

Victoria Herche

“Listen to your tribal voice”

Embodying Locality in German-Australian Music Encounters The Case of Peter Maffay and Yothu Yindi

In 1998, German rock musician Peter Maffay founded a music project called ‘Begegnungen’ (encounters) in collaboration with artists from around the globe, including the singers Noa from Israel, Natacha Atlas from Egypt, Lokua Kanza from Congo, American blues musician Sonny Landreth, the rap group Cartel in Turkey, and, what will be the focus of this essay, the Yolngu band Yothu Yindi in Australia. Each of these collaborative ‘encounters’ consisted of a visit of Peter Maffay and his band to the designated country and the subsequent performance and recording of one song together. These recordings, then promoted under the umbrella ‘World music’, culminated in several releases in 1998-1999: the release of the album ‘Begegnungen’, a concert tour around Germany, the release of a film documentation, and the publication of an illustrated travel book.

While each of these encounters focus on tolerance, international solidarity, and transnational exchange (of stories, genre, lyrics, political agendas), it is mainly Peter Maffay, I argue, who engages in a transcultural performance, presenting himself as global body and symbolic contact zone. Especially in the case of the collaboration between Maffay and Yothu Yindi, in their joint tour around Germany and release of the protest song “Tribal Voice”, Maffay engages with Aboriginality as a form of ethnic drag and uses the intercultural encounter as a forum for esoteric and exoticized images. While Yothu Yindi’s traditions and lifestyle are presented as necessarily tied to a specific locality, Peter Maffay’s engagement with ethnicity foregrounds a freely accessible cultural experience ready to be appropriated for a global market.

Both protagonists of the collaboration, Peter Maffay and Yothu Yindi, are known in their home countries for their political activism. In the 50 years of his active career as a musician Peter Maffay has frequently acted as peace activist and agent for numerous aid projects and charity foundations. Maffay considers himself political and also inserts his own political stances into his music.¹ Born in Braşov (then: Kronstadt) in 1949, Romania, as the son of a Transylvanian Saxon mother and Hungarian father, who immigrated to a Bavarian village when he was 14 years old, the fight against discrimination and xenophobia is of personal importance to him: “I commit myself to people who are in need, for minorities, for people who are discriminated against, because I find it atrocious”.² His work as a peace activist has brought him to perform a concert for German troops in

1 See Olaf Neumann: Umweltschützer Peter Maffay.

2 Peter Maffay quoted in Suzanne Cords; my translation. Original: “Ich engagiere mich für die Leute, für die man sich engagieren sollte. Ich engagiere mich für Minoritäten, für Menschen, die man diskriminiert, weil ich das grauenhaft finde”.

Afghanistan in 2005, and he facilitates and donates to projects for traumatized and abused children as part of the Tabaluga foundation. For his social commitment he received the Federal Cross of Merit (*‘Bundesverdienstkreuz’*) in 1996 and 2008 as well as the *‘World Vision Charity Award’* in 2006.³

Yothu Yindi’s front singer M. Yunupingu (1956-2013)⁴ was one of the first university-trained Yolngu educators from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, and has been an influential representative of bicultural education within local Indigenous schools. In 1986 he formed the band Yothu Yindi and achieved national recognition since its release of the song *“Treaty”* in 1991. The band is celebrated for its innovative blend of what Aaron Corn calls *“globalized Anglophone rock”* and traditional Yolngu *‘manikay’* (literally meaning *‘song’*), *“a sacred yet public form of ceremonial music from north-east Arnhem Land”*.⁵ At the time of Yunupingu’s death in 2013, Yothu Yindi had released seven albums of music and sixteen music videos. In 1990, the band established its own philanthropic arm, the Yothu Yindi Foundation (YYF), which, with Yunupingu as its secretary, inaugurated the annual Garma Festival and also produced the motion picture *‘Yolngu Boy’* (directed by Stephen Johnson, 2000).⁶

In coverage on Yothu Yindi, it is often neglected that the notion of bicultural exchange has been a decisive part of Yothu Yindi’s members and background from the start. From its beginnings in 1986, the band was envisaged as a bicultural initiative that has fostered exchange between Australians of disparate backgrounds, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (the latter referred to as *‘balanda’*).⁷ Aaron Corn outlines how the band’s bicultural outset had its roots in the Yolngu traditional framework *‘ganma’*, which Yunupingu had developed further as a pedagogical model in his educational work but also applied to his music practice. The theory of this confluence, *‘ganma’*, originates in the Yolngu’s use of the powerful metaphor in the meeting and mixing of two streams, e.g., freshwater and saltwater currents. *“At its core, ‘ganma’ serves as a model for a specific kind of diplomatic accord in Yolngu society”*, between groups of equal social standing who agree *“to share their respective ceremonies and knowledge without attempting to assimilate each other or to claim each other’s property as their own”*.⁸ Like the meeting of currents at *‘ganma’* sites such as the one on the Gumatj estate of Biranybirany, it is a *“relationship of respectful distance and recognition for the political independence of the other”*.⁹ Corn argues that the values of cooperation and social parity that are integral to Yolngu understandings have been universalized by Yunupingu through the globally accessible format of pop-

3 See Suzanne Cords.

4 Yunupingu sadly passed away on 2 June 2013, under Yolngu law there is a strict moratorium on the forenames of deceased individuals being spoken for some years. In the following, I will refer to him by mentioning his last name Yunupingu.

5 Aaron Corn: *Agent of Bicultural Balance*, p. 15.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.* The Yolngu trio comprised Yunupingu (lead vocals, rhythm guitar), W. Marika (traditional vocals and dance) and M. Mununggurr (*yidaki* or didgeridoo), all of whom had been raised in Arnhem Land on the Methodist mission at Yirrkala. The Balanda trio comprised Stu Kellaway (bass guitar), Cal Williams (lead guitar) and Andy Beletty (drums).

8 Aaron Corn: *Agent of Bicultural Balance*, p. 24.

9 *Ibid.*

ular song.¹⁰ Yothu Yindi performed Western rock fused with traditional Aboriginal music and dance. Through its frequent references to ancestral themes and materials (in lyrics, instrumentation and dance), Yothu Yindi's music continually points local audiences back to the ancestral values and practices that underpin Yolngu society and culture. Its resetting of these themes and materials in the rock idiom demonstrates how durable ancestral ideas could be re-invented for younger Yolngu audiences and further to communicate traditional Yolngu ideas across cultures.¹¹ This compositional approach has since become popularized further by other bands in Arnhem Land such as Saltwater, Nabarlek and Yilila.

In addition, Yothu Yindi's music has demonstrated how the rock idiom could be internationalized and employed to encourage audiences worldwide to engage with Australian politics. Yothu Yindi stood as an icon of the Aboriginal Reconciliation movement in the early post-Mabo period when Australia's legal and political institutions were just starting to recognize past injustices against Indigenous Australians and the continuing native title over the lands they inhabited. According to Yunupinju, the continuing aim of this diplomatic effort has been to "make it possible for others to understand" why the Yolngu continue to struggle for formal recognition of their sovereignty in Australia, and why this is crucial both to their very cultural survival and to building a more equitable Australia for all.¹² An important success of Yothu Yindi's bicultural performances has been the renegotiation of cultural contact. As John Castles argues, Aboriginal music before the 1990s was regarded as either 'traditional' or 'contemporary' and a contact between these discourses was denied.¹³ In the performance of a group whose members have partially integrated with other music traditions or languages, or when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal musicians perform together, then "a fundamental dislocation has taken place".¹⁴ But clearly, as Castles argues, all Aboriginal musics, let alone Aboriginal adaptations of imported forms such as country, rock, rap or reggae are the product of contact with foreign cultures, forever changed and recontextualized by that contact.¹⁵ It was an accomplishment of Yothu Yindi to break through this habitual separation of discourses.¹⁶ It did, however, also support the labelling of Yothu Yindi in the not at all unproblematic musical category of 'World music'. While the label World music allows entry into Western popular music mainstream and may help to generate global success, the underlying assumptions behind this genre can be limiting. "The agenda is set firmly within a paradigm which sees non-Western musicians struggling to make it in a white mainstream dominated market".¹⁷ Further, the genre World music's ethic of

10 Ibid., p. 39.

11 Aaron Corn: *Land, song, constitution*, p. 100.

12 Yunupinju quoted in *ibid.*

13 John Castles: *Tjungaringanyi*, p. 25.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 25 f.; see Philip Hayward: *Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else*, pp. 34 f.

16 In an opposing reading, one could also argue that the band's division into two groups, the non-Aboriginal musicians playing standard Western (rhythm) instruments, the guitar, bass and drums, alongside Aboriginal musicians playing the yidaki (didgeridoo) and bilma (clapsticks), not necessarily underscores cross-cultural collaboration and exchange, but reinforces cultural differences.

17 Lisa Nicol: *Culture, Custom and Collaboration*, p. 23.

interest in the culturally exotic is encapsulated in specific locality and traditions. "International interest in Aboriginal music, like interest in Aboriginal art, gravitates towards the isolated locale; it seeks out artists from communities remote enough to lay claim to authentic lines of tradition. In this sense the 'margin' or the 'minor' is the creative space when opposed to the 'mainstream', or rather it is the deterritorialising movement which is creative".¹⁸ Bands such as Yothu Yindi would feed in with the emerging World music movement and eventually sell their albums in US-America and Europe. The image that was created, as Castles argues, can be summed up in the phrase 'Into the Mainstream' – both in and away from the marginal.¹⁹ The musicians are not acknowledged as individual artists, but "more often than not, seen as representatives of their racial groups", as a basis on which parallels, comparisons and generalizations are made.²⁰ In World music's attempt to universalize the locally specific, hence exotic, Yothu Yindi's innate cross-cultural influence has been silenced in many commentaries on the band. The assumption is that the cost of such crossover success is often personal, artistic, musical and political compromise.²¹ In this regard, the branding of Yothu Yindi as part of popular music reinforced, as Philip Hayward postulates, that the "blackness of Yothu Yindi is carefully managed in their videos and public appearances" as 'authentic' representatives of independent Aboriginal Australia. They are perceived as "located 'somewhere else' safely away from the inner-city – their blackness and Aboriginality does not require (racial) dilution".²² Claiming that their 'authentic' Aboriginality is their major selling point, this leads, as he argues further, to a repression of their whiteness: "Minimal attention is accorded to the white members of the band, they are carefully 'backgrounded' to the point of near invisibility in videos and interviews".²³ It will be discussed in the following how Peter Maffay's visit to Arnhem Land reproduces such representations of 'authentic' and mono-cultural locality.

Nonetheless, Yothu Yindi's achievement as both performers and cultural ambassadors for the Yolngu people, Aboriginal culture and – in an international context – Australia itself are significant. As Lisa Nicol argues, there is no mandatory responsibility for contemporary Aboriginal music "to make overtly polemic points", thereby limiting their expressive potential.²⁴ It seems an established expectation to require Aboriginal cultural forms to carry the burden of being politically 'correct' and 'oppositional'.²⁵ In contrast, especially Yothu Yindi's globally screened music videos played an important role in promoting a diversified and 'positive image' of Indigenous cultures and identities. For example, in the music video to their chart-hit "Treaty", positive images of vitality and presence are conveyed through scenes of young Aboriginal children dancing and playing on the beach. "[T]heir culture is glorified by potent and mesmerising tribal dance

18 John Castles: *Tjungaringanyi*, p. 26.

19 Ibid.

20 Lisa Nicol: *Culture, Custom and Collaboration*, p. 24.

21 Ibid., p. 23.

22 Philip Hayward: *Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else*, p. 37.

23 Ibid.

24 Lisa Nicol quoted in *ibid.*, p. 36.

25 See Philip Hayward: *Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else*, p. 34.

sequences set in lush bushland with close-ups of painted faces and body parts in motion. [...] With the exception of the footage of [Prime Minister Bob] Hawke and brief, 'flash' inserts of Aboriginal street protests, the entire video was shot on Aboriginal land in Arnhem Land".²⁶ Nicol concludes that these images capture the uniqueness of Yolngu culture, and, in the process, strengthen and preserve it. Consultation on all aspects of the production process was carried out with elders and there has been a "careful choice of what is *not* shown as well as what *is*".²⁷ Seeing how music had been a form of black celebration and resistance in the 1980s (such as in the pioneering work of Aboriginal bands such as No Fixed Address, Us Mob and Scrap Metal),²⁸ the central shift in the performance of Yothu Yindi's songs (especially in music videos) is a lack of overt politics. "Rather than simply representing Aboriginal politics in a simplistic and visually obtrusive way, the *process of production* of the videos is paramount, and its procedures faithful to Yolngu ways and philosophy".²⁹ In contrast to this positive reading of Yothu Yindi's feel-good performances, Philip Hayward more critically engages with how these images circulate and how these meanings are publicly understood and subsequently represented, in Australia, and in our example, also overseas. Hayward claims, "there is something reassuringly comforting in an Aboriginal band singing in their own tongue amidst dream-holiday-exotic surroundings at a time when international politics is in far greater turmoil".³⁰ He further states, "overtly political commentary in popular music is seen as a commercial 'turn-off' here, a hindrance to Yothu Yindi's push for broader acceptance". This, of course, becomes problematic, when "it's not signified politics per se that are the problem, it's radical Aboriginal politics that are perceived to grate on mass market sensibilities".³¹ It is therefore useful, in the context of Yothu Yindi's collaborations with overseas artists, to recognize the underlying white hegemonic discourses which have created the band's context of reception. Their lack of overt political edge and their different cultural background (marked as 'colourful ethnicity') has rendered them highly 'media friendly' in an environment whose institutions are aware of the political correctness of including occasional representations of Aboriginality in their material.³² In the following I discuss the friction between Yothu Yindi's own 'softening' of political edge in the context of World music's commercialization agenda, and at the same time international collaborators such as Peter Maffay foregrounding their own political interests and activism by their engagement with Yothu Yindi's Aboriginality.

Yunupinju's death in 2013 was widely covered in the European media. Several articles on Yunupinju's death, including German, Austrian and Dutch press releases, mention the collaboration with Peter Maffay in the late 1990s. For example, in the newspaper 'Frankfurter Rundschau', the opening sentence reads: "The

26 Lisa Nicol: Culture, Custom and Collaboration, p. 26.

27 Ibid., p. 30 (original emphasis).

28 Bands such as No Fixed Address had already utilized the sounds and instrumentation of Western rock'n'roll, but Yothu Yindi was the first to combine that with ancient song cycles, Aboriginal instrumentation, and dance performances.

29 Lisa Nicol: Culture, Custom and Collaboration, p. 30 (original emphasis).

30 Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, p. 37.

31 Ibid., p. 41.

32 Ibid., p. 39.

singer of the Australian Aboriginal band Yothu Yindi, who once toured through Germany together with Peter Maffay, is dead”.³³ Next to the tour with Maffay, the article only mentions Yothu Yindi’s performance at the Sydney Olympics closing ceremony as the two major events of their career. This gives an impression of the enduring success this collaborative work seems to have achieved for Maffay in Europe, while in Australia the collaboration between Yothu Yindi and Maffay went largely unnoticed.³⁴

In 1998, Peter Maffay and his band were invited to spend ten days in Nhulunbuy, a village in the northeastern part of the Northern Territory, Arnhem Land. During this time they rehearsed and recorded the collaborative song “Tribal Voice”, which also culminated in a music video.³⁵ Maffay and his band were accompanied by cameras, as there were plans for a DVD release of the ‘Begegnungen’-documentary in 2005. The song “Tribal Voice” was first released by Yothu Yindi in 1991 as part of the album of the same name. The album ‘Tribal Voice’ became the first album featuring songs in an Aboriginal Australian language to achieve significant chart success and international multi-platinum sales. Yunupingu being awarded as the 1992 Australian of the Year, irrefutably sealed the place of Yothu Yindi in the nation’s music history.³⁶ The song “Tribal Voice” stands as Yothu Yindi’s response to the influence of Christianity in Yolngu lifestyles following decades of local administration under state-sanctioned missions.³⁷ While the song recognizes the world’s many faiths, it especially celebrates the continuing centrality of ancestral Yolngu belief and law. “Tribal Voice” was therefore conceived of as a rock anthem for Yolngu religious freedom and cultural survival. The song’s chorus alludes to the global diversity of human religions, and echoes the activist expression of ‘Get Up, Stand Up’.³⁸ Yothu Yindi’s song therefore promotes a validation and the equality of Indigenous cultures, languages, law and religion, alongside other cultures and traditions.

While it is unspecified why this particular song was chosen to be re-recorded as the collaborative song with the German visitors, there are hints at how Maffay and his team read the meanings of this song. In the illustrated travel book, ‘Peter Maffay’s Begegnungen’ by Michael Rieth, released parallel to the album and tour in 1998, the Aboriginal people living at Nhulunbuy are described as alcoholics, “uprooted, who haven’t found (yet?) their way back” to the tribal voice. They are contrasted to Yunupingu and his family who live in “one of the last paradises”, Binanangay, in accordance with Yolngu traditions. They have, according to the travel book, “returned to a way of life that is older than anything that has

33 Frankfurter Rundschau: Sänger der Aborigines-Band Yothu Yindi gestorben (my translation). Original: “Der Sänger der australischen Aborigines-Band Yothu Yindi, die einst mit Peter Maffay auch durch Deutschland tourte, ist tot”.

34 In all Australian articles on Yothu Yindi I have worked with so far there is only one brief mentioning of the ‘Encounters’ tour in Germany in a chronological timeline of the band’s work.

35 See “Tribal Voice”: Peter Maffay, Mandawuy Yunupingu.

36 Aaron Corn: Agent of Bicultural Balance, p. 18.

37 Aaron Corn: Land, song, constitution, p. 87. See also idem.: Reflections and Voices, p. 82.

38 Lyrics chorus: “All the people | In the world are dreaming (get up, stand up)/Some of us cry, cry, cry | For the rights of survival now (get up, stand up)/While others don’t give a damn | They’re all waiting for a perfect day | You’d better get up and fight for your rights | Don’t be afraid of the move you make | You’d better listen to your tribal voice”.

been developed in Europe”, they are ‘one with nature’ in an experience of “One Blood”.³⁹ This clear favouring and essentializing generalization of a traditional and rural Aboriginal way of life, in contrast to an urbanized Aboriginality that is here associated with drug abuse and precariousness, is reinforced by the choice of photographs. There are two distinct ways of visual representation in the chapter on Arnhem Land. Firstly, there are documentary-style black and white photographs of the local Yolngu people in Nhulunbuy, showing impoverished houses, a man drinking from a can of beer and rubbish lying around. These photographs have a very matter-of-fact atmosphere, the angle is from above, with an observing and distant perspective. In one of these pictures Peter Maffay is included, he looks worried and is presented in a pose of listening. In contrast to these photographs, there are other, more colourful depictions of Aboriginal life in remote Binanangay. In ethnographic fashion, there are panorama shots of the blue sea and large trees, as well as close-ups of didgeridoos, guitars, and tribal marks on faces. In many of these shots Maffay is presented next to Yunupinju, walking along the beach, sitting by the bonfire, or joining him in song. In the text of the travel book it is stated how Maffay and his band experience this journey as a ‘going back to the roots’, and that Maffay hopes for those Aboriginal people lost to alcoholism to find back to their roots as well. The term ‘paradise’ is stated several times. Maffay romanticizes this spiritual experience of connecting with the land, of “being instead of thinking”,⁴⁰ and the photographs of him blending in with the landscape emphasize this connection he gains with himself and this particular locality. These photographs favour life as primordial and ‘authentically’ nature-bound, a state that, according to the claims made about the urban Aboriginal people and about Maffay himself, can be “returned” to, however difficult because of the “destructive forces of civilization”.⁴¹ Yunupinju and Yothu Yindi are staged as indelibly linked to this particular landscape, in agreement with Hayward who argues that “the Aboriginal rock bands were effectively rendered *part* of the landscape, as organic cultural outcrops”.⁴² The safe, picturesque ‘exoticness’ displayed in these representations limits the political agenda of this collaboration to one where the European visitor understands and problematizes his own (and other’s) lack of boundedness to nature. This is further supported by the music video to “Tribal Voice” where Peter Maffay begins his solo in the second verse, singing “Well inside my mind there’s a tribal voice | And it’s speaking to me ev’ryday | And all I have to do is to make a choice | ‘Cause I know there is no other way”.⁴³ Maffay, quite literally, performs his own ‘returning to roots’ as a choice.

The notion of “one blood”, repeated several times in the travel book as well as in the film documentary, foregrounding Aboriginal purity and boundedness to a specific locality, is further demonstrated by the assertion that Peter Maffay and band were the only non-Aboriginal people on site. In the biography ‘Maffay. Auf

39 Michael Rieth: Peter Maffay’s Begegnungen, pp. 8-22 (my translations).

40 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay. Auf dem Weg zu mir, p. 274.

41 Ibid., p. 8.

42 Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, p. 40 (my emphasis).

43 “Tribal Voice”.

dem Weg zu mir’, author Edmund Hartsch claims that “there were no white people and without a written authorization there were none allowed in the camp”.⁴⁴ Maffay is further quoted in the documentary ‘Begegnungen’, saying that “it was the first time, that they have received guests here”.⁴⁵ The film documentary itself disproves this claim as there are various other non-Aboriginal people, including the band members of Yothu Yindi, shown to reside there. There is, therefore, an attempt to position Maffay as exceptional in a landscape and culture regarded as closed and isolated, which clearly contrasts Yunupinju’s framework of ‘ganma’, the Yolngu bicultural practice of sharing cultures. As this encounter is not covered in any Australian sources, it is difficult to capture the other side, what did Yunupinju and his family make of this group visiting them, filming them, taking pictures of them. There is only one short comment in the film documentary by Yunupinju, asked about the meaning behind this encounter: “Why not”.⁴⁶ It is evidently an encounter initiated by the German partners in which the hospitality of Yunupinju and the camp is instrumentalized as the site of Peter Maffay’s personal reflection and journey. This is climaxed in Peter Maffay being adopted by Yunupinju in a Yolngu ceremony: “He has made me part of his family”, Maffay remembers in his autobiography ‘Der neunte Ton’ (2013).⁴⁷ His new Yolngu name is ‘Baykantjarry’, meaning ‘Fire’, which is vividly illustrated by photographs of him, in tribal marks, sitting by the fireplace.⁴⁸ Peter Maffay’s *embodiment* of Yolngu lifestyle and nature during the ten-day trip to Arnhem Land is captured in the illustrated travel book and documentary as both a development in appearance, and as a change of attitude. The travel book mentions that the guitars they are playing with are out of tune, however, as Maffay muses, this does not seem to matter anymore. He is drawn in by the natural rhythms and magically joins in the songs.⁴⁹ In several photographs he is pictured with tribal marks on his face, which he also wears during the ‘Encounters’ tour around Germany.

The representation of Maffay’s journey, from naïve rock musician to well-informed and acknowledged Yolngu associate, and the subsequent “masquerading” in tribal marks later on tour, can be contextualized as a known practice of performing culture or performing ‘race’ in Germany. In her study ‘Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation and Sexuality in West Germany’, published 2002, Katrin Sieg theorizes ethnic drag as a normative practice in which Germans have engaged with, disavowed, and contested ‘race’ in the pre- and post-World War 2 period. Her definition of ethnic drag includes not only cross-racial casting on the theatre stage, but, more generally, the performance of ‘race’ as a masquerade. Sieg’s examples include ethnic impersonations in Jew Farces of the 1930s, to reenactments of Native Americans in the various adaptations of Karl May’s ‘Winnetou’ westerns perennially staged at Bad Segeberg’s summer festival since

44 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay. Auf dem Weg zu mir, p. 274 (my translation). Original: “Dort gab es keine Weißen und ohne eine schriftliche Genehmigung auch keinen Zutritt”.

45 Quoted in *ibid.* (my translation): “Es war das erste Mal, dass sie hier Gäste empfangen”.

46 Peter Maffay: *Begegnungen*, TC: 00:14:40.

47 Peter Maffay: *Der neunte Ton*, p. 66 (my translation). Original: “Er hat mich zu einem Teil seiner Familie gemacht”.

48 Michael Rieth: Peter Maffay’s *Begegnungen*, p. 28.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

1952. As a crossing of racial lines in performance, ethnic drag simultaneously erases and redraws boundaries as ancient and immutable, and can be read positively according to Sieg. As a symbolic contact zone between German bodies and other cultures, ethnic drag facilitates the exercise and exchange of power. And as a simulacrum of 'race', it challenges the perceptions and privileges of those who would mistake appearances for essence.⁵⁰ As a technique of estrangement, drag denounces that which dominant ideology presents as natural, normal, and inescapable, without always offering another truth. Yet the conclusion that ethnic drag always resists or subverts the limitations of biological concepts of 'race' is countered by historical evidence (such as the fact that Nazi ideology had inherited a long stage tradition of racial masquerade and deployed it as part of its propaganda efforts). Indeed, ethnic masquerade as a "technology of forgetting" of the post-war period,⁵¹ has been an important theatrical trope through which Germans have imagined and expressed their difference from other, supposedly inferior nationalities, but simultaneously evoked and displaced the historical matter in question.⁵² With this particularly German tradition of ethnic drag in mind, the cross-cultural performance of Peter Maffay in the photographs and later on stage together with Yothu Yindi, can be perceived as an ethnic masquerade. In contrast to the Yolngu practice of 'ganma' between groups of equals agreeing to share their respective ceremonies and knowledge without attempting to assimilate each other, Maffay's performance appropriates an 'authentic', exotic Aboriginality, thereby embodying cultural differences and 'otherness' of an ancient, 'lost' primordial culture. When Maffay was adopted in ceremony by Yunupinju he acknowledged this adoption as an honour and gift, but simultaneously regards this practice as an obligation for the Aboriginal side. Yunupinju was thereby, according to Maffay, "bridging the gap beyond music".⁵³ Encouraged by the journeys in 1998, he created a second 'Begegnungen' album in 2006.⁵⁴ This time with a focus on children's aid, visiting Cape Verde, South Africa, India and South Korea. In the United States he visited a Lakota Reservation, where he helped to build a school. In honour of his commitment he was, yet again, adopted by an Indigenous tribe.⁵⁵ Peter Maffay regards his own ethnic performance as a way to overcome cultural differences, yet in its multiple reiterations and various 'costume changes', remains without any sustainable outcome.

One particularly harsh critic of the 'Encounters' tour in Germany, 1998-1999, specifically thematized the performance of ethnicity: "At the beginning of the show he looks rather sickly, the Maffay-Peter. Red and white dots on his face

50 Katrin Sieg: *Ethnic Drag*, pp. 2 f.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 84 f.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 11. For example, the traditions of Jewish impersonation, whose emergence theatre scholars locate around 1800, illustrate the longevity and pervasiveness of racial impersonation on the German stage, often in the service of ethnic segregation, social exclusion, and cultural hierarchy.

53 Peter Maffay: *Der neunte Ton*, p. 66 (my translation). Original: "In Australien wurde ich von M. adoptiert. Er hat mich zu einem Teil seiner Familie gemacht, eine der höchsten Auszeichnungen, die einem dort zuteilwerden kann. M. [...] hat damit einen Brückenschlag geschaffen, der weit über die Musik hinausgeht. Für ihn war es eine Verpflichtung, für mich ein Geschenk."

54 Edmund Hartsch: *Maffay. Auf dem Weg zu mir*, p. 343.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 354.

remind of severe pimples who got out of control. But don't worry, it's only makeup. The rock star from Lake Starnberg has painted a few colourful Aboriginal marks on his face for that purpose. Only corrections on the surface, like the cooing didgeridoo-sounds and exotic percussions, but at its core the same mainstream-grout as for the past 20 years. Every continent has been payed attention to dutifully [...] unbelievably corny".⁵⁶ This critic emphasizes that this musical performance does not present actual Aboriginal culture (as Yothu Yindi is not mentioned at all in this review), but it comments on Peter Maffay in drag, performing a different culture, *which* one is rather negligible – as all continents are worked through anyway. Further, stressing the fact that he is a rock star from Lake Starnberg, also known as Prince's Lake and known for wealthy vacation homeowners, underscores Maffay's distance from the precarious places he intends to showcase and support with his project. In response to the critical voices against the 'Encounters' project, Maffay has justified the collaborations as "fusion" of cultures and as a way to address racism and xenophobia. Disillusioned by the outcome of the tour, he, however, oddly concludes that the project was only liked and understood by those "more or less intelligent".⁵⁷ One can thus question the benefit and intention of such a transcultural encounter. There have been no long-lasting results in the collaboration between the two bands, which Maffay regrets: "This was no playing around. This was meant seriously. A very friendly gesture. The only thing I regret is that this solidarity was lost over the years. Also due to the great distance".⁵⁸

It can be said that this transnational encounter did not engender any sustainable connections or political attention. In Peter Maffay's appropriation of Aboriginality as a forum for esoteric and exoticized images of colourful 'authentic' ethnicity, readily available for those invited and previously unexperienced with Aboriginal ways of life, the specific locality of Arnhem Land becomes a mere backdrop for a European ethnic performance. In accordance with the common dilemma of World music's agenda to gravitate towards the culturally exotic and locally specific, yet silencing its overtly political edge in the attempt to universalize the performance, the 'Begegnungen' collaboration has drifted into a 'feel-good', non-confrontational mainstream.

Various mediums and genres of self-representation illustrating this encounter were considered in this essay, including music videos, an illustrated travel book, a film documentary and (auto)biographies. In conclusion, those texts represent a set of elaborated representations of particular aspects of Aboriginality

56 Thomas Keller, *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 12 November 1998, quoted in Edmund Hartsch: Maffay, p. 293 (my translation). Original: "Am Anfang der Show sieht er etwas kränklich aus, der Maffay-Peter. Rot-weiße Punkte auf seinem Gesicht erinnern an schlimme, aus dem Ruder gelaufene Mitesser. Aber keine Sorge, es ist nur Schminke. Und zu diesem Zweck hat sich der Rockstar vom Starnberger See ein paar Aboriginal-Farbtupfer ins Antlitz gemalt. Korrekturen an der Oberfläche, etwas gurgelnde Didgeridoo-Klänge und exotische Percussions, im Kern aber die gleiche Mainstream-Grütze wie seit 20 Jahren. Jeder Kontinent wird brav abgearbeitet. [...] unglaublich abgeschmackt".

57 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay, p. 291.

58 Maffay quoted in Edmund Hartsch: Maffay, p. 275 (my translation). Original: "Das war keine Spielerei. Das war ernst gemeint gewesen. Eine sehr freundliche Geste. Das Einzige, was ich bedaure, ist, dass dieser Zusammenhalt, den ich mir wünschen würde, einfach verloren gegangen ist. Auch wegen der großen Entfernung".

mediated through a succession of white cultural perceptions. These representations address, by using the intercultural encounter as a personal, yet necessarily shared and universalized experience, a dominant culture's representation and mediation of its 'other'. However problematic these representations are, in the context of Germany's mostly unchallenged practice of ethnic drag until the 1990s and Yothu Yindi's limited political overtness in the mainstream World music market, this seems a little less surprising than at first sight. In the long run, it did enable Peter Maffay to develop a new international and politically informed image and to benefit from the Aboriginal band's popularity and acclaim, while this collaboration presented a singular event for Yothu Yindi. This encounter therefore presents a compelling example of the exploitative pitfalls in the context of international solidarity.

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