

## Book and Media Reviews

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kind of woman he chose as his second wife. That is to say, Malinowski's memory is not based in a shared cosmology about ghosts and the landscape of the afterlife. He is rather an individual whose autobiography is subjected to differing moral assessments that are motivated by how he is seen to have affected his descendants emotionally.

*Savage Memory* is a rich, enthralling movie. Visually and discursively, it depicts a great deal more of Malinowski's fieldwork (including movies and field photos), a lot more discussion by his kin, as well as more academically informed evaluation of his work by several well-known anthropologists than I have space to discuss here.

Suffice it to say that it is worth taking the time to view. But who should take the time to do so? Pacific anthropologists, to be sure, will find it fascinating, as I have. Scholars interested in the history of British anthropology of course will also find significance in it, certainly. And, I suppose, people, also like me, who grew up in the shadows of a great, overachieving, rather self-involved kinsman, will find it compelling too.

But as this is a review for an interdisciplinary scholarly Pacific journal, my last question must be about what kind of a pedagogical context this DVD might serve. What sorts of classes would it benefit? I am unable to answer this question and, being left so puzzled, I am left with the kinds of questions Firth asked in his two introductions to Malinowski's *Diary*. For whom was it made, and for what purpose? For Firth, the answer was that the Diary might have an analogi-

cal appeal to anthropological fieldworkers. But I don't think that *Savage Memory* was made for this unique and highly specialized market. I don't know who it was made for, other than the filmmaker's family. Regardless of its rather mysterious purpose, *Savage Memory* remains a beguiling movie.

DAVID LIPSET

*University of Minnesota*

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*Moana: The Rising of the Sea*. Multi-media dramatic performance. Written and produced by Vilsoni Hereniko; choreographed and directed by Peter Rockford Espiritu. World premiere 6 December 2013, Japan-Pacific ICT Theatre, University of the South Pacific, Suva.

Presented to audiences at the Japan ICT (information, communication, technology) Theatre at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in December 2013, in conjunction with the European Consortium for Pacific Studies (ECOPAS) conference "Restoring the Human to Climate Change," the performance of *Moana: The Rising of the Sea* left me moved and with an intensely heightened sensitivity to the plight of Island communities in an age of climate change. Developed through the collaboration of Oceania Dance Theatre Artistic Director Peter Rockford Espiritu, USP Head of Performing Arts Igelese Ete, and Vilsoni Hereniko, former director of the USP Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture, and Pacific Studies and now professor at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa, this original performance combined innovative music, song, dance, and video projec-

tion design to shake audiences out of their comfortable certainties regarding the place of climate in contemporary Pacific conversations.

A few days before the opening, I had the opportunity of observing a rehearsal. Behind the scenes a stage manager called, “Places please,” and performers scurried to their positions, waiting in the wings to transform into characters such as ocean, land, sky spirits, and Pacific Islanders. While the call “Places” before a show is a common backstage term, in the context of the ECOPAS conference it poetically evoked for me the deeply felt concerns in relation to place in the tragic crisis of relocation and loss of land, homes, and people to the rising sea levels in the Pacific.

The show opens with a monologue written by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner and beautifully performed by Sinu Nau-lumatua. Her words—“Tell them we are papaya golden sunsets bleeding into glittering open sea . . . Tell them what it’s like to see the entire ocean level with the land . . . Tell them we see what is in our own backyard”—express the wrenching emotion of this pressing issue of survival for the cultures and lands of this region.

The curtains part to reveal a magnificent video projection montage, designed by Josefa Matailagi Jr, which takes the audience on a journey through celestial stars, looking back on Earth from space, zooming in on waves surging in the deep sea, and finally closing in on the shoreline, where the ocean laps the sand and trees gently extend over the water.

The performers quietly enter, silhouetted against this moving video backdrop. Dancers process, carry-

ing a large roll of turquoise material that alternatively suggests an umbilical cord or the sea’s edge. The fabric unfolds and stretches expansively across the front of the entire stage while a spinning gobo (lighting instrument) casts undulating, crystalline reflections like light playing on water. Life seems to shimmer across the surface of what is clearly revealed to be a powerful water character. Yet, underneath its beauty, a threatening pulse and rhythmic current unfolds throughout the show. The cloth is continuously shaken, causing rippling waves that bring this symbolic ocean ever more to the awareness of the Islanders on stage, threatening the dangerous possibility of coastal flooding.

Hereniko’s evocative, empathetic production brings attention to a challenging issue that affects many Pacific Island nations and is ingeniously embedded in the performance’s structure. Primarily told in a dialogue between movement, projected image, and song, this poetic story embodies the ecological notion of unity. In our bodies, islands, ocean, sky, and planet, in our being, we are one body, interconnected.

Espiritu’s inventive and skillful staging features thirty experienced performers of the Oceania Dance Theatre and new, innovative choreography employing dance styles from Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Sāmoa, and Fiji and displaying fantastic costumes. Elements of ballet, modern, and aerial dance are woven throughout, all allowing the ocean to speak.

Expressing the continuity of past and present, Ete’s epic musical composition mixes the recorded sounds of

the Pasifika Voices Ensemble with live drumming and vocal singing. There is a sensuous film quality to Ete's sound score. The diverse music inspires emotion in a rich tapestry of musical traditions. The aria of the Vesi Loa Tree character is particularly moving as she sings, "I give my life for generations to come." In this scene, the sound of wind blows and birds sing hauntingly in the background. Live drums beat strongly on stage and an aerialist descends from the ceiling swathed in black fabric. The aerialist appears to be the spirit eyes of the tree.

Energy explodes on stage during the final dance. Islander characters scream as the ocean engulfs land and people. As the music passionately swells to a crescendo, the projection design portrays a flashing animation of distressed frigate birds flying low over the sea. The frigate birds are omens of impending danger, and this is the first time that the performers look directly at the video projection, as if realizing, finally, that the time to move is now. The dancers' gestures seem to be soft, open, weight shifting, and decisively quick all at the same time. The bodies on stage take flight with rounded backs and flexed wrists as they leap into the air in an unexpected geometry of arching bodies and swirling motion.

At the close of the premier performance, I looked around the theater and saw many people crying. The response of one audience member whom I spoke to about her experience of the performance was, "This is real." There were no more words, only tears.

At the same time, *Moana: The Rising of the Sea* sends a hope-

ful message of strength and unity throughout Oceania. This show is created, performed, and presented in a place where people are working hard to adaptively manage disasters and reduce vulnerabilities. The innovative experimentation in this show mixes traditional staging conventions with fresh new life through contemporary Pacific voices that communicate change on the visceral level, through bodies, images, and sound. The production of *Moana* is more than a representation of a cultural artifact or historical moment; it is a living entity that ebbs and flows in the process of becoming with each person who experiences it. What is obvious is that the sea is rising. What is not so obvious is how deeply the confrontation with performance can change a person's thoughts and sentiments and has the potential to change a community—local, national, or regional—by shifting some of the grounds of the discourse about climate.

A DVD version of this performance is available from the Oceania Centre at the University of the South Pacific and plans are in place for *Moana: The Rising of the Sea* to embark on an international tour in 2014–2015, culminating with a performance in Brussels, also funded by the European Union. If an opportunity arises, experience this performance.

KARA MILLER  
*University of Hawai'i, Mānoa*

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