



SO LONG SUCKERS

Marketing kit

Version: 6 July 2016

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1 Approvals

Please note all marketing materials including print (posters, flyers, press advertising), broadcast (TV, YouTube and radio ads) and digital (website, emails) require approval before being published or sent to print.

Approvals should be sent to the marketing contact as listed below. Please allow a 48-hour turn around on all approvals.

2 Promotional material summary

Use this as a quick guide when creating marketing materials. You will find more detail about this production throughout this marketing kit.

Presentation Line: & Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company & Bunuba Cultural Enterprises present

Show title: *So Long Suckers*

Required acknowledgments: Tour supported by Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body the Western Australian Government through the Department of Culture and the Arts and Development Partner, Woodside.

Running time: 88 minutes (no interval)
Genre: Contemporary Aboriginal Physical/Dance Theatre
Rating: Over 15: Course language and adult themes (alcoholism)

3 Performance history

So Long Suckers was first performed at the Main Theatre at the Subiaco Arts Centre in Perth, Australia in May 2016.

Performing Arts WA Award:

BEST NEW WORK 2016 (Finalist): *So Long Suckers* - Peter Docker, Emmanuel J. Brown, Steve Hawke, Kyle J. Morrison & Ian Wilkes

BEST DESIGN 2016 (Winner): India Mehta

BEST MUSIC 2016 (Finalist): Darren Reutens

BEST MALE ACTOR 2016 (Finalist): Peter Docker

BEST MALE ACTOR 2016 (Finalist): Ian Wilkes
BEST MALE ACTOR 2016 (Finalist): Emmanuel
James Brown

4 Short description

The Three Wise Men try to remember who they are but each time they remember it is a grog-police-jail memory. They are prisoners haunted by memories of freedom fighters – Yagan, Ned Kelly & Jandamarra. They each chase down their identities and their purpose, all the while sorting through their memories of oppression and of fighting back. As they go through this process they become closer to themselves, to this reality. What is their wisdom? Will they get to the birth on time? Will their gifts be appropriate?

5 Longer description

What would happen if The Three Wise Men arrived drunk, lost, handcuffed and as strangers to each other? Scripted and collaborated by performers: - Peter Docker, Emmanuel James Brown, Ian Wilkes with Director Kyle J Morrison, **So Long Suckers** is a first time cross-cultural, cross art form collaboration between Yirra Yaakin & Bunuba Cultural Enterprises (Jandamarra).

The Three Wise Men try to remember who they are but each time they remember it is a grog-police-jail memory. They are prisoners haunted by memories of freedom fighters – Yagan, Ned Kelly & Jandamarra. They each chase down their identities and their purpose, all the while sorting through their memories of oppression and of fighting back. As they go through this process they become closer to themselves, to this reality. What is their wisdom? Will they get to the birth on time? Will their gifts be appropriate?

Incorporating original live music, movement and storytelling, this world premiere promises to be provocative and powerful, as it explores the destructive effects of alcohol within our communities.

6 Quotations

Reviews:

*Just when you thought satire was in short supply in new Australian theatre, So Long Suckers restores your faith that someone is looking around, thinking deeply and sharpening the pen. **The Australian***

★★★★1/2 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.

The West Australian

*It's a story that entertains and hits home because we can all relate in some measure, no matter what community we come from, no matter what our walk of life. The only disappointment is that its run at Subiaco Arts Centre ended so soon. **Australian Stage***

*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. **Real Time Arts Magazine***

7 Video

One-minute promotional video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-z-Rco_69g

30-second promotional video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_v6znAHnJE

Opening night vox pops:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TR3aPiD7MOU>

A video of the complete show is available here:

<https://vimeo.com/170109728>

Password: Kaatijin

8 Images

High-resolution REHEARSAL images by photographer Simon Pynt available for downloading from our Dropbox site:

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/so%20long%20suckers%202016/Images/Rehearsal%20Images>

High-resolution PRODUCTION images by photographer Simon Pynt available for downloading from our Dropbox site:

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/so%20long%20suckers%202016/Images/Production%20Images>

9 Director's notes by Kyle J Morrison

Police, grog and jail. Things that I grew up with. How do you then portray that onto the stage with humour, with authenticity and 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 from Bunuba Cultural Enterprises first came to Yirra Yaakin, 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 that 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 evolved into *So Long Suckers*.

When we first started the conversation about a 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 all live in and the country we call home – this island 'prison' – the absurdity of the situation started to infect and effect how the play would develop.

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 gave a completely different sense of jail and the chains that bind us.

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 wanted 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 say in a really strong way while maintaining the humour and the authenticity behind it. I think *So Long Suckers* achieves this in an authentic Australian contemporary way.

10 Writer's 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 yarning, 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 on EJB's country, and now we're down in Ian Wilkes' 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.

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 were 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 – its 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 we're 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.

11 Company information

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company has for over 23 years successfully promoted positive cultural messages to 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, defining, creating and presenting contemporary Aboriginal theatre that provides a positive role model for all. Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company continues to deliver a high quality program of performances and activities that promote respect, pride and cultural strength. 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 our communities. Our program is culturally significant, inspiring, motivating and encourages self-determination for Aboriginal people. As one of Australia's leading Aboriginal performing arts companies, Yirra Yaakin is seen 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-Aboriginal people in an authentic and culturally meaningful way. For Yirra Yaakin, cultural leadership, awareness and the sustainability of our community are

intrinsic to everything that the Company stands for. It goes to the very foundation of Yirra Yaakin's core values and reflects our aim to support the cultural health and wellbeing of all.

Our programs align directly to our fundamental purpose of:

"...contributing to the evolution of the Australian performing arts sector by projecting a strong Aboriginal voice through live performance."

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 means STAND TALL in the Noongar Language of the Aboriginal people of South Western Australia"

12 Creative credits

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

Director: Kyle J Morrison

Concept/Associate Producer: Steve Hawke, Bunuba Cultural Enterprises

Starring: Emmanuel James Brown, Peter Docker and Ian Wilkes

Choreographer: Dalisa Pigram

Associate Choreographer: Jacob Lehrer

Set & Costume Designer: India Mehta

Lighting Designer: Chris Donnelly

Music & Sound Designer: Darren (Daz) Reutens

Stage Manager: Sue Fenty-Studham

Production Manager: Mike Nanning

Assistant Director: James Taylor

Rehearsal Assistant Stage Manager: Jennifer Poh

Performance Assistant Stage Manager: Erin Coubrough

For Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company

Artistic Director: Kyle Morrison

General Manager/Executive Producer/CFO: Peter Kift

Assistant Producer: Clothilde Bullen

13 Partner credits

Program must include these credits:

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company *gratefully acknowledges the support of :*

- the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body
- the Western Australian Government through the Department of Culture and the Arts
- and Development Partner, Woodside.

14 Funding partner logos

Program must include the logos of our funding & project partners:



Government of Western Australia
Department of Culture and the Arts



High resolution versions of these logos can be download here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hnut5y6a634bnn8/AABGsA6UAaiXQ9UkkJw9dy7aa?dl=0>

15 Biographies

DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER BIOGRAPHIES

Steve Hawke — Concept, Associate Producer

Steve Hawke is a writer, producer and project consultant who has worked with Kimberley Indigenous communities and organisations for almost forty years. He has a long-standing and close association with the Bunuba people, encompassing land, native title and community works, and cultural projects through the community owned company Bunuba Cultural Enterprises. He wrote the *Jandamarra* stage play, and the libretto for the dramatic cantata *Sing for the Country*.

Kyle J Morrison — Director

Kyle J Morrison has been working in the theatre industry in Western Australia as an actor for 19 years, working for such theatre companies as Black Swan (*Waiting for Godot* 1993), Deckchair Theatre (*King For This Place* 1999, *Jimmy and Pat Meet The Queen* 2000 & *Wonderlands* 2007), Barking Gecko (*Amy's Monster* 2000 & *Own Worst Enemy* 2001) and Yirra Yaakin (*King Hit* 1999, *Booyi Koora Koora* 1999, *Djill Djitt* 2000, *Inside Out* 2001, *One Day in 67* 2004, *Warloo* 2005, *In The Nyitting Time* 2006, *Muttacar Sorry Business* 2001-2005). In 2008 Kyle was the assistant director on Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Romeo & Juliet*, *Female Of The Species*, written by Joanna Murray for Black Swan Theatre Company and *Yibbiyung* by Dallas Winmar for Company B Belvoir.

Productions directed by Kyle J Morrison for Yirra Yaakin include: *Muttacar Sorry Business* (2007- 2010), *In The Nyitting Time* (2008), *Good Lovin* (2009 - 2010), *Honey Spot* (2010), *Mother's Tongue* (2010) *Kaarla Kaatijin* (2010 - 2012), *The Cake Man* (2013), *King Hit* (2014) and *The Fever and The Fret* (2015). Kyle is currently the Artistic Director of Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Emmanuel James Brown — Mr Green

Emmanuel's talent was unearthed at an acting workshop in Fitzroy Crossing during development of the original *Jandamarra* stage production, in which he played Ilaji. After that production he graduated from WAAPA's Indigenous acting course, and appeared in the TV documentary *Jandamarra's War*. For the 2011 Kimberley tour of *Jandamarra* he won a promotion to the role of the warrior leader Yilimarra, as well as creating an inspired comic cameo as the crippled station hand Jacky. In 2014 he went on to play the lead role of *Jandamarra* at the Sydney Opera House in the

dramatic cantata *Sing for the Country*, presented by Bunuba Cultural Enterprises with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Gondwana Choirs. When not acting, 'EJB' works in his grandfather Dillon Andrews' tourism enterprise, Bungoolee Tours.

Peter Docker— Mr Red

Peter Docker has published three novels, *Someone Else's Country*, *The Waterboys* (shortlisted Best Science Fiction Aurealis Award), and *Sweet One* (shortlisted Best Crime Novel Ned Kelly Award). He has published numerous articles and short stories, and a radio play *Marrying My Family* for ABC RN. As an actor he has appeared for MTC, Malthouse, Ilbijerri, PTC, Deckchair, Black Swan, Yirra Yaakin, Griffin, Melb Workers, Barnstorm, and Kooemba Jdarra. Notables include *Jandamarra: Sing For Country* (with SSO at The Opera House), *Honey Spot*, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *Torrez*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Scenes From An Execution*, *Conversations With The Dead*, *Holy Day*, *Sweet Road*, *Up The Ladder*, and *MacBeth*. Numerous TV guest roles include *Jandamarra's War*, *The Circuit I & II*, *Weewar*, *Blue Heelers*, *The Shark Net*, *Stingers*, *Neighbours*, *The Man From Snowy River*, and *The Flying Doctors*. Films include *These Final Hours*, *X*, and *Harry's War*.

Ian Wilkes — Mr White

Ian Wilkes has always had a passion for the performing arts. Coming from a strong cultural family, Aboriginal dance is an important part of his life. In 2008, Ian graduated from the Aboriginal Theatre course at the WA Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). From 2009-2010 Ian performed with the Wadumbah Aboriginal dance group learning different skills in dance, music and storytelling. He has been a regular performer for Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company in different shows including; *Honey Spot*, *Good Lovin'*, *Kep Kaatijin* and *Kaarla Kattajin*. *Honey Spot* touring nationally at the Sydney Opera House. Ian was also the Assistant Director for Yirra Yaakin's production *King Hit* and is moving his skills towards directing. In 2015 Ian began his directing experience with *Kep Kaatijin* and *Songbird* and will continue his directing in 2016 at the Blue room theatre with *Hobo* and Yirra Yaakin's *Boodjar Kaatijin*.

PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

Dalisa Pigram — Choreographer

Dalisa is a Yawuru/Bardi woman born and raised in Broome. After completing an Advanced Certificate in Aboriginal Musical Theatre (1993) Dalisa performed in Jimmy Chi's *Corrugation Road* and *Bran Nue Dae* (Cabaret). Dalisa has been a member of Marrugeku (1994) since its beginning and Co-Artistic Director since 2009. She has been a co-devising performer on all company productions, touring extensively overseas and throughout Australia with *Mimi* (1996), *Crying Baby* (2001), *Burning Daylight* (2006) (Assistant Choreographer/Cultural Liaison) and *Buru* (2010), which she also conceived, choreographed and co-directed. Dalisa's first solo work *Gudirr Gudirr* premiered in 2013 and has since played across Australia, Europe and at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Nouméa. *Gudirr Gudirr* has earned Dalisa and Marrugeku collectively an Australian Dance Award (Outstanding Achievement in Independent Dance 2014), a Green Room Award (Best Female Performer 2014) and was nominated for a 2014 Helpmann's Award.

Jacob Lehrer — Associate Choreographer

Jacob is a dance theatre and movement specialist. Over the last 20 years he has worked locally, nationally and internationally with a broad and diverse mix of performance companies. His expertise lies in the physicality of intimacy and relationship between 2 or more bodies. Jacob first worked for Yirra Yaakin as Movement Coordinator for the award-winning play *King Hit*. Jacob is thrilled to be Associate Choreographer on *So Long Suckers* and to be working alongside Dalisa Pigram, and thanks Kyle for bringing him on board as part of the *So Long Suckers* team. Jacob is currently working on how to make himself sound professional, experienced, award-winning and amazing in 150 words or less.

India Mehta — Set & Costume Designer

India is a set and costume designer for theatre, film & live events. A 2011 WAAPA graduate winning the David Hough Design Award. India works extensively for Perth's major & independent theatre companies, some of her designs include on *The Red Balloon*, *House on the Lake*, *Flood* Black Swan State Theatre Company, *King Hit* Yirra Yakkin, *The Dreaming Hill* WAYTco, *Those who fall in love like anchors dropped upon the ocean floor* JoMorris&theMOXYcollective, *The Dirty Cowboy* Tim Solly & Steamwork Productions, *The Tribe* Renegade Productions, *The Cockatoos*, *The Boat Goes Over The Mountain* Happy Dagger Theatre, as Design Assistant: *As You Like It*, *Street Car Named Desire* Black Swan State Theatre Company.

India designed and performed in the 2011 Prague Quadrennial: Street Stories in Prague Czech Republic. Film: costume designer on *The Burning Kiss*. Her awards include: 2014 WA PAVA for Best Production for *King Hit* with Yirra Yakkin, 2014 Blue Room Awards: Best Design, Members Choice award, Best production for 'Those Who Fall In Love Like Anchors Dropped Upon The Ocean Floor', 2013 Blue Room Awards: Best Production for 'The Boat Goes Over The Mountain'. Event Designs include collaborating with Hugh Jackman & team for The Jackman Furness Foundation Launch, Janet Holmes a Court birthday function, along side styling many Black Swan State Theatre Company private functions.

Chris Donnelly — Lighting Designer

Chris Donnelly has been working actively in the Australian independent theatre scene since 2005, in roles including Lighting Designer, Technical Director, Production Electrician, Stage Manager and Production Manager. He has worked for companies such as Steps Dance, Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Strut Dance, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Deckchair Theatre, theMOXYcollective, Co3, Renegade Productions, Performing Lines, SpoonTree Productions and many more.

Chris' shows have won awards in several countries including Australia, The United Kingdom, Hong Kong and New Zealand. He is committed to working in, developing and touring; intelligent, well designed independent West Australian theatre and dance. This is Chris' first show with Yirra Yaakin.

Darren (Daz) Reutens — Music & Sound Designer

As a founding member of the Perth Syllaboliks crew, 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 most prolific and preeminent producers. His passion and music has 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). Dazastah executively produced Downsyde's first album- *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.

Sue Fenty Studham – Stage Manager

For more than three decades Sue's work has taken her across five continents where she stage managed hundreds of shows in many genres of theatre from solo performances to large-scale events involving up to 1,600 performers, including *Bali Agung*, 3 Opening Ceremonies for *Citrawarna*:

Colours of Malaysia, the Perth International Arts Festival and many festivals in New York. Sue was based in NYC until 1996 and has worked on Broadway, at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Centre. She was resident stage manager for WA Ballet for 8 years.

Sue was awarded a PhD from WAAPA, ECU in 2015. Her thesis *Stage Management: a question of approach in intercultural theatre* investigated the complexities of cultural exchange in theatrical contexts. She is an arts researcher with interests in regional identity and theatrical processes that respect cultural variation. Sue is delighted to be working with Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company again. Her last show with YYTC was *The Fever and the Fret*, 2015.

Mike Nanning — Production Manager

Mike has more than 25 years experience in the entertainment industry and has a wealth of knowledge. He has worked in film, theatre, large-scale concert and corporate events and has an extensive history in national and international touring. His many roles over the years include Director, Lecturer, Venue Manager, Production Manager, Tour Manager, Designer and performer. Mike has been extremely active in the Perth art and theatre scene collaborating with many successful theatre makers on a wide variety of projects. Until recently, Mike lectures at Edith Cowan University in Lighting and Computer Aided Design. Mike has also facilitated weekend lighting workshops that he developed for Directors, Choreographers, Set Designers and self-producing Artists. Mike is the current Production Manager for Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.

James Taylor — Assistant Director

James Paul Taylor is multi-skilled artist based in Perth, Western Australia. Since completing a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Theatre at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2014, James has utilised a diverse range of skills to work in many different areas of the Australian arts industry. Some of James' highlights thus far include swing dancing alongside Ernie Dingo at the Perth International Arts Festival production *Home* – directed by Nigel Jamieson and performed to over 50,000 - playing the role of *Puck* in WAAPA's operatic production of Britten's *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, under the direction of Rachel McDonald and acclaimed conductor Richard Gill (OAM). James' own play *Hobo*, will have its first full season at The Blue Room Theatre, after a successful debut at Perth Fringe earlier this year. This is James' first role as an Assistant Director with Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.

Jennifer Poh – Rehearsal Assistant Stage Manager

After graduating from the WA Academy of Performing Arts in 1987, Jennifer worked with Hole In the Wall Theatre Company for four years, during which time she was involved with over 30 productions and toured regionally and nationally. In 1992 she toured Australia for 15 months with Amanda Muggelton's *Shirley Valentine*. Jennifer worked with Effie Crump Theatre for 8 years. In 2002 Jenny toured to Sao Paulo, Brazil with Effie's award winning production of *Redemption*, she toured *Noel And Gertie* regionally and was voted Best Stage Manager at the 2002 Equity Awards. Jennifer has since free-lanced with the Perth Theatre Company, The Hole In The Wall, Regal Theatre, Civic Theatre Restaurant, WA Opera, WA Ballet, Deckchair Theatre, Onward Productions, Buzz Dance Theatre and His Majesty's Theatre. This is the second time Jenny has had the pleasure of working with Yirra Yaakin.

Erin Coubrough – Performance Assistant Stage Manager

Erin graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2011 with an Advanced Diploma in Stage Management. From here she became the Company Stage Manager for Black Swan State Theatre Company, where she gained experience in stage-managing new work drama, classic drama, regional touring and national transfers. She then moved to Melbourne to work on *Legally*

Blonde the Musical as Assistant Props. She became an ASM for *Wicked the Musical Australia*, touring to Auckland:New Zealand, Manila: The Philippines and around Australia. After *Wicked*, Erin moved to London where she became ASM: Book Cover for McQueen the Play on London's prestigious West End. Following this she stage-managed the Olivier nominated play, *Four Minutes Twelve Seconds* at Trafalgar Studios. Since returning to Perth in 2016, Erin is working in a number of different departments in theatre and has started her own business: The Crew Scene.

SO LONG SUCKERS: WISE MEN UNSHACKLE POTENT, PERCEPTIVE SATIRE

Victoria Laurie

The Australian

31 May 2016

<http://online.isentialink.com/theaustralian.com.au/2016/05/30/b8a573be-31b2-436f-b2ee-1dd065238a57.html>

Just when you thought satire was in short supply in new Australian theatre, *So Long Suckers* restores your faith that someone is looking around, thinking deeply and sharpening the pen.

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company has combined with the Steve Hawke-led Bunuba production company to create a show so original it almost eludes description. On a small stage bounded on all sides by hanging chains, three men act, sing and dance their way through a 90-minute ode to three historical figures, the Kimberley freedom fighter Jandamarra, the last Nyoongar tribal leader in Perth called Yagan and Ned Kelly.

The trio play Three Wise Men who are haunted by memories of these leaders, but who have themselves lost their way. They are drunkard “suckers” handcuffed to each other and attempting — in often comical skits — to remember what landed them in jail.

The Jandamarra, Yagan and Kelly stories are characterised as part of the DNA of living Australians, and it comes closest to reality in actors Ian Wilkes and Emmanuel James Brown.

Wilkes is a tall Nyoongar actor and beautiful dancer whose stage presence is commanding; his Aboriginal forefathers met and confronted Perth’s early colonists. EJ Brown is a Kimberley-born Bunuba actor whose comic timing is immaculate; his initiation as an actor began with the 2011 touring production of *Jandamarra*, a story about the Bunuba renegade to whom Brown is tribally related.

Peter Docker is a versatile actor, novelist and scriptwriter of Irish and English descent who has worked closely with Aboriginal artists, including in the musical version of *Jandamarra: Sing for Country*, which was performed at the Sydney Opera House.

In *Suckers*, Docker teases out the threads that connect past events to the current cycles of “grog, police, jail” in many towns in Western Australia. But it never descends into didactic preaching; Yirra Yaakin’s director Kyle Morrison deftly turns the white-faced actors into a pratfalling, quasi-tragic trio reminiscent of Beckett or Sartre.

Poignant dance sequences, tightly choreographed by Dalisa Pigram, contribute as much to the mood as the dialogue. India Mehta’s evocative chain curtain design works well, especially in the play’s dramatic final moments, and Darren Reutens synchronises a magical soundscape.

So Long Suckers is a product of the best mix of talents — a novel idea carefully nurtured since 2013 in remote Kimberley workshops, brought under the theatrical wing of Yirra Yaakin and finessed without loss of its potent authenticity. In an era of disappearing WA theatre companies, there should be more of such collaborations.

SUCKERS FOR PUNISHMENT

David Zampatti

The West Australian

30 May 2016

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/entertainment/a/31723414/suckers-for-punishment/>

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 Downsyrde.

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.

SO LONG SUCKERS | YIRRA YAAKIN

Cicely Binford

Australian Stage

8 June

<http://www.australianstage.com.au/201606087833/reviews/perth/so-long-suckers-%7C-yirra-yaakin.html>

Several months ago, I interviewed Artistic Director **Kyle Morrison** about the first show **Yirra Yaakin** was presenting for 2016, and I was absolutely fascinated by what he had planned for **So Long Suckers**. He described an enticing mix of cross-cultural symbols and stories mixed with dance and text. It was still in development, and I wondered to myself just how he would make it all come together cohesively, trusting in **Morrison's** abilities as a director, and curious to see the results. **So Long Suckers** met and exceeded all of my expectations.

Set in an absurd, hallucinatory world contained within a space surrounded by dangling chains, three men emerge from the shadows covered in white paint, each wearing different colored braces over white button-downs and black trousers. I wouldn't say they introduce themselves to each other, as that sounds rather more organised than how it plays out, but they reach into their memories and pull out what they can of their identities and where they have come from; they try to collectively figure out why they've found themselves together in this place, this jail.

This is essentially the central action of **So Long Suckers**; these three actors, (Three Kings, Three Stooges, Three Wise Men, three headless heroes) re-emerge from a grog-induced fog with fuzzy memories swimming around in their heads of past events, things they heard, conversations they were having recently or had a long time ago. Quite simply put, this process is both funny and sad, and it's what makes **So Long Suckers** such a great piece of theatre.

So Long Suckers brings together stories from the land, stories of run-ins with the police, encounters with animals and spirits. It draws on Australian history by incorporating the stories of Jandamarra, Ned Kelly and Yagan. It fuses together Bunuba, Noongar and wadjella perspectives, and gives us something uniquely Australian; it's conscious of its history and heritage and points towards a rebuilding or strengthening of Indigenous identity.

We audience are quickly drawn into this absurdist world that the company of artists has created; **Emmanuel James Brown**, **Peter Docker** and **Ian Wilkes** form a delightful trio of clowns, full of pathos, warmth and humour, **India Mehta's** set design is ingenious and full of meaning, **Dalisa Pigram's** choreography and movement adds yet another powerful level to the storytelling, and **Darren Reutens's** sound is integral to the action. There is not one element of this production that could be deemed a weak link.

Morrison in his notes mentions that he wanted to create a "story about the detrimental effects of alcohol without it becoming a 'lesson'" and he has genuinely succeeded in this pursuit. We never

feel talked down to, and we are all in on the process of self-discovery that the performers undergo. The melding of cultural references works wonderfully, and there are several motifs that carry the pieces themes through to the end. It's a story that entertains and hits home because we can all relate in some measure, no matter what community we come from, no matter what our walk of life.

The only disappointment is that its run at Subiaco Arts Centre ended so soon.

LAUGHTER AND PAIN IN A POST-COLONIAL LIMBO

Jonathon W Marshall

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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.

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.

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It was an incredible piece of theatre, superbly well acted, delivering a very heavy punch. I was quite lost for words when it finished! Always good to see so many folk enjoying Yirra Yaakin. Louanne Munz

This highly distinctive and choreographed play manages to balance depth with humour, and distress with resilience, via an ever-compelling, entertaining and rich dialogue. So Long Suckers is theatre at its avant-garde best. Professor Sandy Toussaint

Saw the performance tonight and it was wonderful - sad, funny, thoughtful, brilliant. Absolutely loved it. Such awesome performers. Thank you so much. Grace Bbara

It was an amazing performance. Wish we had a way of responding to shows like that that wasn't just clapping. It felt wrong to sit there and politely clap, no matter how hard or heart felt the clapping was. Diane Bunten