



Jodi Damon

Arranging Songs for the Ukulele

This workshop will demonstrate how to re-imagine any song for the ukulele. Jodi will demonstrate many simple and intermediate playing techniques and styles that can be used to add depth, interest and an arc to your songs and performances.

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Arranging Songs for Ukulele

Presented by [Jodi Damon](#)

Where to Begin

When possible, pick a song that you know and love.

The first step will be finding the music for the song you'd like to arrange.

Here are some resources for finding chords to a song:

Google search of Song Title + chords (i.e. "Here Comes the Sun chords")

Ultimate Guitar (or literally any guitar tab website)

www.ultimate-guitar.com

Chordify <https://chordify.net>

Chord AI ([app available on Apple and Android](#))

Google search of Song Title + lyrics (i.e. "Here Comes the Sun lyrics")

Songbooks are also a great resource for chord charts/tabs.

The next step is listening to many versions of the song. YouTube is a great resource for this. Listen to the studio version, live versions, acoustic versions and listen to other people's covers of the song. This will help you to start imagining what you can do with the song. You can also look up guitar tutorials for strumming patterns.

Next print the song out or upload it into a digital form that you can edit or take notes on. This will help you remember stylistic choices you've made when arranging and playing the song.

Things to consider when arranging

Make it Interesting:

Vary the way you play different sections of the song.

For example, fingerpicking on the verses and strumming on the choruses, changing the dynamics (playing louder and softer for different sections of the song), or including an instrumental section for the song (by playing the same chords of a verse or chorus and omitting the lyrics).

Also consider adding full stops or a capella portions to the song.

Develop an Arc:

Some songs work very well when played as an arc, meaning it might grow in intensity as the song progresses. (Techniques listed in the Toolbox section of this handout are listed in order of intensity). Arcs can also be used quite effectively within a phrase or verse.

Capture a Mood:

Playing a pensive or sweet song? Try fingerpicking

Want to emphasize lyrics? Try slowing down on the line or simplifying the strumming.

Want to get people dancing? Try adding percussion (On the ukulele via chucking, Z chord or tapping, or foot tambourine etc)

Don't forget about your voice:

You can emphasize lyrics with your voice (singing important words off the beat or without strumming)

Experiment with phrasing and timing

Sing legato or staccato

Whisper, speak

Use dynamics

Techniques for your toolbox (low – high Intensity):

Fingerpicking

Harp Strum (essentially a slower strum using the meaty part of your thumb)

Harp strum + finger picking
(Changes in dynamics/tempo)

Strum with thumb

Strum with nails

Stum & chuck every 4 beats

Stum & chuck every 2 beats

Stum & chuck every beat

Other percussion or full stops (chucking, tapping, Z chord, pluck every string at same time and then quickly mute)

Play instrumental going up the neck (using chord inversions). This is especially effective when going in a linear motion up and down the neck.

Vary Strum patterns by omitting or adding stums to existing patterns
(ex Riptide)

DUDUDUDU

D DU UDU

D D UDU

D XU UDU

D

Endings:

Finish with just vocals (either letting last chord ring out while delivering last line or muting last chord)

Finish abruptly
i.e. i.e. The Universe Song, have it all

Short cadence (I V I)

A E A

1 2 3 4 1

C G C

D A D

F C F

G D G

Slow down the last line

Pick each string and end on the same note that is the key of the song

A just pick each string of the chord

C just pick each string of the chord

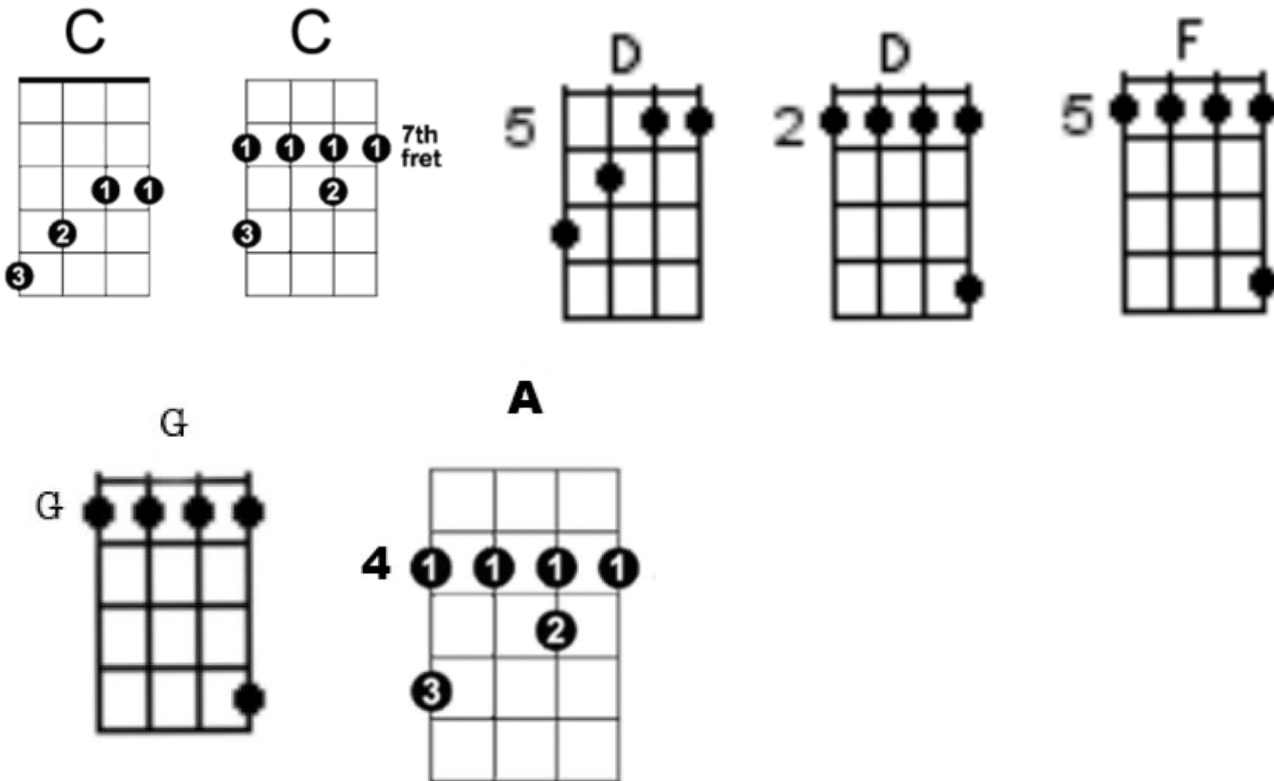
D pick each string plus A string on the 5th fret

F pick each string plus A string on the 8th fret

G pick each string plus A string on the 10th fret

End on a 7th Chord or V7 chord (unresolved ending)

Chord Inversions (sweet ending)



Final Considerations:

When you might want to try to sound like the original.

Try recording yourself so you can see if your stylistic choices are translating to the listener.

Don't be afraid to change it up. You don't have to play it the same way every time.

Start where you are. And slowly add to your toolbox of skills.