



Building a Traditional Tune Repertoire

by Wendy Anthony

Big Sciota

(Key of G)

The Tune:

This tune has almost as many variations in its spelling & pronunciation as in its notes and chord structure! Many versions come from the West Virginia fiddler, Burl Hammons, who rarely seemed to play the same notes each time through. He often created a "crooked" tune by adding extra beats or measures, which needed to be removed or "straightened-out" in order to play with others & dance to the tune.

Known variously as *Big Sciota*, *Big Scioti*, *Big Scioty*, *Big Scioto*, or *Big Sciot-ah*, it is usually pronounced with a silent "C", as in "science" (sounding like "sigh"), & ending with an "ee" or "ah", though some pronounce it like s"coyote". Depending on the chosen style, Old-Time or Bluegrass, the melody can be simple or complex, and the Part B chords, "Em" & "C", will be played in a different order.

The (Big) Scioto River (joined by the Little Scioto River in the North) runs south through Columbus & central Ohio, USA, following the western boundary of the Appalachians, before emptying into the Ohio River.

Big Sciota

Traditional

The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a guitar staff and a tenor banjo staff. Chord diagrams are provided above the guitar staff, and fret numbers are provided below the tenor banjo staff. The guitar part uses a standard tuning (EADG). The tenor banjo part uses a standard tuning (TAB). The score includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The guitar part uses a standard tuning (EADG). The tenor banjo part uses a standard tuning (TAB). The score includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4.

System 1: Chords: G, D, G, G, D, G. Fret numbers: 5 5 2 0 0 5 | 2 5 0 | 5 4 5 2 0 0 5 | 2 5 5 0.

System 2: Chords: G, C, D, 1. G, 2. G. Fret numbers: 5 4 5 0 2 | 3 2 0 | 0 2 3 0 | 5 2 5 0 0 5 | 2 5 5 5 0 | 2 5 5 2 5.

System 3: Chords: G, D, C (Em OldTime). Fret numbers: 3 3 5 7 5 3 | 3 5 0 3 | 5 5 7 5 3 0 | 5 0 0 2 | 3 2 0 | 5 2 2 5.

System 4: Chords: Em (C OldTime), D, 1. G, 2. G. Fret numbers: 0 0 2 0 3 0 | 5 2 5 2 0 0 5 | 2 5 5 2 5 | 2 5 5 4.

Arranged by Wendy Anthony

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Techniques:

- Overview of Tune:** I've presented a fairly simple arrangement of this tune, in order to illustrate how you can progressively add more notes to each measure to create some variety. Speed can often dictate how many notes to include, either adding more notes at slower speed, or reducing notes to increase speed.

OldTime players may pick this at speeds of up to 180 bpm (beats per minute), while Bluegrass players like Sam Bush or Chris Thile may play at warp speeds of 250 bpm or more!

- **Fingering:** In measures 8 & 17, keep the index (first) finger placed at the 2nd fret of the A strings, to act as a pivot, while moving the ring (third) finger from the 5th fret of the A to the D strings (making sure to release the index finger in time to play the open A strings). Part B incorporates the use of the pinky (fourth) finger to reach the 7th fret (B) of the E strings.
- **Pick Strokes:** Pick all 1/4 notes with Downstrokes & all paired 1/8 notes with Down/Upstrokes. See Variations #2 for a picking pattern associated with tied 1/8 notes.

Variations:

1. **Intro:** Instead of a single 1/4 note in the last beat of the introductory measure, play two 1/8 notes or a triplet (three 1/8 notes played during same time as two).

Intro Variations

2. **Variations:** Replace 1/4 notes with two 1/8 notes, for variety; slide up to 7th fret of the A strings (E) while playing open E strings; experiment with different rhythms: using tied notes (the second 1/8 note following the first silent tied 1/8 note is picked with an Upstroke), or try triplets using a Hammer-On for the second 1/8 note & a Pull-Off for the third 1/8 note.

Part A Variations

Part B Variations

Measures 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15

3. **Old-Time vs Bluegrass:** When Bluegrass and Old-Time musicians play this tune together, there will often be quite a discussion, with many differing opinions, about what the "proper" chord sequence is. In Part B, traditional Old-Time players use the chord progression D - Em - C (see the bracketed chord in the full music transcript), while Bluegrass players usually use D - C - Em. In Part A, Old-Time versions of this tune often use a much simpler melody line than Bluegrass versions.

Old Time Variation

Part A

Comments or Suggestions?

Keepin' tuned ...
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