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Book of Abstracts
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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From Hawaii to the London Blitz: A Genealogy of Hawaiian music in WWII British Military Morale

How did Hawaiian ukulele rhythms end up entertaining British soldiers in WWII? As George Formby sang “you should see me out in France wearing my tin hat,” asking us to “imagine me in the Maginot line,” his work was deployed by the UK military to raise morale during WWII. By 1946, he had played live in front of 3m personnel in the front lines and many more workers back in the UK. This raises two interlinked historical questions. Firstly, how Formby came to learn Hawaiian ukulele soloing techniques such as the split stroke. Secondly, how, despite his famed irreverence to authority, the British military came to embrace Formby’s music and persona to raise morale. These interrelated questions are vital to understand the artistic, institutional, and social dimensions of ukulele music in their intersection with conflict and identity in WWII.

These questions are addressed through two genealogical intellectual histories. These analyse single intellectual historical events, particularly the adoption of the split stroke technique and the military use of Formby’s persona for morale purposes, and then trace their presence and impact in subsequent historical instances. The first genealogy offers an intellectual history of Formby’s ukulele practice, following people, sounds, and annotations to document the musical methodological link between Formby and Ernest Ka’ai, via Alvin and Kelvin Keech (1921–23). The second explores UK military archives (1938–40), revealing how, despite initial rejection due to Formby’s class and risqué reputation, the Army came to embrace Formby as a representative of the working class at war. In a twist of artistic history, Hawaiian rhythms were key to British morale in WWII; this research shows how Formby’s ukulele and its Hawaiian rhythms came to speak for England.

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Decoding Brazilian Ginga: New Pathways for the Ukulele in Performance and Pedagogy

This research presents an original contribution to the evolving role of the ukulele within Brazilian popular music.

While the instrument has not historically been part of genres such as Choro, Samba, or Maxixe, this study positions the ukulele not as a substitute for traditional instruments, but as an emergent timbral and harmonic voice with its own expressive possibilities.

Employing a dual methodological framework—comparative analysis and applied experimentation—this research draws on two ensemble contexts: a global online ukulele orchestra and an in-person Brazilian ensemble. These function as musical laboratories to investigate the ukulele’s affordances in relation to rhythmic phrasing, harmonic function, and idiomatic articulation. Special attention is given to its re-entrant tuning, short scale, and percussive attack, analyzing how these characteristics interact with traditional Brazilian rhythmic frameworks such as Choro, Samba (notably *Partido-alto*), and Maxixe. Laboratory findings are complemented by selected case studies of contemporary Brazilian artists, providing real-world insight into the instrument’s emerging applications.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the study introduces structured teaching strategies tested in international workshops. These focus on decoding and transmitting Brazilian rhythmic microtiming (commonly referred to as “ginga” or “swing”) through accessible didactic sequences, ensuring pedagogical accessibility without sacrificing musical authenticity. The resulting framework supports both technical development and cultural contextualization, facilitating engagement with Brazilian repertoire by non-native performers.

Ultimately, this paper establishes a new perspective on the ukulele’s role in transcultural dialogue, affirming its capacity to enrich

Brazilian musical practice and global music education—not by replacing tradition, but by expanding it.

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Why Play J.S. Bach's Violin Partitas on the Ukulele?

Johann Sebastian Bach's partitas for solo violin are part of the core repertoire of Baroque solo music and have been a touchstone for virtuosity, expressiveness, and musical understanding for centuries. Their artful combination of dance forms, contrapuntal density, and instrumental sound language makes them a fascinating body of work – even beyond their original instrumentation.

This project asks: What happens when these works are played on the ukulele? An instrument that, although not historically associated with the European art music canon, has increasingly established itself as a serious solo instrument in recent years. The aim of the transcription is not merely the technical implementation of the musical text on a differently tuned, four-stringed instrument, but the exploration and perception of a new sound ideal. With its clear articulation, warm, percussive sound, and high mobility, the ukulele offers a unique perspective on this music. It opens up intimate, almost chamber music-like interpretations and at the same time presents interesting challenges in terms of fingering, voice leading, and tonal balance.

A part of the project is the instrument-specific comparison between the violin and the ukulele. The tonal, technical, and structural differences between the two instruments are deliberately reflected upon: while the violin is characterized by bowing, dynamic variety, and smooth tone transitions, the ukulele thrives on its clear tone separation, percussive response, and harmonically oriented playing approach. The tuning of the two instruments also differs significantly: the violin is tuned in fifths (G–D–A–E), while the ukulele – in this case played with a low G string – is tuned in fourths or thirds (G–C–E–A). Compared to the classical re-entrant tuning, this tuning allows melodic lines to be realized much closer to the original in their pitch and phrasing. This opens up new possibilities in both the tonal design

and the structural layout of the transcription, which respectfully preserve the character of the Baroque original while translating it into the idiomatic sound space of the ukulele.

The project sees itself as a dialogue between early music and contemporary practice. The aim is not to imitate the partitas “faithfully,” but to reinterpret them through the lens of today’s understanding of the instrument—with respect for the structure, but also with artistic freedom in the use of sound, phrasing, and expression.

As part of the presentation, selected movements from the partitas will be performed live to give the audience a direct experience of the tonal realization of the transcription decisions. The combination of reflection and practice is intended to illustrate how music-theoretical, technical, and tonal-aesthetic considerations are concretized in actual performance practice.

The ukulele does not compete with the violin, but represents an independent voice that illuminates Bach’s music with new colors. This makes it clear that great music can touch us in many different ways—even where we might not initially expect it.

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Rote versus Note Learning for Rhythmic Accuracy in Beginner Ukulele Students (Aged 8–10): A Motor Learning Perspective

This randomized controlled study compared “rote learning” (imitative) and “note learning” (notation-based) approaches for teaching rhythmic accuracy to beginner ukulele students (aged 8–10) in Malaysia. Despite the instrument’s rising classroom popularity, empirical comparisons of instructional methods remain scarce in Southeast Asia.

Sixty children with no prior ukulele experience were randomly assigned to rote ($n = 30$) or note ($n = 30$) groups. No home practice was permitted to control external variables. Over four 45-minute small-group sessions, participants learned two strumming patterns: four crotchet beats (down) and eight quaver beats (down-up). Post-intervention accuracy at 80 bpm and 120 bpm was evaluated by three independent assessors. Results showed no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between groups, suggesting both methods support foundational rhythmic accuracy. However, slower tempos (e.g., 80 bpm quavers) were more challenging, highlighting tempo’s role in motor coordination.

These findings align with motor learning principles, linking Stetson’s early theory of sensorimotor experience (Stetson, 1905) with contemporary schema theory (Schmidt & Lee, 2019), which emphasizes variability and feedback in skill generalization. This integration reflects how structured, in-class practice without home reinforcement can foster basic strumming proficiency.

The study also confirmed that focused in-class practice can suffice for basic proficiency. For educators, these results validate rote learning as a practical alternative to notation-based instruction for simple strumming patterns. This study contributes novel insights to ukulele pedagogy, particularly in under-researched Malaysian contexts.

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Self-Regulated Learning in the Music Classroom

Self-regulated learning (SRL) involves active, constructive processes in which students generate thoughts, feelings, and actions to achieve personal goals. In Aotearoa New Zealand, there is a strong policy and pedagogical interest in promoting student agency via the promotion of SRL strategies in the classroom.

The ukulele has a rich heritage throughout the Islands of the Pacific, including Aotearoa New Zealand, where it plays an important role in supporting students to realise their musical potential in schools across the country. This research investigates how primary teachers promote SRL through ukulele-based music instruction, drawing on Zimmerman's (2013) model of SRL. Using an interpretive qualitative intrinsic case study design, Phase One involved 25 semi-structured interviews with teachers in generalist, specialist, and classroom release roles across rural and urban schools. Phase Two, involving classroom observations of purposively selected Phase One participants, is about to commence and is expected to be reported at this conference.

Despite formidable challenges, preliminary findings reveal that teachers are adept at supporting students to realise their musical potential in diverse settings via the ukulele. SRL is actively promoted through co-regulation (teacher–student and peer–peer interactions) and socially shared regulation (with the class functioning as an ensemble). Additionally, emerging culturally responsive pedagogies—such as *rangatiratanga* (student autonomy), *tuakana/teina* (peer mentoring), and *mahitahi* (collaboration)—are shaping the implementation of SRL through ukulele instruction in Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms.

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Changing Strings and Building Bridges: Creating Ukulele Music Exams for Swiss Music Schools

Although many musicians, educators, and authors around the world work hard for the ukulele and its image, there is still a lack of educational programs at music schools and in the academic field. For instance, one cannot major in music with a focus on the ukulele, except for the Conservatory of Alessandria in Italy. As a result, well-trained ukulele players and qualified teachers are difficult to find for music schools. So, how can this situation be improved?

We start at the beginning and guide the young learners. By creating structured music exams for the ukulele, we can guide children through music education from an early stage—laying the groundwork for future university-level study, where one day it may be possible to major in music with the ukulele. What are the criteria when creating these music exams? What kind of literature should be taught? How do we set the bar?

These music exams for the Swiss music schools are divided into seven difficulty levels along with a well-thought-out curriculum. However, Level 7, which is intended as an entrance exam for a "pre-college" program, will be excluded for now, until university-level ukulele study becomes an option.

The workgroup is split into two groups: the core group, which designs the concept for the music exams, and the control group, which evaluates the feasibility and the accuracy of the content. According to literature research, there already exist similar music exams provided by LCME, ABRSM, and MTB in the UK.

This concept will be launched during the next music exams in 2026, which can also be considered as a test run. Subsequently, it will be evaluated by the core group after the first year and will be edited and optimized if needed. Through this initiative, we aim to eventually build

a bridge from the music school to the university and thus lead to more well-educated ukulele players and teachers.

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Peculiarities of Ukulele Teaching in Russia

The article examines the peculiarities of ukulele teaching in Russia within the context of its rapid popularization and integration into the national musical culture. For the purposes of this research, we conducted a survey among 44 ukulele teachers from Russia, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, as well as personal interviews. Through surveys of educators and historical analysis, key trends are identified that reflect the instrument's adaptation to Russian sociocultural realities. Emphasis is placed on the synthesis of classical methodologies for teaching string-plucked instruments (guitar, domra, balalaika) with modern pedagogical practices. The dominance of local repertoire—Russian folk songs, contemporary hits, and Soviet-era musical heritage—coupled with minimal incorporation of Hawaiian traditions (used by only 15% of teachers of focus group)—highlights a deliberate focus on cultural localization.

A critical role is attributed to online communities and digital resources, which have democratized access to learning, particularly in remote regions during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the persistent stereotype of the ukulele as a "stepping stone" to the guitar continues to undermine its professional recognition.

The article also addresses challenges in teaching children, such as the lack of age-appropriate repertoire for preschoolers and the necessity for educators to develop original instructional materials. Additionally, it underscores the ukulele's role in preserving cultural identity through its connection to state and folk holidays, as well as its integration into traditional folk orchestras.

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Developing Artistic Needs of the Younger Generation Through Online Teaching Ukulele

This paper (based on master's thesis of the same name, defended by author in July 2023 in Tambov State Musical Pedagogical Institute named after S.V. Rachmaninov) explores the development of artistic needs among young adults (25–44 years) through online teaching ukulele. The research addresses gaps in understanding how digital music learning fosters creativity, emotional engagement, and cross-cultural awareness.

The experimental work was conducted within the online community "Ukubanda" (among 80 participants) in 3 stages:

1. Introducing of criteria and levels for artistic needs development and initial evaluation.
2. Developing of methodological guidelines for playing the ukulele and learning programs.
3. Conducting of control diagnostic, selective semi-structured interviews, and learning outcome measurements for some participants to avoid potential bias.

Key findings reveal that structured online ukulele courses, particularly group-based formats with peer interaction and instructor feedback, significantly enhance artistic expression, musical literacy, and interest in diverse cultural traditions. Participants demonstrated increased motivation, improved technical skills, and broader engagement with other art forms (e.g., literature, visual arts). The study highlights the ukulele's role as a gateway instrument, reducing barriers to musical participation and fostering inclusive, supportive learning environments.

The developed thematic course "Lullabies of the World on Ukulele" exemplifies effective pedagogy, blending multicultural repertoire, historical context, and creative performance tasks. Post-experiment, 71.3% of participants achieved a "high" level of artistic development. Practical implications include adaptable frameworks for online art education and teaching strategies leisure preferences.

This work contributes to global discourse on digital music education, emphasizing the ukulele's potential as a tool for personal and cultural enrichment.

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The ‘Ukulele’s Interweaving Pedagogical, Social, and Relational Potential within an Amateur Adult Community Ensemble

The ukulele has emerged in research across many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, including wellbeing, leisure studies, social psychology, cultural studies, music education, and community music. As a social instrument, it has grown from its Hawaiian roots as an “instrument of the people” to now finding itself in pubs, schools, community spaces, and participatory events around the world (Tranquada & King, 2012).

It has also been successfully drawing in adults as an educational and social opportunity (Kruse, 2013, 2018; Secoy, 2016; Bannister, 2019; Lee & Southcott, 2020; Darbyshire & Green, 2022), including those who may not have engaged with music-making since childhood or are coming to music for the first time. These chameleon-like features have helped encourage the growth of communities of ukulele players around the world, and further to this, the development of amateur ukulele ensembles, employing a range of formal or informal frameworks on a spectrum of pedagogy and participation (Kinnunen, in press).

In a current study of an adult amateur community ukulele ensemble who have been together for over a decade, participants noted ways in which they were drawn to and felt connected to the instrument itself, as well as benefiting from the interaction and interdependency relationally in the musicking experience of the group.

Noting that analysis is still ongoing, this presentation will speak to the early results of this doctoral research study, exploring the ukulele as an actor in the space of interdependent and adaptive pedagogical, social, and participatory practice, and specifically the affordances of,

and the participants' personal connections to, the instrument itself in this adult learning space.

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Anne Ku

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What Concerns Ukulele Instructors: Professional Development Beyond FAQ

What started as a support group for isolated ukulele instructors and club leaders (during the pandemic) on Facebook has evolved into an international community of like-minded individuals to exchange teaching tips and resources, i.e., professional development.

This particular long-term experience of meeting each month on Zoom has encouraged a transfer of knowledge among professional music teachers as well as leaders of amateur ukulele clubs interested in “teaching opportunities.” Between August 2020 and May 2024, the 90-minute forum identified and invited experts to speak on curriculum design, repertoire selection, improvisation, accompaniment, rhythm and other music elements, and teaching strategies for students of different ages, taught as individuals and in groups.

The main themes were extracted and analyzed from indexed YouTube video recordings of the 39 Zoom meetings. Subsequent surveys, interviews, and focus groups were conducted to address and explore concerns such as what to teach in the first hour of a complete beginner adult class; curriculum outlines; must-know chords and derivation; multi-level skills in one class; prerequisite skills for participating in group jam sessions; elements and examples of improvisation as a teaching tool; extra-musical benefits such as building confidence and overcoming performance anxiety.

Participation in these forums has connected individuals in Europe, America, Asia, and Australia/New Zealand to compare and collaborate on musical endeavors such as publication of compositions and arrangements. It has brought new insight into different ways to teach instrumental ukulele, vocal accompaniment, and the ukulele as a means to teach music overall.

Danieli Machado Bezerra

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Uketerapia: The Ukulele and the Magic of the Collective

This research aimed to present the ukulele as an instrument for use in group relationships. We developed a historical record of the eight years of existence of the Ukulele Orchestra of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in the project "Toque e... se toque" (Touch and... Touch Yourself). We analyzed the emotional aspects defined by the members of the UFRJ Ukulele Orchestra and the performance of the Hawaiian instrument.

We conducted direct interviews with the members and the conductor and identified reflective possibilities that can help us understand the use of the ukulele in collective actions. We created the concept of uke therapy. We questioned what happens to individuals when they play the ukulele. What can we perceive in this movement between playing the ukulele and what this playing provokes in the individuals who play it? We obtained twenty-four responses from members (13) and former members (11) who completed the Google Forms questionnaire.

Our methodology was participant observation because, according to Tim May in *Social Research: Questions, Methods and Processes* (2004), research can establish "a multilateral and relatively lasting relationship with a human association in its natural situation for the purpose of developing a scientific understanding of that group" (May 2001, 177).

Among the main conclusions, we have the reflection that research takes us in different directions in understanding the authentic acts of making music, as Schurmann indicates in *Music as Language* (1988), where he signals new perspectives on communication, valuing music not understood only as a set of works produced by geniuses (Schurmann 1988, 185–186), "but also—and above all—the simple acts of communication that, at the level of social communication, can

be produced with the same ease as acts of speech” (Schurmann 1988, 186).

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Idiomatic Ukulele Tone Production and Its Contemporary Application

This recital presentation is based on the paper “Ernest Kaai and Ukulele Tone Production” (Pfeiffer, 2023), which investigates ways of ukulele tone production, as described in early 20th century ukulele method books, as well as the findings of a research trip to Hawaii in late 2024. By examining two contemporary arrangements and at least one contemporary composition, idiomatic and adapted strumming and picking techniques, are categorised, analysed and compared. As a result of my research on Hawaii and in Europe (and as part of my PhD studies) a web archive of ukulele playing techniques is currently being developed. The presentation will provide an early preview into the archive, its video motion studies and descriptions that will subsequently be provided to a broader audience of composers, players and teachers. The material on this website will provide an array of visually aided sonic options and the collected techniques are subsequently applied to practice. Early research result show that idiomatic means of tone production regularly employ distinct attributes like repetitive single finger strokes, irregular strumming motions, misplaced accents throughout a bar and a variety of so-called roll strokes.

In collaborative processes with various composers, new works for ukulele solo are examined for opportunities to apply the soundscapes produced by historic and contemporary ukulele techniques, as the focus shifts from broad musical decisions to minuscule sound decisions around micro situations in the early compositional stages of contemporary works, as well as early decisions made in arranging processes.

The illustrative live examples will show how idiomatic ukulele techniques are subsequently contrasted with playing techniques adapted from the guitar or the banjo, which have also always been

historically prevalent in the ukulele's development and are still widely used today.

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Techniques of the Solo Ukulele Performance Tradition

The solo ukulele performance tradition is one of several distinct traditions that have developed within the instrument. Understanding the musicianship required of it is essential for advancing both soloist pedagogy and performance.

This paper investigates the tradition through a multidisciplinary lens that draws primarily from musicology, ukulele scholarship, and performance studies. It argues that all performance traditions are defined by the interaction of syntactic parameters (melody, harmony, rhythm), statistical parameters (texture, tone, timbre, dynamics), and gestural elements (body movement and physical tension). Numerous ukulele performances are investigated to delineate the soloist tradition.

Prior definitions of the ukulele soloist are found to be incomplete: rather than a soloist being a performer who can play melody on the ukulele, the soloist is a performer who has a featured, leading role in a performance. Key musicianship techniques are identified from prior scholarship and re-examined, where chord-melody is reframed not as a tool for syntactic parameters, but as an approach to expressing statistical parameters.

Altogether, this research develops a framework to analyze solo performances to identify and understand the performance parameters that shape the tradition. To illustrate these concepts, a case study is conducted on Taimane Gardner's 2023 performance of "Star-Spangled Banner." The case study offers awareness on soloist playing techniques in the context of virtuosic folk songs; however, it alone is not a comprehensive analysis of the entire solo ukulele tradition.

Rather, this study concludes by calling for comparative analysis on ukulele soloists across genres and skill levels using this newly developed framework.

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Traces of the Ukulele in Early 20th-Century Italy: The Catanese Luthiery Tradition

This paper investigates the overlooked presence of the ukulele in Italy during the first half of the 20th century, with a focus on the vibrant luthiery tradition of Catania, Sicily. Rooted in artisanal practices influenced by professional schools established during the French occupation, Catanese instrument makers skillfully combined craftsmanship and entrepreneurship to develop a flourishing industry (D'Amico, 2023). While typically associated with guitars and mandolins, historical evidence shows that luthiers such as Puglisi Reale and Luigi Genovese also crafted banjos and ukuleles, responding to a growing international market (Sarica, 2004; Di Stefano et al., 2013).

Drawing on a range of archival sources—including export documents and price lists—this study delves into the dynamics and implications of this transnational network of production and trade, which positioned Italian luthiers within a broader global context (Antolfi et al., 2016), including the niche of ukulele manufacturing. These instruments circulated not only abroad but also within Italian popular culture, finding their place in barbershops and public squares, alongside the concurrent rise of jazz and American musical influences during the interwar period.

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The Ukulele and Ingenuity: A History of Intertwining Between Engineering and Ukulele Out of the Box of Traditional Luthiery

This paper offers an interpretative framework for examining the relationship between engineering and the ukulele. It begins by exploring how the ukulele may be classified from an engineering perspective, followed by a concise historical overview of technological innovations and special accessories aimed at simplifying the instrument's use beyond the boundaries of traditional lutherie.

The study outlines the contributions of key inventors between the 1920s and 1950s—Theodor Schmidt, John Mocrejs, Dean Solenberger, Charles H. Reed, and Mario Maccaferri—whose inventions aimed to enhance ukulele playability. Several representative devices developed to assist players in performing chords and songs are analyzed in terms of design complexity, effectiveness, limitations, and market reception. A technical-functional comparison is presented, based on the author's direct examination of rare instruments and accessories, both integrated (e.g., Juka Autoplay) and standalone (e.g., Reed Noteless Player).

Finally, the study proposes a stimulus for further inquiry: how these ukulele-focused inventions may have exerted influence on technological evolution in other industrial fields. For instance, in December 1939, Theodor Schmidt was in the USA in Detroit, Michigan, where he patented an automotive device (patent US 2291923) titled "Vehicle Signal Actuating Device," an electromagnetic actuator that allows the operation of two direction indicators. The system shows a complex of levers and hooks that resemble some lever components of the ukulele actuator of the previous patent.

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The Environmental Sustainability of Ukulele Production

The ukulele is one of the most popular instruments worldwide, with an estimated annual production of over 1.5 million units. Koa wood is traditionally used for crafting ukuleles. Luthiers have progressively expanded the range of woods, incorporating mahogany, rosewood, mango, black limba, and several other tree species.

Given the increasing strain on forest resources, the woods used in ukulele making must be sourced from sustainably managed forests. This aligns with the growing environmental awareness among society and, especially, musicians. Nevertheless, several tropical tree species used in ukulele making are included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Several challenges hinder the capacity of ukulele traders and players to understand the sustainability of an instrument, such as the under-differentiation of wood commercial names (two tree species with the same commercial name) and gaps in the traceability of timber.

While sourcing wood from certified forests is a promising solution, alternative strategies need to be explored to prevent further pressure on endangered tree species. This contribution identifies some key challenges related to the environmental sustainability of ukulele production and proposes some potential solutions. Those include: 1. experimenting with alternative tree species not traditionally used for stringed instruments, and 2. utilizing reclaimed wood.

The available scientific evidence on the feasibility and limitations of those approaches is critically reviewed from the point of view of a forestry expert. To guarantee a holistic approach to the analysis, relevant international conventions, technical, and informative literature (e.g., Swedberg, 2022) are also critically reviewed.

The research shows that, by adopting sustainable wood sourcing practices, the ukulele—fondly known as the "jumping flea"—can evolve into a symbol of the essential harmony between artistic expression and environmental preservation.

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