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Indigenous collaboration towards hybrid musical production builds a better community: Taioreore—Māui, Izanagi and Izanami

Te Manaaroha Pirihiira Rollo

Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato

Whakatauaākiⁱ

Kei a te pō te timatatanga o te waiatatanga mai a te atua.
Ko te ao, ko te ao mārama, ko te ao tūroa.

It was in the night, that the gods sang the world into existence.
From the world of light, into the world of music. (Translation)

(Quoted by Mātiaha Tiramōrehu, Ngāi Tahu, 1849)

Abstract

Indigenous groups have been developing and adopting hybrid identities since colonialism began. According to Smith (2006), “With hybrid identity, indigenous communities can maintain independence and integrity. Simultaneously, they develop the ability to communicate across political, linguistic, and cultural boundaries” (p. 2). Art collaboration between indigenous people builds a better community that aims to improve relationships through understanding and appreciating one another’s cultural heritage and art forms. Furthermore, every indigenous culture encompasses its own uniqueness, differences and sometimes shares commonalities with one another. This article discusses the processes used to negotiate, compromise and creatively develop a hybrid musical production that integrates Māori and Japanese performing arts, namely music, song and dance. The creation and performance of Taioreore—Māui, Izanagi and Izanami at the Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival in 2014 provides an insight into hybrid exploration that not only combined Māori and Japanese traditional and contemporary art forms but explored the creation of a third culture, a third expressive space, a hybrid crossroad. This paper discusses the creative process, the working together and working out of something new, fresh and innovative in performing arts.

Keywords

Māori, Japanese, collaboration, hybrid (musical production), community (development)

ⁱ *Whakatauaāki*: significant ancestral saying



Introduction

The POETⁱⁱ Indigenous Research Conference provided an opportunity to address indigenous collaboration between Māori and Japanese in creating a hybrid musical production that promoted both cultures within traditional and contemporary contexts. The conference theme of ‘Research methods, ethics and approaches in collaboration with indigenous communities’ provided a forum for discussing the concept of music, song and dance creation through collaboration and in return developed cultural understanding and respect for one another. Hybrid musical production became the medium for building respectful and effective relationships between two distinct cultures, thus providing a model for creating a better community and nationhood within contemporary New Zealand.

The bicultural (Māori and Western) and multicultural (other ethnicities) landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand resonates with indigenous cultural and musical artefacts through diverse communities, mixed media broadcast, cultural festivals, educational institutions, and private and public entertainment. This multicultural landscape provides a ‘melting pot’ of opportunity in creating indigenous musical productions. As Vella (2000) states, “When two different cultural groups come into contact, inevitably the music from each group eventually shows the influence of the other” (p. 76). By collaborating with one another, Māori and Japanese artists were able to express their unique cultures, share commonalities and weave their cultures together, thus extending them beyond their traditional origins to serve new purposes. *Taioreore*ⁱⁱⁱ: *Māui*^{iv}, *Izanagi and Izanami*^v explored this concept by integrating Māori and Japanese myths and narrating these stories through music, song and dance. However, expanding aesthetics and production possibilities required careful consideration towards cultural heritage, discussed later in this article. The working-out of this musical production and how it transformed lives amongst artists, musicians, performers and audience alike, thus building a better community through the arts, will be discussed.

Hybridity and musical production

What is hybridity and musical production? According to *Collins Paperback Dictionary* (2009), *hybrid* means anything that is a mixture of two different things (p. 380). Collins also defines *hybridize* as to produce or cause to produce hybrids: crossbreed (p. 380).

Initially hybridity was a term of ridicule, often as a mixed-blood or genetic reference (as cited in Smith, 2006, p. 3.). However, with the increase of globalisation and modernisation there is a move away from the negative connotations of ‘hybridisation’ to a more positive and beneficial capacity that allows people to negotiate across barriers. Arts collaboration is an asset because it is able to transcend strict linguistic, cultural, spiritual, racial, and physical delineations. Therefore hybridity bridges two or more cultures to create a new cultural identity and, in the case of this study, new artistic expression.

In reference to the arts and this hybrid musical production, the fusion of Māori and Japanese cultures not only brings two unique people and cultures together but allows the creation of a third culture, a new expression, a new identity, and a newly formed hybrid culture within the arts arena. Furthermore, the author supports Canclini’s assertion “that hybrid describes a culture that no longer can be considered as pure (following strict rules of modernism) and that is defined by the level of fusion present at any given time and context (cited in, 2011). This hybrid production, *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami*, goes beyond the hybridisation of cultural music, song and dance to explore a new space, the ‘creative domain’ and its semantic implications in a given socio-cultural context.

ⁱⁱ *POET*: Pedagogies Of Educational Transition. The POET Indigenous Research Conference held at The University of Waikato in 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Taioreore*: supreme, paramount and important.

^{iv} *Māui*: a demi-god. According to Māori he was known for his exploits and trickery, which led to many deeds including the fishing up of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

^v *Izanagi and Izanami*: Japanese deities who created the Japanese archipelago.

Methodology in creative process

This study was an empirical approach to research that employed practice-led research in the creative arts. According to Smith and Dean (2009),

Practice-led research is a distinctive feature of the research activity in the creative and performing arts. As with other research conducted by arts and humanities researchers, it involves the identification of research questions and problems, but the research methods, contexts and outputs then involve a significant focus on creative practice. This type of research thus aims, through creativity and practice, to illuminate or bring about new knowledge and understanding, and it results in outputs that may not be text-based, but rather a performance (music, dance, drama), design, film, or exhibitions. (p. 47)

The creation of this hybrid music, song and dance production, *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami*, focused on artist-practitioner, the creative product and the critical process. In addition the framework for practice-led research included theoretical, conceptual, dialectical and contextual practices in working from the ‘unknown to the known’ and a research approach that was purposeful yet open-ended, clear-sighted yet exploratory (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 49). Reflection on creative practices also played an important part in this study that allowed a diverse range of people (composers, musicians, dancers) to share ideas and narratives, re-evaluate processes and rework music, song compositions and choreography towards the final performance. After the performance, feedback and feed forward from members of the audience were valued and provided an insight into what worked and what needed further refining.

Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami production and performance

In 2013, Yurika Arai, a translator and teacher based in Hamilton and representative of the New Zealand Intercultural Society of Arts Inc. and Wa San Bon, a professional Taiko drumming group from Japan, approached me about producing a hybrid musical. The aim was to explore the commonalities and uniqueness of both Māori and Japanese cultures and whether the creation of a hybrid music, song and dance production was possible. Kapa Kuru Pounamu, a university-based kapa haka group was invited to participate in the collaborative process as creators and performers of this new musical. At this initial stage the importance of ‘whakawhanaungatanga’, defined as ‘building respectful and productive working relationships’ was established by an official pōwhiri,^{vi} performed by Kapa Kuru Pounamu to Yurika Arai and Wa San Bon at the University of Waikato. This was followed by introductions and consisted over time in getting to know one another better. The formation of this new performing arts group and the importance of working together towards one goal were best exemplified by Tāwhiao’s tongi^{vii}:

Ki te kotahi te kākaho, ka whati.

Ki te kāpuia, e kore e whati.

If a reed stands alone it is vulnerable

But if many are bound together they are unbreakable.

(As cited in Papa, 2013, p. 2)

The process implemented in this hybrid musical production was also explored through dual discussions and decision-making. In the initial stages no one knew what to do, who was responsible for what, and what the production would eventually accomplish.

These processes were intuitively led. However, it was clear from a Māori perspective that this project was guided by the following principles:

^{vi} *Pōwhiri*: traditional Māori welcoming ceremony.

^{vii} *Tongi*: prophetic statement by the Māori King Tāwhiao who served from 1860 to 1894.

- Mana iwi/tino rangatiratanga

Each culture had total sovereignty and authority over their cultural ethos. There was a need to consult with one another in the creative process.

- Whānaungatanga

Building of respectful and effective relationships. This included the pōwhiri process, leading to ongoing discussions and shared decision-making. Friendship and trust developed from this important value.

- Manaakitanga

The care for one another as people with unique cultural differences and some commonalities within the arts.

- Ako

Teaching and learning from one another. Creating this hybrid musical production encompassed lots of teaching and learning, so that we could gain an understanding of one another's culture during the creative process.

- Wānanga

The need for ongoing communication throughout the creative process leading to the performance. A marae wānanga was also held for rehearsals.

- Auahatanga

The creative process demanded contributions by all members involved in the project, which included the producers, musicians, composers and dancers. There was an open door policy to create the productions through trialling ideas and refining the production.

After they became aware of these Māori principles, Yurika Arai and Wa San Bon agreed that they were able to work with them as they aligned with some of their own beliefs, values and practices. However, as Māori artists we were aware that ongoing communication needed to happen between both parties, Māori and Japanese, to ensure total respect for each culture and its tradition, and what it means to those who protect, cultivate or even adore it. On the other hand, the Japanese artists were able to act as creators and advisors of their own culture for the purpose of art hybridisation.

The aim of this particular project was to narrate the story of Māui, who fished up Aotearoa New Zealand, and Izanagi and Izanami, who created the Japanese archipelago. The first step was to research Māori and Japanese myths and collect music, songs and dances appropriate for this production. In some cases new works and compositions were required. All members of the group became cultured in both indigenous worlds, which assisted with the final hybrid musical programme that combined a traditional and contemporary repertoire as listed below:

- *Māori culture*: Whakaari (drama), waiata (poetry), waiata-ā-ringa (modern action song), poi (poi dance), haka (posture dance), tititorea (stick game) korikori hou (contemporary dance).
- *Japanese culture*: Ancient fishing songs, taiko drumming, shakuhachi instrument (flute), story narration.

In addition we wanted to acknowledge the deities Māui, Izanagi and Izanami, who were known as 'creators of nations', by integrating a mixture of Māori and Japanese repertoires. The opening quote by Tiramōrehu (1849) acknowledges the Māori gods who sang the world into existence, similar to the godly powers of Māui, Izanagi and Izanami, who created Aotearoa and Japan.

The finale included a haka performed by Māori and Japanese dancers, an ancient Japanese song performed by Māori and Japanese singers, and taiko drumming with haka, tititorea and poi dance. Cultural hybridity has a two-fold meaning: first it is about upholding traditional forms but exploring new possibilities without diminishing cultural heritage; secondly, according to Canclini, it relates to "a

culture that no longer can be considered pure (following strict rules of modernism) and that is defined by the level of fusion present at any given time and context (cited in Halac, 2011). This production considered both approaches and the group had to walk a fine line, working towards the creation of a new innovative production while being sensitive to cultural heritage and upholding the integrity of both cultures.

In research, ethics are the acceptable standards of behaviour by researchers based on moral and academic concepts and values in higher learning institutions. So too is the importance of being ethical when dealing with cultural representation. In Māori terms this is regarded as mana iwi or tino rangatiratanga where each culture has their own ethos and are the authoritarians of their culture, and manaakitanga, which demands utmost care for the people and their unique world. When creating this hybrid musical there was a need to understand, respect and value each tradition, which consisted of indigenous beliefs and values, customs and traditions, narratives, sacred text, a repertoire of ancient songs, traditional dances, sacred rituals, and traditional instruments. As Halac (2011) stated, “We should understand the sound (music and song) in the context of the culture and its tradition, and what it means to those that protect it, cultivate it or even adore it.”

The ongoing respectful communication between composers, musicians and dancers within the group ensured that we did not compromise cultural values for the sake of artistic merit. In addition, kaumatua and kuia and cultural advisors guided the group throughout this process. However, through negotiation and compromise we were able to be creative, take risks and rework the musical through feedback and feed forward towards the finishing product. As Riichi Yamauchi^{viii} noted, “Tradition is solid as a rock, but at the same time, flexible like water” (personal communication, 2013).

The success of this project depended on full commitment and participation of all members including supporters. Furthermore, the group called on people with expertise in the arts (composers, musicians, performers) and management skills. These people happily volunteered their time and efforts towards the fruition of this hybrid musical. As the Māori whakataukī states:

Mā pango, mā whero
Ka oti te mahi

*By black and by red (all ethnicities)
The work gets done (through effort and cooperation)*
(Brougham & Reed, 2009, p. 27)

The group was made up of the following members, who held certain roles and responsibilities as detailed in Table 1.

^{viii} *Riichi Yamauchi*: leader of Wa San Bon Taiko Group.

Table 1. Roles and responsibilities

Participants	Role	Responsibilities
Te Manaaroaha Rollo Yurika Arai	Producers	Collaborating with composers, musicians and dancers to produce <i>Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami</i> .
Yurika Arai Alistair Swale	Translators	Japanese to English, English to Japanese
Yurika Arai Cherie Waititi Alistair Swale	Photography Filming	Rehearsals and performances.
Donn Ratana	Artist	Designed the stage backdrop of Māui, Izanagi and Izanami
Riichi Yamauchi Kenji Furutate Hidenori Yura	Wa San Bon	Japanese musicians, dancers, composers and choreographers. Taiko drumming, playing the shakuhachi instrument and performing the final integrated act.
Koha Rogers Anthony Nepia Lotima Vaiioletti Cruize Simon Hēmi Te Kanawa Nakita Wiperi Bobbi-Jo Rhind Marita Pitman Astina Wiperi Cody Ellis Rīpeka Te Huia	Kapa Kuru Pounamu	Māori performers, composers and choreographers. Performing drama, poetry, waiata, poi, waiata-ā-ringa, haka, tititorea, contemporary dance and performing the final integrated act.
Te Manaaroaha Rollo	Kapa Kuru Pounamu	Guitarist and composer
Chirah Simon	Sound Technician	To check sound and play pre-recorded sounds
Family members	Supporters	Fundraising, transportation, food and drinks, and moral support

In promoting *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami*, Donn Ratana, a talented local artist and art lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato, was commissioned to create artworks that depicted Māui fishing up Aotearoa (Figure 1) and Izanagi and Izanami creating Japan (Figure 2). During the creative process a draft of the Māui painting was referred to kaumatua and kuia, and the Izanagi and Izanami painting was discussed with Yurika Arai and Wa San Bon before deciding on the final design. These creative paintings were used for promotional materials and as a stage backdrop for the performances.



Figure 1. Māui (Ratana, 2014)



Figure 2. Izanagi and Izanami (Ratana, 2014)

The group was invited to perform three shows at the Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival in February and one show at the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts in March 2014. As we drew near to the scheduled performances the group became more and more excited about working together and showcasing this hybrid musical to Hamilton City and the Waikato Region. However, prior to the performances there was still a lot of work to be done such as making costumes, building props, promoting the shows, media releases and rehearsal after rehearsal. The group met three times a week from August 2013 to February 2014. There was a lot of time and effort put into perfecting the show and blending the two cultures together. The aim was not only to present a new hybrid musical but also to aim for excellence in the arts, as suggested in the following statement:

Te toi whakairo, ka ihiihi, ka wehiwehi, ka aweawe te ao katoa.

Artistic excellence makes the world sit up in wonder.

(Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20)

The final programme included:

Introduction	15 minutes	Taiko drumming by Wa San Bon and Wai Taiko. ^{ix}
Act One	45 minutes	Māui myth (Kapa Kuru Pounamu).
Act Two	45 minutes	Izanagi and Izanami myth (Wa San Bon).
Interval	15 minutes	
Act Three	30 minutes	Finale—Hybrid musical ‘Creators of Nations’ Performed by Kapa Kuru Pounamu and Wa San Bon

The diverse range of people that attended the performances comprised of family, friends, tourists, Māori and Japanese families, local schoolchildren, and students and lecturers from the University of Waikato. The first show was well received; however, we had some technical problems with the sound and lighting. In the following shows these issues were rectified and the group became more confident and started to enjoy themselves in promoting the beauty of both cultures. This musical confirmed that

^{ix} *Wai Taiko*: taiko drummers from the University of Waikato.

hybridity was a medium that could bring people together to celebrate the diversity of cultures in Hamilton and New Zealand.

Discussion

In New Zealand the arts are powerful forms of expression that recognise, value, and contribute to the unique bicultural and multicultural character of Aotearoa New Zealand, enriching the lives of all New Zealanders (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). This diverse range of arts are celebrated as separate idioms as well as exploring the merging of various art forms and cultures in collaborative works. Fine examples of these innovative works include *Ihi Frenzy* where the Royal New Zealand Ballet join forces with Te Matarae-I Orehu (kapa haka and ballet); *Te Ku Te Whe*, a recording of traditional Māori instruments by Hirini Melbourne and Richard Nunns (Māori and Pākehā partnership); *Te Matatini* where many kapa haka groups integrate drama, non-Māori instruments, props and other non-Māori dance moves (theatrical kapa haka), and *Internet2 and Global Electroacoustic Music* where composers and musicians connect with each other globally (via the Internet) to create live hybrid music (global music creation). *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami* continues this trend by incorporating music, dance, drama and visual arts from Māori and Japanese traditions. Furthermore, this hybrid musical encourages other cultures throughout New Zealand to blend their art forms to create innovative works.

This production demonstrated that the arts are never static and forever evolving, reminiscent of Heraclitus' well-known proposition that change is the only thing constant (Carmody & Brink, 2014). In creating this musical the notion of extending cultural products and pushing the boundaries of creativity were the driving force behind this project. As Da Cunha (1995) stated:

Culture is production and not a product, we must be attentive in order to not be deceived; what we must guarantee for the future generations is not the preservation of cultural products, but the preservation of capacity for cultural production. (as cited in Stephens, 1995, p. 290)

All members of the group learnt to work independently and collaboratively to construct meanings, produce works, and respond to and value others' contributions. This is where the creative and intuitive thought and action came into play. To fully appreciate the arts, this project brought Māori and Japanese artists together to create and perform. Furthermore, it educated the ontological and epistemological nature of Māori and Japanese knowledge, and entertained through music, song and dance about indigenous storytelling and the fusion of these cultures through hybridity. The arts are embedded in culture and never separated from the roots of its people. This musical reconnects Kapa Kuru Pounamu and Wa San Bon to the community through artistic expression celebrating both cultures. As Lismer suggested:

Art was not something to be placed on a pedestal
out of reach of ordinary mortals,
but was to be brought within the arena of active life,
so that the attitudes and experience of the artist could be shared by all.
(As cited in Department of Education, 1978, pp. 13–14)

Collaborative musical projects between two indigenous cultures can bridge the gap towards better understanding. This project has had an impact on members of the group and has transformed lives in various ways. This journey has had a spiritual, cultural, social and educational impact on members of the group, which was evident in on- and off-stage relationships that produced the following benefits:

- Friendship and trust.
- Leadership and management.
- Problem-solving.
- Ongoing respectful communications.

- Being creative (intuitive and intellectual).
- Reflecting and evaluating.
- Learning to appreciate Māori and Japanese cultural ethos.
- Proud to be Māori and Japanese.
- Cooperation, collective efforts and artistic collaboration.
- Being professional in performing arts.
- Being whānau—a cooperative group.
- Being successful.
- Hybrid musical creation.

However, there were some challenges. Some of these that the group had to resolve included:

- Timeframe for creating, producing and rehearsing this production created tension amongst the members. At one stage Kapa Kuru Pounamu had to rehearse alone in New Zealand while Wa San Bon rehearsed in Japan. However, technology and the use of Skype ensured that rehearsals continued as planned.
- Language barriers between Māori and Japanese performers. Having an interpreter during rehearsals solved this problem. At times the language of ‘art’ and following one another during rehearsals was also helpful.
- There was a need for financial support to purchase costumes, make props, provide transport, and for marketing and promotion. We were fortunate enough to get some sponsorship to ensure the production went ahead.
- Lighting and sound issues at the first performance. By the second performance this issue was solved.
- Despite the challenges faced during the production there were more positives that were acknowledge and celebrated. This feeling of achievement impacted on each member of the production team, and more importantly each culture was promoted along with the success of fusing the cultures together to create and perform *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami*.

Conclusions

The group’s belief was that indigenous collaboration towards hybrid musical production builds a better community locally (Aotearoa) and globally (Japan and world). More importantly, a new relationship was formed between Māori and Japanese artists that was demonstrated by the respectful relationship between members throughout the project. It is said that music is universal. Although each culture produces its own musical forms, the appeal that these forms hold is not limited to any particular time or place. Like the other arts, music is able to transcend the arbitrary boundaries that humans devise to separate themselves from others. *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami* aimed to build a better community between the artists and audience by celebrating the diverse cultures that make up Aotearoa New Zealand.

The arts draw people together to create, perform and view indigenous art forms, thus developing respectful relationships and appreciating one another’s cultural ethos and the emergence of the third hybrid culture. Like education, the arts become a powerful tool to retell indigenous narratives and develop better understanding and relationships within a socio-cultural context. Māori and Japanese, Kapa Kuru Pounamu and Wa San Bon have united in producing *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami* and opened the door in promoting future hybrid musical productions so that we are able to appreciate the uniqueness, differences and commonalities that each human race has inherited.

Figure 3 shows Kapa Kuru Pounamu and Wa San Bon as one whānau, one people immersed within the arts. This project provided a ‘creative space’ for Māori and Japanese artists to share ideas, experiences and influences that assisted with the shaping of this musical production. Although the aim was to create something new and fresh and fuse certain elements towards music hybridisation, this did not detract from the unique beauty of each distinctive culture. Both traditional and contemporary aspects of each culture were highlighted in the performance.

Personally, *Taioreore: Māui, Izanagi and Izanami* has been a rewarding experience and has enriched my life. I will never forget the friends I made, and the opportunity of sharing my culture with another, celebrating the diversity and beauty of Aotearoa and Japan.



Figure 3. Kapa Kuru Pounamu and Wa San Bon (Arai, 2014)

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Wai Taiko

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Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival

New Zealand Intercultural Society of Arts Inc.

Te Ohu Tauahurea Cultural Committee at the University of Waikato

Whānau and supporters

Māori Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand, the land of the long white cloud.
Haka	Generic word for all Māori dances, posture dance.
Kapa haka	Māori performing arts.
Kapa Kuru Pounamu	Name of the Māori Performing Arts group.
Kaumātua	Respected elderly Māori man.
Kuia	Respected elderly Māori woman.
Manaakitanga	To care, respect, value.
Mana iwi	Cultural heritage, ethos, authoritarians of that culture.
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Māui	Demi-god.
Pōwhiri	Traditional Māori welcoming ceremony.
Poi	Ball on string, poi dance.
Taioreore	Supreme, supra, paramount.
Tititorea	Māori stick game.
Tino rangatiratanga	Absolute sovereignty, overall authority.
Tongi	Prophetic saying by Māori monarchs.
Waiata	Traditional and contemporary Māori songs.
Waiata-ā-ringa	Modern Māori action song.
Whakawhanaungatanga	Relationship building, to connect with one another.
Whakaari	Drama, theatrical performance.
Whakataukī	Proverb, important ancestral saying.
Whānau	Family, extended family.

Japanese Glossary

Izanagi	A Japanese deity born of the seven divine generations, known as Kojiki (male-who-invites), Izanagi-no-mikoto (Lord Izanagi) or Izanagi-no-Okami (The Great God Izanagi), who gave birth to the many islands of Japan.
Izanami	A Japanese deity responsible for the creation of the Japanese archipelago islands.
Shakuhachi	A Japanese bamboo flute.
Taiko	A Japanese barrel-shape drum.

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