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# Womad sparkles into life

## Groups share musical greetings

**John Anthony**  
john.anthony@dailynews.co.nz

A kaleidoscope of cultures gathered at Owae Marae yesterday to share in music, dancing, laughter and food.

Four busloads of Womad artists were welcomed to Taranaki yesterday with a powhiri at the Waitara marae signifying the beginning of the three-day festival.

The 200-odd guests were greeted on to the marae with a rousing haka by Manukorihī Intermediate School students.

The sound of a pukaea, a traditional Maori trumpet, echoed through the grounds as Rahotu man Horomona Horo answered the call of the kuia and led the artists to the whare.

The pukaea is symbolic in Maori culture, he said.

"It's the spiritual voice to awaken the spirits so we can all gather as one.

"It signifies the inter-weaving bond between all cultures," Mr Horo said.

Maori leader Wharehoka Wano said it was a privilege to have the Womad artists at Owae Marae.

"You bring your land, culture and songs to us and we're honoured.

"On behalf of our sea, the land and our mountain we acknowledge you," Mr Wano said.

In response to the host's welcome Mr Horo gave a speech in Maori on behalf of the artists.

In his message he expressed condolences to people who were experiencing hardship caused by the earthquakes in Christchurch and Japan, he said.

"I was paying homage and giving a lot of respect to the families down in Christchurch.

"While we're playing our music we send our support down to them and also to the people of Japan."

After another stirring haka the

floor was open for the performers to introduce themselves and share a song.

Arabic group Rango had few words to introduce themselves but plenty of song and dance to share.

The Cairo-based collective delve deep into the folk music of their spiritual homeland of Sudan.

They take their name from a 200-year-old "spirit-talking xylophone."

It is believed when this xylophone is played the music evokes the spirits of their ancestors.

The Mana Maoli Collective from Hawaii spoke from the heart in their native language, most of which the fluent Te Reo Maori speakers could understand.

Band member Kaleilehua Maioho said they acknowledged how Maori and Hawaiians shared the same "umbilical cord".

"We were recognising our ancestors and that we are one in the same.

"We're only separated by the ocean," Ms Maioho said.

She said when she looked into Maori people's eyes she could see the faces of her family.

Canadian Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq, who comes from a land where the mercury is currently sitting around minus 65 degrees Celsius, gave a passionate rendition of one of her unique numbers.

She was moved by the fierceness and warmth of the haka and decided to reciprocate the gesture.

"It's a combination of love and defence and attack.

"I felt like returning that in a loving way," Ms Tagaq said.

Other musicians from across the globe including Pakistan, India, Israel, Germany, Mali, Malaysia, and the Pacific Island nation of Kanaki all shared their personal greetings through song.

As the ceremony came to an end and the sun began to set the artists sat down to enjoy hangi.



**Show time:** Womad artists Hassan Bergamon [left] and Kahlil Jackson from Egyptian-based band Rango perform a song during a powhiri at Owae Marae yesterday.

Photo: CAMERON BURNELL