



Lucy Guerin Inc

Dance Dialogues: Jacob Boehme and Mariaa Randall

29 July 2021

Estelle Conley:

Good evening and welcome to this Dance Dialogues conversation with Jacob Boehme and Mariaa Randall. My name is Estelle Conley and I am the Producer at Lucy Guerin Inc. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I am joining today's talk from the land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation and I would like to pay my respects to Elders past and present. I'd also like to extend this to any First Nations people joining us tonight. I have green eyes and shoulder length brown hair with a fringe, I'm wearing a navy-blue turtleneck jumper and I'm using small hot pink headphones. Behind me is a painted white brick wall.

Before introducing our artists, I'd just like to run through a few bits of housekeeping for tonight. At the bottom of your screen, you'll notice a chat button. In the chat, we encourage you to let us know where you're Zooming in from today. To do this, be sure to select 'all panelists and attendees' in the little blue drop down menu first. Also, alongside the chat button you'll find the Q&A button. If you have a question that you'd like the artists to respond to around the themes in today's conversation, simply pop them in there. And later on, we'll select questions from here to talk to. You can also upvote other people's questions by clicking on the little thumbs up button. This talk is being Auslan interpreted, I'd like to welcome our interpreters Dave and Sarah. Please also be aware that we are recording this session so that the audio can be published on our website after the chat.

So, on to tonight's talk. We're delighted to welcome Jacob and Mariaa for a deeply insightful conversation about their practice, their long history working together, and the *Wild Dog* project. Before I handover to them. Some brief re-introductions:

Jacob Boehme is a multidisciplinary theatre maker and choreographer, based in Melbourne. He has been creating work for the stage, screen, and for large scale public events and festivals. Jacob is the founding Creative Director of Yirramboi, Australia's premiere First Nations Arts Festival. He is also the writer and performer of the critically acclaimed solo work *Blood on the Dance Floor*. Jacob is currently the artistic director of the *Wild Dog* project, reconnecting the dingo songlines between South Australia, the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland. Welcome, Jacob.

Mariaa Randall is Gidabul, Gulibul and Yaegl dancemaker from the far north coast of New South Wales. She is a NAISDA Dance College graduate and more recently, a VCA graduate.



Her most memorable achievements have been choreographing Jacob Boehme's *Blood on the Dance Floor* and producing *YAPENYA*, a new Dja Dja Wurrung ceremony based on old stories. Mariaa is currently developing her new work *System*. This work aims to showcase the strength, resilience, and unwavering presence of First Nations women in the face of adversity. Welcome to Mariaa.

And without further ado I'm going to turn off my camera and handover to both.

Jacob Boehme:

Hi, everyone. Thank you, Estelle. My name is Jacob Boehme. I am a Narungga and Kurna man and my mob are from the Yorke Peninsula and Adelaide Plains of South Australia. I'm Zooming in to you tonight from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country here in Melbourne. I am a fair skinned man with a bald head and clear rimmed glasses and kind of the bits of a grey beard coming out. I'm wearing a red jumper and behind me is a bookshelf, and over my right shoulder is a bunch of packing boxes but we won't go into that. I go by the pronouns of he/him.

Mariaa Randall:

Hello everyone, I'm Mariaa Randall. As Estelle mentioned I'm a Gidabul, Gulibul, Yaegl woman. Today, I'm coming from Dja Dja Wurrung up in Bendigo. And the visual description is something I've never done before, but I've got short brown hair with flecks of grey hair in there for the stress of somethings sometimes. I'm wearing a blue skivvy and have brown eyes. I'm sitting in a bedroom that's fairly new, and my background is just white with cupboards.

It's really great for Jacob to invite me in to have a yarn with him about, obviously the work that he's done, but also the long relationship that we've had. You know, working, friendship, and the many journeys and adventures that we've been on, whether that's personally or creatively. And he's obviously got his latest project *Wild Dog* and I wanted to start the yarn with asking Jacob a little bit more about it. Me and him have a lot of conversations around projects, whether we're outside eyes, outside ears or just a bit of a cultural compass with each other—to kind of guide one another and be like springboards off with one another about, you know, if we are feeling like we're going in the right direction and all those kinds of things. So yeah, so I'd ask where'd all this come from? And the joining of states of lands of, you know, it's not just in one spot—it's started someplace and then it's travelling to all these other places.

Jacob Boehme:

Wild Dog started 10 years ago actually, I'll try and do a truncated version of the origin story of the project. So, I'd been asked to direct a commission. [referencing the images being displayed on screen] These are beautiful images, the images that are accompanying this from my Country and Narungga Country in South Australia. Enjoy!

10 years ago, I was asked to direct a commission that the Mornington Island dancers were given to open the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. And I was sitting with the songmen, and we were trying to figure out which major songlines they have that they would like to have interpreted into a traditional dance/ contemporary dance/ puppetry, kind of spectacle, for want of a better word. And we were talking about two of their, their main lines... storylines; one was Thuwathu, which is the Rainbow Serpent, the other was Ngarmbee, which is the Dingo. And one old man turned to me and he said well we have his resting song here, but this line, this song, comes from all the way down from where your mob are from. And I left it at that. Fast forward six years and in 2017, a couple of my cousins were here for a family barbecue from South Australia. And I turned to my cousin Eddie and something, for some reason, something just popped into my head and I was like, yeah, this old fella up north reckon we got Dingo somewhere down south. I've never heard anyone talk about dingos from Narungga Country or Kurna GCountry... and Eddie without missing a beat went, *"yeah yeah yeah, Wild Dog, we call him, Gadli—he's a roaming dog;" "We got a big storyline that goes up the East Coast."* And so, I went *"oh wow okay, then!"* So that's swimming in the back of my head, and fast forward two years, and Nici Cumpston from the Art Gallery in South Australia, who's the Artistic Director of Tarnathi Festival, was talking to me about ideas that I had. And I went... *"so I've had this thing swimming around in my head Nici, for a couple of years now. There's the beginning of a storyline that I know that comes from our mob, and it goes all the way through South Australia, up through Northern Territory and into Far North Queensland. Wouldn't it be great if we could start gathering all the mobs together to dance or reinterpret that songline, look at trade routes look at relationships and work with the use of those communities to start looking at how we can... number one, maintain those songlines, those customs and the practices that go with those stories, but also build contemporary dance and multidisciplinary practice around it and start working with youth and other artists in many different communities to reinterpret those songs."*

So Nici then gave me some seed funding to go ahead and go forth. What ended up happening was that we soon found partnerships with both Country Arts SA and Insite Arts, who are producing *Wild Dog*. And with them we've managed to get a wonderful raft of support around the project to build this idea of creating a multi-generational, multi-year project, that brings all these communities together. So, with that, you know the project now, has got quite a lot of partners, you know, we've got Country Arts and Insite. But then we're also being supported by Lucy Guerin Inc, the State Library of South Australia, Point Pearce Council, Narungga Nations, Artback NT, Mirndiyan Gununa Aboriginal Corporation. And funded through Indigenous Arts and Languages, Arts Queensland, Arts SA, Australia Council, Ministry of Culture Taiwan and City of Port Adelaide in Enfield. Because we're also collaborating with Asian counterparts, because one of the things that happened, when I first started this and when I started going back to Adelaide and yarning with my Elders, was that Uncle Moogy turned to me, he's Kurna and Ngarrindjeri Elder, and he turned to me and he said, *"you know if you're gonna do this you're gonna have to go into Asia don't ya?"* And I went *"what do you mean?"* And he went *"well that's where that Dingo comes from, he's foreign to us, he come maybe 18,000 years*

ago.” And true to form, yes he did. So, the DNA of our Dingo is found in many different spots through Papua New Guinea, through Indonesia, the singing dogs in Vietnam, Cambodia, over through to the mountain dog in Taiwan and then into southern China. So, we’re partnering with a mob in Taiwan, the Bunun people... that’s it.

Mariaa Randall:

(laughs) Yes, I know cause I remember too that when you started yarning about it as well, like when you started going places and you know, you’d meet someone, sometimes for the first time and then, you know, you just start yarning and you’d go, *“Oh, you know I’m doing this project about the dingo”...* and then they’d go, *“oh I’ve got a story for you!”*

You’d be like telling me you remembered, like *“I’ve met this person and guess what?!”* You know that’s interesting, those links—when it was time for that opening, everyone else was just making contact with you.

Jacob Boehme:

Well that’s the thing, that’s the thing about this one. So wild dog and dingo stories... there’s, there’s a couple of things. So, what we’re doing is we’re bringing the children’s versions of these stories, because Dingo we call him Gadli in Narungga language, Mornington call him Ngarmbee, although there’s other names for him as well. And so, there’s also the public version which we can tell, which is the children’s version, which is what we’re doing. There’s also some sacred law attached to this one, which also scares some mob as well. They’re like, what are you doing? You’re breaking laws, but no no no, we’re actually working with the children’s version, the children’s stories around all this, we’re not breaking laws. We’re not going down that path. But what it does do, because a lot of the dingo stories are all about Country, connecting us to Country, naming parts of Country. And with that, how then we are connected to that country, and what those kinship systems are. So, automatically...the project is all about connecting us together, through this animal. The expanse of our continent. Because the one thing that we’ve started, I started to follow, which is completely expanded from now—so, the line that joins us in South Australia through to Queensland is a two-dog story. There is the three-dog dingo story that goes up the east coast through your mob and into Victoria and into Queensland. Then there’s the seven-dog dreaming that comes from Noongar Boodja, Perth country and then splits all over the country. So, a lot of our mob are associated, or have connections, to this dingo dreaming. And for me, particularly when we when we started facing COVID and everything. The question around, but it’s even before that, these questions around why we gather, how we gather and for what reason. That has kind of driven this whole exploration around gathering, around connecting, around keeping those kinship systems and totemic systems and relationship to country alive.

Mariaa Randall:

I know this is probably something for near the end... but with the load, and you’ve just mentioned... how it’s not just that thing of where we just create art, and then present it. That

there's so many more layers and that knowledge... like when you were saying that we've got to tell the right story and the right version and in the right way and with the right knowledge. And that it's not something that you can just go out and make. I suppose that's part of the reason of me and you being... and the stuff that we do—it's sometimes not just about creating a performance or artwork to be presented. Those layers, and that responsibility and the obligation, and all those things that are there invisibly, still stay with us, even when 5 o'clock finishes. And so, there's the juggling of those things, and how to be safe in all that, when you're doing that kind of stuff. And being able to sit down and yarn to one another... you know, to dump... but then also to know where that that cultural guide or compass is, in all of it.

Jacob Boehme:

I suppose that's what you were talking about before—about how we've known each other for 25 or so years. We have that whole thing of being able to call each other up. Because you've experienced throughout this (*Wild Dog*) project, the phone calls coming from me when I've had those exciting moments... where something has just happened, and I've gone: *"oh my god, this thing just came out of the blue and now it's connected me to this and now I'm having yarns with that, and oh my god, did you know about this?!"* But also, the phone calls that I've made, that have gone: *"I actually can't deal. You know I can't deal with the lateral violence that I'm seeing. I can't deal with the stress and the responsibility of this Mariaa, get me out of it, help me get out!"* (laughs) You know we've often used each other for that kind of shoulder.

Mariaa Randall:

Yeah, yeah. And I think that that's the thing. A lot of our yarns too, you know just when we were yarning the other day... we were saying that if we rewound, went back 20 years, to the Jacob or the Mariaa that was there—would they be able to do then what we're doing today?

And everything that's... all those who've been lucky enough to work across different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' cultures and country. And then also working within our own. In this instance we worked together on *Tanderrum*, and that's creating ceremony... and a lot of this stuff that we're working with them on, none of that is directly our community or our culture. Whereas now with *Wild Dog*, you're actually with your own community. And for me I think sometimes working with your mob is not necessarily easy... but working with other mob is.

Jacob Boehme:

Well, I have to say, that's the thing that's been the most exhilarating. It's been exhilarating in terms of working with my community, working on Country, working with my family. But then it's also been... you know how we feel immense responsibility when we've been gifted to hold information and to be able to transfer and translate information for other mobs, through their elders and, and through their communities. You know we go into those projects, fully aware of

that responsibility but then to have that with my own mob is just a totally different, totally different thing altogether. It's not just about being accountable to the community, it's actually accountable to, to your blood, to your direct ancestral line, and especially when we're working with this kind of cultural material, the responsibilities are ten-fold. I suppose that is why you get my late-night phone calls.

Mariaa Randall:

I suppose it's that, you know that, like in the yarns with you, you go *"I've met my auntie from this side, and you know the second time, the last time she made me was this..."*

They always say that our families are big but, really, when you get into it there's still family that I haven't met to this day. And how that expansion happens in something like this... and the art or the practices that we've created, allow us to kind of add to... to building culture or you know reinstating it. And all those things our generation are kind of looking at now, that maybe the couple of generations before us weren't able to do because of the policies and all the things that were in place as well.

Jacob Boehme:

Can I ask you a question about that? Because yeah, I agree. We've talked about this before... and I can see in my chat here, I can see Deon Hastie. Hello Deon. Well, you, me and Deon are from a generation of NAISDA, that was very particular. I think all of us have come out of that generation as practitioners, with a very particular slant on how we practice, why we practice and the kinds of projects that we take on. What do you think? Deon—you can chime in through the chat there if you want. What do you think, why do you think we have taken on what we've taken on? Because I agree, we don't necessarily go *here's my new dance work...etc.* There's all these layers of cultural obligation, complexity, responsibility, maintenance, mentorship, creating pathways for the next generation of indigenous youth—that we never take the easy road. What do you reckon? What was that about that moment in time, back there in the early/mid 90s? And the way we were being taught.

Mariaa Randall:

Especially at NAISDA for me it was our tutors, like they were just really, you know... and I can't say I've ever been in another space like it. Like when we were doing *Unicolour* and Janet was sharing her culture with us... you didn't sit down, you didn't chew gum, you didn't wear socks, you know—when she spoke you listened. But I think also that if I rewind, I get a lot of that from my own... like from my grandmothers anyway—the strength of them, and their history that they had to go through. The women around in my years when I was at NAISDA, were just really strong staunch women and when they walked into a room, you just done whatever they said (laughs). Like Auntie Peggy Patrick. And Auntie Janet and you know, all them mob. They taught you it, and they'd pull you up. I remember Janet going one time, *"this is my culture, you don't muck around with it, it's not a disco dance that you're learning, it's my culture, and so you need to take it seriously..."* And even Auntie Peggy, I remember one time, not you and

Deon but I think you were there, when they were doing the men's dance and the men had to walk in and she was like “*no no no no that's not how you do it*” and she got up and she'd done it. And everyone else was just sitting there in silence, watching you know, her doing that. I think it just clicked for everyone, and then when they, when this mob, when all the men come back in the next time, it was totally different. And I think it was just... maybe just more from them. Just the importance of knowledge and how it's getting transferred, why it's getting transferred, but then also what your responsibility is when you receive it as well.

Jacob Boehme:

And then I suppose that extends to, you know the things that we take on now myself with *Wild Dog* and you with sisters and all that, and with *Divercity* and all the other kinds of works that you've made as well. That same thing that then applies to how do we translate cultural material, and that responsibility, into like contemporary interventions. How do you do that, other than, you know the midnight phone calls.

What do you think? Do you wanna give us an insight into how you process that? Because I, you know, I know that you can't just go into, you know, I've had some creative conversations with my, with the team, with the *Wild Dog* team lately. So, I've been about no we can't do that because, yes, we're telling the children's version of it, but we can't make it juvenile. There still has to be a reverence for the information... it all relates back to x y and z. How do you, what, how do you translate all of that?

Mariaa Randall:

Oh yeah, I don't know I think it's that, that thing again. I think I use my dad a lot as well. He's kind of another person that I'll just call, to give me a gauge as well, around it. I think it's just listening to him but then also—and that's what I've started doing too—is obviously working a lot more with Indigenous women and also just listening to the women and the knowledge that's in the room as well. And as you get more knowledge and all those kinds of things, there's that thing of, yes, having the information and sharing it, but I don't know, like still knowing what's mine to share and what someone else's. So, you know I'm not talking or yarning on behalf of someone else. Yeah, and that's where it's, I think, you know, it then becomes that line of going. I've got to find ways within my contemporary practice to inject my culture, because that's the majority of what it is that I do. I dance and I have a dance practice, but I can't just be making dance and not be conscious of that knowledge that's there, as well. Yeah, so I don't know if I answered your question (laughs).

Jacob Boehme:

No, I get it. It's about having those circles of cultural authority that keep the... not just one circle it's like this continued, like rings on a tree, there are these circles of communication and cultural authority that you constantly have to be checking in to so that you understand you are within that. And what it is that you're freely able to express and what it is that you can't express to whatever it is that you have to get permission.

Mariaa Randall:

Yeah exactly, all of that with it. It's similar—going back to what we yarned about before—it's not just about the lights, the costume, the music; there's all this other invisible stuff that is just as important as all those other things. So, the weight sometimes... sometimes I think the weight of all that, the extra... we've got to make sure that cultural obligation, responsibility, and permission and all the protocols stuff are in place before we even step out on to any space for public consumption. And just how that all gets, not juggled but, the time and the space needed to have that be present when we're making things. I think not a lot of people, I think a lot of indigenous mob, have to you know... that's at the forefront of what they do.

Jacob Boehme:

I found myself at moments in this project... sometimes often, often questioning myself about what it is that we do and what we continue to do. Because it's the amount of time that we invest in consultation and seeking permissions that I do sometimes go... you are an independent man with freewill, why do you choose to do this? (laughs) But then sometimes, and I know this sounds weird, sometimes it's that thing between... we choose to do it but then it's that thing of going more I think someone's chosen us, it's like a tap on the shoulder. It's that well, you're the one that's going to do it. And you know, we've talked about this. There's been a trajectory of projects that we've both done either together, or in our independent practice, that has been building up a significant knowledge bank, to be able to take on some of these bigger projects like *Wild Dog*. Like for me and I don't know whether I should say this out loud or not, but *Tanderrum* was a really good training ground. And taking the knowledge that we learned about that. Because that was raw ceremony, from where you don't have much to start. I mean, let me rephrase that, there was a lot, but it just needed to be uncovered and rethought. I think it was those processes, as sometimes painful as they were, that was such a bloody good training ground to build up some level of resistance—was it resistance or resilience—to be able to take on some of these, these bigger projects like *Wild Dog*.

Mariaa Randall:

It was good in that sense that *Tanderrum* kind of continued as well, and to kind of actually put things in place... gathering knowledge and how that gets done, and then how that gets put into the space. And you know all those kinds of things. Like just getting research for songs, it was about looking at words, but then I was also talking with elders and talking with communities and getting their knowledge around that as well. So, it wasn't always just taking from books. It's not just one form, it's various forms of drawing information. And also, that in our communities there's different versions of stories as well.

So when you're actually in the room, similar to you know wild dog and dingo, you go, *I got this version of this story*, and then someone goes *yeah but have you heard this version...because*

this is from...? Having that kind of process in the space and then going okay so for us to do it, at least that's respectful, we have to do it in this way, you know?

And even just gathering together and acknowledging, we all come from different parts of our uncovering and learning of our cultures, we're all somewhat students for that. And so, we have to acknowledge that—so we put a process in place and a protocol around that. To make those things present so that then, when we go on to do other stuff, there's this thing that's been created to safeguard the people, but also the knowledge that's been shared with all of it.

I've got to also just mention *Blood (on the Dance Floor)*. I remember going back thinking—how do we we put black dramaturgy in this? How do we speak in the voices we speak? How do we tell stories, the way that we tell stories, you know? And so sometimes it might not have made sense in the traditional dramaturgy, but then when sitting around yarning and going, *yeah but we wouldn't say that or like that wouldn't be our thing*, you know? And I know that one of the goals that you wanted with *Blood (on the Dance Floor)* was to have a primarily indigenous creative team—to have the director, the music director, the writer, codirector, artist and movement director all be indigenous. And I've said that to you before, there is that shorthand of information that you just go *I want it to be like this because of this*, and everyone just goes like, you know? That whole thing with the chest thing, you didn't need to explain that. It's just like that's how it is, you know what I mean? There's that shorthand of knowledge, so then you move on and you create where you should and then... anyway I feel like I'm blabbing now. I just remember that the way in which that was being created, yes, was in the traditional... you know, in the room and all those kinds of things, but I think the thinking and the processes around it was very different to the way that we'd normally created stuff.

Jacob Boehme:

And I remember in that one I had to start thinking in terms of being the writer of that work. And working with dramaturgs, working with some fabulous dramaturgs, but in order for us to be able to sink our teeth into it culturally, I had to shift the way I thought about playwriting and the way I was trained to write, into more like being... I remember it was more like being, *okay let's turn this into song*. It was about becoming a songman, not a playwright. Actually writing, so if we were doing one or two song cycles, it was about breaking up all of those things into the episodes that could be spotted here and put in over there. Whichever way it went. It would make sense in its entirety.

Mariaa Randall:

I think even for that opening dance you know... of going, we're not going to do the numbers, you're going to actually tell the story of what you're doing *"so it's a word so you're doing this, then you're going to do that, and then you're going to do that, and you're going to do that"* so it's not *"and 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8"* and then repeated. I can't imagine it would've been easy (laughs) but you done it so deadly! But yeah, just that thing of how to... because when James created the music, we knew that it was kind of a wide, wide soundscape, so there were points of

where you could hit in (clicks fingers), but not necessarily that constant beat that was always in the background to inform stuff. So yeah, even just trying something like that, and it may have looked easy, but I know it was really hard in that... just that thing of changing your brain, going *I'm not counting, I'm actually going to tell a story while I'm moving.*

Jacob Boehme:

Yeah, it's changing the brain and being able to create spaces for more of our, for more indigenous artists to work like that because it wasn't easy in terms of being... *okay so the challenge for us as creatives, is to place indigenous dramaturgy at the forefront of our thinking*, and especially I think what was challenging in that position and it challenges me still today is, you know you and I are both VCA trained as well as NAISDA trained. So, from NAISDA we got a really good foundation in the principles behind culture, cultural performance, cultural maintenance. At VCA we started to learn more about western theatre, western theatre contexts, how to read, how to critique... But then, I think what also comes with that, and also being the fact that, you know, I didn't grow up on my Country. I come from a mob that have a broken line of customs, particularly around song and dance and ceremony. So, I've grown up as a fair skinned kid in the western suburbs of Melbourne, you know, aiming to get a job and a bank account and a mortgage... but then to go into a space as indigenous artists with other indigenous artists and go *okay we're going to place indigenous dramaturgy first. What we need to do is first thing...* And I found it hard, I don't know about you, but then what you need to do is acknowledge how assimilated you are, the assimilated mind that we bring into the room, and that's fucking hard. Remember, especially around *Blood (on the Dance Floor)*, there were moments where we were all walking through the swamp. *Who am I? What am I? What do I even know?* (laughs)

Mariaa Randall:

Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a significant part of the practice as well. Of kind of going well, you know we live in a generation where we now can look and research our language, we can now look and research our dances, we can do all those kinds of things, and we can sit down with our elders for the information that they know. And I don't know, it's just kind of going well, however long I live, I want to at least have... I always keep saying I want to have my own PhD in my culture as well. Because if we're studying every day to have these knowledges and these PhDs in other places and so, however long that I remain on this earth, every day, or I want to be able to be learning about my culture and Aboriginal Australian culture so that... as my 15-year-old nephew said to me at the time, he's now 21, he said *"Aunty Mariaa I think when I'm an elder, I want to be able to have the knowledge... If I make it to be an elder, I want to be able to have the knowledge that I can give to my community."* And so, I was like, *oh wow that's pretty full on.* But yeah, how do you do that? And because it is dance, how do we do it through our practice you know?

Jacob Boehme:

I think that's what's becoming more, as I get older, more urgent. And especially as I'm finding with *Wild Dog*, is that when I've gone into different communities, like, you know Narungga, with my own mob, Narungga mob, we're using this to re-revive song and dance. For other communities that we're working with, this project has been an opportunity to not revive song and dance, but actually to maintain it. And a lot of it has been by creating youth programmes. So, you know we started working, we did a children's exchange with the Central Yorke School, working with the kids, roughly between 13 and 15 years old. Taking them and getting them to walk this dreaming story on Narungga Country. Yorke Peninsula is not that big, but half these kids hadn't even explored their Country outside of Maitland or Point Pearce and you'd take them an hour and a half, down to the bottom end and show them the beach. It was like this "woah!" to all of them. And then to be able to walk them along that dreaming track and teach them about their responsibility to Country was huge. So out of this project had come all these offshoots. I don't know why I'm talking about this, but I think that it just reminded me of working with the kids. With our dingo story, in Narungga Country, he will lead us all—because we're salt water, we're surrounded by salt water, we're a Peninsula—he will lead us to all these water holes where you can get fresh spring water. Dingo has a lot to do with water as well. So now when we took them to these watering holes, to look at it and go *okay so the cultural practice of maintaining these waterholes has been lost for a couple of 100 years now*. So, out of this has come all these land care and environment programs that we're now starting to build, completely away from this project, but as a part of it.

Mariaa Randall:

Yeah, but how was it? How was it taking them down? And how was them mob, how were they when you...

Jacob Boehme:

Oh look, I think it was one of the most stunning examples of the work that we and other people do, where we choose to place our culture first, and you know, the constant, getting the PhD in our culture. Being able to create spaces where that exchange can happen to a next generation, it was a stunning example of that. I had teachers at that school say—because we would go in two days a week, and we made a deal with the principal to pull all the Narungga kids out of their classes and have one big class and then we could, as Narungga artists and elders, do a whole programme with them based around Narungga culture and interpreting it through different art forms, but also that cultural education. And heaps of teachers go "*you know these kids, a lot of the kids that you're teaching, only turn up on a Tuesday and Wednesday, we don't see them for the rest of the week*". Well, there you go, now isn't that an argument for two-way learning?

Estelle Conley:

We're going to move into a Q&A now. A couple of people that are listening have submitted some questions. If you do want to submit a question, it's not too late. Just pop it into the Q&A

box, and we'll get to it. The first question is coming from Sani Townson and says "Hello Jacob and Mariaa. After you've created work that you've loved, and have been really attached to through to its inception, how do you let go of that work, emotionally after its season has ended?"

Mariaa Randall:

Oh, I think for me it's that thing of... the normal you know, the hype, the adrenaline and then you drop. But I don't think I ever let it go. Always, for me, it's a version of something and yeah, similar to those songs or whatever, it stays with me. And then one day I'll just find another iteration of it. It always just remains, yeah. I don't think anything that I've created, I've just kind of let it go. There's always been something that I've learned, or something that I want to kind of continue to unravel. Or I found something that I need to get more knowledge from, and all those kinds of things. There's the normal obvious, you know show, high, low. But then the majority of the time it's a reflection, and so more of an arrowhead to kind of go *I need to do this more or that more*.

Jacob Boehme:

Yeah, yeah, I agree. I don't think it actually goes. As I've gotten older, I've gotten more attuned, and more used to building up the armour that you need to be able to do the post show depression. Because it's just the cycle isn't it? There is that theory that most of us as artists... there is a theme or there is an inquiry that will be a constant thread throughout our career. It's just, it's almost like you're making the same work, but in different formats as you start to learn more, discover more, create more meaning around what it is that you've discovered, and then express it in different ways. There's that theory that we're all just asking, that we ask that same question of ourselves throughout our careers. But in terms of handing over some works, I dunno I'm a typical Sagittarian, I kind of love to hand them on because there's always something else to do. (laughs)

Estelle Conley:

I've got a question from Denise Wilson, thanks Denise. "Hi Jacob and Mariaa. Jacob this current project you are working on is huge and seems to get bigger as it goes along with each location and story you hear. When starting did you ever think how big it would be and what is next with this work?"

Jacob Boehme:

Ooh yeah! Well, I had an inkling just by the fact that, you know, we're looking at an expanse of country from the bottom end of South Australia, all the way to the tip, almost, in Australia. Like that's a huge expanse of country. Where this, these storylines go. And that's just *one* of these storylines or songlines if you want to put it like that. So, I had an understanding, Denise, as you might imagine, of its epic nature. I didn't understand how epic the journey is. I didn't understand the epic nature, at the time, but how epic it is within each community. And what needs to happen, and the care that needs to happen with each particular point along the way.

And that's only within Australia, we haven't even gone into Asia yet, really. What we've had to do recently is I've made the call, and it was only last week, that we were going to an in person gathering with the communities that we're working with, as part of Tarnanthi Festival. It was going to be a big ceremony, theatrical ceremony, a whole kind of different gathering of events, all together. But since the Delta variant came out, and just listening to colleagues again express their disappointment in cancellations, or postponements. I made the executive call about scrapping Plan A, B and C and going straight to plan D. Which means in November now, we've pushed our dates back a month, because Tarnanthi goes for three months from October through to January. We've got all of our communities filming all the content that we would have performed live, but now we can perform it on our own country, or countries, and then I'm working with a team of designers to create an interactive installation that you can walk through. So, you can walk the story through the space by looking at all of these works that everyone's made from Mornington to Taiwan to Narungga or Kurna Country. Then we can also place it on a digital platform so more people can reach it. We get to preserve the work, and then that also then becomes an invitation to more communities to join. Because from 2022, hopefully, or 2023, that's when we can start gathering in person and start singing this story together.

Estelle Conley:

Great, thank you. And another question that came through earlier... "The demands of the *Wild Dog* project reach deep into the personal and emotional for the artists and extend into the distant and recent past, the present and an aspirational future, and combine with other unhealed, ongoing, and past trauma. Can you talk a little bit about how we support and prepare artists that are making these types of projects?"

Jacob Boehme:

Mariaa, do you wanna have a go at that one?

Mariaa Randall:

Where to start. I think it is part of acknowledging, and again, like what I was saying before... And I'm sorry, Hello Sani Townson! I didn't realise, I've just seen your name and to Ngioka as well, hello you mob. And Priya too. I think it's just acknowledging and really kind of, you know... like we're in processes where we're decolonising a process. And so, I think that thing of going... *the onus is on the indigenous mob or the mob that have been colonised to decolonise.*

But at the same time, in those instances, the flip side of it is going well you've got to actually decolonise your process as well, because you're not just working to create an artwork that's going to go on stage or on a wall or anything else. There's a lot more kind of thinking and, you know like, whether that's you know, again, it's that thing... I think you know Jacob's found that with Jason and the Insite mob is that, when you do, it's not just *I'm going to produce you for a project.* There's an ongoing... it's got to be ongoing, because you've got to share that

knowledge and there's got to be that understanding, and the learning, and all those kinds of things for that to happen. But people have got to be open to that kind of process.

And the traditional kind of frameworks that are in place now fund a work, they don't fund the other things that come with it. And so, I think the question is bigger than the system and all those other things around it. I put the responsibility back on to people that want to produce these kinds of work, again of going why? And what's your intention of working with the artist? Knowing, you know, all those things that Jacob and I have mentioned, that actually come into the mix of what working with us entails.

Jacob Boehme:

And then putting, I think, some processes in place. And maybe it's, it's also using your position as a presenter or producer to advocate within the systems that exist. Because we've been banging on about this for years hey? About as Indigenous artists, these are the responsibilities, and this is the baggage that comes with us into our projects. And we're going to need processes where we're able to fall, where we're able to fail, where we're able to get angry, where we're able to let rip, where we're able to cry. Because a lot of the time, lateral violence is real. Walking into these spaces—and sometimes because we're playing with cultural material and because we're playing so closely with the spirit—that we do place ourselves in, you know, tenuous places somewhat. Those spaces, whether you want to call them culturally safe, you know, somewhere to be able to escape to and cry, somewhere to be able to escape to and fall, and like go, *I need the week out. Now. I need to recoup.* But I think, I mean it is, it's all just health and wellbeing, it's mental health and wellbeing, it's all that kind of stuff that's becoming buzzwords now in our industry. We've been talking about it for ages. I think there's, there's a lot of stuff that you know non-Indigenous presenters and producers and funding bodies could do to actually start making movement to put these processes in place so that they are funded, they are, that is part of the project. Does that make sense or have I just talked shit?

Mariaa Randall:

No no, it does. I also want to add too, from what we've been yarning about... It's that thing of cultural revitalisation, cultural maintenance, and all those kinds of things that, again... clocking that Indigenous artists are part of that process. We are taking on something that our elders weren't able to do, you know? Or our parents weren't able to do, and that's only one generation ago. And so, the weight of even that as well... Until someone opens their mouth, and they're listening, and they're doing all that stuff that, then maybe things can change. But if it's always on, or up to us, to create the systems for us to step into then yeah, I don't know...

Jacob Boehme:

Thank you for that, thanks for that comment. Thanks for joining us.



Estelle Conley:

All right, well I think that that brings us to the end of our conversation, as much as I'd like it to keep going. I might just read Antony Hamilton's comment, because I think it sums it up nicely. "Thanks Jacob and Mariaa for your generosity in the talk, really fascinating learning about the heritage of the dingo extending into Asia. I look forward to seeing where the story goes."

So, I would also like to just say a massive thank you again to Jacob and Mariaa for your generosity and your candidness over the last hour. It's been really fascinating to listen to you, and I look forward to listening to the recording so I can dive into it even deeper later down the track.

I also want to say a big thank you to everyone that's joined us tonight for the talk. I really hope that you got as much out of this conversation as we did. A big thank you to tonight Auslan interpreters Dave and Sarah—we really appreciate you being here.

And finally, if you have any feedback on tonight's session, or the Dance Dialogue series in general, please shoot us an email to admin@lucyguerininc.com. It's always really helpful to receive input from our wider community, so I thank you in advance for sending through any feedback.

So that's all from us for this evening. Thanks again for joining us and we'll see you all soon.