

some of the parts...



newsletter of the sum of the parts (music) incorporating newcastle ukestras

SUMMER 2011 - 2012



Ukestras on the waterfront at the Karuah River of Music Festival in May

Introducing 150+ people to the uke in 2011!

The Ukestra year started with a bang – eighteen people attended our first dedicated Beginners Workshop in January 2011. Over the year we ran nine Saturday workshops at the Five Islands Recreation Club, introducing about 150 people to the joys (or not!) of the uke. Some joined our Ukestras – for others one go was enough. We also ran an all day workshop for Hunter Community College (HCC) and will run three more in 2012 (first one in February) as well as monthly two-hour workshops when we aren't doing the HCC thingumie.

Ukulele Entrée

In November over 30 people participated in a Beginner's Ukulele Class, with Jane, Mark and Danielle doing the teaching. As Jane & I were 'full to the noo' (as Jane would say), we asked Danielle to take a new class. 20 people enrolled in 'Ukulele Entrée' which is a six week course designed to build uke playing skills through introducing participants to existing Ukestra repertoire. 70 people did the January 2012 workshop, so we are running three Entrée courses from the end of January, and perhaps expanding the number of Ukestras!

As anyone who has been around the different groups knows, each Ukestra has its own character (and foibles!). The smaller groups enjoy more individual attention whilst the larger groups seem to develop what can only be described as pizzazz. Swings and roundabouts really.

The Year in Retrospect

What a wonderful 2011 it was for all the different activities that make up The Sum of the Parts (music). The year went so quickly and yet so much has happened.

Most of the activity centred on the Ukestras, but also involved other musical projects, training and professional development.

I find it very important to reflect on the past year, and also to say thank you and to acknowledge those who have helped. With our success comes some extra challenges too, and I will also flag those.

Mark Jackson

2012

So far this year we are looking forward to:

February

Blue Mountains Ukulele Festival

March

Melbourne Ukulele Festival
Australia's Got Talent audition

July

Ukulele Festival Hawaii

NEWKULELE FESTIVAL

Newcastle's first ukulele festival, being organised and run by Ukestras, has been scheduled for **26-28 October 2012**.

Keep in touch at

www.newkulelefestival.org





UPDATES

West Newkestra

The beginner's classes were going so well that it started to look like unbalancing things in the regular Ukestras, so Jane started up Thursday nights in March. WestNewkestra regularly gets between 20-30 people of a Thursday and is emphasising singing as well as uke (of course!). What started as a group for newbies has quickly grown to be a rival to the Tuesday nights – yet another reason for the Ukulele Entrée course.

“there are no strangers here, only people we haven't uked with yet”

The swiftly named West Newkestra group (colloquially known as “Jane's Novitiates”) was convened at the hitherto unknown Water Board Bowling Club. I hadn't counted on the group and Jane's leadership being such a good match. They quickly came up to speed with a bunch of different songs that Jane brought in, culminating in a performance for Newcastle Livesites in November. With some help from regular Ukastle Ukestrans, they enthralled the crowd that had gathered to see Afro Moses.

Tomaree

The Tomaree Ukestra has been very active and consistent this year, but has also been growing. At the beginning of the year there were never more than 10 people. Now it is more like 15 people coming along each week. I feel like I know the ins and outs of this community so much better now,

and I admire the independence that they constantly demonstrate. Uke has contributed to their willingness to meet and socialise with new people (“there are



no strangers here, only people we haven't uked with yet”??), and they play regularly at local community events. And! They have their own website (see the link through ukestra.com). We are grateful to the Fingal Bay Sports Club (particularly Mick and Rob who look after us) for hosting us each Monday morning

where we sit in the gorgeous outside area joined occasionally by kookaburras, kangaroos, early morning drinkers and gamblers, black cockatoos and FA18s. Many from the Tomaree mob also come down to the Ukastle Ukestra each week.

LakeMac

The LakeMacUkestra has been going since early 2010, and continues to cater for those who live in the west of the Lake and who have time in the middle of the day. They are a cheeky, feisty bunch who give me back as much as I give out. Lindsay Young and the staff at the Five Islands Recreation Club at Speers Point have been very generous both for hosting us, listening to us, and allowing us to run our Beginners Workshops there. Our only complaint is Lindsay's sense of humour, which he occasionally insists on foisting upon us.

The LMU formed the backbone of several community performances including Melbourne Cup Day at the Five Islands, the Toronto Boat Fest, the Morisset Blind Society and at various aged hostels. Much thanks to Margaret Weaver who was instrumental in organising a number of these.

We were very sad during the year to lose one of our stalwarts, Joy Bryce, who was a mainstay of the Newcastle Jazz scene and in her last year found a real love for Tuesday afternoons and the LakeMacUkestra.

Maitland

The Maitland Ukestra has been patchy in attendance with some ‘hmmmm’ periods. However it seems like my extended absence in July / August injected new life into the inland gathering (huh?). A particular boost came when I was invited to speak at the Dungog Chamber of Commerce (East Gresford Chapter). This engagement (with able musical assistance from Bob Beale & Patty Steele) attracted some new ornery reprobates from the Paterson Valley. Numbers have also been boosted by the expanding presence of the Dixon family. We still owe much thanks to the Grand Junction Hotel for their intimate (and dimly lit) venue which is always delightful on a Monday evening.

The Maitland Ukestra has not yet made its presence fully felt in the area even though we have undertaken a couple of gigs (including New Year's Eve last year and a breast cancer fundraiser). Maybe they just like staying at home and in their local village hotels writing silly songs (I'm looking at you Bob and Linda).

Ukastle

The Ukastle Ukestra has been a constant fount of entertainment, interest and surprises, not to mention some damn fine performances at festivals. It also

hosts out-of-town guests who occasionally turn up to contribute to the fun.

Tuesday night is the centrepiece of rehearsals for significant performances, and all are willing participants in my fanciful ideas about contemporary songs that may or may not be easily tackled by the uke and our singing prowess. After all the efforts they put in for Hawaii, Dennis & Paula Browne decided to take an extended break from Ukestra. We miss them, but wish them well.

Thanks also must go to Pavo of the Croatian Club - as manager, bookkeeper, barman and comptroller of the air conditioning amongst many other duties, he has been incredibly supportive not just of the Ukestra but the related activities such as pre-Ukestra practices, Ukulele Entrée and the Christmas Party.

Other happenings

An extraordinary development has been the starting up of a Ukestra in Tea Gardens by Mick and Nikki Legge. It is extraordinary because they started in May and now, in a town with a population of less than 1500 they get between 20 and 30 people of a Wednesday night at the Tea Gardens Hotel, drawing people from Bulahdelah and Stroud as well as the north side of Port Stephens. The main problem is that this mob of bushies came down to our Christmas Party and nearly put us all to shame.

About the same time, Liz Kitney and Macron Music shop started the Central Coast Ukulele Club. Early in the year people were coming up to Newcastle from the Central Coast and asking when we were starting down there. From all reports the participation down there has gone up exponentially! A few other smaller groups have also begun here and there. Elaine, Norm & Byng have a regular Monday morning

gathering in Stockton; the Tighes Hill mob gather about monthly in someone's backyard, and Michael Sheridan (who was at our first sessions - see ukeonman.com) has started a regular session down at Murray's Beach (south of Swansea) of a Sunday.

Some of our members (inc. Chris, Lyndall, Michael and Joan) have done some fantastic ukulele outreach at the Soul Café, which has introduced the joys of the uke to people who would otherwise not have that opportunity.

Thanks...

I'd particularly like to thank the Newcastle and Hunter Valley Folk Club for their support as well as the many people who assist with and contribute so much to the Ukestras - you know who you are ('cause I can't fit all your names in!!).

Young'uns

2011 saw a consolidation of uke teaching at Waratah & Cardiff South Public Schools, with the kids doing a couple of performances. Teaching children is wonderful, though at times my disciplinary skills required some honing. Thanks to Anna Swanson & Chris Swain for their dedication to expanding music and ukulele education in their schools. And especial thanks to Suzy Gallagher who put in so much effort helping me with her grandchild's class and others at Cardiff South (and teaching me something about discipline). I am looking forward to the new school year which will also see the commencement of an after school **Kids Ukestra** (in Charlestown).

Performances

Tuesday nights have included impromptu performances from a local South American family, Tom the Pom (percussionist), Andrea Soler, and of course AJ Leonard & Jenny, and Bosko & Honey.

But the formal Ukestra performances have been highlights - Melbourne Ukulele Festival in February (culminating in the awarding of the Golden Ukulele - see photo above), Hawaii in July, BUMS' Brisbane Ukulele Festival in September, the Australia's Got Talent (AGT) audition in October, ABC Night at the Wireless performance in the Civic Theatre to 1400 people, and playing at TEDxNewy in November. And how fantastic that we have been asked to go through to the next round of AGT - as long as we make sure that we are only having fun (well...with maybe a smidgeon of competitive spirit).

And that is not to mention the good and the 'interesting' gigs within the community: Amnesty International 50th anniversary in Speers Point park where we were both audience and performers; Jesmond Park; Charlestown Square; support at some Do Rider gigs; Dungog Film Festival, John Hunter Hospital Volunteers luncheon and many others including the incredibly comprehensive group and solo showcase, the Christmas Party.



Ukastle's Mick Lee in unremitting focus at the Christmas Party

the business end . . .

Workshopping

Mark held workshops for people in Inverell, Bendigo and Melbourne, as well as an impromptu workshop at Turramurra Folk Music Camp, which he has been formally invited to return and be a tutor at in January 2012.

Jane's new singing group has taken off with bold forays into multi-part harmonies and African spirituals, generating lots of enthusiasm from all involved.

Other Musical Projects



Four piece 'blurgrass' band *The Do Riders* had a solid year of rehearsing and local gigs. More importantly, we enjoyed each other's company immensely. The Five Islands Recreation Club was a bit like home (sometimes with odd relatives), and we received a lot of support from Ukestras. We are disappointed that we did not get into some of the bigger festivals that we continue to apply

for but, as always, St Albans Folk Festival was a highlight, as was Ben's wedding in Sydney.

Mark and Jane's duo, *Squidge*, will continue to perform at local venues as well as interstate Ukulele festivals.

Club Sandwich, a themed monthly variety show began in July with Mark, Jane, Danielle and a duo called Nerds & Music as core performers/writers. Housed at Newcastle's Royal Exchange salon theatre, it regularly stars a range of local talent, recently including ukulele players!

Professional Development

Jane and Mark undertook some fantastic Professional Development in July/August, attending kanikapilas (ukulele jam sessions) on the Big Island of Hawai'i, and meeting one of the big names of community ukulele music, Andy Andrews, who apparently started the first uke community group in San Diego.

Each festival that we attend or play at also brings new insights into how and why we might be doing things differently.

Going to Canada was the highlight, however – attending and playing ukulele at a bluegrass festival on Vancouver Island, and attending the James Hill Ukulele Initiative



course in Vancouver.

Mark also ran a workshop for a small community uke group in Vancouver (they are now playing our version of 'All I Want is You') and Jane and Mark (as duo *Squidge*) performed in a café there.

Business Evolution

Closer to home, an interview with the Newcastle Herald for a feature story on the Ukestras and the opportunity to speak at TEDx Newy (see links below) prompted me to think deeply about the Ukestras both as a business and something I really enjoy doing.

It isn't really individual teaching, and it isn't the free "hum and strum" ukulele groups that so predominate across the nation and the world. However, it is such a privilege to bring so much joy, activity and meaningful socialising to people through music-making, so I am constantly looking at ways to broaden the experience and include more people, without diminishing the personal nature of it.

LINKS - TEDxNewy <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ld63ubCOMSk&feature=youtu.be>

Newcastle Herald

<http://www.theherald.com.au/news/local/news/news-features/ukestras-make-beautiful-music/2395786.aspx>

Price Changes

To continue delivering, and in even better ways, we have had to alter our payments and pricing. Needless to say the Government is now demanding an extra share of the proceeds via the GST!

So as of early 2012, we'll be including GST, a small price rise, and a discount for those who pay in advance.

NEW UKESTRA PRICING

valid from 13 February

Newcastle, Lake Macquarie & WestNewkestra

- **Ten sessions** - \$115
(must be used within 4 months)
- **Five sessions** - \$65
(must be used within 2 months)
- **Casual attendance** - \$14
- **Second group attended in a week** - \$7 cash

Tomaree & Maitland

- **Ten sessions** - \$150
(must be used within 4 months)
- **Five sessions** - \$80
(must be used within 2 months)
- **Casual attendance** - \$17

Discount advance payment for ten or five sessions is preferably by direct deposit. For regulars, if you have any trouble with this please have a chat with us.