***A Mother’s Love***

***Jeff McMullen***

The Sydney Opera House was hushed the first time I heard Bunna Lawrie’s unrecorded song, *Mother.* With his brothers sitting alongside me the entire audience seemed to hold its breath and tears were flowing freely as one of Australia’s most powerful songmen told us with simplicity and great dignity how much a mother’s love is worth.

*“When I open my eyes,*

*I saw your face and your smile*

*You gave me breath, you gave me life*

*You’ve nurtured me into this world*

*You cared for me and brought me up”*

Bunna Lawrie is a respected elder of the Mirning people from the coastal Nullabor in South Australia. Everyone who loves original Aboriginal music and loves to dance to it would remember that Bunna is also the lead singer of *Coloured Stone.* From the day this band rolled out of Koonibba Mission, west of Ceduna, thirty odd years ago, they had a distinctive sound and feel.

Back in 1984 their single, *Black Boy,* urged Australians to understand something that also seemed so simple but still eludes this nation. “*Black boy, black boy, the colour of your skin is your pride and joy.”* There was no cringe. It was honest and raw.

*When You Gonna Learn, Dancing in the Moonlight, Human Love* and *Wild Desert Rose*

brought ARIA and Deadly Vibe Awards to *Coloured Stone* culminating in Bunna Lawrie’s NAIDOC Lifetime Achievement Award (2012).

Now, almost three decades after this wonderful music career began, Bunna and his favourite players have gone back into the studio to share the song he wrote and first sang for his beloved mother when she was 82 years old and ailing.

*“I thank you for all the love and care*

*We thank you for the life we’ve shared”*

Bunna’s mother, Hazel Lawrie, or ‘Ajgee’ as every called her, had ten children, eight boys and two girls. She lost four of those sons along the way and life was very tough.

“*And sometimes when life was hard*

*It didn’t show on your face*

*You didn’t cry, you showed your grace*

*When life was hard, you came through*

*You’re so strong and you’re so true*

*We love you mother, we love you maaamama*

*You’re so true, mother, we love you”*

“It was always that way, always hard, “ Bunna told me, “from the time her father, my grandfather, had to go to work as a scrub cutter. They reckon he cleared 40,000 acres of scrub. My mother told me a lot of stories about him and of how he consoled his children and helped them find happiness and purpose in life.

“*When you told me a little story*

*That your daddy said to you*

*When you grow up, don’t worry*

*Just be kind, just be true*

*But he didn’t mean about money,*

*The kindness you showed*

*And the love you gave is so rare*

*Mother we love you”*

Ajgee Lawrie shared her love, taking care of so many others. She had a saying, Bunna recalls, “If am not home, my door is open.” When others were sick Ajgee would take them food, clean their houses and bring them bush flowers. She never got angry with anyone and she taught her children, like her father had, to find the simple joys in each and every day.

Ajgee was 82 years old and sick with cancer when Bunna pulled his chair close and sang this song to thank her, to let her know what all of her children felt so deeply in their hearts.

“It’s a beautiful song,” Ajgee said to her son, “ a gift to all the mothers who give us life.”

When this song finds it way to your heart, as you sit with family late one night or are traveling on your own out under the stars, think of your mother and let the love flow like this music.

[ Hazel ‘Ajgee’ Lawrie’s name is used at Bunna’s request, the lyrics of *Mother* are quoted with his permission and you can follow the path of his music on [www.myspace.com/bunnalawrie](http://www.myspace.com/bunnalawrie) ]