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ICTMD INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TRADITIONS OF MUSIC AND DANCE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Guest Editors' Introduction

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This special issue of *Traditions of Music and Dance* presents articles drawn from papers presented at the 48th World Conference of the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance held at the Tākina Wellington Conference and Exhibition Centre, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, from 9 to 16 January 2025. This World Conference had six key themes: "Indigenous people's music and dance," "Environment, place, displacement, and relocation," "Translation, inclusivity, reception," "Dance, movement, gesture, embodiment," "Technologies of sound, music, movement, and dance," and "Alternative approaches and methods to research, education, and knowledge dissemination," (alongside "New Research"). The articles in this special issue present research that speaks across these themes, and we are pleased that the collection also includes works of both early-career researchers and established scholars. As the conference Programme Committee Chairs, we are delighted to serve as guest editors of this collection.

We open this issue with gratitude for and acknowledgement of the extraordinary contributions of Indigenous knowledge holders at the 48th World Conference, working from within community spaces as well as the academy. Numerous Indigenous scholars and practitioners generously shared their time, knowledge, and cultural gifts through the space of the conference. This included, in the September before the conference, ICTMD's first-ever pre-conference symposium, on the theme "Healing, Health and Wellbeing: Indigenous Perspectives on Music and Dance." Organized by ourselves as Programme Committee Chairs, together with the Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee (LAC), Brian Diettrich, this virtual symposium featured presentations by Indigenous practitioners from Unama'ki Cape Breton (Canada), Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand. The Centre for Sound Communities (Cape Breton University) hosted the symposium for ICTMD on Zoom with the

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help of a team of graduate students, and recordings are freely accessible through the ICTMD Secretariat's YouTube page.[1]

The pre-conference symposium presaged an Indigenous focus at the 48th World Conference. The photo on the front cover of this special issue celebrates the keynote that opened the event, delivered by Māori practitioners Jerome Kavanagh Poutama and Ruiha Turner: "Oro Atua Wānanga Rongoā Puoro," or "Reviving Ancestral Sound Practices in Modern Times" (Figure 1). LAC Chair Brian Diettrich noted that as keynote presenters, Jerome and Ruiha are at the forefront of taonga puoro (Māori instruments), community engagement, and the revival of ancestral practices within Aotearoa. As the then ICTMD National Representative for Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori scholar Meri Haami introduced the keynote presenters and marked the significance of Māori leadership within the event. Additionally, the two plenary sessions at the conference were delivered entirely by Indigenous speakers, including Māori, and on themes collectively identified by Indigenous researchers, the first being "Learning and Sharing Indigenous Knowledge: Music, Language and Arts" (Figure 2), and the second being "Healing, Health and Wellbeing: Indigenous Perspectives on Music and Dance" (Figure 3), which continued the theme of the pre-conference symposium. The plenaries were co-hosted by ethnomusicologist Irene Karongo Hundleby, a bicultural researcher of Solomon Islands and New Zealand ancestry. In addition to meeting (virtually) with the speakers ahead of the conference to discuss topics and formats for the plenaries, during the week of the conference and the mornings of the plenary presentations, Irene invited presenters to share a meal



Figure 1. Meri Haami at the podium (right), introducing Jerome Kavanagh Poutama and Ruiha Turner (left), for the keynote at the 48th ICTMD World Conference. Photo by Nick Baldwin.

[1] Videos of the pre-conference sessions are available here: https://www.youtube.com/@ictmd.

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Figure 2. Plenary session "Learning and Sharing Indigenous Knowledge: Music, Language and Arts." Left to right: Leim Joe, Starr Paul, Laurianne Sylvester (chair), Emmanuel Daniel, Jesse Hodgetts, Georgia Curran, Enid Nangala Gallagher, Manaaki Hogg, and Ata Rangi Pehi. Photo by Marcia Ostashewski.

together. The speakers—of varying ages and backgrounds, including children—met and had an opportunity to learn a bit about one another, as well as engage in dialogue ahead of the sessions. Irene also gathered with the presenters after the sessions to close their work together in a ceremony.

Other conference events focusing on Indigenous knowledge included workshops on diverse Indigenous music and dance practices, and a learning opportunity focused on Māori instruments delivered by Tāmihana Kātene during the mid-conference excursion day (Figure 4). Numerous Indigenous performances were scheduled throughout the week of the conference, including one to celebrate a new Sons of Membertou, Mi'kmaw drum group, album released on the Folkways label. This concert was introduced by Canada's High Commissioner to New Zealand, His Excellency Keith Smith, a member of the Thessalon First Nation, and featured a Mi'kmaw-Māori musical collaboration involving Jerome Kavanagh Poutama (Figure 5). Yet other conference performances shared by Indigenous practitioners, notably those featuring cultural performances from different regions of Australia and parts of Asia, are discussed in the first article of this special issue.

Many of the activities described in the above paragraphs fostered friendships and led to visits in Indigenous community spaces off-site, such as Māori kōhanga reo (immersive "language nests"). Meetings and collaboration within the

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Figure 3. Plenary session "Healing, Health, and Wellbeing: Indigenous Perspectives on Music Dance." Left to right: Kim Cunio (chair), Austin Christmas, Graham Marshall, Rita Seumanutafa-Palala, Irene Karongo Hundleby, and Rob Thorne. Photo by Marcia Ostashewski.

conference also led to the establishment of research and teaching partnerships, including the Memorandum of Understanding formalized between Te Herenga Waka and Cape Breton University, and multiple grant-funded projects involving scholars from both universities and a wider global network involving Indigenous researchers from multiple continents. One of these projects—entitled "Our Research Futures: Indigenous Pathways for Research in Higher Education"—was recently funded by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and seeks to document Indigenous experiences in the academy and develop new research pathways and opportunities for Indigenous scholars that also support their well-being.

These activities speak to ways in which the organising committees worked together with deliberate effort and care at the 48th World Conference to prioritize Indigenous voices and knowledges and to Indigenise and decolonise the space through the process and activities of the conference. This work involved a focus on relational accountability, working based on consensus, developing and nurturing trust, finding ways to fund Indigenous participation, becoming informed about and attending to protocols, and other efforts towards creating and maintaining the conference as a culturally safe space. These efforts resonate with the reflections of Prest et al. (2024) on their work co-creating a conference grounded in local First Nations Protocols as a research method, as

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Figure 4. Tāmihana Kātene (centre) leads a workshop on *taonga puoro* (Māori instruments) at the 48th ICTMD World Conference. Photo by Marcia Ostashewski.



Figure 5. Jerome Kavanagh (left) performing with Sons of Membertou (left to right: Austin Christmas, Graham Marshall, and Leim Joe). Photo by Nick Baldwin.

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well as showing how the process is related to the ceremony, an idea which is explored in the opening article of this special issue.

Irene Karongo Hundleby offered her reflections regarding her observations and experiences of the Indigenous focus within the World Conference in Wellington:

> During the past decade, I have attended a variety of academic conferences and observed that Indigenous voices are seldom represented. This absence is especially noticeable in plenary sessions and keynote presentations. To my delight, the 2025 ICTMD World Conference in Te Whanganui-a-Tara showed us a new direction is possible. Jerome Kavanagh Poutama and Ruiha Turner delivered a powerful and appropriately cultural keynote address. Their welcome to Aotearoa, space and place, immersed us in the significant principles of Māori tikanga, meaningful cultural practice and set the precedent for the Indigenous plenaries and experiences that followed. Rich moments of reciprocity, shared culture and whanaungatanga (relationship building) between Indigenous leaders from Australia, Canada, Asia, Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa and Aotearoa shone a light on significant Indigenous concepts in music and dance. I hope we continue to learn from these experiences and to find ways to collaborate more inclusively in future conferences. Our deep gratitude to Brian, Marcia and Kirsty for daring to show us the road less travelled.
>
> (Personal communication, 23 April 2026).

We are grateful to Irene and to our colleagues of Indigenous ancestry around the world who shared their knowledge and time with us and collaborated with us in creating the event as we did.

ICTMD's newly elected President, Tan Sooi Beng, who began her term at the 48th World Conference, also reflects on the conference's Indigenous focus and how it opened space for new scholarly collaborations and continued learning. She expresses her gratitude to those involved, highlighting the sponsorship of Te Herenga Waka/Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), Te Kōkī/the New Zealand School of Music, Attend NZ, Business Events Wellington, Tourism New Zealand, Tākina Events, UNESCO NZ, New Zealand Music Trust, Te Wharewaka o Pōneke, Wellington City Council, the Confucius Institute at VUW, the Australian High Commission in New Zealand, the High Commission of Canada in New Zealand, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in New Zealand, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Zealand, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (Canada), and Gamelan Wellington:

> Thanks to the dedication of the conference organizers, and the sponsorships, Wellington was the first ICMTD World Conference with a keynote, plenary sessions, discussion panels and performances that gave voice to Indigenous Peoples from around the world, and provided a space for future collaboration.
>
> (Personal communication, 21 April 2026).

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These examples also demonstrate how ICTMD's World Conferences can, in addition to offering space to share the exciting research being carried out around the world, do some heavy lifting with respect to allyship, advocacy and activism in academia, create much-needed space for diverse Indigenous researchers and knowledge, and foster unique relationships between students, scholars, practitioners, and wider communities that may lead to groundbreaking new initiatives in music and dance studies and beyond.

* * * * *

The collection of articles in this special issue begins with an Indigenous-focused multi-author article by Georgia Curran, Reuben Brown, Jesse Hodgetts, and Marin Naruse entitled "Common ground: Sharing Diverse Ceremony from Australia and Japan in Aotearoa New Zealand," which addresses their joint performance on the Saturday evening midway through the conference. This memorable event had its venue changed at the last minute; due to the unseasonably cold summer weather, the performance was moved from the Wellington waterfront to inside the Tākina building, in response to concerns for the well-being of the performers. In this article, the authors describe the background to their performance and the cultural exchange that took place as they moved to share their music and dances with each other and the audience. The many photos accompanying the article are in themselves a visual essay on the importance of such exchange at ICTMD conferences and the value of opening such discourse with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and the broader academic community.

Olga Zaitseva-Hertz's article "Sounds of Resilience: Music and Ukrainian Identity across Displacement and Occupation" is a timely piece on the creative expressions of the people of Ukraine at a time of crisis. Examining music and performance both inside and outside of Ukraine over recent years, with a focus on materials circulating via the internet and especially social media, Zaitseva-Hertz ultimately posits music as a form of resilience. While specific to the Ukraine experience, the article is a reminder of the space music holds within the human spirit.

The writings of Yao Cui and Philip Ciantar in this issue explore the movement of traditions and performance practices around the world in different ways. Yao Cui's article, "Negotiations within the Microcosms of Toronto Chinese Orchestras," is at heart a practitioner ethnography of the experience of playing in a Chinese orchestra in Toronto, Canada. The article draws out the similarities, differences, and idiosyncrasies of this performance practice as it establishes itself in a new context. Philip Ciantar's article, "From Valletta to Pyongyang: A Maltese Festive Wind Band March and the Politics of Musical Borrowing," takes a particular Maltese instrumental band piece and traces its journey as it moves and transforms across space and time. These articles, in essence, celebrate both the tenacity and adaptability of musical forms (and their players) in response to the world around them. They also remind the reader of the interconnectedness of performance practices, peoples, and histories around the world, something celebrated by ICTMD as an organisation.

The contributions of Xulia Feixoo and AV Villén also speak to each other, specifically on the issues and concepts of "heritage." Feixoo, in her article

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"Redefining Heritage: The Foliada as a Space of Biopolitical Dissent in Galicia (NW Iberian Peninsula)," shares with us a performance tradition under debate, the *foliada.* This insider view is an important and valued one as our scholarly community continues to grapple with what it means to recognise intangible forms of expression in formal and tangible ways. Finally, AV Villén article "Disciplining Music Heritage: A Preliminary Survey" takes a step back and examines the term "heritage," how it has been used in the literature in relation to music, and how we might consider the term "music heritage" for the future. This argument, with its sizable literature review, reflects the ongoing interest that members have in heritage discourse, which has led, among other activities, to the formation of the recent ICTMD Study Group on Heritagisation of Music and Dance.

As guest editors, we wish to thank all the authors who took the time to prepare and submit manuscripts for consideration, and to the many anonymous reviewers who freely gave their time to offer their expertise. Marcia also humbly thanks Kirsty for carrying out the bulk of the editorial work for this special issue. This allowed Marcia to devote more time to responsibilities in her new role as Secretary General for the Council, which began in the months directly following the Wellington conference. A special thanks to Peter Verdin for joining us as editorial assistant for this special conference issue and for helping fill the workload gap, working from within the Centre for Sound Communities at Cape Breton University. Thanks also to the ICTMD editorial team, in particular outgoing General Editor Lonán Ó Briain, for their expert guidance and timely communications, as well as the support of the editorial staff at Cambridge. We hope that the articles herein continue to stimulate discussion among the scholarly community on these rich and important topics of music and dance scholarship at future World Conferences to come.

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