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LESSON 3: SLAPPING AND TAPPING

In the mid 1980s, Michael Hedges turned the acoustic guitar world on its ear by developing an entirely new approach to composing for the instrument. Hedges used alternate tunings, traditional technique, and new techniques such as *slap harmonics* and *tapping* to realize his musical vision. Other artists, like Phil Keaggy and Preston Reed, have added to these techniques.

DOUBLE DROP D TUNING

This lesson will use *double drop D tuning*, in which the 1st and 6th strings are both tuned down to D (page 90, *Intermediate Acoustic Guitar*). Here are the open notes of the tuning, as well as the matching notes (shown in gray) on adjacent strings to use for tuning.

7
VIDEO
EXAMPLE

D A D G B D

D B G D A D

0 7 5 5 4 3

VIDEO SLAP HARMONICS



One of the most dazzling effects in this style is the *slap harmonic*. A slap harmonic is achieved by striking the strings with the right hand at a *harmonic node* (page 16, *Intermediate Acoustic Guitar*) in such a way as to generate an exciting, percussive harmonic chord. For example, use the *i* or *m* (the index or middle finger of your right hand) to “slap” the 12th fret, causing the strings to sound a harmonic chord. Here are some tips to help you learn the technique:

1. Keep your finger (try *m* first) exactly parallel to the fret, and strike directly on the fret.
2. Keep your wrist and finger very loose. Use a tiny snap of the wrist to lightly “bounce” your finger on the fret.
3. Don’t slap too hard! You can bruise your finger by repeating this motion incorrectly for too long. Remember to *lightly* bounce off the fret. If you have trouble with your *m*, try it with the side of your *i* finger, using your *m* as support.



Slap with *m*.



Slap with *i*.

THE MACHINE THAT MAKES THE MACHINE

Square note heads (■): Tap on top (near sound hole)
 Triangle note heads (▲): Tap on shoulder (side of upper bout of guitar body)
 Diamond note heads (◆ and ◇): Slap harmonic
 All left-hand notes fret tapped from above the body (inverted hand position)
 Left-hand percussion played by tapping shoulder (side of the upper bout of guitar body)
 Stems up: R.H.
 Stems down: L.H.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each containing a standard musical staff, a right-hand TAB, and a left-hand TAB. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

- System 1:** The musical staff shows a melody with square note heads (taps on top) and triangle note heads (taps on shoulder). It includes triplets and slurs. The right-hand TAB shows fret numbers 12, 12, 12, and 12. The left-hand TAB shows fret numbers 3, 5, 5, 7, 5, 3, 5.
- System 2:** The musical staff continues the melody with slurs and accents. The right-hand TAB shows fret numbers 7, 7, 0, 10, 9, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 7, 7, 0, 10, 9, 0, 0, 0, 0. The left-hand TAB shows fret numbers 7, 5, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 5.
- System 3:** The musical staff features a triplet of square note heads and triangle note heads. The right-hand TAB shows fret numbers 12, 12, 12. The left-hand TAB shows fret numbers 3, 3, 5, 5, 5, 5, 0, 0.

“Franklin’s Mower” is a progression in A Mixolydian and is in the style of The Grateful Dead’s “Franklin’s Tower.”



FRANKLIN’S MOWER

Musical notation for the main progression of "Franklin's Mower" in 4/4 time. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The progression consists of four measures, each with a different chord: A, G, D, and G. The melody is a simple eighth-note pattern: A4, B4, C#5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3. The notes are marked with 'V' for vibrato and 'X' for muted notes.

“Franklin’s Mower (Solo)” uses the A Mixolydian scale in the style of Jerry Garcia. It uses some of the same positions as the connected scale in Example 38 on page 47. Garcia made great use of a device called *sequencing* in his solos. A *sequence* is a melodic figure that is repeated at different pitch levels. This can be seen in the first bar of the solo, where an ascending three-note pattern (A–B–C#) is sequenced up the scale twice (B–C#–D and C#–D–E).

Garcia also used accented notes to emphasize certain pitches and rhythms in the solo. Try picking this solo in a flowing, connected style, using a stronger attack to make the accented notes “pop out” of the melody. Don’t forget to make up your own Mixolydian improvisations using the scales and chord progressions in this lesson!



FRANKLIN’S MOWER (Solo)

Musical notation for the solo of "Franklin's Mower" in 4/4 time. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The solo is divided into three sections, each with a different chord: A, G, D, and G. The melody is a complex sequence of notes, including triplets and slurs. The notes are marked with 'V' for vibrato and '>' for accents. The solo is sequenced up the scale twice (B–C#–D and C#–D–E). The notation includes guitar-specific markings such as 'P' (pick), 'S' (slide), and '5th position', '7th position', and '9th position'. The fretboard diagrams show the string and fret positions for each note.

