

5 Concept – Triads

A *triad* is a three-note chord whose notes are a third apart from each other. The bottom note is called the *root* (or 1). The root can be any tone of the major scale. When sung melodically, the triad is equivalent to a 5-note portion of a scale, starting on the root of the chord, with the 2nd and 4th notes of the scale-portion removed. The remaining notes are 3 and 5.

Harmonically, a triad can be *major*, *minor*, *diminished* or *augmented*, depending on the size of the intervals within the chord. (See Example 18.) These qualities are also referred to as *chord colors*.

In *root position*, where 1 is on the bottom of the chord:

- the *major triad* (Δ) contains a *major third* ($\Delta 3$) below, a *minor third* (-3) above and a *perfect fifth* (P.5) on the outside. ($C\Delta = C, E, G$)
- the *minor triad* ($-$) contains a *minor third* (-3) below, a *major third* ($\Delta 3$) above and a *perfect fifth* (P.5) on the outside. ($C- = C, E^b, G$)
- the *diminished triad* ($^\circ$) contains *two minor thirds* (-3) and a *diminished fifth* ($^\circ 5$) on the outside. ($C^\circ = C, E^b, G^b$)
- the *augmented triad* ($+$) contains *two major thirds* ($\Delta 3$) and an *augmented fifth* ($+5$) on the outside. ($C+ = C, E, G^\sharp$)

Sing the four root position triads starting on C (Example 18), using the number for the *chord function* of each note.

Example 18 – Root Position Triads on C

Example 18 illustrates the four root position triads on C, showing the chord structure and the corresponding scale-like sequence of notes with interval labels and fingering numbers.

Major Triad ($C\Delta$): Chord: C, E, G. Scale: C (1), E (3), G (3), C (5), E (1), G (5).

Minor Triad ($C-$): Chord: C, E^b, G. Scale: C (1), E^b (3), G (3), C (5), E (1), G (5).

Diminished Triad (C°): Chord: C, E^b, G^b. Scale: C (1), E^b (3), G^b (3), C (5), E (1), G (5).

Augmented Triad ($C+$): Chord: C, E, G[♯]. Scale: C (1), E (3), G[♯] (3), C (5), E (1), G (5).

Sing the B \flat Major Scale, using the number for the *scale function* of each note.

Example 19a – B \flat Major Scale

Sing the following root progression in B \flat Major (I-VI-IV-II-V-I), and its accompanying chords (B \flat Δ 7-G-7-E \flat Δ 7-C-7-F7-B \flat Δ 7), as indicated.

Example 19b – Root Progression in B \flat Major (I- VI- IV-II- V- I) with Seventh Chords

Singing in Pitch – Conscious Singing of 6 “Scrambled” Chord Patterns for Triads

The three notes of a triad can be *scrambled* into 6 different patterns.

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1-3-5 | 3-1-5 | 5-1-3 |
| 1-5-3 | 3-5-1 | 5-3-1 |

Consciously singing, naming and writing these patterns, as you are about to do, reinforces your aural and theoretical knowledge of a triad and the intervals it contains.

Sing the scrambled chord patterns for root position triads (Example 20a) as follows:

- *Clearly play and listen to the first chord on the piano.* Let the sound ring for about 10 seconds.

• *Sing the 6 melodic patterns corresponding to that particular chord.* Use the number for the *chord function* of each note. Remain aware of the size of the intervals as you sing them.

• *Play and listen to the chord one last time.* Continue with each chord in a similar manner.

Example 20a – “Scrambled” Chord-note Patterns in B^b Major using Root Position Triads

1 B^b Δ

Play and Listen: I Δ Sing: 1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1 Play and Listen

2 C-

Play and Listen: II-

Sing: 1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1 Play and Listen

3 D-

Play and Listen: III-

Sing: 1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1 Play and Listen

4 E^b Δ

In a similar manner: IV Δ Sing: 1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1

5 F Δ

V Δ 1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1

6 G-

VI-

1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1

7 A^o

VII^o 1 3 5 1 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 1 5 1 3 5 3 1

Now, sing the following melodic exercises utilizing the scrambled chord patterns (Example 20b), using the number for the *scale function* of each note as a syllable to sing on. This primary level of practice supports your progress to more advanced levels of sight-singing and melodic improvisation over a chord progression. When practicing with the recording, ignore the written tempo indications.

Example 20b – Melodic Exercises in B^b Major using Root Position Triad Progressions

1 Moderately B^bΔ E^bΔ C- FΔ

Sing: I V III IV I VI II VI IV V II VII

D- G- A° B^bΔ

III VII V VI III I IV II VII I

2 Brightly B^bΔ A° D- G-

V III I I II IV VII VII V III III I III VI

E^bΔ C- FΔ B^bΔ

I VI IV IV II IV VI V VII II II I III I

3 Slowly B^bΔ C- B^bΔ

III I V III IV II IV VI V III V

G- D- A° B^bΔ

I VI I VII V III V IV II VII II I III I

4 Fast B^bΔ E^bΔ FΔ B^bΔ E^bΔ B^bΔ FΔ B^bΔ

I III V I IV VI V II V III IV VI I V I III II V VII I

Example 20c – Composing Your Own “Scrambled” Root Position Triad Exercises

Now, compose additional melodic exercises based on the previous example as follows:

- *Start by creating a root progression of a few tones, ending in V- I.* (If necessary, refer to the root progressions at the beginning of this and other lessons in this book.)
- *Add the root position triads belonging to each root tone.* Play this chord progression slowly, listening to each chord.
- *Then, invent your own melody by scrambling the chord tones 1, 3 and 5.* Feel free to experiment. Do not restrict yourself with concerns about theoretical correctness; let your ear be your guide in creating the melodic line. You can critique your melody at a later time. The only requirement is to stick to the chord tones 1, 3 and 5.
- *Sing the melody notes with their scale numbers.* Remain conscious of the interval sizes as you sing.
- *Play the chord progression again; then, sing the melody one more time.* Continue alternating between listening to the chord progression and singing the melody, until you are confident you can recognize and name all the chords as well as sing back the melody without hesitation.
- *The goal is to establish an aural correspondence between the harmony and the melody.*

The image shows six blank musical staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Each staff is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines. The staves are arranged vertically, providing space for the student to write their own root progressions and melodies as instructed in the text above.



Tapping in Time – Rhythmic Independence; Building Speed Through Slow Practice

Your ability to hear multiple lines with ease can be strengthened through the practice of tapping with two or more limbs, followed by reversing the rhythm in each limb. Singing in combination with tapping, as you have done in Example 10 (Lesson 3) is also helpful.

There are two things to remain aware of when doing this rhythmic practice for independence:

- *Tapping multiple lines trains your mind to remain at the center of balance between the various parts, without identifying with any one of them in particular.* The usefulness of these practices will be especially evident to vocalists or melodic instrumentalists, who need to be able to focus on one or more lines in addition to their own while in the act of performing. Although they are not required to develop the skills of *physical independence* required by drummers and pianists, they need to have a skill of *mental independence*, in order to maintain a sense of balance with the rest of the ensemble. This practice develops this ability.
- *The principle of building speed through slow practice is important to grasp.* Slow practice over a period of weeks and months will establish a foundation for fast performance. During the slow practice of tapping with two or more limbs, allow your mind to become an impartial observer – a “witness” – of the music, instead of merely an active performer of it. Your mind can then focus equally on the way all the parts fit together to form a whole, as well as on how each individual part is to be played. Once trained at a slow tempo, you will be able to perform at faster tempi without sacrificing accuracy or nuance. Your ability to quickly recognize musical elements will also be enhanced.

Finally, your enjoyment of the music-making will increase, as a result of your sense of rhythmic self-assuredness which grows from this practice.

To summarize, the development of physical coordination of the left and right sides of your body through the practice of rhythm exercises in graduating tempi will enhance your mental ability to remain at the center of balance when listening to two or more independent parts.

Tap the rhythmic exercises in Example 21 using two hands as follows.

- Practice each part alone, slowly. When practicing with the recording, ignore the written tempo indications.
- Then, join the parts and increase the tempo in gradients.
- Pay particular attention to the steadiness of your tempi.
- Observe the tempo indications at the beginning and the tempo alterations indicated at points throughout the examples.
- Tape yourself and listen back; then, improve upon your first performance. Do this several times.
- When you master an exercise, switch hands and tap again. Notice the interesting difference! You can use your feet, too, in a similar manner.

Example 21 – Rhythmic Exercises using Quarter-note Triplets (intermediate)

1 Very Slow

The musical score consists of six systems, each with two staves. The exercises are as follows:

- System 1:** Top staff: Quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Bottom staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet.
- System 2:** Top staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Bottom staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet.
- System 3:** Top staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Bottom staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet.
- System 4:** Top staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Bottom staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet.
- System 5:** Top staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Bottom staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet.
- System 6:** Top staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Bottom staff: Quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet, quarter note, quarter note triplet. Includes 'accel.' and 'ritard' markings.

