

June 19, 1972.

Professor Dr. Mantle Hood
Director
Institute of Ethnomusicology
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024
United States.

Dear Mantle:

I am claiming this privilege of writing to you in a personal vein because of my recent visit to the Institute of Ethnomusicology, a visit I shall always value and remember. At the same time I am writing quite freely as I find this is the best way to convey to you my own comments on your statement about the entry AUSTRALIA in the section on ethnomusicology in reves 6.

At the outset I think it should be stated, though you most probably know it, that I was not the first into the field of Aboriginal music, despite the fact that I am considerably older than either of my two colleagues. Trevor Jones was at work about two years before me, Cath Ellis a few months later. Of the three of us, Trevor is undeniably senior from the academic point of view and, as you know, is now chairman of his own department of music in the Faculty of Arts at this university.

Now for my comments on your recent statement (June 9):

AUSTRALIA.

In my view all three of us should jointly contribute to the overview article with Trevor acting as co-ordinator. In other words the first entry should be over our three names with his at the top. Within a structure of this kind Cath and I should be able to come forward with what general knowledge we have concerning the areas we know best (see below), yet submit the material to a general 'editorial' guidance in the hands of Trevor Jones who is more experienced than either of us in work of this kind. At the same time he would be able to add to this main article from his own knowledge of Aboriginal music and music performance. As you know he has made a substantial contribution with A.P. Elkin on Arnhem Land Music with his transcription and musical analyses based on the latter's field recordings from south of the Arnhem Land Reserve. Later, in Aboriginal Man in Australia (ed. R.M. & C.H. Berndt), he attempted an overview of Australian Aboriginal music, again based on the recordings of others, many of them unidentified, songs collected by linguists and others. I may be wrong here, but I doubt whether Trevor would claim any part of Australia as his 'specialized geographical area', although he did make a short trip to east Arnhem Land in 1964, mainly, I believe, in connection with his researches on the didjeridu.

In parenthesis let me say here that Australian Aboriginal music is predominately vocal, unaccompanied or accompanied by sound instruments. Any study of Australian Aboriginal music per se is therefore a study of songs in all their connections. Though it is often to be heard played (and recorded) alone, the didjeridu is a song-accompanying instrument and its relationship to the song is often important.

I realise that my suggestion of triple authorship is not in line with the policy you are pursuing at the moment. But from a country where contributors are few, and much important information collected but not yet made generally available, some adjustments to policy might be necessary if you wish to bring out a well-rounded view of Australian Aboriginal music as it is known, that is, at the present time. When further collating of knowledge has been achieved (a great deal of material has been coming in since the inception of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1961) the story to be told in Groves 7 may indeed be a different one.

In the lead article it will be important to emphasise that most of the viable traditions that still remain are in the north of Australia. By commissioning the article in this way you would ensure, I think, that maximum co-operation would be achieved in getting the material into the right perspective and not emphasising one region at the expense of the other.

ABORIGINAL MUSIC AND DANCE

Dr. Ellis's work has been confined to the state of South Australia where relatively few Aboriginal traditions are still viable. Her book Aboriginal Music Making is based largely on the central Australian recordings of T.G.H. Strehlow.

In contrast to these areas, the higher concentration of different language groups north of the Tropic of Capricorn, the greater diversity of song styles and ceremonies extending from Cape York (North Queensland) to the Kimberleys (North of Western Australia) -- including Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and offshore islands such as Roete Eylandt, Rathurst and Salville islands and Mornington Island --, the continuing interconnections between myth, music, dance and painting -- especially in performances relating to the north Australian religious cults (including Ubar), the contacts, historical and prehistorical, with Papua (New Guinea) and Macassar (Celebes), evidence in the words of songs of both European and non-European contact, continuing distribution of 'new' Aboriginal songs and their instrumental accompaniments throughout parts of the north, are all vital contributing factors to an overall picture of Australian Aboriginal music, parts of which are only just beginning to come together.

My recommendation here is that only two authors submit outlines in relation to specialized geographic areas:

Aboriginal music and dance south of the Tropic of Capricorn (Ellis)
 " " " " north " " " " " (Moyle)

My reasons for suggesting that I undertake the northern sector are as follows:

As part of my work for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, I have made, almost annually visits to more than 25 localities within three states: to North Queensland, the Northern Territory and north of Western Australia. My aim has been to map the distribution of song styles within these areas and also the sound accompanying instruments. I have undertaken to prepare for the A.I.A.S. 10 L.P. discs, seven of which are already off the assembly line: 'Songs from the Northern Territory' - 5 discs, 'Songs from Yarrabah' - 1 disc, and 'Songs by Young Aborigines' - 1 disc. The three remaining discs in preparation are 'Songs from Cape York', 'Songs

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from the Kimberleys' and Australian Aboriginal Sound Instruments'. By way of drawing together these and other publications, I am presently working on a comparative study of North Australian Song Styles to be submitted by the end of this year for a Ph.D. My recent work with the melograph at UCIA is to be incorporated here. Many kinds of Aboriginal songs move about in Australia. That is to say, oral transmission is deliberately carried out. For this reason one's 'specialized geographical area' in Australia should, in my opinion, be as wide as possible. I have preferred to study Australian Aboriginal ^{music} in width as well as in depth.

'Dance' (sub-entry)

I have doubts about this sub-heading. Kay Quisenberry is a modern dancer from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. She has returned there to complete her M.A. in Fine Arts after spending 2 years in Australia. She commenced her studies here with a correspondence course in Benesh Notation with Elphine Mostert (nee Allen) of the Australian Ballet School. To my knowledge she has visited only one Aboriginal settlement, Elcho Island, in north eastern Arnhem Land. I cannot imagine that she would be able to deal with any competence on the subject of Aboriginal dance as a whole. Styles vary from place to place. A great deal of work ~~was~~ still be done in Aboriginal dance. Having seen a great deal of it during my travels and combined, in two film expeditions, with Elphine Mostert (she and I have combined our notations for dances filmed on Groote Eylandt in 1969), I realise some of the problems here.

My recommendation is for Ellis and Moyle to include a sub-head dance in the north and south sectors, incorporating where relevant any remarks (or quotations) made by others.

'Europeanized Aboriginal Songs'

This term may be applicable to the urban areas in which Dr. Ellis has worked. It is not a term I use myself. In the north, English words are sometimes incorporated into Aboriginal melodies, but this does not, in my opinion, make them 'Europeanized songs'. On the other hand, when urban Aborigines sing European melodies with a mixture of English and Aboriginal words, these may more properly be called 'Aboriginalized European songs'. In her letter to you (28/3/72). I note that Dr. Ellis speaks of Aboriginal adaptations (of the medium, Australian Folk Music) for expressions of protest and that she now regards the term previously used ('transitional music') -- a term I have never accepted -- as inaccurate.

My recommendation is for Ellis and Moyle to include any references to this subject in the north and south sectors, according to their individual views.

European Folk Music

I accept the general recommendation here. It should be pointed out that Mr. Manifold may prefer to call this Australian Folk Songs, or Australian Bush Songs. And that the title of the entry should be one of his choice.

DIDJERIDU

As I have made a special study of Australian Aboriginal Sound Instruments and of the names given to them by the Aborigines themselves ('didjeridu' is not one of these) I should like to suggest here that there be a separate entry on Aboriginal Sound Instruments. Their distribution throughout Australia is important and I think my map should be given a place here.

In this entry I would refer to the instruments and to their use in song accompaniment, a subject which ofcourse leads into song distribution and the distribution of ceremonies.

I would ofcourse endorse the recommendation that the didjeridu receive separate treatment, and by Trevor Jones.

Additional

'sing-sing' . This is a pidjin English term in use in New Guinea, not Australia. It is analagous to 'corroboree', as used by some people, meaning a large gathering at which there is singing and dancing.

'corroboree' I think this should receive a very brief definition of a few sentences in length and I should be prepared to contribute this.

'Ubar' This is the name of one of the north Australian religious cults. There are others such as Kunapipi, Djungguwan, Yabadurwa, Garangara etc. Again a few lines would dispose of each, though, in the sector on Northern Aboriginal Music and Dance, the importance and relevance of these cults would have to be brought out.

I hope these remarks will be of some help in your enormous task.

With kindest regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs. Alice M. Moyle
A.I.A.S. Research Fellow)

In regard to the above I have assumed that 'European Art Music' in Australia will be dealt with elsewhere in Groves 6. Australian composers, the history of composition in Australia, concert-giving etc. must ofcourse be given their due. I would agree with Trevor that Roger Covell is the person best fitted for this task.