

Yes, the previous two pages were not the real beginning of this book. They are just a historical perspective on what now follows.

Lesson 1a.

"Rhythmic Inventions"

For the sake of demonstration, I have chosen to use this tune because it is most likely in "public domain". Any tune of your choosing would work equally well or perhaps better. When you are experimenting with the techniques that will be discussed, choose tunes which are strong enough to stand on their own even if they were played with no accompaniment. Melodies which have very few pitch changes can be more difficult to work with or at least that is the case when you will be restricted in the "stuff that you can add."

The first step to improvising on any tune is to learn to play the original song exactly the way it was written. Even better is to learn to sing, hum or maybe whistle the tune. The original melody should be everpresent in your brain as you begin to modify it.

I would suggest a moderate "swing style accompaniment" for this song. It will be difficult to make the melody swing if you play it as shown, but for the time being, let's let the rhythm section do the "swing" and you should just concentrate on playing the tune. Learn it in the octave shown and also 8va. All types of fingerings should be explored. Considering that the song has only a range of a 6th, on the guitar it would be easy enough to play the whole tune on just about any one string.

All the melodic and harmonic permutations of this tune will be done with this three chord accompaniment as being the basic structure. Other harmonizations of this song or for that matter any song are possible.

The musical notation shows a melody in treble clef, 4/4 time. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style with quarter and eighth notes. The chords are indicated above the staff: C, C7, F, C, G7, C, G7, C in the first line; C, G7, C, G7, C, G7, C, G7 in the second line; and C, C7, F, C, G7, C, G7, C in the third line.

If learning "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" has taken you more than a few tries, you have apparently got to this place in your studies much too quickly. At this stage of the game, playing any standard melody should be possible on the first or second try. If this is not the case, return to the place in your previous studies where you decided that you were already too good to bother with the exercises. Start at that point or maybe return to even an earlier lesson and continue your studies until you have developed your reading ability to a slightly higher degree.

It is of paramount importance to continue reviewing the basic skills even when you think that you have mastered them. I have found that although I am a very good music reader, when I don't spend time on using that skill, it tends to get a bit rusty. I make a point of practicing some sight reading quite often. When working on your sight reading, it is important to read something that is not familiar. Reading some old tune that you already know usually does not exercise your reading skill. The fingers and ear tend to take over as if you were on auto-pilot or at least cruise control.

It would be ideal to have a music accompaniment program such as "Band-in-a-Box". The other option is to have your musical buddies on hand to help you during your practice sessions.