

ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance of Oceania

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Beginnings

The origin of the Study Group on Music and Dance of Oceania is closely linked to the first ICTM world conference held in the Pacific.¹ In 1977, the 24th conference of the (then) International Folk Music Council took place in Honolulu, and an excursion to the Polynesian Cultural Center “prompted discussion about commercialization of culture which led to interest in forming a study group focusing on Oceania” (Trimillos 2017:9).² After a signup sheet confirmed members’ interest, Ricardo Trimillos, the chair of the conference programme committee, prepared a proposal for the new group. At that time, no ICTM study groups focussed on a geographical or cultural region, making the Oceania group the first to propose such an association. Together with its approval in 1979, Trimillos was appointed acting chair to organize what is now called the Study Group on Music and Dance of Oceania.³

The event that Trimillos called the “historical moment” in the organization of the study group (hereafter SG) took place later on 10 August 1983, during the Council’s 27th World Conference in New York. He and eleven persons who had done research on music of Oceania gathered informally to consider how to energize its future development. Dieter Christensen, secretary general of the Council, spoke first about the Council’s desire to become more broadly international and how this study group devoted to all the music and dance of

a whole region far from that of the Council’s birthplace in Europe could further that through what he called the recent “quickenings” of activity in Oceania. As evidence of this, he spoke of the work of Alice Moyle in Australia and of the people interested in western Polynesia (five of whom were present). Other recent activities discussed included:

1. the 1976 UNESCO workshop held in the Solomon Islands on the Techniques of Recording Oral Tradition, Music, Dance, and Material Culture for Indigenous Melanesians;
2. the 1982 Conference for Ethnomusicologists at Goroka Teachers College in Papua New Guinea, the first such conference held in the Pacific which brought together scholars from Papua New Guinea (four of whom were indigenous islanders who later joined ICTM and the SG) and five other countries;
3. the July 1983 planning meeting for the Territorial Survey of Oceanic Music, a research project of UNESCO in association with the Archive of Māori and Pacific Music at the University of Auckland, to be directed by Mervyn McLean. (Smith 1984)

In spite of her uncertainty about how best to proceed, on the insistence of those present, Barbara Smith agreed to serve as its chair.

Oceania embraces Australia and the Pacific Islands (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia), with physical geography ranging from the world’s smallest continent, the world’s second largest island (with rugged mountainous terrain, divided between Papua New Guinea in the east and Indonesia in the west), and tens of thousands of islands. The contrasting types of islands in Oceania include large, high mountains of volcanic origin, uplifted coral platforms, and coral atolls that scarcely rise above sea level. This variation in geography entails different resources for human subsistence and, therefore, different sociocultural practices, including a multiplicity of languages and distinctive performing arts. By the late twentieth century, Oceania included peoples with centuries of global interactions and others still in virtual isolation, as well as great differences in the

1 The authors thank Adrienne Kaeppler and Don Niles for their suggestions on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2 For information about the 1977 Honolulu conference, see *BIFMC* 50 (Apr 1977:6–10).

3 The initial designation was the “Study Group on Music of Oceania,” but subsequently the names “Study Group on Oceania,” “Study Group on Musics of Oceania,” and, on occasion, “Oceania Study Group,” were also used. By 2007 the ICTM Board approved the current name: “Study Group on Music and Dance of Oceania.” Seven chairs have led the study group since its founding: Ricardo Trimillos (1979–1983), Barbara Smith (1983–2001), Stephen Wild (2001–2005), Raymond Ammann (2005–2009), Denis Crowdy (2009–2013), Kirsty Gillespie (2013–2015), and Brian Diettrich (2015–2021). For an abbreviated listing of the study group’s activities since its founding, see Niles and Smith (2014).

proportion of indigenous inhabitants to settlers and of intermarriage among them.

Because of the few, slow, and costly means of communication at the time, compounded by the limited routes, infrequent schedules, expense and time involved in long-distance travel, it was obvious that it would be difficult to get enough SG members together frequently enough for symposia or other organized meetings to produce scholarly publications such as those of the previously established study groups. The history of the Oceania SG through 2001 can therefore be summarized as a series of informal gatherings at the Council's biennial world conferences, at multiple annual meetings of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), and at the quadrennial iterations of the Festival of Pacific Arts, interspersed with formally organized symposia and other activities, some of which contributed to what Christensen hoped would benefit the internationalization of ICTM.

Events within and beyond Oceania, 1988–2001

The study group's first symposium was hosted by Deakin University, in Geelong, Australia, 3–5 September 1988. It closely followed three events of relevant interest in that country's bicentennial year. The first of these was ICTM's 8th colloquium, "Documentation of music and dance in the South Pacific and its use in the living tradition," held 9–13 August in Townsville.⁴ The second was the 5th Festival of Pacific Arts, held 14–24 August also in Townsville, and with the theme "Cultural interchange." The third was the symposium of the International Musicological Society and Festival of Music (SIMS88) held in Melbourne, 28 August – 2 September, for which the SG was asked to arrange a session that would combine two of SIMS88 themes. The result was: "Intercultural contact through music and dance since 1960 in Melanesia and Polynesia—Among those areas and with other areas of the world."⁵ The SG's first symposium in Geelong was organized by Gerald Florian Messner with the theme "The transmission of culture in and/or through the performing arts." Six papers and two videos were presented and discussed by twenty SG members (half of its then total membership) from eight countries in a relaxed and friendly way that led to a desire for future symposia.

When it was announced that ICTM's 31st World Conference would be held in Hong Kong, 3–9 July

1991, a locale much closer than Europe to Oceania, Smith immediately explored the possibility of holding a symposium there. Although that proved impossible, the Hong Kong conference became a high point in the SG's history. Contributions included a session on music and dance in Oceania, another on Christian hymnody in Oceania, and a panel organized by the SG, "The Chinese and their musics in Oceania." The latter drew so much interest that Smith was invited to present a report on it to the immediately following international symposium organized by the Chinese Musicians' Society in Guangzhou, and to Dieter Christensen, who later wrote that "the strong horizon-expanding interest that our ICTM study group on Oceania evoked among Chinese Scholars with its exploratory work on Chinese influences in the Pacific ... [is] to me among the many highlights of the Hong Kong Conference" (D. Christensen 1991:18). The Association for Chinese Music Research considered it important enough for its American membership to get permission to publish the papers of the entire panel (Smith 1992). This became the SG's first publication.

Of the two world conferences held in Berlin around this time period, at the first in what was then East Berlin and organized in 1987, Artur Simon offered a two-day symposium hosted by the Museum für Völkerkunde. But with too few papers relevant to its chosen topic of historical sources of Pacific Islands music, it was changed into an informal tour of the musical instruments in its South Seas department. For the second world conference there in 1993 in the by-then reunified city, no institution offered to host a SG symposium. However, its members presented an important session in that world conference, "Music and dance in a changing world," with most examples from Oceania that challenged the Eurocentrism of one of its themes, "Music and dance in a changing Europe."

The SG's second symposium took place in Canberra, 12–13 January 1995. It followed the 33rd ICTM World Conference held in that city. The SG was represented by a panel proposed and chaired by Amy Stillman called "Oceanic music and dance in expatriate and relocated communities" that contributed to the conference's third theme: "Music, dance and migration." The Canberra symposium with the theme "Indigenous performance and music" was arranged by Grace Koch, the first day at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and the second day at the National Library of Australia. Both days began with host-country speakers directly involved with Indigenous performance and media, followed by afternoon tours of holdings of relevant materials. Papers by SG members were devoted to early recordings and aspects of media.

4 Organized by Alice Moyle, almost all of the participants were members of the SG (A. Moyle 1992).

5 The SG participants in SIMS88 were Adrienne Kaeppler, Don Niles, Chris Saumaiwai, Amy Stillman, and Filip Lamasis Yayii.



Figure 1. Don Niles, Barbara Smith, and Helen Reeves Lawrence (Helen Fairweather) celebrate the publication of the SG's second publication, a Festschrift for Barbara Smith, at AIATSIS in Canberra, Australia, in September 2001 (photo courtesy of Don Niles).

The third symposium was held on 26 August 1999 in Hiroshima, following the Council's 35th World Conference in that city, well known for its post-Pacific War emphasis on peace. In a plenary session chaired by Don Niles on its fifth theme, "Music and peace," Stephen Wild's paper "Music, dance, and reconciliation in Australia" was a notable contribution. The SG's business meeting there was devoted primarily to the chair's report on the meeting of all ICTM study-group chairs in which the coordinator, Tilman Seebass, discussed the Council's eagerness to make the work of its study groups more widely available. He also announced the introduction of a website for the study groups, a need for mission statements, and consistent operational procedures. With Adrienne Kaepler as acting chair, SG members elected Stephen Wild to a new position of chair-elect. The symposium was devoted to discussion of which of the possible types of items the SG would want on its website, recommendation for approval of its mission statement, and discussion of the Australia and Pacific Islands volume of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Kaepler and Love 1998), followed by criteria for media to be included in a proposed ongoing discography and film-videography.

The fourth symposium held in Canberra, 15–16 September 2001, was one of the special events hosted by AIATSIS during its fortieth anniversary. It was orga-

nized by Stephen Wild. Cancellation of all flights on US airlines following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, DC, kept most members from the USA and Micronesia from attending. The first morning of the symposium featured the presentation of a Festschrift (Lawrence and Niles 2001)—the second publication by the SG—to a very happily surprised Barbara Smith in honour of her contributions to the SG during her thirteen years as chair (figure 1). The afternoon began with a memorable Aboriginal *rom* ceremony from Arnhem Land, followed by Richard Moyle's presentation of the "Summary document for the territorial survey" and the business meeting with Barbara Smith turning the chair over to Stephen Wild. The second day's schedule included another *rom* ceremony and papers on Oceanic popular musics, festivals, and aspects of recording. In that same year, reflecting on his twenty years in the position of secretary general of the Council, Dieter Christensen cited the SG's role in broadening the scope of ICTM: "The ICTM Study Groups, always an important part of ICTM work, began to expand their scope beyond Europe with the new Study Group on Musics of Oceania" (N. Christensen and D. Christensen 2001:26).

The Festival of Pacific Arts and symposia since 2001

A significant feature for the dynamics and scope of the SG, as well as to its connections within Oceania, has been its close association with the Festival of Pacific Arts as a location for its gatherings and symposia.⁶ From the SG's first informal gathering in Papua New Guinea in 1980 at the 3rd South Pacific Festival of Arts, those festivals have been intertwined with the SG's history by consistently bringing enough members together for an informal gathering every four years, each time in a different place within Oceania. Established for sociocultural reasons for the people of Oceania, this preeminent and recurring event for the presentation of the performing arts of the region offers not only scholars and performers of the delegations from other island countries the opportunity to experience many types of the host country's traditional and evolving arts, but increasingly also their contemporary popular arts, as well as how visiting delegations choose to represent their cultures and identities. Participation in these informal gatherings at such festivals grew from only six persons to more than thirty by the 8th festival in New Caledonia in 2000, where there were two gatherings. The first was hosted by Raymond Amman before the festival started, and combined the social aspects of making and renewing friendships and learning about each other's interests and projects, as well as background information on that year's festival. The second, at a hotel in Noumea near the end of the festival, was devoted to discussion of what had been seen and heard, its repertory and staging in relation to its theme, "Paroles d'hier, paroles d'aujourd'hui, paroles de demain" (Words of the past, words of the present, words of the future). Three delegates from Palau also visited this second gathering to tell those present about plans for the 9th festival and to express their hope for a large attendance.

The close relationship between the SG and the festival became significantly more integrated in 2004, when its fifth symposium was held in Koror, Palau, 1–2 August. It immediately followed the 9th Festival of Pacific Arts, the first of these festivals to be held in a Micronesian country, or in any country with such a small population (c. 20,000) to host it. The festival's theme, "*Oltobed a Malt*—Nurture, regenerate, celebrate," clearly expressed the purpose for which the first of these festivals was founded, and how this festival's organizing committee developed such a remarkable and smoothly-run programme. In one memorable moment, musicians of visiting countries spontaneously created and sang new

verses to a song composed by Howard Charles (then ICTM Liaison Officer for Palau) with all joining to sing the chorus. The song and its performance became so popular that at the end of the closing ceremony, the president of Palau told him to keep it going until daybreak. The symposium was hosted by the festival's organizing committee at the Ngarachamayong Cultural Center. Yamaguti Osamu, in the absence of the SG's chair, organized the programme that, as with previous symposia, featured the host country's dance and music. It began with Barbara Smith showing photos and playing excerpts of recordings she had made in Palau in 1963. Then Bilung Gloria Gibbons Salii, queen of Koror, explained how women leaders of Palau's states were organized. She was followed by other Palauans, including Faustina Rehuher-Marugg (director of the Belau National Museum, now minister of state), who spoke about how the preparations for the festival had revalidated the Palauan people's sense of identity, and Howard Charles, on how the delegations from other countries were housed by the sixteen states. Other sessions included a demonstration of how the Micronesian marching dance was performed in the Ogasawara Islands (Japan) and papers on music in Chuuk, on Guam, of Banaban music and its relocation to Rabi Island (Fiji), and other areas of Oceania. A farewell feast hosted by the Palau Women's Organization and performances of traditional Palauan dances and contemporary dance bands concluded the symposium.

The SG's sixth symposium was held in Honolulu, 19–21 November 2006, immediately following the 51st Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology. Except for an informal gathering of SG members in conjunction with a symposium of the Pacific Arts Association at the Honolulu Academy of Art,⁷ it was the first time any SG gathering had been held in the city of its birth. Although the SG had eight informal gatherings with SEM between 1986 and 1997, the conference in Honolulu offered more meaningful interactions. Three SG members presented papers in the SEM pre-conference session on "Whose Asia-Pacific? Representation and presentation in ethnomusicology." Adrienne Kaeppler presented the Charles Seeger Lecture; and a three-session panel called "A sea of islands: Encounters with time, space, and the other" was organized by Jane Moulin with nine papers from SG members. At the SG symposium—announced with the themes "Pacific strings" and "New research"—fifteen paper presentations were read at the East-West Center, adjacent to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The programme included several papers focussed on guitar and 'ukulele, one on the Chamorro *bilembaotuyan* (stick zither), presentations on stringband music in Vanuatu and Papua

6 First held in 1972, this event was initially called the South Pacific Festival of Arts. From 1985, it became the Festival of Pacific Arts and, more recently, the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture. It is known informally as FESTPAC.

7 Now called the Honolulu Museum of Art.

New Guinea, as well as other research. Special arrangements for the symposium included a performance by the KVVU Panpipe and Dance Company from Santa Isabel Island, Solomon Islands, and a concert of Hawaiian music at the Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa); as well as visits to the Kamaka ‘Ukulele Factory and the Pacific Collection of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum.

The seventh symposium of the SG took place in Canberra, 28 September – 1 October 2010, its third in that city and fourth in Australia, clear evidence of that country’s importance to the SG’s history. This time it was held in conjunction with the Australian National University (ANU) School of Music’s Postgraduate Symposium organized around the theme “Tangible records of the intangible: Collecting musical and choreographic culture in Oceania.” Keynote addresses were delivered by Adrienne Kaeppler and Kati Szego, and Don Niles delivered an evening ANU public lecture entitled “Audiovisual archives: Researcher’s delight or just a tease?” The programme drew attention to current archiving initiatives in Australia through a roundtable discussion on the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia, a discussion initiated by Allan Marett, Neparrnga Gumbula, Aaron Corn, and Sally Treloyn. Social and cultural events were offered in the city’s centre, including the chance to visit the National Museum of Australia’s temporary exhibition of the time, “Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route,” which gave delegates an opportunity to learn about an important part of Indigenous Australian history and culture.

Held 17–19 September 2014, the SG’s eighth symposium was organized in conjunction with the annual conference of the Linguistics Society of Papua New Guinea (LSPNG). Activities were spread across two locations: Divine Word University in Madang town, and the Alexishafen Conference Centre at Alexishafen, located outside the town. The theme for the SG’s symposium, “Celebrating innovation and continuity,” was designed to complement the theme of the LSPNG conference, “Celebrating Tok Pisin and Tok Ples” (Tok Pisin being the creole language of PNG, and *tok ples* the Tok Pisin term for indigenous languages). The programme was a friendly gathering of SG members, with each presentation focussed on an aspect of Papua New Guinean performance traditions from throughout the country. The symposium, supported by Divine Word University, the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, drew upon the many synergies that exist between the disciplines of ethnomusicology and linguistics.

In 2016, the SG renewed the close association with the Festival of Pacific Arts that it had in Palau in 2004, after

having only informal gatherings at the 10th festival in Pago Pago, American Samoa, and the 11th festival in Honiara, Solomon Islands. This time, the SG met on the island of Guam, 19–21 May, just before the 12th festival’s opening ceremony. Its 9th symposium, held jointly with the Pacific History Association (PHA), had the theme “Performing the past, sustaining the future,” which was closely aligned with PHA’s of “*Mō’na*: Our pasts before us.” Paper presentations by SG members were interspersed with those of PHA, allowing for interdisciplinary engagements. A particular feature of the symposium was the involvement of Indigenous presenters and special sessions led by invited Chamorro performers. A panel with guest performers, organized by Michael Clement Jr. (ICTM Liaison Officer for Guam and the Mariana Islands), focussed on the genre of improvised verse called *kantan chamorita*, and a session called “Chant in Guåhan and across the Pacific” featured Leonard Iriarte, recognized as “Master of Chamorro chant,” and other Chamorro performance specialists. A session called “Afro-diasporic women artists on history and blackness in the Pacific” was held jointly with PHA and included music and dance, film, and poetry, and a moving presentation read by Teresia Teaiwa. An ensemble of *bilembaotuyan* (stick zithers) performed at the closing of the combined event. The SG planned to hold its tenth symposium in Honolulu in June 2020, and in conjunction with the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture and the 100th birthday celebration for Barbara Smith, but all events were postponed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. At the time of completing this chapter, SG members were in discussion about new dates for a tenth symposium to be held fully online and hosted between Hawai‘i and New Zealand.

Communication and publications

Newsletters have been an important part of the SG’s bonding, especially because of the wide dispersal of its members both within Oceania and those who live elsewhere. After earlier notices sent by Trimillos, beginning in 1984, Barbara Smith prepared and airmailed short, tersely worded *Circulars* (called *Newsletters* after 2001) that contained information she thought could be useful, as well as information sent by members for dissemination to the whole group.⁸ These included information such as members’ positions, addresses, research and publications, and upcoming conferences and meetings. As the SG’s membership grew and as more members began

8 The SG *Circulars*, extending from June 1984 until August 2001, are archived online by the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (<https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/47070>). *Newsletters* and other documents since 2005 are archived on the SG’s ICTM webpage (<https://ictmusic.org/group/music-dance-oceania>).



Figure 2. SG members attend a business meeting at the 44th ICTM World Conference held in July 2017 in Limerick, Ireland: (front row) Andrew Gumataotao, Stephen Wild, Michael Clement (Sr.), Adrienne Kaeppler; (back row) Geoffrey Colson, Kirk Sullivan, Raymond Ammann, Jane Freeman Moulin, Ricardo Trimillos, Don Niles, Masaya Shishikura, Brian Diettrich (photo by Kimberly Cannady).

using email, their contents expanded greatly; however, it remained a unidirectional means of communication until September 2005, when member Keola Donaghy set up an email list for the SG that allowed for dialogue and discussion within the group, as well as the dissemination of information. The *Newsletter* itself continues to be the principal means of communication within the membership, with notices about new research and reports on significant events in Oceania.

Beyond its regular *Newsletters* and reports in *ICTM Bulletins*, the SG has produced four publications. Already described above, the first two of these projects are a set of conference papers (Smith 1992) and a Festschrift in honour of Barbara Smith (Lawrence and Niles 2001). The third publication (R. Moyle 2007), honouring Mervyn McLean, focuses on music and dance encounters in the region, both historically and more recently, that emphasize the importance of sound archives, as a link to McLean's work with Māori music. The fourth publication (Gillespie, Treloyn, and Niles 2017) was prepared in honour of Stephen Wild, and comprises new scholarship on "Indigenous Australia," "Pacific Islands and beyond," and "Archiving and academia," reflecting the research interests of both Wild and the SG.

As a central thread of its scholarship, the SG continues to be an advocate for the peoples and cultures of Oceania. As ICTM has increased representation in its

World Network to include liaison officers from more Pacific nations, the SG responded in 2017 by establishing a new fund to expand access in Oceania and enhance diversity within ICTM. After its approval by the ICTM Board at the 44th ICTM World Conference held in Limerick, Ireland (figure 2), Brian Diettrich, as SG chair, announced the Music and Dance of Oceania Travel Award generously gifted by Barbara Smith. To be managed by the SG, the award will provide future opportunities for Pacific Islanders and Indigenous Australians to participate in study-group symposia and on special occasions at world conferences. It will ensure continued and meaningful links to ICTM from within Oceania. Over the course of its history, with more than four decades of scholarly discussions and events, the SG continues to be the only such organization internationally devoted to the music and dance of this region. Looking back on its history, and with an eye toward its future, the Study Group on Music and Dance of Oceania continues its research and celebrations about this rich and diverse area of the globe.

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