



Beyond the Basics

The Art and Science of Playing the Lute

The Hinge Bar

Remember the hinge bar, and also the reverse hinge bar. Neither one is difficult to execute, but they are under-used by most players. Maybe we just forget that they exist when we work out our fingering strategies.



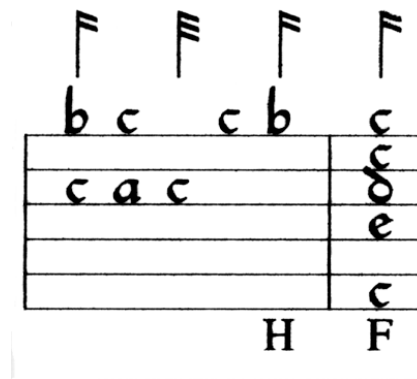
Photo #1 - front view

The hinge bar is created by laying the side of the left hand index finger against the 1st string. (See photos #1 and #2.) Unlike the full bar, a hinge bar is placed at an angle to the fingerboard, so that the bass strings remain free to ring. It is sometimes used for the 2nd course as well, and it often precedes a full bar.

Use the hinge bar whenever it makes the execution of a passage easier than using the 1st finger on the tip. This is often the case, when the index finger is used on the chantarelle immediately before it is needed in the bass.



Photo #2 - player's view



Example #1: Fantasie by Gregorio Huwet (m. 16-17)

H = hinge bar
F = full bar

In Huwet's Fantasie the hinge bar is an elegant solution to an otherwise awkward fingering. The hand slides easily from a hinge bar on the 1st fret to a full bar on the 2nd fret. (Pictured in photos #2 and #3.)

This example begins with a full bar on the 2nd fret. The hinge bar is created at the third bass note of the measure: The tip of the index finger lifts off the fret, to allow the open bass note to ring, while the treble remains firmly stopped by the bar. On the last note of the measure, the full bar returns to stop the bass note at the 2nd fret.

Example #2: Il est bel et Bon intabulated by Marco dall Aquila (m. 4)

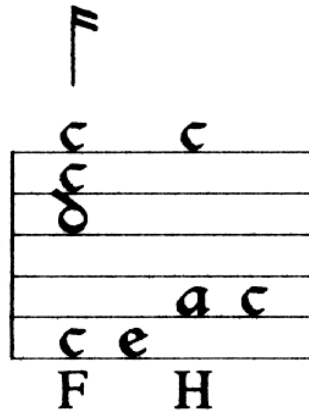
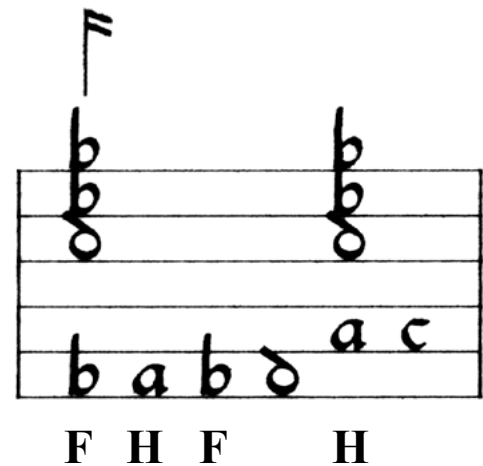


Photo #3 - full bar

This is similar to example #2. Beginning with a full bar on the 1st fret, the fingertip end of the bar is twice lifted to allow open bass notes to ring, while the first and second courses must be clearly stopped by the bar throughout the measure. For this hinge bar, in order to keep firm contact with the 1st and 2nd courses, do not lift the fingertip any higher than necessary for the open bass notes to sound.



Example #3: La Traditora by Marco dall Aquila (m. 6)

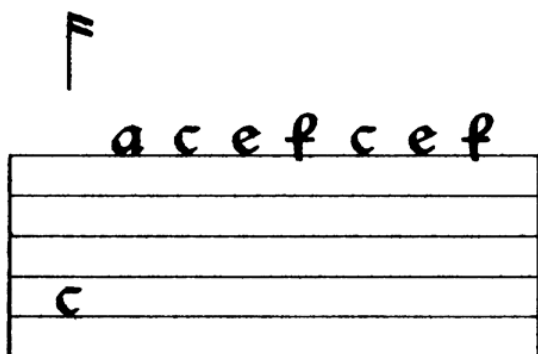


Example #4: Fantasia #38 by Francesco da Milano (m. 11)

In this case, the hinge bar is a good solution because the index finger is needed on the 4th course/ 2nd fret; then, it is needed immediately on the first string/second fret. By using the fingertip on the 4th course, then laying down a hinge bar for the first string, a smooth fingering transition is made possible. In the reverse hinge, the tip joint of the left hand index finger is flattened against one or more bass strings, while keeping the rest of the finger raised so that the treble strings are untouched:



Photo #4: the reverse hinge bar



H F

**Example #5 (reverse hinge bar):
Pavana La Malcontenta by
Pietro Paolo Borrono (m. 22)**

In the case of Queen Elizabeth's Galliard (m. 7), be sure that the flattened tip of your reverse-hinge clearly covers both the 5th and 6th courses at the second fret. The reverse-hinge then lowers into a full bar chord, to stop notes on the first and second courses. Finally, on the last note of the measure, the reverse hinge bar returns, to allow the open first string to sound while continuing to hold the bass.

