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# **Dialogues with the archives: Arrarrkpi responses to recordings as part of the living song tradition of manyardi**

## **Abstract**

This article explores the role of legacy recordings of song for a family of Arrarrkpi (Mawng-speaking people) who are contemporary singers and dancers of *manyardi*—public ceremonial performance of western Arnhem Land—working collaboratively with a team of Balanda (Europeans or ‘visitors’) researchers. Drawing inspiration from Yolŋu ceremony leader and scholar Joe Gumbula’s dialogic approach, the article reflects on various dialogues that inform the research, practice, and archival record of manyardi. We demonstrate how legacy recordings reinvigorate contemporary performance practice in collective settings, rather than serving as canonical or ideal versions of a song-set to be replicated by an individual singer. We suggest that maintaining the linking and organisation of enriched song metadata from the community to the archival collection will enable future song custodians to maintain dialogues with archives that hold recordings of manyardi.

## **1 Introduction**

One of the significant legacies of Yolŋu ceremony leader, scholar and musician Dr Joe Neparnga Gumbula was his ability to communicate across generations and cultures using both local and adopted knowledge systems and creative practices in order to engage young people and Balanda (Europeans or ‘visitors’) in dialogue with living Yolŋu culture, law and society (Corn and Gumbula, *Djilwirri*, p.66). A poignant example occurred in 2010, when Gumbula flew to the capital of the United States of America, Washington D.C., to visit the Smithsonian Institution with a delegation from Arnhem Land including traditional owners from Groote Eylandt and Gunbalanya. They came to perform a ceremony that would ‘resurrect’ from Washington ancestral bones stolen from Arnhem Land over sixty years ago, and to prepare the spirits of those bones for their journey home (see Thomas). Prior to singing the ancestral bones out of the Smithsonian building and into a hearse to be loaded onto a plane home, Gumbula explained the rationale for the performance:

## 2 — *Brown et al.*

This is a long way, America, and we're trying to perform something that is appropriate. . . because these people [spirits of the bones] will be listening to us too—they know. It's not us doing the show, or doing this business just today for the eyes of the public, or the eyes of the living people now. They are listening to us. We [Anindilyakwa speaker Thomas Amagula, Kunwinjku speaker Victor Gumurdul, and Gupapuyngu speaker Joe Gumbula] are different languages, but they have been there, they know this language exists already. Ancestors have given that law to us, and we still hold that law. I still hold that law. . . I was given authority from my clan group, from my Gupapuyngu nation. And I, as a Gupapuyngu nation, represent something here in Washington to resurrect those people here back to the community and to be reburied (Gumbula).

In this article we reflect on the dialogues that Gumbula opened up that have informed Arrarrkpi (Mawng-speaking saltwater people of western Arnhem Land) ceremony leaders David and Jenny Manmurulu and their family, as well as the Balanda researchers and other Arrarrkpi who have collaborated to document *manyardi*—the living song tradition of western Arnhem Land—for future generations.<sup>1</sup> To date, our collaborative research has primarily centered on the documentation and analysis of linguistic and musical diversity in western Arnhem Land (for example, Barwick et al; O'Keeffe, *Multilingual*; Brown et al) as well as an ethnographic account of the fundamental role of *manyardi* in Arrarrkpi society as part of grieving for deceased relatives, maintaining connections to ancestral country and language, and conducting diplomacy within and between Arrarrkpi and Balanda (Brown *Role, Following*). More recently, in response to concerns by David and Jenny Manmurulu and other *manyardi* ceremony leaders about dwindling opportunities in community for intergenerational transmission of certain songs-sets and accompanying dances, our research activities have centered around maintaining a dialogue between custodians of *manyardi*—particularly apprentice singers—and legacy recordings of songs performed by their relatives.

In this article we outline how these dialogues are being conducted and how they might inform the way the archival record is held and accessed in the future—understanding that recordings represent 'episodes of knowledge production' (Christie, p.65), performed by the *arrapujpa* (songman) and *yartparrawarra* (expert didjeridu player) that come together for a particular occasion, and that songs will

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a presentation given by David and Jenny Manmurulu, Reuben Brown and Isabel O'Keeffe for the 2017 *Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities* symposium as well as previous and subsequent discussions between the authors. Researchers who have collaborated with the Manmurulu family and other *manyardi* ceremony holders of western Arnhem Land over the past two decades include Meiki Apted, Linda Barwick, Bruce Birch, Reuben Brown, Nicholas Evans, Murray Garde, Allan Marett, Isabel O'Keeffe and Ruth Singer. For a summary of some recent projects, see O'Keeffe et al.

### 3 — *Brown et al.*

therefore continue to be reinterpreted in future recordings, as custodians of manyardi reiterate the knowledge they hold in different performance contexts. Other dialogues led by Gumbula that have been taken up through our collaborative research on western Arnhem Land song include what Corn and Gumbula (*Rom*, p.172) conceive of as ‘bi-intellectualism’—the learning, through kinship and adoption, of one another’s languages and ways of knowing both as Yolŋu/Arrarrkpi/Indigenous and Balanda/non-Indigenous participating in ceremonial and academic forums; musical dialogues between eastern and western Arnhem Land song traditions and an understanding of how they complement one another; and conversations between voices in legacy recordings that speak to contemporary singers and inform their knowledge and practice of manyardi. Finally, we suggest that by maintaining these important dialogues in the way that digital collections are managed, collecting institutions, research collaborators, educators, and community members and can be responsive to the way in which present and future western Arnhem Land singers use recording technologies as part of a living song tradition of manyardi.

## 2 Kinship and adoption

Much has been written of the classificatory system of kinship that prevails throughout Aboriginal Australia (see for example Keen, pp.147–209; Berndt, pp. 47–90) and the ways in which eastern and western Arnhem Land systems in particular translate so that Bininj, Arrarrkpi, Yolŋu etc. of Arnhem Land are able to adopt local ways of referring to one another, depending on the social context (Garde, *Culture*, pp.23–32). The Manmurulu and Gumbula families are connected through this kinship system, and through the marriage of Jenny Manmurulu’s sister to Joe Gumbula’s nephew. The two families are also connected ceremonially, both through David Manmurulu and Joe Gumbula’s role in regional men’s ceremony, and through public ceremony of *manikay/manyardi* (as it is known in northeast and western Arnhem Land respectively) performed as part of funeral ceremonies, diplomacy ceremonies and other occasions. Recently in 2018, for example, David and Jenny Manmurulu’s son Rupert Manmurulu travelled from Warruwi on behalf of the family to northeast Arnhem Land to perform his family’s songs alongside manikay songmen at a funeral ceremony for one of Joe Gumbula’s relatives.

In addition to these networks of kinship and ceremony, Jenny and David Manmurulu are part of network of Indigenous ceremony leaders and knowledge holders including Gumbula, who have engaged with musicologists, linguists, historians, anthropologists, and curators for over a decade through their involvement with the National Recording Project (NRP) and annual Symposia on Indigenous Music and Dance (see Corn). Both Gumbula and David Manmurulu were original members of the NRP steering committee, and presented in 2007 in Darwin on their respective song traditions as part of the same program, where Gumbula expressed his support for the Manmurulu family and their Inyjalarrku (mermaid) song-set, and David Manmurulu explained connections between manyardi and manikay through

#### 4 — Brown et al.

shared ancestral foundations and ceremonies.

Just as Gumbula's engagement with the academy and interest in research into early records of Yolŋu life was inspired by his father Djäwa who shared and documented his Yolŋu knowledge with Balanda, so too is the Manmurulu family's present-day engagement with Balanda born from their own 'genealogy of dialogue' (De Largey Healy, p.2). David Manmurulu's father, George Winunguj, worked as the Methodist Overseas Mission Christian Education Regional Supervisor and in 1968 contested in the legislative council elections for the Northern Territory for the Arnhem Land electorate in the Northern Territory Parliament. In 1973, Winunguj travelled to the USA, Europe, and Africa (Nigeria) to play didjeridu as part of a sextet with the Adelaide Wind Quintet, performing compositions by Australian composer George Dreyfus (Kadiba, p.269) (see Figure 1). Winunguj's elder brother Lazarus Lamilami was the first Indigenous Australian to be ordained as a Methodist minister in 1966. In addition to his work for the Methodist church, Lamilami worked with anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt to make numerous recordings documenting manyardi, ancestral stories, Warruwi history and cultural life, and his experiences growing up in western Arnhem Land—edited by Ronald Berndt into an autobiography *Lamilami Speaks* (Lamilami).<sup>2</sup>



(c) Northern Territory Library

hdl:10070/25079

**Fig. 1. George Winunguj playing *arawirr* (didjeridu) with the Adelaide Wind Quartet at Musica Viva's Canberra Spring Festival, 3 October 1971. Source: Northern Territory Library <http://hdl.handle.net/10070/25079>**

<sup>2</sup> Both Lamilami and Winunguj were awarded Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Perhaps the earliest records of Winunguj and Lamilami’s cross-cultural engagement are Axel Poignant’s photos and diaries taken in 1952 during a trip to northern Arnhem Land and the occasion of his receiving a Rom (diplomacy) ceremony—known in western Arnhem Land as Mamurrng. Winunguj and Lamilami travelled with Poignant from Goulburn Island, acting as guides, translators, and cultural brokers while Poignant stayed with various groups camped at Nagalarramba. In exchange for his photo documentation, the Burarra group performed for Poignant the gift of the *rom* pole, before Winunguj and Lamilami performed their own Inyalarrku songs (see Poignant and Poignant 1996). This gesture of goodwill by Lamilami and Winunguj toward the Burarra and Poignant—a Balanda participating in and documenting Arrarrkpi culture—was echoed some sixty years later in 2012 by David Manmurulu, when he performed a Mamurrng ceremony at Warruwi for a visiting group including ethnomusicologist Reuben Brown (the recipient), his research collaborators, and adopted Kunwinjku-speaking family residing at Gunbalanya, Warruwi and Kabulwarnamayo outstation (see Brown, *Different*, pp.51–54). Three generations are therefore represented in the documentation of the Inyalarrku song-set, beginning with Lamilami and Winunguj who passed their songs on to their sons including David Manmurulu and Ronald Lamilami, who in turn passed it on to their sons Reuben Manmurulu, Rupert Manmurulu, Renfred Manmurulu and Patrick Lamilami, who continue to lead the songs in ceremony, and dream original songs of their own (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Three generations of *manyardi* (clockwise from top): George

**Winungudj, Rupert Manmurulu and David Manmurulu, dancing the ‘giant dance’ connected to the Inyjalarrku song-set.<sup>4</sup>**

For Jenny Manmurulu, this ethos of engaging visitors/Balanda through kinship was evident in Gumbula’s own collaborations with a network of scholars including ethnomusicologist Aaron Corn:

I really enjoyed listening to what Aaron [Corn] used to talk about, like how they [Aaron Corn and Joe Gumbula] used to work together, like they were more like a family... Aaron with that Gumbula family, how they adopted him as a family and worked together closely and sharing knowledge together, through Yolŋu knowledge and Balanda.<sup>5</sup>

Since the 2012 Waruwi Mamurrng—in which Brown and his adopted families were recipients of the ceremony led by David and Jenny Manmurulu, alongside Charlie Mangulda (*arrapujpa* for Yanajanak ‘stone country spirit’ song-set)—Brown has been invited to participate as a dancer alongside the Manmurulus and other manyardi performers from Waruwi, including as a giver of a Mamurrng in 2016 for Dr Payi Linda Ford’s Rak Mak Mak Marranunggu family at Twin Hill station (see Figure 3).<sup>6</sup> Reflecting on Brown’s ceremonial participation and her own academic collaboration including numerous co-presentations with Brown, O’Keeffe and other researchers at conferences and the annual Music Symposia, Jenny Manmurulu commented: “we’re working as one big family now”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Details of sources of the photos: George Winungudj (top) (Poignant and Poignant, p.149), David Manmurulu (bottom left) (still from Manmurulu and Nabalimirri) and Rupert Manmurulu (bottom right) (still from O’Keeffe, *Nginji*).

<sup>5</sup> Jenny Manmurulu, 20180713I004 00:00:04.711 - 00:00:47.386. For quotes in this chapter that are derived from Brown’s and O’Keeffe’s fieldwork recordings, a footnote provides details of the speaker’s name, recording ID (including the date of recording [YYYYMMDD] and recordist ID—Reuben Brown [RB], Isabel O’Keeffe [IO], Ruth Singer [RS]), recording number and relevant time code where available. Recordings by O’Keeffe from 2006–2012 are archived at ELAR as part of the Western Arnhem Land Song Project database (Barwick et al. *West*). Brown’s fieldwork recordings are in the process of being deposited under collection RB1 in PARADISEC’s archive, while Singer’s recordings are under collection RS1 in PARADISEC and also at ELAR and AIATSIS. Further details of these recordings can also be found in Brown’s and O’Keeffe’s PhD dissertations.

<sup>6</sup> Brown’s research ‘family’ for the Waruwi Mamurrng included Linda Barwick and Allan Marett. Barwick and Marett are long-time collaborators with the Manmurulus and with *wangga* songmen from the Daly.

<sup>7</sup> Jenny Manmurulu, 20180713I004 00:03:15.510 - 00:03:43.938.



**Figure 3. Reuben Brown, Solomon Nangamu, Leneese, Jamie Milpurrr, Jenny Manmurulu, David Manmurulu, Rupert Manmurulu and Renfred Manmurulu at Twin Hill Station after a Mamurrng ceremony. Source: Reuben Brown**

For Gumbula, as for the Manmurulus, adoption operates in both directions—incorporating outsiders into local systems of kinship, but also incorporating Balanda modes of expression into local articulations of country and ancestry (see Corn, p.65). Jenny Manmurulu reflects on the impact of the popular band movement led by Gumbula and his band Soft Sands:

He [Gumbula] probably worked with Balanda long enough, sharing his knowledge through manyardi—like *bunggurl* [eastern Arnhem land public song] ... how it was important for him with those songs, and I remember that ‘Djiliwirri’ like he put that song, like how he mixed with Balanda music but singing in language, it’s a really new experience for like Arrarkpi person to do those modern things.<sup>8</sup>

This had a clear influence on Arrarkpi musical expression, as evident in the CD ‘Best of Waruwi’ 2003 produced by Charles Darwin University, a compilation of Waruwi artists singing songs about historical and contemporary events in Mawng, Kunwinjku and English in a variety of musical styles. Many of the musicians on the CD including Solomon Nangamu, Harold Warrabin and Johnny Namayiwa are *arrapujpa* with their own individual manyardi song-sets, which they incorporate in the recordings alongside verses in Mawng and English (Brown, *Following*).

<sup>8</sup> Jenny Manmurulu, 20180713IO03 00:05:13.230 - 00:06:01.063.

### 3 East and west

The mixing of styles, pedagogies and knowledge systems that characterises the approaches of Gumbula and the Manmurulu family has its foundations in musical dialogues between manyardi and manikay (of northeast Arnhem Land) that are presented simultaneously in ceremony throughout Arnhem Land. Of the numerous differences in the linguistic, musical and dance features that make up the respective song traditions, the clearest aural differences—that makes songs from each region clearly distinguishable from some distance away as one approaches the ceremony ground—are the different sounds of the didjeridu. In manikay, the didjeridu (*vidaki*) makes use of an overblown upper note or ‘hoot’ usually at an interval of around a tenth above the fundamental (Jones; Moyle, *North*). By contrast, in manyardi, the didjeridu (*arawirr*) accompaniment consists of a rhythmically patterned drone with only minimal changes in pitch. Reflecting on these differences between manyardi and manikay, David’s brother and fellow Inyjalarrku songman, James Gulamuwu emphasised how these differences complement one another: ‘Yeah, like we all different together. Yolŋu people [of northeastern Arnhem Land], the play [didjeridu] different, we [of western Arnhem Land] play [didjeridu] us mob different.’<sup>9</sup> These stylistic differences and idea of ‘different together’ also has ancestral foundations, as George Winungudj (David Manmurulu and James Gulamuwu’s father) recounted in a story about two birds—a brolga and kingfisher—who found hollow logs to make didjeridus, and took different styles of didjeridu playing to the east and to the west:

Both [brolga and kingfisher] played [didjeridu] together. Yirrkala mob (people on Gove Peninsula, north-east Arnhem Land) found it [the didjeridu] from the Brolga and it went this way. Kingfisher went to western Arnhem Land. He landed at Beswick (Bamyili) and showed them; and then flew right up to Port Keats [Wadeye]. These two birds first showed how to find the didjeridu. When they found it they became men (Winungudj, cited in Moyle, *North*, p.30).

The importance of performing ‘different together’ relates to a broader interest in presenting ‘consciously differentiated’ styles (Barwick, p.348) within shared ceremonial spaces. Just as Gumbula and Corn point to ‘[t]he aesthetic of difference within similitude’ that ‘lies at the core of the manikay tradition’ (*Budtthun*, p.12), we have argued elsewhere that a similar principle is a core part of the manyardi song traditions, and performance practices in the region more broadly, although the specific musical realisations of this aesthetic are different in manyardi (Brown et al.; O’Keefe, *Multilingual*). This tradition of juxtaposing different manikay and manyardi songs together and highlighting ‘difference within similitude’ in shared performance contexts is evident in the historical record (see for example Elkin &

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<sup>9</sup> James Gulamuwu, 20110903RBM PMRIL07, 00:26:12.555–00:26:23.977 (also quoted in Brown et al. 2017:271).

**9 — Brown et al.**

Jones; Moyle, *North*; Poignant and Poignant; West), including at the 1952 *Rom* at Nagalarramba (near Maningrida) for Axel Poignant discussed earlier, where both manikay and manyardi were performed (Poignant and Poignant, pp.122-141).

The tradition of manikay and manyardi in musical dialogue continues in contemporary performances in ceremonial, festival and academic contexts. For example, funeral ceremonies at Warruwi typically involve performances of multiple manyardi as well as manikay repertoires, particularly since there are a number of Yolŋu families who have lived at Warruwi since around the 1970s (Singer and Harris 2016:183). Arrarrkpi dancers with kinship ties to Yolŋu, such as Jenny Manmurulu, often join in the dancing for manikay, and vice versa. Table 1 shows that, along with David Manmurulu’s family performing Inyjalarrku, two other *manyardi* repertoires and three *manikay* repertoires were performed at a funeral at Warruwi in 2006. Table Y shows a similar number of *manikay* performed along with four other repertoires of *manyardi* in addition to *Inyjalarrku*.

Song-sets and genres	Linguistic affiliation of song-set	Linguistic varieties of song-set	Linguistic affiliation of singers	Main languages spoken by singers	Singers’ usual place of residence
<i>Inyjalarrku</i> ‘mermaid’ <i>kurrula</i> <i>manyardi/</i> <i>kun-borrk</i>	Mawng	spirit language	Mawng	Mawng	Warruwi
<i>Ngarnarru</i> <i>kurrula</i> <i>manyardi/</i> <i>kun-borrk</i>	Manangkardi	spirit language	Manangkardi	Mawng	Warruwi
<i>Milyarryarr</i> <i>kurrula</i> <i>manyardi/</i> <i>kun-borrk</i>	Garig/Ilgar, Marrku, Manangkardi, Mawng	spirit language	Garig/Ilgar Mawng	Iwaidja Kunwinjku Mawng	Minjilang
Galpu <i>manikay</i>	Galpu clan variety of the Dhangu dialect variety of Yolŋu Matha				Warruwi
Gumatj <i>manikay</i>	Gumatj clan variety of the Dhuwal dialect variety of Yolŋu Matha				Warruwi
Murrungun <i>manikay</i>	Murrungun clan variety of the Djinang dialect variety of Yolŋu Matha				Maningrida

**Table 1. Songs performed up to and including the penultimate day of the Warruwi funeral ceremony October 2006 (from O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*, p.132)**

Song-sets and genres	Linguistic affiliation of song-set	Linguistic varieties of song-set	Linguistic affiliation of main singers	Main language spoken by main singers	Main Singers' usual place of residence
<i>Inyjalarrku</i> 'mermaid' <i>kurrula manyardi/kun-borrk</i>	Mawng	spirit language	Mawng	Mawng	Minjilang, Warruwi, Kunbarlanjinja
<i>Nginji/Ngili</i> 'giant/mosquito' <i>kurrula manyardi/kun-borrk</i>	Mawng	spirit language	Mawng	Mawng	Minjilang, Warruwi, Kunbarlanjinja
<i>Mirrijpu</i> 'seagull' <i>kurrula manyardi/kun-borrk</i>	Manangkardi	spirit language	Manangkardi	Mawng	Warruwi
<i>Milyarryarr</i> 'black heron' <i>kurrula manyardi/kun-borrk</i>	Garig/Ilgar, Marrku, Manangkardi, Mawng	spirit language	Garig/Ilgar, Marrku, Manangkardi, Mawng	Iwaidja, Kunwinjku, Mawng	Minjilang, Warruwi
<i>Ulurrumbu</i> 'floating island' <i>kurrula manyardi/kun-borrk</i>	Manangkardi	spirit language	Manangkardi	Iwaidja	Minjilang
Galpu <i>manikay</i>	Galpu clan variety of the Dhangu dialect		variety of Yolŋu Matha		Warruwi
Gumatj <i>manikay</i>	Gumatj clan variety of the Dhuwal dialect		variety of Yolŋu Matha		Warruwi
Murrungun <i>manikay</i>	Murrungun clan variety of the Djinang dialect		variety of Yolŋu Matha		Maningrida
Various artists (recordings)	-	Yolŋu Matha varieties, English	dancers: Yolŋu Matha varieties		dancers: Warruwi
Letterstick Band (recording)	Burarra	Burarra	dancers: Burarra		dancers: Maningrida
Christian hymns & choruses	-	Mawng, Kunwinjku, English	various		Warruwi, Minjilang

**Table 2. Songs performed up to and including the final day of the Warruwi funeral ceremony, April 2007 (from O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*, p.135)**

*Manikay* and *manyardi* songs may actually overlap in these funeral ceremony performances that are, as Knopoff describes for eastern Arnhem Land funeral ceremonies, ‘proximate, simultaneous and unsynchronized’ (Knopoff 1992:150). This juxtaposition and overlapping of *manikay* and *manyardi* songs parallels the kind of juxtaposition and overlapping of Mawng, other western Arnhem Land languages and Yolŋu Matha varieties from eastern Arnhem Land as described by Singer and Harris (see also O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*).

As mentioned earlier, the Manmurulu family have also performed their *Inyjalarrku manyardi* alongside *manikay* for funerals in Eastern Arnhem land and at Eastern Arnhem Land circumcision ceremonies, as well as at the Eastern Arnhem Land Garma festival. The Music Symposia of the National Recording Project have therefore provided an extension of what is already an established tradition of intercultural and musical dialogue between East and West Arnhem Land through the performance of *manikay* and *manyardi*. Indeed, it has been a key aim of the National

Recording Project symposia to have ‘performative, intercultural dialogues’ that are ‘engaged with and responsive to the epistemological bases of its Indigenous community partners and their values, needs and concerns in all work involving the precious cultural resources that their performance traditions comprise’ (Corn and Ford 2014:122).

## 4 Legacy recordings and contemporary practice

For the Manmurulus and other Arrarrkpi, as for Gumbula and other Yolŋu, engagement with scholars in recording and archiving has predominantly been to ‘assist traditional maintenance’ of living song traditions and provide ‘insurance’ against them being lost forever (Gumbula and Corn, *Budtthun*, pp.120, 124). The usual mode of maintaining the *manyardi* song traditions is through Arrarrkpi songmen learning their fathers’ songs, as well as composing or receiving new songs, holding all of these songs in their memories and teaching them to dancers and the next generation of songmen through regular performance. The Manmurulus have described how due to the demands of work and the fact that young people have to move away from the community for education, there are now less opportunities for regular performance, and songs can be forgotten. Jenny Manmurulu points out that this is where recordings can assist:

Like *ngarri* [‘us’] Arrarrkpi, you know, we can just keep it in our head and we just continue [singing] ... [we] keep it going and if people forget, they might say, ‘oh there’s some stuff that we have to look around for [in recordings/archives]’.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, David Manmurulu describes the way recordings work alongside traditional ways of maintaining and invigorating his Inyjalarrku ‘mermaid’ *manyardi*, by teaching his sons the new *manyardi* he has received in dreams from the Inyjalarrku beings:

It [the Inyjalarrku *manyardi*] goes in my head and then whenever we singing I just bring these new songs out and teach my three boys and they can sing, we all singing. And sometimes I record them [so that the boys will remember].<sup>11</sup>

David and Jenny Manmurulu have led ongoing discussions with family, members of the Warruwi community, researchers and archivists about balancing the needs of ceremony holders to keep performing songs with local protocols, articulated differently from one family to the next, around listening to and performing songs as part of restrictions on images, sounds, naming and other representations of the deceased during the period of mourning (O’Keeffe et al.). Despite the sensitivities around mourning protocols, leading to restrictions on the performance and public playback of media of legacy song, Manmurulu suggests that in some cases such as the Ngarnarru song-set, songs have been ‘left too long’, affecting opportunities for

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<sup>10</sup> Jenny Manmurulu, 20170713IO03 00:07:45.600 - 00:08:49.170

<sup>11</sup> David Manmurulu, 20170928 00:24:58.700 - 00:25:39.100

apprentice singers to carry on the song in ceremony: ‘that Ngarnarru, when that old man [the original songman composer] passed away, it’s been off a long time, for a long, long time.’<sup>12</sup>

However, if a songman’s descendants need help in reviving particular song-sets such as Ngarnarru, other Arrarrkpi songmen can usually help out, since it is common for songmen to help out other groups in performance, meaning that they will be familiar with aspects of the didjeridu accompaniment, melody, vocalisation, dance and song order etc. of multiple song-sets. This is similar to the way a particular *manikay* series can be carried on by a related clan in the case of one clan dying out, in what Gumbula described as a ‘traditional Yolŋu archival mechanism’ (Corn and Gumbula, *Budthun*, p.119). As Jenny Manmurulu points out, this similar kind of Arrarrkpi ‘archival mechanism’ can help bring a song-set back even if it’s been ‘off a long time’, but that people are also keen to find archival recordings to assist this process:

Like they [ceremonially] smoke those songs so they’ll continue singing really good, like when that Pastor [Ngarnarru songman] passed away, and then they stopped for a little while and then when his body came back, they smoked it and sang and then.<sup>13</sup> Now it’s just continuing, that Ngarnarru. Because we told them you know, don’t leave it too long cos it’s been off a long time, just continue so that *manyardi* will be strong and maybe one day you boys might get a new song [i.e. in a dream], you know, if you gonna continue singing ... Yeah when they, we opened that song, like smoked it again, they used to help them, our boys [Rupert, Renfred and Reuben Manmurulu] even Albert [another songman] was helping those [Ngarnarru apprentice singer] boys too. And then he asked, Rupert [Manmurulu] asked Reuben [Brown] to look if there’s any more recordings [of Ngarnarru] that they’ve done in the early days.<sup>14</sup>

Reflecting on listening to old recordings from family who’ve passed away, David Manmurulu explains the mixed feelings that legacy recordings can bring, and their significance in keeping alive the memories of deceased *arrapujpa* and *yartparrawarra* who taught him:

Well, I feel a bit sad, but I really wanted to hear more, yeah. I’m happy yeah. Sometimes when I hear it reminds me back when I was a young boy and I was with him, singing, that’s where I was learning that [Inyjalarrku song-set] I was singing with my father.<sup>15</sup>

In the cases of both Ngarnarru and Inyjalarrku then, legacy recordings play an important role in triggering memory of lived experience which is relied upon to reinvigorate and maintain the contemporary performance practice of *manyardi* in a collective setting, rather than serving as canonical versions of a song-set to be replicated by an individual singer.

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<sup>12</sup> David Manmurulu, 20170928 00:01:25.680 - 00:01:36.815.

<sup>13</sup> When a songman in western Arnhem Land passes away, his songs—like his other personal belonging and places he has lived—must be ceremonially smoked (Garde 2006:81)

<sup>14</sup> Jenny Manmurulu, 20170928 00:00:50.375 - 00:02:16.56.

<sup>15</sup> David Manmurulu, RS1-488 00:08:19.650 - 00:09:27.200.

## 5 Song custodians and the (iterative) archival record

The archival record is continually renewed and refashioned, as *arrapujpa* record new compositions received in dreams alongside songs inherited from their relatives, and custodians of *manyardi* juxtapose legacy recordings from the archives with recordings from contemporary performances. David and Jenny Manmurulu describe how ‘new’ Inyjalarrku songs may be varied in a range of ways, including ‘with the same tune but different beat’ or ‘same words but the tune changes.’<sup>16</sup> Even when performers reproduce a legacy song from an archival recording in its original form, singers and didjeridu players bring their own unique voices and didjeridu playing styles to an old song, in the same way that male dancers accompanying the song bring their own style of dance. As David Manmurulu observes: ‘they don’t even dance same old style, they all got different styles of dancing.’<sup>17</sup>

Songmen often draw on the musical and linguistic material of legacy recordings to create or dream new songs to ‘match’ with older songs within a particular song-set. For example, before the Kaddikkaddik songman Nakodjok recorded his songs accompanied by David Manmurulu on didjeridu, in an elicited performance for Isabel O’Keeffe, he wanted first to listen back to all of the legacy recordings of Kaddikkaddik songs that O’Keeffe had brought with her on her laptop (O’Keeffe *Kaddikkaddik*, *Multilingual*). After he had listened through, only one of the song-texts he performed (KK10) was also in the archival collection, while the others were new songs that Nakodjok had received in dreams (O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*). These new songs included some text phrases of older Kaddikkaddik songs, as well as using the same range of rhythmic modes. Nakodjok described his new songs as: ‘all same but bit different.’<sup>18</sup>

Drawing on older songs follows similar compositional practices that are part of the living *manyardi* tradition. David Manmurulu describes ‘matching’ songs with his father’s songs, both as a compositional practice and in the ordering of songs in performances. For example, Manmurulu’s newer song (IL18), begins with the same two text phrases (and their accompanying melodic and rhythmic setting) with his father’s older song (IL17) and shares one other text phrase. Manmurulu described this in a discussion with musicologist Linda Barwick:

So that’s the first one [IL17], that’s from my father, and the second one [IL18] I just made it because it matches with that first song. There could be one song but different—maybe two or three songs different in the end part—but when we start it’s the same.<sup>19</sup>

Other songs of David’s also ‘match’ or draw on the textual and musical material of his father’s songs. Table 3 shows four different melodic contours that are shared by

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<sup>16</sup> David Manmurulu, Jenny Manmurulu, 20180713IO03 00:10:55.190-00:11:14.738.

<sup>17</sup> David Manmurulu, 20070419IB04, 00:08:17.565-00:08:27.325 (see also O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*, p.821).

<sup>18</sup> Nakodjok, 20050511IB01 00:34:16.010 - 00:34:19.590 (see also O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*).

<sup>19</sup> David Manmurulu, 20070405LB01 00:16.17.099 - 00:17:15.140 (see also O’Keeffe, *Multilingual*, 330).

one or more text phrases across David and his father's Inyjalarrku songs.<sup>20</sup> This compositional and performance practice of 'matching' allows the voices of the past to be in dialogue with those of the present.

Melodic contour shared by one or more text phrases	text phrase ID	Song codes of GW's songs that include this text phrase	Song codes of DM's songs that include this text phrase
VIIb-VI-V-I	55	IL20, IL35	
	1	IL01, IL07	IL02, IL05, IL16,
	33	IL15, IL21, IL35	IL12, IL13, IL14
VIIb-VI-V-2-1-VIIb-7b-6b-5-4-3b-1-2-3b-2-1	37	IL13, IL14	IL16
VIIb-VI-VIIb-VI-V-1	23	IL11	IL12
5-3b-1-8-7b-6-5-7b-6-5	5	IL02	IL03

**Table 3. Melodic contours and text phrases that occur in Inyjalarrku songs composed/received by George Winungudj (GW) and David Manmurulu (DM)**

Similarly, in a performance in 2016 at a place called Mawartpalakpikpin on Goulburn Island, Rupert Manmurulu explained how he sang his own dream-conceived song and matched it with his father's, uncle's, and grandfather's compositions:

The one that we recorded fast one *nulatparlangkat* (strong/fast), the new one from me [was first], and then you've got [the songs sung by] David and Ronald, and then the last one from old people, from George [Winungudj] and Lazarus [Lamilami]... We went from the new one, and then the second oldest and then the third, and now the old one.<sup>21</sup>

This attention to song order and song selection in curating the archival record is reminiscent of the role that songman Larry Marawana (of Wurrik clan from Nimbuwa region) played as cultural broker and guide for journalist Colin Simpson when he recorded the activities of the American Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land at Gunbalanya in 1948, assisting Simpson in making a record of *manyardi* by a variety of songmen that reflected the musical diversity of the region (see Brown and Treloyn, pp.51–53).

As well as legacy recordings being incorporated into the compositional practices of *manyardi*, with greater accessibility to recording devices (such as mobile phones and cheap portable video cameras) recording and playback has become part of contemporary performance practices. Performers themselves, or members of their families, often record performances to share with family who are in other communities or with young people living elsewhere for schooling. It is not uncommon for Arrarrkpi to simultaneously dance for *manyardi* performances while

<sup>20</sup> The melodic contours are shown using shorthand notation, using numerals to indicate melodic pitches. Each number from 1 to 8 represents the degree of the scale (with 1 being the tonic and 8 being the octave above the tonic). Numbers above 8, represent degrees of the scale but an octave above the tonic. Roman numerals are used to indicate pitches below the tonic (so I is an octave below the tonic, II is the second degree of the scale but an octave below etc.)

<sup>21</sup> Rupert Manmurulu, 20160623RB01\_IL\_ILXX, 01:14:14.161 - 01:14:39.109

filming the event on their phones! New technology brings both challenges and opportunities. David points out some of the challenges related to engaging the younger generation in song learning:

Sometimes it's a bit hard to get young boys to teach them because nowadays they have mobile [phone], they've got it and with the earphone they put it in their pocket and they walk in the street like this [demonstrates detached stance of a teenager to laughter of audience]. So what we're trying to do, to teach them how to dance—really, young people, young generation.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the challenges, David and Jenny Manmurulu continue to find and create opportunities for teaching young people—in ceremonial, informal and educational contexts—often by incorporating recordings. For example, David recently used his recordings for teaching young school students who incorporated Inyjalarrku dancing in a hip-hop competition in Darwin:

She [the dance teacher] asked me if I could come and sing for those boys, but I told her there's a recording somewhere. So they got it and I was here with them and first was Inyjalarrku, first singing on the recording, singing stopped, then that [hip hop] music.<sup>23</sup>

Jenny Manmurulu also points out the ways that young people are getting involved in the documentation and curation of the contemporary record of *manyardi*:

The recordings that they've done in [1948 with Colin Simpson] it's a bit different to what they record now through their mobiles or through tapes before modern technology came in using mobiles ... [At] our 100-year centenary [celebration] at Waruwi we had a lot of teenage boys involved [dancing and recording]. Me and David's young granddaughter went back from her schooling from St Leonards [in Melbourne] and she was using one of the video recorders, recording the boys and her grandfather and dad to sing the song.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> David Manmurulu, 20170928\_ITIC 00:20:34.147 - 00:21:10.709

<sup>23</sup> David Manmurulu, RS1-488 00:15:08.950 - 00:16:18.850 (quoted in O'Keeffe et al.) (see also 'GBI Super Crew' for a video of David Manmurulu teaching the students and a video of the performance).

<sup>24</sup> Jenny Manmurulu, 20170928\_ITIC 00:10:01.300 - 00:11:45.000



**Figure 3. Three generations of the Manmurulu family perform and document Inyjalarrku with Reuben Brown and Ruth Singer at Mawartpalakpikpin (Fletcher Point), Goulburn Island, NT. Source: Reuben Brown**

## 6 Conclusion: future dialogues

Joe Gumbula conducted multiple dialogues: between ancestors and the living, Yolŋu and other Indigenous peoples including Arrarrkpi; researchers, collecting institutions, and their materials. This dialogue-centric approach that characterised Gumbula's legacy is today carried on by Arrarrkpi leaders, educators and custodians of *manyardi*, and serves as a model for institutions that wish to make their collections relevant to custodians of cultural heritage, the broader public, and the institution. In this article we have shown how cultural heritage from western Arnhem Land is both distinct and intrinsic to other regional public performance traditions such as Gumbula's *manikay* of northeast Arnhem Land; how songs are reinterpreted in the present through collective memory of the ensemble of *arrapujpa* and *yartparrawarra* rather than learned by rote from a recording; and how legacy recordings are used as a template for regeneration of new compositions received in dreams. The attention that singers such as David and Rupert Manmurulu and those before them such as Marawana have given to song order and the juxtaposition of 'same but different' elements of a song-set, requires recognition of the curatorial intent of singers by capturing metadata about individual song items and enabling song custodians to listen to song items in the context of the whole recording session (which usually also includes an exegesis and discussion of the songs by the *arrapujpa*).

The challenge that arises from these dialogic approaches is how to continually renew the archive through the wrangling of new iterations of the song tradition together with legacy recordings. What might future versions of the archive look like? What sort of 'front end' interface might facilitate access to the rich record

of the performance tradition for contemporary practitioners and others? Whilst we ask these questions anticipating solutions to emerge through ongoing dialogues with various stakeholders, an important starting point we have identified from our collaborations is for new metadata generated in the community around recordings of new songs as well as ‘enriched’ metadata relating to legacy recordings (i.e. the identification of key songmen, languages, song-set names, stories and other key contextual metadata about songs) to be synched from local access points to the archive, so that future generations can find the right recordings that support their song revival/regeneration activities, and this dialogue between the archives and Arrarrkpi singers may be able to be maintained.

Through his collaborative work, Joe Gumbula spoke about the idea of the song living on beyond the death of the singer through his spirit which returns to the country (Corn, this volume). David Manmurulu similarly emphasises the importance of ‘keeping the song going’ as his father taught him. He describes that when he passes away, his Inyjalarrku song-set—and recordings of those songs and the devices they are held on—must be ceremonially smoked, allowing the songs to continue to be sung:

If I go [i.e., pass away], well, my boys, they pick up the mobile or tape recorder or whatever, they can smoke it and keep going. Even themselves—they smoke themselves—and they keep singing, because if we leave it too long, maybe for a year, the song will go bad, and then if they try to sing they can't fit it in with that song. So that's how my dad taught me: “when I go, you keep going, don't leave it too long otherwise the song will go bad.” So when my dad gone, I was just singing, I was singing when he was lying down in the coffin there, and singing. That's how this song just keeps going, this Inyjalarrku.<sup>26</sup>

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