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Songlines to illuminate the Sydney Opera House Sails for Vivid

Six artists to feature in the first Indigenous Lighting the Sails at Vivid Sydney

Australia's ancient songlines will weave across the sails of the Sydney Opera House from 6pm on 27 May as part of the first Indigenous **Lighting the Sails at Vivid Sydney**, in a spectacular animation co-curated by **Destination NSW** and the **Sydney Opera House**.

Songlines is inspired by the ancient dreaming tracks that weave across the landscape and skies, featuring the work of six renowned Indigenous artists: **Karla Dickens, Djon Mundine OAM, Reko Rennie, Gabriella Possum, Donny Woolgoodja** and the late **Gulumbu Yunipingu**.

Songlines Director and Sydney Opera House Head of Indigenous Programming **Rhoda Roberts** says: "The songlines have been connecting Australian Aboriginal people for thousands of years. **Songlines** is a monumental work and an unprecedented opportunity for people around the world to really connect with the culture of Australia's First People and glimpse the old trade routes that connected us all to country.

"The songlines are a living map and an archive of our culture. These pieces of art bring an entirely new look to the Opera House – steeped in tradition but so contemporary and relevant today. I simply cannot wait to see it unveiled during Vivid Sydney."

Vivid Sydney Creative Director **Ignatius Jones** says: "It is an honour to have these artists sharing such a profound cultural story of Australia's Aboriginal people through **Songlines** at Vivid Sydney.

"Each year Vivid Sydney showcases art and innovation, and cutting-edge animation has been utilised to bring the **Songlines** projection to life. By placing **Songlines** on our most significant cultural icon, we put Indigenous art at the heart of Australian culture and showcase this amazing story to visitors across the world."

The music accompanying **Songlines** will be composed and designed by **Rhoda Roberts** and **Damien Robinson**, the creative force behind Sydney's **Wicked Beat Sound System** and features songmen **Djakapurra Munyarryun** and **Cecil McLeod**. The music explores the themes of salt water, fresh water, sky, wind and the desert.

That has a particular resonance on **Bennelong Point**, known to the Gadigal for thousands of years as **Tubowgule**, which means where the knowledge waters meet. **Songlines** honours Tubowgule's rich history as a gathering place for community, ceremony, songs, storytelling and celebration.

Contemporary Indigenous visual artists from across the country interpret the songlines through distinctive symbols, patterning and imagery representative of the stories of their clans and groups.

Songlines has been animated for the Opera House sails by award-winning studio **Artists In Motion**. A tapestry of moving images tracing the songlines from the east, across the centre, to the north and to the west of the country will be projected in a breathtaking display.

Charged with being a meeting place for matters of local, national and international significance, the Sydney Opera House continues the traditions of its site on Bennelong Point through a year-round program celebrating the richness of First Nations culture through dance, music and talks events.

Songlines will run each night from 6pm to 11pm from 27 May to 18 June.

Vivid LIVE, the Sydney Opera House's annual contemporary music takeover, runs from 27 May to 13 June.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Karla Dickens (Wiradjuri)

Karla Dickens was born in Sydney in 1967; the Year of the Referendum that gave Aboriginal people human status. A double dawn for Aboriginal people; a major national political and social shift, and an innocent newborn seemingly as yet without any connection to her history and Aboriginal heritage. Karla's Aboriginality and sexuality profoundly inform her work – her insight and breadth of artistic practice both deeply embraces the notion of identity politics and yet works with universal human experiences.

Djon Mundine OAM (Bandjalung)

Djon Mundine is a member of the Bandjalung people of northern New South Wales. Djon has an extended career as a curator, activist, writer and occasional artist and is renowned as the concept curator for the Aboriginal Memorial installation permanently exhibited at the National Gallery of Australia. Djon was awarded an OAM in 1993 and is currently Indigenous Curator-Contemporary Art at the Campbelltown Art Centre.

Gabriella Possum (Nungurrayi)

Gabriella Possum was born in 1967 and she is the eldest daughter of the internationally renowned artist Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, who was awarded the Order of Australia in 2002. Gabriella is best known for her Seven Sisters paintings, with her iconic depiction of the Milky Way, and she also paints Bush Tucker and Grandmother's Country stories.

Reko Rennie (Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Gummaroi)

Through his art Reko explores what it means to be an urban Aboriginal in contemporary Australian society. Rennie received no formal artistic training but as a teenager discovered graffiti, which

became an all-consuming passion. His art and installations continually explore issues of identity, race, law and justice, land rights, stolen generations and other issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in contemporary society.

Donny Woolagoodja (Worora)

Donny, Mowanjum Artists Spirit of the Wandjina Aboriginal Corporation (MASWAC) chairman, is the fourth eldest of ten children. His father, Sam, was the last of the Worora banmen (lawman and medicine man). Donny's remarkable upbringing included the white Christian beliefs he became aware of at the mission churches and the ancient Wandjina laws his father taught him, allowing him to move easily between his Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people.

Gulumbu Yunupingu (1954-2012, Gumatj)

Using distinctive white and black crosses on a red ground, Yolgnu artist Gulumbu Yunupingu (1945-2012) painted Garak, the starry universe, on barks and poles. She came to national prominence when she won the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award (2004), and to international acclaim in 2006 with her scaled-up version of Garak on permanent display at Musée du Quai Branly (2006).

Artists In Motion

Artists in Motion (AIM) is a Creative Project company, highly regarded as pioneers of the industry. Known for their work around the world they still remain a proudly home-grown creative force that produces all of their creations from their Sydney studio.

AIM is a collective of unique talent and experienced artists who have worked as a united team for several years. From the epic to the culturally emotional, their work continues to transfix audiences of all kinds.

Under the creative leadership of Richard Lindsay, AIM's previous projects include content creation for the Beijing Olympics Ceremonies, Vancouver Winter Olympic Ceremonies, Hong Kong Pulse Shows, Alfa Bank Projection Moscow, 1st European Games Baku, the iconic UAE production "Clusters of Light", as well as previous works for VIVID, including the popular *Play* projection on the Sydney Opera House.

ABOUT VIVID LIVE AT VIVID SYDNEY

From 27 May – 13 June, Sydney Opera House will welcome some of the most ambitious and innovative local and international artists for Vivid LIVE - a celebration of music on the nation's most famous stages – held as part of Vivid Sydney, the world's largest festival of light, music and ideas.

Vivid LIVE invites the world's leading music artists and performers to raise the roof of the Sydney Opera House's theatres, rehearsal spaces, recording studios and most famously, its iconic sails, which are transformed into a unique lighting canvas each year for Vivid Sydney.

Now in its eighth year, Vivid Sydney, features large scale light installations and projections (Vivid Light); music performances and collaborations (Vivid Music including Vivid LIVE at the Sydney Opera



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House); and creative ideas, discussion and debate (Vivid Ideas), celebrating Sydney as the creative hub of the Asia-Pacific.

Vivid Sydney is owned, managed and produced by Destination NSW, the NSW Government's tourism and major events agency and runs from 27 May to 18 June 2016. For more information visit www.vividsydney.com