

Bangarra Dance Theatre – Sheltering – Pre-show information

Dear Reader - Dear Listener.

Welcome to Sheltering. The audio description for Sheltering aims to enable audience members who are blind, have vision impairment, or any other sensory disability, to experience as fully as possible, the spirit, emotion and stories embedded in this unique dance theatre experience.

We are providing the following information as both [recording](#) and this written document in addition to the audio description during the performance, to explain design elements, cultural references and choreographic terminology. Please note, there may be some sections that are not appropriate or possible to speak over, such as traditional language vocalisations or very loud music.

References to left and right of the stage are described from the perspective of the audience. For example, left side of the stage means on the audience members' left hand side as they face the stage. Downstage means close to the audience. Upstage means close to the back wall.

Here is some staging terminology you will hear during the description:

The backdrop. This refers to the back wall of the stage and serves as a place where design features contextualise the scene, the story or atmosphere.

Scrim. A scrim is a piece of translucent mesh fabric that covers the whole stage vertically and can descend and ascend as required. It is firm material and often acts as a screen for projection or to enhance atmosphere and lighting effects.

Sheltering consists of three works. Keeping Grounded, Brown Boys (a short film) and Sheoak. The whole Bangarra ensemble is involved in performing Keeping Grounded and Sheoak. There are solos, duos, small groups and larger ensembles across the various sections of the works. Sometimes dancers injure themselves in which case adjustments to choreography need to be made – for example, a group of three dancers might be reduced to two. So, the audio description may not always be a hundred percent accurate in reflecting small details about the performance on the day - however we assure you, this will make little or no difference to your experience of the performance. The film involves just one male performer.

Here is some choreographic terminology you will hear.

Canon. A canon of movement occurs with a group of dancers. One dancer, usually at the edge of a formation, starts a movement then each dancer repeats the movement as soon as the person in front or to the side executes the movement. A common way of referring to this is a Mexican wave. A canon in dance is like a canon in music terminology.

Unison. Unison is when all the dancers are all doing the same movement at the same time.

Random. Random movement is when all the dancers are doing different movements in different directions. Despite the chaotic effect, random movement is actually very highly choreographed to achieve a particular artistic aim, as well as prevent collisions on stage.

Here is some information about the sets, costumes and lighting involved in Sheltering.

The set design for Keeping Grounded is dominated by a very large net - an adapted trapeze net. It is very wide and flexible and there are several randomly placed cut out holes in various places, large enough for a dancer to pass through. The holes are re-enforced with cotton seam with a few gold threads sewn into fabric. The rope is dyed in light reddish brown rock face colours. At the beginning of the work, the net is loosely spread on the ground. Eight dancers are lying underneath, close to each other. During the work, the net is drawn up to reach the full height of the stage to hang asymmetrically. At various points, the dancers anchor one end of the net by using their own weight and arm strength to create a pathway for other dancers to ascend, descend, hang from the seams of the cut out holes.

Costumes for the work are in earthy tones. Beige stretch cotton t-shirts with darker contrast inserts near the shoulders, camouflage colour cargo pants or tracksuits. In the last section they wear leotards or tops with red, gold and black flame pattern on the front. Brown, Gold and copper coloured body paint is streaked along their legs.

There are two instances where costumes are also props as part of the set elements. One is a large black jacket with extra-long extensions sewn on to the sleeves. The others are two green hoodie jackets with extensions sewn on to the front to create an oversized hood, The lighting for Keeping Grounded is fairly dark most of the time and is directed onto the net from the above and from the side.

Brown Boys is a six minute film involving, poetry, spoken word, design, movement, and scenography. There is one male performer, Bangarra artist Daniel Mateo, who is also the writer of the poetry and is one of the directors of the film. The other director is Cass Mortimer Eipper, a film and video specialist with a dance background. The set is gradually revealed as the film progresses and consists of a shelter made of grass matting and a large amount of dark brown sand that falls on the dancer's hands and body, eventually forming a large mound. There is an opening at the top of the shelter where light shines through at various points in the film. The shelter is referred to as the Fale (fah-lay - the Tongan language word for shelter), is constructed in panels and disassembles during the film. The performer is dressed in skin tone shorts. His legs and torso are bare. He has several tattoos on his chest.

In the film they are referred to as tatatau (the Tongan language word for tattoo). His tatatau represent protection and guidance.

The film's cinematography takes a central role in the film in the way the camera draws the viewers focus, the way the light pours through the opening of the shelter and draws the performer to gaze upwards.

In Sheoak, the stage is basically empty except for a lighting strip on the back wall across the floor, a scrim that ascends during the performance, and several poles made of aluminum but painted to look at bare tree branches. The thickness of the branches is designed so that an adult hand fits comfortably around them enabling them to be carried, positioned and re-positioned easily by the dancers. In one section the poles are hanging vertically from the top of the stage to about half a metre off the floor. There is also a section involving a large semi transparent piece of fabric with battery operated LED lights sewn into the seams and LED filaments woven into the fabric. This fluorescent fabric glows in the darkness as it is manipulated by the dancers.

Sheoak consists of three sections, Place, Body and Spirit - and there are 17 dancers involved. One of these is the Keeper, a central female character representing Knowledge, Wisdom, Connection to Ancestors and Country. She wears a long dress of many layers, and highly textured around the bodice.

There are three main sections in Sheoak and there are different costumes for each section. In Place the dancers wear form fitting shorts in a black and white patterned fabric, with a sleeveless top made of thin neoprene. The neoprene is cut in a way that the tops resemble a shape that implies something like a ribcage.

In Body the men wear wrap around skirts of slightly stretchy red textured and randomly torn fabric over layers of black and white mesh type fabric. The women wear long semitransparent shifts made of off-white mesh with grey thicker mesh inserts down the side and a black scribbly pattern on the upper chest.

In Spirit, female dancers wear floor length skirts made of many layers of soft transparent fabrics – pale pink, white and beige - earthy tones, and a quite bulky neck and chest adornment of woven fabric in the same tones with randomly placed gold strips intertwined. They wear skin coloured form fitting tops under the adornment. The male dancers wear skirts of the same fabrics as the women, and their chests are bare

The full Sheltering program is approximately 90 minutes in duration with no interval.

We hope you enjoy Sheltering.