



Building a Traditional Tune Repertoire

by Wendy Anthony

Red Haired Boy

(Key of A-mixolydian)

The Tune:

The Red Haired Boy is a well-known tune played at both Bluegrass jams & Celtic sessions. This tune is also known by other names, many of which are based on the title & lyrics of an 18th Century Scottish ballad with the same melody, otherwise known as #279 in the Child Collection: *The Jolly Beggar*, *Little Beggarman*, *The Rigadoo* & *Johnny Dhu*.

Red Haired Boy

Traditional

Arranged by Wendy Anthony

Part A

A A D A G

Part B

G D A G A

6 T A B

11 T A B

16 T A B

Listen to the Red Haired Boy MIDI

[120](#) & [160](#) bpm

Techniques:

- **Overview of Tune:** This tune is in the Mixolydian Mode, which has a flatted seventh note (G instead of G#). Thus, even though the key signature is A (which has 3 sharps), there are actually only 2 sharp notes - A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G, A. Part B differs from Part A in only the first 2 measures, both in the melody line and the chord structure.

- **Chords:** The chords used are the ones normally expected in the key of A: A(I), D(IV), E(V), though, because the tuning mode is Mixolydian with a flatted seventh, there is an additional G (bVII) chord in the 4th measure of both Parts A & B. Also, Part B starts with a G (bVII) chord, followed by a D (IV), before returning to same progression as the rest of Part A.

Part A: ||: A | A/D | A | G | A | A/D | A | E/A :||

Part B: ||: G | D | A | G | A | A/D | A | E/A :||

- **Pick Strokes:** Pick all 1/4 notes with Downstrokes & all paired 1/8 notes with Down/Upstrokes.

Variations:

1. **Add/Replace Notes:** Repeat the same note to make a 1/4 note into two 1/8 notes; replace 1/4 notes with paired 1/8 notes; add a syncopated feel by using a tied 1/4 + 1/8 note (the second note is silent), followed by a final 1/8 note which is picked with an Upstroke (eg measure 14); try a bluesy-bluegrass ending by using a hammer-on from a flatted third (C) back to the regular third (C#).

Red Haired Boy Variations

The image shows musical notation for 'Red Haired Boy Variations' in 4/4 time, key of A major. It includes a treble clef staff with notes and a guitar tablature staff with fret numbers and pick strokes.

Measure 2: Treble clef: A4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, A4 quarter note. Tablature: 0 0 0 0 0 2 4 5. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

Measure 4 & 13: Treble clef: A4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, A4 quarter note. Tablature: 0 5 4 2 0 2 4 0. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

Measure 5: Treble clef: G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note. Tablature: 2 5 2 4 5 0 5. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

Measure 11: Treble clef: G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note. Tablature: 3 3 2 0 5 3. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

Measure 14: Treble clef: G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note, G4 quarter note. Tablature: 2 0 5 5 4. Pick strokes: Down, Up, Down, Down, Down.

Measures 9, 10, 18, 19: Bluesy-BG Ending

Measure 9: Treble clef: E4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, E4 quarter note, A4 quarter note. Tablature: 4 2 0 2 0. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

Measure 10: Treble clef: E4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, E4 quarter note, A4 quarter note. Tablature: 3 4 3 4 0. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

Measures 18 & 19: Treble clef: E4 quarter note, A4 quarter note, E4 quarter note, A4 quarter note. Tablature: 3 4 3 4 0. Pick strokes: Down, Down, Down, Down, Down.

2. **Play As A Celtic Hornpipe:** A hornpipe is played slower than a reel, with a slightly swung, syncopated rhythm. This is accomplished by either playing the notes as if they were a dotted 1/8 note paired with a 1/16 note, in place of paired 1/8 notes, or by playing the tune as in 2/4 time, with the emphasis on the first note of the first half of the measure & the first note of the second half of the measure. This is usually not notated, but understood to be played as such.

Hornpipe Rhythm 2/4 Rhythm

A A D A A D

The musical score consists of two measures. The first measure is in 4/4 time with a hornpipe rhythm, featuring a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The second measure is in 2/4 time with a 2/4 rhythm, featuring a melody of eighth notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The guitar bass staff shows the following fret numbers for strings E, A, D, and G: Measure 1: E (2), A (0), D (0), G (2); Measure 2: E (0), A (2), D (4), G (5). Chords A, D, and A are indicated above the staff.

Comments or Suggestions?

Keepin' tuned ...
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