

artback nt: arts development and touring presents

DJUKI TITOLA [chooky] dancers



teachers' notes
for secondary schools

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usage notes

These notes are intended as a teaching guide only. They are suitable for high school students at different levels and teachers should choose from the given activities those that they consider most suitable for different year groups.

The notes were developed by Mary Anne Butler for Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring. Thanks to Stuart Bramston, Shepherdson College, Jonathan Grassby, Linda Joy and Joshua Bond for their assistance.

History - Djuki Mala [The Chooky Dancers]

In 2007, on a basketball court in Ramingining, a group of Elcho Island dancers calling themselves the Chooky Dancers choreographed and performed a dance routine to the tune of **Zorba the Greek**. Frank Djirrimbilpilwuy posted the clip on YouTube, and within 12 weeks it had peaked at over 500,000 hits. It now stands at 2,300,000 hits - rating it amongst the highest clips to be circulated world wide.

Activity: Check out the original Chooky Dancers Zorba clip here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-MucVWo-Pw>

Following this success, the Chooky Dancers were invited to perform their new hit in Greece by the descendants and creator of 'Zorba the Greek'. They also appeared as the opening act at the **Melbourne International Comedy Festival** Gala 2009.

The dance was initially developed by Lionel Dulmanawuy who is the lead choreographer and Frank's youngest son. He created the dance for a Greek friend named Liliane who was the main carer of his sister Priscilla. The relationship between the Yolngu family and the Greek family was the main inspiration for creating the dance as a way of saying thank you. The Chooky Dancers had no idea it would go as far and be so popular with so many different people world wide.

In 2013, the Chooky Dancers changed their name to *Djuki Mala*. *Djuki* is the adopted word for 'chook'. There is no 'ch' in Yolngu language – the closest approximation is the 'dj' sound, and many words end with a vowel sound. This vowel ending is commonly added to English words that are adopted for introduced animals or concepts – hence chooky/djuki from 'chook', an introduced domestic bird. Mala means a group or set of people who share a common feature. The change of name has therefore not affected the meaning of the group's name, however it does reflect that the members of the group do not speak English as their first language.



Djuki Mala performing at DanceSite 2013 in Borroloola, NT.
Photographer: Wayne Quilliam.

Activity: This clip shows Elcho Island from the air, and gives a brief overview of the Chooky Dancers history. View it at: <http://thechookydancers.com/content/video/>

Activity: Watch this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRfUJKBAzDM> (2 min) or: vimeo.com/82246865 (10 min) from DanceSite 2013, held at Borroloola in the Northern Territory. Djuki Mala headlined this event. Discuss how traditional dance shown in this video varies from Djuki Mala's style of dance. What non-traditional influences are at work in their dance routines?

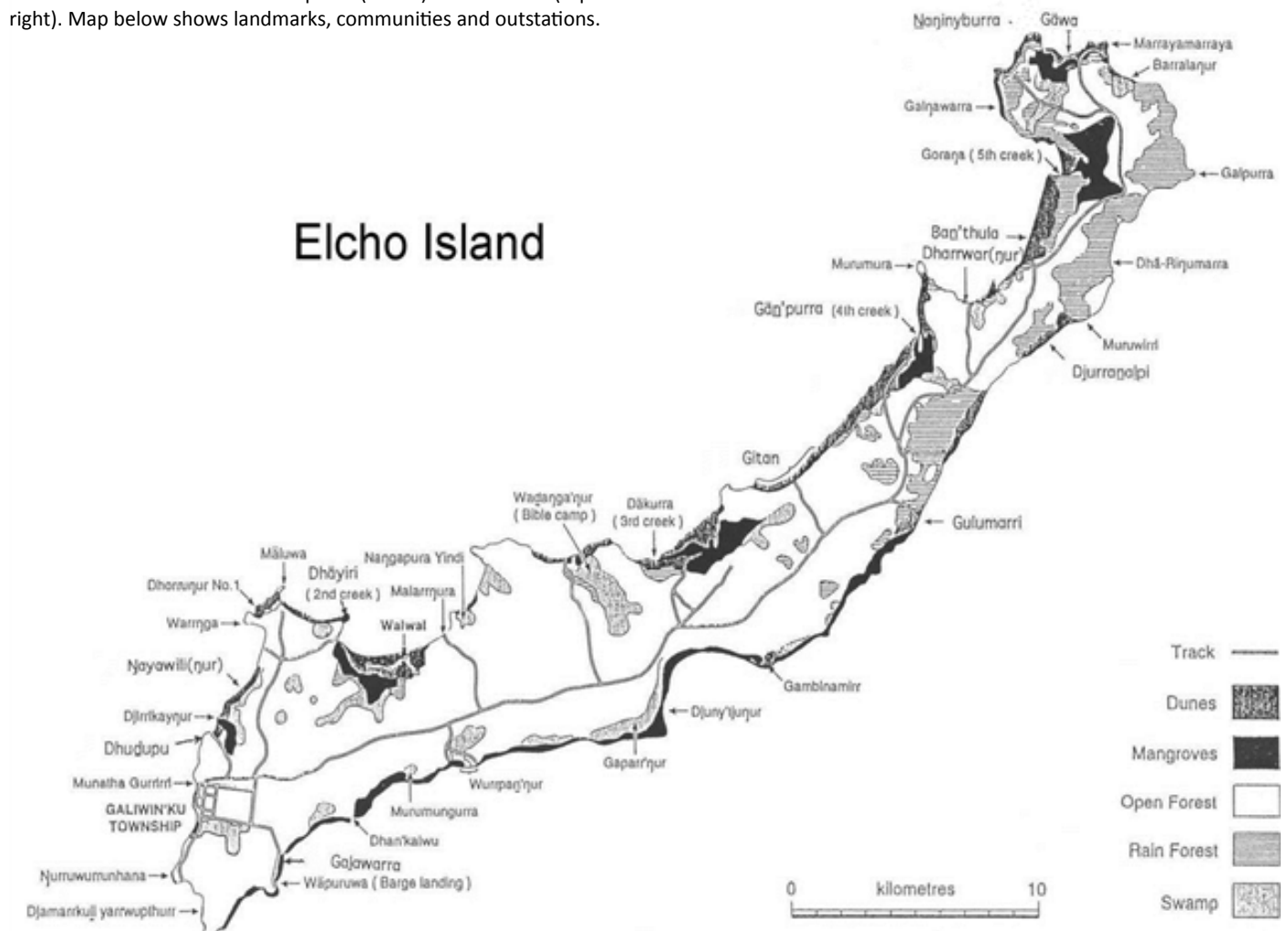
[NOTE: footage depicts bare breasted female dancers]

You can also view a traditional performance of Zorba the Greek dance here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPiCaQ88-Js>

One of the most remote communities in Australia, Elcho Island is located 550 kilometres north east of Darwin, off the coast of **Arnhem Land** in the **Northern Territory**. The Island is long and skinny - approximately 60km long and 6km across at its widest point. It is edged by the Arafura Sea on one side, and the Cadell Strait on the other.



Elcho Island - in relation to the Top End (above) and Australia (top right). Map below shows landmarks, communities and outstations.



Elcho Island is part of East Arnhem Land – 100,000 sq km of land which is entirely owned by the ‘Yolngu’ people – who are one of Australia’s most remote traditional Aboriginal cultures. A map on page 10 shows the full extent of Yolngu country. [An approximate pronunciation is ‘yul-nu’. As with many languages, there are sounds in Yolngu that are not used in the English language, making an accurate pronunciation difficult for English speakers.]

Elcho Island is a traditional Aboriginal community with restricted access, which means that anyone who is not a permanent resident needs a legal permit to visit.

There is a total alcohol ban on Elcho Island and traditional, healthy living is encouraged. Yolngu people maintain strong traditions and spiritual links to the Country by observing strict cultural practices.

History

Yolngu have lived in the region for at least 50 thousand years. Clans [see pg 9] live throughout Arnhem Land much like they always have – hunting fish, bush animals and seasonal bush foods.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, thousands of trepang fishermen from Macassar came to the Northern Territory coastline each year to collect **trepang** [sea cucumbers] which were considered a great delicacy in China. Trading between the Macassars and the local Yolngu people provided significant economic benefits to the Yolngu. Many Macassan words, artefacts and cultural practices were adopted into the local languages and lifestyle.

Activity: Do some research on the Macassars, and their relationship with the Yolngu from Elcho Island.

1] When did trading between the cultures cease, and why?

2] What did they trade?

3] What words from the Macassan language were adopted into Yolngu language and are still used today?

In the 17th Century Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish ships are also known to have charted the Arnhem Land coast.

The first Europeans moved to Elcho Island in 1921. From 1937-1938, Constable **John William Stokes** of the Northern Territory Police was stationed on Elcho Island at the future site of Galiwin’ku. Galiwin’ku was then established as a Methodist mission in 1942, remaining under Church direction until 1974 when it became self-managed.

In the 1950s a fishing industry and building program were established. The ‘60s saw further development as well as the establishment of outstations [see below].

Activity: Some people prefer the word ‘Aboriginal’ when referring to the first owners of this country. Others prefer the term ‘Indigenous’. Look up the definitions of both terms, and see what the difference is. Discuss in class why one term might be preferred above another.

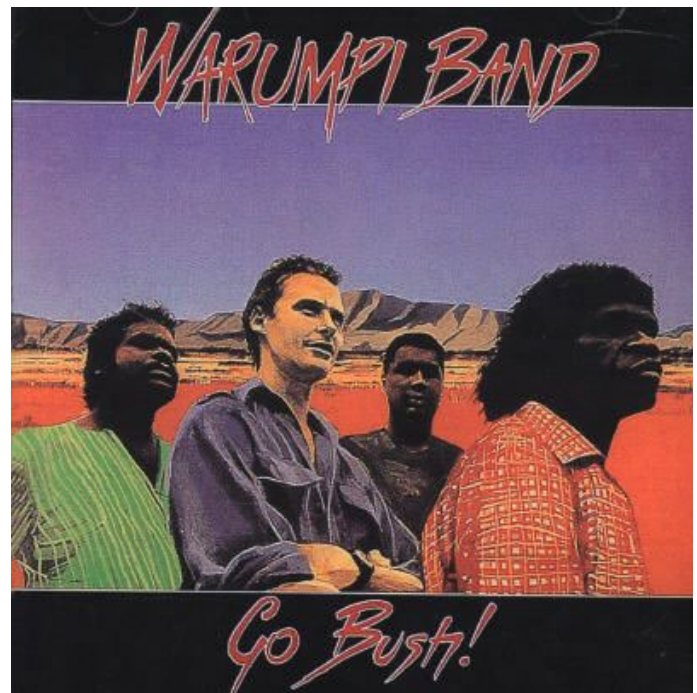
Any non-Yolngu person is called a Managa/Balanda. This expression is thought to have originated from the word ‘Hollander’, for a white or Dutch person.

Since the 1960’s, Yolngu leaders have been a big part of the struggle for Aboriginal land rights. In 1963, Yolngu people at Yirrkala in north east Arnhem land sent a petition written on bark to the House of Representatives. These petitions were the first traditional documents recognised by the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia, and became the documentary recognition of Indigenous people in Australian law. They attracted national and international attention, and now hang in the national parliament as a testament to the Yolngu’s role in the birth of the Aboriginal land rights movement.

You can learn more about the famous Yolngu bark petitions here: <http://foundingdocs.gov.au/item-did-104.html>

A number of famous people have come from Elcho Island, including Aboriginal musician **Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu** [also known as Gurrumul] who has won many awards and tours the world with his music. George Rrurrambu, lead singer of the famous **Warumpi Band**, also came from Elcho [the song 'My Island Home' was written for him, and is about Elcho Island]. And – of course – the Chooky Dancers are from there.

The lead singer of **Yothu Yindi** was Assistant Principal at Shepherdson College in 1983, and lived on Elcho Island. **Saltwater Band** is also from there.



Left: Gurrumul. Photographer: Adrian Cook. Image used courtesy of Skinnyfish Music. Above: The cover of the Warumpi Band's 1987 album 'Go Bush!'. Below: Djuki Mala perform at DanceSite 2013 in Borroloola, NT. Photographer: Wayne Quilliam.



Activity: Check out this youtube clip which features **Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu** and **Djuki Mala** together <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdpoWcma4HE>

Activity: **Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu** has played in front of one of the world's most famous people. Find out who this was.

Activity: List all of Gurrumul's music awards.

Activity: Watch the clip of 'My Island Home' by the Warumpi Band: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaqlW1CvPMk>

Activity: Look up the lyrics to 'My Island Home' [<http://www.maxilyrics.com/warumpi-band-my-island-home-lyrics-51bd.html>]. Discuss the concept of 'home' and what it means to this singer. Discuss the concept of being 'homesick'. Why is the singer of 'My Island Home' feeling homesick? What strategy does he use to overcome his homesickness?

Activity: Watch the documentary film 'Big Name No Blankets', about George Rrurrambu of the Warumpi Band' and his journey to becoming a nationally renowned rock star.

Community

Galiwin'ku [pronounced 'gulley-win-kooh'] is Elcho Island's major 'hub', with around 2,000 residents – making it the largest Aboriginal community in northeast Arnhem Land.

It is situated on the western end of Elcho Island and has a school, a community store and a medical centre. The community store supplies community needs including food, basic clothing, tools, toys etc. Supplies are brought across from Darwin once a week on a barge.

Gäwa is a smaller community situated on Elcho's north-east side, and it houses an independent school.

Elcho Island has 12 'outstations'. An outstation is a small settlement of **Aboriginal Australians** who choose to live on their traditional homelands. These outstations have around an extra 200 people living in them, and [listed from north to south on the Island] they are called:

- Nanyingburra
- Gawa (Gäwa)
- Banthula (Gampura)
- Djurranalpi (Djanalpi)
- Dharawa
- Gitan
- Gulmarri
- Watdagawuy
- Dhayirri
- Ngayawilli (First Creek)
- Dhudupu
- Galawarra

Activity: Find Elcho Island on Google Earth. Find Galiwin'ku and Gäwa, then search the whole Island to see how many of the outstations you can find.

In the Top End of Australia and across Arnhem Land, there is a 'wet season' every year which lasts 4-6 months, usually from December to April. In the 'wet' it can rain for many days and nights without stopping. Roads can often get cut off, so many Elcho Island outstation residents move in to Galiwin'ku for the wet season each year, where they can be close to the local store, school and medical facilities.



Elcho Island: (top) Mission Beach, (centre) basketball court at Galiwin'ku school, (bottom) road near Galiwin'ku.
Photographer: Angela O'Donnell.

Yolngu Culture

In Aboriginal lore, the land and waters of each clan were bestowed on the forebears of living clan members long ago in Wangarr Time. Yolngu people may refer to this as 'Creation Time'; or sometimes they just say 'long ago'. A clan's land and waters were bestowed on it by sacred and powerful Wangarr Beings who travelled across the landscape during this time of creation. 'Spirit man', or 'Spirit woman', 'ancestor', 'totem', or various combinations of these, are some of the English terms used by both Yolngu and non-Yolngu speakers attempting to explain the complex concept of Wangarr.

Activity: Watch the feature film 'Yolngu Boy' [2001]: "Three boys. Two laws. One country...."
The film is about three Yolngu boys on the run, stuck between Yolngu law and white man's law'. Discuss the following questions in class:

- 1] What does it mean to the characters to be 'chosen for ceremony'?
- 2] Why does the character of Botj not get chosen for ceremony?
- 3] 'This is the right way' – what does this mean? What is the 'right' way in the film of Yolngu Boy?
- 4] What is a 'songline'?
- 5] What's the significance of Botji singing a songline?
- 6] 'Time is not a line, it's a circle.' – what do you think this means in the context of this film and in terms of Yolngu culture?

Activity: Go to the 'Yolngu Boy' website to learn more about the film and Yolngu culture:
<http://www.yolnguboy.com/>

Lore: acquired knowledge or wisdom such as traditions or teachings which are handed down through generations, usually through storytelling.

[Extracted from Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation's Visitors' Guide: <http://www.dhimurru.com.au/yolngu-culture.html>]

The entire guide can be purchased from Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation [<http://www.dhimurru.com.au/>] and is an excellent booklet that provides maps and cultural information including stories narrated by Yolngu elders explaining the significance of many locations.

When an Aboriginal person passes away, there is a significant cultural practice of not depicting the deceased, or voicing their names. Traditional law across Australia says that a dead person's name can not be said because you would recall and disturb their spirit. This law has been adapted to include images as well. In some areas, families may determine that a substitute name may be used instead of a deceased person's name for a period of time. For example, 'Kumantjayi Perkins' is now increasingly referred to once again as the late 'Charles Perkins'. This can also carry over to living people who have the same name: they may adopt a substitute name until it is appropriate that that name can be spoken again.

Read more: <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/mourning-an-aboriginal-death#ixzz2gRdN28VD>

Activity: Watch the DVD of 'The Ten Canoes', the first film made entirely in Aboriginal language [Yolngu Matha]. Directed by Rolf de Heer in 2006, the film is set in Arnhem Land, in a time before Western contact. The film is subtitled, and narrated in English by David Gulpilil. A cut of the film featuring narration in Yolngu Matha is also available. Official film site at: <http://www.palacefilms.com.au/tencanoes/>

Ten Canoes won the Un Certain Regard Special Jury Prize at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival, and was nominated for seven Australian Film Institute (AFI) awards, of which it won six. It also won three awards from the Film Critics Circle of Australia.

You can also watch the documentary about the making of the film The Balanda and the Bark Canoes, which aired on SBS – and is 'an uplifting account of the misunderstandings, humour and beauty that can come from a meeting of Ramingining and Balanda, of black and white cultures, when everyone involved has an open heart and a willingness to learn'.

Activity: Read more about The Balanda and the Bark Canoes here - <http://www.smh.com.au/news/film-reviews/the-balanda-and-the-bark-canoes/2006/09/27/1159337217031.html>

Activity: View Part 1 of The Balanda and the Bark Canoes on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7PnJd92_wA - all other parts of this documentary are also available to view from YouTube.

Activity: You can watch some more clips about Yolngu culture here: http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/inc/tfc/yolngu_resources.html

Clans and Moieties

Clan: An important unit in Aboriginal society, a clan is a group of close-knit and interrelated families that have their own group name, totems and territory.

Moieties: All Yolngu people in north eastern Arnhem Land belong to one of two basic divisions, or moieties, called Dhuwa and Yirritja.

Moieties - Each Aboriginal tribe is divided into different social or ritual groups, which are called moieties. Every member of the society is assigned a position within a moiety, and each moiety is connected to certain plants or animals significant to that group. The moieties of Elcho Island are Dhuwa [pronounced Dhoo-wah] and Yirritja [pronounced Yirrit-jah].

Children belong to the same moiety as their father, and their mother belongs to the other moiety. People cannot marry within their own moiety. Everything in the Yolngu universe: spirit beings, plants and animal species, clan groups, areas of land and water are all divided into either Dhuwa or Yirritja. The morning star, the water goanna, the stringybark tree, and the land in and around Yirrkala are Dhuwa, while the evening star, stingray and cycad palm are all Yirritja.

Within each moiety, people belong to smaller clans, each having its own language. Clan members own areas of land and waters in common. The relationship is, however, much more complex than just 'owning', or even 'caring for', the land. Yolngu often say that they 'come from' the land, or that they 'are the land'.

Activity: Go to this website to learn more about the clan and moiety systems. http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/03_moieties.htm

Language

Yolngu people speak a dozen dialects of a language group generally referred to as Yolngu Matha. English is very much a second, third or fourth language on Elcho Island and is in fact a foreign language.

Language Groups: There is no single language spoken by Australia's Indigenous peoples. A 'language group' is a group of languages related by descent from a common ancestor language.

Up to 22 different dialects [language variants] are spoken on Elcho Island. This is because there are lots of different Aboriginal clan groups. The main clans are Yirritja: Wulkarra, Wangurri, Golpa, Guyamirrilil, Gumatj, Gupapuyngu Birrkili, Daywurrwurr (Gupapuyngu), Warramirri, Dhalwangu, Ritharrangu and Ganalbingu.

Dhuwa clans include Golumala, Marrangu, Wawilik, Datiwuy (Naymil), Liyagawmirr, Galpu, Guyula Djambarrpuyngu, Dhunli Djambarrpuyngu, Ngaladharr Djambarrpuyngu and Manabalpuy.



Activity: Learn some Yolngu greetings and practise them in class, or with a friend.

Nhamirri nhe? (how are you?)

Manymak bay' (good)

Nhamirri manda? (how are you two?)

Yaka manymak (not good)

Nhamirri walala? (how are they?)

Märr-gangga/Latju (not too bad/they are good)

ngay' (here)

Ga' gapu (got water?)

Dhuwala bay' (here)

Dhäwul bay' (none nothing)

ngay' (here, take it)

Yaka (no)

Bäyngu (no, nothing)

ngay' (here)

Go marrtjina! (come here)

Yo! Yalala bay' (Yes, later on)

Yaka. Yalala marrtji (No, go later)

Ma'. (okay then)

From <http://www.ealta.org/yolgnupeople.html>.

More Yolngu language words and phrases are available from this site.

Useful links and further resources

Artback NT Arts Development and Touring

www.artbacknt.com.au

You can find out about the Djuki Mala tour here, including all the places they are performing, as well as DanceSite, the traditional Indigenous dance festival run by Artback NT that Djuki Mala headlined in 2013.

A ten minute film about DanceSite can be viewed here: vimeo.com/82246865

This video contains footage of the Chooky Dancers.

Djuki Mala 2014 Tour Facebook page

www.facebook.com/djukimala2014

Up-to-date information about the 2014 National Tour, including fun snippets from the road.

Djuki Mala

<http://thechookydancers.com/content/>

Read about Djuki Mala and Elcho Island on Djuki Mala's own website. Includes links to video and media about the dance troupe.

Yolngu Boy (film)

<http://www.yolnguboy.com/>

This site has cultural information about Yolngu people as well as information about the film. An education guide can be found at:

<http://www.yolnguboy.com/directory/htm/frameset3.htm>

and a brief history and some recorded pronunciations at:

<http://www.yolnguboy.com/directory/htm/frameset3.htm>

Nhulunbuy Corporation Ltd

<http://ncl.net.au/play/about-yolgnu/>

Information packed page about Yolgnu people, history, language and culture.

Yolngu Language Blogspot

<http://yolngulanguage.blogspot.com.au/>

Site dedicated to Yolgnu language information and cultural information (also includes an instructional video about playing the yidaki (didgeridoo))

ABC - Indigenous language map

<http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>

Indigenous language map with zoom function, shows Indigenous language groups across Australia.

Skinnyfish Music

<http://www.skinnyfishmusic.com.au/site/>

Skinnyfish Music works in partnership with artists and their communities to produce music by, about and for them, and to take their music to the wider world. Skinnyfish are the record label for many NT musicians including Gurrumul and Saltwater Band. You can listen to tracks from NT Indigenous musicians here.

Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre

<http://www.marthakal.org/>

Maps, links and information about services on Elcho Island.

Digital Future Media - Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre

<http://www.digifm.com.au/>

DigiFM is a Yolngu created, owned and operated media centre – based on Elcho Island sharing stories across Arnhemland and the Gumurr Marthakal Region.

