

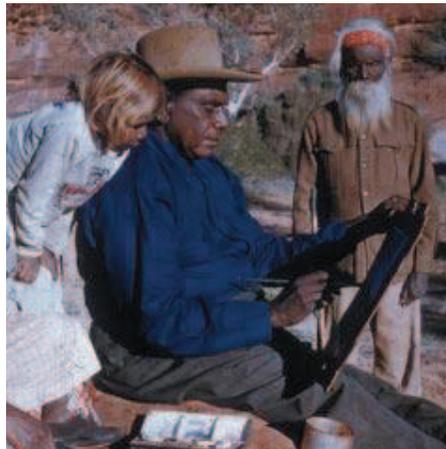


Riverside Theatres Presents

NAMATJIRA

by Scott Rankin

Playreading



Teachers' Resource Kit

Includes:

Cast and Crew Biogs

Director's Note

Teacher's Resource Notes from the Belvoir and Big hART production of Namatjira

CAST AND CREW

RIVERSIDE THEATRE'S PLAYREADING

6th - 7th March 2018

LEX MARINOS
DIRECTOR



Lex attended University of NSW, receiving a BA with Honours in Drama, and also studied with renowned American acting teacher, Stella Adler. Since then he has worked in all areas of the entertainment industry as an actor, director, writer, broadcaster and teacher.

As an actor has appeared with the Nimrod, APG, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Company B, Big *hART*, and at many arts festivals, as well as commercial productions such as the *King and I*. Best known on television for *Kingswood Country* and *The Slap*, has also had continuing roles in *City West*, *Embassy*, *S.C.O.O.P.*, *Live & Sweaty*, *Ballzup*, *World Series Debating*; *Strictly Dancing*, and *Late Night Legends*. Films include *Cathy's Child*, *Goodbye Paradise*, *Last Days of Chez Nous*, *Bedevil*, *Backyard Ashes* and numerous short films.

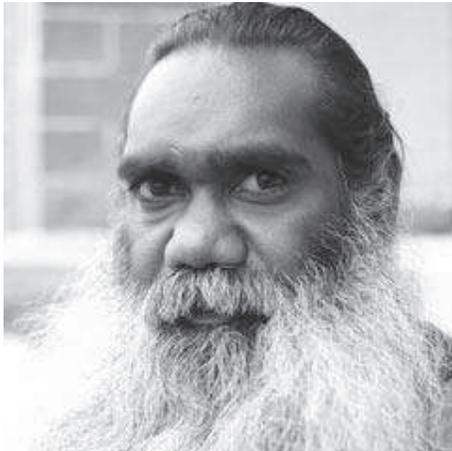
Since the riotous inception of 2JJ, Lex has also worked as a radio presenter on various ABC and commercial networks.

As a director Lex has worked in all media, notably films *An Indecent Obsession*, television series *Bodyline*, *Embassy*, *A Country Practice*, plus documentaries. He co-founded the King O'Malley Theatre Company and has directed many shows for commercial and subsidised companies and festivals. Director of Carnivale, NSW's multicultural arts festival, 1996-99.

Lex directed one of the segments of the Sydney 2000 Opening Ceremony, and was Executive Producer, *YEPERENYE* Federation Festival, which took place in Alice Springs as part of Centenary of Federation Celebrations.

Awarded OAM for services to the performing arts, Lex has also held many advisory and governance positions with arts and cultural organizations including SOCOG, The Australia Council, and Community Broadcasting Foundation. Lex is a frequent speaker and writer on arts and cultural diversity; hosts numerous awards and community functions; and is guest tutor at several Theatre & Screen colleges.

TREVOR JAMIESON
CAST

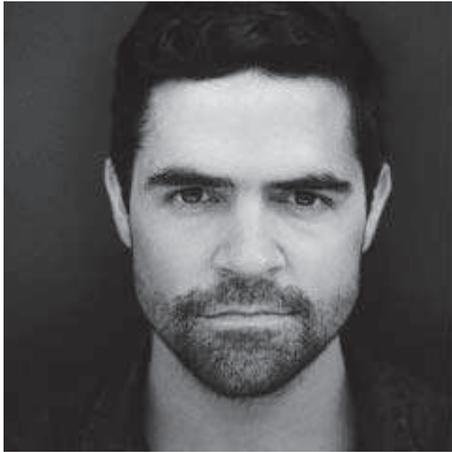


Trevor is a Spinifex man from the western desert of Australia and is a talented actor, didgeridoo player, guitarist, singer, dancer and storyteller. His family was among those displaced by nuclear tests in Maralinga, roaming the outback until they reached the goldfields of Western Australia.

Trevor received Best Actor Award at the 2008 Sydney Theatre Awards for his performance in *Ngapartji Ngapartji*, for which he also received a 2008 Deadly Award. He was nominated in the 2010 Awards for his leading role in *Namatjira*. Trevor has worked on the *Namatjira Project* since mid-2009, consulting with the Namatjira family to gain permissions, engaging in the community development aspects of the project as a key mentor, and playing the lead role in the stage play at 41 venues around the country and internationally.

Trevor's theatre credits are extensive and include: *The Season*, *Secret River*; *As You Like It*; *Corrugation Road*, *Bran Nu Dae*, *Burning Daylight*, *King for This Place*. Soon to be seen in the upcoming remake of the classic Australian film *Storm Boy* playing the iconic character Fingerbone Bill, made famous by David Gulpilil. Trevor's other screen credits include: *Cleverman*, *Secret River*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *Rabbit Proof Fence*, *Kulli Foot*, *Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji*, *Lockie Leonard*, *Wildcat Falling*, *Subi Shorts*, *Deadly Yarns Series 2 & 3*.

MATHEW COOPER
CAST



Mathew is a Wongatha man from the Goldfields (region) of Western Australia. He graduated from WAAPA in 2012, with both an Advanced Diploma in Performing Arts for Acting, and a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Theatre. He has since been seen both on stage and screen, as well as working with school-aged children to devise and develop performance.

Stage appearances include *Stolen* for National Theatre of Parramatta, *Lucky* for MTC/Neon, and the Belvoir Street Theatre / Ilbijerri Theatre Company co-production *Coranderrk*. He has performed in multiple productions for Yirra Yakkin Theatre Company, and played the roles of Ian Simpson in *Up The Road*, Kane in *Killer Kane*, Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Giles Corey in *The Crucible* during his time at WAAPA. In 2015 Mathew shot his first feature film, *The Marshes*, a psychological horror film directed by Roger Scott scheduled for release later this year.

He has also appeared in numerous short films, including *Last Drinks at Frida's* for Magpie Pictures. Mathew played Damo in Blackfella Films' critically-acclaimed television series screened on ABC TV, *Redfern Now*, and, more recently, he appeared in series three of *Janet King*, also for ABC TV.

NICOLE FORSYTH
MUSICIAN



Nicole is a violist/researcher/curator/educator with a 30 year freelance career encompassing historical performance, chamber music, new music/cross-platform work, community cultural development, teaching and orchestral performance. Her credits are vast, and include instrumentalist for the Big hART and Belvoir St Production of *Namatjira* in 2010.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Some thoughts on *Namatjira* playreading

I suppose it's worth stating the obvious, that a reading is not a full production but rather a script-bound performance that highlights the text. As such, it's a perfectly valid means of evaluating the play in its raw state, without all the elements, which transform text into theatre. Nevertheless, we still use minimal elements to serve and enhance the text. We do utilise sound and some costume indications to provide some sign posts of where we are going.

The major theatrical elements missing from the reading are those of the various designers – set, costume, and lighting. This visual tapestry is a major contribution to any theatrical production as it interprets, reinforces and elucidates the various themes and ideas inherent in the words. This is especially so when the play is about an iconic painter and his work, and the very process of making art.

The *Namatjira* production made wonderful use of Namatjira family members, chalking their country on the walls behind the action, as well as using the gifts of a renowned portraitist, Robert ('Alf') Hannaford to paint Albert's portrait during the live performance. These two events served to reinforce the notion of the cultural importance of visualising (recording/documenting) one's world.

I have tried to indicate the importance of this theme by using graphics to provide historical and cultural context, as well as providing a sense of place, and an introduction to Albert's monumental talent. In some cases, it may be too literal, in other cases it may be too abstract. This may well be an area you wish to discuss and debate more fully. Consider how you would utilise visual (and aural) elements in the context of a playreading.

I have also tried to enrich the visual complexity by adding a small sample of watercolours into the set. These include works by one of Albert's sons, some of his grandchildren, and one of his contemporaries.

A word about the performance style. Scott Rankin's Big hART shows are usually done in a manner which I would describe as 'contemporary eclecticism'. That is to say, that they combine elements of the two major movements of 20th Century theatre – Realism (Ibsen, Chekhov) and non-Realism (Brecht, Absurdism). Realistic content is presented in non-realistic ways, through dance and stylised movement; poetry and song coexist with plain everyday speech. Comedy and tragedy are virtually conjoined twins, incapable of existing on their own, vitally reliant upon their mate. Occasionally two or more narratives will collide or intertwine, with or without acknowledging one another.

The fourth wall is often constructed only to be shattered with direct address to the audience, commentary on the action, and anachronistic jokes. Multimedia is

featured, music and soundscapes wash over the audience, sets and costumes transform into timeless shapes and patterns. And like all the best theatre, Scott's is politically and linguistically provocative. A further productive discussion may be had about the creative tension inherent in Scott's use of various performance practices.

As an audience you are expected to be occasional participants, thoughtful receptors and vigilant witnesses. You are expected to collaborate, form opinions and advocate positive change on both personal and societal levels. Above all, remember that you are the one vital ingredient without which theatre can NOT exist: you are the audience. I hope you enjoy your responsibility and creativity.

Lex Marinos 5iii18



NAMATJIRA

Education Notes

By Meg Upton

With additions by Big hART Inc

EDUCATION NOTES

NAMATJIRA

By Scott Rankin

Created with the Namatjira Family

"Unta itja kaltja namalanga, atha nganha ilama... Albert-anha itja nama relhaka rretnya..."



From left: Marcus Wheeler, Derik Lynch, Betty Wheeler, Lenie Namatjira, Trevor Jamieson. Image by Grant MacIntyre

"I'll let you in on a secret... 'Albert' is not actually a traditional Aboriginal name..."



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Big hART Inc

www.namatjira.bighart.org



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ABOUT THESE NOTES:

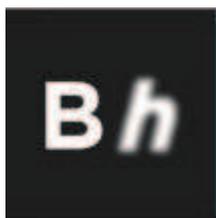
These notes are designed to enhance students' exploration and analysis of the *Namatjira* production for the purposes of their studies in various curriculum areas including Theatre Studies, Drama, History, Art, Dance and Music. They are not offered as a definitive interpretation of the production but stand as a springboard to a broader exploration of the work. We hope that students approach *Namatjira* with their own awareness in order to experience the work for themselves as an evocative and powerful piece of contemporary theatre. We invite students and teachers to explore the production's innate theatricality, its story and ideas, and discover its relevance to their own and others' lives

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Namatjira is a beautifully rendered production that can be enjoyed purely for the experience, but Big hART acknowledges that many students and teachers will be attending the performance for the purposes of study, and therefore suggests the following curriculum links. These links relate to NSW and Victoria, but can also be interpreted for other States.

NSW STATE CURRICULUM LINKS

STAGE 5		
Aboriginal Studies	Core - Aboriginal Identities Options – Aboriginal Visual Arts, Aboriginal performing Arts, Aboriginal Peoples and the Media, Aboriginal Oral and Written Expression	5.1 – 5.9
Visual Arts	Critical & Historical Studies – Conceptual Framework (Aboriginal & Indigenous Artists); Frames (The Cultural Frame)	5.8, 5.9
Drama	Dramatic Forms: Australian Indigenous Theatre, Biographical Theatre	5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3
History	Topics: Australia Between the Wars; Changing Rights & Freedoms (Section A: Aboriginal Peoples)	5.1, 5.3, 5.7
English	Text Types: Non-fiction, Drama. Themes: Aboriginal Experiences	1, 7, 9
STAGE 6 - Preliminary		
Aboriginal Studies	Aboriginality & the Land; Heritage & Identity	P1.3, P2.2, P3.2
Visual Arts	Conceptual Framework – The role of the artist, how interests in the world are represented through art; Frames – The Cultural Framework (cultural artists)	P.8, P.9, P.10
Society & Culture	The Social & Cultural World; Personal & Social Identity; Intercultural Communication	P1, P2, P3, P5
Drama	Dramatic Forms: Australian Indigenous Theatre; Biographical Theatre	P3.2, P3.3



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English	Text Types: Non-fiction, Drama. Themes: Aboriginal Experiences	1, 4, 5, 12A
STAGE 6 - HSC		
Aboriginal Studies	Aboriginality & the Land; Heritage & Identity	H1.3, H2.1, H2.2, H3.2
Visual Arts	Conceptual Framework – The role of the artist, how interests in the world are represented through art; Frames – The Cultural Framework (cultural artists); Case Study – Albert Namatjira & Australian Indigenous Art	H8, H9, H10
Society & Culture	Belief Systems, Equality and Difference	H1, H2, H3, H5
Drama	Australian Drama & Theatre – Contemporary Australian Theatre Practice; Individual Project – Set Design, Critical Analysis	H3.1, H3.3
English	English Standard – Belonging, Experience through language (distinctly visual)	
	English Advanced – Belonging, Representation & Text (History & Memory)	
	English ESL - Belonging, Experience through language (Australian voices)	

VICTORIAN STATE CURRICULUM LINKS

The VCE Theatre Studies and Drama Study Designs	VCE Theatre Studies – Unit 4 – Outcome 3: Performance Analysis
	VCE Theatre Studies – Unit 3 – Outcome 3: Analysing a Play in Performance
	VCE Drama Unit 1 – Dramatic Story Telling – Outcome 4: Analysing drama performances presented by other practitioners
	VCE Drama – Unit 2 – Creating Australian Drama – Outcome 4: Analysing Australian drama performance
VELS Level 6 – The Arts – Dimension: Exploring and Responding	The <i>Exploring and responding</i> dimension focuses on context, interpreting and responding, criticism and aesthetics. It involves students analysing and developing understanding about their own and other people’s work and expressing personal and informed judgments of arts works. Involvement in evaluating meaning, ideas and/or content in finished products is integral to engagement in the Arts.
Teachers and students may also find the notes are useful for discussing and exploring the production through the lens of Australian History, Politics, Visual Arts or Dance .	



NAMATJIRA

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CREATIVE TEAM

Written & Directed by **Scott Rankin**
Composer & Music Director **Genevieve Lacey**
Lighting Designer **Nigel Levings**
Set Designer **Genevieve Dugard**
Costume Designer **Tess Schofield**
Sound Designer **Jim Atkins**
Creative Producer **Sophia Marinos**
Associate Producer **Cecily Hardy**
Community Producers **Shannon Huber, Carmen Robinson**

CAST

Trevor Jamieson
Derik Lynch
Grandchildren & descendents of Albert Namatjira, alternating **Kevin Namatjira, Lenie Namatjira, Mostyn Kentaltja, Gloria Pannka, Ivy Pareroultja, Elton Wirri, Hilary Wirri, Betty Wheeler, Marcus Wheeler**
Musicians – alternating **Nicole Forsyth, Genevieve Lacey, Rhia Parker**
Portrait artists-alternating **Robert Hannaford, Michael Peck, Evert Ploeg**

CULTURAL/FAMILY CONSULTANTS

Lenie Namatjira, Ivy Pareroultja, Betty Wheeler, Gloria Pannka, Mervyn Rubuntja, Hubert Pareroultja, Elton Wirri, Kevin Wirri, Hilary Wirri, Gregory Armstrong, Joseph Rontji, Rahel Engwanaka, Judith Ingkamala, Kevin Namatjira
Consultants **Alison French, David Roennfeldt**

PRODUCTION

Production Manager **Neil Fisher**
Stage Manager **Lorna Earl**
Company Manager **Drew Cook**
Artists support **Elsbeth Blunt, Ellen Steiner, Susie Thurow**
Social Policy **Pru Gell**
Arts Mentor, On-Country Workshops **Sia Cox**
National Programs Manager **Andrew Viney**
Administration **Bob Targett & Lindy Mundy**
Scenic Artist **Neil Mallard**
Landscape Artist **Elton Wirri**
Choir Sounds **Ntaria Ladies Choir**
Film Crew **Sarah Davies, Stuart Thorne, Adrian Warburton**
Voice Over **Lex Marinos**
Choreography **Yumi Umiumare**
Set Build **Oscar Prieckaerts**



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Introduction – the story, the play and the project

"I'm a storyteller here, rather than a character," says actor Trevor Jamieson. "I make it clear at the outset [that] I'm presenting Namatjira but being myself. . . I'm out of my league with him, but I feel closer to him just by coming out here, meeting his families, going through workshops with them, explaining what we'd like to do on stage."

[Article by Nicolas Rothwell, The Australian, September 2010]

NAMATJIRA illustrates the life of an Australian Indigenous artist, painter Albert Namatjira, who took up the untraditional medium of watercolour to paint landscapes of his country – Western Aranda country, in the Central Australian desert. Through his paintings many saw the interior of the country for the first time.

This performance offers up a myriad of ways for students to engage with and experience his story through the arts. The arts are central to Indigenous culture and traditions. Indigenous Australians hand down their stories orally, through song, music and dance. During each performance, while the actors tell his astounding story through words, movement and music, three of Namatjira's descendants (third generation watercolour artists) depict his country in chalk on the theatre walls. This theatrical story features live music that generates a score evocative of both European and Indigenous culture. Two actors play multiple characters across the span of 70 years. *NAMATJIRA* is a unique chance for students of Theatre studies, Drama, Aboriginal Studies, English and Visual Arts to observe the live creation of a vast and transient collaborative piece of art.

Albert Namatjira's story offers students insights into the role of the artist in different societies and cultures, as he negotiated living within his own community and the world of White Australia simultaneously. This perspective is broadened by the possibility of engaging with contemporary Indigenous art practice, through the exhibition of contemporary watercolour works that tours with the production. This provides a further opportunity to understand the life and work of Albert Namatjira, and for students to see how he has inspired generations of artists, and continued a tradition of storytelling through the Arts.

Creatively ambitious and uniquely possible through the longstanding relationship between Rankin and his Indigenous collaborators, *NAMATJIRA* is also a powerful story of a man riven between cultures: a celebrated artist who lost children to malnutrition, an ostracised figure who married a woman of the wrong 'skin' but on whom 600 family members were dependent, and the first indigenous Northern Territorian granted citizenship only to be unjustly imprisoned.

The Namatjira narrative and the legacy of his art provides a timely prism through which we can view the current relationship of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Albert's life coincided



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with the first stirrings of popular media and television, enabling this quietly spoken man – who, with almost no training, could paint exquisitely – to make his far-off country accessible and familiar. He brought the alien desert to the living rooms of suburban Australia and at the height of his fame, Albert Namatjira's shows sold out within minutes. The profoundly moving, energetic and humorous *NAMATJIRA* is a joyous theatrical event to share with your students.

Half a century after his death the charismatic Trevor Jamieson retells Namatjira's extraordinary life. The story of Albert Namatjira premiered to full houses at Sydney's Belvoir St Theatre in 2010, and went on in 2011 to tour to Melbourne, Dandenong, Geelong, Canberra, Wollongong and Lismore.

With evocative lighting and live music, *NAMATJIRA* is more than a performance at the theatre; it is a fascinating account of little known Australian history. It has audiences jumping to a standing ovation every night, both in appreciation of the work and in acknowledgement of the importance of the story.

Notes

- This production is one part of a much larger project run by Big hART called the Namatjira Project. The project has been going since mid-2009 and has involved working closely with Namatjira's family to get permission for the production, to decide which aspects of his story could be told, and the ways in which the community could become part of the telling. It also includes a range of skill building and community development workshops with the extended Namatjira family and Western Aranda people in Alice Springs & Hermannsburg
- The play is partly about Namatjira's relationship with artist Rex Battarbee and their cultural exchange. Battarbee introduced Namatjira to watercolours; Albert opened Battarbee's eyes to his country.
- During the performance, some of Namatjira's descendents, third-generation water colour artists, are chalk drawing on the walls of the theatre, huge depictions of his country. This landscape is based on an artwork by Elton Wirri, a kinship grandson to Albert Namatjira



Kevin Namatjira. Image by Brett Boardman



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- There are two actors, who each play many characters, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Some of these characters are Namatjira himself; his parents; his friend Rex Battarbee; the Pastor at Hermannsburg mission, Lady Huntingfield, the Queen (Elizabeth), as well as many minor characters.
- A musician is onstage throughout, playing live instruments creating a soundscape.
- The story is told mostly in English but is also told in language (Western Aranda) and also some German (the language spoken at Hermannsburg mission when it was first established). There are also songs in all three languages.
- Most of the events which the play retells happened during Namatjira's lifetime (1902-1959) and also earlier, during Rex Battarbee's childhood in Warrnambool, Victoria. During this time, Aboriginal people were not allowed to vote and had not yet been awarded Australian citizenship. They faced a huge range of legal restrictions and social injustices including being banned from purchasing alcohol or land. The play explains these injustices that Albert and other Aboriginal people faced during this time. Students who are unfamiliar with this history might understand these aspects of the production better if they are briefed beforehand.

EXHIBITION:

In 2012 Namatjira will tour with a foyer display of watercolours. Featuring original watercolours by Albert Namatjira's descendants, and curated by the Ngurratjuta Many Hands Art Centre, this unique exhibition guides you through spectacular Central Desert landscapes – the artists' country and the country that Albert used to paint. These vibrant, contemporary works are testimony to Albert's living legacy.

Many of the featured artists exhibit in galleries around Australia and have been painting for years, whilst some are new and emerging artists. They paint their country, with watercolour landscapes that depict the vast beauty and diversity of Western Aranda Country, including the West McDonnell Ranges, Haasts Bluff, Palm Valley and many other special places.

The artists include direct grand children of Albert Namatjira, grandchildren of Namatjira's contemporaries, and kinship descendants of Namatjira and his contemporaries. They have been taught by their parents and grandparents and are the keepers of the central desert watercolour tradition. Artists biographies can be read on the [Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre website](#).

By touring the exhibition alongside a high profile theatrical work, the project aims to generate greater exposure and sales for the artists, as well as generating greater understanding of the vital role of Indigenous art centres in Aboriginal communities.

Read more about art centres at the [Desart website](#), peak body for Central Desert Indigenous Art Centres.



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ABOUT THE NAMATJIRA PROJECT & BIG hART

8 August 2009 marked fifty years since internationally acclaimed watercolour artist and Western Aranda man, Albert Namatjira, passed away. The Namatjira project was launched on that date, and is a celebration of his life and legacy: it is a creative community development project, an original, critically acclaimed theatrical work, accompanying watercolour exhibitions, and contributions to social policy discussion around remote service delivery and Indigenous Art Centres.

The project is run by award winning arts and social change company, [Big hART](#). Big hART is a not-for-profit organisation that works to: make sustained changes with disadvantaged communities; take the issues faced by these communities and make them visible in the public sphere; influence social policy; create high quality cultural activity which drives personal, community, and regional development; produce critically acclaimed, high quality art for local, national and international audiences. Since 1992, Big hART's programs have assisted over 6,500 people experiencing severe disadvantage in 32 communities across Australia, helping them to make sustained changes in their lives.

The Namatjira project is a legacy to Big hART's [Ngapartji Ngapartji project](#), through which the company has worked with Indigenous communities in the Central Desert region since 2004. The Namatjira story came to the attention of writer/director Scott Rankin as a result of working with [Elton Wirri](#), a kinship grandson of Albert's. Elton, now 22, has worked on *Ngapartji Ngapartji* since he was 14 years old, and toured the country with the performance piece, receiving applause from audiences for his chalk drawings depicting Western Aranda landscapes.

The *Namatjira* project consists of ongoing creative development workshops with the artists from the Namatjira watercolour tradition, and their extended families and communities. The workshops include facilitated storytelling sessions, on-country painting trips, performance, health, film and leadership workshops.

One year into the project the workshops culminated in a Community Presentation of the theatrical work-in-progress, and a



Trevor Jamieson & Elton Wirri, watercolour workshop. Image courtesy of Big hART



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preview of the accompanying watercolour exhibition, at the Araluen Centre, Alice Springs on the 7th and 8th of August, 2010. From there, the show *Namatjira* moved on to premier at Sydney's [Belvoir Street Theatre](#), in September 2010, co-produced by Company B, one of Australia's leading theatre companies and most prestigious venues. The season sold out and was a huge critical success. The accompanying watercolour exhibition was so popular at the Birrung Gallery, in Woolloomooloo, that Big hART scheduled a second exhibition at Damien Minton Annex Gallery. Due to the huge success of the 2010 premier season, *Namatjira* embarked on a 9 week tour in 2011 - to Melbourne, Geelong, Dandenong, Canberra, Wollongong and Lismore – and a 16 week national regional tour in 2012, crescendoing in 2013 with a tour to London, including a meeting with the Queen!

The *Namatjira* Project is made in partnership with [Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre](#), which represents many of Albert Namatjira's descendants, including members of his family who tour as part of the cast of *Namatjira*. They are: **Lenie Namatjira, Betty Wheeler, Mostyn Kentaltja, Ivy Pareroutja, Kevin Namatjira, Gloria Pannka, Hilary Wirri, Mervyn Rubuntja, Kevin Wirri, Peter Taylor, Dougie Abbott and Elton Wirri.**

Big hART ensures the project works to the benefit of the *Namatjira* family and is constantly working towards the positive outcomes of the project being sustainable and ongoing.



Petermann Ranges, by Elton Wirri. Image courtesy of Ngurratjuta Art Centre



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SYNOPSIS

The audience enters a space that is alive with a creative spirit. Before the performance begins a landscape is being drawn across a black backdrop, and a portrait artist is painting the main performer Trevor Jamieson, while Trevor, seated on a stool, observes the audience.

When Trevor speaks it is as a friend and as a storyteller. We learn that Albert's father – Namatjirtja – came from the bush, fell in love with Ljukuta and they married. Elea was born in the desert in Aranda country, Central Australia, in **1902**. It was a time of drought and together Namatjirtja and Ljukuta came to the German Mission seeking food and drink, they stayed and Elea was later baptized Albert.

Meanwhile in Warrnambool, Victoria at the turn of the 20th Century, a baby boy is born, Reginald Battarbee or 'Rex'. A small white country boy who makes friends with Wilmot, an Aboriginal elder living nearby.

The story of Albert the artist and Rex the artist/soldier run parallel in this production. Albert grows up on the German mission run by a Lutheran Pastor, driven by his desire to bring the Aboriginal people to God, but also to advocate on their behalf when necessary. Life is tough and babies die. Albert's father has been christened Jonathan, and his mother Emilie. Albert is given to the mission to be raised. Meanwhile, Rex signs up for the Western Front and is sent off to the beaches of France where he is seriously wounded, scarred for life, a twisted hand and a withered arm. When he returns to Warrnambool to mend, he reacquaints himself with Wilmot, an Aboriginal man who calls Rex the old water bird, a heron, because of the funny way he walks.

On the mission, Albert learns two new languages; some German and some English. Rex, returned now to Warrnambool, learns to paint with the gift of some watercolours from his sister. Albert's father Jonathan returns to take Albert out into country to spend time with the men and become a man the proper way. Meanwhile, Albert falls in love with a beautiful young woman, Ilkalita, and they elope. With two young babies to support they return to the mission.



Derik Lynch & Trevor Jamieson as Rubina & Albert. Image by Brett Boardman



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One day a car arrives at the mission and it is Rex Battarbee, returned veteran and now artist from Warrnambool in Victoria. He brings paintings in watercolours and, especially, the colour BLUE. Albert asks Rex to teach him to paint with watercolours and to create 'magic windows'. He sees painting as a way to create a life for him and his family. In return, Albert takes Rex out into country and shows him his land, the meaning of country. Albert tells Rex that he can paint some things but not others. Some things are women's business and others are men's, and others are not of his community, sacred and not his to paint. The narrator then talks about the importance of a sacred place and a sacred practice – Anzac Day and its place in the national psyche – highlighting the need for mutual respect and understanding with regard to sacred sites and sacred moments.

Albert begins to paint and so begins a desire to sell his work. The Pastor is his first client. It isn't enough. Meanwhile, traditional land is being settled by cattlemen, and stockmen drive the cattle through. This is illustrated by the performance of Lee Kernaghan's White Faced Cattle song. Albert becomes a stockman like so many of his friends and family at the time. He now has eight children and needs a way out of poverty. Rex Battarbee takes some of his work to Melbourne and includes it in his own exhibition. It receives a warm reception, particularly by the society women.

Back on country, Albert and Rex go on a painting trip, sharing language and thoughts. After this Rex takes more of Albert's work to Melbourne. A buzz about Albert's work begins and a famous society woman travels to Alice Springs to meet him. His work begins to sell and he begins to make some real money. He returns to country to paint, exhibits and sells. Now Albert is approached by family to help out. He builds Rubina a new house complete with generated electricity. Soon Albert is supporting 600 people in his extended family. He gives freely because they ask nicely.

Rex returns to the mission with his fiancé Bernice to be married in the small stone chapel. These are the cross over days for Albert. He hunts and paints and it is his country. He paints a special picture for his friend Rex and his new bride who are now part of his country. He is admired by the elders who understand the special friendship between Albert and Rex. Then...bombs drop on Darwin and German Missionaries are now classed as enemy aliens. The Pastor is imprisoned and Rex becomes the new 'protector'.

After the war Albert's exhibition start to sell out and he becomes a wealthy man. In recognition the Australian Government makes Albert a 'citizen', meaning he can now qualify to pay tax! As a citizen he can't vote, but he can buy alcohol and he must pay tax. The alcohol becomes tricky because in community law Albert may be 'humbugged' into buying it for others, the Aranda way. Being a citizen means that Albert can live in town and doesn't need to back on the mission at sundown...but in a cruel twist...his children do because they are not citizens.



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With additions by Big hART Inc

The new Queen Elizabeth visits her empire including the Commonwealth of Australia and meets Albert Namatjira. She acquires a painting, loves it and Albert's work becomes even more popular. He advocates on behalf of his people and his family for the land that is being acquired by agriculture and pastoralists; all the good land, the land with waterholes. He isn't successful. A trip to Sydney causes much media attention and Albert is both a celebrity and an oddity as Australia's first black citizen. He is painted for the Archibald Prize by William Dargie and is given a two minute standing ovation at the theatre. He is given a car with his name painted on the side.

Why this ovation? What was it we were all yearning for in the cities? What was it about ourselves, that we saw as we stared through our little Namatjira windows, our cheap prints, over the mantelpiece, in our rows of fibro 50s homes in brand new Kirrawee...who were we then, broken by war, 10 pound Poms, Italians with secret espresso machines, building the Snowy Mountain Scheme, proudly polishing those first FJ Holdens...What was it Rex and Albert were showing us in their friendship...some other Australia? A generous one? Not this one, the one we've found ourselves sliding into... (Act II, Scene II, Trevor as narrator)

Albert is now torn apart. At home - grog, humbugged for money, can't keep up, shows others how to paint, the mission is falling apart and the Pastor, about to retire, questions it all. Albert begins to give his paintings away as gifts and in payment...for what? His father is passing. The Spirit comes and Albert tells it his name, his father's name, their real names.

*That flying ant dreaming, he was (his father)
This Carpet Snake dreaming, I am (Albert)
Where did I go?
I am not a man?
Who am I?*

Albert is arrested and made responsible for the alcohol fuelled attack and murder of a local Pitjanjatjara woman. As the one 'citizen' he is brought to account and sentenced to six months hard labour. The media and society turn against him and he is allowed to return to country. But Albert Namatjira can no longer paint. His country is gone, the light is fading and slowly he is dying. Albert Namatjira is 57 years old.

The profoundly moving Namatjira narrative and the legacy of his art provides a timely prism through which we can view the current era, in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Albert's life coincided with the first stirrings of popular media and television, enabling this quietly spoken man – who, with almost no training, could paint exquisitely – to make his far-off country accessible and familiar. He brought the alien desert to the living rooms of suburban Australia.



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At the height of his fame, his life was a whirlwind of society functions. Yet Namatjira found himself caught in a strange cultural twilight that made little sense – by being made an honorary Citizen with his wife, they were no longer just “flora and fauna” – they were allowed to vote while the rest of their countrymen were not; they were allowed to own land and a house – yet their children couldn’t stay with them, because they weren’t allowed in town after dark; and they were allowed to purchase alcohol – but not to drink it with their friends. Eventually, the trap set by these contradictions would snap shut.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Namatjira, Albert (Elea) (1902–1959) by Sylvia Kleinert, [National Library of Australia](#)

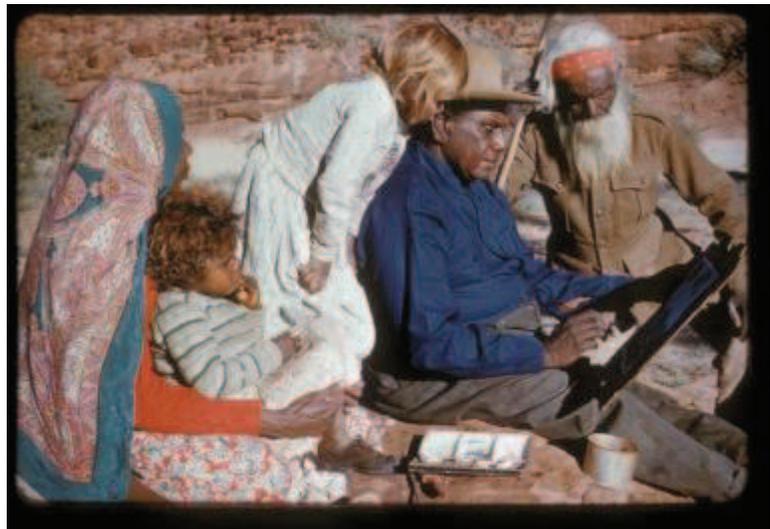
Albert (Elea) Namatjira (1902-1959), artist, was born on 28 July 1902 at Hermannsburg (Ntaria), Northern Territory, son of Namatjira and his wife Ljukuta. Elea belonged to the western group of the Arrernte people. In 1905 the family was received into the Lutheran Church: Elea (who was given the name Albert) and his father (who took the name Jonathan) were baptized, and his mother was blessed (as Emilie). Albert attended the Hermannsburg mission school. In accordance with the practice of the missions, he lived separately from his parents in a boys' dormitory. At 13 he spent six months in the bush and underwent initiation. He left the mission again at the age of 18 and married Ilkalita, a Kukatja woman. Eight of their children were to survive infancy: five sons—Enos, Oscar, Ewald, Keith and Maurice—and three daughters—Maisie, Hazel and Martha. The family shifted to Hermannsburg in 1923 and Ilkalita was christened Rubina.

READ MORE:

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/namatjira-albert-elea-11217>

AND THE NAMATJIRA WEBSITE:

<http://www.namatjira.bighart.org/category/namatjira/>



Albert, Rubina, father Jonathon & grandchildren. Image courtesy of Strehlow Research Centre



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THE 1967 REFERENDUM – WHAT DID IT INVOLVE?

Prior to the national referendum of 1967, Aboriginals were classified under the law as 'flora and fauna'. The referendum asked Australians to decide whether to repeal that definition and to include Aboriginals as citizens of this country. The following two links provide a series of perspectives and facts about the referendum, events leading up to it and the results of the overwhelming support for the granting of citizenship to aboriginal Australians.

www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx

www.wangkamaya.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=107&Itemid=1

Interview with Trevor Jamieson, Derik Lynch and Wayne Blair (co-director) at the Art Galley of NSW

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3E60yvl1gU>

In this live interview at the Art Gallery of NSW, during the 2010 season of *NAMATJIRA* the two performers and co-director outline the process of developing the production with BIG hART productions including:

- the cast and director's research about the man, his life and his art (including learning to paint in watercolours)
- the cultural sensitivities around developing the work and gaining permission from the family,
- painting and listening and the significance of sustained engagement in the development of the work
- Derik Lynch talks about playing nine different characters – five male and four female and how he has to create each of them with the assistance of costume

This is a very useful resource for developing an understanding of the making of Australian Theatre from a very particular stimulus – a man's life and history, impact and significance.



Trevor Jamieson, Scott Rankin & Wayne Blair in front of Albert Namatjira's House, Hermannsburg. Image courtesy of Big hART

Questions for

Big hART Inc

www.namatjira.bighart.org



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Analysis and Discussion

The World of the Play

...the audience gets to experience it like a portrait being painted at the same time...

- Trevor Jamieson, interview at Art Gallery of NSW

While this is a contemporary production, the world of the play has a number of facets:

- What aspects of the production contribute to an historical world?
- What aspects contribute to a spiritual world?
- What aspects of this world are familiar? Unfamiliar?
- Who and what is the audience in this world?
- How do you feel about Trevor Jamieson's comment that you are witness to a portrait and landscape being painted?
- How does the experience of the live painting contribute to the audience's entry to the world of the play?

The historical period in which Albert Namatjira lived, operated under very different politics.

- Consider the line, '...mmm Indigenous theatre, so intriguing, such rich cultural idioms...
- What politics is the play having fun with here?

Structure of the Play

NAMATJIRA is a scripted work that uses the device of narration in order to tell the story. Trevor Jamieson plays himself, Albert Namatjira, then several other characters within the production. Derik Lynch plays nine characters in total including all the women in the play. The story of Albert Namatjira is linear but also compressed in time, key moments are re-created by the actors and these moments are held together by Trevor's narrative. Albert's story is told in conjunction with that of Rex Battarbee's, born around the same time in Warrnambool, Victoria. Their meeting is critical to the story. The early scenes in the production clearly parallel the two men's early years and then the crucial meeting that takes place on the mission.

- Discuss the structure of the production and how effective you thought it was
- Were you ever lost? Did you follow it?
- Comment on the balance between narration and re-creation/re-enactment of key moments in Albert's life.

Theatrical styles

NAMATJIRA is a production that uses several theatrical styles.

As the audience enter Trevor is seated next to a canvas. He is being painted by a portrait painter. Houselights are up.

In the very first moments of the production Trevor Jamieson assumes the role of storyteller.



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- Discuss the use of direct address in these first few minutes.
- How would you describe the tone? Conversational? Casual? Conspiratorial?
- How did you respond to Trevor introducing each of the artists?
- Note when Trevor returns to his stool, by the portrait and why the play is structured like this.

Further into the production, Trevor describes Albert and Rex's first visit to Albert's country.

- What style does the production work with here?
- How does the style chosen evoke the spiritual and the dreaming?

NAMATJIRA uses elements of dance. There are times when Trevor Jamieson and Derik Lynch use aspects of traditional Aboriginal dance in the work, for example to illustrate totems and stories

- Discuss how the actors Trevor Jamieson and Derik Lynch use dance to illustrate aspects of Albert's life.
- Discuss how contemporary dance is used by the actors in the production.
- When specifically is dance used? To what effect?
- Does the dance inform the narrative? Does the dance inform the characterisation?

In the online interview conducted at the Art Gallery of NSW, the interviewer asks the cast about the use of comedy in a show that is often deeply moving and very sad.

- How does comedy work in this production?
- In particular there are several comic characters – the society lady, the Queen, and the stockmen. Why do you think these characters are portrayed in comic way? Is this satire?
- HOW is the comedy achieved? Consider the use of characterisation, timing, focus, tension, language etc.

The production also uses aspects of musical theatre and heightened realism, particularly in the dance number between Albert and Rubina when they first meet, and also during the Stockmen song.

- Discuss the aspects of these styles and how these moments work within the play.

NAMATJIRA is highly non-naturalistic in style.

- Outline some of the theatrical conventions normally associated with non-naturalisms?
- What are some of the dramatic elements of non-naturalism?
- In particular consider use of stillness and silence, mood, rhythm, pathos, contrast, focus, timing and how these were evident in the production.
- Do you think this story could be told using NATURALISM? Why / why not?



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The actor/audience relationship

Consider your discussion of the performance space and the overall design of the production, as well as the theatrical styles within the piece.

- What type of actor/audience relationship was initially created?
- How did the actor create this?
- What directorial decisions were evident in the establishment of this?
- Discuss breaking the fourth wall and its effectiveness to establish an actor/audience relationship.
- How important was the use of space in this production for establishing the actor/audience relationship?

Some of the action within the production took place behind the fourth wall and in the performance space itself. There are times when other types of actor/audience relationships are established.

There is a strong moment in the first act when Rex Battarbee returns to Warrnambool, broken by the War and Derik, playing old Wilmot, sits up stage with his back to Trevor playing Rex.

- Comment on the effectiveness of this. Why this choice? What did it represent?

Characterisation

In *NAMATJIRA* the actors each play approximately 9 to 10 characters.

Focus firstly on the actor Trevor Jamieson.

- How does he use his expressive skills to portray himself as the narrator? Consider focus, voice, gesture, movement.
- How does Trevor Jamieson convey the character of Albert Namatjira – does he embody him fully or only aspects of him?
- Other characters portrayed are Rex Battarbee, Albert's father, Jonathan, and the German Pastor – how does the actor use accent in portraying these roles?
- How does Trevor Jamieson use dance and stylized movement to play Albert, Jonathan and the dreaming characters such as the water bird?

Derik Lynch plays both male and female characters.

- Female characters include: Albert's mother Emily, Albert's wife Rubina, a Melbourne Society Woman, the Lady Huntingfield, and the young Queen Elizabeth
- Discuss how the actor uses accent and gesture to create each of these characters.

In the production the actors sometimes transform character on stage. This is true of all of Trevor Jamieson's characters, but not all of Derik Lynch's. Sometimes he goes off stage and returns as a new character.

- How do the actors TRANSFORM character while on stage? What do they use as



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- transformation devices?
- Comment on a particular transformation that you thought was done skillfully by one of the actors – why?
 - Discuss how the overall convention of transformation of character worked in the production.

What role do the Aboriginal artists play in this production? When are you aware of them and when aren't you? When are they directly spoken to and how does this help establish the world of the play?

Status and Motivation

There are several layers in the work that need to be discussed with regard to character status and character motivation.

STATUS:

- Comment on how the status between Aboriginal and white Australians was portrayed in the production – perhaps choose two key moments to consider here
- For example when Albert Namatjira goes to Melbourne and Sydney, how is he regarded and how is he spoken about?
- What is the status of the Aboriginal people on the mission? Is the character of the Pastor a high status character? What determined this?
- Discuss the status of Albert in his own community – consider his relationship with his father and the Aboriginal elders, then his status with regard to the extended community when he becomes famous. How does the actor convey status in these moments? Vocally? Movement? Use of Space?
- How does the law determine Albert's status?
- Do the actors use particular expressive skills including voice, gesture, focus, use of space to convey higher or lower status?

MOTIVATION:

There are several things that motivate the characters in this production including:

- Life circumstances / the requirement of basic needs
- Religious beliefs
- Nationalistic fervour – signing up to the war
- Artistic expression
- Financial imperatives
- The need to belong

Select a character that you believe could be linked to one of these and discuss how the actor conveyed this. Which characters are more clearly sketched in order to examine this?



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Stagecraft

The overall **set design** of *NAMATJIRA* includes a black backdrop, a representational rock with layers or sediments that could be manipulated to alter its appearance and use, an artists' frame, and a simple stool

- Select two set items and discuss in detail how the actor Trevor Jamieson used them to create the character of Albert Namatjira
- Did the set design reflect any of the major themes in the production?

Costume – costume tended to be representational in this production. Focus on the characters played by Derik Lynch:

- How did the actor use costume to create some of the female characters?
- What costumes were there and for which characters?
- How did costume act symbolically?
- How did he combine costume with expressive skills to enhance the characterisation?

Sound and music – there is a combination of live music (recorders) and recorded sound effect in this production. There are several moments in the production where the recorders are clearly heard.

- How did the live recorders create mood and atmosphere?
- Was the music tied to any themes in the production?
 - What sound effects do you recall? How did they enhance the narrative of the production?
- How did the sound effects create mood and atmosphere?
- How did the sound effects work to create comedy?

The live art – as Trevor Jamieson says, the artists creating the chalk drawings are drawing the audience into the work (with an intended pun).

- How does the drawn background act as part of the set? What does it represent?
- When is your focus drawn to it and when does it recede? Is this deliberate? Directorial? Part of the story?

Lighting – there are some very evocative lighting states in *NAMATJIRA*.

- Consider how lighting works to separate the narrated moments and the enacted moments – did you notice any shifts? Colours? Intensities?
- Discuss how lighting worked to create location, particularly Albert's country
- Discuss how lighting was used in the musical theatre numbers such as the stockmen and the initial dance between Rubina and Albert – how did lighting work to create a sense of heightened realism or fantasy?



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Themes

NAMATJIRA explores many poignant and important themes about Australia's history and its development as a nation. Some include: the establishment of white settlement, the importance and value of family, loyalty, friendship, sacred sites, whose version of history, cultural borders, discrimination etc. You may find many more.

- Discuss some of these themes in relation to your take on the production.
- How were the themes explored?
- What characters do you think embodied particular themes?
- How did the script itself set out to explore particular themes?
- How did aspects of stagecraft represent or align itself to particular themes.



Hermannsburg School Choir, in front of the Old Mission Church, Namatjira Project presentation, August 2011.
Image by Jagath Dheeraseskara



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REVIEWS & ARTICLES

At the following links you can read some stellar reviews and articles of *Namatjira*:

- [Review: The Australian](#)
- [Feature Article by Nicolas Rothwell](#) about the process
- [Article: Canberra Times](#), about the exhibition and the social policy panel discussion at Parliament House, 2011
- [Review: The Age](#) by Elly Varenti, 2011
- [Review: Theatre Notes](#) by Alison Croggon, 2011
- [News story](#): Namatjira tour to London and audience with the Queen
- [Stateline NT](#) featured the Namatjira Celebrations in Alice Springs in 2010 -
- [Here](#) Scott Rankin & Trevor Jamieson speak about Namatjira on ABC's ARTWORKS

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Namatjira Website - www.namatjira.bighart.org
- Namatjira Vimeo Channel with short films made by the project - <https://vimeo.com/channels/namatjirafilms>
- Namatjira Flickr Site for a range of photos from the project - www.flickr.com/photos/namatjiraproject
- Namatjira Family Film by Big hART – <http://vimeo.com/26896655>

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