



BELVOIR ST
THEATRE

DEAR SON

8 – 25 JAN

Based on
the book by
Thomas Mayo

Adapted by
Isaac Drandic
and **John
Harvey**

Directed by
Isaac Drandic

DEAR SON

RUN TIME: Approx. 70 min (no interval)

WARNING

Dear Son contains culturally sensitive stories and may contain images of those who have passed. The production contains mild coarse language and the use of theatrical haze.

Produced by

**QUEENSLAND
THEATRE CO.**



STATE THEATRE
COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Co-presented with



**Sydney
Festival**

Principal Partner of
First Nations Theatre



First Nations Creative
Development Supported by

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SARDINES

Dear Son had its world premiere at Queensland Theatre Company, assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body, and supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.



Australian Government



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DEAR SON

CAST

Jimi Bani

Waangenga Blanco

Kirk Page

Aaron Pedersen

Tibian Wyles

CREATIVES

Author

Thomas Mayo

Director/Co-Adaptor

Isaac Drandic

Co-Adaptor

John Harvey

Set Designer

Kevin O'Brien

Costume Designer

Delvene Cockatoo-

Collins Lighting

Designer

David Walters Video

Designer **Craig**

Wilkinson Composer

& Sound Designer

Wil Hughes

Choreographer &

Movement Director

Waangenga Blanco

Associate Lighting

Designer

Eben Love

Associate Composer &

Sound Designer

Patrick Mau

Assistant Director

Tibian Wyles

Assistant Construction &

Set Designer

Liam Maza

AV Realiser

Susie Henderson

Vocal Coach

Marcus Oborn

Stage Manager

Sam Illingworth

Assistant Stage Manager

Thomas Hamilton

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories. We also pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Cover photography by

Brett Boardman

Rehearsal photography by

Morgan Roberts



Isaac Drandic

DIRECTOR/CO-ADAPTOR'S NOTE

ISAAC DRANDIC

Writing Between Generations – Bloodlines on Stage

In many First Nations cultures, knowledge is passed not just through speech, but through story, silence, and gesture. But sometimes, when the words are too heavy to say out loud, we turn to paper. To write is not only to remember — it is to resist, to reclaim, and to reach across generations.

This story holds a letter that is not yet spoken. A letter from a son to his father. From a father to his son. A radical act of love written in a time of struggle. A letter that does not seek to fix what's broken but to understand where the break began.

To write in this way — from a Black man to his old man, and to his boy — is to thread truth through bloodlines. It is to say: *I see you. I come from you. I fight for you.*

This is not just a letter. It is a song without music. A protest without shouting. A story that moves between ring and fire, between pride and pain.

But this production is more than a play — it is a gathering of story, spirit, and memory. At its heart is a conversation between a father and a son. But that conversation does not live only on the page or the stage. It lives in the hearts and histories of the men telling it.

Each actor in this production is, in their own life, a father, a son, or both. They carry with them not just a script, but real memories of their old men, their boys, their uncles and pops. They walk into this work with the weight of lived experience — the kind of experience that can't be taught in drama school, only lived and felt.

To perform this story — one that cuts so close to the bone — takes courage. Not just artistic courage, but cultural and emotional courage. These men step onto this stage not to pretend, but to reveal. They allow the audience to witness something raw and rarely shared: the complexity of love between Black men. The silence, the shame, the pride, the distance — and the deep, unspoken knowing.

They are not just playing characters. They are standing in a long line of warriors and workers, of

fathers who did their best with what they had, and sons who are trying to do better. This work is an offering. A ceremony. A letter back in time and forward again.

And through their performances, they remind us: the most radical thing we can do is love our fathers, love our sons, and find new ways to speak the truth between us.

In this space, we invite you to listen not only with your ears, but with your spirit. The words may not be your own, but the ache — the longing to be understood, to be seen — that is something we all carry.

With love and respect,

- Isaac



Original cast : Trevor Jamieson,
Waangenga Blanco, & Aaron Pedersen



John Harvey

CO-ADAPTOR'S NOTE

JOHN HARVEY

There's a saying – men don't talk.
Or rather, we don't 'talk talk'.
We talk about footy, cars, politics.
Anything, but what's really going on inside.

And that's okay, until you think that for all our silence,
men take up a lot of space in this world. We lead
companies. We lead communities. We lead countries.
And yet, we remain painfully aware of toxic
masculinity, violence against women, damage in our
communities – even as the statistics refuse to shift.

The door to change has often felt closed or like a wound that won't heal. In these letters of *Dear Son*, thirteen brave Indigenous men invite us into their intimate relationship with their sons and fathers – and asks us to sit with vulnerability, truth and love.

The process of creating this work brought together Indigenous men - actors, director, writers into a room, drawn together by the book *Dear Son*. But as we began to speak about the letters, something shifted and we began to speak about our own personal lives. Stories we hadn't shared before. Not because we didn't trust each other – we've known each other for years – but because so often, as men, we carry things in silence. The book gave us permission to speak what had long been unspoken.

We felt the power of *Dear Son* immediately. It opened something in us – a space to share emotion, vulnerability and challenge. And that's the spirit that shapes this stage adaptation.

Our outer worlds, reflect our inner worlds. The world that we are trying to create – safe, kind, connected – begins when we unlock the world within. As Bob Marley's words remind us, echoing in the Cook Haus gatherings and backyard BBQs across our communities: “*emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind.*” There is no end point, no destination, simply a journey.

And we are sons of mothers, who knew our fathers, and brought us into this world, who gave us life, and loved us. Whose soft touch endured even when the world was against them, who put others before themselves. We are fathers of sons, and daughters who look to us to understand what a good man looks like. We have wives, partners and loved ones whose strength and love keeps the home fires burning, so that we can carry this story. We are thankful for all that you are, and all that you do.

We thank the actors, creatives and everyone from the villages of Queensland Theatre Company and State Theatre Company South Australia who came together to tell this story. And the financial partners who stand with us to tell this story, we thank you.

As co-writers, we're fathers, who lived across the road from each other - on the same street, with babies born on the same day. And there we were, wheelie bins in one hand, babies in the other, never imagining how much those little ones and our older ones - would shape us in ways we couldn't yet understand.

- John



Original cast : Waangenga Blanco,
Aaron Pedersen, Kirk Page, Jimi Bani



Jimi Bani



Waangenga Blanco



Original cast : Aaron Pedersen,
Waangenga Blanco & Kirk Page



Kirk Page



Original cast : Jimi Bani,
Aaron Pedersen & Kirk Page



Jimi Bani





original cast : Waangenga Blanco & Aaron Pedersen



Jimi Bani & Waangenga Blanco



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

2026 SEASON



DEAR SON

Letters of love by First Nations fathers and sons

8 – 25 Jan

AMPLIFIED

Sheridan Harbridge as Chrissy Amplett

29 Jan – 8 Feb

A MIRROR

A smart new play from London about art and power

21 Feb – 15 Mar

DRIVE YOUR PLOW OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD

Pamela Rabe and Eamon Flack take on the Nobel Prize-winner's
whodunnit **28 Mar – 3 May**

THE BIRDS

Paula Arundell goes wild in a new take on Daphne du Maurier's classic

16 May – 17 Jun

THE JUNGLE AND THE SEA

S. Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack's acclaimed play returns

11 Jul – 2 Aug

RUNT

Neil Armfield directs Craig Silvey's great Australian underdog story

22 Aug – 20 Sep

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

E. M. Forster's classic tale of living boldly, together

3 Oct – 1 Nov

THE COCONUT CHILDREN

Vivian Pham's breakout novel comes to the stage

21 Nov – 20 DEC

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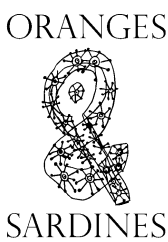
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Thank you to The Balnaves Foundation who are the Principal Partner of First Nations Theatre at Belvoir St Theatre, supporting Belvoir through multiple programs including The Balnaves Foundation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fellowship.

The Balnaves Foundation have been supporting Belvoir St Theatre to deliver this program for over a decade, and we thank the Balnaves Foundation for supporting this program and for championing First Nations-led theatre-making here at Belvoir St Theatre.



The Belvoir First Nations Creative Development Fund (CDF) supports artists and productions that require the kind of time and space that sits outside our usual operating budget. By supporting First Nations Creative Development, the Oranges & Sardines Foundation contributes directly to new work, innovation and risk-taking. We thank the Oranges & Sardines Foundation for investing in this incredible program

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