



JANE HARRISON is descended from the Muruwari people of NSW. Her first play, *Stolen*, had productions across Australia and toured internationally. She was co-winner of the 2012 RAKA Kate Challis Award for *Stolen*. *Rainbow's End* has had numerous productions since its premiere in 2003 and won the 2012 Drovers Award for best touring production. Both *Stolen* and *Rainbow's End* have been placed on secondary school curricula. *The Visitors* premiered at Sydney Festival in 2020. Her novel *Becoming Kirrali Lewis* won the 2014 Black & Write! Prize, and was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Jane believes that stories have the power to reframe our national identity.



*Kerri Simpson (left) as Lawrence and John Blair as Jacob in the Sydney Festival/Moogahlin Performing Arts/Carriageworks production in 2020. (Photo: Jamie James)*

**THE VISITORS**  
Jane Harrison



**CURRENCY PRESS**  
The performing arts publisher

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*Kerri Simpson (left) as Lawrence and Leroy Parsons as Walter in the Sydney Festival/Moogahlin Performing Arts/Carriageworks production in 2020. (Photo: Jamie James)*



*From left: Glenn Shea as Joseph, Kerri Simpson as Lawrence, John Blair as Jacob, Damion Hunter as Gordon, Colin Kinchela as Albert, Nathan Leslie as Gary, and Leroy Parsons as Walter in the Sydney Festival/Moogahlin Performing Arts/Carriageworks production in 2020. (Photo: Jamie James)*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first responsibility is back to my community, and while there is no one ‘community’, I have been blessed with support from many First Nations individuals and companies whilst developing this script. I am aware of the sensitivity in me, as a First Nations woman, telling a ‘men’s’ story and mostly I was encouraged by the many First Nations men who were involved, so a huge thankyou to the fellas.

The idea for this play had been percolating for many years before Maryrose Casey invited me to be writer-in-residence at the Monash University Indigenous Studies Centre. There, I put down a complete first draft, with a script reading culminating the residency. My two cultural consultants during the residency were Tony Birch and Robyne Latham. I am most grateful.

Across its many years of development, various organisations provided support in many forms—time, workshopping, feedback, audiences and funding including: Ilbjerri Theatre Company, Monash University, Moogahlin Performing Arts (Yellamundie Festival), Playwriting Australia, Melbourne Theatre Company, Cybec Electric, Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival, the Victorian College of the Arts and the Australia Council for the Arts. A huge thankyou.

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I am indebted to the many superb actors who have contributed to the play’s development: Glenn Shea, Greg Fryer, along with a number of theatre students from Monash University (sorry, I have no record of your names), James Henry, Aaron Pederson, Wayne Blair, Leroy Parsons, Sermsah Bin Saad, Kamahi Djordan King, Glenn Maynard, Troy Russell, Robert Preston, John Blair, Damion Hunter, Jason De Santis, Kirk Page, Robert Preston, Shane Bell and Sonny Dallas Law.

*The Visitors* premiered at the 2020 Sydney Festival. The premiere was supported by Create NSW, Australia Council for the Arts, City of Sydney, the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation, and the Australian Government through the Department of Communications and



the Arts and Catalyst—Australian Arts and Culture Fund. I particularly want to acknowledge the producers, Moogahlin Performing Arts. It was a big leap to stage a play of its size and scope. ‘The Incredibles’—Lily Shearer, Liza-Mare Syron, Fred Copperwaite and Ali Murphy-Oates—made it happen. Thank you Fred Copperwaite, for your steady yet ambitious direction. To the cast: John Blair, Damion Hunter, Colin Kinchela, Nathan Leslie, Leroy Parsons, Glenn Shea, and Kerri Simpson, my gratitude for your powerful and moving performances. Thank you to the set, sound, lighting designers and crew, and all of those working behind the scenes to make the magic happen on the night.

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And for everything you do, and what you mean to me: my daughters Savannah and Nova, and my partner Dominic. Love, love, love.

*Jane Harrison*

*The Visitors* was first produced by Sydney Festival, Moogahlin Performing Arts and Carriageworks, on 22 January 2020, with the following cast:

JACOB	John Blair
GORDON	Damion Hunter
ALBERT	Colin Kinchela
GARY	Nathan Leslie
WALTER	Leroy Parsons
JOSEPH	Glenn Shea
LAWRENCE	Kerri Simpson

Director, Frederick Copperwaite

Set and Costume Design, Lisa Mimmochi

Lighting Design, Chloe Ogilvie

Sound Design, Phil Downing, with additional composition from  
Tim Gray

Producer, Liza-Mare Syron

Assistant Producers, Corrine Shepherd and Sonny Dallas Law

Production Manager, Oliver Anstis

Stage Manager, Farlie Goodwin

Deputy Stage Manager, Meagan Fitzpatrick

Wardrobe Supervisor, Lissette Endacott

Set Construction, Hamish Elliott, Camille Ostrowsky and Matthew  
Hinton

Community Liaison, Tim Gray

*The Visitors* was developed with the assistance of Monash University Faculty of Arts, 2011, the Yellamundie Festival, 2013, and Moogahlin Performing Arts 2019.

The play was workshopped with the assistance of Playwriting Australia and Melbourne Theatre Company in 2013 and at Melbourne Theatre Company in 2016.

It was produced as part of the Cybec Electric playreading series, Melbourne Theatre Company, and Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival in 2014.

Financial support was provided by an Australia Council Grant.



*Damion Hunter (left) as Gordon and Colin Kinchela as Albert in the Sydney Festival/Moogahlin Performing Arts/Carriageworks production in 2020. (Photo: Jamie James)*

## CHARACTERS

GARY, Wallumedegal man, Northern Parramatta River mob. The ‘Bureaucrat/Numbers Man’.

LAWRENCE, young Gweagal man, Botany Bay mob, Fire Clan. Youngest. ‘Almost initiated’.

GORDON, Cadigal man, Sydney Cove–harbour-dwelling Clan. The ‘General’.

ALBERT, Wangal man, South Shore Clan. The ‘Engineer/Mr Logic’.

JACOB, Cameragal man, Manly Cove–North Shore Clan. The ‘Joker’. The ‘Tradie’.

WALTER, Burramattagal man, River mob. Eel Place Clan. The ‘Anthropologist/Philosopher’.

JOSEPH, Kameygal, man Headlands of the Bay, Spear Clan, La Perouse area. The ‘Doctor/Healer’.

## SETTING

On an escarpment overlooking a harbour. Sandstone cliffs and bush.

## CONVENTIONS

Seven Aboriginal Elders. Although it is 1788, they wear fine modern suits and the props are modern. They bring spears and shields with them.

— means an interruption.

▼ ▼ ▼ means a change—of mood, physical action, position relative to one another, soundscape or lighting—as the director sees fit.

*It is January, the weather is stifling, the rare and unusual mammatus clouds spectacular. The sound of cicadas and birds and the sea.*

*A lone man, WALTER, stands on the edge of an escarpment, looking out to sea (the audience). He is lost in thought. Although morning, it is blindingly hot. After a time, GORDON arrives. He is a big man, a warrior, fit.*

GORDON: Red sky at morning.

*It isn't said directly to WALTER but he doesn't acknowledge it anyway.*

*GORDON starts pacing, working out his action plan. He has to physicalise it, as words aren't his thing.*

*After a time, JOSEPH arrives quietly. He is meticulous. He pulls a kerchief from his chest pocket and pats his brow, folding the kerchief neatly back into the pocket.*

Welcome, Grandfather.

JOSEPH: Gordon. Respects to your country.

GORDON: Received. Decent trip?

JOSEPH: Decent. The ants were frenzied.

GORDON: Storm on its way.

*Niceties over, JOSEPH walks over to join WALTER while GORDON resumes pacing. WALTER silently embraces JOSEPH. There's no need for words between them. JOSEPH follows WALTER's line of sight.*

JOSEPH: Did you ever imagine?

*Again, WALTER doesn't respond. After a time they hear crashing through the bush and GORDON stops pacing.*

Jacob.

*JACOB bursts onto the escarpment, swearing under his breath.*

GORDON: I could hear you three waves before you appeared. Remind me to never use you as a scout.

JACOB: Bros. I can be silent when required. Quiet as a bush mouse. But no need for subterfuge just for a meeting. Grandfather ...

JOSEPH: Jacob.

JACOB *and* GORDON *do the blackfella handshake.*

JACOB: How you doing, big fella?

GORDON: Fighting fit, bros. You?

JACOB: Well, it took three sunrises to get here, overland—

GARY *has appeared.*

—due to this fella instructing me that I couldn't travel by water—

GARY: Just a precaution. [*To* GORDON] Respect to your country, Gordon.

GORDON: Welcome, Gary.

GARY: [*to* JACOB] Surprise is our best defence.

JACOB: Whatever. Just a pain going overland. When it would've been a short trip as the fish swim. Sunrise to mid sun by nowee.

GARY *looks out at sea.*

GARY: Speaking of which ... never in my lifetime have I witnessed that.

GORDON: Not for long.

GARY: Not for long.

GORDON *and* GARY *shake hands.* JACOB *and* GARY *shake hands.*

JACOB *turns to* GORDON *while* GARY *is left standing alone.*

GORDON: How's the family?

JACOB: In great health. Expanding. Another little one on the way.

GORDON: Serious? Since last time?

JACOB: Haha. Grandfather reckons it's something in the water. I reckon it's something in my waters, aye. Your family?

GORDON: Solid. Young fellas getting stronger.

JACOB: We'll get to test 'em out today.

GORDON: They'll enjoy that.

GARY *has joined* JOSEPH *and they have exchanged greetings.*

GARY: Grandfather. You're looking well after such a long walk. Younger. Even in this heat.

JOSEPH: A parakeet fell from the sky, stone dead, and landed at my feet.

GARY: Strange times?

JOSEPH: Strange time. Perhaps that's Albert?

*They listen.*

Yes.

ALBERT *enters the escarpment.*

ALBERT: Respect to your country, Gordon. Ah, that view.

JACOB: Everyone loves a water view.

ALBERT: The view has been somewhat spoilt.

GARY: Speaking of which, the purpose of this meeting—

JACOB: We starting the formal stuff already? How about a feed first?

We've all come a long way. 'Cept Gordo.

GORDON: Yeah, tuck in. Rock oysters, Goolwa cockles, pippis, red cockles, sand cockles. Collected this morning. Tuck in, fellas.

▼ ▼ ▼

*They eat. WALTER hasn't joined them.*

JOSEPH: Good tucker.

JACOB: The eel eater isn't joining us?

*He indicates WALTER.*

ALBERT: He's *contemplating.*

*JACOB grabs more food.*

JOSEPH: [*to ALBERT*] Albert, did you ever expect to see them back again? Those shiny ones?

ALBERT: They come. They go.

JACOB: Shiny ones?

JOSEPH: Under their cloaks they are. Shiny and pink. Like the inside of a shell.

*JACOB laughs.*

*They finish eating, tossing their shells in a pile. The midden.*

GARY: Okay then.

JACOB: Let's get on with it.

*They move over to take their places in the circle.*

GARY: Walter, would you mind joining us?

*But WALTER is still lost in thought.*

Walter? Brother?

JACOB: [*under his breath*] Tidda.

WALTER: Pardon me. I was contemplating.



ALBERT: Told ya.

*A few laugh.*

JACOB: [*under his breath*] Spare us.

JOSEPH: Your contemplation, sir?

WALTER: I was wondering ... how we would remember this day.

JACOB: As a day we'll never get back.

ALBERT: For the excellent feed, thank you, Gordon.

JOSEPH: The ridiculous heat.

GARY: Before we start waxing lyrical, let's get through the meeting protocols.

JACOB: Highlight of my summer.

GARY: We speak one at a time, using the message stick. Agreed?

We listen more than we speak.

We stay until we all agree.

The agreement is for the greater good, not favouring any one clan group. Agreed?

ALL: Yes. Yep. Yes.

GARY: No gossip. Agreed?

ALL: Of course. Yes.

GARY: Lastly, have you given instructions that the women are not to approach them, nor the children?<sup>1</sup>

ALL: Yes.

JACOB: Hang on. How are the girls going to fish if they're not allowed on the water? That's what they do.<sup>2</sup>

ALBERT: It's just until they leave.

GARY: None of us should approach them until we send word?

ALL: Okay. Yes. Fine.

GARY: Jiliwa that way.

Keep your coolamons full.

It's hot and we need you hydrated.

All agree?

ALBERT: Sure.

GORDON: The plan is—

*GARY holds up his hand.*

GARY: *After* the Welcome, Gordon ... Protocols.

GORDON: Sure.