



## Bangarra Dance Theatre's Waru – journey of the small turtle

These notes, as well as the audio description that is heard during the performance, are prepared and written with children and adults with visual impairment in mind, however they may also be useful for people who would like to make use of the Audio Description to assist them to have the best possible experience.

We are looking forward to seeing you at Bangarra Dance Theatre's production of Waru – journey of the small turtle.

### Link to recording of notes

<https://bangarra.box.com/s/sf90folp36td4qryrhxt5o738qe9mkq>

### When you arrive

When you arrive at the theatre you will find some play activities in the foyer where families and friends can get creative with the art and craft materials provided. There are also some large posters displayed in the foyer, which provide information about the Torres Strait – its location, Culture, and its environment.

### The venue

As you enter the auditorium and find your seats, please ask the theatre's staff to help you if you need any assistance. The stage area in front of the audience is all set up for the story to take place. The lights in the auditorium are on but will start to dim as the show is about to begin.

### The set

When you face the stage, a dark blue background depicts lots of twinkling stars across a night sky. On the stage is a small, very simple wooden shelter with open sides. The top of the shelter is adorned with fairy lights and close to and around it are various things like fishing gear, baskets, and a white shirt and pair of pants on a clothes hanger. The floor of the shelter is slightly raised and on the floor is a low bed.

Someone is sleeping in the bed.

As you face the stage, on the left side of the shelter is a little mound of sand about a metre across. Closer to the audience are three little turtles made from kitchen equipment, such as wooden spoons, bowls, pasta strainers and forks. They shine out because they have lights inside them.

The story of Waru takes place on an island in the Torres Strait. The Torres Strait lies in between the very top of Australia and the bottom of Papua and New Guinea. There are 279 islands in the Torres Strait but only 17 of these have people living on them. The people of the Torres Strait care deeply about the land, seas, and skies where they live, because it holds Cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge is very important. It gives people a sense of belonging and being connected to their home, but also tells them about the seasons, so they know when to hunt, fish and grow things.

## The characters

In this story there is one main female character. Her name is Aku Malu. She is the carer of this island and also our storyteller. There is another female performer who takes the role of Mother Turtle, and also Migi the small turtle after she herself has grown into a Mother Turtle. This performer also plays the part of a lizard, and a jelly fish. She also sings and dances with Aku Malu at various times during the show. There is another character who never appears, but we hear her voice. This is Maari - the keeper of the waters, who talks to Aku Malu to let her know when seasons are changing.

## The story

Aku Malu starts the story by waking up and telling us about her life on the island. Then comes the arrival of Mother Turtle. We are invited by Aku Malu to make pushing actions to help her assist Mother Turtle up across the sand to her nest. Then she tells us about Mother turtle's eggs needing to be buried in the sand for the time it takes for two full moons to appear in the sky.

A lizard appears. Not a real one – it's a dancer in a lizard costume. Lizards love turtle eggs and Aku Malu must fight off the lizard with her broom and some clever martial arts moves.

When the eggs start to hatch, Aku Malu finds a little egg that she feels is special. She names the baby turtle inside the egg Migi. As all the baby turtles start to hatch and make their way across the sand and out to the deep water, Aku Malu notices Migi is stranded on the sand, so she asks us to help Migi swim her way out.

Aku Malu teaches us a special dance that gets Migi on her way. We do the dance sitting in our seats. Once that's done Aku Malu goes fishing.

As she is fishing, she notices something large and slow coming onto the island. It is hard to know what it is because it's covered in rubbish – old plastic bags, discarded fishing nets, and lots of other plastic items. Aku Malu starts removing these items one by one, and discovers that underneath is a jelly fish, who has been caught up in all the rubbish that floats around the oceans. Jelly fish, sharks, dugongs, octopuses, and turtles can die when they get caught in rubbish. It stops them from being able to swim properly and hunt for their food. Aku Malu reminds us that we must look after the sea environment and recycle things that we stop using - especially plastic.

Aku Malu then tells us the story of the four winds – Zey, Nai-gai, Kuki, and Sageer.

After the story, Aku Malu realises that Migi has made her way back to the island. She has grown into a mother turtle and has come to lay her eggs. One life cycle is complete, and the next one is ready to start again.

The Lizard appears one more time, and like the last time, Aku Malu scares it away with her broom and martial arts moves.

This is the end of the show. The audience starts to clap, and all the lights get brighter.

## More Information

Creating this story dance about Waru takes about 20 people who all work together over many months.

Waru is conceived and directed by Stephen Page, in collaboration with Hunter Page Lochard, who wrote the story in consultation with several Torres Strait Cultural and Language Consultants – Sani Townson, Elma Kris (who is also the person who plays Aku Malu), Leonora Adidi, Jenson Warusam-Waigana, Helen Anu and Peggy Misi.

Aba Beru is the other performer in the show.

Jacob Nash designed the set and costumes - and the little turtles made of kitchen utensils.

Steve Francis composed the music and the sound score and engineered the voice of Maari into the soundtrack that we hear. The voice of Maari is performed by Christine Anu. The soundscore also uses music composed by David Page.

Lighting was designed by Matt Cox.

Bangarra's production team is responsible for bringing all the elements of the production together. Most important is the Stage Manager who makes all the calls to the technical crew, through electronic communications, during the show to make sure everything happens at the right time.

In November 2023, Bangarra took the production of Waru back to the place that inspired the story – the Torres Strait - and performed it for the children and their families who live on islands. We call this returning the story to Country, and it's a very important part of Bangarra's own Cultural Creative Lifecycle.

Thank you – we hope you enjoy Waru - journey of the small turtle.