

# Theory, Technique And Tunes

For Hammer Dulcimers  
By Peggy Carter



Learn Many Ways  
to be a better player

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# Music Reading

## Lesson 4 - The SCALE

Just as there are only 7 letters in the musical alphabet, there are 7 steps in the MUSICAL SCALE.

A complete musical scale starts and ends on the same letter. For instance, a C SCALE would read, "C - D - E - F - G - A - B - C." This is ONE OCTAVE of the C SCALE. Two octaves of the C SCALE would read "C - D - E - F - G - A - B - C - D - E - F - G - A - B -



C D E F G A B C C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

All scales are made up of WHOLE STEPS and HALF STEPS. This scale is played ON the WHITE KEYS of the piano. The spacing of the keys on the piano is not equal, though.... you'll see that there are black keys in between the white keys, except in 2 spots where there are 2 white keys right next to each other, without a black key in between. These 2 steps are called "half steps" and all the others are called "whole steps." You can find WHOLE STEPS by playing one white key then find the closest white key and skipping a black key in between. Find the HALF STEPS in the C SCALE



Half Step Half Step Half Step Half Step

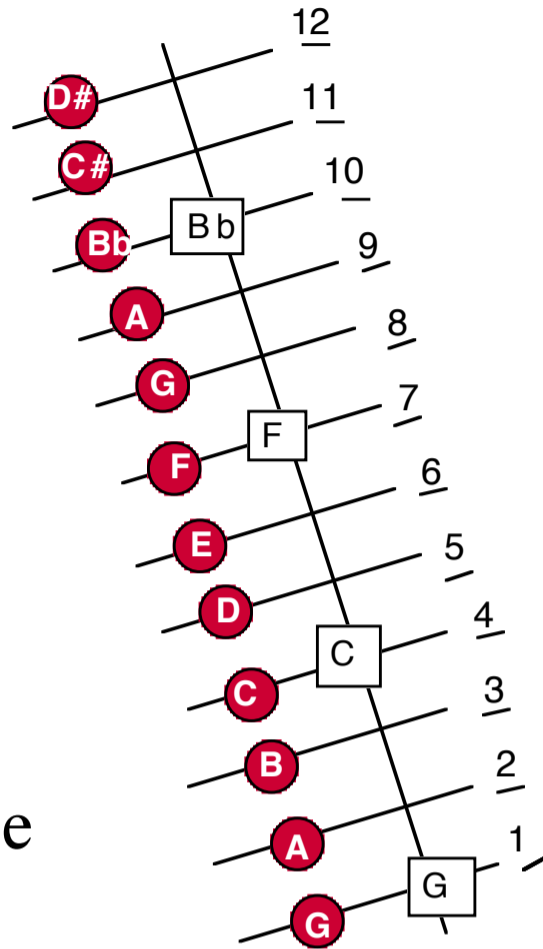
The pattern of a major SCALE is WHOLE - WHOLE- HALF- WHOLE - WHOLE - WHOLE - HALF. Circle the HALF STEPS, then find them on the piano.

Let's take this a step farther. The first note is a C... right? There's a black key to the right of C, and its called C# (C-sharp). The next white key is D. The next black key to the right is D# (D-sharp). The next white key is E, but there's no black key, so the closest key is the next WHITE key, which is F. Then the black key next to F is F# (F-sharp). Keep going...the next white key is G, and the black key to the right is G# (g-sharp) ... and all the way up until you get to the B, which doesn't have a black key by it, so the next white key is C.

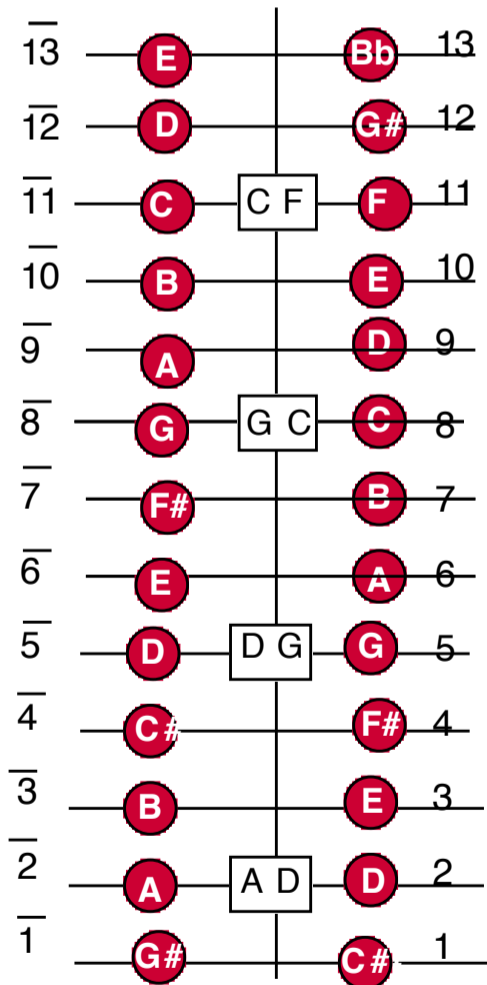


D C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B C

## Notes on the Bass Bridge



## Notes on the Treble Bridge



You will use the numbers to help locate the notes you read from the staff and know which string to strike.

You will see numbers over the notation...the strings are numbered from the bottom to the top. A line under the note indicates that the string is on the BASS bridge. A line over the note indicates that the string is on the LEFT TREBLE bridge. No line below or above the number indicates that the string is on the RIGHT TREBLE bridge.



# Secrets of the Circle of Fifths

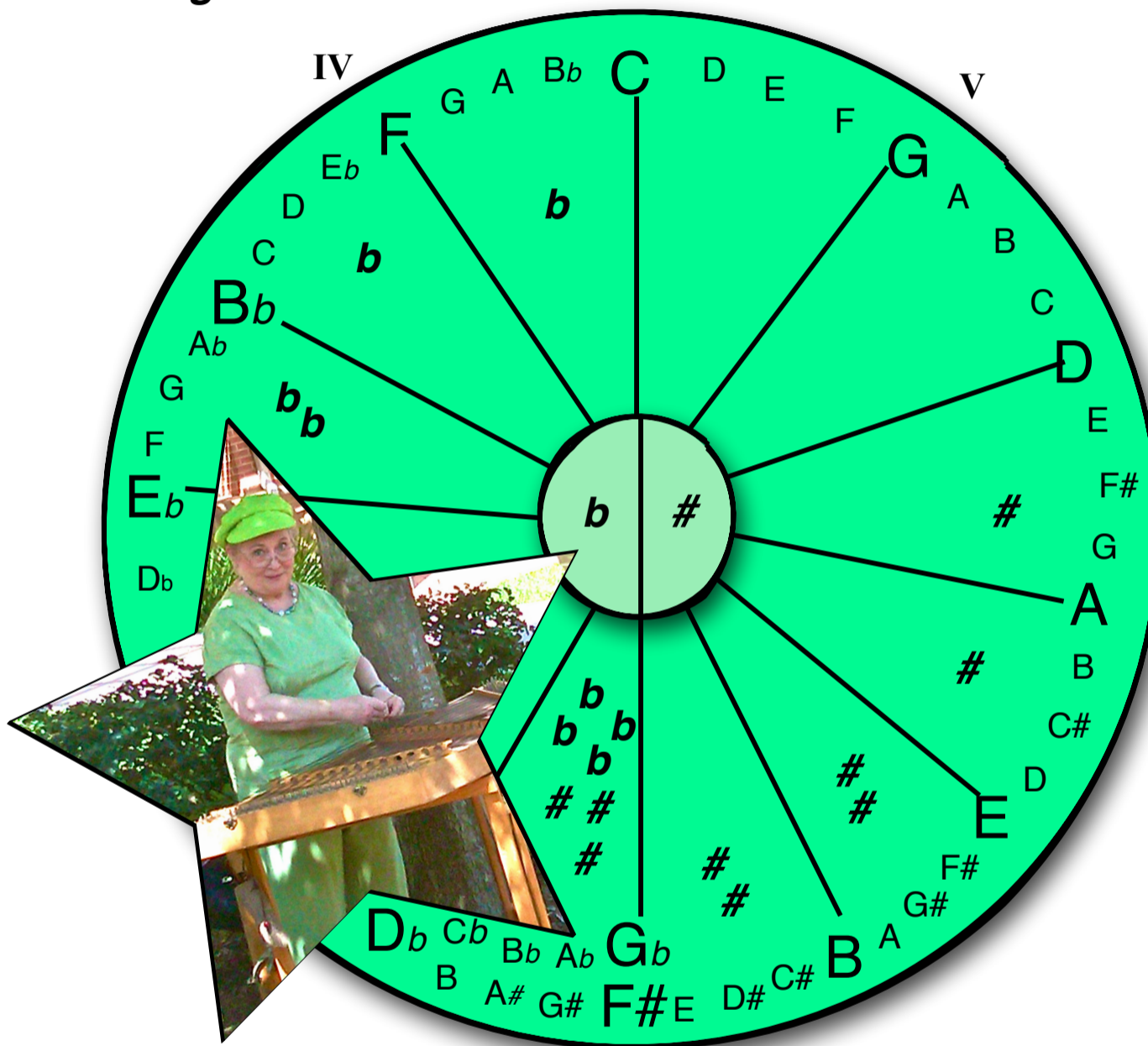
A B C D E F G A B C D E F G

*b* ←————→ *#*

*decending*

I

*ascending*

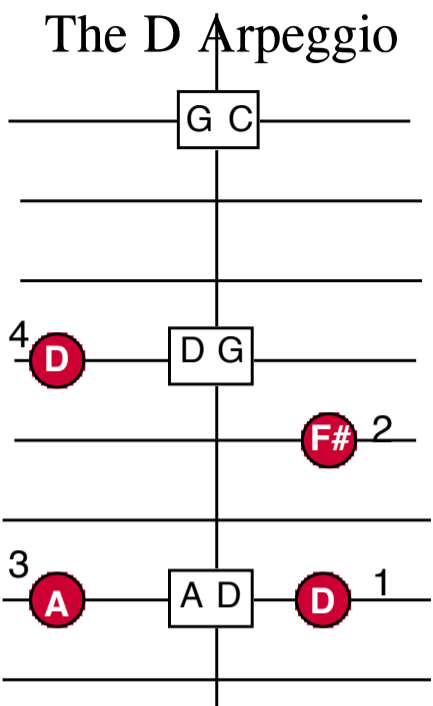


Tetrachord: X-1-1-1/2

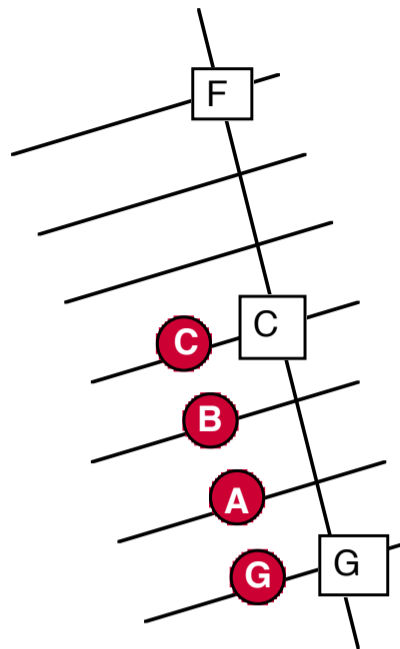
Major Diatonic Scale: Two tetrachords

X-1-1-1/2 - X-1-1-1/2

# Technique is Fun!



## The Bass Bridge



Say, "Mississippi Sawyer!  
Mississippi Sawyer!  
Mississippi Sawyer!  
Mississippi Sawyer!"

Now clap the rhythm of the words.

**X - X - X - X - X — X —**

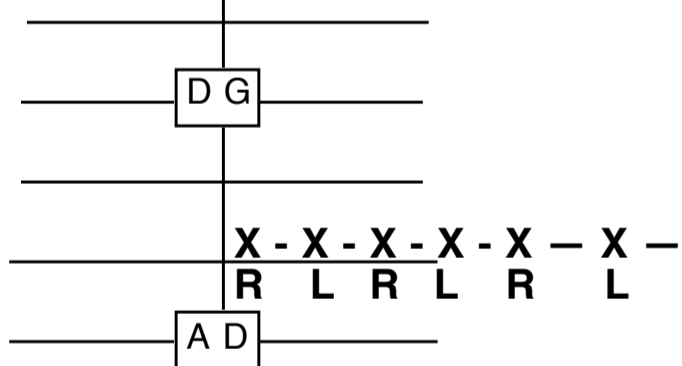
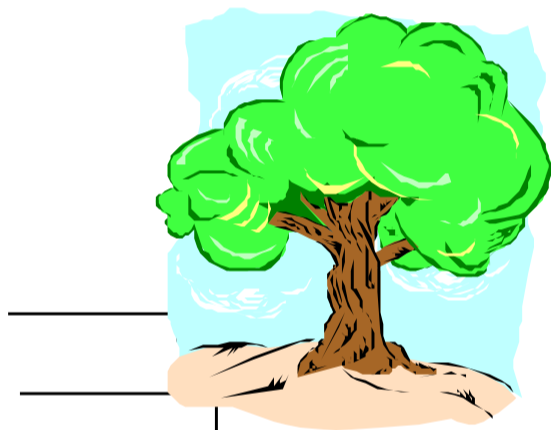
Now

Hammer the rhythm on one string.

*(choose a string - any string)*

Alternate hands, starting with  
**RIGHT HAND**

**R - L - R - L - R — L —**



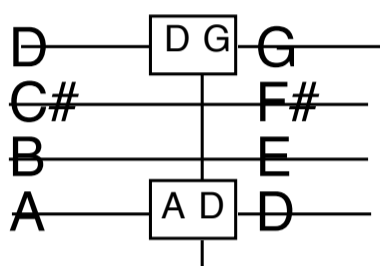
Mississippi Sawyer

*Hold the hammers loosely, between the thumb and "pointer" finger. Let the hammer bounce up from the string. Keep a steady beat.*

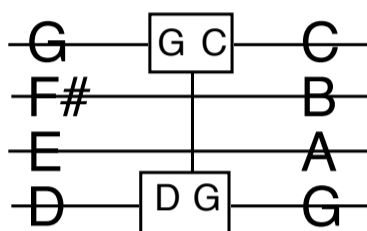


## Seeing Patterns in a “Box”

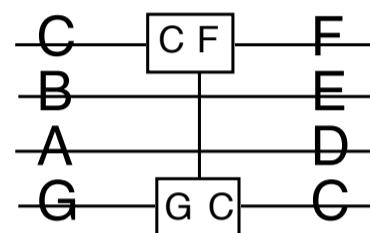
The illustrations below suggest a visual concept that may help the player visualize the patterns in a “Box” that uses four string-pairs, and continues on both sides of the treble bridge. The “Box” can be imagined with its bottom on any “position marker”, and its top on the next higher marker.



The D “Box”

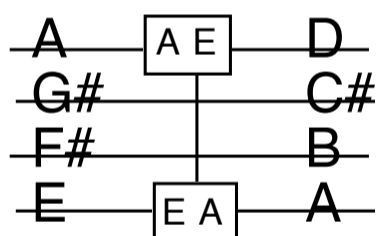


The G “Box”



The C “Box”

Play the scales that are illustrated in the “boxes” above and below. The “D Box,” the “G Box,” and the “C Box” are built on the treble bridge. On the student model (“12/11” or “13/12”) the “D Box” is built on the first treble bridge marker. The “A Box” can only be built on a dulcimer that “15/14” or larger.



The A “Box”

Locate the “boxes” before you start a new piece. Many pieces will extend above and below the original box, but if you visualize the “box” and learn to consider it your “home base,” the patterns will soon become quite natural and comfortable.

Arpeggios and embellishments will extend out from the “home-base box.” Practice scales in the boxes, then extend across the bridges and up and down the bridges to add your own style to the patterns. The patterns you create will soon become your own personal style.

# Whiskey Before Breakfast

Follow the suggested hammering suggestions to make the tune sound smooth and even. (Lines over the hand suggestion means play on left side of treble bridge.) NO LINE means right side of treble bridge. It will sound more like a dance tune if you accent the first beat in each measure.

D L R L R  $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$  D  $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$  L R L G D R L R L R L R L R  
 5 D D G D A D  
 9 D D em A  
 13  $b\bar{m}$   $F\#m$  G D G D A D  
 $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$  R L R L R L R  
 d e f# g a a a b a g f# e d g f# e f# g f# e

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## D Scale ( in the D Box)

and extention

17 L R L R  $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$  L R  $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   
 D E F# G  $\bar{A}$   $\bar{B}$   $\bar{C}\#$   $\bar{D}$   $\bar{E}$   $\bar{F}\#$   $\bar{G}$  D F#  $\bar{A}$   $\bar{D}$   
 [.....D - BOX.....] [.....Extention.....] [.....D - Arpeggio.....]

# Carter Creek Stomp

(Embellishments for fiddle, hammer dulcimer, or penny whistle)

Peggy Carter

D D

3 A7 D

5 D D B

7 A7 D

9 bm f#m

11 G D B

13 D D

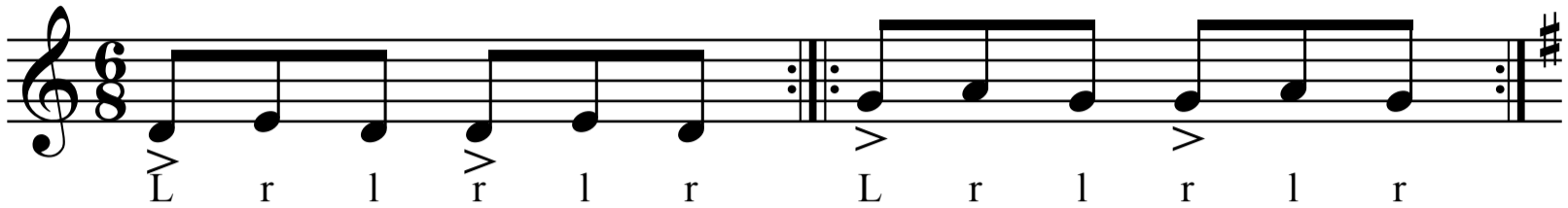
15 A7 D

R/T R/T R/T R/T

L/T

## Jig Exercise No. Five

A JIG has 6 beats in each measure, but taken at a fast tempo, it feels like 2 beats per measure in "triple meter" (each beat is divided into 3 equal notes). The 1st and 4th beats are accented. Alternate hands, but notice that the accent is first with the left hand, then next with the right hand. Do several repetitions of each measure, gradually increasing the speed.

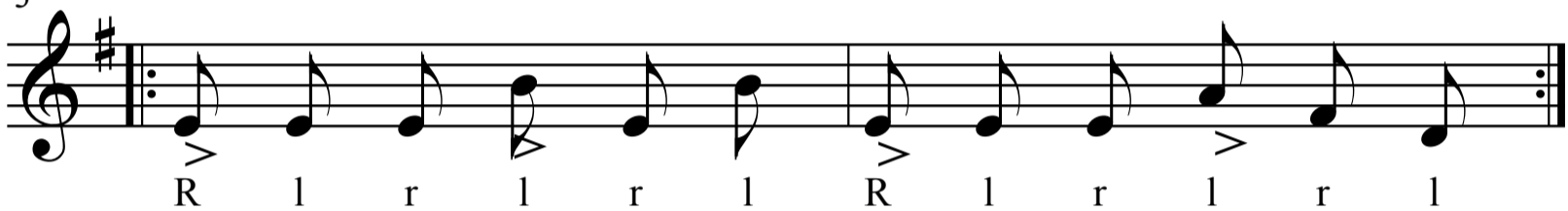


Musical notation for Jig Exercise No. Five, showing two measures of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure contains six eighth notes: L, r, l, r, l, r. The second measure contains six eighth notes: L, r, l, r, l, r. Accents (>) are placed above the first and fourth notes of each measure. The notation includes repeat signs and a final double bar line with a sharp sign.

## Jig Exercise No. Six

The hammering pattern in jigs can be tricky.... start this exercise with right hand on E, on right side of bridge. Left hand plays the B on the left side. The left hand gets a workout as it crosses back and forth across the treble bridge, sometimes with an accented strike, and sometimes with an unaccented strike.

<sup>3</sup> To get the feel of the jig rhythm make a noticeable contrast between accented and unaccented strikes.

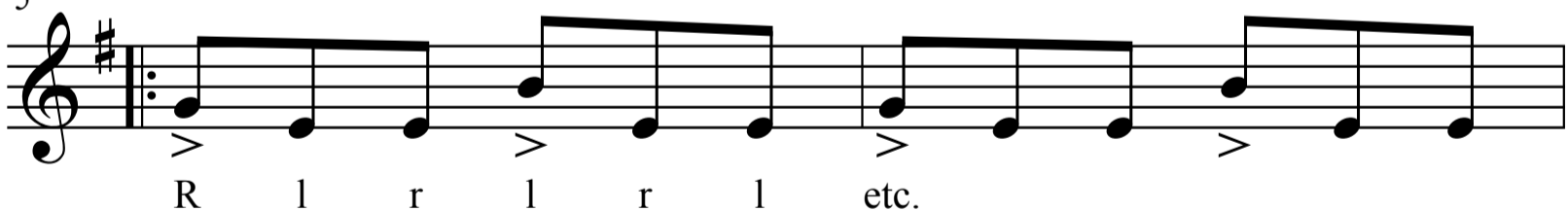


Musical notation for Jig Exercise No. Six, showing two measures of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure contains six eighth notes: R, l, r, l, r, l. The second measure contains six eighth notes: R, l, r, l, r, l. Accents (>) are placed above the first and fourth notes of each measure. The notation includes repeat signs and a final double bar line with a sharp sign.

## Jig Exercise No. Seven

Start with the right hand on the right side of the bridge. The left hand crosses over for the B in the first two measures, and the A in the last two measures. Stay relaxed and let your fingers do all the work. Don't forget to observe the accents, and exaggerate the contrast between the accented attack and the light strike.

<sup>5</sup> Gradually build up speed so that the music flows smoothly as a dance requires.



Musical notation for Jig Exercise No. Seven, showing two measures of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure contains six eighth notes: R, l, r, l, r, l. The second measure contains six eighth notes: R, l, r, l, r, l. Accents (>) are placed above the first and fourth notes of each measure. The notation includes repeat signs and a final double bar line with a sharp sign.



Musical notation for Jig Exercise No. Seven, showing two measures of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure contains six eighth notes: R, l, r, l, r, l. The second measure contains six eighth notes: R, l, r, l, r, l. Accents (>) are placed above the first and fourth notes of each measure. The notation includes repeat signs and a final double bar line with a sharp sign.

# Keel Row

Trad

## Counting Jig Rhythms

Jigs are in 6/8 time.... that is: an 8th note gets 1 beat, and there are 6 beats in each measure.

Count: 1...2 - 3 4...5 6 1...2 3 4...5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6  
 Sounds like: gal lop, gal lop, gal lop, gal lop, gal loping, gal loping, gal loping, gal loping,

1...2 3 4 5 6 1...2 3 4 5 6 1...2 3 4 5 6 1...2...3... 4...5...6  
 gal lop, gal loping, gal lop, gal loping, gal lop, gal loping, stop stop.

Arrangement © 2004 Peggy Carter

# Techniques for Both Hands

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Wizard's Walk: Always alternate hands (except when you don't.)

$\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $R$        $R$   $\bar{L}$   $R$   $\bar{L}$   $R$   $R$        $\bar{L}$   $R$   $\bar{L}$   $\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $R$

Give Thanks: There's more than one way to skin a cat!

$\bar{L}$   $R$   $L$   $R$   $\bar{L}$   $R$   $\bar{L}$   $R$        $L$   $R$   $L$   $R$

$\bar{R}$   $\bar{L}$   $R$   $\bar{L}$   $R$   $\bar{L}$   $R$   $\bar{L}$        $R$   $L$   $R$   $\bar{L}$

Christmas In Killarney: Jig rhythm - alternating accents.

$R$   $L$   $R$   $L$        $\overset{>}{R}$   $L$   $R$   $\overset{>}{L}$   $R$   $L$

Cluck Ol' Hen: Bending strings.

Cluck ol' hen! Cluck and squall!

Wildwood Flower: Learn Rhythm Patterns to embellish.

$L$   $L$   $R$   $L$   $R$        $L$   $L$   $R$   $L$   $R$        $L$   $L$   $R$   $L$   $R$        $L$   $L$   $R$   $L$   $R$        $L$



# Arpeggios in the Key of D

Follow hammering suggestions.....a line UNDER the suggested hand indicates BASS bridge. "R" means right hand on BASS bridge. A line OVER the suggested hand indicates the LEFT side of treble bridge. NO LINE indicates RIGHT side of treble bridge. "L" means LEFT hand on on LEFT side. Capital "L" & "R" indicate the first beat of a measure.

17 D b m

R l r l̄ r̄ l̄ r l R l r l̄ r̄ l̄ r l

19 G e m

Continue the same hammering pattern, beginning each measure with RIGHT hand on the BASS bridge and playing the top note with the RIGHT hand on the LEFT side.

21 D A7

23 D

R l r l̄ r̄ l̄ r l \*L/R (D) R l r l̄

\* The "D" achieves an interesting timbre when struck with left hand on LEFT side of treble bridge, and at the same time with the right hand on the UNISON "D" on the top of the BASS bridge. This note may not be included in all models of the hammer dulcimer.

The arpeggio in the last measure starts with RIGHT hand on BASS bridge.

This set of arpeggios progresses through all of the most-used chords in the key of D.

# 4/4 Time

**I** D chord (D F# A)

*Follow the numbering sequence in each frame, starting with the right hand each time.*

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**IV** G chord (G B D)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**V7** A7 chord (A C E G)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**I** G chord (GBD)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**IV** C chord (CEG)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**V7** D7 chord (DF#AC)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**I** A chord (AC#E)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**IV** D Chord (D F# A)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

**V7** E7 chord (EG#BD)

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Skill-Building Exercises

# MORE 5ths & Octaves on 3 courses

(Two-on-the-BASS)

14 G A

R L R L

16 C D

## Arpeggios on 3 courses

18 D Bm

R L R L R L R L

20 G Em

## Arpeggios Using "Drones"

22 D Bm

R L R L R L R L R L

24 G Em

