



THE BANGARRA FAMILY GROWS WITH TWO NEW DANCERS

Ryan Pearson and Baden Hitchcock join the company through the Russell Page Graduate Program

Bangarra Dance Theatre are thrilled to announce that two young dancers will join the company for 2017 as part of the Russell Page Graduate Program, thanks to the generosity of a group of philanthropists and a matched funding grant from the Sherry-Hogan Foundation.

Ryan Pearson and Baden Hitchcock, both from New South Wales, have joined the company for 12 months of professional experience and training through the Russell Page Graduate Program. The duo will perform in Stephen Page's world premiere of *Bennelong* at the Sydney Opera House in June and will then join the company as they travel back to Country in the Torres Strait Islands in August. They will then embark on a major international tour to Germany in October before returning to Sydney to perform in *ONES COUNTRY the spine of our stories* at Carriageworks.

Donors contributed more than \$60,000 to support the employment of the two Graduate Program dancers, securing the matched funding grant of \$50,000 from the Sherry-Hogan Foundation; taking the total pool of funds raised to more than \$110,000. This amount will in part fund the dancers' salaries, Safe Dance and wellbeing programs, the cost of touring, and mentoring.

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.

The Graduate Program is integral to Bangarra's commitment to building a strong platform for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and artists to grow and thrive.

It is an intense journey for the new graduates, providing invaluable training, development, touring and performance opportunities to evolve into professional artists alongside the company's choreographers, creatives and core dancers.

Bangarra's Artistic Director Stephen Page says the program is of critical importance to the evolution of Bangarra, because it ensures the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists are nurtured by current artists excelling in their craft.

"As the only Major Performing Arts company in Australia with its cultural origins in this land, we have a duty to pass our knowledge onto the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists."

"My brothers – Russell and David – and I were always connected through a shared desire to support new talent, which is what the Graduate Program is all about. Watching young artists emerge and mature and observing the mentoring process in the studio is beyond rewarding for all of us at Bangarra."

Executive Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre, Philippe Magid, says that developing future cultural leaders is critical to Bangarra's success and sustainability.

"Bangarra's artists are professionally trained, dynamic artists with a proud Aboriginal and/or Torres

CONNECT WITH BANGARRA



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Strait Islander background, which is why the support and training that emerging artists receive through the Russell Page Graduate Program is so important."

"We couldn't deliver this program without the generous support of our valued patrons and we thank them for sharing our vision."

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 (Stephen, David and Russell) synonymous with the company. He trained at NAISDA Dance College, and danced with various companies throughout his career but it was with Bangarra that he made his mark on the Australian arts landscape. Russell passed away in 2002.

About Ryan Pearson

Ryan is a Biripi, Minang, Bulang and Baladgung man born and raised in the town of Taree, New South Wales. Ryan began his dance training at NAISDA at the age of sixteen after being inspired by the work he did with Bangarra's Youth Program Team in 2012. During his training Ryan learnt from a number of renowned teachers and choreographers such as Craig Bary, Joel Bray, Penny Mullins, Aku Kadogo, Santee Smith, Omer Astrachan, Frances Rings, Raymond Blanco, Vicki Van Hout and Iquail Shaheed. One of Ryan's training highlights was attending a six-week Profession Division Summer Intensive at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in New York.

About Baden Hitchcock

Baden Hitchcock's family is from Saibai, an island of the Torres Strait. Baden was part of the contemporary and classical ballet companies during his time at Newtown High School of the Performing

Arts. After completing school, Ryan went on to the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne to study a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Contemporary Dance. During his time at the VCA, he worked with a number of choreographers such as Antony Hamilton, Lee Serle, Maria Randall, Line Limosani, Rebecca Hilton and Prue Lang. In 2016 Baden worked with Russell Dumas as part of a collection called Dance Exchange and was also invited to attend the Time Space Place Choreographic Laboratory. He was a participant of the Indigenous Residency at Arts House, Dance Massive and most recently created a work with Public Art Melbourne for their program Test sites.

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