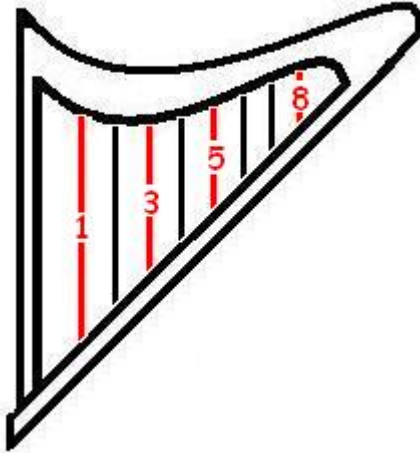


# Explanations and Exercises

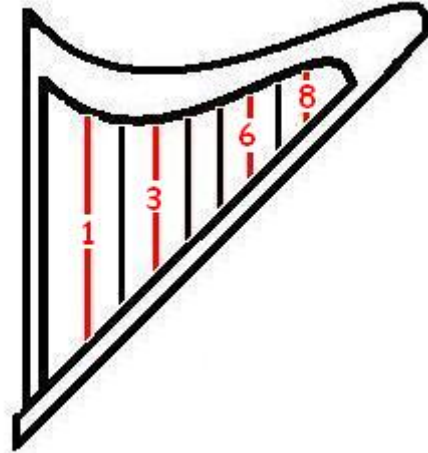
## TRIAD FORMS

The basic forms consist of a triad plus the upper octave, and its two inversions:

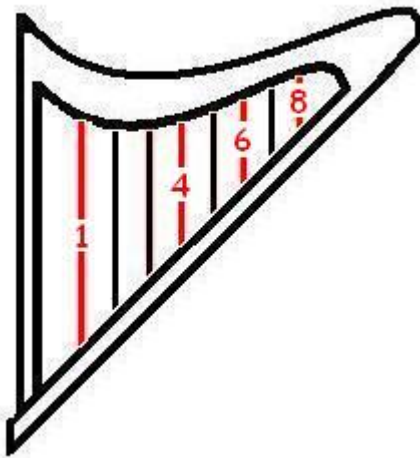
### Triad – Root Form



### Triad – 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion Form



### Triad – 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion Form

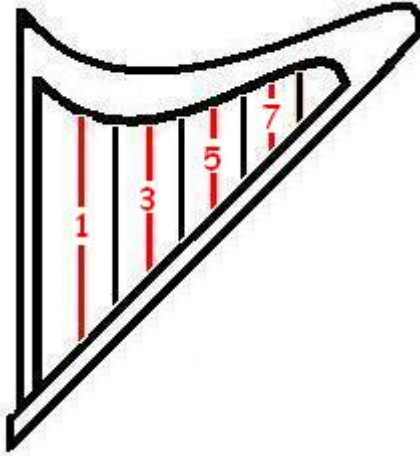


# Explanations and Exercises

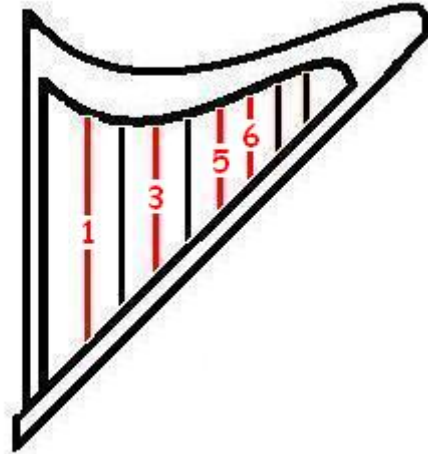
## TRIAD 7<sup>TH</sup> FORMS

The triad 7<sup>th</sup> forms consist of the triad with an added 7<sup>th</sup> and its three inversions:

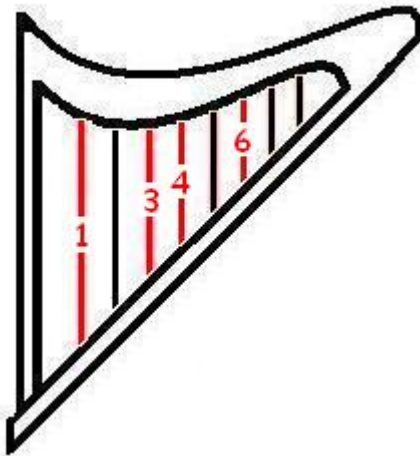
### Triad 7<sup>th</sup> – Root Form



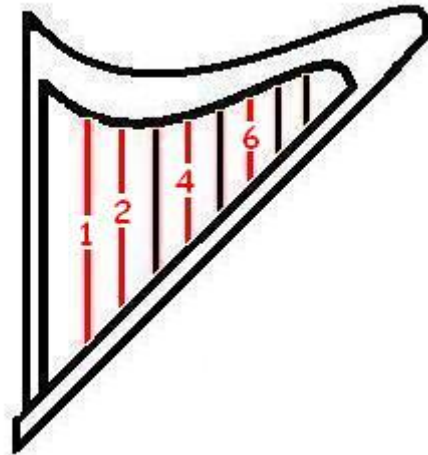
### Triad 7<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion Form



### Triad 7<sup>th</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion Form



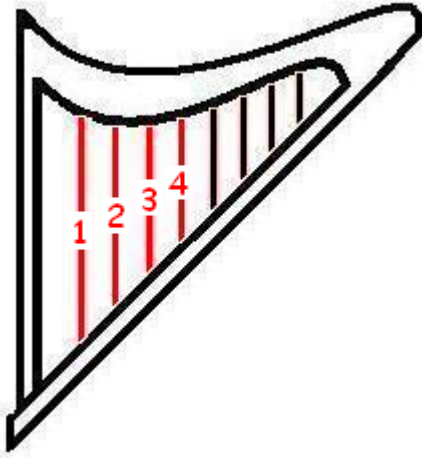
### Triad 7<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion Form



# Explanations and Exercises

## SCALE FORM

The scale form is based on the series of 4 adjacent strings:



## FORM EXERCISES

Select any 8-string range. The range of the right hand (i.e., C3–B3) should generally be higher than the left hand (i.e., C5–B5). The ring finger will be placed on the lowest string and the thumb on the highest. For example, the root triad will be positioned as follows: string #1 (ring finger), string #3 (middle finger), string #5 (index finger), string #8 (thumb). For the sake of establishing a consistent frame of reference, I suggest placing the ring finger on a colored string as a reference point.

The first exercises consist of 1) placing fingers, 2) squeezing, 3) relaxing, and 4) disengaging. Repeat this process, one hand at a time, making sure not to neglect the left hand, which for many people can be the most difficult of the two to manipulate. Your students should exert the same amount of force from each finger while maintaining a relaxed curvature. As beginners, they should be concerned with developing the proper playing position of the fingers, hands, and wrists, and also familiarizing themselves with the “feel” of the form, being especially sensitive to the distance between each finger. Practice this exercise with each of the 8 forms.

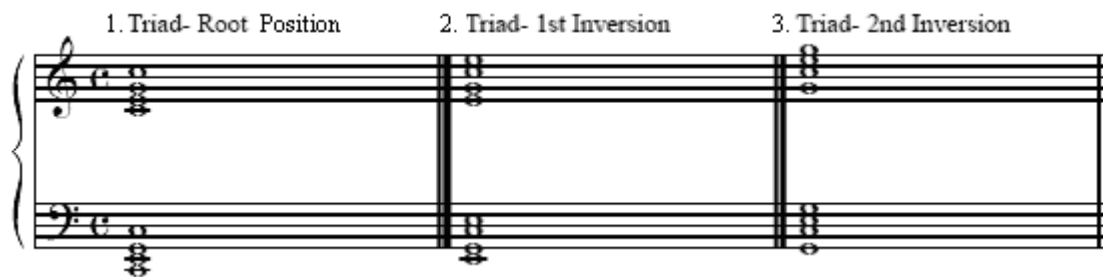
# Explanations and Exercises

## BUILDING CHORDS AND SCALES

Once your students have developed a strong “feel” for the 8 forms, they are ready to use them to build chords and scales. Now your students will position their forms in different locations in order to build specific chords and their respective inversions.

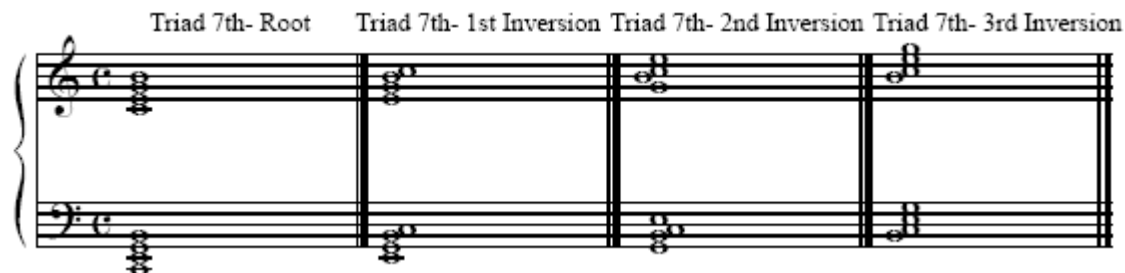
- **Play C major three different ways:**

1. **Root Position:** Place the ring finger on the first note (root) of the chord in triad root form.
2. **1<sup>st</sup> Inversion:** Place the ring finger on the third of the chord in triad 1<sup>st</sup> inversion form.
3. **2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion:** Place the ring finger on the fifth of the chord in triad 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion form.



- **Play Cmaj7 four different ways:**

1. **Root Position:** Place the ring finger on the root of the chord in triad 7<sup>th</sup> – root form.
2. **1<sup>st</sup> Inversion Position:** Place the ring finger on the third of the chord in triad 7<sup>th</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> inversion form.
3. **2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion Position:** Place the ring finger on the fifth of the chord in triad 7<sup>th</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion form.
4. **3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion Position:** Place the ring finger on the seventh of the chord in triad 7<sup>th</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> inversion form.



- **Play the first four notes of the C major scale:**

1. **Scale Position:** Place the ring finger on the root of the chord in scale form.

# Explanations and Exercises



## **BASIC EXERCISES**

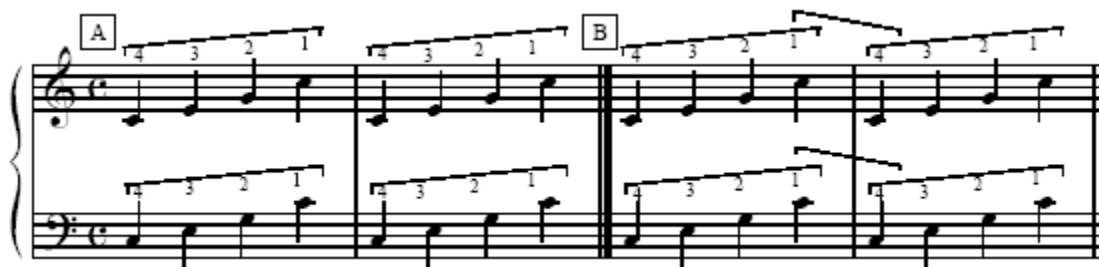
The basic exercises will help develop finger strength, independence, dexterity, and note precision.

1. **CHORDS.** Chord exercises consist of pulling full chords in two different ways: A) unbroken (non-rolled) and B) broken (rolled). While this exercise is only illustrated in root position, it should be practiced in all eight positions, with the right hand first, and then the left hand.



2. **ARPEGGIOS.** Arpeggio study will develop individual finger strength and dexterity. Again, these exercises should be practiced in all eight positions. Remember to play very slowly and maintain a relaxed hand.

  - **Ascending Arpeggio.** There are two modes of performance.
    - A) Place fingers, play one at a time until they are all released, then replace all four fingers simultaneously.
    - B) Place fingers, play one at a time, replace #4 while playing #1, and replace #3, #2, and #1 simultaneously while playing #4. This is also analogous to a guitarist's full and sequential plants.



- **Descending Arpeggio.** There are two modes of performance.
  - A) Place fingers, play one at a time until they are all released, then replace all four fingers simultaneously.
  - B) Place fingers, play one at a time, replace #1 while playing #4, and replace #2, #3, and #4 simultaneously while playing #1.

*From "Teaching the Mariachi Harp" by Sergio Alonso  
April 2007 MENC Mariachi Newsletter*

## Explanations and Exercises

A musical exercise titled "Round Arpeggio" in C major, 4/4 time. It consists of two parts, A and B, each with four measures. Part A starts with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef part has a sequence of four notes: C4, E4, G4, and A4. The bass clef part has a sequence of four notes: C3, E3, G3, and A3. Part B is identical to Part A but starts on a higher pitch level. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above or below the notes.

- **Round Arpeggio.** Place all fingers, play one at a time, replace #2, #3, and #4 simultaneously while playing #1, and replace #3, #2, and #1 simultaneously while playing #4.

A musical exercise in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two parts, each with four measures. The treble clef part has a sequence of four notes: G4, B4, D5, and E5. The bass clef part has a sequence of four notes: G3, B3, D4, and E4. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above or below the notes.

### 3. SCALES

Use the below exercises to practice scales:

A musical exercise labeled 'A' in C major, 4/4 time. It consists of two parts, each with four measures. The treble clef part has a sequence of four chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, and C4-E4-G4. The bass clef part has a sequence of four chords: C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3, and C3-E3-G3.

A musical exercise labeled 'B' in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two parts, each with four measures. The treble clef part has a sequence of four chords: G4-B4-D5, G4-B4-D5, G4-B4-D5, and G4-B4-D5. The bass clef part has a sequence of four chords: G3-B3-D4, G3-B3-D4, G3-B3-D4, and G3-B3-D4.

A musical exercise labeled 'C' in C major, 4/4 time. It consists of two parts, each with four measures. The treble clef part has a sequence of four chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, and C4-E4-G4. The bass clef part has a sequence of four chords: C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3, and C3-E3-G3.

# Explanations and Exercises

## NAVIGATING THE HARP

Once your students learn “how to drive,” they must learn how to “navigate through the city streets!” How do students learn to weave in and out of chords with the most efficiency, accuracy, and knowledge as to what chord they are playing? In order to do this, it is important that they learn what diatonic major, minor, and diminished chords can be produced on the harp. Make sure your student understands the following: I-ii-iii-IV-V-vi-viidiim-I.

A musical score for harp in C major, showing a sequence of diatonic chords: C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, Bdim, and C. The notation is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Each chord is represented by a vertical line with notes on the staff, and the chord name is written above the staff.

Advanced students with a sound foundation of diatonic harmony should also study with added 7<sup>th</sup>s (also I6): Imaj7-ii7-iii7-IVmaj7-V7-vi7-vii7(b5)-I6.

A musical score for harp in C major, showing a sequence of diatonic chords with 7ths: CM7, Dm7, Em7, FM7, G7, Am7, Bm7(b5), and C6. The notation is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Each chord is represented by a vertical line with notes on the staff, and the chord name is written above the staff.

When transitioning from one chord to the next, use various positions so that far-reaching shifts are kept to a minimum. Generally speaking, you want to “take the easiest route” and avoid shifting in only one position because the sometimes-wide intervals between chord placements may be impractical, inefficient, and with respect to voice leading, simply not good musical sense. Because there are so many options in selecting positions, your students should get accustomed to switching from chord to chord in different ways. Here are three suggestions for each of three common chord progressions.

### 1. I-V-I

A musical score for harp in C major, showing the I-V-I progression (C-G-C) with three different fingering options labeled A, B, and C. The notation is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Each option is represented by a vertical line with notes on the staff, and the option letter is written above the staff.

### 2. I-IV-V-I

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# Explanations and Exercises

A C F G C B C F G C C C F G C

### 3. I-vi-ii-V-I

A C Am Dm G C B C Am Dm G C C C Am Dm G C

Your advanced students should also modify these basic progressions to include the diatonic 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Again, three suggestions:

### 1. I-V7-I

A C G7 C B C G7 C C C G7 C

### 2. I-IV-V7-I

A C F G7 C B C F G7 C C C F G7 C



# Explanations and Exercises

## BASS AND CHORDAL ACOMPANIMENT

Perhaps the greatest difficulty for harp students is acquiring right arm–left arm independence. I suggest that you kill two birds with one stone by developing this skill while simultaneously studying common mariachi rhythms. Your students' prior knowledge of basic rhythms may make it much easier for them to "tap their heads while rubbing their bellies!"

Ranchera

Ranchera Valseada

Ranchera Polqueada

## Explanations and Exercises

Your advanced students may then be able to execute some more difficult rhythms:

**Bolero**

**Son**

**Huapango**

# Explanations and Exercises

## TECHNIQUES AND EFFECTS

Like few other instruments in the world, the harp has a huge variety of unique techniques and special effects that may be used to embellish your arrangements. Here are some of the most common in mariachi.

- **Glissando**. Slide between the two indicated notes to create a sweeping scale. The 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is used to ascend while the 1<sup>st</sup> is used to descend.



- **Tremolo**. Ascend the indicated arpeggio rapidly and repeatedly.



- **Arpeggio**. Use both hands in three different positions to ascend and descend.

