

## Dulcimer U Winter Weekend Instructor Biographies

### Larry Conger - Director - Mountain Dulcimer

Larry Conger and his wife Elaine are co-directors of Dulcimer U events at Western Carolina University. Larry is a full time, professional musician. He teaches private and group mountain dulcimer lessons online from his home in Gatlinburg, Tennessee and performs weekly at various locations around the area. A graduate of the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) Larry has been involved with music as a vocation for almost 40 years. Besides being a popular instructor at various dulcimer workshops around the country, Larry also served as a church music director for several churches during the late 1970s through the 1990s. He has been a participating artist for the Tennessee Arts Commission's Arts in Education program as well as the Kentucky Arts Council's Teacher Incentive Program, bringing dulcimer music into the public schools. In 1995, Larry won the Southern Regional Mountain Dulcimer Championship in Mountain View, Arkansas. Three years later in 1998, he won the prestigious National Mountain Dulcimer Championship in Winfield, Kansas. Larry has authored fifteen dulcimer books and has numerous recordings to his credit.



### Elaine Conger - Director - Mountain Dulcimer

Elaine is also one of our directors for Dulcimer U events. She and her husband, Larry work throughout the year to bring Dulcimer U together in July and Winter Weekend in January. Elaine is a professional music educator and Orff-Schulwerk specialist who has a passion for instilling a love for the arts in young people. Her years as a professional musician, combined with her experience as a classroom teacher give her a unique perspective when working with students. Her past musical experience includes touring with her own country band, performing on the General Jackson showboat at Opryland in Nashville and touring as pianist and back-up vocalist with country music superstar, Faith Hill. More recently, she has directed and accompanied numerous musical theater productions and even starred in a few herself. Her favorite role to date is as Patsy in "Always Patsy Cline." Elaine also serves as organist/music director for an Episcopal Church.



### **Judy House - Beginning Mountain Dulcimer**

Judy has been playing instruments and performing since she was 9 years old with everything from marching bands to gospel quartets to dulcimer ensembles! She received her first mountain dulcimer in 1995. A graduate of the first class for Teaching the Mountain Dulcimer from Dulcimer U at WCU, she has taught Mountain Dulcimer classes at Forsyth Technical Community College and The Shepherd's Center for older adults in Winston-Salem, NC, has a number of private students, and was added to the Dulcimer U staff in 2014 for the Teaching the Mountain Dulcimer core class. She has also been a presenter at dulcimer festivals for several years. A graduate of Campbell University, she has had an extraordinary variety of opportunities as an educator for over 40 years, teaching preschool through graduate level classes in North Carolina as well as planning and presenting staff development over much of the state. Teaching comes as naturally as breathing to Judy.



### **Laurie Alsobrook - Advancing Beginner Mountain Dulcimer**

After retiring from a 42-year teaching career, Laurie jumped into the dulcimer world with both feet as an instructor at the Dulcimer U Summer Week, Stephen Foster Dulcimer Retreat, and the Florida Folk Festival. In her third year as an electives instructor, Laurie also led a crew of enthusiastic advancing beginners at the daily Turtle Jam. She also led several late-night sessions that were at times rollicking and even raucous...but always fun! Her gentle spirit, patient demeanor and enthusiastic leadership makes her the perfect fit for Dulcimer U events.



### **Joe Collins - Mountain Dulcimer**

Dr. Joe Collins has been a folk musician and mountain dulcimer player since the late 70s. He is a songwriter and vocalist, still aspiring to improve at both. His primary musical love is the mountain dulcimer. In 2007, he won the National Mountain Dulcimer Championship held in Winfield, Kansas. Combining mountain dulcimer wizardry with good, solid vocals, he sprinkles his performances with a lot of humor - sure to bring a smile to audiences of all ages. Joe was promoted to full professor this past year at Gardner-Webb University where he teaches Discipleship Studies full-time in the Department of Religious Studies. He is an active member of his church, singing in the choir and sharing his expertise in Religious Education. He considers himself blessed when he is invited to share his music in festivals all over the country, but he especially enjoys talking with new people who are entering the dulcimer world for the first time!



### **Stephen Humphries - Hammered Dulcimer**

Stephen is a National Hammered Dulcimer Champion (2007), freelance percussionist, and music educator. At present, Stephen has released five albums as well as two instructional method books for students of the hammered dulcimer. Stephen and his wife, Taryn, reside in Chattanooga, TN, where Stephen serves as the instrumental music teacher and percussion instructor at Silverdale Baptist Academy. In addition to this position, Stephen also teaches as an adjunct professor of percussion at Covenant College and keeps a private studio of percussion and hammered dulcimer students in and around the Chattanooga area.



### **Jim Miller - Beginning Hammered Dulcimer**

Jim joins our Dulcimer U staff every summer and winter to lead the organized jams and teach classes. He is the true perennial of the staff, having been on staff for as long as anyone cares to remember. Jim has been playing and performing traditional music for more than 35 years. An accomplished instrument builder and teacher, he has taught workshops at numerous festivals as well as won many awards for his musicianship.



For twenty years, Jim was the owner of the Hampton Music Shop, in Hampton, Tennessee, where he handcrafted over 750 hammered dulcimers. He has played with Celtic, Bluegrass, Swing, Blues and Old Time bands, and has done session work on many recordings.

In addition to being an accomplished performer and workshop leader, Jim also is an enthusiastic jam facilitator (Jam-Meister, Master of the Jam, etc.) who likes to get everyone involved. He plays guitar, banjo, octave mandolin, bass, steel drum, percussion, autoharp, hammered and mountain dulcimers as well as his own off-the-wall musical inventions, which are always entertaining.

Jim holds a Master's degree in Elementary Education and has completed the course work for certification in music education. He recently retired from teaching 4th grade in Roan Mountain, Tennessee, where he was also leading an after school traditional string band program. He is still active as a teacher at East Tennessee State University, teaching dulcimer and autoharp in the Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music program.

### **Guy & Sharrie George - Hammered Dulcimer, ukulele, penny whistle**

Guy George is a multi-faceted musician with jazz influenced roots. He has made his mark in the dulcimer world as a performer, instructor, author/publisher and recording artist. His diverse playing style adds a different twist to the sounds of the hammered dulcimer, steel drum, pennywhistle, and saxophone, all of which he incorporates into his performances and teaching. A professional musician most of his life, Guy studied jazz performance, arranging and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Mass. He travels throughout the United States and Canada performing and teaching at various types of venues and festivals. His teaching style is relaxed and fun, as he teaches tunes of many different genres and styles. In



addition, he incorporates methods for more advanced practicing and playing techniques while simultaneously entertaining his students. Guy has authored 13 books arranged for hammered dulcimer, steel drum, pennywhistle, and other instruments. In demand in recording studios, Guy has recorded with some of the country's great dulcimer artists; Maddie MacNeil, David Moran and Joe Morgan, Tull Glazener, Doofus, Heidi Muller, Gary and Toni Sager, and Aaron O'Rourke. He also has one recording of his own, Dreamcastle. Guy and his wife, Sharrie now live in Daytona Beach, Fl. Where he plays at Tiki Bars, for weddings on the beach, and at various parties and events in the area. Guy and Sharrie also teach and perform at festivals across the country, as well as co-hosting the Florida Gulf Coast Dulcimer Retreat and the Castaway Cruise with Bing Futch and Richard Ash. Sharrie George, from Daytona Beach, Florida, has been playing music since her teens. She studied music at the College of Charleston, S.C., and plays guitar, ukulele, bass, and sings. She and her husband, Guy play in the Daytona Beach area at Tiki Bars, for weddings on the beach, private parties and local events, as well as teaching and performing at festivals around the country. Sharrie has taught guitar and ukulele at festivals including Key West Dulcimer Festival, Kentucky Music Week, Common Ground on the Hill in Maryland, Dulcimer U in Lake Junaluska, NC, Memphis Dulcimer Gathering, WinterCreek Family Reunion in Oklahoma, and John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, N.C.