

## **BANKSTOWN:LIVE**

Curated and produced by Urban Theatre Projects  
Presented by Urban Theatre Projects & Sydney Festival

### ***Urban Theatre Projects and Sydney Festival present BANKSTOWN:LIVE a unique suburban event hosted in western Sydney suburban streets***

**Sydney, Australia: Urban Theatre Projects – as part of Sydney Festival 2015 – has created a unique four-hour cultural event on the suburban streets of Bankstown with BANKSTOWN:LIVE.** Presented over four nights in January 2015, BANKSTOWN:LIVE is set to the backdrop of Bankstown, featuring nine new works from critically acclaimed international and Australian artists created in collaboration with local Bankstown residents.

Curated by Urban Theatre Projects (UTP) Artistic Director Rosie Dennis and co-presented by UTP with Sydney Festival, BANKSTOWN:LIVE will take place as the sun sets over Sydney's west from Thursday 22 January until Sunday 25 January 2015. Audiences are invited into the neighbourhood to see world-class theatre in backyards, watch films around a hills hoist, or sit in a deck chair curbside and listen to songs of contemporary suburbia.

BANKSTOWN:LIVE builds on the highly successful MINTO:LIVE, curated by Rosie Dennis for Campbelltown Arts Centre and Sydney Festival 2011, with an ambitious program of performance, film, dance and visual arts. *"There are some amazing and inspiring stories that come from Western Sydney and we want to offer a space for people to connect from across Sydney,"* said Rosie Dennis.

BANKSTOWN:LIVE features the work of over 25 international and Australian artists, spanning theatre, visual arts, animation, film, photography, ballroom dancing and installation. The participating artists include: Alwin Reamillo (Phil), Toby Martin & guests (Aus), Michael Mohammed Ahmad with Janice Muller (Aus), Jenny Shillingsworth, Lily Shearer & Beverley Miranda (Aus), Sophia Brous & guests (Aus/UK), Joanne Saad (Aus), Emma Saunders & guests (Aus) and Western Sydney animators (Aus).

Four local residents of Bankstown have offered up their homes to present a selection of theatre, film, audio and animated works. Other local residents have invited people into their living rooms for intimate family portraits, contributed their own stories and been a muse for musicians — inspired by the unique Australian suburban experience. Their stories are as fascinating as the art works around them — from a Macedonian family who emigrated to Australia more than 30 years ago, building their home with their own hands, to 81-year-old David Cranston, who grew up in the same house he still lives in.

A highlight of BANKSTOWN:LIVE is a work by artist Alwin Reamillo who, with the help of the local community, will build a bamboo house that will be lifted and carried through the neighbourhood streets. The work pays homage to Bayanihan, a Filipino tradition of the community helping to re-locate people from one village to another.

Michael Mohammed Ahmad, who grew up in Bankstown, has written a novel, adapted into a script with Janice Muller, based on the experiences of a small Muslim sect who fled to Australia just before the civil war in Lebanon. This moving piece, performed by Hazem Shammas, is how Michael hopes to shed some light on an often-misunderstood community.

**EVENT DETAILS:** Presented from 22–25 January, 6–10pm at Northam Avenue, Bankstown, NSW.

**MEDIA CONTACTS:** For further information and to request interviews or photo opportunities please contact Gabrielle Wilson on 0433 972 015, [gabrielle@articulatepr.com.au](mailto:gabrielle@articulatepr.com.au) or Anna Shapiro on 0417 043 205, [anna@articulatepr.com.au](mailto:anna@articulatepr.com.au)

**Notes to Editors:**

**ABOUT URBAN THEATRE PROJECTS:** Urban Theatre Project (UTP) has a 30-year history of creating groundbreaking work. Under a handful of visionary artistic directors, the company has played a vital role in Australia's cultural landscape. Urban Theatre Projects is renowned for telling compelling, real life stories and revealing the universal within the personal. The company's work not only reflects the diversity of contemporary culture, but also considers whose voice it is telling these stories whether that be older Australians, young people with experiences of the Foster Care system, social housing residents or people living with a disability. UTP actively creates opportunities to tell stories that might help to shift people's perception, grow empathy, and show us a different perspective about life.

**ARTISTS IN BANKSTOWN:LIVE:** Alwin Reamillo (Phil), Toby Martin & guests (Aus), Michael Mohammed Ahmad with Janice Muller (Aus), Jenny Shillingsworth, Lily Shearer & Beverley Miranda (Aus), Sophia Brous & guests (Aus/UK), Joanne Saad (Aus), Emma Saunders & guests (Aus) and Western Sydney animators (Aus).

**LOCAL RESIDENTS PARTICIPATING IN BANKSTOWN: LIVE:**

**David Cranston**

David Cranston has lived on Northam Avenue in Bankstown since he was two years old. He is now 81. A local boy, he's had a rich and varied working life as an electrician, insurance salesman, financial planner and an extra on films. When Urban Theatre Projects put a call out in November 2013 for front and back yards to host an artist for two weeks as part of a residency called *Practice & Participate*, David was the first person to call. Now — one year later — BANKSTOWN:LIVE is taking place on his street, and in his backyard. He is delighted. David retired when he was 69 and remains active in the community as a JP, the Treasurer at Coolaburoo Neighbourhood Centre, and a member of Lakemba men's group OMNI (Older Men New Ideas). He lives with his daughter Catherine and is one of the writers for *The Last Word* as part of BANKSTOWN:LIVE.

**Michael Kamaledine**

Michael Kamaledine is a local entrepreneur who has lived in Bankstown since 1978 and has witnessed the area and people transform during that time. He held senior management positions working for the tobacco industry but left for ethical reasons. After working in advertising, he set up his own business in Bankstown, where he lives with his wife and five children. He says he enjoys interacting with the local community in what he describes as one of the most culturally diverse suburbs in Australia. Michael became involved with Urban Theatre Projects when he offered up the front yard of one of his rental properties for an artist residency, *Practice & Participate*, in 2013. At the end of the residency, he said, "I'd love to do it all again." Michael began talking to UTP's Artistic Director Rosie Dennis about an idea to make a work about the things Michael didn't have a chance to say to his father before he died. This idea has now become *The Last Word*, as part of BANKSTOWN:LIVE.

**LIST OF WORKS IN BANKSTOWN:LIVE**

**THE TRIBE**

Adapted by Michael Mohammed Ahmad and Janice Muller

Based on the novel by Michael Mohammed Ahmad

Performed by Hazem Shammass

*"I was only seven when this happened but it always feels like right now. I say, 'Tayta, tell me what I am made from?' She smiles her toothless smile and her skin glows golden, and she says in the language of my ancestors, 'You are made from your grandfather, oh Bani, and your grandfather, he was made of stone.' — excerpt from The Tribe*

In his first novel and script adaptation with Janice Muller, Michael Mohammed Ahmad offers insight into the life of a Muslim family who fled to Australia just before the civil war in Lebanon. *The Tribe* is a journey inside three generations of an extended family, the House of Adam, as seen by one of its youngest offspring, Bani, and inside one of Australia's most misrepresented communities.

### **BANKSTOWN BAYANIHAN HOPPING SPIRIT HOUSE**

Artist Alwin Reamillo (Philippines)

Visual artist Alwin Reamillo will work with local Bankstown residents to construct a hybrid *Bahay Kubo* or bamboo hut on stilts, using locally-sourced bamboo combined with found and gathered materials. Invoking *Bayanihan*, the traditional practice of community group work in rural Philippines, the community will then perform the collective task of lifting, carrying and moving the house through the streets as part of BANKSTOWN:LIVE. Perhaps the most recent visible demonstration of bayanihan at work was during the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda that devastated the city of Tacloban in Leyte in 2013. That disaster activated and mobilized thousands of Filipinos along with hundreds of international volunteers to assist and help the displaced communities of that province. Alwin Reamillo is a visual artist whose participatory 'social sculptures' explore themes of colonization, migration and globalization.

### **FAMILY PORTRAITS**

Artist Joanne Saad

Created by visual artist Joanne Saad, *Family Portraits* is a series of photographic portraits of local families. Taken in the privacy of the homes of four local families, the portraits offer an intimate commentary on contemporary urban life. Each night of BANKSTOWN:LIVE, one of the families will sit in front of an interior image from their home and invite people to come and sit on their furniture with them, to get to know each other and have a new family portrait taken. Everyone who participates will receive a postcard of the family portrait after the event. Joanne Saad is a multi-media artist who is committed to community collaboration, and fascinated by the extra-ordinariness of people's daily life and the connection we have to emotive images and words.

### **BRE & BACK**

Director Rosie Dennis; Cinematographer Bonnie Elliot; Sound David Tranter; Editor Dena Curtis

Cast Jenny Shillingsworth, Aunty Grace Shillingsworth, Noeleen Shearer, Lily Shearer & Beverley Miranda

The suburban streets of western Sydney and the north-western town of Brewarrina are the backdrop for *Bre & Back* – a documentary on the intimacies and complexities of motherhood from the perspective of five Aboriginal women: Jenny Shillingsworth, Aunty Grace Shillingsworth, Noeleen Shearer, Lily Shearer and Beverley Miranda. Interweaving memories, anecdotes and a sharp wit, *Bre & Back* poetically shifts from the everyday to the profound, as Beverley, Lily and Jenny travel over the Blue Mountains to their hometown. *Bre & Back* shows the humanness and the individual within the larger political and social picture for Indigenous Australians. The documentary shares Beverley, Lily and Jenny's perspectives from motherhood to marriage to what it takes it be an Aboriginal cultural leader in contemporary Australia.

### **THE BANKSTOWN DANCING PROJECT**

Artist Emma Saunders

*Project: Dance Bankstown* invites the local dancing communities of Bankstown to dance on the streets through learning an 'every person's hokey pokey' style group routine and couple dancing in the style of social ballroom dancing. Working with south-coast based choreographer Emma Saunders, local dancers will take part in weekly session with Saunders before performing on Northam Avenue as part of BANKSTOWN:LIVE. *Dance with Somebody* celebrates the joy of life and the importance of community through participating in a common physical unified experience.

### **THE LAST WORD**

Local writers and residents, including David Cranston, Michael Kamaledine, Robyn Schmitz, Amanda Yeo, Peter Polites and Gaele Sobott. *The Last Word* is a series of short audio works written by six Bankstown raconteurs who have each crafted a farewell to a family member who has passed away. Poetic, passionate and at times hilarious *The Last Word* will be experienced in a backyard lying under a hills hoist, looking at the sky.

**SHORT SAMPLE**

Western Sydney animators

As the sun sets, the Bayanian Hopping Spirit House will transform into an outdoor cinema to screen animated short films by western Sydney filmmakers, responding to the theme of FAMILY. HERE. NOW.

**TOBY MARTIN**

With local musicians

In 2013, Urban Theatre Projects invited Toby Martin to write songs on a front verandah as part of an artist residency. In 2014, Martin returned to finished a collection of songs inspired by the people he met in Bankstown that he will perform alongside a band of local musicians. *In 2013, I wrote songs in people's front yards in Northam Avenue. In 2014, I wrote songs out the front of a milk bar/coffee shop on Chapel Road South. Sometimes cars would slow down, other times they wouldn't. Occasionally someone would stop and ask me what I was doing. By looking at the same nature strip and stretch of street for long enough, and by talking to people, songs would eventually form. These are not 'Bankstown Songs' necessarily, but they wouldn't have been written anywhere else.* Toby Martin has released four albums and toured Australia, England and America with rock band Youth Group. In 2012 he released a solo album *Love's Shadow*.

**LULLABY MOVEMENT**

Sophia Brous & guests (Aus/UK)

Genre-defying globetrotting vocalist and performer Sophia Brous explores the unique expressive universe of lullabies in a world premiere featuring the award-winning singer/composer alongside celebrated UK musicians Leo Abrahams (Brian Eno, Pulp) and David Coulter (Jarvis Cocker, Kronos Quartet). BANKSTOWN:LIVE will close with these lullabies, which have come from the local area, being performed under the stars.

**PROJECT PARTNERS:**

