

PLAY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Judy McKinty

During a recent visit to Papua New Guinea, I stayed in Bulolo, a small town located in the hills inland from the coastal town of Lae. While in Bulolo, I spent a few days visiting the International Primary School, to find out about the kinds of games played by the children, who were mostly PNG Nationals. There were about 30 children in the school in two groups, and the games information was mostly provided by children in the older group, aged 9-12. The games were documented using videotape, photos and written notes. The children spoke both Pidgin and English fluently, and quickly became very skilled, enthusiastic and patient explainers and demonstrators of their games, and were quite relaxed and unperturbed by the use of the video camera.

As usual, I wish I had been able to spend more time there, as there is a wealth of material still to be recorded, particularly from the three female staff members I talked with on my last day. It started as just an informal chat, but by the end of the day they were demonstrating their games on the grassed playing area, with much laughter as the memories became clearer.

The following is a list of games collected, with brief descriptions:

ELASTICS

A girls' game, usually played with home-made 'elastic'. Children playing in the streets mostly make them from 'icypole plastic', the narrow, clear plastic tube

containing frozen cordial which is sold in markets and shops. They sometimes use plastic bags tied together, but this is not as successful, as the bags break easily. Rubber bands are often threaded together to make a chain, and at the International School the girls also have wide elastics which are commercially produced and distributed by a Melbourne manufacturer.

The elastic loop goes around the ankles of the two girls at the ends, and one player jumps in the centre according to the pattern of the game. The loop is raised after each stage is completed.

Rhymes accompanying the Elastics games at the school were in English: 'Jingle Jangle'; and 'England, Ireland'. The female staff members also described a high-jump type of Elastics game they played in the 1960s and 70s, in which players jumped backwards over a single rubber-band chain, stretched tight by two players. (This is the same game described as 'One Elastic' by Heather Russell in *Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground*, and played by Chinese and Vietnamese girls in Melbourne.)

RUBBER BAND GAMES

Played by both sexes. The use of rubber bands is widespread. They are readily available as 'found' objects and can be used in the construction of playthings and as playthings by themselves.

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Throw: Played on a path or other flat surface. Players throw rubber bands some distance away, and try to make one land on top of another. The person who succeeds wins the game and all the rubber bands on the ground.

Make an 8: Players roll a rubber band under a finger on a flat surface, and try to make it form the figure 8 when they let it go.

Rubber Band Figures: The children have an amazing repertoire of shapes which can be made from rubber bands, in the manner of string figures. One, two or three rubber bands are used to make different shapes, like a soccer field, a TV, butterflies, a jumping frog, various letters of the alphabet, underpants and other figures. The repertoire also includes tricks, like simultaneously swapping a rubber band from each hand to the opposite.

STRING FIGURES

This was a surprise. Despite their skill and enjoyment at making rubber band shapes, I found that the girls and almost all the boys at the school knew no string figures. The only child who knew any string shapes was a 9-year-old boy, who was taught them by his big sister and who was the acknowledged school expert, encouraged by the other children to demonstrate for me.

One of the staff members knew the string trick known in Australia as *'Snake and Lizard'*, and I was taught two other PNG string figures, *'Bushfire'* and *'Flying Foxes'*, which is a moving figure, by women from outside the school.

CLAPPING RHYMES

Played by girls. The clapping rhymes sung by children at the school were in English, and were known best by one 12-year-old girl, who seemed to be the school's

main carrier of the girls' play traditions. The rhymes were chanted slowly, in contrast to the dynamic and fast-moving examples seen in other places. The rhymes were *'See See Little Playmate'*, *'Chinese Girls are Very Funny'* and *'Down by the Hanky Panky'*. There were no clapping rhymes in Pidgin at the school.

PENCIL AND PAPER GAMES

Known by both sexes. These were the only games I found in the school in which the rhymes or stories were in Pidgin, even though the children communicate in Pidgin all the time during their play.

Teddy Bear and **SHIP:** These are rhymes chanted while drawing shapes on a piece of paper. The rhyme says what the shapes are, and at the end of the rhyme there is a drawing of a teddy bear or the word SHIP.

MAN and **MAMA:** Zig-zag lines are drawn

across the paper. As the story is being told, the storyteller traces the movement of the characters in the story up and down the lines with the pen. At the end of the story the words MAN or MAMA appear. The first story is about a little boy who went to the river to wash and forgot his soap, and the second story is about a family who are in their garden when some raskols come and are chased by the police.

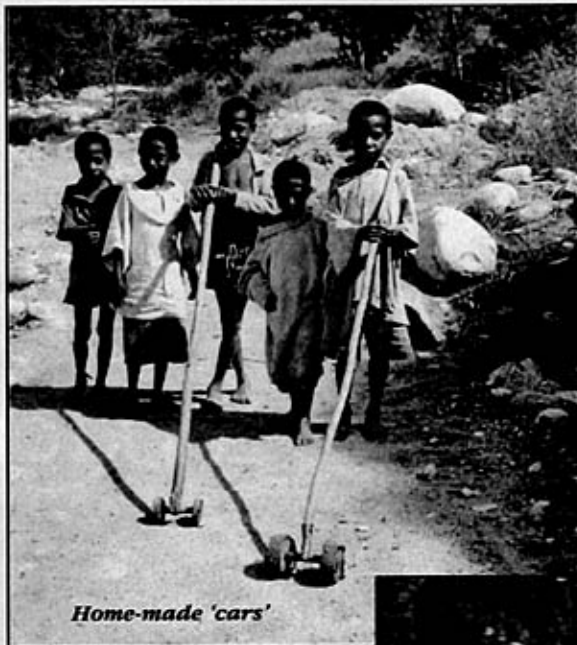
MARBLES

Played by boys, although one of the female staff played marbles as a girl. The children at the school used glass 'Cat's Eye' marbles. When I asked if anyone had any marbles to bring to school, only one boy was able to produce some, even though they all said that they had some at home from the last time they played. I was told by several boys that "sometimes some boys use marbles in their slingshots".



The two games played were *Rings* and *Tok*. *Rings* is as it sounds - a game where players try to hit marbles out of a ring. *Tok* is played with one hole in the ground, and is like *Poison Hole* - players have to try to get their marbles into the hole, and then they can 'kill' the other players. Last player in is the winner.

Some marbles verbal lore: '*banks*' (the marbles inside the ring), '*tiki*' (the marble you shoot with), '*cleans*' (you can brush the ground in front of your marble to give you a clearer shot), '*no cleans*' (you can't do it), '*fork*' (when you flick your marble into the air instead of along the ground), '*every*' (you can move your marble to one side to have a clearer shot).



Home-made 'cars'

HOME-MADE PLAYTHINGS

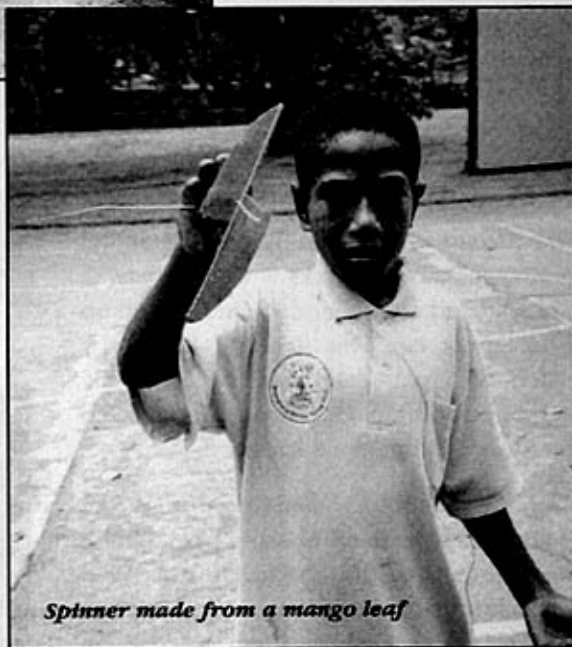
The boys at the school were eager to show me the way they used leaves, sticks and other found materials in their play. Some were highly skilled at making whistles, poppers and other noise-makers from leaves and the stems of plants, and spinners were painstakingly constructed from coconut palm fronds or made in seconds by tearing mango leaves and piercing them with a sliver of bamboo.

One of the playthings demonstrated was a 'car'. Made from a long stick, this push-along vehicle has two wheels attached to an axle on one end of the stick. The wheels can be wooden, or made from the fruit of the native fig which grows in the town. These wheeled toys are found in various forms in many countries. I also saw a teenager pushing a hoop made from a length of hose, and steered with a wire hook and a thin stick.

Slingshots seem to be the most universal plaything (and weapon) for boys in PNG. They are very skilfully made from a Y-shaped branch, carefully whittled into shape, with pieces of rubber tubing attached (the petrol line from cars is popular). A leather or rubber patch serves as a pouch, and there are plenty of stones on the road for ammunition.

One boy showed me the insect trap he had made from a thin piece of pliable stick and spider webs, and another explained how he had made his pop-gun from a thin piece of bamboo, with the hole just big enough to tightly fit a certain kind of seed.

Some of the boys showed me how they play Hockey with sticks cut from a Hibiscus plant and a flat rubber disc - the '*hockey ball*' - cut from an old rubber thong. They play in teams, and the aim is to keep the disc moving along on its edge. Whenever it stops and falls flat, the team at the other end wins a point.



Spinner made from a mango leaf

The girls showed me a musical instrument they had made by tying bottle-tops together, and one also knew how to produce a piercing whistle from the stem of a plant, by placing her fingers in just the right position.

The female staff members recalled walking on coconut

shells, in the same way as many people use jam tins to make stilts. One also made a 'bottletop string' for me. This is made by hammering a bottle-top until it is completely flat, piercing it twice and threading a string through. It is wound in the same way as a button spinner, and makes a noise when spinning. She and her friends used to try to cut each other's strings with the spinning disc. She also described tying a small scrap of yellow paper or cloth to the end of a piece of string, and walking along, swinging it around slowly to attract butterflies.

CHASING GAMES

The boys demonstrated two games which were taught to the children by one of the female teachers, who played them as a child :

Water In is a game for two teams, played on a hard surface on which lines can be drawn or scratched. One team must run to the 'waterhole' at the other end and back again, without being caught. The catching team must keep to the lines, while the runners can go anywhere.

Castle or **Tin Tin** is a ball game for two teams. One team builds a 'castle' by stacking tins on top of each other. Someone from the other team throws the ball at the tins to knock them down. When they fall, the first team tries to hit every member of the second team with the ball before they can build the 'castle' up again. The team which succeeds wins.

JACKS

Stones or **Five Stones** was played by the girls, in the same way as Knucklebones or Jacks is usually played. The stones are scattered on the ground, and picked up by ones, twos, threes, etc. This step is followed by making an arch with one hand and sweeping the stones through one at a time. One stone is nominated as the 'poison' stone, and must be kept until last.

While visiting the school, I discovered that the children and teachers have been working hard to raise money to visit Australia in the first half of this year. They have enough saved to reach Cairns, and hope to raise extra which would enable them to visit an Aboriginal community in inland Australia. One of their aims is to share and compare their play traditions with those of the Aboriginal children. It should be a very interesting meeting.

References: Russell, Heather, *Play & Friendships in a Multicultural Playground*, Australian Children's Folklore Publications, Melbourne, 1986

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When I was young and had no sense

CHILDREN'S RHYMES, SONGS AND GAMES FROM TASMANIA

Rob and Olya Willis (Forbes NSW)

'When I was young and had no sense I took a girl behind the fence' was the opening line of the first bawdy children's rhyme I learnt in the oral tradition. My age was about six I think and what happened to the girl once she got behind the fence did not mean a great deal to me. I developed a passion for risqué rhymes after that and my memory still retains fragments of songs learnt at school. In later years when I began recording oral history and folklore for The National Library under the guidance of John Meredith he revived my interest in these children's rhymes. John always asked our informants of their memories in this area.

Olya however was raised in the Ukrainian tradition learning many traditional poems but not coming in contact with children's rhymes or games. Possibly the reason for this was that there were no other Ukrainian children of her age group living in close proximity. Her first recollection of rhymes was in primary school when selection rhymes featured greatly in the formation of teams either for sport or in small group games such as elastics.

As a teacher for the past 20 years Olya has come across many rhymes and games, both in infants and primary school. In recent years she has noticed a decline in the learning and playing of these rhymes and games in her school.

On a recent collecting trip to Tasmania, Olya and I were recording Andrew Smith in Hobart. Andrew, who holds a senior position with the Tasmanian Education Department, is at present researching a book on the legendary hillbilly singer and collector of folk music, Tex Morton.

As part of our interview we asked about any children's ditties that Andrew and his wife remembered. They had several songs but suggested we talk with their daughters.

The girls aged 12 and 14 had quite a collection of songs and yarns and two of their friends who were the same age also joined the session. After obtaining the necessary written permission and with the parents present we recorded their repertoire.

We noticed that the content of these recordings contain more material that was relevant to current issues than the material we had learnt in our own youth.

Subjects that are mentioned include drugs, Aids and suicide.

*There's a bear in there
In an electric chair
People with Aids and hand grenades
Open wide commit suicide
It's Playschool*

*Can't cope
Don't mope
There's hope
Smoke dope*

*Aids kill don't be silly
Put a condom on that willy*

Selection rhymes prior to playing a game were a part of our youth and our memories of these rhymes involved racist ditties involving 'Niggers' and toes.

The girls had several of these rhymes where each word would refer to a single person with the last named being 'out'. The verse would then start again.

*There's a party on the hill would you
like to come*

Yes (answer)

Then bring a bottle of rum

Can't afford it (answer)

Then get lost

It dit dog shit

You trod in it

The macabre has had a place in children's fairy tales, verse and song. The girls did not disappoint us with this version of a national song.

Waltzing Matilda

Who bloody killed her?

Lying on the grass

With a dagger up her arse

And yes risqué rhymes are still there. This particular verse would have been around for several years as Mr Presley's demise was in August 1977

Elvis Presley girls are sexy

Sitting in the bath tub drinking Pepsi

Went to the movies saw some boobies

OOOOOOH - Sexy

Another rhyme mentioned by the girls was a version of one I had learnt in my younger years in the late 1950's referring to the age of consent. The interesting part was that in my youth the 'acceptable' age was 16 - it has now dropped to 12. An interesting reflection on how times have changed.

Olya and I are aware of the amount of children's material that is transmitted through print and asked the girls several times during the interview where they learnt their material. On all occasions they answered that they had picked it up from other friends and relations by word of mouth.

Thank goodness children's folklore is still alive and well, and we have been motivated to pursue this very important aspect of Australia's culture. We will continue to record children's folklore during the course of our interviews for The National Library of Australia.

Reference copies of any audio tapes for research are available through the Oral History section of The National Library of Australia.

Contact the reference Librarian

HPECHENI@nla.gov.au

WHEN BOYS DID NOT PLAY HOPSCOTCH

Erik Kaas Nielsen, Denmark

A long time ago, when I was a boy at the beginning of the 1930s, I was puzzled, like other boys, by many of the games the girls used to play. It applied both to those in the school yard and to those in the yard at home. For instance, as boys we did not understand why the girls were so preoccupied with their hopscotch exercises, which seemed to us very queer and mysterious. We could certainly see that hopscotch required precision and balance and in addition some complicated rules and expressions, which we never learned to understand. Hopscotch games required

patience and constant practice, and there was always waiting time for the other two or three participating girls, and as a boy one thought there were more exciting games to spend one's time on. What we did not know was that there were boys who also played hopscotch. It happened secretly in certain backyards, and it took place quite openly in village schools - even in school breaks!

At rare intervals it might happen that a boy, in lofty contempt of girls' hopscotch and with that reflex that exists in boys' legs, kicked the glass stone that a girl

had just hopped to the place where it ought to be. But such behaviour had to be advised against in every way. There were rumours about girls who had become furious and thrashed the back of the presumptuous boy, so that the hopscotch stick - a broomstick - was dashed to pieces. The hopscotch stick was in fashion in the 1930s, and girls were allowed to lean on it, but good and skilful hopscotchers did not use it.

If someone had told us that hopscotch actually had started as a boys' game more than two hundred years ago, we would possibly have believed it, but it would not have changed our opinion of hopscotch as a curious schoolgirlish game.

Not until I was a grown-up did I learn to see what was so fascinating about girls' hopscotch games. About 1960 a new kind of game, never seen before, arose. The girls who practised the game called it *Tvillingehop* (Twin Hopping), and it was done without hopscotch stones in a double row of squares, or sometimes a triple one, drawn contiguously. The exercise, as the name indicates, was performed by two girls, and their hopping one on one leg and their other movements were completely synchronous: one hop on the right leg and perhaps a twitch backward with the left leg in the first field, then two hops and two twitches in field no. 2, three hops and three twitches in the third field, and so on, after which they hopped back to the first field with the same movements, but with one hop and one twitch less with each field on their way back. Then they started on a new course with the addition of a new movement besides the twitch, and that happened with each new tour. And all the time the movements were extremely precise and exactly synchronous.

In the following years the girls' interest in this fine choreographic exercise diminished, and I have not observed it subsequently. But as long as it was practised, it was performed with elegance and precision in Copenhagen and its suburbs.

My real understanding of hopscotch with its many fine details and mysteries, however, did not occur until 1971. This year the children's magazine *Pondusposten* carried out a nationwide collection among children of hopscotch games, including the diagrams they used. By agreement with Dansk Folkemindesamling (Danish Folklore Archives), to whom the material was handed over after the closing of the collection, I had occasion to analyse the descriptions and drawings received, as I shall expound below. A provisional result was a radio talk in 1972 with the title taken from some of the names of the hopscotch figures: "Drunken Man, Sun, Star, and Paradise" (Kaas Nielsen 1973).

HOPSCOTCH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the case of Denmark it is difficult to say with certainty when children began to play hopscotch in the special diagrams that belong to the activity. No doubt hopscotch games have come to us from abroad, particularly from Germany and Great Britain, as one may take it for granted that hopscotch was played in the eighteenth century as mentioned above. The oldest known detailed description of a hopscotch game is from 1846, when it appeared in a topographical publication on the town of Aarhus and Aarhus Diocese (Hübertz 1846:4021). The hopscotch figure was called *Hopskok*, which was used in Aarhus in 1837. This form of hopscotch was described by "a well-informed little person from first or second class". The person, who was a boy, wrote or told about other games too, which makes him or at least the editor a kind of pioneer, as it is no doubt the first time a child in this country had the opportunity to describe his games in print. Of *Hopskok* it is stated:

THIS GAME CAN BE PERFORMED BY TWO OR MORE PERSONS. FIRST YOU TAKE A FLAT STONE, GOOD FOR THROWING. YOU THROW IT INTO THE FIRST BED, HOP IN AND ON ONE LEG YOU PUSH THE STONE OUT WITH YOUR TOE. AFTER THAT IN THE SAME WAY IN THE OTHER FIELDS. AT THE LINE SEPARATING DENMARK AND NORWAY YOU TURN AROUND. IN THE FIRST AND LAST HOURGLASS AND IN HELL YOU ARE ALLOWED TO STAND ON BOTH LEGS. IF YOU THROW THE STONE IN THE WRONG BED, MAKE A WRONG TURN, OR IF THE STONE HAPPENS TO LIE ON ONE OF THE LINES OR COMES OUT AT THE CORNER OR AT THE SIDE, YOUR TURN IS OVER, AND YOU MUST WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT ONE HAS MADE A MISTAKE. IF YOU CAN GO THROUGH THE WHOLE *HOPSKOK* THREE TIMES WITHOUT MAKING MISTAKES YOU HAVE TO HOP THE STONE BACKWARDS OUT THE FOURTH TIME.

In a note the editor adds: "The stone must always pass the line a b; if it passes at another place, a mistake has been made, and another one may try his luck" (*ibid.*).

The editor J.B. Hübertz (1794-1855) was a highly respected doctor, who beside his professional work edited several topographical publications. In the notes to *Hopskok* he supposes that the game received its name from English Hopscotch, and he thinks that he did not see the game before 1832, when he came to Aarhus. Later he saw boys playing hopscotch in Copenhagen, where the game is called Paradise, and as far he recollects also in Aalborg. He does not remember having seen the game elsewhere (*ibid.*).

Soldat og Paradis (Soldier and Paradise). Sketch by J.T. Lundbye from July 1847. The word *Hoppenskok* or

Koppenskok is no doubt the name of the diagram used by the girls. The original sketch measures 21 by 26.4 cm.

In July 1847 the painter Johan Thomas Lundbye (1818-48) made a sketch of children at play in the town of Kalundborg. The picture shows four girls engaged in playing *Paradiis* (old spelling of the word for Paradise), while three boys in the background play soldiers. Furthermore, a man in the background is observing the children's game. He has a crutch in his folded arms, and perhaps he is a disabled ex-serviceman. The persons in the background are vaguely sketched, and it is above all the girls at play that the artist has concentrated on and depicted with many fine details. No doubt Lundbye saw a contradiction between the boys' playing soldiers and the girls' hopping Paradise. The title of the drawing, "Soldier and Paradise", might indicate this. Under the title the artist has further written *Hoppenskok* or *Koppenskok*, which in my opinion must be the name the girls used for the game. It is remarkably similar to the name that Hübner's young informant used in Aarhus, and a similar name may have been applied in Kalundborg. The hopscotch figure, which Lundbye just sketched, resembles the hopscotch figure from Aarhus.

Johan Thomas Lundbye is considered one of the finest painters of the so-called Golden Age and is especially known for his paintings of the landscapes of North Zealand and for his drawings of animals. In the introduction to his first diary he wrote: "What as a painter I have had as my aim in life is to paint my dear Denmark, but with all the simplicity and modesty that is so characteristic of it" (Madsen 1961:18). His little drawing, whose original is painted with sensitive watercolours, conforms well to this aim.

In the patriotic enthusiasm that had possessed the nation at the outbreak of the war in 1848 Lundbye volunteered. Just a few days later, however, he was killed when a pyramid of rifles overturned and he was hit in the head by a shot (*Dansk biografisk leksikon* 1974-84).

HOPSCOTCH ON THE COPENHAGEN RAMPARTS

In 1869 a long article on hopscotch games was published in the New Year's issue of the magazine *Fremtiden* ("The Future"). The title was "Paradiis", and the article had drawings of the hopscotch diagrams and description of the way to play the games (Andresen 1869:118ff).

Beside the description of the hopscotch game that the author himself had played in his boyhood, there was

also a report of some hopscotch games he had observed in London. The article was written by Albert Andresen (1834-1913), who was educated as an actuary and later as Master of Engineering at the Military High School. When the article was published, he was teacher and inspector at Borgerdydskolen in Christianshavn (*Dansk biografisk leksikon* 1974-78).

As a boy he went in for hopscotch games with his peers on the ramparts around Copenhagen. The time was probably the middle of the 1840s when Copenhagen was still surrounded by ramparts, and the place was one of the footpaths in this territory. It was still guarded by the military, but admission must have been rather free as the citizens could walk there, and children often played in the area.

Referring to the drawing reproduced in the article (Andresen 1869:120), the author says that the squares or beds with numbers were called *diser*: 1st *dis*, 2nd *dis*, 3rd *dis* etc. The names are derived from the word paradise, he thinks, as *Paradiis* was the name of the whole hopscotch figure. The square field A was Hell, the circular field B was Heaven, field C was called the Hat, and D was the Chimney.

He finds good agreement with the names Heaven, Hell, and the name of the game Paradise, as he thinks the game must be of Catholic origin.

First the players decide who is to start the game. This is done by means of a competition to find out who is able to throw a stone next to the circular field Heaven (B). The way in which the hopscotch is played closely resembles the *Hopskok* from Aarhus since a flat stone is used, which is successively thrown into the different beds. With every throw the participant hops on one leg to the bed with the stone, pushes it out again, and then he hops on one leg to the place from where he threw the stone. In certain beds he is allowed to stand or rest on both legs across a dividing line - between beds side by side as 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 9 and 10, plus 11 and 12 - or across a diagonal at beds 6 and 7. In beds 5 and 8 only a hop on one leg is permitted.

The game has its own terminology with expressions such as *nips*, *fur*, and *rør* or *snup* as appellations for the different ways the foot can push or lightly kick the stone.

Reprinted with permission from 'Hopscotch games in Denmark: A report on tradition and innovation with a brief look at other Scandinavian countries', ARV Nordic Yearbook of Folklore 1999, Editor Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, Åbo (Turku). Published by The Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy, Uppsala, Sweden.

LETTER FROM BILL SCOTT

WARWICK, QLD, 13 AUGUST 1999

Please find enclosed sub for next year. About the mention of hoops on page 10 (last issue): at Caboolture in the thirties we certainly had and played with hoops. The local blacksmith would make one for you from three-eighths steel rod, bend it in a circle and weld it on the anvil. They were about a metre or perhaps a little more, and he charged sixpence. If you weren't rich, you used an old tyre instead. We ran for miles patting a tyre ahead of us. I remember how dirty my hands got from the exercise! Like kites and marbles, the 'seasons' came and went.

The 'Old Tremone' is wonderful, a lovely cross between the 'Little Red Hen' traditional tale, ('I'll eat it myself', said the Little Red Hen) and the Cutty Wren song, which someone once told me originated in the days of the Peasants' Revolt! We may never discover just who were meant by Millder, Malder, Festle and Fose and John the Red Nose, but there seems little doubt about their aggression, especially John! And of course the Wren was 'King of the birds' and hunted as such and carried in procession annually. So perhaps the Cutty Wren was a blanket name for King and nobility and Landlords. A nice problem of cross-fertilisation. I've never encountered the Old Tremone song anywhere myself, and I mean anywhere in the literature or the field. Thank you. Hope all goes well for you and the work continues to flourish.

Telling it like it was, telling it like it is: the Maxine Ronnberg Folklife Program

SUSAN FAINE, DIRECTOR, VICTORIAN FOLKLIFE
ASSOCIATION INC.

PAPER PRESENTED AT *TALES OF THE CENTURY ORAL
HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 1999*

The late Maxine Ronnberg was a great lover of folk music. She had an encyclopaedic knowledge of tunes and lyrics, having collected in country Victoria in the 1960s. For many years, she served as secretary, archivist, newsletter editor and president of the Folklore Council of Australia, an organisation with which she had been very closely involved since its early days in the mid 1960s.

In 1995, the Folklore Council of Australia disbanded, and the members decided any remaining funds should be directed towards a program that would both honour Maxine Ronnberg's contribution to the study and collection of folklore, and stimulate young people's interest in it.

This idea was brought to the Victorian Folklife Association, an organisation established in 1991 to protect and promote the folklife - or 'unofficial' - heritage of the people of Victoria.

The Association receives a small annual grant towards its operations from Arts Victoria. Government policy precludes the Association applying for specific project funds from the same department, so any project and marketing funds must either be drawn from the core grant, or raised externally. Furthermore, the current State arts funding categories do not cater to folklore research.

The Maxine Ronnberg project, with a small sum of money attached to it, was an opportunity to set up something, to innovate without the constraints and shackles of government funding programs. There was never any question in our minds about doing it, it was a matter of how - how to make the most of the opportunity; how to get lots of people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to participate.

Basically, this is what we proposed: a biennial schools-based program, directed at the upper levels of primary school, in which students work in groups to research and collect information on a specified folklore subject, and put their findings into illustrated book format.

Why a schools-based program? Because that way we could reach as many people as possible, and the program would have a more equitable framework. Why in groups? Because folklore is about people, and communities. Why the book format? Because it combines their research and creativity in a format that is within everyone's reach financially, and conceptually. Why that age? Because the methodologies fitted into the curriculum and standards framework for arts, studies of society and the environment and English at that level, and because the students would be mature enough to research on their own while still involving other members of their families or communities.

A group of folklorists, educators and others came together to fine-tune the methodology, timing and promotion. The theme for the inaugural program needed to be broad and accessible; we settled on 'Traditions in your local community'. There had been talk about using families as the hub, but we preferred community as it could be interpreted as family for those who wanted this focus. After all, not everyone has family to draw on. Students were encouraged to interpret 'community' in different ways - schoolyard, church, family, municipality etc.

Attached to the Maxine Ronnberg project idea was \$5000, the balance of the money held by the Folklore Council at wind-up. Given how little money we had, and the fact that we wanted to run the program more than once, how best could we promote it? What sort of information should be sent out, and to whom? As part of its commitment to the program, the VFA allocated my time as project coordinator, and several committee members contributed unstintingly of their time and ideas. We drew together a 'working group' of folklorists - Gwenda Davey, June Factor, Heather Russell, Judy McKinty, Steve Bullock - and a representative from the Education Department (Gabrielle England). We had intermittent input from the Ethnic Schools Association, Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools, mainly to do with the project timing and help with promotion.

Much thought went into the content, style and format of the promotional material and the publicity strategy. After all, by and large, we were selling a new program - and a new concept - folklife. We wanted it to look and 'feel' contemporary, inviting; to be attractive both to the more conservative members of the community as well as to the more liberal-minded, fit with our own corporate image, and most importantly, be easy to read and follow, and inexpensive to distribute.

At the beginning of Term 3 in 1997, 1000 fold-out leaflets were produced, and posted to those who expressed their interest after reading about the program in small items in The Age newspaper, the Ethnic Communities' Council newsletter, advertisements in Vic School News, and Agora, the journal of the History Teachers' Association. We had very little money for advertising. Attached to the program were prizes which were to be awarded to the schools, and every participating student and school was to receive a certificate.

Entries were due mid 1998. 33 schools expressed interest in participating. Remarkably, they were evenly distributed between the private and state systems, between metropolitan Melbourne, outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. Of these 33, just 5 finally participated. Why so few? Apparently our timing was not good, as second term is a busy term for reporting, school theatre productions etc.

Working in groups of 3-6, the 165 students involved produced 32 illustrated books in which they recorded their findings. Different schools went about things in different ways: in some schools, the teacher chose the subject matter, and every group in the class treated that subject. This wasn't a good idea, because apart from restricting the students' ideas on folklore, it meant it was harder to assess the projects individually.

It was clear from the entries that some teachers had not grasped what we were asking them to do - and it became clear from conversations with a couple of these teachers, and the work they submitted, that they had contributed their students' existing work rather than working specifically for the program. Yet the entry form had been quite specific. It provided a definition of folklife, suggested some topics (handcrafts, cooking, traditional games for example), methodologies such as oral histories and interviews, observations, photography, the use of local archives, and so on; and gave examples about how a book might be created. The difficulty was not so much with the topics that were chosen, but the way they were treated, and researched. Students were also asked to include with their book a statement about their methodology, and what they thought they had learned from the project. This is what some of them said:

'I learnt how to cooperate in the groups I was in. I learnt...how to share ideas and talk about them..'

'The thing I learnt most was cooperating with people in my group and working things out by saying we will take it in turns.'

'Our group was a bit loud because we talked a lot but we still worked. We shared ideas and listened to each other.'

continued on next page

'I learnt that it is very difficult to share work around because everybody has different skills and things they like doing. However, I learnt that a team is reliant on each other and if one person misbehaves or forgets something the whole group suffers'.

'I learnt how to gather information and put it all together so it makes sense. I also realised that finding the right question to ask to receive the right answers is not as easy as it looks'.

'I learnt that in the survey you can't have no for an answer. Otherwise it will mess up everything. Because you need the information'.

At another school, the students told us more about the information they had gathered rather than about the understanding they had reached through the project processes:

'Well I learnt that younger children like to play imaginary games, like mothers and fathers. Whereas the other children like to play sports. I also learnt that more preps think that play is to have fun where older children think it is to get a break from work and some preps don't understand the importance of a good education.'

'When I went to do my surveying I learnt that I had to be patient with the littler children and the older children responded quicker...'

'I learnt that all over the world children play the same games like marbles, skipping and hopscotch'.

And another student produced the following comment:

'When I first heard about this project, I thought geez, this is going to be boring! Now, it's not so bad. I had heaps of fun writing this book with some of my friends. A big thank you to all parents/friends that helped'.

This comment came from one of the three co-authors of 'Let's Party! A study of family celebrations'. When this book arrived, along with 20 or so others from the same school, I thought - yes! This is it - it is possible!

What was so terrific about this entry? It was obviously their own work. Texts written on the computer were in the students' words and spellings. They had clearly thought about what family celebrations were in their own community contexts, and were telling us about them. Their research stood on its own merits. They illustrated the book creatively, and cleverly, using different media at different times. They had included home-made games - their own creations for the

purposes of this project - a perfumed carnation on the wedding page, and chocolates in the Easter Bunny's pocket. There were picture wheels and windows, and audio tapes. In fact, they described their entry as an 'interactive book'. And it was humorous. To honour their work, the panel of judges created a special category for 'best overall entry'.

All the books were exhibited at the Immigration Museum's resource centre in November - and the children from the two schools which scooped the prizes had a field day looking at them all. They were also featured on ABC TV's Snapshot program. The winning entries were also placed on exhibition at Dromkeen Children's Literature Centre at Riddell's Creek.

Our conclusions have been that this project is certainly worth doing again; that it is an example of how folklore and oral history programs can empower people - not just the subjects, but the interviewers, who really learned so much about themselves, and about different layers of their community, through the processes this project offered them. Clearly those who conducted interviews learned about others' perceptions of the community, even if it was the playground and the schoolyard. They learned that there are other perceptions, that they are worth listening to, and that they have their place in the total that is the community. Through the program we have introduced ideas and methods for relating to the present, to people and to their past, to half a dozen teachers, and their students.

We are preparing another round of the Ronnberg Project for 2000, with the theme Traditions of Childhood. We are rewriting the brochure to make it more explicit, using the judges' comments as our guide, and will promote it essentially through the schools which expressed interest last time, as well as through media coverage. We have even less money now, of course, and will gratefully accept any donations - with our offer of tax deductibility!

Of course, the most obvious research to spring from this project would be interviews with primary school teachers about oral history and folklore...With the recent acquisition by Museum Victoria of the Australian Children's Folklore Archive, perhaps we can look forward to more institutional interest in folklore and oral history, and in young people.

Notes from Korea

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is playing a major role in efforts to safeguard folk traditions all around the world. In 1989 the General Assembly of Unesco passed a Recommendation on safeguarding traditional culture and folklore, and during 1999 Unesco conducted a series of regional seminars to consider the implementation of the 1989 Recommendation.

At present, the preservation and revitalisation of traditional folk culture is one of Unesco's major priorities.

Many individual countries are also taking initiatives in this regard. In October 1999 the Korean National Commission for Unesco invited representatives of 9 different countries to a week-long training workshop in Seoul and on Chindo Island to study the Korean system of 'living human treasures' and to discuss the preservation of traditional performing arts. As a member of the Cultural Network of the Australian Commission for Unesco, I was invited to attend.

Korea is a fascinating and challenging place for a folklorist to visit. The population of the Republic of [South] Korea is almost 45 million, somewhat more than double the Australian population, and I found it useful to bear this in mind during my visit to the country. Korea also has a very different and tragic history. It was colonised by Japan from 1910, regaining independence in 1945 but with partition of

the country into North and South Korea in 1948. The Korean War between North and South raged between 1950 and 1953.

Not surprisingly, Korea has an acute sense of its national identity, nowhere more obvious than in its attention to its traditional cultural heritage.

The scale of this attention is

astounding,

for example, the complex of buildings which constitutes the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts in Seoul seems to be on the scale of the

Sydney Opera House.

The system of Living Human Treasures, which also operates

in Japan, is of great interest. A Living

Human Treasure in Korea is often

referred to by the alternative and to some

Koreans, preferred, term of 'holder of

intangible cultural property'.

Once an individual is so

designated, they receive a monthly stipend of approx

SUS800. If a group, rather than an individual, is

designated, the members will receive half this amount,

as also will trainees working with the Living Human

Treasure. Living Human Treasures are ensured of being protected by the government in time of war, armed conflict or similar emergency. Living Treasures have obligations to pass on their skills and to provide public

continued on next page



Pictures: Cultural experts from Japan, Korea and Vietnam remember childhood traditions. Photos: G. Davey.

performances or exhibitions. An indication of the national commitment to the continuation of traditional heritage is that persons training with Living Human Treasures may be exempt from compulsory military service. During our participation in the October Workshop we met two Living Human Treasures, a traditional flute (taegum) player and a shamanic ritual musician.

There are a number of other Korean organisations, foundations and government departments which are concerned with the maintenance of folk traditions. The National Folk Museum is housed in a former palace and has permanent exhibitions of traditional folklife as well as various special exhibitions, performances and projects. At the time of my visit in October 1999 the extensive grounds around the National Folk Museum included a display of hundreds of scarecrows; some authentic scarecrows made by farmers and some made by schoolchildren. Schoolchildren were also engaged in playing traditional games such as skipping, hoops and whipping tops.

The paper which I presented to the October Workshop in Seoul discussed 'protecting and revitalising intangible cultural heritage in Australia', and I spoke about some of our difficulties. The following is a quote from my paper:

How can one describe Australia's intangible cultural heritage, in our complex and young multicultural society, where for many years this heritage has been poorly understood or documented? Surprisingly, perhaps, Indigenous cultural heritage is better recognised in Australia than non-Indigenous culture. It is a major irony of Australian life and history that our Indigenous

people, on most important social indicators such as health, housing, infant mortality and land ownership, are greatly disadvantaged by comparison with the rest of the Australian population, yet their traditional cultures have been intensively studied and documented, virtually since the beginning of white settlement in 1788.

To demonstrate some aspects of Australia's non-Indigenous traditional cultural heritage, my paper described the Moe Folklife Project, carried out in Victoria's most multicultural town, Moe in Victoria's brown-coal-mining La Trobe Valley in 1995. I showed slides of a few examples of storytelling, handcrafts, foodways, children's games, customs and celebrations, and music and dance, from several different ethnic groups in Moe. The children's games included string figures or Cat's Cradle, and these photographs caused a considerable stir of recognition and enjoyment in my audience. Subsequently, in a few minutes' break from our crowded program, I asked some of my fellow participants to show me some of the string figures they could remember from their childhoods, in Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Zimbabwe, and the photographs in this issue of Play and Folklore are the result. Children's folklore has truly many universal features!

I have written a report on my participation in the October Workshop in Korea, and have made a number of recommendations for the preservation and revitalization of our intangible cultural heritage. This report will be discussed by the Cultural Network of the Australian National Commission for Unesco at our next meeting in March 2000.



UNESCO 1994 Children's art calendar. Guo Zheng, 11 years (China) "Skipping-Rope" (picture from back page of calendar)

Note from Vietnam

Keith McKenry
(Canberra)

[On a recent visit to Vietnam] I saw - as in India - a number of traditional children's games, including jacks, hoppy and elastics. Shuttlecock is also very big, and a new game (well, new to me) which blends the skills of shuttlecock and soccer, in that they attach shuttlecock-type feathers to a weighted tube, about 8 inches long, which is then kicked around in a small circular group from player to player, without touching the ground, much as you see kids here doing with soccer balls. Sadly, I didn't manage to get photos of this game...

THE CASE OF SIR MICKA DORA

Kathryn Marsh

This paper discusses aspects of a recent ethnomusicological study of preservation and renewal in children's playground singing games. The study, conducted over a period of six years in an urban Australian elementary school, involved the audiovisual recording of more than 600 playground singing games in natural and elicited contexts and concurrent unstructured interviews with 139 performers, aged between 5 and 12 years. Analysis focussed on processes of transmission and variation of these games, the factors influencing these processes and the interrelationship between them.

Preservation is a prerequisite for enculturation, the process by which definitive aspects of playlore are instilled in the children who perform it. In this process, children act as arbiters of appropriate practice, ensuring the maintenance of tradition (Riddell, 1990). Games, for example, may be preserved for an extensive period of time, in some cases over several centuries. These games, however, are rarely preserved intact. While identifiable aspects of the games, such as sections of text or clapping patterns, remain in use, others change. Thus, a game which may be identified by its textual elements in earlier collections, is unlikely to be identical to that performed by children in other times and locations, although researchers may draw parallels and identify them as the same entity. This change frequently occurs both as the result of deliberate processes of innovation and through the processes of transmission.

Children's playground singing games are transmitted predominantly, though not exclusively, through oral means, from child to child. Changes which occur through transmission processes affect the three integral elements of children's playground singing games: music, text and movement. Theories of oral transmission and performance have been concerned with the ways in which oral forms are both produced and reproduced in performance, having been transmitted from one performer to another or from one performance to another. Characteristics of orally-

transmitted forms of performance have been discussed by Lord (1960, 1995), Treitler (1974, 1986), Ong (1982), Edwards and Sienkewicz (1990), and Rubin (1995) among many others.

As part of an active oral tradition, children's playground singing games are composed orally by means of combining culturally-predetermined formulae, a formula being defined as a standardised pattern of sounds which will evoke an implicit meaning for those within the culture (Lord, 1960). Such formulae are seen by Ong (1982) as mnemonic devices, the repetition of which is necessary for the maintenance of knowledge in oral cultures.

The processes of oral transmission and composition are interconnected. The performer "learns one melody and . . . imitates its pattern in inventing another like it. At some point his [sic] inventions do not refer back to the model of concrete melodies but are based on his internalised sense of pattern" (Treitler, 1974, p. 360). These internalised patterns comprise a "generative matrix" which, when used by successive performers over a succession of performances, results in many variants (Treitler, 1986, p. 46).

Also inherent in oral composition is the notion of "composition in performance" (Lord, 1995, p. 11), described by Edwards and Sienkewicz as a form of recreation in which performers draw on traditional resources rather than rote memorisation. These resources include "the shared expectation of the overall pattern of the performance; the use of formulae . . . ; of special language, music and metre" (1990, p. 13). These "structural props" (Edwards and Sienkewicz, 1990, p. 13) enable performers to simultaneously create and perform.

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SAR MACKA DORA



(Note: x denotes words which are spoken)

This song is a singing game:

1. Children sit in a circle with hands touching the hand of the child on either side, palms upturned. Childrens' right hands should be on top of the neighbouring hand and left hands underneath the neighbouring hand.
2. While singing the song, children "pass the beat around the circle" to the left, each child tapping her neighbour's right hand with her own.
3. The child who is tapping on the words "ch-ch-ch" taps the rhythm or pattern of the words (3 taps) instead of the beat.
4. On the number "3", the child who is about to be tapped tries to withdraw his hand. If he avoids being tapped, he remains in the game. If he is tapped, he is "out". (Teachers may use their discretion in deciding whether to incorporate this elimination aspect into the game).

Source:

The singing game was collected in the playground of Boronia Park Public School by Ruth Doyle. The ethnic origins of the song are unknown, as it is characteristically composed of nonsense words and has been passed orally from one group of children to another. Similar nonsense versions of the same game have been taught by Macedonian and Italian children in other Sydney schools. Children's playground games from various cultures can provide a rich source of material for teaching musical concepts.

The nexus between composition and performance results not only in original deployment of formulae, but also in new references to contemporary material, persons, issues and events, which change with the circumstances of each performance: "Performance is thus dynamic, never static, and changes from one occasion to the next" (Edwards and Sienkiewicz, 1990, p. 218). Thus, to view preservation and change in such musical forms as dichotomous is problematic. Waterman (1993) defines cultural continuity not as a "stasis, but as a recursive process" (p. 51) in which traditional forms are constantly reinterpreted in performance in reaction to different performative situations. The reproduction of a structure thus becomes its transformation.

Aspects of both preservation and renewal in children's playground singing games are examined with particular reference to the game genre *Sar macka dora*. This game is characterised by considerable textual and melodic variation but is clearly identified as belonging to its genre by the relatively stable movement pattern which is reflected in its rhythmic characteristics. Variants of the game have been found in many countries, including Canada and the USA (Harwood, 1993, 1995), the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Czechoslovakia, Croatia (Doekes, 1992; Doekes and Van Doorn-Last, 1993) Israel and the UK (Grugeon, 1998). Variants have also been collected by the researcher in two Australian cities hundreds of kilometres distant from the focus school. Multiple factors, including immigration, appear to be responsible for transmission on such a large scale (Marsh, 1997). Several examples of the game, collected in one inner city primary school in Sydney are included below.

In this school, transmission practices have been influential in determining the degree and forms of variation in performances of this genre. Transmission of the game has occurred through oral means in the playground but also through teaching of a standardised form of the game in the classroom. This standard version has been preserved in audiovisual form in a teaching kit (Marsh, 1988) distributed on a state-wide basis. The continued transmission of the game through classroom teaching has led to increasing dominance of one text and melody over a period of time. At the same time, the idiosyncratic movement characteristics of the game have ensured

that variation within designated textual and melodic forms has continued through playground transmission. In this genre, the relative stability and simplicity of the movement formulae seem to allow for greater melodic complexity and variation. External sources of melodic, textual and movement material, particularly from children of different schools entering the school population, also continue to exert influences of change on the performance practices of this game.

Classroom teaching has apparently contributed to the greater valuing of this game among children of both sexes for the duration of their elementary schooling. This was one of the most popular games in the playground and was one of the few playground singing games which continued to be performed by children in the latter years of elementary school, its reiteration in the classroom curriculum in Kindergarten and upper elementary years providing a validation of its performance by both younger and older children. The intersection of playground and classroom cultures can be seen in this instance to have had positive outcomes for the playground tradition.

This paper has been submitted for consideration for the 24th ISME World Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in July 2000. Kathryn Marsh, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

SM 93 1 AV

Performers: Manu, Clara, Joanne,
(Tara, Thuy, Carrie)

$\bullet = 165$

Musical score for the song "Son performer fe - ri - o fe - ri - o fe - ri - o". The score is written on two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics "Son performer fe - ri - o fe - ri - o fe - ri - o" are written below the bottom staff, aligned with the notes. The word "performer" is written above the first note of the bottom staff.

Musical notation for the first staff of the song. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, and a quarter note A4. The lyrics 'Ley - a ley - a' are written below the staff.

Musical notation for the phrase "Ley - a ley - a tap tap tap". The notation consists of two staves. The top staff is a five-line staff with five 'x' marks indicating finger positions. The bottom staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written as follows: a quarter note on G4 (labeled '1'), an eighth note on A4 (labeled '2'), a quarter note on B4 (labeled '3'), a quarter note on A4 (labeled '4'), a quarter note on G4 (labeled '5'), a quarter note on F4 (labeled '1'), a quarter note on E4 (labeled '2'), a quarter note on D4 (labeled '3'), a quarter note on C4 (labeled '4'), and a quarter note on B3 (labeled '5'). The lyrics "Ley - a ley - a tap tap tap" are written below the bottom staff, aligned with the notes.

One two three

Standard two person clap
in last iteration.

Up unni up

SM 90 1 AV

3rd of 5 iterations

Performers: Tony, Julie, Amira, Rafael, (Jorge, Roland)

$\text{♩} = 130$

Indefinite Pitch Throughout.

Recorded: Primary Playground 5/12/90

Up un - ni up un - ni up un - ni up

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff has four vertical lines with no notes. The bottom staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. The lyrics 'Up un - ni up un - ni up un - ni up' are written below the notes.

Up un - ni up un - ni up un - ni up

The second system of musical notation is identical to the first, with two staves and the same sequence of notes and lyrics.

Ley - o ley - o tap tap tap

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff has four vertical lines with no notes. The bottom staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. The lyrics 'Ley - o ley - o tap tap tap' are written below the notes.

Ley - o ley - o tap tap tap

The fourth system of musical notation is identical to the third, with two staves and the same sequence of notes and lyrics.

One two

The fifth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff has four vertical lines with no notes. The bottom staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. The lyrics 'One two' are written below the notes.

Much intervening feinting movement and comment occurring for approximately 35 beats.

One Performer Feinting continues for approximately 10 beats.

Two three

The sixth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff has four vertical lines with no notes. The bottom staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. The lyrics 'One Performer Feinting continues for approximately 10 beats.' are written below the notes. The word 'Two' is written below the first note, and the word 'three' is written below the last note.

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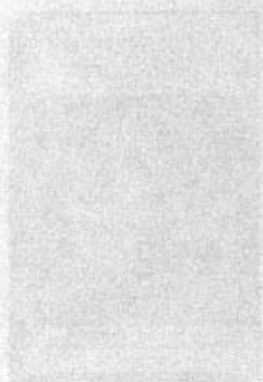
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Play and Folklore

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