that all singers or instrumentalists are included in the field of the microphone (better microphones allow you to select the angle of capture according to the size and distribution of the group). Sometimes you may need to adjust the position of your microphone during a performance (e.g. if the performing group moves). If this proves absolutely necessary, try to do it between items, not during, because you will introduce noise.

On the sound-recording device, record at the best quality available (on a digital device, a minimum of 16-bit, 44.1khz is recommended). Pay careful attention to setting levels. Too low, and background noise will become obtrusive; too high, and you risk clipping and distortion of the signal. Unfortunately, many cheap recording devices do not allow you the option of turning off any automatic level control (also referred to as automatic volume control or AVC) on the recording device. Avoiding AVC is essential for musical performances, where there may be large variations in dynamic range. For example, in some of the Aboriginal music genres I deal with, it is normal for a song item to start with just didjeridu and voice, and for much louder clapsticks to enter partway through the song. AVC will boost volume levels (and any background noise) to the maximum allowable during the early quieter section, but when the clapsticks enter, the relative volume of the voice drops away very quickly, making it much more difficult to hear and transcribe. For this music, I set the levels in advance to accommodate the clapsticks, so that each sound source remains at a similar dynamic level throughout the recording. Resist the temptation to adjust levels during a piece, but if you must do so, do it very gradually. It is almost impossible for later sound engineering to compensate for the variations in levels introduced by AVC or tinkering by the operator, meaning that recordings will be unsuitable for reuse for professional quality CD publication or for use in a video soundtrack.

It is important to record complete items wherever possible. Since it may be difficult to predict the beginning of an item, the best idea is to turn the recorder on at the beginning of a musical event and leave it running unless asked not to. You can later edit the recording to excerpt the individual items if required for documentation or reuse. Discussions between items are often of considerable interest, and can provide important context to the performance (Walsh 2007).

Because musical performances typically have a group dimension (multiple performers, dancers, or engaged listeners), there are good reasons to use video. Video documentation can help with later documentation of
p. 176 participants and their ↳ roles, and is the only effective way of documenting entrainment through movement and group coordination to music, including but not limited to dance (Johnson and Snyder 1999; Sklar 2000). Video can also be invaluable for documenting instrumental technique and for clarifying song text transcription in cases where the audio recording is unclear. Unfortunately for the would-be video documenter, in the tropics many performances take place at night, meaning that the quality of video is likely to be poor and perhaps not suitable for archiving.

Dealing with video data in the field situation can be rather difficult because of the large file sizes and the time needed for ingestion of the video data into usable formats for annotation and archiving. Although some video cameras record uncompressed audio, it can also be time-consuming to extract the audio from the video files. If power consumption is an issue in your fieldwork, a more effective use of resources may be to record audio alongside the video, because audio files are comparatively quicker and easier to copy, excerpt, and annotate in the field. In this situation it may be a good idea to call on research collaborators to assist with operation of the two recording devices, because it is difficult to do justice to recording of what may be a one-off event if your attention is distracted by monitoring two recording devices. It can be best to save editing of the video until you are in a situation where you have access to the necessary time and processing power, and plan to work on annotation and documentation at a later stage, or even in a subsequent trip.

When recording movement and dance, it can be useful to document the performance space by use of a sketch diagram and perhaps photos from different angles. Movement annotation systems like Laban and Benesh operate at the level of the complete body, so while close-up shots may be useful for fine details, most