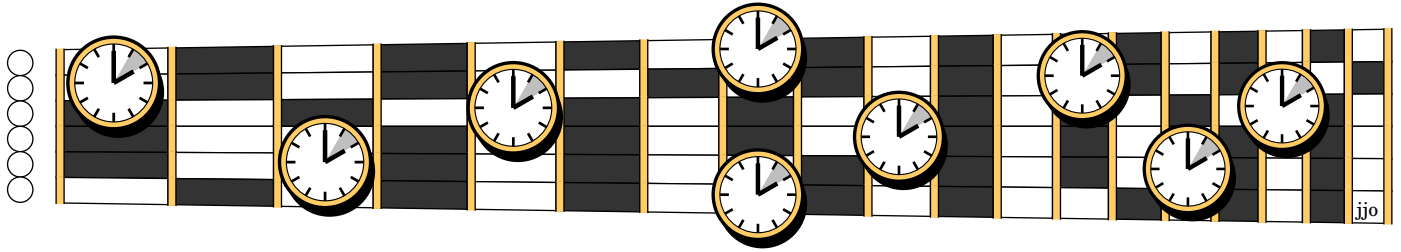


March Fretboard Exercises

Synchronizing Syncopated Sightreads



Syncopation: Sometimes you spring forward. Sometimes you don't.

Exercise 1: I 1 II 2 III 4 IV 3 V 3 VI 4 VII 1 VIII 4

$\text{♩} = 96$

Am G F E Am

G F E7 A

Dm G C F

C F C G7 C

Exercise 2: I 2 II 2 III 6 IV 7 V 3 VI 5 VII 3 VIII 7 ⑤

$\text{♩} = 108$

Exercise 3: I 2 II 2 III 6 IV 7 V 3 VI 5 VII 3 VIII 7 ⑤

$\text{♩} = 108$ ($\text{♩} = 72$)

Exercise 1	Vivaldi(1723): Violin Concerto in D minor, Op.8 No.9, RV 236	1
Exercise 2	Joplin(1905): Bethena	1
Exercise 3	Niljop(2025): Anetheb (var. of Bethena)	1

The Short and the Long of It

If that phrase sounds backwards, then welcome to syncopation! Call it off-beat, but it didn't just begin with ragtime; syncopation has been found all the way back to Medieval times, according to this Wikipedia article:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncopation#History>

Exercise 1 is a well-known example composed over 300 years ago by Vivaldi, in the same opus as his famous Four Seasons. Those concertos were numbers 1 through 4 out of 12 in the opus, and this syncopation example is from number 9. The whole opus was titled “The Contest Between Harmony and Invention”, and number 9 shows how Vivaldi could balance both (e.g. the chords in bold follow the circle of fifths). When reading this exercise, take it at a tempo where you'll be able to keep up with the sixteenths later.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Il_cimento_dell%27armonia_e_dell%27inventione
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPvTFsDFzeM&t=36s> (English Concert, 1994)

Exercise 2 is a tender piece by the King of Ragtime, Scott Joplin, who subtitled it a “concert waltz”. It was written in the months after his young wife died of pneumonia 10 weeks after their wedding. It didn't get critical acclaim until the Joplin revival of the 1970s. Be careful not to rush it; it's for the concert hall, not the dance hall. And don't miss Joplin's minor key variation later in one of the youtubes.

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethena>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTMNZvT3Drc&t=25s> (Fausto Bongelli, 2019)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTMNZvT3Drc&t=227s> (... minor key variation)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biK446OfcvM> (Joshua Rifkin, 1972, with score)

Exercise 3 has the same notes as Exercise 2 but with the short-long rhythms reversed, as a demo of how essential the original order is. Technically in 3/4 time it's still syncopated, but if you think in 6/8 it's all on the beat and sounds like children's skipping music (trochaic meter).

Counting, and all that ... You might want to read about various ways of counting such rhythms, particularly the syllable-based techniques like Takadimi, though they won't help while sightreading in real time, they're good when wood-shedding a difficult rhythm.

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_\(music\)#Takadimi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_(music)#Takadimi)

These exercises are from the yet to be released book “Chromatic Fretboard Exercises”, which contains over a 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).

Interested? Contact Jeff Olson at jjocanoe@gmail.com

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