Edited by Fiona Magowan & Karl Neuenfeldt

Music, song and dance of the Torres Strait and Arnhem Land

Landscapes
Indigenous Performance
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Edited by Fiona Magowan and Karl Neuenfeldt
First published in 2005
Aboriginal Studies Press
for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies
GPO Box 553, Canberra, ACT 2601
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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-In-
Publication data:
Indigenous music and dance: Torres Strait and
Arnhem Land performance.
1. Torres Strait Islanders — Songs and music.
2. Torres Strait Islanders — Dances. 3. Torres
Strait Islanders — Rites and ceremonies.
4. Torres Strait Islanders — Social life and
customs. 5. Aboriginal Australians — Songs
and music. 6. Aboriginal Australians
— Dances. 7. Aboriginal Australians — Rites
and ceremonies. 8. Aboriginal Australians —
Northern Territory — Arnhem Land — Social
life and customs. I. Magowan, Fiona. II.
Neuenfeldt, Karl. III. Title.
781.629915

Printed in Australia by Ligare Pty Ltd

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that
this book contains names and images of deceased persons.
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Contributors

**Greg Anderson** undertook field work in central Arnhem Land with Rembarrnga-speaking people in the mid-1980s and received his PhD from Sydney University in 1993. After completing a degree in theology, he moved to the Northern Territory in 1995 to train Aboriginal church leaders at Nugalinya College. He currently works for the Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society.

**Noel Loos** is Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Humanities at James Cook University. He taught the history of black–white relations in Australia and still gives occasional lectures. He has conducted research into the areas of frontier conflict, Aborigines in colonial society, the evolution of government policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, more recently, mission history. In the 1970s he pioneered the development of teacher education programs in Queensland for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Noel Loos has published widely on indigenous history and politics. His last book was *Edward Koiki Mabo: His Life and Struggle for Land Rights*, which contained as a centrepiece, 'Koiki Mabo's Story', told by Mabo himself.

**Edward Koiki Mabo** was born on Mer, Murray Island, in 1936, the adopted son of Benny and his aunt, Maiga Mabo. He became much more fluent in English than most Torres Strait Islanders of his generation and soon became a bridge between the two cultures. From 1953 to 1957 he worked on luggers fishing for trochus shell. In 1957 he moved to the mainland, first working on luggers, and then as a labourer at the Townsville Harbour Board from 1962 to 1967. From 1967 to 1975 he was a groundsman at James Cook University. He had become involved with the trade union movement and in 1967 initiated a seminar, 'We the Australians—What is to Follow the Referendum?', an important milestone in the history of race relations in North Queensland. From 1962 he became involved in a number of black organisations. From 1973 until 1985 he was Director of Townsville’s Black Community School, which he founded. In 1981 Mabo was the leading litigant of a group of
Meriam people who took their claim for native title to the High Court of Australia, knowing it would be a test case for all Indigenous Australians. The case, Mabo and Others v. the State of Queensland, commenced in May 1982 and found in favour of the litigants on 3 June 1992, destroying the legal doctrine of terra nullius, by which Australia was colonised. Mabo had died of cancer on 21 January 1992 before the ten-year struggle was completed. He was buried in Townsville but reburied at Mer after his tombstone was desecrated. In 1992 Mabo was posthumously awarded a Human Rights Award, and in 1993 declared the 1992 Australian of the Year. In 1995 he was dubbed one of Australia’s twenty most influential historical figures, in the Melbourne Age. His extraordinary life story is told in Noel Loos and Koiki Mabo, *Edward Koiki Mabo: His life and struggle for land rights*, UQP, St Lucia, 1996.

**Liz Mackinlay** is Senior Lecturer in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland, where she teaches Indigenous Studies, Anthropology and Ethnomusicology. She completed her PhD in Ethnomusicology in 1998 and a PhD in Education in 2003. She is undertaking research on Indigenous Australian women’s performance, performance pedagogy and embodied learning, and music teaching and music learning environments. Liz is also editor of the *Queensland Journal of Music Education* and co-editor of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

**Fiona Magowan** lectures in Anthropology at Queen’s University, Belfast. She has researched Yolngu song, dance and ritual and has carried out consultancy work on marine tenure in north-east Arnhem Land. Her work explores the relationship between ecology, performance and cosmology. She is completing a book on Yolngu performance and her publications include the co-edited TAJA journal *Beyond Syncretism: Indigenous Expressions of World Religions* (2001) and a co-edited book with Bain Attwood, *Telling Stories: Indigenous life narratives, memory and history: Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia* (2001).

**Steve Mullins** is Associate Professor of History at Central Queensland University. His research interests are maritime history, with special reference to colonial impacts and post-coloniality in the tropical sedentary fishing industries: pearl-shell, bêche-de-mer (trepang) and trochus, in the western Pacific, northern Australia, and Propinsi Maluku, Indonesia. He also publishes in Torres Strait history and contemporary issues.
Martin Nakata is Professor and Director of the Indigenous Academic Development Unit at Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology Sydney. He has published widely in the areas of education and Indigenous cultures.

Karl Neuenfeldt is Associate Professor in the School of Contemporary Communication, Central Queensland University (Bundaberg campus). He trained in history, anthropology and cultural studies and is active as a music producer, performer and researcher. In 2004, Karl was a producer of Seaman Dan's Australasian Recording Industry Award (ARIA) winning CD, Perfect Pearl, in the World Music category.

Ingrid Slotte carried out fieldwork in Ramingining, eastern Arnhem Land, from 1990 to 1991. She received her doctorate from the Australian National University in 1998. In 1999 she worked as a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide. She is currently living in Sweden, raising her four young children.

Peter Toner is Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, and was formerly an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the Australian National University. He has conducted almost two years of field research in northeast Arnhem Land (primarily in Gapuwiyak, N.T.), focusing on ritual music and social identity, poetics and connections to country, the repatriation of archival field recordings to their communities of origin, and the history of Arnhem Land music research.
*Landscapes of Indigenous Performance* brings together a wide range of contemporary explorations of Indigenous music and dance in the Torres Strait and the tropical regions of the Northern Territory. This collection shows how traditional music and dance have responded to colonial control in the past and more recently to other external forces beyond local control. It looks at musical pasts and presents as a continuum of creativity; at contemporary cultural performance as a contested domain; and at cross-cultural issues of recording and teaching music and dance as experienced by Indigenous leaders and educators, and non-Indigenous researchers and scholars.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributors demonstrate how local music and dance genres have been subject to missionary, institutional, popular and global influences. They offer an understanding of the cultural background and history of Torres Strait music; discuss how contemporary Christian music and dance in Arnhem Land incorporate traditional ritual; unpack the complex form and structure of an Australian Aboriginal song series; and examine the transformation of a nineteenth-century American popular song into a 'traditional' anthem of the Torres Strait. The book also examines the interface between Aboriginal ritual, movement and the environment as portrayed on film, and explores the issues raised by the presence of Aboriginal performers in the non-Indigenous university classroom.

*Landscapes of Indigenous Performance* is of critical importance for those involved in the fields of music, dance and performance in general.

Fiona Magowan is lecturer in Anthropology at Queen's University, Belfast and continues to research Yolngu music and dance in northeast Arnhem Land. Karl Neuenfett is Associate Professor in Contemporary Communication at Central Queensland University. He is active as a music researcher, musician and producer.