

Use of the thumb in the fretting hand

I want to highlight the use of the thumb in the fretting hand, denoted by the letter T throughout. Several of the études use this technique to extend the range of a specific chord or to allow the performer to sustain a lower note than would otherwise be possible. Practise the following exercises.

- 1 The chord below is commonly used on the guitar and the addition of the thumb is essential:

D

- 2 Here is an example taken from *Aqueduct* where the use of the thumb in the fretting hand allows more freedom to sustain the chord whilst developing the melody:

- 3 Try the below examples from *Awakening*. The use of the thumb helps to extend the range of the arpeggios and chords and adds more harmonic tension.

F7^{#11}/B chord
(^{#11} in the bass)

E⁶
(^{#11} in the bass)

D^{#aug}
(^{#11} in the bass)

Étude 5: Watercolours

My early piano transcription of Debussy's *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum* is a piece I still use to keep my right-hand technique in shape (see ex. 18, page 31). Its main technical challenge is to pick quickly across different strings whilst playing very sensitively with the right hand. This piece makes good use of that right-hand technique but also uses the 'hammer on/pull off' technique in the fretting hand to create a sound where the notes bleed into one another (see ex. 3, page 22). Like *Aqueduct*, use a very light touch in the right hand so that the plectrum is as close to inaudible as possible.

Freely ♩ = 160
Let all notes ring

The musical score for *Étude 5: Watercolours* is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a guitar staff (treble clef, one sharp) and a fretless bass staff (bass clef, one sharp). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and fingerings. The fretless bass part includes a 'H' marking for a hammer-on/pull-off technique. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and the systems are numbered 1, 3, 6, and 10.

Rolled techniques

Classical guitarists will be very familiar with rolled techniques, another great way of expressing chords. I have given some simple examples of fingerings over four, five and six strings. The execution of rolled chords is like the difference between strumming a chord and plucking a chord.

- 11 Four basic ways of playing a simple four-note chord.

- 13 A five-note rolled chord. The plectrum (or thumb) moves across two strings before you use the other fingers. Practise slowly to find the most efficient hand position.

- 12 A four-note rolled chord (without plectrum).

- 14 A six-note rolled chord. Find an efficient picking hand position to execute this technique consistently.

- 15 This example is from *Confluence*. I like using patterns like this to practise the rolled technique, where the chords are over different string sets.

Hybrid picking patterns

- 16 I use this picking pattern frequently for the études and it is the basis for many other hybrid patterns.