

Media Release: For Immediate Release



***Tjaabi–Flood Country* is a Contemporary Intercultural Music and Theatre Performance Led by Ngarluma Man Patrick Churnside**

***Tjaabi–Flood Country* is coming to Tasmania from 20 April – 4 May, visiting Wynyard, Devonport, and Hobart with this intimate performance.**

Ten years in the making in the Pilbara, *Tjaabi–Flood Country* captures the urgencies of the 21st Century as the globe warms and the climate changes. Patrick captures the many cultural and ecological pressures facing Aboriginal people in places like the Pilbara in the face of ever-increasing pressures for new minerals, rare earth, and more ore. He does so through breathtaking music, profoundly personal narrative, and humour that cuts to the bone.

Tjaabi is a unique song form, short compositions using crisp poetic language, set to melodies from across the Pilbara. Each song captures stories, dreams, thoughts, moments, which can be ecological, profound, funny, sexy, or wistful. Tjaabi are culturally accessible and can be listened to by indigenous and non-indigenous audiences. Each tjaabi has an original singer and comes from a specific place in the Pilbara, handed down to subsequent singers and family members. The original tjaabi singers were men and women of great strength and power from many nations across the Pilbara. Patrick evokes these varied landscapes from the desert to the East, the grassy tablelands, to the flood country of Iremugadu/Roebourne on the western coast, where the desert meets the sea.

Importantly, this work is an intercultural sharing, a collaboration between many, reflecting a hopeful future of cultural exchange and dialogue, with Patrick's story at the centre. This immersive theatre work, using music, spoken word, animation, and tjaabi, tells the story of growing up in the Pilbara, the lineage of cultural knowledge, the contemporary relevance of indigenous ecologies, working on country, the resource sector, and the power of Ngarluma language in capturing cultural knowledges and lived experience.

With a deep joy and sorrow, *Tjaabi–Flood Country* incants the contradictions brought by the tsunami of modernity – where the weakest of strengths and the strongest of weaknesses combine.

After some years creating digital work and documentary, this Big hART theatre work is much anticipated. Created in collaboration with award-winning writer and director **Scott Rankin**, (Namatjira, Ngapartji Ngapartji, Hipbone Sticking Out), and produced by Big hART's renowned collaborative team, *Tjaabi–Flood Country* delivers much of the signature power of Big hART's large scale works. Raw, gripping, intensely moving, yet funny and compassionate, *Tjaabi–Flood Country* creates a contemporary and sophisticated portrait of Pilbara life in this complex moment in time out of Patrick's remarkable lived experience.

Tjaabi–Flood Country is scored and performed with composer and musician **Aaron Hopper**, whose emotive, nuanced, and intelligent work seeks to grow out of traditional Pilbara melody and motif. This creates a grounded space for Patrick's own story to emerge. Aaron and his family lived and worked in the Pilbara for three years, immersing themselves in cultural exchange which has allowed this musical collaboration to grow.

Patrick Churnside says:

"Tjaabi has become one of my passions and life's work. I pour my heart into it, researching, learning and performing. Through my commitment to awakening and sharing Tjaabi in this innovative intercultural project, I hope understanding and reconciliation will grow, greater awareness of country and stronger song, story and culture."

Aaron Hopper says:

“In designing the score for Tjaabi, I reflect on my 3 years living in Roebourne, the textures of the landscape, the people and their stories. I’ve been looking for ways to represent place and country in sound both modern and ancient. The guitar is such a part of the culture in the Pilbara, and it’s also my instrument. I use the guitar in my own way, and I find the sounds I was taught by the great players in and around Roebourne coming out through the music.”

Scott Rankin says:

“Patrick and I have been working together for ten years on Ngarluma country in the Pilbara developing a detailed theatrical language in which these tjaabi can sit, and a style based on Patrick’s natural abilities. Over that time the ecological urgencies of the 21st century have increased and Tjaabi – Flood Country speaks powerfully to our times.”

Importantly, in keeping with how Big hART works with communities, this tour sees Patrick touring Tjaabi as a practice on country - rather than a performance only - as a gift to other First Nations people, and from this cultural exchange, the theatre performance is delivered. Touring nationally, the approach Aboriginal communities first, in order to awaken the similar practices in local communities and families around the country.

Review Quotes

“Pilbara songs are hanging in the air under a swollen moon. Indian prayer bowls brimming with salt, spinifex seeds, sand and water have been laid on pillows of red dirt across the performance ground.” -Victoria Laurie, The Australian

“Incredible. I think there’s a really big thirst and desire for this culture to be shared across the country.” -Patricia Karvelas, ABC Radio National

Education Package

To complement the presentation of *Tjaabi – Flood Country*, Big hART has developed educational packs aligned with the curriculum. These resources are integrated into Big hART’s NEO-Learning educational platform, providing students with engaging activities directly crafted in our Digital Lab located in Roebourne, WA.

Dates and Locations

Saturday – 20 April, 2024 | 7pm
Watershed, 2a Old Bass Hwy, Wynyard
<https://thewatershed.bighart.org/program/theatre-tjaabi-flood-country/>

TBA April, 2024
Devonport (address TBA)

Saturday – 4 May, 2024 | 4:30pm
Moonah Arts Centre, 23-27 Albert Rd, Moonah
Booking Details TBA

For more information on *Tjaabi-Flood Country* visit:
<https://www.bighart.org/projects/tjaabi/>

For more information on Big hART visit:
<https://www.bighart.org/who-we-are/>

Interviews, images, and footage available on request.



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