

# Neal's Workshops

## Autoharp Workshops

### Beginning to Intermediate Level

- **$\frac{3}{4}$  Strum Accompaniment:** this is a beginners class building on a simple  $\frac{3}{4}$  strum and applying it to songs such as “Down in the Valley” and “Across the Blue Mountains”.
- **Easy Lullabies:** this is an easy strumming workshop focusing on accompaniment of “Brahm’s Lullaby”, “Hush Little Baby”, and “Slumber My Darling”: all in the key of C. While you might be tempted, no snoozing is allowed!
- **Picking Clean Melodies:** here are some basics for playing melodies on the autoharp and what you can do to make them stand out clearly. Focus will be on pinch-pluck but we’ll work a bit on thumb lead as well.

### Intermediate to Advanced Level

- **Wonderful Waltzes:** we’ll take a couple of simple waltzes; get the melodies down and then explore filling in the “holes” with delicate rhythms. Possible tunes are “Rainbow Waltz”, “Cowboy’s Waltz”, “Peeler Creek” or “Tombigbee”.
- **Ragged Tunes:** we’ll work through a couple tunes like “Pig Ankle Rag”, “Red Apple Rag” or “Victory Rag” and then focus on the rhythm accents, which make these tunes so much fun to play.
- **Old Time Songs & Tunes:** a good repertoire builder: we’ll start off with some simple songs and tunes and then work up to some more obscure fiddle tunes you may not have heard. Novice strummers and melody pickers alike, should enjoy this hour.
- **Duets on the Autoharp:** here are several examples of duet playing: from call & answer to counter melodies. Titles include “The Clayhole”, “Precious Memories”, “Alo-ha Oe” and “Spotted Pony”.
- **Thumb Lead:** here’s a way to play melody on the autoharp alternatively to the pinch-pluck method. Good songs for exploring this are “Going to Italy”, “Golden Slippers”, and “Do Lord”.
- **Repertoire Development:** all of the “theme” workshops listed under mountain dulcimer are available for autoharp as well.

**Note:** most of our workshops can be tailored for any level from beginner to advanced but in the absence of any prior arrangement to the contrary, will generally be targeted at the levels indicated.

# Mountain Dulcimer Workshops

## Beginning to Intermediate Level

- **Music Theory for Dummies:** a little theory is often as useful as a lot of technique in terms of improving your playing, particularly in jamming situations. This workshop is designed to demystify what every dulcimer or autoharp player should know about chords, modes, keys, and other frightening but important subjects. Time permitting; we'll also discuss jamming techniques and etiquette.
- **Exploring the 1-3-5 Tuning for Dulcimer:** this tuning is particularly good for ragtime, blues, and other guitar-like tunes. We'll learn some simple tunes like "Victory Rag", "Railroad Bill" and "John Henry" that benefit nicely from this tuning.
- **Easy Chords In D-A-D:** let's start off at the very beginning with easy chords. We'll try a few easy strum patterns and then add some additional fingerings. We'll move right into some simple songs to sing that will accompanied by our chord playing.
- **Simple Harmony in D-A-D:** we'll take some familiar tunes and find alto, tenor and bass "harmony" lines to add to the melody for an ensemble sound. Starting with "Bile the Cabbages", we'll move on to "Go Tell Aunt Rhody", "Sweet Hour of Prayer", and "Big Eyed Rabbit".
- **D-A-A Chords:** a clear chord chart will be provided and participants will go through the exercise of penciling in fingerings next to the chord names. Songs to be used for the exercise are: "Hard Times", "Banks of the Ohio", "Jubilee", "Down the Road", "Going to Little Creek" and several more.
- **Easy Children's Songs in D-A-D:** sometimes it's the early childhood songs that allow our fingers to quickly get familiar with the fret board. Examples of these include "London Bridge", "Michael Row Your Boat Ashore", and "Brahm's Lullaby".
- **Learn a Tune by Ear:** a good exercise in listening and training your fingers to imitate what you hear. We'll take a basic tune and break it down phrase by phrase: slowly: and then put all the pieces together for a new tune to add to your repertoire: without tab... gasp!
- **Left Hand Techniques:** every intermediate player should be familiar with left hand techniques such as hammer-ons, slides, pull-offs, and triplets. We'll break each of these techniques down and practice applying them in appropriate tunes.
- **Right Hand Techniques:** there's more to your right hand than bum-ditty-bum. Learn a variety of strumming techniques to add variety to your music and allow you to "match the mood" of the material you're trying to play.
- **Fills, Breaks, and Turnarounds:** learn what to do to fill those spaces when simply strumming the chord sounds too boring; learn to use turnarounds: that's what you do between the end of one part of the song and the beginning of the next: and get started taking instrumental breaks to spice up your playing.
- **Repertoire Development:** just want to learn a few new tunes? Try one of these

workshops.

- » Easy Contra Dance Tunes
- » Easy Old Time Fiddle Tunes
- » Songs about Mountains
- » Favorite Gospel Songs
- » Gospel Technology
- » Easy Country Blues Songs
- » Slow Airs
- » Harvest and Thanksgiving Songs
- » Winter Songs
- » Pub Favorites
- » Songs about Birds
- » Children's Songs
- » Cowboy Songs
- » Doofus/Bozo Songs
- » Songs about Exotic Places
- » Father's Day Songs
- » Mother's Day Songs
- » Songs about Food
- » Gardening Songs
- » Nostalgic Songs
- » Songs about Ordinary People
- » Railroad Songs
- » Songs about Water
- » Silly Songs
- » Songs of the Supernatural
- » Tear Jerkers and Dying Downers
- » Your State's Name Here

### Intermediate to Advanced Level

- **Out of the Ordinary Waltzes:** waltzes are wonderful on the dulcimer. We have a large number of obscure, beautiful and, often, unusual waltzes that we've arranged for dulcimer over the years. We'll bring along several of our favorites, arranged in D-A-D. (This could easily be coordinated with a similar autoharp workshop).
- **Fiddle Tunes You Probably Can't Dance To:** the Southern solo fiddle tradition contains a number of tunes that were not designed for dancing. Many have unusual twists and turns, often adding or subtracting beats. Even those that may have been intended as dance tunes sound good on the dulcimer, particularly at a statelier tempo.

- **Love, Death and Barnyard Animals:** some of our favorite country blues tunes: like Deep River Blues, Deep Elm (pronounced Ellum) Blues, and maybe even Deep Doo Doo (that's a joke!) – come from the guitar playing of people like Doc Watson and Libba Cotton. These tunes sound wonderful on the dulcimer and are great “repertoire expanders.”
- **Scottish Tunes in DAD:** learn a couple beautiful melodies that lie nicely on the dulcimer. Selections include “Loch Tay Boat Song”, “Rorate”, “Ian Ruddah’s Lament”, and “Cuillins of Home”.
- **Ragged Tunes:** the left hand fingering and syncopated rhythms make these tunes fun to play on the dulcimer. “Pig Ankle Rag” is in D-A-D and “Red Apple Rag” is in D-A-D capo 3.
- **Adapting Guitar or Other Written Music to the Dulcimer:** there is a lot of music available in books for guitar and other folk instruments. Learn how you can easily adapt this music to the dulcimer.
- **Putting Your Music on Paper:** an informational discussion of music notation programs, tablature, and other computer resources for those who “want to but don’t know how.”
- **Practical Music Theory:** a more advanced version of the Music Theory for Dummies workshop. This one covers the beginning topics, i.e. chords, modes, keys, etc., but goes into more depth to include transposing, chord inversions, the use of capos, and more. This should be scheduled for two hours or more.
- **Repertoire Development:** the repertoire development workshops outlined under the Beginning to Novice levels can be presented at a more advanced level as well.

Note: most of our workshops can be tailored for any level from beginner to advanced but in the absence of any prior arrangement to the contrary, will generally be targeted at the levels indicated.

## Banjo Workshops

- **Beginning to Intermediate Level Getting Started on 5-String Banjo:** learn beginning 5 string clawhammer techniques starting with the basics: how to hold and tune the banjo, and quickly move on to 2 & 3 chord melodies. The class will play out of an open G tuning (gDGBD) starting with the basic clawhammer frailing rhythm and then adding some hammer-ons, slides & pull-offs. Tab and exercises will be provided. Get off to a solid start, ready for years of banjo addiction!
- **Old Time Tunes on 5-String Banjo:** for those novice players comfortable with the basic clawhammer rhythm, we will teach some old time tunes: slowly: a phrase at a time: and then put it all together. Tab will be provided for those who learn by sight as well as by ear!
- **Intermediate to Advanced Level Adding Spice to Your Playing:** explore more advanced right and left hand techniques such as hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, double thumbing, syncopation, etc. and learn how these techniques fit into both simple and

more complex arrangements of common tunes in the basic banjo repertoire.

- **Playing with a Fiddler:** learn techniques for accompanying fiddle tunes and for playing with fiddlers. An actual real-live fiddler will participate.
- **Repertoire Development:** learn some uncommonly good and sometimes rare banjo tunes to build your repertoire and to amaze your friends!
- **Singing with the Banjo:** learn accompaniment to old-time songs, including intros, fills and endings.

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## **Mandolin Workshops**

- **Getting Started on Mandolin:** for the absolute beginner. Learn how to tune the mandolin, how to hold the pick, and how to play several basic chords in an accompaniment style. We'll focus on the key of D for playing in dulcimer jams.)
- **Repertoire Development:** learn some nice and relatively easy mandolin tunes to build your repertoire and to further amaze your friends!