

SONG SPIRALS

By Rosealee Pearson

A Brown's Mart production presented with Darwin Festival

Let the Milkarri dance
around you

6-11 August 2024
Brown's Mart Theatre
World Premiere Season



**We acknowledge the
Larrakia people, the
Traditional Custodians of
the land on which we work.
We pay our respects to
their Elders, past, present
and emerging, and to all
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander peoples,
and acknowledge that this
always was, and always will
be, Aboriginal land.**

PRODUCTION NOTES

PERFORMED BY

Brianna Kemmerling
Harlisha Newie-Joe
Henrietta Baird
Maddison Fraser

CREDITS

DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER | Rosealee Pearson
CULTURAL CONSULTANTS | Merrkiyawuy Gananbarr-
Stubbs, Djawundil Maymuru
COMPOSER/SOUND DESIGNER | Andrew Grimes
VIDEO ARTIST | Naina Sen
LIGHTING DESIGNER | Sean Pardy
PRODUCTION MANAGER | Annie Winter
STAGE MANAGER | Eve Lynch
TECHNICAL DESIGN & QLAB | Letitia Firth

BROWN'S MART

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER | Sophia Hall
ARTISTIC ASSOCIATES | Nadine Lee, James Mangohig
TECHNICAL MANAGER | Letitia Firth
VENUE HIRE MANAGER | Francesca Sculli
FINANCE OFFICER | Mish Dott
MARKETING COORDINATOR | Hannah Illingworth
FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
COORDINATOR | Tahlia Biggs



ARTIST STATEMENT

Song Spirals is my second directorial work. Based on my mothers' book of the same name, Song Spirals is a highly personal work which has culminated in 4 years of collaboration with the women in our community who hold the sacred knowledge of Milkarri.

*I am the daughter of the authors
Laklak Barbara Burarrwanga,
Rirrtjalili Ganambarr
Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr and
Banbapuy Ganambarr. How can I
possibly have so many mothers?*

Well, in Yolngu life our biological mother's sisters are also our mothers. My mothers are from the Dätiwuy clan and they are

my Ngandi'pulu. My mother clan.

I am the Djunggaya (caretaker) of the Dätiwuy clan. It is my responsibility to look after my mother and mother's clan's land, waters, songs, dances, knowledge. This is to ensure the safety of those dances and knowledge for the next generations. With that responsibility and my background in dance and theatre I took the opportunity to create a new work inspired by their book.

Instantly the images for the show came to me in real life and in dreams. Who better to do this work than me, with the deep love and respect that I hold for them all.

I applied for funding from Brown's Marts Build Up Program and with the help of Darwin based Producer Elizabeth Rogers we also applied for funding through the Indigenous Language and Arts Program.. We were successful.

The first and most important step was for the creative team to meet my family in Yirrkala.

Here we spent time recording and talking about what the project would look like and how best to go about putting it together.

It sparked huge conversations with the women in different communities calling in and sending recorded Milkarri on their phones.

A few months later we again got together in Nhulunbuy with three dancers to start playing with the idea of using the Yolŋu Math alphabet to create the milkarri on the dancers bodies. I was so happy when I knew this choreographic tool would help me build the dance element of the work.

Throughout the 4 year process there have been movement in many parts of the show and in our lives including Brown's Mart coming on as Producer, the birth of my second child and the loss of 2 of the books authors, my mothers.

It has been an absolute privilege to work on this project. The process of making this work with Australia's leading artists and creative team

here in my home the Northern Territory has been a gift.

It is very rare to be able to work with a group of people who all come different parts of the world but become your family. A massive thank you to Annie Winter, Eve Lynch, Naina Sen, Sean Pardy, Letitia Firth; Dancers Henrietta Baird, Brianna Kemmerling, Maddison Fraser and our newest member Harlisha Newie-Joe.

To my incredible husband Andrew Grimes who not only composed the music for the show but is always the steady calm water after many storms, I love you.

Thank you to Sophia and Brown's Mart who believed in this work at the beginning and to Darwin Festival for all the amazing support you give NT artists' and everyone else (so many to mention here) who have joined our spiral throughout the years.

I hope this work inspires you all to explore and learn more of the connection that we Yolŋu have to this land, the water, the air, and each other.

CREATIVE COLLABORATORS



DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER
Rosealee Pearson

Rosealee Pearson is a Manggalili woman and interdisciplinary artist from Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land. A graduate of NAISDA Dance College she has worked across many disciplines as a dancer, director, actor, tour manager, event co-ordinator, stage manager, choreographer and cultural consultant, producer, festival coordinator. Rosealee has worked with Insite Arts, Belvoir St. Theatre,

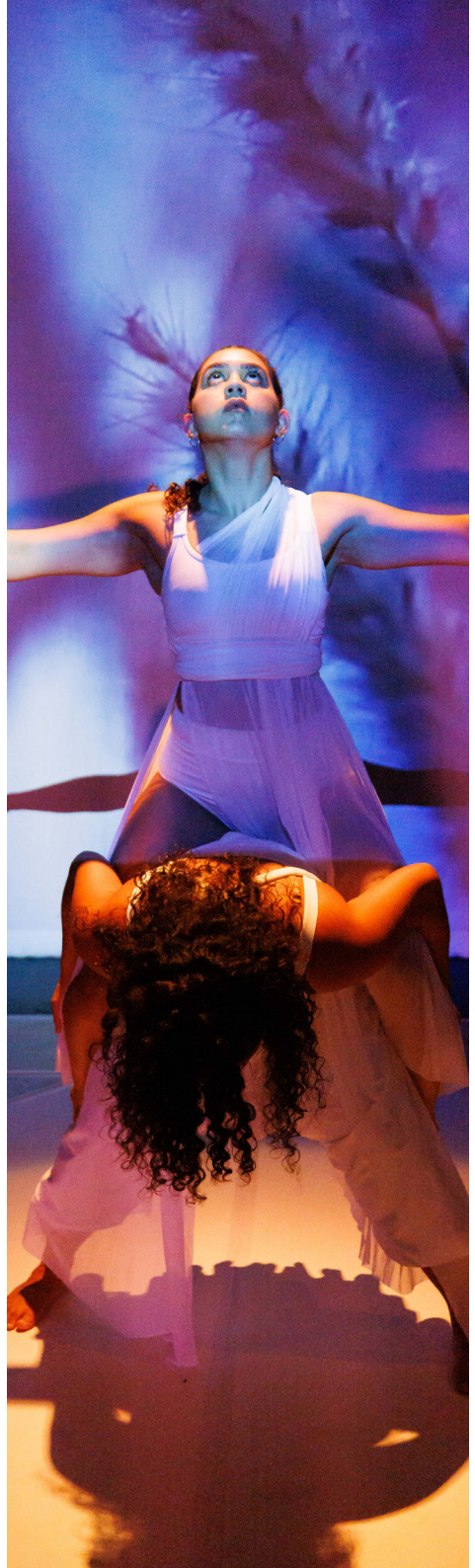
Urban Theatre Projects, Shaktidharan Sivanathan, Curious Works, Performance Space, Bells Shakespeare Company, Boomerang Festival, Sydney Festival, East Arnhem Live, Aris & Grimes. In 2021 Rosealee created Wanha! Journey to Arnhem: a live audio visual work featuring an intergenerational collective of musical talent from Arnhem Land. The show premiered at Darwin Festival in 2021 and was presented at the Sydney Opera House in 2022.





COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER Andy Grimes

Andrew Grimes is a Musician, Producer, Composer and Recording Engineer based in Yirrkala, NT. He is a founding member of the Andrew Gurruwiwi Band. He worked as the senior producer for ARDS/Yolŋu Radio from 2015 to 2019, and since founded the company Aris & Grimes, providing music and film production services in East Arnhem Land. Highlights include the 2018 NIMA for best traditional album for 'Buku- wathunawuy Niningu Rom: Ancient Languages New Sounds' which he recorded and co-produced alongside longtime collaborator Andrew



Gurruwiwi. He also produced and recording the 2020 hit online concert series 'East Arnhem Live'. Andrew co-directed the audio-visual show 'Wanha! Journey to Arnhem' alongside Rosealee Pearson, which debuted at Darwin Festival in 2021 and went to Sydney Opera House in 2022. Andrew has produced a number of records with East Arnhem Land artists, some highlights include co-producing the 2019 Bärra West Wind album 'Djongirrinny' alongside Stu Kellaway from Yothu Yindi, and in 2021 was associate producer on Yirmal's debut album alongside Andrew Farris from INXS. Andrew is currently finalising the debut album from the Andrew Gurruwiwi Band, which he is co-producing with Julian BelBachir.



CULTURAL CONSULTANT Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr Stubbs

Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs is a proud Yolŋu woman and leader from North East Arnhem Land. She has written 7 books. Her children's books are written in Yolŋu Matha for use in primary schools as Walking Talking texts. She plays an important role in the bilingual education movement in Arnhem Land working with Yolŋu Elders to develop both-ways learning. Her latest book Song Spirals was the joint winner for the Prime Ministers Literacy Award 2020. She is also a singer, actor, and artist most recently as narrator for Wanha! Journey

to Arnhem as a part of Darwin Festival 2021. She is one of the authors of *Songlines*, the book that inspired this work.



CULTURAL CONSULTANT

Djawundil Maymuru

Djawundil is from the Gumatj clan. Djawundil Maymuru is a co-author of two books, *Welcome to My Country* and *Weaving Lives Together*. Djawundil currently works with

Bawaka Cultural Experiences, a highly successful Yolŋu owned-and-run Indigenous tourism business. As a key member of the business, she works with visitors to Bawaka to share life at Bawaka with them, helping them understand and respect Yolŋu culture and land. She is a college graduate and has been on the board of Laynhapuy Homeland Association. Djawundil has also been invited to share Yolŋu knowledge at conferences and seminars in New Zealand, Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle. Djawundil is a member of an Indigenous-academic collaboration with academics from Macquarie University and the University of Newcastle and is an Honorary Associate of the Department of Environment and Geography at Macquarie University. She is one of the authors of *Songlines*, the book that inspired this work.





VIDEO DESIGN

Naina Sen

Born and brought up in New Delhi, India, Naina Sen is a Walkley and AACTA nominated filmmaker and video artist. Based on the lands of the Larrakia People in Darwin, Naina has collaborated extensively with artists from across remote communities in North-East Arnhem Land and the Central Desert in the Northern Territory for the last 12 years. A practice built on long term cross- cultural and inter-cultural collaboration and storytelling, Naina works across documentary, installation and live projection and uses image making to explore gender, cultural identity and equity, place and memory,



privileging First Nations and South Asian and South East Asian diaspora narratives.



LIGHTING DESIGN

Sean Pardy

A theatre-maker and arts administrator with over 25 years' experience, Sean has been engaged in executive, creative, producing, technical, and facilitation roles.

Sean has worked as a director, actor, and lighting designer for scores of companies across Australia.

His tenure as Executive/Artistic Director of Brown's Mart saw the growth and development of the performing arts in the Top End, with award-winning plays being produced and published including *Broken* by Mary Anne

Butler, Bastard Territory by Stephen Carleton, and *Daly River Girl* by Tessa Rose. Sean is a recipient of the NT Performing Arts Legend Award, Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, and an Alumni of the Australia Council Leadership Program.



PRODUCTION MANAGER

Annie Winter

For 35 years, Annie has had the pleasure of making magic with dancers, musicians, opera singers, circus folk, writers, actors, visual and performance artists, film-makers, and young people in Australia and around the world. She loves her job.





STAGE MANAGER **Eve Lynch**

Eve Lynch is a Jack of all trades. After moving to Darwin Eve has had the privilege to Work, Play, and Create on Larrakia country as an Actor both on stage and on screen, a comedian, a children's entertainer, scriptwriter, MC, FOH Coordinator for Darwin's biggest festival, Co-Create and perform as one half of Darwin's number 1 boy band, movie maker, program facilitator, Fringe Artist and last but certainly not least as a Stage manager. If stage managing for a World Premier theatre piece was not enough, she also decided to pack down 5 years of her life and move internationally the day

after the show ends ! If any audience member is thinking of attempting such an ambitious plan (she advises against it) However, Eve feels truly privileged to be able to work on such an incredibly spiritual and emotional show and wants to thank the wonderful cast and crew for making this production the perfect way to say goodbye to Darwin. Eve could not think of a better way to say goodbye to the Darwin Arts Community than Stage managing and operating on Song Spirals.



TECHNICAL **DESIGNER & QLAB** **Letitia Firth**

Letitia is a multidisciplinary visual artist. Entering the

events scene in 2019 having moved to Mparntwe, Alice Springs to work with the oldest and largest indigenous radio station in the country was a privilege for her as a proud Lama Lama and Kuku Thaypan woman. A highlight of working with the CAAMA events team was delivering the Bush Bands Bash event multiple years in a row.

Letitia advanced from Audio Visual Technician with CAAMA radio to full time Theatre Technician at the Araluen Arts Center in 2020 She's worked on larger productions including national tours for Opera Australia, Ballet Australia and Bluey's Big Play. During the 2021 season, Letitia premiered the GUTS Dance- Value for money show at Araluen which concluded in a national tour of the works.

Since moving to Gulumoerrgin, Darwin in 2022, Letitia has focused on developing her skills in lighting design and live sound production. Highlights of this period have been working as the lighting designer on Country 2 Couture Indigenous Fashion Show for DAAF, and

working as a technician/ ASM for the National Indigenous Music Awards.

Letitia has worked on many local and international theater, touring festivals and film productions across the NT in a variety of roles which she continues to do today.



THE DANCERS



Henrietta Baird

Henrietta Baird is from the Kuku Yalanji people in Far North Queensland, Graduated from NAISDA Dance Association in Sydney 2005, Henrietta has performed in many notable productions across Australia, including “My Right Foot Your Right Foot” at the Australian Choreographic Centre, Canberra with Viki Van-Hout, “Pop Whistle Crack” with Marilyn Miller in Cairns, “Stolen” at Riverside Theatre Parramatta Sydney with Vicki Van Hout. “The Stirring” with Tess De Quincey Co at Carriage works. “Dancing Smoke” in Cairns with

Pauline Lampton “Divercity” at the Spirit Festival. In 2017 Henrietta was chosen as one of the 6 writers to be a part of the Yellamundie festival which premiered in the Sydney Festival in 2019, writing her first script “The Weekend”. With Moogahlin Theatre was invited to the Weesageechack, Begin to Dance Festival in Toronto Canada in 2017. Ms Baird also performed at the 2018 Australian Performing Arts Market in Brisbane for Maria Randall's work, “Divercity” which had recently been performed in the Spirit Festival in Adelaide. “Divercity” also premiered at the Dance Massive Festival and Yirrimboi in Melbourne in 2017. Henrietta worked for Pauline Lampton, and her dance group Miriki in Cairns collaborating with the Local Yidinji Tribe in Cairns and with the Pomo First Nations tribe from California, creating a show based on fire. This show travelled to America and was performed at Berkeley University. Miss Baird has also been asked to perform in the Sydney Festival for Critical Paths “Hack The Anthropacine”

looking at Sustainability and Dance creating conversations around that topic.

Henrietta recently came back from Singapore a work that was part of First Nations Art work which was performed at the Singapore Art Gallery. Henrietta just recently worked on her second stage development "Plant a Promise" had showing at Carriage works and is now working with Rosealee Pearson's new Dance work Song Spirals. Henrietta travelled to London to be a part of the workshop. When not performing Henrietta is part of the Indigenous Education team at Royal Botanic Gardens where she leads tours and creating educational programs learning about native bush plants and the history of the Sydney people.



Maddison Fraser

Hi, my name is Maddison Fraser. I'm from the Palyku and Yindjibarndi Tribes in the Pilbara of Western Australia. I've grown up on Wajuk Land in Perth, WA all my life and have now moved to Darkinjung Land on the Central Coast of NSW. I am currently studying at NAISDA Dance College as part of the Advance Diploma course. I have completed industry placements at Critical Path with Jasmin Sheppard, Jasmine Gulash and Vicki Van Hout unpacking and investigating Indigenous Dramaturgy through a series of workshops. I have performed in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Vivid Sydney, and Hysteria,



working with renowned choreographers such as Angie Diaz, Deon Hastie and Sue Healy. I look forward to sharing my dance and stories with you.



Brianna Kemmerling

Brianna Kemmerling is a proud Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and German descendant. Her family line stretches from Wik-Waya through Kaanju, Ankamuthi, Yupungathi, Taepadhighi, and Darnley (Erub) Island. Mid 2022 Brianna was a part of the first class to graduate Advance Diploma from NAISDA Dance College after 4 1/2 years of training. She debuted her professional journey as an independent artist with NT

Dance Company “Forbidden” (2021), followed by “Waja” (2022). Late 2022 Brianna also began her journey with Culture College as she continues to educate and inspire the youth of her generation. In 2023 Brianna was the annual recipient for the Lucy Guerin Inc’s First Nations Graduate Internship, where she was able to experience and build connections with Lucy Guerin Inc and Joel Bray Dance. Most recently Brianna traveled to Hawai’i with the Australian Delegation to participate in the Pacific Arts Festival 2024 to exchange cultural dance, music, fashion, ect and celebrate over 20 other pacific arts delegations coming together as one. In between Brianna has engaged in many other projects, programs and developments within Australia as she looks forward to future creations.



Harlisha Newie-Joe

Harlisha Newie-Joe is a proud Zenadth Kes woman from Mabuyag and Badu Island, she is from the Goemu and Wagadagam tribe. Harlisha spent most of her life growing up in Weipa, Cape York on Algnith Country. She is now currently living on the Central Coast, New South Wales on Darkinjung Country.

Harlisha started training at NAISDA Dance College in 2020 and is currently in her fourth year completing her Advanced Diploma of Professional Dance Performance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People’s. At NAISDA Harlisha has had the opportunity to be trained



by various professional artists such as Angie Diaz, Jasmin Sheppard and Lee Serle. In 2023 Harlisha performed with Jannawi Dance Clan for Dance Rites, was the recipient of the Sharp Short Dance film selection and was a successful finalist to win a secondment with Bangarra Dance Theatre.

Harlisha was a recipient of the Perth Moves Bursary 2024 for the Perth Moves 3 week workshop/intensive series where Harlisha worked with world leading choreographers and artistic directors such as Nick Coutsier, Ta'alili (Aotearoa) and Daniel Riley (Australian Dance Theatre).

Most recently Harlisha had the opportunity to represent First Nations Australia and traveled to Hawai'i with the Australian Delegation to participate and perform at the Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture (Festpac), celebrating alongside 20 other Pacific delegations. Harlisha performed with Arpaka Dance Company, a Torres Strait Islander Dance Company lead by Dujon Nuie.

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