

# UIC 2023

## 2nd UKULELE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



*Research on Performance, Composition,  
Pedagogy and Organology*

Conservatorio di Musica “Antonio Vivaldi”  
Alessandria (Italy) – October 27-28, 2023  
*Sala Abbà Cornaglia*

Program and Abstracts

Edited by Giovanni Cestino



# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

# PROGRAM

**Friday, October 27, 2023**

**13:00** Conference registration

**14:00** Welcome and institutional greetings

**14:30** Keynote presentation

*UKEtopia: Adventures in the Ukulele World*

**Jim Beloff**

**15:45** Paper session #1 (chair: Giovanni Cestino)

- *Teaching Ukulele: the Canadian Experience*  
**Marta Bianchi** *Conservatorio di Musica "A. Vivaldi" di Alessandria (IT)*  
**Peter Luongo** *independent scholar (CA)*
- *The Organization, Methodology, Challenges and Outcomes of an Online Ukulele Orchestra with Participants Aged 7 to 87 Years Old*  
**João Tostes** *independent scholar (BR)*
- *Some Considerations on Arranging Hawaiian Melodies as a Teaching Tool*  
**Davide Donelli** *Associazione "C. Monteverdi", Cologno Monzese (IT)*
- *Posture, Musculoskeletal Pathologies and What to Do to Prevent Them*  
**Alessandra Scalese** *Istituto Clinico Città Studi di Milano (IT)*

**18:15** Roundtable: *Ukulele Teaching* (chair: Giovanni Albinì)

**Byron K. Yasui** *University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (US)*

**Elisabeth Pfeiffer** *University of Surrey, Guildford (UK)*

**Peter Luongo** *independent scholar (CA)*

**Vinícius Vivas** *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (BR)*

**20:30** Conference dinner

## **Saturday, October 28, 2023**

**10:00** UIC 2021 Proceedings presentation

**11:00** Paper session #2 (chair: Giovanni Cestino)

- *Enhancing Music Education in Italian Primary Schools: a Proposal for Integrating Historic Methods and the Ukulele*  
**Serena Taretto** Conservatorio di Musica "A. Vivaldi" di Alessandria (IT)
- *Ernest Ka'ai and Ukulele Tone Production*  
**Elisabeth Pfeiffer** University of Surrey, Guildford (UK)
- *Just a Small Guitar?: The Ukulele in Mainstream Popular Music*  
**Kate Lewis** Brunel University, London (UK)

**14:00** Paper session #3 (chair: Giovanni Albin)

- *Ukulele as a Toy ... for Classical Composers*  
**Fabrizio Nastari** Eesti Muusika- ja Teatriakadeemia, Tallinn (EE)
- *Ukulele and Electronics: Pushing the Boundaries of the Repertoire for Ukulele*  
**Enrico Dorigatti** University of Portsmouth (UK)  
**Andrea Beggio** independent scholar (IT)

**15:15** Roundtable: *Composing for Ukulele: Challenges and Perspectives* (chair: Federico Favali)

- Andy Eastwood** independent scholar (UK)
- Choan Galvez** independent scholar (ES)
- Giorgio Colombo Taccani** Conservatorio di Musica "G. Verdi" di Torino (IT)
- Jim Dalton** Boston Conservatory at Berklee (US)

**17:00** Roundtable: *Ukulele Identities* (chair: Giovanni Cestino)

- Jim Beloff** independent scholar (US)
- Jim Tranquada** independent scholar (US)
- Kate Lewis** Brunel University, London (UK)
- Shawn Yacavone** independent scholar (US)

**19:00** Final Concert

**Jim Beloff and the Conservatorio "A. Vivaldi" String Quartet**  
**Isabella Sophie Paruzzo**

# CONCERT PROGRAM

**Saturday, October 28, 2023**

**19:00**

**Jim Beloff**

*Uke Can't Be Serious. A Concerto for Ukulele and Symphony Orchestra* (1999)

string quartet setting by Phillip Keveren (2015)

**Jim Beloff** *ukulele*

**Conservatorio "A. Vivaldi" String Quartet**

**Michele Ruggieri** *violin*

**Matteo Rolando** *violin*

**Francesco Calandrina** *viola*

**Giulia Roveta** *cello*

...

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

*Prelude from the Cello Suite No.1 in G major, BWV 1007*

arr. by Giovanni Albini

**Consuelo Velázquez**

*Bésame Mucho*

arr. by Giovanni Albini

**Leonard Cohen**

*Hallelujah*

arr. by Isabella Sophie Paruzzo

**Isabella Sophie Paruzzo** *ukulele*

# **CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS**

**Marta Bianchi**

*Conservatorio di Musica "A. Vivaldi" di Alessandria (IT)*

**Peter Luongo**

*independent scholar (CA)*

## Teaching Ukulele: the Canadian Experience

In this paper we will consider the ukulele as an effective instrument for teaching music literacy. (Colwell and Rundell 1965) We will consider the Canadian experience as a model of excellence in classroom education (see Greenberg 1992; Pulley 1953) as we highlight the extended period of success with this approach and the extensive number of students involved in the program.

We will begin with a brief history about the program's pioneer J. Chalmers Doane in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. (Trowsdale 1977) This will be followed by sharing details of Peter Luongo's thirty-five years experience teaching and refining the program in The Langley School District. Finally we will return to Nova Scotia to discuss James Hill's updated and revitalized version of the methodology which was developed in collaboration with his predecessors. (Hill and Doane 2009)

We will concentrate on Peter Luongo's practice of teaching as a significant model of Doane's approach. We will analyze pedagogical attributes such as the suitability of the ukulele for music instruction, the approach and lesson, and the effects of ensemble playing (Thibeault 2015) in order to verify their coherence as a method. (Hemsey de Gainza 1973, 24) We will focus on a foundational element of the program - the aspect of music making – that refers to the historical active methods. (Hemsey de Gainza 1973, 24) Indeed, this approach took the steps from the Kodaly and Orff methods, but the aim of this article is to verify the autonomy and completeness of this programme. (Delfrati 1989, 88, 113; Delfrati 2009, 8–15)

We will then move to James Hill's experience: after being Luongo's student, he went to Halifax and worked with Chalmers Doane to recreate his programme into the methodology called "Ukulele in the classroom".



In the end, we will look at the development of the methodology and the applicability of using the approach to adults and to the new digital tools.

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- Trowsdale, Campbell. "Innovation and Excellence: The Music Education System of Halifax, 1967-1976, Part I." 1977. *The Canadian Music Educator* 19, no. 1: 34–43.

**João Tostes**

*independent scholar (BR)*

## **The Organization, Methodology, Challenges and Outcomes of an Online Ukulele Orchestra with Participants Aged 7 to 87 Years Old**

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant challenge to the use of music as a proxy for social interaction and coping. The sudden lockdown forced many people to abruptly transition to digital forms of communication and engagement, a situation that was also experienced by groups of ukulele students. Therefore, an online orchestra was created, aiming to provide the ukulele students with an opportunity to develop their group practice skills, as well as motivating them to keep their learning in continuous development.

Despite the challenges to put the work into practice, as getting learners used to deal with professional level resources such as metronome, backing tracks and video recording standards, the efforts were all worth it since a large group of students was engaged in the preparation of each unique video that would then be an essential piece of a musical patchwork.

This study is aimed to present how this online ukulele orchestra was led, considering all the details, from the construction of the arrangements that would fit each of the various students' proficiency level, going through the online preparation lessons and rehearsals, as well as the resources that were provided for the participants' offline self-study and preparation, until the strategies for editing the final audio and video of the presentations, so that they would enrich each participant's real participation in the orchestra.

## References

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**Davide Donelli**

*Associazione "C. Monteverdi", Cologno Monzese (IT)*

## **Some Considerations on Arranging Hawaiian Melodies as a Teaching Tool**

The ukulele is a “migrant” (Vitale 2001) and “transcultural” (Tranquada 2012) musical instrument, that has demonstrated remarkable versatility and adaptability due to the many “encounters” it has had with different musical cultures throughout its history. This process—actually, a number of simultaneous processes—produced a wide range of styles, performance techniques, artistic contexts, a great variety in the construction features, but also a multifaceted repertoire. Within this repertoire, arrangement represents a technique of central importance and widespread use (Albini forthcoming).

In this article, I will present some aspects of my ongoing research on designing a method for the standard ukulele based on arrangements of “traditional” Hawaiian melodies. Performing a kind of auto-ethnography of my work, I will analyze how this project relates with historical methods (such as Ka’ai 1939), and how my compositional choices develop similar techniques and aesthetic features. Furthermore, I will discuss how such a teaching resource can spark greater interest in the Hawaiian heritage of the ukulele in young performers, and how this connects to more layered questions about the instrument’s aura, identity, and the many narratives related.

## References

Albini, Giovanni. Forthcoming. "A Musical Pocket Knife: the Ukulele's Unique Arranging Features." In *Research Paths in the Ukulele. Proceedings of the First Ukulele International Conference – Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Performance, Composition, and Organology (3-4 December, 2021)*, edited by Giovanni Cestino and Giovanni Albini. Milano: Milano University Press.

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Tranquada, Jim and John King. 2012. *The 'Ukulele: A History*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

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**Alessandra Scalese**

*Istituto Clinico Città Studi di Milano (IT)*

## Some Considerations on Ukulele Playing from a Medical Perspective

Musicians use their hands and the whole body to produce a great form of art: they adopt position and develop compensating movements to facilitate their playing, sometimes without considering the physiological balance of the muscles or biomechanics. For this reason it is paramount to stress the importance of a good posture, because it is a condition where the musculoskeletal apparatus of the whole body is in physiological equilibrium and this could lead to the preservation of a good function and a physiological use of articulation and muscles.

PRMDs are the Playing-related Musculoskeletal disorders. We can distinguish five grades of these pathologies and different types of pathologies, especially: muscle-tendon unit overuses or misuses syndromes, muscle imbalance, nerve entrapment, focal dystonia and bone, joint and bursal injuries. It is important to recognize them and treat them as soon as possible so as to prevent them from getting worse. But it is even more important to prevent them in the first place. Posture is clearly important, but it is not the only risk factor. We can recognize other factors: a change of technique or instruments, intense preparation, overly strenuous repetition, sudden increase in duration or intensity, prolonged performance without rest, lack of warm up or combination of these factors.

But what about the ukulele? Is there a right posture? Is there a way to prevent the onset of these diseases? Probably, there are a lot of right postures and it depends on the size of the instruments, the personal qualities and the style with which we are playing, but it is important to keep on mind some fundamental concepts: some fundamental concepts, such as the correct posture of the spine, shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand, which is useful in the prevention of musculotendineous pathologies, but capable of guaranteeing the correct physiology of the joints, muscles and tendons and, at the same time, the expressive capacity, speed and typical virtuosity of each style.

## References

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**Serena Taretto**

*Conservatorio di Musica "A. Vivaldi" di Alessandria (IT)*

## **Enhancing Music Education in Italian Primary Schools: a Proposal for Integrating Historical Methods and the Ukulele**

In this paper I will present a proposal to optimize the achievement of the main objectives of music education in the first-grade classes of the Italian primary school. For this purpose, the proposal is based on some fundamental elements of chironomy as developed by Kodály (1979), the use of the voice from the Goitre method (Staiano et. al. 2013), the Orff-Schulwerk instruments (Orff 1977), and movement in music education as theorized by Jacques-Dalcroze (1986), with the addition of the introduction of the ukulele. In recent decades, various experiments have been made for the use of the ukulele in education (Zulian 2016; Conado 2011), but the literature does not show any contributions that elaborate an explicit connection between historic methods and the ukulele.

Therefore, a project consisting of 28 lessons will be presented, built around the unique pentatonic potential of the ukulele in re-entrant tuning. In addition to a preliminary introduction to instrumental techniques and singing activities, rhythmical activities and spoken choruses will be included to promote the internalization of pulse, the distinction between sound and silence, and the introduction to polyphony mediated by the use of spoken or percussive ostinatos that employ the available instruments, primarily the ukulele, in ways that are also distant from the traditional approach to the instrument. It is expected that the use of an instrument with the aforementioned characteristics will facilitate music learning, improvisation, creative use of voice and instrument and enhancing the abilities of intonation and recognition of certain intervals.



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**Elisabeth Pfeiffer**

*University of Surrey, Guildford (UK)*

## Ernest Ka'ai and Ukulele Tone Production

This paper investigates how ukulele tone is produced and which factors contribute to an inherently "Hawaiian" sound on the instrument.

Strumming hand techniques as found in three method books by Ernest Ka'ai are categorised, analysed and compared. The techniques described in the method books are subsequently applied to practice. This practical research finds that idiomatic strumming patterns often employ irregular strumming motions between the 12th and the 16th frets of the ukulele. Irregular strumming motions sometimes misplace accents in a bar, producing various characteristic strumming patterns. Accented up-strokes frequently combine nail and flesh sounds, while soft and light strumming with the index finger of a rather open and flat strumming hand allows for a combined nail and finger tip sound on the index finger on occasion.

Additionally, this paper assembles a collection of early ukulele strumming patterns and thus serves as resource for more research, teaching or composing.

### References

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**Kate Lewis**

*Brunel University, London (UK)*

## **Just a Small Guitar?: The Ukulele in Mainstream Popular Music**

Similar to the guitar in many ways, the ukulele is an instrument that has been a feature of popular music since the early 20th century. However, to date, little if any academic attention has been paid to the instrument within the genre.

The aim of this paper will be to offer a brief survey of the history and repertoire of the ukulele in mainstream popular music. The paper will also offer an initial analysis of the musical roles and function of the instrument in popular music, drawing on the work of Moore (2012).

Finally, the paper will consider issues of authenticity and representation surrounding the instrument.

## References

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**Fabrizio Nastari**

*Eesti Muusika- ja Teatriakadeemia, Tallinn (EE)*

## Ukulele as a Toy ... for Classical Composers

The ukulele has historically often been associated with a playful dimension; proposed and successfully sold by companies as a toy (Tranquada 2012) it is often still considered as one; The purpose of this paper, from the perspective of a composer, is to debate whether this view is a condemnation or an asset. It is clear that the ukulele is a musical instrument in its own right; there are professional performers and composers that write for it, and high level educational programs. Nevertheless, the ukulele was used for comedy and entertainment purposes throughout the last century, and the image of the toy-instrument is still strong (Muir 2023); this aspect can open interesting reflections for instance: can the image of a toy influence how we perceive the sound, the timbre of the ukulele? How, then, the approach of a composer changes?

It is well known that the use of the verb “play” when talking about music is typical of various languages (e.g. French, Spanish, German, etc.), yet performers are not playing a game. To enter in this grey area and to understand the concept of “game” in a musical context, it is worth to discuss the concept of musical toys; in various articles and books about video games composition, the term “musical toy” refers to a software or interfaces; then, if we consider a tool for composers as a toy, can a musical instrument be a composer’s toy too?

This question brings us to briefly discuss actual existing compositions for musical toys. Firstly we will consider John Cage’s *Suite for Toy Piano* and other recent compositions (e.g. *Bicycle Lee Hooker* by Erik Griswold); eventually, starting from Arvo Pärt’s interview (Smith 1999), we will reflect on the artistic activity seeing as a game.

Linking ukulele’s music to the idea of musical toys and finally to the work of the composer, this article will describe examples of my own as well as others’ compositions (e.g. *Pappagalli Verdi* by Fabrizio Nastari, *Symphonies of Toy Instruments* by Fabian Svensson, *Fragile* by Danilo Gervasoni) to clarify how the concept of game could be a key to create new music and for interpreting a composition.

## References

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**Enrico Dorigatti**

*University of Portsmouth (UK)*

**Andrea Beggio**

*independent scholar (IT)*

## **Ukulele and Electronics: Pushing the Boundaries of the Repertoire for Ukulele**

The ukulele has long been considered “a popular or folk instrument rather than a serious classical instrument” (Muir and Albini 2021, 310). However, in recent times, it has been established a tendency directed towards exploring and establishing the ukulele as a classical, “serious” instrument. This current is multifaceted and, besides the traditional and theoretical academic research, it is also composed of an important practical thread. In turn, this latter is primarily divided into arranging historical repertoire for this instrument on the one side and commissioning new pieces written specifically for it on the other. Within this scope, an emblematic and remarkable example is given by composers and performers such as Giovanni Albini, Donald Bousted, and Samantha Muir. Their theoretical research on the instrument and dissemination is the tip of their works, which are heavily grounded in both arranging existing repertoire of different genres and styles and commissioning new pieces written specifically for ukulele.

This, however, meant the composers had the possibility to really dig into not only the possibilities the instrument offers per se (e.g. by detuning it); they were also allowed to contextualize its usage within our contemporary, technology-soaked musical context, extending the ukulele capabilities, also through means attributable to the concept of new lutherie (Verrando 2012). This scenario saw the creation of pieces for, as an example, amplified detuned ukulele and live electronics (Beggio 2020), tape (Beggio 2021), ukulele and web app (Barberis 2020), amplified ukulele and effects (Rawski 2021; Tundo 2022), and ukulele and electronics (Dorigatti 2023).

Focusing specifically on the new scores for ukulele and electronics composed by the two authors, this proposal aims to highlight the strategies adopted, especially concerning the electronic part, and the



expressive possibilities this unusual combination offers. Likewise, it will investigate the unconventional methods of notation that have been determined by the relationship between the instrument and the electronic counterpart.

## References

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Jim Tranquada *independent scholar (US)*

### Special Guest

Jim Beloff



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