

Howdy Dobro players! I'm looking forward to presenting Dobro Crash Course #2 for Nashville Acoustic Camps! You'll recall that in Dobro Crash Course #1 (which is still available on the [Previous Workshops Page](#) of this website we learned essential building blocks for playing this flummoxing instrument in standard G tuning:

- a straightforward pattern for mapping out the major scale on the fretboard in any key using just three shapes
- how to locate chord triad notes away from the straight-bar chord positions (across strings within the first five frets and on one string up and down the neck)
- how to play minor chords and double-stops
- introductory forward rolls on strings 4-3-1 and 3-2-1
- hammer-on, pull-off, slide, and damping techniques
- picking technique
- essential classic Dobro licks built around the straight-bar chord positions
- how to start playing melodically using short phrases that end (and usually begin) on chord triad notes that correspond with the chord progression
- and much more!

We're going to pick up right where we left off and put the Dobro knowledge and skills we learned into action by building—from scratch and one step at a time—great sounding Dobro solos on typical three-chord bluegrass songs. We'll keep it simple and straightforward: I'll only use the minimum necessary music theory and focus only on practical, learnable strategies and pathways through the fretboard that are readily playable with the bar.

**We'll start in the open position in the Key of G** with a classic bluegrass song by breaking it down to its smallest components:

- Locating the melody of each line using two, three, and four note phrases that end (and usually begin) on chord triad notes that correspond with the chord progression, e.g. in Blue Ridge Cabin Home, we'll find the first few syllables worth of melody ("There's a well") as its own distinct dobro phrase and investigate a few ways of playing it musically, and do the same with each short phrase.
- Learning to ornament these short phrases with convenient hammer-ons/pull-offs and slides as the melody permits
- Learning to spice up these phrases by adding open strings, rolls, and syncopation
- Creating licks that add flare while still covering the most important melodic territory of each phrase
- Learning a strategy for reliably predicting \*the next melody note\* even on songs you've never played before (this strategy is a major step towards learning to improvise!)
- Learning to treat each phrase of the song as its own distinct "module" that can always be switched out with another phrase of the same duration with the same general melodic content.

## **2. Playing up the neck**

- Locating the melody in the next octave
- Finding a few easy ways to add "bass" notes, harmony notes, and chords without getting locked into parking the bar at straight-bar chord positions
- Learning how to connect the fretboard and return from up the neck to the open position calmly and coherently

## **3. Learning the same song in the other two most-useful 'open' major keys: C and D**

Most aspiring Dobro players don't really know how to approach bluegrass songs that aren't played out of G position, but that's about to change for you! Once we've created a solo in the key of G, we'll work out solos for the same song in the keys of C and D *without* a capo. This alone is going to be worth the price of admission for most of you, because along with a capo, these three positions will let you play in any major key with open strings that are compatible with each key's major scale. This process will involve:

- locating the most important chord notes in these keys, and learning the most ergonomic way to play the C and D major scales
- learning go-to pathways and licks that will enable you to easily traverse C and D major scale notes within the first five frets, where you can utilize hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and rolls
- adapting moves you may already know from the key of G to these new keys
- learning how to play competently over the dreaded F chord *without* going up to the 10th fret
- and much more!

#### **4. For each song, in each key, we'll also spend some time addressing rhythm and backing up a vocalist**

- locating the spaces to fill while staying out of the way of the singer
- learning which notes work well as fills over each chord
- adjusting the phrasing of classic go-to Dobro licks to suit a given moment in the song
- creating a verse or chorus of Dobro fills that's internally coherent rather than random sounding
- a few options for playing rhythm through the chord progression

We'll work through at least three classic bluegrass songs in great detail—with each song being taught in the keys of G, C, and D. Time permitting I'll briefly demonstrate applying the same principles to some other songs (feel free to email me song suggestions). Class recordings, tablature, backing tracks at a couple different tempos (made with Strum Machine), and documents with assorted scales, charts, and chord shapes that come up during the course of the workshops will be provided weekly. There will be homework and a practice plan each week.

As a bonus, we'll do an extra Q&A session over Zoom sometime in mid or late March, and you'll all have a chance to unmute and interact a bit. For another bonus, you'll also get a link to my painstakingly curated private Spotify playlist for Dobro students, with 20 hours (thus far—I'm always adding to it) of among the best Dobro music available on that platform, from the big stars to under-the-radar less-flashy players who are great to listen to when you're learning to play tasteful, melody-focused music on the Dobro.

**Reminder:** you don't need to attend the classes live. Recordings of all classes will be shared each week for you to download and/or stream, and you'll have access to all the workshop recordings and materials in perpetuity.