

THE BENDING RIVER

Holistic Lesson Plan

The Bending River is a level 3 piece that is intended to deepen student's experience reading on the top three strings in G major, while focusing on right hand alternation, short string crossing motives, and proper left hand finger placement. While our focus will center primarily on expressive music making and performance, *The Bending River* also presents important technique and literacy benchmarks. Our overarching goals for *The Bending River* are as follows:

Artistry

- Perform the piece to evoke the calming feeling of a relaxed river/nature scene through the execution of a soft dynamic approach, legato strokes with round and full tone, and beautiful and smooth dynamic changes.
- Perform the piece with balance between and within the various parts according to the dynamic indications in the score.
- Perform the piece with precise vertical alignment and togetherness among the ensemble.

Technique

- Sit in proper playing position (see performance checklist).
- Establish and execute I and M alterations with proper right hand set up with full, round tone (*straight right wrist, enough arch under the right wrist, and a deep stroke that pushes through the string using the big knuckle*). Avoid the thin "twangy" sound that comes with improper right hand position and stroke execution.
- Execute proper right hand string crossing (*moving from string to string in the right hand*) by using subtle movements in the elbow to allow the right hand/fingers to move from string to string while maintaining a straight wrist and avoiding bending the wrist in order to "reach" for adjacent strings.
- Emphasize proper left hand technique (*curved fingers making contact with the string at the tip of the finger instead of the flat part of the finger*). Proper left hand technique is addressed through an opportunity to let notes on adjacent strings ring over each other.

Literacy

- Read and perform note values: quarter, eighth, half, whole.
- Read and execute rest values: quarter rest, half rest.
- Read and perform notes from the G Major scale on the top three strings (strings 3, 2, and 1).

Recommended Broad Sequence:

- 1) Set up proper playing position, and establish right hand I-M Alternations with good form and tone (see video). [Right Hand IM Alternations](#) + [String Crossing](#).
- 2) Warm up (see video) [Right Hand Alternation Warm Up](#) for the Classroom to be done at the beginning of each class.
- 3) Listen to recording of [The Bending River](#).
- 4) Literacy Sequence (below) as needed to be done each class.
- 5) Introduce Guitar 3 Section D. Emphasize proper string crossing when moving from string 3 to 2.
- 6) Perform Guitar 3 Section D as a class with a beautiful crescendo and decrescendo.
- 7) Perform Guitar 2 Section D as a class with a beautiful crescendo and decrescendo.
- 8) Split class into two equal groups and perform Guitar 2 and 3 as a class with all dynamics, round and beautiful tone, and proper string crossing.
- 9) Introduce Guitar 1 Section D by splitting class into two. One group will speak "Ta's" (quarter notes) while the other speaks "Ti-ti's" (eighth notes).
- 10) Perform Guitar 1 Section D as a class with a beautiful crescendo and decrescendo while teacher performs either Guitar 2 or 3.
- 11) Split class into three groups and perform Guitar 1, 2, and 3 Section D with dynamics and ritardando as written.
- 12) Continue in a similar fashion for Section C, using reading examples from the Literacy Sequence to continue to reinforce comfort with switching back and forth between quarter to eighth notes and half notes to quarter notes.
- 13) Perform Guitar 1, 2, and 3 Section C followed by Section D as a class.
- 14) Introducing Guitar 1 and 2 Section E. Using Literacy sequence to build comfort with half rests and quarter rests. Teach Harmonics by rote.
- 15) Perform Guitar 1 and 2 section E with beautiful dynamics as written.
- 16) Demonstrate open 5th string (A) and the fourth string 2nd fret (E) by rote. Introduce Guitar 3 section E.

- 17) Split class into 3 groups and perform Guitar 1, 2, and 3 Section E with dynamics as written.
- 18) Perform Guitar 1, 2, and 3 from Section C to the end. Emphasize a beautiful performance with full and round tone, and dynamics as written.

***Note** - Every student should play each part for the first few classes introducing this piece. After you are confident that all are reading parts 1, 2, and 3, define your permanent part assignments for future performance.

***Note** - Once students are confident with the Literacy Sequence for the Bending River, explore Level 3 sight reading here, as is appropriate. Sight reading should happen for a short period every day.

Opportunities for Social Emotional Learning

In addition to the social emotional learning opportunities that performing a beautiful and calming piece of music together as a group can offer our students, The Bending River provides SEL experiences centered around the idea of connecting with Nature, and how doing so can provide a sense of calm and relaxation. Also, The Bending River provides an opportunity for students to connect with positive memories of their own experiences with Nature. This can be visits to parks, local creeks or trails, etc. Encourage students to share these experiences with the class and open a discussion on how these experiences with Nature can provide a sense of calm and meditation. Explore the idea that the guitar itself can evoke those same feelings and can even paint a picture through music of beautiful things in Nature. Take opportunities to include other disciplines like visual arts, movement, poetry/literature, and drama to explore the idea of Nature and its effects on our everyday lives.

The Bending River Literacy Sequence

- ① Reading in G major on top three strings using IM alternation

- 2

The first system of the musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the time signature is 3/4. The music consists of a sequence of eighth notes. The first measure has a circled '1' above it and a '4' below the first note. The second measure has a '2' below the first note. The third measure has 'sim.' above it and a '0' below the first note. The fourth measure has a circled '2' above it and a '4' below the first note. The fifth measure has a '1' below the first note. The sixth measure has a '0' below the first note. The seventh measure has a circled '3' above it and a '2' below the first note. The eighth measure has a '0' below the first note. The system ends with a double bar line.

- ③ Switching from eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes

- ④ Incorporating quarter and half rests

- ⑤ Emphasizing string crossing

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is written for a single melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a quarter note G4 (labeled 'i') followed by a quarter note A4 (labeled 'm'). This is followed by a series of eighth notes: G4 (labeled 'i'), A4 (labeled 'm'), G4 (labeled 'i'), and A4 (labeled 'm'). The melody then continues with a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5, all marked with the instruction 'sim.'. The melody concludes with a quarter note G4, a quarter note F#4, and a final quarter note E4. The score is presented on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

The Bending River

Phil Swasey

Flowing (♩ = 65)

Guitar 1
Level 3

Guitar 2
Level 3

Guitar 3
Level 3

fret 2
string (4)
p *p*

p
open
string (5)

i m i m
p

①
H XII
4

①
H XII
4

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 3

A

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 3

p

sub. p

sub. p *sub. p*

The Bending River

B

Gtr. 1 *mf*

Gtr. 2 *mp*

Gtr. 3 *mp*

C

Gtr. 1 *f*

Gtr. 2 *f*

Gtr. 3 *f*

D

Gtr. 1 *mp*

Gtr. 2 *mp*

Gtr. 3 *mp*

rit.

E

Gtr. 1 *p* *f*

Gtr. 2 *p* *f*

Gtr. 3 *p* *f*

a tempo

H XII 4

①

H XII 4

②

H XII 4

H XII 4

④

⑤

⑥

The Bending River

Phil Swasey

Flowing (♩ = 65)

A

B

The first system of the musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the dynamics are 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The music begins with a repeat sign. The first measure has a finger number '2' above the note. The second measure has a finger number '0' above the note. The third measure has a finger number '4' above the note. The fourth measure has a finger number '0' above the note. The fifth measure has a finger number '2' below the note. The sixth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The seventh measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The eighth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The ninth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The tenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The eleventh measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The twelfth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The thirteenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The fourteenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The fifteenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The sixteenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The seventeenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The eighteenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The nineteenth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The twentieth measure has a finger number '0' below the note. The system ends with a repeat sign.

C

D

The first system of the musical score is for the right hand. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody consists of quarter notes: F#4 (marked with an accent *i* and finger number 4), G4 (marked with an accent *m* and finger number 2), A4 (marked with an accent *i* and finger number 0), and B4 (marked with an accent *i* and finger number 2). This is followed by a half note G4, a half note F#4, a half note E4, and a half note D4. The next measure contains a quarter note G4 (finger 4) and a quarter note F#4 (finger 2). The system concludes with a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, and a final half note C4 (marked with a fermata). The dynamic marking *mp* is placed below the first measure. Below the staff, there are two sets of empty lines for the left hand.

E

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Flowing (♩ = 65)

2

i m i m

p

5

A

sub. p

B

i m i

mp

C

i m i

f

D

i m i

mp

rit.

E

a tempo

i m i

p *p* *p* *f* *p* *f*

H XII

②

The Bending River

Phil Swasey

Flowing (♩ = 65)

fret 2
string ④

p *p*

0
p
open
string ⑤

5

A

sub. p *sub. p*

B

p *p* *i* *p* *i* *p* *p* *p* *i* *p* *i* *p*

0 2 0 0

mp

C

4 0 4 0

f

D

i *m* *i* *rit.*

mp

E

a tempo *p* *p* H XII H XII H XII

4 4 6

④ ⑤

p *p* *p* *f* *p* *f*