

ONCUE

BLACK SWAN STATE
THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

NEWSLETTER
2023 WINTER



BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY OF WA



JURRUNGU NGAN-GA
[STRAIGHT TALK]

Image credit Prudence Upton

WHAT'S ON



MEET MARRUGEKU'S
DALISA PIGRAM & RACHAEL SWAIN



VISIT ROHAN JEWELLERS



PERTH AIRPORT WORKSHOPS



WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE LIVE AND WORK ON WHADJUK BOODJAR,
THE LANDS OF THE NYOONGAR PEOPLE, AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO
ELDERS PAST, PRESENT, AND EMERGING.

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FROM IAN BOOTH

IT'S BEEN SUCH A BUSY START TO 2023 HERE AT BLACK SWAN AND I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW QUICKLY THIS YEAR HAS BEEN GOING!

The year kicked off with *Cyrano*, an irrepressibly heart-warming fun-filled loving adaptation written by and starring the super talented Virginia Gay, based on the original story by Edmond Rostand. It was so terrific to have presented this play produced by Melbourne Theatre Company in association with Perth Festival.

Virginia, a WAAPA graduate, was incredible on stage, with a dazzling cast around her. Here at Black Swan HQ we also loved the way she gave back to the community and company with Q&A's, interviews and events. Magic!

Our second show for the year, *The Bleeding Tree*, was presented with The Blue Room Theatre in the Studio Underground. An incredible

achievement for the sublimely talented Ian Michael. We were incredibly pleased to be involved in this important story that Australia needs to hear, which we trust will have a lasting impact on our audiences.

We are currently in season with Andrew Bovell's *Things I Know To Be True*. Brought to life by an all-WA cast, this moving family drama marks the directing debut of our terrific Artistic Director Kate Champion.

This is a good moment to remind you that if you are yet to join us as a member of Black Swan, there are still very good reasons to become one, or to sign up friends and family for birthday presents. By booking two or more shows in the one transaction you unlock a minimum 15% discount, with unlimited free exchanges should you need to change dates, and exclusive invitations to member briefings. After *Things I Know to Be True*, the year rounds out with two

more "not to be missed" shows at the Heath Ledger Theatre; *Jurrungu Ngan-ga* which is showing 15-23 September, and *Dirty Birds* from 18 November to 10 December.

On a personal note, it's now been a year into the role here for me as CEO at Black Swan, and I must say it's been a roller coaster of a ride with so many wonderful highlights. My favourite so far has been the audience response to *Cyrano*, with the multiple standing ovations occurring at every performance I attended.

As I reflect on the past year, it's been a privilege to get to know the Black Swan community - our supporters, friends, and family - and to celebrate the power and connection that live theatre creates. With our ongoing support we look forward to the rest of 2023 and a super season in 2024! See you at the theatre!

Ian Booth
CEO

Photo by Frances Andrijich



MEET MARRUGEKU'S ARTISTIC DIRECTORS DALISA PIGRAM AND RACHAEL SWAIN



IT IS OUR GREAT PLEASURE TO BRING BROOME'S RESIDENT COMPANY MARRUGEKU BACK TO ITS HOME STATE, WITH ONE OF ITS MOST COMPELLING AND IMPORTANT WORKS. JURRUNGU NGAN-GA MEANING STRAIGHT TALK IN YAWURU LANGUAGE IS DIRECTED, DEVISED AND DESIGNED BY AN EXTRAORDINARY TEAM OF ARTISTS.

It's not easy to reduce into words the impact of this multi - artform, dance based piece of theatre. At times it's searingly painful to watch, at other times supremely beautiful. Exploring Indigenous and refugee stories of humiliation and torture in prisons and detention centres, we are invited to simultaneously consider the power of their joy and hope. Hear from choreographers Dalisa Pigram and director Rachael Swain as they chat about this hard-hitting and yet life-affirming piece of art as activism.

Sadness, Anger, Resilience and Joy: The Making of Jurrungu Ngan-ga

In July 2016, we sat down with Yawuru leader Patrick Dodson to discuss *jurrungu ngan-ga*, a Yawuru

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

Researching this question led us to the ground-breaking autobiographical novel *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (2018), a collaborative work written in Farsi by Kurdish Iranian

journalist and filmmaker Behrouz Boochani and translated into English and edited by Iranian Australian scholar-activist Omid Tofighian. Behrouz's account of his perilous journey to Australia in search of safety and protection, and his subsequent incarceration in the Australian-run immigration prison on Manus Island (PNG), was translated by Omid from thousands of WhatsApp messages typed into a smuggled phone.*

In Behrouz's and Omid's culturally situated, philosophical and political framing of Australia's carceral-border regime, we found critical tools, approaches to genre and key scenes that helped us to activate Patrick's questions.

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

Indigenous governed intercultural performance to create art that interrogates the burning issues of our times.

Jurrungu Ngan-ga is set in the "prison of the mind of Australia", expertly designed by Abdul-Rahman Abdullah to both foreground the 'inside' and the 'outside' and at once to reveal its flimsy construction. The multi-talented cast and creative team draw on their intersecting yet distinct cultural and community-informed experiences (Indigenous, people seeking asylum, transgender and settlers of many backgrounds) to ask: "Who really is in prison here?" Together this extraordinary team have responded through choreography, sound and visual art to investigate that which Australia wishes to lock away, to put behind walls and to isolate.

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

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

Image credit: Prudence Upton



DIRTY BIRDS CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR KATE CHAMPION AND ACTORS HAYLEY AND MANDY MCELHINNEY SPENT A WEEK IN MARCH AT OUR BASSENDEAN WORKSHOP WITH SET & COSTUME DESIGNER BRUCE MCKINVEN WORKING ON THE WORLD PREMIERE OF DIRTY BIRDS.

Both Sisters have graced our stages, film and TV screens for over 20 years and incredibly have never been in a play together, let alone one they've written. Kate says, "It's such a coup for Black Swan! I can't wait to get into rehearsals towards the end of the year with what promises to be an exceptional theatrical experience". *Dirty Birds* runs at the Heath Ledger Theatre from 18 November - 10 December.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Engage directly with artists for insights that enrich your theatre experience.

POST SHOW Q & A
Tues 19 Sep
Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]
Heath Ledger Theatre

MEMBER BRIEFING
Mon, 13 November, 6pm
Dirty Birds
Heath Ledger Theatre



2023 MEMBER PACKAGES

Tell your friends there's still a chance to become a Black Swan member by booking two of our last productions for the season. Purchase tickets to *Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]* and *Dirty Birds* to enjoy all the benefits of membership, including 15% off ticket prices.

PLEASE VISIT [BLACKSWANTHEATRE.COM.AU/MEMBERSHIPS](https://blackswantheatre.com.au/memberships)



MEET STUDENT AMBASSADOR – CONWAY CHUNNARY

I AM A BLACK SWAN STUDENT AMBASSADOR FROM KUNUNURRA STUDYING CONTEMPORARY DANCE AND DRAMA AT JOHN CURTIN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS.

Miriwoong is my community language, however I also speak Nyikina Nunggubuyu and Kriol (mixture of language and English).

I proudly come from a long line of dancers, visual, textile and traditional artists whose stories come from the red hill, looking down to the fresh

water, dreaming of the mermaid. You can find some of their work here – <https://www.waringarriarts.com.au>.

I aspire to work as a performer, travelling the world and experiencing different cultures and art. I have performed with the Western Australian Youth Theatre Company, Boss Arts Creative and Yirra Yaakin's Ngalka Daa Ensemble, and last year danced in Marrugeku's video *This is Australia*.

I am currently enjoying my final work placement at Black Swan, learning about all the different aspects of a working theatre.



UPCOMING PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS

MONOLOGUE PREPARATION
SATURDAY 15 JULY
MIDDAR ROOM,
STATE THEATRE CENTRE WA

Remove anxiety from the audition process by learning the qualities directors seek in an actor and why presenting contrasting monologues showcases your acting range.

Morning Session: Contemporary
(10am - 12pm): Julia Moody will share ways to harness nerves, make a great first impression in auditions, and coach participants on how to shape a truthful and compelling contemporary monologue.

Afternoon Session: Classical
(1pm - 3pm): Director Trent Baker shares his love of classical text by sharing ways to embrace heightened language, character, and emotion in this practical and insightful workshop.

CREATIVE LEARNING WORKSHOPS

WE'D LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK PERTH AIRPORT FOR PARTNERING WITH US TO DELIVER A SERIES OF IN-SCHOOL DRAMA WORKSHOPS AT HELENA COLLEGE, BELMONT CITY COLLEGE, AND GOVERNOR STIRLING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL WITH STUDENTS IN YEARS 7-11.

Anna Dickie, Perth Airport Community & Partnerships Program Manager said, "Partnering with Black Swan allows Perth Airport to provide schools in our community with valuable experiences they otherwise would not be able to access. In addition to skills development, these workshops build confidence and provide a voice for students in our communities."



In March, industry specialists shared their skills with Drama teachers by facilitating Professional Development Workshops, generously hosted at Hale School and facilitated by Nigel Luck and Dr Teresa Izzard.

"These workshops were the most valuable I have attended in years, offering a great balance of practical and theory activities to take straight into the classroom. I appreciate that the focus is on syllabus practitioners and is being delivered by experts in these fields."
Teacher Participant



BACK

ARTISTS · CREATIVES · STORIES

BLACK SWAN

EVERY DONATION HAS A BACKSTORY

Backstage, beyond the talented actors, away from the spotlight, is the Black Swan production hub, teeming with creativity and craftsmanship.

Here, an entire ecosystem of specialist artists work passionately behind-the-scenes to bring our stories to life. The set builders. The costumiers. The scenic artists, prop makers, designers, composers, mechanists and stage managers.

When you #BackBlackSwan, you're helping us create opportunities and jobs for these talented creatives, build a thriving industry in WA, and ensure these extraordinary skills are passed on to future generations.

"I make wood look like bricks. I make canvas look like scenery. I create the magic that makes a different reality."
Marek Szyler, Scenic Designer

WE ARE APPEALING TO YOU TO SUPPORT WA THEATRE THIS END OF FINANCIAL YEAR.

DONATE BEFORE 30 JUNE.
BLACKSWANTHEATRE.COM.AU/DONATE

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

LES HICKFORD
WORKSHOP MANAGER

ZOË ATKINSON
DESIGNER

MAREK SZYLER
SCENIC ARTIST

LYNN FERGUSON
WARDROBE MANAGER

Proud to be the Principal Partner of Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA

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ROHAN JEWELLERS

OUR LOYAL PARTNERS, ROHAN JEWELLERS, HAVE RECENTLY OPENED A NEW ATELIER AND WORKSHOP IN MT LAWLEY.

Built in 1919, the former Salvation Army Citadel has been transformed over the past two years with master craftsman Rohan Milne applying his renowned modern and elegant style

to the transformation. Embodying the Rohan Jewellers philosophy, the boutique is filled with handcrafted furnishings and show-stopping centrepieces.

Like Black Swan, it is the celebrated rich Western Australian heritage and cultural connections that drive Rohan Jewellers' creativity and craftsmanship.

"We have the opportunity to tell stories with our jewellery showcasing the best of Western Australia - Argyle pink diamonds, Western Australian South Sea pearls and gold. We love working with Black Swan to deliver rich storytelling and creativity - in the theatre and in our workshop." - Rohan Milne.

BLACK SWAN'S YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK

EXPERIENCE AN EVENING OF GROUND-BREAKING THEATRE AND NETWORKING WITH BLACK SWAN'S EXCLUSIVE SERIES OF EVENTS FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN PERTH CALLED 'FRONT ROW'.

We are encouraging you to come straight from the office or workplace to enjoy food and drinks while connecting with like-minded individuals who share your passion for culture and the Arts.

As an added bonus, one of the production's creative team will provide a fascinating and unique

perspective on how a show comes together in an exclusive discussion before you take your seats in the theatre.

This is a great opportunity to expand your network while enjoying exceptional theatre. Join us at FRONT ROW.

2023 Dates:
Jurrungu Ngan-Ga [Straight Talk] - Wed 20 Sep

Dirty Birds - Wed 29 Nov

For further information, please contact Danielle Hadley, Head of Business Development d.hadley@blackswantheatre.com.au





Leaders find new ways to make the old ways obsolete.

KPMG.com.au

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CYRANO

★★★★★

"Quick witted, laugh-out-loud funny, incredibly emotional, and thought provoking on so many different levels, Virginia Gay's new exploration of the classic story of Cyrano De Bergerac is theatre at its very best."

Out In Perth

★★★★★

"Cyrano blends humanity, imperfection, desire and personal growth into a joyful, libatory spectacle and carries it off with loads of panache."

The Green Left



THE BLEEDING TREE

★★★★★

"Memorably poetic, award-winning production."

Arts Hub

★★★★★

"A deeply compelling production beginning with a conk to the head, crack to the shins and gunshot to the neck that hits straight at the heart."

The West Australian



THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE

★★★★★

"One of the most compelling, intense and relatable theatre experiences of my life."

The West Australian

"Kate Champion's Black Swan debut, at the helm of Things I Know to be True, is faultlessly staged and performed."

Seesaw Magazine

THE BLEEDING TREE PANEL DISCUSSION

BLACK SWAN AND THE CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY AND WELLBEING PRESENTED A RICH AND POWERFUL PANEL DISCUSSION TO REFLECT THE THEMES OF THE BLEEDING TREE.

Bringing together a group of First Nations women and facilitated by Dr Alison Evans (Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing's CEO), the panellists included a group of First Nations women Kyalie Moore, Renna Gayde, Barbara Bynder, and Gloria Lockyer, who spoke about the power of sisterhood and the important role community plays in addressing family violence.



LR: Gloria Lockyer, Barbat Bynder, Renna Gayde, Kyalie Moore, Dr Alison Evans. Photo by Cole Baxter.



BLACK SWAN'S SOCIAL PAGES

If you see yourself on this page and would like the photo, email i.jarzabek@blackswantheatre.com.au
For more social pics visit Black Swan's Facebook page. Photos by Matt Jelonek, Jessica Wyld.
Images throughout On Cue courtesy of Frances Andrijich, Daniel J Grant, Prudence Upton.

CYRANO OPENING NIGHT



Shantha Cokis & Andrew Bovell



Kate Champion & Iain Grandage



Tuuli Narkle, Sanna Andrews, Barry Healy, Annolies Truman

THE BLEEDING TREE OPENING NIGHT



Angus Cerini & Ian Michael



Melanie Julien-Martial, Corey Booth, Stephanie Somerville, Teresa Moore



Hon David Templeman MLA & Ian Booth

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