

Wongawilli



The Wongawilli Band was originally formed in 1987 to help promote, preserve and perform Australia's rich tradition of music, song and dance.

The band represented Australia in China at the Australian Film Festival in Beijing which was arranged by the Australian Embassy in Beijing in May, 2004.

The band has become well known throughout Australia with performances at all major folk festivals in all Australian States and the Northern Territories including the major folk events at Woodford, Qld, Port Fairy, Vic, Victor Harbour (SA) and the National Folk Festival (13 times).

The band has aimed at trying to be different from the average bush band by performing unfamiliar yet entertaining music. This formula seems to have received national recognition with 16 awards at the Australian Bush Music Festival and Bush Band Championships.

In particular the band's singer, Graeme Murray, received the **1991 Australian Bush Music Awards Best Male Vocalist** ahead of John Williamson and Alan Scott. He repeated the award in 1993 and 1994 and has become the "Voice of the Bush".

Also the band's accordionist, David De Santi, received the **1992 Australian Bush Music Heritage Award**, a Commonwealth Government Centenary Medal in 2003 for services to the folk music industry in Australia, is the editor of Australia's national folk music magazine Trad&Now and Illawarra Folk Festival Director.

Jane Brownlee, the band's violinist and David De Santi were recently awarded the **National Library of Australia Folk Festival Fellowship** which involved further researching of Australia's song and music tradition.

The group has been heavily involved also in sharing its resources with workshop, recordings and publications.

What they've said about the band:

... this ensemble is highly regarded in the field of interpreting authentic Australian traditional music, song and dance as a performance art. The group is recognised in Australia as a leading force in the revitalisation of our folk traditions ...

Warren Fahey AM, JP, Festival Records

... Wongawilli Band, based in the culturally-rich Illawarra region are nationally recognised as one of, if not the, finest exponents, collectors and presenters of Australian traditional 'Bush' music. Their stage performances are distinctively 'Australian' whilst having a wide general appeal with their lively rhythms and music coupled with lyrics which frequently carry the wry humour of the Australian 'bushie'

Bernard Bolan, President Folk Federation of NSW

... They present entertaining and distinctive interpretations of traditional and tradition-influenced Australian folk songs and tunes and have won many awards and appeared at many major festivals and venues ..

Jamie McKew OAM, Festival Director for Port Fairy Folk Festival

Wongawilli is the pre-eminent group performing Australian folk music in this country. The music they play is uniquely Australian, but without any of the clichés usually associated with Australian folk music. In the fifteen years they have been performing, they have built an unequalled reputation for fine musicianship and entertainment, backed up by extensive research into the traditional origins of the music and the people who played it in the past.

Graham McDonald, Program Director for National Folk Festival, Canberra

Wongawilli's background as performers, folk advocates, and folk historians that is unlike any other group performing in Australia today. The band has a national profile, gained through performances at all major folk festivals in all Australian States and the Northern Territories including the major folk events at the Woodford Folk Festival, Queensland, the Port Fairy Folk Festival, Victoria, Victor Harbour Folk Festival, South Australia and the National Folk Festival (now held permanently in Canberra) thirteen times, an outstanding record that rivals any other folk/traditional act for experience, longevity and popularity.

Wongawilli band members have earned a range of accolades; the band's singer Graeme Murray, received the 1991 Australian Bush Music Awards Best Male Vocalist ahead of John Williamson, a feat he repeated in 1993 and 1994, accordionist David De Santi, received the 1992 Australian Bush Music Heritage Award for his exemplary work in promoting and preserving Australian dance and music with the Pioneer Performers Series, a compilation of books and cassettes. David was also awarded a Commonwealth Government Centenary Medal in 2003 for services to the folk music industry in Australia.

Wongawilli is a rare band filled with musicians who are not only entertaining, but are authorities on Australian traditional music, an enviable combination.

Dani Rocca, President of Folk Alliance Australia, 2004

Performances

Concerts - the Wongawilli Band performs traditional, original and contemporary folk and bush songs and instrumentals. "Bush Music" is a term used to describe the traditional music of the settlers to Australia with influences from Ireland, the United Kingdom and Europe.

Tavern / Pub Concert - a concert of up to 3 hours comprising lively Australia bush and folk songs and instrumentals, music to drink to!

Bush Dances - the band can present a 'bush dance' up to 4 hours. Wongawilli is regarded as one of Australia's leading dance music bands. All the dances are taught and walked through and from a selection of circle, line, longways sets, quadrilles and couples dances.

Workshops - members of the band can provide workshops on traditional Australian dance tunes, Australian style fiddle and music. One of the members of the David De Santi can also present a workshop on Italian traditional tunes that have travelled to Australia!

Discography

1. **Australian Traditional Dance Tunes**, double CD - over 2 hours of music, 85 tunes arranged into music for bush dances, includes a CD Rom multimedia track with information, dance calls, music
2. **Live at the Local** - recording of band at Jamberoo Pub with songs and tunes
3. **Australian Selection** - selection of Australian traditional and contemporary folk songs and tunes, winner of 3 awards from the Australian Bush Music Awards
4. **After The Tradition** - Wongawilli's first recording, winner of 5 awards from the Australian Bush Music Awards
5. **Australian Tradition** - compilation of Australian Selection and After the Tradition released in North America
6. **Tunes of Bert Jamieson** - traditional tunes from harmonica player, Bert Jamieson
7. **Bush & Folk** - Australian mood music recording

Contact details

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The band with Bryan Brown at 2004 Australian Film Festival in Beijing China

The Band

Graeme Murray	Main vocal, lagerphone, whistle, spoons
Reg Murray	Mandolin, banjo-mandolin, banjo
Jason Roweth	Main vocal, guitar
Chloe Roweth	Main vocal, mandolin
Jane Brownlee	Violin, viola
Tania De Santi	Piano
David De Santi	Accordion, concertina

Dance

The band is well known for its dance music and Australian dance repertoire, with over 80 dances in the band's repertoire. Performances have been provided for the National Folk Festival on a number of occasions, Bush Music Club, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide Colonial Balls.

The following is a selection the band can teach and present.

Quadrille formation dances (4 couples in a square set):
Santoys Quadrille, Galop Quadrille, Lancers Quadrille, Polka Cotillion, Waltz Cotillion, Wombat Quadrille, The Grand March, danced traditionally at the start of the evening and before a quadrille

Couples Dances: Berlin Schottische, Pride of Erin, Frangipani Waltz, Prince of Wales Schottische, Varsoviana, Kings Waltz, Princess Polka, Brown Jug Polka (Heel & Toe Polka), Dutch Hoe Waltz, Barn Dance, Manchester Galop

Longways sets dances: Country Bumpkin, Haymakers Jig, Flying Pieman, Sandhurst Diggers, Double Sir Roger de Coverley, Bullockies Ball, Virginia Reel, La Galopade

Circle Dances: Adelaide Race Day, Circle Waltz, Circassian Circle 1 & 2, Jubilee Jig, Stockyards, Blackwattle Reel, Jacaranda Dance, Circle Galop

Other formations: The Tempest, Waltz Country Dance, Spanish Waltz, Jolly Miller Waltz, Devil's Triangle, La Gursa, Dashing White Sergeant