

9

Developing Minor Triads

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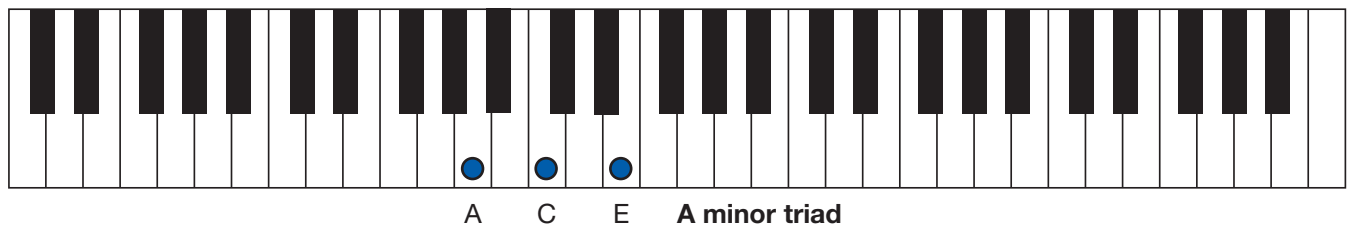
We have discussed that the keyboard player often plays using both hands at the same time. Sometimes the left and right hand need to play different things. For example, the left hand might play a triad to establish the sound of the chord, whilst the right hand plays the scale to create a melody or to improvise a tune.

Let's start this lesson with our first exercise in which we are going to play left hand triads starting with our A minor triad. We have learned how to form this triad in our previous two lessons and we will simply play the triad down the Octave in the bass clef.

Lesson Objectives

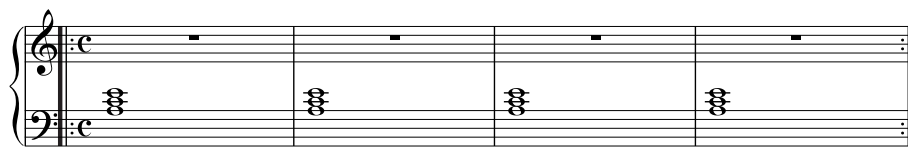
- Develop playing minor triads with the left hand.
- Develop two hand co-ordination using left hand triads and right hand scale.
- Introduce minor triad inversions.
- Develop changing chords.
- Develop transferability.

Figure 1: A minor triad in the bass clef with the left hand



Exercise 1

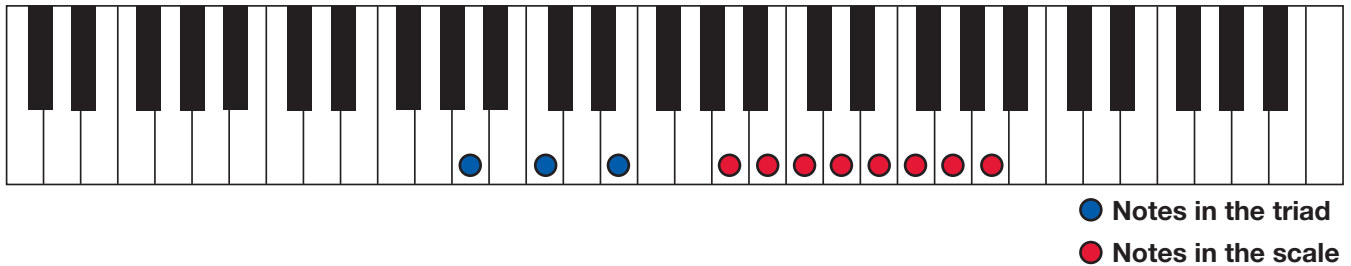
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Two way coordination

As described in our introduction let's now play the A minor scale with our right hand whilst playing the A minor triad in our left hand. This will help develop coordination between our hands and increase our familiarity with A minor.

Figure 2: A minor triad in the bass and A minor scale in the treble clef.



Exercise 2

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Take Note!

You are using a lot of skills learned through the course now. You are applying fingering technique, reading, rhythm recognition as well as timing and counting skills. On top of which you are learning your minor triads and scales, together with the major triads and scales we learned earlier on in *Part One*.

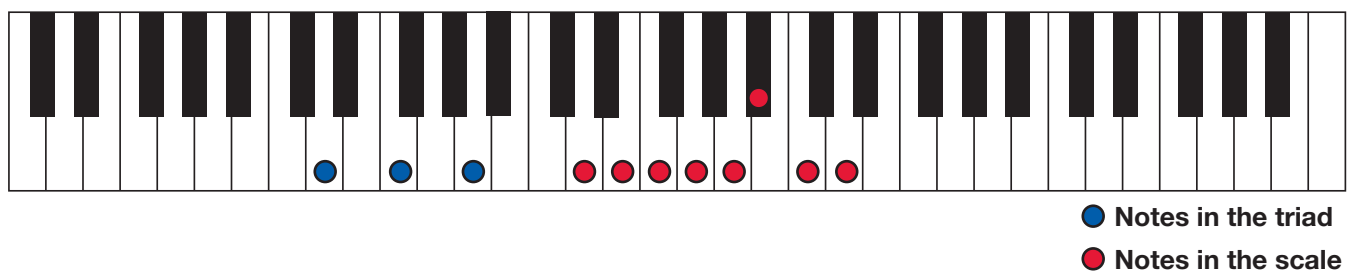
Applying transferability – and additional difficulty

As we have done all the way through the course so far, and as we intend to continue to do, we are going to transfer the concept we have developed to other scales and triads. We are now going to repeat the above process, this time with D minor.

This time though we are adding another challenge as we are going to use eighth notes in the scale rhythm and you are going to play doubles in the right hand to help develop that skill.

Look at the figure below along with the exercise and remember that you can use the multimedia files as always.

Figure 3: D minor triad in the bass and D minor scale in the treble clef.



Exercise 3

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Note that in this exercise the flat symbol (*b*) is only used on the first note of the pair of notes.

In standard music notation the flat symbol continues to all notes of the same pitch **in the bar** unless cancelled by another sign.

Practising minor triads and minor scales

You need to be able to apply this skill to all the natural minor scales and triads you know, so we have written out 5 exercises for you to practise the remaining notes.

We have merely written the music out, so that you need to:

- Identify the minor scale and triad.
- Form the triad correctly with the left hand.
- Play the correct scale with the correct fingering over the minor triad chord.
- Keep in time, play with increasing fluency and repeat until comfortable.
- Learn the notes in each triad and scale.

Exercise 4: G minor Scale and Triad

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Exercise 5: C minor Scale and Triad

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Exercise 6: E minor Scale and Triad

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Exercise 7: B minor Scale and Triad

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Exercise 8: F minor Scale and Triad

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Minor Inversions

So far you have learned to play minor triads in root position. This means that the root note of the chord is in position at the base, or bottom of the chord. This can result in a lot of work for the left hand when playing different chords in a chord progression.

You will recall that we looked at minimising movement by using inversions in the first half of this part of the course when we looked at major triads. We are going to do the same again for our newly learned minor triads.

I would like to illustrate again how inversions work using A minor and D minor.

We know that the notes in an A minor triad are:

A, C and E.

The notes in a D minor triad are:

D, F and **A**.

The concept with inversions is recognising which are the common notes in different triads and then use those notes so as to change as few notes as possible when changing chords. Therefore, if we take A minor and D minor, we can see that the common note is A.

In *Figure 4* we can see where your fingers would have to be to play both the chords in Root position.

In *Figure 5* this shows that by retaining the common note of A with our thumb, we simply have to move finger 2 up from C to D and finger 4 up from E to F.

This creates an inversion of D minor with A at the base of the chord.

Figure 4: Changing from A minor to D minor in root positions.

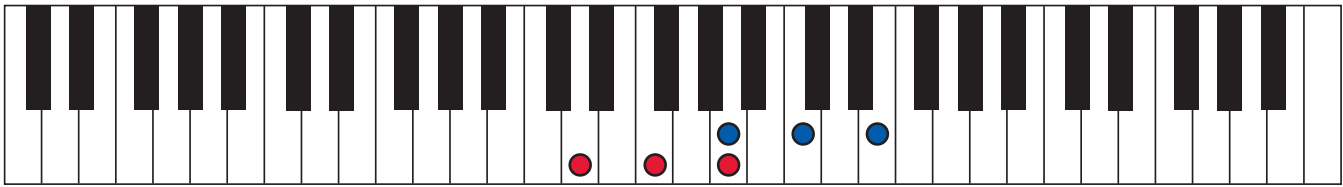
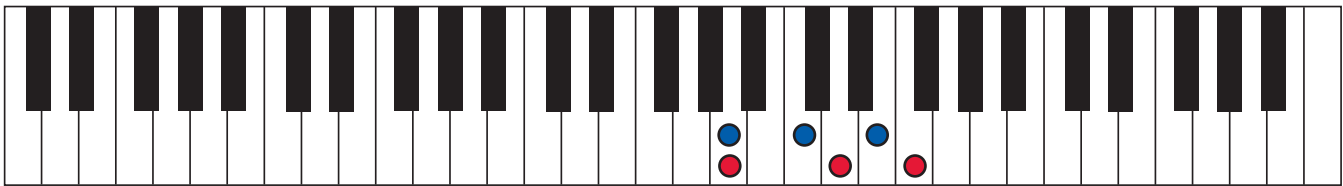


Figure 5: Changing from A minor to D minor creating an inversion of D minor.



- The notes in Blue form the A minor triad
- The notes in Red form the D minor triad

Economy of movement

We made this point earlier in the course but try playing the A minor to D minor as shown above and you will notice how much easier it is to play. The economy of movement has a very positive effect on the overall sound of the chord change which is now much smoother. By using this inversion the hand stays in the same place, as opposed to making quite a leap down the keyboard.

Discover for yourself. Play the following exercise which gets you to play the chords in their root positions for the first two bars but then uses the inversion for the next change.

Feel free to use the multimedia files as always to help you understand the note positions and movement issues.

Exercise 9

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The image shows a musical score for Exercise 9. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is common time (C). The key signature has one sharp (F#), indicating C major. The score is divided into four measures, numbered 1 through 4 above the treble staff. In each measure, the treble staff contains a triad of notes, and the bass staff contains a whole rest. Measure 1: C major triad (C4, E4, G4). Measure 2: E major triad (E4, G4, B4). Measure 3: G major triad (G4, B4, D5). Measure 4: A major triad (A4, C5, E5).

Learn the notes in your Chords!

It is often possible to use Inversions throughout a chord progression to create a smooth, economical sound. A good keyboard player is always aware of this possibility and looks to achieve it when changing chords. This is one reason why it is important to know all the names of all the notes in each chord — it makes it easier to change from one chord to another using inversions. In an **ensemble** (Band) the bass guitar will often be playing the root note of the chord, underneath everyone else at the bottom. This will enable you to use inversions without being unduly concerned about playing the root note.

A Chord Progression

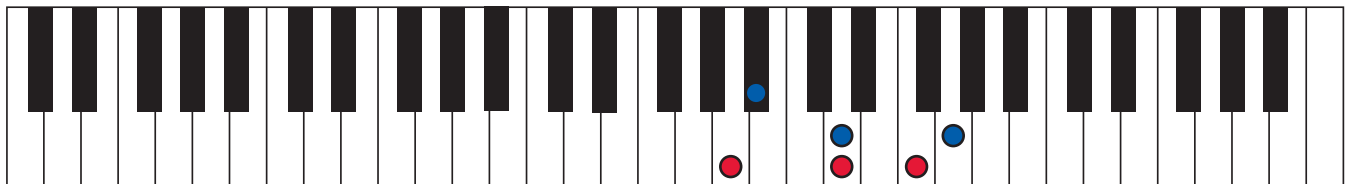
Songs often contain several chords linked together to form a Chord Progression. This becomes the basis of the song. Let's add another chord to our progression — the chord of G. You now have three chords — A minor, D minor and G minor. You have already changed from A minor to D minor using an inversion. Now use an inversion of the G minor chord to move smoothly, economically and efficiently from the D minor chord.

Again we are looking for common notes so we need to know the notes in both G minor and D minor.

G minor: G, B \flat and **D**
 D minor: **D**, F and A

So our common note is D. Have a look at *Figure 6* and then try the next exercise.

Figure 6: Changing from D minor to G minor in our chord progression.

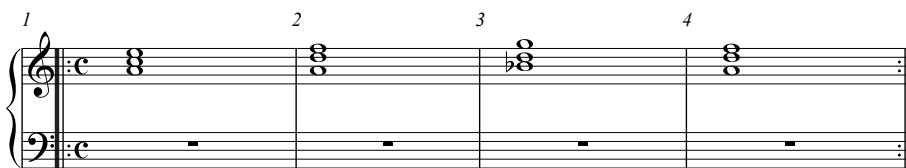


- Notes in the D minor triad
- Notes in the G minor triad

You can see that finger 2 stays on the common note D, whilst the thumb moves up to B \flat and finger 4 moves up to F.

Exercise 10

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Two way co-ordination with root notes in the left hand

As we have already developed good use of the left hand we are going to play the last exercise again this time playing the root note of each chord in the left hand. You will hear the chords clearly even though you are playing inversions as the ear hears the triad and can easily make sense of it.

Exercise 11

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The musical notation for Exercise 11 consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in common time (C). The exercise is divided into four measures, numbered 1 through 4 above the treble staff. In each measure, the right hand plays a triad and the left hand plays a single root note. Measure 1: Right hand plays a C major triad (C4, E4, G4), left hand plays C3. Measure 2: Right hand plays an E minor triad (E4, G4, Bb4), left hand plays E3. Measure 3: Right hand plays a G minor triad (G4, Bb4, D5), left hand plays G2. Measure 4: Right hand plays a Bb major triad (Bb4, D5, F5), left hand plays Bb3. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Further development

As a keyboard player you will be expected to be able to invert chords into chord progressions, whether they are major or minor chords. As stressed through the course so far, it is important that you know the notes in your major and minor scales and also which notes form your triads, so that you can invert triads so as to play with a smoothness and economy of movement that makes your playing seem and sound fluent and effortless.