

Introduction

Born to an unlikely parentage of European musical instruments, Portuguese craftsman and Hawaiian rhythmic spirit, the ukulele came into being around 1890. After arriving in the USA the role of the ukulele as a rhythm chord-playing instrument became firmly established and from the 1920s to the 1950s popular sheet music was published with ukulele chord symbols and diagrams, including practical instructions in retuning the instrument to different keys. By the 1960s guitar chord symbols were almost universally adopted for the ukulele making it easier for players to double on both instruments.

Popular interest in the ukulele has been reignited in the 21st century with many amateur ukulele clubs worldwide having players strumming and singing together, often as an enjoyable social and charitable musical activity. Ukulele music and popular music is being kept alive with the ukulele.

That social and fun arena fed my own introduction to the ukulele, which merged quite naturally with my working background as teacher, composer and arranger. It was not long before I began to develop ideas and techniques beyond strumming and to explore the ukulele's capabilities to combine melody, harmony and rhythm. The one instrument that this is what I call "fingerstyle ukulele" is open to other musical ukulele styles is sometimes used.

Inspired by virtuoso players such as Jake Shabazz and James Hill I began arranging (and publishing on YouTube) all kinds of interesting music for the instrument. I also devised a ukulele exam syllabus for The Victoria College of Music, London.*

You don't have to be a virtuoso to play more than one chord on the instrument. By following the carefully structured contents of *Developing Fingerstyle Ukulele*, you can develop the skills that will:

- enable you to play fluently with both the right and left hands with fluidity and expression. Familiarise yourself with chords that all strummers use and help you to discover the many other chord varieties to use in your accompaniments. It is not only the right hand that is important in fingerstyle playing; the left hand, too, will need to gain more strength and flexibility to extend beyond the standard chord patterns. Familiarity with techniques that use all four fingers requires practice, time and patience.
- enable you to explore ways to develop rhythmic ideas, sometimes using familiar strums but also to discover the joys of right-hand *p i m a* patterns to create arpeggios and other accompaniment figures.

* Victoria College of Music, 71 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AY www.vcmexams.co.uk

Features of *Discovering Fingerstyle Ukulele* include:

- Mixed notation system – Music and TAB

The music is presented in both tablature and standard staff notation. Tablature is a system of lines that represent the strings and frets of the ukulele. This has the advantage of showing the player exactly where to place the fingers without prior knowledge of musical notation. Standard notation, however, is common to all musical instruments and, once learned, conveys more performance information than tablature alone. This allows you to experiment and choose alternative fingerings that may be more suitable for you than those shown in tablature.

- Organization by keys

This will help you to develop a sense of key families and relationships. Gradually you will learn to hear and play the patterns of harmony that hold the music together.

- Musical arrangements

41 pieces representative of many genres including classical, pop, jazz and some new music specially composed for this book.

- Technical challenges

96 short studies to help you develop techniques and ideas which are developed in the pieces.

- Historical music

17 ways to play a refreshed version of an old favorite, and providing at the same time a rich, continuous learning thread throughout the book.


- Anatomy of a ukulele

Chapter 10 demonstrates the chord shapes and scales that can move all over the fretboard and showing how these arrangements can be constructed by knowing where the notes are. Also discover some of the more outlandish secret moves held within the instrument's capabilities.

- Exercise framework

Just like going to the gym! Develop finger fitness with these 21 studies and at the same time gain confidence in making position changes on the fretboard.

- Recordings

All of the pieces, arrangements and studies in *Discovering Fingerstyle Ukulele* are available as Audio Downloads (labelled  in the text).

- Technical terms

Some of the technical and/or musical terms used in *Discovering Fingerstyle Ukulele* which may be unfamiliar to the beginner are marked in **bold type** on their first appearance in the book and are listed and defined in the Glossary, Appendix 1.

Which ukulele is best for you?

The ukulele comes in four main sizes, three having the same tuning:

Soprano – the most common size and best for young children starting fingerstyle.

Concert – this is more suitable for older beginners with its slightly longer fingerboard on which to place larger fingers! However, some older players may still prefer the smaller instrument to begin with. Same tuning as the Soprano and Tenor ukulele.

Tenor – larger still and perhaps better suited to playing some melodic lines. The artists in *Discovering Fingerstyle Ukulele* use chord shapes to provide harmony in which some fingers are kept static whilst others play the melodic notes. This may involve stretching to reach the higher frets and may be more difficult on the instrument with a longer neck. The use of a low G can give the Tenor, as a melodic instrument, a wider range. Same tuning as the Soprano and Concert ukulele.

Baritone – tuned like a guitar's top 4 strings – approximately three-quarters size guitar. This is ideal for a guitarist wanting to gain a taste for playing without having to learn new chord names. The difficulty of stretching to reach the higher frets, however, increased to a greater degree than on the Tenor.

The ukulele's popularity stems partly from the opinion that it is the easiest of instruments to play. In this book you will find some of the often hidden doubts, but these come only with the same degree of appreciation for the music demands. Be sure, however, that you will find both the challenge and the immense enjoyment, as I have done. So tune up and go on!

Colin Tribe

Chapter 1

Starting out

Holding the instrument

I prefer to use a strap to help hold the ukulele when sitting. Depending on the extra support given is essential to allow freedom of movement for both hands and arms.



Fig. 2

For those who prefer to sit and rest the instrument on their lap, a position used by classical guitarists, I have also seen players use a thigh support to lift the instrument to a more comfortable position.

To simplify reading and to show fretting I have included Tablature staves TAB, a standard practice nowadays.

The ukulele has 4 strings which, when played open, sound the notes G-C-E-A.

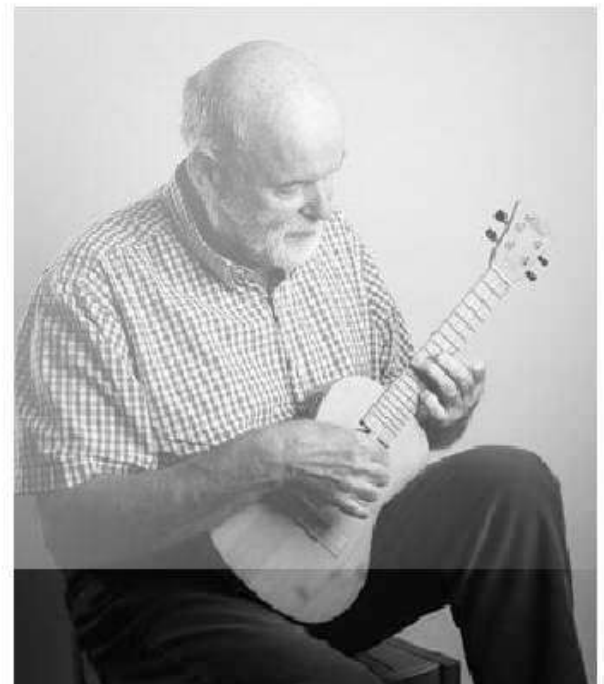


Fig. 3

▶ TRACK 1

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This is not in the order you would expect if you have played guitar, mandolin or violin where the pitch rises from bottom to top string. Traditionally the G string of a ukulele is tuned an octave higher than you might expect. This is called a “re-entrant tuning” and is used throughout the book.

This tutor concentrates on fingerstyle playing which means plucking the strings of the right hand. If you are used to strumming chords with the pick or plectrum this will slow you down at first, but persevere and the technique will, with repetition, begin to feel natural.



Fig. 4

strings with your hand like this (and see Fig. 4):

G – 4th string with the thumb (*p*)
 C – 3rd string with the index finger (*i*)
 E – 2nd string with the middle finger (*m*)
 A – 1st string with the ring finger (*a*)

The letters are abbreviations of the Spanish names for the respective fingers and are universally used in guitar notation:

p = Pulgar = thumb
i = Índice = index finger
m = Medio = middle finger
a = Annular = ring finger

*You can download all audio tracks at: en.schott-music.com/fingerstyle-ukulele