

Bangarra Dance Theatre

Location: Sydney, New South Wales

Aim: To tell stories of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through dance and theatre.

Dance is a popular form of communication that can 'speak' to different groups of people. Since 1989, the Bangarra Dance Theatre has thrilled audiences around the world with their unique style of dance, cleverly created from a mix of Indigenous traditional dance and modern dance. Their captivating performances echo an ancient land and tell stories of the continuing cultures of Indigenous Australians. Performance is a powerful tool that can

encourage audiences to imagine and see the world through the eyes of another. In this way, dance and theatre promote respect and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.



Bangarra dancers performing *Ochres*. The word 'Bangarra', meaning 'to make fire', comes from the Wiradjuri Aboriginal language group from New South Wales.

Stephen Page

Stephen Page, Bangarra's artistic director since 1991, explains what it means to create a dance production. He says:

'To truly reconnect with your cultural identity it takes a journey of self discovery. From this experience—this exploration—comes the idea: let's turn this passion into a production... We are essentially building bridges to rejuvenate our identity and we are doing it in a very positive way.'

He goes on to explain how he is motivated by the teachings of a Yolngu man called Djakapurra Munyarryun, who generously shared his cultural knowledge with him:

'Djakapurra Munyarryun was a powerful inspiration: he knew his language groups. We respected him and embraced him as a cultural sounding board. By collaborating... with Djakapurra, I am really celebrating the return of a deep traditional knowledge. Djakapurra passes on to me his songs and stories, and by doing so, he is saying how you guide them, mould them into a fusion of ancient and contemporary.'



Djakapurra Munyarryun.