



Federation of Australasian  
Mandolin Ensembles Inc.

www.fame.asn.au

# Plucked Strings

*A (sometimes) quarterly newsletter for FAME members*

Editor: Marie Schulz marie@conceptual.net.au

July 2014

## JULY 2014

**President's Report** *page 2*

**Orchestra Reports** *pages 3 ~ 11*

**News and Reviews ~ Tales from Tourists and news from the BDZ Eurofestival**  
*pages 12 ~ 18*

**2015 Sydney FAME Festival Registration Forms** *pages 19 ~ 20*

**New things to look at** *~ page 18*

**(What) Do Composers Think About Instruments** by Keith Harris *page 21*

### From the editor

Here it is at last, with apologies for the delay. I wanted to hold off till late June so that we could read all about it - the tales from the Australis group's trip to Germany, that is. I did have a week free in June, but at that time I didn't have anything to publish! And then renovations (decisions, decisions), work, and life in general got in the way, as it does sometimes. Thanks to those who diligently sent in their articles by the published deadline, and thanks to those who didn't give up, and sent in something a bit later. I think it's important for us to hear about the all of the orchestras and what you are getting up to. If you don't have time to write a detailed report, get creative (see Joan's report for Concordia on page 4).

## Articles for next edition due 9th November

Please send text either in the body of an email or as an attachment (Word or Pages documents are fine) with photos as separate attachments. PDF is not so easy to work with as I often need to change the layout to fit the space available.

## President's Report

Finally back in Australia after ten weeks in Europe and another two weeks to "recover" before resuming my usual job, I've had plenty of time to contemplate the state of affairs of the mandolin orchestra movement both here and in Europe.

I was privileged to participate in the two week concert tour in Germany with the **Australis Ensemble** under the baton of **Stephen Lalor**, performing a repertoire mostly comprising Stephen's wonderful and extremely popular compositions as well a suite of short whimsical pieces written by former President of FAME, **Robert Kay**. The tour was extremely well organized by a committee lead by Lea O'Brien and Col Bernau and the many months of planning, hard work and frequent communication with a number of mandolin orchestras in Germany resulted in a very precise schedule of six concerts performed jointly with local mandolin orchestras in six communities varying from small villages to large cities.



The concerts were all very well attended and the local orchestra groups were all incredibly enthusiastic about having an Australian orchestra performing with them in their own community. They were also very generous hosts and we all had a wonderful time meeting their players, rehearsing and performing with them. And while there were quite a number of rather "senior" members in our host orchestras, it was exciting to see how many very young players they had in their ranks. Of course, for most of the touring players, our German language skills were probably much worse than the local players' English but clearly music was the language we all had in common!

The final performance by the Australis Ensemble was a short 20 minute "cameo" appearance during the **Bund Deutscher Zupfmusiker (BDZ) 2014** held in Bruchsal over the last three days of May. This festival, held every four years somewhere in Germany, is the largest festival dedicated to plucked instrument ensembles in the world and it is huge! At this particular BDZ festival there were 23 (!) concerts performed in the three main indoor venues and one outdoor stage over the three days. In addition there was a large instrument makers' display and a "market" of sheet music, CDs, strings, music stands and other musical gadgetry for those with deep pockets and empty suitcases!

While most of the groups performing at this enormous festival were amateur groups there were also a number of professional ensembles featuring some of the most virtuosic players you'll ever see and hear.

Despite the fact that there are so many mandolin orchestras in Germany, one of the constant complaints I heard expressed repeatedly by members of their groups was about the difficulty they had in recruiting new players into their ranks, and that the number of mandolin ensembles was declining. However there were a number of youth orchestras performing during the BDZ festival and it was quite amazing to hear how precisely and energetically they played. And there was always a very energetic and stimulating person conducting these young players who had frown of concentration while playing but beaming smiles when we applauded.

That brings me finally to the point of this report!

Nearly always, the creation of and the maintenance of any group of equally-minded people depends on a shared enthusiasm but it usually needs just one person to be the catalyst for the association to begin. This applies equally to mandolin ensembles as it does to any musical group or to a bridge club, etc. One person with energy and a vision is usually all it takes to get something started.

My own orchestra, the MMO, needed the energy and enthusiasm of Josef Ruecker to get started back in 1967. Similarly WAMO needed Robert Schulz over 30 years ago and WAYMO, the youth orchestra formed with Robert Schulz' students (they performed at the in-house concert at the Melbourne FAME Festival last

January) also needed his inspiration and drive. Look at every mandolin ensemble within FAME and you'll always find "the match that lit the fire"!

However a fire needs an ongoing supply of wood to keep going and without new players joining an orchestra to replace those who eventually retire, for any number of reasons, the orchestra is doomed to failure.

Just as there are expressions of despair by members of German mandolin orchestras at the difficulty they experience with attracting new players, the same issue affects Australian groups and so we all need to come up with ideas to recruit new players. Robert Schulz' strategy of bringing his own mandolin and guitar students together to form WAYMO is one approach. He has also encouraged WAMO players to take on a teaching role themselves, particularly the mandolin and mandola players, in the hope that more players eventually join WAMO's ranks.

With too few teachers qualified to teach classical mandolin and too few young people ever experiencing the sound of classical mandolin orchestras there are major obstacles to popularizing our instruments, unlike the situation with the classical guitar.

Clearly there is a need for all mandolin orchestras to do more than making music – we should all work at making more musicians!

I welcome any correspondence on this topic.

*Danny Silver*

---

## Mandolins in Brisbane

NO ONE could ever say the mandolin players of Brisbane were not multicultural. In fact, the first half of 2014 has seen our players get involved in some really special musical themes, including concerts and pieces from entirely separate corners of the globe. Mandolins in Brisbane and Queensland Mandolin Ensemble teamed up with a shakuhachi player in February to celebrate Chinese New Year in fine style at a great community concert held in China Town in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. Despite windy conditions, players did a great job and gave the crowd a great insight into just how dynamic a mandolin group can be.

Players then delivered a fantastic Italian themed concert at Old Government House on Sunday, June 1 as part of the city's Italian week fiesta. The program included a variety of popular songs and operatic themes such as Eduardo Di Capua Arditì, made famous by singers including Carlos Buti and Marietta Piccolomini; a fantastic medley of themes from La Traviata by arguably Italy's most famous composer, Giuseppe Verdi; and a set of popular Italian works for the mandolin by Primo Silvestri, Edouardo Mezzacapo and Giacomo Sartori. The music was thoroughly enjoyed by standing-room-only crowd who spilled out onto a newly opened court yard where morning tea was served. The concert was met with a standing ovation from the audience. MIB was led by first mandolinist Marissa Carroll and performed under the baton of Allan Hall - our long-time conductor who generously gave up his time to rejoin us especially for this series while regular conductor Joel Woods travelled overseas. The players will perform the same program at a special concert at the Logan Art Gallery on June 28 and it will be recorded for a forthcoming CD.

MIB has an exciting few months ahead, with a new music program based on Australian compositions to be played at the Brisbane City Hall as part of the upcoming G20 Summit conferences in November. Meanwhile, other exciting programs are still afoot, such as our inaugural composition competition which has been launched and set into motion. The hope is it will generate some exciting new music for players to perform and generate a renewed interest in the mandolin and its dynamism as an instrument.

We have also launched a new website at [www.mandolinsinbrisbane.org](http://www.mandolinsinbrisbane.org) and it is a great accompaniment to our Facebook page by the same name. Stay in touch online and keep up-to-date on our progress via both pages.

A small group of our players gave up their valuable weekend to attend a Renaissance Faire on the Gold Coast - you guessed it, in traditional costume. Just in case you mistake them for Maid Marian and a court jester (sorry, Joel), in the photos below are featured players: Willi Green and Barbara Allsop on mandolin, Anne Roubos on mandola and Joel Woods on guitar. They were not only on the mark with their costumes, the audience loved them as well.

Until next time - happy playing - from MIB.

**Brooke Baskin**




---

## Concordia

### **Triumphs**

March 31st Serrell St, East Malvern, Concordia played a Concert for Friends of Concordia which was followed by tea and biscuits.

May 25th Uniting Church at Cowes Phillip Island, the orchestra played a well received concert

### **Looking forward**

August 2nd 7.30pm at St Stephens Anglican Church in Richmond, Concordia will present a Concert for PlettroMano (Marissa Carroll and Joel Woods)

August 3rd Marissa and Joel join Concordia as soloists for an Afternoon Concert at St Johns, Southgate

November Concert at Ewing Uniting Church East Malvern

Christmas Concert

Busy Orchestra!

**Joan Harris**

## Auckland Mandolinata

It's been a busy few months for the Auckland Mandolinata, seeing us getting stuck in to some new and challenging pieces for our winter series concerts held four times a year in Auckland. As I am writing this we have just successfully played our second of the year which featured some really interesting pieces of our typical mix, some old favourites like *Deep River* and Robert Schulz' *A Lament* as well as some new ones such as *Binasuan* - a Philippine folk dance and *Slaves Chorus* from Verdi's *Nabucco*.

Still plenty more work to do this year as we keep the challenges coming with music such as *The Caliph of Baghdad Overture* by Boieldieu, *Palladio* by Jenkins and Tchaikovsky's *Waltz of the Flowers* from the *Nutcracker Suite* as well as many others on the cards. As usual everyone's hard work is showing through in the great performances we are able to put on and keeps the audience coming back.

We usually have a guest spot during our winter series concerts to have something a little different for our audience during the orchestra break. It can be a showcase for our own other musical interests or an opportunity for a guest to play something completely different. In the past we have had a Chinese Pipa soloist, a Croatia Tamburica youth orchestra, and a Trombone soloist among others. Earlier this year Lloyd performed in a bluegrass duet, and pictured are Stefan, Lynn, Bryan and John performing in their ensemble "Almond Icing" performing a Greek themed set.

### *Gianni Flego*



## Canberra Mandolin Orchestra

As usual, we've had a busy time with learning lots of new music and some interesting performances around Canberra.

Since the last issue, we've played two more lunchtime sessions at a picturesque winery just outside Canberra and the highlight of the year so far has been a program of all-Greek music outdoors at a suburban shopping centre. This was part of the ACT Government's "Parties at the Shops" series of concerts.

We were joined in the concert by solo singers Theodora Volti and Antonio Vlachos and a children's choir of some 20 voices in a concert of music from the legendary Greek composers Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hadjidakis.

Conductor Michael Sollis told the media, "We love playing Greek music as it comes from such a distinguished plucked instrument heritage and suits mandolins perfectly. But above all, we love playing it because it is such wonderful, evocative music. It brings us the passion and romance of Mediterranean history in a musical language all its own."

Despite the cool weather, we attracted a crowd of more than 200 most appreciative Canberrans.

One of our rehearsals for this performance was held in the elegant drawing room of the Swedish Embassy in Canberra (see photo). The Ambassador's wife, Anita Petersson, has been a valuable member of our seconds for the past three years. The rehearsal included a sumptuous supper and glass of bubbly. The event was also an opportunity for Anita to entertain us before her posting came to end in May.

Anita and husband Sven-Olaf have returned to Sweden where they have retired to a farm outside Stockholm. Anita assures us she will keep playing mandolin and will encourage her partner to accompany on guitar. We wish them both a very a happy retirement!

More recently, we have been rehearsing for a very special concert in collaboration with some leading Canberra musical and performing figures. But more on that in the next edition.

Until then, happy plucking and warm greetings to all our FAME friends around Australia and New Zealand from the Canberra Mandolin Orchestra!

**Sam Leone**



*CMO rehearsing with Greek singers at the Swedish Embassy in Canberra.*

## COZMO - Capital of Australia Mandolinata

Another eventful quarter for COZMO and COZYMO members, beginning with our participation in the "Connect and Participate Expo" at the Kingston Bus Depot Markets on Saturday 29 March.

The aim of the Expo was to expose its visitors to a great range of community groups, to show them the range of groups and social organisations active in Canberra that they might like to join. We set up a 'stall' displaying several mandolins, concert posters and other information, to promote mandolin playing in the ACT region. COZMO members manned the stall and talked to Expo visitors about mandolin playing in Canberra, and about our ensemble and Learning Group programs. We also offered 10-minute 'tasters' so people could hold and play a mandolin for their first time ever, learning the names of the strings ("g'day"!) and moving the plectrum over them to pick out simple tunes. Lots of people were intrigued by this petite and pretty instrument and oldies and youngies alike had fun. COZMO also played a short set on the stage to demonstrate what we'd been spruiking about. The day went really well, with COZMO receiving good exposure at this event and giving us an opportunity especially to publicise our forthcoming annual Winter Concert (15 June) and our next Learning Group programs (starting 27 July).

We then concentrated our efforts on preparing for our Winter concert and then our High Court concert (20 July). For three weeks in May while Col, Lea and Lindsay were away with the *Australis Ensemble* in Germany, COZMONauts kept busy in Canberra, with John Yoon, a gifted final year ANU composition and piano student, leading and conducting the ensemble in Col's absence. Ensemble members experienced following an 'out-front' conductor (cf 'from-the-chair') and continued to work on the repertoire in readiness for these two concerts.

The Winter concert gives our COZYMO Learning Groups (Beginning and Continuing) an opportunity to strut their stuff, and COZMO also played a 50-minute set. This semester's Continuing group presented some 4-part folk tunes (*Scarborough Fair*, *Simple Gifts* and *Guantanamera*) while the Beginning group played a medley of 3 Irish tunes and a waltz by Pettine arranged in 4 parts – a great result for both groups! COZMO's set included Kuwahara's *Song of Japanese Autumn*, Stephen Lalor's *Australis Suite*, Bill Monroe's *My Last Days on Earth* – with soloist Diane Cross's mandolin cross-tuned to produce the haunting Monroe melody, Rob Kay's *Elegy* and some Italian favourites. The capacity audience enjoyed the concert immensely and it was good preparation for our next gig – a fairly high-profile concert at the High Court of Australia on 29 July.



*COZMO at the High Court, May 2013*

In early 2013, Sunday afternoon concerts began to be held in the High Court's huge foyer as part of 'The Musical Offering' project which aimed to have free music played somewhere in Canberra every day, to celebrate Canberra's centenary. COZMO was invited to participate in that project and we're delighted to be invited back this year.

Since the success of the High Court TMO concert series, this space has been made available to music performers – ensembles, choirs and the like – on a permanent basis each Sunday afternoon for public concerts. The foyer has a multi-level ceiling, in places 4 storeys high, yet the acoustics are excellent and perfect for the pure tones of a mandolin ensemble.

**Col Bernau**  
**COZMO President & MD**

## Sydney Mandolin Orchestra

Sydney Mandolin Orchestra is humming along and we have welcomed two new members - Gordon, who plays mandolin and double bass and Patrick, who plays mandolin.

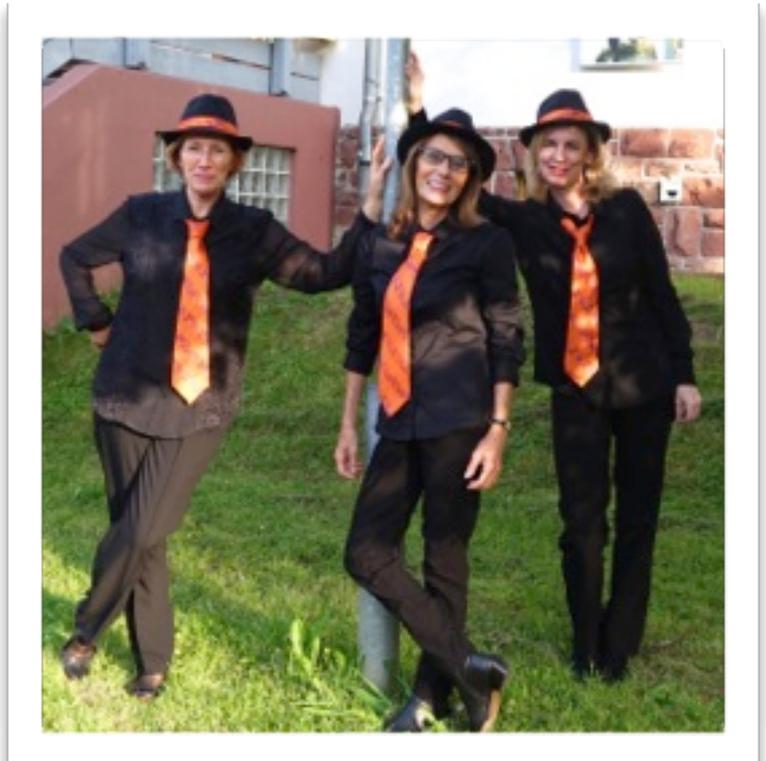
Our Conductor Marge, we have discovered, is a superb Clarinet and Saxophone player and she has arranged some pieces for Clarinet and Orchestra as well as for Saxophone and Orchestra which we have performed to the delight of our audiences.

Our initial preparations for the next FAME Festival are all going well and to plan. Thank you to all of those FAME members who took advantage of our discount for the Early Bird Registration. We have booked the Dunmore Lang College at Macquarie University which offers good accommodation and facilities set in beautiful grounds. Also secured is the Venue for our FAME Gala Concert which will be held at PLC School Auditorium at Pymble which is only a 15 minute drive from the College.

Two SMO members, Cath Kench and Martha Babineau, enjoyed playing with the Australis Mandolin Ensemble which just toured Germany. They are pictured here with Fiona Orenstein on their arrival day in Germany and below, performing at Lohr, conducted by Stephen Lalor.

We are looking forward to seeing you all at our FAME camp in Sydney in July 2015 !

The registration form can be found towards the end of this newsletter.



## Plektra

Plektra has returned from performing a 45 minute set on the outdoor stage at the BDZ (Bund Deutscher Zupfmusiker ) Festival in Bruchsal, Germany on Saturday, May 31st.

Stephen Lalor - our leader, also had the chance to showcase some of his solo pieces to a very appreciative audience. Plektra's line-up this trip was Stephen Lalor, Fiona Horbach, Martha Babineau - mandolins, Alex Burger - acoustic bass, Yuri Halay- mandola and Joel Woods from Brisbane stepping in to play guitar.

Our program was:

Zakarpatsky; Atherton Tableland Waltz; 4 String Swing; Timonya - Belarus Folk song (solo); Over Easy; Piperkovo Kolo (duo); Poloninu; Masquerade Waltz; Reverie (solo); Balmain Bossa; Ballade; Kolo Kolo and East West. All pieces were composed or arranged by Stephen.

We had a great time, it was a lovely sunny summery day in the town square and we were very well received. Thank-you to all of Plektra!!

*Fiona Horbach*



## WAMO



A break with the traditional formal concert in the form of a theme night was trialled last month and proved quite a success for WAMO members. At the regular Saturday evening dance night on 28th June at our home base the Rhein-Donau Club, we presented a Spanish Night theme. With generous support from the club members who were attracted by the idea of a Floor Show from WAMO (25 minutes worth) and Tim Andrew on flamenco guitar (20 minutes) and a completely Spanish menu, we all enjoyed an evening mixing both social and musical elements. WAMO also made an effort to make the very German

Eidelweiss Hall look a bit Spanish with the Spanish National flag hanging behind us as a backdrop. The tables were decorated with red and yellow table mats, tealights and fresh red carnations (apparently they're the national flower). The added decorative flourish of fresh mandarins (which were ultimately eaten by the guests) and a raffle with Spanish prizes capped off a most successful evening. The position of MC for the evening was capably taken by Jana Buvari who is keen to rejoin WAMO now that her new job situation makes this possible.

It is proposed to consider such evenings again in 2015. To more fully embrace the event WAMO members have committed themselves to 6 months of dance lessons to more fully engage on these occasions!!

Both WAMO and WAYMO will be featured in the next concert for 2014 on Saturday 6th September at the Steiner School in Bibra Lake. The Steiner School benefited from Kevin Rudd money with a new auditorium ideal for our purposes. The school boasts a particular interest in the playing of musical instruments as central to their educational philosophy. WAYMO is presenting two new works, 'Dance Music Power' with some heavy percussion and 'Small Suite for Flute and Orchestra' both premier performances (both by yours truly).

Soon after on Wednesday 24th September we will join forces with the guitar students from Governor Stirling High School for an exchange of program and a joint piece in *Suite Number 2* by Wolki. This continues our quest to let students of the guitar know about WAMO in the hope some of them will see the light.

Work on the History of WAMO will continue when Geoff Barber returns from England. Geoff has successfully written a book on his own family history, so his insights will be of great benefit.

**Robert Schulz**  
**Music Director**

## Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

The Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra is once again settled in to its normal rehearsal routine after the return of its conductor and associate conductor, who were both on the tour of Germany with the Australis Ensemble. We owe many thanks to Basil Hawkings and Terry Harris who both took up the baton for the MMO during the absence of Werner and Darryl.

The next BDZ festival in 2018 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra taken from the first concert performed as an ensemble. The MMO hopes to celebrate this occasion by performing at the BDZ, preceded by a tour within Europe and an approach has been made to the organisers. It is laudable that amateur music groups, that are subject to the uncertainties of finances and the ups and downs of membership, can sustain itself for so many years. The Australian Mandolin fraternity has many ensembles that have been around for a long period of time and may they continue to prosper.

There were six orchestra members in total who toured Germany and attended the BDZ festival in Bruchsal. Their return brings the MMO back up to strength and we are straight into intense rehearsals for our concert in Geelong in August. We are playing in the McAuley Hall, a very fine venue located in the Newtown campus of Sacred Heart College. The program includes the Concerto De Samba by Klaus Wusthoff featuring three guitars. The South American rhythms of this piece are providing an interesting challenge to the orchestra. The program also includes the Vivaldi concerto for two mandolins with the solos played by Michelle Wright, our leader and Jordan Moshcovitis. Young Jordan is relatively new to the mandolin, however, as a fine violinist he has taken the change to the mandolin within his stride and will do a great job. Ina Postuma has been busy promoting the concert by using her many contacts within her Probus club and by sending out flyers to people deemed to be our target audience. Here's hoping for a full house.

Werner, our conductor, has been looking for ways to start our rehearsals on time with a full compliment of players; a problem all conductors of amateur groups have to contend with I am sure. As we play in the German club the first idea mooted was that the latecomer/s buys everyone a beer, I can see Rob Kay giving the thumbs up to that. However, it was decided that a late jar at a dollar a time would be the way to go. A few of our players will need to get their credit cards ready.

### **Ray Kerslake**

**Editor's comment:** Working with the Dutch players at Biezenmortel in October last year we soon learnt how the Dutch orchestras work. Rehearsal starts only when everyone is seated and ready to play. It is considered extremely bad form to hold up the conductor and other players so rehearsals always started on time. Everyone was seated and tuned up at least 10-15 minutes before rehearsal was due to start - always. WAMO rehearsals usually start at 7.30 ready or not, after the apologies from absent players have been announced. Players soon learn that it is really awkward to arrive late, especially if you sit in the middle of the orchestra.

## Australis Ensemble

The Australis Ensemble was made up of the following members from around Australia

Mandolin 1 - Sue Flower (Ensemble leader), Martha Babineau, Fiona Horbach, Danny Silver.

Mandolin 2 - Col Bernau (Section leader), Jan Gillingham, Lea O'Brien, Lindsay Peak, Catherine Sands(Canada).

Mandola - Darryl Barron (Section leader), Ian Bull, Yuri Halay, Cath Kench, Ray Kerlake.

Guitar - Joel Woods (Section leader), Paula De Gilio, Donna Kerlake, Lucien Lowe, Werner Ruecker.

Acoustic Bass Guitar - Robert Kay(Section leader), Alex Burger, Scott Kay.

Helpers- Leanne Coleman - photographer/facebook updater, Jamie Kay and Robert Kench.

Our ever patient conductor Stephen Lalor took on the challenge of guiding an ensemble of mixed experience through 6 concerts in the German towns of Lohr- reputed to be Snow White's home town!, Freigericht, Eislingen, Schweinfurt, Sessenbach and Mannheim (this last concert was with one of Keith Harris's ensembles). We shared the program in each town and joined together for 2 pieces. Musically we grew as a group not only by playing together regularly but by learning from the other orchestras we performed with. Stephen's compositions were met with universal praise by the performers and the audiences wherever we played. Congratulations to Joel and Sue for their wonderful solos! Thank-you also to Sue for her great leadership of the ensemble.

Each orchestra was so welcoming, providing us with food and liquid refreshment whatever time of the day we were with them and so much home-baked kuchen that we could scarce believe our eyes!! Our hosts often spent the following day with us meeting us for meals or coming with us on guided tours of their towns that they had graciously organised.

We were also honoured to be the special guests at two mayoral receptions, one in Eislingen with Lord Mayor Mr Heininger and the other in Schweinfurt with Lord Mayor Remele.

Socially we also had great time! Memorable moments include Stephen in a dungeon, Joel's commentary on the German windmills during one particularly long bus trip, rehearsing in the bus, very loud church bells 24/7, our bus driver forgetting to pick us up one evening and his numerous wrong turns, many delicious meals shared, drinking beer at 10am!! on a brewery tour, Martha and her camera....everywhere! and Jan's never ending supplies of whatever we needed at the time - tictacs, trivia, you name it she had it!

We were lucky enough to have time out for sightseeing and saw many a castle and church, cruised on the Rhine, visited Emser Thermal Park all before we arrived at Bruchsal to perform at the 2014 Bund Deutscher Zupfmusiker (BDZ) Eurofestival on Friday 30th May.

Our performance in Bruchsal received a standing ovation of which we were all so proud. We had worked really hard and wanted our final performance in Germany to be extra special. We were even invited to play an encore which was a big surprise!

A huge thank-you to the planning group for an amazing tour! The backbone of the group was Lea O'Brien who spent countless hours before and during the trip making contact with the orchestras, putting together our itinerary and seeing that we were in the right place at the right time. She was assisted by Col Bernau, Rob Kay and Stephen Lalor.

Thank-you also to Werner and Stephen for all of their translating at concerts, receptions and for whenever we needed their help.

***Fiona Horbach***



*Australis Ensemble*

Here is a newspaper review from the Sessenbach concert (24.5.14) - which said of our program :

'The new music (by conductor Stephen Lalor) was presented with precision - securely played as an ensemble, soulful, romantic. The Australians transported the listeners to distant lands.'

*excerpt from: 'Australier zupfen in Sessenbach' (page 14) Issue 136 of 'Westerwald' published 14 June 2014.*

And a review from the American mandolin player Chris Acquavella (now based in Germany) from his Facebook page - "highlights for me ..

### **Stephen Lalor and the Australis Ensemble.**

**Not enough can be said about a good melody and a solid rhythmic pulse. Stephen's compositions put the biggest smile on my face. All of his works were awesome but East-West was my favourite. The ensemble clearly enjoyed themselves and performed with smiles all around. The art of "stage presence" is still alive. It is good to know that not all zupforchester music has to be pseudo-intellectual or written in a style originating around 1935. Stephen's music proves that music can still be melodic, rhythmic and just beautiful art. Well done Australis Ensemble!**

## BACK IN GERMANY, BACK AT BRUCHSAL

A return visit to Bruchsal was again a most enjoyable experience. This time attending as an audience member it was nonetheless just as entertaining and exciting as before in 2010.

The Festival does well to showcase such a variety of ensembles of both size and sound, but there were several new additions that are worthy of mention.

Maybe due to the AMMA showcasing Australian music last time (in 2010), the BDZ committee decided this year to commission 13 new works and have them performed at the Festival. Thirteen composers were asked to write a work of certain duration. These were then sent to participating orchestras who were then obliged to perform them as part of their Festival presentation. These pieces were highlighted in the program notes with a special logo. This displayed another trend in the programming of the Festival music, in that there seemed to be less music from the established composers, but many more new composers coming through. This gets a big tick from me. As it was not possible to hear all concerts (there being two venues running concurrently) one had to survey the program and make choices.

There were many highlights with some memorable performances. Ricardo Sandoval and his guitar accompanist Mattias Collet with their brilliant music from South America were outstanding. I finally got to meet Alon Sariel who has performed many of my pieces. Over breakfast at the hotel one morning, I met Alon's accompanist, pianist Michael Tsalka. They are planning to create a new Festival in Holland with baroque music but also contemporary pieces.

The American mandolinist Brian Oberlin presented his own style of solo playing and included some very well known classical pieces but with his own take on them. A very brave performance I thought. Takashi Kubota performed his Tanzsuite Nr 3 with the Kubota Philomandoline Orchester. Although this work carried the same sense of grandeur as Tanzsuite Nr 2, I thought it lacked some pivotal moment.

The delightful sound of the Persian saz played by Mesatolia was a new sound sensation. The acoustics of the Stadtkirche was ideal for this soft but full sounding instrument. I have sent music already to the young guitar trio 'Jamali' as (hopefully) an incentive to keep playing together. Silvan Wagner who looked, dressed, played and sang like a 15th Century troubadour was a delight. And finally the brother and sister act Amsterdams Gitaar and Mandolin Duo blew our socks off with the causal, energetic and vibrant performance, a performance without boundaries.

To make a link between the city and the Festival, there was an outside stage built not far from the concert halls, where Festival performances were given variously throughout the week. The final night was awash with everyone who wanted more, and they were not disappointed.

As usual, the glossy program was full of information about ensembles, conductors, composers, complete with photographs, printed in German and English and running to 101 pages. This program becomes a rather valuable source for new music and biographies of new composers.

For me there were some matters I would address to the Festival organisers if I were asked to do so.

First, it seemed as though the Festival organisers did not really talk to the city council to brief them on the activities of the Festival (that is, to show them the program). This showed up one night when one local cafe (adjoining the theatre) was caught unawares and struggled to cope with the evening concert goers, who wanted to celebrate late into the night. Understaffed, they did well to feed and water an unexpectedly large crowd. On the final night too, the local pub ran out of beer!

The Festival ticket was not cheap, although the price included lunch and dinner. This was catered for in a large marquee outside the theatres. However we soon discovered the local cafes provided much better

food (and for about the same price as we had been charged for the catered food). So many abandoned the 'tent food' and went to town. It would save the organisers much time and trouble with meals for attendees by just letting everyone go out and about. It would also bolster the trade for the local restaurants and cafes.

There is an inherent trend for Germans to make speeches! This was one of the most frustrating elements of the Festival presentation. We had our glossy programs in our hands telling us the background to both the performers and the pieces. However it seemed necessary to the organisers to ask a 'Presenter' to tell us again exactly what we had just read. This proved tedious to say the least. This cost the program much time and I think the time would be better given to the performers, who could have added perhaps 5 minutes more to their programs. At one evening performance there was a 45 minute delay in the starting of the performance. We subsequently learned this was due to some Festival Presentations (speeches) being made in an adjoining venue.

All that said, I will be there (wherever that is - rumour has it it will not be in Bruchsal) in 2018! For me it is a great opportunity to stay in touch with many musicians with whom I have become acquainted. The depth of the program is amazing with so many ensembles of commendable standard sharing the same stage. It is interesting to see the trends within the BDZ (who have a new committee) and after the thoughtful changes to this years program, it will be interesting to see what eventuates next time.

See you all there!

**Robert Schulz**



## BDZ Silver Medal awarded to Keith Harris

*Thomas Kronenberger, newly elected president of the BDZ, Keith Harris, Christian Weyhofen, Dominick Hackner - both vice*

Within the framework of the recent Eurofestival Zupfmusik in Bruchsal, Keith Harris was awarded the Silver Medal of the German Plucked String Federation (BDZ) for "services to plucked string music". He is one of only five recipients of this rare award. The presentation took place at a ceremony attended by leading officials of the German organisation, which is by far the largest of its kind in the world, in a reception held in the baroque castle of Bruchsal. The laudatio was given by Christian Weyhofen, Vice President of the BDZ, who emphasised the wide range of Harris' international contribution to plucked string music - artistically, as performer, conductor and composer, but also as author, teacher and active participant in the ongoing and lively discourse on the mandolin.

## 'Australis Ensemble' Tour to Germany and BDZ Eurofestival May-June 2014

We're happy to report that the Australis Ensemble, conducted by Stephen Lalor, had a very successful tour, and all got home safely. This article will present a broad overview of the tour, with a focus on some of the scheduled activities we all enjoyed. I hope it will give a picture of the fun – and hard work – we all experienced together! It is a little lengthy, but the Bund Deutscher Zupfmusiker (BDZ) Eurofestival happens only every 4 years, and we would like to let FAME members know how the tour went. We would also like to recognise and thank our host orchestras in Germany.

So, reminiscent of Katy, this is what the Tour did, with the best bit – about our Tour Concerts and Music – left till last...

**Pre-departure planning almost done!** The final 8 weeks before our departure were a blur of activity for the Planning Group, confirming bookings, checking concert programs and engaging in final communications from our six host orchestras.

The first part of the Tour was the pre-BDZ part: over a period of 12 fabulous (and full!) days we took in six towns in the southern half of Germany, six concerts, six delicious after-concert dinners catered and/or organised very generously by our host orchestras, and several excursions.

**The start of the Tour:** All the Tourers met in Frankfurt airport as planned and on that first day we had a very full schedule. In the space of the next few hours we travelled to Lohr, an hour away, met our delightful hosts, settled in to our accommodation, then had rehearsals – one with our ensemble and one with our host orchestra - before playing in the evening concert. The coach driver was a little late, and baggage loading not part of his remit, so this was quickly handled by the group with lots of fun and chaos ensuing. Needless to say, a Load Meister and Team were duly established – thanks to Danny and to Robert and Jamie, two of our three Helpers – to ensure even smoother and speedier loadings in the days ahead!

We soon settled into the routine of loading our baggage, our instruments and ourselves on to the coach, travelling to the next town, disembarking and settling in to our accommodation, meeting our amazing hosts, catching whatever meal was next, rehearsing, socialising and fitting in some great excursions. Did we mention sleeping?!

**Accommodation:** For this tour we organised accommodation in local, typically German 'Landgasthof' and smaller hotels as much as possible so we could experience the local flavour.

**Our meals:** Speaking of which... breakfasts were invariably superb, offering a variety of super-fresh bread rolls, an array of cheeses, salamis and hams, and bottomless pots of coffee.

Most of the restaurants where we were to have lunches and dinners were booked in advance (sight-unseen) to ensure that our large group of 27 people could be catered for. Luckily this worked out very well and we enjoyed some wonderful meals, sometimes with members of our host orchestras. We soon discovered that salmon and schnitzel featured prominently on most menus, and that pork and turkey are the most-served meats in Germany.

Our hosts also suggested restaurants that we should experience, including the Erstes Ulmer Pfannkuchenhaus in Ulm, which specialises in huge pancakes, both savoury and sweet. We followed up on this and had a delightful evening side-trip during our Eisingen visit. Additionally, our hosts organised post-concert celebratory dinners (some very late!) for the players, and treated us to home-made regional specialities, such as Schwabian noodles and ravioli pockets, and amazing arrays of cakes and desserts.

**Gift presentations to our hosts:** The *Australis Ensemble* presented each of the host orchestras with a gift and thanked the key organisers in each orchestra, the conductor and all the members for all the work they'd done to organise our joint concerts, and for the wonderfully warm hospitality they'd shown us from the minute we'd arrived.

We wanted our gifts to each orchestra to be 'hand-made', useful and memorable. So each brightly wrapped package contained:

- a bound copy of the *Atherton Tableland Suite* donated by composer Stephen Lalor,
- a bound copy of *Whimsies I, II and III* donated by composer Robert Kay,
- CDs donated by the MMO, SMO, WAMO, Plektra, Joel Woods and Marissa Carroll (*Plettro Mano*) and by Col Bernau (*Bernau & Lambert*),
- a copy of our *Tour Song Book* produced by Leanne Coleman with input from Jan Gillingham, and
- a fridge magnet for every member of each orchestra, with a photo of the Australis Ensemble on it to remember us by!

Our presentation 'speeches' to our hosts were delivered in English then translated into German where possible, thanks to the noble efforts of Werner and Stephen! In return, our hosts gave us copies of their CDs, books of their region and other great memorabilia.

### Our Host Orchestras' Organisers and Conductors:

Lohr: **Petra Breitenbach** (Conductor) of the Zupf-Ensemble Lohr am Main

Freigericht: **Barbara Trageser** and **Patrizia Tarantino-Langner** (Conductor) of Das Freigerichte Zupforchester

Eislingen: **Christine Risel** and **Heidemarie Güller** (Conductor) of the Zupforchester der Kolpingsfamilie Eislingen/Fils

Schweinfurt: **Dagmar Kutsche** and **Julian Habryka** (Conductor) of the Mandolinen- und Gitarren-orchester der Naturfreunde Schweinfurt

Sessenbach: **Lucia Zinndorf** & **Stephan Fahl**, and **Corina Supper-Münzer** (Conductor) of the Mandolinenorchester 1927 Sessenbach

Mannheim: **Brigitte Randl** & **Andreas Mangold**, and **Keith Harris** (Conductor) of Mandolinata Mannheim.

### Receptions by Town Mayors:

Two of our host organisers, Christine Risel in Eislingen and Lucia Zinndorf in Schweinfurt, organised receptions by their respective Lord Mayors in honour of our visit. At each reception Stephen Lalor as the conductor of the *Australis Ensemble*, and we players, were received most graciously by the Lord Mayor and other dignitaries – all very formal but with a very friendly flavour. These ceremonies certainly made us feel that our visit was An Event, and that they considered us to be important and valued visitors to their towns.

### Excursions:

During the first part of our trip we went on a number of guided tours, to:

- Lohr's Old Town and Old Tower (this town is the home of Snow White and the Lohrians can prove it!);
- Gelnhausen (near Freigericht) – reputed to be one of the oldest towns in Germany, including a visit to a deep dark doorless dungeon, built in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century as a turret but then used to imprison those accused of being witches, from which they never emerged alive;
- Ulm's Fischviertel (fishermen's quarters) – starting at the Ulmer Münster, then through the narrow old streets of the Fischviertel, along the top of the 15<sup>th</sup> century town wall which runs parallel to the Danube River, across narrow canals, right to the door of the Pfannkuchenhaus;
- the city park area of Mannheim – led by an enthusiastic tour guide, Margret, who regaled us with interesting and humorous stories about the sights;
- Kaiser-Brauerei in Geislingen, where we saw the huge beer-fermenting vats and tasted their specialty beers. Rob Kay and several others were in beer heaven!

We also made a number of other excursions.

**Emser Therme:** After seven days of touring, we visited the Ems thermal baths for 2 hours of relaxation before our fifth concert of the tour with the Sessenbach orchestra. The Emser Therme is a very modern and up-market complex of saunas and bathing pools of different sizes and temperatures, where we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, soaking, steaming and splashing. Once we were back on the coach, we had a twenty-minute ride to the...

**'Deutsches Eck':** the 'German Corner' in Koblenz - the headland at the confluence of the Mosel and Rhein rivers. We strolled through the hundreds of stalls in the busy Saturday flea market along the bank of the Rhein, and on to the Deutsches Eck itself. Very impressive!

**Beethoven-Haus, Bonn:** We had a wonderful time gazing at original manuscripts and letters, seeing an actual lock of Beethoven's hair (almost a 'religious' relic!), and walking through the rooms where Beethoven had been born and where he and his family had lived for a short time.

**Schloß Heidelberg and the Old Town:** Our final concert was in Mannheim on Sunday 25 May, with the Mandolinata Mannheim conducted by Keith Harris, an Australian mandolinist, guitarist, composer and conductor of considerable international repute. This meant that all our concert commitments were completed and we had Monday and Tuesday free to relax and go sightseeing – and to gather our strength for our performance at the BDZ Eurofestival. At the end of the day we all met up at the Kulturbrauerei Heidelberg in the Old Town for dinner with some of the host orchestra members.

**Rhein River cruise:** On Tuesday we turned into real tourists and took a 3 hour cruise down the Rhein River. Embarking at Bingen (a small and pretty town made famous by its 12<sup>th</sup> century resident Hildegard von Bingen), we passed small villages, larger towns, vineyards and over thirty castles – some in ruins – on both sides of the steeply sloping riverbanks. We disembarked in Boppard, another small town with a history going back to Roman times, where we had lunch before getting back on the coach which had driven from Bingen to meet us.

### Our Tour Concerts and Music:

For the public concerts with our six host orchestras in their towns, we had agreed on a set format – they would open the program, then our ensemble would play the second set, and we would finish with both orchestras playing two pieces together. With up to fifty or so musicians on stage, the combined orchestras at times created a bigger mandolin orchestra than some of our new friends had played in before, and bigger than some audience members had ever seen! Needless to say, these rehearsals and six great concerts in nine days prepared us well for our performance in Bruchsal.

In these concerts, we performed Pujol's *Tangata*, Rob Kay's *Whimsies, I, II and III*, and movements II and III from Stephen Lalor's *World Music Suite*, as well as the BDZ set (see below). Joel Woods starred as a soloist in our first concert, playing *Black Opal* written for solo guitar by Richard Charlton, and Alex Burger played didgeridoo in movement I of Stephen's *World Music Suite* in all six concerts. With the combined orchestra we performed Stephen's *Atherton Tableland Suite* and the pieces sent to us by each host orchestra: Fred Witt's *Study #1* with Lohr, Michael Jackson's *Earth Song* with Freigericht, Leopold Mozart's *Suite in D-moll – I: Anglois and 5: Mourqui* with Eislingen, Klaus Schindler's *Suite Latina: Mambo* with Schweinfurt, Tarrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* with Sessenbach and movement III of Keith Harris's *Diamantina Suite*, the *Tarantella*, with Mannheim.

Once at the BDZ Festival in Bruchsal, the program offered a huge variety of music for us to enjoy over the four days. Standout performances for many of us included:

- Mark Davis' NAME (New American Mandolin Ensemble) for their musicality and tight presentation,
- Oliver Kälberer with Ensemble Roggenstein – Oliver is a great conductor and composer, and has an extremely well-rehearsed ensemble that was one of the tightest at the festival,
- the Prague Chamber Guitar Orchestra, whose players presented a great set and made good use of octave guitars,
- the Kubota Philomandolinen Orchestra from Japan, whose players showed us what precision is all about, and
- performances from Chis Aquavella (USA) and Stephanie Rauch (Germany), Brian Oberlin (USA), Carlo Aonzo (Italy) and Plektra (Oz!) were also outstanding and memorable.

As always, one only got to see a portion of the whole programme, so sadly we missed seeing Mandolinata Mannheim's performance and Barbara Pomerence-Steel's BMG ensemble (from Scotland), and a swathe of other fabulous performers and music. Schade!

Our performance of three pieces written by our conductor Stephen Lalor was refreshingly different from many of pieces played at the festival – modern, rhythmic and eminently melodic - and was really well received by our audience. These pieces - *East West* (movement I of the *World Music Suite*), *Lyuba* and *Australis Suite* (in three movements) – draw to an extent on Stephen's training in Kiev, Ukraine, and on his extensive knowledge of domra repertoire, which no doubt made them very accessible to many in the audience.

Thanks must go to our brilliant conductor Stephen Lalor for his work with us and for the material we had the pleasure of working with, and thanks also to our terrific section leaders Sue Flower (Mandolin 1), Col Bernau (Mandolin 2), Darryl Barron (Mandola), Joel Woods (Guitar) and Rob Kay (Bass).

The Planning Group would very much like to thank the wonderful members of the *Australis Ensemble* for the lovely presentation and gifts to us at the end of the Tour. The gifts were thoughtfully chosen for each of us and were received with much surprise.

Finally, we're sure that all of us lucky enough to have been part of the *Australis Ensemble* tour under the baton of Stephen Lalor will join together to thank him for his music, his dry wit and his eerie ability to wave his arms almost non-stop for 16 days straight! Grateful thanks from us all, Stephen!

Lea O'Brien and Col Bernau

On behalf of the Tour Planning Group

Col Bernau, Lea O'Brien, Rob Kay and Stephen Lalor

**2014 'Australis Ensemble' Tour of Germany and BDZ**

*(Edited for length)*

## WHAT'S NEW FROM SCHULZWERKE?

***Symphonic Fantasy in E minor*** is written for large Mandolin Orchestra, timpani, percussion and flute. This score is awaiting it's first performance in Japan in May 2016.

And those technically challenged guitarists who would love to boast they can play Asturias by Albeniz, should ask for my ***Asturias for Dummies*** version. Sounds as good as the original but much more accessible.

***Small Suite for Flute and Orchestra*** is soon to be performed by WAYMO. It is an accessible piece of moderate difficulty in three movements. Flute part comes with easy or difficult version.

Contact: [rschulz@conceptual.net.au](mailto:rschulz@conceptual.net.au)

[www.robertschulz.net](http://www.robertschulz.net)

*Check this out .....*

The logo for 'rondofile' is displayed on a grey rectangular background. The word 'rondo' is in a white, lowercase, serif font, and 'file' is in a gold, lowercase, cursive font.

<http://www.rondofile.com.au>

A filing system for sheet music (and other things)  
recommended by one of our members, whose colleague developed the system.

*From the web page:*

Australian designed rondofile allows you to directly annotate on various types of sheet material, whether it be music, text or handwritten documents, drawings or other forms of artwork.



**2015 Sydney FAME Mandolin Festival**  
 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015  
 Dunmore Lang College, Macquarie University  
 Herring Rd, North Ryde NSW 2113



**F**ederation of  
**A**ustralasian  
**M**andolin  
**E**nsembles

## REGISTRATION FORM

Please complete and send by email to – [thesydneymandolinorchestra@hotmail.com](mailto:thesydneymandolinorchestra@hotmail.com)  
 Or print, complete and send to – PO Box 522, Northbridge 2063  
 (One form for each player)

### PERSONAL INFORMATION (Please PRINT)

Player:

Family Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ Given Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Member of FAME (Y / N) \_\_\_\_\_ (non-FAME members have a \$10 surcharge)

Family or Friends accompanying Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ie non-players) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Contact Details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Orchestra (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ Instrument(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred position in FAME Orchestra (Please tick or write Y & indicate skill level –

(1) Beginner (2) Intermediate (3) Advanced)

Mand 1 \_\_\_( ) Mand 2 \_\_\_( ) Mdlr \_\_\_( ) M'cello \_\_\_( ) Guit \_\_\_( ) Bass \_\_\_( ) Percussion \_\_\_( )

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a Double Bass player from Interstate / Overseas, do you need an instrument provided for you?  
 (Y / N) \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary Requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Conditions, Serious Allergies &/or Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

### REGISTRATION FEE: (Non-Refundable) Per Person; Due 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015 \*.

Resident player	@ \$ 300	\$ _____
Resident non-player	@ \$ 150	\$ _____
Player (non-resident)	@ \$ 300	\$ _____
Fee (\$10) for non-members of FAME (players only)		\$ _____
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

Registrations are ONLY accepted on receipt of this Non Refundable Registration Fee or the Full Fee  
 (Deposit & Accommodation Fee, on page 2).

**\*NOTE – An EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION FEE (non-refundable) of \$250, is available,  
 For Players only, until 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2014.  
 After that date the Full Registration Fee is applicable & is due by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015.**

**YOUTH FAME SUBSIDY**

This is available to encourage young people to participate in FAME Festivals. A subsidy of up to \$200 may be available.

Requirements – You must register as a full-time playing member of the Festival Orchestra. This means you must attend all day and evening rehearsals and participate in the Festival Concert.

You must be an Australian or New Zealand Resident.

You must be less than 26 years of age.

**General Information**

Membership of a mandolin orchestra is NOT a requirement. The Youth Subsidy is not paid to the applicant, but paid by FAME to the Festival Management Committee. The FMC will advise the applicant, upon approval, the amount of the grant, which will then be deducted from the balance of money owing.

I wish to apply for the FAME Youth Subsidy (Y / N) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

**ACCOMMODATION FEES (This is in ADDITION to the REGISTRATION FEE)**

There are a limited number of twin rooms (motel style) with ensuites, some single rooms with ensuites, some single rooms where 2 rooms share a bathroom and then single rooms (student accommodation). These will be allocated on a first registered / first allocated basis.

- |                                 |                                  |         |          |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------|
| 1. Full board and Accommodation | @ \$ 650 per player / non-player | x _____ | \$ _____ |
| 2. Lunch & Dinner, NO Accom     | @ \$ 200 per person              |         | \$ _____ |
| 3. Lunch only, NO Accom         | @ \$ 100 per person              |         | \$ _____ |

Full Cost (Registration + Accommodation) is \$ 950 per player / \$ 800 non-player.

Full cost of the Festival (Registration plus Accommodation Fee) is due 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015.

Payments made after 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015 will incur a \$50 late fee. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**BANKING DETAILS For Electronic Fund Transfer**

If you transfer funds electronically, it is VERY important that you include your FULL NAME as a reference. If you do it through your own bank, you must ask the teller to include this reference.

You may also pay by cheque when you send your **Registration Form** by conventional mail, to –

The Sydney Mandolin Orchestra, PO Box 522, Northbridge NSW 2063

Deposit (in Australian Dollars): St George Bank

Account Name: Sydney FAME 2015

BSB: 112 - 879 Account Number: 448237292

**INDEMNITY & PERMISSION**

By sending this form (even if unsigned) to the 2015 Sydney FAME Mandolin Festival Organising Committee, I acknowledge and agree that the organisers of the 2015 Sydney FAME Mandolin Festival and associated volunteers will not be liable for the injury to any person or for loss or damage to any property arising from any act or omission by the organisers of the said Festival and associated volunteers or any other person whether arising under the law of contract tort or otherwise, and indemnify the organisers of the 2015 Sydney FAME Mandolin Festival in relation to any such injury, loss or damage.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I give full consent for all audio and video recording and for photographs that may be taken of the rehearsals, FAME concert and the normal social activity of the Festival for whatever use is deemed appropriate by the organisers.

(Y / N) \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Which One to Use  
A Series About Mandolin Technique  
Instalment 14

(What) Do Composers Think About Instruments?

At the time of writing, I've just accepted an invitation to be Composer-in-Residence at the **C**lassical **M**andolin **S**ociety of **A**merica's 2014 Convention in Portland. I'm really excited about seeing many American friends I haven't seen for a long time, and of course it will also be great fun to watch Jim Bates (whom I've known, liked and admired for around three decades now) conducting some of my music. I had lots of positive feedback, by the way, on my *Three Miniatures* (commissioned by the **A**ustralian **M**andolin **M**usic **A**ssociation), which were played at the 2012 **F**ederation of **A**ustralasian **M**andolin **E**nsembles gathering in Fremantle, Australia, conducted there by my long-time friend and colleague, Mark Davis, and shortly afterwards at that year's CMSA Convention, where they were in Jim's wonderful hands. I think the CMSA idea of having a person who makes a musical blueprint (a "composer") rubbing shoulders with the people who convert the marks on the paper into sound waves, is really great, because it makes the whole process of music-making more real and human.

I'm glad people generally seem to like playing things I've written. I think one reason is that I try to make all the instrument parts interesting - not just a melody on top and a boring accompaniment underneath. I know I'm also careful when I *compose* (a big word!), that what I write is playable for normal people who just don't have the time to practice four hours a day. I do expect them to do their best though! And of course my music also suits the instruments of a plucked string ensemble, which I claim to know extremely well.

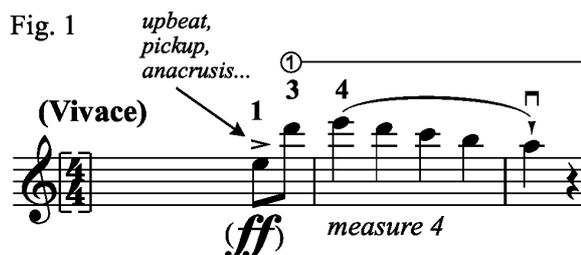
People who have been following this series will know that lots of my views on mandolin (and guitar, for that matter) technique are, well, *non-standard*. This is particularly reflected in the technical suggestions (fingering, stroking...), which I often add to the written parts. In this series, I discuss various aspects of how I see the plucked string universe, and of course I look forward to talking about my views at the Portland Convention. For now though, here are some insights into a few things that go through my head when I write music.

This Instalment is mainly about two seconds or so of playing time of my *Diamantina Suite*, which was published by Vogt and Fritz of Schweinfurt in 2009. The first concert performance of these three movements was in Brisbane (Australia), when I conducted the orchestra at that year's FAME gathering, which coincided with anniversary celebrations in the state of Queensland. So many Australasian readers of this article will be familiar with the music.

Only recently, Bettina, one of my students in Germany, had an Internet session on *Leaving Patras*, the first movement of the *Diamantina Suite*. By telling you about that session, I can perhaps give you an idea of some of the things I think about when I write music. I certainly don't just write generic music; rather, I write for specific instruments and have a very clear notion of how I'd like it to sound - and also *how* to make it sound that way.

Bettina, a very alert and musical 23-year old student, has been working with me now for around two years, so she has a lot of background about why I recommend certain things. Often during a lesson, I just sit sipping tea, smiling at the computer screen and admiringly watch her applying principles we've talked about, giving a gentle virtual nudge from time to time. If (as admittedly happens pretty often) I recommend extremely non-standard solutions, I of course try to explain and justify my recommendations. Bettina examined first the very innocent-looking **motif** consisting of measure four, together with the *upbeat* at the end of measure three and the count of one in the fifth measure:

The connecting point between composer and player is usually the written music. Many composers go to a lot of trouble to express clearly what they'd like the player to do, and I certainly do! So please bear with me while I remind you of a few things about the written details of Figure 1.



- i. As this example comes a few bars into the piece, there would of course usually be neither **time signature** nor the tempo word **Vivace** at this point, because they have already appeared at the beginning. That's why I put them in brackets; to understand this article, you really do need that information.
- ii. The dynamic sign for **very loud** in brackets really does appear in the printed music and not just in this article. In the published part though, it has also already appeared a few bars earlier, so really still applies until there is another differing indication. As the volume is important to me as the composer, however, and I suspect the player might have forgotten in the meantime, I take the risk of appearing patronising, and state it again as a reminder. This is a precaution, not a necessity, and hence the brackets.
- iii. The figure contains two different standard uses of Arabic numbers: the one in a circle means a string number - the 1<sup>st</sup> string (E); the numerals by themselves indicate my fingering suggestions. I think the composer can reasonably expect players to know these common conventions.
- iv. The curved line (a *slur*) here indicates that I'd like the tremolo technique - as I describe in detail in the written introduction to the score. The down-stroke sign over the note A indicates that the tremolo stops with a down-stroke at this note.

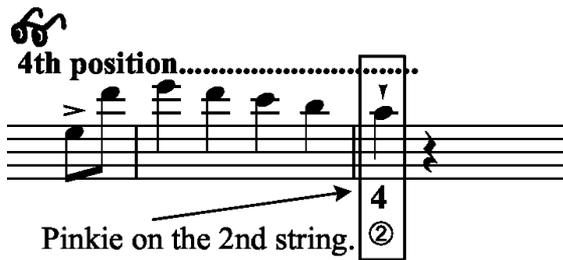
Here's an account of our session.

Right hand:

- We agreed to leave out the tremolo for the moment, just because there were enough other things to talk about without this special matter.
- We quickly agreed that alternate strokes are pretty standard for the two quavers of the pickup/lead-in/upbeat (*anacrusis* is a nice technical term).
- During the 20 minutes or so we spent working on Figure 1, as we didn't have to worry about tremolo, we could concentrate on other aspects like sound quality and articulation (here *legato* = smooth). I suggested for practice purposes playing the crotchets sometimes with alternate strokes and sometimes only with down-strokes. My reasons for this approach are much too complicated to elaborate on in this article, but perhaps you'd like to try practising with both



Fig. 4 - *A really bad idea...*



This fingering does in fact avoid changing position, which however would be an advantage exclusively for shiftophobics. Two reasons why non-phobics should not do it though:

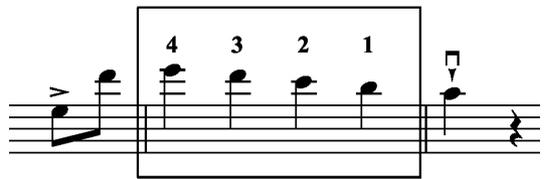
- i. It's a lot harder (accident prone!) than practically any shift I can think of, and
- ii: Even if it sounded impeccable - in tune, "clean" etc. (which is highly unlikely), it would still sound different to a note of the same pitch on the E-string.

So far, of course, we have only talked about the notes before and after measure 4, but hardly about the measure itself.

Initially, Bettina opted for the standard fingering solution shown in Figure 5:

If you use the fingering indicated in this example, and most well-informed mandolin players on the planet would, many people would say you are playing in the 4<sup>th</sup> position (because the 1<sup>st</sup> finger is on the note B on the E-string and so on - see Instalment 6 for a detailed explanation). A more elaborate description might add that you are also using the 2<sup>nd</sup> *finger pattern*, a theoretical system based on the spacing between fingers.

Fig. 5 - A textbook solution.



(See again Instalment 6 - especially Figure 10ff. - for this related matter.)

Being curious and, contrary to what some people think, open-minded, I watched Bettina practising the notes for a while, and observed her reactions. I thought it just might work for her, as she is very skilful and also as the distance between frets is less, further up the fingerboard. In that case we wouldn't need to disturb any sleeping dogs. After playing the notes half a dozen times though, she began to look unhappy, so I thought we should discuss the situation. I pointed out that the distribution of fingers (remember: so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> finger pattern?) was anatomically not especially comfortable. I suggested another fingering much more in keeping with the way most hands are constructed:

Fig. 6



This fingering makes child's play of the motif, if you know what to do. The two most obvious trouble spots for the unwary or uninitiated:

- i. Different fingers for each of the two Ds.
- ii. The shift between C and B.

Bettina had already encountered the technical issues involved, but it nonetheless took five patient and concentrated minutes to begin applying these known principles consistently to these particular notes. If you happen to see the printed music, you'll notice that, unlike in Figure 6, in the final analysis I have left most of the fingering up to the player - of course hoping against hope that at some distant future time people might automatically use the fingering shown in Figure 6 - which is certainly what the composer, teacher and theorist in me hopes for. I'm also realistic though, and often avoid making suggestions which I know most people would find so bizarre that they

would never trust me again - except for my own students, of course, who follow even my most outlandish-looking suggestions with delight and complete trust. In most cases, after a while they have internalized the relevant principles to such an extent that they come up with exactly the same ideas even without my intervention, and I then have nothing else to do but say “congratulations!”

To conclude this Instalment, why don't you try the consciousness-raising exercises Bettina and I used to cope with at least the *first trouble spot* mentioned in Figure 6?

Please spend a couple of relaxed, concentrated and thoughtful minutes with each exercise - and follow my guidelines exactly. After all, you don't have to adopt my ideas later on if you don't want to, but you really should give them a fair chance before you dismiss them.

First preparatory exercise:

Fig. 7

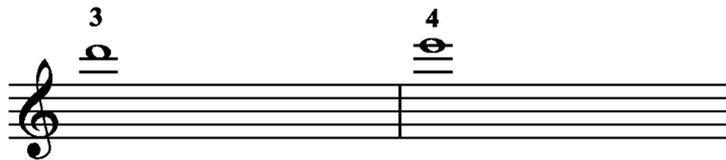


Leave the 1st finger down until *after* you have actually struck the next note. The note E should keep sounding for a short time after D has begun to sound. So, for a short time, you should apply the correct pressure to *both* fingers. Then, carefully raise *only* the 1st finger, leaving the 3rd finger still on D.

Next one:

Fig. 8

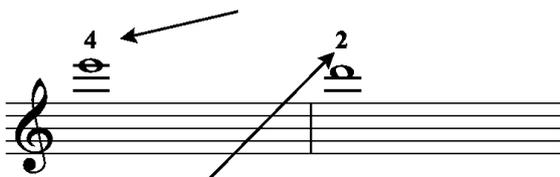
When you strike E, leave the 3rd finger on D. Continue pressing with both fingers for a few seconds, and then lift *only* the 3rd finger, leaving the pinkie on E, which keeps sounding.



Possibly the trickiest step:

Fig. 9

i. Initially, only the 4th finger and *not* the 2nd finger presses.



ii. Leave the pinkie in place and the note E ringing, and place the 2nd finger on the D as well. Now, 4 and 2 are both applying the correct pressure.

iii. Play D by striking the string and simultaneously raising the pinkie.

Please be *extremely* conscientious and alert now! Remember the situation you were in at the end of Figure 8? Just to make sure: The note E is still sounding, because the pinkie is still fingering it. You have, however, *raised* your 3rd finger, which until recently had been on D. Now, leaving the pinkie on E, allow the 2nd finger to move towards the pinkie and finger the note D as well. At this moment, *both 4 and 2* are pressed down. When and only when you feel that the 2nd finger is doing its job properly, play D by raising the pinkie.

Then:

Fig. 10

This is analogous to Figure 9:  
Make sure that the 2nd finger is still firmly on D, which therefore continues sounding, while you finger C with the 1st finger *as well*. At this moment, both 2 and 1 are pressing. When you feel the right moment has come, play C by making a stroke and *at the same time* raising the 2nd finger.  
NB: The 1st finger is *already* in place!

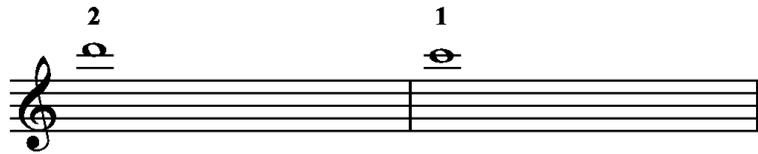
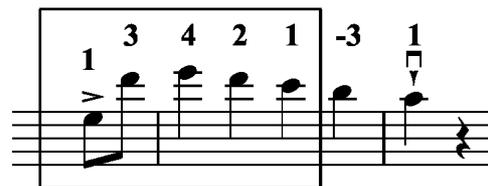


Fig. 11

This takes us without interruption this far:



If you are wondering now how to change with utterly no interruption from C with the 1<sup>st</sup> finger to B with the 3<sup>rd</sup>, see Instalment 2, where Example 12 illustrates exactly how to execute the required technical procedure.

Of course you should revise not simply Example 12, but **ALL** of Instalment 2, so that you don't miss any vital detail.

Keith Harris - exited Composer-in-Residence in Portland! - Marburg.