

Burrbgaja Yalirra (Dancing Forwards) Marrugeku

07 – 16 June



Image: Jalaru Photography / Michael Torres.
Edwin Lee Mulligan in *Ngarlimbah*

Contents

3	About PICA
4	About Burrbgaja Yalirra (Dancing Forwards)
5	Curriculum links
6	Themes
7	Key questions
8	Pre-show activities
10	Post-show activities
13	Partners

About PICA

Housed in a large and striking heritage building in the heart of Perth, Western Australia, PICA is the city's focal point for those wishing to experience the best of Australian and international visual, performance and interdisciplinary art.

PICA is both a producing and presenting institution that runs a year-round program of changing exhibitions, seasons in contemporary dance, theatre and performance and a range of interdisciplinary projects. It boasts one of the largest and most breath-taking exhibition spaces in Australia and has become known for the leading role it plays in the presentation of significant new work.

PICA's key aim is to promote, support and present contemporary arts and to stimulate critical discussion around the arts and broader cultural issues. Providing a site for experimentation, critical analysis, discussion, and debate is fundamental to its charter. PICA is known for the rigour and breadth of its artistic and education programs, high production standards and impeccable presentation.

PICA is an icon of contemporary thinking – it is a catalyst for innovative and groundbreaking art and culture. Not constrained by convention, PICA gives artists and audiences a glimpse of what is possible.

To learn more about our coming program, or to make a booking, visit pica.org.au or call 08 9228 6300.

About Burrbgaja Yalirra (Dancing Forwards)

Marrugeku is dedicated to developing dance works that build bridges and break down walls between urban and remote dance communities, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and audiences and between local and global situations.

Burrbgaja Yalirra, pronounced Burrb-garj-ya Ya-li-rra and means Dancing Forwards, is a triple bill of new solo works. Created in cross-cultural collaboration, each work is performed by a single artist, and explores the notion of reciprocity in contemporary Australia and the effects of colonisation. Together these works form a vivid coming together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures across dance, music and storytelling.



Image: Jalaru Photography / Michael Torres. Eric Avery in *Dancing with Strangers*

Curriculum links

This education resource has been developed for the Western Australian Curriculum subject areas of English, Humanities and Social Sciences, and The Arts subject areas, with a focus on the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and is intended to build on students' experience of *Burrbgaja Yalirra*. Teachers can use this resource to establish explicit links with the curriculum and facilitate learning outcomes for students, adapting questions and activities to deliver a unit of work or select relevant stand-alone learning experiences. The activities included in this resource are flexible and should be adapted to the needs and interests of students.

English

Language variation and change
Texts in context
Literature and context
Interacting with others
Interpreting, analysing, evaluating

The Arts (Dance)

Choreographic processes
Dance reflecting and analysing

Humanities and Social Sciences

History
Civics and citizenship
Communicating and Reflecting

General Capabilities

Critical and creative thinking
Intercultural understanding

Cross-curriculum priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

Themes

Belonging

Burrbgaja Yalirra explores a diversity of Indigenous identities and stories. What does this reveal about the experience of Indigenous Australians? Has this experience changed over time? What does the historical focus of *Miranda*, for example, reveal about contemporary experience for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians? How does the past continue to shape Australian identity and experience?

Cultural collisions

Each of the works of *Burrbgaja Yalirra* explores different concepts of historic and contemporary clashes between cultures. *Ngarlimbah* articulates Edwin Lee Mulligan's concerns for his community through a dream encounter with two dingoes, the calm Yungngora and the dark dog Jirrilbil; *Dancing with Strangers* articulates a missed chance for cultural exchange at the time of first colonial contact; and *Miranda* explores the struggle for settler Australians to comprehend Indigenous Australian experience.

Representing story through movement

Ngarlimbah, *Dancing with Strangers* and *Miranda* all use movement to create narrative. How did the performers and choreography convey the message of the story? What prior experiences did you draw on to make these interpretations? What movements do we use in our everyday communication to convey meaning?

Reciprocity

The concept of reciprocity underpins each of the works of *Burrbgaja Yalirra*. For Edwin Lee Mulligan, this idea of reciprocity is contained in the title of his work: *Ngarlimbah* (*You are as much a part of me as I am of you*). What does reciprocity mean? How does this idea of reciprocity reveal itself in the works?

Key questions

Identity

Our experiences shape our identity as individuals and communities. Explore this concept on a personal level: what experiences have particularly impacted your idea of yourself? How does this impact your interactions with others? Extend this thinking out to consider your community. How is community similarly shaped by experience?

Tradition and transformation

In *Ngarlimbah*, Edwin Lee Mulligan gives an urgent cry for attention: ‘...we are like flowers, balancing on unsettled waters...’. What does he mean by ‘unsettled waters’? What concept of culture is he portraying? Is this work hopeful for the future?

Storytelling for country

Each work of *Burrbgaja Yalirra* explores a different articulation of country from the perspective of a single performer. However, all of the works are the result of cross-cultural collaborations. What does this say about Marrugeku’s concept of country? Whose stories are being told? Who has the right to tell stories of country?



Image: Jalaru Photography / Michael Torres. Miranda Wheen in *Miranda*

Pre-show activities

Understanding the context of a performance allows students to deepen their experience of a production and supplement their experience with additional knowledge.

Focus 1: Impacts on identity

Identity is the combination of what we believe we are, others' conception of who we are and what it means to belong to our community.

Collectively, the works of *Burrbgaja Yalirra* reveal the complexity of contemporary Australian identity. Each work is led by a single artist who uses music, dance and storytelling to explore contemporary Australian identity. Through their works, the performers explore aspects of social, physical and cultural identity within the context of broader understandings of Australian history, society and culture.

Activity

As a group, ask students to think about why a sense of identity is so important to individuals and communities. Brainstorm the different elements of a person's identity, creating a chart to show possible connections. How do people express their identity? As individuals and as a community? How can a person's sense of identity impact on their behaviour?

Give students time for self-reflection about their own identity and identify the elements they perceive as most important. Are these elements cultural? Behaviourial? Physical? Once they have determined these elements, ask students to consider a single factor that has had the greatest impact on their identity. This could be an event, a characteristic, a cultural practice or way of perceiving the world. Create an artwork that reflects these elements, giving emphasis in terms of greatest impact.

Focus 2: Preparing for the show

Ask students to think about what they expect from the performance. How will their personal experiences connect to what they're going to see? What do they think they will enjoy? What won't they like? What are their expectations? What do they think the performance will look like and sound like? Ask them to note all their expectations, so they can draw on them after the performance.

Performances unfold live in front of an audience that actively views the performance. The audience can have a tangible impact on the energy, pace and outcomes of a performance as the actors on stage can hear and see the audience; their reactions and their behaviour influence the performance.

Activity

Ask students to share their own theatre experiences, naming one performance they have seen and the impression it left on them. If students have not attended live performances, focus your discussion on cinema. Working in small groups, students should create a list of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours for a different kind of live performance (football game, rock concert, movie, dance performance). Guide their discussion by asking them to focus on late arrival, talking, noise, using mobile phones and photography. Ask each group to share their ideas, recording their ideas on a chart. Once all this information is collated, work with students to create guidelines for their own visit to *Burrbgaja Yalirra*.



Image: Jalaru Photography / Michael Torres. Edwin Lee Mulligan in *Ngarlimbah*, Eric Avery in *Dancing with Strangers* and Miranda Wheen in *Miranda*

Post-show activities

Focus 3: Analysis

These activities aim to empower students to express their opinions confidently and develop their critical analysis skills.

Ask students to talk about the parts of the performance that really stood out for them – for good or bad reasons – and things that they remember. Did the performance meet their expectations? What were they surprised by? Discuss which elements of the performance were important. What did they find most interesting? What would they change and why?

Activity

Split students into small groups and ask them to take turns talking about their opinion of the performance. Ask students to explain their opinion of the performance and justify their rating by extending their thoughts into a review.

Focus 4: Dance & Contemporary Performance Making

Marrugeku pursues powerful new forms of cultural knowledge and the survival, preservation and growth of Indigenous story, dance and language through the making of new intercultural performance work. Each of the performances of Burrbgaja Yalirra integrates dance with other artforms to create an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary mode of performance, that is, different artforms combined into one performance style.

Study questions:

What does intercultural performance mean?

Think about the movement style in Eric and Edwin's work. How is this considered to be contemporary Indigenous dance vs a traditional cultural style of Indigenous dance?

Thinking about each work's interdisciplinary form, what artforms are used and why? In Eric's work, why does he use poetry and animation with dance? In Eric's work, why does he play and dance with the violin? Why is classical played alongside contemporary music? In Miranda's piece why does she use movement and spoken word?

Marrugeku works with a process that has its origins in German Tanztheatre (dance theatre), in particular the work of Pina Bausch. What is Tanztheatre and where are its influences in the work?

What other design concepts (lighting, costumes, props, sets) were used and how did they communicate meaning?

Focus 4: Belonging and identity

On 13 February 2008, then-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally acknowledged the suffering caused by decades of mistreatment of Indigenous Australians. The impacts of colonisation – including dispossession and government policies of forced child removal and assimilation – continue to impact Indigenous Australians and influence the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians make sense of their own identities.

Activity

Ask students to consider the possible implications (social, emotional and economic) of policies of forced removal on those implementing and those affected by these policies. How has this impacted contemporary Australians? Ask students to work in pairs and discuss ways in which their own identity has been impacted by the history of dispossession in Australia. What does belonging mean for all Australians? How would they tell their own story in this context?



Image: Jalaru Photography / Michael Torres. Edwin Lee Mulligan in *Ngarlimbah*

Focus 5: Interpreting stories

Miranda Wheen's work *Miranda* leverages the iconic Australian text *Picnic at Hanging Rock* as an inspiration point to explore the perspective of settler-Australians grappling with understanding Indigenous Australian experience. Joan Lindsay's 1967 novel focuses on the disquieting disappearance of a group of school girls at Hanging Rock while on a Valentine's Day picnic in 1900, exploring the social, emotional and psychological impact of their disappearance on the community. Wheen's interpretation of the text is one in a series of multi-modal representations of the novel, including Peter Weir's 1975 film, the 2016 stage play by Tom Wright and the 2018 television series. In 2017 the "Miranda Must Go" campaign: was started to raise awareness about the problematic nature of the novel and how it has "white-washed" indigenous culture and the traditional custodians of Hanging Rock.

"Since the novel's publication in 1967, Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, and its story of the inexplicable disappearance of schoolgirls and their teacher in 1900, has engrossed the Australian collective imaginary. For fifty years, associations with the fictional vanishing of white women have persistently troubled and haunted visitors to Hanging Rock. Each year, countless tourists climb the rock, calling out for the main character "Miranda", and retell the tragic story of her loss. It's time to end this habit." – (<http://www.mirandamustgo.info/>)

Activity

Ask students to think about the historiographical context of these diverse interpretations of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. What is it about this story that is so resonant? Why do they think it has been interpreted multiple times?

Read about the *Miranda Must Go* campaign. What is the indigenous name for Hanging Rock?

Respond to the questions of the campaign:

- Why do we obsessively retell a myth of white vanishing?
- Why don't we cast as much attention to the actual losses and traumas that took place at the Rock?
- Whose absences matter?

Ask students to share their thoughts with one another and then feed back to the group. Broadening the discussion, ask students to consider how different stories change over time. What impacts the way a story is told and the meaning that is taken from it? Ask them to work in pairs to come up with two or three stories that are important to the construction of Australian identity.

Perth Cultural Centre
51 James St Northbridge
pica.org.au | 9228 6300

@pica_perth



Presenting Partner



Co-Commissioned Partner

CARRIAGEWORKS

Government Partners



Automotive Partner



Major Partner



Freight Partner



PICA's ongoing programs are primarily supported by an investment from the State of Western Australia through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries in association with Lotterywest, assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. PICA is supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.