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Mandolin Song Book

by Bradley Laird

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Celtic and Classic American Favorites.**

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of the mandolin fingerboard.**

*32 Mandolin Solos written in
Tablature & Standard Notation*

Mandolin Song Book

by
Bradley Laird

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FIRST EDITION

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About the Author

Bradley Laird played mandolin with the bluegrass group Cedar Hill from 1983 until 2010. He is the mandolin player with another bluegrass group, Pony Express, which he founded while in college in 1979.

He has recorded several albums, has been a mandolin, banjo, upright bass and guitar teacher since 1982 and is an alumni of the Atlanta Mandolin Society Orchestra in which he played mandola and mandocello.

Brad has written 5 mandolin instruction books including the popular Mandolin Master Class and The Mandolin Handbook. He is a songwriter and has composed over 50 bluegrass songs and instrumentals.

Brad was inducted into the Hall of Honor of the Atlanta Country Music Hall of Fame in 2004. He resides in Rex, Georgia and, in addition to his performing and teaching, is a piano tuner and technician.

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Dedicated to the members of the A.O.M.

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INTRODUCTION

This book and CD contains a collection of songs for mandolin players. In it you'll find a variety of styles of mandolin songs, from bluegrass to old-time fiddle tunes to Celtic tunes and classic American favorites, all arranged for the mandolin and written in tablature and standard notation. The accompanying CD demonstrates each song so you can get an idea of how the song sounds. Most of the tunes are played slowly and then at a more moderate tempo with rhythm guitar. Each song in the book shows the chord progression written above the music so that you can easily learn them or teach the chords to other players.

The arrangements run the gamut from downright easy to somewhat challenging. There are tunes in this book for players of all skill levels. If you began the learning process by working through "Mandolin Primer" by Bert Casey, or any other basic mandolin instruction course, you should be ready to enjoy playing these mandolin songs.

This book assumes that you already know how to read tablature or standard notation. If you don't, it would be a good idea to consult a beginning mandolin book or check out my downloadable video lessons on www.freemandolinvideos.com. I have indicated some left hand fingerings over certain passages wherever I thought it might be helpful. These numbers are located over the tablature staff and indicate which finger of the left hand is suggested for playing the note. Whenever the fingering is obviously in the normal, first position, I have omitted fingering markings to keep the pages from being cluttered with extra marks. Of course, fingerings are completely up to you. If you find another way to play the notes which is easier, by all means do it!

Several of the tunes in this collection are presented as 2 different versions. First, there is a basic version to help you "get the gist" of the melody and then a more advanced, embellished version to add to your collection of mandolin licks. Some of the tunes, especially the bluegrass songs which may be sung in a variety of keys, are arranged in more than one key so you can learn to play solos in multiple keys.

Track 1 of the CD is a tuning track. After you tune up, it might be helpful to listen to the entire CD to hear the tunes and then pick your favorites and turn to the book for the written music. Most of the songs in the book are recorded at a slow practice speed and then at a moderate performance speed. A couple of the tunes are slow enough that I only included one track.

Have fun and I hope to see you at a jam session soon!

Bradley Laird

Note: The audio tracks are supplied as MP3 files with this downloadable digital PDF edition.



Amazing Grace

KEY OF G

John Newton, 1799
Arranged by Bradley Laird

Musical notation for the first system of 'Amazing Grace' in G major, 3/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting with a whole rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line with fret numbers: 0, 2, 5, 2, 5, 2, 0, 5, 2, 0, 0, 2.

Musical notation for the second system of 'Amazing Grace' in G major, 3/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody with quarter notes D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line with fret numbers: 5, 2, 5, 2, 0, 2, 5, 5, 2.

Musical notation for the third system of 'Amazing Grace' in G major, 3/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line with fret numbers: 5, 5, 2, 5, 0, 2, 5, 2, 0, 0, 2.

Musical notation for the fourth system of 'Amazing Grace' in G major, 3/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The bass clef staff shows a bass line with fret numbers: 5, 2, 5, 2, 0, 5, 5.

This simple melody is a favorite around the world. On the demonstration CD I played the half notes as a single sustaining note. Feel free to use tremolo or embellish the tune in any way that suits you. I have a video lesson on playing this tune in 8 different keys which you can find online at www.freemandolinvideos.com.



Battle Hymn of the Republic

KEY OF D

Arranged by Bradley Laird

First system of musical notation for guitar. Chords: D, G, D. Includes treble and bass staves with notes and fret numbers.

Second system of musical notation for guitar. Chords: F#7, Bm, Em, D, A7, D. Includes treble and bass staves with notes and fret numbers.

Third system of musical notation for guitar. Chords: G, D. Includes treble and bass staves with notes and fret numbers.

Fourth system of musical notation for guitar. Chords: F#7, Bm, Em, D, A7, D. Includes treble and bass staves with notes and fret numbers.

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This song was popular during the American Civil War. You can play this for your Yankee friends. The rhythm of the dotted 8th note followed by a 16th note looks harder to play than it is. Just think "humpty-dumpty" and you'll get it. I really like the chords in the second and fourth lines.



Caledonian Laddie

KEY OF D

Arranged by Bradley Laird

A Part

Musical notation for the first system of the A Part, including treble and bass staves with chords (D, A, G, A) and fret numbers.

Musical notation for the second system of the A Part, including treble and bass staves with chords (D, A, D, A) and first/second endings, and fret numbers.

B Part

Musical notation for the first system of the B Part, including treble and bass staves with chords (D, A, Bm) and fret numbers.

Musical notation for the second system of the B Part, including treble and bass staves with chords (D, G, D, A) and first/second endings, and fret numbers.

FREE PREVIEW

This traditional tune from across the big pond has a couple of interesting triplets to watch out for. They really add to the flavor of the tune. I play the triplets by striking only the first note with my pick and then use a hammer-on or a pull-off to create the other two notes. The exception is the final triplet which crosses strings. In that one, I hit that 1st string note with an upstroke.



Dixie

KEY OF D

Arranged by Bradley Laird

Musical notation for the first system, including a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature (C). The guitar tablature below the staff shows fret numbers and includes a slide mark 'S' under the 7th fret of the 4th string.

Chords: D, G

Musical notation for the second system, including a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature (C). The guitar tablature below the staff shows fret numbers.

Chords: D, Bm, A

Musical notation for the third system, including a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature (C). The guitar tablature below the staff shows fret numbers.

Chords: D, D, G

Musical notation for the fourth system, including a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature (C). The guitar tablature below the staff shows fret numbers and includes a triplet '3' and a 'H P' (hammer-on/pull-off) mark.

Chords: E7, A7, D, G

FREE PREVIEW

System 1: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Chords: D, A⁷, D, A. Bass clef with fret numbers: 0-4-5-5, 5-4-4-2, 0-0-0-2-4-0, 2-2-2-4-5-2.

System 2: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Chords: D, A⁷, D. Bass clef with fret numbers: 0-0-5-2, 0-5-0-2, 0-0-0-2-4-0.

System 3: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Chords: A, D, A⁷, D. Bass clef with fret numbers: 0-2-2-2-4-5-2, 4-0-5-2, 0-0-0-2, 0-5-0.

FREE PREVIEW

This arrangement is played slowly and expressively. My fiddle playing friend, Mike Estes, plays a version very much like this that can bring tears to a glass eye. This song is a nice follow up to the Battle Hymn of the Republic and will make your Johnny Reb friends drop Confederate money in your tip jar.



Dusty Miller

KEY OF A

Arranged by Bradley Laird

A G A E A

A G A E A

A G A E A

A G A E A

This song is not named after a wrestler. These days we get our flour and corn meal from a grocery store. (Martha White brand being the favorite of bluegrass players.) But, it has not been that long ago that you hauled your crop to the mill whereupon the miller would grind your grain for a share. He would become very dusty in the process—thus the origin of the title. This tune is played in many different ways and there is even a Texas style fiddle tune called Dusty Miller with a completely different melody.

it roar like a Loar. It is a system and all parts of the system must be considered. This includes frets and fret wear, nut height and material, string gauges, composition and tension, bridge construction, height, fitting and placement, neck curvature and truss rod adjustments, type of pick, picking style, muscle strength, etc. etc. It goes on and on. Bottom line. Don't look to a string to make you sound good. Strings help. So do all those other things I mentioned.

Spacing is also important. So is the "level" of the strings in a plane parallel to the fret board. Nut slots and bridge slots cut haphazardly or "fooled with" often leave you with strings that stick up higher than others. My opinion is that the strings should match the radius of the fingerboard and be pretty level across the tops. Mine isn't. But I think it should be. Maybe during the next refret I will get that straightened out.

If you enjoy tinkering with your mandolin or simply enjoy learning more about them, I suggest you take a look at my book "The Mandolin Handbook." Now, back to the questions:

Question: Do you change your strings often?

No. I hate changing strings. I play about 6 gigs each month and who knows how many hours I play during lessons and practicing but I still only change my strings about every 6 weeks or so. I personally don't like the brassy "zizzz" that you get with new strings and for me I like them when they are played in for about 4 to 6 hours. They start getting a bit thumpier and I start liking them better. If I break a string, and that doesn't happen too often, I usually change the string on the fly and then do the rest of the set in the morning. Also, if I begin to notice that the E string is sounding flat when I play up near the 12th fret I change them all. If I notice that I am having to "choke" the E string to the side to get it in tune I know I have waited way too long.

Question: Do you recommend a universal set, or is there an ideal set of strings that could be used for jazz, or Celtic, Brazilian, etc.?

Not as far as I am concerned. I don't really

know anything about Brazilian anything, except Brazil nuts, so I definitely don't know about that.

Question: Are bronze wound strings best?

To me, yes. I like the sound better. I am not too big on Phosphor Bronze though. They sound great but, in my hands, they seem to go dead too fast for me. I like 80/20.)

Question: What are steps for the proper care and treatment for strings?

I don't do anything. I suppose I should wipe the crud off once in a while, but I never do. I do, maybe once during the last days of a set of strings, loosen the 4ths and 3rds, and while they are partly loose snap them really hard a couple of times by yanking them up and letting the slap the frets. Or I might loosen them enough to unhook them at the tailpiece and form a loop about 2" in diameter in the free end of the string. Then, holding the end of the string, I roll the loop up and down to the nut and back a couple times. It breaks all the crud and crap free and wakes them up a bit. I learned this in the piano tuning business and it is called "rolling the bass strings". When I am finished rolling them I give them a half turn clockwise to tighten the winding and stick 'em back on. You should try it and you will be surprised how you can liven the wound bass strings for at least a temporary fix.

Question: How do you reduce or eliminate the unwanted harmonics that are produced by the strings between the bridge and tailpiece of an acoustic mandolin?"

I have a bit of buckskin glued across the upper surface of the tailpiece that contacts the strings as they leave the tailpiece. It quiets the strings somewhat but doesn't totally deaden them. Again, take a look at my book, "The Mandolin Handbook," for more information on this subject.

Question: What tips on strings could you pass along that might help or be of interest?"

Mandolin Chords

	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	7th	Minor 7th
G						
A ^b						
A						
B ^b						
B						
C						