

# folklife news

## In This Issue...

*We vox pop* Port Fairy visitors and Alan Musgrove tells us his thoughts on the National Folk Festival

Jon Faine visits the Australian Toy Museum and we delve into the Dorothy Howard Children's Folklore Collection

Stephen Costello reviews *Silvenje's* first CD and the Australian Folk Trust announces the winners of the inaugural Folk Awards

*just look inside!*

## Editorial

Winter is definitely here! As I write this I am snugly wrapped up in a thick wool jumper and my Greek fisherperson's (?) cap. Just the right kind of weather to find a warm spot in a pub and listen to a folk group or stay home and listen to some of the great folk programmes we have on the radio.

### A Few Thoughts on Shopping Malls...

I've been reading some notes that VFA member Warren Judd put together about the decline in local shopping strips and the concomitant imposition of huge, privately-owned malls in their place. According to Warren the disappearance of traditional shopping strips adds to the demise of a sense of 'community'. As a result he is working hard to ensure that our local councils are aware of this problem. I must say that I share his concern. The rise of 'The Mall' dissipates the notion of 'public space' and replaces it with the notion of 'private space'. In a mall the communal space is a controlled area, staffed by security guards. It doesn't allow for the simple pleasure of sitting and enjoying the day, unless you 'purchase the right to sit' by buying something. Warren Judd is very enthusiastic about encouraging local councils to support and maintain traditional shopping strips. It sounds like a good idea to me. If you have any thoughts on the matter drop us a line. We always welcome contributions and discussion.

Peter Symons

# News

## Horti Hall

Thanks to all those who filled in their questionnaire on how they would use the various facilities of the **Folklife and Heritage Centre**. **Steve Bullock** did some sums and charts, showing us how the centre might develop and the likely income.

In April, the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**, managers of the Horticultural Hall, called for expressions of interest in the building from the general public via newspaper ads.

We prepared our submission and lodged it on **5 May**; the closing date. Now we must wait! By next newsletter, we should know whether Horti Hall will become home to the Folklife and Heritage Centre.

## Official Office Opening

The **Folk Federation of South Australia** has moved into new, and we're told, larger space at the **Governor Hindmarsh** in Adelaide. The launch was held on **3 March** and, by all accounts, a most enjoyable evening — despite the fact that the **Festival of Community Music** decided to hold their launch at the same time in the same building!

## Honouring Folk

The **Australian Folk Trust** has announced the winners of its inaugural awards to recognise work in preserving and promoting the living traditions of Australia. The three winners of the awards are:

folklorist and author  
**John Meredith**

songwriter and entertainer  
**Ted Egan**

and, our very own member, dancer and dance teacher  
**Shirley Andrews**.

Congratulations to these three who have worked so hard and contributed so much to the folklore of Australia.

## Real Folk News

The **National Library of Australia** has just published a book entitled '**Folk Life**', which features over **100 stories and photographs** of the 'everyday heroes' of our folk culture gathered by **John Meredith**.

If you would like to get your hands on this publication, contact the **National Library** on **Tel: (06) 262 1646**.

## Changing Numbers

Just like everyone else, the VFA has been given longer phone and fax numbers. Our new phone number is **(03) 94 17 46 84** and our new fax number is **(03) 94 16 33 42** — just add a '9' to the beginning of the old one — easy! The new number is effective from now. You can contact us on either number until **February 1996**.

## Lead Belly Blues

I have in front of me a copy of the Lead Belly Society's newsletter; the **Lead Belly Letter**. Anyone who is interested in the great Blues guitarist's career and music might well enjoy this publication. It's published in the United States so if you would like a copy or more information, you'll have to write to:

**The Lead Belly Society**  
**P.O. Box 6679**  
**Ithaca, NY 14851**

## Deadline for next issue:

**5 June**

Send your articles, letters or comments to :

**Folklife News Victoria**  
**P.O. Box 1765**  
**Collingwood**  
**Victoria 3066**

# Reviews

## Children's Folklore

### The Australian Children's Folklore Collection

The Australian Children's Folklore Collection, held at the University of Melbourne archives, is in the care of **Dr June Factor** and **Judy McKinty**.

This collection includes the **Dorothy Howard Collection**. **Judy McKinty** took the trouble to show me around the collection and tell me a little about Dorothy Howard and her work.

Dorothy Howard was an American Fulbright scholar who travelled Australia in 1954-55 collecting descriptions of games, rhymes, jokes and all sorts of other aspects of children's play.

There are also a number of fascinating photographs from that period of children playing games including 'statues' and hopscotch. Remember playing them?

It is 40 years since Dorothy Howard visited Australia, and June thinks it is therefore an appropriate time to hold an exhibition of the material Dorothy Howard collected.

**Judy McKinty** showed me just a few of the ten thousand children's games, toys and other artefacts that are held at the archives. The collection

concentrates upon artefacts that children create themselves, rather than manufactured toys and games. They include home-made slingshots, knucklebones (or 'jacks') made from actual sheep knucklebones and 'rude' playground rhymes that I'm sure have caused more than the odd detention at the schools where they were recited.

Looking through the collection made me realize the importance and relevance of children's folklore to our culture and sense of personal identity. I saw photographs of children playing bat tennis — a game I played at primary school in the 1970s. I read variations of rhymes and poems that I learnt from my friends in my childhood. I experienced a pleasing sense of the evolution of children's folklore; a feeling that the games we leave behind in our childhood will continue to be played and modified from generation to generation. The material I saw in the archives is well worth displaying publicly. I hope that Judy McKinty and June Factor are able to gain enough support to mount an exhibition of this fascinating aspect of our heritage.

More information:

**Judy McKinty or June Factor**

**Tel: (03) 93 44 72 35**

### **The Australian Toy Museum**

**174 Smith St  
Collingwood  
Open 10am—6pm  
7 days a week**

The old Post Office building in the middle of the Smith Street shopping strip has been

recently converted into a toy museum. Predominantly housing the personal collection of former Melbourne restaurateur **Jean Jacques Lale-Demoz**, the three main rooms offer a nostalgic tour of childhood toys, concentrating mainly on pieces from this century. This wonderful old building is much better suited to this life than its former function, the substantial rear yard now circumnavigated by a five-inch gauge track offering steam rides for young passengers.

The museum entrance is through an old-fashioned turnstyle, operated by a small metal token purchased at the entrance. Small children will be totally unfamiliar with a relic of that kind, instead more familiar with electronic wizardry of the kind being used at Sydney's historic Luna Park.

The novelty of feeding a coin into a turnstyle is soon forgotten, as the first room offers a choice of glass cases to stare at. Across one long wall is a variety of toy ephemera, such as fairground dolls and cereal packet toys; dolls and TV marketing figures coveted as a child but since totally forgotten.

Adjoining this display is a glass case of more elaborate dolls (both porcelain and plastic) teddy bears and other large figures, including a few older dolls' prams.

The next three rooms, making up the bulk of the collection, display a terrific collection of Meccano, 'O' gauge electric and clockwork trains, trucks and cars, tinplate and die-cast of every imaginable make.

Collectors will recognise many rarities and lots of old favourites. Amazing old shop display models made of Meccano, as featured in period catalogues, are set up as working models. A 'Lionel' electric three rail 'O' gauge train runs around one case, starting on a time delay button and not requiring any additional money to make it run.

The main feature is a large glass case about ten metres by five metres, designed to recreate a (rather crowded) living room floor of the 1950s. Any small boy of the time would have only ever dreamt of a living room offering such riches, as every imaginable toy is crammed in. Running around the perimeter at the touch of a button, is a Hornby 'O' gauge electric train. There are trains, die-cast cars, trucks and other vehicles dotted around the 'floor' of the living room and in glass cases around the other walls. Altogether a grand selection. Other cases are dedicated to collections of military figures and vehicles, tin soldiers, aircraft, boats and so on. Most of the wheeled toys are from the 1940s onwards. There are more European examples than American.

Other rooms offer a display of space and science fiction toys, including a good selection of robots, as well as an entire glass enclosed display of Australian made toys, mostly from the 1950s, such as Micro cars. I looked for a Gerry Gee doll but didn't see one, however just about every other icon of Australian childhood from the 1940s and '50s is there.

Downstairs the Toy Museum offers a superb cafeteria, called the 'Magic Pudding' (under license from the Lindsays, evidently) with excellent coffee, cakes, snacks and milk shakes. Surrounding the cafe are a dozen or so amusement arcade machines, some in working order and some just on display.

The steam train runs around the yard, offering smaller children a ride while bigger 'children' guzzle cakes and coffee at the trackside. The cafe can be visited directly from the street without having to pay to go through the museum.

A family ticket (two adults, two children) cost \$17, an adult ticket alone is \$6 and a single child or concession is \$4. The collection is not large by museum standards — remember this is mostly one person's collection. A lot of care has been taken to make the objects easy to see and to appreciate the context in which they were originally used, but there is no way of playing with anything yourself. These are not exhibits that lend themselves to any interactivity. Pressing an electric switch to activate a train is as close as you get to 'hands-on experience'. My six year old and his five year old friend had to be dragged away. They loved the train ride and the milk shakes as well.

Jon Faine

## CD Review

### *Silvenje*

*Where musical waters meet...*

*Silvenje* were formed in 1991 by multi-instrumentalist and

community music legend, **Linsey Pollack**. Linsey builds instruments, supports and facilitates the establishment of ethnic music centres. He also led the construction of the **Big Marimba** across Brisbane river.

*Silvenje* means 'where waters meet' in Macedonian. It is also Australian music emerging from the cultural traditions of six Australian musicians.

What is special about this meeting of waters is that the musicians are exceptional performers. **Ashok Roy** plays sarod, **Satsuki Odamura** koto, **Blair Greenberg** tabla, steel drums and bells, **Hernan Flores** zampona, cuatro and tiple, **Dorinda Hfner** voice and percussion and **Linsey Pollak** plays gaida, woodwinds and marimba.

'Guaranteed to be interesting', you may be thinking, 'but is it good to listen to?'

The answer is an unqualified 'Yes'. The worst I could say about this recording is that the wide range of different styles and cultural backgrounds take some digesting. But it is worth the effort. Listen to the uplifting, Latin American inspired, 'Mulata Oriental', the exquisite 'Autumn' and the haunting 'Wahed' ('One' in Arabic). The other highlights are the bass koto and saxophone 'conversation' in the opening of 'Ranglia' ('Colourful' in Hindi), the sarod and tabla which evoke the smoky sunsets of Benares (or Brunswick?) and the rudely humorous 'Chopsticks'.

Where these waters meet is deep, cool and moving. It's also known as Australia.

Stephen Costello  
Manager

Community Music Victoria

## National Folk Festival

The National Folk Festival held in Canberra over Easter was a smorgasboard of culture, the like of which I have not seen for some time. It was as, the programme said, 'four days and five nights of music, song, dance, verse and entertainment'. The average punter (me) could not expect to see all of the fun but what I did get to was interesting and highly entertaining.

Shortly after arriving and setting up camp on Friday I hurried off to **Alan Scott's** workshop; '**The Folklife of the Post Office**'. Alan is well qualified to speak on this subject having spent a large part of his working life in this Australian institution.

Alan joined the Post Office in 1956 and became part of a community of workers who had developed their own customs and traditions. This community was a mixture of nationalities that included Greeks, Albanians, Chinese, Italians and even a Maltese Jew from Egypt!

Alan introduced us to characters with such colourful epithets as '**Jerky Joe**', '**Nervie Ernie**', '**Helicopter Markham**' (he waved his arms about a lot) and the **Moreton Bay Shark** (from Queensland and always moving about). He also wrote a collection of poems that appeared anonymously on the noticeboard; such as '**The Ballad of Harry Trewitt**'; the most gullible man he ever knew.

Alan shared with us the folklore of overtime. 'It's on for the needy and the greedy' was the cry when overtime was announced. He worked with someone he knew as Bill Bailey for years before he found that was not his real



name. It merely reflected his unquenchable thirst for overtime; they said his wife always sang 'Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey?'. Middy Saturday saw the terrace filled with sounds of massed Union Choirs inspiring the populace with their superb voices. The performance included voices from the **A.C.T, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.**

The Union Choir movement seems to have been growing quickly over the past few years with many towns and cities boasting a sizeable group. I feel, however, that all of the choral groups sang a little timidly and could learn from the Russian choirs of old. All the same, it's great to hear the Union movement with a united voice.

A concert and workshop on Saturday and Sunday highlighted the work of folklorist and collector **John Meredith.** John Meredith began collecting recordings by traditional musicians in the 1950s and is still active in the field of folklore. John has travelled all over Australia mainly at his own expense and in recent years with the assistance of the National Library of Australia. For his enormous contribution to Australian culture he was awarded the **Order of Australia.**

In the workshop the group **Wongawilli,** assisted by collector and musician Rob Willis, took us through some of the unique dance music from the Meredith Collection. The Wongas squeezed out lively renditions on accordions, piano and strings while Rob Willis related amusing anecdotes of his experiences travelling with 'Merro'.

The concert, hosted by Keith McKenry, was a more formal affair but still enjoyable. The many notable performers, including **Cathie O'Sullivan, Alan Scott, Gordon McIntyre, Gary Shearston, John Dengate and Wongawilli** helped bring the old songs alive. Of particular interest was **Kevin Bradley's** rendition of 'What's in Document J?'; a song about the Petrov Affair, written by **Joe Fernside** and never previously published or performed.

The bar area hosted informal sessions all weekend and musicians jammed together well into the night. All in all there was just too much to see. I heard reports of many other fine performances including **Sounds of Asia, Wanton Whimsical and Obscene** by **Keith McKenry,** African singing with **Jean-Paul Wabotai** and the **Colonial Ball.**

All I can say is I'll be back next year!

Alan Musgrove

## *Vox Pops:* **Port Fairy Folk Festival**

For our very first *Vox Pops* segment we asked a few people what they thought about the **Port Fairy Folk Festival;**

**Elizabeth** from **Box Hill** loved the festival, but was confused. Why? Because there were so many groups to see that she couldn't make up her mind which to go to! She said she spent most of the time running from venue to venue sampling all the delights but never stopping to watch the whole show.

**Fred,** also from **Box Hill,** loved **Robin Ramsay's Life of Henry Lawson.** Apparently a

'very good performance', it demonstrated the 'expressive power of Henry Lawson's writing very well'. He also said it was a bargain, Robin Ramsay's show cost \$30 to see in theatres in Melbourne, yet the whole festival only cost \$70.

**Ann,** from **Glen Huntly,** found it encouraging that artists who were around in the 1960s were still playing now. **Tom Paxton** and **Martin Wyndham-Read** were the artists that she particularly enjoyed.

If you have any other thoughts about the Port Fairy, or any other, folk festival, why not jot them down and send it in to us?

**Advertise in Folklife News Victoria!**  
Interested in reaching the folklife community? Include an A4 or A5 leaflet or flyer in **Folklife News Victoria.** For just \$20 you can reach about **200** individuals and organisations in the community. Display ads also available.  
Contact **Susan** or **Peter** at the VFA for further details.

## **NoticeBoard** **Handweavers & Spinners Guild of Victoria**

The general meeting of the Handweavers and Spinners is on the **third Saturday of every month,** preceded by a workshop in the morning. The next meeting is at:

**Time: 1:00 pm**

**Date: 20 May**

**Meat Market Craft Centre  
7 Blackwood St**

**North Melbourne 3051**

More information:  
**Shirley**

Tel: (03) 93 29 61 91  
Between 11:00 am—3:00pm  
Tuesday—Friday

### Basketmakers of Victoria

There is a meeting every third Sunday of the month to share information and have a bit of a chat. The next meeting is at:

**Time: Noon until 4pm**

**Date: 21 May**

**Meat Market Craft Centre  
7 Blackwood St  
North Melbourne 3051**

### The National Celtic Folk Festival Geelong 9—12 June

Formerly the 'Celtfeis', this festival now has been given the honour of becoming **Australia's first National Celtic Festival**. There will be music, arts and crafts, street theatre and food from the Celtic countries.

For bookings ring:

**Tel: (052) 21 7066**

**Fax: (052) 21 3106**

### Dya Singh Australian Sikh Rhythm and Soul 24 June

Dya Singh play the music of North India from an Australian perspective. Their music crosses the boundaries of the traditional and contemporary — a unique blend of bouzouki, didgeridoo, flute, Vietnamese zither, Spanish guitar and voice. Sounds fun!

**Cost: \$25 & \$18 conc.**

**Time: 8pm**

**Date: 24 June**

**Drama Space  
Monash University  
Clayton  
Tel: (03) 99 05 11 11**

### Orff 100 International Conference of Music and Dance Monash University 10—15 July

**Orff 100** celebrates the centenary of the birth of the composer and educator **Carl Orff**. This conference is for all music and dance teachers, musicians, dancers and anyone interested in these issues. There will be workshops, papers on **arts education, early childhood research, dance education** and a whole host of other things.

Presenters include **Gwenda**

**Davey and Kim Dunphy**

More information:

**Hilary Bergen**

**Executive Director, Orff 100  
1B Angle Road**

**Balwyn 3103**

**Tel: (03) 98 16 93 95**

**Fax: (03) 98 16 94 41**

### The Third A Capella Festival 22 July—27 August

This year's programme includes two major concerts at the **Melbourne Town Hall**, as well as performances at **Monsalvat, the Assembly Hall** and the **Boite World Music Cafe**.

More information:

**Tel: (03) 94 17 35 50**

### Melbourne Traditional Dance Festival

Performances and workshops for everyone. It all culminates at the **Melbourne Town Hall** on **Saturday 19 November**.

More information:

**Tel: (03) 417 3550**

## What's on the Wireless

### 3RN, 612 AM:

**Saturday**

9:05 pm—10:00pm

**A Swag of Yarns'**

Presented by

**David Mulhallen.**

Lots of folk music and festivals

### 3LO, 774 AM:

**Sunday**

5:30am—10:00am

**'Australia All Over'**

Presented by Ian MacNamara.  
Stories of Australia

### 3CR, 855 AM:

**Sunday**

10:30pm—Midnight

**'Traditionally Late'**

Co-ordinated by Peter Goodyear

### 3RRR, 102.7 FM:

**Tuesday**

2:00pm—4:00pm

**'The Old Folks Show'**

(apparently sometimes occasionally referred to as the 'Folking Around Show'...)

presented by

**Rick E. Vengence.**

General folk music.

### 3PBS, 106.7 FM:

**Sunday**

3:00pm—5:00pm

**'Global Village'**

Presented by Roger

Holdsworth and Suzzette Watkins.

Traditional and contemporary music from around the world.