

KULLARK
(Home)



The smoked head of Yagan, 'Chief of the Swan River'.
A watercolour from *A Descriptive Account of the Panoramic
View &c of King George Sound and Adjacent Country* by
Lieutenant R. Dale, London 1834. Reproduced by kind
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Kullark was first performed at the Titan Theatre, Perth, by the Theatre-in-Education team of the National Theatre Company on 21 February 1979, with the following cast:

ALEC YORLAH
THOMAS YORLAH

Michael Fuller

ROSIE YORLAH
MARY YORLAH

Lynette Narkle

YAGAN
JAMIE YORLAH

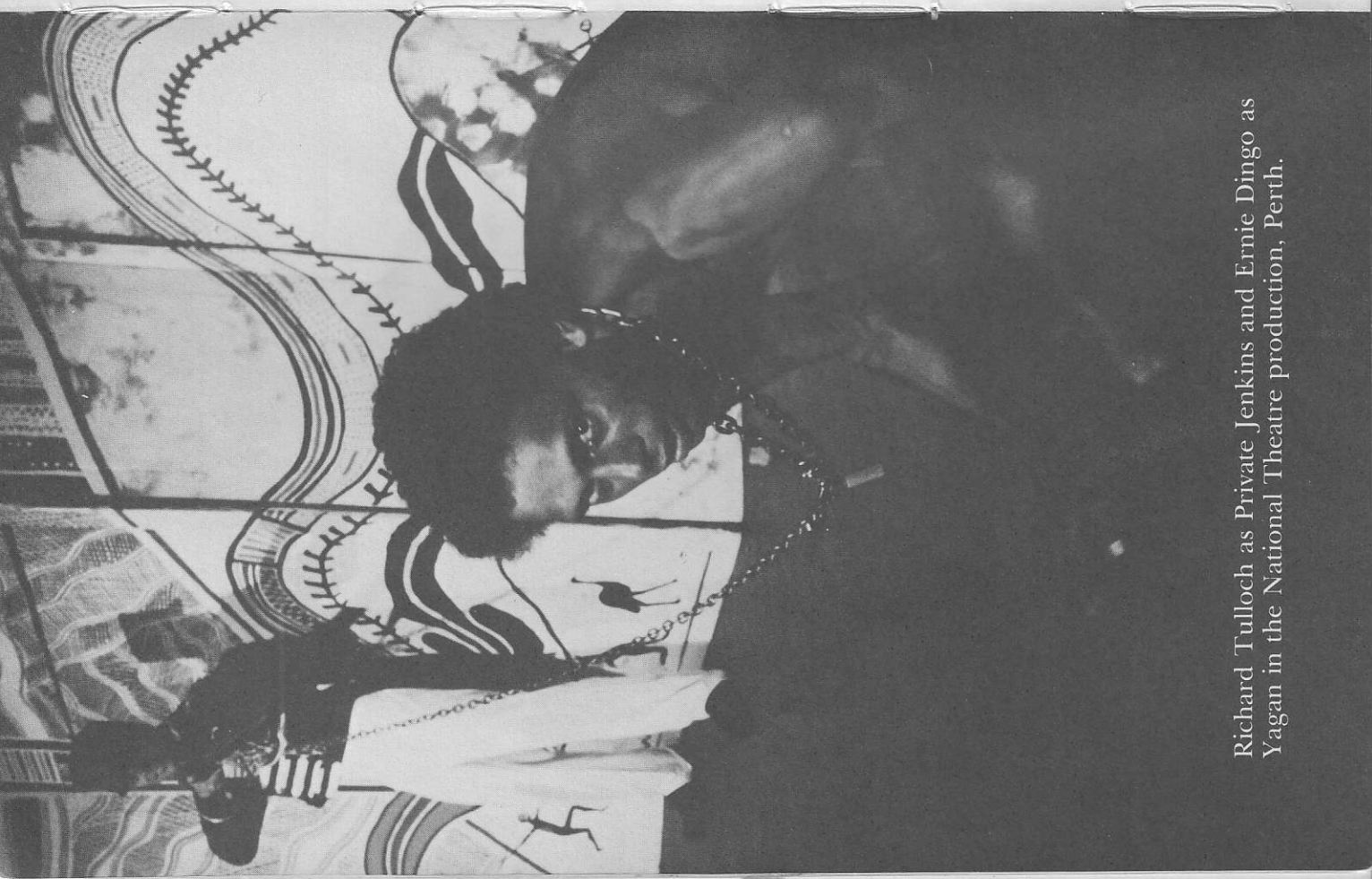
Ernie Dingo

ALICE
WILL
CAPTAIN STIRLING

Dawn Blay
Richard Williams
Richard Tulloch

The other characters were played variously by the cast.

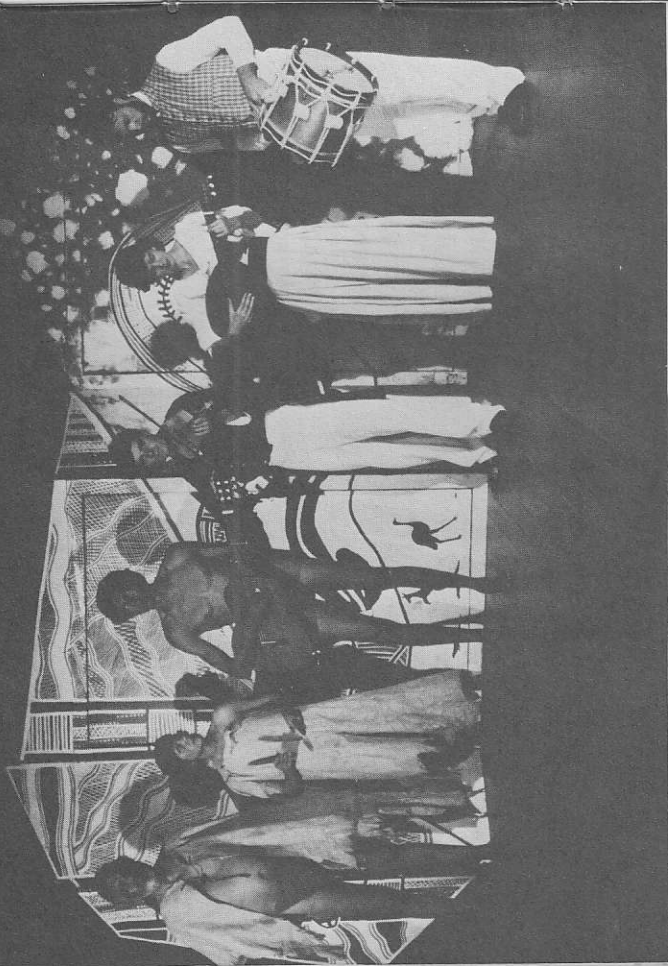
'Brown Skin Baby' words and music by Bob Randall,
adapted by Jack Davis
Researched and directed by Andrew Ross
Designed by Igor Sas
Scenery painted by Shane Pickett



Richard Tulloch as Private Jenkins and Ernie Dingo as Yagan in the National Theatre production, Perth.

CHARACTERS

- ALEC YORLAH, an Aboriginal labourer
- ROSIE, his de facto wife
- JAMIE, their son
- YAGAN, a member of the Swan River (Tjuah) people
- CAPTAIN JAMES STIRLING, founder and first Lieutenant-Governor of the Swan River Colony, 1831-38
- CHARLES FRASER, a botanist to the colony
- MITJUROO, Yagan's father
- MOYARAHN, his wife
- WILL O'FLAHERTY, a white settler
- ALICE, his wife
- LYN, a white schoolteacher
- PRIVATE JENKINS, enlisted in the Sixty-Third Regiment
- A SOLDIER
- THOMAS YORLAH, Alec's father
- MARY, his wife
- A POLICEMAN
- MR NEALE, Superintendent of the Moore River Aboriginal settlement
- MATRON NEALE, his wife
- MR A. O. NEVILLE, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, 1915-1940
- BLUEY, a blacktracker
- COLONEL, A.I.F.



Michael Fuller, Lynette Narkle, Ernie Dingo, Richard Tulloch, Nici Woods and Richard Williams in the National Theatre production, Perth.

SETTING

The action of the play moves from the kitchen of the Yorlah household in a country town in the South West of Western Australia, 1979, to a farm in the Pinjarra area between 1829 and 1834, the Moore River Native Settlement in the 1930s, the Yorlahs' chaff-bag humpy in 1945 and other associated areas.

The stage is divided into a large exterior and a smaller interior. The exterior is represented by a painting in neo-traditional style of Warrgul the Rainbow Serpent in the shape of a map of the Swan River. The interior area incorporates one, and the exterior two, revolving screens on which the changes in location are represented.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Aboriginal language used in *Kullark* is Nyoongah, the major language of the South West of Western Australia. Since 1829 fourteen South-West dialects have been lost and replaced with one composite modern language. 'Kullark' means literally the place where we make our fire, home.

Yagan, a Nyoongarah leader who was killed by settlers in 1833, is an important symbolic figure to the Nyoongarah and his death led to the Battle of Pinjarra on 28 October 1834 when a party of the 21st Regiment, six police and a group of settlers engaged the Murray River tribe, killing between fifteen and twenty and capturing more. One policeman died of wounds.

While some of the other characters bear the names of historical figures, the Yorlah family are fictional. The experiences of Thomas Yorlah are, however, based on those of a number of Aborigines involved in the 1933 Northam transfer.

ACT ONE

THE STEEL AND THE STONE

When referring to Australia's treatment of her Aborigines we are apt to refer somewhat scathingly to Tasmania's harshness in ridding herself of her natives within the first seventy years of settlement. In that time some 6,000 natives disappeared and only one was left alive. Yet here in the South-West of our State, within an area about twice the size of Tasmania, between 1829 and 1901 (seventy-two years) a people estimated to number 13,000 were reduced to 1,419 of whom forty-five per cent were half-caste.

A. O. NEVILLE
Chief Protector of Aborigines
in Western Australia,
1915-1940

From a transcript of a meeting of the Western Australian Historical Society, 26 June 1936.

SCENE ONE

February 1979. Morning. A kitchen in the YORLAH household, somewhere in the South West of Western Australia. A radio is blaring out the local commercial station.

ROSIE enters, clearing up the bottles of the night before. ALEC enters clearly suffering from the night before. He yawns, stretches and scratches himself.

ALEC: What's for breakfast?

ROSIE: Well it ain't 'am and eggs.

[ALEC turns the radio off, picks up the paper and sits down. ROSIE turns the radio on again.]

ALEC: Turn that flamin' radio down, will ya?

ROSIE: [turning it off] Crook head, eh?

ALEC: [flipping through the newspaper] Watcha done with the flamin' racing page?

ROSIE: I never touched it.

[ALEC finds the page, takes it out, thumps it and squares it off methodically.]

ALEC: Gawd, will ya look at that, Star Pixie, fifty to one. If it wasn't for that long-winded missionary bloke ravin' on yesterday I woulda won two hundred bucks.

ROSIE: You never won two hundred bucks in your life.

ALEC: Anyway, who was that bloke?

ROSIE: Aw, he's somethin' to do with the Nyoongah Church.

ALEC: That weren't no funeral service. More like a flamin' sermon.

ROSIE: Anyway, he meant well, and it don't hurt to shake *nyoongahs* up about livin' or dyin'.

ALEC: Look, he spoke for three quarters of an hour at the church and three quarters of an hour at the graveside, and that's what I call playin' on people's feelin's.

ROSIE: But that's his job. That's what 'e's there for.

ALEC: Ah, all 'e was tryin' to do was frighten people into goin' to 'is church.

ROSIE: When you're dyin' you'll be glad of a man like 'im.

ALEC: [laughing] You know, 'e can't lose, it's like an each way bet: If 'e can't get ya to 'is church that don't matter, 'e'll still get to 'eaven 'cause 'e tried. It's even better than an each way bet, cause 'e bets on the whole bloody field.

ROSIE: [reproachfully] Alec Yorlah, I'm sure I know where you're going when your time comes.

ALEC: But what I said's true.

[He points vaguely upwards.]

'E's just a bookie's clerk, and 'im up there, 'e's sort of in charge of like the T.A.B. in the sky.

[Pause. ROSIE continues the dishes, ALEC pencils in his selections.]

ROSIE: It's a pity you don't take more notice of people like 'im.

ALEC: Who d'yer mean? [Derisively] That missionary bloke?

ROSIE: Yeah, I do.

ALEC: A good tomatater in the face would've done 'im the world of good.

[His head goes back into the paper. ROSIE pours ALEC a cup of tea in a chipped enamel mug and turns the radio down.]

The only good thing about funerals is ya get to see people ya ain't seen for a long time.

ROSIE: Yeah, I saw Auntie Peg and Uncle Eli there, I ain't seen them fa years.

ALEC: They still livin' down Gnowangerup, on the reserve? ROSIE: Yeah, they're still there with Libby and Joe and all the kids.

ALEC: Gawd, how can they bring a family up in that cold bloody dump?

ROSIE: Well, at least it's their 'ome, not like this place 'ere. We could be kicked out any time.

ALEC: Old Tony can't do that. Our rent's paid up.

ROSIE: That ain't the point. If mobs of *Nyoongahs* keep comin' round here we'll be in trouble, that's for sure.

ALEC: They can't do that. *Wetjals* have their friends visitin' 'em so we can do the same.

ROSIE: No we can't. *Wetjals* look at us as bein' different and we can't get away with things the way they do.

ALEC: Look, if I wanta 'ave my friends 'round 'ere for a drink no ding lan'lord's gonna stop me, that's for sure.

ROSIE: Yeah, y'all had to come back here after the funeral and get drunk. You ain't got no shame.

ALEC: Well, it's better than cryin' and moanin', ain't it? That won't bring the old fella back. Poor old bloke.

Auntie Peg reckons 'e'd 'ave been well over a 'undred. ROSIE: Oh, he wouldn't 'ave been that old, would 'e?

ALEC: Well 'e used to tell us when we was kids back at Moore River 'ow 'e was brought up shepherdin' sheep before any fences was put up. An' that wasn't yesterday.

ROSIE: Yeah, 'e was always tellin' yarns about them old *Nyoongahs*.

ALEC: Yeah.

[*He sighs and his eyes light up. The radio fades to a quiet Country and Western ballad.*]

Yeah, I remember one he told us. We was at Moore River sittin' round the fire cooking *gilgies* in the ashes. How'd it go? You know the one about Ol' Wahrdung an' Koolbahrdi?

ROSIE: Oh yeah, I ain't heard that one in years.

ALEC: [*Animatedly*] Oh yeah, yeah. Now the magpie and the crow was brothers, and they both 'ad beautiful white feathers, and they were always arguin' about which one was the most beautiful. Anyway one day they decided to fly up into the sky and fight it out. So Wahrdung, that's the crow, and Koolbahrdi, that's the magpie, they flew into the air, and they fought and they fought, round and round, *numbul bukbul*, up and down. Anyway, they didn't know they was gettin' closer an' closer to the ground, then all of a sudden, *tjoppul*, they fell straight into this pool of black sticky mud. Well Koolbahrdi, 'e was the first to get out, and

he took off into the sky half covered in mud, and poor ol' Wahrdung 'e was the last to get out, and when 'e flew up into the sky 'e was black all over.

[*They both laugh warmly. The radio stops, and they fall still and silent. A long pause. ROSIE sighs.*]

ROSIE: Yeah, hearin' that story again, whenever I see a crow or a magpie it'll always remind me of that ol' fella.

[*ROSIE weeps quietly. ALEC gazes into his tea. Didgeeridoo music crashes in. ALEC and ROSIE exit.*]

SCENE TWO

YAGAN enters in ceremonial paint. He chants and dances.

YAGAN: *Woolah!*
 You came, Warrgul,
 With a flash of fire and a thunder roar,
 And as you came
 You flung the earth up to the sky,
 You formed the mountain ranges
 And the undulating plains.
 You made a home for me
 On Kargattup and Karta Koomba,
 Kargattup and Karta Koomba.
 You made the *beeyol beeyol*,
 The wide clear river,
 As you travelled onward to the sea.
 And as you went into the sunset
 Two rocks* you left to mark your passing,
 To tell of your returning
 And our affinity.
 You gave me kangaroo and emu for my
 middens,
 Feathers for corroboree at night,
 The swan, the duck and other birds you
 gave me,
 And the waters teemed with fish a-shim-
 mering bright.
 You gave me laws and legends
 To protect me,
 And sacred places hidden in the hills.
 Then, oh *wirilo, wirilo*,
 The *jungara* came across the deep blue
 waters
 To rend my soul, to decimate and kill.

[YAGAN exits.]

*Rottnest and Garden islands

SCENE THREE

The music cuts abruptly to a rollicking folk tune. CHARLES FRASER, a well dressed botanist carrying a shovel and butterfly net enters through a revolving screen, revealing a watercolour of the Swan River in 1827. This picture cuts the Rainbow Serpent near the tail.

FRASER: [calling] Captain Stirling, look. More fresh water, right on the surface this time.

[CAPTAIN JAMES STIRLING enters.]

STIRLING: Good, good. Fresh water, rich soil, pleasant climate, all the natural attractions of New South Wales.

FRASER: Sir, shouldn't we be getting back to the boat?

STIRLING: Mr Fraser, a British colony would stand a better chance of prospering here on the Swan River than anywhere in the world.

FRASER: But, sir, it'll soon be dark.

STIRLING: Just a bit further, Mr Fraser! Come on man! [YAGAN, MITIJIROO and MOYARAHN enter, clad in kangaroo skin capes. The men carry spears, the woman a wahna.]

FRASER: Look sir, savages.

YAGAN: *Tjimahng baalah bok*. [Look at their clothing'.]

FRASER: Do you think they're hostile, sir?

MOYARAHN: *Gnung wayarning, wayarning*. [I am frightened.]

STIRLING: Just curious, I think, but don't make any sudden move.

MITIJIROO: *Baalup dahdahrup wilgeeuul*. [They are painted white.]

FRASER: Our guns are back in the boat, sir.

STIRLING: Try not to talk, Mr Fraser.

MOYARAHN: *Baal tjennuk tjennuk nyinning*. [They are devils, devils.]

MITIJIROO: *Baalup wahnging gnullarah*. [They are talking to us.]

YAGAN: [raising his spear] *Gitjul! Gitjul! [Spear! Spear!]*

MITIJIROO: [holding him back] Yuart, yuart, yuart! ['No, no, no.']

[STIRLING and FRASER shrink back at the sight of the spear. Finally STIRLING advances cautiously.]

STIRLING: It's all right, Mr Fraser. I've handled such a situation before.

MITIJIROO: [to STIRLING] Gneean noomuk? ['Who are you?']
[To YAGAN] Gneean baal? ['Who is he?']

STIRLING: [slapping his chest] Captain Stirling . . . Stir-ling.
[He extends his hand in a friendly gesture. YAGAN and MOYARAHN are reticent but MITIJIROO advances. Instead of shaking STIRLING's hand he rubs it vigorously, to see if the colour will come off. Astounded, he runs back to the others.]

MITIJIROO: Tjnung, baalup, marp dardarah dardarah. ['See, his skin is white, white.']

MOYARAHN: Allewah, gnuurrah yuar! kooling. ['Look out, come let us go.'] Miija baal warramat. ['They are very bad.']

[STIRLING draws back towards FRASER.]

STIRLING: Have we got anything we can give them?

FRASER: My butterfly net?

STIRLING: I don't think they would attach much value to that. No, something colourful. Your coat and trousers.

FRASER: I beg your pardon, sir?

STIRLING: Take your coat and trousers off, Mr Fraser.

[FRASER does so.]

FRASER: Sir, is this really necessary?

[FRASER folds his trousers neatly. STIRLING offers them to MITIJIROO. With STIRLING's help, MITIJIROO dons the coat, but hands the trousers to YAGAN, who tries to put them on as a coat. STIRLING moves to help YAGAN, but he raises his spear. STIRLING retreats again. They begin to enjoy their new clothes.]

MOYARAHN: [screaming] Allewah, allewah! ['Look out, look out!']

Kynya, kynya, niujuk. Warrah bok, warrah bok. ['Shame, shame, this clothing is bad.']

[Didgeridoo music and clapsticks fade in.]

Baal warramat, warramat. ['They are bad, bad.'] Yuar! gnullarah kooliny. Yuar! gnullarah kooliny. Yuar! yuar! yuar! ['Come, let us go. Come, let us go. Come, come, come.']

[The music builds to a climax and stops abruptly as MOYARAHN 'puts mobymé' (i.e. casts a death wish) on STIRLING and FRASER. She marks the ground in front of them with her wahna, and gestures to the sky. The Aborigines then exit.]

FRASER: [terrified] Can we go back to the boat now, sir?

STIRLING: That, Mr Fraser, would be an excellent idea.
[FRASER exits hurriedly.]

There is a drum roll. STIRLING addresses the audience as if they were attending a meeting in England.]

The natives are fascinated by the colour of our skin, believing it to be painted white, but care must be taken in all dealings with them, for they are vengeful and capricious and will not hesitate to resort to offensive weapons. The intention I adopted, therefore, in dealing with the natives, was to avoid all possible means of quarrel with them, and the necessity consequent thereon of rendering them hostile to future settlers in revenge for the severe measures we should be obliged to take, if put to our defence. I am happy to say in this plan I was not disappointed.

[STIRLING exits through the revolving screen, returning the Rainbow Serpent painting to its original form.]

SCENE FOUR

Country and Western music fades in as ROSIE and ALEC enter and take up their positions as at the end of Scene One.

ALEC: Yeah, it was good to see so many people at the funeral. There was even some Wongai from out in the eastern goldfields.

ROSIE: Yeah, a lot of those fellas remember him 'cause 'e used to be cuttin' sandalwood out there years ago.
ALEC: Pity Jamie couldn't get down for the funeral. The old fella always used to carry him around when 'e was a kid.

ROSIE: Anyway, I've got everything ready for 'im when 'e gets down.

ALEC: Yeah, you went to a lot of trouble, borrowin' that bed an' mattress orf that flamin' do-gooder Lyn what's-er-name.

ROSIE: Here you go again. Any *Weijala* does you a favour you call 'em a do-gooder.

ALEC: Just because she lent you a bed an' mattress you thing the sun shines out of her *kwon*. Wouldn't mind bettin' she'll be around to share the bed with 'im before too long.

ROSIE: You dirty-minded ol' bastard.

ALEC: [*laughing*] Watch your language, love, watch your language. [*Suddenly disgruntled*] We never needed the flamin' bed, anyway.

ROSIE: He'll be down today, you'll see.

ALEC: That'll be great, seeing that we buried the old fella yesterday.

ROSIE: It ain't easy for him being a student in Perth, workin', an' you gotta remember that.

ALEC: And 'e's gotta remember things ain't easy for you an' me. All these young fellas today, just 'cause they're gettin' an education they think they're 'igh an' mighty.

ROSIE: Well, at least 'e's gettin' a chance.

ALEC: Sure 'e's gettin' a chance, gunna be a schoolteacher. So what? Ain't gunna do me much good.

ROSIE: Why isn't it gunna do you much good?

ALEC: I'll tell you what 'e'll do, 'e'll finish up marryin' some *Weijala yok*, 'ave blue eyed kids and 'e won't want nothin' to do with us.

ROSIE: 'E can please himself who 'e marries.

ALEC: You mean who 'e shacks up with.

ROSIE: What you talking about? You and I been shacked up for the last twenty-five years . . . worse luck.

ALEC: That ain't got nothing to do with it, I don't want 'im marryin' no *Weijala yok*.

ROSIE: You're just plain bloody racist.

ALEC: No I'm not, but 'e's a *Nyoongah* like you and me, and 'e should marry a *Nyoongah*.

ROSIE: What about your sister Mary? She's married to a *Weijala*.

ALEC: Aw, that's different. Ol' Bill, 'e's all right.

ROSIE: Yeah, specially when 'e brings you a flagon around now an' again.

ALEC: Well, they buy you a Christmas present every year, don't they?

ROSIE: Oh yeah, every year she brings me tea towels, and every year she tells me to keep 'em nice and clean. Just because she's married white she tries to think white. She'll always be black. She's blacker than me.

[ALEC goes to the cupboard, takes out a flagon of wine and pours himself a glass.]

ALEC: You know, in the twenty-five years we been together I never won a argument yet.

ROSIE: And if you drink that you won't win this one either.

[He drinks boldly. ROSIE walks to the door.]

ALEC: Hey, where are you going?

ROSIE: [*defiantly*] Out!

[She exits and slams the door. ALEC drinks.]

SCENE FIVE

A folk ballad on a tin whistle fades in.

Alice, an Irish pioneer woman, enters through a revolving screen to reveal a painting of sailing ships on the Swan River in 1829. ALEC exits as she reads from a letter.

Alice: 'I am trembling all over with excitement. Next week Will and I set sail on the *Parmelia* for the Swan River Colony. Since poor Father was taken from us

I have felt an emptiness that's mighty and strong, but, with the prospect of our new life ahead of us, something snapped deep down at the quick of me, and I'm ready to start living again and dreaming again. I know I can do it with Will looking after me. Oh, I know it's going to be just grand. Captain Stirling will head our expedition and a detachment of the Sixty-Third Regiment goes with us for protection. We've sold all our possessions and take with us what seems only the barest necessities: bags of seed, farming implements, and a few livestock. Sure, we don't know what hardships we may suffer, but neither do we know how many of our fondest wishes may come true.

[She exits. The music changes abruptly to a lively folk dance tune. WILL enters with a musket, proudly surveys the land he has been granted, then exits.]

There is a drum roll, and STIRLING enters through the other revolving screen, revealing a Union Jack which cuts the rainbow serpent near the head. He reads from his journal.]

STIRLING: By the authority vested in me by His Majesty the King, I do hereby authorise William Patrick O'Flaherty to take up a selection of one thousand acres on the Upper Swan River, with the provision that the river frontage does not exceed one quarter mile.

[He exits through the screen, restoring the rainbow serpent. The folk dance repeats as WILL and ALICE stagger on, laden down with their possessions.]

The music cuts abruptly to didgeridoo and clapsticks as YAGAN, MITJUROO and MOYARAHN appear suddenly. Both parties take fright. WILL levels his musket, and YAGAN, his spear, while ALICE scrambles to take a loaf of bread from the trunk. Slowly she passes it to MITJUROO. She mimes that he should eat it. He tastes it and is pleasantly surprised.]

ALICE: It's bread. [Slowly] B-read.

WILL: It's good.

ALICE: Very good, very good.

MITJUROO: Bery goot, bery goot.

[They all laugh. The Aborigines slap their thighs.]

MOYARAHN: Kynya noonaking kartwarrah baalup tjennuk nyinning. Noonuk kuttij? Noonuk kuttij? Yuarl koorling, yuarl koorling, yuarl, yuarl, yuarl. Baal moolyuk noycha, moolyuk noycha, yuarl, yuarl. [Shame, you are mad. They are devils. Do you understand? Do you understand? Come, let us go. Come let us go, come, come, come. They smell of death, smell of death, come, come.]

[The didgeridoo crashes in as YAGAN and MITJUROO exit. MOYARAHN marks the ground and points to the sky as she did to STIRLING and FRASER, then exits. WILL and ALICE huddle together as the didgeridoo fades.]

ALICE: Oh, Will, I was so scared. Should I not have given them the bread?

WILL: It's all right, Alice, I was scared too. You did very well.

[He holds her firmly.]

Very well.

[There is a drum roll. WILL and ALICE freeze. STIRLING enters through the revolving screen, revealing the Union Jack. He reads from his journal.]

STIRLING: 'I do hereby give notice that any person or persons acting in a fraudulent, cruel or felonious manner towards the Aboriginal race, will be prosecuted and tried for the offence as if the same had been committed against any other of His Majesty's subjects.'

[STIRLING exits, restoring the rainbow serpent painting. Jaunty folk music fades in. WILL enters the kitchen revolving wall to reveal a crude settler's hut. ALICE reads a letter.]

ALICE: 'April the tenth, eighteen hundred and thirty. Gracious, if Mary could see me now! Yesterday Will instructed me how to plant cauliflower and cabbages. Well, I made a right mess of it and covered myself in mud. Will just stood there laughing at me. I've seldom seen him look so well and I've never loved him more.

The natives have paid several visits to our encamp-

ment. They are as black as ink and clad only in the scantiest of garments fashioned from the skins of animals. They jabber away to each other in a language that would cause Meg and the children a great deal of mirth. They repeat every word Will says, over and over, just like parrots.

[YAGAN and MITIJIROO enter, carrying a catch of mullet.]
[uneasily] Hello! [Calling] Will, come and see. It's our two native friends.

[Pause. ALICE becomes rather frightened.]
Will?

[At last WILL enters. YAGAN greets him.]

YAGAN: *Wuh, wuh.*

WILL: Oh hello Yagan, hello Mitijiroo. *Wuh, wuh.*

[They all laugh. An awkward pause.]

ALICE: Look at the fish, they've caught.

WILL: [pointing to the fish] Hmm, beautiful fresh fish.

YAGAN: Pish?

WILL: Yes, fish, fish.

YAGAN: [explaining to MITIJIROO] Pish, pish. *kulkana*, pish.

WILL: Ah, *kulkana*, fish.

[They laugh. WILL shows them his shovel and mimes digging.]

And this is a shovel. Shovel.

YAGAN: *Wahna.*

MITIJIROO: *Wahna koombahiny.* [The digging stick is huge.]

WILL: Shovel . . . shovel.

YAGAN: Chubble . . . chubble.

WILL: [indicating the spear in YAGAN'S hand] And that's a spear.

YAGAN: [demonstrating the spear] *Gitjul . . . gitjul karbul.*

[Spear . . . spear fish.]

[WILL retreats from the brandished spear.]

ALICE: Oh, Will, be careful.

WILL: [recovering] It's all right my dear, he's only showing me.

[Indicating the spear] Spear . . . spear.

YAGAN: Peer. Peer.

[He thinks for a moment.]

Peer pish.

ALICE: Oh, he's very clever, Will.

WILL: Yes, you spear fish. [Rubbing his stomach] Beautiful fish.

YAGAN: [to MITIJIROO] *Baal kobblo weent, kia kia.* [They are hungry, yes, yes.]

[He takes the fish and lays them at ALICE'S feet.]

ALICE: Oh no, he didn't mean that we wanted the fish . . . WILL: It's all right, my dear, we'll take the fish. We'll give them something in return.

ALICE: I could get them some flour.

[She exits. Pause.]

WILL: Thank you very much for the fish. We'll give you some flour, in a bag. You mix it with water, make berry good.

[ALICE returns with a bag of flour which she hands to YAGAN. The Aborigines are suspicious at first, but smelling the bag, they burst into laughter.]

YAGAN: Bery goot, bery goot.

WILL: Just add water.

[The two Aborigines exit.]

Thank you very much for the pish . . . fish!

[There is a drum roll. WILL and ALICE freeze. STIRLING enters through the revolving screen, again revealing the Union Jack behind him.]

STIRLING: I hereby proclaim that whereas the safety of the Colony from invasion and from the attack of hostile native tribes may require the establishment of a militia force, which on emergency may be depended upon to assist His Majesty's regular troops in the defence of the lives and property of the inhabitants of the territory, all male persons whatsoever between the ages of fifteen and fifty are hereby required to enrol themselves in the militia of the country.

[STIRLING exits through the screen, restoring the rainbow serpent.]

A gentle folk tune fades in quietly as ALICE reads from a diary.]

ALICE: 'I am sure that Meg would never believe me if I told her that there is a native here who actually appears to be intelligent and who has already learned several words of English. He calls himself "Yagan" and often comes to visit us, sometimes alone, and sometimes in the company of an older native called "Mitjijiroo". We believe Mitjijiroo to be Yagan's father, though of course we're not quite sure at this stage. I find him rather fascinating, really. Sometimes he brings a catch of fish to exchange for flour. You see, the natives have acquired a taste for bread, which they call "Bery goot", which causes Will to laugh and laugh. He's a decent soul, my Will, and he believes it is good to share our food supplies with the natives. I agree, and it is sensible too, to avoid the risk of it being taken by force.'

SCENE SIX

Country and Western music fades in as ALICE and WILL exit through the revolving wall, changing it back to the kitchen.

ALEC YORLAH enters and sleeps at the table, head on his arms, a glass and half-empty flagon at his elbow. As the music fades, JAMIE enters with an overnight bag and a guitar case, liberally plastered with land rights stickers. He sniffs the glass with distaste, then shakes his father.

JAMIE: Hi, Pop. Wake up.

ALEC: [*stirring*] Hullo. Gawd, I musta been asleep.

JAMIE: You sure were. Where's Mum?

ALEC: Oh, we 'ad a bit of a blue.

JAMIE: Nice homecoming, you two arguing again.

ALEC: [*grumpily*] Hey, d'ja come on yer own?

JAMIE: Yeah, why?

ALEC: Can't have no big mobs 'ere.

JAMIE: Looks to me like you got a nice hangover, Pop. S'pose you all got drunk after the funeral.

ALEC: Well, if we did at least we was 'ere to see the old bloke buried.

JAMIE: I'll bet that's what you and Mum were arguing about.

ALEC: [*angrily*] Why couldn't you get here yesterday?

JAMIE: [*offhand*] Oh, one bloke was going to Albany. He was going to give me a lift.

ALEC: Well?

JAMIE: He never turned up.

ALEC: Well 'ow didja git 'ere?

JAMIE: I hitch-hiked.

ALEC: With that guitar on yer back?

JAMIE: Well what's wrong with that?

ALEC: I'll tell ya what's wrong with it, ya missed the bloody funeral. Why didn't ya come on the bloody bus?

JAMIE: Because I'm not a bloody millionaire. I wanted to save some money.

ALEC: To buy a new guitar, I suppose.

JAMIE: Yeah, a hundred and forty bucks' worth.

ALEC: A hundred and forty bucks, that'd pay two months' rent for me and Mum.

[ROSIE enters with LYN, a white schoolteacher.]

ROSIE: [*kissing JAMIE*] How are you? Good to see you, love.

You remember Lyn, don't you? Her Mum and Dad live down in the corner house.

JAMIE: Yeah, I remember.

[ROSIE nudges him and he offers LYN a seat. A pause follows, during which ALEC glares at LYN. She tries to break the ice, but the conversation is embarrassingly forced.]

LYN: How long are you down for, Jamie?

ROSIE: Oh, he's down for two weeks. Then he has to be back at Teachers' Training College.

LYN: How's it going? You still like it?

JAMIE: Oh, yeah, great.

LYN: Still playing football?

JAMIE: Yeah, and a bit of basketball during summer.

LYN: Good.

ROSIE: Jamie always was good at sport. [*Showing LYN the*

radio on the sink] He won this at footy. Leading goal-kicker. An' 'e give it to me an' ol' boy for a Christmas present.

LYN: That's really good, Jamie. What about you, Mr Yorlah? Did you ever play any sport?

ALEC: I wasn't too bad at two-up.

[*He turns away from LYN and buries his head in his paper.*]

JAMIE: [*to LYN*] Where are you teaching now?

LYN: Mount Lawley.

ROSIE: Oh, isn't that nice? You must look each other up now and again.

JAMIE: Yeah, I'll get your phone number before I go back.

LYN: Why don't you come round and have dinner with Mum and Dad sometime? You too, Mrs Yorlah . . . and . . . Mr Yorlah.

ALEC: Better git me best suit out of mothballs.

JAMIE: [*under his breath*] *Kynya.*

ROSIE: Would you like a cup of tea, Lyn?

LYN: No, thank you. I really have to go . . . things to do. I'll see you later, Jamie.

[*She moves to the door.*]

'Bye, Mrs Yorlah. 'Bye . . . Mr Yorlah.

ALEC: 'Bye — er — Lyn.

[*She exits. As the door shuts ROSIE and JAMIE turn on ALEC.*]

ROSIE: Alec, how can you be so rude?

JAMIE: Yeah, Pop, you really were unnecessarily rude.

ALEC: [*Springing to his feet and mimicking JAMIE*] Yeah, Pop, you really were unnecessarily rude.

JAMIE: [*furiously*] All right, then you're just plain bloody ignorant. Does that suit you?

ROSIE: Yeah, what've you got against her?

ALEC: She's a flamin' do-gooder, that's what she is. [*Mimicking LYN*] 'Do you play any sport, Mr Yorlah?'

JAMIE: [*grabbing his guitar and heading for the door*] Well, if you can't talk civil to my friends there's no room in this bloody house for me.

ROSIE: [*soothingly*] Now, Jamie.

ALEC: I been dealing with people like her all me life. If they pay you a visit they're all over you. I bet she's runnin' us down to her flamin' mob right now.

JAMIE: [*burning*] Well, she certainly has got reason to talk about you, eh?

[*ALEC pushes past him to the door.*]

ROSIE: Where are you goin'?

ALEC: I'm goin' down the pub. At least I can find someone civil to talk to.

[*ALEC exits. ROSIE and JAMIE look at each other.*]

SCENE SEVEN

Folk music cuts in abruptly. ROSE and JAMIE exit, revolving the kitchen wall, as ALICE enters through a revolving screen, revealing a painting of the Swan River colony in 1832.

ALICE: [*reading from her diary*] 'September the seventeenth, eighteen thirty-two. There has been no rain here for months, and the heat is already so oppressive that I find it quite a labour even to write in my journal. I am trying desperately to hide my fear and anguish from my Will. There have been a number of incidents here resulting in the deaths of natives, and I am sure that it is our friend Yagan who is involved in all this terrible violence. What frightens me is that after each incident, Will has found a spear embedded in the wall of our hut. Poor Will, he tries to protect me by telling me that Yagan means no harm and is merely showing his displeasure, but I can be comforted like a child no longer. Lives are being lost for a mere sheep or a bag of flour. It's a tragedy, that's what it is, a tragedy.'

[*Folk music with a martial beat crashes in as ALICE moves to the table, and WILL enters and sits by her. PRIVATE JENKINS, carrying a musket, crosses the rainbow serpent painting and knocks at the door of the cottage.*]

JENKINS: [*calling*] Anybody 'ome?

ALICE: Who is it, Will?
 [WILL draws the curtain aside and looks out the window.]

WILL: A soldier.
 [He opens the door and JENKINS enters.]

JENKINS: Afternoon, sir. Private Jenkins of the Sixty-Third.

WILL: Will O'Flaherty. This is my wife, Alice.

ALICE: How do you do?

JENKINS: Not badly at all.

WILL: What brings you out here? Trouble?

JENKINS: Not for you, I hope, sir. Purely routine. We're investigatin' some complaints from farmers about a bit of sheep stealin' up river. Wondered if you'd lost anything?

WILL: No, not us. The natives around here are very friendly.
 [YAGAN enters through the Rainbow Serpent painting with a catch of fish.]

YAGAN: [calling to the cottage] *Wejjala! Wejjala!*
 [Inside the cottage there is no answer.]

I peer pish, *Wejjala*. You got berry goot?

WILL: It's all right. I'll go out and talk to him.
 [ALICE hands him a bag of flour.]

ALICE: The flour.
 [JENKINS intercepts the flour.]

JENKINS: Are you aware, sir, that the Government has forbidden settlers to give flour to the natives? If they want handouts they've to go down to the official rationing station.

WILL: It's not a handout, he comes to trade for it, with fish.

JENKINS: With fish? I suppose you can't catch your own fish. No, my friend, you're just scared, aren't you? If you don't give him his berry good he'll be in to pinch it, probably over your berry dead body.

ALICE: All right, so we're scared. There's nothing wrong with that, is there?

JENKINS: Only when people are so scared they'll protect their own little necks at the expense of everybody else's. Well, come on, let's go and have a word with

this little trading partner of yours, shall we? Leave the flour here.
 [He picks up his rifle.]

WILL: There'll be no need for that, Private.

JENKINS: It's all right, I'll just give 'im a bit of a fright, that's all.

YAGAN: [calling] Hey *wejjala*, you got berry goot?
 [He is met by JENKINS, with musket levelled. WILL and ALICE follow behind.]

JENKINS: Listen you, no berry good. You want berry good you go down Guv'ment rationing station. Down Mount's Bay, understand? You come here *kwippliny* [slapping his chest] sojr man, plenty trouble. [Tapping his musket] *Boorl boorl*, you plenty dead. Understand?

YAGAN: Yagan no *kwippliny*. Bring pish.

JENKINS: You go! Get off, I said.
 [JENKINS fires a shot into the air. YAGAN drops his fish and flees. JENKINS picks up the fish, laughing.]

WILL: There was no need to do that, was there?

JENKINS: [handing the fish to WILL] Only language they understand, sir.
 [He exits. YAGAN bursts in from another entrance.]

ALICE: Oh, Will.

YAGAN: Sojr *warramat*, *warramat*. Me do'ak *barminy*, *baal warramat*. [Soldier bad, bad. Me beat him with my club.]

WILL: Yagan, Yagan. Listen to me. He's a soldier. It's his job to stop stealing. Yagan *kwippliny*, soldier catch him.

YAGAN: Yagan *yuart kwippliny*. [No steal] You give Yagan berry goot.

WILL: [to ALICE] Go and get the flour for him. [To YAGAN] If we give it to you, it's all right, but you must not steal — sheep, pigs or berry good.

YAGAN: [rubbing his stomach] *Tjeeep kwobinyahn* [Sheep are very good.]

WILL: But the sheep belong to the white man. To the farmer.

YAGAN: *Yuart, Wejjala* kill *yonga*, *gwinnin*, *kuljuk*, *kalkama*. ['. . . kangaroo, duck, swan, mullet.']

WILL: But all those things belong to everyone.

YAGAN: Archh, *Wetjala kartwarrah*. ['... white man is mad.']
[ALICE enters with a bag of flour which she gives to YAGAN.]

ALICE: Yagan, here is berry good for you and your family. But remember, you must ask for it and not steal it.

YAGAN: If *Nyoongah* steal from *Nyoongah*, *Nyoongah* peer [indicating his leg] *niijal*. Not kill. *Wetjala boorl boorl*. [indicating his chest] here, and [his head] here. *Wetjala warramut*.

WILL: But Yagan, you must understand. The white fella takes stealing very seriously. If you steal they'll catch you, put you in prison, even kill you.

YAGAN: [*proudly*] *Yuart! Wetjala boorl boorl Nyoongah*, Yagan peer *Wetjala*.

WILL: [*shocked*] What white fella?

YAGAN: *Kia kia*, Yagan, *Mitjiroo*, *Mundi*, peer *Wetjala*, plenty *Wetjala*.

ALICE: Oh, Will, the *Entwhistle* murder, it was Yagan.

WILL: Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

YAGAN: [*laughing*] All *pimish*, *Wetjala boorl boorl Nyoongah*. Yagan peer *Wetjala*. All *pimish*, plenty shake hand. [*He offers his hand. WILL rejects it.*]

WILL: No, Yagan. You go. Go now.

YAGAN: *Wetjala kartwarrah*. ['White man is mad.'] [*He exits. WILL and ALICE move back to their hut. Threatening didgeridoo music begins. YAGAN is thrown back onstage by JENKINS, who chains him at the point of his gun and hustles him offstage again. The music stops suddenly. WILL reads a letter.*]

WILL: To the Governor. 'Dear Sir, this letter is in the nature of a plea for mercy and understanding in dealing with the case of the native Yagan. In my continued contact with him over the past two years I have found him possessed of noble instincts, and a sense of justice that would do credit to any British citizen. Furthermore, sir, the farmers in the outer lying regions are concerned for the possible consequences, should Yagan be executed. As the militia cannot afford sufficient protection against attack, we request, with re-

spect, sir, that you consider leniency towards Yagan on this occasion. Your obedient servant, William Patrick O'Flaherty.'

[*There is a drum roll. STIRLING enters through a revolving screen, again revealing a Union Jack.*]

STIRLING: Whereas I have received many pleas for clemency in the case of the native Yagan, and whereas it appears likely that retribution from the natives would be executed upon innocent people were the said Yagan to be executed, I do therefore order him to be sent under armed guard to Carnac Island, there to be instructed in Christianity and the British way of life.

[*STIRLING exits, restoring the Rainbow Serpent picture. WILL and ALICE sit at the table. ALICE reads a letter.*]

ALICE: 'May twenty-third, eighteen thirty-three. I am frightened for my life. Two days ago Yagan escaped from Carnac Island. The next day the body of Private Jenkins, Yagan's captor, was found in a well. I never liked him in my life, but I pray the Lord will protect Mrs Jenkins and the little ones.'

[*YAGAN crosses the Rainbow Serpent, carrying JENKINS' coat, hat, and a spear. He exits.*]

I do think my sorrow and trials of late have been almost more than I can bear. I know I must give Will my support, but I am so afraid.'

[*YAGAN and MITJIROO appear in front of the Rainbow Serpent. ALICE starts and attracts WILL'S attention.*]

Will, there's someone outside.

[*WILL listens, then relaxes.*]

WILL: It's nothing. You're imagining it.

ALICE: No, I'm not, please check at the window.

[*WILL goes to the window. YAGAN and MITJIROO crouch down.*]

WILL: There's no one there.

ALICE: I'm sorry, I'm just so nervous all the time.

WILL: There's no need to worry. We're on good terms with them. They know us.

ALICE: That's what I'm afraid of.

YAGAN: [calling to the cottage] *Wetjala, Wetjala!*

ALICE: Will!

[Will takes his musket and goes to the door.]

YAGAN: *Wetjala!*

ALICE: I knew there was someone there.

YAGAN: *Wetjala, Wetjala!*

WILL: Who is it? Who's there?

ALICE: Oh Will, you can't let them in.

WILL: What name?

YAGAN: Yagan.

ALICE: There's others. I'm sure of it.

WILL: One fella only! I'll open the door but one fella only come.

ALICE: Ask him what he wants.

WILL: You want berry good?

YAGAN: No, we *wahnging, wahnging*.

WILL: He says he wants to talk.

ALICE: All right, he can come in, but make sure he comes in alone.

[WILL opens the door and admits YAGAN, who is very angry and wild.]

YAGAN: *Wetjala mahmboyet* Premantle, kill brother.

WILL: I know. White fellas *boorl boorl* Domjum.

YAGAN: Why, why?

WILL: Because Domjum stealing, that's why.

YAGAN: I peer two *Wetjala*.

WILL: No, you mustn't do that. White fella kill you then.

YAGAN: *Wetjala* kill *Nyoongah*, plenty *Nyoongarah*. Me go n kill *wetjala*. *Wetjala boorl boorl* Domjum, kill my brother . . .

WILL: Yagan, listen to me, you kill white fella, plenty white fellas come and kill you.

YAGAN: [scornfully] Ah. *Nyoongarah moorditj*. *Wetjala yuart*. ['Black man is good. White man is nothing.']

WILL: No, there'll be many of them. Soldiers with horses, many guns.

YAGAN: *Wetjala yuart*, *Nyoongarah moorditj*.

ALICE: Will, I don't understand what he's saying.

WILL: Neither do I.

YAGAN: [quietly] *Me gijul Wetjala*. ['Me spear white men.']
[He holds up two fingers and rushes out the door.]

ALICE: Yagan! Yagan!

[There is a drum roll. STIRLING enters through the revolving screen, again revealing the Union Jack.]

STIRLING: Whereas it appears that a murder was committed yesterday on the road to Fremantle by a party of natives, headed by a particular native known as Yagan, I do hereby declare the natives Yagan and Mitijiroo to be outlaws, deprived of the protection of British law, and I do hereby offer a reward of thirty pounds to any person producing their bodies dead or alive.

[He exits, restoring the Rainbow Serpent. A crowd is heard. As the noise builds MITIJIROO, in chains, crosses in front of the Rainbow Serpent. There is a sound of a firing squad being called to order with the words 'ready, aim, fire'. Gunshots are heard. ALICE enters.]

ALICE: [reading from her diary] Today I saw the most dreadful sight. Mitijiroo was captured yesterday after a long but inevitable pursuit. He was shot by a firing squad of six soldiers from the Sixty-Third Regiment. Today his body was hung for public viewing.

[YAGAN enters.]

YAGAN: [calling to the cottage] *Wetjala?*

WILL: Stay here, Alice.

ALICE: No, I'm coming too.

[They both walk out through the door and reappear facing

YAGAN.]

YAGAN: Where my father, he walk?

WILL: Your father's a prisoner on Carnac Island.

YAGAN: You *koohyamul*.

WILL: No, I'm telling you the truth. The soldiers have put him on Carnac.

YAGAN: He gud away. He *dalyaniny, dalyaniny*.

WILL: He got away before, not this time.

YAGAN: Why you say 'not'?

WILL: Soldiers put chains on him this time.

YAGAN: *Nyoongah kwipple* boat. Bring *baal nitjuk*. ['Black men will steal a boat. Bring him back.']

WILL: *No, yuart*, you must not do that.

YAGAN: [*suspiciously*] Why you say *yuart*?

ALICE: Will, you must tell him. He has a right to know.

YAGAN: *Nitjuk noonuk yok wahnging?* ['Why does your woman speak?']

WILL: I don't know what he's saying.

ALICE: You know what he wants to know. Tell him.

[*WILL turns away.*]

If you won't tell him I'll tell him myself.

[*WILL gives no answer.*]

[*To YAGAN*] Your father is dead. Soldiers shoot, *boort*, *boort*, kill.

YAGAN: Which one kill? Which one kill my father? *Wetjala?*

WILL: It was a firing squad.

[*YAGAN fails to comprehend.*]

Many soldiers. [*Frustrated*] I don't know which one.

[*YAGAN strides out. WILL and ALICE return to their hut.*]

Didjeridoo music plays as YAGAN enters slowly with his spear. He sits ritualistically in front of the rainbow serpent and, as if entranced, slowly paints himself with morning paint. Suddenly he takes up his spear and runs off as the music builds to a climax, and cuts. A gunshot rings out.

[*ALICE reads from her diary.*]

ALICE: 'Yagan is dead. Two boys, William Keats, aged eighteen, and his brother James, aged thirteen, met up with Yagan and pretended to be friendly. Yagan invited them to his camp and shared his meal of damper with them. The elder boy held his rifle casually in his arms and waited for Yagan to move unsuspectingly into the line of fire, then shot him through the head. Another native, Heegan, attempted to spear the boy, but was shot in the head by the younger brother. As the two boys fled, now unarmed, a third native speared Yagan's killer while his brother escaped. A party of settlers returned to the site. Yagan and William Keats lay dead. While Heegan lay moan-

ing, one of the settlers put a gun to his head and blew it apart. He then hacked off Yagan's head with a knife and skinned the body to souvenir his tribal markings. [*She exits.*]

'*Rule Britannia*' plays softly, as an English scientist carrying a small polished jarrah box enters through the revolving screen, again revealing the Union Jack. He takes a letter from the box and reads.]

SCIENTIST: 'To Mr T. J. Pettigrew, F.R.C.S. Dear sir. I am sending you the head of an Aboriginal native of a tribe that frequents the recently formed Swan Colony. Known as Yagan, he was believed to have been a leader of his people and ever disposed to violent and criminal activity. His nature was sullen, implacable and ill-tempered, in short a most complete and savage villain. This head was removed by his killer in order to obtain a reward of some thirty pounds. It was then smoked in the stump of a tree for three months, which has preserved the head, but caused the facial features to shrink, and the hair to become somewhat lank. [*He produces the head from the box.*]

I hope nevertheless that this piece will prove of phrenological interest and a worthwhile addition to your collection.'

[*He replaces the head in the box and exits, restoring the Rainbow Serpent painting. 'Rule Britannia' finishes loudly.*]

SCENE EIGHT

ROSIE and JAMIE enter, revolving the kitchen wall. JAMIE sits at the table and reads a book. ROSIE makes a sandwich.

ROSIE: What d'you want in your sandwich, Jamie?

[*JAMIE gives no answer.*]

Jamie? Peanut butter or vegemite?

[*She taps his book with a spoon. JAMIE looks up.*]

JAMIE: Oh, sorry Mum. I'll have a coffee.

[*He continues to read.*]

ROSIE: In your sandwich?

JAMIE: Oh, no . . . peanut paste, please.

ROSIE: [*taking his book*] What's that you're reading?
Living Black. 'Blacks talk to Kevin Gilbert'. He a
Nyoongah?

JAMIE: Nah, 'e's a *Koori*, black fella from the Eastern States.

ROSIE: Oh, yeah.

JAMIE: You know Gloria Brennan?

ROSIE: Oh yeah, *Wongai* girl from Kalgoorlie way.

JAMIE: She's got a bit in here, whole chapter. And you ought to hear some of the things she says. Here, I'll read you a bit.

'My mother was used as a teacher on a settlement once too. She was taken away from my grandmother because she was a half-caste. All half-castes, as they called them, were rounded up in Western Australia back in those days. And then they were put on a settlement down in the South-West that was right out of their area. Out of sight, out of mind.'

ROSIE: You don't 'ave to read books to know about things like that. Somethin' just like that 'appened to your father.

JAMIE: Yeah, but the trouble with Pop and his generation is they got no guts. If a *Wetjala* said 'jump', they all jumped.

ROSIE: They 'ad to jump. If not they went to gaol. Anyway, I don't want you talkin' about your father like that. 'E's respected in this town, 'e's in the dart club; and another thing, 'e don't owe nobody nothin'.

JAMIE: Yeah. He seems to spend a lot of his time drinking with those dings down the pub. He ought to call himself 'Yorlatti', not 'Yorlah'. If you ask me Pop spends too much time down that pub.

ROSIE: 'E's no worse than anybody else.

JAMIE: There seems to be plenty of baled hay around this year. Why doesn't he try and get some hay carting?

ROSIE: *Nyorn*, 'e's got a crook back, that's why.

JAMIE: He seems to bend over that pool table down the pub all right.

ROSIE: Look, half the people in this town are on Social Services, *Nyoongahs* and *Wetjals* there's plenty like your father.

JAMIE: Pop must know every screw and bolt and stick of furniture in that Social Service office.

ROSIE: Look, what are you pickin' on your father for?

JAMIE: I'm not, all I'm sayin' is, he spends too much time down the pub. The way things are going, you're going to have an alcoholic on your hands, you see.

ROSIE: I want no more talk about your father, you 'ear me?

JAMIE: But what I'm saying can happen.

[*ALEC enters, rather under the weather. He flops down into a chair.*]

ALEC: Anybody 'ome?

JAMIE: See what I mean?

ROSIE: You shut up.

ALEC: What are you two whisperin' about?

JAMIE: Looks like you had a skinful, Pop.

ROSIE: You're back early, pub burn down?

ALEC: No, the flamin' place was crawlin' with coppers.

JAMIE: What 'appened?

ALEC: Somebody broke in there last night and knocked off a coupla dozen bottles of plonk.

JAMIE: I bet they blamed blacks for that.

ALEC: Well, they oughta be caught and locked up for three months.

JAMIE: But Pop, you're condemning your own people and you don't even know that they did it.

ALEC: Ah, I wouldn't put it past some of the blokes that drink down there. Look at ol' Skinner, I wouldn't put it past 'im.

ROSIE: *Kynya*, just fancy, blamin' an old man like 'im.

JAMIE: Yeah, for a start, how would ol' Skinner carry a coupla dozen flagons with his gammy arm?

ALEC: Oh, I dunno who did it, but I do know Ron wouldn't let me book up a couple of bottles because of what happened there last night.

JAMIE: Well, that shows that Ron is a bloody racist.

ALEC: Before, I could go into that pub and book up bottles any time.

JAMIE: I remember when you were working at the meat-works you couldn't even go in that pub and have a drink with your mates after work.

ALEC: Oh, that was years ago.

JAMIE: And Ron was running the place then. Anyway Pop, all you got to do is go on being a good Jacky and you'll get on . . .

ALEC: Who are you calling a Jacky? The Jackies today are the educated ones like you.

JAMIE: Look Pop, you're not worried about those fellas being blamed for stealin' the grog, you're upset because Ron wouldn't let you book up a couple of bottles.

ALEC: [standing up, furiously] Anyway it's none of your business . . .

[A fight looms. ROSIE steps between them.]

ROSIE: Ay ay . . . You two stop it now. Jamie, you make yourself useful and go down and get some bread.

[JAMIE sidles to the door.]

JAMIE: [on his way out] Jacky.

ROSIE: Git.

[She turns to ALEC.]

And as for you, you can go and sleep it off.

[They both exit.]

SCENE NINE

Folk music. The actress who previously played ALICE enters in modern dress.

ACTRESS: The death of Yagan did not end the violence in the Swan River Colony. While Yagan's tribe was quiet, to the south of Perth, along the Murray River,

there was more bloodshed. In eighteen thirty-four Captain Stirling returned to the colony after a year's absence.

[A drum roll. STIRLING enters, but not through the screen.]
STIRLING: [reading from his journal] On my late return to the settlement I learned that a soldier of the Twenty-First Regiment had recently been killed by natives. In addition, I learned of the duplicity and unprovoked ferocity of the same tribe, in the course of which practices they have murdered four white men and seriously wounded two others, independent of sundry robberies of valuable horses and of a mill near Perth.

It therefore became the most urgent necessity that a check be put to the career of that particular tribe. I therefore availed myself of the first opportunity to proceed to the vicinity of the proposed new township of Pinjarra, accompanied by a squad of the newly formed Military Corps.

[A SOLDIER enters, carrying a musket. Sound effects fade in softly.]

SOLDIER: On the twenty-seventh of October, by Oakley's Brook Junction, we came upon a camp of some sixty to seventy natives.

STIRLING: [cocking a revolver] The rain, which had been threatening for some time, began to fall heavily.

SOLDIER: Captain Ellis, with Mr Norcott and three soldiers, rode towards the camp.

STIRLING: They were seen, the alarm was given in the camp, and more natives emerged from their shelters.

SOLDIER: The men gathered up spears and woomeras, the women and children fell back towards the river.

STIRLING: Captain Ellis and his party galloped their horses into the middle of them.

[The noise of the battle increases.]

SOLDIER: The men panicked and fell back.

STIRLING: Then the natives were caught in a crossfire from mounted men on both banks.

SOLDIER: For an hour we fired, picking them off as they tried to escape.

[Two Aboriginal men enter through the revolving screens in the Rainbow Serpent to reveal the Western Australian flag and the emblem of the sesquicentenary celebrations. STIRLING and the SOLDIER shoot them dead. The sound effects cut. They freeze.]

ACTRESS: Between sixty and seventy natives were sighted in the camp. It was surrounded and subjected to the continuous fire of twenty-four guns for one hour. The wounded and those trying to escape were shot down. The official estimate was fifteen to twenty dead, but only eight women and several children were finally rounded up.

[The SOLDIER exits and returns with an Aboriginal woman, whom he throws down at STIRLING'S feet.]

STIRLING: This is to be a warning, a warning to all of you. The white man will not tolerate murder. If there is any more bloodshed in this area, four times the number of soldiers will be sent here to kill every man, woman and child between here and the mountains. Those of you whom we have mercifully allowed to live today must carry this message. You cannot fight us. The white man is too strong.

[STIRLING and the SOLDIER exit through the screens, restoring the painting.]

ACTRESS: As white settlement spread south, similar incidents occurred. In eighteen forty-one at Vasse, seven Aborigines were shot by Mr Bussell. In eighteen forty-two Bussell shot an Aboriginal caught stealing flour. The verdict was self defence. In the same year he shot a seven-year-old girl at point blank range. The verdict: accidental death. In eighteen forty-two Captain Molloy rounded up an entire tribe at Vasse and according to reports exterminated them and burnt their bodies. In eighteen twenty-nine the Aboriginal population of the South West was estimated at around thirteen thousand. By nineteen hundred and one there were less than eight hundred full-bloods left.

[A slow drum beat starts up. All the actors enter and stand as an Aboriginal actor sings.]

ACTOR: You once smiled a friendly smile,
Said we were kin to one another.
Thus with guile for a short while
Became to me a brother.

Then you swamped my way of gladness,
Took my children from my side,
Snapped shut the law book on my sadness
At Yirrkala's plea denied.

I remember Lake George hills,
The thin stick bones of people;
Sudden death and greed that kills,
That gave you church and steeple.

I cry again for Worralarra men,
Gone from kith and kind;
I wondered when I would find a pen
To probe your fickle mind.

I mourn again for the Murray tribe
Gone too, without a trace.
I thought of the soldier's diatribe
And the smile on the Governor's face.

You murdered me with rope, with gun,
You massacred my enclave,
You buried me deep on McLarty's run,
Flung into a common grave.

Then you propped me up with Christ, red
tape,

Tobacco, grog and fears,
Then disease and lordly rape
Through the brutish years.

Now you primly say you're justified
And sing of a nation's glory;
But I think of a people crucified,
The real Australian story.

[All repeat the last two lines. The drum continues, and the actors file off stage.]

END OF ACT ONE