

Pick Stroke Theory Part II and The Kiowa Special by Mickey Abraham

Once again I'd like to thank all those who have emailed me with positive feedback, questions, and lesson ideas. I take the time to read and respond to every email I receive so please don't hesitate to drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net.

This lesson is a direct follow up to last month's lesson "Pick Stroke Theory Part I." In this part we will look at how to treat hammer-ons, pulloffs, slides, and a couple basic triplets. Let's quickly recap our Pick Stroke Theory – on beats one, two, three, and four we play all down-strokes and on all the "up beats" or "and" beats we will be striking with an upstroke. This way, no matter what the rhythmic pattern we are always moving our hand at the same tempo.

Take a look at the first example. This measure would be played using **All** downstrokes. You see, the hammer-on is "taking the place" of the actual "up" pick stroke. Next, you should treat a pull-off the same way. The pulling off of the finger will be "taking the place" of an actual pick stroke and will result in two strokes in a row of the same direction. This is all keeping true of our original pick stroke theory of down on down beats and up on up beats (see example 2).

Example three incorporates sliding. You should treat slides the same as hammer-ons and pulloffs. Although there are two notes in this measure that fall on up beats, this measure would also consist of four downstrokes! The slides end up taking the place of what would normally be upstrokes.

Example 4 is revisiting a G-run, but this time we are taking extra special care to make sure that we are, in fact, keeping our pick direction correct. The run begins on an UP beat with an UP stroke followed immediately by a slide and another up stroke. Then, we encounter a down stroke followed immediately by a pull-off and another down stroke. The slide has taken the place of the first "downstroke" in the measure and the pull-off has taken the place of the second up beat of the measure.

The next example is a bluegrass G lick that has a little bit of everything. Try to apply the pick stroke theory properly to this phrase. Look out for the slides, hammer-ons, and pulloffs (see example 5).

Finally, I'd like to look at a couple common fiddle tune style triplets. The first triplet example (example 6) consists of two hammer-ons in a row. This would be played with two downstrokes. The triple is being sounded with one pick stroke – that's three notes for one stroke!

The next triplet example is sounded by a hammer-on with a down stroke followed by an up stroke on the next skinnier string (see example 7).

I hope all this pick stroke theory is beginning to make some sense to you. I'd like to put out there that are many ways to pick the guitar and this is just one way that has worked well for me. There are many variations of alternate picking that are also very cool and useful like Irish triplets or sweep picking. These lessons are just a place to begin to develop proper technique and good habits. Use my ideas as stepping stones to invent your own useful picking techniques.

I have also included a killer new tune for you to work on. The "Kiowa Special" is one I picked up from dulcimer whiz Aaron O' Rourke and it's one we recorded on our instrumental Trio CD. Let me know what you think of this tune and remember to apply proper pick stroke theory to everything you play.

Examples

Example 1: Hammer-on

Example 2: Pull-off

Example 1: Hammer-on. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 0, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2. An 'H' is placed above the first two frets (0 and 2) to indicate a hammer-on from the open string to the second fret.

Example 2: Pull-off. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 2, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. A 'P' is placed above the first two frets (2 and 0) to indicate a pull-off from the second fret to the open string.

Example 3: Sliding

Example 4: G-Run

Example 3: Sliding. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 2, 4, 0, 4, 2, 2. An 'S' is placed above the first two frets (2 and 4) to indicate a slide from the second to the fourth fret.

Example 4: G-Run. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 1, 2, 0, 2, 0, 0. An 'S' is placed above the first two frets (1 and 2) to indicate a slide from the first to the second fret.

Example 5: Bluegrass G-lick

Example 5: Bluegrass G-lick. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 4, 0, 3, 0, 0. An 'H' is placed above the first two frets (2 and 3) to indicate a hammer-on from the second to the third fret. A 'P' is placed above the first two frets (1 and 2) to indicate a pull-off from the first to the second fret.

Example 6: Triplet 1

Example 6: Triplet 1. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 0, 2, 4, 0. An 'H' is placed above the first two frets (0 and 2) to indicate a hammer-on from the open string to the second fret.

Example 7: Triplet 2

Example 7: Triplet 2. The notation shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). The second staff is a guitar TAB with fret numbers 0, 2, 0, 1. An 'H' is placed above the first two frets (0 and 2) to indicate a hammer-on from the open string to the second fret.

Kiowa Special

Musical notation for the first staff, measures 1-4. Chords: C, F, C, Am, G.

TAB notation for the first staff, measures 1-4.

Musical notation for the second staff, measures 5-8. Chords: C, F, C, Am, G, C.

TAB notation for the second staff, measures 5-8. Chord: P.

Musical notation for the third staff, measures 9-12. Chords: F, C, Am, G.

TAB notation for the third staff, measures 9-12.

Musical notation for the fourth staff, measures 13-16. Chords: C, F, C, Am, G, C.

TAB notation for the fourth staff, measures 13-16. Chord: P.

Musical notation for the fifth staff, measures 17-20. Chords: Am, Em.

TAB notation for the fifth staff, measures 17-20.

Kiowa Special (con't)

21 Am Em Am

2 2 0 2 0 | 2 4 2 0 2 0 1 3 | 0 0 1 0 3 1 0 | 2 2 2 2

25 Em

2 0 2 0 2 0 2 | 4 2 0 4 2 0 1 3 | 0 0 1 3 3 0 | 1 1 3 1 0 0 1

29 Am Em Am

2 2 0 2 1 0 1 | 2 0 2 2 0 1 3 | 0 0 1 0 3 1 0 | 2 0