
Seven Fundamental Arpeggio Studies for Classical Guitar

Essential Studies for the Classical Guitarist

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The Seven Fundamental Arpeggio Studies

Introduction

The Seven Fundamental Arpeggios are essential to the technique fundamentals in the area of arpeggio studies for the classical guitarist in order to acquire the necessary finger coordinations to perform the etudes and concert literature (repertoire) of the classical guitar that exist from the 16th century Renaissance to the modern-day. Detailed finger descriptions, music score details, and string crossing applications are included as a practice guide to study and master the arpeggio sequences.

Three Arpeggio Pattern Sets (Groupings)

The three sets of arpeggio patterns are organized as a basic or fundamental approach to right hand finger combinations. Simply stated, the patterns are mathematically designed to include every possible combination of *i*, *m*, and *a* fingers where no repetition of a finger is included. Therefore the sets will exercise every possible combination of right hand finger combinations that exists to give freedom to the fingers to function and perform the etudes and concert repertoire of the classical guitar.

The Fourth Arpeggio Pattern (*pimami*)

The fourth arpeggio pattern, the *pimami* pattern is a more advanced pattern that should only be studied and mastered once the previous three arpeggio pattern sets have been thoroughly studied, memorized, and mastered. This pattern is often referred to as a pattern using opposed motion of the right hand fingers due to the repetition of *i* and *m* fingers between thumb strokes. This pattern is essential for the guitarist to study since the pattern is included in many etudes and concert pieces in the literature of the classical guitar.

Right Hand Finger Identification Chart

P = Thumb

I = Index

M = Middle

A = Anular (Ring Finger)

First Set (the *pi* grouping)

pima

piam

Second Set (the *pm* grouping)

pmia

pmai

Third Set (the *pa* grouping)

pami

paim

Fourth (the seventh arpeggio/opposed motion)

pimami

Fundamental String-Crossing Patterns

The three string-crossing patterns listed below represent all of the possible patterns that are used in performing music on the guitar using the right-hand fingers. In order for the guitarist to have a competent and efficient right hand technique, it is essential that the three string-crossing combinations are studied and practiced in the guitarist's daily practice routine.

The Three String-Crossing Pattern Formulas

1. The Thumb moves across string numbers 6,5, and 4 in the order of 6 5 4 5 6 while the *i*, *m*, and *a* fingers stay on strings 3,2, and 1 respectively (*i* finger plays the 3rd string only, *m* finger plays the 2nd string only, and the *a* finger plays the 1st string only).
2. The entire hand moves across all sets of four strings respectively in the order of 6543, 5432, 4321, 5432, & 6543. For example, on strings 6543, the thumb (*p*) plays the 6th string, the index finger (*i*) plays the 5th string, the middle finger (*m*) plays the 4th string, and the ring finger (*a*) plays the 3rd string. This sequence is repeated across all sets of string combinations.
3. The thumb (*p*) plays on the 6th string only. The *i*, *m*, and *a* fingers will move across all sets of three strings respectively in the order of 543, 432, 321, 432, and 543. For example, on the first set of 3 strings, the index finger (*i*) will play the 5th string, the middle finger (*m*) will play the 4th string, and the ring finger (*a*) will play the 3rd string.

The String-Crossing Technique

When moving the right hand fingers across the strings, it is imperative that the fingers maintain and preserve the most beneficial finger-to-string relationship in order to play accurately and precisely on each string in each respective pattern. The refinement of the technique requires that the entire arm (including the elbow) be moved up or down across the strings from the shoulder. This will allow the right hand finger (or fingers) to be repositioned on a string (or sets of strings) and will preserve the most beneficial finger-to-string relationship for playing precision and accuracy.

Seven Basic Arpeggios

The image displays seven numbered musical examples (I-VII) of basic arpeggios. Each example is written on a single treble clef staff. The first measure of each example shows the chord with its constituent notes and a fingering diagram (p, i, m, a). The second measure shows the arpeggiated sequence of notes. Example VII includes a '6' below the notes in the second measure, indicating a sixth. The dynamic marking 'p' (piano) is present at the start of each arpeggiated sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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