

HELD FAST

Holistic Lesson Plan



Held Fast is a Level 5 piece intended to teach students descending slur technique. Slurs can be a really tricky skill to develop on the guitar for a number of reasons, especially descending slurs. It can be difficult to execute descending slurs so that the second pitch in the figure “speaks” and we hear the second note clearly. It can also be challenging to coordinate the new feeling of performing a note on the guitar without using a right-hand finger to pluck the string. For these reasons, it’s important to take it slow and introduce this technique with intention and care for every student.

Students should be confidently executing all technical and literacy skills from Levels 1-4 in order to begin *Held Fast*. Left-hand position and technique is crucial for descending slurs. Be sure to cue left-hand position frequently throughout rehearsal in order to ensure that students learn this new technique correctly.

Held Fast can be played together with *Gift of Fire* as a two-movement work. Both pieces teach slurs and have a thematic through line of strength, power, and resolve.

Artistry

- Perform the piece with intense, quick, but strong and steady character through execution of round and full tone, big dynamic change through crescendo, crisp pizzicato and staccato strokes, and bright balanced harmonics.
- Perform the piece with balance between parts and perfect vertical alignment.

Technique

- Play with perfect left-hand position throughout.
- Establish and execute descending slurs with clarity, balance, and rhythmic accuracy.
- Execute all articulation markings with appropriate right-hand technique.

Recommended Broad Sequence:

- 1) Set up in proper playing position and place P on string 3, I on string 2 and M on string 1.
- 2) Place 2nd finger in the left hand on 2nd fret string 1 (F#).
- 3) Practice plucking the F# with m and “pulling off” to execute the descending slur. Pull 2nd finger off the string at a 45-degree angle down and away. Simply lifting the finger will create little to no pitch. Pulling straight down into the string below will create a sloppy, plucked tone. We are looking to hear a clear open E second note without digging under the string and plucking the guitar with the left-hand finger. Stay light in the left-hand and let the sound of the two notes of the slur guide your technique. The notes should sound similar in volume.

- 4) Repeat the above step but on strings 2-6. Be sure to keep a 45-degree angle on the pull-off. Go slowly here. Make sure your pull-off finger in the left hand does not make contact with the string below. Listen to every student execute their descending 2-0 slurs.
- 5) Repeat the above step with 3rd finger to open slurs on fret 3 and 1st finger to open string slurs on fret 1.
- 6) Once students have gone through the descending slur technical sequence, we are ready to begin the piece. Consider starting the piece in measure 60. Have each part find their respective slurs either on fret 2, 7, or 12 of string 1. Pay close attention to the accents.
- 7) Work backwards to rehearsal mark D making sure rolled chords and harmonics are clear and even.
- 8) Continue to rehearse the piece by sections focusing on expression. Pay close attention to balance between parts as well as the sound of your pizzicato at letter C for parts 1 and 2.

Opportunities for Social Emotional Learning

Held Fast is a piece that is intended to communicate a feeling of strength and resolve in the face of adversity. There are moments in life we are tested to stand up for what we know is right even when those around us might push us to do the wrong thing.

Lead a classroom discussion about standing up for what you believe is right. Who are figures historically who have made their mark by holding fast to their principles? Your students may want to share a moment in their life that they have held fast to their beliefs in the face of pressure.

HELD FAST

Based on "Distant Kestrel"

Travis Marcum

Score

Moderato (♩ = 96)

rit. a tempo

Guitar 1 Level 5

Guitar 2 Level 5

Guitar 3 Level 5

f *p*

f *p*

Let Ring *p* *p* *m*

1 2

4

9

G1

G2

G3

mf *f*

mf *f*

mf *f*

17

G1 *mp* *mf*

G2 *mp* *mf*

G3 *mp* *mf*

22

A

G1 *f*

G2 *f*

G3 *f*

29

B

G1 *pizz. p i* *sub. p*

G2 *pizz. p i* *sub. p*

G3 *ff*

35

G1

G2

G3

mf

2

4

41

G1

G2

G3

p

pp

pp

nat.

nat.

46

G1

G2

G3

f

f

pp

f

Sudden Silence

p

H XII

52

G1

G2

G3

pp

p

Fret 7 to Open Slur

H XII

58

G1

G2

G3

Fret 12 to Open Slur

63

G1

G2

G3

f

pp

tasto

roll with thumb
then flesh dedillo

C

72

G1

p

mf

G2

p

mf

G3

p

mf

77

G1

sub. p

sub. p

G2

sub. p

sub. p

G3

sub. p

82

G1

mf

pp

G2

mf

pp

G3

mf

pp

rit.