

Beginning Irish Mandolin – Michael B. Gregory

As promised last time, I've given you a way to add some basic ornaments to the tunes *The Merry Blacksmith* and *The Congress*. In an earlier column

<http://www.melbay.com/mandolinsessions/oct06/Gregory.html>

I showed you a way to ornament a jig. These ornaments are very similar – many Irish players refer to them as “triplets” but they do not coincide exactly with the usual musical meaning of triplet. I urge you to read the comments I made about ornaments in that earlier issue – especially the part about using them sparingly. I have deliberately inserted many “triplets” into the written scores in order to show you that there are many places where the notes can be ornamented. Experiment with these ornaments, putting them in various places. Try placing them in different spots each time you play the tunes. You will find that I've not played exactly as the written music indicates.

In order to achieve the triplet, you have to go slowly at first. I recommend holding the pick fairly loosely and striking the strings at a slight angle rather than straight on. Keep in mind that this is something you're going to need to work on daily in order to achieve the desired sound. As always, try different attacks and, above all, don't get discouraged. If you find that you're not getting the results you want, KEEP TRYING. But, take solace in this: these tunes sound perfectly fine unornamented. It is much more important that we all learn to play with a steady and smooth rhythm. If you're playing in a group situation (for example, a traditional Irish music session) the chances are good that your ornaments will not be heard.

I can recommend a few places where you can listen to some outstanding players execute ornaments on (mostly) Irish tunes. For example, although an old album, Mick Moloney's “Strings Attached” contains many sets of reels, jigs and hornpipes played on mandolin and tenor banjo. I've been told that it is available at iTunes. More recent cd's that you should listen to are “Torch and Fire” and “Shatter the Calm” by Dan Beimborn. I'm sure you'll be interested to see photos and descriptions of the instruments (mostly mandolins) that Dan used on the Torch and Fire recording.

<http://www.mandolinarchive.com/dan/instruments.html>

There you'll find a link to a page where you can order the album.

The Merry Blacksmith - ornaments

1 5-5-0-2-2-0 4 0 0-2-5-5-0-2-0 4 0 0-2-5 0-2-2-2-0 V 2 0-0 5 0-3-2-2-0

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

9 5 5-3-2-2-3-2-0 5 5-0-2-2-0 4 0 0-2-5 0-2-2-2-0 5 2 0-0 5 0-3-2-2-0

13 5 5-3-2-2-3-2-0 5 5-0-2-2-0 4 0 0-2-5 0-2 5 0 4 5-2-0 4 0-0 0