



December 2007

**Jazz**

## Visualization: Mapping the Fretboard with the Use of Three Major Scale Patterns

### Conquering and Knowing Your Way Around the Neck

by Lynn Wiles

I'm truly honored and excited about being asked to continue with my series of articles on visualization. I love the challenge of meeting deadlines before the holidays!

In last month's article, "Mastering the Guitar Fingerboard Through Visualization", I introduced the process of visualizing the fingerboard, toward taking the appropriate steps of having the confidence and knowledge of locating and identifying every note on the neck. My goal was to help the reader see in their *mind's eye*, as well as hear in their *mind's ear*, each note as related to other notes on the fingerboard.

As a prerequisite to this month's article, it is advisable to look up and review the November article [Back Issues] so as to have an understanding of the visualization approach. "The Approach: Getting Ready" section in the November article is exceptionally important to review.

This month we will look at three major scale fingerings, and by learning and applying these scales through visualization, we will have a complete map of the fingerboard. Through constant practice of visualizing these scales through the cycle of keys, our knowledge of the layout of the fingerboard will aid in sight-reading [Jan. '08] and, learning new pieces [Feb. '08], with a better understanding of all that we attempt to play on the guitar.

## Learning the 6/1 Major Scale Fingering in the Key of C.

- I call this scale 6/1 because the root of the scale is played from the 6th string starting with the 1st finger.
- At this point it's important to understand the definition of a **half-step** and **whole-step** as it pertains to the guitar.
  - A half-step is the distance of movement from one fret to the next fret higher or lower in pitch, *e.g.*, *Moving a finger from the third fret to either the*

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second fret or to the fourth fret. Also, moving from any open string to the first fret.

- A whole-step is the distance of movement of two frets higher or lower in pitch. *e.g. moving from the third fret to either the first fret or to the fifth fret.*
- The formula for a major scale is: whole-step / whole-step / half-step / whole-step / whole-step / whole-step / half-step.

## The C Major 6/1 Scale Notation w/ Fingering Cues.



Please note:

- The number **above** the note indicates the proper *left-hand* finger to be used.
- The number **below the staff** indicates the string. A succession of dots (...) indicates that you will stay on that string until a new string number is indicated.
- The *Roman numeral* indicates the **position** on the fingerboard. "Position" refers to the fret at which your 1st finger will be stationed.

## Playing Visually

(Do not hold the guitar yet!)

- Setting the guitar down, and using the visualization technique demonstrated in my previous article [Nov. '07], visualize in your mind's eye, your 1st finger being placed and pressing on the 6th string, 8th fret.

This is the note that would sound:



- Remember, visualize yourself using correct hand position, correct posture, visualizing the pick if using one, right-hand fingers, and if ready, visualize the written notation for the C note.
- As you visualize yourself playing the note, arbitrarily hear a note in your head (mind's ear) as a reference point when moving to the next whole-step (D). You want to *hear* yourself ascending the major scale as you are visualizing the scale. If you have perfect or relative pitch, try hearing a C note in your mind's ear.
- Next, visualize yourself placing your 2nd finger one whole-step higher behind the 10th fret. This will produce the D note:



- Moving one whole-step higher, visualize placing your 4th finger behind the 12th fret. This is the E note:



- **Remember not to rush through this process!**

Depending on your comfort and skill level, you can visualize while memorizing as many of the notes in the scale as you would like. I usually visualize one string at a time before the next step of:

## Playing

(Yes. Pick up the guitar!)

As guitarists, when we pick up our ax, we tend to jump right into noodling or playing our latest and most comfort *hot lick*. Refrain from this and stick to the process!

- Now go ahead and pick up the guitar and very slowly and deliberately actually play the first note of the 6/1 C major scale [6th string/1st finger/8th fret].
- As you are playing, visualize the written notation, and listen to the actual pitch of the note.
- Slowly play the next note D while using correct posture, visualizing the notation, and listening to the pitch and relating it to the previous note C.
- Next, visualize and play the third note 4th finger E using the same process as above.
- Slowly, replay this sequence several times while using correct posture, visualizing the notation, and listening to the pitch. And remember, absolutely no noodling while you are programming your noodle (i.e., brain)!

### **That's right! Set the guitar down again.**

- Visualize playing the next ascending note (F) on the 5th string, 1st finger, 8th fret.
- Visualize the next note (G) 2nd finger, 10th fret, followed by the (A) 4th finger, 12th fret.
- As a visual review, practice playing in your head several times, the finger, string, fret, notation, and the sound of these three notes.

### **Playing Again!**

- Slowly play the notes that you have visualized, using correct posture, visualizing the notation, and listening to the pitch and relating it to the previous note (E).
- Repeat playing these three notes.

### **Visualize Again!** (Cementing the information into your brain).

- Visually play the scale from C through A.

### **Play It Again!** (Confirming and training your fingers).

- Slowly play the scale from C through A several times.

### **Got It?**

By now, I hope you are comfortable using the visualization process. Your goal is to complete the 6/1 C Major Scale finishing on the 2nd string, 4th finger, 13th fret, by using the visualization, memorization, and playing process, by following the notated scale shown above. Be sure to visualize the scale ascending and descending.

### **Rest and acknowledge yourself for this accomplishment!**

- Pat yourself on the back! This style of learning takes a great amount of discipline, but has long lasting effect.

## Your Next Goal

The next adventure is to apply the same Visualization approach to two more major scale fingerings: The 6/2 fingering, root on the 6th string, starting with the 2nd finger on the root, playing in the VII Position, and the 6/4 fingering, root on the 6th string, starting with the 4th finger, playing in the V Position.

### The Major Scale Fingerings 6/2 and 6/4

As you already know the approach, I will not be providing a step-by-step discussion on the visualization approach for these fingerings. Simply apply the approach to the scale and finger notations shown.

#### Fingering 6/2, Key of C



#### Fingering 6/4, Key of C



#### Cycle of Keys (Fourths)

To have a complete understanding of the fingerboard, it's important to visualize each of these fingerings through the cycle of fourths. The cycle indicates every key of music. Remember that the root of the scale is on the 6th string, so if you want to play the 6/2 fingering in the key of Ab, you would be playing in Position III, with your 2nd finger starting on the Ab 4th fret, 6th string. Here is the cycle of keys:

C - F - Bb - Eb - Ab - Db - Gb/F# - B - E - A - D - G - C

A great exercise is to visually play through the cycle of keys using each fingering pattern; e.g., visualize playing pattern 6/1 through each key, then pattern 6/2 through each key, etc.

Here's a terrific idea. If you're lying awake at night tossing and turning, don't reach for the sleeping pills. Visualize your scale patterns! You'll be asleep in a matter of minutes. *This is not to say the visualization approach is boring; no, not at all!*

I hope this article has been helpful, and that you can apply this visualization technique to all that you do while improving your playing. Remember. Visualization works, but you must be methodical, consistent, and disciplined in applying the approach. Next month I will present an article on visualization and sight-reading. If you want to bone up on your reading skills, I suggest the "Mel Bay Deluxe Guitar Position Studies" book by Roger Filiberto. For February, I'll be addressing the topic of memorizing a piece of music through visualization.

I hope you're considering adjusting your practice habits as resolutions for the New Year. **Start visualizing them now!**

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at [lwiles@twcny.rr.com](mailto:lwiles@twcny.rr.com). I would like to give a special *thank you* to family and friends who have been helpful and supportive with this project.

Until next time, Happy Holidays and have a Happy New Year!

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### About the Author

**Lynn Wiles** has been performing and teaching guitar for over 35 years, drawing from many styles and performing situations. He is a graduate of the Musicians Institute, Hollywood, CA and is a registered Suzuki Guitar instructor. Throughout his career Lynn has studied with many well-known musicians in his field. He is the founder of a not-for-profit music school, and has taught at The Interlochen Guitar Institute on the campus of the Interlochen Center for the Arts, as well as other seminars and workshops throughout the country.

Lynn has two CD recordings to his credit, *Autumn Fire* (2002), a jazz guitar and piano duo, and *Hasty Pudding* (2006) which includes various styles from blues vocals to jazz. He also written and released the *Wiles Home Guitar Course* on VHS (out of print). Lynn has an active performance schedule and is dedicated to teaching in his own music studio in Ithaca, NY.

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