



Alice Marshall Moyle
(1908–2005)

Alice Marshall Moyle (1908–2005)



Alice Marshall Moyle was born in South Africa but spent most of her life in Australia. She graduated from Melbourne University in 1930 with a Bachelor of Music, from Sydney University in 1954 with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and in 1957 with a Master of Arts, and from Monash University in 1975 with a Doctor of Philosophy. She was also awarded the degree of Doctor of Music (honoris causa) from both Sydney University (1989) and Melbourne University (1995). In 1977, she was appointed Member of the Order of Australia and, in 1994, Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. A festschrift in her honour, *Problems and Solutions: Occasional Essays in Musicology Presented to Alice M Moyle*, edited by J Kassler and J Stubington, was published in 1984. Dr Moyle was elected Honorary Life Member of the International Council for Traditional Music in 1995 in recognition of her services to the Council and to ethnomusicology, and was further honoured by the establishment of the annual Alice Moyle Prize in Musicology at the Australian National University and the annual Alice Moyle Lecture of the Australasian Sound Recordings Association.

Alice Moyle's extraordinary life is documented in detail by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in its *Alice Moyle Online Exhibition* and in the Institute's library. Readers are referred to this source for further details.

Dr Moyle was one of three pioneering Australian scholars of Indigenous music, along with Professors Catherine Ellis and Trevor Jones. Each contributed to this field in her or his own way. Unencumbered by regular teaching duties, Moyle spent more time doing fieldwork than Ellis or Jones and over a wider geographical range, which included central Australia, the Kimberleys, Arnhem Land and Cape York. Most of her career in ethnomusicology was spent as a Research Fellow of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) Studies (AIATSIS), and she had ready access to the Institute's press through which she published a dozen or so record albums of Aboriginal music. Documentation (in the broadest sense) of Aboriginal music was an important aspect of Moyle's achievement, through voluminous field recordings, published recordings and other publications, the establishment of the Sound Archive at AIATSIS, the compiling of *A Handlist of Field Collections of Recorded Music in Australia and Torres Strait* (1966), the 'Computerized Index of

Australian Aboriginal Song Words' and the 'Computerized Index of Aboriginal Songs: Cape York Area'. She also researched historical records, tracking down nineteenth-century recordings of Tasmanian Aboriginal music and of central Australian singing made by Baldwin Spencer, as well as recordings made by the Haddon Expedition to the Torres Strait. She also studied rock art depictions of Aboriginal performances.

Alice Moyle's ethnomusicological career spanned the beginnings of several scholarly movements in which she played a significant role. Ethnomusicology itself was in its infancy when she engaged in her first field research in 1958–59, the Society for Ethnomusicology having been established in America in 1955. Moyle corresponded with leading international figures in that field and attended several international conferences, and played no small part in establishing ethnomusicology in Australia. She was the Australian Liaison Officer for the International Folk Music Council (later International Council for Traditional Music—ICTM) for many years until an Australian National Committee was established in 1988. Moyle was a founding member of the Musicological Society of Australia (MSA) when it was first established in Sydney in 1960, its National President in 1982–83, and the first Chair of the ACT branch of that organisation. Alice Moyle was a founding member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (later AIATSIS) and attended its inaugural conference in 1961. She also played a significant role in the International Association of Sound Archives (later International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives) both internationally (she was a member of the Cataloguing Committee and participated in international conferences) and nationally (as Editor of the Australian National Branch Newsletter).

Alice Moyle worked at AIAS until she was 70. She continued as an Honorary Fellow until she was 88, carrying out further fieldwork, analysing, publishing and organising. It was during this period, in 1988 at the age of 80, that she organised an ICTM Colloquium in Townsville in association with the Festival of Pacific Arts. The Proceedings, edited by Moyle, were published by Oceania Monographs in 1992. She was still planning a major publication on Groote Eylandt music, in collaboration with linguist Judith Stokes, when she was forced by ill health to retire to Sydney in 1996 to be nearer to family members and where she died peacefully at the age of 96. Her ethnomusicological career spanned 38 years, from age 50 at the time of her first field trip to age 88.

Alice Moyle left a remarkable legacy of documentation, scholarship and organisation that will continue to influence the study of Australian Indigenous music for generations. It was a remarkable achievement in half her adult life.

Stephen Wild