

# Albuquerque Ukekopelli Festival - Fingerpicking the Ukulele

with Craig McClelland

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Strumming is not the only way to play the ukulele. Fingerpicking is another very popular technique for getting a little more music out of your uke. When fingerpicking, the player uses the individual fingers of the right hand to pluck at the strings, individually and in groups. This creates a lighter, airier sound than strumming and can be very effective.

## Fingerpicking Patterns in 4/4 Time

Music is commonly written in 4/4 time. This simply means that there are 4 musical beats per measure of music. In fact, 4/4 is regularly referred to as “common time” as it is so frequently used.

Let’s try a simple pattern in four. Place your thumb on the 4<sup>th</sup> string, your index finger on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, your middle finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and your ring finger on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Now try the following pattern slowly - one string per beat - thumb, index, middle, ring. This pattern repeats once per measure.

A diagram showing a C chord fingering above a ukulele staff. The chord is represented by a grid with dots on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings. Below the grid are the letters 'p', 'i', 'm', and 'a'. The staff is labeled with strings T, A, B and has a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: T (0), A (0), B (0) in the first measure; T (3), A (0), B (0) in the second measure.

That wasn't too hard was it? Good!

Now try playing that pattern over some simple chord changes.

Two systems of musical notation for a fingerpicking exercise. Each system includes a chord diagram, a sequence of letters 'p i m a', and a ukulele staff. The first system starts with a C chord and ends with an F chord. The second system starts with a G7 chord and ends with a C chord. The staff notation shows the notes for each string (T, A, B) across four measures, with fingerings (0, 1, 2, 3) indicated below the notes.

Here's a slightly different pattern in 4/4. The rhythm is the same and you still pluck the 4th string with your thumb but then you use your middle and ring fingers to pluck strings 2 and 1 simultaneously.

Here is our simple chord progression. Try this new pattern over it.

## Patterns in 3/4 Time

Not all songs are written in common time. Many are written in  $\frac{3}{4}$  or “waltz” time. In “waltz” time there are 3 beats per measure.

Let’s try a pattern similar to the last but in  $\frac{3}{4}$  or “waltz” time. Just like before, place your thumb on the 4<sup>th</sup> string, your index finger on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, your middle finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and your ring finger on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

Now pluck the first note of the measure with your thumb, then simultaneously pluck strings 1 and 2 with your ring and middle finger twice. Play this pattern over and over.

Good. Now that you are getting comfortable, let’s try playing over our simple chord changes.

Let's try another simple pattern in three. Again, place your thumb on the 4<sup>th</sup> string, your index finger on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, your middle finger on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and your ring finger on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Now try the following pattern slowly – thumb, index, middle, ring, middle, index.

C  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
*p i m a m i*

Now let's try this pattern while changing chords.

C  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
*p i m a m i*

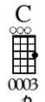
F  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
*p i m a m i*

G7  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
*p i m a m i*

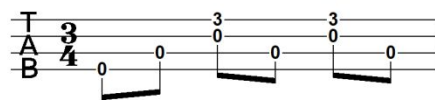
C  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
○○○  
*p i m a m i*

Now let's try a pattern that somewhat combines the previous two:

C

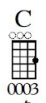


*p i a m i a m i*



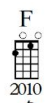
Now with chord changes:

C

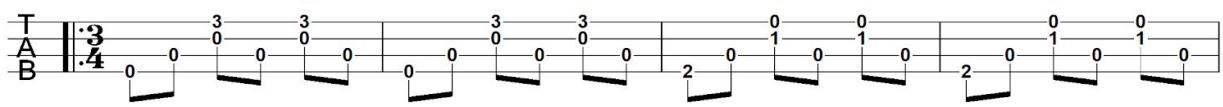


*p i a m i a m i*

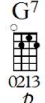
F



*p i a m i a m i*

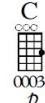


G<sup>7</sup>

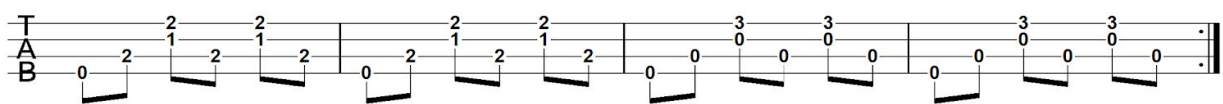


*p i a m i a m i*

C



*p i a m i a m i*




Good. After you feel comfortable try a couple of songs in the key of C using these patterns. When that becomes easy try these patterns with other chords.


## More Patterns in 4/4 Time

Let's try some more patterns in 4/4. Do just as we did before placing each finger on an individual string, starting with your thumb on the 4<sup>th</sup> string.

C




*p i m a p i m a*




Very good. Now let's try it with chord changes.

C

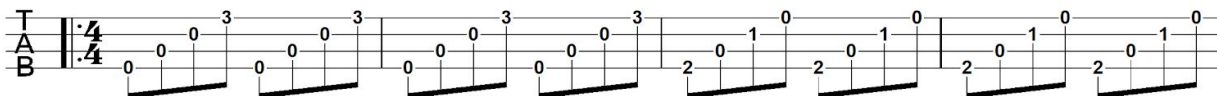


*p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a*


F



*p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a*




G<sup>7</sup>

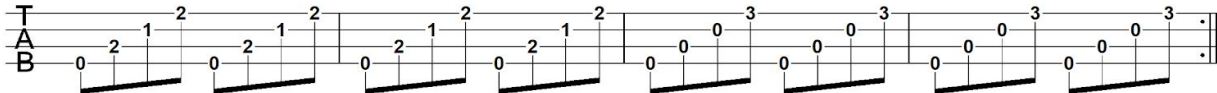


*p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a*

C



*p i m a p i m a p i m a p i m a*



Remember your second pattern in 3/4?

C  
0003  
*p i a m i a m i*

T  
A  
B  
3/4

If we just extend that pattern for one more beat, like so...

C  
0003  
*p i a m i a m i a m i*

T  
A  
B  
4/4

...we get a very useful fingerpicking pattern to use on songs in 4/4 time.

Here are some changes to try.

C F  
*p i a m i a m i p i a m i a m i p i a m i a m i p i a m i a m i*


T  
A  
B  
4/4

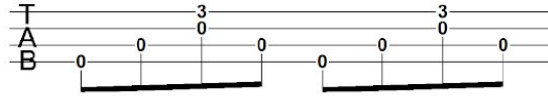
G7 C  
*p i a m i a m i p i a m i a m i p i a m i a m i p i a m i a m i*

T  
A  
B  
4/4


Here are some more patterns to try

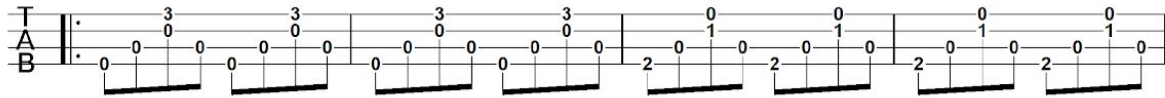
2

C  
  
*p i a m i p i a m i*




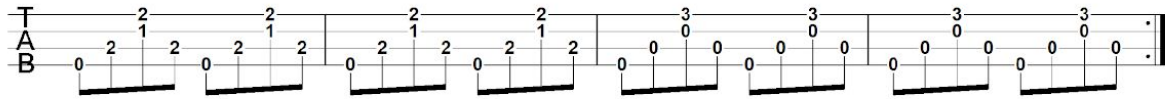
T  
A  
B

C C F  
  
*p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i*




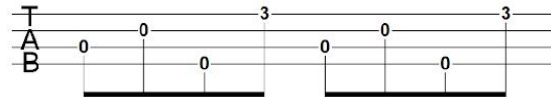
T  
A  
B

G7 C C  
  
*p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i p i a m i*




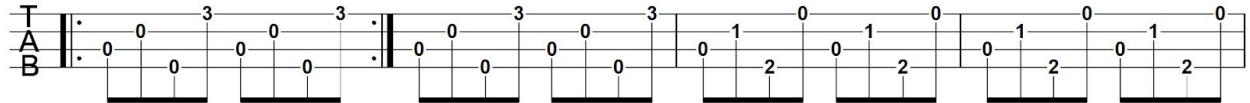
T  
A  
B

C  
  
*i m p a i m p a*




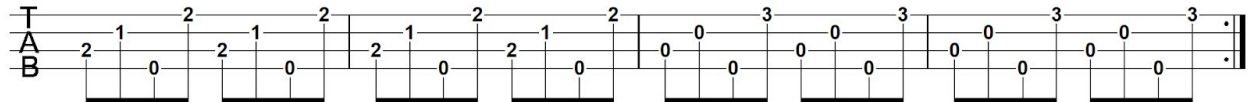
T  
A  
B

C F  
  
*i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a*



T  
A  
B

G7 C  
  
*i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a i m p a*



T  
A  
B