing sheep, but charges were dropped when Jandamarra agreed to serve the police by taking care of their horses. He won popularity and trust at Derby. A year later he went to Lennard River as a stockman, and then to his mountain home where it is alleged that he violated Bunuba law.

Avoiding retribution by the tribe, he went to live at Lillimooloora station where he

Sources:

Magabala Books. *Teacher Notes. Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance*. Retrieved 2017. https://www.magabala.com/media/wysiwyg/pdf/Jandamarra_and_the_Bunuba_Resistance.pdf

Case Study - Jandamarra cont...

formed a close friendship with Bill Richardson, a stockman. In 1894 Richardson joined the police force and Jandamarra was recruited as a tracker. Although it was not official policy to use tribal members against their own people, Jandamarra helped to locate and capture Bunuba warriors. He once saved Richardson's life during an attack by his own people.

In a dramatic defection Jandamarra subsequently shot and killed Richardson as he slept, then released sixteen Aboriginal prisoners, among them Ellemarra. The sixteen—who included some of his blood relations—had told him that he was obligated to them for having waived tribal punishment for his offences; they had described a new policeman at Fitzroy Crossing who was murdering Aborigines; and they had announced the imminent invasion of Bunuba country by the Europeans.

Together they formed a gang and with captured guns ambushed a stock party, killing two of its members. Jandamarra planned a military defence of his country by using fire-arms and held a vision of an Aboriginal uprising which would transcend tribal boundaries. Panic engulfed the small White settler community, scattered as it was over an area of nearly 11,500 sq. miles (29,785 km²). The police gained sweeping powers to crush the uprising and killed many Aborigines.

Fifty ochre-painted warriors fought the Whites in the major battle of Windjina Gorge on 16 November 1894. Ellemarra was killed and Jandamarra was severely wounded, but recovered and spent two years hiding in caves to the south. Although his strategies had caused them great suffering, the Bunuba credited him with supernatural powers.

In November 1895 he raided Lillimooloor police station, shocking the Whites who had thought him dead. Late in 1896 he again humiliated the police at Lillimooloor. By this stage many of his gang had been captured and others killed. In March Jandamarra and twenty others attacked Oscar Range homestead; a number of his party were killed and wounded, but their leader escaped through a tunnel and was succoured by Terrawarra. He was finally shot dead at Tunnel Creek on 1 April 1897 by Aboriginal trooper Minko Mick.

Sources:

Indigenous Australia. *TJandamarra (1870 - 1897)*. Retrieved 2017. <http://ia.anu.edu.au/biography/jandamarra-8822>

'True Australian Heroes'



Case Study - Yagan

- **Born:** c. 1795
- **Died:** July 11 1833, Belhus

Yagan was the son of Midgigaroo, chief of the tribe in the district of Beeliar, the native name for the region south of Perth bounded by the Swan and Canning Rivers and the sea.

In the early days of the settlement, Yagan was friendly with a number of the settlers. However, in 1830, misunderstandings and tensions arose between the Nyoongah people and the new pioneers.

An incident concerning the shooting and death of a young Aboriginal boy who had entered a homestead near Melville caused a serious rift between the settlers and the local Aboriginal community. Under Aboriginal law the boy's death had to be avenged.

Yagan, family and friends entered the homestead and speared a servant who had been working in the house.

Further tragic and retaliatory events occurred. Finally Yagan and two friends were caught and sentenced to an indefinite period of time on Carnac Island, a small limestone outcrop just south of Fremantle. Yagan escaped from prison and spent many months avoiding recapture.

On 11 July 1833 two teenage brothers named William and James Keats discovered Yagan and his brothers and suggested that they join them in hunting kangaroo. When the Keats pair found an opportunity Yagan and his brothers were shot and killed. Yagan's head was removed and placed in the wedge of a smoking tree in order to preserve it.

The head was eventually taken to England and was on display at the Royal Institute in Liverpool until 1964 when it was eventually buried in Everton cemetery.

In 1990 a request by the Western Australian Nyoongah community was put to the British Government to exhume the head. Permission was finally granted.

164 years after it was sent to England Yagan's head was brought back to Australia for burial according to Nyoongah custom. However due to the uncertainty of the whereabouts of the rest of the body, burial has not yet taken place.

Sources:

South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council. *Yagan*. Retrieved 2017. <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/yagan/>

'True Australian Heroes'



Case Study - Ned Kelly

- **Born:** December 1854, Beveridge, Victoria
- **Died:** November 11, 1880, Melbourne

Edward 'Ned' Kelly was born at Beveridge in 1855, the first-born son of an Irish Catholic couple. His father, John 'Red' Kelly was an ex-convict (transported for the theft of two pigs), who eloped with Ellen Quinn, an Irish 'bounty migrant', from Van Dieman's Land (later Tasmania) to Port Phillip. The Kelly's settled in the Victorian ranges north of Melbourne, eking out a living on the edge of the squatter's rich lands. Red Kelly supplemented his income by horse stealing. After his arrest and gaoling for horse-stealing, Red Kelly died before finishing his sentence. Ellen moved the family to a slab-hut at Eleven Mile Creek in the north-west of the colony where Ned became the main breadwinner.

At the age of 14, Ned was arrested for stealing 10 shillings from a Chinese man and reportedly to have announced that he 'was going to be a bushranger'.

Ned's real troubles with the police began when his mother, Ellen Kelly, was arrested for aiding and abetting in the attempted murder of Constable Arthur Fitzpatrick on the 15th of April. Fitzpatrick visited the Kelly home to serve warrants to arrest Dan Kelly for alleged horse stealing. As a result of the subsequent brawl, Ned and Dan fled to the bush where they were joined by Joe Byrne and Steve Hart. They became the Kelly gang.

Ned was so enraged that he made a hide-out, with his brother Dan and their mates Joe Byrne and Steve Hart, at the head of the King River, a virtually impenetrable place where Harry Power had long eluded escape (before he had been eventually caught with the help of an informant and black trackers). Ned Kelly used this hide-out to his advantage, aided by sympathetic 'informers', to confirm who made their way into the Wombat Ranges.

The police were determined to hunt down the Kelly Gang, and in October 1878 a party of four police with heavy arsenal were sent out from Mansfield. Their camp at Stringybark Creek received a surprise visit from the Kelly's, with Ned killing three out of the four police officers.

The government's reaction to the Stringybark Creek murders was swift and severe. Within ten days of the murders, the Berry Government had enacted the Felons' Apprehension Act 1878, and called on Ned Kelly and his brother Dan to surrender

Case Study - Ned Kelly cont...

or be declared outlaws under the Act's draconian provisions, which authorised any citizen to shoot a declared outlaw on sight.

After more bank robberies, the Kelly Gang had their 'last stand' in the small town of Glenrowan, Victoria in 1880, where they took 60 hostages in a hotel. The Gang established a base at the Glenrowan Hotel, determined to fight it out with police when they came. Kelly planned to derail the expected train carrying the police, but this was prevented by a school teacher, let out of the hotel, who flagged the train to a halt. Led by Superintendent Hare and assisted by local Constable Bracken, the troopers attacked the Gang in the hotel. Superintendent Hare and other police officers were wounded when the Gang shot at the police.

Ned Kelly was shot in the arm and thumb, and retreated to the bush, from where he hoped to attack police from behind. Knowing that the Felons Apprehension Act meant they could be shot, the Kelly Gang all wore suits of steel armour, made during the previous year. Despite this, Joe Byrne was shot in the groin and died. Dan Kelly and Steve Hart were shot dead, and the hotel was burned to the ground by the police.

As dawn broke, Ned Kelly, in his armour, approached the police from the rear and began shooting at them with his revolver, despite his wounds. After half an hour, he was shot in both unprotected legs. A wounded Ned was arrested and charged with the murder of a policeman. Ned Kelly was tried and convicted of the murder of Constable Lonigan at Stringybark Creek.

In gaol, Kelly wrote a long letter to the authorities demonstrating the discrimination against poor Irish settlers. Despite public protests, the judgement of Redmond Barry prevailed. Kelly spoke the immortal last words 'Such is life' and was hanged on 11th November 1880 at Melbourne Gaol.

Ned Kelly's final defiant stand against the Felons Apprehension Act and his pleas for justice to end discrimination against poor Irish settlers did end up opening the eyes of people. Ned Kelly in his armour came to symbolise a fight by a flawed hero, a convicted criminal, for 'justice and liberty' and 'innocent people'.

Sources:

Commonwealth of Australia *Ned Kelly. Australian Stories*. Retrieved 2017. <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/yagan/>

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'True Australian Heroes'



Activity - Freedom Fighters, Leaders and Activists

In groups further investigate the stories of Jandamarra, Yagan and Ned Kelly and present your research to the class.

Investigate stories of other Aboriginal freedom fighters such as: **Pemulwuy; Tunnerminnerwait; Maulboyheener; Windradyne; Dundalee; Fanny Balbuk; Bilin Bilin; Kamalyarrpa Japanangka** and the **coniston massacre**.

Investigate other significant leaders who have fought for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples such as: **Charles Perkins; Eddie Mabo; Rob Riley; Richard Frankland; Jack Davis; Linda Burney, MP**.



Activity - Essay Questions:

They call him a black Ned Kelly. In the Kimberley, Jandamarra is an outlaw to some and a warrior to others.' Discuss this statement, comparing Jandamarra with Ned Kelly. Is this a just comparison or a misunderstanding of each character's actions and roles in Australian history? Give sound reasons to support your opinion.

The rights and freedoms of Aboriginal people have improved drastically since 1945 to bring about a change from oppression to equality. Do you agree with this statement? Discuss your view on this giving sound reasons to support your opinion.



Activity - 1965 Freedom Ride

Watch *Charles Perkins fights for racial equality* on ABC Splash via the following link and answer the following questions:

<http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1264423/charles-perkins-fights-for-racial-equality>

- Why is Charles Perkins remembered as a significant leader in the struggle for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- What was the situation for Indigenous Australians and non-Europeans in Australia when Charles Perkins gave this interview in January 1967?
- The 1965 Freedom Ride around northern New South Wales was inspired by the 1961 Freedom Rides that exposed terrible racism in the USA. Use appropriate sources to find out who besides Charles Perkins was involved in the 1965 Freedom Ride, the towns they visited, the forms of discrimination they exposed, the ways in which townspeople reacted, and what was achieved.

'True Australian Heroes'



Activity - Project: Rights and freedoms in Australia

Complete a case study on the significance of one of the following civil rights events for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- 1962 right to vote federally
- 1967 referendum
- Yirrkala Bark Petition
- Wave Hill strike
- Mabo
- Tabling of the Bringing Them Home Report (The Stolen Generations)
- Reconciliation movement
- 2008 Apology to Australia's Indigenous People's

Write a hypothesis about your chosen case study to respond to the following inquiry question: *What is the significance of a particular event in the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people's struggle for rights and freedoms and the methods used by activists to achieve change?*

Research your case study, gathering information about:

- background events and key dates
- the role of one individual or group
- methods used by civil rights activists
- events that represent changes and continuities (what has remained the same)
- the significance of the event.

Develop questions to provide a focus for your research. Write questions for each of the following research areas:

- Background events and key dates
- Methods used by civil rights activists
- The role of one individual or group
- Events that represent changes and continuities
- Significance of the event

Students will:

- investigate the significance of a civil rights event
- analyse and synthesise information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- plan and deliver a spoken presentation which incorporates historical arguments based upon referenced sources of evidence.

Source: Queensland Studies Authority. (2013). *Australian Curriculum Year 10 History Assessment. Rights and freedoms in Australia*. Retrieved 2017. https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ac_sa_hist_yr10_rights_freedoms.pdf

Dumb Things - A.B. Original, Paul Kelly & Dan Sultan



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICcewg7fxho>

Welcome strangers to the show
I'm the one who should be lying low
Saw the knives out, turned my back
Heard the train coming, stayed right on that track

Chorus

In the middle, in the middle
In the middle of a dream
I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings
I've done all the dumb things

Yeah, them dumb things
This goin' out to all my brothers down there in Don Dale
Dealin' with that disaster that them guards are there and not jail
Thinking we gettin' our welfare, huh? Thinking we gettin' our healthcare, huh?
Think about if it was your son, now think about sending some help there, yeah
What's dumber than that mate? What's dumber than dressing up blackface?
What's dumber than doing it knowing it hurts and don't even work to make that change
Let's go

Chorus

In the middle, in the middle
In the middle of a dream
I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings
I've done all the dumb things

We got
We got islands for the ones who seekin' asylum
We got silence for the ones who died in confinement
If you're complacent to the words of a racist
Don't you dare complain when that's what leading your nation
Send in the clowns, they're blackfacing
They're locking up couples, they're locking up brothers, but they ain't leavin' the station
The date's changin'

Yeah, them dumb things
Lumped in, looking for peace, but won't find it
They holdin' us back from closing the gap by keeping them close minded
See, no surprises there, hearing both of them sirens blare
Them coppers where I'm from are kind of fair, if you kinda fair

What's a royal commission to the ones who live on a mission
To the ones who's killed by the system by the ones that's meant to assist 'em
At the hands of policemen, who's gonna police them?
They killin' us Koori's, they got it on footage, they need to release them

Chorus

In the middle, in the middle
In the middle of a dream
I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings
I've done all the dumb things

Chorus

In the middle, in the middle
In the middle of a dream
I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings
I've done all the dumb things

Outro

Yeah, I melted wax to fix my wings
Threw my hat into the ring
I thought that I just had to sing
I've done all the dumb things



Activity - Dumb Things

Listen to the song *Dumb Things*. Read through each line and analyse what is being said. What are the messages being conveyed?

Use the song and/or lyrics as stimulus to create a scene or piece of dance OR create your own song, poem or rap about any of the people or civil rights events explored in the previous activities.

Losing Your Head

What is it that we've inherited from the British Empire as Noongar Australians, Bunuba Australians and Irish Australians and one of the key things is alcohol. Back in those days they used to have rum rations and they paid all our mob in alcohol. Even nowadays you've got the drink and you're in that party, you've got stature and status and you've got gravitas. Alcohol is still such an important thing in our communities.

Kyle. J. Morisson, Director



Activity

Read the interview page 33 and answer the following questions:

INTERVIEW ONE

- Kyle. J. Morrison describes the play as 'a conversation about waking up and casting off the chains of alcohol abuse holding back contemporary Australian culture'. Discuss what you think he means by this. What do you think are the detrimental effects of alcohol to contemporary society. Why?
- Morrison states that 'one of the things we wanted to ask was, what have we missed out on because we've been drunk and what would we miss out on if we continue to be drunk'. Why do you think these were important questions to ask?
- "If I don't go and drink and partake in this side of contemporary culture then I get called a coconut. So this idea around what is our culture has really fired the plot of *So Long Suckers*." Discuss the types of pressures that lead people to drink e.g. peer, cultural, work, family. What are the causes of teenage drinking? What is peer pressure and how can you say no to it? Do you think the pressures to drink vary dependent on the culture you're a part of?
- Read through the website 'Alcohol - how it affects your health' (<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/how-alcohol-affects-your-health>) and answer the following questions: What is alcohol? When does a habit become a problem? What is binge drinking? Why does alcohol affect some people more than others?
- In groups read through the website 'Aboriginal alcohol consumption' (<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/health/aboriginal-alcohol-consumption#toc7>) and develop a list of research questions. Switch your questions with a different group, research the answers and share as a class.

The West Australian

Casting off the chains

Stephen Bevis

🕒 Wednesday, 11 May 2016 1:26PM



So Long Suckers performers, from left, Darren (Dazastah) Reutens, Ian Wilkes, Emmanuel James Brown and Peter Docker with director Kyle Morrison. Picture: Gerald Moscarda/The West Australian.

When Kyle Morrison became Yirra Yaakin artistic director in 2009, he mapped out a strategy to scour the State for new indigenous stories.

That approach continues to bear fruit in 2016. Yirra Yaakin's first homegrown season at the Subiaco Arts Centre begins this month with *So Long Suckers*, a joint exploration of the destructive effects of alcoholism with Fitzroy Crossing's Bunuba Cultural Enterprises.

Written by Peter Docker with Morrison and performers Emmanuel James Brown and Ian Wilkes, *So Long Suckers* focuses on three men in custody haunted by grog and visions of freedom fighters Yagan, Ned Kelly and Jandamarra.

Morrison says the dance-theatre piece is essentially a conversation about waking up and casting off the chains of alcohol abuse holding back contemporary Australian culture.

INTERVIEW

“One of the things we wanted to ask was, what have we missed out on because we’ve been drunk and what would we miss out on if we continue to be drunk,” he says.

“It’s a conversation about opening your eyes, about taking off the self-imposed chains and starting to look at life with strength, respect and intention.”

“A lot of these conversations came out of legacy. What is it that we’ve inherited from the British Empire as Noongar Australians, Bunuba Australians and Irish Australians and one of the key things is alcohol.

“Back in those days they used to have rum rations and they paid all our mob in alcohol. Even nowadays you’ve got the drink and you’re in that party, you’ve got stature and status and you’ve got gravitas. Alcohol is still such an important thing in our communities.

“If I don’t go and drink and partake in this side of contemporary culture then I get called a coconut. So this idea around what is our culture has really fired the plot of *So Long Suckers*.”

Dalisa Pigram, from Broome’s Marrugeku dance-theatre company, has created the choreography that gives *So Long Suckers* a physical intensity with “getting arrested” dances and “drunk driving” dances.

“Some of the styles we’ve come up with are based on the physicality Marrugeku have built up over the years,” Morrison says.

“There’s going to be so much dance, so much rhythm.”

Dazastah (Darren Reutens), from the Perth hip-hop group Downsyde, will be dropping the musical beats that Morrison says will create an atmosphere of tension, fun and immediacy.

“The beautiful thing about theatre is it’s the only art medium where everything happens in the same place and in the same time so the audience will share the journey with the actors.”

Retrieved From: <https://thewest.com.au/entertainment/art/casting-off-the-chains-ng-ya-106387>

Further Resources

The West Australian

Suckers for punishment

David Zampatti

Monday, 30 May 2016 3:04PM



So Long Suckers is a cry from the heart about the destructive power of grog in Australia. As its writer, Peter Docker, says, “Grog. Police. Jail” has replaced “guns, germs and steel” as a principal agent of the dispossession of the original owners of the country and a wider, similarly disempowered, population.

Its performers come from those communities: Emmanuel James Brown is a Bunuba man from Fitzroy Crossing, Ian Wilkes a Noongar man from the Whadjuk (Perth) region, and Docker, a wadjela (white man) whose creative path has led him to embrace indigenous culture, hails from Wiilman country around Narrogin.

The director, Kyle Morrison, is also a Noongar man, and choreographer Dalisa Pigram a Yawuru/Bardi woman from Broome.

So Long Suckers works around a metaphor with wide and direct historical resonances; that alcohol figuratively “cuts off your head and takes it away” – a fate literally and famously suffered by the characters’ outlaw heroes, the Noongar Yagan, the Bunuba Jandamarra and Ned Kelly.

“Men without heads”, on the booze, in cars, on trains, in parks and on the street, are easy targets for the system of summary arrest and the dreaded bench warrants that endlessly ensnare them.

We meet them in a whirlwind of words and movement inside a striking, ominous set (by India Mehta, lit darkly by Chris Donnelly) of chains, bars, blocks and smoke.

They are the Nativity story’s Three Kings, but staggering and confused, forgetful of what they are seeking. They are also Mr Red, Mr White and Mr Green – wine, whiskey and beer – garrulous, bickering and perilous.

These splintered characters argue and cackle, mug and dance (Pigram’s compositions are exquisite, and Wilkes, in particular, a compelling figure) to the insistent beats of Darren Reutens, aka Dazastah from Downsyde.

When they are drinking in the car, they are circus clowns. When, in better days, they dive for marron up the Canning River or hunting goanna in their holes, they are storytellers, poetical and wise.

But when they are beaten senseless by transit guards, bailed up before the magistrates or, like Yagan, made outlaw, ambushed and beheaded, the machine of deprivation and dissolution is exposed.

So Long Suckers is not easy theatre, and its density and aggression occasionally reduces its impact. There are some major influences (narrow your eyes sometimes and it’s Vladimir and Estragon on stage) that, combined with its breakneck pace of action and textual change, make it a challenge to fully grasp.

There’s no denying, though, that it is an impressive gathering of artistic talent, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, to expose an evil that afflicts communities, families and individuals across a land we are still learning to share.

Retrieved From: <https://thewest.com.au/news/wa/suckers-for-punishment-ng-ya-108382>

Further Resources

realtime

Australian
and international
exploratory
performance and
media arts



Yirra Yaakin, *So Long Suckers*: Laughter & pain in a post-colonial limbo

Jonathan Marshall

In Yirra Yaakin's *So Long Suckers*—cheekily promoted as “Bangarra meets Beckett”—three ochre-faced men (Ian Wilkes, Emmanuel James Brown, Peter Docker), each bearing in stately fashion a tombstone-like box, enter a black corner stage draped with a veil of dangling chains. The ensuing action mirrors Beckett's dramatisations of the self-conscious discourse of characters imprisoned within an indeterminate theatrical space. Although the text has a slightly laboured poetry about it, the performance rests upon the simple but powerful bearing of the performers, with choreography by

Dalisa Pigram (with Jacob Lehrer) supporting Kyle J Morrison's spare, occasionally knockabout direction. Darren Reutens—Dazastah of the leading Perth hip hop band Downsyde—is visible throughout providing low-key atmospheric music while the fall and clinking of chains provides the drama's acoustic signature. Short movement interludes evoke mournful dancing. Wilkes' steely balanced poses, arms wide, and measured liquid dance phrases, are choreographic highlights.

So Long Suckers is closer to Beckett's precursors such as August Strindberg (*Dream Play*, 1907) and the German Expressionists of the 1920-30s. Echoing Sartre's *No Exit* (1944), we observe three ghostly presences marooned in an uncertain afterlife wherein they struggle to recall their past and atone for their failings. This is very much an Australian post-colonial limbo. Encounters with "police, grog and jail" recur, with recollections of a party—or parties—that went wrong and a drunken drive along country—or urban—roads—that ended in a crash. The men have lost their heads—literally and metaphorically.

The narrative, if that's the right word, is cyclic and enclosed. Motifs are introduced like keys in a choral development. The characters proclaim that they may be identified by their braces—red, green and white—leading to scuffles over 'colour.' Uncertainty permeates their memories as they grope for clarity. That horrendous motif of colonialism, the theft and display of the heads of natives and criminals, recurs as a particularly painful recollection. Each has lost his head, partly through his own actions—compromised, addicted—and partly at the hands of violent, legally protected oppressors.

The tombstone-like boxes become, in the end, the tightly clasped heads which they reclaim. As in Expressionism, the work is rife with Christian symbolism. Aside from redemption through suffering, the trio is initially introduced as the Three Kings or Wise Men, now Fallen, having (like the archangel Lucifer) lost their kingdoms and been forced to cross the desert. They joke that the cars are their camels, but the humour is sporadic and slurred by the grog.

The text for the production was compiled by Peter Docker from workshops and storytelling sessions with Bunuba Cultural Enterprises in Fitzroy Crossing, which involved his fellow performers. Tales of encounters with transit security guards on late night trains, of near misses on the road and the telling of jokes at parties, rest within the overarching Judeo-Christian poetics of the work. These half-remembered yarns act as sketches within a ramshackle structure. Suckers would benefit from dramaturgical and directorial sharpening. There are also several false endings which lead into weighty pauses before the work builds again. Finding heads or identities does not seem to conclude the characters' journeys and the work drifts on.

The thread which binds these tales is the search for identity, the protagonists coming to realise that they embody Perth warrior Yagan (Wilkes), Bunuba warrior Jandamarra (Brown, whose portrayal introduces the Bunuba language) and Ned Kelly (Docker). The condensed narratives of Yagan and Jandamarra provide a strong historical reference point, locating the origins of contemporary racial torment in the past while sketching a distinguished lineage of Aboriginal resistance into the present.

The history of Kelly's death mask and its public display received an intriguing twist with recent discoveries regarding the post-execution travels of the bushranger's head. Docker's uncritical acceptance of Kelly's claims to be a displaced Irish resister of British rule and proto-republican recalls

the attitudes of post-WWII Australian artists like Sidney Nolan or playwright Douglas Stewart (Ned Kelly, 1942). To compare a self-interested bank robber like Kelly with those who fought to stop white incursions into their territories jars.

Like many new Australian plays produced in a limited funding climate, *So Long Suckers* would benefit from further development. Nevertheless, it's a great success, its charm lying in a slightly awkward but engaging blend of Expressionist moroseness and a vaudevillian desire to reprise and reinvent. The combination of motifs and a cyclical structure produces an evocative choral effect well supported by effective design and strong physical expression.

Retrieved from: <http://www.realtime.org.au/yirra-yaakin-so-long-suckers/>

Themes

The following themes and ideas are present in the play:

- Grief
- Anger
- Violence
- Racism
- Colonialism
- Identity
- Choice
- Loss
- Law and order
- Invasion and colonisation
- Retribution
- Aboriginal over-representation within the prison system



Discuss

How were these themes and ideas explored in the play? Find some specific examples paying attention to acting, directing and stagecraft.

Which themes or ideas do you feel were most prominent? Why?

What other ideas and themes do you think are present?

The World of the Play

The world of the play means a variety of things. It's the relationships between the different characters, their personalities and the situation in which they find themselves. It's also the social, historical and cultural context of the play when it was written, as well as the world we witness on stage through the dialogue, action, subtext, direction, and stagecraft/design elements.

As an audience, we enter the world of a play at a particular point in the characters' lives and exit at a particular point. The world may be a realistic world, a fantastical world, an absurd world, or any number of combinations and permutations of these and others.



Discuss

When you first entered the performance space, what world did you feel you were entering?

What aspects of the performance space indicated a particular world?

What did you begin to imagine or predict? What were you curious about?

What is the GREATER world of the play? What is the IMMEDIATE world?

What was initially very familiar? What felt strange? Why?

At what point do we as an audience enter the characters' world?

At what point do we exit the world of the play? Where do we leave 'the three wise men'?

Was the world clear? Did you want a different beginning or ending? Why



Structure and Narrative



Discuss

Share your reflections and map out the story of the characters in *So Long Suckers*. Use the following to help prompt you.

- At what point do we enter each of their lives and at what point do we exit?
- What do we see, hear and feel about the characters lives throughout the production?
- Who else do we meet or get a sense of?
- What happens at the end?
- How does time work in the play? Is it compressed, does it flashback, what seems to be happening in real time?
- How is time shown or indicated? Is it in the language, the action, the stagecraft?
- Discuss the difference between linear and non-linear narrative.
- Would you describe this production as linear in nature?
- Were there elements of both the linear and the non-linear? Identify these.
- Did you feel confused at any point? Why?
- Analyse how the structure of the play enhanced the non-naturalistic styles within the production.



Activity

After watching the play, compile a list of things that YOU KNOW and things that YOU WONDER about the story and/or characters. Compare and contrast your list with others.

Choose an idea from the WONDER list and explore this further through role play, writing or visual arts. What could be the answer to your I WONDER question? Could there be other possibilities?

Language

Below is a list of Noongar and Bunuba language used throughout the play:

Noongar Language

Coorda	Friends
Wadjela	White person
Gudia	White person
Yorgas	Girls / Women
Munartch	Policeman
Boodjar	Land / Country
Dyerbal Yirrigan	Swan River

Bunuba Language

Gamba
Malngarri
Yuwai
Gurri
Limba
Jungai
Djarlgarra
Djarrin



Did you know...

Bunuba is one of at least 44 languages that were spoken in the Kimberley. Some are no longer used, but about 30 are still spoken to varying degrees. The Kimberley is one of the most linguistically diverse areas not just in Australia, but the world. This is due to the number of distinct languages spoken in the region. According to the 2005/6 census there are approx 100 Bunuba speakers, most of whom are older people living in Junjuwa, and the Aboriginal community in Fitzroy crossing. Source: <http://www.jandamarra.com.au/bunubapeople.html>



Activity

So Long Suckers is written largely in Australian Aboriginal English (AAE) as opposed to Standard Australian English (SAE). AAE is used by a large section of the Indigenous Australian population and is made up of variations developed in different parts of Australia.

These varieties are generally said to fit along a continuum ranging from light forms, close to SAE, to heavy forms, closer to Kriol. There are generally distinctive features of accent, grammar, words and meanings, as well as language use.

Listed below are some words known to the SAE lexicon and commonly used in AAE but hold a different meaning. Discuss what you think each word might mean both in SAE and AAE and then research the answers.

- Brah
- Camp
- Dardy
- Gammon
- Humbug
- Yarn
- Business
- Cheeky
- Deadly
- Gubbah
- Mob
- Unna

Script Analysis



Discuss

WHITE: But I'm always playing the bad guy. I'm sick of being the judge, the policeman, the redneck, the uncaring white public, the racist, the rapist, the murderer, invader, squatter, ruthless convict, overseer...

GREEN: What else can you be? In this story? How do you think this country was settled? You think I wanna be in a loincloth my whole career? Carrying a spear?

What do you think this excerpt is saying about the histories of 'white' and 'black' Australia? Do you think white Australia acknowledges its past? Why?

Research the following and answer the below questions:

- Bringing them home report
- National Sorry Day
- Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2008 sorry speech

Who are the Stolen Generations?

How do we know their stories are true?

Why was it important to apologise to the Stolen Generations?

Why did Australians of today apologise for something they weren't responsible for?

What does the apology mean to non-Indigenous Australians?

Why should we apologise when many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are actually better off because they were removed from bad circumstances?

What has the Government done for members of the Stolen Generations since the Apology?

Why was the word 'sorry' important as part of the Apology?

Does the Apology mean that reconciliation has been achieved?

Source: Reconciliation Australia. *Q&A Fact Sheet. The Apology to the Stolen Generations*. Retrieved 2017.

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Apology-fact-sheet.pdf>

Answers can be found via the Reconciliation Australia Q&A fact sheet.

Stereotypes are incomplete and inaccurate beliefs that some people hold about groups of other people and are dangerous and can lead to prejudice and racism.

What are some stereotypes about Aboriginal Australians that you've come across?

Research the 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 20c, \$1 and \$2 coins. What stereotypes about Aboriginal people do they hold?

Where do stereotypes come from?

What impact can stereotypes have on young people?

How can you avoid stereotyping?

Source: Creative Spirits. *Stereotypes & prejudice of 'Aboriginal Australia'*. Retrieved 2017.

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/stereotypes-prejudice-of-aboriginal-australia>

Answers can be found via the link above.

Script Analysis



Discuss

RED: Who you lookin for?

BLIJMAN: You, Brother.

GREEN: "Brother?" What kind this blijman?

WHITE: I was thinking that I'd make him a real nice bloke?

GREEN: You ever bin arrested, bro?

WHITE: I was a bit harsh before, I was worried I might've caused him to do something stupid.

GREEN: You only asked him his name.

WHITE: But we hear about these cultural differences, maybe asking him his name is sensitive because a same/name for him just died, and the whole family is in mourning, and if you say the name you're in plenty big trouble...

GREEN: Did you just say 'plenty big trouble'?

WHITE: I'm a white man. Mister White.

GREEN: Colour got nothin to do with it.

WHITE: You're thirty times more likely to get locked up than me.

This excerpt of text is a commentary on the lack of understanding, awareness and empathy around the cultural differences in white and black communities. Discuss your thoughts about the disconnect between these cultures as well as other cultures within Australia and how it may impact on Australian society for example through the legal and education systems and government policies.

Reconciliation Australia (2016) suggests that evidence demonstrates that strong, healthy communities are the most effective way to prevent crime and make communities safe. Prisons are extremely costly, damaging and ultimately ineffective at reducing crime. Every dollar spent on prisons is one less dollar available to invest in reducing social and economic disadvantage through education, health, disability, housing, employment and other programs. The principle of justice reinvestment is that government funding is reinvested into initiatives that address the underlying causes of crime instead of being spent on imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity.

- What are your thoughts on this? Do you agree? Why?
- Has anything changed? <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/04/15/national-crisis-indigenous-incarceration-rates-worse-25-years>

Sources:

Reconciliation Australia. (2016). *Justice Reinvestment*. Retrieved 2017: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Lets-talk...-justice-reinvestment.pdf>

Australian Government. *Families and cultural diversity in Australia*. Retrieved 2017. <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-and-cultural-diversity-australia/3-aboriginal-families-australia>

Script Analysis



Discuss

RED: Gudia (whiteman) - they change their law all year round, but blackfulla law stays on solid foundation.

ALL: ONE WAY. ONE LAW. THAT'S ALL.

*GREEN: Blackfulla law. You do the wrong thing. Get punishment. Come back.
Whitefulla law - you are criminal forever.*

Describe in your own words what you think is meant by this.

What is 'blackfulla' law?

What do you think are the differences between 'white' and 'black' law and do you think it is possible for both laws to coexist harmoniously? What are the implications for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people having two laws?



Activity

Read the article 'Different world: understanding Indigenous justice' by Chris Graham via the link below and answer the following questions:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-07-25/graham-jarrah-and-laws-from-different-worlds/4153758>.

- Referring to the article, unpack the idea of Aboriginal people (who follow traditional law) getting caught in white man's law system.
- *When white courts decide what Indigenous offenders must or must not do they often ignore or are unaware of black law and customs. Sentences or bail conditions might be culturally inappropriate.* (Source: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/black-people-white-law#ixzz4w2P3ZhW3>) Discuss this statement in reference to the article.
- In the article Graham states: *white people intervened in the belief they were doing the right thing. But the reality is we've made things a whole lot worse, and a whole lot more people have been hurt as a result.* What do you think he means by this? Can this be interpreted in a broader context? Do you agree with the idea that the white system of justice should recognise Aboriginal law and do you think it should exist independent of this legal system? Write a persuasive essay to support your view.

Sources:

Korff, J. Creative Spirits. (2017). *Black people, white law.* <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Lets-talk...-justice-reinvestment.pdf>

Stage Craft

Use of Stage Craft

Here are some ways to think about stagecraft areas:

- **Set and Costume:** place, time, aesthetic, palette, texture, tone, shape, mood, function
- **Acting:** focus, timing, facial expression, gesture, voice (including accent, tone, rhythm), movement, stillness, silence, pause, meaning, interaction, reaction
- **Direction:** use of space, actor/audience relationship, delivery, timing, sight lines
- **Sound:** diegetic, recorded, composed, scored, dramaturgy, mood, timing
- **Lighting:** mood, tone, texture, time, purpose, dramaturgy



Activity

Create a table like the one below to prompt and record as many aspects of the production as you can. What did you see, hear feel, and what meaning or understanding did you make with regard to each stagecraft area?

Stagecraft area	See	Hear	Feel	Meaning
Set design				
Props				
Costumes				
Hair & Makeup				
Sound				
Lighting states				
Acting technique				
Use of space				
Directorial choices				
Actor / Audience relationship				

Performance Styles

*“When we first started the conversation about collaboration to develop *So Long Suckers*, it looked like a naturalistic play with conversations, with themes, with dialogue, with characters, but as we got into the absurdity of the world we live in and the country we call home - this island ‘prison’ - the absurdity of the situation started to infect and effect the absurdity of the play”*

Kyle J Morrison (Director)



Discuss

What do you think Kyle J Morrison is suggesting when he refers to the country we call home as “this island prison”?

If you were a director, how would you create this ‘island prison’ on stage?

Based on the above description how do you think the play might be staged and why?

What performance styles and or conventions of styles might be used and how?

So Long Suckers is presented in a **non-naturalistic** performance style. You may be able to identify similarities to the work of Bertolt Brecht (**Epic Theatre**) through the use of conventions such as direct address, flashbacks and multiple roles as well as forms and conventions drawn from the **Theatre of the Absurd**. In particular, the stagecraft elements are highly non-naturalistic, as a myriad of different locations must be represented on the stage in transformations of time and place.



Discuss

What are the conventions of each of the theatrical styles mentioned above? Which conventions were evident? How were they made evident – through the acting, the set design, the costumes, and the sound design?

What other theatrical styles or conventions of styles do you think are evident in the play – remember to provide examples to argue your case.

Theatrical Conventions

“The beautiful thing about theatre is it’s the only art medium where everything happens in the same place and in the same time so the audience will share the journey with the actors”. Kyle J Morrison (Director)

Theatre allows feelings, emotions and parts of our mind that normally remain internal to be represented and visualised on stage. Using a non naturalistic style and design, elements of the private, internal worlds of the characters can be physically explored on stage and shared with the audience.



Discuss the following theatrical conventions and address how they were used in the production:

- Episodes
- Pathos
- Stillness and silence
- Transformation of place
- Heightened language
- Stylized movement/dance
- Chorus
- Fourth wall
- Direct address
- Soliloquy
- Use of symbol
- Fragmentary set
- Use of song, music and soundscape
- Transformation of time / Use of multiple time frames
- Character transformation / actor playing multiple roles
- Disjointed time: compressed/accelerated/flashback time

Dramatic Elements



Discuss, analyse and evaluate how each of the following dramatic elements were presented in *So Long Suckers* and how they may have been manipulated through the use of performance skills, direction and stagecraft:

- **Climax** – when, for whom, was there more than one?
- **Contrast** – between characters, worlds within the play, scenes
- **Conflict** – inner conflict, inter conflict, meta conflict (against the world)
- **Tension** – dramatic, comic, tragic
- **Timing** – real, compressed, disjointed, flashback
- **Focus** – for the characters, for the actor, for the audience
- **Mood** – establishment of, juxtaposition
- **Rhythm** – in language, in structure, within scenes
- **Sound** – affect, music, composition, percussion
- **Space** – actor/audience relationship, establishment of, endowment of
- **Symbol** – word, gesture, stagecraft, sound

Despite the serious content of the play, there are moments of humour and joy. With *contrast* in mind what role does humour play in this piece and what is its purpose?

Do you think that live theatre has more impact than say a novel or film? Why?



Lighting



Discuss

Some of the functions of lighting within a play are to provide;

- visibility
- illumination and focus
- mood and atmosphere
- special effects
- emphasis of rhythm and punctuation

Discuss these in relation to the play.

How does the lighting design utilise the following;

- colour
- distribution
- direction
- angle
- height
- division of the stage
- visual quality and intensity of the light
- change and movement
- cue and call
- balance; symmetrical, asymmetrical
- unity and harmony
- contrast and variation

How are each of these elements of lighting useful to a live theatre production?

What particular lighting states and changes can you remember as being significant, memorable, striking and why?

What different types of 'lamps' were used to create these states?



Sound & Composition



As a founding member of the Perth Syllaboliks crew, **Darren (Daz) Reutens (Dazastah)** used this platform to hone his skills in music production and collaborate with like-minded

Perth musicians. Dazastah is the executive producer for several albums of prominent SBX artists LAYLA, HUNTER, MATTY B, CLANDESTIEN, FDEL, DRAPHT, and PORSAH LAINE. Dazastah continues to be a sought after hip hop heavyweight and one of the genres taken him all over Australia, America, Canada and Europe, Malaysia and India and he continues to tour and perform and produce music with and for other well known Australian artists like the Hill Top Hoods, Pegz, UK's Mystro AND THE LATE GURU OF GANSTARR (USA) Epinonimous in 2000. The album launched them headlong into the Australian hip hop culture. Dazastah's raps feature heavily on the band's subsequent albums and he has earned national notoriety as one of the subcultures foremost performers. Downsyde studio album number seven is due for release soon. Dazastah regularly conducts music workshops and tours with theatre performance groups like 'Burning Daylight' 2007 in his role of music engineer and live music producer.



Discuss

Sound design in theatre utilises;

- dialogue
- music
- sound effects
- silence

What can each of these aspects of sound design bring to a theatre production?

How did the play's sound design;

- motivate actions onstage?
- indicate events taking place offstage?
- establish the time?
- locate the action in a specific place?
- create mood and changes in mood?
- stimulate audience expectations of what is to come?
- provide information about the characters?
- build transitions between scenes?
- offer shortcuts that rapidly advance the plot or recall past events?

What elements of sound design contributed the most to the somber tone of the play? How?

What was the role of the songs and music to the play?

Stage Management & Publicity

STAGE MANAGEMENT



Discuss

What OH&S issues do you think an SM may need to consider with regard to the set design for this production?

What do you think would be some key cues you may need to write on the prompt script?
How would you pre-set this show?

What would the SM need to do at the end of the show in order to prepare for the next performance?

PUBLICITY



Discuss

Explore Yirra Yaakin's website for marketing and media publicity approaches to this production.

Comment on the poster design and how you feel it represents the play.

What would you tweet in order to advertise the production?

Which creative team members do you think the media might like to chat to prior to the production opening? During the season?

How would you advertise this show on Facebook? Other social media?

If the show wasn't selling well, what type of publicity campaign could you devise?



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Feedback

To ensure our education notes remain relevant and meaningful we welcome any feedback that you may have. We would also love to hear about your students learning from this show and welcome any work samples or relevant material. Please email any comments, questions or learning material to education@yirrayaakin.com.au.

Become a Koordah

Yirra Yaakin would like to thank our generous koordahs (friends) and donors for their continued support. By becoming a Yirra Yaakin Koordah or Donor you become part of our company's legacy and a contributor to the fabric of Aboriginal theatre in this country. If you would like to donate please visit: yirrayaakin.com.au/support-us/giving/



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our most precious resources for future generations.

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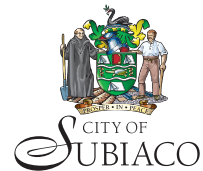
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