

WATA

A GATHERING FOR SONGMEN, IMPROVISING SOLOISTS, AND ORCHESTRA

Presented by **QPAC** and **Queensland Symphony Orchestra** as part of **Clancestry**

31 July 2025 | Concert Hall, QPAC

Wata: A Gathering for Manikay Performers, Improvising Soloists and Orchestra

Composed by **Paul Grabowsky** for a Wägiluk Djuwalpada Manikay shared and performed by
Daniel Ngukurr Boy Wilfred (voice and bilma) and **David Yipininy Wilfred** (yidaki)

ARTISTS

Paul Grabowsky director / piano

Daniel Ngukurr Boy Wilfred voice and bilma

David Yipininy Wilfred yidaki

Benjamin Northey conductor

Erkki Veltheim violin

Helen Svoboda double bass

Peter Knight trumpet and electronics

Aviva Endean bass clarinet

QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Concertmaster

Glenn Christensen

First Violin

Johnny van Gend
Mia Stanton
Rebecca Seymour
Stephen Tooke
Ann Holtzapffel
Gregory Lee
Lynn Cole
Sonia Wilson
Brenda Sullivan
Eliza Scott
Li Liu

Second Violin

Nicholas Penfold
Helen Travers
Delia Kinmont
Faina Dobrenko
Runa Murase
Ceridwen Jones
Natalie Low
Clare Cooney
Harold Wilson
Allana Wales

Viola

Yoko Okayasu
Charlotte Burbrook de Vere
Ella Pysden
Nicole Greentree
Gregory McNamara
Graham Simpson
Kirsten Hulin-Bobart
Bernard Hoey

Cello

Isaac Davis
Matthew Kinmont
Kathryn Close
Andre Duthoit
Matthew Jones
Min Jin Sung

Double Bass

Dušan Walkowicz
Anne Buchanan
Kenneth Harris
Marian Heckenberg

Flute

Alison Mitchell
Stephanie Vici

Oboe

Sarah Young
Vivienne Brooke

Clarinet

Irit Silver
Mitchell Jones

Bassoon

David Mitchell
Evan Lewis

Horn

Nicholas Mooney
Natalie Douglas
Christian Fisalli

Trumpet

Rainer Saville
Alfred Carslake
Mark Bremner

Trombone

Ashley Carter
Tate Cassells
Jason Luostarinen

Tuba

Thomas Allely

Timpani

Tim Corkeron

Percussion

Josh DeMarchi
William Elvin
David Kemp

Harp

Emily Granger

ABOUT THE MUSIC

BY PAUL GRABOWSKY

Wata is the latest chapter, and in a way a culmination, of a seventeen-year association I have enjoyed with the Wilfred clan from Ngukurr, NT. I was drawn to this collaboration by the exciting possibility of connecting with the world's oldest performative musical tradition, one that continues to blossom and reveals facets of itself in the face of our linear-historical thinking about music, past, present and future. The form of the songs you will hear performed by these master musicians known as Daniel and David Wilfred is called manikay, cycles of poetic invocations of time and place intended for public ceremonial events. The titles of each of the seven parts of **Wata** carry concepts conveyed through the powerful ritual words sung by Daniel, and overseen by David. They are:

Naraka-Wana (Bone Country)

in which the ancestor figure called Djuwalpada walks through the land as he creates, names and embodies it.

Larra (Stone Spear Country)

in which Djuwalpada runs through the land, joyfully. The land rises up to meet him.

Marayunmara Gara (Spear Dance)

in which Djuwalpada fashions a spear needed for hunting, setting in motion the cycle of birth, death and regeneration.

Yarrata (String Line)

in which Djuwalpada makes a spear thrower. The title refers to the law which joins the manikay in one line from the deepest past, through the present, into the future. All things are bound by this line, this fundamental law.

Madayin (Ancestral Law)

The spear in flight transcends time and place; these generative acts are renewed, relived with each performance. Manikay are open-ended musical statements. Anything which is accepted into an immediate sonic relationship to the manikay in effect becomes part of the manikay, as it represents a model of a holistically interconnected universe.

Warrara (The Blood of the Setting Sun)

Here the purifying Wata (here meaning 'smoke', another manifestation of Djuwalpada) settles his (and therefore our) troubled soul, preparing him for a journey away from this place.

Birrk-Birrk (The Lap-Winged Plover Flies on the Wind)

Djuwalpada flies away in his guise as the plover, a totem representing the creator figure in his ever-present state, as he wishes us well on our individual journeys.

The soloists on stage with me tonight and the Wilfreds (aka the Young Wagiluk Group) developed this collaboration over many years. The improvisations themselves embedded within the manikay run as a skein linking the sections together. Now, Queensland Symphony Orchestra have been welcomed into this living, breathing, organic musical world.

We are all one.



With thanks to Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra