

My personal approach of using the Iranian santour

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The harmonies on the santour - 2: Playing the chords

In a series of texts, I present the construction of harmonies on the santour. The present text is the second one of the series. *These texts consider that the reader has the theoretical knowledge of harmonies: what is a chord, what distinguishes a major chord from a minor chord etc.*

In the following, I will illustrate the different ways of playing the chords on the santour.

The figure 1 shows an Em chord in three notes. Executions 1 and 2 are like the executions of chords on the bow instruments, like the violin and cello. These ways of execution present a certain efficiency for “bringing out” the voices in a composition (bass and melody, canon or polyphony...). Personally, in most cases, I find execution 3 to be more effective, and native to the spirit of the santour. It is a manner of performing an arpeggio, by “rolling” the notes, from the flattest to the sharpest, as quickly as possible.

The figure shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The chord is labeled 'Em'. The notation is divided into three sections:

- Written:** A single chord symbol 'Em' with a vertical line through it, indicating a sustained chord.
- Played:** Two different ways of playing the chord. Execution 1 shows two mallets (V) striking the notes simultaneously. Execution 2 shows two mallets (V) striking the notes in a sequence.
- Preferred execution:** A single mallet (V) striking the notes in a sequence, creating an arpeggiated effect.

Red circles with numbers 1, 2, and 3 are placed below the staff to identify the three execution methods. Below the staff, the text reads: "The order and placement of the mezbabs (mallets) are given as an indication. They can be changed or switched."

Figure 1

The figure 2 presents the case of chords with 4 or more notes. The same methods of execution are applied to these chords, as well as the possibility of combining them.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The chord is labeled 'Em'. The notation is divided into three sections: 'Written', 'Played', and 'Preferred execution'. The 'Written' section shows the chord as a single block of notes. The 'Played' section shows the chord as two groups of notes, each with a mallet indicator 'V' above it. The 'Preferred execution' section shows the chord as a single block of notes with a mallet indicator 'V' above it. Below the staff, three red circles with white numbers 4, 5, and 6 are positioned under the 'Written', 'Played', and 'Preferred execution' sections respectively.

The order and placement of the mezbabs (mallets) are given as an indication. They can be changed or switched.

Figure 2