

David Bindi Hudson in

A JUTE Theatre Company and Didge-Ralia co-production

FROM CAMPFIRE TO STAGE LIGHT

By David Bindi Hudson
with Kathryn Ash
and Cindy Hudson

Directed by
Isaac Drandic



7-16 JULY 2022

BULMBA-JA ARTS CENTRE
CAIRNS | JUTE.COM.AU/CAMPFIRE



This project is supported by
Restart Investment to Sustain
and Expand (RISE) Fund - an
Australian Government initiative
- and by the Queensland
Government through Arts
Queensland.



TO BOOK AND FOR
MORE INFO SCAN:

PH: 07 4281 6832

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

JUTE Theatre Company acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which it operates, the Gimuy Waluburra Yidinji. It recognises all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

WELCOME

Dear Drama Educators,

It is with my pleasure that I present JUTE Theatre Company's *Educators Learning and Engagement Notes* for your perusal and possible implementation into your classroom's activity.

The purpose of the Educators Learning and Engagement Notes is to provide educators and students with contextual information to support their theatre visit.

For further assistance please contact:

JUTE Theatre Company on
0742816832 or
info@jute.com.au

JUTE Theatre Company and Didge-ralia's production, *From Campfire to Stage Light* by David Hudson, (written with Kathryn Ash and Cindy Hudson) explores a variety of dramatic languages and can be analysed from a contemporary Dramatic Perspective, an Historical Perspective or from a Literary English perspective as outlined in this resource.

Established in 1992, JUTE Theatre Company is an award-winning theatre company producing bold seasons of contemporary theatre from the evocative North. JUTE provides key access to the performing arts for Cairns and the region. It offers annual programs to the regional and remote communities of the Far North through its Indigenous touring and residency program, Dare to Dream. Our philosophy demands creative excellence, diversity of voices, access to artistic development and collaboration and partnerships with the broader Australian theatre sector.

From Campfire to Stage Light has been a long time in the making, from an idea in 2018 following the success of the Cairns Regional Council Commonwealth Games community performance Beginnings in which David and Kathryn worked together as script writers, through a series of consultations, workshops and creative developments over 4 years, the writing team of three have created a script that is funny, poignant and thrilling. This is David's story, a story that begins around a humble campfire in Far North Queensland and culminates in the bright stage light on some of the most iconic stages of the world.

We are proud of the collaborative spirit of this work, mindful that this is an Indigenous story embedded with history, family, struggle and triumph, and we hope that you and your students will find it engaging and memorable.



Kind Regards

Suellen Maunder

Artistic Director and CEO, JUTE Theatre Company

EDUCATORS LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT NOTES

How to use these JUTE Theatre Educators Learning and Engagement Notes

The information provided will help focus attention on the work presented and fuel the learning process by enabling teachers and students to find connections between the performance and Drama, History and English syllabuses.

As a stimulus after viewing the performance

- Research Indigenous geographical areas known as Country.
- learn more about Indigenous culture and history
- learn more about theatre as an art form
- consider possible Themes and Inquiry Topics
- discuss the work using key dialogue moments.
- Watch online interviews with the artists.
- compare with other works by Indigenous theatre-makers
- consider the themes and use of design

To encourage the spread of ideas, and to make the most of your visit to the theatre, you are free to download from the JUTE website, print, and distribute the Notes to students.

Please visit our website www.jute.com.au to download an electronic version of our Educators Learning and Engagement Notes.



About the Play

Born in 1962 in Cairns, the son and grandson of a stolen generation, in an era when Indigenous peoples of Australia were not legally recognised as citizens, David Hudson begins life simply, in a society that at best ignores his existence, at worst actively discriminates against him. At a young age his mother, Esme, a Western Yalanji woman, takes David to live on his father's traditional country, the lands of the Ewamian people. There he's guided by the Elders in cultural knowledge and given his cultural name, Bindi, meaning 'look forward'. He embarks upon the world adventure with this new name and a new mission- to bring the culture of his people out of the campfire light and into the global spotlight.

About the Playwrights

David Bindi Hudson, born in Cairns, is an internationally renowned musician, artist and entertainer, and a proud Western Yalanji/Ewamian man of North Qld. His work comprises a combination of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal influences. He is steeped in oral tradition of yarning, story-telling and cultural knowledge- and this is the basis of his 'writing'.

Kathryn Ash is an award-winning playwright, dramaturg and actor. She co-founded JUTE Theatre Company in 1992 and works with the company as a creative producer, managing a wide variety of writing and theatre programs including JUTE's script development program, Write Sparks. Her most recent works are *La Bella Figura* with Roz Pappalardo and *Frank Dangelico, Here We All Are Assembled* and *Beginnings*.

Cindy Hudson has worked many years in the entertainment industry, supporting her husband David in his national and international career engagements and partnering with him in the Indigenous education space. She has worked tirelessly with regional and state industries, including tourism, to create awareness of Indigenous arts and culture with the ultimate goal of reconciliation.

Cast

DAVID	David Bindi Hudson
MUSICIAN 1	Nigel Pegrum
MUSICIAN 2	Nereace

Creative Team

Playwrights

David Bindi Hudson, with Kathryn Ash and Cindy Hudson

Director Isaac Drandic

Set, Costume and Production Designer Josh MacIntosh

Production Artist Jedess Hudson

Lighting Designer Sam Gibb

Sound Designer Nigel Pegrum

Projection Designer Keith Deverell

Music and Lyrics Nereace, Nigel Pegrum and David Hudson

Stage Manager Sarah O'Neill

Production Manager Sam Gibb

Photography Mick Fuhrmann

Genre

Autobiographical drama/comedy with Music.

Indigenous Australian Story

Running Time

Approx. 1hr 25min with no interval

Audience Information

Rated PG: Includes scenes that depict images of Indigenous Australians who have passed away.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

From Campfire to Stage Light is an epic journey toward self-determination and Indigenous pride, as told through the life experience of David Bindi Hudson, well-known and loved cultural leader and global ambassador for Indigenous Australia.

David is the ultimate storyteller, singer-songwriter, dancer, visual artist and actor and the performance is brought to life through storytelling, songs, and extraordinary visual design.

The stories take us from David's traditional lands to the international mega stages as David traversed the world musically, educating people about his culture. He co-founded the award-winning dance troupe 'Tjapukai', whose achievements include being Australia's longest-running theatrical production. David has emerged as a strong cultural leader with a significant arts practice.

Themes & Issues

- Cultural connection
- Indigenous history
- Cultural Identity

Differences Dramatic

Languages

Elements of Drama

- Communication/connection
- Yarning
- Place / Time

Skills of Performance

- Acting
- Music and singing
- Performance Technologies including projection

Styles and their Conventions

- Yarning
- Indigenous motifs and symbolism

Contemporary Western Styles - Contemporary Comedy, Heritage Western Style storytelling.

Conventions

- Song and Music
- Ritualised movement
- Direct Address
- Intertextuality

Text

- Scripted Contemporary

Context

General Context

- Historical / Cultural
- Geographical
- Music

Dramatic Perspectives

- Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Cross Curriculum Links

- Drama
- English
- SOSE: History and Geography

Classroom Context

- [A] Suitable for 8 - 12
- [S] Low
- [L] None
- [V] None
- [N] None
- [DTA] This new work utilizes a number of contemporary conventions that will engage your students with direct address, image projection, comedy, live song and music.

GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS

- [A] Appropriate Audience
- [S] Sex
- [L] Language
- [V] Violence
- [N] Nudity
- [DTA] Drama Teacher Advice

MEET THE DIRECTOR



ISAAC DRANDIC

*Watch the interview with director of *From Campfire to Stage Light*, Isaac Drandic and consider the following questions*

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why is it important a director develops a directing vision for a play?
2. What is a director responsible for?
3. Why do you think it is important for there to be an Indigenous director directing new work about Indigenous culture and history?
4. What is the relationship between the playwright and the director?

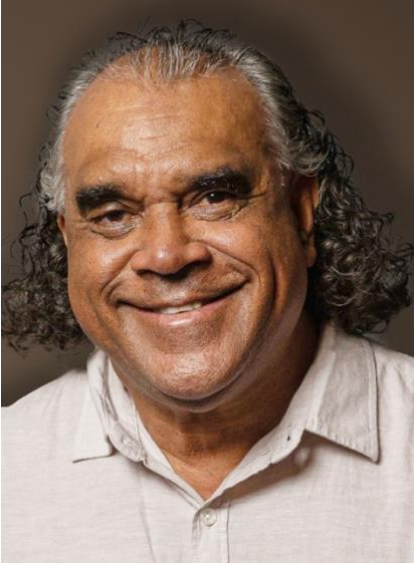
We asked Director Isaac Drandic, a Noongar man from Western Australia, five questions relating to his craft and to his experience of *From Campfire to Stage Light*.

1. What is the process that you undertake as a director before meeting with the creative team?
2. Could you describe your vision for *From Campfire to Stage Light*, and how that was realised through the designers?
3. What themes and ideas would you like the audience to carry with them after the play for further reflection?
4. We often hear people say "this story needs to be told!" Why is it important for this story to be told?
5. As a theatre director, what types of activities do you do during the rehearsal process with your actors in order for them to realise your directing concept?

Visit JUTE's website's Backstage page to hear Isaac's answers.

<https://jute.com.au/backstage/backstage-campfire/>

Meet the Playwrights



DAVID HUDSON



KATHRYN ASH



CINDY HUDSON

*We asked the three playwrights of *From Campfire to Stage Light* about their process for creating the work, the challenges and the advantages of collaborative playwriting.*

1. Where did the idea for the script *From Campfire to Stage Light* come from, what was your intention in creating it and why was it important to you?
2. Describe your process for development and collaboration on the work?
3. What themes and ideas would you like the audience to carry with them after the play for further reflection?
4. The work is autobiographical but how did you decide as a team which parts of your life to highlight and which parts to leave out?
5. David you perform the work, so there must have been special challenges and advantages in developing the work with two other writers. What are those challenges and advantages do you think?

Visit JUTE's website's Backstage page to hear how the writers answered these questions.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Notice how the playwrights are credited on the poster. Why do you think the playwrights chose to use the words 'by David Bindi Hudson and with Kathryn Ash and Cindy Hudson'? What is the significance of the way the names listed and the order of names?
2. What skills, attributes and artistic practice would be needed to create the work, considering the different cultural backgrounds of the three playwrights.
3. What is meant by a culturally safe space?
4. Why are Indigenous stories important to the current cultural climate of Australia?

HISTORY STUDIES



The play mentions several Indigenous Australian lands/peoples: Ewamian, Yalanji, Yidinji, Yamitji, Noogar and Djabugay. Research where the boundaries of these countries are. Do you know the name of the Indigenous land on which you were born? Can you give the Indigenous name for some of the important geographic landmarks in your area and discover why they are important from an Indigenous perspective?

What was the Mission system? Research where the main missions were in Queensland. What was the thinking behind the creation of the mission system? What is meant by the Stolen Generation?

During the show, David showed you a piece of paper that belonged to his mother, an Exemption Card. Take a closer look at the document here. What did the card mean? What law made it necessary to have such an item? During the Mission era, research what an Indigenous Australian person issued with such an exemption could and couldn't do under state law. When was the law repealed? Why do you think David's mother refused to throw the exemption card away even after the law was repealed?

David mentions what is considered to be the very first modern "Welcome to Country" that was given to Non-Indigenous people in 1976 by his former dance employers, Richard Walley and Ernie Dingo. Read more about the circumstances of this historic event here.

What is a Welcome to Country? What are some of the reasons it is given? Why were some people confused and annoyed by the Welcome to Country that Richard and Ernie gave in 1976?

What is the difference between a Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country? Who can offer a Welcome to Country? Who can do an acknowledgement?

David describes the historic precedent of the Mabo Decision. Who was the decision named after and what was the decision?

GROUP DISCUSSION



Discuss these moments in the play:

DAVID:

"After 1992, all those people who'd been displaced back in the day, forced off their ancestral lands onto missions like my grandmother and my father, were again put in a position of being dispossessed. The places they had been forced to live in had been their home for generations. Suddenly those people and all their families, including me, were being told *you don't belong here, got no business here, if you want to claim country, go back to where your mob come from, go home. Home?*"

How did the legal precedent of the Mabo decision impact the Stolen Generation and their families?

DAVID:

"It feels like we are on the brink of something in this country. Something good. For mob. For all you fellas."

David is expressing his belief that we are closer than ever to real Reconciliation in Australia between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people. Do you agree? What steps still need to be taken?

David invites you to connect with him and to connect to his culture through symbolically stomping the ground. Do you feel it is possible for you to have a connection between yourself and the land you live on? Discuss ways in which such a connection could be made? Discuss what that might mean to Australia, if both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous, found that profound connection that David speaks of?

ENGLISH STUDIES



THEMES

From Campfire to Stage Light expresses one man's journey to regaining his cultural identity.

The play's theme is 'connection'.

There are recurring references to 'connection' throughout the play's journey. Why does David describe a campfire as an urge, a deep connection? What is the significance of David stomping his foot and saying 'connect'? What is the significance of David inviting you to stomp with him? Why do you think the playwrights chose to repeatedly illustrate the action of 'talking on tin can' phones throughout the play?

In what ways does the ideas of connection and disconnection relate to Indigenous and Non-indigenous histories of Australia?

METAPHORS

The play works with a number of ideas around the metaphors of FIRE. Explore the ways fire and its attributes are used to express the story of David's cultural and life experience.

The script also references AIR as a metaphoric idea. What does air, the lack of it or the abundance of it, relate to the stories of the Indigenous Australian perspective on our nation's history? How does the air relate to the fire within the poetic language of the play?

FORM

The play is delivered as direct address/role-player to the audience, and a one-man show (well, mostly). The form chosen is 'yarning'; a casual, comic story-telling mode (often associated in Australia with campfire storytelling) in which a single actor will "dive in and out of stories", playing a variety of characters to express a narrative. Diving in, he was in the moment. Diving out, he would comment directly to the audience about the experience of having lived that story.

Do you think this form is effective? Why or why not? How did the actor indicate the difference between diving in and out of direct address and role-playing?

LANGUAGE

David uses several Indigenous words that are generally understood amongst many Indigenous peoples. Can you find out their meaning? Murri, Biri, Warruma, Junga, Mookai, Yigi Yigi, Yakka, Gulagees, Migaloo.

GROUP DISCUSSION



Discuss these moments in the play:

Early in the play, David announces....

"(My father) was Ewamian mob. Gulf Savannah Country, way out west from here. Most of his mob were removed from their country in the 1920's, sent this way and that. My father and his sisters got lumped in with the Mona Mona outfit. Culture got squeezed out of him. His language, the language of Ewamian, is no longer spoken on this Earth. Gone."

Then towards the end of the play...

"Turns out, they've found a way to maybe claw that lost language back to this earth, word by word, rekindle the tongue, connect it back to the land it belongs to. That's a huge thing. Language is culture. Because culture is all about communicating. From one person to the next, creating a circle around a campfire. Sharing stories from one campfire to the next campfire."

David mentions his father's language, that of the Ewamian people, twice; once at the beginning and once at the penultimate moment of the play. This device is a classic technique of 'bookending'. What is the impact of bookending an idea like this? Examine the intention of both statements to evoke a certain emotion. How does this mirror the emotional journey of the play?



DRAMA STUDIES

THEMES

***From Campfire to Stage Light* expresses one man's lived experience of regaining his cultural identity.**

The play's major theme is 'connection'.

There are recurring references to connection that trace through the play's journey. Why does David describe a campfire as an urge, a deep connection? What is the significance of David stomping his foot and saying 'connect'? What is the significance of David inviting you to stomp with him? Why do you think the playwrights chose to repeatedly illustrate the action of 'talking on tin can' phones throughout the play? In what ways does the ideas of connection and disconnection relate to Indigenous and Non-Indigenous histories of Australia?

METAPHORS

The play works with a number of ideas around the metaphor of FIRE. Explore the ways fire and its attributes are used to express the story of David's culture and his life experience.

The script also references AIR as a metaphoric idea. What does air, the lack of it or the abundance of it, relate to the stories of the Indigenous Australian perspective on our nation's history?

FORM

***From Campfire to Stage Light* is a one-man play with music. Identify the theatrical forms used in it?**

The idea of connecting with an audience is part of what makes live performance an enduring art form. What elements of the show create that connection; consider all the design elements and various ways the idea of connection is presented. Consider whether this script would work as a film.

The playwrights originally thought about the play being presented by an ensemble of actors who might play several characters. What would that list of characters have been and how many actors you would need to convey the same story? It was later decided to write it entirely as a one-man show. Can you think of reasons why this decision might have been made? Do you think it works better as a one-man show with two musicians? Why or why not?

CONTEXT

The National Black Theatre (1972-1977) was a golden era in Indigenous Australian theatre history. Who were the iconic leaders of this theatre, and what important political issue was the focus of its establishment?

First Nations Theatre is entering another golden era, with many Indigenous Australian new works, for theatre, film and television being developed and produced. What are the names of some of the contemporary prominent First Nations Theatre companies and theatre artists? Research some popular contemporary plays written by First Nations Playwrights; what are the dominant themes of these plays?



GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss this moment in the play:

DAVID:

"Being seen. Being seen at last."

What do you think is the significance of 'being seen at last'? Why do you feel it is critical for First Nations people to tell their own stories in their own way? What do you think 'culturally safe' theatre-making looks like?

Australian theatre industry best practice follows the protocol that if a character in a play has been written from a specific cultural background, they should be portrayed by an actor from that specific cultural background. This is called Culturally Appropriate casting. There is also a growing trend of casting diverse actors in roles traditionally held by Anglo-European actors. This is called 'Colour-Blind casting'. (see *Bridgerton*) Casting actors regardless of their heritage may seem to allow for more diversity on screen and in theatre. However, a growing number of critics believe we should be *considering race* rather than ignoring it. Some theatre-makers advocate for "Colour Conscious" rather than 'colour-blind casting'. That is, an actor's cultural heritage should and must be taken into account in order to play a character authentically. What do you think? Colour-blind casting, Colour-conscious casting or strictly Culturally Appropriate casting?

For the case of Colour Conscious casting, check here: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/aug/11/its-dangerous-not-to-see-race-is-colour-blind-casting-all-its-cracked-up-to-be>

JUTE Theatre Company acknowledges the First Peoples of the Country on which we stand. We pay our respects to all of Cairns' and Far North Queensland First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.



This project is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

JUTE THEATRE
COMPANY