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PRIVATE LESSONS

Acoustic Artistry

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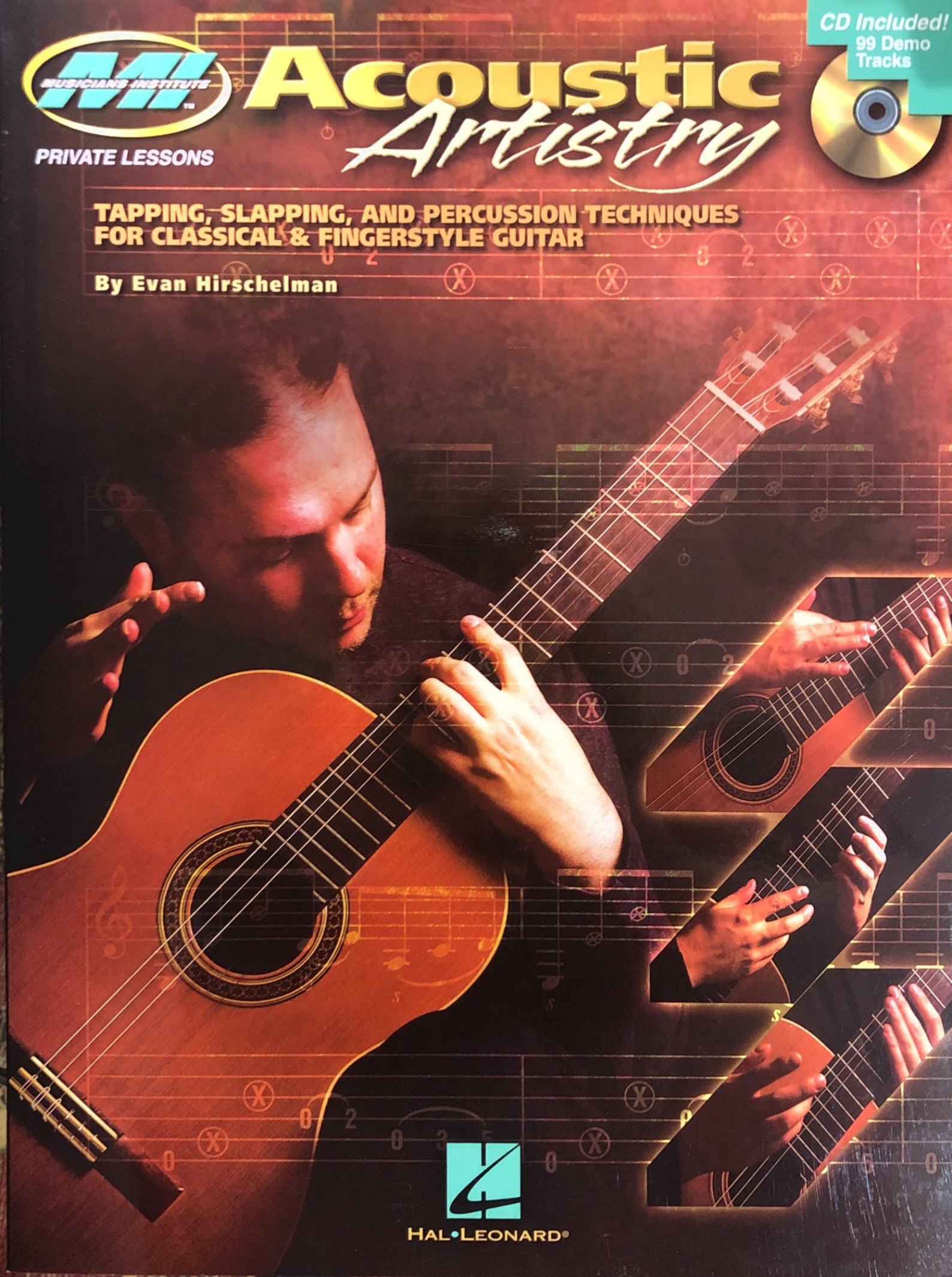
99 Demo Tracks

TAPPING, SLAPPING, AND PERCUSSION TECHNIQUES FOR CLASSICAL & FINGERSTYLE GUITAR

By Evan Hirschelman



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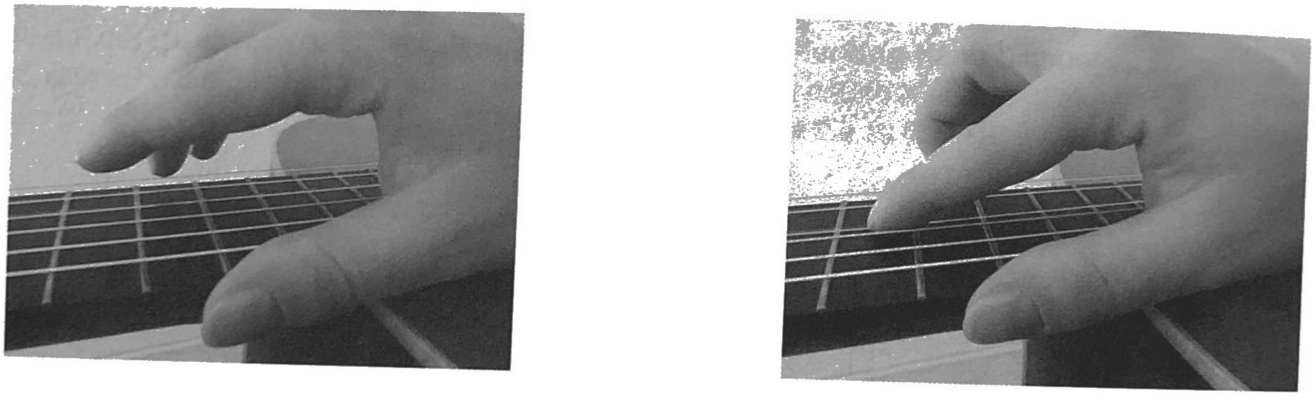
The Tapping Hand

The term *tapping* refers to the technique of hammering a note on the fretboard with the fingers of the hand that are usually reserved for plucking the strings (the right hand of a right-handed guitarist). The motion originates in the fingers, primarily in the knuckles and mid-joints—not in the wrist. The tip of the finger is hammered onto the string with a snapping motion similar to a fret-hand hammer-on (performed by the left hand of a right-handed guitarist).

> The phrase *economy of motion* should be applied constantly when playing the guitar. Practice tapping with the smallest movements possible, as this will help keep errors and fatigue to a minimum.

To achieve proper positioning and stability, begin by resting the thumb of the plucking hand on the side of the fretboard. When preparing the tap, don't exaggerate the motion; isolate and raise the tapping finger (in this case, the index finger) only about an inch—just enough to allow the subsequent snapping motion. Try to keep the neighboring fingers in loose resting positions.



Flex the finger at the main knuckle to execute the tap.

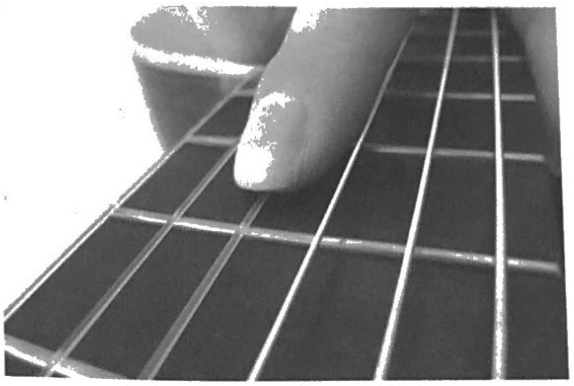
Adapting to Acoustic Guitar

For those who have never tapped before, it can take time to acclimate to this technique, especially if the calluses of the tapping hand are not fully developed.

Tapping on the acoustic guitar differs slightly from tapping on the electric guitar. Acoustic instruments usually have higher string tension, requiring a stronger attack from either hand to produce a clear tone. A more pronounced attack combined with the acoustic properties of the instrument produces more overtones and high partials, especially on the higher strings (3, 2, 1), necessitating significantly more fret-hand dampening than one would use when tapping strings on an electric guitar.

Tapping with Nails

For classical guitarists and others who play with their nails, tap just below the tip of your plucking-hand index finger so that you do not cause damage to your nail.

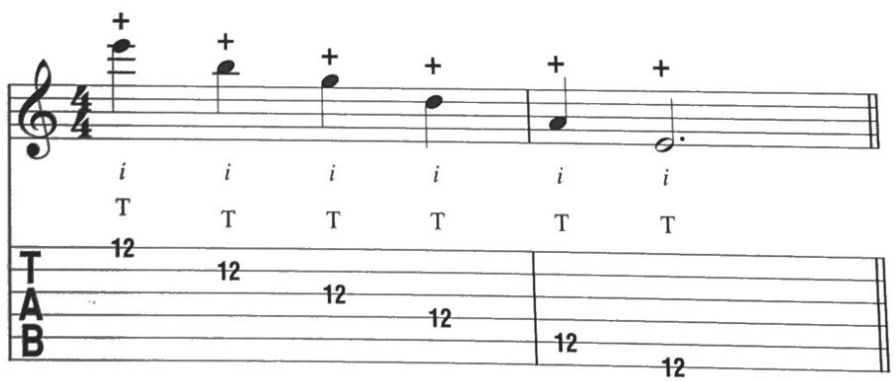


The nail should be clear of the string.

Tapping and String Dampening

For our first basic example, we'll tap E, B, G, D, A, and E at the twelfth position with the index finger of the plucking hand.

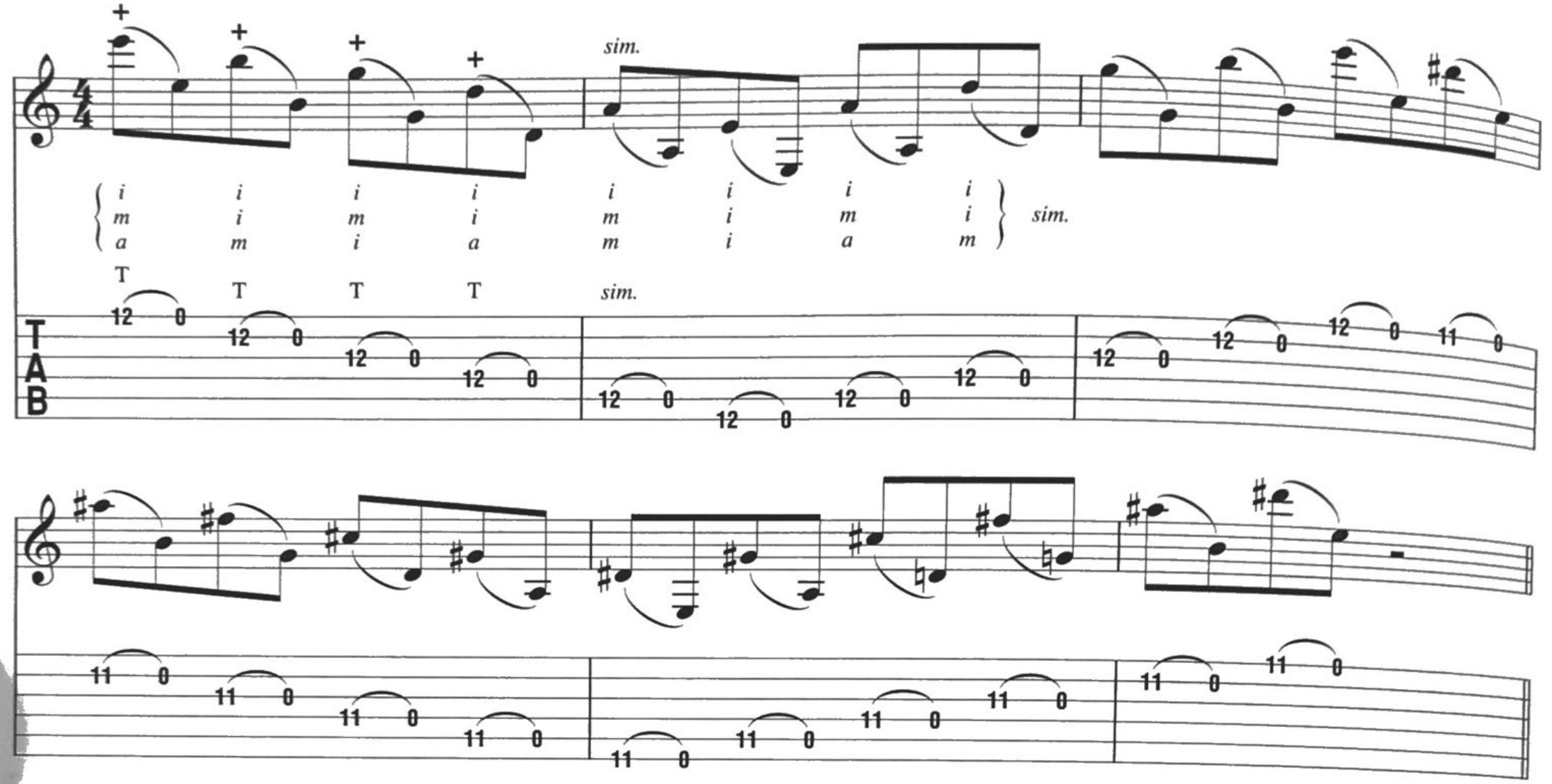
Track 2



Do you notice how the strings sound as if they are creating multiple pitches when being tapped? Try the same exercise again, but this time dampen all of the strings using your fretting-hand fingers, placing them below the tapped notes; your tapping should sound much cleaner now. What you were hearing were overtones. These overtones can vary from consonant to dissonant, including microtones. You should always be aware of these overtones, and, depending on the needs of the music performed, dampen accordingly. Since these overtones are more prevalent on the treble strings, practice dampening these strings whenever possible. As a general rule, dampening when tapping is recommended, as it will control sympathetic vibrations and also minimize unwanted noises.

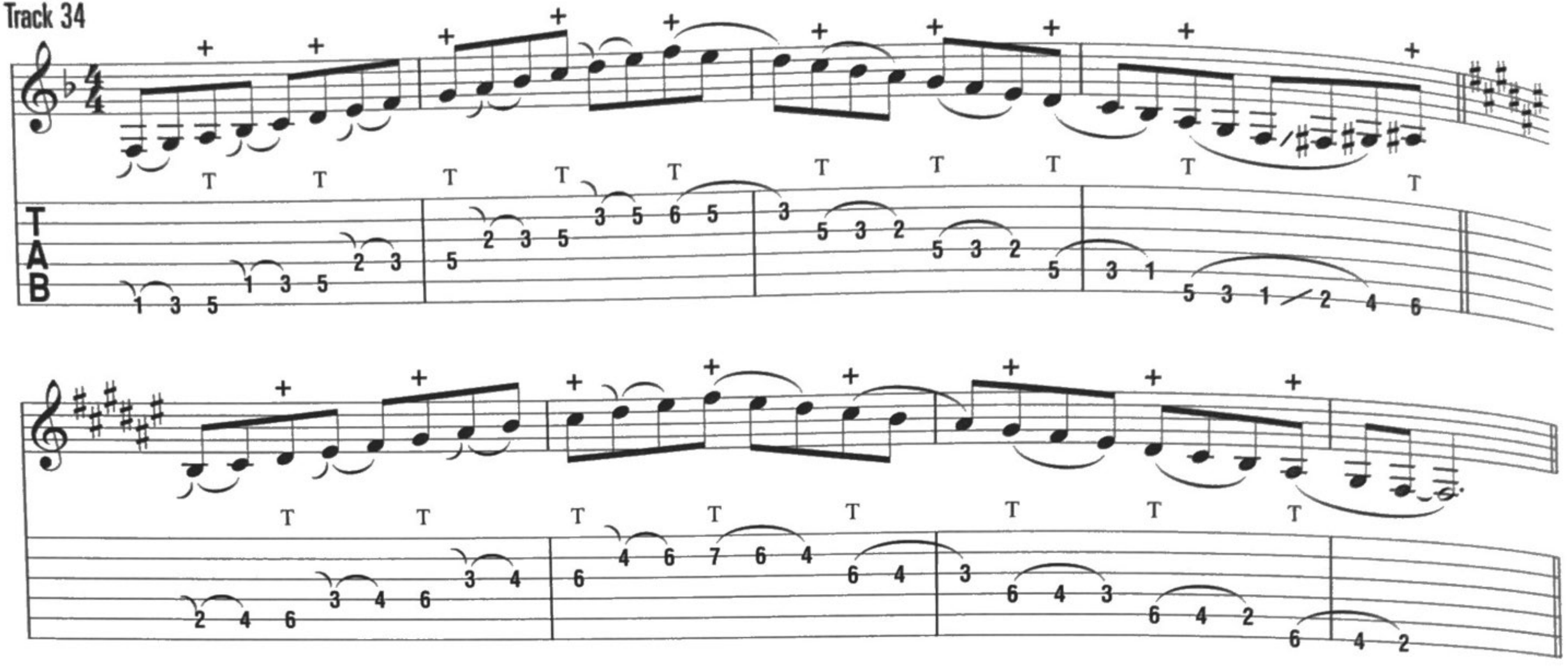
First, let's tap a note and then pull off to the open string. Pay careful attention to the rhythmic values and stop the open strings from excessively ringing by dampening with your fret hand. Be sure to explore the suggested fingerings.

Track 7



Major Scales

Track 34



Arpeggios with String Skipping

The next example incorporates tapping with string skipping. The arpeggio is Gmi7 with some added 11ths (C). By using different tapping-hand fingers, we will make the spacing easier, thus, not requiring you to shift as quickly with one finger. This arpeggio alternates tapping between your *i* and *m* fingers. When the arpeggio descends, you will barre in three-string groupings.

Track 43