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MS 5291

Bangarra Dance Theatre : Material collected by Robin Bryant

CONTENTS

COLLECTION SUMMARY	2
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY STATEMENT	2
ACCESS TO COLLECTION.....	3
ADMINISTRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	3
COLLECTION OVERVIEW	5
CONTROLLED ACCESS / SUBJECT HEADINGS	5
SERIES DESCRIPTION.....	6
Series 1: Newsletters	6
Series 2: Bangarra Annual Reports	6
Series 3: Grant Applications and Administrative materials.....	6
Series 4: Promotional materials and programs	7
Series 5: 2020 Addition	8
BOX LIST	8

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:	Bangarra Dance Theatre Bryant, Robin
Title:	Bangarra Dance Theatre : Material Collected by Robin Bryant
Collection no:	MS 5291
Date range:	1989 - 2014 (bulk 1990-1994)
Extent:	0.2 linear metres (1 archival box)
Repository:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

It is a condition of use of this finding aid, and of the collection described in it, that users ensure that any use of the information contained in it is sympathetic to the views and sensitivities of relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Users of this finding aid should be aware that, in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, seeing images of deceased persons in photographs, film and books or hearing them in recordings etc. may cause sadness or distress and in some cases, offend against strongly held cultural prohibitions.

[Back to top](#)

ACCESS TO COLLECTION

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Preferred citation

Items from this collection should be cited as:

[Title or description of manuscript item], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS [insert number], Series [insert number], Subseries [insert number], Item or Folder [insert number].

For example:

Bangarra Dance Theatre Annual Report 1990, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 5291, Series 2, Item 2.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bangarra Dance Theatre was founded in October 1989 by Carole Johnson, an African-American modern dancer and founder of the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA), Robin Bryant, a Gumbaynggirr man and graduate of Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education (KCAE), and Cheryl Stone, a South African-born student at NAISDA.

MS 5291 - Bangarra Dance Theatre : Material collected by Robin Bryant

Carole Johnson, an activist and dancer who studied at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York, toured Australia in the early 1970s with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company from New York. Johnson had experienced the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and had been a part of a movement of new modern dance exponents across America. During her time in Australia in 1972, she was asked to conduct dance workshops. These successful workshops resulted in Johnson's new dance production that depicted Australia's own civil rights actions: *The Challenge – Embassy Dance*, about the Moratorium for Black Rights initiated by workers' unions and the challenge to uphold the presence of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Johnson realised that there was a lack of contemporary dance expression in the Australian sociocultural environment. On the back of these workshops, she established the Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Scheme in 1976, which later became the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association – known today as NAISDA Dance College. By the 1980s, NAISDA had developed a performance arm called the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre, which showcased the development of students into professional dancers and also gave opportunities for these dancers to develop as choreographers. In 1989, Johnson separated from NAISDA and along with Cheryl Stone, who had been studying with the NAISDA dancers, founded a new company in Bangarra. In 1991, the artistic directorship was handed to Stephen Page and on 24 June, 1992, Bangarra opened its inaugural production, *Praying Mantis Dreaming*.

Rob Bryant is a Gumbaynggirr Man who served in the Vietnam War from 1970-1971 as part of the 9th Squadron Royal Australian Air Force. In 1984, Bryant enrolled in a Bachelor of Business at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education (KCAE) in Sydney. In early 1988, Bryant produced an Aboriginal fashion parade at the KCAE to celebrate Indigenous culture and people. One year after the success of this event, Bryant contacted a newly formed Bangarra to perform a second event at KCAE. Shortly after, Bryant entered into discussions with others from Bangarra including Ian Plater and Sue Gibson. Through these discussions, and with other members of the Indigenous community in Sydney, Bangarra Dance Theatre Australia Limited was born. In 1990 Bryant was elected as the Chairperson of Bangarra Dance Theatre, and in the same year appointed Founding General Manager. He held this position until September 1994 when he returned to his hometown of Nambucca Heads.

Bangarra Dance Theatre, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangarra_Dance_Theatre, viewed 16/11/20

30 Years of Sixty Five Thousand; Study guide for teachers and students, Bangarra Dance Theatre, 2019

Dance, Redfern Oral History, <http://redfernoralhistory.org/>, 2020

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Scope and contents note

The material within this collection was collected by Robin Bryant during his time as Chairperson and Founding General Manager of Bangarra Dance Theatre Australia Limited, from 1990-1994. Some material produced and collected before and after these dates is also included in this collection.

The collection includes both published and unpublished material relating to Bangarra Dance Theatre. The unpublished material includes grant applications and related documents such as design briefs, as well as correspondence, research and Bangarra newsletters. The published material includes Bangarra production flyers and posters.

Provenance

The collection was deposited at AIATSIS by Robin Bryant in June, 2018. A second consignment was received in April, 2020.

Material separated from the collection

No material has been separated from this collection.

Related material

AIATSIS holds many collection materials related to Bangarra Dance Theatre, including manuscript, published, pictorial and audiovisual items.

For a complete list of works by and related to Bangarra Dance Theatre or Robin Bryant held by the Library, and for other related material consult [Mura®](#), the AIATSIS catalogue.

For access to material please contact AIATSIS Collections via the [online form](#).

Important: Before clicking on the links to the catalogue entries please read our sensitivity message.

CONTROLLED ACCESS / SUBJECT HEADINGS

Dance, Aboriginal Australian

Performing arts - Ballet and modern dance

Performing arts - Dance companies

Performing arts - Grants and finance

Bangarra Dance Theatre Australia

Bryant, Rob

[Back to top](#)

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Series 1: Newsletters

This series contains Bangarra Dance Theatre newsletters, which were distributed to the Bangarra staff, supporters and community. They present news related to productions, new appointments and retirements, training, sponsors, merchandise and social events.

MS 5291/1/1	Newsletter Number 1, 1992
MS 5291/1/2	Newsletter Number 1, 1994 (3 copies)
MS 5291/1/3	Newsletter Number 3, 1994 (3 copies)
MS 5291/1/4	Newsletter July 1995 (2 copies)
MS 5291/1/5	Newsletter October 1995

Series 2: Bangarra Annual Reports

This series contains several annual reports published by Bangarra Dance Theatre.

MS 5291/2/1	Annual Report 1989
MS 5291/2/2	Annual Report 1990
MS 5291/2/3	Annual Report 1992 (2 copies)
MS 5291/2/4	Annual Report 1993 (2 copies)

Series 3: Grant Applications and Administrative materials

This series contains funding grants and related administrative material which were applied for by Bangarra Dance Theatre.

MS 5291/3/1	Community Enterprise Initiatives Scheme (CEIS) Grant Application to ATSIC, March 1993
MS 5291/3/2	Community Enterprise Initiatives Scheme (CEIS) Grant Application to ATSIC, December 1993
MS 5291/3/3	Funding Application to ATSIC, 1994
MS 5291/3/4	Proposed Aboriginal Cultural Centre: Design Brief, August 1994 (2 copies)

MS 5291 - Bangarra Dance Theatre : Material collected by Robin Bryant

- MS 5291/3/5 Proposed Aboriginal Cultural Centre: Functional Brief, August 1994 (2 copies)
- MS 5291/3/6 Proposed Aboriginal Cultural Centre: Negotiation strategy by Colin James (University of Sydney), and Cultural Centre naming research.

Series 4: Promotional materials and programs

This series contains flyers, programs and other promotional materials for a variety of Bangarra Dance Theatre productions from 1992 to 2014. Some promotional materials are not related to a specific Bangarra production.

- MS 5291/4/1 General Bangarra Dance Theatre promotional materials: Christmas cards and envelopes, ticket holder, Bangarra Exclusive Prints catalogue, Bangarra Friends flyer and application form, Bangarra Totem Program flyer and application form, promotional flyer for *The Journey from Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre to Bangarra: A Photographic Exhibition by Elaine Pelot*.
- MS 5291/4/2 *Praying Mantis Dreaming*, 1992
- MS 5291/4/3 *Blackvine*, 1993
- MS 5291/4/4 *Ninni*, 1994
- MS 5291/4/5 *Ochres*, 1995
- MS 5291/4/6 *Blackvine II*, 1995
- MS 5291/4/7 Olympic Arts Festival: Olympic Dance. *Bangarra Dance Theatre presents 'Skin'*, 2000
- MS 5291/4/8 *Corroboree*, 2001
- MS 5291/4/9 *Bush*, 2003
- MS 5291/4/10 *Clan*, 2004
- MS 5291/4/11 *Boomerang*, 2005
- MS 5291/4/12 *Fire: A Retrospective*, 2009
- MS 5291/4/13 *Patyegarang*, 2014
- MS 5291/4/14 Bangarra Press Kit: contains Vision document, personnel biographies, reviews, photocopied press clippings from 1992-1994, newsletters.

Series 5: 2020 Addition

The materials in this series were deposited as a second consignment in April, 2020.

- MS 5291/5/1 Manuscript document describing CJR (Robin) Bryant's involvement with the development of Bangarra Dance Theatre Australia Limited, written by Robin Bryant, 2020.
- MS 5291/5/2 JTD Merchandise promotional pamphlet and business cards, correspondence between Robin Bryant and Russell Taylor regarding Bangarra posters, 2016

BOX LIST

Series	Folder/Item	Box
1	1-5	1
2	1-4	1
3	1-6	1
4	1-14	1
5	1-2	1

Finding aid compiled by Angela Schilling, November 2020

[Back to top](#)