

How To Play “Adore You” by Harry Styles

National Standards: 1-9

Harry Styles’ 2019 single “Adore You” was a coming-of-age moment for the former boyband star. The second single from his sophomore album *Fine Line*, it topped the Billboard Pop Songs radio chart and proved that Harry wouldn’t fall victim to the sophomore slump. It provided an early glimpse into what would become Styles’ signature sound, with lush, modern production that didn’t hide its affinity for the pop giants of decades past. This feature dives into the inner workings of the hit song and explains how to recreate it in a live setting.

Prepare

Like any good pop song, the centerpiece of “Adore You” is the earworm vocals. However, the magic that props up the vocal lies in the arrangement. Although the chord progression of the song stays the same throughout the whole song, a sense of unstoppable momentum underlies the entire three minutes. This is achieved by adding and removing instruments at crucial points in the song, which builds dynamic excitement and propels the song forward. Ask students if they can think of any other songs that use only one chord progression and listen to an example. How does that song keep the momentum going?

Key points in the article:

- Harry Styles is the latest in a long line of pop stars who rose to prominence as part of a group before launching a solo career. Far and away the most successful former member of One Direction, Harry has won a GRAMMY, reached the top of the charts, and even starred in major motion pictures.
- “Adore You” demonstrates how clever arrangements and dynamics can propel a song forward, especially when the chord progression remains the same throughout the entire song. Although the song sounds lush and exciting, it features relatively few instruments for a pop song and a simple, straightforward vocal.
- “Adore You” translates well to a live arrangement, demonstrated by Styles’ own band. They make a few subtle changes for the sake of feel (like swapping an electric bass for the synth bass part), but the overall impact of the song remains the same. With a classic guitar/bass/drums lineup and a clever keyboard player or two, any ensemble can create their own version of the song.

Begin

Have students listen to the album version of “Adore You” and then read the article. After reading, listen to the live version linked in the feature. Notice any subtle differences in the sound

and feel of the arrangement, as well as any differences in the way Styles approaches the vocal in a live setting.

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Dynamic:** characterized by constant change, activity, or progress
- **Momentum:** the impetus and driving force gained by the development of a process or course of events
- **Propulsive:** having the quality of driving or pushing forward
- **Syncopated:** characterized by displaced beats or accents so that the strong beats are weak and vice versa
- **Ethereal:** extremely delicate and light in a way that seems too perfect for this world

Discuss

Listen to the singles “Sign of the Times,” “Two Ghosts,” and “Kiwi” from Styles’ eponymous debut album. Discuss with students the differences in sound and personality of the records. How did his style evolve between his first two albums? Do students notice signs of growth in his songwriting or vocal abilities? How did Styles prevent the dreaded sophomore slump and send *Fine Line* to the top of the charts?

Q&A

1. How many Brit Awards has Harry Styles won?
2. Which two effects are featured on the guitar parts on “Adore You?”
3. On which television show did One Direction make their debut?
4. How is the ‘telephone filter’ effect created?
5. What is the British equivalent of a GRAMMY?

Answers

1. Two
2. Chorus and Octave Divider
3. *X-Factor*
4. By electronically filtering out the highest and lowest frequencies
5. Ivor Novello

Expand

Create an ensemble of students modeled after Styles’ live band: guitar, bass, drums, two keyboards, and three vocalists. As noted in the article, it can also be done with only one keyboard and one vocalist if necessary. Have students cover the song as closely to the original as possible, paying close attention to how the dynamics are affected by the presence or absence of each instrument (like when the bass drops out in the prechorus). Then play it again, removing the dynamic touches on the record one by one (for instance, have the bass play through the prechorus, or remove the syncopated electric piano from the second verse). Notice how each

dramatically affects the momentum of the song. Have students develop their own arrangement of the song and make it as different from the record as possible. Can they devise their own dynamic strategies to keep the song moving?

Chord Stacking

National Standards: 1-9

For musicians in most modern popular styles, proficiency in simple major and minor chords (and maybe a 7th chord here or there) is usually enough to get by. But what about those styles of music that thrive on more harmonically complex sounds? For many beginner and intermediate musicians, trying to decipher a b9 or #11 chord on a lead sheet is like trying to read hieroglyphics. Fortunately, there is a simple technique that breaks these dense chords into digestible pieces: chord stacking. By focusing on the triads or 7th chords within larger chord voicings, students can approach them with more confidence and deeper understanding.

Prepare

Make sure students have a solid understanding of building triads and seventh chords, reviewing if necessary. A keyboard lab is the ideal setting for this lesson, allowing students to play through each example and hear the sounds of each chord as they read. Depending on grade level, have students read and play through the article themselves, or provide demonstrations of each example before letting students play through it on their own. Be prepared to answer questions as needed.

Key points in the article:

- Many styles of popular music rely primarily on three-note triads and four-note 7th chords, but more harmonically adventurous styles like jazz and R&B often feature chords with upper extensions (9ths, 11ths, and 13ths). These may be intimidating to players who are unfamiliar with them, but when deconstructed, these larger extended chords can be viewed as two smaller chords stacked on top of each other.
- Triads can be stacked from the 3rd, 5th, or 7th of the bottom chord to form extended voicings. Experimenting with different triads or seventh chords starting on different degrees of the bottom chord will yield a plethora of harmonic variations.
- As the chord stacks get denser and more complex, it may be necessary to alter your voicing and omit redundant notes. When stacking a 7th chord off the 7th of the bottom chord, nearly every note in the key is played simultaneously- experiment with leaving out the 5th, 9th, or any other chord extension to yield different textures and harmonies.

Begin

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Triad:** a set of three notes that can be stacked vertically in thirds
- **Chromatic:** containing notes that are outside the seven-note diatonic (i.e., major and minor) scales and modes

- **Myriad:** a countless or extremely great number
- **Upper Extensions:** notes above the chord tones (i.e. the 9th, 11th, and 13th) which extend and add color to the chord
- **Scalar:** of or relating to a musical scale

Discuss

Ask students to share which of the chord stacking techniques created their favorite sounding chords, demonstrating on their keyboard for the class if possible. Were they most drawn to 9ths, 11ths, 13ths, or one of the chromatic variations? Were there any chords or voicings in the example that they found unpleasant? Ask if the chord they liked most (or least!) reminded them of a song they knew, and listen to the recording to see if students can pinpoint where the chord was used.

Q&A

1. In which century did composers begin using chords to accompany their melodies?
2. How many notes are in a 13th chord?
3. What type of chord results from building a minor triad on the 5th of a major chord below it?
4. What chord results from stacking C half diminished over D7?
5. What are two styles of music that often feature the type of extended chords discussed in this lesson

Answers

1. 17th century
2. Seven
3. Dominant 9th chord
4. D7b9b13
5. Jazz and R&B

Expand

Assign an example chord progression that uses only triads or seventh chords, preferably a popular song that students will know. Have them learn the progression in its original form. Then, have them apply their favorite chord stacking technique from the lesson to each chord in the assigned progression, adding upper extensions and modifying the voicings in a way that is pleasing to their ear. Have students demonstrate their modified, chord-stacked versions of the example progression for the class. Notice how many variations are possible and how many harmonic textures can be created from the same chord progression.

Ingrid Andress

National Standards: 7-8, 10-11

Rising country-pop star Ingrid Andress is a storyteller at heart. Even when the major labels and radio stations started clamoring for slickly produced anthems about trucks, boots, and boats, Andress stuck to her guns and forged a style that is both authentic and innovative. She leaned into her outsider status and used her earnest, introspective songwriting approach to stand out in a sea of cookie-cutter Nashville strivers. Now, with the acclaim of country legends and some key award nominations, she’s forging her own path in the music industry.

Prepare

Have students listen to a few songs from Andress’ 2022 album *Good Person* and her 2020 debut *Lady Like*. Make a list of the lyrical themes explored in the songs, and take note of any lyrical devices she employs (metaphors, sensory information, etc). Give specific examples. What instruments are prominent in her songs? Have students offer their opinions on whether her songwriting style fits neatly in the country genre or if it should be considered something else. Are there any artists to whom students would compare her sound?

Key points in the article:

- Andress was drawn to country music for its storytelling and emotional honesty, and her own songs follow suit. These elements are less common in modern mainstream country, which favors party-ready anthems and mass marketability. As a result, Andress has distanced herself from the genre and developed her own sound, which has been described as “soulful country-pop.” Even when she collaborates with radio stars like Sam Hunt and Keith Urban, she stays true to her own songwriting values to create thoughtful, evocative songs.
- As a home-schooled child, Andress was prevented from listening to secular music by her mother (who was also her first music teacher). These attempts were unsuccessful, as Andress’ rebellious streak led her to recruit friends to burn her CDs of music that was forbidden in her home. She internalized the attitude of an outsider, which continued through her time in Boston at Berklee College of Music and her earlier days in Nashville. She eventually gave up trying to fit in to the Nashville music scene, and as soon as she did, she found herself with more industry attention than ever before.
- Now that Andress is a GRAMMY nominee with a rapidly growing fanbase, critiques from genre purists about whether her music is “real country” have little effect on her, professionally or personally. She continues to pursue her singular sound, regardless of what others call it, and encourages others to do the same.

Begin

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Sentiment:** a view of or attitude toward a situation or event; an opinion
- **Allegory:** a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one
- **Frivolous:** not having any serious purpose or value
- **Ethos:** the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations
- **Secular:** denoting attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis

Discuss

Look up the top country songs of 2020, the year Andress' debut album was released, and listen to several of them. Analyze the lyrics and the instrumentation to see if students notice any trends. What do they have in common? Do they sound similar? Next, compare them to Andress' music. What similarities do you notice? What differences? If you were an executive at a country record label, would Andress' music stand out to you? Why do you think she made such a large impression on the industry at that point in time?

O&A

1. Where did Ingrid Andress grow up?
2. Which music college did Andress attend?
3. What was her father's profession?
4. How many GRAMMY nominations has Andress received?
5. Which country legend did Andress tour with in 2022?

Answers

1. Denver, CO
2. Berklee College of Music
3. Coach for the Colorado Rockies baseball team
4. Three
5. Keith Urban

Expand

For a songwriting assignment, have students choose one of the previously selected hit country singles from 2020 and rewrite it in the style of Ingrid Andress. Analyze the lyrical theme closely and determine how Andress would approach the subject. Alternatively, have students choose an Andress song and rewrite it in the style of a 2020 country radio hit. How would Andress' lyrical ideas need to be modified to fit what record labels were looking for at the time? Have students perform their selections and give feedback.

The Marching Arts 2023

National Standards: 7-8, 10-11

In short, the marching arts are back and in full swing. Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted and marching ensembles from middle school to professional corps are looking to recruit and fill gaps left in their rosters by the dormant years of the pandemic. There are opportunities for musicians at every level, from first-time marchers to aspiring pros, as well as a plethora of resources to help master the craft and nail any audition.

Prepare

Have students find YouTube videos of marching performances from each of the following levels: high school, college, and professional (DCI/WGI). Find at least two examples of each level. First, have students compare the marching styles and musical choices of ensembles of the same level (how does College A's performance differ from College B?). Then, compare the performances of different levels of ensembles. Are there noticeable differences in the musical abilities of the high school ensembles and college ensembles? In their marching formations? What elements do the professional corps have in their shows that no one else can do?

Key points in the article:

- After being sidelined by the pandemic, marching is back as strong as ever. However, for the middle and high school classes who had to miss a year (or more) of marching, there is an experience gap. Many marching bands still have positions to fill, making now the perfect time for anyone interested in marching to join up. Even if you don't play a traditional marching instrument, many bands now include a wider range of instruments. If you don't play an instrument at all, there's never been a better time to learn.
- Auditioning for a college marching program can be intimidating, to say the least, but there is no shortage of great advice on how to approach it. First priority should be your own musicianship- it's easier to teach a great player to march well than it is to teach a great marcher to play well. Likewise, don't feel that your audition piece needs to be high and fast. Picking a piece well within your skill range and playing it beautifully will likely leave a better impression than stumbling through a more advanced piece. Most of all, don't be afraid to reach out to band directors and current band members before you audition.
- Drum Corps International is considered the highest level of marching and features elite corps staging outdoor performances around the country. Winter Guard International is a similar institution but focuses instead on indoor performances during the winter. Participating in DCI or WGI is considered a badge of honor for anyone in the marching world and looks great on the resume of any future band director or music teacher.

Begin

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Flourishing:** developing rapidly and successfully; thriving
- **Bevy:** a large group of people or things of a particular kind
- **Exhilarating:** making one feel very happy, animated, or elated; thrilling
- **Compile:** produce (something, especially a list, report, or book) by assembling information collected from other sources
- **Unprecedented:** never done or known before

Discuss

In a group discussion, ask if any of the instrumentation or repertoire of the previously viewed marching ensembles surprised them. Were there any instruments used that students had never seen in a marching band format, and if so, does anyone in the class play that instrument? Have they ever considered joining a marching band? Ask students if they recognized any of the music they heard. Were they arrangements of modern pop songs, old standards, or original music composed exclusively for marching ensembles? Did anything they saw change their perception of what the marching arts were about?

O&A

1. What year did Winter Guard International start?
2. What is University of Michigan's John D. Pasqualeis' most important piece of advice for auditioning for a college ensemble?
3. Which organization is known as *Marching Music's Major League*?
4. What does Dr. David Thornton of Michigan State University recommend to prepare for an audition?
5. What does Christopher Hoch of Ohio State consider the most important quality in a marching student?

Answers

1. 1977
2. "Playing appropriate repertoire beautifully"
3. Drum Corps International (DCI)
4. Consistent preparation and mock auditions
5. Strong musicianship

Expand

If available, have students watch footage of their own school's marching ensemble, or even other schools in the district. Have students make note of any stylistic similarities they notice between their own school and others of their grade level. Were there any song choices made by the college or professional corps students would like to hear their own school ensemble perform? Ask students what cues they would take from any of the higher-level ensembles they viewed if they were a band director.