

# A Lesson on Contrapuntal Scales and Arpeggios

For

## Electric and Classical Guitarists

*By Jimmy Wyble – compiled and edited by David Oakes*

**Editorial note:** Jimmy Wyble presented the following material in a class taught at Musicians Institute on March 6, 2008. Jimmy also handed me extra materials than he did not have time to cover in that days lecture. That material has also been added to this packet. Jimmy also taught a course at GIT back in the late 1970's called "*Guitarman'ship*", which was a course based on developing finger independence. Some of Jimmy's exercises from that curriculum have also been added to this packet. Jimmy is relying on me to help him to compile and organize this material. I feel that compiling this information into a useful lesson plan might be the best way. I have tried to write the following text in the same manner that Jimmy presented this material to his class using Jimmy's words as much as possible. I hope that you enjoy this material and that it helps you learn to play the incredible sounds that Jimmy has developed on the guitar but also it is hoped that this information will help you to understand the thought process behind it.

Most guitar players work on scales and arpeggios as single note lines for the purpose of building technique and improvising over changes. While this is the accepted and very legitimate norm for most schools of thought, I would like to add the concept of developing harmonic awareness while playing scales and melodic patterns as well as the development of finger style guitar technique can also be added.

Fingering explanation: Here we will use standard classical guitar notation:

- Numbers around the note heads represent left hand fingering
- Circled numbers are the string that the note is played one.
- Right hand fingering: p – thumb, I – index finger, m – middle finger, a – ring finger.

Example #1 below, is a C major scale in a sequential pattern commonly known as a "group of 3" sequence. Most guitar players play this pattern across the neck in a four or five fret position and pick style alternating down and up strokes. Try playing this pattern completely on the fourth string starting with the first finger on every downbeat. In the right hand, practice the three different fingerings given below the first measure.

④ -

1

*i m a i m a i m a i m a*  
*a m i a m i a m i a m i*  
*i m i m i m i m i m*

To try something different, play this pattern on the third, second and first strings. Always look for ways to vary an exercise even if that means simple to move it to another string.

Example 2: This exercise adds the 6<sup>th</sup> interval below the first note of the group of three. Play the bass note only on the 6<sup>th</sup> string with the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger of your fretting hand and pluck the note with your thumb. Keep the top line moving with the same 1<sup>st</sup> finger shifts and the same right hand fingerings as in exercise #1. You will have to alter your fingering of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> notes of each group to keep the bass note sustaining.

Example 2b: Moving the bass note to the 2<sup>nd</sup> note of each group of three. This produces the interval of a 7<sup>th</sup> between the top and bottom notes in each group.

Example 2c: Moving the bass note to the 3<sup>rd</sup> note of each group of three. This gives you the octave between the top and bottom note. Try and make the notes connect so that there isn't a brake in sound on the shift. You will have to play slowly and carefully to make this happen.

As a variation, try and stagger the notes on the above exercises. Do this by playing the bass note slightly before the upper note.

**Editorial note:** This staggering effect is similar to playing the example with a pick. You would actually hit the 6<sup>th</sup> string slightly before you would hit the 4<sup>th</sup> string. Jimmy played these exercises in class with a pick as well as with his fingers. I think that he really likes that sound of the bass note hitting slightly before the upper note.

Examples 3, 4 and 5 take example 2 and move the same concepts to different string sets. Also, play these examples by putting the bass note on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> attacks of each group as well as staggering the bass note with the upper note.

**Editorial note:** These scale sequences show Jimmy's fingerings and partial bars with his index finger. This is how he actually performed them in class and is one of the rare times I ever witnessed Jimmy using a bar.

Example 3: Musical notation in 4/4 time, starting with a circled 3 above the staff and a circled 2 below. The sequence consists of eighth notes with triplets and fingerings (1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2).

Example 4: Musical notation in 4/4 time, starting with a circled 2 above the staff and a circled 4 below. The sequence consists of eighth notes with triplets and fingerings (1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2).

Example 5: Musical notation in 4/4 time, starting with a circled 1 above the staff and a circled 3 below. The sequence consists of eighth notes with triplets and fingerings (1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2).

Example 7 is an example of a descending triad arpeggio. The right hand fingering is the same from measure to measure. The left hand fingering changes according to whether the chord is major, minor or diminished but they are still played on the same strings.

7

*m i m i m i m*  
*p p p p*

Example 8 combines both exercises 6 and 7. Remember to always use a metronome and practice at a tempo that keeps your playing precise.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Example 8. The first staff begins with a circled '8' in a box. Both staves are in 4/4 time and feature eighth and quarter notes, triplets, and various fingerings. Circled numbers (1-6) are placed above or below notes to indicate specific techniques or fingerings. The notation includes ascending and descending lines with triplets and single notes.

**Editorial note:** Again, here is Jimmy’s way of creatively adding/combining something to the same phrase to change the way he might play or practice the exercise.

**Editorial note:** The following examples, nine through eleven, shown on pages 6 and 7, were originally exercises Jimmy wrote and played with a pick from the “*Guitarmanship*” class. He demonstrated these exercises in class both pick style and finger style. With the pick, he did not alternate down and up strokes, but he followed the contour of the line. If the line crossed a string ascending he would play a down stroke and up strokes if the line was descending. With his fingers, it was a very free technique that used the most convenient right hand finger available. For the most part, he alternated his thumb and index with the middle and ring fingers thrown in from time to time. Go slow but work up your tempos. Jimmy played these examples very quickly.





**Editorial note:** This is the point at which the seminar at Musicians Institute finished. The next section contains more scale and arpeggio exercises that Jimmy wanted me to include with this information. Examples 12 – 15 are harmonized scale patterns based off of the harmonized C major scale. These examples are the opposite of the earlier examples in the sense that the scale pattern is on the bottom and the harmonizing note is on top. Practice these examples the same way moving the top note to different beats and by staggering the double stop notes. Unlike many jazz guitar players, who base their knowledge of the guitar in closed moveable patterns, Jimmy is not afraid to incorporate open strings into his patterns.

Example 12: Harmonized scale based on the (5 - 1 - 3 - 7) chord shape. Follow the right hand pattern given in the 1<sup>st</sup> measure for all measures in the example.

Example 12 consists of four systems of musical notation, each representing a different chord shape. Each system shows a treble clef staff with a dotted half note on the first beat and a dotted half note on the second beat. Below the staff are fingerings and right-hand patterns. The systems are:

- Cmaj7:** Fingerings: 3, 0, 2, 3, 0, 2. Right hand: 3, 0, 2, 3, 0, 2.
- Dm7:** Fingerings: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1. Right hand: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1.
- Em7:** Fingerings: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1. Right hand: 2, 4, 1, 2, 4, 1.
- Fmaj7:** Fingerings: 2, 0, 1, 2, 0, 1. Right hand: 2, 0, 1, 2, 0, 1.
- G7:** Fingerings: 1, 3, 4, 1, 3, 4. Right hand: 1, 3, 4, 1, 3, 4.
- Am7:** Fingerings: 1, 1, 4, 1, 3, 4. Right hand: 1, 1, 4, 1, 3, 4.
- Bm7<sup>(b5)</sup>:** Fingerings: 1, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1. Right hand: 1, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1.

Example 13: Harmonized scale based on the (1 - 3 - 7 - 9) chord shape. Notice that the top note changes in each measure from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of each diatonic chord structure. The right hand fingering is a two bar pattern. The second measure reverses the fingering of the first measure. Reversing the right hand fingering is not easy to do right away but with slow steady practice; it will become a very stable right hand technique.

13

Cmaj7

Dm7

Em7

Fmaj7

G7

Am7

Bm7(b5)

*m* *a* *p* *i* *p* *i* *p* *i* *p* *i* *m* *i* *p* *i*



Example 15: Supportive finger exercise – Shown on page 12: This study originally appeared in the Guitarmanship curriculum that Jimmy wrote for GIT in the late 1970's. Jimmy tends to use these exercises as a way of developing strength through equal pressure, good fretting hand positions with the left hand playing directly on the fingertips. Here is how this exercise works:

- Please practice this exercise slowly. This one is not for speed.
- Left hand fingerings are directly to the left of each note head. There are three notes played on each string. The note with two fingering numbers to the left means that two fingers will be placed at the same time. (In the first line, first measure - play the note G with your first finger. Then place Ab and A down at the same time with the second and third fingers. Finally the note B, with a fourth finger stretch, is placed on the 7<sup>th</sup> fret. All four fingers should be kept down on the 6<sup>th</sup> string until you move to the 5<sup>th</sup> string and do it all over again. Each string has one place where a supportive finger is placed at the same time as a scale tone. Here are some extra tips:
  - Make sure each finger has equal weight (pressure) on each fret.
  - Check to make sure that each finger is playing up on its fingertip.
  - Keep the left hand and wrist a natural extension of the forearm. Try not to bend too much at the wrist. A little bend is OK!
  - Observe the right hand fingering but also come up with other combinations to play the notes. (Including using a pick)

**Editorial Note:** The Guitarmanship course was a technique class for developing left hand finger independence as well as right hand picking technique. This exercise was played with a pick in that course. Jimmy tends to use the “Supportive Fingering Exercise” as a warm up for the students. He usually takes one or two of the patterns and practices them with the students for several minutes and then moves on to something else. I have seen this exercise work minor miracles in correcting a students poor left hand position.

**Ionian:**

15

*a m i a m i a m i a m i a m i a m i*  
*m i p m i p m i p m i p m i p m i p*

**Dorian:**

**Phrygian:**

**Lydian:**

**Mixolydian:**

**Aeolian:**

**Locrian:**

Example 16: C scale supported by diatonic intervals - This exercise is another example of a way to create contrapuntal motion inside of scale practice. I like to practice this exercise several ways. First play each line as written with the fingering given. Play legato letting notes ring as long as possible. Next, practice the scale repeating the pattern several times. (see example 16a shown on page 14) Play the notes short lifting your fingers off of the notes creating a detached piano style effect. Jimmy finds lifting fingers in this manner very useful in developing finger independence.

16

**2nd's** ② ----- ①

**3rd's** ② ----- ①

**4th's** ② ----- ①

**5th's** ② ----- ①

**6th's** ② ----- ①



## How To Practice This Material

**Editorial note:** To fully understand how Jimmy likes to practice, you have to understand how he was influenced by Howard Roberts. H.R., as his friends knew him, was not only one of the all time great jazz and studio guitar players, he was also a very intellectual person. Howard was very influenced by a book that he read by Carl Seashore titled “*The Psychology of Music*”. Included in this book was a chapter on how we learn music. Howard applied this chapter to the training of students at GIT.

The students practice time was to follow this procedure:

- Clear your workspace of anything not pertaining to that particular lesson. (i.e. – no distractions)
- Have a defined goal and objective for your practice session. Know what it is you are learning and why you are learning it.
- Select a small amount of information to learn (just a small portion of the above goal or objective). (1 note, 2 notes, half a measure, full measure etc.)
- Select a time frame to learn that information in. (1 minute, 2 minutes up to 5 or 10 minutes maximum)
- The first part of the time frame is geared to visualize the music to be learned by getting the information off of the page and into your minds eye. Don’t play your guitar while doing this process.
- Practice only that portion of music slowly making no mistakes. Memorize everything.
- Take a short break in-between each time frame. Stand and stretch thinking about what you were just practicing and go back and review the visualization of that material.
- Make every practice session a success by taking whatever you were practicing with you (both in your hands and your mind) and not leaving that information behind back on your desk or music stand.

GIT students used to carry around egg timers with them and practice everything from chord shapes to arpeggio and scale patterns this way. They would also use this technique while learning solos and tunes as well as Jimmy’s ideas. It is a very effective way to practice. Howard published a book called “*Super Chops*” where each of the 20 lessons was laid out with a one hour practice schedule broken up into five – 10 minute time frames combined with five – 2 minute breaks. Howard’s next book “*Praxis*” was an essay on the subject of problem solving both technical and musical questions.

This was the very beginning of GIT and anyone who was around during that time would know and would have lived exactly what I am saying here.

Howard encouraged Jimmy to write down his ideas and collect them into a book form. Howard published Jimmy’s first book “*Classic Country*” for his company Playback Publishing.

Jimmy has often spoke of his relationship/friendship with Howard Roberts during his lectures. He has nothing but complete respect and admiration for what Howard did in his life for music and the guitar.

One of the first questions a student will ask of Jimmy is “How do I practice all this information? It seems so overwhelming.

Jimmy’s answer is always the same. It goes like this:

I don't think of this as something I learn today or this week or even this year. This is an ongoing work in process that will create a path you will follow for many years of your musical life. If you practice these techniques slowly and mindfully, the application of these ideas in your playing won't be far behind. Practice just a few exercises every day. Try not to practice any exercise more than a couple of minutes. Practice slowly with a metronome and pay attention to your fingerings. Change up your exercises often. Do this by slightly altering the scale or pattern that you are playing. Be patient with your progress. Finally, he always says: Don't practice this material more than 10 – 15 minutes per day.

It is easy to hear these words and be reminded of the time frame practice routine that Howard Roberts taught us. Lets turn this packets examples into a practice session and see what we get:

1. Supportive Fingering example 15: 2 minute time frame - Do a different line every day for a week.
2. C Scale supported by Intervals example 16: 2 minutes – Do one line per day. Try also to do one variation on the line as well (Example 16a).
3. Scale sequences examples 2 through 5: 2 minute time frame – There are 3 variations of where to place the bass note plus three variations in right hand fingering. If you do the math and do one exercise per day it would take you 36 days to do all of them. If you transpose to all 12 keys at the rate of 1 exercise per day for a two-minute time frame, you will complete this exercise some time in about a year and a month or two. But who's counting; remember this is an ongoing process.
4. Scales arpeggios going across the fingerboard examples 7 – 8: 2 minute time frame playing only one example. Again with the variation in where to place the bass note the different arpeggio ending and transposing this to different keys, you will also be done with this exercise sometime next year.
5. Practice examples 12 -14 again take one example for 2 minutes.
6. Finally, practice one of the lines using the different right hand fingerings (Examples 9 - 11). 2-minute time frame: Take a few days to learn it. Move it around the fingerboard.

If you follow this advice, you will have practiced for 12 minutes. Throw in a short rest break and you have a 15-minute time frame completed. You will have also covered every technique in this packet. Every day you will play these same techniques but with different fingerings and positions.

The next question that is often asked of Jimmy by the GIT students is: How do I apply this material?

Again, Jimmy's answer is always the same: "I don't know how you will use it!" Everyone will find a different way to use this material. It is totally up to each person and their own level of development and time spent on this subject as well as their desire to play in this style. When each person's creative side is added to this mix, this is when the magic will happen.

Enjoy the ride!