

# Learning Dulcimer Tunes from Written Music

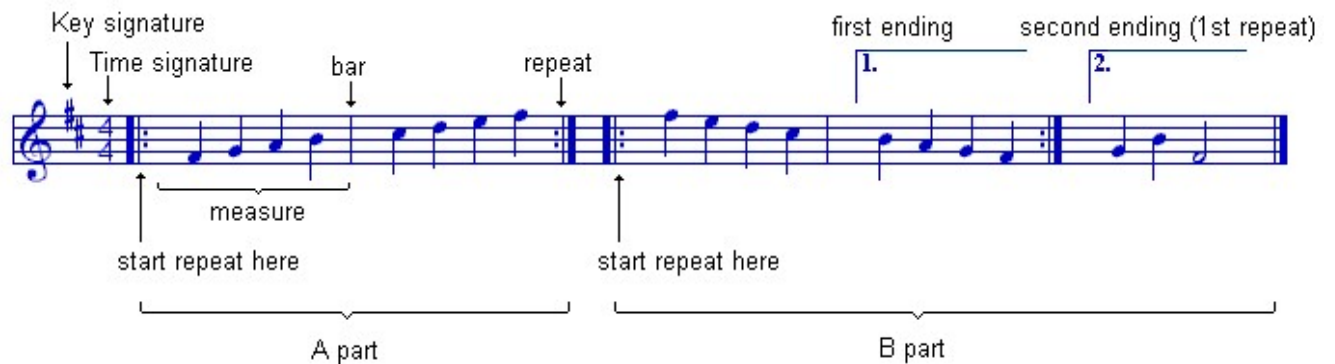
## Goals

- learning by yourself from music notation
- playing fluidly from memory

## Elements of a learning/playing a tune






- 1) determine where to begin playing
- 2) find the melody notes on the dulcimer (which courses to hit)
- 3) learn the rhythm (timing of each note and groups of notes)
- 4) determine which hand to use for each note

## Music Notation

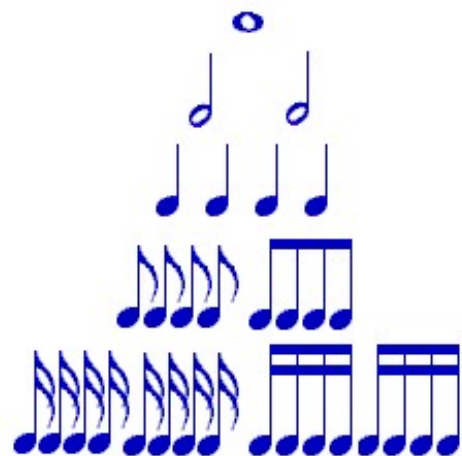


- music staff lines = E G B D F (Every Good Boy Deserves a Favor)

## Note Timing Basics:

Name	Note	4/4 Count
Whole note		4 beats
Half note		2 beats
Quarter note		1 beat
Eighth note		1/2 beat
Sixteenth note		1/4 beat

## Equal Time Pyramid:


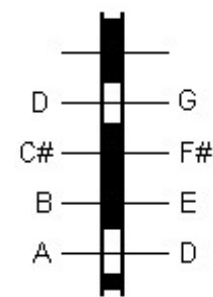


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## Key Signature

- determines where on the dulcimer the notes will be found

Key of D

## Popular keys for the Hammered Dulcimer (in order of popularity):

Key Signature	Major Key	Minor Key	Comments
	D	Bm	
	G	Em	
	A	F#m	usually not playable on 11/12 instruments
	C	Am	
	F	Dm	bass bridge only




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## Time (Rhythm) Signature

**4** = Beats per measure

**4** = Note value that receives 1 beat

## Popular time signatures for traditional music:

Time Signature	Music Pulse (accented beat(s) underlined)	Beats per Measure	Used for:
4 / 4		4	Reels, Marches, Hornpipes, Set Dances
3 / 4		3	Waltzes
6 / 8		6	Jigs

## Figuring out which bridge and courses/notes to play

- 1) ignore the octave - use the key signature to find “the box” to play in!
- 2) avoid hand crosses (*use unisons if needed to make bridge crosses easier*)
  - move over a bridge to the right with your right hand, to the left with your left hand
- 3) go for the easiest transition to the next note or hand
- 4) play horizontally if/when easier (*using unisons*)

## Rhythm – determines which hand to use for each note

- play the rhythm on your legs
- accent 1<sup>st</sup> beat of each measure - use/lead with your strong hand
- for series of 8<sup>th</sup> notes: use alternating hands
- for quarter notes and each note that follows a quarter note: play with your strong hand
  - in other words, don’t use your non-dominant hand where there is a “missing” 8<sup>th</sup> note
  - see next pages for examples...



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## Reels

R=right, L=left hand

Tr = Treble bridge, right side  
 TI = Treble bridge, left side  
 B = Bass bridge

### Cincinnati Hornpipe (D)

Musical notation for Cincinnati Hornpipe (D) in 4/4 time, D major. The melody consists of 16 eighth notes. The rhythm is indicated by the letters R L R L R L R L below the first four notes, and the remaining notes are grouped in pairs.

### Swinging on a Gate (G)

Musical notation for Swinging on a Gate (G) in 4/4 time, G major. The melody consists of 16 eighth notes. The rhythm is indicated by TI Tr B above the first three notes, R L below the next two, (R R) L below the next two, B Tr TI above the next three, and (R R) below the last two. The (R R) pairs are circled.

### Far From Home (G)

Musical notation for Far From Home (G) in 4/4 time, G major. The melody consists of 16 eighth notes. The rhythm is indicated by Tr B Tr above the first three notes, R (L) below the next two, R R L below the next two, Tr B Tr above the next three, and R L below the last two. The (L) is circled.

### Petronella (D)

Musical notation for Petronella (D) in 4/4 time, D major. The melody consists of 16 eighth notes. The rhythm is indicated by R R L R R L below the first six notes, (R R R) below the next three, R L below the next two, R R L R R below the next four, and R R below the last two. The (R R R) group is circled.

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## Jigs

R=right, L=left hand

Tr = Treble bridge, right side  
Tl = Treble bridge, left side  
B = Bass bridge

### Hullichan's (G)

Tr Tl Tr Tl Tr Tl

R L R | L R L R L R | L R L L L

### Off She Goes (D)

Tr Tl Tr

R R | L L R L R | L L R R | L L R L R | L

### Jefferson and Liberty (Am)

Tr B Tr

R R | L R L R R | L R L

## Learning tips

- first analyze the tune: look for repeating / similar phrases, recognize patterns from other songs you know
- use the music to find notes and hand sequence on the dulcimer, then visualize and memorize the hammering patterns
  - **when playing, look at the dulcimer not the written music**
- work slowly, increase speed only after you can play it well slowly
  - if you're making too many mistakes, slow down until you've "got it"
- **if a phrase/riff is giving you trouble, practice it by itself over and over until you've got it in your ears, eyes, and muscle memory**
- the more you learn the faster learning will become

## Memorization hints

- memorize visual patterns
- small parts at a time
- tackle a riff or phrase at a time, then play it with the phrases you've already learned
- **repetition over time (10 minutes/day...)**
- use muscle memory - relax!

