

Brodie Murray, a proud Wamba Wamba and Ngarrindjeri man, is a playwright and performer committed to sharing the survival stories of Victorian Aboriginal communities. His plays, including *Soul of Possum*, *The Whisper* and *Billy's Choice*, have garnered accolades including the 2021 Melbourne Fringe Best Emerging Indigenous Artist Award.

Tom Molyneux, a Gunditjmara man, is a versatile creative professional based on Wadawurrung Country in Djilang (Geelong). He is recognised for his riveting performances in works such as *The Mission*, which he wrote and toured nationally and which earned him the 2023 Green Room Award for Best Performer (Independent Theatre).

Tracey Rigney, a Wotjobaluk and Ngarrindjeri woman, is an acclaimed storyteller and filmmaker whose work spans theatre and film, with notable credits including the play *Belonging* and the documentary 'Endangered'.

Together, these artists contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of First Nations history, culture and contemporary issues through their compelling and diverse artistic practices.

WAS AND WILL BE

A FIRST NATIONS ANTHOLOGY BY
**TRACEY RIGNEY
BRODIE MURRAY
& TOM MOLYNEUX**



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About the Project

This anthology was conceived and developed by Nick Waxman (pictured above) who provided additional creative resources and education notes for the work. Nick is a writer, educator and performer from Naarm. Nick would like to thank these artists for their generous contributions to this work.

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Utilising This Anthology

Purpose and Access

This anthology, crafted with contributions from three First Nations artists—Tracey Rigney, Brodie Murray and Tom Molyneux—serves as a repository of open scripts, offering versatile narratives that span monologues, dialogues, choruses and dynamic movement sequences. This collection is specifically designed to be accessible and enriching for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors, creatives, educators, students and theatre enthusiasts.

Versatility and Adaptability

The scripts are inherently flexible, allowing for varied interpretations and adaptations to suit different group sizes and settings—from a duo to a classroom of thirty or a cast of 100. Whether in educational environments, theatrical productions, or informal readings, you are encouraged to delve into the scripts, exploring the profound themes and stories embedded within them. Scenes can be presented in any order unless specified.

Engagement and Exploration

Readers are urged to engage with the material actively by reading the scripts, exploring accompanying resources and conducting further research to deepen their understanding of the themes. This approach not only enriches your experience but also enhances your appreciation and respect for First Nations narratives.

Creative Freedom

The anthology champions creative freedom, encouraging users to interpret and present the works in ways that resonate most profoundly with their personal or collective experiences. This flexibility supports a wide range of expressive possibilities, from traditional performances to more innovative, experimental forms of theatre.

Cultural Reflection and Education

Above all, this anthology aims to foster a reflective and educational space where individuals can connect with, reflect upon and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Victorian First Nations peoples. It is a tool for cultural engagement and learning, promoting a broader understanding and appreciation of Indigenous stories and traditions.

Original production

Was And Will Be was first produced at Frankston Arts Centre and Haileybury on 21 August 2024, directed by Nicole Smith, Candice Anderson, Emma Maggio and Nick Waxman.

Foreword

Stories make us human and First Nations people have used stories to impart culture, language and knowledge for millennia. Stories are to be shared and they help us engender empathy and understanding. When we delve into stories our shared humanity comes to the fore. As First Nations people we are unique but as humans we can share emotions, beliefs and values. These talented and generous storytellers have created scenes that allow you to walk in our shoes for a moment in time and to embody these narratives. This is a rare and special opportunity and a gift that will inform you for a lifetime. Use this material with respect but also give yourselves permission to explore, experiment and connect.

*Jane Harrison, playwright
Muruwari*

The Scripts



Tracey Rigney

Wotjobaluk and Ngarrindjeri

Embark on a journey into the poignant and powerful scripts of Tracey Rigney, a distinguished Wotjobaluk and Ngarrindjeri woman from Victoria, acclaimed for her diverse contributions to film, television and theatre. Tracey's work, deeply anchored in her Indigenous heritage, vividly captures the essence of human experiences, cultural identity and personal transformations through evocative narratives and vibrant characters.

Tracey would like to acknowledge that the following scripts were written on Wotjobaluk Country.

CMT (Culturally Modified Tree)

Some of us have these markings on us.
These special scars.
We were the chosen ones
From those who lived before
From those who spoke different languages
From those who sang different songs
And danced, kicking up the dirt with their bare feet
Those who honoured the Country
The animals
The water
The sky
Those who always took what was necessary
And made sure there was enough
Those who used fire to manage the landscape
And made sure the water ran clear
Some of us who still stand today
See a new generation of these old people
We thought they wouldn't make it
Wouldn't survive
But they did
Some of us who still stand today
Are losing our markings
Are losing our ability
To remain in this landscape
But we know
These new generations of people
Are choosing others like me to mark
These special scars.

My Reincarnation

Here I am.

In the middle of the cold desert again.

Where my mind plays tricks on me and I think that I see you my love

But just like a mirage you're not really there

So I stand alone in this barren landscape,

Freezing cold and wishing to find a real place to belong

So I take a couple of steps and realise that I've come to be on the edge
of a cliff, looking out over a turbulent sea

I think I see you again my love.

You're microscopic in size, and at the base of the cliff bobbing up and
down like floating debris

Waving your arms about, looking up at me.

I wish for you to be rescued by a passing whale,

So you can ride it out to the horizon and beyond

So you can ride it to be with your Ancestors, at the edge of the dark
cloud, where only the light shines

But then you fade beneath the water

With a smile on your face

I've never seen you smile like that before?

And then the waves vanish and the ocean settles

And I find myself alone again

In the cemetery standing before your unmarked grave

Crying my eyes out

And then I wake up.

Life-long Friend

Grief visited me when I was four
They told me they were a new friend.
We played hide and seek in the house.
A house in inner Melbourne suburbia
I hid so well that grief couldn't find me for a long time
They finally found me hiding in my old bassinet in the back room
I love hiding in there when I play with my brothers.
We then went outside and I climbed the apricot tree
Grief followed me up and we sat there looking around the backyard
I like being up in high places.
I showed the shed where I climbed one time following my brothers
I got stuck there and my dad climbed up to get me down
I remember he had hairy arms.
And a Bugs Bunny tattoo.
An apricot fell to the ground.
We watched it fall.
I told grief that I don't eat apricots
I then pointed to a corner of the backyard where my brothers tried to
make a swimming pool
I don't know where my mum is right now, I said to grief.
Grief asked me where my dad was.
I said he's in the kitchen making me toast.
Grief thanked me for playing.
Grief climbed down and picked up the fallen apricot
They opened up the apricot and removed a seed.
Grief handed it to me and said they will return again when the seed
grows.
I put the seed inside my heart.
I now carry an orchard in there.

Teachers' Notes

Tracey Rigney

CMT (Culturally Modified Tree)

This scene metaphorically explores the concept of cultural continuity and change through the lens of a tree that bears special scars—markings made by the First Nations peoples of Australia. These markings symbolise a deep connection to land, culture and ancestry. The chosen ones refer to trees selected for marking, symbolising individuals who carry forward the traditions and wisdom of their Ancestors. This scene reflects on the importance of maintaining cultural practices in the face of modern challenges and the loss of traditional knowledge.

Tips for Interpretation

Chorus Students form a living forest, with each representing a tree. They sway gently as they recite lines, symbolising the enduring presence of these marked trees through generations.

Monologue A single student, as the voice of a culturally modified tree, reflects on the history and significance of its scars, connecting the past with the present and future.

Movement Piece Students use dance and movement to represent the process of marking and the growth of trees, showing the cycle of life, tradition and memory.

My Reincarnation

In *My Reincarnation*, the speaker(s) navigates a surreal, dream-like landscape that intertwines elements of longing, loss and the cyclical nature of life and death. This scene suggests a deep yearning for connection with a lost love, manifesting through vivid, sometimes haunting, imagery. The progression from a cold desert to a cliff overlooking a turbulent sea and finally to a cemetery, represents the emotional journey of grief and the search for meaning after loss.

Tips for Interpretation

Chorus or Small Group A small group or chorus can act as the embodiment of the emotional landscape, narrating or commenting on the journey. They can use a combination of spoken word, vocal sounds and rhythmic movement to reflect the changing environments from the desert, to the cliff, to the sea and finally to the cemetery. This group could also represent the elements—wind, water, earth—interacting with the main speaker(s), creating a more immersive experience that conveys the speaker’s internal and external journeys.

Monologue A student delivers a powerful monologue, embodying the speaker’s journey through loss and longing, using tone and pace to convey the emotional landscape.

Duologue Two students represent the speaker and the imagined presence of the lost love, engaging in a dialogue that captures the essence of longing and the mirage of presence.

Creative Movement Through interpretive dance, students can portray the transition from the desert to the cliff and then to the cemetery, using their bodies to represent the shifting emotional states.

Life-long Friend

This scene portrays a poignant and imaginative exploration of grief as a life-long companion, beginning from a young age. Through a child's interaction with grief, personified as a new friend, the scene gently introduces the concept of loss and coping. The use of familiar, everyday settings and activities helps to demystify grief, presenting it as a natural part of life's experiences.

Tips for Interpretation

Duologue A student plays the child and another embodies grief, performing a dialogue that explores their evolving relationship through playful and reflective moments.

Choral Speaking A group of students could voice the child's internal monologue, with different voices representing different aspects of the child's emotions and experiences with grief.

Physical Theatre Through symbolic actions, such as hiding, climbing and observing, students can physically interpret the child's journey with grief, highlighting the emotional and physical spaces grief occupies.

Prop Use Use an apricot or a symbolic object to represent grief's presence and its impact on the child, with students interacting with the prop in various ways to signify key moments of the narrative.