



# The Delta Strummers

## Newsletter *Fall, 2014*

### From the Maestro

The Fall Ukulele season is in full roar and we just finished a "boffo" concert at Summerset IV. The latest beginner class had full participation in the SSIV concert and we performed for a crowd of 150 with 44 Delta Strummers. I've had numerous reports and feedback from our latest concert.; people loved the mix of music, the skill of performance, the quality of the solos and yes, even the hats (especially the flamingo hat). I was also informed that the band showed a "joy in performing" that was inspiring to all who watched us. I feel the same energy during our rehearsals so it's no surprise when we entertain a crowd.



The most gratifying part of being the Music Director of the Delta Strummers is watching the response on our new members' faces to the participation by the audience during one of our performances. Aside from the fact that we're making good, really good music together, the audiences seem to help bring out the performer in all of us.

I think we have recently accomplished our task of introducing the ukulele to our audiences and ourselves as a versatile instrument, capable of rock, folk, blues, ragtime and yes, even Hawaiian. I think as we add more songs to our list of over 125 songs in our library, we can entertain at a band level as well as small group and even as individuals with our friends and families. Our solos and our "open mic" sessions have added to the Delta Strummers' repertoire and I continue to encourage each of you to find and perform new material for us as we grow our group.

Now we are preparing for our Christmas concerts and have two Assisted Living Home concerts as well as performing for our local Brentwood Garin Elementary school. I believe bringing joyful music to our Seniors is important. I especially believe bringing joyful music to kids is a gift we can all share at Christmas. It will help in a small way to fill the vacuum created by the elimination of music from our elementary school curriculums; This loss of music programs has an impact on the growth of young minds. We're proud do our small part to make a statement to both this and the next generation.... music is important and creates fellowship, learning, and improves life's experiences.

*"Music is the universal language of mankind". Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

Ernie Macintyre, Music Director

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## Chairman's Message

by Tom Jones

I've continued to receive great support from our 2014 Board members. Together, we work closely with our Music Director, Ernie Macintyre. The Board meets monthly to review finances, membership, music, performances and future plans.



Ray Abeyta worked with our outside supplier to provide polo shirts with an embroidered Delta Strummers logo.

A number of non-Board members stepped forward in 2014 to take on various tasks. Fred Kamp led an audit team, and Mary Jane Dukellis led the Picnic Committee to put on a wonderful picnic event. Several members helped to transport and set up folding chairs for our performances.

As my 2-year term comes to a close, I can report that the nomination committee is busy putting together a slate of nominations for 2015, and these will be subject to approval by our membership.

Thanks to everyone for giving me the opportunity to have served as Chairman for 2013 and 2014, and a big thanks to everyone who supported me, either directly or indirectly.

Tom Jones

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## Treasurer's Report

By Burga Munch

Our finances continue to stay in the black, which has allowed our cash balance to continue to build. The Board budgets conservatively, attempting to accurately anticipate costs, and keeps a close eye on expenses

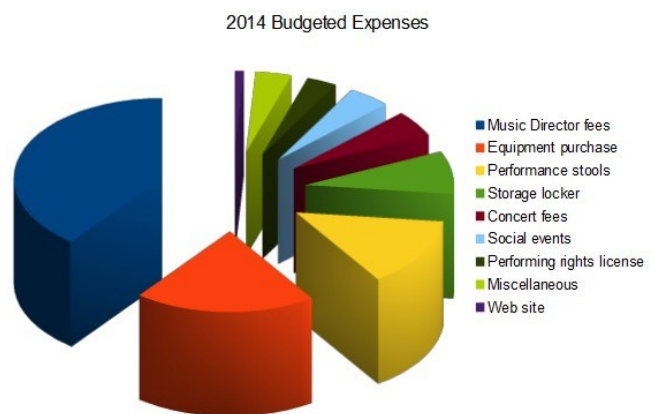


at our monthly Board meetings.

In 2014 we're operating on a budget of \$7,900. Income is derived from a few paid concerts and weekly practice fees. Our expenses are shown graphically below, and include Music Director fees, concert expenses, printing, and web site costs.

A budgeted 1-time expense this year was for new audio equipment that we use as monitors during our weekly practices and performances. Another budgeted 1-time expense was for 'tall' stools for use during performances, and an annual recurring storage locker fee. The Board continues to discuss the need for stools and the logistics and cost of storing and transporting them; As a result, we have not incurred these seating-related expenses in 2014.

The Board approved a non-budgeted expense, not to exceed \$1,000, for the picnic. A new recurring expense for 2014 is a fee charged for the use of the Summerset IV Pavilion where we hold our weekly practices.



Our 2013 accounts were audited by a team led by Fred Kamp. Fred reported the audit findings to the Board and to a Delta Strummers general. We subsequently introduced a minor change into our accounting documentation as a recommendation from the Audit Committee.

Burga Munch

## Strumming, Patterns and Technique

by John Davelaar

The first thing to think about when considering the subject of this article, is not either of the two topic items, but rather “rhythm” and “tempo”, because no matter how many strum patterns you have



learned, without developing a sense of rhythm and tempo, and having the ability to “feel” the music, you will not be satisfied with the results. So first get a better understanding for both. Go to:

[www.ukeschool.com](http://www.ukeschool.com), click on Beginner Lessons, then click on “How to strum”, lesson #1, then #2, #3, #4, and #5. Always think of “Tempo” as the speed of the beat, or count, and “Rhythm” as the dynamic or pattern.

Before we start strumming, make it easy on yourself, and anchor your strumming arm, such that the only arm movement you get when strumming, is a result of your wrist twisting as you strum up and down. Make a loose fist with your strumming hand, placing your thumb behind your first finger, such that the tip extends and bends over your thumb. Then use the nail on the down stroke, and the back of your finger on the up stroke. Try it, You’ll like it.

Our music primarily consists of a 4/4 or 3/4 “time signature”, meaning 4 beats per measure or 3 beats per measure, and the “rhythm” has to do with the emphasis, or dynamic, placed upon each beat of a measure. (Example: 1-2-**3**-4, 1-2-**3**-4. . . etc.) Once you become comfortable with the rhythm and tempo of a piece of music (by listening and counting), you can begin to employ strum patterns which make the music more interesting and enjoyable to play. When learning to play the ukulele we all began with various “down” and “up” strokes. When introduced to the concept of “Shuffles”, we added a dynamic which

offers a more syncopated rhythm to our strumming, and by varying the **dynamic** of the up and down stroke, in conjunction with varying the **pattern** of the up and down stroke, all kinds of neat things happen. Try some of these patterns. . . . To get a better feel for the rhythm, mute your strings with your left hand.

Shuffle: **DU-DU-DU-DU**, put the emphasis on the down stroke.

Now try these: DD-UU-D, or DD-UU-DU, or DD-DUDU, or, just DUD. . . .

As you become comfortable with these patterns, you will surprise yourself by developing new ones, and automatically switching from one to another as you play. It just happens!

Also, have some fun by damping the strings, as you play a chord, in time with the music, you’ll like the effect. Or, damp the first string with you ring finger to accentuate a C or G7. You may want to check out: [www.ukulelehunt.com](http://www.ukulelehunt.com). Also, search for: The best Ukulele Strum In the World, Coveywood on YouTube, and buy, or borrow, a copy of Ralph Shaw’s Strumming DVD.

That should keep you busy,

Have fun and keep strumm’en,

John Davelaar

### Ukuleles for sale and wanted

If you have a ukulele to sell, or are in the market for one, check out the For Sale page on our web site. You might find a bargain or a buyer for that unwanted ukulele.

## Questions For The Board

We were recently made aware of the fact that some members may have questions for the Board. If you have a question or issue you feel needs to be raised with the entire Board, we'll make time available to discuss it.

The preferred way is to document your question or issue, and submit it to our Secretary, Mary Ritner. If you need to address the issue in person with the Board, we'll allocate a brief time slot in our agenda. The Board will follow up in writing to let you know the result of their discussion and any conclusions or decisions reached.

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## Music Selection

The Board was recently asked about our music selections for performances; Who makes the decision to include or exclude a song, and the protocol for adding them to our song book.

The process starts with our "Open mic" sessions, typically held twice a year at the end of a season. Members are encouraged to offer up new music for consideration, and to audition these selections at designated practice sessions. If a member is uncomfortable auditioning their song, they may delegate the audition to another willing member.

Most of our new music is derived from these offerings and, in fact, over 50% of the songs in our current practice list came from this source.

Music submitted for consideration needs to be in a standard 'lead sheet' format. Songs that could be too difficult for most members to sing, or too difficult for our newer members to play, may be transposed into a different key &/or rearranged by our Music Director.

Following audition, music is selected for inclusion in upcoming practice lists by a Music Committee. In 2014, the Music Committee was comprised of Board

members and the Music Director.

When a practice list is created for upcoming performances, lead sheets for all the songs are reviewed, played and sung, usually by Ernie and myself (Tom), to identify further changes and, following editing, are added to our online Song Book.

This entire process, from submission to publication, is time consuming, which means that some music offerings have not yet come out the other end; Specifically, music submitted in different formats, or which is not readily playable, sits in a queue and will be dealt with as time permits.

As we get closer to a performance, Ernie will take note of which music we play well and which we're struggling with. This usually results in songs being removed from the practice list to eventually end up with a "playable" performance list.

Having participated in a number of groups who don't have this discipline, I can say that their group playing left a lot to be desired.

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## Nominating Committee

The Board has chartered a Nominating Committee to come up with a slate of officers for 2015. If someone taps you on the shoulder and asks if you'd be willing to serve, please give it serious consideration. Anyone wishing to serve as a Board member in 2015, please seek out one of the Nominating Committee members or a current Board member.

Nominations will be presented to an upcoming Delta Strummers General Meeting, held concurrent with a weekly practice, and the membership will be asked to vote on the nominations.

## Hi-G vs Low-G for Ukuleles

By Ray Abeyta

In ukuleles tuned using hi-G, the fourth string (G) is tuned higher than the third string (C). This type of tuning is called “Re-entrant tuning”. It has been traditional for Hawaiian ukulele tuning. The fourth string (G) is thinner than the third string (C).



In low-G tuning, the fourth string (G) is thicker than the third string (C) and is tuned lower than the C. It is more related to guitar tuning.

Many people prefer hi-G tuning because of the traditional sound. For some picking patterns the hi-G is easier to play. But not having the low notes can be limiting.

Low-G tuning gives you the advantage of having more low notes. This helps when playing solos or intros that require low notes. Some Classical pieces can be difficult to play without the low notes.

I like the low-G because it plays similar to a guitar. Low-G makes it easier to play licks and riffs for certain types of music. Low-G is nice for certain strums where I want to alternate bass and chord, such as when playing tunes like Jambalaya. When playing eight bar blues, low-G gives a fuller sound.

Many musicians now have one ukulele tuned low-G and another tuned hi-G to allow for different styles.

If you are interested in low-G tuning, you can buy single low-G strings at Lamorinda Music. Make sure the string you buy is for your type of ukulele.

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## The Skills of a Luthier

Several Delta Strummers have used Jordan Music Services in Concord to repair and adjust their instru-

ments. John Jordan works in a converted garage which is full of woodworking machines and instruments in various states of disrepair. Everything from a mini-ukulele to a double bass can be seen.

In addition to purchasing metal parts, John makes many of the wooden parts he replaces on damaged instruments.

Following repair & adjustment, John tunes and plays each instrument before having the owner play it. John’s prices are very reasonable, and a visit to his workshop is quite enlightening.

More information can be found on our web site under **Ukulele Resources | Instrument Repairs**.

Recently, it has come to our attention that Lamorinda Music has two technicians skilled in repair and setup of instruments.

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## Singing for Your Supper - a Musical heritage

By Tom Jones

I was born and raised and in Wales, known as *The*



*Land of Song*. Almost everyone in this small country sang.

I came across this photo in my parents’ attic, and was reminded of a family story I’d heard years before; My Dad was born into a large family. My grandfather was a coalminer, and he used to take Dad to “rich people’s houses” in the evenings to sing for money

and help put food on the table.

I didn’t know the rest of the story until a few years ago, when we stayed overnight with an aunt, the last remaining sibling, near London. When I showed her the photo, she remembered it well, and explained that, when puberty arrived, Dad’s voice dropped, and that was the end of his singing career.

## Is the Ukulele the “happiest” instrument?

By Mary Ritner

I’m sure you’ve heard this statement in the past from both listeners and players. Most people say they feel happy when hearing (and playing) the ukulele. There are lots of reasons why this may be true.



First, it’s so cute. It’s small size with only 4 strings which makes it very nice in appearance. The sound produced by all sizes of ukuleles is very pleasant. No matter if it’s soprano, concert, tenor or baritone it sounds lively, upbeat and mostly..... happy. Ukulele means ‘jumping flea’ in Hawaiian because of the fast moving fingers over the chords played, so it’s interesting and fun to watch.

The US origins of the ukulele may contribute to its happy feel, starting in Hawaii. Much of the music reminds us of beaches, tropical breezes and paradise at its best. While this heritage makes the ukulele enjoyable to everyone, it sometimes limits public knowledge of the ukulele’s range. As we know, the ukulele can produce moving, and sometimes sad music that is deep and touching.

Lots of people come together to enjoy happy ukulele music. With the current popularity of the ukulele in the US, many groups have arisen where folks enjoy the fun and dynamic music of the ukulele. The Delta Strummers are a great example of the rapid growth of this music. Both current and past famous people enjoy the ukulele such as Beatles Paul McCartney and George Harris, Marlon Brando, Gloria Swanson, Betty Grable, Bob Hope, Warren Buffet, Taylor Swift, Elvis

Presley, Barack Obama and many, many more. Yes, the ukulele community is a fun place to be. While we take it seriously and work very hard, the music produced as a group is amazing and enjoyed by so many listeners.

In truth, many other instruments also produce happy and joyful music, in addition to making people feel a range of emotions. The ukulele does the same, so it can produce a meaningful and enjoyable experience just as well as other musical instruments. Of note, the ukulele can be played happy and sad and everything in between, making it one of the most musically wide ranging instruments. Isn’t that what music is all about?

In the end, we all agree it is a serious instrument, and maybe underestimated in the world of music. When we play it, we enjoy being challenged and sometimes frustrated. We appreciate our band mates who support and encourage us. We’ve benefited from the experience and expertise of an amazing music director who continually brings our music to new levels. And, we especially love bringing a smile to the faces of our listeners and hearing their happy voices joining us in song. Keep smiling, keep happy.

Mary Ritner,  
Secretary

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### **A quote on a plaque in my office/studio.**

From the 1967 poem ‘*In Passing*’ by Brian Harris:

*To be born in Wales, not with a silver spoon in your mouth, but with music in your blood and with poetry in your soul, is a privilege indeed.*

Tom Jones

The Delta Strummers Board introduced this newsletter in 2011 to document recent activities, and to convey information regarding future events. It also serves to communicate decisions made by the Board. However, this newsletter is not intended to replace emails sent to the group with more current information.

## Delta Strummers Newswire

### Delta Strummers Fall/Winter Performances

**Wednesday, October 15, 2014:** Summerset IV Orchards Lodge.

**Thursday, October 23, 2014:** The Commons at Dallas Ranch, Antioch.

**Thursday, December 4, 2014:** The Commons at Dallas Ranch, Antioch.

**Wednesday, December 10:** Cortona Park, Brentwood.

**Friday, December 12, 2014:** Garin Elementary School, Brentwood.

*Directions, playlists, attire and other information will be communicated via email prior to each event.*

### Delta Strummers on the web

[www.deltastrummers.org](http://www.deltastrummers.org)

The Delta Strummers web site is our primary communication to the outside world, and contains various resources for use by the group. Several new members came to us through the web site.

A password-protected **Song Book** on the web site allows members to download new and updated music and playlists. Details on accessing this resource are communicated via email. Contact Tom Jones if you need help.

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### Check your email

email is our primary vehicle for communicating with Delta Strummers members. New or revised playlists and updated music are uploaded to our web site,

and are announced via email. So be sure to check your email regularly.

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### Group discounts

We've negotiated the following discounts for Delta Strummers members:

**Good Hawaiian Shirts** will give a 25% discount. Ordering information is on our web site under **Ukulele Resources | Clothing**, but be aware there are different ordering links for men's and ladies shirts.

**Lamorinda Music** in Lafayette will give a 10% discount to Delta Strummers members. They have the largest selection of ukuleles in stock of any music store within driveable distance. Store information is on our web site under **Ukulele Resources | Ukulele Stores**.

### Delta Strummers name badges

In response to multiple requests, the Board approved a design for Delta Strummers name badges, and a local source was secured. The badges use magnets for attachment, rather than making holes in clothing. However, they can also be procured with a pin attachment if folks have concerns about any effect on a pacemaker. (Check with your doctor.)

Anyone who needs a badge, please contact Tom Jones. Badges are sold at our cost.

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### Delta Strummers Polo shirts

We have a supplier of Delta Strummers polo shirts. Ordering information is on the Clothing page of our web site.

## Delta Strummers 2014 Board

**Chairman Emeritus.** Ward Pinther founded The Delta Strummers together with his better half, Dorothy and Fritz and Joan Dueming.



**Chairman, 2013 & 2014.** Tom Jones joined the Delta Strummers in the middle of 2011, having never previously played a stringed instrument. He has since acquired and continues to learn to play several instruments, including banjo and guitar.



**Vice Chairman.** When John Davelaar learned that there was a ukulele Band in Summerset, he dusted off his old concert uke and called Ernie. John had played the ukulele in high school, but never had training, or the opportunity to play in a group. He says he's not much of a singer, but loves playing the uke, especially old time Vaudeville tunes, Rag Time, and Bluegrass.



**Treasurer.** Burga Munch was born and raised in Germany, where she played the accordion as a child. Burga started to learn to play ukulele in late 2010 in Santa Cruz. She joined the Delta Strummers in 2011 and has been having fun ever since.

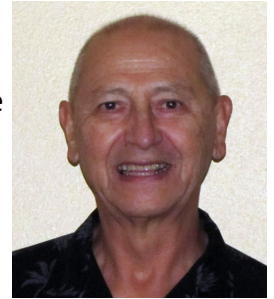


**Secretary.** Mary Ritner has loved all kinds of music all her life. She received a ukulele as a birthday gift, fulfilling a long time wish. She found the Delta Strummers soon after joining the band in 2012. She en-



joyed playing piano and singing in church choirs in the past. Mary has been the secretary since January 2014.

**Board member.** Ray Abeyta bought his first ukulele while vacationing in Kauai in 2010. He heard the Delta Strummers rehearsing at the Summerset Orchards Pavilion, and joined in 2012.



**Board meetings:** The Board meets monthly to discuss finances, membership, payout dates & venues, music selection, public relations, and future direction of the Delta Strummers.

### Becoming a Board member:

All our Board positions are voluntary, and take varying degrees of time and effort. If you would like to serve on a future Board, please let any Board member or the Nominating Committee know.

### Music Director.

Ernie Macintyre was born in Glasgow, Scotland and came to the U.S. as a "wee little laddie". Ernie is a talented musician and accomplished singer, and has a unique approach to teaching musical skills and leading musical ensembles.



He joined the Summerset Singers in 2003 and, after serving as Assistant Music Director, became Music Director and Principal Conductor in 2010.

Ernie joined the Delta Strummers as Music Director in June, 2011, and has helped grow the group, both in numbers and musical skills. His 'ukulele beginners classes' have been well attended, and graduates are able to transition to the main band.