

Connecting A Single Melody Note To A Strummed Or Arpeggiated Chord

By Douglas Niedt

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Below are the opening measures of *Prelude No. 3* by Heitor Villa-Lobos.



What is wrong with the way I am playing the single note F on the first string at the end of the second measure going into the strummed Cmaj7 chord of the third measure?

 [Listen to the sound clip.](#)

Yes, there is a gap between the F and the high open E of the chord. These are both melody notes and should be seamless. There should be no dead space between them.

A lot of people lift the first-string F as soon as the thumb begins to play the fifth string C:

Incorrect execution
in slow motion:

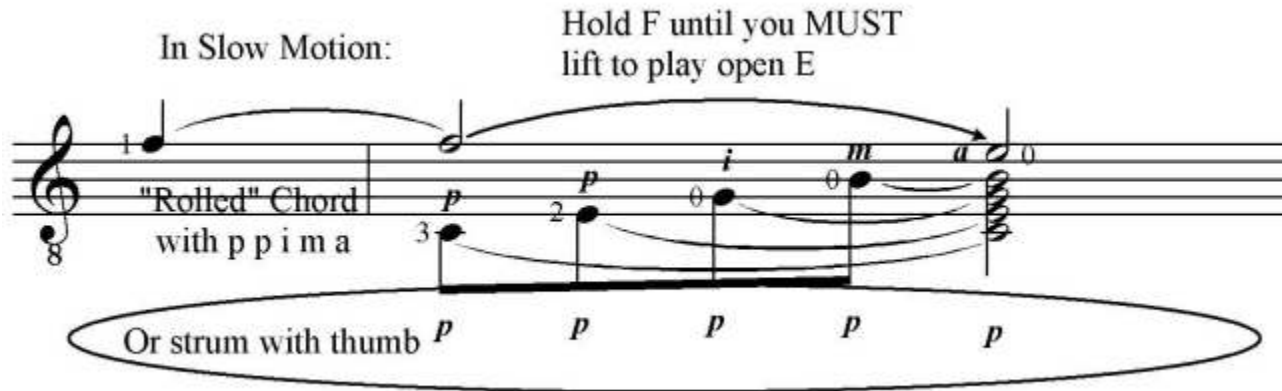
Dead space

"Rolled" Chord
with p p i m a

Or strum with thumb

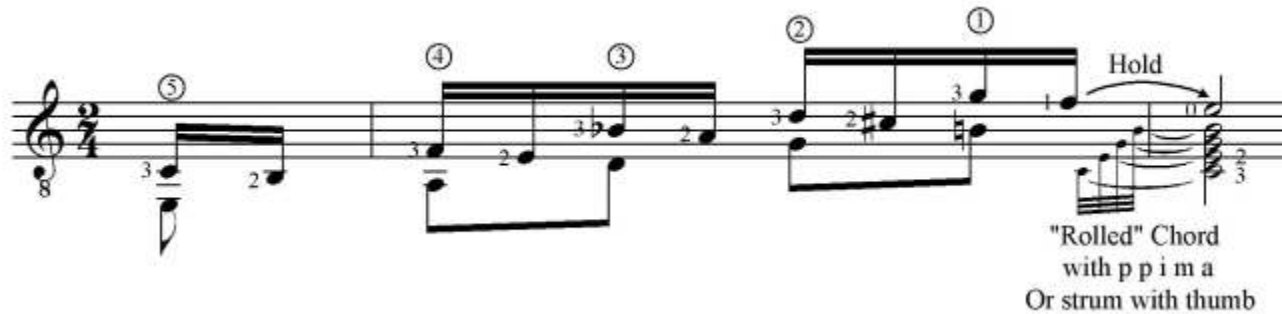
🔊 [In slow motion, this incorrect execution sounds like this.](#)

In slow motion, the correct execution of the transition from the first-string F to the open E looks like this:



🔊 [Correctly played, this is how it sounds in slow motion.](#)

At tempo, this is what the actual execution would look like on the printed page:



🔊 [Correctly played, it sounds like this.](#)

Notice that the transition from the single F to the open E of the chord is now seamless.

So here it is. This is the Technique Tip of the Month. When you want to connect a single note (usually the melody) to the high note (again, usually the melody) of a strummed or arpeggiated ("rolled") chord, do this: keep the single note held down until the moment when the right-hand thumb plays the high note of the chord (in the case of a thumb-strummed chord) or until the moment when the right-hand finger plucks the high note (in the case of a "rolled" chord).

Let's look at another example from the introduction of *Capricho Arabe* by Francisco Tarrega:

⑥=D Natural Harmonics

7th fret

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 2/4. The staff is divided into two systems. The first system contains a single note on the 7th line (F#) with a circled '4' above it, indicating the 4th harmonic. The second system contains a sequence of notes: F# (7th line), G# (8th line), A (9th line), B (10th line), C (11th line), D (12th line), E (13th line), F# (14th line), G# (15th line), A (16th line), B (17th line), C (18th line), D (19th line), E (20th line), F# (21st line), G# (22nd line), A (23rd line), B (24th line), C (25th line), D (26th line), E (27th line), F# (28th line), G# (29th line), A (30th line), B (31st line), C (32nd line), D (33rd line), E (34th line), F# (35th line), G# (36th line), A (37th line), B (38th line), C (39th line), D (40th line), E (41st line), F# (42nd line), G# (43rd line), A (44th line), B (45th line), C (46th line), D (47th line), E (48th line), F# (49th line), G# (50th line), A (51st line), B (52nd line), C (53rd line), D (54th line), E (55th line), F# (56th line), G# (57th line), A (58th line), B (59th line), C (60th line), D (61st line), E (62nd line), F# (63rd line), G# (64th line), A (65th line), B (66th line), C (67th line), D (68th line), E (69th line), F# (70th line), G# (71st line), A (72nd line), B (73rd line), C (74th line), D (75th line), E (76th line), F# (77th line), G# (78th line), A (79th line), B (80th line), C (81st line), D (82nd line), E (83rd line), F# (84th line), G# (85th line), A (86th line), B (87th line), C (88th line), D (89th line), E (90th line), F# (91st line), G# (92nd line), A (93rd line), B (94th line), C (95th line), D (96th line), E (97th line), F# (98th line), G# (99th line), A (100th line), B (101st line), C (102nd line), D (103rd line), E (104th line), F# (105th line), G# (106th line), A (107th line), B (108th line), C (109th line), D (110th line), E (111th line), F# (112th line), G# (113th line), A (114th line), B (115th line), C (116th line), D (117th line), E (118th line), F# (119th line), G# (120th line), A (121st line), B (122nd line), C (123rd line), D (124th line), E (125th line), F# (126th line), G# (127th line), A (128th line), B (129th line), C (130th line), D (131st line), E (132th line), F# (133th line), G# (134th line), A (135th line), B (136th line), C (137th line), D (138th line), E (139th line), F# (140th line), G# (141st line), A (142nd line), B (143rd line), C (144th line), D (145th line), E (146th line), F# (147th line), G# (148th line), A (149th line), B (150th line), C (151st line), D (152nd line), E (153th line), F# (154th line), G# (155th line), A (156th line), B (157th line), C (158th line), D (159th line), E (160th line), F# (161st line), G# (162nd line), A (163rd line), B (164th line), C (165th line), D (166th line), E (167th line), F# (168th line), G# (169th line), A (170th line), B (171st line), C (172nd line), D (173rd line), E (174th line), F# (175th line), G# (176th line), A (177th line), B (178th line), C (179th line), D (180th line), E (181st line), F# (182nd line), G# (183rd line), A (184th line), B (185th line), C (186th line), D (187th line), E (188th line), F# (189th line), G# (190th line), A (191st line), B (192nd line), C (193rd line), D (194th line), E (195th line), F# (196th line), G# (197th line), A (198th line), B (199th line), C (200th line), D (201st line), E (202nd line), F# (203rd line), G# (204th line), A (205th line), B (206th line), C (207th line), D (208th line), E (209th line), F# (210th line), G# (211th line), A (212th line), B (213th line), C (214th line), D (215th line), E (216th line), F# (217th line), G# (218th line), A (219th line), B (220th line), C (221st line), D (222nd line), E (223rd line), F# (224th line), G# (225th line), A (226th line), B (227th line), C (228th line), D (229th line), E (230th line), F# (231st line), G# (232nd line), A (233rd line), B (234th line), C (235th line), D (236th line), E (237th line), F# (238th line), G# (239th line), A (240th line), B (241st line), C (242nd line), D (243rd line), E (244th line), F# (245th line), G# (246th line), A (247th line), B (248th line), C (249th line), D (250th line), E (251st line), F# (252nd line), G# (253rd line), A (254th line), B (255th line), C (256th line), D (257th line), E (258th line), F# (259th line), G# (260th line), A (261st line), B (262nd line), C (263rd line), D (264th line), E (265th line), F# (266th line), G# (267th line), A (268th line), B (269th line), C (270th line), D (271st line), E (272nd line), F# (273rd line), G# (274th line), A (275th line), B (276th line), C (277th line), D (278th line), E (279th line), F# (280th line), G# (281st line), A (282nd line), B (283rd line), C (284th line), D (285th line), E (286th line), F# (287th line), G# (288th line), A (289th line), B (290th line), C (291st line), D (292nd line), E (293rd line), F# (294th line), G# (295th line), A (296th line), B (297th line), C (298th line), D (299th line), E (300th line), F# (301st line), G# (302nd line), A (303rd line), B (304th line), C (305th line), D (306th line), E (307th line), F# (308th line), G# (309th line), A (310th line), B (311th line), C (312th line), D (313th line), E (314th line), F# (315th line), G# (316th line), A (317th line), B (318th line), C (319th line), D (320th line), E (321st line), F# (322nd line), G# (323rd line), A (324th line), B (325th line), C (326th line), D (327th line), E (328th line), F# (329th line), G# (330th line), A (331st line), B (332nd line), C (333rd line), D (334th line), E (335th line), F# (336th line), G# (337th line), A (338th line), B (339th line), C (340th line), D (341st line), E (342nd line), F# (343rd line), G# (344th line), A (345th line), B (346th line), C (347th line), D (348th line), E (349th line), F# (350th line), G# (351st line), A (352nd line), B (353rd line), C (354th line), D (355th line), E (356th line), F# (357th line), G# (358th line), A (359th line), B (360th line), C (361st line), D (362nd line), E (363rd line), F# (364th line), G# (365th line), A (366th line), B (367th line), C (368th line), D (369th line), E (370th line), F# (371st line), G# (372nd line), A (373rd line), B (374th line), C (375th line), D (376th line), E (377th line), F# (378th line), G# (379th line), A (380th line), B (381st line), C (382nd line), D (383rd line), E (384th line), F# (385th line), G# (386th line), A (387th line), B (388th line), C (389th line), D (390th line), E (391st line), F# (392nd line), G# (393rd line), A (394th line), B (395th line), C (396th line), D (397th line), E (398th line), F# (399th line), G# (400th line), A (401st line), B (402nd line), C (403rd line), D (404th line), E (405th line), F# (406th line), G# (407th line), A (408th line), B (409th line), C (410th line), D (411th line), E (412th line), F# (413th line), G# (414th line), A (415th line), B (416th line), C (417th line), D (418th line), E (419th line), F# (420th line), G# (421st line), A (422nd line), B (423rd line), C (424th line), D (425th line), E (426th line), F# (427th line), G# (428th line), A (429th line), B (430th line), C (431st line), D (432nd line), E (433th line), F# (434th line), G# (435th line), A (436th line), B (437th line), C (438th line), D (439th line), E (440th line), F# (441st line), G# (442nd line), A (443rd line), B (444th line), C (445th line), D (446th line), E (447th line), F# (448th line), G# (449th line), A (450th line), B (451st line), C (452nd line), D (453rd line), E (454th line), F# (455th line), G# (456th line), A (457th line), B (458th line), C (459th line), D (460th line), E (461st line), F# (462th line), G# (463rd line), A (464th line), B (465th line), C (466th line), D (467th line), E (468th line), F# (469th line), G# (470th line), A (471st line), B (472nd line), C (473rd line), D (474th line), E (475th line), F# (476th line), G# (477th line), A (478th line), B (479th line), C (480th line), D (481st line), E (482nd line), F# (483rd line), G# (484th line), A (485th line), B (486th line), C (487th line), D (488th line), E (489th line), F# (490th line), G# (491st line), A (492nd line), B (493rd line), C (494th line), D (495th line), E (496th line), F# (49

 Listen to the melody played with incorrect execution in measure 3 to 4.

There is a large gap between the 16th note E to the C# of the A major chord in measure four. Because these are the melody notes, they should be connected or legato. (I am assuming we want the A major chord to be strummed or "rolled." If we pluck the notes of the chord simultaneously, there is no problem connecting the melody notes.)

Let's look at it in slow motion. Many people would incorrectly lift the E on the second string as they began to play the fifth string open A of the A major chord:

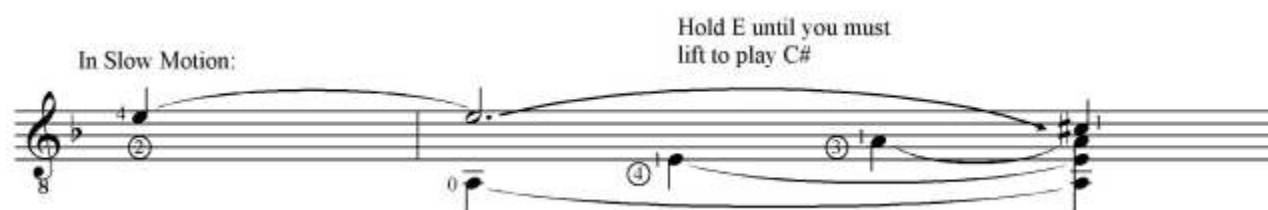
Incorrect execution
in slow motion:



Dead space

🔊 That sounds like this.

In slow motion, correct execution looks like this:



🔊 [It sounds like this.](#)

The actual execution of measures three to four would be notated like this:

⑥ = D Natural Harmonics
7th fret

Connect E to C#

"Rolled" Chord
Or strum with thumb

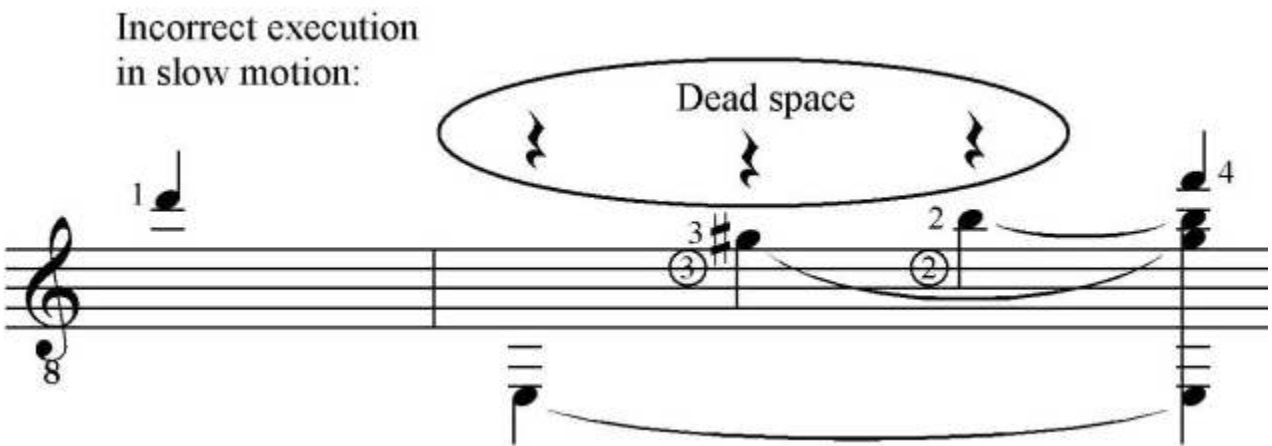
🔊 [Correct execution of measure 3-4 at tempo sounds like this.](#)

Just to be sure, let's look at one more example. This is from *Maria*, also by Francisco Tarrega.

Again we are assuming the final chord will be "rolled" or arpeggiated. If the notes were played simultaneously, connecting the melody notes would be easier.

🔊 [Listen to this example](#) and notice the gap in the melody from the high D at the end of the first measure going to the high F of the chord in the second measure.

Incorrect execution in slow motion looks like this:



🔊 [Incorrect execution in slow motion sounds like this.](#)

