

FROM MELODY TO MASTERPIECE

**ARRANGING
FOR
FINGERSTYLE GUITAR**

ONE MELODY - HUNDREDS OF OPTIONS

JOE MCMURRAY

ARRANGING TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF ONE SIMPLE MELODY WITH THE GOAL OF UNDERSTANDING HOW TO ARRANGE ANY MELODY IN A VARIETY OF STYLES.

Introduction

- 1) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in G Major
 - A) Melody and Bass
 - B) Inner Harmony
 - C) Travis Style/Alternating Bass
 - D) Arpeggiation
 - E) Melody in the Bass
 - F) Combination of Approaches
 - G) Thumb Slaps
 - H) Rhythmic Bass Lines
 - I) Harmonizing in 3rds, 6ths, or 10ths
 - J) Natural Harmonics
 - K) Artificial Harmonics
 - L) Drop D Tuning
 - M) Closing Thoughts
- 2) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in C Major
 - A) Melody and Bass
 - B) Inner Harmony
 - C) Travis Style/Alternating Bass
 - D) Arpeggiation
 - E) Melody in the Bass
 - F) Thumb Slaps
 - G) Rhythmic Bass Lines
 - H) Harmonizing in 3rds, 6ths, or 10ths
 - I) Natural Harmonics
 - J) Artificial Harmonics
 - K) Closing Thoughts
- 3) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in Other Keys
 - A) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in D Major
 - B) D Major: Drop D Tuning
 - C) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in E Major
- 4) Introduction to Alternate Tunings: DADGAD
 - A) DADGAD Tuning: Key of D Major
 - B) DADGAD Tuning: Key of G Major
- 5) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* Cross String/Harp Style
 - A) Cross String: Key of C Major
 - B) Cross String: Key of G Major
 - C) Cross String: CGDGBE Tuning: Key of G Major
 - D) Cross String: DADGAD Tuning: Key of G Major

- E) Cross String: CGDGAD Tuning: Key of G Major
- F) Cross String: DADGAD Tuning: Key of D Major
- 6) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* with Independent Bass Lines
 - A) Independent Bass Lines: C Major: Walking Bass Lines
 - B) Independent Bass Lines: C Major: Major Pentatonic Bass Lines
 - C) Independent Bass Lines: C Major: Boogie Woogie Bass Line
 - D) Independent Bass Lines: G Major: Bluesy Root – b7 Bass Lines
- 7) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*: Rhythmic Exploration
 - A) 3/4 Time
 - B) 6/8 Time
 - C) 5/4 Time: 3-2 Pattern
 - D) 5/4 Time: 2-3 Pattern
- 8) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*: Harmonization with Triads
 - A) Harmonization and Reharmonization
 - B) Counterpoint
 - C) Transposing to Natural Minor
 - D) Transposing to Harmonic Minor
 - E) Out of the Box Ideas for Harmonization
- 9) Arranging *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*: Harmonization with Seventh Chords
 - A) Harmonization and Reharmonization with Seventh Chords
 - B) The Power of the V7 Chord
 - C) Secondary Dominants and Modulation
 - D) The ii-V-I Cadence
 - E) Chord Planing
- 10) *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*: Finished Arrangements
 - A) Beginner Arrangement
 - Arrangement 10.1
 - B) Beginner / Intermediate Arrangement
 - Arrangement 10.2
 - C) Intermediate Arrangements
 - Arrangement 10.3
 - Arrangement 10.4
 - Arrangement 10.5
 - Arrangement 10.6
 - D) Intermediate / Advanced Arrangement
 - Arrangement 10.7
 - E) Advanced Arrangement
 - Arrangement 10.8
- 11) Introduction to Advanced Melodies
- 12) Final Notes
- Appendix A: Essential Music Theory
- Appendix B: Harmonics

INTRODUCTION

The guitar is truly an amazing instrument – a musical swiss army knife with the capacity to excel in almost any genre of music. At the beginning of my musical journey I enjoyed strumming chords and singing. Next, I found my need for speed and electric guitar pyrotechnics. Eventually I took a deep dive and learned to swim in the world of jazz guitar. Then one day I witnessed Andy McKee playing *Drifting* on YouTube and I could hardly believe my ears as he wielded his acoustic guitar like a tiny orchestra. If I hadn't seen the video evidence, I would have been certain that at least 3 people were playing together. That's when it happened. That's when I caught the fingerstyle bug, and I have been obsessed with it ever since. I have been on a pilgrimage, seeking out the full potential of the acoustic guitar.

This book is for the intermediate or advanced guitarist who wants to sound like a full band by him/herself. You will learn how to simultaneously play a melody, bass line, chords, and occasional percussion in a variety of styles. You will develop the skillset to arrange just about any song you can think of into a solo fingerstyle masterpiece. Ultimately you may be inspired to start writing your own compositions.

There are surely thousands of music books out there – I have two bookcases filled with them! While there are many classical guitar books, there are only a handful of great books focusing on the art of steel-string fingerstyle guitar. Most method books provide a series of mechanical patterns or theoretical concepts, each with a few musical applications ranging from 4-bar phrases to full tunes.

What sets this book apart is that it arranges one musical phrase using hundreds of mechanical and theoretical possibilities. While other method books are certainly valuable, this book provides a different way of thinking that will supplement those other books in your collection and help you to consolidate all of your musical knowledge for use in any song arrangement.

This book is incredibly thorough. It leaves no stone unturned. I tried to ensure that you can follow a logical progression from a single unadorned melody to not only one finished arrangement, but arrangements in a multitude of styles within the umbrella of fingerstyle guitar. We will explore *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* which provides a simple and memorable melody as a platform for our studies. We will look at:

- Harmonization with block chords, melody and bass, and inner harmony
- Travis Style / alternating bass lines
- Arpeggiation
- Melody in the bass
- Thumb slaps
- Rhythmic bass lines
- Harmonizing each note of the melody with 3rds, 6ths, 10ths, etc.
- Natural and artificial harmonics
- Transposition and alternate tunings
- Cross string / Harp Style
- Independent bass lines
- Rhythmic exploration and new time signatures
- Reharmonization
- Full performance arrangements of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*

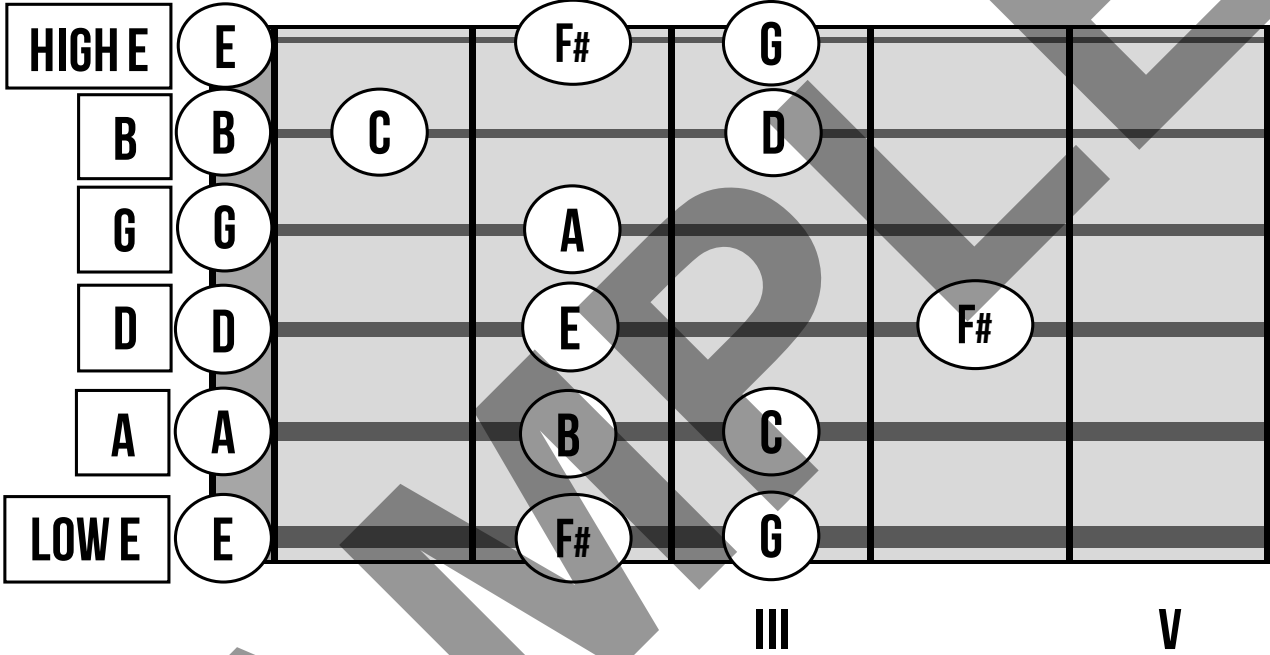
I will try to focus on playing while slowly introducing music theory as needed for the first 7 chapters until we reach the topic of harmonization. I believe that understanding music theory is extremely helpful, so I'd recommend taking a look at the extensive **APPENDIX A: ESSENTIAL MUSIC THEORY** whenever you feel so inclined.

You will notice I have chosen to write out all examples only in tablature. While I am a proponent of standard notation (treble clef), I made the difficult decision to omit it for several reasons. First, I don't intend for this to be a series of reading exercises - I want to show you where to place your fingers and allow you to focus on arranging and playing rather than reading. Second, the book would be far too long if I provided both TAB and standard notation

- there are hundreds of examples. Finally, while standard notation often provides the rhythms for the accompanying tablature, I have notated the exact rhythms within the tablature itself so that you are reading one line without looking back and forth between the trebel clef and TAB.

It would be beneficial to know the notes on the guitar on all six strings and within the first 3 or 4 frets. If you don't already have a firm grasp of this, don't worry – you will by the end of the book. Until then you can reference the fretboard diagrams that I provide throughout the book.

FRETBOARD DIAGRAM: NOTES IN THE KEY OF G MAJOR



CHAPTER 11 will serve as a preview of the second book in this series that will address the difficulties of arranging a more complex *Advanced Melody* for fingerstyle guitar. Don't skip ahead to this! Through *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* you will master the fundamentals of arrangement and develop the skills needed to take on the *Advanced Melody*.

1A) MELODY AND BASS

G Major, Standard Tuning

The beauty of playing fingerstyle guitar is that you can actually be a one-man (or one-woman) band. You can be the singer, the bass player, the rhythm guitarist/pianist, and even the drummer. In the previous example when you play only the melody, the tune is entirely recognizable, but it sounds sparse. The easiest way to beef up your arrangement is to add in a bass line. Bass players dedicate their musical studies and efforts entirely to the bass – bass lines can be incredibly complex and beautiful. However, a very simple bass line will do the trick in the beginning. Your starting point as a fingerstyle guitarist should be to play the root of each chord as your bass note while simultaneously playing the melody. It is essential that you maintain the melody, but it is almost always possible to also grab a bass note.

With your picking hand thumb, play the root of each chord with a half note rhythm. With your fingers, play the melody. For most of the examples in this book I have provided specific fingerings in the tablature, but be aware that there are almost always alternate fingering possibilities. Here I indicated that you should play the melody with alternating middle and index fingers, but you could alternate index and middle fingers or you could assign your index finger to the 3rd string, your middle finger to the 2nd string, and your ring finger to the 1st string. There are other options as well, but ultimately you should choose the fingering that allows you to play most consistently while achieving the best tone.

Example 1.2

Example 1.2 shows a sequence of chords: G, G, C, G, C, G, D, G. The notation includes chord names, dynamics (*mp*), and articulation (*i*). The tablature (TAB) shows the following fret numbers for the strings (from top to bottom):

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Chord	G	G	C	G	C	G	D	G
Dynamics	<i>mp</i>		<i>mp</i>		<i>mp</i>			
Articulation		<i>i</i>		<i>i</i>				
String 1	0	0	3	3	0	0	2	0
String 2	3	3	0	3	1	1	0	3
String 3	0	0	3	3	0	0	2	0
String 4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
String 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
String 6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In measure 4, you could play an F# in the bass because that is the 3rd of the D major chord. This gives you a deeper/lower sound, and also creates a nice half-step resolution to the G on beat 3. Note that I use my thumb over the top to play the F# in measure 4, but you could also use your 1st finger. Personally, I can transition more smoothly from one chord to the next when I use my thumb over the top.

Example 1.3

Example 1.3 shows a sequence of chords: G, G, C, G, C, G, D/F#, G. The notation includes chord names, dynamics (*mp*), and articulation (*i*). The tablature (TAB) shows the following fret numbers for the strings (from top to bottom):

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Chord	G	G	C	G	C	G	D/F#	G
Dynamics	<i>mp</i>		<i>mp</i>		<i>mp</i>		<i>mp</i>	
Articulation		<i>i</i>		<i>i</i>				
String 1	0	0	3	3	0	0	2	0
String 2	3	3	0	3	1	1	2	3
String 3	0	0	3	3	0	0	2	0
String 4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
String 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
String 6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

1D) ARPEGGIATION

G Major, Standard Tuning

Arpeggios are simply musical patterns involving the chord tones (the root, 3rd, and 5th for a basic 3-note triad). Essentially, your picking hand will play a repetitive physical pattern while your fretting hand holds down chord shapes. Therefore you are plucking chord tones or *arpeggiating* each chord.

If you were playing your guitar while singing, you could just play a repetitive arpeggiation pattern for each chord. However, when playing solo fingerstyle arrangements you want to simultaneously play the melody. Like in the previous sections, you will aim to play the melody on top while maintaining the arpeggiation pattern underneath. Make sure to let each melody note sustain as long as possible!

16TH NOTE PATTERNS

The following arpeggiation pattern creates a lot of energy underneath the melody and is relatively easy to play. We are still playing the the melody and bass notes but we're adding inner harmony to fill the space between. Because this pattern uses sixteenth notes, don't be afraid or ashamed to play the song at a slower overall tempo.

Example 1.16

Example 1.16 shows a sequence of chords: G, G, C, G, C, G, D/F#, G. The notation includes guitar tablature (TAB) and a rhythmic pattern below it. The rhythmic pattern is: 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 4 0 0 0 4 0 0 0. The TAB shows the fretting hand positions for each chord, with the picking hand playing a repetitive pattern of notes (0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2) on the strings.

You could play bass notes only on beats 1 and 3 to leave a little more space in the arrangement.

Example 1.17

Example 1.17 shows a sequence of chords: G, G, C, G, C, G, D/F#, G. The notation includes guitar tablature (TAB) and a rhythmic pattern below it. The rhythmic pattern is: 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 4 0 0 0 4 0 0 0. The TAB shows the fretting hand positions for each chord, with the picking hand playing a repetitive pattern of notes (0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2). Circled numbers 3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3 indicate bass notes on beats 1 and 3.

Here's another arpeggiated pattern that plays the melody notes on the down-beats.

Example 1.18

Example 1.18 shows a sequence of chords: G, G, C, G, C, G, D/F#, G. The notation includes guitar tablature (TAB) and a rhythmic pattern below it. The rhythmic pattern is: 0 3 2 0 0 3 3 0 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0. The TAB shows the fretting hand positions for each chord, with the picking hand playing a repetitive pattern of notes (0, 3, 2, 0, 0, 3, 3, 0) on the strings.

Use the same arpeggiation pattern with the harmonization of *Example 4.6*, except on beat 3e of measure 1 play an F# (the 3rd of the chord) in the bass.

Example 4.8

Dsus4 **Dsus4/F#** **Gsus2/B** **Dsus4/A** **Gsus2** **Dsus4/F#** **A7/E** **Dsus4**
a p i m
 TAB: 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 1 0 0 4 | 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 4 | 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 4 | 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 4 | 2 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 4 3 0 0 4 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Use the same pattern, but this time use an even better bass line (in my opinion). The reason that I prefer this bass line is that it features contrary motion in measures 2 and 3. We will discuss the concepts of contrary motion and other types of *counterpoint* in more depth in **SECTION 8B**, but to get started:

- On beat 3 of measure 2, the melody goes down from B (9th fret of the 1st string) to A (7th fret of the 1st string) while the bass line goes up from G (5th fret of the 6th string) to A (open 5th string).
- On beat 1 of measure 3 the melody goes down to G (5th fret of the 1st string) while the bass walks up to B (2nd fret of the 5th string).

Also, leave a little space by breaking up the arpeggio patterns.

Example 4.9

Dsus4 **Dsus4/F#** **Gsus2** **Dsus4/A** **Gsus2/B** **Dsus4/A** **A7/E** **Dsus4**
a p i m
 TAB: 0 0 0 0 0 4 1 0 0 4 | 4 1 0 0 4 1 0 0 4 0 0 0 4 | 4 1 0 0 4 1 0 0 4 0 0 0 4 | 4 1 0 0 4 1 0 0 4 0 0 0 4 | 2 1 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Play the melody using natural harmonics. On beats 1 and 2 of measure 2, the only ways to play a B using a natural harmonic are at the 9th or 4th fret of the 3rd string. Either of these harmonics produces a pitch that is an octave higher than the rest of the melody. If you don't like that sound, you could always play a normal fretted B at the 9th fret of the 1st string or you could find an artificial harmonic.

Example 4.10

TAB: <12> <12> <5> <5> | <9> <9> <7> | <12> <12> <9> <9> | <7> <7> <12>

6C) INDEPENDENT BASS LINES C MAJOR: BOOGIE WOOGIE BASS LINE

C Mixolydian, Standard Tuning

You will recognize this cliché boogie woogie bass line. Over a dominant 7 chord, the bass line walks root - 3 - 5 - 6 - b7 - 6 - 5 - 3. Over C7, this line is C - E - G - A - Bb - A - G - E.

Example 6.22

C7

6D) INDEPENDENT BASS LINES G MAJOR: BLUESY ROOT-b7 BASS LINES

G Mixolydian, Standard Tuning

The Mixolydian scale is like the major scale, but with a flat 7: root 2 3 4 5 6 b7. The previous boogie woogie bass line utilized the C Mixolydian scale (C D E F G A Bb). Now in the key of G Mixolydian (G A B C D E F), we can create a simple bass line consisting of the root (G) and the b7th (F). Since the melody contains neither a 7th (F#) nor a b7th (F natural), our b7th in the bass line doesn't conflict with anything.

Example 6.23

G7

Here is another arrangement with a bass line that uses only the root (G) and the b7th (F), but with a completely different rhythm. The final measure is a little tricky since the bass line and the melody converge to the same pitch (G) on beat 3. Overcome this obstacle with a slide in the bass line and different fingering for the final low G.

Example 6.24

G7

9D) THE ii-V-I CADENCE

G Major, Standard Tuning

A *cadence* is simply a chord progression that resolves. We've already looked at a very popular cadence: the V-I progression. In this section we will discuss the ii-V-I cadence, which you can think of as an extension of the V-I cadence. While the V chord prepares the listener's ears for the resolution to the I chord, the ii chord prepares them for the V chord!

In this example I have harmonized used only triads and seventh chords diatonic to the key of G major. However, in the 4th measure I have introduced the ii-V-I cadence: the Am is the ii chord, the D7 is the V7 chord, and the G major is the I chord. Note that these chords could be triads, 7th chords, 7th chords with extensions or alterations (Am9, D7b13, Gmaj9, etc.), or any combination of these chord types.

Example 9.15

ii-V-I cadence creates a strong resolution to end the song

ii **V** **I**
Am **D7/F#** **G**

Chord diagrams for Example 9.15:
 G: 0003 0003
 G: 3003 3003
 Em: 0000 0000
 G: 3003 4003
 Am7: 1001 1001
 Bm7: 0202 0202
 Am: 2002 2002
 D7/F#: 2003 2003
 G: 0003 0003

Let's continue embellishing this arrangement by adding secondary dominant chords to temporarily modulate to the key of A minor. On beat 3 of measure 2, harmonize the melody with an E7 (the V7 of the following Am7). On beat 3 of measure 3 you can do the same thing, but play a B (the 5th of the chord) in the bass to create a smoother bass line.

Example 9.16

Temporary modulation into the key of A minor

V/ii Resolves to **ii**
E7 Resolves to **Am7**

V/ii Resolves to **ii**
E7/B Resolves to **Am**

ii-V-I cadence to modulate back home to the key of G major

ii **V** **I**
Am **D7/F#** **G**

Chord diagrams for Example 9.16:
 G: 0003 0003
 G: 3003 3003
 Em: 0000 0000
 E7: 3101 4100
 Am7: 1001 1001
 E7/B: 0101 0202
 Am: 2002 2002
 D7/F#: 2003 2003
 G: 0003 0003

In measure 2 play the 3rd of the G major chord (B) in the bass so that the bass line can walk down from C to B to A. Also, add some energy to the arrangement by playing the bass line with a half note rhythm.

Example 11.3

Example 11.3 shows guitar TAB for two measures. Measure 1 is a C chord with notes G (3), B (1), and D (0). Measure 2 is a G/B chord with notes G (3), B (1), and D (0). The bass line in measure 2 is C (4), B (2), and A (2).

Reharmonize measure 2 with a Gm over Bb (the b3rd) in the bass. This chord is not diatonic to the key of C major, but it sounds good because:

- 1) The opening note of the phrase (G on the 3rd fret of the 1st string) is the root of both G major and G minor and
- 2) The phrase doesn't contain any notes that conflict with a G minor chord (G, Bb, and D).

Now the bass walks from C to Bb to A. To my ears this harmonization sounds really cool!

Example 11.4

Example 11.4 shows guitar TAB for two measures. Measure 1 is a C chord with notes G (3), B (1), and D (0). Measure 2 is a Gm/Bb chord with notes G (3), Bb (1), and D (0). The bass line in measure 2 is C (4), Bb (1), and A (1).

Here is one arrangement that utilizes arpeggiation under and between the melody notes. The full arpeggios which fit so easily under and between the steady quarter note melody of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* can't simply be played between each note of our new *Advanced Melody* which moves in eighth notes and with syncopation. Prioritize the melody (make sure that it is clearly discernible) and fit in the chord tones where you can.

Notice that in measure 1, I pushed the melody note on beat 3+ back by an eighth note to beat 4. This slight adjustment to the rhythm of the melody allows us to fit in an extra arpeggiated chord tone.

Example 11.5

Example 11.5 shows guitar TAB for two measures. Measure 1 is a C chord with notes G (3), B (1), and D (0). Measure 2 is a Gm/Bb chord with notes G (3), Bb (1), and D (0). The bass line in measure 2 is C (4), Bb (1), and A (1).