

UKESOPHISTRY

the newsletter for ukestras in the newcastle / lake macquarie area

Newsletter #3, 1 April 2010



Ukuleles in the Hunter – We are thriving!

When I start jotting things down for the newsletter I usually think that there won't be much ... but I always seem to be wrong!

Last week at Wickham was a real cracker, with an impromptu Betty & Ted performance, a stand up uke practice, singing with great gusto, a lot of people and a general real good time!!!! And there was even a birthday party with a Hawaiian theme to take advantage of our presence! Things are good in Ukastle.

I am still doing a lot of thinking about how best to meet the different needs of people, both beginners and those who have come a long way in getting their head and fingers around the ukulele! That is why I am going to always leave room for the 45 minute beginners group sessions at the start of each Ukestra session. We did ditch it for a few weeks, but a few recent conversations have changed my mind as there is an ongoing need to leave the way open for people to be able to get a group lesson at the most basic of levels (generally the three chords (C, F, G) and the basic strum!).

During this beginners lesson there is plenty of scope and leadership (amongst the advanced groups) for people to practice together, to provide their own peer teaching, and to learn and jam together. Then at quarter past the hour a proper structured rehearsal will commence with a performance (see elsewhere for more explanation of this!). At half the hour we should be ready to start with Ukestra rehearsals of known songs.

Bullet Points for Busy People

- Workshop with Mike Dickison
- Mike's Kiwi Ukulele book for sale
 - Gift vouchers and prepaying available
- Join the local email uke discussion group
 - Lessons available
 - An online metronome
 - The website
- LakeMacUkestra starts
- Ukastle Ukestra performances
- John Dickinsons extras and the St Albans Folk Festival
 - Perform!!
- MUK & What to wear?!

Mike Dickison – book and man for sale ...

I have looked at quite a few ukulele books and somehow came across Kiwi Ukulele. I really like Mike's style of writing, and how he carefully treads the line between providing good basic information, yet providing content that is interesting, intelligent and light-hearted. I am distributing Mike's book in oz for \$20.

But wait!! There's more!! I am also distributing Mike himself!!

Mike is giving a 2 hour intermediate workshop on uke playing and other uke bits n bobs on Sunday 11 April at the Wickham Croatian Sports Club at 11am. Please book with me as I need to confirm numbers. The cost is \$20. Check www.ukestra.com for more info.

LakeMacUkestra

As most of you would know – the LakeMacUkestra is up and running very nicely thank-you! The Teralba Bowling Club is a lovely venue on a Tuesday morning (10:30am). We share the Club with a number of women doing craft, and I think they are enjoying our uking & singing. I also think Celeste (who runs the restaurant there) is enjoying our presence as a lot of Ukestrans are staying on for lunch. Most of the mob at the LMU are beginners, and there seems to be a popular focus upon old style songs.

Teaching

There may be times where you want some help in setting up your uke, or in advancing your skills in a way that is faster than a weekly ukestra visit allows. If you want to set goals in relation to your uke playing, and want to be put in touch with more resources, give me a ring for some private lessons.

John Dickinson has been taking on a pretty strong mentoring role in both the Ukastle and LakeMac Ukestras and I thank him for that.

An increasing number of people seem to be turning up at 5:30ish at Wickham to join John in singing and playing a bunch of songs, notably stuff from the 20s, 30s and 40s. He has also had two sessions at his own house in Fennell Bay and is helping the Phunsters (a uke group from Sydney) run a uke workshop at the **St Albans Folk Festival**. This festival is held on the ANZAC weekend (April 23-26). It is a fabulous, rather intimate and endearing event hidden in the valleys of the Hawkesbury (just north of Wiseman's Ferry, or just south of Wollombi). It is worthwhile getting along to!!!

Ukastle Ukestra Performances – May 1st ?

Ukastle Ukestras! Prepare yourselves for our 'first' possible public performances on May 1st.

In the morning it is the Olive Tree Markets, which are held at the Junction Public School. These are delightful original arty crafty markets with good food and are really worth going to, even if you aren't performing! If this one gets organised, we will be standing under a tree, playing ukulele to admiring crowds (this *will* be a focussed performance). Music stands will be a problem, so it is important for us all to practice playing without music whilst standing (if possible), and maintaining appropriate volumes so individuals (like singers or soloists) can be heard. And we have to rub our tummies and pat our heads at the same time!!!!!! (or is the other way round?).

Cultural Stomp also has us pencilled in for Civic Park in the afternoon. This will be a non-stage, fairly informal thing, and may be a workshop type situation. I still need to clarify details.

Audience available! Just add water (and/or a performer). One of the great challenges as a musician is performing. As with anything, practice makes perfect (or at least breaks the ice!). Our ukestras are a bunch of lovely, supportive, fun people who are interested in music. These are qualities that any performer relishes in an audience. So since we have it, why not take advantage of the opportunity?!!

Therefore (your Honour) I propose that we allocate 10 minutes of each session to being an audience for one or two of us each week who want to practice performance skills, especially those which you are unsure about. For instance, if you are confident of doing duo stuff, how about doing something solo? If you are feeling nervous about it, then this is the forum for you! Please speak to me before so we can refine what you are going to do and book you in! And remember! This is a Ukestra, so a ukulele really should be involved!

Want to link in with other ukestras? Have a question to ask someone about a uke this or that? **Join the ukestra yahoo email group.** Details on the www.ukestra.com website.

The Web Pages - The ukestra web pages are an active resource for you to link into the world wide web of the ukulele. For instance I found an online metronome (which helps you set and keep time with music) and I am starting to put the tempo on our arrangements. A good shortcut to all of this is www.ukestra.com.

Gift vouchers and / or paying in advance

For \$90 you can get a loved one a unique present – a gift voucher for \$100 worth of ukestra sessions or of private lessons. If no-one wants to pay for you, you can spend that same \$90 on yourself prepaying for your own ukestra sessions (saving 10%).

MUK and the eternal problem of what to wear

The Melbourne Ukulele Festival was a pearler. Myself, Jane, Susie & Kathy went along and had a ball at the end of February. We enjoyed a real diversity of performers, from professionals (such as AJ Leonard's Tropical Lounge) and a bunch of ukulele groups who came from Hobart to Brisbane. The pick of them all was however the Melbourne Ukulele Kollektive who dressed formally with eccentric flair. Which leads me to that final eternal question that we men are constantly struggling with ... What to wear when we go out or perform????!!!!

I have a secret file which is a lovely hour long radio special about the history of the uke – ask me for the link.

What is The Sum of the Parts (music)???

Unfortunately music (and the getting together that came with it) has gone out of the active lives of us commoners as television and other passive activities (watching rather than doing) has taken over our lives. Rather than *play* music together, we generally think that music-making is only for famous people and virtuosos. We are the poorer for it, both socially and health-wise. My business - *The Sum of the Parts (music)* – aims to help revive people's interest in playing music together, wherever and whenever! The ukestras are an important part of that. The web pages at www.thesumoftheparts.com.au aims to help people reconnect to music (& in the process – each other!).

Here's to uke'n, Mark Jackson - The Sum of the Parts (music). mark@ukestra.com 0430434291
Ukastle Ukestra 6:30pm Tuesdays, Wickham LakeMacUkestra 10:30am Tuesdays, Teralba
www.thesumoftheparts.com.au