

Music, Dance and The Archive, edited by Amanda Harris, Linda Barwick and Jakelin Troy

Review by Keith McEwing

The preface of this book indicates that this collection of essays originated from a project looking at creating a better record of the histories of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly their practices around music and dance. Funded by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Project Scheme, the project was titled *Reclaiming Performance Under Assimilation in Southeastern Australia, 1935–1975*. The book's nine chapters stretch much further than this, however. As well as covering First Nations people in Northern Territory and Western Australia, it also includes two chapters relating to Aotearoa/New Zealand, and

further chapters on the Indigenous practices of Taiwan, and the Haudenosaunee in North America.

Most chapters address both the archivist and researcher's dilemma of dealing with records related to music and dance and how to document both the tangible—recordings, photographs and other documentation, and the intangible—the actual performing art itself. Other chapters challenge the Western notion of objects as stand-alone items of purely physical significance. A third theme considers the human body as an archive, holding knowledge, and in turn, expressing that knowledge.

The two Aotearoa chapters create an interesting contrast in approaches to archives and museums. Marianne Schultz writes of two performing artists of Māori songs and dances from the beginning of the twentieth century. Both toured internationally, generating great interest in Māori culture/Te Ao Māori. Princess Iwa (Evaline Skerrett, Ngai Tahu)—dubbed the Māori nightingale—travelled with Makereti Papakura's Māori concert party to Britain. Staying on in London, she broadened her repertoire to include English ballads and opera arias.

In distinction to this 'British-ised version of Māori', Schultz then focuses on Bathia (Bathie) Stuart, a Pākehā woman who specialised

in Māori repertoire. Footage of Bathie Stuart performing exists in the 1925 comedy drama, *The Adventures of Algy*, while Princess Iwa's career is documented largely by photographs and newspaper accounts. Questions of authenticity are raised by Schultz, both in terms of Bathie Stuart's performance being tailored as international entertainment, and in one of Princess Iwa's signature songs being 'Waiata Poi' by the Pākehā composer Alfred Hill.

The second essay relating to Te Ao Māori is a contemporary artistic response to Māori artefacts. Jack Gray, co-founder of Atamira Dance Company, visited the whareniui of his tupuna, Ruatēpupuke II, now standing at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois. In the process of being interviewed by Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Gray presents two themes: that of artefacts being more than museum objects and having a life or spirit of their own, and that of the human body as an

archive, storing knowledge that is then expressed through movement.

Although the book is broader than its preface outlines, this is of great benefit to the reader. Opening gateways to understanding many different Indigenous groups in the world's use of music and movement, the book also presents some common themes and approaches shared amongst the different groups. These include how to view archives and collections of artefacts, and furthermore how to respond to them. Archives hold historic detail; artefacts share a spirit or presence; and the human body—particularly one well immersed in the customs those archives and artefacts represent—becomes an archive of knowledge historically informing music and movement practice.

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