

Mandolin Excursion

Improve Your Playing and Build Experience By Learning Tunes

by Bradley Laird

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*An excursion is a trip, usually made for leisure
or educational purposes. It is often an adjunct to a longer journey
or visit to a place, sometimes for other (typically work-related) purposes.
from Wikipedia*

*This book is dedicated to
Buddy Ashmore who dearly
loves to pick and sing.*

*Thank you to Darlene
for tireless encouragement.*

Welcome aboard!

Climb in and make yourself comfortable. This excursion is the *third leg in the tripod of learning to play music* on the mandolin. The first leg is **knowledge**. Understanding of theory, notes, scales, chords and why you play what you play. The second leg of the tripod is **ability**. The ability to get your fingers to do what you ask them to do. The third leg is **experience**—the experience of playing of songs to learn to express more musical ideas. This book is meant to beef up and strengthen that third leg. My previous books, "Mandolin Master Class" and "Mandolin Training Camp" are to build up the first two legs. Remove any leg of the tripod and it falls over. Knowledge without ability is powerless. Ability without experience is meaningless. Experience and ability without knowledge is limiting. They all work together.

This book is valuable to mandolin students wishing to improve their skills at improvising too, particularly if they take the time to dissect and study the notes and determine why those particular notes work at that moment. Even those who do not tear apart the tunes for study, but just learn to pick them, will gain a great deal by accumulating a much larger store of "licks" and interesting note sequences and by coaxing their fingers to learn new things. *If you play the tunes, and learn them well, you simply cannot avoid becoming a better player.*

This book presents a wide variety of mandolin tunes and breaks, 44 to be exact, which will broaden your repertoire and increase your skill level on the instrument. You could consider this a "learn by doing" method. The tunes presented here run the gamut from breaks for bluegrass standards, classic common jam session tunes, offbeat original tunes, Celtic tunes, and old-time fiddle numbers.

With regards to the older, traditional tunes presented here, this book is not meant to be the definitive source for the "original" melody. If you have been playing the mandolin more than five minutes you have surely discovered that there are hundreds of variations of many of the traditional tunes. The arrangements presented here represent the way the I tend to play the tune. On my original tunes I have written out the true melody of the tune. I can only say this with authority because I wrote them! On the tunes written by some long-deceased composer, and modified by hundreds of people since that time, I can only say that this is how I play the tunes... sometimes.

Some of the arrangements here are downright easy. Others will test your patience, but give them a fair shake. The first time you picked up a mandolin everything was difficult. There will be some difficult passages in this book. Take the time to make them easy and you will be elevated to a new level in your playing. And you will have a whole pile of new tunes to play. Don't forget to practice the chords too so you can play the tunes with other folks!

I hope you like the tunes. Got your mandolin, a pick, a couple of sandwiches and your sleeping bag? Fine. Let's hit the trail!

*Bradley Laird
Rex, Georgia
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