

Written Guide to the Choreography



Big Dance Australia 2018 is a large-scale, participatory dance festival for all ages, levels of ability and experience, led by Ausdance Victoria and Ausdance NSW.

Big Dance Australia 2018 is created by acclaimed Indigenous choreographer Frances Rings and New Zealand born Craig Bary. The dance has all the hallmarks of the richness and beauty of Ring's work and Bary's contemporary dance experience, offering participants access to a unique insight into Contemporary Aboriginal dance and culture.

The five-minute dance routine can be learnt by anyone in the world and include versions to suit different capabilities, including standard and seated. The online tutorials of the dance sequences are easy to follow and supplemented by the cues provided in this booklet. The dancers you see presenting the dance are developing artists from National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) Dance College.

In presenting this Written Guide to the Choreography we acknowledge the importance of the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders, past, present and future.

A note on the choreography

The choreography has 3 clear groups: black T-shirt group, a white T-shirt group, and a red T-shirt group. Rings explains their significance and symbolism: 'the black is the indigenous and the white is the non-Indigenous; the red is really the heart of our country. It's the red soil, it's our bloodline, it's our lineage and it's our spiritual heart of Australia, which is Uluru. And that is something that indigenous and non-Indigenous people connect with.'

Each group (black, white, red) is assigned a different choreographic sequence/variation. Please note that these colour choices are symbolic and in no way literal. You may freely choose the group you follow; with a movement story, you connect with and want to tell. Once you've selected a group you must stay with that group throughout the dance. Dance leaders, think about the size, formation and needs of your own participants and from this decide if you'd like everyone to dance the same variation, or learn all three group variations.

Themes

In the choreography, Rings and Bary explored a number of themes and ideas including:

- Indigenous and non-indigenous people coming together in a shared dialogue
- Country; its spiritual heart, its red earth
- Bloodlines and culture making up our shared identity
- Breathing into our shared cultural life and sustaining that connection.

These are embedded within the movement, and in some of the group structures. The more you practice the dance, the more you will sense these connections. This is an important factor in the work. Learning the movements until they almost feel second nature will help you understand the ideas and stories behind the dance.

Getting ready to learn the dance: hints and tips

- Find a quiet space that is clear of objects and is relatively even and smooth, with enough space for your dancers to move without hitting the walls or each other. You will need a sound system to play the music.
- Encourage your dancers to wear comfortable clothing and ideally bare feet, so that they can feel the floor.
- Each group has their own instructional video, divided into three sections. Have the video and your notes handy, so that you can refer to them as you go.
- Practice each section until it starts to feel comfortable and your dancers don't hesitate in between movements.
- Bring plenty of water and keep hydrated.
- Movement and spacing that can be adapted for those with limited dance experience, disability and movement barriers, including those who may be seated.
- Neutral stance
 - This is a stance with feet in parallel with each other, head erect, spine long and hands out to the side. The dancer should feel comfortable, relaxed and ready to move.

Red T-Shirt Group

Red is divided into three sections.

- Part 1 focuses on the basic phrases for Red (standing and sitting), voice instruction by Jye Uren
- Part 2 focuses on the choreography for when one group joins the other, voice instruction by Frances Rings
- Part 3 focus on how each group comes together, voice instruction by Craig Bary



RED Part 1a - standing - step by step movement:

Starting position – neutral position, with parallel feet – any of kneeling, standing and seated – with the eyes up, with both hands to the side.

1. Take the left hand, pulse it over your heart and slide it down to the palm of the right hand (counts 1, 2, 3, 4). Repeat on the other side (counts 5, 6, 7, 8)
2. Repeat this again and add a step out: take the left hand, pulse it over your heart and slide it down to the palm of the right hand (counts 1, 2, 3, 4), step out onto the right leg. Repeat on the other side (counts 5, 6, 7, 8)
3. Reach both hands in front and take R foot back in a lunge; return R foot back to meet the other leg, in parallel, knees bent (counts 1, 2, 3, 4). Repeat on other side (counts 5, 6, 7, 8)
4. Three pulses. On the last take arms around from one side to the other, like a big wave, returning back to your heart (counts 1-8)
5. Take L hand to L side and step forward on your L leg (1, 2); bring hands back to heart. Repeat on other side (3, 4). Bring L leg back into parallel, bring both arms forward, palms up (5)
6. Three pulses. Two of these are with palms up, the last one comes to elbows up, hands down (6, 7, 8)
7. Three walks forward and turn to the back (counts 1, 2, 3 turn, 4). Repeat (counts 5, 6, 7 turn 8)

RED Part 1b - sitting - step by step movement:

Take 8 counts to get to the floor by crossing one leg behind the other, then sitting in a cross legged position.

1. Take the left hand, pulse it over your heart and slide it down to the palm of the right hand (counts 1, 2, 3, 4). Repeat on the other side (counts 5, 6, 7, 8). Repeat once more with left hand (counts 1, 2, 3, 4). Repeat again with right hand (counts 5, 6, 7, 8).
2. Reach both hands forward; return hands to heart (counts 1, 2, 3, 4). Repeat: reach both hands forward; return hands to heart (counts 5, 6, 7, 8).
3. Two pulses, elbows back (counts 1, 2, 3, 4). Take arms out to side, above the head, down the front to heart (counts 5, 6, 7, 8).
4. Extend L hand to L side (1, 2). Repeat on other side (3, 4). Bring both arms forward, palms up (5); three pulses. Two of these are with palms up, the last one comes to elbows up, hands down (6, 7, 8)
5. Four arm circles forward (counts 1, 2, 3 turn, 4). Brush side right, brush side left, brush forward both arms
6. Brush right hand to right side, brush left hand to left side, brush both hands forward; Grab with right hand, grab with left hand, reach forward and grab something, bring it in
7. 3 chest expansions, reach forward and bring both hands behind your back (1, 2, 3, 4)
8. With hands behind your back rock x 8, with your body leaning forward and dip with your shoulders starting with your left (5, 6, 7, 8, 1, 2, 3, 4)
9. Sit up taller and rock with your hands behind your back x 4 (5, 6, 7, 8)
10. Continue rocking side to side but now, lift elbows (1, 2, 3, 4)
11. Sprinkle out to one side, pull the hands back & lean back; repeat other side
12. Take 8 counts to stand up.

RED Part 2 – Red and Black - step by step movement:

Starting position – standing in parallel position of feet, with arms to the side



1. Heartbeat: eight chest expansions/pulses (counts 1- 8)
2. Touch R foot forward, R hand goes above your head, with your left arm wrapped around your body (1); Bring foot back and take the other foot forward, with arm up and other arm wrapped around the body (2); Repeat again both sides (3-4)
3. Dip in the middle, with hands crossed (5); Come back to standing (6); Dip again (7); Come to heart beat hands (8)
4. Drop down (1); Open chest (2); Drop down (3); Open chest (4)
5. Cut right arm across to left (5); Pull up, hands on shoulders (6); Cut left arm across to right (7), pulling up (8)
6. Travel towards the back wall, cut with opposite arm x 4 (counts 1-4); Circle one arm around and to the shoulder (5-6); Circle the other arm around (7-8)

7. Travel backward to the audience, twisting, with hands on sides of head (1-4); Rock forward and reach your arms forward, rock back and pull back your elbows (5-6); Repeat (7-8).
8. Turn around to face the front: Rock forward and reach your arms forward, rock back and pull back your elbows (1-2); Repeat (3-4).

At this point the white group arrives



RED Part 3 – coming together - step by step movement:

Starting position – standing in parallel position of feet, with arms to the side

1. Rock forward and reach your arms forward, rock back and pull back your elbows (1-2) Repeat (3-4)
2. Right hand to sky, other hand on shoulder (5); Change (6); Change (7); Change (8)
3. Two hands up (1); Two hands down (2) ; Two hands up (3); Open on (4)
4. Slight direction change follows: Red and white groups step to the left, black group steps to the right
5. Lunge to the side and scoop same arm, bring feet together, hands on shoulders, repeat to the other side. Continue this action facing each of the walls (facing front, side, back, side, front again)
6. Heartbeat (right hand to heart, left hand holds your elbow): Rock forward on left (1); Rock back (2); Rock forward (3); Bring feet together and straighten your arm by pushing your elbow towards the centre of your body (4); Forearms parallel (5); Circle the arms around, finish with opposite arm on top in parallel arms (6-7); Open fingers (8)
7. Four steps back, starting on the left foot and cutting with the right hand (1-4); Circle the left hand back and to the left shoulder, big bend (5-6); Repeat with the right arm (7-8)

8. Four steps forwards, starting with the right leg, twisting with hands on sides of head (counts 1-4); Rock forward and reach your arms forward (5); Rock back and pull back your elbows (6); Repeat (7-8).
9. Repeat the rocking with elbows action, twice, facing the back wall (1-4); turn to face the front, arms straight out to the side (5)
10. Drop your body all the way forward (6); Lift your right arm (7); Lift your left arm and drop your body all the way forward, reach your arms out and down (8)

