

Sunday, February 12, 2017, 7pm  
 Zellerbach Hall

## Black Arm Band

### *dirtsong*

<i>Created by</i>	Black Arm Band
<i>Original Text</i>	Alexis Wright
<i>Original Concept</i>	Steven Richardson
<i>Black Arm Band Artistic Director</i>	Emma Donovan
<i>Artistic Director—dirtsong</i>	Fred Leone
<i>Musical Director</i>	Michael Meagher
<i>Arrangements and Orchestrations</i>	Andrea Keller, Eugene Ball, and Julien Wilson, with artists of Black Arm Band
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Michelle Preshaw
<i>Production Management</i>	Daniel Gosling
<i>Stage Management</i>	Brock Brocklesby
<i>Audio Engineer</i>	Patrick Murray
<i>Screen Visuals</i>	Natasha Gadd, Rhys Graham, Daybreak Films
<i>Producer</i>	Sarah Greentree

#### Vocalists

James Henry  
 Troy Brady

Ursula Yovich

Shellie Morris  
 Nicole Lampton

#### Band

Tjupurru, *yidaki/didgeribone*  
 Patrick Wolff, *tenor saxophone and clarinet*

Michael Meagher, *bass*  
 Benito Cortez, *violin and viola*

Rory McDougall, *drums*  
 Jacob Smolowe, *piano*

*Black Arm Band is assisted by the Australian government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and supported by the Victorian government through Arts Victoria.*

*This project has been assisted by the Australian government through the Department of Communication and the Arts' Catalyst—Australian Arts and Culture Fund.*

*This evening's performance will be performed without intermission and will last approximately 90 minutes.*

*Black Arm Band and Cal Performances wish to gratefully acknowledge that we are standing on the ancestral lands of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. We thank them for the privileged use of their ancestral lands.*

*Cal Performances Classroom activities with Black Arm Band are generously supported by the Jacques M. Littlefield Foundation.*

*Cal Performances Classroom activities throughout the season are made possible, in part, by Wells Fargo.*



The purpose of Black Arm Band is to develop, perform, promote, and celebrate contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music and culture to the highest degree possible in a wide variety of performance and community contexts.

Established in 2006, Black Arm Band is a flexible music-theater ensemble that performs on stages and in community contexts across the globe as well as throughout metropolitan, regional, and remote Australia. The group promotes contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through the creation of large-scale productions, concerts, installations, and multimedia projects.

Since 2006, the company has performed before over one million people in Australia and worldwide, has provided professional pathways and opportunities to over 60 artists, and has offered community programs that have reached over 2,500 participants.

#### About *dirt*song

A musical journey through Australia's cultural heartland, *dirt*song is set against a stunning backdrop of moving imagery and text inspired by the words of Miles Franklin Award winner Alexis Wright. A collaborative performance celebrating music, language, culture, and identity, it features unforgettable songs performed in 11 different Aboriginal languages by some of Australia's most extraordinary musicians.

Drawn wholly from Aboriginal Australia, *dirt*song mixes traditional approaches and contemporary songs with existing repertoire and newly commissioned music to conjure a sense of "country" as not only a geographical place, but as something much more—personal encounters, memories, obligations, and nature itself.

#### SONGS

Background and credits for some of the songs currently performed in *dirt*song:

##### Far Away Home/Gungalaira

*Sung in English and Bundjalung*

From the award-winning film *The Tracker*, directed by Rolf de Heer. Composed by Graham Tardif with lyrics by Rolf de Heer.

##### *dirt*song

*Sung in Yorta Yorta*

Written by Lou Bennett and Alexis Wright. From the Echuca, Barmah region, the heartland of Yorta Yorta country, this is a song about the connections between people, music, and country. "Baiyan Woka" is Yorta Yorta for "singing for country/land." This song comes from the understanding that we all have connections—we just have to learn "Gulpa Ngarwal" (deep listening).

##### Coming Up Close Now

Devised and arranged by Mark Atkins and Julien Wilson. In the spirit of the Wongi word "GrunGada" or "gathering" from the Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie regions of Western Australia, this is an invitation for people, performers, and storytellers to share their experiences, songs, and music—both old and new.

##### Big Law

*Sung in Alyawarre and Yalanji*

Written by Leah Flanagan, Deline Briscoe, and Alexis Wright, based on text by Alexis Wright. The language comes from Kuku Yalanji, the rainforest country of the Daintree. Flanagan has written in the language of her Nana from east of Alice Springs, who was born Ivy Upurla-Dempsey; as part of the Stolen Generation her name was changed to Dorothea (Dempsey) Ber-to. *All you people, come and listen to this spiritual connection to land.*

##### Giidang

*Sung in Gumbayngirr*

Written by Emma Donovan and Alexis Wright. Sung in the Gumbayngirr language, which comes from the mid-north coast of New South Wales, "Giidang" means "heartbeat," and the song tells the story of our connection to "jagun" ("country"). How are we the country? How do we keep the heartbeat of the country going? We must "ngarraanga" ("listen").

The women in the song maintain the heartbeat almost like a pulse, and refer to the country as "miminga" (mother). This song calls out like a mother calls to her children, like a country to its people.

**Yarian Mi Tji (What's My Name)**

*Sung in Ngarrindjeri*

Written by Ruby Hunter. A song of questions looking for answers. What is your name, your story, your land? The Ngarrindjeri language is from the Lower Murray River, South Australia.

**Burad**

*Sung in Badjtala*

Written by Fred Leone. Badjtala language is from the Fraser Coast region of South East Queensland. "Burad" is the white-crested eagle and this song is a hunting story, telling of how to watch the eagle find fish.

**This Land is Mine**

Written by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody for the film *One Night The Moon*, directed by Rachel Perkins. Originally set on Andyamathanha land in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, it reflects on the concepts of possession and belonging.

**Old Fitzroy**

Written by Dan Sultan.

**Gungalairla**

Written by Archie Roach.

**Dron Wanga**

*Sung in Gumatj*

Written by Neil Murray. Performed with permission from the family of GR Burarrwanga. This version is dedicated to GRB and sung in Gumatj from the Yolŋu Matha languages of North East Arnhem Land.

**Rainstorm**

*Sung in Gundjeihmi*

Written by Shellie Morris, Mandy Muir, and Alexis Wright. "Rainstorm" is sung in the language from the southern end of Kakadu National Park (it is still spoken fluently all over the region). Mandy Muir, with the help of her mother, Jesse Alderson (a Traditional Owner in Kakadu), translated this piece.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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**Black Arm Band**

Black Arm Band (BAB) is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organization and one of Australia's leading performing arts companies, widely praised for its distinctive music-theater performances. The group celebrates Indigenous music, culture, and language through the combination of music and uniquely powerful visual imagery. BAB shares the stories and heart of Indigenous culture with audiences in the spirit of resilience, understanding, hope, and reconciliation, and its presentations are a contemporary expressions of more than 40,000 years of living culture.

At the heart of BAB's work is a deep connection with Indigenous communities across Australia. The group's remote music workshops and performance programs have positively impacted over 2,500 participants with inspiration drawn from the ongoing relationships developed throughout these diverse communities, and grounded in connections to people and

places. BAB develops, performs, promotes, and educates as a vehicle for social change that is centered on self-determination, empowerment, and the development of community.

Black Arm Band is a flexible ensemble of highly skilled musicians, composers, performers, directors, and artistic technicians, working together and representing the finest of Australian music theater.

**James Henry** (*vocals*) is a singer/songwriter, composer, producer, music director, and accomplished photographer. He is involved in many fields of the music industry: as a guitarist on Black Arm Band's recent tour of the UK; a choir member and guitarist on the Archie Roach Into the Bloodstream tour; and as a composer for various dance and theater projects. His skills have attracted commissions from the City of Melbourne to compose for experimental media and as music director of the Melbourne Festival opening ceremonies.

**Troy “Jungaji” Brady** (*vocals*) keeps cultural fires burning through his lyrics and music, presenting his captivating stories around the world. The Western GuGuYalanji and Birri Gubba songman shares his tales of country, love, and law in language and through contemporary folk/roots music. Currently touring as a feature artist with BAB, as well as performing as a solo artist, he is a consummate performer. Over a career of 20 years, he led a number of bands before setting out on his own, his current music exploring more deeply his language and connection to the country of his ancestors north of Cairns and Proserpine.

**Ursula Yovich** (*vocals*) was recently selected as one of the “Top 21 Most Iconic Women of the Australian Stage”; the six-time Helpmann Awards nominee has become one of Australia’s most celebrated performers. From Maningrida in North East Arnhem Land to Carnegie Hall, Yovich has amazed her audiences. She has also played significant roles in the feature films *Australia*, directed by Baz Luhrman, *Jindabyne* (Ray Laurence), and *Around the Block* (Sarah Spillane). Yovich has appeared in the television series *Redfern Now*, *The Gods of Wheat Street*, and *The Code*, and has performed with every major theater company in Australia.

**Shellie Morris** (*vocals*) is a proud Yanyuwa and Wardaman woman, a multi-award-winning singer/songwriter who creates and sings in 17 Australian Aboriginal languages. She has been in the spotlight over the years for involvement with Black Arm Band, and has earned ARIA nominations, the Music Australia Award, and the GR Burarrwanga Memorial Award, always working within local communities to empower and gently effect social change. She is the 2014 NT Australian of the Year, the 2014 NAIDOC National Artist of the Year, a multi-Deadly Award winner, and a driving force for the acclaimed album *Ngambala Wiji li-Wunungu* and the internationally award-winning musical documentary *Prison Songs*.

**Nicole Lampton** (*vocals*) grew up singing gospel in choir in her family church. She ven-

tured into music studies at the age of 17 and achieved a diploma in world music at EORA Centre, Sydney. Eventually, Lampton became involved in local music groups in Sydney and Cairns, performing soul, hip-hop, and alternative styles of music. In 2002 she joined the local Cairns hip-hop artist Carl Fourmile, supporting his music with her soulful melodies. Lampton assists other artists with songwriting and music arrangements and has performed as a support act with Jordan Oliver.

**Tjupurru** (*yidaki/didjeribone*) is a proud descendant of the Djabera Djabera tribe of the West Australia Kimberleys. He plays a unique slide *didjeridu* named “The Didjeribone” because it can slide through different notes and tones (a cross between a *didj* and a trombone). Since being discovered at the Big Sound Festival in Brisbane, Tjupurru has worked with Kaki King (USA), Leo (France), Babylon Circus (France), Rodrigo Y Gabriela, and many more. He has performed at the Jazz in the Domain festival, collaborating with the renowned percussionist Airtro Moreira, and has been invited to appear at festivals across Australia, New Caledonia, Japan, and the United States His latest album was produced by Lee Groves (Gwen Stefani, The Black Eyed Peas, Marilyn Manson).

**Michael Meagher** (*music director and bass*) is a graduate from the Victorian College of the Arts and currently plays with Black Arm Band, The Meltdown and Emma Donovan, and The Putbacks. He has worked as a freelance bassist for bands including The Bamboos, The Pigram Brothers, Kate Ceberano, and Ross Hannaford. In 2011 Meagher performed with international superstars Joss Stone, Mavis Staples, and Rickie Lee Jones, through BAB’s Melbourne Festival production *Notes from the Hard Road*. He continues to work with a wide array of artists and is also a passionate teacher.

**Rory McDougall** (*drums*) graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2000, with a bachelor’s degree in music performance (repertoire) and specializing in percussion. He has collaborated with many Australian musicians,

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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including Shane Howard (of the group Goanna), The Conglomerate (featuring members of the Cat Empire), and the Chris Hale Ensemble, among many others. McDougall has spent six years as drummer with Black Arm Band and has also worked in the rhythm section for numerous projects featuring artists including the Melbourne hip-hop group T.Z.U, Ross Hannaford Trio, Mavis Staples, Joss Stone, Ricki Lee Jones, Paul McDermott, HOY, Tim Rogers, Kate Ceberano, Rhonda Burchmore, Matt Hetherington, Shane Howard, City City City, David Arden, Illzilla, The Red Eyes, Paul Kelly, Jimmy Barnes, The Putbacks, Labjad, San Lazaro, Scott Edgar, Tripod, and The Firemen (Bamboos).

**Fred Leone** (*artistic director of dirtsong*) has a long history working as a dancer, singer, hip-hop artist, and MC, as well as an educator working in community cultural development and as a youth worker. He is an gifted community leader, with strong Australian Aboriginal, Tongan, and South-Sea Islander heritage, and has also been a guest curator of Clancestry at QPAC. Leone is currently developing a new work for the National Theatre of Scotland.

**Brock Brocklesby** (*stage manager/visuals*) has worked with BAB since its inception and in the arts and cultural events landscape for 30

years. She has extensive experience as a tour manager, safety officer, company coordinator, and production manager, and her specialty is stage management. Brocklesby has stage-managed many commercial productions but her preference is to work for companies with more than money at their heart. She has toured extensively—locally, internationally, and to remote communities.

**Daniel Gosling** (*production manager/lighting*) has been on the road for the last 10 years, working in a range of roles in lighting, staging, audio, automation, and management. He has been privileged to work on the Australia television production *RockWiz* and act as crew chief and systems engineer on their national Australian tours. He has worked as production manager and lighting designer for KuDeTa Bali's high season dance parties for the last eight years as well as production manager for the Victorian Opera and Melbourne Ballet, numerous school and pro-am productions, and diverse international clients on their broadcast and live events both in Australia and across southeast Asia.

*Black Arm Band is a flexible ensemble featuring a large group of different artists and some artists pictured may not be appearing in these performances.*

# Berkeley **RADICAL**

## IMMERSION, INNOVATION, AND **INCLUSION**

This performance by **Black Arm Band** is part of the 2016/17 Berkeley **RADICAL Inclusion** strand that spans multiple genres from September 2016 – February 2017. *Inclusion* performances and activities seek to explore how universal themes can arise from diverse, culturally specific artists or ensembles, and how artists use the idea of inclusion in their creative process. Regardless of cultural backgrounds, audiences can see themselves in such works because the artists intentionally aim for inclusion. Cal Performances' next *Inclusion* program takes place on February 18, when **The Nile Project** returns to Berkeley. An audience favorite in 2015, this remarkable program spotlights artists from the 11 Nile countries and celebrates the rich mix of musical communities gathered around a shared, precious resource: water. For complete details of all performances and related activities, please visit [calperformances.org](http://calperformances.org).



# dirtsong

## SINGING “COUNTRY” IN NEW WAYS

by Urszula Dawkin

Black Arm Band’s first show, *murundak* (2006), surveyed the depth and breadth of contemporary Aboriginal music to date; its second, *Hidden Republic* (2008), took a step towards the future in its expression of hope “post-apology.” *dirtsong*—performed predominantly in Indigenous languages from across Australia—brings past and future together and celebrates language restoration and cultural survival through songs that map the “countries” of the band members.

Of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages that were spoken before 1788, many have been irretrievably lost or are at risk of disappearing when their remaining fluent speakers pass away. But some languages survive and are thriving, and many are being recovered, restored, and learned anew by younger generations.

Remembered and passed on by the old people, or reconstructed with the help of early journals and ethnographic records, these recovered languages are helping redress the cultural dispossession suffered by Aboriginal Australia. They are also enabling the renewal of an oral tradition over 40,000 years old.

The languages in *dirtsong* come from across Australia, from the Northern Territory to Tasmania, and from east to west: Gumatj and Burrarra of Yolŋu Matha from Arnhem Land; palawa kani from Tasmania; Yorta Yorta and Mutti Mutti from southern Mungo region; Ngarrindjeri from the lower Murray River region in South Australia; Gumbayngirr, from north-coast New South Wales; Mirning, from the western Great Australian Bight—and quite a few more. Each of the Black Arm Band artists



has their own particular relationship to culture through language; whether it be long-standing and uninterrupted through generations of family, recently recovered, or severed through geographical displacement.

In this sense, *dirtsong* re-maps and strengthens these cultural relationships, feeding back into the larger project of language revival in this country. Many of the songs are newly commissioned—not just reinforcing or affirming culture, but actively creating it.

Black Arm Band artist and Yorta Yorta woman Lou Bennett sees *dirtsong* as being much more than a concert, and language as much more than “words” for the artists in the band.

“*dirtsong* is about land, language, and people,” says Bennett, “and the connection between the three is innate in us [Aboriginal people]. It’s something that’s always been there, always will be in humankind, but in our mob it’s very evident in our everyday life. Whether we’re from the cities or the country, we all come from that earth, we all go back to that earth.”

For many of the band’s members, the creation of *dirtsong* was an intense personal experience—particularly for those who are in the process of retrieving their language, or who are yet to hear their own language spoken.

“We have members within Black Arm Band that have been dispossessed and removed from their countries,” says Bennett, “and also people who are still in their countries and still speaking their languages fluently—the whole gamut. And it is such an overwhelming emotional thing to go through that journey [of language recovery], even by yourself, with your family and community—let alone for a particular show.”

“Language is belonging,” she says. “It is tasting—it is feeling. When I speak and sing my language I feel at home. I feel a sense of belonging, and pride in my language. I also feel a sense of connection to the land where that language comes from.”

*dirtsong* is about telling a story—not only musically, but spiritually—about the meaning of country and the Indigenous relationship to the land through time. According to the show’s original director, Steven Richardson, it charts a

new “territory” encompassing the many landscapes, both physical and cultural, that make up this continent.

“The performance is in some senses a map of Australia,” says Richardson, “but not in the sense that we are trying to represent specific geographical locations. Each language is specific to a place, but the music perhaps renders a symbolic portrait of Australia embracing cultural and linguistic diversity.”

This idea of a “map” also suggests the traditional Aboriginal concept of “songlines,” an idea that is complex, but for Lou Bennett represents “the connection between the past, the present, and the future.”

Bennett says that the creation of a songline does not depend on a traditional approach.

“Even if I’m using English, [if] I’m using a different type of melody, [if] I’m not necessarily using traditional instruments, it’s still a connection to my land, it’s still a connection to my belief system. It’s not just a pop song—it links me to that ancestral land.”

Songlines, says Bennett, relate not only to time but also to places, “like little veins that run through the country.”

“You know, some of those old men and women that travel through bushland, they sing the country; and when they sing the country they know where they are. It’s like a map to them, and that’s more of the depth of what songlines are to me.”

Transplanted to a contemporary setting, perhaps there is a relationship between the singing of the old people and the map that Black Arm Band creates through this show. *dirtsong*’s title track, written by Bennett, acknowledges the depth of tradition while retaining a clear focus on the present.

“[The song, ‘dirtsong’] is about the songs that come up from the country—that have been coming up from the country for a very long time. And if you listen to that country, you hear the songs, you hear that oldness, you ‘Gulpa Ngarwal’—you start to listen deeply.”

“It’s not just about looking to the past and to the ancestors; it’s also happening now. We are still singing our country, but in other ways.”





Sara Walker

# Original Text That Inspired *dirtsong*

by Alexis Wright



Susan Gordon-Brown

*Alexis Wright, a member of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria, is one of Australia's finest writers. Her novel Carpentaria won the Miles Franklin Award, Australia's most prestigious literary prize.*

This is dirtsong—It comes from where we  
bin start off.  
Comes from country line.  
Long time singing song for country.  
Dirtsong coming up from where everything  
start off.

Coming up from ancient song for making  
country good—looking good all of  
the time.  
Singing it up, singing it up, looking after  
it well.  
Should be like that, very important for  
spinifex, gidgee, mulga,  
Plenty good food, plant, water hole,  
animal each country place,  
Sky place,

Sea place—looking after em.  
Keeping story alive for country,  
make it alive—singing the songs,  
Living the stories,  
Holding the knowledge,  
Following the story,  
That is the Aboriginal law belonging to us.  
dirtsong—happening now!

Country!  
Country for me! You listening?  
Are you listening to me?  
Coming up close now.  
I am country. Listen to me!  
I am your government—I am the land.  
This country speaks proper way.  
Law right up top.  
It has to be above other laws.

That Canberra law underneath—any  
Australia law underneath—only little law.

Yeah, I reckon old Law is everywhere.  
See it over there in the hill where the old  
spirits live, inside rock, tree, wind, sky,  
all animals and these old ones are coming  
through the elders singing the country with  
all the knowledge for big law.

I cannot be any other way.  
 I am not your way.  
 Everyone must listen to the land to live strong.

Land strong with Law.  
 Indigenous law.  
 He is the right constitution for this country.  
 I am here.  
 Sitting down here.  
 My country, he's alright, very good.  
 I am happy now.  
 First time I am happy.  
 I like that country and go back and stay there.  
 It is desert country, all flat, and big range on  
 side—that far—and all the sandhill going  
 the other way.  
 We done ceremony—making corroboree,  
 and all that for our own country.  
 I know everything: what Dreaming I got,  
 law that my father lend me.

I am here.  
 Sitting down here.  
 Sitting where grandparents' grandparents lived.  
 Watching my country, watching story—  
 creation story, law story.  
 Growing up children.  
 Growing up country.  
 Looking after.  
 Side by side.  
 Proper way for this country.

I don't know what other people do  
 to the country.  
 I cannot understand it.  
 It is a crying shame to see the country  
 like this.  
 Yep! We have seen all the change.  
 There were a lot of good things right through  
 this country—but memories now.  
 Still though, the Indigenous law for land  
 stands strong, I don't know how, but it does.

We got to make the stories.  
 Sing the stories back.  
 Bring the country back.  
 Singing it up.  
 Bringing it back.  
 Bringing up feeling.  
 Feeling it in the heart.  
 Giving it back to the country.  
 Listen for the heartbeat.  
 The heartbeat now—with the pulse of the land,  
 The bird; The tree; The grass and the wind.  
 Bringing it up.

Dry country some places now  
 Too much  
 I don't know if we will get rain soon.  
 Who will make it rain?  
 I can't make it rain  
 Some of them old people passed away now,  
 you know, the rainmakers.

They been make it rain.  
 Make it rain and the country come back.  
 You got to look after the rainmakers.  
 People need to listen  
 Listen carefully  
 The wind blows strong  
 Through the tree it blows  
 Come visiting you  
 Spirit talking to you  
 It comes in dreams  
 You can hear it too  
 We are made the same, you and I  
 Hot wind bringing the goose  
 Bringing fish  
 Rain storm.

*Alexis Wright's words written in recognition of  
 the recorded voices of elders in the books Take  
 Power and Story About Feeling by Bill Neidjie.  
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 Sydney University. Black Arm Band also ac-  
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