

KOOLBARDI WER WARDONG

OVERVIEW

WEST AUSTRALIAN OPERA

West Australian Opera (WAO) has been Western Australia's State Opera company for nearly 60 years, sharing the power of sung stories with the community. WAO is considered crucial to arts & culture in WA and is known for producing high-quality performances with an engaging and inspiring atmosphere.

KOOLBARDI WER WARDONG

Koolbardi wer Wardong is a critically acclaimed Noongar opera for young people, for all to enjoy. With the support of Principal Partner Wesfarmers Arts, West Australian Opera commissioned this new Australian work from award-winning songwriters and storytellers, Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse.

Koolbardi the Magpie and Wardong the Crow are two very proud, very vain, very jealous brothers. Watch as their cunning, rivalry, and one-upmanship bring them unstuck in spectacular fashion.

We invite you to join us for a journey back to the *Nyittiny*, the time of Creation, where love, loyalty, betrayal, and jealousy are all stretched to their limits. Because pride always comes before the fall.

KEY MESSAGES

A Wesfarmers Arts Commission; with the support of Principal Partner Wesfarmers Arts, WAO commissioned this new Australian work from Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse.

- Premiered in October 2021 at His Majesty's Theatre and toured regional WA in 2022 / 2023.
- A work for children based on a *Nyittiny* story of the Magpie and the Crow.
- Written and sung entirely in Noongar language.
- Aboriginal composer, librettist, and choreographer.

STREET ADDRESS

Level 3, His Majesty's Theatre
825 Hay Street,
Boorloo (Perth) WA 6000

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ABN 45 432 889655

PRODUCTION DETAILS

PRODUCTION TITLE

Koolbardi wer Wardong

COMPANY NAME

West Australian Opera

GENRE

Children's/Family Opera

PERFORMANCE DURATION

Duration 70 minutes (no interval)

LANGUAGE

Sung in Noongar with English surtitles

AGE SUITABILITY

Suitable for all ages

RECOMMENDED TICKET PRICES

As recommended ticket prices, please find West Australian Opera's original prices below:

A Reserve: \$45 Adult, \$40 Concession

B Reserve: \$40 Adult, \$35 Concession

C Reserve: \$35 Adult, \$30 Concession

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MARKETING MATERIAL

MARKETING TEASER

Award-winning songwriters and storytellers Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse weave magic in this five-star production, brought to life under the deft direction of Matt Reuben James Ward. Experience the incredible beauty of the language of this land in a production that promises to delight audiences of all ages.

MARKETING SYNOPSIS

Aliwa yeyi! (Look out now!) Feathers will fly in this cautionary tale.

Koolbardi the Magpie and Wardong the Crow are two very proud, vain, jealous brothers. Watch as their cunning, rivalry and one-upmanship brings them unstuck in spectacular fashion.

Set on Noongar Boodja (the south west corner of Western Australia), we invite you to join us for a journey back to the *Nyittiny*, the time of Creation, where love, loyalty, betrayal and jealousy are all stretched to their limits. Because pride always comes before the fall.

Award winning songwriters and story tellers, Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse weave magic in a world first, brought to life under the deft direction of Matt Reuben James Ward. Experience the incredible beauty of the language of this land, as this production promises to delight audiences of all ages.

FULL SYNOPSIS

Koolbardi wer Wardong is based on a traditional Noongar story.

Koora koora, nyittiny boodja...

We start this story a long, long time ago, when the earth was cold. Ngaank Boodja (Mother Earth) comes to start telling this cautionary tale to the barna, the other animals.

Koolbardi the Magpie and Wardong the Crow were once close, like brothers. They used to go hunting and fishing together, they would spend all their time together happily playing and laughing.

Both birds had white feathers. Both birds were very beautiful, and they both knew it. They were also secretly jealous of one another. Koolbardi is the more outgoing of the two. He loves attention and thrives on praise. He also sometimes takes the credit for doing things that he hasn't always done. Koolbardi thinks Wardong is a bit stuffy and a bit boring and a bit too preoccupied with catching fish.

Wardong is a bit quieter and considers himself more intelligent. Wardong thinks Koolbardi is a terrible show off, though he would never say this. Wardong also thinks he is a better hunter and tries to order his brother around to catch fish and hunt as a way to show he's better and cleverer.

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Early morning at the river, the two brothers are fishing. As usual, Koolbardi has no luck while Wardong catches lots of fish. Nearby, two Djidi Djidi (willy wagtails) come in to watch and tease Koolbardi for some fun. Seeing his brother becoming angry and upset, Wardong offers Koolbardi some of his catch to take back to camp. He reasons that all is not lost, together they can feed the others at camp and both be loved and admired by the other barna (animals).

Naughty, precocious Koolbardi steals all the fish and runs back to camp, leaving Wardong empty handed.

Wardong is very cross at his brother. Ngaank Boodja sees this and they talk about what has just happened. Even though he is angry, Ngaank Boodja reminds him that it is a little bit unfair to keep forcing his brother to do something he doesn't really like and isn't very good at.

Wardong sees her point and calms down. He collects his thoughts and heads back to camp to find Koolbardi and settle this argument. Much to his dismay he returns to see his brother in the middle of the camp, bragging and boasting about catching all the fish.

Koolbardi asks the barna "Ngiyarn baal kwobidak? Ngiyarn baal kwobidak? Who's the prettiest?" "Who's the best looking?"

The Barna, unaware of what has happened, excitedly sing back "Oh Koolbardi, there's nobody finer than you!"

This makes Wardong furious – the brothers fight, the scuffle ends when they both land in the fire.

And this is where the change happens. Wardong lands in the fire, all his white feathers are turned black. Koolbardi tries to escape, flying high into the air, but he gets caught with the ashes and the smoke, making him black and white.

Warra kedala nidja, koora moorditj koorda! Bad days come here to those who were once solid friends.

Ngaank Boodja intervenes, sending the two brothers in opposite directions, never to be friends again. In this bittersweet moment, she reassures the rest of the Barna that this is for the best, and to never forget that pride always comes before the fall.

MANDATORY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Koolbardi wer Wardong is a Wesfarmers Arts Commission. This tour is supported by MM Electrical Data and Suppliers. Other touring partners to be added and acknowledged as negotiated.

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MEDIA QUOTES

★★★★★ – [Limelight Magazine, Marilyn Phillips](#)

“This highly entertaining, accessible new family opera, performed in the Noongar language with surtitles, deserves further performances and exposure.” – [Limelight Magazine, Marilyn Phillips](#)

“Williams and Ghouse tell the story with song, colour, light, movement and above all humour, aided and abetted by two rising stars, Jarrad Inman as Koolbardi and Jarred Wall as Wardong.” – [The West Australian, David Cusworth](#)

“A visual feast of colour and whimsy.” – [The West Australian, David Cusworth](#)

“Williams and Ghouse’s heart-tugging melodies are sweet and fun, arranged by Chris Stone who seamlessly blends a jazz band (led by Ghouse on guitar), with the lush expressiveness of the WA Youth Orchestra, conducted by Aaron Wyatt. It’s wonderful music and gives the ancient story a sense of timelessness and depth.” – [Seesaw, Rosalind Appleby](#)

“A Noongar story, told through song, connecting people to each other and our country – opera at its best.” – [Seesaw, Rosalind Appleby](#)

“I wanted the show to keep going!” – [Seesaw Junior Review, Emma Wadley, Age 10](#)

“I really enjoyed the light-hearted and funny scenes” – [Seesaw Junior Review, Liliane Wadley, Age 8](#)

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY

Image credit to Mellen Burns / West Australian Opera

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KEY ART

To be supplied.

POSTERS

To be supplied.

TRAILER

To be supplied.

PROGRAM

To be supplied with local children’s chorus details

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