

Fabulous Fill-Ins

How to Fill Out Melodies Intuitively

at the

Phoenix Autoharp Retreat

Lucille Reilly, instructor

Sunday dinner, Feb. 19, 2023 through Wednesday
dinner, Feb. 22, 2023 (a.k.a. Cherry Pie Day!)

(Note: Monday, Feb. 20, 2023 is President's Day!)

Fill-ins, those extra strokes autoharpists play to enliven long melody notes, also contribute to harmony, rhythm, rock-solid tempo, energy, etc. Stroke symbols in music scores let us fill-in by eye, but is it possible to know *how* to fill in melodies *intuitively* by feel and by ear, almost without thinking? YES. All will be revealed in *Fabulous Fill-ins* at the 2023 Phoenix Autoharp Retreat.

During three days of step-by-step instruction, *Fabulous Fill-ins* will cover:

- the basic mechanics of fill-ins, which we'll apply right away to simple songs;
- varying the basic mechanics through rhythm and harmony;
- the one common playing action that's central to all fill-ins;
- how to make every melody sing clearly over all kinds of fills;
- special effects, like "long" fills and "un-chorded" fills;
- to fill, or not to fill? (both are the question!);
- personal time to fill in *your* favorite songs and make them your own;
- answers to your questions and more!

Fabulous Fill-Ins will equip you to play your favorite songs and tunes with just the right amount of pizzazz or pathos from "the beginning." (See *About "The Beginning"* on page 10 for more.) You do *not* need to know how to fill in melodies beforehand; Lucille Reilly is ready to teach you How to do it! You'll come away making music on the autoharp with new ease, resonance, fullness and joy!

PAR's three days of instruction also include supportive handouts, good fellowship, engaging music discussions, delicious meals, a closing celebration of everyone's accomplishments and more. Join us at PAR February 19-22, 2023!

The Phoenix Autoharp Retreat is limited to 14 PARticipants to maximize on personal attention towards autoharping proficiency. Reserve your spot today by filling out the registration form on pages 7-9.2

List of Playing Actions Needed for Fabulous Fill-Ins

The following short list of playing actions needs to be part of your playing *before* PAR begins. With these in place, we can dive in to filling in melodies right away:

Basic strumming by stroking down/up constantly. If you can strum rhythm, that's fine, too.

Seamless chord changes while strumming constantly and when playing melody.

Six simple songs of your choosing that you like and can play well using: Pinch: to sound most melody tones with lower strings/pitches to add harmony.

Pluck: of a single string with one/any finger. Plucks are occasional actions that usually follow pinches to complete melody playing.

NOTE: None of the above skills needs to be perfect (whew!). Lucille Reilly will help you polish them up at PAR so you sound beautiful. However, your string hand does need to be familiar with all of the skills listed, even when playing just a handful of tunes.

A musical teaching moment

I especially liked becoming aware of various ways to help the autoharp sound full and beautiful... My playing improved and I feel confident to continue playing the autoharp. [*Lucille replies: Hooray!*] —HM, Arizona3

Essential Items for PAR 2023: Fabulous Fill-Ins

Autoharp: Of course! Your autoharp of choice can be chromatic, *or* GD or GDA diatonic. Whatever autoharp you bring, be sure it has *all* of the following chords for playing in The People's Keys of G & D major:

C, G, D, A; Am, Em, Bm, F#m; D7, A7

A word about diatonic autoharps: Diatonic autoharps come both with and without lock bars. Because we will be depressing chord bars continuously throughout PAR 2023, you won't need lock bars, so all is well. Should your autoharp have lock bars, leave them on (you might like to use them when jamming informally). Also, we won't be using "offbeat" chords like sus4 or m7, but again, if your autoharp has them, leave them on. They will be fun for jamming, too.

A word about chromatic autoharps: It is ready for PAR as long as it has all the chords listed above.

Autoharp Stabilizer: *required*; the autoharp needs to support itself without your arms' help so that you and your arms can move freely to play any to all of its strings.

Hip Pouch (for playing the autoharp upright): Fill the pouch with peanuts *in the shell*, pistachio shells or large, dry beans. Do **not** use Styrofoam peanuts or tons of plastic grocery sacks; they *do not work!*

To see a photo of a suitably sized pouch, visit <http://thedulcimerlady.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/fpack-CD-headon.jpg> Also, note the belt-length requirements at <https://thedulcimerlady.com/teaching/fohp/>; the belt needs to be longer than you think for the hip pouch to do its job! Finally, the zipper works for you when it follows the edge of a *curved* lid, as shown in the photo. The zipper should *not* go over the top and across the center of a wide gusset.

Pouches of similar size and design can often be found at local thrift shops.

Guitar Strap (for playing the autoharp on the lap): Look for an adjustable strap that can extend long enough to set the autoharp some distance from the torso. (The strap needs to be longer than you think!) Obviously, a guitar strap needs to be attached to an autoharp with screw-in strap buttons; have these buttons installed before coming to PAR.

Picks: Absolutely! (no bare fingers; they cramp the string hand)

Bring three finger picks of the same brand and material, plus a thumb pick with a firm, broad blade (a "flicker" style thumb pick blade is too thin and flexible for sounding firm bass pitches).

I learned more in three days at PAR than at any of the festivals I've attended. PAR gave me permission to play more strings and produce a full sound....well worth the time and money! —MC, Arizona4

Meet PAR's Instructor

Lucille Reilly

2019 Autoharp Hall of Famer

1995/2010/2015 Mountain Laurel Autoharp Champion

1995/2003/2010 International Autoharp Champion

Life-long performer

Former feature editor of "The Diatonic Corner" in *Autoharp Quarterly* magazine and

Accidental Autoharp Historian

"The best autoharp teacher in the world."—Mike Fenton, *Autoharp Hall of Famer*, Hereford, England

Lucille Reilly (www.thedulcimerlady.com) brings a wealth of autoharping wisdom and history to all autoharpists with endearing humor. She delights in helping every autoharpist sound good, using an easy and accessible teaching approach.

Lucille's students live all over the world: close to home in metro Denver Colorado, incoming "B&B students" from out of state, and via webcam from anywhere. She frequently presents workshops and classes at the major autoharp events, and has taught at the Southern Belles Autoharp Workshop in Georgia, John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina, and Sore Fingers Summer School in the UK.

She is the author of *Chords Aplenty*, a reference book devoted to finding great chords for all music genres played on the autoharp, and a monograph series devoted to the Chord-and-Release method of autoharping.

Of course, everything Lucille offers as a teacher stems from decades of honing and studying those technical skills that make her a consummate musician both in concert and on three CDs: *All in a Garden Green* (solos played on six diatonic autoharps), *Contra-Intuitive* (imaginatively crafted fiddle tunes on hammered dulcimer with expert piano accompaniment), and *Thus Sing My Soul* (inspiring hymn solos on diatonic autoharp and hammered dulcimer).

Music is all about how it sounds. Discover how to achieve it at the Phoenix Autoharp Retreat!

—Midori Hall5

Relaxing at the Afterglow Dinner on Wednesday evening, playing well and eager to return!

Cost and How to Register

\$585.00 includes all hands-on/ears-on instruction, all handouts. extra help with Lucille Reilly when you need it, and all meals from dinner Sunday, February 19 through dinner Wednesday, February 22, 2023.

To register, fill out the form on pages 7-9 and mail it with your check or money order.

Postmark payment in full by Friday, February 3, 2023.

Got a question about the Retreat? Text, call or email:

Midori Hall: 480/220-9243; midorihall@cox.net OR

Lucille Reilly: 303/408-3140; thedulcimerlady@juno.com

I like learning and playing with fellow autoharpists and appreciate the emphasis on tweaking playing basics when we needed it. I now have a clearer understanding of how to make beautiful music on the autoharp because I discovered how to make mine *sing* at PAR! —GE, Connecticut6

As long as you're coming to Fabulous Fill-Ins,
how about arriving a day early for this

Workshop: How to Back Up Melodies by Ear

taught by PAR instructor **Lucille Reilly**

Saturday, February 18, 2023, 1–4 pm at the PAR location (TBA closer to the event).

Admission: \$25 per person on or before Friday, Feb. 3, 2022, *or* \$30 per person on or after Saturday, Feb. 4 & at the door.

If you've wanted to go to a jam session *without* that big, heavy song/tune notebook, longing to simply chord along by ear, now is your chance!

In this three-hour workshop for players of chords on *all* stringed instruments (autoharp, guitar, ukulele, mountain dulcimer, hammered dulcimer, etc.), Lucille will help you unlock your ear to hear and *feel* which back-up chord comes next. Join in, free your ear, and be amazed!

Skills to know before the workshop begins*:

Basic strumming *and* changing of chords* in timely fashion, in the following keys:

G major: G C D D7 D major: D G A A7

C major**: C F* G G7

* There *will not* be time to teach chord formations, strumming, etc. from scratch. Using a capo for guitar and ukulele is fine, as needed.

** Note to autoharpists coming to the Phoenix Autoharp Retreat with a GD diatonic autoharp: Yes, there is *no* F chord on this configuration, but fret not! (You can't fret, remember?!) Lucille Reilly has a cool way to fake an F chord on a GD diatonic autoharp.

How to register for the workshop, too: Check the workshop box on the first page of the PAR registration form (page 7) and include this amount with your PAR registration check or money order.⁷

Phoenix Autoharp Retreat

Ah, that sounds wonderful!

FABULOUS FILL-INS

Sunday dinner through Wednesday dinner, Feb. 19-22, 2023

2023 REGISTRATION FORM (page 1 of 3)

To print the registration form only, select pages 7-9 in your Print dialog box.

- ☐ **YES! I am eager to fill in tunes by ear at the Phoenix Autoharp Retreat!**

Enclosed is my check or money order for \$585.00, to include all workshops, handouts, meals and entertainment from Sunday dinner, February 19 through Wednesday dinner, February 22, 2023.

- ☐ **AND YES, I will attend the workshop *How to Back Up Melodies by-Ear* on **Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023, 1-4pm.** (See details on the previous page.) I've added an additional \$25.00 for the workshop to my check.**

Name (one per registration form; please print): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone: Daytime: _____ Evening: _____

Mobile: _____

Email Address: _____

_____ **Additional Meals Request**

- ☐ Please send info about meal costs for a non-autoharpist who will be with me in Phoenix and would like to join us for some to all of the meals.

One page done; two to go!8

PAR 2023 REGISTRATION FORM (page 2 of 3)

Sunday Dinner through Wednesday Dinner, Feb. 19-22, 2023

Your name (please print):: _____

Emergency contact information *(required)*

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

Other Information:

☐ Food Allergies: _____

☐ Special Physical Needs: _____

☐ Flying/Arriving From: _____

Where will you be staying during PAR? _____

We'd love to know: How did you hear about PAR? _____

Phoenix-area PARTICIPANTS: would you be able to house a fly-in PARTICIPANT?

Yes___ No___

(The Retreat includes all meals, so you will not have to also feed this person.)

Almost done! One page to go!9

PAR 2023 REGISTRATION FORM (page 3 of 3)

Sunday Dinner through Wednesday Dinner, Feb. 19-22, 2023

ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT AND RELEASE

This event is run by volunteer organizers who provide their services and efforts for the benefit of all. For obvious reasons, these volunteers cannot be held personally liable for damages to property or injuries to participants during the Retreat. Therefore, we require all participants to indicate their understanding and agreement with this principle by signing this Release as part of the Retreat's registration process.

In consideration of the undersigned Attendee being allowed to participate in the 2023 Phoenix Autoharp Retreat: "Fabulous Fill-Ins":

Attendee releases the volunteer organizers ("Releasees") from any liability for all claims, including claims for the negligence of Releasees, whether known or unknown, anticipated or unanticipated, which may result or arise out of Attendee attending and traveling to and from the Retreat.

Attendee relinquishes all rights to sue or make a claim against releasees.

Attendee recognizes the risks of damage to property or injury to persons that may occur while traveling to and from, and participating in activities at the Retreat.

Attendee will indemnify Releasees from claims of others against Releasees regarding any damage or injury that I either cause or receive.

The undersigned, intending to be legally bound, has read this release and has executed it with full understanding of its meaning.

Attendee Name (printed): _____

Attendee Signature: _____

Date: _____

All done!

Make your check or money order for \$585.00 (plus \$25.00/person for the Feb. 18 workshop, if applicable) payable to James A. Hall (our Registrar), and mail it to:

James A. Hall (email: jhall26@cox.net)

95 N. Mondel Drive

Gilbert, AZ 85233-5124

Please write PAR 2023 in the memo line.

Postmark payment in full on or before Friday, February 3, 2023.

CANCELLATION POLICY

1. A \$50.00 administrative fee will be withheld for cancellations occurring on or after Saturday, February 4, 2023.
2. Emergency refunds will be considered on a case-by-case basis on or after February 5, 2023.
3. No refunds after Friday, February 10, 2023.

About “The Beginning”

While every technique presented at the Phoenix Autoharp Retreat (PAR) is taught from the beginning, note that it is a *modified* beginning. PAR is geared for autoharpists who play the autoharp regularly and desire to bump up their playing proficiency and overall sound.

PAR does not assign a “playing level” (i.e., “beginner,” “intermediate,” “advanced”) to each year’s featured technique. That’s because no one seems to know what a beginning, intermediate or advanced player *is*. Why label a featured topic that way? Also, instructor Lucille Reilly has observed over decades of teaching that autoharpists in her workshops who have played just a short time catch on readily to new techniques when organized instruction is paced to grasp.

PAR supplies instead a short list of playing actions that everyone needs to be able to play *before* the Retreat begins. All actions are common fare for most autoharpists; they include, but are not limited to: strum, pinch, pluck, etc. (Easy! See page 2 for this year’s list.) From here, Lucille weaves the playing actions together step by step in new ways to help each PARTICIPANT play the featured technique *and* make it his/her own. The actions list on page 2 also places everyone on common ground: past PARTICIPANTS have expressed to us how grateful they are to fit in without a “playing level” to live up to! We hope this is true for you as well.

We emphasize again that PAR is for those who actively play the autoharp. If you are brand new to the autoharp (including guitarists: 36+ strings feel and play a lot differently than six) or you played the autoharp many years ago and are now visiting it again, either start to play a handful of simple songs to “burn in” the playing actions on page 2, or take your time and plan to join us at PAR next year.

Finally, every technique featured at PAR stands on its own as a complete, 3-day unit. PAR has never been, and cannot be, “the continuing story of _____.” The only thing a first-time PARTICIPANT may have missed is a previously featured, hot technique. (See the next page for lists of past and future techniques. With enough interest, Lucille is happy to repeat a past technique. Tell us what you’d like.) So first-time PARTICIPANTS can expect to be on a “par” with attendees from previous years.

Lucille Reilly (in plaid shirt, above center) demonstrates how to expand the pinch’s versatility at the dining-room table before applying it to the autoharp.

I was very pleased with what I learned! Thank you for your thorough coverage of playing concepts, particularly when it comes to hand use. —LS, Texas11

Previous PAR Techniques and Topics

2018: Secrets of Musical Autoharping (including 200+ ways to pinch!)

2019: Filigree Fingerpicking (finger independence toward playing single strings)

2020: Orchestration on Solo Autoharp (varying fills and exploring dynamic range)

(2021: No PAR due to the Covid-19 pandemic.)

2022: Travis Picking.

Future Techniques and Topics Requested by Our PARticipants

How to create solid, basic harmonies to play along with melodies: includes individual study with paper with pencil, alongside occasional playing.

Intro to Harmonic Variation: Change/add to the basic chords you know and surprise the ears you play for—including your own!— in marvelous ways.

PAR for Beginners: We'll start from the *very* beginning and move at a comfortable pace. A good refresher for more experienced players, too.

Intro to Melodic Variation: Take simple songs to the moon and back. The possibilities are endless once you know this skill's source.

Swing Picking: Pick the melodies of fiddle tunes at near-bluegrass tempo! A great intro to Chord & Release for the button hand. (A GD or GDA diatonic autoharp *with lock bars* is required.)

The Diatonic, Chord-and-Release Method of Autoharping: Lucille says this is the most fun you can have playing an autoharp! We will learn to “pump felt” while harmonizing your first pumped melodies at the same time. (A GD or GDA diatonic autoharp *with lock bars* is required.)

And *what have you?* Do tell us!

PAR offers every autoharpist a tried and true way to play the autoharp with a full sound! —WE,
Arizona12

The Phoenix Autoharp Retreat: A History

The Phoenix Autoharp Retreat (PAR) was conceived by Phoenix autoharpists Midori Hall and June Fessenden. June and Midori recognized a need to understand *how* to execute, combine and manage the various autoharp playing actions into memorable music, something they both continually guessed about in workshops devoted to learning tunes. (They knew plenty of tunes, but didn't feel like they could play any of them well. And they *wanted* to play well!)

In the summer of 2016, Midori and her husband Jim met Lucille Reilly for the first time at the Northwest Autoharp Gathering, where Lucille was one of the featured performers and workshop leaders. Midori attended all of Lucille's workshops at that event and became energized by the content. Soon after this, June and Midori connected and talked autoharp for a long while.

In October 2016, June returned to metro Denver, Colorado for a second round of "B&B" autoharp lessons with Lucille to continue fulfilling her hunger to know *How* to play the autoharp well through music already in her head, heart, hands and soul. Once back home in Phoenix, June talked autoharp instruction all the more fervently with Midori. They soon envisioned a retreat where they and many other autoharpists having the same passion for playing well would be able to "fill in the blanks" and bump up their "techno-musical" proficiency minus the guesswork.

In mid-2017, June and Midori approached Lucille about being the teacher for the retreat they had in mind. (After all, Lucille had already been hot on the trail of making both the autoharp and its music sound good for at least a couple decades. She still is, in fact.) Lucille agreed to meet the challenge, and with that, Midori, June and Lucille launched the first *Phoenix Autoharp Retreat* in February 2018.

L to R: June Fessenden, Lucille Reilly and Midori Hall take a moment to pose in Midori's kitchen while Ohio Shaker Lemon Pie bakes in the oven for the PARTicipants to enjoy.