

MEDIA RELEASE
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BANGARRA WELCOMES TWO NEW DANCERS
Lillian Banks and Brad Smith announced as
2018 Russell Page Graduate Program recipients

Bangarra Dance Theatre is thrilled to announce two young dancers joining the company for 2018 under the Russell Page Graduate Program, thanks to the generosity of a group of donors and a matched funding grant from the Sherry-Hogan Foundation.

Lillian Banks, a Yawuru woman from Broome, Western Australia and **Brad Smith**, a Gumbaynggirr man from Coffs Harbour, New South Wales have joined the company for 12 months of professional experience and training through the Russell Page Graduate Program.

The pair will make their debut in February as part of Bangarra's seven-city regional tour of the 2016 work [OUR land people stories](#), before travelling to South Australia to perform in the highly-acclaimed [Bennelong](#) at Adelaide Festival. In June, they will take to the stage at the Sydney Opera House for Stephen Page's world premiere of [Dark Emu](#) and embark on their first national tour.

Initiated in 2014, the Russell Page Graduate Program is named after the late Russell Page, a founding member of Bangarra and one of its most revered dancers, who passed away in 2002.

Bangarra Dance Theatre, Artistic Director, Stephen Page says the program is central to Bangarra's commitment to building a strong platform for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to grow and thrive.

"We are delighted to welcome Lillian and Brad into the Bangarra clan. It will be an intense journey as they immerse themselves in our world of training and performance under the guidance of our dancers, choreographers, and creatives.

"This program is a continuation of the desire I shared with my brothers – Russell and David – to support new talent to flourish under the nurturing mentorship of artists excelling in their craft."

Both Lillian and Brad are graduates of Australia's elite Indigenous training college, [NAISDA Dance College](#), where they studied together for four years.

Bangarra Dance Theatre, Executive Director, Philippe Magid says the Russell Page Graduate Program directly allows the company to develop future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

"Lillian and Brad now belong to a growing number of professionally trained Bangarra artists with a proud Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, who will benefit from invaluable support and training through the Russell Page Graduate Program.

"This powerful program wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our valued donors – a number of whom have been on this journey with us since the beginning of the program in 2014 – and we thank them for sharing our vision."

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Donors contributed significantly to support the appointment of the two Graduate Program dancers, securing the matched funding grant from the Sherry-Hogan Foundation, which will in part fund the dancers' salaries, Safe Dance and wellbeing programs, mentoring, and the extensive cost of touring nationally.

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About Russell Page

Born in Queensland, Russell was one of the founding members of Bangarra in 1989 and the youngest of the three Page brothers synonymous with the company. He trained at NAISDA, and danced with various companies throughout his career, but it was with Bangarra that he made his mark on the Australian arts landscape.

About Lillian Banks

Lillian is a Yawuru woman, born and raised in Broome, Western Australia. In 2013, Lillian left her hometown and travelled across the country to study dance at NAISDA Dance College. She was applauded for her thoughtful contemporary solo in the college's annual performance season, *RESTORATION* at Carriageworks in 2017. Lillian has fond memories of watching Bangarra productions at the Sydney Opera House and is excited to perform alongside dancers she has looked up to throughout her training.

About Brad Smith

Brad Smith is a Gumbaynggirr man, with Fijian and English heritage, born and raised in Coffs Harbour on the north coast of New South Wales. After finishing high school, Brad completed four years of dance training at NAISDA Dance College. He was praised for his standout performance in the college's annual performance season, *RESTORATION* at Carriageworks in 2017. Having enjoyed contemporary dance since high school, Brad is inspired to learn more about his culture and share knowledge and traditional stories through dance.



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