

PROGRAM

Gary Lang's NT Dance Company

WANJA: SPIRIT

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a note from

Jessica Machin

Chair Person

Gary Lang's NT Dance Company

On behalf of the Board of Directors of NT Dance Company, it is my greatest pleasure to welcome you to the performance of Waṅa.

This work is part of a larger two-year project 'Dancing Across Country' – a collaborative dance development project providing employment and professional development pathways for dancers in the Northern Territory funded through the Federal Government's RISE fund, Regional Arts Fund, Australia Council for the Arts and Arts NT. This strategic investment has been a game-changer for NT Dance Company and has strengthened our relationships with NAISDA in NSW and West Australian Ballet (WAB) in Perth, creating long-term opportunities for employment and development of dancers within the Northern Territory.

We know you'll love this work. We also know that you'll love what's coming next. 2023 is scheduled to bring together an international collaboration with Northumbria University on the creation of 'The Other Side of Me'. This poignant piece translates the true-life story of a young Aboriginal man, born in 1966 in Kalkarindji, Northern Territory, who was adopted by an English family and raised in a remote hamlet in Cornwall, United Kingdom. The project draws on a collection of 30 of his own letters and poems which journal, "Memories exist on the other side of me. I have two sides. The side I know. And the side I don't." The Other Side of Me is supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and Regional Arts Fund.

Thanks for joining us on this journey of the spirit in Waṅa. I'll be enjoying it alongside you!

Mike Harris

General Manager

Darwin Entertainment Centre

Darwin Entertainment Centre is proud to present Waṅa (Spirit) with NT Dance Company.

DEC's relationship with Gary Lang and NT Dance Company runs deeper and is more symbiotic than any one moment on stage. As Artist in Residence, NT Dance Company is a year round presence at DEC and for me that is the core of our relationship, which then comes to a point of creative expression in Waṅa. Presenting Gary's work is important for DEC, Darwin, the Territory and for all of Australia because he captures the spirit (literally) of First Nations storytelling through his dance. These stories need telling and there is no finer storyteller than Gary Lang.

Enjoy!

Felix Preval

Artistic Director

Darwin Festival

We couldn't be more thrilled to have the world premiere of NT Dance Company's Waṅa in this year's Darwin Festival.

Larrakia artist Gary Lang is an icon of contemporary dance in Australia. He has worked tirelessly to bring the stories of this place and the talent of First Nations artists to the stage. His trademark style of Indigenous ballet comes together here with Yolṅu ceremony for a stirring dance collaboration, backed by members of Darwin's much loved Symphony Orchestra.

We are honoured to have been able to support this project through Spotlight, Darwin Festival's Creative Development fund, and to ensure Waṅa takes its rightful place as an opening event of our city's arts festival.

Sit back and join NT Dance Company on a journey that follows the spirit from this life to the next. We hope this world premiere season marks the start of a beautiful for journey for Waṅa and its creators.

“When the soul leaves the spirit world and is conceived to this world, the spirit world sheds tears of sadness. When the soul is born to this physical world, we shed tears of joy. Likewise, when the soul leaves this world, there are tears of sadness and when it steps back into the spirit world there are tears of joy...”

– Gary’s Grandmother



the movements

WAŃA: SPIRIT

manikay and bungul

the veil

mother's lament

pathways

fear

journey

family

wonderment

the music

WAŃA: SPIRIT

Manikay:

thambul, djerrak, bul pul, murruma, waŃa, mourning

Banula Marika, Ngalkanbuy Munungur,
Yirmal Marika and Malngay Kevin Yunupingu

String Quartet 3: Mishima, all movements

Philip Glass

String Quartet 5: movements 1 + 4

Philip Glass

Cello Suite No.2 in D Minor

JS Bach

Cello Suite No 5 in C minor

JS Bach

about Waḡa

Hello to all of you, our friends and supporters. It's been a long journey to get to here and I am thrilled to be sharing Waḡa with you. It is simply beautiful.

Some of our long-term supporters will be aware of our production, *Mokuy*, that first premiered in 2014. That piece and its response to the journey of the spirit after death is the foundation of this new work, *Waḡa*. Some elements and movements have carried across and may be recognised, like the stunning visuals by Naina Sen, and some choreography. This is, however, an entirely new production, borne out of our Dancing Across Country collaboration with NAISDA Dance College, West Australian Ballet, a new partnership with Darwin Symphony Orchestra and our long-term collaborators and family, Miku Performing Arts.



Gary Lang
Artistic Director
NT Dance Company

Waḡa opens with a manikay and bungul performed by most of the company. In this moment, we are creating an experience of the process to prepare for a funeral. The waiting, the talking, the togetherness. It takes time. It can take about three months for us to prepare everything for that funeral, though it's different for all families.

When the spirit (Floer Alder) enters, I think of it as the veil, a wall between worlds. 'You don't see me'. This blends into 'Mother's lament', there's that sadness. While we cry for our loved ones we just don't see them, but they see us. For that spirit, though, there is an initial moment of fear that begins the dance movement called Pathways, where the other spirits begin to come in. When the spirit (Alexander Abbot), comes up to her and slaps his hands is when that spirit (Floer) finally knows 'ah, I am seen!'. Spirits will do something so you can see them - if it chooses. While you're in darkness, the spirit could present itself.

Here, our spirits represent a mix of family and friends that come to meet Floer, to help her on the journey on the other side. Alex's character is more like the angel, the guiding spirit and the duet with Zachary Wilson and Floer I consider a question and answer: 'Do I know you?', 'Yes, I know you'.

As the journey continues, a teaching, a guiding, a sharing, leads the spirit onwards to the Morning Star, the place of our origin. This final part of the journey I call Wonderment. It's beyond our knowledge.

As far as the details of the traditional moments, if you're curious about them I encourage you to come and ask questions, to be active in your desire to learn. For myself I'd rather leave it as a mystery for you. However, I will say that what we're experiencing specifically in this show are moments from Rirratjinu Culture in Arnhem Land.

I cannot sing enough praises about our Creative Team. I have loved working with Jonathan Tooby from Darwin Symphony Orchestra and his quartet to create this show. Their contributions to the production have brought new levels to our work. The same can be said for the rest of my creative team, the costumes by Jennifer Irwin, the lighting and set design from Beck Adams, and Christopher Hill as rehearsal director and mentor for me. I believe their expertise and support rings loud and clear from the stage enabling so much of my vision for *Waḡa*.

As always, I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the members of the board Jessica Machin, Rod Gonzales, Michele Dott, Brett Midena. To our private donors, thank you for coming on this journey with us. Darwin Entertainment Centre, thank you for all of your support over these years.

the team



**Erica NT Dance Company
McCallum General Manager**

With a 35-year affiliation with the NT, Erica has an extensive background in dance studies and tuition as well as a proven managerial track record in both the commercial and community sectors. She describes Gary Lang's work as an 'evolution of brilliance' and is inspired by his cultural sharing of regional Territory stories with unique creative flair and lyrical beauty. Erica continues to align her motivation with the NT Dance Company's vision to become the Nation's second fully funded Indigenous Dance Company. She continues to foster pathways for collaborations with National and International organisations ensuring sustained employment and professional development pathways for Gary Lang and his artists.



**Elizabeth Project and Production
Rogers Manager**

Elizabeth Rogers is an independent producer and maker with extensive experience working on musicals, children's shows, dance, contemporary music, cabaret and festivals. Her work has taken her touring throughout Australasia, Europe and the Middle East. Her experience in production management, stage management, lighting and sound design has been of enormous benefit to the shows and tours that she now produces and coordinates.

Since returning to her home, Darwin, Elizabeth has worked with Darwin Festival (2015) and Artback NT (2016-2021). She is proud of her part in the story of their inclusion into the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework.



**Christopher Rehearsal
Hill Director**

Christopher Hill is a Perth based dance artist, teacher, choreographer, rehearsal director, and arts manager. Over a career spanning 20 years, he has worked with leading international dance companies and choreographic masters, and has performed at numerous iconic festival and theatres around the world. He is currently a Professional Teaching Artist for West Australian Ballet where he teaches extensively for the company, the Marketing and Program Manager for Strut Dance in Perth, and the Rehearsal Director for Gary Lang's Northern Territory Dance Company.



Eve Lynch Stage Manager

Eve Lynch is a performer, writer and comedian that has performed and worked both national and international. Eve is new to the Stage Managing scene only starting this year but has worked on Jarradah Gooragulli (Browns Mart 2022), Kindness Festival (kindness shake 2022) and is extremely excited and privileged to work with Gary and so many incredible dancers on this wonderful show. Eve would like to thank Liz for sharing all her knowledge and wisdom and NTDC for giving her this opportunity. She hopes you enjoy the performance.



**Rebecca Set and Lighting
Adams Designer**

Beck Adams is a Darwin-based theatre designer working across the disciplines of architecture, theatre lighting and set design.

Some of her work since returning to Darwin with her family in 2010 include When the Rain Stops Falling (2016); The Crucible (2018); Turquoise Elephant (2018); And I'm the Queen of Sheba (2019); New Babylon (2021); The Messenger (2022).

She is excited to be working with NT Dance Company for the first time.



**Jennifer Costume
Irwin Designer**

Jennifer's design commissions include 32 years repertoire by Bangarra Dance Theatre, 49 ballets with Sydney Dance Co, Australian Ballet, Opera Australia, WA Ballet, QLD Opera, SA Opera, Jeffrey Ballet, Royal NZ Ballet, Sydney Theatre Co, Belvoir Theatre Co, Korean National Ballet, Melbourne Theatre Co, Tasdance, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Cathy Freeman's torch costume and more.

Jennifer has received awards from AACTA, Helpmanns, Australian Production Design, Australian Dance Award's 'Service to Dance' and the Centennial Medal 'Service to the Arts'.

the performers



Floeur Alder **Spirit**

Floeur Alder has danced with Leigh Warren and Dancers, Tasdance working with over 20 choreographers, Strut Dance and Ochre Contemporary Dance Company. A Churchill Fellow, she has traveled and worked extensively in Europe and Australia. Floeur is now an independent artist creating work for Ochre, WA Ballet and independent shows. Throughout all this time she has been teaching at WAAPA, Tasdance, Ochre, WA Ballet Company and numerous other dance schools.



Alexander Abbot **Spirit**

Alexander Abbot is a WAAPA graduate originating from Canberra, who has performed on stage and screen around the country and internationally. Coming from a hip hop and breakdance background, Alex made the transition to contemporary dance with QL2 and trained under the supervision of Ruth Osbourne as Artistic Director from 2012. In Darwin, Alex has worked with SLIDE Youth Dance and Darwin High School. Alex was part of the 2021 WA Arts award winning performance Hofesh in the Yard with STRUT dance company's collaboration with Hofesh Shechter.



Zachary Wilson **Spirit**

Zachary is a Perth-based performer who graduated from WAAPA in 2020. Following this, he was a member of LINK Dance Company, completing his Honours Degree. While at WAAPA, he worked with choreographers Cass Mortimer Eipper, Bernadette Lewis, Didier Théron and many more.

Zachary most recently performed in Raewyn Hill's Archives of Humanity with Co3 for 2021 Perth Festival.

Zachary grew up in Darwin dancing with SLIDE Youth Dance Company and the D*City Rockers crew. He returns this year to perform with NT Dance Company.



Hannah McVinish **Spirit**

Hannah's dance background is predominantly in commercial dance, performing with Karibu Collective and Rix Kix Arts. In 2020, Hannah joined NT Dance Company after performing in 'Secrets of the Boudoir' - a collaboration between Karibu Collective and Gary Lang.

Hannah loves the technicality of contemporary dance, as well as the opportunity to learn and share stories through movement. She is very humbled by the opportunity to learn and share Aboriginal dance and stories in this show, Waṅa.



Brianna Kemmerling **Spirit**

Brianna is a proud Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and German descendant. Her family line stretches from Wik-Waya through Kaanju, Ankamuthi, Yupungathi, Taepadhighi, and Darnley (Erub) Island.

Mid-2022 Brianna was part of the first class to graduate Advance Dipoma from NAISDA Dance College after 4.5 years. She debuted her professional journey with NT Dance Company in 'Forbidden' (2021) and looks forward to the future ahead.



Jordan Bretherton **Spirit**

Graduating from WAAPA in 2016, Jordan took on the role of Roger in the New Adventures production of Lord of the Flies in Melbourne in 2017. Since returning to Darwin, Jordan has performed for Tracks Dance in Man Made and Global Positioning and worked as a creative leader for outreach and community projects. In 2021 Jordan performed in Gary Lang's NT Dance Company 'Forbidden' and SLIDE Youth Dance 'Collide' directed by Tania Lieman. This year Jordan joins us again after performing in The Messenger, directed by Merrilee Mills.



Anastasia Lonsdale Spirit
current VCA student

Anastasia is currently studying a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) at the Victorian College of the Arts. Before completing this she studied ballet and contemporary at The McDonald College. She has also completed a certificate III in Dance at the Premier Dance Academy in Brisbane.



Jazmin Griffiths Family
current VCA student

Jazmin was born in Darwin; she began dancing at Darwin High School where she performed in many performances and showcases. Jazmin also performed and worked with local dance companies like SLIDE Youth Dance Theatre Company and NT Dance Company. After completing year 12, Jazmin has pursued her dance career by attending the Victorian College of the Arts studying a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance).



Ruby Platemotley Family
NTDC Junior Spirit
Understudy

Ruby is a junior dancer at NT dance company and has been dancing with Garry Lang since early 2021. Ruby is currently studying Advance 1 Cecchetti classical ballet With Darwin School Of Ballet with Lisa Heath.



Sammy George Spirit
NTDC Junior

Sammy is an emerging contemporary dancer blending ground-based circus with dance. He has been performing with Corrugated Iron Youth Arts for over a decade and last year won 3 medals at an international rope skipping competition.

Sammy is a passionate member of SLIDE Youth Dance Company undertaking key roles in many productions, including Secrets (2021), Someone Else's Story (2021), and Falling (2022). Most recently, Sammy has performed in Darwin High School's Creative Arts Dance original work, Formula, choreographed by Jordan Bretherton and Joanna Noonan. Sammy hopes to pursue a career on the stage.



Sophie Kuswadi Family
NTDC Junior

Sophie Kuswadi (14) has been dancing for 11 years. Sophie trained with the Darwin School of ballet from 2016 - present. She completed her Cecchetti Intermediate Exam in 2021 and she is currently preparing for Cecchetti Advanced 1.

Sophie has been dancing with NT Dance Company since the beginning of 2021. She performed as a Junior Artist in NT Dance Company's "Forbidden" 2021. Sophie has also performed in "Congress" All the Queen's Men 2018 (Darwin Festival).



Rachael Wallis
Miku Performing Arts **Artistic Director**

Rachael Wallis is a versatile dancer and choreographer based in Nhulunbuy, NT. Covering both traditional and contemporary dance styles, she has worked with leading Indigenous dance companies and choreographers, performing regionally, nationally and internationally over the past 30 years.

Rachael is currently Artistic Director of Miku Performing Arts Company who share and preserve Yolngu knowledge through collaborations and performance.



Banula Marika **Family Songman**
Miku Performing Arts

Banula Marika is a Yolngu songman and performer from Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land. The son of Roy Marika, he is a member of the Rirratjingu clan who has toured Australia and much of the world since the 1990s. Teaching and sharing knowledge of Yolngu culture is not only an honour but also his passion. Banula is the cultural director of Miku Performing Arts Company.



Janet Munyarryun **Family Consultant**
Miku Performing Arts

Janet was born in Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land. She is a Yolngu woman of the Wangurriclan whose homeland is now Dhalinybuy.

In the early 80's she started working at NAISDA Dance College in Sydney, and began cultural workshops to bring traditional dance practices to urban students.

She now continues as cultural advisor, performer and teacher for many national and internationally renowned dance companies. Janet is cultural advisor for Miku Performing Arts Company



Ngalkanbuy Munungur **Family Yidaki player**
Miku Performing Arts

Ngalkanbuy is a Yolngu man from the Djapu clan in North East Arnhem Land. He has travelled the world performing Yidaki (didgeridoo), Manikay (song) and bungul (dance) with the bands Yothu Yindi and East Journey.

He has performed and toured nationwide and overseas promoting and sharing Yolngu culture.

Ngalkanbuy has performed with NT Dance Company in Western Australia for their acclaimed Milnjiya during the Perth Festival in 2018 and again in Darwin in June 2019. He also performed with NT Dance Company for their performance Forbidden in September 2021.



Ineke Wallis **Family**
Miku Performing Arts

Ineke Wallis has traveled internationally for dance and advocating for human rights of Indigenous peoples around the world.

Her dance styles include contemporary, traditional aboriginal, ballet, hip hop, jazz, tap and others. Those skills grew from her mother's influence (Rachael Wallis) and then with Arafura Dance Association, NAISDA Dance College and performing with various artistic companies around the world.

Her experiences of law, lore, motherhood and the arts impact her advocating for Indigenous people, artists and the environment.

Darwin Symphony Orchestra

String Quartet



Jonathan Tooby Conductor
Cello

As a Conductor, Artistic Director and Cellist, Jon has worked extensively throughout Australia, Asia and Europe over the last 30 years. He has performed all forms of art music including Symphonic, Opera, Ballet, Chamber Music and Film and even in bands playing music from Bach to AC/DC.

Jonathan has been Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra since 2018, and is founding Artistic Director of the Darlington Chamber Music Series and Etica New Music Ensemble, both in Perth, WA.



Tara Murphy 1st Violin

Tara Murphy is currently the Concertmaster and Education/Outreach officer for the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. Tara is a graduate of the Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem and The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. She has been the recipient of the Allied Chamber Music Scholarship, the Graham Wood Silver Jubilee Award for Chamber Music, and a three-time winner of Echo Investment Chamber Music Prize. As a proponent of new music, Tara has performed for Tura New Music in Perth and the MKH ensemble in Hobart which specialises in world premiere works by Australian composers.



Clare Gorton Viola

Originally undertaking tertiary study in violin, Clare is a violinist and teacher currently based in Darwin, NT. Clare is currently the Principal Viola of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra.

Clare has an interest in the music of living composers, particularly in the style of post-minimalist music. She completed her Bachelor of Music in Performance at Monash University in violin, and Honours in viola.

Clare's performance work has taken her abroad many times, with highlights being a summer course at New York University in 2017 and new music festival SICPP at the New England Conservatory in Boston in 2018.



Erin McCann 2nd Violin

Erin started playing the piano at the age of five and the violin at the age of seven. Over many years, Erin has been extensively involved in a number of ensembles around Darwin, past and present, including as Concert Master of the Darwin Youth Orchestra and Charles Darwin University Chamber Orchestra.

At a young age Erin was invited to play in the Darwin Symphony orchestra and is now their principal first violinist. Erin has also studied and performed interstate including as part of the Australian Youth Orchestra. On receiving a Northern Territory Government scholarship, Erin left Darwin to study the violin at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music as a student of Carmel Kaine.



NT DANCE
COMPANY

thanks

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Special thanks to

Naina Sen, cinematographer, for provision and permission to use some of the original projections created for Mokuy in this production.

