

Heart is a Wasteland returns as ILBIJERRI celebrates 30-year anniversary



Photo credit: Aaron Walker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 21 JUNE 2022 – Following a sell-out season at the 2021 Darwin Festival ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's restaging of [Heart is a Wasteland](#) – directed by the company's multi-award-winning Artistic Director **Rachael Maza** (Yidinji/Meriam) – brings **John Harvey's** (Saibai Island) humorous and deeply heartfelt script to life.

Showing at Arts Centre Melbourne's Fairfax Studio from **25 – 27 August**, the theatre piece coincides with activities celebrating 30 years of ILBIJERRI giving voice to First Nations cultures through the ongoing creation of innovative works by First Nations artists.

Heart is a Wasteland has been reinterpreted by Maza for this upcoming season but still combines storytelling and live music in an uplifting, cross-country love story that takes us through Australia's heartland, dealing with love, loss, unspoken truths and history.

"I'm incredibly excited to be working on *Heart is a Wasteland* because it's one of those stories we never get to see on our stages. I have the privilege to sit in a room with our writer and creative team to come at it with fresh insight and get the work to where it needs to be. I love working with John Harvey too; his rich intelligence for telling a human story really comes lifting out of the script," said Maza.

Raye (**Monica Jasmine Karo**, Gunai/Gunditjmara), a country-music star in the making, plays pub-to-pub along Australia's vast desert highways trying to make a living in the hope of returning home to her son, Elvis. But when she meets Dan (**Ari Maza Long**, Yidinji/Meriam), another young wanderer at the cross-roads of life, a love affair unfurls over a four-day drive to Alice Springs.

"I wanted to bring this human experience across that we all kind of share but in this uniquely Indigenous voice. I wanted it to also explore our relationships with each other and our relationships to country but how our relationships to country affect our relationships with each other," said Harvey.

With original music by **Lydia Fairhall** (Worimi), exquisitely arranged by **Gary Watling** (Wiradjuri), freshly conceived sets and adventurous audio-visual design, this production brings Australia's stunning outback right to the front matched by the vitality of its young leads.

"It's a beautifully poetic piece and it's in this same style that the music sits right in and is able to propel the emotional journey of our protagonists and allow the world of the play to speak through the music," said Maza.

To commemorate ILBIJERRI's 30-year milestone, they have created a 200-page coffee table book which is a culmination of three decades of photos, interviews, essays and behind-the-scenes stories from actors and creatives who have been a part of the history of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company.

Heart is a Wasteland is a RISING co-production. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.

★★★★ "impressive... delivers a strong, affecting narrative, powered in part by the freedom that flows from Indigenous voices telling Indigenous stories" – **The Age**

★★★★ "It is a love story, but there is a complexity to it, and a dreaming self-awareness, brought to us by an accomplished and talented team of artists, which is moving, enlightening and utterly refreshing" – **Theatre People**

"an important piece of theatre" – **Stage Noise**

Cast & Creative Team

Writer: John Harvey (Saibai Island)

Director: Dr Rachael Maza AM (Yidinji/Meriam)

Performers: Ari Maza Long (Yidinji/Meriam), Monica Jasmine Karo (Gunai/Gunditjmara) and Gary Watling (Wiradjuri)

Songwriter: Lydia Fairhall (Worimi)

Musical Director & Arrangements: Gary Watling (Wiradjuri)

Sound Designer: James Henry (Yuwaalaraay/Yorta Yorta)

Production Manager: Glenn Dulihanty

Set & Costume Designer: Emily Barrie

Lighting Designer: Niklas Pajanti

AV Designer: Sean Bacon

Dramaturg: Mark Pritchard

Stage Manager: Olivia Walker

Producer: Alexandra Paige

About ILBIJERRI Theatre Company

ILBIJERRI is one of Australia's leading theatre companies creating innovative works by First Nations artists. The longest established First Nations theatre company in Australia, ILBIJERRI creates, presents and tours powerful and engaging theatre by First Nations artists that gives voice to Indigenous cultures. ILBIJERRI is committed to growing a sustainable and vibrant First Nations arts ecology and is investing in the next generation of First Nations theatre makers and industry professionals. Deep listening with and for community and country is central to their work. ILBIJERRI perform an important role as cultural leaders, continuing to make work that speaks to the truth of this country, sometimes with humour, but always celebrating the extraordinary resilience and strength of First Nations people.

Images can be found [here](#).

Arts Centre Melbourne and ILBIJERRI Theatre Company present

Heart is a Wasteland

by John Harvey

Fairfax Studio | 25 – 27 August

Duration: 75 minutes, no interval

Warnings: strong language, sexual references

Age Recommendation: 15+



Media Release

For more information visit artscentremelbourne.com.au

We're excited to be welcoming visitors back to all of our venues for live experiences in line with the most recent Victorian Government guidelines on COVID-19. We will continue to offer engaging online experiences via our digital hub – [Together With You](#).

For more information including: our current health and safety policies; bookings for free and ticketed events; and other digital content and experiences, please visit artscentremelbourne.com.au.

For more information about Arts Centre Melbourne, please visit www.artscentremelbourne.com.au or phone 1300 182 183. Become a fan of Arts Centre Melbourne on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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