

Above All Things

Dropped D tuning

Phil Keaggy

Intro

1

D5 C/D G/D D5 Am7/D

4

D5 C/D G/D C G D

6

E7 G D4 E7 G D4

Verse

8

D5 Am7/D D5 Am7/D G/D Dsus2 D

I have taken you in...

E7 G D4 E7 G D4

10

D5 Am7/D D5 Am7/D G/D Dsus2 D

12

E7 G D4 E7 G D4

14

1st Chorus G A A/E D5 G D5 A

16

I have placed your love above all things...

C G A D5 C G D5

18

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

E7 G D4 E7 G D4

20

0 3 0 3 5 2 5 3 3 0 0 3 0 3 5 2 5 3 3 0
1 0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 2 0 0 0 0 4 4 0 0 0
2 5 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 5 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

C G D5 C G A/E

22

2nd Chorus

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

And this present life is nothing...

C G Bm D5 C G D5

24

1 3 3 3 1 3 3 3
0 0 4 2 0 0 0 0
3 5 2 0 3 5 0 0

This exuberant Celtic anthem in celebration of marriage appears on Phil's 1998 release, *Phil Keaggy*. The lyrics are inspired by an excerpt from the writings of St. John Chrysostom that appears in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Chrysostom suggests that husbands say to their wives:

I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself. For the present life is nothing, and my most ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not being separated in the life reserved for us.... I place your love above all things, and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you.

Musically, the Celtic mood of the song is established by the 12/8 meter (common in Celtic dance music), and the frequent use of chords with no third and the use of a major triad built on the dominant seventh, C (both techniques create harmonic ambiguity and tension and are common in Celtic music).

This transcription reflects a typical live solo performance of the tune. The various sections of the lyrics are largely independent, and in Phil's live performances he often repeats sections or inserts an instrumental verse as the mood suits him. Here you'll find transcriptions for the various sections; assemble them as you will! The accompaniment to the recorded version is very similar to that transcribed here, the biggest difference being bars 6 and 7 of the Intro, which are replaced by a single bar of a D5 chord on the recording. There are also small variations to the rhythms as sections are repeated.

A typical performance might go as follows:

Intro

Verse 1 – *I have taken you in my arms.../And my most ardent dream...*

Chorus 1 – *I have placed your love above all things...*

Verse 2 – *I have taken you in my heart.../And together we in prayer...*

Chorus 2 – *And this present life is nothing...*

Verse (instrumental)

Chorus 1 – *I have placed your love above all things...*

Intro (through bar 5)

As a transition between sections, Phil often vamps on the final chord for an extra half bar.

Use your right hand thumb to play the downstem notes throughout; for the strummed sections, Phil typically plucks the chords for the first (notated) beat and strums with his right hand fingers for the beats notated with slashes. There are three particularly challenging parts of this tune. The Intro is quite challenging rhythmically, because it is played "two against three," the thumb keeping the 12/8 rhythm, but the fingers playing a melody in 8 beats to a bar. If you have trouble with this kind of thing (I did!), try playing just the thumb's part until you can sing or hum the other part in correct time. Then let your fingers pick it up. The second challenge is the fingering in bar 6, a motif that recurs throughout the piece. Pay attention to the left hand fingerings in the treble staff; they show Phil's fingerings for this lovely passage. Finally, the opening bar for the verses requires a bit of a stretch, with both the first and third fingers barring frets and the fourth finger adding notes to span 6 frets total. Worth the reach!

– Tom Lored, September 1998