

Paronella Park: Music, Migration and the ‘Tropical Exotic’

Annie Mitchell

Southern Cross University

The history of Paronella Park is a tale of migration from Europe to far north Queensland; underscored by the music of a diversity of cultures that weaves a rich tapestry through this narrative; set to a backdrop of tropical wilderness in the rainforest of Mena Creek, via Innisfail. Jose Paronella arrived in north Queensland, Australia from Catalonia, Spain in 1911; where he spent many years working as a cane cutter. In 1929 he bought thirteen acres of land on Mena Creek to fulfil his dream of creating a Spanish castle and tourist resort. By 1935 Paronella’s dream had become a reality, with the completed construction of *Paronella Park*: a Spanish castle, picnic area, ballroom, movie theatre, hydro-electric power system, tennis courts and botanical gardens. Paronella Park became the cultural hub of the Mena Creek-Innisfail area, providing entertainment in movies, dances, balls and theatre. North Queensland was a base for Allied Service personnel during World War II, so musical activities increased greatly during this time with Australian and United States soldiers frequenting Paronella Park on rest and recreation. From this heyday, Paronella Park has survived destruction by cyclones and floods, fire, years of neglect, and finally restoration of much of the property. Over the past decade, Paronella Park has won extensive tourism awards. In 2010, to commemorate Paronella Park’s 75th anniversary, the musical *The Impossible Dream* was written and performed in Cairns. This paper traces the musical history of Paronella Park, investigates the cultural and musical activities performed there, identifies the bands and musicians who played at Paronella Park, their musical styles and repertoire, discusses the contribution of Paronella Park to tourism in north Queensland, and evaluates the influences of Spanish culture and music on the identity of the Mena Creek community. Music and lyrics from *The Impossible Dream* are transcribed and analysed to correlate their musical links to entertainment at Paronella Park during the 1930s and 1940s and identify Spanish influences in the musical score. The research also evaluates the impact of *The Impossible Dream* on recent tourism at Paronella Park, investigates current musical entertainment at Paronella Park and its potential for future development.

This research addresses themes of James Cook University’s *Tropics of the Imagination* Conference:

- i) voyage and migration: Jose and Margarita Paronella’s journey from Catalonia, Spain to Mena Creek, via Innisfail,
- ii) labour and work: entertainment and musical activities performed at Paronella Park, its musicians and their repertoire,
- iii) metropolis and wilderness: building a Spanish castle, resort and botanical gardens in the tropical wilderness,
- iv) ethnic subjectivities: influences of Spanish culture and music on the identity of Mena Creek community,
- v) avant-gardes in the tropics: an analysis of the musical *The Impossible Dream*, and
- vi) the ‘tropical exotic’.

Paronella Park’s contribution to tourism in tropical north Queensland, and the timeless appeal and ambience of music, heritage architecture, natural beauty and romance.

1. Theoretical Background

The relationship between tourism and music is a significant area of creative arts research. The scholarship of Gibson and Connell (2005) investigates cultural tourism, musical landscapes, sites of creativity, performance and production, relationships between tourism and culture, the contribution of music to tourism and travel, and associated issues of identity and authenticity. Richards (2011) also explores this theme of ‘creativity and tourism’. From this research, themes of distance, ambience, heritage and nostalgia emerge; all of which resonate with the story of Paronella Park. Jose and Margarita Paronella, both Spanish migrants, contributed greatly to the cultural development and growth of tourism in north Queensland. They developed a musical landscape that replicated the culture and heritage of Catalonia in the north Queensland rainforest, nurtured the creative potential of this site through musical and theatrical performances, and disseminated this creative arts practice to generations of local visitors and tourists. Smith (2009) examines issues of cultural heritage and tourism and the growth of creative tourism. The distinction that Smith (2009, 245) identifies between the passive consumption of traditional cultural tourism and the more interactive participatory nature of contemporary cultural tourism is exemplified in the engagement by the local community and tourists in the entertainment that was offered by Paronella Park. Today, Paronella Park is a model of cultural heritage and also creative tourism.

The Paronellas were self-employed active members of the local community who enjoyed the camaraderie of Australian, Spanish, Italian and other migrant families. The multi-cultural nature of the Mena Creek community reflects issues that have been researched by Hania (2011), such as migrant workers and employment, relationships between members of migrant groups, their relationship to the host community and the concept of human mobility. Contemporary themes in tourism research such as ecotourism and sustainability, researched in the works of McCool and Molsey (2008) and Charters and Law (2000), have been fundamental to the ethos underpinning the conception, operation and restoration of Paronella Park.

The aim of this research project is to investigate the musical history of Paronella Park, determine the types of musical entertainment provided, identify the musicians who played at the park, their styles and musical repertoire. The research explores the relationship between Paronella Park and the multicultural community in which it is situated: the influence of Paronella Park’s musical activities on the cultural development of the Mena Creek and Innisfail communities, and the reciprocal influence of the diverse community groups of Mena Creek and Innisfail on the entertainment profile of Paronella Park. In 2010, the musical *The Impossible Dream* was staged and performed as a musical theatre/dinner show in Cairns, which ran for six months. This paper analyses the score and lyrics of this musical and evaluates the contribution of this musical to tourism in north Queensland. Using Paronella Park as a model of cultural, heritage and environmental tourism, this research relates Paronella Park to contemporary themes in creative arts, music, tourism and travel.

Two research methodologies were used for this project: action research case study and musicological analysis. Research expeditions to Paronella Park were undertaken to observe the buildings, resort, museum and current tourist activity. The author also investigated historical and archival documents about Paronella Park from its inception in the 1930s to the present day. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted with family members, local community members, musicians who had played at Paronella Park and the current owners/managers of Paronella Park.

The music of *The Impossible Dream* was researched by conducting interviews with the musicians involved in composing, creating and performing the score of this musical. Aural analysis and transcriptions of the soundtrack recording of *The Impossible Dream* were conducted, supported by musical analysis of the score with particular reference to the musical characteristics of instrumentation, rhythm, melody, harmony and improvisation. Observation of a live performance of *The Impossible Dream* completed this musicological analysis method.

2. Voyage and migration to the tropics

Jose Paronella arrived in Sydney from Spain in 1911, aged twenty-four, then travelled to north Queensland. In the early 1900s, north Queensland was a very remote and isolated area of the far north-eastern coast of Australia. Its tropical rainforests, sugarcane farms, cattle and horse grazing lands were geographically and ecologically far removed from Paronella's Catalanian homeland. The nearest major town of Cairns with a population of approximately 3,500 was one hundred kilometres away. The remoteness of Mena Creek was exacerbated by its two thousand kilometre distance from Queensland's capital city, Brisbane, situated in the south-eastern corner of the state.

Paronella spent years cutting cane, working tin mines and buying property. On his return to Spain in 1924 he married Margarita Soler, his former neighbour. Their honeymoon consisted of a tour of Europe where they scouted Spain for architectural ideas; the architecture of Gaudi, Barcelona's Park Guell for its staircases, columns and turrets; the Alhambra's fountains; plus castles, gardens, tourist parks, cinemas, ballrooms, cafes and hydro electricity schemes. The cultural and architectural heritage of his homeland inspired Paronella's dream of replicating a Spanish-style castle, tourist resort and botanical gardens in the north Queensland wilderness.

3. Labour and work in the tropics

Paronella bought a thirteen-acre property at Mena Creek and used the available natural resources to construct his buildings: timber, gravel, sand and clay from the property and creek and metal from discarded mill railways. The rugged terrain this task very difficult. A Grand Staircase of forty-seven steps had first to be constructed to allow the building materials to be carted up from the creek. Jose and Margarita's domestic cottage was completed by Christmas, 1931. The following year saw the completion of the park's first entertainment venue, The Café By The Pool and Small Pavilion, boasting a roof-top balcony where musicians could play for dances. By 1934 Paronella had completed his Spanish Castle, including a Museum, and a hydro-electricity scheme generated from Mena Creek Falls that bordered his property. The hydro-electricity scheme powered the buildings, but also generated lighting for the whole property, turning it into a Spanish fairyland and creating an exotic and romantic ambience attractive to night visitors. The most ambitious building project was the hall, which would function as a ballroom, cinema, theatre and reception centre (Leighton, 2007, 53). This Spanish-designed building, which could hold hundreds of canvas seats and featured black bean parquet floor for dancing, plastered walls swirled with Jose's handprints, and a revolving 1270 faceted mirror ball (ibid.), was completed in 1935. The ballroom held over four hundred guests (ibid., 64) and contained an orchestra pit. The hall was the park's prime entertainment venue, accommodating wedding receptions, balls and regular dances, social functions, parties, concerts, theatres and cinema. Movies played in the

cinema were preceded by short documentary films made by Jose Paronella about the park; an early form of tourism video-marketing. Daytime tourist activities at Paronella Park included tours of the park, cultural festivals, nature walks, viewing gardens, swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, tennis, butterfly spotting and school sports days.

4. Metropolis in the tropics

During the 1940s, a different type of voyage and migration was imposed upon north Queensland. With the outbreak of World War II, north Queensland became the base for approximately one hundred thousand Allied servicemen. This exponential increase in the region's previously sparse population greatly enhanced Paronella Park's potential and prosperity as a tourist resort. Paronella Park, a European-style metropolis in the Australian wilderness, became an extremely popular destination for troops on rest and recreation. "To war-weary servicemen Paronella Park seemed like a mirage, a dream Spanish Castle and Gardens growing so incongruously from the tropical vegetation. So beautiful, so unusual, so fascinating – and so peaceful" (ibid., 78). Entertainment was provided by bands of four-five local musicians who played for balls and dances. In the jazz Swing era, popular dance tunes included hits by Glen Miller, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington and other big bands.

Jose Paronella played traditional Catalan songs on guitar; his son Joseph played boogie-woogie piano. However, these pursuits were usually family activities, not guest entertainment. Jose's daughter Teresa, who worked in the resort, also played piano. Her playing was so popular with the homesick American servicemen that they helped her in the kitchen so she was able to finish work early and entertain the guests. Her repertoire consisted of popular tunes of the day; jazz, dance and old time.

5. Ethnic subjectivities in the tropics

Mena Creek's population comprised a rich diversity of cultural groups: Spanish, Italian, Maltese, Greek, German, Yugoslav, Chinese (ibid., 52), Hungarian, Irish, Anglo-Australian and indigenous Australian. Most people were employed in cane farming, dairy farming and forestry. There was a very large Italian contingent and about thirty local Spanish families (ibid., 67). This ethnic diversity was reflected the cultural activities and entertainment at Paronella Park during the 1950s and 1960s, most of which centred on music and dancing. Bands of local Italian, Greek, Spanish and popular musicians were booked to play for dances and balls. Paronella Park also hosted festivals for these different cultural groups, where musicians played the traditional music from their cultures. As many older people only spoke in their native language they liked to hear music and songs in their own tongue. Valentina Crump, married to Jose and Margarita's son Joseph Paronella, who lived and worked at Paronella Park from 1952-1976, attests to extraordinary success of these social functions and affirms the popularity of the local dance bands, particularly the Italian bands. The Italian musicians played accordion, piano, guitar, drums, saxophone and also sang. Teresa Paronella's husband, Pino Zerlotti was Italian and taught people how to dance. Local bands that performed at the park during this era included the Italian bands *The Blue Stars* and *The de Roma Boys*. *The Blue Stars* were led by Albert Lanzafame; their line-up consisted of saxophone, piano accordion, drums and vocals. Their repertoire was based on old-time dance music catering to the older generation. Later the band included keyboards and a bass player. *The de Roma Boys* were a trio of local farmers; Ross de Roma on saxophone, Joe de Roma on drums and Joe Calli on guitar.

Cairns' first electric guitar band *The Fireflies* played at Paronella Park from 1961 to 1970. This band with lead and rhythm guitars, bass and drums specialised in instrumental guitar-based rock and roll of the day and surf music. Their repertoire was influenced by *The Shadows*, *The Ventures* and Duane Eddy. The band's membership included John Suez and Tom Duffy of Atherton. To satisfy the demand for dance music at Paronella Park, *The Fireflies* created original arrangements of big band music into a repertoire of waltzes, Pride of Erins, barn dances, gypsy taps and other old-time dance forms performed by their popular instrumental ensemble. The Chinese band *Three Blind Mice* was a trio comprising well-known north Queensland musicians Junior See Poy (saxophone), Bernie Lee Long Snr. (piano) and Brian How Kee (drums) who performed popular dance tunes, hit parade songs and some jazz. At times they were joined by well-known local multi-instrumentalist, Paul Zammit. Some of these bands also used the ballroom for music recording.

The large Greek community that lived around Innisfail celebrated weddings, dances and festivals at Paronella Park, using musicians from their Greek community. They also showed Greek films in the park cinema. However, due to the spread of television in the 1960s, the cinema closed in 1965. The connection of generations of Mena Creek residents to Paronella Park is apparent as one of the performing bands of this time, *The Marauders*, included Sam Pappalardo. Decades later, his daughter Ros Pappalardo, performed the role of Margarita in the 2010 musical *The Impossible Dream*.

6. Wilderness in the tropics

The story of Paronella Park is not only a tale of extraordinary human achievement and creative endeavour, but also a narrative of resilience and overcoming adversity. The vibrant cultural life of this micro-metropolis has been punctuated by a series of disasters inescapable in the natural wilderness. In the violent wet season of February 1946 the resort was extensively damaged by floods. "Within the short space of 40 minutes, Jose's dream of a Spanish Castle and Pleasure Grounds had been turned into a scene of total devastation. ... Nature had made a mockery of one man's attempt to build a dream in a tropical rainforest" (ibid., 85). The rebuilding effort took two years, shortly after which Jose Paronella died. However, the park continued under the management of his wife and family. Joseph and Valentina Paronella and their sons Jose and Kerry operated Paronella Park until its sale in 1977. A series of short-term managers followed and the activities and popularity of Paronella Park declined. The park was also extensively damaged by significant natural disasters: fire (1979), Cyclone Winifred (1986), Cyclone Sadie (1994), Cyclone Larry (2006), and Cyclone Yasi (2011). Extensive restoration of the buildings and grounds has been conducted by the current owners and operators, Mike and Judy Evans, who bought Paronella Park in 1993. Their successful tourism and marketing business strategies have resulted in Paronella Park receiving numerous state and national tourism, heritage and business awards, leading to an increasing number of tourists visiting the park. Musical activities at Paronella Park since 1993 include concerts, operettas, private parties, corporate functions, wedding receptions, a Broadway-type show and an indigenous dance troupe. Mike and Judy Evans extended Paronella Park's cultural and tourism palette by commissioning the musical theatre show, *The Impossible Dream*.

7. Avant-gardes in the tropics: *The Impossible Dream*

Paronella Park continues to inspire creative works in literature, music, theatre and dance in the twenty-first century. The musical *The Impossible Dream* was commissioned to commemorate Paronella Park's seventy-fifth anniversary in 2010. Two iterations of a play entitled *The Impossible Dream* preceded this musical. *The Impossible Dream* play, for which Greek musician Irene Vella wrote the music, was performed by JUTE Theatre in Cairns in 2005. A year later, Australian actress and theatre owner, Diane Cilento reawakened the play and commissioned Cairns musicians Nigel Pegrum and Mark Mannock to rewrite some of the music and make the score more authentically Spanish. They did this by supplying segues and interludes and creating an anthemic closing song. The play was staged at Karnack Playhouse, Diane Cilento's theatre near Miallo, in north Queensland. To commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of Paronella Park in 2010, Mark and Judy Evans commissioned a new score, more like a theatre restaurant. The play became a tourist dinner-show entertainment and ran nightly in Cairns for six months from 24th July 2010 until 22nd January 2011.

The score of the musical *The Impossible Dream* Song is a mixture of Spanish, classical European and contemporary musical styles. Composers Nigel Pegrum and Mark Mannock collaborated with the play's scriptwriter Philip Witts to turn some of the script into workable song lyrics, rather than poetry or script set to music. They used song lyric-writing techniques such as rhyme and metre and changed the vocabulary to be more song-like. Lyrics were chosen to reflect the nature of the narrative's Spanish and Australian characters. This new play, *The Impossible Dream* included Margarita's song *The Garden Song* and the grand finale *Dreaming of Love*, which, according to Pegrum, sums up the story and uplifts the audiences to leave on a happy, positive note.

Spanish musical elements of the score include the instrumentation of castanets, nylon string guitars and piano accordion; Spanish rhythmic influences are characterised by Latin dance rhythms, flamenco strumming and repeated rhythmic flourishes; and melodic nuances feature the Phrygian mode to give a Spanish effect, add mystery and exoticism. Guitarist/bassist Giles Smith emulated the acoustic timbral character of Spanish music by playing nylon string guitar and double bass. Smith constructed improvisations based on Phrygian modes and harmonic minor scales and also substituted the major 3rd interval in Phrygian modes instead of the minor 3rd (1, b2, 3, 4, 5, b6, b7, 8).

Transcription 1: D Phrygian mode with major 3rd



Smith also employs Django Reinhardt style improvised minor runs suitable for two fingers, e.g. 2-b3, 5-b6, 7-8. This run derivates from the Phrygian mode by using a major 7th.

Transcription 2: two-fingered ascending run on D



Keyboardist Bob Howlett selected keyboard sounds to emulate orchestral instruments such as strings, brass, woodwinds, an oboe sound for pastoral sonority and a harpsichord sound for a classical effect in *The Garden Song*. Howlett constructed improvisations based on the

Phrygian mode and the harmonic minor scale. He also improvised with the harmonic minor scale a perfect 4th above the chord (e.g. using F harmonic minor scale over C7 chord). By playing the scale notes F G Ab Bb C Db E over a chord constructed of C E G Bb, this scale application alters the chord to contain a perfect 5th, a flat 13th which is the enharmonic equivalent of an augmented 5th and a flat 9th.

Transcription 3: Scale-harmony application

The diagram illustrates the application of the F harmonic minor scale over a C7 chord. It shows the chord notes (C, E, G, Bb), the F harmonic minor scale (F, G, Ab, Bb, C, Db, E), and the resulting altered extended chord (C, E, G, Bb, Ab, Db, Eb). The scale degrees in ascending order are listed as 1 3 5 b7 b9 11 b13 (#5).

In the opening song *Doesn't Seem Too Much To Ask* Giles Smith played nylon string guitar and double bass. Musical characteristics of this piece include flamenco strumming, repeated rhythmic flourishes and repeated melodic phrases. Spanish melodic flavours feature in improvisations constructed from Phrygian modes and harmonic minor scales.

Transcription 4: Opening guitar riff in introduction

The diagram shows the opening guitar riff in the introduction of the song. It features a D chord and a melodic line in 4/4 time, consisting of eighth and quarter notes.

The harmonic basis of this song oscillates between the chords D Eb/D (EbM7) D. The linear semitone movement of this chord progression reinforces the Phrygian modality which is characteristic of Spanish music. Smith voices these chord in small three-string shapes, again like Django, Whilst Reinhardt's heritage is from Belgium, Romani and France, not Spain; his eclectic style embraces characteristics of a diversity European musical cultures; a style therefore appropriate to the eclectic cosmopolitan nature of the music played at Paronella Park. Synthesised horn lines enhance the Spanish flavour of this track as trumpets feature significantly in Spanish instrumentation.

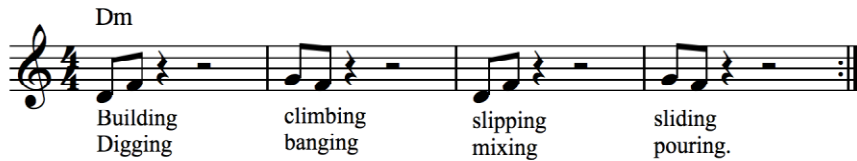
The track *Resistance Is Useless* exhibits a more contemporary style, opening with a descending moving line harmonic progression (Bm, Bm/A#, Bm/A, Bm/G#) set to a Bossa Nova dance rhythm.

The lyrics of *I'd Rather Be In Paris* reflect themes of voyage, migration and labour as Jose sings "In Mourilyan you meet folk from every nation, making new lives for themselves and future generations" (Witts, Mannock and Pegrum, 2010). The inherent issues of isolation, toil and social dislocation are espoused by Margarita: "I'd rather be in Paris, every day a celebration, than shipwrecked on some southern shore, praying for salvation" (ibid.). Margarita reiterates these sentiments in the chorus of *The End of the World*: "Lost and alone and quite out of reach, where the tropical rain meets the tropical heat, my future behind me, loneliness all around me, the end of the world is at the end of my street" (ibid.).

Jose's ethic of labour and work in the tropics is depicted in the chorus of *The Building Song*. The collaborative nature of building work is exemplified in the scoring of this chorus for male ensemble, which juxtaposes Spanish and Australian characters and caricatures. The song pivots on im (Dm) and bVII (C) major chord progression. The physical drudgery of

their labour is characterised by vivid word painting, setting the action verbs to a monotonous rhythmic and melodic ostinato.

Transcription 5: *The Building Song* chorus



Paronella's heartbreak at the destruction of his Spanish castle in the 1946 flood is echoed in *Jose's Lament* where he cries "Even Gaudi, he failed to deliver, his big cathedral, sitting down by the river" (ibid.).

Exemplifying the *Tropics of the Imagination* conference theme of creative writing in the tropics, *The Garden Song* honours Margarita's creation of Paronella Park's beautiful gardens but also depicts her struggle to learn English. Margarita's friend Cynthia taught her the botanical names and English translations of plants to assist her learning new languages. The sub-plot of these lyrics is the friendship between these two women: "We'll take this journey together, one step at a time; this is a garden of friendship, now put your hand in mine" (ibid.). For this track, Bob Howlett selected keyboard sounds to emulate orchestral instruments: strings, brass, woodwinds, and an oboe to achieve a pastoral effect. A harpsichord sound with rapid rhythmic movement punctuated by strings, over a simple harmonic vocabulary of D / C / G / D / suggests classical European Baroque style.

The Ballroom Song comprises a medley of themes from the score. The sounds of piano, strings and piano accordion replicate the mystique, fantasy and romance of Paronella Park's famous ballroom. To underscore the show-stopper scene in the musical where the mirror ball ascends, the music segues into Paronella Park's highly recognisable television theme which has been used as advertising for the past ten years. Written by Pegrum, its style is similar to the Horner and Jennings love theme from *The Titanic: My Heart Will Go On*. The medley finishes with a bossa nova on guitar, piano, muted trumpet and drums over a background of festive revelry, suggestive of accompanying dancers.

Dreaming of Love is *The Impossible Dream's* anthemic finale. The musical's themes of human endeavour, inspiration, collegiality, community, overcoming adversity, toil, friendship and love are affirmed by the lyrics "Dreaming of love, together we stand, together we find our way home" (ibid.). The juxtaposition of struggle and achievement, loss and love, conflict and resolution are word-painted in the introduction's suspended chord motifs: Bb/C (C11) – C, and the plagal cadence F – C of the chorus. The drama of conflict and resolution is emphasised by a descending 9th – 8th string line, creating dissonance with the 9th then resolving to the tonic.

Transcription 6: Dreaming of Love chorus

Strings

Vocals

Dreaming of love

These musical and lyrical devices imbue the score and soundtrack of *The Impossible Dream* musical with characteristic Spanish, European and Australian flavours. They reflect aspects of the style of music played at Paronella Park by Spanish musicians and for Spanish festivals, but also suggest the diversity of other styles essential to the park's musical history. European classical music (western art music), dance music and contemporary popular music are also represented in the score of *The Impossible Dream*. This musical diversity aligns with the eclectic nature of cultural entertainment offered at Paronella Park, particularly in its early decades.

Staging *The Impossible Dream* musical produced an immediate positive effect on tourism at Paronella Park. Mike and Judy Evans reported an immediate increase in visitors to the park and a more varied clientele. Different tourist markets were opened up and new and younger audiences attracted through diversified marketing strategies. Over eight hundred tourism industry representatives attended performances of *The Impossible Dream*, comprising many large group bookings and corporate groups. The owners observed broader recognition of Paronella Park by both the local populace and the tourism industry, testament to the park's credibility as a tourism destination and affirmation of their business strategies and ethos.

8. The 'tropical exotic'

Paronella Park is a location of historical, cultural and ecological significance. The appeal of this Spanish dream to generations of Queenslanders, Australians and international visitors affirms the timeless appeal of the 'tropical exotic'. Paronella Park has inspired several creative works which are listed on the Paronella Park website (2013): *The Girl From Mena Creek*, a novel by Canadian author Grace Bogart; *Love In The Ruins*, a film by Sydney film director Ben Hackworth; *The Silent Woman*, a film by Robert Schmidt who authored the cartoon *Footrot Flats*; *8,000 Balustrades*, a musical by Brisbane playwright John Rogers; and *Lapita (Castle in the Sky)*, an animated Japanese film inspired by the geography and the natural environment around Paronella Park. Its music is used to accompany Paronella Park night tours.

Paronella Park contributed greatly to the growth of tourism in north Queensland, which was a fledgling industry when the park was first built. This was attested to by Queensland's governor, Sir Leslie Orme Wilson who visited Paronella Park as part of the 1935 Commerce Conference held in Innisfail. He stated: "Jose Paronella has created a place of beauty which will be a great attraction to visitors in the future. His buildings are of unique design. The Park is a credit to North Queensland. It is absolutely remarkable to see what one enterprising man can do" (Leighton, *ibid.*, 55). Wilson's recognition of the cultural and financial potential of creative ideas, individual innovation and entrepreneurship resonates almost eighty years later, to an era where creative arts industries are "one of the fastest growing and dynamic segments of the national economy" (Research for a Creative Australia, 2013). The Australian Government's Ministry for the Arts (2013) defines Creative Industries as having "their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent. They have the potential to create wealth and jobs through the generation and use of intellectual property. Creative industries can include

music, performing arts, film, television, radio, advertising, games and interactive content, writing, publishing, architecture, design and visual arts". Over the decades, all of these creative arts have been practised at Paronella Park.

Wilson's auspicious statement about the attraction of Paronella Park to future visitors is affirmed by the numerous industry tourism and industry awards it has received. These include The Steve Irwin Award for Ecotourism (2011), Ecotourism Australia GECKO Award for Ecotourism (2011), Queensland's No.1 Must See Attraction (Royal Automobile Club of Queensland, 2009), No.3 Australian venue for weddings, Queensland Tourism Award Winner for Heritage & Cultural Tourism (2009, 2004, 2003, 2001), The Premier of Queensland's Export Awards – Winner of Tourism Award (2006), Queensland Government Reconciliation Awards for Business – Winner of Emerging Business Category (2004), and Queensland Tourism Awards – Winner of Tourism, Marketing & Promotional Campaign (2001) (Paronella Park, 2013). Paronella Park contributes significantly to the local community by employing thirty-four staff, twenty of whom are locals.

These awards attest to the successful business strategies of the park's current owners, Mark and Judy Evans. They aim to reflect Jose Paronella's vision and intention of developing the tourist potential of the park whilst preserving the buildings and protecting the natural environment. Their future plans include the building of a large reception centre that will expand the number of guests who can attend functions such as weddings, and an Interpretation Centre for the benefit of schools and special interest groups. There are potential opportunities to incorporate music more integrally into Paronella Park's activities, e.g. an entertainment venue to cater for open-air concerts, gigs, more musical performances at functions and staging *The Impossible Dream* at Paronella Park. However, such plans would need to accommodate the logistical challenges of travel from Cairns, weather protection and resourcing.

9. Alignment of research with *Tropics Of The Imagination Conference* themes

The story of Paronella Park and its unique position in the cultural, tourist and natural landscape of north Queensland resonate with the themes of James Cook University's *Tropics of the Imagination Conference*.

Voyage and migration: Jose and Margarita Paronella's migration from Catalonia, Spain to Mena Creek, Queensland was not only a great geographical journey but an immense cultural leap. This voyage epitomises the migrants' faith in their own ability to build a new life; it is a motivational story of independence, self-belief, creativity and energy that is timeless in its appeal.

Ethnic Subjectivities: the narrative of Paronella Park is not only a story of immigration, but a study of local history; the rich ethnic diversity of Mena Creek and the contribution of this multi-cultural community to the artistic development of this region. These subjectivities are underscored by imagination and nostalgia. Paronella Park was created from the imaginations of the Spanish migrants, Jose and Margarita Paronella, who replicated Spanish style architecture, draperies, paintings and garden landscaping in north Queensland and emulated Spanish music and culture as an integral part of Paronella Park's entertainment.

Labour and work: Leighton (ibid., 32) describes Paronella's heritage as "European ideals, belief in hard work and business; in sober behaviour and family values, with no desire to

waste time and money on frivolous pursuits”. Jose and Margarita Paronella, the Paronella family, and Mark and Judy Evans model the ethic of hard work and the discipline required to establish and maintain a business and the hospitality to attract a continuous stream of visitors and guests. Paronella Park has been a site of interdisciplinary creative practice, with activities spanning music, media, cinema, drama, dance, creative writing, education, tourism, botany, environmental science and engineering. Jose Paronella’s original vision to build a Spanish castle, tourist resort and botanical gardens in tropical north Queensland exhibits the innovative and individualistic style of creativity and invention that is a vocational attribute required by contemporary creative industries that fuel the creative economy. Paronella’s entrepreneurial strategies to support Paronella Park by buying and selling cane farms to build a capital base, buying tin mines to provide cash flow, and merchandising services, souvenirs and catering models a contemporary portfolio approach of creating revenue streams to maintain successful businesses; an approach applicable to creative arts and tourism industries. Mark and Judy Evans emphasise the importance of marketing to develop and expand their business using modern methods that are global and diverse. The success of these strategies is verified by the accolades that Paronella Park has won in state and national tourism and business awards under their management and the increasing numbers of tourists.

Metropolis and wilderness in the tropics: Paronella Park was an enigmatic combination of metropolis and wilderness. A Spanish castle, resort and cultural hub were created in the tropical wilderness of north Queensland. Thousands of tourists have visited Paronella Park. It has also been the muse inspiring artists to write novels, plays and musicals and to make films. The backdrop to this creative activity is the natural beauty of the landscape. The Paronellas enhanced these natural resources by creating the botanical gardens, planting an impressive avenue of Kauri pines and planting seven thousand trees. They further capitalised on the natural resources of this wilderness by installing a hydro-electricity plant to generate power to operate Paronella Park. This plant was restored for use in 2009. Paronella Park is an early example of nature tourism, which is now a major sector of the Australian tourism industry. The buildings have been heritage listed and are undergoing restoration. To minimise the impact of visitors and tourism on these buildings and the environment, current tourist and business activities are practised in ecologically sustainable ways; a significant consideration in contemporary tourism and also in creative arts practice.

Avant-gardes in the tropics: Paronella Park was a bold experiment in transporting a Spanish vision and fairytale to the wilderness of tropical north Queensland. It was also an attempt to replicate centuries-old European cultural and social activities in a remote and sparsely populated area of Australia. The imagination and foresight that Paronella exhibited in making his dream a reality are qualities quintessential of the avant-garde.

The ‘tropical exotic’: the appeal of the tropical exotic is affirmed by the continued popularity of Paronella Park as a tourist destination and place of significant cultural and heritage value. Music was an essential element of the activities, development and identity of Paronella Park. Its importance pervades the interviews that were conducted for this research. The musical heritage of Paronella Park has been preserved in the memories of the people who lived at, or visited, Paronella Park when it offered regular musical entertainment. This musical heritage is further preserved in the creative works Paronella Park has inspired, such as the musical *The Impossible Dream*.

The daytime natural ambience of the park, with botanical gardens, paths and walkways, tennis courts and water features, and its night time romanticism of extensive lighting, music,

dancing, theatre and cinema made Paronella Park an extremely popular site for proposals and weddings. This attraction is echoed in the statement by an American serviceman visiting the park during World War II. “It was like something from another world ... I met my wife in Innisfail and proposed to her in the Tunnel of Love. She accepted by the time we reached the other end! I’ll never forget that day” (Leighton, *ibid.*, 79). The fact that Paronella Park is currently one of Australia’s premier wedding venues verifies the ongoing allure of the tropical exotic. Romance is a ubiquitous element in music, migration and the tropical exotic. The musical *The Impossible Dream* reflects the romantic nature of the history of Paronella Park and the romanticised narrative of a lifestyle in remote, regional north Queensland.

Conclusion

This research *Paronella Park: Music, Migration and the Tropical Exotic* contributes to greater understanding of the history of Paronella Park, the cultural and musical activities performed at Paronella Park, musicians who played during this time and their repertoire, the contribution of Paronella Park to creative arts, writing and tourism in north Queensland, and the influences of Spanish culture and music on the identity of Mena Creek community. Further research could investigate the continued development of Paronella Park as a tourist attraction; the potential of Paronella Park as a music and entertainment venue; the alignment of music, the creative arts, nature and tourism in north Queensland; and the contribution of music and the creative arts to tourism and travel in Queensland.

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