

Sesere eeye

Traditional song from the Torres Strait Islands

Clap, turned to the left side

Crook left elbow and look left

Clap, turned to the right side

Actions hands/arms

feet

Melody

Harmony 1

Harmony 2

Se-se-reee-ye se-se-reee-ye nar in ar__ in a ro-par-te Se-se-reee-ye se-se-reee-ye

Se-se-reee-ye, se-se-reee-ye nar in ar__ in a ro-par-te Se-se-reee-ye, se-se-reee-ye

Se-se-reee-ye, se-se-reee-ye nar in ar__ in a ro-par-te Se-se-reee-ye, se-se-reee-ye

7

Crook right elbow and look right

Crook left elbow and look left

Crook right elbow and look right

Clap low left

low right

high

hop on right & bend left knee

hands & arms

feet

Melody

Harm. 1

Harm. 2

nar in ar__ in a ro-par-te. Ro-par-te mar-ow-si am-ma te se-se-re ee-ye.

nar in ar__ in a ro-par-te. Ro-par-te mar-ow-si am-ma te se-se-re ee-ye.

nar in ar__ in a ro-par-te. Ro-par-te mar-ow-si am-ma te se-se-re ee-ye.

12

Crook left elbow and look left

Crook right elbow and look right

Left hand on right shoulder and scoop right

Pat shoulders (4 times)

hand down to end up on left shoulder

Bounce heels (4 times)

hands & arms

feet

Melody

Harm. 1

Harm. 2

Ro-par-te mar-ow-si am-ma te se-se-re ee-ye

Ro-par-te mar-ow-si am-ma te se-se-re ee-ye

Ro-par-te mar-ow-si am-ma te se-se-re ee-ye

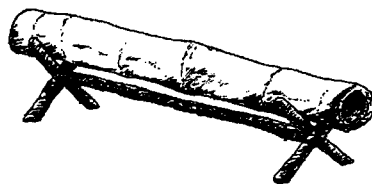
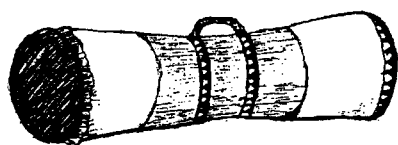
Music of the Torres Strait Islands

The Torres Strait Islands are situated between the northern most tip of Australia (Cape York Peninsula) and Papua New Guinea. There are more than one hundred tropical islands in the Torres Strait, about a fifth of which are populated. The indigenous Australians who live in the Torres Strait are of a different cultural and genetic origin than mainland aborigines, having strong links with the Coastal Papuans to the north. Despite ongoing cultural and trade relationships with the Papuans, Torres Strait Islanders have developed their own special lifestyle and culture.

Although traditional Torres Strait Island music virtually disappeared with the arrival of Christian missionaries in 1871, a modern style of music which is strongly Polynesian in origin took its place which has developed over the past 130 years into a unique singing-based musical culture. Island Song (as the locals call it) consists of a rich heritage of song for both adults and children dealing with matters of everyday life – fishing, weather, the sea, the behaviour of animals and insects, domestic life and agriculture.

Most Torres Strait Island songs are short, and are traditionally repeated three or four times. Songs are normally sung by groups rather than individuals, and improvised harmonization is inherent to the style. Torres Strait women and girls sing with a strong nasal quality, while the men and boys sing with a more mellow sound. Western performers of Island Song should aim for a bright energetic sound in most songs.

Melody playing instruments are not generally used in Torres Strait Island music. A guitar is sometimes used in informal music making, although not for ceremonial song and dance occasions. Percussion instruments are traditionally used to accompany the songs, the most common being the “warup”, an hour-glass shaped low sounding drum skinned on one end, the “lumut” a bamboo log drum, played with thin bamboo sticks and the “gor”, a rattle made of halved bean-like seeds.



The warup, played with the hand, gives the basic pulse for the song, sounding mostly on the strong beats of the bar. The lumut normally provides a constant semiquaver (sixteenth note) subdivision to the beat, with an accent at the start of each crotchet (quarter note) beat. The gor is held by the dancers and reinforces their hand movements.

Dances are traditionally either “stand-up” dances which are performed in lines, or “sit-down” dances which are performed in circles. In stand-up songs most leg movements are simple steps on alternate feet and small jumps or hops. Arm movements are claps, or a series of actions which generally reflect the text of the song. The use of props such as spears, fish traps and gors (rattles) is common in stand-up dances.

A valuable reference for those wanting further information about Island Song is “Children’s Songs of the Torres Strait Islands” by Frank A. York (Owen Martin Publications 1990 ISBN 0 908540 56 6) Frank York’s Three Modern Folk Songs of the Torres Strait Islands, arranged for SSA (or SA) Voices and Piano are also published in the Young Voices of Melbourne Choral Series.

Sesere eeye

Sesere eeye is from Moa Island, and is about the wind, and the effects of the wind blowing on the mountains. This version was taught to the Sydney Children’s Choir by Australian indigenous music performer and teacher Matthew Doyle.

As is traditional, *Sesere eeye* should be repeated at least three or four times, perhaps in unison the first time. The harmonies indicated are suggestions only, and singers should feel free to improvise further parts. A unison (or simple two part) performance by young children would also be appropriate. The performance should be full of energy and vitality, with singers dancing while they sing. *Sesere eeye* is a stand-up dance, with actions indicated in the score on two lines – one for the arms and one for the feet. Percussion accompaniment by the warup, lumut and gor (as described above) is most appropriate for *Sesere eeye*. If the traditional instruments can’t be found, other similar instruments can be used. Islanders have been known to use empty metal petroleum storage drums in place of the lumut!