

Solo Dobro Part 2 – Ivan Rosenberg
Class 1: February 5, 2025

Notes and Homework

Hi all – today we learned some new exercises for training your picking hand

- Some bar moves with arpeggios to use with “A Peaceful Return.” Practice these every day – this is my default warm-up exercise/tune. **See Handout 1** for a sample of the kinds of moves that happen in the A section of this tune.
- Exercises involving double stops and arpeggios for minor chords built off the B string root, and how to mix and match them with other kinds of picking patterns. **See Handout 2**
- A non-damped basic fingerpicking pattern that effectively gives you an “alternating thumb” bass line for use in folk/songwriter music. This style is very similar to Travis picking, but it’s not supposed to have “bounce” or half-muted bass notes, so play this more relaxed and folky. See tab for one example of a chord progression you can practice, which involves mostly major chords and requires a different string group for the Em chord. **See Handout 3**
- Picking-hand damping techniques for the thumb notes while Travis picking to give the rhythm some “bounce” and precision, and to give you different tones and sustain for the bass notes vs the melody notes. Damping is very important to this style, so put some time into this. I’ve seen lots of dobro players try to get this effect by lifting the bar to mute notes but it generally doesn’t work. On Dobro it’s almost always an effect you want to achieve with the side your picking hand barely making contact with the strings. **See class recording for explanation**
- A Travis picking practice routine with many variations for training your fingers to play simultaneously with thumb bass notes and in between bass notes, as well as a classic country blues reverse roll pattern we’ll use in Deep River Blues. Spend some time with each. These are presented in the Tab in the order you should learn them. The goal is not to “memorize” each exercise, but instead to train your hand through repetition to do these moves without thinking and drill all the variations into your muscle memory and your musical memory. It takes time for these picking moves to be internalized and then improvised naturally, but once you internalize them, you’ll know them forever and won’t really need to practice them again. **See Handout 4**
- Basic pick blocking, which we’ll use in Desperado. Remember not to practice pick blocking obsessively or exclusively, and to mix up pick blocking practice with other picking practice that does NOT involve pick blocking, e.g. bluegrass rolls or those four-string partial-bar arpeggios where you let all of the notes ring. Pick blocking is something you want to do *sometimes* but not always—for solo dobro arrangements we *usually* want more than one note ringing at a given time, and sometimes we may even want to pick block one string and let others ring around it.

Remember while practicing that this isn't a race – take it slowly and make sure not to practice faster than sounds good, and not faster than the songs we'll be learning.

You'll find mp3s of “Desperado” and “Hello in There” on the super-secret webpage, or you can always find them on my Bandcamp page: <https://ivanrosenberg1.bandcamp.com/>

A Peaceful Return

Listen to both of these versions of “A Peaceful Return” by Jerry Douglas on YouTube obsessively for some amount of time. I have this link to the studio album Plant Early set to begin right at “A Peaceful Return”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Axdommm6nqc&t=752s>

And here's a more recent version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRHZxlp4kPc>

The original MCA Masters Series studio version is with a band, the other solo. He never plays it the same way twice. I heard Jerry play this in person solo at Humboldt State University for the Masters of the Steel String Guitar tour in 1992 or so, and I went out and bought my first Dobro the very next morning when the local guitar shop opened up – lots of great ideas for solo Dobro in this tune! We'll learn the tune in the week 4 class, so you'll have plenty of time to master the A section in its typical form before then. I'm going to show a more playable-by-us-mortals version of the other sections of this tune (more like the studio version), but I may try to show you a crazy lick or two just for fun...

Travis picking

For some Travis picking inspiration, check out this great live version of Doc Watson doing “Deep River Blues”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VAbnrjdtYw>

There's another great version around 11:30 of this set of music by Doc: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjyySIR17uM>

It's worth seeing that entire video—such great music. There will never be another Doc Watson.... We'll learn something approximating these versions to the extent that we can in G tuning using the bar, and I'll see if I can steal a few licks from these live versions between now and when I teach it to you. By the way, I'd probably never have played acoustic music at all if I hadn't found my Dad's Doc Watson records. This was one of the first songs I tried to learn on guitar.

That's it for now – feel free to email me during the week if you hit any roadblocks, and I'll see what I can do to help. Happy slidin!

Ivan