



The Delta Strummers

Newsletter *Fall, 2015*

From the Maestro

The Delta Strummers have grown from a small informal group founded in 2004 in Discovery Bay, to over 60 members in the general East Bay Community by 2015.

In the Summer of 2011, we decided to articulate our Basic Purpose as a group of ukulele players to attract more players from the surrounding communities in the East Bay. These 6 ideals, listed below, have guided us during our rapid growth and have contributed to the high level of musicianship and fellowship that exist today in the Delta Strummers. I believe each component is equal in importance to the next and we constantly assess our progress as a group by our measure of how well we are performing to the following ideals:



Have Fun

Play to (and include) all levels in Strummers' Song Selections

Highlight Skill Players

Coach Beginners

Perform Well for Audiences

Grow Group in Size and Performance Skills

In the 4 years since 2011 we have trained 28 of the 60+ present members from beginner status; We have performed at major venues to rave reviews; We have cultivated an awareness of good music; and we've involved and encouraged a great majority of the band to perform in small groups to highlight the members' skills at singing, playing, and expression of music.

But, in my view, the most important attribute of the Delta Strummers is the legitimate joy of performance of our music to each other. The group's support for members who risk getting up in rehearsal and "auditioning" new songs and skills is amazing. The applause from within as we close off a group number with a big ending or incorporate a solo breakout is the true value of the group. The fact that our practices are as much fun (and hard work) as they are, carries over to our performances in the community.

Now you know a secret why Tuesday night is a night that carries me for the rest of the week.

*" I listened, motionless and still; And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore, long after it was heard no more."*

William Wordsworth

Ernie

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Chairman's Message

by John Davelaar

As we conclude the third quarter of 2015, and consider our accomplishments, which include the performance at the El Campinal Theater, concerts at Knightsen School, Cortona



Park, also the Summerset Orchards Grand Opening. We now look forward to additional performances which include: Quail Lodge, on November 11th, Commons at Dallas Ranch on October 28th, Garin School on December 16th, and again at Cortona Park on December 17th.

But wait, there's more. . . .

We are also having great success with small "break-out" groups from within the band, which provide even more opportunity for our members to perform, while expanding their musical experience and abilities. We currently have the "Back Row Bunch", the "Garage Band", Noni Lozier's Hawaiian Group, also Fritz and Joan Dueming's "Rivertown Uke Group", and other small groups forming for special events, such as those who recently performed at the Lions Center for the Visually Impaired in September. It's not uncommon for our board members to be asked by various groups or individuals if there is a "small" group of players who could perform at various venues or functions. Not every venue will hold sixty players.

If you haven't done so, it's time to reach out, get connected. . . .

These "small group" performances are not identified as "The Delta Strummers", but as groups with their own "Name" identity which may include players who also belong to the Delta Strummers. So, if you are interested in joining a small group, or would like to start a small group, consider taking the opportunity to do so. This will give you a chance to have a closer connection with your bandmates, and expedite your skill as a ukulele player.

Even more connected. . . .

We had a terrific Summer Picnic in August, orchestrated by Patti Leek and her committee. In addition, Deb Grainger and Ernie Macintyre have formed a committee to plan for this year's Holiday Party. So, if you would like to be involved in the process, please let them know.

Much, much more connected. . . .

Finally, as we are nearing the end of 2015, it will soon be time to consider elections for the 2016 Delta Strummers Board of Directors. If you are interested in being a candidate for the Board, please contact a current board member, and let them know of your interest.

And. . . . keep strumm'en,
John

Ray Abeyta, Vice Chairman

Keep practicing

The May concert at El Campanil Theatre was a huge success for all of us. I heard lots of positive comments from people who attended. Personally, I felt every number was done really well, whether it was the whole band or small groups.



Unfortunately, Don Brumfield has moved away. Don added much to our music with his picking. We somehow need to fill the gap.

I'm sure we can take up the slack and maintain our quality of music by practicing. With Don leaving, new opportunities are there for those who want to step up a level.

Practice! Practice! Practice!

Ray

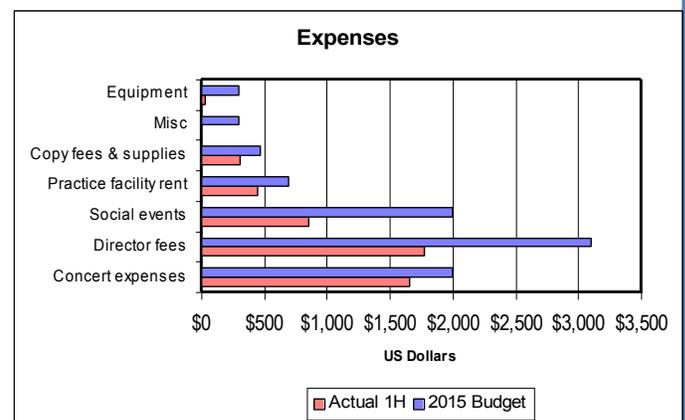
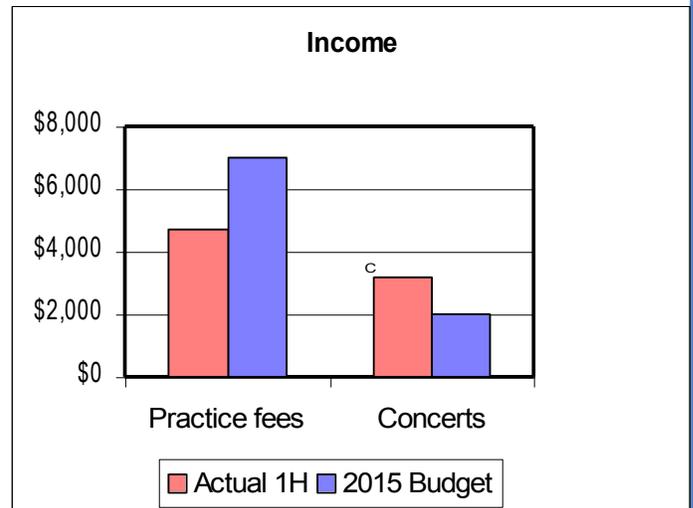
Treasurer's Report

By Fred Kamp

The first half of 2015 was a financial success as well as an entertainment success.

Our "Ukulele Uprising" performance at El Campanil Theatre produced outstanding results. People actually paid \$15 to see us, of course this included our friends and family, amounting to 377 curious folks. The total revenue was \$5,655.00, an amazing feat. El Campanil took \$2,499.00 for rent, box office, production support and ticket fees, leaving us \$3,156.00. Our expenses (for risers, programs, posters and support) were \$1,655.35, giving us a profit of \$1,500.65. Kudos to everyone!

The summer picnic was another success. In addition to great music provided by our own cast of talented performers, the cost came in under budget. This was the result of the efforts Patti Leek and the Picnic Committee. The result was an out of pocket cost of \$852.04 or \$14.69 per head for 58 members and guests.



In Memoriam

It was with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of Dorothy McKellar Pinther on Sunday, August 2, 2015.

Dorothy and husband Ward were founder members of the Delta Strummers. She continued to be active in the Band until her illness, and organized a number of events such as group attendance at the Funstrummers annual Play Day in Modesto, performances for the Byron Delta Lions Club, and the Lions Center for the Visually Impaired.

Dorothy was a good friend to a number of our members, and is missed by many.

Delta Strummers on the web

Our web site functions as a communication tool, both to the band and to the external community.

In addition to news and links to numerous ukulele-related resources, the site hosts our Song Book, and our photo gallery. The web server also hosts our member mailing list.

Please take some time to explore the web site; You might be surprised at what you'll find.

Strong Medicine

By Chuck Cannon, Secretary

You may find yourself singing along with the Delta Strummers, thinking that your voice sounds just fine, but you seriously question the sounds from the person sitting next to you. Well, the truth is that our impressions of musical voices can be quite deceiving.



First of all, the way we hear ourselves is quite different than how others hear us. The truth is that 'others' hear us correctly, and we hear our own selves in a distorted manner. This becomes evident the first time we listen to a recording of our voice. As we speak, (or sing), the sound not only travels to our ears through the air, but also spreads through our skull bones, making the sound appear lower than it is. In my head, I sound soooo much like Elvis, that it is astonishing. But a quick look at the disapproving glances from those sitting near me tell me I am mistaken.

Other things happen as well. As we get older we lose the ability to hear high pitched noises. This is referred to medically as presbycusis, and can begin as early as 18 years old! Many of us who are not fond of 'heavy metal' music, will at least have to admit that we are probably not sensing the same full musical experience as teen age fans of the music [sic].

And then there is amusia, a condition that affects one person in twenty. Amusia is commonly referred to as tone deafness. It is characterized by the inability to distinguish pitch, especially when two notes are close together. An amusic person cannot distinguish when they are singing 'off-key'. Hmmm, if the condition affects about one in twenty, and there are nearly sixty people in our group, well, you do the math.

There are some interesting websites that will allow you to test yourself for presbycusis or amusia. Not only is it fun, but it can be enlightening as well. I took the tests, and may someday reveal the results. You

may want to try them out as well. Here they are:

What is the highest pitch you can hear:

<http://www.noiseaddicts.com/2009/03/can-you-hear-this-hearing-test/>

(Be aware that some computer speakers and ear-phones may not be able to reproduce some of the higher pitched sounds.)

This is a test for tone deafness:

<http://tonedeafest.com/>

Fun, huh? Remember, if you have any of the above-described conditions, it does not mean that you are suffering from anything; It means that those sitting around you are suffering!

Chuck

The ubiquitous ukulele

By Tom Jones

A number of our Delta Strummers band members are also active RVer's (Chris and I have been RVer's since the mid 80's). In discussion with other RVer's, the question comes up about the ideal instrument to take along. Personally, I've tried packing a guitar, banjo, and keyboard, but all of these take up a lot of storage space, and are too bulky to play in the RV.



Several years ago, having "discovered" the ukulele through the Delta Strummers, the answer became obvious; The ukulele takes up little storage space and can be easily played on board. It also makes it easy to practice songs from our playlist while on the road.

As we travel the country, I've been able to play with a number of ukulele clubs. Most clubs welcome visitors.

Some of our members perform &/or arrange sing-alongs in campgrounds.

Tom

Questions For The Board

If you have a question or issue you feel needs to be raised with the entire Board, we make time available to discuss it.

The preferred way is to document your question or issue, and submit it to our Secretary, Chuck Cannon. If you need to address the issue in person with the Board, we 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.

Music Selection

We're sometimes asked who makes the decision to include or exclude a song, and what's 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 need to 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 2015, the Music Committee is comprised of Chuck Cannon, Wally Coffman, Bob Leek, Patti Leek, Mary Ritner, and our Music Director, Ernie Macintyre.

When a practice list is created for upcoming perfor-

mances, lead sheets for all the songs are reviewed, played and sung, 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 prior 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 gets 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 leaves a lot to be desired. Tom

Nominating Committee - 2016 Board

The Board will soon charter a Nominating Committee to come up with a slate of officers for 2016. 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 2016, please seek out one of the Nominating Committee members or a current Board member.

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

Editor's quote from the olde country.

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.
From the 1967 poem 'In Passing' by Brian Harris.

Delta Strummers Newswire

Delta Strummers Fall/Winter 2015 Performances (*updated 10/9/2015*)

October 28, 2015 (2:00pm): The Commons at Dallas Ranch, Antioch.

November 11, 2015 (1:00pm): Quail Lodge, Antioch.

December 9, 2015 (5:00pm): Summerset III (with the Summerset Singers).

December 10, 2015 (7:00pm): Summerset IV (with the Summerset Singers).

December 13, 2015 (3:00pm): El Campanil Theatre, Antioch (with the Summerset Singers).

December 16, 2015 (9:00am): Garin School, Brentwood.

December 16, 2015 (2:30pm): Brookdale Living (Cortona Park), Brentwood.

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

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.

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 Jerry or Sue Wiebe. Badges are sold at our cost.

Delta Strummers Polo shirts

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

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 2015 Board

Chairman Emeritus. Ward Pinther founded The Delta Strummers together with his wife Dorothy.



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.



Vice Chairman. 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.



Treasurer. Fred Kamp loves all kinds of music from opera to pop (omitting rap). He started playing the ukulele in college and singing with his fraternity brothers but never followed through until he joined the Delta Strummers in 2013. It has added another dimension to his joy of music.



Secretary. Chuck Cannon remembers being 'totally blown away', the first time he heard the Delta Strummers play. "I sat in the audience, not only enjoying the music, but also



carefully studying the hand movements of the performers as they strummed and formed chords." Chuck knew immediately that this was something he really wanted to do. That same evening he called Ernie, signed up for the beginner class, and has been happily strumming ever since. The Tuesday evening classes have become an important part of his social life.

Board member. Tom Jones joined the Delta Strummers in the middle of 2011, having never previously played a stringed instrument. He had sung a capella since he was a child, but playing the ukulele finally gave him the opportunity to accompany himself.



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

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.

