

THE Delta Strummers Fall 2019 Newsletter



S hared Thoughts From the Maestro!

I realized that it is now time to pen another biannual Strummer's newsletter article and it struck me that this would be a good opportunity to explain to you my love of music.

A third of your music skills are genetic...I received mine from my mom. My dad couldn't sing or play an instrument but he loved to hear my mom sing, play the violin, and pound out Scottish tunes on a Sears keyboard. My mom and I both sang in church choirs and I was encouraged, from an early age, to enjoy music, joining school and community choruses along the way.

Another third of your musical skill set comes from exposure to others through life as they sing, direct, or play instruments. I joined a folk group in college and almost starved to death...but I learned to play the guitar and banjo...and sing in bars.

I believe the last third of your music skills comes from practice. Practice singing solos...in groups...in choirs. Practice playing instruments...pianos...guitars...banjos...harmonicas, etc. Without practice, there are only latent skills...no growth in performance...no confidence in what you have learned.

Music is a form of fellowship to me...It is the harmony of music and the joy it brings to the audience and the performer or performers, in rehearsal or performances, that trigger the fellowship.

The **Delta Strummers**, the Summerset Singers, the church choirs, the folk bands, the occasional solos, are all part of my fellowship of music.

I confess I don't just view the **Delta Strummers** as a well-tuned monster, ukulele band...I also view the Strummers as "a group of friends with an ukulele problem." When I leave rehearsals on Tuesday nights, I leave refreshed in the knowledge that I saw joy in all of our faces as we made music, and fellowship together.

I'm not the only one to try to articulate the value of music in our lives...Here's a few of my favorite quotes:

"The history of a people is found in its songs"
George Jellinek

"Where words fail, music speaks"
Hans Christian Andersen

"Music washes away from the soul, the dust of everyday life"
Berthold Auerbach

*"Alas for those that never sing,
But die with all their music in them!"*
Oliver Wendell Holmes



~ Ernie

You should add your own quote to the bard's words above... It will be good for your soul.

UKULELE MOVABLE CHORD SHAPES

by **Wally Coffman**, Chairman



Have you noticed that we play almost all of our chords on the first four frets? The ukulele has between 12 and 20 frets depending on the size. So, why is it that we use only a few? Part of the answer may be because it's easier. Think of all the chords that can be played with one finger, C, Am, A7, C7 and C6. We play Am7 completely open. We may be fretting only one string but the ukulele nut is fretting the other three open strings to make the chord. Now if we are fretting all the strings with our fingers the chord is movable. This allows us to go up and down the fretboard with the same shape and the chord name changes with each new fret position. As an example, let's use the D7 (non-Hawaiian D7). This is the one where all four strings are barred

with the index finger at the second fret and the second finger is on the A string (bottom) at the third fret. Now if we slide up one fret, we have an Eb7, and if we go up one more we have E7. We can keep going and the chord name changes with each move, but they all remain seventh chords. If we think of our index finger as a movable nut we can deal with all those open strings. In most cases you may have to rearrange fingering due to barring with the index finger. Try this with the C, F and A chords. The index finger will barr the first fret and arrange fingering for each chord. All of the chords have moved up one fret, so they become C#, F# and Bb. The Bb will now look very familiar. Having said all this, I have found that the chord voicings at the higher frets are not that useful.

I know this all sounds quite confusing and it is! However, having a chart that shows the different shapes for Major, Minor and Seventh chords and the chord names at each fret will make the task much easier. Nothing like a good visual! A good resource can be found through Amazon. "Ukulele Chords with online instructional video," by Mel Bay (paperback \$9.99). A summary section in the back of the book has charts showing three Major, three Minor and four Seventh shapes.

Have fun!



"My husband will be home at any moment—quick, take the ukulele!"



FROM UKULELE FESTIVALS TO GATEWAY INSTRUMENT

by **Rod Flores**, Vice Chairman



It's great to see everyone as we begin the Strummers' 2019/2020 season. For me, this is my sixth year as a member, and I look forward to another year of challenging rehearsals and satisfying performances. I feel lucky to be a part of a great organization.

Welcome to all the new members! Remember that the ukulele is supposed to be enjoyable. Always keep that in mind. The key to boosting your knowledge of the instrument is attend rehearsals, establish practice time at home (especially rhythm patterns, timing and changing chords in line with those timings). Moreover, if you have time, get together with other **Delta Strummer** members. It is always fun to learn with others.

Are you interested in taking a road trip with your ukulele? Well, here are a couple of events worth mentioning:

Palm Springs Ukulele Festival - October 31-November 2, 2019

Spend Halloween weekend enjoying the golden age of ukulele with the Palm Springs Ukulele Festival! Evoke the era of ritzy cocktail parties during the Roaring '20s and the campy revival period in the '50s with an in-depth line-up of classes and workshops that have been tailored to the theme "From Gatsby to Godfrey." Oh, and rumor has it that banjulele-and baritone-friendly classes and workshops have been added. The Day Stage features free entertainment and open mics as well as an extensive vendor marketplace. There's a costume contest, and best guy and gal win a uke! Special guests and teachers include swing-jazz uker extraordinaire Casey MacGill, the retro-slick duo Dead Man's Uke, Gerald Ross, Dani Joy, vintage-pop duo Victor & Penny, Heidi Swedberg and Daniel Ward, and more. The whole weekend will wrap up with a big Swing Dance bash, so make sure to pack your dancing shoes.

Kumu Hula Association of Northern California will present their **39th Annual Hula Competition and Festival**, November 1-3 at the Alameda Fairgrounds. Spend the weekend celebrating Hawaiian Cultures and Traditions.

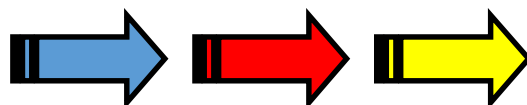
Mc Uke Fest - 2019 November 17, 2019, Santa Monica, CA

McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica California, renowned for more than 50 years of world-class concerts, gives the ukulele its due with 12 hours of ukulele madness November 17. The day begins with a kid's concert and ukulele petting zoo led by Heidi Swedberg and ends with an all-star concert featuring Sarah Maisel and Craig Chee, Craig McClelland, Daniel Ward, and Alex DeGrassi. In-between, there will be workshops and events for all levels of players. Information and tickets at mccabes.com

Don't miss the **1st Annual Ukulele Jam** in Union City. It will be held Saturday, November 23 at Ruggieri Senior Center, 33997 Alvarado-Niles, Union City, from 1:00-4:30 p.m. Free admission.

A GATEWAY INSTRUMENT???

Keep reading! Rod's article continues on the next page.



A GATEWAY INSTRUMENT???

(cont'd from page 3)

by **Rod Flores**, Vice Chairman

Did you know that the ukulele began as a gateway instrument for many legendary musicians? Here are a few musicians, who began their musical journey on the uke.

As a youth, Jimi Hendrix was gifted an ukulele that helped him learn melodies. He later went on to become one of the greatest guitarists of all time.

Folk grunge Granddaddy, Neil Young suffered from many ailments as a child; diabetes, epilepsy and polio. Things became so serious that, at one point, Neil lost the use of his legs. That didn't stop him from picking up the ukulele. After mastering the uke, banjo, harmonica and piano, Neil finally delved into plucking the strings of the guitar.

At four-years-old Tommy James played a plastic Maccaferri ukulele with a built-in Arthur Godfrey tuner. By age twelve he was playing guitar and fronted his first band, The Tornados.

Chet Atkins, one of the great Nashville stars, started on ukulele, moved on to fiddle then guitar.

Jazz Master, George Benson started playing the ukulele at age seven, playing for tips in a corner drug store. At eight, he moved to guitar.

As a young girl, Joni Mitchell wanted to play the guitar. But, according to her Wikipedia page, "her mother disapproved of its hillbilly associations, so Joni settled initially for the ukulele." Her performing career began on a Harmony baritone ukulele and later she taught herself the tiple (Editor's note: The tiple is a 10-string cousin of the ukulele) and then guitar from a Pete Seeger songbook. (Joni also plays the dulcimer, as Deb will gladly tell you.)

Dick Dale is known as the "King of Surf Guitar," and his first stringed instrument was a ukulele. Dale went on to push the boundaries of electric guitar playing and innovations in guitar amplification.

Peter Rowan became enamored with the ukulele at the age of four when his uncle Jimmy returned home from World War II via Hawaii where he had won a ukulele in a craps game. In the early 1950s, Peter's father bought him a plastic Maccaferri Islander ukulele. Peter returned to his ukulele roots with the 2017 record entitled *My Aloha*, in which he examines the relationship between bluegrass and Hawaiian music.



**ROCK BEATS
SCISSORS**



**PAPER BEATS
ROCK**



**SCISSORS BEATS
PAPER**



**NOTHING BEATS
UKULELE**

TIPS FROM THE MONEY MAN

by **Rich Alves**, Treasurer



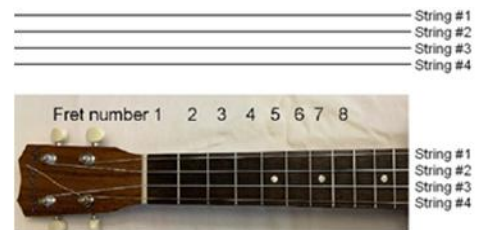
We have many new members since I last did my “Treasurer Thing,” so let me repeat part of what I wrote back in the spring of 2018:

Do you want to be counted? We routinely receive more money than is indicated by those who fill out the Practice Attendance Sheet. **If you want to be counted as attending, write something in the column with the “\$” at the top.** Forget your money? Write “0.” Pay \$5 for the practice session? Write “5.” Make up for last week? Write “10.” Etc.

Do you want to know who you are? Wearing your name tag makes it easy to look in the mirror and find out. My name is hciR.

If you’d like to try some finger picking, grab your uke.

We’re going to use tablature to represent the strings on your uke. This is a kind of notation that will show you where to place your fingers to produce a specific note or chord.



Assuming you are playing right-handed, hold down a C chord with your left hand. Then with your right hand:

- Use your thumb to alternate between strings #4 and #3
- Use your index finger on the string #2
- Use your middle finger on string #1



It can be helpful to pick something that you do every day – like watching the 6 O’clock news. Bring your uke, watch the news, and practice doing a soft pick with your right hand. You will eventually be able to do the pick without even thinking about what you are doing.

As you get better you can make a small change into the “Travis-Style Pinch Pattern.” Here you pinch strings #4 and #1 at the same time, pause slightly, and then continue the pick as above.



**What’s the difference between a ukulele player
and a savings bond?**

One will mature and make money.

HIGH G VERSUS LOW G TOP STRING ON THE UKULELE (AND BANJO UKULELE)

by **Lucy Meis**, Board Secretary



At one of our practices, a fellow Strummer let me use his ukulele with five strings (the fifth string, now the top string, is High-G). I liked the sound of an ukulele with a Low-G string and a High-G string. When I told another Strummer, I learned that I could replace the Low-G string on my ukulele with a High-G string for a different sound.

Since I have a tenor ukulele, I began researching on the sound comparison of the tenor ukulele with a High-G string versus a Low-G string. I wanted to share with you the website I found with the most information on Low-G and High-G tuning, <https://coolukulele.com/ukulele-low-g-vs-high-g-the-tuning-tango/>.

OFF TO THE RACES

by **Deb Grainger**, Member & Editor

Some of you have probably heard me remark, “we were off to the races,” in reference to the speed of a given song; once we started playing, our tempo steadily sped up. Some of us may not even be aware it is happening. Our feet are tapping away but they’re tapping to our own internal rhythm. We get buried in our lead sheet, focused on a new strum or pick and become deafened to the overall tempo of the band.

Sometimes another player in your vicinity may be the one speeding up and they “take” you with them. Get two or three strong, capable players all unaware that they are gradually increasing tempo and “we’re off to the races.” The whole band gets dragged along or we end with left side/right side sound issues.



**THE BIG QUESTION...ARE YOU BEING DRAGGED or
ARE YOU ONE OF THOSE DOING THE DRAGGING?**



Tempo control is not innate to everyone but it is a skill that can be improved upon. How? By using an actual, physical **metronome!** I still have mine from my piano lesson days. If you don’t have one, type ‘metronome’ into the search engine of your favorite device and one pops right up, adjustable speed and all.

When you first start using a metronome, pick a song with which you are totally familiar, say **San Francisco Bay Blues**, then strum and sing it through at a comfortable speed. On the metronome, pick and set a tempo that sounds right to your ear based on what you have just played and play the song again, strictly adhering to the audible tempo output of the metronome. You may discover that it’s not easy to sustain a steady controlled speed at first. It will feel awkward and it could be frustrating. Stick with it though, and your tempo control will improve. Apply the same approach to thumb roll and fingerpicking sections of our music as well.

Use a metronome regularly when you practice and your internal tempo will soon be standing its ground and you won’t be one of the “runaway horses.”



Delta Strummers Newswire



Scheduled Performances

December 12, 2019: Garin Elementary
December 14, 2019: Summerset IV Orchards Lodge
May 21, 2020: El Campanil Theatre, Antioch



More details and other seasonal performances 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 website and are announced via email. So, be sure to check your email regularly.

Where do I go for...?

We have an online source for your Hawaiian clothing—**Aloha Outlet**. Ordering information is on our website 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 website 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 shirts and black pants. Links to the approved designs are on our website 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 magnetic 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 & caps

We have a local supplier of **Delta Strummers** polo shirts and caps with the embroidered logo. Ordering information is on the Clothing page on our website.

Ukulele Magazine

This magazine is 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, Webmaster.

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 (a few times per 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 member.

Typically, over 50% of the songs in our practice/playlist list come 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 new members to play may need to be transposed into 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 **Delta Strummers** 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 the Board 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.



UKULELE WORD SEARCH FUN

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|-----------------------|---------|------------|----------|
| ACOUSTIC | HOLLOW | UKE | USA |
| ROW ROW ROW YOUR BOAT | BODY | TUNING PEG | PORTUGAL |
| MACHETE | HAWAII | BRIDGE | NUT |
| STRINGS | FRET | SOUNDHOLE | NECK |
| CHORD | UKULELE | | |

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| H | A | W | A | I | I | H | T | R | C | O | U | K | E | N | U | D |
| T | A | B | B | J | V | V | N | H | T | E | C | X | U | U | F | F |
| N | E | W | U | A | E | T | E | H | C | A | M | C | C | O | L | B |
| A | Y | R | M | E | W | C | A | T | G | A | M | G | I | E | T | Q |
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| T | U | U | J | U | I | S | O | O | I | W | O | R | U | X | Q | S |
| U | H | X | F | K | Q | R | U | J | C | E | H | O | O | Z | Q | T |
| N | O | B | K | U | Y | C | N | B | B | M | N | H | C | W | R | R |
| I | L | F | X | L | V | A | D | C | I | U | Z | C | A | C | U | I |
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| G | O | D | A | L | Z | J | O | T | N | O | A | W | C | C | R | G |
| P | W | Q | J | E | F | D | L | R | D | E | C | B | Z | M | E | S |
| E | B | T | Z | B | M | Q | E | Y | J | D | Q | P | Z | Q | K | N |
| G | Y | A | P | O | R | T | U | G | A | L | X | J | O | F | Y | A |
| R | O | W | R | O | W | R | O | W | Y | O | U | R | B | O | A | T |
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