

2013 March Media Release

BlakDance Australia | A vehicle for change



Written by Ann-Maree Long.

BlakDance Australia Ltd is an industry leader in the performing arts and advocate for Indigenous Contemporary Dance in Australia with the vision to contribute significantly to the artistic landscape of Australian Dance. *BlakDance* supports and promotes their dance artists at state, national and international level. This they achieved, when hosting the *BlakDance 2012* performance and professional development program.

It's a story told by passionate movement, by a collaboration of inspiring cultural artists, young and old. It's a call for home, to our ancestors, and for all to listen. It exposes identity, and truth. There's controversy, and it's important, but most of all it is learning.

BlakDance 2012 was a touching performance narrated by a diverse group of First Nation independent dance artists, companies and families from around the globe. The production *BlakDance 2012* was performance held in June 2012, in partnership with the Queensland Theatre Company. The vision was to profile Australian First Nation independent contemporary choreographers on an international platform. The program was designed to bring together a diverse range of work representing a diverse range of cultural artistic voices.

The lead-up to the *BlakDance 2012* performance and the performance itself was a week that will never forget. As I was sitting there at lunch after dance workshop I gazed around in admiration at all of the individuals coming together. Artists from Guam, New Zealand, Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait Island Australia were all chatting, laughing, creating friendships and listening to each other's stories. The choreographers were Ms. Ojeya Cruz Banks, Ms. Cathy Livermore, Mr. Jack Gray, Ms. Tammi Gissell, Ms. Rita Pryce and Mr. Albert David. Being surrounded by these artists and listening to tales of their past gave me strong sense of self, cultural worth and pride. It was one of the most satisfying emotions, and I imagine that the students, adults and children around me shared this feeling.

The lights went down and it was the evening of the first performance. The feelings and thoughts that came across my mind during the performance were unlike anything I had ever experienced. I felt exposed, but in way that I had needed to be.

Being involved in the production *BlakDance 2012* and working at *BlakDance Australia Ltd* currently as an intern in my final year as a journalism student has inspired me. We all have stories to share that connect us, and every one of us has past, history, ancestors and traditions.

It's often challenging being an Indigenous Australian with pale skin and blonde hair, yet sitting there in the audience; this all became so insignificant to me.

I'm a Butchulla woman of Fraser Island, and grew up in Toowoomba, Queensland. My mother is an Indigenous artist, and during my childhood I was always surrounded by her art, and passion of culture and artistic expression. When I was watching the *BlakDance 2012* performance I felt the music, the song, the stories and movement as if it were in my own body. It took me home.

It's not every day that you can sit around and be surrounded by such a diverse cultural group of people. I know the future is secure with the support of our industry, with the vision to move forward with one voice.

Currently *BlakDance Australia Ltd* is seeking partnerships and support with like-minded organisations and philanthropic trusts. Our mission is to create opportunities for our artists to develop and profile their work through our Indigenous leadership programs like the upcoming BLAKDANCE 2014 event. As Ausdance have stated 'like Treading the Pathways, *BlakDance Australia's* purpose is to support Indigenous Australian dance and dancers'.

Current exciting news about our artists is Mr. Gary Lang has been awarded a fellowship from the Dance Board of the Australia Council for the Arts. Ms. Rita Pryce was a successful recipient of the 2012 ACCELERATE-Indigenous Leadership Program in partnership with the British Council. In addition to this, Ms. Vicki Van-Hout is the successful recipient of the Australia Council for the Arts 3 month artistic residency in Paris 2013.

Ms. Tammi Gissell went on to choreograph for OCHRE Contemporary Dance Company after *BlakDance 2012*. For Dance Massive this year Ms. Dalisa Pigram will be launching her solo performance 'Gudirr Gudirr' and Mr. Albert David is collaborating with Korean choreographer/performer Soo Yeun You in '[Gu:t] ㄱ'.

BlakDance is an exciting place to be working as an intern in my final year as a dance and journalism student. I look forward to being a part of the planning for BLAKDANCE 2014 and the many other new initiatives.

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For further information about **BlakDance** please contact our staff via email, phone or on our social network pages.

Email admin@blakdance.org or phone Tiina Alinen, CEO of BlakDance on: 048 77 060

We invite you to like our Facebook and Twitter pages, and subscribe to our ENEWS on our BlakDance website.



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Twitter: search- BlakDance Australia Ltd



BlakDance website: www.blakdance.org.au



Event: BLAKDANCE 2012
Work: Feather & Tar
Choreographer: Ms. Tammi Gissell
Dancer: Nicola Sabatino
Photographer: Anja Ali-Haapala



Event: BLAKDANCE 2012

Work: Giz

Choreographer: Mr. Albert David

Dancers: Mr. Albert David, Mr. Kenny Johnson and Mr. Tyrel Dulvarie

Photographer: Mr. Daniel Cooper