

23. 11th Pacific Arts Festival, 2012

The first Pacific Arts Festival was held in 1972 and has continued on a four-year cycle as a travelling cultural event hosted by different Pacific nations. The 11th Pacific Arts Festival, held in Honiara from 1–14 July 2012, was a unique opportunity for Solomon Islanders to highlight and celebrate their cultural diversity. The theme was ‘Culture in Harmony with Nature’. After the ‘Tension’ years (1998–2003), the RAMSI aftermath and the upsets of 2006, the festival provided a chance for Solomon Islanders to show their pride in their nation and its many cultures, and to invite the peoples of the Pacific to join them in celebration. It was a time for unification, an opportunity to build infrastructure and to create long-term cultural, economic and spiritual benefits for artists and communities.

Solomon Islands is rapidly attracting tourists to the beauty of its land, sea and diverse peoples. The 11th Pacific Arts Festival cemented the nation’s place in Pacific tourism. It was also a peaceful event, which brought all Solomon Islanders out onto the streets of Honiara, as crowds walked back and forth every day and evening to the Panatina venue. The opening and closing ceremonies were the highlight of the event. The festival was not only about performance and spectators, it was about participation and nation-building. The 11th festival was an outstanding success and showcased the culture of the nation.



23.1. Preserving culture is about yesterday, today and tomorrow, as these Malitan women displayed. (All photographs in this chapter are from the Pei-Yi Guo Collection.)



23.1. A statue at the entrance gate, holding a sube, a Malaitan club.



23.3. Sculptures on the ridge at the back.



23.4. Santa Cruz Nelo Dancers.



23.5. Amotukunga Tikopian Cultural Group.



23.6-7. Western Province dancers.



23.8. Stone carvings from Ranonga Island, New Georgia Group.



23.9. Wooden carvings for the tourist market, many featuring the Nguzu Nguzu (the stylized head) design once attached to canoe prows, and creatures of the ocean.



23.10. Dance group from Tawatana village, Arosi One, Makira Ulawa Province.



23.11. A group from Rennell and Bellona Province.



23.12. Dancers from from Tawatana village, Arosi One, Makira Ulawa Province., with a large bamboo panpipe.



23.13. Ontong Java women, covered in turmeric.



23.14. The performers and spectators were always colourful.



23.15. The performing stage.