

French Renaissance Tablature

In the 16th and 17th Century there were three main varieties of lute tablature. These were French, German, and Italian tablature. In England and France the French tablature was the most popular.

I have used French renaissance tablature in my transcriptions for the non re-entrant ukulele, however the note duration symbols are of later design for clarity.

Non re-entrant ukulele tuning means that the 4th string is low as in the Baritone Ukulele and the Low 'G' Standard Ukulele.

For those that are used to playing contemporary tabulation they will find it very easy learn to read French Tabulation. Here are the main points to remember.

- 1) The frets are arranged in alphabetical order, with the open strings starting at 'a'.
- 2) The letter 'j' has been deliberately omitted.
- 3) In French tablature the fret letters are written on top of each stave line, unlike modern numeric tabulation where the fret number is usually embedded into the stave line.
- 4) In Renaissance tablature the note durations are not repeated for each note. When a note length has been declared all the following notes stay at that same note duration until a change of note duration occurs. For example if a crotchet has been declared then all the following notes are crotchets until different note duration occurs, at which time all its following notes remain at the new duration until a different duration is declared.
- 5) There are Time signatures provided, but no Key signatures are necessary on a tabulation track.
- 6) Normally the early Renaissance Lute had 6 strings and hence 6 stave lines. As the players of the instrument developed more complex music, more strings were added, It is common to find later Renaissance lute music for 8 course (13 strings) instruments. Eventually in the Baroque lutes had 13 courses made up of 24 strings. I have kept with music written for the six string renaissance lute as the manuscripts can be transcribed more satisfactory for the 4 string ukulele.

For those unaccustomed to playing from tablature, I have written some training material in order of difficulty. I have started with tunes we learned as children as they are embedded in our brains and we do not have to worry about how the tune

goes, therefore we can concentrate more on developing the automatic finger positioning under the alphabet fret naming system.

French Renaissance Tablature Fret Names

Each fret was named a letter of the alphabet

