



# Plucked Strings

*Serving the needs of mandolin ensemble players, promoting mandolin ensemble music to the world, stimulating new compositions to enhance the repertoire.*

A Quarterly Newsletter

December 2010

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## President's Report

### Whose Festival is it anyway?

Everyone associated with a FAME Festival likes to say "our" festival at some point or another: the general membership of FAME, the Festival Organisers, the Host Orchestra(s), the 'locals' doing the grassroots work, the players when they arrive and perform, and everyone is correct in one way or another.

However, from the managerial point of view we need to be clear where the responsibilities and liabilities lie, and why. Is the Festival to be a project of a host orchestra (or two) or is the Festival Committee an independent organisation, or is it a sub-set of FAME?

Independent establishment of a Festival is impractical. The Sydney 2008 Festival explored this and dismissed the concept. It is costly and difficult to set up: it would at the very least require registering as a business or even more complex an incorporated body in order to deal with bank accounts, concert and camp venues, insurance needs and other businesses.

I make the observation that a clear and unambiguous decision to establish the Festival Organising Committee as a subcommittee of FAME unrelated to the Host Orchestra(s) will axiomatically mean that a Festival debt is FAME's not the Host Orchestras'.

These relationships are for consideration but are not immediately relevant to our need for some minuted decisions of the members in General Meeting to establish clear procedures and to authorise underwriting expenditure. In turn the Meeting needs evidence from the Festival Organisers that their planning is financially and logistically sound. It is much

better to have these policies written down before a disaster strikes rather than leaving it till mopping-up time.

**The reasoning behind establishing the following procedures was spelt out in my President's Report in the last edition of Plucked Strings. Please re-read them there.**

**The formalities of establishing a FAME Festival.**

There are some sticking points in getting this formalisation established, and their resolution will be put to the membership as four separate questions:

- (1) spelling out the three-step process of establishing a FAME Festival and the concept of the Letter of Agreement as the ultimate stage;
- (2) the acceptance of the Festival Guidelines as they are written currently and of the concept that they can from time to time be modified to meet changing circumstances.
- (3) the question of the sharing of liability for a Festival loss, the outcome of which doesn't invalidate questions (1) or (2), but which will properly give authorisation to the FAME Committee of Management to spend FAME's assets in the process of underwriting a Festival.
- (4) the acceptance of the Letter of Agreement containing the wording as agreed following Motion (3) regarding liability for a loss.

### Setting up a Festival:

The "Guidelines to Assist Organisers of Mandolin Festivals/Camps" are available on the FAME Website. The Expression of Interest is outlined in this document and its detail is spelt out in the preamble to the "Letter of Agreement" (also available on line). The Expression of Interest and the Letter of

Agreement are intended as simple documentary evidence that good planning has taken place and give a reassurance to both the Festival Committee and the FAME Committee and Members that things are travelling on a sensible agreed path.

My Motion (1) below proposes three Steps in the formal establishment of a FAME Festival. As I have already stated, some of this is already carried out by the conventions of FAME's General Meetings, but I propose we clarify the procedure and put a proper statement of intention on the table - an "Expression of Interest" from the proposing Festival Committee - and reply with a formal acceptance by FAME in the form of a "Letter of Agreement". This will provide a clearly documented record for both the Festival and the FAME Committee to work with. The draft of the Letter of Agreement is on the FAME Website. It has been changed since the wrong version was posted last year. Please let us not revisit argument about the incorrect document. The percentage of the Host Orchestra(s)' liability in this document is the subject of a separate motion below. If your beef is with that specific issue, please let us not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Motion (2) is a procedural one: the Guidelines are a list of advice and warnings of pitfalls and were drawn up by a sub-committee of FAME in 2007, and subsequently modified and added to following the 2008 and 2009 Festivals to include the experiences of those events. It is time that the draft Guidelines were formally accepted and with that the ability for them to be modified as circumstances alter without as cumbersome a procedure as that required for a constitutional change.

## President's Report - (continued)

**Making Good a Festival Loss:** The need for a documented process of recognising a Festival Organising Committee and confirming this through a Letter of Agreement is a different point from whether members feel that a "host orchestra" should be held liable for any share of a Festival loss. This question really depends on the degree of answerability that FAME members want to place on the organisation/management team. If FAME is not going to be shown a Festival budget and have some ongoing indication that financial management is sound and that the budget is being adhered to, then it is open to question why FAME should be "the goose who laid the golden egg" if things go awry. (The same argument applies to the relationship between a host orchestra and the Festival Committee). An open-ended guarantee against loss from FAME is a temptation to overspend, especially when there is no requirement to "go public" with the budget.

**But whatever is the wish of the members as a whole to set regarding the proportions of the liability to be met by FAME and by the Host Orchestras, it should be put in writing at a General Meeting.**

**What to do about it:** I am proposing that in order to have a written record of the policies of the FAME members the matter be put to the Auckland AGM in four parts (the Motions are all the text in brown, both bold and plain text. *My commentary is in blue italic*):

**Motion 1) That the establishment of a FAME Festival be made through the following procedure:**

**Step 1:** *This is what happens now. I'm phrasing it as the "first step".* **The Members of FAME in General Meeting will establish a rota of "host regions" that will create a series of FAME Festivals to be held approximately every eighteen months.** Modification of this schedule may be made to enable linking a Festival to a special regional occasion or other circumstance including the inability of the rostered "host region" to hold the scheduled event, bearing in mind that the Election of the FAME Committee of Management and Office-Bearers is intended to coincide if at all possible with Festivals.

**Step 2:** **FAME members in a designated "host region" will establish a committee of interested parties to plan the Festival.** They will work with the "FAME Festival Guidelines" and seek the written support of the "host orchestra(s)" in their Region. **They will prepare a written "Expression of Interest" - a Festival outline, Festival budget, a filled-in but unsigned Letter of Agreement, and written support by the nominating Host Orchestra(s) - to present via the FAME Committee of Management to a General Meeting of FAME members for the members' approval and confirmation that the presenters will be the official Festival Organising Committee.** The personnel of this

Organising Committee may change, but the fundamental plan and budget must be followed within reason: flexibility is acceptable but substantial changes will need the acknowledgement of the FAME Committee of Management.

**If there is to be more than one "Host Orchestra" between which any Festival profit or loss is to be shared, the Letter of Agreement must contain this detail before submission to FAME Committee.**

**Step 3: Depending on the time-frame available, a General Meeting of FAME, or if time is of the essence, the FAME Committee of Management will either approve or reject (with recommendations on how to meet approval) the Proposal. If approved, formal acceptance will be written in the Letter of Agreement, signed off by the representatives of both the Festival Organising Committee and the FAME Committee of Management.**

*It may well be quite difficult for the Festival Organisers to open a bank account without presenting some of these written documents as proof of their bona fides.*

**Motion 2) That the Draft "Guidelines to Assist Organisers of Mandolin Festivals/Camps" be accepted. They will become part of the requirements for planning a FAME Festival or Camp. These Guidelines can be modified by the FAME Committee of Management or the membership in General Meeting in consultation with Festival Planning Committees past present and future to meet changing circumstances.**

**Motion 3) That FAME Members in General Meeting discuss and reach agreement on the percentage of a potential Festival shortfall that should be deemed as the liability of the Host Orchestras. The principle here is to give clear direction and authorisation for the FAME Committee of Management to use members' funds to meet whatever part of a Festival shortfall is agreed as FAME's share of the liability.**

**This agreed percentage share of liability will be written into the Letter of Agreement between Festival Organising Committees and FAME, the Organising Committee writing in the accepted liabilities of the Host Orchestras so that they plus FAME's percentage share total 100% of the loss.**

**Motion 4) That the Draft Letter of Agreement bearing any modification arising from the outcome of Motion 3 be accepted and become part of the process of establishing a FAME Festival.**

Please let us discuss this matter at the AGM from a logical and rational point of view. After much discussion over the year, the Committee recommends that a degree of liability to the Host Orchestra, however small, should be set in place, simply to encourage a watchful attitude towards the Festival budget. However, if it is the wish of the FAME Members not to

place any of this liability on the shoulders of host orchestras (who over recent history stand to make in the order of \$2000-\$5000 from organising the Festival successfully), then this decision must be placed on record.

Whatever the outcome of the vote on sharing a liability, if the vote lowers the liability percentage for a host orchestra below the figure signed off by the Auckland Festival then the lower figure decided at the AGM should be applied to the Auckland Festival.

Looking forward to some decisions being reached in Auckland that will make clear and unambiguous statements so future Festivals can have approved guidelines and agreed protection and all in FAME, organisers and participants alike can be assured that sound planning is in place.

Robert Kay



### More Motions for FAME's AGM

Hi Danny

Another proposed motion (sorry!)

This one relates to Rob Kay's proposed motion 2 asking for acceptance of the draft 'Guidelines for Running FAME Festivals'

#### Motion:

The following words be removed from the document **Guidelines for Running FAME Festivals:**

**'Please bear in mind that the profit generated by a FAME Festival is the principal income stream for FAME, providing the finance for FAME's assistance to future Festivals.'** (page 1)

and

**'Only one aim of our festivals is to raise money as the main source of income for FAME.'** (page 6)

Proposed: Marie Schulz

Seconded: Robert Schulz

Comments: FAME festivals were never meant to be fund raising events, let alone the main source of income for FAME. It's just happened that way for a few years when organizers have scheduled a final concert and a good number of tickets were sold. FAME got lucky. It is not a requirement for festival organizers to put on a public concert at all. I would not like to see embedded in an official FAME document such as the *Guidelines for Running FAME Festivals* a reference to the notion that festivals are supposed to earn an income. The aim of the festival is to promote fellowship and sharing of mandolin music.

cheers, Marie

## Sense and Sensibility

Recently there has been some heated discussion at WAMO about the proposal that a host orchestra should share the liability in the case of a FAME festival incurring a financial loss. The issue came to light when our committee was told they had to sign such an agreement so that planning for the Perth Festival in 2012 could go ahead. As one of our players pointed out, if FAME hired professional events co-ordinators to organise our festivals they would certainly not accept any liability if there were a loss. It is surely unreasonable to expect an amateur community orchestra to take on such a liability. Surprising things happen – airline strikes, volcanoes, earthquakes – with unpredictable consequences (*Recommended reading – [Black Swan](#) by Nassim Nicholas Taleb 2007*). It seems unlikely that WAMO would sign such an agreement. Does this then put the Perth 2012 Festival in jeopardy?

We were told it is only after much discussion the committee recommends that the host orchestra should accept a degree of liability. So we ask, how is it this proposal has got so far without any discussion or input from orchestra members? Our orchestra was unaware that such a significant change was on the cards. I don't know if the same is true for other FAME orchestras. It seems that the whole discussion has taken place in isolation. Perhaps this all points to a need for clear and concise communication between the FAME committee of management, the state reps and the local orchestras (*Recommended reading – [Death Sentence](#) by Don Watson, 2003*).

During the recent discussions a phrase 'you could find yourself in legal difficulties' or something of that nature was used. This reeks of politics by fear (Recommended reading – *Fear and Politics* by Carmen Lawrence, 2006) Is someone suggesting we should be afraid? Of what exactly? Is it our own members we are supposed to distrust?

In the past FAME has dealt with problems as they have arisen through discussion (sometimes quite loud) amongst members. When there was a festival loss we agreed to cover it. (It should be in the minutes – Perth 2002, I think). Perhaps we do need something more formal and in writing. Let's keep it clear and simple so that all members can read it without glazing over, tuning out or falling asleep.

And if you don't have time to read all of the recommended reading, first read 'Hamlet's Blackberry' by William Powers (2010). By following his recommendations you will have!

Robert and Marie Schulz

## Orchestra Reports

### Auckland Mandolinata Orchestra

Whew!! Are we busy advertising the FAME concerts?? But we are enjoying playing Christmas music around town while our supporters give out flyers and collect money for the Auckland City Mission. Everyone is dishing out publicity so "practise to perfection" is the cry.

We used to have concerts all over the city but our Winter Series, now based in the Irish Club, have had ever increasing audiences in both numbers and loyalty. They also help bring afternoon tea and look after the door. Now that we have a regular venue with a regular audience we can go further afield to country areas where the locals are starved for such entertainment.



Remembering that distances are not so great for New Zealand we can travel out of town for the day to a country area for a concert in the weekend and be home by evening. Bookings for 2011 include

Waiuku, Cambridge and Matamata with Whangamata yet to be confirmed. (*FAME visitors - [Look them up on the map](#). [Lovely little towns to visit!!](#).)*

This year we went to Thames (*[another little town for FAME visitors](#)*) and we played in a church with great ambience and the music was appreciated by the locals who had come from around the area. Having the concert earlier in the afternoon allows the cow cockies (dairy farmers) to get home in time to milk.

We also did our usual gig at the Auckland Rose Festival (Parnell Rose Gardens for FAME visitors) and had a stage well-sheltered from wind and sun. Our ongoing problem is competing with amplified bands that just drown us out. We get caught even though we emphasise that we do not play that kind of music. Nor do we want to!!

On Market Day in Ponsonby Rd (*[FAME visitors – restaurants galore!!](#)*) we gave up but we had completed our reason for being there, that was, to distribute flyers about the FAME concert. We are using our Christmas entertainment to promote the concert so we are busy until Christmas, as well as organising and dealing out other publicity for the FAME concert.

*Mandolynos* – our little daytime group is going into recess, at least until February. Sadly stalwarts, Iris Jeffries, Elsie Blythe, Jack Shore, Lex and Henry Kitchingman, called it a day this year after over 25 years playing to many older folk throughout Auckland. Our singers, Margaret, Jack and Malcolm will continue with Loryn, Grace

and Diana when new players join in. Many times elderly people who had little response to other life around them would react to our music by beating time, maybe ever so slightly, and would accompany the singers in the songs that they knew. Some Mandolynos players chatted with their audience over a cup of tea afterwards and had developed a rapport with many listeners.



The problem is that our customers, Rest Homes, Hospitals, Senior Citizens Clubs, Over 60's, Probus, Retired Persons' Associations, Retirement Villages and so on would have us out there two or three times a week during the day. Mostly we will miss the people from Selwyn Village for whom we play nearly every month. Maybe we can just pop in to say hullo in the future.

**Diana Grant-Mackie**

# FAME Festival - Auckland



## DAY TRIP OUTING – WEDNESDAY 5 JANUARY 2011

11am to 5pm approx.

West Coast Wilderness Excursion and Vineyard lunch



Come and join us for an outing that will be rejuvenating and relaxing at the halfway point of the festival. Enjoy exceptional cuisine with a private Soljans Estate buffet lunch at the gateway to the Kumeu heritage wine region. We have a room all to ourselves !

Relax in the comfort of an air-conditioned coach for a jaunt to Muriwai where the view is spectacular right from the carpark. With a short walk you can view the Gannet colony, they are graceful fliers and fearsome hunters. There should still be gannet chicks around at this time. With the nests just centimetres apart, the birds are incredibly adept at negotiating through airspace that would be an air traffic controllers' nightmare. These two-and-a-half kilogram birds have a wingspan of two metres. The amazing thing is that on the chick's first flight off the cliffs they don't actually touch down until they cross the Tasman Sea to Australia ! A few years later, the birds return to secure a nest back at the Muriwai colony. It's kind of a fitting outing for an Australasian festival.

On the way back we'll be stopping at Crystal Mountain for afternoon tea at the cafe. The museum houses New Zealand's largest selection of rare and exquisite crystals, minerals, fossils and meteorites from around the world. Our group has been offered a 10% discount in the retail gallery where there is an excellent selection of semi precious gifts and souvenirs.

We have given much thought into arranging an outing that would appeal to a wide age group and be manageable for a large group. Stunning food and wine combined with being immersed in the ruggedly picturesque wilderness of the West Coast, we think that this will be a trip not to be missed.

The trip cost of \$50AUD includes a Vineyard lunch, bus trip, afternoon tea and Crystal Mountain museum entry. Please complete the order form and forward along with your payment if you would like to join this fun excursion with a great bunch of people.

**GROUP OUTING** (Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2011)

Number participating \_\_\_\_\_ @ AUD \$50 NZD \$60 per person  
 (Cost includes: Lunch & bus trip, activities and afternoon tea.)

**Total: \$.....**

**CONCERT TICKETS** (Non Players)

Festival Concert, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011,  
 8pm @ Raye Freedman Centre, Silver Road, Epsom, Auckland.

Number Required \_\_\_\_\_ @ AUD \$20 NZD \$25 per person

**Total: \$.....**

**SHIRT** with embroidered FAME FESTIVAL 2011 LOGO

(65% polyester/35% cotton

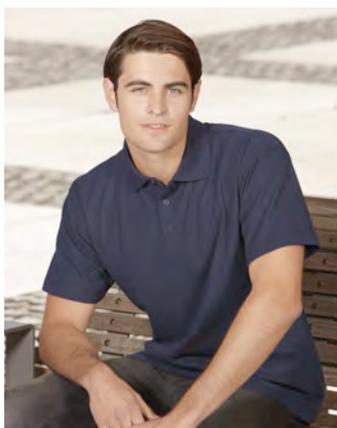
AUD \$30.00..... NZD \$37.00..... Each

**Total: \$.....**

Shirt Size:	Small	Small	Medium	Large	X L	2XL	3 XL
* Measurements:	49cm	52cm	55cm	58cm	62cm	65cm	71cm
Quantity - White							
Quantity - Navy Blue							
Quantity - Black							

\* Relates to centimetre measurement from armpit to armpit

**Grand Total \$.....**



## Orchestra Reports

### Canberra Mandolin Orchestra

A highlight since the last edition for the CMO was an outdoor concert celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. In September 1949 Prime Minister Ben Chifflery planted the first trees - an oak and a eucalypt to celebrate the start of a botanic gardens for Canberra. The eucalypt can be seen just inside the entrance gates of the Gardens.

The CMO played a variety of pieces to an appreciative crowd. A septet then played live on ABC radio and conducted an interview on the CMO and mandolin music in general.

Since then the orchestra has continued to hone favourite pieces and started playing new arrangements by mandolinist David Wardle and mandolaist John Furlonger.

Along with conductor Michael Sollis and associate conductor Heather Powrie we now have at least four 'in-house' arrangers - a veritable smorgasbord of fine music.

As we approach the end of the year, several of our members are busily practising their parts for the upcoming FAME festival in New Zealand.

In the meantime we look forward to a rewarding and enjoyable year of music making in 2011 and wish the same to all FAME.

**Sam Leone**

### Concordia

Concordia's special Spring Concert at St. Johns Southgate in early October was a great success even though one of our soloists was unable to play due to ill health. The large and appreciative audience was able to enjoy most of the advertised program, particularly enjoying David Laity's clarinet playing in two Mozart pieces, the Theme and Two Variations and Adagio in G, both arranged for us by Basil Hawkins.

The end of year party in early December was fun as usual, with a special performance of a poem written many years ago by Joy Petersen dedicated to the members of Concordia, the sentiments of which are still very relevant today. Unusually, this end of year event is not the end of rehearsals for 2010, as most of the members of Concordia are contracted to play a short concert at a private New Year function on, you guessed it, New Years Eve. That however will definitely be the end of performances for the year and we look forward to another good year of music in 2011.

Sue Martin.

<http://www.concordiamandolins.org.au/>

**COZMO**

In the quarter since we last reported on COZMO activities in Plucked Strings, our ensemble has held three successful and very different concerts, one paying and two invitational. The theme of the first concert, at the Wesley Music Centre on 9 October 2010 was "Bach to the Future" (ensemble leader Col's wry sense of humour escaping again!), an interesting mix of works ranging from classical Baroque and Romantic through to nineteenth century European traditional and folk music and Australian Contemporary music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In particular, we had great fun performing an old Russian romance arranged by our domra player Volodya Savitsky, a section of which turns out to have provided the inspiration for one of contemporary Islandic singer Björk's songs!



**COZMO in Concert**  
Capital of Australia Mandolinata  
presents

**BACH TO THE FUTURE!**

Enjoy a Saturday afternoon musical treat! - a delightful concert featuring the beautiful works of popular Baroque composers Bach, Vivaldi, Corelli and Handel. *Bach to the Future* also includes works by Australian composers Robert Kay and Robert Schulz and popular melodies from the European "zupforchester" repertoire.

COZMO - A Canberra-based ensemble of mandolins, mandola, domra, bass and guitars

2.00pm Saturday 9 October 2010  
Wesley Music Centre  
20 National Circuit, Forrest ACT  
Bookings: Ph 0421 043 082  
or Tickets at Doors: \$20 Adult & \$15 Concession  
Refreshments available at Intermission

The next day we gave our second-last concert for this year - a 'charity' performance for the Australiana Fund in one of the drawing rooms surrounded by beautiful antique furnishings at Government House on the edge of Lake Burley Griffin. This was the perfect setting for a similar repertoire as the previous day's concert, in particular the Corelli, Bach and Handel suites. Our final performance for the year was in the cavernous open space of the National Museum of Australia, playing for a 'Friends of the Museum' evening function. Luckily, we were able to arrange the ensemble in front of a solid wall and the sound we were told was akin to music in a cathedral. With champagne and cheeses to follow, it was a delightful finish to our performing year.

We are planning to establish a 'residency' next year with the school at which we hold

our rehearsals and tap into its two 'sister' schools to increase the number of younger ensemble members. COZMONauts wish all our plucked-string-playing colleagues a very merry Christmas with family and friends and a happy playing year in 2011!

**Lea O'Brien Secretary COZMO**

### Mandolins D'Amour

On November 25th Mandolins D'Amour performed their final concert for 2010. With Terry Harris as guest conductor, they played an interesting program of music for an appreciative audience.

The orchestra played a program of music by Sartori, Schulz, Schwaen, Starck and Bresgen and others. Holly Brick and Don Marsham played Vivaldi's Concerto in G for two mandolins which was well received. The evenings most popular piece was Pachelbel's Canon in D. It was a charming evening crowned by a magnificent supper.

**Joan Harris**

### Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

The MMO set off to Wonthaggi in Gippsland on a bright, clear 24th October to perform at St Josephs Church Hall. Ina Postuma had previously decided not to continue as Leader the month before so I resumed as leader of the orchestra. We played the *Tango* from Angulo's *Divertimento*, Boccherini's *Fandango*, *Tarantella* from Keith Harris' *Diamantina Suite*, the second movement from Khanmamedov's *2nd Concerto* with Abram Iourgaev playing the solo on his new rubob, *Song of the Japanese Autumn* by Kuwahara, Kurt Jensen's *Italian Selection*, Movements 1 and 2 from Stephen Lalor's *Brisbane Suite*, Michelle Nelson's *Pacific*, and Vivaldi's *Concerto for 2 mandolins and 2 guitars*. Quite a demanding performance for all players.

It was a pleasant venue with a great audience and a terrific afternoon tea - Devonshire tea no less.

Just before interval drama intervened. Danny Silver who was our MC stood up to announce the last piece before interval and placed his mandola on the chair behind him. Bad mistake! The mandola fell onto the floor and its bowl back split open in two places - LOUDLY! It gaped WIDELY and was unplayable.

Danny sat out for the *Tango* and examined the damage while we shakily played on. At interval he asked if any person in the audience had some gaffer tape. Someone quickly came to the rescue, so Danny taped up the mandola, re-tuned it and played the rest of the concert on it. He then returned

## Orchestra Reports (continued)

home and repaired it properly over the next few days - making some improvements to the original construction!

Earlier this year Ina had made contact with the Geelong Community Orchestra and it was agreed that the MMO would play a joint concert with them. "Mandolins and More" was the title of the Concert on Sunday, November 28th in the McAuley Hall at the Sacred Heart College in Geelong. The music the MMO performed was mostly chosen by the Geelong Orchestra's amiable conductor, Alistair Cox after he had listened to our CD's. Our contribution included Kuwahara's *Song of the Japanese Autumn*, Elke Tober-Vogt's *Klezmer Suite* (our soloists for this fantastic piece included the Geelong Orchestra's principal clarinetist, Janet Boyce, Juliet Maxwell playing accordion and Joel Gladman playing tuba), Massenet's *Meditation* featuring Abram Iourgaev as soloist on mandocello, Michelle Nelson's *Brolga Dances* and Vivaldi's *Concerto for two mandolins and 2 guitars* with me and Jill Johnson on mandolins and Michelle Nelson and Donna Kerslake on guitars and with the strings of the Geelong Community Orchestra conducted by Alistair Cox.

The "More" of the concert's title was Smetana's *Moldau* and Strauss' *Emperor Waltzes* played by The Geelong Community Orchestra.

We concluded with two exciting pieces by Khatchaturian, *Sabre Dance* and *Dance of the Rose Maidens*, joint pieces with both groups playing.

The venue had a fabulous acoustic and there was an audience of around 300. The MMO and the GCO rose to the occasion. It was wonderful for me to play that Concert as it was my last as Concert Master, and *my last concert with the MMO*.

**Joan Harris** MMO Leader

### Queensland Mandolins

It seems a long time since the Garlands Concert and the performance of "Poverello", the piece written for the orchestra by Betty Beath. The entire work for Garlands was well planned, well practiced and well performed by the new Queensland Mandolin Orchestra, Choir and guest performers.

We were delighted to welcome Stephen Lalor, who had arranged several of the pieces for the second half of the programme, to our Mandola section for the performance. Stephen should have been extremely pleased with the performance which was added to by his presence in the orchestra. We were also delighted to have Roberta Condie who played with the seconds along with percussionist, Andre Bonetti and flautist Christian Tadman

Robins. It was also a particular privilege to welcome to the QMO Allan Hall (our former conductor) as guest cellist.

Poverello, composed by Betty Beath and prose and poetry written and narrated by her husband, David Cox, gave an insight into the complex personality of St Francis of Assisi. Members of the Choir included three Brothers of the Anglican Franciscan Friars who are resident in Brisbane: Br Stephen (tenor) performed in the role of St Francis and was supported by Br Bart and Br Gabriel and other soloists. The setting of St John's Cathedral was a fitting venue for the performance and the soloists choir and chants of Psalm 96 as they processed through the Cathedral at the end of Poverello was one of those spiritually uplifting experiences. Visuals including a Cope and prints of a selection of some of the series of St Francis of Assisi by the late Rev David Binns, a religious artist, were presented via a PowerPoint presentation. The many elements of the performance were appreciated by a full Cathedral audience.

The second half of Garlands comprised a collection of pieces that explored love, suffering and relationships with nature, taken from a broad and wide range of composers both old and new including folk songs, dances and the power of the human voice in song. A truly uplifting and enjoyable experience was rewarded by an enthusiastic audience looking for more. The QMO and Choir obliged by a repeat of the last item, *El Dindindindin*. This was new ground for our orchestra appreciated by players, choristers, soloists and very satisfying for the composer of the work. After the concert, a Chicken and Champagne supper allowed the performers to mingle with members of the audience, some of whom travelled long distances to attend this performance.

It always seems disappointing that so much effort goes into such performances as it is performed only once. It would be wonderful to repeat the performance of Poverello, .....maybe one day! In the New Year our plan is to perform concerts not only in Brisbane, but also outside Brisbane e.g. Ipswich, Toowoomba, as both cities have very strong musical traditions.

### Brisbane Mandolins

MIB have been busy with three performances. The orchestra received an invitation to play in the gardens of Newstead House, a historic house of Brisbane. It was the beginning of the spring festival in Brisbane. The crowd was small but enthusiastic. The orchestra was in the open and although we were told that there would be amplification available the one microphone was not really adequate for the performance. Marissa Carroll and

Joel Woods the 'new mandolin and guitar duo' - 'to be watched!' performed a range of pieces from the baroque to modern. MIB was also invited to apply for an opportunity to perform in the Multicultural festival in October and we were accepted. There are many stages at the Festival. We were placed at the Children's Stage at 10 am (not the centre of the festival) and were received by a small but enthusiastic crowd. This is MIB's first opportunity to perform at the Festival and hopefully we should be given a better venue next year.

Once again MIB was invited to perform in the Brisbane Musical Performers Concert held usually at 4 MBS (classic FM) in November. The orchestra played a selection of pieces suitable for the time of the year and included some pieces from our new repertoire, some well-known pieces, some pieces selected from the Repertoire Programme in Auckland and some Greek music generously forwarded to us by CMO for 20 minute. We sincerely thank CMO and Auckland for their generosity. The Forum has a range of performers from our orchestra to choirs, small ensembles and soloists.

The last event is our Christmas Party set for 13<sup>th</sup> December where both QMO and Brisbane Mandolins, family and friends



meet for fun, food and performance. We shall end the year on a happy note!! We take this opportunity to wish all Mandolin Orchestras/Ensembles/Groups a very Happy and Safe Christmastide and to those who will be travelling to NZ a Super Time!

**Robyn Tindal** President MIB

## Orchestra Reports (continued)

### Sydney Mandolin Orchestra

SMO concerts this quarter included the Lane Cove Plaza; Montefiore, Randwick (twice); Montefiore Hunters Hill and the Picton Music Club, which was a resounding success. We finished off our concert season with a Christmas Carol performance in the Lane Cove Plaza – followed by our annual dinner.

We have been preparing for a second set of recording sessions for most of this year: we do hope to recover some of last year's material – despite the loss of the master files when Mathew's, our recording engineer, house burnt down. Mathew is well, and the house is being rebuilt - courtesy of the insurance policy.



As we approached our recording dates however, the deficiencies of our rehearsal hall (as a recording chamber) became more



and more apparent. We established that the cicadas commenced fairly predictably (just before 8:00 p.m.) but realised that we had no control over noise from aircraft, animals, traffic and heavy rain.

At the last minute common sense took hold and we negotiated access to Studio 227 at the ABC in Ultimo. The sessions were most productive – free of unexpected noise and we now have enough material to assemble our first CD.

The photographs were taken at the first session (2 Dec) and for the final session, a week later, we were joined by Rob Kay who had arrived in Sydney that afternoon. The last session was the swan song for our percussionist (Raymond Toms) who is leaving us to live in Bega and for Catherine Read who is leaving us to work in Ireland.

**Peter Canavan**

### WAMO

It always comes as a surprise to be writing about another "end of year" activity statement. The last three months have been eventful for WAMO members as we draw to the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

Our September concert at the Rhein-Donau Club on Sunday 19th was again well received with a very appreciative audience who enjoyed an eclectic programme.

Featuring the Vivaldi Concerto for two Mandolins, and a revival of the European Suite (we're still in tour mode I think) we also featured flautist Steve Proksch in Baumannis Tafelmusik. Jana and Kathryn sang some songs from Lord of the Rings by Schulz, who then jumped onto his accordion and lead WAMO through Jugoslavia Suite.

Our final concert on the 27th November was in part a response to Marissa Carroll who wished to come again to Perth and join us in concert. We were more than happy to oblige and offered her the solo part in Arno Starck's Concerto in B minor which opened the second half. The program included (finally) our performance of Charlton's A Day at the Circus, the 5th movement of Wolters Turkish Suite, and would have included the Fackler Concerto for Two Mandolins and Mandola. Unfortunately our leader Cath Shackleton came down with the mumps (adults aren't supposed to get this!) so a last minute change to the program saw the revival of Travers La Hongrie by Manichetti. Marissa also contributed the Prelude from Partita No 2 by Bach for solo mandolin and Divertimento for Two Mandolins and Guitar by Schulz.

Marissa's week in Perth made it feel like a mini festival as she divided her time between playing, rehearsing, boating, shopping and

partying. Ray arrived with his new video camera so watch for You Tube postings. Our final rehearsal night was a mixture of food and music. Dinner at the Club was followed by around 14 items from WAMO members. The informal program featured Robert's student guitar ensemble and other items like violin duet with guitar accompaniment, solo mandola, solo guitar, solo mandolin, mandolin quartet, and the players going to NZ performed one of their tour pieces. Although that sounds a lot we were finished by 9.30 PM so then could talk away the evening and say our goodbyes. And we didn't even have to do the dishes! One final performance by the Ambrosius quartet on Saturday 11th December saw Geoff, Marie, Elizabeth and Robert on stage at the Octagon Theatre playing live for the Gail Lazzaroo Ballet School concert for 2010.

During a rushed recording session (thanks to Rob Kay) we provided some pieces for the chorographer to listen to, and then played live on the day.

Working in a professional theatre we were assured of being heard and the audience's response thanks enough.

Looking briefly at 2011, WAMO will again be seen in autumn and spring at the Rhein-Donau Club. It is anticipated the end of year concert will be in conjunction with the Early Music Group in November. We will see the arrival of three new members and some swapping of players from one section to another. The Youth Ensemble will get together again and perhaps consider a performance later in the year. The orchestra is seeking government funding for more instruments from Scott Wise which will continue to improve the overall sound from within.

So post tour, a successful conclusion to a busy year with many fond memories. Let's hope the down-turn in Christmas spending translates to more support for the arts.

**Robert Schulz**

## Obituary - Alison Stephens

### For my Li'l Ali

Ali has been one of my closest friends since we performed together when she was 17 in Vivaldi's Concerto for 2 mandolins at The Barbican in London. That



was 23 years ago. Since that time, until I moved to Australia with David in 2004, we played and worked together often, and during that time, while her amazing career grew, so did our friendship.

We met through Hugo D'Alton, with whom we were both having lessons, and from that first meeting we hit it off straight away. From then on we performed

I have so many wonderful memories of my time with Ali both through work & socially, that I could go on for hours! Out of the many great orchestral gigs we did there are a couple of favourites, both with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden in London: performing in "Palestrina", an opera about the composers life, we had so much time between the bits we had to play that on one occasion we went to see the movie "Shine"! Another was doing 36 performances of the "Merry Widow" and becoming such regulars at the wine bar down the road that the owner gave us a free bottle on our last night as a thank you for giving him so much business!

We had to get dressed up & play onstage sometimes. One of the most outrageous costumes was for "Cherubin" when we had to wear a hideous orange & black number, very fetching indeed. Quite funny looking back now, especially as orange was Ali's favourite colour & she insisted that everyone who attended her funeral wear something orange. What a pity I didn't have that costume.....

Ali worked SO hard to achieve her amazing career. When she wasn't playing she worked in a bar, stuffed envelopes, anything she could to earn some extra money so that she could pursue her dream of playing the mandolin. And through all the years I have never heard anything bad said about her.

You only have to read the wonderful tributes in the British press to see how well thought of she was as both a person & a performer.

Here are 2 web pages you might be interested in looking at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/oct/28/alison-stephens-obituary>

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/obituaries/Obituary-Alison-Stephens-mandolinist.6591846.jp>

I know that a few of you met Ali for the first time in Bruchsal. Rob Kay emailed when I got home and he mentioned what a joy it'd been to meet her. He also said, & I quote: "She sets you off so well as two really ripper birds - absolutely no mistaking two bosom-buddies from wayback." That is exactly what we were & always will be.

I was asked to do a short tribute for the recent BMG Federation newsletter. How do you encapsulate Alison into a 300 word description? Impossible! I happened to be in Tiptree, a town in Essex, England with my mum a few days after Ali passed away



and a bookmark fell into my hands:

"Alison: From the Gaelic meaning 'truthful'. She is dainty, pretty and loving, and has a wonderful imagination. She is fun to be with."

Trust Ali to give me a tip when I needed it. Her quirky sense of humour made it a jam factory, so even from the other side she's still making me laugh.

Ali, I love you and will miss you heaps. I'm sure wherever you are you'll be organising an amazing concert. At least all of us here have our wonderful memories and your incredible musicality, which has been proved on so many occasions, to listen to.

I've had so many emails from people saying how sorry they were about Ai & how they knew what good friends we were. Thank you so much, those messages meant a lot. To me, Ali was like a little sister as well as a very special friend.

### Sue Flower



concertos, did duo concerts, and loads of orchestral gigs together over the years, including numerous film sessions. Although we thoroughly enjoyed it all I think I enjoyed the duo concerts the most because it was just us on the stage, playing together. We just seemed to be able to sense what each other was going to do, & the more we played together the more that empathy grew. I am so grateful to WAMO for giving me the opportunity to go to Europe in May this year as it meant that Ali & I could meet up at the Festival in Bruchsal. As some of you know I made a quick trip over to England after the tour and I stayed with Ali & Mitch for a couple of days., where we spent a fantastic few hours in her music room playing duets together, it was just like old times. Little did we know that that was going to be the last time we saw each other. Now, it's so good to have that lasting memory.

Because of our difference in height (I'm 6ft, Ali was about 5ft 4") Hugo used to call us Big Sue & Li'l Ali, hence my title for this tribute to her.

### Another Obituary

**Herta Habersam-Wenghoefer** died on November 28th, 2010.

Herta studied the mandolin and music with the legendary Vinzenz Hladky in Vienna. She was a founding member and organiser of the Austrian Cecilia Ensemble, with which she played for the last time at this year's eurofestival zupfmusik in Germany.

Herta Habersam was familiar to some in the Australian mandolin community through their visits to Austria, and also from her participation as player in the New Vienna Mandolin and Guitar Ensemble at the Melbourne International Music Festival. She played in or directed numerous ensembles in Vienna, and also played regularly when the instrument was required professionally in Viennese musical circles, for example at the Vienna State Opera. For several decades she organised a highly successful annual seminar for plucked string instruments. She was a familiar face throughout Europe for her regular artistic participation at leading music festivals and sought for her advice as Austrian delegate to the European Guitar and Mandolin Association (EGMA). She was a leading figure in the VAMÖ, the Austrian amateur music organisation.

As if musical activities were not enough, she was respected all over Europe for her influence in judicial circles.

She leaves a huge hole in Viennese, Austrian and indeed European musical and legal circles, and in the lives of very many friends.

**Keith Harris**, Marburg



## Which one to use?

### A series about fingering on the mandolin by Keith Harris

*(Editor's Note: somehow instalment 1 was lost in the ether in the last edition of PS provoking justifiable howls of outrage! To pacify the seething mob I've repeated last edition's introduction plus instalment 1 AND instalment 2)*

At the beginning of lots of teaching books on the mandolin there is a table of the fingerboard, showing at which fret the string should be depressed (*stopping* is the technical term) to produce the respective notes. This is not very original, but legitimate, I think, because it's simply a description of the way things are.

Often though, there are also indications of which fingers to do the *stopping* with. I have a big problem with this if it looks as if some natural law is being stated, because this is not the case. What is being stated is merely the opinion of the author.

One usually reads, for example, that the notes up to the seventh fret on the A-string are to be stopped (fingered) like this:

B with the index finger, which bears the number 1;

C with the 2nd finger;

D with the 3rd finger;

E with the 4th finger (the "pinky").

My reaction is: *Who says?!*

Many mandolin players seem to go through life following this convenient oversimplification, which certainly saves thinking, but doesn't have many other virtues.

I'd like to invite you to try out a few perhaps unfamiliar ideas. I think it might be fun for you, and it might change the way you think about certain things.

I emphasise:

I try to distinguish in my own mind between things which are a matter of fact and things which I happen to think are a good idea – and I hope you keep an eye on me too. It's not always easy for me to be sure which is which, particularly as I'm pretty convinced of the value of my recommendations – but this doesn't make them *true*.

So please be wary; *you* are ultimately responsible for what you do, even if it's just a decision about which finger to use.

Have fun!

## Instalment 1

Most of the musical examples in the series will have this pretty usual form:

### Example 1

Sometimes I write a metronome mark to remind you to play slowly!

M.M. ♩ = 56

Normal Arabic numerals like these indicate fingers

Keith David Harris

A number in a circle indicates a string, in this case the 3rd string, D.

Please try Example 1, really slowly(!), with single down-strokes, and stopping the notes with the fingers I indicate.

It's not particularly difficult or profound, but please try to make it sound nice anyway.

Now try the following:

Stop the note F-sharp with the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger instead of the (perhaps) customary 2<sup>nd</sup> finger.

### Example 2

Please play the note a few times, beautifully and slowly. Take your finger off the string and put it back a few times, and see if you notice any differences in the feeling.

And how does it feel?

Weird perhaps? Even *wrong*? Or just normal?

*(I know people who feel almost nauseous when they do something like this in a completely unaccustomed way. On the other hand, I know lots of people – my pupils among others – to whom it's as normal to use any one of the four fingers of the stopping hand as any other, for any given single note.)*

Please try the same note now with the 1<sup>st</sup> finger, and compare the result. Does it sound good? Is it easy? Slowly – easy does it!

### Example 3

And then with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger – the pinky...

### Example 4

Of course this should be in every way as good as with the other fingers. If it's not, please see if you can figure out why, but please don't do anything violent to make it work! We can explore the matter further at a more appropriate time.

*(I am utterly convinced that many mandolin players develop their technical habits in a way that disadvantages their 4<sup>th</sup> finger – all their fingers in fact, but that's a long story...)*

And finally, once again the notes we played at the beginning, but this time with a different *fingering*. Please observe the fingers indicated carefully, and make sure that your habits don't take over and make you move a finger you really didn't intend to!

### Example 5

Play slowly and beautifully!

M.M. ♩ = 56

When you feel you are really in control of what is going on, try example 1 again, and compare the *feeling* (and of course the musical result!) when you use different fingers.

Instalment 1 (continued)A few extra considerations:

1. Before you begin to play, stop **all three** notes. So when you strike the note G, you will have be stopping the notes F-sharp and E **as well**.
2. When you change to the second note, F-sharp, you do not need to put the finger on the note – because it is already there! Instead, you take the G-finger off the string.
3. The 1st finger likewise is already stopping the note E, so to play this note, you simply remove the F-sharp finger.

4. When you play F-sharp again, make sure that the E-finger stays in place, and by the time you play the last note, G, all three fingers are once again in the stopping position.

Of course there should be no break in the sound between the notes.

That's enough for the beginning.

Please go through our little exploration again. I'm sure you will become conscious of different things each time you do. Next time you pick up the mandolin, take a few minutes, and just play the notes a few times – with the different fingerings – and notice the sensations.

More next time!

Which one to use?A series (not just) about fingering on the mandolin by Keith HarrisInstalment 2

In the first instalment, I tried among other things to point out that there is often more than one possible *fingering scheme* for a musical passage. This is not really surprising, to people who know that there is (at least often) more than one way to skin a cat. Some of the ways may be better than others however, and nicer for the cat too.

This time, I'd like to pursue the same principle – trying different ways while sparing the cat – but exploring a different area. This is an area which some people are less familiar with, and which some even regard as difficult. It's not – if you do it the right way.

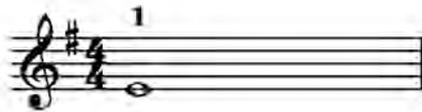
The subject is going to be: stopping (*fingering*, if you prefer that word) strings not by using fingers which are next to each other when the hand is stationary, but by moving the whole hand along the fingerboard.

Like lots of things, what may appear to be a single activity involves a *process*, a number of activities, some of which are carried out simultaneously. We are going to explore the process by breaking it down into parts, smaller units, which are easier to cope with. When each element is secure, we can put them back together to carry out the whole activity.

Let's try the different elements involved. They may look easy and obvious, but let's make sure of them anyway.

Please stop the note E at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret on the D string (*e'* – “one-line E” to use the Helmholtz system to give it a more precise name) carefully with the 1<sup>st</sup> finger. When you feel confident that you have prepared everything properly, play the note with a single stroke – beautifully! – and see how long it rings for.

## Example 1



Now, keep the 1<sup>st</sup> finger pressed on the string, make a single stroke and straight away, while the string is still sounding, *slide* the finger – slowly – until it reaches the 5th fret, the note G.

## Example 2



Please do this a few times. Take your time. Keep the finger pressed down with **constant pressure** while you slide; it should maintain a snug contact with the fingerboard. Slide it slowly, and see if you can hear all the sounds in between – a sliding sound (a *glissando*) – as it moves.

Practise this for a little while – slowly and reflectively, observing as much as you can.

Now try the *gliss.* (abbreviation of *glissando*) in the other direction, from G downwards to E (*g'* to *e'*, to be more precise).

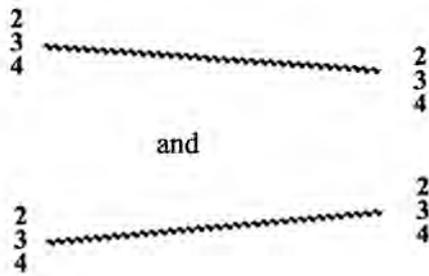
## Example 3



**Instalment 2 (continued)**

For a bit of variety, try the *change of position* (as it's often called, although the term is not as straightforward as many people think...) slowly, meditatively, in both directions – using each of the other fingers:

Example 4



Take your time! Is the result different with the different fingers? (It shouldn't be...)

An important detail:

*If you can, have a little bit of distance between the fingers. If this is difficult at first, don't get upset about it, but keep this objective in mind whenever you try Example 4.*

This friend from Brisbane knows how to do it...

(Note also the straight line made by the back of the hand and the first segment of the fingers. Ah! She's a good student!)



Do you remember the final exercise in Instalment 1? Please play it – *slowly* – again a few times, before you continue with our current exploration.

In this instalment it's numbered as

Example 5



It may well seem really easy, but please humour me, and do it another few times anyway...and think of the photo above!

And then do it yet again, but this time wait on the second note in the second measure, F sharp, and just see how long you can keep this note ringing:

Example 6



An explanation:

*What we are going to do next is a little like adding a ready-made building block to another one, which is already in position.*

*The building block (X) that is already in position is Example 6, which we have just practised; the "ready-made building block" (Y), which we add on, is Example 2, which we practised thoroughly before.*

**Instalment 2** (continued)

When you try Example 7 – putting the building blocks together – please concentrate on two things in particular:

- I. Wait for a while on the F sharp as indicated by the pause sign , and use the time to get your bearings, and then
- II. join the E, the first note of Example 2, on **very smoothly, with utterly no break in the sound.**

Our building blocks so far will look like this:

Example 7

Block X      Block Y

S-l-i-d-e slowly!

*f*

Just let this note ring for as long as you can...

and while it is still sounding, join this one on smoothly! Then s-l-i-d-e...

Please try this for a few minutes, and see how good you can get at it.

- Do you remember to join E on to F sharp with no interruption?
- Do you hear a continuous sliding sound between E and G?

Something to think about:

Until now, we have deliberately made the slide slow and drawn out. Hopefully you've begun to feel comfortable with it, and are pretty sure that your finger will find the upper note, the G, safely.

Please try the slide again now, at first slowly, but then increasing the speed bit by bit.

Example 8

S-l-i-d-e slowly!

a little quicker...

and even quicker...

Think about

- the nice space between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers in the photo above, and try
- to lead with the (pinkie-side) edge of your hand, which *drags* the finger along.

It really isn't very far, and with a bit of experience, you can probably do it in what amounts to **no time** (a concept I develop at length in my book *The Mandolin Game*<sup>2</sup>, if you want to go into the subject more...).

*Just to make sure you're doing the right thing:*

When you feel you can make the change in no perceptible time, try counting slowly to **four** when you play E, and then play G, exactly when you come to **one** again. The slide is now executed not *before*, but exactly *on* the count of **one**.

Example 9

Wait..... until here!

one two three four      one

Count slowly and evenly,      then play G exactly on the count.

We've almost reached our goal...

Try

Example 10

Leave the 1st finger on E ..... for the whole duration of F#,

one two three four      one two three four      one

..... count slowly and evenly, then finger G, with the 1st finger, exactly on "one".

At the very instant when you have been joining E on to F sharp, you change position, so that the note you strike is not E but G.

Note:

In Example 10, it's the 1<sup>st</sup> finger that does the shifting – from E to G – in **no time**, but you don't hear E: after F sharp you hear G, just as with the fingering in Example 5.

When it's done correctly, there is no break of any sort between F sharp and G.

So at last

Example 11

The first finger just stays put from here until the last bar, when it shifts (from E) up to G.

and this sounds the same!

At the risk of labouring the point:

*Please take care that the change from F sharp to G sounds exactly the same, whether you stop the notes with the fingers 3 – 4 or with 3 – 1. The “change of position” is easy, safe and extremely useful. More about this in later instalments.*

Here is another example so you can gain more fluency:

Example 12

Slowly!

The 1st finger stays on the string and slides - right on the count, in no time - down to the 2nd fret.

careful!

very careful!

No break!

A tip:

If you find that your thumb presses on the back of neck, creating friction which hampers you when you slide, you're not the only one. The truth is that you should remove the thumb from the neck, or at least relax it, just before you make the slide. Sound easy? It is of course, but only if you do it the right way. Some people just seem to do it intuitively, the same as there are individuals who just “know” how to use a baseball bat. Most of us need a bit more information though. The subject is treated in detail in Game G of [The Mandolin Game](#).

(Editor's Note: Readers of Plucked Strings should be grateful to to Keith Harris for providing these extremely helpful lessons which we can practice at our leisure to improve our technique as plucked string players. I look forward to future instalments. )

## Another Obituary!

**Takashi and Silvia Ochi** occupy a unique place in the history of the mandolin in the 20th century. Particularly through their work with the Saarland Plucked String Orchestra and the Deutsches Zupforchester, both directed by the legendary German guitarist Siegfried Behrend, and also a number of recordings with the Jean-François Paillard Chamber Orchestra, they pointed the way to new and courageous possibilities for the instrument. Through their contribution, the mandolin became regarded as an instrument capable of producing sounds which meet the expectations of serious and discriminating music lovers.

Takashi Ochi, ably partnered – on stage and privately – by his German wife, was personally a sensitive and subtle musician, a highly gifted and modest man who embodied the best characteristics of a Japanese gentleman, living in Germany and

becoming a citizen of the world. He was an enormously popular teacher. The currently high state of development of the mandolin in Germany – widely played, taught at several music universities and with numerous virtuoso performers taking part self-confidently in normal concert life – owes very much to Tadashi Ochi.

Takashi Ochi, born in 1934 in Imabari, passed away in the early hours November 16th, 2010, at his home in Heppenheim. He will be sadly missed by his wife and family, and also by many friends and admirers all over the world.

**Keith Harris** Marburg.

## Letter to the Editor

On Friday night, October 1, 2010, I had the privilege of participating in a wonderful concert which was performed in Brisbane's beautiful St John's Anglican Cathedral.

This innovative and exciting concert was performed in two parts. The first part was called Poverello (the poor one) and was about the life and times of St Francis of Assisi. Betty Beath wrote the beautiful music and David Cox wrote the major part of the related lyrics and narration of this world premiere. He was also the narrator. The pieces express love, suffering and relationships with nature and the words were as relevant as if they were happening today. I was spellbound when I first heard them.

Poverello was also a multi-media presentation. It comprised the Queensland Mandolin Orchestra with guest artists: Stephen Lalor: mandola, Allan Hall: cello, Christian Tadman Robins: flute and Andre Bonetti: percussion. Singing was provided by the Alexandra Chorale Chamber Singers with soloists: Ashleigh Crane, Sebastian

Maclaine, Stephanie Lloyd, Brother Bart and Brother Stephen. The music was interspersed by David Cox' narration and a backdrop power point presentation showed the beautiful art work by the late Rev. David Binns.

Garlands, which formed the second part of the performance by the Queensland Mandolin Orchestra, was music from all around the world and celebrated the variety, complexity and joy of human existence. Some of this music will be well known to readers of Plucked Strings and some not so well known. Most will know Bach's Two minuets from the 4th Lute Suite as well as The Ash Grove, Autumn Leaves and Elke Tober-Vogt's English Suite arrangement. And many will know the Preludio and Tango from Eduardo Angulo's Divertimento. New music was Stephen Lalor 's arrangements of three of my favourites: the very moving Percy Grainger's Shallow Brown, Jacob Arcadelt's Il Bianco e dolce Cigno (The White Swan) and Robert Pearsall's Lay a Garland.

Nathan Aspinall's conducting was inspirational. His passion for the music was obvious and he conveyed this to us players. Willi Green and I were reminded of Fred Witt's passionate conducting and never more so than when Nathan was conducting Shallow Brown.

The beginnings of the idea for this concert came about when Murray Green was walking in St John's Cathedral. He was very taken by the beauty of the cushions on the pews which have stories to tell. He talked about this with Nathan, and the seeds for the concert were sown.

At the end of the concert, a very appreciative audience gave resounding applause and afterwards mingled with the performers during a champagne and chicken supper.

I found practising and performing the music for this concert profoundly uplifting and moving.

**Roberta Condie** (MMO/Concordia)

### Dr Michael Hooper

Michael Hooper has recently been made a Research Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music London. Since 2009 he has been a Lecturer in Music (Postgraduate Studies) at the same institution.

You can find more information about Michael at: <http://www.ram.ac.uk/find-people?pid=493>

and more about the Royal Academy of Music at: <http://www.ram.ac.uk/>

Recently the London newspaper The Guardian said: 'the Academy exudes a cosmopolitan confidence in tune with the global classical music business... teaching is outstanding. So is the value it adds. And in a performance art where work can be precarious, it rolls out musicians who are highly employable'.

As a Mandolinist he performs regularly and continues to champion new repertoire (frequently having works written for him). The latest first performance was *Fickle* by UK composer Elspeth Brooke.



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