

WUDJANG: NOT THE PAST

SYNOPSIS

1 UNCOVERING

THE METAL MOUTH

A metal mouth digging

A change unforgiving

A dam is constructed

The land is disrupted

In the deep darkness just before dawn, a Yugambeh man, Bilin, sits singing in Mununjali language, anticipating the finding of ancestral bones.

Bullei manyay jigay nahrjam ngali nguhr Ngulung kani ngali, Guria nguhr ngali

(You will feel wounded but you have the future connected to you, Gurai is with you).

The bones they find are Wudjang (meaning mother) and with her is Gurai (meaning wonder).

FULL CAST

2 RECLAIMING

BILIN'S HUT

The dam builders have disturbed her

From the place she was interred

Now I must find a sacred place

Where she won't be disturbed

Wudjang's spirit is awakened from deep under the earth and given breath – fresh and new – the birth of the old exposed to the present moment.

Kirk Page, Elaine Crombie, Jess Hitchcock, Elma Kris, Lillian Banks, Brendon Boney, Tessa Nuku, Musicians, Bangarra Dancers

BILIN'S LESSON

Nananhg, Bilin's niece, arrives. He uses the stones to explain Nananhg's ancestral maternal line, tracing it back to Wudjang.

Kirk Page, Jess Hitchcock, Elaine Crombie, Elma Kris, Lillian Banks, Musicians, Bangarra Dancers

WHAT DO YOU THINK OLD GIRL?

*Watch Listen Learn
Ngay binangmah nyuhmba*

*This is what she show you
Gale minyang nyahleh nyuhmba ngali*

Mi (eye) Penung (ear) Bareibunn (Dream)

*This is hers to know you
Gale ngulagani gu migany ngali*

*Watch, Listen, Learn
Ngay binangmah nyuhmba*

*She is not the last
Nyahleh yugam nyumbil*

Mi (eye) Penung (ear) Bareibunn (Dream)

*This is not the past
Gale yugam nyumbil*

*Nanahng
I already know
Stories from my culture*

I will show respect

Listen to my elder

Then I have to go

Life is moving fast

These are only bones

This is still the past

Jess Hitchcock, Elaine Crombie, Elma Kris, Lillian Banks, Bangarra Women, Kirk Page, Musicians

3 COLONISATION

BY ORDER OF

A non-Indigenous male character, the Duggai enters and plants a claiming flag.

*It is amongst the
other things enacted
Ineffectual things*

The order of His Majesty

The royal pigsty

Justin Smith, Musicians, Bangarra Dancers

ONE MILLION SHEEP

The Mununjali are confronted with the strangeness of sheep.

Why you talking to a sheep, ah?

I wasn't talkin', I was singin'

Why you singin' to a sheep, ah?

Same thing as talkin' to a muggai (ghost)

Kirk Page, Jess Hitchcock, Elma Kris, Lillian Banks, Musicians, Bangarra Dancers

BLACK SHEEP

A black sheep is sheared for Wudjang to create resistance in her clan.

*You tell all your whiteface
sheep cousins ya*

*You tell 'em to go, Yugambeh
country*

*You tell them this place
blackface creature*

*And then the day Yalnun Yalnun
Bugalehn (very good)*

Beau Dean Riley Smith, Elaine Crombie, Elma Kris, Lillian Banks, Musicians

4 RESISTANCE

THE MEN CARRY FIRE

The Yugambeh/Mununjali gather for seasonal feasting.

They are inspired by the beauty and power of having the Wudjang spirit among them.

*The clan load their scalp with
ochre and grease*

Karal kayi janabi nguhr kudbi wajir

*The women dive deep down for
shellfish*

*Jalany kalgali gurul juy yugir
kujing*

*The lorikeet scream, mullet in the
stream*

Bilam kanga kanihng bulun-dah

And the men carry fire

Kibar wahri jalu

FULL CAST

5 CONFUSION

TWO SYSTEMS, ONE WAY

Wudjang is trying to connect Nananhg to the wisdom of the spirit of Wudjang and its purpose for generations to come. Bilin is trying to anoint Nananhg to become a leader for the next generation. But Nananhg is resisting their persuasion. She is aware of the trauma of the past and, fearful of the grief and pain, she becomes caught in the white system.

White System Calls
This's not my concern
Twenty First Century Now
What is there to learn?
Story of the land is pain
That's all in the past
This is not my shame
This is not my ask

**Justin Smith, Jess Hitchcock,
Elma Kris, Lillian Banks,
Musicians, Bangarra Dancers**

6 CARRYING TRAUMA

DUGGAI

This massacre recalls a series of murders on the banks of the Nerang River, on Yugambah country, under the direction of Frederick Wheeler.

Duggai spear those cattle,

Duggai raid those huts

*Duggai Shoot us dead with
spilling guts*

*Duggai Massacre with guns
and cuts*

Smallpox swells in sickly puss

**Justin Smith, Kirk Page,
Elma Kris, Lillian Banks,
Véronique Serret, Amaru
Derwent, Brendon Boney,
Tessa Nuku, Elaine Crombie**

NERANG RIVER MASSACRE

Here is the horror.

The torn and gouged bodies
lying across the stage.

The innocent and the old,
massacred.

*We fought them hard, We fought
them clever*

We won't surrender, never ever

We used surprise and firesticks

*Sent out spies with hunting
tricks*

There is too much death

MALI YAH WALAL DAHBALEHN

My energy is disturbed

NGAYAH KAYAH MINYANGBA

**Kirk Page, Justin Smith,
Musicians, Bangarra Dancers**

FIVE POUNDS, TWO POUNDS

A Mununjali family talk about the price put on the head of Indigenous adults and children.

You want to listen sister

*You want to know what
happened?*

*They give five pounds for every
adult*

Two pounds for every child

**Elma Kris, Lillian Banks,
Beau Dean Riley Smith,
Glory Tuohy-Daniell, Baden
Hitchcock, Musicians**

DISRESPECT

The women suffered terrible assaults at the hands of the colonisers.

We are their daughters

We are their voices

We give them honour

Now.

**Tessa Nuku, Elaine Crombie,
Jess Hitchcock, Musicians,
Bangarra Women**

MAREN'S REBELLION

Maren sings of her resilience and survival.

*A rage like the sea will crush men
who take*

*Women like me will destroy men
who rape*

Rage won't go away

We will kill you white snake

*We will make you pay for your
violence*

**Elaine Crombie, Elma Kris,
Lillian Banks, Jess Hitchcock,
Tessa Nuku, Musicians,
Bangarra Women**

7 DE-COLONISING

NOT FORGOTTEN

Duggai

I am marked with blood

I am stark with regret

Shame comes in a thud

Truth will have its debt

Nanahng

Sing me into country

Dance me into land

Give me my inheritance

Now I understand

Justin Smith, Full Cast

8 REGENERATING

CEREMONY

Maren and Nanahng sing to each other of their understanding of Wudjang.

Nanahng

How could I have thought

I knew how to listen

Everything is changed

Now my spirit opens

I am of this land

Call out to the old ones

Up my totem flies

Sing my ancient tongue

Maren

Look Gather Breathe

This is all our story

Mi Penung Bariebunn

We must know our history

Look Gather Breathe

We are not the last

Mi Penung Bariebunn

Never be the past

Wudjang is restored to country and the clan celebrate her endurance.

While the wind is fierce we are

While the trees clutch sky we are

While the moon shines soft we are

While the mountains wait we are

While the land is here we are

While the land still breathes

While the rivers run we are

We will never leave

FULL CAST