

## 2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method

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# **2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method**

Michael Leslie

A thesis in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts



University of New South Wales Art and Design

December 2016

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This project records my history as an Aboriginal dancer who trained both in Australia and the USA. The end result of this history is a new Aboriginal Dance Method, which seeks a synthesis with African American dance, and other contemporary dance forms. In describing This new form, is informed by Gamilaraay Language, culture, mammals, birds, reptiles, qualities, elements, moving, parts of the body, material culture, water, doing, places, times, and questions.

The dance sequence will include contemporary techno music and theatre to synthesise and to explore this new dance typology via the use of 100 steps drawn from the Gamilaraay language. These 100 steps are the core creation of this Masters. Is it possible to synthesise into another essentially "Aboriginal Dance Method" modern European ballet, physical theatre, African American dance and both ancient and modern Aboriginal dance types?

The urban Aborigine is often divorced, like myself, from traditional initiation ceremony and hence cultural Rights of Passage. Loss of ritual and ceremony coupled with racism and no safe place to exist in society, has generated a mark milestone of institutionalism or goal time as a mark of being a man. Traditional ceremonies are often replaced by jail time for young Aboriginal men. Is it possible to create a major dance form, which celebrates and acknowledges these rights, by reflecting on the politics of disproportional Aboriginal incarceration?

Can this new dance form, described in my thesis in 100 steps, or compressed movements, add to the choices for young Aboriginal dancers who are seeking to transcend cultural turmoil and to heal its wounds?

This paper addresses the history of Racial Prejudice in Australia of incarceration and its relationship to initiation and the rights of passage for Aboriginal males in incarceration. 92 % of all Aboriginal prisoners are males. Aboriginal people account for 25 % of Australia's prison population 14 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal people.

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## Abstract

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The dance sequence will include contemporary techno music and theatre to synthesise and to explore this new dance typology via the use of 100 steps drawn from the Gamilaraay language. These 100 steps are the core creation of this Masters. Is it possible to synthesise into another essentially "Aboriginal Dance Method" modern European ballet, physical theatre, African American dance and both ancient and modern Aboriginal dance types?

The urban Aborigine is often divorced, like myself, from traditional initiation ceremony and hence cultural rights of passage. Loss of ritual and ceremony coupled with racism and no safe place to exist in society, has generated a mark milestone of institutionalism or goal time as a mark of being a man. Traditional ceremonies are often replaced by jail time for young Aboriginal men. Is it possible to create a major dance form, which celebrates and acknowledges these rights, by reflecting on the politics of disproportional Aboriginal incarceration?

Can this new dance form, described in my thesis in 100 steps, or compressed movements, add to the choices for young Aboriginal dancers who are seeking to transcend cultural turmoil and to heal its wounds?

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## INTRODUCTION

The performance is titled '2.5'. This title is a number, seemingly meaningless. To me, this title is the translation of my people into a numeric, a statistic, a measurement by Western standards; Aboriginal people are the invisible minority in this country. We are the 2.5.

This project addresses the history of institutional racism in Australia. It looks at the way in which attitudes from early colonial history – seen in events such as the Myall Creek Massacre – have been passed down and incorporated into attitudes towards Aboriginal people. In particular, I am interested in how my people, Kamilaroi people, have been subjected to racism. This project is not a history of colonial Australia. Rather, it is a story about how this history affects my people and manifests itself on my body. In this sense, this is a story of how the history of colonialism is mapped onto my body and the histories that establish the background to my study; this is first and foremost a subjective account. It needs to be, because my life has been marked by racism on my body. In other words, I am unable to escape this history, or live outside of it because the institutional racism in Australia will not let me.

The approach taken by this project combines historical research with my own personal history: me as a dancer, an Aboriginal man, and an outsider in my own country. This position of alienation is central: feeling like I am a part of something, yet removed from it at the same time.

This is reflected in the methodological approach taken by this project. I tell stories, I attempt to write them down and put them on paper, yet I always feel like that will not capture my experience somehow. Words never seem to do justice to what I feel and think. Yet, I feel the urge to express myself because history keeps coming back. Therefore, the methodology explores a historical survey of colonial history in Australia, an overview of dancing techniques that have influenced me (including key practitioners), and a plan of the key steps of my performance.

"2.5" begins with the examination of Institutional and widespread incarceration of my people and explores this as an alternative rite of passage for young men. Even though we are presumably living in the age of post-colonialism, the effects and attitudes towards Aboriginal people are still very much in tune with those of two centuries ago. My project is autobiographical for two reasons. First, I felt this history on my body. I witnessed

friends and relatives as subjects of this history. This is still continuing, tucked away from the spotlight of media and public interest. Second, I cannot remove myself from this history and attempt to write an objective account. I feel that I am still living this history every day. Because of this, my experience in dance enables me to express this history through movement of my body. But even learning how to be a dancer is connected to racism. In this way, for me to dance is to perform this history, to narrate the events of my life and the heritage of my people.

## CHAPTER 1: INVASION AND OCCUPATION

Prior to 1788 my people had no contact with the world outside of Australia. Suddenly, we're confronted by white people. The British colonisers declared that before their invasion the continent of Australia was not inhabited by humans, it was described as 'Terra Nullius'. This lie was used to take what they wanted. My people were forced and pushed further and further away from their traditional lands. Hunted like wild animals, poisoned, shot, treated like dogs, chained like dogs, considered lower than a dog. Families were broken up, their children taken away from them and sent to be "civilised"; sacred sites destroyed; our staple diet of animals were hunted and killed intentionally, many of my people died of starvation. In 1992, the High Court of Australia handed down its famous ruling, known as Mabo. The law of Terra Nullius was made invalid. The Court ruled that my people were the first human occupants of Australia. It had taken 227 years, 4 months, and 23 days to rewrite the wrong.

The Australian police force was born from the British soldiers of the criminal settlement. It was the role of the early forces to assist colonisers progressing inland. Rules of dispersion were put into practice to displace my people from their country, cruelty against those who opposed settlement, resulting in the eradication of many of my people. They used total control processes to dismiss, massacre and abuse my people for centuries under authoritarian government acts. This was a war which provoked resistance and ongoing slaughter.

### MYALL CREEK MASSACRE:

The killings and exploitation of my people by whites continued well into the twentieth century. Gangs of stockmen would go on Aboriginal hunts named "a big bush whack" or "a drive". On the 10 April 1938, in New England near Bingarra, 556 kilometres North West from Sydney, the Myall Creek Massacre took place. This area was seen as a last frontier, pastoralists exercised land grabs into the region.

Armed white stockman rode onto Henry Dangar's at Myall Creek station with intention to do harm—it was premeditated murder. These armed men waited for the station manager and his labourers to go to work on another pastoralist property, leaving 28 vulnerable people. My people were roped together like dogs and taken out bush and slaughtered, mutilated, decapitated and burnt to avoid detection. The weapons used were swords and knives. Stockmen and shepherds were involved. It happened 78 years ago, in the lifetime

of my family members. This means that the massacre was a lived experience of genocide and trauma for my family. The stockmen would have had approval from their employers, they were convicts and could not leave the station without the permission. They came back boasting about what they had done.

The station manager, William Hobbs, notified the authorities of the massacre. The Massacre became headline news. The Sydney Morning Herald ran a story causing a scandal, dividing the colonial society but the paper spoke for the racist majority. The men went to trial in Sydney and were acquitted of the charges to cheering crowd. The all white jury took twenty minutes to deliberate and found the verdict by way of a technicality. One of the jurors was later quoted in the Australian as saying:

“I look on the blacks as a set of monkeys and the sooner they are exterminated from the face of the earth, the better.”

“I knew the men were guilty of murder but I would never see a white man hanged for killing a black.”

Subsequently, they were retried found guilty of other charges and hung. This was the first time white men had been brought to justice for murdering Aboriginal people. As one would expect the news was not welcomed; in Sydney there was outrage.

“We want neither the classic nor the romantic savage here. We have far too many of the murderous wretches about us already.”

“The whole gang of black animals is not worth the money the colonists will have to pay for printing the silly court documents on which we have already wasted too much time.”<sup>1</sup>

On Australia Day January 26, 1838 at the remote stream of Waterloo creek in northern NSW, mounted police and convict stockman under Major J Munns marked the occasion by massacring up to 300 of my people. Munns and his criminal troopers were all pardoned. The North West Moree area has had a long history of racial hatred, violence and murder.

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<sup>1</sup>Parliament New South Wales, legislative Assembly Myall Creek Massacre, Business of the house. Retrieved (April 2016) <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/hansart>. Boome, R 2012, Myall Creek Massacre, audio podcast Melbourne 11 April available from: (11 April 2012), <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2012/podcasts-old/the-myall-creek-massacre/transcript>

In November 1982 a similar incident happened 100-plus years after the Myall and Waterloo creek massacre. The Ned Kelly bar in Moree was a regular for middle class young whites and a number of them had been drinking at the bar that day. Ronald 'Cheeky' McIntosh, Lyall Munro Jnr, a relative, and others arrived at the pub. Cheeky approached the bar to order drinks; the bar manager refuses to serve him since Lyall Munro Jnr was barred from the pub. The white patrons supported the white manager, racial tensions arose and room divided into groups. Racial abuse was hurled back and forth until a violent brawl erupted. Police were called and arrived at the pub to many brawling. They called for reinforcements.

## INJUSTICE

Following the pub brawl my people head towards Endeavour Lane. The whites congregated outside the bar and my people decided to make a stand at the lane. The whites returned with guns and sneaked to a levee bank where they fire around 20 rounds. Ronald 'Cheeky' McIntosh, Warren Tighe and Stephanie Duke are shot.

Word got around town of the shooting. The numbers were increasing outside the hospital. Once hearing the news that Cheeky was dead emotions and anger rose; people rioted, walking over the bridge to the town centre, smashing cars and shop front windows. The Manager of the Imperial Hotel shot Michael Foote in the thigh, arm and back. The large numbers of police, the Tactical Response Group (TRG), in all their riot gear round up and herd my people "Alabama-style" out of town, back to the mission. There were police cars, wagons, lights and sirens, police on foot brandishing shotguns and pistols.

The perpetrators were caught and charged for the murder and malicious wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm to Ronald 'Cheeky' McIntosh, Stephanie Duke, Warren Tighe and Michael Foote. They were being tried by their peers - the jury were 12 white people, no black peers. They were charged with the lesser crime of manslaughter and one walked.

The effect of British settlement upon my people led to near extinction within 120 years. The impacts of genocide, linguicide, war and terrorism have left scars and wounds on contemporary living – post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Racism is institutionalised in the Australian police force and they are responsible for the genocide of my people in this country dating back to the first arrival in 1788. Bigotry and racism in the criminal justice system is alive and well, fair and equitable justice is rare for my people. Instead, penal “lock- em-up” policies and practices triumph.

The history of racial profiling continues. When my people are not able to exist on their traditional lands they are more likely to come into conflict with the law. There are many times when men and women have been flogged or abused by police. Every day of the week my people are charged with disorderly conduct, 15 times more likely to be charged for swearing. In Wickham, Western Australia, my people have been arrested for ‘shouting’ at the police. Who the fuck gets arrested for shouting at the police? They are dragged before the courts for these incredibly trivial offences.

My people are more heavily policed and let off less under discretionary powers held by the police. Higher imprisonment rates are not reflective of higher crime rates but harsher sentencing, bail laws, and a move away from alternative sentencing measures.

From 1 January 1981 to 31 May 1989, 99 of my people died suspiciously and murdered whilst in police custody sparking the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody (11 of my people were dying per year). The Commission handed down its bullshit findings in 1991 with 330 recommendations. Since the Royal Commission, 330 of my people have died in custody and will continue to die. That is 19 people per year, 8 more than before the Royal Commission. These people were sons, daughters, uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters, and cousins and their deaths could have been avoided.

## CHAPTER 2 – MY EARLY DAYS

I started dancing very late, at the age of 19. I was born in the mid 1950’s in Gunnedah, North West NSW, Kamilaroi country, dad’s country. Times were extremely tough, mum and dad both worked: dad worked on the railway, mum would pick up work cleaning (domestic) in homes or in factories. I come from a loving family, a creative family of dancers, painters and carvers. We moved around as a family living in a variety of towns like Moree and Gunnedah in the northwest of NSW; in Berowra, northern Sydney, our home was a tent; and Bradfield Park Lindfield, the upper north shore of Sydney and Liverpool NSW. My parents left the mission in Moree wanting to give us kids better

opportunities. Finally we resided in Miller Green Valley, a new housing commission estate in Liverpool, Western Sydney in 1964. We were one of the first Aboriginal families to move into that area, everyone there were white, working class, battlers.

I worked as the local newspaper boy pulling the barrow full of newspapers. I would signal by blowing the whistle to notify customers. Friends and I would also sell newspapers at the Sydney Cricket Ground on weekends; we would scalp tickets for the finals whilst selling newspapers. I did not graduate from high school, my future prospects were bleak. I had aspirations to be a professional, but what? I became an apprentice welder, welding chassis for Millard caravans. I worked in flour mills, travelling back and forth from Sydney to Moree.

The Government law of the day was paternalistic and every consecutive Government since then has had the same policy of racism. Aboriginal people had the freedom to leave the mission at Mehi Crescent in Moree but if you chose to reside on the mission one had to abide by the racist Aboriginal policy. Still living under the Aboriginal Protection Act, there were still restrictions, permission was needed to get married, children were still being taken away.

Families were living in humpies along the Mehi River in the early 1970's. A permit was needed from the white manager to go to town, there was no public transport. I remember an old asian man in a big truck with many compartments coming into the mission; he was selling a variety of things to the people on the 'mish'.

A consistent stream of white tourists visited the mission, where they came from I don't know. They came in buses taking pictures of the blacks, observing us like we were animals in a zoo. We were always told to go inside when they were on 'safari'. People had to walk everywhere, so to go to town we took a short cut along a track by the riverbank. Segregation was flourishing. There was a school on the mission that we attended. Admission into the local cinema was allowed with blacks up the front. Blacks were barred from the town swimming pool. This eventually changed due to the Freedom Rides to allow blacks to swim in the town pool.

Dance would have been the furthestest thing from my mind. Then one day I viewed a television commercial using pop art, a shampoo product called Luxene with sexy female dancers, I was hooked. Taking the initiative I signed up and commenced dance classes at

the Bodenwieser Dance Centre on Broadway in Chippendale, Sydney; founded by Mrs Margaret Chapple, a pioneer of Australian Contemporary Dance.

I first met Carole Johnston at Bodenwieser, she invited me to attend a six-week workshop at Black Theatre in Redfern. Carole Johnston was an African American dancer formerly from the Eleo Pomare Dance Company, New York City and Founder of National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA). Carole was a graduate of the prestigious Julliard's School in NYC, an activist and arts administrator. Carole joined the Eleo Pomare Dance Company in 1966 and became principal dancer with the company. Eleo, labeled the angry black man of modern dance, had a reputation for "telling it like it is", portrayed the black experience, the struggle, injustices and racism through his dance.

The Company was featured in the Harlem's Cultural Dance Mobile, along with other talented emerging black choreographers in the 1960's and 1970's. The Fred Benjamin Dance Company and many more were also featured in the Dance Mobile. The Dance Mobile was a flat bed trailer truck transformed into a travelling performance space that went into the boroughs and neighbourhoods in NYC.

Fred Benjamin was unique, a dancer choreographer combining classical technique with modern jazz into a highly propulsive style. Fred was one of my lecturers in Jazz and he was an awesome teacher and Chair of the Jazz Department at the Ailey school.

In 1972 the Eleo Pomare Dance Company toured and performed at the Adelaide Arts Festival. Carole remained in Australia briefly for 3 months, receiving funding. Carole left Australia for a time and on her return she resided in Redfern where there was a movement of defiance and self-determination, a voice of protest and social commentary, artistic expression and protest through theatre at Black Theatre.

This led to a 6 week workshop of Dance, Acting, Voice, Cultural Dance from Mornington Island, Film Editing and Script Writing at Black Theatre. People would attend from all over Australia: Bob Maza, Mac Silva, Kath Walker, Jack Davis, Bobbi Sykes, Marcia Langton, Wayne Nicole, Freddie Reynolds, Maroochy Baramba, Cheryl Stone, Lillian Crombie, Dorothy Randall and many more. Lecturers were Carole Johnston, Brian Syron, Steve Costaine, Andy Reece, Daryl Williams and many more.

Prior to 1975 there were only two female Aboriginal dancers in Australia. Ms Mary Miller WA, dancer with the WA Ballet 1960, and Ms Roslyn Watson, trained at the Australian Ballet School, Dance Theatre of Harlem NYC, Dance Company of NSW, Australian Dance Theatre and the QLD Ballet.

Carole Johnston had a vision and expertise as an educator, dancer and arts administrator and this led to the birth of a unique dance school, a new dance form and dance company in Australia: NAISDA. The five founding students of NAISDA were Dorothea Randall, Cheryl Stone, Wayne Nicole (Deceased), Daryl Williams and me. We were pioneering individuals who were the foundation and the building blocks of black modern dance in Australia, contemporary Aboriginal Dance. Protest dances included Brown Skin Baby, Mangy Old Dog, Nullabor Prayer, Tent Embassy. Our Repertoire was a reflection of the times.



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Carole Johnston NAISDA, Glebe NSW

The National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Scheme (NAISDA) provided 'Careers in Dance', transcended state borders and cultural barriers, and was open to black youth across Australia. The School offered a three to five year full time dance and related arts program which was designed in the making; this school would lead the way in evolving dance in the tertiary education curriculum of Australia.

In 1976, the formation of the first part-time professional dance company called “Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre” (AIDT) arose out of the school to give a platform and voice to Aboriginal Contemporary expression to one of the world’s oldest living cultures. Through AIDT we became Cultural Ambassadors, by re-introducing not only Australians to its own unique culture but also to the world at large

We were dancers of the world, many of our lecturers were from around the world. We had African American dancers of the highest caliber from NYC dancers and performers from Broadway, touring shows to Australia. Ronnie Arnold, Teddy Williams, Raymond Robinson-Sawyer to name a few from the USA. Lucy, as well as Jumawang were from the Philippines. Lectured in Ballet, Modern dance and choreography. Chrissie Koltai, Graham Jones, Kai Tai Chan, Jane Farrell and Karen Kerkhoven were all teachers of mine.



Carole Johnston NAISDA Glebe NSW



Back, Lillian Crombie, Michael Leslie, Richard Talonga.

Front, Malcolm Cole (Deceased), Cheryl Stone and Carole Johnston.

Our first International performance was at the Second World Black and African Arts and Cultural Festival Arts Festival in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977 known as FESTAC'77 from 15 January to 12 February. Black artists came from all over the world more than 17,000 participants from over 50 countries, the largest cultural gathering ever held on the African landmass. The Festival composed of Dance, Music, Drama, Film, Literature and Exhibitions.

Aboriginal Australia's involvement in FESTAC '77 indicated how plentiful and diverse was the artistic talent they could draw from, representatives from each major artistic field. Kath Walker, Jack Davis, cultural dancers from Groote Eylandt and Aurukun, and the four members of the Aboriginal and Islander dance theatre Wayne Nicole, Richard Talonga, Michael Leslie, Lillian Crombie, Roslyn Watson (Roslyn was brought in to replace Cheryl Stone who was of non Aboriginal decent). The Aboriginal Arts board was committed to guaranteeing that Aboriginal participation in the festival was of the highest standard.

Mid year in 1977 the Aboriginal and Islander dance theatre—Cheryl Stone, Lillian Crombie, Wayne Nicole, Malcolm Cole, Richard Talonga, and myself, were invited to the South Pacific Arts Festival in Papeete Tahiti in French Polynesia. Funded by the Aboriginal Arts Board of Australia Council for the Arts. We were a sensation in Tahiti and we were invited to stay an extra week to perform in the Maison De La Grand Theatre. The French Ballet were the only others to perform in the theatre. Our repertoires were vibrant, exciting and sexy: trilogy by Marcia Hines, Harold Blair suite (First Aboriginal opera

singer), Mangy Old Dog by Bobby McCloud, Brown Skin Baby by Bob Randall, Nullabor Prayer and the Tent Embassy. On our way back to Australia we were invited to perform in Noumea at the Hotel Casino a commercial gig where we performed to packed houses.

We were students at NAISDA, not even one year old in its infancy, our technique was limited, we were raw, we were still training and yet we were already performing internationally at arts festivals, cultural ambassadors for Australia. We learnt our craft as dancers and performers through performing.

I worked with a number of dance companies, choreographers and freelance artists such as One Extra Dance Company, Graham Jones Kinetic Energy, Mike Mullins 'Bloodlines' Performance Art, employed on TV commercials, performing in clubs and fashion parades by Grace Brothers throughout their department stores around Sydney and metropolitan areas. They had the concept of having both male models and dancers on stage modelling and dancing. Richard Talonga and I were back up dancers to an African American singer and her band in St Leonard's North shore at the African Queen disco theatre restaurant.

In Sydney 1980 through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, I got to see Dance Theatre of Harlem, an all black ballet company renowned both as the first black classical ballet company and the first major ballet company to prioritise black dancers. It was vibrant, exciting, breath taking and the athleticism and flexibility inspired me.

I was awarded the Sir Winston Churchill fellowship in 1980 to study at the world-renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Centre. My referees were Carole Johnston, Chicka 'The Fox' Dixon and the legendary Keith Bain. Carole, while in the Commonwealth Bank, had seen a poster advertising the Winston Churchill fellowship. Carole took it upon herself to apply on my behalf. Carole felt I had the potential of being one of the world's best dancers and to be in an environment that was competitive and disciplined.



Mr. Alvin Ailey

I would get extra tutoring a few times a week from Valerie Tweedie as my ballet training was poor. I needed to be more competent with my technique which was a requirement when enrolling at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Centre. I did not audition for the school. To be accepted, entry into the certificate program, an audition or video is required. Carole was well known in New York City in the dance and theatre circles. It was through her endorsement I gained entry.



Richard Talonga and I, African Queen 1976

The dance training was the best in the world and discipline was out of this world, extremely demanding on you both physically and mentally. You would be pushed and pushed; it was relentless, Monday to Friday, five days a week. I was living in NYC on a student's allowance and it was tough. I questioned myself many times. Did I want to be here? Is this for me? I would live on porridge and bread to survive, hardly any money.

When Bobbi Sykes was studying at Harvard University in Boston and I at Ailey school I would travel on public holidays to Boston spending time with Bobbi. We became very close friends. She would speak to me of the importance of perseverance, determination and persistence. You have to make sacrifices. I was very fortunate to have this opportunity. I needed to see it through, to use these skills to educate, to empower our people and future generations. I had a responsibility to challenge and inspire our people as they did for my generation.

The Ailey School, in the heart of the theatre district of Broadway, was inspiring. The energy and excitement of performing to live music in the Horton class, played by professional musicians, evoked an emotion and strength in the quality of how you move and made you want to dance; it energises and feeds the spirit.

I studied the various techniques at the Ailey school in particular the Horton technique, a series of flat backs, lateral, attitude swings, pristine lines and powerful structure. My teachers of technique included: Ballet - Delores Brown; Horton - Anne Maria Forsyth; Grahame technique - Penny Franks, Carole Friedman, Dennis Jefferson; Jazz ballet - Fred Benjamin, Miguel Godreau; Men's ballet class - Walter Raines; Dunham technique - Joan Peters.

An awesome experience was when a number of selected students and myself from the certificate program were chosen to do workshops with guest choreographers such as Bill T. Jones, Ohad Naharin, Garth Fagan with pioneers dancers Dr Pearl Primus, the legendary Carmen de Lavallade, James Truitte and Talley Beattie. They were all fellow company members with Mr. Ailey in the Lester Horton Company, all direct students and dancers of Lester Horton, of his technique and of his dance company.

We were also invited to perform along side the Alvin Ailey American Dance theatre, the Alvin Ailey Repertory Company in 'Memoria', a work by Mr Ailey in honour of Joyce Trisler.

## INFLUENCES

There have been many individuals that have had a major influence on me as a dancer. African American dance has had the greatest impact, this what inspires me.

The kinaesthetic awareness assisted my creativity as I moved, using the senses of doing and feeling and visualisation as I performed and choreographed the solo of the Bird-man in Sally Morgan's theatrical production "Sister Girl". My character, the Bird-man, was a menacing enigmatic character that would visit an elderly female patient in hospital at night scaring and tormenting her. For my process in creating the movement for his character I looked at the storyline, scene, music and the relationship between the character, how he would walk, his movement entrance, and the set. I would take note of the music, visualise all the elements together from the set, props, characters. In addition, I would create the steps one by one to choreograph the dance. I'm a creative choreographer and I ask questions. Why would he do that? Why would he be motivated to go? I process ideas by performing the step physically, if I'm pleased I add them to the foundation and structure of the dance and re-evaluate again at a later time.

I aimed for full bodied, agile sensual and meticulous movements, airless jumps. I was inspired by a number of styles of dance from the Yolngu cultural dance of Arnhem Land and the Ailey African American Dance, which I had studied years ago as a student both at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Centre in New York City and at National Aboriginal and Islander Dance theatre in Sydney. Walking on the ball of the feet gives a sense to the audience of gliding across floor, knees bent, body contracted and hands flexed and in a shape like claws with an isolation of the rib cage inspired by the "devil dance".

In dance performances there should always be a spectacular moment from the performer, the "wow" moment. In Bird-man, that moment occurred with an earthy chassé into the floor with a 1-2-3 step into a deep wide parallel plié for preparation into a scissor kick action finishing with attitude leap (similar to a hurdler but higher) over the hospital bed with the actress sitting in the bed. The momentum and power for the jump travelled from the deep wide plié arms and of the legs. I glanced at her as I flew past her over the bed landing into a crouch position into the floor.

### **Lester Horton - His Influences, His Company, His Legacy**

Lester Horton is renowned for the Horton technique and theatrical staging themes of biblical accounts and of social and political protest. He was a mentor to Mr. Ailey, Carmen De Lavallade, Joyce Trisler, James Truitte and Tally Beattie (choreographer of "Stack Up").

Lester Horton was fascinated with studying the dance and culture of a number of the First Nations people. Horton laid the groundwork for Mr Ailey to create the most popular

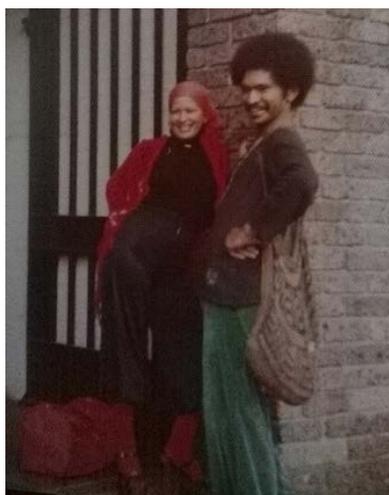
modern dance work of all time, “Revelations”, which has been performed to 50 million people. Mr. Ailey extended the technique to create a form of movement all his own.

I was to meet Mr. Ailey on a number of occasions on my arrival in NY when he came into a class that I was in and observed. He would be at the school regularly if the company was not touring. Ms. Pearl Primus, an artist, educator, social activist, dancer, anthropologist and choreographer, a talented dancer of her era, created dances addressing the African-American experience and racial cruelty such as Strange Fruit (1943), a dance piece of a woman who reflects witnessing a hanging. I also had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Primus when I was enrolled as a student in 1981-83 at the Ailey school. Ms. Primus and I became friends and she invited me as a guest to the Buffalo State University, Upstate NY to give a lecture, a demonstration and an insight into the Aboriginal experience to her students.

### **The Five Founding Members of NAISDA**

Cheryl Stone is a South African, her family fled South Africa and settled in Perth WA in early 1969. Cheryl is a pioneer of Black Modern dance in Australia, a founding student of NAISDA, AIDT and co-founder of Bangarra Dance theatre. Cheryl played an integral part in the building, shaping, and creation of Australia’s first Aboriginal contemporary dance theatre company, transforming the stereotypical images of Aboriginal Australia, nationally and internationally.

Cheryl was inspired to be a dancer due to her friend Wayne Nicole, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancer participating in the workshops at Black theatre in Redfern.



Cheryl Stone and Wayne Nicole  
Bodenweiser Dance Centre, Chippendale, NSW

In 1982, Cheryl was the proud recipient of scholarships from the Australian Arts Council, enabling her to study at the Ailey School. Her primary goal for this study was to explore the roots and cross cultural integration of African Dance Styles in the West at the same time continuing her study of the Catherine Dunham and Martha Graham techniques.

She toured Europe with the renowned South African pianist Dollar Brand aka Abdullah Ibrahim (with some of South Africa's most revered artists in exile), as dancer/actor and assistant Choreographer in his production of "Kalahari Liberation Opera". Cheryl continued to perform and teach.

Wayne Nicole hails from Mosman in North Queensland, the older brother of us all. We were like a family. Wayne was a very disciplined, dedicated, motivated, talented and beautiful dancer. He was in Sydney undertaking dance classes with Carole prior to the 6 weeks workshop at Black Theatre. Wayne created a work, "Under Water Study", a solo signature work of Wayne's. Wayne was the first graduate of NAISDA to go abroad and he danced with Maas Movers Dance Company (MAAS) in London.

Another influence was Dorothea Randall, for her early groundbreaking works which were composed of Aboriginal inspired techniques with a distinct flavour of Aboriginal contemporary modern dance (Bangarra style of dance). Dorothea graduated from NAISDA after 3 years. On her graduation she move and lived in Canberra. She founded the Children's Performing Group spending several more years in Canberra before moving back to Darwin Northern Territory. Dorothea is the daughter Bob Randall, a well-known singer/songwriter and activist. As one of the stolen generation he was the original songwriter and singer of "Brown Skin Baby", a relevant song of the times that sings of the stolen generation. A solo dance for females, "Brown Skin Baby" was created by Carole with both Cheryl and Dorothea in mind.

"Devil Dance" was created by Dorothy Randall, the first time for main stream stage both nationally and internationally with a male solo performed for Richard Talonga, an awesome dancer. This was inspired by the Yolgnu people's cultural devil dance of Arnhem Land. Dorothea went on to create woman's solo "Witchary Woman", this was a work in progress throughout the NAISDA years and premiered in 1988 with Bangarra Dance Theatre touring to Finland and Germany. It became one of the principal works created for both Cheryl and Dorothea.

Darryl Williams, a Lardil cultural man from Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria North Queensland, was a participant at the 6-week workshop at Black Theatre Redfern and a Founding member of NAISDA. Darryl would stay at NAISDA then return home. He would be instrumental in future enrolments from Mornington Island at NAISDA. A unique institution in that it attracted young people from a remote community, who were still active in religious spiritual practice, to attend an institution in Sydney. Darryl would go home and would be instrumental in establishing the Woomera Dancers, a touring Aboriginal troupe from Mornington Island known nationally and internationally. My family has had a long history and association with the Mornington mob.

**Picking up themes of Racism, Institutionalism, Lost Ceremony/ Ritual, yearning/ Grief for culture, Reclamation of Culture and Language.**

I was a Founding partner of the Marrugeku Physical Theatre Company, WA. I also worked at Aboriginal Arts and Crafts at the Rocks, Sydney in the storeroom packing for delivery of artefacts. Whilst working there I gained an insight into the MIMI spirit of Gunbalanya Oenpelli from Arnhem Land. The MIMI spirit, a stick like figure who lives in the crevices of the rocks in the escarpments, blowing holes in the rock to come out at night to sing dance and make love; he is scared of the wind as they have short necks that would easily snap. In 1992, I had seen Stalkers perform on stilts at the Festival of Perth on the lawns of the University of Western Australia, straight away seeing the similarities in their movement with the MIMI, how they ran crouched and bent. I was fascinated that they were just like the dancing images of the MIMI on the bark paintings. Stalkers held sticks in both hands similar to the ones used for skiing on the snow. When crouched on all fours the movement is animalistic with the elongation of the body and the movement big and broad with deep pliés.

I approached Henry Boston General Manager of the Festival of Perth and the Festival of Perth commissioned "MIMI", a site-specific physical theatre piece. Marrugeku (meaning clever people) Physical Theatre Company was born with a collaboration between the community of Gunbalanya, Stalkers and myself. We commenced cultural negotiations with Thomson Yulidjirri of Gunbalanya, custodian responsible for the stories of the MIMI, seeking their permission to create this work and collaborate with them giving input into the creation of MIMI and employment in the production. We did a residency in the

community, creating the work, the collaboration. The company was established and composed of Marriageku with the Community of Gunbalanya, Stalkers and myself.

In the latter part of my 40 year career I have been honoured both here and abroad for my work. In 2010, I received the Australia Councils, Red Ochre Award for my life long contribution to the Performing Arts in Australia. In 2011 at the 23rd International Association for Blacks in Dance IABD in Los Angeles California, I was honoured by the Lula Washington Dance Theatre LWDT and IABD as the 2011 International Unsung Hero with four African Americans dancers and choreographers for their contribution to dance.

## CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

My methodology invents a new and original dance technique linking Modern Ballet, Physical Theatre, African American Dance, and new Aboriginal dance methods beyond cultural tourism and homogenised Aboriginal contemporary dance.



(Visualisation of the performance - See below for steps sequence)

### THE DEVICES

I have seen and been part of the great progress over the last 30 years within Aboriginal Contemporary dance, via groups like Bangarra. However the tendency is for these groups to prejudice entertainment over experimentation and excellence. I lament this lack of true experimentation and the failure to forge a greater understanding of our difference in technique.

My aspiration is to understand how my work as a choreographer has defined itself as a unique practice, by combining western modern movement with Aboriginal movement, breathing and physical theatre and African American dance.

As I sift through and define my “devices” and their historical and theoretical foundations, I have endeavoured to shape them into a framework for “The Australian Method”.

In particular I have cited “circular breathing” Yidaki (Didjeridoo) and “physical theatre” as being critical elements within my work. These essential forces, coupling physical theatre with continuous breathing, make a direct linkage to Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal dance phases. To reinforce this phenomenon I will use Gamilaroy language to focus my invented steps.

Fundamental to this process is my track record and a commitment to my people to advance contemporary Dance and Art in Australia.

My central research questions are aligned with questions confronting my position as an urban Aborigine and similar indigenous people around the world:

**What was my coming of age ritual as an urban Aboriginal man?  
Is it possible to embody these concerns within a contemporary performance?**



*This image shows Dhuwa, Initiation ceremony in Ramingining North Eastern Arnhem Land  
This scene lies at the genesis of my work. The witnessing of an initiation of boys – something  
of which I was deprived – only now to realise it through this thesis and 2.5.*





## THE MUSICAL SCORE

The choice of techno music is inspired by a story of my niece Katie, who was arrested, held in a cell, verbally abused, bashed and tormented with techno music. I have used a repetitive intricate layering of sounds, melody's, and rhythmical elements with various synthesisers, and computer programs to torture. Emotions going haywire, confined, smothering, repetitive: the techno music captures all these emotions I am feeling. My emotions and actions movement are defiant, staunch, strong and angry in response to the way I have been treated.

Sonata Piano and Violin by Henry Cowell captures the emotion in the movement I visualised, the classic western image of a father riding off into the sunset, wife and child stand with arms around each other waving goodbye from the family home. Accepting my environment my thoughts of family and home.

## THE 100 STEPS

I have reclaimed 100 words from Gamilaraay Language into art and dance. This is not only an artistic reclamation of language but a political act against linguicide. The colonial system attempted to destroy and forbid the use of our languages and with me I have

successfully reclaimed, refurbished and renewed language into contemporary art and dance.

1 Bagu - Flying Squirrel: (honey Glider Possum) Inspiration Hip-hop. Preparation counted or said with a rhythm Yil 1- aa 2- lu 3 123 or 1&2 similar to a Chinese barrel role in the air full rotation of body grabbing both legs pulling tight against torso. Then landing flat face down. Rolling into the floor with a sequence of rolls coming to a halt. Gaining composure.



2 BARURRA - Red Kangaroo: The anatomical characteristics of the kangaroo have inspired this contemporary movement. Staunch and powerful with muscular shoulders and elongated torso and presence when standing upright - the stance is very intimidating when threatened.



3 UDJA-Long stretched: Contemporary, lyrical smooth sustained movement slow and controlled. Stepping right leg into wide second position turned out. Bending of the right knee, left leg is straight and stretched, with flexed foot. Left buttock on the THAWUN arms in second parallel reaching to the left leg. Pull up of the torso parallel to the leg and arms parallel to left leg stretched.

4 LUNG: Position in either 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> where only one knee is bent and the other straight

5 WARAGAAL - Sequence: Left hand is placed on the floor far forward reaching of the torso arm bent to gain power to push off into a slide left knee. THINBIRR – Knee: Contemporary slide left knee with momentum from left arm gliding with a kick through of right leg giving the power. THAWUN – Dirt: Contemporary and earthy feel the dirt.

6 WHURRAAY - Black Snake: Hip-hop, tricking inspired movement.

7 BUNINGA Striking: At GANDJIBAL Policeman - BIGUUN Pig lengthening head to toe, Left leg bent preparation dive into a rotation of the hip, WIRA –Twist, BIRI – Chest:

8 BUULI – Whirlwind: Sequence of travelling turns in relevé arms in second position palms up, representing the circular smooth movement of the whirlwind. Confused, lost, frustrated, confined, assessing the environment.



9 YILLI – Angry: Wild tension gradually building up and explode chair through sugar glass blackout, show finishes. All synched timing.

10 THIGARAA – Bird: Inspired by the wings shape when wet, shaking their feathers the upper body. Pain contraction of the centre of the torso retreats.



11 WIMA – Li To light a fire: Inspiration sitting around a campfire. Simultaneously small jump into a grand plié, 3rd position turn out representing sitting. Hands striking together

representing striking of the matches to light the fire. Knees bent, right foot, left foot quick - step. Holding shape.



12 THIIN – Elbow: Starts the movement a quick sharp turn the knees bent turned out. Right foot attached to the back of the ankle turn out foot running down towards ankle dragging and following.



13 BUNDAA – GI - fall: Specific fall to a spot coming out of a turn or other movement.



14 MALIYAN WANTHALA - Eagle Hawk: A leader and warrior, inspiration is from images of the eagle hawk attacking and swooping. Stepping back left leg into relevé. Right leg flexed feet and toes, a retracted back and the heels are pressed forward. THINA Foot; MILA Hold lunging into a deep; GURRUU second position. Chassé or YILAALU 1 & 2. Long drag left leg straight with big tow touch dragging no weight on big tow. Right leg bent right foot attached to knee foot pointed. Leading with left hip with arms raised straight at 45 degrees. Power comes from the deep preparation plié and of the arms being thrown above the head.



15 BURR – Brolga: Contemporary movement inspired by the movement of the brolga's wings. Slow adagio focus is on the back muscles in the arms back and shoulders. Muscles are controlled and slow focusing on the lines of the arms and spine.



16 WAMBA – Mad: Contemporary and Jazz inspired. Losing of the mind, sequences and isolations. Step left foot into a relevé opposition right hand flexed waist high head direction of hand. Repeat and alternate the step. Isolation of the shoulders starting with

shimmying shaking the shoulders gradual build up transferring to head all in 8 counts. Trembling throughout the body from feet to head.

17 THAWAN – Emu: Startled into flight and Horton inspired movement airless jump preparation crouched on the floor knees and feet together to gain power jumping in the air throwing both arms back bent giving momentum. Right leg straight kicking battement forward left leg bent torso on right thigh.

18 THARRARR – Rib: Isolation: Jazz ballet inspired movement of only one part of the body rib cage in a circular movement.

19 BANAGA –Y - Run: To attack aggressive 4 counts direction of the audience.

20 Mila – Hold: Step into relevé left leg right leg bend attached to the knee. Arms bent strong. Hands flexed fingers spread strong tense. Hold for 4 counts.



21 MUMAL- Stomach: Hinge core strength. Bending of the knees on the balls of the feet are parallel second. The arms are elongated reaching through to the tips of the fingers. The arms are in line with the torso and knees.



22 WAAGAAN – Crow: Inspiration contemporary movement interpretation. How the crow hops casually on the country road when cars approach, cool and calm. Knees are crouched

low on the balls of the feet right foot forward alternating of feet when hopping.





23 BIRI – Chest: Slapping stinging sounds of the chest and contraction an interpretation of pain. Chest retreats into a soft contraction with the expansion of the back the arms are reacting and soft.



24 BILAARR – Spear: Movement and motion of the arm suggest throwing of a spear of the lines straight. Directed at the GANDJIBAL policeman - BIGUUN Pig from the verbal abuse.

25 MALA-Fork: Grabbing of fork crutch directed at audience intimidating, sexual suggestive, uncomfortable for audience.



26 THARRA-Thigh: The right hand skimming slap on the side of the right thigh quick and sharp. Thoughts of the pain and brutality inflicted being incarcerated and the verbal torment.

27 GUMAGALA-Sky: Pirouettes pencil turns arms in first position the head looking to the ceiling an interpretation of checking out the environment of the cell.



28 THINA-Foot: The slamming of the foot on the Perspex knee bending a preparation pushing off the Perspex into a backward anger and frustration of the torment from pigs (police).

29 THURRI – Rise: Relevé on to both feet parallel contraction torso unfolds to upright position arms following unfolding slow adagio to an upright position.

30 BARRAAY- Quick: Step sequence quick left and right with the feet crouched suggestion of a bird walking quickly or hopping.

31 THIGARAA- Bird: Step left leg both left and right arm. Reverse to back making circle to front all simultaneously with the head looking up in the air. Arms and jump finish together. Inspiration contemporary.



32 BULANGGI-Blanket: Slide push with right hip off standing left leg. Right leg slides to right parallel. Slapping both thighs arms follow through from slap to the wrist action of dusting blanket holding position. Facing same direction step back quick 1234. Preparation into a Pirouette Step left leg right foot pointed parallel down the Achilles of left foot both arms make circular movement above the head arms apart holding the shape of the arms suggestion of swinging blanket. Then out of the shape of the arms the right arm slams glass coming to a sudden halt.



33 YUUL-NGIN - Hungry: Contemporary the inspiration pain and help. Left hand with right hand placed on top of the stomach elbows are parallel held to sides. Movement left to right making a circular motion into a contraction. Right hand reaches to front suggesting begging with left hand on stomach. Right leg and knee bends reacting to the contraction.

34 MUNAN - Heavy: Contemporary inspiration contraction step back left drag right foot to drag left and right foot follow with a drag transferring weight stepping back left and right together left and right stepping back both feet coming together into a relevé. Arms are in 3<sup>rd</sup> position and soften when contraction.



35 BALAWAGARR - Frill-Necked Lizard: Inspiration of a lizard water dragon running on hind legs. Crouching knees bent alternating transferring weight right and left dragging foot. Similar to the mechanics of ice-skating.

36 WIIBI-Axe: Metaphor for strong and defiance cutting down authority white man institutions, authority. Stool be thrown through the glass dismiss suddenly and ruthlessly.

37 BARA - Jump: Inspired by the effortless jump of a kangaroo

38 THUWADI – Shirt: Reach left arm strong flexed hand fingers spread. Simultaneously right leg straight foot flexed strong. Step in front right leg turn. Then repeat left side. Suggestion putting on a shirt, pain anger.

39 THIINBIN - Diving Duck: Inspiration Jazz Quick step right left into a lung parallel. Chest is resting on left thigh. Reaching forward with head through to chest then contracting transferring weight from front to back slow adagio. Arms reaching parallel to ceiling palms facing each other then collapse and fold over the back. Suggesting pain



40 WIIBI-Li -To be sick: Stepping left right foot right foot on ball right pelvis thrust forward followed by chest. Right hand flexed mouth opened Hand suggesting, throwing up. Leading by the palm hand comes over left arm fingers spread.



41 MILIMILI-Mud: Inspiration Hip Hop moonwalk. Walking backwards heaviness stuck left right left right arms are moving in opposition pain 4<sup>th</sup> step left leg bent weight in left leg right leg attitude into bent arms in 3<sup>rd</sup> position over head simultaneously into a contraction.

42 GAGA-Li-to Call Out: Right leg starts the movement stepping across left foot slide left leg parallel lung left arm reaches followed by right arm. Right leg foot pointed attaches to calf knee forward toes facing down along calf. Standing on one leg into a double contraction. Arms soften.

43 YU-GI-to Cry: Inspiration of a bird covering itself with wings. Interpretation is to cry and sad. Right hip starts the movement fall into wide deep parallel lung. Arms follow leading with the left elbow followed by right leading into a contraction.



44 THARRAWURRA - trousers: Standing on the left supporting leg plié right leg and hands at ankles simultaneously pulling up motion leg bent then leading with heel. Both arm and legs head reacts similar to a fan kick suggestion putting on pants.

45 YUUNDU - Stone: Action to pick up a stone and throw through a sequence mechanics actions of picking up and throwing.

46 BUNINGA- Striking:

47 BARRA-G I-To Fly: Standing on left leg plié, right leg bent a foot both attached to left leg. Preparation plié to jump leading with right arm into both arms and legs similar to spread eagle.



48 BARA-Y-To Jump: Preparation stepping left right left deep parallel pli  both arms come from the side of the body giving momentum to jump into the air half turn.



49 MARAYIN Wild Dog, Dingo: Step left leg knee bent left arm reaching simultaneously. Right leg bent knee deep and wide parallel, torso elongated head on spine. Then alternating the step twice.

50 WARAUU-Crow: Contemporary inspired crouching and waking on the balls of the feet alternating walking on the balls of the feet. Arms elbow bent tucked close to the rib cage.

52 BARRAN- Boomerang: Inspired by throwing the boomerang step throw right arm and once released continue into a turn. Left arm parallel to shoulder.



53 GANAAY- Digging Stick: Sitting on left heel right leg bent on the walk inspired by woman digging step defiance elongation of torso hit the ground then struggles to move.

54 GALI-NGIN- Thirsty: Standing step put right leg crossed left leg head looking up right hand squeeze as to release water left arm parallel slack hand hanging.

56 BINDIEYE BINDAYAA-Burr: Inspired by stepping on a burr, step left weight left leg foot attached at ankle then step reacting the body

57 BUNDI-Club: action ready to club right arm up in position as if holding a club, left arm to the side. Body slightly turning to right, standing right leg left foot attached to ankle.



58 GUBI-Y-To Swim: Alternating arms right left right left as if swimming. Arms have a shape slightly bent not straight line. Legs are alternating with arms.



59 MINYA-What? Inspired by hand and body gesture physical non-verbal language of my people. Standing up right. Placing emphasis on the hands flicking and shoulder and present.

60 THALAA - Where? Inspired by hand and body gesture physical non-verbal language of my people. Then right hand arm gesture pointing and panning of the arm left to right. Left leg lung at the same time as arm.

61 NGAANAN - Who? Inspired by hand and body gesture and non- verbal physical language of my people. Gesture of the head and lips. 3

62 MANGUN GAALI - Tree Goanna: Handstand right leg straight left leg bent. Then falling through to floor on the back parallel to floor left foot bent breaking the fall. Or hand stand against the Perspex bending left knee, foot on the walk then falling backwards.

63 GAAYINGGAL - Baby: Inspired gesture of holding a baby hands cusp on top of each other making a circular movement. Movement to the right with elbow initiates the movement stepping same time right leg. Body and head reacts.

64 MARA - Hand: Hands clinched soft do a circular movement out to in. arms are soft then body contracts, weight is transferred to left leg.



65 BURRU - Initiation Ground: Making a circular movement low with the right arm marking the ground. Legs bent left arm to the side sitting into the ground.

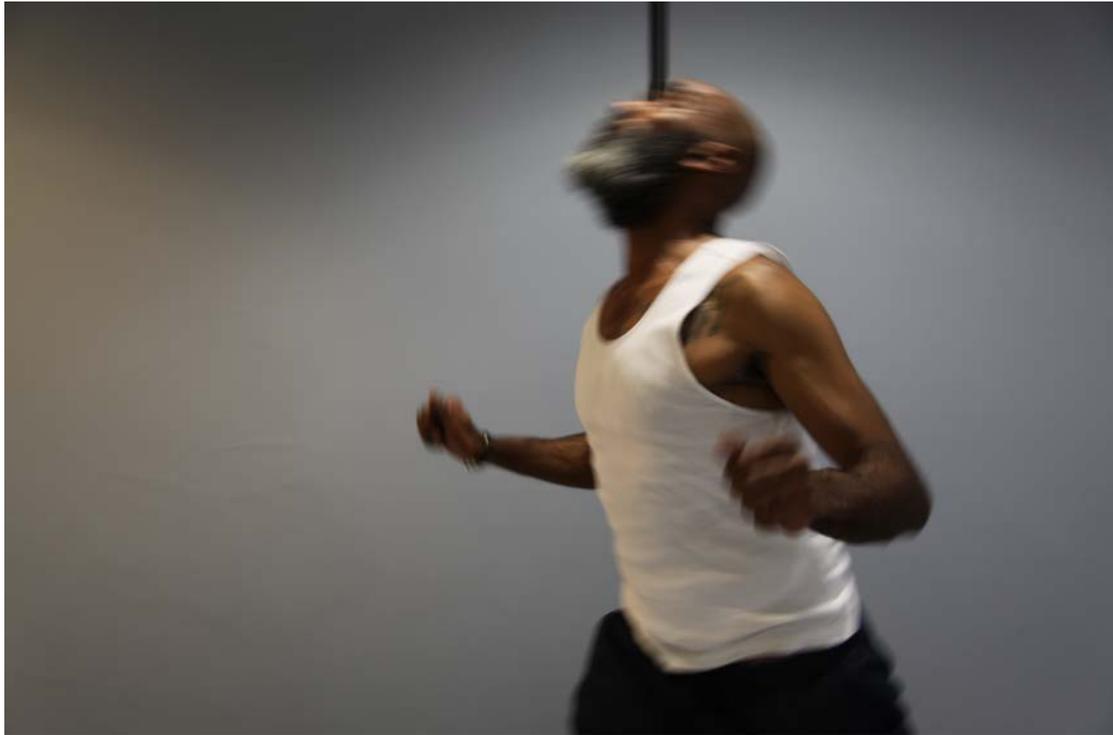
66 GURIYA - Back: Relev'e left foot forward parallel deep second. Arms thrown into in 3<sup>rd</sup> position head looks up to ceiling simultaneously continue into back bend. Twist and collapse right side into the floor pivot on bottom right to left.



67 YULAA-LI - To Tie Up: Circular of both hands as if tightening a rope, contraction of body relaxing of legs suggestion of control and pain.

68 THANGA - Heel: Rocking back on the heels, legs straight and strong and contraction of torso falling back to limit. Arms forward reaching palms down and Head looking down.

69 THARRA - Thigh: Lifting thigh, hand cusped under right thigh lifting and relev'e on left leg. Head and lifting of thigh simultaneously looking to audience elongation from ball of the foot.



70 THUBI-LI -To Spit: Body contracts arms fold in on standing leg, right foot attached to calf. Then lead with the head and body follows as if to spit.



71 BULARRI - Hot: Inspired wiping sweat sad. Back of right hand motion left to right of wiping sweat from forehead arm thrown down as to release the sweat. Right leg forward bent left leg back both bent stepping pulls in body when step.



72 BURRIIN - Shield: Stepping right leg in front of left leg. Going down on the knee left knee, right leg bent on the walk. Arms are reaching up same time as right leg steps across. Then arms change shape into left hand holding shield defence.



73 GIYAL – Afraid: Back to the audience. Arms crossed in front of torso. Hands exposed pressure from fingers into the back 3. Head dropped contraction the back expands.

74 BARUMBALU - Weak: Start left foot forward right foot back on the ball of the foot both feet parallel with wide pli , stepping right left. Simultaneously torso on the thigh arms dropped parallel to the leg. Isolation of the torso contacting pulling the torso up then drops to starting position.

75 MILA - Hip: Right hip thrust back right side leg to torso shoulder through to head react. Arms react and are relaxed.



76 MURI - Lightning: tour full body rotation in the air onto the knees into the floor. Head drop hands slap the ground. Actions power quickness and slap suggestion lighting.

77 THUURRI - To Crawl: Kneeling torso on the thighs as you step together with the knees torso rolls up then contracts shoulders lift arms bent to side fists clenched then collapse back on the thigh and repeat.

78 GIYAL- Frightened: Step right transferring weight to right leg bent. Left leg lifts to calf foot on walk simultaneously hands cross right left flexed palms facing out spread covering face.



79 MIRI - Star: Quick throw cutting through the air of the left and right arm head follows. Path of a falling star to a crouch position. Left hip moves to the left same time with the left arm moves.



80 GURRAAGAA - Crane: Inspired by the movement of the crane. Step left leg into pli  step right foot touches side of the left knee simultaneously with pli . Torso tilts left arms attached torso and follow. Inspired by the bird crane.



81 GURRAAGAA - To Break: Hands fists clenched apart suggestion of holding a stick. Torso bent forward. Step lifting right leg stepping on stick to break in the air. Stepping through leading with the heel.

82 GINDJURRA - Frog: Inspired by leaping of the frog. Leap full stretch in the air. Pushing of both feet parallel from a plié hands relaxed and arms bent.

83 GANDAWA – Li - To cover: Squat feet flat parallel 1st position. Right arm then arm left fold on top of the head pushing head down to cover.

84 MAAYIRR - Wind: Action gust of wind throwing of arms momentum into a small half turn into the air stepping with right leg to finish and bent.



85 NGINDAAY - You All: Arms are crossed right and left index fingers emphasized pointing. Body collapsed and head dropped. Arms are thrown forward suggesting to you all. To 45 degrees inline with the shoulders. Simultaneously legs step forward into a wide second position in relive'.

86 THULUMAAY - Thunder: Quickness of thunder and sound. Stepping left leg quick action lifting of the right knee to the right shoulder. Right arm and hand quick action hand meeting the knee. Hand retrieves above the head to a catch and hold position. Left arm to the side soft and slightly bent balance the torso folds and contract.



87 BULUUY - Black: Blackness of my skin proud black man. Standing parallel hips shoulders square elongation of the torso neck and head left arm 45 degrees right arm elbow bent hand runs along arm to wrist slow. Suggestion my skin is black.



88 MUGA - Blind: Stepping left leg arms forward shoulders raised. Hand reaching turning ear to listen arms contract. Right arms reaches tapping the air forward then repeat the other side.

89 YIILI - Angry: Lift of the arms quick and catch clench fist. Neck extends forward through the head then throwing the arm to the index finger pointing and tense. Step left leg simultaneously with the throw of the arm.

90 BAAYIN – Sore: Standing right hand holding the back of left shoulder suggestion of sore hand bringing roll shoulder forward slow and controlled body is folding into a contraction.

91 BAMBA – Hard with force: Step left leg into a jump suspended in the air right left leg arms raised fists coming down hit with force.

92 BATHA – Bitter: Taste of blood in and outside of the mouth on the lips bitter. Facial expression action wiping of the lips with the palm of the left hand look and pause repeat action with the right hand this time with the fingers.

93 BUURR – Hair string belt: Sitting torso falling to the right torso square to the front and pulled right arms slides hands in a cusp position sliding on the heel of the hand this is controlled. Rolling action back and forth with the arm and hand rolling of the hair into string for the hair belt.

94 BUWI -Y – To smell: Right and left arm alternate hand wiping sweat from under the armpits hands to nose smelling and forehead.

94 GULURR – Waist: Arms wrapped around the waist with a circular movement of the torso then stepping right and left leg.

94 GUWAA - LI – To speak: Right hand elbow held to mouth two fingers back to the to lips palm out. Left arm to the side relaxed and hand relaxed four pulses of the torso lengthening. Head lifts as hand does a motion back to forward suggesting speaking. Standing parallel first knees bent.

95 WIRA – Li – To twist: Left leg step into semi plié torso twist arms shoulders 45 degrees follows bent looking back at right leg straight and foot on side. Once the twist is completed all weight is on the supporting right leg the left leg then follows momentum from the twist to knee coming of the ground contraction and arms react soft.

96 WURU - Throat: Right and left hands placed on throat elbows lifted head up falling into hinge whilst releasing right hand into reach hand tense.

97 YILAMBU - Long ago: Hand gesture forward as if throwing arms away above the head with both hands long ago. Hands come down step back right leg with arms following into a circular motion. The left leg slides back with the arms to the right leg. Then jumping right leg quickstep into the air landing on right leg. Left leg held forward bent foot flexed arms above the head actions cultural step long ago

98 MANTHA - Bread: Actions kneading dough for bread right left hands folding in then push with the heel of the hands forward tension strength and control. Same leg as hand steps and torso moves side-to-side transferring weight.

99 GII – Heart: Right swoop from right to left. Hand cusp slapping heart. Head reacts drops. Left arm in line with the shoulder arm and hand soft. Hands reacts a strong flex when slapping the heart. Making a thud sound.

100 MUGARR – Kidney: Second position parallel twisting of the torso placing the hands 1 2 placing on the kidney head looking. Hip then legs follow into a bent position torso collapsed forward.

## CONCLUSION

By combining personal history, lived experience of colonial history in the present, personal experience and detailed knowledge of dance, by combining western modern movement with Aboriginal movement, breathing and physical theatre this project has invented a new and unique dance technique. I call it....

This is still a work in progress. It is unfinished and unresolved, just like my story is unfinished, and just like the history of colonialism and racism in Australia is ongoing. While I intend to use this technique for educational purposes, I expect it to grow and change in the years to come, through my practice, through my experience. In this sense, it is a story that continues, a story of lived experience in the face of institutional prejudice.

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## APPENDIX

1. Interviews with Michael Leslie
2. Documentation of work
3. Set Design