Composing Identities: Charting Negotiations of Collaborative Composition

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Statement of Originality

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purpose.

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30 June, 2019
Abstract

Polynesian artists who fuse popular music with traditional Polynesian musical elements have been celebrated by a range of scholars for establishing transcultural alliances and expanding the scope of Polynesian cultural expression. Yet a predominant focus in this discourse on the political and social resonance of fixed recordings and public performances has left relatively unexplored negotiations of cultural expectation and musical vision that occur during the formation/design period of these works. In this thesis I undertake a real-time investigation into the collaborative development of three sets of musical works that fuse popular and traditional musical genres in order to reveal the multiple mindsets and philosophical stances Polynesian musicians slip into and out of as a matter of course during the negotiation of transcultural music. I begin by illuminating the range of sonic positions contemporary Polynesian artists have staked out across a large body of recorded material and then document the collaborative development of my own composition portfolio in which I have threaded the melodic and harmonic language of contemporary jazz and pop through a series of traditional Polynesian rhythmic frameworks. Analysis of the development of these works reveals a constantly shifting hierarchy of concerns amongst participants related to cultural authenticity, audience expectations, musical reach, and aesthetic taste. Such findings reveal that artists assume multiple and at times conflicting ideological and aesthetic positions as they forge transcultural musical works, and foregrounds the importance of examining what goes on ‘behind the scenes’ as we seek to better understand what transcultural Polynesian music means to those who make it.
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Introduction

Purpose and Rationale

Polynesian musical works exhibiting both indigenous elements and elements of popular music have been widely celebrated for their unique social, cultural, and political resonance. A prevailing trend amongst scholars has been to read these works as expressions of cultural identity. While such interpretations are often compelling, a close examination of compositional rationales and musical negotiations undertaken during the formation of these works has yet to be conducted. In particular, the way that powerful concepts such as perceived cultural authenticity, audience expectations, and individual aesthetic tastes influence compositional decision making have yet to be teased out in real-time. In this thesis, I argue that there is potentially much to discover about how culture and identity are expressed musically by entering the music-making frame.

This thesis relays my journey through several musical collaborations undertaken with the explicit aim of designing works that fuse indigenous Pacific elements with elements of popular music. The first stage of this journey involved work with a professional drummer of traditional Samoan rhythms; the second involved musical interactions with three leaders of a cultural arts academy and our collaborative design of dance pieces composed of both traditional and contemporary Pacific musical elements; and the third involved work I undertook with a professional Cook Island drum ensemble leader. By documenting the compositional processes and negotiations that unfolded in each of these cases, I provide a window into the

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1 Although the term Polynesian is contested (see a summary of critiques in McGavin 2014), I use it here, and at other points in this thesis, to simply confine the scope of my discussion to Polynesia rather than the Pacific as a whole. This boundary is necessary as the traditional musics engaged with in this project were defined by my participants as Polynesian, not Micronesian or Melanesian. Furthermore, while the term Pacific was used by my participants as a broad ethnic self-identifier, they frequently distinguished themselves from Melanesians and Micronesians. Margaret Jolly states that these “terms are deployed in the self-designations and claimed identities of Pacific peoples – ‘the Melanesian way’, ‘the Polynesian triangle’, ‘the Micronesian world’” (2007, 521 in McGavin 2014, 133). When referring to the Pacific at large, I use the term Pacific.
shifting mindsets and philosophical stances Polynesian musicians slip into and out of as a matter of course when making transcultural music.

Composition Portfolio

The compositional outcomes resulting from the research undertaken form a substantial portfolio of creative works submitted as the second component of this Doctor of Philosophy. Excerpts from these compositions are presented throughout the text in score format to demonstrate how discussions with participants drove compositional choices. Full scores are presented at the end of this document. Hyperlinks to the composition audio files are also included. These provide evidence of how issues raised by participants (i.e. the need to maintain rhythmic danceability) were upheld in the final recordings. This thesis therefore entwines text, score and audio files in a holistic fashion, as it showcases new knowledge in the realm of Pacific music studies and composition.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One begins with a brief historical overview of transcultural Polynesian music studies. Investigations into what have been termed “acculturated musics” are surveyed to illuminate early conceptual distinctions made between ‘Polynesian’ and ‘Western’ musical tropes (McLean 1986; Thomas 1981). Shifts in thinking from simplistic separations to sophisticated theories of “indigenization” are then discussed. Here I highlight how scholars teased out ideas about indigenous and Western ownership over certain musical styles (Moulin 1996; Stillman 1993). I then turn to scholarly defences of Polynesian popular music made against public concerns that emerged over what this music represented (namely Americanization and cultural abandonment) (Henderson 2011; Mitchell, 1998; Zemke-White 2001; Zemke-White 2002; Zemke 2011). This marks the rise of what I consider to be an ‘identity expression phenomenon’ in Polynesian pop music – a phenomenon in which various political, cultural and place-based identities are reflected in Polynesian artists’
choices of lyrics and their selection of sonic material. Subsequently, I point to a lack of composition-based research in this field. Studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music are drawn on to build a rationale for real-time investigations into compositional decision making behind musical expressions of identity. I then provide a supporting theoretical framework based on the work of Simon Frith (1996), Christopher Small (1999) and Jeff Warren (2014).

Chapter Two lays out the methodologies employed in this study and the methodological issues encountered in the field. After a brief overview of the recruitment process, I discuss my use of talanoa (Vaioleti 2006). Talanoa can literally be translated as “to talk, tell stories or relate experiences in an informal manner” but Timote Vaioleti extends its meaning to “a phenomenological research approach which is ecological, oral and interactive” (2006, 23, 34). I then explore the participant observer position I adopted during my fieldwork and reflect on some of the issues that accompany the complete member of research (CMR) stance I assumed. In particular, this entails a discussion of intersecting positionalities – my role as a researcher and my shared cultural ties with my participants – and how these intersecting positions affected the data collection process. I subsequently outline the documentation tools used to gather data, such as my use of audio recordings, transcriptions, and field notes and the general inductive coding method I used to analyse my data (Thomas 2006).

In this chapter, I also provide a flow chart of compositional steps undertaken to develop each transcultural work. The first step was a program of study I undertook to develop at least an initial understanding of recorded rhythms before working with them. The second step emerged after being informed by each participant of key rhythmic patterns I had often overlooked. The final two steps were based on an arrangement made between each participant that all proposed musical ideas met their standard of approval before being included in a piece. This approach to collaborative composition was informed by the work of Simon Barker (2015) on collaborative engagement with Korean drummers. To conclude, I provide an overview of the composition portfolio covering the context and aim of each piece.
Each of the following three chapters lay out my research findings and state their contribution to other ethnomusicological studies. By this I refer to the key discoveries made in terms of both shifting aesthetic philosophies during the formation of transcultural works and the compositional outcomes resulting from these shifts. Chapter Three surveys my musical engagement with a participant named Tai, and our attempt to build three pop songs based on traditional Samoan dance rhythms. Our first collaboration involved use of the traditional fa’ataupati rhythm, and our negotiations during this collaboration revealed the importance of generating a Pacific sounding accompaniment to ensure that the fa’ataupati rhythm retained its audibility. Our second collaboration synthesised the traditional ailoa rhythm with electronic musical elements, and our negotiations here revolved primarily around meeting perceived audience expectations. Our final collaboration highlighted an intriguing shift in Tai’s dismissal of the philosophy that previously governed our work together – the maintenance of traditional rhythmic structures. This is seen in our piece “Crawling”, wherein Tai modified two traditional rhythms to create an entirely new rhythm. Through my discussion of each of these collaborations, I demonstrate the fluidity of compositional rationales and the spectrum of concerns that arose during the period of our musical work together.

Chapter Four unpacks a collaboration with participants Fred, David and Maryjane, in which we again endeavoured to work traditional Samoan dance rhythms into a set of new compositions. Different cultural and sonic rationales emerged amongst the group when integrating these rhythms into music for an NRL (National Rugby League) dance piece. I juxtapose this experience with a discussion of three pop songs I wrote independently for two dance shows that were devoid of traditional Pacific elements. While they of course did not involve music making negotiations, I highlight the fact that they were accepted by Maryjane and Fred without requests for change. I then posit that this acceptance speaks to a vision amongst my participants of a polyphonic Pacific identity. The conclusion of this chapter highlights parallels with other studies on the relationship between technology and traditional Pacific musical practices. Here I point out that production technology affects not only decision making over the
presentation of songs ready-made for recording but also compositional ideas, including those that do not ‘make it’ to the final mix.

Chapter Five investigates the processes undertaken to compose twelve pieces in a style that my participant Alex and I have termed *kuki* jazz – an amalgamation of piano and *tangi ka’ara* (Cook Island drum ensemble). I first establish the terms of the collaboration and the compositional roles we took on. An overview of Cook Island drumming is then provided. I spotlight “danceability authentication” as a phenomenon that revealed itself during the collaborative process. That is, “danceability” served as the key strategy in this collaboration for ensuring that the piano lines I composed did not undermine the saliency of the Cook Island dance beats. I unpack the various compositional techniques employed to simultaneously engage at the level of rhythmic complexity required to work with these beats and meet the overarching danceability requirement. Finally, I look at how this experience further nuances other studies of the danceability phenomenon in other sites of transcultural collaboration.

Chapter Six weaves these compositional negotiations together into a story about shifting identities. Here, ethnographic Pacific studies not specifically focused on music are called upon to link rehearsal room activity to identity construction concepts. Tai’s ‘paradoxical’ music-making philosophies are conceptualised as “edgeworker identity” outworkings – “walking the edge between ... cultures in the same persona” (Krebs 1999, 9 in Tupuola 2004, 89). Matavai’s compositional aims to celebrate both individual island and regional Pacific identities are connected to the idea of “unity in diversity” found in the work of Kirsten McGavin (2014, 142). I draw on James Rimumutu George and Lena Rodriguez’s (2009) notion of “transmutable, hybrid and negotiated” identities to explain danceability negotiations made with Alex. Throughout this discussion, I argue that examining expressions of identity from the ‘other end’ – the making as opposed to the listening of music – allows us to more readily see that Polynesian identities are in constant flux. Such ‘behind the scenes’ insights, I conclude, are worth studying if we are to gain a fuller
understanding of what transcultural Polynesian music means to those who make it.
Chapter One: Narratives of Transcultural Polynesian Music

The first section of this chapter outlines key discourses in the study of transcultural Polynesian music to illuminate the lack of research on musical identity construction in music making. The second section establishes the theoretical stance I have assumed – framing compositional process as identity construction – to address this gap. It begins with an overview of the ideological positions that ground early research on acculturated Polynesian music and then charts scholarly movement away from simplistic indigenous/Western conceptual divides as it unpacks the emergence of “indigenisation” theories. Special attention is given to the methodologies employed by a group of recent scholars that aim to unravel indigenisation processes and challenge long held notions of Polynesian or Western ownership over particular musical tropes. I then turn to defences of Polynesian popular music made by scholars in the face of public concerns over perceived Americanization, bastardisation, and cultural abandonment. Here focus is placed on how scholars have commended transcultural popular music for its capacity to express a range of diasporic identities. It is in response to this state of play – the scholarly discourse around expressions of identity – that I argue real-time compositional-based research might usefully be deployed. In support of this idea, I point to a range of studies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music making processes in which compositional development has been documented in real-time and draw parallels between the findings of these studies and the theoretical arguments about shifting identities set out in the work of Frith (1996), Small (1999) and Warren (2014).

1.1 Turns in Transcultural Polynesian Music Discourses

During the 1980s, discussions of transcultural music in Polynesia were typically linked to notions of parent musical systems. For example, Allan Thomas noted that acculturated music was a subject of scholarly disinterest because it threatened
ethnomusicologists’ ambitions at the time – to rescue ‘pure’ indigenous music from its uninterested peoples and the encroachment of Western influences (1981, 183). Working against this trend, Thomas deemed such music worthy of inquiry on the basis that it was not a product of ad hoc musical convergence but of a sophisticated set of distinctive procedures. These, he believed, constituted a musical system of change that differed from that of its “parents” (1981, 184). That is, in Thomas’ view, transcultural musicians purposely focused on simplification, recombination and the interactive development of new musical idioms (1981, 184). Yet discussing these new musical idioms without reference to the cultural origin of particular musical tropes proved challenging for scholars. For instance, Mervyn McLean’s “four-fold typology” admirably engaged acculturated music but filtered it into categories constructed around the flow of musical material between cultural systems. This work insightfully charted out the ways new musical idioms might emerge in the Pacific but remained committed to the notion that musical roots were always reasonably discernible (1986, 40-41).

Amy Stillman’s work boldly challenged such notions. After examining the history of Protestant hymnody in Polynesia, Stillman claimed that hymnody had in fact been absorbed into an “indigenous framework of musical experience” (1993, 97). Rather than focusing on sonic elements of songs to determine their status as traditional or introduced, her work brought a level of specificity to the mechanics of how hymnody practices had changed over time in the region. To this end, she theorised five strategies of appropriation underpinning the emergence of modern hymnody: survival and resurgence, coexistence, appropriation, emergence (of new idioms), and absorption (of old/new idioms into indigenous conceptual frameworks) (1993, 93). Stillman presents this framework in support of her argument that Protestant hymnody, despite its Western origins, sits firmly within the accepted repertoire of traditional Polynesian music. Such thinking marked a move away from the idea that transcultural works are perpetually attached to their respective “parent” musics (Thomas 1981, 184). Instead, Stillman’s work put forward the idea that music can take on new meanings and, importantly, new owners as it is performed and celebrated.
A surge of musical borrowing in Polynesian music during the mid 1990s would however resurrect claims of ownership over particular musical tropes. Jane Freeman Moulin (1996), for instance, argued in her article “What’s mine is yours? Cultural borrowing in a Pacific context” that the dawn of globalisation brought with it the threat of musical homogenization. To counter this threat, Moulin believed it was necessary to trace intra- and inter-cultural origins of musical styles so as to establish ‘who owned what’. As trend analyst John Naisbitt eloquently put it, “the more global we become, the more tribal we act” (Naisbitt 1994 in Moulin 1996, 139). Moulin argued that such “tribalism” was at least partly grounded in a desire to hold on to the political and economic power that flowed from the international tourism market (1996, 138). Yet a desire to celebrate and steward what were felt to be unique national music or dance styles seems to have also fed into the debate. For instance, in a Honolulu lecture, a successful Tahitian dance group was publicly accused of committing “cultural plagiarism” on the grounds that they had borrowed Cook Island materials but not adequately acknowledged them (Moulin 1996, 137). Demands for recognition were reiterated in a public censure at the 1985 Festival of the Pacific. Here the Cook Islands delegation prefaced a performance with a speech on the need to properly credit owners of artistic material presented (Moulin 1996, 136). These cases pointed to the relevance of cultural preservation concerns in the global musical environment.

In parallel, calls for cultural preservation emerged in the public realm as pop infused Polynesian music burgeoned in New Zealand and Australia during the same time period. Māori pop balladeers were seen as purveyors of low-brow culture and nothing more than ‘sell-outs’ (Mitchell 1998). The widespread adoption of rap vernaculars by Polynesians was in turn deemed a form of Americanisation (Zemke-White 2001). Emergent Pacific pop songs were considered “one of the very forces threatening the survival of indigenous Pacific cultures” (Zemke-White 2002, 117). Hip-hop – a popular form of expression across the Samoan diaspora in New Zealand,
Australia and the US—was particularly contentious with Samoan elders who saw the genre’s cultural values as antithetical to those in the *Fa’aSamoa* (Samoan culture) (Henderson 2010). Similarly, Māori elders in *Aotearoa* New Zealand held *hui* (social gatherings) to address reggae’s worrisome influence on Māori youth (Cattermole 2011). In particular, these elders felt that Rastafarianism promoted through the genre clashed with *Māoritanga* (Māori traditions) and *tikanga* (customs) (Cattermole 2011, 55). The sentiment underpinning each of these critiques was that some ‘outside’ artistic influences were off-limits to those invested in the creation of new forms of Polynesian musical expression.

In response to this criticism, scholars such as Tony Mitchell, Kirsten Zemke, April Henderson and Jennifer Cattermole devised counterarguments. Some spoke of the fluid nature of musical traditions and others praised Pacific pop music as a vehicle for modern expressions of identity. Mitchell’s work (1998), for instance, revealed the implausibility of entertaining cultural preservation regimes in the face of ‘outside’ musical influences. He achieved this by referencing historical instances in which syncretic cultural practices gradually became accepted as “traditions” in the eyes of Polynesian community members (see, for example, Mitchell’s (1998) reference to European brass band influences on Māori *waiata*). Similarly, Zemke displayed an attitude of openness to the influx of rap amongst Polynesian youth in New Zealand. Instead of viewing the embrace of rap as mere mimicry, Zemke illuminates how rap functioned as an “ideal tool” for Polynesian youth in the exploration, construction and assertion of their identities (2001, abstract). By “injecting” it with their “own culture and ideology”, Polynesian youth were able to use it as a *turangawaewae* (place to stand) and to communicate political points of view and feelings of pride (2001, abstract). In the same way, Zemke’s subsequent work defended Pacific pop music against accusations of cultural loss. While the adoption of pop had been seen by some to signify a parting from traditional roots, Zemke argues that musicians have always possessed both “roots and aerials”—i.e.

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1 I have used the term syncretic here to denote the “attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices (Oxford English Dictionary)” (Kartomi 1981, 244). *Waiata* can be translated as Māori songs.
the capacity to navigate both traditional and global influences (2002, 117). Such studies demonstrate that global music genres are frequently remodelled by Pacific artists on their own terms and called on to express a range of local concerns.

More recently, scholars have been eager to demonstrate how engagement with popular music genres can serve as a tool for forging both intra and inter-cultural alliances (Cattermole 2013; Henderson 2010; Zemke 2005; Zemke 2011). It is along these lines that both Mitchell (1998) and Cattermole (2011) defend Māori reggae and Polynesian reggae respectively by framing it as an ‘indigenised’ music harnessed for its oppositional vernacular and deployed to voice Māori specific political concerns. Mitchell and Cattermole point out that such appropriation is capable of forging a transcultural affiliation – a sense of belonging to other cultural minorities in similar states of depoliticization (Cattermole 2013; Mitchell 1998). The potential to build bridges between cultures via pop music genres is in turn highlighted in Henderson’s (2010) defence of Samoan hip-hop in New Zealand, Australia and the US. Through its ability to articulate connection, hip-hop, in Henderson’s view, has not only linked Samoans to African Americans but also established a “thread that potentially binds Samoans to each other across the broad geography of their dispersal” (2010, 307). Zemke (2011) picks up on the concept of transnationalism in her defence of hip-hop and the way the genre empowers Polynesian peoples to represent their transnational place-based identity connections ranging from their neighbourhoods to their islands. At the core of each of these works lies the argument that authentically expressing one’s identity and commenting on one’s cultural situation does not preclude the use of non-traditional influences.

While this body of scholarship provides good insight into how Polynesian artists weave together the traditional/contemporary and the local/global to express themselves, the details of negotiations undertaken to achieve these synergies are often invisible. That is, artists’ compositional processes for integrating traditional material into new songs, and particularly their rationales for such decision making, have not been unpacked and examined. Some research in this area has been
conducted by Geoffroy Colson (2016) who detailed his own compositional processes for creating transcultural works grounded in Tahitian musical traditions. Yet research on the actions and philosophies of Polynesian artists within a collaborative music making frame has yet to be conducted.

Looking outside the sphere of Polynesian music-based studies, we can see that there is certainly some precedent for documenting the emergence of transcultural music in this way. Karl Neuenfeldt and Lyn Costigan’s (2004) work for instance investigates Torres Strait Island composers’ processes for incorporating traditional dance chants into contemporary songs. This process entailed complex negotiations between the artist’s musical tastes and the cultural, social and aesthetic dictates of their communities. For example, chant “danceability” was something composers felt they needed to maintain through the various stages of musical fusion in order to be seen to be making culturally acceptable music (2004, 119). The collaborators achieved this by dancing to musical drafts, generating musical ideas around chant rhythms, and in some cases, re-recording parts that caused rhythmic obscuration.

Another study by Katelyn Barney (2010) shows similar negotiations performed by indigenous Australian female composers. For instance, composer Emma Donovan’s recordings of Koori Time at first sought to meet expectations for a recognizable ‘Aboriginal’ sound but later rejected them. In the first release, she incorporated the “diji” to represent her culture but only to match her collaborator’s contribution of “traditional” Māori elements. Yet later, when re-working the same song into a solo piece, she resisted incorporating any typical “Aboriginal markers”. Instead she preferred to let the piece “speak for itself” and have people appreciate her music “without the feathers” (meaning without stereotypical indigenous markers) (2010, 12). Both accounts highlight the fact that decision making processes around the use of traditional material are not static – they in fact fluctuate throughout the artistic act. At the core of such an argument is the idea that decision making is an emergent process – i.e., that decisions are made in unique contexts and that outcomes vary depending as much on what material is engaged with as to who is in the room.
1.2 Theoretical Stance: Product vs Process

Placing analytical focus on finished transcultural Polynesian musical products inevitably leads scholars to interpret them as expressions of fully formed identity. Take for instance the way in which Zemke (2002) argues that traditional Pacific musical elements combined with contemporary popular musical influences reflect Pacific identities. When analysing the music of *Te Vaka*, Zemke identified the use of traditional Pacific instrumentation, the presence of historical Pacific themes, the use of lyrics in Pacific languages and a reliance on pop technology and production as evidence of a purposeful assertion of identity. This analysis was supported by an interview with *Te Vaka*’s leader Opetaia Foa’i on the American musical role models who had influenced his songwriting. Such an approach reasonably generated the conclusion that “the Pacific personae and imagery of the music, as well as its community presence, demonstrate that it can be used to reflect and perpetuate modern Pacific identities, acknowledging a Pacific past, a New Zealand present, and a globally connected future” (2002, 120). This is a powerful reading of *Te Vaka* and provides deep insight into their recorded artefacts.

Yet the belief that identity may not be easily fixed to a specific place and time (i.e. a recorded artefact) – indeed, that identity may be a phenomenon in constant flux, is an idea that has received considerable press in popular music studies. Frith, for example, has argued that music does not inherently hold and reflect identity (1996, 109). Instead, he posits that we interpret music as an expression of identity because musical works are seen to echo the experience of making music (1996, 109, 110). More specifically, we construct an “echoed experience” entirely through a unique experience of our own – listening. More recent work by Warren (2014) puts forward the idea that perceptions of musical meaning are vice-versa intrinsically linked to the personal histories of those doing the listening. Such notions of musical meaning being shaped and reshaped over time by both practitioners and listeners links into Small’s belief that meaning in music is “found not only between those organised sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but
also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity” (1999, 13). My point here is simply to emphasise the fact that the experience of making music and the way music is heard are not always in alignment. Reflecting on music making processes is therefore required if we are to develop a thorough understanding of the cultural negotiations embedded within transcultural works. That is to say, there is potentially much to discover about the aims of transcultural music if we can bring ourselves to step inside the frame of collaborative music making.

The discourse on transcultural music laid out in this chapter establishes a history of scholars wrestling with how musical traditions are sustained and how musical traditions evolve. A consensus in recent scholarship on this theme seems to be that growing interconnectedness between Polynesian artists, their diaspora and other cultures has resulted in a range of personalised conceptions of music tradition and culture. In response to the dominant methodologies used to unpack these new expressions of tradition and culture – i.e. the analysis of completed musical works – I seek in this thesis to carve out a space for a real-time investigation into how expressions of identity are negotiated during the process of transcultural composition. By building a compositional portfolio through cross-cultural collaboration and documenting the shifting mindsets practitioners move between during its development, I have endeavoured to illuminate the fluidity and complexity of cultural identity as it manifests in the realm of musical expression.
Chapter Two: Researching through Practice and Cross-Cultural Collaboration

This chapter unpacks the methodologies employed to collect and analyse my data. I first provide information on my musical background and the preliminary research undertaken to develop a culturally informed ethics application and reputation necessary for participant recruitment. I then detail my recruitment process with an emphasis on the role that service to the Pacific arts community played. This is followed by a discussion of a Pacific interview approach known as talanoa, which I adopted to gather data on culturally sensitive topics. The participant observation positions assumed are explored, along with a self-reflexive account of methodological issues encountered and measures taken to address them. Here I also outline techniques utilised to document both verbal and musical activity in rehearsals. A brief summary of the general inductive coding approach I utilised when analysing my data is provided (Thomas 2006). Subsequently, the transcription analysis and collaborative compositional procedures undertaken to develop culturally respectful musical works are laid out. The chapter concludes with a short overview of the composition portfolio.

2.1 Musical Background

The motivation for this project emerged out of postgraduate studies I undertook at the University of Auckland. My MMus research project was centred on an investigation into how pianists/composers Brad Mehldau, Vijay Iyer, Aaron Parks, and Robert Glasper generated jazz music infused with classical, Indian, cinematic, and RnB music styles respectively. From this analysis, I created a series of compositional approaches that allowed me to fuse these genres in the same way. During this project, I developed a desire to craft a unique compositional voice of my own that encapsulated the music I was exposed to growing up. This included a range of Pacific music I participated in such as Samoan hymns at family gatherings, Pacific RnB and hip-hop through dance, and contemporary Samoan pop at fiafia (entertainment) nights hosted by our
church for our Pacific community. Prior to MMus candidature, I considered this musical world of mine separate to my career as a musician. Alongside this interest, lay a strong sense of cultural respect for my Samoan culture that had been instilled through family ties and heavy involvement in a community of Pacific people. From this, the initial research PhD inquiry was birthed: how can I respectfully inject my ‘Pacificness’ into the various areas of music I was familiar with? Although my research became more concerned with rationales for compositional choices, this high level of cultural awareness informed all aspects of my study from the observer stance taken to the data sought out and field of literature engaged with.

2.2 Preliminary Research

During my first year of candidature, July 2013 - July 2014, I performed at a number of Pacific events to engage in the community consultation required for an ethics application. In New Zealand (NZ), I performed at Le Va and the NZ Annexation of Samoa Commemoration. For both events, I worked with a number of Pacific musicians to develop jazz fusion pieces that combined piano improvisation with traditional Pacific instruments.¹ In Australia, I performed at two major events: the Sydney Casula Powerhouse Pacifica Gods Event and the Melbourne Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival. At these events I presented similar style works to those showcased at previous NZ events along with Pacific pop originals led by a vocalist. These performances were well received by audience members, including musicians, who provided positive feedback on my compositions and shared about their experiences of incorporating traditional Pacific musical elements into contemporary songs. Underpinning the various sorts of advice given were words of encouragement to courageously engage and experiment with music of the Pacific, but in a highly respectful and sensitive manner. Such insights gleaned here served to consolidate my first-year research plan and develop a culturally informed ethics proposal.

These performances in turn led to a series of professional opportunities that afforded me a reputation advantageous for participant recruitment. After attending two of my performances in NZ, the Samoan Jazz Festival organisers invited me to headline the

¹ While I worked with a number of local musicians, perhaps most notable was traditional Māori music authority Dr Richard Nunns who introduced me to a range of traditional Māori songs and instruments.
Samoana Jazz Festival in both Samoa and American Samoa. One of my works performed there, “Samoa Forever”, was nominated as a finalist in the NZ Pacific Music Awards Best Song Composition category. For this, I was featured on NZ’s FRESH television series My World, which brought my work to the attention of M2S1 Films Ltd, who then commissioned me to compose music for the Three Wise Cousins motion picture. From these experiences, I became known amongst NZ and Australian Pacific communities as a composer dedicated to the Pacific arts. As a result, participants invited to take part in my study were already familiar with my music and agreed to collaborate on the basis that our ‘Pacific sounds’ combined would result in a desirable artistic outcome.

2.3 Recruitment Process

Timote Vaioleti has noted that before acquiring information on Pacific traditions from its knowledge bearers, one must first demonstrate a worthiness to receive it (2006, 26). This was demonstrated by Professor Konai Helu-Thaman in her work on ‘Pacific ways’ of teaching and learning in Tonga (Helu-Thaman 1998 in Vaioleti 2006). In this context, Helu-Thaman noted two types of knowledge: communal day-to-day knowledge and specialised, often tapu (sacred), knowledge (Helu-Thaman in Vaioleti 2006, 28). The guardians of such knowledge only chose to bestow it on those they considered “mateuteu (ready), kataki (tolerant, having endurance, loyal), ofa, fakatoo ki lalo (possessing humility, respect for tradition) and who will use the knowledge for the benefit of the poto (whole)” (Helu-Thaman in Vaioleti 2006, 29).

I too had to earn the trust of my participants before they agreed to take part in my research. After requesting interviews with my first three participants – Maryjane, Fred and David – I was instead invited to sit in on their music and dance workshops. This allowed for relationship building and gave me an opportunity to familiarise myself with their traditional practices. After attending multiple workshops, and occasionally composing material for their dance performances, they granted me the opportunity to include them in my research project. Prior to recruiting my next participant Tai, I toured with him to promote traditional Samoan drumming through
contemporary songs. He agreed to participate in my study in order to continue advocating for Pacific traditions in this way. Alex, my fifth participant, agreed to participate in my study based on his interests in my Pacific-based cinematic work. He believed that the fusion of his Cook Island rhythms with my Pacific ‘sound’ would serve to promote Cook Island drumming in an innovative way. To acknowledge each participant involved, I agreed to credit them as collaborating artists and share fifty percent of the royalties of the tracks they took part in. In all three cases, the establishment of rapport and service to the Pacific arts served as necessary prerequisites to recruiting participants.

2.4 The Participants

All participants were recruited for their knowledge of traditional Pacific musics, along with their experience incorporating these into modern artistic contexts. Maryjane and Fred lead a Sydney-based Pacific cultural arts academy dedicated to traditional and contemporary forms of Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan, Fijian and Māori Pacific music and dance practices. David is one of their Samoan group leaders adept in both traditional Samoan dancing and drumming. Tai was chosen for his wealth of experience drumming in both traditional and modern Samoan styles. For over a decade, he has led traditional Samoan dance groups at the Polynesian cultural arts festival Polyfest. Alex was selected for his experience competing in internationally renowned Cook Island drumming and dance competitions. He is a professional Cook Island dancer and the lead drummer of his Cook Island drum ensemble, for which he acted as a spokesperson. Having this breadth of experience on board the project meant that collaborative transculturation processes could be navigated from a place of cultural authority.

2.5 Talanoa

A talanoa was held with each participant prior to our musical collaborations.\(^2\) While Alex was the ensemble spokesperson, all members of his group consented to perform and record for this project.\(^3\) Here I am referring to research musical collaborations, not the pre-research service previously mentioned.
Vaioleti has defined *talanoa* as “a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (2006, 21). This proved suitable for participants as they often used story-telling techniques to explain various cultural concepts. It allowed them to steer conversations, which was vital given the culturally sensitive nature of topics that arose. As Russell Bishop claimed, storytelling is a culturally appropriate tool for representing the “diversities of truth”, wherein the story teller remains in control rather than the researcher (Bishop in Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 242). Each *talanoa* was recorded in audio format.

The purpose of each *talanoa* was to gain an understanding of the cultural practices my participants engaged in and establish mutually respectful roles for upcoming collaborations. In every case, participants spoke about different forms of traditional and contemporary Pacific music and dances they regularly performed. When discussing the latter, they shared about their processes of navigating cultural respect and maintaining cultural ‘authenticity’. This information gave me a reference point as to what participants considered culturally acceptable or unacceptable, which was vital before engaging in musical activity with them. In light of their cultural expertise and knowledge, an arrangement was made at the end of each *talanoa*, wherein they would govern our musical transculturation processes to ensure that all resultant musical products met their standard of cultural respect.

2.6 Participant Observations: Researcher Stance

While this project involved practice-based research, it was documented in a heavily ethnographic manner. This was determined by the nature of the research undertaken – cultural collaborations – in which the primary compositional issues of concern were ‘extramusical’ – problems regarding cultural authenticity, identity, aesthetics, etc. in the presentation of musical ideas. Compositional outcomes were not only reached via isolated experiments of the composer but through ongoing verbal and musical negotiations with participants. Rather than

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4 Controversial matters discussed were on topics such as cultural ‘authenticity’, ‘tradition’ and cultural appropriation.
confine the research focus to my own experiences, I also gave voice to my collaborators throughout. Scores displaying trial and error compositional processes were linked to rehearsal discussions that drove them at every turn. This take on collaborative composition situated the research in the field of ethnomusicology.

Given my heavy involvement in the research setting, the particular participant observer role taken on is perhaps best described as Paul and Patricia Adler’s (1987) complete member of research (CMR) approach. CMR is a stance assumed by researchers who are already members of the group under study or became fully affiliated with it during the course of their research. Adler and Adler have argued that the aim behind adopting such an insider position is that a researcher might “share and grasp the meaning of the members’ world as members themselves feel it, as opposed to hearing members recollect and interpret their experiences” (1987, 82). Being a member of the cultural arts groups, I was observing, meant I was able to experience, to an extent, the same phenomena my participants experienced.

This insider position granted me special access to particular feelings and aspirations of participants that emerged during the music making process. As Adler and Adler argue, CMR researchers are “able to gain the full openness of their subjects to an extent unknown by any other kind of fieldworker” (1987, 81). By simply accepting my invitation to collaborate, participants granted me a level of trust. That is, they were aware that our names would all be ‘on the line’ in terms of potential criticism or support regarding our music. Perhaps the most significant benefit of being an ensemble member was that participants shared with me their cultural and commercial aims for our musical collaborations perhaps more openly than they might have was I not heavily involved. Sonya Dwyer and Jennifer Buckle argue that insights of this sort are what add “greater depth to the data gathered” (2009, 58).

Yet participating at this level also carries with it disadvantages that require close attention. As Benjamin Paul put it, “participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment” (Paul 1953, 441 in Tedlock 1991, 69). One issue
with emotional involvement is that it can cause researchers to focus on “the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally different Other” (Renato Rosaldo 1993, 7 in Anderson 2006, 385). Consequently, the research can be shaped and guided by core aspects of the researcher’s personal experience, not the participant’s (Dwyer and Buckle 2009, 58). To avoid these pitfalls, I took on a more balanced approach by adopting strategies from Leon Anderson’s (2006) analytic auto-ethnography. During data collection, this partly involved having an analytic agenda, which Anderson defines as, gaining “insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves” (2006, 387). With this in mind, I made an effort to constantly move my attention beyond my own actions to the participants, in order to observe how our interactions might yield new insights into the phenomenon under study. During data analysis, I examined these interactions using Anderson’s analytic self-reflexivity (2006, 373). This entailed close consideration of my own and participants’ comments to distinguish between phenomena that was likely to have or have not arisen in response to comments I had made. Making these distinctions afforded integrity to the research findings as it acknowledged that I am, to some degree, what Tina Bering Keiding refers to as a researcher who is “co-producer of the observed phenomenon” (2010, abstract).

2.7 Intersecting Positionalities

While my CMR stance afforded unique insider insights, I must account for the fact that I still assumed an outsider stance at various points in the research process. Dwyer and Buckle point out that while qualitative research encourages close engagement with participants as insiders, it simultaneously entails taking on an outsider researcher role (2009, 61). In addition to this, other factors can render researchers outsiders. Amanda Couture, Arshia Zaidi and Eleonor Maticka-Tyndale argue a participant’s view of a researcher’s multiple identities shapes their interactions, experiences and conversations (2012, 102). One must therefore consider how such factors not only affect the distance of their engagement with participants but how these bear influence on data collected. Indeed, as Couture et al. have noted, participants’ views of researchers can determine what information they choose to
provide (2012, 87). To account for this, Couture et. al advocate intersectional self-reflexivity, which involves understanding the multiple identities we possess and how they intersect (2012, 102). In the following, I consider how both my researcher status and cultural identity affected interactions with participants, the implications this had on the data produced and collected and how I attempted to address this issue.

Despite being ‘on the inside’ as an ensemble member, I nevertheless needed to address issues relating to my outsider researcher status. That is, my participants were obviously aware that my intentions for collaborating were in part based on research ambitions. Couture et. al posited that a researcher’s academic identity can inhibit the interview process by affecting the power dynamics in that participants do not open up as much as they might were they not aware of this power imbalance (2012, 92). To address this issue as much as possible, I participated in the participants’ musical projects, sometimes at the cost of my own, so that my research agenda did not dictate our interactions entirely. For example, I recorded and produced an hour’s worth of music and soundscape material for Matavai’s Tala Matavai show and a seven-minute piece for their NRL half-time performance. Another instance involved recording and producing a dance track to accompany Alex’s cultural arts group at the Te Mire Ura Nui International Cook Island Dancer of the Year competition. For Tai, I recorded and produced an instrumental for a family member of his competing in a local singing contest. This all took place while I was conducting research and writing the thesis. Such reciprocity arguably helped generate a sense of equal collaboration and the emergence of a power balance between myself and the participants. The approach taken here aligns with Dwyer and Buckle’s belief that the core ingredient of qualitative research “is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one’s research participants” (2009, 59).

Other than my researcher role, my shared cultural background with participants arguably granted me privileged access to a unique set of cultural knowledge. Their awareness of our shared ethnic identity was evident in references they made to ‘our’
Pacific traditions. In addition to this, the Samoan participants frequently used proverbs in the Samoan language and used long stories as analogies to explain their views on musical concepts. No analogy explanation or language interpretation was ever provided thus indicating that presumptions were made based on perceived shared cultural experiences and knowledge. Penny Rhodes has noted that such shared aspects of racial experience, language or cultural knowledge between researchers and their participants can result in a deeper level of cultural communication than those interactions lacking such commonalities (Rhodes 1994 in Coutore et. al 2012, 90).

The similarities I had with participants certainly opened the communication lines which, in turn, culturally enriched the data with conversations that seamlessly weaved between technical music making topics and creative talanoa.

Yet possessing this shared ethnic status of course did not mean I was not at times a cultural outsider. Sharon Merriam, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Ming-Yeh Lee, Youngwha Kee, Gabo Ntseane and Mazanah Muhamad (2001) argue that even researchers with the same ethnicity as their participants still shift between insider and outsider roles as a result of positionality, power and representation. That is, factors such as class, gender and education affect the dynamics of such interactions (2001, 405, 416). While my participants and I had ethnic and cultural experience commonalities, they held knowledge of their traditional arts that I did not. This effectively placed them in an educational position of power to which I was a cultural outsider.

I made it clear to participants that while we shared some cultural knowledge, there was of course much I needed to learn from them. This was important given that, as Merriam et. al have noted, insiders tend to presume they have shared cultural knowledge with participants that they might not (2001, 411) To avoid this, I informed each participant of my knowledge limitations regarding transculturation processes for integrating their traditional material into non-traditional contexts. In doing so, I positioned myself to receive the type of information generally gleaned by cultural outsiders that Rhodes describes as “stranger value” (Rhodes 1994 in
Coutore et. al 2012, 91). Stranger value is common insider cultural knowledge participants provide to outsiders to help them comprehend particular cultural concepts (Rhodes 1994 in Couture et. al 2012, 91). While I was certainly not a stranger to my participants, the apprentice like role I took on allowed them to, at times, unassumingly teach me ‘the basics’ they often taught outsiders.

2.8 Documenting Observations

All participant observations were audio recorded to capture musical activity and discussions during rehearsals. Audio recording was necessary because I was actively engaged in musical collaboration for most of the rehearsals and thus unable to take notes simultaneously. Recordings of musical activity in turn ensured the accuracy of the musical transcriptions presented throughout chapters 3-5. Discussions were recorded for a self-reflexive analysis of both my own and participants’ comments in relation to musical activity. These rehearsal recordings took place over a period of 18 months with Maryjane, Fred and David, and 9 and 6 months with Tai and Alex respectively.

Additional ethnographic observations were documented as field notes. These were written after rehearsals to capture events undetectable in audio recordings. For instance, I noted aspects of dance movements related to specific drum parts. I also documented informal discussions and important moments that took place before or after rehearsals when the recording device was switched off. One such event included a cultural protocol of presenting me with gifts (necklaces, traditional instruments) and expressions of gratitude from elders for engaging with traditional Pacific arts. Having these on record meant that rehearsal data could be analysed with an added dimension of cultural context.

To document practice-based engagements in musical collaborations, I drew from Robin Nelson’s practice-as-research methods (PaR) (Nelson 2013). Nelson defines

5 While AV recordings would have provided useful research data, my participants expressed discomfort when I proposed this data collection method.
PaR as “a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry (2013, 8-9). A key aspect of PaR is documenting the various stages of the practice process (2013, 86). Accordingly, I transcribed all verbal discussions and instrumental activity from rehearsals (Nelson 2013, 6). As a result, I acquired a full record of compositional processes from initial ideas to fleshed out works in both verbal and musical forms of evidence. Consequently, I could capture “that special moment of breakthrough when things began to work” (Nelson 2013, 87). Special moments included instances of conflict and resolution throughout the transculturation process that, without documentation, might have otherwise been overlooked.

2.9 Coding and Analysis

All transcripts of interview and rehearsal discussions were coded and analysed using the general inductive approach (Thomas 2006). This process enabled me to organise the large volume of data gathered from hours of rehearsal recordings and identify the major themes of discussion within them. The first step involved preparing raw data into a uniform format and reading transcripts closely until a strong level of familiarity with them was reached. I then applied open coding to all comments made between myself and my participants. Following this, text segments resembling common emergent themes were identified and labelled as categories. These smaller categories were then revisited and refined to account for contradictory points of view and new insights. Consequently, new categories emerged, and some were subsumed by others. This resulted in refined categories that captured the key aspects of themes identified in the data relating to my overarching research objectives (Thomas 2006, 242). While numerous sets of correlated data were identified, they all pointed to an overarching theme – rationales for maintaining or altering traditional dance rhythms. These categories, along with the interesting paradoxes within them, served as the basis for the three
findings chapters presented in this thesis.

2.10 Compositional Process

**Figure 2.1 Compositional Steps**

Figure 2.1 displays the steps taken to develop the composition portfolio. The design of this framework emerged from the interviews undertaken with participants before we embarked on our musical projects. During these interviews, I was advised to start with traditional rhythms and build compositions from there. Accordingly, an initial familiarity with traditional rhythms was required and I achieved this by transcribing what I perceived to be the key rhythms of my participants’ drum recordings. To complete this task, I adopted the culturally informed approach employed by Simon Barker during his engagements with Korean drummers (2015, 37). This involved consideration of all documented comments participants had made that could aid the rhythm transcription process. For instance, knowing that the *pa’u* (kick drum) part dictated the ensemble tempo meant I could use it as a reference point for ascertaining tempo shifts throughout any given piece. Additionally, knowing how each part related to its counterpart led me to conceptualise how multiple parts were related in a hierarchal system. Through this study, a number of rhythmic patterns emerged. As my participants had no method for transcribing their rhythms, I drew from Barker’s notation techniques and rhythmic terminology to document these patterns (2015, 55,
The rhythmic patterns discovered during transcription analysis served as a base from which I developed compositional ideas. They were memorised so that I could improvise around them on the piano. This took place in a studio to ensure that satisfactory ideas were captured on record. During experimentation, the goal was to ensure that all introduced parts did not overshadow the traditional rhythms interacted with at each work’s conceptual foundation. That is, all melodic and harmonic material rhythmically engaged with the patterns in an overtly intentional manner. This approach marked my attempt to uphold cultural respect throughout the music making process.

The next step involved consulting with participants to ensure compositional drafts met their standards of cultural respect. On many occasions, unsatisfactory drafts resulted from discrepancies in how participants and I perceived their traditional rhythms. For instance, I frequently treated accompaniment rhythms as lead lines and vice versa. On other occasions, compositional ideas were deemed unsatisfactory for ‘extramusical’ reasons. For example, participants were sometimes not satisfied with compositional ideas proposed because they clashed with a particular cultural aim they had envisaged (i.e. an exclusively Samoan or Pacific sonic identity). Following these consultative rehearsal sessions, musical phrases were re-composed, and transcriptions amended. In meeting these requests, I also made sure that drafts met my own desired standard of composition. That is, that they displayed a level of skill that I felt reflected both my own and my participants’ musical abilities. As a result, the process of presenting drafts and making amendments always resulted in mutually satisfactory musical products. These last two steps of composition and consultation were repeated until both parties were pleased with the outcome. The strategy used here demonstrates what Nelson described as a procedure in which practitioner-researchers “do not merely think their way through or out of a problem, but rather they ‘practice’ to a resolution” (Brad Haseman in Nelson 2013, 9-10).
2.11 Composition Portfolio Overview

In addition to the compositional processes, the composition portfolio evidenced the outcome of my research investigations. With Tai, I composed three pieces: “Nafanua”, “Tidalwave” and “Crawling” in 2015. The first was performed live at the Melbourne Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival (CPAF). The second was played live at a Sydney-based Pacific dance show hosted by the Matavai Cultural Arts Centre. The last was featured in the motion picture film Three Wise Cousins. The first pieces I created for Matavai were: “Come Together Pasefika” and “To the West” in 2015 and “Tala Matavai” in 2016. These were performed in two live Sydney-based dance shows Come Together Pasefika and Tala Matavai. They were also used as teaching materials at two music workshops we conducted – one at CPAF and the other at the Brisbane-based Samoa Tula’i regional exhibition. During 2016, I also worked with Matavai to compose a piece titled “Waratahs” comprising several sections designed to accompany an NRL half-time dance performance in Sydney. With Alex, and his Cook Island drum ensemble, I recorded eight jazz pieces in 2017. These were titled as follows: “Maine”, “Aka Piri”, “Ura Tokotoko”, “Vaka”, “Ta’iri”, “Rutu Viviki”, “Reureu” and “Kuki Jazz”. One of these, “Kuki Jazz”, was released on YouTube as a music video. The following three chapters explore the twists and turns through various mindsets my participants and I collaboratively embarked on during the development of this portfolio.
Chapter Three: Tai

This chapter unpacks collaborative compositional processes undertaken with Tai to synthesise pop style musical elements with three traditional Samoan rhythms. The goal here was to balance the ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ components in each song in order to meet Tai’s standard of cultural respect. To unpack the journey to achieving this, each case commences with the introduction of a traditional Samoan dance rhythm. Following this, I detail issues that emerged when building musical ideas around each rhythm, along with resolutions reached. In the first case, I discuss problems that arose when fusing the fa’ataupati rhythm with musical ideas Tai labelled “non-Samoan”. Here Tai was concerned that the “foreign” elements undermined the Pacific sonic identity he had envisaged for the song. We see that the solution lay in pairing his rhythm only with Pacific sounding elements. The second case explores conflict arising from the synthesis of electronic drum parts with the traditional ailaop rhythm. We encounter Tai’s fear of audience criticism concerning our departure from “tradition”. While he allowed me to publicly release this composition, he declared that audience feedback would determine whether or not we had successfully merged these two musical worlds. The third case I discuss contrasts the previous two as it displays a deliberate break from core traditional Samoan rhythms. In this scenario, Tai’s agenda to appeal to younger generations outweighed his belief in maintaining the audibility of traditional rhythmic structures. To conclude, I draw comparisons between all three cases to highlight how perceived expectations play out in the development of a transcultural work.

3.1 Fa’ataupati Fusion

The first rhythm Tai introduced into our collaboration was the traditional fa’ataupati (slap dance) rhythm. While Tai referred to it as a traditional Samoan beat, Kit Skeoch Coloma proposed that the fa’ataupati dance it accompanies was “an evolved form of traditional Samoan war dances” (1984, 36). According to Richard Moyle’s records, the age of the fa’ataupati dance is unknown and “the absence of descriptions or specific references in nineteenth-century publications suggests a recent
introduction” (1988, 225). While it may not hold a traditional status in Samoa, Moyle noted that it is still “firmly established in the national repertoire for use on formal occasions” (1988, 225).

Figure 3.1 displays what Tai referred to as the “core” of the fa’ataupati beat, which he performed on the pate (log drum). In addition to this, he played two other parts to form a fa’ataupati rhythm he had previously used to accompany a competition dance set. As seen below, pate 2 embellishes pate 1 while the pa’u (bass drum) provides a simple low-end accompaniment to the complex high-pitched parts. All three rhythms remained relatively unchanged throughout the dance piece apart from sections designed to mark new dance sequences. These sequences themselves involved body percussion. Coloma highlighted body percussion in his description of the fa’ataupati dance: “a syncopated slap dance where rhythmical slaps are given to the unclothed portions of the body combined with claps” (1984, 36). Moyle has reported that these slaps and claps are both “kinetic and musical” (1988, 225). McLean has further stated the importance of body percussion claiming it to be the most significant audible sound in the fa’ataupati (1999, 160). In accordance with these statements, Tai stated that besides playing a timekeeper role, the fa’atauapti rhythm should “chop and change” and periodically “drop out” so that body slaps and claps can be heard.

Figure 3.1 Fa’atuapati Rhythm

1 McLean classified the pate as the smallest log-drum in the slit-gong drum family (1999, 150).

2 Tai also mentioned that a cabin bread box or a tin occasionally served as alternative instruments used to perform the fa’atuapati rhythm, particularly because they possess a “real snaring but high pitched” quality that “cut through clearly”.

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Tai and I discussed the flexibility around integrating this traditional rhythm into a contemporary piece. Tai first noted the lack of any reference point as to how these rhythms should be handled in such situations, stating: “Samoan traditions are not written down, you know, it’s an oral tradition. It’s like there is no old law or manuscript that says, you know, this is what must be done in order for it to be Samoan music because it is an oral history, it is always changing”. He also pointed out that certain musical traits had become accepted as part of Samoan musical traditions despite having originated elsewhere: “Don’t get me wrong, I love my people, but they can be wrong coconuts sometimes. They’re like ‘we were harmonising long before then’ but nah bro it came with the missionaries”. Moreover, he noted that traditional dance rhythms were constantly being reinvigorated by the Samoan diaspora, claiming that “the beat was simple but over time as kids got influenced obviously living in European countries, countries away from the home nation, they still want to do that stuff but they want to put their own flair on it obviously because they are in a competition and so the music had to evolve to keep up, you know, the tripling and stuff or adding the second drum or the third drum”. To explain how this sort of cultural change took place in Samoan musical traditions, Tai likened it to a “one hundred year old [game of] Chinese whispers, you know like, what they say is traditional today is not what is necessarily going to be traditional 100 years from now”. Thus, whilst we would carefully negotiate notions of cultural respect when working with these rhythms, there were clearly no absolute confines on what could be deemed culturally acceptable or not.

Despite this fluidity, Tai believed we should pay attention to the “little things that have remained the same” over time. To provide an example of this, he praised the long held tradition of the sasa rhythm, “I know for a fact that that’s been tradition because my father played it, my father’s father played it … it’s never been changed since and you know it because when you play it to another Samoan who is alive today, whether he is 18 or 80, he’ll listen to it and go ‘oh that’s the sasa’”. Tai’s comment illuminated not only the fixed nature of the sasa rhythm but the importance of its recognisability to those familiar with it. Accordingly, Tai suggested that the “core” of each traditional rhythm should be retained when incorporated into a modern pop song because they “are very unique to Samoa and I guess if you change that up too much and you lose that sort of sound or that sort of
feel, that’s when it’s not Samoan anymore”. These statements arguably indicate Tai’s desire to ensure our transcultural works would always retain some audible trace of traditional Samoan musical practice.

Although keeping this core rhythm intact while layering musical interventions on top would serve to maintain a Samoan sonic identity, Tai felt that too much additional content might still invite cultural criticism. He first pointed out that maintaining the core alone would never render our music immune to criticism since “you are always going to have people back home in Savai’i and stuff saying you know, don’t do that, don’t do this … that’s not traditional Samoa”. In addition to this, he went on to state the importance of not “over doing” musical transculturation. To elaborate on what he meant, he reflected on a time he was criticised by his grandfather for adding too many American football “huha” exclamations to a traditional fa’ataupati: “Grandpa, not only is he my biggest fan but he’s my biggest critic as well and if I’m doing crap or stuff that is just a bit too much he’ll tell me”. Despite having kept the rhythm in its traditional format, his grandfather critiqued him for inserting these exclamations “every eighth beat in a two-and-a-half-minute dance”. After reducing these significantly, Tai felt he had struck a desirable balance in which “the song and dance had all that huha on top of it with the flash stuff and that contemporary feel but at the core of it, you know, it’s still there, the traditional beat is still there”. Tai credited the success this dance piece received in competition to this amendment. What we can gather from this anecdote is that the audibility of the fa’ataupati rhythm was not the only concern. The aim was to ensure that neither the traditional nor introduced elements overshadowed each other.

After creating a vocal line to Tai’s fa’ataupati recording in my own time, I sung it to him during rehearsal, but he disapproved of it. A sample of this melody is provided in Figure 3.2. Although this vocal part did not include lyrics, Tai felt that it did not “sound Samoan”. In his view, it sounded “Persian”. Nevertheless he acknowledged

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3 This was a draft recording of the rhythm captured on my phone.
4 In Tai’s defence, the notes of this melody are derived from what would commonly be referred to as a Bb Persian scale - Bb, Cb (B), D, Eb, Fb (E), Gb, A and Bb.
the subjective nature of what could be considered Samoan, “at the end of the day my perspective of Samoa and your perspective of Samoa are not necessarily going to be the same thing”. He proceeded with a talanoa to further unpack this.

Everyone’s take on Samoa is different you know. My grandad, his take on Samoan is very traditional and, in his village, you know the boys there walking around, you have to wear your lavalava, you know boy’s hair, it can’t be longer than your shoulders. When I think Samoa, I think beaches and sand and sun and spit roast pig, you know. That’s my version of Samoa but for him it’s a totally different thing.

While Tai demonstrated an awareness of his own bias, the proposed musical idea did not have the Samoan character he had envisaged.
To meet Tai’s expectation, I spent time independently creating “Samoan sounding” musical ideas for his rhythm in a piece I titled “Nafanua”. I felt that a diatonic melody with harmonies and lyrics on a Pacific theme would work well in achieving this aim. This projection was based on my own listening experience of Pacific music that typically encompassed such components. As displayed in the score below, I have layered the rhythm with a chorus on the Samoan legend “Nafanua.”
Figure 3.3 “Nafanua” Excerpt
This was played to Tai at our next rehearsal. As hoped, he said that the new musical ingredients definitely gave the song a Samoan character and in particular highlighted the use of generic sounding Pacific harmonies.

Back in the day we didn’t have harmonies, but the missionaries introduced them, and they’ve become so much part of us that that really makes it Pacific too. It’s weird seeing a PI singing by themselves or a Samoan and that’s because we are used to singing at church, funerals, family prayer etc. or even if we are just on the piss, we sit around and sing together you know. Everyone always jumps in and sings harmonies. It’s really weird to sing along by yourself as a Samoan.

Another key reason for his approval of the sound was that the core rhythm of the *fa’ataupati* cut through clearly, “it’s not just something that is in the background, I hear it clearly, cutting through nicely. … and maybe this is just me being Samoan, but you can clearly hear that there is a Pacific sound cutting through”. What is interesting here is Tai’s acceptance of a broad Pacific sonic identity alongside his Samoan one. Arguably he approved of this because it reflected part of his own identity – a Samoan who is also a member of the Pacific diaspora.

### 3.2 Amalgamating the *Ailao*

The second rhythm Tai introduced to me was that used to accompany the traditional Samoan *ailao* (war dance). Moyle has described the *ailao* as a “war dance” and Mervyn McLean similarly noted that it was a “standing men’s weapon dance” (McLean 1999, 160; Moyle 1988, 224). While the *ailao* dance rhythm sat in part of Tai’s repertoire of Samoan beats, Moyle has pointed out that the *ailao* dance may be of Uvean origin. Nonetheless, Moyle has recorded that it was common in 19th century Samoa to have these kinds of “flourishes using wooden clubs” after a group had been victorious in war (1998, 225). In the 1980s, many *ailoa* movements were “taken into the cabaret in the form of ‘knife dances’ and ‘fire dances’ performed for the entertainment of non-Samoans” (Moyle 1988, 225).
Displayed in Figure 3.4 is the core of this rhythm performed by Tai. This can be seen in the pate 1 line. He also played additional drum parts of his own that he had used in competition. As shown below, these include pate 2 used to embellish the core rhythm and the pa’u, which dictates the speed of the dance. Having additional parts like these was apparently common in competition settings: “If it is a school competition, a varsity competition or whatever they’re going to naturally want to stand out, so they put their own sort of flare to it but traditionally at the core of it the beat’s the same”. We decided to use this particular rhythm and its various parts as a base for our next composition.

Figure 3.4 Ailao Rhythm

During rehearsal, I synthesised electronic drum parts with the ailao but Tai expressed uncertainty over the resultant rhythmic fusion. This is shown in Figure 3.5. Although Tai approved of the introduced keyboard, bass and lyrical elements, he expressed concern over the introduction of the pop beat. In particular, he noticed that although I had left the core part of the ailao unchanged, I had replaced his pa’u part with an electronic kick drum and click. He remarked “I’m guessing you are trying to go for more of a poppy sound, so I would expect that there you will get your detractors”. Despite this apprehension, he still said “it’s authentic, I haven’t heard that rhythm used in a pop song like that or any song for that matter except for in traditional Samoan stuff”. Consequently, although he had reservations about how the final outcome might be received, he encouraged me to “dare to be different man, I guess culture is always changing and we need to be the ones to change it”. Thus, the resultant product – “Tidalwave” - was one of mutual compromise.

Moyle has recorded that traditionally this rhythm was performed “on a kerosene tin or equivalent” (1988, 224–225).
Interestingly, however, Tai’s approval was granted on a conditional basis. He said “I want to see people’s reactions you know whether it’s an ugly one or whether it’s a good one. The only way you are going to know is if you give it a go and obviously if you get a lot of detractors and your detractors outweigh your pros, then you by all means say, ‘oh well, never going to do that again’”. Thus, according to Tai, the ultimate success or failure of this transculturation could not be determined until the popular vote had been cast. In his view then, personal preference should not prevail over audience reception in the end.

3.3 Synthesising the Sasa

We then delved into the rhythm typically used to accompany the traditional sasa.6 According to McLean, the sasa dance, like the ailao, may have originated in Uvea. Despite its origins, Tai referred to the sasa as the Samoan “sit down dance”. He explained that slapping and clapping movements made up a significant portion of the dance. Coloma (1984) has specified the terms used to denote sasa body percussion – two types of claps called pati and po – and has argued that they form the most important aspect of this dance.

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6 Tai referred to the sasa as the “the sit-down dance”. McLean argues that the dance involves “men clapping their hands together, slapping their bodies in unison and going through a long series of coordinated dance movements” (1999, 162). Later on, Kaeppler and Wainwright described it as a dance performed, mostly seated, by men and women (Radoskovich 2004, 46).
In terms of instrumentation used to perform the *sasa* rhythm, McLean has noted that the *sasa* dance is often accompanied by mat-beating, the *pate* slit-gong, or, in the past, stamping tubes (1999, 162). Adrienne Kaeppler and Jacob Love Wainwright believed several percussion instruments - the *pate*, *fala* and *pa’u* - normally accompany the *sasa* dance (Kaeppler and Wainwright in Radokovich 2004, 46). Jennifer Radokovich later noted that this has since changed, stating that the accompaniment of the *sasa* dance in contemporary times varies in each example that she studied, from percussive instruments to synthesisers and recorded music (2004, 75). Tai performed it as a four-bar phrase on the *pate*, which is displayed below. In Moyle’s account, this rhythm provided the primary source of accompaniment to the *sasa* (1974, 66). Coloma described this accompaniment as a device for signalling slap and clap patterns (1984, 34). He also noted that a leader called the *fa’auma* provides verbal and visual cues to signal slap patterns (1984, 34). According to Tai, the role of the rhythm involved both keeping dancers in time and cueing body percussion sequences using “double beats” or “off beats”.

Figure 3.6 *Sasa* Rhythm

Before integrating this rhythm into a new piece, Tai discussed how flexible one could be with it in dance settings. He first stated that the drummer should always be “the accompaniment, not the ‘ish’” as a way of highlighting the precedence of dance over drumming. To further support this, he said that he could not even recall a time where dance choreography was changed in order to suit the rhythm. In terms of the drummer’s own creative license, he reiterated that the “the core of it stays the same”

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7 Ish is a slang term for shit, which I feel Tai used in our interview to express a certain emotion while remaining polite.
but that they could improvise when dancers march on stage, when marking dance cues or concluding a dance. These were the only spaces where as a drummer you could “have your say”. The question then remained whether or not these limitations would at all apply in a listening-oriented piece.

The negotiations undertaken to integrate the \textit{sasa} rhythm into our next piece – “\textit{Crawling}” – indeed called into question such limitations. When discussing how we might achieve this, I asked Tai if the \textit{sasa} rhythm could be incorporated into an odd-time context.\footnote{By odd time, I am referring to uneven time signatures such as 7/4 or 5/8.} I thought this was perhaps possible given that \textit{sasa} dance phrases, while mostly proceeding in bars of four counts, momentarily took place in bars of three counts. Tai confirmed this would be possible but certainly abnormal within a traditional Samoan dance context and even in Pacific pop music more generally speaking. Nonetheless, Tai took the idea and decided to form an entirely new rhythm of his own that encompassed part of the traditional \textit{sasa} rhythm. What struck me at this point was Tai’s dismissal of the core principal used to govern our previous two compositions – the maintenance of traditional core rhythmic structures. I expressed concern about Tai’s decision here, but he justified it in the name of cultural preservation. He believed that “you are changing the culture, but you are also preserving it too by making it relevant”. To elaborate on what he meant by “making it relevant”, he argued that:

\begin{quote}
If you were to give any old Samoan chant or music in its original form to the kids they would get disinterested so fast. I mean they might be interested for a bit in the history but they wouldn’t be into learning it like a Justin Bieber song. I kid you not, if they hear Justin Bieber blasting on a radio they’re going to learn it because it’s the ‘in thing’ and I’m all for embedding culture into our kids um you know and if it means that I have to make it relevant for them so that it is something that they will listen to then so be it.
\end{quote}

To form the new rhythm, Tai fused two traditional Samoan rhythms – the \textit{sasa} and the \textit{ailoa}. Figure 3.7 displays both traditional rhythms in their original form, along
with the new one. Brackets have been provided to show how these traditional rhythms have been integrated into the latter. I asked Tai why he chose to form this rhythm in 7, to which he responded with “I was thinking ‘go for a different time signature’, either 6 or 7 and just thought 7 was the strangest number you could come up with, so I took 7”. I went on to query whether or not this choice was connected to my question about odd time phrases in Samoan dance but he stated that “it was more of a feel thing, like by no means is that your traditional Samoan beat because I don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone play in 7 but the majority of the Samoa world, from what I know, has always been in even time”. What I gathered from this was that Tai’s decision here was an intentional departure from traditional drumming. To illuminate the traditional components embedded in the new rhythm, he pointed out that “it is not in the original time, but the beat is still there if you listen to it, if you listen carefully”. Thus, according to Tai repackaging these rhythms into a format that would appeal to those who would otherwise overlook them was justifiable albeit a slight departure from tradition.

Figure 3.7 “Crawling” Rhythm

Tai went on to explain how breaking tradition to preserve culture was an intrinsic part of being Samoan diaspora. He did this by offering a talanoa on
how we can appropriate traditional Samoan ways of living in diasporic settings. People like me and you, we come from two worlds. Although we are of Samoan heritage, we’ve got that Samoan DNA etched into us, that fa’alaloalo (respect). We also live in a European world where, you know, we don’t have to wear a lavalava when we walk around town, we don’t have to be home for a 6pm prayer because that’s what it is back home.

At the same time, he did state his awareness of potential criticism that would ensue after applying this philosophy in our music, “I’m going to have my detractors and I’m going to have my promoters but at the end of the day this is what is relevant to me hate it or love it man this is me”. What is significant here is Tai’s adamance in holding fast to this belief irrespective of how the music might be received. That is, his aim in reaching younger listeners outweighed his belief in upholding a Samoan musical tradition albeit at the cost of his reputation amongst ‘traditionalists’.

3.4 Conclusion

The conflict and resolution processes in these songs reveal rich negotiation politics embedded in the creation of three transcultural works. In the first and second composition cases, maintaining core rhythms came with a strong desire to express a Pacific sonic identity. That is, if the traditional Samoan rhythm was to be recognised in a composition as such, there seemed to also be an expectation for the remainder of the song to sound Samoan or at least Pacific. Furthermore, the compromise seen in “Tidalwave” underscored the role the audience would play in determining whether the elements added to the rhythm were culturally acceptable or not. “Crawling” provides a compelling contrast. Here Tai’s goal to repackage tradition for younger generations outweighed his belief in safeguarding it. Unlike the previous cases, even negative responses apparently would not sway him from his belief in innovating for cultural preservation purposes. The significance in surveying these compositional processes is that they illuminate how thoughts on cultural identity expression and perceived expectations shift and work to shape final musical products.

The shifts in Tai’s compositional rationales seen here align with the Frith’s (1996)
theory of musical identities in music, the notion that identities are always in flux and contingent on time and place. For instance, the stated aim for breaking tradition in the composition created with Tai was to reach younger audiences, which might be framed as an attempt to assert a particular sort of progressive identity. However, this expression of identity stood in tension with Tai’s philosophy stated earlier regarding the significance of keeping traditional Samoan rhythms untouched and only allowing musical parts to be added to them. Therefore, the idea that a transcultural Polynesian musical product reflects a fixed expression of identity is destabilised by the fact that for Tai, multiple mindsets informed the shape of our musical collaboration.

Tai’s case also enhances Zemke’s discussion of “roots and aerials” – the ability to combine traditional and contemporary elements – by unpacking precisely how he utilised these tools (2002, 117). When creating “Nafanua”, Tai did not allow his “aerial” to sync up with a Persian sound. He chose instead to keep the song within clear Samoan and Pacific sonic identity boundaries. An extension away from Tai’s “roots” was evident in his acceptance of an electronic beat over the ailaö rhythm albeit with great hesitance. However, perhaps the best example of Tai’s conscious departure from his “roots” was seen in “Crawling”. His decision to break with the past to reach Pacific youth aligns with the kind of action Zemke advocates for: “a view of tradition and culture that does not allow for growth, adaptation, and change, may alienate new generations” (2002, 128). Tai’s aspirations and thoughts captured in the music making process demonstrate how he manipulated his “roots” and “aerials” to navigate perceived expectations of two worlds successfully.
Chapter Four: Matavai

The music discussed in this chapter emerged from collaborative projects led by my participants Maryjane, Fred and David. Particular focus is given to the way perceived cultural expectations and sonic tastes drove music making within this group.\(^1\) The first half of the chapter hones in on negotiations that took place when creating a compositional work made up of four sections that featured three Samoan dance rhythms. I begin by examining the role dance played in the recording of rhythms and highlight how the notion of a generic Pacific aesthetic governed the overall post-production phase. I then illuminate specific sonic related reasons that rose to the top of compositional priorities when deciding whether to use electronic or traditional instruments. The second section of this chapter surveys Pacific pop songs I composed for my participants that were devoid of traditional musical components. I highlight the ‘trouble-free’ acceptance of these songs by participants to suggest that perhaps the negotiations identified in other collaborative projects in this thesis are less salient when dealing with non-traditional material. I conclude that it is only by being aware of these distinctive compositional tensions that we can get a full picture of why traditional or non-traditional Pacific material is presented the way it is in present day transcultural music.

4.1 Traditional Samoan Dance Rhythms

Three traditional Samoan dance rhythms were integrated into various sections of a composition we created for a National Rugby League game held in Sydney. This piece, conveniently named after the team it was dedicated to – *Waratahs* – was recorded in the studio with my participants and then danced to by their group Matavai on the rugby field at a half-time break of a game. The first traditional rhythm Fred and David introduced into our collaboration was the *siva afi* (fire dance) beat.\(^2\) He had four rhythms of his own that he used for *siva afi* dances. Fred noted

\(^1\) While cultural reasons may have underpinned all decisions made to some degree, the rationales stated in such situations were overtly focused on sonic preferences.

\(^2\) According to Fred, the drum ensemble was often the only form of musical accompaniment for a *siva afi*. 
that because this dance was a modern practice, there was no general consensus on any set rhythm or instrumentation for it. Below is a transcription of the one we recorded. It displays the fundamental rhythmic pattern that was repeated throughout much of our recording. The lead rhythm is executed by the tin and this is further emphasised by the pa’u. The pate plays an accompaniment role as evident in its monotonous part.

Figure 4.1 Siva Afi Rhythm

![Figure 4.1 Siva Afi Rhythm](image)

The second rhythm that we recorded was the *fa’ataupati* (slap dance) beat. Displayed below is a sample of a *fa’ataupati* rhythm performed by Fred, David and other members of their dance company. Fred noted that this dance drum accompaniment relied heavily on body percussion to complete the rhythmic make up of a *fa’ataupati*. Accordingly, the slaps have also been included in the score below. In fact, he mentioned that at times most of the drum ensemble would momentarily drop out and

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3 This is the same rhythm previously introduced to me by Tai. Maryjane and Fred described this dance as an expression of inner strength. Fred likened it to the Māori *haka* and Maryjane believed its purpose was to enable Samoans to “fire themselves up” and display their fearlessness. This dance and the importance of body percussion in it is covered in Chapter Three. Here the claim is supported by the work of Coloma (1984), McLean (1999), Moyle (1988) and Wainwright and Kaeppler (1998).
allow slaps to carry the rhythm. Maryjane also noted that “slapping was part of the music”. She pointed out that the word pati inherent in the dance title fa’atauapti translates to “clap, so when you fa'ataupati you have to clap”.

4 To further underscore the significance of body percussion, Fred reflected at length on his former years in which he and Maryjane used to slap dance and made “the noise till our legs were red. Being a slap dance means you have to hear that sound”.

**Figure 4.2 Fa’ataupati Rhythm**

Fred then introduced me to the rhythm used to accompany the lapalapa (stick dance). While he did not refer to it as the sake rhythm, it closely resembled that used to accompany the sake dance (mentioned by Coloma and Moyle), which Kramer translates to “dance with sticks” (Kramer in Coloma 1984, 37). As with the fa’ataupati, the rhythms executed by dancers, in this case through the beating of sticks, were considered a crucial part of the overall sound of the lapalapa. The drum ensemble used by Fred and his group for this dance generally included two bongos, one pate and one pa’u. Below is a transcription of the fundamental two bar phrase that was repeated throughout most of our lapalapa recording. This transcription includes both the drum ensemble parts and the stick beating performed by dancers. The majority of the accented rhythms of both bongos, the pate and pa’u further emphasise the stick beat.

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4 By clap, she means a clap sound that comes from slapping the body hard. She said, “if there are no red marks from the fa’atuapiti slaps you’re not doing it right”.

5 Coloma described it as a dance performed by a large number of men and women who beat sticks while singing (1984, 39). Historically, Kramer has noted that the sake was performed before driving out neighbouring Tongans in wars years ago. For this reason, he argues that perhaps the knife dance is an evolved form of this sake dance but has no verification of this (Kramer in Coloma 1984, 37). Coloma noted that it was a rare dance performed (1984, 39) and Moyle believed it originated in Uvea (1988, 228).
4.2 Cultural Rationales

A great deal of difficulty was encountered when attempting to capture traditional Samoan drumming in recording sessions without dancers. This was particularly clear when tracking the *fa’ataupati* rhythm. My initial attempt to record each part separately was unsuccessful due to drumming synchronisation issues that arose during the overdubbing process. To remedy this, I recorded the entire drum ensemble at once, but this again proved to be problematic without dance actions dictating where rhythmic pattern changes should occur. My participants then decided to source dance footage to record along to while providing verbal cues for each other. While this approach enabled them to make it through a full drum performance, they felt they could not perform to their regular standard without live dancers. Eventually they discovered that having one drummer dance while the other drummed, and vice versa, allowed them to record and layer each part until the whole rhythm was completed satisfactorily. David noted that this level of reliance on dance was perhaps exclusive to their ensemble because they had learned to perform their drum parts in a dance-centric context.

Yet as David elaborated on why dancing was so vital to drumming, it became obvious that the issues previously encountered were not only related to an unfamiliarity with studio recording. He first pointed out that *fa’ataupati* dancers

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* This involved layering drum takes one at a time.
typically set the pace for the drummers. This tempo was often fluid causing the drum ensemble to speed up and slow down throughout a dance performance. He also mentioned that rhythmic patterns played by the ensemble were loosely based on choreographed dance movements. As David explained “when it comes to the dancers, the beats will start to vary. I’ll change it more from what I see”. To further unpack this, he informed me that there were different memorised rhythmic combinations they would deploy arbitrarily in each dance section. After asking how they coordinate these shifts, David simply stated that “we just know and play through”. By setting the pace and marking moments of rhythmic change, dance established the framework within which rhythm could take form. This illuminated how interdependent traditional Samoan drumming and dance practices were even in a context designed to capture rhythm alone.

Other cultural related issues surfaced during the post production phase. On many occasions, rationales for an ‘authentic’ Pacific sound were given. For example, after tracking and listening back to David’s pa’u part in a fa’ataupati rhythm, Fred expressed concern over the “tin”-like quality of the recording. To fix this issue, I EQed out the high pitch frequencies until Fred was satisfied. While this gave the instrument a somewhat muffled quality, Fred stated that “it’s good that it sounds raw”. Another instance in which Fred requested amendments to a recording was during the playback of a vocal chant section sung over a siva afi rhythm. These parts had a polished, produced sound but Fred wanted them to “come across natural, like drumming and chanting and it’s not recorded”. After experimenting with different reverb, EQ settings and volume automation levels to yield a “raw” sound, Fred exclaimed “that’s perfect! See now it actually sounds as if they are saying it there”. These cases demonstrate how familiar sounds of the past – i.e. the sonic resonance of live performance – can influence the process of transferring musical traditions into modern spaces.

The same Pacific aesthetic criterion was imposed on elements added to traditional Samoan rhythms during post production. Take for instance Fred’s request for a
musical device that would cue dancers for the entrance of the fa’ataupati section of this piece. He asked for “anything that will bring it out more and make it seem Pacific”. During a brainstorming session, David suggested we use a generic sounding Pacific conch shell to achieve this effect. Fred agreed with this proposal, so I conducted a conch shell recording and inserted it at the beginning and end of the fa’ataupati rhythm to cue the dancers on and off stage. David noted that in addition to cuing, this conch shell worked to ‘glue’ the fa’ataupati section to its preceding and subsequent sections in the overall piece. This desire for a “Pacific sound” resurfaced when experimenting with kick and snare electronic parts for the siva afi section of the piece. Figure 4.4 shows where I instinctively placed the kick and snare on this rhythm. Fred’s immediate response was that it sounded “mad”. However, after listening back to it several times, he became slightly concerned that the rhythmic momentum initially provided by the constant beating of the pa’u had been lost. He suggested we peel back the electronic components. Before fulfilling this request, I explained that doing so would lessen the Americanised hype imbued in the electronic beat. At this point, David declared that the primary purpose of the song was “to show off the Pacific”. I took Fred’s apprehension and the implication inherent in David’s statement as obvious cues to remove both the kick and snare. The request fulfilled in the first example and tension navigated in the second reveal the extent to which overarching goals for Pacific sounds were paramount, even at the cost of new stimulating musical ideas.

7 This is a slang term used to mean impressive. I had used it frequently among my own peers and had previously witnessed my participants using it in this way.
While my participants frequently raised cultural concerns in music decision making scenarios, this was not always the case. There were also situations in which sonic rationales drove compositional choices. Take for example Fred’s decision to alter the instrumentation typically used for a lapalapa. After listening back to his lapalapa recording, Fred said the sound of the second bongo and pate parts “confuse it a bit” sonically. By this he meant that it cluttered the overall drum ensemble mix. Instead of immediately removing the pate, I created more frequency space in the mix for it through the use of EQ and panning. However, this still did not cause Fred and David to change their opinions on the matter. To respect their wishes, I isolated and removed bongo 2 and pate from the recording leaving in only the bongo 1, pa’u and dance stick parts. Fred then experimented with a second bongo accompaniment part but eventually decided that it “killed it a bit” because it made the ensemble rhythm too busy as a whole. After several playbacks, Fred and David concluded that a lapalapa recording consisting of only one bongo, pa’u and dance sticks sounded sonically superior to one that used the traditional instrumentation.
Sonic rationales influenced decisions regarding the synthesis of electronic instruments with traditional rhythms as well. Take for instance the compositional development of the fa’ataupati section of the Waratah piece. After recording a basic fa’ataupati rhythm, Fred felt that it needed an additional “build up” effect. To achieve this, he decided to record more pa’u hits throughout the piece than he would normally play. The first two figures below display the initial and reconstructed pa’u lines. While these additional hits did add rhythmic momentum, they did not provide a sufficient amount in Fred’s view. We then trialled the electronic kick and snare parts that were dismissed from the siva afi. As seen in the third figure below, I have used the pa’u line as a basis for developing kick and snare phrase in its place. Fred’s initial impression was that it “really builds it up you know what I mean”. After listening back to this several times however, he became somewhat hesitant over whether or not these electronic instruments were “too much”. Eventually, Fred decided to keep them for the additional “hype” they afforded this section of the piece. These twists and turns in thought demonstrate once again how a sonic-driven agenda can, to a large extent, determine what ends up in the final product and what ends up on the cutting room floor.
4.4 The Absence of Negotiation

While working on the pieces discussed above, I was asked to compose a series of Pacific pop songs that did not include traditional Samoan dance rhythms. The purpose of each song was to convey the notion of a unified Pacific. These would be used to accompany contemporary dance and drama acts in two live shows. The ethos behind the Pacific unity theme was not to homogenise different cultures but to celebrate their differences under the same banner. As Fred put it, they wanted the Pacific diaspora to know “where they were from, where their parents were from, no matter what island they were from” while at the same time “heading in the same direction to unite more”. Both Fred and Maryjane believed that helping young Pacific people discover their cultural heritage and membership in the Pacific diaspora would strengthen their confidence in their cultural identity.

I composed several pop style songs in accordance with this rationale that were immediately approved for the concerts without requests for change. The first piece, “Come Together Pasefika”, expressed the message inherent in its title through the
use of lyrics. It was used to accompany dancers who presented artefacts on stage that, according to Maryjane, “represented each culture, what we call measina or sacred artefacts from the culture”. Later this song became, in Maryjane’s words, something of an “anthem” for their dance company because it represented “the epitome of everything we were trying to portray and everything we live for, everything that is Matavai”. Under the same rationale, I wrote “To the West”. Its purpose was to motivate Pacific people to rise together in support of the Free West Papua movement. This was performed live while flags from different Pacific nations were hoisted as a tribute to West Papua. In Maryjane’s opinion, it called “for people not to forget about areas in the Pacific who are struggling and who are fighting. They are losing their lives and there is injustice and that song, it reinforced that”. The third piece I composed was “Tala Matavai”. Its lyrics served to stir up a sense of cultural pride in young Pacific people and an accompanying slideshow acknowledged Pacific elders who had recently passed. Fred commented on its youth appeal and ability to unite young members of the diaspora with their ancestors:

A lot of people see culture as something really traditional. They are a bit stuck in those ways but to be realistic this is a different world today and we have to adapt to it. I think the only way to adapt to it is exactly what the song does. I think it really just enabled people to walk out proud and connect a little bit closer to their elders and to their grandparents and their ancestors.

What is most interesting about all three songs is that they were accepted by my participants without conflict of any kind. Perhaps the reason for this lies in a statement made by Maryjane about “crossing the line” of what is often considered traditionally acceptable. In our first meeting, she noted that sometimes she would “cross the line” when selecting songs for contemporary sections of her shows by simply picking “songs that are relevant to the person doing the dance”. Although the song choice in this instance may not be traditional, “the message and the heart of it is still the same. It’s to love one another, it’s to ensure that our culture lives on…it’s
those core values of respect and love and community that matter”. Here the message of a song takes precedence over the medium. If we compare this to issues encountered when integrating traditional dance rhythms into new songs, we see that perceived cultural expectations may not always be problematic when dealing with non-traditional material.

4.5 Conclusion

The role cultural politics play in transferring traditional material to the realm of music production has been explored by Neuenfeldt (2001). After observing pre-production, production and post-production processes of a Torres Strait Island community album, he stated that “central to the project was an awareness, not always overt, of how cultural politics can impact significantly on an indigenous-based recording project” (2001, 143). For example, during the post-production phase, the Torres Strait Island musicians asked for the overdubs in their songs be performed by a “non-Islander” or “Islander” to yield what they referred to as an “Islander” or “non-Islander” feel (2001, 141-142). Oli Wilson (2014) conducted a similar investigation into the production processes of several music projects in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. He sought to demonstrate “how indigenous ideas concerning locality, both conceptual and physical, frame PNG notions of identification and belonging that underpin Papua New Guinean popular music production (2014, 426). In support of this claim, he highlighted their use of ples – “one’s place of origin and primary identification” – in music (2014, 426, 436). Engineers would achieve this by creating a “music bed” (an instrumental) in “the lokal style synonymous with their rural ples affiliation, and actively target their music for audiences with whom they share ples affiliation” (2014, 434, 436). Both papers exemplify how Melanesian ideas intersect with music production technology.

The impact such technology has had on cultural practices traditionally performed live has also been documented. Jennifer Cattermole investigated how Fijian musicians’

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8 Lokal music can be “understood as indigenised musical forms that exhibit a range of stylistic elements.” (Wilson 2014, 434).
musical customs were either maintained or adapted when recorded in studios (2007, 177). In particular, she illuminated the influence that multi-track technology has had on cultural ensemble performance practices. An example of this was seen in a multi-track recording issue experienced by a group of Fijian vocalists. When requested to record their parts individually, they could not perform to a satisfactory standard because they were outside their usual group setting. According to their band manager, they felt they had been “stripped naked in front of everyone” (2007, 178). To remedy this, the singers were instructed by the producer to practice separately outside studio sessions. Cattermole also pointed out that multi-tracking advantages could, in some cases, render group ensembles redundant. She recalled speaking to a Maravu band member who claimed he would record the ukulele, lead, rhythm and bass guitar and vocal parts on his own (2007, 178-179). These interactions with technology, she believed, mirror experiences of other indigenous artists engaging in similar practices globally but within the specific cultural boundaries of Fiji (2007, 184).

Similar experiences were encountered at the convergence of tradition and technology in my own study. The post production actions I took to acquire a live Pacific sound for Fred parallel the procedures performed in Wilson’s (2014) account of *ples* signifying and Neuenfeldt’s (2001) discussion of Islander vs non-Islander music overdubs. Studio recording obstacles similar to those mentioned by Cattermole (2007) were confronted by my participants when drumming without dancers. One particularly interesting point of difference is that in my study, the dance accompaniment custom was not lost but in fact used to guide the drummers through this particularly challenging situation. The influence of technology on cultural performance noted by Cattermole can also be seen in my collaboration. For example, the high-quality recording playbacks compelled my participants to make significant changes to their traditional rhythms.

While my research experience echoes those of others, the compositional collaborator approach adopted in it gave rise to new insights. My study did take place in similar

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9 In particular, she looks at musicians from the Fijian islands Taveuni and Qamea.
studio production settings to Neuenfeldt (2001), Cattermole (2007) and Wilson (2014) but its focus was not on the recording of ready-made songs. As a compositional collaborator, I was privy to the development of musical ideas that never ‘made it’ to the final mix and the reasons why. Take for instance our process of experimenting with electronic parts in the *siva afi*. Although my proposed kick and snare line generated an attractive level of hype for Fred, it was eventually ruled out by a greater vision, which was to showcase “the Pacific”. Conversely, the traditional style *pa’u* overdubs designed to generate additional hype in the *fa’ataupati* were replaced by the electronic parts excluded from the *siva afi*. In this case, the goal for increased sonic hype was of paramount concern. Thus, musical ideas were dismissed either for the purpose of ensuring the audibility of a particular Pacific sound or simply for attaining a particular sonic texture. Such cases reveal the complex level of negotiation that goes unseen in the formation of transcultural musical products.

The absence of cultural conflict in the last three pop songs arguably suggests that such concerns are more likely to arise when working traditional material into new songs. As Margaret Kartomi put it, it is common for “tensions” to arise when “two or more musical cultures have interacted and been resolved into a new unity” (1981, 245). In my case, these pop songs did not feature any traditional Pacific elements nor the negotiations that would often accompany the act of integrating them. They instead constitute contemporary expressions of diasporic identity made through global musical mediums. Of course, the reception of such musics is not always free from cultural criticism. Indeed, as discussed in chapter one, Henderson (2010) has commented on the criticism Samoan hip-hop artists have received. What I wish to point out here, however, is that cultural concerns seem less likely to affect compositional decision making when the aim of the music is to promote a progressive diasporic identity via non-traditional vehicles of expression.

The work of Michael Webb and Camellia Webb-Gannon (2016) can shed further light on my participants’ ‘all too easy’ acceptance of our Pacific pop music. While their study was not confined to non-traditional forms of music, they argued that a
nascent expression of a unified Melanesian regional identity, one closely resembling the Pacific unity vision of my participants, is driven by the “diasporic experience”. They believe it promotes key themes of postcolonial thinkers like Epeli Hau’ofa who stated that “a new sense of the region that is our own creation, based on our perceptions of our realities, is necessary for our survival in the dawning era” (Hau’ofa in Webb and Webb-Gannon, 2016, 86). If we view the pop songs in my collaboration from this perspective, they then form part of a modern diasporic movement that is less tied to cultural authenticity claims rooted in the past.

Indeed, the findings of this chapter further nuance defences of Pacific musics comprising both traditional and global musical elements. As discussed in Chapter One, scholars such as Zemke (2002) and Cattermole (2011) have argued against the idea that such musics signify cultural abandonment and instead celebrate them as expressions of modern Pacific identity. While identity rationales did play a role in the decision making of my collaborations – i.e. “anything Pacific” could be superimposed on traditional rhythms – many decisions were driven by personal sonic goals. In fact, the majority of Fred’s decisions to adjust parts of traditional rhythms or change instrumentation were based on what sounded ‘right’ sonically. By presenting such findings, I do not wish to challenge the notion that expressions of identity underpin many Pacific artists’ rationales for integrating their traditions into contemporary songs. Instead I aim to show that compositional processes can be much more complex than they may appear through retrospective analyses of song recordings.
Chapter Five: Alex

This chapter lays out several compositional strategies employed to develop a selection of works in a musical style I have termed *kuki jazz* (music comprising a synthesis of traditional Cook Island dance rhythms with jazz piano). I begin by outlining Alex’s key rationales for participating in our collaboration and the roles we played in it. An introduction to the *pakau tarekareka ura pa’u* (Cook Island drumming ensemble) and traditional Cook Island rhythms is then provided. Following this, I discuss the score-based style of documentation used to supplement my ethnographic observations. I then trace the emergence of “danceability authentication”, which served to address concerns Alex had over the reception of our music within the Cook Island community. Some concluding remarks on this chapter’s contribution to Pacific music studies concerning dance drumming practices, issues of ownership, audience expectations and indigenous agency are then made.

5.1 Alex

In my first meeting with Alex, he stated the key rationales underpinning his interest in collaborating. His primary reason for collaborating was to find a means of making Cook Island drumming appealing to younger generations. To him, this was vital because “they are the ones who are going to carry the legacy on”. While he held immense respect for Cook Island traditions, he stated that “tradition gets boring sometimes. The world is changing. We need to keep up”. His urge for musical innovation was not only grounded in a desire to preserve tradition but partly in an ambition to help put “the Cook Islands on the map” in Sydney.

Together we devised a culturally sensitive approach to combining Cook Island drumming with jazz piano. The agreement reached was that the Cook Island rhythms in the compositions would remain untouched. Alex felt that this would help us evade
criticism from those bent on preserving traditional style Cook Island rhythms. He did of course admit that in the end “you can’t always impress everyone”. Alex’s role then involved providing the rhythms and making executive calls on whether or not my proposed jazz piano lines blended with them. My role was to draft piano parts around these rhythms until Alex approved of them.

5.2 Cook Island Drumming

Alex leads a drum ensemble that is known in Cook Island as *pakau tarekareka ura pa’u*. Its primary role is to provide rhythmic accompaniment for the *ura pa’u* (drum dance) and, in particular, signal action sequences (McLean 1999, 58). The instrumentation typically used in it consists of a *pa’u* (large drum), *pa’u mango* (small skin-drum), *tini* (kerosene tin or cabin bread tin) and one to five *pate* (slit-gong) or *tokere* (slit-gong) (McLean 1999, 60). Our group was comprised of three *tokere*, one *tikitaa* (a small *tokere*), two *pate*, one *tini*, three *pa’u mango* and one *pa’u* that were played by a group of six drummers. The *pate* is often beaten with a single stick and produces high or low pitches depending on whether it is beaten in its centre or tapped on one end. The *tokere* functions in the same way but is played with two sticks (McLean 1999, 58-60). Alex noted that the *pa’u* generally sets the tempo, the *tokere* carries the lead rhythm and the smaller *pate* and *pa’u mango* switch between either replicating the lead rhythm or playing repetitive accompaniment parts. He also mentioned that adept *pate* and *pa’u mango* players often do “their own cuts here and there” spontaneously when swapping between lead and accompaniment parts so as to add “additional flavour”.

The rhythms of the ensemble are vital to dancers because, as Alex put it, “if you don’t know the beat, you’re not going to be able to memorise the routine”. He saw the beat as “a representation of the [dance] counts”. Alex explained that his particular rhythms were not traditional per se but composed and performed in a traditional style. Being able to create rhythms of this sort was a compositional skill

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1 The *pa’u* is played with bare hands or the tips of the fingers (McLean 1999, 56); There are two forms of slit-gongs, the smaller one is known as *pate* in Rarotonga, and the larger one the *tokere* in Aitutaki, Mauke and Mitiaio and *ove* on Atiu and Mangaia (McLean 1999, 57).
passed down to Alex from his parents: “I was born into it, I see it, I breathe it, I do it every day”.

5.3 Documentation of Musical Transculturation

The way I documented research for this collaboration extends beyond ethnographic observations to practice-as-research (PaR). More specifically, it involved detailing the collaborative compositional practices in both score and text form. As Nelson explains, “it is the resonance between the various kinds of evidence – documentation of practice and conceptual frameworks – which ultimately makes the tacit explicit and, together, yields new insights” (Nelson 2013, 90). Accordingly, this chapter illuminates in both written and transcription form how verbal negotiations gave rise to musical outcomes. Nelson also argues that documenting “how the arts function in production, composition and reception has great potential to produce new knowledge” (2013, 89). Indeed, by transcribing my initial attempts to fuse piano lines with Cook Island rhythms, I could identify precisely where I failed to meet Alex’s expectations, which, in turn, enabled me to come up with solutions. These solutions were conceptualised into compositional strategies that are arguably useful forms of “new knowledge” for other practitioners wishing to undertake similar cross-cultural projects.

5.4 Danceability Authentication

After transcribing one of Alex’s recorded rhythms, I developed a sense of where I felt key emphasis points occurred. In Figure 5.1, I have used red boxes (hereafter referred to as red zones) to designate these. Such points were not outlined by one instrument alone but different instruments at various points. In bar one, for instance, the *pa’u mango*, *tikitaa*, *tokere* 2 and *tokere* 3 are in the first red zone while only the *pa’u mango*, *tikitaa* and *tokere* 3 are in the third. Thus, the ensemble worked as a complex unit to delineate these key accents.
The next compositional step involved creating piano phrases in rhythmic alignment with the key emphasis points. As seen in Figure 5.2, I have utilised both the bass and treble clef to achieve this. In bar one, the bass clef notes are placed within the first and second red zones. Subsequently, the treble clef part joins the bass in the second red zone and stands alone in the last. This pattern is repeated in the second bar. By the same formula – utilization of independent and interdependent treble and bass clef parts – bars three and four feature the use of harmonic rhythm and arpeggios to mark red zones.
Figure 5.2 Rhythmic Alignment

After playing the piano lines to Alex, he expressed concern that they clashed with the log drum parts rhythmically. While he admitted that the fusion sounded “cool because it was different”, he also felt that “everyone would say this is not changing where it should be”. To show where these changes were ‘meant’ to be, he performed the choreography to his beat while verbally marking key rhythms with exclamations. This revealed the link between rhythm and action. That is, how rhythms served to emphasise certain movements and signal upcoming dance sequences. These are outlined in the green zones below. The overlapping green and red boxes indicate where I had already accented some of the key rhythms in the piano part.
With this information, I redesigned the piano lines so that they aligned with the key dance rhythms. As seen in Figure 5.4 from “Aka Piri”, these piano parts are significantly less complex than the original ones. In bars one and two, the chord in the treble clef and melodic bass line sit in the first set of green boxes. Subsequently, harmonic rhythm is used in bars three and four to achieve the same effect. After playing this to Alex, he responded with “this is on track and blending”. Evidently, constructing piano parts that satisfy Alex’s requirements would not be possible without knowledge of the key dance rhythms.
This compositional strategy – aligning piano parts with key dance rhythms – enabled me to meet Alex’s expectations in other pieces via different techniques. In order to synchronise piano parts with faster key dance rhythms, I had to draw on a number of compositional methods. Take for instance the method employed in the excerpt below from “Maine”. Before discussing this, I must point out that the key dance rhythms are hereafter represented by a single ura pa’u (drum dance) part positioned above Figures 5.5-5.8. To match the short quick ura pa’u phrases in measures three to six and ten to thirteen, I designed a string of three note motifs. To conclude both ura pa’u phrases in measures seven to nine and fourteen to fifteen, I used harmonic rhythm.
To align piano parts with fast ura pa’u phrases of greater length, I developed another technique. As seen in the excerpt below from “Ura Tokotoko”, I used fast melodic
lines that ended with chords. In measures eighteen to nineteen, this was achieved through the use of arpeggios followed by a chord. Measures twenty-two to twenty-three display the same approach of quick phrases finishing with chords but through the use of melodic lines rather than arpeggios.
After listening to several pieces – “Vaka”, “Rutu Viviki”, “Reureu” and “Kuki Jazz” – that exhibited these techniques, Alex said he was very pleased that I had “actually sat there and made little melodies that blend in exactly right”. He also added that if I was to “play the jazz song all the way through without our beat, I could still hear it”. This served as confirmation that his rhythms had not been obscured by my piano phrases.

5.5 Dance Phrasing and Harmonic Considerations

In addition to key dance rhythms, another aspect of dance to consider was phrasing. That is, a series of rhythms outlined by dance movements that formed rhythmic phrases. The start and end points of these phrases were marked clearly by Alex’s choreography. This information was vital for timing harmonic progressions correctly. While I did this successfully in the previous excerpts, I did at times overlook the significance of harmony in relation to dance phrasing. The excerpt below provides one such case. The brackets displayed above the ura pa’u rhythms outline the length of each dance phrase. Alex felt that more than one chord per dance phrase caused “confusion” because each chord change, in his opinion, indicated the beginning of a new dance phrase. As seen below, my chord changes were too frequent and as a result obscured Alex’s dance phrasing. To resolve this issue, I altered my harmonic movements to one chord per dance phrase. As seen below in an excerpt from “Ta’iri” I have used F# minor and the D major chord vamps to achieve this. Each vamp lasts two bars. Although there are some harmonic embellishments in the second and fourth bars, these do not change the prevailing harmony established by the vamps. After presenting this to Alex, he confirmed that I had come “in at the right time, stopped at the right time and come back in again so yeah that’s really good”.

\[2\] Unlike the pieces previously discussed, “Ta’iri” was not carefully composed in score form. After becoming very familiar with the ura pa’u phrases for this piece, I improvised the “Ta’iri” piano lines over a sequence of chords. Consequently, only a solo transcription is provided rather than a full score.
Dance phrasing also revealed periodic shifts in pace. More specifically, movements from quadruple to duple division of the beat. Alex had noted earlier that the feel of his rhythms “change all the time, like in-between we’ll add a slower beat” but this only became clear to me after seeing the dance choreography and hearing dance counts. With this knowledge, I composed piano parts accordingly. Take for instance the excerpt below from “Aka Piri”. The first half of it is in 4/4 (apart from bar fifty-six) and the second half is in 4/8. To mark this shift, the chord movements in the former are at half the pace of those in the second. Once again, these rhythmic changes would have arguably been undetectable without the dance counts.
5.6 Conclusion

The compositional negotiations made with Alex evince a manifestation of the
danceability authentication phenomenon different to that discussed by Neuenfeldt
and Costigan (2004). In Nuenfeldt and Costigan’s study, the composer ensured that
the marap dance could be performed to his transcultural music. As with Alex,
maintaining danceability was the method by which his resultant music could be
deemed a ‘bona fide’ cultural product. Composing music for dance, however, was
never the goal of our collaboration. For us, danceability authentication informed the
process for generating piano lines. Such findings demonstrate how important the
audibility of traditional rhythmic structures was for Alex in the pursuit of
transcultural music not explicitly linked to dance. In short, it was the music’s
danceability that inevitably made it ‘feel right’.

The engagements with perceived cultural expectations in my collaboration intersect
with ideas discussed by Kalissa Alexeyeff (2004) on concerns regarding “Island
Music”. Alexeyeff noted that Island music – a form of pop music with traditional Cook Island elements – though widely celebrated, has been viewed by Cook Island musicians, along with dancers, as the “prostitution of ‘traditional’ forms” (2004, 155). Such ambivalence, in Alexeyeff’s view, was “symptomatic of concerns about cultural homogenisation, loss of ownership and control over artistic practices” (2004, 155-156). Although Alex and I did not engage with pop music, the concern of a tradition being swamped by an ‘outside’ genre was certainly present in our collaboration. Indeed, while Alex praised the fusion of jazz piano with Cook Island rhythms for its ring of innovation, he expressed concern that the former obscured the latter. Alexyeff’s work is instructive here in that she views such feelings not as paradoxical but a natural process of cultural production in our post-colonial setting. She sees Cook Island cultural production as a “work of imagination”, which is “neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern” (Appadurai 1996, 4 in Alexeyeff 2004, 155). Our conflict and resolution processes thus arguably form a natural practice of annexing global jazz into our modern practice of kuki jazz. That said, our compositional processes offer a means of dealing with the concerns about loss of ownership, artistic control and cultural homogenization raised by Alexeyeff. By allowing Alex to make executive calls on proposed musical ideas, he maintained a level of creative control and ownership over the music. As for homogenisation, the negotiations we undertook to maintain Cook Island rhythmic danceability, in Alex’s eyes, enabled us to prevent any ‘take-over’ threat posed by jazz piano.

While creative control can serve to regulate foreign musical influences, Dan Bendrups’s work (2009) highlights how indigenous composers have purposely excluded indigenous components to reach particular listeners. He credited the success of Rapanuan singer/songwriter Mito Manutomatoma to his ability to anticipate and meet the expectations of his target Chilean audience. To achieve this, the Rapanuan language was seldom used so that much of the song could be sung in Spanish. The Rapanui tributes were made through references to the Rapanui homeland in the
Spanish language, along with Rapanuian style instrumentation (2009, 120-121). Alex, on the other hand, did the reverse. He placed confines on our use of jazz piano for the sake of appealing to his ‘inside’ Cook Island community. By juxtaposing these cases, we see that both, despite their differences, work to achieve the same end – to generate “a medium in which musical fusion and hybridity are celebrated for their contributions to the construction and mediation of cultural identity” (2009, 126). Thus, the place of musical traditions in modern contexts, in my case Cook Island drumming, is to an extent contingent on who the composer aims to reach.

Kirsty Gilliespie’s work (2010) highlights the importance of “indigenous agency” that is enacted when weaving ‘the traditional’ with ‘the contemporary’ in cases like that of danceability authentication. She demonstrated how Duna composers used a traditional method of song writing – “recycling of distinct melodic formulas” – to create new material (2010, 184). More specifically, Gillespie focuses on the combination of traditional “fixed melodic structures” with “lyrical innovation” (2010, 190). Instead of simply celebrating this as an ingenious means of cultural preservation, she applauds the composers for harnessing their musical heritage on their terms (2010, 211). While Alex and I did not deploy any specific traditional method of composition, we did compose within the confines of a traditional dance drumming framework. In light of Gilliespie’s study, attention must be given to the fact that danceability authentication was an emergent phenomenon in our collaboration. That is, a method we intentionally devised to meet our compositional aims. Perhaps then what is significant in my collaboration with Alex is not only the survival of a dance drumming tradition in a contemporary setting but Alex’s enactment of “indigenous agency” therein.
Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks on Musical Identity

This thesis has contributed to a central discussion in Polynesian music studies as it has sought to answer the question of how we might better understand the way social, cultural and political views fluctuate and crystallise during the creation of transcultural musical works. The need for a real-time investigation into expression of identity in Polynesian music was demonstrated through a review of literature that highlighted the liminal nature of musical identity. As Frith notes, identity is almost always context dependent – a description of “one’s place in a dramatised pattern of relationships” (1996, 125). The analysis of cross-cultural collaborations set out in this thesis illuminated these dramatisations as it documented how desires to be considered culturally authentic, sonically relevant, and identifiably part of particular cultural groups ebbed and flowed depending on the nature of particular projects and the background of particular collaborators. The compositions that emerged from these negotiations gives musical shape to this new knowledge.

Far from approaching this project with a static sense of how Pacific identity might be expressed in music, participants in this study are shown to have embraced a plurality of mindsets as they sought to design new transcultural music with an audible Pacific voice. Anne Marie Tupuola’s (2004) work highlights the way such plurality of mind functions outside the realm of music. Tupuola’s central critique calls into question “secured identity” models – systems built on the belief that all youth undergo identity metamorphoses that end in “an ultimate sense of self or single identity” (2004, 87). Instead of viewing identity as a linear concept, Tupuola, like Frith (1996), highlights its transmutable nature by mapping out identity movements among several of her participants. For example, some youth in her study self-identified as “PIs” (Pacific Islanders) or took on global gang labels such as “crips” or “bloods” in order to ‘fit in’ with their peer groups (2004, 94). Outside these contexts, however, they often referred to themselves as “Kiwis” or “New Zealanders” (2004,
Such examples speak to Tupuola’s participants’ ability to take on different identity mindsets according to their surroundings. To describe this experience, Tupuola borrows Kreb’s notion of the “edgewalker” – a term used to denote one’s ability to maintain a sense of continuity while walking “the edge between ... cultures in the same persona” (Krebs 1999, 9 in Tupuola 2004, 89). Tupuola holds that her participants were “crossing between cultures and adopting identifications far removed from their genealogy and local geography” (2004, 96). The shifting musical mindsets identified in this thesis reveal a similar tapestry of thought. For instance, Tai’s apparent ideological compromises can be understood as an extension of the “edgewalker” concept. His self-identification as Samoan was evident in his attempt to preserve recognizable traditional Samoan rhythms throughout much of our collaboration. The decision he later made to modify tradition for a contemporary sound signified a desire to find musical relevance in a different sonic space. Instead of treating these decisions as paradoxical, the “edgewalker” concept helps us understand how movement between multiple mindsets wrap together in the identities of particular individuals. In other words, the concept focuses us on how individuals shift positions as a matter of course when expressing ‘voice’ in both spoken conversation and musical settings.

Kirsten McGavin’s (2014) study in turn demonstrates the importance of pan-ethnic identity labels for members of the Pacific diaspora living in Australia (i.e. “Islander”, “Pacific Islander” and “Nesian”). Such terms, McGavin believes, serve a dual purpose amongst those in the Pacific diaspora – in some cases unifying cultural groups and at other times reinforcing difference in aid of various socio-political goals (2014, 142). Specifically, McGavin notes that despite the linguistic and cultural differences amongst members of the Pacific Youth Association of Queensland (PYAQ), pan-ethnic labels serve to establish commonalities (i.e. the “shared practice of the ‘Pacific way’”) in order to set up a framework for the advancement of Pacific youth in their area (2014, 142). At the same time, the PYAQ offers events aimed at strengthening individual Islander identities. At these events, elders from different Pacific nations share forms of traditional knowledge from their respective island homelands (2014, 142). The unification of the Pacific diaspora and simultaneous
strengthening of unique ethnicity in cases like these helps McGavin establish how we might find “unity in diversity” (2014, 142).

The notion of “unity in diversity” surfaced in my collaboration with Matavai. While they took pride in presenting three traditional Samoan dance rhythms in one piece, they also used generic sounding Pacific conch shells as part of a stated agenda to give the overall song a Pacific diasporic resonance. These compositional decisions align with McGavin’s belief that members of the Pacific diaspora are often keen to celebrate their cultural identity by binding together both their individual ethnic status with their shared diasporic positions (2014, 142). Whether or not the unity in diversity idea is detectable in the recording of this piece, it is important to see that the concept certainly extends into the realm of compositional decision-making.

James Rimumutu George and Lena Rodriguez’s work attests to the “transmutable” nature of identity (2009, 3). They note that once upon a time Pacific tattooing only took place in the islands and that members of the Pacific diaspora now engage in this practice abroad. George and Rodriguez deem such traveling of culture as an act that maintains tradition by bringing it “home” (2009, 17). In the words of arts curator Giles Petersen, “they’re carrying their culture with them, they’re adapting to the new environment but they’re still maintaining or struggling to maintain and honour the traditional values” (Petersen 2000 in George and Rodriguez 2009, 18). In parallel to this phenomenon, the musical work documented in this thesis points to the ways members of the Pacific diaspora enact strategies that ensure their culture remains audible in a globalised world.

The danceability negotiations held with Alex serve as a case in point. Alex’s effort to preserve traditional Cook Island dance rhythmic structures reflect his desire to carry this tradition into a new musical setting. In the same way that Pacific tattooing has been practiced across the diaspora, we sought to maintain tradition via danceability authentication. Petersen’s proposition that members of the Pacific diaspora are “struggling to maintain and honour…traditional values” can be seen in the complex
negotiations required to satisfy Alex’s musical aims (Petersen 2000 in George and Rodriguez 2009, 18). By assuming a collaborator role, I not only unveiled the details of this “struggle” but was able to glean that it was a concern deeply rooted in perceived audience expectation.

By studying expressions of Polynesian identity from the ‘other end’ – the making as opposed to the listening of music – this thesis has revealed the constantly shifting positionalities that constellate in the musical ideas we put out into the world. Simply put, musical expression does not always reflect a coherent thought process, even though it may be interpreted as extending from a particular expressive aim. Transcultural musical expression of the sort under examination here often spirals out of a nest of challenges that present during the formation process – perceived audience expectations, various sonic preferences, the clash of conservative and progressive cultural ideologies, familiarity with and availability of certain production technologies, etc. This reality does not render the expressions of identity scholars have discerned in a variety of transcultural music unreasonable. It simply shows that transcultural Polynesian musical works emerge from a complex and dynamic web of possibilities that are nearly impossible to determine before work on a particular piece of music begins. It is hoped that identifying such complexity might lead to more nuanced research on musical identities in the future.
Reference List


Cattermole, Jennifer. “Oh, Reggae but Different!” The Localisation of Roots


Composition Portfolio Audio Files

*Nafanua*

*Tidalwave*

*Crawling*

*Waratahs*

*Come Together Pasefika*

*Tala Matavai*

*To the West*

*Maine*

*Aka Piri*

*Ura Tokotoko*

*Vaka*

*Ta’iri*

*Rutu Viviki*

*Reureu*

*Kuki Jazz*
Composition
Portfolio Scores
Beyond the ocean's grave,
She paddles

where the shadows hide,
She's
beat-ing with the rythm of the tide.

She hears the ocean's

etc.

cry,

Now here spirit's alive.

P1

P2

P

Voice

Kbd

P1

P2

P

11

Voice

Kbd

13

Voice

Kbd

P1

P2

P
And now the mist has fallen,

She steps into her calling.

Vo: 

Kbd.

P1

P2

P

Administrative
Can you hear me

C.7

G-/C

P1

P2

P
Tidalwave

\( \frac{d}{dt} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2} = 1 \)

Intro

Voice

Flute

Keyboard

Synth Bass

Pate 1

Pate 2

Drum Set
We're fighting off the winds of fear,
My confidence is in my spear.
I tell my-self const-tantly, My peo-ple nav-i-gate the stars and seas so
Pre-chorus I

I'm tidal wave

no I

I'm tidal wave
Oh I'm gonna ride this wave so high so high I'm coming like a

D- Bb\(^\text{A7}\) C\(^6\) D-

S. Bass

Perc.

Dr.
Chorus 1 & 3

Voice:

Tidal wave
tidal wave
Tidal wave
Better get out the way
I'm coming like a

Fl.

D-
B6\(^\text{7}\)
C6
D-

Kbd.

D-
B6\(^\text{7}\)
C6
D-

S. Bass

Perc.

Finger clicks only on D.S.

Perc.

Dr.
When my souls so cold and afraid,
On the ocean on unfamiliar planes,
Close my eyes remind myself again, Your
pride resides in me your spirits in my veins so I'm tidal wave

I'm tidal wave

C6

D-

D-

Bb\(\frac{6}{7}\)

S. Bass

Perc.

Perc.

Dr.
Voice: 

no I

I'm tid - al wave

Fl.

C6

Kbd.

C6

S. Bass

Perc.

Perc.

Dr.
Oh I'm gonna ride this wave so high so high I'm coming like a
ti-dal wave  ti-dal wave  ti-dal wave  Better get out the way I'm coming like a
I'm coming like a tidal wave

D.S. al Fine
Tidalwave

\[ \text{Voice} \]

\[ \text{Flute} \]

\[ \text{Keyboard} \]

\[ \text{Synth Bass} \]

\[ \text{Pate 1} \]

\[ \text{Pate 2} \]

\[ \text{Drum Set} \]
Verse 1

Vocals 8vb

We're fighting off the winds of fear.

My confidence is in my spear.
I tell myself constantly, My people navigate the stars and seas so
Pre-chorus 1

I'm tidal wave
no I
I'm tidal wave
Oh I'm gon-na ride this wave so high so high I'm com-ing like a
Voice: tidal wave tidal wave tidal wave Better get out the way I'm coming like a

Fl.: D- Bb\(^7\) C\(^6\) D-

Kbd.: D- Bb\(^7\) C\(^6\) D-

S. Bass:

Perc.: Finger clicks only on D.S.

Dr.:
When my souls so cold and afraid,
On the ocean on unfamiliar planes,
Close my eyes remind myself again,
Your
pride resides in me your spirits in my veins so I'm tidal wave
Oh I'm gonna ride this wave
so high
so high
I'm coming like a
Voice:

**ttal wave** like a **ttal wave**

Fl.

Kbd.

S. Bass

Perc.

Perc.

Dr.

D.S. al Fine
7

V

\[ \text{Through me blood} \]

Pno.

\[ \text{Gm7} \]

S. Bass

Dr.

P

3x

9

Verse 1

V

\[ \text{I just can't get it no,} \]

Pno.

S. Bass

Dr.
I just can't get it to the other side, Mmm mmm mmm - m-

This brown canoe brown canoe,
Through the concrete tide, Mmm mmm mmm-m-mmm mmm mmm

My identity is in disguise
got my moth-er's skin and my fa-ther's eyes
But I want to hear you whisper

To heal my heart and cold
bones
I'm lost
but I still feel you

crawl - - ing

Chorus 2
Crawling
Ab6
In
Through me blood

Two shadows, lost in the dark,
Drink-ing, drown-ing in the blood,
Of this figh-ing and ma-king love,

ma-king love. skin-ning all these dia-
monds from py-thons
Switching all these islands for high-lands,

Hearing all these

Si-rens and si-lence, si-

tence so lost but I still feel you Crawling crawling

Bridge
I still feel you Crawling crawling I still feel you

Db

I still feel you Crawling crawling I still feel you

Db

Crawling crawling I still feel you I still feel you I still feel you

Eb-

Pno.

S. Bass

P

Dr.
Waratahs
Come Together Pasefika

\( \text{Verse 1} \)

Vox 1: We're rising in your name Pa-ci-fi-

Vox 2: Pa-ci-fi-

Vox 3: Pa-ci-fi-

Vox 4: We're rising in your name

Vox 5: We're rising in your name

Keyboards

Synth Bass

Electronic Percussion

Pate

Drum Set
We won't stop fighting for our place Pacifi-
Come see what I can see

Kbd.

S. Bass

Perc.

Pate

tacet on D.S.

Dr.
And dream what we could be

One love___

And dream what we could be

One love___

One love___

One love___

And dream what we could be

One love___

C.7    Bb(add4)    G.7

Kbd.

S. Bass

Perc.

Pate

Dr.
One heart for the people

V1

V2

V3

V4

V5

A♭⁵⁷

B♭₁³(sus4)

Kbd.

S. Bass

Perc.

Pate

Dr.
our way Come together Pacifica
To Coda

Verse 2

V1

(8)

together our way Been through the fire

V2

(8)

together our way Been through the fire

V3

(8)

together our way

V4

(8)

together our way

V5

(8)

together our way Been through the fire

Eb/G

A♭7

C.9

Kbd.

S. Bass

Perc.

Pate

Dr.

2nd time only
The trials couldn't hold us down.

Pacifica together our way

Bb(add4)  Eb/G  A\b^47

S. Bass

Perc.

Pate

Dr.
Tala Matavai

\[ \sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \]

\( \int = 120 \)

**Voice**

**BV's 1**

**BV's 2**

**BV's 3**

**Keyboard**

**Synth Bass**

**Percussion**

**Toms**

**Drum Set**
Verse 1

Standing on your shoulders,

Feels like standing in the sky.

A-7  G(add4)  F/A7  A-7  G(add4)

Kbd.

S. Bass

Perc.

Dr.
You're more than memories,
I feel you by my side.
So I keep moving.

I feel you by my side.
Keep moving.

Keep moving.

I feel you by my side.
Keep moving.

I feel you by my side.
Keep moving.

Keep moving.

A-7
G(add4)
F\textsuperscript{7}
C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C

C
through the tide I, I will stand through the fire. I know you're walking,

through the tide I, I will stand through the fire. I know you're walking,

through the tide I, I will stand through the fire. I know you're walking,
Walk-ing by my side  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride
Walk-ing by my side  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride
Walk-ing by my side  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride
Walk-ing by my side  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride  Pa-ci-fi-ca pride
In the wait-ing  Through the pain,
In the wait-ing  Through the pain,
In the wait-ing  Through the pain,
In the wait-ing  Through the pain,
I hear you call
Out my name,
You're gon-na make it through the rain

I hear you call
Out my name,
You're gon-na make it through the rain

I hear you call
Out my name,
You're gon-na make it through the rain

D₆(add2)

A₇

D₆(add2)

A₇

Dr.

4
To Coda ø
Verse 2

Pa-ci-fi-ca pride
Pa-ci-fi-ca pride.

When I took a look in-side,
I had a moment to realise.

I had a moment to realise.

I had a moment to realise.

I had a moment to realise.

A-7

G(add4)

F47

A-7

G(add4)

F47

Dr.
You've been watching me from the other side,

Sometimes I
see you in my own eyes.

see you in my own eyes.

see you in my own eyes.

see you in my own eyes.

G\textsuperscript{add4} \quad F\textsuperscript{maj7}

G\textsuperscript{add4} \quad F\textsuperscript{maj7}

Percussion Interlude
Keep moving through the tide, I will stand
through the fire. I know you're walking, Walking by my side Paci-fi-ca pride Paci-fi-ca pride In the waiting

through the fire. I know you're walking, Walking by my side Paci-fi-ca pride Paci-fi-ca pride In the waiting

through the fire. I know you're walking, Walking by my side Paci-fi-ca pride Paci-fi-ca pride In the waiting

through the fire. I know you're walking, Walking by my side Paci-fi-ca pride Paci-fi-ca pride In the waiting

Kbd. A7

S. Bass

Perc.

Perc.

Dr.
Through the pain, I hear you call
Out my name, You're gon-na

Through the pain, I hear you call
Out my name, You're gon-na

Through the pain, I hear you call
Out my name, You're gon-na

Through the pain, I hear you call
Out my name, You're gon-na

D\text{add}2

A-7

S. Bass

Perc.

Perc.

Dr.
make it through the rain  Pacifica pride  Pacifica pride.

Voice

Voice

Voice

Voice

make it through the rain  Pacifica pride  Pacifica pride

Kbd. F\textsuperscript{27}

S. Bass

Perc.

Perc.

Dr.
To The West

$\frac{d}{=122}$

Percussion fades in

Voice

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

Piano

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

Electric Bass

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

Fala

Fala rhythm from the Tu'is track 'Tamase (Traditional Samoan)'

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

Voice

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D}^\#_7\quad \text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

Pno.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D}^\#_7\quad \text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

E. Bass

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D}^\#_7\quad \text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]

Perc.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{D}^\#_7\quad \text{F}^\#_7\quad \text{E}^{(\text{add}4)}\quad \text{D}
\end{array}
\]
Come with me, Let's sail the sea
They're on their knees, praying for peace
(To the west, to the west Papua)
Where people hide, In shadowed skies (To the west, to the west Pa-pu-a)
Hear their plea, for the fire to cease

Can you see, broken dreams (To the west, to the west Pa-pu-a)
Children cry no more tears to cry
Tears of blood, Rain-ing down (To the west, to the west Pa - pu - a)

But I see the pain

Chorus 1 & 2

Lest we for - get, The blood of our own line.
Lest we forget, all the roots of the trees.

Lest we forget, we wail when the ocean cries.
Lest we forget, Pacifica.
Maine
Aka Piri

Movement 2 introduction

Ura Pa'u

Piano

\[ \sum \]
Movement 2

Aka Piri
Ura Tokotoko
Ura Tokotoko

24

B- A E/G#

E/G# C#/E# F#-

26

E D A

A F#-
Ura Tokotoko

Part 3
\(\frac{\text{\#}}{\text{\#}}=154\)

54

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{A/C}\# & \text{D} & \text{D}_{(47)} & \text{D}^\text{9} & \text{C}_\#^\text{9}\end{array}\]

60

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{F}_{\#}^\text{9/C}\# & \text{C}_\#^8\end{array}\]