

## Introduction

The object of this book is to give bluegrass mandolin players who are becoming literate with standard notation music to study and practice that is specifically oriented toward their further comprehension of and familiarity with classical music norms, and also *specifically adapted to their particular needs*. This to avoid being thrust by necessity into exercises, methods, and studies that could be: largely mechanical, too easy, too hard, too technical, simplistic, overtly maudlin, or very pedantic. A great deal of time and money can be wasted on such materials.

My purpose is not to bring confirmed doghouse pickers into the classical constellation, but to make their occasional forays into classical music less difficult. What motivated bluegrass mandolinists often want to do is read typical pre-1770 classical art music, not in order to eventually become virtuosi or join mandolin orchestras, but simply to study appropriate adjunctive pieces from time to time, appreciating the composition and musicianship of such masters as Handel, J.S. Bach, and Telemann. The study of the instrumental dance suites, solo sonatas, and fantasias of these and similar masters is tangential but often peculiarly relevant to the inner spirit of bluegrass.

Bluegrass mandolinists must also be able to read, in a careful way, moderately difficult transcriptions of the more complex works of such artists as Bill Monroe and Frank Wakefield, as well as play through the various traditional tunebooks rapidly at sight. Attentive, repeated study of the music in this book will help attain these goals.

The player may find a few of the pieces somewhat challenging, with occasional unfamiliar keys, a few unusual classically-oriented fingerings to be tested and thought over, and specific Italian tempo indications which may require the use of a dictionary of musical terms. Mandolin two course barres (often with the barre finger 'flattened' at approximately a 45° angle to the fret, but sometimes with a very rapid rolling motion of the upright barre finger from one course to the other) are to be understood throughout the text, with, I believe, only one example actually indicated.

In this type of music, an uncommon fingering may be needed to expedite a group of notes at speed, but *sometimes* such a passage may also be accomplished using standard

first position technique, and the reader is expected to both discern and implement the alternatives ad libitum; my intention is to get you to think of the possibilities and the rationale of same. The E, A, and D courses are to be played as in bluegrass music: open unless otherwise indicated. For control of overringing on fretted and unfretted notes, see the introduction to my Op. 3, *Lou Martin's Tunebook*.

Traditional bluegrass music played on the mandolin has certain characteristic intervals, leaps, phrases, course (doubled string) crossings, cadences (phrase or section endings), and rhythms that are already known and loved by players dedicated to this particular type of folk art. Classical music usually pursues other kinds of inner logic, technique, rationale, and construction. Often, when bluegrass mandolinists play and study classical music, they feel 'at sea' or 'in a foreign land', no matter how much genuine respect they have for Parnassus. The pieces in this book implement *aspects of bluegrass thought in a classical context*. The idea is to acquaint the bluegrass player with some of the typical rhythmic groupings, melodic contours, and fingerings of classical art music - including occasional time signature changes (which also occur in bluegrass music) - but in such a way as to sound, and play, 'familiar'.

The tilt is toward Apollo: I hope you will find that these studies are just what you need to become a better general sight-reader. Stay with it, and go after each one knowing that the understanding that you gain will augment and enhance your bluegrass music. The studies are not graded or in a particular order; choose any that interest you.

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My protégée Miss Kelly Madsen deserves, as usual, special mention. Her encouragement and interest have made this small book quite special for me. I dedicate it to her.