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DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL ON THE "RULE OF OCTAVE" PERFORMANCE FOR CLASSICAL GUITAR

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Abstract

This study centers on the pedagogical tool "Rule of Octave," crucial for interpreting 18th-century basso continuo notation. The main objective is to contribute to literature by exploring its application in classical guitar performance. The introduction includes accompaniment's flexible nature during baroque and renaissance periods and explaining the concept of basso continuo. The Rule of Octave, vital for basso continuo notation in the 18th century, is explained, with contemporary literature evaluated. In the "Results" section, the Rule of Octave is explained for each degree with chords to be used, with diverse chord voicings across varying guitar positions for C major and A minor scales. The study undertakes to apply the rule of octave on guitar from various positions, despite challenges in achieving uniform chord combinations and voice leading due to the instrument's nature. Studying common cadences, analyzing unfigured basslines ("partimenti"), and understanding key modulations are essential for basso continuo skill advancement. However, it is thought that learning the octave rule can be a good first step for basso continuo performance. The study enriches educational resources and seeks to spark research in octave rule and basso continuo on the classical guitar.

Keywords: Guitar, the Rule of Octave, Basso Continuo, Partimenti, Accompaniment.

INTRODUCTION

Accompaniment is one of the basic skills that must be acquired by students studying polyphonic musical instruments such as guitar, piano and harp. Accompaniment is defined in The Harvard Dictionary of Music as follows:

> "The musical background for a principal part or parts. This term is used in two somewhat different ways, one referring to manner of performance, the other to texture. The first is appropriate when the performers of a musical work are divided into two components of contrasting and complementary function: a principal part in which musical interest and the listener's attention are mainly centered, and the accompaniment, subordinate to it, whose main purpose is in some sense supportive. The principal part may be one or more solo performers, vocal or instrumental, or a group of performers, such as a chorus. The accompaniment is usually instrumental, either a single instrument (usually one capable of chords), an ensemble, or an orchestra. The relation between accompaniment and principal part can vary from a completely and unobtrusively subordinate role for the accompaniment, like that of guitar chords strummed with a song or that of the church organist in congregational singing, to what is usually called *obbligato accompaniment, found in more complex music, where the accompaniment is an essential part of the texture. Obbligato parts can remain in a subordinate relation to the principal part, as in much Baroque music, or can interact with it to varying degrees, as in much music from the Classical period onward. It is in such music that accompaniment makes its greatest artistic demands on performers (Randel, 2013, p. 11)."

A performer who has developed accompaniment skills will not only improve his/her competence in the performance of works designed in the form of solo instrument and accompaniment but will also increase the quality of his/her performance by raising his/her awareness of the structures designed with the melody-accompaniment texture in his/her soloistic works. For this reason, many music schools and conservatories include courses to improve accompaniment skills in their curricula.

Throughout the history of Western Music, accompaniment has been designed by composers in various forms. Roughly from the 1800s to the present day, it is seen that accompaniment parts have been notated in detail by composers most of the time.

However, until the end of the Baroque period, accompaniment parts were performed more or less improvised. During the Renaissance, accompanists were trained to find the appropriate voices for harmony based solely on the bass part. Although some useful rules were laid down, it was difficult to quickly decide which intervals were appropriate during a performance. For this reason, many accompanists in the 1500s took the trouble to copy the score. In some works, composed in the same period, polyphony was distributed among several choirs, each with its own bass part. In some of these 16th century works with more than one bass part, the choice of the bass part for the accompaniment was left to the accompanist, while in others it was specified. This specific part is called "Basso Continuo" (Donington, 1992, p. 288).

> "A figured bass I thus a thorough-bass or continuo to which accidentals and figures have been added showing the main intervals required. But the distribution of the intervals, the conduct of the parts and the melodic figuration are not shown. The performer is told, with very varying degrees of thoroughness and accuracy, what harmonies to produce; how he produces them is his own affair (Donington, 1992, p. 289)."

Numerous theses and books have extensively explored the subject. Proficiency in playing the basso continuo was not just crucial for playing accompaniments; it also held significance for music theorists and composers of the 18th century since it aided in grasping the fundamental mechanics of musical compositions and harmony. Even composers of the classical period, such as Haydn and Mozart, were introduced to the partimenti and therefore the basso continuo as part of their musical training (Zapico, 2013, p. 103).

In the 18th century, music theorists and educators in various parts of Europe developed a very useful tool for teaching basso continuo that was very similar to each other: The Rule of Octave.

In almost every eighteenth-century basso continuo or composition book, there is a sequence of "Scale Harmonizations" encoded over all 24 ascending and descending major and melodic minor scales. Although various titles have been used, it is most frequently referred to as "la règle de l'Octave" - "The Rule of Octave". When the rule of octave is examined closely, it is seen that only the I and V degrees are voiced with chords in root position, while all other degrees are composed of some kind of six chords. The performer who knows which six chords are to be voiced and in which degree can easily play the scale in its polyphonic form. Not only the degrees but also the melodic direction of the scale can determine the six chords to be used. For example, during the ascending movement, the 6/5/3 chord is built on the IVth degree that will move to the Vth degree, while during the descending movement, the 6/4/2 chord is built on the IVth degree sound that will move to the IIIrd degree. At the same time, during the descending movement, it is seen that the sixth interval established on the VIth degree is raised by half a tone and modulated to the Vth degree. With some exceptions, the same application can be made for every major and minor scale, and a specific chord can be formed for each degree of the scale (Christensen, 1992, p. 91).

Figure 1. The Rule of Octave from Campion's Book (Campion, 1716, p. 3).

There are two areas where the octave rule is useful. The first, according to Campion, is its use by beginning accompanists and composers who need to find the harmonization of a simple diatonic bass line. By learning the octave rule in all 24 major and minor keys, the student has a handy rule for

harmonizing any bass part with a lateral progression. The second area where the octave rule is useful is as a tutorial for keyboard and string soloists who want to learn how to improvise. Since successful improvisation requires knowledge of harmonic progressions, it is useful to have a simple formula along the lines of the octave rule (Christensen, 1992, p. 92).

Despite minor nuance differences, the rule of the octave was designed with similar chords in many treatises and books of the 18th century.

Sanguinetti cites the rule of octave according to Fenaroli as follows (2012, p. 115):

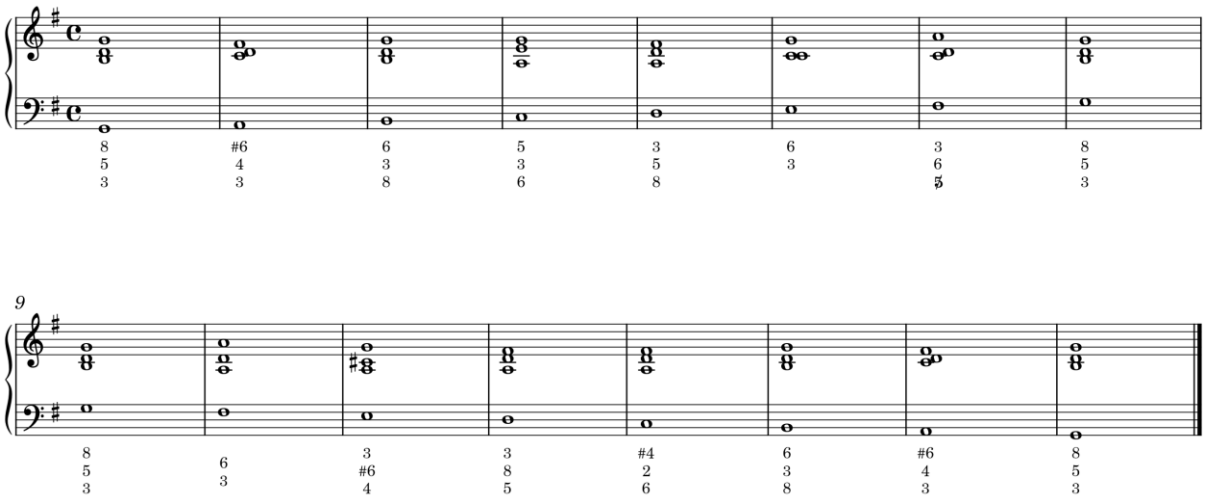

Figure 2. The Rule of Octave According to Fenaroli, G Major

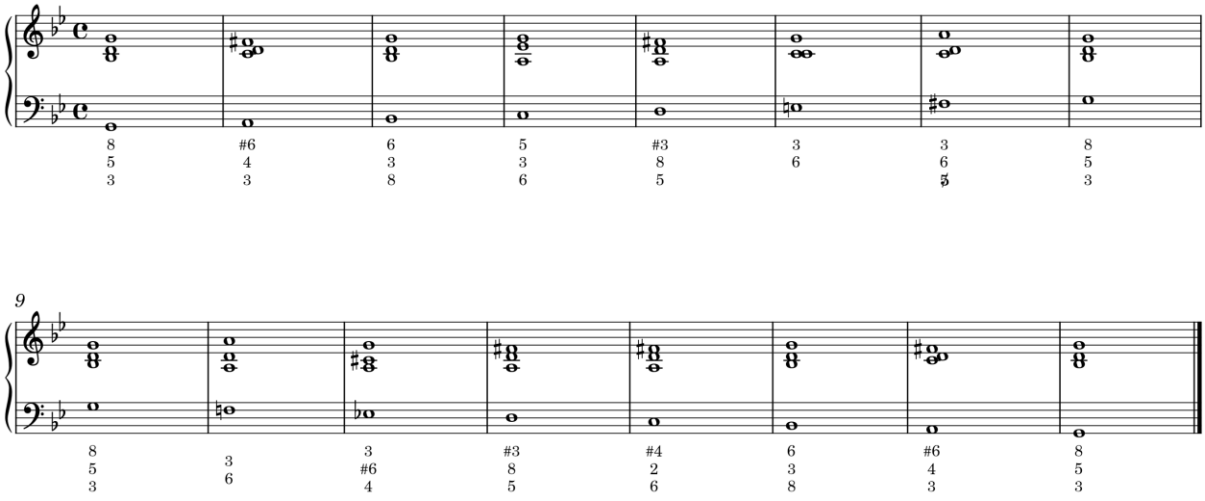

Figure 3. The Rule of Octave According to Fenaroli, G Minor

Christensen cites the rule of octave according to Campion as follows (1992, p. 91):

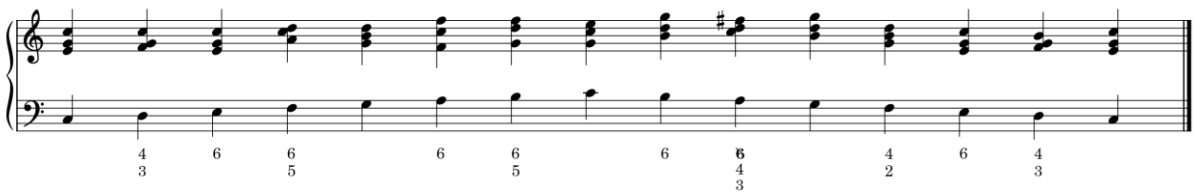

Figure 4. The Rule of Octave According to Campion, C Major

Vignali, in his *Rudimenti di Musica per Accompagnare del Sig.r Maestro Vignali* quoted the rule of octave as follows (1789, p. 11):

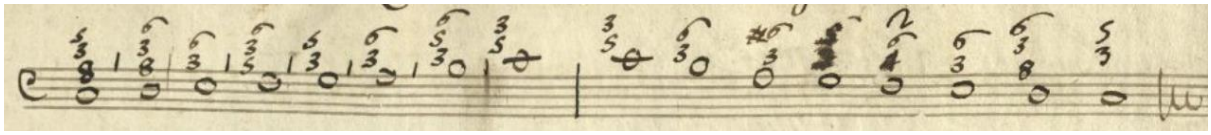

Figure 5. The Rule of Octave According to Vignali, C Major

As the basso continuo was a way of writing down accompaniment used by composers of the baroque and renaissance periods and the rule of the octave was a tool to comprehend it, the books and theses that have survived to the present day were designed with the instruments of these periods in mind. Because the plucked string instruments used in these periods to play from basso continuo parts, differ from today's classical guitar in some respects, there is a need to create new instructional materials for artists who want to perform basso continuo on classical guitar today.

There are some studies on basso continuo for today's performers and classical guitarists, some including the rule of octave.

The most comprehensive research made on the subject is Peter Croton's "Figured Bass on the Classical Guitar". Croton wrote his book in four main parts, in the first part he gave interval and voice leading exercises and, created a separate subtitle for each chord of each degree in the octave rule and derived various examples to perform them. The second part of the book is devoted to various dissonances and suspensions. The third part includes exercises and sample pieces in various major and minor keys. The last part of the book contains concluding remarks (Croton, 2005, p. 5-50).

In his doctoral thesis titled "An Introduction to Figured Bass Accompaniment on the Classical Guitar", Yerby studied basso continuo performance on the classical guitar. The researcher grouped his study under 9 main headings. The first heading includes background information on the subject. In the second title, he gave historical background information. In the third title, he presented his views on the importance of the subject. In the fourth heading, the book of the famous guitarist Santiago de Murcia, who lived in the 18th century and published a book on baroque guitar and basso continuo performance *Resumen de acompañar la parte con la guitarra*, is analyzed. In the fifth chapter, studies for performance are derived and studies for guitarists to decipher using the bass clef are included. The sixth chapter is titled "Building on the Bass". In this chapter, studies for basso continuo performance with intervals of 3s and 10s are derived, and it is suggested to create similar studies using intervals of 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th. Chapter 7 contains various chord realizations. The author includes some dissonances and cadences in this chapter. Chapter 8 examines various harmonic progressions of Santiago de Murcia. The last chapter contains the author's thoughts on the application of basso continuo. The author did not make use of the rule of the octave as a tool in his study (Yerby, 2012, p. 1-43).

Pignatiello made an English translation of the 1775 book of Fenaroli's *Regole Musicali per I Principianti di Cembalo* and adapted it for classical guitar. In the appendix section, the author includes the rule of the octave and transcribes the chords into classical guitar notation in various major and minor keys (Pignatiello, 2023, p. 40-41).

Besides research on the topic with the focus of classical guitar, Sánchez-Kisielewska developed a series of strategies to incorporate the Rule of Octave into the core music theory curriculum, emphasized the foundational role of mastering the Rule of Octave in comprehending tonal harmony. The author also shared personal experiences from the classroom, illustrating the potential pedagogical advantages of reviving and modernizing this crucial teaching tool (2017, p. 1-20).

It is thought that for contemporary performers, learning the rule of octave might be useful, especially following ways: First, for performers and students who want to perform Renaissance or Baroque period works by using their original scores, it will be a guide in developing the ability to read basso continuo parts. Also, in 18th century solo instrumental music, the texture of music is designed in accordance with the rule of octave. Performers with knowledge about the rule, would understand the

music's texture and make informed choices about how to play it, including nuances, articulation, ornaments, and tempo. Finally, as Sánchez-Kisielewska points out, learning and memorizing the rule of octave might be a helpful tool for undergraduate studies of tonal harmony. For all these reasons, it is beneficial to increase the amount of contemporary instructive materials. This study aims to produce additional educational material on the subject, for classical guitar, a polyphonic instrument that is also able to perform the rule of octave.

METHOD

This study is conducted using the document analysis method.

> "Document analysis is the process of collecting existing records and documents related to the study to be conducted, coding and analyzing them according to a certain norm and system. Document analysis is also defined as documentary observation or documentary scanning. In the process of document analysis, a researcher first analyzes available sources, reads each source carefully and notes down the necessary information and makes some evaluation processes based on the notes he/she takes. The most important issue in this process is the researcher's ability to use the information in the sources understanding in the desired sense and using it in that direction. The syntheses made through document analysis are based on the synthesis of all the works made in that field according to certain characteristics. It has the ability to classify. Although it is difficult to reach new information or make a discovery as a result of this process, the existence of general tendencies, alternative thoughts and ideas becomes a little clearer based on what has been done (Çepni, 2012, p. 74, 75)."

This study seeks to add to the educational literature concerning the execution of the rule of octave on the classical guitar. To achieve this aim, the rule of the octave will be transferred to the classical guitar in C major and A minor tonalities as it is described in 18th century sources. The educational materials to be designed will be classified by degrees of the scale under separate headings. Since some degrees are harmonized with different chords according to the direction of the melody, they are analyzed under two main headings: descending and ascending. The figures are derived to create the performance in three different positions. As North points out, avoiding consecutive 5ths and 8ves between outer voices is also a general rule (1987, p. 40, 41) and the figures in the results section will be designed with this rule in mind.

RESULTS

I & V Degrees of the Scale, Ascending Motion

During the ascending motion, the I and V degrees of the are harmonized with a 5-chord consisting of major/minor triads, perfect fifths, and octaves. For 5-chords, no figure is written in the basso continuo part except for the 5th degree in minor keys. Since the fifth degree has the dominant function, for minor keys, the sharp sign of the triad should be included in the figures.

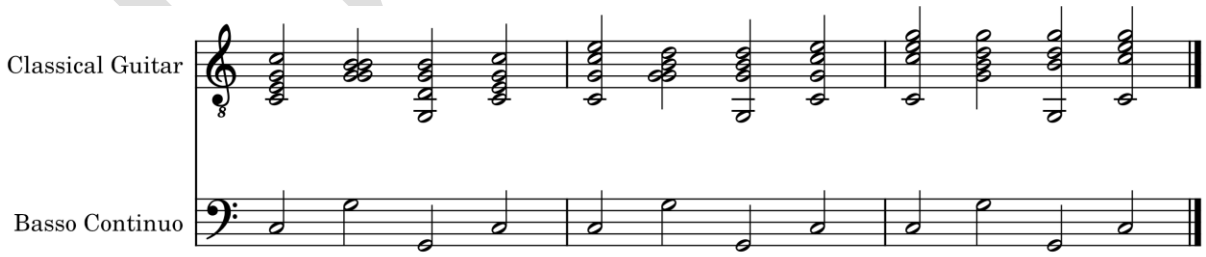

Figure 6. 5 Chords on I-V degrees in C Major

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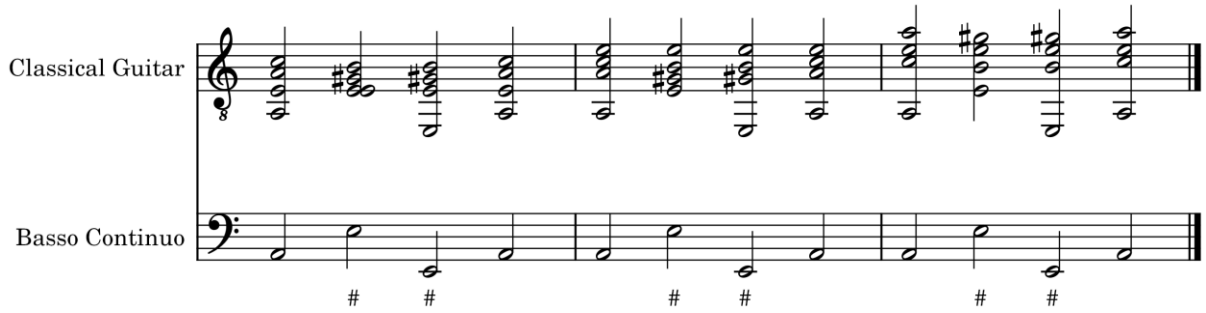

Figure 7. 5 Chords on Ist-Vth degrees in A Minor

III Degree of the Scale, Ascending Motion

During the ascending motion, IIIrd degree of the scale is harmonized with 6-chord which consists of major/minor third, major/minor sixths, and eighth intervals. In the basso continuo part, it is indicated by using "6" figure.

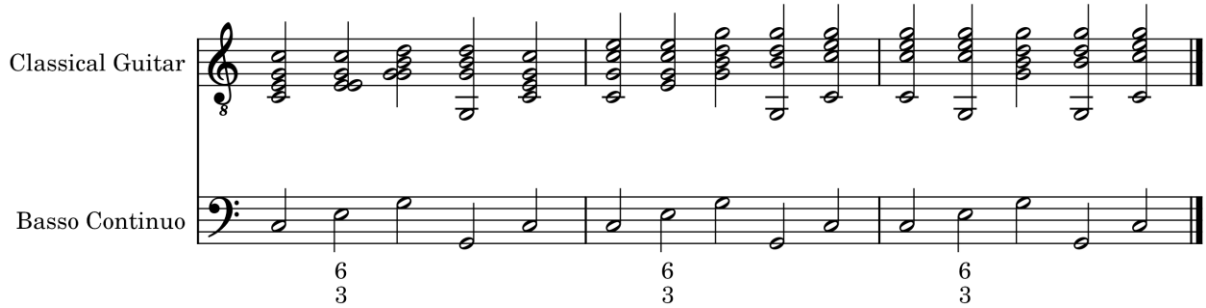

Figure 8. 6 Chord on IIIrd Degree, Ascending Motion, C Major

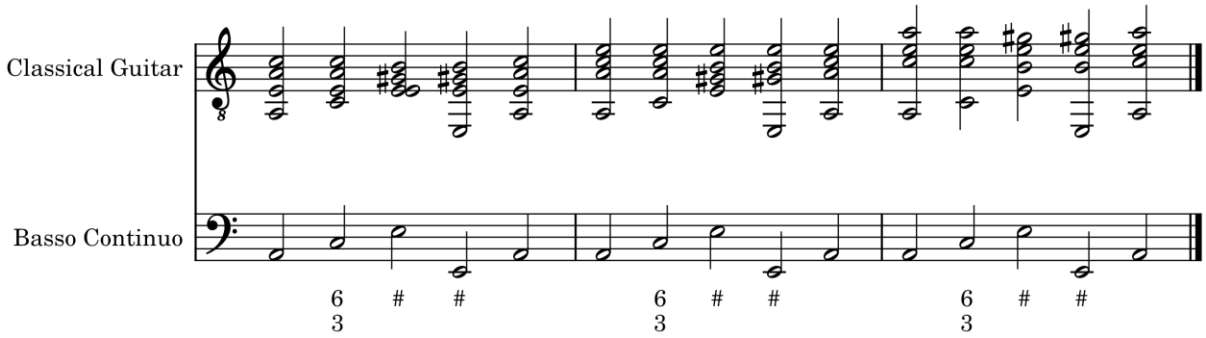

Figure 9. 6 Chord on IIIrd Degree, Ascending Motion, A Minor

II Degree of the Scale, Ascending Motion

During the ascending motion, IInd degree of the scale is harmonized with +6-chord which consists of minor third, perfect fourth, and major sixth intervals. These types of chords also called "Petite Sixth" in French Sources and it is commonly figured with a $\frac{4}{3}$ or a 6 (Croton, 2005, p. 18). The main difference between the Simple Sixth chord on the third degree and the Petite Sixth chord on the second degree is that for the Petite Sixth chord there is always a tritone (Zapico, 2013, p. 34). Since the sixth of the second-degree chord is the leading tone, it raises a half tone in minor keys.

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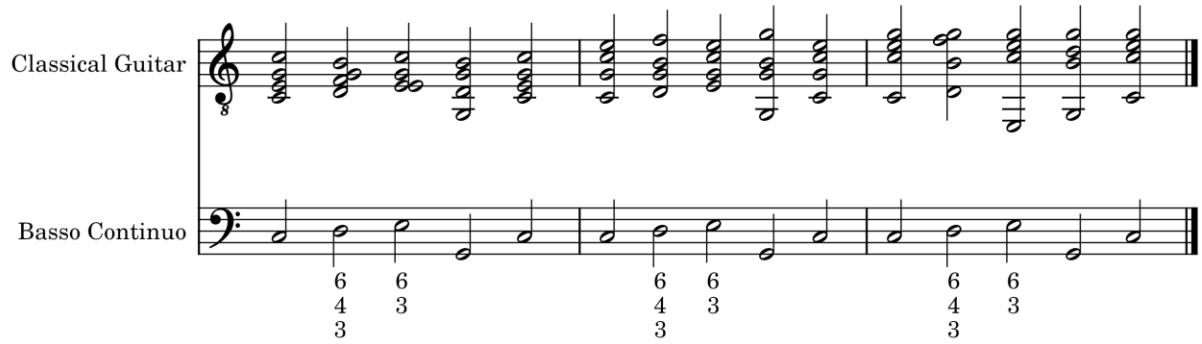

Figure 10. Petite Sixth Chord on IInd Degree, Ascending Motion, C Major

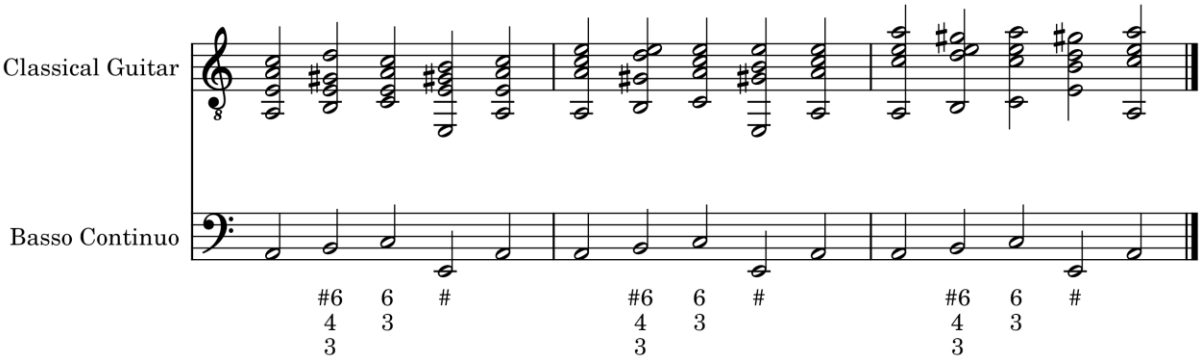

Figure 11. Petite Sixth Chord on IInd Degree, Ascending Motion, A Minor

IV Degree of the Scale, Ascending Motion

During the ascending motion, IV degree of the scale is harmonized with 6/5-chord which consists of major/minor third, perfect fifth, and major sixth intervals. It is commonly figured with $\frac{6}{5}$.

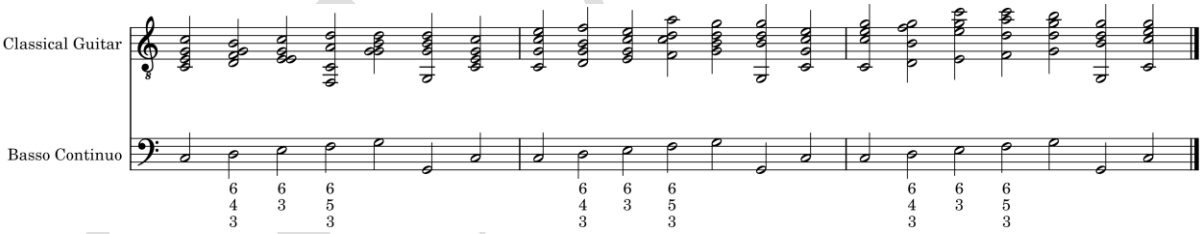

Figure 12. 6/5 Chord on IVth Degree, Ascending Motion, C Major

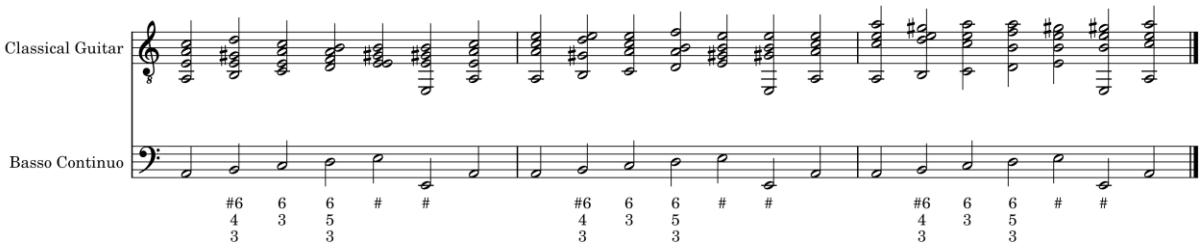

Figure 13. 6/5 Chord on IVth degree, Ascending Motion, Minor

VII Degree of the Scale, Ascending Motion

During the ascending motion, VII degree of the scale is harmonized with 6/5-chord which consists of minor third, diminished fifth, and minor sixth intervals. It is commonly figured with $\frac{6}{5}$.

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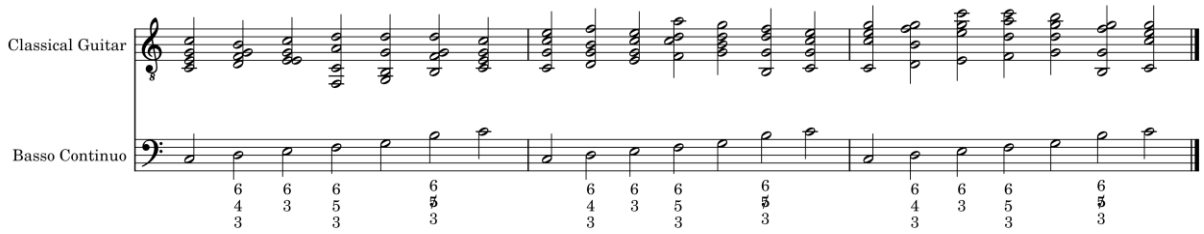

Figure 14. 6/5 Chord on VIIth Degree, Ascending Motion, C Major

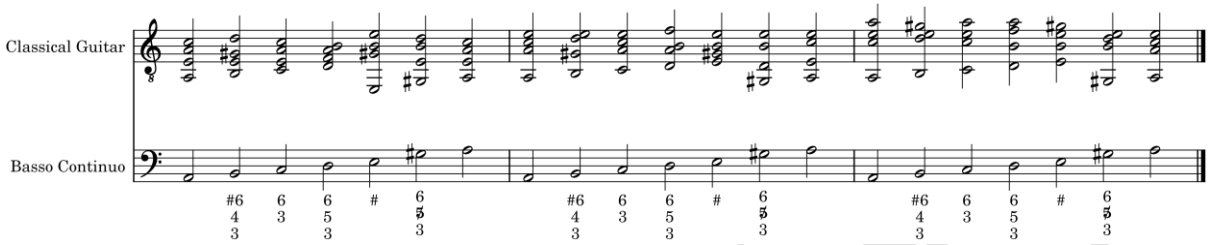

Figure 15. 6/5 Chord on VIIth Degree, Ascending Motion, in A Minor

VI Degree of the Scale and The Rule of Octave, Ascending Motion

During the ascending motion, VI degree of the scale is harmonized with 6-chord which consists of major/minor third, major/minor sixths, and eighth intervals. In the basso continuo part, it is indicated by using "6" figure.

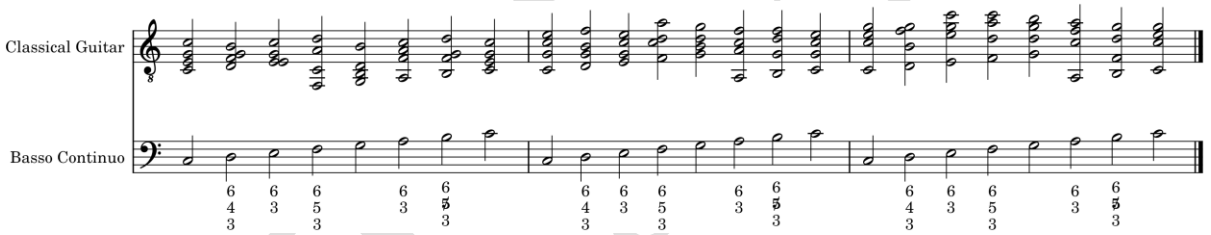

Figure 16. The Rule of Octave, Ascending Motion, C Major

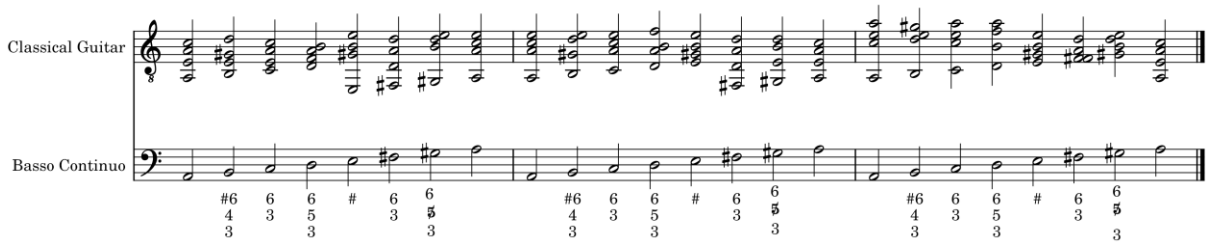

Figure 17. The Rule of Octave, Ascending Motion, A Minor

I & V Degrees of the Scale, Descending Motion

In the process of descending, the Ist and Vth degrees of the scale maintain the same harmonization as in the ascending motion. However, while descending, the scale modulates to the Vth degree of the scale.

VII Degree of the Scale, Descending Motion

During the descending motion, the VIIth degree of the scale is harmonized with 6-chord which consists of major/minor third, major/minor sixths, and eighth intervals. In the basso continuo part, it is indicated by using "6" figure.

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During descending motion VIIth degree is harmonized with a simple sixth since it no longer functions as a leading tone. Also, due to the use of the melodic minor scale for the rule of octave, the VIIth degree becomes a semitone lower during the descending movement.

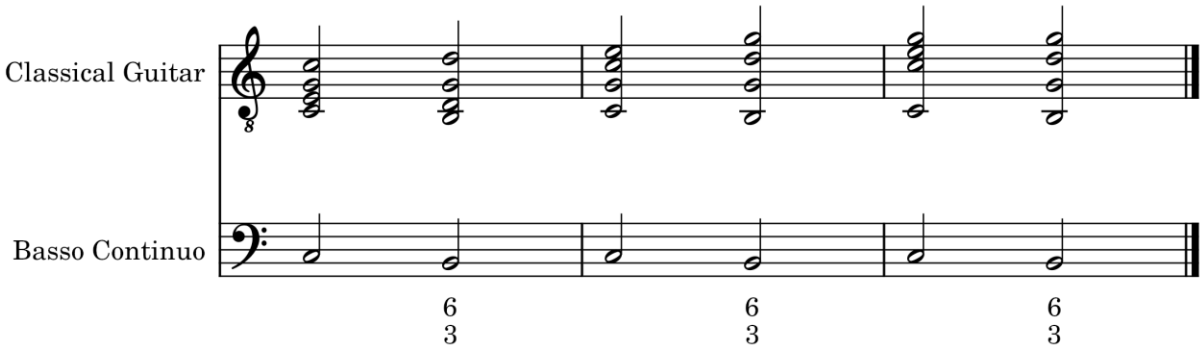

Figure 18. 6 Chord on VIIth Degree, Descending Motion, C Major

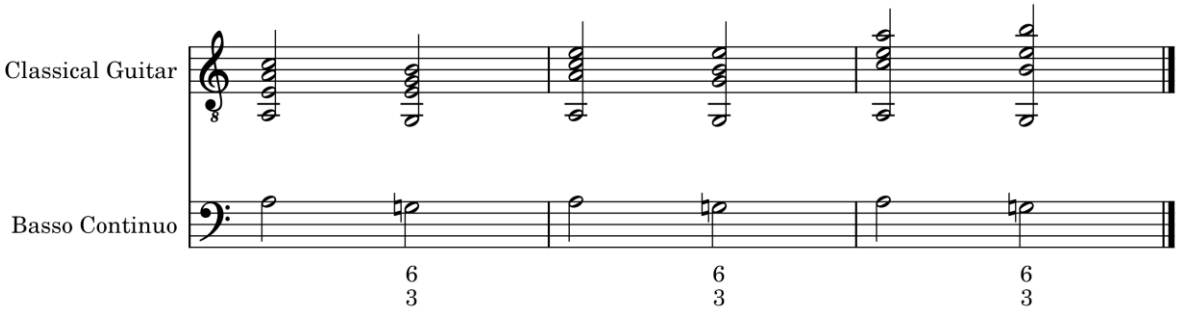

Figure 19. 6 Chord on VIIth Degree, Descending Motion, A Minor

VI Degree of the Scale, Descending Motion

While descending, the sixth degree of the scale is accompanied by a +6 chord, comprising intervals of a minor third, perfect fourth, and major sixth. Due to the use of the melodic minor scale for the rule of octave, the VIth degree also becomes a semitone lower during the descending movement.

For major tonalities the major sixth in this case acts as a leading tone to modulate to the Vth degree of the scale and creates a tenor cadence. For minor tonalities, there is still a modulation to Vth degree of the scale, however the 6 of the VIth degree chord arrives on Vth degree using a whole tone this time, thus creating a phrygian cadence (Zapico, 2013, p. 36).

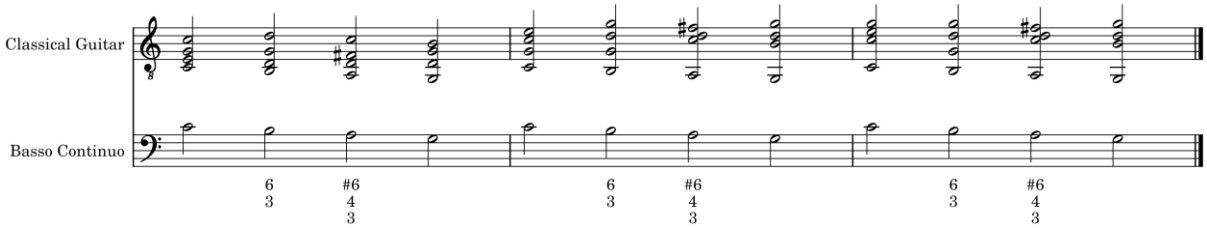

Figure 20. +6 Chord on VIth Degree, Descending Motion, C Major

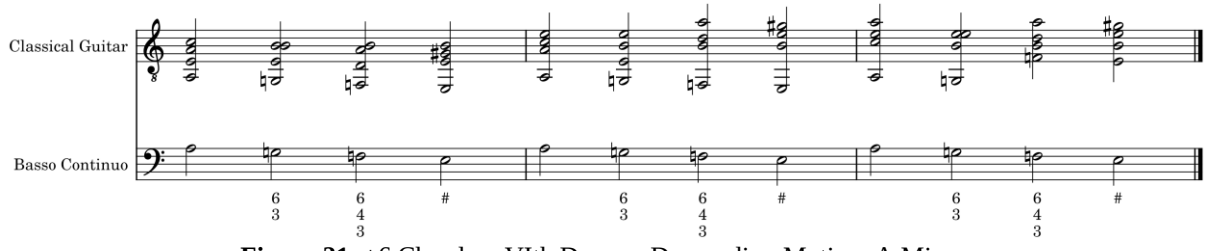

Figure 21. +6 Chord on VIth Degree, Descending Motion, A Minor

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IV & III Degrees of the Scale, Descending Motion

This chord is built with a major second, an augmented fourth, and a major sixth. In the context of the rule of octave, this +4 chord on the descending IV helps set up a return to the main tonality as it resolves to the third degree (III). It is commonly figured with 4+ or $\frac{4}{2}$.

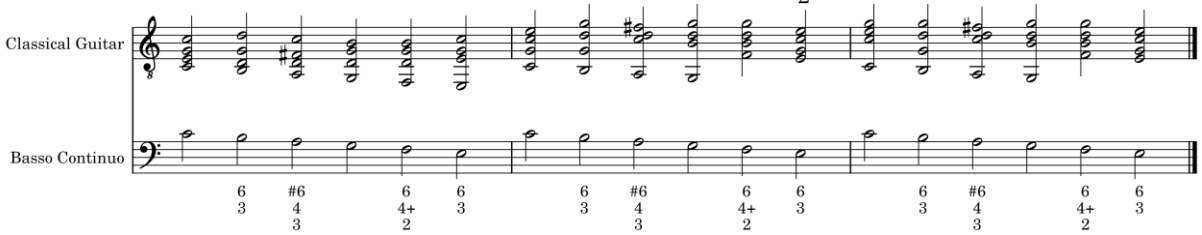

Figure 22. +4 Chord on IVth Degree & 6 Chord on IIIth Degree, Descending Motion, C Major

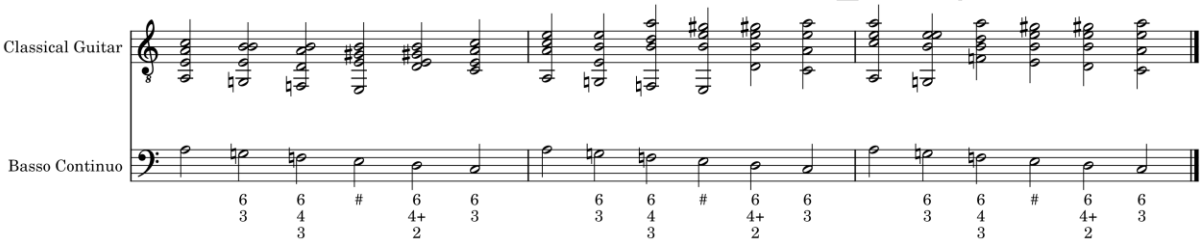

Figure 23. +4 Chord on IVth Degree & 6 Chord on IIIth Degree, Descending Motion, A Minor

II Degree of the Scale and The Rule of Octave, Descending Motion

During the descending motion, the IInd degree of the scale is harmonized to be the same as the ascending motion.

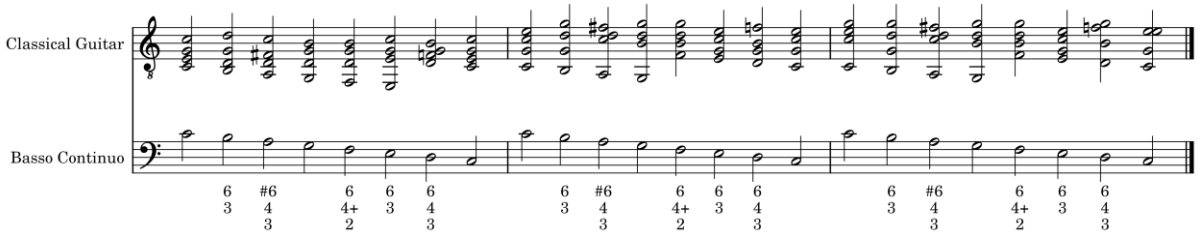

Figure 24. The Rule of Octave, Descending Motion, C Major

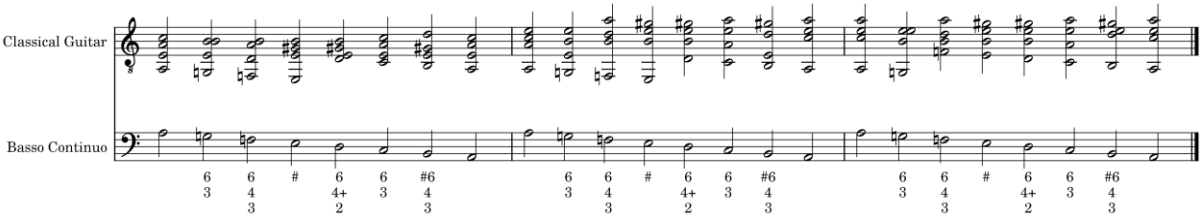

Figure 25. The Rule of Octave, Descending Motion, A Minor

The Rule of Octave in Ascending and Descending Motions

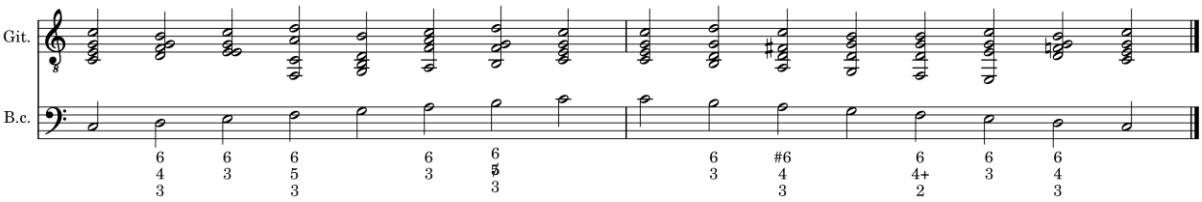

Figure 26. The Rule of Octave, C Major

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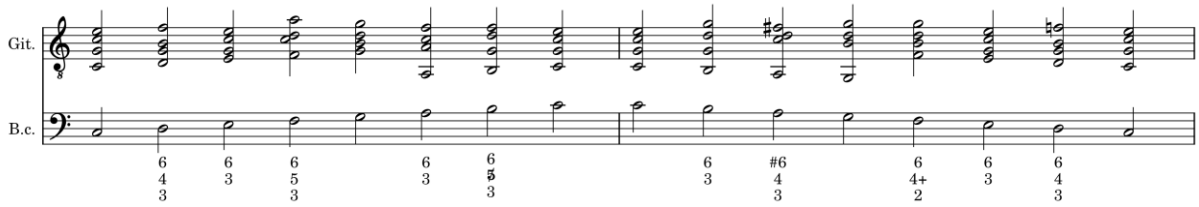

Figure 27. The Rule of Octave, C Major, Alternative Position

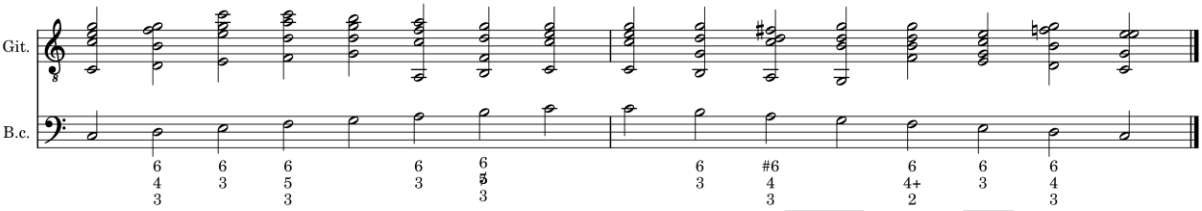

Figure 28. The Rule of Octave, C Major, Alternative Position

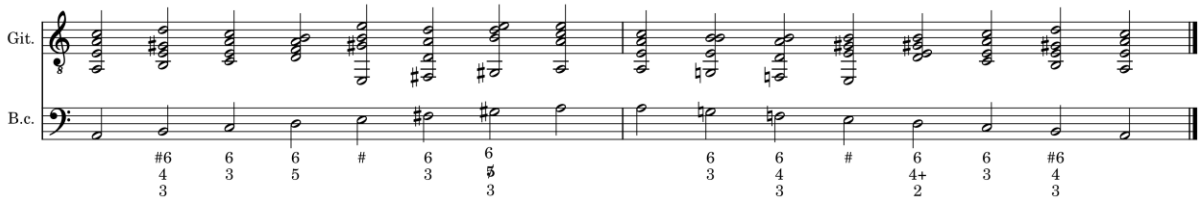

Figure 29. The Rule of Octave, A Minor

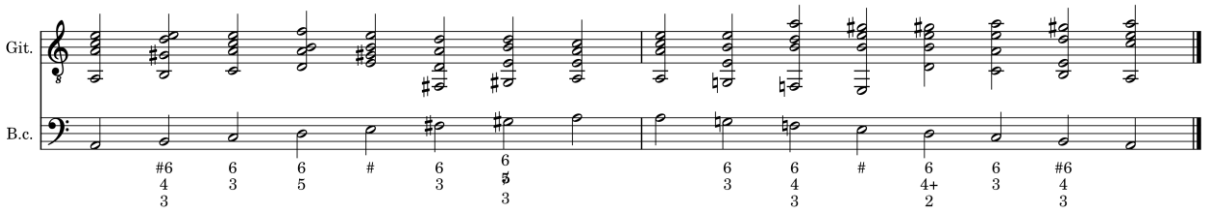

Figure 30. The Rule of Octave, A Minor, Alternative Position

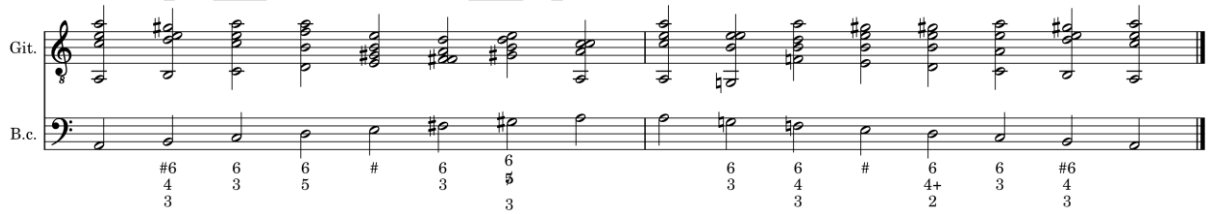

Figure 31. The Rule of Octave, A Minor, Alternative Position

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

This study is centered around the vital pedagogical tool known as the "Rule of Octave," which is employed to master the interpretation of 18th-century basso continuo notation. The primary objective is to enhance existing literature by examining the application of the Rule of Octave in the context of classical guitar performance. With this goal in mind, the "Introduction" section lays the foundation by introducing the concept of accompaniment. It emphasizes the flexibility of accompaniment rules during the baroque and renaissance periods and provides essential background information on the use of basso continuo in accompaniment composition. Subsequently, the study explains the Rule of Octave, a technique utilized in the 18th century for the execution of basso continuo notation. The section also incorporates a review of contemporary literature, evaluating the potential contributions

that an exploration of this subject can offer to the knowledge of present-day musicians. The "Methods" section outlines the approach employed in the study.

Moving to the "Results" section, the Rule of Octave is expounded upon, categorically addressing each degree. The figures derived involves diverse chord voicings across different guitar positions, for the C major and A minor scales. The intention is to progressively build and harmonize the entire scale by incrementally introducing new degrees. Unlike preceding guitar-centric research, this study aims to implement the Rule of Octave from various positions. But due to the guitar's nature, getting perfect chord combinations and voice leading across positions is tough. So, it's suggested that some intervals might need to be left out for many chords due to practical reasons. These findings emphasize the need for more study in this area.

After understanding the octave rule in C Major and A Minor, extending this to more tonalities is beneficial for guitarists and students. Digging into common cadences to conclude phrases, analyzing unfigured basslines known as "partimenti," and studying key modulations are essential for developing basso continuo skills. Nonetheless, for guitarists a commendable first step towards becoming proficient in basso continuo involves mastering the octave rule across different tonalities and practicing the ability to execute it from various positions on the scale. This study is expected to provide more educational materials on the topic. Another desired result is an increased enthusiasm and a subsequent surge in research focused on both the octave rule itself and its application in performing basso continuo on the classical guitar.

Ethics

The author declares that the work is written with due consideration of ethical standards.

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