

The Delta Strummers

SPRING 2019 Newsletter



THE “VALUE AND REWARDS” OF UKULELE TRAINING

Recently, the Strummers have undertaken ukulele music training of 3rd and 4th grade students at Garin Elementary School in Brentwood. We are fortunate to have an extremely supportive Strummer Band and have elected to purchase 60 ukuleles and engage in music training with our local elementary students.

We believe that music is an important life-skill and realize that elementary school music programs have been sadly minimized by our Local and State School Boards. The Strummers elected to provide the ukuleles, music stands, training materials, and hands-on trainers to our local Garin Elementary School, with the solid support, partnership, and encouragement of the Garin administrators and staff.

The program kicked off in January with the Garin Administration and involves 60 students, 3-4 credentialed teachers, and 12 Strummer trainers, meeting every Tuesday after school.

THE RESULTS ARE AMAZING!

The students are now fully playing 5 songs (arranged and coached by the Strummers) and are preparing to perform for their peers and parents in

late May. The teaching methods are similar to those that we use to train our beginner Strummer players. The kids are a quick study and the entire effort has been met with great enthusiasm and joy by the kids, the administrators, and the trainers.

SO HERE ARE THE “VALUE AND REWARDS”

- ♦ We're giving 60 kids a basic skill in playing an instrument which they can use for the rest of their lives.
- ♦ We're introducing them to group singing and basic music skills.
- ♦ We're giving them self confidence and self esteem with their new found skills.
- ♦ The Administration of Garin Elementary has stepped up and is also enjoying the “value and rewards” of a successful music program aimed at their 3rd and 4th graders.

BUT THAT’S NOT ALL...

- ♦ The biggest “value and reward” to date is watching the joy and pride of the Strummer Trainers as they work with the kids and see the music light bulbs go on.
- ♦ The realization that we are making a successful life-skill investment in the kids, gives us the biggest reward of all.
- ♦ It may take a while, but my bet is that 10 years from now, many of these kids will use this solid music base to help them find further success in school and beyond.

**Congratulations to The Delta Strummers
for sponsoring the Training
and especially to the Trainers..**

Just realize..

the reward for doing what we do.. is free!

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

~ *Ernie*



Brilliant minds do think alike! Timely referencing of a handy tool by two board members...



EXPLORING YOUTUBE FOR BUILDING UKULELE SKILLS

by **Wally Coffman**, Chairman

Let me start by saying, that you can find unlimited information on YouTube. Looking for strumming patterns, picking patterns, specific songs for ukulele or maybe a little music theory. It's all there and quite unbelievable what's available under "ukulele." You can access through a smart phone, computer or a smart TV YouTube application. For those of you that are already YouTube fanatics, you have my permission to skip to the end – where it says, Good Luck!

Take a look at a few favorites; Cynthia Lin, Ukulele Mike (Michael Lynch), The Ukulele Teacher (the energetic British guy), Aldrine Guerrero (Ukulele Underground), Stu Fuchs (Ukulele Zen), and Terry Carter (Uke Like the Pros). A word of caution, they, won't give you everything. It's like passing along a "family" cooking recipe, you always leave out a key ingredient – it's mandatory! What they really want is for you to subscribe and send them money – don't do it! You'll learn something without all the parts, which will be helpful in building ukulele skills. I have found Cynthia Lin to be very good. She gives you more than most. Her tutorials move at a reasonable speed and you can download her complete song lead sheets free.

So, turn on that smart TV, go to the YouTube app, and type in your search. Include the word ukulele as part of the search to filter out all the unwanted information for other instruments. Grab your uke, and make sure it's tuned (that's what the British guy says). Type in ukulele play along and kick back and enjoy. Let me warn you; this could go on for hours. So bring along that favorite glass of wine. It won't make you play better, but you'll feel better. A final thought, if you have time for all this, you may need more to do.

Good Luck!



Using YouTube

by **Lucy Meis**, Board Secretary

I use my laptop and SmartTV to access videos on YouTube. I search for videos of the original artist singing the song. This helps me learn the words as well as the beat. In the comforts of my home, I can develop my voice -- sing as loud as I want.

I also search YouTube for tutorials and lessons on strumming, finger-picking, and other patterns for playing the song. For example, I found a tutorial video by Cynthia Lin on **CAN'T HELP FALLING IN LOVE**. This tutorial helped me to learn a fingerpicking pattern I now use to play this song.

I am learning how to incorporate a chucking strumming pattern in a song. With chucking, you mute the strings to create a percussion sound. I found a specific tutorial video by Cynthia Lin on a strumming and chucking, **THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT**, a song on our playlist.

YouTube has songs performed by the Delta Strummers at prior concerts. I encourage new members to watch the videos and practice the songs along with the video.



FESTIVALS, BUILDERS & MORE

by **Rod Flores**, Vice-Chairman



While we prepare for our show on June 2nd at El Campanil, the ukulele music scene is already active in 2019. As we go to print on this newsletter, the following festivals are over; Aloha Music Camp in Kauai, Hawaii; Kernville's Ukulele Blues and Harp; Ukulele Club of Santa Cruz hosted "Smoldering Uke VIII" in Carmel Valley; Ukiah Uke Festival at Mendocino College and Ukulele Band Camp in Corbett, Oregon.

However, in the next several months, there are other scheduled festivals and musical acts worth checking; The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain appeared at the Mondavi Center (April 2nd) and Gallo Center (April 7th); Uke Ohana Molokai April 5-9 in Kaunakakai Molokai, Hawaii; The Northern

California Ukulele Festival will appear April 28 at James Logan High School in Union City, the Reno Ukulele Festival May 1-4 in Reno Nevada and the Los Angeles International Ukulele Festival in Torrance on September 28.

Searching through the internet, there are many other popular ukulele festivals, (nationally and international-ly). They even have ukulele cruises. Ukulele festivals are popular and provide opportunities to learn, play and bond with other ukulele enthusiasts.

If your thing is buying (or just window shopping) ukuleles, visit the island of Oahu, where the world's best ukuleles manufacturers are based. The four preeminent makers: Kamaka, Kanile'a, Ko'olau, and KoAloha are open to the public and relatively close to each other. Between the four companies, you'll find a ukulele in any style, from the most traditional bell-shaped soprano to an unusual hand-carved tenor archtop, with prices ranging from \$100 to more than \$10,000.

Kamaka is the oldest uke company, established in 1916 when the late Samuel Kaiialilii Kamaka began making ukuleles and guitars in the basement workshop of his Honolulu home. By the mid-1920s, Kamaka had set up a shop outside of his home, at which, among many other things, he invented the pineapple body that is today a standard alternative to the traditional bell shape. After the elder Kamaka died in 1953, Samuel Jr. took over. These days, the 29-employee company makes about 3,000 instruments per year, with stock models ranging from \$895 to \$2,495.

Kanile 'a is headquartered in Kaneohe. It's a family-based company, led by Joe Souza and his wife Kristen. They build about 1,400 ukuleles per year, that range in price from \$700 to \$3,000. The company's budget ukuleles, imported under the Islander name, cost between \$100 and \$600.

Ko'olau, situated between the Ko'olau and Waianae Mountains is presided by luthier John Kitakis and his sons, Noa and Andrew. In the mid-1990s, the clan started the Ko'olau Guitar and Ukulele company, with an emphasis on high-end instruments. In 2005 Ko'olau introduced its Pono line of affordable, all-solid-wood ukuleles and guitars, designed in Hawaii and built in Indonesia. Ko'olau makes between 300 and 400 per year, starting at \$1,600.

KoAloha is a relatively new manufacturer based in Honolulu. Established in the mid-1990s, started by Alvin "Pops" Okami, an inventor and musician. In the early 1990s, Okami made tiny playable ukuleles before moving on to full-size ones. KoAloha is a portmanteau of the words koa and aloha, and true to its name, the company makes predominant use of koa in the construction of its instruments. The ukes in KoAloha's new Naupaka line utilize a unique combination of koa and mango wood throughout their entire bodies—tops, sides, and backs. There's a KoAloha uke for every budget, with an Indonesian-made entry line (KoAlana) and Thailand-made mid-level line (KoAloha Opio) supplementing its flagship Hawaiian-made line. Prices for standard sopranos in these lines range from \$175 to \$800, but instruments produced in the company's custom shop—Red Label (non-commissioned) and Black Label—can go for as much as \$4,000.



DASHED HOPES AND EMPTY BOTTLES DREAMS

by **Rich Alves**, Treasurer



I started writing this piece several months ago. It was all about using the Riffstation Pro app to change the tempo and the key of a music file (mp3), so that you could learn the piece by playing along. I use it all the time and shared the piece with several members of The Office. I was all ready to email it in to Editor Deb, but thought I'd better confirm the link to download the app. Unfortunately, the link produced, "We are sad to announce that Riffstation Pro will no longer be available for download." I still have it on my computer and can try copying it onto a flash drive. Let me know if you're interested.

Moving on, Maestro Ernie has been encouraging us to do a little picking with "In The Mood." I thought I might write a piece on picking patterns. However, I'd need to use some tablature to do so. Hummm, what to do, what to do.

USING TABS FOR FUN AND FANCY

According to Wikipedia,

"**Tablature** (or tabulature, or tab for short) is a form of musical notation indicating instrument fingering rather than musical pitches. **Tablature** is common for fretted stringed instruments"

Such as ukuleles perhaps?

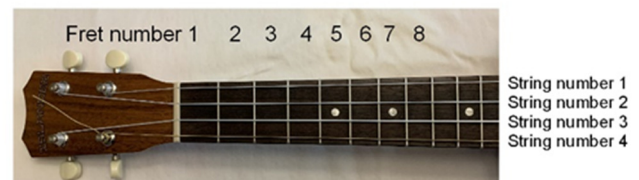
Note that the strings are in the same relative position on the "TAB" as they are on your UKULELE. The numbers in the TAB refer to the fret number on your uke.

You read the TAB from left to right.

A SMALL PART OF EL MAESTRO'S "IN THE MOOD" TAB

A	----	3-----	3-----	3-----	3-----	3-3-		String number 1
E	----	3-----	3-----	3-----	3-----	3-3-		String number 2
C	-/4----	4-----	4-----	4-----	4-----	4-4-		String number 3
G	----							String number 4

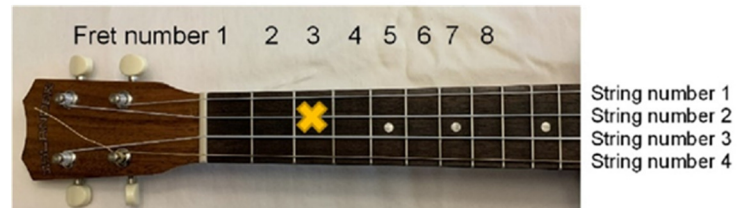
YOUR VERY OWN UKULELE



☞ The first number is a "4" on string number 3. Put your finger on your ukes string number 3 at the fourth fret and pluck string number 3.



☞ The second number is a "3" on string number 2. Put your finger on your ukes string number 2 at the third fret and pluck string number 2.



☞ The third number is a "3" on string number 1. Put your finger on your ukes string number 1 at the third fret and pluck string number 1.



☞ Etc.

☞ Play slowly until you get it right. Then slowly pick up speed.

Is this fun or what! We might be ready to try some picking patterns in the next newsletter.



YOUR BRAIN AND PLAYING IN THE BAND

by **Deb Grainger**, Member & Editor

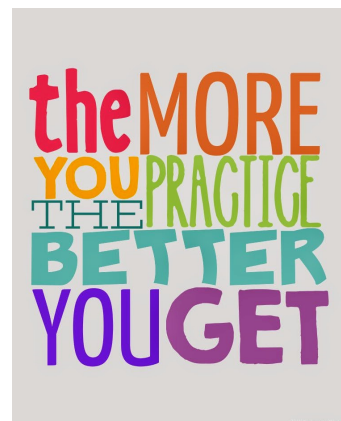
I'm sure you already know that learning to play a musical instrument will enhance verbal memory, spatial reasoning and literacy skills. If you want to firm up your body, head to the gym. If you want to exercise your brain, play an instrument!

Research has shown that music can reduce anxiety, blood pressure, and pain, as well as improve sleep quality, mood, mental alertness, and memory. So it seems to reason that the more you play, the better your brain keeps functioning.

"There are few things that stimulate the brain the way music does," says one Johns Hopkins otolaryngologist.*** If you want to keep your brain engaged throughout the aging process, music is a great tool. It provides a total brain workout. Music is structural, mathematical and architectural. It's based on relationships between one note and the next. You may not be aware of it, but your brain is doing calisthenics when you play and sing at the same time; it has to do a lot of computing to make sense of it all.

Ernie tells us if we just practice for 15 minutes a day our playing will improve. What might happen if we practiced more? If 15 minutes is good, what about 15 minutes twice a day? Bottom line—if you want to play better, you need to practice more than just plunking away from 6:45 to 7:00ish while waiting for Ernie to give us the "Howdy Greeting" on Tuesday nights.

As long as I'm on a roll, let me challenge you again. Have you ever watched yourself in any of the videos that have been posted from our concerts? Are you buried in your music or are you smiling and looking out at the audience once in a while? Scary suggestion—We should all consider putting more effort into memorizing the "go-to" pieces in the band's repertoire. At the very least we should be familiar enough with a percentage of the songs to glance up now and again. Bonus—being familiar and comfortable with a lead sheet will erase the "**scowl of concentration**" seen on many of our faces. Playing ukulele is **FUN** and should look like it. Let's get rid of the scowls!



If you're not playing your uke every day you are missing out on one of the greatest benefits of being a Strummers member.

***Otolaryngologist

Otolaryngology (pronounced oh/toe/lair/in/goll/oh/jee) is the oldest medical specialty in the United States. Otolaryngologists are physicians trained in the medical and surgical management and treatment of patients with diseases and disorders of the ear, nose, throat (ENT), and related structures of the head and neck.



Delta Strummers Newswire

Scheduled Performances

May 11, 2019: Summerset IV Orchards Open House

May 20, 2019: Garin Elementary School Assembly & Evening Parents' Concert

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 Caps

Thanks to Rod Flores, our local polo shirt supplier now has baseball caps available for embroidery with the **Delta Strummers** logo.

Ukulele Magazine

Thanks to Craig Wilson for the introduction to Ukulele Magazine, published in hard copy and digital versions four times a year. In addition to informative articles, the magazine includes various useful tutorials. You can visit online for a peek and subscribe at: <https://store.ukulelemag.com>

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.

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

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, Lucy Meis. 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.



Get To Know Your 2019 Board of Directors

WALLY COFFMAN - CHAIRMAN

It seems like it was just recently that I joined the **Delta Strummers**. I believe the year was 2012. The group was much smaller and met in the ping pong room at the SSIV pavilion. Who could have believed the group would have grown to the present size? Not only has the band gotten larger, the quality of music has been elevated to a much higher level. We have heard the comment numerous times after a performance – “I can’t believe this is the same band.” Everyone is more relaxed and having fun.

I grew up in the Bay Area, did one tour in the US Navy and completed a Bachelor’s Degree at UCSF. Retired from the DuPont Company, as HR Manager at the Antioch site. Moved to Summerset III in 2001.

Being part of the **Delta Strummers** has been significant over the past six years. I found that I’m really addicted to the ukulele both playing it and collecting them. I served as the Board Treasurer in 2016 and am currently serving as Chairman. I recall our early open mic nights, where very few had the courage to stand up before the group. Now, it’s hard to get all the small groups into the allotted time. We have benefited from the new songs and our song book has been greatly expanded. I’m excited about the Garin School program and the upcoming concert schedule for the year.

Happy Strumming!

ROD FLORES - VICE CHAIRMAN

It wasn’t long ago that Tuesday rehearsals were the best part of my week. I used to be a Monday through Friday, 8-5 robot, who commuted on BART two hours per day. Now as a recent retiree from state service, every day is Tuesday, because I can pick up my ukulele at any time or day! I have been with the **Strummers** for six years and they have helped me become a better ukulele player. Over the years, it has been exciting watching the membership evolve into a cohesive and entertaining musical group. It is a pleasure to play with you and a privilege to serve as a board member.

RICH ALVES - TREASURER

He was introduced to the ukulele as a young child, but his interest waned as he grew older. He played a little mid-life crisis guitar, but his interest waned as he grew older. In 2015 he sat in front of a **Strummers** performance and noticed what a fun time the musicians were having. He thought, “Fun time? Count me in!”

LUCY MEIS - BOARD SECRETARY

In 2016, I began strategically planning when to retire from the federal government as a judge and what to do in retirement. I put “play an instrument” and “develop my singing voice” on my plan.

As a teenager, I played the guitar and sang in a church choir. I lost the guitar in a move, and did not have time for the choir in college, law school, and starting a career.

While my daughter was in elementary school, we took piano lessons and played duets, Edelweiss was my favorite. My daughter has the piano and plays on occasion.

While visiting music stores, a small purple, inexpensive ukulele caught my eye. Shortly after I purchased this ukulele and a beginner lesson book, I met a **Delta Strummer** who told me about an upcoming concert at the Summerset Orchards. I thoroughly enjoyed the concert, especially the excitement and talent of the players. I approached Ernie about joining the **Delta Strummers**.

Fast forward, I now have a tenor ukulele and a banjouke, serve on the Board, play with fellow Strummers in small groups, and help teach third and fourth graders how to play the ukulele, an extremely gratifying experience.

My family and friends love the smile, enthusiasm, and energy they see when I strum and sing.

DEB GRAINGER, MEMBER & EDITOR

My family was the kind that sang together in the car on the way to grandma’s or at family gatherings while standing around a piano. Growing up I did the grade school band thing (clarinet) and I took the obligatory piano lessons. I have sung with many groups, secular and non-secular, large and small and have played the dulcimer since 2010. I’ve also dabbled in local theatre work. While at an out-of-state musical event in 2014 I bought a second-hand uke. When I got home I Googled uke groups in our area and discovered the **Delta Strummers**. I made contact, took a few lessons from Maestro Ernie and joined the band at the end of January 2015. My husband, Arlen, joined about five months later. We love the music, the members and the fun and intend to remain actively involved for as long as we are able.

Although not a member of the board, we sure can’t do without him...

ERNIE MACINTYRE - MUSIC DIRECTOR

He has a BSEE from Northwestern and is a retired Semiconductor Executive. Music is an important part of his life and he has sung in, soloed and/or directed High School, College, Church and Community Choirs for over 50 years in Illinois, Scottsdale, Los Angeles, and now Brentwood. He joined the Summerset Singers in 2003 and became the Music Director and Principal Conductor in 2010. He also plays the guitar, Five-string banjo and now the Concert and Tenor Ukulele. He joined the **Delta Strummers** Ukulele Band as Music Director in June 2011 and is extremely proud of the group’s growth, performances, fellowship, and accomplishments.



Board Meetings

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