



Building a Traditional Tune Repertoire

by Wendy Anthony

Arkansas Traveler

(Key of D)

The Tune:

Arkansas Traveler has a long history of being played in traditional American tune repertoires, with Colonel Sanford C. Faulkner generally credited for writing the music & song lyrics around 1850. This tune was the Official Arkansas State Song from 1949 until 1963, and was eventually designated as an Official Arkansas State Historical Song in 1987. Note that the spelling of this tune title may change depending on which country you spell in; the traditional American spelling is "*Traveler*" while the Canadian & British spelling is "*Traveller*".

This melody will be familiar from a variety of different sources, ranging from many early TV cartoon "hillbilly" characterizations, to a children's Playground Song, with lyrics about "Bringing home a baby bumblebee" sung to Part A. This fiddle tune was also often played along with a skit about a hillbilly-fiddler, too busy fiddlin' away to fix his leaky roof, who is playing Part A of his favourite tune over & over. A lost "city-slicker" tries to ask about shelter & directions, without much luck until he offers to take the fiddle & play the missing Part B. The hillbilly-fiddler is so thankful to hear the rest of the tune that he starts to dance & offers the city-slicker the best of all he has.

Arkansas Traveler

Traditional American

Arranged for mandolin by Wendy Anthony

Part A
D G A D A D A

E
A
D
G

0 4 2 0 4 4 2 2 0 2 2 4 4 2 4 2 0 4 2

D G A D D G ^{1.}A D

5
T
A
B

0 4 2 0 4 4 2 2 0 5 4 5 0 2 5 0 5 4 0 2 0 2 4

Part B
^{2.}A D D G D A D A

9
T
A
B

4 0 2 0 2 3 5 3 2 5 3 0 2 0 5 0 0 5 5 0 5 0

D A D G D A D G

13
T
A
B

2 0 5 2 0 2 3 5 3 2 5 3 2 0 2 0 2 0 0 5 4 5 0 2 5 0 5

^{1.}A D ^{2.}A D

17
T
A
B

4 0 2 0 2 3 4 0 2 0

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

Techniques:

- **Overview of Tune:** To help give Arkansas Traveler a feel that harkens back to its "hillbilly" roots & the contrast between Parts, play it with a combination of not-quite-choppy 1/4 notes joined together with smoother 1/8 note passages. The chords in Parts A & B start & end the same, but are reversed in the middle.
- **Pick Strokes:** Pick all 1/4 notes with Downstrokes. Give the fretted notes an almost-choppy feel by totally lifting the finger from the string slightly before the end of the note's full 1/4 beat, creating a bit of a rest while still letting the string ring, then fretting the next note.

Pick all paired 1/8 notes with Down/Upstrokes, using a smooth transition between each note. When crossing strings or fretting the next higher note on the same string, wait to lift the first fretted finger until after the next note is fretted. When fretting a lower note on the same string, co-ordinate your timing to completely lift the first finger just before fretting & picking the next note.

- **Chords:** Parts A & B start & end the same, but differ in the middle by reversing the A/D changes with D/A.

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

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

Variations:

1. **Different Octave:** In many fiddle tunes, Part A will be played in a lower register than Part B, or vice versa. Reverse this characteristic by playing each part in a Different Octave than you originally played; Play one of the end licks Up The Neck in Part A.

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Traditional American

Variation: different octave
Arranged by Wendy Anthony

Part A
D G A D A D A D G A D

Part B
D G A D G A D A D G D A

109105 7105 10 9 5 7 5 : 5 4 5 0 2 5 0 5 4 0 2 0 4 5 : 0 0 5 4 5 4 2 5 4 2 0 4 2 2

43412414 312 1

D A D A D G D A D G 1. A D 2. A D

0 0 2 0 2 4 2 0 4 2 4 5 0 0 5 4 5 4 2 5 4 2 0 4 2 0 5 4 5 0 2 5 0 5 4 0 2 0 4 5 4 0 2 0

Listen to the Midi without & with variation: [120 bpm](#) & [160 bpm](#)

Comments or Suggestions?

Keepin' tuned ...
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