



Federation of Australasian
Mandolin Ensembles Inc.

Plucked Strings

A quarterly newsletter for FAME members

www.fame.asn.au

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June 2013

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from Keith Harris

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due
18th August

President's Report



Last month I received a very thoughtful and thought-provoking email from John Flameling, currently Auckland Mandolinata Orchestra's President and also a New Zealand representative on FAME's Committee of Management. He wanted to bring to my attention some concerns he and the AMO committee had with FAME's Constitution which states that individuals were members of FAME, not orchestras. The impact of this definition meant that orchestras did not have the right to nominate representatives to FAME's Committee but financial members of FAME within each "region" (eg State or NZ) had that responsibility to nominate representatives to the committee.

The changes made to FAME's Constitution in 2007 and again in 2009 also meant that orchestras did not have the responsibility to levy members for FAME's annual membership fee and individual members of orchestras were not

obliged to also be members of FAME ie FAME membership was optional. The result of this wording meant that slowly, bit by bit, more and more orchestra members were deciding not to pay FAME's outrageously expensive annual membership fee (all of \$10 AUD, unchanged for 30 years!!!). In addition FAME's own rules for admission of new members regarding the requirement for a formal application to be submitted to FAME's committee were not being adhered to, thereby leading to confusion regarding players' FAME membership status and whether they had legitimate claims to vote at FAME AGMs and FAME Special meetings.

John quite correctly pointed out that FAME's Constitution was changed to enable musicians who had no formal attachment to any particular mandolin orchestra to join FAME but another focus of concern back in 2007 and in 2009 was expressed by former President Robert Kay who felt that it was probably illegal for membership of an orchestra to automatically compel players to become FAME members and pay another \$10 for this "privilege"! So the long-standing and well understood association of orchestras with FAME was removed from FAME's Constitution.

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Currently most mandolin orchestras in Australasia do have a representative on FAME's committee but there are notable exceptions including Concordia Mandolin and Guitar Ensemble and Mandolins D'Amour, both in Victoria which, interestingly, is where FAME was born and where it is registered as an Incorporated Association.

Having been stimulated by John Flaming's email I have read through the 1991 FAME Constitution and found it an interesting read as it is quite simple and to the point. However it probably wouldn't pass the increasingly rigid requirements of Victoria's Department of Consumer Affairs which has under its wings "Clubs and not-for-profits" Division including Incorporated Associations.

Nevertheless this early FAME Constitution describes the

obligations of Orchestras and "groups" seeking to "register" with FAME which were to 1. pay FAME membership fees of all members of that Orchestra or group, and 2. To submit contact details for all members.

The next paragraph described how individuals could become members of the Federation by either joining an orchestra or group which was registered with FAME or by submitting an application to FAME's committee or by orchestra submitting to FAME's committee the names of non-playing members for consideration of admission to FAME.

The 2009 version of FAME's Constitution makes no mention of orchestras or groups being registered with FAME and only lists how individuals could become FAME members.

The Constitutional changes made in 2007 and then in 2009 have clearly had some unintended consequences for FAME and for orchestras and I think that it is now appropriate for FAME's committee to re-examine the Constitution with the aim of making some proposed amendments which will redress the unintended consequences. Hopefully this can be done quickly enough for adequate advance notice of a motion to adopt proposed changes to the Constitution to enable those attending the AGM in early January during the Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival to vote on this issue.

As FAME's President I encourage feedback from FAME members on this issue either directly to me or to your own FAME representative.

Danny Silver

O R C H E S T R A R E P O R T S

Auckland Mandolinata

What a busy start to the year! We booked ourselves up for four weeks in a row in April, a couple of small concerts around Auckland, and a day long sectional workshop, and culminating in the first of our Winter Series concerts on the first weekend of May. It has been a busy time for us all, keeping up to speed with some of our more tried and true arrangements which we can use for some of the less routine concerts, as well as learning some new and exciting (and challenging) pieces for our regular Winter Series. Our day long sectional workshop was a great success and everyone felt the

benefits of coming together for some intensive practice with the other players. We will definitely be looking at continuing these throughout the year. Well done and thanks to everyone for all the hard work over this time.

At our winter series concert we were able to premiere Gounod's *Soldiers Chorus*, Albeiniz' *Tango*, *Sarah Brown Eyes* from the musical *Ragtime*, and a preview from Anthony Halligan's *Theatre Suite*. This suite of 5 movements has been one of the more challenging works we have worked on recently and we are excited to be able to perform all the pieces in the following

months. As well as these, we have worked on some of our base material, well known to those who have been in the orchestra for a while, but still new and challenging for those who have joined in the last few years. Thanks to the experience and leadership of the longer serving members of the orchestra, us "newbies" can get up to speed quickly and put on an excellent show for our audience. This works really well as the orchestra continues to grow; great news for the future of the Auckland Mandolinata.

Gianni Flego

Canberra Mandolin Orchestra

On 21st May the CMO celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Ann Carr-Boyd's "Fandango" was the catalyst which launched the CMO in May 2003. Briefly, in 2003 I heard the piece on ABC FM, rang the station for more information and decided maybe Canberra could have a mandolin ensemble.

I advertised for players and received 35 phone calls. Canberra music identity Peter West (now a Melbourne-based cello teacher and orchestral performer) agreed to conduct. Danny Silver of the MMO gave much valuable telephone advice on repertoire and management.

The CMO kicked off with more than 25 very enthusiastic founding players and the rest, as they say, is...CMO history.

We have maintained a core of around 21 enthusiastic members, developed an extensive and interesting repertoire and played hundreds of performances since then. After the successful FAME festival held in Canberra in 2006 the CMO was even able to seed a second mandolin ensemble for Canberra.

We now look forward to the next 10 years of success!

Sam Leone,
President, CMO



Heather Powrie reports:

The highlight of this quarter for CMO must surely have been our participation in **Canberra's 100th birthday celebrations** (see photo), on Monday 11th March, even though some of us may have received more than our share of souvenirs on the day.

We commissioned our conductor and musical director Michael Sollis to write a special piece to celebrate both anniversaries, and he didn't disappoint! Michael wrote for us, "**Secrets from a Shoebox**", a beautiful three-movement suite with prologue, interludes, some spoken text and a postlude. We played the new work on the main orchestral stage of Canberra's centenary concert (see photo) in March on the lawns in front of Old Parliament House.

On the morning of this concert a small group of us had another task. It was a very warm day and a party

of eight met at the **National Museum** jetty to board a boat marked *DRIFT* and tour around Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin while people strolled along visiting the various activities. Because of the noise of the motor we made a deal with the driver, such that he would gun the engine to get up speed, then cut it, at which point we all began to play as loudly as we could whilst the boat lived up to its name!

Unfortunately this little (privately owned and volunteered for the occasion) boat had been newly painted and the hot sun melted the not-quite-dry white marine paint on the benches, leaving us all with sticky white residues on our black uniform clothing, so we had to perform at our next gig as marked persons! This gig involved the whole group and took place in the special marquee stage erected in front of Old Parliament house a few hours later, following the

Woden valley youth choir (as described above).

On Tuesday 19th March we were invited to play as accompaniment for pre-dinner drinks at the **National Asthma Foundations's** national conference held at the spectacular **National Arboretum**, Canberra's newest tourist attraction.

On 24th March we had two gigs, one, our customary annual Smith family VIP breakfast at the **Governor General's house** at 9a.m. and a second in the afternoon, out at Bungendore, an arty village about 30 minutes outside Canberra, at a "festival of the elements" concert in the **Mirramu Arts Centre**. Here our act was followed by voluptuous belly dancers and preceded by local primary school children, obviously a very varied programme to suit all

tastes. Our performance was very well received none-the-less.

On Sunday 7th April we played at the **National Botanic Gardens Family Day**, which was a lot of fun; another outdoor venue on a balmy Sunday morning with birdsong to accompany. As usual on such occasions we started out with "Never on Sunday", a bit of a signature tune for us, as we so often do play on a Sunday!

On April 14th we made a return visit to the **Lerida wine estate** and this time sat outside overlooking Lake George, because the harvest was inside. Our concert was attended by strong aromas and a few million tiny insects, in addition to our usual fans. As before, we played for an hour, ate and drank for a second one and then played again, and we all took home a bottle of their new wine, which

made a fitting end to a very busy first term.

And of course, as our President has reported above, we recently celebrated **our first ten years** with a shared meal and a birthday cake (thanks Ian, we didn't know you could bake!) ; an exciting milestone in Canberra's Centenary year. As I write from Jandakot in Perth, (where I have come to meet my very new grandson), a much awaited and rather important meeting is taking place in Canberra between members of the two mandolin groups, with a view to co-hosting your 2015 FAME conference.

Until the next issue, greetings to all in FAME.

Heather Powrie,
Associate Conductor and
Mandola/inist as required!

Concordia Mandolin and Guitar Ensemble

Concordia began 2013 with a concert at our "home ground" at East Malvern Uniting Centre (this is also our rehearsal venue!) with a diverse and exciting program.

It featured music played by Concordia for the first time and showcased some pieces that were performed at the recent Mandolins Victoria music week in January.

This included two pieces from composer Keith Harris - 'Domra'

and 'Habanera' from his 'Three Miniatures' and 'East West' from Stephen Lalor's 'World Music Suite' for mandolin orchestra. Juliette Maxwell on piano accordion performed 'Libertango' by Astor Piazzolla and an old favourite with our audiences 'Beka Roka' by Grock, arranged by the late Fred Witt. The program also included a premier performance of 'Ringing the Strings' by guitarist and composer Michelle Nelson with three very contrasting

movements.

As a contrast to the contemporary elements of the program, the 'Concerto for Mandolin' by Giuseppe Guliano, featured our orchestra Leader Noeline Sherwin and Michelle Wright.

We are looking forward to our next concert at Ewing Memorial Uniting Church on the 21st July.

Michelle Wright

COZMO

All of us in COZMO and in our COZYMO (Capital of Australia 'Youth' Mandolinata) Learning Group program are very pleased with the great strides being made by our program participants. During our tour of quite a number of mandolin orchestras in Germany last October, COZMO's Musical Director Col Bernau and I heard here and there about the difficulty of finding new experienced players, unless they were coming through a high school program or were found through a university or similar institution offering studies in plucked-stringed instruments such as the mandolin. Interestingly, one or two of the smaller orchestras visited were comprised mainly of keen family members – husband and wife, brother-in-law, mother and daughter etc, together with a handful of other, unrelated mandolin enthusiasts. In COZMO, thanks to encouragement and advice received at the 2012 Perth FAME Festival, we are overcoming that problem little by little, by 'growing' our own. By the end of this semester (in 2 weeks' time), COZMO may be gaining another couple of members, home-grown from its COZYMO program. Very exciting and rewarding!

In our March Report we'd flagged COZMO's upcoming involvement in Canberra Centenary's celebrations, in a "Musical Offering" program organised by a small but dedicated group of long-time Music Lovers here in Canberra, to bring free musical performances of all styles to everyone in our nation's capital, every day of this year. We were delighted to be asked to perform in the Foyer of the High Court of Australia, where quite a number of very successful instrumental and

voice performances had already taken place each Sunday this year as part of this program. We set up in the Foyer, in one of the quirkiest spaces acoustically we've come across – a very large expanse of marble floors and walls (where there were any walls at all!), huge glass windows, long ramps leading to floors high above, and at least three different ceiling heights in our immediate vicinity ranging from 4 metres to 6 metres to 20 or 25 metres above us. Depending on where one sat or stood, the sound was muted or magnified – quite a challenge for both players and audience!

We gave our appreciative audience a one-hour set of nine pieces, which included Arcangelo Corelli's *Fünf Tanzstücke* and JS Bach's *Aus den französischen und englischen Suiten*, both of which sounded absolutely beautiful in the setting, and Rob Kay's evocative *Pennyglen* which was also very warmly received, finishing with a lively rendition of Robert Schulz's *Dance* from his *Short Studies*. We've been invited back to play in this venue again which we'll do later in this Centenary year – we're quite chuffed by this as we've heard that not all groups are invited back, if not quite 'suited' to the quality of this venue! At the end of our set, the High Court organiser asked if we'd noticed the Chief Justice in the audience – apparently he comes in to work every Sunday in his office located somewhere above the Foyer from where he can hear the performances, and if he likes what he hears, he makes the effort to come down and listen in person. So COZMO passed the Chief Justice test!

At our recent AGM, a new Committee was elected for the

coming year: All were happy to see Col and Lea continue in their roles (thanks...!) and two new members stepped up to the committee, which now comprises Col Bernau (President and Musical Director), Lea O'Brien (Secretary and Treasurer), Lindsay Peak and Trevor Smallwood (Committee Members). We thank Mary Firkins and Frances Maclaren for all the work they did on the previous committee.

In two weeks' time we will be holding our Winter Concert. Our Learning Group participants on mandolins and guitars will be presenting the first half, playing four pieces learned during this Semester's program, and also playing in several trios, ably backed and supported by Col on guitar. We already have some participants for the LG program starting in Semester 2 – on Sunday 28 July, at 4pm in the Atlas Room at the Hellenic Club In The City. If anyone reading *Plucked Strings* in the ACT and surrounding region would like to participate in this Semester-long program (or would like to join COZMO), you can do so by contacting COZMO's secretary (secretary@cozmo.org.au or 0421 043 082).

The next task for ACT's FAME members is to submit an Expression of Interest in hosting a Festival for consideration by the FAME Committee – still early days! Suffice to say for now that all FAME members in the ACT Region, including in COZMO and the CMO, are looking forward to seeing you all at the next but one FAME Mandolin Festival in Canberra in July 2015!

Lea O'Brien
COZMO Secretary and Treasurer



WAMO

month together with the guitar students. So in readiness for this we performed all 5 movements of Wolki's Suite No.2. This unique work is always a pleasure to perform and we hope some of the students will take a liking to our repertoire and consider joining WAMO when they leave high school. This strategy has worked for us before, so we'll keep you posted.

The first half concluded with a new work by me for mandola solo and orchestra. Two contrasting pieces 'Waltz Nostalgique' and 'Devil's Dance' were written to explore the new timbre of my Scott Wise mandola. The first piece was written to displaying scope for tremolo, and the other to see how agile one can be. I was pleased to pull off the performance from memory with only the usual exciting race to the end in the Devil's Dance!!

After interval a small group performed Kraus's Variations in F. This time two new players not yet involved in the small ensemble setting Michelle Lovkis and Harry Baker joined Cath Shackleton, Elizabeth Neeson and I for a very tidy and enjoyable play. The contrast with the smaller sound of the quintet moving back to the larger orchestra is a pleasing addition to the program.

A new work by John Jooste 'Mazurka' followed then three movements from Suite Mexicana, a work we will continue to re-visit I'm sure over the years. There were two smaller pieces to conclude (Mr 'K' and 'Gin and Tonic') before kicking back and enjoying a hearty meal and a drink.

WAMO will perform two concerts in the next two months. One as mentioned with the High School and the other a joint concert with the resident Heimat Choir at the German Club for which Rob Kay has arranged the music.

As we enter the winter months there will be disruptions (winter colds and flu) holidays (orchestra members are forever travelling overseas and thereabouts and generally having a good time!!) before our Spring Concert in September.

Ongoing matters of interest within the orchestra are the writing of our History, due for release in 2016, the recent purchase of a mandocello (now we want someone to play it!), and the ongoing development of our Youth Orchestra (see next article).

Robert Schulz
Music Director

WAMO has just performed its Autumn Concert at the Rhein-Donau Club on the 19th May under our new conductor Ana Milas. The atmosphere at the Club was relaxed and the blend of music, coffee and wine seemed most agreeable.

The program began with Ambrosius' Serenade, a good opener being tuneful, and not too long. Always up for new challenges they performed next Prelude and Fugue by Mandonico (the last of our purchased music from Bruchsal in 2010) and carried it off fairly confidently. The prelude captures the expected sequences nicely and for a new work the orchestra seem to get inside the piece well. The fugue was somewhat more interesting as it was in jazz style with a contrasting 'classical' middle section.

WAMO will perform again at Melville Senior High School next

West Australian Youth Mandolin Orchestra

Together with WAMO, the Youth Orchestra performed their latest works at the recent May Autumn Concert.

As yet, the ensemble is not meeting regularly due to geographical distances, so the commitment from the young

players has to be commended for all being there on the day. We warmed up with a pre-concert rehearsal at 2 PM which served to keep all the details of the performance fresh in their minds.

Their program consisted of two original works by me, the 'Syncope Blues' (a good opener), and 'Chorale and Dance' (containing their first efforts at tremolo, which according to one of the young players makes her feel like she's part of the bigger orchestra!!).

These were followed by two arrangements, the theme from 'James Bond' and the old perennial 'Sway' by Ruiz. In the last piece the guitarists were allowed to strum the chords and it soon became apparent (due to their classical upbringing) this technique was a little foreign.

But the audience welcomed the young players and thoroughly appreciated their efforts.

My efforts to suggest a uniform of black bottoms (dress or pants) and a white top resulted in uniformly black lower

apparel, and a variety of colours on top ranging from grey to totally black! We'll re-group on this issue before their September appearance.

We maintain 16 players with two more ready to join later in the year.

As we move through this year, being their third year of study and playing together, we are able to structure the group in the traditional setting of 1st mandolin, 2nd mandolin, mandola (1), guitars and bass guitar. Future repertoire will be targeted to keep the interest of

the players, but soon it may be possible to visit the WAMO library and see what they could attempt.

Many of the players have made the commitment to perform at the Melbourne Festival. Still counting the numbers.

Robert Schulz
Conductor

News from Stephen Lalor and Plektra

♪ Stephen Lalor held a mandolin masterclass before the MMO rehearsal in Melbourne at the German Tivoli Club 3 June at 6pm. Stephen is in Melbourne playing for the Australian Ballet triple-bill season 6-17 June, having just finished the Sydney season in May.

♪ Stephen Lalor also played in the Sydney Symphony Vanguard Program (Wednesday 29 May) at the Australian Institute of Music.

♪ The Chantarelle String Quartet is playing a program of String Quartets by Vaughan Williams and Stephen Lalor on ABC Classic FM Sunday Live Sunday 2 June 2013 at 3 pm - broadcast live from the Goosens Hall in the ABC Centre, Sydney.

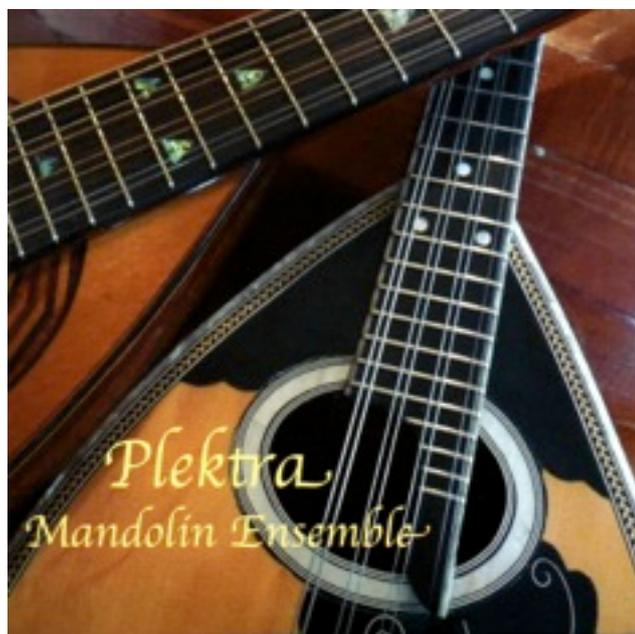
You can listen to a podcast of this program here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/classic/content/2013/06/02/3740916.htm>

♪ **Plektra** performed in Northern Beaches Music Festival and the Utzon Room at Opera House in May - pieces by Canciello, Druzecky, Lalor, Katchaturian.

Plektra's debut CD was launched at CMSA 2012 Convention in Minneapolis with music by Beethoven, Canciello & Lalor.

\$15.00. Available by contacting
Fiona Orenstein at:
fionaoren@gmail.com



Stephen Lalor

Five Easy Classics
arranged for
Solo Mandolin

Bach: Minuet in G
Petzold: Minuet in G
Boccherini: Minuet & Trio
Dvorak: Humoresque
Tchaikovsky: Nutcracker March

slalor@cmcaustralia.com

Stephen Lalor's

'Five Easy Classics for Mandolin'

makes available solos for the mandolin which fit easily under the fingers as self-contained study or recital pieces.

Launched at CMSA Minneapolis 2012, they have been performed both in Australia and the US.

\$15 incl. postage.

Contact Stephen at

slalor@cmcaustralia.com

Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

May has been particularly busy, with the orchestra performing three concerts during the month, the first being held at Castlemaine. Castlemaine has become a successful annual event thanks mainly to the efforts of the three members of the orchestra, Danny Silver, Lorraine Le Plastrier and Deb Shaw, who reside in that town. Lorraine had also commissioned an orchestration of a work by local singer and composer Fay White. The piece, named Casuarina, was arranged for mandolin orchestra and voice by musician and teacher Wendy Rowlands and the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra were very pleased to perform this work at all three concerts during May. We would like to thank Lorraine for her generosity.

Doing three concerts in one month is not ideal and there was a great deal of pressure on the orchestra to produce good performances. The orchestra was also missing a few players and we asked Noeline Sherwin, who is leader of Concordia Mandolin and Guitar Ensemble, to join us and lead the seconds for the three concerts. She did an excellent job, having been dropped in the deep end, and really saved the day. The number of concerts within such a short period came about circumstantially, with a paid gig at Ararat slotted in between and key personnel going on leave in June, dictating the timetable. The final concert of the month was held at St Georges in Malvern and was the best of the

three, helped significantly by excellent acoustics in the hall.

The organisation of the FAME festival in January hosted by our orchestra is progressing well with the accommodation and performance venue confirmed. The selection of the leader of the FAME orchestra and the leaders of the sections has occurred and hopefully Danny, our very busy secretary, should have application forms ready for this edition of Plucked Strings.

We look forward to seeing you all at the festival here in Melbourne. This is a great city to visit and we aim to make this camp sociable and fun as well as musically satisfying.

Ray Kerslake

Mandolins D'Amour

On Thursday evening 23rd May mandolins D'Amour played their Annual Soloists Concert. The idea of Orchestra members playing segments as trios, duos and solos grew from the belief that players would gain performance confidence from these performances.

We had many more items than usual due to new members joining the group and enthusiastically embracing the concept. This years group of players included friends, teachers and former members. As a result the music had such variety. It included German and Danish folk and popular Vietnamese

Our Program

Dat du min Leevsten bust Volkslied aus Norddeutschland
Schneeflockchen, Weissrockchen Weihnachtslied
Bunt sind schon die Walder J F Reinhardt (1752 -1814)
Sonatina F. Carulli

Susanna and Walter, Guitars

I skovens dybe stille ro Old Danish Folksong

Joan, Mandolin and Dennis, Mandola

Almain Thomas Morley
Sonata Op. 5 No. 8 in E minor A. Corelli
Aria di Almirena from the opera 'Rinaldo' Georg F Handel
Pieces arr. by Georg Mertens for performance in the
Jenolan Caves

David, Guitar and Ben, Cello

Sonata no. 4 for two mandolins 3rd Movement E. Barbella
Jane and Terry, Mandolins

Duo op 120 no 3 F. Carulli
Bill and David, Guitar

Shee Bheg, Shee Mhor T,O'Carolan Arr. Uren
MƯA (Rain) VÃN PHỤNG & VÃN KHÔI
Nhan and Gerard, Mandolins and Sigge Guitar

Sonata in D major Christian Gottlieb Scheidler 1752-1815
Allegro, Romanze, Rondo
Joan, Mandolin and David, Guitar

music , Flamenco, post romantic Australian, a number of baroque and classical pieces and some jazz.

A very happy and enthusiastic concert finished up with Sigge Cronstedt conducting Joska by Kok in his imitable way.

Joan Harris

Conductor Mandolins D'Amour

Spanish Romance Anon
Corozon de Violette George Sankatzi

Josephine and George Guitars

A Pastorale from the Essercizii Musici Georg P. Telemann
Donald & Nola, Mandolins and Ben, cello

Till There Was You Meredith Williams from The Music Man
Margo vocals, Donald, Mandolin and Ben, Cello

ALL MANDOLINS D'AMOUR

Rags to Riches Robert Schulz

Ashgrove Trad. arr. Stephen Lalor
Julie Tiedemann, Flute

East West Stephen Lalor
Percussion Margo Clancy

Recuerdos d'Alhambra Francisco Tarrega arr. Keith Harris

Leaving Patras Keith Harris

Joska J.B Kok
"Head" Conductor Sigge Cronstedt

Mandolins in Brisbane

What a few months of much to report!!

Mandolins in Brisbane (MIB) has been busy exploring new ways of making music with 'some dreams being put in place' so to speak. Brendan our President has been on a learning curve with MIB (sometimes a baptism of fire) and meeting the challenges very well; our treasurer has also been on a learning curve with a new system of accounting delivering monthly reports of all things financial for easy distribution.

Dreams have been a highlight to be achieved, new goals identified and plans being put into place for those goals, and our 'new' conductor of Brisbane Mandolins, Joel Woods, presenting the orchestra in two great concerts. The MIB Management Committee is identifying policies that will be a great guide for future committees – the list goes on.

The greatest highlight for Queensland Mandolin Orchestra together with guest musicians and singers was the performance of 'JEPHTHA' at two locations: Montville Village Hall (Hinterland Sunshine Coast) on Sunday 19th May at 2.30pm and St John's Cathedral Brisbane on Saturday 25th May at 7.30pm. Both very different locations, but both equally receiving rave reviews! This performance has been the dream and long term plan of Nathan Aspinall in his last conducting role with us before

travelling overseas to further studies in conducting.

"Jephtha's Vow is a tragic story of ambition, greed and love. The ambitious warrior Jephtha is at war with the people of Ammon. In the heat of the battle, he makes a rash promise to God that if he is victorious he will sacrifice the first creature he meets on his return home. Shockingly, he is greeted by his beloved daughter Filia, who accepts the vow and goes up into the mountains to die. Each year since, the daughters of Israel go to the mountains and lament the daughter of Jephtha.

Many composers have created works inspired by this tragic story. This new commission from Mandolins in Brisbane incorporates settings by Baroque composers Carissimi and Handel as well as new music by Timothy Tate. Timothy Tate is a young composer who has written creative new works for QMO before and is now living in Melbourne and composing music not only for performance, but also for screen, stage and beyond. It was to our delight he was able to once again collaborate with Nathan to bring this sad, emotional story before us and appreciative audience.

This new version of the Jephtha story is scored for an ensemble of QMO orchestra, flutes, violas, cello, bass and percussion and features singers performing the roles of Jephtha, Filia and a chorus

of Soldiers and Israelites" ~ (Nathan Aspinall 2012).

A report on Nathan's time with us appears elsewhere in this edition of Plucked Strings. Nathan has given the Mandolins in Brisbane an opportunity to meet the demands of new and creative works and performance. Under Nathan, MIB has expanded and has two orchestras that play individually, with QMO playing more advanced classical music and Brisbane Mandolins light classical, usually to different audiences. The two groups also combine for joint performances.

Recently Brisbane Mandolins has presented three concerts: the first for the Brisbane Music Club where we performed to a full and appreciative audience; the second a joint performance with QMO at the 4MBS Studios at Coorparoo. We performed the Schoenberg Serenade with guest musician and other pieces including Bagatelle by Luft, Iuba by Stephen Lalor and the Sevenpence Halfpenny Fling by local composer Christopher Andrews. On Sunday May 12th BM performed at Old Government House in the City on invitation from Brisbane Metropolitan Bands Inc. The theme for Mothers' Day was reflected in the music and Joel as a super conductor presented the performance to another appreciative audience.

We are in the process of working with two Schools (with thanks to Ken Gilbert): Yeronga State High

School, very much a multicultural school, and St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School at Corinda. Ken Gilbert has once again been able to support us in our aim to work towards our goals of beginning a Mandolin Training Program. On 16th August we are presenting a short performance during the morning at Yeronga State High School. Both schools have a more

than interested Music Department – we look forward to bringing more stories of our progress in this venture. Joel is heading a group of our experienced musicians who will be involved in the training programme.

We hope there will be MIB members able to attend the Melbourne Music Festival in January 2014. Some of our

mandolin and guitar players attended the Mandolin Magic Music Camp in Gympie organised by Sue Flower, at the end of which a great concert was performed in Gympie to a very enthusiastic audience.

Robyn Tindal
Secretary, Mandolins in Brisbane

WHAT'S NEW FROM SCHULZWERKE?

Recent Works

'Fur Hats and Vodka' for Mandolin Orchestra (catalogue number MO 072) – as the name suggests everyone likes a bit of vodka every now and then. A tongue-in-cheek little piece to take the place of all the well worn Russian ones in your library. Not yet performed.

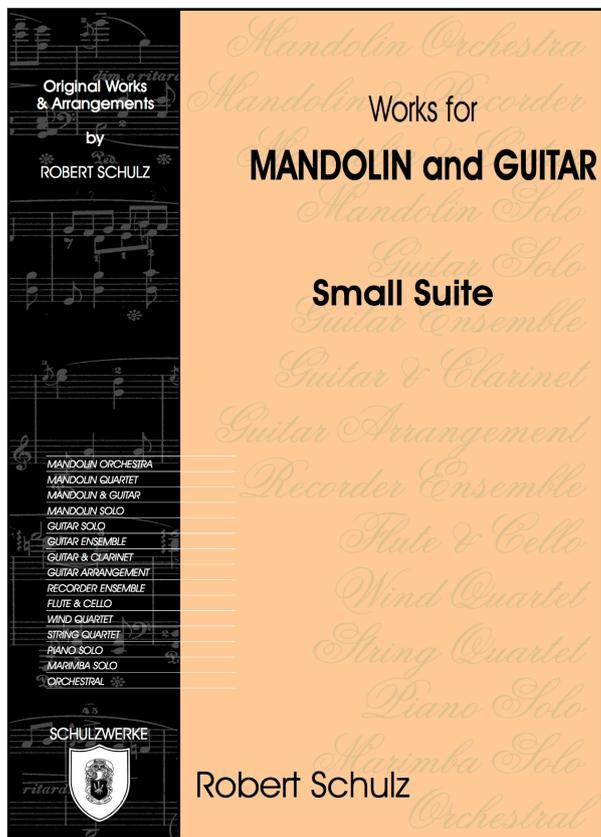
'Dance Music – 'Power' for Mandolin Orchestra (catalogue Number MO 068) written in response to performing live on stage at a dance concert. 4 minutes of pumping heavy rock. Needs strong right hand attack all through!! Not yet performed.

'Prayer of the Matador' for Mandolin and Guitar (catalogue number MG 034). An arrangement of a beautiful small piano work by Norman Dello Joio. Ideal encore piece. Quiet and evocative.

'Small Suite' for Mandolin and Guitar (catalogue number MG 033). Three movements titled – 'Mr Pompous Goes to an Important Event', 'Quiet Waltz' and 'Song Without Words'. Written for Marie's last birthday. Very accessible.

Music is available from:
www.robertschulz.net.au

On the web page, click on the reference number for the piece to view an excerpt from the score.





MANDOLINS IN BRISBANE SAY A VERY FOND FAREWELL TO NATHAN ASPINALL

Nathan was appointed music director and conductor of MIB five years ago when he was a second year student at Queensland University studying French Horn and conducting.

The young conductor and music entrepreneur had the vision to take the traditional mandolin orchestra and make it slightly more interesting and do more innovative works incorporating voice.

Nathan achieved this objective and more!
Some of the highlights of his five years journey with us have been:-

- Establishment of a second orchestra within MIB - Queensland Mandolin Orchestra which contains some of the best players in Queensland.
- Expanding the repertoire of MIB by commissioning new pieces and arrangements.
- Collaborating with other art forms – singers, instrumentalists, designers and writers.

Some of the most memorable performances have been :-

- The premier performance of Betty Beath and David Cox's work "Poverello"
- The premier of Timothy Tate's special piece "Hanging Threads" composed specifically for performance in *St John's Cathedral*, Brisbane.
- Concert "Songs of Love and Obsession" (a collection of love songs from medieval times to the present day, many arranged especially for this concert).

Then came Nathan's final presentation of his wonderful journey with us "Jeptha ". This new version of the Jeptha story has been a project that Nathan has worked on for the past two years. On the 25th of May all this effort and planning came to fruition with a truly wonderful (sold out) performance. The production of the story of Jeptha utilised oratorios by Handel, Schubert, and Carissimi woven together by new music created

by Brisbane composer Timothy Tate and incorporated lighting design created by local creative designer Daniel Anderson.

Nathan has also been very busy and successful outside of his work with us!

For the past two years Nathan has worked with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra as Assistant Conductor. In this position he assists Chief Conductor Johannes Fritzsch and visiting guest conductors as well as conducting concerts for the education series. Nathan studied French Horn and conducting at the University of Queensland and upon graduation was awarded the Hugh Brandon Prize. In 2012 Nathan attended the Aspen Music Festival studying with Robert Spano and Hugh Wolff. He was awarded the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize, inviting him to return to Aspen in 2013. In January of 2012 Nathan made his Sydney Symphony Orchestra debut at *Symphony in the Domain* . He also acted as assistant conductor for Opera Queensland's production of *Macbeth* and *Carmen*.

In 2013 Nathan has return engagements with the Queensland and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra and will conduct Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, Beethoven's *Cantata on the Death of Emperor Joseph II* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Bach society Queensland. He will also lead members of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Mozart's *Gran Partita*.

Then Nathan is off to Boston where he was awarded a Scholarship to attend the New England Conservatory to study conducting with Hugh Wolff.

A very, very FOND FAREWELL
Nathan from all of us at MIB!!

Murray Green
(Past President MIB)

Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival 2014

News Update

Two major developments announced by the Organising committee of the 2014 Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival include the booking of the venue for the FAME Festival Concert – the Glen Eira Arts Centre & Town Hall, and the release of the Registration form for the Festival.

The Glen Eira Arts Centre & Town Hall, on the corner of Glen Eira and Hawthorn Roads, Caulfield, is a fabulous venue for concerts as the concert hall has very comfortable seating for about 500 people, a large stage easily capable of coping the a very large FAME orchestra, good dressing rooms and a large car park. It is very accessible by public transport as a tram line runs right past it along Hawthorn Road and it's not that far from Melbourne's CBD. And unlike many other venues the Festival Organising committee investigated it's modestly priced which has helped keep down the cost of running the 2014 FAME Festival (big bonus!). In fact, keeping down the price of participating in the Festival has been of very major priority for the Organising committee and it has sought to get the most "bang for the bucks" as possible while making as sure as possible that no corners are cut!

The Registration form for the Festival is attached below but is also available at the Festival Website www.melbourneFAME2014.com.au for downloading in both PDF and in Microsoft Word formats. The former is intended for those people who prefer to print out and then complete the form before sending it off by conventional mail to the Festival Registrar, Ms Ina Postuma

(at 15 Rimula Rd, Corio, VIC, 3214) along with the \$200 deposit fee.

The Word version of the Registration form can be downloaded and completed using Word on one's computer and then it can be sent, without needing a signature, to Ina Postuma as an email attachment to the following email address: postuma@ncable.net.au. The deposit can then be paid by electronic fund transfer using the information in the Registration form. This saves the need to get out of one's chair, find a postage stamp and envelope and then face the strenuous task of taking the completed letter all the way to a post box!

Seriously though, the Organising committee is very keen to encourage potential participants for the Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival to register as soon as possible and particularly to pay the deposit as soon as possible. The remaining fee for accommodation or, for those who don't intend to leave the comfort of their own Melbourne homes to move into the student accommodation provided at International House (good as it is!) and all the camaraderie and fun that goes with "living in", the fees for meals only can be paid at a later date closer to the Festival.

As has become the custom in the last few FAME Festivals, young players below the age of 26 will be offered a subsidy by FAME which, depending upon the number of applicants, may be as much as a \$200 discount on the cost of attending the Festival and this is intended to encourage as many young people to participate in the Festival and perform in the FAME Concert at the end of the week.

One detail deliberately left off the Registration form was a space for interstate or overseas registrants to include details of their flights so that the Organising committee can make arrangements to pick up interstate or overseas participants from the station or airport on arrival and similarly to take them back to their departure points after the Festival. These details will be chased up closer to the Festival when it's much more likely that travel details will have been finalized.

One final word – for those intending to pay by electronic fund transfer, please understand that it's very important for the Festival Organising committee to know who has paid their deposit and accommodation fee. So please be absolutely certain that you include your name and what you're paying for when you do an on-line fund transfer to the Festival bank account (details are on the Registration form). This might be as simple (space willing) as, for example, "J Blogs deposit".

If anyone has questions about how to complete the Registration Form or what fee should be paid or in fact any other details about the Festival in January 2014, please send Ina Postuma an email.

The 2014 Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival is bound to be an enjoyable week of making music and catching up with musical friends and we on the Organising committee are looking forward to being your hosts for a week in January.

Danny Silver

**Secretary MMO and 2014
Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival
Organising Committee.**



MELBOURNE FAME MANDOLIN FESTIVAL 2014
5 - 12th January 2014
International House
Royal Parade, Parkville Melbourne 3052



REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT FORM

Please complete using Microsoft Word, **one form for EACH individual** person and send by email to postuma@ncable.net.au or print, complete and post by conventional mail to:
Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival 2014, 15 Rimula Rd, Corio, VIC 3214

PERSONAL INFORMATION (Please PRINT)

Player:

Family Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms _____ Given Name: _____

Financial FAME Member? (type YES or NO) _____ (non-FAME members have a \$10 surcharge)

Family or Friends accompanying (ie. non-players) Name: _____

Name: _____

Contact address: _____

State: _____ Country: _____ Postcode: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Email: _____

Mobile: _____

Emergency Contact Details:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Relationship to you: _____

Your Orchestra (if applicable) _____ Instruments(s): _____

Preferred position in FAME Orchestra: (please type YES next to preferred position)

Mandolin 1 _____, Mandolin 2 _____, Mandola _____, Mandocello _____, Guitar _____, Double Bass _____, Percussion _____

Other (specify) _____

If you are a double bass player travelling from interstate or overseas do you need an instrument provided for you?
(type YES or NO) _____

Special Dietary Requirements: _____

Medical Conditions, Serious Allergies and/or Special Needs: _____

BANKING DETAILS for Electronic Fund Transfer:

Deposit (in Australian Dollars): to Commonwealth Bank

Account Name: Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

BSB: 063 181 Account Number: 1033 4749

If you transfer funds electronically it is extremely important that you include your FULL NAME as a reference so that we know it is YOU who has paid the funds. If you do it through your own bank then please advise the bank teller to include this reference at the time of transaction. You may also pay by cheque when you send your Registration & Deposit form by conventional mail to the address at the top of this page.

FAME YOUTH SUBSIDY

to encourage young people to participate in FAME Festivals, a subsidy of up to \$200 may be available from FAME for young players who MUST fit ALL of the following requirements:

- you must register as a full-time playing member of the FAME Festival Orchestra. This means you must attend all day and evening rehearsals and participate the Festival Concert.
- you must be an Australian or New Zealand resident
- you must be aged below 26 at the commencement of the Festival

Membership of a mandolin orchestra is NOT a requirement.

The Youth Subsidy is not paid directly to the applicant but is paid by FAME to the Festival Management Committee. The Festival Committee will advise the applicant, upon approval, of the amount of the grant which will then be deducted from the balance of money owing for accommodation (if any).

I wish to apply for the FAME Youth Subsidy (*type YES or NO*) _____ Date of birth: _____

DEPOSIT \$200 per person (players & non-players)

- this is non-refundable and should be paid by the 30th of July 2013

Residential Player	\$200	Total: \$ _____
Residential Partner/Guest	\$200	Total: \$ _____
Player (non-residential)	\$200	Total: \$ _____
Fee (\$10) for non-members of FAME (Players only)		Total: \$ _____
		Deposit Total: \$ _____

Registrations are ONLY accepted on receipt of this Deposit which must be paid as soon as possible. You may pay this deposit separately or you may pay the full fee (Deposit plus Accommodation Fee altogether)

The Full cost of Festival (Deposit Plus Accommodation Fee) is payable by 30th of November 2013 - payment made after 30th of November will incur a \$50 Late Fee!

ACCOMMODATION FEES (this is in ADDITION to the DEPOSIT)

most accommodation is in single rooms; however there are a small number of twin rooms and a few suites with 4 separate bedrooms. The twin rooms and suites may be reserved on a first booked/first in basis! Please contact Ina Postuma if you want to reserve a double room or a suite to share with 3 others

1. Full board & Accommodation @ \$650 per player	Total: \$ _____
2. Full board & Accommodation @ \$450 per NON PLAYER (balance owing)	Total: \$ _____
3. All meals, NO Accommodation @ \$200 per person	Total: \$ _____
4. Lunches only, No accommodation @ \$100 per person	Total: \$ _____
5. FAME Youth Subsidy (up to \$200)	Deduct FAME Youth Subsidy \$ _____
	(cross out if not applicable) Late Fee \$ _____
	Balance Owing After Deposit is Paid \$ _____

Players and/or guests wishing to stay at International House for longer than the duration of the FAME Festival may do so for an extra fee for the extended accommodation. Please contact Ina Postuma by email (postuma@ncable.net.au) or by phone (03 5275 7444) to discuss your needs BEFORE you send your Registration form and payment.

INDEMNITY & PERMISSION

By sending this form (even if unsigned) to the 2014 Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival Organising committee I acknowledge and agree that the organisers of the 2014 Melbourne 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 2014 Melbourne FAME Mandolin Festival in relation to any such injury, loss or damage:

I also give full consent for all audio and video recordings 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.

Signed: _____ Printed Name: _____

Instalment 11

Words...words...words...

The real truth about the pinkie revealed!

I can't remember hearing the term *pinkie* (or pink-y) to mean the 4th (or *little*) finger in my childhood in Australia, but perhaps I just didn't pay enough attention. It's certainly standard in various countries where English is the main language though. Apparently it's a borrowing from the Dutch word *pink* or its diminutive form *pinkje*. Whatever it's called, the little finger is a source of anxiety to lots of mandolin players. Many of my students, who routinely use it as freely as any other finger, find this a bit strange. Of course, the truth is that it's usually neither weak, too short, nor unreliable, but just badly trained.

Mandolin players who have grown up with this Flat Earth misconception of human anatomy though (probably most players, I suspect, and certainly myself until a few decades ago), often need gentle remedial help to overcome their completely home-grown and unnecessary fear. This is why I wrote this little *Pinkie Blues* for my American friend and online student Bob, building in lots of applications for the 4th finger - some of which might surprise you. As you can imagine, I couldn't resist the temptation to include other technical features as well - so this instalment doesn't use only the word *pinkie*, but also *slide*, *hammer-on*, *triplet etc.* Lots of the words and the underlying principles will be familiar to anybody who has worked through the earlier instalments of this series. In particular, you might care to revise Instalments 3, 4 and 7.

In Instalment 11, I use lower case letters - eg "**b**" - to mark features I discuss. Sometimes other people use different words to describe the same thing, and the signs are also not very standardised. I use my own here, and try to explain what I mean. There are many other instances of each technical feature in the tune, so please keep an eye out for them.

The title of the tune is of course a multiple pun - on the 4th finger itself (*pinkie*), the colours pink and blue, and also on the various meanings of the word *blues* - as a musical form and also suggesting worry or sadness, perhaps feelings associated by some people with the 4th finger...

Here's the tune:

Pinkie Blues

(for Bob)

Visit Keith Harris' website:
www.mandolin-lessons.com

Use open strings and a generally chromatic finger pattern throughout.

Keith David Harris

a) slide (sl) **b)** 4-4 **c)** **d)** pull-off (p-o) **e)** sl **f)** p-o **g)** hammer-on (h-o) **h)** **i)** **j)** glide-stroke **k)**

3 or 4 both have virtues; the worst finger by far is 2.

1 2 3 4

1 sl-1 0 1 sl-1

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And here are some comments:

a)



This is a standard direction that quavers which look the same length should be *tripletised*, played unequally (with a *swing feel*- long/short in a ratio of 2:1).

b) slide (sl)



Stop (*finger*, if you prefer the word) C# with the 4th finger (*pinkie*). Strike the string, and immediately slide the finger one fret to the right, as if correcting a mistake (*oops!*). Be careful to apply constant pressure with the 4th finger - don't inadvertently relax it. **Do not strike the second note -D- with the plectrum:** if the *slide* is done correctly, you will hear the note softly but clearly. You can practise the *slide* slowly: Strike C#, then let it ring for a few seconds before moving the whole hand energetically to the right. The use of the pinkie in this situation is by no means arbitrary; it really is the most efficient finger in the context.

c)



There are a number of interesting aspects at *c*.

1. You almost certainly know the standard downstroke sign , but perhaps you are less familiar with this sign: , - an upstroke sign with a dot. It was introduced around 30 years ago, and indicates an upstroke on only one of the pair of strings. (There is a similar sign for a *downstroke* on only one string of a pair , but I didn't need it for this tune.) These signs would obviously be meaningless for instruments with single strings, like the violin or modern guitar, but they come in handy for double-strung instruments like the mandolin. Generally, the sound has more "body" if both strings of a pair are sounded - the thinner sound of a single string then provides a useful contrast.
2. Remember the *swing* treatment of the equal-looking quavers.
3. For the left hand: as you play the notes C, C# and D, leave each finger down; by the time you play D, three fingers (2, 3 and 4) are all exerting the same force on the string.
4. I think it sounds good to let the higher D keep ringing when you play the lower D (this also applies to letter *b* among other places). The written music doesn't indicate this, although it *could*, of course, but it would be harder to read. There's lots of room for *artistic licence* when you play music.

d)



The *pull-off* is a very common technique in particular with the classical and other forms of guitar and also with various styles of mandolin playing such as *bluegrass*. Various forms of it have been discussed in earlier instalments. It can even be found in mandolin music of the early 20th century as *left-hand pizzicato*, although this often refers to plucking only open strings with the left hand (see measure 4 of *Slipping and Sliding* in Instalment 7 of this series).

In this case,

1. stop both the notes involved (D and C) simultaneously with the 4th and the 2nd fingers respectively.
2. Strike D with the plectrum, then - being careful to keep the left hand completely stable - no twisting and turning! -
3. use the pinkie instead of the plectrum to pluck the string, producing the note C (already stopped with the 2nd finger). To do this, make sure the segment of the finger adjoining the hand forms a straight line with the hand (as is usual on the guitar, lute, violoncello and practically every string instrument except the violin - funny that people don't notice this...), then pluck the string by bending it even more than usual, shortening the distance between the fingertip and the palm of the left hand. After plucking the string, the 4th finger follows through somewhat, heading in the direction of the player's toes and passing just over the E string. At best, this is an extremely effective way of executing a *short grace note*. It works well in particular because it doesn't require coordination with the right hand. It is very easy once you get the knack. Don't use too much force and scrape the tip off your finger!
4. As at letter *c*, let some of the notes on the 2nd string (A string), in this example C and the higher D, keep ringing when you play the open D string.

A further refinement in example *d* is that the 2nd finger can then remain on C until the end of the measure - in particular when the pinkie stops D, and also when C is produced, not by putting the 2nd finger on the string (it's already there!), but by taking the 4th finger off.

e)



Mechanically, this *slide* is not much different from that at *b*, just with a different finger. Be careful though: if you stopped the quaver F# two notes earlier with the 3rd finger, you may well have to stretch the 1st finger back somewhat more than usual to reach the 1st fret - D#. Of course, if you stop F# *with the 2nd finger* (for no better reason than that people have been doing so for 250 uncomfortable and inefficient years), you may have to stretch the 2nd finger back even further - a real *extension* - which requires a lot more control than players usually notice. The pinkie itself on F# though, would make the D# particularly safe and easy, whereas the 3rd finger would harness static forces for the slide. Why don't you experiment with these different possibilities and see if you can spot various pros and cons?

f)



This comment doesn't deal with any technical matter at all; it's just to remind you to observe the change of *key* (from *major* to *minor*). You change back again to the original key (G major) at measure 25.

g)

hammer-on (h-o)



The *hammer-on* is usually regarded as the opposite of the *pull-off*. In my book *The Mandolin Game* (Trekell, Hamburg), I use the term *hammer-off*, which I think better describes the reverse movement. After all, as we saw in *d*, the *pull-off* is a plucking movement, and the *hammer-on* just isn't, I'm afraid. In *g* you do it by striking the open A string, and then immediately (with a "hammer"-like movement) stopping the Bb vigorously with the 1st finger. The forceful finger movement makes the note sound, you don't strike it with the plectrum. The speed is even more important than the force.



The teacher in me just couldn't resist giving various contrasting examples of a *triplet*. I'll talk about the others at *i* and *j* in due course.

When examining the situation at *h*, it's advisable - as so often! - to look first of all at what the *right* hand needs to do.

So please try the following.



What to do:

1. Strike the open D string, making sure that the plectrum ends up resting against the A string. Wait a few seconds in this *resting position* (this term is discussed in detail in *The Mandolin Game*), then
2. allow the plectrum to *fall* through the A string(s) and come to rest against the E string. Wait a few seconds again, then
3. play A by raising the plectrum so as to catch only the lower of the pair of A strings (see *c* above for an explanation of the sign ∇) bringing the plectrum into position for a further downstroke onto the D string.
4. Please practise this stroking pattern slowly and carefully for a few minutes, until you can do it easily and fairly automatically - it needs to work smoothly and reliably even when your attention is focussed on other matters.

When you feel confident that the right hand will do what you want it to when you want it to,

5. instead of making the initial downstroke on the *open* D string, replace D with the note G (as in example *h*), fingered with the pinkie. Wait a few seconds, leave the 4th finger securely where it is, and then - as in 2 above -
6. allow the plectrum to *fall* through the A string(s) and come to rest against the E string. Both G and A will now sound together. Wait a few seconds again, then
7. stop the note B \flat with the 1st finger, at the very same moment sounding it with an upstroke on one string (as practised in 3 and 4).
8. As your pinkie should still be stopping the note G so far, use your 3rd finger for the slide from C \sharp to D. Your pinkie will leave the G when you make the slide.
9. The most expedient finger for the next note, C \natural , is the 1st finger, which at the beginning of the next measure then slides back to B \flat at the first fret.



This shows yet another way of playing a triplet. The rhythm will be as in *h*, but the *sound* of the notes should be interestingly different.

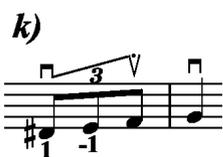
1. Use a *chromatic* fingering (adjacent fingers for adjacent frets) for the first four notes - so the note G will be fingered with the pinkie.
2. Both the down and the up-strokes for the triplet itself should strike *both* strings of the pair. To do this, make sure the plectrum is held at right angles to the instrument - try to make the up-stroke sound in every way like the down-stroke.

3. Strike the higher G with an up-stroke on one string. The contrasting sound is nice, but there is also a mechanical reason: after sounding the note with an up-stroke on one string,
4. the plectrum then continues its upward path out over the G string, which it can then comfortably strike with a down-stroke.



How to do the *glide-stroke*:

1. Right hand: The plectrum strikes both the G and the D strings, practically at the same time. I have indicated two joined down-strokes, but you might also think of it as one stroke with a slight interruption.
2. Left hand: Finger the note C# with the pinkie. At the very moment the open D string sounds, relax the pinkie, leaving it resting lightly on the string, so that the note C# stops ringing. (If you're curious, look up what a harpsichord player 300 years ago did for an *acciaccatura*.)



And yet a third way of playing a triplet.

A preliminary exercise for the right hand:

1. Play the D string with a down-stroke.
2. Wait for the time value of two quavers of a quaver triplet, then
3. play the third quaver with an up-stroke on only one of the pair of D strings.

It's not hard, but please practise this exercise for a couple of minutes to make it automatic:



And the the left hand:

1. Finger D# with the 1st finger.
2. The note E is sounded not by a plectrum stroke, but by the 1st finger *sliding* energetically from D# to E. (You may need to suppress an urge to make a stroke with the plectrum at this moment...)
3. Stop the note F# - sounded by an up-stroke on one string - with the 3rd finger, then G with the pinkie.

Concluding comments

If you have trouble with the 4th finger, you certainly aren't the only one. If you seriously want to improve matters though, stop believing that the problem is due to an unchangeable anatomical reality. It probably isn't, but rather

caused by an inefficient use of the left hand - which you can certainly change, if you get the right information which oddly seems to be in extremely short supply...).

Most of those really good players who use the pinkie with apparent ease also believe (wrongly, but it's nice to have something or someone to blame...) that the problem is based on the way the hand is built, and compensate by long hours of practice. This often causes more bad intonation than they care to admit (due to faulty distribution of forces in the hand), and may even lead to arthritis in later years.

The good news is - there are sensible ways to do things!

As Linda, another of my online students, recently wrote (not to me - but I do have her permission to quote her):
"What I'm getting from Keith is a smart way to play that will not wear my body out.I find that my playing is much more consistent now than before."

And my friend and respected colleague Mark David, conductor of the Providence Mandolin Orchestra and himself a fine guitarist, authorised me to quote this regarding the mandolin:

"I have been enjoying your ideas of left hand fingering. I am using much more 'closed position' fingerings. You know what? You're right! It is better by far and causes much less stress on the hand. And makes things more musical AND more fun!"

Perhaps ***Pinkie Blues*** will give you some insights into the matter and make your playing more fun too.

Good luck!

Keith Harris (Marburg, Germany.)

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www.mandolin-lessons.com**

**or send an email to:
info@mandolin-lessons.com**

**or telephone:
 +49-6421-95 23 44 (landline)
 +49-176 800 22 531 (cell phone)**

