



# Beginning Irish Mandolin

by Michael B. Gregory

The meat and potatoes of the Irish music session are the reels and jigs. The latter are generally considered easier to play so let's start with a simple, lively and melodic jig. Next month we'll tackle one of the reels. A goal of this column will be to build sets of two, three or even four tune-types, to be played consecutively as they are in sessions. A good example of this is the pair of slides that we featured in our previous two columns. They are almost always played together.

There are two common Irish session tunes with the title "The Geese in the Bog". This version comes from the album called "Many Happy Returns" by the group Arcady. Widely considered a classic and highly recommended, this cd contains, besides lovely vocals, about 25 very popular session tunes played in sets, most of them at quite a brisk pace. The jig I've transcribed below is the middle tune of a set of three jigs. If you're lucky enough to find this cd, listen to the way the bodhran (handheld Irish drum) builds the pulse throughout the set.

In the music below, I've made a recommendation for the pick directions. Most of the measures consist of two groups of three eighth notes and you want to emphasize (slightly) the FIRST note of each such group. If you use the pattern of DUDDUD for your pickstrokes, then you have gravity helping you to make this emphasis. I strongly urge you to stick with this pattern - it WILL become natural with time and practice. Your jigs will end up sounding more authentic. Listen to the recording, download it & play along with it when you feel ready.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> measure, I've indicated a somewhat elementary ornament. Irish players use ornaments to "dress up" a tune. You should not play this ornament each time through the tune - you only want to throw it in on occasion to add interest. Notice that measure 15 is identical to measure 7, except for the ornament. So whenever you want to omit the ornament, you simply play measure 15 in the place of measure 7. Listen to the recording to get an idea how the ornament sounds. After some experience, you should be able to find places in this tune where a similar ornament could be inserted. For example, I often do this on the first notes of measures 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15. You might also want to consider placing the ornament on the 4<sup>th</sup> note of measures 10, 11, 12 and 13. I want to stress again that you want to use ornaments sparingly - it is tempting for a beginner to overuse them and the result can be somewhat sickening, like too much sugar on your Cheerios. Of course, when you're first learning the tune, you can omit the ornament all the time. In fact, I would recommend that a beginner learn the BASIC tune first - with NO ORNAMENTATION at all. Get that down solid and add an ornamentation (much!) later. When you're playing with a fairly large group of musicians, these ornaments are not discernible at all (unless you have a VERY loud instrument). So in a session context, you'd probably omit them anyway.

As usual, your comments and suggestions are welcomed. Send them to [michael.gregory@und.nodak.edu](mailto:michael.gregory@und.nodak.edu)

Listen to [The Geese in the Bog](#) at Slow Tempo.

Listen to [The Geese in the Bog](#) at Tempo.

# Geese in the Bog

Traditional

1 2 3 4

Handwritten musical notation for measures 1-4. The top staff is a guitar fretboard with fingerings (0-2, 3-2-2-5-2-2, 3-2-2-5-0-2, 3-2-2-5-2-0) and vibrato marks (V). The bottom staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. Chords C and Am are indicated below the staff.

5 6 7 8

Handwritten musical notation for measures 5-8. The top staff continues with fingerings (3-2-2-5-2-2, 3-2-2-5, 3-3-2-0, 5-2-0, 2-0-0-0-2) and vibrato marks (V). The bottom staff continues with the melody. Chords C and Am are indicated.

9 10 11 12

Handwritten musical notation for measures 9-12. The top staff features more complex fingerings (3-5-0-3-0, 3-0-5-3-0, 3-5-0-3-0, 0-5-5-3-0) and vibrato marks (V). The bottom staff continues with the melody. Chords C and Am are indicated.

13 14 15 16

Handwritten musical notation for measures 13-16. The top staff continues with fingerings (3-5-0-3-0, 3-0-5-3-0, 3-2-0, 5-2-0, 2-0-0-0-2) and vibrato marks (V). The bottom staff concludes the piece. Chords C and Am are indicated.