

Interviewer Profile: Kimoro Taiepa

Kimoro Taiepa is of Tūhoe and Tainui descent and is a tutor Te Reo Māori (Māori Language) and Research for the Te Tohu Maruata: Bachelor of Māori Performing Arts programme for the School of Performing Arts - Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Rotorua. He is also the Head of Discipline for Kapa Haka and Te Reo at the National School of Performing Arts; Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and oversees curriculum development of these disciplines across both Certificate and Degree levels.

Also a composer – singer/songwriter Kimoro recently won the Maori Song Section of the 2005 Lockwood Aria competitions – with his own original composition “Te Hōkioi.”

Kimoro is involved with composition predominantly for cultural groups at all levels ranging from pre-school through to national senior level. He is currently working towards establishing a production company which will develop learning media, publications, literature, performance and resources which aim to enhance the retention of cultural heritage, language, performance and oral arts through the use of multi-media.



Winner of the Maori Song Section at the 2005 Lockwood Aria, Kimoro Taiepa accompanied by Kapene Howard. Picture: Ben Fraser; Daily Post, Rotorua; 9 November, 2005.

“Like the days of old and through to today, waiata (song) is the vessel by where knowledge is maintained and imparted. However in today’s society, the written form in some respects is just as strong if not stronger than the verbal expression. However in books; knowledge lays dormant until someone picks it up and reads it to himself/ herself or to others but through waiata and music the message – the knowledge becomes vibrant.” (Piripi Christie)



Album Cover "Mo Ake" Piripi Christie; designed by Phil Fuemana.

Listen to an audio track of **TIEHU** by **Piripi Christie** from the album **Mo Ake** with the record label **Tangata Records**; produced by **Tu Productions, Aaron Davey**.



Profile (www.maorimusic.com)

Piripi Christie is a young talented singer songwriter with an ability to compose in both the English and Māori language. Piripi's skills in traditional Māori performing arts and culture as well as his interest in contemporary forms of music and dance have seen him develop a unique creative original presentation.

Piripi's debut album 'Mo Ake' features well known tracks 'I Heke' and 'He Mihi' as well as 10 other songs and bonus remixes. 'Mo Ake' is released to New Zealand retailers in September 2004.

'I started to compose Māori songs in 1995 when I joined the Waitara Māori culture group (Te Roopu Kapa haka o Waitara).'

Piripi was taught the Māori language, customs and the old teachings of te kauae raro (jaw of earthly knowledge) and te kauae runga (jaw of heavenly knowledge).

"It was through such teachings that inspired to write and compose songs".

Piripi has developed a live musical show featuring singing, Kapa Haka, Hip-hop and Brazilian - Capoeira styles as part of his overall live performance.

Tangata Records were first introduced to Piripi Christie whilst hosting a Māori song writing competition, which Piripi eventually won receiving a \$4000 prize

package recording the winning entry 'I Heke', released on CD compilation 'He Taonga Te Reo-Tahi'.

Mo Ake was supported by Māori broadcasting agency Te Mangai Paho.

Piripi recently performed in Tahiti representing Aotearoa as guest of the Tahitian Arts Society Himene Patitifa along with 20 other artists from around the World.

Piripi is currently working as a tutor of the Certificate in Māori Performing Arts programme at the School of Performing Arts of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Rotorua.

He pepeha (An exclamation)

Taumutu te maunga

Mangapoike te awa

Takitimu te waka

Ngāti Kahungunu te iwi

Matawhaiti, Ngai Te Apatu mē Ngāti Hinepua ngā hapū.

Taumutu is the mountain

Mangapoike is the river

Iwitea, Takitimu and Manu Ariki are the marae

Ngāti Kahungunu is the tribe

Matawhaiti, Ngai Te Apatu and Ngāti Hinepua are the sub tribes.

Who, in your experience has had the most impact on your life; they, who have shaped your world view?

Ko te nuinga o ngā mātauranga i whakaako mai e taku kaiako ā Trenton Martin. Ko ōna mātauranga no te kura wānanga o Manu Ariki me te koroua ra a Sonny Waru. Ki ahau, kōtahi noa iho te wā i haere au ki taua kura wānanga; ēngari i waimarie ahau no te mea i noho au ki te kainga o Trenton, koia tonu tētahi o ngā tangata i whakaako i ngā mea o te kura wānanga, nā te mea nā Sonny Waru i whakaako ki a ia me ngā kaumatua o Manu Ariki i whakaako ki a Trenton.

My mentor, Trenton Martin taught the majority of what I learned to me. His knowledge stems from the Kura Wānanga (School of Learning) at Manu Ariki and

respected elder; Sonny Waru. I only ever attended once but was nonetheless fortunate to live with Trenton anyway and at the time he was teaching at Te Kura Wānanga. Sonny Waru as well as the elders of Manu Ariki taught Trenton.

I was quite lucky to stay with Trenton and during that nine years; nearly a decade he always used to talk; mainly on Sundays and this time was set aside to korero (speak) about Te Kura Wānanga and different things from within there and those (kōrero - stories) were the sources of inspiration for songs. So basically it's about reinterpreting that particular knowledge through songs.

You speak about the philosophies of te kauae runga and te kauae raro, which were taught within te Kura Wānanga - what, is te kauae runga and te kauae raro?

Ko te kauae raro ko te mātauranga e pa ana (ki) mai i Papatūānuku ki a Ranginui e tū nei me nga momo atua kei waenganui. Ko te kauae runga e pā ana ki a Ranginui tae noa ki te toi o ngā rangi ki a Io. Koira ētahi o ngā mātauranga kei roto i te kura wānanga. Ko te kauae raro e kōrerohia ana ki ngā tamariki a Papatūānuku me Ranginui. Otirā, ngā tūngane whitu tekau mā tahi e raupapahia ra o rātau whakapapa me ngā korero e pā ana ki a rātau mahi i roto I te aio a i roto i te aorangi.

Te Kauae Raro refers to the knowledge of the terrestrial (Papatūānuku-Earth Mother) to the celestial (Ranginui-Sky Father) and the various deities between them both. Te Kauae runga refers to the knowledge of the realm from Ranginui (Sky Father) to Te Toi o ngā Rangi (the twelfth Heaven) where Io (Supreme Being) abides. Te Kauae Raro refers to the children of Papatūānuku and Ranginui; all seventy-one of them and their various portfolios within the universe.

Its knowledge that is quite spectacular and it's not only from the spiritual side but also the material side and the different karakia (incantations) and the ways in which the old people used to do their things. And there was just so much to absorb and some of it you think you've forgotten but it just pops up suddenly and you think – that's right and you just remember it.

Were you selected to go into the Kura Wānanga?

They only open it up at certain times and anyone is allowed to go to the Kura Wānanga and it's hard They talk about stuff in the kura wānanga for like two to three days and it's just in there hard out - come out for a break and have kai (meal) and then back in again. You learn heaps about like – all the children of Rangi and Papa – all seventy-one of them and what each of their portfolio's are. You also learn about the baskets (of knowledge) of whose contents were handed down and distributed by Tūmātauenga (God of War). That was his responsibility to give each

one their portfolios and they (the brothers) all interconnected with each other. Yeah, it's those kinds of things that are awesome sources of inspiration.



Piripi in preparation for performance at the Patitifa Festival; Tahiti.

Which of your songs epitomises some of that which was taught you from the Kura Wānanga?

Ko Tiehu tētahi. Ahakoa ko ngā kupu he māmā noa iho ki te whakarongo - hei tauira ake, "...mai te pupuhi o te hau" - mē tirohia kia hōhonu, he aha te hau? He aha te take o te hau? He aha ai te hau? He aha ōna mahi?

"Tiehu" is one. Although the words are relatively simple to the listening ear for example, "...from the blowing of wind" – looking at it from a deeper perspective one may ask – what is wind? Why the wind? What is its purpose?

So you know, it's not just the wind blowing in the trees, you know you got to look at the *signs of the wind* – *ngā tohu o te hau*; things that can't be seen. You can feel the wind but you can't see it – you can see it moving things but it's more about the spiritual connection. In the song it's connecting things like the wind, sunshine, water – different forms of blessings I guess from the ancestors. Basically those elements are there to help give you strength in anything that you need and those are

what those acknowledgements are – “*Te tiehu o ngā tīpuna*” (*the blessings of the ancestors*) which means that your tīpuna (ancestors) are helping to keep you at ease – giving you blessings.

Nga kōrero anō o tiehu – whaia te ara tūwātea; aruhia ki te whakamutunga.
Another message that “*Tiehu*” contains - follow the path that has no hindrances – observe the mistakes that people have made and try not to go down that same path. Listen to what your kaumatua have said because they have been there and done that. So, to avoid making the same mistakes – see those signs that say that your pathway is clear.

If you look at nature and study nature – the more you get to know about God. He’s everything – everyone knows that. Say for instance if you study how a bird is, you will learn about how God is. If you study nature – you get a better understanding of the man upstairs.

To what degree do certain influences such as those you have outlined, have on your compositional style?

Even though I listen to their music but don’t always agree with their kupu (words) and some of their kaupapa (themes); what I do enjoy are their tunes. There are some bits in there that are to me quite powerful and makes the wairua (spirit), I guess, just ride with it and it feels good! Iron maiden – some of their kupu because they’re such an old band back in the 80’s you know some of their topics back in those days were set in medieval times and talking about you know the man sitting in the circle surrounded by the temple of the wind you know things like that and they’re quite descriptive when you think about them. The imagery is quite good. In some ways this is quite inspirational in some ways to see how their wairuatanga (spirituality) is. In terms of a cross-cultural context, it’s about looking at similarities like – you’ve got ‘Iwi Maire’ the people of the horn – the Vikings – some say that the Māori people and the Vikings are related. Some of these metal bands talk about Thor and all those Norse Gods and the “Congregational Halls of Valhalla” are like the “Pūtahitanga o Rehua”^[1] you know, so it’s about finding those sorts of similarities. But it’s their tunes I enjoy – good cover songs. Guns and Roses – some of their kaupapa (themes) are not very good but they way in which they structure their song’s – that’s what I look at. Bone Thugs n Harmony – again it wasn’t about what they represented and what they sang about of which I don’t agree with anyway. At the time when they came out there was something about them – they were ground breaking – they were involved in a whole new area of hip-hop. They’ve been and gone now but I think it was just a challenge for me to see how we (Māori) could do something repetitious – how they say their lyrics so fast – we were able to do it in Māori – with the language. That was the only reason why I see them as a kind of influence on my own style – to see if we could do the same.

Did you succeed in applying this technique?

Oh yeah there are a couple of songs on the album that are quite fast.

Do you have an example?

(Piripi then raps the following)

Ki taku hoa rangatira

O' my beloved

Ka taea e koe te rangona

Are you able to listen?

Whakarongo ki te karere nei

Hearken to this message that has materialised

Te putanga I puawai nō te whakapono

And bloomed from pure faith

Nō te tūmanako te mana hinengaro

For the power of thought comes from the hope

Rangawairua ūhia ki roto

Alas inspiration has taken a hold of me

Mai to aroha ūhia ki roto

Alas from your tenderness it unfolds

Whātoro atu ki te rangi tūhāhā

So shall it extend to the heavens above

Kātahi he putanga ki te Ao Mārama

And emerge to the world of light

Ae ra e hoa i ngā wā o mua

Indeed before

Kaore au i mōhio i te aroha

I was unacquainted with love

Nā taku hoa rangatira

Yet my beloved

I whakaatu mai i te aroha

Showed me love

Te mauri o te manawa

The life essence of the heart

E puta mai i roto tēnei ao takahuri

To emerge in this changing world

I rangahaua ahau i te pōuriuri

I searched the darkness

Nā reira taku tau, taku whaiaipo

So therefore my beloved

E whakahooaia ahau i te aroha

Thank you for showing me love

And again it's just trying to make the Māori Music Industry progress in another sense – you know we have “Ko te hi! Ko te ha! - you sort of have that slow rap then Bone Thugs come out with this real hard out, sort of triplet – so we sort of yeah, went along with that. It only took a day and a half to nut this out and because I already had the kaupapa which was a love song, and then we just started working the words. We had the tune and the tune fit the words – making sure that they sound correct – the enunciation.



Piripi performing at the Patitifa Festival; Tahiti.

You expressed your interest in Alternative Music. What elements of this type of music do you particularly enjoy?

Te rangawairua o ngā waiata alternative – ko te World Music. Tētahi roopu whakaatu nui mai ki a au ko te Deep Forest. Ka āta whakarongo au ki a rātau waiata –ko ngā tangata o Deep Forest ka whakatauria ngā momo waiata o ngā tāngata whenua o tāwāhi, kātahi ka whakatakoto i te tuki....

Alternative music or more so World Music inspires me. One particular group who stood out for me was Deep Forest. I was quite intrigued by their music, which takes indigenous music and applies a drumbeat...

.... and slotting in music and I think that was one sort of turning point for me was looking at – well they could do this, Bohemian styles, Taiwanese songs – how could we (Māori) do something similar to that in Māori. So it was a matter of looking at the different things that you could pull out of Māori waiata – kiiwaha (colloquialisms) keeping it simple and just putting that on top. Deep Forest was quite an eye opener - it expanded on what could be possible if you start doing something similar to what they were trying to achieve. For instance, they did Pasifika; I think their third album was based on sounds of Pasifika but it wasn't quite Māori orientated but it was more the Islander drums – the Islander sound which is cool.

What is your specific formula for composing songs – from concept to reality - thereafter to production and distribution to the masses? In your experience, what does this process involve?

I te nuinga o te wā ko te mea tuatahi me kimihia he rangi – tirohia ngā momo chords – kia kitea he aha ngā mea e noho pai ana i te wā kōtahi.

The majority of the time; I begin with the music – a melody – experiment with various chord patterns to see what sits well with each other.

Once it's solid, then you'll find your verses and your choruses and then basically structure it. So it may go verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, verse, chorus, and chorus. So you'll get a basic structure and once you've sussed that out on the guitar then from there you start to whakaarohia he aha tetahi momo kaupapa e haere pai ana ki tēnei waiata i whakaritea. Mehemea he wairua te kaupapa o te waiata (begin by inquiring what theme would be appropriate for this particular song. Say for instance – spirituality is the theme) – generally what I do is keep the chords eerie – you see the spirit moves in mysterious ways – so I like to keep it mysterious. Minor chords are quite good for that. If it's something that's brighter and the kaupapa is fun, and the kaupapa is light – you keep the chords light. So depending on what your chords this will dictate the kaupapa. So, from here - ka tuhia ngā kupu (the words are composed). Some people make the rangi (tune) fit the kupu (words) and others make the kupu fit the rangi.

Have you always used the conventional structure; i.e. verse, chorus, bridge?

Sometimes it doesn't always work like that. You might get inspired to do something and it might actually start from the bridge first and go into a chorus. I think it's something easier to work with. Some people have a composition formula. Say for instance "You're going to put your verse here, but the last two lines of your verse are going to be really catchy – stating something so that when it rolls into your chorus then that's what your chorus is going to be about. So whatever your verse ends on, say like the last two lines of your verse have to be the ones with the most punch because those are going to be leading into your chorus. Of course your chorus has to be the catchiest part of the song because it can either make or break a song.

Do you use proverbs, quotes, metaphors etc in any of your compositions?

Ētahi. Tētahi o ngā waiata. Tērā ko te waiata "I heke". Ēngari kaore ngā kupu i titohia kia orite ki te whakataukii. Mē whakahoki ki o maunga titohea ka tū koe i ngā hau a Tāwhirimātea. Koira tetahi whakataukii I whakaatuna ki roto i tōku hinengaro.

Some. One of them (songs) is "I heke". However the words weren't a particular proverb but one similar. Return to your mountains and stand in the winds of Tāwhirimātea (God of the Winds). That particular analogy came to mind (when writing this song.)

Based a verse around that – you know, going back to your ancestral mountain and standing in the winds of Tāwhirimātea to be purified. You got to hold onto what the old people have said – you know – you got to maintain that stuff (traditional values). Because of all the worldly stuff you've got to try and find that interconnection (with the natural world – the world of our ancestors.)

Do you use aspects of the Māori World to convey your own experiences although the world around you brings with it different values?

For me, you can take something common like Rangi – sky father who is common throughout the world – universal. You take something like that and represent it from a Māori perspective and put it out there. People can relate to it and it's just another angle, everyone has their own way of seeing the same thing; again like Mother Earth. So you're coming from another angle about the same subject.



Piripi performing at the Patitifa Festival; Tahiti.

Are some of the themes of your waiata geared towards a global community?

Some of them are. Roimata is one; it was probably the second song I've ever composed. *E pā ana tēnei waiata ki ngā mahi tūkinō a te tangata e pā ana ki te ao* (This particular song refers to the destruction that mankind has wreaked on nature) – the cutting down of forests, “*te porotanga o te wao nui a Tāne*” (the cutting down of the great forests of Tāne). That can relate back to Brazil, *nga rākau katoa a Tāne – ona uri*. (The trees of Tāne – his descendants) The polluting of the seas – the domain of Kiwa (Guardian of the sea) and Tangaroa (God of the Sea) – again it relates back to Papatūānuku. Again mans exploits of the land – Papatuanuku – the plundering and the stripping of her cloaks. Some of them (my songs) are universally contextual, some are not. Some of them talk about *ngā waka o te Māori* (the canoes of the Māori) although they don't mention all the waka or else the song will end up being 10 minutes long!

In terms of economy as related to subject matter and wording, what do you tend to do – given that the language when interpreted has many layers of understanding?

You can sometimes compromise. A good song is about three minutes 30 seconds long – that’s a good length to work towards. At the outset you could write all this stuff and when you go through it all – it’s a bit too much – so you got to whakarāpopoto – summarise it. You’re still saying what you need to say but in a summarised way – just not so long. I think that’s one of the beautiful things with Te Reo. You can look at a line and even though it says this, it can also say this and this and this! You can read a lot of things between the lines.

Do you think that there are many singer- songwriters out there who have succeeded in using figurative language inside their compositions?

I think the best one out there would have to be Whirimako (Black). You know she’s got some really, really awesome stuff and her background; all the mātauranga (knowledge) that she has been taught. She’d be the best in the industry at the moment.

You have stated clearly your tribal affiliations to Ngāti Kahungunu and Taranaki – what aspects of your heritage influence your compositions? (e.g. dialect, language, customs)

I te wā i tīmata au ki te tito waiata i titohia i roto i te mita o Taranaki. Ka whakahiki I te “h”. Ko te waiata tuatahi “I ‘eke”. I te wa i hangānia te kōpae pūoro me ata whakarongo mē pēhea mēnā ka mau tonu ki te mita ka whakawhānuitia.

When I first started composing I composed with a Taranaki dialect - that is the dropping of the “h”. And the song at the time was “I ‘eke” (heke). When we first produced the album we listened to see how it would sound if we retained the dialect.

If we thought about it if – *mehemea ka mau tonu ki te mita – ko ngā tāngata nō Taranaki anake ka matatau ki tōnā mita – (if we retained the dialect – then it would only cater to the tastes of the Taranaki people)* so what we did was that we wanted to keep it open – so that we don’t get to the point where “he’s just Taranaki hard out and he’s only doing it in Taranaki dialect!” So, even though *kei roto I ahau ae - nō Taranaki ahau (within me yes – I am Taranaki)* I don’t have to go and say it all the time I’m from Taranaki – so that’s why we didn’t put in the “h”. *I taua wā e noho ana ki te rohe o Taranaki kei reira tētahi momo mahi kaiako toi whakaari; he tohu tērā mo nga tauira e hiahia ana ki te rapu i te mahi kaiako mō ngā mahi whakaari –ngā mahi kapa haka. I taua wā I puta mai tetahi mahi whakataetae – ko “Manu whakataetae.” Ko Nikiti Toataua te kaiako toi whakaari i tonu mai ia ki a mātau katoa ngā tauira kia hangaia mai he waiata, kia titoa he*

waiata mō tēnei whakataetae. I mahi ai mātau katoa – ētahi o mātau i whakaoti ngā mahi kia pai. Kātahi ka mutu, ka tonu atu ki a Tangata Records, rātau te kamupene whakahaere – i tukua mai rātau he reta e kiia ana ko te waiata i toa ko “I heke he whakataetae-ā-motu. Koira te wā tuatahi i kitea ai te ao waiata Māori - te Māori Music Industry. Koira te wā tuatahi i kitea ai ēnā mahi kua pai te kite atu i te reka o ēnā mahi – nā reira mē whai atu. Kātahi ka titohia ngā momo waiata – ka hoatu ki a Trenton kia mōhio pēhea ōna whakaaro. Mehemea he āhua rangirua ka tīmata anō. Mo te roopu kapa haka anō hoki. Ka kii mai ia “Tuhihia ngā waiata mō to tāua roopu kapa haka.” Ko te roopu kapa haka o Waitara. Kātahi ka mahi mātau ko Trenton, ko Jade – ka noho mātau ki te tēpū ka tīmata ki te tito waiata - ka titohia ngā kupu mō te roopu. Pai tēnā ki a ia. Ka kii ia, titohia ngā waiata mo te iwi kua e titohia mou anake. Hei aha ngā waiata aroha! Tokomaha ngā waiata aroha kei tua o te ao. Ka aha? Are we in love or what? Kei te pakanga rātau, kei te kanga – koretake ngā waiata aroha. Titohia ngā waiata mo te iwi – hāpaitia I te iwi whakatoa I te tūmanako ki roto I te iwi.”

When I lived in Taranaki I was on a course, which qualified people to teach performing arts and kapa haka. At the time there was a competition – “Manu whakataetae”. Nikiti Toataua was the tutor at the time and he encouraged us to write for this competition. We worked on our respective songs and others of us worked a little extra to get our songs up to scratch. Once completed, sent these off to Tangata Records the recording company. Eventually we received a letter stating that the winning song was “I heke”. This was also a national competition, which for the first time recognised indigenous Maori Music – giving birth to what is now the Maori Music Industry. Maori Music had finally become recognised for its uniqueness and beauty and was now being encouraged. When I have completed a composition, I then hand this on to Trenton for a second opinion. If he felt I was a little off track then he would sit me down and make me start over again. The same went for kapa haka as well. He would say to me “Write some songs for our group.” The Waitara cultural group that is. Then Trenton, Jade and I would come to the table and start to compose material for the group. He enjoyed that. He would also say “Write songs that are uplifting of the people; not about yourself. Never mind love songs! (Piripi laughs.) There are enough of those around and most of the time the people who sing them are hypocrites. Are we in love or what? You see them (lovers) fighting, swearing – so it’s pointless writing about love songs. Write songs that are befitting of the people – lift the people up and give them hope.”

Give our people something to strive for. That has been something that has dictated the kaupapa for the waiata – making it relevant to the people – give them something that they can relate to – not just make them relate to personal tribulations – that kind of stuff. That was a biggie. On the album we got asked to do a love song. I was reluctant to do it at first but I thought I may as well give it a

go and it is the only one I have written. I think that has always been a big one for the album is to do it for the people - something that they can all relate to.

What is your affinity with other indigenous cultures and their music? From my observations, there is a feel; an innate sense of knowing almost for the percussion, dances and movement of cultures in particular, South America – speak to that.

I only have an affinity with the America's, South America, Mexico and the Indians of North America – only through our teachings – that we are all related through the Māori People *ia rātau e taki haere ana ki te kimi I te whenua o Aotearoa. (As they journeyed in search of the 'promised land' Aotearoa -the land of the long white cloud.)* That's the only reason why I have an affinity. Even though I love their music – some of the things that they relate to like the eagle – a creature of high status – we were told that that eagle was 'Amo Taketake' a spiritual eagle that guided the Māori people through the America's en route to Aotearoa. It's out of respect knowing that there's a connection there with those people – acknowledging that gee for all I know I could be part Indian or that I could be part South American or part Peruvian. That's why I have always remained close acknowledging that there is a blood tie there. And I love the music as well.

What happened to the percussive instruments of the Māori?

That's something that has probably just been lost in time. I mean everyone talks about the pahū. It's quite difficult trying to locate where it got to. When you look at Polynesia and the way they use drums and it's an awesome thing and you wonder why the Māori people didn't adapt that. You have the Cook Island Māori and their language is very similar to the Māori and the question posed is why did they still maintain that and here in Aotearoa they talk about the 'pahu' but was it the main one. All Polynesians, Tahitians; everyone; we all come from the same tīpuna; you know from Maui and his brothers and so there's a connection there. So there had to have been some similarities – for all we know it could have been the environment – just adapting to the land – everything had to be adapted; right down to the music. I mean with today's society it's really hard – you got all these scientists DNA this and DNA that and it's making it hard for us for Māori people to say, this is how it was. The pahū isn't just something that popped out from nowhere. Nō mai rānō – even back when Tāne brought the baskets of knowledge – they talk about the rutu pahū – the sacred gong he sounded for the brothers to gather before the baskets were brought down. If you were to pioneer bringing back the pahū in a new perspective – I mean, a lot of people think that Māori are just all that eerie kind of stuff and then you get a Māori who can play something similar to a cook island drum or samba drum you can categorise it quite easily (because you've heard it before) so it (Māori percussion) would have to be something different.

Your most recent excursion to Tahiti – speak to that.

Tahiti – Himene Patitifa; a celebration for contemporary artists of Polynesia and it wasn't only Polynesia but more so the “Ring of fire”; because you had representatives from Taiwan. Even a representative from Las Vegas! It was a good experience. I represented te Iwi Māori and each person represented an island throughout Polynesia; French Polynesia coming together in celebration of where artists have taken their traditional forms; where they've evolved to and where their stance is in the World Music area.



Piripi performing at the Patitifa Festival; Tahiti.

In your opinion, how are Māori faring in the World Music Area?

It depends on where you go. The guy from Rapa Nui he was just just blown away with Māoridom as a whole. He's done a bit of study and he himself acknowledges that we are quite similar to the people from Rapa nui and the Māori. Other cultures have affinity with other cultures. The Japanese and the Taiwanese love the Māori culture. In Tahiti you just feel like you're home again and you can see that they're another proud people. I think if you look at people like Hinewehi Mohi, Moana and the Tribe it's those kinds of people that are spearheading the Māori Music Industry into the international scene. In France Toni Huata is doing quite well with her album. Its (Māori music) not world wide; I mean everyone likes to hear it but perhaps only in certain areas the Māori Music industry is doing well. Once you know where those places are; I think it's just logical to take it there and expand from there. Being a Māori male artist you'll find that It's mainly Māori female artists that are going international. There's also Wai 100%; they're doing really well. Moana and the tribe; she'd probably be the most successful Māori artist. She's won a few awards as well.

What do you think is the local response to Māoridom's contribution to World Music? Is there enough local support for this?

I think Aotearoa generally tend to be quite harsh (towards their own). There is support out there, but when you go abroad people are just far more receptive; they're just blown away. I think that most New Zealanders have been around Māori culture enough to accept it for what it is and so is nothing new to them. But when you take it overseas, you're like the best thing that has ever happened to them! I mean there's support from Te Māngai Paoho and Creative NZ which is great because we need to build it more however if you look at the artists themselves, they struggle a little more than artists from overseas.

So what are your plans for the immediate future?

Yeah we're talking about producing another album. A couple of projects have turned up. One of them is a compilation called Reo, which is a compilation of various Māori artists from around the motu. One CD. I was a little surprised when I got asked to do it. I had to submit a song within two days and so had to quickly develop one of the songs I had been working on. I had others but didn't want to hand them out as they were still a little raw and may not have done them any justice. So I had to find a song that was developed enough that we could submit it. Yep a future album. We are still looking at a concept. One concept that we talked about– if you look at different philosophies from around the world like how elements are interconnected and what we were going to do was the same but from a Māori perspective. We started brainstorming about how we could base an album on Te Ao Māori. If we look at the Chinese elements – they've got five elements fire, wind, water, metal and earth and how each one of them affects each other. Each of them is stronger than another one but is weak against another. So we sort of looked at philosophies like that but related it to Te Ao Māori. One suggestion that was made; which I was sort of reluctant about – was te tātai ihorangi – the Māori zodiacs and how Io and Whaea Rikoriko gave out unto each of the Mareikura a gift.^[2] For example; one was given the gift of honour and one was given the gift of strength. So honour, strength; responsibility of man – each of these is different kaupapa that you can base a concept for an album. I was a bit reluctant to use these korero lest they be demeaned. So we ended up looking elsewhere so we thought about fire; and different kaitiaki of fire and how fire can help people. Same again for water and even thought. Another was raised; “What about personal expressions?” - nah we don't really want to do personal expressions because then it'll be just another sad album about myself and I didn't want that to happen. So again I wanted to keep it open for our people.

I always acknowledge the spirit. *Nā te wairua I hōmai I te whakaaro (It is the spirit that gives illumination)* – so you always got to acknowledge the spirit. You're just a vessel who is there to put the thoughts across.

Still a work in progress. We are looking at working on it (the album) next year but this year; it's just writing. I've suggested a song per month. Done two so far, the third is halfway but nearly finished. But that's the goal; a song per month. I wish I was like some people who can write a song like say within a matter of a week; like yourself (interviewer) you can just do that and that's the kind of thing that I would like to achieve and Ruia (Aperahama) is a prime example. He made up a song on the way to the studio in his vehicle and he's such a talented person and he knows how to play all these instruments. I think every artist has their own strengths and I think I like to let my songs ferment; just let them sit there for a while and wait and see what comes next. So yeah, we're on track at the moment. One thing I may have to do is research what's out there in terms of lyric writing.

So you're going to stick to writing for the people?

Yeah that will always dictate what the kaupapa will be about and it's going to be something that I'm going to keep sticking to because once I start talking about myself then it's over. For me, it's about giving my koha to help the Māori Music Industry to develop.

Words of wisdom to budding young composer/ performers

Kia mau te whakapono i roto i a koe

Hāpai to kaha, to māia hei whakakikokiko ou wawata ki tēnei ao tūroa.

Be strong and believe in yourself. You can do it but you have to be prepared to work hard for it. The harder the battle the sweeter the victory.

“Tiehu” (Piripi Christie, Aaron Davey, Joe Amstad)

Words in Maori

Mai ngā ihi o te ra

Mai te pupuhi o te hau

Mai te rere o te wai

He tiehu o ngā tīpuna

I te ao, i te po

Tiaho tonu mai

Te wairua o ngā mātua tīpuna e

He puawai tapu i tau i to ngākau

Mauhere te ra mōu te ao

Anō te pai

Mauhere te ra, kua oti te ao

Te mutunga pai

Whaia te ara tūwatea

Te kaha o te pūmanawa

Ka puawai to moemoeā e

Whaia te ara tūwatea

Aruhia ki te whakamutunga

Ka puawai to wawata e

Ko te reo, ko ngā tikanga

Te whakapiripiri o te momo kōtahi

Ko ēnei ngā taonga

I waiho e rātou ki a rātou uri

Words in English –

Beyond the life bearing rays of the sun

Beyond the kind hearted blowing of the wind

Beyond the life flowing waters

Come forth the blessings of our ancestors

Unto the world of light

Unto the world of darkness

It is forever luminous

The prestigious spirit of our ancestors

A sacred plumage
That resides within your heart
Seize the day and the world is yours
Once more the bewildering joy
Seize the day and the world is yours
On the prevalence of success
Pursue the path of uninhabited hindrance
And draw on the strengths of your instincts
Pursue the path of uninhabited hindrance
And quest to the very end
The ancestral language and the ancestral customs
The coming together of a common cause
These are the ancestral heirlooms
They bequeathed to their successors
The Māori people

[1] Rehua; a celestial being in Maori mythology said to have gifted on behalf of Io (Supreme Being who dwelled in the twelfth heaven) the breath of life to Hineahuone the first woman. Tāne (the first man) having sought the female element created Hineahuone from the earth and breathed life into her through her nostrils hence the symbolism of the hongi or traditional Maori form of greeting where the noses are pressed together. Therefore Te Pūtahitanga o Rehua or the “the gathering place of Rehua” is one of the final ports of call for spirits who have left their physical bodies for the afterlife.

[2] Io is the Supreme Being who created Whaea Rikoriko his female companion. Io went inside himself and pulled out the best of himself and called her Whaea Rikoriko. Whaea Rikoriko is Io’s first creation before everything else.

Mareikura are guardians of higher status of the children of Rangi and Papa. The closest description of Mareikura are “female angels”. Their names are Te Ataatuhi, Whakaahu, Ruawaahia, Te Werowero, Takero and others.

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