

60s," recalls Mr Vercoe, "from the Ngata collection of *Nga Moteatea*. They were in our catalogue for many years. And we made a record of waiata sung by Rangi Dewes. But of course, they were all some time ago now."

What of the future? With the resurgence of interest in all areas of Maori culture, Tony Vercoe expects the recording scene to change. "It begins to look like the revival will extend to musical recording, and I would welcome it. I don't delude myself that there's commercial potential in it, but I feel it's important to have such records available."

This process has already begun. Some time ago Sam Karetu of Waikato University felt that his group, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, had reached a standard of quality which deserved an airing on record. Furthermore, their repertoire included a wide range of items, new and old. He sent a "demonstration tape" to Kiwi-Pacific and asked for their comments.

"I was delighted when he approached us," says Tony Vercoe. "Here was a young group (mostly students) with talent and enthusiasm. Apart from the usual standards they also had old traditional chants and waiata and weren't afraid to try something new."

In due course a date was set to make a recording. The chosen venue was Tuwaerea, the dining hall of Hui te Rangiora marae in Hamilton. It was a good choice as the acoustics are good and Te Whare Wananga have performed there before and felt comfortable in familiar surroundings. Enough material was recorded to fill two albums, and the choice of material was significant.

Half of it was in a traditional vein, either old songs or newly composed by Sam Karetu. He had reservations about performing old items: "We tried to select material which has become 'common property'. If it was still exclusive to a tribe we wouldn't record it. Another danger about recording an old item is that it may inadvertently become **the** version."

Their traditional repertoire includes the Ngati Raukawa patere "Poi atu taku poi", never before recorded, and the

Waikato lament "Takoto ana mai". On the modern side they recorded such well-known songs as Te Puea Herangi's "E noho e Ata".

Te Rita Papesch-Huata, a leader of the group, says without false modesty, "I reckon our group handles traditional music really well; we prefer doing it to modern music, and we prefer to do our own."

"No one can fault us when we do our own," adds Sharon Harawira, another group member. "Although we try to be traditional, we have a modern approach — we can't handle the half-notes of our koroua and kuia."

The new material they speak of includes, for example, a waiata a poi about urbanisation and pollution and a haka complaining about those old people who criticise but will not teach or correct. Continues Sharon, "Sam keeps our enthusiasm going. He's a prolific composer, and there's enough going on in Maoridom for him to write about."

Te Whare Wananga o Waikato deserve credit for their energy and creativity. But there are bound to be other groups around New Zealand trying to achieve the same objectives: the difference is that Sam Karetu and his group have done something about it. Perhaps your group deserves a break. Have you considered getting a tape together and sending it to a recording company? Have you delved back into our rich past for ideas or experimented with new themes? Or are you like a worn-out needle, stuck in a groove and playing the same things over and over again?

Te Whare Wananga o Waikato at Hui te Rangiora Marae. Sitting in the middle of the second row is Sam Karetu. The group has recently returned from a tour of Tahiti, Hawaii and the United States.

