




# Lesson Eight : Left Hand Bending/Sliding/Portamento

## Techniques

 “**shang hua yin**” = forward portamento, upward bending to a higher pitch note

 “**xia hua yin**” = Reverse/backward portamento, release bending from a higher pitch note back to a lower pitch

 “**hui hua**” = light forward portamento + reverse portamento

 “**dian yin**” = tap on the left side of the string

An upward or a downward curving arrow represents a portamento. This technique is often called sliding in the bow instrument such as violin and erhu. In guzheng, we call it “bending” or “hua yin”.

## Forward Portamento

An upward curving arrow indicates a forward portamento, or bending from a lower pitch note to a higher pitch note. The fingering is sometimes written as a slur above the notation pointing from the lower pitch note to the higher pitch note.

When it’s written as an upward curving arrow next to the notation, you always bend down to the next note in the pentatonic scale. The sound should match the next string on the guzheng.

$1' = \overline{1\ 2}$      $2' = \overline{2\ 3}$      $3' = \overline{3\ 5}$      $5' = \overline{5\ 6}$      $6' = \overline{6\ 1}$

Just like doing the **4** and **7**, use your index, middle and ring fingers to do the bending. Close the three fingers together and push down the string to raise the pitch to the desired note. Keep your wrist straight and add arm force to do the bending. When bending down the bass strings, add shoulder force as necessary. Do not lower your wrist as the force won't be able to pass through from your arm to your fingers.

**Example:**    **3** ↗ = **3 5**

How to play:

1. Pluck the **3** string with your right hand
2. Then bend down the **3** string slowly at the left side of the bridge using the left hand fingers. The sound pitch should gradually raise up
3. Stop bending downward when the pitch is raised to a **5** note.
4. Hold your fingers there to keep a steady **5** sound. Do not release the fingers right away.

\* For starter, it is really important to bend to the accurate pitch. Pluck the **5** string to check if you have bended the **3** into a **5**. If the **3** string sounds just like the **5** string when you bend down, then it's correct. If the **3** string sounds flatter, then push down harder to raise the pitch to a **5**. If the **3** string sounds too sharp, then release the force to get an accurate pitch.

In a forward bending, the timing is usually half and half unless otherwise indicated. That is half of the time duration is on the first note, and the second half of the time duration is on the bended note. When the timing is other than half and half, the notation will indicate the correct timing.

Some different timing examples:

**3 5**    **3 · 5**    **3 5 ·**    **353**

**Reverse Portamento**

A downward curving arrow indicates a reverse portamento, or a release of the bending from a higher pitch note back to a lower pitch. Just like the upward bending, the fingering is often written as a slur above the notation pointing from the higher pitch note to the lower pitch note.

$$\curvearrowleft \mathbf{6} = \underline{\mathbf{1\ 6}} \quad \curvearrowleft \mathbf{5} = \underline{\mathbf{6\ 5}} \quad \curvearrowleft \mathbf{3} = \underline{\mathbf{5\ 3}} \quad \curvearrowleft \mathbf{2} = \underline{\mathbf{3\ 2}} \quad \curvearrowleft \mathbf{1} = \underline{\mathbf{2\ 1}}$$

**Example:**  $\curvearrowleft \mathbf{3} = \underline{\mathbf{5\ 3}}$

How to play:

1. First, bend down the **3** string to a **5** position using your left hand fingers on the left side of the bridge.
2. Pluck the **3** string using your right hand. (It should sound like a **5** now because you pre-bend the string.)
3. Release your fingers slowly, so the sound gradually slides back into a **3**.

When doing the reverse bending, it is important that you pre-bend the string to the accurate pitch. It will be too late when you realize that it's out of tune after you pluck the note out loud. It takes a lot of practice and experience to pre-bend the string to the accurate pitch before pluck. Work on the drills to build up finger memories.

Just like the forward bending, the timing of the reverse bending is usually half and half unless otherwise indicated. When the timing is other than half and half, the fingering is written as a slur on top of the notes.

Some different timing examples:

5 3   5 · 3   5 3 ·   535

When the fingering is written as the slur above the notes, look for the notes to see if it's an upward bending or a release bending. If the first note is lower than the second note, then it's an upward bending. If the first note is higher than the second note, then it's a release bending.

## Drill 20

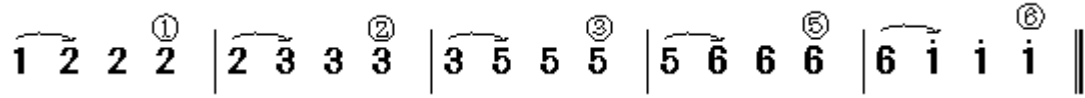
1<sup>∟</sup> 2 1' | 2<sup>∟</sup> 3 2' | 3<sup>∟</sup> 5 3' | 5<sup>∟</sup> 6 5' | 6<sup>∟</sup> 1 6' | 1<sup>∟</sup> 2 1' | 2<sup>∟</sup> 3 2' | 3<sup>∟</sup> 5 3' ||

This drill works on the upward bending.

How to play: (use the first set as example)

1. Pluck the first two notes, **1** and **2**
2. Plucking the **1** again
3. bend down the **1** string slowing into a **2** (next pitch note). It should sound like a slur of the first two notes.

## Drill 21

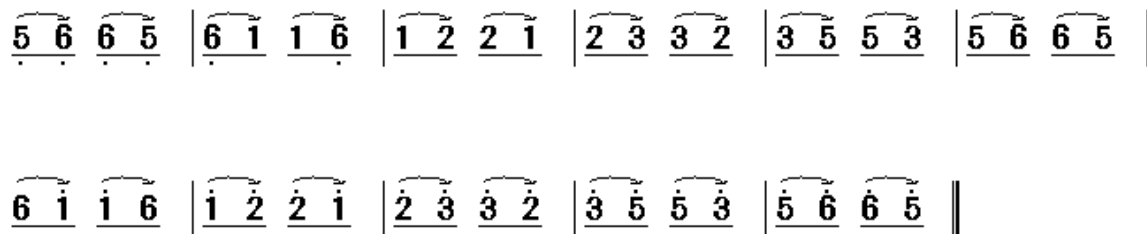


This drill is to check the accuracy of your bending pitch. The number inside the little circle above the notation indicates the string to pluck. For example, in the first measure, there is the number **1** inside the circle above the **2**. That means you don't pluck the actual **2** string, you pluck the **1** string while pre-bend the string to a **2**. It should sound just like you plucking the actual **2** string.

How to play: (use measure one as example)

1. pluck **1**
2. bend the **1** into a **2** and hold the fingers there, do not release the fingers until you pluck the last note
3. pluck a regular **2**
4. pluck **1** again. This time it should sound like a **2**, since your left hand fingers are still bending and holding it like a **2**.

## Drill 22



**Drill 22** works on upward bending and release bending.

How to play: (use measure one as example)

1. Pluck the **5** string
2. bend down to a **6** note, and hold the left hand fingers there
3. pluck the **5** string again (this time it should sound like a **6** because your pre-bend)
4. release your left hand fingers slowly back to the normal position

### Drill 23

53 ↘ 3 32 ↘ 2 | 21 ↘ 1 16 ↘ 6 | 65 ↘ 5 53 ↘ 3 | 32 ↘ 2 21 ↘ 1 ||

**Drill 23** works on the release bending.

How to play: (using the first set as an example)

1. pluck the first two notes **5** and **3**
2. bend the **3** string into a **5** and hold it
3. pluck the **3** string which should sound like a **5** now
4. release the left hand fingers slowly to a normal position. The note should sounds like a slur of **53**

## (20) Picking Tea Leaves 採茶曲

1=D 4/4  
♩ = 108

Hakka Folk Song

5̣. 5̣ 3̣ 6̣ | 5̣ 3̣2̣ 1̣ 5̣ | 6̣ 1̣ 1̣ 6̣5̣ | 3̣ 5̣ 5̣ - |

1̣. 5̣ 3̣ 5̣ | 6̣1̣ 2̣3̣ 6̣ 5̣ | 3̣ 3̣2̣ 1̣ 5̣6̣ | 1̣. 1̣ 1̣ 1̣ |

6̣. 6̣ 5̣ 6̣ | 0̣1̣ 6̣5̣ 3̣ 5̣ | 0̣3̣ 5̣6̣ 1̣ 6̣3̣ | 5̣. 5̣ 5̣ 5̣ |

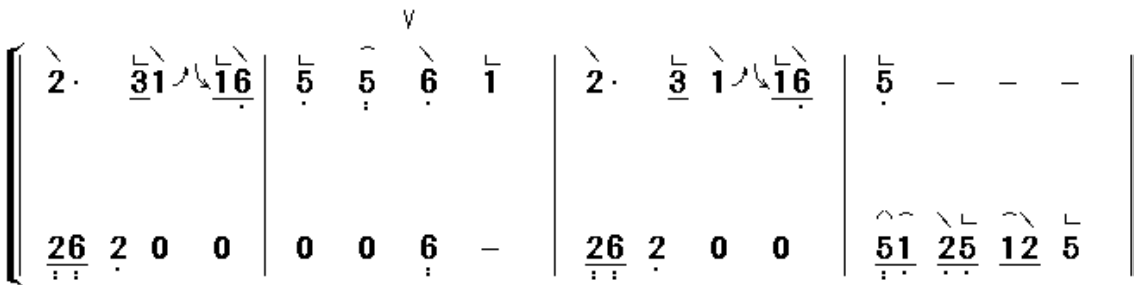
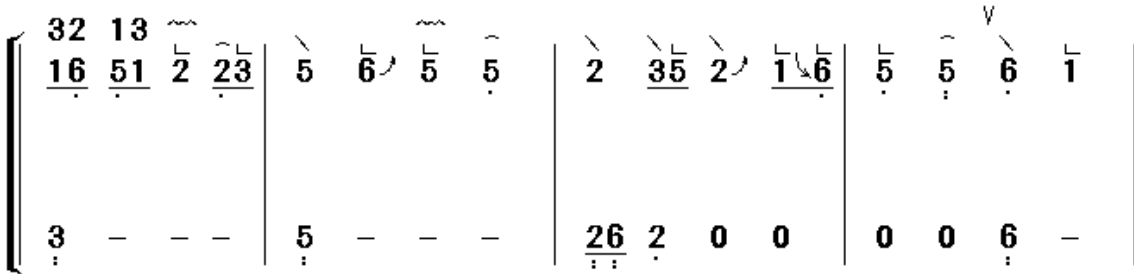
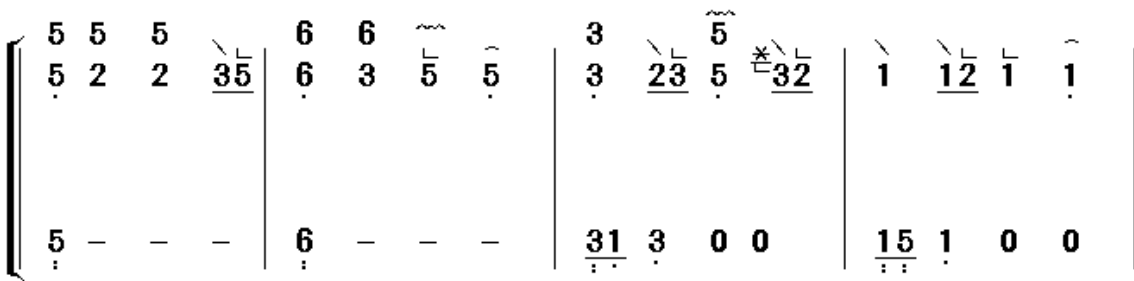
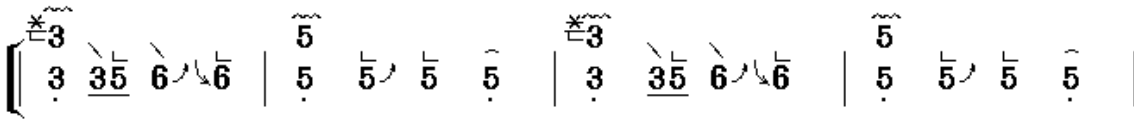
1̣. 5̣ 3̣ 5̣ | 6̣1̣ 2̣3̣ 6̣ 5̣ | 3̣ 3̣2̣ 1̣ 5̣6̣ | 1̣. 1̣ 1̣ 1̣ ||

## (21) Jasmine flower 茉莉花

1=D 4/4

Jiangsu Folk Song

♩ = 92





# (22) Beautiful Flower Under the Full Moon

花好

月圓

1=D 4/4

Cantonese Classic

♩ = 108

$\overset{\sim}{\text{♯5}}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{32}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{12}$   $\overset{\sim}{35}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{56}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{21}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$  |

$\overset{\sim}{61}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{16}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{32}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{61}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |

$\overset{\sim}{\text{♯5}}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{32}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{12}$   $\overset{\sim}{35}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{56}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{21}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$  |

$\overset{\sim}{61}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{16}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{32}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{61}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$  - |

$\overset{\sim}{\text{♯1}}$   $\overset{\sim}{12}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{\text{♯2}}$   $\overset{\sim}{23}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$  |

$\overset{\sim}{\text{♯2}}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{21}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{6}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{4}$   $\overset{\sim}{61}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{4}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$  |

$\overset{\sim}{\text{♯1}}$   $\overset{\sim}{12}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$  - |  $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$   $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{21}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{6}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$  |

$\overset{\sim}{\text{♯3}}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{1}$   $\overset{\sim}{3}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{2}$   $\overset{\sim}{21}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$   $\overset{\sim}{6}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{4}$   $\overset{\sim}{61}$   $\overset{\sim}{5}$   $\overset{\sim}{42}$  |  $\overset{\sim}{1}$  -  $\overset{\sim}{1}$  - |



## Other Bending Techniques

When two numbers are written one above each other and represent two neighboring strings, use the thumb to pluck both strings, and bend the bottom string to the top string sound.

**Example:**  $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$

How to play:

1. Use thumb to pluck both **3** and **5** together. In order to pluck two strings at the same time, slightly tilt the thumb pick facing downward, and then pluck forward and downward.
2. After you pluck both strings, bend down the **3** string slowly to a **5** sound.

**Example:**  $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 3 \\ 5 \end{matrix}$

How to play:

1. Use thumb to pluck both **3** and **5** together, and middle pluck the lower octave **5**.
2. After you pluck, bend down the **3** string slowly to a **5** sound.

Left hand bending technique is vital to guzheng playing. The player uses left hand techniques to express his/her feeling and gives the song a soul. Bending and vibrato are used to add flavor to the melody. A combination of bending and vibrato is used often. Long and deep vibrato is used for accent notes or to express strong feeling. A tapping or a short vibrato is used in a shorter note, a note with a dot, or in a happy lively melody. Bending can also be done in a fast way, slow dragging way, soft way, and harsh way to express different feelings. Most of the time, the left hand technique is not written clearly on the score. An experienced player can add the flavors as he/she likes to express the feeling of the moment.

## (23) Cranes Triumph the Cloud 鶴衝霄

1=D 2/4

♩ = 60

Guqin Classic

3	5		<u>33</u>	<u>532</u>		1	3		2	-		6̣	5̣	5̣				
3	5		<u>33</u>	<u>532</u>		1	3		1	-		6̣	5̣	5̣				
1	-		1̣	2̣		2	-		3	<u>2325</u>		6̣	6̣	-				
1	-		1̣	2̣		2	-		3	<u>2325</u>		6̣	6̣	-				
5̣	3̣		6̣	1̣		3	5		3	5		35	36		1	2	3	
5̣	6̣		1̣	-		3	5		3	5		35	36		1	2	3	
2	-		1̣	2̣	3̣		2	2		1̣	2̣	5̣	6̣		5̣	6̣	-	
1	-		1̣	2̣	3̣		2	2		1̣	2̣	5̣	6̣		5̣	6̣	-	
<u>36</u>	<u>55</u>		6̣	6̣		3	-		3	3	<u>532</u>		1	2	3		-	
<u>36</u>	<u>55</u>		6̣	6̣		3	-		3	3	<u>532</u>		1	2	3		-	
2	2		6̣	5̣	5̣		1	-		6̣	5̣	5̣	6̣		1	6̣	-	
2	2		6̣	5̣	5̣		1	-		6̣	5̣	5̣	6̣		1	6̣	-	