



Presented by Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts in association with Queensland Performing Arts Centre

SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY

by **GEORGE BOSTOCK**

**IN VIETNAM THERE
WERE NO BLACKFELLAS
OR WHITEFELLAS,
WE WERE ALL TARRED
WITH THE SAME BRUSH.**

OUR COLOUR WAS GREEN...

MERIVALE STREET STUDIO

12 Merivale Street South Brisbane (Montague Road end)

17 August - 1 September 2001

Phone Qtix 136 246 or www.qtix.com.au

Strong language is used within the context of this performance.



THE VIETNAM WAR

Although Australians served in Vietnam over thirty years ago, for many the memory of that time is as fresh as when it happened. The emotions tied with serving overseas and coming home run as deeply now as they did then.

Australia was drawn into the Second Indochina War after the French and despite a bitter eight-year campaign, were soundly defeated by the Viet Minh forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. A Western Hemisphere dread of Communism was a catalyst in this sorry process. And Australia's Menzies Government embraced a desire to form a strong alliance with the USA following on from the Second World War. After conflicts against Communist forces in Korea, Borneo and Malaya and confrontation with Indonesia, our nation joined the Vietnam conflict in 1962.

Our involvement lasted 10 years. Over 59,000 troops were deployed to fight this counter-revolutionary civil war that polarised the Australian nation. The use of conscripted National Servicemen in a foreign war divided the country as never before. Some 520 Australians, including 200 National Servicemen, did not return from the war. Thousands more were wounded. The USA lost over 53,000 servicemen.

It was a war that in hindsight could never be won by the intervening allied forces. The North Vietnamese nationalist forces that fought under the Communist flag were prepared to fight for decades and longer if needed. America and her allies lost faith in their Vietnamese allies and withdrew from the conflict in 1972. Communist forces fighting under the Viet Cong flag stormed into Saigon and claimed victory in 1975. Their losses were counted in the many hundreds of thousands.

For the Australians, the bulk of fighting in Vietnam was taken to the enemy by infantrymen. This involved long weeks on patrol in the enervating tropical climate of Vietnam. It was a war with no front lines, against an enemy who could be dressed as a peasant or a warrior and who was a constant threat by day and night.

For men like 28 year-old George Bostock, it was a war in the shadows of the primary and secondary jungle. A war of carrying heavy loads on search and destroy and cordon and search operations. The foot soldiers' greatest fear was not the enemy but the hidden menace of mines and booby traps that could tear a man's leg off or cut him in half. It was a war where every soldier depended on his mates around him to stay alert and to stay alive. Contact with the enemy was often within 15 metres in the gloom of the jungle canopy and was usually a sharp, violent and deadly affair.

For Australian Indigenous soldiers it was also a time when there was no colour, creed or religion that mattered. Their primary purpose and greatest concern was to destroy their enemy and come home alive. In this demanding and hostile environment there was no room for racism, only mateship, friendship and teamwork. That teamwork forged bonds that can never be broken and created friendships that know no bounds or limitations.

A tour of duty lasted 12 months and coming home was something every soldier looked forward to greatly. The novelty of being shot at wore off quickly and the peace and tranquility of Australia was every soldier's dream. But it was a dream that turned ugly when soldiers returning from the war found that many of their own countrymen, and half of the politicians, did not support their efforts. The scars from their war have taken a long time to heal, and for many never will.

Courtesy of Gary McKay
Author of *In Good Company - One Man's War in Vietnam*

KOOEMBA JDARRA INDIGENOUS PERFORMING ARTS

Based in Brisbane, Kooemba Jdarra aims to provide an avenue for the artistic expression of Indigenous culture, identity and self-determination through the performing arts. The company was incorporated in 1993, the International Year of Indigenous People, and maintains a strong commitment to professionalism and excellence in the arts.

Kooemba Jdarra produces contemporary performances that present the stories of Indigenous Australians throughout Australia and internationally.

Kooemba Jdarra is a not-for-profit organisation that receives core funding through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission, the Australia Council and Arts Queensland. It is also proud to acknowledge the support of ENERGEX who, by way of an ongoing cash and in-kind sponsorship, recognise Kooemba Jdarra's value to the community.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Creative Team

Writer GEORGE BOSTOCK

Director NADINE McDONALD

Designer ALISON ROSS

Assistant Designer KELLIE FLYNN

Lighting Designer/Production Manager JASON ORGAN

Sound Designer BRETT COLLERY

Marketing Manager LENNY VANCE

Stage Manager DANIELLE KELLIE

Assistant Stage Manager JAMES LEES

Administrative Officer & Foyer Display CARMEN PEREZ

Cast

Nanna ROXANNE McDONALD

Stewie BRADLEY BYQUAR

Ken ARIU SIO

Johnnie PAUL DENNY

Tony YALIN OZCULIK

Wes NIGEL POULTON

Peter MARC RICHARDS

Buddy SEAN DENNEHY

A MESSAGE FROM KOOEMBA'S CHAIR

Since its inception in 1993, Kooemba Jdarra has provided a beginning for the careers of a number of now highly regarded actors, producers and arts workers. Whilst we have strived to piquant the performing arts with an Indigenous flavour through our works, it is our success at providing a career platform that has been most pleasing.

We are now looking to become a leader in the presentation of contemporary Indigenous theatre. We will continue to resist stereotypes and drive diversity. We may not always succeed but we will certainly not shy away from the role of experimenters. For that is our style and the very nature of contemporary arts.

We challenge you as our audience to come with us on this journey. Be transported. Be surprised. And take what you will from our presentations for they are there to be shared.

In return your support will help us uncover the Indigenous stars of the future.

Glenis Charlton

A MESSAGE FROM ENERGEX

ENERGEX decided to support Kooemba Jdarra because we believed that it would make an enriching contribution to the community of Queensland and beyond.

As one of the largest energy companies in Australia, ENERGEX ensures it supports organisations that are a part of the very fabric of our society and will provide a valuable contribution to our community.

Kooemba Jdarra, through their many projects, including *Seems Like Yesterday*, give all of us the opportunity to experience Indigenous culture and appreciate its many facets.

ENERGEX are proud to encourage that appreciation and help bring these stories to a wider audience.

Greg Maddock - Chief Executive Officer

GENERAL MANAGER'S NOTE

Kooemba Jdarra will soon be uprooting to the new Judith Wright Centre for the Contemporary Arts. This is an exciting development for the company and we are proud to be part of Brisbane's blossoming cultural significance.

In addition, we are cultivating new opportunities through strategic marketing and by tapping into performance opportunities outside of the traditional theatre field. As Des Partridge said recently in *The Courier-Mail*, Kooemba Jdarra is "sowing sweet ground".

We look forward to your continued support and come Spring, feel free to visit us in our new digs.

Vera Ding

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When the Vietnam War started I was merely a twinkle in my father's eye. As I grew up, the most I ever learnt about this war was from a single chapter in a book and a tele movie. I took very little time to consider the reality of it. The reality of the war. The place. The men who fought, died or were injured.

Seems Like Yesterday is a powerful story of mateship, identity, loss and pain in a time of war. It is a truthful interpretation of the Vietnam experience told through the eyes of seven brave men. These men were strangers thrown together in fearful circumstances. And through their personal conflicts and experiences, the need for strength and trust in each other brought them closer together.

The most powerful element of *Seems Like Yesterday* is that it is told through the first-hand experiences of the playwright George Bostock. George is a very special man. We feel very honoured that he has shared his story with us and that we have the opportunity to present it to a wider audience. His story contributes to a learning process. Through it we gain a better understanding, a greater awareness and a deeper appreciation of those men who gave so much in the Vietnam War.

Please enjoy this production. Laugh, cry and celebrate the true struggle of the human spirit it portrays. Through it we honour those who did not make it back to our shores and venerate those who are here with us now. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

Nadine McDonald

ABOUT GEORGE BOSTOCK

After seeing a play about life in the World War 1 trenches, George Bostock realised there was a story in his own life experiences and in particular his time in Vietnam.

George was born in 1940 and belongs to the Bundjalung people from the Northern Rivers District of New South Wales. His family moved to Brisbane when he was a child and he grew up in Moorooka.

In his teens George was battling on the streets of Sydney. He learnt there were only two options for him to get an education; in jail or in the army.

George eventually spent 20 years in the Army and in this time saw active service in both Borneo and Vietnam with the 4th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment.

He looks back on this time with mixed emotions. There was the comradeship and bonds formed through adversity but in contrast there was also the tragedy of loss. As well as the death of mates, many Vietnam veterans talk of the loss of youth and innocence.

In writing *Seems Like Yesterday*, George was originally only looking to record the story for his grandchildren. But in 1992 he was awarded an Australia Council Workshop Grant and subsequently the play underwent significant development. Eventually George showed the script to Kooemba Jdarra. Artistic Director Nadine MacDonald liked what she read and tonight we see its delivery as a completed project.

But this is by no means the end of the story for George Bostock. At 60 years of age he feels he has found himself. He is now a recognised playwright and actor (having made his debut in Queensland Theatre Company's 2000 production of *Fountains Beyond*). He has gone on to play the role of Chucksa in Sydney Theatre Company's production of *The Cherry Pickers* and who knows what's next.

As George says, "You wouldn't be dead for quids!"

CREATIVE TEAM

NADINE McDONALD – Director

Nadine has worked with Kooemba Jdarra for the past three years as workshop tutor, co-ordinator, Artistic Associate and now Artistic Director. In this time she has developed and directed programs and performances for Brisbane City Council, Ipswich City Council, the Australia Council, the Australian Council for Reconciliation, International Women's Day, schools, community groups and organisations that highlight contemporary Indigenous culture and performing arts. In 1988, Nadine performed in the Australian tour of Jimmy Chi's *Corrugation Road* for Black Swan Theatre, Perth and in 1999 was the Assistant Director for *Romeo and Juliet*, a joint production between Kooemba Jdarra and La Boite.

Directing credits for Kooemba Jdarra include *Goin' to the Island* (Brisbane season and the Inaugural *Ten Days on the Island* Festival), *Skin Deep*, *Where From You Came?*, and co directing/writing *Binni's Backyard* for the *Out of the Box* Festival 2001.

Later this year Nadine will co-direct *Small Mercies* for La Boite Theatre Company.

BRADLEY BYQUAR – (playing the part of Stewie Jackson)

Brad moved to Sydney in 1991. Originally from Brisbane he has worked for such companies as Twelfth Night Theatre, Grin and Tonic, Street Arts, La Boite, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland Performing Arts Trust and Kooemba Jdarra. In Sydney, Bradley has worked for EntActe Theatre, Sidetrack Theatre, Toe Truck, Urban Theatre Projects, Q-Theatre, Australian Peoples Theatre, Griffin Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company and Belvoir Street as well as Melbourne Theatre Company, Playbox and The State Theatre Company of South Australia.

Most recent theatre credits include *Somewhere in the Darkness* (APT/STC); *Up the Road and As You Like It* (Belvoir Street); *Ship of Fools* (Griffin Theatre); and *Miss Tanaka* (Playbox/Handspan Visual Theatre, Melbourne). Brad has numerous television appearances to his credit. Film credits include *Zone 39*, *Turning April*, and the short films, *Warm Strangers* and *Wind*.

Brad is thrilled to be performing in George Bostock's play for Kooemba Jdarra, which pays tribute to all returned servicemen, and to those who sacrificed their lives.

SEAN DENNEHY – (playing the part of Buddy Holley)

Sean Dennehy is a London born actor currently residing in Sydney, where he has appeared in such stage productions as *Hamlet*, *For The Birds* and *Talking Dirty* for Whoosh Productions and in Brisbane, *Zoo Illogical* and *Butterfly Seer*. Television and film credits include *Home and Away*, *Medivac*, *Fire*, *Flipper* and *Farscape*. Films include *Mr Reliable* and *US Movie of the Week*, *Alien Cargo*. Sean is currently writing, directing and appearing in a series of comedy sketches for Foxtel's Comedy Channel. He is also a performer for IZIT? Entertainment in Sydney and Brisbane.

PAUL DENNY – (playing the part of John Bowden)

Paul is one of Brisbane's busiest actors.

Paul's many productions at La Boite Theatre include the premiere season of *Milo's Wake* (directed by Jim Vilé), *First Asylum* and *The John Wayne Principle* (directed by Lewis Jones), as well as *Rio Saki* and *Other Falling Debris*, *Hamlet* and *Blackrock*.

Paul won a 1997 Matilda Award for his performances in *Third World Blues* and *Scar*.

He was directed by Lewis Jones in Someone's production of *Bouncers*, as well as the phenomenally successful three seasons of *He Died with a Felafel in His Hand*.

Film and television appearances include *Finding Hope*, *Hildegard*, *The Love of Lionel's Life*, *Day of The Roses*, *Joey*, *Medivac*, *Waste*, *Last Laugh* and *Eat In Or Takeaway*.

This year he has performed in Michael Gow's productions of *Fred and Dirt* for QTC and will appear later this year in QTC's production of *Richard II*. In 2000 he played Frank Gardner in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, also for QTC.

Seems Like Yesterday will be Paul's first production for Kooemba Jdarra.

ROXANNE McDONALD – (playing the part of Nanna)

Roxanne has worked in theatre for the past eleven years and has travelled from the northernmost tip to the southern regions of Australia. She toured Europe with The Glasshouse Performance Group's production of *The Other Mother*. Theatre credits include Kooemba Jdarra's *Radiance* (co-production with Queensland Theatre Company), *The Cherry Pickers*, *Murri Time*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Bethel and Maude*, *A Life of Grace and Pity*, *Crossings*, *Black Shorts*, *Romeo and Juliet* (co-production with La Boite), *Luck of the Draw*, *Changing Time* and *Spirit*, Queensland Theatre Company's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *Sunshine Club*, *Black-ed Up*, *Fountains Beyond* and Brolgas Touring Programs; *Kit's Murri Time*, *Fractal's Coriolanus*, La Boite's *Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*. Roxanne received a special commendation Matilda Award in 2000 and is regarded as one of Brisbane's finest and most versatile actors. Roxanne will next be seen as the Duchess of York in Queensland Theatre Company's *Richard II*.

YALIN OZCULIK – (playing the part of Tony Papas)

Earlier this year Yalin completed a Queensland tour playing Ned in La Boite's production of *Milo's Wake*, which won the NSW Premier's Literary Award for its writers Margery Forde and Michael Forde. This was Yalin's second show in a row with director Andrew Buchanan, having previously played Ferdinand in Harvest Rain's production of *Love's Labour's Lost* at La Boite.

Yalin spent most of 2000 touring! After playing Alex in the critically-acclaimed, world premiere season of *After January* at La Boite (directed by Lewis Jones), he toured Central Queensland with the show. He then reprised his role of Amir in the national tour of Matrix

Theatre's *A Beautiful Life* (directed by Michael Fletcher), which won four Greeri Room Awards including Best Ensemble Cast. Also in 2000 Yalin played Ben in the interstate tour of the award winning play *X-Stacy*.

Other stage work includes the original production of *A Beautiful Life* for the 1998 ENERGEX Brisbane Festival; the return La Boite Theatre season and tour of *X-Stacy*; and the role of Benvolio in Kooemba Jdarra and La Boite's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Yalin graduated from the University of Queensland in 1997 with a BA (Drama).

Seems Like Yesterday is Yalin's first production with Kooemba Jdarra.

NIGEL POULTON – (playing the part of Wes Hinton)

Nigel is an actor and fight choreographer. A graduate of the Actors Conservatory in Brisbane, he was one of four founding Directors of Schnapper Head (Australia) – a production company focusing on physical comedy. Nigel has worked nationally and internationally over the last three years, both as an actor and Stage Combat/Movement Instructor, including touring with the acclaimed production *Zoo-illogical* throughout Northern Australia in mid 2000, where he also conducted a series of stage combat and movement workshops for Indigenous students. Nigel is the Vice-President of and a Fight Director with the Society of Australian Fight Directors and is also certified with the British Academy of Dramatic Combat (BADC). Nigel has also been a core member of IZIT? Entertainment, a corporate/street theatre company based in Brisbane, since 1999.

MARC RICHARDS – (playing the part of Peter Davis)

Marc is one of Brisbane's most exciting new actors. In the past two years he has given dynamic performances in productions including QTC's *Dirt*. Other theatre: De Base Sheila's Shorts Festival: *The Kingswood Kids*; Front: *Troilus and Cressida*; Better Than Nuthin: *Underwear*, *Pertume* and *Crash Helmet*; Elision: *Transmissi*; and Underground: *Bulldog Front*. Directing: *CRACKA: Boneless Chicken*, *Brecht* and *Inheritance*. Teaching: UQ Drama Tutor. Training: UQ.

Seems Like Yesterday is Marc's debut performance with Kooemba Jdarra.

ARIU SIO – (playing the part of Ken Jackson)

When not working as an actor, Ariu is employed by Kooemba Jdarra's major sponsor, ENERGEX! Most of the time, though, Ariu is busy performing in productions such as *The Mikado*, *Lilies of the Field*, *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Harvey*, *As You Like It*, *Othello* and *Driving Miss Daisy*. Ariu's film credits include *The Product* by VIP Productions.

Seems Like Yesterday is Ariu's debut performance with Kooemba Jdarra.

SPECIAL THANKS GO TO:

Ron Organ, Alan Price, Noel Kelly, Steve and Di Gage, Sandy Greenwood, Glen Williams - Chorcho Cadets, Trevor Atkinson - Vietnam Legion, Glenis Charlton and Castlemaine Perkins.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Queensland Performing Arts Centre is a Statutory Authority of the State of Queensland and is funded by the Queensland Government
The Honourable Matt Foley MLA Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for The Arts