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March 17, 2010

Feature Article FingerBoard Harmony, Part Seven: Dominant 7th Arpeggios



The Dominant 7th Arpeggio

Last time, we added the 7th to the Major Triad to form the Major 7th arpeggio. Now, we will build a different type of 7th chord from the major triad, the all-important Dominant 7th chord.

Very early on, we learned about major 3rd intervals, and minor 3rd intervals. Major 3rds are 2 whole steps in length (4 frets apart), minor 3rds are 1 1/2 steps (3 frets apart). If you look at the interval formed between the 7th of the scale we added last time, and the 5th it sits on top of, you will see that it is a major 3rd. For example, in the C major 7th arpeggio, C-E-G-B, the G to B is a major 3rd.

If that major 3rd is made into a minor 3rd, the chord changes from a Major 7th to a Dominant 7th.

The way we change the major 3rd into a minor 3rd is by simply lowering the top note, B, one half step to B flat. We then have the chord C-E-G-Bb, which is a C dominant 7th chord. This chord has an entirely different sound than the major 7th.

So, the formula for a Major 7th chord is 1-3-5-7 from the major scale, and the formula for a Dominant 7th is 1-3-5-b7 from the major scale. These formulas must be memorized.

While this may all sound complex, it is rather simple, especially as it translates into playing. Anyone who has played guitar for awhile has undoubtedly played songs where a major 7th chord was followed by a dominant 7th chord with the same letter name, with the appropriate note being changed in the chord fingering. For

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example, in the key of G, we have the song "Something" by George Harrison.

G

Gmaj7

G7

C

Something in the way she moves
attracts me like no other lover

The F# of the major 7th chord lowered to an F natural to make the G dominant 7th chord.

Here, a plain G chord, with no 7 in it, moves to a Gmaj7 chord, and then to a G dominant 7th chord.

So, in order to get the dominant 7th arpeggios we need, we simply have to lower the 7th of the major 7th arpeggios by 1/2 step. Lowering the 7th we added last time to the arpeggios by 1/2 step, will transform the major 7th arpeggio into a Dominant 7th arpeggio.

Here they are:

**6th String Root
Dominant 7th Arp**

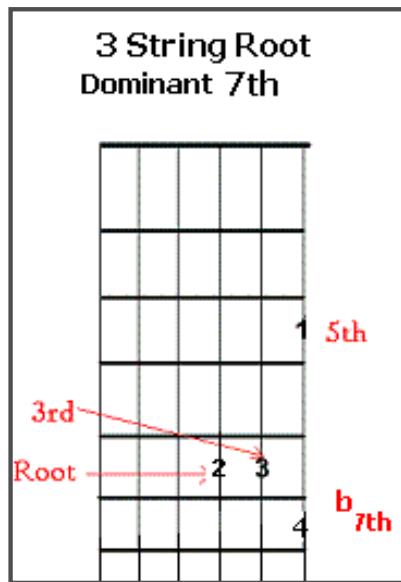
**5th String Root
Dominant 7th Arp**

**4th String Root
Dominant 7th**

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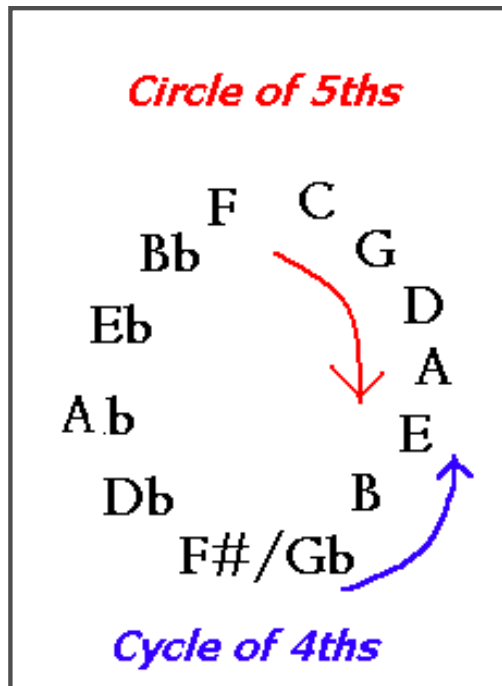


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Integration Exercise: In addition to using the same methods we have used previously to learn these (playing the up and down the neck fret by fret, and around the circle of 5ths), we will use a more complex, but more musically satisfying method for these dominant 7th arps.

A common type of chord movement in jazz and related styles is one known as a "cycle pattern". It is done by using chord movement in 4ths, that is, each chord moves to a chord that has a root a 4th away. This is quite simple to envision, all we have to do is think of the Circle of 5ths backwards, because a 4th is simply a 5th played backwards! In other words, C to G is a 5th, because there are 5 letters involved in going from C to G. But, G to C is a 4th, because there are 4 letters. So, we simply go in a counter-clockwise direction around the Circle of 5ths to obtain the chord movement known as a "cycle pattern".



So, we will very often see chords in progressions where, for instance, a B root chord goes to an E root chord, which goes to an A root chord, etc. The chords could be minor, dominant 7, major, whatever.

Example: Billy Joel "Just The Way You Are" (bridge)

G A F#m- B7- Em-
"I need to know that you will always be
A7- D
the same old someone that I knew"...

The cycle pattern occurs from the F#m onwards.

In learning fingerboard harmony, it is a common practice to play our exercises to chords moving around the cycle of 4ths. So, starting from C, play these Dominant 7th arpeggios in a counter-clockwise direction.

Tip: Since the guitar is tuned mostly in 4ths, you will find that you can simply move over to the next string set to get the arpeggio you need. For instance, C7 starts on the 8th fret of the 6th string, F7 is the 8th fret of the 5th string, Bb7 is the 8th fret of the 4th string, and Eb7 begins on the 8th fret of the 3rd string.

There are countless ways to connect these arpeggios, you can hear some of them here, as [I play the dominant 7th chords around the cycle of 4ths.](#)

Go to: [Introduction To FingerBoard Harmony](#)

Go to: [FingerBoard Harmony, Part Two: Minor Triads](#)

Go to: [FingerBoard Harmony, Part Three: Diminished Triads](#)

Go to: [FingerBoard Harmony, Part Four: The 5 Fret Rule](#)

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Q&A Tremolo Troubles

My name is Matt and I have been playing guitar for total of 3 years. Anyway what inspired me to write to you is I noticed an article in one of your recent newsletters "nail that dream solo" or something like that and it kind of inspired to conquer one my dream pieces of music, Taregga's "**Recuerdos de l'Alhambra**".

I've only started working on the tremolo technique intensively for about 2 weeks now, I've got two tips on ways to practice the tremolo, and also there is a small section about it in the Frederick Noad book 1.

One tip from my teacher which was passed from her teacher, Frederick Hand, Mannes school of music, was to practice it with rest stroke so you get equal volume. The other tip I discovered was from Sharon Isbin who said to accent the m finger because it should fall even with your bass line and by putting emphasis on the m finger while working on the technique slowly, helps the tremolo to stay even with your bass line when reaching the higher speeds.

My biggest problem is playing it on the inner strings (free stroke) I hit the string below it quite often. I would truly appreciate it if you perhaps had any tips about building the tremolo technique.

I would like to maybe someday become one of the teachers teaching your principles, but I don't have the money to be spending on too much supplementary material right now. I also don't know how long I'll be teaching for, since next year I'm going to audition for Manhattan school of music, my teacher recommended me for conservatory study. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Matt Van Dongen
New Jersey

Hi Matt,

Playing "**Recuerdos**" is the dream of a lot of players, no doubt! It was one of the first pieces I learned after seriously beginning classical guitar, and I have played and refined it throughout my life. There are many difficulties to overcome with this piece besides simply executing a fast and even tremolo with the right hand, but that is certainly the first difficulty to overcome!

As far as the suggestions you mention, they fall into the category of "better than nothing, but not much better than nothing". They may give some slight benefit, but they do not go to the root of the problem here. Practicing with a rest stroke may help somewhat, but it would be equally beneficial to practice with a nice loud free stroke. Emphasizing "m" may also help, but no more than practicing with emphasis with each finger in turn. These are both partial solutions, which may, if properly done, partially improve your overall tremolo.

The necessary perspective here must be the understanding that *each note we play is in reality an action of*

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the entire arm, from the shoulder (meaning the shoulder blade, or scapula, the origin point of many of the muscles attached to the shoulder area), to the fingertip. All of this must be the focus of our concern and attention during practice. The proof of what I am saying is shown in your case by the common obstacle you mention: hitting adjacent strings when playing the inner strings. This is happening because of tension you are chronically holding in your arm during the execution of the tremolo. You are holding your entire arm tight while trying to control your fingers, but you don't know it, and cannot feel it. You have not yet discovered the necessary sensations of your own body that are needed for the kind of control required to play a fast tremolo on the inner strings without knocking into the adjacent strings.

As I mention in "[The Principles](#)" book, we must think of the relationship of the fingers to the arm as we would an artist standing on a ladder, trying to have fine control of his paintbrush, while someone is holding the ladder steady at the bottom. If the person holding the ladder starts shaking it instead of holding it steady, the artist will not be able to paint well no matter how good he is. Your arm is the ladder, your fingers are the artist and paintbrush, and your shoulder, with all its attached muscles, is the guy trying to hold the ladder steady. And on top of that, every time the fingers play a note, it is like a wind blowing against the artist at the top of the ladder, making it even tougher for that poor guy trying to hold the ladder steady. You hit adjacent strings because your ladder is shaking!

All of this gives you a bit of an idea why my response to most people trying to learn a good tremolo is "You have no idea of the real difficulties of what you are trying to do". You also have no idea of the kind of practice and training procedures you really need to get that control.

I will, at some later point, write a complete method for the proper training of the tremolo, but the foundation of that training has already been written and is contained in "The Principles" book, and demonstrated in "[The Principles](#)" DVD. It is all of the methods contained therein for the basic training of the free stroke and its use in a simple 4 or 6 note arpeggio. These exercises, which I call "**fingerdipping exercises**" develop the kind of finger control needed for tremolo.

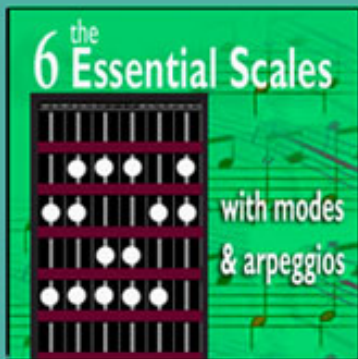
We should not think of the tremolo as something essentially different from other uses of free stroke, such as arpeggios. Segovia himself said "Tremolo is just an arpeggio done on one string". If you have trouble developing tremolo, it is because there is trouble with your arpeggios, your basic free stroke, and in the final analysis, with your technique, practice approach and understanding of guitar technique itself.

I am sorry if this sounds depressingly complex, but I only say it because it is the truth. You are asking "how do I play a virtuoso piece like a virtuoso?". The answer is to get the same foundation of technique that virtuosos have, and The Principles will give you that. There is no quick fix for such an accomplishment. **No tempo practice, the Basic Practice Approach, and all of the Foundation Exercises in The Principles** will, over time, give you what you want. We will see how badly you really want it.

Happy practicing!
Jamie

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Article

Franz Liszt: "Think 10 Times, Play Once"



Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was one of the greatest pianists in history, in fact, according to Martin Bookspan, writing in 101 Great Pieces of Music and their Composers, "if we are to believe the testimony of those who heard him play, Liszt may well have been the greatest pianist who ever lived." He was an incredible musician, who could play and re-arrange for piano an entire Beethoven symphony at sight. He worked constantly to promote the work of other great musicians of his day, including Wagner, Chopin, and Schumman. He was such an incredible pianist that people thought he must have made a deal with the Devil, that being the only way they could explain his virtuosity. In fact, he was really the first Rock Star, being constantly worshipped by people as celebrities are today, and the first of the new breed of musician to make their living by touring, and getting all the babes he wanted.

"Think 10 Times, Play Once"....Franz Liszt

When someone like this says anything, I listen very closely. I have thought about this statement over the years, and it has led me, by itself, to probably half of everything I have realized about playing an instrument. This statement, which basically points to the supremacy of the mental aspect of playing, is the basis of the first Principle of Correct Practice.

"Your aware thinking mind is your primary practice tool."

If you, as a practicing musician, keep this thought constantly in mind, and deepen your understanding of it, I think you too will see it lead to many powerful awareness's. I wish I had a nickel for every time I discovered the answer to a problem in playing, after years of having that problem, just by finally deciding to really sit down and THINK about it. I mean, examine it from every angle, re-think it again and again. Then play, with full awareness, observe the results, and think again.

But understand this: you have to have an idea of what THINKING is. And I don't assume everyone does, since I am constantly observing people's lack of doing it.

I was talking with a student once who complained that he thought too much, it was bad for him. Upon questioning him, I realized that what he really meant was that he worried too much. He thought worrying was thinking! Wrong. Worry is a mental activity that uses the imagination, coupled with negative emotions, to pretend to deal with reality. It is actually a way of avoiding life, and is a weakness that makes us weaker.

Thinking on the other hand, is a dynamic process, characterized by a positive emotional state, a sense of curiosity and the excitement of discovery. It uses knowledge already gained, and creatively combines it with other knowledge, and intuition, to create even more knowledge. Examine yourself. Is this what you do when you practice, or do you just "worry". As in, "damn, I still can't play this. Well, let me try it the same way yet again, for the one zillionth time."



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Don't! Stop. Think. Observe. Think. Then have the fingers perform a well thought out action. Was it better? Why? Worry repeats the past, and creates more of it. Thinking creates a new future. For guitarists, that means, "I am creating an improved ability to do these notes".

Thinking, of course, involves awareness, which is why we must know what the fingers are doing, and why we get the results we do. Often people have no idea what their fingers are really doing, so thinking is actually not possible, because they don't yet have anything to think about!

There are so many levels that this statement of Liszt's can be interpreted on. I can't touch on them all here, but I do want to mention its relevance to what is called Mental Practice.

Mental Practice means going through the music in your mind, away from the instrument. You internally visualize everything about playing it. You mentally see the fingers doing it, feel them do it. Hear the music. Some advanced players do most of their practicing this way. It can be as , or more, effective than actual practice.

For more insight into this, read a book called "Psycho-Cybernetics", by Maxwell Maltz, a classic. In it, he explains the basis of Mental Practice, which is the fact that the nervous system cannot tell the difference between a vividly imagined experience, and an "actual one". He tells of an experiment where basketball players were divided into two groups. One practiced foul shots every day for an hour, the other laid down and imagined they were doing fouls shots (successfully, of course). At the end of the experiment, the second group showed as much or more improvement as the first.

Convinced? One last thing. Henry Ford said "thinking is the hardest thing there is, that's why so few people do it." I won't kid you. You will resist it. Notice that.

Now put your thinking caps on!



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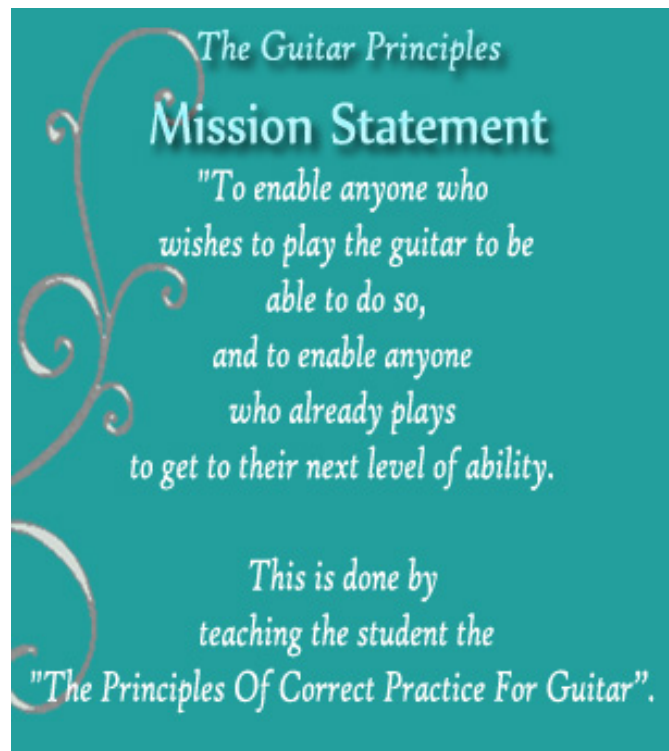
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Thanks for reading, and happy practicing!.....Jamie

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