



UKARIA

## QUARTET AND COUNTRY

*11-13 July 2018*



*A commissioning initiative between UKARIA, the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival and the Australian String Quartet.*

**Key creative personnel in residence at the UKARIA Cultural Centre:**

**Ursula Yovich** Indigenous Composer / Performer  
**Djakapurra Munyarryun** Indigenous Composer / Performer  
**Iain Grandage** Collaborator on compositional elements  
**Australian String Quartet** Performers

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

It has been my great pleasure as the Artistic Director of the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival (since 2016) to introduce a sizeable Indigenous component to this Festival of fine music. We have presented concerts by Archie Roach, Corey Theatre and Deborah Cheetham, as well as curated concerts around the works of Jimmy Chi and Jessie Lloyd's *Mission Songs Project*. But central to this focus has been the *Quartet & Country* commissioning series, so generously supported by UKARIA, the UKARIA Foundation and the Klein Family Foundation. The *Quartet & Country* commissioning series seeks to create a body of work created by indigenous musicians that has at its heart a conversation between the Western European Classical canon (as written for string quartet - the ASQ) and the Songlines of the country. Previous iterations have resulted in works from musical elders Lou Bennett, William Barton, Deborah Cheetham and Stephen Pigram – all of which have received wide critical and public acclaim both here in Australia and Internationally.

For the 2018 Festival, it is a great privilege to propose a collaboration with Bangarra Dance Theatre, and to feature the works of the late great David Page. As the final chapter of *Quartet & Country*, Ursula Yovich and Djakapurra Munyarryun, both longtime collaborators of David's, will compose deeply personal responses to David and his music, and perform these works side-by-side with re-arranged compositions of David's. After premiering at the 2018 Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, it is proposed that these works will then feature (alongside more works for strings and voice commissioned by Bangarra) in the Bangarra-presented celebration of David's life '*Dubboo – Life of a Songman*' in December 2018 at Carriageworks.

Ursula and Djakapurra are two of the great voices of Australian indigenous culture, and their long history with Bangarra makes them well known amongst a wide audience. This collaboration with Bangarra is new territory for both Port Fairy Spring Music Festival and Bangarra organizations, and a thrilling expansion of the original UKARIA/Port Fairy vision for the series.

Iain Grandage  
Artistic Director  
Port Fairy Spring Music Festival 2018

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

### **Ursula Yovich**

Indigenous Composer / Performer

Ursula Yovich is an Australian actress and singer born in 1977 to an Aboriginal mother and Serbian immigrant father.

She has appeared in more than 20 theatre and musical theatre productions, including *Capricornia*, *Mother Courage and her Children*, *The Sapphires*, *Natural Life*, *Nailed*, *The Sunshine Club*, *Jerry Springer the Opera*, *Nathaniel Storm*, and *The Adventures of Snugglepote & Cuddlepote* and *Little Ragged Blossom* and in the films *Jindabyne*, *Australia* and *Goldstone*. She was the subject of an episode of the SBS documentary series *Blaktrax*.

Ursula Yovich grew up in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. Her father, Slobodan Jovic, was a Serbian immigrant who anglicised his name to Stan Yovich. Her mother was from North West Arnhemland near the Blythe River, the closest community being Maningrida.

In 2016 Ursula was awarded the prestigious Sydney Myer individual award in recognition of her outstanding body of work in theatre. She was also announced the winner of the Balnaves Foundations Indigenous Playwrights Award later in the same year.

Yovich received a Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Play in 2007 for her performance in *Capricornia*. She was also nominated for this award in 2011 for *Waltzing the Wilarra* and in 2014 for *Mother Courage and Her Children*.

She has been nominated twice for the Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Musical, for *The Threepenny Opera* in 2004 and *The Wizard of Oz* in 2010, and once for the Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Supporting Role in a Musical for *Jerry Springer: The Opera* in 2009. She also received a nomination for the Helpmann Award for Best Cabaret Performer in 2010, for *Magpie Blues*.

### **Djakapurra Munyarryun**

Indigenous Composer / Performer

Djakapurra Munyarryun was born in Yirrkala as a member of the Munyarryun clan of northeast Arnhem Land. He was raised with traditional dance and ceremony as an integral part of his life and as a teenager toured Australia with elders from Yirrkala, teaching and conducting traditional dance and music workshops.

In 1991 at the invitation of Stephen Page, Munyarryun joined Bangarra Dance Theatre. His early involvement with the company encompassed performing as a didgeridoo player and traditional singer as well as leading roles in *Praying Mantis Dreaming* (1992), *Ninni* (1994), *Ochres* (1995) and *Fish* (1997). Following his acclaimed performance in *Rites* (1997) he was the recipient of the inaugural Australian Dance Award for outstanding performance by an individual. Munyarryun has also played a pivotal role in Bangarra Dance Theatre through his collaboration, as a cultural consultant, with artistic director Stephen Page, discussing ideas for development, and sharing stories from his people. Munyarryun and his sister, Guypunura Munyarryun, led the Munyarryun clan in Laka Bunkul, a performance in Bangarra's inaugural *Dance Clan* (1998) series which showcased short works choreographed by Bangarra Dance Theatre members.

In 1993 Munyarryun played the water spirit in Kevin Lucas' operatic film *Black River* and also appeared in the film *Breaking Through*. He performed with Yothu Yindi, Christine Anu and David Page in the ABC special *Songlines*, and was a featured performer in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. He also performed in Tubowgule, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Arts Festival and in Bangarra's *Skin* which was created for the Festival. After leaving Bangarra in 2002, Munyarryun rejoined for Page's 2005 work *Boomerang*.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF IAIN GRANDAGE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA**

I am a composer, musician and now Festival Director who has spent the best part of the last 20 years collaborating with indigenous musicians. These collaborations are at the core of my practice. They are my request to belong. This country has stories and songs embedded in its geology - and these are not my songs to sing. But through various opportunities, as outlined below, I have had the privilege of collaborating with many of Australia's finest Indigenous artists, and they have welcomed me and my music to their campfire, and through them I feel ever more embedded in this country.

Starting with Jimmy Chi and the Pigram Brother's multi award winning *Corrugation Road* in 1996, collaborations followed with the Spinifex people of central Australia, initially on *Career Highlights of the Mamu* and subsequently with concert works in collaboration with WASO and Topology. For the 2007 Festival of Perth, I co-composed (with Noongah Elders) and conducted an overture featuring Noongah soloists, a 600 voice choir and percussion ensemble performing the Noongah Welcome to Country. I've worked as musical supervisor and arranger for the Black Arm Band on their award-winning performances *Hidden Republic*, *dirtsong*, and *Seven Songs*.

In 2012 I received two Helpmann awards (for Best Score and Music Direction) on the STC show *The Secret River* (recently revived for seasons in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne) which involved working with Dharug speaker Richard Green and Stephen Page to create an indigenous series of songs through the production. I have also completed a co-commissioned work *Immutable* for the ACO with didgeridoo virtuoso Mark Atkins as part of the ACO's multimedia presentation *The Reef*, worked with Rachael Maza and the indigenous cast on Kate Miller-Heidke's multi award winning opera *The Rabbits*, and collaborated on a choral episode for Bangarra's Bennelong.

As a performer, I have had the great privilege of playing regularly with the Black Arm Band, worked with didgeridoo master William Barton in our ensemble Overlander, and conducted orchestras around the nation for the late Dr. G Yunupingu's stage show *Gurumul: His Life and Music*.

Since 2016, I have collaborated with indigenous composers on a series of works for the Australian String Quartet, supported by the UKARIA Foundation, for performance at the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival. Deborah Cheetham, William Barton, Lou Bennett and Stephen Pigram have all composed works for 'Quartet and Country' – a series of compositions that seek to find common ground between Western Art Music and the Songlines of this country. I also worked alongside Gunditjmara man Corey Theatre to help realize his work *Six Seasons* – performed by Corey, Archie Roach and local choirs to open the 2016 Port Fairy Spring Music Festival.

Iain Grandage, May 2018

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