



CHRISTOPHER BERG

Graduate of the Peabody Conservatory of Music. Guitar studies with Aaron Shearer. First guitarist to receive the Master of Music degree from Peabody. First guitarist to win the MTNA National Guitar Competition (1977). Concerts and concerto appearances throughout the United States. Currently is Assistant Professor of Music at the University of South Carolina.

Christopher Berg states that although many guitarists are aware of the necessity of moving smoothly and accurately from one string to another, rarely has string crossing been the sole focus of a technical exercise. He points out that a common symptom of faulty string crossing is the inability to play scales which cross the strings as rapidly as one can play notes on a single string. To help deal with this problem, Mr. Berg contributes the following comments and exercises:

Assuming one has a comfortable right hand position on any given string, try to keep this same position for each string. This is accomplished by the basic technique of moving the forearm *from* the elbow. Strive to maintain the same wrist and fingerjoint relationship as when playing on a single string. The exercises below should be studied with both free stroke and rest stroke.

PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

On a single string practice the right hand patterns of *i-m*, *m-a*, *i-m-a*, *a-m-i*, *i-m-a-m*, *i-a-m-a*, and *a-i-m-i*. The cultivation of these patterns cover every possible string crossing situation. (Although other right hand patterns can be devised, practicing them would be superfluous. For example, the finger movements for *m-a-i* are the same as for *i-m-a*. The difference is simply starting the pattern with a different finger.)

i m i m i m i m i m i m
m a m a m a m a m a m a
i m a i m a i m a i m a i m
a m i a m i a m i a m i a m
i m a m i m a m i m a m i
a i m i a i m i a i m i

Use rhythm patterns of triplets and sixteenth notes. This will require playing the triplets with the right hand patterns that use an even number of strokes (*i-m*, *m-a*, *i-m-a-m*, *i-a-m-a*, and *a-i-m-i*), and will require playing the sixteenth notes with right hand patterns that use an odd number of strokes (*i-m-a* and *a-m-i*). Note that the accent should shift from finger to finger.

i m i m i m i m i m i m
m a m a m a m a m a m a
i m a m i m a m i m a m
a i m i a i m i a i m i

i m a i m a i m a i m a
a m i a m i a m i a m i

CROSSING STRINGS

Now practice crossing all six strings ascending and descending with the patterns studied above. It may be helpful to begin practice with *i-m* and then proceed with the more difficult patterns. Think of crossing as you play the last note on a string. Remember to make a definite movement from the elbow.

Descend & Repeat

i m
m a
i m a m
i a m a
a i m i
a m i
i m a

Descend & Repeat

a m i
i m a
i m
m a
i m a m
i a m a
a i m i

To relieve the tedium of open strings and to practice left hand endurance, finger chords employing the full bar and ascend by position.

BI ⑥

Ascend to IX

TRANSVERSE SCALES

When the above can be done as a matter of habit, practice transverse scales (scales that move across the strings) in groups of three and four notes with the above right hand patterns. It is preferable to begin with scales that leave the left hand in *one position*, (as in example below) but longer scales may be utilized if desired. Make certain that the groups of 3 or 4 are clearly discernible.

1 3 4 1 3 2 3 4 5 6 5

i m
m a
a i m
i m a
i m a m
i a m a
a i m i

1 3 4 1 3 2 3 4 5 6 5

i m
m a
a m i
i m a
i m a m
i a m a
a i m i

Remember! Practice slowly and carefully to allow the various techniques involved to consolidate. *How* these exercises are studied is of more importance than *what* is being studied.