

Gerhard Beilharz

Accompanying
Songs with the Lyric

Translated by Simon Pepper

Preview

edition  zwischentöne

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Publications (selection): Musik in Paedagogik und Therapie (ed. 2004); Uebwege mit pentatonischen Chorifloeten (together with Christiane Kumpf, 2005); Playing the Children’s Lyre (together with Mechthild Laeier; English translation in preparation); Meeting the Lyre (2006). Music collections for lyre: beispiele 1 (1982), beispiele 2 (1986, reprint 2016) Compositions for lyre: Paths of Sound – Images of Listening (together with Chritian Giersch and Martin Tobiassen, 2006); Acht wirklich klingende Lyren (2014); From Germany with Love (2014)

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Preface

This booklet is intended for people who are familiar with the basics of lyre playing and would like to use the lyre as an accompanying instrument for singing, whether alone, or with others.

The mere accompaniment of a song's melody on the lyre can have a beneficial effect on singing together because the sound of the instrument strongly activates listening and gives the singing voices a supporting cover. – This is the starting point for most of the song arrangements presented here. The accompaniment usually plays the voice part and gives the melody a supporting characteristic quality. Such accompaniment is also suitable as a purely instrumental version.

The structure of the booklet allows one to work through it systematically. Depending on your current needs, as well as your own level of knowledge and experience, you can also enter at the relevant place. The sequence of exercises and song arrangements leads from the fifth to the third, and corresponds in this respect to the path taken in the author's book „Meeting the Lyre“. There are two reasons for this:

1. The understanding of the tones' relationships based on the fifth is fundamental for everything else: keys, triads, cadences.
2. In playing with chords and triads there is a danger of narrowing the sphere of listening – which is so important for all lyre playing – and of fixing and hardening the movement. For this reason, we first practice with exercises and examples based on the fifth and not determined by the song melody, in order to keep our hearing more open and the accompanying figures more open.

The song arrangements are given as examples with the hope of encouraging your own attempts. For the exercises the necessary basic vocabulary is given. This takes place quite pragmatically and without the claim of fully developing harmonic theory. If you would like to deepen this, you should consult an appropriate text book.

As already mentioned, this booklet does not explicitly deal with the wide field of independent or contrapuntal song accompaniments. If you are looking for examples of this, please refer to Christian Giersch's excellent folksong arrangements which are very stimulating in their variety.² Also in the material edited by Betrijs Gradenwitz and Petra Rosenberg a lot of further suggestions on our topic can be found.³

Gerhard Beilharz

1 Gerhard Beilharz: *Meeting the Lyre*. edition zwischentoene 2006. ISBN 978-3-937518-05-3.

Also available for download: www.edition-zwischentoene.de

2 Christian Giersch: *Folksongs on the Lyre*. edition zwischentoene 2015. ISBN 978-3-937518-25-1

3 Betrijs Gradenwitz: *Verspreide lieder en melodieën uit verschillende landen*; Petra Rosenberg: *Ratjetoe. Een werkboek for lierspelers*. Stichting Wega. www.wega-lier.nl

Preface to the English edition

After the German edition *Liedbegleitung mit der Leier* was published, I was asked by many lyre players from all over the world, who cannot read German, for an English edition. This now appears in printed and in digital form. My special thanks go to Simon Pepper for his invaluable help with translation!

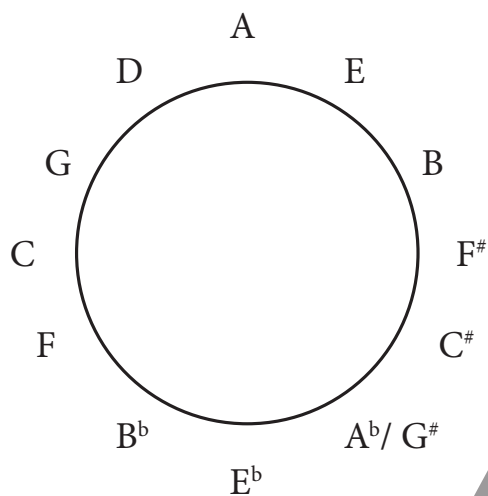
Gerhard Balharz, 2018

How to use this booklet

- All exercises and song settings are playable on large soprano-lyre or large alto-lyre (sometimes one octave lower).
- Find your own, suitable mix of exercises and songs.
- Do a lot of written exercises: Transcribe exercises or song settings, always inwardly listening, or transpose them into other keys.
- When playing chords, do not allow your posture and sound to become fixed. Always be led by the movement.
- If you do not understand a context or want to broaden your understanding, you can take a book about music theory for help or get advice from a musically experienced person.
- To study an instrument without a teacher has its limits. This booklet cannot, of course, replace the professional guidance by an experienced teacher.

Fifths

The twelve tones in a circle of fifths



The fifth is the primal relationship in our tonal system. In the tempered system the circle closes: a^b= g[#]

A daily journey through the circle of fifths

If we play the circle of fifths clockwise, we get ascending fifths.

In order to bring fingers, listening and inner movement of tones into flow, we follow a certain pattern.

1

Musical notation for exercise 1, showing a sequence of ascending fifths on a treble clef staff.

The notation shows only one of many possibilities. – Once you get more experienced, you can vary the position of tones in putting them an octave higher or lower and gradually become independent of the notation.

After which you can certainly succeed with this series of fifths:

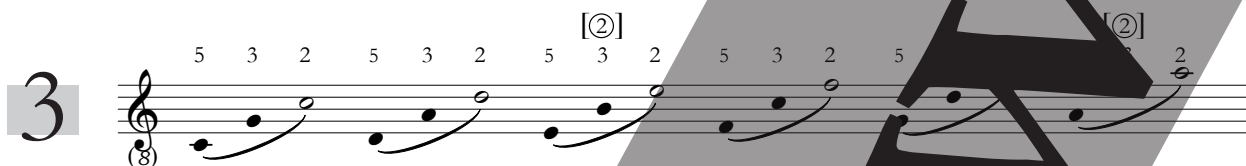
2

Musical notation for exercise 2, showing a sequence of fifths on a treble clef staff.

Chords with fifths and octaves

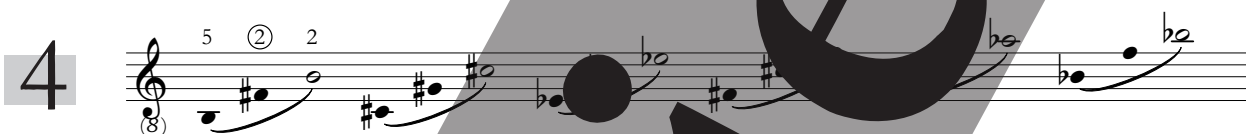
Corresponding to their character, these chords are also called *open chords*. They have no third above the basic tone; neither major nor minor. They are particularly suited to the accompaniment of pentatonic melodies.

First, a pattern for the right hand:

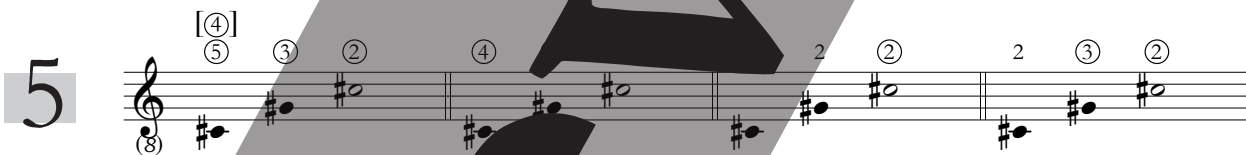


Take your time! The movement should breathe!

For the next tonal sequences we mostly need the left hand.



Chords with three „back strings“ do not have to be played exclusively by the left. Just as the left hand can play a “front string” e.g. e⁴ or a b⁴, so the right hand can also reach through and play one of the three back string notes. There are different possibilities for the fingering:



Go back once more to exercise No. 2 to practice this aspect of a good flow between both hands!

Playing in chords can arise out of the exercises.



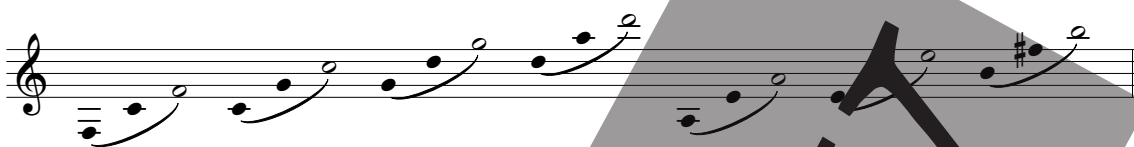
Pay attention to playing smoothly!

If in chordal playing the timing of the tones becomes too hard, arpeggiation (sounds quickly played one after the other) can help.



Now we follow the sequence of fifths from F to B (depending on the limited range of your lyre, you may change the position of tones (octave lower or higher) at any point in the sequence):

8



In the next pattern we follow the relationship of the third (D - F - A - C)

9



Thus we get an almost complete accompaniment for this beautiful folk song of the Hebrides:

10



Exercise Steps :

- 1) Just play or sing (without text) the melody.
- 2) Play only the accompaniment.
- 3) Play the accompaniment and sing the melody.

Another example. Exercise Steps as in No. 10.

11

Ref.: Speed, bon-nie boat like a bird on a wing, "On-ward!" the sai - lors
 Car - ry the lad that's born to be king, ov - er the sea to

cry. _____ Verse: Loud the winds howl, _____ the waves roar,
 Skye. _____ *Fine* Baf - fled, our foes _____ the shore,

1. _____ 2. _____
 thun - der - clouds rend the air. _____ dare. _____ *Da Capo al Fine*
 fol - low they will not _____

The very calmly moving accompaniment could be played with the right hand. However, try to bring in the left hand, according to one of the following patterns.

12

With this preparation, even more complicated accompaniments can be managed well:

13

As your experience in playing and listening grows, you will find your own patterns – or even completely different accompaniments!

One more remark about dampening strings: When playing *open* chords to pentatonic melodies, usually it is no problem to let every tone sound. In certain points, however, the resonance may be disturbing, e.g. at No. 11 when the accompanying voice has a change from c' to d' (*sailors cry*). Here and in similar situations, however, it suffices to dampen the deepest tone of the broken chord, which can easily be done with the left forefinger.

An intimate minor key melody can get a deeply touching, almost melancholic colour when the accompanying voice uses many thirds. With *open* chords, on the other hand, it becomes lighter and more open. As an example we take the well-known Russian song *Bajuschki Bajn*.

We need four basic chords:

14

With these four chords we get a beautiful accompaniment

15

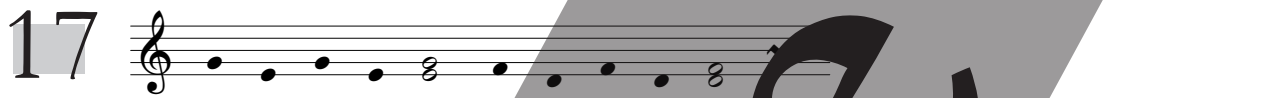
Thirds

Basic exercises



Always move first, then come to the chord.

With double movement, you can get an even softer sound.



Steps:

- 1) Play only with your right hand. Fingering: 2 - 3
- 2) Play every e' and b' with the left hand.
- 3) Skip the moving tones. Play pure chords only.

Now we go to G major, f[#] always played with the left hand. Steps as before.



Why do we not add a third underneath when the melody comes to the tonic g' (in G major)? Play and listen:



The first (a) should be accepted as a special colour; at (c), it disturbs the sense of key.

We play again, but omit the notes at the three marked points.

It is even more beautiful if we place a d' (fifth) under the melody tone a' and a lower b' (sixth) below the basic tone g'. – For a start, practice in a very slow tempo!

20

The structure of this accompaniment is based on a scale without the 4th, 6th and 7th degree.

Exercise in G major:

21

Horn fifths

If you play this special scale as a round (with a second player or yourself) you get

22

The resulting characteristic sequence of thirds, fourths, sixths and fifths is called *horn fifths*.

Many German folks songs form a second voice in a very simple scheme: to every melody tone the second voice adds a third (below). For the second scale degree (a' in G major) a fifth below is added and the tonic gets a sixth (below).

Scheme for G major:

23

An example for a variety of German folksongs:

24

Two more examples, one for Christmas, the other one for springtime: