

STYLEUP

FASHION, BEAUTY & LIFESTYLE

Country stories

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Dancers perform in Triptych.
Picture: Ven Tithing



Amrita Hepi performs in Rinse.
Picture: Zan Wimberley

Dance in limelight in Sydney

PHOEBE BLOGG

Following critically acclaimed international seasons, two celebrated First Nations choreographers have arrived home for limited seasons of contemporary dance works at the Sydney Opera House.

Bundjalung and Ngapuhi artist Amrita Hepi makes her return with solo dance-theatre piece Rinse, and Bungandidj and Ngarrindjeri choreographer Lewis Major will present the Sydney premiere of Triptych, a triple-bill of short works.

Sydney Opera House director of programming Brenna Hobson said the venue “couldn’t be more proud to

invite Amrita Hepi and Lewis Major home to celebrate their international success”.

“The local contemporary dance scene is thriving internationally, and the Sydney Opera House is privileged to celebrate an ecosystem that champions not only excellence, but a uniquely Australian perspective,” she said.

Running from September 10-12, solo performance Rinse combines a highly physical dance vocabulary with an evocative text.

The work, created by Hepi with acclaimed theatre-maker Mish Grigor and with sound design by composer Daniel Jenatsch, approaches the

history of dance through a powerful decolonial lens.

Rinse has toured extensively since its debut — premiering as the first Australian work ever performed at the Festival d’Avignon — with seasons across Europe, the UK and Canada.

Renowned for her expressive experimental dance works, Hepi has twice received the people’s choice award at the Keir Choreographic Award, and in 2018 was named one of Forbes Asia’s 30 under 30.

From September 16-19,

Triptych presents three luminous and award-winning short works — Prologue, Unfolding and Epilogue.

This mixed bill is a mesmerising fusion of movement, music and light.

Performed by four dancers, the interplay between lighting and sound design sits at the centre of the production, with the works linked thematically by ideas of duality and connection.

Major is considered one of Australia’s leading choreographic talents, with

works performed across six continents to widespread acclaim.

After years of collaboration and mentorship under Russell Maliphant and Hofesh Schecter, Triptych is Major’s own opus and has accrued more than a dozen award wins — including best dance (Adelaide Fringe Festival, 2025) and the Spirit of the Fringe Award (Edinburgh Fringe Festival, 2024).

Triptych will also be performed at Arts Centre Melbourne from September 23-26.

A dancer performs in Epilogue as part of Triptych by Lewis Major. Picture: Alessandro Botticelli.



Pigram receives Red Ochre Award

NATASHA CLARK

The Pigram Brothers have helped shape the sound of modern Broome.

Their music has captured the town’s salt water, humour and spirit in a way that has reached far beyond WA’s Kimberley region.

One of the brothers, singer-songwriter and guitarist Stephen, was recently recognised with one of Australia’s most important First Nations arts awards: the Red Ochre Award for lifetime achievement in artistic excellence, at the First Nations Arts and Culture Awards in Sydney.

Pigram Productions referred to Pigram as the “grandfather of our branch of the family tree”.

His work includes theatre, film, live shows, and community arts.

He has written songs with his father Eric Pigram, Uncle Jimmy Chi, Kuckles, Scrap Metal and The Pigram Brothers.

As a music director and composer, he worked on the landmark theatre shows Bran Nue Dae and Corrugation Road.



Stephen Pigram received the Red Ochre Award at the First Nations Arts and Culture Awards.

He also worked on the films Bran Nue Dae and Mad Bastards, both of which are closely connected to the Kimberley’s culture.

Pigram Productions said Pigram’s career had involved some of Australia’s top arts organisations.

“As a featured artist, he has performed with leading Australian arts organisations including The Black Arm Band, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Australian String Quartet, and Tura New Music,” the organisation said.

Pigram was elected a writer full member of APRA in 1989, inducted into the WA Music Hall of Fame in 1993, and awarded the Centenary Medal in 2000 for services to Indigenous music.

He has supported the wider arts community through his work with the Aboriginal Arts Board and Arts WA. Pigram Productions said Pigram gave special thanks to his older brother Alan, who was at the awards ceremony and still worked in music and storytelling through Pigram Music Pty Ltd.

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Marlene Gibson's work on a Naarm tram. Pic: James Morgan

Indigenous artworks get people moving

JARRED CROSS

A Naarm (Melbourne) icon is sharing First Nations art, stories, culture, reflections and visions for the future while taking others, literally, along for the ride.

Six trams will take to the city's tracks as a moving canvas of works for the next 12 months, as First Peoples Melbourne Art Trams launched its 2026 edition this month. Wadawurrung Elder and senior artist Marlene Gilson's work *Happy Families — Time When We All Lived Together* was exhibited at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024.

It's now a little closer to home, stretched across the Legacy Tram of 2026.

"It's an honour to see it on the tram. Who would have thought that my artwork would be going all over Melbourne, putting our people out there?" Auntie Marlene told National Indigenous Times.

Auntie Marlene has presented solo exhibitions in Ballarat, Melbourne and Sydney; was commissioned for the 21st Biennale of Sydney in 2018; and saw some of her work illuminate the Sydney Opera House in 2021.

Her paintings and practice are celebrated expressions on connection to culture, Country and Indigenous perspectives and place within historical narratives.

Natasha Carter, Mitch Mahoney, Jenna Mayilema Lee, Zena Zada Cumpston and Sonja Hodge join Auntie Marlene as featured artists.



Kamilaroi/Samoan artist Becca Hatch has released cinematic new track *Daylight Robbery*.

Hatch drops a knockout new track

PHOEBE BLOGG

Becca Hatch has continued to rise with the release this month of her new single *Daylight Robbery*, a cinematic and emotionally charged track capturing the chaos, intensity and vulnerability of a connection which refuses to fade.

Following the breakout momentum of *Garden (Bang Goes The Drum)*, the proud Kamilaroi/Samoan artist has delivered a track which cements her as one of Australia's most compelling new voices.

Written by Hatch alongside Patrick Byrne (Beso Palma), mixed by Cam Parkin and mastered by Klaus Hill, *Daylight Robbery* blends Hatch's signature fusion of R&B, electronic textures and bold pop production with raw emotional storytelling.

At its core, *Daylight Robbery* explores the contradiction of being unable to let go of someone who still holds power over you. It is a song about impact, memory, and the dangerous pull of chemistry, even when logic says otherwise.

Throughout the song Hatch strives to transform heartbreak into something euphoric, reckless and impossible to ignore.

"*Daylight Robbery* is about a love that leaves an imprint on you; someone you can't forget, even if they might not be the best for you," she said.

"It's about being overtaken by feeling and impact. Like being hit suddenly in the face or the gut."

"Sometimes we meet people

that leave a mark on us, and even after they're gone, parts of them still linger.

"The song lives in that tension of knowing someone has the power to hurt you, but still feeling drawn to them anyway."

"There's something addictive about connections like that, and I wanted *Daylight Robbery* to feel emotional, dramatic and a little reckless."

Hatch has built a reputation for genre-bending soundscapes, deeply personal songwriting, and commanding live performances.

Hatch is a 2024 National Indigenous Music Awards winner, a multiple ARIA nominee, and recipient of the 2025 APRA professional development award.

Garden (Bang Goes The Drum) was a breakout moment, landing on 47 editorial playlists worldwide including the cover of Spotify's R&B Connect and Big Ancestor Energy.

The release also secured a triple j first play on *Home And Hosed*, more than 460 radio spins on more than 40 stations, and more than 130,000 Spotify streams.

Hatch's rise has been defined by a string of career-defining moments on stage.

In late 2024, she was personally invited by Coldplay to perform her original verse on their song *We Pray* during two sold-out Sydney stadium shows in front of crowds exceeding 80,000 people.

She has also shared stages with global artists including Tinashe and Mahalia, and given standout performances at *Beyond The Valley*, *Strawberry Fields* and the NRL half-time show.

Olympic gear honours First Nations

JARRED CROSS

Australian Olympians in Los Angeles and on the French Alps at the next summer and winter Olympic Games will don gear honouring the First Nations athletes who have come before them.

Noongar artists and father and son Peter Farmer Sr and Peter Farmer Jr, and Torres Strait Islander artist Alick Tipoti have created the Australian Olympic Committee's official team artwork.

Titled *Doonch-doonch, Kaymelan, Together*, using both Noongar and Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait) language, the work honours the 66 known First Nations athletes

to have competed at previous Olympic Games.

This is "carried together as a wave, an expression of unity across land, sea and sky. Across generations, communities and cultures it represents one shared story", as explained by the Australian Olympic Committee.

The artwork will feature on team uniforms for the 2028 Summer Games in LA, and the 2030 Winter Games in the French Alps, after 11 First Nations athletes competed at Paris in 2024.

It was unveiled at the same time the AOC and its Indigenous advisory committee launched its Stretch reconciliation action plan. The AOC said the

unveilings "represent the next chapter of its commitment to reconciliation through sport".

"I'm extremely excited to be part of this project. As an artist for the athletes, I want them to feel proud and strong knowing this artwork was designed with thought and care when it comes to culture," Farmer Jr said.

The AOC launched its inaugural Indigenous athlete scholarship program at its annual general meeting earlier this year.

"The AOC Stretch RAP makes clear that reconciliation is not something we acknowledge only on special occasions — it is something we embed in our decisions, our



AOC advisory Indigenous advisory committee chair Patrick Johnson, Torres Strait Islander artist Alick Tipoti and Noongar artists Peter Farmer Sr and Peter Farmer Jr. Picture: AOC

sport, our workplaces and our communities," two-time Olympian and AOC Indigenous Advisory Committee chair Patrick Johnson said.

The announcement came amid resistance efforts at the planned Olympic stadium

development site in Magandjin for the Brisbane 2032 Games, with the Goori Camp Embassy vowing to continue efforts to protect Barrambin/Victoria Park after police moved supporters from the Sacred Fire site early on June 1.



Creative glimpse of Country

PHOEBE BLOGG

The 2026 Kimberley Aboriginal Fashion Textiles and Art runway showcased the talents of 14 First Nations creatives and 60 models from nine communities across the northern WA region.

KAFTA executive director, Belinda Cook, noted this year was “the first KAFTA has presented as an Aboriginal Corporation, so it was a major step and cemented the organisation”.

“We are finalists in the upcoming NIFA Award Business Category, and hope that this will bring recognition to the collective community model we have built, and inspire other regions and communities to build their own programs,” she said.

This year’s event, hosted at Broome’s Town Beach Jetty on May 31, was managed by Rhiana Powers, a proud Yawuru, Jabirr Jabirr, and Gija woman.

“Rhiana began as a support

team member, back of house and has quickly and naturally stepped into a leadership role, overseeing the whole event program this year,” Cook told Style Up.

“Rhiana’s trajectory to a board member of the organisation and producer of the runway speak to the core purpose of KAFTA: to see Kimberley creatives taking up leadership roles, building industry for the Kimberley community and being recognised for the rich skills and knowledge they bring to the creative sector.”

Made by Kimberley people, celebrating Kimberley Country, the KAFTA runway event strives to highlight the remarkable Aboriginal-led creative industries in

the region, and supports the growth of the Kimberley Aboriginal fashion sector for future generations.

“Fashion is a way for us to carry our culture back,” KAFTA chairperson Agnes Pigram told a crowd of hundreds gathered on Broome’s Town Beach jetty for the event.

Featuring both designers and art centres, the 2026 runway included Nagula Jarndu Designs (Saheli Collection), Yarraliny Designs Yarraliny, Bidyadanga



Community Five Tribes Desert to the Sea, Mulardy Designs (Ocean & Wet Season), Dusty x My One (Kimberley Country Magic x My One), Halls Creek Job Pathways Hub (Ngarangga Larna Collection), Roxanne Dolby (Leah Collection), Shonte Molyneux (Sonder), Kwobardak Beautiful Designs (Kwobardak), Bibi Nganju Designs (Djugun Woora), Nangarri Designs (Vio & Olly), Jalayimiya, Jaymee Lee Chaquabor, and Marra Worra Worra.

Jaru woman and debut designer, Romenica Long, garment Desert Flowers, was inspired by the Country around her East Kimberley hometown of Halls Creek.

“I just love the way the desert dresses itself,” Ms Long told Style Up.

“My design showcases where I grew up, and spent most of my childhood with my grandmother. I used to travel around everywhere with her, so it is also a reminder of my family connections.”

Presenting the latest fashion,

textiles and art innovations from around the Kimberley, the catwalk welcomed not only designers and models but also dancers and performances.

KAFTA is a powerful platform for cultural expression, economic empowerment, and community celebration, deeply rooted in the heart of the Kimberley.

The commitment to local engagement ensures the benefits of the event directly benefit the community, fostering a strong sense of community and pride.

Attending family, media and audience members were thrilled to watch the runway and Town Beach Jetty provided a vibrant outdoor runway and a beautiful backdrop of the Kimberley sunset.

With several First Nations photographers, make-up artists, hairstylists and event crew being part of the event, First Nations excellence was championed on and beyond the runway.

When it came to the designs



that walked the runway, each creative showcased their distinctive style via culturally crafted clothing collections.

The designs featured on the runway presented a mix of

vibrant hues and distinctive prints. Storytelling was at the forefront of each and every collection, whether it was personal experiences or influences of local flora and fauna, these designers were

inspired to tell a story through the collections they presented.

Popular First Nations designer Brodie George impressed audience members with her swimwear and lifestyle brand Jalayimiya,

Pictures

Kristy Brittain
Halina Storm Kolatowicz
Kacey Umbagai

showcasing four artworks across her brand's signature beachside silhouettes.

"KAFTA builds self-belief within the community.

"It encourages people, particularly women and girls, to take up space, feel beautiful and celebrate themselves in garments that might not typically be worn in remote communities," Ms George told Style Up.

"Fashion becomes a form of self-expression. Women and girls learn how clothing can help tell stories, celebrate culture and showcase creativity. It inspires people to think differently about textiles,

design and the many ways culture can be represented through fashion.

"More than anything, KAFTA is a celebration of one another. It creates opportunities, builds confidence and reminds us of the importance of supporting and uplifting our communities"

Since its inception in 2022 the KAFTA runway has grown into one of the most successful runways for First Nations designers.

Celebrating culture and contemporary storytelling, KAFTA has continued to propel creatives to new opportunities.

Sharing culture through community.

Challenge accepted.

In Roebourne, artists of Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi Country are sharing stories that reflect culture, identity and connect to Country.

Where We Come From is a community-led exhibition developed with FORM and supported by Woodside, strengthening knowledge and understanding of culture in the Pilbara and across Western Australia.

In 2025 the exhibition attracted more than 3,300 visitors, who engaged in storytelling, workshops and cultural learning.



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Sharon Warrie, Art Development Camp. Perth 2025. Photo by Marnie Richardson courtesy of FORM.

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Play takes look at a key figure in history

PHOEBE BLOGG

The world premiere of Muruwari playwright Jane Harrison's *Bennelong In* London comes to Sydney Theatre Company's Wharf 1 Theatre this July.

The acclaimed writer and singular voice behind *The Visitors* and *Stolen* reunites with STC resident director and Wilman Noongar man Ian Michael — hailed by *Limelight Magazine* as “the most exciting new director of this generation” — to tell the story of one of Australian history's most important figures.

Making his STC debut, Gamilaraay actor Googoorewon Knox (Hamilton, *Big Name, No Blankets*) will play *Bennelong* alongside Biripi, Worimi, Wodi Wodi and Walbanga man Guy Simon (*The Visitors*, *The Tempest*) as a tenacious young actor who is preparing to audition for the role of a lifetime.

Set between present day and the 1780s, *Bennelong In* London depicts a time-bending conversation and burgeoning friendship between two First Nations men seeking to understand each other, themselves, and the art of auditioning. Harrison has



Guy Simon

taken “a playful — yet serious — approach to history and laced it with a contemporary character”.

“Diving into the archives and then inventing — this is what I love about playwriting, that you can build new worlds from old and that an audience will go with you on that ride,” she said

Michael is “honoured to bring *Bennelong In* London to Sydney audiences, on the traditional lands and waters of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, where so much of this story began”.

“It has been a privilege to work again with Jane Harrison after directing her



Googoorewon Knox plays the lead role in Jane Harrison's *Bennelong In* London.

work *Stolen*, and to once more be part of bringing her compelling storytelling to the stage,” he said.

“*Bennelong* remains a vital figure in Australia's history — a man who stood between worlds at a moment of enormous change — and this production invites us to reflect on questions of identity and whether we can reconcile with our history, told through deep truth-telling and humanity.

“*Bennelong In* London asks us to engage with the dark

history of this country while affirming the resilience and continuing strength of First Nations voices and storytelling.”

The play tells the story of *The Actor*, played by Simon, who is preparing to audition for the role of a lifetime playing one of Australia's best-known figures.

As he readies himself, his imagination conjures to life *Bennelong* (Knox) himself, a man forced to navigate his way through two cultures colliding at breakneck speed.

Both travel to the 1780s where *Bennelong*, now a young Wangal man, is abducted by Governor Phillip.

Bennelong becomes his go-between with the Eora people and later, the first Aboriginal man to visit Europe and return and, eventually, the husband of a woman named Barangaroo.

Tickets are now available to *Bennelong In* London, which plays at Sydney Theatre Company's Wharf 1 Theatre from 18 July.

Journey Among Men presents cultural belongings

PHOEBE BLOGG

The Koorie Heritage Trust will present *Journey Among Men*, an exhibition of cultural belongings which brings together eight emerging and established First Nations artists in a powerful exploration of culture, connection and wellbeing.

Journey Among Men will run from August 22-November 22 at Koorie Heritage Trust, Birrarung Building, Fed Square.

Developed over two years, the project brought artists together on Country across Victoria to share cultural knowledge, creative practice and lived experience. The exhibition represents the culmination of this shared journey.

The exhibition features new works by emerging artists Earl Handy, Mitchil Harding, Cahill Kennedy, Iluka Sax-Williams and Lewis Wandin-Bursill, alongside established artists Mick Harding, Brendan Kennedy and Kevin Williams.



Brendan Kennedy and participating artist Cahill Kennedy.

Journey Among Men demonstrates the importance of intergenerational knowledge-sharing and the value of creating together on Country.

Developed as a mentoring and cultural development program for First Nations men, it fostered the exchange of cultural knowledge, creative practice and lived experience while supporting participants to strengthen cultural

connections, build skills and confidence, and develop meaningful relationships.

Journey Among Men recognises the important role cultural practice can play in supporting social and emotional wellbeing.

Through time spent on Country, making, learning and sharing together, participants created spaces for connection, reflection and healing while strengthening cultural identity

and belonging. The exhibition will showcase the artworks, stories and experiences that emerged through the process.

Artists were commissioned to create cultural belongings using materials sourced from Country and techniques including carving, incising, burning, and pigment application.

The resulting works have evolved through mentoring relationships, engagement with historical collections, and ongoing connections to family, community and Country.

“What I have found over the years is that a lot of young men — and they're older men now — just being around the older fellas, they pick up things from them, learning how to make artefacts, boomerangs and things like that,” Kevin Williams said.

“Some of them are still doing that to this day.”

Bridging “the old” and “the new”, *Journey Among Men* foregrounds the continuity and

living presence of First Peoples cultural practice while challenging colonial museological approaches to display and interpretation.

Rather than positioning cultural belongings as historical artefacts, the exhibition presents them as expressions of a living, evolving and enduring culture.

An exhibition catalogue and accompanying film have also been produced as part of *Journey Among Men*.

“I extend my deepest thanks to all participating artists for their generosity, dedication and ongoing collaboration throughout this program and the development of the exhibition and accompanying publication,” Koorie Heritage Trust chief executive Tom Mosby said.

“Their willingness to share cultural knowledge, artistic practice and lived experience has shaped a powerful exhibition that celebrates culture, resilience and connection.”



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