

SHARON MAZER

Ka Haka! Māori and Indigenous Performance Studies Symposium 2018: Special section of *Te Kaharoa*

Introduction

This special section of *Te Kaharoa* features nine papers that were presented as part of the 2018 Ka Haka! Māori and Indigenous Performance Studies Symposium. Following the success of *Empowering Performance*, the inaugural Ka Haka! Symposium in 2016, Te Ara Poutama, the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), embraced the opportunity to be part of the 8th Biennial International Indigenous Research Conference (IIRC 2018) in partnership with Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga at the University of Auckland. Ka Haka! 2018: *Old ways of knowing, new ways of doing* offered Māori and Indigenous performance scholars the opportunity to contribute actively to the development of the field, this time as part of one of the biggest meetings of Indigenous scholars from around the world. The Symposium was launched at AUT on 12 November 2018. We welcomed participants with a social event that included performances by Mika, Raze, Rosanna Raymond, Te Kahu Rolleston, Bob Ruha and featured Miss Kihi as MC. Three days of Ka Haka panels followed, with diverse presenters from around Aotearoa, as well as the USA and Taiwan, taking the platform in turn to offer glimpses into their distinctive approaches to performance research.

The theme for the 2018 Symposium – *Old ways of knowing, new ways of doing* – was put forward as a premise: that current performances of culture and identity can be seen to work through often complex interactions between what is often termed ‘traditional’ (ie, pre-colonial) knowledges and practices that are associated with the colonial (or post-colonial) eras. Two questions were offered as provocation: What might it mean to call a performance ‘authentic’ in the Māori and Indigenous context? How might

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mis/representations of the 'authentic' in Māori and Indigenous cultures in performance be seen to reflect, or not, the influence of colonisation, mediatisation and/or globalisation?

The papers published here offer a diverse range of responses, well-grounded in each contributor's own cultural contexts, histories, performance practices and political struggles. They are presented, as much as possible, with their orality intact – that is, only lightly edited from the versions that were delivered in person and developed in multiple conversations during the Symposium. What is revealed as a result are the particular preoccupations of these academics and artists (and artist-academics) based on their lived experiences of performative activism. In this, they seek to preserve and promulgate their new ways of thinking about performance as a repository of old (and new) knowledges, as a platform for (re)constructing cultural identity and as a form of socio-political activation that connects the past to the present while shaping the future.

Prominent Māori performer/academic, Dr Te Rita Papesch, opens the discussion of *Old ways of knowing, new ways of doing* with an insider's look at checkered history of the rules governing Kapa Haka competitions. She reminds us of the ambivalent relationship between tikanga marae and theatre on the Te Matatini stage and asks why it has been so difficult to design and implement new judging guidelines and processes that she believes could, in turn, support the growth of the form in the 21st century. In 'That was then, this is now', Sharon Mazer takes up the threads of her ongoing academic collaboration with Te Rita Papesch and offers a brief overview of the development of Māori Performance Research. Drawing on his background in Māori Dance Theatre, Romana Potts shows how the profound knowledge of the past lives on in the footwork of the haka, each movement an invocation of Manu Rangatira. Rosanna Raymond's poetic paper puts 'the VA in the acti.VA.tion' – positioning her past performances into the performative present as she makes a case for an embodied practice where the ancient and the modern can productively co-exist. Yaqui artist-academics Eduardo Madril and Sara Moncada trace the history of American Indian dance to the present day, along the way troubling the idea of the 'authentic' in the construction of the 'traditional' in Native American performance. In 'Identity, Memory and Legacy: Indigenous Taiwan', Jolan Hsieh and Sifo Lakaw set the stage for their colleagues, Pasuya Yasiungu and Kacaw Fuyan, who in turn

demonstrate the need for Taiwan's diverse Indigenous peoples to take steps to secure their heritage by combining performance with political action. Finally, in 'Performing difference differently', Dione Joseph argues that it is not enough to find new ways of doing theatre, when the old ways of seeing race and culture can readily override challenges to the status quo.

Each of these contributors presents a characteristically critical view of the ways the legacies of colonisation are still working their way, often insidiously, through contemporary performance, in art and in theatre as in everyday life. After all, the colonial itself is an old way of knowing that continues to have currency in the 21st century. But each also sees the power of performance to embody and in so doing recuperate and activate Indigenous knowledges, past and present. Their perspectives are tempered by experience, hopeful of a future that is more realistic than utopian as they work to create new ways of knowing who we are and how we come to be here now.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Pare Keiha for encouraging publication of these papers and Professor Paul Moon for providing a platform in *Te Kaharoa*. Thanks also to Melissa Derby for her editorial support. We are already looking forward to the next Ka Haka! Māori and Indigenous Performance Studies Symposium, which will again be co-sponsored by Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga and Te Ara Poutama and hosted by The Cultural Conservancy in San Francisco in November 2019.

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