Five modal 2-part exercises for guitar

By Sune Pors

About The Exercises

Over the past few years, I have spent quite a bit of time exploring the polyphonic possibilities of the guitar, from the perspective of an improvising guitarist. That has included things like J.S. Bach's 2-part inventions, Jimmy Wyble's guitar etudes and Ted Greene's teachings. On my continuous journey towards polyphonic freedom, I have realised, that writing one's own exercises and ideas, is very helpful in absorbing such a complicated concept. Playing existing material requires extensive practice and analysis for it to seep into your own improvisational vocabulary. Simply learning the music won't do. Starting from a blank page, on the other hand, forces you to think deeply about how everything works, both musically and mechanically, and allows you to explore specific areas of harmony and technique you are curious about.

This collection comes from my own pile of exercises originally intended for my own use. The five short pieces each explore a modality, avoiding as much as possible the devices of functional harmony that our ears are so used to (though not avoiding it entirely), and bringing out some of the flavour of the other modes of the major scale. They are not intended to be in any particular musical style or idiom, or for a specific type of guitar, and can be played on electric-, classical- or steel string acoustic guitar.

The suggestions given for tempo are mainly there to give you something to aim for. The exercises will benefit you the most if you learn them in a slow tempo, and once internalised, explore them in many different tempos.

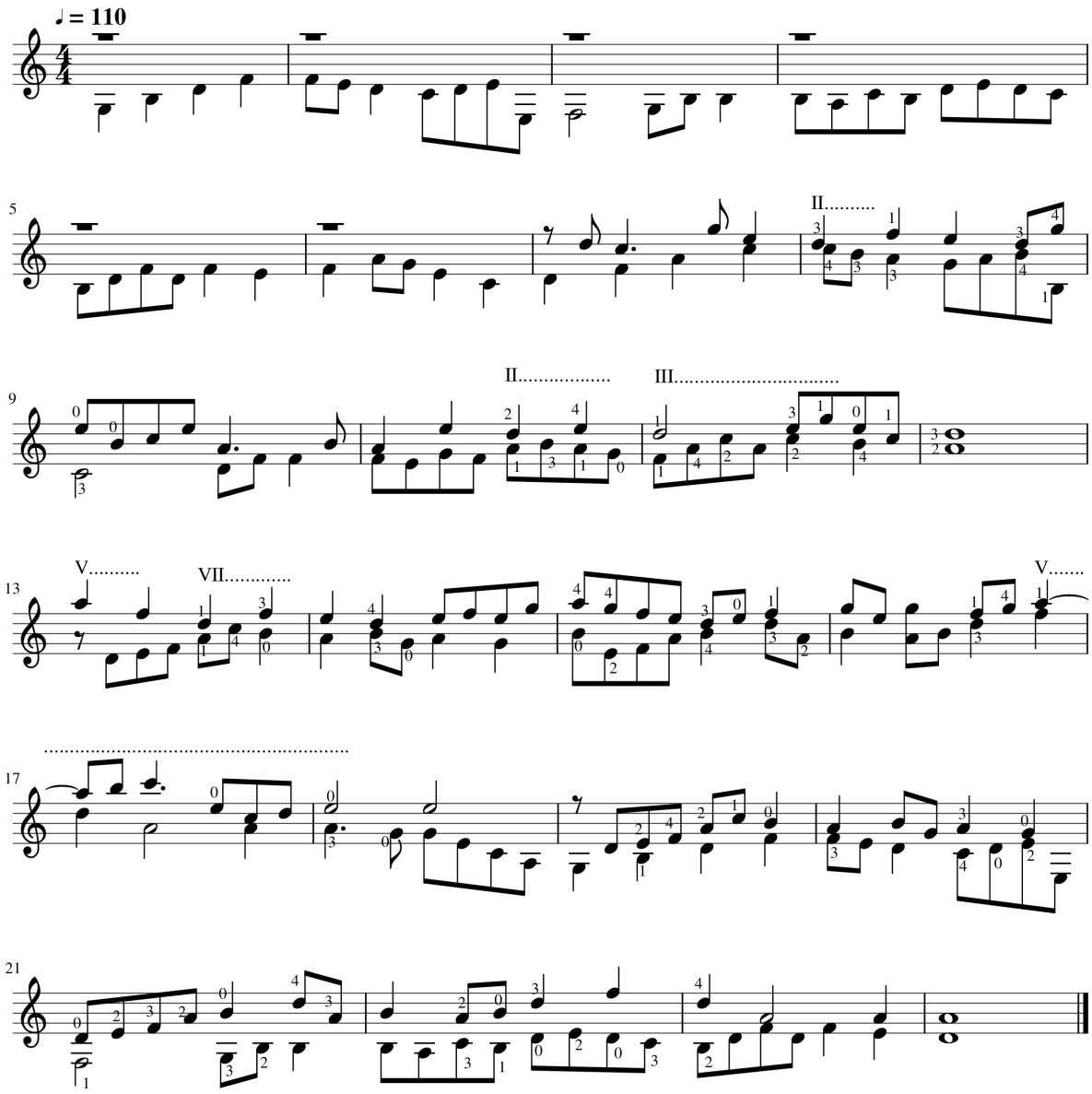
Even though I have added my fingerings to the exercises, you will similarly benefit the most from experimenting with different fingerings, so that you learn what works, and why, instead of simply copying my fingerings. The fingerings in this version generally favor continuity of both lines, minimising pauses due to position shifts etc.

When learning a language, it is important to absorb a lot of it on a continual basis. Learning these exercises should be combined with the studying of other materials, such as the aforementioned ones, as well as writing your own exercises. Also, it should be combined with actual polyphonic improvisation, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this document.

I hope the pieces will challenge you, and bring you pleasure and insight, as they have for me!

Sune Pors
January 2019

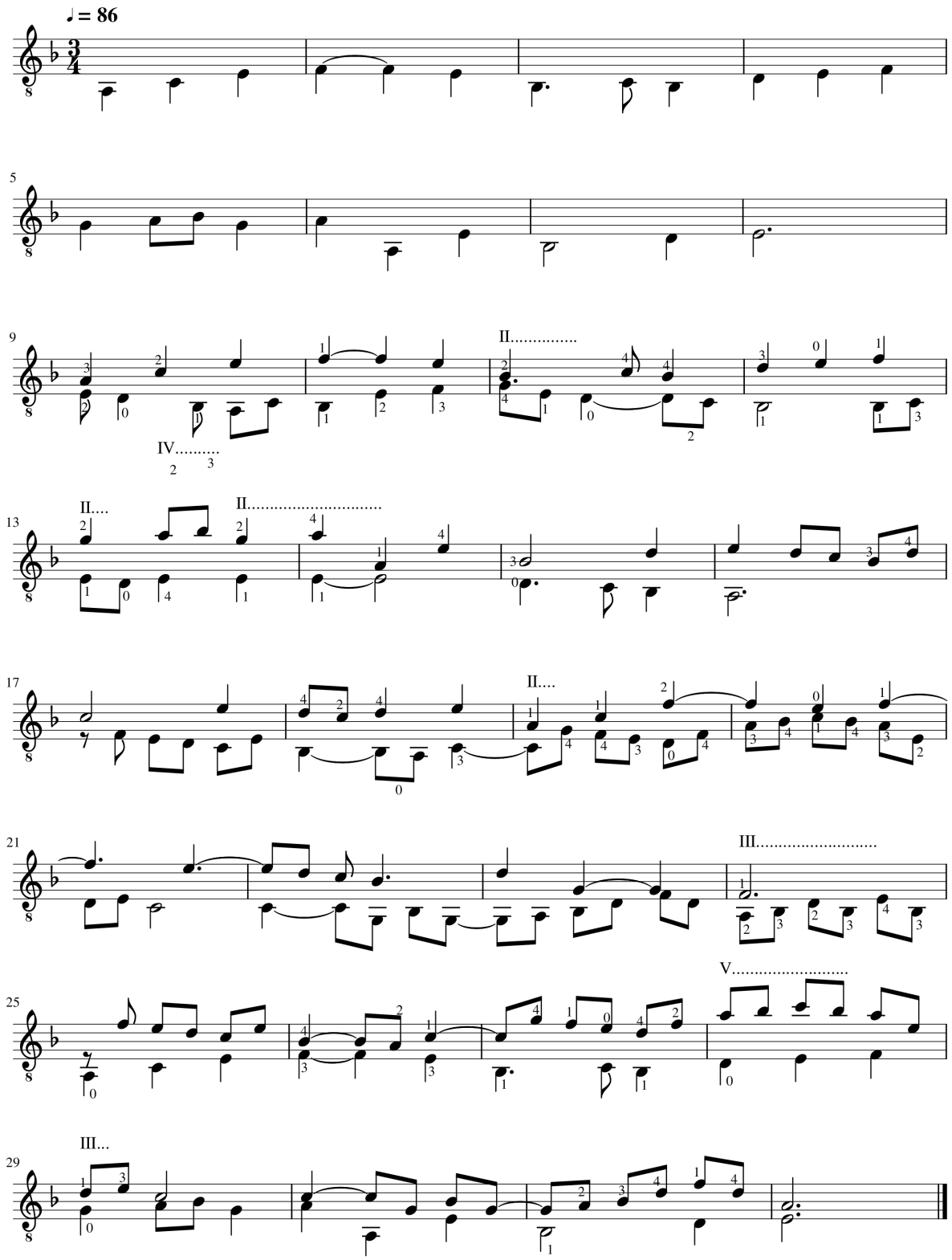
D dorian Exercise



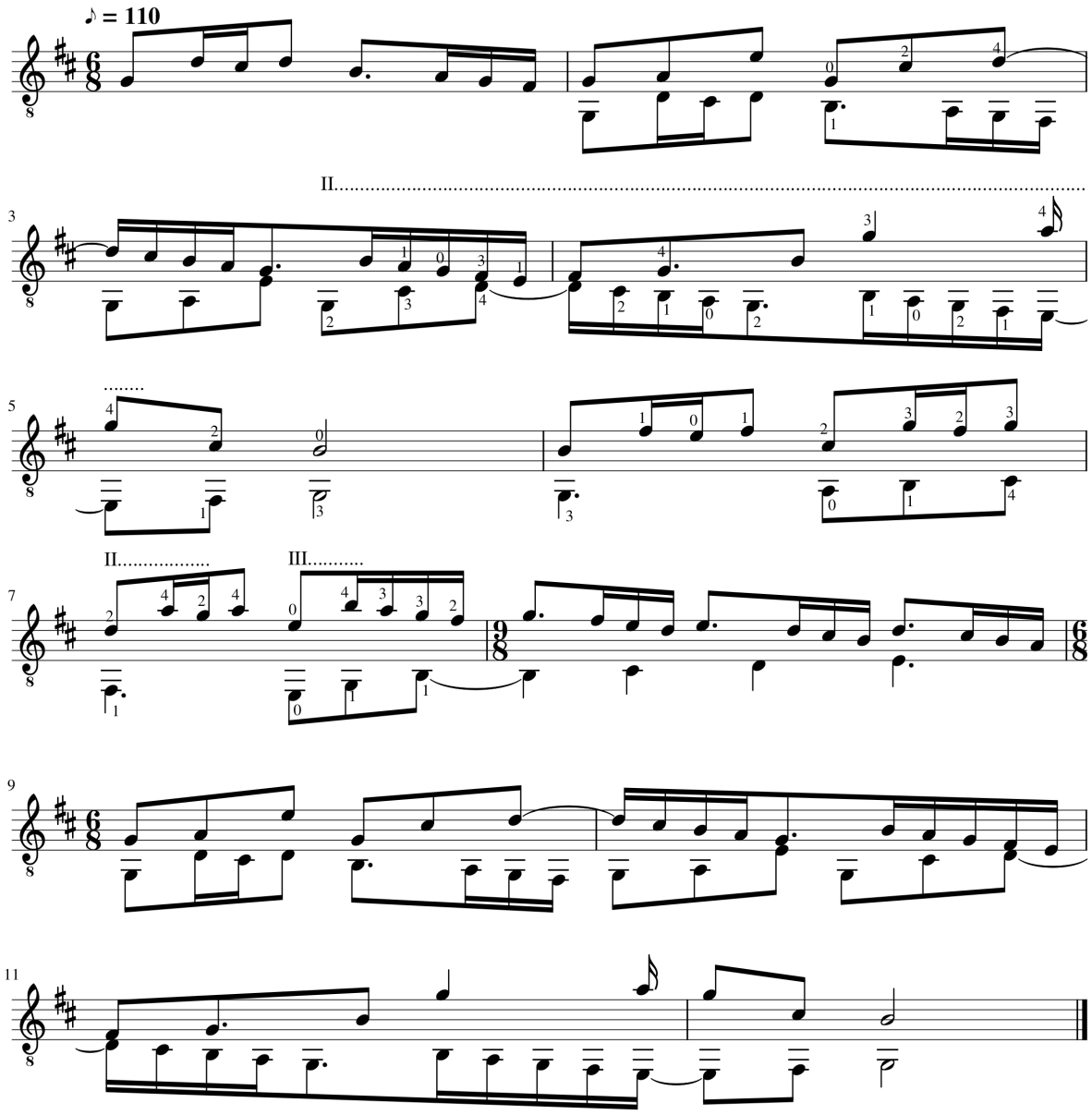
Things you could do:

- Play each line on its own.
- Play one line, sing the other. (learning to *hear* the lines simultaneously is as important as learning to *play* them)
- Play it as a duo with another instrument.
- Learn a phrase, for example bars 19-24. Then learn it in a few different keys. Transforming material is often the key to understanding it.

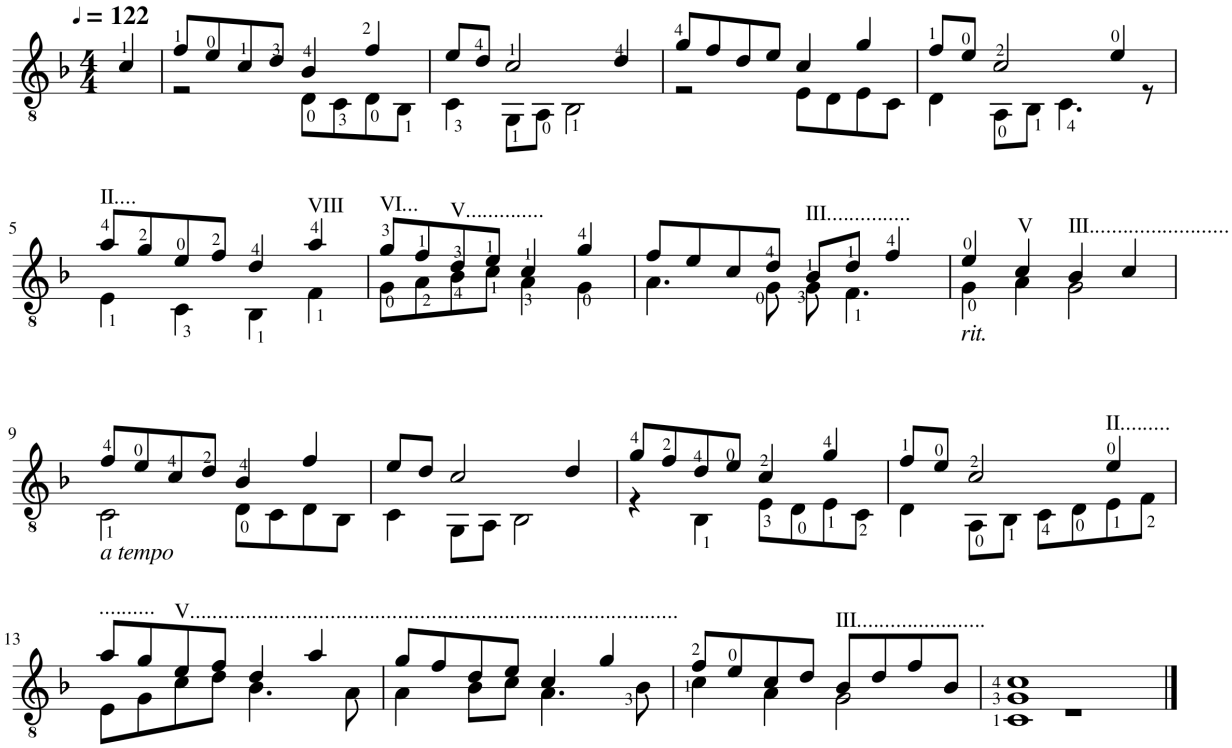
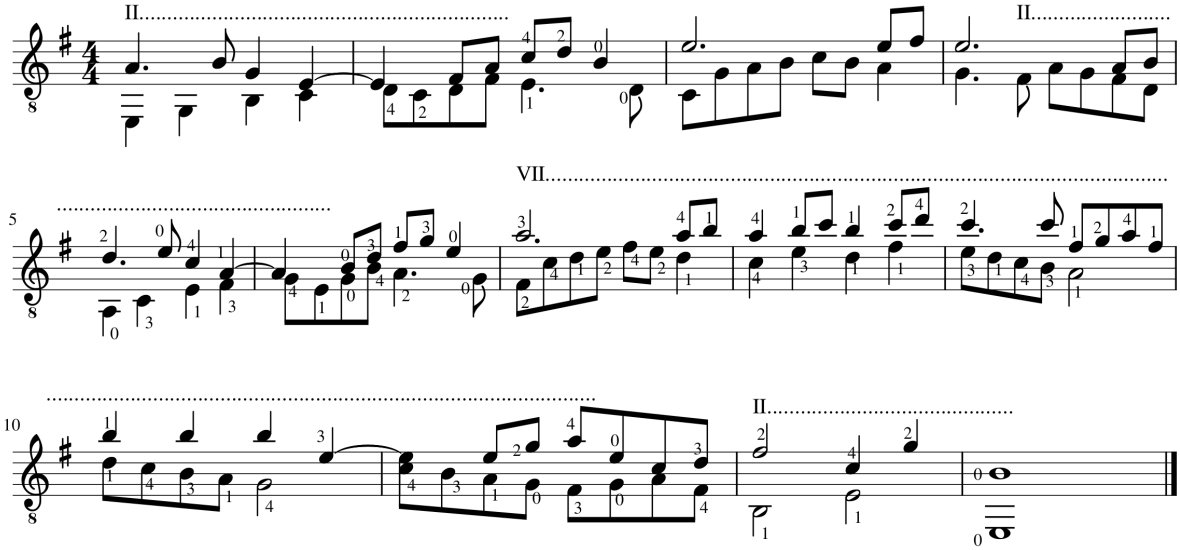
A Phrygian Exercise



G Lydian Exercise



C Mixolydian Exercise



E Aeolian Exercise