



Wesfarmers Arts

SYNOPSIS & CASTLIST

West Australian Opera presents
A Wesfarmers Arts Commission

KOOLBARDI WER WARDONG

In association with the AWESOME Festival, West Australian Young Voices and the Western Australian Youth Orchestra

His Majesty's Theatre
2, 5, 6 October 2021

Composers **Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse**

Conductor **Aaron Wyatt**

Director **Matt Reuben James Ward**

Bendat Family Foundation Movement Director **Olman Walley**

Set and Costume Designer **Matt McVeigh**

Lighting Designer **Mark Howett**

Arrangement and Orchestration **Dr Chris Stone**

Repetiteur **Adrian Soares**

Koolbardi **Jarrad Inman**

Wardong **Jarred Wall**

Djidi Djidi **Tyrone Brownley**

Miss Djidi Djidi **Natasha Eldridge**

Ngaank Boodja **Gina Williams AM**

Guitar **Guy Ghouse**

Double Bass **Dr Nick Abbey**

Percussion **Dr Daniel Susnjar**

Featuring **West Australian Young Voices**

Featuring **Noongar Children's Choir**

Featuring **Western Australian Youth Orchestra**

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.

Executive Director Carolyn Chard AM
Artistic Director Christopher van Tuinen

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 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.

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.

Duration 60 minutes. Sung in Noongar with English surtitles. Casting correct at publication but may be subject to amendment. KOOLBARDI WER WARDONG is a Wesfarmers Arts Commission.

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