

Hello banjo friends,

So...have your heads all exploded yet?! Seriously, we covered some taxing ground tonight, and I hope that you feel comfortably rather than unmanageably stretched. Not only are we doing the two processes at once that I mentioned at the very end of class--learning how the tune GOES as well as how to play it on the banjo--but we are also still learning to navigate the tuning! That you can play even a few notes in a row while coordinating all of this is to be commended.

If you find Stump-Tailed Dolly as tricky as I suspect you do, remember to approach it one ~two-measure/quarter-part phrase at a time, much as we did in our class loops before moving onto the next phrase. This will make for a nice Goldilocks length of content to finesse: long enough to make good musical sense and for the motifs recycled across the tune to become apparent, but not SO long that you get lost in all of its details. Revisit Sandy River Belle (the tune, not the tuning) when you need a more user-friendly break from the truly hard work. Think of it as ice cream to be enjoyed before, during, and after the main course! The tabs are attached here, too, should you prefer to work from them.

When we get together next week, I will plan on spending the first few minutes of class reviewing whole parts--A and then B, separately--of Stump-Tailed Dolly before connecting them in the usual AABB format. If you are struggling with specific areas of the tune, I can address your concerns during that time (as well as via email between now and then). We will not review Sandy River Belle unless a critical mass of participants requests that we do so, and tonight's review of the Shortening Bread exercises will be the end of those unless many of you ask to see them again.

Here are some interesting takes on Sandy River Belle, a commonly-played tune that I never tire of hearing (or playing):

-fiddler Charley La Prade with the Blue Ridge Highballers in the earliest-known commercial recording of this tune, from 1926. Coincidentally, this fiddler and band were from my adopted hometown of Danville, Virginia! Note the reversed parts from our version and the usual way that folks sequence them today: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/sandy-river-belle-0>

-Kirk Sutphin on fiddle with Kinney Rorrer on Charlie Poole-style banjo and Bob Carlin on guitar, from a 1990 concert, also with reversed parts: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/sandy-river-belle-2>

-bluegrass musicians love this tune too, as it turns out! Kristin Scott Benson on banjo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8yGfxk9Vtg>

-perhaps my favorite discovery in preparing the resources for this class, Irish trad musician Sharon Shannon on button accordion with a fine ensemble: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaB3Tes7QG4>

...and here are some fun examples of Stump-Tailed Dolly:

-Kentucky fiddler William Hamilton Stepp in a recording from 1937: <https://soundarchives.berea.edu/items/show/692>

-Kentucky fiddler John Salyer in a recording from the early 1940s. Note the crooked B part: <https://soundarchives.berea.edu/items/show/4278>

-Uilleann piper Jerry O'Sullivan presenting an unlikely medley of old-time tunes, of which our tune is the last (starting at 2:25, but the whole medley is so great that you should try to resist skipping ahead!). If I had another lifetime to live, I would give up the banjo and fiddle and attempt to learn to play the uilleann pipes, perhaps my favorite non-old-time instrument and practically the most soul-stirring sound I can imagine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qNUxgQ5vus>

As always, I am happy to hear from folks between classes, so please feel free to send questions or thoughts my way at any time.

Happy practicing!

Cheers,
Adam