



Building a Traditional Tune Repertoire

by Wendy Anthony

The Girl I Left Behind Me

(Key of G)

The Tune:

The Girl I Left Behind Me, also known as (aka) *The Gal I Left Behind*, is a jaunty air, played as a march, describing the necessity of leaving behind a girl in order to find work or fight wars. This tune has old roots, and though published sources exist from the late 1790's, the exact date & place of origin is contested. This tune shares a similar melody to the Irish *The Rambling Laborer* & the English *Brighton Camp*. When military regiments/troops left cities or camps, soldiers often sang *The Girl I Left Behind Me* as a leave-taking, while marching in time to this tune. Lyrics of Irish & English origin were adapted in America, where the song became popular during the Civil War. This tune may be played in Old-Time jams & even in some Celtic sessions.

The Girl I Left Behind Me

Traditional

Arranged by Wendy Anthony

Chords: G, C, G, D, G, C, D, 1. G, 2. G, G, D, G, C, D, 1. G, 2. G

Measure numbers: 6, 11, 16

Listen to the Midi: [120 bpm](#) & [160 bpm](#)

Techniques:

- **Overview of Tune:** Though played in a jaunty manner, this tune has a steady march-time rhythm, with slight accents on the 1st & 3rd beats. The only difference between Parts A & B are the first 4 measures; the notes & chords of the last 4 measures are played the same.

- **Chords:**

Part A: ||: G | C | G | D | G | C | D | G :||

Part B: ||: G | G | G | G/D | G | C | D | G :||

- **Pick Strokes:** Pick all 1/4 notes with Downstrokes & all paired 1/8 notes with Down/Upstrokes. Avoid playing the numerous 1/4 notes in a choppy manner. The transition between each note can be made smoother by holding down each fretted 1/4 note until after the next note is fretted.

Variations:

1. **Substitute Notes &/or Alter Rhythm:** use different lead-in/intro notes; replace 1/4 note with 1/8 notes; replace 1/4 note with 3 - 1/8 note triplets; alter timing; use hammer-ons &/or pull-offs ...

Variations for The Girl I Left Behind Me

Comments or Suggestions?

Keepin' tuned ...
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