

CHORDAL ACCOMPANIMENT
ON THE APPALACHIAN DULCIMER:
IONIAN TUNING

by

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1. THE RULE

You're playing a song in an Ionian tuning and come to a point where a chord would be nice. What should you do? THE RULE is simple: The chord is determined by the note on the melody string, based on the following table

string											
bass	0	3	1	2	4	4	5	7	7	8	9
middle	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	5	6	7	7
melody	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Practice these chords over and over, up and down the fingerboard, until they become automatic.

Fingering: Do whatever is most comfortable. Most players use their index finger on the melody string, middle finger on the bass string, and ring or little finger on the middle string depending on the amount of the stretch. If you have small hands, you might try your thumb on the melody string, index finger on the bass string, and ring finger on the middle string.

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2. An Example

Let's apply the RULE to "Red River Valley":

0 3 5 5 5 5 4 5 4 3
From this *val*-ley they *say* you are go-*ing*,

0 3 5 3 5 7 6 5 4
We will *miss* your bright *eyes* and sweet *smile*,

7 6 5 5 4 3 4 5 7 6
For they *say* you are *tak*-ing the sun-*shine*,

1 0 2 3 4 5 4 3
That *bright*-ens our *path*-way a-*while*.

Where do the chords go? The underlined syllables dominate the song, so let's apply the RULE there:

4 4 2
3 3 0
5 5 3
From ths val-ley they say you are go-ing,

4 7 4
3 5 2
5 7 4
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile,

4 4 5
3 2 3
5 4 6
For they say you are tak-ing the sun-shine,

0 4 2
0 2 0
0 4 3
That bright-ens our path-way a-while.

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Play just the chords, strumming each one repeatedly until it changes.

3. Why THE RULE Works

To understand why THE RULE works, you have to know the names of the notes and be willing to take one or two things on faith.

Let's assume that we're in the key of D, so that our dulcimers are tuned D-A-A Ionian. The major D scale contains the notes

D E F# G A B C# D

and the fingerboard looks like this:

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

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Two important observations about music:

1. Most traditional folk music uses the same three chords: Music theorists call them the tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant chords. If you've ever played guitar, you've probably called them the I, IV, and V chords, named after the first, fourth, and fifth notes of the scale.

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Since this is the key of D major, these chords are D, G, and A. The notes composing these chords are:

chord	D	G	A	
notes	D-F#-A	G-B-D	A-C#-E	.

2. If you want to harmonize around a particular note, chose a chord containing that note.

Combining these two observations, we get the principle
 BUILD A I, IV, OR V CHORD AROUND THE NOTE YOU WANT TO
 HARMONIZE.

Let's consider an example from "Red River Valley."
 "Smile" is an E note (fret 4). Since E appears only in the A
 chord, use an A chord. What is the RULE for fret 4?

	4		A
The triple 2	contains the notes	C#,	an A chord!
	4		E

Question: What if a note appears in more than one chord? The note D appears in both the D and G chords, while the note A appears in both the A and D chords. Answer: You'll usually get the best results using a D chord with both a D note and an A note.

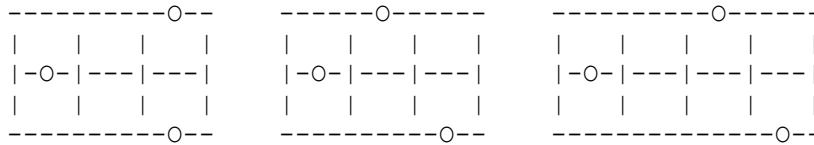
Now let's examine the RULE in detail:

	0D	3G	1E	2F#	4A	4A	5B	7D	7D	8E	9F#
	0A	0A	0A	0A	2C#	3D	3D	5F#	6G	7A	7A
	0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D
chord	*D	*	A	D	A	D	G	D	G	A	D
	*I	*	V	I	V	I	IV	I	IV	V	I

So THE RULE gives us a I, IV, or V chord built around the note on the melody string.

1. Further Explorations

1. One D chord is as good as another. If your playing calls for a D chord, you can just as well use the chord at fret 5 or 7 as the one at fret 3. Try it on "Red River Valley". Similarly, one G chord is good as another and one A chord is as good as another.
2. THE RULE uses three basic fingering patterns:



Lorraine Lee calls these patterns "sandwich", "triangle", and "stretched triangle", respectively. Lorraine has also pointed out that if you stick with a particular pattern something interesting happens as you move it up and down the fingerboard:

In the case of the "sandwich" chord, you always get a chord whose name is given by the note on the bass string.

In the case of the "triangle" chord, you always get a chord whose name is given by the note on the middle string.

In the case of the "stretched triangle" chord, you always get a chord whose name is given by the note on the melody string.

This is spelled out in detail on the next page.

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Sandwich

2F#	3G	4A	5B	6C	7D	8E	9F#	10G
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B
2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D

chord	F#m	G	A	Bm	C	D	Em	F#m	G
		(IV)	(V)			(I)			(IV)

Triangle

1E	2F#	3G	4A	5B	6C	7D	8E	9F#
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B
2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D

chord	A	Bm	C#dim	D	Em	F#dim	G	A	Bm
	(V)			(I)			(IV)	(V)	

Stretched Triangle

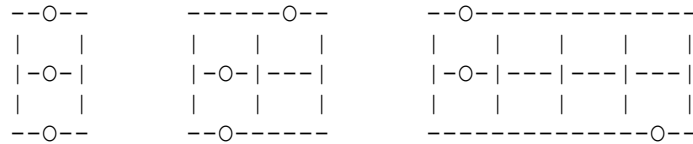
2F#	3G	4A	5B	6C	7D	8E	9F#
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A
3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D

chord	D	Em	F#m	G	Am	Bm	C#dim	D
	(I)			(IV)				(I)

As the triangle formed by your three fingers becomes more and more unbalanced, the string that names the chord formation moves closer to you. The symmetric "sandwich" gets its chords' names from the bass string; the slightly unbalanced "triangle" gets its chords' names from the middle string; the extremely unbalanced "stretched triangle" gets its chords' names from the note on the melody string.

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3. Some intervals worth knowing. The patterns



each contain only two notes. They can be used in place of either a major or a minor chord. The first interval gets its name from the note on the bass string, the second gets its name from the note on the middle string, the third gets its name from the note on the melody string. So these patterns, too, follow the rule that as the fingering becomes more unbalanced the string giving the pattern its name moves closer to you.

same fret

0D	1E	2F#	3G	1A	5B	6C	7D	8E	9F#	10G
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D
0A	1B	2C#	3D	1E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D

interval	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
	(I)			(IV)	(V)			(I)			(IV)

2nd pattern

1E	2F#	3G	4A	5B	6C	7D	8E	9F#	10G	11A
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D

interval	A	B	*	D	E	*	G	A	B	*	D
	(V)			(I)			(IV)	(V)			(I)

3rd pattern

0D	1E	2F#	3G	4A	5B	6C	7D
0A	1B	2C#	3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A
3D	4E	5F#	6G	7A	8B	9C#	10D

interval		D	E	F#	G	A	B	*	D
		(I)			(IV)	(V)			(I)