



2018: SEMESTER 1 (Term 1)

COZMO – Learning Group Notes #7

COZMO Learning Group: Teaches or consolidates previously acquired basic reading and playing skills including transferring playing skills from another instrument e.g. piano, clarinet etc to mandolin or guitar, developing skills in playing ensemble-style, opportunities to utilise improvising or other solo playing skills within an ensemble setting. Through the Semester we will also be working towards presenting a short set at COZMO's Annual Winter Concert on Sunday 1 July 2018 (more on this in later Sessions).

SESSION 7 (8 April)

Guitars and Bass (Col)

Present: Col, Gianni, Lyn, Bob, Barbara, Gianni; Lindsay and Diana assisting.

Absent: No-one.

1. Golden Sceptre (by R Schlepegrell)

Today we played through to the end of the piece! The guitars now have the full part, which I received from CMSA during the Easter break. It was gratifying to find that the original missing page was not too different from my reconstruction! ☺ Whilst we still have some occasional lapses in timing, generally our playing of this piece is continuing to improve.

Gtrs: You now have the melody in section H and melodic phrases in section L, so...

Ms: ... in those sections you will need to change your dynamic to **p** (at least for the moment).

Mandolins, try tremoloing using the edge of the pick – this will help drop the volume.

In the original theatre score, those melodies were played by trombones, so other instruments could be as loud as they wanted! ☺

I'm still working on putting together a score, and once I've done this, I'll generate a midifile or an MP3 so that people can play along in their Home Practice (fun!).

M1: Col, M2: Diana, Gtr: Gianni and Barbara, Mdl: Lyn (on Gtr), Bass: Bob. Lea: M1 or M2 when visiting group.

2. La Paloma (by S. Salaverri)

We played this next and made it through to the end!

Gtrs and Bass: The 'rhythm section' is getting tighter. Sorry, I still didn't get to spend time this week working specifically with you, so I intend to do that next session.

M1s and M2s: You still need to sound more confident in bars 23, 39-40, 44, 48-52 and 56-59. To make sure of the timing, practise slowly with a metronome.

Big hint to everyone: A good strategy for getting used to phrases with demisemiquavers or shorter is to treat all the notes as though they are twice as long. So, treat semiquavers as quavers, demisemis as semis etc. This approach makes them seem more familiar and less challenging, and also allows us to get the actual rhythm into our heads. Once it's in and your fingers are coping, shorten each note so you end up with the correct note durations. I'll also spend time on this in our **next session on 29 April**.

Gtr 1: Col and Lindsay (on Mandolin), Gtr 2: Diana (on Mandolin) and Barbara (on Guitar), Gtr 3: Gianni, Gtr 4: Lyn, Bass: Bob. Lea: Gtr 1 (on mandolin) when visiting group.

LG(C) Guitars & Bass HOME PRACTICE

1. Continue to work slowly through all Sections of Golden Sceptre, to the end. Have you numbered every bar? If not, please do. Also mark in fingerings where necessary, and write in your counting. Did you all follow my two suggestions from the previous Notes?? ☺ This was to... **Circle any sections that give you problems and work on those separately and Use a metronome when practising!**
2. Continue to work on mastering La Paloma rhythms SLOWLY and get them as solid as possible. Take note of any points I've made above.
3. Continue to play through Carol of the Bells to keep it fresh – we'll get back to it soon.



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Mandolins (Lea)

Present: Lea, Frank and Michael.

Absent: No-one.

The Streets of Laredo

Frank, as a new student in Semester 2 of 2017, had used this piece to practise beat 1 playing in preparation for playing with the LG(C) group on stage in COZMO's Summer Concert in December.

We used this piece today as a vehicle for learning how to approach each new piece of music which included some music theory, and continuing our work on counting and coming to grips with different rhythmic patterns.

We covered a lot of ground actually ☺, but with two weeks of break coming up before we start Term 2 on Sunday 29 April, this gives you lots to be going on with and mastering ☺ before we meet again.

1. How to approach playing a brand-new piece and some music theory

Before we started playing *The Streets of Laredo*, we first briefly talked about how one should approach playing a brand-new piece – what we should look at first, before starting to play the notes. When playing a piece for the very first time, people tend to just go straight to the first note and start playing – this seems like the obvious thing to do, after all!

But before you do that, just so as you know what's coming and there are no surprises (☺ !!), you should take just a couple of minutes to check out the 'fine-print' – what the piece can tell you about how you should play it, apart from the tune as given by the notes themselves:

- Time signature: What sort of beat and pulse can you expect in the piece? This piece is in 3/4, meaning that you can expect a 'waltz' feel (1,2,3, 1,2,3, 1,2,3...) with the pulse on '1' (but this doesn't necessarily mean that the '1' gets played louder).
- Key signature: This tells you immediately where you can expect your fingers to fall. This piece is in the key of G major, as it has just 1 sharp, F#. So you know straight away that you'll need to land your 2nd finger on the 4th fret of the D string, not the 3rd fret.
- Any indication of tempo: How fast do you expect to play the piece? This piece states '**Andante**', which means moderately slow, 'walking speed' (Italian: a form of the verb *andare*, 'to go'); 'andante' is faster than 'adagio' but slower than 'allegretto'. Next to the word 'andante', there is also a crotchet note and '= 96'. This means that you can set your metronome to '96' for an exact tempo (click, click, click, click, click, click = 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3).
- Range of notes: Where do you expect your fingers to have to range over the fretboard – are there any really high notes to play? A quick scan of the music shows us that there are no notes at all on ledger lines below or above the stave; our lowest note will be a 'D' (open D string) and our highest will be an 'E' (open E string). This means also that our hand will stay in the same position on the neck for the whole piece – not need at all to shift our hand up the neck to play higher notes, and that we will be playing only on the first 5 frets – nice and easy!
- Any special instructions in the music: For example: any 'dynamic' (note volume) or tempo-change or 'articulation' (note quality) instructions?
 - Dynamic expressions: In this piece we see '**p**', '**mp**', '**mf**', '**f**' and '**pp**'. These tell you where to play your notes softly (**p** = piano), moderately softly (**mp** = mezzopiano), moderately loudly/strongly (**mf** = mezzoforte), loudly/strongly (**f** = forte) and very softly (**pp** = pianissimo). We also see the word '**cresc.**' (*crescendo*) which means that you should start to increase your volume to arrive at the volume next indicated. This can also be indicated by a 'hairpin' that finishes open-ended (*cresc.*) or that starts open-ended (**decresc.** or *decrescendo*, start to decrease your volume) – both appear in line 4 of this piece, telling you to adjust your volume to build up from a **p** in bar 24 to an **mf** in bar 27 and back down (probably to a **p**) in bar 30. Note that you suddenly go up to an **mf** on beat 3 of bar 31.
 - Tempo-change expressions: In bar 31 and bar 46, we see '**poco rit**', which means 'a little slow down', followed in bar 32 (from beat 1) and bar 47 (from beat 3) by '**a tempo**', which means to return to the original tempo. In bar 67 we see '**rit**', meaning 'slow down' together with a *decrescendo* hairpin.



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- **Articulations:** In bars 24-26, we see little horizontal lines above each note. Each line is an instruction, called a '**tenuto**', telling you how to play ('articulate') each note. 'Tenuto' means 'to hold' (Italian), i.e. you hold the note for its full value; it can also indicate a slight accent or nudge. In bar 27 we see the word '**simile**' which means that you play the remaining bars in this phrase like the preceding bars, i.e. continue the 'tenuto' articulation. Also, over bars 6, 23 and 69, we see a '**fermata**' (half circle and dot symbol), which means that the note's value should be extended somewhat – some say by half of its value again, some say by twice its written value etc. In a group, you follow the conductor or leader! Finally, we see 2 **phrase marks** – little 'ticks' just before the pick-up note in bars 47 and 55 (explained on Gtr 2, Gtr 3, Gtr 4 and Bass parts).
- **Arrangement/form:** For example, are there **repeats**? No, there are no 'repeat' markings in this piece – we simply play from bar 1 to the end (bar 69). What is its **form** or shape? At first look, we might spot how this piece is constructed, but it's more likely that we'll hear this once we've started to play it: you'll begin to notice that the same 8-bar phrase is repeated 8 times, with just a few notes tweaked to vary each phrase a little, with an 8-bar 'bridge' in the middle (bars 24-31). So once you've mastered this 8-bar phrase, you've mastered the whole 69-bar piece.

2. Counting and rhythmic patterns

- I gave us a 1-bar count-in: "1 & 2 & 3 &", to get us started. The purpose of a count-in is:
 - to set the tempo (how slow or fast we'll all be playing the piece) for all the players, and
 - to get all players to start playing at exactly the same time (©), and
 - if "&" is included in the count-in – to get the players settled into expecting where the half-beats will be, as well as the on-beats.

Players should write the count-in above bar 1, to know what to expect every time you play the piece.

- We played the first 16 bars through together, sight unseen – a good effort! This gave us a chance to see in broad-brush what the piece sounds like. Then we started to look more closely at the rhythmic patterns contained in this piece – there are four:
 1. **Minim + crotchet:** Bars 6, 14, 39, 55, 63 and 68 (i.e. at the end of each phrase): **1 & 2 & 3 &**
 2. **Crotchet + crotchet + crotchet:** Bars 3-5, 12-13, 20-21, all of the bridge at bars 24-31, 37-38, 45-46, 53-54, 61, 65-67: **1 & 2 & 3 &**
 3. **Dotted crotchet + quaver + crotchet:** Bars 2, 7-9, 11, 15-17, 19 etc: **1 & 2 & 3 &**
 4. **Quaver + quaver + crotchet + crotchet:** Bars 10, 18, 35, 43, 51 and 59: **1 & 2 & 3 &**
- We spent the rest of the Session practising the 2 most difficult ones: rhythms 3 and 4, and practising the dynamics in the bridge phrase (bars 24-31):
 - We 'cycled' bar 9 (i.e. we repeated bar 9 a number of times without stopping), then cycled bar 10, then cycled bars 9 and 10 together (i.e. we played bar 9 then bar 10 then bar 9 then bar 10 etc), to get the feel and the sound of each rhythm and then the two rhythms together.
 - Left-hand fingers technique: We concentrated on not shifting the left hand at all and to have each finger at the ready at all times, i.e. either actually playing the note or poised just a few millimetres above the fret so as to be ready to play that note again. Your aim here is not to let any finger be retracted away from the fret it will be playing in 1 or 2 notes' time – especially ensuring that the 3rd finger does not retract from the 5th fret, but stays poised just above it.

LG(B) Mandolin HOME PRACTICE

1. **The Streets of Laredo:** Practise the first 4 lines only, and really get on top of the 4 main rhythmic patterns, by 'cycling' pairs of bars as we did in the Session. If you can also work in the dynamics, even better.
2. Make sure you number all bars, write in the counting for each bar and circle each beat that you play on.

Michael and Frank: This piece is on the COZMO website, on the webpage "Members and Participants Only", under "Trad (American)". To print, double-click on the link, then when the music opens (5 parts), download it first, check that you have "Fit" selected (not "100%"), then print out pages 1-4 (don't print out the 5th page – it's the Bass part, in bass clef). Work just on Gtr 1 for now – but once Gtr 1 is mastered, we'll pick other parts (they're all much easier!!) and each take a different part so we can start hearing the harmonies.



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3. **A Riddle:** As for previous Home Practice –
Frank, first practise this piece playing the ‘Pupil’ line with all your notes (G, D, A, E) played on open strings. Then practise it playing all those notes on the 7th fret of the lower string (the one closer to your nose!). You may wish to try playing the upper notes of the first 4 bars of the ‘Teacher’ line as well.
Michael, practise playing the tune at just the upper notes of the ‘Teacher’ line, then the lower notes.
Frank and Michael: For the ‘Teacher’ line, if you want to work out how to play both notes together (‘double stops’), please do, and check back with me on 29 April. You may find you need to hunt for a note of a certain pitch on a different string, because you’ll find you can’t play 2 different notes simultaneously when they’re on the same string (which you’ll know from your guitar playing, Michael). Example: Bar 1, the 4th double-stop B + D: both notes are on the A string, so will you play the B or the D elsewhere, and where? Tell us on 29 April what you each worked out!
4. **G scale:** Please keep practising a 2-octave G scale (G major, i.e. 1 sharp: F#) – this starts on the open G string and finishes on the ‘G’ on the 3rd fret of the E string (15 notes). Once you have mastered playing the scale in ascending order, start to practise playing it in ascending then descending order, playing the high ‘G’ twice at the turnaround.

OTHER STUFF

1. END OF TERM 1 (HALFWAY THROUGH SEMESTER 1)

We’ve now come to the end of the ACT Schools Term 1 – halfway through our Semester. **We won’t have a Session on Sunday 15 April or Sunday 21 April. We meet again on Sunday 29 April** (i.e. the Sunday just prior to the start of the ACT Schools Term 2). Happy holidays and happy practising, everyone!

2. MEMBERSHIP OF FAME 2018

FAME is the umbrella organisation for all mandolin ensembles in Australia and New Zealand: ‘Federation of Australasian Mandolin Ensembles Inc’. Each year COZMO pays a \$10 fee to FAME on behalf of each current Learning Group and COZMO player; it is included in your COZMO/LG fee. This fee has now been paid for the FAME membership year to 31 March 2019 and you should start receiving FAME’s quarterly mag *Plucked Strings* by email. If you don’t receive the next issue in June/July, please let Lea or Col know. They’ll advise COZMO’s new FAME Rep Trevor Smallwood in COZMO, and he’ll contact the Editor to sort this out.

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