

Douglas Niedt's GUITAR TECHNIQUE TIP OF THE MONTH

Yes, it's "Doug's Dirty Little Secrets"



I subtitled my Tech Tip "Doug's Dirty Little Secrets" after reading someone's posted message on a guitar web forum. The writer asserted that professional virtuoso guitarists all had secrets they kept to themselves and wouldn't tell anyone else, so no one would play as well as them!



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Guitar Technique Tips of the Month

We Three Kings: The Story Behind the Carol

By Douglas Niedt

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"We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar," goes the famous Christmas carol, but from where? Little is known about the Magi, or three wise men as they've come to be known. Over 2,000 years later, the three kings remain one of the great mysteries of Christ's nativity.

The Three Kings, or as they are commonly known, the Three Wise Men or Wisemen, have long been one of the most mysterious aspects of Christ's nativity. They are mentioned in Matthew's Biblical nativity but not Luke's, and Matthew refers to them, without number, as Magi. In the words of the Church of England, "the visitors were not necessarily wise and not necessarily men." So who exactly were these Magi?

We Three or 12 Astrologers or Magicians

Many traditions surround the Magi. Some people believe that Matthew's nativity is intended to be symbolic rather than literal. But those who believe in the real existence of the Three Kings have put great effort into uncovering their origins.

What is known for sure is that the Magi were followers of the Zoroastrian religion. The word Magi is a complicated one and has been translated many ways, including shaman, sorcerer, wizard, and astrologer. It is also the source of the English words magic and magician.

Zoroastrianism was originally a Persian religion, but in a form of Zoroastrianism known as Zurvanism, Magi was the specific title of a priestly caste that paid great attention to astrology. As Babylon was the center of Zurvanism, some people believe the Magi came from there rather than Persia.

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Some traditions embrace both the symbolic and literal aspects of the Three Wise Men story. The "Three Kings" were seen as real-life symbols of worldwide submission to Christ's rule, and under the names Balthasar, Gaspar/Casper, and Melchior, were reported to be the kings of Arabia, India, and Persia, respectively.

Yet the number three is not found in Matthew's nativity. Eastern traditions put the number of Magi visitors at 12. Although there is no scriptural basis for stating dogmatically that there were three wise men, the belief in Three Wisemen stems solely from Matthew's mention of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as gifts to the holy family. Master artists throughout the centuries have depicted three wise men on camels as one of their favorite nativity themes.

The number of wise men is not important, but the fact that they persisted in following the light that was given them until they found the object of their search, that they responded in worship, and that they returned home to share their experience with others all has much to tell us. Also, the gifts presented to the Christ child were both significant and appropriate: gold, symbolic of His kingly reign; frankincense, symbolic of His priestly ministry; myrrh, symbolic of our redemption through His death.

Following Yonder Planet

The star of Bethlehem that the Three Wise Men were said to follow has also caused great speculation. Skeptics have pointed out that a star would be too high in the sky to indicate a particular town or house, but this has not prevented astronomers from seeking a real-life astronomical event that could have coincided with Christ's nativity.

Some believers in the literal truth of Matthew's nativity story have dismissed astronomy altogether and claimed the Bethlehem star was a one-time miracle. Others have pointed out that the Greek word used, *anatole*, means star rising, suggesting the possibility that the Bethlehem star was actually a planet. Around 2 or 3 B.C. there were several pairings of planets such as Venus and Jupiter that would have produced great visual interest for astronomers such as the Magi. However, the death of King Herod is set at around 4 or 5 B.C., which would disrupt the continuity of Matthew's nativity story.

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Spiritual Symbols

Whatever their number or origin, the Three Kings have become a fundamental part of traditional outdoor nativity scenes. They can be seen as eternal spiritual symbols, or as a mysterious complement to the gospel of Luke's more detailed nativity story. Having endured in our memory, the Three Wise Men certainly deserve their place alongside the holy family.

The Composer

Reverend John Henry Hopkins, Jr., from Pennsylvania, was an author, book illustrator, stained glass window designer, Episcopalian minister and editor of the New York *Church Journal*. He wrote *We Three Kings* for an 1857 Christmas pageant put on by the General Theological Seminary of New York City. In 1863, he also published the Christmas Carol in his book *Carols, Hymns and Song*. Hopkins has been credited with contributing much to the development of music in his denomination during the nineteenth century, writing a number of fine hymns and hymn tunes.

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And now, the Arrangement

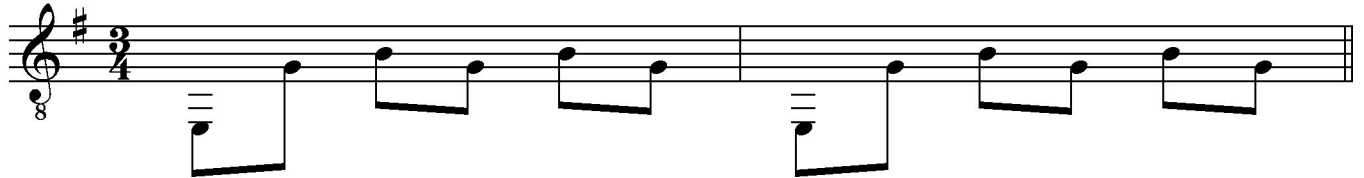
[Listen to me play the arrangement](#) Make sure you listen to the WHOLE clip. I stop part of the way through to explain an alternative way to play it, and then continue on.

(A separate window will open that you can minimize in order to still see the written musical example as you listen.)

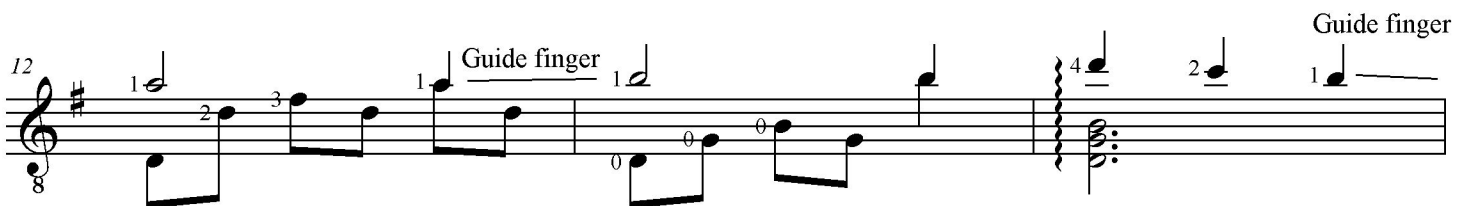
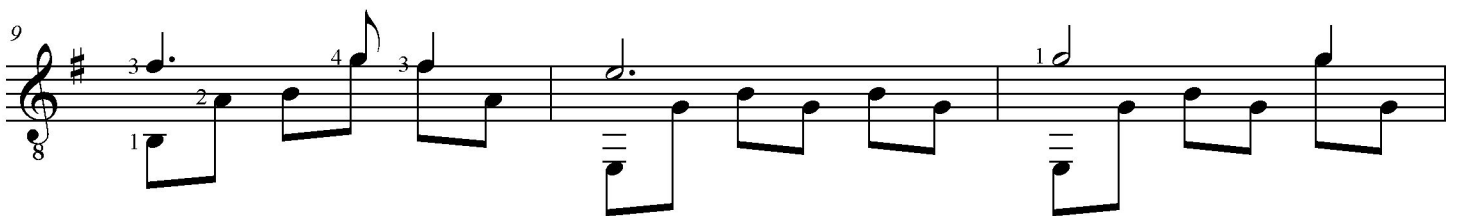
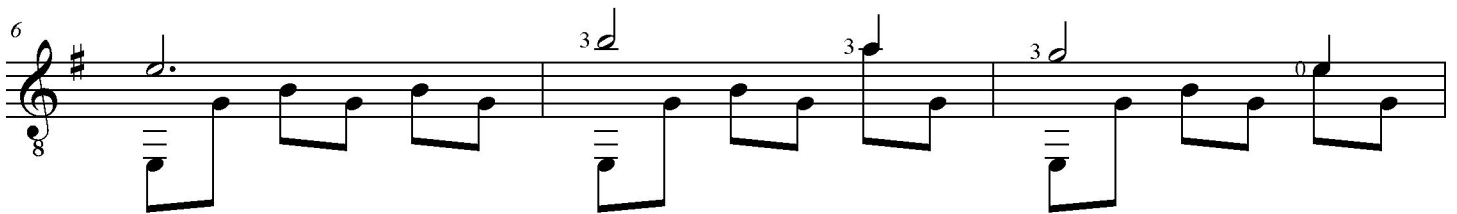
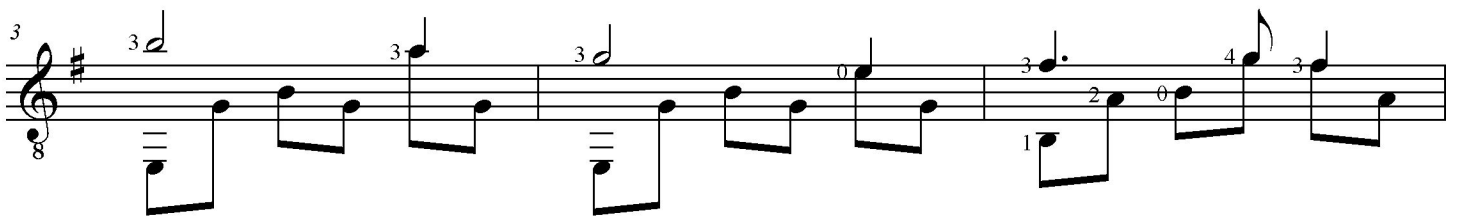
Merry Christmas. Enjoy!

We Three Kings of Orient Are (Three Kings of Orient)

John Henry Hopkins (1820-91)
arr. Douglas Niedt



First Verse



We Three Kings of Orient Are

15

Guide finger

Guide finger

rit.

18

First Refrain

a tempo

21

24

As you are playing, plant the left hand first finger on the first string first fret. Then slide that first finger up to the fifth fret A on the first beat of the next measure.

Slide the left hand 3rd and 4th fingers up one fret to get to next chord

27

Lift left hand first finger here

We Three Kings of Orient Are

30

1 2 3 4 4

Guide finger

0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

Option #1: End here. You're done!

Option #2: Use this measure instead of previous measure and continue into more difficult second verse and second refrain

33

4 0 4

2 1 0 2 2 2 2 2

4 4

2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1

rit.

accel.

Second Verse
a tempo

36

4 2 2 0 2 4 2

2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

39

0 4 4

3 2 0 2 2 2 2 2

4 4

2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

42

4 4 4

2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

3 0 4 2 0 0 0 0

We Three Kings of Orient Are

45 *rit.*

48 *a tempo*

V^④

Second Refrain

51 *Guide fingers*

54

57

We Three Kings of Orient Are

As you are playing, plant the left hand first finger on the first string first fret. Then slide that first finger up to the fifth fret A on the first beat of the next measure.

Musical notation for measures 60-62. Measure 60: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 8/8 time signature. Notes: 4 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 4 (quarter). Bass clef: 2 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 4 (quarter). Measure 61: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 1 (quarter). Bass clef: 4 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 2 (quarter). Measure 62: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 4 (quarter). Bass clef: 2 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 4 (quarter).

Musical notation for measures 63-65. Measure 63: Treble clef: 1 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter). Bass clef: 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Measure 64: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 4 (quarter). Bass clef: 1 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Measure 65: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Bass clef: 1 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter). Measure 65 ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

Musical notation for measures 66-68. Measure 66: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 3 (quarter). Bass clef: 0 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Measure 67: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Bass clef: 0 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 2 (quarter). Measure 68: Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 3 (quarter), 1 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Bass clef: 2 (quarter), 2 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter).

Musical notation for measure 69. Treble clef: 4 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter). Bass clef: 2 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter), 0 (quarter).