Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1171

Barambah, Maroochy

(1950 -)

Born	19500101, Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve Queensland Australia
Occupation	Opera singer

Summary

Maroochy Barambah is a distinguished indigenous musician whose career since the 1970s has spanned the genres of jazz, rock, musical theatre and classical opera.

Details

Maroochy Barambah, formerly Yvette Isaacs, of Gubbi Gubbi descent, was born in c.1950s at Cherbourg reserve in Queensland. Her early years were spent in the dormitory system, designed to sever Aboriginal children from their cultural heritage. She participated in the Aboriginal Inland Mission choir at Cherbourg and, when fostered out to a family in Melbourne, she went to school there under the Harold Blair Aboriginal Children's project.

In the 1970s she was awarded a Melba Conservatorium of Music scholarship, and subsequently formed her own jazz group. She became lead singer with indigenous rock band Quokka and participated in the Rock Against Racism concert in Hobart, Tasmania. She also took part in the television series *Women of the Sun* (1982). In the same year she changed her name as a statement of pride in her Aboriginality.

In 1989 she performed in the Sydney Metropolitan Opera production, *Black River*, which won the Sounds Australian National Music Critics Award for the year and a film version has since been produced. In 1990 she played the lead role in the successful indigenous musical, *Bran Nue Dae*, and in 1991 was awarded the inaugural Aboriginal performing arts fellowship offered by the Aboriginal Arts Committee as she pursued a career as a classical opera singer. She also had the lead role in *Beach Dreaming*, an opera written not only for but about her, by Mark Isaacs.

Published resources

Edited Book
The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

Book
Women of the sun, Maris, Hyllus and Sonia Borg, 1985

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details
Leonarda Kovacic and Barbara Lemon

Created 20 May 2005
Last modified 24 March 2006