

Bunggridj-bunggridj: *Wangga* Songs by Alan Maralung • Northern Australia



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Bunggridj-bunggridj: Wangga Songs by
Alan Maralung • Northern Australia

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. New Song 3:38 | 5. Jabiru 4:59 |
| 2. Bushfire 3:19 | 6. Brolga 6:03 |
| 3. Ibis 5:39 | 7. Garranan 6:21 |
| 4. Green Frog 8:52 | 8. Minmin Light 8:30 |

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Playing time 47:21

*Recordings and Photos Allan Marett;
Commentary: Allan Marett and Linda Barwick*

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Alan Maralung's *didjeridu*-accompanied songs, named after the spirit from which he learned them, are the creation of a great Aboriginal composer/performer. A 44 page booklet provides extensive notes about Maralung, the Wangga genre, and the music on these 1988 recordings.



Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings
Center for Folklife Programs &
Cultural Studies
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600
Smithsonian Institution
Washington DC 20560

THE WORLD'S MUSICAL TRADITIONS 4

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No special thematic limits have been set for this compact disc series. Each issue centers on those forms of traditional music that have been the subject of musicological research and is accompanied by an extensive scholarly commentary of an ethnomusicologist who deals with the particular subject matter from the point of view of her or his primary experience in the field. Each issue contains a description of the music of a certain region, of a particular type of ensemble, of an individual musician or of a musical genre. The content of a disc refers to rural, urban or popular aspects of the music concerned including both oral and written traditions. Taking any one traditional musical culture as a whole, a compact disc may present autochthonous, acculturated and transformed genres, folk music as well as art music. The musical examples and the information given in the booklet aim at providing a deeper insight into both general as well as particular aspects of musical cultures, explaining, for example, the imbedding of musical traditions in a certain sociocultural context, the role of these traditions in a changing (musical) world and their function as a mean of musical self-expression.

BUNGGRIDJ-BUNGGRIDJ:

WANGGA SONGS FROM NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

BY ALAN MARALUNG

Sung by Alan Maralung, accompanied by Peter Manaberu (*didjeridu*)
Recorded by Allan Marett, mixed by Allan Marett and Paddy Naughton
Notes by Allan Marett and Linda Barwick

INTRODUCTION

This recording presents a set of songs that Alan Maralung refers to as “Bunggridj-bunggridj” after the spirit who gave him most of the songs. These songs belong to a genre of *didjeridu*-accompanied songs widely performed in northwest Australia and known most commonly as *wangga* (though Maralung uses the Ngalkbon term, “*walaka*”). Although once renowned as a songman, Maralung has in recent years been inactive as a singer owing to a serious chest illness. He has nevertheless continued to “compose” new songs. His songs involve a

far higher degree of improvisation than is usually found in *wangga* today; the musical and intellectual skills displayed by Maralung as he manipulates the musical and textual materials are probably unique and may well represent the last manifestation of an older tradition of *wangga* singing. This CD is an edited version of a recording made in November 1988 for the purpose of documenting his current repertory of eight songs, and with the agreed intention of preparing an edited version of the song session for publication. A monograph in preparation will discuss a number of *wangga* (including Maralung's Bunggridj-bunggridj) in more detail than is possible in notes such as these.

Wangga are individually-owned dance songs accompanied by *didjeridu* and performed publicly in both ceremonial and non-ceremonial contexts by Aborigines of northwest Australia. The major centres of the *wangga* tradition are the country in the vicinity of the Moyle and Daly Rivers, the Barunga area and the eastern Kimberleys, although performances may be encountered in other areas of northern Australia. The map (Fig. 1) shows the major locations where *wangga* have been recorded in recent years.

Wangga are normally sung by one or two men accompanying themselves on clapsticks while another performer plays the *didjeridu*, a wooden trumpet fashioned from a branch hollowed out by termites. *Wangga* are received in dreams from spirits, although in some cases singers claim to have composed songs without spirit intervention. In order to be considered a songman, a singer must either receive or compose songs himself, or have inherited songs, usually from his father.

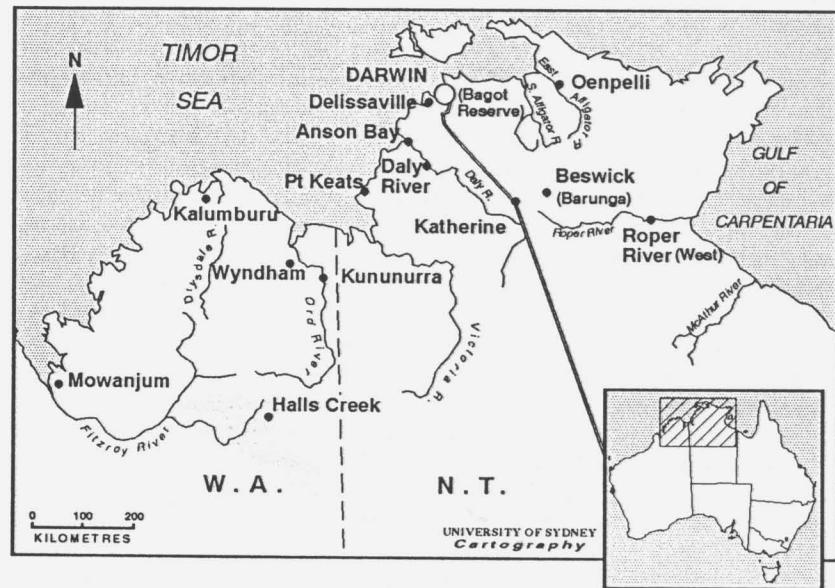


Fig. 1. Map showing the locations where *wangga* have been recorded; as per Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies catalogue

The principal performance occasions are circumcision ceremonies (at which men, women and children are present) and ceremonies for the purification of dead people's belongings by smoking. The versatility of *wangga* is one of its features; songs and dances may nowadays also be performed for a wide variety of quasi-ceremonial occasions: the opening of public buildings such as arts and craft centres or licensed clubs; college graduation ceremonies; arts festivals or eisteddfods, as well as for entertainment. A prominent feature of the genre is the spectacular dance-style that is the source of its widespread popularity.

There are two other major genres of *didjeridu*-accompanied songs in northern Australia, namely *bunggurl* and *lirrga*. *Bunggurl* (also referred to as *manikai*) are song series owned by clans in central and northeast Arnhem land and are musically quite distinct from *wangga*; *lirrga* (also known as *gunborrg*) are individually owned like *wangga* and are musically similar to them. *Wangga* and *lirrga* are frequently performed together in ceremonies.

As stated above, improvisation does not usually play a major role in *wangga*. If it were not for Maralung's songs, one might have concluded that a lack of improvisation is a feature that distinguishes *wangga* from *bunggurl*, which are characterised by the incorporation of improvisatory elements in their performances (Clunies Ross & Wild 1984, Anderson 1985). The ways in which Maralung manipulates text and melody are, however, quite distinct from those found in *bunggurl*. The framework within which improvisation occurs will be discussed more fully below under the heading "Analysis".

Many of the *wangga* from the Daly/Moyle region exhibit texts that discuss everyday or semi-mythological events in a style of language

closely related to that of normal speech. The texts of Maralung's songs, on the other hand, contain virtually no ordinary language words. Rather, they contain a high proportion of special song words (to which meaning may at times be attributed) and apparently meaningless vocables that appear to exist primarily as a vehicle for the articulation of rhythms and other elements of form (see further below).

In November 1988, Maralung expressed a desire to make a recording of the songs in his current repertory. On 14 November he began recording the set of songs with Jack Chadum, his "number one bambu man" (*didjeridu* player). After recording Ibis, Green Frog, Jabiru and Brolga Maralung became ill and was unable to continue. On 25 November another recording was made in which all the songs were recorded. In the absence of Jack Chadum, Peter Manaberu agreed to play the *didjeridu* and made a new *didjeridu* especially for the recording, which was made at Number Three Springs some distance from Barunga. It is this second recording that provides the material on this CD.

In editing this CD from the original field tape, roughly one third of the song items have been omitted. In most cases this is because they were marred by extra-musical intrusions such as the singer's coughing fits; even so, a number of song items included in the recording still contain coughs and spits. The proportion of song items per song-subject group has been kept roughly the same as in the original performance; thus of eleven song items of Minmin Light sung in the original performance, five are included here; of four verses of New Song, two are included. There are a number of extraneous sounds on the recording that require explanation: at the end of some songs, the *didjeridu* player can be heard blowing water through the *didjeridu* (in

order to seal the wood and improve the sound); he also taps the mouthpiece of the *didjeridu* in order to smooth out the wax that forms the mouthpiece and in the course of the performance his intakes of breath through the nose can frequently be clearly heard.

Alan Maralung

Alan Maralung (cf. photo on back cover) was born at Maranboy in about 1925 and died in Barunga in 1990; at the time of this recording therefore he was about 63 years old. His name, Maralung, was taken from his conception site on Flying Fox Creek some miles to the northeast of Barunga. He was also known as Barney, and because for many years he worked as a painter, he was sometimes referred to as Alan (or Barney) Painter. Maralung spoke both Ngalkbon and Jawoyn and was the senior member of the Bunno (Nabunno) clan whose clan lands lie to the east of Barunga.

Maralung received songs from two spirits (*wahru*), Bunggridj-bunggridj, a small bird tentatively identified as a shrike tit, and Balandjirri, the ghost of a deceased songman (cf. cover). There is a degree of mystery about the relationship between these two spirits and their history. Maralung recounted that many years ago when he was exorcising a young man, he made contact with a spirit who from that time appeared to him, often but not always in dreams, and gave him songs. While it is difficult to reconstruct the early history of Maralung's role in ceremonial life, we know that he participated in and performed at circumcision ceremonies, at times with Wadaman and Djamindjung people from the Victoria River area. For example, there

are references to Maralung in La Mont West's field notes of 1961, which state with regard to a recording made in 1961:

Barney Alan Maralung, 36, Dalabon [Ngalkbon] and Djawany [Jawoyn] languages, sings his own composed songs during a dance by his own semi-professional troupe at his home camp ... west of the west fork, Beswick Creek... Unlike his rival song leader, Jolly Laywonga [a singer of *gunborrg/lirrga*], [Maralung] is not also a virtuoso dancer, *didjeridu* player and choreographer. The dance movements and group pattern are sometimes suggested by [Maralung], but he dances no elaborate solo to his own music like Jolly and the group choreography for his troupe is provided by one of the troupe. Nor does Alan have a large number of highly competent second string song assistants and *didjeridu* players (West 1961-2:88).

Again, discussing a recording made in January 1962, West wrote:

[Maralung] has his own troupe of dancers, but rarely performed in 1961-2 and his cycle of songs seems to be less popular at Beswick than the Bungalin-bungalin dream-composed Gunborg [*lirrga*] style cycle of his rival Jolly Laywonga (West 1961-2:108).

Some of West's recordings of Maralung made in 1961-2 are included in the recording *Arnhem Land Popular Classics* (West 1963).

At the time of the present recording, ceremonies using *wangga* had not been performed for many years in the Barunga area. Maralung no longer had a dance troupe and he was frequently too ill to perform. The performance from which the songs on this CD are drawn—a song session lasting 90 minutes—was a rare event. Although Maralung was

no longer active as a songman he continued to receive songs from his two spirits Bunggridj-bunggridj and Balandjirri. It is clear that Marett's enthusiasm for Maralung's songs and his appreciation of the extraordinary skill that went into their performance played a significant role in stimulating Maralung to both perform and compose in recent years. The facts that Maralung was no longer active in the community as a songman, and that performance and (to a lesser extent) composition were stimulated by interaction with a non-Aboriginal musician, in no way diminish the significance of the music. These performances are as valid a response as any to the realities of Aboriginal life in contemporary Australia. Indeed, we regard Maralung's songs as among the most intellectually and musically skilled performances to be heard anywhere in Australia.

Repertory

Unlike *bunggurl* (clan songs, cf. above), which are constituted into series, each of which is owned by a specific group of clans, and which (theoretically at least) contain a fixed number of song subjects (since the set of song-subjects for any series is said to have been handed down in the Dreamtime), sets of *wangga* songs are more difficult to define. In a sense the songs making up a set of *wangga* can be defined only as those songs that are in a singer's repertory at a particular time. So long as a singer is alive and receiving new songs while at the same time discarding others, this set is constantly changing. Once a singer has died, however, the set may become more fixed.

In so far as these are the songs that Maralung chose to have recorded in November 1988, they may be regarded as his then current Bunggridj-bunggridj song-set. This is not to say that they are the only set of Bunggridj-bunggridj songs he knew. In 1986 he sang for Marett a set of songs that he called his "old songs", which he had received in the 1950s. In addition he identified from archival recordings a second set of "old songs" recorded by West in 1962. He said that these songs were now "closed" and that he chose not to sing them because they reminded him of deceased friends. In 1986 he sang for me another set of "new songs", which he had received within the previous four or five years while he was living at Jim Jim Creek.

The songs on this recording were all received within the last five years. In chronological order they are:

1. "Jabiru" and "Brolga", received at Jim Jim Creek in about 1983 or 1984. As is frequently the case with songs received when Marett was not present, little information could be obtained by him about the circumstances of their composition.
2. "Garranan" and "Minmin Light" were received from Bunggridj-bunggridj and Balandjirri respectively during 1986. Alan Maralung's account of their creation is included below under "Song Creation". Both songs have undergone significant changes since 1986 (cf. further Marett 1992).
3. "Bushfire", "Ibis" and "Green Frog" were received between August 1986 (when Marett left Barunga) and March 1988 (when he returned). It has not been possible to ascertain the circumstances of their composition.

4. "New Song" was received within two days of this performance. It is discussed further below under "Song Creation".

In Maralung's performance, the songs in each of the four groups (1. Jabiru, Brolga; 2. Garranan, Minmin Light; 3. Bushfire, Ibis, Green Frog; 4. New Song) are kept together. In general, the performance begins with the most recent groups and proceeds to the older songs except that Jabiru/Brolga precede Garranan/Minmin Light. The probable reason for this was a desire to finish the performance with Minmin Light, which had been received shortly after Maralung and Marett first met. For this reason, and because it had been extensively performed and discussed in the course of their relationship, Minmin Light held particular significance for them both.

Song Creation

The receipt of songs by individuals from spirits or "devils", frequently when the receiver is in a state of heightened awareness or dreaming, has been widely discussed in the literature on Aboriginal music (cf. further Elkin 1953: 92-4; A. Moyle 1974: xi; Wild 1987: 109-12; Keogh 1989: 3 and R. Moyle 1986: 132-4). The two most detailed accounts given by Maralung of song creation refer to the songs Minmin Light and Garranan (the former is discussed more fully in Marett 1987). In addition Marett was present at the time Maralung received New Song and recorded the following in his field notes:

This session includes a new song which Alan says has no name yet because Balandjirri hasn't told him yet. I heard him rehearsing

fragments of the song on the previous day when I was sitting in his camp. He was simply arranging the melodic material in different ways *sotto voce*. When we were going down to Number Three Springs to make the recording Alan told me he didn't yet have the song straight. Nevertheless, it was the first song he sang.

Maralung also refers to this in the spoken introduction to New Song on this recording. The following are Maralung's accounts of the creation of Minmin Light and Garranan.

Minmin Light

It came from the west that Minmin Light. Yeah it came up close. Like, you know, I saw it. I thought, oh, this might be a debil-debil coming up. I was asleep then. I was watching. Balandjirri said, "Boy, are you asleep? I'm coming into your camp. Bunggridj-bunggridj and I are coming." Then both of them came to me.

"Get up," said Balandjirri. "Come here. We're going to sing for you. We're going to show you a song." Well, Balandjirri and that *didjeridu* player [Balandjirri's son, Narolga] showed me that song. He looked at that light and then followed it. It was Balandjirri who made me know. When that light appeared he followed it himself. It was dangerous because that other debil-debil, the Minmin light, was then at the same place that he had gone to. He got that song then. He got it from there for sure.

Then he came to me and said, "Boy, you listen. You might be frightened. Are you asleep?" "Come here," I said, "I can see you."

"Well," he said, "we've got to show you this song, Minmin Light." "You show yourself now. Come here and sing to me," I said. This is how he got those...what do you call them...corroboree sticks. They were about two feet long. They just appeared there. He got them all of a sudden. He split that cloud. They were enormous those corroboree sticks.

That *didjeridu* player, he sat down. There were two men. Balandjirri called the *didjeridu* player "son." It wasn't a short *didjeridu*. It was enormous. Really long. And he played that *didjeridu* right there for me.

Well, he went back from there then. Yeah, he went back. "Don't lose this song," he said. "Well boy," he said to the *didjeridu* player, "I'll take you back now." "All right," I said. "Bye-bye," he said. "Don't you lose it. You keep this one. I sang this *wangga* for you. It's yours."

Garranan

Bunggridj-bunggridj met the night-owl, Mukmuk. He asked him: "What's your name?"

"I'm Mukmuk, I'm Garranan," he said. "Oh yeah, that's your name eh," said Bunggridj-bunggridj. "Yeah, that's my name," he said. "Oh, so your name's Mukmuk." "Yeah my name's Mukmuk," he said. Then Mukmuk said to Bunggridj-bunggridj, "Call me Garranan."

Now all the time he was asking, Bunggridj-bunggridj knew this. He was thinking all the time, "I'm going to teach him that song."

Well he said, "I'm Bunggridj-bunggridj." "Ah, so you're Bunggridj-bunggridj," said Mukmuk. "Yeah. Have you got a song?" "No." "Ah, then I'll give you a song," and he gave him this song. [sings] He called up this song for Garranan.

ANALYSIS

Although Alan Maralung performs everything in his repertory with an apparently great degree of freedom (no two song items within a single song-subject group are ever constructed in exactly the same way), it is possible to identify a number of melodic and textual frameworks and formulae that recur throughout the singer's repertory. To help the listener unfamiliar with this sort of music, we have included a full textual transcription of the first song item in each song-subject group, including the introductory comments made by the singer in Kriol or English at the time of the recording (see below under "Song Text"). The listener should bear in mind, however, that the second and subsequent items will be differently constructed. The transcription is headed by the main text recurring in all song items of the particular song-subject (see further below under "Main Text"); the precise rhythmic setting of the Main Text will vary from its occurrence to occurrence. We discuss below some of the most important structural elements recurring in Maralung's repertory, in the hope that this will help the listener to appreciate some of the ways in which the singer "plays" with his material in the course of a performance.

Large-scale framework

All song items consist of the same basic structure of stretches of singing (usually three) alternating with *didjeridu* interludes. There are cueing formulae for signalling the beginning and end of *didjeridu* interludes and the end of the item. Either voice or *didjeridu* may start an item. There are two basic arrangements of stick beating: in the first two song-subject groups (New Song and Bushfire) the sticks enter after the first stretch of singing and continue to the end of the item, while in all the rest (Ibis, Green Frog, Jabiru, Brolga, Garranan and Minmin Light) the sticks sound only in the *didjeridu* interludes. As the structure of this latter category is clearer, it will be discussed first.

Construction of Ibis, Green Frog, Jabiru, Brolga, Garranan and Minmin Light

Song items of all six song-subjects in this category display the same basic organisation; they are organised into a number of sections, usually three (these are marked with arabic numerals in the texts), each of which may be further subdivided into a) a passage of singing accompanied by *didjeridu* but without stick-beat accompaniment (marked "a" in the texts) and b) a passage where the singer ceases to sing but the sticks and *didjeridu* continue (marked "b" in the text). Thus sticks are absent from the vocal subsections (during which the metrical pulse is articulated by the *didjeridu*) and enter only after the voice has ceased. While the instrumental subsections are always in duple metre, the vocal subsections are in a variety of metres, which may involve the

singer articulating either duple or triple subdivisions of the underlying *didjeridu* pulse (see rhythmic transcriptions of the Main Text for each song-subject). That is to say, there is sometimes a change of metre between the vocal and instrumental subsections.

The division into vocal and instrumental subsections may be regarded as typical of *wangga* as a genre. In danced performances, dancers move freely during the vocal subsections, that is, with little regard to the metrical pulse of the music, often engaging in some sort of mime related to the subject of the song. Then the singing stops and the *didjeridu* and stick passage begins; now the dancers begin to move rhythmically, executing a series of stamping movements in time with the music. The only song-subject in this collection that Marett has seen danced is Minmin Light and this only in an informal context. During the vocal subsections the dancers walked about in an attitude of fear or awe, turning their faces to the sky and shielding their eyes from the glare of the Minmin light; during the instrumental subsections they executed the stamping motions typical of *wangga*.

The beginning of the instrumental subsection is marked by an instrumental and/or vocal cue (Fig. 2). In song items where the vocal section is in duple metre the sticks play formula 1; in song items where it is in triple metre the sticks play formula 2. This is frequently preceded by a vocal cue, usually performed as a neutral vowel (transcribed here as 'e'), sung either two beats (in duple metres) or three beats (in triple metres) before the stick formula. The sticks and *didjeridu* then continue for a number of measures, during which the singer may intone the burden syllables *di di di* on the tonic, before the singer marks the end of the subsection with a particular pattern on the sticks. In all

but the final subsection of each song item, the end of the stick and *didjeridu* passage is marked with formula 3, which may coincide with or be slightly preceded by a vocal cue, usually the syllable 'e'. The final instrumental subsection of any verse concludes with special formulae: during the final measures the singer may give a series of grunts (transcribed as 'e'), frequently on the off beat just before the *didjeridu* ceases. This may be a cue to the *didjeridu* player that he can begin his

<p>Formula 1</p>	<p>Formula 4</p>
<p>Formula 2</p>	<p>Formula 5</p>
<p>Formula 3</p>	

Fig. 2. Rhythmic formulae played on sticks

closing formulae, a series of specially patterned figurations, after which the *didjeridu* stops. The singer then plays a closing formula on the sticks (formula 4), the first beat of which occurs on the *didjeridu*'s last note; at the same time he frequently hums quietly or sings the word *ngagan* (finish) on a note between a tone and a semitone below the pitch of the *didjeridu* drone. In each song-subject group except Minmin Light, the ends of song items may be marked by Maralung intoning the words *bunggridj bunggridj* twice, with the first syllable of each *bunggridj* marked by a stick beat; the whole formula is preceded by sticks alone playing formula 5. In some cases the figure may be truncated. For certain subjects (Ibis, Green Frog, Brolga, Garranan) each song item in the song-subject group is concluded with the intoned *bunggridj bunggridj* formula; in other subjects (New Song, Jabiru) only the final song item of the group is followed by the intoned formula. Of the twelve song items of Minmin Light in the original recording, two (neither of which are included on this recording) were concluded with the *bunggridj bunggridj* formula. This is contrary to normal practice however and directly contradicts what Maralung told Marett, namely that he didn't use the intoned *bunggridj bunggridj* formula with Minmin Light because he received it not from Bunggridj-bunggridj but from Balandjirri.

Construction of New Song and Bushfire

The construction of New Song and Bushfire is slightly different from that of the other song-subjects discussed above. Instead of being

composed of vocal subsections with *didjeridu* accompaniment alternating with subsections of stick and *didjeridu*, song items begin with a stretch of singing with *didjeridu* accompaniment, proceed to a passage of stick and *didjeridu* (up to this point the structure resembles that of other song-subjects) but then the sticks continue through the next vocal subsection until the end of the item. Not only is the vocal/instrumental subsection structure not articulated by the dropping out of the sticks in the vocal sections, but instrumental sections are not as clearly articulated by cues, making it difficult to be sure whether a passage of stick and *didjeridu* should be regarded as an instrumental subsection or as a short interlude within the vocal section (see further below). For this reason subsections are not marked in the texts for these song-subjects. In New Song and Bushfire, it is only when the sticks first enter after the opening vocal passage that a cue regularly appears (formula 3 on the sticks—used elsewhere as a closing formula). No subsequent instrumental passages are cued in this way. Nor are the ends of instrumental passages consistently cued, although formula 3 sometimes occurs at or just before the beginning of a new vocal section. The significantly lesser degree of articulation of instrumental passages leads to a greater formal ambiguity than is found in the other category of song-subjects. It is possible that the type of formal arrangement described for New Song and Bushfire implies a different dance structure; since, however, Marett has never seen these subjects danced it is impossible to speculate further.

Vocal Material

Vocal sections are variable in composition, although there may be some tendency to “settle” in to a particular structure in the course of several song items (this tendency is apparent in Jabiru and Brolga). On the other hand, once a particular framework is established, the singer may “play around” with it, creating ever more outrageous divergences (e.g. Green Frog).

All vocal subsections consist of two main textual elements: the “Main Text” (a fixed text string peculiar to each song-subject, usually special song words, set always to more or less the same rhythm); and more rhythmically varied “vocal material”, consisting mainly of meaningless vocables (*a, nga, na, ya*, etc.) but also including various “commentary” formulae (see further below under “Vocal material”). With few exceptions, the same basic vocal material is shared between all song-subjects. In the textual transcriptions the Main Text is shown in bold, while vocal material is shown in italics.

Vocal subsections are melodically segmented into a number of descents (one to four) separated by short *didjeridu* interludes (in all but New Song and Bushfire these interludes cannot be confused with instrumental subsections because of the cueing in the latter). Each descent may be thought of as being in two parts (Fig. 3). If we take the *didjeridu* note as C, the first part of the descent explores the five notes descending from B a seventh above the drone through A, G and F# to E, while the second part explores the series descending from E to the lower C (the singer frequently concludes the descent on D).

This is not to say that the singer is confined to the notes outlined above: he frequently adds notes (C, C#, D) above the B, and at times appears to deliberately play with the series, replacing the G with a G#, or A with A#. The latter substitution produces an augmented fourth above the cadence onto E, reflecting the augmented fourth from F# to the drone on C that gives the series its distinctive quality (in modal terms it represents a Lydian series). Similarly the lower part of the descent may include notes above or outside the range. The ends of descents are marked in the text transcriptions by a double bar line (||).

Descents may be classified into those including a statement of the Main Text, and those including only vocable material. In "Main Text



Fig. 3. Melodic composition of vocal subsections

descents", the Main Text itself (sometimes repeated or truncated; see below under "Main Text") is always sung to the first part of the descent, cadencing almost invariably on E. The exposition(s) of the Main Text are, in a small number of cases, preceded by vocable material, usually a melisma sung over one syllable. The second, lower, part of the Main Text descent is invariably sung to vocable material. "Vocable descents" consist almost always of the syllables *nga ga na ya* (or similar) over the first part of the descent, while the second part of the descent is articulated using similar vocable material to that used at the end of Main Text descents (see further below under "Vocable material").

Main Text

To make the Main Text easier to identify while listening to the songs, an indication of its relatively fixed rhythmic articulation is included under the text; in performance this rhythm is treated with a degree of freedom. In only a few cases could Marett obtain specific glosses for words in the Main Texts, which apparently consist of special song words rather than Ngalkbon language words. For transcription of these texts we have adapted the practical orthography used for Jawoyn, since no currently accepted orthography exists for Ngalkbon. There is some variation in phonetic realisation of the Main Text, dependent in part on whether it is presented towards the beginning or the end of an exhalation (some consonants, such as "rr", are more clearly articulated at the beginning of a vocalisation, while others, such as "m", are more clearly articulated with the relaxation of breath

pressure towards the end of a vocalised phrase). For ease of reading and to highlight the textual structure, such details of phonetic variation have been omitted from the textual transcriptions, and we have divided the fixed syllable strings making up the text lines into words on the basis of information from the performer, repetitions of syllable strings (e.g. *andegarrana* in Bushfire), and the occurrence of certain syllable strings in more than one song-subject or in more than one position within a text (e.g. *gama*, which recurs in Ibis, Jabiru and Brolga). All song-subjects except Minmin Light include repeated words within one statement of the Main Text.

New Song, Bushfire, Ibis, Green Frog and Minmin Light have only one text phrase in the Main Text, which may be consecutively repeated up to five times within one descent. Jabiru, Brolga and Garranan, on the other hand, have more complex Main Texts consisting of more than one text phrase. These Main Texts are never repeated within a descent, and there is rarely more than one Main Text descent presented within a vocal subsection. Jabiru and Brolga each have a basic three-phrase Main Text, although in early items of Brolga there is sometimes another phrase (from Jabiru, which immediately precedes Brolga) interpolated between the first and second text phrases. Garranan's text composition is unlike any other. It consists of two phrases, the first of which is optionally repeated up to four times.

In all song-subjects, Main Text phrases may be preceded by an anacrusis (usually on the syllable *ga*) and truncation by several syllables may occur. Both these features are relatively rare within the multiple-phrase Main Texts of Jabiru and Brolga except for anacrusis before the first phrase of the text. In single-phrase texts and in

Garranan, repeat phrases are most frequently *not* preceded by anacrusis and are more likely to be truncated. For example, in Minmin Light, vocal subsections are frequently composed as follows:

Main Text Descent 1: anacrusis + Main Text (complete)
Main Text (truncated)

Main Text Descent 2: anacrusis + Main Text (complete) + vocable material
anacrusis + Main Text (complete) + vocable material

Vocable Material

The vocable material can be analysed into a number of recurrent formulae, some of which occur only over part one of the descent, and others only over part two (Fig. 4).

All of these formulae except 1 and 4 may be preceded by an anacrusis on the syllable *ga*. When 1 and 2 occur consecutively, the latter formula may extend into part two of the descent; this happens rarely, however, as 1 occurs most frequently in Main Text descents. Most vocable formulae appear to be meaningless syllable strings composed of the syllables *a*, *ga*, *nga*, *na* and *ya*, which have been transcribed as discrete single-syllable words. There are four formulae that include meaningful words: two of these, 3a and 3b, include reference to Bunggridj-bunggridj. The other two "commentary" formulae (6 and 7), which occur only in Green Frog, consist of the

English/Kriol words *djom djom* (jump jump) and the place name *narrindji*; these comment on characteristics associated with the song subject. The distribution of vocable formulae in all items performed by Maralung in this session (not all of which are included on the present recording) is shown in Fig. 4. The category "other" includes instances of both meaningless vocable material and spoken commentary.

A number of distributional features emerge from Fig. 4, not all of which we are yet in a position to explain. We have already dealt with the restriction of 6 and 7 to Green Frog. Formula 5, (*ga*) *ya ya*, occurs not at all in Ibis, and only once in Garranan (for reasons as yet unknown), but is by far the most common formula used in Minmin Light. The predominance of 5 in Minmin Light is apparently related to the relative lack of the formulae 3a and 3b, which refer to Bunggridj-bunggridj (the two Minmin Light song items containing 3a and 3b, one of which also includes the intoned *bunggridj bunggridj* ending formula, have been omitted from the present recording). As already mentioned, any appearance of formulae naming Bunggridj-bunggridj in Minmin Light is anomalous, since Maralung received the song not from Bunggridj-bunggridj but from Balandjirri. Another as yet unexplained distributional peculiarity concerns the relative frequency of the two formulae 3a and 3b in Garranan. It will be noted that in all other song-subjects the frequency of 3a is always either equal to or greater than 3b. This situation is reversed in Garranan.

	Vocable formulae occurring over part one of descent		Vocable formulae occurring over part two of descent						other
	1	2	3a	3b	4	5	6	7	
New Song	5	9	5	6	7	4	-	-	-
Bushfire	5	8	6	6	10	7	-	-	2
Ibis	7	11	5	19	9	-	-	-	3
Green Frog	11	25	2	14	17	7	24	16	2
Jabiru	5	16	4	8	11	2	-	-	-
Brolga	10	31	7	15	25	7	-	-	5
Garranan	5	17	15	6	17	1	-	-	-
Minmin Light	6	20	1	2	19	61	-	-	9

Vocable formulae occurring over part one of descent

1. extended melisma over one vowel (transcribed, for example, as e--)

2. *nga ga na ya* (or similar)

Vocable formulae occurring over part two of descent

3a. *bunggridj ya ya*

4. *ya ga ga*

7. *narrindji*

3b. *bunggridj bunggridj*

5. *ya ya*

6. *djom djom*

Fig. 4. Distribution of vocable formulae in the sample

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SONG TEXTS

1. "New Song" (two performances)

Main Text:



Textual transcription of first performance

'Serbatjim ai bin djingim yu eh, nu djong tharrun. Ai maitbi gubit yu neim bainbai. Jeya im im gibitimi balandjirri bainbai.

[It's the first time I've sung it for you, new song that one. I might give you the name by and by. That Balandjirri will give it to me by and by.]

a ga nga ya ga
 rranya rranagama rranagama
 rranya rranagama rra
 rranya rranagama rranagama ga bunggridj bunggridj ya ya | |

(sticks enter and continue to end)

ga rranya rranagama rranagama
 rranya rranagama rranagama
 rranya rranagama rrana
 rranya rranagama rranagama ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
 a ga na ya
 ga rranya rranagama rranagama ga bunggridj ya ya | |
 e --- a ga ga na ya ya ga ga | |

i di di di (throaty)

a--- ga rranya rranagama rranagama
 rranya rranagama
 ga rranya rranagama rranagama ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
 a ga na ya ya ga ga | |

di di di di di di di [di di di di] (didjeridu stops)
 mm (sticks stop)

2. "Bushfire" (two performances)

Main Text:



Textual transcription of first performance

Dijan old jong, dijan iya -- bushfire
[This one's an old song -- bushfire]

ga andegarrana andegarran(a)
andegarrana andegarran(a)
andegarrana andegarrana ya ||
a ga na ya ya ga ga ||

(sticks enter and continue to end)

andegarrana andegarran
andegarrana andegarrana ga bunggridj ya ya ||
a nga ga na ya ||
ga andegarrana andegarrana ga bunggridj bunggridj [bunggridj] ||
e --- andegarrana andegarrana ga ya ya ya ga ga ||
andegarrana andegarrana
ga andegarrana andegarrana ga bunggridj ya ya ||
[ganyarrana] andegarrana ga bunggridj [bunggridj] ||
a ga na ya ya ga ga ||

di di di di

ne 'e 'e 'e (didjeridu stops)
mm (sticks stop, then start again for the following)

(intoned) *bunggridj bunggridj bunggridj bunggridj*

3. "Ibis" (three performances)

Main Text:



Textual transcription of first performance

Ibij [Ibis]

- 1 a *e ganarrana ganarrana gama*
ganarrana ga bunggridj ya ya | |
e ganarrana ganarrana gama ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
b 'e (sticks start)
'e (sticks finish)
- 2 a *e ganarrana ganarrana gama*
[ganarrana ganarrana] gama bunggridj ya ya | |
e ganarrana ganarrana gama ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
a ga na ya ya ga ga | |

- b 'e (sticks start)
di di di di di
'e (sticks finish)

- 3 a *e ganarrana ganarrana gama*
ganarrana ganarrana gama ga bunggridj ya ya | |
e ganarrana ganarrana gama ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
a ga na ya ya ga ga | |
b 'e (sticks start)
di di di di
'e (sticks finish) (spoken comment)
- 4 a *e ganarrana ganarrana gama ga ganarrana ga bunggridj*
[bunggridj] | |
a ga na ya ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
e--- e ganarrana ya ganarrana gama ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
b 'e (sticks start)
(spoken interjection)
di di di

ye 'e 'e 'm (*didjeridu* stops)
[ngagan] (sticks stop)
(sticks recommence for the following)

(intoned) *bunggridj bunggridj bunggridj bunggridj*

4. "Green frog" (four performances)

Main Text:



Textual transcription of first performance

[Wal ai jingim] bla yu brog na - grin brog
[Well I'll sing frog for you now, green frog]

- 1 a ngagan a--- a bagang bagang bagang bagang ga djom djom | |
e--- ga bagang bagang bagang bagang ga narrindji djom djom | |
b 'he (sticks start and stop)
- 2 a a bagang bagang bagang bagang ga djom djom narrindji ya ya | |
nga ga na ya ya ga ga | |

- b 'e (sticks start)
'e (sticks stop)

- 3 a bagang bagang bagang bagang
ga bagang bagang bagang bagang
ga bagang bagang bagang bagang ga narrindji djom djom | |
nga ga na ya ya ga ga | |
e --- e a bagang bagang bagang bagang ga narrindji djom djom ya
ga ga | |
b 'e (sticks start)

(didjeridu stops)
(spoken interjection)
(sticks stop, then recommence for the following)

(intoned) bunggridj bunggridj bunggridj bunggridj

5. "Jabiru" (two performances)

Main Text:



Textual transcription of first performance

Jabiru

- 1 a u-- u mm | |
a rromo rromo rromo rromo
rribagana garralany(a)
ga rraya gama garralanya ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
ga ga na ya ya ga ga | |

b 'm (sticks start and stop)

- 2 a ga ga na ya bunggridj bunggridj ya ya | |
ga rromo rromo
rribagana garralanya
ga rraya gama garralanya ga bunggridj [bunggridj] | |
ga ga na ya ya ga ga | |

b 'e (sticks start)

'e (sticks stop)

- 3 a ga ga na ya
ga rromo rromo rromo
ga rribagana garralanya
ga [rra]ya gama garralanya ga bunggridj bunggridj | |
a ga na ya ya ga ga | |

b 'e (sticks start)

(spoken interjection) (sticks stop)

- 4 a ga rromo rromo rromo rromo
rribagana garralanya
ga rraya gama garralanya ga bunggridj ya ya | |
a ga na ya ya ga ga | |

b he' (sticks start)

(spoken interjection)

di di di

'e (didjeridu stops)

(sticks stop)

6. "Brolga" (three performances)

Main Text:

rranya rranya rranya rranya
malany malany birrana gama
rraya gama garrana gama

In early items Maralung sometimes interpolates *rribagana garralanya* (as in Jabiru) between the first and second phrases.

Textual transcription of first performance

Natib kombanyon [Native companion; i.e. brolga]

1 a *ga rranya rranya rranya rrany[a]*
malany malany birrana gama
ga rraya gama garrana gama ga bunggridj ya ya | |
nya ga na ya ya ga ga | |
b 'e (sticks start)
'e (sticks stop)

2 a *ga rranya rranya rranya rranya rranya*
ga malany malany birrana gama
rraya gama garrana gam [a] bunggridj ya ya | |
nga ga na ya ya ga ga | |
b 'e (sticks start)
'e (sticks stop)

3 a *a rranya rranya rranya rranya*
ga malany malany birrana gama
rraya gama garran bunggridj ya ya | |
ga ga na ya ya ga ga | |
e --- a nga ga na ya | |
b *me* (sticks start)

(*didjeridu* stops)

o (sticks stop, and recommence for *bunggridj bunggridj* stick pattern--no words)

7. "Garranan" (three performances)

Main Text:

The musical notation consists of two parts. The first part is in 2/4 time, showing two measures: the first measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth note beamed to another eighth note; the second measure contains a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note. This is followed by a repeat sign. The second part is also in 2/4 time, showing two measures: the first measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth note beamed to another eighth note; the second measure contains a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note, with a '2' above a bracket spanning these two notes, indicating a second ending. Below the first part is the text 'garra-nan garra-nan'. The second part is in 6/8 time, showing a single measure with six eighth notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, an eighth note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Below this is the text '(ga)wa-go wago wago wago'.

Textual transcription of first performance

Wadabat Garranan

[What about Garranan (proper name for a night owl or mukmuk; see further under "Repertory")]

1 a e--- e garranan garranan

ga wago wago wago wago [e] bunggridj [bunggridj] | |

a nga ga na ya ya ga ga | |

b 'e (sticks start)

'e (sticks stop)

2 a a garranan garranan

garranan garranan

ga wago wago wago wago ga bunggridj ya ya | |

ga ga na ya ya ga ga | |

b 'e (sticks start)

'e (sticks stop)

3 a a garranan garranan

garranan garra

e garranan garranan

garranan garra

ga wago wago wago wago [| |]

ga ga na ya ga bunggridj ya ya | |

b 'e (sticks start)

di di di

'e 'e 'm 'm (didjeridu stops)

[ngagan]

(sticks stop, then recommence for the following)

(intoned) bunggridj bunggridj (followed by two more stick beats)

8. "Minmin Light" (five performances)

Main Text:



Djero is said to mean "shadow" in song language, and refers to the shadow cast by the minmin light.

Textual transcription of first performance

Minminlait, balang

[Minmin Light, balang (balang is Allan Marett's "skin" or kinship category name)]

1 a *ga djero ganaga andibarrana*

djero ganaga andiba

ga djero ganaga andibarrana ga ya ya ||

a ga na ya ya ga ga ||

b 'e (sticks start)

'e (sticks stop)

2 a *ga djero ganaga andibarrana*

djero ganaga andiba

ga djero ganaga andibarrana ga ya ya ||

ga ga na ya ya ga ga ||

b 'e (sticks start and stop)

3 a *a djero ganaga andibarrana*

djero ganaga andiba ya ee ||

ga djero ganaga andibarrana ga ya ya ||

nga ga na ya ya ga ga ||

b 'e (sticks start)

i di di

'e 'm 'm 'm 'm (didjeridu stops)

(sticks stop)

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