



DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA WINS NATIONAL IMPACT AWARD

Townsville-based collaborators Wulgurukaba Walkabouts, Big Eye Theatre (Mula Jina Warran and Mula Jina Jalbu), Komet Torres Strait Islander Arts and Culture, Sambo Productions, and Dancenorth Australia have won a 2022 Performing Arts Connections Australia Impact Award for the cross-cultural collaborative performance project DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA.

The Impact Award, announced Monday evening at an award ceremony at Sydney Opera House, recognises the significant achievement of the collaborators in elevating First Nations stories and culture, fostering social cohesion, and strengthening North Queensland's collective identity through the cross-cultural collaborative performance project.

Two years in the making, DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA brought together several different organisations and individuals to co-create a performance that celebrated and honoured traditional culture and contemporary aspects of First Nations culture.

DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA was a groundbreaking celebration of First Nations culture from across the North Queensland region featuring Wulgurukaba Walkabouts, Big Eye Theatre (Mula Jina Warran and Mula Jina Jalbu), Komet Torres Strait Islander Arts and Culture, Sambo Productions and non-first nations collaborators Dancenorth, as well as 30 young performers from Heatley State School, Townsville Multicultural Support Group and Dancenorth's youth community.

Award-winning multilingual rapper Baker Boy, from North East Arnhem Land, performed live alongside the cast of 70 performers before rounding out the evening in a celebration of contemporary music.

The First Nations collaboration also incorporated graphic and costume design by Jessica Johnson of Nungala Creative, with additional painting by renowned artist Gail Mabo. DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA employed over 70 artists and was performed to an audience of over 2000 people.

“This was a significant moment for the Townsville community, as we came together for reconciliation through dance, which for us as Aboriginal people is how we continue to teach, practice, and share culture on our Country.”

Wulgurukaba Traditional Owner and leader of the Wulgurukaba Walkabouts Ashley Saltner Jnr said the process of making the work was an opportunity for healing and celebrated the strength of the community through dance.

“As a Wulgurukaba Traditional Custodian, it was an honour to welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as our non-Indigenous collaborators, to create and share this experience on our Country.”

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“DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA means ‘now we have arrived’. The impact of this project is that we now have momentum to move forward together.”

“There were a lot of songlines, stories and language that were lost. Because a lot of our songlines tie together, having different groups come together has meant that we were able find new pieces of the puzzle,” Mr Saltner Jnr said.

Director of Big Eye Theatre Rosalind Sailor believes that this is an historic moment for the Townsville community.

“The project allowed Elders, students, young people, and families to come together. This was needed in our community.”

“It was an opportunity to lift our mob up. Collaborating with the professional dancers from Dancenorth and with Baker Boy was a fantastic source of inspiration for our young people to create a vision and explore new avenues for their future.”

“By coming together, we have created a shared sense of belonging. We have been working for decades for this moment and now we have arrived,” Ms Sailor said.

Leader of the Komet Torres Strait Islander Dancers Aicey Day acknowledged the importance of the event.

“This event marked an important milestone in the promotion and recognition of Torres Strait Islander culture; our traditions, community, and people.”

“This was a momentous occasion for our region with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people coming together as one First Nations people”.

Dancenorth Artistic Director and Co-CEO Kyle Page emphasised the extraordinary achievement of everyone involved in delivering this uniquely Queensland Indigenous arts and cultural celebration.

“As the only non-indigenous organisation involved, Dancenorth feels a deep sense of gratitude for being invited to participate. This was an entirely collaborative process and no one voice held the central authority. It has strengthened our capacity to authentically and respectfully engage with First Nations peoples employing a human-rights based approach that prioritises self-determination, consultation, deep listening, and trust.”

Dancenorth Executive Director and Co-CEO Hillary Coyne acknowledged the importance of the two-year process of developing and presenting the work.

“DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA has provided a grounding from which we can continue to find ways to connect and collaborate ongoing; to breathe life and build community strength in the North Queensland region.”

DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA was commissioned by the North Australian Festival of Arts and presented in Townsville (Gurambilburra) in 2021.

Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill said DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA encapsulated the resilience of the local community.

“DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA marks an incredible effort from our city’s First Nations performers to share song, dance and culture not only with Townsville locals but also with visitors to the city,” Cr Hill said.

“Council is proud to be able to support creative pursuits like this performance, which are critical to building our region’s collective identity and encouraging social cohesion.”

“This announcement reinforces Townsville’s reputation as the arts and culture capital of Northern Australia.”

Performing Arts Connections (PAC) Australia’s Impact Awards, previously known as the Drover Awards, celebrate excellence in performing arts, leadership, new thinking and best practice, with a focus on lasting impact in communities. PAC Australia have proudly been recognising excellence in performing arts through these awards since 2003.

DUNGARRI NYA NYA NGARRI BI NYA was supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government initiative, and Townsville City Council through the North Australian Festival of Arts.