



PluckedStrings

Newsletter for FAME members

Fame.asn.au

April 2024

President's Report



How lovely it is to be again looking forward to a FAME Festival, without the worry of cancellation, due to Covid! However, having returned from Tasmania in January, with Covid – I can tell you, it is still around! So let's all keep being vigilant with our hygiene regime.

I would like to share with you news of what one of our members has been engaged in over the last few years –

Research into the “the psychosocial benefits of intercultural music engagement and the interrelationship between cultural understanding, cultural biases, emotion, and music.”
(spoiler alert – RIME (Rich Intercultural Music Engagement) can effectively nurture and promote intercultural understanding, leading

to increased ethnocultural empathy, tolerance and social connectedness. The world needs more of this!)

Marjorie Li (she participated in the FAME festival in Perth last year, on her Pipa) undertook this research, for her PhD, and presented a paper at the 17th International Conference of Music Perception and Cognition, Tokyo in 2023; ‘Enhancing Cultural Understanding through Rich Intercultural Music Engagement: A Theoretical Model and Supporting Empirical Evidence’,

This year Marjorie has been invited to present at the conference of the 12th European Society for Cognitive Science of Music, in York (UK); ‘Cultural Classification and Emotional Perception of Western and Chinese music by Western Listeners’. She will not be travelling to York, but rather joining the satellite Hub in Melbourne. AND.. ..

She has also been asked to present an additional paper, “Does foreign music sound scary? Perceptual bias for culturally familiar and unfamiliar music by Western listeners”, at the Society for Music Perception and Cognition conference in Canada later in July.

This is why Marjorie is unable to attend our FAME Festival in Brisbane!
Congratulations Marjorie!!

Marjorie has offered to write an article about her research for Plucked Strings. With only about 3 months before FAME's own 'conference', celebrating our musical connectedness, I am getting very excited and look forward to seeing many of you in Brisbane, for the Sounds of the River City, Festival.

Cath Kench
President

"Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife."
Kahlil Gibran

Mandolins In Brisbane

FAME Festival 2024 "Sounds of the River City"

Do you remember the first time you heard a mandolin? What was your reaction?

I do not remember a time I did not hear a mandolin! My older 2 sisters played, and my father taught plucked strings and conducted a mandolin ensemble the "Varianten", first in Arnhem, the Netherlands, and then in Geelong, Victoria. It was a foregone conclusion I would play the mandolin, and so I did until I was 20 years old and left home to go teaching in the countryside.

It was not until many, many years later that I was able to pick it up again and join Mandolins in Brisbane. I realized immediately I still had so much to learn and both MIB and the FAME festivals helped with that. But my highlights, both from my youth, and for the past 4 years, have been playing in an ensemble. I absolutely relish the experience of playing within a group and being part of a team, not because I enjoy being in front of people but because there is something special about the experience of together contributing to (usually) beautiful music. FAME 2020 and 2023 were so special! I don't care where I am sitting, just let me be part of the larger.

If you have never been part of this experience don't miss the chance to be part of FAME 2024. There are a handful of single bedrooms with shared bathroom facilities remaining, and first come, first served. We will definitely need to close registrations by 30 April, or earlier if all the bedrooms have been taken. I have been told that there are very few alternatives in the area.

Living, eating, sharing and learning together and being part of the larger group will never be forgotten. And it's fun! I have attended a lot of conferences and camps in my life where people tend to be somewhat cliquish, however newcomers were made to feel so welcome at FAME festivals from my experience. Don't miss out.

It has been somewhat of a new experience for me too to be part of the organising team for the

festival. I did not anticipate this would be easy but no one could have prepared me for the pitfalls, including breaking my arm while inspecting one college site, and driving my car into a pole at another. Now it is finally all starting to come together because it has very much been a team effort. There may be more mishaps along the way, but we'll deal with them. If you do need more clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me on marian.z@bigpond.com or phone 0417 017704.

The coming together includes the music selection. I think Richard Charlton and Joel Woods have done a brilliant job with the music for the final concert, which will be at the St. John's Cathedral 6 July, 7pm. The Cathedral is in the CBD in Brisbane and a landmark site. Make sure your friends and family from the southeast corner of Queensland know about this and invite them. Richard will be conducting and it will be the world premieres of the major composition by Richard Charlton "Chronicles of a River City" and the smaller one "Echoes of the River" by young, talented Brisbane composer Tara Lynam. And don't forget to order your "Sounds of the River City" t-shirt and/or hoodie before the end of March. Mandolins in Brisbane looks forward to welcoming you all, old friends and new to Brisbane 30 June 2024.

Marian Zaunbrecher (secretary Mandolins in Brisbane)



FAME 2023

FAME 2020

Werner/Joel duo 2023

Sydney Mandolin Orchestra

Following the success of our three 90th anniversary concerts celebrated over 2022/23 the Sydney Mandolin Orchestra has a busy schedule in 2024 with some exciting concerts to new audiences.

SMO has a long tradition of playing in nursing homes and retirement villages. Sadly, the pandemic put paid to many of those opportunities. However, on St. Patrick's Day March 17 we will entertain the good folk of Glenaeon Retirement Village Belrose for the first time with a mixed program of music that has something for everyone, including the Irish!

On May 25 we have another first-time concert in the beautiful sandstone Mona Vale Anglican Church. This concert will feature the wonderful talent of Jocelyn Fazzone on flute and will include a work written by me and commissioned by SMO titled "Backyard Images" which was premiered last year.

Other works include the premiere of two new pieces by Brent Keogh, a locally based composer in Newport. Brent lectures in Music at UTS Sydney and is in my opinion a rising star as a composer for mandolin and related instruments. His music is always challenging, engaging and evocative!

Further concerts for 2024 include the Lane Cove Music Club, Wollstonecraft Bowling Club (our rehearsal venue) and a joint concert with the Karinya Hummingsong Choir in December. Karinya are an all-female choir and are part of the Hummingsong group founded by Anna Humberstone. This will be an exciting collaboration for both SMO and Karinya and will hopefully lead to further concerts in the future!

After the enforced concert hiatus imposed by Covid it has been great to get back to regular performances over the last two years. The other pleasing factor is the significant growth that SMO has experienced in the last few years, in particular our guitar section. This has opened up an opportunity to include more original mandolin orchestra music in our repertoire and extend the orchestra's ability overall.

We look forward to continuing that growth both physically and musically and hope to see many old friends at the FAME Festival in Brisbane in July. It's likely SMO will once again be the largest interstate group represented.

Werner Ruecker
Conductor Sydney Mandolin Orchestra

Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

The MMO has resumed rehearsals for 2024 working up the repertoire for our first concert for 2024 at Chapel Off Chapel in mid-April. We were fortunate once again to receive a generous grant from the City of Stonnington for which we have become "habitual applicants" and this grant provides us with the use of this prestigious performance venue in Prahran plus funds for soloists and various other costs. The theme of this concert focusses on involving young and upcoming musicians, which seems rather paradoxical given the ever-rising average age of players in mandolin ensembles due to the difficulty of recruiting and hanging on to young musicians!

Amongst other pieces we will perform the **Overture No.4 in B minor** by Konrad Wolki which includes two clarinets, two French horns, a bassoon player, a flautist, an oboe player and two percussion players hopefully having recruited young and upcoming players. Watch this space!

Just retracing my steps, the MMO finished its public performances for 2023 with a very well attended concert in Castlemaine at the Campbells Creek Community Centre. The program included, amongst other works, **Nuits Florentine** by Mario Maciocchi, **Okinawa Suite** by Miwa Naito, **Concertino for Soprano Recorder and Mandolin Orchestra** by Antonio Vivaldi featuring the young recorder virtuoso, Will Hardy, **Trilogie Op. 25** by Michael Troster, **La Vita e Bella** by Nicola Piovani and **Aria** from Suite No.3 in D, BWV 1068 by J.S. Bach.

Our end of 2023 breakup was held in our regular rehearsal venue in Serrell Street, East Malvern with an in-house concert by various small groups within the MMO, a nice, gentle end to a busy year!

Looking ahead in 2024, the MMO is organising concerts in Tecoma, an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne about 35 km east of the CBD, in St Georges Centre, Malvern, and another concert in Castlemaine. It will also participate in a joint concert with Concordia Mandolin and Guitar Ensemble and Mandolins D'Amour in November at the Ewing Memorial Church in East Malvern.

On a sad note, our conductor Darryl Barron, has very recently sustained some painful fractures in one of his feet which have meant that he's been unable to conduct us for at least 2-3 weeks but we are very fortunate that Juliette Maxwell who plays bass and piano accordion with Concordia has graciously stepped into the breach to conduct us while Darryl is "off the air". We all wish him a speedy recovery!



Above: Photo taken just prior to our concert at Barwon Park Mansion early in September 2023

Finally, just a very early report from the 2026 Melbourne FAME Festival Organising Committee. I'm getting in here early to plug our Melbourne FAME Festival which will run from 11th to the 18th of January 2026 and which we anticipate will be held in University College, Parkville. We are delighted that we will have **Stephen Lalor** as the Musical Director/Conductor for this Festival and no doubt we will extricate another wonderful musical commission from him!

As yet we have not booked a venue for the FAME Orchestra Concert but we're working on it. So, start saving up for what will be a wonderful Festival. As our plans firm up you'll get regular update in Plucked Strings from our organising committee which currently includes Donna Kerslake as committee chair, Darryl Barron, Marion Blaze, Stephen Morey, Ray Kerslake, and yours truly!

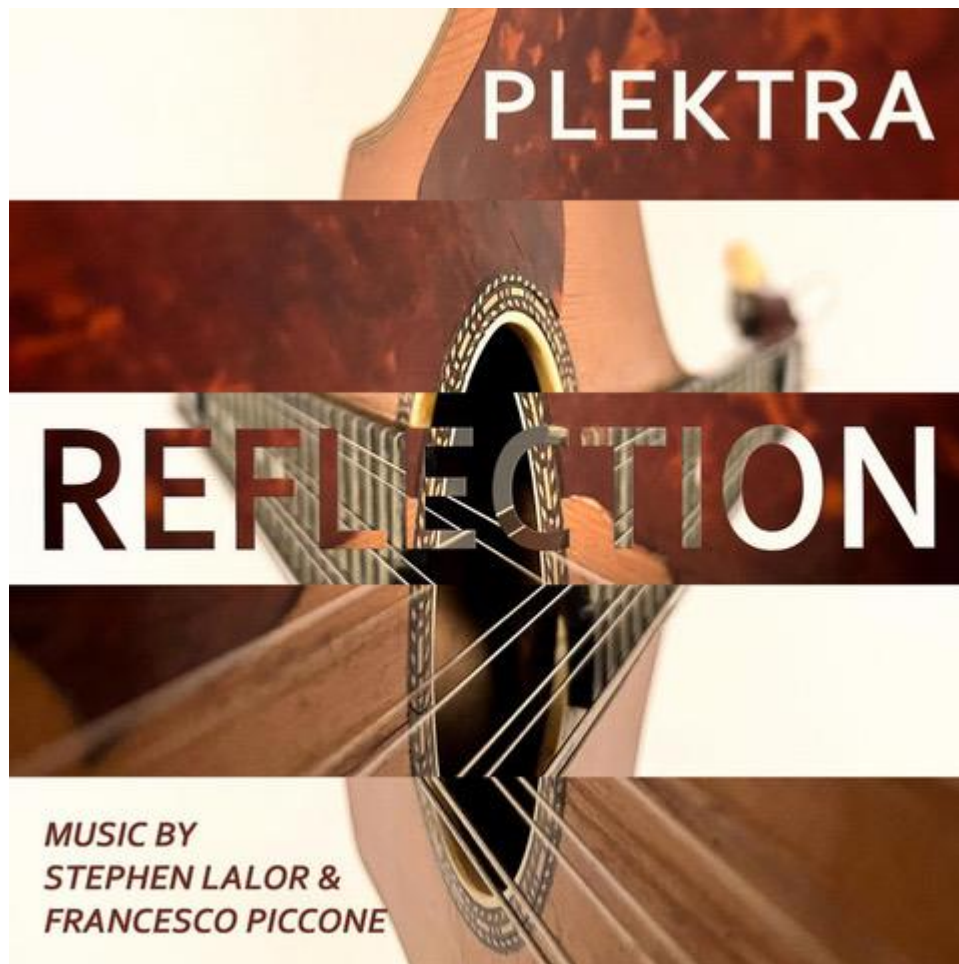
Cheers, Danny Silver

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Plektra

The latest Plektra recording "*Reflection*" was released on 11 January 2024 and is available through all streaming services. Sample tracks can also be heard on YouTube.

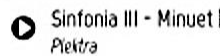
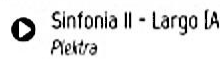
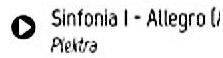
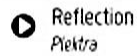
It features 6 pieces by Stephen Lalor (*Orbit*, *Reflection*, *Ukrainian Variations*, *Flying*, *Autumn Song*, *The Dancing Man of Kew*) and the 4-movement *Sinfonia* of Francesco Piccone (1685-1745). Artwork by Oliver Rathje.



Reflection - Music by Stephen Lalor & Francesco Piccone

by *Plektra*

Get the music:



Western Australian Mandolin Orchestra



At the time of writing WAMO is approaching its first concert for 2024. This will be at our usual rehearsal venue on Sunday 24th March. A one hour affair with the title 'Pastime with Good Company' (in which WAMO members will be heard to sing as they play!!). Conducted by Ana Milas it presents a good mix of both old and new material. Within our programming guidelines for 2024 WAMO is deliberately including some works only recently performed both to allow for a short 8 week rehearsal period and to let our audience begin to recognise some of our repertoire.

The Rhein-Donau Club (our home base) has recently upgraded their kitchen facilities (at a cost of \$100,000) which will be in service by our concert date. Brand spanking new, very trendy and a great outcome for the Club, this should be an extra pull for our audiences who can once again eat and drink following the concert performance.

All 4 concerts have been planned for 2024 with the 2nd one being conducted by Jana Buvári,

the third by Robert Schulz and the last again by Jana.

The ongoing seeking of new members is always a topic of discussion. WAMO is planning for the final concert this year to be a joint effort between WAMO and the guitar students from the local Melville Senior High School. It is of some concern (at least for me) there is no connection between school music programs and community ensembles. School music teachers seem to be content to say farewell to the year 12 students with scant regard for furthering their musical interests out in the wider community. This is reflected across all musical groups who are constantly on the lookout for new and younger members.

As I could not find a suitable photo for this article, I've included a free to FAME members a copy of the first of my solo mandolin preludes (there are 5 in the set) for those wanting something to get on with.

Robert Schulz

Editor: A copy of Robert Schulz's solo mandolin Prelude #1 is attached at the end of this newsletter.

Canberra Mandolin Orchestra

The Canberra Mandolin Orchestra (CMO) has been busy since its annual Dancing Feet concert in November at Folk Dance Hall in Hackett, North Canberra. While the temperature was quite warm in the afternoon the audience enjoyed the concert item and joined in enthusiastically with dancing led by caller Mark Simmons. The dance arrangements were all arranged by our conductor Michael Hardy. At the concert we were joined by new teenage members Benji (mandolin) and Sam (Accordion). Benji will be joining the FAME camp in Brisbane.

National Multicultural Festival, National Portrait Gallery, Tuggeranong Community Day, National Multicultural Festival with Theodora Volti joining us for vocals on several pieces. In February the CMO also performed at the Yarralumla Woolshed for a fundraising dinner to raise funds to support midwife and paediatric nurse training to continue the work of Dr David O'Rourke and the late Dr Peter Scott at the Murder Ignacia hospital in Indonesia.

At Easter the CMO is to perform in concert and in a collaboration with a presentation *String me Along* and Greek Rebetika Con Kalamaras.

Following Easter, the CMO has confirmed several events for the remainder of the year that include our annual seasonal activities and themed concert events. Performances at this time include a collaboration with a recorder group and a cabaret themed dinner with vocalist Theodora Volti.

The CMO will be well represented at the FAME festival in July 2024. Looking forward to catching up with our mandolin family.

Ian Bull



Special Feature—The Sydney Balalaika Orchestra

For those of us who played with or followed the Sydney Balalaika Orchestra, it came as a bit of a shock when we heard the news that long-time conductor Victor Serghie would be retiring. The following tributes to Vic's long and successful career are from some long-time SBO members.

Victor Serghie hangs up his baton

After the Sydney Balalaika Orchestra's concert at the Russian Club on 16th June, the SBO's long standing musical director Victor Serghie will hang up his baton for the last time and retire. It will be a sad day indeed for this remarkable orchestra, as he has been its driving force for nearly 70 years. In that time, he has seen it grow from a small group of 6 musicians, to an ensemble of 28.



These days it's nice to hear a good news story about Russia and Russian culture. And on this occasion Victor has been the story! On Australia Day he received an 'Achievement Medallion' for an "exceptional contribution to cultural diversity and the promotion of Russian folk music in Australia". Nominated by the Russian Ethnic Community Society, it is an award that was well deserved

The SBO has done a lot to promote Russian culture in Australia. Under Victor's leadership, it has not only received recognition throughout the country for outstanding music and musicianship, but it is also been seen as one of the best Russian folk orchestras outside Russia itself. The orchestra has made several concert tours of Russia. It has also toured China and New Zealand. Much of its success has been due to Victor's leadership.

Victor was born Harbin, China to Russian/Romanian parents. In 1956 his family migrated to Australia, and Victor started playing the violin from an early age. In 1963 he attended the Sydney Conservatorium of Music to further violin and music studies. He also taught himself to play the Russian prima domra.

Vic's arranging and orchestration skills have been his greatest gift to this orchestra, and it was his leadership and ability to turn those scores into music that has been so remarkable. Through his leadership he transformed musicians into players of Russian folk music, despite the fact that very few spoke a word of Russian, and through his personality he attracted and retained the musicians he needed to achieve all this. And with his help many of the musicians had to acquire and learn how to play strange-shaped instruments, that were not readily available in Australia.

It was the orchestra's dynamics that set the SBO apart. To Vic, just playing notes wasn't enough. Musicians had to play gracefully, loud and soft, with feeling and passion – in other words dynamically. His arrangements often included sudden halts - or 'fermatas'. Woe to the inattentive player who didn't stop!

And he knew how to work a crowd. His introductions either English or Russian (he is fluent in both) helped audiences understand music so often unfamiliar to them, enriched by a sense of humour sometimes bordering on the *smart-arse!*



He achieved all of this without Government funding or regular organised sponsorship. Any money received at the box office was rolled back into running the orchestra. Any international travel was paid for out of the pockets of the musicians themselves. And the players were not paid a cent. Neither was Victor.
Patrick O'Neill

"I had the pleasure of playing with the SBO for some time. I was always amazed at the professional quality of the arrangements and performances under Vic's leadership. His style of conducting and interacting with audiences was something to behold!"

Patrick Fazzone



How grateful I am that thirty years ago Vic Serghie handed me music for my new domra; a new adventure in music! What fun I've had being exposed to the Russian psyche -, the fire and melancholy spirit of Russian music through Vic's wonderful musical arrangements. The passion and energy that Vic has instilled into the players throughout the years has been boundless. His encouragement and assistance is legendary; a great role model.

The Sydney Balalaika Orchestra moved from the rural gigs like Coonabarabran (around 2003, photo below) to the large stages of Russia and Beijing (group photo of the 2018 trip below).



The energetic spirit and essence of Vic conducting is well captured in these photos taken in Blagoveshchensk on our Russian tour of 2016. What a pleasure It has been for me. Thanks Vic!



Testimonial and photos above from Matha Babineau

“Victor Serghie, such a generous, gifted, hard-working and driven man, musician, teacher and conductor-arranger. When I joined SBO as an aspiring domra player without an instrument, he immediately lent me his beautiful 4 string domra and gave me lessons at his home studio in Epping. With that early boost, I progressed from a tremble to a fledgling full arm tremolo that I could develop under his sharp ears and eyes - and sometimes tongue! - and those sweeping wingspan arms that drive the excellence of the SBO sound. But Victor is also so more than a conductor when he fronts SBO to rehearse and presents concerts. He is totally at one with the power and beauty of the music. Together with the orchestra, he actually **performs** the music with an infectious passion, energy, precision and comedic touch that energises the players and entertains audiences!”

Mark Berlage

“Playing with SBO under the leadership of Vic has been such a great experience and I have learnt a huge amount from his musicality. His energy and passion for the music has always been infectious and I am immensely grateful for all the effort that he has put in to keep the SBO up to his high standards.”

Oliver Rathje

For Sale

Sue Flower is selling three musical instruments, described in more detail below. Sue will also be bringing a collection of sheet music and CDs for sale to the FAME festival in Brisbane.

Catania Carmelo #34860

This mandolin was my first bowl back, Neopolitan mandolin, so I would have been around 8 or 9 years old when mum & dad bought me this 😊 (I started on a flatback when I was 6!) I loved the Dutch like figurines on the front! I have no idea where they purchased it and have been unable to find out the exact age. I found the following link from 2 years ago which gave me an idea on value.

[Catania Carmelo Bowlback Mandolin Rare 1972 Italy Bowlback 1972 | Reverb](#)

There are a few scratches on the front, and although there is a string broken I will put on or supply a new set of strings. The case was not the original but fits fine & is included in the price

Selling the Carmelo mandolin & case for \$700





Hora #U1068

HORA is apparently the largest and oldest musical instrument company in Romania. This mandola belonged to my stepdad, Paul Marquis. I bought it from my mum in 2018. It has a battery powered pickup fitted. I had every intention of using it but sadly have never played it & I feel it needs to be loved by someone who will! I'm not sure if the case is original but it fits. There are no scratches or cracks that I am aware of, so in excellent condition. It's dated 2010. I've been in touch with Hora direct & a new one would be Euro265 plus shipping

[Hora Musical Instruments | Mandolas \(hora-instruments.com\)](http://hora-instruments.com)

Selling the mandola & case for \$350

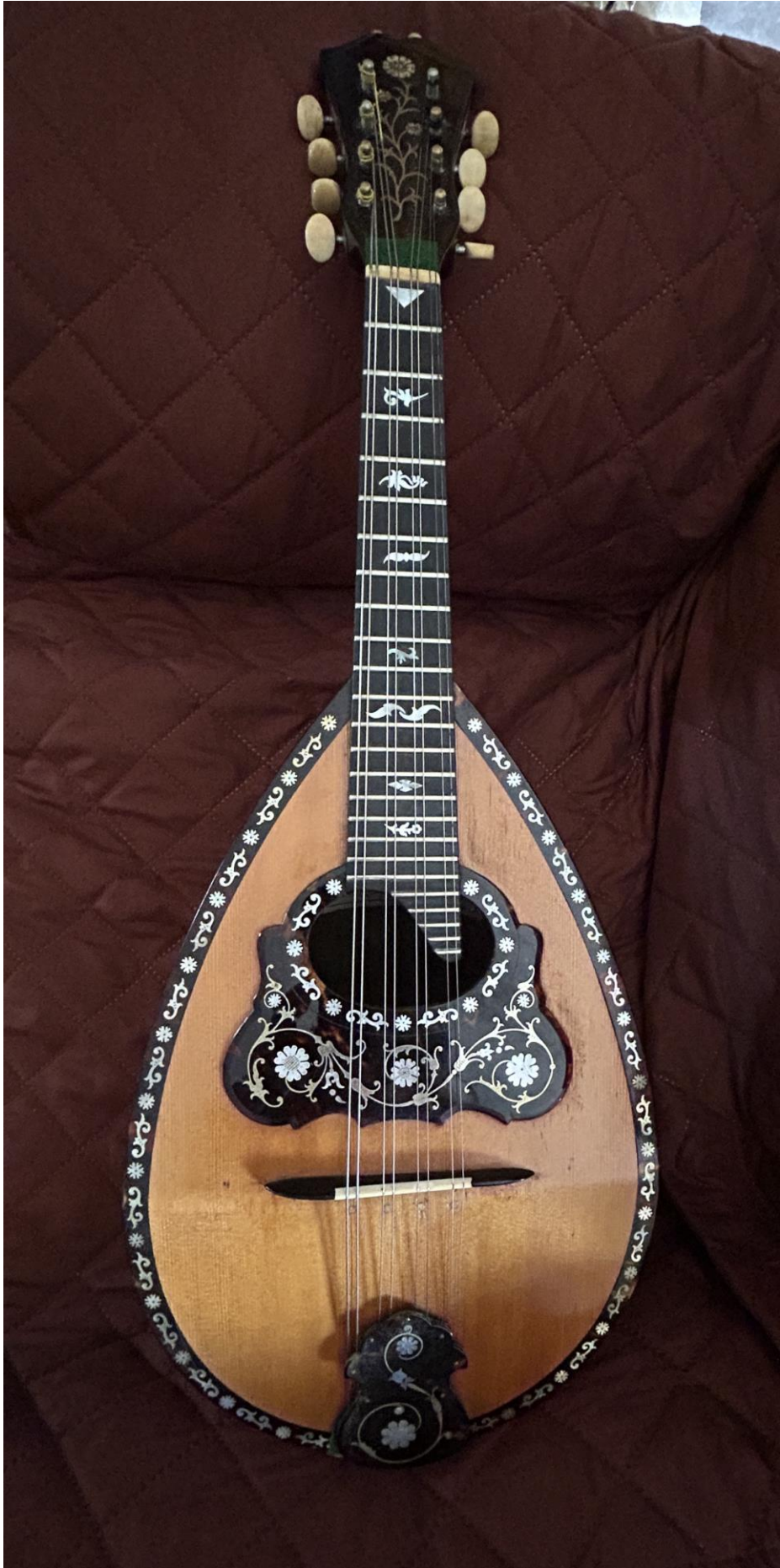


Umberto Ceccherini

This mandolin belonged to my stepdad, Paul Marquis. I bought it from my mum in 2018 & played it on tour in Europe with MMO. I love it, but it isn't being played as much as it should. It deserves to be loved & cherished by someone else now. I had a special flight case made for it and both the instrument & case were officially valued by Michael Cameron, a luthier in London (who, incidentally, Ali Stephens used to get any work done on her instruments). I have a copy of the valuation, which I will include for insurance purposes. The original case is leather but falling to bits, however, I'm including it in the sale as I feel it's part of the instrument's history. There are no scratches or cracks that I am aware of, so in really good condition.

For more photos contact me direct mandosuef@icloud.com or call 0409 872 474

Selling the Ceccherini mandolin & case for \$5,000



Mandolin Solo

[Unless otherwise shown,
all double note slurs
tremolo both voices]

Prelude #1

Robert Schulz
2012

Preamble ♩ = c. 92

mf

10

17

25 *Moving, but steady*

mf

31

37 *f* *mf*

43

48 *stringendo* *rit.* *mp*

Prelude #1

54 *cresc.* *ff* *mf*

61 *f* *mp* *p*

72 *mf* *mp*

79 *f* *sf* *mf*

88 *mp* *cresc.*

94 *ff* *mf* *f*

102 *meno mosso* *sf* *mf* *rit.*

108 *mp* *p* *pp* [2'15"]

Har 12

Detailed description: This page contains the musical score for the first system of 'Prelude #1'. It consists of eight staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score begins at measure 54 and ends at measure 108. The music features a variety of textures, including dense chords, arpeggiated patterns, and melodic lines. Dynamic markings range from *pp* (pianissimo) to *ff* (fortissimo). Performance instructions include *cresc.* (crescendo), *meno mosso* (less motion), *rit.* (ritardando), and *Har 12* (harmonic). Fingering numbers (1-4) and breath marks are present throughout. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a duration of [2'15"].