

(Book 5.)

Introduction to Four Part Arpeggios

AT THIS POINT, A GOOD ARGUMENT MIGHT BE MADE IN REGARD TO THE ORDER OF PRESENTATION. LESSONS 54 THROUGH 57 COULD BE LOGICALLY PLACED AHEAD OF LESSON 36. I WILL LEAVE IT UP TO THE DISCRETION OF THE PLAYER OR TEACHER TO DETERMINE THE COURSE OF ACTION.

Tony Bradan's hand written notes on this subject consisted of about 100 pages. I have tried to edit these ideas without losing the integrity of his thoughts.

The examples in this book are not the only possibilities for arpeggio fingerings. Tones could be written in regard to guitar arpeggios.

I suggest that you work through these fingering demonstrations methodically but not obsessively. By all means, spend some practice time on pursuing other areas of musical study. Practice harmonizing tunes. Practice some scales and related exercises. Comping with three and four part chords of all types of voicings is very important. The presented concepts are not particularly difficult but to develop the technique will take a fair amount of work.

Probably the most important aspect of chord and arpeggio playing is to practice the "spelling" of the chords. Rather than trying to verbalize at a lightning speed, allow the chord spelling to flow through your brain as you play the arpeggios. There is a good chance that your fingers will quickly begin to outpace the best efforts of your mouth.

Many players think of arpeggios as something that they can add to music to fill up the empty places. Although that is a possibility, keep in mind that most melodies actually are arpeggios joined melodically with some passing type tones. Any note in any tune can be justified as some type of chordal tone.

Although the arpeggios in this next section are demonstrated in two octave form, that does not mean that they will always be played in that manner. When you use an arpeggio in your own inventions, the amount of rhythmic time that is allotted to the arpeggio will usually determine the length of the run. To cover the full two octaves of any four part chord arpeggio, takes up nine notes in one direction. (ascending or descending) Suppose that you are playing a song at a "moderato" tempo in 4/4 time and you plan to use all nine notes within perhaps a beat and a half. You'd better make sure that you have the physical skills to cope with the velocity that will be required. The better solution may be to choose an arpeggio which has more interesting notes even if they are rhythmically slower. As an example, the notes of a G7 arpeggio played over a G7 chord will always sound "right" but even a lightning quick performance will only be marginally interesting. As an example, if you play a Bm7b5 arpeggio against the G7 chord, it will probably be more interesting musically because now the G7 chord will come off as a G9.

Arpeggios need to be resolved in the same manner as the chords themselves. Once you have mastered the fingering of the arpeggio, spend the rehearsal time in developing a variety of resolutions. Some suggestions are demonstrated in this book but they do not cover all possibilities. That "arpeggio bible" which I alluded to might have the definitive resolutions. My experience is that the idea of arpeggio resolution is usually not even spoken of in most books.

Some years ago, I had a student who absolutely balked at even the thought of practicing arpeggios. He suggested that arpeggios would never be a big part of his playing style. When he demonstrated some of the licks that he had learned by ear, I was surprised to see and hear him playing all kinds of short arpeggiated bursts. We analyzed a few of his licks and shortly thereafter, he quit the guitar lessons. I have no idea what he is doing at this point in history. Hopefully, he is still playing the guitar.

The point is very simple. Learning to play arpeggios fluently can't possibly hurt your skill development.

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