

Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring presents

CHOOKY DANCERS

[chooky]
[dancers]



2014 NATIONAL TOUR

Artistic Director and Producer - Joshua Bond



Artistic Director/Producer's Note

Making a Djuki Mala show is always an exciting experience, as it nearly always takes place out on our island home of Galiwin'ku Community on Elcho Island. In some respects this show has been seven years in the making, despite a short documentary and maybe a couple of interviews: this is the first time we have created a show that tells our story. Every performance we have ever done is followed by a hundred questions about who? how? where? when? So we saw this in part as an opportunity for us to invite you - the audience - into our lives by way of sharing some of the intimate moments and experiences that have shaped Djuki Mala as well as showing you a damn good time in the process.

Near on two years ago the ensemble and I started playing around with some new ideas both musically and choreographically and we started to look at some of the origins of modern hip hop, funk and contemporary dance. We have had the honour of guest choreographer Narrunga/Kaurua woman Nikki Ashby coming on board to help bring some of these ideas to life, along with equally amazing artists/performers in their own right, our tour managers/stage managers, proud Yolngu woman Rosealee Pearson, and Bec Cooen. And Angela O'Donnell from Artback NT, who has not only

coordinated this tour but has been a great support along the way. Thanks to Circus Oz team for the freedom to pursue the opportunity to create this work.

As always it is an absolute privilege to work with my family.

I am constantly humbled by how lucky we are to have a voice, to live in a country where we are not only free to think and speak our minds but also where we can choose a line of work where we can come up with creative ways of telling important stories. Where we can think up ways of subverting the norm and present politically and socially controversial ideas to the masses. We get to do this through our theatre companies or dance or circus companies, films, bands, comedies, burlesque, cabaret, street theatre and visual arts.

People the world over are battling for basic human rights: from Victoria's silencing laws to the Zionists in Gaza to the students protesting in Venezuela, to the asylum seekers on Manus Island to the staggering rate of youth suicide in Aboriginal Australia and to the West Papuans fighting genocide. The list goes on.

So many worthwhile stories to be shared, voices to be heard. I believe the freedom to do this work is a gift, a tool, a responsibility and in the right hands, a weapon.

We hope that you enjoy this show.

Joshua Bond
Artistic Director/Producer



Guest Choreographer's Note

Six new dance pieces plus reworking of original choreography in six days. With over twenty years of national and international choreographic experience, I am impressed with the dancers of Djuki Mala, by their commitment to all that hard work. There's not been a day where I haven't laughed with pride and joy during the rehearsals. They are talented and dedicated and among some of the most professional artists I've worked with in this country.

Thanks Djuki Mala.
Nikki Ashby
Guest Choreographer.



Tour Coordinator's Note

Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring is the Northern Territory's visual and performing arts touring agency. Our mission is to lead regional arts throughout the Territory by delivering art to and from remote and regional areas; to link communities, empower artists, present quality cultural experiences and facilitate local and national outcomes.

Artback NT's performing arts program is proud of the work we've invested to get this tour to you our audiences round the country. From the initial conversations with Josh about the possibilities through to the support to get the Djuki Mala group to Darwin's first Long Paddock and the journey to develop and apply for funding as well as the weeks spent on Galiwin'ku preparing, we have been impressed by the enthusiasm of these unique artists. We look forward to sharing more work from artists across the Northern Territory with the rest of the country.

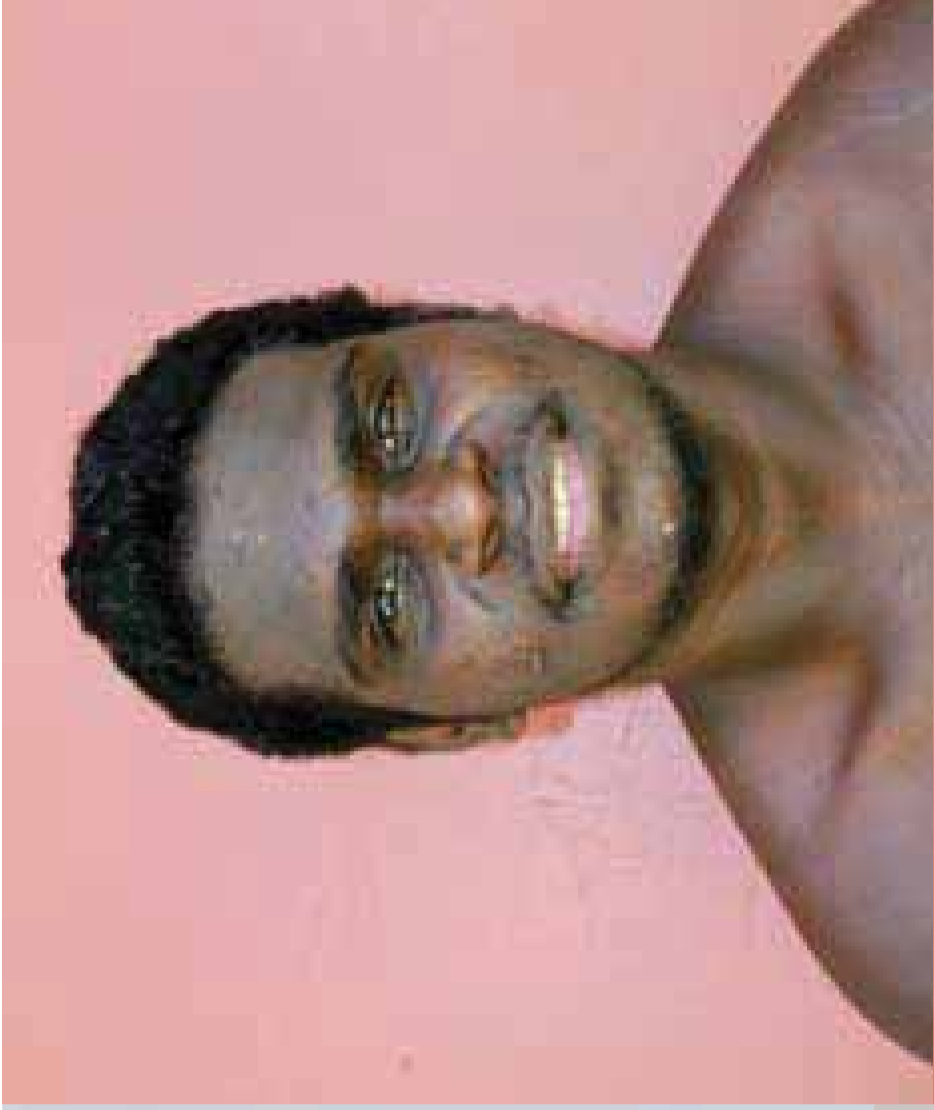
Ang O'Donnell
Performing Arts Touring Manager
Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring.

WUJUKI MUNDA

[chooky] [dancers]



Lionel Dulmanawuy
GARAWIRRRTJA



Mitchell Rang
GARAWIRRRTJA



Baykali
GANAMBARR



Aaron Djimilkinya
GARRAWURRA



Simon Bapadjambang
ATU



Wakara
GONDARRA



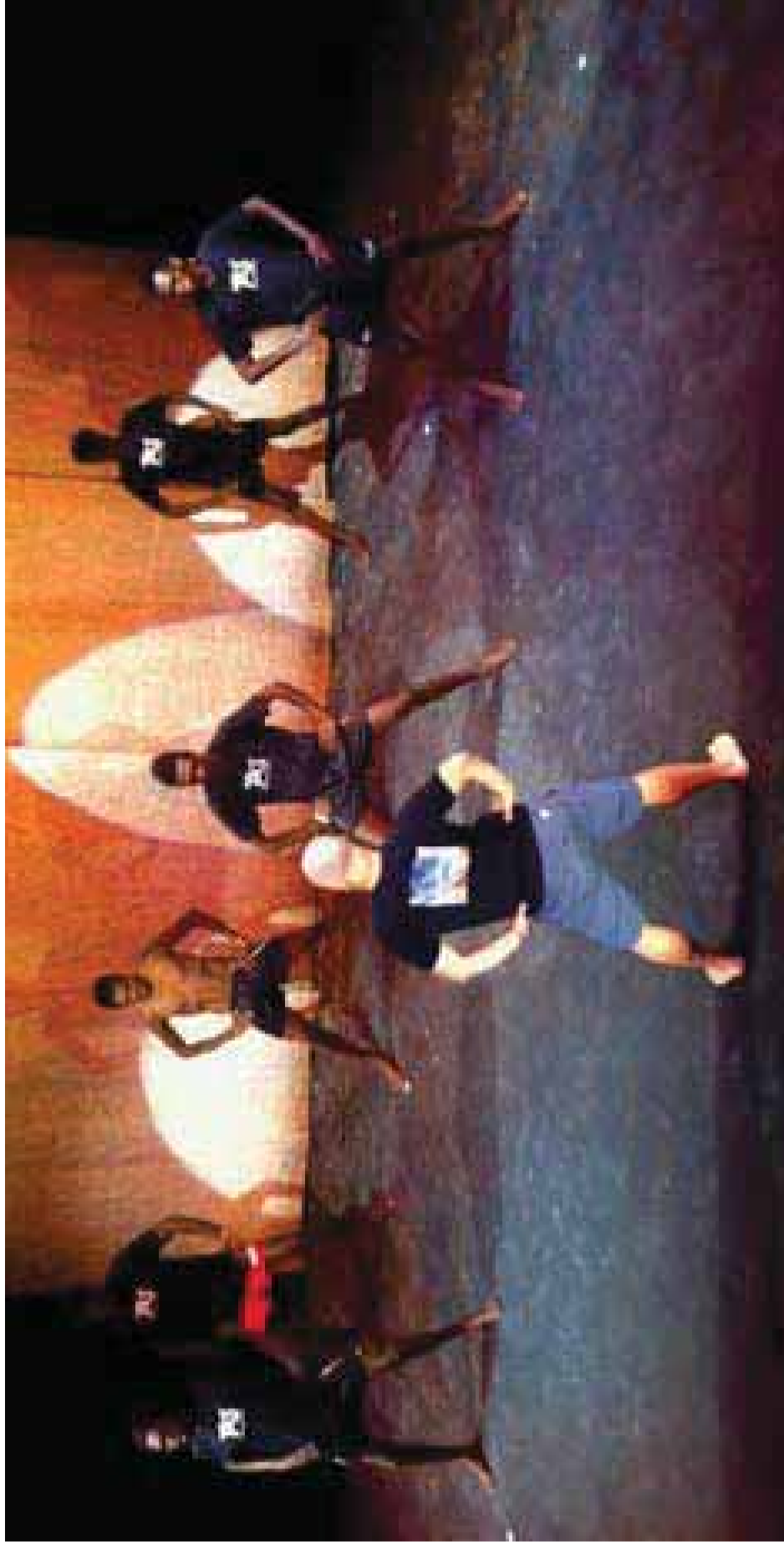
Margaret Nyungunyungu
Elder and Support Staff



Rosealee Pearson
Tour Manager/Stage Manager



Bec Cooen
Tour Manager/Stage Manager



DJUKI MATA

The Chooky Dancers achieved overnight success when Frank Djirimbilwuy lodged a video clip of the group dancing to Zorba the Greek on YouTube in October 2007. Within twelve weeks it had peaked at over 500,000 hits world wide and to date it stands at almost 2.4 million views.

The dance was initially developed by Lionel Dulmanawuy, Frank's youngest son. It was created as a thank you to a very good Greek friend named Liliane who was the main carer of his sister, Priscilla.

The funny dancing and comedic element of their performance also has its origins in their community, explains Lionel. "It's a tradition in a young boy's initiation ceremony. You make up stupid dances and do them at the ceremony to make it more of a fun day for the young boy. Zorba the Greek is an extension of that."

Since 2007 they have created a number of shows combining their re-interpretations of popular culture and dance with narrative and drama. The work reflects the juxtapositions they see in contemporary Yolngu culture, and offers a rare and insightful view into Aboriginal Australia.

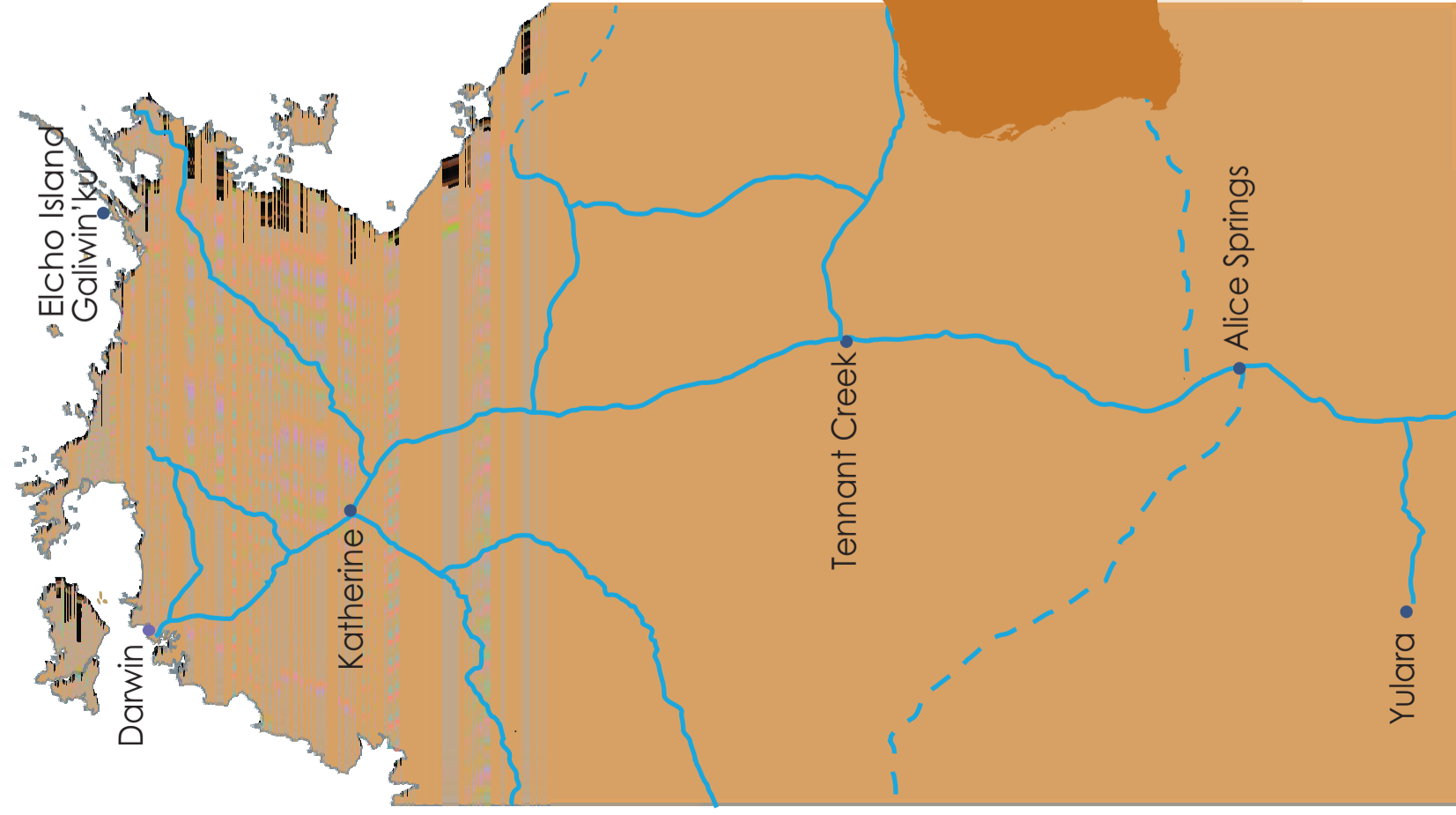
The Chooky Dancers were invited to perform their hit in Greece by the descendants and creator of the movie, Zorba the Greek. They have performed to ecstatic crowds in China, at the Solomon Islands Festival of Pacific Arts, in Canada, on the set of Bran Nue Dae and at the Melbourne Comedy Festival, to name but a few.

In 2013 The Chooky Dancers announced that the group would be going by their Indigenous name: Djuki Mala, and preparations for an eponymous tour began.

After months of preparation, much of the show was built on Elcho Island in early 2014, in a cramped training centre with low slung fans and a fridge door that doubled as a change room.

The show opened to standing ovations at the Darwin Entertainment Centre in late February before heading off down the track on a tour of the eastern and southern states.





Galiwin'ku Elcho Island Home of Djuki Mala

Galiwin'ku

One of the most remote communities in Australia, Elcho Island is located 550 kilometres north east of Darwin, off the coast of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. The island is approximately 55km long and 6km across at its widest point. It is bounded by the Arafura Sea on the west and Cadell Strait to the east. The island's largest community is Galiwin'ku.

The island is home to the largest Aboriginal community in northeast Arnhem Land, with approximately 2,000 residents living in the main settlement of Galiwin'ku and across many outstations. There are eighteen connected clan groups within the locale, which spreads to the mainland. The most commonly spoken languages are Djambarrpuyngu and Gupapuyngu, however there are at least another dozen languages in use over the region.

Thanks

We pay respect and proudly acknowledge our families around the country – the First Nations people of Australia.

Thanks to Galiwin'ku Community of Elcho Island.

A very special thanks to Wilson Ganambarr and the Datiwuy and Ngamil Clans.

Thanks to Djakapurra Munyarryun, Janice Multhara Garawirrja and of course all the previous members of Djuki mala [Chooky Dancers].

For their interviews on video that appear in the show, thanks to Janice Multhara Garawirrja, Djapana Wunungmurra and Djamangi Gaykamangu.

Thanks to Balumba for the Spears.

Thanks to Tracey Bunn at Artback NT for the hard yards of tour development and application work.

Thanks to the Artback NT team. Thanks to Faye Stephens for administrative support from Luthu Luthu Productions.

Thanks to Ben Starick of Starling Publicists for all his hard work, Mary Anne Butler for producing a beautiful and inspirational education kit and Angus Robson for the tech help in those the dark hours in the lead up to opening night. Naina Sen, your television commercial has been shared widely and we love it.

Thanks to all the venue techs and venues who have embraced the Djuki Mala tour and to the audiences.

Thanks to our partners and support organisations including Marthakal Homelands, Arnhem Land Progress Association Stores – Galiwin'ku, East Arnhem Shire, Regional Economic Development Fund, Australia Council for the Arts – Playing Australia, Arts NT, Regional Arts Australia and to Tim Fairfax Family Foundation.

Thanks to Michael Jackson, other original lockers and Motown in general!

Credits

Naina Sen – Film: director/cinematographer/editor for Djuki Mala National Tour.

Additional footage used courtesy of Blue King Brown and Gurrumul, Mic Gruchy and Scott Otto Anderson.

Sound from Djakapurra Munyarryun, Wilson Guluwu Ganambarr and the Datiwuy and Ngamil Clans for Traditional Dances & Songs

Manuel Dhurrkay and Marcus Dhurrkay for Lungurma

Aaron Thomas – Lighting Design





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www.chookydancers.com
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