

Presented by Arts House

Tales of an Afronaut wāni

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Image: Ruth Ruach

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7pm, Wed 26 – Fri 28 Jul
40 mins

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artshouse.com.au

Concept & Lead Artist:

wāni

Collaborators:

Neil Morris

Nasa

I come from a long line of incredible storytelling, from friends, family, grandparents through to both my mother and father, especially my father. Most of the lessons I've learnt in life have come through those stories weaved in as metaphors and proverbs, and all I'm doing is continuing this living cultural tradition. Introspection and self-analysis is a large part of not only the creation of my work, but the work itself. It's basically to me like a window of my current state. I believe people are always growing or I'd like to imagine they are and the other part of inspiration is an acknowledgement of where I am by putting a permanent seal on that particular moment through poetry, in this case through spoken word. Also a deep desire to see the community I come from prosper and just be able to be awesome without having so many obstacles before them, so I try to make sure to find ways to leave the doors open behind me in spaces I've been given footing.

— *wāni*

wāni is an unusual and quite extraordinary writer performance artist.

Tales of an Afronaut chronicles his life story through a set of steps from Rage to Joy. What makes this performance so powerful is where it comes from.

Artists often draw on their own life experience however, they usually shield themselves from the viewer through a web of metaphors that encrypt the true nature of their personal experience in unintelligible tangents.

wāni manages to walk the fine line between being a psychological outpouring and a transformative process that makes his words and work relatable to everyone, white, black, disenfranchised and privileged.

As a black man, wāni has walked a hard road in a country that prides itself on the motto of a fair go. He has experienced first hand the brutality of racism, of being excluded, demeaned, and dehumanised. He knows it is not a place of fairness, it is a place deeply rooted in a mind set that enacted a white Australia Policy in a country whose first peoples were black.

He takes the audience on that road.

Rage is a normal response to a life that has witnessed war too young.

Pain is the result of the thaw from numbness to heartfelt.

Struggle is what it takes to be black in a world dominated by whiteness.

Process is the courage to work through all of the above.

Healing is what comes to those who do the work.

Love is the opportunity

Joy is the reward.

It takes an unusual and extraordinary young man to bring this to the stage and present it to an unknown audience, innocent and without guile.

I have grown up in this country as a beneficiary of my white privilege.

I thank, from the depths of my heart, people like wāni who will graciously change this country through their courage and generosity.

— *Dr Megan Evans (visual artist/curator)*

I'd like to begin by thanking my creator for gracing me with the life, courage and abilities I've been given. My friends for their constant love and support, for the late nights, txt messages, impromptu lunches and phone calls, my fam for their faith, commitment and guidance, my partner for being there with me every step of the way, as well as all those who have shared the journey with me to this point. I'm forever indebted to the elders who've imparted wisdom on me as I've grown, the first Nations folk whose lands I am privileged enough to live and work from, my father for his willingness and openness to delve deep into parts of himself that were at times uncomfortable and most times confronting and for the lessons, stories and memories I carry with me always, mama, my siblings but most of all my forefolk who came before me and the ancestors who lay the foundations on which I walk today.

Special mention to: Mama wāni, Papa wāni, Megan Evans, Neil Morris, Naomi Velaphi, Pauline Vetuna, Jessie Matthews, Kyah Parrott, Tenda Mcfly, Curtis Stewart, Ruth Ruach, Nasa, Zii, Lay The Mystic, Tania Cañas.

Arts House, as a key program of the City of Melbourne, is Melbourne's contemporary centre for performance and interactive artforms. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art which is participatory and experiential, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, curated through a balance of provocation, responsiveness and collaboration with artists and audiences.

For more information, please contact us on the details below.

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Arts House acknowledges the traditional land upon which we are located, of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and pay our respect to Elders both past and present and, through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

