A NEW APPROACH TO READING FOR THE CLASSICAL GUITAR:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF AURAL SKILLS PEDAGOGY TO INSTRUMENTAL SIGHT-READING DEVELOPMENT IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

by

JOHN ROBERT CULWELL

(Under the Direction of Daniel Bolshoy)

ABSTRACT

Despite many innovations in modern classical guitar pedagogy, the sight-reading abilities of graduating college students remain inadequate for professional engagements. Evidence shows that music students do not receive sufficient training from self-directed approaches. This document presents a flexible sight-reading method for classical guitar, integrated with sight-singing and aural skills pedagogy to develop functional reading fluency.

INDEX WORDS: Guitar, Sight-Reading, Aural Skills, Sight-Singing, Guitar Pedagogy, Method

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B.M., University of North Carolina School of the Arts, 2016

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

Despite many innovations in modern classical guitar pedagogy, the sight-reading abilities of graduating college students remain inadequate for professional engagements. Existing methods lack a holistic approach that nurture all the skills necessary to develop strong reading habits. This project develops a new kind of sight-reading method for guitar that integrates with sight-singing training from aural skills pedagogy, utilizing interactive games and drills in real repertoire to develop a direct link between notation, tonal music function, solmization, and transposable fretboard patterns. The activities in this method are primarily designed for instructors to use in private lessons with their students but can be adapted for the classroom setting if desired. Ultimately, this sight-reading method seeks to help the student maximize the connection between the eye, the hand, the ear, and the mind.

Need for Study

This project fills two gaps in college music education. The first is the apparent deficiencies in sight-reading training among many classical guitar students. The majority of current guitar sight-reading methods are created using author-composed, carefully graded exercises that teach the student the geography of the fretboard. Sight-reading publications for guitar mention the importance of quick analysis for scanning, recognizing melodic, harmonic, and textural features pre-performance, and a few publications offer in-depth instructions on developing this habit, but they do not present strategies for realizing those patterns *during*

performance. At the same time, the project fills a second gap in aural skills instruction, as educators seek more ways to use instruments in the aural skills classroom.[1] Simon Parkin calls aural training "the binding agent between theory, improvisation and performance."[2]

Purpose

This document provides guitar studio instructors in higher education with strategies and activities to train the sight-reading abilities of their students using real music collected for sight-singing manuals, as well as repertoire and etudes from the classical guitar canon. It also situates sight-reading training in the applied lesson as an extension of the integrated music theory curriculum. Guitar students will become more confident readers, allowing them to learn music quickly for chamber music, and realize music from scores while exploring repertoire without relying on recordings to hear it. In this way, classical guitar students will not just gain the ability to recall the fingerings necessary to perform standard notation correctly, they will develop functional reading fluency: learning to imagine notated music and perform it expressively and intuitively.

Review of Literature

A survey of this literature reveals many consistencies in format and curricular structure. There are numerous sight-reading books for classical guitarists in publication. Ubiquitously, they are published as take-home practice books for students with exercises and musical examples

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[1]Timothy K. Chenette, Stacey Davis, and Stanley V. Kleppinger, "A Critical Review of Current Aural Skill Materials and Pedagogical Practices," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 36, no. 1 (2022): 152, accessed March 18, 2025, https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=571cd166-ba32-3f2f-8252-e5fe642b6316.

[2] Simon Parkin, "Aural Training within an Integrated Approach to Musicianship Training," in *The Routledge Companion to Aural Skills Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 32.

primarily composed by the author(s). Dodgson and Quine's *Progressive Sight-Reading for Guitarists* (1975) focuses on memorizing pitches in higher regions of the fretboard that are commonly less familiar to students, utilizing short excerpts originally composed by the co-author and prolific British guitar composer, Stephen Dodgson, in his signature chromatic musical language. Robert Benedict's *Sight Reading for Guitarists* (1985) assumes the student has no prior reading experience. By the series' end, the student can read simple polyphonic textures in the keys most common to guitar repertoire. Most of the original pieces resemble simple 19th-century guitar etudes, making it one of the more accessible and widely used books in the private studio today for beginner students.[3] Despite its value as a beginner reading book, the melodies are very limited in range, with the pitches rarely reaching higher than second position.

Paul Harris', the piano pedagogue best known for his *Improve Your Sight-Reading!* books for piano, published a similar series for guitar in 2009 in collaboration with the guitarist, Hugh Millington. These books are comprised of carefully graded pieces composed by the author designed to prepare the student for the Associate Board of Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) exams. While these books incorporate innovative activities such as improvisation and composition and are some of the only books to structure progression based on key rather than fretboard pitch location, they only cover exam training for the first five grades of the curriculum.

A Semester at Sight (2017), designed by the accomplished American guitar composer, Bryan Johanson, is a book for more advanced readers. It is one of the only sources that does not present reading examples in a progressive sequence. This means many of the first examples may be quite challenging for students who are new to reading. While these books can be very helpful for developing sight-reading, any one book will not offer enough material for sufficient practice.

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[3]Bradford Werner, "Sight-Reading for the Classical Guitar by Robert Benedict," *This is Classical Guitar*, last modified October 2, 2019, https://www.thisisclassicalguitar.com/sight-reading-classical-guitar-robert-benedict/.

The persisting sight-reading challenge among guitarists calls for divergence from the established model.

Methodology

This new approach to sight-reading provides strategies and activities for studio instructors to use with undergraduate-level students, developing their sight-reading skills using real music and tying in with sight-singing training from their aural skills course. Educators learn how to instill a strong rhythmic foundation in students by having them perform the rhythmic profiles of guitar repertoire in a measured sequence of common musical textures. For melodic training, the movable scale forms outlined in Shearer and Hirsch's *Learning the Fretboard* are mapped with movable-*do* solfège. This system is used to sight-read tonal melodies in a variety of keys, clefs, and positions on the fingerboard from *Music for Sight Singing,* tenth edition, by Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman. The scaffolding in this book, primarily based on harmonic features, is ideal for polyphonic instrumentalists, and promotes an integrated music curriculum between aural skills and applied lessons. Additionally, singable melodies ensure a relatively narrow melodic range, which is ideal for the beginning stages of training when students can only sight-read in one movable scale form at a time. Then, instructors are shown how to students can sight-read more advanced instrumental melodies once the preliminary training with sight-singing melodies is complete.

Next, the document covers strategies for sight-reading common accompaniment textures separated from their melodies. Students are asked to extract and perform musical lines or groups of lines in isolation from the rest of the musical texture in a progressive manner. Revoicing activities are used with guitar etudes from Julio Sagreras' *Las primeras lecciones de guitarra* to

train harmonic pattern recognition in different positions of fretboard. Finally, performance of full polyphonic textures is practiced by borrowing structured improvisation activities from Rogers and Ottman, applying them to guitar repertoire. Instructors will learn a variety of approaches to supplement traditional sight-reading practice in a way that develops students' pattern recognition skills in tonal music—the correlation between notation and fretboard geography.

Delimitations

This project is not designed to teach students the basics of reading standard music notation. Furthermore, the project will not train the guitarist's technique in one specific school or set of principles. The purpose of the fingering charts and fretboard maps throughout this document is to connect aural skills concepts to the patterns of the instrument. Fingering used by a guitarist for actual performance will be determined by their own technique, which can vary depending on background, education, and nationality. Furthermore, open position scale playing will not be covered, focusing primarily on training transpositional scales and upper position performance. If a student does not yet have experience reading in open position, it is recommended they learn from one of the many excellent books outlined in the literature review before attempting the contents of this document. While listening activities, such as interval and chord identification, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic dictation, error detection, and contextual listening, are essential to the development of audiation and a high level of musical literacy, this curriculum will be limited to developing performance-based skills. Lastly, the project will only focus on tonal repertoire. Tonal and post-tonal music present different reading challenges, requiring vastly different strategies for training. Therefore, it is ultimately outside the scope of this project.

CHAPTER 2

TRAINING RHYTHM AND METER

According to the Australian guitar virtuoso, John Williams, many guitarists "play the most difficult solo works from memory, and yet if you give them a part to play in one of the easier Haydn String Quartets… they're lost in no time."[1] This chapter discusses aspects of the sight-reading method related to rhythm and meter. It explains the best counting system for guitarists performing in common meter types, and discusses strategies for training right-hand technique using notated rhythm groups. This is done first with the rhythm exercises of the sight-singing manual, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition by Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman. Then, I show how rhythm exercises and solo guitar repertoire can be repurposed for open string practice on the guitar, integrating students' aural skills training with their applied lesson instruction.

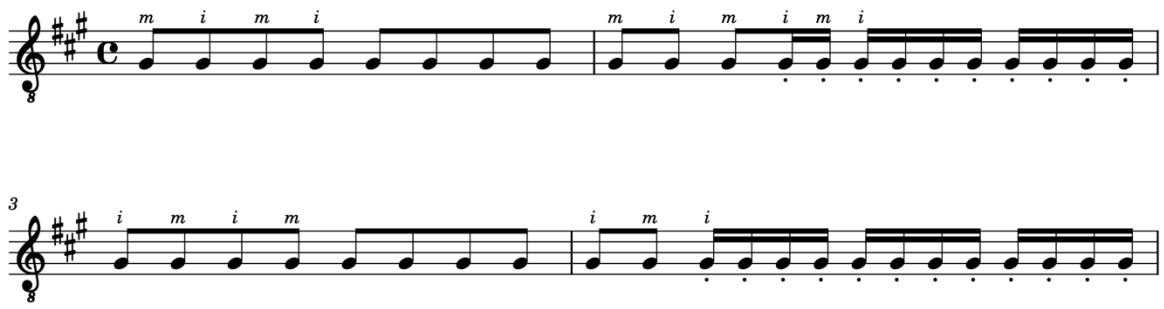
Technical Considerations with the Right Hand

During rhythm practice, students will find that the right hand interacts with repeated rhythm groups in very specific ways. Beginner students, especially those who struggle with rhythm, should first learn to play with their thumb (*p*) on a bass string, while resting the index, middle, and ring fingers (*i*, *m*, and *a*) on the treble strings. This is a simple, more accessible technique, since it only requires one finger to perform. When a student is comfortable with the basic level of coordination, they can try more challenging combinations, like finger alternation

[1] John Williams, interviewed by Ron Payne, *Ron Payne: Classical Guitar Teacher*, last modified March 19, 2015, https://guitarteacher.com.au/interview/john-williams-interview/.

with *i* and *m*, *p* and *i*, or whichever two-finger combination preferred by the instructor. Precision and control in alternation requires awareness of the numerical values of different rhythmic groupings, specifically whether the group requires an even or an odd number of articulations.

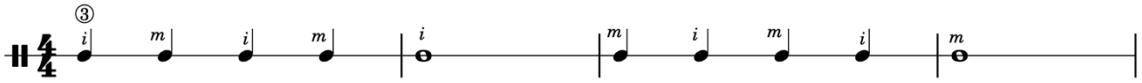
This is shown in a right-hand exercise from Scott Tenant's *Pumping Nylon*, replicated in Example 2.1. The repeated eighth-note rhythms begin on the *m* finger, and the *m* finger continues to play on the downbeat until the first odd-numbered grouping is introduced in second beat of the second measure. This three-note grouping (one eighth and two sixteenths) switches the downbeat to the *i* finger, which remains on the downbeat for the rest of the excerpt. In this scenario, guitarists must be equally comfortable starting on *m* or *i*, being ready to switch downbeat emphasis when the music calls for it.



Example 2.1: Scott Tenant, *Pumping Nylon*, "Scales: Control and Velocity," Exercise 8, mm. 7–10, p. 63.

If students are not mindful of how beat emphasis interacts with their right-hand technique, it will surely have a negative impact on their phrasing of exercises like the one in Example 2.2 from Chapter 1 of *Music for Sight Singing*, performed on the third string, indicated by the circled numeral three. A circled number is the conventional symbol for a string number (e.g. a circled numeral one indicates the note is played on the first string, another name for the

high E string). Students who struggle reading these groupings can practice away from the guitar, by clapping or tapping on a surface. This can even be done on the guitar by performing *tambora* techniques to practice rhythms. Then, students will be ready perform rhythms on open strings of the guitar, practicing with the right hand alone. The open strings should ring fully, not being dampened or muted in any way, so they practice performing rhythms with good tone.

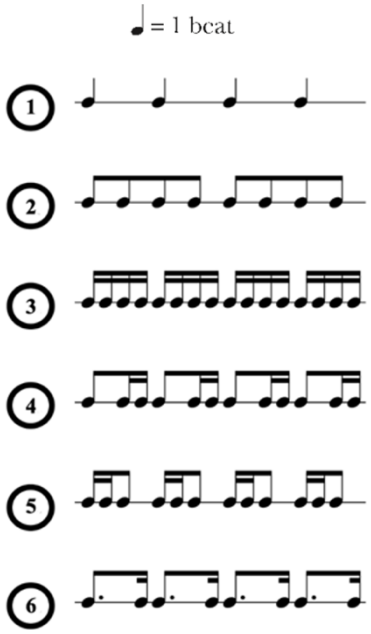


Example 2.2: Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Chapter 1, Exercise 1.9, mm.1–4, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition, p. 3.

Preparatory Training: Rhythm Trees

The previous section demonstrates only a few examples of how the right hand interacts with rhythm in guitar performance. Unfortunately, there are too many scenarios and exceptions to comprehensively catalogue in this document. However, students can practice right-hand rhythmic coordination by performing common, repeated rhythm figures on open strings, using a variety of activities that can be created from *Rhythm Trees*. A Rhythm Tree is an activity that familiarizes students with rhythmic patterns common to a meter signature or found in a sight-reading excerpt, arranging them in a vertical column or "tree." While the name is original to this method, the activity is inspired by ones commonly found in sight-singing textbooks, including *Music for Sight Singing*. Example 2.3 transcribes the rhythms of the original exercise used for training sixteenth note subdivision in simple quadruple meter. Aural skills students are instructed to conduct while speaking the rhythms of each line, repeating each line without interrupting the

tempo until mastered. The following lines are then performed in a similar manner. Once the student has completed every group, they then can skip from one line to any other line.



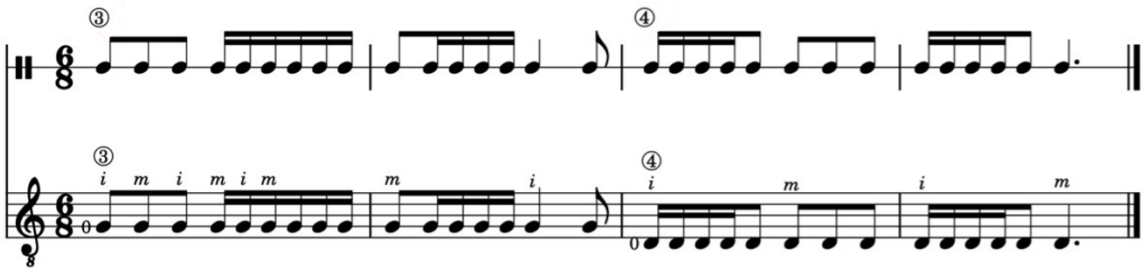
Example 2.3: Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Chapter 10, Music for Sight Singing by, tenth edition, p. 158.

Guitar students can perform the same activity on the guitar, using two-finger alternation [index (i) and middle (m), thumb (p) and index (i), etc.], using the counting system explained later in this chapter. The circled numerals, rather than the original bullet-point style of the original diagram, gives the numbers of the exercise a dual meaning: can be used to label the rhythms of each line, or it can be used to represent a string number of the guitar. When a student performs the activity, the instructor can point to the different numerals, directing the student to cross the right hand to the corresponding string. For example, when the instructor points to the circled numeral three, the student switches to perform the rhythms on the G string. This activity, which remains a great warmup even for more advanced students, helps to practice crossing

strings and adds an exciting challenge for students. A blank rhythm tree template is provided in Appendix A so instructors may create their own rhythm trees based on the needs of individual students in a meter signature of their choosing.

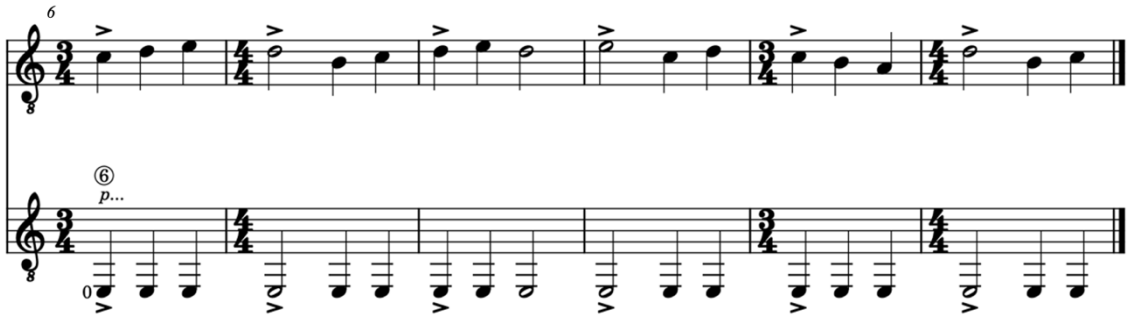
Single-Line Performances

Once a student is comfortable with counting and performing basic groups of isolated rhythms on open strings, they begin practicing reading notated, unpitched rhythms exercises. There are several guitar method books that present a limited number of these exercises, but there are aural skills textbooks, like *Music for Sight Singing*, that contain hundreds of unpitched rhythm exercises. Example 2.4 displays one of these exercises from Chapter 10, with one possible performance transcribed below. In this case, the instructor writes a circled numeral three above the first measure, directing the student to perform the rhythm on the open G string, and a circled four over the third measure, telling the student to change to the fourth string on the downbeat. Too many markings can overwhelm the student and feel like "busy work," but if used cautiously it can be great way to add variety to open-string practice.



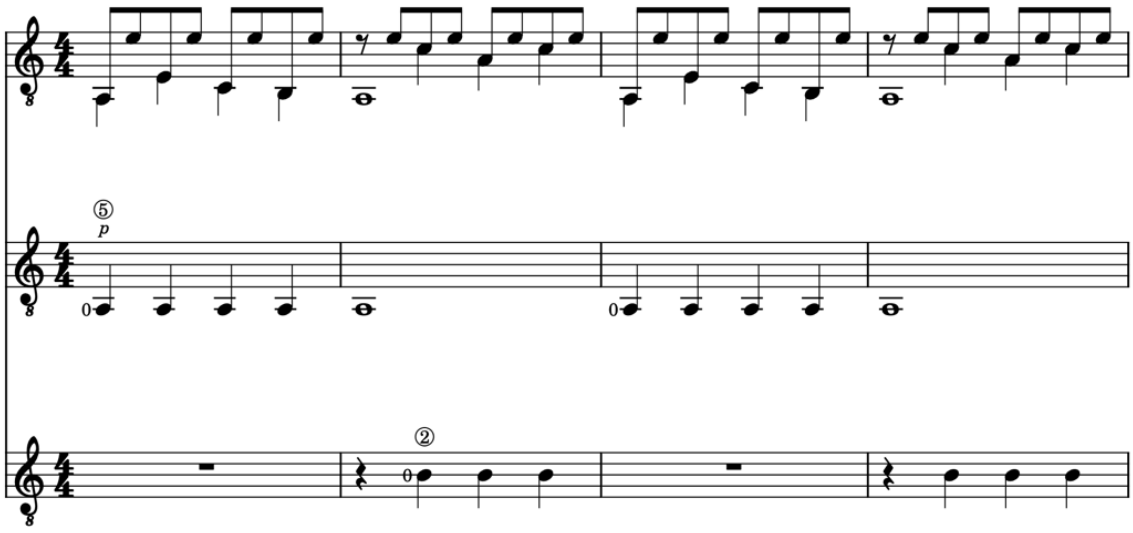
Example 2.4: Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Exercise 10.36, Chapter 10, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition, p.164.

Students will then be ready to perform the rhythmic profiles of fully-notated melodies from guitar repertoire and other resources instructors have on hand. Example 2.5 shows a single-line melody from Shawn Bell's *Elementary Studies*, transcribed as an open-string rhythm performance on the low E string with the thumb (p).



Example 2.5: Shawn Bell (b.1958), "Dreams of an Old Sailor: Variation V," mm. 6–11.

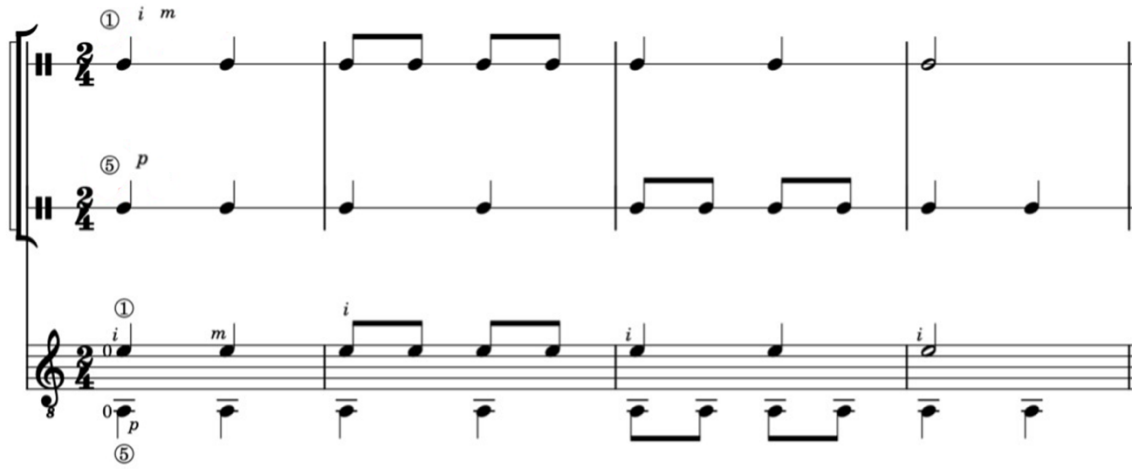
The same exercise can be done within polyphonic, solo guitar music. The arpeggiated bass line of a beginner etude by Mertz in the upper staff of Example 2.6 is reduced and performed by the student to its rhythmic profile transcribed in the middle staff on the open A string. An additional sight-reading attempt can be made by performing the middle voice (downbeats two, three, and four of measures two and four, realized on the lowest staff). Since solo guitar music is written on one staff, it can be difficult for beginner students separate voices of a busy, polyphonic texture. This activity helps develop this essential reading skill in way that is accessible to inexperienced readers.



Example 2.6: Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856), Exercise on the E String, mm. 1–4.

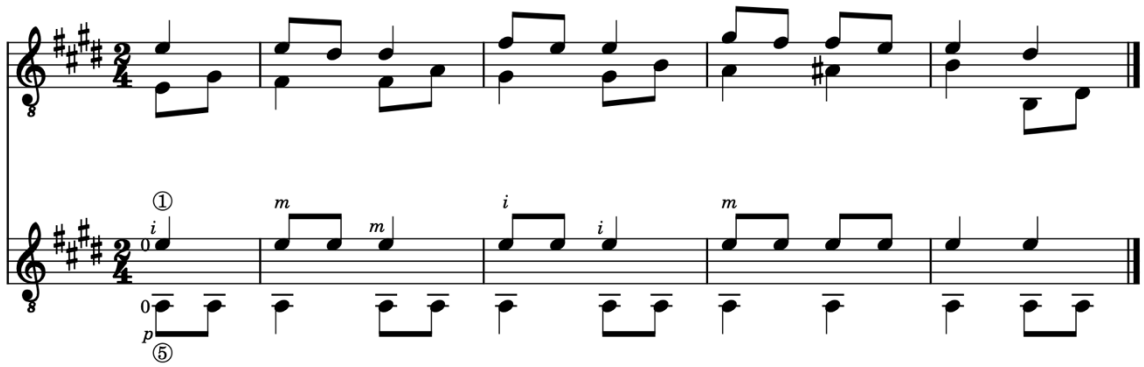
Multi-Line Performances

This section presents an expanded version of the previous reading activity, performing multiple lines of rhythms simultaneously on two or more open strings. *Music for Sight Singing* includes two-part rhythm drills in their rhythm chapters, like the one displayed in the upper staves of Example 2.7, that act as an ideal framework for preliminary polyphonic rhythm training. Guitar students can perform these directly from the sight-singing book by playing the lower line on an open bass string with *p* and the upper line with an alternating finger combination, like *i* and *m*. Here, the original exercise has been marked with right-hand fingerings directing the student to perform the upper line on the open first string (the E string) with *i* and *m*, and the lower line on the fifth string (the A string) with *p*. The lower staff shows a transcription of this performance. As with the open string activities in previous sections, instructors may include string crossings for more advanced students.



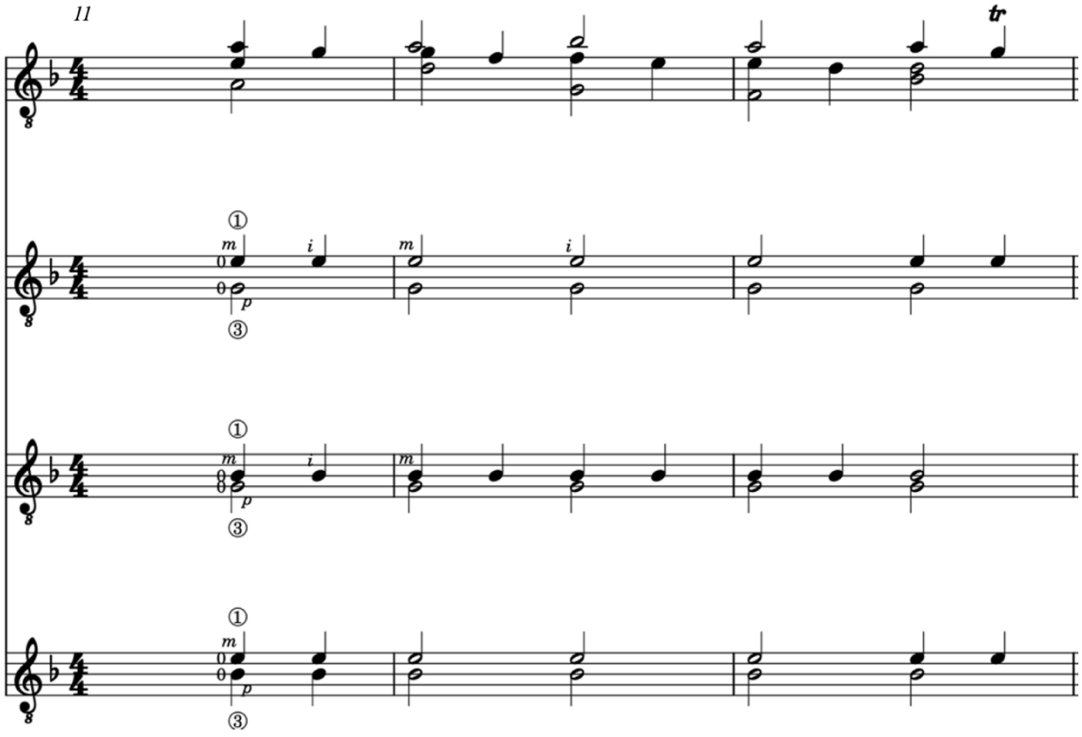
Example 2.7: Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Chapter 1, Exercise 1.25, mm. 1–4, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition by, p. 6.

Practicing two-part drills prepares students to read the rhythmic profiles of solo guitar music. Two-voiced textures, like the Aguado study shown on the upper staff of Example 2.8 are ideal for beginner practice. It is clear to see the two separate voices in the score, making it a simple task to perform each voice on a separate string. The lower staff of Example 2.8 shows this activity realized on the first and fifth strings again.



Example 2.8: Dionisio Aguado (1784–1849), Lesson 39, mm.1-4.

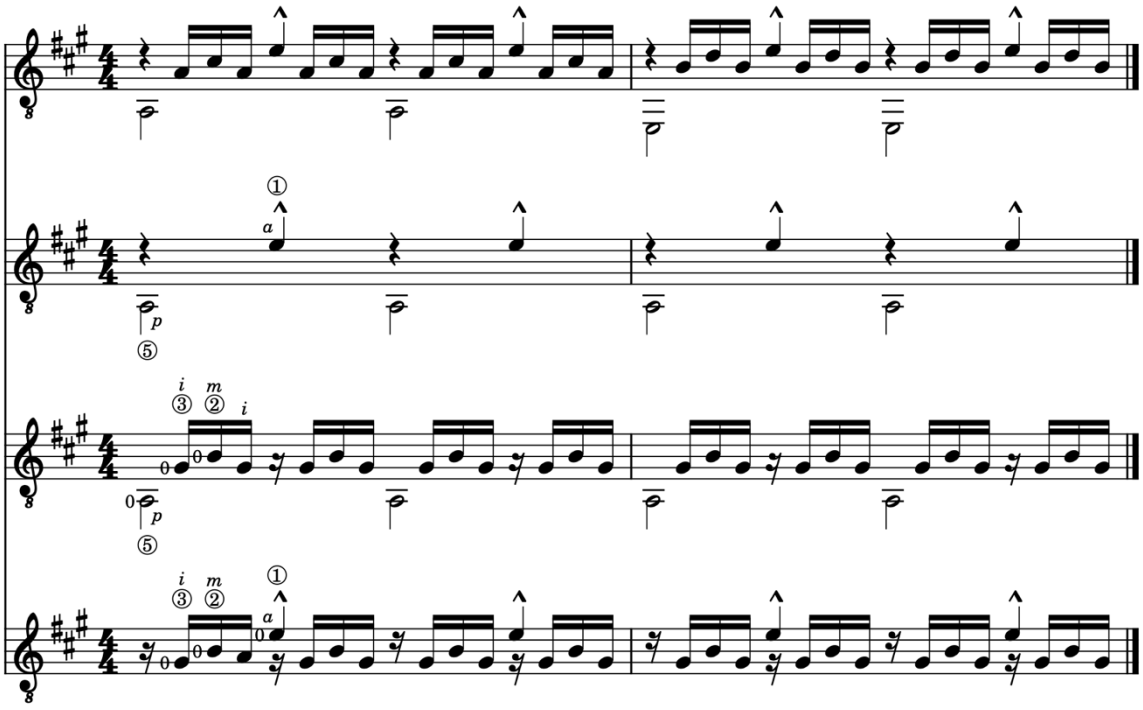
Example 2.9 shows that two-part drills can be practiced by extracting two voices from three-voiced textures in notated music. An excerpt from the original prelude by Santiago Murcia in the example is written in the upper staff, while the rhythms of each combination of two voices is extracted in the staves below: the melody and bass line, the middle-voice and bass line, and then the melody and middle-voice. This type of chord/melody texture that is generally homo-rhythmic is helpful at the beginner level.



Example 2.9: Santiago de Murcia (1673–1739), Preludio y allegro, Suite in D minor, arranged by Frank Koonce, mm.11–13.

When students are ready to perform two-part drills from complex textures, instructors must consider the notational and technical challenges within their sight-reading selections. For example, Lesson 54 by Sagreras is transcribed on the highest staff of Example 2.10. The staff

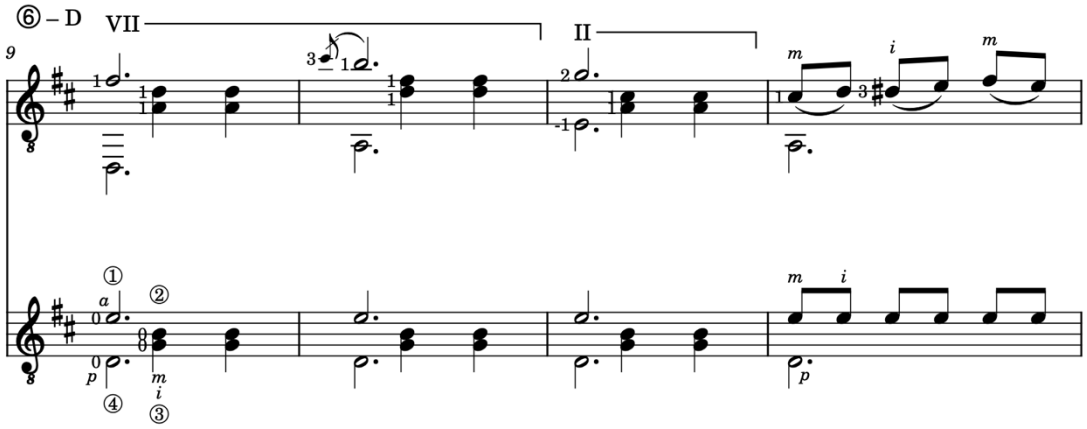
directly below shows a two-part drill of the bass and melody of this excerpt. The technique required for this performance is most accessible, since the subdivisions are removed and both voices can be played easily with the fingers of the original arpeggio, *p* and *a*. The challenge comes in reading it, since it requires looking past the sixteenth note Alberti figure in the middle voice that is consistent in the texture. The subsequent staff, this time showing a reading of the bass and middle voice, involves simple right-hand arpeggios: *pimi* on the downbeat of beats one and three, and *imi* off beats two and four. Both arpeggios are quite comfortable to perform, but the *imi* fingering requires an understanding of syncopation and may not be suited for novice readers. Finally, the lowest staff realizes the melody and Alberti figure without the bass line, presenting the greatest rhythmic and technical difficulties of all the performances. An additional layer of syncopation is now involved with *aimi* arpeggio, whose downbeats fall on weak beats two and four of the measure. The *aimi* arpeggio itself is not necessarily awkward to perform, but the technical security of playing *p* on the downbeat has been removed. For reading practice, it is best to first use two-part rhythm combination that are least burdensome to the student's technique before venturing to more challenging ones.



Example 2.10: Julio Sagreras (1879–1942), Lesson 54, mm.1–2.

Students are then ready to perform the rhythm profiles of all the voices of a piece simultaneously. Here, it is advised to assign each voice of the excerpt to a specific string for the duration of the sight-reading performance, regardless of the string crosses required of the right hand during performance. This is demonstrated with a waltz by Tárrega in the upper staff of Example 2.11. The right-hand articulations of the first three bars are generally consistent and provide a framework to assign each voice to its own open string for performing the rhythm in isolation: the melody on the first string (the E string), the alto and tenor on the second and third strings (the B and G strings). While the bass line changes strings in every measure, it is assigned to the fourth string throughout the exercise due to its proximity to the index finger (this is tonic only by coincidence, the D string). Note the suggested right-hand fingerings do not correspond with the string assignments, the fourth measure uses *m/i* alternation for the eighth note scalar

passage. All left-hand articulations are ignored in this realization of the exercise, specifically the grace note in measure two and the slurs in measure four. While it is certainly possible to perform these features with the right hand, and would be a welcomed challenge for some students, most will have the best experience if the focus remains on counting, staying in the metric framework, and following the score.

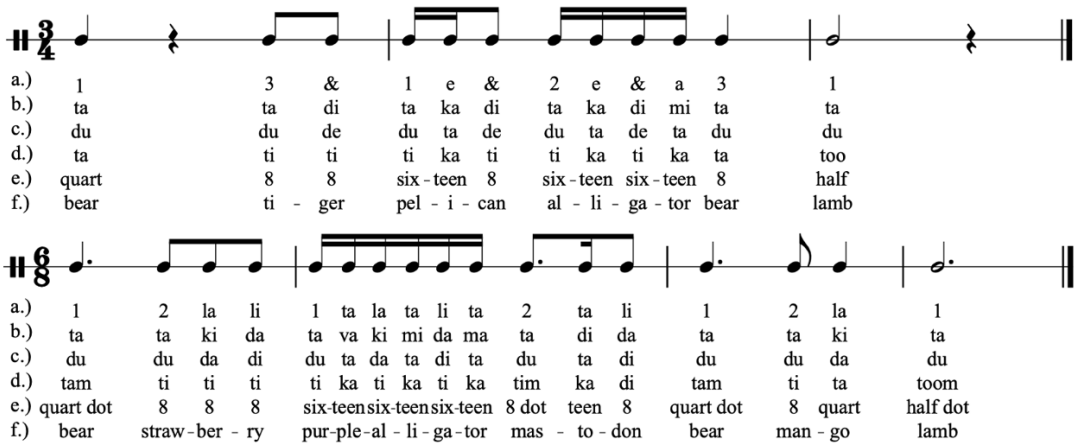


Example 2.11: Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909), Waltz in D major, mm. 9–12.

Rationale for a Counting System

Counting is the most fundamental skill needed to keep time while reading a score, therefore, guitar students should develop the habit of counting the meter out loud. Vocalization is the best method of externalizing the meter for guitarists because it does not interfere with the player's technique or sitting position, unlike foot tapping or conducting. A counting system for guitar sight-reading must serve three purposes: it must reflect the meter, clarify beat position within the measure, and distinguish two layers of division (for example, the eighth-note *division* and the sixteenth note *subdivision* in a 4/4 meter signature).

While primarily used in aural skills courses to help students articulate rhythm, syllable systems can help clarify meter and beat divisions when used as a method of counting. Example 2.12 displays a list of popular syllable systems with rhythm samples in simple and compound meter. Row A, the *1 e and a* system (pronounced "one ee and uh"), is the only syllable system on the list that reflects beat placement within the measure. The other systems rely on a conducting pattern, or some other physical gesture, to realize the meter.



Example 2.12: Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Appendix A: Rhythm Solmization, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition, p. 430.

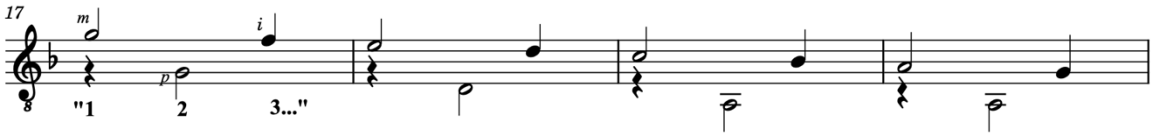
Many students learn to use the *1 e and a* system in a way that does not distinguish subdivisions of simple meter from divisions compound meter (for example, *1 e and a 2 e and a* in a 4/4 meter signature shares two syllables with *1 and a 2 and a* for a 6/8 meter signature). For some students, this can lead to confusion of where the downbeats fall in compound meters.[2] Allen I. McHose and Ruth N. Tibbs propose a solution to this by creating unique syllables that distinguish compound meter division (*1 la li* 2 *la li*) and subdivision (*1 ta la ta li ta 2 ta la ta li*

[2] Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, *Music for Sight Singing*, 10th edition, (New York: Pearson, 2019), 429.

ta) from simple meter division (*1 and)* and subdivision (*1 e and a*). Therefore, the *1 e and a* system, with McHose/Tibbs syllables for compound meter, is the preferred method for a guitar sight-reading method, due to its representation of beat placement in the meter and its distinction between division and subdivision in both simple and compound meters.

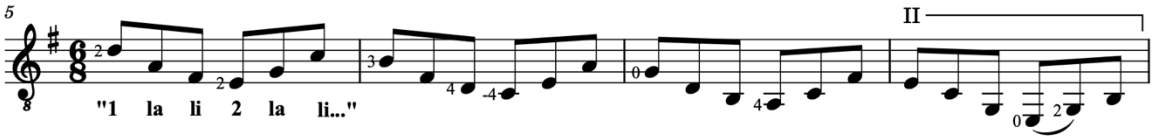
Counting Beat Division While Sight-Reading

It is common for musicians to continuously subdivide while counting using this counting system, regardless of the rhythmic divisions present in the piece. However, habitual counting does not guarantee that a student will thoroughly scan a piece to check for rhythmic difficulties. This curriculum offers a solution to this by teaching students to count division and subdivision only when necessary. *Tea in Picardy* by Jeffery McFadden in Example 2.13 contains quarter notes and half notes, therefore counting only whole beats (*1 2 3*) is necessary.



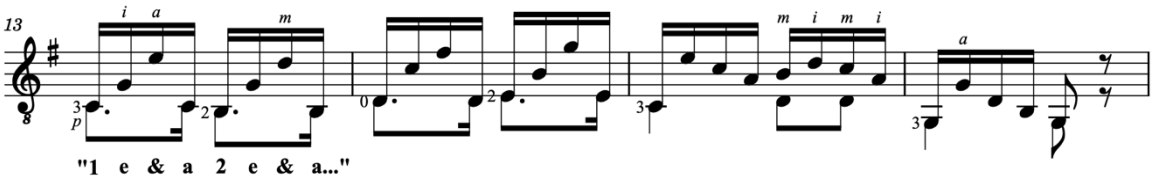
Example 2.13: Jeffery McFadden (b. 1963), *Tea in Picardy*, mm.17–20.

The texture of the prelude by Augustine Barrios in Example 2.14 is made of eighth notes in a 6/8 meter signature, which means the student counts just the compound meter divisions (*1 la li 2 la li*).



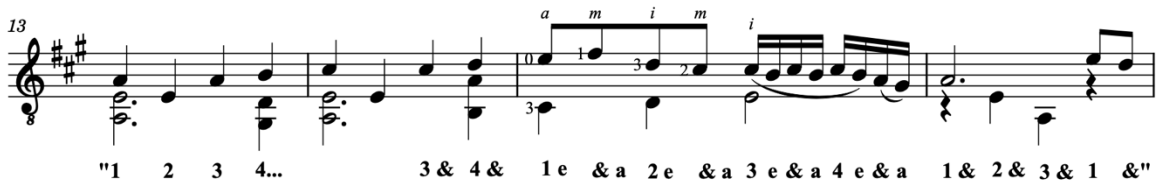
Example 2.14: Augustine Barrios (1885–1944), Prelude, mm.5–8.

The texture of the etude by Ferdinando Carulli in Example 2.15 features a sixteenth rhythms, requiring subdivision in simple meter (*1e and a 2 e and a*).



Example 2.15: Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841), Andantino, Op. 241, no. 5, mm. 13–16.

In the early stages of training, the lowest division needed for the piece should be maintained by the student throughout. The lute piece in Example 2.16 shows how more advanced students can be more dynamic with how they count division by anticipating upcoming division and subdivision. In this example, the performer begins counting whole beats (*1, 2, 3, 4*), since the no divisions are present at the beginning of the phrase. On beat three of measure 14, they begin counting the division (*3 and 4 and*) in preparation for the downbeat of measure 15. Finally, they transition to counting the subdivision (*1 e and a 2 e and a*) on beat one of measure 15 to be ready to perform sixteenth notes on beat three of the same measure. Counting division and subdivision in this way helps the student pick a reasonable performance tempo, and it also requires the student to scan the entire excerpt, thinking critically about the rhythms while sight-reading.



Example 2.16: Ivan Jelinek (1683–1759), Gavotte from Lute Suite No. 2, mm. 13–16.

If guitarists are to be successful sight-readers, they must exhibit a strong foundation in rhythm and meter and be able to express it on the instrument. The intention of this chapter is to develop this awareness by focusing on the role of the right hand in guitar performance. Guitarists are familiar with practicing open strings for preparing concert repertoire, but this is fundamentally different from the activities presented in this chapter. Traditional right-hand alone practice is a technical exercise designed to improve tone production and clarify the job of the guitarist's right hand in a piece. The sight-reading activities in this chapter are designed to give the performer experience following specific lines in the score, counting aloud, and choosing right-hand finger combinations that naturally align with various meters and rhythm types. The next chapters will focus on the role of the left hand in performing scales and arpeggios of tonal music, but instructors should first ensure students are competent in rhythm skills before venturing into pitch content.

CHAPTER 3

MOVABLE SCALE FORMS

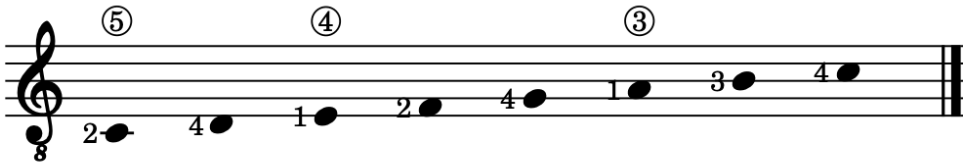
Many guitarists attribute their sight-reading difficulties to the instrument's capability to play the same passage of music in multiple locations on the fretboard.[1] This characteristic is shared with other string instruments, like of the violin family. What compounds this challenge for guitarists is the number of strings (six instead of four), and their tuning to closer intervals (fourths rather than fifths). This creates more instances of duplication on the guitar as you move up the fingerboard.[2] Despite the numerous publications that present approaches to practicing the various scales, chords, and other patterns of the instrument, classical guitarists continue to neglect this essential area of study. This chapter defines five movable scale forms of the fretboard which create a transposable network of tonal patterns for sight-reading. It explains how these patterns can be used to perform melodies in a variety of keys and registers on the instrument, which will be visualized with both guitar fingering notation and fretboard diagrams accompanying each example.

Introduction to the Five Movable Scale Forms

While called variety of different names (e.g. "shapes," "fingerings," etc.), a movable pattern is any scale, arpeggio, or chord that can be "moved" from one position of the fretboard to another, transposing it to a new key if the original left-hand finger pattern is maintained. There

[1] David Pedrick, "Literacy and the Guitar: Suggestions for Improving Sight-Reading Skills," *Soundboard* 25, no. 3, (1999): 27.
[2] Jonathan Leathwood and Richard Wright, *Guitar*, (London: Kahn and Averill, 2024), 38.

are five movable scale forms used by guitarists for melodic performance, which can be found in Appendix B written in C major, labeled with pitch letters on page 75.[3] Example 3.1 shows a one-octave scale in C major that uses Movable Scale Form 2, notated with left-hand fingerings. The low C and D are performed with the middle (2) and little (4) fingers of the left hand on the fifth string (indicated by the circled numeral 5), the E, F and G are performed by the index (1), middle (2), and little (4) fingers fourth string (indicated by the circled numeral 4 starting under the E), and finally A, B, and high C are performed with index (1), ring (3), and little (4) finger on the third string (indicated with the circled numeral 3 starting with the A). Since no open strings are involved, the fingering can be laterally transposed, or "moved," to any new tonic on the fifth string if the same fingering is preserved. This style of notation is preferred by classical guitarists, as it is designed to be used with notation and is helpful for determining fingerings for repertoire.

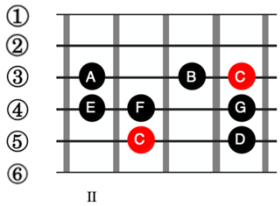


Example 3.0.1: One-octave in C major using Movable Scale Form 2.

The fretboard diagram in Example 3.2 displays the same scale, performed with the same movable scale form. Fretboard diagrams are read as six horizontal lines indicating the six strings of the guitar (the high E string being the highest line and the low E string being the lowest line) and typically three to five vertical lines representing frets of a specific region of the fretboard.[4]

[3] These are identical to the ones found in *Learning the Fingerboard* by Aaron Shearer and Alan Hirsch.
[4] This horizontal orientation of the diagram is typical for scales as opposed to the vertical orientation preferred for chord voicings.

The region is specified with a Roman numeral II indicating *second position* (meaning the first finger of the left hand is aligned with the second fret). Fretboard *dots* are placed on this diagram indicating a left-hand finger placement on the fretboard for the note being played. This form of notation is preferred by jazz guitarists and other styles that mostly perform without sheet music due to its visual clarity and precision in geographical location on the fingerboard. It is also used by classical guitarists when describing fretboard mapping.



Example 3.0.2: One-octave in C major using Movable Scale Form 2.

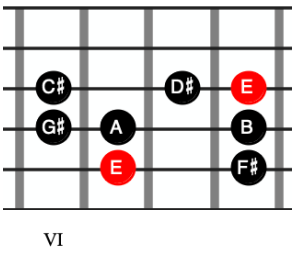
Each movable scale form in Appendix B is written in its *full position*, meaning it includes all pitches that can be reached by the left hand comfortably without having to do a large shift to another region of the fretboard. Movable scale forms here are notated in C major in the left column, revealing the natural pitches of the fingerboard. In the right column, tonic is reoriented to the relative minor. Learning to access minor mode melodies in this way, rather than by parallel relationship, greatly simplifies the learning process, allowing the student to access the same patterns for both modes.

Each scale overlaps with the one preceding it by two frets (e.g. Movable Scale Form 1 shares frets two and three with Movable Scale Form 2 in C major), covering the entire range of the fretboard. Transposition to other keys is done by aligning the tonic, marked in red, to a different pitch on the same string (e.g Movable Scale Form 2 transposes to C-sharp major by

positioning the second finger on the C-sharp on the fifth string's fourth fret, but *not* to the C-sharp on the sixth string's ninth fret). In the key of C major, Movable Scale Form 1 is written its open form, meaning it uses the open strings for the E, A, D, G, B and E instead of fretted notes, requiring only three left-hand fingers to play.[5] In other keys, this scale form will require all four fingers to perform. When all five movable scale forms are mastered, the performer possesses the ability traverse the entire range of the fretboard, seeing it as one unified network of tonal, melodic patterns.

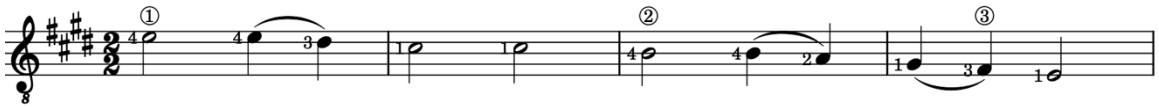
Movable Scale Forms in Practice

Movable scale forms are commonly used for transposing diatonic melodies. Example 3.3 transposes the previous one-octave scale from Movable Scale Form 2 to E major by "moving" tonic to the E on the seventh fret of the fifth string. This is used to perform "Watts' Cradle Hymn," a simple descending stepwise melody in Example 3.4.[6] It clear to see the relationship of the movable scale form between C major (Example 3.2) and E major, and how they are helpful for transposition of diatonic melodies.



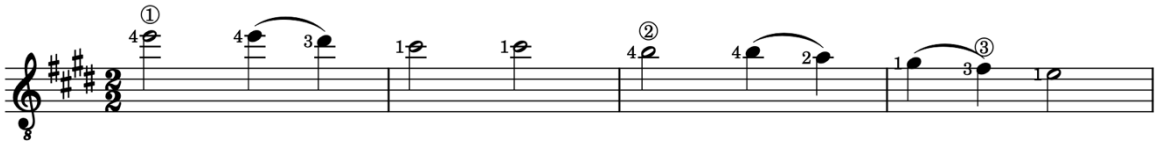
Example 3.3: Movable Scale Form 2, one octave in E major.

[5] For an example of a movable scale form being used to perform a melody, see Example 4.7 on p. 34.
[6] This melody is used in Gary S. Karpinski's *Manual for Sight Singing and Ear Training,* second edition on p. 46.

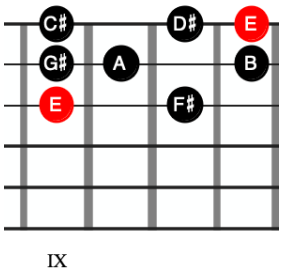


Example 3.4. “Watts’ Cradle Hymn,” mm.1–4 in E major using Movable Scale Form 2.

Guitarists who prioritize learning movable scale forms can access higher, less familiar positions of the fretboard much earlier in their training than those who do not. If asked to play the same melody from the previous example an octave higher, like in Example 3.5, the performer has no choice but to play the high E on the first string, twelfth fret. This requires a movable scale form that accommodates tonic on the highest string of the instrument (Movable Scale Form 2 in E major does not). The higher octave of Movable Scale Form 3, shown in the fretboard diagram of Example 3.6, reaches this note comfortably with the little finger (4) and keeps the left hand entirely in ninth position. Visualizing the fretboard in this way allows for students to navigate this intimidating region of the fretboard that many struggle with well into their education.



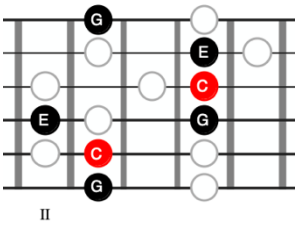
Example 3.5: “Watts’ Cradle Hymn,” mm.1–4, using Movable Scale Form 3 in E major.



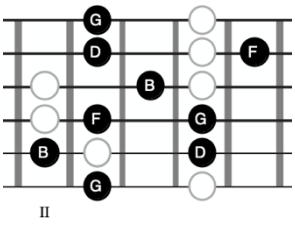
Example 3.6: Movable Scale Form 4 one-octave in E major; used to perform Example 2.5.

Diatonic Arpeggios Within Movable Scale Forms

It is common for guitarists to visualize arpeggios as independent shapes of their own (e.g. a guitarist will learn a four-note dominant seventh arpeggio that they move up and down the neck of the guitar to new roots). It is perhaps more intuitive to learn diatonic arpeggios native to the movable scale forms. Example 3.7 reveals the tonic triad embedded in Movable Scale Form 2. The chord tones here are labeled with traditional dots while the full scale form placed in the background is indicated with hollowed grey dots; its dominant seventh chord form is displayed in the same way in Example 3.8.

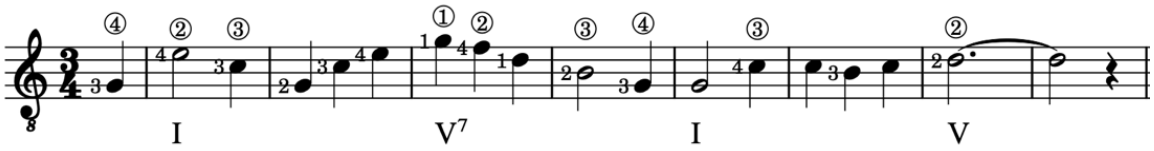


Example 3.7: The Tonic Triad Arpeggio of Movable Scale Form 2.



Example 3.8: The Dominant Seventh Chord Arpeggio of Movable Scale Form 2.

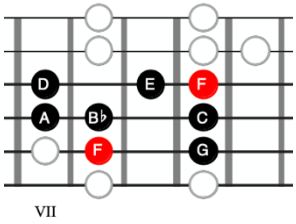
The melody of the etude by Fernando Sor in Example 3.9, which mostly involves leaps of the tonic triad and the dominant seventh chord, uses a fingering that aligns with the arpeggios within Movable Scale Form 2 displayed above. Here, contractions of the second and third fingers to the fifth fret are preferred for playing the second inversion tonic arpeggio in the opening measures, rather than awkward fourth finger jumps from string to string that will certainly break the continuity of the line. Recognition of these notated arpeggios, alongside rote practice of the associated fingerings away from notation, will certainly help the one's ability to perform this melody in a sight-reading context. At the same time, it simplifies fretboard memorization by using arpeggios inherent to a larger fingering network.



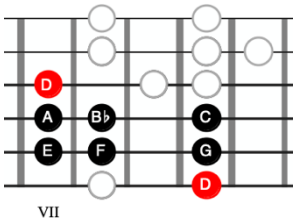
Example 3.9: Fernando Sor (1778–1839), Moderato, Op. 31, no. 1 mm.1–8, melody only.

Performing Minor Mode with Movable Scale Forms

Again, the minor mode can be accessed by identical fingerings reorienting tonic to the relative minor. Note that the shift to minor mode changes the range of the scale form. Examples 3.10 and 3.11 show how one octave of both F major and D minor can be played with Movable Scale Form 2.

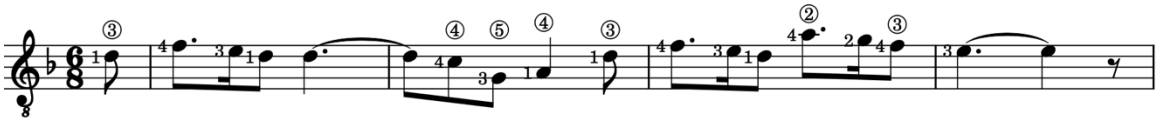


Example 3.10: Movable Scale Form 2, showing one octave embedded in the pattern.



Example 3.11: Movable Scale Form 2, showing a one-octave scale of the relative minor embedded in the pattern.

Movable Scale Form 2 in D minor is used to perform the melody from the solo guitar piece by Frederic Hand in Example 3.12. The diatonic arpeggios of minor keys must be trained separately, especially with harmonies involving the leading tone, but this kind of melodic training can clarify the relationship between modes and further simplify the task of learning the patterns of the fretboard.



Example 3.12: *Elegy For A King,* mm.1–8 melody only, by Frederic Hand (b. 1947).

Pattern recognition is widely considered an essential skill that is necessary for successful sight-reading.[7] The objective of this chapter was to clarify what these patterns are on the instrument so they can be later connected to musical patterns represented in notation. It may come as a surprise that mastering these patterns is often considered a secondary skill for classical

[7]Anne Sullivan, "Sight-reading Should Be Easy: 4 Simple Strategies - PHH 036," *Practicing Harp Happiness*, Podcast audio, January 24, 2022.

guitarists. The ability to perform two or three-octave scales in all twelve major and minor keys is not as useful for performing solo guitar music as it is for other instruments. Neglecting scale practice, however, has led to a deficiency that is becoming glaringly apparent. The next chapter shows how undergraduate aural skills pedagogy provides a scaffolding to train guitarists' sight-reading abilities as well as to develop them as competent fretboard practitioners.

CHAPTER 4

APPLYING AURAL SKILLS PEDAGOGY

The previous chapter outlined the common movable scale forms of the guitar, giving some insight to how they can be trained and visualized by students in terms of diatonic function. This, in turn, is mapped with movable-*do* solfège, displayed on page 75 of Appendix B, and applied to sight-reading tonal melodies, using the organization and approach of the sight-singing method book widely used in undergraduate aural skills courses, *Music for Sight Singing*. One of the primary objectives for training undergraduates to sight-sing is to develop pitch audiation rather than hearing pitch associated with a scale or chord fingering by rote.[1] Guitarists learn to read music from a very early age, but they often do so in a way that does not help them become musically literate. Students are careful to practice the coordinated physical movements that are necessary for successful performance of repertoire, but this is often done in a way that disconnected from a deeper understanding of the score. Predominantly rote ways of practice create issues recognizing and assimilating rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic information quickly while sight-reading.[2] The methodology in this chapter aims to address this problem by training the association between scale fingering, solmization, and conceptual learning in coordination with other core classes.

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[1] Jennifer Snodgrass, "Pedagogy of Aural Skills." In *Teaching Music Theory*, 190-227.Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 205.
[2] Jonathan Leathwood and Richard Wright, *Guitar,* (London: Kahn and Averill, 2024), 38.

A Rationale for Movable-*Do* with *Do*-Based Minor

Classical guitar technical manuals have ubiquitously used fixed systems for centuries. Ferdinando Carulli published *Solféges et vocalises* circa 1822 to train guitarists to sing while accompanying themselves. Claudio Camisassa's *Méthode progressive* uses fixed solfège syllables, identifying rather than pitch letters, without chromatic inflections (e.g., A, A-sharp, and A-flat are all *la*). The widely used American method by Aaron Shearer utilizes fixed-*do* solmization with chromatic inflections (e.g., A-sharp is *li* and A-flat is *le*) as a tool for visualization while memorizing repertoire, helping develop knowledge of the fretboard. While popular and jazz guitarists are known to use scale degrees ($\hat{1}$ for tonic, transposable to any pitch) for improvisation, there appears to be no exploration of movable-*do* systems for classical guitar sight-reading pedagogy.

Movable solmization systems are much more common in music theory programs at the university level throughout the United States. Overwhelmingly, these programs use movable-*do* solfège (*do* is tonic, transposable to any pitch), with a study conducted in 2017 confirming 175 of 239 university theory programs use this system, far more than any other.[3] These programs favor movable-*do* solfège because it is ideal for teaching diatonic function (e.g. *ti* is used interchangeably with "the leading tone," *do* with tonic, etc.) and for integrating aural skills training with concepts learned in written theory courses. There are conflicting views on the best approach for syllables in the minor mode. According to Jennifer Snodgrass, a *la*-based minor system may have advantages for programs with a music education population, because many melodies common in K-12 programs frequently modulate between major and minor keys.[4]

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[3] Barbara Murphy and Brendan McConville, "Music Theory Undergraduate Core Curriculum Survey: a 2017 Update," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 31, no. 1 (2017), 177-223.
[4] Jennifer Snodgrass, "Pedagogy of Aural Skills," in *Teaching Music Theory,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 194.

Karpinski, on the other hand, believes tonic-oriented solmization systems more immediately reflect the cognitive process while listening to tonal music.[5] The system used in this chapter employs a movable system to (1) emphasize function and tonic inference (with *do*-based minor) within movable scale patterns, (2) extend music theory and aural skills training into applied lesson space, and (3) complement to the widespread fixed-*do* and letter-naming systems that students likely use in every other aspect of their applied lesson training.

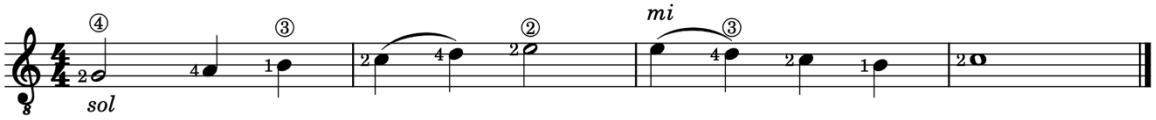
Rationale for Using *Music for Sight Singing*

Since no sight-reading method for guitar has been constructed on the basis of diatonic function, the scaffolding for introducing tonal content can be created from modeling successful sight-singing manuals. As a polyphony-capable instrument, guitarists benefit from practicing from a book that uses harmony as the main learning focus when introducing content, as opposed to intervallic relationships or other priorities. *Music for Sight Singing* was chosen as the ideal model for the following reasons: (1) it utilizes a collection of melodies drawn from real music; (2) clear table of contents with most chapters defined by harmony; (3) structured improvisation to practice new concepts; (4) and inclusion reading a variety of clefs. While other books incorporate many of these features, and certainly arguments for their uses could be made, they do not have all of them. I now shift toward a discussion of melodic chapters from *Music for Sight Singing* that introduce pitch-related content, demonstrating how they can be used for training sight-reading on the guitar with movable-*do* solfège and *do*-based minor.

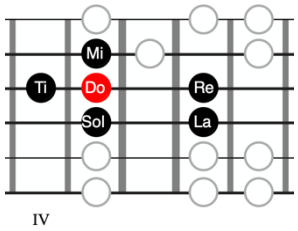
[5] Gary S. Karpinski, "A Cognitive Basis for Choosing a Solmization System," *Music Theory Online*, 27, no. 2 (2021), accessed April 1, 2024, https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.21.27.2/mto.21.27.2.karpinski.html.

Stepwise Motion

Chapter 2 of *Music for Sight Singing* is devoted to major mode melodies composed entirely of stepwise movement. The chapter contains treble clef melodies in keys of three accidentals or less with quarter-note beat values (section 1), similar melodies written in bass clef (section 2), melodies in meter signatures with beat values other than a quarter note (section 3), and additional conceptual practice with duets and structured improvisation (sections 4 and 5). The authors believe none of the melodies should present any significant issues for students, since singing up and down the major scale is somewhat familiar for most music students. Performing a major scale on the guitar is not as accessible as it is to sing, so it is important that only students who have the appropriate technical facility attempt to train from this book. In other words, the student should not be learning how to play the major scale at the same time as sight-reading it. Given the narrow range of the melody in Example 4.1 (*sol* to *mi,* marked in the score) it can be performed with any of the movable scale forms. Example 4.2 reveals the range of the melody using Movable Scale Form 3, with dots marked with corresponding solfège syllables. Using the movable-*do* system on the fretboard allows for students to train reading bass clef, as well as the later alto and tenor clefs, which can be useful if a student wishes to sight-read material for piano, viola, cello or other instruments.



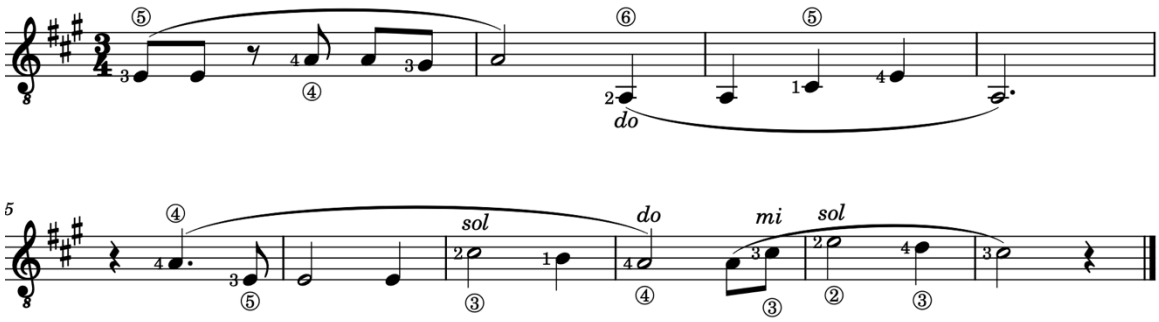
Example 4.0.1: A Melody by Dupnis, Chapter 2, Exercise 2.1, Music for Sight Singing, tenth edition, p. 15.



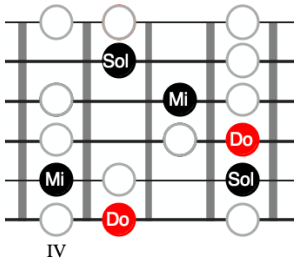
Example 4.0.2: Movable Scale Form 3 in C major.

Leaps of the Tonic Triad

Chapter 3 practices tonic triad arpeggiations in melodies with adjacent chord tone leaps of a third, fourth, fifth, and octave with exclusively quarter note beat values (section 1), similar melodies in bass clef (section 2), larger leaps of a sixth in the tonic triad (section 3), melodies with eighth-note beat values (section 4), duets (section 5), key signatures of five accidentals or more (section 6), and structured improvisations to practice new concepts (section 7). Since the leaps need to be singable, most of the tonic arpeggios can that be performed on the guitar in a single position using one movable scale form. Example 4.3 transcribes a melody from this chapter with fingerings that outline Movable Scale Form 4 in A major. One can see the melody is comprised mostly of tonic triad leaps, marked below the corresponding solfège in the score. Example 4.4 reveals the tonic arpeggio within the scale form used for this melody.



Example 4.0.3: Melody by P. Hayes, Chapter 3, Exercise 3.46, p. 38.

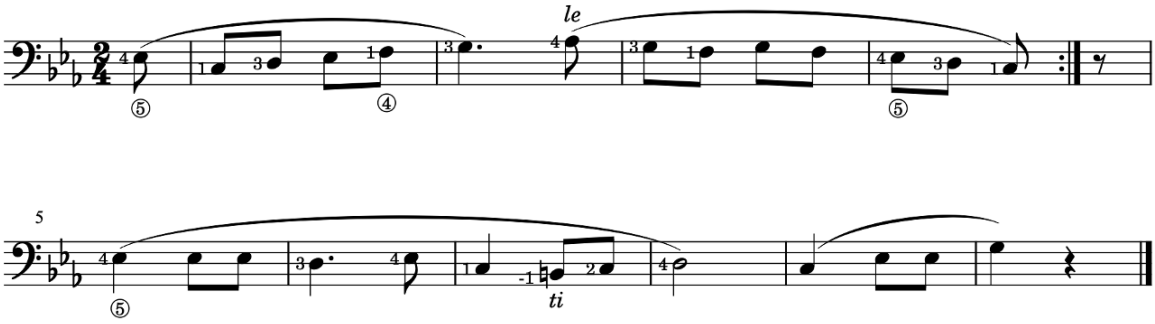


Example 4.0.4: Movable Scale Form 4 in A major.

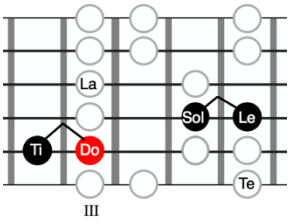
Minor Modes

Minor modes are introduced in Chapter 5, first with melodies that do not include the sixth and seventh scale degrees (section 1). Then the chapter features melodies containing the most common uses of the sixth and seventh scale degrees (section 2 and 3), followed by less common uses (section 4). The chapter concludes with duets and structured improvisations (sections 5 and 6) to practice new concepts. Guitar students learn how to navigate minor modes while sight-reading using the method mentioned in Chapter 3—shifting the tonic to the relative minor. Since students using this method practice melodies without the sixth and seventh scale degree, they can focus on orienting the scale form to the new tonic. Uses of the sixth and seventh scale degrees are introduced gradually based on conventions of melodic form. Raised scale degrees are used when the line ascends, and natural scale degrees are used when the line descends. Example 4.5 features a melody from section two that uses harmonic minor in very common ways. While *ti* in measure seven breaks out of the natural minor scale form most familiar to the student, it can be easily navigated if the performer feels its half-step relationship to the *do*. This is visualized in Example 4.6 on the fourth and fifth strings respectively against the natural minor scale form, with the lowered seventh scale degree, *te,* greyed out on the sixth string, sixth fret. The use of the

ti in this chapter prepares the student for arpeggiations of the dominant triad in minor mode in the next chapter.



Example 4.0.5: Folk melody from France, Chapter 5, Exercise 5.16, mm.1–10, p. 74.

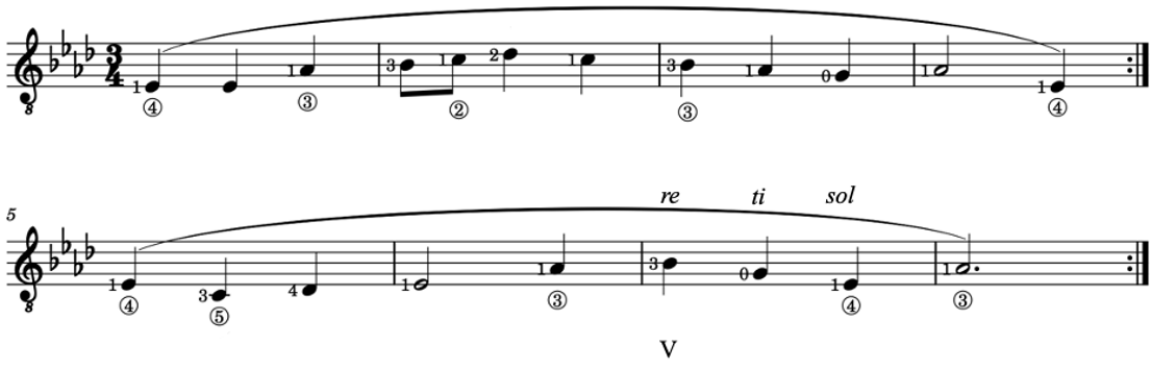


Example 4.0.6: Movable Scale Form 1 in C minor.

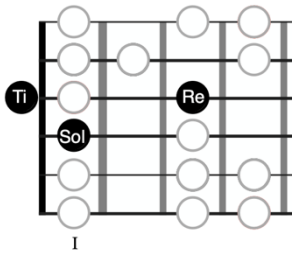
Leaps of the Dominant Triad

Chapter 6 concerns leaps of the dominant triad within both major and minor modes. This begins with melodies only in simple meter, first restricted to leaps of a third within the triad in major and minor keys (section 1 and 2), then expanding to include melodies including leaps of fourths, fifths and sixths (section 3 and 4). This content is then practiced with melodies in compound meters (section 6) before finishing with duets and structured improvisations (section 7 and 8). Like the tonic chord, the task for guitar students here is simply to drill the dominant arpeggio in each of the movable scale forms (suggestions for this are given at the end of the

chapter), then recognize the same arpeggio within sight-reading melodies. The melody in Example 4.7 features dominant leaps in the penultimate measure, realized by Movable Scale Form 3. This movable scale form utilizes its open form in A-flat major, meaning the leading tone (*ti*) is performed as an open string, allowing for *re* to be performed with the third finger and the *sol* with the first finger.



Example 4.0.7: Folk melody from Lithuania, Chapter 6, Exercise 6.1, p. 86.

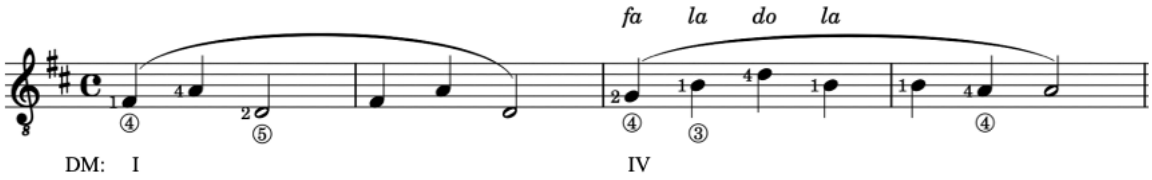


Example 4.0.8: Movable Scale Form 3 in A-flat major.

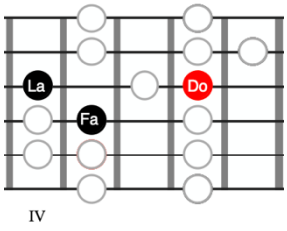
Further Use of Diatonic Leaps

In Chapter 8, Rogers and Ottman introduce melodies containing common melodic leaps in other contexts, defined as "further uses of diatonic leaps." It introduces leaps of the IV or ii chord (section 1), leaps to scale degree 2, 4, and 6 in other contexts (sections 2, 3, 4, and 5), bass

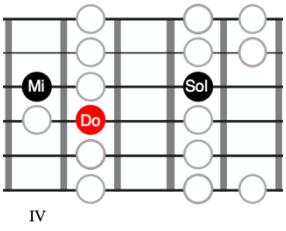
lines with leaps primarily to scale degree 4 before a cadence (section 6) and then duets and structured improvisations (sections 7 and 8). Leaps to scale degree 2 and 4 in the context of the dominant seventh chord are saved for the next chapter. Guitar students who have thoroughly practiced the contents of previous chapters will realize they will be familiar with the fingerings for the arpeggios of the IV chord and ii chord: their patterns are borrowed from tonic chords of other movable scale forms. Example 4.9 is performed with Movable Scale Form 2 in D major. The IV chord arpeggio in measure three, visualized in Example 4.10, shares identical fingerings with the tonic chord of Movable Scale Form 5 in G major, shown in Example 4.11. This concept should be taught cautiously in lessons, as it may be overwhelming and confuse the students. It is mentioned here to make instructors aware that students will likely assimilate these arpeggios more quickly than previous ones.



Example 4.0.9: Folk melody from Pomerania, Chapter 8, Exercise 8.1, mm. 1–4, p. 119.



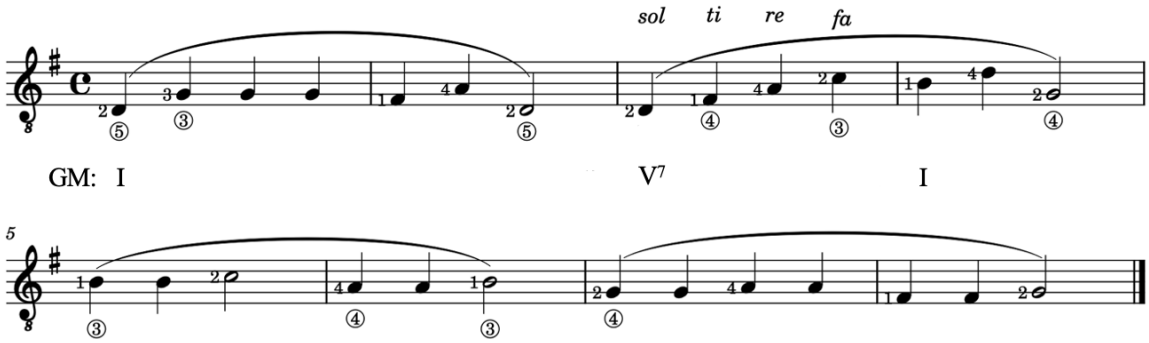
Example 4.0.10: Movable Scale Form 2 in D major.



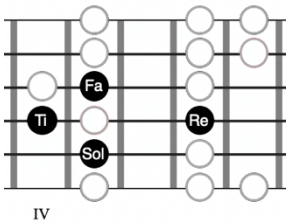
Example 4.0.11: Movable Scale Form 5 in G major.

Leaps of the Dominant Seventh Chord

Chapter 9 introduces singing the dominant seventh chord with melodies that outline the complete chord (section 1), leaps of a minor seventh (section 2), leaps of a tritone (section 3), other common leaps within the chord (section 4), and finally, structured improvisations (section 5). This chord involves the more difficult minor seventh and diminished fifth intervals to sing, but the arpeggio fingerings on guitar do not pose much more difficulty if the student practices them with appropriate drilling exercises. The dominant seventh arpeggio of Example 4.12 can be comfortably performed in position without any shifts, contractions, or expansions.



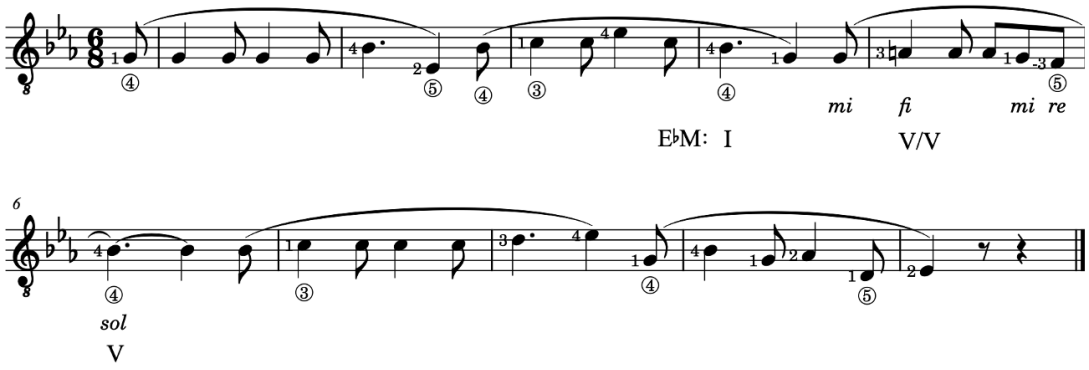
Example 4.0.12: Folk melody from Germany, Chapter 9, Exercise 9.1, p. 143.



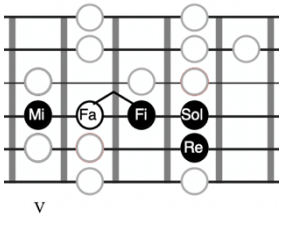
Example 4.0.13: Movable Scale Form 5 in G major.

Chromaticism, Tonicization, and Modulation

Training chromaticism is separated into three parts, distributed across three chapters: Chapter 15 covers chromatic embellishing tones (sections 1 and 2), tonicizations of V in major keys (section 3), tonicizations of the III chord and modulations to the relative major from minor keys (section 4), modulation to V in major and minor keys (sections 5 and 6), and finishes with duets and structured improvisation activities (sections 6 and 7). In Example 4.14, measure five outlines a secondary dominant of the V chord, with a perfect fourth leap into measure six, which can be played with an extension of the third finger on *re* (F) to allow the fourth finger to perform the *sol* (B-flat). The performer should learn to feel the raised scale degree four (*fi*) against the familiar adjacent scale degree five (*sol*), shown on the fretboard diagram in Example 4.15.

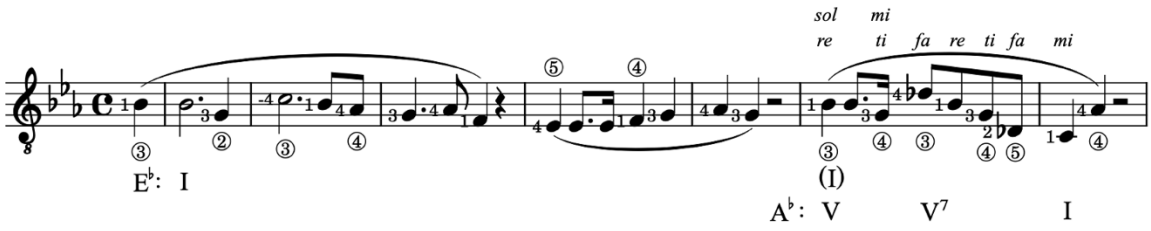


Example 4.0.14: Melody by Franz Schubert, Chapter 15, Exercise 15.41, p. 258.

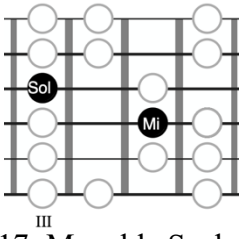


Example 4.0.15: Movable Scale Form 2 in E-flat.

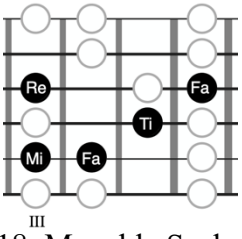
Chapter 16 concerns tonicization of any key and continues to practice modulation to closely related keys (namely V and the relative major or minor). This involves brief tonicizations of any diatonic triad with no modulation (section 1), extended tonicizations (section 2), tonicization with modulation only to the dominant or relative major key (section 3), modulation to any closely related key (section 4), successive modulations among closely related keys (section 5), a section of additional practice with tonicization and modulation (section 6), and finally duets and structured improvisation (sections 7 and 8). Example 4.16 features a melody that modulates to the dominant in measure six. The melody uses Movable Scale Form 1 for the first five measures, then pivots to Movable Scale Form 4 on beats one and two of measure six. Here, the *sol* and *mi* naturally transition to *re* and *ti* to become part of the dominant seventh arpeggio of Movable Scale Form 4. Examples 4.17 and 4.18 show this transition on the fretboard.



Example 4.0.16: Melody by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Chapter 16, Exercise 16.36, mm. 1–7, p. 294.

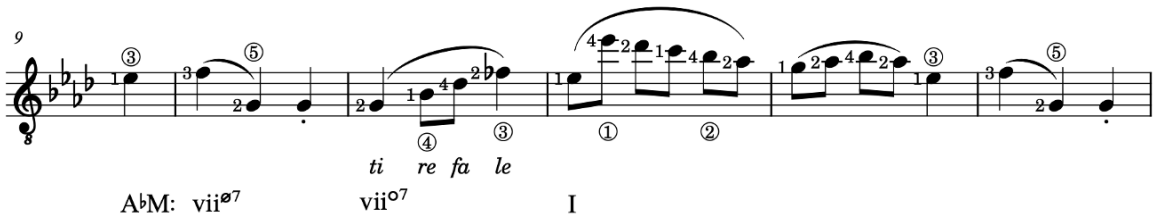


Example 4.0.17: Movable Scale Form 1 in E-flat major.

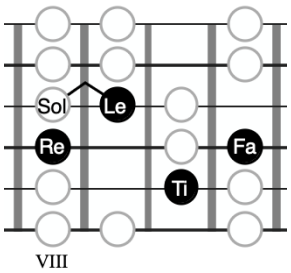


Example 4.0.18: Movable Scale Form 4 in A-flat major.

In Chapter 19, the student is introduced to additional uses of chromatic tones and remote modulation: mode mixture (section 1), melodies outlining augmented sixth chords and the Neapolitan chord (section 2 and section 3), chromatic tones in less common intervals (section 4), and remote modulation (section 5), finishing with several structured improvisation activities (section 6). For mode mixture, guitar students will need to practice altering the 3rd, 6th and 7th scale degrees of the movable scale forms. To perform the leading tone seventh chord arpeggio in measure 11 of Example 4.19, the F-flat (*le*) can be played with the second finger, the only note that is foreign to Movable Scale Form 1. Example 4.20 shows the proximity of this chromatic tone to its resolution, *sol* on the fingerboard in this scale form.



Example 4.0.19: Melody by Franz Schubert, Chapter 19, Exercise 19.1, mm. 9–14, p. 348.



Example 4.0.20: Movable Scale Form 1 in A-flat major.

Sing and Play Drill: The Solfege Tree

Whenever a new topic is introduced in each chapter, whether it be a scale form, arpeggio, or chromatic tone, the student should first practice it by singing and playing fluency drills using a *solfège tree*. This handout can be found Appendix C, or it can be written out on a piece of paper or a white board. The handout displays the syllables of movable-*do* solfège in a vertical column that the instructor points to, leading the student through quasi-improvised patterns to explore and become comfortable performing the tonal feature.

This drill is particularly helpful in training unfamiliar movable scale forms using stepwise motion in a major key (the main topic of *Music for Sight Singing*, Chapter 2). For example, if the student is unfamiliar with Movable Scale Form 1, the instructor picks a key and establishes it on the guitar, either by playing up and down the scale form themselves first or by playing a short harmonic progression. The instructor then leads the student through simple patterns, getting more and more complex, but being sure to always move in stepwise motion. When arpeggios of specific harmonies are introduced, the instructor can follow a similar procedure. For leaps of the tonic chord (Chapter 5), the instructor begins with familiar patterns, like stepwise motion, then carefully introduces leaps of the tonic chord (*do, mi,* and *sol*). When students are introduced to tonicization (Chapter 15), instructors should write in the appropriate chromatic tone, such as *fi*

for scale degree four tonicizing the dominant, and arpeggiate the secondary dominant in the context of a basic harmonic progression.

Training Multiple Movable Scale Forms Simultaneously

Guitarists practicing sight-reading eventually will need to train all five scale patterns with each of these chapters from *Music for Sight Singing*. The typical timeline Rogers and Ottman had in mind for tonal chapters of their book is to align with first three semesters of an undergraduate's first and second year, the final chapters devoted to modes and 20th-century music covered in the students' fourth semester. This means that if an instructor wishes for their students to master a chapter's concept with every movable scale form before moving onto the next, it might take longer for a guitarist to work through the book than a typical undergraduate core theory sequence. Some guitarists who come to college programs will already be familiar with movable scales. These students will inevitably progress more quickly. Others will need a significant amount of training in both scales and solfège mapping. In this situation, it is recommended that instructors focus the training on only two movable scale forms: one whose tonic falls on the fifth string and one that falls on the sixth string. That way, the instructor can work through most of the melodies, but not all, in the book.

The melodies in this chapter give just a few examples of how the movable scale forms of the fretboard map directly onto the melodies and content sequence of *Music for Sight Singing*. The curriculum laid out in this chapter covers a wide variety of content and constitutes multiple semesters of study; for some students it could occupy their entire undergraduate education. It is important that instructors are mindful of each student's individual pace and take care not to rush ahead to new content before they are ready. This method should not be used in place of

memorizing the pitch locations of the fretboard outside of a tonal context. However, to discredit transpositional modes of conceptualizing the fretboard, in many ways, goes against the guitar's very nature. In this way, students will learn to transpose on the guitar as intuitively and naturally as with their voice.

CHAPTER 5

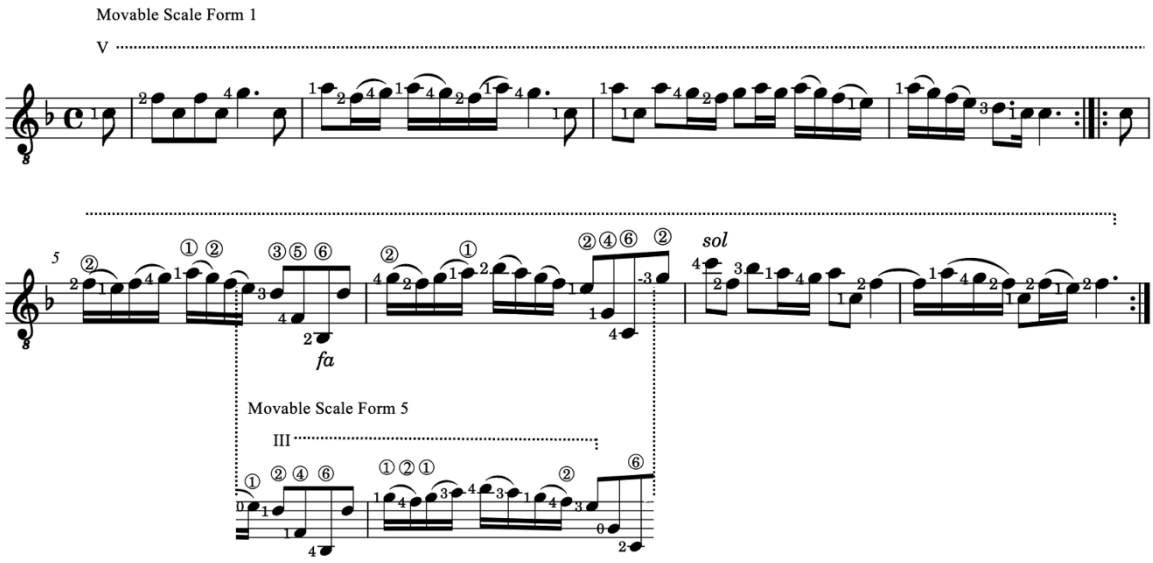
TRAINING STUDENTS WITH ADVANCED MELODIES

The music selected for Rogers and Ottman's sight-singing manual is partly chosen for its "singablility," meaning the melodies fit the average vocal range. The movable scale forms of this sight-reading method for guitar are coincidentally similar in range, so each melody can be performed with a single movable scale form without having to change position. However, instrumental reading often requires guitarists to cover wider ranges of notes in a single melody. This chapter offers strategies for sight-reading instrumental melodies that necessitate shifting between two or more movable scale forms once sight-singing melodies are exhausted. This will use examples from instrumental repertoire, specifically for violin, guitar chamber music, and solo guitar music, by developing the habit of identifying the range of the melody in terms of movable-*do* solmization. This helps students determine which movable scale forms are suited for the performance, helping guitarists find fingerings quickly and easily.

Finding Alternative Fingerings with Movable Scale Forms

When a movable scale form is chosen for a melody, the performer may decide to borrow certain passages, arpeggios or other features from of a movable scale form in another position. This is demonstrated with the violin melody by Corelli in Example 5.1. The student determines fifth position, using Movable Scale Form 1 in F major, will best accommodate the range of the melody: the low B-flat (*fa*) in measure five on the sixth string and the high C (*sol*) in measure seven. However, staying in position requires the guitarist to perform the subdominant arpeggio in

measure five with an awkward fingering, specifically the reach from the third finger on the third string down to the to the fourth finger on the fifth string. To avoid this, the performer may shift on the open E in beat two of measure five down to third position, displayed by an alternative fingering in the melodic fragment below measure five and six. By using Movable Scale Form 5, the arpeggio becomes much more comfortable for the left hand. The subsequent motive covering beats one and two of measure six can be played in the same position, with a shift back to Movable Scale Form 1 on the offbeat of four in the same measure on the G.

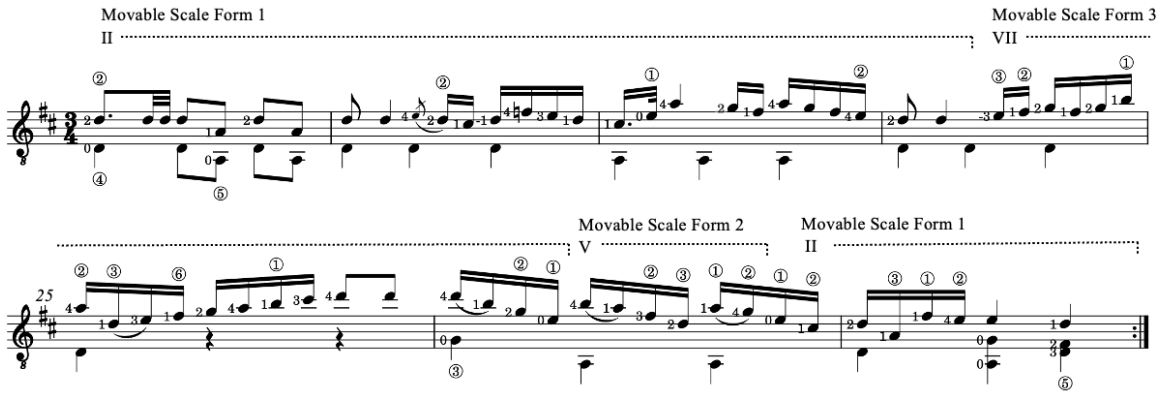


Example 5.0.1: Arcangelo Corelli, Gavotta Allegro, Sonata in F Major Op. 5, no. 10, mm.1–8.

Performing Melodies Requiring Multiple Movable Scale Forms

The first guitar part of Mauro Giuliani's Polonaise No. 1 for two guitars in Example 5.2 may look daunting to sight-read at first glance, due to the arpeggios and necessity for higher position playing. This can be navigated with a network of movable major scale forms determined by the guitarist pre-performance. The performer begins in second position with Movable Scale

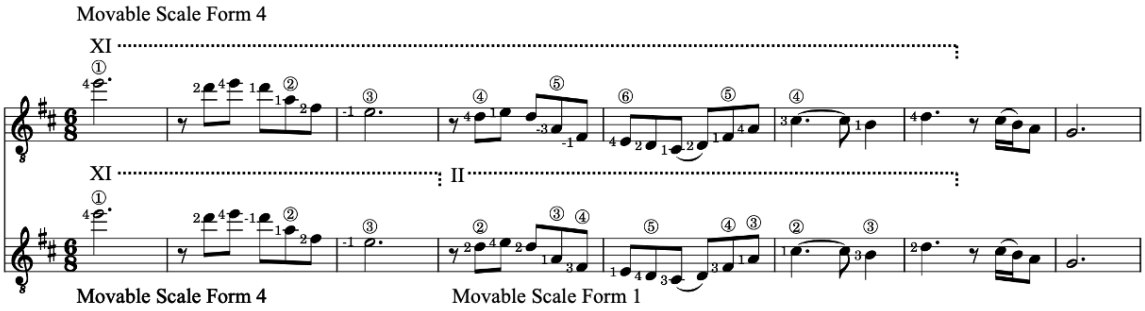
Form 1 in D major, allowing them to reach the *sol* (A) in the melody in measure three. The F-natural in measure two is reached on the second string, sixth fret, with a small shift on the first finger on beat three. The scale passage beginning right after beat two in measure four ascends to the highest D (*do*), outside the range of the performers starting scale form. This warrants a shift before the start of the passage in the middle of beat two of measure four to Movable Scale Form 3 in seventh position, whose fingering reaches the higher tonic. Then, a series of sixteenth note diatonic arpeggios begin in measure six, leading to the cadence in measure twenty-seven. The first arpeggio on beat one of measure twenty-six, outlining the subdominant, can be played in the performer's current position, using the open E string to shift to Movable Scale Form 2 in fifth position. This fingering more comfortably accommodates the cadential six-four and dominant chord arpeggios on beats two and three of the same measure. Note the dominant seventh arpeggio does not use a left-hand slur, but a right-hand string cross from A (*sol*) to G (*fa*) that imitates it to the best of the performers' ability. The third note of this same arpeggio again uses the open E string to shift back to Movable Scale Form 1, performing the tonic arpeggio and block chords at the end of the phrase.



Example 5.0.2: Mauro Giuliani, Allegretto, Polonaise for Two Guitars, Op. 137, no. 1, mm. 21–27.

Timbral Variety with Movable Scale Forms

When sight-reading in higher positions, the performer must be acutely aware of the timbres of different positions of the fingerboard. For instance, the melodic fragment from a solo guitar piece by Hector Ayala, shown in Example 5.3, can comfortably be played with Movable Scale Form 4 in ninth position. When playing in this position, however, the bass strings are much shorter in length than other positions, giving the notes that fall in this region a great deal of energy and intensity. Some performers prefer a lighter character for this passage, which can be achieved by shifting to second position using Movable Scale Form 1 at the phrase break at the start of measure four.



Example 5.0.3: Hector Ayala (1914–1990), Guarania, mm.1–8.

The preliminary training from Rogers and Ottman's *Music for Sight Singing* prepares students to read in more advanced melodies: the melodic examples in this chapter all are wider in range than the previous, necessitating shifting between different positions of the fretboard. This is important for chamber music, where musical lines are less restricted by accompaniment. On the other hand, sight-reading polyphonic material is much different. This music primarily utilizes harmonic and melodic patterns that involve the open strings, especially in their accompaniment

textures. A method for training reading fluency with these kinds of textures is introduced in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

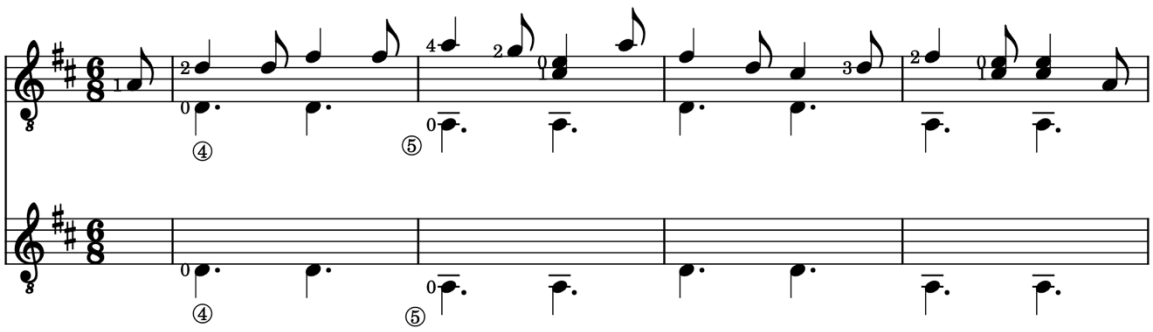
READING ACCOMPANIMENT TEXTURES USING OPEN STRINGS

There are exercises across a variety of sight-singing books that involve performing multiple lines of music (chorales, keyboard/singing drills, etc.). However, these activities do not help students become comfortable with the notational idiosyncrasies that often appear in guitar scores. Therefore, this method must look for other models when training accompaniment in solo guitar. This chapter presents a progressive method for introducing the practice of reading multiple accompaniment lines of music simultaneously. It then offers activities that develop the association between the *open chord shapes* most used for basic accompaniments and diatonic harmonic patterns of the guitar, using studies from *Las primeras lecciones* by Julio Sagreras as examples.

Extracting Bass Lines from Solo Guitar Music

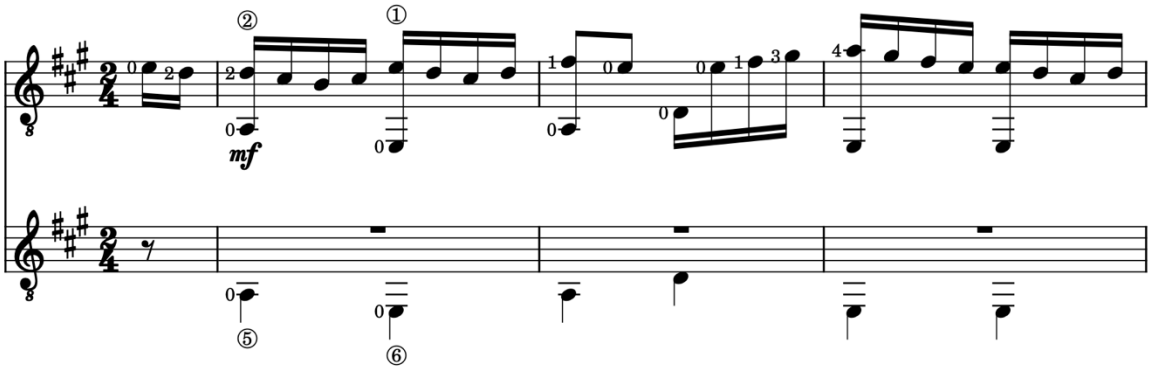
Students should begin accompaniment reading training by separating and performing bass lines from solo guitar music. Since they are most performed with the thumb (*p*), one of the more accessible right-hand techniques, learning the bass line separately allows for the student to concentrate more on reading, counting, and following along in the score without the burden of an unfamiliar or challenging technique. In modern editions of scores, two-voiced textures are typically notated in a way that clearly separates bass from the melody, making for ideal introductory material. There are countless exercises, studies, and simple pieces that meet these criteria, including the Carulli etude shown in Example 6.1. Here, all bass notes are down

stemmed, separated in register, and comprised completely of open strings. The suggested student sight-reading performance is realized in the lower stave.



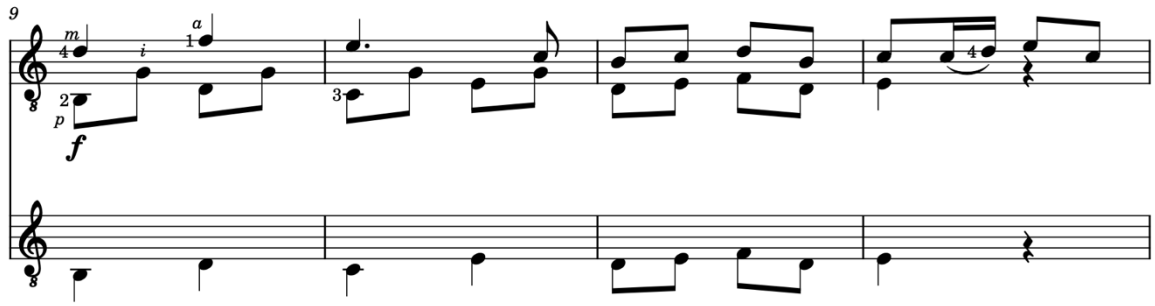
Example 6.0.1: Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841), Rondo, Op. 241, no. 1, mm. 1–4.

While bass lines tend to be written independently from other voices in many cases, separating the bass line is not always a straightforward process. This is especially true in facsimiles and historical editions of pieces that feature antiquated notation conventions, like 19th-century violin music that often stems bass lines as part of the upper lines. This convention was copied by many guitar composers. Carulli uses it in the first guitar part of a duet transcribed in Example 6.2. While the registral distance between the two lines makes separating the voices while reading a simple task, some students may try to be exact with the durations of sixteenth-note and eighth-note rhythms; some may even try to play the bass line as a chord with the melody note above. It is important for instructors to explain these pitches ring over longer than their notated duration in this type of notation, performing in a manner similar to what is transcribed in the lower staff.



Example 6.0.2: Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841), Andante, Op. 120 No. 4, mm. 1–3.

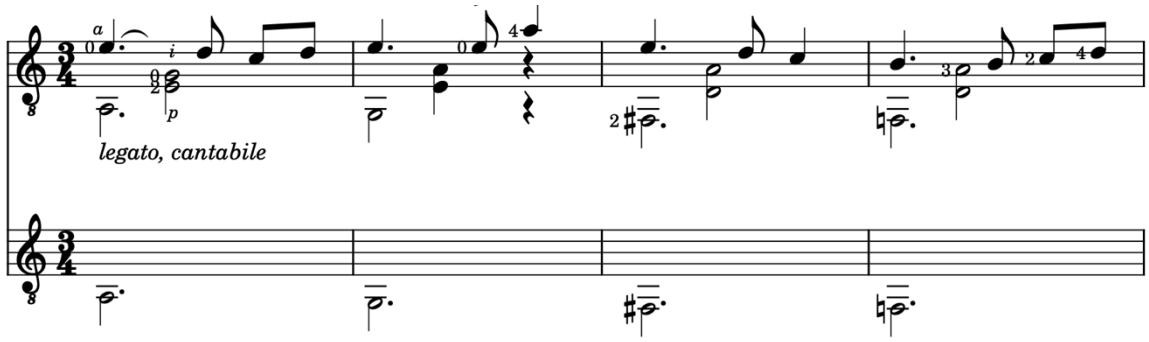
Some bass lines are beamed in such a way that they are connected with an inner voice. This is true of the Francesco Molino's piece in Example 6.3. The eighth notes in the lower register begin as a bass line alternating with G in measures nine and ten, with a simple thumb (*p*) and index (*i*) pattern, but the G's do not continue in measure eleven. This type of notation on the surface looks like a two-voiced texture but, in reality, is three-voices. Again, the instructor must help the student understand the implied durations of the bass line in first two measures: the quarter notes, ringing underneath the pedal G.



Example 6.0.3: Francesco Molino (1775–1847), Anglaise I, *La terpsichore de société*, no. 1, mm. 9–12.

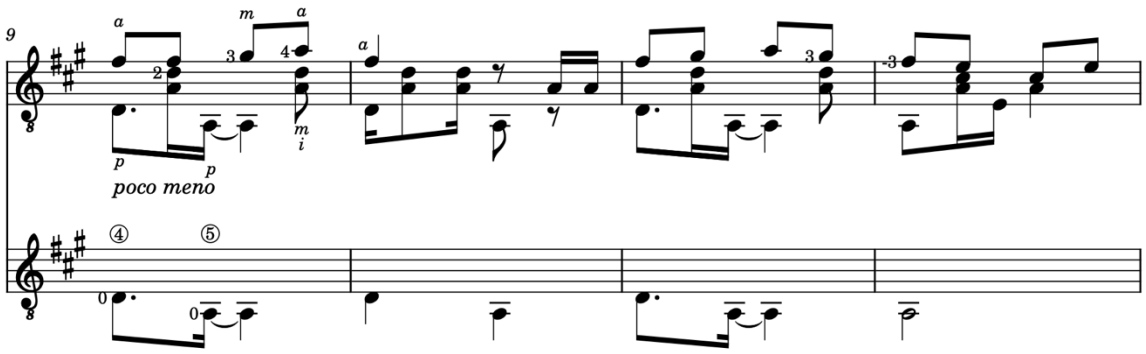
Students are then ready to read bass lines from scores with more complex textures, overtly displaying three voices or more. Example 6.4 shows a waltz choro by Francis Kleynjans,

where the bass line on the down beats is stemmed the same direction as the upper part of the accompaniment chord on the second beats of each measure. Here, the rhythmic values of the accompaniment are clear with dotted halves on beat one and halves on beat two. In this activity, the instructor should explain that the bass note in measure two should be held like the others, as a dotted-half duration. The chord lifts early only to accommodate left-hand shift to perform the high A in the melody. In some ways, this is easier to read than the previous example (Example 6.3), since the bass line is not stemmed with another voice. However, students new to sight-reading are more likely to have trouble extracting bass lines from more involved polyphony.



Example 6.0.4: Francis Kleynjans (b.1951), Waltz Choro, Op. 64 no. 1, mm.1–4.

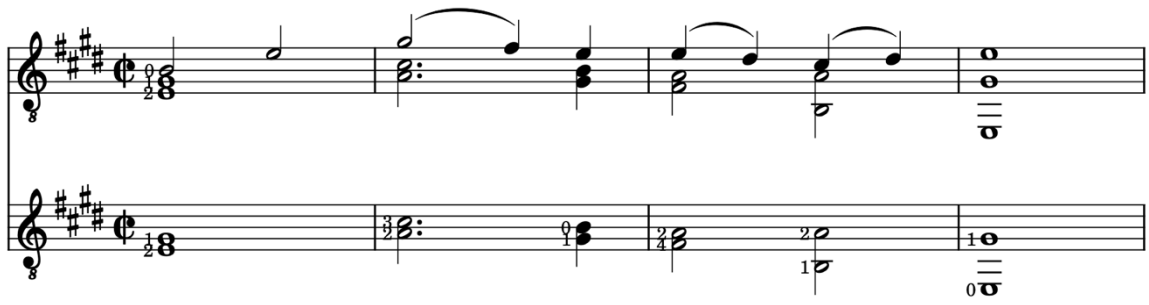
The last example shows how a bass line can be more embedded within a texture, implying a syncopated rhythm within the rhythm of the whole accompaniment. Example 6.5 shows a piece by Isaías Sávio where the bass line emphasizes the first two groupings of beats of the *tresillio* rhythm (3 + 3 + 2 sixteenths) alternating between D and A in measures nine through eleven. Instructors can highlight or circle the bass line pitches to give a visual aid to students who at first have trouble finding them within the texture.



Example 6.5: Isaías Sávio (1900–1977), Peixe vivo, mm. 9–12.

Separating Accompaniment from Melody

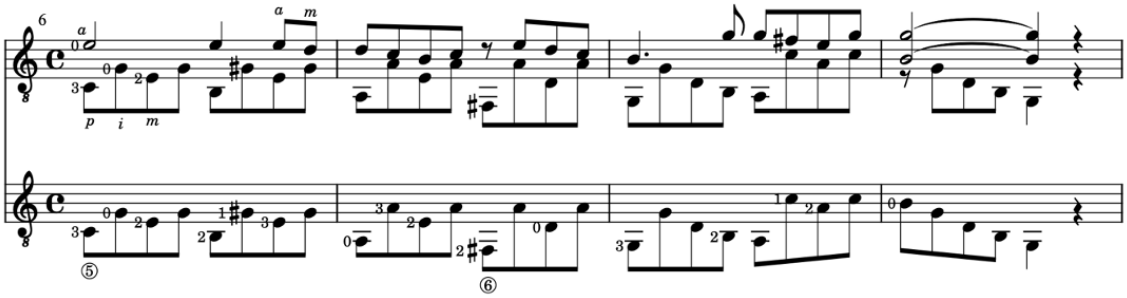
After students are confident in recognizing and performing bass lines in a variety of textures, they are then ready to perform full accompaniments in solo guitar repertoire. The goal is to identify the melody in notation and separate it, performing what is left of the texture. The following examples display some common musical textures in 19th-century guitar repertoire.[1] For the chord-melody texture of the Sor study in the upper staff of Example 6.6, students sight-read the isolated accompaniment shown in the lower staff.



Example 6.6: Fernando Sor (1778–1839), Op. 31, no. 23, mm.1–4.

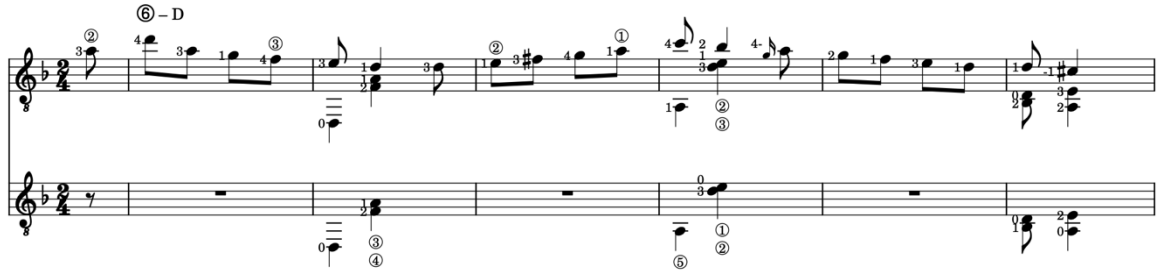
[1]Many of these examples are drawn from Chapter 7 of Christopher Berg's *Classical Guitar Companion,* which contains a chapter on common accompaniment textures.

Alberti bass textures are typically notated with down-stemming while the melody is separated with up-stemming. Example 6.7 is notated in this fashion, and despite some middle-voice pitches sharing close register with the melody, the separation between parts is clear. However, the downbeat B in measure nine would likely be ignored by inexperienced students, when it is a middle-voice resolution carrying over from the Alberti example. There is some ambiguity here, as the texture departs from the Alberti figure in this measure. If students exclude this note as part of the melody, it should be a conscious, interpretive decision, not a compulsory one.



Example 6.7: Felix Horetzky (1796–1870), Op. 15, no. 2, mm.6–9.

The accompaniment in Example 6.9 is much more sparse than the other examples, still it is a fully independent texture. The piece is mostly a lyrical melody with the accompaniment, only appearing every other measure (measures two, four, and six). This can be excellent training for the student's ability to count and follow a score. This is best practiced as a duet with the teacher, where the student must follow the "soloist" performing the melody.



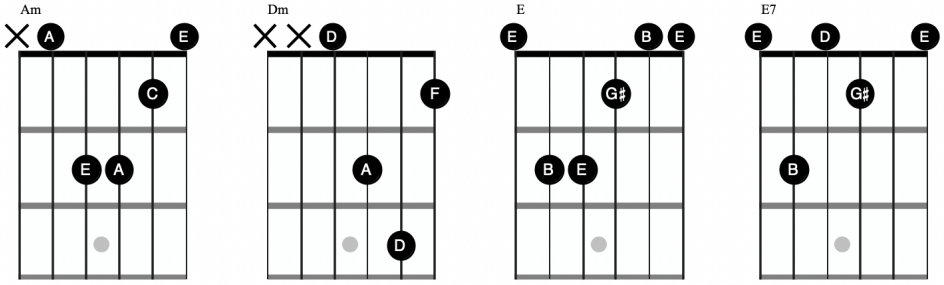
Example 6.9 Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909), Endecha*,* mm.1–6.

The accompaniments included in this section are invariably performed with right-hand finger patterns—repeating figures, block chords, etc.—with fixed, left-hand open chord voicings. Sight-reading these textures requires pattern recognition skills that are inherently different melodic performance. The next section will offer activities that help with practicing chord voicings in coordination with tonal harmonic function.

Using Open Chord Shapes with Accompaniment Patterns

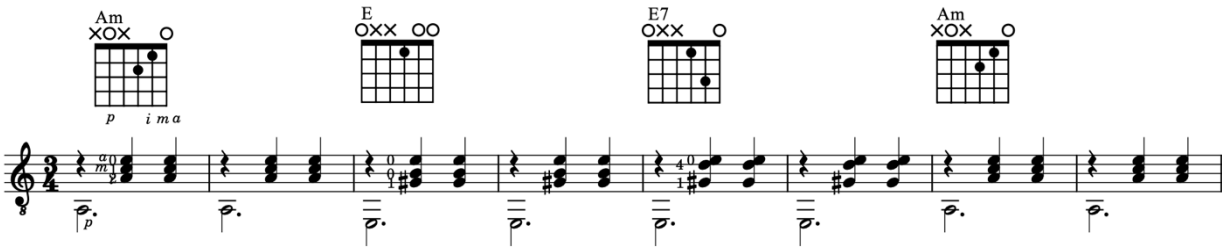
This activity repurposes the progressive exercises and etudes in *Las primeras lecciones de guitarra* by the Argentine composer, Julio Sagreras (1879–1942) for training student recognition of harmonic patterns in the *open chord shapes* common in guitar performance. Sagreras' pieces use many of the open-string chord voicings, known as the open chord shapes, familiar to many guitar students and common in simple guitar accompaniments. Example 6.10 shows chord diagrams for a few of these open chord shapes in the key of A minor: A minor (the tonic chord), D minor (subdominant chord), E major (dominant chord), and E-seven (the dominant seventh chord). The vertical orientation of these diagrams (meaning now the vertical lines represent the strings) is conventionally used for chords, rather than the previous horizontal view used for scales. This positioning aligns the sixth string (the low E string) on the left side of

the diagram, and the first string (the high E string) on the right. An “x” marked above the diagram indicates a string not performed as part of the voicing while a pitch-labeled dot placed above the fretboard diagram represents a played open string.



Example 6.10: The open chord shapes of A minor, D minor, E major, and E dominant seven.

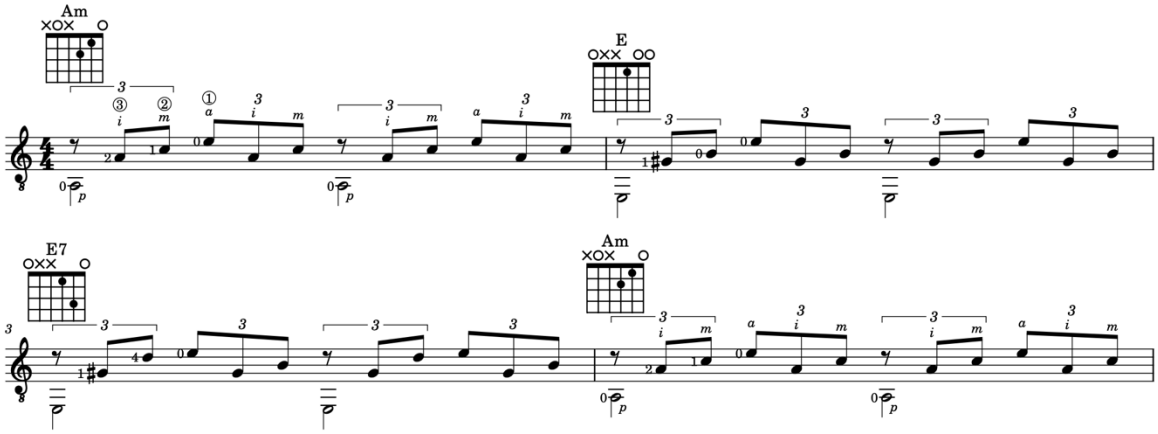
Example 6.11 shows incomplete versions of these voicings that are used in an excerpt of Lesson 47 by Julio Sagreras by placing their related fretboard diagrams above the score. The A minor chord (measures one and two and measures seven and eight) omits the E on the fourth string, and the E major (measures three and four) is performed without the B on the fifth string and the E on the fourth string. The E dominant seventh (measures five and six) deviates from its original open chord shape, placing the D on the second string omitting the chordal fifth, the open B, from the voicing. These versions of the open chord voicings reflect the role of the right hand in articulating the chord texture of this study: *i*, *m*, and *a* are fixed on the treble strings while *p* crosses between strings to perform the bass notes of the root position harmonies. Training to recognize these shapes in notation, in their complete, incomplete, and varied versions, will certainly help with a student’s ability to process the harmonies within accompaniment textures in tonal music.



Example 6.11: Julio Sagreras (1879–1942), Lesson 47, mm. 1–8.

Revoicing Activity with Lesson 46 by Julio Sagreras

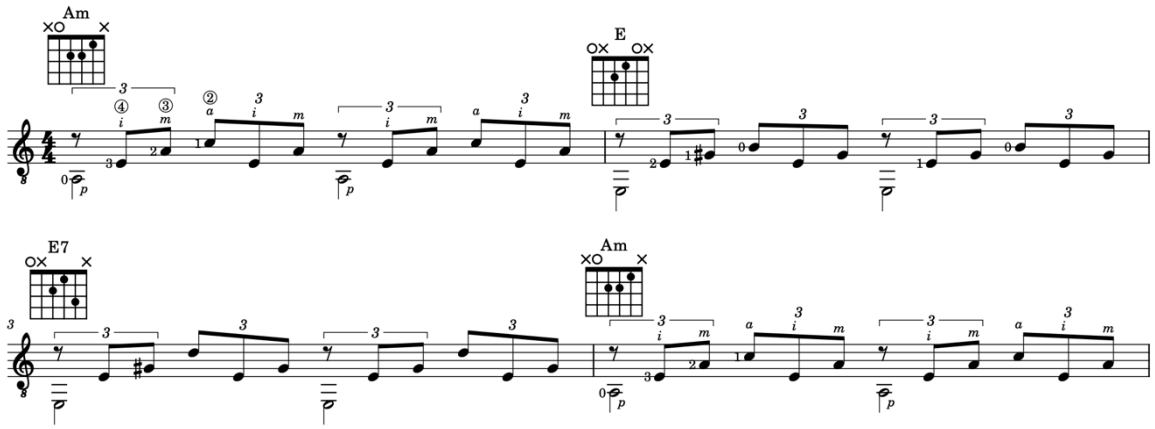
This activity involves taking original harmonies from a sight-reading piece and revoicing them on different strings and positions of the guitar. This will use an excerpt of Lesson 46 by Sagreras, displayed in Example 6.12, as an example. Note this study features the same harmonies as Lesson 47, as well as the right-hand position of the fingers and thumb, but its texture is a more complex triplet-example accompaniment.[2]



Example 6.12: Julio Sagreras (1879–1942), Lesson 46, mm. 1–4.

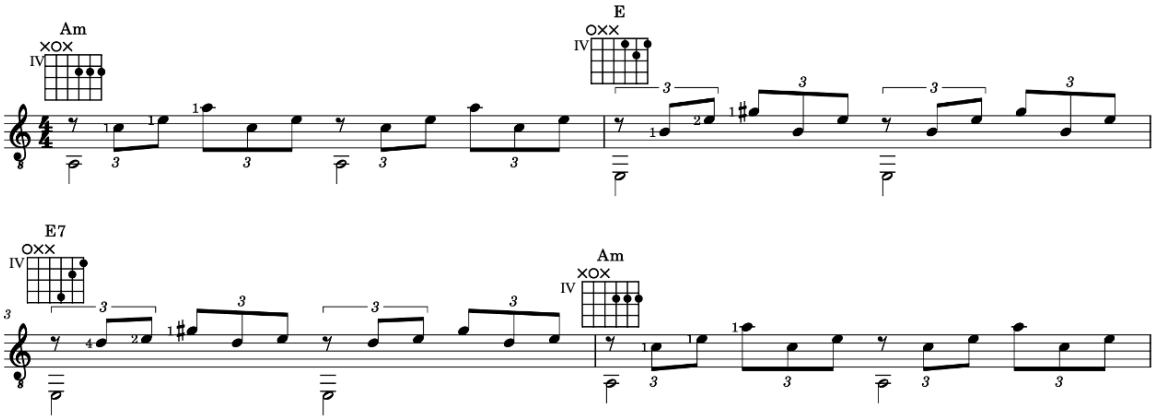
[2] It is common in guitar method books to notate compound meter exercises in simple meter as triplets. See Mauro Giuliani's 120 Right-Hand Studies from *Studio per la chitarra* (1812), Op. 1.

Example 6.13 shows how the instructor can direct the student to perform the piece but play the related open chord shapes on different strings, in this case the fourth, third, and second instead of the first, second, and third (what was the alto voice in the original composition is now the soprano, the soprano is now the tenor, etc.). This ensures the student sees both voicings, the ones of the original composition and their “recomposition," as part of a greater whole based on the open-string harmonies native to first position.



Example 6.13: Revoicing of Lesson 46 by Julio Sagreras.

The exercise can be used to practice chord voicings other than the open chord shapes with more advanced students. In Example 6.14, the student is asked to perform the piece using voicings in fourth and fifth position.



Example 6.14: Revoicing of Lesson 46 by Julio Sagreras.

The activity outlined in this section uses fretboard geography (e.g. “play the A minor open chord shape on the bass strings”) rather than by voicing (e.g. “place the chordal fifth in the soprano”), to train pattern recognition in sight-reading guitar accompaniments. This helps the student connect to the fretboard before the notation. Students study for years without being able to recognize these voicings in written music and have considerable difficulty performing simple pieces comprised almost entirely of these familiar fingerings. The next chapter offers an activity that further confirms a student’s mastery of melodic and harmonic patterns in tonal music.

CHAPTER 7

STRUCTURED IMPROVISATION

Improvisation activities are used in music theory courses as a meaningful way to create a "sense of play."[1] Rogers and Ottman include a specific kind of improvisation activity they call *structured improvisation.* These activities are included in most of the chapters in *Music for Sight Singing* and are used to reinforce the lessons of their respective chapters. Part of the reason structured improvisations are helpful for sight-singing is that they allow student to foster a deep awareness of tonal harmony, and they add variety to practice sessions.[2] Structured improvisations can provide similar benefits to guitar students who are seeking sight-reading development.

Instructors can create structured improvisations from pieces of music containing a phrase that overtly arpeggiates a specific chord. This is borrowed from a structured improvisation from Chapter 9 in Rogers and Ottman, displayed in Example 7.1, where the sight-singing student practices improvising singing leaps of the dominant seventh chord, with particular focus on the minor seventh leap created by the root and the chordal seventh. Example 7.2 shows this activity applied to an etude by Sor. The instructor can use notation software to type out the activity in advance of the lesson, or they can simply cover the "blank" measure with a note card (perhaps using it to write the improvisation instructions on it). In this example, the student is also asked to include a leap of the supertonic chord in measure seven.

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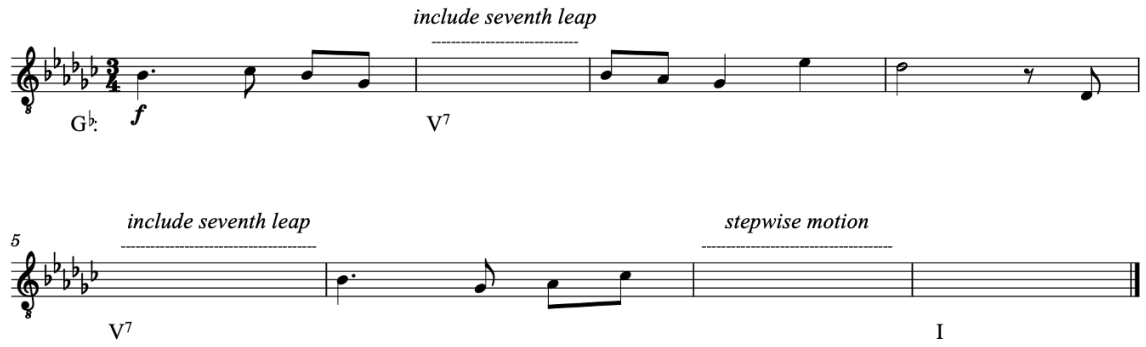
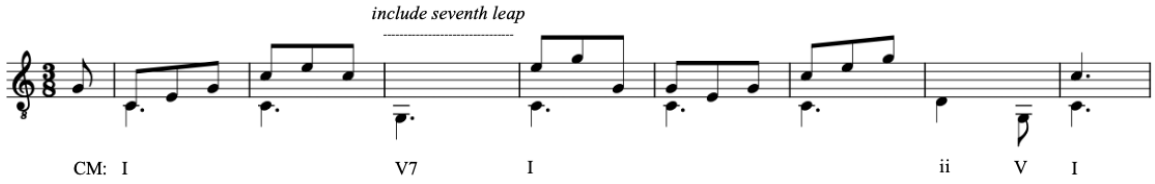
[1] Steve Larson, "Integrated Music Learning" and Improvisation: Teaching Musicianship and Theory Through "Menus, Maps, and Models" *College Music Symposium* 35, no. 1, 1995, 80.

[2] Nancy Rogers and Robert W. Ottman. *Music for Sight Singing.* 10th edition, (New York: Pearson, 2019), xii.

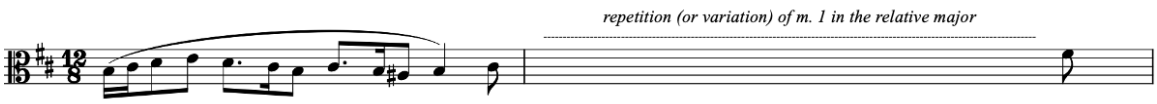


7.0.1: Structured improvisation by Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Chapter 9, Exercise 9.51, p. 156.

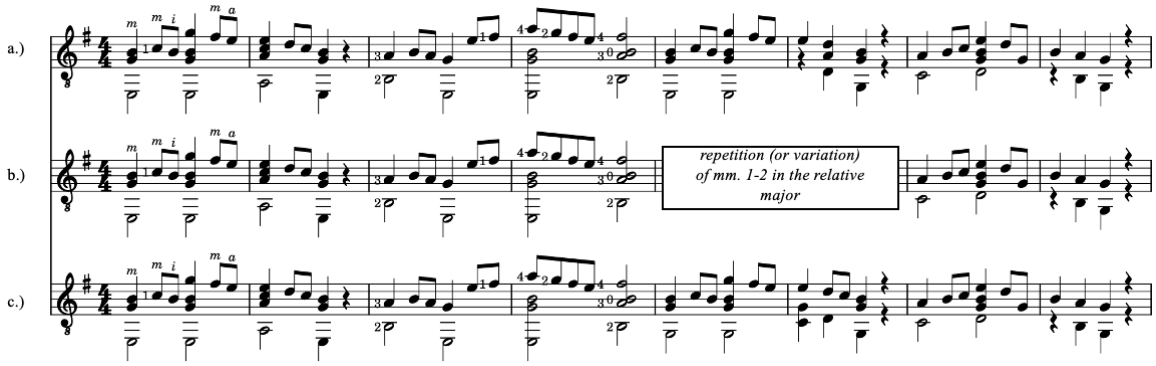


Example 7.0.2: Structured improvisation based on Fernando Sor's Moderato, Op. 60, no. 7, mm.1–8.

Guitar students can practice modulation between major and minor using a similar activity. Example 7.3 shows a structured improvisation from Chapter 16 that requires the student to sight-sing a written phrase in minor mode, then repeat the phrase in a way that modulates to the relative major of the original key. Example 7.4 shows this activity applied to a piece by Mertz, with the top stave (a.) transcribing the original excerpt, the middle staff (b.) showing the student's score for the activity, and the lower stave (c.) showing a hypothetical improvisation by the student. In this example, the improvisation in measures five and six reharmonizes the entire consequent phrase in G major.

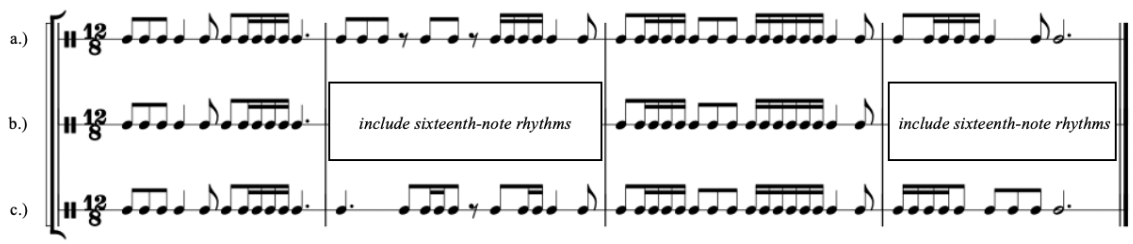


Example 7.0.3: Structured improvisation by Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman, Chapter 16, Exercise 16.80, mm.1–2, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition, p. 311.



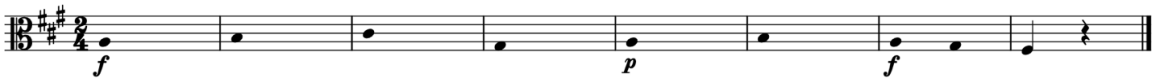
Example 7.0.4: Structured improvisation based on Johann Kaspar Mertz's Romanze, mm.1–8.

Chapters devoted exclusively to rhythm in *Music for Sight Singing* do not include structured improvisations, but guitar instructors can create them with fully composed, unpitched rhythm exercises from these chapters. In a similar manner to the previous examples, instructors cover one or two measures of an exercise, like Exercise 13.54 from Chapter 10 in the highest stave (a.) of Example 7.5. The student reads the exercise with one or two measures covered by the instructor (shown in the middle stave (b.)). Instructions dictate the student must perform sixteenth rhythms to ensure they engage with the new content of the chapter (in this case, six-part subdivision in compound meter). The third system (c.) shows a sample improvisation that follows these instructions. Alternatively, the student and instructor can perform the exercise with a repeat, each taking turns improvising during the blank measure as "the soloist."

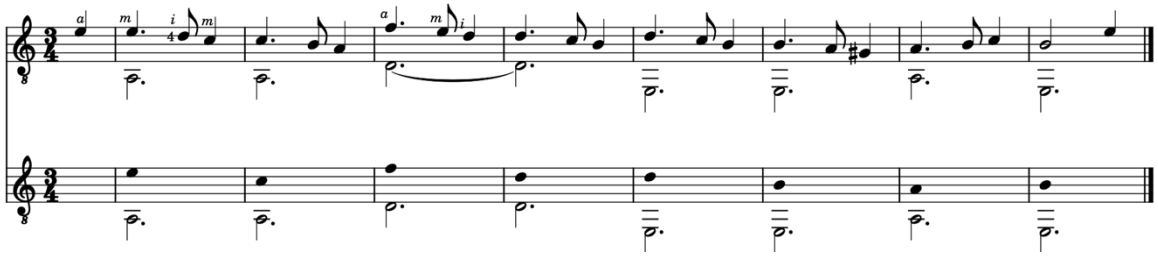


Example 7.0.5: Structured improvisation activity based on Nancy Rogers and Robert Ottman's Exercise 13.54 from *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition, p. 209.

There is another version of structured improvisation that can be borrowed for guitar sight-reading training. Example 7.6 presents an outline of a melody by providing downbeat pitches. The student then must improvise a more complex melody using eighth and sixteenth-note rhythms ensuring they perform the notated pitches on downbeats. Guitar instructors can create this same activity from a solo guitar excerpt, such as the etude by Matteo Carcassi shown in the upper staff of in Example 7.7. Like the aural skills student, the classical guitar student develops a deep understanding the harmony with this activity, which translates to more expressive performances of unfamiliar music.



Example 7.0.6: Structured improvisation by Nany Rogers and Robert Ottman, Chapter 11, Exercise 11.36, *Music for Sight Singing*, tenth edition, p. 179.



Example 7.0.7: Structured improvisation activity based on Matteo Carcassi's Sicilienne, op. 59, part 3, no. 22, mm.1–8.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in incorporating improvisation into classical music education. Root echoes Michaelsen, who describes it as "music theory and ear training with immediacy."[3] This document has shown how this can extend to music literacy training on the guitar. Rogers and Ottman's structured improvisations can inspire guitar instructors to create variety in sight-reading practice and maximize the benefits of their reading selections. It demonstrates the student can anticipate, simplify, change, and elaborate upon unfamiliar music not just proficiently, but at a very high level.

[3]Jena Root, "Teaching Improvisation: Starting Points," in *The Routledge Companion to Aural Skills Pedagogy*, (New York: Routledge. 2021). 402.

CHAPTER 8

BEYOND THIS PROJECT

In the future, I plan to create an undergraduate course that uses the method outlined in this project in detail. Like *Music for Sight Singing*, this will involve creating a manual of collected melodies from real sources, primarily from the guitar repertoire, scaffolded in a progressive way to train fluency in tonal function on the guitar fretboard as it relates to music literacy. Additionally, there is a need to design a preparatory curriculum for this method that focuses on fixed, open-string scale forms rather than movable ones, training students to recognize melodic features in tonal music. This project covers activities that are designed to be used in the private lesson, with instructor/student interaction. These activities should be expanded for use in group or classroom settings, fostering skills that would help the development of ensemble and chamber music skills. The goal is to continue to provide the classical guitar community with resources that present new approaches to training the complex task of sight-reading, in a way that merges core-theory pedagogies with instrumental learning.

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APPENDIX A

Blank Rhythm Tree

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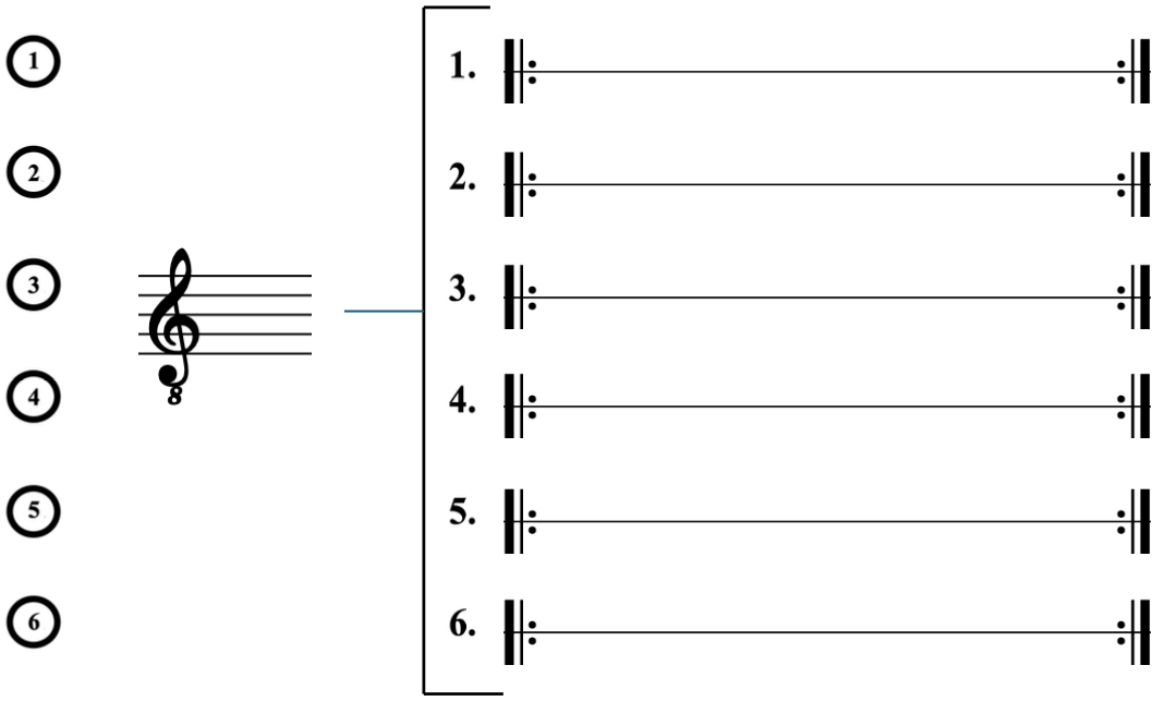
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APPENDIX B

Five Movable Scale Forms

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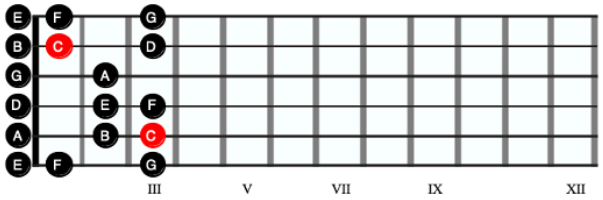
Movable Scale Forms in C major in Note Letters

Movable Scale Form 1



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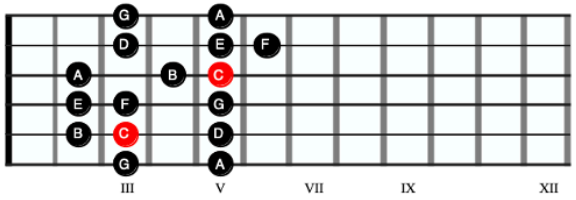

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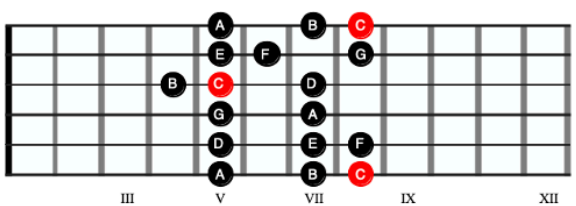

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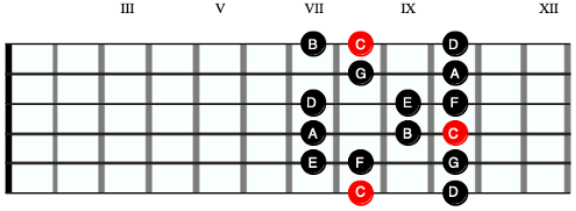

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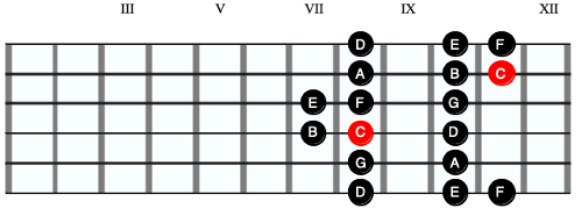
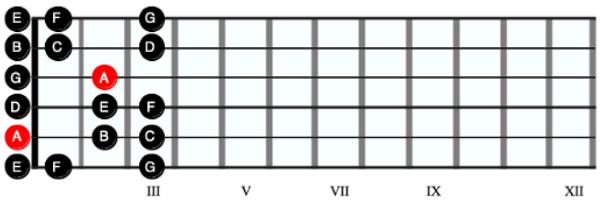


Movable Scale Forms in A minor in Note Letters

Movable Scale Form 1



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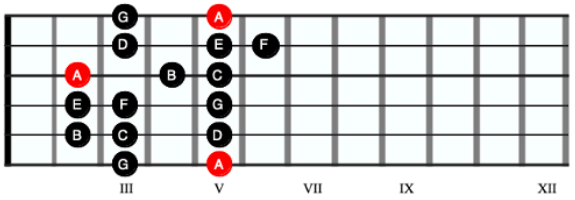

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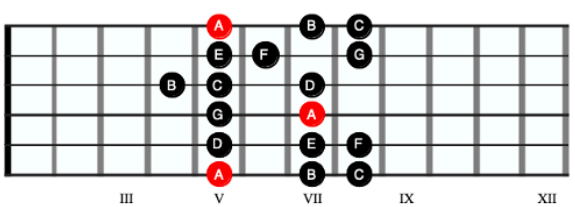

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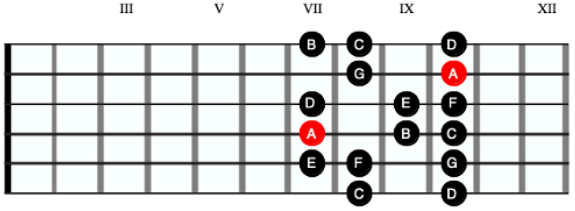

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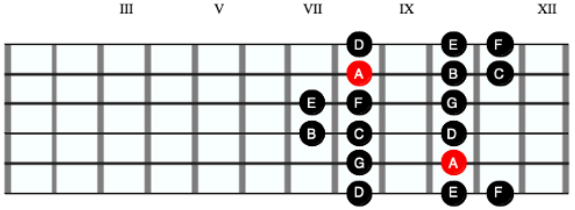
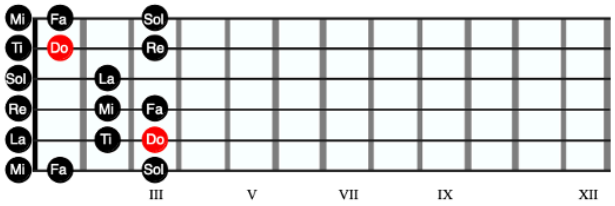


Movable Scale Forms in C major in Movable-*Do* Solfège

Movable Scale Form 1



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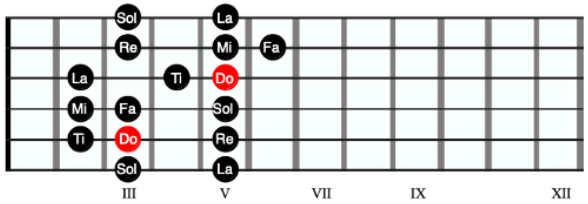

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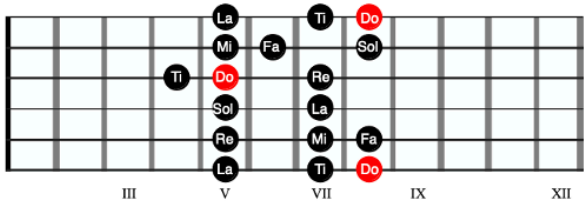
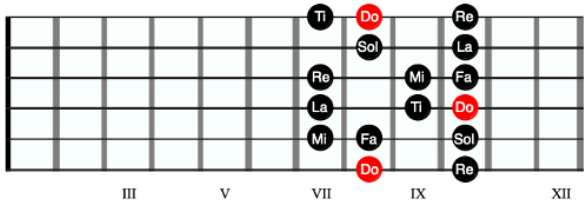
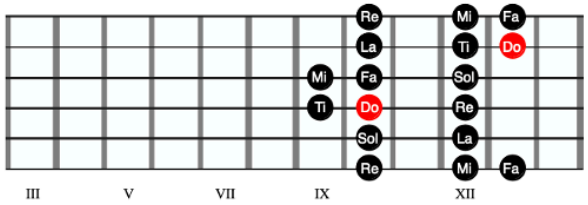


Movable Scale Form 4

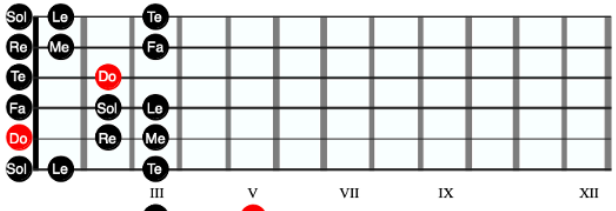


Movable Scale Form 5

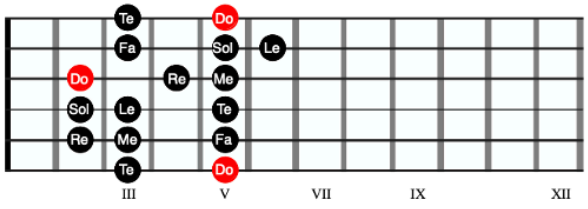


Movable Scale Forms in A minor in Movable-*Do* Solfége

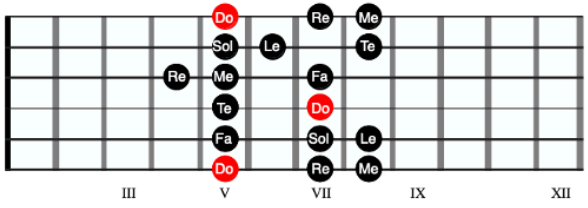
Movable Scale Form 1



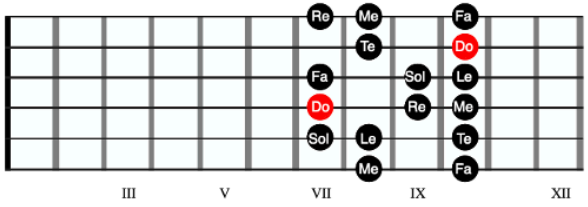
Movable Scale Form 2



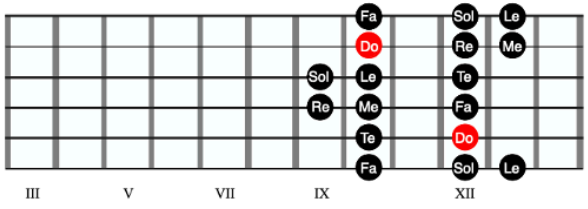
Movable Scale Form 3



Movable Scale Form 4



Movable Scale Form 5



APPENDIX C

Solfège Tree

(On Following Page)

Do

Ti

La

Sol

Fa

Mi

Re

Do