

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 19, 2019



**DanceHouse Launches 2019/20 Season with Canadian Premiere
of Bangarra Dance Theatre's Landmark Retrospective**
— Spirit —

***Australian dance company fuses traditional Indigenous culture with
contemporary movement in a powerful exploration of ceremonial storytelling***

Vancouver, BC — DanceHouse, in partnership with **Dancers of Damelahamid**, launches its exhilarating 2019/20 season with Australia's acclaimed **Bangarra Dance Theatre** in the Canadian Premiere of ***Spirit*, October 25 & 26, 2019 at 8pm** at the **Vancouver Playhouse**. Choreographed by Bangarra's Artistic Director Stephen Page and former Assistant Artistic Director Bernadette Walong-Sene, the retrospective piece is a visionary fusion of nine of the company's celebrated Indigenous and contemporary works that boldly bridge past and present. Bangarra Dance Theatre has an authentic style of totemic storytelling reflecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities — tracing the unbroken connection between people, the land, and creation itself. Established in 1989, the cutting-edge company has played a critical role in the resurgence of traditional dance expressions.

"Through this urgently vital work that celebrates ceremony and tradition, Bangarra Dance Theatre is helping to define identity within a modern global culture," says Jim Smith, Artistic and Executive Director of DanceHouse. "Since Canada is the ancestral home of a diverse range of cultures and traditions, this performance is especially resonant. *Spirit* demonstrates the immense power of art to break down geographical barriers, sparking important dialogue on the preservation of the ceremonial rituals and storytelling forged by cultures over millennia."

Spirit draws from the multi award-winning company's most celebrated repertoire. Hailed as "a landmark work; a revelation," (The Australian), the company's full ensemble of 17 dancers — each with a proud Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island background — perform a series of nine vignettes from past seminal works: *Brolga (Corroboree)*, *Black (Ochres)*, *Yellow (Ochres)*, *Dingo (Skin)*, *White (Ochres)*, *Moth (Bush)*, *Two Sisters (Bush)*, *The Call (Walkabout)*, and *In her Mind (Nyapanyapa)*. Tracing an unbroken song-line, *Spirit* gives voice to a cosmos of plants, animals, and ancestral medicine, laid down one step at a time. This "haunting, mesmerizing, and incredibly powerful performance" (Dance Informa) seamlessly blends ceremonial tradition gathered from respected community elders with dynamic contemporary movement, highlighting remarkable athleticism and powerful extensions from its company of accomplished dancers.

The atmospheric score for *Spirit* was composed by the late David Page, Bangarra's long-time music director and prolific composer, and Steve Francis, an award-winning composer for film, television, theatre, and dance. A celebration of the sacredness of ritual from dawn's first light to the setting sun, the lush score's heady foundation is punctuated by the earthly rhythms and natural vibrations found within cultural customs, including a pulsing drumbeat, droning didgeridoo, and dynamic vocalizations.

A descendent of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambah Nation from the South East Queensland, Bangarra Artistic Director and *Spirit* choreographer Page is one of Australia's most treasured and highly acclaimed performing arts leaders. Appointed to his role in 1991, Page has

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worked in close relationship with Australia's many communities to develop Bangarra's signature dance technique that fuses time-honoured culture with contemporary movement. The recipient of numerous performing arts accolades, Page has choreographed several works for The Australian Ballet, including *Alchemy* and *Rites*, as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. His first full-length film *SPEAR* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2016.

A former assistant artistic director, choreographer, and dancer with Bangarra Dance Theatre, Walong is an independent choreographer-performer and educator based in Sydney, Australia, working within dance, theatre, education, advertising, and film. She lectured in performance at the University of Western Sydney for eight years (1999-2007). A graduate of NAISDA Dance College, Walong performed with Dance North, Meryl Tankard, and Australian Dance Theatre.

Founded in 1989, Bangarra Dance Theatre is one of Australia's leading performing arts companies. Lauded for its "extraordinarily beautiful and invigorating" (The Australian) aesthetic and distinct theatrical voice, at the heart of every Bangarra creation is the company's relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where stories are gathered from respected community elders and works are created on traditional lands. A leader in the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance making, Bangarra has been presented with Australia's national Helpmann Award for Best Ballet or Dance Work multiple times. Audiences from remote Australian regional centres to Tokyo, New York, Delhi, Paris, and Toronto delight in performances by Bangarra. The company also spearheads education programs, workshops, and special projects geared at planting the seeds for the next generation of performers and storytellers.

Vancouver-based Indigenous dance company Dancers of Damelahamid are partnering with DanceHouse as cultural liaisons, connecting the local Indigenous community to Bangarra Dance Theatre's presentation and activities.

DanceHouse is excited to announce their season Donor Lounge Sponsor, Zdenka Gomes – Odlum Brown Limited:



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For tickets and further information, visit: dancehouse.ca

About DanceHouse (dancehouse.ca)

DanceHouse connects Vancouver audiences and the local arts community to the international world of dance by presenting exceptional companies that are recognized for their excellence, innovation, and international reputation. Since 2008, DanceHouse has presented vibrant and inspiring companies from Canada and around the world. In addition to the performances on stage, DanceHouse offers a suite of engagement opportunities and a chance for the general public and local artistic community to engage with the presented artists and their work.

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This year, Odium Brown Limited celebrates its 96th year as an independent, full-service investment firm providing disciplined investment advice and objective research with a singular focus on clients. Nationally, Odium Brown is distinguished as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies, an honour that has remained with the firm for 19 years, and one of Canada's Most Admired™ Corporate Cultures.

LISTING INFORMATION

DanceHouse presents Bangarra Dance Theatre's *Spirit*

Dates: October 25 & 26, 2019 at 8pm
Pre-Show Talk at 7:15pm. Host: Starr Muranko (Artistic Associate, Raven Spirit Dance). Guest: Stephen Page (Artistic Director, Bangarra Dance Theatre)

Ticket Prices: From \$35

Address: Vancouver Playhouse
600 Hamilton St, Vancouver, BC

Box Office: dancehouse.ca/tickets/single-tickets/ or call 604.801.6225

Website: dancehouse.ca

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