

Delta Strummers

SPRING 2020 Newsletter

HOW DARE the COVID-19 mess suddenly interrupt our lives, our train of thought, and our basic life routines.....**how dare!!** Originally, I planned to write on the joy that the Garin Strummer program was bringing to us, the kids, their parents, and the community.

Then the roof fell in or did it?

The commitment made by the Strummers to the Garin program still lives. The trainers still care, the kids are home with their ukes, and hopefully we have given many of the kids and their parents a positive experience and introduction to music (as well as a possible escape from boredom). In consultation with Mr. Wally (the keeper of the ukes), we believe over 40+ kid's families purchased their own ukes for their Garin Strummers on our behalf. So suddenly it appears, that even as we are cut off from direct hands on training....the kids experience of owning and playing an instrument still lives. It's our "gift" of music to the kids.

We had great training started before the COVID delay. I am extremely proud of all the trainers (**Fred Kamp, Tom Webster, Wally Coffman, Deb Grainger, Laurie Nowak, Rick Schulz, Talia Todd, Mary Jane Dukellis, Lucy Meis, Ann Wangan, and John Davelaar**). I watched as they all took charge of the "thundering herd" of 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, and started serious teaching of basic chords, rhythms, and songs. I watched as they saw the kid's lightbulbs going on as they started to connect the ukes with real music. I watched as the trainers suddenly realized they were making a difference. The COVID delay is only temporary... you can't ignore the difference we were all making.

Garin has been on an extended Spring Break and when (and if) they return, we have decided to give them learning material for the Summer via the web with help from the Garin Administration Parent Contact Lists. We also plan to retrieve the Strummer donated ukes for the Summer and safely store them for next Fall. The kids who have their own ukes will be given songs, tuning instructions, and some MP3 files to play against. The parents of the kids who don't own their own, will also be sent the same material in hopes that some will also buy ukes for their kids. We plan to restart the Garin Strummer program in the Fall and hope we can retrain (and retain) advanced students for our Fall program. When I think about the Strummers, I realize that members not only belong to the Garin Trainers, but to the Board, the Music Committee, the open mic'ers, the soloists, the new members, the old timers, the small groups, and that we are all part of the Strummer family music experience.

So Mr. COVID.... Do your **temporary** thing....



We plan to wait you out and then return even stronger, to our lives, our trains of thought, our basic life routines.....and the kids.

Hell....we have music on our side
Mr. COVID...you can't hurt us!

~ Ernie



DEVELOPING MY SINGING VOICE

by *Lucy Meis*, Chair

As a teenager, I sang as an alto in the church choir. That was the extent of my experience singing in front of an audience until I joined the Delta Strummers decades later.

I wanted to share with you how I am developing my singing voice on my own:

USING A MUSICAL KEYBOARD

I purchased a Yamaha portable keyboard to help me warm up my alto voice. I use a technique I found on YouTube by Jeff Rolka.

KNOWING THE LYRICS

I read the lyrics of a song out loud to help with enunciation, find the song on YouTube, listen to how the performer sings the song, and then practice singing with the performer.

SINGING KARAOKE

While on a cruise, I participated in Karaoke Night, the first time I had ever sung Karaoke. I selected **RING OF FIRE** because I knew the lyrics (you may recall that the Band in the Bay dressed in black as a tribute to Johnny Cash and played **RING OF FIRE** at open mic). After the cruise, I found an affordable home Karaoke machine at Target. This machine helps me with the volume/tone of my voice.

A friend recently gave me the name of a voice coach who has an office in Brentwood and is accepting new students. But, due to the shelter-in-place order, I put this potential option on hold.





DOES PERSONALITY IMPACT YOUR SINGING?

by **Tom Webster**, Vice Chair

Over the last couple of years, there has been a steadily increasing interest, enjoyment and participation in our Open Mic sessions

I am somewhat new to the Delta Strummers but I hear from some of the Strummer veterans that not so long ago, getting folks to perform for Open Mic was challenging – my, how times have changed! Beyond just the love of music, I believe this change has come about from a combination of increased skill levels and confidence along with the support and encouragement provided by all of the Delta Strummers.

The Open Mic sessions have become a great time to hear a wide variety of music crossing over several genres and time periods. I think part of what makes this fun is that these songs are performed by the various groups or individuals in their own personal style.

Additionally, we get a glimpse into some of the different types of personalities that comprise this group of performers. As with any large group, you will find a multitude of personalities and temperaments – and I think, the Strummers are no exception.

So, the question arises, just what kind of personalities enjoy this opportunity to perform during the Open Mic sessions?

Back when I was part of the “Corporate” world, we periodically went through several different types of “soft skill” training focusing on teamwork, diversity, and improving productivity. Many of you probably did the same. One of our training sessions involved a personality test to determine what type of “animal” we were and who we were most suited to work with – which seemed kind of appropriate being in the midst of the “Corporate Jungle.”

Here were the different animal/personality types (... not good or bad – just different) :

- ♦ **The Owl** – thoughtful, introspective, scholarly, professorial, willing to share ideas and knowledge
- ♦ **The Dolphin** – caring, kind, strive towards consensus, looking to collaborate and make sure all voices are heard
- ♦ **The Panther** – dominating, directive, driven, very results oriented, decisive.
- ♦ **The Peacock** – flamboyant, gregarious, not afraid of the spotlight

It struck me that within the Strummers, we see some of these same personality characteristics both in our casual interactions and while performing at the Open Mic sessions

Of course, we often exhibit traits of more than one of the animals described above depending on the circumstances – in our case, gathered at our weekly practices, performing at the Open Mics, other social gatherings and performing at our scheduled programs/events.

So, which type(s) are you? Here are some of my thoughts:

As I think back to my first Open Mic performance, the anticipation of it was rather intimidating, if not downright frightening– very similar to the fear of public speaking. This is where a little bit of the Panther in us has to come forward telling us to “press on”, along with the encouragement of our friends and fellow Strummers (... that would be the Dolphins).

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And then there are those folks that are putting together the songs for the Open Mic - arranging them in the right key, developing instrumentals, determining where harmonies are needed, etc. (these would be the Owls with maybe a little Panther and/or Dolphin mixed in as well)

When I see some of the small groups that perform at Open Mic, I often think of the teamwork involved (... more Dolphins) and usually with a leader or director (this could be either a Panther or a Peacock).

And of course, there are also those among us that just like the idea of performing (these would be the Peacocks – and I tend to think there is a little inner Peacock in all of us!)

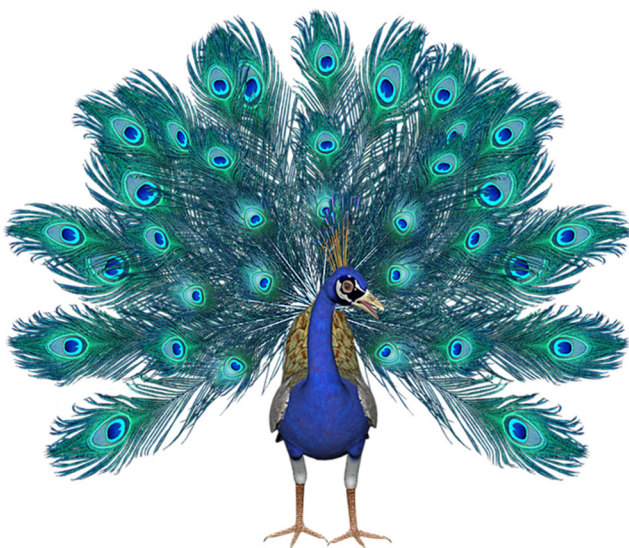
So, now, as you look around at our Tuesday Night Practice Sessions, you may ask yourself, are you surrounded by; a Pod of Dolphins, a Pride of Peacocks, a Parliament of Owls or a Leap of Panthers – most likely a combination of all!

Whereas this doesn't really add to our overall knowledge of music, I thought it would be fun to take a lighthearted look at our group through a different "lens" and from a different perspective.



Which one are you?

Are you a combo?





THOTS ON DOTS MUSIC THEORY TO PUT YOU TO SLEEP by Rich Alves, Treasurer

What are musical “beats”? They are the repeating rhythm of a base guitar or drum. They are what you tap your foot to in time with the music. They are what Maestro Ernie shouts out at the beginning of San Francisco Bay Blues, “One, Two, Three.”

How long is a beat? It depends on the speed (tempo) of the music. If the tempo is a slow 60 beats per minute (BPM), each beat lasts one second. If the tempo is a faster 120 BPM, each beat lasts one half second.

Why might this be important? Chord notations on lead sheets show approximately where chords change relative to the words in the music (lyrics). They do not necessarily tell you what part of a word, or space between words corresponds to the specific chord change.

C Dm
 Did you write the book of love
 F Dm Am G
 And do you have faith in God a-bove, if the Bi-ble tells you so?

What are “beat dots?” Some renowned musical groups, such as The Office in Brentwood, and the San Jose Ukulele Club, https://sanjoseukeclub.org/song_book.html, use beat dots to show how many beats there are between chord changes. Using dots to play a C chord for four beats would look like this: “C •••”. This information can be helpful. However, dots only relate to the lyrics within an accuracy of one whole beat. Just like chord changes, they do not necessarily tell you what part of a word, or space between words corresponds to the specific beat dot.

C • • • Dm • •
 • Did you write the book of love
 • F • • • Dm • • • Am • • • G • •
 And do you have faith in God a-bove, • if the Bi-ble tells you so?

Sheet music more accurately relates chord changes and beats to the lyrics. An 8th note will relate to the lyrics within an accuracy of half a beat, a 32nd note within an accuracy of an eighth of a beat, etc.

C Dm
 1. DID YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF LOVE AND DO YOU
 F Dm Am G
 HAVE FAITH IN GOD A-BOVE IF THE BI-BLE TELLS YOU SO?

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

by **Ralph Hendrix**, Member



I am not a musician that feels comfortable trying to teach. I feel that my greatest strength is demonstrating the things that I practice and how I try to gain proficiency in chord progression and fingering the strings.

I have used picks intermittingly over the years, including finger and thumb picks for the steel guitar and banjo. I have tried to use flat picks on the guitar, but really never became proficient with that type of pick, but sometimes use them to get some more volume. I have plastic, bone, felt and other picks in my bag and try them out at various times.

I really enjoy practicing chord progressions and figuring out how to move smoothly from one to another more efficiently. As Ernie has demonstrated, getting proficient with some new, more difficult chords is a matter of doing them slowly, watching your hand and figuring out what works best for you, sometimes changing the fingers that are standard in easier progressions to another finger if necessary. Also, I use my index finger to bar all four strings for chords like a Bb. I find that barring the neck with the index finger allows you to do more moving up the neck of the instrument.

The other thing that I enjoy in practicing is using a variety of fingers to strum and pick the uke. I learned the technique playing the guitar, but found it was really easy to transition to the uke. So, my basic strum for the uke is a downstroke and upstroke with my second or middle finger, but I alternate that a lot with a downstroke with my middle finger and the upstroke with my index finger. I find that getting very comfortable with using both fingers to strum allows me to vary the rhythm of the strum and lets me get creative in the way the music sounds. Ernie has taught us many standard strums that get us all in the same pattern which works very well for our large group performances. However, sometimes, I enjoy doing my own versions for my own listening pleasure.

I like to pick many of our songs. Again, Ernie has taught us to use several patterned picks with a flat pick or thumb which works well for all of us to assure that we are in sync. However, over the years, I have built up the muscle memory to use my thumb and first 3 fingers to pick individual strings in various patterns that fit the 4/4 or 3/4 beat of the song. I recommend resting your little finger near the back and below the sound hole and then rest your thumb on G; your index on C; your middle finger on E and your ring finger on A. Then it is a matter of practicing (with a C chord) by plucking the strings downward G; C; E; A and then upward with E; C for a 6-count pick. I do some other picks using the same finger placements but plucking G & E together; then C; then E; then C & A together, and last an E. I vary that sometimes with simultaneously plucking C & E. I play around a lot with many variations, including moving through various simple chord patterns to see how the patterns work through a series of chords, like C to F to C to G7. This practice is helpful to let my hands and fingers build up muscle memory to be comfortable, quick and accurate in the transitions, and maintain the right tempo and beat.

I hope this will help you understand some different ways we can approach our practice and playing.

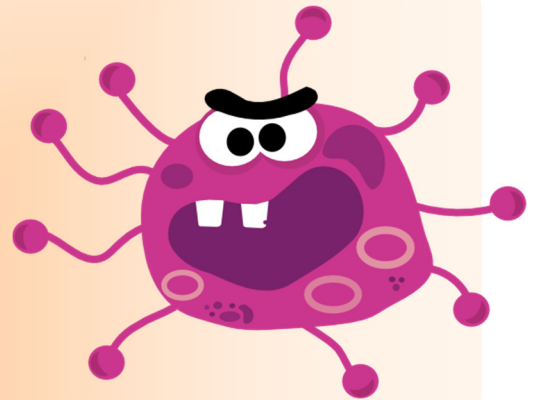


IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

by **Deb Grainger**, Board Secretary

NOTE: TV on all waking (& sleeping) hours

- Wake up (not particularly willingly 'cuz the news is on)
- Hungry; thinking about what I may want to eat
- Play with dogs while ignoring the news
- Shower & dress (sorta' - you all know I hate shoes)
- Eat some random bread product
- Coffee
- Think about *or* eat something else random
- Crochet while ignoring the news
- Play **dulcimer** while ignoring the news; sometimes I sing
- Turn TV to reruns
- Play with dogs while ignoring the reruns
- Thinking about what to eat next (do we have any chips left??)
- Crocheting to keep my hands busy
- Playing with dogs whether they want to play or not
- Thinking about eating (are there any leftovers?)
- Play **ukulele** while ignoring the reruns; sometimes I sing
- Crocheting while ignoring reruns & keeping my hands busy so I won't eat anything else
- Play with dogs while pondering if it is too early for wine
- Thinking about eating (salty/crunchy sounds good!)
- Work crossword puzzles while ignoring reruns & trying not to eat
- Craving *something sweet* (do we have any cookies?*)
- Play with dogs while ignoring reruns (don't I remember a bottle of tequila somewhere?)
- Crochet some more 'cuz I'm mad at **idiot** crossword puzzle maker person!
- Thinking about eating something (is spicy a good choice at this late hour?)
- Love on dogs (after 45 days plus, dogs rolling eyes)
- Pull out something I've previously crocheted 'cuz I have no more unused yarn; reuse yarn
- Read off & on all day (I'm even rationing how much I read at a sitting 'cuz I'm afraid I'm going to run out of books - missing the SSIV library!)
- Love on our wonderful dogs (are eyes rolling?)
- Thinking about something to eat even though I'm not hungry & it's way too late to be eating!
- Thank goodness for the dogs! (no eyes rolling; both on the bed & snuggled down - they own me)
- Go to bed



I have a friend who has planted tomatoes & zucchini in some horse watering troughs her husband rescued from the his father's ranch. She has also reorganized her sewing room, kitchen cupboards & drawers and even **alphabetized her tea!**

Me... I'm binge watching TV reruns, re-watching cable movies that make me feel good, watching some old B&W movies that have been on my list forever and... well, the list above speaks for itself.

I'll be kicking myself later for not doing all the things I used to wish I had more time for...

Question: What's with all the zombie movies airing? Do **"they"** know something I don't?

***P.S.**

No in-house cookies; no eggs either. I asked the Great Google if there was anything that could substitute for eggs while baking cookies. I tried the most touted suggestion; said it worked great for cookies, "can't tell any difference" etc.- **LIES!** I ended up with an oatmeal & dried cranberries granola-like product; not very good; ate it anyway

Delta Strummers Newswire

Scheduled Performances

Due to COVID-19 the Delta Strummers Fall 2020 Concert Dates & Venues remain undetermined at this time. Stay tuned!

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 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 **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, Deb Grainger (graingerdebra@gmail.com). 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 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lucy Meis, Chair

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 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.

Fast forward, I now have a tenor uke, serve on the Board, play with fellow strummers in small groups and help teach 3rd & 4th 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.

Tom Webster, Vice Chair

Tom Webster is a recent retiree and has resided in Brentwood with his wife Frances for the last 15 years. Born and raised in the bay Area, Tom has four grown children and three grandchildren.

Following graduation from college at Cal Poly, Tom went to work for Chevron in San Francisco as part of their Information Technology Company. Working in a variety of technical and project management roles as both an employee and contractor for 35 years, Tom retired in 2016. Favorite activities include sports, music and travel. Tom and his wife have been involved since 2001 with Guide Dogs for the Blind, both raising puppies and puppy-sitting as needed.

Favorite places include Yosemite, Point Reyes, Thailand and Germany.

Music has been a part of Tom's life for most of his adult years. The opportunity to be part of the Delta Strummers has been a great experience, both musically and socially - looking forward to the continuing comradery and performing with the group.

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, again, his interest waned. In 2015 he went to a Strummers performance and noticed what a fun time the musicians were having. He thought, "Fun time? Count me in!"

Ralph Hendrix, Member

At about age 8, my father taught me to play several chords on his guitar, which was a tough instrument to use with a high bridge that really caused a lot of finger pain. But then, about a year later, I was able to take lessons on the steel guitar, using a metal slide to pick out the notes. I enjoyed this and wished it would have continued, but we moved away and there was no opportunity to continue those lessons.

When I was 14 or 15, I bought my own acoustic guitar and I still have my music from the early 60's. It is virtually all Folk music, with songbooks by Cisco Houston, the Kingston Trio, and Peter, Paul & Mary. I took guitar lessons from a woman who played in a local Folk Trio and still have the mimeographed song sheets, some with fingerpick patterns that I have transferred to the uke. I lived in Southern California and enjoyed the many performance venues in the nearby beach communities.

I played the guitar for myself intermittently over the years. This was enough to influence my son to pick up my guitar in his teenage years and later he played bass guitar in a Ska Band, "The Blue Beat Stompers", which we all enjoyed.

My college education at Brigham Young University was in Finance and I ended up as bank examiner and senior regulator with the Comptroller of the Currency, a bureau of the Treasury Department that regulates nationally chartered banks. I spent 25 years with that agency and then another 15 years as the Chief Credit Review Examiner for Zions Bancorporation, overseeing eight banks that they owned throughout the western states.

I retired from my banking career in 2006, and then spent the next 14 years volunteering with Dogs for Diabetics (D4D), a California non-profit, serving on its Board, as Executive Director and recently retiring as Finance Director. This was really a joy in my life as it was an opportunity to help people with a chronic disease in a unique way. D4D was the first accredited service dog organization in the world to train dogs to identify hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) through extensive scent training. D4D is recognized around the world for this work. It provides all its services and dogs at no cost to its clients.

I truly enjoy the time that I can now spend in the Summerset IV community and the Delta Strummers.

Deb Grainger, Secretary & Editor

I have always loved music and singing and have played a variety of instruments during my lifetime. After I retired, I started playing the uke and finding a way to sing and play while having a good time made joining Strummers a natural progression. I truly endeavor to be a proactive member, having served on different committees, teaching in the Garin Project, helping with stage management at performances and serving on the Board. I hope to continue for years to come.

Ernie Macintyre, Music Director

He has a BSEE from Northwestern and is a retired Semiconductor Executive. Music is 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 guitar, five-string banjo and now the concert and tenor ukulele. He joined Delta Strummers 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 the future direction of the Delta Strummers.