

The First Birds of Morning

by Jerry Rockwell

Tuning: DAD

1 D A Bm A G

4 4 2 3 1 0 1 2 1 2 1 2 3

5 D A G Asus4 A D

4 2 3 1 0 1 3 3 2 3 2 3

9 D A Bm A G

0 3 2 3 1 2 0 2 0 2 0 1 2 3

13 D A G Asus4 A D

0 0 0 2 3 1 2 0 1 3 3 2 0 4

17 D A Bm A G

2 4 2 1 2 0 2 0 1 4

21 D A G Asus4 A D

2 4 1 2 1 3 3 2 3

Beginning Level Instruction

Tuning: DAD

on The First Birds of Morning

by Jerry Rockwell

D	A	Bm	A	G
0	4	5	4	3
4 0	4	5	4	3
4 0	4	5	4	3

Here are the first four measures of The First Birds of Morning. This is a very simple chord part that serves as a back-up to melody players. When you are beginning, learning to play backing parts will help you a lot: it helps you to follow along with the music, and it helps you build some confidence in your rhythm. I usually play these "power chords" with my left-hand pinky, ring, and middle fingers on the melody, middle, and bass strings. When you play them as block chords the way they're written above, try strumming from the bass to the melody in an inward sweep.

Below you'll see the whole eight bar form. Once you get this down you can just play this over and over while the other parts will be changing each time through. An accompaniment part like this is bedrock for the whole jamming experience: it really can hold everyone together! Play it as slow as you need to at first then gradually build your speed. When you feel like you've got it, try playing along with the mp3 - don't expect to get it perfect the first time! Remember, you can always go back to the block chords shown at the top of the page. These are just arpeggios or "broken chords" and you can experiment with the order and picking patterns, as long as you stay on each chord for the prescribed number of beats:

D	A	Bm	A	G
0	4	5	4	3
0 0 0	4 4 4	5 5 4	3 3 3	3

D	A	G	A	D
0	4	3	4	0
0 0 0	4 4 4	3 3 4	4	0 0

Intermediate Level Instruction on First Birds of Morning

At the intermediate level, we're going to cover some more interesting and detailed ways of playing back-up arpeggios. These are just seeds to get you started with your own ideas. The first 8 bars are block chords, and they sound great just as they are: I usually strum inward from the bass string to the melody. A brush like this at the beginnings of each measure is a very nice way to create some texture!

The other use for these block chords is to try different ways of playing arpeggios. You don't have to follow my suggestions for how to play these - which you'll see in the following 8 bar passage - because there are MANY ways to break up these chord tones. Please try your own combinations and patterns. If you finger-pick like I do, you might find many picking patterns that you are more familiar with, and that you can play without "thinking" about.

The other thought about playing arpeggios in a back up situation is to try and simplify your playing as much as you can. For example, instead of playing on the quarter-note and eighth-note level as I did below, why not try mostly half-notes? At first you might think that's too simple or slow, but it is exactly this sparseness that can be wonderful and magical! If you play with a group, be sure and try this.

	D	A/C#	Bm	A	G
7	6+	5	4	3	
4 5	4	3	2	1	
4 4	4	2	1	0	
5	D/F#	A	G	A	D
2	4	3	4	0	
0	2	1	0	0	
0	1	0	1	2	
9	D	A/C#	Bm	A	G
7	6+	5	4	3	
5 4	4 4	3 4	2 2	0 1	
4 4	4 4	2 2	0 0	0 0	
13	D	A/C#	G/B	A	D
7	6+	5	4	4	
5 4	4 4	3 3	4 4	4	
4 4	4 4	3 3	4 4	0	

Advanced Level Instruction on Light Into Darkness chords (D-A-Bm-G)

by Jerry Rockwell - May 2017

Here are nine pages worth of studies, ideas, insights, and charts on the first section of First Birds of Morning. If I go deeper into any musical form, like a chord progression or bass line, I find it much easier to spin out new melodic ideas, improvisations, and counter-melodies. If you work through this material at your own pace, I hope you'll find some sparks of inspiration. It might even form the basis of a whole new piece of music of your very own!!

Any way you shake it, try to enjoy the music as much as you can: don't feel pressured to master everything.....you might just find a few measures of one tune and savor that. Please don't feel overwhelmed! I'm always overwhelmed when I browse guitar books in a music store, because there's a part of me that KNOWS I won't really put the effort into playing the music in these books - I just don't have the time, and in many cases, the ability to play the tunes. So you might think of some of this stuff as a resource (yes—I know that this is how many of my music books of all kinds end up in huge stacks.....the rare bird that is the "Round Tuitt"), and let it gently wash over you.

Light Into Darkness Sequences (in Waltz Time) is the first study on these chords. More about sequences in later in this document.

More Sequences on D-A-Bm-G is next, and this study is in 4/4 with two measures on each chord. The second page of this study has some interesting passages of continually ascending half notes. This study is fun to use as a kind of "ground" part - or lower part for writing a higher melody.

More Sequences - Basic is a page of explanations about what melodic sequences are, and how the dulcimer's fretboard just "does them for you" — using the beginning measures of the More Sequences study.

More Sequences - Details and Analysis goes into more depth about how the melodic sequences in the first 8 bars of the study work, and this might help you to work with your own sequences. If you look up search terms such as "tonal sequences" vs. "real sequences" and "real transpositions" vs. "tonal transpositions" on Google, this will give you MUCH more insight into these devices. If you have access to a piano or electronic keyboard, I strongly suggest playing some of the studies on that.

Light Into Darkness (Baroque-flavored round) — this is a 4-Part round that should be great fun for your dulcimer club or ensemble. Most of the parts are fairly slow and easy, and since they all work together, you can mix and match parts and instruments to your heart's content. As a solo player, if you are feeling ambitious, try playing more than one part on your solo dulcimer!!

Fingerboard Charts for D - A7 - Bm - G — even though I rarely use the A7 when I'm doing this progression, I decided to include it in this chord reference page.....you might find it works for you. There are two charts for each chord: one for note names (D, F#, A), and the other for chord ingredients (R, 3, 5), kind of like a recipe for building a chord. Both are helpful, but knowing where the Root and 5th of each chord lays out on the fingerboard is incredibly useful.