

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE PRESENTS  
**BINDJAREB PINJARRA**

*"Extraordinarily immediate, powerful and moving...delicious satire" - The West Australian*

*"Most effective vehicle for black-white reconciliation you'll ever see" - Courier Mail*

*"A wonderful fusion of the comic with the tragic" - The Sydney Morning Herald*

Combining extraordinary risk-taking theatre with a harrowing piece of history, the Opera House will challenge audiences with a retelling of Western Australia's Pinjarra Massacre in ***Bindjareb Pinjarra*** from 27 – 28 June.

On 28 October 1834, 90km south of Perth in a place known as Pinjarra, a violent conflict took place between Mounted Police and the local Nyoongar tribe. Estimates put the Nyoongar fatalities between 70 – 150 people. One policeman died. History books recorded the event as The Battle of Pinjarra. The Nyoongar people retold of the massacre of an indigenous community.

But *Bindjareb Pinjarra* is not a history lesson. This is a live, oral retelling of a shared history. There is no recorded script, no playwright and no director. Created and performed by The Pinjarra Project, the work deliberately grows with audience input and moulds to each audience's interpretation of events and their contributions of contemporary issues that resonate with them. This unique format provides a rich forum for learning about both the events that took place in Pinjarra and the way history can be shaped and distorted in its retelling.

2015 marks the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the original play which premiered in Perth in 1994. Since then this ever-changing, malleable theatre experience has toured extensively across metropolitan and remote Australia.

Although no two performances are ever the same, there is a format to telling the story that switches between three narratives: the time of the massacre; an unnamed time when black and white children meet and learn about their shared history; and the present day, which has constantly changed over the play's 21 year history.

Acclaimed actor **Kelton Pell** was one of the original creators of *Bindjareb Pinjarra* and returns to the stage for this season. An award-winning actor, he is known to Australian audiences for his stirring performances in *Redfern Now*, *Gods of Wheat Street*, *Cloudstreet*, feature film *Bran Nue Dae* and various productions for Sydney Theatre Company and Black Swan Theatre Company. Born in Western Australia, Pell tells the story of the Pinjarra massacre with the perspective of a local who is carrying through the tradition of sharing stories passed down through generations.

**Sydney Opera House Head of Indigenous Programming, Rhoda Roberts**, presented *Bindjareb Pinjarra* as part of The Dreaming Festival in 1997 and believes it has retained its significance. *"This was an important story to tell and reconciliation theatre is a powerful way to share it with modern audiences. As a people we have an oral storytelling tradition and Bindjareb Pinjarra is true to that custom. This practice also demonstrates how history moulds and changes in its retelling. In a way, Bindjareb Pinjarra reclaims our story."*

**Sydney Opera House Head of Children, Families & Creative Learning, Bridgette Van Leuven**, believes this is brave, risk-taking theatre combined with a compelling piece of history, *"The Pinjarra Project has cleverly used comedy as a device to approach a sensitive subject and a dark period in our history. The way the piece has evolved over 21 years has also become part of its own living history. This is an opportunity to examine both our past and the assumptions through which we view historical events."*

Challenging and thought-provoking, *Bindjareb Pinjarra* is history relived, retold and rewritten.

**BINDJAREB PINJARRA**

**Dates:** 27 – 28 June 2015

**Venue:** Studio, Sydney Opera House

**Website:** [http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/whatson/kath\\_bindjareb\\_pinjarra.aspx](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/whatson/kath_bindjareb_pinjarra.aspx)

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