

Introduction to Playing Hymns

Colorado Dulcimer Festival Workshop by Steve Eulberg, February 2010

Because we “know” the hymns we want to play, but often find reading the music from hymnals difficult (e.g. weird keys, no time signature, too many harmony notes!) this workshop focuses on finding where the hymns lay on our dulcimers.

Your dulcimer can be tuned in either DAA or DAd (they are both tunings in the key of D). **Advantages of the DAA** tuning: you don't have to leave the melody string(s) to play songs which start below “do”-1st step. **Advantages of the DAd** tuning: for songs that stay between “do and do” (in one octave) you can play everything on the melody string(s). If you are tuned to DAd, everything is below “do” must be played on the middle string. If it is too difficult for you to switch strings, play the whole tune on the middle string.

Principal: Nearly all songs and hymns **end** at home, or “do”. In the key of D, “do” is D. Many songs begin on “do” at the top *or* bottom of the scale; a certain subset of tunes begin on “mi”-3rd step and another subset of tunes begin on “sol”-5th step.

Tunes and Hymns do one of three things:

- 1) You start on a note and stay there. (like chanting)
- 2) You start on a note and go up or down.
- 3) You go up or down by steps “neighbors” (one fret after another: e.g. 0 1 2 3) or by jumps (e.g. 0 2 4 7)

Process: We will each name a hymn or song that we would like to learn to play and examine it's characteristics, then play it.

(Reminder for the fearful: we all learned everything we needed to know to survive for the first 5 years of our lives by EAR. Then we were taught to read and people have spent the rest of our lives telling us to sit down and listen, but we trust our eyes more than our ears. We all have a solid basis of learning by ear, we'll work on waking it up here.)

Don't forget to look for where sections of a hymn repeat to aid in your learning process!

OUR HYMN CHOICES:

Hyfrydol

(Welsh Tune Name for *Lord of Glory*, or *Come, Thou Long-Expected*, or many more sets of Hymn lyrics)

Starts on do: **0 fret** in DAd, or **3rd fret** in DAA tuning.

Goes up by steps

(DAd: 0—1-0-1-2-3--2...) (DAA: 3---4-3-4-5-6—5...)

Shall We Gather at the River

Starts on the 3rd step of the scale (mi) or **2 fret** in DAd, **5 fret** in DAA

Moves by steps: neighbors below and above

(DAd: 2-2-2-1-2-3-4----2----.....) (DAA: 5-5-5-4-5-6-7----5...)

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(parentheses around a single note or two indicate that it is played on the middle string)

What a Friend We Have In Jesus

Starts on sol *above* do: A or **4th fret** in DAd, or **7th fret** in DAA.

Goes up one step, comes down by steps until a jump down.

(DAd: 4—4-5-4- 2-0 -(1) (0)...) (DAA: 7—7-8-7-5-3-1-0)

I'll Fly Away

Starts on mi *above* do: F# or **2nd fret** in DAd, or **5th fret** in DAA.

Jumps down on chord tones (the steps of the scale that make a D chord= D, F#, A) and goes below do

(DAd: 2- 0 -(0)-0- 2 - 1-2- 3 -2-1-0 (1) (1) (0)...) (DAA: 5-3-0-3-5-4-5-6-5-4-3-1-1-0)

These all start below do and jump to to it:

Amazing Grace

Starts on sol or 5th *below* do (A on melody string(s) on DAA or middle string A in DAd)

Jump up to **0 fret** on melody string(s) in DAd or **3rd fret** in DAA.

(DAd: (0) 0---2 - 1 - 0 - 2...) (DAA: 0 - 3---5 - 4 - 3 - 5...)

I Love You Lord

Starts on sol or 5th *below* do (like Amazing Grace above)

Jumps up to do: **0 fret** on melody string(s) in DAd or **3rd fret** in DAA.

(DAd: (0) 0-0-0...) (DAA: 0-3-3-3...)

Will the Circle Be Unbroken?

Starts on sol or 5th *below* do (like Amazing Grace above)

Goes up one step to la-(B on middle string-**1st fret** in DAd or B on melody string(s) **1st fret** in DAA.

then it Jumps up to do: **0 fret** on melody string(s) in DAd or **3rd fret** in DAA.

(DAd: (0) (1) 0-0-2-1-0-2...) (DAA: 0 1 3 3 5 4 3 5...)