GUDIRR GUDIRR
Marketing kit
Version: 21 August 2017
(please discard earlier versions)

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1  Basic information
Title: Gudirr Gudirr
Company: Marrugeku
Running time: 60 minutes
Genre: Physical theatre, dance theatre, contemporary Indigenous dance
Rating: Over 16: Coarse language and adult themes (youth suicide)

2  Performance history
*Gudirr Gudirr* was first performed at the Meat Market at Arts House in Melbourne, Australia in March 2013 as part of Dance Massive.

Subsequent performances:

- Brisbane Powerhouse
  - World Theatre Festival
  - 20-22 February 2014
- Teatro Central
  - Seville, Spain
  - 15-16 February 2014
- Teatro Alhambra
  - Granada, Spain
  - 13 February 2014
- Magdalenazaal (MaZ)
  - Bruges, Belgium
  - 5 February 2014
- Theatre de la Ville
  - Luxembourg
  - 25 June 2014
- Theatre Tram
  - Glasgow
  - 22,23 July 2014
- Julidans
  - Amsterdam
  - 5,6 July 2014
- Carriageworks
  - Sydney Festival
  - Sydney, Australia
  - 16-19 January 2014
- The Place
  - Origins Festival
  - London UK
  - 30-31 October 2013
- Theater Pfalzbau
  - 23 October 2013
- Pigram Garden Theatre
  - Shinju Matsuri Festival
  - Broome Australia
  - 16-19 September 2013
- Darwin Festival
  - 22,23,24 August 2014
- Centre Culturel Tjibaou
  - Noumea
  - 4,5,6 September 2014
- Arts and Edges
  - Kalgoorlie
  - 17 October 2014
- World Stage
  - Harbourfront Centre
  - Toronto
  - 6-9 May 2015
- State Theatre Centre of Western Australia
  - Perth
  - 7-9 July 2015

3  Short description
*Gudirr Gudirr* calls a warning, the guwayi bird calls when the tide is turning — to miss the call is to drown. An intimate solo dance and video work performed by Dalisa Pigram, daughter of Broome. By
turns hesitant, restless, resilient and angry, Gudirr Gudirr lights a path from a broken past through a fragile present and on to a future still in the making.

4 Longer description

Gudirr Gudirr calls a warning, the guwayi bird calls when the tide is turning — to miss the call is to drown. An intimate solo dance and video work performed by Dalisa Pigram, daughter of Broome. By turns hesitant, restless, resilient and angry, Gudirr Gudirr lights a path from a broken past through a fragile present and on to a future still in the making.

The production considers the legacy of Australia’s history for Aboriginal people in northwest Australia today and asks: what does it take to decolonise Aboriginal people’s minds, to unlock doors and to face cultural change? Gudirr Gudirr calls a warning to a community facing massive industrialisation on traditional lands, loss of language and major gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous wellbeing. Drawing on a physicality born of Pigram’s Asian–Indigenous identity, and in a unique collaboration with Belgian choreographer Koen Augustijnen and visual artist Vernon Ah Kee, Pigram builds a dance language to capture this moment in time for her people.

5 Quotations

Gudirr Gudirr is a truly timely work that should be seen widely.
RealTime

...an extraordinary work from an artist at the peak of her craft and intellectual confidence...Unmissable.
The Guardian

Pigram is an extraordinary dancer, her solo work is breathtakingly good... she seems to move entirely her own way, a body that is both memory and future tense.
The Australian

An intensely personal exploration of identity as well as a kind of universal commentary on where we are as a larger society... this work has real power both in its relevance and in its rawness.
The Age, Melbourne

This extraordinary solo performance by Broome artist Dalisa Pigram, working with a creative team from Australia and Belgium, is an example of the powerful synthesis of tens of thousands of years of continuous cultural endeavor with the skills and confidence of contemporary indigenous performing art.
The West Australian

I can’t overstate the impact and importance of this piece. In one sense, it’s an urgent invective on how systemic oppression has left Australian aboriginal communities grappling with social and economic injustice. There are sequences of pure rage when, for example, Pigram considers teen suicide rates and how the wait for change feels never-ending. But the piece is also a celebration of the strange phenomenon of “identity” itself, framed through the lens of multiculturalism.
The Globe and Mail, Toronto

...the piece’s chief emotional power comes from Pigram’s dancing. She’s a strong, utterly convincing performer.
The Globe and Mail, Toronto
6 Video
Five-minute promotional video:
https://vimeo.com/marrugeku/gudirr_gudirr_promo

A video of the complete show is available here:
https://vimeo.com/marrugeku/gudirr_gudirr_full_length
Password: Melbourne

7 Images
There are a variety of high-resolution images available for downloading from our Box site:
https://marrugeku.box.com/v/gudirr-mgudirr-marketing-images

8 Program notes by Dalisa Pigram
When someone looks at me or at anyone they begin to make a story for that person. My story is influenced by many things, my movement language is influenced by practices like Malaysian martial arts (Silat), gymnastics, memories of traditional movements and a focus of observing animal movements and behaviours — all these inform my contemporary style of moving. It’s a bit like the way I look, a type of mongrel breed! The place where I was born and bred also influences all that I do and the concerns for my community and culture are always present in my work.

In Broome, the people I know are proud of their mixed cultural heritage. This is a reflection of our rich and unique history, born of Broome’s exemption from the White Australia Policy due to the Pearling Industry. However at times I find myself concerned for the younger generation who sometimes struggle with their identity and where they fit in contemporary life.

Koen’s task-based choreographic process has helped me to explore these ideas on stage. He has a way to draw out a physical essence that sometimes surprises, even the performer! There’s a scene in the piece that we call ‘The Tide is Turning’ and in it I explore the point in my memory where it felt like my community was changing. I interpret this time through a range of ‘movement channels’ inspired by different characters. Following the task to ‘change the channels’ I am introducing myself and others from my community from the inside out. The audience may see what’s inside of me. They may see the issues that I have that exist as inspirations and concerns through the movement of these characters, until they are left with just a person before them, with a story.

Metaphorically the tide is turning for my community in many ways today, not only the urgency to keep language and culture alive but also with the rapid rate at which some of our young people are taking their own lives. In one month alone in 2010, seven young people killed themselves and the youngest was 13 years old. We explore this devastating issue affecting the Kimberley region and my community in Gudirr Gudirr.

9 Company information
Marrugeku creates innovative intercultural dance theatre from the northwest Australian experience, where desert meets sea, Australia meets Asia and where cultures twine, fuse and morph. The company is currently under the artistic direction of Dalisa Pigram and Rachael Swain. Marrugeku was founded and based in Western Arnhem Land from 1994 till 2002 where it developed the ground breaking intercultural and interdisciplinary productions Mimi (1996) and Crying Baby (2001) in collaboration with Kunwinjku artists and story keepers. Since 2003 Marrugeku is proud to create its contemporary productions in the land of the Yawuru people of Broome, WA. Drawing from the lives of people and communities living in remote northwest Australia, Marrugeku share the memories and traditions of Indigenous culture and experience through contemporary dance-theatre.
Productions produced in Broome include the dance, film and karaoke work *Burning Daylight* (2009) the youth production *Buru* (2011) and most recently the multi-lingual dance and video solo *Gudirr Gudirr* (2013) performed by Dalisa Pigram and designed by Vernon Ah Kee.

Marrugeku’s ambitious large-scale outdoor and indoor productions are created through long-term collaborations with artists from remote and urban locations, though innovative international collaborations and in dialogue with Indigenous cultural custodians. The company utilises contemporary dance, traditional and contemporary music, circus, installation and video art to create its visually spectacular productions. Works are presented in a variety of alternative locations from remote Indigenous communities to international arts festivals in Australia and around the world.

Marrugeku maintains a rare position as an innovative contemporary performing arts company which practices in the northwest of Australia. The company conceives, creates and presents its body of work wholly in Indigenous contexts and in remote conditions and as such responds directly to key issues facing those communities. Broome is an ideal home for Marrugeku to progress its central aims of culture making and culture mapping, and it is the Broome Indigenous community’s own particular relationship to place, forged by a complex and often painful history, that drives Marrugeku’s work.

Marrugeku has a commitment to art form development, documentation and the sharing of artistic and cultural knowledge. This has lead to platforms such as the company’s trilogy of International Indigenous Choreographic Labs (2009-2011), the dance documentary *Burning Daylight*, shot and directed by Warwick Thornton, and the multi-tiered *Place History and Community* documentation project.

“the most artistically, conceptually, politically and socially ambitious work being made in Australia today. The issues are huge and directly impact upon the working process of the company but the fragility, vulnerability, confusion and instability of that collaborative process is one of the most hopeful things I have witnessed in Australian Theatre.”

Sarah Miller, *Real Time*

10 Creative credits
Concept, Performer & Co-choreographer: Dalisa Pigram
Director & Co-choreographer: Koen Augustijnen
Set Designer & Video Artist: Vernon Ah Kee
Costume Designer: Stephen Curtis
Composer & Sound Designer: Sam Serruys
Singer & Songwriter: Stephen Pigram
Lighting Designer: Matthew Marshall
Concept & Cultural Adviser: Patrick Dodson
Dramaturge & Creative Producer: Rachael Swain
Video Production: Sam James
Rigging Designer: Joey Ruigrok Van Der Werven
Production management: Mike Smith
Sound and Video production and operation: Jeremy Silver

For Marrugeku
Co-artistic directors: Dalisa Pigram and Rachael Swain
General Manager: Robina Burton
Sales and Strategy: Justin Macdonnell

11 Partner credits
Program must include these credits:
Gudirr Gudirr was co-commissioned by the City of Melbourne through Arts House (AUS), Theater Im Pfalzbau, Ludwigshafen (DEU) and Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg (LUX).

Gudirr Gudirr was funded by:
- the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body
- the Western Australian Department of Culture and the Arts
- the Shire of Broome, Western Australia.

12 Funding partner logos
Program must include the logos of our funding partners:

High resolution versions of these logos can be download here: https://picasaweb.google.com/stalker.marrugeku/GudirrGudirrLogos?authkey=Gv1sRgCLDnps-VvfCmmgE#

13 Biographies
Dalisa Pigram — Concept, Co-choreographer and Performer
Dalisa was born and raised in Broome, north western Australia. Her family comes from the Yawuru people of Broome and Bardi people of the Dampier Peninsular in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. After finishing year 12, Dalisa completed the Advanced certificate in Aboriginal Musical Theatre Course which was accredited by Edith Cowan University in Perth W.A. Dalisa has performed and travelled with Corrugation Road and the cabaret version of Bran Nue Dae, both musicals written by Jimmy Chi.

Dalisa is a founding member of Marrugeku (1994-present) and was appointed Co-Artistic Director of the company (with Rachael Swain) in 2009. She has been a co-devising performer on all productions. She has toured with Marrugeku to the Netherlands, The Philippines, New Caledonia, Brazil, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, America and all over remote and urban Australia with shows Mimi, Crying Baby, Burning Daylight (for which she was also assistant choreographer and cultural liaison) and Buru which she conceived, choreographed and co-directed. Dalisa has co-curated (with Rachael Swain) Marrugeku’s three International Indigenous Choreographic Labs, building exchange between West African, Australian and New Zealand based Indigenous dance artists.

Dalisa is a qualified Yawuru language teacher and teaches in schools in her community. Dalisa received the Kullarri NAIDOC Festival Award for Performing Artist of the Year in 2008. In 2010 she was recipient of the Australia Council’s OYEA initiative with which she researched and developed Gudirr Gudirr in Brussels, Broome and Sydney. Dalisa participated in Marrugeku’s Listening to Country lab and most recently co-choreographed (with Serge Aimé Coulibaly) Marrugeku’s production Cut the Sky.
Koen Augustijnen — Director and Co-choreographer
Koen Augustijnen worked closely with Les Ballets C de la B since 1991, initially as a dancer in performances staged by Alain Platel. From 1997 till 2013 he was one of the Belgium dance company’s house choreographers.


He studied history at the Ghent University and was enrolled in theatre workshops at the Antwerp Conservatory. In addition, he has attended dance workshops by Wim Vandekeybus, Caro Lambert, Min Tanaka, Laurie Booth, Suzanne Linke, Francisco Camacho amongst others. His principal training and work experience, however, has been firmly rooted in his staging of performances as a member of Les Ballets C de la B.

He works as a choreographer, joining forces with Stalker Theatre, STAN and most recently Marrugeku to name but a few. Koen is currently active in Palestine co-directing a piece for ten Palestinian dancers produced by KVS, Les Ballets C de la B and The Qatan foundation.

Vernon Ah Kee — Set Designer and Video Artist
Vernon Ah Kee is a drawer, photographer, screen-printer, video and text based installation artist who was included in the 2008 Biennale of Sydney and the 2009 Venice Biennale. Vernon was born in North Queensland and is of the Kuku Yalanji, Waanji, Yidindji and gugu Yimidhirr peoples. He is one of Australia’s leading Indigenous artists who has been living in Brisbane for over twelve years. His art is primarily a critique of Australian popular culture specifically the Black/White dichotomy. Vernon holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts in Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art and Honours in Fine Art; he completed a Doctorate of Visual Arts — Fine Art from the Queensland college of Art, Griffith University in 2006. He is a member of properNOW Indigenous art collective. Vernon continues to develop his conceptual use of text and minimal expression combining a combative writing style with a strong visual sense. He has exhibited in group and solo shows. His research interests include Aboriginal education, identity and art.

Stephen Curtis — Costume Designer
Stephen has worked extensively as a designer for drama, film, opera, dance and exhibition. For Marrugeku Stephen designed costumes for both the live and multimedia components of *Burning Daylight* and for Stalker Theatre Company designed sets and costumes for *Shanghai Lady Killer*. Other theatre credits include: *I Am Eora* (Sydney Festival 2012); set design for the recent highly acclaimed Sydney Theatre Company production of *The Secret River*; *Lulu*; *The Cunning Little Vixen*; *The Turn of the Screw* (Opera Australia); *The Ring Cycle* (State Opera of South Australia); *The Blue Room*; *Tribes*; *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Servant of Two Masters*; *Henry IV* (Bell Shakespeare); *Scorched*; *The Blind Giant Is Dancing* (Belvoir). His film credits include features *Looking for Alibrandi* and *Bedevil* and short films *Night Cries* and *Small Room Confessions*. Stephen was Head of Design at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School for four years.

Sam Serruys — Musical Director and Composer
Sam is a guitarist/composer who graduated from the Dutch Tilburgbased Rockacademie (1999–2003). In addition, he attended the audio engineering training course at the School of Audio Engineering in Rotterdam. He toured Belgium and Holland as a member of Bertus Borgers’ band
(saxophonist with Herman Brood and Raymond van het Groenewoud). In 2005, he started working at Les Ballets C de la B, moved to Het Toneelhuis (Antwerp) and returned to Les Ballets C de la B as sound engineer and composer for Koen Augustijnen (IMPORT/EXPORT, Ashes), Ted Stoffier (Aphasiadisiac), Lisi Estaras (primero, patagonia), Alain Platel (Out of Context and Gardenia) and Rosalba Torres Guerrero (Pénonbre). For the moment Sam works as a freelance composer/designer/engineer and works for Ultima Vez (Wim van de Keybus), Nadine Ganasse, Virginie Thirion, Blindman, Needcompany and others.

Stephen Pigram — Songwriter and Singer
Hailing from Broome in Australia’s far North West Kimberley region, Stephen Pigram is a singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist musician playing acoustic guitar, harmonica, ukulele and more. He is one seventh of the Pigram Brothers band whose particular kind of ‘saltwater country music’ has attracted many fans both in Australia and beyond. Stephen has been a member of legendary Broome bands Kuckles and Scrap Metal, and was Musical Director for the original production of the first Aboriginal musical and recent major Australian film, Bran Nue Dae. Stephen was the producer and composer for the Australian film Mad Bastards in 2010. In 2006 Stephen and brother Alan were inducted into the West Australian Music Industry Hall of Fame, the first indigenous artists to receive this honour. He works regularly with the Black Arm Band and has written songs for Marrugeku’s Buru.

Matthew Marshall — Lighting Designer
Matthew graduated from WAAPA in 2000 and since then has designed for theatre, opera, events and dance, his designs have been seen on most main stage theatre companies and festivals throughout Australia. Recent designs include Sex With Stranger & The Wharf Revue for Sydney Theatre Company, Little Orphan Trashley, This Is Our Youth and The History Boys at Sydney Opera House, and Language of Living, the debut season of the New Zealand Dance Company. Matthew recently received a Helpmann Award nomination for Best Lighting Design 2012 for Perth Festivals The Red Tree.

Patrick Dodson — Concept and Cultural Advisor
Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome in Western Australia. He has dedicated his life work to being an advocate for constructive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people based on mutual respect, understanding and dialogue. He is a recipient of the Sydney International Peace prize. He was a Royal Commissioner into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, inaugural Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and Co-Chair of the Expert Panel for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. Patrick lives in Broome with his family, where he is involved in social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability through his roles as Chair of the Lingiari Foundation and Executive Chair of Nyamba Buru Yawuru. He is Adjunct Professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Broome where he lectures in Spirituality and the Challenge of Reconciliation. He has worked as a cultural adviser to Marrugeku shows Burning Daylight and Buru and co-conceived Gudirr Gudirr with Dalisa Pigram.

Rachael Swain — Dramaturge and Creative Producer
Rachael Swain is a founding member of Marrugeku (1994–present) and co-artistic director (with Dalisa Pigram). Together with Dalisa, Rachael conceives Marrugeku’s intercultural and interdisciplinary dance theatre works created in situ in remote Indigenous communities. She has directed Marrugeku’s productions including Mimi (1996), Crying Baby (2000), Burning Daylight (2006) and Buru, co-directed with Dalisa Pigram (2010) and Cut the Sky (2015). Rachael was dramaturg and creative producer for Gudirr Gudirr (2013) and together with Dalisa has curated and facilitated Marrugeku’s ground breaking series of intercultural Indigenous Choreographic Laboratories Sydney (2009), Broome (2010), Auckland (2011) and Nouméa (2016). Rachael has a
practice-based MA in Advanced Theatre and Dance Research from Das Arts, Amsterdam and a PhD from Melbourne University researching dramaturgy in Indigenous dance theatre. She was the recipient of an ARC funded early career researcher fellowship from 2013-2016 (part time).

**Sam James — Video production**

Sam James has been a filmmaker and projection designer for performance since 1995. His focus has been to collaborate with new media, dance and theatre projects to develop integrated, paradoxical languages in live performance. He has been a regular contributor to Performance Space, Sydney for ten years also filling a role as video documentor for many independent dancers there. His approach to the moving image is to unveil paradoxes between media and the live presence and being seduced but complicit in the manipulations of the stage. Most of his work involves animation of abject subconscious, environments and objects, playing with and against the performer. He has also been a set designer and made successful super 8 and 16mm films such as Nun’s Night Out (winner best dance film, Australian Dance Awards 2006). He spends most of his time working on small, independent developments and continues to contribute to the major festivals in Australia, from Adelaide to Perth to Alice Springs.

**Mike Smith — Production Manager**

Since graduating with a degree in Arts Production, Mike has worked as a Production Manager and Lighting Designer for theatre, events, music and film. As a Production Manager, Mike has toured theatre productions and new developments across Australia, Europe, Mexico and Asia, and has been part of the planning and design for several major Arts Festivals. He was head production manager for the Sydney Writer Festival for five years. In lighting, Mike has designed for theatre developments and corporate events, and has worked on a range of productions, including *Billy Elliot* (Sydney), *Pixel Mountain* (Korea, Mexico), and the feature film *Xmen Origins: Wolverine*. In 2014, Mike received a grant from Australia Council for the Arts to undergo professional development in Cambridge, UK as an Arts Producer.

**Jeremy Silver — Sound and Video Operator**


**GUDIRR GUDIRR, MARRUGEKU**

Van Badham
The Guardian
19 January 2014

Conceived, performed and co-choreographed by Marrugeku’s Co-Artistic Director, Dalisa Pigram, *Gudirr Gudirr* is an extraordinary work from an artist at the peak of her craft and intellectual confidence. Pigram’s solo dance work is an articulate and thoroughly interrogated exploration of her politicised identity as an Aboriginal Australian of diverse cultural heritage. Working with Belgian choreographer Koen Augustijnen’s “task-based” choreography, and artist Vernon Ah Kee as her
set/video designer, her political narrative unfolds in powerful projected text and imagery and in movement inspired by and taken from Aboriginal dance, contemporary western dance, gymnastics and the Malaysian martial art, Silat.

Pigram hails from Broome, a remote corner of Australia where a pearling industry brought waves of settlement from Malaysian and other Asian communities at the turn of the century. The show begins with some projected text compiled from the report of a government inspector who visited the township in 1928, expressing concern about the sexual and domestic interrelations of the "Asiatic" migrants with the local Aboriginal population.

The historical report pulls no punches in its expression of systemic racism, concluding the "quadroon" offspring of these relationships may in fact breed a more "efficient and effective" domestic servant. As evidence of historical racism it’s confronting - but Pigram pulls no punches herself; when a monologue reveals her own great grandmother was legally designated "a prostitute" for loving the Malaysian man who fathered her children, the legacy of institutionalised hate is exposed at its most personal and profoundly affecting.

It is but one revelation among many. Amongst its sophisticated layers of physical and visual imagery, Pigram also incorporates speech in her piece. While affecting postures of warriors and animals, vulnerable children and disoriented youth, she interweaves speech from traditional languages with local dialects and hilarious moments of satirical comedy. Her own verbal polemic – in one sequence, delivered as she rolls across the floor – is as politically astute and powerful as any heard in Australian public discourse for decades.

Another section, saturated with swear words projected on a screen, is chilling for the proximity of fury to frustration; she attacks colonialism’s remnants in white culture as passionately as she fights for "de-colonisation of the mind" in black culture. With its diverse dance influences channelled into the focused metaphor of Pigram as the embodiment of Broome's cultural inheritance, *Gudirr Gudirr* is at its heart both a threnody for a genocide and a stirring affirmation of black survival. Unmissable.

**A DANCE FOR DARK TIMES**
Virginia Baxter
RealTime April 2013
[http://www.realt imearts.net/article/114/11008](http://www.realt imearts.net/article/114/11008)

When Dalisa Pigram takes a well-earned bow at the end of *Gudirr Gudirr*, inviting a line of collaborators to join her, we are suddenly aware of her diminutive stature.

For a solo, this is one BIG performance. Accompanied by video projected onto a corrugated iron wall upstage and a long fishing net suspended from the ceiling, Pigram otherwise fills the space for 60 minutes with her intense presence.

From exuberant recreation, Pigram shifts deftly through a parodic airline steward sequence to a series of multi-faceted choreographies variously expressing frustration, resistance, despair, forbearance and celebration. Contained within a strong and compact body her dance mixes Malaysian martial manoeuvres (Silat)—anchored by a low centre of gravity with extended leg and expressive arms—with stances we have come to know from Indigenous dance—solidly grounded feet, torso and hips suddenly and sharply changing plane and aspect, references to animal movement. Moving easily between these forms—a martial stance is enlivened with a quick, animal
flick of the wrist—Pigram displays a light-footed grace and a sharp-eyed focus that holds us keenly on her wavelength.

At other times she is all muscle and strength deploying the acrobatic skills that are part of Marrugeku’s house style. The suspended net is used to map the space in myriad ways. At one point Pigram deploys it as tissu apparatus, hooking her feet into its threads, executing a series of difficult staccato moves through the fabric to end hanging upside down like the day’s haul. Though we’ve seen it so often, we still catch our breath as she falls, relaxing as she playfully swings from the net, sizing us up.

In the program notes, Pigram describes the generation of these shifting gestures and personas as resulting in part from the ‘task-based process’ she embarked on with director and co-choreographer Koen Augustijnen—a regular collaborator on Marrugeku projects who has also worked with Alain Platel’s Les ballets c de la b—and which together they named “The Tide is Turning.” Says Pigram: “I explore the point in my memory where it felt like my community was changing. I interpret this time through a range of ‘movement channels’ inspired by different characters. Following the task to ‘change the channels,’ I am introducing myself, and others from my community, from the inside out. The audience may see what’s inside of me. They may see the issues that I have that exist as inspirations and concerns through the movement of these characters until they are left with just a person before them, with a story.”

Disoriented movement matches angry verbiage as Pigram proselytises from the stage about the pressing need for action on Indigenous issues and follows up with a funny and expletive filled outburst, complete with waving arms, head-banging and huge projected FUCKEN text, in sheer frustration at the time it’s taking for justice and fairness to prevail. Mood shifts again as we witness video of young Indigenous boys fighting one another—images of themselves that these boys display proudly on Facebook. Pigram is still, facing us directly, silently wringing her hands, and then slapping her own face. In one month alone in 2010, seven young people in Pigram’s community killed themselves, the youngest 13 years old.

The work concludes with projected portraits of relatives and friends who form an important part of Pigram’s community, women and children, elders including a white haired man we’ve seen earlier dancing slowly on the screen, and finally the familiar bearded countenance of cultural advisor on this and other Marrugeku projects, Patrick Dodson. Stephen Pigram’s song provides soothing accompaniment as Dalisa Pigram repeats a sequence of calming hand gestures seen earlier on screen.

Gudirr Gudirr is a truly timely work that should be seen widely. Showing all the signs of careful collaboration from a gifted team it conveys complex experience in the shape of Dalisa Pigram who shows us in the sharply shifting facets of her performance the rich and troubled life of her community and of this country.

ANXIETY OVER INDIGENOUS FUTURE ELOQUENTLY EXPRESSED
Jill Sykes
Sydney Morning Herald
21 Jan 2014

Dalisa Pigram is a powerful solo performer with a great deal to communicate through words and images as well as movement. Brought up in Broome with ancestors from diverse cultures, she
reflects on the town's multicultural character and problems in a piece that is mostly sombre and often angry.

_Gudirr Gudirr_ begins with onscreen quotes from a 1928 government report sickeningly lacking in humanity and understanding. The conclusion seems to be asking how much has changed.

On the happier side, we see a girl fishing with her father but catching more than they could carry back against the incoming tide – a lesson learned about greed, taking only what you need.

We hear about that in Kriol as well as observing it through movement whose style, naturalistic to stylised, illustrates Pigram's background. It includes a conspicuous martial arts influence, feisty yet graceful: dramatic squats and deep lunges with a mix of strong and soft upper body, arm and hand gestures.

It's a great combination, co-choreographed by Pigram and Koen Augustijnen, and as _Gudirr Gudirr_ continues, the intensity of anxiety about the future of indigenous people, the younger generation in particular, is eloquently expressed in dance as well as some disturbing video.

For me, Pigram's amplified listing of terrible white settler deeds was a lecture I would have preferred in a more subtle artistic form. But having stood beside an Australian family in a museum last year as they were shocked by a familiar (to me) photograph of Aboriginal people lined up in chains, I have to admit that not everyone knows about Australia's unpleasant past. So maybe it has to be this direct. Either way, the impact of the production by the Broome group Marrugeku, with an impressive team of technical and creative contributors, is resounding.

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**DALISA PIGRAM IS AN ENCHANTING DANCER AND A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR LIFE IN AUSTRALIA'S NORTHWEST.**

Dalisa Pigram is an enchanting dancer and a passionate advocate for life in Australia's northwest. In _Gudirr Gudirr_ she weaves a memorable solo from themes relating to the area's indigenous history, polyglot population, environmental beauties and present-day challenges. There are plenty of the latter.

The sound of a coastal bird from Pigram's home country, the Kimberley, gives her work its name. At the start of the piece Pigram luxuriates in memories of gathering fish - but not too many! - and learning from her family. Simple pleasures give way to a passionate recitation of former wrongs and current woes. There may be no more Aboriginal men with cruelly heavy chains around their necks or girls chosen for domestic work on the basis of skin tone, but new issues such as mining, violence and suicide take their toll. Gains have been made, Pigram says, but danger lies in being seduced by them.

Simultaneously wiry and elastic, Pigram seamlessly incorporates shapes from indigenous dance, martial arts, animal imagery, gymnastics, the nightclub and the circus for a wholly individual effect. When she speaks in her traditional language, Yawuru, it becomes a liquid element in Sam Serruys's score, which also includes songs from Stephen Pigram. When she rails against contemporary ills, the repeated use of the most common four-letter word turns into a kind of bird sound.
There is the occasional bumpy moment when Pigram rushes a text or a filmed element is difficult to identify, but *Gudirr Gudirr* rarely loses its grip. Particularly effective is how subtly Pigram alters her movement to morph from serene confidence to uncertainty and anguish. She also takes to the air via a long ribbon of net that lets her swing free or entangles her. The net is both tradition and snare.

Pigram, who is co-artistic director of Marrugeku, worked on *Guddir Gudirr* with Koen Augustijnen, formerly with celebrated Belgian company Les Ballets C de la B. He is credited as director and co-choreographer and together he and Pigram have made a 55-minute work overflowing with rich images and ideas.

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**LINES OF FLIGHT**  
Philippa Rothfield  
RealTime Online  
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Located in the Australian north-west, Broome has an abundant history of many peoples coming to live together. It was exempted from the white Australia policy because it was the hub of Australia’s pearling industry. As a result, many children like Dalisa Pigram have grown up proud of their mixed, cultural heritage.

This is reflected in Pigram’s physical training: a bricolage of Malaysian martial arts, gymnastics, indigenous culture and refined, animal movements. It is also part of who she is. Not that such a medley of origins has always been welcome. *Gudirr Gudirr* opens with a 1928 report to AO Neville (Commissioner for Native Affairs) on the dubious status of peoples of mixed heritage in the Broome area.

All the while, Pigram stands in a far corner, her back towards us. She moves nearer, still facing upstage, punching, lunging, and rotating along the axis of her spine. She cuts a strong diagonal, iterating a movement lexicon in a ritual crossing of space. Facing us, she opens her body into a low lunge to the side, Krishna holding a spear. Or is it a harpoon?

The screen at the back of the space flashes black and white images throughout: of family, living ancestors, gurus and masters. There is an older man, circulating chi, nursing it between his hands. His mastery presides over this performance. Pigram is dedicated to her moving, clear and bold. Her feet say a lot. They are broad, grounded, the feet of a woman who has walked, and fished. She tells a story of catching crabs with her father, learning the ethos of the fisherman: catch enough to eat, no more. The little girl learns to work the long net suspended from the ceiling.

House lights brighten, we look at each other. Pigram is an airline steward demonstrating the pros and cons of net throwing, inducting us into fishing culture via the technology of the throw net. Perched along its grid-like netting, she looks like an island girl, agile, flexible, at one with its flowing lines.

As the music turns sour, dystopia enters this coastal idyll. The documentary flavour of black and white imagery gives way to the elicitations of colour. A goanna stumbles, its head trapped inside a beer can. History enters the life of the animal. Pigram snatches a microphone, declaring what is past and what is present. If the old days are over, their legacy is not. It is time, she says, to decolonise blackfella’s minds, echoing French Algerian Frantz Fanon’s heartfelt cry, “Imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land but from our minds as well.”
Pigram occupies the liminal space between colonisation and cultural freedom. Her movements are jerky, discombobulated. They do not eat space, they are confined by it. A tryptich shows young men fighting each other in the dirt, their misdirected aggression devouring their own future. Three images blend into a single scream. Pigram verbalises the anger in a tirade of “fucken” this, “fucken” that. A proliferation of fuckens fills the screen. It becomes surreal. Pigram’s body heaves catching its breath.

Silence.

What happens next is key. This is Dalisa Pigram’s moment, as an artist and as a subject of history. She is poised in the present of all that has become. She leans out, supported by the long net, her feet on the ground. Leaning: neither fully supporting her own weight nor surrendering it to the net, Pigram explores the possibilities that lie between her body and the net. She runs, veering in a circle, testing the pull of the net as it meets the force of her own activity. The net circles as she soars towards the audience. Time stretches to the elastic sounds of jazz. This expression of the dancer’s agency is a mixture of freedom and constraint. She is a compact set of forces, aware of her location, her lineage, but finding a creative line of flight. Three snakes, one snake three ways, slither over river stones, elegant, inexorable. Pigram dances her own future, stretching the space of possibility not just for herself but for us too.

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GUDIRR GUDIRR
Jordan Beth Vincent
The Age (Melbourne)
15 March 2013

Apart from regular visits from Bangarra Dance Theatre, performances by Indigenous contemporary dancers in Melbourne are few and far between. The work created by Broome-based company Marrugeku is noteworthy, not only because it presents the unique artistic voice of performer Dalisa Pigram, but because it is an excellent piece of dance theatre.

Pigram explores the different facets of her Asian-indigenous heritage, highlighting the way her ancestry has shaped her sense of self, while still demanding to be seen as more than just the sum of her parts. Through spoken word, projection and a range of different kinds of movement, Pigram explores aspects of her life in Broome, her anger at the careless industrialisation of land and her despair for future generations.

The latter issue is powerfully explored through a video depicting a street brawl between young men, filmed for Facebook by several different mobile phones.

Here, as in many other moments of this work, Gudirr Gudirr manages to be both an intensely personal exploration of identity as well as a kind of universal commentary on where we are as a larger society.

The notion of sustainability - for ecology, culture and even for Pigram herself - is the theme that underpins this work. Throughout the work, Pigram retreats to a large fishing net, which hangs from the ceiling, giving her something to resist against, scale to the top of or swing from.

Despite occasional moments of clumsiness, this work has real power both in its relevance and in its rawness.
Gudirr Gudirr is a one-woman dance show of evolving aboriginal repression
MARTHA SCHABAS
The Globe and Mail
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Harbourfront Centre’s Fleck Dance Theatre City Toronto

The multicultural cemeteries of the town of Broome, Western Australia, are filled with dead pearl divers. Many of the buried are indigenous people who were forced into the work as slaves in the late 19th century and the migrant workers who replaced them once slavery was abolished. In the early 20th century, Broome was exempt from Australia’s white-only immigration policy so that the pearl industry could flourish.

This history forms some of the backdrop for Gudirr Gudirr, a one-woman dance-theatre piece performed, conceptualized and choreographed by Dalisa Pigram, co-artistic director of Australia’s Marrugeku Theatre. Using video art designed by Vernon Ah Kee (and co-choreographed by Koen Augustijnen of Belgium’s Les Ballets C de la B), the work is a gripping hour-long exploration of the aboriginal people of northwest Australia and the region’s unique multiculturalism. Through movement, text, narrative and film, Pigram tells a multilayered story about how historical racism, persecution and violence have turned into contemporary racism, persecution and violence – compounded by the threat of cultural erasure and environmental devastation.

I can’t overstate the impact and importance of this piece. In one sense, it’s an urgent invective on how systemic oppression has left Australian aboriginal communities grappling with social and economic injustice. There are sequences of pure rage when, for example, Pigram considers teen suicide rates and how the wait for change feels never-ending. But the piece is also a celebration of the strange phenomenon of “identity” itself, framed through the lens of multiculturalism. A racist report from 1928 on mixed-marrriages between aboriginals and Asian migrants is juxtaposed with a beautiful montage of the people of Broome. A series of young and old faces are projected over the stage, reifying the region’s unique history. The people seem to be captured apolitically, too busy being themselves to be indignant.

But the piece’s chief emotional power comes from Pigram’s dancing. She’s a strong, utterly convincing performer. Her movement draws on Malaysian martial arts (Silat), gymnastics and traditional motifs (her background is Asian-Indigenous). While there are hints of narration and characterization in the actual steps (at one point, Pigram becomes a disoriented youth; at another, she seems to be dancing in a nightclub), the choreography is most effective in its abstract ability to express feeling. Pigram has an innate, physical understanding of contrast and conflict. There are flourishes of the acrobatic – but Pigram might be most compelling in her minutiae. She finds drama in the delicate, birdlike isolations of her neck and the jointed details of her robotic arm chops.

The starkness of desert and sea are conjured through the use of sound and light. A long vertical net suspends from the rafters and is used to delineate the empty space. Oceanic projections bubble and crest in the background as Pigram climbs to the net’s top, as though surfacing from a dangerous dive. All this happens to an alternately haunting and heartening score by Sam Serruys and Stephen Pigram.
Some of the narrative vignettes are stronger than others. I was gripped by a sequence that unravelled under the heading “the time is now,” in which Pigram compares socio-economic problems and systemic persecution of the past and present. In another, a diatribe on injustice and life’s meaninglessness turns into a hilarious (but poignant) outburst of uncontrollable swearing. I was a little less clear on the point of a satirical flight-attendant-style speech and had trouble decoding the relevance of some images on film. But even when clarity wavered a little, the emotional coherence was sustained.

Gudirr Gudirr has toured throughout Australia and Europe, but its presentation at World Stage marks its North American premiere. The piece’s relevance to Canadian audiences is obvious – it’s impossible to watch and not consider how slowly and ineffectively change and justice are being granted to our First Nations communities at home.

14 Audience responses – Broome season Sept 2013

Gudirr Gudirr was a very powerful expression of the complexities of purpose in life for the community depicted. The dancing superb. The music haunting and all told a memorable performance. The standing ovation was well deserved and some more.

Agnes Gibson

Gudirr Gudirr was breathtaking. It somehow captured many elements of living in Broome and weaved them into something that was enjoyable, sad, funny and at times confronting, but entirely accurate. I really enjoyed the gymnastics she was able to incorporate into the dance moves. Her athletic ability is amazing – she never once looked out of breath and never appeared to forget a dance move! I agree it would be a shame for other audiences not to be able to see this performance – it’s a must see for anyone living in or visiting Broome. The venue worked so well with the storytelling too.

Natalie Jones

Dalisa Pigram’s performance in Gudirr Gudirr is captivating and powerful. She deals with some confronting issues in the context of a well-crafted narrative, which ranges from humorous to poignant to raw. All of this is beautifully delivered through the use of metaphor, a diverse palette of language, and of course, sublime movement.

Deb Hannagan

Firstly, the strength of performance by the Dalisa – mesmerising and inspiring to watch.

Secondly, the subject of the piece was relevant to Broome considering its history. ‘The time is now’ dealt with strong and difficult issues and made people think about how far we’ve actually come as a society. It is a great way to start the conversation on these topics without being to confronting.

Thank you to everyone for bringing the show to Broome – very lucky to have this type of performing art available without having to pay for a return airfare to see it.

Chris Lane

WOW, what an awesome Broome dance Performance by Dalisa and Marrugeku. I love the way it connects to our Broome issues, tells a story about our community that we need to be constantly
thinking about and evolving through and done so tastefully and beautifully, taking you on a roller coaster ride of emotions and doing it with great beauty.

It would have been great for Senior school kids to see that performance, I reckon that would have added to a already sensational Shinju 2013 community feeling.

I am sure it would reach lots of different communities across this great land and I hope it goes on and travels telling a important story and doing it so well.

Congratulations to Shinju, Dalisa and Marrugecku.

Leon Mead

I felt very privileged to live in a regional community that can create such sophisticated art which asks such important questions about who we are and answers these questions in such a thought provoking way. You can’t overstate the importance of this work in the way that it inspires everyday people to reflect on ourselves and move toward a more considered future where we celebrate our strengths and understand our challenges so that we can work together to make our society richer and stronger.

Ben Collins

Dalisa is such a powerhouse of energy and character, and the technical production of the show was excellent. But I was really impressed at the range and depth of ideas explored in Gudirr Gudirr including social, cultural and economic challenges faced by the people of Broome. It had so many shades of light and dark.

I’m not an expert on dance – and as I was watching the show I thought “this is not really dance. It’s bigger than dance, it’s kind of movement theatre”. Whatever, you want to classify it, and I think Dalisa is pushing the boundaries of classification – I’d love to see her have more opportunities to work with her community at that important grassroots level to tease out ideas and talent and present it in such an entertaining way.

Clancy McDowell

I thoroughly enjoyed the performance Gudirr Gudirr. It was incredibly refreshing and special to go to see a performance in Broome, performed by a Broome local, and relevant to the Broome community. It was an enriching and enjoyable experience. Broome is such a creative community, it is crying out for more performances such as this one. Thank you for being part of making this happen in this town.

My friend who lives up in One Arm Point saw the performance with me. She said the following:

"It was like a week in the community, a snap shot of life. I found it really moving".

My other friend said that she didn’t expect to be entertained by a single dancer for an hour, but spent the whole time in ‘a trance’ mesmerized by Dalisa’s performance.

Rani Middleton
Gudirr Gudirr was an inspirational show. The words Dalisa spoke were words of truth that resonated deeply within me. She brought issues to light that I feel have been swept under the carpet and must be discussed with our young people. There was a perfect balance between intensity and humour, very clever! I believe this show would be invaluable for our young people of Broome to experience...for their personal growth and for growth of spirit.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Dione Westwood

Gudirr Gudirr found the perfect marriage between humour and tension. The storytelling and language really touched me. I was captivated, confronted, uncomfortable, entranced and amused. The full spectrum of emotions ran through me and still stir now in retrospect. I walked away with a deeper connection to this land.
I think that was a very brave and exposing solo performance to showcase on home turf and I have an even deeper respect for her as an artist/performer/teacher.

Nicole Gallus