



EDITOR'S LETTER

HELLO EVERYONE!

Brisbane recently played host to the Goodwill Games, which, according to the accompanying promotional campaign, brought the gods of sport into our own backyards. Extend that analogy to two other major events that have been staged in our fair city since my last letter to you and it would seem that Brisbane's backyards have been bursting at the fence-line with gods of a more musical orientation. The 2001 International Workshops brought a host of pedagogical and performing gods to Brisbane in July, and, as you'll read on pp 18-23 in the reports from our on-the-spot workshopers, the encounters with these titans were inspirational experiences.

No sooner had the IW great ones vacated the backyard than the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music had trucked in another eclectic band of musical gods to take their place, and for ten memorable days musicians from around the globe rocked the socks off audiences in venues across the city. The Festival began with Olivier Messiaen's extraordinary *Turangalila-Symphonie* and finished with a memorable Last Night of the Biennial concert featuring the music of the fabulous Louis Andriessen. This concert brought together Andriessen's own band, the celebrated Orkest de Volharding, and a pair of frighteningly-talented young soloists: Italian singer, Cristina Zavalloni and American violinist Monica Germino. I had an interesting chat with Monica just prior to the concert and

you can eavesdrop on that conversation by reading page 6 of this issue.

The Biennial also brought me face to face with the extraordinary Guscott E-violin. I thought it was so stunning I put it on the cover (see story below).

Last but not least, the gods of AUSTA also visited Brisbane just prior to the International Workshops and it was a very happy experience for me to meet and speak with people I had, until then, only known from phone or email. The warm welcome I received and the subsequent discussions served to confirm my initial impressions of AUSTA as an organization kept alive and well by a team of dedicated, hardworking people: the National Executive, the directors, the staff of the national office, the State representatives, the journal team (sadly farewelling Reviews Editor Catherine Milligan) and especially the Chair of the editorial board who is such a support to me and Yuri. Thanks one and all, and keep up the good work.

Rosemary Duffy

COVER STORY

GUSCOTT E-VIOLIN

During this year's Queensland Biennial Festival of Music a great number of very beautiful musical instruments were to be found under the one roof in the old Cooroy Butter Factory, the site of an exhibition entitled *Sound Builders*. For nine days, instrument makers from all around Australia proudly displayed their handcrafted instruments and chatted to admiring visitors about their work. Harpsichords with painted lids, warm-wooded mandolins, pretty dulcimers, ancient Aeolian harps, Celtic harps and exquisitely decorated lutes were just some of the impressive instruments on display. Fine specimens all of them but there was one that stood out from the crowd in its sleek loveliness – the new Guscott E-violin; an eye-catching hybrid of high-tech materials and the familiar, elegant curves of the classical violin.

The Guscott E-violin is a relatively new arrival in the burgeoning field of plug-in fiddles.

David Guscott built his first electric violin (made from laminated western red cedar with ceramic nut, sustain rod, bridge and soundposts) just last year after shifting focus to instrument-making halfway through a bachelor degree in Visual Arts. He has since refined and improved on the prototype to produce a range of striking instruments which are attracting the attention of string players around the country.

When Michelle Lovett, lecturer in music at the University of Southern Queensland, played the Guscott 5-string violin for the first time, the experience had "a profound effect" on her both as a music educator and string player. She gave "the beautifully handcrafted instrument" a glowing report card describing it as:

"... remarkably satisfying – a gorgeous tone across all strings.... The instrument was comfortable to hold and play and was as responsive as a traditional instrument. In my opinion, the versatility of this instrument may have been the most impressive aspect. As a classically-trained violinist and violist, I found the instrument most suitable for reproducing the 'classical' timbre traditionally associated with stringed instruments. Of course, I am delighted with an instrument that combines the two stringed instruments so well – yet not sacrificing either instrument's unique quality."

Young string players, in particular are drawn to the E-violin. Not only does it look good but it also offers them a choice of sonorities, from the rich classical tone of a concert violin to the more electric or even distorted sound of an electric guitar. Another attractive feature is the headphone input which allows the player to practise without disturbing those nearby or plug into a backing tape/CD and hear the violin in stereo through the, headphones as if it is part of the recorded music... Who needs an accompanist?

Unlike other electric violins, the Guscott E-violin retains many of the features of its more distant, classical cousins. At the same time, its special capabilities open the way for the violin family to increasingly find a voice in the less-traditional performance spaces of jazz, rock, folk and world music.