**Rites: Dancing towards a shared history**

Podcast created for Australian Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne

Transcript

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this site contains names of people who are now deceased.*

---

**Yolande Brown** This podcast is presented by Arts Centre Melbourne's Australian Performing Arts Collection and celebrates the 25th anniversary of the production *Rites*, the first collaboration between The Australian Ballet and Bangarra Dance Theatre, which premiered as part of the Melbourne Festival on the 29th of October 1997. Before we begin this discussion, let's take a moment to consider where our feet are planted and acknowledge the first custodians of the land where we are standing, the sovereign Peoples of these Lands, Waters and Skies. Let's pay respect to their Elders as we recognise their continual connection to, and care for, culture and this Country.

Budabai Duru. I'm Yolande Brown and I'm a proud Bidjara woman. As a former Bangarra dancer, I've been honoured to revisit this ground-breaking work through the lens of a First Nations performer and reflect on the cultural, political and spiritual significance of this seminal work for this podcast and accompanying online exhibition. I've also had the great pleasure to work alongside David McAllister and draw on his own experience with The Australian Ballet as we teamed up to gather the recollections of those who helped create *Rites*. These artists shared what it meant to be a part of this act of reconciliation, this powerful collaboration that started us dancing towards a shared history.

**David McAllister** My name is David McAllister, and during my time as a principal dancer with The Australian Ballet I experienced the power of *Rites* firsthand, felt the audience respond, and witnessed two companies coming together. Later as Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet, I had the privilege of building on Stephen Page's repertoire by commissioning further works that brought our two companies

together with *Amalgamate* in 2006 and *Warumuk* in 2012, which celebrated The Australian Ballet's 50th anniversary. Working with Yolande and the Australian Performing Arts Collection to mark this 25th anniversary of *Rites* has surfaced many of my own reflections of our First Nations culture and its representation on the Australian stage. There were some very obvious missteps, which was only amplified with the creation of *Rites*, and its preceding work *Alchemy*, which more fully embraced our rich cultural history.

**Yolande Brown** It takes a special human being to take on a challenge like *Rites*, in the face of the government's refusal to apologise to the Stolen Generation only months before he and the Bangarra Dancers entered the studios of The Australian Ballet in 1997. We wanted to find out what led Stephen to this point, and what shaped his unwavering belief in the power of dance. Let's go back to the beginning.

**Stephen Page** All I remember is stories from a very young age. Hi, I'm Stephen Page. I'm a Munundjali, Nunukul man. I'm a freshwater/saltwater man from Yugambeh Nation and the Quandamooka Nation. I am currently Artistic Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre. I think I have ten months left as Artistic Director, for 32 years, and I'm here today to reflect and share stories of *Rites*. I was born in 1965. All of my siblings before that, seven of them, were all born on my Dad's Country, on Munundjali Country. It took my father a very long time to leave his Country, to come to the city. Then, because we were in the city in this urban environment, he would then take us back on Country, and so my earliest memories would have been five, going back on Country, where I would actually hear a fusion of people sitting around, particularly a campfire, like there was always someone's backyard, and then I would remember Dad would just make us sit down beside him and mob just doing little language of songs and melody. But the biggest influence was probably the guitar would come out and the spoons and a lot of Country and Western music, but it was in their own way and their own energy. So, from that it was just always being around the gathering of telling stories and performing.

Then throughout the early seventies, we would have my father ended up moving to the city, and then, you know, he started working as a labourer. He was a man of many, many jobs - landscaping and concreting were one of the big ones. And they would start early in the morning, finish at three in the afternoon, and then it would just be this culture of drinking between 3:00 and 7:00, and they would come to the gathering and all the concreting mates of black and white would sit around. And for some reason my dad just became this great host of bringing mob together to tell stories and there would always be song and dance. So, as it went on, that dancing turned into Dad finding an old TV at the dump, and then he fixed it up, and that was the first time he watched Elvis Presley musicals. My sisters got into

the Beatles and Rhythm and Blues and Motown, and then they started to direct the younger brothers and sisters for Friday night entertainment, and it just became — oh, they were probably the reason why — yeah, they were our first directors.

I just believed whatever I saw on TV was actually how you conduct yourself in the real world. You know, it's crazy, but that's where I just came from, this imaginary world of performance. And so that confidence just stayed with me. But there was just this natural thing of mimicking. I think that's where it comes from. It's the mimicry of physicality. It's what a child first sees and hears and does, and that was always interesting to me because when I got to be up and close in front of traditional Aboriginal dance, mimicry was a big part of their connection to embody what you see, what you feel, what you hear, and out of that your body would then just shape this form of connection. And then I didn't realise I was sort of doing it in this urban way at home.

My dad said at a very young age I was just always inquisitive about culture, and he said I was just this sort of relentless sort of energy around wanting to know more. He just knew I was too young to understand the black politics, and I was the first one out of all the kids to reach year 11, where they were like "Wow." In those days, you know, this is when ABSTUDY came out, '78, '79, you know, and there's only about four other black kids in the school. So, but we used to all gather together and go "Hey, did you get paid too?", and they'd go "yeah". So, we thought it was just, like, this funny thing. It was when they were pushing, especially in urban cultures, black kids going to high school, trying to get them through to their HSC. Anyway, I think I was expelled for a week in early year 11 and I just challenged a history teacher why we weren't doing Aboriginal history. And I don't know if it's because I was really fair-skinned and I was really pissed off with the rest of my family because everyone else was darker-skinned. My mum had these big dreams for me going through and you know, she always had big dreams for her children. And then she just said “look, if you don't get a job in a week, you're going back to school”.

And then my cousin was working at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service in Roma Street, and it was my first taste of moving into social activism, and I've got a job just as a trainee law clerk. I think they just named something just to pay me. I had no idea what a law clerk did, but I thought, "oh wow, I could wear like a tie," and so I thought everything was about acting, so I put a shirt on, I pretended to like have these books and I was like this lawyer clerk. And I remember clearly my mum would be like, "what are you doing?" So I was sort of like dressing for the character of being a [clerk]. Once I got in there, I was like, I got to see just firsthand just social activism in a city, and the first time I realised about having a voice and just hearing the language. Because we came from a family where it was all sacred and secret and Dad wouldn't share language because he was told not to speak

language, and we'd only hear a little bit with Granny when I was little back on Country, or if they did sing quietly around a campfire. I remember it used to always be not loud, it used to be just controlled and just the sort of Culture they came from. So, to move into this and see activism like this stays strongly in me. I remember Cecilia Smith and Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Vivian Walker, and then I saw the poster of Sylvia Blanco, like she had a feather string around her waist in her head, plus she had ochre, but then she had ballet tights and no shoes, and the tights were cut off down the bottom and she wore them over a leotard. And she was in this sort of flex foot attitude and flexed hand. Everything was flexed. The extremities were the opposite, I suppose, to classical ballet.

**Yolande Brown** Inspired by this NAISDA poster featuring dancer Silvia Blanco, Stephen lodged an application to audition for NAISDA Dance College. NAISDA is Australia's leading First Nations Training College. It was formed in 1976 through the vision of African American dancer, choreographer, arts administrator and activist Carole Johnson. Stephen auditioned successfully in 1982.

**Stephen Page** It was after Christmas I started at the college ... early February 1983. I was just amazed that there was careers in dance for black kids all over the country. We were all there to celebrate traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait culture through dance. But I got that straight away when I walked in. It just opened up so much.

**Frances Rings** I didn't know it could be a career. I didn't even know that there was a college where you could study it. I did try to do ballet when I was younger. You know it was hard for my family, you know, it was ... we couldn't afford to send me to lessons, and I thought, "oh well, maybe later on it won't be too late for me to study."

My name is Frances Rings, and I'm a Kokatha woman from the west coast of South Australia. I am Associate Artistic Director with Bangarra Dance Theatre. This year is a transition year. Next year I step into the role of Artistic Director. Yeah, really excited to bring to the company a new vision, a new cycle, but also honour this incredible legacy that Stephen Page has created.

I think when I came to NAISDA and I walked in the building and I just saw all of these incredible Indigenous young people from around the country, and they were beautiful and ambitious, and they were sexy, and they were so strong and proud and knew their identity. And there was just this diverse mix of mob from everywhere, and I'd never seen that before, ever. And I'd always had this sense of kind of shame and a bit of loss around, you know, of confusion around who I was. But I automatically felt like I'd found my tribe and I found this mix of other young people who were all there. We all came from

vastly different backgrounds, but we all were there for the same reason. And that's because we chose dance to be this form of expression that best described who we were and what we wanted to do with our lives.

**Stephen Page** The school was the sense of marinating cultures. I remember like the Aboriginal urban mob who didn't have lingo and language would be the most defensive because they lost language and so they would stick together as a little clan. And then there was the idea of the leaders being African Americans, and then - it was strange. And then this like tutors that would come from Central Desert Pitjantjatjara and Walmajarri and Yolngu mob, and then all the Meriam mob and the Saibai mob. And it was just this, oh my God, it was an eclectic of wonderful diversity, you know, the fusion of European with American modern movement to Caribbean, with modern Western movement to Jamaican, with Western movement, to African.

So, into the early eighties were the biggest you know, that was the big shift in Australian identity ... was American influence of modern dance, you know, it was huge. And I suppose David could say the same for, you know, when Ballets Russes happened and then the classical influence. But American modern dance. Oh my God. It was just so intense. Martha Graham and then Lester Horton's technique for Alvin Ailey and then Elio Pomare and Dunham technique, and it was all about fusion. It was sort of like all the early seeds of what Bangarra is today, you know, like I was sort of getting it on a smorgasbord then. We were spoilt.

**Frances Rings** You never knew what was going to happen in a typical NAISDA day. This was the first time that I had seen young people who were proudly displaying their cultural backgrounds, their identity, their sexuality. They might have been trans, they might have been from Community. It was this incredible rainbow of richness and cultural empowerment. And I think because it was bubbling out of this era of self-determination and, you know, it was a few years on from the establishment of the Tent Embassy… of the Aboriginal Legal Service, of the Aboriginal Medical Service. Two of those organisations were founded just down the road from us, let alone Black Theatre. So, we were in this time of incredible artistic and cultural vibrancy. It was a cultural renaissance that was happening in Sydney.

**Stephen Page** Just the rawness of being at the College. There's no way we could all escape politics, like it's just with us and the political conversation is just part of our human kinship system. You had people connected to political families and they were the ones that were more fiery in a different way because they had First Nation politics where they actually had Elders and family members that worked in the

front line of that. Gail Mabo was there, who's Eddie Mabo's daughter. They were much more savvy in their political knowledge and something I learnt from them. It's not the upbringing I had, but it's like I end up creating my own experiences I suppose, by embodying all of that.

**Frances Rings** 1988 was my first year. That was the bicentenary, and it was an incredible time to be in Sydney, in the place of first contact, in the place where that British flag went up 200 years earlier. White Australia embarked on this year of bicentennial celebrations and black Australia was rising up, and black Australia was saying we stand in our cultural authority, we are proud, our young people are strong and resilient. They are the children of survivors and that we are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have survived genocide, who have survived displacement, who have survived government policies. And it was this incredible sense of light this year. It was about letting people know that we were here and that we were strong. And, you know, we weren't going anywhere. We were a part of the community, of society, and we had our own organisations, we had our own companies and voices and artistic forms and, you know, languages, and there was diversity, and people were just standing proud. And I think that to be in Sydney at that time as a young person, it was overwhelming, and at times intimidating but incredibly inspiring as well.

**Stephen Page** Those social themes were always with me, I think, and they just naturally, like when I curated in '89, I did a dance about me being expelled, because “why weren't you teaching Aboriginal history?” And I didn't realise that ‘til later. And so, we all played schoolkids and Jensen Warusam and played the teacher and he said "Who discovered Australia?" And one kid yells out "Captain Crook!" and then he goes, "You, go to the principal's office." But instead of me going to the principal's office, I get up and then a girl pulls out a tape deck thing and she presses the button, and we play Warumpi Band’s ‘Jailangaru Pakarnu’, which is a traditional song about getting out of jail, but it's all in language. Then everyone takes over the class. So, it's a bit like a Hollywood school drama about getting kicked out of school. But we responded in this political way. As entertaining as it was, the underline of the subject was pretty much just about reclaiming an identity.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** I met all the Page brothers, there in '88 in NAISDA in Glebe, that Glebe Point Rd, my sister was there, Janet, like, you know, there was a lot of dancers. There was, you know Mornington dancers, Torres Strait, Desert Mob, you know, Central Australia. You know, there was a lot of African dances. There was a lot of ballet, contemporary dance. That's the place that I met Stephen Page and Russell and David.

Yo Gululu, my name is Djakapurra Munyarryun. I'm from North East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. I come from a little community called Dhalinybuy. A leader of Wanguri Clan, song man. Been working with Bangarra Dance Company for 25 years. Yo.

**Stephen Page** He only come to visit Janet, Munyarryun, and his sister Janet was one of the tutors. She would tell him about the city, and he was like, "I'm coming with you, girl". He was a baby, and he was 16, sitting in the room and I was directing an end of year show. Was I that young? Lord. I have no idea why I was so confident, and everyone just believed my vision. It was crazy. All the best teachers in the country were all choreographing a section and they were all meeting at Paul Saliba's house. So, I asked, "can I come along?" Because I just left Sydney Dance and I was there for three years, and I went back to the college, and I was teaching. Anyway, cut a long story short, they just said, "hey, come, yeah, you should come and learn". Then when I went to the meeting, and they were all sitting around and having fun. Then I just pulled out these five pages and I just said, "I would like to direct this end-of-year show and I have some themes, and this is what I would like", and I just read them all out and they all just looked at each other with their mouth open. They went back the next day and then I got called by Carole Johnson to come in the room. I thought I was going to be told to leave because, you know, she said, "I heard you wanted to direct." and I was like, "oh yeah, I thought it'd be cool. Like, got some ideas." Anyway, then they just let me direct.

They all go, "oh, you're the first First Nations mob to do a directing of the show, because it always be directed by a non-Indigenous or an African American." So, all the radical, black urban kids were like, "We finally got an Aboriginal director in there." I had this support like you would not believe. Then David got to compose the first time and Russell was in his fifth year and he was like the lead dancer. And I don't know, maybe the three Page boys were just a bit more powerful together as one, and I think that could've been wonderfully intimidating for people. Maybe - I don't know.

Our end-of-year show's a bit like most end-of-year shows of school shows, they're a little bit curated in this variety show, you know. That's why they had so many choreographers because they all got 3 minutes or 4 minutes to do. I didn't have an interval this year because I wanted to go from Aboriginal culture theme into Torres Strait. So everything was more earthbound, and sort of mainland inspired in the first 40 minutes and then we shifted, and David did some music. Oh, that was the first time David marinated traditional music with contemporary soundscape, and that was the first seed of what *Ochres* became. It's sort of the way we curate and structure Bangarra shows that became this way of how he wanted to direct a show. It was just a bit more cohesive, and it was more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander themes because before it used to just be contemporary songs or different non-

Indigenous composers, but everything was sort of coming from the black perspective. So … God I can talk, Lord.

I was on a high working with my brothers on the end-of-year show, and then I was in Sydney Dance [Company], and then I said, "oh, just got to go to New York". I was fortunate to go, and I was working with Cynthia Lochard at the time, and she was with New York City Ballet, and she was catching up with dance friends in New York City Ballet, and they'd all meet downtown, and I would go with them, and they would be like, "What do you do?" They had no idea about First Nations mob, and Sabine was saying, "He's a choreographer and just directed this end-of-year show", and they were all fascinated. You know, that was probably my first take into the ballet world, besides seeing David McAllister and Steven Heathcote, because we had all shared seasons with Sydney Dance Company at the [Sydney] Opera House. So, I always knew those guys from my relationships and Sydney Dance, so I was sort of aware of the sort of mainstream dance, sort of whatever that world is, the classical and the contemporary.

I got this call. I was living in Harlem for about four months and then they rang and said, "Oh, would you want the position of Bangarra's Artistic Director?" I was just like, oh my God, imagine if I said no, what sort of — where I would be? My brothers rang me and they were like, "If you don't get back here now —". The rest is history. I've been here for 32 years.

**Yolande Brown** The word Bangarra is from the Wiradjuri language and means to make fire. Bangarra Dance Theatre was founded in 1989 by Carole Johnson. In 1991, Stephen Page stepped into the position of Artistic Director. Under Stephen's leadership, Bangarra has grown from a small grassroots company into a leading First Nations arts organisation. One of the company's earliest productions that made people pay attention was the work *Ochres*. *Ochres* has been in the company's repertoire since 1994, when it was first performed as a work in progress at the Belvoir Street Theatre.

**Stephen Page** Bangarra started in '89. They did a lot of school shows and it was much more traditional works that were ready for public domain. So, Yolngu could do traditional dances and Torres Strait could do traditional. That was more for a public domain sort of environment so they could teach young kids. So those sort of cultural protocols were sort of looked after early - how you respect Tradition, how you permission. All that was something I learnt very young in my career. So I started just curating shows with David. David and I started to then cross over this idea of directing and curating what's traditional and what's contemporary. Then we just started marinating it through sound first, and then it was the first time we were like getting Djakapurra to sing language to contemporary songs. So he was writing

contemporary music with David, and then he would translate in his language, and so therefore it become all the early seeds of ideas.

**Frances Rings** So I joined Bangarra in 1994. Stephen said, "You're on a traineeship." And he said, "You can do class, you can understudy and learn the choreography, but you're only performing traditional." So, he was very strict back then and he wanted to make sure that you had a good cultural grounding. And I had Djakapurra and Djakapurra's sister and Djakapurra's brother, and there was, you know, Jensen Warusam, and, you know there was just as many traditional dancers as there were contemporary dancers in the company at that stage. So, we were all doing the same repertoire, and you know. He was really tough. Stephen was very, he was very serious, very driven. He understood that there was something really important and monumental about the company and about what he was creating. But we were still yet to find out what that was and the birth of this incredible form and this language. But he had this amazing ability to be in the room and have this immediacy about him, but also have his eye strategically on where we were travelling to and understanding the landscape of what Bangarra was about to enter and the steps that we would take in order to arrive there. And he was never one to kind of rush that process.

**Stephen Page** I mean, I remember at that time I think Australian dance was going through a change, classical ballet was going through a different influence. You know, a lot of European, Eastern European experiences, physical theatre was birthed in the early nineties as a strong sort of form. We were at a time where this fusion of traditional and contemporary and when *Ochres* came out, everyone thought how important this work was. So therefore, this company's important. And so there was the resources started to unfold for us. So anyway, it was an interesting time in the '90's.

**David McAllister** Maina Gielgud had been the Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet since 1983 and was well known for her love of the classical repertoire. But in her final year, she commissioned three Australian choreographers to create a brand new Contemporary program. One of them was Stephen Page, and his work was *Alchemy* - the first work for The Australian Ballet by a First Nations artist.

**Stephen Page** You know, I think she knew that she had to start curating in a different way. So therefore, you know, curating contemporary works and working with choreographers and it was a time of change. So we were all in that process and probably not knowing why we were doing what we were doing. But

with *Alchemy*, I just came in with David and once again it was just my little cocky confidence thinking, "I think I can do this".

**Steven Heathcote** And so when we had this first collaboration for *Alchemy*, with Stephen Page and The Australian Ballet, it was a fantastic opportunity for us as dancers to get to grips with what was at the very heart of his movement style and the essence of that.

I'm Steven Heathcote. I'm a former principal dancer with The Australian Ballet and now have the great privilege of being ballet master here at The Australian Ballet.

And so it was a fantastic exploration for us as classically trained dancers to delve into such a different modality of movement, and movement that was coming from somewhere else. It wasn't coming from a technique. It was coming from a sense, a feeling, an energy, a spirit. And that was a wonderful physical and spiritual learning experience.

**Miranda Barker** Stephen's work is very full of soul. It's very connected to the earth, and it emanates that deep connection that the Indigenous people have to the earth. Classical dancers are so aerial and so tall and so light, and to find that depth of movement, that groundedness and that heaviness and where exactly what Stephen's choreography is all about, that soul and the essence was challenging. It was also very humbling.

My name is Miranda Barker, formerly Miranda Coney, before I met and married Charles Barker. I was with The Australian Ballet, a dancer with The Australian Ballet for about 17 years, and I had the most amazing career with the company.

There were so many highlights. Of course, *Rites* was one of those very enormous highlights. Working with Stephen in *Alchemy*, it was really a very new experience, because I think when you look at the Bangarra dancers, it's just part of who they are. The movement is, it's innate, you know, it's part of their Culture and their heritage and it just sort of comes through the inside and breathes out. It just comes out to the audience and permeates the whole room, the whole of the theatre. For classical dancers, it's hard to find that.

**Frances Rings** I knew that he'd done a work with them earlier and they were responding to language and to David's music and to Stephen's choreography and echoing these shapes that were born from our bodies - from Bangarra's bodies. There was a certain protectiveness that I guess I had around that and like, oh, that's our language. So it kind of took me a while to kind of not be so possessive of that and to

want to share that, because you work so hard and you forget that and it's something that you feel that culturally, historically, politically, those shapes are part of our inheritance, I guess.

**Stephen Page** We were just sort of mirroring a companion idea from the *Ochres* structure with *Alchemy*, really, and we sort of just went from there. We looked at ochres and we looked at different metaphors of ochres and the colours and what they represent, and I think I might have been a little bit clichéd or corny, and I thought, "Oh, I wonder what that's in the Western world?". Then we looked at this political thing of minerals, and then we thought, wow, the companion of destruction to the natural substance of ochres is the destruction of - it was all based on mining, really, but then these natural minerals, these alchemies were natural in the environment. So therefore, David and I looked at mercury, we looked at salt, we looked at lead, and we looked at gold, and we tried to create. Oh, we had that beautiful … Mercury, had the voice of Banula [Marika], and he picked some language, Yolngu words, and he was - David and I were in the room, and we were getting him and we were saying, "If you were singing above water and you had to sing underwater, what would it sound like?" And he was in the studio in the room, I remember this, and he would just go … like he was swallowing water and playing with texture of tone. And then David, it inspired then David to do the Mercury soundscape. And I could still hear that today, and it sounds fresh.

**David McAllister** In 1997, Ross Stretton took over the role of Artistic Director from Maina Gielgud, and during this handover time he saw the production with *Alchemy*. He was very impressed by the work of Stephen Page, which led to him asking Stephen to create another work for The Australian Ballet, this time using the famous score *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky.

**Stephen Page** Ross, bless him. You know, he saw *Ochres* in '96 and we just did *Alchemy*, and he saw it in Canberra. I remember meeting him after. I had no idea what he was talking about, and he just said, "Can you come back, but this time with your company? I've got this idea and it's *Rites*. I had no idea what he was talking about. Couldn't get on your computer in those days and you couldn't, you know, you couldn't just Google and be a historian in 5 seconds, like we can do now. I think I rang Sabine [Cynthia] and I said, "Oh, *Rite of Spring*." And she's like, "What? They want you to do that? Woah, are you ready to do that?" She like, scold me and thought I wasn't ready. And she said, "Oh, you need to watch Pina Bausch's *Rites* and you need to watch this and that and Stravinsky..." Igor, Igor - I had no idea, and the moment she started talking about Ballet Russes, and I was just, like, so confused. And there was nothing

to be confused about, you know, like it was just, you know, and then she sort of said, "Oh 1930, and it was the first thing, and it caused controversy and it was, you know, Nijinsky choreographing."

And it was so weird. All these things started to line up in my head because I danced with Graeme Murphy and Garth Welch in *Late Afternoon of a Faun,* which was Nijinsky. Graeme was mimicking Nijinski at the time, and I did that in 19...I can't even remember when I did it. I was very young and I had no idea I was dancing with these amazing icons on stage. Just bizarre. Like my life has just been about these clans of relationships. I suppose we're all like that universally. But I've really had some really interesting, intuitive relationships and experiences that have been a huge part of my creative process and experience. So, I do remember thinking rites and then *The Rite of Spring*, and then I wanted to call it 'Rites'. Then I realized, you know, this whole sort of inspiration of the pagan myths and ritual and mythology and it just - I just started lining it up with my cultural beliefs.

**Charles Barker** Ross brought up the idea that he was going to put Bangarra together with The Australian Ballet and put on this production of *The Rite of Spring*. I was just, "yes, what a great idea, wow!"

My name is Charles Barker and I am in New York City and I was the Music Director of The Australian Ballet for about six years. Before that, and during that, and after that, I was also Principal Conductor for American Ballet Theatre here in New York. I had a little sojourn to the Royal Ballet for a couple of years in the middle of all that but have always kind of maintained my New York residency and my work here.

*The Rite of Spring* is, of course, iconic, and there are a lot of accolades that have been given to it. And of course, *The Rite of Spring* and *Romeo and Juliet* are two of the most fantastic pieces of music of the 20th century. You know, the stories of the riots that happened during the premiere and the fact that Stravinsky was sitting at the audience at the beginning and was so disgusted with the people in the audience that he got up and went backstage and then was amazed that there was Nijinsky yelling out the counts to the dancers on the stage. But you could barely hear the music and they could barely hear Nijinsky because of the roar from the audience. I think there was something like 46 people were arrested after the performance. I mean, you know, it's like, do we have shows like that anymore? I don't know. How thrilling would that have been?

**Frances Rings** I remember Stephen playing us the music. We were still at Bangarra and he said, "Oh, we're going to have a listen to the score, and it's, you know, Igor Stravinsky and it's *The Rite of Spring*." I remember, you know, we were, all kind of laid down and we listened to it and wow, it just blew me away. The incredible layers of storytelling that's built into that score. You know, it just felt like it was

taking you onto Country. It felt like there was these textures and this soundscape of energy and of, you know, this deep kind of connection responding to these elements that came from a very deep, organic place.

**Stephen Page** Once again, I went in this four, sort of metaphor, element structure, like *Ochres*, like *Alchemy*, and then I went into the more natural elements. As easy and simple as they might sound, I knew whatever depth they were in Aboriginal culture and their significance. We learnt a lot, like we came in, you know, four boys, four girls and me and Djakapurra. He'd always say, "Look, I'll be your eyes in the bush, but you have to be my eyes in the city," and I went "Okay."

So we were all just learning. *Rites* was between *Ochres* and the Olympics and this ballet experience introducing me to Igor. I would just take on as much as I can. I didn't realise how much of a workaholic I was, like, you only become that if you love it. So, I obviously loved it. The biggest time of my life, you know, once *Ochres* was up by '96 touring the world and doing *Fish* at the Edinburgh Festival in '97, and plus we did *Rites* that year. I talk about the artists because I just love watching them experience. I'd say, 'Hey, they want me to go to Atlanta. Do you want to come?" Yes, they'd come. "Hey, they want me to do the Sydney opening and closing, but I need you all to be dance captains in and you all need to be involved." They had no choice. I didn't even let them say no, you know, because I would just say, "Come for the ride."

**Frances Rings** He's always been incredibly ambitious, and when he told us about *Rites* and that we were doing a collaboration with The Australian Ballet, it was overwhelming actually. Our response at the time was — I guess we're defensive. I guess we were like, "Why are we doing this?" Like, you know, we're achieving our own successes. At least I was like, they're two worlds that never cross over, that never meet, that are both born from traditions, and we're both fiercely proud of those traditions - the ballet world and Bangarra's world. And I guess, you know, I felt like, "How do we come together to create this language?" And Stephen was like, "Just trust me, it's going to be incredible."

**Stephen Page** This black company, The Australian Ballet, you know, all these different things coming together at once. There's an audience in the theatre and then there's an audience out there in this social landscape, you know? And I think people were hearing of this and, you know, lucky we weren't in the digital, social media world in those days, because I reckon we probably would have had a lot of flak too. Like people would have been wanting questions answered, I suppose, like "What is two companies like this coming together?", and "Oh, he doesn't do David's score. He does a Western…" That was the first

Western score that I had worked with. So, "You go to one of the biggest scores of the 20th century?" You know, I think everyone has no idea of how the outcome of that's going to be, but they're just within the experience at the moment, at the time that you're in it.

**Frances Rings** Quite a lot of times with art, it's accidental. You put these elements in the space and you trust that, you know, it works. Sometimes it doesn't. But you do take risks as creatives and as choreographers. You know, I think Stephen was always very brave in taking those risks and trusting that, "Okay, if I give the vision, if I give the story, I've got Djakapurra, who's going to guide the cultural elements. I've got my team of dancers who knows the language. All we need to do is to be able to nurture the space to ensure that that's done in the right way." Because we were having people ask us like, "Why are you doing a work with The Australian Ballet" and "What's Bangarra doing and — " As a dancer with Bangarra, and I think any Indigenous artist, it's really hard to separate your art form from politics because everything we do is a response to that. But, you know, once you're in that room, it just made sense. It just kind of was this, well, if it's not happening externally, if it's not happening in society, and if it's not happening in our communities or if our politicians aren't making it happen, then our artists are and our artists are creating this moment of change.

**Stephen Page** You know, I think the first day we all just sat around in a circle and once again, we just all mimicked each other. We all picked a brother and sister and we told everyone to take their shoes off.

**Steven Heathcote** The very first day, Bangarra and The Australian Ballet came together in The Australian Ballet studios in Kavanagh Street, South Melbourne was a momentous day, and I don't use that word lightly.

**Frances Rings** There was just this wonderful, curious wonderment from both sides.

**Steven Heathcote** It was the coming together, a happy coming together of two great companies with two distinct identities and two distinct purposes for being and two distinct modes of operation. And I actually personally, I remember being a little bit nervous because we'd had a taste of Stephen's movement through *Alchemy*. I remember thinking myself, "Am I going to be able to understand and, for want of a better word, emulate the proper kind of movement style now that we have the real Bangarra dancers in the room?" This fabulously friendly, warm, funny, actually hilarious group of people came

into the room and just immediately bonded with all of us. And we knew, I think, right from the very first five to ten seconds that this was going to be a really special collaboration.

I distinctly remember one of the first things that Stephen Page did was to ask us all to form a circle, which of course immediately links everybody because we all know that there's no break in a circle. And he two-by-two chose a Bangarra dancer and an Australian ballet dancer to stand and come to the centre of the circle. And he wanted this as an exercise. He wanted The Australian Ballet dancers to watch and mirror the movement, which was improvised from the Bangarra dancer. And that was one of the most extraordinary experiences, certainly for me personally. In a sense it was kind of ceremonial, kind of a hybrid corroboree. It was a meeting of minds and spirits and understanding where the essence of Stephen's movement was coming from.

Stephen asked me to stand up and be opposite Djakapurra Munyarryun, of course, who's incredibly charismatic. And this man not only has an extraordinary presence, but he's got the biggest smile in the universe. But he also has a movement quality that none of us had ever seen before or experienced before. And so, I stood up and I locked eyes with this big, beautiful man, and he started to move, and I felt myself being drawn into his movement. I was conscious, I was I was kind of saying to myself, "Don't copy, feel it." You know, don't just, don't just carbon copy the movement. Just feel what you can feel coming from, emanating from Djakapurra. That was a really special experience and one that actually bonded Djakapurra and I. And I know that, you know, it doesn't matter how many years that go by, if we see each other, it will be big hugs. You know, he's an extraordinary man.

**Stephen Page** Poor ballet dancers. Some wanted to be in barefoot. They were so determined, The Australian Ballet dancers, they were like, "No, we're going to be just like you." And Russell was like, "Well, you be ready. Your skin's going to get torn up on that floor."

**Miranda Barker** Trying to find the essence of Stephen's choreography was pretty challenging, was very challenging, but also it was new territory. We really embraced it; I think. It wasn't comfortable, you know, it wasn't natural for us, but we really did throw ourselves into it, and it evolved over time. We were a bit awkward. It took us out of our comfort zones, but eventually I think we found the essence, or some of the essence. You know, it's very different working in bare feet to pointe shoes, although I have to say in my role as Wind, I was in pointe shoes, which was kind of interesting because you can't feel the floor as well through your pointe shoes. Stephen's choreography is very grounded, very earthy, very dynamic, and that was like an added challenge on top of the rest. It was in the middle of being a classical and contemporary… sort of somewhere in the middle there. So, that was interesting for me. Then, of

course, to navigate the branches that came out of my hair. Yeah, there were lots of challenges, but there were delightful challenges.

**Steven Heathcote** The big difference for The Australian Ballet dancers to come to grips with, physically, was lowering their centre of gravity. We've often talked about this in the past in relation to Stephen Page and Bangarra's work that there is a sense of connectedness to the earth and that's obviously where a lot of the inspiration of the movement comes from, from Mother Earth.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** Yes, cultural dances are always in the low. Everything is low because we've got to connect to the Earth. And Australian Ballet's more higher, you know, they're working with the pointe shoes and like what I was doing, teaching them to doing lower, more lower things, so they can connect to the Earth. Yeah, open the eyes and open the mind, that where the stories come from, and you know, the Land, you know, to connect to, like what's in the environment, you know, all the birds talking or the wind blowing.

**Steven Heathcote** For dancers at The Australian Ballet who were classically trained, we had to really think about movement in a very different way. Now physically that manifests itself in using the glutes and the hamstrings and the quads much, much more because you're supporting your weight in much deeper postures.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** And it's killing their legs, you know, and because their dances is more higher things and our traditional dances are really low.

**Steven Heathcote** And so yes, there were a lot of sore butts and a lot of sore hamstrings and a lot of sore thighs over the course of the next few weeks until we became a little more conditioned to that style of movement.

**Frances Rings** The ballet dancers, their minds were … the frameworks in their minds were kind of recalibrating and breaking up and just becoming these organic beings. And this listening, this sense of innocence, this sense of growth, this sense of sharing story, and I think that's where the innocence comes from, this childlike "Oh, so you moved this way because the story is that you're collecting the earth and the earth becomes the paint on which you put it on your body for ceremony, and the ceremony is telling stories that have been passed on to you, and…". It was fascinating to kind of be given

that responsibility to help them find a new way, a new key, a new door into this art form that became a new expression of Australian dance.

**Stephen Page** I have a big admiration for performers because I tell you they carry stories night in and night out, you know, like the artist always needs to know how important they are for that expression. We probably don't say it enough because we're so caught up in responding to western system and time, but in the back of our minds, I just always made sure that those artists … and Djakapurra. Djakapurra kept me calm with that. We would just listen and try to feel and hunt quietly.

He loved the ballet like he, I remember he used to just stand at the window and watch the class. Like, you know, he does ballet with Bangarra, but not like that, you know, like he would look and just look at - really he loved the technical, the technician of the idea and just, you know, the girls on pointe. And then when the men would jump, he would be like tours for days and jetes. Like all of it made sense to him. Like I would say to him, "Well, this is the house, you know, it's like the house of where classical is really in its element because, you know, this is this is their ritual, this is their sacred, this is what makes them do what they do." And he got that. He just knew and he knew there were similar disciplines in his traditional.

**Miranda Barker** Djakapurra was this power, a powerful force. Watching him was/is unbelievable. He had such a presence, such a focus, the way he moved, you know, his big you know, he could move with such agility and such precision. He was like the God of the Earth, you know, the spirit of, like the embodiment of what *Rites* is all about, you know. And the impact that he had, he begins *Rites* and then he ends *Rites* as it comes full circle. But yeah, he was amazing to watch, truly just something we had never seen before.

**Stephen Page** I asked him to explore the more traditional movement in Earth, and then for some reason, him and - good old Djakapurra and Stravinsky - they all sort of somehow, they came together, like, rhythmically. Out of all of them, Djakapurra only had to listen once, and he could hang on to the listening and he could improvise. Well, that whole Stravinsky score is - it's because it's so unpredictable. It sort of turned him back to traditional urgencies and traditional Aboriginal scoring. Like, he loved all of that. Like he loved all the off beat to the on beat.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** But it was different for me to, like, I got to learn to listen careful. To where we're coming from, what I want here, and where we're going to come in, we're going to be finishing the

dance. You know, it's really different for me. But, you know, I was trying to challenge that music to learn, you know, that's what I was there for. I learned. I was learning from Stephen, and, you know, Stephen was a really good teacher for me - to hear to that music and he was telling me about where it's going to come to, for that, you know. He was teaching me how to do it then … and then you need to put that movement onto this different music, you know. And, you know, Stephen asked me, you got to put, something like, in your body move or just a foot move or just a hand move.

**Charles Barker** One of the interesting things about Djakapurra in all of the performances was that he would have these extremely well-timed utterances, and it was usually right before some sort of cataclysmic change in the music. And when I say right before - a split second before. Now to know the music that well is something that conductors do, but I wouldn't expect a layman to do it or a dancer to know it that well, you know, you kind of get the feel of it. But he seemed to know exactly where these things happened. Also, for me, it was kind of part of the production. It was the Bangarra side saying, "We are here and we are part of this, we are genuine." And I would have imagined Stravinsky would have said, "Whoa, yeah, that sounds great."

**Steven Heathcote** Clearly you have hundreds of thousands of years of Indigenous history and Culture and ritual meeting this extraordinarily powerful western music. And somehow the meeting of those two energies sparked the most incredible creative bushfire, you know. What Stephen managed to do was to tap into the power of the music and actually enhance, if I may say that, the power of the music with the power of his movement.

**Stephen Page** That score is unbelievable and unpredictable, and I could not count it. I could only feel it. And when I remember doing the movement and I would never count, and the dancers would look at me and I'd go … so it made me work harder because it made me then, I had to bring a story every time I was doing something. And dancers were so fixated into counts, and then they'd just love it because there'd be like the best dancer that could count that score, you know? So, if you had a musical knowledge, you were like the one that everyone would turn to in rehearsal. The temperament of it was just volatile because it was in nines, then elevens, and then fourteens, and then eights and then sixes. And so, it became this obsession amongst the dancers.

**Frances Rings** One of my challenges was, how do I count this? How do we all stay in time? And I think that was a really bonding thing for all of us. We found different ways in which we would count it that

worked for us. I mean, we knew we had limited time, that was the other thing. I remember. It was limited. So, we had to switch it on and go, okay, he's going to rely on us, he's going to want things and he's going to want them really quickly. And we need to be 150% invested in this so that he doesn't need to look around and second guess and worry about that. For us, that was that bond that brought us together and it felt like this, you know, really intimate relationship that we had and this sense of fearlessness of “we've just got to go there!” We got to not be shamed blackfellas and like, you know, or hold back, like we usually do. But we just have to push ourselves and challenge ourselves more, and I think that really helped me, yeah.

**Stephen Page** But it was very raw at first and I was rushed, and I was like, "Oh". Anyway, and sometimes your creative ego has to let go, like, you just know you can't control anything. And all I could do is just talk to the dancers and just make them feel like they can have it, you know? Like, I didn't really care. I wasn't on about what this exterior product was. It was more that all their energies felt they were connected, and then for some reason, I would always feel comfortable to think it's in the body and the minds and the listening of the artist. I just hope they're just good experiences, things that they hang onto, because that drive and that energy of just wanting to change people's perspectives.

**Frances Rings** That experience of putting those two companies in the room together, trusting the vision of Stephen, you had to really be honest with yourself. You couldn't fake it in that room. I think that everybody had to become vulnerable. We had to become the three-year-old. The egos had to stay out of the room.

**Steven Heathcote** I remember thinking as we went through this creative process, that there's more similarities and there's more that binds us than there is that separates us. It really compounded the belief that we can't do anything on our own. We're all dependent upon one another to create things of beauty. It really brought home the understanding that the world is such an old place, and we're here for but a blink of it. Also, that personal connection and authentic relationships are the most important thing to cultivate and maintain.

**Frances Rings** I love that you just saw humans. It didn't matter what colour you were. We were - we had the same emotions, we had the same reactions, we had the same love for our art form, we had the same passions. It felt like a fresh energy that came through the company. And identity's important, but sometimes it's okay to let go of having to carry that responsibility all the time. I mean, I’d love seeing

Djakapurra in the corner just with the boys laughing, or he'd be teaching … I'd see him in the dressing room, you know, before the show and some, you know, teaching some guy yidaki, they'd be on the didge.

You know there was always this little really, just such precious little moments there that individuals were having. So, there was a bigger picture story. And then it all came into these little micro stories that were just changing people's lives. And those people go away, and they have children, and they work in the industry. And each one of us had our own transformation. We all had our own reckoning about what it was to be an Australian dancer and an Australian artist.

**Steven Heathcote** I do remember a really special moment prior to the curtain going up. About a half an hour before the world premiere, a whole bunch of us gathered in one of the larger dressing rooms. And we sat in a circle and Djakapurra began to sing us in to the performance and to the whole experience. After he'd sung us in, in traditional language, he took his clapping sticks, and he draped those sticks, one by one, across the shoulders of each person sitting around in the circle. And I remember people weeping. It was such a moving moment, and such a moment of power that it really brought people's emotions to the surface. And I couldn't have thought of a better way to prepare for a momentous occasion like that. And the fact that Djakapurra saw and felt the significance of that moment and acted upon it in, in such a way that an Elder would. It was mind blowing, and it set up not just the world premiere evening, but the whole season ahead and all the subsequent seasons.

**Frances Rings** When you go away from your own country and you're both telling and caring for this story together, like I found that really bonding for both companies and going overseas with it and opening at City Center in New York and taking it to the Kennedy Center. We really came together and we were so proud, this sense of, "wow, nobody's doing this anywhere in the world. Nobody! Nobody would think to do the oldest culture in the world and this tradition and this history and of ballet. And to bring that together, to create a new dialogue and a new way of telling a story, but also to Stravinsky, an honouring that". You know, you got three pretty epic things that you've all, you know, thrown together and gone, okay, let's see what happens. And the magic just worked!

**Charles Barker** The cultural idea of having Bangarra in New York was very important to me. As an American, it was very important to me. And I thought it was a positive step forward. And I had the best time just kind of hanging around with Stephen and Djakapurra. And as I said, just, you know, walking through Times Square with them was an adventure and really fun. And I felt proud to be an American

escorting them and, you know, listening to what they had to say and the, you know, the remarks that they would make about either the people or the traffic or the lights or the… it was just it was really fun … fun for me, and a great cultural experience.

**Stephen Page** Let's bring Country on stage before we do this work.

**Yolande Brown** When Djakapurra leaves his Yolngu Country, he sings himself to Country, to refuel and maintain his bonds through the story and power of song. When Bangarra and The Australian Ballet travelled *Rites* to New York, Stephen wanted to provide Djakapurra with a moment to sing Country onto stage. Djakapurra sang a Yolngu, 'Gathering Song', grounding and connecting everyone in a form of ceremony that set the energy for the sharing of stories through *Rites*.

**Stephen Page** And when I was explaining that to Ian and Ross and Charles, they all just looked at me and I said, "trust me, it's going to be okay. And Charles, you just take two seconds breath. Let him finish. Don't panic. Just take a couple of deep breaths and you start". He said, "okay". And then, 'Purra, when you finish, make sure you cry and call out closest to that note". And I was sweating by then because I thought, "Oh my God, it's City Center. He's going to sing a traditional song. No one's ever heard native tongue language like this, ever. This is like no one's ever done this in this theatre".

**Frances Rings** Hearing his voice, I could be a Bangarra dancer, and I could be laying next to an Australian ballet dancer. But once he started singing, we all just became the same, the same entity. And that was a real kind of like, oh, this sense of, like, letting go … and of ceremony. You know, that preparation - how you prepare. Your body becomes Land, becomes Country. You paint. You let go and you become the vessel. And it just becomes a sense of ceremony, of ritual, of transformation, of rebirth. Yeah, just … we became the one.

**Stephen Page** He sang, and it was just so quiet. And therefore, I thought because it was so quiet and even the creaking of those old theatre chairs, like I was thinking, keep still! And I don't think I breathed at all for the first 3 minutes and… Oh, my God. Yeah.

It was one of the most special moments, I think, in my career, actually, when I think of it, because you, you really bring traditions and Western cultures like … that sense of bringing people together, even, not just the dancers, because we had worked out a nice little 'clanship' by then, but that energy was just connecting to the audience … and there was something special in that room.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** The importance that people are coming in to share the stories. Because there's a lot of people coming in from different walks of life, people from different backgrounds. And the song, 'Gathering…', is like, that's important for me to put everybody in the one, and then we can go together on this journey and share the culture together - the two worlds. That's where the songs come [from] … It's like, you know, because that song's, 'Gathering Song' is so important to … we meet in one meeting area, or in the big dancing ground to, can share together, that knowledge … that we're building the bridges together and walking hand to hand.

**Charles Barker** Yeah. Reconciliation is a good word, I think, for *Rites*. Yeah. Culturally, I don't know of any other attempt to combine two disparate companies into one to form a union to ... and of course, *The Rite of Spring* is the perfect piece to do that and to combine, you know, those two companies, you know, the company that is that is kind of earthbound and the company that is airborne, to put them to put them together, you know, I think is a… it was remarkable. And it seems to me that it could continue, you know, that that this could just be the beginning. Why can't, you know, Dance Theatre of Harlem and Joffrey Ballet put something together? Well, why can't there be some sort of a combination of two companies, two cultures coming together, not necessarily with *The Rite of Spring*, but with some project that intertwines us, that makes us one that makes us whole. So when I look back at 25 years ago and *Rites*, that's what I, that's what I sense. It's like, there's a future in it for lots of other companies to do exactly the same thing, but in their own way.

**Frances Rings** I look back now, and I go, "that was pretty phenomenal that we were able to accomplish that". We trusted the process and we didn't question that and that it became something that's so iconic and I hope happens again in the future.

**David McAllister** For the 50th anniversary of The Australian Ballet. I really wanted to do another work with Bangarra Dance Theatre and so went on bended knee to Stephen Page and said, you know, we would love to have you with us to celebrate this milestone for The Australian Ballet. And that's really how *Warumuk* began.

**Yolande Brown** *Warumuk* was a really special production to be a part of because for a couple of reasons. It was a First Nation story being platformed and being care taken by Cultural Consultant Aunty Kathy Marika, who guided the staging of the production with Stephen and the dancers. And we work

side by side with The Australian Ballet Dancers. One of my favourite sections was Seven Sisters and it featured, I think, three Bangarra dancers and four Australian ballet dancers. It was really beautiful.

**David McAllister** I think for us it was really important too, because even though with *Rites* and *Amalgamate*, we drew on culture for those works, this was actually the first time that The Australian Ballet had been a part of a First Nation story, and to share that with us for this anniversary felt extremely special.

**Yolande Brown** Collaborations like these make me reflect on just how important it is that we have a platform like this to share these valuable stories. There are so many important First Nations stories and they've informed the lives and cultures of our First Nations people for millennia, and I think we will become stronger as a nation when these stories work their way through our society and into our national identity.

**David McAllister** It has been such a pleasure to join you, Yolande, on this great journey of recollection about this ground-breaking work. After 25 years, it still resonates as such a powerful symbol of what unites both of our companies and our shared bonds.

**Yolande Brown** Thanks, David. It's been a real honour to reflect back over all of these years. This work was really important to me as a dancer. It was my first year in the company and I learnt so much on a personal level and I also watched our organization grow as well. We had a new safe dance practice that was implemented which supported all of us, all of us as dancers. We also learnt so much through being in the studio together and admiring the discipline of the different forms and just that level of respect. It was inspiring and it's something I think that all Australians can aspire to, you know, to have in their daily life practice; that respect for difference and how, when that's appreciated, things can come together, and magic can be created.

**David McAllister** Well, I think look, you know, for me, this collaboration the very first time and we can thank, you know, Stephen Page and Bangarra Dance Theatre for your generosity. And also, Ross Stretton for his vision to bring our two companies together. And for the first time, it really made sense to me about being a ballet company in Australia. We weren't just a ballet company in Australia, we were an Australian ballet company and I think that's what I wanted to take forward and something that I feel like

changed our company and gave us a richness that wasn't there before. So, I think that's the importance of this work and the importance of our shared history.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** Our culture is still alive in our music, in our dance. It's about the legacy that we're carrying. Yeah, that knowledge that we be learn from the old people, you know, that my great grandfathers and you know that come through my dad and then dad's telling us the story and how you can respect that Land. Some people didn't even know about that, you know, and then people coming in and telling us to what to do. But we're the First People in this Land, walking through this Land, and they can learn about that, yeah. Working with The Australian Ballet… telling people that … who we are, where we come from. We're original people that… from the Australia. You know, we know that our culture is still alive, our language is still alive, and we're standing strong. That's our everyday life. You know, our story's been there for a long time. From start. We stand in the two foot, in this ground, where we belong.

Song plays*: 'Gathering Song' – Wanguri Clan song, Yirritja Yolngu language, North East Arnhem Land Songman: Djakapurra Munyarryun*

**Announcer:** This podcast was hosted and produced for Arts Centre Melbourne by Yolande Brown and David McAllister. Additional production by Margot Anderson, Chrissy Chan and Megan Williams. Sound Engineer Samuel Pankhurst. Music Licensing Chrissy Chan.
Special thanks to our wonderful guests Stephen Page, Frances Rings, Djakapurra Munyarryun, Stephen Heathcote, Miranda Barker and Charles Barker. Music by Steve Francis, Djakapurra Munyarryun, David Page and Igor Stravinsky.
If you haven't seen our online exhibition, go to stories.artscentremelbourne.com.au/rites/.
Thanks for listening.