



DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON AO

# PARRWANG LIFTS THE SKY

## VISUAL STORY

*This Relaxed Performance has been made possible through the generous support of the Marian and E.H. Flack Trust and the William Angliss Charitable Fund.*

**Victorian Opera respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work and live: the people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. We acknowledge these original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways and their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.**

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*Victorian Opera acknowledges the support of  
The Department of Education and Training, Victo-  
ria, through the Strategic Partnerships Program.*



The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust  
William Angliss Charitable Fund

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# WELCOME

This resource is designed to give away some of the secrets of our production so you can really concentrate on enjoying your time at the theatre.

## THE THEATRE

*Parrwang Lifts the Sky* will be performed at the Merlyn Theatre, Malthouse. When you come inside you will be able to tell that it was once a large factory, in fact beer was made here for nearly 100 years! It was turned into a theatre in 1988 and is now a place where new and interesting productions are created.



## THEATRE GUIDELINES

So everyone can enjoy the production, there is no photography or mobile devices in the theatre. You can do these things in the break-out spaces in the foyer.

If you need a device for communication, just let one of the ushers know before the show starts.

When you attend a Relaxed Performance we allow you to move around the auditorium, sing-a-long and show your support for the performers by cheering when they stop singing.

If you need to take a break from the production, head out to the break-out spaces in the foyer with one of the adults you came to see the production with. Then head back in to continue watching when you are ready.

## RELAXED PERFORMANCE

Victorian Opera is committed to providing performances that allow all to enjoy the wonder of opera and theatre in a way that respects individual needs. This Relaxed Performance is designed to welcome people who require awareness of their sensory sensitivities, so that they can enjoy theatre with the important people in their lives.

A quiet break-out space is available in the foyer when you need it. Feel free to get up and move and sing-along, we embrace your individuality.

### Contact

This visual story has been prepared by Victorian Opera. If you would like any additional information please contact us during business hours on:

Phone (03) 9012 6659, or

email: [education@victorianopera.com.au](mailto:education@victorianopera.com.au)

# THE PRODUCTION

*Parrwang Lifts the Sky* is based on a Wadawurrung creation story about the first sunrise. The Wadawurrung people are from western Victoria in the area from Geelong to Ballarat.

In this story, Parrwang (the magpie) is preparing for a visit from relatives when she is interrupted by two human children who have climbed her tree. The humans have been living on the ground which is covered in darkness. They are amazed by the light up in the treetops as they can see all the wonderful colours and feel the breeze. After hearing this from her new friends, Parrwang works to convince the Great Council of Birds, led by Bunjil the Eagle, to lift the veil of darkness from the land. To the Wadawurrung people, this led to the first sunrise and helped explain the beautiful birdsong heard at dawn.



## LENGTH

*Parrwang Lifts the Sky* goes for approximately 50 minutes with no break.

It is sung in English with scene descriptors to help you follow along. There is also some traditional Wadawurrung language that the performers will sing.

## AGE RECOMMENDATION

Victorian Opera recommends this production to young people between 8 to 15 years of age. However, this is a creation story with an easy to follow storyline and short runtime, so there is something for everyone of all ages.

Please review warnings and read through this resource before committing to purchasing tickets.

## WITH THANKS

This Relaxed Performance has been made possible through the generous support of the Marian and E.H. Flack Trust and the William Angliss Charitable Fund.

## WARNINGS AND OTHER THINGS TO KNOW

This production is an opera, which means the performers are all singers who can sing quite loudly. There is also a small orchestra. If it becomes too loud for you, feel free to cover your ears or put on some headphones until you feel comfortable - it won't stay loud for too long.

Most of our performers are playing the characters of birds, so their costume and make-up will help them show this to you. We have provided pictures of what they will look like to help you prepare. Remember our performers are pretending.

This production is based on a creation story. This means the story was created a long time ago, before Science was understood, to explain why things happened. In this story, the Wadawurrung Elders explained that birds lifted nighttime and that the birdsong at dawn was a reminder to humans to care for Country.

During the performance some haze will be used. If the haze becomes a little overwhelming, you're more than welcome to leave the auditorium to have a break.



## BEFORE THE PRODUCTION

When you arrive, there will be lots of other people coming to see the same show. You will enter the old red brick building by walking through the outdoor performing space - this is a great place to see live performances in the warmer months.

You will then enter the foyer of Malthouse. This is a big open space and it will be busy, so stay close to your group. Feel free to also wear your headphones as it will also be noisy.

In the foyer are the toilets - if you need to go, ask your teacher.

You'll also find people wearing black. These people are called ushers and their job is to help you find your seat in the theatre and answer your questions. Some of these people will also work for Victorian Opera, you will see Victorian Opera printed on their shirts.

The doors to the theatre will open 30 minutes before the show starts to allow you and your group plenty of time to get settled. The show is general admission, which means there is no allocated seating and the ushers will help you and your group to the best available seats.

## DURING THE PRODUCTION

*Parrwang Lifts the Sky* goes for approximately 50 minutes with no break.

If you need to have a rest during the show feel free to head out to the quiet area in the foyer with an adult from your group. There won't be many people in the foyer during the performance so it will be quiet.

The same goes if you need to go to the toilet, just head out to the foyer with an adult from your group and you will find the toilets in the foyer area.

We are happy for you to get up and move to the music and even sing along, just be careful not to block the view of people behind you trying to watch the show while they sit down.

## AFTER THE PRODUCTION

At the end of the opera, clapping and cheering is a great way to say thank you to the performers and everyone who has worked on the show. We would love for you to join in by saying thank you in this way.

The performers will also come and take a bow, make some extra noise for the performers you liked best. If you think they did a really good job, you can stand up and clap - this is called a standing ovation.

If it gets too noisy you are allowed to cover your ears. Don't worry, the clapping won't last long.



# THE SETTING

The setting is where the story takes place. This story happens in the treetops where the light reveals lots of colours. As the story unfolds, we move to different locations and trees which are also at different heights. The performers don't actually climb trees though, we use platforms at different heights with ladders and stairs. There is also a big Council Tree which will be wheeled into position when the Great Council of Birds meet with Bunjil, the Eagle.

The design is based on an artwork by a Wadawurrung artist called Billy-Jay O'Toole - what traditional techniques can you see being used in the design?



**Let's meet the characters of the story and the people that  
are playing these characters.**



# PARRWANG, THE MAGPIE

## THE CHARACTER

Parrwang is the main character in this story and she likes to help others. She sings beautifully and is courageous when talking to the Great Council of Birds about removing darkness from the land.

She wears a costume that is black and white and has a magpie's eye printed on the torso. Her costume has a lot of white to show that she is a young magpie.

**Sarah Prestwidge** and **Lisette Bolton** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMERS

**SARAH PRESTWIDGE**

(Soprano)



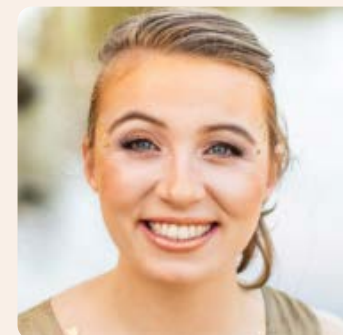
**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Warin - the rainbow lorikeet

**Best subject at school?**  
Music

**Who inspired you as a kid?**  
Delta Goodrem

**LISETTE BOLTON**

(Soprano)



**Favourite song to sing?**  
Anything by ABBA

**What Primary School did you attend?**

North Wagga Primary School

**When you were a kid you loved to?**

Sing and perform!

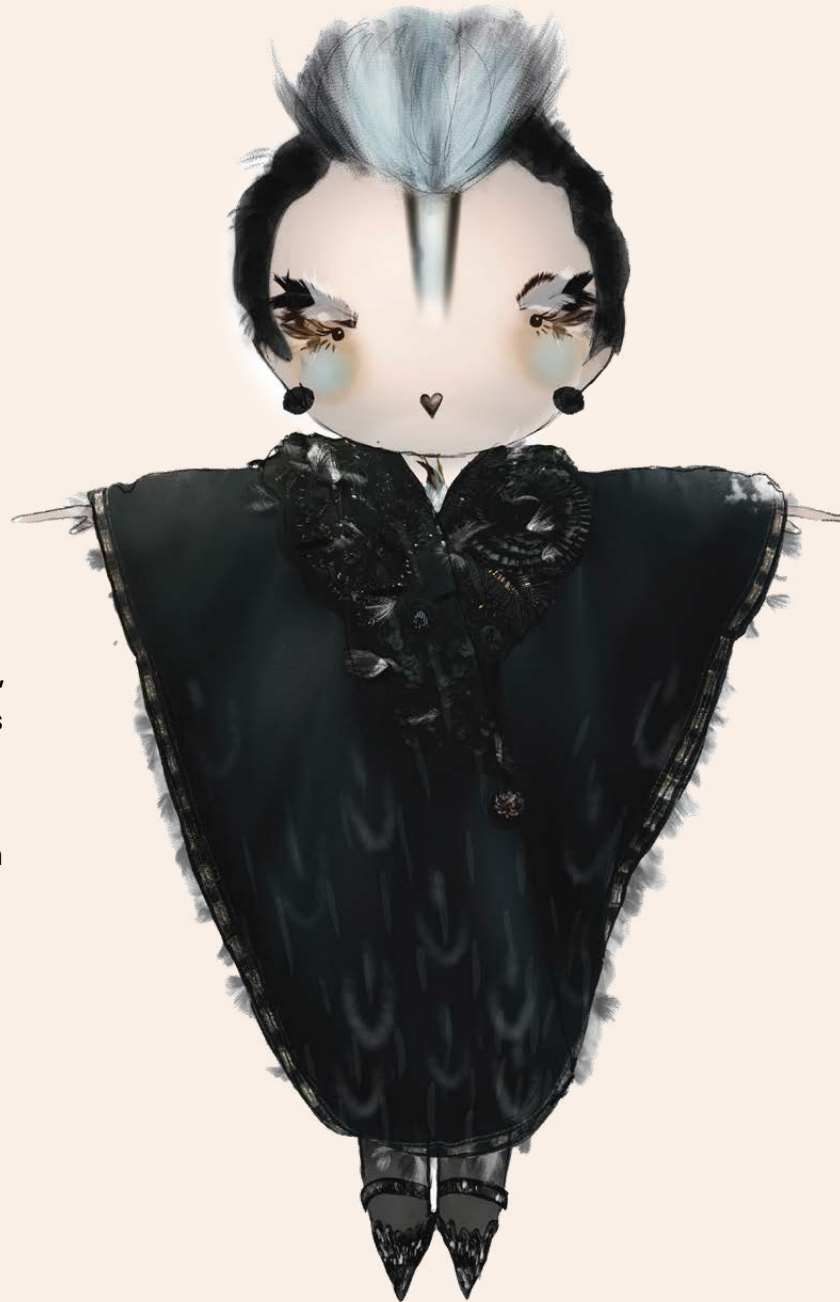
# GORNGANY

## THE CHARACTER

Gorngany is Parrwang's cousin who is visiting from Yorta Yorta country (an area that crosses the border of Victoria and New South Wales). Gorngany is the Yorta Yorta word for magpie. She is at first very cautious about the humans and doesn't think Parrwang should help them.

She wears a costume that is mostly black, you can see feathers printed on her dress and on the scarf around her neck. Her costume is different to Parrwang's to show that she is older and has come from different Country.

**Michaela Cadwgan** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMER

**MICHAELA CADWGAN**  
(Soprano)



**What Primary School did you attend?**

St John's Primary School, in Aotearoa  
- New Zealand

**Favourite colour?**

Pink

**When you were a kid you loved to?**

Swim, read, sing and monkey bars!

# BUNJIL

## THE CHARACTER

Bunjil, the eagle, is considered to be the Creator Spirit to many First Nations people. They believe he created all things including humans. He listens to Parrwang and agrees to lift darkness from the ground so that humans can experience daylight. A lot of what he sings is in Wadawurrung language to help us understand that he is ancient and wise.

He wears a very different costume to the other birds in this story. He wears a colourful vest and jacket to represent him being the creator of all things.

**James Bilson and Isaac Burgess** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMERS

**JAMES BILLSON**  
(Bass)



**What Primary School did you attend?**

Japanese International School in Hong Kong

**Favourite colour?**

Orange

**Best subject at school?**

Biology

**ISAAC BURGESS**  
(Baritone)



**Favourite Australian bird?**

Kookaburra

**Favourite song to sing?**

Dancing Queen, ABBA

**Who inspired you as a kid?**

Elvis Presley



# MR WAA

## THE CHARACTER

Mr Waa is a crow and he can be very fussy. He is very proud of how handsome he is and he thanks his wife, Mrs Waa for making him look so good. He is the protector of rivers and seas and is going to run the meeting of the Grand Council of Birds. He does not trust humans.

He wears a costume that is mostly black and his shirt is very fancy and shiny just like the feathers of a crow.

**Nicholas Beecher and Mitchell Sanders** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMERS

**NICHOLAS BEECHER**  
(Baritone)

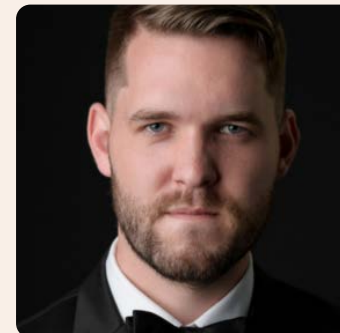


**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Superb Parrot

**Favourite colour?**  
Blue

**Best subject at school?**  
Maths

**MITCHELL SANDERS**  
(Tenor)



**Favourite song to sing?**  
Una Furtiva Lagrima

**Who inspired you as a kid?**  
Josh Groban

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Climb trees

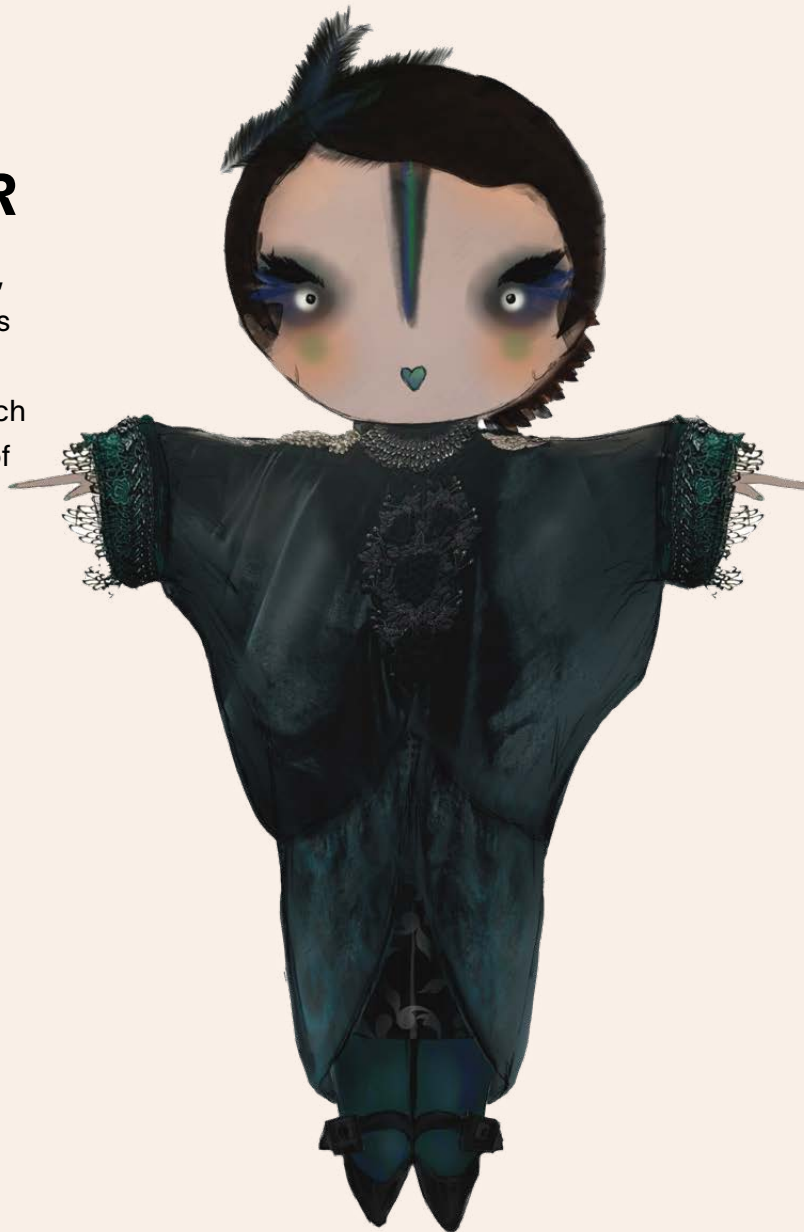
# MRS WAA

## THE CHARACTER

Mrs Waa is the wife of Mr Waa, she is also a crow. Whilst she is known for being very kind she can also be a sticky beak, which means she is very observant of what other people are doing.

She wears a costume that is black with some dark green (just like you can see in the shine on crow's feathers). Her costume is very fancy and made from expensive fabrics, she is also very proud of looking good.

**Chloe James and Saskia Mascitti** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMERS

**CHLOE JAMES**  
(Mezzo Soprano)

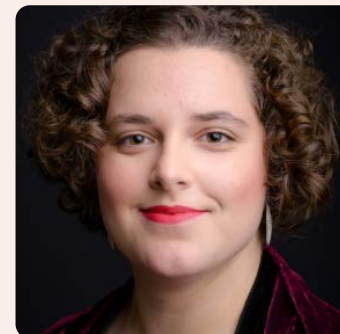


**Favourite song to sing?**  
Habanera (Carmen) - Bizet

**Who inspired you as a kid?**  
My mum

**Anything else you'd like the students to know?**  
Working hard is great, but having fun and eating chocolate is more important!

**SASKIA MASCITTI**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



**Favourite Australian Bird?**  
Cassowaries

**When you grow up you want to be?**  
An Astronomer

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Play mermaids

# TJATJARRANG

## THE CHARACTER

Tjatjarrang is a human girl and her name means older sister in Wadawurrung language. She is very adventurous and whilst she loves her brother, she finds him boring at times when he shares what he has learnt at school.

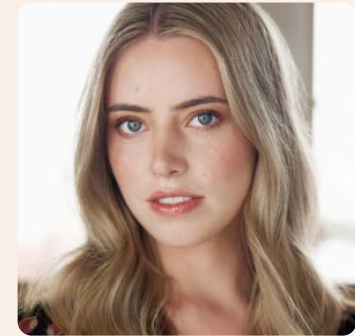
She wears a school uniform with a grey dress, grey shirt and a grey tie and socks. Remember she comes from a land where there is no light, so there is no colour.

**Chloe Taylor** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMERS

**CHLOE TAYLOR**  
(Soprano)



**Favourite song to sing?**  
I Go To Rio by Peter Allen

**Who inspired you as a kid?**  
Julie Andrews

**Anything else you'd like the students to know?**  
Don't let anything or anyone stop you from doing what you love!



# KOKI

## THE CHARACTER

Koki is a human boy who likes to read and learn things at school. His name means little brother in Wadawurrung language. He enjoys sharing his knowledge with other people, but sometimes this bores his sister Tjatjarrang.

He wears a school uniform with grey shorts, grey shirt and a grey tie and socks. Remember he comes from a land where there is no light, so there is no colour.

**Douglas Kelly** will play this role.



## THE PERFORMERS

**DOUGLAS KELLY**  
(Tenor)



**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Wedge-Tailed Eagle

**Best subject at school?**  
Music

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Write stories

# THE CHORUS

Apart from all of the characters we have just introduced, there are other performers that appear on stage. They are called The Chorus. The Chorus are a group of singers that help tell the story and help to create the emotions and moods experienced by the main characters.

Let's meet all of these people now.

**ERIN ABSALOM**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



**Best subject at school?**

History

**Who inspired you as a kid?**

My parents

**When you were a kid you loved to?**

Climb trees and explore outside

**QIULIAN AXTENS**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



**Favourite song to sing?**

Dreams by the Cranberries

**Favourite Australian bird?**

Blue Wren

**When you were a kid you loved to?**

Sing and play violin

**SARAH AMOS**  
(Soprano)



**Who inspired you as a kid?**

Jane Austen

**When you were a kid you loved to?**

Read and paint

**Favourite colour?**

Purple

**MILLICENT BRAKE**  
(Soprano)



**When you grow up you want to be?**

A performer on the stage!

**When you were a kid you loved to?**

Collect pet ladybugs

**Best subject at school?**

Geography

# THE CHORUS

**ASHLEY CHUA**  
(Soprano)



**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Sparrow

**Favourite colour?**  
Yellow

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Run around, play tag

**HARRIET DU PONT**  
(Soprano)



**When you were a kid you wanted to be?**

An Astronaut

**Favourite song to sing?**  
Sunday Morning, Maroon 5

**Favourite colour?**  
Green

**SOFIA IMPERATORE**  
(Soprano)



**Favourite song to sing?**  
Butter - BTS

**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Rosella

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Collect acorns

**STEPHANIE MACINDOE**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



**When you grow up you want to be?**  
A singer!

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Read fantasy books

**Who inspired you as a kid?**  
My cousin who was a professional dancer.



# THE CHORUS

**TESSA MCKENNA**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Kookaburra

**Favourite colour?**  
Green

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Climb trees and ride horses

**METAHAN PEKTAS**  
(Tenor)



**When you were a kid you wanted to be?**

An actor

**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Magpie

**Favourite colour?**  
Blue

**NOAH STRAUGHAN**  
(Baritone)



**What Primary School did you attend?**  
Westbourne Grammar School

**Favourite Australian bird?**  
Emu

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Play downball with my friends, sing in choir

**MARIA WOOLFORD**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



**When you grow up you want to be?**  
A unicorn

**When you were a kid you loved to?**  
Write stories about riding horses

**Who inspired you as a kid?**  
My siblings

Here are some of the characters that the chorus will play...

## THE ACOLYTES

An acolyte is someone who helps a leader during a ceremony - they might hold things or direct people. Their costumes are black and white robes with traditional patterns printed on them. In our production they are there to assist and protect Bunjil.



## THE TIDINGS

The Tidings is a chorus of birds and they will be Cockatoos, Eastern Rosellas, Kookaburras and Magpies. You will notice that their costumes are quite plain but the neck dress gives a clue as to the type of bird they are playing.



# COVERS

Covers are very important. If someone is sick and cannot perform we have other performers in the cast that can cover those roles which means the show can go on.

**MILLICENT BRAKE**  
(Soprano)



**HARRIET DU PONT**  
(Soprano)



**SOFIA IMPERATORE**  
(Soprano)



**MITCHELL SANDERS**  
(Tenor)



**NOAH STRAUGHAN**  
(Baritone)



**MARIA WOOLFORD**  
(Mezzo Soprano)



Based on the voice types, which characters do you think these performers will cover?



# THE STORY

When you take your seat, you might be able to see the musicians in the pit, which is the space in front of the stage before the seats start. You may also hear them playing their instruments as they get ready for the show to start.

Just before the show starts, the musicians will tune their instruments so that they are all playing at the same pitch.

The person who leads the orchestra is the conductor. They will come to the front of the area where the musicians are, and we will clap. The Conductor of *Parrwang Lifts the Sky* is **Aaron Wyatt**.

The show is now ready to start. Aaron will raise a short white stick called a baton, and the lights will dim. The orchestra will play the music at the start of an opera, which is called an overture.



## SCENE 1: THE CANOPY

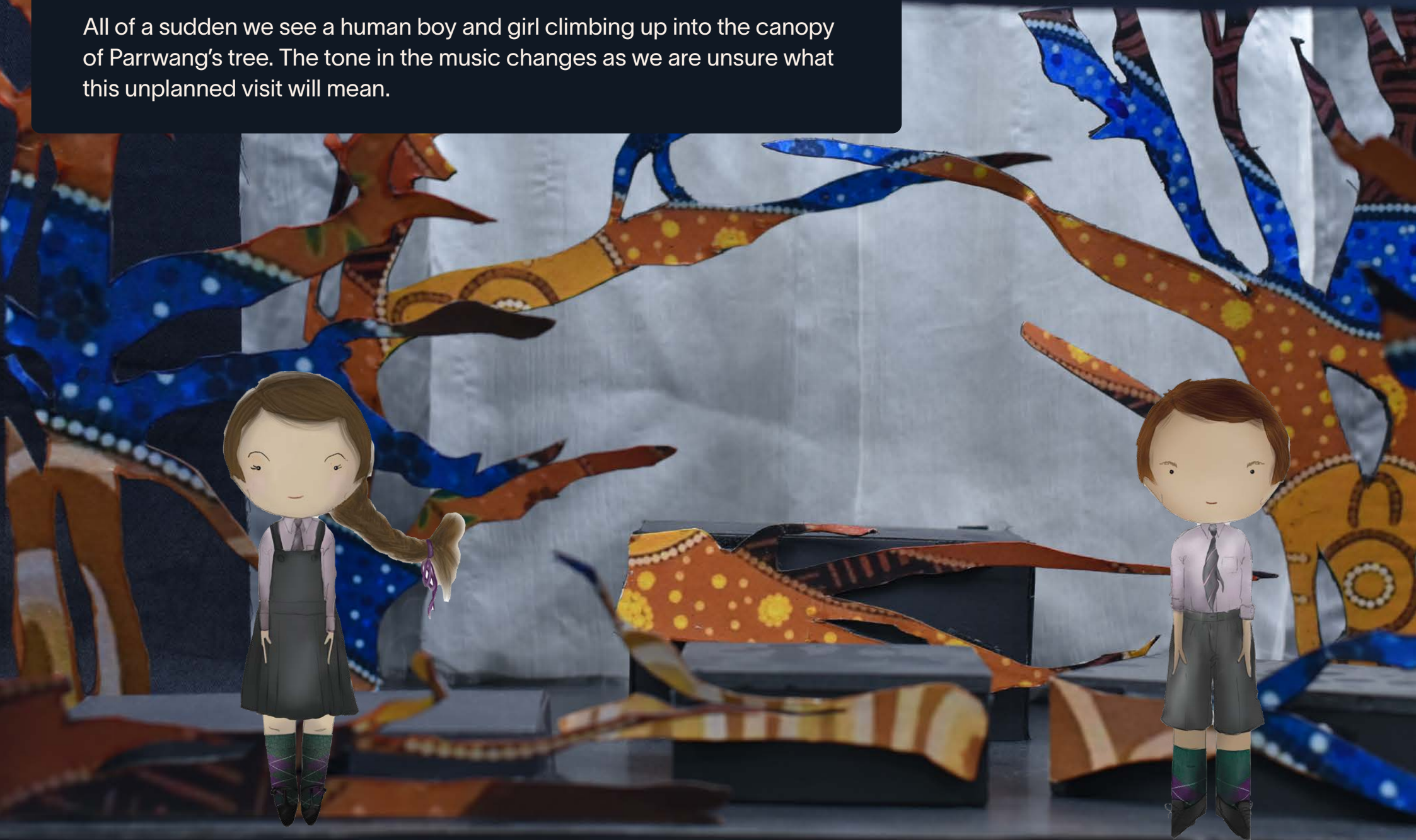
High in the treetops of Wadawurrung Country we meet a young magpie called Parrwang. She is excited for a visit from her cousin Gorngany who is visiting from Yorta Yorta Country (an area that crosses the Victorian and New South Wales border). She prepares her nest with flowers, and grubs to eat. She is looking forward to sharing lots of stories and showing her cousin the beauty of Wadawurrung Country.





## SCENE TWO: TJATJARRANG AND KOKI

All of a sudden we see a human boy and girl climbing up into the canopy of Parrwang's tree. The tone in the music changes as we are unsure what this unplanned visit will mean.





As they climb higher Tjatjarrang asks her brother what he can see. These human children have been living on the ground in darkness and have not seen light before. It is bright and they can see lots of things and even the different colours. They can also feel the breeze blowing against their cheeks. Koki has read about the sky being blue and explains to Tjatjarrang why this is the case because he likes to share what he has learnt at school.





Koki continues singing about the things he is seeing, completely unaware that Parrwang has returned to her nest, even though Tjatjarrang tries to warn him. When he realises, he is completely amazed. The children call her a magpie and Koki uses the Latin word Pica (Latin the is language used to label things in science), however Parrwang explains that things have names in Wadawurrung language which is much older. Tjatjarrang goes on to explain that where they live words have little meaning because the land is covered in darkness and they can't see anything. This troubles Parrwang and she offers to help them, but first she has to get her nest ready for her cousin Gorngany's visit.





## SCENE THREE: MR AND MRS WAA

As the human children help Parrwang prepare her nest, they hear the call of crows which announces the arrival of Mr and Mrs Waa. Parrwang offers to introduce them to each other, but the children decide it is time to go home so as not to worry their mother. Mr and Mrs Waa appear dressed in fancy black costumes made from expensive fabric and are proud of the way they look.





Parrwang invites Mr and Mrs Waa to her nest for a cup of tea, but Mr Waa explains that they do not have time to stay for tea. The Waa's are due to be at the Council Tree for the Great Council of Birds and as Mr Waa is the protector of rivers and seas he is due to run the meeting so cannot be late. However, before she leaves Mrs Waa comments on seeing human children climbing in the tree canopy. Parrwang decides to tell Mr and Mrs Waa about the children and how they live on the ground in darkness and that she would like to help them. Mr and Mrs Waa do not like the idea and worry about what Bunjil will say as he created the world this way, but Parrwang cannot believe Bunjil meant it to be that way.





## SCENE 4: GORNGANY ARRIVES

After the crows leave, Parrwang is left feeling a little unsure about her plan, but then Gorngany, her cousin, arrives. Gorngany is the Yorta Yorta word for magpie. Parrwang shows Gorngany around her nest, they share tea and stories. Parrwang explains about the human children and Gorngany is shocked and readies herself to swoop them if they return. Gorngany does not trust humans to do the right thing, but Parrwang explains that Tjatjarrang and Koki are very nice and mean no harm.





Tjatjarrang and Koki climb up into Parrwang's tree and she introduces the children to her cousin. Whilst Gorngany is hesitant at first, she slowly warms to the humans as she and Koki share their understanding of words - Koki knows many words in Latin and Gorngany knows many words from Yorta Yorta Country. Gorngany is so impressed she joins in singing a song in Latin with the children.





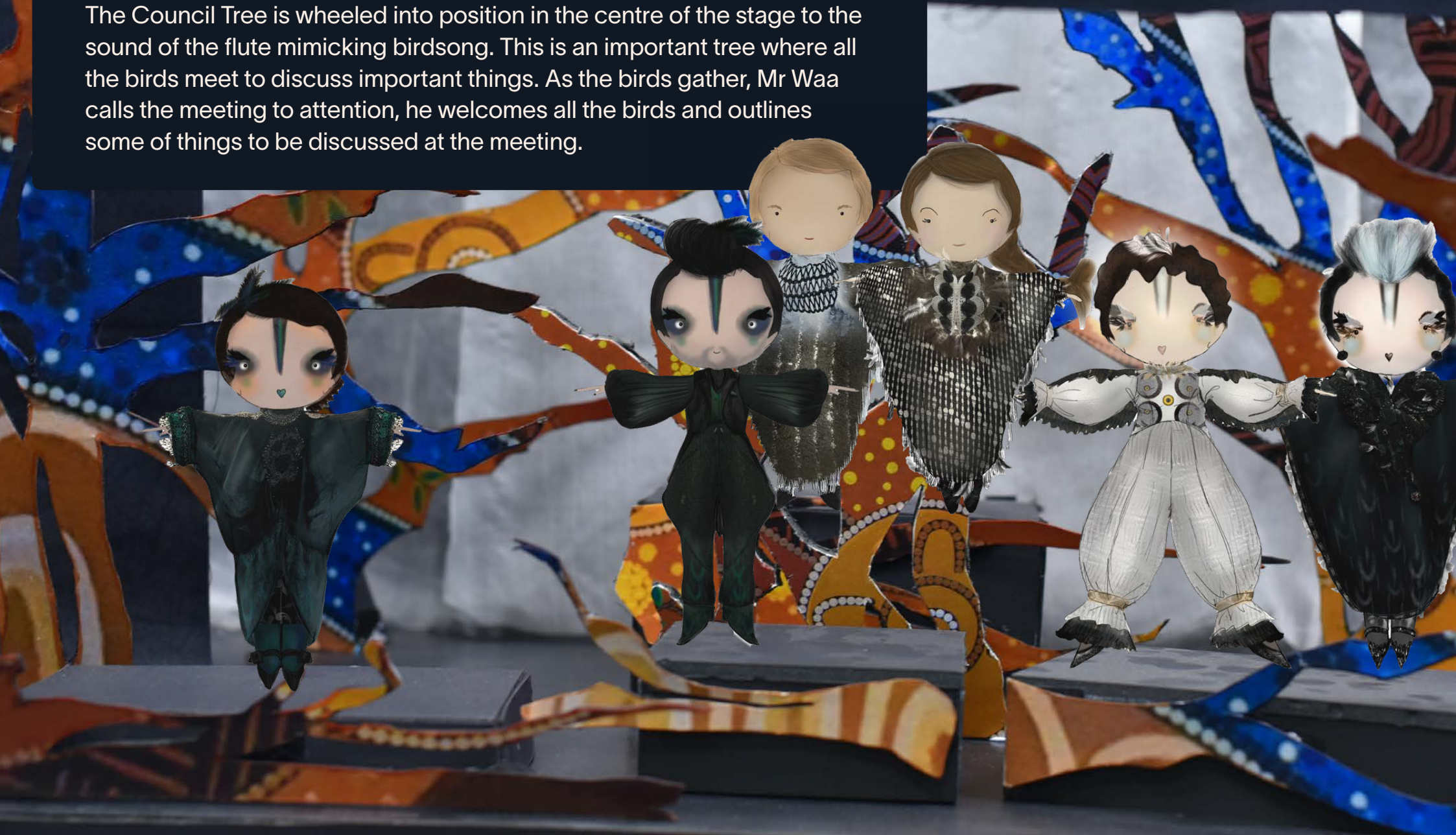
At the sound of a Kookaburra, Parrwang and Gorngany are reminded they need to attend the Great Council of Birds, where they will deliver her plan to lift the sky. Parwang remembers that she needs to ask Mr Waa to talk and is worried because he does not like her plan, but Gorngany encourages her to be courageous. Both Parrwang and Gorngany prepare to fly to the Great Council of Birds and tell the human children they will do their best to help them remove darkness from the ground by lifting the sky.





## SCENE 5: THE GREAT COUNCIL OF BIRDS

The Council Tree is wheeled into position in the centre of the stage to the sound of the flute mimicking birdsong. This is an important tree where all the birds meet to discuss important things. As the birds gather, Mr Waa calls the meeting to attention, he welcomes all the birds and outlines some of things to be discussed at the meeting.





Mr Waa then introduces Bunjil the eagle who is the Creator spirit for many First Nations people. The orchestra plays a formal fanfare and all the gathered birds bow. Bunjil addresses the birds in Wadawurrung language.

**Bengadak Nyatne Waa  
Maiwan dula tabayl Ngubitj Yaluk Naro  
Bengadak tjarrangitj Wadawurrung lakorra  
Mokbarra baa baap keetyarra ta tee  
Ka namo yeyedyeelee ngarrwa delama kareenga**

**Together let us acknowledge Waa and Mrs Waa  
And their continuing care of water, rivers and seas  
We come together under the Wadawurrung sky  
Let us talk together in friendship  
For we are here to love, dream, believe and embrace to grow**





## BUNJIL'S DELIBERATION

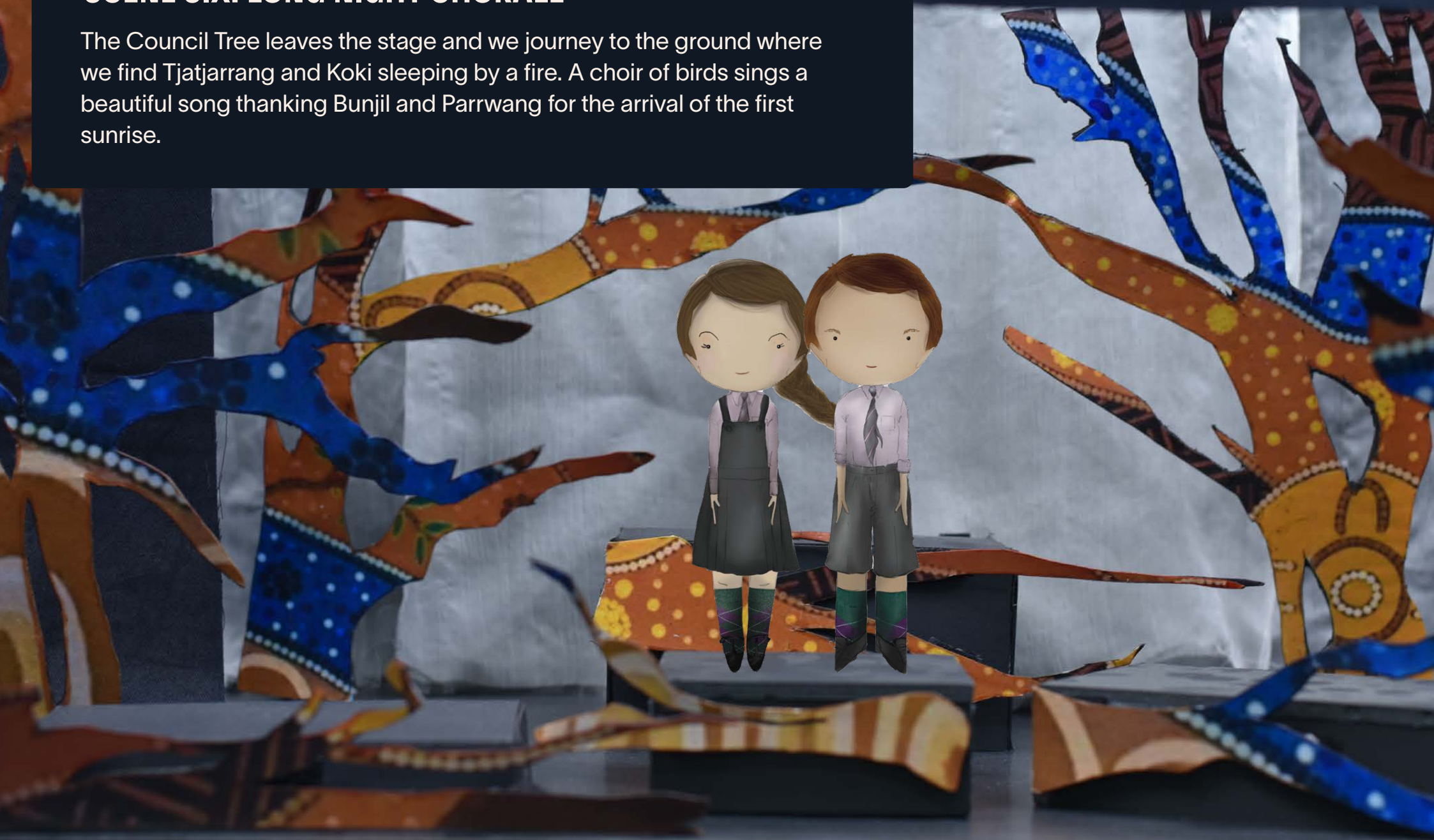
Bunjil thanks Parrwang but cautions that it will not be easy because it will take time to teach the humans to share and care for Country. He agrees that the blanket of darkness should be lifted, and as a reminder to the humans of what has been done for them, Parrwang's family should sing at dawn. He sends everyone on their way to spread the news and gives all birds permission to swoop the humans if they ever do the wrong thing.





## SCENE SIX: LONG NIGHT CHORALE

The Council Tree leaves the stage and we journey to the ground where we find Tjatjarrang and Koki sleeping by a fire. A choir of birds sings a beautiful song thanking Bunjil and Parrwang for the arrival of the first sunrise.





## SCENE SEVEN: PARRWANG FINALLY LIFTS THE SKY!

Parrwang wakes Tjatjarrang and Koki, telling them that daylight will finally arrive to the ground because Bunjil has given permission to lift the sky. They all gather sticks and poles and get ready to lift the sky.





Working together, all of the birds and humans lift the sky whilst singing in Wadawurrung language. This is the section that we learnt in the Access All Areas workshops, make sure you sing along with the performers.

As we lift the sky we will sing a song in the ancient language of the Wadawurrung.  
Woorwoorr tyoorrkoorma werupmering wenering-ik yerram nganboo kardineyoo  
Mirriyu nyall darra dyalk  
tyoorrkoorma werupmering wenering-ik yerram nganboo  
Matnyoo yerram Parwan wayaperree kardineyoo benggoethanang yerra yerra yeng yeng!



## The performance of Parrwang Lifts the Sky has ended.

All of the performers will come out on the stage and bow to say thank you to the audience for watching the opera.

At the end of the performance the audience will clap as a way of saying thank you to the singers, musicians and everyone working backstage on the opera. You can clap as well if you feel like it.

If the performers did an exceptional job, you could also stand and clap. This is called a standing ovation and tells the musicians and performers that you thought they were excellent.







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