

MUSIC REVIEW: MIAF The Black Arm Band

By [Simon Baker](#) Arts Hub | Saturday, October 25, 2008

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To smile, to laugh, to shed a tear, to dream, to be challenged, to hope, to be inspired. What more could one want from a night out. On Friday night, The Black Arm Band together with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra delivered this and so much more.

The Melbourne International Arts Festival chose the Black Arm Band to close out its 2008 Festival and they couldn't have selected a better show.

For nearly two hours the sold out audience that packed the State Theatre clapped and cheered as the nearly 30-strong group took us on a journey through contemporary Indigenous music. The underlying theme of the concert, titled *Hidden Republic*, was one of hope for the future of the country.

This theme can be seen in many of the songs which included *I Have a Dream, Where I B'long, Lighthouse, Blackfella/Whitefella* and, what seems to have become a bit of an anthem for reconciliation, *Treaty*.

While not all of the music is well known, special mention has to go to Lou Bennett, Sally Dastey, and Amy Saunders who beautifully sang *Aunty across the Sea* and *Inside My Kitchen* and in the process nearly brought the house down.

Band includes such well know names as Jimmy Little, Archie Roach, Shane Howard and Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu.

At its heart *Hidden Republic* is about laying the questions and concerns of the past to rest and moving into a bright new future. As Tracee Hutchinson writes in the programme "This is our time. We can walk together in the glad tomorrow. And we can sing from the same songbook. A songbook of hope."

This is the second major project of The Black Arm Band. The first was titled *murundak* and was first seen as part of the 2006 Melbourne International Arts Festival.

The Black Arm Band performs again tonight at the State Theatre. For more information [click here](#).