

*Nā roto atu o te pukapuka nei, kua tikina atu ngā ringa rehe o Hirini Melbourne hei hanga anō i ngā taonga pūoro e whakahau ana i ngā reo o ngā atua kia waiata mai anō. Kua roa e hāngū ana nā reira, ko te kauwaka tēnei hei whakatangi anō i a rātou kia unuhia ai te kura huna.*

Through this book, the skilled hands of Hirini Melbourne are being utilised to create taonga pūoro and thus are prevailing on the gods to sing once more. They have long been silent, and this book is the medium whereby the gods are invited to make their voices enchant the listeners and to release their unique treasures to inspire people.

Wharehuia Milroy

# TAONGA PŪORO

## SINGING TREASURES

*The musical instruments of the Māori*

BRIAN FLINTOFF



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All unacknowledged carving and photographs in *Taonga Pūoro* are the work of the author Brian Flintoff.

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## PREFACE



The Haumanu logo depicts a kōkako being drawn to the sound of a nguru.

Haumanu is a loose-knit group of dedicated Māori music players and instrument makers which developed under the leadership of well-known composer and player, the late Dr Hirini Melbourne (1950-2003). Hirini's interest in traditional instruments had initially been stirred by looking at old examples lying silent in their museum cases. He mused sadly on their loneliness. What were the sounds they created? What stories were told about them? And would their music be heard by the coming generations? He set about finding the answers to these questions and subsequently drew together a number of people who were already working on their revival, and others who also wished these treasures would sing again and were prepared to do something about it.

Haumanu had its beginnings at an informal weekend near the top of Pīkikiruna on Takaka Hill, near Nelson. When Hirini and I travelled there initially to dedicate a pūtōrino carved from a 35,000-year-old tōtara tree it was early in the day and mist wafted from the mysterious holes scattered throughout the vast expanses of warming marble. He began playing softly, slowly building momentum, and as he played the sound filled the still air above us. Soon the echoes were circling over us and in that magic moment it was as if we were inside a crystal glass singing to the finger's touch. We called that great marble rock nestled in bush Ōhaka Tapu, the Sacred Nest. Several members of the group have returned at other times to film and record at this special place and at the same time we have revived our energies in its special aura.

The name Haumanu can be literally translated as 'breath of birds' and was chosen because of the importance of bird songs in the traditions of the music. The word also means revival and this is the aim of the group. The Haumanu logo depicts our greatest songbird, the kōkako, being attracted by the sound of a flute.

Dr Hirini Melbourne with his pūkāea **Tamanui**.



One of the plant-filled holes in the great marble rock, **Ōhaka Tapu**.

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Craig Potton

The nucleus of Haumanu combined the complementary skills of Hirini, as a musician and composer, with an established status in both Māori and academic circles; Richard Nunns, as an accomplished flute player and multiskilled presenter; and myself as a craftsperson to make replicas of those treasures held safe in the museums. From a hui initiated in 1991 Hirini also drew together such people as Mauri Tirikātene, Rangīiria Hedley, Tūpari Te Whata, Clem Mellish, Rangīnui Keefe and Tēpora Kūpenga, John Collins, Te Wārena Taua and Rewi Spragon, all with different areas of expertise but whose intention was to create a human resource that would foster the revival of the instruments. From these initial beginnings the Haumanu ‘flock’ began to increase over time and those who have joined the ranks are Te Aue Davis, Joe Malcolm, Hemi te Wano, Rangī Kipa, Bernard Makaore, Pōtaka Taite, Aroha Yates-Smith, Warren Warbrick, Moana Maniapoto, Horomona Horo, Robin Slow, James Rickard and James Webster.

Many demonstrations and workshops have been conducted, mostly on marae throughout the country. A collection of instruments constructed at one of the workshops or hui of instrument makers held at Otātara in 1995 was lodged at Te

Papa for future students to have access to. Ngāwara Gordon at the Hei Tiki Gallery in Rotorua has continued the momentum of these hui for makers and players.

Richard Nunns has collated the results of the comprehensive research he and Hirini undertook with elders and other informants over many years, and has compiled this into a major work for which Hirini had begun a parallel Māori version. This is still in production. Richard’s readiness to journey out to my workshop with new information to guide my reconstructions, and also to test play the many modifications and variations, is still a vital element in the success of our work.

For several years Hirini, Richard and I have been working towards a smaller publication to supplement our verbal and musical presentations. We wished to provide a reference for those who wanted to continue their interest in both playing and making Taonga Pūoro, these Singing Treasures. Late in 2002, after Hirini was diagnosed with cancer, he gave me the task of compiling this small, long-planned book, saying with his ever-present chuckle, ‘I’ve got a great idea. And the best thing is I just do the idea bit and you do all the work.’ This of course makes light of his years of devotion to the journey that brought us to the place where

a coherent narrative is possible. This book summarises historical observations and contemporary research by Hirini, Richard, myself and others, and includes translations of Hirini's writings and oral communications. In most cases topics are complemented with some of his songs and, where possible, his own brief interpretations of them. Fortunately Hirini and I were able to complete the outline and share most of the content before he left us. *Taonga Pūoro, Singing Treasures* is therefore presented as a tribute to Hirini.

The readiness of a great number of people to freely provide assistance has been a heart-warming tribute to Hirini's standing and I am very appreciative of it all, especially the inspirational photographs taken by Terry O'Connor who passed away just before this book went to print. I note with gratitude the special contributions of Professor Wharehuia Milroy, Jan Melbourne, Pania Melbourne, Rangīria Hedley, Richard Nunns, Derek Lardelli, Aroha Yates-Smith, Kiri Bramley, Dr Amiria Henare, Maureen Lander, Awhina Tamarapa and the others at Te Papa, Alan Thomas, Michael Keith, Keith Hill and Tim Gummer at Rattle Records, Jo Paku, Cherie and John Woffindin, Maggie Atkinson, Bob Bickerton, Robbie Burton and the team at Craig Potton Publishing who have turned the concept into a reality, and my wife Julia, for her support and encouragement.

A third dimension has been added to the words and pictures of this book with the inclusion of a sampler CD of Māori music. This has been made possible by the support of the recording companies and the musicians who have kindly given permission to use extracts from their compilations, all of which are highly recommended. It adds the sounds that were absent when Hirini looked into those silent museum cases. A multi-dimensional look at the taonga is available on the DVD that accompanies the CD *Te Hekenga ā Rangī*.<sup>1</sup>

Hirini wished primarily to share this knowledge with his people of Ngai Tūhoe and other Māori, but he also recognised a similarity of human spirit in others and wanted everyone to respectfully share the gifts of his ancestors.

*Kia pōkai ake ra i te takapau  
tuwhara o te pō  
Kia whiti mai anō te rā  
Whiti  
Whiti  
Whiti mai te rā.*

The blankets of night  
are rolled away  
The sun shines again. +



Julia Flintoff

On their way to **Ōhaka Tapu** are Haumanu members Brian Flintoff, Richard Nunns and Clem Mellish on the left, with Hirini Melbourne on the right and the crew of Rangīatea Films in the centre.

*Note:* Hirini's wonderful songs, which appear throughout the book, have also been recorded, sometimes on more than one CD. Hirini was creative and seldom sang his songs the same way each time he recorded them, and was also happy to reuse his material. The symbols at the end of each song show which CD or CDs contain recordings of that song. Full details of the CDs are given in the references at the end of the book.

\* Hirini Melbourne, *Te Wharekura 41*, Learning Media Ltd, Wellington, 1994.

@ Hirini Melbourne, *Toiapiapi* (book and accompanying tape), Shearwater Associates Ltd, Wellington, 1991.

+ Hirini Melbourne & Richard Nunns, *Te Kū Te Whe* (CD with notes), Rattle RAT-D004, 1994.

# Hirini Melbourne, *Te Kuraroa*, Kia Ata Mai Educational Trust, 1998.

^ Hirini Melbourne, Richard Nunns & Aroha Yates-Smith, *Te Hekenga ā Rangī* (CD and DVD), Rattle RAT DV010, 2003.

## INTRODUCTION

*In* 1849 Matiaha Tiramorehu related the creation story in which Māori music traditions are founded. He gave a genealogy of creation that begins: 'Kei a te Pō te timatatanga o te waiatatanga mai a te Atua. Ko te Ao, ko te Ao mārama, ko te Ao tū roa.' This has been interpreted as 'It was in the night, that the Gods sang the world into existence. From the world of light, into the world of music.'<sup>2</sup>

Creation began in Te Kore, the Void, after the two opposite but complementary elements, Hani (the Seeker) and Puna (the Well Spring), came together at the Sacred Altar. Then followed aeons of generations of Te Pō, the Darkness, which were matched by generations of Te Ao, the Light.

From the ages of Te Ao came our world's primal Sky Father, Ranginui e tū iho nei. From Te Pō came Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother. Their names are often abbreviated to Rangī and Papa. Both had families through earlier relationships, and several children of these stayed with Rangī and Papa and are commonly known as their children. This extended family gave us most of the departmental gods of the Māori. The ones met in this book include Tānemahuta, the great procreator and God of the Forests, as well as birds; Tāwhirimātea, the God of the Winds; Whiro, feared as the one responsible for bad deeds and sickness; Tū Matauenga, the fierce God of War; and Rūaumoko, the unborn child who gets restless at times and moves within Papa, creating earthquakes.

All the different types of Māori song stem from the emotions displayed by the gods during the creation aeons. There are songs of sorrow, anger and lament; of loneliness, desire and joy; of peace and love. The voices of the instruments and the movements of dance support and embellish the songs.



**Te Wehenga** A print depicting Rangī and Papa, with traditional symbols representing some of their children between them.

Māori traditions include a wide range of musical instruments and these are presented here in their family groups, mostly illustrated by contemporary examples that have been used in the revival journey. Because these Taonga Pūoro, singing treasures, can be best appreciated and understood when the cosmogony that guided their creation is known, this book summarises some of the myths and legends that directly relate to them. They are arranged in order of the validating myth that introduces them and authenticates their existence. This sequence fittingly keeps them between the primal parents, Rangī and Papa. These stories have been pieced together from various sources and there are several tribal variations on them, not all of which are in the public domain. However, their theme is consistent and we trust that where local knowledge does not agree with these versions it will be understood that we acknowledge, respect and treasure those variations.

In the following chapters you will learn a little more about the Māori gods associated with Taonga Pūoro. Tunes are named after the Sky Father Rangī, and rhythms come from the heartbeats of Papa, the Earth Mother. Their descendants brought us the instruments to join rhythm and tune. Tānemahuta, the God of the Forest and its creatures, gave the trees from which many instruments are made. Hine pū te hue, one of his daughters, became the ancestress of the gourds



This selection of contemporary Taonga Pūoro shows the variety of materials used to make them.

and began by using her own body as a sounding vessel. Another daughter, Hine Raukatauri, loved her flute so much that she chose to live inside it and became the Goddess of Flute Music. Tāwhirimātea, the God of the Winds, gives breath to the spinning instruments. Tangaroa, the Mighty God of the Seas, is father of the fish which give us sea shells, some of which are made into instruments.

While most instruments have these obvious family origins, others however are created by a union of the families of gods, and so could rightly be included in more than one chapter. Understanding these concepts helps to give some insight into the values that are placed on the instruments, the music and the materials they are created from. It also helps in giving respect to the many spiritual aspects of these taonga, which are not part of the public domain and are therefore only alluded to in this book. Taonga Pūoro were also vehicles of entertainment, and this aspect is the focus of the book – however, as we have so often noticed when performing, these instruments also convey a spiritual dimension that transcends the sounds they can create, which is an essential part of appreciating their value.

Today, instrument materials that are endangered, extinct or no longer appropriate are being substituted by newly adopted children of the natural world. For instance, we make bone kōauau from ostrich to replicate the extinct moa, and deer or emu bones are substituted for human bones.



This kōauau is carved from a moa leg bone. It is a carved lizard design inspired by traditional human bone kōauau held in the British Museum.

**Te Uira** is a 'simple' percussive whalebone pākuru, but playing techniques for this instrument are so complex that many of their intricacies are, for now, lost.



Mauri Tirikātene is playing his pūtōrino in the style he was taught as a youth.

Richard Nunns

The most commonly heard instruments are the flutes and a wide variety of styles are made in a wide range of materials. All instruments are seen as individuals and so naturally have different voices, but these differences are kept within the boundaries of their family's origins. Innovation that crosses these boundaries is strongly discouraged as it could contravene the natural order of things as set down by the gods, and marked by the Pou Tiri Ao, or guardian posts.

Traditionally all tunes were intended to complement words: the instruments were not used just to make musical sounds. There are many references to the words being breathed into the music of a number of the instruments and several legends tell of listeners being given secret messages through their playing. There are many mysteries locked within all these instruments. Along with entertainment their uses in healing, sending messages, opening and closing life's doors and in other significant ceremonies are still practised.

It is important to understand that the Māori did not use a musical scale of semitones or have a set scale. They compressed their scale into microtones of such subtlety that many early Western observers failed to appreciate it. The

method of blowing the flutes allows adaptability to adjust the pitch with small movements of the tongue and lips. Therefore it is often unnecessary to create instruments to a set pitch, though attaining an approximate pitch suited to a song is advisable where the flute is accompanying a singer. Several instruments have soft, private voices suitable for playing in the confines of the small whare, or houses. Others have louder voices for use in a large meeting house or even for sending messages outdoors.

In 1807 it was noted that 'every man was his own musician' and with such small and portable instruments 'they were never at a loss for entertainment'.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the use of these traditional instruments declined. Some became children's toys, and some were hidden away or destroyed because they were deemed too precious and special to be denigrated. Some are retained by the families of their owners and others were sold to collectors or given as special taonga to mark momentous events. Sadly, some playing techniques are now lost, even for the 'simple' instruments such as the percussive pākuru.

The greatest decline was probably through the double pressures of, first, missionaries and teachers who discouraged the use of the instruments because they did not understand them (or understood their spiritual nature all too well), and, second, the appeal of newly introduced European instruments. These often even took on traditional names so that a saxophone or clarinet could be called a kōauau.

Because musical instruments were taonga they were well made and thus very collectable. This was strikingly evident when we visited the British Museum in London where they have more pūtōrino in their collection than in all the museums in New Zealand.

Only a handful of old recordings were made, mostly on wax cylinders. The only known later recordings were of Mrs Paeroa Wineera, and a few items from this treasure are available on a CD, *Traditional Music of the Māori*.<sup>4</sup> Careful listening reveals her method of 'singing' the words into her kōauau. These sounds, along with old songs that were known to be used with the instruments, are a valuable guide to the revival process. Even the earliest recordings, however, were of players who had become attuned to the Western musical scale and so are not a true guide to the ancient music. Ancient musicians are known to have taken inspiration from natural sounds; accordingly, these natural sounds and the voices the instruments are able to produce have been important in the revival process.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a revival of the instrumental traditions by a number of individuals, notably Joe Malcolm and Donna Hall. In 1985, under the umbrella of Ngā Puna Waihangā, the Māori Artists and Writers Organisation, the late Ivan Ehai organised the first major workshop on kōauau and pūtōrino making and playing at Te Araroa, with Joe Malcolm as its kaumātua or elder consultant.

Fortunately another kaumātua, Mauri Tirikātene, was present, as he had been taught to play the pūtōrino when a boy in the Whanganui area and was able to pass on his expert guidance. Both Richard Nunns and I were workshop tutors at this wānanga, and this is where we first met Hirini, who was one of those making their first instrument. So began our friendship and partnership.

Since then a great number of wānanga have been held on marae throughout the country. This has led to the collection of a considerable body of new information from many elders throughout Aotearoa who were able to correct and modify what had been gleaned from books and museums, and even bring to light hitherto unrecorded instruments. Interestingly, it was often only after hearing the sounds of the instruments that many old people rediscovered forgotten memories. These pieces of information have been the key to rebuilding the traditions and our sincere thanks go to all those who have shared their knowledge.

Many individuals have retained pockets of knowledge that sometimes resurface when their time is right or are kept precious within trusted family circles awaiting their time. It is always exciting to be able to add these to the basket of Taonga Pūoro knowledge and I look forward to gaining more of these to share with those who wish to learn.

This book uses the most common of a range of names that have been collected for most instruments. They are not comprehensive but are intended as a beginning so that more people can share the entrancing experience and lifelong interest that these singing treasures offer. And, like many of those involved in this revival, they may find their lives much enhanced by their magic.

#### TAKU PŪTŌRINO

*Taku Pūtōrino  
Nō wai rā ngā ngutu  
Hai whakapā ki ōu  
hai puhi i te hauora  
kia rangonahia ai anō tō reo?*

*Kai te rongō mai koe  
E Hīneraukatauri  
Te puhi o te tangi  
Hotuhotu mokemoke  
O ngā mōteatea.*

Hirini Melbourne\* @

Raukatauri,  
Whose breath  
could bring you life  
And make you sing again?



University of Waikato

Hirini Melbourne playing a double pūtōrino named **Amokura**, which was made to hold the amokura feather between its two surrounding chambers.