

**Name of collection**

*Indigenous rituals*

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**[DIDGERIDOO AND FLUTE PLAYING]**

The opening night, what we tried to do is follow indigenous protocol in the way in which we welcomed people into our own space. A lot of the people who are there are involved in the festival in some way or have been involved in previous festivals or are involved in some way in the company. We also like to try and bring in people who are important in the city.

What we've tended to do is draw on the help of indigenous people who actually live in the city. On this particular occasion, it was the Samoan community here in London have an arts collective run by Sani.

So to bring that here is very special. I'm really happy, because it connects me to myself. And I've got a background in theater, and opera, and composing. So everything that I do is imbued with Samoa. And that's good. It's unique. And it also gives a platform for any Pacific people coming from around the world who want to perform. And they come and help out with us, with our thing-- so keeps my sword sharp.

I've been invited to the Origins as an educator of sort. And what I mean, "of sort," is that to educate one's mind, heart, and soul to another is to educate our way of living. And sometimes they view us as barbaric or savagery. But we're really human being in partnership with Mother Earth, Father Sky.

We'll have rituals. We'll have songs. We have cultures. We have traditions that we still practice today. And that's not even practice. That's our way of life.

The other ceremony is a sharing of a special drink which has mildly narcotic properties but is legal. And it just takes you to a space where you feel both calm but a little more aware. And we also use that ceremony as a way of framing our own speeches are welcome.

The ceremony is the first half of the evening. And what happens at the end of the ceremony, because we've established that equality, that equilibrium, everyone's able to eat together. And eating together is very important in indigenous culture. It means that there's [NON-ENGLISH] Any problems are broken down. You can share the same bread. You can share the same drinks. And it becomes much more celebratory.

The latter part of the evening, we have performances, which are not necessarily ritualized as such, but nevertheless also very rooted in the cultures that we're showcasing. So this year we have Heath Bergerson playing the didgeridoo.

#### [DIDGERIDOO AND FLUTE PLAYING]

We had Andrew Thomas from the Navajo Nation playing the Native American flute. And indeed we had the two of them coming together and performing this extraordinary sort of meeting of breath and drone from two completely different spaces on the planet. We even had this indigenous Australian stand-up comic-- first time there's ever been one outside Australia, I think. And he was part of the opening night, too. It was terrific.

Yes, it is very special to be here and performing as an indigenous person along with other indigenous people from all around the world. It's like a cultural exchange-- communicate and actually talk to people face to face.

So I think we all have our own versions of ritual. But I like the way that it becomes internal. And no one can question that, and no one can criticize. It's just what you do.

The healing process which this festival is part of has to move beyond just ourselves and quite the small arts community. It has to go out into the city more broadly, which is why we try to do things in public spaces, which is why we try to work with museums, which is why we work with schools. The indigenous artists coming into the city from which their lives were once colonized and making a statement about their presence in the world in relation to those spaces is absolutely crucial to what the festival is about.

#### [DIDGERIDOO AND FLUTE PLAYING]