

**THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL AND MULTICULTURALISM :**  
**WHY THEY DO NOT APPLY.**

When questioned about the lack of migrant clients from NESBs, institutions like the Australia Council usually reply that they can only fund people who apply. It is true that migrants and their organisations seldom get to the application stage. Of the bands examined in this study that received funding, Tunari was unique in being entirely from a NESB. Even in this case, they did not apply themselves, an Anglo/Australian musician did on their behalf. In its rhetoric, the Australia Council occasionally notices the imbalance:

"The Board is informed that cultural differences, language and conceptual difficulties(!!)...are obstacles to those ethnic musicians who might seek and merit financial assistance." (Australia Council:1986:c:2-73.)

The use of the phrase 'conceptual difficulties' is quite interesting. It demonstrates how easy it is for Anglo/Australian institutions to develop and use patronising and insulting terminology, that on a linguistic level buttresses structural racism and Anglo/Australian cultural dominance. As Spender notes, language is political, and indeed revealing of real inequalities. (Spender:1985:118.)

Nonetheless, the Australia Council has occasionally responded to the imbalance between Anglo/Australian and migrant clients. There have been periodic attempts to facilitate migrants entering the funding race. For example in 1986, the Music Board attempted to increase its migrant application rate:

"...by establishing for one or two years only a special grant category with minimum constraints on eligibility other than involvement with ethnic or fusion music activity." (Australia Council:1986:c:2-71.) My underlining.

If the evidence of this study counts for anything, it is most likely the bulk of this extra money ended up with Anglo/Australian musicians playing 'ethnic or fusion music'. Certainly none of the Greek musicians I knew at the time either knew about the initiative or were informed of it through their press. Yet the phrasing of the so called special assistance reeks of caution, if not tokenism. Why 'one or two years only'? Did the Board think the problem would be solved by a couple of years of "relaxed criteria"? (Australia Council:1986:c:2-72.) Perhaps it feared the backlash from the powerful Anglo/Australian majority if it were seen to be discriminating in favour of migrants. It might also have feared the possibility of being inundated with applications from thousands of migrant musicians out there, thus threatening the whole funding (im)balance. As we shall see, this was hardly likely anyway. In any case, the restrictions on the 'relaxed criteria', coupled with the imprecision in defining those musicians who could

take advantage of it mean't that, in reality, it made little difference to the structural imbalance.

An interesting anecdote is also illustrative of the pointlessness of tokenism, and the gap between rhetoric and action. In 1986, I attended a meeting arranged by the Music Board in order that members of the Board could meet with migrant musicians and discuss their particular funding problems. The Board was upset that only a handful of people turned up, and that of those who did, most were not migrant musicians from NESBs but interested Anglo/Australians. They did not seem to recognise how correctly this reflected the reality of multicultural music-making in Australia. Anyway, it was quickly pointed out to the Board that advertising a meeting in 'The Age' was not the best way of contacting musicians from NESBs. Also a meeting scheduled at 2.30pm on a weekday would not attract migrant musicians who often work full-time in factories, or on buses etc. The Board dutifully noted the point for next time, and the meeting proceeded. After all, they were not going to let the simple fact of non-attendance by migrant musicians get in the way of serious policy-making! One of the Anglo/Australians then asked to speak. He told how he had been employed by the Board to assist migrant organisations fill in their application forms, and that over a period of time he had helped a dozen or so such groups apply for Music Board funding. He then revealed, to our astonishment and his frustration and embarrassment, that none had been funded! In effect,

the result of this particular benevolent initiative was to provide a few months employment for one Anglo/Australian arts administrator!

The context of Anglo/Australian structural dominance itself needs to be challenged. If it is not, most attempts to assist migrants from NESBs will be patronising, tokenistic or short-circuited somewhere down the Anglo/Australian line. It is not that migrants have 'conceptual difficulties' but that the odds are stacked against them. It is not migrants that have to change but institutions like the Australia Council, indeed Australian society.

There are real reasons why migrants from NESBs do not apply, even when the 'criteria is relaxed'. On a basic level of information, most migrant musicians are unaware of the Australia Council and its funding role. Little attempt is made to reach migrants from NESBs via their own communication channels. In particular, this means using SBS and the non-English press. In fact, language is fundamental. A band like Tunari, which functions in Spanish is hardly likely to relish the task of filling in a five page application form in English.. These forms ask probing questions about aims, objectives and budgets. They can be as intimidating as a social security form. Without a confidence with and fluency in Anglo/Australian bureaucratic procedures, success is unlikely. As Linda Marr commented:

"...it must be difficult for people who aren't good English speakers, or whatever, I know it must be very difficult for people like that to get applications in that will be approved."  
(Dunbar/Marr:1990).

Luckily for the Australia Council, there are a growing number of good English speakers like Marr ready and able to submit the forms and accept the money, which maintains the 'multicultural and ethnic' funding figures! Perhaps this an easier option than introducing multi-lingual application forms. A reform that would positively assist migrant musicians' access Australia Council funding.

Language is not the only barrier to cross for migrants from NESBs to enter the funding race. There are also enormous psychological factors involved. Any group that has suffered, or seen their parents and family suffer institutional discrimination and/or personal racism, will hold deep-seated suspicions of the institutions of that society. (Voulgaris:1988:5ff.) A perfect illustration of this is the character of Nan, in Sally Morgan's book, My Place. As an Aboriginal child, Nan experienced the common humiliation of state-sanctioned abduction from her family. As a result, throughout her adult life, she showed a total mistrust and pathological fear toward any government instrumentality. This fear included the government rent-collector, the Gas & Fuel and even public hospitals.  
(Morgan:1989.)

Similarly, the first experiences of a great many post-war migrants in Australia were unfavourable. (Lowenstein & Loh:1977:24ff; Lyssiotis:1987:1-25.) Herded into holding camps like Bonagilla, often separated from their families, yelled at in a foreign tongue, it was little wonder they were often confused, angry or afraid. Later, many of these initial unpleasant experiences were built upon in their dealings with Anglo/Australia. At work, at the bank, visiting a doctor or in any number of interactions migrants from NESBs might be made to feel stupid, unwelcome or despised. In this context, what for Anglo/Australians might be the simple act of filling in a form, could involve confronting deep-seated fears for migrants. The easy solution is not to ask for anything, to remain hidden. Besides, how do you know the information you give will not be held against you later? How do the Australia Council project officers differ from charming work-care assessors? How do you know the Australia Council is not yet another government instrumentality where you risk encountering individuals who treat you like an idiot because you have an accent? For most migrant musicians it becomes too difficult. It is at this level that the Australia Council must operate if it really wants to support migrant musicians from NESBs.

In a revealing study, Michael Liffman outlines a four-point typology with which one can categorise the goals of instrumentalities in their interaction with migrants. (Liffman:1982:19.) It is also a useful tool for measuring how serious institutions are about multiculturalism. The four points of Liffman's typology are:

1. ASSIMILATIVE & UNIVERSAL - assuming a shared values system and making no particular attempt to identify and respond to the cultural experiences of immigrants.
2. ASSIMILATIVE & ETHNIC TARGETED - assume common needs, but provide some facilitating services such as interpreters and multi-lingual information.
3. PLURALIST - the development of services by generalist institutions which specifically responds to the needs of individuals in culturally relevant terms.
4. ETHNIC - a service or agency which is solely geared towards one (non-Anglo/Australian) ethnic group.

Liffman goes on to note that the most common interaction is based on the first or second category. These two categories demand the most from migrants, (ie English fluency and the acceptance of Anglo/Australian cultural values). Concurrently, they require the least change to existing Anglo/Australian institutions in interacting with migrants. They do not challenge Anglo/Australian dominance, and foster assimilation.

They are probably the type of institutions most mistrusted and perhaps feared by working class migrants from NESBs.

It is clear that the Australia Council, despite its rhetoric (in English) fits most comfortably into the first of Liffman's categories. The Australia Council provides few special services, like interpreters, for migrants. Its mono-lingualism alone promotes the acceptance of a shared value system, that of Anglo/Australia. Its attempts to respond to the 'cultural experiences of immigrants' in this context are usually tokenistic. The funding figures demonstrate the extent of Anglo/Australian cultural dominance and control.

It is little wonder then, amid the structural racism of Australian institutions, that not one of the bands in this study received a recording grant without the 'special knowledge' provided by an Anglo/Australian. It is also little wonder that in fact most of the bands comprise Anglo/Australian musicians. It is little wonder that multicultural music is controlled by Anglo/Australians. Even at the level of music-making in society, structures of dominance are reproduced.

With the exception of Lenko and Tunari, migrant musicians are hardly involved at all in the bands examined. When they are included they often are, what Marr jokingly, but correctly termed "real, live token



ethnics". ((Dunbar/Marr:1990). In *Blindman's Holiday and Southern Crossings*, migrant musicians are not used at all. Yet their music-cultures are considered fair game as a source of repertoire. Nakisa and Sirocco have used migrant musicians, perhaps to legitimise their own feelings of guilt, or more likely to, as O'Toole puts it, "give the band some stick". (Dunbar/O'Toole:1990). These migrant musician members are treated like the West German government treats its Turkish and Yugoslav 'guest workers'. They have no citizenship rights, they are not 'real' members of the band. Rather they are what O'Toole calls 'floating members'. As such, they are estranged from the Anglo/Australian decision-making core of the band. They may contribute ideas, and they certainly contribute musical repertoire. They often have performance skills far in advance of the Anglo/Australian members. This part of the attraction of migrant musicians to Anglo/Australian multicultural bands. Yet if they become difficult they can be gotten rid of, or replaced. Afterall, they are only 'floating members'. They present no threat to the cultural value-system shared by the Anglo/Australian majority membership. They are in a very real sense 'token ethnics'. So why do they do it? Why do they participate in a relationship that is "all take, take, take?"

**LEGITIMISATION AND MUSICAL MEANING.**

This perplexing question partly finds its answer in the relationship of Australian society to its migrants. In Australian capitalist society, the twin goals of acceptance and success are powerful motivational forces. It is a society that stresses materialism, conspicuous consumption and stereotypical beauty, among other values. (Dunbar:1984:ch 2.) Recently, I spent two years working in a Greek child-care centre in Richmond. This experience demonstrated to me how early children from NESBs learn the need to assimilate into dominant Anglo/Australian culture. In an environment conducive to Greek speaking (90% of the child-care workers were bi-lingual in Greek and English) many four-year-olds strongly resisted using their mother-tongue, while a few actually insisted on speaking only English. These are children whose parents spoke almost exclusively in Greek in the home. No wonder so many parents of migrant children have communication break-downs. No wonder so many have nervous break-downs too! At this early age, these toddlers perceive that speaking English legitimises their sense of self-worth in a society dominated by Anglo/Australian values.

I believe a similar process of legitimisation is at work when migrant musicians agree to play with

Anglo/Australian bands, in what is a very unequal relationship. It is one of their ways into dominant culture. It is one way of escaping, what is often the ghetto-mentality of migrant communities. Communities battered down and under seige from the sheer weight of Anglo/Australia. In concrete terms, it is sometimes a way of making a living from music, like they may have done in their country of origin. This was the case for Tabrizzi and Akdagcic. I would also suggest that being a 'floating member' of a multicultural band, despite its drawbacks, is perceived as a more attractive proposition for migrant musicians than jettisoning their cultures entirely. This is what is demanded if you retrain as an orchestral musician, or seek work in the commercial music industry. An experience not uncommon among second generation migrant musicians. (Dunbar:1989b:16.)

These, are no doubt only some of the most common reasons. Throughout history people have submitted to forms of exploitation. The reasons are important only if they lead to positive change. Only if they reduce the exploitation. This study has shown that in multicultural bands, migrant musicians are not equal members. That the structural racism of Australian society is reproduced and perpetuated in these bands.

My interviews also revealed that some Anglo/Australian musicians are conscious, on some level, that things are a bit odd when Anglo/Australian musicians are promoted above migrant musicians to play multicultural music. Some recounted stories eager to demonstrate migrant approval for their music. As Marr recounted:

"There was this woman who came up after a Blindman's Holiday performance there (in Sydney) and was just over the top. She was so happy because she'd just arrived in Australia the day before from the isle of Samos, and we had just sung this song called 'Samiotissa', which means 'the girl from Samos', and she was just about crying with joy because she said she just couldn't believe it, she's walking up Martin Place with her sister and she hears the song from Samos, her home."  
(Dunbar/Marr:1990).

No doubt the Greek woman's ecstasy would have tripled had she encountered a Greek band playing the song!

Although I did not ask a direct question about potential criticism of Anglo/Australians playing multicultural music, Marr displayed a certain sensitivity in offering this comment:

"I don't agree with people who say you have no right to perform music from a culture other than your own because you are not going to be able to do it correctly. I don't agree with them because I really enjoy the music I perform, and I feel that that gets across to the audience." (Dunbar/Marr:1990).

Marr's musical integrity is not in question. As mentioned before, to the extent she resists the commercialisation

of culture in Australia, her work is positive. However, the point here is not about her own personal enjoyment or musical ability, but about who gets the money and why. It is about:

"...who wins and who goes on loosing."  
(Pettman:1986A:21.)

In another story we see how Anglo/Australian musicians take on a role of legitimisers of migrant culture in Australia.

"A lot of bagpipe players who were living in Sydney, for instance in the Macedonian and Turkish communities, had put away their bagpipes, they may have still had the wooden pipes somewhere in a cupboard, but didn't have any skins, (until they) heard people like Lindsey Pollock playing and were encouraged to actually get their bags in working order. And suddenly you found there were ten Macedonian bagpipers living in Sydney who suddenly came out of the woodwork because they were encouraged by somebody like Lindsey who made it seem all right to play them."  
(Dunbar/Marr:1990).

This story is interesting because it retells history from an Anglo/Australian perspective. As Woody Allen tellingly says in his film, Crimes & Misdemeanors:

"History is written by the winners."  
(Allen:1989.)

It does raise some issues about what Carr calls the choice of 'facts'. (Carr:1961:25ff.) For example, did they really 'put away' their pipes, or were they hidden from Anglo/Australians within the confines of migrant communities? If they did put them 'somewhere in a

cupboard', we need to ask why? Did these migrant musicians sense that Anglo/Australian society did not value gaida players, no matter how skilled they were? Did they sense that Australian society only wanted labourers, bus-drivers and factory workers, not musicians or new cultural forms? (Lowenstein & Loh:1975:81. "For goodness sake, don't say you're a teacher or had an education because all they want is manual laborers.") Did these gaida players really emerge from their noisy closets as a result of Anglo/Australians imitating their music?

Perhaps, but I believe there are more historical explanations. Just maybe, as a result of years of hard work that had provided a house and other pieces of material security, migrant ex- musicians could feel a little more confident in their cultural heritage. This may have been expressed in a renewed interest in a past-time they had been forced to forego when they chose to migrate. In this case, gaida playing. This is not necessarily the answer. A definitive solution, if at all possible, would require more specific research. But it is given as an example of an alternative to the Anglo/Australian telling of history.

In all these stories, the defence of Anglo/Australian dominance of multicultural music is couched in cozy benevolence. 'We are helping them. We legitimise them'. While understandable and expainable, such language mystifies the actual power relation between

dominant and minority culture. It clouds the forces of assimilation at work. It disguises racism. While it serves to appease the feelings of guilt of middle class, Anglo/Australian musicians, it represents the worst kind of multiculturalism. Anglo/Australian musicians take migrant musics, corrupt their styles and forms, and even ask migrant musicians from those very traditions to play this music as a way of feeling more apart of Anglo/Australia's multicultural society. It is little wonder Minic from Bombarde is so vigilant about what the group does to his Slavic music. He is rightly suspicious. Unfortunately, there is no evidence in this study to suggest he will have a lasting impact on the band. More than likely, he will leave, or be forced to change his views.

On many occasions, I have encountered similar justifications of their work from liberal-minded anthropologists and ethnomusicologists. (Keil:1979:2ff.) "The natives loved me. They were very happy that I chose to live and work among them." So often have I heard similar expressions from ethnomusicologists, as if that is all that need be said about the matter. Yet it conveniently ignores the fact that the travel, the clothes, the equipment, the very means of ethnomusicological fieldwork is the product of Western affluence. The ethnomusicologist is a symbol of that affluence. Of course s/he will be welcome, for a while. But nonetheless, the product of this research can be

destructive and exploitative, despite the initial goodwill shown towards the researcher, and more decisively, regardless of the best intentions of the ethnomusicologist. Many of the Anglo/Australian musicians interviewed cited ethnographic recordings as a source for their repertoire. On this level alone the music from ethnomusicological field-work gets re-recorded and performed commercially for profit, without any acknowledgment or royalty paid. And as Chinweizu explains, there are many other levels of neo-colonial exploitation of the third world by the rich.

(Chinweizu:1975.) This particular example may seem trivial, but the stakes can escalate quickly in profit-orientated societies. Good examples are the recent releases of commercial albums using musicians from non-commercial cultures. Paul Simon's Gracelands features the Black South African vocal group, Lady Smith Black Manzanbo. Similarly, Kate Bush has recently cashed in on the discovery in the Western world of the vocal tradition of Bulgarian women by using the Trio Bulgarka on her album, Sensual World. In fact, music by the same Trio is now being used in England to sell shampoo! While we live in an unequal world, where the rich nations promote their own commercial values, all ethnographic research must be more than cautious. As Magubane & Farris remind us, there has:

"...been a more or less general recognition that anthropology (including ethnomusicology) was born of western imperialism to bring the west information



and artifacts as a consequence of imperialist exploitation." (Magubane & Farris:1985:91.) My parenthesis.

It is not good enough, in the light of the history of exploitative capitalism, for ethnomusicologists like myself to merely seek the approval of their objects of study, they must examine why it is given, and what are the likely consequences of the work. This is true as much for ethnomusicologists as it is for Anglo/Australian musicians playing multicultural music.

So far I have outlined how the structures of racism in Australian society have effected multicultural music-making, especially that promoted by the Australia Council. I would like finally now to return to the music itself. Tunari, and to a lesser extent, Lenko aside, the over-riding characteristic of these recordings is what I have termed stylistic incoherence. Eclecticism is elevated to a stylistic trait in itself. I have suggested that in the cases of Sirocco, Southern Crossings and Nakisa, this incoherence is partly the result of the requirements of international touring and multicultural schools shows. This is a good example of how non-musical elements can affect musical style and structure. This incoherence of musical style seems also to be connected with a conscious ambition to forge a new Australian musical language.

By necessity, Anglo/Australian musicians playing music from many diverse cultural traditions can only focus on what Blacking has called "the surface structures of the music." (Ballantine:1973/4:73.) Musical elements like tone, rhythm, melody, phrase and feel. Perhaps significantly, those elements emphasised in western musicology, usually to the exclusion of all else. But as Blacking's research shows:

"Music-making is not simply an exercise in the organisation of sound, it is the symbolic expression of social and cultural organisation."  
(Blacking:1971:186.)

Accordingly, I would like to suggest that the deeper explanation for this stylistic incoherence is that much of this music has been cut adrift from the cultural and social organisation it symbolised. It is music in search of meaning. (Dunbar:1988:3-11.)

When a music culture is transplanted as a result of migration, changes will occur to that particular tradition. It is change that reflects new meanings in a new society. Yet it knows its history, and I would suggest it is usually an unconscious process. (Dunbar:1988:5.) When Anglo/Australian musicians play multicultural music there is no knowledge beyond the surface elements of the music. There is also no relationship with a community of people who have contributed to the development of this musical tradition. There is no history. Thus it can only function as

spectacle, and the level of appreciation and communication is limited. Perhaps this is why Hohai from Tunari speaks of 'communication', while O'Toole speaks of 'success' and of 'creating a new style'. The difference in language, I believe is important. It represents more than two distinct personal aesthetics. Tunari's music retains its symbolic meaning and is undergoing transformation as a result of migration. It is stylistically coherent. Sirocco's music is based upon a plethora of musical traditions sampled at random, and cut adrift from the societies from which they originated. Hence, it is stylistically incoherent. Its only logic is the materialistic imperatives of capitalist organisation, in which it is now located. This, I believe, has always been a poor basis for musical development. As Blacking points out:

"Artistic growth and economic growth are different phenomena. The arts are not primarily a commodity to be manufactured and exported for entertainment, but a plant to be grown, tended and contemplated for the sake of individual spiritual development and the enhancement of relations with others."  
(Blacking:1987:117.)

Unfortunately, as most of the musical examples in this study indicate, in today's multicultural Australia, this romantic notion is seldom the case.

Perhaps the 'real' multicultural music in Australia is the music of migrants from NESBs. Yet as we have seen, it is little funded and hardly known about (by their own

admission) by institutions like the Australia Council. In many ways, I believe it is the structural dominance of Anglo/Australian culture that prevents this recognition; its all pervading nature, and our learned perception of this state of affairs as 'natural and inevitable'. Most migrant musicians from NESBs are working class. This means that from both a class and ethnicity perspective dominant culture is potentially threatened by this music. Yet, this last sentence appears quite laughable in the context of the funding figures cited. However, looked at in another way, perhaps the extent of the perceived threat is reflected in the very inequality of the figures. Could there not be a very real political explanation for such an enormous discrepancy between the rhetoric of the Australia Council and their funding reality? This is not a conspiracy theory. Middle class, Anglo/Australians in power, like anyone else, will serve, and promote their own. Therefore, instead of migrant music, with its potential to produce new forms and new alternatives for Australian musical culture, the Australia Council promotes and funds a sanitised, stylistically incoherent, Anglo/Australian variety of multicultural music. Middle class, well meaning Anglo/Australian musicians are drawn to these styles, as we have seen, primarily because they reject commercialism and its musical forms. Yet the means of organising both the music and the creative processes, (including the very structure of the bands), are those of middle class Anglo/Australia. In the final analysis, these bands are

tolerated and officially promoted in Australia today because they are considered knowable and controllable by dominant Anglo/Australian culture. They belong to the exploiters, not the exploited, as does the majority of their audience.

In the West a similar process occurred during the 1960s and 70s. White middle class hippies, rejecting capitalism, were by and large not attracted to the revolutionary critiques of Che Chevara or Malcolm X but rather to the ideologies of Indian mysticism, including its music. These ideologies were, in the final analysis acceptable to American corporate capitalism.

(Harris:1974:243-258.) The powerful in American society may have been shocked by hippydom, but they were hardly threatened. In contrast revolutionary organisations such as the Black Panthers were extremely threatening and thus suppressed.

More specifically, there are parallels in the findings of this study with the co-option of black jazz by the white music industry in the USA. In this example, we see how the structural exclusion of migrant musicians from NESBs, demonstrated vividly by the Australia Council's funding choices, goes hand in glove with the promotion of alternative, Anglo/Australian hybrid musical forms. In a very real sense, this is a process of co-option of a potentially radical and transforming culture by the dominant mainstream in Australia.