

## Resource Guide

# The Arts— Drama

The information and resources contained in this guide provide a platform for teachers and educators to consider how to effectively embed important ideas around reconciliation, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions, within the specific subject/learning area of [The Arts- Drama](#). Please note that this guide is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, and that users are encouraged to consult with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in engaging with the material contained in the guide.

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*Please be aware this guide may contain references to names and works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are now deceased. External links may also include names and images of those who are now deceased.*

## Background and Introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Drama/Performing Arts

*“Our theatre was corroboree and dancing. It’s the first form of theatre in Australia and it’s the oldest form ... Theatre has been here for years because Aboriginal people had the dance and the music and the songs ... the first operas ... the first musicals were done by Aboriginal people. So it’s nothing new.” – Richard Walley.*

It is important to appreciate that, while this guide predominantly focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, perspectives and drama conventions since European colonisation, dramatic arts have been an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years, and continue to play an active and important part in cultural life to this day. It is also worth pointing out that, while the subject/learning areas of The Arts— and the guides that Reconciliation Australia’s Narragunnawali team have built around these— have been separated into distinct Drama, Dance, Music, Media and Visual Arts categories, traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama is ultimately based on a strong and simultaneous use of cross-arts frameworks and features such as song, dance and storytelling.

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama has often taken the form of a corroboree<sup>1</sup>— a ceremonial amalgamation of song, dance and visual symbols or stimuli to provide a dramatic representation of, and to pass on information about, the Dreaming. In this way, and akin to traditional belief systems, so too have dramatic customs tended to embrace an intricate human, geographic and spiritual interrelationship.

In a traditional corroboree, the so-called ‘stage,’ ‘performance space’ or ‘set’ may not be represented by a ‘theatre’ hall or setting, but rather by the outdoor environment, on Country, often on sand or soft soil. The ‘curtain,’ or ‘backstage,’ may similarly be demarcated using elements from the natural environment such as screens made from leafy branches.

The ‘script’ and ‘soundscape’ may predominantly involve the narration of Songlines— traditional musical stories which serve as an Aboriginal ‘voice map’ of Country, dramatising important journeys made during the Dreaming. Traditional instruments such as didgeridoos or clapsticks may also contribute to the soundscape according to cultural convention.

So-called ‘costumes’ or ‘props’ may include decorative and symbolic body art or adornments, sometimes featuring ochre paint, traditional weaving techniques, native leaves, cotton, feathers or animal skins, for example.

The ‘actors’ may best be recognised as dancers, helping to tell a story through often subtle yet stylised symbolic movement.

The ‘audience’ in attendance may depend on whether or not a particular corroboree is more informal, or indeed more sacred or ritualised in nature, and on whether or not there are any

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to point out that there can be great diversity in the forms or features of a traditional corroboree. ‘Corroboree’ is a very generic word that was in fact coined by Europeans in an attempt to imitate a term from just one Aboriginal language of NSW. There is indeed no single corroboree structure, style or story with a number of different corroborees existing both between and within distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander linguistic-cultural groups.

culturally informed age or gender restrictions surrounding who is permitted to be present during a corroboree performance.

It is important to point out that these are but *examples* of what some of the forms or features of a traditional corroboree may be. 'Corroboree' is a very generic word that was in fact coined by Europeans in an attempt to imitate a term from just one Aboriginal language of NSW. There is in fact no single corroboree structure, style or story, with a number of different corroborees existing both between and within distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander linguistic-cultural groups.

While questions of ownership, authority and authenticity are crucial to consider, it is clear that, for dramatic artists, "there is a rich cultural field to draw on and inspire: the diversity of Aboriginal languages, ... the rich oral traditions of storytelling and history; the unique styles of humour; and the treasures of dance, art and design.<sup>2</sup>" Accordingly, the following pages of this guide will provide a platform for Drama teachers and educators to research and reflect on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, perspectives and performance conventions have entered into, or have been represented in, more contemporary 'Western' theatre spaces.

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<sup>2</sup> Haebich, A. (n.d.) *West Australian Performing Arts in the NFSA Collection*, National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/research/papers/2014/05/20/west-australian-aboriginal-performing-arts-nfsa-collection/>

## Timeline of Key Dates in the Contemporary History of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Drama/Theatre

This timeline chronologically lists some of the key dates— other than key publication and performance dates— in the more recent history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Drama/Theatre and/or with regard to the relationship between drama and reconciliation more generally.

- **60,000+ years ago:**
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia have maintained longstanding conventions and conceptualisations pertaining to drama for tens of thousands of years.
- **1969:**
  - The Sydney Black Theatre Group was formed.
- **1971:**
  - The Nindethana Theatre Company was established as a cross-cultural collaboration in Melbourne.
- **1972:**
  - The Nindethana Theatre Company was re-formed as an Indigenous company.
  - The National Black Theatre was formed by members of the Sydney Black Theatre group.
  - The Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council for the Arts was formed.
- **1973:**
  - The Black Theatre Group was formed in Brisbane.
  - The First National Seminar on Aboriginal Arts was held in Canberra, sponsored by the newly formed Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council for the Arts.
- **1974:**
  - The Black Theatre Arts and Cultural Centre, with its resident theatre company, Black Theatre, was established in Redfern, Sydney.
- **1983:**
  - The First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers was held at Murdoch University, Perth.
  - Marli Biyol Company (Swan River) was formed.
- **1984:**
  - The EORA Centre opened as a training centre for Indigenous Australians in the performing and visual arts sector, with Robert Merritt serving as the Centre's first coordinator.
- **1986:**
  - Jack Davis' *No Sugar* was awarded the Australian Writer's Guild Award for best stage play of the year.

- **1987:**
  - The first National Blacks Playwrights Conference and workshop were held in Canberra.
  - The Aboriginal National Theatre Trust was established.
  
- **1990:**
  - Ilbejerri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-operative was founded in Melbourne.
  - Jimmy Chi was awarded the Sidney Myer Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Performing Arts.
  - Roger Bennett's *Up the Ladder* received the Best of the Fringe Award in Adelaide.
  
- **1993:**
  - Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Arts was established in Brisbane, with Wesley Enoch as the first appointed Director.
  
- **1996:**
  - The National Indigenous Writers and Playwrights Conference was held in Brisbane.
  - Ningali Lawford was awarded the Green Room Award for Best Actress in a One Woman Show.
  - Jimmy Chi's *Corrugation Road* won the Melbourne Age Critics Award at the Melbourne International Festival of Theatre.
  
- **1997:**
  - Yirra Yaakin Noongar Theatre was established in Perth as a professional company (it had previously been a youth company).
  - Yirra Yaakin was awarded the Prince Charles Trophy for Services to Youth.

## Plays by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playwrights

The table below lists a number of plays which have been written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playwrights. The list focuses on those which have been published, meaning that teachers and educators may be able to usefully access the scripts in print form.

Year of Publication	Play Title	(Indigenous) Playwright	One-Sentence Synopsis
1978	<i>The Cake Man</i>	Robert Merritt	A simple yet moving portrayal of life on a mission in Western NSW, showing 'white' Christian paternalism from a 'black' point of view.
1979	<i>Kullark</i>	Jack Davis	A dramatisation of the devastation of the original occupants of the Perth area, their settlement at Moore River, and the murder of Yagan.
1982	<i>The Dreamers</i>	Jack Davis	A representation of contemporary life among urban Aboriginal people, its problems, and the significance of Aboriginality.
1986	<i>Mereki</i>	Bob Maza	An exploration of the tensions surrounding Indigenous land rights.
1986	<i>No Sugar</i>	Jack Davis	Set in 1929, this play follows the story of the Millimurra family's forced removal from their home in Northam to the Moore River Native Settlement during the Great Depression.
1988	<i>Honey Spot</i>	Jack Davis	A touching story of the friendship between an Aboriginal boy and a non-Indigenous girl, raising issues of race as two families that seem to have nothing in common are forced to face their prejudices when danger strikes.
1988	<i>The Cherry Pickers</i>	Kevin Gilbert	Based on the experiences of itinerant rural workers, this play (notably the first to be written in English by an Aboriginal Australian, and performed entirely by an Aboriginal cast) explores issues of family, spirituality and dispossession.
1989	<i>The Keepers</i>	Bob Maza	Set in South Australia in the nineteenth century, the action revolves around the relationship between Mirnat, an Aboriginal woman, and Elisabeth Cox, the wife of a Scottish missionary.
1989	<i>Murras</i>	Eva Johnson	Amidst struggles against a hostile and racist society, an Aboriginal woman, Ruby, shows courageous strength despite tragic life events including the loss of her house under authoritarian governmental rehousing policies, and the loss of her husband to alcoholism induced by the despair at the loss of his land and culture.
1989	<i>Barungin</i>	Jack Davis	A powerful culmination of the dramatic history of Aboriginal life since the arrival of the white man 200 years before the play's publication.

1989	<i>Coordah</i>	Richard Walley	A depiction of Urban Aboriginal Australians in conflict with alcohol and the law.
1991	<i>Bran Nue Dae</i>	Jimmy Chi	A musical telling the story of an Aboriginal boy's journey home from a Catholic boarding school in the city of Perth to his homeland at Djaridjin, searching for his identity.
1992	<i>In Our Town</i>	Jack Davis	Set in a country town, this play centres on the return of an Aboriginal soldier after World War II and his rejection by the 'white' Australian community.
1992	<i>Funerals and Circuses</i>	Roger Bennett	Following the story of a 'white' policeman's daughter marrying an Aboriginal artist in a small South Australian town, this play takes a searing look at black-white relations.
1993	<i>Moonglue</i>	Daisy Utemorrah	A cautionary tale about what might happen to children when they do not listen to their parents, following the events that ensure after two children are advised by their mother not to lie awake at night and watch the moon.
1994	<i>Moorli and the Leprechaun</i>	Jack Davis	A play featuring a mythic Aboriginal character called Moorli—a rainmaking spirit—and his counterpart the Irish leprechaun, which explores racial tensions all the while examining the importance of sharing a common interest in the well-being of ordinary human beings.
1996	<i>What do they call me?</i>	Eva Johnson	A one-woman play which brings the struggles and resistance of Indigenous Australian women—and the world of non-Indigenous/white Australia—into sharp critical focus.
1996	<i>The Seven Stages of Grieving</i>	Wesley Enoch & Deborah Mailman	A contemporary, one-woman Indigenous performance appropriating Western form whilst using traditional storytelling to give an emotional insight into Murri life through the journey of an Aboriginal woman as she tells poignant and humorous stories of grief and reconciliation.
1997	<i>Up The Road</i>	John Harding	A celebration of life, love and family set in the remote Aboriginal community of Flat Creek, where life is pretty uncomplicated—until a Canberra bureaucrat returns home.
1997	<i>Up The Ladder</i>	Roger Bennett	Following an Aboriginal man's journey from the rough and tumble fights of the boxing tents of the 1940s and 1950s to a career as a professional and champion boxer, this play evokes the blood, sweat, smell of the sawdust and the momentary fame of the boxing tents.
1998	<i>Stolen</i>	Jane Harrison	Split between the stories of five characters, both as children and as adults, this play brings the tragic history of the Stolen Generations to the stage, expressing the pain, poignancy and sheer desperation of the struggles to make sense of a world where one has been forcibly told to forget their family, home and language.

2002	<i>Aliwa!</i>	Dallas Winmar	This play traces the true story of three Aboriginal sisters (those of playwright Jack Davis) whose mother was determined to keep her children when officials wanted to remove them following the death of their father.
2002	<i>Crow Fire</i>	Jadah Milroy	A story of a young, urban Indigenous Australian woman and a man from a desert community lured into the city.
2002	<i>Enuff</i>	John Harding	Set in a future Australian context, the question of whether retribution or forgiveness will prevail is raised when a violent uprising is planned for Reconciliation Day.
2002	<i>Box the Pony</i>	Leah Purcell	A semi-autobiographical one-woman show which captures how, despite growing up in an atmosphere of violence and racism, Leah is determined to break the cycle which has bound generations in her family and finds the will to escape, finally achieving fame on her own terms.
2002	<i>Casting Doubts</i>	Maryanne Sam	A funny and at times heart-wrenching play about an actors' casting agency and the problems faced by Indigenous actors.
2002	<i>Conversations with the Dead</i>	Richard Franklin	A powerful, savage play which takes audiences into the aching sorrow of deaths in custody by following the story of a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody employee who, in his role, listens to the stories of grieving families and recreate the lives of those who have died.
2002	<i>I Don't Wanna Play House</i>	Tammy Anderson	Based on Tammy Anderson's own childhood, this one-woman show works to raise awareness of child abuse and domestic violence, all the while representing a remarkable account of the human spirit.
2002	<i>Belonging</i>	Tracey Rigney	A play which follows the taunts and temptations of a school girl and her personal struggle to remain true to her culture and herself.
2004	<i>Yanagai! Yanagai!</i>	Andrea James	Exploring the struggle for Indigenous land rights, this play tells about the failed claim by the Yorta Yorta people for land along the Murray River.
2007	<i>The Story of the Miracles at the Cookie's Table</i>	Wesley Enoch	A moving testament to culture lived, lost and found, the strength of family, adapting, and gathering together.
2008	<i>The Forever Zone</i>	Andrea James	Set on the Melbourne tramway system and reflecting Indigenous peoples' prior and ongoing ownership of the land on which Melbourne stands, this is a comic and poignant magical-realist piece featuring an ancient Aboriginal warrior in a possum skin cloak and the journey that unfolds after he is confronted by a motley crew of ticket inspectors on a tram



2009	<i>Oodgeroo-Bloodline to Country</i>	Sam Watson	A play which tells the story of Oodgeroo Noonuccal and her son, Denis Walker, as well as the tensions that tore at the fabric of one of Australia's most prominent families.
2013	<i>Windmill Baby</i>	David Milroy	A story of an Aboriginal woman who worked in servitude on a cattle station somewhere to the west of the Kimberley, and who returns to the station to confront the memories that have haunted her adult life.
2013	<i>King Hit</i>	David Milroy and Geoffrey Narkle	An acclaimed play that strikes at the very heart of the Stolen Generations, exploring the impact on an individual and a culture when relationships are brutally broken.
2013	<i>Rainbow's End</i>	Jane Harrison	A domestic drama, set in the home of three generations of Indigenous women living near Shepparton in the 1950s.
2013	<i>Black Medea</i>	Wesley Enoch	A poetic adaptation of Euripides' <i>Medea</i> , blending the cultures of Ancient Greek and Indigenous storytelling to weave a commentary on the contemporary Aboriginal experience.
2013	<i>Bitin' Back</i>	Vivienne Cleven	An exploration of stereotyping, identity and race relations in a Queensland country town.
2014	<i>Brothers Wreck</i>	Jada Alberts	A story of a family, buffeted by constant tragedy yet holding itself together as their people have done generation after generation.
2015	<i>Kill the Messenger</i>	Nakkiah Lui	Set in Western Sydney, the lives of five individuals collide around questions of familial bonds, institutionalised racism and the value of life.
2016	<i>The Drover's Wife</i>	Leah Purcell	Loosely based on the classic short story of the same name by Henry Lawson. Once again the Drover's Wife is confronted by a threat in her yard, but now it's a man. He's bleeding, he's got secrets, and he's black.
2017	<i>Black is the New White</i>	Nakkiah Lui	An incisive romantic comedy about family, race, politics and too much wine over dinner.

For more information and ideas, you may like to visit:  
<https://australianplays.org/category/indigenous-playwright>

## Plays by non-Indigenous Playwrights with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Reconciliation-related Themes

The table below lists a number of plays with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or reconciliation-related themes which have been written by non-Indigenous Australian playwrights. The list focuses on those which have been published, meaning that educators may be able to usefully access the scripts in print form.

Year of Publication	Play Title	(non-Indigenous) Playwright	One-Sentence Synopsis
1940	<i>Brumby Innes</i>	Katharine Susannah Prichard	Written in the 1920s, this play confronts the turbulent relations between the sexes and the 'races' in the remote Pilbara region of Western Australia.
1986	<i>State of Shock</i>	Tony Strachan	A powerful and disturbing study of race relations in Australia, based on the true story of Alwyn Peter, who was released on parole in a historic decision by the Queensland Supreme Court because of the oppressive environment on Queensland reserves.
1994	<i>Close to the Bone</i>	Ned Manning	An uplifting story of survival that is infused with the humour that has enabled Indigenous Australians to cope with incredible adversity, such as the forced removal of children and the impact of wider bureaucratic decisions on Aboriginal families.
1996	<i>Black Mary</i>	Julie Janson	A story of an Aboriginal bushranger who dreams to return with her partner to live with her people but instead witnesses their massacre and plots revenge.
1996	<i>Gunjies</i>	Julie Janson	A contemporary play which combines family life, young love, a football match and a debutante ball with political activism, racial discrimination and uneasy relations with police (the 'gunjies').
2000	<i>Radiance</i>	Louis Nowra	An exuberant story of three Indigenous half-sisters with little in common except for the ghosts of their childhood who gather, in a tropical

			Queensland landscape, for their mother's funeral.
2000	<i>Burst of Summer</i>	Oriel Gray	A social-realist play set in a country milk bar and dealing with racial prejudice as it explores a town divided over a new housing development for the Aboriginal population.
2001	<i>Holy Day</i>	Andrew Bovell	Revolving around a woman's contested claim that Aborigines have murdered her husband and stolen her infant child, this is a mystery that draws together the lives of four women and their men, all struggling to survive in a hostile and misunderstood landscape.
2003	<i>Inheritance</i>	Hannie Rayson	A powerful family saga dealing with the divisions between the city and the busy, black and white, and duty and freedom.
2003	<i>Wonderlands</i>	Katherine Thomson	A drama about native title and ownership of an outback property.
2005	<i>Children of the Black Skirt</i>	Angela Betzien	An evocative gothic fairytale for young people which explores history, reconciliation, and the power of storytelling, following three lost children who discover an abandoned orphanage in the bush and learn a history of Australia through the spirits of children who have lived there, from convict times, through to World War III, the Stolen Generation and beyond.
2007	<i>The School of Arts</i>	Billie Brown	Set in 1967—the year of the constitutional referendum which recognised Aboriginal people as part of the Australian population—this play intertwines suspense, humour and mystery in a story based on a visit to a small country town by a company of actors to perform Shakespeare in the School of Arts Hall, all the while offering insights into a significant time in Australia's history.
2007	<i>Image in the Clay</i>	David Ireland	A blend of realism and poetry in a stark portrait of a rural

			Aboriginal family in the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> Century.
2013	<i>Deadly Eh?!</i>	Sue Rider	Powerful, dynamic theatre about identity, belonging, and the courage to be yourself, which tackles and dispels cultural stereotypes to explore what it really means to be Aboriginal.
2013	<i>My Story Your Story</i>	Sue Rider	A play which promotes the idea that, whether from a remote Indigenous community to the bright lights of the city, everybody's story is worth telling.
2014	<i>Head Full of Love</i>	Alana Valentine	Set against the backdrop of the Annual Alice Springs Beanie Festival, this is a portrait of the complexity of cross-cultural relationship rewoven—like a beanie—into a simple and humble beauty.
2014	<i>Today We're Alive</i>	Linden Wilkinson	A verbatim play about the efforts, 100 years after the Myall Creek Massacre, to create a fitting memorial to this event, which led to a powerful experience of reconciliation and healing for the descendants of the victims and murderers alike.
2015	<i>Black Diggers</i>	Tom Wright	A story of honour and sacrifice that has been covered up and almost forgotten, paying tribute to the lives and deaths of the Indigenous soldiers who fought for the British Commonwealth in World War I.

For more information and ideas, you may like to visit:  
<https://australianplays.org/category/indigenous-themes>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playwrights

The list below provides the names of a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playwrights, including some whose works may not be accessible in print form, but which have played an important role in the history of Indigenous Australian drama/theatre. You may wish to research these playwrights and see if you can identify any that have come from your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Upon further research, you may also notice that many of these playwrights have also played a valuable role in the novel-writing, poetry, music, directing, acting or wider Arts sphere, demonstrating their great talents and strength.

[Alberts, Jada](#)  
[Anderson, Tammy](#)  
[Bennell, Eddie](#)  
[Bennett, Roger](#)  
[Blackmore, Ernie](#)  
[Bostock, Gerry](#)  
[Charles, Jack](#)  
[Cheetham, Deborah](#)  
[Chi, Jimmy](#)  
[Cleven, Vivienne](#)  
[Cook, Sam](#)  
[Craigie, Cathie](#)  
[Davis, Jack](#)  
[Enoch, Wesley](#)  
[Everett, Jim](#)  
[Frankland, Richard](#)  
[Gilbert, Kevin](#)  
[Harding, John](#)  
[Harrison, Jane](#)  
[James, Andrea](#)

[Janson, Julie](#)  
[Johnson, Colleen](#)  
[Johnson, Eva](#)  
[Mailman, Deborah](#)  
[Maza, Bob](#)  
[Merritt, Robert](#)  
[Milroy, David](#)  
[Milroy, Jadah](#)  
[Newcastle, Anthony](#)  
[Oodgeroo Noonuccal \(Kath Walker\)](#)  
[Purcell, Leah](#)  
[Rigney, Tracey](#)  
[Sam, Maryanne](#)  
[Sheppard, Mark](#)  
[Utemorrhah, Daisy](#)  
[Walley, Richard](#)  
[Watson, Sam](#)  
[Weller, Archie](#)  
[Winmar, Dallas](#)

For more information and ideas, you may also like to visit:  
<https://australianplays.org/category/indigenous-playwright>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre/Stage Actors

The list below provides the names of a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander actors, past and present. While this focuses on theatre/stage actors, you may notice that many of these have also played screen acting roles<sup>3</sup>. Many have also contributed to the wider Arts sphere as playwrights, poets, novelists musicians or directors, for example.

- Belling, Kylie
- Bennett, Roger
- Charles, Jack
- Cheetham, Deborah
- Enoch, Wesley
- Farmer, Kylie
- Harding, John
- Johnson, Eva
- Kelly, Ray
- Lawford, Ningali
- Lewis, Tom. E
- Mailman, Deborah
- Maza Long, Rachael
- Purcell, Leah
- Saunders, Justine
- Sheppard, Mark
- Syron, Brian
- Tovey, Noel

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<sup>3</sup> For a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen (film/television) actors, please see the Media Arts resource guide.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dramatic Theatre Directors

The list below provides the names of a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander directors, past and present. While this focuses on theatre/stage directors, you may notice that many of these have also played screen directorship roles<sup>4</sup>. Many have also contributed to the wider Arts sphere as playwrights, poets, novelists musicians or actors, for example.

- Cheetham, Deborah
- Davis, Jack
- Enoch, Wesley
- Johnson, Eva
- Maza, Bob
- Maza Long, Rachael
- Milroy, David
- Syron, Brian
- Walley, Richard

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<sup>4</sup> For a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen (film/television) directors, please see the Media Arts resource guide. For a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance directors, please see the Dance resource guide.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Companies/Dramatic Arts Institutions

The following list includes several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Companies or Dramatic Arts institutions that are either active today, or have played a very active role in the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander theatre in Australia. While dance, music and visual arts are often important features of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama/performing arts, please see The Arts—Dance, The Arts—Music and The Arts—Visual Arts resource guides for more dance, music or visual arts-specific organisational lists. On a related note, you may find that, in your local area, it is actually your local Art Centre<sup>5</sup>, Language<sup>6</sup>/Culture Centre, or another community organisation that acts as the main host for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dramatic arts events.

- [Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts](#)
- EORA Centre for Visual and Performing Arts
- [Ilbejerri Theatre Company](#)
- Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts
- Marli Biyol
- [Natjul Indigenous Performing Arts](#)
- [Mooghalin Performing Arts](#)
- Nindethana Theatre
- National Black Theatre
- [Yirra Yaakin Noongar Theatre](#)

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<sup>5</sup> For a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Centres, please see the Visual Arts resource guide.

<sup>6</sup> For a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Centres, please see the Languages resource guide.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Drama Celebratory Events

The list below features a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama festivals or celebratory events.

- [Balnaves Foundation Indigenous Playwrights Awards](#)
- [National Indigenous Arts Awards](#)
- [Victorian Indigenous Performing Arts \(VIPA\) Awards](#)
- [Yellamundie National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playwriting Festival](#)

For more information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander celebratory events pertaining to The Arts more broadly, you may also like to visit:

- <http://www.australia.com/en/search.html?q=aboriginal+events>
- <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-arts/>
- <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-arts/national-indigenous-arts-awards/>
- <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/events>
- <http://www.tourism.australia.com/aboriginal/festivals-and-events.aspx>

## Other Online Guides/Reference Materials

- Australian Council for the Arts (2007) *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian performing arts (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*,  
[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/symphony/extension/richtext\\_redactor/getfile/?name=42f208904890560b1eb1194724637ee6.pdf](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/symphony/extension/richtext_redactor/getfile/?name=42f208904890560b1eb1194724637ee6.pdf)
- Blackfella Films (2008) *The Black Book Directory*,  
<http://www.theblackbook.org.au/directory.asp>
- Blackfella Films (2008) *The Black Book Library*,  
<http://www.theblackbook.org.au/library.asp>
- Casey, M. & Craigie, C. (2011) *A Brief History of Indigenous Australian Contemporary Theatre*, Australian Script Centre,  
[http://australianplays.org/assets/files/resource/doc/BlakStage\\_Essay\\_ABriefHistory.pdf](http://australianplays.org/assets/files/resource/doc/BlakStage_Essay_ABriefHistory.pdf)
- Drama Australia (2007) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guidelines for Drama/Theatre Education*,  
<http://www.dramaaustralia.org.au/assets/files/ATSIdguidlinesFinalSept07.pdf>

## Reflective Questions for Drama Staff and Students

- How have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories influenced Australian dramatic arts, and what active role do these cultures and histories play today?
- Choose two plays—one by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander playwright and one by a non-Indigenous playwright—each set in a similar place or time period, or exploring similar themes. What other similarities do these plays exhibit, and/or how are they different?
- Can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, perspectives and performance styles be adequately or appropriately represented by non-Indigenous Australians?
- How might questions of ownership, authority and authenticity be important when considering the adoption or adaptation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performance conventions in the ‘Western’ theatre?
- Choose to research an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander playwright, director or actor. What is the importance of his or her contributions to dramatic arts on either a local or (inter)national scale?
- What is the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dramatic arts, and music, media, dance and/or visual arts? Why are these relationships important? How are they similar or different to non-Indigenous cross-arts collaboration, either in style or purpose?
- Where possible, organise an excursion to a public Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performance—whether a theatre-based performance, or a public corroboree event hosted by your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Centre, Language/Culture Centre, or another community organisation. What messages did you receive from this performance, and how did it make you feel? How was it similar or different to non-Indigenous performances that you have attended?
- How might your school or early learning centre contribute to the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dramatic arts, and dramatic artists?
- In a landmark speech about racism in theatre at the 2014 National Play Festival, Indigenous Playwright Andrew Bovell accused Australian theatre as being dominantly and inequitably ‘white.’ Do you agree or disagree with this statement, and why? How does this discussion sit within a bigger/wider discussion of racism in Australia?
- How can embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories into the study and practice of Drama help to foster reconciliation?