

Lake creates the big dance

TANYA MACNAUGHTON

Melbourne choreographer Stephanie Lake reacted with a little bit of petulance and a whole lot of ambition when advised to keep things "small and tourable" due to funding cuts in the arts sector. She wanted to do the opposite and created *Colossus*, a contemporary dance work for 50 dancers, which has enjoyed seasons in Melbourne and Sydney before this month's Perth Festival.

"I've always loved working with big ensembles (Sydney Dance Company, Queensland Ballet) but I thought 'Why not go for something even crazier?' in a moment of madness," Lake says.

"I called it *Colossus* because it needed to have a monumental

feel about it; I knew I wanted to work with this mass of dancers.

"It's been an unexpected joy that it's gone so well," she adds.

"There's been an amazing response to the work and it's getting to live on in all these new dancers."

In need of 50 dancers, Lake's obvious choice was to collaborate with WAAPA while Strut Dance also funded three young dancers for the project.

"It's been great to have that support from WA and it's a complete Perth cast, which is phenomenal," Lake explains.

"They learnt the whole show in one week of rehearsals last year. It blew me away and I got quite emotional to see what they achieved. You can imagine that 50 people in a dance studio is hectic, intense and loud.

"It's complex choreography,



Colossus features 50 dancers.

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they're moving really fast, it's intricate and there's times where they're rushing across the stage. They're all on stage for the whole time, so it's a feat of spatial awareness and sensitivity to each other."

Lake returned to Perth to finesse the 60-minute work before it opens on Wednesday at Studio Underground, where she

wants it to have a physical effect on audiences.

"I want it to be an experience that hits them in the guts," she says.

"There is stuff about human nature in there and then there's also just the real beauty of the collective and what can be achieved through unity.

"A lot of it is abstract, so I'm

not trying to be didactic or hit you over the head with any kind of statement. It is about patterns and amazing rhythms and all the things that can be achieved with a group that size."

Colossus is at Studio Underground from Wednesday to February 23.

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Gina Williams leads landmark concert Koorlangka alongside Guy Ghouse.

A gift from deep within

CONCERT
Koorlangka
Government House Ballroom
REVIEW DAVID CUSWORTH



Cheers and whoops of a corroboree greeted Noongar duo Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse to the Government House stage for a landmark concert on Thursday night.

Yet this celebration of Aboriginal culture was not all joy.

On the 12th anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations, Williams told a personal story of a Little Orphan Girl, a story "not unique to my family".

A gentle ballad over slow, plucked guitar darkened as the drama built to full 12-string resonance.

It was the first song of the set sung solely in Noongar; a pin-drop moment, yet Williams soon pierced the gloom.

"I feel like Cinderella at the ball," she said, later adding: "We're here with language in a place we were once forbidden to set foot in."

Song cycle Koorlangka (Children) is a warm-hearted gesture of reconciliation, combining western styles — jazz, country, folk, plus piano and strings from

Russell Holmes and the Dolce Ensemble — with Williams' booming voice and Ghouse's lyrical guitar and ukulele.

The colonial-era ballroom turned from fortress to community forum, the entrance of 50 Aboriginal students of the Girls Academy flicking the switch on age and ethnicity. Inclusion is a theme of Perth Festival but also of Music on the Terrace, a Government House Foundation series curated by mezzo soprano Fiona Campbell, who in the year's first program has changed the dynamic of the venue.

Dreaming is a leitmotif of Koorlangka, both for comfort and inspiration; Williams drawing on personal and tribal lore for a series of ballads, dance tunes and torch songs that bridge traditions, in a conscious bid to revive Noongar language.

Her voice and persona embody the spirit of reconciliation, with Ghouse a supportive counterpoint to the narrative drama, couched in Holmes' piano and string arrangements.

Yet the concert and freshly minted album will sink or swim on Williams' entreaty in the encore: "Boorda" (Speak soon?).



Artist's impression of Merry Gate. Pictures: Sculpture by the Sea

Uchida attracted back to Cottesloe

Award-winning Japanese artist Haruyuki Uchida will be the 2020 Tourism WA Invited International Artist for Sculpture by the Sea on Cottesloe Beach.

A renowned kinetic sculptor, he uses magnets in his works to create gravity-defying illusions that often feature bright Japanese red or Shu-iro.

For Sculpture by the Sea, Uchida is creating a 7.5m-long work made from stainless steel and magnets, called Merry Gate.

"I encourage the audience to look through the sculpture to see a happier, different place," he said. "This sculpture exists with the hope that audiences may step into a luckier place than usual."

Uchida is a regular participant in the hugely popular event.

"I've had the pleasure of exhibiting my work on the iconic white sands of Cottesloe Beach before," he said.

Sculpture by the Sea founding director David Handley said the combination of art and science in Uchida's sculptures was "unique and mesmerising". Perth's largest free public event runs from March 6-23.



Haruyuki Uchida



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