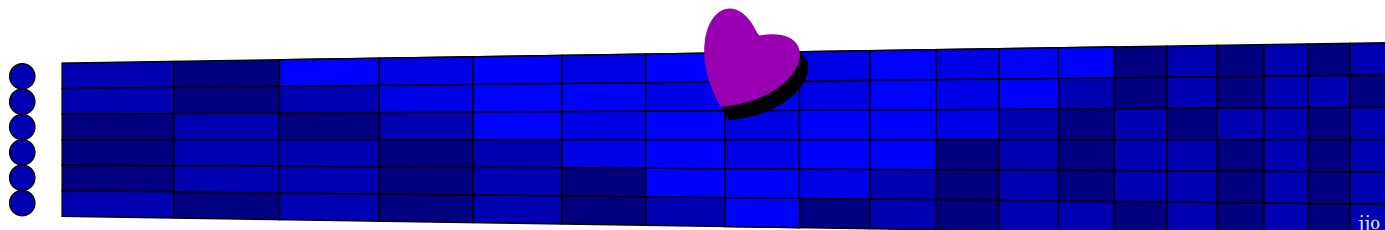


April Fretboard Exercises

Sightread Some Sad Sighs ...



“The job of [that note] is to make the [next note] feel sad.” Benjamin Zander, 2008

“You can't leave out a single note.” Mark Limber, 2020

Exercise 1: I 3

$\text{♩} = 72$

“Notes from the original chords reveal this hidden counter melody.” Jeff Olson, 2026

Exercise 1 Chopin(1839): Op.28, Prelude No.4 in E minor 1

Chopin died at age 39, and this piece was one of two he had requested be played at his funeral (Mozart's *Requiem* was the other). It is simple and brief (the score fits on one page) but poignant. On the piano, the right-hand melody is mainly just two notes, repeated at intervals, like the inhale and exhale from repeated sighs of regret. While the right hand is sighing, the left hand is setting the context of deeping sadness through a downward chord progression of gradual chromatic note changes. The piano score is freely available on IMSLP:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude,_Op._28,_No._4_\(Chopin\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude,_Op._28,_No._4_(Chopin))
- <https://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ImagefromIndex/974243/hfpb> (piano score)

Benjamin Zander, the British conductor, famously used this Chopin piece in his TED Talk on The Transformative Power of Classical Music where he proved to the audience that everyone can appreciate classical music. Watch the whole video to hear his heartfelt anecdotes and humorous observations (e.g. “one-buttock” playing). He's a master communicator.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LCwI5iErE> (Benjamin Zander, 2008)

Compared to Chopin's original, the melody of Exercise 1 (below in 4/4) combines Chopin's original right-hand melody with a counter melody derived from selected notes (in red) of his left-hand chords, capturing their beautiful downward progression. The actual Exercise is in 5/4 in order to sustain those sad sighs of the original right-hand melody a little longer.

The image shows a musical score with three staves. The top staff is labeled 'orig RH' and shows the original right-hand melody in E minor, 4/4 time, consisting of a series of descending eighth notes. The middle staff is labeled 'Exercise' and shows a new melody that combines the original right-hand melody with a counter melody derived from selected notes (in red) of the original left-hand chords. The bottom staff is labeled 'orig LH' and shows the original left-hand chords in E minor, 4/4 time, consisting of a series of descending chords. The exercise melody is in 4/4 time and is a combination of the original right-hand melody and the original left-hand chords.

The above comparison is done in A minor, like the Exercise. But Chopin's original was in E minor, so Zander's talk about “C making B feel sad” now applies to the F making E feel sad, which is true. And the progression of “B down to E” has become E down to A.

Mark Limber, after making numerous arrangements of this Chopin piece, observed in 2020 that “you can't leave out a single note”. See his newest arrangement, played with Sadie Zukowski, on the youtube of our recent BGS concert, where he combined it with Jobim's well-known derivative and connected it with more surprising melodies. Definitely not for a funeral!

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIe-oCrWarA&t=6171s> (Mark Limber, 2026)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_Insensitive (Antônio Carlos Jobim, 1963)

*P.S. It easiest to follow these links if you **get the pdf** as indicated on the first page.*