

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

HORIZON

STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Bangarra Dance Theatre pays respect and acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, create and perform. We wish to also acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose customs and cultures inspire our work.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (ICIP)

Bangarra acknowledges the industry standards set by Creative Australia Protocols for Working with Indigenous Artists. These protocols have been widely adopted across the Australian arts communities to respect ICIP and to develop practices and processes for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultural heritage. Bangarra incorporates ICIP into the very heart of our projects, from storytelling, to dance, to set design, language, and music.

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WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this Study Guide contains images, names, and writings by deceased persons.

HORIZON

STUDY GUIDE

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1. USING THIS STUDY GUIDE

Dear teachers and students,

We hope you find this guide helpful as you prepare to attend Bangarra's *HORIZON* or use it to facilitate further inquiry and discussion around the themes and topics explored in this program of two works – *Kulka* and *The Light Inside*.

The guide is not a literal explanation of the works. Instead, it aims to provide some contextual background to the cultures, histories, and political events that have inspired the works.

As you explore the material in the guide and watch the show, you might like to consider the contrast between western epistemologies and the knowledge systems of First Nations Peoples such as: the connection to the spirit realm and the way that informs sustainable living, the connection to place and the way that informs identity and relationships, and the connection to people and the way that informs shifting socio-political constructs.

Another important question to explore is if, and how, the arts have a role in shaping our endlessly evolving understandings of the world we live in. Does collective participation in the arts provide a useful platform for maintaining a critical dialogue that continually questions who we are and where we are going?

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Critical and creative thinking

Intercultural understanding

Ethical understanding

LEARNING AREAS

The Arts (Dance, Music, Visual Arts, Media Arts)

Humanities and Social Science (History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship)

TOPICS/THEMES

First Nations perspectives

Spirituality

Society and Culture

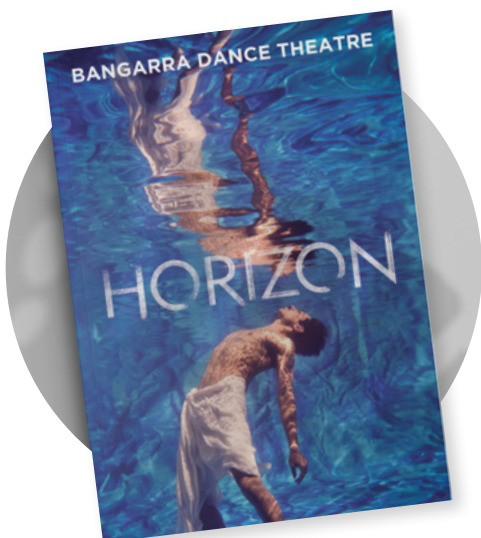
Bi-Culturalism

European colonialism

Treaties and Native Title

Contemporary Dance Theatre practice

Story telling through performance art



Further information about the works and the creative teams can be found in the *HORIZON* program.

2.

HORIZON: A BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE PRODUCTION



There is a place between sea and sky – a sacred realm, where the sun rises and falls, where light ignites renewal, and darkness holds the energy of the tomorrow.

Some call it a feeling; some call it the mother spirit. *Horizon* is the place where sea meets sky, a place we look towards but can never physically reach, a place that guides us to our sense of home.

Bangarra Dance Theatre's production of *Horizon* is a cross-cultural program consisting of two works – *Kulka*, by Bangarra alum Sani Townson, and *The Light Inside*, a co-choreography by Arts Laureate Moss Te Ururangi Patterson and Bangarra alumna Deborah Brown.

Horizon honours the land, seas and skies that these three choreographers call their Cultural home, and the spirit that calls them to that 'home'.

Townson's heritage lies on Saibai Island and his work, *Kulka*, pays homage to his grandfather and his Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait heritage, as well as the totemic systems that unite People with creatures and inform their identities.

Brown is a proud descendent of the Wakaid Clan and Meriam people in Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait and also has heritage from far across the seas in Scotland. Drawing inspiration from family stories and the constant sense of her Cultural being and the source of Knowledge that is never displaced but always present inside.

Patterson, born near Lake Taupō in Aotearoa /New Zealand, is a proud mokopuna (grandson) of the Ngāti Tūwharetoa tribe, and describes his sense of home as something alive, a fire inside, that he carries like a beating heart.

3.

GEOGRAPHICAL, CELESTIAL, SPIRITUAL.

A horizon is commonly understood as the line that separates the Earth from the sky. The two main types of horizons are Earth-sky horizons and celestial horizons.

One way of thinking about the Earth-sky horizon is simply as the visible boundary between earth and sky. This type of horizon can be purely geographic – the line between Earth and sky – or it can be a local horizon taking in features such as mountains, trees and built environments. There is also the sea-level horizon which is the geographic horizon at sea level, such as one would see standing on a beach. The part of the sea that “touches” the horizon is called the ‘offing’.

Another type of horizon is a celestial or astronomical horizon. Used by astronomers, celestial horizons measure the position of the Earth relative to the rest of the sky and refer to the point directly above the observer at a 90 degree angle. Astronomical horizons are referred to as circles that surround the observer. In this way, both Earth-sky and celestial horizons are locations that we can never actually reach, yet we often think of it as a quasi-location.

Horizons are not just concepts. They are important tools for navigation and aviation. Before technology provided computerised navigation, sailors used the sun’s position in relation to the horizon to know the time of day and what direction they were sailing. At night, they used the star constellations in reference to the horizon.

The horizon was also important for early methods of communication before radio, telegraph and later more modern technologies arrived. People would use smoke signals; however, communication could never reach anyone farther away than the local horizon.

For many cultures around the world, the horizon is also a spiritual realm. Beyond the horizon is the world of the unseen – an ‘other world’, a place that holds knowledge that is both mysterious and foundational.

In our modern world, the concept of, or just the word ‘horizon,’ can infer something that is aspirational, reaching out to something new and exciting, appealing to people’s desire to have something special but perhaps out of reach.

The dance theatre works, *Kulka* and *The Light Inside*, both reference and are inspired by the horizon and the many layered meanings it holds.

4.

PLACE: ZENADTH KES/ TORRES STRAIT



PLACE: ZENADTH KES/TORRES STRAIT

There are two names for the waters between Cape York and Papua New Guinea, Zenadth Kes and the Torres Strait.

After the Spanish navigator Luis Vaz de Torres sailed through the strait in 1606 on his way to the Philippines, European traders decided to give the stretch of water Torres' name. While a number of traditional language names exist for the strait, a Cultural acronym was devised in 1989 by the late Adhi Ephraim Bani as a name that bore relevance to the traditional people of the area. This acronym is Zenadth Kes and is constructed as follows:

ZE - Zey (south)

NA - Naigai (north)

D - Dagam Place/side)

TH - Thawaythaw - (coastline)

KES - (passage/channel/waterway)

Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait covers an area of over 48,000 square kilometres, from the top of Cape York to the southern land of Papua and New Guinea and Indonesia. There are 279 islands in the Torres Strait, but only 17 of these are inhabited. There are eighteen officially listed island communities, and two northern peninsula area (NPA) communities, Bamaga and Seisia, which are located in Queensland at the very top of Cape York.

It is estimated that the first inhabitants arrived in Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait around 70,000 years ago, mostly from the Indonesian archipelago and the western areas of Melanesia, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. They came by boat, moving from island to island. Some walked overland from New Guinea until a great flooding event about 8,000 years ago separated the land link.

Today, of the nearly one million people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander about 4% of these are of Torres Strait Islander background, and about 4.3% identify as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The actual population of the Torres Strait is just over 4000, with the vast majority of Islanders living on mainland Australia, mostly in Queensland and NSW.

There are two traditional languages in the Torres Strait - Meriam Mer (Mer dialect and Erub dialect) and Kala Lagaw Ya (Kulkalau ya, Kalaw Kawaw Ya, Kawrereg dialect, Mabuyag dialect). Following the arrival of the London Missionary society in 1871 (see Coming of the Light page 8) people were discouraged from speaking their traditional languages, and an assimilation of languages occurred resulting in the development of a creole language (Yumplatok) which is now a common language across the islands.

Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait is a unique and fragile land and seascape - an environment where Culture is lived as one with the spiritual and natural worlds, collectively forming the basis for people's identities, livelihoods and survival. The islands are typically low-lying and the threat of natural weather events, as well as human induced climate change presents a serious risk to these communities and their viability. The people of the Torres Strait face a very real possibility of becoming Australia's first climate refugees if urgent action to reduce emissions, especially by high greenhouse discharge producing nations, is not undertaken.

4. PLACE: ZENADTH KES/ TORRES STRAIT



TOTEMISM

In the words of Sani Townson, who descends from the Samu, Koedal, Dhoeybaw clans of Saibai Island in the Torres Strait, “As people we are created in the sky, where the universe is mother. We are sung into life and guided to our clans. Our totems choose us and as we start to grow, we experience a moment of realisation about our totem, and we start to imbibe the characteristics of that totem”.

Totemism can be described as a system of belief where humans have a kinship or mystical relationship with spirit-beings related to creatures or plants. Totems are designated at birth and there are rules for how people should care for their totem and understand its meaning in their life. For instance, it is not permitted to hunt and/or eat a creature that is your totem, it is your responsibility to protect that creature. People can have multiple totems associated with their clan that are handed down from one generation to the next, as well as personal totems.

COMING OF THE LIGHT

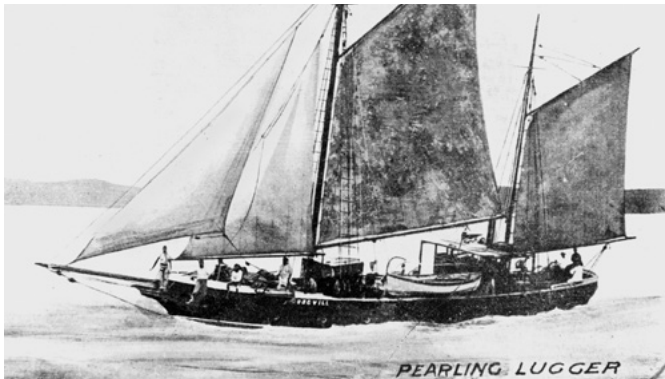
In July 1871, the London Missionary Society arrived on Erub Island (Darnley Island) accompanied by several South Sea Islander evangelists. Clan Elder, Dabid, greeted the group as they landed on the shore, not knowing the intentions of the visitors. When the Reverent Samuel McFarlene fell to his knees and offered a copy of the Bible, Dabid accepted the gift, interpreting it as the ‘light’. This was the first step in the introduction of Christianity to the Torres Strait.

The people of the Torres Strait subsequently adopted many Christian rituals and teachings, while continuing to uphold a strong connection to their Cultural identity, Ailan Kastom (Island Custom).

Every year, the ‘Coming of the Light’ is celebrated on 1 July, not only in the Torres Strait but wherever Torres Strait Islanders are living, either on the Australian mainland or beyond.

The introduction of Christianity to the islands brought enormous changes to the Islanders’ life. They approached the new form of spiritualism with an openness that led to an embedded bi-cultural acceptance of European religious practices that continues to this day.

4. PLACE: ZENADTH KES/ TORRES STRAIT



SEAFARING INDUSTRIES

In the 1890s, tons of pearl and trochus shells were harvested in the Torres Strait to supply over half the world's demand for the making of buttons and buckles. Many of the Islanders were employed as divers. The pearl shell industry created a new economic paradigm in the Torres Strait where capitalism and subsistence co-existed. Wages were low. People continued to hunt and fish to survive. New arrivals came from Malaysia, Japan and the Pacific Islands as the demand for labour increased, creating a new diversity of cultures in the island communities.

The boats used for harvesting pearl shells were called luggers, distinguished by their four-pointed 'lug' sails and multiple masts. They were wide berth heavy timber vessels designed to hold huge volumes of cargo. The luggers of the Torres Strait became a symbol of this new era, however with the development of plastics in the 20th century, the industry collapsed, and many Islanders were forced to move to the mainland in find work.

THE TORRES STRAIT TREATY, 1978.

Prior to 1973, Papua and New Guinea (PNG) existed under an international trusteeship system and was largely dependent on administration provided by the Australian Government. As PNG moved towards its full independence, the Whitlam government wanted to review and determine where the sea border within the Torres Strait would lie. After two visits from the Canberra bureaucrats and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gordon Bryant, to the islands, it was decided that 42 Islander delegates would travel to Canberra in June 1973 to meet face-to-face with Prime Minister Whitlam.

At this meeting the Islanders rejected a proposal to simply draw a line through the middle of the Strait, asserting that all land and waters were connected by tradition. They expressed their tolerance for Papuans to fish in certain areas, acknowledging their long history of sharing waters and kinship connections. But they rejected oil drilling in the Strait due to the predictable damage this would cause to everything that supported the lives and futures of the Islanders. When questioned on the possibility of petroleum royalties, they insisted that they were interested in survival, not in wealth.

After a long negotiation period, the Torres Strait Treaty was signed in Sydney on 18 December 1978 by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare but it took until 1985 to be enforced.

As a result of the determined efforts by the Islander leaders in navigating an extremely complex scenario of territorial claims and competing interests, the Torres Strait Treaty demonstrates how agreements – or ways of moving forward – can be achieved while incorporating tradition imperatives. The Torres Strait Treaty is unique in the world for incorporating two main boundaries, the Seabed Line and the Fisheries Line, and an overlying protection zone to allow people of the Torres Strait to move freely between islands to carry out traditional practices and maintain their interconnected communities.

In 1994, Torres Strait Regional Council (TSRC) was set up to provide a governance structure for the islands of Zenadth Kes/Torres Strait and is currently the centre for policy and administration.

5.

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND



PLACE: AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

The word Aotearoa is an acronym formed from a compilation of Māori terms and is most commonly interpreted as land of the 'long white cloud'. The precise origin of the composite term "Aotearoa" is not known. But if we translate "Ao" as world, "tea" as bright or white, and "roa" as long, we have the common translation of "long bright world" or "long white cloud".

Dutch explorer Abel Tasman is recognised as the first European to visit the islands, which he named Staten Landt (Dutch words for 'state land') thinking it was connected to South America. This was in 1642. Dutch cartographers later showed that the islands were quite separate and renamed them Nova Zeelandia (Latin for 'new sea land') after the low-lying area of the Netherlands known as Zeeland. The term was later anglicised to New Zealand and became the most used term for the two islands - North Island and South Island.

However, as far back as 1862, the name Aotearoa was also used. It appears in written documents and was known to be used at cultural events and gatherings of Māori communities in the late 1800s and early to mid 1900s. It was not until the late 20th century that the name Aotearoa started being used in official settings, such as names for government and non-government institutions, public service organisations, and tourism. Today the word appears on the national currency and is used internationally when referring to the nation. One of the most common expressions of personal and national identity is the "Uruwhenua Aotearoa New Zealand" passport.

MĀORI WORLD VIEW, CREATION AND WHĀNAU.

The basic principle of the Māori world view is based on the cycle of the sun as it rises from the darkness and embarks on its journey across the sky to the opposite horizon where it sets before darkness returns. The rising and setting of the sun also symbolises the cycle of birth and death. This view supports the idea of the world being created every day through three conceptual stages:

Te Kore - the void beyond the world of the everyday - an 'other world' where there is an energy for things we cannot see. The idea of *Te Kore* is important to the concepts of *mana* (status), *tapu* (sacred) and *mauri* (life force).

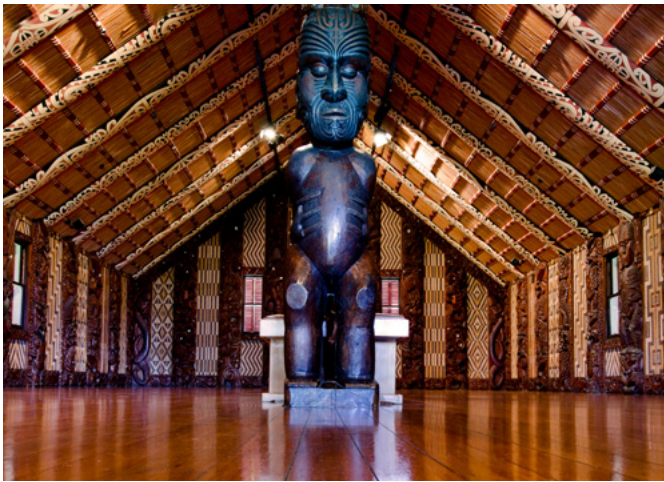
Te Ao (the light of day) and *Te Pō* (the darkness) links light with peace and understanding, and darkness with conflict and confusion.

The Māori creation story begins in the darkness. *Papatūānuku* (the Earth Mother) and *Ranginui* (the Sky Father) came to exist in the darkness (*Te Pō*), and held one another in a tight embrace. Their separation brought forth many sons who were held between them without light. On release, these 140 Gods become the guardians of all things - including seas, wind, fire, stars, earth and water.

The Māori World View supports the idea of people being connected as a vast and complex family. This is the concept of *whānau*. Prior to European settlement, *whānau* were made up of senior elders, sons, daughters, partners and children. In its contemporary iteration, the term *whānau* illustrates several meanings. It can refer to close friends or groups of people united by a cause or social setting. The interpretations of *whānau* shifts to accommodate new situations, but the essential tenets of community and respect hold strong.



5. AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND



THE MARAE

The Marae is the hub of a Māori community – a meeting house where people gather to discuss and resolve issues or come together for celebrations and commemorations. A Marae is located on Māori held land, is formally constituted, and is governed by a board of trustees.

Entering the Marae involves a formal welcome ceremony which is called *powhiri*. It starts with the *karanga* (call) from the hosts, and includes the exchange of gifts, sharing of *kai* (a meal) and towards the end of the ceremony there is *hongi* (the gentle touching of noses which signifies the breath of life as two become one).

The physical design of every Marae consists of a sacred courtyard, a central meeting house, an eating house and several smaller areas or buildings to accommodate the business that is carried out on the Marae. Ornate carvings are a feature of the buildings, representing the ancestors of the tribes. The uprights represent the connection between *Ranginui* (Sky Father) and *Papatūānuku* (Earth Mother). The inside of the house is the place of *Rongo* (the God of Peace) and is positioned to instil an atmosphere of interaction and cooperation.



TREATY OF WAITANGI

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) was signed as an 'agreement' between Māori chiefs and British settlers in 1840. There were two versions, Māori and English, and the interpretations of these versions has been subject to scrutiny from the time of the signing.

It was already apparent in the first decade from signing, that the promises in the treaty would not be upheld. Settlers pursued European advancement on their own terms and Māori found themselves without a voice in the higher levels of governance. Even when there were four representatives in Parliament in the 1860s, Māori petitions for legislative progress failed to restore the promises laid out in the treaty.

The first half of the 20th century saw some minor improvements, but it was not until after World War II that, due to a new level of activism and general public awareness, Māori land rights started to be taken more seriously.

The Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975 opened the process for the return of land to Iwi traditional owners. In 1985, the New Zealand government extended the Waitangi Tribunal to have jurisdiction over breaches of the Treaty. Since 1987, *te reo* Māori has been an official language in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The Treaty of Waitangi precedes the 1980 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and is not subject to international law, however it underpins the relationship between Māori and *pakeha* (non-Māori) inhabitants of Aotearoa/New Zealand, providing a foundation for negotiation, restoration and renewal.

6.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Read the quotes below. Identify any common themes or ideas that resonate strongly, and think about your own connection to Place, and how you could express this creatively.

'Toitū te whenua, whātungarongaro te tangata'. 'The land remains, but people come and go', is a saying which describes my feelings about the place in which I was raised.

Tongariro is my maunga and awa (mountain and river) and Taupō is my moana (large body of water). The river flows past my humble home and marae (village) named Tokaanu. Ngāti Kurauia is my subtribe and Pūhaorangi is my whare tīpuna (meeting house). These landmarks and special places together form the rich cultural environment that have inspired me to create this dance, The Light Inside, because it is from here, from my village, Tokaanu (windy rock) that I draw my strength. This wild and peaceful environment I can feel inside me always.

Moss Te Ururangi Patterson

Place is not only where you are rooted; Its who you carry with you. Music and dance have a way of transporting you back to the islands. Although place serves as our anchor, we can always look across the horizon to where we come from. Our ancestry and elders originate from there, bound by an invisible rope that forever connects us.

Deborah Brown

Mipla come from there untap lor ol Zugubal, Kubilaw Tonar (at night) em e waseh the universe and em e Ama blo we e gad song that tekeh mipla por the totem and clan blo we. We come from above where the stars are, you see the nighttime is the universe, she is our mother, and she sings a song that guides us to our family totem and clan.

Sania Guy Townson

Our ancestors that came before, created this knowledge. Our voices carry this knowledge to give to our children to carry forever. They must learn their knowledge so they can stand and speak with strength. So they can follow and know this wisdom. This is our umbilical cord to life. This knowledge is from long ago, listen to our voices.

June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Rights Commissioner.

Report by the Lowitja Institute for the Close the Gap Steering Committee, March 2020.

2. There are a number of nations around the world who have formally re-instated their traditional name, after having lived for a significant time under a name and flag that had been imposed upon them by ruling powers of other nations. For example: Myanmar (formally Burma), Türkiye (formally Turkey), Thailand (formally Siam), Taiwan (formally Formosa) and Iran (formally Persia).

Discuss the potential reasons for this.

3. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples was adopted in 2007 by 143 nations. Australia, along with New Zealand, Canada and the US signed the declaration a few years later. There remain some abstentions but essentially most of the world agrees, through the 46 articles of the Declaration, that the rights of Indigenous people should be upheld – their human rights, land rights, rights to practice and control traditional customs, and more.

How can your school be part of this conversation?

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Anthropology/iresearchnet
<https://anthropology.iresearchnet.com/totemism/>

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