

duce. Practice using both fingers. Experiment with the notes, note sequences, beats and fingerings. Make up your own melodies, and remember that the sequence of upstrokes, downstrokes, and down/up strokes depends on the formation of the melody you are playing—where the notes occur in the melody in relation to the rhythm.

And songs? Well, some fine, basic songs to work with and improvise around are songs of your childhood like “Frère Jacques,” “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” “This Old Man, He Played One,” “London Bridge Is Falling Down,” “She’ll Be Comin’ ’Round the Mountain,” “Go Tell Aunt Rhody,” “Oh Susanna!” “You Are My Sunshine,” “Down in the Valley,” “Old Joe Clark” (which is unique to the Mixolydian mode), “Cripple Creek,” “Wildwood Flower,” “Banks of the Ohio,” and one of our favorites, “Boil Them Cabbage Down, Boys!”

Play what you know. If you don’t know any songs at all, make some up. That’s the point of all this anyway. If you have trouble picking out a tune and finding the notes “by ear,” we’ve listed some music books in Chapter XI (“Some Useful Charts, Books, and Records of Interest”) that give you simple songs to play.

A good exercise game consists of playing children’s songs like “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” “Frère Jacques,” “This Old Man,” and “London Bridge” all together. As you get to a point in one song that has the same beginning note as a phrase you recognize in another song, switch songs and maybe even rhythms. Doing this will show you not only how songs are put together but also how they come apart. It will make you think ahead to what you are going to do next, and how that relates to what you are doing at the moment and what you have already done.

Here’s an example—and it may help a little if you sing this through a couple of times to get into what’s happening: