

Original Musical Compositions

For Mandolin and All Other Instruments



Composed by

Phil Lawrence

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Original Music Compositions

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Introduction

This collection of melodies should afford any serious student of the mandolin an opportunity to learn new approaches to the instrument; at the same time I hope it will also be a source of pleasure to any musician, on *any* instrument, who wishes to explore its variety of styles and melodic inventions, simple though they may be. In other words, it is not meant to be an instructional guide to the mandolin; it is meant to be a book of tunes.

The compositions came together over a period of thirty years or more, beginning around 1979, though the majority were written in the last ten years. I began setting them down on the computer around 2005 to facilitate their transmission to band mates and friends. It occurred to me recently that I ought to go through all the separate files, clean them up and edit them, and merge them into a single file that can readily be shared electronically or in printed form. In today's world, self-publishing has become easy to do, and so I am tossing these melodies out onto the wine-dark internet in a fragile glass bottle, hoping somebody somewhere will find them and read them through, and possibly even play them with their bands.

The melodies were born out of my habit of constantly noodling on the instrument: repeating phrases, scales, arpeggios, bits of other tunes, and picking out all kinds of flotsam and jetsam drifting through my mind as I sat around and practiced. Sometimes I gave myself an assignment—"Write a tune in B-flat major today" or "Try writing a jig in D major". Other times, I may have been playing around with a well-known piece by, say, Beethoven, or Santana, or Django Reinhardt, and, being fascinated by a phrase or a harmonic progression, I "borrowed" it, in the true folk tradition, and added on phrases and structures of my own, until it became something entirely different, with the faint perfume of the original melody still lingering in the air. Other times, I may have been striving to perfect a technique or an arpeggio, and so I developed a "melody" that incorporated these elements; these are tunes that I consider *etudes*, or studies. These etudes may explore a simple pentatonic open position, like the tune "Dragonflight", or focus on varying positions of arpeggios, as in "Crying". Some tunes were born by meditating on a specific person or a place or even an animal (e.g. "The Gecko Waltz"). In these cases I would let inspiration try and flow into me, hoping for something that could capture the essence of that meditation.

My primary source of inspiration has been the mandolin compositions of David Grisman, who will always be the Maestro in my eyes. As Grisman has composed tunes in a variety of styles, I have attempted to do the same in this book. The reader will find some simple fiddle tunes among these pages, but also gypsy jazz, swing, klezmer, blues, Latin sambas, and even some very humble attempts to imitate classical mandolin styles. I know that this will probably doom all potential sales, but what the heck. These are the styles I have dabbled in over the years, and I like to think that the variety of experience has made me a better all-around player, and I hope that whoever reads this book through will also benefit from its diversity.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention my first mandolin teacher, Rudy Cipolla, who by his example, patience, and generosity, taught me to focus on writing original material and to make sure it was all down on paper so others could perform it. Rudy was already well-advanced in years when I met him in his tiny candy store called The Book Nook in San Francisco's Inner Sunset district. He seldom had any customers enter his domain and so he lived a life of poverty, but he could always be found sitting at the counter of his shop surrounded by reams of music staff paper replete with his own scribbles and blotches, as he dotted away and dotted away at his compositions. When I would visit, he would have me try some of the parts he wrote, and though my reading skills were poor at that time, he was always patient. He lived to be ninety-nine years old and he continued to compose and perform right up until the last few years of his life. We should all be as creative and productive as Rudy, and I hope I can live up to his example.

I could name dozens and dozens of other mandolin players and musicians who have inspired me over the years. In the interest of brevity, I'll have to be content with naming only three: Mike Marshall, Sam Bush, and Chris Thile. I could never praise these musicians enough, so I will just leave it at that and urge the reader to listen to their recordings, watch their videos, and go to their concerts.

My special thanks to Ned Boynton, one of the best guitar players in San Francisco, who has been an invaluable aid in editing these compositions. I could not have done this without him. And to Ken Edwards, my computer wizard, all thanks and gratitude for the technical advice and software fixes over the years. To all my band mates, past and present, for learning some of these tunes and making them (and me) sound better than they really are, grazie mille. And to my wife, who is my favorite mandolin player in the entire world, for your understanding and support, much love and eternal thanks.



Young Girl with Mandolin

Jules Joseph Lefebvre

The Bee on the Turnpike

Allegro

Phil Lawrence

1 A D A⁷ D

5 G F#m G A⁷ B D

10 D A⁷ D C A⁷

14 A⁷ D D

18 D A⁷ D 

 CODA: LAST TIME ONLY

21 D A D

Allegro ♩ = 175-190

The Bee on the Turnpike

21
Phil Lawrence

A D D A⁷ D

B G G F#m G G A

C D D A⁷ D

D A⁷

E D D A⁷ D

21 CODA LAST TIME ONLY D A⁷ D

Bee Samba

A Em C7 B7 Em

5 Em C7 B7 1. Em

9 2. Em **B** Am Em C D

13 Em Am Em C D *gliss.*

17 **C** B7 Em C7 B7

21 Em Em C7 B7

25 $\text{\textcircled{O}}$ Em **D.C.** $\text{\textcircled{O}}$ Em
Coda last time only

When Mandolins Weep

167

Slowly, with expression
and lots of slides

For Chip Dunbar

Phil Lawrence

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of nine staves of music. It begins with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into sections A, B, and C, each marked with a box containing the letter. Section A (measures 1-5) starts with a dynamic of *p* and includes a trill (tr) on the second measure. Section B (measures 12-16) features a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with a trill on the final measure. Section C (measures 22-27) includes trills and a dynamic of *p*. Measure 28 is marked with a circled cross and the instruction 'To Coda Last Time only'. Measure 33 is marked with a circled cross and the instruction 'Coda'. The score concludes with a 'D.S.' (Da Capo) instruction, a trill, and a 'slow fade' instruction. Chord symbols are placed above the staff, and dynamics (*p*, *f*) are placed below. Trills are indicated by 'tr' above notes. Slurs and triplets are used to group notes. A key signature change to two flats (Bb and Eb) occurs at measure 6.

1. A 2. B

3. C

To Coda Last Time only

Coda

D.S.

slow fade

p *f* *rit.* *f*

When Mandolins Weep

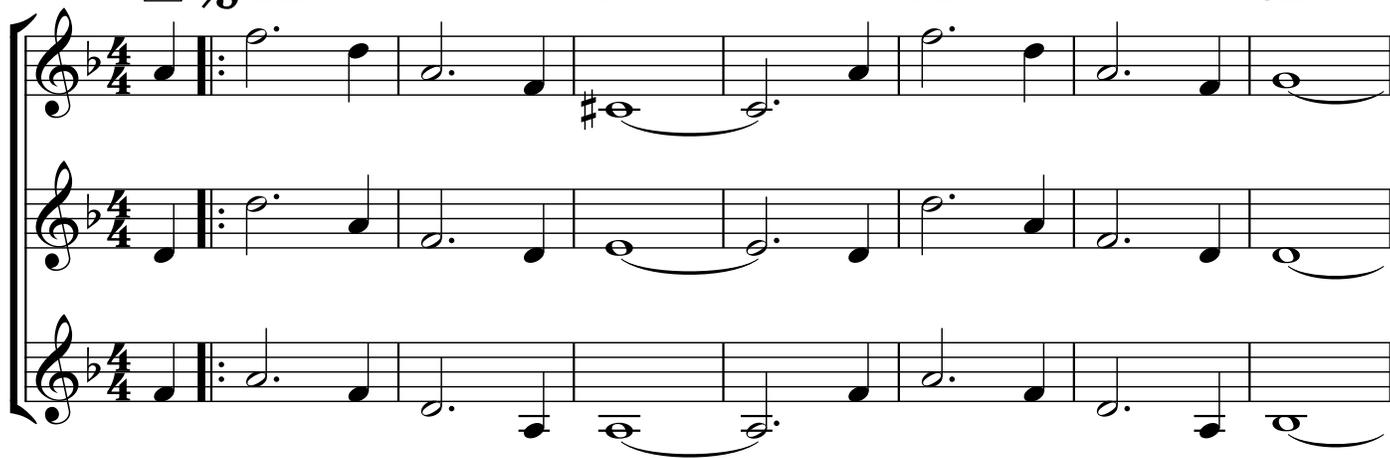
168

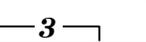
Slowly, with expression

To Chip Dunbar

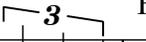
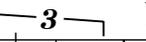
Phil Lawrence

A  Dm A⁷b⁹ Dm Gm⁷



8 Ddim Dm A⁷#⁵ Dm 1. A⁷#⁵ 2. Dm  Gm **B**



15 B^b F  Fm Fm  A⁷ A⁷#⁵



When Mandolins Weep

172

Phil Lawrence

A Dm A7b9

Mando 1
Mando 2
Mando 3
Violin
Mandola
Guitar
Mandocello
Bass

Detailed description: This block contains the first four measures of the piece. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Measure 1 starts with a repeat sign. Mandolin 1 and 2 play a melody of quarter notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Mandolin 3 plays a similar melody but with a grace note on the first measure. The violin plays a series of chords: B-flat major, A7, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, B-flat major. The mandola plays a melody of quarter notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The guitar plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The mandocello and bass play a bass line of quarter notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat.

5 Dm Gm Ddim Dm

Mand. 1
Mand. 2
Mand. 3
Vln.
Mandola
Gtr.
Mandocello
Bass

Detailed description: This block contains measures 5 through 8. Measure 5 starts with a repeat sign. Mandolin 1 and 2 play a melody of quarter notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Mandolin 3 plays a similar melody but with a grace note on the first measure. The violin plays a series of chords: B-flat major, A7, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, B-flat major. The mandola plays a melody of quarter notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The guitar plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The mandocello and bass play a bass line of quarter notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat.



The Mandolin Player

Edward Bisson

About the Tunes

“Autumn in Oregon” was conceived when I was in Portland visiting my son. It developed by noodling around in 6/8 time in D minor and grafting a hint of Beethoven’s “Für Elise” into my reverie. It’s easier to read in 3/4, but it should be played pretty fast. The arpeggios should sweep across the fingerboard smoothly. The rhythm mandolin or guitar should approach it as if it were an Irish jig. I’ve written out a simple piano arrangement also.

“The Bee on the Turnpike” — Irish musicians will recognize the first part of “The Bee on the Turnpike” as the traditional “Paddy on the Turnpike”, but the second and third parts are my own additions. I included a harmony so two mandolins can play together. All the tunes with “bee” or “honey” in the titles are a reference to my wife, whose name, “Devorah,” is Hebrew for “honey bee.” She’s a very good mandolin player and she taught me “Paddy on the Turnpike”.

“Bee Samba” is another echo of a musical phrase from Beethoven. In this case the “Bee” in the title is a double entendre. When performing this tune, slide liberally up and down the fret board. It should be played with a Latin rhythm, passionately and intensely. The harmony rounds out the sound.

“Beets Me”— once again a musical phrase borrowed from Ludvig is transformed into a jig with a slight dash of the blues thrown in. The parallel minor is a challenge to play, but it helps to keep it all interesting. It was darn hard to write out. I composed this way back in the early 80’s, but when I finally got around to notating it, it baffled me for many hours. Hence the title’s double entendre. I’ve included a two-page version that is easy on the eyes and a version that lays out on a single page.

“Betcha Five to One Swing” moves from the five chord to the one chord in A minor with a slight half step. Play it fast with a swing backbeat. Measure seven bounces off an open A string on the mandolin. In measure two, slide up to the A note on the D string and hit the open A and E strings at the same time to get a bluesy dissonance and dynamic effect. The G major section interposes a fiddle tune to break up the simplicity of the rest of the piece. Improvise freely throughout when jamming.

“Blue Mandolin” is a blues with a jazz/rock feel to it. It bounces off the E and A arpeggios while the rhythm goes from the one to the flat seven, reminiscent of “On Broadway.” It offers the soloist a framework for blues improvisation in E major.

“The Bougainvillea Blues” — I generally shy away from composing in the flat keys, but “The Bougainvillea Blues” feels good in E flat major. Written on my deck on a sunny day in California while sitting next to our flourishing bougainvillea plant, it’s a simple melody. Swing the rhythm and jam over the changes.

“The Brooklyn Rag” — I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, which is where I composed “The Brooklyn Rag” while visiting in 1983. I originally recorded this with violin and banjo, which gave the tune a blue-grassy sound, but it really is a rag, so it could be

considered jazz. It works best when played in harmony, which I've included for the intrepid musical ensembles who may want to try it out. Play it at a lively tempo.

“Bull Frog Swing” was composed late at night in the darkness of my campground among the giant redwoods at a place called Bullfrog Pond in the hills above Guerneville, California. There's a small pond there and late at night by the summer's end, there is usually only one bullfrog left out of many that begin the season. He's the king and he bellows like a bull. Slide up to the opening note of each phrase and keep the right hand moving steadily back and forth on the dotted half notes, hitting the open E string while doing so. Improvise on the turnarounds at the break. The rhythm should be steady swing. Try the harmony for fun. Maybe give the bass player the turnarounds and have him or her try to imitate a bullfrog.

“The Crimson Rose” — All the tunes with “Rose” in their titles are dedicated to my mother whose name is Rose. Each of these is in a different style of music and each tune has its own color. The idea is to create a musical bouquet with a variety of genres. “The Crimson Rose” has a stately feel to it, something like a traditional English or Irish dance tune. I've included a three part harmony for mandolins and mandola.

“Crying” — I consider “Crying” a Gypsy jazz waltz. It's important to maintain restraint on the tempo and play it slowly in order to allow the arpeggios to breathe and expand. The accent falls most heavily on the first beat of each measure. I've included two versions—a simplified, easy-to-read rendition and another version in which I tried to notate the lilt in the melody with dotted sixteenth notes and dotted eighth notes. The piece could be considered an exercise in minor arpeggios, but it has a pathos that goes beyond an exercise.

“Dance of Ecstasy” is a tune I composed for my klezmer band. It borrows a phrase from “Adir Hu”, but develops into something very different in the second and third parts. It should be played at a moderate dance tempo. I added lyrics. I imagine Tevye from *Fiddler on the Roof* singing this one.

“Dance of the Fireflies” was written on a warm summer night in the countryside of eastern Pennsylvania. We don't have fireflies in Northern California. During a visit to the East Coast I watched them with fascination as they drifted through the trees, blinking their lights slowly on and off, disappearing and reappearing in the distance. The first part of the tune is a waltz, though I have been told it could be considered a mazurka because the accents fall on the first and third beats. The second part changes to a rapid 4/4 time beat. Improvise freely over the second part. I included harmonized versions for two mandolins and tenor banjo.

“Dance of the Honeybees” is an Irish sounding jig that plays with ascending and descending in steps up and down the A minor scale. It morphs into A major pentatonic on the second part. The trick is to make the transition smoothly without any hesitation.

“Dang!” was written at the top of a concrete and steel stairwell on the third floor of The Cannery in San Francisco. There's nothing like a mystical echo chamber to inspire a new tune. It alternates between the keys of A and C, and the melody will take you up and down the whole length of the mandolin neck, while hitting a few blue notes in between. The triplets at the

beginning and the end act like bookends, framing the main part of the tune and the solos. Jam freely over the form.

“Dawg’s Bark” and **“Dawg’s Jig”** are both tributes to David Grisman. The first piece is a swing-jazz blues in F# minor. It should be laid back in tempo. Measure sixteen slinks up chromatically in ascending quarter note triplets to the climatic G natural on the fifteenth fret.

“Dawg’s Jig” should be played at a lively tempo. Measures thirteen and fourteen employ a whole tone scale over the D augmented chord. Though I’ve written in a possible solo at the letter “D”, the soloist should feel free to improvise at will. There’s a harmony part which sounds very cool when executed with precision.

“Devorah’s Swing” merges two styles—klezmer and swing. The first two parts should have a straight-ahead swing rhythm backup, but the second part should switch to a klezmer rhythm. Lots of slides up and down. Keep it all danceable.

“Devorah’s Tune” — Treat “Devorah’s Tune” as though it were a blues-rock. It’s a framework for a jam. I suggested one possible solo idea at the letter C, but there is no obligation to play it as written at that point.

“Diane and Byron” commemorates the tragic murder of a young woman named Diane. Byron has been a friend of mine since college and he brought her to my home one evening to introduce me to her as his newest girlfriend. Not long afterwards, she was found in Henry Cowell State Park near Santa Cruz, where apparently a hitch hiker had killed her and left her body. The news left me stunned. The melody tries to capture the feeling that swept over me when I heard what had happened. It begins slowly, almost rubato. The tempos change throughout, gypsy style. At the letter “C”, you should gradually begin to establish a tempo, and by the letter “D”, you should be in full gear. Hold and tremolo the two chords at the letter “E” for dramatic effect before returning to the A section one last time. The coda should be another dramatic tremolo.

“Django’s Blues” starts with an easy laid back swing rhythm in A minor. Lots of slow slinky sliding in the melody. Each of the quarter note triplets in measure three should be slides. It’s a basic I-IV-V minor progression, but the possibilities are endless. When I play this with my band, It’s A Beautiful Day Acoustic, we usually double time the tempo at the solos and return to the original tempo at the letter “B” before we proceed to the coda, which is a fourth above the original key.

“Django’s Dream” is a ragtime piece really, but swing the rhythm. At the letter “B” it changes to the key of E briefly, much like Django Reinhardt’s “Swing 42”. Play measure nineteen on the A string and hit the open E string as you do so. It’s a very cool effect. Measure twenty-five is a whole tone scale. It takes you back to the top in an unexpected twist. I wrote a three part harmony that ought to make it sound like an old time honkytonk piano.

“Dragon Flight” and **“The Flea Market Shuffle”** are the first tunes I wrote on the mandolin back in 1979. They were both inspired by a chance meeting with David Grisman in the Sausalito Flea Market right when I was first learning to play the instrument in a serious way. I had a booth

there, and on that sunny morning I spied the Dawg from a distance, so I began playing . He came right over. He was carrying a book called *The Flight of Dragons*. We talked music and mandolins and he showed me how to do the slide in measure four, which should be executed on the A string while hitting the open E string at the same time. I immediately incorporated the idea into a pentatonic fiddle tune. Play this very fast. It should smoke like a dragon.

“**Elegy**” is dedicated to my father. It’s a beautiful melodic waltz. It can be played very slowly or moderately. I’ve recorded it both ways. The slides on the D7 chords add pathos. I scored this tune for mandolin orchestra with parts for three mandolins, mandola, mandocello, guitar, and bass. I’ve also recorded this with piano and cello. Originally it had a second part in a rapid 4/4 tempo. Maybe I’ll add that in the next edition. See my *Mandolin Mezzotints* CD to hear the whole thing, with brilliant solos by Radim Zenkl and Joe Yamamoto.

“**Flame of Desire**” — Latin tune written specifically for David LaFlamme, my friend and bandmate, and original founding member of the 1960’s San Francisco rock band, It’s A Beautiful Day. His most famous song is “White Bird”. I imagine David’s violin soaring over the changes in this tune as well. Play this one with intensity.

“**The Flea Market Shuffle**” is a blues in B minor which revolves around the pentatonic scale with added blues notes. It should be played at a moderate swing tempo. It is the very first tune I wrote on the mandolin, composed on the same day as “**Dragon Flight**”. I was just learning my pentatonic scales then and I had just discovered where to find the blue notes. In my first recording of the tune, the band modulates up to E minor to keep it fresh.

“**From the Heart**” has a Latin backbeat under a simple pentatonic melody in F major. The turnaround on the B part falls to the flat seven chord, E flat in this case, before it rises again to the five chord, where it hangs suspended for two measures. Play this the way the title suggests it should be played. The coda is in an old-world romantic style, something Rudy Cipolla might have written. There’s a harmony part that should enrich the tones.

“**The Gecko Waltz**” was composed in Hawaii where these friendly critters abound. You can find them on the walls and ceilings everywhere. They are brightly colored and have a permanent smile painted on their loveable snouts. This jazz waltz should be played fast, but not too fast. You want to be able to bend the first note of each measure in the A part ever so slightly as you play them.

“**Hava’s Tune**” — a lovely waltz in A Major. The first phrase of the melody ascends from the fifth tone of the scale to the seventh tone and then descends again to the third tone. At measure thirteen the melody drops to the C natural with a C Major seventh chord underneath, adding a pleasant surprise. Look for that same chord at measures thirty-one and thirty-four. I originally recorded this with two mandolins and a mandola, which I borrowed from Rudy Cipolla. I have provided the harmony parts here as well.

“**The Honey Bee**” — another klezmer tune. Much depends on the hammer-on pull-offs to achieve a honey bee effect. I like to hit all the open strings when I play measures twenty-one to twenty-four. The idea is to drone as much as possible. The key changes mimic many of the old

klezmer tunes I've learned to play. The shift to B-flat major in the third part adds a joyous feeling before it returns to the hard work of collecting pollen in the first two parts.

“Irving Street” — a Latin tune composed in 1983 which I included in my *Brooklyn Rag* cassette. The opening note is sustained with tremolo, which then transforms into a staccato climb over a G minor arpeggio before the melody winds its way up a diminished arpeggio. It ascends again to the V chord where it rests before the second part shifts to the relative major. My band recorded this with plenty of bluesy solos over the changes. Look out for that surprise coda.

“Jasper’s Waltz” was written as a self-imposed assignment when I was trying to show my son, Jasper, how to write a tune. I asked him to pick a key; he said “B flat;” I said pick a time signature; he said “3/4 time.” So I started playing a II minor-V-I chord progression in B flat and added a simple melody over that. A second part came easily. The surprise twist appears at measure thirty-five over an F augmented chord at the turnaround of the B part. Try the harmony parts for a richer texture.

“Joie de Django” tries to capture a gypsy jazz feel in G major and G minor. The minor part offers a contrast to the “happy” sounds of the first section. The turnaround is a little tricky, and the coda employs a descending diminished arpeggio. Play this one fast, a la Django.

“Journey to India — I experimented with playing long extended solos over the Indian drone instrument, the tanpura (I had downloaded a computer program that mimics the tanpura and the tabla as well). “Journey to India” was the result of one of these experiments. The original goal was to play Americanized versions of Indian ragas on the mandolin. Most of the improvisations I came up with were harmonized over a single note or over a root and its fifth combined, which the tanpura produces naturally, but this tune morphed into chord progressions that move and change feeling. Play the first two measures of the C section by hitting all the open strings, as well as the notes indicated. Jam freely over the form.

“Katie’s Tune” — Katie Carleton was the vocalist in a trio I used to perform with in San Francisco. We had just started a recording project when we learned she had bone cancer. She continued to record while recovering from chemo treatments, but she passed away in the summer of 1991. She had courage and compassion beyond anyone I have ever known. “Katie’s Tune” is a lament for her loss. The melody slides liberally up and down the fret board. It alternates between tremolo and staccato phrases, and between minor and major chords. The turnaround is an ascending diminished arpeggio that leads back to the top of the melody. The coda ends on the seventeenth fret.

“Klezmer Banjo” — I confess I am a closet banjo player—tenor banjo. It’s tuned in fifths, like a mandolin, so it’s easy enough to adjust to its fingering. “Klezmer Banjo” is written in F minor because it lays out so nicely on the tenor banjo in that key, and I wrote it on the banjo, but it also can be played on mandolin in F minor. It employs a modified harmonic minor scale and a klezmer rhythm. This tune will challenge your fingers to try new positions. Maybe someday I’ll come up with a more colorful title.

“Klezmer Dance” opens with an E7 arpeggio and borrows a phrase from “Adir Hu”. Use a klezmer backbeat for the rhythm. This always gets people dancing. Bounce off the open E string in measure twenty and use hammer-on pull-offs.

“Laughing” is the companion piece to **“Crying”**. It’s an etude that plays off arpeggios in D major and D minor. The mandolin should sound as though it is laughing. Play this as a solo piece or go the whole hog and use it in your mandolin orchestra. I’ve included parts for three mandolins, mandola, mandocello, guitar, and bass. Keep the tempo as lively as you can possibly play it, and remember to laugh.

“Led Dawg” — In the summer of 2004 I was invited to serve as an assistant instructor at David Grisman’s and Mike Marshall’s Mandolin Symposium in Santa Cruz, California. Students came from all over the United States and the world to improve their mandolin skills. One semi-anonymous student in the class was the celebrated John Paul Jones from Led Zeppelin. On the final day of the week-long symposium, the instructors and their assistants performed in concert at the music hall on the campus of Santa Cruz University. I performed as a duo with another assistant instructor and we were followed by David Grisman and John Paul Jones on stage. I tried to commemorate that evening with “Led Dawg”. The opening two bars are borrowed from “Stairway to Heaven”, but it quickly develops into something very different and Dawgish. The first section utilizes hammer-on pull-offs on the open E string. Sections C, D, and E are syncopated rhythmic interludes with room for improvisations. Section F is a fiddle tune that resembles “June Apple” a bit. Play this very fast.

“Mandalas and Mandolins” — a simple melody in 6/8 time that changes from a G minor harmonic scale to G major. It should be played with tabla. Free improvisation is encouraged.

“May Bee” — I was thinking of a Django Reinhardt tune called “Belleville” when “May Bee” emerged out of a chord progression that intrigued me. I wrote out the chord positions because they move smoothly when played on the fret board where indicated in the notation. They also change fairly quickly. I added a very simple melody that allows for maximum freedom in soloing. Another “bee” tune with a double entendre just for fun.

“Midnight Reverie” — The music for “Midnight Reverie” was composed way back in 1979. I had answered a newspaper ad in the classified section by Harvey Rich, who later went on to perform with Steve Seskin. He was looking for musicians to collaborate with on song writing. We became good friends. One night very late, we were both playing guitar when we came up with this tune. Harvey used dreamy, open-string chords to create a dissonant effect. I added the second section to lift the feeling to a major sound. We created a middle section for a flamenco style solo. Harvey then brought this tune to Roberta Donnay, who added lyrics and changed the title to **“Mojave Reverie”**. It is essentially the same tune adapted for vocals. Katie Carleton recorded this song with our trio, Sweet Amnesia, in 1986, while she was undergoing chemo treatments, adding a deeper sense of irony and pathos to the lyrics.

“New Year’s Reel” — On New Year’s Day, 2010, I sat down and wrote a tune as a self-imposed assignment. Kind of like a resolution—“I’m going to write more tunes this year.” “New Year’s Reel” came out. It’s short and sweet and easy to play. It changes from D major to

G major to keep it interesting, like a number of traditional fiddle tunes. I might have been thinking of “Flop Eared Mule” when I wrote this.

“Palm Swings” — It should come as no surprise that **“Palm Swings”** was written in Palm Springs. Pump the rhythm like a Django tune. The B part is a half-step higher than the A part. Measure sixteen uses half-note triplets that can be a bit tricky, but just make sure to keep the beat so you return to the A part smoothly. The turnaround at the end of the A part in measures seven and eight doesn’t necessarily need to be played as written. Invent your own turnaround if you like. Try it with the harmony parts I’ve included for a challenge.

“Pangea” — When I wrote **“Pangea”** I was trying to borrow the melody and chord progression from one of my favorite Carlos Santana tunes, “Europa”. Well the chords are in there, but I changed the time signature to 3/4 time, and I added a third part in the parallel minor key, somewhat similar to “My Favorite Things”. The melody bears no resemblance to “Europa” whatsoever. The titles of the tunes are the only evident connections remaining—both refer to continents.

“Pick It Up” was probably the third tune I wrote on mandolin, back in 1979. It began as a pinky exercise in the first three bars, and then it plays with a B minor pentatonic scale. I added a third part in A major twenty-five years later and a three-part harmony just last year. It’s simple, but it’s still fun to pick. The slides are important, so be sure to emphasize them, especially in the third part.

“Ponte Vecchio” — When I graduated from the University of Chicago in 1975 I spent the next two years as a couch-surfing guitar bum in Europe, where I played music on the streets of most of the cities of the continent to earn my daily bread. My travels led me to a great many beautiful places, including Florence, where I remained for about six weeks. I would play every day on the Ponte Vecchio (the 600 year-old bridge) between the vendors with their hand-crafted goods. This melody has a romantic feeling to it, and a Latin rhythm. Play it moderately slowly, but not too slowly. Try the harmony. This was composed on the guitar in 1976 while I was staying with a friend in Munich, Germany, shortly after my sojourn in Italy.

“Portland Melody Part I” and **“Portland Melody Part II”** are companion pieces. The former drifts lazily up and down the scale to a four minor chord and back before it undergoes some interesting harmonic changes in the B part. The second tune is a lively dance number that makes me think of some Italian folk tunes I’ve played. Both of these compositions sound very good on the piano, where the sustain pedal plays an important part in contrasting staccato and legato sections. I’ve tried to write out the tunes for piano so the reader can see how they work.

“The Purple Rose” came to me when I was trying to learn “Tico Tico”. Frustrated by my inability to finger some of the more difficult passages in “Tico Tico”, I decided to write a Latin tune of my own that I *could* play. Fortune brought this tune to the attention of David Grisman, who added a mandolin track of his own to a recording I made of it with Brazilian guitarist, Almir Cortes, and bassist, Jeff Martin. A dream come true.

“Queen Bee” — a gypsy-jazz tune that should be played very fast to simulate the sound of a bee in flight. I think of the opening phrase as “Dark Eyes” pushed to the limits. The B part starts with a G minor 6 chord over what seems like an A augmented arpeggio, but somehow this works together, especially if you bounce off of the open D string while the arpeggio is played. At the letter C the rhythm should break and rest on the third beat. Repeat that break for each phrase in the section. The coda bounces off an open E string to a high D.

“The Rabbi’s Farewell — My next door neighbor, Mike Robinson, was a retired rabbi with a long, distinguished history of public service in the battle for social justice. He marched with Martin Luther King in the Civil Rights Movement, but I knew him as a warm, kind, ordinary man who always had a friendly word for me. When he passed away in 2006, I wrote the elegy, “The Rabbi’s Farewell”, for him. The composition falls into the klezmer category of tunes. The first two parts of the melody are slow and sad. It uses a modified C minor harmonic scale with lots of mournful slides up and down. The second part of the tune should be lively and accelerate in tempo, because my neighbor’s life deserves to be remembered with joyousness.

“The Red Rose” mimics a stately English or Irish dance piece. It’s simple, but elegant. Harmonies will enrich a performance, so I’ve added additional parts for the reader to try with friends and band mates.

“Roma Rag” was written specifically for Paul Gruen, a former member of my band and the best gypsy jazz guitar player in the region. It provides a simple framework for an extended jam over one chord, the D7, which in this case might be considered the dominant in the harmonic progression. There is a dynamic release at the letter C when the tune finally resolves to the root chord, G minor, for the first time. Play this very fast and improvise freely.

“The Rose and the Thorn” — play the first part of this slowly, almost rubato, and draw out the sadness implied in the melody. The second part shifts to the parallel major and a lively tempo, offering contrast to the melancholy feeling of the A section.

“Rose Blossoms” — part of my experiments with tabla and tanpura drones, the melody starts with a simple C major seventh arpeggio, and then an equally simple C pentatonic scale. The whole idea behind these forays into Indian-sounding pieces is to solo as freely as possible over one or two background tones provided by the tanpura, which plays the root and the fifth tone continuously. I added an A minor chord in this transcription for effect, but it’s not really necessary.

“Roses in December” — Just a simple melody. All the “rose” tunes are for my mother, and this tango has a few measures in the B section that recall “It Had To Be You”, which was the song my parents danced to when they first met and fell in love. I’ve provided a piano part to guide the bass line.

“Samba de Sonoma” — I live in Sonoma County just north of San Francisco. I love it here, so this piece is a homage to the beautiful region of redwoods, vineyards, and apple orchards I call home. The B section of this tune plays off two ascending diminished arpeggios that are fun to

climb on a mandolin fret board. They will take you to the five chord and from thence back to the top of the melody. The harmony is worth a try.

“Sausalito Rag” — written on and for the tenor banjo after a truly wonderful jam session in Sausalito with The Hot Club of Marin. The last Monday of each month is gypsy jazz jam night in a local café there, and I discovered that the tenor banjo cuts through the noise of a crowded café. This is a ragtime tune with Django-Dixieland influences. It’s easy and it’s fun to play. There’s a key change on the B part to keep it fresh. The E flat chord in the A part also keeps it moving in an unexpected direction.

“Someone’s in the Kitchen”— This was written as an exercise in B flat major for one of my mandolin students named Dinah—hence the title. It plays off the blues notes in the scale and the diminished half steps. Contrast the staccato notes with the legato half notes in the opening phrases and swing the rhythm.

“Trans-Siberian Express”— The opening tune on my first cassette recording. This tune was composed in 1979 as an American-Russian train song. It opens with rhythmic ascending octaves. The fiddle tune part incorporates an Irish melody, but adds a second part of my own invention and closes with a harmonic minor scale, followed by a descending scale that bookends the fiddle tune section. It then modulates to D minor and back to A minor with solos in between over syncopated rhythms. The band members contributed significantly to this arrangement and it came out pretty good in the session. I remember buying the guitar player, Jean-Jacques Vergnaud, a double espresso just before the recording, to ensure we played this one as hot as possible. I traded fours with Tony Marcus on violin in the solo section to add dynamic change and musical dialogue.

“Tulip Blossoms”— I found an old reel to reel tape recorder on the streets of Haight Ashbury back in the seventies. I took it home and discovered that it worked fine. It even had a mechanism for adding echo, which I started playing around with. I was practicing my G minor arpeggios with this very heavy echo effect and it sounded mystical to me, so I added another part based on the G minor harmonic scale and *voilà*, a tune with a Latin rhythm and plenty of room to improvise. Alternate between staccato and legato in the first section to enhance contrast. The C section goes to the relative major. Note the rest on the first beat of measures thirteen, fifteen, and seventeen. This gives the rhythm a surprise twist. In the studio we ended with an extensive two chord jam on the G minor and the D minor until we faded out gently.

“Up On Thorn Road”— A trance-dance jig in D major, co-written with Eddie Guthman, with plenty of happy sounding triplets. The second part requires a shift in fingering position. Start the first phrase with the middle finger on the ninth fret of the A string, and root the index finger on the seventh fret; start the next phrase with the middle finger on the seventh fret, and continue to the E minor arpeggio, which should begin with the ring finger on the seventh fret. Mastering these positions will allow the melody, which is really a series of descending arpeggios, to be played smoothly. Pay attention to the accent marks as well.

“The Violet Rose”— A gypsy-jazz swing tune in E minor with chromatic phrases here and there. The C section takes the melody to the relative major key briefly. Add this song to the bouquet of rose tunes.

“The Watertower”— This tune represents my twist on David Grisman’s “Dawgma” and “Dawgmaticism”, two of my favorite pieces from his repertoire. I’ve changed it enough to render it unrecognizable as his originals (I hope), and I added an entirely different second part which further distinguishes it. Play this with a Latin rhythm. Radim Zenkl and Joe Yamamoto recorded this with me on my *Mandolin Mezzotints* CD, and the two of them play some beautiful solos on it. The B section includes some hammer-on-pull-offs which I tried to write out as sixteenth notes.

“The Wedding March”— Composed for the wedding procession of my friend Carlos Alden and his wife Janine in the style of Rudy Cipolla, whose influence has remained with me always. It was meant for solo mandolin. I’ve written in suggestions for alternating between tremolo and non-tremolo right hand techniques. Alternate between loud and soft as much as possible and end with a crescendo.

“When Mandolins Weep” — This spontaneous composition came to me on the evening I heard that Chip Dunbar had passed away suddenly. Chip was Sonoma County’s best mandolin player and a good friend. When playing this tune, slide liberally between the notes to create a mournful sound. The guitar accompaniment should keep a steady finger-picked roll. I have included harmonies and an orchestral arrangement as well for the ambitious musical ensembles.

“The White Rose”— This tune is meant to simulate an Israeli dance piece. I play it with my klezmer band and it always gets people dancing.

“The Yellow Rose”— Not too long ago I spent a good part of one fall season reading through O’Carolan tunes in O’Neill’s book of Irish music. I like the feel of jigs very much and so I came up with this happy sounding tune. The mood changes to a more somber tone in the D section when the melody moves to the parallel minor key, but the joyful feeling resurfaces in the repetition of the A section. Start measures ten, eleven, and twelve with the ring finger and it will be much easier to reach the higher notes up the neck. They will also sound stronger. Harmonies always add new colors, so I have included two and three part harmonies.



Phil Lawrence Summer 2013

About the Author

Phil Lawrence was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York in a Sicilian-American family. He graduated from The University of Chicago in 1975 with a degree in Social Anthropology. While at the university, he developed a passion for playing the guitar and spent almost two years travelling throughout Western Europe singing songs in the pubs and playing on the streets to support his music. His travels took him all over Ireland, England, Wales, France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, and Greece. He sang on the streets of Paris, Copenhagen, Rome, Venice, Athens, London, Dublin, Munich, Florence and dozens of other cities great and small.

When he returned to the United States in 1977, he moved to San Francisco at the invitation of Jorma Kaukonen, whom he had met in Copenhagen. In San Francisco he discovered the mandolin and its magical tones. He attended every David Grisman concert he could possibly get to, watching, listening, and learning. He enrolled briefly in The Blue Bear School of Music, studied jazz, and practiced many hours every day.

*In the 1980's and the 1990's he produced four cassette recordings, mostly of his original music. A CD, *Mandolin Mezzotints*, was produced in 1993. Phil worked with his own band and with a number of other local bands in San Francisco and Sonoma County throughout the 90's and the 2000's. In 2004, David Grisman and Mike Marshall invited him to be an assistant instructor at The Mandolin Symposium in Santa Cruz, California.*

*Currently Phil is playing with *It's a Beautiful Day Acoustic*, with David and Linda LaFlamme on violin and vocals. The band is in the middle of producing a CD with guest appearances by David Grisman on at least two tracks. Phil is also working on a book of poetry which he hopes to publish in the next year.*



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