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Mana Wahine: Māori Women in Music

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Abstract

Moana Maniapoto and Hinewehi Mohi are famous for having pioneered a distinctively Māori form of popular and political music in the 1990s, and they continue to produce remarkable contemporary waiata for audiences in Aotearoa and overseas. Their successes have inspired other artists, and more importantly, they have both made significant contributions to the empowerment and strengthening of te reo Māori and mātaranga Māori. Recognising what has happened since the 1990s, this paper takes a constructive look at the current state of Māori music and considers how to produce a new wave of creativity for the 21st century for new generations of Māori and Indigenous composers, audiences and performers. How does popular music performance make a powerful contribution to the revitalisation of te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori? Maree Sheehan will lead a conversation with Moana Maniapoto and Hinewehi Mohi to discuss the lasting significance of their work for Māori music and culture, twenty-five years later.

Introduction

This paper uses a Mana Wahine perspective to look at how two Māori women – Moana Maniapoto and Hinewehi Mohi – express Māori women’s knowledge and understandings through their waiata. Mana Wahine affirms and upholds a strong cultural concept, which locates Māori women foremost in relation to each other and (our) mana as women of particular genealogical groupings. In doing so, Mana Wahine situates Māori women in relation to the outside world and reaffirms (our) mana as Māori, indigenous women. Mana Wahine addresses issues of race and gender and places Māori women’s struggles within two distinct societies (Smith, 1992, p.62).

Moana Maniapoto and Hinewehi Mohi are famous for having pioneered a distinctively Māori form of popular and political music in the 1990s, and they continue to produce remarkable contemporary waiata for audiences in Aotearoa and overseas. Their successes have inspired other artists, and more importantly, they have both made significant contributions to the empowerment and strengthening of te reo Māori and mātaranga Māori. Despite Maniapoto and Wehi’s successes, New Zealand mainstream radio remains largely unsupportive of music in te reo Māori. Recognising what has happened since the 1990s, this paper takes a constructive look at the current state of Māori music and considers how to produce a new wave of creativity for the 21st century for new generations of Māori and Indigenous composers, audiences and performers. How does popular music performance make a powerful contribution to the revitalisation of te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori?

Traditional Māori waiata

Waiata (song, chant) has been a traditional medium through which Māori knowledge; histories, culture and language have been passed down from one generation to another (Ka’ai-Mahuta, 2010; McLean, 1996; Orbell, 1991; Smith, 2003). Waiata have also been utilised as a traditional form to express

emotion such as anger, love, sadness, and desire (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2010). Traditional waiata were and remain an integral aspect of mātauranga Māori as an expression of cultural identity and a means of retention of both the knowledge and the art itself. Contemporary waiata Māori from the 1980s to the present continue to express Māori knowledge and culture through lyrical and musical elements and is no different in this way.

Contemporary Māori waiata

Between the 1970s and 2000s, some contemporary waiata Māori were recognised as songs written as an expression and commentary of the social, political and economic struggles that Māori were facing at the time (Hauti, 2010). None were more esteemed as Ngoingoi Pēwhairangi and Delvanus Prime who contributed to the empowerment and strengthening of te reo Māori and mātaranga Māori in a distinctively Māori form of popular and political music with waiata 'Poi E' and 'E Ipo'. The composition of 'Poi E' was a conscious decision by Pēwhairangi to write about her love of te reo and to raise awareness about the language and to promote Māori culture among young Māori people (Ka'ai, 2008, p.87). This was done in collaboration with Dalvanus Prime and the Paatea Māori Club.

At this time, the adverse effects of British colonisation on Māori, which include urbanisation, land loss and language shift (O'Regan 2000; Smith 2000; Walker 1990), resulted in the loss of transmission of te reo Māori occurred within many whānau. The action taken by Pēwhairangi to use contemporary mainstream pop music as a vehicle to reach young Māori was significant, because Māori in both urban and rural areas were not represented in mainstream media domains. When 'E Ipo' lyrics, written in te reo Māori by Pēwhairangi and performed by Prince Tui Teke, reached number one of the New Zealand music charts in 1982, and subsequently 'Poi E' in 1984, they traversed into mainstream territory for the first times in history. These waiata were supremely successful in promoting te reo Māori and

Māori culture throughout New Zealand.

Contemporary Māori waiata written between the 1980s and 2000s continued as a musical commentary of the social, political and economic struggles that Māori were facing at the time and as songs of protest (Hauiti, 2010). These voices of protest were heard in the lyrics and music of 'Devolution' composed by Ngātai Huata from the group *Black Katz*. It expressed the concern of Māori at how the New Zealand Government were selling off state owned assets and the deregulation and dismantling of Māori Affairs Department (Huata as cited in Hauiti, 2010).

Another significant composer and performer was Jo Williams from the band *Aotearoa*, who composed the first New Zealand reggae bilingual waiata 'Marangā Ake Ae' in 1984, with lyrics such as 'freedom from oppression'. The band *Herbs* composed waiata as a voice of protest against nuclear weapons and testing in the Pacific. Hirini Melbourne composed one of the most well-known protest songs in the 1980s, called 'Ngā Iwi E', to promote Māori rights, highlight racial discrimination, and confront injustices perpetrated by the New Zealand Government. It also became the 'go to' waiata (Harawera as cited in Hauiti, 2010) for Māori protestors, especially during protest marches against the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour (Hauiti, 2010).

By the mid 1980s Māori language revitalisation efforts were growing steadily through the Māori Language Act of 1987, the development of kohanga reo, kura kaupapa and many other initiatives including Māori music. The Māori language had survived having seemingly returned from the brink of extinction. Te reo Māori was still limited in its public reach domains and particularly New Zealand radio, which were not playing Māori music (O'Regan, 2012, p. 312). The early 1990s was a time in which Māori began to apply pressure on the New Zealand Government to allocate more resources to Māori broadcasting. Under the Broadcasting Act (1989) the authority for broadcasting in Aotearoa New Zealand was vested in New

Zealand on Air, a New Zealand Government media funding agency that invest in diverse local television, radio, music and digital media for New Zealand audiences. Two state-owned enterprises then emerged: Radio New Zealand and Television New Zealand. New Zealand on Air also became responsible for Māori radio and began funding this medium in 1990.

By 1993, New Zealand on Air was funding twenty-two Māori radio stations. The further development of Māori radio broadcasting from 1995 onwards is primarily linked to Te Mangai Paho (Matamua, 2006). These broadcasting developments meant that waiata Māori, both traditional and contemporary, had a vehicle upon which to be heard. At this time also, NZ On Air began funding the recording of single songs and multi-song projects, music videos, and music. This funding supported the recording of Māori and the distribution to Iwi radio, however it did not alter the lack of Māori music being played on mainstream radio.

In the 1990s, Moana Maniapoto (Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Tuhourangi, Ngāti Pikiao) and Hinewehi Mohi (Ngāti Kahungunu, Tuhoe) were writing contemporary popular waiata in te reo Māori or bilingually as a way of reclaiming their language and expressing their identity as Mana Wahine. 'AEIOU' written by Maniapoto in 1991 conveys a message for all New Zealanders to engage in learning te reo Māori, with the chorus of 'akona te reo' and highlights the struggle of te reo Māori survival, the fight for Māori language to exist, be acknowledged, valued and treasured (NZonscreen, 2005). Mohi released her debut single 'Kia U' in 1992, all in te reo Māori with lyrics that articulated the mistreatment of Māori by Tauwiwi and encouraging the need for Māori people to stand up and fight. It asks the question: 'if the wairua is not well, then how can we as Māori people be well?' (Kelly, 2016).

The devices of popular musical genres such as hip hop, funk, reggae and house were a vehicle to get kaupapa-driven waiata Māori and waiata that incorporated te reo Māori that would appeal to mainstream radio and youth audiences. It was

also a time when taonga puoro (traditional Māori instrumentation) was enjoying a revival through the works of Hirini Melbourne, Richard Nunns, Bernard Makaore and others. Both Maniapoto and Mohi were experimenting with the use of these sounds, bringing a unique opportunity to hear these traditional Māori instruments contextualised in a contemporary style.

Moana Maniapoto (Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Tuhourangi, Ngāti Pīkiao)

Moana Maniapoto has long been acknowledged for having consistently pushed the boundaries in Māori music in a distinctive style that articulates kaupapa Māori driven topics through her lyrics and music. She formed *Moana and the Moahunters* and in 1990, and in 1991 of released their first waiata ‘AEIOU’ (NZonscreen, 2005). This waiata written in te reo Māori and English conveys a message for all New Zealanders to engage in learning te reo Māori, with the chorus of ‘Akona te reo’. This came after the release of feminist anthem ‘Black Pearl’ in 1990, which climbed to number two in the New Zealand music charts. Both songs appear on her 1993 album ‘*Tahi*’ and the album ‘*Rua*’ followed in 1998. But even before forming *Moana and the Moahunters*, in the mid- 80s, Moana released ‘Kua Makona’ produced by Dalvanus Prime and Ryan Monga, with te reo Māori-sung lyrics denouncing drink-driving. It was another fearless step in the trailblazing career of Moana Maniapoto and contemporary Māori music.

Two and a half decades on from the 1990s, and Moana Maniapoto and the tribe are still touring internationally and performing domestically. She has build a substantial fanbase throughout the world. Her latest album ‘*Rima*’ was released in 2015 and was finalist for the APRA Maioha awards, the New Zealand music awards and the Waiata awards. She has received numerous accolades in the last ten years for her music and contribution to New Zealand arts. They include recipient of the

Laureate award, Arts foundation in 2007, the Toi Iho lifetime recipient award, Te Tohu Mahi Hou a Te Waka Toi (CNZ) 2005, and she was appointed member of the NZ Order of Merit, Queens Birthday Honours in 2004 (www.moananz.com).

Maniapoto's mana as a Māori woman is not limited to receiving recognition and accolades outside her community. Her mana is grounded in her whakapapa, her connection to the whenua and the relationships she upholds in her iwi, hapu and whānau. Throughout her music career she has remained true to composing and performing kaupapa driven waiata that are also expressions of being Mana Wahine. Despite years of work in the music industry and numerous accolades Maniapoto (Te Karere, 2016) declares that there are serious issues and barriers to getting te reo Māori waiata played on mainstream radio in New Zealand and in general there is a lack of recognition for Māori music in New Zealand. She states (2016) that New Zealand mainstream radio on the whole do not embrace and will not play Māori music. This has been highlighted over the last fifteen years when New Zealand music month in May celebrates New Zealand music and there is a distinct lack of Māori music being played. Maniapoto (Te Kaere, 2016) expresses her disappointment at the lack of acknowledgement for Māori music currently,

I think Māori music has gone forward, but New Zealand is still behind us. . . . the last Māori language track to win Single of the Year at the NZ Music Awards was E I Po. That was in 1982. The last song to hit number one in this country was Poi E. That was 30 years ago (Maniapoto as cited in Te Karere, 2016).

McLayney, New Zealand music month organiser, said in an interview with Te Karere (2016) that it could be perceived as racism, but for many for mainstream radio station in New Zealand it is about commercial viability. Maniapoto has also

acknowledged that Māori music is competing for mainstream airplay against radio playlists that are determined by American and international music markets in New Zealand (Te Karere, 2016). “I doubt ‘Kotahitanga’ by Hinewehi Mohi did any better 10 years later, despite big sales offshore” (Maniapoto, 2015).

With all of the challenges that she has faced, it is remarkable that Moana Maniapoto is still at the forefront of Māori music 25 years later, having recently been awarded second place in the International Songwriters Awards in 2015 with her song ‘Upokohue’ (with lyrics by Scotty Morrison), beating over 18,000 entries. In an endeavour to develop wider audiences for Māori music, Maniapoto has taken her music to international markets that acknowledge the cultural significance and uniqueness of Māori music.

Maniapoto has also received international recognition through extensive touring which has included the United Kingdom, Korea, Poland, Finland, Hungary, Germany, just to name a few. This is also a familiar environment for Hinewehi Mohi, whereby in the New Zealand music scene, she has experienced the success of her music internationally but has faced difficult scenarios regarding Māori music especially in te reo Māori being recognised in mainstream media domains, let alone accalimed in its own country (www.moananz.com).

Hinewehi Mohi (Ngati Kahungunu, Tuhoe)

An estimated 100 million people worldwide witnessed Hinewehi Mohi singing the New Zealand national anthem in te reo Māori only, before an All Blacks match during the 1999 Rugby World Cup at Twickenham (Shiels, 2002). At the time, this incident galvanised public opinion in New Zealand and abroad, with viewers complaining that this was inappropriate because most New Zealanders did not speak (or understand) Māori. The incident sparked public debate about how people reacted to the singing of the anthem in general. The All Blacks, because of their high profile, were singled out for particular attention and

were criticised for being unable (or unwilling) to sing the anthem.

Mohi was in London at the time of the Rugby World Cup to promote her first album, 'Oceania' (Shiels, 2002). She recalls that the last thing on her mind was stirring up bitter controversy:

I felt honoured. I felt so proud and I really didn't anticipate the negative reaction. . . . It was traumatic at the time. I got quite personal attacks. I thought we were more mature as a nation. It's taken a while to work through it. It was a statement then, not that I was setting out to make a statement. I was just trying to make the country proud because we all loved the haka and I didn't think the anthem in Māori was so awful. At the time the feedback was quite vicious and if I'd been here in New Zealand I might have been quite worn down by it (Mohi as cited in Shiels, 2002).

Although Mohi does not see her actions as radical, in fact what she did changed the whole way in which 'God defend New Zealand' is perceived. By singing the the te reo Māori lyrics written by T. H. Smith in 1878 (www.folksong.org.nz), she dispensed with the English language version and its representation of the dominant culture in New Zealand and located the Māori language as the first language of tangata whenua in Aotearoa.

The use of the New Zealand anthem in te reo Māori reflects a Māori worldview, and the language requires singers to engage with spiritual essence (mauri) of the waiata. This new tradition whereby the New Zealand anthem is sung both in te reo Māori and English is one way that acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa and provides a very public platform, particularly surrounding the All Blacks, whereby Māori and non Māori can be united in song. Mohi's actions have changed

the way in which the New Zealand anthem is sung, to the extent that in 2016 Rio Olympics, two Pākehā sailors, Peter Burling and Blair Tuke, upon receiving gold medals sang the anthem in te reo Māori only.

Mohi's first album, 'Oceania', was released in 1999 and went on to achieve double platinum sales in NZ and 70,000 sales world-wide. It was a collaboration with Jaz Coleman of *Killing Joke* that fused te reo Māori lyrics, melodies, harmonies and taonga puoro (traditional Māori instrumentation) with modern dance beats. The album yielded the highly successful single 'Kotahitanga'. This waiata once again used a popular genre of house music beats and contemporary popular musical progressions and structures, layered with te reo Māori and infusing traditional Māori musical motifs. 'Kotahitanga' speaks of unity, solidarity and freedom for Māori people.

A significant influence and impetus that contributed to Mohi's song writing on this album was the birth of her daughter Hineraukatauri. Mohi describes the challenges she faced having a child born with severe cerebral palsy and how it has contributed significantly to the lyrical content, mauri (lifeforce) and wairua of her music:

When my daughter was born, Hineraukautauri . .
 . I wasn't able to return back to work in television
 and so I took on my music with a bit more
 vengence and used my music as a way of
 expressing some of sadness that I had because my
 daughter has been born with cerebral palsy. . . .
 it's a challenge, but I think I'm a better person for
 it (NZonscreen, 2005).

Mohi's voice has a powerful unique timbre to her vocal sound. It is distinguishable by its higher tonal character and vibrato. Mohi also applies the sound of mōteatea, which is traditionally a lament, traditional Māori chant, or sung poetry within her music. Over the last twenty five years since Hinewehi

Mohi first released her first single 'Kia U', she has gone on to become one of Aotearoa's singing icons. She has released three albums 'Oceania', 'Oceania II' and her third album 'Raukatauri - Te Puhi o te Tangi' in 2013, dedicated to the mentors, musicians they have supported her, with a special tribute to Hirini Melbourne.

Mohi's mana as a Māori woman primarily resides with her whakapapa and connection to the whenua, and to the relationships she maintains in her iwi, hapu and whānau. In 2016 she won the Te Puni Kōkiri te reo Māori champion award at WIFT (Women in Television and Film) for her significant contribution to the increased use and knowledge of te reo Māori me ngā Tikanga, for her promotion of te reo Māori in all her work – as a singer, a producer and presenter and as an advocate for the disabled. She established the Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre in March 2004, which helps provide music therapy for children with disabilities; it is named after her daughter. Mohi also returned to the television industry as producer and director of several documentaries and television series. She continues to create, explore work in television, the Raukautarui music therapy centre and within music. She describes her love of music:

Oh, I really love Moteatea and I want to repackage it so that it's more accessible to people and so they can learn those traditional waiata, and then carry them on within their iwi and whānau. iwi anthems is another one. And I've just finished a series called waiata, which is now on Māori Television. That was my most favourite project ever because it's all about performance and expressive motion through music which transcends boundaries. I think that's exactly the same as how music therapy works, so it's a beautiful thing (Mohi as cited in Hubbard, 2015).

There is still a strong cohort of Māori composers expressing their identity and cultural knowledge through contemporary waiata Māori. Artists such as Moana Maniapoto and Hinewehi Mohi continue to contribute to Māori women's knowledge and understandings through their waiata, affirming and upholding strong Māori cultural concepts which provide a distinguishable voice and pioneering spirit to their artform and in turn contribute to their whānau, hapu, iwi and to Aotearoa's political, social and cultural landscape.

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Once Were Warriors. Maree has mentored groups such as Nesian Mystik and continues to work with many artists, recently writing and producing XFactor duo L.O.V.E. She has spent several years spent working behind the scenes – writing and producing songs for television and film and penning tracks for others. Maree is a certified full member of both APRA and AMCOS.