

The case for an Australian

folk music tradition

Excerpts from a doctoral thesis by Chris Sullivan



Chris Sullivan is a leading Australian field collector, performer and scholar of Australian Traditional Music with more than four decades of experience.

His collections include 1,200 audio recordings, still photography, video and film.

He has worked with a number of institutions and government bodies including the National Library of Australia, The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, The Australia Council, The Australian Bicentennial Authority and The Australian Folk Trust.

His MA (Hons) thesis (ANU 2005) was a critical examination of Australian Folk Revival sources and representation. He won the Southern Cross University Three Minute Thesis Competition in 2015 and was an Asia-Pacific Semi-Finalist. Chris was the 2016 National Folk Fellow.

This thesis examines aspects of historical music performance in Australia, using the key concepts: folk music, traditional music and popular music, the terms most widely used to account for informal music practice.

The main focus is on the

application of these concepts to the Australian field recorded evidence and, more widely, to 19th century musical form.

Through a close re-examination of the musical evidence, the aim is to identify and locate Australian characteristics within national and international contexts.

The development of 19th century nation states is closely allied to folklore, folk music and literature.

Historically, these cultural forms have provided validation, social cohesion and a focus for identity and identification.

National literature, national songs and folk literature have been of special importance to new-settler societies, such as Australia and the United States, where they have played an important role in defining the national story.

Indeed, folk may be said to manifest only through its incorporation into a national storyline.

Older European societies used folk literature in a similar way, but in a retrospective sense, to flesh out a back story, adding to long established myth and legend rather than creating an entirely new cultural history.

In environments new to Europeans, the clock is reset on transplanted culture, and the subsequent fate of those materials is divergent.

As grand narrative, national literature pivots between popular culture and the formal structures of society, playing a central creative role in validating the diverse activities covered by the terms, 'folk' and 'tradition'.

In contrast, the detailed analysis of folklore materials presents a different perspective, challenging the monolithic national story by supplying the counter narratives reflective of the actual polyglot community.

The folk conception centers on the recovery of lost and re-found non-material culture. In practice, the materials

under consideration do acquire an objective existence, as transcript, print, or recording, but in research, the focus is on the intangible nature of folk idiom.

There is a contradiction for music research, as music is both a tangible cultural artifact and an intangible, ephemeral manifestation of culture.

A key issue is the identification of where the creative input occurs: is it something innate within vernacular culture within the subject field, or an observer phenomenon, the result of conscious selection and defining of culture as folk?

This quandary is central to all disputation over the status of Western 'folk music': is it received culture that is merely parroted, or culture that is created/re-created by people? the putative folk.

Any study of 'folk music' must deal with two facets that are not necessarily related, the music, and the place of that music within society.

In establishing a linkage, folk scholars have taken both hard and soft lines on the definitional aspects of the music.

Using music to describe culture or to explain cultural attributes is by no means a straightforward process.

The forms and structure of vernacular music are variable and do not make for easy general classification.

The task of melding what are, typically, an assortment of individual or local music styles into a larger regional or national entity is problematic because of that variability.

The characteristics of folk music are said to be consistent only at the small scale, local level.

It is for these reasons that socio-cultural history has, historically, been used as the main explanatory tool, with discrete music examples providing support.

Such was the case in Australia. Marxist interpretation was the

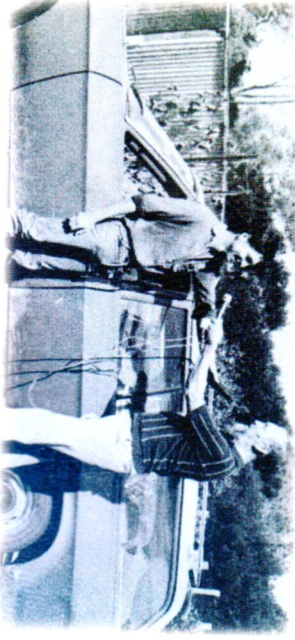
matrix, with support from broad occupational categories such as shearers or drovers.

The problem with this approach is that it does not solve the inherent contradictions present within the musical diversity or explain the creative processes at work in society.

Any number of alternative explanations could equally suffice.

The difficult task then, is to establish a reading in which the scope of the interpretation is commensurate with the scale of the supporting evidence, whether representative of specified people or groups, or of culture and society more broadly.

An emphasis on cultural process rather than on the materials or historical construct acts as a counter balance to the limitations inherent in the available musical evidence which must be considered as partial and therefore inherently unrepresentative. The interpretative base



Chris Sullivan and Jacko Keavans, Glen Innes Folk Festival, 1990. Photo: Rob Stack.

Advertise now in



Ph: 0410 522 070

Email: info@tradandnow.com

Web: www.tradandnow.com



TRAD&NOW: THE JOURNAL OF AUSTRALIAN FOLK MUSIC AND CULTURE. WWW.TRADANDNOW.COM



Chris Sullivan and John Meredith, after returning from the most successful field trip in the history of Australian Folklore (1200 items), Thimbera, 1983.

can be broadened by the measurement of change over time, or through time.

Snapshots of single moments in time and space are not fixed, they are points on a continuum.

Musical form and style may change, but its place within society remains the same, or similar.

In folklore studies, this roughly corresponds with the research orientation described as the function of folklore, and is linked with anthropology, ethnography, and oral history methodologies.

The evidence does not rest solely on isolated musical examples, but includes the performance and social contexts and a host of potential ancillary information that too relates to the scale of enquiry.

An expensive, inclusive research orientation avoids the obvious pitfalls and base assumptions typical of Australian folk song scholarship (Sullivan, 2006).

Without inferring any mere circumstantial authority, the fact

that this thesis is the product of a diverse 40-year research mitigates against a superficial characterisation.

Culture is not static.

Musical culture is ever changing, in ways both dramatic and subtle.

Furthermore, it is characteristic of 'folk' idiom that the relationship between the content or theme and lived experience is masked or oblique and the underlying meaning hidden from view.

It is for that reason that 'folk' culture has been described as Hidden Culture (Seal, 1989).

There is no simple 'straight' reading of the tangential relationship between form, content and the subject (content analysis).

The materials can be, and often are, idiosyncratic, anachronistic, ironic, and/or humorous.

The approach of this thesis is to audition a large and diverse sample and to ascribe importance to the occurrence, across time and space, of the

Photo: Sullivan

same, or similar facets.

This does not necessarily confer authority on the interpretation, or identify any underlying hidden meaning, but it does identify what are the significant and substantive issues.

A great many different activities and cultural processes have been designated as 'folk', leading to the use of coverall terms, such as folkways and folklife.

The original English language term (Folk-Lore) is used in a general sense to cover diverse activities and orientations:

'Folklore' is both subject matter and critical discourse, amateur enthusiasm and academic discipline, residual agrarian culture and popular urban culture of the present; it is both conservative and anti-modernist and radical counter-culture; the sphere of dilettantish provincial intellectuals and of committed-nation builders, transmitted by word of mouth in intimate settings and negotiated electronically in the public

domain. (O'Giollain, 2000)

Musical is studied as folk music and as folk song.

There are a multitude of different historical approaches. For most of the 20th century, the informal music of polyglot Western societies has been classified as folk and/or traditional music, and these conceptual paradigms are used here as the basis for comparative reference.

When dealing with the recent past, it is often difficult to isolate characteristics, but there is some degree of certainty when dealing with cultural practice that is more remote in time, as with the 19th century, where society was not influenced by electronic media or advanced sound reproduction technology.

Because the relevant context is provided by print, it is possible to distinguish between the naive

influence of popular culture, and the conscious evocation of tradition that takes place in 20th century cultural revivals.

Moreover, the greater the separation in space and time, the more obvious the disparity. However, the scales are sliding ones.

It cannot be assumed that people in the remote past acted the same as they do in the present day, nor can it be proven that they did not.

Balanced re-interpretation relies on making fine distinctions between sources and separate classes of evidence.

1.1 Discriminating the revival and vernacular contexts

Movements covering the collective interest are designated folk revivals.

Australia conforms with other Western countries in that

it experienced a folk revival, the products of which are widely represented throughout society.

However, the situation is unique because of the late arrival of the folk interest being 1952 in Australia and mid to late 19th century in comparable Anglophone countries, the comparatively small amount of field research, the late coverage of comprehensive field research, and the lack of methodological and theoretical development.

Field research began a century after the first English use of the term 'Folk-Lore', and fifty years after Cecil Sharp's formulation of a workable definition of 'Folk-Song' (Sharp, 1908).

There was little or no attempt to capitalise on contemporaneous theoretical and practical developments in Anglo-American research.

THE LIVING TRADITION

Subscribe to the leading Traditional Music magazine



Packed with information, news, reviews and features leading you to the best live and recorded music, clubs, concerts and festivals in the UK, Ireland and further afield. Keep in touch with the definitive guide to the traditional music scene.

10-issue subscriptions from £36!

www.livingtradition.co.uk

Hot To Trot

Podcast Radio

Presented by

Stephen Norwood



mixcloud.com/H2Tmaine

In Da'N'Us
Australia

Hot To Trot... features First Nations musicians and bands, presenting music that isn't available on mainstream radio. Regular interviews with artists. News about upcoming festivals, gigs & the latest records. **Hot To Trot** acknowledges the First Nations people throughout Australia as the traditional custodians of country.

... Soooo deadly!!!

<https://www.mixcloud.com/H2Tmaine>

In Australia, field collection, interpretation, and revival performance are said to have commenced at the same time (Edgar Waters, 1956a).

Following an initial period of research, explanation and performance as 'bush song' (1952-1967), the Australian folk revival was re-constituted in 1968, incorporating organisational structures taken from the contemporaneous English/British revival, with characteristic 'folk clubs', 'folk festivals', and Anglicised 'Ceilidh' dance (Lowenstein, 1966).

The different revival conceptions had competing aims and objectives.

Within this setting, expatriate British became the dominant force.

The marked preference was for British and Irish revival music. With notable exceptions, overt 'Australian' revival content was based around popular theatrical performance, and literary stereotype (Sullivan, 2006).

While it is not possible to position this present thesis

Chris Sullivan and Edgar Waters, National Library, 1992.

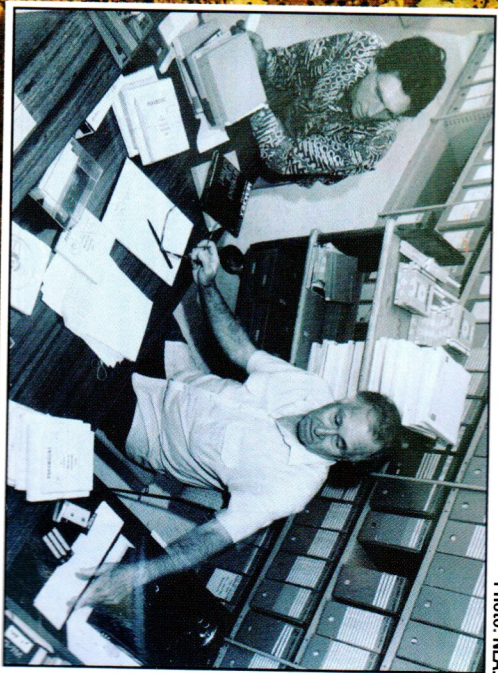


Photo: NLA.

research outside of the revival concept or structures, the focus is on the recovery of musical evidence that pre-dates the arrival of the folk revival concept in 1952.

It is widely acknowledged that revivals selectively re-interpret the past.

Each historical situation is unique and so is every revival process.

No revival can be said to be the same as what it purports to represent.

There is significant scholarly interest in why some 'traditions' are revived and others, with perhaps an equal or better claim, are simply discarded (Hayward, 2001; Lowenthal, 1993).

But these are rhetorical questions.

They deal after the fact, explain outcomes, not processes.

The relative absence of collected music in the Australian revival could be explained as a rejection of local traditions.

Equally, it could simply be due to a failure of process.

Whether different activities would have produced different

outcomes remains an open question.

An important point of difference is that revival performance and representation takes place in an entirely new context, described as the 'second life' of folk materials (O'Giollain, 2000).

The folk revival in Australia placed little or no importance on the musical component.

The situation was not unique, but the scale of replacement and imaginative re-creation is noteworthy.

For the purposes of this thesis, the vernacular and revival contexts and music are considered to be functionally separate.

The concept of revival is not restricted to the urban phenomenon of the 1950s and later.

There are many examples of community based revival in the historical record.

Throughout the 19th century, references appeared in Australian newspapers lamenting the disappearance and advocating the revival of English popular custom.

English, Scottish and Irish music were featured, including 'folk music'.

The late 19th century Irish cultural revival also had an influence in Australia, within and beyond the confines of the diaspora (O'Mahony, 1908).

Thus, it is not surprising that in the early 20th century, contemporaneous accounts appeared of the emerging interest in English folk song, including the work of Charles Marson and Cecil Sharp (Marson, 1909).

In the decades either side of Federation, English traditions

were co-opted, becoming official culture, for example, maypole dancing.

Well before the advent of conscious folk revival, transplanted folkways and a vernacular interest in the folklore of the various home countries was a part of the wider cultural matrix.

Australia received a diverse and multi-faceted body of customary behaviors from the Old World, reflective of national, regional, local and familial associations.

Transplanted culture is not separate from local cultural production, it is a part of the substratum that supports it.

But, as transplanted culture, it is mediated, subject to displacement and exposed to new selection pressures.

Since the 1970s, an Indigenous cultural revival has been underway, the broad features of which closely resemble the late 19th century cultural revival in Ireland.

This comparison is controversial, and would be opposed by some Aboriginal researchers.

However, by late 20th century, no Indigenous person or society was without at least some European influence.

In most areas the influence was profound.

In the Southern half of the continent, it was longstanding and relational.

Indigenous culture had changed as a result, and that change involved both loss and gain.

A state of hybridity engendered syncretic cultural form, in the face of which, it is argued, it is not possible to sustain an essentialist position

on culture.

Or, alternatively, an essentialist position could only be sustained through a recourse to belief, not evidence.

That clash, between belief and evidence, is the same for all revival processes, for the folk revival, and, unless some special dispensation is granted, for Indigenous culture.

The Irish and Aboriginal-Australian cultural revivals are both founded on an Indigenous attachment to place.

In both situations, culture and society have been influenced by centuries long processes of colonisation, occupation, and consequent acculturation.

The initial revival response, in both Ireland and Australia, was two pronged, a concentration on surviving traditional culture from the margins, and the atavistic, romantic re-creation of culture in areas where dislocation was greatest.

The description for Ireland has some relevance for the Australian situation two centuries later.

The seventeenth century English conquest had profound implications for traditional political autonomies and for the religion of the country, which was proscribed. The resulting divide between conqueror and conquered, settler and native, over time, normalized into broad ethnic categories ... leading to a decay of all native learned traditions, ... (O'Giollain, 2000).

Off-setting the culture loss in Ireland was the introduction of English and Scottish language, traditional practices and popular culture.

Whatever one might think about these processes, the attitudes towards transplanted

cultural influence have shifted over time.

It is now generally considered that the borrowings were reciprocal, and that they produced hybrid traditions no less 'Irish' than any other synchronous form.

In other words, Irish-ness was not simply expressed through form and content, it was situational and transcendent, acting to produce naturalised hybrid traditions.

Overwhelmingly, the aural evidence of Indigenous musical cultures in Southern Australia, collected since the 1950s by anthropologists, historians, linguists and folklorists, fits that scenario.

In recent decades, there have been many retrospective re-interpretations of the British, Irish and American folk revivals.

The practical and theoretical underpinnings are questioned: sources, motivations, ideology and method.

In these critical reviews, as in the original works of the seminal folk scholars, the intention is to better know and understand the subject, whether that be the music, the people, or society.

Interpretations of folklore are not merely subjective and creative; they are intentional.

There is no such thing as a disinterested folk scholar.

They all have a point to prove or a case to make.

Notable success for any study of folk resources is most often due to external factors, especially the timing, having a message that resonates with and is right for that time and place.

This was true for Cecil Sharp, Alan Lomax, A.L. Lloyd and, in Australia, Russel Ward.

The numerous re-assessments of their work highlight the main points being stressed here: that folk music interpretations are essentially creative endeavours that imaginatively express sentiment through the representation of music as culture.

It is because of the overt ideological intent that it differs from contemporary accounts and portage.

The diverse manifestations of Australian folk and tradition are the products of revival, mediated by and incorporated into popular culture.

Regardless of what they purport to represent, the national story, or myth, they vicariously stand for, or in the place of, music that was actually performed in diverse historical settings.

We can be certain that this historical performance has taken place, the question is what can be known or understood about it? In contemporary parlance,

this may be termed a known unknown.

Contemporary musicology equates cultural production with forms of popular culture (Hayward, 2001).

Diverse genres are seen to function on the same plane, for example, as equally imagined musical communities.

Difference is context dependent, a manifestation of circumstance.

Regardless of what individuals believe they are doing, it is always something else: an affect, the product of disparate motivations, hidden drives or mistaken ideologies.

The changes wrought to the folk conception since the mid-1950s attest to this underlying state.

Stripped of belief, genres really are all just manifestations of the same thing.

But what has this relativity meant for the status of Australian vernacular music as a unique cultural form? In film, television and radio

productions of Australian history, the thematic and situational music is, with few exceptions, wrong, historically, culturally and musically, and therefore, it could be argued, inappropriate.

While this thesis operates in a contemporary milieu, it adopts a diachronic stance that allows for the re-evaluation of folk and tradition as historical concepts.

Contemporary theory rightly argues for transparency when it comes to ideology and belief, but that must also include the limitations of theory.

In the consideration of historical musical culture, there is no way of knowing how or why people acted as they did.

It would be equally unjust to assume that it was the same as in the present, as it would be to arbitrarily argue that it was different, say, according to a folk dictum.

Representation in any form blurs the distinction between genre and musical form.



Sydney band YELLOW MONDAY releases "DOLBYE ISLAND" A breathtaking and joyous combination of World Music and Indie Folk. It features a unique remote recording from Bhagya Singh on his beautifully played Estron, Anshu Islam Tantal playing Tabla, Andy Gray with Guitars & Mandolin and Lexi Koese on backing vocals. This new track fuses the traditional with a contemporary approach. Carefully recorded by Phil Snow at Bulletin Place Studios, Sydney. It follows several new releases from YELLOW MONDAY including KANTHENIZONCA(TP) and a compilation of early recordings HOME CURED, 2000-2006.



Double Island by Yellow Monday

Spotify, YouTube Music, TIK TOK, DEEZER, TIDAL, amazon music

Both vernacular songs and those composed from within folk revivals, the so-called 'instant folk songs', are creative and intentional.

But they are not informed by the same things.

Important vernacular developments in Australia pre-date the arrival of a dedicated folk revival process.

The surviving conception of Australian folk music is the product of sequential contemporaneous factors, and particular times and places: the populist appeal of The Australian Legend; the international Folk Boom; the jingoism of the Bush Band craze; or, the desire to ground Australian Country Music (G. Smith, 1994a, 2005; E. Watson, 1976).

Where, in this schema, would a solid, evidence based interpretation of past music performance fit?

The answer would be different depending on which analytical paradigm was used.

1.2 Representativeness: conflicting claims and aims

When folklore research began in Australia in 1952, it was as an entirely new interest, the only new cultural genre to emerge in that seminal decade.

A potential game-breaker, a unifying force, it offered a fresh slant on long established cultural positions.

However, there was little depth to the understanding of folklore/folk song within the small coterie of budding scholars (Sullivan, 2006).

The first decade of research established Australian folk song as a popular presence, but did not resolve the definitional issues.

The circular debate revolved around a small set of defined texts: as argued, mostly from literary sources, with comparatively few field-collected examples, no significant musical analysis, and no representative geographic coverage.

Despite these limitations, explicit or implicit claims were made to represent the national tradition.

The representative basis of those claims is in question.

Beginning in the 1960s, transplanted ballads, songs and instrumental music made their appearance in representation, but at no time were they the main focus of interpretation.

For the purposes of this thesis analysis, transplanted and local music are both viewed as linked aspects of the same cultural assemblage.

While they may have served different functions, they were subject to the same vernacular forces of selection and process.

A new period of intensive field research commenced in 1979/80.

In scale and scope, it far exceeds the earlier work (1953-1963), and constitutes approximately 90% of the Australian field recordings. There are important differences.

Firstly, the people are of a later generation, although many of the important informants were over 80 years of age.

Secondly, in this work, no functional distinction was made between folk and popular, or transplanted and local forms.

Thirdly, recordings were made in all mainland areas and adjacent islands.

Fourthly, while the recordings were predominantly of



instrumental dance music, in quantitative terms, the vocal music far exceeds that recorded prior to 1980.

On this important point, John Meredith's claim that instrumental music was proportionally more available at this time than it had been in the 1950s, and songs less so, is misleading (J. Meredith, Covell, & Brown, 1987).

Songs and ballads were less common, and that is a generationally dependent factor, as in Britain and America, but the instrumental music was available to be recorded at an earlier date, the performers were in situ and at no time had they ceased to play.

The significant point, which Meredith obscures, is that the recordings made between 1953 and 1963 on which currently rests the Australian folk interpretation, are unrepresentative, even of the few areas in which recordings were made.

Fifthly, some collectors were interested in stylists, went to

the trouble to learn instrumental and vocal styles, and performed together with informants at festivals, work similar to that undertaken by Peter Kennedy, Seamus Ennis and others in Britain and Ireland (1948—).

From a theoretical perspective, Musicology contextualizes this work within a rubric of new authenticity bands and the conscious creation of named systems (G. Smith, 2005).

Authenticity is seen as a negative attribute, the same for both the serious attempt to capture vernacular style and aesthetics as it is for the amateur theatrics of the 1950s Bush Band.

Such extreme relativism denies the importance of situational and positional factors and fosters the notion that historical accuracy and continuity have no place in cultural revival.

Only through deep engagement can the innate features of style and context be revealed to any meaningful extent.

As the parameters of field collection expanded, there followed the significant representation of transplanted vocal and instrumental music.

However, the focus in 'folk music' analysis has remained the collected music of the first, early phase (G. Smith, 2015).

To some extent, that is true also for this thesis.

Where the research orientation has shifted, it is through the use of Ethno-musicology and Popular Music methodologies, which have been especially important in uncovering 20th century music in littoral and island contexts (Hayward, 2001, 2002, 2006; Magowan, 2005).

The interpretation of the core 19th century music has not significantly expanded. In summary, there is an

entrenched folk interpretation that is based on a small, geographically restricted body of field recordings, and a much larger body of published texts.

Those materials have been subject to exhaustive text-based socio-cultural interpretation, representation and performance, and a comparatively minor degree of musicological and folkloristic analysis.

A separate body of more recent scholarship, generally interpreted as Popular Music, has represented diverse sectional music performance, restricted by genre, ethnicity, and geographical location.

In this latter work, the historical frame operates, in general, from the present backwards in time, the opposite to that of the folk paradigm, which begins with the remote past and works forward.

The relationship between these bodies of scholarship is by no means clear.

There are as many apparent overlaps and synchronicities as there are gulfs in the understanding.

The difference partly lies in the ideological underpinnings of the separate scholarly approaches.

The perspective of Popular Music studies is contemporary, confating vernacular and revival contexts, equating all cultural production, and lumping different actions, motivations and ideology within portmanteau categories, for example, as imagined musical communities (G. Smith, 2005).

This would seem to merely replace one set of subjective criteria for another.

Regardless, the contested nature of the folk construct is a shared concern, specifically, the unresolved definitional debate, and belief based interpretation. What sets folk apart, is the



Chris Sullivan's photo of Jack Hall, Ebor, NSW, 1980, adorns the cover of *Overland*.

assumption that a set of socio-cultural behaviors existed in the past, that they influenced cultural production, and that this is manifest in the musical evidence.

This thesis does not set out to resolve all of the outstanding issues, rather, the aim is to make practical sense of the conflicting evidence, and by so doing to establish solid links between past and present music performance in Australia.

Notwithstanding the limitations, Australian scholars did use relevant sources and grapple with the problem of folk song definition.

They each dealt with the same small sample, but it did include many of the important terms, and the questions that were raised are pertinent.

The findings would be considered speculative or unproven, but they are not entirely without foundation.

With important caveats, some interpretation would be supported by more detailed analysis.

This thesis aims to identify, contextualize, and, where appropriate, to amend the substantive issues raised by Australian folk song research.

Hammered dulcimers and a famous Australian maker



Gillian Alcock works on a mandolin.

Trad&Now received an advertisement from Geoff Seymour of Batemans Bay, NSW, wanting to sell a hammered dulcimer made by famous instrument maker Gillian Alcock.

This led to enquiries about the hammered dulcimer and the maker.

So what is a hammered dulcimer and who is Gillian Alcock?

The hammered dulcimer itself is basically a hollow box with tuned strings stretched across the top between two bridges, one near each side.

Half of the strings also pass over a third bridge which is positioned so that 2/5 of the string length is on one side of it and 3/5 on the other side.

Thus you get two different notes from the one string, say 'd' on one side, 'a' on the other.

A note is produced by striking the strings with a 'hammer' or beater.

Design Canberra Festival, it's fitting to pay tribute to an internationally renowned musical instrument maker who called this city home.

Canberra's folk music community is mourning the loss of Gillian Alcock.

She was 68 and passed away on November 2, 1=2018, at her home in Chiffley, ACT.

Gillian was the beating heart of Canberra's burgeoning folk music community in the '70s and '80s, dedicating her life to a rare, ethereal instrument called the hammered dulcimer.

Her uniquely Australian dulcimers are treasured instruments for players in Australia and around the world.

That Gillian called Canberra home is by chance.

She was born in Narragin in rural WA to a farming family, whose property, "Bald Rock", sits at the edge of the wheat belt about 180 kilometres from Perth.

Rare chance to buy a

HAMMERED DULCIMER

Made by the late Gillian Alcock of Canberra, Australia's premier builder. 12/11 course, very good condition. Includes 1 pr beaters, 3 strands, instruct. books/tapes/cds. \$1000 +freight.

Contact Geoff Seymour Batemans Bay NSW
0414724798 email: geseymour1@bigpond.com



It was, and remains, Merino sheep farming country.

Bald Rock's nearest town was tiny Yornaming, a small railway siding on the remote Great Southern Railway running from Beverley to Albany.

Although all four Alcock children received piano lessons, Gillian took to it like a duck to water.

As the 1967 dux of Narrogin Senior High School, she made her way to Perth to study a bachelor of arts at UWA.

Her decision to major in Chinese history and music was bold at the time: the first glimpse of a lifelong curiosity in other cultures and traditions.

In 1971, Gillian moved to Canberra to take a position in the management stream of the Australian Public Service cadetship program, the fast track to a high flying career.

But it was a happenstance meeting with a local musician, Terry McGee, that opened her eyes to the world of folk music.

Before long, Gillian had taken a break to accompany Terry on a seven month trip to study folk music in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The 1974 visit was a deeply formative time for Gillian.

She traipsed around Britain researching folk music and

musical instruments, travelling to north Devon to pick up her first build-your-own-harpichord kit.

Energised by the experience, Gillian took this newfound passion back to Canberra, setting up a small studio in the second bedroom of her Farrer home.

With no particular woodwork experience, Gillian turned her brilliant mind to picking up the skills she needed to embark on building her own musical instruments.

A clavichord and two harpsichords she made in these early years are now part of the collection of musical instruments at the Canberra School of Music.

But there was a limited market for keyboard based instruments, so Gillian struck on the hammered dulcimer, a rare instrument with a unique, sweet sound.

Her first dulcimer greatly underestimated the forces placed on the instrument, and it bent in two like a banana.

After some recalibration, she built her second dulcimer to withstand the 17 tonnes of force across the instrument, and there was no turning back.

With musical instrument making taking up more of her time, Gillian made another bold move: this time, to quit the



Gillian Alcock (1950-2018).

public service.

She turned her single minded passion to making hammered dulcimers, teaching herself how to play the instrument at the same time.

She exhibited at the National folk festival and did solo exhibitions at the Beaver and Berrina Galleries to build her profile as Australia's own dulcimer maker.

Gillian's contribution to the Canberra music scene extended beyond instrument making and included the establishment of Canberra Stereo Public Radio with Terry McGee, which became the much-loved Artsound FM.

Gillian was President of Artsound in its formative years and was an honorary life member.

The '70s and '80s were a burgeoning and vibrant time for the Canberra folk community.

Gillian was in many folk bands, including the Perfect Cure, Dancerve, the Flying Trapezoids and Finger Jam.

She organised dulcimer focused gatherings, building a community of musicians across Australia passionate about this unusual instrument.

In 1997, she released "The Pleasures of Hope" together with harp player and instrument maker, Andy Rigby.

It is an elegant and beautiful recording that showcased Gillian's fine skills as a musician. In the late '90s, she founded the Australian Hammered Dulcimer Association.

Gillian also began to connect with dulcimer makers and players internationally, first in England, through the Nonsuch Dulcimer Club, then through the Cimbalom (Dulcimer) World Association.

It was on the international stage that her skills as an instrument maker were truly apparent.

She had few peers in Europe or America on quality and craftsmanship.

She became a scholar of dulcimers from other cultures, such as Eastern European cimbaloms and Middle Eastern santurs.

Several players even came to her to make their Italian salterios.

Gillian flexed her muscles as an innovative instrument maker, tenacious, constantly testing and adapting her instruments to improve the sound.

She researched the physics behind the acoustic properties of strings.

Through her friendship with mandolin maker, Peter Coombe, she experimented with Tasmanian King Billy Pine for one instrument's soundboard. The dulcimer surprised Gillian

with its rich, resonant quality. It was a turning point, and from the mid-'90s onwards, she made many fine instruments using Australian timbers.

Gillian maintained her skill and enthusiasm despite a diagnosis of progressive multiple sclerosis (MS) in the mid-'90s, with the most productive period of instrument making in the decade following her diagnosis.

She mentored apprentices from the ANU School of Art, and only fully retired in 2015.

In 2011 and 2015, she travelled to Europe for International dulcimer conferences with the support of her family, the MS Society and her international network of friends.

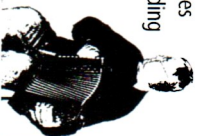
In a bold act of love, Gillian married Tim Shopen in 2004, who sadly passed away from cancer in 2005.

She survived breast cancer in 2014 in what seems like a footnote in a remarkable life.

Join the Folk Federation of Tasmania.....

.....and take advantage of a host of membership benefits including:
 * DrumBeat magazine regularly delivered to your home provides interesting articles and current information on folk events including dance
 * Discounts to FFT Events and numerous folk related businesses
 * Eligibility for special FFT initiatives, such as free studio recording time, scholarship for Music Under the Southern Cross,
 song writing awards and more

Still only \$27 per year family \$20 individual to
 PO Box 1638, Hobart, Tas 7001
 Ph Peter Hicks 03 62663010 www.folkfeds.org



Gillian Alcock and Terry McGee at work in the '70s.

Australia Council grant recipients revealed

by Brianna Roberts

The Australia Council has invested \$8.8 million in arts and culture including First Nations musicians, youth and regional artists.

Emerging First Nations musicians, new Australian works by younger artists, regional artists and literature projects are among the recipients of the latest round of arts projects grants supported by the Australia Council.

The investment will support 256 creative projects and cultural activities for artists and organisations creating benefits for all audiences across Australia.

Australia Council Executive Director for Arts Investment, Alice Nash, said: "This investment of \$8.8 million will create opportunities for artists and audiences in every state and territory, from Brisbane to Bunbury.

"As we continue to face the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 it is greatly encouraging to see

the creativity, innovation and resilience of our arts and cultural workers in delivering their work for audiences in our remote communities, regional towns and major centres.

"Our arts and creative sector continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability, supporting the social and economic wellbeing of all Australians."

Key highlights:

- Queensland based Backbone Youth Arts receives support towards the creation of new Australian works by leaders in circus, theatre, dance and contemporary opera. This investment will also open up opportunities for young and emerging artists in performance, design and production.
- The Bushwackers' Golden Jubilee Exhibition - Celebrating the long 50 year history of one of Australia's most iconic bush bands.
- Support for regional organisations including Merrigong Theatre Company and Bunbury Regional Theatre, whose projects support local artists and develop local stories.
- Support for First Nations arts including an important project enabling veteran singer songwriter Uncle Archie Roach to work with a selection of young and emerging First Nations artists.
- Tasmanian Youth Orchestra annual programs 2021 and 2022: playing on, for the love of music; and.
- Support for Melbourne Fringe commissioning six Deaf or disabled mid-career artists to create new works for the 2021-2022 Melbourne Fringe Festival.

A full list of recipients can be found on the Australia Council's website.

Since March 2020, there have been 2,227 projects/individuals funded.

A search through the list will discover many familiar artists and projects, far too many to list here.

"I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE HOMELESS."

More people are now facing homelessness than ever before.

Donate today

Visit salvationarmy.org.au or scan the QR code



Jackadder's Music Club raised \$1,300 for bushfire victims

by Carmel Charlton



We had a very successful fundraising concert at Jackadder's on July 18.

Over \$1,300 was raised for Gillian and Charles, ("Four on Six"), our guest performers who had lost their property and their possessions in the February bushfire at Giddegannup.

What a pair of virtuoso musicians they are.

It was a wonderful concert. On August 15, the South African Gospel Choir are coming to entertain us at Jackadder's.

They are a Multi National Choir who sing both English and African Gospel songs, to the beat of an African drum, with dance moves.

They are a fun loving group who are out to entertain the

audience and encourage them in song and some dance movements.

Their Conductor is Sylvia Bright. The choir regularly sings at church and has performed at many prestigious events



YOUR LIFE WON'T CHANGE BUT SOMEONE ELSE'S WILL

Give blood during National Blood Donor Week, 7-13 September 2009

Do something special. Give blood. Call 13 14 95 or visit donateblood.com.au



Loch Lomond....

What the song really means

Peninsula Folk Club's July Bankia Bulletin

At the time in Scottish history when "Loch Lomond" was a new song,

the United Kingdom, which united Scotland, England and Wales, had

already been formed.

But the Highland Scots wanted a Scottish, not an English King to rule.

Led by their Bonnie Prince Charlie (Prince Charles Edward Stuart) they attempted unsuccessfully to depose Britain's King George II.

An army of 7,000 Highlanders were defeated on April 16, 1746, at the famous Battle of Culloden Moor.

It is this same battle that indirectly gives rise to this beautiful song.

After the battle, many Scottish soldiers were imprisoned within England's Carlisle Castle, near the border of Scotland and "Loch Lomond" tells the story of two

Scottish soldiers who were so imprisoned.

One of them was to be executed, while the other was to be set free.

According to Celtic legend, if someone dies in a foreign land, his spirit will travel to his homeland by "the low road", the route for the souls of the dead.

In the song, the spirit of the dead soldier shall arrive first, while the living soldier will take the "high road" over the mountains, to arrive afterwards.

The song is from the point of view of the soldier who will be executed.

When he sings, "ye'll tak' the high road and I'll tak' the low road" in effect he is saying that you will return alive, and I will return in spirit.

He remembers his happy past, "By yon bonnie banks ... where me and my true love were ever wont to gae

[accustomed to go]" and sadly accepts his death, "the broken heart it ken nae [knows no] second Spring again."

Loch Lomond

V 1. By yon bonnie banks and by yon bonnie braes,

Where the sun shines bright on Loch Lomond,

Where me and my true love will never meet gain,

On the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

Chorus: O ye'll take the high road, and I'll take the low road, And I'll be in Scotland afore ye,

But me and my true love will never meet again, On the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

V 2. 'Twas there that we parted, in yon shady glen, On the steep, steep side o' Ben Lomond,

Where in soft purple hue, the hieland hills we view, And the moon coming out in the gloaming.

V 3. The wee birdies sing and the wildflowers spring, And in sunshine the waters are sleeping.

But the broken heart it kens, nae second spring again, Though the woeful may cease from their grieving.

The Songwriting Society of Australia

The Songwriting Society of Australia was incorporated in 1989 to be a voluntary, independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to helping songwriters in all genres of music and all levels of songwriting. It provides a support network for members with functions like Monthly Concerts, Darling Harbour Showcases, Newsletters, Workshops, Song Competitions, etc. Membership costs \$45 per year.

Email: songsoc@ozemail.com.au for information/applications

Performers' Directory

Attention all musicians and performers. If this is you, see pages 72-73 for more information on how you can be listed in this Directory. Entry is free to subscribers.

Alanna and Alicia

Twin sisters Alanna and Alicia sing original folk, jazz songs. Known for their fine songwriting and sweet harmonies they regularly perform around the festival circuit.

0416546410

maudeemail@inet.net.au

Ben Palumbo

Singer - 4 octave range, baritone to soprano (flute voice), French chanson exponent, performance art. Performs at Claire's Kitchen - Salon Dada

www.benpalumbo.com.au

urbanex@rog.com.au

BluesAngels

3, 4 - or 5-piece blues/folk/jazz/soul/hokum band, plugged or unplugged, comprising over 20 instruments and over 5 sets of originals/covers. Based on Central Coast NSW.

02 4787 5689

tonifood@hotmail.com

Bruce Watson

Multi-award winning singer/songwriter whose performances are highly entertaining as well as moving. Bruce is a regular at festivals and is a folk icon.

0407 898 168

jandwatson@gmail.com

Bruce Hearn

Long time roots musician, well known for fronting the iconic Melbourne ska band Strange Tenants since 1981, the multi-instrumentalist Bruce Hearn has returned to his folk beginnings with the release of an amazing Two DOUBLE albums - 'The Word is the Music the People are

the Song' as well as 'Live at the Athenaeum: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie'.

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

brucehearn2020@gmail.com

Rare Treats

Let us treat you to beautiful vocal harmonies of a mixture of rare and long forgotten songs along with originals and songs you can sing and dance to. Consisting of a 3 piece band, including keyboard, banjo/mandolin, guitar and ukulele. Great for parties, functions, cafes and restaurants. Well known local artists based on the Central Coast of NSW.

0428 329 926

glenys@gil.com.au

Hallett Flood

NSW Blue Mountains acoustic roots duo covering songster greats 50s-70s and beyond, plus originals on guitars, harmonica fx, 5-string banjo.

02 4787 5689

tonifood@hotmail.com

Hither and Yon

Acoustic duo singing original songs plus interesting & exciting arrangement of Aussie & Celtic folk standards, based near Canberra

Lthorburn@vira.com.au

Joni Mitchell Tribute duo

Husband and wife duo, Grant and Mary McLean, pay tribute to musical genius Joni Mitchell, presenting a cross section of Joni's music over four decades, intertwined with stories of her life.

0407 898 168

mary_mclean@optusnet.com.au

Peter Vadivello

Capitivating indie-folk singer/songwriter Peter Vadivello deftly weaves folk, funk, blues and roots music around a rich seam of social justice and environment issues.

0402 504 099

julie.whitney@bigpond.com

www.stevetyson.com.au

steve.tyson411@gmail.com

www.swingbeans.com.au

www.acousticssessions.com.au

<https://www.facebook.com/Vanessacravenmusic>

www.vanessacravenmusic.com.au

Two new multi million dollar entertainment and cultural precincts

by Jake Challenor

was an opportunity too good to let go," Morrison said.

"We now have the capacity to resource the business how and when we need to.

"Our ambition is to grow our team and presence further in the Australian/New Zealand markets, continuing a consistent level of industry benchmark outcomes for all of our clients."

Humm Events' services cover event site and production management; creative concept development; COVID-19, crowd and risk planning; and strategic consulting for event owners, with feasibility planning being a big growth area for the business.

Ian Morrison, and business partner, Tara Whitfield, will remain with Humm Events as Event Directors, alongside Cedar Mill Group's, Kyle Mckendry, who has been named General Manager.

Kyle Mckendry joined Cedar Mill Group in 2019 after almost two decades at Roche Group to lead the company's foray into the live entertainment, event, and tourism industries.

"Humm Events is a very important acquisition for our group," Mckendry said.

"Joining the experience and expertise of Ian, Tara and the Humm Events team accelerates our capability in this exciting industry and fits perfectly with

our future growth plans."

Cedar Mill Group, which is preparing to build two new venues in the Lake Macquarie/Hunter Valley Regions in NSW, has its sights set on bolstering the live music and events industry as it recovers from the global pandemic.

The two new purpose built venues, named Cedar Mill Lake Macquarie and Cedar Mill Hunter Valley, will include multi million dollar entertainment and cultural precincts with an amphitheatre capacity of 30,000 in Lake Macquarie and 22,000 in the Hunter Wine Region.

Winarch Capital CEO, Paul Lambess, said the decision to bring Humm Events into the Cedar Mill Group was a no brainer as it readies to become a key player in the events sector.

"The challenge we have set ourselves as a business is to be the benchmark in all we do. "Adding skill and credibility in event management is a natural fit for our strategy," Lambess said.

"We look forward to working with the passionate and experienced Humm Events team and doing our part in growing this exciting and already successful event business."



COVID challenges choirs

by Carolyn Lowry
Courtesy Music Education

A small gleam of musical hope shone through the gloom of Sydney's COVID restrictions in 2020.

In an attempt to develop strategies to cope with a dire situation in which 'choirs and dancing' were officially banned, a Zoom Choral Conference was held between members of the choral fraternity to discuss possible ways to safely continue choral activities. The outlook seemed bleak.

Mask wearing, essential to contain the aerosol spraying from singers' mouths, hindered effective group singing.

However, participants at the Conference learnt that humming was not considered a 'high risk behaviour'.

This welcome news inspired a gift from Sydney Philharmonia Alumni to celebrate the Centenary of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs 1920-2020 during an extremely disappointing 100th anniversary year spoiled by venue closures and cancelled concerts.



Sydney Philharmonia Alumni

The Alumni's Hon Sec, Carolyn Lowry, commissioned five composers to contribute to The Humming Chorus Project – Hum COVID Away.

Brett Weymark OAM, Conductor and Artistic Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs was delighted to see the new music.

He described the project as a 'great initiative' and 'a beautiful gesture' and sought to incorporate the idea in a forthcoming concert. Brett Weymark included composer Matthew Orlovich's

humming chorus in the program of the postponed SING ON CENTENARY CONCERT rescheduled for a Sydney Town Hall performance in July.

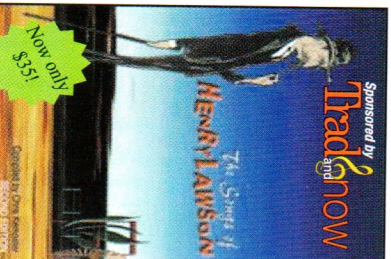
However, with the return of the COVID lockdown, this concert has been postponed once again.

Despite lockdowns and mandatory mask wearing, hope has certainly not been extinguished for Sydney Philharmonia and all involved in the unique gift of The Humming Chorus Project – Hum COVID Away.

As the word spreads, there are a growing number of enquires from choirs interested in performing the Humming Choruses.

The musical gift will go on giving and allowing choristers to make music together again safely.

In the meantime, the choral community looks forward to Sydney Philharmonia Choirs humming MMXX – A meditation on Auld Lang Syne for the first time on November 21 at the Sydney Town Hall.



The Songs of Henry Lawson
The Folk Federation of NSW has published a second edition of 'The Songs of Henry Lawson', Originally published in 1989 by Chris Kemper.
The new edition adds 45 new settings for a total of 275 tunes. Australian folk songs have developed alongside our national identity.
This collection reflects the truth that the song making tradition lives on and that Lawson's poetry expresses timeless ideas.
This new edition is designed with the needs of performers, teachers and students in mind, being spiral-bound and easy to prop on your music stand and now ONLY \$35! Singers and musicians will find in it inspiration for their own performance and composition.
To order a copy, go to www.tradandnow.com or jan.org.au or call 02 9939 8802

Now only \$35!

Folk Radio Directory

Attention radio presenters. If this is you, see pages 72-73 for more information on how you can have your program listed in this Directory. Entry is free to subscribers

- NSW - Chicken Hot Rod 2RRR 88.5FM**
Three hours of Bluegrass, Old-Timey and other Forbidden Delights. Music You Can't Hear On the Radio. Sundays 9:00am to noon, Sydney 88.5FM
office@2rrr.org.au
www.2rrr.org.au
- NSW - Folk 4 U/ 2 Way FM 103.9**
Australian & overseas folk/ bush festival & performer updates. Every Saturday afternoon 2pm - 4pm
Rod & Geoff
rodworthing1@gmail.com
NSW - Focus on Folk 2MBS 102.5 FM
Folk Federation of NSW radio show on 2MBS 102.5 FM in Sydney and finemusicFM.com where various local performers bring you their choice in Folk music. 1st Saturday of each month at 5PM for 1 hour
paul.jackson@sunnet.com.au
- NSW - Minstreis' Gallery on Highland FM 107.1**
Minstreis' gallery has been broadcasting for several decades. It features contemporary and traditional folk music and poetry from around the world, presented by four enthusiasts in rotation.
6 - 8pm AEST every Mon on 107.1FM, heart radio and from website highlandfm.org.au
Brian Haydon 0406 939 309
brian@haydons.com
- Vic - Radio OGR FM 98.3FM Colac & District**
Australian smorgasbord is a radio program hosted by OGRFM in South Western Victoria. The presenter plays Australian folk and blues artists.
Every Tuesday, 11am - 1 pm.
(03) 5232 1991
moonlightau@gmail.com
- Vic - Southern Style 106.7**
Presented by Jan Dale live on PBS FM, 106.7 Melbourne and archived on www.pbsfm.org.au - Bluegrass, Old-Time and some Blues, Cajun and Western Swing.
Tuesdays 1-3pm (EST)
www.pbsfm.org.au
ozbluegrass@gmail.com

Make recycling at work easy...on the go

- plastic wrap
- timber pallets
- food
- cardboard
- furniture
- electronics
- aluminum cans
- printer cartridges
- containers
- packaging



Heart rending video in call for support

by James Blaxall

Entertainer, **James Blaxall** has compiled a heart rending video in which members of the arts community tell of the devastation on lives and livelihoods and the need for further government income support to be extended to the arts.

In the emotion-charged 10-minute video, prominent artists from a wide range of disciplines speak of the loneliness and despair combined with deepening concern that the arts are being overlooked.

They tell of having bookings and income in their gig-to-gig industry cut to zero, which in some cases has left them in despair, reliant on family and friends to survive.

"I made the video because it was clear to me that the arts community and the people who make it so vital were being overlooked even though entertainment is among one of the hardest hit sectors," said Bustar.

"Very few people beyond artists' immediate circle are aware of the depths of despair into which they've been plunged amid the silence of government in terms of offering income protection beyond JobKeeper at a time when the covid crisis continues unabated, especially with the current outbreak and lockdown in the wider Sydney region.

"The video is an impassioned plea from the arts community for a lifeline to get them to the other side of the pandemic.

"As one of the artists in the

NO DAGGY MUSIC

Let us entertain you!

A variety of musicians/bands/
duos performing Blues &
roots, rock 'n' roll, 60's-80's
pop, older classics, harmonies
and dance.

Trudy Van Laar
wilmavanlaar@yahoo.com.au
0418 649 477

video says, the arts community consists of the artists and entertainers who produce the content that is helping everyone else get through the pandemic and its restrictions, but are now in need of help themselves."

In the video, artists contrast how every effort has been made to ensure that the passion of Australians for sport is satisfied, but the same priority has not been afforded to the arts.

In it, virtuoso jazz vocalist and violinist, Fern Belling, says: "Artists are the last to be thought of, we are not seen as important, we don't do important things."

"But I want to challenge every single person out there to go through a lockdown or some harrowing time in their life without music, without Netflix, without newspapers, without books ... it is the artists who create those things and yet we are the first to always be asked, 'please donate your services'."

"The government needs to step up and look after the people that they go home to every night when they turn on their televisions and radios."

In the video there is also a note of defiance on the part of the arts community with prominent keynote speaker and corporate entertainer, Anthony Lave, saying: "Do we just throw in the towel and say 'stuff it I'm moving out of the entertainment and speaking world', or do we hang in there to wait and hope that things might get back to normal?"

"I want to hang in there because I love what I do."

James Bustar said he hoped the video and the pleas of the arts community would be seen far and wide to raise awareness of how serious the situation has become for many artists in terms of their mental health and ability to support themselves financially and in other ways.

"People see the work of the arts community in their lives every day but they don't necessarily know what is going on in the background or the pressure that individual artists are under," Bustar said.

"If nothing else, I hope the video shines a light on the crisis that they are facing and the

solution to help them get through it."

Many industries have had a crazy last 18 months and the Entertainment industry has been one of those.

When gigs are cancelled during lockdowns, this means that work is cancelled now for the next 6 months basically, and once a lockdown is over and financial support stops, our industry does not just "start" up again.

The entertainment industry is now basically non-existent and the people part of the arts feel like their identity is lost, not only in the places of lockdown, but worldwide.

There seem to be many double standards in terms of the industry and how essential it is deemed, which causes many mental health and financial issues.

Entertainment is majority a gig to gig industry, and when the gigs are gone, so is the purpose and identity, with no CV to fall back on.



A GENERATION ON THE BRINK

SYRIAN CRISIS DESTROYING CHILDREN'S LIVES

Alaa is only 8 years old, forced to live in this crowded, dirty refugee camp in North Iraq.

TEXT ACT' TO
1991 8899
SEE THE DIFFERENCE
YOU COULD MAKE.
(\$0.25/sect msg)



Find out more,
visit unicef.org/au/syria

© Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited ABN 35 060 581 437. To opt-out SMS STOP#19918899 (\$0.25/sect msg).

Venues Directory

Attention all music venues, folk clubs and other related venue organisers. If this is you, see pages 72-73 for more information on how you can have your organisation listed in this Directory. Entry is free to subscribers.

NSW - Bush Music Club Inc

Founded 1954 to promote Australian folk tradition through collecting and popularising songs, dances, music and folklore. Contemporary compositions encouraged.

Beecroft Bush Dance - 1st Saturday each. Pennant Hills Dance Workshop - each Monday night. Concert party & music workshop - Monday night (Marrickville NSW)

www.bushmusic.org.au
bmcmail1954@gmail.com

NSW - Goulburn Club

The Goulburn Club is a heritage venue promoting music and art, focusing on local and touring performers, presenting alternative music, folk, blues, jazz and roots. Aus blues festival - 2nd wed in Feb, Bush trad sessions - 1st Fri of month - 7pm, Celtic trad sessions - 3rd Fri of month - 7pm, Folk music sessions - every sun - 3 - 5pm.

secretary@goulburnclub.com.au
Ph: 4821 2043

www.goulburnclub.com.au

NSW - Newcastle and Hunter Valley Folk Club Inc

Newcastle and Hunter Valley Folk Club supports and encourages Folk Music, Dance and Poetry with regular concerts and activities showcasing international, national and local artists. Club night concerts are held on the first Saturday of each month

(except January) at the Uniting Church Hall, 178 Glebe Road, Merewether, starting at 7.30 pm. Check out our website for details. Chris 0408428083

featured act and floorspots, Normally 1st Saturday of each month. 7.30pm Fern Tree Tavern, 680 Huon Rd, Ferntree TAS

Facebook@kunanyifolkclub
kfc@tastfolk.org

NSW - Toongabbie Music Club
Welcome all performers from beginners to professionals. Musicians, Singers, Poets and yarn spinners. Since 1983 performed at festivals, charities, etc. Meet 2nd & 4th Friday (except Jan) 7.30pm - 11.30pm and 3rd Wednesday's 11am - 3pm at Scout's Hall Northmead NSW, Cost \$7

allenderavisguitar@gmail.com

NSW - Wagga Acoustic Session
Last Sunday each month. Commercial club, Gunwood St. Wagga Wagga NSW. 2.30pm - 5pm
0431 246 023
hootwhistle@gmail.com

NSW - Wise folk
Keeping folk music alive and well in the western suburbs of Sydney. Musicians, poets, singers and audience all welcome. Meet last Wednesday of the month (except Dec) at Toongabbie bowling club. Station Rd Toongabbie NSW, Free
Sonia 0423 162 205

TAS - Kunanyi Folk Club
Monthly folk club event with

WA - West Australian Folk Federation (Jackadder's Music Club)
The West Australian Folk presents entertainment for the whole family at Jackadder's Music Club. Each month features a special guest artist plus quality support acts. It gives performers a great opportunity to network and connect with other musicians. 3rd Sunday of each month
Venue: Perth Horse and Pony Club, Jon Sanders Drive, Hertsman Lake.
Cost: \$12 Adults Children free
Time: 2.30pm - 5.00pm
carmel@carmelcharlton.com

The 'bestest' little folk club in the west

Have you ever heard of Munding?

It's a little bit out of the way, even by Perth standards, and Western Australia itself is a long way away by eastern states judgements, but I have a great story to tell you, and should you ever finally decide to 'live the dream' and hit the highway, you might be really glad to know about this gem of a folk club way out West.

Munding is the major town of the Eastern Hills, a collection of villages that wind their way up the Darling Scarp as you either enter or leave Perth City by road.

There is really only one road in or out, good old highway number 1, and if you are arriving, you know you are in the hills once you hit the township of Sawyers Valley, aptly named, as this area was all about logging in the early days.

Next township along the line is Mt Helena, which was my home for nearly 2 decades, a place imprinted on my heart and soul.

Above and beyond anywhere I have ever lived, this village will always be 'where I came from and what forged me', and I have come from so many places.

Once a month, every third Friday to be exact, a wonderful musical event is held in the local bowling club, the 'Munding Folk n' Blues Club', offering the very best of entertainment to the local community, run on a 'not for profit' basis as a gift to the community that it sits amongst.

Here's how it all started.

Early in 1992, an advertisement appeared in the Hills Gazette asking for anyone interested in forming a folk club to call.

The result was 6 musos in the lounge room of Chris and Mary Woodward in Sawyers Valley.

This club was the brainchild of Vic Dent.

Vic was, and still is, a true believer in folk music and was really keen to see some happening in Munding.

This early meeting did not result in a folk club.

The problem was that, although there were many keen to be in the audience, it was difficult to find players.

What came from that meeting was a long friendship between Chris and Steve, who still play together at the club from time to time.

Another advertisement in the Gazette, from Mandy Vincent, and interest in Liz Packwood resulted in Tanglewood, but there was still no folk club.

But slowly the hills community was dusting off its guitars, whistles, mandolins and flutes.

Musicians seemed to be appearing out of the woodwork.

The first meeting of what was to become the Munding Folk n Blues Club was held in the Munding Sharing Center on Phillips Road in November 1995.

'Tanglewood' agreed to be the anchor act for 6 months to see if a club could form, we

by Mandy Breeze Kelly really had no idea what would happen.

We ourselves were a new act, playing to a mostly non accustomed folk audience, we were slugging it out in beer gardens in local pubs and seeing what would happen.

Our timing was right for such an enterprise.

'Riverdance' and all things Irish music had burst onto the global scene and suddenly all things 'folky' were very much 'in'.

Our plan had always been to open up a folk music scene where none had been before, we didn't want to take the long trek to Fremantle, a 114km round journey, and we didn't want to compete for scarce gigs with the established 'folk monarchy', we wanted to offer them gigs.

And a Folk Club sure did form, and went from strength to strength, starting off in the local community education centre and branching into an iconic local Inn, as every month we offered the best of local, interstate and even occasionally international acts.

We presented the likes of Martin Carthy, Jez Lowe & the Bad Pennies, Chris Whille & Julie Mathew, Steve Tilston, amongst so many more.

I can't tell you the joy that the original 'gang' felt being able to do this for our local community, and at less than half Freo prices. Pretty much from our earliest club night things flourished.

Tanglewood were joined by a core group of other performers,

all of them excellent, and the audience packed out the small Community Ed room, spilling into the corridor.

We were soon searching for bigger accommodation.

We charged a mere \$4 per adult and allowed people to 'BYO'.

We liked keeping the cost low as we didn't want anyone to miss out, but it also meant that we could at least offer musicians petrol money.

Moving to the Mahogany Creek Inn was wonderful, the rustic and charming building with the wishing well in the garden and a colonial history with the best credentials (famed bushranger 'Moodyne Joe' was once banged up there!) was perfect for us.

A large cavernous room, its stone walls bedecked with rusty souvenirs of a bygone past, an anteroom behind for musos to tune up and stow their gear, and fantastic food and drink for those who wanted to come early and dine.

We also diverged into free public concerts at our local Lake Leichnautia, big mass waterside concerts, local

families picnicking on the lake's shores, city friends invited up to something worth coming too, funded by our shire council, presenting quality folk music to a whole new generation.

One of my proudest moments from that era of my life was hearing, years later, how a local young adult had approached one of our founding FC members telling him how his desire to play guitar had been forged at one of those concerts.

Brilliant!

Exactly what we wanted, pass on the 'baton' so to speak.

Sadly, after many wonderful years, the era of the Inn came to a crashing halt when new owners decided that they didn't want us.

We were all dumbstruck by this.

What sort of business person wouldn't want a monthly gig that attracted often 200 people, most of whom dined and all of who drank, and they didn't have to pay the band?

However, the local bowling club was quick to offer to rehouse us, and through they didn't have quite the same quality of buildings, they made

up for it in generosity, very low bar prices and a willingness to let us use their kitchen and sell our own food.

Tanglewood, by this stage, had long broken up and gone their collective ways, as bands do.

All former members remain firm friends and often refer to each other as 'band family'.

I married Doug and moved interstate, many thousands of miles from the hills.

I had the absolute joy of being in Perth and able to play with my husband, Doug Kelly (ex Tansey Fancy & Strocchio), and son Isaac Vincent (fiddler extraordinaire) at the 21st birthday celebrations of the club a few years ago, so special.

It's not just still going, it's thriving.

So, 'do yourselves a favour if you plan to travel to Perth and you like folk music, definitely take a trip up the hills and visit Munding Folk n Blues Club.

It's still held on the 3rd Friday of each calendar month at the Munding Bowling Club. You'll be so glad you did.



*Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013).

YOUR SPONSORSHIP CAN CHANGE A DISADVANTAGED CHILD'S LIFE

1 in 10 Australian children are living in disadvantage* They don't have the basics they need for their education such as the right uniform, bag or even books.

By sponsoring an Australian child today you will give them the essentials they need to fit in, keep up and succeed at school.

CALL 1800 024 069

THESMITHFAMILY.COM.AU



everyone's family

Festival Directory

Attention Festival Organisers

If this is you, see pages 72-73 for more information on how you can have your festival listed in a festival Directory.

Entry is free to subscribers.

Cygnnet Folk Festival

welcoming village of Newstead in beautiful Central Victoria. Held annually over the January weekend before schools go back. Festival Director: Kelly Skinner
newsteadlive@gmail.com

5 to 8, 2020

Festival alternates annually between Darwin region (Mary River Wilderness Retreat, even years) and Alice Springs region (Glen Helen, odd years). 2020 is the 50th THFF. secretary@topendfolkclub.org

2nd weekend of January each year.

Sydney Folk Festival

info@cygnnetfolkfestival.org

(Postponed)

A World of Music in the Heart of the City

topendfolkclub.org

Fleurieu Folk Festival

Fleurieu Folk Festival an annual three day family friendly multi-staged event set in the historic township of Willunga SA 15th-17th October 2021 admin@fleurieurfestival.com.au

Join the e-News list: www.sydneyfolkfestival.com.au

www.facebook.com/SydneyFolkFest

www.facebook.com/SydneyFolkFest

#sydfolkfest

https://www.sydneyfolkfestival.com.au/buy-tickets/

Tickets: https://www.sydneyfolkfestival.com.au/buy-tickets/

Margaret Walters 0427 958 788

Wingham Akoostik Music Festival

If you love uncrowded music festivals where you can relax, act like a local and dance like no one is watching then take a road trip to camp and enjoy the Wingham Akoostik Music Festival

Three day event on the third weekend October across Friday Saturday and Sunday

hello@akoostik.com.au

NT - Mary River Wilderness Retreat June

Wilderness Retreat June

NT - Mary River Wilderness Retreat June

Newstead Live Inc

A celebration of folk and acoustic music, spoken word, kids shows and sessions all in the

Top Half Folk Festival (Details Tbc)

Wilderness Retreat June

Sydney Folk Festival postponed

Festival postponed

Prior to the recently extended lock down in Greater Sydney, the SydFolkFest21 Team met to assess the current situation in NSW concerning the spread of COVID-19 and whether they are in a position to stage the Sydney Folk Festival over the weekend 13-15 August.

With cases increasing in Greater Sydney it was anticipated that the current lock down will be extended and thereafter that tight restrictions will be imposed regarding people movement and gatherings.

There may also be a degree of hesitancy about attending events until there is a higher percentage of the population fully vaccinated.

"The present situation is volatile and unpredictable and the health and wellbeing of all involved must come first," organisers said.

"With this in mind, we have decided to postpone SydFolkFest21 rather than cancelling it and are currently considering options for later in the year.

"We have great support from the City of Sydney and will reassess the situation as things begin to improve."

Trad&Now

FLEURIU FOLK FESTIVAL

15-17 OCT 2021
WILLUNGA - SOUTH AUSTRALIA

OVER 50 ACTS - 11 VENUES

PETE DENAHY w/ EMMA DEAN and
TOBY BEARD w/ THE ROYAL HIGH JINX w/
TOTALLY COURAGEOUS w/ SIOBHAN OWEN SA
AND MANY MANY MORE!

- FOLK • CELTIC • AMERICANA •
- BLUES • COUNTRY • BLUEGRASS •
- WORLD • SINGERSONGWRITER •
- CONCERTS • WORKSHOPS •
- DANCE • SESSIONS •
- OPEN MICS •
- POETRY & SPOKEN WORD •
- FOOD & CRAFTS •
- KIDS' ACTIVITIES •

BOOKINGS: OZTIX.COM.AU
FLEURIEURFESTIVAL.COM.AU

Festival News & Reviews

by Bill
Quinn



Folk On The Road Top Half Folk Festival Turns 50



Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and two hundred plus hearts were filled with music, song, poetry, and good cheer in June, as the Top Half Folk Festival (THFF) returned, after a year on sick leave, to celebrate their milestone 50th annual event.

While Covid19 had cancelled the festival in 2020, and conditions were still dicey in the lead-up, meaning that some interstate visitors could not make the trek north, it all kicked off in brilliant conditions and surroundings at the Mary River Wilderness Retreat on the June long weekend.

While I'm not on commission for them, I highly recommend you add this little gem of an accommodation venue to your itinerary if you're headed to the top end.

Situated just over 100kms from Darwin along the Arnhem

Highway, the cabins and sprawling campgrounds are tailor-made for a folk festival or a stopover, and the management have been generous and constant supporters of THFF since it moved to that locality in 2000.

Well, half of it moved there. Let's go back a step.

THFF is easily one of the longest continually running folk festivals in the country, tracing its origins back to March 1971, with an initial gathering at the old Telegraph Station at Alice Springs in March 1971.

Organised by the Central Australian Folk Society, the event was followed the next year by a home festival for the Top End Folk Club in Darwin.

From there, a rota of sorts developed between the Top End, Central Australian, and Mt Isa (Old) folk clubs/societies.

Ergo, top half (not end).

Yeah, I finally fully grasped the meaning when I read the program notes.

Cut forward to 2021 and Mt Isa has been out of the scene since late last century, but Darwin and Alice have continued the annual event, alternating between Mary River Wilderness Park in the north, and Glen Helen Lodge in the red centre.

This makes for something of a weather contrast: dry, humid and hot in the north, and mild days and freezing at night in the desert.

If you've never experienced Darwin and surrounds in the dry season (May to September-ish), I recommend you do at least once.

How many Australian festivals have you been to in June wearing t-shirt, shorts, and thongs throughout?

For many, it was the first festival for at least two years, and the frissons of joy and excitement on Friday afternoon/evening were visible.

There was definitely something in the air.

I reckon there's a sort of muscle memory involved in

getting into a festival rhythm, beginning with arrival/check-in procedures and starting to eye off items in the program.

As the sound of music from nearby campsites starts drifting across the lawns, it's like festivals never stopped.

Just on the program, THFF has a very friendly, compact size and more often than not, there's only one venue running.

The few overlapping events are helpfully highlighted in the program, but the singular focus at most times really added an extra dimension of laid-back feel, with no need to do the 200-metre dash between venues.

John McCartie, President of the Top End Folk Club, spoke a bit about the duality of the festival venues.

"Alternating between Darwin and Alice gives everyone a bit of a break.

"There were a couple of offshoots.

"Townsville hosted one, Katherine did two, Jabiru did one, but over the years it's settled into the current arrangement of two festivals.

"This year, we've picked up where we left off.

"The main thing is the great unknown, what's going to

Festival News & Reviews



happen tomorrow?

"The biggest challenge is not knowing who's going to turn up due to border closures.

"But we have representation from every state and both mainland territories, and six ex-Christmas Island people.

"It's got a reputation amongst southern folk as a very laid back little festival.

"Very convivial in terms of weather and people."

I must mention the festival lanyard.

Having worn and discarded scores of paper/plastic wristbands and simple lanyards, the THFF 50 edition is definitely a keeper, a sturdy combination bottle opener and drink coaster.

"Attendance was heavily NT-based and I'd hazard a guess that most of Alice Springs's folk community had barrelled up the Stuart Highway and were on hand.

Happily, many were also there from WA, SA, and even some Victorians who had been on the road before the latest lockdown curtailed travel from the south east.

Even a former brother in song (fellow tenor) from a decade ago had lobbed in from Sydney (G'day Patrick).

Plus an ever present fixture



Festival News & Reviews

on his home territory soil, my former colleague in the written word, Gareth Hugh Evans, creator of arguably Australia's finest folk blog, Timber and Steel, and one half of the band of the same name.

And is it really an Australian folk festival without Campbell the Swaggie, the travelling poet was a very welcome returnee to the NT after a two-year absence.

Opening events, performing, and ever-present for the weekend, were two legends of the Northern Territory: Bill Yidumduma Harney, senior elder of the Wardaman people near Katherine, and bastion of NT song, culture, and politics, Ted Egan.

It was an absolute privilege to hear the singular and shared experiences of these two that spanned decades.

Bill is a non stop gushing fountain of stories, anecdotes, and legends.

If someone simply trailed him around all day taking dictation, we'd have to build a second NT Library to house the volumes.

And man, is he light on his feet for an older... for a man of advanced... for an elder.

Ted Egan had the task of opening the festival officially.

"It's a thrill to be here," he said.

"And look at all these beautiful faces in front of me, so many I've known for many, many years and so many new friends."

Pause as a gust of wind caught the Top End Folk Club banner, bringing it tumbling ever so gently down over Bill Harney's head.

"It's very good to be asked to do the official opening because I think Nerys and I have probably been to 25, 30 of the festivals over the years, and we intend

to keep coming while we're still vertical.

"It's been a wonderful 50 years since it first started.

"I'm particularly enthused this year to see so many young people.

"Karen Jackson's brought her lovely Fiddlesticks group up from Alice, and you're going to be knocked out when you hear them play.

"Sally Balfour's over here with her two lads.

"That's what we need, the new generation.

"It's crucial to keep the spirit alive."

My personal highlight of the weekend was the simple joy of being in the thick of a bona fide, fair dinkum singing session again.

Veterans of the artform know that these can only be planned so much, and some of the best ones sprout and bloom organically.

On the first night, the raised voices of the young, old, in between, sober, tipsy, and three parts off-piste were things of beauty and joys to behold.

We all have those moments that we cherish on our mental mantelpieces, and mine now

include having Ted Egan lead us all in rousing renditions of 'Ocean Liner' and 'Got Some Bloody Good Drinkers in the Northern Territory'.

I'll add some video to this article on my website.

From our position in the back corner of the verandah, I first got to hear members of the Alice Springs men's singing group, The Shavings.

I've got a full interview with them to share in the not-too distant future.

In short, the group arose as a spin-off from a female singing group of their partners named The Splinters.

They had come together and bonded over a love of song, companionship and cheese, and this was their first festival outside Alice Springs.

Mark Hussey spoke of his experience in a band in SA. "I was kicked out because I couldn't remember the words of the song.

"I can get away with not remembering the words when I sing with other people!"

Chris O'Loughlin spoke of the importance of the interplay of confidence and performance when singing: "I really found

my own ability improved just purely if I was confident and singing together gives you that confidence, because you're so supported in lyrics and supported in the notes and the music.

"I'm familiar with a lot of people who can sing and could sing so much better if they sang confidently and in a supportive environment."

Which was all in evidence at The Shavings singing workshop, after which this scribe had a dual earworm on constant repeat: 'Leave Her, Johnny' and 'On Ilkka Moor Bait' at.

The workshop was attended by a good crowd, plus the resident emu who strutted around between venues, workshops and campsites all weekend, and even joined in the yoga sessions.

Another stalwart of the CAFE! spoke to at some length (and will share the longer interview later) is Barry Skipsey.

Barry was born on King Island and got his musical chops growing up as the progeny of two pianist-playing parents, playing rock guitar and singing in Melbourne.

In 1976, after Cyclone Tracy, he threw a couple of guitars and cameras in his HB Torana and headed to the NT.

He came for six weeks and is still here 45 years later.

"This is the 50th Top Half Folk Festival, and I've been to close to 40 of them.

"They're all wonderful people, they are my family.

"I do get very emotional when I see them all, because no one's getting any younger, some of them have passed away, we all have health issues, but if there's one thing in common, it's this music, lyrics, song writing, and the power of voice."

Festival News & Reviews



Sadly, one scratching from the interstate attendees was festival favourite, Bernard Carney.

At a very volatile time for interstate travel (when is it not?), the trip up north wasn't worth the risk if the return journey might involve a 14-day quarantine period at short notice.

In his stead, Darwin based singer songwriter Crystal Robbins subdued in at short notice with just one request from Bernard: could she play one of his songs?

An absolute master of the quickly learned cover version, Crystal performed 'Suitcase of Stars' at the Saturday night concert and again on the deck for Sunday lunchtime.

Back-announcing her concert bracket, MC Dave Evans said he'd be texting Bernard to let him know what a wonderful job Crystal had done.

Having reached their 50th, talk around the festival occasionally touched on whether there'll be a 51st.

John McCartie was optimistic on the topic: "It's a bit of a hard one to answer.

"We're certainly an aging population, but there are younger people interested, and I think that's borne out by the fact that way back, the definition of folk

music was very narrow. "Over the decades, that has broadened its appeal to a younger generation.

"It will morph over time, but I think it will stay."

Some of us rounded out our Mary River stay on Sunday evening or Monday morning with an hour in the cruise boat on the eponymous river itself, spotting a few crocodiles, many more of the bird population, and hearing more about what is believed to be the most densely crocodile populated river in the world.

All of us were keen to follow our captain's suggestion to keep arms and heads inside the vessel, and to stick to the pool for any swimming activities.

Late Monday morning came and as the muggle campervans and hire cars started lining up at the front entrance, we all bade a fond farewell to Mary River Wilderness Retreat, and a hopeful "See you in the MacDonnell Ranges this time next year".

For more on the festival, see <https://www.topendfolkclub.org/> top-half-folk-festivals/

More from the THFF in the next few weeks at www.OverheardProductions.com

