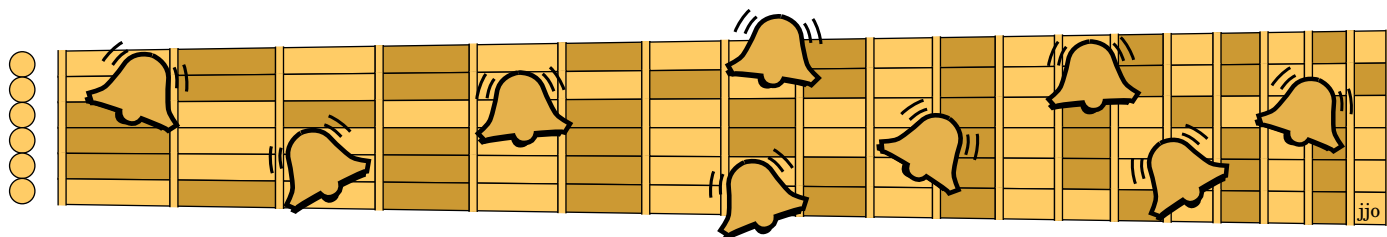


December Fretboard Exercises

Sightreads that will ring a bell!



Exercise 1: I 1 II 2 III 4 IV 2 V 4 VI 5 VII 2 VIII 5 IX 2 X 5 XI 5

♩ = 120

Exercise 2: I 1 II 4 III 4 IV 4 V 3 VI 5 VII 1 VIII 3 IX 1 X 4 XI 6 ③

♩ = 180

Exercise Index

Exercise 1 Leontovych(1914): Shchedryk (Carol of the Bells)	1
Exercise 2 Pierpont(1857): One Horse Open Sleigh (Jingle Bells)	1

Neither of these tunes was originally about Christmas but both have become classics of the season that you will recognize immediately.

Shchedryk, from the Ukrainian word for “bountiful”, has its origins, both musically and lyrically, in traditional Ukrainian well-wishing songs sung in springtime to proclaim a plentiful new year. The melody we recognize today was composed by Mykola Leontovich and has Ukrainian lyrics describing a little swallow that sings of the wealth to come.

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shchedryk_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shchedryk_(song))
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6RILKvR2u8> (Ukrainian choir 2024)

The association with Christmas bells didn't come until the Ukrainian-American composer, Peter Wilhousky, copyrighted the modern lyrics as “Carol of the Bells” in 1936, and the rest is history. The “high voices” rendition set by John Williams for “Home Alone” is classic, the TSO rock version is famous, but I prefer the gentler fingerstyle version by Kapuściński.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carol_of_the_Bells
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXGsblqxIOo> (high voices 1990)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHioIlbnS_A (Trans-Siberian Orchestra 1996)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbEjaOKC3rM> (fingerstyle guitar 2022)

Jingle Bells may not have been as innocent as we now presume. It was first performed in, and dedicated to, a blackface minstrel theatre in Boston a few years before the Civil War and just before the composer relocated to the South; and the verses describe the antics of young men in seeking unchaperoned contact with young women. Musically, the original chorus had a chord progression likened to Pachelbel's ostinato. Read the details and hear for yourself:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jingle_Bells
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udw4gqWRjM0&t=7s> (original lyrics & chorus)

Peter Breiner, known for making baroque arrangements of modern pieces, has versions of both these tunes in the youtubes below. But they're just an excuse for sharing my favorite: his seamless merging of Bach's *Air on a G String* with Irving Berlin's *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas*.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXzCWye-mOc> (White Christmas 1993)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebhbzjTqp48> (Carol of the Bells 1993)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-WEjUR4Q7k> (Jingle Bells 1991)

These exercises are from the yet to be released books “Diatonic Fretboard Exercises”, and “Chromatic Fretboard Exercises”, which together contain over two thousand such exercises and will be made available for free on IMSLP. The contents may be freely copied and modified, but with the condition that they be attributed to J. J. Olson (CC-BY license).

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