



SEPTEMBER 2005 – Media Release

## PETROGLYPHS – SIGNS of LIFE

### Capturing Australia's Indigenous Culture through Movement, Music and Art

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SEPTEMBER sees Adelaide's National Aboriginal Cultural Institute – **Tandanya** - come alive like never before, as the venue hosts the landmark production *Petroglyphs – Signs of Life* – an alluring work melding Aboriginal culture with contemporary Australian dance, music and visual art.

A collaboration between South Australia's acclaimed **Leigh Warren & Dancers**, Indigenous choreographer and aspiring film maker **Gina Rings** (formerly of Bangarra Dance Theatre) and **Tandanya**, *Petroglyphs – Signs of Life* will be performed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous dancers, together with singers from the central desert, and articulates the continuing relevance of Aboriginal culture through the ages.

Best described as a dance work in promenade, the production literally moves its way through the venue as it explores the ideas presented in artworks specially commissioned to embrace the language of signs and symbols.

Petroglyphs are the oldest known form of visual communication. Ancient symbols engraved on stone surfaces, they have a rich history within Aboriginal culture. It was while studying Anthropology that Gina Rings discovered the significance of petroglyphs within Australia's Indigenous history.

"I found it fascinating to look back at these ancient symbols and see how so many of the signs have travelled through time – literally over tens of thousands of years – and still they have meaning within Australian society," says Rings.

*Petroglyphs – Signs of Life* is set amid a spectacular exhibition of specially commissioned artworks from artists Ian Willding, Yhonnie Scarce, Joel Birnie, Mark Blackman, David Pearce, Troy Anthony Baylis & Peter Sharrock. The exhibition itself commences on August 13.

"In many ways, Tandanya became an easel upon which Gina and I created this production," said Warren. "We've drawn inspiration from the artworks on the walls of the gallery and the unusual nature of the space itself – turning a series of two dimensional creations into a three dimensional, living form. The result is a moving feast of visual and performance art."

Another dynamic element of the production is the allowance made for a degree of spontaneity among the dancers.

"Some of the dancers will be creating their own petroglyphs out of ochre, during the actual performance," says Warren. "So, part of the unique experience of attending any one of the performances, will be in seeing how the dancers themselves interpret these amazing artworks – based on their own individual cultural backgrounds."

Adelaide's **India Flint** has designed a number of unique costumes for the production. Known for developing the highly distinctive eco-print – an ecologically sustainable plant-based printing

process giving brilliant colour to cloth without chemical adjuncts – Flint's costumes are pieces of art in themselves.

"Just like the choreography, the design of each costume has been inspired by the artworks and the ideas they represent," says Warren. "Between everyone involved – India, the artists, the singers and the dancers - we've created a sensitive production which not only looks back to the rich history of Australia's Indigenous culture – but also focuses on celebrating its future. It's something we can all genuinely feel proud of."

### ***Background on Gina Rings***

*A certified student of the Centre for Performing Arts and NAISDA, who completed a traineeship with the Bangarra Dance Theatre, Gina went on to dance with Bangarra Dance Theatre – touring nationally and internationally with the company. In 2003, she choreographed and directed Inma Wiru - involving 25 Arnagu traditional Inma dancers. The production was performed at the Australian Performing Arts Market and at Tandanya. Gina assisted in the creative development of Unaipon, performed by Bangarra Dance Theatre at the 2004 Adelaide Festival, and has collaborated with Leigh Warren previously to produce performances for Encounter 2000 and Reconciliation Week. Gina has also worked as a tutor and project manager for the Ausdance SA Indigenous Dance Alliance and with a number of companies including Jumbuck Youth Theatre, Port Youth Theatre Workshop, Kurruru and many other local and national dance and theatre organisations. In 2001 she received a NAIDOC Award for work in the arts. She was previously nominated for her role in Bangarra Dance Theatre's FISH and was nominated for Best Female Dancer in the 'Mo' Awards in 1998 and 1999. Gina is now a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board.*

### ***Background on Tandanya***

*Established in 1989, Tandanya enjoys a unique position as Australia's first and oldest Indigenous-owned and managed multi-arts centre. A national institute, Tandanya presents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures from throughout Australia. The name comes from the language of the traditional inhabitants of the Adelaide Plains, the Kurna people (pronounced Garna) and means "place of the Red Kangaroo".*

### **PERFORMANCE DETAILS**

#### **WHEN:**

8.00pm: September 8 to September 10 & then September 13, 14, 16 and 17

1.30pm: Thursday September 15

#### **WHERE:**

Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, 253 Grenfell Street, Adelaide

#### **TICKETS:**

Adults: \$24 / Concessions: \$18

#### **BOOKINGS:**

Book at Leigh Warren & Dancers by calling 08 8212 5660

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*For more information, interviews or images – please contact Skye Murtagh  
at Foster Workshop PR on 08 8231 3555.*