



Artist Partner Program presents

BLACK ARM BAND

dirtsong

JANUARY 25, 2017 . 8PM
DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL
at The Clarice

THE CLARICE AT UMD

APP

ARTIST PARTNER PROGRAM

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dirtsong

Inspired by the words of author Alexis Wright, Australia's Black Arm Band perform songs from 11 different Aboriginal languages in this soulful show, which will bring to you the heart and humanity of the country and its most celebrated musicians.

This performance will last approximately 1 hour 30 minutes with no intermission.

Far Away Home / Gungalaira Graham Tardif, Rolf de Heer.

Words and music from the award winning film *The Tracker* directed by Rolf de Heer.

sung in English and Bundjalung

dirtsong Lou Bennett, Alexis Wright

From the Echuca, Barmah region, the heartland of Yorta Yorta country, it is a song of the connection of people, song and country. 'Baiyan Woka' is Yorta Yorta for singing for country/land. This song comes from the depths of my knowing and understanding that we all have connection, we just have to learn 'Gulpa Ngarwal' (deep listening).

sung in Yorta Yorta

Coming up close now Mark Atkins, Julien Wilson

In the spirit of the Wongi word GrunGada or 'gathering' from the Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie regions of Western Australia, this is an invitation for people, performers and storytellers to share experiences, songs and music – old and new.

Big Law Leah Flanagan, Deline Briscoe, Alexis Wright

This piece is based on text by Alexis Wright. Deline's language comes from Kuku Yalanji, the rainforest country of the Daintree. Leah has written in the language of her Nana from east of Alice Springs. She was born Ivy Upurla-Dempsey but as part of the Stolen Generation her name was changed to Dorothea (Dempsey) Berto.

"All you People, Come and listen to this Spiritual connection to land"

sung in Alyawarre and Yalanji

Giidang Emma Donovan, Alexis Wright

Giidang is sung in the Gumbayngirr language which comes from the mid-north Coast of NSW. *Giidang* means Heartbeat, and the song tells the story of my connection to jagun (country) how I am the country, how I'm keeping the heartbeat of my country going, I am asking you to ngarraanga (listen).

The other women in the song keep the heartbeat almost like a pulse, we always call our country our mimminga (mother) and this song gives me a voice to call out like the mother who we have always referred to as country too.

sung in Gumbayngirr

Yarian Mi Tji (What's My Name) Ruby Hunter

A song of questions looking for answers for your name, your story, your land. Ngarrindjeri language is from the Lower Murray River, South Australia

sung in Ngarrindjeri

This Land is Mine Paul Kelly, Kev Carmody

From the film *One Night The Moon* directed by Rachel Perkins, originally set on Andyamathanha land in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, *This Land is Mine / This Land is Me* reflects on possession and belonging.

Dron Wanga Neil Murray

Performed with permission from the family of GR Burrarrawanga. This version is dedicated to GRB and sung in Gumatj from the Yolŋu Matha languages of North East Arnhem Land.

sung in Gumatj

Rainstorm Shellie Morris, Mandy Muir, Alexis Wright

Rainstorm is sung in the language from the southern end of Kakadu National Park which is still spoken fluently all over the region. My sister Mandy Muir, with the help of her mother Jesse Alderson, a Traditional Owner in Kakadu, translated this piece for me as she is fluent in the language and helping me to regain some language in my life to feel like I belong and that I have a place.

sung in Gundjeihmi

SINGING 'COUNTRY' IN NEW WAYS – *dirtsong* URSZULA DAWKINS

The Black Arm Band's first show *murundak* (2006) surveyed the depth and breadth of contemporary Aboriginal music to date, and its second, *Hidden Republic* (2008), took a step towards the future in its expression of hope 'post-apology'. Now *dirtsong* – performed predominantly in indigenous languages from across Australia – brings past and future together and celebrates language restoration and cultural survival through songs that map the 'countries' of the band members.

Of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages that were spoken before 1788, many have been irretrievably lost or are at risk of disappearing when their remaining fluent speakers pass away. But some languages survive and are thriving, and many are being recovered, restored and learned anew by younger generations.

Remembered and passed on by the old people, or reconstructed with the help of early journals and ethnographic records, these recovered languages are helping redress the cultural dispossession suffered by Aboriginal Australia. They are also enabling the renewal of an oral tradition over 40,000 years old.

The languages in *dirtsong* come from across Australia, from the Northern Territory to Tasmania, and from east to west: Gumatj and Burrarra of Yolŋu Matha from Arnhem Land; palawa kani from Tasmania; Yorta Yorta and Mutti Mutti from southern Mungo region; Ngarrindjeri from the lower Murray River region in South Australia; Gumbayngirr, from north-coast New South Wales; Mirning, from the western Great Australian Bight – and quite a few more. Each of The Black Arm Band artists has their own particular relationship to culture through language, whether it be long-standing and uninterrupted through generations of family, recently recovered, or severed through geographical displacement.

In this sense, *dirtsong* re-maps and strengthens these cultural relationships, feeding back into the larger project of language revival in this country. Many of the songs are newly commissioned – not just reinforcing or affirming culture, but actively creating it.

Black Arm Band artist and Yorta Yorta woman, Lou Bennett, sees *dirtsong* as being much more than a concert, and language as much more than 'words' for the artists in the band.

"*dirtsong* is about land, language, and people," says Bennett, "and the connection between the three is innate in us [Aboriginal people]. It's something that's always been there, always will be in humankind, but in our mob it's very evident in our everyday life. Whether we're from the cities or the country, we all come from that earth, we all go back to that earth."

For many of the band's members, the creation of *dirtsong* has been an intense personal experience – and particularly for those who are in the process of retrieving their language, or who are yet to hear their own language spoken.

"We have members within The Black Arm Band that have been dispossessed and removed from their countries," says Bennett, "and also people who are still on their countries and still speaking their language fluently – the whole gamut. And it is such an overwhelming emotional thing to go through that journey [of language recovery], even by yourself, with your family and community – let alone for a particular show."

"Language is belonging," she says. "It is tasting – it is feeling. When I speak and sing my language I feel at home. I feel a sense of belonging, and pride in my language. I also feel a sense of connection to the land where that language comes from."

dirtsong is about telling a story, not only musically, but spiritually, about the meaning of country and the Indigenous relationship to the land through time. According to Director, Steven Richardson, it charts a new 'territory' encompassing the many landscapes, both physical and cultural, that make up this continent.

"The performance is in some senses a map of Australia," says Richardson, "but not in the sense that we are trying to represent specific geographical locations. Each language is specific to a place, but the music perhaps renders a symbolic portrait of Australia embracing cultural and linguistic diversity."

This idea of a 'map' also suggests the traditional Aboriginal concept of 'songlines'. The concept of songlines is complex, but for Lou Bennett it represents "the connection between the past, present and the future."

For Bennett the creation of a songline does not depend on a traditional approach. "Even if I'm using English, [if] I'm using a different type of melody, [if] I'm not necessarily using traditional instruments, it's still a connection to my land, it's still a connection to my belief system. It's not just a pop song – it links me to that ancestral land."

Songlines, says Bennett, relate not only to time but also to places, "like little veins that run through the country". "You know, some of those old men and women that travel through bushland, they sing the country; and when they sing the country they know where they are. It's like a map to them, and that's more of the depth of what songlines are to me."

Transplanted to a contemporary setting, perhaps there is a relationship between the singing of the old people and the map that The Black Arm Band creates through this show. *dirtsong's* title track, written by Bennett, acknowledges the depth of tradition while retaining a clear focus on the present.

"[The song, *dirtsong*,] is about the songs that come up from the country – that have been coming up from the country for a very long time. And if you listen to that country, you hear the songs, you hear that oldness, you 'Gulpa Ngarwal' – you start to listen deeply."

"It's not just about looking to the past and to the ancestors, it's also happening now: we are still singing our country, but in other ways."

Black Arm Band (BAB) is an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) organisation and one of Australia’s leading performing arts companies, widely acclaimed for its distinctive music theatre performances, celebration of Indigenous music, culture and language and uniquely powerful visual imagery. We share the stories and heart of Indigenous culture with audiences in the spirit of resilience, understanding, hope and reconciliation - our presentations are a contemporary expression of 40,000 years of living culture.

At the heart of our work is a deep connection with Indigenous communities across Australia. Our remote music workshops and performance programs have positively impacted over 2500 participants with inspiration drawn from the ongoing relationships we have with community, grounded in connections to people and places. We develop, perform, promote, educate and celebrate contemporary ATSI music as a vehicle for social change, centered on self-determination, empowerment and development of Indigenous communities.

BAB is a flexible ensemble of highly skilled musicians, composers, performers, directors and artistic technicians, working together representing the apogee of Australian music theatre. Our model was formed, and is based, on blackfulla alongside whitefulla artists passionate to promote and celebrate ATSI music and culture in the spirit of reconciliation, with a commitment to creating opportunities for emerging artists.

Created by.....Black Arm Band
 Original Text.....Alexis Wright
 Original ConceptSteven Richardson
 Black Arm Band Artistic Director..... Emma Donovan
 dirtsong Artistic DirectorFred Leone
 Musical Director.....Michael Meagher
 Arrangements and Orchestrations Andrea Keller
 Eugene Ball
 Julien Wilson
 Artists of Black Arm Band
 Lighting Designer.....Michelle Preshaw
 Production Management Daniel Gosling
 Stage Management.....Kay Brockelsby
 Audio Engineer.....Patrick Murray
 Screen VisualsNatasha Gadd
 Rhys Graham
 Daybreak Films
 Producer.....Sarah Greentree

Cast

Singers.....	Fred Leone Troy Brady Deline Briscoe Shellie Morris Nicole Lampton
Yidaki/Didjeribone.....	Tjupurru
Bass.....	Michael Meagher
Drums.....	Rory McDougall
Piano.....	Janelle Gill
Violin.....	David Schulman
Tenor sax.....	Elijah Jamal Balbed

Deline Briscoe (*vocalist*) is a Strong Yalanji Woman hailing from Far North Queensland. Her former outfit The Briscoe Sisters performed across Australia, including at WOMAD and Big Day Out. Since 2009 Deline has worked with prolific aboriginal artists such as Bart Willoughby, Archie Roach, Lou Bennett, Emma Donovan, also a part of The Black Arm Band ensemble with whom she has toured, selling out shows Australia wide and internationally to the UK, New Caledonia & USA and China.

Proud Yanyuwa and Wardaman woman **Shellie Morris** (*vocalist*) is a multi-award-winning singer/songwriter creating and singing in around 17 Australian Aboriginal languages.

While she has been in the spotlight over the years for involvement with Black Arm Band, ARIA nominations, Music Australia award and G.R. Burarrawanga Memorial Award; by and large, she works on the ground empowering and gently effecting change.

She is the 2014 NT Australian of the Year, the 2014 NAIDOC National Artist of the Year, a multi Deadly Award winner and a driving force of the acclaimed album Ngambala Wiji li-Wunungu and the internationally award-winning musical documentary Prison Songs.

Fred Leone (*vocalist and director*) has a long history working as a dancer, singer, hip-hop artist and MC, as well as an educator working in community cultural development and youth worker. He is an intelligent community leader, with strong Australian Aboriginal, Tongan and South-Sea Islander heritage. Fred is the director of 'dirtsong' for BAB and had also been a guest curator of Clancestry at QPAC and is currently developing a new work for the National Theatre of Scotland.

Tjupurru (*didjeribone*) is a proud descendant of the Djabera Djabera tribe of the West Australia Kimberleys. He plays a unique slide

Didjeridu; named “The Didjeribone” because it can slide through different notes and tones - a cross between a didj and a trombone. Since being uncovered at The Big Sound Festival in Brisbane, Tjupurru has supported Kaki King (USA), Leo (France), Babylon Circus (France), Rodrigo Y Gabriela and many more. He performed at the Jazz in the Domain collaborating with the world renowned percussionist Airtto Moreira and has been invited to appear at festivals across Australia, New Caledonia, Japan and the USA. His latest album was produced by Lee Groves (Gwen Stefani, Black Eyed Peas, Marilyn Manson).

Michael Meagher (*bass*) is BAB’s Musical Director. He is a graduate from the Victorian College of the Arts Bachelor of Music Improvisation degree and currently plays with BAB, The Meltdown and Emma Donovan, and The Putbacks. He has worked as a freelance bassist for bands such as, The Bamboos, The Pigram Brothers, Kate Ceberano and Ross Hannaford.

In 2011 Michael performed with International superstars Joss Stone, Mavis Staples, Rickie Lee Jones, through the Black Arm Band’s Melbourne Festival production Notes from the Hard Road. He works with a wide array of artists and is also a passionate teacher.

Nicole Lampton (*vocalist*) grew up singing gospel in choir & lead in family church. She ventured into musical studies at the age of 17 and achieved a Diploma in World Music at EORA Centre, Sydney. Eventually, she became involved in local music groups in Sydney and Cairns, which included Soulful, HipHop & Alternative styles of music. In 2002 she joined a local Cairns HipHop artist Carl Fourmile to support HipHop with soulful melodies. Nicole assists other artists with songwriting & musical arrangement and has performed as a support act with Jordan Oliver for “Umi Arts Big Talk One Fire” festival and Xzibit HipHop Concert.

Troy “Jungaji” Brady (*vocalist*) keeps cultural fires burning through his lyrics and music, sharing these stories around the world. The Western GuGuYalanji and Birri Gubba songman shares his stories of country, love and law in language and through contemporary folk/roots music. Currently touring as a feature artist with Black Arm Band as well as performing as a solo artist, Troy is a consummate performer. Forging a career over 20 years, he has led a number of bands before hitting out on his own, his current music exploring more of his language and connection to the country of his ancestors north of Cairns and Proserpine.

Rory McDougall (*drums*) graduated from the Victorian College of the Art’s (V.C.A) in 2000, with a Bachelor of Music Performance (Repertoire), specializing in percussion. He has collaborated with many Australian musicians such, Shane Howard (of Australian group Goanna), The Conglomerate (featuring members of the Cat Empire) and the Chris Hale Ensemble amongst many others.

Rory has spent 6 years as drummer with The Black Arm and has also worked in the rhythm section for numerous projects featuring artists Melbourne hip-hop group T.Z.U, Ross Hannaford Trio, Mavis Staples, Joss Stone, Ricki Lee Jones, Paul McDermott, HOY, Tim Rogers, Kate Ceberano, Rhonda Burchmore, Matt Hetherington, Shane Howard, City City City, David Arden, Illzilla, The Red Eyes, Paul Kelly, Jimmy Barnes, The Putbacks, Labjacd, San Lazaro, Scott Edgar, Tripod, The Firemen (Bamboos), and many others.

Brock (*stage manager/visuals*) has worked with BAB since its inception and in the arts and cultural events landscape for 30 years. She has extensive experience as a tour manager, safety officer, company coordinator and production manager.

Her specialty is stage management. She has stage managed commercial productions such as *Mother and Son*, *The Trocks* etc; but her preference is to work for companies with more than money at their heart - *Circus Oz*, *Black Arm Band*, *Ilbjerri* - Noel Tovey in *Little Black Bastard*, *Mbantua Festival* - *Bungalow Song*, *Archie Roach* - *Into the Bloodstream*, *Melbourne Festival*, *Adelaide Festival* etc.

Brock has toured extensively, locally, internationally, and into remote communities.

Daniel "Goz" Gosling (*production manager/Lighting*) has been on the road for the last 10 years, working in a range of roles throughout lighting, staging, audio, automation and management departments. He has been privileged to work on the Australia TV production *RockWiz* and act as crew chief and systems engineer on their national Australian tours. He has worked as production manager and lighting designer for *KuDeTa Bali's* high season dance parties for the last 8 years as well as production manager for the Victorian Opera & Melbourne Ballet Company, numerous school and pro-am productions, and work with international clients on their broadcast and live events both in Australia and across south east Asia.

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In partnership with House of Musical Traditions in Takoma Park a digeridoo workshop with Tjupurru Yidaki took place on Tuesday evening for about a dozen community members. On Friday morning, the band will present a student matinee for 300 students, teachers and parents from several area homeschools, Langley Park-McCormick Elementary School and Hollywood Elementary School in College Park.

ORIGINAL TEXT that inspired *dirtsong* by Alexis Wright

This is dirtsong – It comes from
 where we bin start off.
 Comes from country line.
 Long time singing song for
 country.
 dirtsong coming up from where
 everything start off.

Coming up from ancient song for
 making country good – looking
 good all of the time.
 Singing it up, singing it up,
 looking after it well.
 Should be like that, very
 important for spinifex, gidgee,
 mulga,
 Plenty good food, plant, water
 hole, animal each country place,
 Sky place,

Sea place – looking after em.
 Keeping story alive for country,
 make it alive – singing the
 songs,
 Living the stories,
 Holding the knowledge,
 Following the story,
 That is the Aboriginal law
 belonging to us.
 dirtsong – happening now!

Country!
 Country for me! You listening?
 Are you listening to me?
 Coming up close now.
 I am country. Listen to me!
 I am your government – I am the
 land.
 This country speaks proper way.
 Law right up top.
 It has to be above other laws.

That Canberra law underneath
 – any Australia law underneath
 – only little law.

Yeah, I reckon old Law is
 everywhere.
 See it over there in the hill where
 the old spirits lives, inside rock,
 tree, wind, sky, all animals
 and these old ones are coming
 through the elders singing the
 country with all the knowledge
 for big law.
 I cannot be any other way.
 I am not your way.
 Everyone must listen to the land
 to live strong.

Land strong with Law.
 Indigenous law.
 He is the right constitution for
 this country.

I am here.
 Sitting down here.
 My country, he's alright, very
 good.
 I am happy now.
 First time I am happy.
 I like that country and go back
 and stay there.
 It is desert country, all flat, and
 big range on side – that far –
 and all the sandhill going the
 other way.

We done ceremony – making
 corroboree, and all that for our
 own country.
 I know everything: what
 Dreaming I got, law that my
 father lend me.

I am here.
 Sitting down here.
 Sitting where grandparents'
 grandparents lived.
 Watching my country, watching
 story – creation story, law story.
 Growing up children.
 Growing up country.
 Looking after.
 Side by side.
 Proper way for this country.

I don't know what other people
do to the country.
I cannot understand it.
It is a crying shame to see the
country like this.
Yep! We have seen all the
change.
There were a lot of good things
right through this country – but
memories now.
Still though, the Indigenous law
for land stands strong, I don't
know how, but it does.

We got to make the stories.
Sing the stories back.
Bring the country back.
Singing it up.
Bringing it back.
Bringing up feeling.
Feeling it in the heart.
Giving it back to the country.
Listen for the heartbeat.
The heartbeat now – with the
pulse of the land,
The bird; The tree; The grass and
the wind.
Bringing it up.

Dry country some places now
Too much
I don't know if we will get rain
soon.
Who will make it rain?
I can't make it rain
Some of them old people passed
away now, you know, the
rainmakers.

They been make it rain.
Make it rain and the country
come back.
You got to look after the
rainmakers.
People need to listen
Listen carefully
The wind blows strong
Through the tree it blows
Come visiting you
Spirit talking to you
It comes in dreams
You can hear it too
We are made the same, you and I
Hot wind bringing the goose
Bringing fish
Rain storm.

Alexis Wright's words written in recognition of the recorded voices of
elders in the books *Take Power* and *Story About Feeling* by Bill Neidjie.

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UMD Jazz Studies students and bassist Kris Funn during a jazz clinic with APP Visiting Artist Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah

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