

## **OTEA**

### **Traditional Polynesian music**

Tahiti is the most well-known jewel of the Polynesian Triangle. Consequently, its culture - including its music and dance - is more familiar than that of other islands.

The dances are mainly performed by men and women in a group. The dominant feature of the dances is the movement of the lower-half of the body which is accentuated by the "grass skirts" made of straw. On other islands like Samoa and Tonga the torso and the hands receive the predominant role.

One of the characteristic ancient instruments on Tahiti is the "toere", which is a hand-hollowed, wooden drum carved from the tamanu tree; its size varies from very small to as big as a huge tree trunk. They were used mostly to accompany traditional dances, but were also incorporated to call together the people for tribal meetings. The "average" drum orchestra of Tahiti consists of hollow wooden drums of different size and are complemented by drums made of coconut tree trunks (pahu). The mallets that sound these drums are composed of wood, branches, or roots.

*Otea* is a garland of various dances. It is strung together by the "pig dance" known throughout Polynesia and sounded by yells and growls. "Vocal" elements occur later as well. They make up an integral part of the music, since the drum leader gives signals with his yells; these indicate the changes to the musicians and to the dancers often 40-50 in number. They also answer with assorted shouts.