



Scott Rankin is the Creative Director of Big *h*ART. His projects have been included in the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Ten Days on the Island and Edinburgh festivals, and toured Dublin, London, Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland, South Africa, New Zealand and Germany. Scott's work includes *Namatjira* (national tour), *Ngapartji Ngapartji* (national tour), *Nyuntu Ngali* (Windmill and STC) and *Box the Pony* (Leah Purcell). Scott is renowned for creating works in varied genres—such as the award-winning outdoor public housing work *Stickybricks* (Sydney Festival), the floating video installation piece *Junk Theory* (Sydney Festival), the international hit comedy *Certified Male* with Glynn Nicholas, large-scale film and radio installation project *Drive In Holiday*, and experimental works like *Beasty Girl*. Scott has won three Green Room Awards for Best Direction and Most Innovative Production, and a Sydney Theatre Award for Best New Work for *Namatjira*. Big *h*ART receives awards from many different fields for its theatre, film and community cultural development work, including a World Health Organisation Award, an AFI Award, eight Coalition of Australian Heads of Government Awards, a Deadly Award and recently the Myer Performing Arts Group Award.

**Namatjira** &  
written for the Namatjira Family (Aranda)

**Ngapartji Ngapartji**  
written for Trevor Jamieson (Pitjantjatjara)

Two plays by **Scott Rankin**



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## Introduction

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These two seminal works for theatre were written by Scott Rankin, with social innovation company Big *h*ART, through a unique creative process spanning 2005 to 2011. These uniquely Australian stories have graced the stages of the country's major festivals and most prestigious venues, as well as being performed outdoors in dry riverbeds in some of the country's most isolated and remote communities.

Utilising Big *h*ART's unique creative process, they have grown from, and been developed with, the communities where these stories originate. *Namatjira* was created with the extended families descended from the acclaimed artist Albert Namatjira, who come from Western Aranda country, west of Alice Springs. It was through their generosity, along with that of Gayle Quarmby (Rex Battarbee's daughter), that this piece resonates with authenticity and heart. Similarly, *Ngapartji Ngapartji* was created thanks to the gift of the Jamieson family's story—of diaspora in the face of the Cold War British Nuclear testing on their homelands—and the generosity of the Pitjantjatjara community in sharing many aspects of their language, culture and wisdom.

Both these theatre works are bursting with stories that go right to the heart of the intersection between indigenous and non-indigenous experience in this country. Both are interwoven with the depth and breadth of common human experience. They are stories of family, friendship, land, myth, life and death, with all the peaks and troughs that touch us all. They celebrate life, and its complexity, diversity and adversity. They are contextualised within the social, political and historical framework of their times, locally, nationally and internationally. This may be part of the reason for their box office popularity—they resonate universally, yet at the same time capture unique moments in Australian history and experience.

*Namatjira* and *Ngapartji Ngapartji* are part of a long line of critically acclaimed plays written by Scott Rankin, a number of which have been invitations from, or collaborations with, indigenous people and communities. These works include *Box the Pony* for Leah Purcell, and

*Riverland* for Ian W Abdulla and Wesley Enoch. Scott and Trevor Jamieson have maintained a rich, collaborative relationship, working together for over ten years on many productions including *Namatjira*, *Ngapartji Ngapartji*, *Nyuntu Ngali*, *Career Highlights of the Mamu*, *Knot @ Home* and others. Now, with *Namatjira*, Scott is also working with the remarkable Derik Lynch on new works.

Big *hART* has been producing long-term intercultural projects such as *Namatjira* and *Ngapartji Ngapartji* for twenty years. Big *hART* is a not-for-profit, social change, arts company made up of artists, producers, arts workers, community builders, field workers, and researchers. The company strives to create exquisitely finished art at the same time as working with the country's most marginalised communities and individuals, providing opportunities for individual change, community change and social policy change at a national level.

Big *hART* tries to experiment with this process of making art, over a minimum of a three-year period, utilising varied artforms such as theatre, film, television, painting, photography, dance, new media and radio.

Remarkably, over this time, Big *hART* has emerged as Australia's highest producing and most critically acclaimed arts and social change company. From 2004 to 2011 Big *hART* presented twenty works, to high acclaim, in festivals in Australia and overseas. Since its inception in 1992, Big *hART*'s programs have assisted over seven thousand people experiencing severe disadvantage in forty-two communities across Australia, assisting many of them to make sustained changes in their lives.

It is against this backdrop that these two projects emerged, these two plays were created, and these two scripts are being published. *Ngapartji Ngapartji* is the product of work with Pitjantjatjara communities, and *Namatjira* with Western Aranda communities.

## Ngapartji Ngapartji

The *Ngapartji Ngapartji* project headquarters were based on Arrernte country in Mparntwe (Alice Springs, Central Australia) between 2004 and 2009. The *Ngapartji Ngapartji* theatre production was one part of a much broader project which included [ninti.ngapartji.org](http://ninti.ngapartji.org), an online Pitjantjatjara language site; a long-term arts language-based

community development program throughout the Central Desert; an ABC documentary, ‘Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji’; a language policy campaign; and the acclaimed theatre production.

‘*Ngapartji ngapartji*’ translates roughly as ‘I give you something, you give me something’, a concept of reciprocity which governs relationships in Pitjantjatjara society and culture. This concept of reciprocity underpinned the entire project—reflected in the working practice on the ground, where skills in language and arts practice were equally valued and shared across cultures and generations; and in turn, the website and theatre shows offer an opportunity to participate in a rare and intimate experience of language and culture.

At a policy level, the project sought to highlight the dire status of indigenous languages and help generate a national and international groundswell of support for the maintenance and preservation of these languages. Behind these over-arching goals is the fact that Australia has witnessed the largest and most rapid loss of languages of anywhere in the world, over the last century. According to the 2005 National Indigenous Languages Survey, the situation of Australia’s indigenous languages is ‘very grave and requires urgent action’, and Australia has been identified as the place with the most rapid and widespread loss of indigenous languages anywhere in the world over the last one hundred years:

Of an original number of over 250 known Australian indigenous languages, only about 145 indigenous languages are still spoken and the vast majority of these, about 110, are in the severely and critically endangered categories.

In response to this the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* project, together with a group of indigenous language professionals devoted to helping languages to thrive, was successful in facilitating the Federal Government to announce a National Indigenous Languages Policy in 2009. There is still a way to go, but this is one of the many legacies of this project in co-operation with others.

The work of the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* project over six years in Alice Springs and the Central Desert also paved the way for the *Namatjira* project to be conceived and developed.

## Namatjira

At its inception, the *Namatjira* project was a small idea to tell a big story. Elton Wirri, a kinship grandson to Albert Namatjira, had been touring the country with the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* production. When introducing Elton to audiences at the conclusion of the performances, it became clear that they wanted to know more about Albert Namatjira, and so, gradually this project developed, working with the families and communities descended from the renowned painter.

My name is Lenie Namatjira, I'm the granddaughter of Albert Namatjira... and I would like to say something about my grandfather. I'm happy that you mob can tell this story... people from all over the nation can see, what we're doing, this lovely painting.

Lenie Namatjira  
Granddaughter of Albert Namatjira

*Namatjira* is also a multilayered project. It is a creative community development process; a touring new Australian theatre work; a touring contemporary watercolour exhibition; a strategy to assist the Namatjira family to be able to take trips to paint 'on country' in important places; teaching watercolour painting to younger generations; a film and documentary process; working with, and recording the Choir in Hermannsburg; and a contribution to social policy discussion around the vital role of Indigenous Art Centres and remote indigenous communities.

At the core of the project is a partnership with Ngurratjuta 'Many Hands' Art Centre in Alice Springs. Ngurratjuta supports contemporary Central Desert watercolour artists, many of whom are grandchildren and descendants of Albert Namatjira and artists from the original 'Hermannsburg School'. The national *Namatjira* tours and accompanying exhibitions of vibrant watercolours aim to leverage greater income and exposure for the contemporary school of Central Desert watercolour painters.

Growing from this partnership with Ngurratjuta, the *Namatjira* project has made it a focus to support Indigenous Art Centres more broadly. Art Centres are owned and governed by Aboriginal people, and are a vital part of community life. Often the only source of externally generated



income in remote communities, they are hubs for innovation, creativity, cultural expression, non-welfare-based income, local leadership, health and wellbeing.

As part of the ongoing *Namatjira* project, Big hART continues to engage Federal Ministers and policymakers in discussions to highlight the unique opportunity Indigenous Art Centres present to help build sustainable communities.

It is with true thanks that we acknowledge how much these two projects and the stories contained within them continue to teach us, about creativity and resilience.

*Sophia Marinos, Alex Kelly and Scott Rankin*

Sophia Marinos is the Creative Producer for the *Namatjira* project. Alex Kelly is the Creative Producer for the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* project.

For more detail on the *Namatjira* and *Ngapartji Ngapartji* projects, visit these websites:

[www.namatjira.bighart.org](http://www.namatjira.bighart.org).

[www.ngapartji.org](http://www.ngapartji.org)

[www.bighart.org](http://www.bighart.org)

# Namatjira

written for the Namatjira Family (Aranda)

*Namatjira* was first co-produced by Big *h*ART and Belvoir at Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney, on 25 September 2010, with the following cast:

PERFORMER	Trevor Jamieson (Pitjantjatjara man)
PERFORMER	Derik Lynch (Yankunytjatjara man)
MUSICIAN	Genevieve Lacey
PORTRAIT ARTIST	Robert Hannaford
SECOND MUSICIAN	Nicole Forsyth
SECOND PORTRAIT ARTIST	Evert Ploeg

Grandchildren and descendents of Albert Namatjira performing as artists on rotation throughout the Belvoir season:

Kevin Namatjira  
Elton Wirri  
Gloria Pannka  
Ivy Pareroultja  
Hilary Wirri  
Lenie Namatjira  
Betty Wheeler  
Mostyn Kentaltja

Co-directors, Scott Rankin and Wayne Blair  
Set Designer, Genevieve Dugard  
Costume Designer, Tess Schofield  
Composer and Music Director, Genevieve Lacey  
Sound Designer, Jim Atkins  
Lighting Designer, Nigel Levings  
Creative Producer, Sophia Marinos  
Assistant Lighting Designer, Christopher Page  
Stage Manager, Luke McGettigan  
Assistant Stage Manager, Jessica Smithett  
Sound Operator, Nick Shipway  
Associate Producers, Cecily Hardy and Clare Atkins  
Community Producers, Shannon Huber, Sia Cox  
Social Policy, Pru Gell

Cultural and Family Consultants: Lenie Namatjira, Kevin Namatjira, Betty Wheeler, Mostyn Kentaltja, Gloria Pannka, Ivy Pareroutja, Kevin Wirri, Joseph Rontji, Rahel Engwaneke, Judith Ingkamala, Gayle Quarmby.

Big *hART*'s *Namatjira* project is a long-term, multi-layered arts and community development project, with a touring performance piece and a grass roots project working with Aranda people in Alice Springs and Hermannsburg. For more about the project and about Big *hART* visit [www.namatjira.bighart.org](http://www.namatjira.bighart.org)

## MAIN CHARACTERS

JONATHAN NAMATJIRA (Western Aranda name: NAMATJIRITJA),  
Albert's father

EMELIE (Luritja name: LJUKUTA), Albert's mother

ALBERT NAMATJIRA (Western Aranda name: ELEA)

REGINALD 'REX' BATTARBEE (later named UNTJWAARA by Western  
Aranda men), whitefella landscape artist

WILMOT, old blackfella living in the Warrnambool forest

PASTOR, at Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission, speaks a blend of  
German and English

RUBINA (Western Aranda name: ILKALITA), Albert's wife

## **OTHER CHARACTERS**

ARMY SERGEANT, Fifty-Eighth Battalion  
ARMY MEDIC, at Bullecourt, France  
BAKERY EMPLOYEE, in the inner city  
MISSION MEN, at Hermannsburg  
AUSSIE BLOKE 1 & 2, tourists  
KID, at mission  
MELBOURNE SOCIETY WOMAN  
CHARLES MCCUBBIN, prominent artist  
LADY HUNTINGFIELD, wife of the Governor of Victoria  
MR T.H. GILL, a pompous gallery owner  
CUZ 1, 2, 3 & 4, mission humbuggers  
WHITEFELLA 1 & 2, in Alice Springs  
OLD ARANDA MAN, elder  
GOVERNMENT MEMBER, in Parliament  
OPPOSITION MEMBER, in Parliament  
GOVERNMENT MAN, bureaucrat  
MAURICE, one of Albert and Rubina's sons  
MAISIE, one of Albert and Rubina's daughters  
SYDNEY SOCIALITE  
QUEEN ELIZABETH II, Queen of England  
NEWSPAPER REPORTERS  
MAGISTRATE, Mr Dodds, a Senior Magistrate

## SETTING

The action of the play takes place in various Australian locations during the lifetime of Albert Namatjira (1902–1959).

The stage features several large sculptural shapes, made of wood, creating a variety of landscapes and locations.

To one side is a portrait artist with easel, and a chair in which his model sits from time to time.

Two other artists (from the Namatjira family) are drawing a large black-and-white landscape in chalk across the back of the stage.

## HYMNS

The following hymns appear in the text.

‘Fierce Raged the Tempest’ (p.9)

Words: Godfrey Thring; Music: John Dykes (1862). Arranged by Genevieve Lacey. Translated into Western Aranda by TGHS (1964).

‘Follow On’ (pp.16 & 23)

Composed by Rev. W.O. Cushing (1878). Arranged by Genevieve Lacey. Translated into Western Aranda by David Roennfeldt.

‘Kumbaya’ (p.19)

Traditional. Arranged by Genevieve Lacey.

‘*Stille Nacht!*’ (‘Silent Night’) (p.28)

Composed by Franz Xaver Gruber (c.1818). Arranged by Genevieve Lacey. Translated into German by Carla Verwer.

‘Abide With Me’ (p.45)

Composed by William Henry Monk (1861). Arranged by Genevieve Lacey.