Making Tracks
By Sara Fonck
NT | 27.10.2005

An insight into the amazing work of Tracks Dance Theatre.

Based in Darwin, Tracks Dance Theatre Performance specialises in outdoor events - innovative, humongous, multicultural dance spectacles that everyone can enjoy. Their works can be few and far between, only a handful a year, but that's because creating a Tracks performance is an in-depth task. Tracks is using Community Cultural Development practices in their work, and the result is thanks to an extensive collaboration between artists, organisations, and communities.

One of the really special things about Tracks is the variety of people with which they work. Their performances include people of all ages, and all backgrounds. Jerrin Rechter, the Artistic Director with Stompin' Youth Dance Company vows "There is no-one else in this country with the ability to work with both Indigenous and wider community issues at the same time and at the highest level". From looking at their history, you know she's right. Tracks have spent the best part of twenty years developing relationships with Indigenous people living in remote areas. They have put a great deal of time into developing relationships with these Aboriginal communities, eventually building them into large-scale dance works. As another impressive note, Tracks is the only non-Indigenous dance company that uses these relationships as a major foundation of the company's work.

Although there are many communities in the Northern Territory, Tracks has spent most of their time working with the community of Lajamanu - an area that lies on the highest point of the Tanami Desert, located 950km south west of Darwin. Together, they have created performances that integrate Warlpiri culture into a mainstream theatre environment.

The first work to come out of this collaboration was Desert Boy, a play written by Warlpiri Aboriginal language students in 1987. Produced by NT company Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre, it toured throughout remote communities with the title of Living in Isolation. A representative from Tracks tells me that "The highlight of the tour was at Lajamanu where the company narrated versions of A Tour With a Difference and Walls Hill, and performed the bilingual play, Manangkarawardingki Malu. The people at Lajamanu appreciated the efforts of the cast to learn some Warlpiri language. Elders invited the cast to stay an extra day so the Lajamanu Wawalyu women could share traditional dances with them".

It's an amazing and inspiring thing to hear about communities working so closely together, to create something that everyone can enjoy. And whilst that was a long time ago, Tracks continues to work closely with these communities, constantly inspiring and influencing others around them.

The next scheduled performance is for 12 November 2005. It is entitled Milpirri, and it is also a result of the long-lasting collaboration Tracks have held with the Lajamanu community. Milpirri is set to be a large-scale performance performed by Lajamanu youth and elders utilising traditional Warlpiri and western dance forms. It will be held as the feature performance of a full day of celebrations within the Lajamanu community. The name Milpirri means rainstorm cloud, which is something that can only be formed through the coming together of the cool and the warm air. It promises rain, and new growth - of land, and of culture.

The general public are invited to travel to the community to witness this special event. If you would like to attend, or would like some more information, you can contact the Tracks office by emailing info@tracksdance.com.au. If you'd prefer to call, ring (08) 89 244 414.

And if you don't live in the Northern Territory, but would like to see Tracks in action, they have a quicktime movie up for viewing, available at www.tracksdance.com.au/Tracks_1.mov.

ORGANISATION:
Tracks

THE PROGRAM is an initiative of the Australia Council's Community Partnerships & Market Development Division
Home | About | Contact | E-newsletter | Legals