

Introduction:

# ISLAND MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE CULTURES

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Since its inception in 2007, *Shima* has addressed music as a key element of island and related maritime cultures. The first issue – v1 n1 – included Heather Sparling’s article on Gaelic language culture on Cape Breton Island with particular regard to the career of Mary Jane Lamond and responses to it by local Gaelic speakers (Sparling, 2007), and the second – v1 n2 – followed this up with further articles on Shetland Island fiddle traditions (Forsyth, 2007) and on Torres Strait Islander women’s music (Barney, 2007). Subsequent issues have involved analyses of island music festivals (Bendrups, 2008; Johnson, 2008), instrumental practices on islands (Johnson and Kuwahara, 2013; Lomano, 2013), aspects of songs and contemporary audiovisual media in particular islands (Cattermole, 2008; Lane, 2011) and the evocation of mythical islands and oceanic locations in popular music (Fitzgerald, 2014; Fitzgerald and Hayward, 2016; Gaskins, 2016; Burton, 2016). This issue consolidates the strands identified above by featuring extended versions of a number of papers presented at the 12th International Small Island Cultures Conference held at Okinawa Prefectural University of the Arts in Naha, in June 2016. The eight articles originating from this source (by Burman-Hall; Fitzgerald, Hayward and Reis; Gillan; Greenland; Johnson and Kuwahara; MacKinnon; Samoto; and Suwa) are accompanied here by three (by MacKinnon and Hannan; Mark; and Wolfram) submitted as a result of an open call published in *Shima* in 2015 and two (Vézina and Breslin) that were originally presented as papers at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Small Island Cultures Conference held in Saint John’s, Newfoundland in June 2017.

The offer by Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts to host the ISIC 12 conference was welcomed by the conference’s organising body, SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative) since the study of Okinawan culture, and particularly music, dance and language, played a key role in the initial assembly of the Island Studies researchers who formed SICRI and the related development of this journal. The journal’s title – *Shima* – is taken from a term that in its Okinawan usage means both a literal island and an insular space with distinct socio-cultural aspects. As Suwa’s article in the initial issue of the journal (v1 n1 2005) detailed, the concept is an especially rich one for Island Studies, offering a complex understanding of the human constructions of islands and related insular cultures. More specifically, Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts hosted the 1999 national conference of the Japanese branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, presenting an opportunity for Japanese and visiting international

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researchers to grasp the variety of Okinawan music making, from the traditional *shima uta* (island song) performances that were available to attendees in the evenings through to the discussions of contemporary Okinawan pop material provided in various sessions. The generosity of the University in offering to host the 2016 ISIC event continued their tradition of being at the forefront of engaging researchers with Okinawan culture.

Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts was founded in 1986 to honour and maintain traditional Okinawan culture and to engage with international cultural forms. Integration of elements has always been key to the University's mission and students of classical Okinawan music and dance have been taught together, allowing for learning and communication to occur in collegial contexts. The University has prioritised employing the most skilled and respected practitioners of local culture as teaching staff. National recognition of this has recently come with the conferral of Living National Treasure status for professors Satoshi Higa and Shingo Nakamine, on account of their mastery of musical accompaniments for *kumi odori* dramas (on *taiko* and *sanshin*, respectively). The professors performed at the opening of the ISIC conference, introducing the international delegates to the subtleties of traditional Okinawan music.

While Ryukyuan classical dance and music forms such as *kumi odori* (a genre that was developed at the Okinawan royal court in the early 1700s) are important to the University's program of study, local forms of folk and popular music that reflect the daily life of Okinawans are also a key focus. Although classical and folk music may initially appear quite distinct, there has been a considerable amount of exchange between them in recent centuries. Around the beginning of the 20th Century, for instance, new forms of local culture emerged that were later taken up by younger generations of *shima uta* (island song) performers who re-popularised traditional forms of Okinawan music in the islands and helped it achieve a national profile in Japan (and a degree of international exposure through the work of artists such as Shoukichi Kina and Nenes). The University also addresses the study and management of both classical and local folk/popular music forms and, to that end, the Music Department was reorganised in 2016 to establish an Okinawan Culture and Management Course within the Music Culture Studies Major, aimed to maintain and to further develop a vibrant local music culture.

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The articles included in this volume address music-making and related performance cultures within particular insular island spaces that are – nevertheless – connected to other communities (and/or performers and/or performance spaces) through the movements of performers between these and through the dissemination and modification of repertoire through both oral and technologically mediated means. This body of articles includes diverse studies that allow for insightful points of connection between these phenomena. Gillan's study of physical song monuments in Okinawa, for instance, offers a materialised form of musical memorialisation distinct from the folkloric song tradition discussed by Greenland or the annual performance practice analysed by Suwa. Yet all three – and, indeed, the other articles in the issue – fundamentally address the validation of music and related performance traditions by social practice enacted in various public spheres (none more so than Vézina's discussion of the search for an anthem for Puerto Rico). There are also considerable points of connection between Johnson and Kuwahara's identification of the role that key protagonists had in developing *eisā* traditions in Okinoerabu and Fitzgerald, Hayward and Reis's identification of key protagonists involved in developing maracatu music in Fernando de Noronha and Mark's discussion of musicking on Hornby

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Island. With regard to the interaction of environmental, spiritual and cultural aspects in indigenous cultures, Burman-Hall's analysis of human-primate associations in Bentawai, Samoto's discussion of concepts of bamboo panpipe tunings and Wolfram's analysis of the spiritual/ritualistic practices associated with song conception all offer rich ethnographic studies of island communities negotiating modernity in various ways. Intersecting with the latter aspect, MacKinnon and Hannan provide a focused case study on the circulation of a recording purporting to have rescued supposedly "lost" musical materials.

Some of the articles in this issue reflect the development of island cultural studies within *Shima* since its inception. Suwa's article is a notable example, drawing on debates concerning the nature of the aquapelago that have animated the journal since 2012.<sup>1</sup> In his detailed analysis of musical and ritualistic performances around a rock (now) linked to the mainland by a harbour wall, he identifies how the aquapelago is performed and temporarily constituted on an annual basis. Other contributions (Breslin; Gillan; Greenland; and Johnson and Kuwahara) address the specificity of local island spaces in terms of the Okinawan/Japanese notion of *shima* explicated by Suwa (2007) in the first issue of the journal, illustrating how the concept can be engaged with and deployed in various ways to create particular patterns of significance for local musical practices and repertoire.

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<sup>1</sup> See the anthology of articles debating the concept of the aquapelago on the *Shima* website: <http://shimajournal.org/anthologies.php>

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