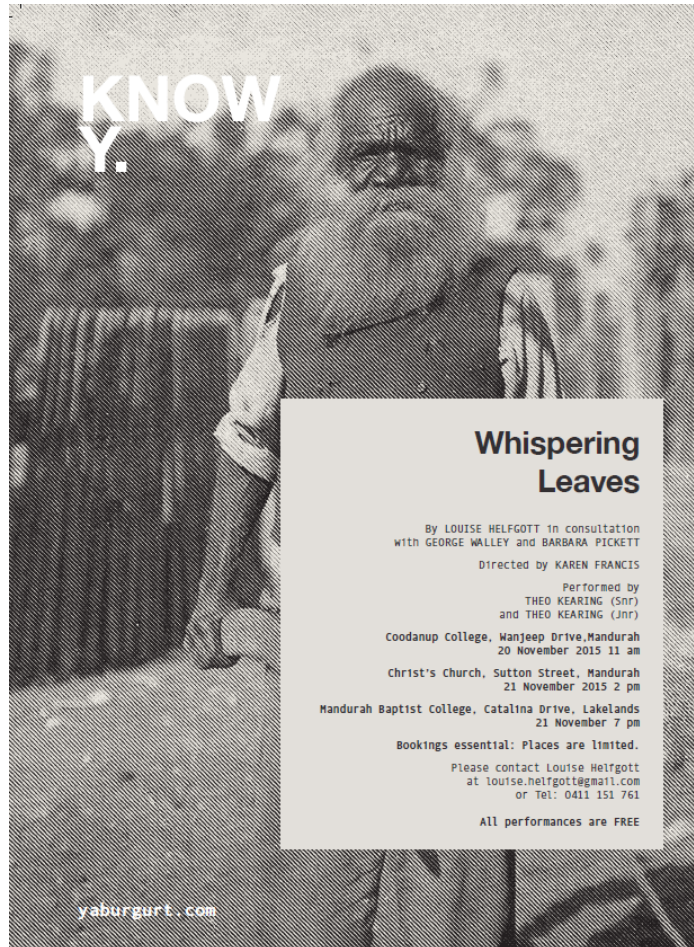


Yaburgurt Memorial Project

Whispering Leaves

Evaluation Survey Report



Background

Whispering Leaves is a theatre production which is part of a series of artistic and cultural events to commemorate and honour the life of Yaburgurt (George Winjan), a prominent Noongar elder in the Peel region. *Whispering Leaves* is written by Louise Helfgott in consultation with George Walley and Barbara Pickett, directed by Karen Francis, and performed by Theo Kearing Snr (TK) and Theo Kearing Jnr.

The performance aimed to encourage audiences to foster an interest and expand their knowledge of the history of Yaburgurt, Mandurah and of Aboriginal people. The performances simultaneously encouraged the audiences' support of reconciliation in Mandurah, and to demonstrate the impact of European colonisation on Aboriginal people in Mandurah.

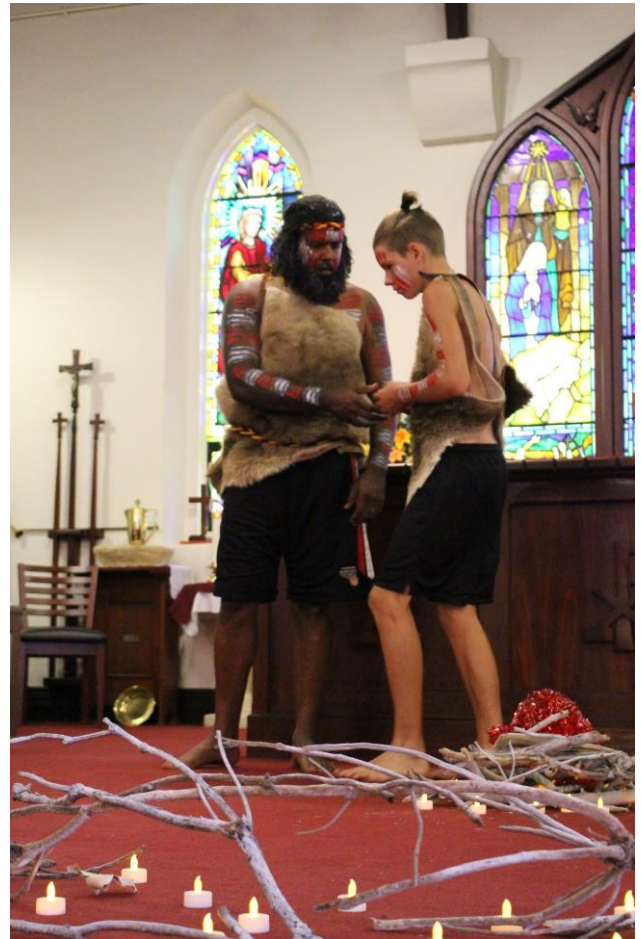
Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to investigate if the audiences' perception of their knowledge and interest in Yaburgurt and Mandurah's history changed as a result of attending a '*Whispering Leaves Performance*'. The survey also asked if the performance demonstrated the impact of European colonisation on Aboriginal people and if performances could support, and be part of reconciliation in Mandurah. It was hypothesised that the audiences' knowledge and attitudes would change as a result of viewing the performance.

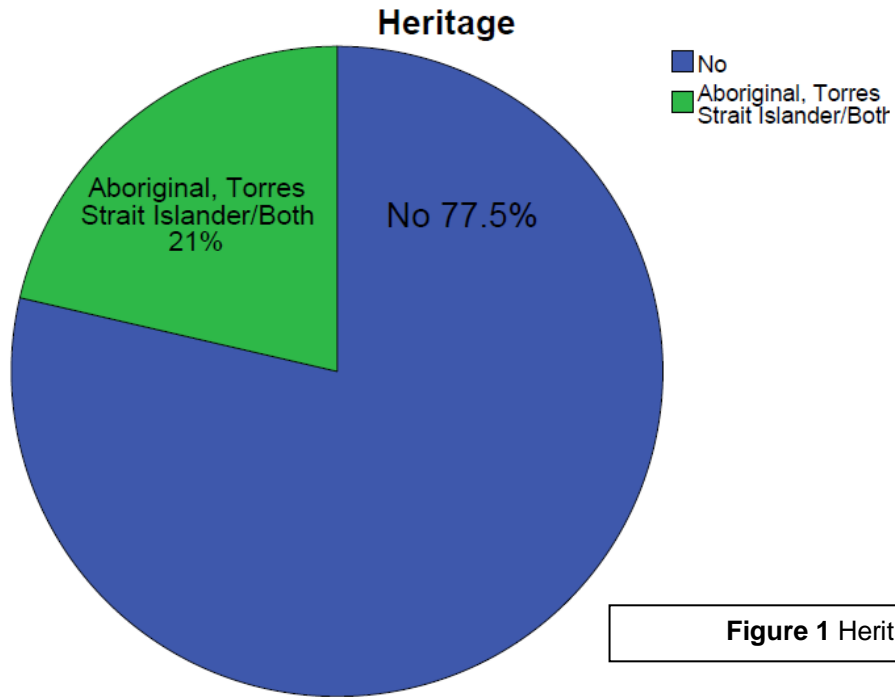
Participants

Of the 209 pre-performance surveys that were completed:

- **21%** identified themselves as Aboriginal or/and Torres Strait Islander;
- **1.4%** participants did not answer;
- **77.5%** participants did not identify themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage (figure one).



Theo Kearing Snr (TK) and Theo Kearing Jnr performing *Whispering Leaves* at Christ's Church, 21 November 2015 as part of Heritage Day



37% were high school age students aged 13 to 17;
 19% were aged 66 and above (figure two);
 13% were aged 26 to 45, 26% were aged 46 to 65;
 3% primary school aged children aged 5 to 12;
 2% young adults aged 18 to 25.

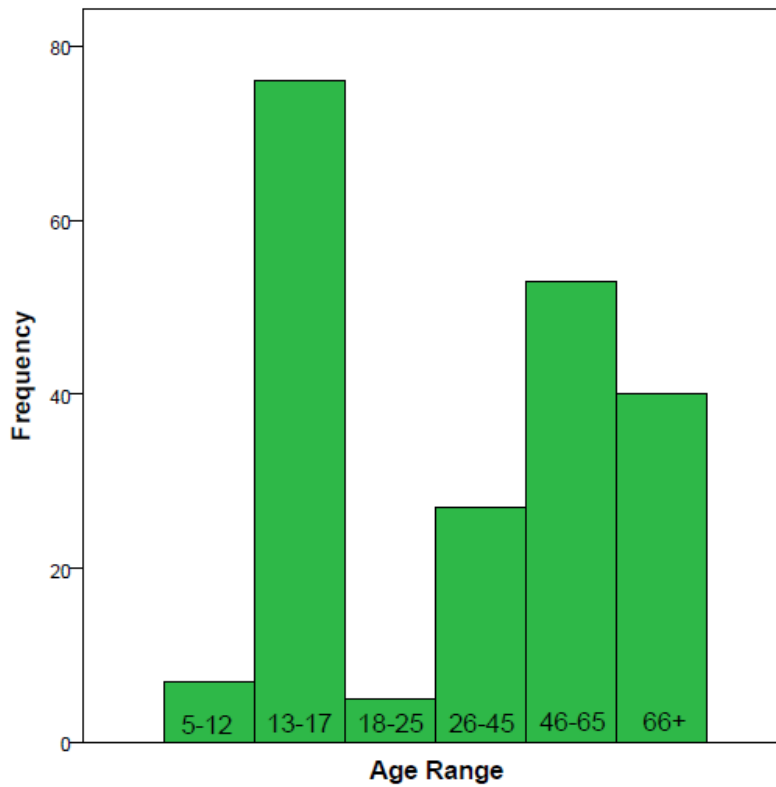
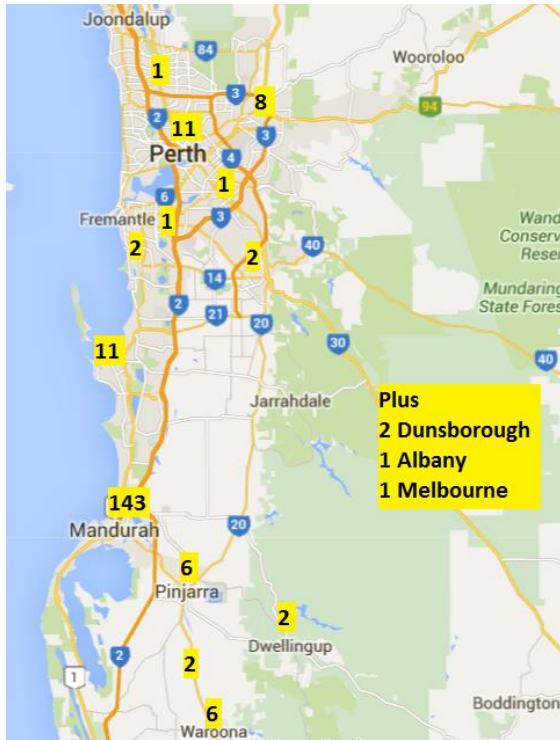


Figure 2 Age Range



As represented in figure three 68% of participants lived in Mandurah, and the remaining (32%) participants lived elsewhere.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and participants attended the performances for a variety of reasons. However, the majority of people, 54% indicated that they attended because of an interest in Aboriginal culture.

Other popular reasons included supporting local events (26%), love seeing live theatre (24%), and knowing people who were either in or a part of the performance (23%).

Methodology used can be found in **Appendix A**

Figure 3 Map of participants' residence

Results

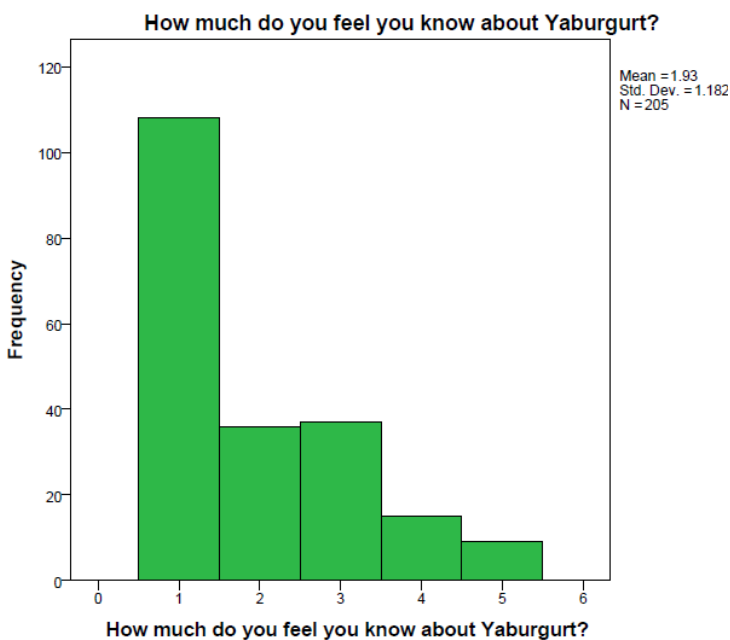


Figure 4 Question one (pre)

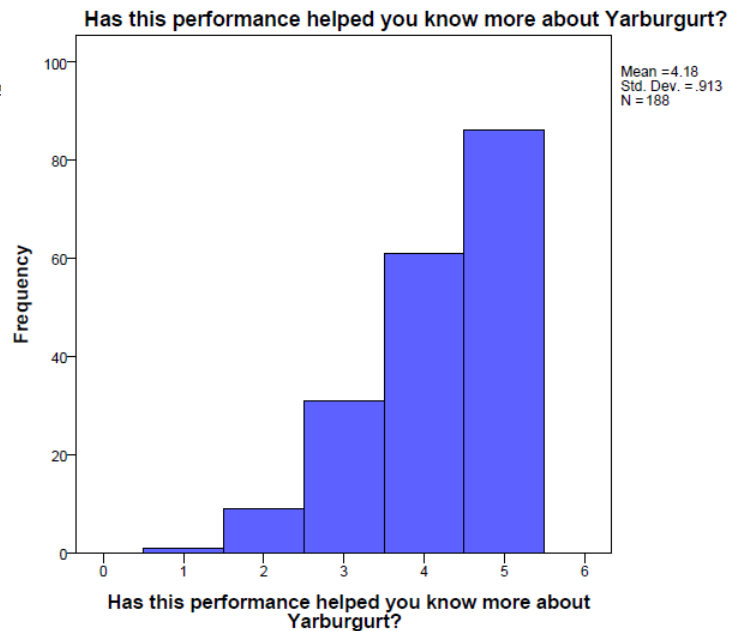


Figure 5 Question six (post)

The mean for question one is 1.93, indicating that participants knew very little about Yaburgurt prior to viewing the performance. After viewing the performance, the mean for question six is 4.18 indicating a significant change in participants' perception of their knowledge of Yaburgurt.

Has the performance generated your interest in finding out more about Aboriginal history?

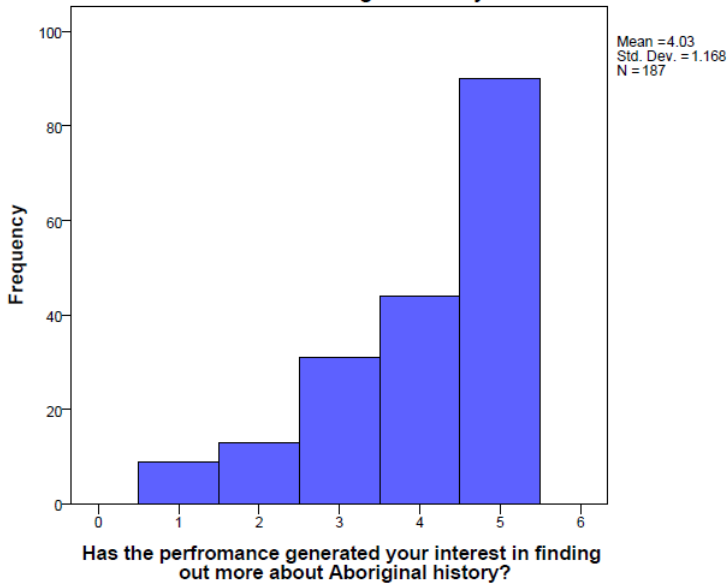


Figure 6 Question two(pre)

Has this performance helped you know more about Mandurah's history?

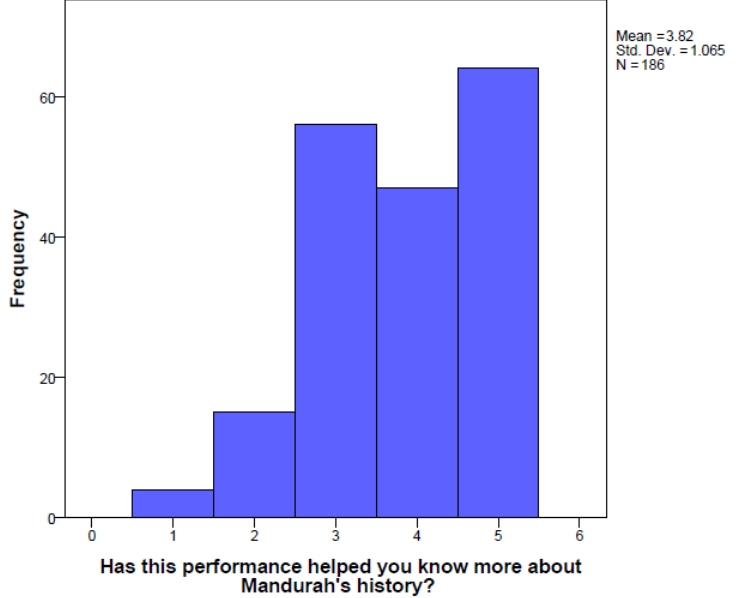


Figure 7 Question seven (post)

The mean for participants' perception of their knowledge of Mandurah changed from 2.45 to 3.82, indicating a slight increase in knowledge.

How interested are you in finding out more about Yaburgurt?

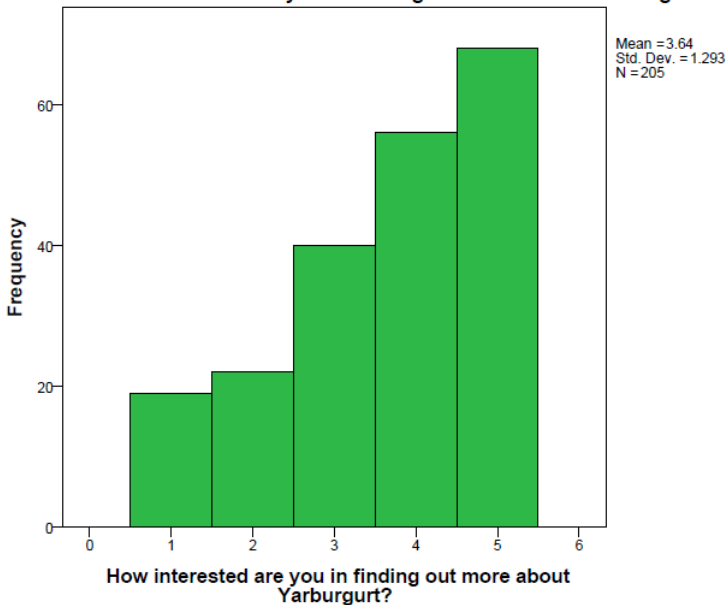


Figure 8 Question three (pre)

Has the performance generated your interest in finding out more about Yaburgurt?

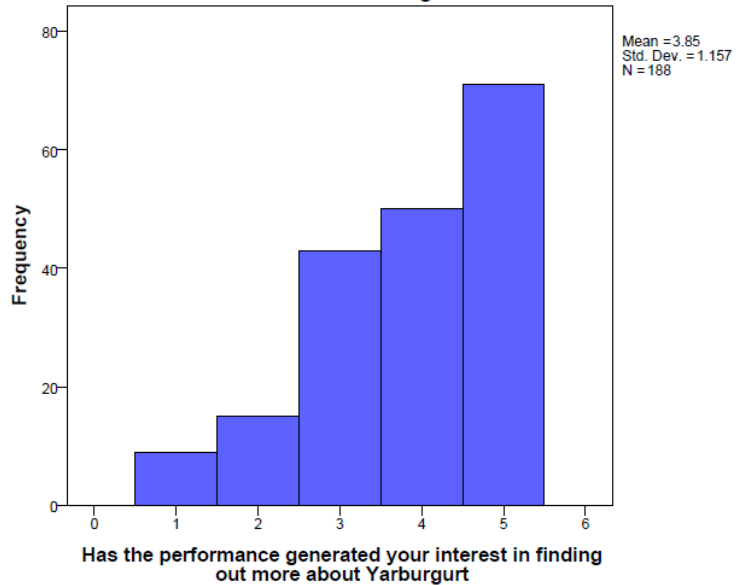


Figure 9 Question eight (post)

There was not a significant difference in the means between participants interest in finding out more about Yaburgurt from before to after the performance, changing from 3.64 to 3.85. However, this is supported by majority of participants attending due to the interest they already have in Aboriginal culture.

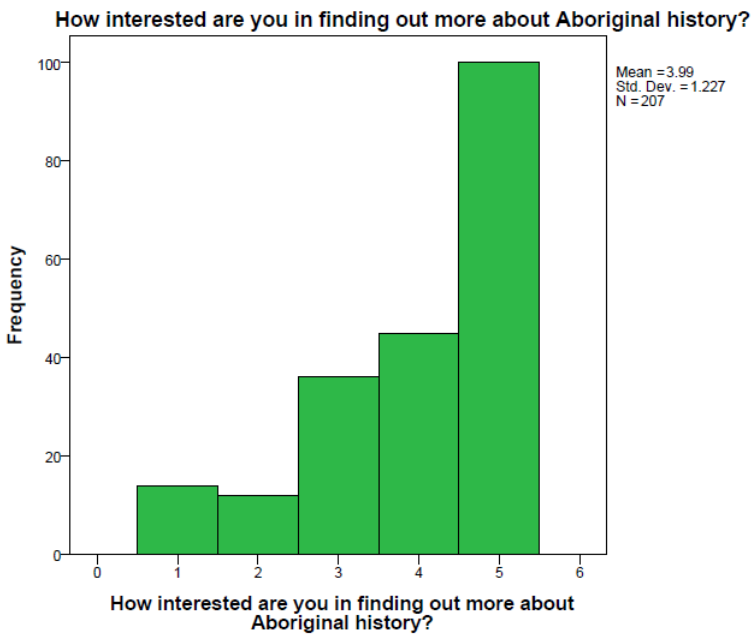


Figure 10 Question four (pre)

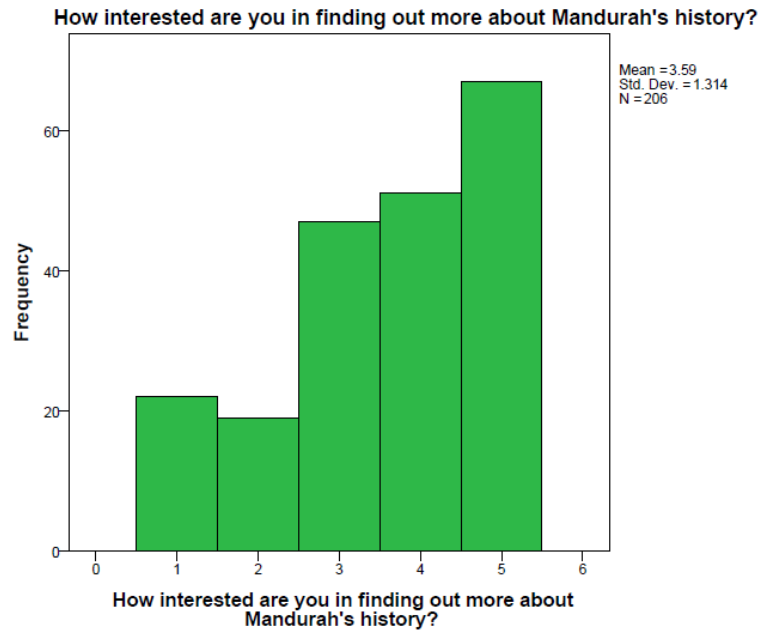


Figure 11 Question nine (post)

There was not a significant difference between the mean of participants interest in Aboriginal history before and after the performance, 3.99 to 4.03. However this is because their interest was already high.

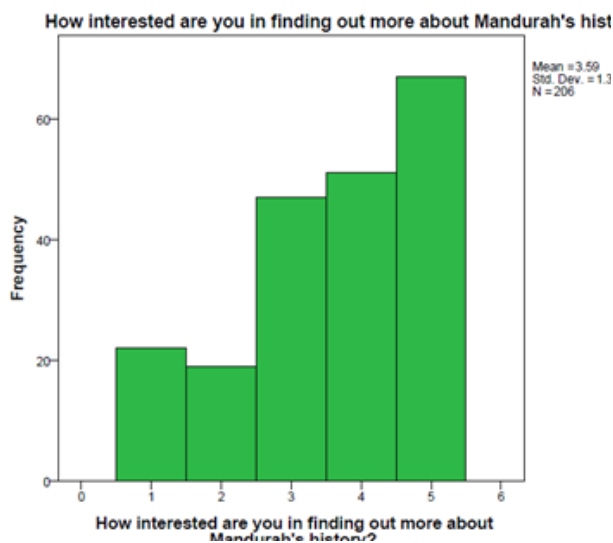


Figure 12 Question five (pre)

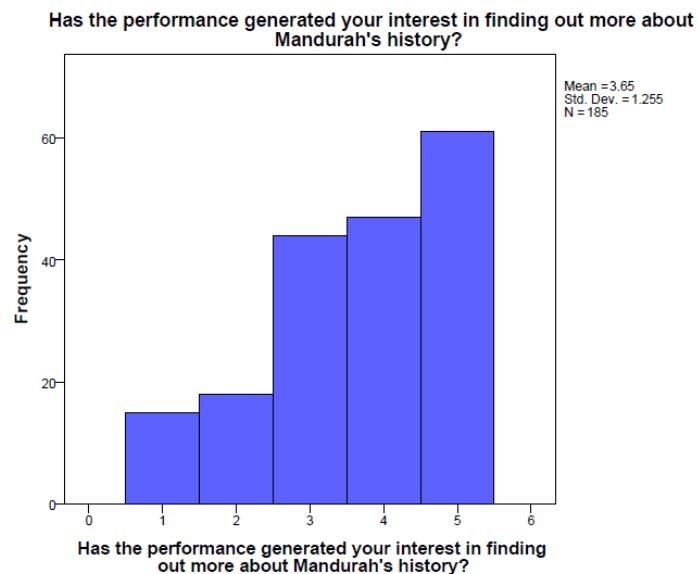


Figure 13 Question ten (post)

Again, there was not a significant difference between the mean of participants interest in Mandurah's history before and after the performance, 3.59 to 3.65. However this is because their interest was already high. Interestingly, more people were interested in Aboriginal history than Yaburgurt specifically or Mandurah's history.

How well do you think the performance can support reconciliation in Mandurah?

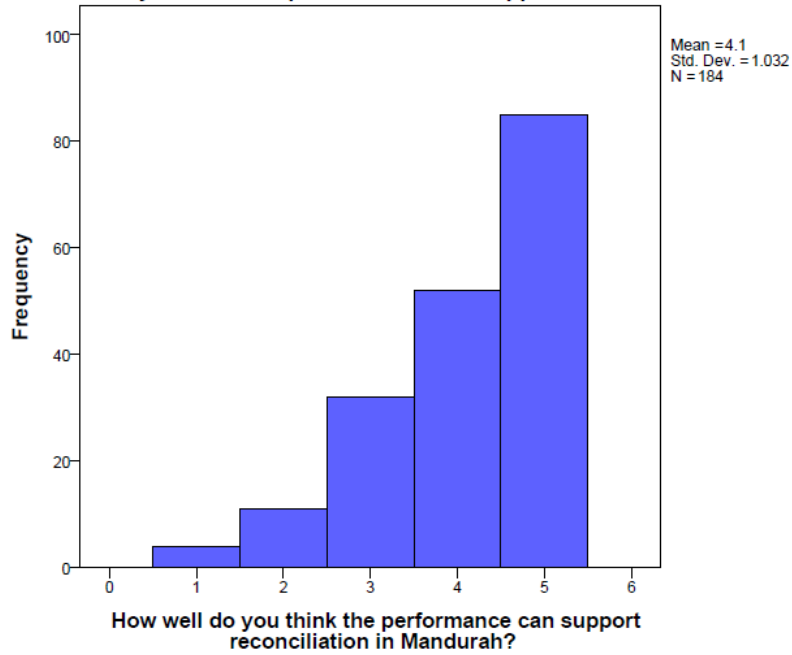


Figure 14 Question eleven

The mean for how well participants thought the performance can support reconciliation in Mandurah was 4.1, indicating that a high number of participants thought that it could support reconciliation very well.

How well did the performance demonstrate the impact of European colonisation on Aboriginal people?

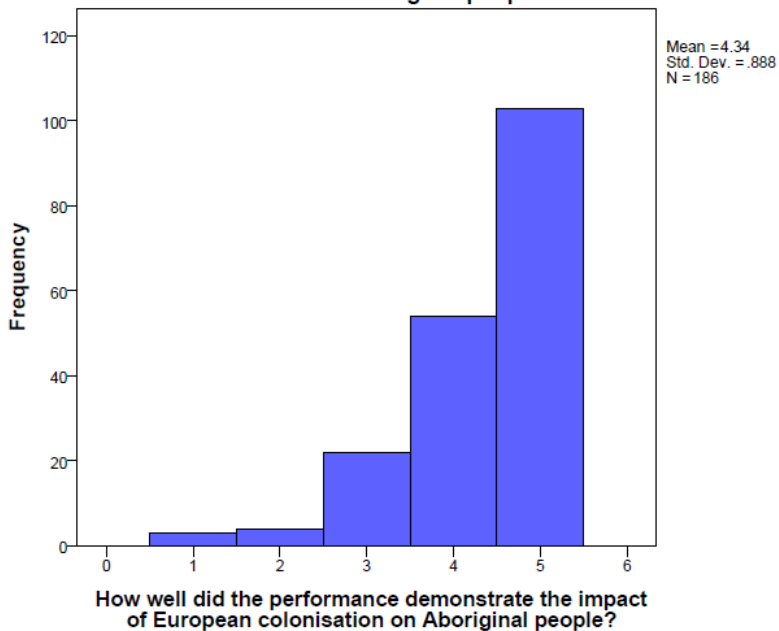


Figure 15 Question twelve

The mean for how well participants thought the performance demonstrated the impact of European colonisation on Aboriginal people was 4.34, indicating that a high number of participants thought that it demonstrated it well.

Would you recommend Whispering Leaves to your friends and/or family?

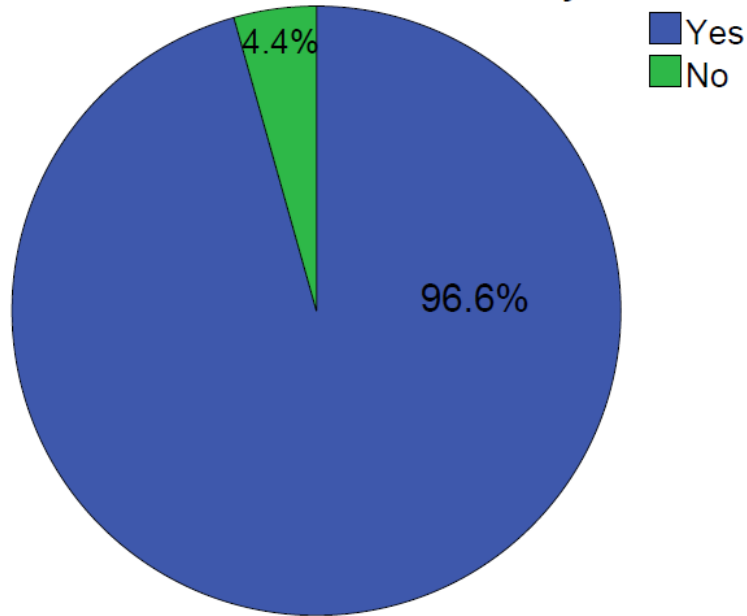


Figure 16 Question thirteen

As represented in figure sixteen, 96.6% indicated that they would recommend *Whispering Leaves* to their friends and family. Suggesting that they considered the performance enjoyable and worth seeing.

Question fourteen: How did the performance make you feel?

“I felt as though I had received a wonderful history lesson – and presented so well!”

- **12%** felt sad;
- **9%** felt good, or fantastic;
- **7.6%** were interested and wanted to know more;
- **6%** felt emotional;
- **6%** said they felt sorry for the Aboriginal people.
- **5%** said they felt sad but optimistic or happy for the future;
- **1.4%** said they felt sad and angry.

Some of the stand out comments were:

- “I feel very lucky about being an Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander about the culture”, “it made me know more on my culture and it made me feel good”,
- “it made me feel very empathetic towards the Aboriginal people of the Peel Region”.

Question fifteen: Do you have any comments on the overall quality of the performance?

“Powerful style with the use of body language together with voice over.”

- 31% used positive adjectives such as really good, fantastic, top quality, awesome, brilliant, and spellbinding;
- 9% good or nice;
- 8% excellent quality of the acting;
- 4% suggested that the quality of the recording needs to be slower and clearer;
- 3% noted how well the performance was written;
- 2% people suggested that Yungap takes on a stronger role;
- 2% commented on the benefit of using a prerecording:

Overall there was a very positive response to the quality of the performance.

Question sixteen: In what ways do you think the performance could have been improved?

- 11% no changes at all;
- 8% actors should speak live;
- 7% more music and soundtrack;
- 6% suggested including more dance or movement;
- 5.2% suggested including more actors, particularly for the scenes with European settlers;
- 2% suggested using more props, including Aboriginal artefacts and Australian animals.

An interesting suggestion by one person was to have it performed in the bush. Other interesting suggestions was to have the performance available on DVD or to have the story available to purchase in a booklet.

The most common additional comment was that *Whispering Leaves* needs to continue and be taken further:

- 4% the play needs to continue in general;
- 3% should be performed in all schools;
- 1% should go Australia wide.

And

- 4% expressed their gratitude;
- 4% commented on importance of learning about history, Aboriginal culture and finding out more stories.

“Keep up your good work – we need to know and understand more of Aboriginal perspective and experience”.

Conclusion

It is valuable that the Aboriginal community are supportive of the performance for it to be successful. It was great to have such a high percentage of participants identify as Aboriginal or/and Torres Strait Islander along with the high number of positive responses to the performance.

Participants ages were not consistent between groups, with primary school age children and young adults much lower. It could be beneficial to choose venues which may be more likely to draw in younger children and young adults such as primary schools or universities.

The largest group was high school students, likely because two of the venues were high schools. Furthermore, a significant number of participants, 32% were not residents of Mandurah, again considering majority of responses were positive, this suggests the performance has value to be performed outside Mandurah, which was also supported by the additional comments.

It is important to consider that the majority of participants viewed and completed the survey voluntarily and due to their interest in Aboriginal culture, therefore there is some bias in this data. However, there is evidence that proves a significant increase of knowledge particularly of Yaburgurt but also of Mandurah's history. Even though prior to the performance interest in Yaburgurt, Mandurah's and Aboriginal history was already quite high, while it was only slight, interest did increase for each of these areas. Thus it can be concluded the performance did not hinder participants' interest.

Responses indicated that participants thought the performance could very strongly support reconciliation in Mandurah and demonstrated the impact of European colonisation very well. Responses to the open-ended questions were mostly positive and constructive. Participants responded with appropriate emotions that demonstrated respect and reconciliation. Consequently, it can be concluded the performance did improve the knowledge and attitudes of the performance.



Appendix A

Methodology

Participants completed two surveys; one before and one after the performance consisting of seventeen questions. The pre-performance survey included relevant Demographic questions such as which performance was attended, how they found out about the performance, their motivation for attending, age, if they live in Mandurah and if so for how long to compare to their knowledge of Mandurah's history; and if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. Questions one to five were asked in the pre-performance survey and questions six to seventeen on the post-performance survey. However, surveys were not paired for correlating purposes.

Questions one to twelve asked participants to rate how they felt based on a Likert Scale from one to five with one being nothing/not at all and five being a lot/very interested. Questions one to five asked participants their perceived knowledge of Yaburgurt and Mandurah's history and their interest in Yaburgurt, and Mandurah's and Aboriginal history. The post-performance survey questions six to twelve asked participants their perceived knowledge of Yaburgurt and Mandurah's history after watching the performance, and if the performance generated interest in knowing more about Yaburgurt, and Mandurah's and Aboriginal history.

This survey also asked how well participants thought the performance could support reconciliation in Mandurah, and how well participants thought the performance demonstrated the impact of European colonisation on Aboriginal people. Question thirteen asked if participants would recommend *Whispering Leaves* to their friends and family. Questions fourteen to sixteen were open ended questions asking participants how the performance made them feel, any comments on the overall quality of the performance and any suggestions for how the performance could be improved. Question seventeen provided participants with the opportunity to make additional comments.

Pre-performance surveys were handed out as attendees arrived to each performance and collected prior to the beginning of the performance. Post-performance surveys were handed out and collected instantly after the performances. This occurred at three different performances at three venues. 209 pre-performance surveys and 189 post-performance surveys were completed.

Whispering Leaves

Evaluation Survey

Part A: Please complete BEFORE the performance

Which performance did you attend? (please tick)

- Coodanup College Christ's Church Mandurah Baptist College

How did you find out about this performance?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Poster/ Flyer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

What was your motivation for attending the performance?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interested in aboriginal culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Something fun to do |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I know people in/ a part of the play | <input type="checkbox"/> I brought my kids/family to see it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like to support local events | <input type="checkbox"/> I was curious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I love seeing live theatre | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

What is your age?

- 5-12 13-17 18-25 26- 45 46-65 66+

Do you live in Mandurah? Yes No

If yes how many years have you lived in Mandurah?

- Less than 1 1-5 6-15 16-30 31-50 51+

If no where do you live? _____

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage?

- No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander
 Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Please answer questions on a scale of 1-5

1 being nothing/not at all, 5 being a lot/very interested

Questions:	1	2	3	4	5
1. How much do you feel you know about Yaburgurt?					
2. How much do you feel you know about Mandurah's history?					
3. How interested are you in finding out more about Yaburgurt?					
4. How interested are you in finding out more about Aboriginal history?					
5. How interested are you in finding out more about Mandurah's history?					

Whispering Leaves

Evaluation Survey

Part B: Please complete AFTER the performance

Please answer questions on a scale of 1-5 1 being nothing/not at all, 5 being a lot/very interested					
Questions:	1	2	3	4	5
6. Has this performance helped you know more about Yaburgurt?					
7. Has this performance helped you know more about Mandurah's history?					
8. Has the performance generated your interest in finding out more about Yaburgurt?					
9. Has the performance generated your interest in finding out more about Aboriginal history?					
10. Has the performance generated your interest in finding out more about Mandurah's history?					
11. How well do you think the performance can support reconciliation in Mandurah?					
12. How well did the performance demonstrate the impact of European colonisation on Aboriginal people?					

13. Would you recommend *Whispering Leaves* to your friends and/or family?
 Yes No

14. How did the performance make you feel?

15. Do you have any comments on the overall quality of the performance?

16. In what ways do you think the performance could have been improved?

17. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for your support in completing this survey 😊