

Classical Guitar: Canon in D

I initially came across this little arrangement of this classic tune in a guitar magazine and have since adapted it and played it at countless weddings and other gigs. This song has truly put bread on my table!

GUITAR STYLES

intermediate

Originally written by the baroque composer Johann Pachelbel around 1680 as a string quartet, this, his only Canon, was largely ignored until the 1970s. It was then the song became a staple classical standard at weddings. Its popularity continues to grow.

Canon in D Playing Notes: Harmonic Explanation

This song is in the key of D, hence the name. It's basically an 8-chord progression, which is repeated and developed. The chords are D - A - Bm - F#m - G - D/F# - G - A. The pattern of the bass notes of this progression remains consistent throughout the whole song, with the melody developed in various forms. The chord names above the music are meant to show the harmonic structure of the song and should be used loosely as a guide for the fingering of the passage. For the most part, if you use the general shape of the chord as a guide, and adjust a finger or two to accommodate the melody, you can play each particular section.

Canon in D Playing Notes: Technical Explanation

The first four measures are simple arpeggiations of the chords. They are open D, open A, Bm (5th string barre form), F#m (6th string barre form), open G, and D/F#. Not all the notes of each chord form are used, so be careful to play only the ones needed at the time. In measures 5–8, the chord forms are fingered the same as the first four bars, just with different combinations of notes. The half notes are meant to remain ringing for the full two beats. So, be very accurate in your fingering so the notes that need to ring out are holding out for the correct amount of time. Don't let your fingers mute the notes that need to be held out. This can be tricky, but with attention to the ringing notes, the song really comes alive.

I play the first two measures of line three in the second position. Because you're in the second position, reference the TAB and notice where to play the notes because some notes you'd normally play open are played with a finger. Remember, the Bm is basically a fifth string barre form, and the F#m is based off of a sixth string barre form. Keep the 5 string barre for the Bm (measure 10) intact until beat 3 when the 6 string F#m barre takes over. Then the F#m barre form remains intact for the remainder of the measure.

The last three sixteenths in the second measure of line three I play with my third finger on the D, going back to the C# in the barre, then back to the last D with the third finger. This frees up my second finger to play the low G in the next bar. On beat three of the third measure of line three, I play the low F# with my first finger and the A with my second finger. In the last measure of that line, I again use my second finger to play the first low G. In the second beat, I play the low B with my first finger and the high D with my third finger. On the third beat, I play the high C# with my first finger; the fourth beat low C# with my third finger; leaving my first, second, and fourth fingers to cover the upper notes. It requires a little bit of a stretch to hold that low C# while playing the other notes and hitting the high A, but this fingering works best for me.

On line four in the first measure, beat one is in second position again, but on beat three where it goes to A, I move to fifth position. In the next measure, I go back down to second position for the Bm. The F#m on beat three is played by one straight bar with the first finger over all six strings. Then I play the B and the G with my second and third finger.

Canon in D Playing Notes: Closing Thoughts

This piece is fairly complex in spots. Depending on your skill level, plan on taking a few weeks to work out all of the parts to it. Tackle it one line at a time. Don't go fast. At whatever tempo you can play the third line is the tempo you should start and play the whole song. Don't start at one tempo then slow down at the third line. Each fingering move on the third and fourth line is critical and is probably going to be unfamiliar to you. Carefully work them out one at a time until you can play them with the correct fingering motions. When you have worked out all of the numerous fingering issues then put it all together. Make sure the bass notes are holding out for the proper time. Don't cut them off early. When I am performing this song, I usually do each line twice. This is a great song and is worth the effort of learning it. You'll be playing it for years to come, and who knows, you might even play it at a wedding or two.

For more ideas and instruction check out the award-winning Gibson's Learn & Master Guitar course at www.LearnAndMaster.com and the lessons section at www.gibson.com for all the help you need to become the player you want to be!

Canon in D

By Johann Pachelbel

Arranged by Steve Krenz

D A Bm F#m G D/F# G A

T A B

2 3 2 2 | 4 3 2 | 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 2

0 2 2 | 2 4 4 2 | 0 0 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 2

0 2 | 2 3 2 2 | 3 4 4 2 | 0 0 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 2

D A Bm F#m G D/F# G A

T A B

2 3 0 | 3 2 2 | 0 0 3 | 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 2

0 2 2 | 2 4 4 2 | 0 0 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 2

0 2 | 2 3 2 2 | 3 4 4 2 | 0 0 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 2

D A Bm F#m G D/F# G A

T A B

5 2 3 5 2 3 5 | 2 3 5 | 2 3 5 | 0 3 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 0 2 3 | 0 3 2 3 3 2 3 | 0 0 2 3 5

0 2 4 | 2 4 | 4 5 | 2 5 | 0 2 | 4 0 | 3 | 2 0 4

D A Bm F#m G D/F# G A D

T A B

5 3 5 3 | 2 3 2 0 | 3 0 0 2 | 3 1 0 2 | 2 2 2 | 2

0 2 6 4 | 4 4 | 2 2 | 2 0 | 0 0 2 | 2 2 | 0

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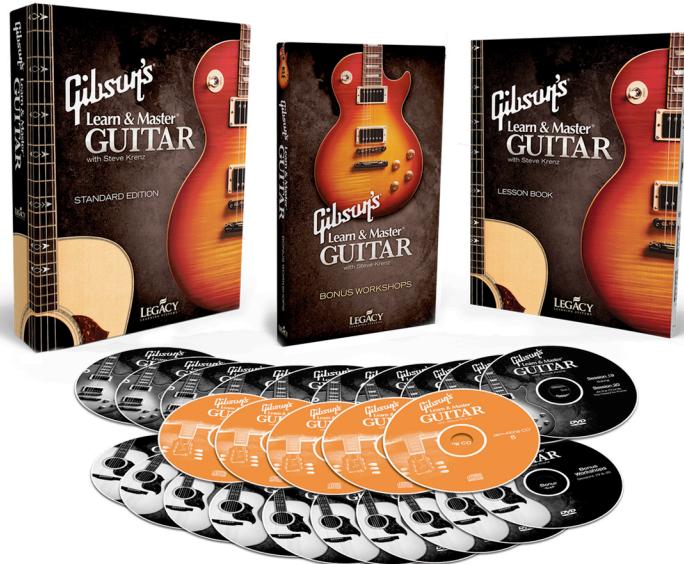
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