"Creating Your Vision and Understanding". The Musical Legacy of Wirrinyga Band within and beyond Northeast Arnhem Land[1]

Franca Tamisari
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Abstract

Focusing on the musical production by the Australian Indigenous rock-pop fusion group Wirrinyga Band from Milingimbi, an Indigenous community in Northeast Arnhem Land, North Australia, I propose that popular music is not only an arena where Indigenous people of this region have been negotiating colonial and postcolonial power relations, it is also a "construction site", a creative space where new ideas, experiences, visions are created. Wirrinyga Band's songs do not only express local ideas, values, principles or a set political agenda in the face of difficult past and present life conditions, but also and most importantly, have contributed to shaping a novel individual and collective identity that – rooted in the past but reaching out towards the future – places performers and listeners in a field of relationships where alternative modes of social interaction can be forged. This is accomplished by employing music as a means of education both in transmitting knowledge from the old to the young generations within the community and the region, as well as sharing and explaining Yolngu ways of being to non-indigenous people. I will conclude the paper by considering how Wirrinyga Band's legacy has been taken up and elaborated by a new generation of Yolngu hip-hop musicians who use music as an educational means of "making people".

Keywords*:* Australian Yolngu rock-pop fusion and hip-hop; music as transmission of knowledge; Northeast Arnhem Land; Wirrinyga Band.

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[1] I wish to thank Keith Lapulung, all Wirrinyga Band members and Yolngu elders for their encouragement, teachings and patience. I hope I understood and rendered closely what he taught me over the years. I am grateful to Jenny Robins and Scott Trenwith for sending me the lyrics of Wirrinyga Band's songs. I am also obliged to Anne Douin for the text editing.

"Creare la tua visione e comprensione". L'eredità musicale di Wirrinyga Band nella e oltre la Terra di Arnhem Nordorientale.

Concentrando l'attenzione sulla produzione musicale del gruppo rock-pop Wirrinyga Band di Milingimbi, una comunità indigena nella Terra di Arnhem Nordorientale, Nord Australia, propongo che la musica popolare non è solamente un'arena in cui la gente indigena di questa regione continua a negoziare le relazioni di potere coloniali e postcoloniali. È anche un "cantiere", uno spazio creativo in cui si creano nuove idee, esperienze e visioni. Le canzoni di Wirrinyga Band non esprimono solo le idee, i valori e i principi locali o un determinato disegno politico nell'affrontare difficili condizioni di vita attuali ma, e in maniera più significativa, hanno anche plasmato una nuova identità individuale e collettiva che – radicata nel passato ma protesa verso il futuro – colloca i musicisti e gli ascoltatori in un ambito di relazioni dove si possono forgiare modi alternativi di interazione sociale. Questo è compiuto utilizzando la musica come una forma di educazione non solo per trasmettere la conoscenza dalla generazione degli anziani a quella dei giovani nella comunità e nella regione, ma anche per condividere e spiegare il modo di essere yolngu alla gente non indigena. In conclusione, analizzo i modi in cui l'eredità di Wirrinyga Band è stata raccolta da una nuova generazione di musicisti yolngu hip-hop che utilizzano la musica come un mezzo educativo per "formare le persone".

Parole chiave*:* rock-pop e hip-hop yolngu australiano; musica come trasmissione di conoscenza; Terra di Arnhem Nordorientale; Wirrinyga Band.

«Yow nhamirr bukmak bam'mili. Good morning it's always a good idea
to put your music within your own ways of thinking
to create your vision and understanding your life».

Keith Lapulung, Facebook post, Monday 10 August 2020

«Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them».

Frith, *Music and Identity, Taking Popular Music Seriously*

When I arrived in Milingimbi, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory in the early 1990s to conduct the fieldwork for my Ph.D. thesis, there was no television and only a handful of people had VHS players with which they mainly watched films, music videos and Christian praying sessions. While the oceanic prayer meetings by Billy Graham were very popular among adults, young people and children would watch over and again the same few films they had on VHS tapes, such as RoboCop 1 and especially RoboCop 2 that had just come out that year. Equally pop-

ular, although scarce, were dance video clips by Michael Jackson and Afro American breakdancers. However, many people had audio tape players on which they could play the gospel, rock and hip-hop music cassettes that circulated throughout the community. As soon as I arrived I met Keith Lapulung, the lead singer of the local rock group called "Wirrinyga Band" who, in addition to rehearsing regularly with his group, organised the community's annual music events, today known as the Gattjirrk Festival, and had just released his first album that same year. Although, since its formation in the late 1970s, the Wirrinyga Band mainly addressed a local public and thus never reached the national exposure of better-known rock groups from the same region, such as Yothu Yindi from Yirrkala and Saltwater Band from Elcho Island, its contribution to Indigenous rock and popular music in Australia - a movement that gathered momentum with the civil and land rights activism from the early1970s (Dunbar-Hall 1994; 2006; Corn 2002) - is nonetheless crucial. Focusing on the music by Wirrinyga Band, which in August 2020 celebrated the 30th anniversary of the release of its first album, I would like to explore its legacy and influence on the next generations of music groups in Northeast Arnhem Land and beyond. To this end, I propose that Wirrinyga Band's music, like other Indigenous popular music groups in the region, can be understood not only as one of the arenas where the Yolngu people denounced social injustice and negotiated colonial and postcolonial power relationships with non-indigenous people and institutions, but also as a "construction site", a "creative space" where new ideas, experiences and visions were created. Wirrinyga Band's music, a rock-pop fusion style, will be first approached as a practice and a means the Yolngu people deploy to reach several ends: to celebrate, affirm and renew Yolngu presence and survival by teaching local knowledge and life values to the young, but also to confront and educate the non-indigenous world. Further, following Frith (2007), I will also shift attention to how Wirrinyga Band's music is not only a means to express local ideas, values, principles or a political agenda in the face of difficult past and present life conditions, but also an effective way of shaping a novel sense of collective identity that places performers and listeners in a field of new relationships where alternative modes of social interaction can be forged within and without the community. I will approach this music as a way of displaying a new political presence and voice connected and true to the past, as well as a mode of controlling their music production and circulation in their own terms. In agreement with Frith's (2007: 296)

approach captured in the quote reported at the beginning of this paper, it is necessary to shift attention to how making music is not only "a way of expressing ideas" but "is a way of living", imagining, experiencing, and enacting them (see also Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000). Thus:

> […] the issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience – a musical experience, an aesthetic experience – that we can only make sense of by taking on both a subjective and a collective identity. The aesthetic […] describes the quality of an experience […] it means experiencing ourselves in a different way. [… and] the experience of music – of music making and music listening – is best understood as an experience, of *this self-in-process* (Frith 2007: 294, original emphasis).

Wirrinyga Band songs did not merely represent and convey Yolngu values and ideas, but rather made them enter into a complex and rapidly changing web of postcolonial power relations in their own terms (cf. Magowan 2000). From the Band's perspective, this is accomplished by employing music as a form of education both in transmitting knowledge from the old to the young generations within the community and the region, as well as presenting and explaining Yolngu ways to non-indigenous people. This is what is captured in the title of Wirrinyga Band's second album *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision*, and in the sentence Lapulung posted on his Facebook page on 11 August 2020. After having asked «how are you all, my family» (*yow nahmirr bukmak bam'mili*), he muses that «it is always a good idea to put your music within your own ways of thinking to create your vision and understanding your life». I will thus approach Wirrinyga Band's music making as producing a «self-in-process», a way of forming new individual and collective experiences, or in Lapulung's words, a way of understanding and imagining a new vision of life in the present.

In what follows, Wirrinyga Band's music-making as a «self-in-process» will be discussed first of all by contextualising its music production in relation to the major political events as well as State and Federal policies that have characterised the colonial and postcolonial race relations in Milingimbi Community, in the Arnhem Land region and the Nation from late 1960s. Second, it will be discussed by tracing continuities and discontinuities with the themes and objectives found in the rich repertoire of Yolngu ceremonial songs still practiced today. And, finally, this music will be considered in analysing the strong commitment and courage in accommodating the past in a

relentless engagement with present realities, challenges and problems. I will conclude the paper by considering how Wirrinyga Band's legacy has been taken up and elaborated by a new generation of Yolngu hip-hop musicians. In particular, I will refer to the music by Danzal Baker, aka Baker Boy, a young Yolngu hip-hop artist who, born and raised in Milingimbi, rapidly rose to national and international fame after the release of his debut singles in 2017, in which he raps in the local language.

From Mission times to land rights

In order to contextualise Wirrinyga Band's commitment to music, engagement with the non-indigenous world, and understand its music and legacy, it is necessary to mention the main influences, political events and policies that have characterised the lives and experiences of Yolngu people in Milingimbi and Northeast Arnhem Land. Like other music groups that were formed in the region in the early seventies, their music style, their songs' main themes, their strong commitment and vision for a Yolngu future have emerged in a similar although unique way starting in the Mission times and flourished up to the mid-1990s, when Wirrinyga Band released its two music albums: *Dreamtime Shadow* (1990) and *Dreamtime Wisdom and Moderntime Vision* (1995), both produced by the Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA, see below).

Yolngu people were exposed to Western music as early as 1924 with the establishment of the first Methodist Mission in Milingimbi, and thus entered the telecommunications revolution. More significantly, as in other parts of Indigenous Australia, in those early mission years, Yolngu people started learning Christian hymns, a style of music inspired by country music (Breen 1989) that has had a deep and lasting influence on the development of Yolngu popular music. Taught and regularly sung across the community (Wells 1963: 15) a few Christian hymns were translated by the missionaries in 1926 and by the 1950s were regularly performed by members of the local choir who also started composing their own devotional songs in several of the regional languages (Magowan 2013; Breen 1989: 49). Yolngu Christian music was further developed during a charismatic revival in 1979 both in Elcho Island as well as in Milingimbi, where new song compositions were often accompanied by a particular form of devotional dancing which, from Arnhem Land, was exported to other communities in the Northern Territory and beyond (Brady 1989; Tamisari

2020). Several music groups which, like Wirrinyga Band, started playing in the early seventies, such as Soft Sands, in Elcho Island, were best known for their country-gospel style music sung in English and one of the local Yolngu languages (Breen 1989: 50; Corn & Gumbula 2002). Following this pattern, in their second album *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* (1995) Wirrinyga Band included a gospel song entitled *Djesuny ga Rongiyirra Raalin* composed by Keith Lapulung. The lyrics of this song start off with a warning to all the Yolngu peoples not to forget nor neglect the Christian message, but to be confident, as the chorus affirms, that Jesus will come back to save His children.

Djesuny ga Rongiyirra Ra:lin, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji

Nhaltjarr limurr mongal/Garraynha limurrung	How could we have forgotten our Jesus,
Yolngu walal bukmakthu muka	You all Yolngu people
Nhina limurr ga li'ya-wawu	We sit ignoring
Limurrunggyiyingal romthu ya:tjthu	With our bad ways of being
Chorus:	
Djesuny ga ronggiirra ra:lin munathalila	Jesus will return, on this hearth
ga maram nhangu djamarrkuliny mala	In order to take all his children
balan nunhi wangalil, Djewarrlilnha	And lead them home to Heaven
bala ngunhi wangalil ma:rra-djulngilil	Toward a luxuriant home full of joy[2]

Major political changes in Indigenous policy started with the referendum of 1967 when sections 51 and 127 in the Commonwealth Constitution were changed so that Indigenous people be granted Australian citizenship (Fletcher 1992: 1-2). An important event that led to the introduction of the "self-determination policy" (1972-1990) introduced by the then newly-elected Prime Minister Gough Witlham, was the lawsuit "Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd, (1971) 17 FLR 141" presented by some Yolngu leaders against the mining company Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government in order to stop the exploration drilling and the establishment of a bauxite mine nearby the Yolngu community of Yirrkala, in the east of the

[2] CD notes, *Dreamtime wisdom, Moderntime Vision* (CAAMA 1995), my translation (where not indicated, the translation of song lyrics is mine).

region (Stanner 1979; Williams 1986). Despite its unsuccessful outcome, this lawsuit, also known as the "Yirrkala case", contributed to the process that led to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, Northern Territory in 1976, whereby Indigenous people could claim property rights over their land. Further, this case strengthened the national campaign for Indigenous land rights in the south of the Country which, gathering momentum, resulted in the National Native Title Act of 1993. This legislation represented a decisive turning point in the history of colonial relations in the Country as it rejected the legal fiction that Australia was "*terra nullius*" and recognised Indigenous people's perduring presence on and ownership of land. The self-determination policy introduced welfare assistance in the communities and supported the return and the establishment of smaller communities on peoples' original lands, known as the "outstation movement" (Coombs, Dexter & Hiatt 1980; Gray 1977).

As in other parts of this region, the Methodist Missionaries retired from the management of Milingimbi Community as well as the running of the local school in 1974 while the Northern Territory Government established an elected local Council with all administrative and economic responsibilities. In 1973 the local Council also started managing the local school by implementing the Northern Territory bilingual policy which, as of the early 1990s, was transformed by local Yolngu educators into bicultural curricula with the objective of integrating local knowledge, values and pedagogy into mainstream schooling (Nayan et al. 1991; Tamisari & Milmilany 2003). The Yolngu's commitment to education does not only apply to the designing and implementation of local curricula but is also one of the main objectives of both ceremonial and popular songs. Indeed, as I will discuss in the next section, the ceremonial song repertoire of each patrilineal group is a rich repository of knowledge and a major modality to educate the younger generations in all aspects of everyday and ceremonial life. Similarly, Wirrinyga Band's lyrics insist on the transmission of knowledge to the young generation in order to renew a strong community.

From this perspective, it is not surprising that song and dance performances are often the fulcra around which bicultural curricula are designed. Ceremony, a complex social, political and aesthetic event, in fact provides a frame and a logic of Yolngu education and pedagogy as it condenses key notions such as moral responsibility, obligation, codes of correct behavior and skills through seeing, doing and active participation with the aim of developing youth's awareness and potentialities (Tamisari & Milmilany

2003: 6, Christie 1992). Finally, while ceremonial songs and performances are often deployed to negotiate with the Nation in a growing number of public diplomatic encounters with Government institutions, in a similar way, Wirrinyga Band's songs are often described as a means of "sharing culture" with and educating non-indigenous people. It is interesting to note that several music groups' lead singers in the region were also school teachers. Keith Lapulung in Milingimbi trained as a school teacher and was involved in the early development of what is known as "both way" or "two-way" education[3]. In Milingimbi, the so-called Gattjirrk curriculum is the result of a long politically-directed process which resulted in designing and implementing a pedagogical program for primary and secondary schooling aimed at promoting the integration of Yolngu language, local knowledge, values, and principles in compulsory mainstream "white" (*balanda*) education (Tamisari & Milmilany 2003)[4].

As scholars have noted (Gibson 1998), Indigenous popular and rock music became more visible and spread across the Top End in the wake of the Federal Government's self-determination policy that aimed at including and empowering Indigenous peoples in the decision-making process as well as supporting their cultural and economic initiatives. The first rock groups formed in the late sixties to mid-seventies and their number increased exponentially up to the late nineties: Arnhem Land counted fifteen groups (Corn 2002: 37) while in the whole of the Northern Territory there were thirty-four groups (Dunbar-Hall 1994: 40; see also Gibson 1998: 173). The song lyrics of each of these music groups, as I will later illustrate in Wirrinyga Band's song texts, voiced similar concerns: the determination and commitment to cultural survival, the affirmation of individual and collective identities, the claims to land ownership and social justice, the caring and longing for one's homeland, the celebration of one's lifestyle, principles and values from the past. The major song themes also include the identification and condemnation of the dangers brought about by the colonisers (drugs, gambling and diseases), and a strong commitment to educating younger people to deal with these problems.

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[3] Mandawuy Yunupingu, the lead singer of the rock group Yothu-Yindi was a school teacher and was one of the main educators who designed and implemented "both way" education in Yirrkala (Yunupingu 1993).

[4] The term 'Gattjirrk' refers to the geographical area in which Milingimbi is located in relation to the Yirrkala region in the "sunrise" or "Eastern side" (Miwatj) and Maningrida region in the "sunset" or "Western side" (Madhakal) of Northeast Arnhem Land.

The increasing number of music groups in the region in the 1980s was promoted and supported by the establishment of the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Community Scheme (BRACS) in 1987 following the launch of the AUSSAT satellite system by the Australian Government in 1985 (Hinkson 2005). Although rather rudimentary, these broadcasting units in the region allowed Yolngu people to access and control the production and circulation of their own music and media productions at community level. Inserting themselves into the satellite services, Yolngu people started operating the radio equipment to play a variety of music, make announcements as well as develop their own programs. Their selections included country, rock, gospel and reggae music but no public ceremonial songs (Deger 2006: 12ff.).

In 1989, the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) was set up to provide support for the 29 Top End BRACS communities. As one of the early organisers and broadcasting engineers of Northeast Arnhem Land BRACS and TEABBA, Evan Wyatt (1996) noted at the time, TEABBA is "committed to fostering the broadcast image from the bush, to give broadcasters a voice and a unique communication network spanning the Top End, that is where our strength lies and we see our role growing in this area".

The title of Wirrinyga Band's second album *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* well captures the main concerns that the Yolngu people have been facing in their daily lives since the beginning of colonization and brings to the fore the overarching concern of their music-making. These simple yet strong words express Yolngu awareness of living through a period of radical changes brought about by the encounter and often collision of "two laws", as the Yolngu say: the Indigenous and the non-indigenous socio-political, moral and religious systems which are interdependent yet distinct (Tamisari 2009; cf. Williams 1986). Although the album title seems to reproduce the Western dichotomy of tradition vs modernity, it has a very different meaning. Celebrating the wisdom of the Dreaming while having a vision of the future does not imply the opposition between two different modalities of being and knowing, but rather suggests an interweaving of old people's wisdom with youth's vision, an adjustment between the old and the new, the commitment to maintaining the past while dealing with present challenges.

As Lapulung (Milingimbi 2 July 2003) explained to me, the album's title, the coexistence of the past and the present is to be considered as an "objective" at the basis of the survival of Yolngu society:

> Dreamtime wisdom and modern time vision is our story. It is like the charcoal embers (*ganu' or lirrwi*) burning at an old place where you and your elders lit a fire and made a camp. Our knowledge is in the fire ashes that have been burnt and buried in the fireplace. When you pick up a charcoal that has been left there by the old people (*ngalapalmirri*), there is a bit of knowledge that has been hidden and buried in the fire ashes; and it is like opening a file cabinet of our knowledge. Dreamtime wisdom and modern time vision is an objective […] to see […] the general picture leading to our reality – the formation of reality in our lives that is adapting to today's modern society as well as to the knowledge passed down by our elders' stories. We need to hold on to this… for the vital role it has in Yolngu knowledge (Keith Lapulung, Milingimbi 2 July 2003, in conversation with the author) [5].

The song lyrics of *Dreamtime Wisdom, Moderntime Vision*, the cover song of the homonymous album, well captures how Yolngu people live observing the Dreaming or Law (*rom*) set down by ancestral beings and dealing with the fast-advancing technologies that are transforming the world.

Keith Lapulung, composer and lead singer, «wonder[s] how we're living today» simultaneously in «the land of Dreamtime cosmologies» and «the world of moderntime technologies».

As I will elaborate below, the terms Dreamtime or Dreaming, used by Yolngu people interchangeably with Law (*rom*), refer to a set of social, jural and moral rules that regulate behaviour and the decisional process, as well as moral orientations that guide people to behave correctly and ethically towards other human and non-human beings.

In the first verse, the text refers to the journey of the «two mother natures», namely, the Djanka'wu Sisters, that is considered the first and most significant cosmogonic event which gave life to the entire Yolngu territory land and people, a story that must be «shared with the Nation» (Tamisari 2018a:166). In the second verse, Yolngu people can handle and control the power of politics and participate in the technological knowledge.

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[5] "Fire ashes" is a Yolngu culturally dense expression often used to identify close kin's social, moral and emotional relatedness. It also indicates the socialisation of the young, stresses the social links between past and present generations, and is a metaphor for the depth and intimacy of relationships people establish through living with and caring for relatives (Tamisari 2014b).

Dreamtime Wisdom, Moderntime Vision, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji

System of the world is turning
And the population is starting to grow

People of the dreamtime
And people of the moderntime
Take this message stick of the dreamtime
And share it to the Nation
The journey of those two mother natures
Gave birth to the Yolngu nation

Chorus:
Dreamtime wisdom moderntime vision
We're living in the land of dreamtime cosmologies
Living in the world of moderntime technologies
Ooh ooh Why yeah yeah
It makes me wonder how we're living today

People of this country now reacting
Holds the power of politics in their hands
Inventing nuclear weapons by technologies
Science vision computerized system[6].

In Gilroy's (1990: 10) words, the title *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* well illustrates how «[…] by posing the world as it is against the world […] this musical culture supplies a great deal of courage required to go on living in the present».

Ceremonial songs: transmitting knowledge

As in other Australian Indigenous communities, ceremonial songs contain all the knowledge associated to a territory as they describe in minute and vivid detail all cosmogonic actions by female and male ancestral beings who, along their journeys' trajectories, transformed their bodies, shaping and naming everything as it is today, generated and distributed different groups of people across the region, bestowed property on them, gave them their own language as well as taught them the right practices and moral

6 CD notes, *Dreamtime Wisdom, Moderntime Vision* (CAAMA 1995).

orientations in all daily and ceremonial practices. It is important to stress that the shaping of the land implies the act of naming and, vice-versa, names condense the ancestral transformative processes (Tamisari 2018a: 161ff.). All cosmogonic events that have shaped the land and bestowed it to humans (*nhirrpan*, literally "implanted") are referred to as "Yolngu Law" (*Yolngu rom*), a term, as I mentioned above, which does not only refer to all jural and moral rules regulating all aspects of Yolngu social life and political life, but includes feelings and desires that allow people to behave correctly and ethically towards other human and non-human beings. "The law of kinship", "the law of marriage", the "law of hunting", "the law of the songs and dances", and "the law of the dead" need, in fact, to be felt in order to be applied and observed (Tamisari 2014a; 2018a: 342ff.).

Each patrilineal group in the region possesses several song cycles that record all ancestral as well as more recent historical events. Songs, in fact, cannot just be compared to a very detailed title act conferring land ownership – who knows the songs can claim ownership of and affirm their authority over it. If each place, as a result of ancestral transforming actions is a living country who shares substance with its human descendants and has taught them all the correct ceremonial and everyday practices through its names, songs and dances, the other way round, the execution of a song, a painting and a dance reenact the cosmogonic event, and thus "makes place happen", activates its story, its fertility and its power (Tamisari 2018a: 164ff.). In Arnhem Land as elsewhere in Australia, where Indigenous people have been forced away from their territories due to colonial dispossession or resettlement into missions, both ceremonial but also pop songs are a means of maintaining a relationship and taking care of one's land.

Songs are also a means to record new important events, such as the arrival of and cultural exchanges established with Macassan sailors on the Northeast Arnhem Land shores (Macknight 1976) or the destruction brought about by the 1974 cyclone (Caruana 1993: 164ff.) as well as small everyday happenings such as a drinking binge among friends (Tamisari 2018a: 353)[7]. In addition, established and renowned singers can innovate

[7] The now known "Guirr Guirr ceremony" was created by Western Australian artist Rover Thomas following the cyclone that destroyed Darwin in 1974. Interpreting the cyclone as an ancestral warning to Indigenous peoples not to forget their culture, the song and dance performance was to affirm and review local practices and beliefs (Caruana 1993: 164). See also the creation of the "Aeroplane dance" recounting the

song compositions by dreaming new tunes and lyrics that they will add to their repertoire (Marrett 2005).

Songs texts are also a rich repository of geographical, ethnobiological and zoological information (Curran et al. 2019; Bradley 2010; Yanyuwa families et al. 2003). They are replete with many toponyms which not only allow singers to identify larger and smaller areas as well as retrace ancestral trajectories over land with precision, but also contain many common and proper names which describe every aspect of the world, such as morphology, seasons, forms and patterns, sizes, colours, reproduction habits but also preferences, personality and the character of all animals, plants species and natural phenomena.

Male youth are introduced to and start learning the knowledge contained in the songs' lyrics by playing the didjeridoo in order to inherit the rights to perform their patrilineal group's songs and manage their matrilineal group's knowledge. It is in fact in early adolescence that young men start participating in the song performances first of all by learning to play the didjeridoo (*yidaki wanga*, literally, "making the didjeridoo speak"), because, as the older men say: «young men have a lot of breath!»[8]. It is only around the age of twenty that young men are permitted to play clap sticks (*bilma*) and can start singing, but only as background singers following the lead singers, literally "singing by following" (*malthun barrbarrkthun*). During these learning years, a young man sits close to his biological or classificatory fathers, patrilineal and matrilinear male relatives and, according to his musical and personal skills in acquiring, understanding and remembering song lyrics, he is progressively given more opportunities to finish off the verses of an increasing number of song units. It is important to note that, although young men mainly learn from their male relatives, as several women mentioned to me, they start learning songs in infancy when, held by their mothers, mothers' sisters and other female relatives, they listen to women crying songs performed during mortuary rituals and

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plane crash and rescue of American airmen in the community of Borroloola (Graham 1994; Casey & Bradley 2011).

[8] The didjeridoo (*yidaki* in yolngu languages) is a wind instrument that originates from Northeast Arnhem Land. It is made of eucalyptus branches naturally hollowed by termites. Although it is the cultural property of a few Yolngu groups, the didjeridoo has become one of the most visible symbols of Aboriginality in Australia and overseas (see Neuenfeldt 1997; Ferroni & Furlan 2006).

daily contexts (Chadwick & Rrurrambu 2004: 163; Magowan 2007)[9]. It is not surprising to find that teaching and learning of all techniques are mainly conceived and carried through imitation and experimentation and is rendered with expression drawn from dancing. Teaching is thus rendered with "giving the steps" (*gakal gurupan*, literally "giving the calves") and learning is rendered with "following the steps" (*gakal malthun*). The teaching and learning of hunting techniques, bureaucratic competence necessary to administer the community local government or other skills is expressed with "giving" and "following the steps". Consequently, a person "having the steps" or "having big/powerful steps" (respectively *gakalmirr* and *gakal dhumurr*) is a knowledgeable and able person such as a good hunter and gatherer who can find game and food all in all seasons, a proficient dancer, or a competent administrator.

As I proposed and discussed elsewhere (Tamisari 2014a, 2018b) song texts present ancestral actions as motivated by a wide range of feelings and describe a world of beings who perceive, know and relate to each other through affect and the senses. This led me to conclude that Yolngu knowledge, or Law, contained in the songs, must be felt and experienced in order to be acquired, observed, applied, reproduced and transmitted. This is a pervasive aspect of Yolngu songs that, however, has remained marginal to most studies. All cosmogonic actions are motivated and characterised by a wide range of feelings: longing, compassion desire, fatigue or strength, rage, courage, aggression, fear, cunning or gullibility, the perception of danger and the comfort of safety. Songs also describe in detail how everything in the environment is perceived through the senses: the changing colours and shimmers of natural phenomena, the wind's fresh blow on one's skin, the roar of the sea waves, and the whistling of leaves in the storm. It is significant that, in the song texts as well as in everyday language, the verbs "to think" (*guyanga*) and "to worry about" (*liya wanddirr*, literally, "head run" and also *warrguyun*) are used interchangeably to indicate a form of agency marked by the indivisibility of feeling and thinking (Wikan 1991: 285, 1992: 463). Ancestral beings "worry about" the place they have just left and "think" of the place they will reach and the actions that they will per-

[9] The crying songs, (*ngathi*, literally "crying"), also known as "tears" (*milkarri*) are performed by women during mortuary rituals and other daily contexts to express their sorrow. In these songs, women follow and build upon the main lyrics (*manikay yutungurr*, literally the "song's legs") performed by men (Berndt 1950; Magowan 2007).

form along their journeys. This "thinking" or "cleverness" of ancestral beings is referred to as "*dalatj*" a term that derives from "*dal*" meaning strong, hard, difficult, and "*djambatj*" meaning expert, sharp, smart, and crafty. It implies an awareness, intention, agency and sensibility that preexists the performing of an action. The cleverness of Ancestral Beings is not limited to their knowledge and wisdom but also includes their desire and determination. The term is used to refer to the skills of a good hunter, someone who is always successful, someone who is not only able "to see and follow the tracks" (*dhinthun wayawu*) of a wounded animal but who possesses qualities such as decisiveness, dexterity, discipline, and great determination or drive to catch the animal (Tamisari & Milmilany 2003: 7).

The affective and sensual dimensions in ceremonial songs find continuity in some of Wirrinyga Band's lyrics which describe the land. For instance, see how the coastal area is described in the song *Great Turtle Hunter* below.

Finally, there are also songs performed to attract members of the opposite sex, so called "love magic songs", and others performed for sheer entertainment (*wakal*) at local sports events, openings, welcome ceremonies as well as in local cultural festivals. Not to forget the composition of Christian songs, as mentioned above, which, accompanied by dancing, constitute another very dynamic, and fast-changing mode of responding to postcolonial challenges through an adjustment of the old and the new (Tamisari 2020).

Ceremonial songs are complex and rich cultural expressions which convey a complex series of meanings that are to be reproduced and transmitted to younger people: they reenact ancestral cosmogonic events which serve to legitimate one's ownership of land, are a rich repository of geographical, linguistic, social, moral and environmental knowledge, contain all the rules and correct practices, but also the feelings and perceptions needed to observe the Law. Songs are also an important mode through which the old is adjusted to the new in order to continuously realign Yolngu society, identity and political presence to a continuously changing vision of the future. The use of songs for educational purposes has been extended to dealing with the nation. Performed at a growing number of formal and informal public gatherings such as politicians' visits, conferences, exhibitions, sporting events, art openings, commemorations, policy launches etc., Indigenous performance has been deployed to enter the diplomatic arena from an assertive position of equality and partial control (Magowan 2000; Merlan 2014). By means of this "performative politics"

(Magowan 2000:309) or "ritual of diplomacy" (Henry 2011: 189; Tamisari 2006: 117; Wild 1986), in the complex space of self-affirmation and recognition, Indigenous people in general and Yolngu people in particular want to "share culture" in order to educate non-indigenous people to understand different ways of being, thinking and behaving. A particularly complex and very successful example of Yolngu performative politics is the Garma Festival organised by the Yothu-Yindi foundation and held annually near Yirrkala (Phipps 2011; De Largy Healy 2011). As the website states, Garma is «Australia's leading Indigenous cultural exchange event» aimed at «educating, sharing and learning» (https://www.yyf.com.au/). In a similar way, the Gattjirrk Festival, annually held in Milingimbi and organised by Wirrinyga Band's lead singer, Keith Lapulung, has the objective of "sharing culture" or, as conveyed by the title of the 2009 events, *Building bridges, connecting cultures*. The Festival as a "sharing of culture" is a space where, through performance, Yolngu peoples demand attention and challenge non-indigenous spectators to engage, acknowledge, and react (Tamisari 2016: 4)[10].

Wirrinyga Band: Dreaming, land and learning from the elders

The first music group founded by Keith Lapulung in Milingimbi in the mid-Seventies was called Black Wizard and mainly performed rock covers. It was not until 1979 that the group changed its name to Wirrinyga Band, and in 1982 started composing original songs (Corn 2002: 59). When I arrived in Milingimbi in 1994, the music group was formed by lead sing-

[10] In addition to past performative political exchanges between Yolngu peoples and the missionaries such as the 'Adjustment Movement' held on Elcho Island in 1957 (Berndt 2004 (1962), also see Morphy 1983), and more recent performative encounters such as the one with then Prime Minister John Howard in 1997 (Magowan 2000: 317ff.), I would like to include the spectacular ceremony performed by several clans from Yirrkala at the Northern Territory High Court to redress past legal injustices (Murray 2004) as well as numerous less spectacular and formal performances such as welcome ceremonies for politicians and state representatives (McIntosh 2000: 55ff.; Trudgen 2007), Christian everyday meetings and larger revival gatherings (Magowan 2007; Slotte 2005), welcome to country ceremonies (Everett 2009; Merlan 2014), art exhibition openings in urban settings (Mundine 1997), graduation ceremonies to award degrees in education or in theology both in Darwin and in Northeast Arnhem Land communities, community shop and office openings, local and regional sporting events, as well as impromptu farewell performances for non-Indigenous teachers – including the anthropologist (Tamisari 2005).

er Keith Lapulung, his three brothers, two matrilineal male relatives and Scott Trenwith, the only non-indigenous member who was then teaching music at the local school. Both of Wirrinyga band's albums were produced by CAAMA, a media association located in Alice Springs which emerged as one of the Indigenous-led initiatives in the mid-1970s to control the creation and circulation of Indigenous media and music products (Stefanoff 2018: 112). Subsidised by the Australian Federal Government, CAAMA was to provide radio, television, internet, music recording and filming to Australian Indigenous communities (Dunbar-Hall 2006: 127). Although Wirrinyga Band often participated in musical events in the region both in nearby communities and urban centers, its main activities took place in Milingimbi, especially on the occasion of Milingimbi's musical events. The Milingimbi annually held musical event, known as *Music, Sound and Light Competition* was launched in 1982 and renamed *Gattjirrk Cultural Festival* in 2004. The well-established Festival is the product of the social commitment and cultural vision that its artistic director and organiser, Keith Lapulung, Wirrinyga Band's founder and lead singer, has invested in the social-political and educative potential of music since the mid-Seventies (Corn & Gumbula 2005: 31). It is not by chance, I note, that Keith Lapulung named the Festival after the homonymous curriculum, the *Gattjirrk Bicultural Curriculum*, adopted by Yolngu teachers in 1993.

In considering some of the central themes in Wirrinyga Band's songs, I will focus on their educational objectives and potential to create new ideas and experiences, or in Lapulung's words «to create your vision and understanding your life».

As Dunbar-Hall (2006: 122) argues, Wirrinyga Band's lyrics aim not only at denouncing the problems local youth face in their daily lives but also serve to promote Yolngu presence, persistence and survival through education. Their songs, as well as the Festival, deal with individual and community health, physical and moral education, political collaboration and reconciliation with the non-indigenous world (*Ivi*, p. 123). Keith Lapulung formulates its objectives in terms of a discourse of "sharing culture" among community groups and with outside visitors. He was also the first to start sharing his generation's experiences and their vision through this style of musical performance. As I argued elsewhere (Tamisari 2016: 93ff.), the Gattjirrk Festival opens up a space where youth propose their experiences and perspective of history and political engagement to previous generations, as well as in an arena where tensions with the non- in-

digenous world are displayed, mediated, and negotiated. Further, it is in this space that the young and the old have the potential for formulating new socio-political and aesthetic syntheses or cultural remixes that realign individual and community life to historical circumstances in continuing and rapid transformation. As Festival's founder and organiser, Keith Lapulung succinctly put it: «the Gattjirrk Festival creates a space and time for a generation to react» (Tamisari 2016).

In what follows, I would like to approach Wirrinyga Band's music-making as a particular way of understanding and imagining a new vision of life which was dominant up to the Nineties and has created a fertile ground for contemporary groups, which I'll turn to in the conclusion. In other words, we could say the «[t]opics remain unchanged, while its musical representation continues to evolve» (Dunbar-Hall 2006: 126). Similarly to the educational role of ceremonial songs, one of the main objectives of Wirrinyga Band's music-making is to transmit knowledge in order to secure cultural reproduction and survival. As musician and music educator, George Rrrurrambu (Chadwick & Rrurrambu 2004: 165-166) states: «And we dance and sing – so those new kids can grow and look, and they'll start dancing. And it's still education, through contemporary and traditional [means]».

One of the recurrent themes present in many of Wirrinyga Band's songs is the Dreamtime or Dreaming, a notion that, as I mentioned above, needs to be understood in terms of Yolngu Law, a complex political system of land tenure and a set of socio-cultural rules which regulate all aspects of everyday and ceremonial life set down by cosmogonic journeys[11]. The second verse of the following song entitled *Dreamtime Shadow* from the homonymous album (1990), declares the necessity to remember all the aspects of the Law which was taught to them, and, as the chorus affirms in Djambarrpuyngu language, «the desire to go back to the past and to one's own homeland»[12].

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[11] The term "Dreamtime", as well as the most diffused "Dreaming", often recurs in Wirrinyga Band's songs, as well as in many other Indigenous music groups in the region and in the Country as a synonym of Law. Despite its heavy colonial connotations (Wolfe 1991), the term has been reappropriated and re-signified by Indigenous people in music and other contexts.

[12] Djambarrpuyngu is one of the nineteen languages spoken in Northeast Arnhem Land and has become the region's lingua franca (F. Morphy 1977). It is also the language of Keith Lapulung's patrilineal group.

Dreamtime Shadow, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji (1990)

Dreaming times all began
Ever since the white man knew
Yolngu are all the people
That knew about the dreaming times
It doesn't matter today
We're living in the civilised world
Take me back to the dreamtime
Far away into Yolngu land

Chorus:

Way! Way! Way!	Ehi! Ehi! Ehi!
Ma gu gangun ngarrany runganmarangur	Take me back
Go! Go! Go!	Come on! Come on!
Bala Ngarrakiyungal wangalil	There to my land[13]

The first verse of another song entitled *The Land and My People* from the same album, celebrates the story of the land as giving knowledge and life to Yolngu people. «Dreaming tracks» and «the spirits of the Dreamtime», namely the Law, is what gives not only resources but «knowledge and understanding» to Yolngu people.

The Land and My People, by Keith Lapulung

There is a story about our land
It has got Dreaming tracks and sacred boundaries
The spirits of the Dreamtime moves across the face of the
Land giving knowledge and understanding to all Yolngu man.

Chorus:
What does the land really mean to my people?
Land is very important for the needs of my people
Land means more to all the Yolngu people
Land is our mother it protects us all – oh yeah
Land is where my people once dwelt[14]

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13 CD notes, *Dreamtime Shadow*, (CAAMA 1990), my translation.

14 CD notes, *Dreamtime shadow* (CAAMA 1990).

Other songs, such as *Djambuwal the Thunder Man* in the 1990 album, and *Great Turtle Hunter* in the 1995 album celebrate the sensual and emotional relationship needed to know and respect the Law: Thunder Man roams «our land and brings forth our sacred Dreaming/creating lonely valleys and huge mountains» (*Djambuwal the Thunder Man* 1990). As with the ceremonial repertoire, these songs encode information on cosmogonic actions and as such they have the potential of reenacting them thus caring for one's own land at a distance. As the performances of ceremonial songs have allowed Indigenous people in this region and across Australia to maintain a connection with land after colonial dispossession and forced removal, in celebrating the land, similarly, Wirrinyga Band's songs offer a different modality through which this relationship can be renewed. In this context, the turtle hunter is celebrated, I argue, not only as an important ancestral being of Wirrinyga Band's patrilineal group, but especially as a wise and experienced man whose main role and objective is to transmit all aspects of knowledge to Yolngu people.

Great Turtle Hunter, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji

I see the sunset on the open seas
I see the vision of the great turtle hunter

Chorus:
Take me away across the deep blue seas
Show me around all the coral reefs
Together we'll hunt across the coral reefs

II
I see the canoe amongst the coral reef
I feel the wind and it's blowing from the east

III
I see the rain clouds and is forming from the east
I hear the sound of the seagull singing

IV
I see the figure of an old man standing
He shows the wisdom and the knowledge of my people[15]

[15] CD notes, *Dreamtime Wisdom ModerntimeVision* (CAAMA 1995).

Other song lyrics shift attention and are more explicit in stressing the necessity of learning from the elders and remembering their teachings. The songs entitled *Indigenous Man Keep on Telling Those Stories* and *Proud Young Arnhem Land Man* in the 1995 album clearly state the preoccupation of forgetting this knowledge and its crucial role in the process of maintaining and affirming individual and collective Yolngu identities with pride:

Indigenous Man Keep on Telling Those Stories, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji

Indigenous man is standing out in the lonely plains
Telling all the young generation the stories he was told

Chorus:
Better keep on telling those stories,
Gotta hold on tight to our Dreaming.[16]

Proud Young Arnhem Land Man, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji/Steve Grace

I remember when I was a boy
Growing up to be a man
Not knowing so many things in my lifetime
Just playing around and having fun
But most of all I'm proud I'm glad

Chorus:
Well, I'm proud to be a young Arnhem Land man
A good chance of knowing I'm a Yolngu man
They pass onto me Yolngu knowledge and understanding
Proud to be young Arnhem Land Man

In this country of Arnhem Land
Too much sadness is covering our land
Our older people are quickly dying[17]

The relationship between the young and the old people is also the subject of a much-loved song in Djambarrpungu language entitled *Yothu ga marrtji* ("A child is walking") in the 1990 album. The song describes a

16 CD notes, *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* (CAAMA 1995).

17 CD notes, *Dreamtime Wisdom ModerntimeVision* (CAAMA 1995).

child walking along a shore looking for fish and an old woman, with little strength left, sitting and smoking a cigarette, while a seagull crosses the sky. In describing a common scene in everyday life on the beach at Milingimbi where people sit to relax in the afternoon shade, the attention is turned again to the transmission of knowledge expressed through the interdependency between the wisdom and fragility of old age juxtaposed to the liveliness and lightheartedness of youth.

Even school education is celebrated in a song dedicated to Beulah Lowe, linguist and the first qualified missionary teacher who, on her arrival in Milingimbi, also known as Yurrwi, in 1951, started teaching in one of the local languages (Wearing 2007) and has thus been recognised as having initiated an early version of the bilingual curriculum. The song entitled *History of Schooling in Arnhem Land*, released in the 1995 album, could be understood as a sign of approval and support of the bicultural curriculum that had been implemented in Milingimbi at the beginning of the 1990s (Tamisari & Milmilany 2003) especially in the way the text describes and equates Yolngu pedagogical approach (observation and imitation, trial and error) and the necessity to learn to read and write in English.

History of Schooling in Arnhem Land, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji/Guwaykuway Ganambarr

Fifty years ago there were no schools in Arnhem Land
Yolngu children learning what they needed to know

Direct from the people all round them
And the boys would learn how to hunt for a wallaby

By watching their fathers so carefully
And the girls used to gather all them bush tucker

Hunting and gathering was the way for our survival
Learning from the old ways then introduce the new
Educating children was the next step to come
At the age of sixteen Beulah Lowe arrived at Yurrwi

Teaching Yolngu children to read and write
Little bit of English was just as good enough[18]

[18] CD notes, *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* (CAAMA 1995).

Like other Indigenous groups, Wirrinyga Band has used its music to criticise the consumption of alcohol and promote good health in the community (Carfoot 2016). The song *Balanda's Totemic Waterhole* in the *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* album, warns against the seduction of the city and the lethal dangers of drinking:

> Now we're living in this modern world today/ Many things are changing and our people are dying/ City lights are shining and the totem of the pubs are calling/ Yolngu women and Yolngu men/ Don't get fooled by the Balanda ways/ Totemic waterhole now open and someone's calling/ He's a stranger with a pub totem (*Balanda's Totemic Waterhole*, 1990).

But it is in the song entitled *Antipetrol Sniffers' Song*, in the same album, that Wirrinyga Band addresses the destructive consequences of drug abuse that had taken hold in Northeast Arnhem Land by the1990s (Brady 2011). The problem, however, is not only that children do not listen to their relatives' warnings and advice. The song also draws attention to adults' concern about finding effective ways to discipline and educate the young to follow the Law and choose a healthy lifestyle while being understanding and compassionate of their predicament.

As with other Indigenous communities (cf. Myers 1986: 107), the verb "to listen" (*dhhulina-wittjurr*, also *buthuru-bitjun* literally "to sharpen your ears") refers to "listening with attention", understanding and learning, a fundamental attitude young people must have and develop to become responsible adults. In contrast, "to be deaf" (*buthuru-dhumuk*, literally "closed ears") means that children are unaware of key social values and do not behave in the correct manner.

Antipetrol Sniffers' Song, by Lapulung Dhamarrandji

I

Dhuwandja dha:wu nhumalang bukmaku	This is a story for all of you
Yolngu malanguw nhaltjan ngilimurr	Yolngu people, how could we
Dhu raypirriyun limurrung djamarrkuluny	Discipline our children
Romtja walal ga melkum dal mirrithirr	Show them the law in a strong manner
Bayngu walal nguli dhhulina-wittjurr gurutumirrrw	They are not listening to [and understanding] their relatives

Chorus:	
Nhaltjarr limurrdja nhama walalany melyu dhalyu	How do we look at them in a severe manner
Gurrupurungumirr walal djamarrkuli'	Poor children [expression of compassion]
II	
Nhuman walal nguli walu ga munha-gnupan	They sniff from the morning into the night
Ba:yngu walal nguli dhulina-witjurr gurrutumirriw	They are not listening to [and understanding] their relatives
Galki walal dhu warrpam rirrikthuna ga buluny	All of them will soon get sick and further
Walal dhu warrpam dhinggaman	They all will die[19]

Follow the right path. Music as education and medicine

Ceremonial song repertoire and the Wirrinyga Band's music deal, as we have seen, have similar themes and share the same objectives, namely to educate, transmit and share knowledge with others. Ceremonial songs are the repository of political, social, geographical, environmental and religious knowledge which is transferred from generation to generation through performance. Yolngu people talk about ceremonial songs containing Yolngu knowledge and describe them as equivalent to western books. While books are contained in a library, the song texts are safeguarded in the "older men's heads" who have experienced the Law and thus can "think" and transmit it through songs and dance performance[20].

In a similar way, the lyrics in Wirrinyga Band's songs that focus on the Dreaming – i.e., the relationship to land and especially the knowledge that constitutes the Law – insist on its transmission in order to maintain an anchorage to the past, renew the Yolngu way of life and shape a vision for the future. As Chadwick, G. & G. Rrurrambu (2004: 163) state, first of all, «before learning comes respect, and the Yolngu culture, law and *rom*, [is] very strong in the Top End area and Central Australia, very strong», and concludes that both ceremonial and pop mu-

[19] CD notes, *Dreamtime Wisdom Moderntime Vision* (CAAMA 1995), my translation.

[20] There are specific Yolngu terms to refer to old men, literally "white-haired ones" who, thanks to their knowledge and authority can recite sacred proper names toponyms in songs. The colour white is associated with ancestral power, sexuality and the acquisition of the Law (Tamisari 2018a: 237).

sic provide «education, through contemporary and traditional [means]» (*Ivi,* p. 166). Considering the continuity between ceremonial and popular songs, I would like to argue that Wirrinyga Band's music-making and especially their lyrics are educational not only in the way in which they express local ideas, principles and practices, but also in the way that they shape new experiences, create a way of understanding and imagining a new vision of life in the present, a becoming of the self-in-process. Lapulung's lyrics and comments on his music-making are about "understanding", in Yolngu terms an interlinked process of passing on and receiving knowledge from the past to the future generations, a determination to teach and learn through experience. Not surprisingly, the term "*dhinthun wayawu*", literally "following the tracks", mentioned above to convey the ancestral beings' agency, is also used metaphorically in the context of the Yolngu pedagogical approach in bicultural education. In order to teach and to learn, it is necessary to look for, desire, recognise and then choose the right path towards a Yolngu education traced by the old people (cf. Marika Mununggiritj & Christie, 1995: 60). Education from a Yolngu perspective is a vision projected into the future but forged in the past, and dependent on the knowledge of one's own place of origin. In the words of educator and leader Bobby Winyimarra (in Tamisari & Milmilany 2003: 1) in relation to the development of the bicultural curriculum in the early 1990s:

> We cannot know the place we are going to unless we know the place whence we came. The voices of what we were, what we forget and what we can be. Culture is the past, the present and the future, continuity and coherence. Building on the past gives meaning to the present and hope for the future.

It is with determination and commitment that Wirrinyga Band's music searches for that path connecting the past with the future, the old and the new, "dreamtime wisdom and moderntime vision", the Yolngu and *balanda* world.

In Wirrinyga Band's songs, the recurrent reference to education is central and explicit. As illustrated, most songs draw attention to old peoples' responsibility to «keep on telling those stories» so that the younger generations can «hold on tight onto the Dreaming»; the recognition that «older people are quickly dying» and thus young boys need to learn «Yolngu knowledge and understanding» in order to grow into a

responsible «proud young Arnhem Land man»[21]. As noted, although in describing an everyday scene, the song *Yothu ga marrtjji* focuses on the contraposition between a boy walking on the Milingimbi beach and a frail old woman who is quietly smoking as she observes the horizon. Education is even more explicit in songs such as *Balanda's Totemic Waterhole* and *Antipetrol Sniffers' Song* where young people are warned about the hollow and dangerous allurements of the city and the dangers of alcohol consumption and drug abuse. In the latter song, entirely sung in Djambarrpuyngu language, the concern is also on adults' disorientation in finding a right and effective way of disciplining the young people to avoid self-destructive behaviour and opt for a healthy lifestyle. Finally, the song *History of Schooling in Arnhem Land* is dedicated to school education: both Yolngu ways of learning and the necessity to learn to read and write in English thanks to the work of the first trained teacher who introduced a program of bilingual schooling that was then developed into a bicultural curriculum integrating a Yolngu pedagogical perspective in the 1990s.

Baker Boy: «Music makes us»

I would like to conclude this paper turning my attention to the ways in which, Danzal Baker, aka Baker Boy, a young hip-hop rapper has taken up Wirrinyga Band's legacy especially in promoting music and performance as a potent educational means to encourage and transmit knowledge to the younger generation as well as educate non-indigenous people to listen, recognise and respond. Danzal Baker grew up in Milingimbi and Maningrida and most probably participated in the Milingimbi music festivals that Keith Lapulung had been organising since the beginning of 1980s where young people could find a space to tell their stories, display their aspirations and imagine new configurations of ideas and experiences weaving together elements of Yolngu heritage and pop culture, the comic and the serious, the high and the low, the old and the new (Tamisari 2016: 94). He began his career as a member of the Djuki Mala (https://www.djukimala.com/), – a Yolngu dance company that started performing in 2007 (Tamisari 2010)

[21] From the songs *Keep On Telling Those Stories* and *Proud young Arnhem Land man* respectively.

– and released his first two singles in 2017 achieving almost instant success with his rapping in Djambarrrpuyngu, one of the languages in the Northeast Arnhem Land region. In 2019 Danzal Baker was nominated Young Australian of the Year and was the recipient of the National Indigenous Music Award in 2019 and 2020 with his first two songs *Cloud 9* and *Marryuna* (Let's dance)[22]. Even before the beginning of his career, Danzal Baker had started collaborating with the Indigenous Hip Hop Projects (IHHP), an association of talented artists, founded in 2005, who have been teaching hip-hop media and performing arts in remote Indigenous communities across the nation. In 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages, he was also nominated an ambassador for the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation and as such travelled around Australia to stress the value of first languages, performing and reading books to children in schools[23].

Danzal Baker is highly aware and deeply committed to his work as an educator to help shape young Indigenous children and adolescents' experiences and aspirations and inspire their desires and visions.

> I was able to travel around remote Australia, in remote communities, talking about healthy lifestyles and being a strong role model for the next generation. I was able to encourage them to do something I did, like take a big step out of a small remote community and be a sign for the next generation — to actually be strong, confident and comfortable in my skin because the world is really big out there […] It helps inspire the next generation — that's why it's important to have strong black role models to show little brothers the right way and keep them on track so they can be the next leaders (Morelli 2018).

His engagement in promoting Indigenous and in particular Yolngu languages is even more important when he visits and performs for his own people in Northeast Arnhem Land:

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[22] Initiated in 1960, and conferred on Australia Day, 26th January, The Australian of the Year Award celebrates Australian citizens who have distinguished themselves for their achievements in different fields. See web page: https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/recipients/ [last consulted 15/10/2021].

[23] See the following web page: (https://alnf.org/2019/11/07/baker-boy-board-newest-alnf-ambassador/) [last consulted 15/10/2021].

> Especially back home, where most of the kids don't even speak English as much, for me to rap in Yolngu Matha and teach them to be proud and strong and not be ashamed and keep moving forward and chase your dreams and goals, to teach them through music, it's like an awesome way to go […] Because they actually listen to the track and repeat it and actually sing along and some of them start understanding what it means (Reich 2020).

In the *Cloud 9* single, Baker Boy give a series of advices to young people and encourages them to follow their dreams and visions. His lyrics are direct and to the point:

> We gonna fly high like an eagle, don't wanna see no ego/ […] Gotta do what Baker Boy, young man not a boy/ You can't control me like a toy/ I'm a human being, just like you and me/ […] So never back down (Back down, back down)/ You wanna be as good as me? Boy, you better practice/ Step back, feel the power of my blackness/ You wanna be as good as me? Boy, you better practice/ Step back, feel the power of my blackness/ Can't stop me now (Can't stop me)/And you can't bring me down/ I'm on cloud 9/ And I'm not coming down.

In rapping in his language as well as in English his objective is also to stimulate non-indigenous people, to arouse their curiosity and get them to start listening to what Indigenous peoples have to say and to understand who they are:

> *Balanda* [white people] will be curious about it and then learn the language so they can understand what I'm saying. Then they'll want to learn more language and try and connect to the community – it's like my secret way of pulling everyone together, I guess (Israel 2017).

Despite its apparent entertaining and evasive message celebrating dancing, Baker Boy's single *Marryuna* (Let's dance) has a deeper meaning. The lyrics talk about the importance of learning as well as taking up the knowledge from the past, and the necessity to «sit and work» together, black and white. In Danzal Baker's words:

> My music is all about bridging two worlds as one. I want everyone, no matter black or white to come together and have fun, no colour you know? You see it as just human beings. We all have brains, eyes, and hearts. I think it's cool to have everyone come together to be strong and *marryun* ("dance", Morelli 2018).

Marryuna [24]

Refrain:	
I'm a proud black Yolngu boy with the killer flow	
Listen to the yidaki (didjeridoo), listen to it blow	
Verse 1.	
Brother boys, Yolngu boys, all the way from Arnhem Land	
Rawakpuy Yindi djal nhaburr dhuwal kirtjirr	We, tough ones, like dancing a lot
Nharow Yolngu balanda bungul	This is a dance event for Yolngu and balanda (white people)
Gu dhumurryurra nganya marrtji gu	Let's make them move
Nhapurr ga djalthirr nhapurr dhu wiripungom	We like ourselves and the other ones
Walalung mangutji marrka manapunmirr	So that we can bring their gaze together
Weripu weripu minytji gu	Different different colours
Triggers mind blown, survival mode, human brain	
Greatest weapon in the globe, self-sustain	
Education knowledge is loaded	
Standing on everyone's shoulders	
Teaching yourself as you get older and older	
Ngarra ga djalthirr ngalitjalung marrma nhungu	I would like both for us two and you two
Ngarra gu ngalidhu nhina djama wungatj ngur	I, and we two, sit and work together
Chorus:	
Yolngu mala our music is growing	
I'm using my *manikay* (songs) the river is flowing	
Can you feel the wind blowing?	

[24] The term "*rawak*", literally means dry, overcooked, and stale, but here it is used idiomatically with the positive meaning of "being tough" and "cool". The term "*ngali*" is the first plural pronoun dual inclusive, "you and me"

Yolngu ngali marrtji! Miyalk ga dirramu	Yolngu we two let's go, girl and boy
Oh, *marryuna, marryuna, marryuna, marryuna*	Let's dance, let's dance, let's dance
La-la, la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la	
Oh, *marryuna, marryuna, marryuna, marryuna*[25]	

In Baker Boy's more recent single *Mirritjin* (2019) music becomes a "medicine" not only to educate but to cure the world: music, family and friends are paramount. The chorus declares: «Money is all that you got/I got my friends and fam, the only currency I understand/Money is all that you got/ In a world full of greed/Music is everything that I need». And in the second verse, as the Djambarrpuyngu lyrics assert: it is music that educates in terms of shaping people, young and old, transmitting knowledge through song is like a medicine to the body and soul, a remedy that «got me living life like/I just wanna live my life».

In other words, it is a way of teaching and learning, a way, as Lapulung reminds in his Facebook post (Monday 10 August 2020), of «thinking to create your vision and understanding», a way of imagining, experiencing, and enacting life»

Mirritjin

Manikaydhu nhapurrinyli	Music makes us
Munupun bingur bili	Let's come together from over there
Limurrli nga:ma	We listen
Yothungur ngala baldhirr	From childhood to adulthood
Dhuwal music	This music
Nhakun mirritjin	Is like medicine
Rumbalgu birrimbirrgu	For your body and soul
Marram nhuli earphone	You grab the earphone
Buthururulil nhirrpun	Put it in your ear
Babuyurra dhumurryurr	Bounce and kick
Dhurrguyurra ga runhdu'yurr	Shake and rock
Marrtji ngany dhukarrkurr	Let's walk along the road
And just rock with it, just rock with it[26]	

[25] Baker Boy, Island Records Australia, 2017, my transcription and translation.

[26] Baker Boy, Island Records Australia, 2019, my transcription and translation.

I would like to conclude by drawing attention to Baker Boy's first line of the song *Mirritjin* translated above. The expression "music makes us" captures the shared significance of Yolngu music making - ceremonial songs, pop-rock and hip-hop songs alike - not only in terms of expressing Yolngu perspective and key ideas, principles, social and moral values and political voices in such a sophisticated yet directly accessible manner. "Music makes us" conveys music's ability of shaping ideas and new experiences, creating understanding and imagining a new vision of life in the present (Lapulung 2020). In Yolngu terms, this is an interlinked process of drawing knowledge and passing it on from the past to the future generations, a determination to teach and learn through experience. As the repository of geographical, environmental, moral, religious knowledge articulating a complex land tenure system, the ceremonial song repertoire is constantly performed and taught in order to face new historical contingencies and social postcolonial challenges. Yolngu people would say that ceremonial songs and dances are one of the main and most efficient occasions for the elders to "give the steps" to the young who have the responsibility of experiencing, "following", and teaching them in their turn. Despite their stylistic differences, rock-pop as well as hip-hop music, are powerful tools to draw together "dreamtime wisdom" and "moderntime vision" as the title of Wirrinyga Band's first album declares, in order to understand the present through the past knowledge and experience, finding new intersections between the old and the new, or as Lapulung affirms, creating a way of imagining a new vision of life in the present, enacting and becoming of the self-in-process. As Baker Boys sings in one of his punch lines: "song is like a medicine to the body and soul, a remedy that got me living life like/I just wanna live my life" (*Mirritjin*, Baker Boy, 2019).

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