

## **Stephen Page citation**

Born and raised in Brisbane, Stephen Page is descended from the Nunukul people of Stradbroke Island and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambah tribe of southeast Queensland. Building on a childhood passion for performance and dance, Stephen performed with the prestigious Sydney Dance Company until 1991 when he was appointed Artistic Director of the Bangarra Dance Theatre.

Stephen's vision for a dance company with a theatrical style that remains true to the indigenous spirit, has seen the Bangarra Dance Theatre become a major force in Australian contemporary dance. His commitment to creating powerful indigenous performances that challenge and educate has required strength and conviction. His works, *Praying Mantis*, *Dreaming*, *Ninni* and *Ocbres* established a milestone for the company and for Australian dance.

In 1996, Stephen made his creative debut with The Australian Ballet, choreographing the work, *Alchemy*. The following year he brought The Australian Ballet and Bangarra Dance Theatre together to perform *Rites*, which was performed in Melbourne, Sydney and New York.

Stephen, and Bangarra's, ability to represent the spirit of indigenous dance was respected and recognised by an invitation to direct the indigenous segment of the Sydney Olympic opening and closing ceremonies in the year 2000. He also choreographed *The Awakening Ceremony* for the Olympic Festival of the Dreaming. Stephen's first Olympic experience, however, was at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics where he choreographed the flag handover ceremony.

The Olympic Arts Festival saw the premiere of the work, *Skin*, at the Sydney Opera House, which won Stephen and Bangarra the prestigious Helpmann Award for Best New Australian Work and Best Dance Work in 2000.

In 2001, and having thought over the concept for many years, Stephen choreographed the double bill, *Corroboree*, which toured Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and, later, the United States. *Corroboree* is a work that draws from the beauty of nature and popular culture to explore the transformation and fusion of urban and traditional culture. And it was for *Corroboree* that Stephen received the Helpmann Award for Best Choreography in 2002.

Stephen's contribution to visual arts in Australia is not limited to dance theatre. He has been involved in creative film, television, documentaries and rock videos. And it was with this outstanding background in the arts, that Stephen was appointed the Artistic Director of the 2004 Adelaide Festival of Arts.

As Artistic Director for the 2004 Adelaide Festival of Arts, and in the shadow of the 2002 Festival, Stephen was faced with the challenge of creating a popular artistic program under considerable budget pressure. In his own words Stephen has admitted that, "he is used to doing things with only two bob". Now, with an extremely successful 2004 Festival under his belt, Stephen is to be congratulated for creating an incredibly well-received program and removing the cloud of debt from the Adelaide Festival of Arts.

The University of South Australia, through the Visual Arts program and Writers' Week, enjoys a close and productive relationship with the Adelaide Festival. For the 2004 Festival, the Director of the University Art Museum, Erica Green, was the Executive Officer of the Festival's Visual Arts Program. From the Louis Laybourne-Smith School of Architecture and Design, Rachel Hurst, organised the Architecture Symposium. The University also sponsored two authors for the 2004 Writer's Week.

Stephen's leadership of the Festival made it easy for us to be involved in these ways. And the success of the Festival – its energy and engagement with a broad cross section of our population – made us proud to be associated with the program.

Early last week, Stephen was named the Individual Winner of the prestigious Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards for 2003. These national awards, established in 1984 to enhance the status of the performing arts in Australia, pay tribute to outstanding achievement in drama, dance, music, mime, opera, circus and puppetry.

Chancellor, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the University of South Australia, to present to you, Mr Stephen Page, for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the arts in Australia.