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# ‘When Everybody there Together ... then I Call that One’: Song Order in the Kimberley\*

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Song repertoires from the Kimberley region of northwest Australia are structured in much the same way as repertoires from Central Australia and the Western Desert.<sup>1</sup> Substantial work has been done placing the musical structure of the *nurlu* genre from the southwestern Kimberley and the *junba* genre from the northcentral Kimberley in this regional context, finding that while there are indeed many characteristics that these genres share with Central Australian and Western Desert genres such as *inma*, there are also significant points of difference.<sup>2</sup> Understanding these relationships has contributed to a better appreciation of the cultural and social significance of performance practices in the Kimberley and, more generally, in indigenous Australia.

One aspect of the relationship between Kimberley and Desert styles that is yet to be discussed in music research scholarship is the way that songs are ordered in performance. In this article, I will provide an introduction to this issue by advancing the literature on song ordering in the Kimberley, where the selection and deployment of songs is determined by the composer/song-leader in response to the engagement of his performing ensemble in the manner described by the Ngarinyin/Miwa composer, Scotty Martin, in the title to this article:

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\* I express sincere gratitude to Scotty Martin for patiently and generously discussing his repertory, as well as to Paddy Neowarra, Jimmy Maline, Paddy Wama, Jack Dann and Mick Jowalji for patiently and generously explaining various aspects of performance practice to me. I also thank Linda Barwick for reading and commenting on an early version of this article, as well as to the anonymous readers. Of course, any shortcomings remain my own. The comment quoted in the title was made by Scotty Martin, a composer and performer of *junba* songs from the Kimberley region of northwestern Australia. A more complete transcript of this discussion can be found in Sally Treloyn, *Songs that Pull: jadmi junba* from the Kimberley Region of Northwest Australia, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006, Appendix 6.

<sup>1</sup> See Ray Keogh, *Nurlu Songs of the West Kimberleys*, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1990; Treloyn, *Songs that Pull*.

<sup>2</sup> Keogh, *Nurlu Songs of the West Kimberleys*; Treloyn, *Songs that Pull*; Treloyn, ‘Songs that Pull: Composition/Performance through Analysis,’ *Context* 31 (2006): 151–64.

'When everybody there together ... then I call that one.' I will also revisit previous accounts of song ordering in Central Australia and the Western Desert where song order is frequently attributed to the journeys undertaken by and activities associated with Ancestral beings. My overall aim is to improve general knowledge about the cultural and social principles and systems that underlie song ordering in both regions, and thereby develop appreciation of the broader cultural significance of this multi-layered aspect of Indigenous Australian performance practice.<sup>3</sup>

### Song Order in *junba*

Researchers have reported a high level of variability in the ordering of songs in the Kimberley region. Keogh, for example, reports that the songs in one 'line' of a *nurlu* repertory composed by the Nyigina man George Dyunggayan are performed with no fixed order.<sup>4</sup> In *junba* repertories from the northern Kimberley by Ngarinyin, Wunambal and Worrorra people, this is also certainly the case. To illustrate this, in Figure 1 I have set out the sequence of songs that were performed in three danced performances of a repertory composed by Martin. Danced performances have been selected because dance and song ordering, as will be shown in this article, are closely related. This table clearly illustrates the high degree of variability with which *junba* songs in this region are performed. The repertory is in a style known as *jadmi*, one of the two major subgenres of *junba*. Songs are numbered 1–34, and each is performed once (x1), twice (x2) or three times (x3).<sup>5</sup>

While there is generally no predetermined order that encompasses all songs in a *junba* repertory, there is a complex network of principles that guide the deployment of songs in each performance that is expertly negotiated by the composer/song-leader. In the following discussion, I outline four primary principles that appear to guide the way that composers

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<sup>3</sup> The understanding of *junba* song ordering and the strategies of composer, Scotty Martin, that I present in this article is based on field research that I conducted in the period 2000 to 2002. This understanding stems in the first place from conversations with composers and performers, including Scotty Martin, Paddy Neowarra, Jimmy Maline, Paddy Wama, Jack Dann, and Mick Jowalji, covering principles of song ordering in relation to a number of different repertories. Such discussions were facilitated by the expertise of these performers, their generous approach to explaining principles of song ordering to me, their generous responses to my analysis- and performance-based ideas, and my participation as a woman singer in performances. Transcriptions of conversations with Martin on the topic can be found in Treloyn, *Songs that Pull*. While the role and value of analysis in cross-cultural music research is a contentious issue—see, for example, Bruno Nettl, 'Musical Colonialism,' *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>, accessed 28 May 2008; Michael Tenzer, *Analytical Studies in World Music* (Oxford/New York: OUP, 2006) 17—the analysis of song ordering presented here has been responsive to dialogue with performers and has both come out of and led to a broader understanding of the cultural context of *junba* performance. In this way it is similar to the approach of Allan Marett, who finds that analysis is a 'methodological tool for isolating significant (and signifying) moments of performance' (*Songs, Dreamings, Ghosts: The Wangga of North Australia* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2005) 6). While informed by dialogue and participation with performers, the analysis also aims to represent my understanding of song ordering. In this case, it also follows Steven Knopoff who, taking 'personal responsibility' for his transcriptions and analysis, aims to represent his *own* understanding, rather than attempting to represent that of the performers ('What is Music Analysis? Problems and Prospects for Understanding Aboriginal Songs and Performance,' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (2003): 39–49 at 46–47).

<sup>4</sup> Keogh, *Nurlu Songs of the West Kimberleys* 42, fn. 25. In this context, a 'line' is a subgroup of songs in a repertory that represents the songs given to the composer in a single dream experience (Keogh, *Nurlu Songs of the West Kimberleys* 31–32).

<sup>5</sup> Songs in Martin's repertory are numbered according to the order in which they became known to me.

**Figure 1.** Song order in three performances of Scotty Martin's jadmi repertory \*

RK1985	LB1997	ST2000
32 x2	23 x2	23 x1
30 x1	4 x2	1 x1
33 x2	3 x2	2 x2
3 x2	24 x2	29 x1
32 x1	1 x2	20 x1
34 x1	2 x2	23 x1
32 x1	5 x2	20 x2
26 x1	23 x2	-
32 x1	18 x2	-
15 x1	17 x2	-
32 x3	24 x2	-
20 x1	23 x2	-
-	20 x3	-

\* The details of these recordings are as follows: RK1985 recorded by Ray Keogh in Kalumburu (WA) in 1985; LB1997 recorded by Linda Barwick at Bijili (near Dodnun Community, WA) on 3 May 1997; ST2000 recorded by Sally Treloyn at Maranbabidi (WA) on 15 Sep. 2000. All performances were led by Scotty Martin, as is always the case in performances of his repertory.

deploy songs and dance-songs in *junba* repertoires.<sup>6</sup> As signalled in the statement by Martin quoted in the title to this article, it is the involvement and engagement of people that guides his choice of song: 'When everybody there together ... then I call that one.' I will show how this involvement and engagement can also be seen to extend to the spirits and Ancestors with which *junba* is intertwined, outlining how, in the course of the performance, song ordering is encoded with principles that guide relationships between people, and between spirits, Ancestors and people.

### Tempo and Mate-songs

Two of the most prevalent principles that guide song selection are the systematic deployment of songs with particular tempos and the pairing of songs that are considered to be 'mates.' Two tempos are used in all *junba* repertoires: songs are either 'slow' (referred to in Ungarinyin<sup>7</sup> as *banngun-ngarri* or *abalan-ngarri*) or 'fast' (referred to in Ungarinyin as *manamana-ngarri*).<sup>8</sup> These have a tempo of approximately 92–98 beats per minute and 112–122 beats per minute, respectively, measured according to the rate at which percussion, which accompanies the singing, is performed. In all performances slow and fast songs generally alternate, beginning

<sup>6</sup> I do this to show that song ordering in *junba* is enmeshed in the broader cultural beliefs of performers. I will discuss the reasons behind this in the conclusion to the article.

<sup>7</sup> Ungarinyin is the language spoken by Ngarinyin people.

<sup>8</sup> *Banngun* means 'to go cautiously, slowly, steadily' (H.H.C. Coate and A.P. Elkin, *Ngarinjin—English Dictionary*, Oceania Linguistic Monograph 16 (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1974) 72). *Manamana-ngarri* literally means 'Hurry! Hurry!' (p. 339).

with a slow song and ending with a fast song, in the form ||: slow + fast :||, as indicated in Figure 2. Songs of one particular type (*galanba-ngarri* ‘warm up’ type songs), which I will discuss below, may work either within or outside of the ||: slow + fast :|| pattern. I have marked one performance of such a song that works outside the system in the performance, and thereby disrupts the pattern, in brackets ([ ]).<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 2.** ||: slow + fast :|| pattern

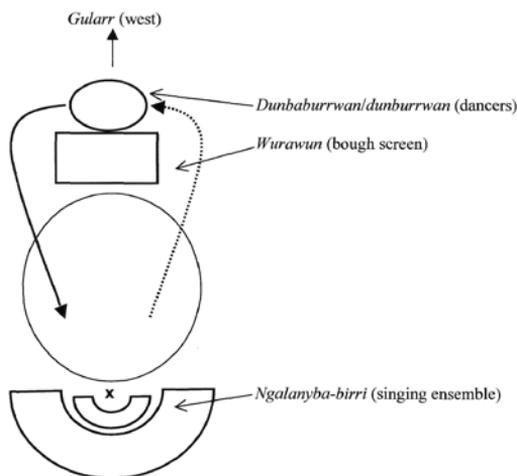
LB1997	
23 x2	Slow
4 x2	Fast
3 x2	Slow
24 x2	Fast
1 x2	Slow
2 x2	Fast
5 x2	Slow
[23 x2	Slow]
18 x2	Fast
17 x2	Slow
24 x2	Fast
23 x2	Slow
20 x3	Fast

The significance of the ||: slow + fast :|| song order is yet to be fully researched. It is clear, however, that it relates to the dances that accompany these songs and therefore plays a role in bringing living performers together with the spirits of their deceased relatives, whose actions are re-enacted by the dancers. When singing songs, singers draw these spirits forwards from behind a bough screen that sits at the western border of the performance space, as set out in Figure 3. The western orientation of the screen relates to the fact that these spirits reside on Dulugun—an island of the dead, which is located off the western coast.<sup>10</sup> Martin has explained that ideally the dancers will come forward from the screen on a slow song and return on a fast song.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> When *galanba-ngarri* songs disrupt the ||: slow + fast :|| pattern it is because they are used, as needed, to accommodate the time taken by dancers to prepare for each dance.

<sup>10</sup> Treloyn, Songs that Pull 74; Anthony Redmond, *Rulug wayirri: Moving Kin and Country in the Northern Kimberley*, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2001, 119.

<sup>11</sup> This resonates with tide metaphors used in *wangga* songs from the Daly River region of northern Australia, where the ebb and flow of the tide invokes a liminal space in which living and deceased beings interact; see Allan Marett, *Songs, Dreamings, Ghosts* 5, 30. When I asked Martin if the slow and fast songs might be related to neap and spring tides, respectively, Martin agreed that this would be an appropriate comparison, saying ‘That’s right, that sound really good. That’s how it goes. I think most of this *jadmi* song, quick one or slow one, they all come from the sea anyway, all that song’ (Martin, personal communication, 20 Feb. 2002; see Treloyn, Songs that Pull 525).

**Figure 3.** The advance and retreat of the dancers

The successive performance of songs that are considered to be ‘mates’ to one another is another principle that guides the ordering of songs. The two songs that make up each mate song pair are complementary, sharing subject matter and lexical content, and present contrasting accounts of the same or similar subjects. They also have minimally contrastive musical features. Songs 1 and 2 are one of the mate song pairs in Martin’s repertory. As set out in Figure 4, Song 1 is slow and describes the relationship between the actions of brolgas (which provide the precedent for *jadmi* type *junba*) and the actions and appearance of the dancers, while Song 2 is fast and describes the way the brolgas, like the dancers, dance in a line. Comparing Song 2 with Song 1, Martin explained: ‘That’s still representing the broлга, but you get different song say the quick one and slow one.’<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 4.** Song 1 ‘gurreiga/ngadarri’ and Song 2 ‘gurranda/ngadarri’

Song	Text-line A	Text-line B
1	gurreiga narai binjirri broлга, picking/preening	ngadarri jagud binjirri headcaps, dancing
2	gurranda wayurlambi broлга, walking in a line	ngadarri wayurlambi headcaps, walking in a line

It can be seen from Figure 5 that these songs are paired together in a typical performance of the repertory. Barwick has found that the two songs in a ‘mate’ song pair in the Warumungu *yawulyu Mungamunga* repertory (from northern Central Australia) have similarly contrastive tempo relationships, subject matter and lexicon, and are also performed successively. Barwick found that the contrastive content and musical structure of these songs are underpinned by an understanding that the difference between the songs is complementary,<sup>13</sup> and their juxtaposition

<sup>12</sup> Martin, personal communication with Linda Barwick and Sally Treloyn, 15 May 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Barwick, ‘Performance, Aesthetics, Experience: Thoughts on Yawulyu Mungamunga Songs,’ *Aesthetics and Experience in Music Performance*, ed. E. Mackinley, D. Collins and S. Owens (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005) 9.

serves to establish relationships between the distinct elements contained in the songs.<sup>14</sup> This is also the case in *junba*. The pairing of Songs 1 and 2 in Martin's repertory has the overall effect of foregrounding the relationship between the living performers, and the spirits and brolgas that they enact on the dance ground.

**Figure 5.** The pairing of mate songs (note that all of the principles that guide song order are collated in Figure 12, below)

LB1997	
23 x2	
4 x2	
3 x2	
24 x2	
1 x2	mate song pair
2 x2	
5 x2	
23 x2	
18 x2	
17 x2	
24 x2	
23 x2	
20 x3	

### Song Types: *Galanbangarri*, *Birrina* and *Enerr-ngarri*

While the ||: slow + fast :|| pattern and the pairing of mate songs have a significant impact on the ordering of songs, by far the most pervasive principle that guides song selection is the deployment songs according to their type. There are three types of song in *junba* repertories, two of which are dance-song: *birrina* 'public' and *enerr-ngarri* 'big' dance-songs. In performances, *birrina* dance-songs precede *enerr-ngarri* ones. Explaining this, Paddy Neowarra noted: '*Birrina* first, you dance, dance, finish now ... Right big one [that is, *enerr-ngarri*] come out now.'<sup>15</sup> In performances these are preceded by and interspersed with repeated performances of *galanba-ngarri* 'warm up' type songs, of which there are only one or two in each repertory. Songs are deployed in two patterns within this broad schema. Leaving aside the *galanba-ngarri* songs, the performances either begin with *birrina* songs and move directly to *enerr-ngarri* '||: B :|| + ||: E :||' or, having moved from *birrina* to *enerr-ngarri*, briefly move back to a *birrina* song before returning to an *enerr-ngarri* type song '||: B :|| + E + B + ||: E :||' as in the LB1997 performance set out in Figure 6.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Barwick, 'Performance, Aesthetics, Experience' 15.

<sup>15</sup> Paddy Neowarra, personal communication, 7 Apr. 2002.

<sup>16</sup> The classification of Martin's songs is based on statements made by Martin (see Treloyn, Songs that Pull, Appendix 6).

Figure 6. Distribution of song types

LB1997	
: B :   + E + B +   : E :	
23 x2	Galanba-ngarri
4 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
3 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
24 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
1 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
2 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
5 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
23 x2	Galanba-ngarri
18 x2	<b>Enerr-ngarri</b>
17 x2	Galanba-ngarri
24 x2	<b>Birrina</b>
23 x2	Galanba-ngarri
20 x3	<b>Enerr-ngarri</b>

The significance of this system of ordering lies in the way that it encodes in the performance principles of interaction that guide relationships between living people, and between people and spirits, in the broader life-world of performers. I will now discuss each song type showing how this is the case.<sup>17</sup>

### *Galanba-ngarri* Type Songs

*Galanba-ngarri* have a key role in mediating interaction between the living performers and spirits (*burrunguma*) who both give the composer songs and dances in dreams, and appear in the dance ground in the bodies of the dancers. It is through interaction with these spirits that the composer conceives songs. Song 23 is one of the *galanba-ngarri* type songs used in Martin's repertory. This song, the text of which is set out in Figure 7, like most other *galanba-ngarri*, refers to this vital interaction with *burrunguma* spirits. In a discussion about this text, Martin explained that

a seabreeze came, like wind blowing a tree [*yawa nanburru*]; *yawanbuwun*—'see all that leaf moving now already' that how the language mean. Instead of saying *yawanbuwurrun*, *yawa nanburru*. See he go half way up again.<sup>18</sup> ... *Yalangarr* we call it — *Gandiyad*. *Burrunguma* travel now, in the night or day or whatever.<sup>19</sup>

The *yalangarr* breeze that Martin refers to is associated with the *marrarri* 'sorrow' that spirits feel for their kin and country and assists them in their journeys to visit them. Song

<sup>17</sup> This discussion is drawn from my PhD dissertation; for a more detailed account, see Treloyn, Songs that Pull, Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>18</sup> See Treloyn, Songs that Pull 113, for a discussion of this practice of pronouncing words that refer to spirit actions 'half way up.'

<sup>19</sup> Scotty Martin, personal communication, 4 Apr. 2002. For a more complete transcript of this conversation see Treloyn, Songs that Pull, Appendix 6.

23 refers to seeing a type of fish (*wunbalu*) under the water at Bilginji, a place to the east or northeast of Wyndham, and rippling water and rustling leaves, through which a *yalanggarr* breeze has moved.

**Figure 7.** Song 23 ‘wunbalu/Bilginji’

Song	Text-line A	Text-line B
23	<i>wunbalu marra mawane</i> A fish in the moonlight	<i>Bilginji yawa nanburru</i> Bilginji, leaves moving/ water rippling

Statements by performers about *galanba-ngarri* type songs throw further light on the important role that they play before and interspersed with dance-songs in performances. For example, with regard to the repetition of *galanba-ngarri* type songs before the performance, Martin has explained that it is designed to ‘make the rest of the people come along ... when they hear me singing.’<sup>20</sup> Because the words that Martin sings are those sung by spirits that he met in his dreams, this call for engagement (that Martin directs to the rest of his performance ensemble to come and listen to and participate in the performance) also re-enacts and invokes the call that the spirits made to Martin in his dream—that is, Martin calls people to the performance just as spirits called him to the performance, through the use of *galanba-ngarri* type songs.

Finally, while *galanba-ngarri* type songs have an important role in drawing the living and spirit worlds together, they also appear to have a protective, mediating function that screens living people from spirits. On the dance ground green branches are used in several situations to create such a screen. They are used, for example, in the screen that stands at the far western side of the performance space, screening the singers from the dancers who come from the island of the dead (in the west) behind the screen.<sup>21</sup> While I have not had the opportunity to discuss this with performers, it appears that *galanba-ngarri* type songs may have a purpose similar to the green branches of the screen. The word *galanba-ngarri* may translate to ‘characterised by dark green’: ‘*galanba*’ also literally means ‘dark green’;<sup>22</sup> *-ngarri* is a suffix that means ‘characterised by.’<sup>23</sup> The repeated performance of these songs before the danced performance, as dancers apply paint, and alternating with dance-songs throughout the performance, seems to resonate with this mediating screening role.

### ***Birrina* and *Enerr-ngarri* Type Dance-songs**

*Birrina* type dance-songs are glossed by performers as ‘public ones,’ meaning that all the dancers may participate in the dance. Repertories have a small number of different *birrina* dances, which are performed to a large number of different songs. These dances are important because they enact the interdependent relationship between the two moieties that underpin all parts of Ngarinyin identity, society and worldview. They also foreground the relationship

<sup>20</sup> Scotty Martin, personal communication, 20 Feb. 2002. For a more complete transcript of this conversation, see Treloyn, *Songs that Pull*, Appendix 6.

<sup>21</sup> When a composer receives a song in a dream, green branches are also used to screen to his eyes from seeing his deceased relatives (Redmond, *Rulug Wayirri* 120; see also Andreas Lommel, transl. Ian Campbell, *The Unambal: A Tribe in Northwest Australia* (Carnarvon Gorge, Qld: Takarakka Nowan Kas, 1997) 63).

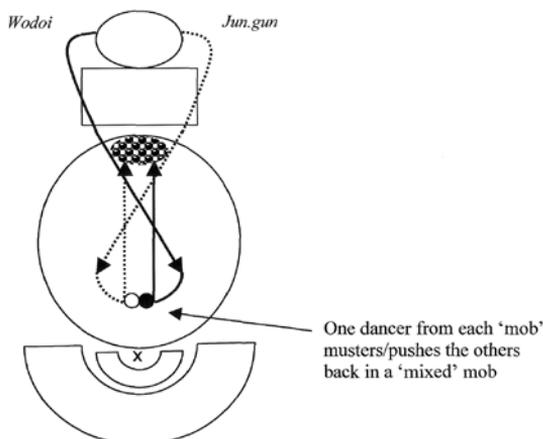
<sup>22</sup> Coate and Elkin, *Ngarinjin – English Dictionary* 222.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Rumsey, ‘Aspects of Native Title and Social Identity in the Kimberley and Beyond,’ *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (1996): 2–10 at 5.

between the living performers, spirits, the Ancestral heroes that created the moiety system, and the important places that are named in the songs that accompany them.

In a typical *jadmi birrina* dance, the dancing ensemble is split into two groups as they emerge from the bough screen. Each of these groups represents one of the two moieties—*Ornod* (bone) represented by *Wodoi* (the Spotted nightjar), or *Amarlad* (dust) represented by *Jun.gun* (the Owllet Nightjar). These mobs move in two or three lines over the dance ground towards the singing ensemble positioned on the opposite, eastern side of the space. In one common *birrina* format, as illustrated in Figure 8, when the dancers approach the singers the two lines cross over and then one *Wodoi* and one *Jun.gun* line dancer will dance behind the others ‘pushing’ or ‘mustering’ them back to the screen. When the song is repeated the dancers typically enter from the opposite side of the screen to which they entered in the first instance (i.e., the dancers that emerge in the first dance from the *Wodoi* side will emerge from the *Jun.gun* side on its repeat), as if walking in the other’s footsteps.<sup>24</sup>

**Figure 8.** *Birrina* Dance Format†



While a full discussion of the details of how this choreography invokes the interdependent mode of interaction that defines the moiety system in Ngarinyin society lies outside the scope of this article, as does how the system in *junba* relates to those of other cultural groups, it is important to note that interactions between the moieties are characterised by a pattern of articulating difference against a background of similarity, and that this practice (and the fundamental complementarity that it imbues in people, groups, places, animals, etcetera) energises all social interactions (such as marriage, the definition of a child’s moiety, and trade between clans).<sup>25</sup> The process by which a child’s moiety is determined exemplifies this pattern: while patrilineality (that is, the child takes the same moiety as his or her father) is generally common throughout northern Australia, in Ngarinyin culture the child takes the opposite moiety to that of its mother—a *Wodoi* mother gives birth to a *Jun.gun* child, and vice versa—as if *Jun.gun* springs from *Wodoi*, and *Wodoi* from *Jun.gun*.<sup>26</sup> This process and manner

<sup>24</sup> The descriptions of *birrina* and *enerr-ngarri* choreography in this section are based on detail offered by performers, and diagrams drawn by them in reference to specific repertoires. These descriptions and diagrams were also supported by danced performances that I have witnessed.

<sup>25</sup> Redmond, *Rulug Wayirri*; see also Treloyn, *Songs that Pull*, Chapter 2.

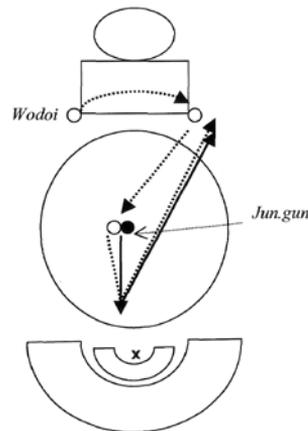
<sup>26</sup> Redmond, *Rulug Wayirri* 125.

of interacting was set down by the Ancestral activities of *Wodoi* (the Spotted Nightjar) and *Jun.gun* (the Owlet Nightjar), who first worked together, stealing sacred objects from another Ancestral being in order to create the system of sharing known as *Wurnan*, but then afterwards split from one another, engaging in a perpetual series of fights that assert their difference from one another thereby setting down a precedent for trade between clans of opposite moieties.<sup>27</sup> In *birrina* type dances, when the moieties begin together, split, come back together, then dance in the other's tracks, the participants echo this foundational pattern that is core to all important Ngarinyin social institutions.<sup>28</sup>

The third type of *junba* song is referred to as *enerr-ngarri*, glossed as 'big ones.' These dance-songs also have an important role in mediating the relationship between living performers, spirits, Ancestral beings and places. They are easily distinguished from the 'public' *birrina* dance-songs, in that they typically have unique choreography, paraphernalia, and the dancers embody—sometimes in a relative mimetic way—particular spirit beings, animals, and/or Ancestral beings. They are also distinct in that they mostly involve just one or two dancers.

Martin has described nine different *enerr-ngarri* type dances for his *jadmi*, one of which (Song 9, '*bumarlad burad bindirri / wurrurru umbad ga wene*') describes an archetypal Ancestral fight between *Wodoi* (the Spotted Nightjar) and *Jun.gun* (the Owlet Nightjar). The first line of the song, *bumarlad burad bindirri*, describes *Jun.gun* (*bumarlad*) cleaning up his camp. In the second line, *wurrurru umbad ga wene*, *Wodoi* (*wurrurru*) approaches *Jun.gun* and picks a fight with him (he 'push him out').<sup>29</sup> In the *enerr-ngarri* type dance that accompanies this song, as out in Figure 9, *Jun.gun* (*bumarlad*) begins the dance in the middle of the dance ground, sitting down, 'cleaning his camp.' *Wodoi* (*wurrurru*) peeps out from one edge of the screen, before

**Figure 9.** *Wodoi* and *Jun.gun* *enerr-ngarri* type dance format (Song 9)



<sup>27</sup> Redmond, *Ruluḡ Wayirrii* 193–95.

<sup>28</sup> Martin also uses a second *birrina* choreography which foregrounds the relationship between *jadmi* type *junba* and the *broлга* which is said to have provided the precedent for the appearance of the dancers and sound of the singers. In this dance the dancers move from behind the screen and dance forward in three lines to the front of the dance ground. Martin has explained that, unlike in the standard *birrina* dance described above, 'they [the dancers] all can dance in a line because all those *broлга* walk in a line,' indicating that the *broлга* provide a precedent that enables present-day performers' actions (see Treloyn, Songs that Pull 90–91).

<sup>29</sup> *Bumarlad* comes from *amarlad* 'dust,' the moiety represented by *Jun.gun*. *Wurrurru* substitutes *Wodoi*, perhaps to fill an additional rhythmic unit in the text.

emerging from the other side. He moves towards *Jun.gun*, they both dance forward, and then both dance back to the screen.

This fight scene clearly demonstrates one of the Ancestral battles that set in place the process of articulating difference against a background of similarity and complementarity that pervades social interactions between moieties. The significance of these songs, however, lies also in the way that they relate to *birrina* dance-songs with which they are juxtaposed in performance. The term '*enerr*,' which was explained to me by performers to mean 'big,' underlines the importance of these songs. This word, in the form *ened* and *anerr*, means 'great, master, lord, boss, superior,' as well as 'parent.'<sup>30</sup> The suffix *-ngarri*, as noted earlier, is a suffix that means 'characterised by.' This definition, I suggest, signals a correlation between the *enerr-ngarri/birrina* relationship and the *Wodoi/Jun.gun* relationship, which is marked by a fundamental complementarity. That is, when a child's identity is determined, *Wodoi* springs from *Jun.gun* and *Jun.gun* springs from *Wodoi*. Similarly, the small number of dancers that perform *enerr-ngarri* type dance-songs split from the larger group that performed the *birrina* dance-songs. At the same time, if we regard *enerr-ngarri* dances as embodying specific Ancestral acts in a semi-literal way and *birrina* dances as embodying these in a more abstract way (that is, as if representing the ubiquity of the Ancestral acts of *Wodoi* and *Jun.gun* in present day social structure and community), we can also see that when a *birrina* dance-song follows an *enerr-ngarri* type dance-song in performance, as in the performance set out in Figure 6, the contemporary social structure and roles enacted in *birrina* dances spring from the Ancestral *enerr/parent* acts of *Wodoi* and *Jun.gun*.<sup>31</sup>

### Thematic Content

The final primary principle that guides the placement and selection of songs is thematic content. Without exception repertoires of *jadmi* type *junba* contain one or more songs about the broлга (see Figure 10), who provided the precedent for this style of dance, including dance paraphernalia and vocal quality.<sup>32</sup> As Martin has explained, 'Any song from the broлга would be a *jadmi*.'<sup>33</sup> As indicated in Figure 10, each performance also usually contains songs that name places, songs that are about water phenomenon (associated the creative force associated with composition, and all other forms of creativity—*Wunggurr*), and songs that are about spirits.<sup>34</sup>

In my experience, the *enerr-ngarri* type dance-song that is performed at the end of the each performance seems to be the most exciting, drawing strong reactions from the audience. In the case of Martin's repertory this is usually Song 20 (see Figure 1) in which focus on mediating the relationship between the performers and spirits is dramatically expanded to draw in the audience. In Song 20, the text of which is set out below in Figure 11, two *burrunguma* spirits dressed as *agula* (trickster) spirits—a male (Mr Agula) and his wife (Mrs Agula)—appear on the dance ground in masks. Mr Agula dashes unpredictably at the crowd, provoking fear-tinged

<sup>30</sup> Coate and Elkin, *Ngarinjin—English Dictionary* 212.

<sup>31</sup> Treloyn, Songs that Pull 45–46.

<sup>32</sup> Treloyn Songs that Pull 54–55.

<sup>33</sup> Martin, personal communication, 8 Nov. 2001.

<sup>34</sup> See Treloyn, Songs that Pull, Chapter 3, for a detailed account of song subjects in Martin's *jadmi* repertory; see also Treloyn, 'Flesh with Country: Juxtaposition and Minimal Contrast in the Construction and Melodic Treatment of *jadmi* Song Texts,' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2 (2007): 90–99.

**Figure 10.** The deployment of themes

LB1997	
23 x2	Place
4 x2	Place
3 x2	Water
24 x2	Place
1 x2	Brolga
2 x2	Brolga
5 x2	Water
23 x2	Place
18 x2	Spirit
17 x2	Place
24 x2	Place
23 x2	Place

screams and hilarity from children. Mrs Agula, acted by a man dressed as woman, exhibits provocative mannerisms, such as lifting his skirt when he sits down. The overlaying of the man acting the role, who is recognised by audience, with the persona of an *agula*, dressed as a woman, likewise provokes strong reactions. The positioning of this song at the end of the performance brings the performance to a climactic conclusion, emphasising and intensifying the fact that *junba* performances bring living people into contact with the spirit world.

**Figure 11.** Song 20 ‘biyende /barij’

Song	Text-line A	Text-line B
20	<i>biyende jilaj wunmara</i> you carry that little one	<i>barij barni barij barni jundu wunmara</i> you get up, put im on your shoulder and carry im along

Song order in *junba* repertoires is therefore guided by a number of principles that are encoded with local beliefs that guide interactions between people (such as in the exogamous moiety-based social institutions of marriage, the determination of a child’s skin, and *Wurnan* exchanges between clans), and between people and their deceased relatives. The realisation of each of these principles in the LB1997 performance is set out in Figure 12.

### Song Order in Central Australia and the Western Desert

Some of the same principles that guide song order in *junba* can also be found in discussions of song order in repertoires from Central Australia and the Western Desert. Barwick, for example, as discussed, describes mate songs in the Warumungu *yawulyu Mungamunga* repertory, as well as the use of contrastive slow and fast tempos.<sup>35</sup> However, while in practice many Central

<sup>35</sup> Barwick, ‘Aesthetics and Experience’ 8–9. Barwick notes that slow songs are often followed by fast songs with thematically-related texts, however the ||: Slow + Fast :|| pattern appears to be a much more rigid pattern in *junba*.

**Figure 12.** Song order in performance by tempo, mate song pairs, song types and themes

LB1997			
	Tempo:   : Slow + Fast :	Song type:   : B :   + E + B +   : E :	Themes: place, water, broлга and spirits
23 x2	Slow	Galanbangarri	Place
4 x2	Fast	Birrina	Place
3 x2	Slow	Birrina	Water
24 x2	Fast	Birrina	Place
1 x2	Slow	Birrina	Brolga
2 x2	Fast	Birrina	Brolga
5 x2	Slow	Birrina	Water
23 x2	Slow	Galanbangarri	Place
18 x2	Fast	Enerrngarri	Spirit
17 x2	Slow	Galanbangarri	Place
24 x2	Fast	Birrina	Place
23 x2	Slow	Galanbangarri	Place
20 x3	Fast	Enerrngarri	Spirit

Mate song pair

Dance-song that emphasises person / spirit interaction

Australian and Western Desert repertoires exhibit flexible song order as in *junba*, performers often report that song order is or should be fixed. Richard Moyle for example, suggests that songs throughout the Western Desert region

are sung in a prescribed order. Informants were adamant that this order was never changed, and that if a particular song could not be remembered readily, songs previously sung would be repeated until the problem one was recalled, whereupon the series could continue.<sup>36</sup>

Statements that refer to a fixed ordering of songs are not surprising when we take into account the origin and function of many song repertoires in these regions. Throughout the Western Desert and Central Australia, song repertoires were created by Ancestral beings who created and named the landscape, and who today reside in its important features.<sup>37</sup> Songs are embedded with these important sentient places and the actions of the Ancestors that created them.<sup>38</sup> Repertoires of songs can record the entire foundational journeys undertaken by the Ancestral beings, site-by-site and action-by-action, forming complex

<sup>36</sup> Richard Moyle, *Songs of the Pintupi: Musical Life in a Central Australian Society* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1979) 9. Meggitt similarly explains that repertoires performed by Walpiri people 'should be sung in the temporal-geographical order laid down in the myth. If a song "breaks the line", the singers should start the cycle again' (Mervyn Meggitt, *Desert People. A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1962) 222).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Nancy Munn, *Walbiri Iconography: Graphic Representation and Cultural Symbolism in a Central Australian Society* (New York: Cornell UP, 1973) 131–32.

<sup>38</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971) 134.

sung maps.<sup>39</sup> When song repertoires are performed, performers can access some aspect of the power of the associated Creative being and this plays an important part in drawing individuals together with their community and the Ancestral creative forces that underpin their belief systems: as Barwick and Ellis explain, 'correct performance of an appropriate ceremony draws on the power of the Dreaming. Singing is a powerful act whose functions mediate between the individual, the group and the forces sustaining life.'<sup>40</sup>

While statements by performers that indicate fixed song order are common, researchers often report high levels of variability in actual practice. Munn, for example, notes that, while 'Walbiri men think of the songs as having an exact sequence, correlated with the sequence of sites,'<sup>41</sup> the 'sequence is not, however, carried out precisely in ceremonial [performances], and of course the sequence itself is always subject to the vagaries of individual memory.'<sup>42</sup> Payne similarly suggests that in the Musgrave Ranges region of Central Australia, 'the articulated item order for a Dreaming is *not* adhered to in the actual practice.'<sup>43</sup> In some repertoires it appears that there is no ideal narrative ordering of songs, such as in the Warumungu *yawulyu Mungamunga* repertory,<sup>44</sup> the *Akwelye* song series of the *awelye* genre performed by Kaytetye women discussed by Myfany Turpin,<sup>45</sup> and Warlpiri *yawulyu* described by Munn.<sup>46</sup> In all cases, clearly the purpose of the performance also plays a role in determining song selection and ordering.

While performances in Central Australia/Western Desert and the Kimberley both demonstrate a high level of song order variability, which is in both cases related to some extent to the memory of the performers, they differ in several significant ways, not the least of which is the fact that comments that point towards the idea of a fixed ordering of songs (made by performers and/or researchers) are far less common in the Kimberley than they are in the Desert. There are also a number of other important differences. Firstly, while the genesis of the Central Australian and Western Desert repertoires discussed above lies predominantly in the sites, identities and actions of Ancestral beings, the origin of songs in Kimberley repertoires is more closely associated with the creative acts of relatively contemporary agents—either the spirits of deceased relatives or (in the case of *nurlu*) other

<sup>39</sup> Linda Barwick and Allan Maret, 'Song Forms and Organisation,' *Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia*, ed. A. Scott-Maxwell and J. Whiteoak (Sydney: Currency House, 2003) 23; Catherine Ellis and Linda Barwick, 'Musical Syntax and the Problem of Meaning in a Central Australian Songline,' *Musicology Australia* 10 (1987): 41–57; Meggitt, *Desert People* 222; Munn, *Walpiri Iconography* 132.

<sup>40</sup> Ellis and Barwick, 'Musical Syntax' 41.

<sup>41</sup> Munn, *Walbiri Iconography* 132.

<sup>42</sup> Munn, *Walbiri Iconography* 132, fn. 7. Meggitt similarly notes that he 'did not hear one [line] sung twice in precisely the same order, and ... rarely saw the singers begin anew after an error' (Meggitt, *Desert People* 222).

<sup>43</sup> Helen Payne, 'Rites for Sites or Sites for Rites? The Dynamics of Women's Cultural Life in the Musgraves,' *Women, Rites and Sites: Aboriginal Women's Cultural Knowledge in South Australia*, ed. P. Brock (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 45.

<sup>44</sup> Linda Barwick, personal communication, 12 Oct. 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Myfany Turpin, *Form and Meaning of Akwelye: A Kaytetye Women's Song Series from Central Australia*, University of Sydney, PhD thesis, 2005, 57.

<sup>46</sup> For Warlpiri women's *yawulyu*, Munn found that there was no idealised ordering of songs, that women 'would sing them as they came to mind or as some reference in the narrative jogged their memories. There are no rules of sequence in terms of which songs can be ordered' (Munn, *Walbiri Iconography* 95).

song-giving spirit beings.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, while Central Australian and Western Desert song repertoires are frequently based on a geographical, often sequential, journey associated with a particular Ancestor, Kimberley repertoires typically comprise collections of often unrelated, non-sequential events that were shown to the composer in a series of dreams by the spirits of his or her deceased relatives. It therefore seems that there may be a correlation between Ancestral genesis, mappable, sequential journeys as the subject of songs, and a preference for fixed song order, on one hand, and a correlation between contemporary genesis, multiple, unrelated events as the subject of songs, shifting memory, and unfixed song order on the other.<sup>48</sup>

This conclusion however raises several important questions. First, if in Central Australia and the Western Desert fixed song order is notionally affixed to Ancestral journeys, and correct performance is vital to accessing the power associated with them, how is it that song order varies in many instances?<sup>49</sup> Do performances that break from the order set down by the Ancestral being (and, indeed, those that are not associated with any one journey or narrative and therefore have no fixed order) somehow fail to invoke the power described by Ellis and Barwick? The answer to this is clearly 'no,' because performers are able to vary song order by virtue of the fact that they have knowledge of the underlying Ancestral story and choose what aspects of it they wish to realise in any particular performance. In reference to variable song order in performances of *awulya* performed by Alyawarra women, Richard Moyle explains:

the participants are already familiar, to varying extents, with the details of the narrative, and the performance proper is a celebration of the individual events in it, only some of which may have a logical connection between them. The celebration of these events is, in a sense, flexible, in that if they wish, singers may return to any song, or prolong any song to allow participation by several of their number.<sup>50</sup>

Performers can repeat individual songs and vary song order to accommodate accompanying ritual action (such as painting, dancing and so on),<sup>51</sup> to teach people the text and rhythm of new

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<sup>47</sup> This is not to say that Central Australian and Western Desert repertoires are not passed to people via the intervention of spirit intermediaries, nor is it to say that Kimberley repertoires are not closely associated with the foundational acts and identities of Ancestral beings. Here I am simply invoking a distinction between 'history' songs (see Catherine Ellis, 'Aboriginal Music and Dance in Southern Australia,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980) 722) and songs that have a more contemporary origin, whether it be human or spirit.

<sup>48</sup> There are of course some exceptions to this, such as the second line in the *Bulu nurlu* repertory, which traces a journey yet has a contemporary origin (Keogh, *Nurlu Songs* 42), and the Kaytetye *Akwelye awelye* songs discussed by Turpin, and the Warumungu *Mungamunga yawulyu* discussed by Barwick, both of which, whilst given to women via spirit intermediaries, refer to events and activities associated with Ancestral beings.

<sup>49</sup> Note that I use the expression 'notionally affixed' to refer to this association between fixed order and Ancestral journeys, because it is very much a product of researchers' understandings of performers' comments. Performers' comments on the topic are, no doubt, based on ideas of sameness and difference that are often distinct from those of researchers.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Moyle, *Alyawarra Music: Songs and Society in a Central Australian Community* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986) 65.

<sup>51</sup> R. Moyle, *Alyawarra Music* 65; *Songs of the Pintupi* 46–47; *Balgo: The Musical Life of a Desert Community* (Nedlands, WA: Callaway International Resource Centre for Music Education, University of Western Australia, 1997) 43.

songs,<sup>52</sup> in response to the recent death of individuals who have close associations with an area of land referred to in the series,<sup>53</sup> and to accommodate the shifting memory of performers.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, by varying the order in which songs are performed, and indeed which songs are selected for performance, it may be that knowledgeable performers can foreground their authority and knowledge of the Ancestral genesis. T.G.H. Strehlow, for example, found that, because only part of a particular *Antokarinja* narrative was covered in an associated repertory of songs, an appropriate knowledgeable person was needed at performances to explain the importance of the ceremony to others.<sup>55</sup> That is, when songs are ordered with no logical narrative flow, the broader ensemble must be attentive to knowledgeable performers for elucidation of the underlying story, and, moreover, in relation to the practicalities of performance (that is, knowing what song to sing next), be attentive to the song leaders' song choices. In this way, as Barwick has explained in relation to the preference for irregularity in other aspects of performance practice, irregularities at one level of the musical system point towards regularities at other levels, and thus help maintain the musical form.<sup>56</sup> In this way we can say that variable song order, as much as a preference for a fixed order, references and maintains the underlying cultural source and power of the songs and plays a major role in the powerful act of singing that, as Ellis and Barwick explained, 'mediate[s] between the individual, the group and the forces sustaining life.'<sup>57</sup>

If variable song order in Central Australian and Western Desert repertories occurs in response to the underlying Ancestral origin of the songs, what guides variations to song order in repertories that have a more contemporary origin, such as *junba*, which generally come from the spirits of deceased relatives? Does song order still have a role in expressing important cultural principles? Does song order, particularly variable song order, in relatively recent *junba* repertories still serve as a tool to 'mediate between the individual, the group and the forces sustaining life' as in Central Australia and the Western Desert? The answer of course is 'yes.' While song order in *junba* demonstrates a very high level of variability, there are several underlying principles—tempo, mate song pairs, song types and themes—that guide the deployment of particular songs and dance-songs, and these are all inseparable from a background concern with the relationships between living people, spirits, the patterns and processes laid down by ancestors, and the country to which they are attached. In the conclusion to this article I will briefly argue that the importance of asking and answering this question extends beyond a purely academic quest to uncover principles that guide indigenous music and moves towards a broader politicised dialogue in the broader Australian community.

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<sup>52</sup> R. Moyle, *Songs of the Pintupi* 69.

<sup>53</sup> R. Moyle, *Balgo* 43.

<sup>54</sup> Munn, *Warlpiri Iconography* 131, fn. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia* 195. See also discussion of this finding by Strehlow by Turpin, *Form and Meaning of Akwelye* 56–57.

<sup>56</sup> Linda Barwick, 'Creative (ir)regularities: The Intermeshing of Text and Melody in Performance of Central Australian Song,' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (1989): 27. See also Catherine Ellis, 'Understanding the Profound Structural Knowledge of Central Australian Performers from the Perspective of T.G.H. Strehlow,' *Strehlow Research Centre Occasional Papers* 1, ed. D. Hugo (Alice Springs: Strehlow Research Centre Board, 1997) 60.

<sup>57</sup> Ellis and Barwick, 'Musical Syntax and the Problem of Meaning' 41.

## Conclusion

A thorough discussion of the broader significance of understanding the systems that underpin song order in these regions lies outside the scope of this article. Here I will, however, signal one issue that underpins the need for further research on the topic of song order and on other aspects of performance practice. In my view, due to the apparent association between the idea of fixed song order and Ancestral origin, and between unfixed song order and contemporary origin as well as shifting memory of songs, there is a contingent risk that a false opposition between Ancestral creative acts and contemporary creative acts is set up. Risk lies in the potential for such an opposition to minimise the cultural significance of current indigenous creative activity. In relation to anthropological constructions of indigenous sociality, Alan Rumsey notes that in his view there is a

potential problem with positing too big an asymmetry between these two aspects of existence [‘dreamtime’ and ‘everyday life’], in that it is too conducive to an anthropological objectification or reification of ‘the dreaming’ itself—one which has the politically unfortunate consequence of providing support for an equally sharp dichotomy between ‘traditional’ Aborigines, who have it, and non-traditional ones, who do not.<sup>58</sup>

There is no question that this false opposition plays a role in politicised attitudes to Indigenous Australian creative activity—indeed, the number of times I have been presented with comments along the lines of ‘but contemporary music isn’t as important as “traditional” music’ (read in the context of song order as ‘fixed order is a sign of strong traditions, with roots strongly in the “Dreamtime,” and unfixed order a sign of diluted contemporary traditions’) are uncountable. While discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this issue lie beyond the scope of this article, I hope to have shown that, in relation to song order in Central Australia and the Western Desert, and in the Kimberley, contemporary creative activity, the complex decisions made by composers and song leaders, and the principles that underpin them, are inscribed by and inscribe Ancestral activity with meaning, and demonstrate how performers actively use performance practice to, to use Ellis and Barwick’s words, ‘mediate between the individual, the group and the forces sustaining life.’<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Alan Rumsey, ‘The Dreaming, Human Agency and Inscriptive Practice,’ *Oceania* 65 (1994): 119.

<sup>59</sup> Ellis and Barwick, ‘Musical Syntax and the Problem of Meaning’ 41. See Rumsey, ‘The Dreaming’ for further discussion of inscriptive practice.