

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company presents

SONGBIRD

By Shakara Walley





CAST & CREATIVES

Shakara Walley Playwright	Cast
Cezera Critti-Schnaars Director	Kira Feeney
Charli Strickland Set & Costume Designer	Owen Hasluck
Jolene Whibley Lighting Designer	Tyren (Tre) Maclou
Levi Widnall Sound Designer	
Jasmyn Day Stage Manager	Emily McLean Director Mentor
Paul Rowe Assistant Stage Manager	Rachael Dease Sound Designer Mentor
Rubeun Yorkshire Fight Choreographer	Tori Lill Production Photographer
Molly Tipping Intimacy Director	Jessica Russel Production Videographer
Roger Miller Tour Technician	
Dale Kerrison Driver / Stagehand (Tour)	

This production of Songbird premiered on 19th of April 2024 in the Studio at Subiaco Arts Centre

Duration 60 minutes

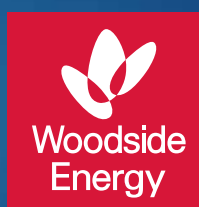
From all of us at Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company we want to give our dearest thanks to everyone that contributed, great and small to this production.

RATINGS & ACCESSIBILITY



EMPOWERING FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS

Woodside has proudly supported Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company as Development Partner since 2012. Through the Next Step Training Program, Yirra Yaakin inspires the next generation of First Nations artists and continues to create exceptional contemporary Aboriginal Theatre.





Synopsis

The melodies of the past can linger long after the music fades...

Brooke, her brother Michael, and Leon grew up together and have been best friends their entire lives, until an untimely tragedy tore them apart.

After five years, Leon wants to reconnect with Brooke and find out what happened to Michael. Does he really want to know the truth? Will he understand why reconciliation with Brooke may be too difficult, or will their shared memories and love of music allow forgiveness to triumph over the ever-aching sadness they both share?

Songbird is a story about a young couple, Leon, and Brooke, who parted ways following a tragic accident. Brooke, Leon and Michael's story is one of hope, acceptance and love.



Writer's Notes – Shakara Walley

After doing the Yirra Yaarnz program for almost a year I was given an opportunity, through a collaboration with The Blue Room Theatre and Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company to write a play.

I knew I wanted it to be different, have music and somehow pay homage to John Harding play *Up the Road*. The concept was simple, why not place two people in a room, one who wants to reconcile and the other who doesn't. The world and the characters kind of built itself from there. I wanted to explore the themes of family, love and loss and set it in the outback. I love observing people and watching how they interact, what's said and not said, behind every gesture is a meaning and how we interpret that.

As this was my first experience writing a play, I had amazing mentors who guided me through the process and thus *Songbird* was born. The songs are all originals from my talented family. Like most writers, some elements of the characters, scenes and themes are based on my experiences, everything else is fictional. My mentor and good friend Rick Brayford once said, never let the truth get in the way of a good story and raise the stakes.

I want to say thank you to everyone involved in presenting *Songbird*, from the 2015 cast and crew to the 2024 cast and crew. Thank you to Maitland and Yirra Yaakin for giving me the opportunity to showcase *Songbird*. I hope you as the audience get something out of it. Chookas to cast and crew!

Director's Notes – cezera Critti-Schnaars

I was fifteen years old when I saw a rehearsal of *Songbird*. I was doing my high school work experience with Kyle Morrison, the Artistic Director of Yirra Yaakin at the time. One afternoon, I got to run around with Shakara Walley, and she took me to a rehearsal of the original independent production of *Songbird* in 2015 at The Blue Room Theatre. I never saw the show itself, but I so clearly remember sitting in that rehearsal room, just watching and not even considering that one day I would get to be a part of work like this.

To say it feels very full circle to now, nine years later, to be directing this show would be an understatement. I have dreamed of directing a Yirra Yaakin show since I was a teenager and to do so with the most beautiful script and the most incredible team of people has been nothing short of one of the best experiences of my life. One of the most challenging but one of the best.

There is something about working with a young team. All of us are under twenty-seven, all of us are emerging and let me tell you that the room we created together has been one of the most fun and eclectic rooms I've ever been in and one of the most talented. To my cast and crew, thank you for trusting me and thank you for figuring it all out with me. Lastly but not least, thank you to Shakara Walley for writing a show that has truly transcended time.

To the audience, enjoy the show and remember that even when it doesn't feel like it, life moves on, and things will be okay.



Kira Feeney - Brooke

Is a proud Pakana woman who grew up on Wathawurrung land in Victoria with a passion for the performing arts. Kira moved to Boorloo (Perth) in 2021 to complete the Aboriginal Performance course at WAAPA, where they also discovered a passion for stage management and they have since completed their Advanced Diploma in Stage Management. When not on stage or backstage, Kira can be found in her own world, with her guitar, writing music. Kira is beyond excited to be working with Yirra Yaakin to bring *Songbird* to life.



Owen Hasluck - Leon

Is a proud Noongar man and actor, born and raised in Perth. After graduating from WAAPA Aboriginal course in 2018 and a Diploma of Acting in 2020, Owen jumped across the country to continue training at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts' (NIDA) Bachelor of Acting in 2021 having just graduated in November of 2023. During Owen's years of studying, he performed in an array of productions including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2022), *Three Sisters* (2022), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2023) and *A Very Expensive Poison* (2023). Owen was a recipient of the Keith Bain Award for Excellence in Movement at NIDA in 2023.



Tryen (Tre) Maclou - Mike

Is a proud Aboriginal/South African Australian. He graduated from WAAPA with a bachelor's degree in Acting. Tre completed a Cert. IV in Aboriginal Theatre and Performance in 2020 and has done many WAAPA projects, some of them include *Even Hands* (Xylo), *Our Country's Good* (LT Faddy), *King Lear* (King Lear), *Orestes* (Fury-Tisiphone), *Samovilla* (Plague / God), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Conrade), *Fatherland* (Craig Mutch). Tre also has voice acting experience. Tre worked with Black Swan State Theatre on *Krakouer Brothers* and *Cloudstreet* at Yule Brook College in 2013. In 2018 he worked with Screenwest on a short film *Brothers*. Tre worked on a show *REST* for the Fringe Festival in 2020 and since that year he has worked on *Yirra Yaarnz* for Yirra Yaakin.

Shakara Walley - Writer

Comes from the Bunuba & Jaru (Kimberley) from her mother's side and Bindjareb (Nyoongar) from her father's side. She graduated from the Aboriginal Theatre course at the WAAPA in 2007. In 2013 she graduated from SAE Institute with a Bachelor of Arts in Film Production. Shakara worked in theatre, ranging from acting, writing, directing and producing from 2007 through to 2016. She was the Indigenous producer for the opening productions *The Giants*, 2015 and *Home*, 2016 for the Perth International Arts Festival. Shakara participated in the Indigenous Producers Initiative with Screen Australia in 2016 and also worked as the Producer's attachment on the feature film *Jasper Jones*. Shakara is the producer, co-writer and creator of the Web series *Aussie Rangers* through ABC and Screenwest initiative Screenshots. Shakara has co-produced the documentary series, *Nyoongar Footy Magic*, about 24 Nyoongar Australian Football Players. She is the WA Co-Producer on the *Mystery Road* TV series. She is a recipient of the Screenwest Emerging Producers Initiative. In 2018 Shakara completed a 3-month internship at Matchbox Pictures. In 2018 she was successful in the Black Web-series Initiative with Screen Australia, in which she developed a web series. In 2020 Shakara was an Indigenous Consultant on the Web series development / writers room for *Gold Diggers* with Kojo Productions. Shakara was also a writer for the development/writers room of *Return to Country*, a Web series for ABC.



Cezera Critti-Schnaars - Director

Is based in Perth, Western Australia, Cezera is a proud Noongar and Greek theatre maker whose passion for theatre started when she was a kid. As a teenager, she branched out into writing her own work, participating in Yirra Yaakin Writers' Group. She completed the Aboriginal Performance Course at WAAPA in 2018. Since, she has worked with a number of companies in both acting, writing and directing positions. Most recently she co-directed *Seven Sisters* with WAYTCo for Perth Festival 2023 and wrote and starred in her debut play *Salted Pretzels* (2023) at The Blue Room Theatre with APK Productions. For her performance in *Hecate* (2020) she was awarded Best Newcomer and Best Supporting Actress at the PAWA. awards.



Charli Strickland - Set & Costume Designer

Is an emerging set and costume designer, having recently completed an Advanced Diploma majoring in Theatre Design at WAAPA. They have always had a love for visual art and as a designer they are interested in taking part in productions that spotlight queer and diverse voices and stories. During their education Charli has designed costume and sets for a range of WAAPA productions including musical theatre, dance and newly devised works. Charli designed set and costumes for a play *Salted Pretzels* written by Cezera Critti-Schnaars.



Jolene Whibley - Lighting Designer

Is a Boorloo based Lighting Designer. Jolene gained her early technical experience in the Goldfields, as a theatre technician at the Goldfields Arts Centre. After spending two years as the venue's Technical Assistant, supporting a range of local and touring productions, Jolene realised that lighting was what she wanted to specialise in. In 2019 she relocated to the big city to focus whole-heartedly on a career within lighting design. Her first step to this was completing a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Lighting) at WAAPA. Since completing her studies in February 2022, Jolene has professionally lit works for companies and organisations that include, Black Swan Theatre Company (*TOAST*, 2022), Perth Festival/WAYTCo (*Seven Sisters*, 2023), APK Productions (*Salted Pretzels*, 2023), the City of Fremantle (*Wardarnji Festival*, 2022) and *Woolah!* (Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, 2023).



Levi Widnall - Sound Designer

Is a Yamatji man from the Nhanda tribe which is located at the mouth of the Murchison River. He grew up in Tom Price, a small town in the heart of the Pilbara. After graduation Levi moved to Perth where he spent the next five years touring plays teaching students Noongar Dreamtime stories. After taking a break to study Aboriginal Theatre at WAAPA Levi found his true passion is providing support to young people and helping them to achieve their dreams. He is currently working at Mandurah Catholic College as Indigenous Teacher Assistant. Levi Widnall is known for performing in the *Kaatijin* series and sound design/performing in the WAYTCo play *Seven Sisters*.





Rubeun Yorkshire - Fight Choreographer & Community Engagement Coordinator (Tour)

Is a visual artist, dancer, stage combat choreographer, and actor who is well known for his performance as Banquo in the award-winning production of *Hecate* (Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company). After graduating from the WAAPA in 2010, Rubeun performed in the *Kaatijin Series* (2015-2018) for Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company. He also performed in West Australian Youth Theatre Company's award-winning Fringe World show, *Rest* (2019). Rubeun was a key collaborator on Boomerang and Spear's *Noongar Wonderland* presented at the 2022 Perth Festival, co-choreographing a series of dances for a new collection of Noongar-language dance tracks by *Maatakitj* (Clint Bracknell). He worked as fight choreographer on the productions *Hecate* (Yirra Yaakin 2020) and *Conversations with the Dead* (Yirra Yaakin 2017). Rubeun has also completed a range of public art for corporate, major festivals and education institutions. His voice is featured on the ground-breaking language reclamation film *Fist of Fury Noongar Daa* (2021).



Molly Tipping - Intimacy Director

Career in movement arts and body practices began 20 years ago. She completed a BA in Dance at WAAPA and worked for seven years as a professional dancer and choreographer in Australia, India and Europe. After a creative and adventurous time, Molly left performing and dove head and heart first into her greatest passion-body-mind science and therapeutic practice. She trained in Pilates with Gillian Cornish (2000), Ideokinesis with Pam Matt (2004), Feldenkrais with Alan Questel and Julie Peck (2006-10) and Consent and Intimacy Coaching with Betty Martin and Robyn Dalzen (2021). These body centered modalities form the foundation of Molly's teaching and healing practices today.



Jasmyrn Day - Stage Manager

Is a current Whadjuk Boodjar/Perth based Stage Manager who recently graduated from WAAPA, with a Bachelor in Performing Arts. She has been involved with the arts from a young age and possesses a keen interest in presenting new, challenging and thought-provoking works. Her recent shows include *Hello Asteroid*, presented through the Subiaco Arts Centre, *The Twits* at The Cremorne Theatre in Brisbane with Shake and Stir Theatre Company, *Rebirth* with APK Productions at the Blue Room Theatre, *Chicago: A Musical Vaudeville* presented by Drew Anthony Creative at The Royale Theatre, and most recently *Twelfth Night* regional tour with Fremantle Theatre Company. Her passion and drive to display high calibre productions is the driving force behind her work ethic and is always seeking to improve upon her skills within the industry.



Rachel Dease - Sound Designer Mentor

Their artistic practice encompasses art music, film and theatre scoring, installation and song writing. Graduating from the WAAPA, she won the inaugural Martin Sims Award at Fringe World, the Melbourne Fringe Music Award and received critical acclaim at New York Fringe Festival for her contemporary song cycle *City of Shadows*. Her composition and sound design for theatre include the Helpmann Award-nominated *It's Dark Outside* (The Last Great Hunt), *Sunset* (Strut Dance/Maxine Doyle), *The Bleeding Tree* (Blue Room Theatre), and *Rest* (WAYTCO). Rachael was awarded the 2017 Department of Culture and The Arts Performing Arts Fellowship, won the Performing Arts WA Award for Best Music for *Let The Right One In* (BSSTC) and has been a Besen Fellow at Malthouse Theatre. In 2020 Dease was Prelude Composer in Residence at Gallop House, Western Australia where she wrote her first solo album *Hymns for End Times* which was performed with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in February 2021 for Perth Festival.



Emily McLean - Director Mentor

Is a WAAPA Directing graduate, and a founding member of Red Ryder Productions. She has worked for Black Swan, Perth Theatre Company, Deckchair, Red Ryder, WAAPA, Curtin, and many of Perth's thrilling independent companies. For Black Swan, she directed *Toast* by Liz Newell, the world premieres of *Animal Farm* by Van Badham, *Water* by Jane Bodie, *Dust* by Suzie Miller and *Unsung Heroes*, which was filmed during Perth's lockdown. Some of the Red Ryder productions she directed are *The Wolves* by Sarah DeLappe and *Grounded* by George Brandt. In 2023 she directed *Takeaway* by Liz Newell for Hayman Theatre, *Curtin* and *Salted Pretzels* by Cezera Critti-Schnaars, both at the Blue Room Theatre and was dramaturg on *Democracy Repair Services* by Noemie Huttner- Koros. She sits on the board of The Blue Room Theatre. Emily has won awards from Equity, PAWA and The Blue Room Theatre for her work.



Paul Rowe - Assistant Stage Manager

Is an actor, lead vocalist and arts consultant. He did three years of classical vocal and performance training with Dallas Watts, of Opera Australia, and studied a year of Drama at Monash University, in Melbourne. Paul is the front man of Genrefonix, a Perth based arts/music collective that combines cutting edge sound engineering and filmmaking techniques to create unique live events. Paul is well known for his roles at many iconic Fremantle venues, including Customs House, PSAS, The Roundhouse and Fremantle Prison. He played the famed bushranger Moondyne Joe at the Fremantle Prison for Fremantle Heritage Week *The Ghosts of Fremantle*. Paul was the Assistant Stage Manager for Yirra Yaakin's production of *Dating Black*.

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Correct as of 19 April 2024

About Yirra Yaakin

Yirra Yaakin (Yir-raarh Yaarh-kin] which means “Stand Tall” in Noongar language, is one of Australia’s leading Aboriginal performing arts organisations, situated in Boorloo on Whadjuk Noongar Country, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company produces award-winning, world-class theatre that is exciting, insightful, authentic, and culturally appropriate.

For over 30 years, Yirra Yaakin has commissioned and premiered over 60 new theatre works that have reached 13 countries in five continents, and has won awards for their theatre, governance, and their partnerships, including a prestigious Sidney Myer Award for their record of facilitating Indigenous artistic programs

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company is a locally cherished and nationally important company that supports Aboriginal theatre and culture. We are committed to fostering the next generation of Aboriginal artists, sharing incredible stories told through an Aboriginal lens, and constantly expanding our community engagement and education programs.

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company leads by honouring the past, investing in the future, and embracing the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre. We respect the generations past and invest in a thriving future for our artists and arts workers.

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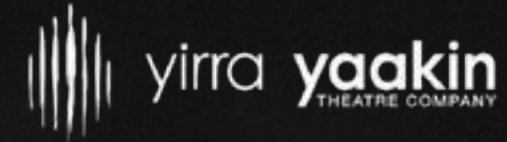
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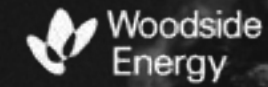
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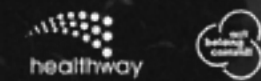
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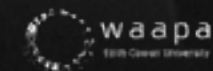
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