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Bluegrass Harmony Songbook

*Prepared by Jenny Lester
For NimbleFingers 2018*



Practical Music Theory for Folk Music

Musical Alphabet

(ALL SEMITONES) Chromatic Scale (1 fret move)

			SEMITONE				SEMITONE					
G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G
	A _b		B _b			D _b		E _b			G _b	

The MAJOR SCALE

WHOLE TONE = 2 semitones = 2 frets

The scale is where you find the melody & harmony notes.

→	TONE		TONE	SEMITONE	TONE		TONE		TONE	SEMITONE	
	1(key)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
C		D	E	F	G	A	B	C			
G		A	B	C	D	E	F#	G			
D		E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D			
A		B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A			
E		F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E			
B		C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	B			
F		G	A	B _b	C	D	E	F			
B _b		C	D	E _b	F	G	A	B _b			
E _b		F	G	A _b	B _b	C	D	E _b			
A _b		B _b	C	D _b	E _b	F	G	A _b			
D _b		E _b	F	G _b	A _b	B _b	C	D _b			
G _b		A _b	B _b	C _b	D _b	E _b	F	G _b			

Three Elements of Music
Tuning Timing & Tone

Chord Construction: Bluegrass Harmony Terms

High Baritone	1	D
Tenor	5	A
Lead	3	F#
Baritone	1	D
Low Tenor	5	A
Bass	1	D

High Baritone An octave above baritone

Tenor Nearest Harmony above lead

LEAD MELODY

Baritone Nearest Harmony below lead

Low Tenor An octave below tenor

Bass Independent structure, alternately doubling other parts while pursuing either a lead line or chord progression.

The Triads Chord Construction

1	→	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
D		E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D

(8=1)

Chord Construction

A simple major chord uses the root (1), third (3) & fifth (5) of the chord's scale.

<u>1</u>	2	<u>3</u>	4	<u>5</u>	6	7	8
C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C

But can also use other intervals and are named accordingly.

For Example: C= C E G

C7 = C E G + the flatted 7th = Bflat

Chord Progression

The sequence in measures.

To choose which chords are in the key take the major scale and make each note the root of a chord.

1=key	1,4,5 are Major	2,3 are major or minor	6 is minor	7 is diminished or b7
C=key	C, F, G	D or d _m , E or e _m	a _m	B ^o B ^b

Key is the sense of resolution.

Key is chosen by the lead singer so that the song's melody fits best into their range. Every singer has a best key for each different song. Some keys are easier than others for musicians.

Common chords are the **MAJOR** chords:

1 4 5
C F G
G C D
D G A
A D E

A **measure** is the number of beats in the rhythmic count.

4/4 =	♪♪♪♪	4 beats per measure / ♩ gets a beat
3/4 =	♪♪♪	3 beats per measure / ♩ gets a beat
6/8 =	♪♪♪♪♪♪	6 beats per measure / ♪ gets a beat

Examples of a chord progression and **CHORD CHARTS**...

4/4							
Part A						Time: 3/4	Key: D
G	♪♪♪♪	G	C	G			
C		G	¹ A	D	:		
			² A-D	G		V & C & Solos:	
Part B							
C	C	G	G			1	♪♪♪
D	D	G	G-G ₇			1	1
C	C	G	G			1	1
D	D	G	G			1	5
							4
							5
							4
							1

Rock of Ages

Gillian Welch

This version is based on using one chord, the Aminor, and letting the melody create tension against it.

SCALE NOTES: A B C D E F# G

Am

Round, round wanna go round, wanna see the rock of ages
When my body gives out, gonna read the final pages

Oh my mother is gone she told me I should meet her
Some day streets of gold gonna guide me on and greet her

Solo once over form

Once my father sat down and told me of the prophets
Mathew, Mark, Luke and John they're gone but not forgotten

Chorus (change final to gospel pages)

Moses heard a voice it called him up the mountain
40 days had set when Moses come a shouting

Chorus

Solo once over form X 2

Chorus (gospel pages)

Chorus (final pages)

The River, Mother Nature & Me

Composer: Jenny Lester 1994

C
 There's a place in the north where you still see the moons
 F C
 When the morning sun is high
 It's a place Mother Nature takes all her children
 F G C
 And none are more willing than I

Chorus:

F C
Sitting on rocks down by the river
 G
Feeling the powers that be
 F C Am
You can howl at the moon, wade the deep water
 F C
There's no place that I'd rather be
 F G C
Just the river, Mother Nature and me

Chord Progression

Time: 3/4 Key: C

Intro & Turnarounds

4 5 1 1

Verse:

1 1 1 1

4 4 1 1

1 1 1 1

4 5 1 1

Am

Chorus:

4 4 1 1

1 1 5 5

4 4 1 6m 6m

4 4 1 1

4 5 1 1

If you listen at nighttime you'll hear her heart beating
 It's a rhythm that lulls me to sleep
 If I awake in the city I'll dream of the river
 It's a feeling that I long to keep

Chorus

If your heart needs healing go down to the river
 And quietly sit on the shore
 You'll feel her run through you to mend and renew you
 You'll feel life like never before

Chorus

Arrangement

Intro

V1

Chorus

Turnaround

V2

Chorus

Turnaround

V3

Chorus

Repeat chorus acapella

The Next Time I'm in Town

Chet Atkins and Mark Knopfler

1
Now it's been something seeing you again

4

And in this time we've had to spend

1

You've been so good to be around

I thank you for that special thrill

4

Keep me going on until

5

1

The next time I'm in town

Though I won't be back here for a while

I hear your laughter, see you smile

and I'll remember what went down

And I can't tell you how or when but I'll be seeing you again

The next time I'm in town

Now the places and the faces range across the bridge of time and change

Once again I'm homeward bound

There's one thing I promise you

That's another rendezvous

The next time I'm in town

Chord Progression

Time: 4/4

Verse

1 1 1 1

4 4 1 1

1 1 1 1

4 5 1 1

Chorus

1 1 1 1

4 4 1 1

1 1 1 1

4 5 1 1

Number System: uses
the major scale to show
you which chords fall in
the key, and 1 is the key.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

A D E

D G A

G C D

C F G

Won't You Come and Sing For Me
- Hot Rize

5 4 1
I feel the shadows now up on me
4 1 5
And the angels beckon me
4 1
Before I go dear sisters and brother
5 4 1
Won't you come and sing for me

4 1
Sing those hymns we sang together
5 4 1
That plain little church with the benches all worn
4 1
How dear to my heart how precious the moment
5 4 1
We stood shaking hands and singing a song

My burden is heavy my ways has grown weary
I have travelled the road that is long
And it would warm this old heart my brothers
If you'd come and sing one song

In my home beyond that dark river
Your sweet faces no more I will see
Until we meet where there's no more sad parting
Wont you come and sing for me

1 1 1 1
1 1 5 5
1 1 1 1
1 5 1 1

Number System: uses the major scale to show which chords and notes fall in the key.
1 is the key.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C	d	e	F	G	a	b	C
G	a	b	C	D	e	f#	G
D	e	f#	G	A	b	c#	D
A	b	c#	D	E	f#	g#	A

Don't This Road Look Rough & Rocky

Composed by: Charles Justice
And Shoji Tabuchi

D G D
Darlin', I have come to tell you

A
Tho' it almost breaks my heart

D G D
But before the morning, darlin'

A D
We'll be many miles apart

G D
Don't that road look rough and rocky
A

Don't that sea look wide and deep

D G D
Don't my baby look the sweetest

A D
When he's in my arms asleep

Can't you hear the nightbird's cryin'
Far across the deep blue sea
While others you are thinking
Won't you sometimes think of me

One more kiss before I leave you
One more kiss before we part
You have caused me lots of trouble
Darlin', you have broke my heart

Chord Progression

Time: 4/4 Key: D

Intro Verse

Verse & Solos:

1 1 / 4 1 1

1 1 5 5

1 1 / 4 1 1

5 5 1 1

Chorus:

4 4 1 1

1 1 5 5

1 1 / 4 1 1

5 5 1 1

Form

Intro Verse Form

Verse 1

Chorus

Solo

Verse 3

Chorus

Solo

Verse 3

Chorus

tag out

My Little Georgia Rose

Composed By: Bill Monroe

1 4 1
 Now come and listen to my story
 5
 A story that I know is true
 1 4 1
 A little rose bloomed in Georgia
 5 1
 With hair of gold and a heart so true

4 1
Way down in the Blue Ridge Mountains

5
Way down where the tall pines grow

1 4
Lives my sweetheart of the mountain

1 5 1
She's my little Georgia Rose

Her mother left her with another
 A care free life she had planned
 The baby now is a lady
 The one her mother couldn't stand

We often sang old songs together
 I watched her do her little part
 She'd smile at me when I would tell her
 That she was my sweetheart

Chord Progression

Time: 4/4

Verse

1 1 / 4 1 1
 1 1 5 5
 1 1 / 4 1 1
 1 5 1 1

Chorus

4 4 1 1
 1 1 5 5
 1 1 4 4
 1 5 1 1

Number System: uses
 the major scale to show
 you which chords fall in
 the key, and 1 is the
 key.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

D G A

G C D

C F G

Once More

¹
Once more to be with you dear
⁵
Just for tonight, to hold you tight
¹ ⁴
Once more I'd give a fortune
¹ ⁵ ¹
If I could see you once more

¹ ⁵ ¹ ⁴
Forget (forget) the past (the past) this hurt can't last
¹ ⁵ ¹ ⁵
Oh I don't want it to keep us apart
¹ ⁴ ¹
Your love (your love) I'll crave (I'll crave)
⁵ ¹
I'll be your slave if you'll just give me
All of your heart

Number System: uses the major scale to show which chords and notes fall in the key. 1 is the key.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C	d	e	F	G	a	b	C
G	a	b	C	D	e	f#	G
D	e	f#	G	A	b	c#	D 12
A	b	c#	D	E	f#	g#	A

West Virginia – Hazel Dickens

West Virginia oh my home
West Virginia's were I belong
In the dead of the night in the still and the quiet
I slip away like a bird in flight
Back to those hills the place that I call home

It's been years now since I left there
And this city life's about got the best of me
I can't remember why I left so free
What I wanted to do, what I wanted to see
But I can sure remember were I'm from

Well I paid the price for the leavin'
And this life I have's not one I thought I'd find
Well let me live, love, let me cry
When I go just let me die
Among the friends who'll remember when I'm gone

Home, home, home
Oh I can see it so clear in my mind
Home Home home

I can almost smell the honeysuckle vine
In the dead of the night in the still and the quiet
I slip away like a bird in flight back to those hills
A place that I call home

4/4

Verse

1	1	4	4
1	1	5	5
1	1	4	4
1	5	1	1

Number System: uses the major scale to show which chords and notes fall in the key. 1 is the key.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C	d	e	F	G	a	b	C
G	a	b	C	D	e	f#	G
D	e	f#	G	A	b	c#	D
A	b	c#	D	E	f#	g#	A

Farther Along – JR Baxter

1 1₇ 4 1
 Tempted and tried, we're off' made to wonder
 2 5
 Why it should be thus all the day long
 1 4 1
 While there are others living about us
 1 6m 5 1
 Never molested, though in the wrong

Farther along we'll know all about it
Farther along we'll understand why
Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine
We'll understand it all by and by

When we see Jesus coming in glory
 When He comes from His home in the sky
 Then we shall meet Him in that bright mansion
 We'll understand it all by and all by and by

Farther along we'll know all about it
 Farther along we'll understand why
 Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine
 We'll understand it all by and by

1 1 4 1 1 1
 1 1 2 5 5 5
 1 1 4 1 1
 1 1 6m 5 1 1 1

Number System: uses the major scale to show which chords and notes fall in the key. 1 is the key.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C	d	e	F	G	a	b	C
G	a	b	C	D	e	f#	G
D	e	f#	G	A	b	c#	D
A	b	c#	D	E	f#	g#	A

Where The Soul of Man Never Dies

To Canaan's land, I'm on my way,
Where the soul of man never dies.
My darkest night will turn to day,
Where the soul of man never dies.

No sad farewells. (Dear friends there'll be no sad farewells.)
No tear dimmed eyes (There'll be no tear dimmed eyes.)
Where all is love, (Where all is peace and joy and love.)
And the soul never dies. (And the soul of man never dies.)

The rose is blooming there for me,
Where the soul of man never dies.
And I will spend eternity,
Where the soul of man never dies.

Chorus

The love light beams across the foam,
Where the soul of man never dies.
It shines and lights the way to home,
Where the soul of man never dies.

1 1 1 1
1 1 5 5
1 1 1 1
1 5 1 1

Number System: uses the major scale to show which chords and notes fall in the key. 1 is the key.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C	d	e	F	G	a	b	C
G	a	b	C	D	e	f#	G
D	e	f#	G	A	b	c#	D
A	b	c#	D	E	f#	g#	A

How Mountain Girls Can Love

4 **1**
Get down boys go back home
5 **1**
Back to the girl you love
4 **1**
Treat her right never wrong
5 **1**
How mountain girls can love

1
Riding the night in a high cold wind
 5 **1**
On the trail of the old lonesome pine
Thinking of you and feeling so blue
 5 **1**
Wondering why I left you behind

Chorus

Remember the night we strolled down the lane
Our hearts were gay and happy then
You whispered to me as I held you tight
We hoped that night would never end

Worried Man Blues

Stanley Brothers

1 / 1 / 1 / 1
4 / 4 / 4 / 1
1 / 1 / 1 / 1
5 / 5 / 1 / 1

It takes a worried man to sing a worried song
It takes a worried man to sing a worried song
It takes a worried man to sing a worried song
I'm worried now but I won't be worried long.

I went across the river and I laid down to sleep
I went across the river and I laid down to sleep
I went across the river and I laid down to sleep
When I woke up, there were shackles on my feet.

Twenty one links of chain around my leg
Twenty one links of chain around my leg
Twenty one links of chain around my leg
And on each link, the initials of my name.

I asked the judge what's gonna be my fine
I asked the judge what's gonna be my fine
I asked the judge what's gonna be my fine
Twenty one years on the Rocky Mountain Line.

If anyone should ask you who composed this song
If anyone should ask you who composed this song
If anyone should ask you who composed this song
Say it was me and I sing it all day long.

Steel Rails

1 / 1 / 2m / 2m
4 / 5 / 4 / 1

Steel rails, chasing sunshine round the bend
Winding through trees, like a ribbon in the wind
I don't mind, not knowing what lies down the track
Cause I'm looking out ahead, to keep my mind from
turning back

It's not the first time, I found myself alone at dawn
If I really had you once, then I'd have you, when I'm gone
Whistle blowing, blowing lonesome, in my mind
Calling me along, that never ending, metal line

Sun is shining, through the open box car door
Lying in, my mind, with the things I've known before
I've lost count of the hours, days, and times
Just the rhythm of the rails, keeps the motion in my mind

cause I'm looking out ahead... To keep my mind from
turning back

SITTIN' ALONE IN THE MOONLIGHT (Bill Monroe) 3/4

G F# G G7
Sittin' alone in the moonlight,
C D G
Thinking of the days gone by.
G F# G G7
Wondering about my darling,
C D G
I can still hear her say goodbye.

Chorus:

C D G
Oh the moon grows pale as I sit here,
C D G
Each little star seems to whisper and say.
C D G
Your sweetheart has found another,
C D G
And now she's far, far away.

Somebody Loves You Darlin

1 **5**
Somebody loves you darlin'
4 **5** **1**
Somebody loves you I know.
1 **5**
Somebody love you dearly
4 **5** **1**
Why did you let them go?

A E

There's going to be a wedding

D E A

It's going to be in the fall.

E

So boys and girls get ready,

D E A

I'm going to invite you all.

Chorus

I see a postman coming
 He's coming down the street.
 In his hand he's carrying a letter
 And he's headed straight for me.

So I broke the seal and read it.
 It said I love you you know.
 Oh why did you ever leave me,
 Why did you let me go?

Chorus

Chord Progression

Time: 3/4 Key: A

1	1	5	5
4	5	1	1
1	1	5	5
4	5	1	1
A	A	E	E
D	E	A	A
A	A	E	E
D	E	A	A