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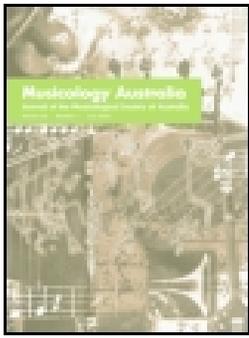
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The Fringe or the Heart of Things? Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Musics in Australian Music Institutions

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Teetering on the fringe of Australian music scholarship and knowledge institutions, research and teaching of local Indigenous musics hold a marginal place, belying the positioning of Indigenous music-makers at the centre of international representations of Australian culture, and the dynamic local connections of Indigenous music-making to Australian landscapes and social realities. Music's ubiquity and diversity worldwide show its potential as a tool to manage the changing world in societies of the past and present, yet this potential is largely neglected in contemporary Australia, and our theories and evidence base are limited by the narrow western focus within our knowledge institutions. The sheer weight of institutional investment in purportedly superior European musics prolongs Australia's characteristic cultural cringe and the trivialization of Indigenous cultures. Recent calls to decolonize music education and decentre the study of western classical music ring hollow in the Australian context because, despite the glossy pictures and stated aspirations, there is a big gap at the heart of our music institutions. Addressing this gap requires not just greater inclusion of Indigenous people and their musics, but also, we argue, advocacy for Indigenous self-determination as core business.

Introduction

Country—the 'nourishing terrain' (Rose 1996)—is alive and intertwined with Indigenous identities and knowledge systems. Across the landscape currently known as Australia, many songs in many different regional Indigenous languages can directly connect people to the heart of Country. As Irene Watson observes, 'the natural world is still singing even though the greater part of humanity has disconnected itself from song' (Watson 2014, 33). While Indigenous musics are not unique in terms of their affiliative and communicative qualities, they are distinctively important to Indigenous cultures (Ellis 1985; Stubington 2007; Marett 2010). Performance helps maintain Indigenous ontological relations to land, relations that 'continue to unsettle white Australia's sense of belonging' (Moreton-Robinson 2015, xxi). Describing settler colonialism in Australia, Patrick Wolfe states:

On the one hand, settler society required the practical elimination of the natives in order to establish itself on their territory. On the symbolic level, however, settler society subsequently sought to recuperate indigeneity in order to express its difference—and, accordingly, its independence—from the mother country. (2006, 389)

As a consequence, at various points of the Australian settler colonial project, Indigenous musics have risked eradication and appropriation (Haebich 2018; Harris 2020).

Within today's global milieu, association with Indigenous musics—be it symbolic, aspirational or part of core business—provides Australian music institutions, composers and researchers with a sense of prestige or distinctiveness. Study of Indigenous musics has also been at the vanguard of significant innovation in Australian music scholarship across the areas of pedagogy (Ellis 1985), applied methods associated with the repatriation of archival audio recordings (Bendrup, Barney and Grant 2013; Wafer and Turpin 2017; Barwick et al. 2019) and cross-cultural collaborative research (Barney 2014). Looking ahead, the inextricable link between landscape and performance in Indigenous performance is directly relevant to the emerging field of ecomusicology—the study of music in relation to society and the environment (Feld 1990; Marett 2010; Allen and Dawe 2015). The regionally distinctive, esoteric and seemingly evanescent nature of Indigenous performance has long positioned it as a subject of scholarly interest (Stubington 2007; Skinner 2015).

Despite their obvious fascination, settler colonist transcribers of the nineteenth century were unable to understand the complexity and culturally embedded nature of Indigenous song, most hearing it as 'monotonous and primitive' (Radic 2002, 10; Bracknell 2020a). These initial impressions served to position Indigenous musics as trivial and inferior, and supported the widespread practice of banning Indigenous musics on missions and reserves, which in turn assisted processes of colonial indoctrination utilizing European music (Radic 2002). The dramatic changes to Indigenous lifeways brought about by Australia's colonization and subsequent cultural assimilation policies continue to devastate the vitality of most Indigenous performance traditions (Marett in McLintock 2008; Haebich 2018). Because these traditions are predominantly vocal and based in language, it is also of concern that just thirteen of more than 200 Indigenous languages maintain fluent speakers across all generations (Marmion et al. 2014).

In the context of the settler colonial nation-state, academics are powerfully positioned to be advocates for Indigenous musics. Many of the key factors for sustaining musical traditions identified in Grant's 'Musical Vitality and Endangerment Framework' (Grant 2014) are reliant on the opinions, endeavours and influence of cultural outsiders, particularly music researchers and music institutions. Since the middle of the twentieth century, music researchers have increasingly attempted to understand Indigenous musics on their own terms, despite general resistance from the institutions within which their practice was embedded and constrained. The gradual emergence of more culturally inclusive attitudes towards music research culminated in Catherine Ellis and Ngarrindjeri poet Leila Rankine establishing the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) at the University of Adelaide in 1972 (Ellis 1974). More recently, following calls from Indigenous communities (Marett et al. 2006; Corn 2013) and earlier music researchers like Catherine Ellis (1992), contemporary music researchers have increasingly collaborated with Indigenous communities to address pressing cultural and environmental crises and produce tangible local benefits (for examples, see Barwick et al. 2005; Emberly, Treloyn and Charles 2017; Corn and Patrick 2019). Nevertheless, this important work has seemingly scarcely influenced the core business of Australia's music institutions and most domestic music studies, which remain predominantly grounded in Europe's classical traditions and continue to position Indigenous people and music on the fringe (Newton 1990; Ottosson 2015; Harris 2020).

Conservatoria are ultimately responsible for deciding what music and which musical practices are worth conserving from the past, and what—if anything—we need to conserve for the future. Considering the perennially endangered status of regional Indigenous musical

idioms and the way they are customarily evoked in attempts to showcase distinctive Australian culture, their exclusion from most music scholarship and curriculum indicates a serious disjuncture between Australia's current cultural aspirations and its practical realities (Reed 2003; Barney 2005; Marett 2010; White 2011; Harris 2020). This article highlights issues of categorization, representation, training and diversity across the field of music studies in Australia. In light of this discussion, the article will suggest ways in which Australian music scholarship can become a braver space in which authentic, sustained and meaningful engagement with Indigenous music-makers truly constitutes a central mandate.

Shifting Symbols

The Australian government recognizes both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Indigenous peoples. The Australia Council for the Arts' *Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Music* refers to Indigenous music as being 'created primarily by Indigenous Australian people, or based on the cultural property of Indigenous Australian people' (Janke and Quiggin 2007, 4). This definition can be expanded upon to distinguish Indigenous musics by their inclusion of musical or lyrical content derived from Indigenous people, and the Indigenous identity of the artists involved in its production (Bracknell 2019).¹ In Australia, due to the ongoing ideological struggle between institutional control and Indigenous self-determination, the music-making that is persistently categorized as 'Indigenous music' is multifaceted and in constant flux (Bracknell 2019). 'Indigenous music' can refer to a wide range of regionally, linguistically and functionally diverse vocal music idioms—be they genres of the mainland and Tasmania usually featuring percussion and, far more rarely, the didgeridu, or the markedly dissimilar and diverse musics of the Torres Straits. Equally, it can encompass music created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music-makers across the multitude of popular genres now almost globally available as a 'repertory of resources for any given musician' (Straw 1991, 253) and put to use as an array of country, rock, hip hop and even art music all 'allied to the proclamation of contemporary black identity' (Clough 2012, 269).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musics always have been and always will be uncompromisingly contemporary (Barwick 2000). Creativity is inherent to the perpetuation of even the oldest Aboriginal oral song traditions (Hale 1984), and is exemplified by the widespread composition of new songs in old styles to describe contemporary life (Donaldson 1979; Bracknell 2017). There is also a frequent and dynamic interaction between the conventions of Indigenous musics and popular music genres (Corn 2009; Patrick 2015; Ottosson 2015). Furthermore, adaptive innovations—such as the use of large painted boards in Junba performances from the Kimberley in Western Australia (Treloyn 2003) or the integration of hip hop dance movements at the Milpirri cultural festival at Lajamanu in the Northern Territory (Patrick 2015)—are key to sustaining performances of Aboriginal song, allowing each generation to craft its own expression of cultural identity.

As was the case with Australian languages, until the twentieth century the term 'Australian music' was commonly used to refer to Indigenous musics (Lhotsky 1834;

1 The Australian government's current working definition of an Indigenous Australian is 'a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he [or she] lives' (Department of Aboriginal Affairs 1981, 8; Gardiner-Garden 2003).

Kingston 1851; Skinner 2015). Until the late twentieth century, international interest in the music of Australian settler colonists was minimal, with Aboriginal musics considered by some writers the ‘*only* Australian music of authenticity and intrinsic interest’ (Skinner 2011, 32; original emphasis). James Hall’s serialized ‘A History of Music in Australia’ praised John Lhotsky’s (1834) ‘publication of what I believe to be the first piece of music printed in Australia [...] the setting of an aboriginal melody which [Lhotsky] heard at a corroboree earlier in the year’ (Hall 1951, 519). Although positioning it as a scientific curiosity, Lhotsky’s description of this piece as the ‘first specimen of Australian music’ (1834, 1) clearly places Indigenous traditions at the heart of a nascent conceptualization of what Australian music could be.

Moves in the twentieth century towards promoting a settler colonial Australian national identity resulted in the foregrounding of polemic and exclusionary distinctions between Indigenous musics and ‘Australian’ music, in which the latter category only included the music-making of settler colonists (Wentzel 1962; Harris 2020). In 1967, the same year as Australia’s successful referendum to amend its constitution and count Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the national census, Covell’s *Australia’s Music: Themes of a New Society* presented histories of settler colonial music-making in Australia since colonization, together with material about Indigenous musics, suggesting a future in which the two would more greatly influence each other. Unfortunately, most representations of Aboriginality in prominent art music of the twentieth century ranged from being vaguely atmospheric to incorporating actual blackface performance, almost totally excluding Aboriginal people (Harris 2020).

Popular music acts involving Aboriginal people such as Warrumpi Band from 1980 and Yothu Yindi from 1986, plus the founding of Bangarra Dance Theatre from 1989 and the premiere of the musical *Bran Nue Dae* in 1990, finally moved Indigenous musics to the foreground of public consciousness. Still, recent efforts to categorize settler colonial Australian and Indigenous musics—let alone describe their complex relationship—are fraught. In an attempt to altogether ‘bypass the muddy issues of Australianness’, the *Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia* based its coverage around ‘music and dance in Australia rather than Australian music and dance’ (Whiteoak and Scott-Maxwell 2003, 5). The Australian Recording Industry Association Music Awards category for ‘best Indigenous release’ between 1987 and 1991 oddly featured non-Indigenous Australian folk, country and rock artists as nominees and award-winners (Bracknell 2019). From 1999 onwards, the ‘Indigenous’ category was discontinued, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists were instead frequently and rather confusingly nominated in the Australian Recording Industry Association Music Awards category for ‘best world music album’ (Bracknell 2019). The ‘world music’ category is based on the profitable promotion of ‘ethnic and geographical differences’ (Connell and Gibson 2004, 359), consequently functioning as a ‘distancing mechanism that too often allows for exploitation and racism’ (Byrne 1999). Despite the central role of Indigenous musics in international representations of Australian culture in tourism and the arts (Magowan 2000; Barney 2005; Harris 2020), they remain on the outskirts of Australian music institutions and scholarship.

Representation in Research

The domestic scholarly study of Indigenous musics in Australia began to gain momentum in the twentieth century (Spearritt 1974). An early exponent, Harold E. Davies, published

analyses of Aboriginal song in central Australia, suggesting that Aboriginal people, ‘whose language is so inherently musical, will probably take the lead in a subsequent development of the art of music’ (Davies 1927, 695). Nevertheless, he considered Aboriginal musics to represent an earlier stage of evolution (Davies 1927, 1947). Until the 1950s, music research in Australia focused almost exclusively on western classical traditions, and it was largely anthropologists like T.G.H. Strehlow, R.M. and C. Berndt, A.P. Elkin, N.B. Tindale, A.P. Mountford and others who were the main recordists of Aboriginal musics (Moyle 1966). The musicologists Trevor Jones, Alice Moyle and Catherine Ellis worked initially on the recorded collections of others (Elkin and Jones 1958; Ellis 1964; Moyle 1957). In subsequent years, a lineage of Australian musicologists (soon to be termed ‘ethnomusicologists’, in line with international developments in the field) became engaged to varying extents with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians, mostly through fieldwork in remote Australia (Wild 2006).

Since at least the 1950s, ‘white Australians’ quest for identity with the land’ (Newton 1990, 101) has seen white Australian musicians identify with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal musics as a ‘cultural foil in the positive sense’ as they search ‘for a richer culture’ (Newton 1990). While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not directly involved in such efforts, references to Indigenous musics were often employed to distinguish music created in Australia as being unique or authentic (Newton 1990). Catherine Ellis (1991, 14) observed that ‘very few’ white Australian composers have remained ignorant of the ‘structural intricacies of Aboriginal music’, yet ‘preferred to look at the superficialities: a descending melody, a regularly repeated stick beat, a didjeridu-like sound’. While a general and malleable notion of Indigenous music was considered valuable in the quest for national identity, Indigenous musical traditions were not necessarily appreciated in their own right or on their own terms.

Since its inception in 1963, the Musicological Society of Australia (MSA) has played a significant role in promoting research about Indigenous musics, even at times when Indigenous people were not necessarily involved at the institutional level. While the bulk of MSA members have traditionally been historical musicologists (reflecting the institutional bias of academic music studies more generally), a significant number of ethnomusicologists specializing in studies of Indigenous music-making have served as presidents of the MSA and have driven agendas in support of Indigenous music research (Wild 2006), including Alice Moyle, Catherine Ellis, Stephen Wild, Allan Marett, Steven Knopoff and Aaron Corn. The first MSA conference program of nine papers included two investigating Aboriginal musics: ‘The Didjeridu: A Unique Development of a Common Musical Instrument’ by Trevor Jones (1964) and ‘Bara and Mamariga Songs on Groote Eylandt’ by Alice Moyle (1964), both published in the first issue of its flagship journal *Musicology Australia*. In 2001, the late Kaytetye researcher Alison Ngamperle Ross became the first solo Aboriginal presenter at an MSA conference, beginning a steady trickle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ involvement in Australian music research. The same year saw the establishment of the Indigenous music ‘think-tank’ study group of the MSA, which led to the MSA supporting Indigenous presenters via a travel bursary and fee waivers. Fifteen years after being launched in 2002, the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia (NRPIPA) became an official study group of the MSA in 2017, leading to the MSA’s establishment of a dedicated student prize for the best presentation on an Indigenous music topic. In 2020, the MSA’s annual conference was preceded by NRPIPA’s three-day Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance featuring a full program of presentations led by Indigenous presenters from Australia and

overseas, held in association with the fourth symposium of University of Melbourne's Research Unit for Indigenous Arts and Culture hosted at the University of Melbourne's Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Culture. This trajectory could be understood as representative of a shift in thinking amongst Australian music researchers, with Indigenous musics gradually moving from a fringe concern to a central touchstone of music research in Australia, despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and researchers of Indigenous musics still constituting distinct minorities of the MSA membership.

The MSA logo and two versions of the cover art for the publication *Musicology Australia* have long featured a didjeridu player and Aboriginal dancers, representing its uniquely Australian nature with a globally recognized symbol of Aboriginal music-making. An instrument originating in the north of the continent (Moyle 1981), the didjeridu 'is so widely recognised as a symbol of Aboriginal music that it has become metonymic and its use tends to elide the fact that Indigenous people may play other instruments' (Vellutini 2003, 132). Foregrounding the didjeridu also belies the fact that voice, lyric and rhythmic text are the fundamental elements of most Aboriginal musical traditions Australia-wide (Wafer and Turpin 2017). Although perhaps aspirational, the MSA's self-representation also partially misleads, given the current state of music research, institutions and education in Australia, where, as we shall see, Indigenous musics are far from a primary concern (Burslem 2019; Webb and Bracknell 2021).

Institutions and Training

In Australia, more than fifty institutions offer post-secondary music studies (Letts 2014). Without a dramatic cultural shift, these institutions will continue to essentialize, gloss over and ultimately repel Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and musics. Diverse examples of recirculating archival Aboriginal song in the Kimberley, central Australia, the southwest of Western Australia and many other places (Wafer and Turpin 2017) describe the potential of archival recordings in music sustainability initiatives, but emphasize the underlying need for dedicated time and appropriate places to practice and perform (Barwick and Turpin 2016). That valuable time and space for Aboriginal song has often not been forthcoming inside the nation's music institutions. Despite the promise of earlier initiatives such as the 1972 establishment of the CASM, evidence suggests that nearly all music schools in Australian universities have continued to prioritize training in European art music practices, understood as the unmarked, default role of conservatoria.

In 1962, ethnomusicologist Trevor Jones noted a 'conviction still fostered by many of our music educators that all non-European music is by nature childish, unsophisticated, crude, ugly, and downright inferior' (Jones 1962, 31). Although general consciousness of Aboriginal performance in Australia surged in the late twentieth century, the composer Jon Rose still contended in 2006 that:

[t]he people who run culture in this country are terrified of their own stuff ... They only look for overseas models and they only applaud people who do overseas things. It's a cultural cringe. It's sad, but it's the reality. (Quoted in McFadyen 2005)

Recent moves to make Indigenous performance part of core business at major arts organizations include Rhoda Roberts instigating the nationwide Indigenous dance

competition Dance Rites at the Sydney Opera House in 2015 and Wesley Enoch being appointed as the artistic director of Sydney Festival in 2017. More recently, Perth Festival programmed a whole first week of Indigenous content in 2020. Its commercial success highlighted Australian audiences' significant appetite for Indigenous performance.

Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers are certainly being applauded and their work is crucial to Australia's arts landscape. Despite moves at the top of arts organizations and the obvious audience interest, there remains scant opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to study the complexities of their own regional performance traditions. Music teaching in schools—if even available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students—does little to help in this regard. When asked for their views on music pedagogy and curriculum earlier this century, Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory highlighted 'what they saw as an exclusion-driven west-centric preoccupation with notated music', which 'contrasted with the inclusion generated by orally transmitted music, supporting the collectivist cultures of many societies' (Smith 2002, 68).

It seems that many Australian music education institutions have a difficult time finding conceptual space to include Indigenous musical content in their courses at all, although Megan Burslem's recent study of musicology teaching in Australian universities optimistically observes that 'new units in Australian Indigenous music traditions and cultures are springing up across the country, often led by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and professional practitioners' (Burslem 2019, 114). However, Burslem's data reveal that, in 2018, the majority of tertiary music faculties (six of the nine major Australian tertiary music schools she surveyed) failed to offer any undergraduate music units focusing primarily on Aboriginal musics. Furthermore, three of the nine music schools surveyed did not mention in their non-practical music course descriptions the terms 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal' at all. Course offerings may vary from year to year depending on the values and expertise of teaching staff employed at each institution, but only the University of Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium houses a dedicated centre for Aboriginal music.

While Burslem's dataset is limited to non-practical units available in 2018, it reveals a possible disjuncture between research and teaching at key institutions, which, although undertaking significant funded Indigenous music research, have little correlating curriculum. Teaching at Australian music schools occurs mostly in line with their foundations as training institutions for composers and orchestral instrumentalists. In order to cover one-on-one instrumental teaching, the non-practical undergraduate curriculum at music schools can end up complex and fragmented, with little space for overarching curriculum outside broad world music or themed units. Consequently, and as part of the aforementioned legacy of anthropological—not musical—academic interest in Indigenous musics, course content centred on Indigenous music-making is just as likely to be found in anthropology, linguistics or Indigenous studies units as music ones.

Aside from overarching issues associated with elitism and the settler colonial gaze, this situation is itself partially a result of the cycle of exclusionary school music education. The longstanding reluctance of most secondary school music teachers in Australia to include Indigenous musics in their programs feeds into the paucity of Indigenous music content at tertiary levels (Webb and Bracknell 2021). Like secondary schools, universities can blame the virtual invisibility of Indigenous musics in their offerings on the fact that most music lecturers are unfamiliar with Indigenous content and wary of protocols associated with potentially restricted cultural material such as song. Trepidation is warranted, but

inaction will not break the cycle. Without a significant improvement in equitable relationships between Indigenous music-makers and music institutions, alongside the development of new domains for training in Indigenous traditions, issues of endangerment and marginalization will only be exacerbated.

In 1975, the University of Adelaide appointed senior Pitjantjatjara songman M. Baker as a senior lecturer, in acknowledgement and recognition of his commensurate expertise as a performer and knowledge-holder, and this appointment became key to the CASM's early experimentation with a kind of bimusical pedagogy (Amery 2012). Such a groundbreaking move would come to be remembered, however, as an exception to the rule in Australian academic music institutions, which still predominantly, if not exclusively, employ conservatorium-trained lecturers with little knowledge of Indigenous musics. Sporadic and longer-term programs involving Indigenous instructors at various music institutions continue to be developed and are usually effective and well received (Corn and Patrick 2015; Turpin et al. 2017), no doubt because performers 'can best reflect and express the essence of a culture' (Lampton and Tunstill 1994, 35). Still, in the eyes of Australian tertiary music institutions, there is an extremely small pool of Indigenous people considered suitably qualified as lecturers. At present, most Australian universities seem to lack the will to prioritize the development, recruitment and ongoing culturally supportive employment of such individuals (Cheetham et al. 2020), thus further entrenching Indigenous musics on the extreme fringe of Australian music training.

Presently, there are few tertiary performance programs tailored for Indigenous students. Courses at the CASM (Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music), TAFE (Technical and Further Education college) New South Wales Eora in Sydney and AbMusic in Perth focus on popular music. NAISDA (National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association) Dance College offers dance training, and the longstanding Aboriginal Performance course at WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts) aims to prepare students for acting work. Since 2017, Chris Sainsbury's Ngarra-Burria First Peoples Composers scheme has been successful as an art-music-focused training and mentoring program for Indigenous music-makers operating outside a university degree structure (Australian Music Centre 2020). However, it is not currently possible for an Indigenous person in Australia—or any student for that matter—to enrol in an undergraduate program of study coordinated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander instructors to major in Indigenous musics. Deep learning in an Indigenous music context remains outside the remit of most music institutions, and is more likely to occur in association with local community-controlled cultural centres and ranger programs, sometimes as a positive result of university-supported research (Barwick et al. 2010; Marett, Barwick and Ford 2013; Treloyn and Charles 2015; Corn and Patrick 2015; Turpin 2017; Emberly, Treloyn and Charles 2017; Barwick 2017; Curran, Fisher and Barwick 2018).

Research has functioned to partially inform and support important cultural programs, gatherings and events available to the general public including the Garma Festival (Marett et al. 2006), the Mowanjum festival (Treloyn, Martin and Charles 2016), the Milpirri festival (Patrick 2015), the Yeperenyne and Mbantua Festivals (Perkins 2016; Barwick and Turpin 2016) and the work around Perth Festival's recent Noongar-language adaptation of Macbeth (Bracknell et al. forthcoming). Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata argues that Indigenous scholars should engage with the academic disciplines in order to demonstrate how mainstream knowledge is limited in its ability to understand the dynamics and diversity of Indigenous people and culture (Nakata 2006). Accordingly, recent decades have increasingly seen university-affiliated Indigenous researchers including Joseph

Neparrŋa Gumbula, Marcia Langton, Linda Payi Ford, Steven Wanta Jampijinpa Patrick, Lexine Solomon, Toby Whaleboat, Tiriki Onus, Shaun Angeles Penangk, Jesse Hope-Hodgetts and the late Alison Ngamperle Ross in leading roles on research projects dealing with Indigenous musics. On the part of Aboriginal researchers, much of this work has little to do with the agendas of music institutions and is more motivated by responsibilities to home communities of origin, reflecting local aims to ensure cultural sustainability and the maintenance of intangible cultural heritage (Bracknell 2015).

Ways Ahead

Claiming that academic music institutions are inherently white spaces, an open letter to the Music Faculty of the University of Cambridge, sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement and with well over 500 signatures, suggests that '[t]he very issue of needing to "add" people to such a naturally-exclusionary space in the first place is symptomatic of the ongoing perpetuation of systems of white supremacy and oppression' (Decolonising Music, Cambridge 2020). Although every Australian music institution is located in a place that has significance for local Aboriginal people, the institutions themselves are overwhelmingly experienced as white and exclusionary spaces. At a foundational level, music institutions can embed cultural awareness training into all music training curriculum, but greater depth is required. In Australia, all music can be understood—on a scale ranging from ignorance to immersion—in terms of its relationship with Country, Indigenous musics, people and ways of doing things. There is no reason why this kind of critical frame could not be at the forefront of undergraduate music studies in Australia, providing social grounding for European musics and opening the door for more informed understanding of Indigenous musics. The significant funded research on Indigenous musics emanating from our music institutions could also be more commensurately reflected in undergraduate curriculum content.

The Pitjantjatjara language, like many other Indigenous languages, has no separate word for 'music'; instead, the term *inma* encompasses all phenomena (dance, music, storytelling and visual design) marking performance (Ellis et al. 1978). This world-view about the form and function of music sits in fundamental contradiction to approaches that see only musical elements as worthy of analysis. The maintenance of arbitrary silos between music educators, the music industry, ethnomusicologists, historical musicologists, researchers of community music, music therapy and popular music is wholly unproductive. In Australia, Indigenous musics are highly relevant to all of these disparate areas—whether these subdisciplines realize it or not—and could function as a central touchstone around which to coalesce. New, more holistic performing arts pathways could be similarly multi-modal while also fostering greater interdisciplinarity, particularly between the creative arts and environmental and health sciences. Resisting settler colonial attempts to suppress and eradicate them, Indigenous musics will always carry immense power to connect and effect change in this place. Given the history of denigration, ignorance and appropriation towards Indigenous musics, advocacy for Indigenous self-determination must be the central mandate of Australian music institutions. Enabling tertiary music institutions as brave spaces from which Indigenous music-makers and Indigenous scholars can speak truth and be heard will benefit the practice, teaching and research of all involved (Arau and Clemens 2013).

As restricted international travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic challenges humanity to focus locally, and the Black Lives Matter movement demands action to dismantle

systemic injustice built on the insidious cultural concept of race, the frame of reference for most Australian music schools seems radically out of step. In 2009, ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon explained, ‘persons sustain music and music sustains people’ (2009, 122). Especially in the current context, we must critique just who and what our music institutions and scholarship are sustaining. Presently, Indigenous musics are clearly not a priority for our music institutions. Music is an infinitely diverse, empowering and awe-inspiring manifestation of culture and nature (Allen and Dawe 2015). Continuing to focus on it in a narrow and Eurocentric way diminishes our current and future potential (Marett 2010).

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Linda Barwick is an Emeritus Professor in the Sydney Conservatorium of Music at the University of Sydney. Since her musicological training under Catherine Ellis at the University of Adelaide in the early 1980s, she has collaborated in community-based music research with numerous Indigenous musicians across Australia, with a focus on contemporary engagement with archival recordings. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

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