The Art of Arpeggios

The Little Book of Right Hand Technique for the Ukulele

> _{by} Samantha Muir

20 exercises for the development of the right hand. With detailed fingerings and study notes.



ellenpham05@gmail.com 25 Sep 20

Index

- 1. Front Cover
- 2. Index
- 3. Introduction
- 5. The Right Hand Fingers
- 6. Study Notes
- 10. Exercise 1 and 2
- 11. Exercise 3 and 4
- 12. Exercise 5 and 6
- 13. Exercise 7 and 8
- 14. Exercise 9 and 10
- 15. Exercise 11 and 12
- 16. Exercise 13 and 14
- 17. Exercise 15 and 16
- 18. Exercise 17 and 18
- 19. Exercise 19 and 20
- 20. The Little Book Series
- 21.About Me

The Little Book of series of ebooks for ukulele focuses on instrumental arrangements of classical and traditional tunes. Booklets of pieces by Carulli, Sor, Carcassi, Guiliani and Songs and Sea Shanties are available to purchase as digital downloads from Gumroad and Payhip. Videos of the pieces can be seen on YouTube by visiting SamMuir Ukulele.

For more information please visit http://www.samanthamuir.com/ukulele-2/

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Introduction

As I continue my ukulele journey I find more and more players asking how to develop fingerstyle picking techniques. Having arranged six books of solo pieces for the ukulele I now realise that I have probably been putting the cart before the horse. What is really needed is a method that focuses solely on right hand development. The first exercises in this book were written for students who knew how to strum chords and now wanted to learn how to finger pick. I needed to find a simple and specific way of getting students to focus on what their right hand fingers were doing. After creating a few simple right hand exercises I realised I had the makings of a booklet to share with other ukulele players. Whether you are a complete beginner who has never picked, or picked up, a ukulele before, or an advanced player looking for some exercises to hone your picking technique I hope this booklet will help you.

The concept behind this bookelt is simple: in order to improve right hand technique it is best to focus totally on the right hand. So, it's time to give your left hand a holiday. Send it to the Bahamas! The exercises in this book are all written for open strings. Yep! That means no left hand fingers needed. You will be focusing 100% on which right hand finger you are using for each string. The left hand would be a distraction. The right hand drives the rhythm, creates the sound and articulation, controls the dynamics and enables projection. Your right hand is your voice.

There are twenty exercises in this booklet. It is just the tip of the iceberg! There are so many combinations of strings and fingers and so many rhythmic variations the possibilities are almost endless. All twenty are in 3/4 time. (Don't worry, part two in 4/4 time is coming.) I regard these exercises as something to include in your daily practise routine. It would be rather mundane to only work on right hand execises every day. Plus, your left hand is just having a holiday not going into retirement!

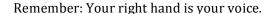
Choose one or two exercises a day and spend five to ten minutes of focused practise on each. Don't overdo it. The important thing is not how long you practise but how regularly you practise. To start with you will just be worried about getting the correct finger on the correct string but with repetition muscular memory will take over. As you feel more relaxed with the technicalities you will become more aware of the sound.

If you're not making a good sound then don't blame your ukulele. By working on these exercises you can start to take responsibilty for your sound. It is possible to make a relatively cheap ukulele sound beautiful.

Aim for fluency, evenness and projection. Learn to "see through your fingers." By this I mean learn to become aware of which finger is playing which string. Muscular memory is good but don't let your practise become mindless.

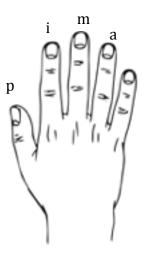
One of the most important things I ever learned was during a classical guitar masterclass given by the great John Williams. Talking about technique, John said most people think technique is all about the fingers (and he wiggled his fingers to demonstarte) but, he continued, technique really begins here... he was pointing at his head. Remember - the brain is also a muscle. Start by practising really slowly. Saying the fingering out loud is helpful. This encourages the brain and fingers to co-ordinate. Gradually experiment by increasing the tempo. Everyone wants to have speedy ferret fingers so see how fast you can go. Once you have got that out ot your system return to a slow and even tempo. Make the sound as beautiful as possible.

Is this all too disciplined? Isn't the ukulele supposed to be an easy and fun instrument? Is this all just too much like a classical straight-jacket? Well, I find I am having the most fun when I am playing well. When I'm playing well I'm relaxed and totally in control of what my fingers are doing and when the fingers get themselves in a tangle (which they do from time to time) I can untangle them without losing the plot and feeling like a muppet. Playing well takes time and discipline. There is no magic formula for instant virtuosity. Practising for 6 or 8 hours a day is not a guarantee for success – you may just over-stress your hands and end up with an injury. What you practise and how you practise are absolutley critical. I believe that short and simple exercises are the most effective. I regard practise as a fun way to learn and improve, not a chore. Having a good technique gives me freedom to chose what I want to play and how I want to play it.





The Right Hand Fingers



p = pulgar or thumb

i = *indices* or index

m = medio or middle

a = anular or ring finger

The "p i m a" System

This system has been used by classical guitarists for many years. Originating in Spain, the home of classical guitar, the letters used to identify the fingers are taken from the Spanish language. It is a fast and effective way to code which finger is required. It also avoids confusion with the left hand fingers which are referred to by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

All of the exercises in this booklet use the p i m a right hand fingering system. I pluck the strings using both flesh and nail of the fingers but only the flesh of the thumb. I prefer a relaxed, almost side-on hand position with a striaght wrist (similar to lutenists) as I find this produces a fuller sound and allows greater freedom of movement. I have experimented with planting the pinky on the fingerboard. I would avoid doing this, however, as it seems to restrict finger movement. But, if you are new to fingerpicking it can be stabilising – a bit like training wheels on a bicycle.

The Correct Order of Strings

String 4 – G (the string closest to your jaw)

String 3 - C

String 2 - E

String 1 – A (the string closest to your feet)

Study Notes

Exercise 1

This exercise uses 2 arpeggio patterns.

Pattern 1: Bars 1 and 2 are a simple *p i m* arpeggio pattern across strings 3, 2 and 1.

Pattern 2: In bar 3 and 4 the pattern changes so that the *i* finger is now plays string 3, *m* now plays string 2 and p now plays string 4.

piays sumg 4.

Pattern 1: Bar 5

Pattern 2: Bar 6

Pattern 1: Bar 7

End: Bar 8 – thumb plays dotted minim note (worth 3 crotchet beats or 3 quarter notes)

This exercise requires a subtle shift in the hand position from pattern 1 to pattern 2. Practise this exercise until the fingers make the shift cleanly and accurately. Avoid looking at your hand. Learn to feel, or "see through your fingers".

Exercise 2

The notes and arpeggio patterns are exactly the same as exercise 1. The only difference is the rhythm. The 1st beat in the bar is a dotted crotchet or dotted quarter note (worth 1 and a ½ beats). This long note is followed by a short note or quaver (eighth note). I have written in the counting. If you are unsure then clap the rhythm before trying to play it. The effect is long – short – long (but not as long as the 1st beat!) This is a good exercise in rhythmical control. I recommend using a metronome. The metronome will keep your rhythm honest and even. The other advantage of the metronome is that you can start slowly and gradually increase the velocity while keeping it rhythmially tight. Remember: the 1st beat of the bar should have a slight accent.

Exercise 3

Minims (half notes) and crotchets (quarter notes). Once again the rhythmical effect is long – short – long – short. Although simple, this creates a rather pretty Campanella melody. Aim for a full, legato (smooth) sound. Allow the minim to ring on for its full 2 beats. The driving force is the thumb – which moves from the 3rd string to the 4th and back again.

Exercise 4

Crotchets (quarter notes) and quavers (eighth notes). Bars 9, 10 and 11 all follow the pattern – pimi. There is a slight variation in bar 11 with the thumb moving from 3rd string to 4th string. Bar 12 uses the simple pim pattern in crotchet beats. Bars 13, 14 and 15 return to the pimi pattern. In bar 13 note how pi plays the 3rd string and then, on the next note pi also plays the 3rd string. Avoid the temptation to just repeat the 3rd string note with the thumb. Reason: The thumb creates a heavier 1st beat while the quaver movement is more suited to being played with the more agile pi pi pi in pi in

Exercise 5

Rhythmically straighforward in 2 crotchet beats (quarter notes) per bar. This arpeggio pattern starts with the m finger. The m i p pattern is a back-to-front pim. Make sure the 1st beat of the bar (played with m) is strongest note. This is achieved by accenting the m stroke. The p (thumb) ntaurally has the most weight so make sure the p notes are light. In bars 3 and 4 the m i p pattern begins on the 2nd string. Make the change as seamless as possible. In bars 5 and 7 the m and i play strings 1 and 2 while p has to play to string 4. This shouldn't be a problem but make sure you are playing the 4th, and not the 3rd string.

Exercise 6

This exercise has the same *m i p* arpeggio pattern as Ex.5 but with a rhythmical variation (similar idea to Ex.1 and Ex.2). The notes are not exactly the same. The long dotted 1st beat followed by the quick quaver (eighth note) 2nd beat requires control. Make sure you count. I recommend clapping the rhythm 1st. Once the rhythm is established in your head you can focus on the fingering.

Exercise 7

An exercise in fluency. The constant quaver movement should be even and whilst the music needs to flow it should not sound rushed. Put more weight on the 1st beat of each bar. This helps to keep the meter even. These fast and flowing repetitive arpeggios have a tendency to speed up so a metronome is recommended. I always have a metronome handy when practising. While you don't want to end up sounding like an automaton is a good idea to occassionally check your tempo and evenness. It is also sometimes quite a fun challenge to test yourself by increasing the tempo.

Exercise 8

There are 2 arpeggio patterns at work here.

Pattern 1: p i m a m i in bars 9, 10, 13 and 15. This is the 1st exercise to use the a (ring) finger.

Pattern 2: p i m p i m in bars 11, 12 and 14. The pattern also shifts strings from 3,2,1 to 4,3,2. Be careful of the rhythm. The natural instinct is play p i m p i m as 2 triplets, but the rhythm is still 1+2+3+.

The change from pattern 1 to pattern 2 is tricky but a good exercise is engaging brain and fingers! One suggestion for practising this exercise is to start by focusing on the 1st pattern. Just repeat bar 9 over and over until comfortable. Then, do the same with 11. When confident with both patterns try putting them together.

Exercise 9

The pattern is a repeated *p i m p i m* arpeggio with a string shift after the 1st *p i m* pattern. Again the rhythm is mostly quaver movement. Keep the ¾ feel and be careful not to let the *p i m p i m* sound like a triplet pattern. The crotchets (quarter notes) in bar 4 will help to keep the meter even. It is important to develop the feel of changing from quavers (eighth notes) to crotchets (quarter notes) and back again.

Exercise 10

Tricky! This pattern doesn't feel natural – *i p m i p a*. Although awkward each finger is assigned a string so there is no string shifting involved just concentration. The *i* finger plays the 1st beat of each bar - which should be played with a slight accent. Start very slowly and only increase the speed when the arpeggio feels comfortable.

Exercise 11

This exercise also starts each bar with the *i* finger. The pattern is a repeated *i m p i m a*. Once again each finger is assigned a string. This pattern certainly feels more natural than Ex.10. You should be able to build up the velocity of this pattern fairly easily. One suggestion for practising is to sit in front of a mirror and watch what your right hand is doing. Things to think about:

- Does your hand look relaxed?
- What is your little finger doing? If it is sticking out then this will indicate tension. Sometimes awareness is enough but it is good idea to stop and give your hand a shake and do a few light stretches.
- Is your hand bouncing? If it is bouncing a lot then you are using too much hand and pulling the strings. Try to make your fingers move from the main knuckle. Rather than pulling up to pluck at the string, try to sweep the fingers in the direction of the palm. The word plucking is actually very misleading. Plucking creates an image of pulling and this is the best way to create the worse sound! Pulling the strings makes it move in an up and down motion and this causes a twangy sound. But, if the finger sweeps across the string creating a sideways movement the sound is fuller and more sonorous.

Exercise 12

Another back-to-front pattern. This time the arpeggio is *m i p m i p*. The *m* finger now has the responsibilty of creating a heavier 1st beat. There is also a string shift from 1,2,3 to 2,3,4. Make the notes as legato (smooth and attached) as possible. The beauty of arpeggios and campanella technique is that the notes can ring on over each other. This can be a very effective way to create extra resonance and is particularly important given that the ukulele is a mostly "bass-less" instrument.

Exercise 13

If the *i m i p i m* pattern used in this exercise was just repeated on the same strings it would be relatively easy. But, the pattern shifts strings each bar and this increases the difficulty. So, from strings 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1 (bar 1) the pattern shifts to strings 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 2. As each bar begins with *i* it is a challenge for the index finger to make sure it lands on the right string. The rest of the fingers should follow once the change of string has been navigated. If you are finding the constant shift for each bar tricky then start by repeating each bar 4 times. As your confidence builds you can then start changing bar by bar.

Exercise 14

Time to practise the dotted crotchet (dotted quarter note) rhythm again! This time the dotted crotchet is followed by 3 quavers (eighth notes). The effect is rhythmically pleasing – a long note and then 3 short notes. The **p** i m i pattern should be familiar by now so focus on getting a nice rhythmical feel. Make the long note sing while the 3 short notes come in rather like an answer. No need to rush, just enjoy the sound.

Exercise 15

Triplets! The repeated $p \ i \ m \ p \ i \ m \ p \ i \ m \ p \ i \ m$ pattern lends itself to playing in triplets (groups of 3). I thought I would make life more interesting by constantly shifting strings from 3, 2, 1 to 4, 3, 2 and back again. One technique to try is "finger planting." This has nothing to do with gardening! The idea is to place the fingers on the strings before plucking them. So, start with p on the 3rd string, p on the 2nd and p on the 1st. Once "planted" pluck the strings in succession. This exercise requires a good deal of control. When you play the next triplet set repeat the idea of positioning the fingers on the strings before playing. You will notice that this stops the strings from ringing on. The sound is not as pleasant but it is a good exercise. It also facilitates very rapid playing once grasped, leading to a blur effect.

Exercise 16

A workout for **i** and **p**. The emphasis is on constant string shifting. This is an exercise in accuracy and care should be taken that the correct string is being plucked. Lutenists were very fond of alternating p and i and often played scale passages with this combination. I notice a lot of top ukulele players play a lot with their thumbs and it is definitely worth developing a strong and agile thumb technique. (I do find my little finger tends to want to rest on the top when playing this exercise.)

Exercise 17

A workout for the thumb and index finger. Note the constant *p i* movement across the strings. After the first pair of notes where the thumb plays the 4th string and the index plays the 3rd string the thumb then moves down a string to play the 3rd string while the index plays the 2nd string. This pattern is repeated with the last pair of notes. Thumb now moves to string 2 and index plays string 1. A good exercise for precision plucking with the thumb – alternating and then string changing. Bar 4 offers a brief respite with a simple *p i m* arpeggio in crotchets. Repitiion is a good way to practise but it also important to be able to break the routine (as in bar 4) and then resume. Muscle memory is all fine and dandy but once the pattern is mastered the brain often switches off. It is important to keep the brain engaged.

Exercise 18

A reverse arpeggio using an **m** i **p** pattern. A bar of crotchet beats (quarter notes) is followed by a bar of quaver beats (eighth notes) effectively requiring the fingers to double their speed. The quaver beat bar is followed by a bar of crotchets. This pattern of slow then fast continues throughout the exercise. The aim is to be able to change from crotchets to quavers fluently and evenly and then back again. Keep a steady beat and be careful not to play the quavers too fast. They should sound controlled and powerful.

Exercise 19

A *p i m a* exercise. Each finger is assigned a string. *P* has 4th string; *i* has 3rd string; *m* has 2nd string and *a* has 1st string. Keep the hand position steady and make the fingers do the work. Make sure the hand is not bouncing as you pluck the strings. If your hand is bouncing then you are pulling the string up rather than sweeping the finger in the direction of the palm. Focus on moving the finger from the main knuckle. The rhythm is broken – 1 2 & 3 etc – in most bars (bars 4 and 7 are the exceptions) with constant quaver (quarter note) movement. The playing is basically slow fast fast slow; slow fast fast slow. Again the emphasis is mental and physical control over purely muscular and mechanical memory. Bars 4 and 7 break the pattern with constant quaver (eighth note) movement and an extension of the pattern to *p i m a m i*. The fingers move up and back across all strings.

Exercise 20

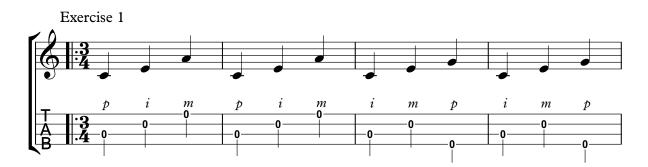
This exercise follows the same rhythmical structure as exercise 19 but with a different right hand pattern – $p \ a \ m \ i$. A good introduction for practising tremolo as this is the same right hand fingering pattern for playing tremolo. The difference is that when playing tremolo the $a \ m \ i$ fingers play repeated notes on the same string. Pay attention to the connection between p and a. The thumb is naturally stronger than the weaker (and more timid) a. One suggestion for practising is to accent the a notes. This helps the brain to register the often forgotten a! It also helps to strengthen the finger.

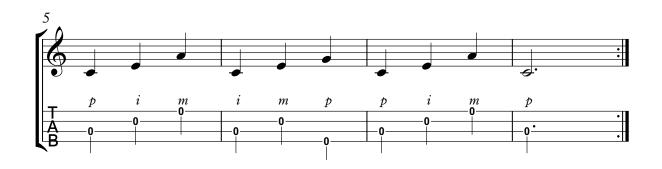
YouTube Playlist of the exercises

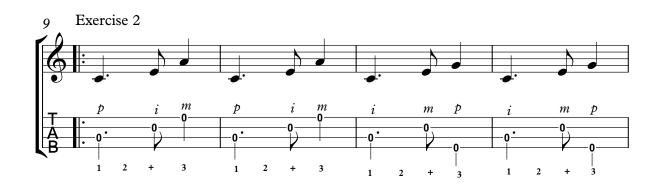
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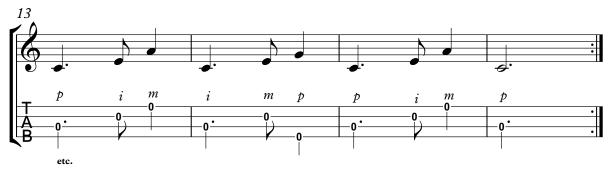
20 Exercises for Right Hand Development

by Samantha Muir

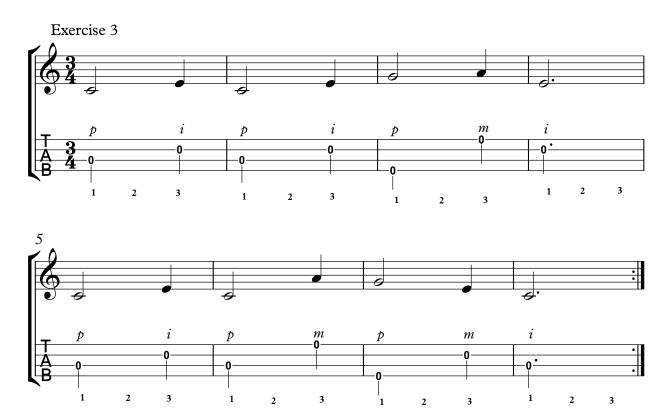


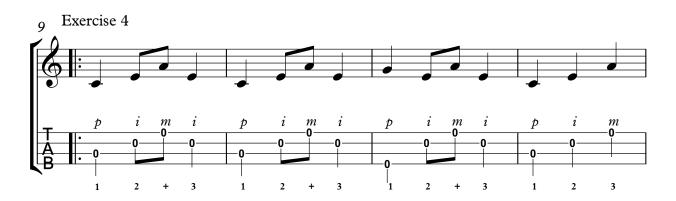


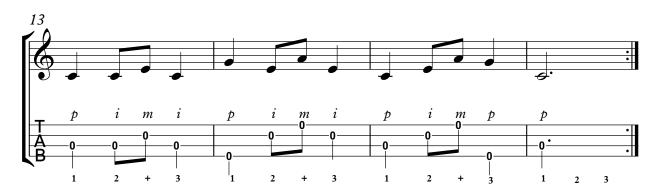




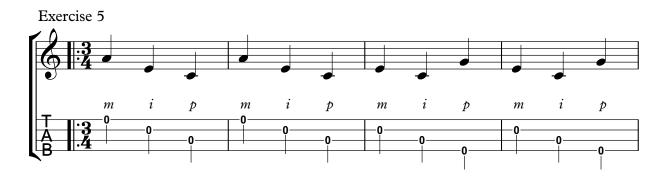
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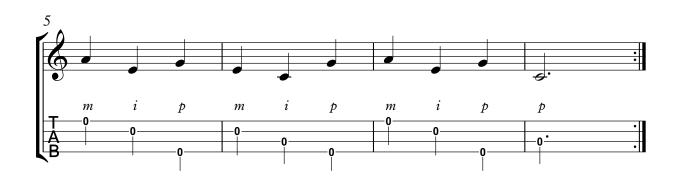




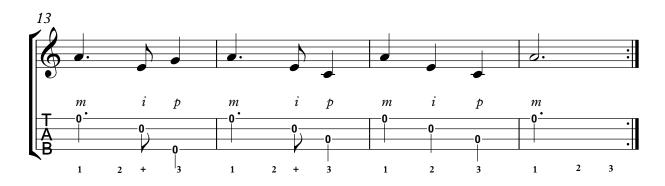


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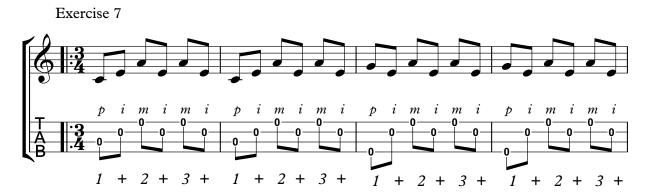


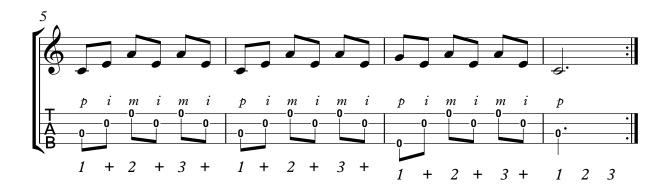


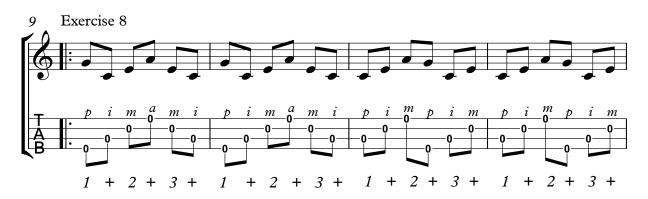


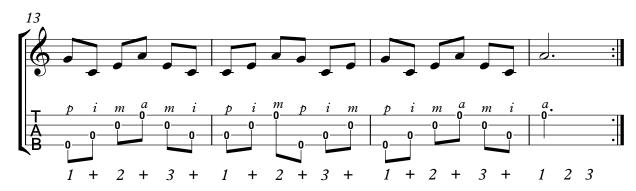


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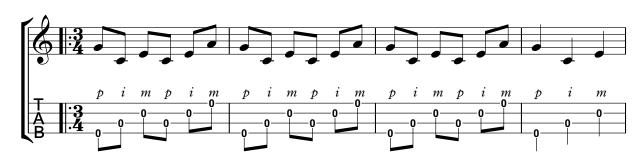


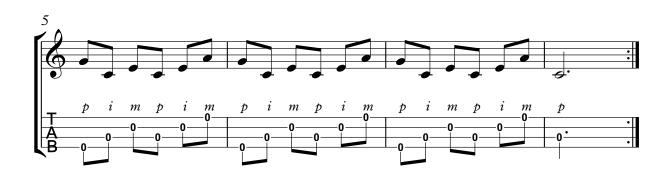


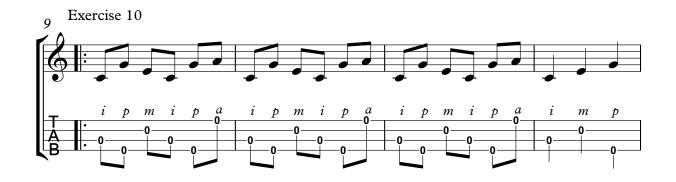


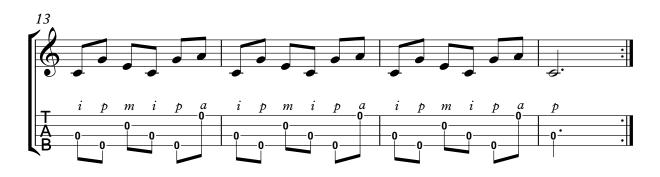
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Exercise 9

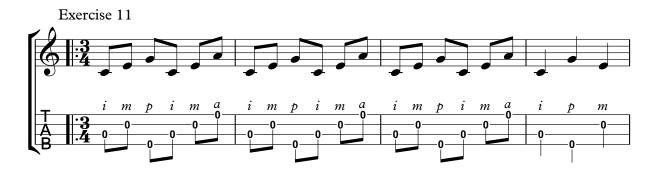


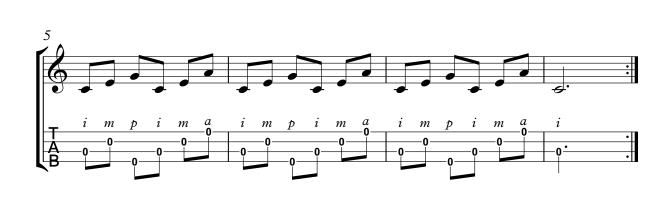


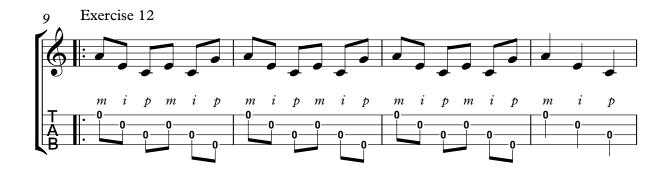


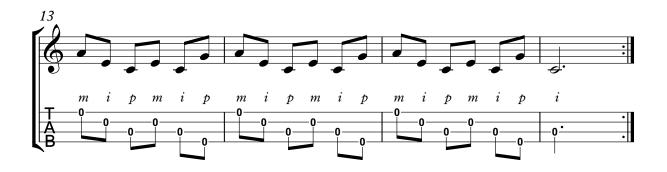


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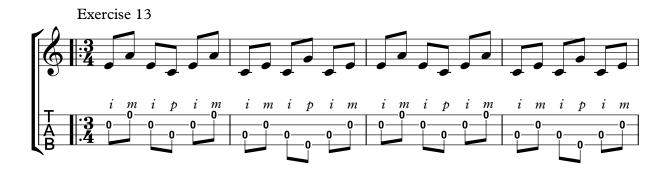


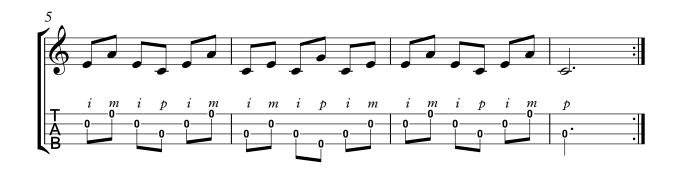






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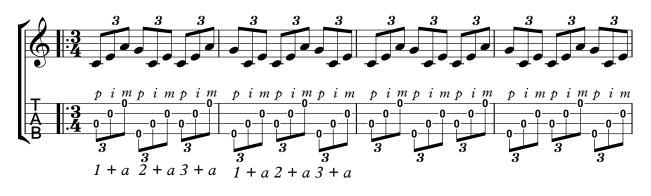


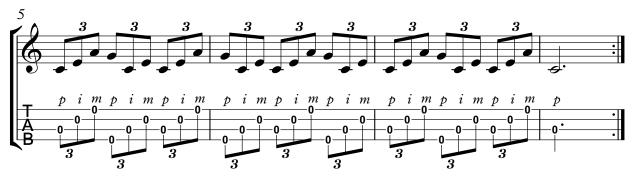


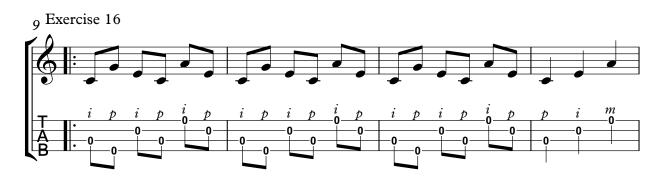


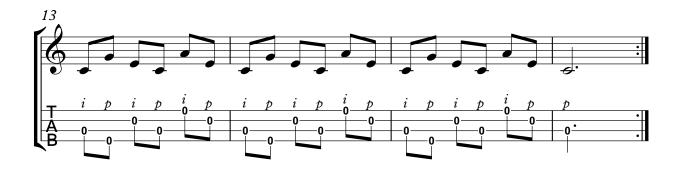
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Exercise 15 Samantha Muir



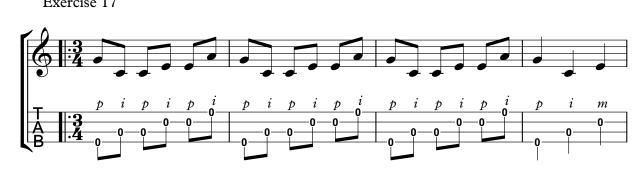


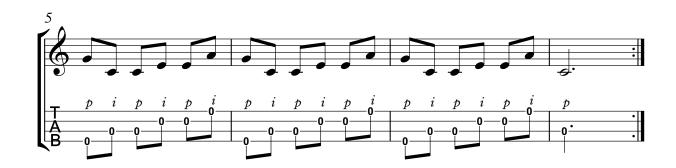


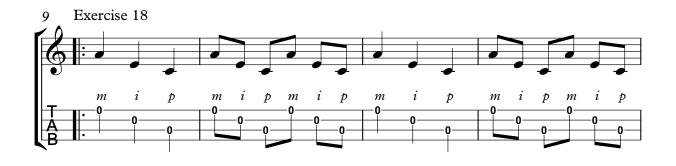


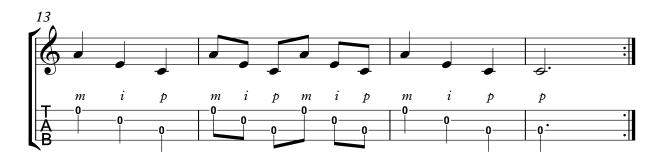
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Exercise 17



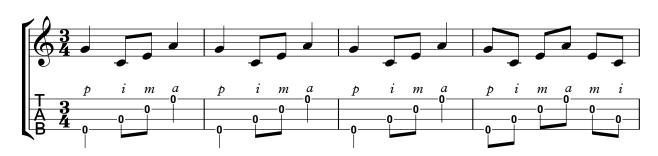


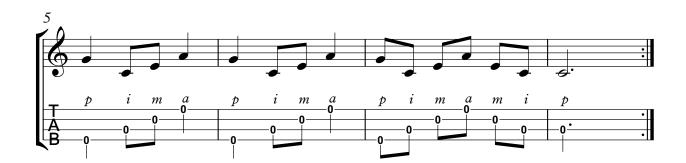


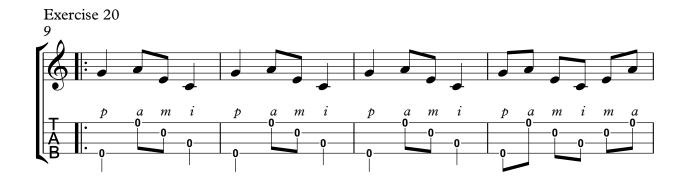


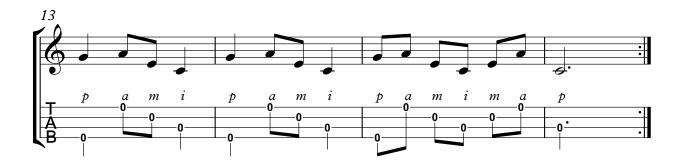
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Exercise 19









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The Little Book Series for Ukulele

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- 2. The Little Book of Sor https://payhip.com/b/90bi https://gumroad.com/l/sor2
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- 5. The Little Book of Guiliani https://payhip.com/b/qc1E https://gumroad.com/l/giuliani

About Me

I am a professional classical guitarist with many years experience as a teacher and performer. I only started playing the ukulele in 2013 but it was not a difficult transition from one to the other. The ukulele is, afterall, a small guitar. Or, should I say the guitar is a big ukulele! Much has happened in those two years. I have created a series of ebooks called the Little Book of Series for ukulele which is a collection of arrangements of mostly classical guitar pieces for ukulele. Pieces by Carulli, Sor, Carcassi and Giuliani work surprising well on the ukulele. While some of the pieces are challenging they are all fun to play. I never put pieces in my booklets which I don't enjoy playing myself. The collection is steadily growing so do keep an eye on my website for more titles. I am also delighted to have been invited to do a book of 35 Scottish Folk Tunes for Ukulele (with CD) published by Schott and due for release in July 2015.

I run my own ukulele group in Sherborne, Dorset, UK called the Sherborne Ukulele Noodle. It is a bit of a uke group with a difference as we focus on instrumental ensemble playing rather than strumming and singing.

As a classical guitarist I have recorded three CD's. The most recent CD, Alma Apaixonada, (Passionate Soul) was released in May 2015. Please check out my website and YouTube channels to listen to samples.

My guitar channel is:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5YtPVxPW7zXyKJK_KrUqcw

My ukulele channel is:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC 6wKay150LzInkitgTkvYg

My website:

http://www.samanthamuir.com

Thank you for downloading this booklet. I hope the exercises help you on your ukulele journey!

