

The Delta Strummers

Fall 2018 Newsletter



message from our Maestro ...

I am constantly surprised and motivated by the positive results of the combination of new players and senior members of the Band. As the Band continues to grow, we seem to delight in welcoming our new members and helping them grow in their playing skills. The Band not only continues to grow in musical skill, but continues to grow in fellowship and all-around enjoyment of both our music and each other.

I also personally learn a lot from instructing our new players and riding herd on our Tuesday rehearsals. Our music has become much more difficult and performance capable over the past 3 years and this year the improved skill level is very evident in our rehearsals. This skill level improvement is due to extra instruction, small group activity, and personal practice. Many of you also make

suggestions and contribute to our “rev changes” as we tackle each piece. I constantly remind myself that instructing others requires that you are capable of not only demonstrating a riff or technique, but also understanding how to teach it for all skill levels.

I actually learn from many of you and that improves my skills as well. Our vocal soloists constantly keep me apprised of the correct key to perform our songs, our instrumental soloists constantly remind me of improved chording and rhythm changes, our newest members remind me that the melody lines on some of our songs are not well known and ask to perform it for them until it's locked into their “song bank”. The “open mic” sessions are a joy and have contributed to numerous new performance pieces.

So, all in all, the Strummers continue to grow in skill, fellowship, and numbers. The end result is a musical gift to all of us every Tuesday evening and this will directly translate into a musical gift to very appreciative and surprised audiences at our concerts in December and June.



JUST THINKEACH OF YOU ARE NOW PLAYING AND ARE PART OF A MAJOR LEAGUE BAND THAT MAKES A MIGHTY MUSICAL STATEMENT... YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

~ Ernie



WHY I PLAY

by **Fred Kamp**, Chairman

The other day I was thinking about why I get so much pleasure out of music. This drove me to think how it may have happened.

My first experience was singing during church services. I can't really say I enjoyed it since the composers were ancient and I couldn't connect with the words, however my dad was standing next to me, so I sang. My dad loved to sing and, fortunately, liked to listen to the Texico Theater, on the radio Sunday nights (yes, you youngsters, the RADIO). Gordon McRae and a female guest would sing songs from Broadway musicals. I loved the music and the lyrics.

Sometime around sixth grade my mother wanted me to play an instrument. I volunteered that I wanted to play a trombone like my dad did and could use his old trombone so she didn't have to rent or buy one. That didn't matter, as she had already made up her mind that I would learn to play the Hawaiian guitar. Well, I had never seen a Hawaiian guitar until my first lesson. It did not go well. The more lessons I had the more I hated it. Two years later, when the lessons ended, I had learned nothing but, was free of that cursed instrument.

High school provided me with an opportunity that didn't involve an instrument other than my voice. I joined the mixed choir and sang bass for three years. I loved the music and the fellowship it provided. My best friend sat next to me and together we massacred many of the songs in the repertory.

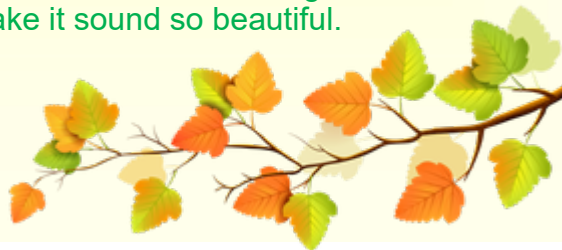
College presented me with numerous musical opportunities. I was working a part-time

job where my boss introduced me to opera. He insisted I see the "perfect opera," Aida. It was being performed at the Cincinnati Zoo that summer. I paid for the ticket with my hard earned money and even bought a libretto. The opera was transforming. The music was thrilling, the singers magnificent, the parade of zoo animals across the stage during the Triumphant March was surprising, the ballet was delightful and the story heart wrenching. I was hooked! Since then I have seen about thirty operas live, many more on TV and heard hundreds of Metropolitan Opera performances on the radio.

College also got me started playing an instrument again. The first was a tenor banjo that I played during nightly singing sessions around the piano at my fraternity before dinner. We had a mandolin player and various pianists, too. The banjo was not a good fit for all songs so I invested in a ukulele. The uke was an easier instrument to play and with a few chords I could play most of the songs the guys were singing. I made a case for the uke and took it with me as I shuttled between the university and my co-op job.

Fast forward to five years ago when John Davelaar found out I had a ukulele. "Why don't you join my band, the Delta Strummers?" he said. As you know John is quite a salesman and soon I was attending Ernie's classes. My old ukulele was soon replaced with the Kala tenor travel uke that I now play. I bought a banjouke two years ago to supplement the variety of music I play. I wonder if the banjouke is a replacement for my old tenor banjo?

So, to get back to my original question of why I get so much pleasure out of music. The answer is multifaceted. First, for me, is participating in the band to make beautiful music that I cannot do alone. Second is the emotion the music creates in me that lasts long after the music stops. Third is the appreciation of the talent that created the music and the gifted musicians and singers that contribute to make it sound so beautiful.





BUILDING A FOUNDATION WITH MUSIC

by **Mary Jane Dukellis**, Vice Chairman

Thanksgiving and Christmas are just around the corner. Holidays are family happy times. We build memories with our loved ones. Especially fun is being able to surprise our grandchildren with new music.

Disney songs are timeless. They can be played year after year. Song books and sheet music can be found for beginners and every other level.

What are some of the Disney classics you can share with your family?

- ♦ **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**
- ♦ **BIBBIDI-BOBBIDI-BOO**
- ♦ **CHIM CHIM CHER-EE**
- ♦ **HEIGH-HO**
- ♦ **IT'S A SMALL WORLD**
- ♦ **SOME DAY MY PRINCE WILL COME**
- ♦ **SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS**
- ♦ **WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR**
- ♦ **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

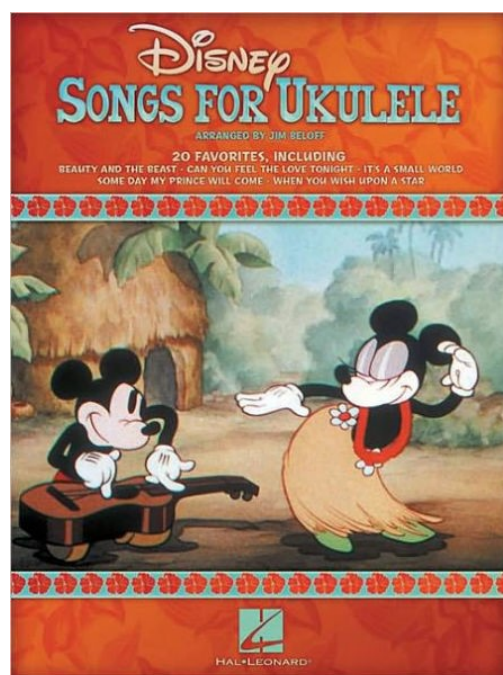
We build memories..... when my granddaughter was five she danced to many songs. Her favorite was **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**. I picked up an easy version of this song and played while she danced. The joy in my heart when I recall how gleeful she was is overwhelming.

Also at five years of age her favorite word was "again." I played and she danced.

Each time I played it again, it was like she heard it for the first time. Oh, the enthusiasm in children.

This song created a memory foundation for us. Now that she is a Senior at UC San Diego, when she comes home for the holidays, guess what song is always on the menu? We will always share music together.

Disney was our choice for songs. There is a music book for ukuleles called Disney Songs for Ukulele by Jim Beloff.





LEADER OF THE BAND
by **Rich Alves**, Treasurer

On Tuesday, April 17, 2018, our beloved Maestro, Ernie chose to abandon the Strummers, run off in his new RV with Dana, slog down a bunch of chardonnay, and relax for a few days. I was one of three, along with Fred Kamp and Chuck Cannon, who were chosen to do our best to replace him at the evening practice. It was an interesting experience. I thought I would share it in case you are ever approached to fill in for one of Maestro's "Chardonnays Forays."

- First, I really enjoyed the experience.
- Second, I'm a bit embarrassed about all of my screw-ups.
- Third, the band really got behind me and made it all work. What a great group!

What was it like?

I looked out at the band and 34 pairs of eyes were looking right back at me – right between my eyeballs – and expecting me to do something. I had never before experienced such attention from others!

I think we did pretty well on the first piece, **SAN FRANCISCO BAY BLUES**. It sounded completely different up front when compared to sitting in the band. The music jumped right out and surrounded me totally. It was a nice moment.

As we went through my "hour," the challenges included not knowing the intros well enough to get the group started together, or the endings to close them together. I think we did pretty well with the "in betweens." Thank you Andy, Vinnie, and Lucy for your help.

Some apologies:

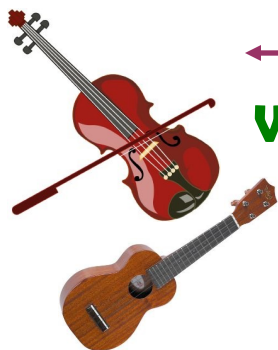
Will, did I thank you for your **FREIGHT TRAIN** harmonica solo? I forgot to get you up to the mic. However, you did it incredibly well.

Chuck, we never got possession of the "podium" cord. Thanks for doing your solo "unattached."

Everyone else I'm forgetting, thank you for your understanding and your help.

Many thanks to everyone who did such a **FANTASTIC** job helping this old guy enjoy sitting up front jamming with you, for a special hour on a special evening.

Why don't ukulele players play hide and seek?
Because no one would look for them.



What's the difference between a fiddle and a violin?

Who cares? Neither one is a ukulele!



**THOSE OTHER INSTRUMENTS,
WHO PLAYS THEM & WHY**
by **Sue Wiebe**, Board Secretary

While pondering what the topic of my Delta Strummers' Newsletter article would be this fall edition, I mentioned to my husband that I was having trouble with a subject. Jerry suggested I interview players of unique instruments that play in our band. That sounded like a great idea and I picked up my phone to start making calls.

My first call was to **Deb Grainger**. Not only does Deb have a beautiful singing voice, play ukulele, and serve as the Strummers' Newsletter editor, she plays a unique instrument, the mountain dulcimer.

Deb was first exposed to the dulcimer while visiting her folks in Arkansas in 2009. She attended a performance at the Ozark Folk Center where a performer played this lovely instrument on her lap. Deb was intrigued by the wonderful sound and visited a local shop and played one herself. She eventually purchased her first dulcimer in 2010. She now owns six dulcimers, including one made of cardboard with chromatic fretting, plus her uke, banjulele, two guitars, one mandolin and two autoharps.

Deb is pretty much self-taught. She found a book on how to play the dulcimer on a subsequent trip to Arkansas. Inside the book she found a flyer advertising dulcimer workshops all over the country. She was delighted to find a workshop listed that was going to be held in the Santa Cruz Mountains right after her return to California. She signed up, took a few sessions on strumming and picking and was hooked.

Although heart-shaped sound holes are traditional, Deb's favorite dulcimer has a sun, moon and stars, and a slightly radiused finger-board; a custom-made retirement gift ..

As many of you know, **Andy Gnall** has quite a collection of instruments. I had planned to talk to him about his mandolin, however, I found his story and collection of instruments to be fascinating, so here goes.

Andy inventoried his instrument stable and sent me this list: 30 ukuleles: 2 Baritone, 1 Bass, 7 Concert, 7 Soprano, 13 Tenor (124 strings). 12 Guitars (78 strings), plus 1 Violin, 2 Mandolins, 1 Merlin Banjo (29 strings). That's 47 instruments and 231 strings! -

Keep reading—more to come: piano, keyboard, tin whistle, 7 harmonicas, Hawaiian nose flute, and a djembe.

I had to look up djembe.

A djembe is a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum played with bare hands, originally from West Africa. According to the Bambara people in Mali, the name of the djembe comes from the saying "Anke djé, anke bé" which translates to "everyone gather together in peace" and defines the drum's purpose.



A Hawaiian nose flute is just what you think it is... a flute you play with your nose.

Andy said his interest in music started way back when he and his neighborhood friends would pretend to play instruments while listening to a Victrola. One little kid had a toy saxophone and there were other toy instruments. Andy was always drawn to the stringed instruments, primarily guitars.

His first guitar was purchased while in the Navy from a sailor who was moving on to a new base. Andy has pretty much taught himself to play but gives credit to late night jam sessions on the beaches of Hawaii during his Navy stint. There were many varied styles and sounds. He learned strumming, picking, other techniques from his fellow sailors.

Andy honed his ability further by attending parties with his musical Navy buddies. He said he'd go with his guitar, a gallon of wine, and his baby, Leilani in her carrier. Andy's wife, Carla worked nights and Andy continued to take Leilani along. Through her young years she often fell asleep to rock 'n roll. For one of his recent birthdays, Leilani made a CD of all the music she remembered hearing during these jam sessions. This is a treasured gift for Andy.

Andy left home right after high school and gained his musical abilities after he was gone. It

wasn't until his dad's 75th birthday party that his family discovered he played guitar. He pulled a chair up in front of his dad and played for him. The whole family was astonished.



Andy indicated he always loved the sound of the violin. He only learned after his dad had died that he had once played the violin. Andy put two and two together and figured out that the item he rode around the attic as a stick pony was his dad's violin. It's obvious Andy gets his musical talent from his dad. He remembers hours playing and singing while his dad played the harmonica.

Andy always has ukuleles with him, even when he goes to the store with Carla. He related a story about being at a mall and waiting while Carla shopped. Of course, he had his uke with him, but the security guard said he couldn't play inside and "kicked him to the curb" where he played. A family approached from the parking lot and told him they had just moved to California from Hawaii and they were homesick. Best part of the day for them was hearing Andy play.

One more story - recently Andy and Carla stopped in Reno on their way to a Celebration of Life in Idaho. Carla took off for the buffet while Andy went up to the room. Andy attempted to find the buffet and got lost. Of course, he had his uke with him and a man at a bar that he passed asked him what it was. He told him it was a ukulele, and would he like to hear something? The man said, "yes," and Andy played **HERE COMES THE DAY** for him. Andy asked if he knew where the buffet was and the man pointed it out. Unknown to Andy, the man had followed him to the restaurant and picked up the bill for Andy and Carla's dinner. He said it was the least he could do for the pleasure of Andy's company and for his music.

Dave Stoeffler is another Strummer with a collection of instruments. He has, of course, ukuleles along with a banjo, a gut bucket, Jew's harp, tambourine, train whistle, spoons, and sleigh bells. We talked mostly about the Jew's Harp.

Here's a definition: Jew's Harp: NOUN, a small lyre-shaped musical instrument held between the teeth and struck with a finger. It can produce only one note, but harmonics are sounded by the player altering the shape of the mouth cavity.



Dave told me he has been playing the Jew's Harp for over 50 years. He was first introduced to it while working at a facility for emotionally disturbed children in Mendocino County's Anderson Valley. He worked as a counselor and eventually became the Resident Director.

One of the other employees was a "tall, cowboy-type guy with a big head and good-sized mouth." He played the Jew's Harp very well and taught Dave how to play. They played music for the kids and Dave often played with other people playing country western and blue grass music. Dave and his wife, Diana travel by RV and Dave enjoys joining jam sessions around camp fires. He mentioned the Jew's Harp is much more portable than a piano. Most of Dave's Jew's Harp playing takes place with the break-out band, The Garage Band. The band consists of Dave, Will Taylor, Lesley Dinette, Mary Jane Dukellis, Chuck Cannon, Norm Soucy, and Nelda Devine. The Garage Band plays bluegrass, country western, and folksy music.

Dave says his fondest memory of playing the Jew's harp was at the El Campanil Theater with the Garage Band in a breakout performance of **MOUNTAIN DEW**.



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UKULELES IN THE MOVIES by Rod Flores, Member

As ukulele lovers, we respect the instrument's popularity and usage in different musical genres. In addition, I also enjoy hearing the uke's sweet sound when used on those mindless radio/television commercials. Last time, I wrote a little about the ukulele's evolution; from players such as Don Ho, Arthur Godfrey and Tiny Tim to the famous modern-day guitarists Eric Clapton, George Harrison and Pete Townshend.

This time, I thought I would do an investigation on how ukes have been used in motion pictures. There is valuable, albeit limited information on the internet, however what is documented is a pretty good snapshot of the history of the ukulele in film.

Here is some of what I found:

- In the 1966 classic movie, **THE GLASS BOTTOM BOAT**, Doris Day and Arthur Godfrey sing and he plays the ukulele for two complete songs: **QUE SERA, SERA** and **THE GLASS BOTTOM BOAT**. This is an early color film.
- In **THE JERK** Steve Martin "air-uked" during the scene in which he and Bernadette Peters sang **TONIGHT YOU BELONG TO ME**. The song was actually played by the great uke artist, Lyle Ritz. The actor confessed to accidentally stepping on and crushing the uke when he stood up at the end of the scene. It is rumored that it was a classic Martin ukulele. Yikes!

- There's a scene in the biopic **RAY** about Ray Charles where an ukulele player plays **ANYTIME** in the back of the bus.
- There is a ukulele player in Warren Beatty's **REDS**.
- In **MONKEY BUSINESS** Groucho Marx plays a uke for a few moments in his cabin aboard the ship.
- Ukulele player, Zarha Lowzley has a scene playing her uke in **TRAINSPOTTING 2**.
- George Formby was an English actor, singer-songwriter and comedian who became known to a worldwide audience through his films of the 1930s and 1940s. On stage, screen and record he sang light, comical songs, usually playing the ukulele or banjolele, and became the UK's highest-paid entertainer.
- Adam Sandler plays **I WANNA GROW OLD WITH YOU** in **THE WEDDING SINGER**.
- Tom Hanks performs **THE COWBOY SONG** in the movie **JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO**.
- Even the great Buster Keaton had some ukulele scenes in his movies.
- **GO FOR BROKE**, the 1951 movie about Japanese-American GIs fighting in Europe in WWII, featured a lot of uke playing. One Nisei soldier carried his uke throughout the war.
- The two popular movies where the actors portrayed roles of ukulele players featured Marilyn Monroe in **SOME LIKE IT HOT**, and Mia Farrow in **THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO**.
- The ukulele was even used as a prop in the movie **SEABISCUIT** where it hung on the wall in William H. Macy's office. (Who keeps track of that statistic?)

This brief review shows that the ukulele has had a long history and some unforgettable moments on the silver screen. Whether it was in a short scene or a cameo, the ukulele always demonstrated its versatility. It is an amazing instrument and as ukulele lovers we're happy for its success.

Delta Strummers Newswire

Scheduled Performances

2018

December 3, 2018: Almond Grove Elementary School

December 13, 2018: Garin Elementary School

December 14, 2018: Summerset IV Christmas Concert

2019

June 2, 2019: El Campanil Theater, Antioch

More details and other seasonal performance dates/times will be announced in due course.

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.

Where do I go for...?

We have a new online source for our Hawaiian clothing—**Aloha Outlet**. Ordering information is on our web site under **Resources/Clothing**. Please be aware that there are different ordering links for men's and ladies' items.

Many members of the Delta Strummers have had a long standing affiliation with **Lamorinda Music** in Lafayette. They have the largest selection of ukuleles in stock of any music store within drivable distance. They also are a great source for straps, cases, stands, music and just about anything else you may need or want. Store information is on our web site under **Resources/Ukulele Stores**.

Alternative ladies' performance attire

In response to member requests, the Board approved the wearing of a dress or muumuu in place of black pants. Links to the approved designs are on our web site under **Resources/Clothing**.

Delta Strummers name badges

Delta Strummers name 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 needing a badge, please contact Jerry or Sue Wiebe. Let them know how you want your name(s) spelled.

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.

Delta Strummers on YouTube

We have a number of videos from our past performances on *YouTube*. If your friends or relatives have video of us performing, please encourage them to either upload them to *YouTube* or send them to Tom Jones.

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, Sue Wiebe. 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.

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. 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 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, Ernie.

Following audition, music is selected for inclusion in upcoming practice lists by a Music Committee.

When a practice list is created for upcoming performances, 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, and some prior music offerings have not yet come out the other end; specifically, music submitted in different formats, or which is not readily playable, 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 Jones, Past Chairman/Advisor

2019 Delta Strummers Board of Directors

The current Board chartered a Nominating Committee to come up with a slate of officers to serve on the 2019 Board. Nominations will be presented at an upcoming Delta Strummers' General Meeting (usually held concurrent with one of our November practices), and the membership will be asked to vote on the nominations.

Board Meetings

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

