
Researchers, Musicians or Record Producers? Negotiating Roles and Responsibilities in Music Ethnography

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Ethnographic research has long been recognised as a field of personal entanglements. As Clifford Geertz eloquently summarised:

What the ethnographer is in fact faced with ... is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another ... which he must contrive somehow to grasp and then to render.¹

In music ethnography, such 'conceptual structures' range from the intellectual mediation of ethnomusicological theories and methods to the practical considerations of performance interaction. In some small communities, particularly in Oceania, performances provide a forum in which musicians, researchers, tourists, enthusiasts and collectors meet, collaborate and, occasionally, collide in a milieu of artistic and cultural negotiations. These encounters, whether positive or negative, often become a defining force in future encounters. Timothy J. Cooley refers to them as 'shadows' that are 'often ambiguous or liminal, inviting ethnomusicologists into a dialogue of multiple realities.'² The shadows of past researchers can be a significant determinant in successful music ethnography, and it is important for field researchers to acknowledge and negotiate them.

This article describes my own efforts to negotiate fieldwork 'shadows' on the remote Polynesian island of Rapanui (Easter Island), where my doctoral research involved the collection and analysis of sound recordings.³ Songs regarded as traditional—particularly those carrying direct references to ancient Rapanui culture—constitute a vital aspect of Rapanui's cultural

¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Hutchinson, 1975) 10.

² Timothy J. Cooley, 'Casting Shadows in the Field: An Introduction,' *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (New York: OUP, 1997) 3.

³ Spelt 'Rapanui' rather than 'Rapa Nui,' in concordance with Grant McCall, *Rapanui: Tradition and Survival on Easter Island*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994) 15.

heritage, and are therefore handled with care by their indigenous custodians. Many Rapanui performers have undertaken recording projects in the last fifty years, but these enterprises have not been received with universal approval from the island community. In the worst of cases, unscrupulous producers have released recordings of Rapanui music without the knowledge or consent of the performers. However, even where highly collaborative and consultative projects have been undertaken, recordings usually end up being released or housed off the island, out of reach of the Rapanui community.

The need to address these ethical issues became a guiding force in my research method, resulting in my adoption of an 'action research' model.⁴ By putting the concerns of the Rapanui music community at the centre of my research method, I was able to ensure the support of recording collaborators and I could achieve tangible local outcomes, including the establishment of a local music archive. Philip Hayward has termed this kind of community-focused research as 'culturally engaged research facilitation,' and he has argued that 'you get better, more detailed and more multiple input when your enterprise is being assisted (rather than merely tolerated) by a community.'⁵ This attitude is gaining currency in academia with the growth of undergraduate courses in applied anthropology and applied ethnomusicology, particularly in the United States of America.

Much music research in Oceania documents and salvages traditional musics that are perceived to be endangered by colonisation, commercialisation and globalisation. While this is an admirable research objective, it can have the effect of marginalising the very forms of music that are central to contemporary performance practices. Like many other Polynesian islands, Rapanui has experienced moments of crisis and change as a direct result of contact with outsiders. To discount these changes as unwelcome acculturation, however, would deprive Rapanui music history of some of its most culturally significant moments. The following discussion therefore has three aims. Firstly, it provides an example of socially responsible music research that places the researcher and the community under study in the same conceptual space, thereby facilitating mutually beneficial outcomes. Secondly, it illustrates the artistic borrowing inherent in music research by describing key episodes of musical exchange in post-contact Rapanui history. Finally, through a critical examination of these exchanges, it aims to reinforce the notion of researcher responsibility in fieldwork.

Researchers, Musicians or Record Producers?

The figure of the music 'researcher' wielding a microphone and privately going about the process of making recordings has come to be viewed somewhat suspiciously on Rapanui, largely because of the non-consultative recording practices of past music researchers (trained or untrained). A prominent Rapanui politician articulated this view clearly to me on one occasion:

Researchers? I prefer to call them 'raku raku' ['scratchers']. Raraku is the name of the

⁴ See Yoland Wadsworth, *Do it Yourself Social Research*, 2nd ed., (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997); Bob Dick, 'What is "Action Research"?' *Occasional Pieces in Action Research Methodology*, no. 2, 1997, <<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arm/op002.html>> (accessed 30 April 2005).

⁵ Phillip Hayward, 'Culturally Engaged Research and Facilitation,' unpublished paper presented to the Cultural Transformations Research Network, School of Language Literature and Performing Arts, University of Otago, 21 May 2004.

volcano where our ancestors scratched out the moai [statues] that they left for us, our inheritance. But these researchers, they scratch and scratch, finding what they want, and leave nothing behind.⁶

This statement recalls other expressions of dissatisfaction generated by the behaviour of Western producers in non-Western contexts.⁷ The matter has been discussed further in ethnomusicological literature by researchers who have undertaken commercial recording projects.⁸

Regardless of where fieldwork is undertaken, music researchers and collaborators usually have one thing in common—they are musicians. While their fields of musical expertise may vary, this shared identity provides firm ground in which mutually beneficial community developments can be undertaken. In light of this, Raymond Ammann called for music to be viewed as a living expression rather than a cultural artefact, and for researchers to take a more interactive stance in research:

I believe that the ethnomusicologist should no longer be an observer and a listener, trying to minimise his/her influence on the subject of study. In reality, the presence of a researcher has always had a certain influence on the community. I can imagine that the population in a village does not want to be coldly observed by an expressionless passive person, but prefers to interact with the researcher who is allowed to express his/her feelings, emotions, worries and laughter—in short, researchers are allowed to be themselves.⁹

My own PhD research on Rapanui between 2002 and 2004 examined the relationship between perceived traditional and contemporary music on the island, arguing for changes in the music culture to be viewed as a measure of continuity and adaptability, rather than loss or impoverishment.¹⁰ During my fieldwork, aspects of my musical background impacted upon the research process in unexpected ways. Two issues of identity perception initially impeded my musical participation on Rapanui. Firstly, I arrived on the island in the professional capacity of ‘researcher’—not ‘musician’—and my initial interactions with Rapanui musicians gave me the impression that I was expected to behave like an anthropologist or sociologist, rather than as an artist or performer. Secondly, as a non-guitarist, I found it difficult to convince some of the Rapanui musicians that I was a competent musician myself. Years of experience as a freelance trombonist in various contexts meant nothing on Rapanui, where this instrument has only ever been seen as occupying a perfunctory role in military band performances. While these

⁶ Pedro Edmunds Paoa, personal communication, 15 May 2003. Author’s translation.

⁷ Louise Meintjes, ‘Paul Simon’s *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning,’ *Ethnomusicology* 34.1 (1990): 37–73, and Steven Feld, ‘Pygmy POP: A Genealogy of Schizophonic Mimesis,’ *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996): 1–35.

⁸ Hugo Zemp, ‘The/ an ethnomusicologist and the record business,’ *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996): 36–56; Steven Feld and Denis Crowdy, ‘Papua New Guinean Music and the Politics of Sound Recording,’ *Perfect Beat* 5.4 (2002): 78–85.

⁹ Raymond Ammann, ‘Using Ethnomusicology to Assist in the Maintenance of *kastom*, with Special Reference to New Caledonia and Vanuatu,’ *Traditionalism and Modernity in the Music and Dance of Oceania: Essays in Honour of Barbara B. Smith*, ed. Helen Reeves Lawrence and Don Niles, Oceania Monograph 52 (Sydney: Oceania Publications, University of Sydney, 2001) 154.

¹⁰ Dan Bendrups, *Continuity in Adaptation: A History of Rapanui Music*, PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 2005.

issues were only temporary ones, they directed me towards participation opportunities in predominantly vocal music, and therefore Rapanui songs (rather than instrumental ensemble music) became the main focus of my analysis.

Socially Responsible Music Research

Since the 1970s, researchers in Oceania have called for their colleagues to demonstrate a better commitment to local concerns in Pacific island research. In 1975, Epeli Hau'ofa encouraged greater participation from local researchers in Pacific island anthropology. Mervyn McLean responded, imploring that the academic's responsibility was twofold: that their work pertained as much to the community being researched as to the academy.¹¹ Such observations are reinforced continually in anthropological literature. As John Perry has remarked more recently, 'The era in which a fieldworker simply decamped from a steamer, pitched a tent near "the natives" and unproblematically got on with filling notebooks is finished and, indeed, may never really have existed.'¹² This stereotype, which James Clifford has called the 'myth of fieldwork,' reveals its shortcomings in the inability to encompass a local perspective.¹³

In the musicological literature, Yoshihiko Tokumaru suggested that the solution to this problem was to engage in 'fieldback' with research participants.¹⁴ He coined fieldback as a term signifying the effort that a researcher can make in going back to the field specifically to gather feedback on research findings. Tokumaru saw fieldback as an essential stage in the research process, ideally undertaken before the publication of any findings. A particularly good example of successful fieldback is the second edition of Steve Feld's *Sound and Sentiment*, which includes a discussion of Kaluli responses to the first edition, giving the reader insight into issues of reception and cultural representation.¹⁵

Helen Reeves Lawrence articulated the importance of recognising and responding to local concerns with her article 'Guidelines for Researchers in the Pacific.'¹⁶ This text provided an example of the procedures that researchers could undertake in addressing and adhering to Pacific island protocols, using the procedural guidelines of the Cook Island Government for obtaining permission to undertake fieldwork as a case example.¹⁷ While Reeves Lawrence acknowledges that similar programs have yet to be implemented in many parts of Oceania, her reference to this document indicates what researchers should be aiming to achieve regardless of their obligations to protocol. Underpinning Reeves Lawrence's discussion is an acknowledgement that Pacific island musicians deserve the same respect and recognition that a Western musician would expect in musical collaboration.

While resources such as these provide ample suggestions for the aims that researchers

¹¹ Mervyn McLean, 'Approaches to Problems of Field Ethics in Oceania,' *Pacific Studies* 6.2 (1983): 5–9.

¹² John Perry, ed., 'Introduction,' *Doing Fieldwork: Eight Personal Accounts of Social Research*, 4th ed. (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002) 5–7.

¹³ James Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Authority,' *Representations* 2 (Spring 1983): 198.

¹⁴ Yoshihiko Tokumaru, 'On the Method of Comparison in Musicology,' *Asian Musics in an Asian Perspective*, ed. Fumio Koizumi, Yoshihiko Tokumaru and Osamu Yamaguchi (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977) 5–11.

¹⁵ Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Helen Reeves Lawrence, 'Guidelines for Researchers in the Pacific,' *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 21 (1989): 109–17.

¹⁷ Reeves Lawrence, 'Guidelines for Researchers' 111–12.

should take into the field, they provide less information on how outcomes are to be achieved. It is assumed that the researcher will learn cultural facilitation skills along the way as they gain sufficient knowledge of the community in which they are working. As the Society for Ethnomusicology's *Handbook for Field Research in Ethnomusicology* states, 'As a field researcher, you are the best qualified person to make ethical decisions ... you know the facts and the nuances of your field environment ... the social and political expectations.'¹⁸ While guiding principles on ethical behaviour are imparted through academic literature, the researcher is usually left to their own devices in the field.

In other disciplines, however, accountability and reciprocity are built into research method at a grass-roots level. Yoland Wadsworth, in her community development text *Do It Yourself Social Research* advocates a 'social action' research method in which the researcher aims to provide tangible and specific outcomes to the community being researched.¹⁹ Wadsworth identifies four conceptual parties to any research project: those who it is for; those who it is ultimately for; those who are the researchers; and those who are the researched.²⁰ Wadsworth indicates that the same person or group of people may occupy any or all of these positions. Similarly, from an educationalist perspective, Bob Dick defines action research as an approach that pursues 'action and research,' and consists of 'a cyclic process, alternating action with critical reflection.'²¹

While the vast majority of sociocultural research literature implores researchers to adopt a scientific stance that is as objective as possible, this does not necessarily preclude an ethnographer from taking 'action' in the field. As Susan Kenny suggests, the opposite is often the case: 'in community development, it is widely accepted that community activism and professionalism are compatible.'²² Kenny warns, however, that the role of the community development worker is one of facilitation rather than leadership: 'Community development workers facilitate rather than lead ... they are accountable to the community they are working with and for; and ... must ensure that members of the community speak for themselves in their own terms of reference.'²³ I would argue that a similar role applies to the socially responsible music researcher. As my own experiences illustrate, a research collaborator is rarely a passive participant in cultural developments, and may have a clearer perception of the music community's needs. Ethnomusicologists might have all the benefit of academic training, but ultimately their work rests on trusting ordinary people who happen to possess specialised musical knowledge.

Recently, some music researchers in Australia have pursued tangible outcomes for the music communities with whom they have worked. For example, the Department of Contemporary Music Studies (DCMS) at Macquarie University has established a production label, 'Coral Music,' which aims to facilitate recording opportunities for Pacific island musicians. Phil Hayward and Denis Crowdy were able to take advantage of this facility to make recordings

¹⁸ *Handbook for Field Research in Ethnomusicology* (Bloomington: Society for Ethnomusicology, 1994) 53.

¹⁹ Wadsworth, *Do it Yourself Social Research*.

²⁰ Wadsworth, *Do it Yourself Social Research* 17.

²¹ Dick, 'What is "Action Research"?'

²² Susan Kenny, *Developing Communities for the Future: Community Development in Australia*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Nelson ITP, 1999) 300.

²³ Kenny, *Developing Communities* 302.

for research collaborators they worked with on various Pacific islands.²⁴ Similarly, Linda Barwick's collaboration with women from the Warumungu community in central Australia led to a commercial production of *yawulyu* women's songs.²⁵ These initiatives involved indigenous performers in decision-making at various stages of the production process, and demonstrate an understanding that field researchers' behaviour often determines how the communities they seek to engage with will cooperate.²⁶ Susan Kenny, writing for a community development readership, reinforces this view: '[t]he authenticity of people's experiences and views form the basis of any [future] engagement.'²⁷

Case Study: The Rapanui Music Scene

Rapanui, like many other colonised Polynesian islands, possesses a hybridised contemporary music culture formed through a combination of local, regional, colonial and commercial influences. Songs that are held to be ancient or traditional, commercial, popular, Western, and global coexist in the local music scene, resulting in a unique blend of sounds and styles. Visitors to Rapanui are likely to encounter hints of Bob Marley or Creedence Clearwater Revival in popular Rapanui song, or remark at the similarity of Rapanui action dances to those of Tahiti and the Cook Islands.

Researchers such as Max Stanton have decried the apparent 'cultural impoverishment' inherent in such performances, which may appear, superficially, to be intended for the tourist trade.²⁸ However, Rapanui musicians are equally influenced by local performance traditions and community concerns in their music making, and rarely view tourists as the primary audience for their songs. The Rapanui community is the intended audience for most Rapanui music, and this results in performances that are imbued with local meanings that may not be immediately apparent to visitors.

Stanton's call for authenticity in performance evokes an ongoing debate in Pacific music studies. On the one hand, the perception of inauthenticity can lead to the denigration of contemporary island musics and the dismissal of modern performance practices as products of acculturation or cultural loss.²⁹ On the other hand, many scholars have critiqued the very notion of authenticity, observing that calls for cultural purity that reject post-contact changes in island musics often fail to accurately represent this music.³⁰ Studies that focus on traditional music or ancient practices can have the unintended effect of undermining or invalidating

²⁴ See, for example, George Toofie Christian, *Pilli Lornga N.I., Songs from Norfolk Island*, Coral Music, 2001, CD CM001.

²⁵ Linda Barwick, Jane Simpson and the Papulu Apparr-Kari Language and Culture Centre, *Yawulyu Mungamunga: Dreaming Songs of Warumungu Women, Tennant Creek, Central Australia*, Festival Records, 2000, CD D139686.

²⁶ Ammann, 'Using Ethnomusicology' 154.

²⁷ Kenny, *Developing Communities* 303.

²⁸ Max Stanton, 'Economics and Tourism Development on Easter Island,' *Pacific Island Tourism*, ed. David Harrison (New York: Cognizant Communication, 2003) 124.

²⁹ Christopher Tilley, 'Performing Culture in the Global Village,' *Critique of Anthropology* 17.1 (1997): 74–75.

³⁰ Allan Thomas, 'The Study of Acculturated Music in Oceania: "Cheap and Tawdry Borrowed Tunes"?' *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 90.2 (1981): 183–91; Margaret Jolly, 'Spectres of Inauthenticity,' *The Contemporary Pacific* 4.1 (Spring 1992): 49–72; Jane Freeman Moulin, 'What's Mine is Yours?: Cultural Borrowing in a Pacific Context,' *The Contemporary Pacific* 8.1 (1996): 128–53.

contemporary cultural practices, which may themselves be of primary significance to the performers, as Jane Freeman Moulin asserts:

Considering the length of accelerated contact in Polynesia and the substantial amount of external pressure brought to bear on indigenous music, people should stand in awe of its continuity, tenacity, and amazing adaptability instead of shaking their heads over loss or change.³¹

Recent music research in Oceania has moved towards a model where both traditional and contemporary musical influences are included, side-by-side, in cultural analysis.³² My own Rapanui music research is a further example of this trend.³³ However, the literature concerning Rapanui music concentrates on perceived traditional aspects of the island's performance culture.³⁴ A curious aspect of these writings, though, is the extent to which they acknowledge the perseverance and ingenuity of Rapanui musicians in adapting introduced music for local purposes.

Rapanui became a Chilean protectorate in 1888, after more than 150 years of contact with explorers and whalers in the Pacific. In the early twentieth century, Chilean customs, language and commercial goods permeated Rapanui. While outright Chilean colonisation of the island was impeded by distance (the island is more than 3000 kilometres from Chile) and perceptions of disease and inhospitable living conditions,³⁵ Chilean governing authorities and military personnel maintained a regular presence on Rapanui from the 1920s onwards. These authorities frequently became the instigators of cultural exchanges with the indigenous Rapanui population as the arrivals and departures of Chilean authorities were a direct conduit for Chilean goods. Between 1928 and 1931 at least two Vitrola (Victrola) gramophones were transported to Rapanui, and the selection of Chilean popular music that accompanied them became a fixture of the local music scene. Two of the most popular music genres in Chile at this time, Argentine tango and Mexican corrido, developed into new performance genres on Rapanui.³⁶ The Rapanui version of tango—*tango Rapanui*—became a permanent fixture of dance competitions on the island, and its very existence has mystified some commentators.³⁷

³¹ Freeman Moulin, 'What's Mine is Yours' 140.

³² Aaron Corn, *Dreamtime Wisdom, Modern-time Vision: Tradition and Innovation in the Popular Band Movement of Arnhem Land, Australia*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002; Kalissa Alexeyeff, *Dancing from the Heart: Movement, Gender and Sociality in the Cook Islands*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2003.

³³ Bendrups, *Continuity in Adaptation*.

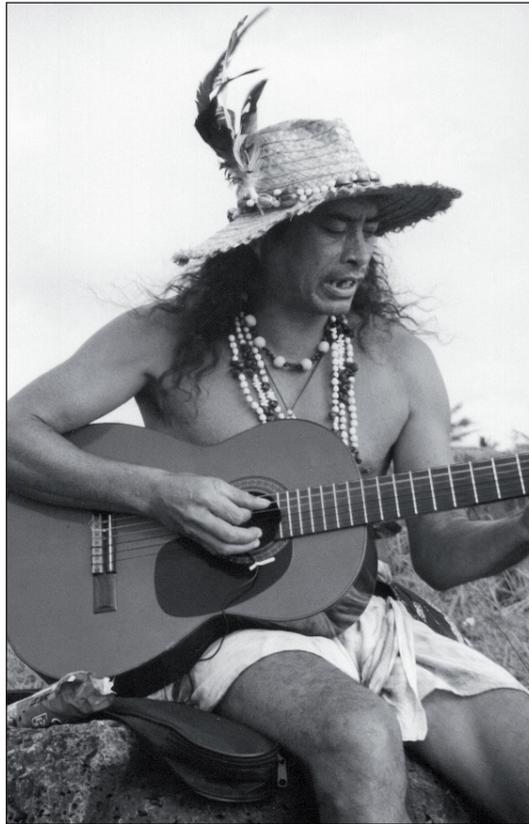
³⁴ Eugenio Pereira-Salas, 'La música de la Isla de Pascua,' *Revista Musical Chilena* 1.1 (1945); Ramón Campbell, *La Herencia Musical de Rapanui: etnomusicología de la Isla de Pascua* (Santiago: Editorial Andres Bello, 1971); Ramón Campbell, *Mito y Realidad de Rapanui*, 2nd ed., (Santiago: Editorial Andres Bello, 1987); Ramón Campbell, 'Etnomusicología de la Isla de Pascua,' *Revista Musical Chilena* 42.170 (1988): 5–47; Margot Loyola, 'Mis vivencias en Isla de Pasuca,' *Revista Musical Chilena* 42.170 (1988): 48–86; Adrienne Kaeppler and Juan-Pablo González, 'Rapa Nui,' *The Garland Encyclopaedia of World Music*, vol. 9, *Australia and the Pacific Islands*, ed. Adrienne Kaeppler and Jacob Love (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998); and Mervyn McLean, *Weavers of Song: Polynesian Music and Dance* (Auckland: Auckland UP, 1999).

³⁵ J. Douglas Porteous, *The Modernization of Easter Island*, Western Geographical Series, vol. 19 (Victoria, BC: Department of Geography, University of Victoria, 1981) 47–49.

³⁶ Juan-Pablo González and Claudio Rolle, *Historia Social de la Música Popular en Chile 1890–1950* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005).

³⁷ See Ad Linkels, 'Polynesia: The Real Music of Paradise,' *World Music: The Rough Guide*, ed. Simon Broughton and Mark Ellingham (London: Rough Guides Ltd, 2000) 223.

Figure 1. Rano ‘Gato’ Tepano, demonstrating Rapanui ‘tango style’ guitar. Photo: Dan Bendrups.



This dance is accompanied by a distinctive plucked guitar style (known by Rapanui guitarists as ‘tango style’) based on rhythmic and harmonic approximations of the arpeggiated accompaniments of early recordings of tango, and this style has been passed through oral tradition into the twenty-first century.

In 1938, the Chilean governor of Rapanui, Dr Alvaro Tejada-Lawrence, organised a festival featuring traditional Rapanui music to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Chilean annexation. In contrast to the prevalent local adaptations of Chilean popular musics, this occasion demonstrated to Rapanui musicians that their own music was of interest to outsiders. Early in 1938, community elders convened to select a series of traditional songs for the festival including ancient chants (*patautau*), rhymes accompanying string figures (*kai kai*), declaratory songs (*ute*), emotive songs (*riu tangi*), thanksgiving songs (*riu hakakio*) and other songs.³⁸ The songs performed in 1938 continue to underpin Rapanui performances in local and international festivals in the twenty-first century.

Between 1966 and 1969, a cohort of the United States Air Force was stationed on Rapanui, and the popular music they introduced to Rapanui was rapidly adapted into local performances. The troops’ arrival resulted in the establishment of bars and restaurants, which became

³⁸ Comprehensive descriptions of these styles are provided in Campbell, *La Herencia Musical de Rapanui*.

important venues for live music performance, particularly after the establishment of regular commercial passenger flights to Rapanui in the early 1970s. For young Rapanui musicians who matured in the 1970s, the ability to approximate rock music and country music was a powerful symbol of their willingness to engage with the outsiders, who were increasing in numbers on the island. Unlike traditional songs, and unlike adaptations of Chilean music, rock constituted a shared language for the Rapanui and many of their English-speaking visitors. Rock dominated the island's two discos, and in the public performances of individual musicians such as Zopy and Rano (see Figure 1).

The Rapanui musicians who were at the forefront of the rock movement now constitute the majority of today's cultural leaders on the island and their preference for rock-oriented sounds has contributed significantly to modern compositions. One twenty-first century Rapanui ensemble, Topatangi, recently used rock as a medium for conveying social messages. After an outbreak of Dengue fever on Rapanui in 2002, Topatangi composed the song *Nao nao* ('Mosquito') to encourage Rapanui residents to destroy mosquito-breeding places (stagnant water) around their homes (See Figure 2). Other high-profile ensembles such as Matato'a and Varua seek to combine traditional and modern influences in the rock medium, aiming to attract contemporary youth audiences to aspects of traditional Rapanui culture.

Figure 2. Text of Topatangi's *Nao nao* (2002) in Rapanui language, with English translation.

<i>Ina he vai ha'aputu</i>	No stagnant water (means)
<i>Ina he nao nao</i>	No nao nao
<i>Ina he nao nao</i>	No nao nao means
<i>Ina he dengue</i>	No Dengue (fever)
<i>Te nao nao e</i>	The nao nao
<i>Nao nao tore tore</i>	The one with the little stripes
<i>Patia mai</i>	When he bites
<i>Ahu ahui tatou e</i>	It swells, it swells us all
<i>He rapu te kara</i>	He flaps his wings
<i>Ana rere ana oho</i>	And flies around
<i>Kimi kimi ana</i>	When looking
<i>I te poko poko</i>	For vessels (of stagnant water)
<i>Ina ko ha'a putu</i>	Don't leave standing
<i>Te vai i te hare</i>	Water around the house
<i>O punua ro</i>	Stop the breeding
<i>Te nao nao e</i>	Of the nao nao
<i>O tu'u ro mai</i>	Lets turn back
<i>Te mauuii</i>	This illness
<i>Tatou motu</i>	From our island
<i>Nehe nehe e</i>	So beautiful

To most Rapanui musicians, there is no question that traditional music practices have changed significantly over the course of the twentieth century through increased contact with the outside world. These changes are rarely viewed as evidence of cultural impoverishment, however. Introduced instruments such as guitar, ukulele and accordion are now indispensable to Rapanui performance culture, and other adaptations from international popular music are also viewed as opportunities for cultural enrichment. Most importantly, music continues to provide a means of communication: for interacting with outsiders as well as for conveying messages within the Rapanui community.

Music as a Medium for Cultural Exchange on Rapanui

Unlike any other art form, music provides a medium in which people from diverse social, cultural, political and economic backgrounds can find common ground. On Rapanui, the adaptation and use of the guitar in both traditional and non-traditional local music is a pertinent example. The guitar, which is central to Chilean and Tahitian musics, occupies a pivotal position in Rapanui culture, and it provides a practical conduit for musical exchange between these places. Furthermore, the guitar is a common instrument of choice for travellers to Rapanui, and guitar-carrying tourists are often incorporated into local performances, particularly in the annual Tapati Rapa Nui (Rapa Nui Week) cultural festival. Some of the first Rapanui islanders to visit Chile in the 1940s endeared themselves to the Valparaíso port community through guitar-based performances on radio, even though the instrument had only become widespread on Rapanui after 1939.

Through music, Rapanui performers have gradually established a niche for themselves in mainstream Chilean culture. Rapanui popular songs, particularly *Sausau* and *Opaopa*, have been included in Chilean *folklore* (folk) music since the 1950s, largely thanks to the pioneering efforts of Chilean folklorist Margot Loyola, who was the first outsider to seek to engage on a musical level with the Rapanui people. Her relationship with Rapanui music began through interactions with islanders who had been sent to Chile for medical treatment in the mid-1950s. This led to a field trip in 1961 where Loyola gained passage to Rapanui on a Chilean navy vessel, remaining there for two weeks.³⁹ In this short period of time, Loyola recorded a variety of what she perceived as ‘folk’ songs, but more importantly, learned to sing many more, with Rapanui style guitar accompaniments, such as *tango Rapanui*.

Loyola’s Rapanui fieldwork was sponsored by the Chilean Ministry of Education and her field recordings are deposited at the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, where a Margot Loyola Archive has recently been established. The field recordings in this archive, including those obtained on Rapanui, were used throughout the 1960s and 1970s as the basis for primary and secondary school folklore curriculum in Chile. A prominent Chilean musician in the Melbourne migrant community, Alex Vargas, recalls learning Rapanui songs in this context:

What we know about Rapanui music is based on this: every kid in Chile, at one time or another, comes across a particular Rapanui song in an end of year primary school show. The kids are encouraged to dress up and dance in a style which is supposedly drawn from Rapanui culture. No historical or musicological references are made to this performance item, nothing to say ‘this is why we do this.’

The Easter Island songs are included in the school performances because they are different and interesting. Also, the way they are taught makes them easy to dance (for young children)—all you’ve got to do is swing your hips. There’s no directive in regards to choreography either. You move to the left, you move to the right, and that’s about it ... Even today, friends in Chile send me pictures of their kids dressed up as if to perform Rapanui songs. Every kid does it at one time or another.⁴⁰

Subsequent to her fieldwork experiences, Margot Loyola became a self-appointed representative of Rapanui music, performing in Chile and internationally throughout the 1960s

³⁹ This is described in Margot Loyola, ‘Mis vivencias en Isla de Pasuca.’

⁴⁰ Personal communication, 14 December 2001.

and 1970s. While she is not Rapanui, her performances have attracted little criticism from Rapanui musicians for two main reasons. Firstly, her Rapanui repertoire was directly taught to her by Rapanui community elders, and secondly, in her interactions with Rapanui musicians, she has demonstrated herself to be an accurate and adept performer, paying special attention to the correct pronunciation of song texts. Loyola has continuously sought to undertake collaborative projects with Rapanui musicians—a practice that resulted in one of the first commercial recordings of Rapanui music in 1967—and her collaborative approach to music research reinforced the Rapanui conceptualisation of music as a practical tool for cultural exchange.

Loyola's interest in Rapanui music presaged other Chilean musicologists including Jorge Urrutia Blondel and Ramón Campbell.⁴¹ Urrutia Blondel departed for Rapanui in 1958 with the intention of studying 'only the actually surviving Pascuan music, based on the solid ground of that which can be seen and heard directly and in person.'⁴² His fieldwork account was published with the title 'Report of a musician on Rapanui,' sending a clear message that his method would reflect a personal immersion in Rapanui music culture.

Urrutia Blondel suggested that Rapanui music sounded 'different' to Chilean *folklore* primarily because of the Rapanui language, which has its own internal melodic characteristics, and that even well-known Chilean tunes could be rendered almost unrecognisable by virtue of the sound of the language.⁴³ He also observed that 'borrowing' of songs appeared to be part of an ancient custom on the island.⁴⁴ Urrutia Blondel further indicated that the sources from which Rapanui musicians were able to 'borrow' were many and varied, ranging from Chilean songs, to church hymns, and European folk songs left behind by marooned sailors during World War I. He recorded various examples of indigenised *volkslieder* to illustrate this point.⁴⁵

Ramón Campbell's PhD research into Rapanui music (published in 1971) is still regarded as a seminal work, and while his 1965–66 fieldwork findings are somewhat dated, his success in documenting over 160 songs is still viewed positively by many Rapanui musicians.⁴⁶ Like Loyola, Campbell sought to engage with Rapanui music in practical ways. He transported a piano to the island in 1965 and used it to provide harmonic accompaniment to his transcriptions. Campbell's association with Rapanui music continued through three decades, and his field recordings became the core material for a series of radio broadcasts in Chile.

In a curious reversal of the cultural flow between Chile and Rapanui, Campbell adapted a series of prominent Rapanui songs from the 1938 festival repertoire, mentioned earlier, into an orchestral score entitled *Sinfonía Hotu Matua* (or 'Hotu Matua Symphony,' bearing the name of the founding king of Rapanui). This symphony was performed by the orchestra of the University of Chile and recorded for Campbell's radio show in the 1970s, but was never published. It comprises arrangements of the melodies of Rapanui songs that are most frequently performed for Chilean audiences, as well as the incorporation of Rapanui musical instruments, such as the *kauaha* (horse-jaw rattle), into the orchestral context (see Figure 3).

⁴¹ Jorge Urrutia Blondel, 'Reportaje de un músico a Rapa-Nui,' *Revista Musical Chilena* 12.60 (1958) 5–47; Campbell, *La Herencia Musical de Rapanui*.

⁴² Blondel, 'Reportaje de un músico a Rapa-Nui' 29.

⁴³ Blondel, 'Reportaje de un músico a Rapa-Nui' 29.

⁴⁴ Blondel, 'Reportaje de un músico a Rapa-Nui' 30.

⁴⁵ Blondel, 'Reportaje de un músico a Rapa-Nui' 33.

⁴⁶ Campbell, *La Herencia Musical de Rapanui*.

Figure 3. Score excerpt from *Sinfonía Hotu Matu'a*, showing the scoring for *kauhaha*. Unpublished manuscript by Ramón Campbell, CAMPRA 622, Centro de Documentación de la Música Chilena, Universidad de Chile. Used with kind permission.

The image shows a page of a musical score for a symphony orchestra. The tempo is marked 'SCHERZANDO' and the time signature is 1/2. The score is numbered 50. The instruments listed are TRP (Trumpets), TRB (Trombones), TUBA (Tuba), TRG (Trombones), PIRTE (Percussion), TAMB (Tambourines), KAUHHA (Kauhaha), and C. C. (C. C.). The Kauhaha part is the focus of the figure, showing a rhythmic pattern with a wavy line above the notes. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

This score is one of the first examples of Rapanui music entering a cultural arena completely outside the control of Rapanui musicians. From a critical revisionist perspective, it could be viewed as a misappropriation of Rapanui musical culture, perpetrated by a non-Rapanui composer for a non-Rapanui audience. However, Campbell seems to have had the exaltation of Rapanui music at heart, as his symphony brought Rapanui 'folk' songs into a context where they mingled with the most highly respected art music performed in Chile. After years living on Rapanui and working with Rapanui music, Campbell clearly developed a sense of ownership over the songs he transcribed and recorded. Some Rapanui musicians assert that many traditional songs would have been lost were it not for Campbell's extensive collection, and his own experimentation with this material was, therefore, met with a certain degree of forbearance.

The special profile of Rapanui as a tourist destination attracts many international public figures. Unlike most other Pacific islanders, Rapanui musicians have had privileged access to the internationally famous musicians who have visited their island. Some well remembered examples from the 1970s include John Denver (who piloted his own way there) and Julio Iglesias, who collaborated in a recording with a local children's choir. More recently, Axl Rose donated a pair of running shoes to a Rapanui musician whom he saw performing. Because of its small population (fewer than 4500 people), Rapanui is a difficult place to stay inconspicuous, and local musicians have often found themselves approached by visiting musicians in performance situations. The collective experience of Rapanui musicians rubbing shoulders with international icons of popular culture, together with the attention they have received from music researchers, has had the effect of reinforcing their own sense of artistic worth.

Commercial Productions of Rapanui Music

After 1970, when regular flights between Tahiti, Rapanui and Chile were established, Rapanui musical culture began to attract the attention of private commercial music producers, mostly working independently of large studios. Some musicologists affiliated to professional institutions, such as Hikaru Koide, participated in the collection of Rapanui music for commercial release.⁴⁷ Other producers sought to capitalise on the growth of the 'world music' market as described by Bohlman and Frith.⁴⁸ Producers were often well received on Rapanui, gaining the trust of local musicians and obtaining field recordings of their songs and performances with little difficulty. In due course, the recordings they produced surfaced in the commercial world music market internationally. LP and CD notes printed in English, Spanish, French, German and Italian all claim to represent the 'traditional' music of Easter Island, with some of the most recent examples emanating from independent production houses in Tahiti and Vanuatu in the late 1990s.

Unfortunately, most of these recordings have been produced with little regard for the input of the Rapanui musicians who feature on them. Only once has a producer of Rapanui music sought to return proceeds from his record sales to the musicians involved, but in other cases, Rapanui musicians have unknowingly featured on externally produced recordings. In one example, a prominent Rapanui musician only became aware that his voice featured on a commercial recording produced in Tahiti when he saw the CD for sale in a souvenir shop on his own island. This particular recording was accompanied by liner notes proclaiming that the greatness of Polynesian culture was 'To Meet And To Share.'⁴⁹ The producer clearly failed to adhere to this principle in his own sharing of information with the Rapanui musicians he recorded. Another prominent independent producer of Rapanui music recently decided to overdub the voice of an elderly Rapanui musician onto a rock-inspired song that plays automatically on entry to his website, again without the knowledge or permission of the performer concerned.⁵⁰

While some Rapanui musicians take the pragmatic view that any recording produced externally assists in promoting international interest in Rapanui culture, others have become preoccupied with the need to protect their ownership of Rapanui music through copyright law. In 2002, a large group of Rapanui musicians began to rally in an effort to register their authorship of songs with Rapanui titles in Chile. Under the title *Mana Tupuna* (Ancestral Power), this musicians' union was involved in the production of a compilation CD by Rapanui musicians, *Rapa Nui Compilation 1970–2002* (2002), and has also begun negotiations with recording industry representatives in Chile in regard to Rapanui-directed marketing of Rapanui music produced for the world market.

Two independent recording studios have been established on Rapanui since 2002, further

⁴⁷ Hikaru Koide, *Music of Polynesia III: Easter Island, Marquesas Islands*, JVC, 1994, CD.

⁴⁸ Philip Bohlman, *World Music: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: OUP, 2002); Simon Frith, 'The Discourse of World Music,' *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: U of California Press, 2000) 305–22.

⁴⁹ Francois Le Calvez, 'Two CDs to discover the music of Easter Island,' <<http://www.easterislandmoai.com/Magiccd.html>> (accessed 11 September 2001).

⁵⁰ Jörg Hertel's website can be found at <<http://www.joerghertel.de/Erahmen.html>> (accessed 11 September 2001).

supporting local recording initiatives. With these studios, Rapanui musicians wishing to record no longer need to travel to Chile. By the end of 2003, Nuku te Mango recording studios had completed an experiment in recreating wooden figure puppet shows, and Mana Tupuna was planning a second compilation CD. In 2004, the music and dance ensemble Kari Kari constructed an enclosed rehearsal house, which also served as a venue for dance workshops for school children. Later that year, a Rapanui-based Chilean music teacher succeeded in gaining Chilean government funding to establish a youth string orchestra on Rapanui.

Establishing an Action Research Project

In light of these grassroots initiatives, I initially found it difficult to justify my own recording aims to some of my research collaborators. When compared to local studios and locally produced song compilations, what possible point could there be in re-recording songs with another outsider researcher? I found a practical answer to this question through a process of community consultation.

My efforts to demonstrate social responsibility resemble experiences that are common to ethnomusicologists and other field researchers. I contributed my labour to festival preparations and concerts, child-minding, tilling and planting. I also gave advice on audio technology matters and assisted with funding applications and translation. With the support of Macquarie University, PARADISEC (the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures), and the Chilean indigenous funding body CONADI (Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena [National Corporation of Indigenous Development]), I facilitated a cultural exchange for a Rapanui musician to visit Sydney in order to deposit culturally significant recordings of Rapanui music at PARADISEC, and to participate in a series of digital audio editing workshops at the DCMS. Between 2002 and 2004, as a further demonstration of research reciprocity, I dedicated research time and funding towards sourcing, obtaining and repatriating copies of field recordings undertaken on Rapanui but held internationally.

In pursuing a research method that would result in tangible local outcomes, I redefined my method according to Wadsworth's 'conceptual parties' and sought to include Rapanui musicians as ultimate beneficiaries of the research. The first step in this process involved widespread consultation with Rapanui musicians, asking specifically what local outcomes an ethnomusicological research topic such as my own might achieve. While responses varied, a common factor was the assertion that any recorded material should remain behind on Rapanui, if only as a reference source for future generations. In answer to this, between 2002 and 2004 I worked towards combining my own field recordings, those I recovered from overseas, and the private collections of Rapanui musicians, into a local music archive. This facility was established in late 2004 as the Depósito de Música Rapanui [Rapanui Music Deposit], or DMR, housed at the Biblioteca William Mulloy [William Mulloy Library] of the Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastian Englert [Father Sebastian Englert Anthropological Museum] on Rapanui.⁵¹

As a community-based facility, the DMR provides a permanent location for the ongoing repatriation of recordings of Rapanui music. In the future, researchers (and others) who

⁵¹ For further details see Dan Bendrups, 'Returning Borrowed Goods: The Motive for Establishing a Rapanui Music Archive,' *Refereed Papers from the First International Small Island Cultures Conference*, ed. Mike Evans (Sydney: SICRI, 2005) 2–13.

undertake field recordings on Rapanui can be informed of the DMR's function and invited to contribute their recordings directly. Likewise, Rapanui musicians and ensembles that undertake their own recording projects can view the DMR as a repository for their creative output, and contribute to the community's understanding of Rapanui music culture by donating copies of their own recordings to the archive. As a research initiative, the DMR provided me with a means of justifying my Rapanui music research to Rapanui musicians on the one hand, and owners/producers of Rapanui recordings on the other. By obtaining and repatriating recordings held off the island, I was able to demonstrate a commitment to local concerns, and thereby gain the trust, collaboration and approval of numerous Rapanui musicians. Extensive fieldback was a key component of this process, and the successful outcomes provide able justification for the adoption of an action research model in music ethnography.

Conclusion

The history of contact between Rapanui musicians and outsiders clearly demonstrates the degree to which external influences can be internalised in a music culture, regardless of the original intent or motivation of either party. This can be seen in stylistic influences, such as the continuing vitality of *tango Rapanui*, or in social behaviour, as in the local reception of foreign researchers. The points of contact discussed in this article illustrate the need for music researchers to examine their social responsibility towards the communities they study, taking ethical, interpersonal, relational and developmental factors into account.

Whether conducted by highly trained ethnographers or untrained enthusiasts, music research involving cross-cultural ethnographic methods can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for researchers and research collaborators. In my own research, this was achieved through the re-conceptualisation of research collaborators as end users of the research product, thereby recognising the active nature of their collaboration. They became collaborators in more than just name, and their efforts can be appreciated by current and future users of the DMR archive.

The basic model for this approach was drawn from action research literature, but this should not be construed as a deficiency in ethnomusicological theory. As Anthony Seeger once noted, the true strength of ethnomusicology lies in its ability to incorporate ideas from other disciplines, gaining strength from a plurality of approaches.⁵² The acknowledgement of the ethnomusicologist's role as a potential facilitator of action research projects constitutes a powerful indicator of the discipline's continued relevance and vitality in the twenty first century.

⁵² Anthony Seeger 'Ethnography of Music,' *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, ed. Helen Myers (New York & London: Macmillan, 1992) 107.