

Now and in the Future: The Role of the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia in Sustaining Indigenous Music and Dance Traditions

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Abstract: The article investigates the history of the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia as a dedicated network of Indigenous performers, and allied scholars and curators, to protect and sustain Australia's highly endangered traditions of Indigenous music, dance and ceremonies. It will examine how the National Recording Project has developed into an effective community of practice for the making and archiving of Indigenous Australian music and dance recordings in response to grassroots community agency and concerns, and how its annual Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance has become one of Australia's premier forums for intercultural exchange. Present challenges to the project's growth are identified and opportunities explored.

Résumé : Cet article étudie l'histoire du Projet national d'enregistrement pour la performance autochtone (National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance) en Australie en tant que réseau d'artistes autochtones, de chercheurs et de conservateurs associés dédié à la protection et au maintien de musiques, de danses et de cérémonies traditionnelles autochtones gravement menacées. L'article examine comment le Projet national d'enregistrement s'est développé et est devenu une communauté de pratique efficace pour la création et l'archivage d'enregistrements de musiques et de danses autochtones australiennes en étant à l'écoute des initiatives et des demandes locales, et comment son symposium annuel sur la musique et la danse autochtones est devenu l'un des principaux forums pour l'échange interculturel en Australie. L'article identifie également obstacles actuels à la croissance du projet et explore les opportunités.

Over the past decade, the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia (2011) has grown into an expert intercultural and interdisciplinary coalition of concerned individuals and organizations with

interests in protecting and sustaining Australia's highly endangered traditions of Indigenous creative expression through music, dance and ceremonial performance. It hosts the annual Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance from which it initially emerged, and publishes the Indigenous Music of Australia series of books and albums through Sydney University Press. The discovery of existing recordings and the act of recording anew are both facilitated by the National Recording Project with an aim to apply such artifacts in ways that support and stimulate cultural continuity.

Informed by my close collaborations with Indigenous and other colleagues in the National Recording Project (referred to hereafter as the Project) since its inception, this article will examine how this initiative has coalesced into a community of practice for the making and archiving of Indigenous Australian music and dance recordings that marries academic and curatorial institutional expertise with grassroots community agency and concerns. It will explore the beginnings of the Project in the intercultural dynamism of our first symposium at the 2002 Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in Arnhem Land; the establishment of agreed fieldwork and archiving protocols in 2005; the development of the symposium as a premier forum for intercultural exchange in Australia; our facilitation of affiliated projects led by Indigenous people and communities; and finally, challenges and opportunities identified together with our partners for sustaining Australia's Indigenous performance traditions into the future.

Origins and Formative Collaborations

The Project was conceived in August 2002 by delegates of the inaugural Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance at Gunyanara in Arnhem Land, during the fourth Garma Festival of Traditional Culture hosted by the Yothu Yindi Foundation.¹ Delegates at the inaugural meeting, funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies (AIATSIS),² comprised a large cohort of Indigenous traditional artists and community leaders from Australia's north, and scholars of music, dance, Indigenous studies, languages and archiving. It was convened by Mandawuy Yunupingu of the Yothu Yindi Foundation, Allan Marett of the University of Sydney, and Marcia Langton of the University of Melbourne, with me serving as Secretary.

This initial symposium explored a range of possibilities for understanding, recording and circulating Indigenous performance traditions, which included performing and analysing traditional songs; transcribing and translating their lyrics; new media re-settings of traditional song materials; learning

and performing traditional dances; and Indigenous archiving as a means of gathering and caring for localised collections. It attracted leading Indigenous performers from Gunyaṅara, Yirrkala, Galiwin'ku, Maningrida, Belyuen, Ngukurr and Borrooloola; community stakeholders from regional schools, language centres and local government councils; ethnomusicologists, linguists and Indigenous experts from Australian tertiary institutions; and a contingent of scholars and archivists from the Institute for Papua New Guinea Studies, including senior ethnomusicologist Don Niles (Marett et al. 2006:84).

This cross-section of delegates identified common areas of concern for endangered Indigenous traditions, for the need to respect the law and knowledge that the traditions carry, and for improved access to worldwide collections of Indigenous materials. From these discussions came the “Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Performance” (Appendix A), which was drafted and ratified by delegates and launched before the festival's close.

Two years later, during the sixth Garma Festival in Arnhem Land, the Project was launched at Gulkuḷa, following our third Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance. Allan Marett took on the voluntary role of founding Director, and in 2005, we undertook two pilot studies in the Project's name. The first, funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC), provided for a series of meetings with potential stakeholders from Indigenous communities, industry, and universities and collecting institutions in order to establish the Project's governance structure as well as archiving arrangements with AIATSIS and the Northern Territory Library. The second pilot study, funded by the University of Sydney, provided for a series of collaborative field trips to remote locations across Arnhem Land, led by senior tradition holders, including Mandawuy Yunupijū, to test new equipment and techniques for digitally capturing, storing and repatriating high-fidelity recordings of their incumbent song repertoires. These trips into Arnhem Land also enabled new comprehensive recordings of song series in the region's eastern *manikay* genre of the Yolḷu and western *kunborrk* tradition of the Bininj (Marett et al. 2006:87).

Findings from both pilot studies informed the Project's initial fieldwork and archiving protocols. These protocols were announced by Allan Marett, Mandawuy Yunupijū, Marcia Langton, Neparrŋa Gumbula, Linda Barwick and myself at the National Education and the Arts Symposium held by the Australia Council of the Arts in Melbourne in September 2005 (Marett et al. 2006).

From this period also came the Project's first edited volume of articles on Indigenous songs presented from Indigenous, musical and linguistic perspectives. Published by AIATSIS in *Australian Aboriginal Studies* (Marett and Barwick, eds 2007), it includes work by project partners on the *kunborrk* tradition of western Arnhem Land (Marett and Barwick 2007; Barwick, Birch

and Evans 2007; Garde 2007; O'Keefe 2007); the *wangga* tradition of the Daly River region (Marett 2007; Ford 2007); the *junba* tradition of the Kimberley region (Treloyn 2007); central Australian songs (Turpin 2007); the *manikay* tradition of eastern Arnhem Land (Corn and Gumbula 2007); and overarching questions of language use in Indigenous songs (Walsh 2007).

My own article in this collection, co-authored with Neparrŋa Gumbula, a Yolŋu elder, scholar and ceremonial leader, stems from field trips we undertook along with his family to their homeland, Djiliwirri, in 2004 and 2005. We aimed to make a complete digital recording of a hereditary song series as sung by Gumbula and his siblings, and to capture stories, images and geospatial data for related sites on this country. Unlike a conventional ethnographic exercise whereby a researcher might record whatever activities the host community may be undertaking at the time, our approach (adopted for later field trips to Luŋgutja, Gurrumuru, Wandawuy and Biranybirany in 2005 and 2006) was an intentional attempt by Yolŋu leaders to perform their own repertoires for posterity. The plan arose in part from their frustration with the often fragmented and incomplete records left by earlier ethnographers (Corn and Gumbula 2007:118).

Present Aims and Activities

Since its formative years, the Project has grown into a cross-sector network with interests in supporting and maintaining the endangered Indigenous performance traditions of Australia. It has been active in:

- » recording traditional music, dance and ceremony in cooperation with local Indigenous communities.
- » repatriating archival records of music, dance and ceremony to Indigenous communities following best practices.
- » assisting communities to integrate these materials into education, language, health, governance and business programs.
- » promoting and assisting in the creation of local digital archives of traditional music, dance and ceremony within Indigenous communities.
- » encouraging safe archival storage under agreed protocols at AIATSIS in partnership with local digital archives.
- » publishing books and albums of traditional music and dance under the Indigenous Music of Australia label, published by Sydney University Press, to promote Indigenous music as an integral part of Australia's

cultural life.

- » raising awareness via publications, education and the media about the crisis afflicting Australia's Indigenous music, dance and ceremony.
- » promoting traditional performance and cultural sustainability as major factors in strengthening Indigenous health, education and employment.
- » stimulating local community development through Indigenous arts programs to support infrastructure needs and economic growth within Australia's regions.
- » organizing the annual Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance, which draws together Indigenous artists from throughout Australia with experts from universities, collecting institutions and industry partners.

All official positions on the Project are voluntary, and there are no membership fees of any kind. New parties wishing to be affiliated with the Project are invited to first present their work at the Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance. On the day before each symposium, an Annual General Meeting is held for all partners, and a meeting of the Steering Committee immediately follows.

The Project is presently led by two co-directors, myself and Payi-Linda Ford of the University of Queensland, an Indigenous educator of Marranunggu descent from Finnis River in the Northern Territory. Allan Marett remains active as co-chair of the Steering Committee along with David Manmurulu, a Mawng elder and ceremonial leader from Warruwi in Arnhem Land. Others on the Steering Committee represent the Project's community and institutional partnerships, and bring cultural, technical and scholarly expertise to bear in shaping present and future directions. They presently include representatives from the National Library of Australia, the Northern Territory Library, the Milpirri Festival at Lajamanu, AIATSIS, the Mulka Project at Yirrkala, and Stephen Wild in his capacity as Vice-President of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). Linda Barwick of the University of Sydney is general editor of the Project's publication series, the *Indigenous Music of Australia*; titles to date include the album, *Wurrurumi Kun-borrk* by Kevin Djimarr (2007) and my book, *Reflections and Voices* (Corn 2009b).

The Project's core strengths lie in its longitudinal history of consultation and action on issues of how best to maintain and strengthen Australia's highly endangered traditions of Indigenous music and dance, and in its implementation of projects that support these aims. While the Project receives no operational funding, Project partners have nonetheless been successful in attracting a large number of research grants and industry consultancies for its goals.

While the Project maintains a vibrant network of partners, there is no master task list that determines or prioritizes what should be recorded. As such, the Project is perhaps best described as an expansive longitudinal meta-project that is a composite of its partners' interests and priorities as shaped through consultation with the communities from which they come or with which they work. Since 2004, our partners have secured some A\$7.5 million from granting bodies for research that supports the survival of Indigenous performance repertoires and related languages. Spanning some thirty discrete studies to date, these include a core collection of competitively funded grants from the ARC, AIATSIS, the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Documentation Project, and the Volkswagen Foundation.

Among results of these grants, which have all enabled endangered song traditions to be locally recorded, documented and revitalized, are work by Stephen Wild on Warlpiri songs of the Tanami Desert; Nicholas Evans on song and language traditions of northwestern Arnhem Land; Margaret Gummow on traditional song revitalization in northern New South Wales; Sally Treloyn on the *junba* tradition of the Kimberley; Myfany Turpin on central Australia songs; and Genevieve Campbell on song traditions of the Tiwi Islands.³ These grants have also funded research into the development of digital archiving techniques and interfaces for Indigenous communities and their institutional partners. This includes my study on the application of Semantic Web techniques for organizing collections data and metadata according to Indigenous knowledge structures, including intermedia geo-tagging and rights management information.⁴

To date, these grants have provided for nine fixed-term research fellowships and two internships, comprising a total of thirty-five years of full-time employment for researchers. Three of these fellowships and both internships have gone to Indigenous scholars for research into untapped existing collections of their own communities' cultural heritage (Gumbula 2005, 2009, 2011; Gumbula, Corn and Mant 2009). The first and second of the Indigenous fellowships went to Neparrŋa Gumbula, who is the first Yolŋu Australian in history to have led an ARC project. The third fellowship, commencing in 2012, was won by Wanta Patrick, making him the first Warlpiri Australian to lead an ARC project.

A Symposium of Intercultural Exchanges

Since its inauguration in 2002, the Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance has been held each year as a plenary event, and it is the Project's key

annual event. The first five symposia were convened at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in collaboration with the festival's Yolŋu hosts, and became a core component of the immersive Garma Fieldwork courses that, until 2004, I taught with Marcia Langton at the University of Melbourne and subsequently offered at the University of Sydney (Corn 2011a:31–45). In 2004 and 2005, the Project also sponsored international artists to visit Arnhem Land and contribute to our program. The first of these were the Bauls of Bengal, who shared their experience of sustaining their endangered music tradition and building an international audience for it. The second were Takbing Siwaliya from Makassar on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, who came to explore, through ceremonial performance and collaboration, the trade and cultural relations that their forebears held with Indigenous peoples of north Australia until the first decade of the twentieth century (Corn and Marett with Garawirrtja 2011).

In 2006, the focus shifted to a musical collaboration between Yolŋu *manikay* performers from Ngukurr in southeast Arnhem Land and the Australian Art Orchestra (AAO). Festival patrons witnessed the first public performances of their ever-evolving collaborative work, *Crossing Roper Bar* (AAO 2010). From 2007 to 2009, the Symposia were hosted by Charles Darwin University in Darwin, where they were programmed as part of the Darwin Festival. In 2009, we also convened a special forum at the University of Melbourne to address the activities and concerns of Indigenous communities and artists in Australia's southeast, with valuable contributions from the Koori Heritage Trust, the statutory Indigenous collecting institution for the State of Victoria. This event coincided with a performance of *Crossing Roper Bar* in the Melbourne Recital Centre, and the musicians involved also spoke as forum delegates.

Our ninth Symposium was convened in July 2010 at the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra in conjunction with the AIATSIS Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium, which I convened in partnership with Lyndon Ormond-Parker from the University of Melbourne and Cressida Fforde from AIATSIS. Initially, we had envisaged that this joint Symposium would be a modest affair attracting some thirty speakers, but our call for papers elicited a huge response, and we were faced with the need to program up to three parallel sessions. All told, some 250 delegates gathered to share in the presentation of more than seventy papers and workshops that revealed the staggering strength of grassroots Indigenous engagement with information technologies throughout Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The groundswell of Indigenous expertise in information technology applications for education, health, heritage, languages, mapping, creative arts and broadcasting

is now improving quality of life, educational outcomes and economic futures for Indigenous Australians (AIATSIS 2010).

Our tenth Symposium returned to Darwin where it was convened on the North Australia Campus of the Australian National University. A significant outcome of this meeting was the formal commissioning of a traditional *mamurrng* 'gifting' ceremony from northwest Arnhem Land to affirm the accord that has been established between the Project's two steering committee co-chairs, David Manmurulu and Allan Marett (Altman 1987:202; Garde 1998:6; Corn 2002:87–8). Allan Marett was invited to make this commission by David Manmurulu and Charlie Mangulda, senior leaders of the *mamurrng* ceremony in northwest Arnhem Land, and plans are underway for the ceremony to be held at our eleventh Symposium in 2012.

Over the decade of its existence, the Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance has grown into a meeting that brings together senior Indigenous law-holders and cultural practitioners, ethnomusicologists, archivists, linguists, librarians, lawyers, historians and others to exchange ideas and information on local, regional and national initiatives in recording, collections and cultural revitalization across Australia. Our sessions typically address concerns such as musical, choreographic and linguistic processes in Indigenous music and dance; the application of these traditions to intercultural initiatives such as the Milpirri Festival at Lajamanu; and resource management and community access to materials held in collections at local, national and international levels. We discuss community initiatives that would apply ceremonial knowledge to localized health, education, governance and legal programs, and we consider what Indigenous performance traditions contribute to human understanding of the nature of knowledge.

Under the guidance of traditional exponents, live performances of rare song and dance repertoires often bloom into profound discussions of their sacred resonance with kin, country and ancestors; while otherwise conventional analytical papers can erupt into responsive performances by Indigenous delegates. These cross-media intercultural dialogues have ensured that the Project remains engaged with the epistemological bases of its Indigenous community partners' values and concerns in all work involving their precious cultural resources. As the only annual meeting that fosters this depth of collaboration among Indigenous performers and the network of curators, technical experts and academics working in allied fields, it is unique.

The Symposium's emphasis on collaboration and dialogical consensus-building among disparate parties owes much to its beginnings in the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture, which itself was influenced by the ethos of biculturalism cultivated by Mandawuy Yunupingu in his work as an educator

in Arnhem Land schools and as a musician in the celebrated Australian band, Yothu Yindi, and its philanthropic offshoot, the Yothu Yindi Foundation. Modelled on the Yolŋu concept of *ganma* (“converging currents”), the places on Yolŋu homelands where waters flowing from the countries of different clans meet as equal forces, Yunupingu envisaged the Garma Festival as a forum for dialogue with a goal of generating new knowledge among different peoples, an understanding that was free from assimilationist imperatives (Morphy 1991:70; Neuenfeldt 1993; Yunupingu 1994; Stubington and Dunbar-Hall 1994; Corn 2005, 2009a, 2010).

In keeping with its formative years at the Garma Festival, the Project embraces this vision with a collaborative approach that seeks to inspire and facilitate people working with and from within Indigenous communities to shape their own cultural records; and to do this within a collegial national network through which they can access the technical and operational expertise of larger institutional partners such as AIATSIS and the National Library of Australia. The Project also reflects ethnomusicology’s intimate relationships with Indigenous musicians, and its transformation in the 1980s from a discipline predicated on distant taxonomical concerns and salvage research into one that continually reshapes itself through dialogue with the communities whose cultures it examines (Koch 2008; Corn 2011a:24–25).

As an interdisciplinary and intercultural network of partners, the Project also embraces the multiple interwoven literacies of Indigenous knowledge systems. These systems recognize music and dance as formal media for the recording of history, the reckoning of ancestral lineages, the evidencing of heredity rights over country and other property, and the execution of due legal process. The Project acknowledges the formal standing and expertise of law-holders educated through these systems as intellectuals and intercultural agents in their own right (hence our support for Indigenous elders such as 8ŋa Gumbula and Wanta Patrick in pursuing research interests directly informed by their own communities’ needs) (Corn and Gumbula 2004, 2006; Patrick, Holmes and Box 2008). The respect for traditional knowledge and its methods of transmission sets the Project markedly apart from other organizations in Australia (with the exception of AIATSIS), most of which are driven by conventional anglophone approaches to academic and policy concerns.

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

The transformation of recording media from wax cylinder to solid state hard drives within the span of a century has revolutionised our ability to capture

and return high-quality sound recordings to Indigenous communities with ease. Yet there are constraints that need to be addressed before all calls from Indigenous communities for better support in sustaining their performance traditions can be met. The Project has striven for a decade to draw attention to these needs. Since the beginning of British settlement in Australia, there has been massive attrition of Indigenous performance traditions. We estimate that more than ninety-eight percent of all traditions present in January 1788 at the commencement of British occupation have been lost, and that all remaining traditions are in danger of being lost. The efforts of Indigenous peoples to keep these remaining traditions alive are immense, and indicate their intrinsically high value to Indigenous communities. Even so, the overarching socioeconomic and political pressures on Indigenous communities constitute a persistent threat (Australia 1997, 2007; Perkins and Langton 2008; Corn 2001, 2007, 2011b; Yunupingu 2009).

As Australia has not yet signed the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), in July of 2011 the General Assembly of the International Council for Traditional Music, a non-governmental organization in formal consultative relations with UNESCO, formally recognized the crisis in Australia's Indigenous performance traditions and called for urgent action with a unanimous endorsement of the ICTM Statement on Indigenous Australian Music and Dance (Appendix B). This is the first time since ICTM's foundation in 1947 that it has taken such an action, which in itself attests to the urgency of the matter.

The increasing affordability and accessibility of digital technologies that enable Indigenous peoples to create and access records of their traditional cultures are already offering benefits, and the Project strongly advocates their use. For several decades now, Indigenous performers have used audiovisual media to support the intergenerational transmission of traditions, and over the past decade partners of the Project have tested the use of digital repositories as electronic keeping places designed to support traditional performance activities in numerous Indigenous communities (Marett et al. 2006:85–86). These include the Northern Territory Library's Community Stories database based on the Ara Irititja software developed by the Pitjatjantjara Council, and the Wadeye Song Database developed through the Murriny Patha Song Project with the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre and the Wadeye Knowledge Centre (Northern Territory Library 2011; Ara Irititja Project 2011; PARADISEC 2011).

As identified at the Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium in 2010, there is rising enthusiasm for the use of new technologies among young Indigenous Australians, providing a fertile context for digital media initiatives that link local communities to broader

social and professional networks. At the same time, the new technologies strengthen Indigenous health, education and employment (AIATSIS 2010). Examples include Ngaanyatjarra Media in Alice Springs, which uses media and communications technologies to tell Indigenous stories of the Western Desert region, and the Mulka Project at Yirrkala, which provides meaningful employment to Yolŋu communities through multimedia cultural heritage programs and has recently launched its own series of traditional music albums (PY Media 2011; Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Art Centre 2011).

There is great need for more secure sources of income for training and employment in this burgeoning field so that Indigenous communities can collect and curate their own cultural records, but the equipment, infrastructure and maintenance required by such initiatives impose considerable recurrent costs, particularly in remote communities where suppliers and service providers are scarce. Computer terminals and hard drives cannot simply be loaded with content by visitors as a solitary exercise and then forgotten. Over time, hardware fails and software corrupts, and without sufficient funds for maintenance, upgrading and replacement, even modest facilities will fail. This is why regional networks like the Ara Irititja and Community Stories databases are crucial: they can share not only content but also technical and operational training and expertise across multiple communities simultaneously, and so create sustainability of digital recording and archiving endeavours.

The Project has recently addressed these concerns in its formal response to the Australian Government's *National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper* (Australia 2011b). We propose that the decline and possible loss of Australia's remaining Indigenous music and dance traditions can be arrested through the establishment of a fund, to be administrated through AIATSIS, that is similar to the present Indigenous Languages Support scheme for the protection and revitalization of Indigenous languages (Australia 2011a).⁵ Grants from this fund would be available to Indigenous organizations with encouragement to apply for triennial funding. Individual grants would differ in size, scope, geography and immediacy, but given the threat to these traditions, we consider that triennial funding of up to A\$250,000, to be drawn from a total budget of A\$5 million annually, would be justified. If such resources could be provided, it would be possible to stem and reverse the decline, and even to revive lost traditions from existing records. Indigenous peoples in New South Wales and Victoria, even now, are beginning to explore long lost traditions through a variety of records both ancient and modern, while in northern Australia, musicians and dancers have consulted audiovisual records as an aid to performance for several decades now.

Our experience shows that there are a variety of organizations that could

host and implement projects that would support traditional music and dance, and that Indigenous communities themselves are best placed to nominate host organizations. These could include arts centres, language centres, libraries, rangers programs, schools, health clinics, aged care facilities, community councils and community centres. Although they would require assistance in technical areas, these kinds of local organizations are in the best position to determine what is needed and what will work best. There are far greater chances of endangered music and dance traditions being sustained if they are embedded in the daily business of local services and organizations with the most immediate need for regular use of the materials.

With the Project providing advice on application preparation and project implementation, the grants program would be focused on:

- » the recording and documentation of existing traditions in dialogue with world's best practice standards.
- » the development of local communities through related Indigenous arts programs that support infrastructure needs and economic growth within Australia's regions.
- » the location and return to the community of relevant archival records.
- » the establishment of local digital archives to facilitate dissemination of material according to appropriate cultural protocols.
- » safe archival storage under agreed protocols at AIATSIS in partnership with local digital repositories.
- » the creation of books, recordings, websites and teaching materials in close partnership with Indigenous communities to assist in the education of the broader Australian public about Indigenous music and dance.

With AIATSIS administrating any potential funds from the National Cultural Policy, the Project's advice to communities would be in the form of consultancies, with all consultants working within agreed protocols (Marett et al. 2006). In formulating this plan, we would advise and facilitate dialogue between communities and government on the preservation and maintenance of endangered Indigenous performance traditions with the aims of:

- » developing projects to sustain local traditions.
- » recording and documenting traditional Indigenous music and dance, and training local Indigenous people to undertake this work.
- » strengthening local communities through related Indigenous arts programs that support infrastructural needs and economic growth

- within Australia's regions.
- » locating and repatriating existing archival records.
- » creating and managing local digital archives.
- » safe archival storage under agreed protocols at AIATSIS in partnership with local digital repositories.
- » creating publications and websites including teaching materials for use at all levels of education.

Conclusions

At the heart of the National Recording Project's successes to date is the broad network drawn to each year's Symposium for the exchange of ideas and information on recording, collections and cultural revitalization initiatives across Australia. More than anything else, our relationships with communities, cultures and sectors make the Project a conduit for propelling community engagement with recording and archiving, which become catalysts for cultural survival into the future. This article has shown how the Project grew out of the first Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in 2002, which was itself a product of Mandawuy Yunupiju's ethos of *ganma* biculturalism. Through its vibrant cross-media and intercultural exchanges, the Symposium remains unique in the world in its engagement with the epistemological bases of our Indigenous community partners' values and concerns in all work involving the irreplaceable cultural resources that their performance traditions comprise.

While the tasks of stemming and, wherever possible, reversing the attrition of these music and dance traditions are daunting, the decade-long experience of the Project nonetheless demonstrates how fostering such networks, nurturing research leadership among Indigenous elders, and building on the enthusiasm of young Indigenous Australians for digital media can all provide new opportunities for Indigenous communities to record, archive and sustain their performance traditions. The National Recording Project advocates that sustaining traditions of Indigenous music, dance and ceremonial performance should be a pillar of Australian cultural policy now and in the future, and that a dedicated grants fund should be established to support Indigenous communities in their maintenance and revitalization. 🌿

Appendix A. Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Performance (YothuYindi Foundation 2002)⁶

Songs, dances and ceremonial performances form the core of Yolŋu and other Indigenous cultures in Australia. It is through song, dance and associated ceremony that Indigenous people sustain their cultures and maintain the Law and a sense of self within the world. Performance traditions are the foundation of social and personal well-being, and with the ever-increasing loss of these traditions, the toll grows every year. The preservation of performance traditions is therefore one of the highest priorities for Indigenous people.

Indigenous songs should also be a deeply valued part of the Australian cultural heritage. They represent the great classical music of this land. These ancient musical traditions were once everywhere in Australia, and now survive as living traditions only in several regions. Many of these are now in danger of being lost forever. Indigenous performances are one of our most rich and beautiful forms of artistic expression, and yet they remain unheard and invisible within the national cultural heritage.

Without immediate action many Indigenous music and dance traditions are in danger of extinction with potentially destructive consequences for the fabric of Indigenous society and culture. The recording and documenting of the remaining traditions is a matter of the highest priority both for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Many of our foremost composers and singers have already passed away leaving little or no record.

At the Garma Symposium on Music and Dance held in association with the 2002 Garma Festival, the following proposals were put forward in order to address the current critical situation:

- » That the establishment of local Knowledge Centres with digital storage and retrieval systems be supported as a basis for the repatriation of sound and visual records to communities. Such records play an important role in the maintenance and protection of tradition. Research should be conducted into the most culturally appropriate ways of storing and retrieving knowledge from computers. It is acknowledged that different communities may ultimately adopt different storage and delivery systems, and that there should be regular meetings to explore the success or failure of different strategies.
- » That a national recording project be established to ensure that the songs of as many singers as possible are held for future generations. This project will be conducted under Indigenous control with an advisory board of senior men and women from a broad range of communities guiding its

- priorities and strategies.
- » That the recording and repatriation of songs to local Knowledge Centres be supported by universities and other institutions to assist Indigenous communities to integrate their cultural knowledge into a broad range of community activities such as education, bilingual, and health programs; and that the maintenance of performance and ceremony be encouraged by their incorporation into community governance.
 - » That well documented recordings of Indigenous song be published in order to educate the broader Australian public and international audiences about Aboriginal performance traditions. The production of both the recordings and documentation should be based on broad consultation with learned senior men and women who would control access to sacred knowledge in song texts. Other forms of production, including multimedia and web based forms should also be explored.

The Symposium calls on the Federal government to support and sustain Indigenous song traditions through the establishment of Knowledge Centres, and a national recording project as a National Research Priority. The Symposium resolves to pursue funding through the Australian Research Council as well as through Local, State and Territory, and Federal Government, and Industry. The participants resolved to request governments, universities, industry bodies and other institutions to acknowledge and respond to this urgent need.

This statement emanates from the Garma Symposium on Music and Dance convened by Mandawuy Yunupingu, Marcia Langton and Allan Marett at the Yirriŋa Music Development Centre at Gunyaŋara from 10–12 August 2002.

Appendix B. International Council for Traditional Music Statement on Indigenous Australian Music and Dance (ICTM 2011)⁷

The International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), a non-governmental organization in Formal Consultative Relations with UNESCO, is a worldwide organization dedicated to the preservation of traditional music. Research conducted by members of the Australia and New Zealand branch of the ICTM reveals that Australia's traditions of Indigenous music and dance are in crisis. These traditions are among the oldest and most endangered in the world, and yet insufficient financial support is currently available to undertake the work that is required to protect and preserve them. The Australia and New Zealand Regional Committee of the ICTM, with support from the International Executive Board

of the ICTM, has issued this statement to draw attention to this crisis and to call for greater support and action in this domain of endangered intangible cultural heritage.

Songs, dances and ceremonial performances lie at the centre of Indigenous Australian cultures, playing a vital role in religious beliefs and practices. They are important repositories of cultural knowledge. Through song and dance, Indigenous Australians maintain social and personal wellbeing, sustain their cultures, and maintain Law and their own identity. Performance traditions are also used to strengthen Indigenous languages and provide intergenerational links between families and communities. Indigenous songs and dances are therefore essential to Indigenous culture and society.

Once found all across Australia, these traditions now only survive in a few regions, and it is estimated that ninety-eight percent of musical traditions have already been lost. Many senior composers and performers have passed away leaving limited or no record of their knowledge. Modern lifestyles and the ongoing devastating impact of colonization are affecting the dissemination of cultural knowledge between generations. The preservation of Indigenous Australian performance traditions through recording and documenting is therefore vital for their survival.

Members of the Australia and New Zealand Regional Committee of the ICTM collaborate in projects aimed at preserving Indigenous Australian music and dance, including the establishment of Indigenous Knowledge Centres and initiatives such as the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia. The Australia and New Zealand Regional Committee of the ICTM recognizes the benefits of these initiatives, and calls for them to be supported and expanded in any way possible. Urgent action is required to ensure the preservation of those living practices that remain, for the benefit of all Australians, and for cultural diversity worldwide.

Notes

1. All spellings of names and words from the Yolŋu languages follow the conventions used today in the Yolŋu communities of Arnhem Land (Zorc 1996).

2. AIATSIS (2011–12) is the world's premier institution for information and research on the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, past and present. It undertakes and encourages scholarly, ethical community-based research; holds a comprehensive collection of films, photographs, video, audio recordings and print materials on Indigenous Studies; and has its own publishing house. Its activities affirm the richness and diversity of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories.

3. Stephen Wild, “*Milpirri*: A Revitalisation Movement in Central Australia,” Research Grant, AIATSIS, 2009; Nicholas Evans, Sabine Höng, Linda Barwick, Bruce Birch, Robert Mailhammer, Gretel Schwörer-Kohl and Dietmar Zaefferer, “*Inyman Kalmu*: Languages of the Cobourg Region, North Australia, Phase II,” Documentation of Endangered Languages Project, Volkswagen Foundation, 2009–10; Margaret Gummow, John Giacom and Suellen Tighe, “Revitalising Gamilaraay Songs and Dances: Using New Technologies to Create Community-based Resources,” Research Grant, AIATSIS, 2010; Sally Treloyn and Allan Marett, “Strategies for Sustaining Aboriginal Song and Dance in the Modern World: The Mowanjum and Fitzroy River Valley Communities of Western Australia,” Linkage Project, ARC, 2009–12; Myfany Turpin (Australian Postdoctoral Fellowship), “Singing the Dreaming: Exploring the Relationship between Language and Music in Arandic Song – Poetry,” Discovery Project, ARC, 2010–12; Ngarukuruwala, “To Develop Music Resources from Archived Material to Preserve and Maintain Tiwi Language and Song Practice,” Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records Grant, Australia, 2011.

4. “Indigenizing the Semantic Web: Ontologies for Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage Resources on a Machine-readable Web,” Future Fellowship Project, ARC, 2009–13.

5. I edited this response based on an initial draft by Allan Marett with substantial contributions by David Manmurulu, Payi-Linda Ford, Russell Taylor, Sally Treloyn and Grace Koch.

6. This statement was prepared and ratified by delegates at the inaugural Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance at Gunyaṅara in Arnhem Land in August 2002 during the fourth Garma Festival of Traditional Culture.

7. This statement was prepared by the Australia and New Zealand Regional Committee of the ICTM and endorsed unanimously by the General Assembly during the forty-first World Conference in St John’s, Canada, in July 2011.

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