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THE STATUS OF CONTEMPORARY MĀORI MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Music has always been an integral part of day to day living in both traditional and contemporary Maori society. Significant to Maori music is a distinct philosophical and cultural perspective. Essentially these principles encapsulate the notion of Maori defining their own priorities, expressions, locality and collective aspirations within the realm of music making. For these reasons, the scope of Maori music extends beyond the individual artist and therefore performance. It is concerned with reasserting self determination and collective purpose thus situating itself within the broader context of Maori development.

This thesis examines the status of contemporary Maori music, its priorities, distinctive features, and social realities. The research undertaken highlights the historic decontextualisation of Maori worldview, language, music and culture emphasising how western approaches to music making are privileged rendering Maori music systems invalid. Significant to this research has been the determination of an ideological shift referred to as the augmented identity. This reconstruction situates contemporary Maori music in its own distinct space although adjacent to traditional Maori music culture and likewise western popular culture. In addition this study presents a pictorial framework in which to conceptualise the range of influences that assist in the reconstruction of an augmented identity.

Another crucial area of this thesis has been the collation of views drawn from a small sample group of practitioners and organisations involved in the contemporary Maori music sector. The research proposes that contemporary expression utilises selective elements of traditional Maori worldview as a premise of cultural validation. Additionally this research claims that artists of Maori descent utilising western performative and aesthetic characteristics generate a false impression of contemporary Maori music and its priorities. As a result Maori worldview and language is often a site of contention for Kaupapa Maori music makers in the national music scene.

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DEDICATION

E tika ana kia mihi au ki tōku kōka a Atareta Rarere Karini o Ngāti Rongomaiwahine ki Te Māhia. Nāna i toko ake te whakaaro kia hīkoi, kia tinana tēnei rangahau kia aro ki te ao muramura tawhiti o te pūoro. Mai anō i a mātou e tamariki ana e whāngaihia ana mātou e rāua ko tōku pāpā e Hauraki Pio Karini o Ngā Uri o Kuri o Te Aitanga-ā-Hauiti o Ngāti Porou ki te kupu o te pūoro.

Whāia ka tika kia titiro ki aku tamariki aroha, me taku whānau whānui. Ko koutou katoa te whakatinanatanga o te ‘aroha’ kā tika!

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PREFACE

It is generally a prerequisite for one to establish who and where one comes from within the context of 'Kaupapa Māori.' In doing so, one identifies the relational and tribal context of personal heritage and identity. In this preface I declare my tribal and social affiliations so that the reader understands that this work derives from the perspective of an insider working in an arena I am familiar with and a part of.

Ko Te Marua O Te Rangi te maunga

Ko Hikuwai te awa

Ko Kuri te tangata

Ko Ngā Uri o Kuri me Ngāti Kuramui ngā hapū

Ko Ōkuri te marae

Ko te whānau Karini tēnā

Huia Te Kai!

Ko Rakauwhakatangi te maunga

Ko Kopūāwhara te awa

Ko Rongomaiwahine te tangata

Ko Te Hokowhitu o Ngai Tū te hapū

Ko Te Poho o Rongomaiwahine te marae

Ko te whānau Makahue, Kara me Rarere tēnā.

Ko Hauraki Pio Karini toku pāpā

Ko Atareta Rarere Karini toku kōka

Ko Angela Piki Karini ahau

Ko Ani Piki Rapua i te Rangi Tuari taku tamahine

Ko Tatana Horomona Te Ana rātou ko Tame Hoake Hone Te Rua me

Hamiora Houkamau Iwikau Tuari āku tama

My tribal affiliations derive from Ngāti Pōrou and Ngāti Rongomaiwahine despite having been born and raised in Invercargill. Music making has always been inherent, a tradition handed down from my mother manifesting in the form of singing and from my father; guitar playing. As a child, group singing was a recreational activity our family regularly pursued and it was so enjoyable that we assumed everyone could hold a tune or locate harmonies¹ at the ‘drop of a hat.’ My mother’s family was especially musical having produced a broad range of instrumentalists and vocalists strongly influenced by my grandfather Kahukuranui Rarere, (Chappie La) a piano player in his own right.

Ironically we had to travel 40km up the road to the township of Mātaura to be amongst other Māori families, as in our street; we were the only Māori family. The deliberate situating of Māori amongst European families was actively reinforced by government legislation throughout the 1950’s to the 1970’s. Mainstream New Zealand sought to assimilate Māori families migrating to the city for employment by situating individuals and families amongst other European families (often referred to as pepper-potting²) so as to eradicate tribal social systems. As a result, many families resisted their own cultural heritage and actively pursued acculturation. Such families severed their links with other local Māori, tribal networks, as well as practices supporting the retention of Te Reo Māori.

¹ The harmony construction I am referring to in this sense is the production of two or more notes sounded at the same time.

² This is a common social descriptor depicting the mix of cultures namely Māori and European living in the same suburb, street etc...

Mataura was a thriving hub of activity in those days and many closely related Māori families settled there having attained employment at the local freezing works, paper mill or shearing sheds. It was during these visits we became accustomed with the songs of Apirana Ngata³, Tuini Ngawai,⁴ Ngoi Pēwhairangi⁵ and even more so, cultural customs (karanga, whaikōrero, mōteatea, tangihana, pōhiri, huri tau) associated with the kawa of the marae. As the family grew, my parents became involved in local community based activities raising funds to help build marae, support associations such as the Murihiku Māori Wardens, Te Puka a Maui Kapahaka Council, the Mahia Families Society and Te Taurahere o Ngāti Porou ki Murihiku.

It was the performances of singers such as Erana Clarke, Bunny Walters and Mark Williams (as opposed to Suzanne Prentice, the local Southland and National songstress) that inspired my desire to be a professional singer. Living in Southland one could not escape the phenomenon of the Gore Gold Guitar Awards and the various country music clubs littering the landscape of Invercargill. I entered the country and western circuit for about five years utilising that experience as a platform for performance development before joining a series of local cover bands and setting off to tour in New Zealand and Australia under the auspice of the late Prince Tui Teka and his talented wife, Missy Teka from Tokomaru Bay, East Coast.

When I returned to New Zealand, I remained in Auckland for three years ‘gigging’⁶ in the nightclub circuit as well as attending performance workshops co-ordinated by Television New Zealand. By 1985 although I had returned to Invercargill, I continued ‘gigging’ locally and nationally until the arrival of my four children throughout 1988 to 1994. I returned to music in 1995 and began the journey of formalising my musical knowledge initiating a decade of singer song writing, audio production and arts administration. As the children grew, so too did my knowledge

³ Sir Apirana Ngata is a renowned historical advocate for Māori. His talents were numerous; politician, orator, composer, researcher etc... Sir Apirana Ngata originates from Ngāti Pōrou.

⁴ Tuini Ngawai was a prolific composer originating from Te Whānau o Ruataupare. She was often referred to as a protégé of Apirana Ngata. Her songs captured the heart and soul of the rural lifestyle as well commemorating the Māori soldiers lost during the Second World War.

⁵ Ngoi Pēwhairangi, a protégé of Tuini Ngawai was a prolific composer of songs that focused on the retention of ‘Te Reo Māori’ and relationships.

⁶ The term ‘gigging’ is a colloquial term often utilised by working musicians to describe the act of music making in accordance with a set fee.

base and I began to move further afield conducting choral work with local and north island kapa haka for national competitions as well as advocating for the development of Māori performance in the regions of Southland & Otago in tandem with representation at a national scale. I also completed an undergraduate degree in Māori Performance at Te Whare Wananga o Takitimu and Massey University while administrating the block course locally.

In most recent times I have been working closely alongside my daughter and friend developing ‘Māori Diva’⁷ an intuitive approach to music composition and performance incorporating cultural concepts discussing the femineity of Māori women utilising classical poetry, Te Reo Māori, head voice,⁸ cello⁹ and poi. Presently I am a lecturer at the Southern Institute of Technology specialising in Practical Studies, Singer Song writing Studies, Professional Studies and Māori Performance. Ironically I seem to have spent a lifetime of performing, teaching or advocating on behalf of music or kapa haka. As a second generation descendent of Ngāti Pōrou and Ngāti Rongomaiwahine born outside of tribal boundaries, I have grappled with cultural identity within western music and vice versa music construction within my own culture. This thesis therefore represents the beginning of an enquiring journey that will hopefully provide a framework of understanding for those in similar circumstances as well as inform other inquisitive minds wanting to conceptualise the nature of contemporary manifestations of Māori music.

Mauri ora! Mauri e

⁷ Diva in this context refers to notion of a professional singer that has a vocal capacity to sing to audience with or without amplification.

⁸ The head voice is commonly referred to as the head register or in this context; the soprano voice.

⁹ The cello is a stringed instrument that can be plucked or bowed. This instrument is generally featured in an orchestra.