



# Sunshine Super Girl: the Evonne Goolagong Story

By Andrea James

## Background

*Sunshine Super Girl* is a quintessentially Australian story about a Black girl from the bush who, with the unlikely support of an outback farming town and her loving family, rises to become a world tennis champion in 1971 at the tender age of 19 - making Evonne Goolagong a household name.

On a high riverbank on Wiradjuri country, Evonne fishes for Murray cod and reflects on her incredible life journey - from the dirt floor of her family's shack outside Griffith to meeting royalty on Wimbledon Centre Court; her homesickness while "living white" with her coach's family in Sydney; to her battles with racism and media paternalism and local race politics; to her controversial decision to play in South Africa during Apartheid to become the first Black woman to win the South African Open.

When she retired in 1982, Evonne had won 92 professional tournaments and was a finalist in 18 Grand Slam events and seven singles – winning Wimbledon twice, the French Open once and the Australian Open four times.

More than a rags-to-riches tale, Goolagong's heartwarming story is a celebration of spirit and passion over privilege and racism; and a tribute to a great Wiradjuri woman who inspired a nation and offers hope and possibility to thousands of young girls across the country.

With its peculiarly Australian sensibility, humour and humility, *Sunshine Super Girl* asks us to consider our nation's future and the larger collective significance of our individual actions on the next 'Goolagong' waiting in the wings.

*Sunshine Super Girl* is about what Australia was and could be.

## About the Work

Evonne's personal narrative is at the heart of this work, and it is this key role that drives the show. The role of Evonne is supported by three adept actor/dancers who play the supplementary roles of family, townsfolk, tennis officials and friends. The ambition of this project is as a large-scale physical theatre event that will offer a challenging, refreshing and powerful role to an up and coming Aboriginal actress.

Reflecting the epic nature of grand slam tennis – *Sunshine Super Girl*/will utilise exquisite yet physically robust dance, a poetic storytelling style and the rules of the game of tennis to bring spirit to this great woman and the colourful characters drawn from Evonne's family and life.

### The Setting

Set on a makeshift bush-mechanics style tennis court during Goolagong's last Wimbledon final, *Sunshine Super Girl*/will use text-based and physical theatre, traditional dance, choreography and poetry to play out the life and times of a much-loved Australian treasure.

With audience seated in traverse, on either side of the action, a vintage tennis scoreboard keeps score and a white bedsheet at one end flutters ominously in the air. A rustic tennis line marker is literally filled with Wiradjuri earth to create a makeshift tennis court on stage.

Retro tennis costumes and outfits of the 60's, 70's and 80's will be donned to reminisce on the race politics of Australia and our troubled relationship with the United Kingdom.

### Creative Team

Writer | Yorta-Yorta/Kurnai woman and playwright, Andrea James has written *Sunshine Super Girl*. As an Indigenous led work, family and cultural consultation is vital to maintain integrity. Andrea has developed a close relationship with Evonne and her husband/ manager, Roger Cawley, to ensure the work is endorsed and supported as it continues to develop.

Choreographer | Wiradjuri woman and choreographer, Vicki Van Hout will create the movement, to illuminate the rhythm and grace of Evonne Goolagong's tennis game, and demonstrate the epic psychological battle that is elite tennis. Sharing the same Wiradjuri heritage, Vicki is both culturally and professionally qualified for the project.

### At a Glance

Premiere date: Mid-late 2020

Age Range: 12+

Running time: 90 mins (Approx.)

Audience Capacity: 200 (Approx, dependent on playing space size)



### Key Technical Information

- A studio space or large stage is required to create the traverse seating arrangement required for the show. Size of playing space is yet to be determined, but minimum area required is approx 20m x 15m.
- Seating to be provided by presenter
- Non-raked floor surface required

Produced by Performing Lines.

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