



Te Ara Puoro

A journey into the world of Maori music

Richard Nunns with Allan Thomas

One of the largely unseen consequences of the European colonisation of Aotearoa was that the playing of, and knowledge about the traditional musical instruments of the Maori almost completely disappeared. In the 1970s a young Pakeha schoolteacher, Richard Nunns, started asking questions of his Maori friends about these instruments, which sparked a 40-year journey of rediscovery. Over that time Richard has become internationally recognised as the leading figure in the revival of taonga puoro, alongside the late Hirini Melbourne, educator and musician, and Brian Flintoff, master carver and instrument maker.

Te Ara Puoro tells the story of Richard's remarkable journey; of how fragments of knowledge given by elders were pieced together through countless presentations and performances on marae the length and breadth of the

country; of how the instruments were re-created and developed; and of how he subsequently mastered their playing. The book gathers together an enormous amount of the current knowledge about taonga puoro, and will undoubtedly be the most important written resource in existence on the subject. It also charts the many other paths that Richard has taken with the music, including the huge variety of recordings he has done, his sound-track work, and his playing in other genres, such as free jazz and classical.

This is a remarkable and important story. Lavishly illustrated with photographs of the instruments, this book will be essential reading for anyone interested in Maori culture.

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Author information

Richard Nunns was born in Napier, and spent most of his career as a high-school English teacher. Over the last decade he has played and researched taonga puoro full-time, giving a huge number of traditional performances and presentations all over the world, while also performing with taonga puoro in many other non-traditional situations, including free jazz and in the classical world, most notably with the New Zealand String Quartet. He has received numerous awards and accolades for his work, including an Arts Foundation Laureate, and an Honorary Doctorate in Music from Victoria University. He lives in Nelson.

Allan Thomas (1942-2010) was a Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology at Victoria University for over 30 years. A specialist in music from many different parts of the world, he was also very interested in traditional Maori music, and played a key role in helping Richard Nunns develop the manuscript that became **Te Ara Puoro**.



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