

**BIOSONG FREESTYLE (November 23, 2022) So Much Unknown**

*. . beginning, possum fur string, ever-travelling,  
tip appearing, wafting, possum-fur string, wafting,  
woven spiritual essence, beginning, possum-fur string . .*

Translation of a fragment of a Yolngu (North-East Arnhem Land) Aboriginal song cited in *The Musical Human: A History of Life on Earth* by Michael Spitzer.

*Some years ago I had the privilege of meeting two young women from a remote Arnhem Land community who were brought to Sydney to receive an award. They were quite bashful and shy, and awestruck at their first sight of a city, but not at all unfriendly. Their chaperone (and teacher) had read some articles I'd written during her University studies and wrote to ask me to join them for a couple of hours. At the end they invited me to visit their 'Homelands.' That was a special honour, I was told. But, sadly, very sadly, I didn't ever go. I also listened to a tape recording of some songs their people sang.*

Fellow human beings, we are the same,  
Yet how can I begin to understand the simplicity of what we have in common?  
We laugh, and listen, and agree. We smile. How wonderful is smiling?  
On a city street, we are together in time. But what about our histories?  
I thought about this later.  
You are direct descendants of the oldest living civilisation.

Our meeting was, to me, like fragments of a song.  
I've heard that your ancestors sang the stories of your people,  
Over and over, for, probably, 60,000 years. No written record,  
Just the sound and feeling of the songs.  
The songs I had heard, I could not understand. What did they mean?

There was singing in my history, too.  
The earliest known written verses were said to have been sung.  
Our ancient, extinct, relatives, the Neanderthals, apparently sang a lot.  
The ancient rock carvings are in resonant caves, beside relics of bone flutes.  
To Spitzer (in his book): there is something 'irreducibly human' about our songs.

We must have made them from the natural 'rhythm and harmony of heaven and earth,'  
But, with our larger brain and by standing on two legs (so we could dance),  
We made them into our mind's 'signature.'  
Life and music are movement and time  
Embodied as meaning.

That meaning is in my feelings;  
I know fragments of the song,  
So much is unknown.