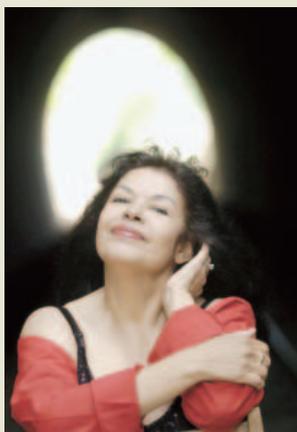


what

What's Happening Around Town

Songs of family



Reading to sing at concert

WILMA Reading conquered the international show business world from Las Vegas to London with her three octave voice, playing the London Palladium, Copacabana and performing with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

But next week she will swap the world stage and West End musicals for Cairns Festival and a concert with the Cairns Classical Music Group.

The concert, *Ensembles, Arias and Pipe Organ*, will feature Reading singing excerpts from *Porgy and Bess*, while other ensembles include vocalist Fonti von Gunton and Strings 4 quartet, performing *A Koma (A Child)*, a Papua New Guinean song they recorded for the newly released Cairns Festival CD *Opening Notes*.

The evening's program also includes pipe organ, violin, oboe, vocalists with organ accompaniment and a duet by French horn player Thomas Humphris and organist David Godwin.

Wilma Reading has performed 33 one woman concerts with a symphony orchestra in Russia, played the role of Julie in the London season of *Showboat* and been televised by BBC Television. *Ensembles, Arias and Pipe Organ* is at the Presbyterian Church, Sheridan St, at 8pm on September 1.

REVIEW

PUT aside any preconceived ideas you may have about *Blackbird* at the door and expect just one thing – to be moved.

Travelling through six generations of women, *Blackbird* jumps back and forth in history as Megan Sarmardin, the youngest member of a proud North Queensland family, unravels her family history with captivating narratives told through song.

In a moving performance, Megan shows herself to be a brilliant vocalist with power and subtlety, as well as an articulate and captivating storyteller.

Taken predominantly from the memories of her great-grandmother, Flora, 94, Megan weaves her family's intriguing story with a voice which captures and conveys a range of emotions – the strength and determination it took her great, great-grandmother Kitty to walk from Butcher's Creek near Malanda to Innisfail to be married, to the sadness and loneliness of Kitty's mother, Emily, who was snatched from her country and taken to Palm Island, where she died.

This is a performance that resonates with authority, it demonstrates the power of family and the special bond indigenous people have to their land and their people.

Opening night on Friday was particularly special, with many of Megan's family, including her "Granny Flora", in the audience.



MOVING PERFORMANCE: Megan Sarmardin and Jamie Clark.

Not overwhelmed by the presence of her family whose story she is about to tell, Megan blossomed as she embraced the songs to deliver a show that had the whole audience, not just her family, laughing and sobbing.

While the light-hearted moments filled the theatre with the noise of laughter, it was the hardship endured by this family and the hurdles they climbed for each other that resonate long after the curtain falls.

While Megan and her family take centre stage, Jamie Clark's musical accompaniment also deserves high praise. This is the sort of performance that has the capacity to truly inspire. I would encourage everyone to sample the magic that is *Blackbird*.

Pasco Rogato

Blackbird is at JUTE Theatre until August 28. Tickets from Ticketlink, phone 1300 855 835 or visit www.ticketlink.com.au online.

Tasty helping for the children

AUSTRALIA'S leading producer of musical theatre for children, Garry Ginivan Attractions, brings to Cairns a new adaptation of the Australian classic *Wombat Stew*.

First published in 1984, *Wombat Stew* has become a modern day phenomenon in children's literature and has sold more than 350,000 copies Australia wide.

Written by Marcia K Vaughan, with illustrations by Pamela Lofts, the simple story of a dingo who catches a wombat and decides to make wombat stew has been cleverly developed into a "true-blue-dinky-di-big-aussie-musical" complete with blobs of mud, very fine feathers, creepy crawlies, flosses, gum-nuts and a big bubbling billy can!

With a cast of six multi-talented performers, *Wombat Stew* is a mouth-watering combination of story-telling, mime, music, dance and puppetry. *Wombat Stew* is at the Cairns Civic Theatre, September 6 at 6pm, September 7 at 9.30am and 11.30am, and September 8 at 9.30am and 11.30am. Tickets from Ticketlink, phone 1300 855 835 or www.ticketlink.com.au online.



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