

**YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION**

# Baleen Moondjan

Stephen Page

**28 February - 2 March 2024**  
**Glenelg (Pathawilyangga) Beach**  
**Glenelg, Kurna Country**

**Duration:** 1hr, no interval

**Warnings:** Contains smoke and smoke effects

Presenting Partners: City of Holdfast Bay and The Advertiser & Sunday Mail.

*Baleen Moondjan* has been commissioned by Adelaide Festival. Generously supported by the Adelaide Festival First Nations Commissioning Programme.

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# Credits

## PERFORMERS

Gindara **Elaine Crombie**  
Nundigili **Zipporah Corser-Anu**  
Spirit of Yallingbillar **Brendon Boney**  
Narrator **DOBBY**

## MUSICIANS

**Jorjabelle Munday**  
**Taj Pigram**

## DANCE ENSEMBLE

**Alexander Abbot**  
**Rika Hamaguchi**  
**Gusta Mara**  
**Beau Dean Riley Smith**  
**Nicola Sabatino**  
**Glory Tuohy-Daniell**

Director & Co-writer **Stephen Page**  
Co-writer **Alana Valentine**  
Songwriter, Composer & Sound Designer

**Steve Francis**  
Set Design **Jacob Nash**  
Costume Design **Jennifer Irwin**  
Lighting Design **Damien Cooper**  
Musical Director **Paul Mac**  
Language Consultant **Donna Page**  
Assistant Director **Beau Dean Riley Smith**

Company Stage Manager **Matthew Schubach**  
Assistant Stage Manager **Kerry Ireland**

Producer **Jo Dyer**  
Lighting Programmer **Harry Clegg**  
Sound Operator **David Trumpmanis**  
Radio Mic Technician **Tarlee Penwill**  
MX/Backline **Yuri Poltz**  
Monitors Engineer **Keith Jabinsky**  
Wardrobe Maintenance **Laz Snoswell**  
Photography **Daniel Boud & Ashley de Prazer**

Senior Program Manager **Kate Donnelly**  
Production Manager **Paige Goodwin**  
Production Coordinator **Leisa Gosling**  
Site Coordinator **Thomas Pidd**  
NIDA Production Secondment **Shery Simson**

Camera Operator **David Tang**  
Camera Operator **Celia Rio Suarez**  
Vision Switch **Nik Carr**  
Lighting, Systems Tech **Simon Richie**  
Sound, Systems Tech **Marco Rab**  
Vision, Systems Tech **Rory Parker**

The Producers would like to thank:  
**The Minjerribah and Moorgumpin**  
**Elders-in-Council**  
**The Page matriarch: Doreen Day Page**  
**Bangarra Dance Theatre**  
**City of Holdfast Bay**

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## Program Note

### Stephen Page and Alana Valentine

*Whale totem of mine, carry my spirit*

*I will carry your spirit in my belly and heart*

*Whale totem of mine, carry my joy*

*I will carry your joy till it bubbles the waves back to the shores of your offspring*

*Whale totem of mine, ease me into death*

*I will ease you into a death that will allow your spirit*

*to burst out like a water-softened seed,*

*like a pale green new seed*

*smooth with promise and fat with hope*

*I will carry that nugget of you to a tiny bud of new birth*

*a tiny baby stamping along the shoreline*

*where this piece of person that I have carried will soak up into the soles*

*and the soul of a new Moondjan carrier of country and sea*

*Baleen Moondjan* draws deeply on the knowledge and yarning that Stephen Page inherited from his Nunukul/Nughi mother, the practice of combining deep sacred understanding with contemporary music and dance that was innovated with his brothers David Page and Russell Page at Bangarra Dance Theatre, and his own daily journey to live cultural knowledge in an authentic and sustaining way. It tells the story of a Moondjan elder, named Gindara, on the day when her spirit crosses over to abide for a time with her whale totem, and of her granddaughter Nundigili, to whom she passes cultural knowledge.

Told in English and Jandai language, supervised by language custodian Donna Page, this is a story that celebrates in ceremony and song the sacred relationship of First Nations people to their totems and country, acknowledging the cycle of life and the certainty of death as a rhythm of immense beauty. From an early scene where we see Gindara and Nundigili gathering kelp as a ritual of strength and resilience, to a central scene where the great baleen whale is called in and celebrated, to the final scenes where Gindara's spirit passes away to travel with her magnificent cetacean totem, *Baleen Moondjan* aims to joyfully recognise the wonder of our shared environments and of the precious connection to land, sea and sky.

## **Project Background**

Invited by Adelaide Festival Director Ruth Mackenzie to create a work to open AF 2024, including the bold possibility of presenting a work outdoors on Glenelg Beach, Stephen Page began working with his long-term collaborative team – Jacob Nash as designer, Alana Valentine as co-writer, Steve Francis as composer, Jennifer Irwin as costume designer, Damien Cooper as lighting designer and Donna Page as language consultant.

Stephen's process involves long hours discussing, dreaming, collaborating and imagining ways to express ancient and sacred ideas in the form of contemporary theatre. *Baleen Moondjan* builds on recent collaborations where this team has been expanding Stephen's inspired theatrical vocabulary of dance to include spoken and sung poetry, narrative storytelling, and ceremony. 'Is it dance or is it opera?' ask the delighted audience, 'is it a concert or theatre?' ask the artists and the media – it is contemporary ceremony, answers the team. It harnesses the elements of country and the sacred knowledge of First Nations ritual with the dynamic communication tools of bold visual aesthetics, resonant poetry and moving, haunting musical composition. It mobilises light and dance and song to tell an ancient story of precious love of creatures of the sea, children of the clan and the power of culture. In such a vision, the presence of the lapping waves, of circling gulls, of the grit and softness of the sand on which the audience will sit all become part of the immersion of Festival audiences in a unique and ancient knowledge about the primacy of country, ancestors and respect.

Performed on an astonishing outdoor stage, reminiscent of a whale skeleton, Stephen's vision will move the cast of six superb dancers and six remarkable singers into the rhythm of the ocean and the resilience of the land and its people, despite the many poisons that could threaten this relationship.

*What poison spikes our dreams?*

*Or rips us at the seams*

*Throbs in our aching heads*

*Spins us on our beds*

*Feet in two worlds at once*

*Abuse on many fronts*

*Such effort and distress*

*A constant sorry mess*

*The strain of raw despair*

*In every strand of hair*

## List of Scenes

- Scene 1** JUMUNYA NYAMBA (We smoke the present)
- Scene 2** WALINGGA & WABUNGGGA (Old woman and young sister)
- Scene 3** GABALANYA GULBURBIN (We cut marine grass / Kelp)
- Scene 4** YUNMA JAGA (The sleep of death)
- Scene 5** MAYALBANYA YURI (Awaken her totem)
- Scene 6** YALINGBILLAR (The Big Whale)
- Scene 7** WARANG WARANG BIRIYINJILI (Gindara sings to whale)
- Scene 8** MARAGUN BONGA (Old woman dies)
- Scene 9** DUNGUNYA YANA (She weeps that she walks away)
- Scene 10** GABILIWA (Telling into the future)
- Scene 11** WARING GABING (The cold water)
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## Jandai Language Glossary

Jumunya Nyamba: We Smoke the Present  
Balga: Come  
Nyanga: See  
Gabi Gabi: Wind  
Biram: Sky  
Dabilyil: Water  
Yarabin: Sea  
Bogey: Swim  
Jara: Ground  
Jagun: Country  
Yallingbillar: Big whale  
Walinga: Old woman  
Gulburbin: Kelp  
Gwumbi: Shells  
Buruan: South wind  
Nimbin: North wind  
Gabili: West wind  
Windjia: East wind  
Yunma Jaga: Sleep of death  
Mayalba: Awake

Wiya Wiya: Let go  
Gowan: Blood  
Gung: Poison  
Gundu: Medicine  
Guwumba: Good  
Kunjeil: Corroboree  
Gundu gundu Boobayn: Medicine Tree  
Ngulli: We  
Kirba: Wake up  
Biriynjili: Sing  
Janjari: Light  
Walangara: Long water  
Maragun: Old woman  
Bonga: Die  
Dungunya: Weep  
Yana: Go away  
Gowa: No  
Bujal: Feel Sad/Sorry/Pity  
Wagari: Carry

# Creative Team Biographies

## Stephen Page

Director & Co-writer

Stephen Page is descended from the Nunukul people and Munaljali clan of the Yugambah Nation. He retired from Bangarra Dance Theatre in 2022 after serving as Artistic Director for 32 years. During his tenure, he created a signature body of works that have become milestones in Australian performing arts, including the Helpmann Award-winning works *Skin* (2001), *Mathinna* (2009), *Bennelong* (2017) and *Dark Emu* (co-choreographed with former Bangarra dancers Daniel Riley and Yolande Brown) (2018), as well as co-productions with Sydney Theatre Company *Bloodland* (2011) and *Wudjang: Not the Past* (2022).

Stephen directed the Indigenous sections for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies, as well as a significant dance work for this father's Munaljali people for the Opening Ceremony of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. His first full-length film, *Spear*, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival before screening at various arts festivals around Australia in early 2016. He also co-directed and choreographed the documentary *Freeman* (2020), directed the chapter *Sand* in the feature film *The Turning* (2013), and choreographed the feature films *Bran Nue Dae* (2009) and *The Sapphires* (2011).

In 2015, Stephen was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Creative Arts by the University of Technology Sydney. In 2016, he received both the NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award and JC Williamson Award. In 2017, Stephen was honoured with the Australia Council Dance Award for significant contributions to the cultural and artistic fabric of the nation, and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO).

## Alana Valentine

Co-writer

In the 2022 Adelaide Festival, Alana Valentine was co-librettist for *Watershed: The Death of Dr Duncan*, written with Christos Tsiolkas, recent winner of the 2023 AWGIE for Best Work for Music Theatre, and *Wudjang: Not the Past*, written with Stephen Page.

Previous work as co-writer and dramaturg with Stephen Page includes the Helpmann Award winning *Bennelong* (2017), *Dubboo: Life of a Songman* (2018), *Dark Emu* (2018), *Patyegarang* (2014) and *ID*, from *Belong* (2011).

Alana was the recipient of a Helpmann Award in 2019 for Best Musical and Best Original Score for *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, co-written with Ursula Yovich.

Recently, her cabaret *Send For Nellie* played the Sydney Festival and toured to Wyong and Wollongong, and her collaboration with the Brandenburg Orchestra, *Notre Dame*, which she also directed, opened in Melbourne and Sydney. *Watershed: The Death of Dr Duncan* is at the Sydney Opera House in June, 2024.

## Steve Francis

Songwriter, composer & sound designer

As a composer and/or sound designer for theatre, Steve Francis has worked for Australia's leading theatre companies, most recently working on the productions *Julia* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Switzerland* (Auckland Theatre Company) and *The Weekend* (Belvoir Theatre). He has won two Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Music or Sound.

For dance, Steve is best known for his work with Australia's leading national Indigenous company, Bangarra Dance Theatre. He has scored 13 productions for the company over the last 20 years, most recently *Wudjang: Not the Past* and *Sandsong*. His work with Bangarra has won two Helpmann Awards for Best Original Score.

Steve has scored music for a number of films including the recent feature films *The Moogai* and *Firestarter: The Story of Bangarra*.

**Jacob Nash**  
Set designer

Jacob Nash is a descendant of the Daly River people, West of Darwin. A NIDA Design graduate, he has designed sets for most of Australia's leading theatre companies, including Sydney Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare, Ilbjerri Theatre Company and Belvoir Street Theatre, where he also serves as Board Director.

Jacob was Head of Design at Bangarra from 2011 – 2023 and designed sets for the company's annual productions, including *Dark Emu*, *Patyegarang*, *Terrain*, *Blak* and *Bennelong*, for which he was awarded the 2018 Helpmann Award for Best Scenic Design.

In 2019 Jacob created the work *ALWAYS* for Sydney Festival, a large scale artwork that became the backdrop for *The Vigil* and the Wugulora Ceremony. He went on to serve as Creative Artist in Residence at Sydney Festival until 2024.

Jacob was the Production Designer and Co-Creature Designer for *Cleverman* Season 2 for the ABC and was the Production Designer for Stephen Page's 2015 film *SPEAR*.

**Jennifer Irwin**  
Costume designer

Australian designer Jennifer Irwin works both internationally and nationally across opera, drama, film and in particular dance and ballet.

Commissions include over 100 ballets. 36 ballets for Sydney Dance Company, 32 years repertoire for Bangarra Dance Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, The Australian Ballet, Melbourne Theatre Company, Belvoir Theatre Company, Australian Dance Theatre, West Australian Ballet, NT Dance Co, The Queensland Ballet & Opera Australia, Joffrey Ballet, Universal Ballet Korea, Opening and Closing Ceremonies for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Official Ceremony marking the Centenary of Australian Federation 2001.

Jennifer designed the costumes for the international box office sensation *Dirty Dancing*, now celebrating its 20th year.

Jennifer was awarded 'Outstanding Contribution to Australian Design' at the 2023 Australian Production Design Guild Awards and 'Service to Dance' at the Australian Dance Awards. Her work has been recognised by many Helpmann, Green Room & AACTA Awards and nominations.

**Damien Cooper**  
Lighting designer

Damien Cooper is a lighting designer working in theatre, opera and dance.

Damien's work at the Adelaide Festival includes *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Impermanence*, *Supernature*, *Counting & Cracking*, *Habitus*, *Aindimar*, *Three Furies*, *Universal Playground*, *The Age of Unbeauty*, WOMADelaide, *Birdbrain*, *Heavy*, *The Theft of Sita*, *Flamma Flamma* and *Red Square*.

Damien has won three Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Lighting Design and four Green Room awards for Best Lighting Design. He won the Australian Production Designers Guild inaugural Award for Lighting Design for his work on Opera Australia's *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* and the Showreel finder Award for Live Performance Lighting Design for *The Glass Menagerie* at Belvoir.

**Paul Mac**  
Musical director

Paul Mac is a composer, songwriter, musician and producer and one of the leading figures in Australian electronic music.

A graduate and now lecturer of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Paul was awarded a Doctorate of Musical Arts in 2021. He is a multi-ARIA Award winner for his work as one half of dance pioneers Itch-E & Scratch-E and for his own solo work, and a recipient of Australian Dance Music Awards for Outstanding Contribution to Dance and Producer of the Year. The list of artists with whom he has collaborated includes Sia, George Michael, Kylie, Daniel Johns and Ngaiire.

Paul has composed scores for film, TV and theatre for directors including Baz Luhrmann, Stephen Page and Ted Emery. His own original theatre work, *The Rise and Fall of St George*, created with playwright Lachlan Philpott and directed by Kate Champion, played to great acclaim in Arts Centre Melbourne's Hamer Hall in 2020 and the 2021 Sydney Festival.



# Cast Biographies

## **Elaine Crombie**

Gindara

Elaine Crombie is a proud Pitjantjatjara, Warrigmal, South Sea and German descendant and a singer, songwriter, actor, director, writer and stand-up comedian who has performed nationally and internationally for more than two decades.

She has worked for all of Australia's leading performing arts companies including Belvoir, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre and Queensland Theatre.

Elaine was recently seen in the national tour of *The Visitors* and was one of the leads in the Helpmann Award-winning *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*.

Notable screen appearances include TV shows *Top of the Lake*, *Rosehaven*, *Nowhere Boys*, *Get Krack!*, *Black Comedy*, *Redfern Now* and *Kiki and Kitty* and feature films *Jackie Jackie*, *Black Talk* and *Top End Wedding*.

## **Zipporah Corser-Anu**

Nundigli

Zipporah Corser-Anu, a descendant of the Samu and Suy clans of Saibai in the Torres Strait, has been a performer since the age of 5. Seamlessly blending dance and vocals, she maintains a deep connection to her cultural roots.

A 2019 NRL Youth Ambassador and alumna of Wollongong's High School of Performing Arts, Zipporah is a natural talent on both stage and screen. She takes pride in her family and cultural background, which fuels her energy, determination, and fierceness to succeed. Zipporah is currently working on new music set to release in 2024.

## **Brendon Boney**

Spirit of Yallingbillar

Brendon Boney is a proud Wiradjuri/ Gamilaroi man. An APRA PDA winner, over his stellar career he's performed at festivals including Bluesfest, Woodford Folk Festival, Sydney Festival, Brisbane Festival and Friendship Festival (Seoul). He's written for and collaborated with artists such as PJ Harding, Jaguar Jonze, Becca Hatch, MXWLL, Tessa Thames, Xavier Dunn & Tasman Keith and his work has been played on stations including triple j, FBI radio and ABC.

Brendon has composed for Sydney Theatre Company, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Belvoir and

Ensemble Theatre and toured with Ilbijerri's acclaimed production *Black Ties* as Music Director, for which he also made his acting debut.

## **DOBBY**

Narrator

A proud Filipino and Muruwari man, DOBBY is a rapper, drummer, composer and producer. His music has taken him to Europe and North America and locally he has performed at festivals including Bluesfest, Port Fairy, PARRTJIMA and OzAsia.

DOBBY composed all the soundscapes for PARRTJIMA 2021 & 2022 and his song "I CAN'T BREATHE" won Best Video at the FBI SMAC Awards in 2020 and has become an anthem for Australia's Bla(c)k Lives Matter movement.

In 2022, DOBBY was awarded the NIMA Archie Roach Foundation Award, which recognises emerging First Nations artists who show exceptional talent and promise in their chosen field.

## **Jorjabelle Munday**

Musician

Jorjabelle Munday is currently a student at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and is proud to make her professional debut with *Baleen Moondjan*. She won the award for Best Bassist at 2020 RockFest Australia.

## **Taj Pigram**

Musician

Born and raised in Broome, Taj Pigram is a proud First Nations Australian of Yawuru, Wadjarri, Pitjantjatjara, Noongar, Filipino, Scottish and English descent.

Throughout his varied career, Taj has performed with companies including Marrugeku and Opera Australia, for whom he featured in their most recent production of Jimmy Chi's *Bran Nue Dae*. Taj also appears regularly in TV commercials and featured in SBS's groundbreaking drama series *The Circuit*.

### **Alexander Abbot**

Dancer

Alexander Abbot is a WAAPA graduate originating from Canberra, who has performed on stage and screen around the country and internationally.

Alex comes from a hip hop and breakdance background and transitioned to Contemporary dance through QL2 in 2012. He has worked with many choreographers including Gary Lang, James O'Hara and Cadi McCarthy, and performed with SRUT Dance Company in Collaboration with Hofesh Shechter.

Alex has been privileged to be part of national and international dance workshops including DaCi (Taiwan, 2012), AYDF (Denmark, 2014), CYDF (Glasgow, 2014) and B12 (Berlin, 2017). *Baleen Moondjan* is his first work with Stephen Page.

### **Rika Hamaguchi**

Dancer

Rika Hamaguchi is a creative artist from Broome, Western Australia. She is a descendant of the Yawuru, Bardi, Bunaba and Jaru people in the Kimberley Region and also shares Asian, European ancestry.

In 2022, Rika joined Australian Dance Theatre as a performing artist in *Tracker*, which has since been touring nationally. Prior to this, Rika was a senior artist at Bangarra Dance Theatre where she was involved in their many productions and creative operations since 2015.

Currently, Rika is the face of Western Australia's tourism campaign *Walking on a Dream*, broadcast nationally and internationally.

### **Gusta Mara**

Dancer

Gusta Mara is an Angamudthi, Atembiya, Goba, Argun, Wagadthagum and Kauraregman man from the tip of Queensland and the Western islands of the Torres Strait. He first started dancing at the age of 16 at the Graham Academy of Dance, before successfully auditioning for NAISDA in 2015. He completed his studies in 2018 and across his career has worked with choreographers including Stephen Page, Vikki van Hout, Pamela Williams, Craig Bary, Raymond D. Blanco, Frances Rings, Sani Townson and Jack Grey.

Gusta performed with Atamira Dance Company at the 2018 Tempo Dance Festival in New Zealand and danced with Bangarra from 2019-2023.

### **Beau Dean Riley Smith**

Dancer

Beau Dean Riley Smith is a Wiradjuri and Gamillaraay man from Dubbo, NSW, raised on Yuin Country in Culburra Beach and Nowra, now living on Gadigal land. He trained at WAAPA and NAISDA before joining Bangarra where, over his 10 years with the company, he performed in over 22 major productions, including the title role in *Bennelong* (2017) for which he won a Helpmann and Australian Dance Award.

Beau made his musical theatre debut in 2022 in Wesley Enoch's *The Sunshine Club* for Queensland Theatre and was most recently seen in Sydney Theatre Company's *The Visitors*.

### **Nicola Sabatino**

Dancer

Nicola Sabatino is a Torres Strait woman, with Filipino, Scottish and German ancestry. She trained at the Australian Dance Performance Institute, NAISDA and The Ailey School.

As a freelance artist, Nicola performed in works including Graeme Murphy's *Turandot*, Tammi Gissell's *Feather and Tar: a cabaret of sorrows* at Blakdance 2012 and *Diaphanous*, the debut performance of Ochres Contemporary Dance Company, before joining Bangarra Dance Theatre in 2013. She toured with the company regionally, nationally and internationally before returning to freelance life in 2021.

### **Glory Tuohy-Daniell**

Dancer

Glory Tuohy-Daniell is a descendant of Indjalandji-Dhidhanu and Alyewarre Aboriginal tribes, in the North West Queensland and Northern Territory, and of Scottish, English, Irish, Welsh, Chinese and Spanish heritage. Glory trained at NAISDA and joined Bangarra in 2016, one of two Russell Page Graduate Program recipients. She toured with Bangarra nationally and internationally until 2023, the year she made her choreographic debut with *Keeping Grounded* for Dance Clan.

One of Glory's seminal experiences was attending a cultural residency, learning and performing cultural dance in community on Saibai and Moa Islands, in the Torres Strait and Elcho Island, North-East Arnhem Land.



## About Soft Tread

Soft Tread is a producer of theatre and film led by Jo Dyer, former Executive Producer of Sydney Theatre Company, General Manager of Bangarra Dance Theatre, CEO of Sydney Writers' Festival and Director of Adelaide Writers' Week.

Soft Tread's recent shows include the annual much-loved *Wharf Revue*, coming to Adelaide in April 2024, and Jonathan Biggins' acclaimed one-man play about Paul Keating, *The Gospel According to Paul*. Other notable recent productions include Jonny Hawkins' *Maureen: Harbinger of Death*, which played at the Adelaide Festival in 2023 before heading to Edinburgh, super-group magic show, *Band of Magicians*, which headlined at Las Vegas' legendary Tropicana Hotel, and celebrated artiste Meow Meow performing at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.