



# Silver Strings Dulcimer Society

## Soundboard

April 2021

SHARING ACOUSTIC MUSIC for 37 YEARS  
[www.silverstrings.org](http://www.silverstrings.org)

Issue 432

### PERKY PEGGY'S PONDERINGS ~ Peggy Kustra

HAPPY EASTER! I wish you peace and joy.

On March 1, 2021 Bob Hlavacek passed away. He gave so much of himself to Silver Strings. We can count ourselves blessed to have had him as a member, as a friend and a fellow musician.

During March we also lost another member George Newton who was a delightful friendly, jovial person and a wonderful banjo player. Both of these gentlemen will be greatly missed.

Judy Pyrkosz, our Treasurer, has developed severe health issues. Due to this situation she has asked to step down from her position so that she may focus on her new journey of getting well. She will need our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

Judy has done a fabulous job as our Treasurer. She has completed a lot of hard work. Thank you Judy...

Gerry Kustras has offered to step in and fill the position. The SSDS board has gratefully accepted. Our Current board is:

President; Peggy Kustra

Vice President Business: Steve Beck

Vice President of Programs: Sandi Hlavacek

Secretary: Julie Kafcas

Treasurer: Gerry Kustra

A great deal has happened in the last month. However, the SSDS board has kept all things in order.

On February 25, we had a *Zoom Variety Night*. Oh My Goodness ....what a fun time!! Everyone enjoyed themselves. Therefore we will be having another one. So watch your email for the next date.

Take a look at the duties of Vice President of Business. This job just might suit YOU!!

If you have ideas, questions or concerns, contact me at [peggyakustra54@gmail.com](mailto:peggyakustra54@gmail.com) or 313-570-7844

.....Peggy Kustra - President

### IT'S APRIL...LET'S CELEBRATE !

#### April Birthdays

- 1...Alice Avery
- 1...Cindy Semrau
- 10...Luke Kawecki
- 13...Bill Deighton
- 23...Harold Crane
- 28...Marsha Kozlowski
- 30...Phyllis Tillapaugh



### MARSHA'S MUSINGS ~ Marsha Kozlowski

#### April Spirit Jam – Thursday, April 15 @ 7:00 EDT.

The theme is "Musical Menagerie" featuring tune titles containing the name of a critter – fish or fowl, beastie or bug. People whose last names start with the letter M through R are invited to send me a tune suggestion.

**April Photo Collage** – should include an animal or some representation of an animal (pet, picture, sculpture, aquarium, you at the zoo, or at a farm, in a barn). Have fun with this. Keep Dave Smith's email handy so you can send it. You are also welcome to post it on the Spirit Jam page. These photos help us stay connected while we cannot meet in person. If unable to be at the jam, you are still encouraged to submit a photo. It lets us know you are well.

**Tune Correction** – Cincinnati Hornpipe has been revised. The last measures of each part was short by one count. Either mark your paper copy or check Dropbox for the corrected version.

**Tune Practice Video Project** – A March ZOOM meeting gave this project some impetus. About 8 people have committed to doing at least one video. Any SSDS tune from the regular repertoire or After-Hours tune can be used. I ask that I be informed what tune is being done in order to coordinate efforts and avoid duplication. Once recorded, the tune is saved to Dropbox, Karen Turner is notified and then puts it on the club's YouTube channel. So far there are approximately 30 videos in the library.

You can **support this project** in a number of ways.

1 - Check out the tunes and give me your feedback.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Thursday, April 15 at 7:00**  
**Live SPIRIT JAM on Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2641846032714862>

## VP - BUSINESS NOTES ~ Stephen Beck

2 - Let me know what tune you would like to see a video of.  
3—Consider doing a recording yourself. I have a guideline handout and would be happy to talk you through the process.

**Pop-up Jams** – are just around the corner. In keeping with CDC guidelines, they will be limited to maximum of 15-16 people. If everyone is vaccinated, we won't need to wear masks. Jams will almost always take place between 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Thursdays. However, it will be weather dependent, so the day may change. The locations will vary to accommodate the wide area of the club's membership. If you have a suggestion for a location, note that there needs to be adequate parking, shade, and bathrooms. No snacks will be served, but you are welcome to bring your own. You will also need to provide your own chair if you need one. Notify me if you want notification (they will be tailored to people who want to jam and sorted by geographical needs).

**Miscellaneous Music** – one of the outcomes of the Spirit Jam has been the sharing of tunes from other groups and parts of the country. Each Spirit Jam has had a "theme" to which participants have enjoyed contributing a tune choice and sending a copy of the arrangement they use. In some cases, I had to track down a tunewriter for permission. All have been gracious, encouraging and delighted that we are playing their music. The blessing is discovering what is being played in other places, increasing the number of "After-Hours" tunes, and adding to the variety of our tune library. I am interested in your feedback. Has there been a new tune that you particularly like or have worked on to add to your personal playlist? Our guests have commented on particular SSDS tunes they like, but there have been few comments on the tunes themselves from SSDS players.

..... Marsha [mtkoz72@gmail.com](mailto:mtkoz72@gmail.com) 734-239-4190

## TREASURER ~ Judy Pyrkosz

There are still several members with outstanding dues. We are trying to finish this up so that we can close out 2020 – I'm sure we all want to see that year gone. Also, I listed the wrong address in my last article. The correct address for payment of dues is:

SSDS  
PO Box 51446  
Livonia, MI 48151

This will be my last Treasurer's report. I have developed severe health issues that require me to step down as Treasurer. I've enjoyed the job and wish I could continue, but find that I cannot. Gerry Kustra has graciously agreed to step in and take over the position. Thank you Gerry. Thanks to all for your support and compliments.

..... Judy [jpyrkosz@yahoo.com](mailto:jpyrkosz@yahoo.com) 734-525-3553

**Playdate performers are required to have the COVID vaccination before June, and will have to show their card. We will be required to also have our temperature taken before entering the events facility.** \*\* This is our clients requirement.

In order to perform with Silver Strings, one must be a member in good standing, i.e., you must have **paid your membership renewal for this year**. There are a few people who I know who like to perform but have forgotten to renew.



## We need YOU

### Business Manager Job Description.

- Book playdates and send out Letters to clients and invoices.
- Announce playdates at SSDS meetings, email, and in Newsletter.
- Determine appropriate clothing (Casual dress or Victorian costumes) for playdates.
- Sign up members for playdates (at meetings or by email).
- Make sure members have directions to playdates.
- Confirm member attendance for playdate approximately 1 week before by sending reminders.
- Determine a seating arrangement at playdates and assist or delegate another member. Direct members where to sit if necessary.
- Start tunes at playdates or delegate another member(s) to start tunes.
- MC Playdates or delegate another member(s).
- Collect playdate monies and submit to Treasurer on a timely basis.
- Administer CD's and Tape sales at playdates and submit monies to Treasurer.
- Keep track of player attendance at playdates, determine player pay; submit to Treasurer on a quarterly basis.
- Create playlists monthly or delegate another member. If there is a Music Director, this would be their responsibility.
- Submit playlist to Newsletter Editor monthly - Write VP Business article for Newsletter monthly.
- Attend Executive Board meetings.
- Assist President at SSDS jams and meetings when needed.
- Take over for President at SSDS jams and meetings if he or she is absent.

\*\*\*Please contact me if you have any questions.

.....Steve [sbeck@beck-enterprise.com](mailto:sbeck@beck-enterprise.com) 313-701-7539

*Since there is nothing going on, there really isn't much to say. So I decided to share some history of our favorite instruments in traditional circles. Here is the first... HISTORY OF THE AUTOHARP.*



**The Autoharp** is a musical stringed instrument having a series of chord bars attached to dampers which, when depressed, mute all the strings other than those that form the desired chord. Despite its name, the autoharp is not a harp at all, but a chorded zither.

There is debate over the origin of the autoharp. A German immigrant in Philadelphia by the name of Charles F. Zimmermann was awarded US patent 257808 in 1882 for a design for a musical instrument that included mechanisms for muting certain strings during play. He named his invention the "autoharp". Unlike later autoharps, the shape of the instrument was symmetrical, and the felt-bearing bars moved horizontally against the strings instead of vertically. It is not known if Zimmermann ever commercially produced any instruments of this early design. Karl August Gütter of Markneukirchen, Germany, built a model that he called a "Volkszither," which most resembles the autoharp played today. Gütter obtained a British patent for his instrument circa 1883 - 1884. Zimmermann, after returning from a visit to Germany, began production of the Gütter design in 1885, but with his own design patent number and catchy name. Gütter's instrument design became very popular, and Zimmermann has often been mistaken as the inventor.

The term "Autoharp" was registered as a trademark in 1926. The word is currently claimed as a trademark by U.S. Music Corporation, whose Oscar Schmidt division manufactures Autoharps. The USPTO registration, however, covers has expired. In litigation with George Orthey, it was held that Oscar Schmidt could only claim ownership of the stylized lettering of the word Autoharp, the term itself having moved into general usage. As a consequence, for instance, Autoharp Quarterly is able to register its own mark using the word Autoharp in its generic sense, and Orthey instruments (and other manufacturers) can market their instruments as "Autoharps".

Modern autoharps have 36 or 37 strings, although some examples with as many as 47 strings, and even a rare 48-string model exists. They are strung in either diatonic (1, 2 or 3 key models) or chromatic scales. Standard models have 15 or 21 chord bars, or buttons, available, a selection of major, minor, and dominant seventh chords. These are arranged for historical or systemic reasons, as for example:

Eb Bb F C G D A

F7 C7 G7 D7 A7 E7 B7

Ab Bb7 Cm Gm Dm Am Em

Although the autoharp is often thought of as a rhythm instrument for playing chordal accompaniment, modern players can play melodies on the instrument. Diatonic players are able to play fiddle tunes by using open-chording techniques, "pumping" the damper buttons while picking individual strings. Skilled chromatic players can perform a range of melodies.

Diatonically strung single key instruments are known for their lush sound, accomplished by doubling the strings for individual notes. Since the strings for notes not in the diatonic scale need not appear in the string bed, the resulting extra space is used for the doubled strings, resulting in fewer damped strings. Two- and three-key diatonics compromise the number of doubled strings to gain the ability to play in two or three keys, and to permit tunes containing accidentals which could not otherwise be rendered on a single key harp. A three-key harp in the circle of fifths, such as a GDA, is often called a festival or campfire harp, as the instrument can easily accompany fiddles around a campfire at a festival in their favored keys.

Prior to the 1960s there were no pickups to amplify the autoharp other than a rudimentary contact microphone which had a poor-quality, tinny sound. A bar magnetic pickup was designed by Harry DeArmond, and manufactured by Rowe Industries. Roger Penney of Bermuda Triangle Band was the first to introduce the electric autoharp to the public, as described in a 1968 Variety article. In the 1970s Oscar Schmidt introduced their own magnetic pickup. A synthesized version of the autoharp, the Omnichord, was introduced in 1981, and is now known as the Q-Chord and described as a "digital songcard guitar".

The first line of autoharps produced in America consisted of at least three styles, the 3-, 4-, and 5-bar models with plain bars. One early catalog shows only these models. Whether this was an abbreviated catalog or if it represented the entire line is not known. Within the first three years of production, if not from the beginning, the line included one 4-bar model with "shifter" bars, two 5-bar "shifter" models, and a 6-bar "shifter" model. These instruments were made in Philadelphia, in the shop of German-born American C.F. Zimmermann, who in 1882 obtained an American patent for an attachment gizmo he proclaimed constituted "an improved method for playing a harp". The total package, a zither or harp-like instrument outfitted with this gizmo, was referred to as an "autoharp". However, both the instrument and more importantly the bar action pictured and described in the patent differ significantly in form from the autoharp as we know it. The body shape is symmetrical, and the felt-bearing bars that silence certain strings move horizontally, rather than vertically.

The date of British patent appears to have been granted in 1883 or 1884. Though Zimmermann's patent predates this one, a couple of points need to be kept in mind: (1). Zimmermann's 1882 patent did not represent the instrument now known as an autoharp. (2). The patent grantee was German and the patent was British. It seems likely that an earlier patent was granted in his home country, but it is very unlikely that any record of it will ever be found.

So how do we get from Zimmermann being granted a patent for an instrument that is not the autoharp as we know it (1882) to Zimmermann beginning production of the autoharp as we know it (c. 1885), for which a British patent had been granted to a German inventor in 1883 or 1884?

Both the German instrument and the one featured in Zimmermann's patent are small zither-type instruments which make chords by muting certain strings, by means of manipulating wooden bars with blocks of felt attached to them. It appears Zimmermann saw the German instrument before he applied for the 1882 patent. Otherwise, we have to believe that *two* such instruments were invented independently of each other within a couple of years.

It seems certain that the action of the instrument in Zimmermann's patent would have been functionally inferior to that of the German instrument. In the years from 1882, when the first patent was granted, to about 1885, when production actually began, it seems likely that Zimmermann realized his patent instrument was a failure, that he experimented with trying to improve on it, but that he eventually gave up and began production of the German instrument in unaltered form before some other enterprising American did.

However, it appears he was reluctant to totally abandon his horizontal approach to muting strings and that he had also experimented with incorporating the idea into the design of the German instrument as an improvement. The result was the addition of "shifters" to the chord bars. These shifters allow each chord bar to produce more than one chord. They do so by means of manipulating metal tabs attached to the bars, which cause a separate set of felt blocks to move *horizontally*, muting and un-muting certain strings. The shifters appeared very early on; examples of all shifter bar models bearing appointments of the very first type are known. This suggests that Zimmermann's experiments with them probably began sometime before the commencement of American autoharp production.

Around 1893, the autoharp factory moved to Dolgeville, New York, bought by Alfred Dolge, a German-born piano parts manufacturer. It was at the Dolgeville factory that the autoharp first donned its now-familiar cloak of black. The Philadelphia location had been a productive one; a booklet from around 1889 states that "50,000 have been sold in the first three years following its introduction". The autoharp's second home, the Dolgeville factory, was even more productive. As a result, 19th century instruments are abundant enough that examples in fine structural, functional, and cosmetic condition are still to be found. Some of the most imaginative decals ever to adorn autoharps were of Dolgeville birth, and the firm reached the height of functional refinement with the "concert grand" and "parlor grand" models.

Though extremely productive, the company enjoyed a very short lifespan of only about 6 years.

Beginning around 1910, the Phonoharp Company of East Boston began manufacturing the autoharp. The company originally produced an instrument patented in 1891 called the Phonoharp, became established later in the 1890s as the producer of the Columbia chord-zither, and in the 1920s produced the Bosstone ukelin. The Phonoharp Company also produced the Marxophone and the Celestaphone.

The Phonoharp Company introduced nothing new, functionally, to the autoharp, but only produced some of the pre-existing models that had been pioneered at Philadelphia and Dolgeville. However, the company did leave its mark in the ornamentation category. The Phonoharp Company's tail cover decals were the most imaginative and elaborate of any company that produced autoharps. The same decals also adorned the tail covers of their chord-zithers.

For a short time in the late 1920s, autoharps bore the name of the International Musical Corporation of Hoboken, NJ. The company's name appears on the labels of zithers and most of all ukelins. It appears that all their instruments were actually made at Oscar Schmidt's Jersey City factory. Sometime in the 1930s, the company was absorbed by Schmidt.

Finally, around the mid to late 1920s, we arrive at the best-known of the autoharp mass-producers, the Oscar Schmidt companies. Schmidt (and later, his successors) had affiliations with an army of "companies". Some were generic company names like "Manufacturers Advertising Company". Some were partnerships, one of the more notable being "Menzenhauer and Schmidt". (Menzenhauer was the holder of the original 1894 patent for the chord-zither. This relationship apparently originated around the turn of the 20th century.) Some of the Schmidt "companies" were even named after the particular instrument they produced, such as "The Hawaiian Art Violin Company". There were also business activities outside the realm of pin-tuned instruments; Schmidt's company produced guitars, and probably other instruments as well. It appears that sometime in the 1920s, all the manufacturing firms producing zithers, ukelins, and the like (with the exception of the Marx company) folded into Oscar Schmidt companies. Sometime in the 1930s, International Musical Corporation was swallowed by Schmidt. That company's name was retained in part, and the company names that resulted were "OS-International Corp." and later "OS-International, Inc.". The company continued to produce ukelins until the 1960s, chord-zithers into the 1970s, and autoharps which at least bear the OS name are still being manufactured to this day. In the time from about 1960 to the present, the company has introduced many new models.

*Information from Wikipedia website <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autoharp>*



A fun and well attended *virtual* Spirit Jam took place on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Join us in April when Marsha and Terry will host another fun jam on April 15, 2021 at 7 pm EDT. Be there! April Photo Collage – should include an animal or some representation of an animal (pet, picture, sculpture, aquarium, you at the zoo, or at a farm, in a barn). Have fun with this!

## Practice Tune Video Guide

1. Choosing a tune.
  - a. Pick one you know very well and are confident in playing. While the regular SSDS tunes have priority, any of the tunes we have played in the Spirit Jams are okay. They are tagged AFTERHOURS in Dropbox.
  - b. Check with Marsha to make sure nobody else is doing that tune before you go to the next step.
  - c. Review the elements of the tune:
    - i. Where on the dulcimer is the tune played – identify this for the viewer. Some tunes can be played in more than one place. Show where you play it.
    - ii. Hammering patterns – show the one you use. If you are left-handed, declare that your pattern is for a “lefty”, and that viewers can determine their own pattern as they learn the tune.
    - iii. Are there accidentals in the piece that determine hammering patterns – address that important aspect. For example, any tunes in the keys of D or G with G# or D# in them.
    - iv. Rhythm – is there syncopation, strathspeys, or rhythmic pattern that “makes” the tune. Ex: Cockles and Mussels is a very easy tune and without observing and playing the rhythmic patterns would be very boring. Hornpipes are another type of tune for which rhythmic patterns of the hornpipe should be noted because the music may not be written to show the hornpipe pattern.
  - v. Meter – is the tune 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8? Is it played “cut time?” Try to accent the first notes of a measure to help the viewer “feel” the meter.
    - vi. Tempo – begin the recording by playing the tune with the desired tempo you prefer to play it. This may be slower or faster than SSDS plays it. A moderate tempo works best for a practice video, that is okay.
2. Preparation.
  - a. Practice it as if you were making a recording, start by explaining what you are planning to do. This helps you become more comfortable when it's time to actually record.
  - b. Set your dulcimer up in a way that the viewer will be able to clearly see where you are playing. Use hammers that don't “disappear” into the HD.
  - c. Make sure your dulcimer is in tune.
3. Recording – TURN OFF YOUR PHONE RINGER! It is better to record indoors to avoid extraneous noise.
  - a. It is not unusual to need more than one “take”. Even professionals do.
  - b. Make sure the lighting is okay so there are few shadows across the dulcimer.
  - c. If you want to talk into the camera at the beginning, that is acceptable. But if not, that is okay, too.
  - d. The sequence of your recording should be:
    - i. Announce the tune and the key you are playing it in.
    - ii. Show the range (box) the tune is played in from lowest to highest.
    - iii. Play/demonstrate the tune at your usual playing tempo.
    - iv. Break down the A part and play note by note slowly – pay attention to any accidentals, where you may cross over a bridge, or options to play a note (ex: which A works best) in one or more places
    - v. Break down the B part and play note by note slowly.
    - vi. Play through the entire piece 2 or 3 times. First slowly, second a little faster and third, the recommended tempo. If a waltz, play it 2 times – one very slow and the second at the preferred tempo. Some waltzes are faster than others – like Viennese waltzes are usually much faster than most others.
  - e. You can set this up to record yourself or have someone help record you. This is up to you. Record in landscape view which comes out best for YouTube.
4. Finished recordings –
  - a. Save the recording to the file in Dropbox that Karen Turner has created. Video recordings are huge files and take a while to save/upload. Notify her by email that you are putting it in Dropbox. The SSDS Dropbox file has a limited capacity so if your file is not uploading properly, she may need to empty the Dropbox file to create room.
  - b. Let Marsha know when it is done so she can keep track of the project's progress and avoid duplication of effort.
5. Final Comments –
  - a. Timetable for the project – set your own personal deadline. However, the goal is to have as many SSDS tunes in the “library” as possible.

Copyrighted Tunes - focus on the non-copyright tunes first. If it is a copyrighted tune we have played at Spirit Jam, chances are we have permission to play and use it for educational purposes. Check with Marsha. [mtkoz72@gmail.com](mailto:mtkoz72@gmail.com) 734-239-4190 Rev. 3/27/2021

## Silver Strings Summer 2021 Playlist

D	Whiskey Before Breakfast/Mississippi Sawyer	3/3
D	Sandy River Belle	3
D	Bucket Man Blues	3
D	Black Mountain Rag	3
G	Westphalia Waltz	2*
Em	Road to Lisdoonvarna / Riding on Load of Hay	3/3
G	Yellow Bird	3
G	Red Apple Rag	3
G	Columbus Stockade Blues	3
G	Bellman's Jig	3
G	South Wind	3*
A	Hangman's Reel	3
Em	Dancing Bear	3
D	Over the Waterfall	3
D	John Ryan's Polka	5*
D	Ashokan Farewell	2*
D	Liberty	2
G	America the Beautiful	3**
G	God Bless America (repeat pt B 2 <sup>nd</sup> time thru)	2 1/2**
G	Yankee Doodle Boy / You're A Grand Old Flag	2/2**
	<b>Extras</b>	
D	Hey Polka	3
Em	Tamlin	4
G	Nail That Catfish to a Tree	3
<p>* 2<sup>nd</sup> time: HD's soft – feature other instruments  ** 2<sup>nd</sup> time – feature whistles</p>		

**Pocono Virtual Dulcimer Festival**  
2021

There's **NO** Such Thing  
as Too Many  
**DULCIMERS**

The 18th Annual ... & 1st!!!  
Pocono Virtual DulcimerFest...  
April 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 ... using Zoom  
<https://poconodulcimer.club/pocono-dulcimer-festival/>

**BERKELEY DULCIMER GATHERING Online**

WORKSHOPS!  
CONCERTS!  
CLASSES!

**MAY 14-16**  
**2021**

MOUNTAIN DULCIMER: AUBREY ATWATER  
HAMMER DULCIMER: ILACE MEARS  
STEVE EULBERG, HEIDI MULLER, ERIN MAE LEWIS,  
DJ HAMOURIS, DUSTY THORBURN, KAY BOLIN

<https://www.berkeleydulcimergathering.com>

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