

Virtually Shrewsbury Folk Festival Big Band

Introduction from John Spiers:

Hi there and welcome to the big band workshop for this year's festival. It's a funny old year ... and people are responding by doing music in funny old ways! One of the ways I've been passing the time and trying not to go mad in isolation involved starting an online session called the Isolation Pub Sessions (check it out on my YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/squeezyjohn1> if you haven't seen it before) ... the way it worked was that I played on my own every week and invited others to play along with me and then I had the task of putting all the video and audio together and it really did sound like a session!

So the thinking was - why not do the same thing with a band workshop? This is all the material you should need to learn the tunes and parts to take part in this (videos are also available for those who prefer to learn by ear).

We're going to be doing 3 sets:

Gallons of Brandy and The Fox Tell Tune

A slip jig I wrote and a tune by Jackie Oates that dovetails in as a harmony

Funney Eye and The Rochdale Coconut Dance

A short tune I found in the manuscript of William Henry Giles of Bampton and the well known traditional tune.

The Yellow Haired Laddie

A Scottish slow air.

How it's going to work (Technicalities)

Nearer the festival I will release the "master track" which will be a video of me playing the tune set for everyone in the band to play along to. You can practice as many times as you like playing along with that video, but in order to get you in to the band you will have to video yourselves playing along to the whole video while listening to the soundtrack preferably on headphones. The video can be shot on a smartphone, a digital camera or a laptop with a webcam and the sound quality of the built in microphones will be fine ... but if you know how to do it, feel free to use better microphones and a sound card.

The next step is to get your video to me. This can be done a number of ways ... the most common way people did it for the sessions was to upload it to a YouTube channel, unlisted if you don't want everyone to be able to see it (but not private because then I can't download it!) ... and send me a link to the video. Other large file transfer websites like Dropbox, Google Drive or WeTransfer are fine too. But do give yourself enough time to upload it ... video files can take forever on slow broadband speeds!

Finally I will edit the band together by lining up all the tracks and creating a zoom style screen full of boxes which you will be a part of and it will sound awesome!

So here's the music for Gallons of Brandy. The melody is suitable for any melody instrument and we want that big band sound so join in. I've given out 2 different chord sequences for guitar, ukulele, accordion left hands - any instrument that wants to play chords. But there is a third way of playing this tune and that is with a drone on an open G chord (just the notes G and D) and I'd like to open the arrangement of this tune like that. I've given a suggestion of how to drone more rhythmically if you'd like to do that on something like a fiddle. Finally there's Jackie's tune Fox Tell from our duo album (Needle Pin Needle Pin) which acts as a harmony as well as a tune in its own right. I've added a third part which is a harmony for the third section of my tune. If you play a percussion instrument please just follow the rhythm - I'm going to indicate where the beat drops ... so to speak!

Gallons of Brandy

Simple Chords

Slip jig

John Spiers

Gallons of Brandy

Normal Chords

Slip jig

John Spiers

suggested drone vamping patterns



Gallons of Brandy

Harmony line (Fox Tell by Jackie Oates)

Slip jig

Jackie Oates



So this is how the arrangement is going to run:

1st time through the tune - melody only with a drone which starts quiet and gets louder and more rhythmic.

2nd time through - bring in the simple chords and percussion

3rd time through - play the tune harder with the normal chords and add more ornaments/flair

4th time - play Jackie's Fox Tell tune (first 2 sections only this time through) with no chords

5th time - choose either Fox Tell (all 3 sections) or the Gallons of Brandy melody and play it - they fit together really well. Chord instruments can come in during the third section - build it up from quiet to loud.

6th time - Back to the normal chords version full pelt to a rock'n'roll finish!

The next set will be these two tunes. For Funney Eye I've given you the melody with normal chords - this is the same principle as the last tune ... melody instruments take the melody and if you play chords too like on a melodeon, guitar, mandolin etc. the chords are for you. I've also done a version with a "vamp" or riff. This really lifts the tune. The vamp can be played by anyone but even though I've written it out in treble clef ... if anyone has a bass instrument then it would be great ... It could work for brass instruments too. I've included the chords the vamp follows so any guitarists could also join in with that rhythm ... we'll need some people still playing the tune though!

The Rochdale Coconut Dance has 2 chord progressions and a counter melody. The counter melody works particularly well with the main tune when there are no chords although it fits with the normal chords.

Funney Eye

Normal chords

Reel

Trad.

Chords: G, Am, Bm, C, D, G

Chords: G, C, D, G, C, D, G, G, C, D, G

The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems. The first system has a melody line and a chord line with chords G, Am, Bm, C, D, and G. The second system has a melody line with first and second endings and a chord line with chords G, C, D, G, C, D, G, G, C, D, and G.

Funney Eye

With vamp

Reel

Trad.

Chords: G, G, C, C, G, D, D, D

Chords: G, C, D, D, G, C, D, G, G, D, D, D

The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems. The first system has a melody line, a chord line with chords G, G, C, C, G, D, D, D, and a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The second system has a melody line with first and second endings and a chord line with chords G, C, D, D, G, C, D, G, G, D, D, D, and a bass line with eighth notes and rests.

The Rochdale Coconut Dance

Tune with normal chords

Polka

Trad

Em Am Bm C D

Em Am Bm C D

G Am Bm C D

G Am D C D G

This musical score is for the tune 'The Rochdale Coconut Dance' in 4/4 time, featuring normal chords. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has chords Em, Am, Bm, C, and D. The second staff has chords Em, Am, Bm, C, and D. The third staff has chords G, Am, Bm, C, and D. The fourth staff has chords G, Am, D, C, D, and G. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

The Rochdale Coconut Dance

Counter melody

Polka

Trad

↔ ↔ ↔ ↺

↺ 5 ↔ ↔ ↺

↺ 9 ↔ ↺ ↺ ↺ ↺

↺ 13

This musical score is for the counter melody of 'The Rochdale Coconut Dance' in 4/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has a counter melody line with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second staff has a counter melody line with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The third staff has a counter melody line with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The fourth staff has a counter melody line with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

The Rochdale Coconut Dance

Chords 2

Polka

Trad

Em A C D

Em A C D

G Am Bm C D

G Am D C D G

So here's how the arrangement goes:

Funney Eye

1st time - melody only ... hit the ground running ... nice and punchy.

2nd time - bring in the vamp ... but most melody instruments keep playing the tune

3rd time - drop in the beat on any percussion instruments and play normal chords

Rochdale Coconut Dance

1st time - only the counter melody and light chords ... controversial!

2nd time - melody instruments choose either counter melody or the main tune - no chords ... they should work well together!

3rd time - drop the beat back in ... and go for it - normal chords

4th and final time - play Chords 2 and really enjoy the way that A major tune changes the whole feel ... big finish!

The Yellow Haired Laddie

Simple chords 1

Slow Air

Trad

Musical score for 'The Yellow Haired Laddie' using simple chords 1. The score is in 3/4 time, key of D major (two sharps), and consists of four staves of music. The melody is written in treble clef. The chords are indicated above the notes: D, G, A, D, G, A, G, G, A, G, D, G, A, D. The score includes a repeat sign with first and second endings.

The Yellow Haired Laddie

Chords 2

Slow Air

Trad

Musical score for 'The Yellow Haired Laddie' using chords 2. The score is in 3/4 time, key of D major (two sharps), and consists of four staves of music. The melody is written in treble clef. The chords are indicated above the notes: D, Bm, G, A, D, Bm, G, A, G, G, A, D, Bm, A, Em, F#m, G, A, Bm, A, G, A, D, A, G, A, D. The score includes a repeat sign with first and second endings.

The Yellow Haired Laddie

Harmony

Slow Air

Trad

Something nice and gentle to finish off with! I really want this one to sing out. Put as much expression in to it as you like. I've given a simple set of chords and a more lush set (chords 2) as well as a harmony line which works with chords 2. However this tune also works very well over a drone of the notes D and A (an open D chord) ... and I'd like to use that as the way the tune starts.

So the arrangement is:

1st time - a non-rhythmic drone of D and A while the tune starts ... anyone can choose a single note or both ... but I'd like it to be as ghostly and tentative as possible. If you choose to play the melody keep it gentle. If you're playing guitar just add little bits here and there and no percussion yet.

2nd time - we'll bring in the simple chords and play the tune a bit more powerfully.

3rd time - the melody and harmony lines together - choose which one you'd like to do - keep chords and percussion to a sensitive minimum to let the harmony shine out.

4th time - Bring in the chords 2 and this is the full on time through ... play the harmony if you like too. Feel free to improvise other stuff as well here.

5th time - we just play the first section and it's with the D and A drone again ... let the music kind of fade away to nothing ... I'll slow right down at the end too.

So that's pretty much it! Have fun learning the parts. Beyond what I've prescribed here there is plenty of room for improvisations - particularly in the noisier sections. Have fun with the tunes.

I will see you next when the “master tracks” for all 3 of these big band pieces are released by the festival ... and then I’ll be doing some hasty video editing while all your masterpieces come flooding in!