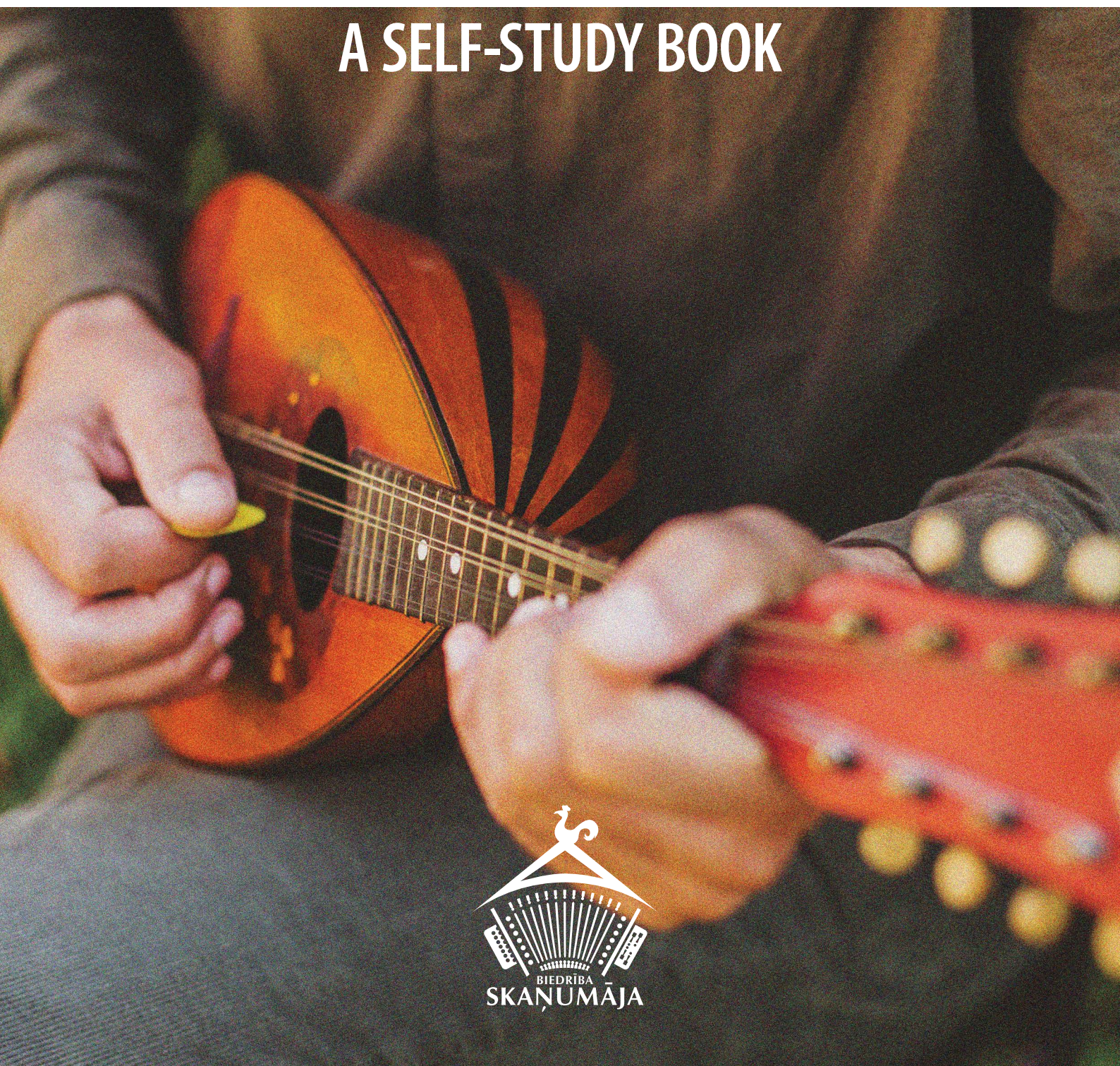


ILMĀRS PUMPURS

TRADITIONAL PLAY OF THE MANDOLIN

A SELF-STUDY BOOK





Contents

About the book	2
Musical Instruments and Traditional Music	3
Mandolins in Latvia	9
Half-step. Introduction. Which instrument you have to choose and how to prepare it for playing. How to hold the instrument and how to acquire good sound. Explanations of the notation and tabulatures used in the book.....	12
First Step. Playing in Re (D) major. A scale in one octave, exercises to learn downstroke and upstroke. Melodies that do not exceed octave in their range to firm the positions of left fingers and to practice down- and upstroke	16
Second step. Playing in Sol (G) major. A scale in one octave, melodies without large leaps to practice the positions of the left fingers and movement of the plectrum	22
Third step. Changes of tonalities and rhythm. Different rhythmical patterns to fill the long notes. Upbeats – the beginning of the phrase played with upstroke	25
Fourth step. More than one octave. Sol (G) major. Playing outside the basic fingering of Sol (G) major – a scale and melodies in two octaves; staccato	30
Fifth step. More than one octave. Re (D) major. Playing outside the basic fingering of Re (D) major. Playing on the 1st string; legato	34
Sixth step. Using side strings. Using free strings to create accompaniment – bourdon on downbeats and upbeats (on-beats and off-beats); creating double stops	38
Seventh step. Other tonalities and positions. Playing in La (A) major and Do (C) major, pieces with tonality changes	41
Eighth step. Chromatic sounds. Minor and chromatic sounds. Tremolo	45
Addendums	51
1. The fretboard scheme with positions for playing all sounds	51
2. Tuning and adjustment of the instrument	52
3. Estonian and Lithuanian music materials.....	53





About the book

This book is meant for anyone who would like to learn to play the mandolin. It is designed to give you what you need to know to get started as quickly as possible. You will learn to play real song and dance tunes and begin to experience the ineffable joy of music with your instrument. The book will be useful for anyone interested in folk and traditional music—the techniques discussed here represent traditional styles and can be utilized in traditional music ensembles. It will also be helpful for students and professionals who would like to join the rapidly growing ranks of mandolin players in our region. Most of the techniques described here are universal and these training methods for the acquisition of good skills will be of use to both amateur and professional musicians.

The instructions have been written simply, so that those who do not read music can get right down to learning practical techniques. Each assignment has been formulated as simply as possible and the music is given in easy to understand tablature format where note lengths and finger positions are illustrated graphically. Each exercise and piece of music is accompanied by a video which can be accessed on a computer or mobile device via the links provided.

The material is organized step-by-step. Because you will not need to absorb a lot of complex information upfront, you will be able to start making music for real from the very beginning. The book contains traditional Latvian songs, singing games (or carols), and dance tunes that have been selected to teach and consolidate specific techniques. Mastery of each step will successfully prepare you for the next step, incrementally increasing the range, rhythmic complexity, skills, and the modes of expression available to you for music making. You will be able to proceed at your own speed through the steps. To reinforce the techniques taught in each step, we are also including an appendix containing music from Lithuania and Estonia. By learning to play the mandolin, you will also become familiar with the traditional music of all three Baltic countries!

This is a book from the series of self-study books of traditional play of instruments. The book was created with the financial support of the EU educational program Erasmus+. The series was created in collaboration of three non-governmental organizations – “Skaņumāja” (Latvia), “Virbel” (Estonia) and “Utenos etninės kultūros centras” (Lithuania).





Musical Instruments and Traditional Music

Even a cursory examination of what is considered “folk music” or “traditional music” shows that it is far from homogeneous. This multilayered phenomenon has taken shape over an extended period of time and determined by shifting theoretical perspectives, artistic interpretations, cultural policy priorities, along with the material actually inherited from past generations.



Dwellers of “Brici” around 1900. Photo from I. Mežs’ collection

With the exception of the archaic kokles (psalteries) and flutes which are considered native to the area, the majority of musical instruments arrived in Latvia by a variety of routes at different points in time, thus inserting themselves into the existing music scene. This was not an inadvertent process. Over time, the uses of this music changed, as did musical styles and repertoire, for which the newer instruments seemed better suited. On the other hand, the new arrivals had to develop a fit with older traditions and customary ways of making music. In many countries, these developments follow a similar pattern, yet in others unique local traditions came into being. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, significant change took place as travelling musicians brought with them bagpipes, violins, and the hammered dulcimer. The technology available and the ability to make instruments at home, along with legislation regulating the use of instruments according to social class, encouraged the spread of string instruments among Latvian peasants. The next large wave of change occurred following emancipation in the nineteenth century as markets stabilized and merchants offered an increasingly wide range of good from abroad. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the accordion, a newly invented bellows driven instrument claimed its place in Latvia. It is interesting that different accordion models took root in the various provinces. The ornate “leviņas” with their deep sound were played and fabricated in Vidzeme into the 1940s, while the three-row St. Petersburg type dominated in Latgale. Musicians in Kurzeme preferred the two-row Vienna model. By the end of the century, the accordion was joined by the guitar and mandolin, as well as other instruments of the zither family. It is noteworthy that all of the instruments which became part of Latvian



A diatonic accordion player. Early 20th century. Madona NMM



***A multistring instrument player. 1930–40ties.
Photo from I. Mežs' collection***

tradition, also began to be made by local artisans and musicians themselves. Some of the locally made instruments started to diverge from the originals as they were adapted to the needs of traditional Latvian sound and its applications. One notable example of this in Northern Latvia and Southern Estonia used multistring instrument (lat - caurspēlējāmā cītara, est - rahvakannel), where instrument building techniques and structures were modified to accommodate the playing style of the archaic kokle (psaltery).



The Musicians

Developing in rural areas and small towns in Latvia,, the playing of musical instruments had not become a professional occupation. Most musicians were tradesmen or peasants who supplemented their income by being paid for their services in cash or kind. The music itself remained simple in terms of melodic structure and group musicianship which allowed anyone with any interest and a modicum of talent to participate. In particular cases, instrumental music had a well defined role in community ritual, especially weddings, where the presence of a musician was vital for the merriment for the guests and, in accordance with custom, required to assure the new couple of a rich and harmonious life together. Musicians had to be well versed in wedding customs and prepared to use their instruments to lead ceremonial activities. Instrumental music and the opportunity to dance or just listen to music served as an excuse for informal gatherings. Hootenannies and other such get-togethers could take place anywhere—in the yard of a well-disposed landowner, a barn or out in the open. People who possessed these specialized and much needed skills were highly regarded. Oral histories indicated that families tended to support aspiring musicians and even relatively poor families were prepared to sacrifice a portion of their annual income (such as a cow) to purchase a musical instrument.



***Wedding guests and musicians. 1930–40ties.
Photo from I. Mežs' collection***

The role of the traditional musician has undergone tremendous change since then. The need for this type of music has disappeared and musicians tend rather to demonstrate their skills at festivals or join traditional music or folklore groups. Stage performances and recording sessions are now the predominant formats for traditional music. As a result, much higher levels of musical skill are expected than would have been the case in traditional settings. Professional musicians often turn to traditional music, a

development that has significantly altered the way traditional melodies are interpreted, the quality of performance, and audience understandings of this type of music. While these trends are common in the Baltic as well as elsewhere, there are also communities of traditional music lovers who remain passionate about traditional dance and music in their original form and make the effort to teach themselves to play an instrument.



Music and Music-making

The concept of traditional music was introduced in the second of the twentieth century to describe traditional playing styles and repertoire choices in context, alongside the materials of musical folklore. However, in ordinary usage we understand that to be the practical musicianship

of older generations of musicians, as well as a diverse array of interpretations and innovative approaches that retain references to tradition. Regardless of how it is interpreted today, it is clear that traditional music was once the current music of its time, which could be heard anytime and anywhere it was needed and permitted. However, specific circumstances could determine repertoire and at times the choice of instrument. The newest layer of Latvian tradition is not characterized by rigid rules for the use of instruments and musical groups could be quite variable in their composition. A single instrument was considered entirely sufficient but an ensemble was most desirable. One or more melody instruments (violin, mandolin, guitar) could be accompanied by a bellows-driven instrument (accordion) along with bass instruments (three-string bass, cello or double bass) and multistring instruments (cimbalon, zither). Wind instruments were rare in these groups and percussion did not have a



***Traditional ensemble 1930–40ties. Liezers' photo.
Gulbene VMM***

significant role. It is noteworthy that until the 1920s and 1930s, musicians who played songs did not sing along. It is still true today that musicians who have learned to play in traditional settings do not themselves sing. Short textual units that have been recorded along with dance tunes which serve as keys allowing specific melodies to be named, recognized and remembered. Similarly, traditional musicians do not worry about key signatures and even if instruments allow for key changes, the musicians will continue to play in the same convenient key all night long.

Tradition, however, does dictate repertoire through a number of constraints. Regardless of how many and what type of pieces musicians can play at informal gatherings, public events required specific musical selections. Musicians needed to know dance tunes current at that time (waltz, foxtrot, polka etc.), as well as dances with more defined choreographies, an opening number, ladies' dances, dances requiring partner changes, musical signals for toasts, congratulatory songs, and a tune to mark the end of the event. A good wedding musician was expected to provide appropriate accompaniment for each part of the festivities—the arrival of the guests, the honouring of the mistress of the household, greetings for the uninvited gypsy guests, the bedding of the newlyweds, their awakening, and other activities.

Now that the main role of traditional music is performative, much more attention is given to the sound and format of the music, and it is estheticized accordingly. Folk music groups create arrangements which approach pop music standards. The song is the dominant form and accompaniment is rendered in a romantic style utilizing minor chords, modulations, and progressively increasing tempos. A larger role is allocated to drums and other percussion instruments, and traditional instruments are often replaced by readily available pop music and orchestral instruments, which consequently affects both the sound and style of the music.



Instrument makers

One of the larger issues facing the renewal of traditional music and its wider practice relates to the availability of musical instruments. During the heyday of the tradition, demand was met by both imported and locally shop fabricated instruments, as well as those built by musicians for their own use. Local artisans took over production of certain models, while also continuing to further develop their design and construction techniques. In this way, several unique local instrumental styles came



***Rūdolfs Pakalns in his workshop in Ziemei (1987).
U. Niedre's photo***

into being in Latvia. These include the "caurspēljamā cītara" (multistring instrument), larger scale chord zithers with hinged covers, as well as the "leviņa" type of accordion in Vidzeme. Musicians and collectors continue to appreciate the work of earlier artisans such as Voldemārs Saulītis, Augusts leviņš, Panders and Kārlis Vinters. While many local artisans continued to build instruments, these have to a large extent disappeared from the market for a number of reasons. One notable case is that of the three-row St. Petersburg accordion which was characteristic of Latgale. As the de-

mand for older instruments declined, fabrication techniques were not studied in any detail, nor were they passed on to the next generation. Today, those interested in building such instruments are required to learn to through their own research and trial and error. On the other hand, it is also possible to make use of recent technological advances which allow for improvements in quality and lower costs.



Musical Sources

The ideal way to learn the traditional repertoire, playing techniques and styles is of course from tradition bearers directly and masters of the older generation. However, today most will have neither the opportunity, nor time and requisite knowledge to do so and thus must make do with a knowledgeable teacher or learn to do it themselves.

This book has the potential to be helpful in this regard. To expand repertoire, it is advisable to familiarize oneself with the most significant collections and publications. The first individual to

undertake the study of instrumental music alongside traditional songs in the nineteenth century was the composer and cultural activist Andrejs Jurjāns. Notebooks 4 and 5 of his collection *Latviešu tautas mūzikas materiāli* (The Materials of Latvian Folk Music) offer valuable insights into the instrumental repertoire of the time. His work was continued in the 1920s and 1930s by the composer Emilis



**Jurjānu Andrejs' handwriting, Latvian Folklore Repository.
Published at www.garamantas.lv**

Melngailis whose collection *Latviešu mūzikas folkloras materiāli* (The Materials of Latvian Musical Folklore) was published in three volumes between 1951 and 1953. A separate compilation was also published in 1949 as the volume *Latviešu dancis* (Latvian Dance). Material relating to instrumental music was collected by other interested individuals and as well as the Archives of Latvian Folklore which published a volume in 1924 but these have not received separate publications. Folkloric dance tunes which constitute a large

part of the traditional musician's repertoire can be found in the compilations of J. Rinka and J. Ošs *Latvju tautas dejas I-IV* (Latvian Folk Dance) 1934-36, J. Stumbris *Dejosim latviski I-II* (Let's Dance in Latvian) 1939-40, H. Sūna *Latviešu rotaļas un rotaļdejas* (Latvian Carols and Sung Dances) 1966, E. Spičs *Mārtiņa deju burtnīca I-III* (Martin's Dance Notebook) 1999-2000. However, none of these publications provide information about individual playing styles, group musicianship or the ways in which tunes were varied or improvised. This type of information can only be ascertained through audio recordings which came into use relatively late in Latvia. The first to implement such recordings were the Archives of Latvian Folklore in the 1950s, as did the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum of Latvia. However, a tremendous surge of interest in documenting instrumental music styles of individual musicians came with the growth of the folklore movement in the 1980s. Māris Jansons' and Sniedze Grīnberga's sizeable collection at the *Tautas mūzikas centrs* (Folk Music Centre) contains examples representing all layers of a traditional musician's repertoire including dance tunes, *ziņģes* (folk romances), dances of the mid-twentieth century, as well as popular songs by Latvian and foreign songwriters. Currently, a great deal of research is being done in audio and video archives, which are also being digitalized. Much of this material is available to the public at <http://garamantas.lv>, which is the website developed by the Archives of Latvian Folklore. Another important website is the digital archive of the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music at <http://jvlma.tradarhivs.lv>.



Traditional Music in the Contemporary Cultural Context

The desire to enrich one's lived experience with traditional music and the playing of instruments is not new. The first *kokle* groups which played folk songs and arrangements of traditional melodies were founded in the 1920s. This work continued after World War II when model orchestras comprising national folk instruments were formed. Traditional instruments turned out to be difficult to adapt to this setting and were soon abandoned in favour of standard orchestral instruments. A more successful endeavour was the *Latvian Radio lauku kapela* (country music group) which was active between 1959 and 1985. It contributed to the creation of performing traditional music groups in many rural communities. This music continued to be build on academic principles using folklore materials as the

basis for arrangements without any consideration of the instruments still extant in living memory or traditional repertoire or playing styles. The 1970s came with the rise of the Folklore Movement which was a form of protest against this highly artificial style. The Folklore Movement called for a return to unarranged songs in their primary form and tradition based performance styles. There was also a desire to work with the oldest layers of material which influenced attitudes to instrumental music. A tremendous amount of work was done at that time to renew knowledge of the almost extinct kokle, bagpipe, and traditional flute. Some completely lost instruments such as the ģīga (bowed string instrument) and celma bungas (wooden drum) were reconstructed. At that time, it was still possible to learn to play the zither, accordion, cimbalom, and violin from living masters, but these opportunities remained unexplored.

Today there is the understanding that even the newer cultural layers are an important constituent element of cultural identity and that they can also be irretrievably lost. This realization has brought greater interest in learning about it and safeguarding it for future generations. It is clear that the number of people involved in traditional music activities continues to grow. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into too much detail about the reasons for this development, except to note reactions against global mass culture, as well as the influence of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the desire to promote diverse forms of cultural expression. Traditional music festivals in Latvia over the last ten years have been consistently attracting larger audiences.

Live music performed by people with knowledge of the relevant repertoire is a vital part of traditional dance events. Musicians participate in dance club meetings on a regular basis, as well as at festivals and calendrical festivities. More and more individuals are choosing to learn traditional instruments. In recent years, several projects to build instruments and train artisans have been completed which has raised the profile of traditional music and increased interest in learning to play. Every year several dozen adult beginners take the group classes offered by the NGO "Skaņumāja" to learn to play. Extra-curricular classes and summer camps are also available to children and youth. Music schools are also looking at including traditional instruments in their professional curricula and developing traditional music divisions. Folk music and folklore groups are increasingly choosing traditional instruments such as the accordion, zithers, and mandolin rather than orchestral instruments or opting for reconstructed archaic instruments.



*The participants of the Traditional Instrument Play Classes.
Skriveri, 2016. O. Patjanko's photo*





Mandolins in Latvia

There is very little documentation available about the mandolin in Latvia. Not too long ago, this instrument was not considered part of traditional musicianship and did not engage the interest of scholars and folklore collectors. Since its inception, the mandolin has balanced on the cusp of a number of musical genres including folk, classical, popular and house music. The mandolin made its way into period literary works and press reports about musical events and instrument sales. These types of sources form the basis for the following overview of the mandolin's earliest days in Latvia. The first reports about mandolins in Latvia can be found in the German press of the time. As early as 1797, Boiteux, master luthier at the Court of Bavaria advertised a variety of instruments for sale, including Spanish guitars and mandolins, along with repair services at an address on Krāsotāju Street in Rīga.

The mandolin arrived in Rīga and other urban centres in the 1850s through regular guest performances by Italian, German, and Austrian musicians, and remained a presence here. In the beginning, references in the Latvian press made note of the "little known mandolin". In the period from 1870 to 1890, the mandolin came to more frequently adorn concert posters and appeared in the translated novels carried by literary supplements and seen as characteristic of exotic southern cultures. By the late 1890s, the mandolin began to appear in retail advertisements directed at the Latvian public. This coincided with rapidly increasing interest in the mandolin across Europe, which stemmed from innovations in the tuning mechanism. The new machine heads made tuning considerably easier than had been the case with friction tuning pegs, which made it a truly democratic musical instrument accessible to a wider segment of society. Around this time, the mandolin also started to find its way into the hands of Latvian performers. An 1891 edition of the *Baltijas Vēstnesis* ran an ad for a Sunday performance of the comedian Kārlis Arturs and the mandolinist Miss Milly at Ķeizara dārzs. It is possible that Miss Milly might have actually been an English lady, rather than a young local lady with a charming stage name. In 1903, the Kurzeme Cyclists Society held a post-race event where they advertised "Artistic cycling done from Mr. Vītoliņš in Rīga" in which "Mr. Vītoliņš will perform on a high wheel bicycle like an Boer rifleman and mandolinist cycling on just one wheel", which must have been quite an impressive sight.



A group of young men with mandolin. Dubulti, 1925. T. Lindbergs' photo

Mandolins could well have found their way to traditional music groups or rural bands. One Russian language publication of the 1930s described quadrille dancing "of grandfathers' era" accompanied by "rather thin mandolin strumming". Particularly noteworthy is a short article in an 1897 edition of *Latviešu Avīzes* dedicated to the memory of the noted loom builder Bierants Pesse from Rucava, who had become passionate about building old-time musical instruments. The mandolin was



Mandolin players ensemble, 1920ties. Kuldīga VMM

among those mentioned. This shows that the mandolin had found a place in Latvian society, even though initially it might have had more to do with the rarified attitudes of urban folk, as the humorous lyrics of the song about Līna and her mandolin would indicate.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were enough mandolin players that people felt a need to form ensembles, orchestras, and societies. The first known “Balalaika, guitar, and mandolin orchestra” was

formed in 1903, under the auspices of the student musical society of the Rīga Polytechnical Institute. Mandolin performances and mandolin orchestras began to augment a variety of social events. There were mandolin orchestras in Rīga, Āgenskalns, Liepāja, and elsewhere. It is likely that the repertoire of these groups would have consisted of popular music such as romances, operetta melodies, and folk songs arrangements. A mandolin-guitar orchestra founded in Rīga in 1930, modelled on similar Italian orchestras aspired to change attitudes to the mandolin by showing that this instrument could also be played by serious musicians in tails, not just “boys in striped pants, who make honest people run away”. Concert programs were accordingly developed including the works of Jānis Mediņš, Emīls Dārziņš, Grieg, Satori, Chopin, and other well-known composers. The orchestras led to a new wave of popularity for the mandolin in Latvia.

The dissemination of mandolin skills was facilitated by mandolin clubs in Latvian schools and children’s organizations from the 1920s to the 1960s. Older musicians report that they learned the basic skills by themselves or from a friend who had learned to play at school. The increasing popularity of the instrument also brought a variety of teach yourself materials utilizing standard musical notation, as well as the numbered notation systems prevalent in the nineteenth century. There were also many mandolin collections which included Latvian folk song melodies, works by local composers, and popular international hits.



F. Travins' self-study book of mandolin. 1930ties.

In the period leading up to World War II, most mandolins used in Latvia had been made in Germany or Italy, although there were several Latvian luthiers as well, including A. Ieviņš, V. Saulītis, and O. Zutis, who built both flat and round-backed instruments. There is also evidence of other Latvian luthiers in rural areas, which points to the mandolin’s enduring presence in Latvia. Although there were no obvious barriers, the mandolin started to decline in popularity in the 1950s. Popular music styles of that time were not a good fit for the mandolin. Mandolin clubs and orchestras stopped operating and the professional music education system never brought the mandolin into its curriculum. Despite the fact that relatively good Russian and Ukrainian made instruments were available,

only musicians of the older generation who had learned to play in their youth continued to play for their own enjoyment, along with a few enthusiasts driven by an interest in early music or American country music.

In the late 1990s, traditional music practitioners began to once again familiarize themselves with the mandolin. As I learned of the mandolin's earlier presence in Latvian traditional music, I began teaching the mandolin to children at folklore camps and including it in my lectures on traditional music. The founding of the Rīga Mandolin Orchestra in 2012, also helped spread the word. This group regularly participates in a variety of cultural events and performs Irish, French, Swedish, Estonian, and other tunes from other traditions. The 2015 Mandolin Music Festival brought together participants from Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, and provided significant impetus and a great deal of publicity which attracted interest from people outside the traditional music community. Today, the mandolin is part of many different folk music and traditional folklore groups, although in many cases it is underutilized, as players remain content to play accompanying chords and do not take advantage of the instrument's full potential.

The mandolin classes offered by "Skaņumāja" are consistently one of our most requested courses, which offers hope that this very accessible instrument will regain its place on the Latvian music scene.



A mandolin built in A. Ieviņš' workshop. Riga, 1920–30ties.



"Tarkšķu Mandolinisti" at the festival "Live Music". Riga, 2015

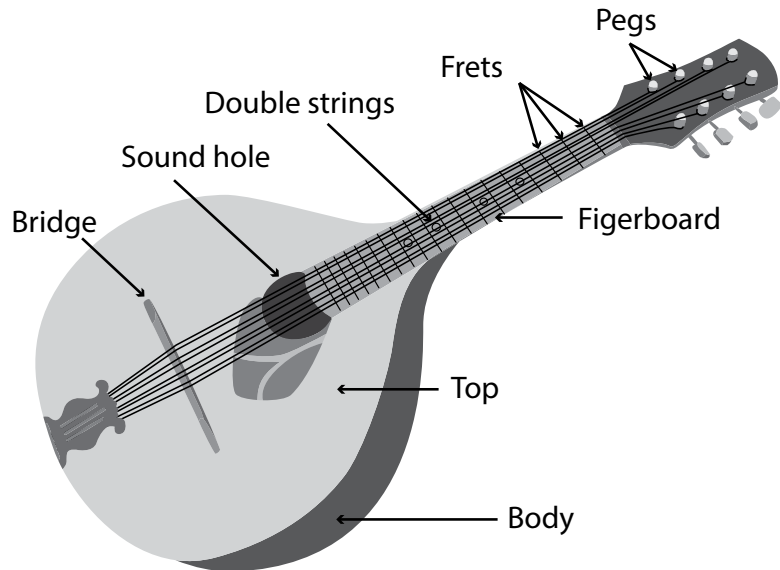




Half-step. Introduction

Which instrument you have to choose and how to prepare it for playing. How to hold the instrument and how to acquire good sound. Explanations of the notation and tablatures used in the book

Nowadays, every person who wants to play has lots of opportunities to get the instrument, and in these cases, there are always the same questions – how can I choose an instrument and which instrument will be the best and the most suitable? If you already have an instrument – found, given as a gift or left as a family heritage – it would be desirable to show the instrument to a master or player who could evaluate the quality of sound and whether any repair is necessary for the instrument before playing.



Picture 0.1 Mandolin and its parts

The first thing to evaluate is the instrument's body – is there visible damage: cracks or deformation? Note that small cracks do not always make the instrument unplayable. Next to be checked is the fingerboard. View it from the ending – the fingerboard or, to be more precise, the frets have to be in one plane. Significant deflection that often appears on old instruments have not been played for long time seriously affects possibility to play in tune. You can also use a small ruler to check straightness of the fingerboard. Small deflection (1–2 mm) can be eliminated quite easily, but if the deflection is large and significant, extensive repairs will be necessary.

Then, you have to check tuning pegs – are the mechanisms undamaged and the pegs easy to turn? In case of difficulties in turning you can use few drops of oil, and this is also recommended for regularly played instruments.



Picture 0.2 Inspection of the instrument with a ruler – view from the ending and side-view

All these aspects have to be checked also when the instrument you buy is not new. If the instrument is good and playable, the height of the strings above the 12th fret will not exceed 2.5–3 mm. Besides, it is recommended to change the strings for an old instrument; string change is necessary for regularly played instruments, too. Strings lose the clearness of sound in approximately 1–2 years. For beginners, it is recommended to choose medium tension strings. If you intend to prepare the instrument or to change strings on your own, without help of the professional, it is recommended to also check the technical tuning. Refer to the chapter “Tuning and adjustment of the instrument” in the addendum for further information.



If you have decided to buy a new instrument, choose style and design of instrument that corresponds to the music you want to play. For a folk music player, the instruments with both round and flat body will be suitable. Classical Italian round mandolin has soft sound and long closing, although, it will be quieter than that of flat mandolin. Additionally, the price of a round mandolin will be higher than of flat mandolin. Flat or Portugal mandolin sounds more powerful, which is important when playing in an ensemble. Widely available are also country mandolins, but it is important to remember that cheaper models without an electric amplifier have weak and inexpressive sound because of the massive body and bridge.



Besides the instrument, the plectrum affects the sound as well. Too thin (soft) plectrum that easily bends will not allow playing with full sound – instead the sound will be silent and flapping. The most suitable plectrum is of medium hardness/softness (0.6–0.8 mm) that allows creating the sound powerful enough. If placed between the fingers, such a plectrum bends a little, with considerable resistance. Too thick (hard) plectrum that is hard to bend creates unclear sound and runs down player’s hand.



Picture 0.3 Plectra

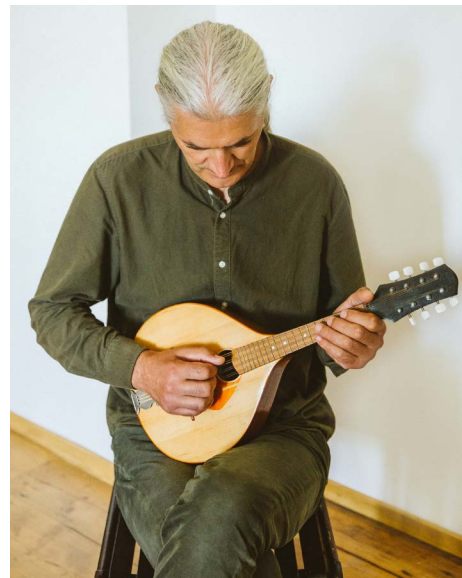
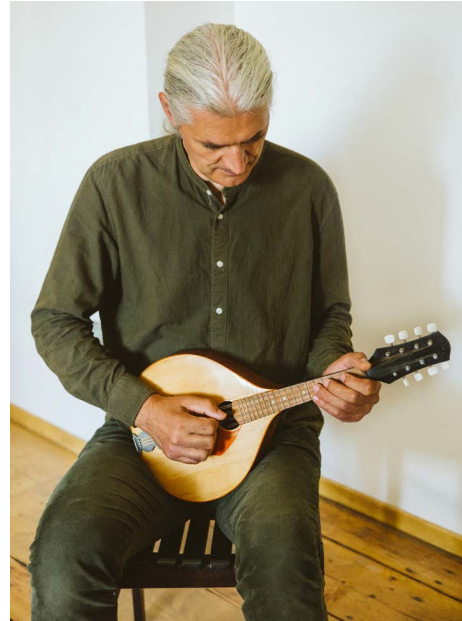
As it is mentioned above, the best string choice for the beginner is medium tension strings (.010–.038). Hard tension strings (.011–.041) will produce more sound, but for a player who is not used to playing (and even for one who is used to), the strings will pinch fingers and can destroy the joy of playing. The tuning for mandolin is the same as for violin – the highest/thinnest string is e’, and then accordingly a’ – d – g.

Electronic tuner facilitates tuning of the instrument, but it is recommended to learn tuning by hearing. This skill will be useful when battery of electronic tuner fails.

Handy and comfortable playing starts with holding the instrument. Mandolin is usually played when the player sits and holds the instrument on the lap. When playing round mandolin, it is recommended to cross one leg neatly over the other; for flat mandolin it is not so essential. The neck is placed on the base of the left index finger, while right forearm slightly presses the body of the instrument against the player's stomach – therefore, the instrument stays in the same position even if the fingers are released for the moment.

The plectrum is held with the right hand clenched into a fist – the wider end of the plectrum is placed on the first joint of the index finger and pressed with the tip of the thumb. It is not recommended to hold the plectrum into straight fingers or press several fingers against the body of mandolin. This could seem easier at the beginning, but later wrong position of the plectrum and right hand can become a serious obstacle in development of finger dexterity and tremolo.

During play, the right hand is positioned on the body so that the plectrum touches strings above the edge of the soundhole. There produced sound is rich and pleasant. Try to ring in free strings – put the pointed end of the plectrum to double string (e.g., the third string) and with a down-stroke pull the plectrum over both strings. Then repeat the same with an upstroke. Pay attention to changes of the sound depending of plucking spot. If strings are plucked near the bridge, sound is dry and sharp, whereas on the fingerboard it is hollow and hazy. You can watch this exercise in the added video file.



Picture 0.4 Position of a mandolin when the player is sitting



QR 0.1
<https://youtu.be/rzyJaKCEDgU>



Picture 0.5 Position of the plectrum

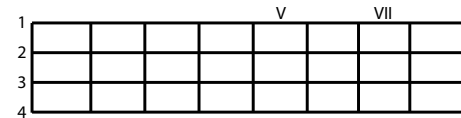
To facilitate learning of instrument play for those who have not learned musical notation, all exercises and examples in this book will be given in easy-understandable tabulatures – this is a type of notation that has developed historically and has been widely used in all the world (e.g., refer to mandolin-cafe.com). This approach corresponds with type of thinking of folk musicians; majority of musicians from old generation perceive the melody graphically, as a consecutive line of finger positions, and they are not concerned about the pitch.

Four rows in the tab resemble the strings (each doubled string is assumed to be one string). Strings are counted starting from the thinnest – this is the first string that is displayed at the upper part. Accordingly, the lowest row resembles the thickest string. Sounds to be played are marked in the row of the necessary string with a figure that indicates the fret on which string must be pressed. 0 means that a free string must be played, 1 – string must be pressed on the first fret, 3 – on the third fret etc.

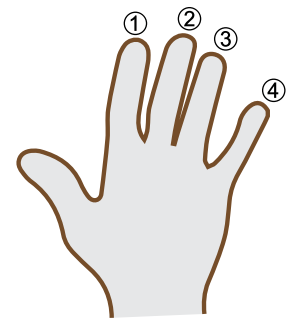
When playing in a traditional manner, strings are pressed with four left fingers. They are marked with figures as shown in the picture 0.7. Sometimes fingers that have to be used for pressing the string are indicated with circled figures above the tabulature.

For the convenience of players, usually V, VII, X and XII frets are marked with dots on the fingerboard. In some places these frets will be marked above the scheme as well.

In this book, there are no lines under the figures to visualize the length of the note. The length is indicated with stems and flags in musical notation. Similarly to musical notation, here are also used vertical lines to divide the melody into bars, repetition marks (two dots indicating that the previous fragment should be repeated) and other signs that allow shortening of the notation. Figures that appear simultaneously on more than one row show chords – sounds to be simultaneously played. If necessary, direction of the plectrum / movement of the right hand is indicated above the tab. When the hand goes down (downstroke), the sign ↑ is used; when the hand goes up (upstroke), the sign ↓ is used. When in written text, it is embarrassing that sign “up” indicates the opposite direction, but this is not a mistake. In the tabulatures, the direction corresponds with the location of the fingerboard.



Picture 0.6 Fingerboard – tab – stave



Picture 0.6 Left fingers with relevant figures

However, it is recommended to learn musical notation as it significantly extends the availability of different materials and also collaboration with other musicians.



First step. Playing in Re (D) major

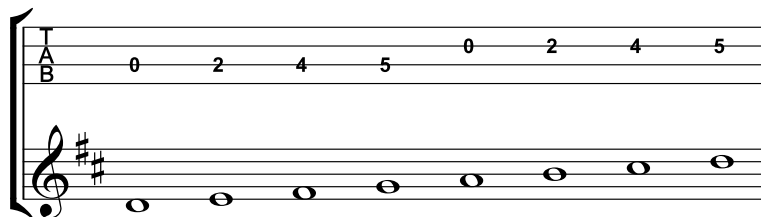
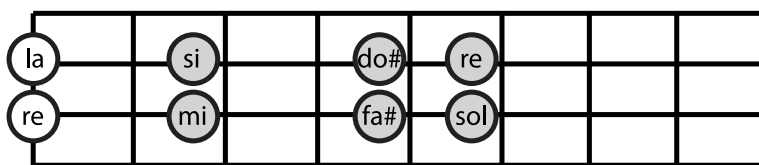
A scale in one octave, exercises to learn downstroke and upstroke. Melodies that do not exceed octave in their range to firm the positions of left fingers and to practice down- and upstroke

Playing scales is not the traditional method for developing basic playing skills; however, at the very beginning, scales are the best way to learn the principles of finger positions and creating sound. As the very first, let's play the most handy scale — Re (D) major. Start playing on the 3rd free string (Re/D) and put your fingers as it is shown in the picture: play free string, then put the first finger, then – the second, etc. The fingers should be put as near as possible to the fret, but not directly on it. In the traditional manner of playing, usually only three left fingers are used. The pinky is used rarely, only in the highest positions on the first string; the thumb is never used to press strings.



Position of fingers on the frets when playing Re (D) major

1.1. Re (D) major – fingering



Pluck both same-pitch strings with the plectrum using downstroke (the sign ↑) and upstroke (the sign ↓). Each sound should be repeated slowly for 8 times; then change it to the next. When all sequence on the 3rd string has been completed, repeat such sequence on the 2nd string starting with the free string.

NB! Please, pay attention that each finger during this scale plays on one particular fret and does not change its place – the 1st finger on the 2nd fret, the 2nd finger on the 4th

fret, and the 3rd finger on the 5th fret. Follow this principle also when playing melodies in Re (D) major. This is the reason why playing mandolin is so simply – easy-to-find finger positions allow finding the right notes easy and correctly. When up-going scale does not bother you anymore, play it backwards. At the beginning, speed is not important, but you have to follow that each note sounds precisely and in tune. You can increase speed after as well as play each sound 4 times instead of 8.

If the finger is too far from the fret, you have to press very hard to acquire clear sound; if the finger is too close or on the fret, the sound will be dampened.

1.2. Re (D) major tab (4 and 8 repetitions)

QR 1.2
<https://youtu.be/iBUiU8Tfh4>



A

The image displays four systems of mandolin tablature and musical notation. Each system consists of a tablature line (A/B) and a musical staff (G-clef, D major, 2/4 time). The tablature includes fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 5) and circled finger numbers (1, 2, 3) above the notes. Arrows above the tablature indicate the direction of the plectrum stroke (upstroke or downstroke). The musical notation shows the corresponding notes on a staff.

Arrows above the tablature show the direction of the plectrum – downstroke or upstroke. Circled figures indicate finger which has to be used to press the string in the relevant position.



B

The exercise is divided into two systems, each with a tablature staff and a musical staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tablature uses fret numbers 0, 2, 4, and 5, with arrows indicating the direction of the plectrum stroke (up or down). The musical staff shows the corresponding notes on a four-string mandolin.

NB! Follow the movement of the plectrum – in turn, from one side to the other. In the course of time, it will become a habit and you will not need to concentrate on it. When you have learned this exercise, you can use it in warm-up and in developing finger dexterity. Another important thing to become a habit is the positions of the fingers. When playing melodies within one octave, the positions of the fingers never change: each finger always play on the same fret, and on the fret there is always the same finger.



With such preparation it is enough to learn and play quite a lot of beautiful traditional melodies. As the very first, let's learn a melody from Latgale which is often included of the repertoire of different ensembles because of its dance-like character. When playing this tune, pay attention to two important things that were done with the scales. Experience shows that these are forgotten as soon as the player starts playing melodies. That was the reason why we paid so much attention to them learning basics. The first – each left finger works only on one fret independently of the direction of the melodic line. The second – the right hand (plectrum) plays symmetrically up and down even if the string to be played changes. In the first examples of the melodies, the direction is indicated with arrows above the tabs. Unlike the scales, in many melodies, absolutely symmetrical movement of the plectrum is not possible – it depends on number of sounds in the phrase. Each new phrase of the melody should be started with downstroke as this is the way the note sounds more active and powerful. In "Tymsa, tymsa", the first sounds in the first and fifth bars are played in such a manner. Afterwards, the plectrum moves in turn up and down, but the new phrase again should be started with a

downstroke even if the last note was played the same way. In such places in the tab, there will be arrows indicating the right direction.

Play the melody slowly, without rush.

1.3. «Tymša, tymša tei egleite»

QR 1.3
<https://youtu.be/Mx35DYG-Y3o>



② ↑ ↓ ③ ↑ ↓ ② ↑ ↓ ① ↑ ↓ ② ↑ ↓ ③ ↑ ↓ ② ↑ ↓ ② ↑

4 4 5 4 | 2 2 2 4 | 5 5 5 0 | 4 4 4 | 4 4 5 4 | 2 2 2 4 | 5 5 5 5 | 4 4 4

The musical notation for 'Tymša, tymša tei egleite' is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. The guitar tablature above the staff shows the fret numbers for each note, with arrows indicating the direction of the stroke (up for upstroke, down for downstroke). The first four bars of the melody are: 4-4-5-4, 2-2-2-4, 5-5-5-0, and 4-4-4. The next four bars are: 4-4-5-4, 2-2-2-4, 5-5-5-5, and 4-4-4.

*Tymša, tymša tei egleite, kur sauleite nakti guļ,
 [Nakti guļ(i), nakti guļ(i), kur sauleite nakti guļ.]
 Tuoli, tuoli tys cīmeņš(i), kur aug muna leigaveņ.
 Leigaveņa, sirdspučēite, snīdz rūceņu, dūd muteiti.
 Snīdz rūceņu, dūd muteiti, byusi muna leigaveņ.*

Then, let's learn "Rozes Zied", a dance from Kurzeme. Similarly to the previous, this melody also is written in a time signature 2/4 (march, polka, foxtrot), which is the most common time signature in Latvian folk music.

1.4. «Rozes Zied»

QR 1.4
<https://youtu.be/ATaatACgrYk>



↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑

4 5 0 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 4 2 | 0 0 | 2 2 2 2 | 0 4 0 | 2 5 4 2 | 0 0 0

The musical notation for 'Rozes Zied' is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. The guitar tablature above the staff shows the fret numbers for each note, with arrows indicating the direction of the stroke (up for upstroke, down for downstroke). The first four bars of the melody are: 4-5-0, 4-5-0, 2-5-4-2, and 0-0. The next four bars are: 2-2-2-2, 0-4-0, 2-5-4-2, and 0-0-0.

*Rozes zied, rozes zied uz tām meitu galvām
 Ai, cik jauki izskatās, kad tās rozes ziedēt sāk*

When learning a new melody, practice separate parts of it. First, learn how to play the first two bars, and repeat them until you can play all the sounds without a hitch. Then you can learn next two bars. Only after practicing these, you can join 4 bars together and play the first part of the dance. Afterwards, use the same principle to learn the other part of the song.

Use this method (especially when you have recently started playing mandolin) for learning other melodies, too. NB! Remember that correct finger positions and consequent movement of the plectrum is far more important than fast-learned melody. The most common mistake, which should be avoided, is “pecking” – when right hand only goes down. If the basic skills are learned correctly, they will allow you to develop much faster, whereas correcting mistakes will take a lot of time and effort.



Even if the first melodies you have learned is still not perfect, learn one more! The popular melody “Dzīsmē” comes from Latgale. This name is used for plays and dances with longer texts to be sung. The dance is often performed by the participants of folk ensembles and dance clubs.

1.5. «Dzīsmē»

QR 1.5
https://youtu.be/K_yLKUB-EU



Learn separate parts here as well. In the first four bars, the motive is repeated two times and the movement of the plectrum is symmetrical – after playing downstroke, you have to play upstroke. However, the short notes (eight notes) in the 6th and 8th bars can be more difficult to play. These rhythmic patterns are easier to play with two following downstrokes (as it is showed with arrows in the tablature).



Triple time (mazurka, waltz, polonaise) slightly differs from previously played time signature. “Sīkais dancis” is a dance for four couples. It has been written down at the beginning of the 20th Century. Here you have the version of Kurzeme with a text to be sung. In a triple time melody, it is not always possible to keep the symmetrical movement of the plectrum, but this piece is a nice exception.



1.6. «Sīkais dancis»

Musical notation for 'Sīkais dancis'. The top staff shows fret numbers for the mandolin: 0 0 2 | 0 4 4 | 5 2 2 | 5 4 | 5 5 5 | 0 4 4 | 5 2 2 | 0 4 | 0 0. Above the fret numbers are arrows indicating finger direction: ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑. The bottom staff shows the melody in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 3/8 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. There are two endings: '1.' and '2.'.

*Spēlējiet spēlmaņi, es gribu dancot
Jau manas kājiņas dietin(i) deļa
Ciņaina, celmaina taut' istabiņa
Gan manas kājiņas nolīdzinās(i)*

QR 1.6
<https://youtu.be/NeafQLxJjoM>



Hopefully, after learning these melodies you have an idea how to play and the desire to play hasn't faded. The aim set at the beginning of the first step – to play within one octave – was carried out in scales. Short-range melodies were selected knowingly – so that you pay attention to correct playing techniques and strengthen them (finger positions on the frets, symmetrical movement of the plectrum). To conclude the first step, let's learn a melody where all 8 sounds of the octave are used – the popular dance "Skroderis". In foreign countries, this melody is known as "Štetīnes kreicpolka", but it is played significantly slower than in Latvia.

1.7. «Skroderis»

QR 1.7
<https://youtu.be/f5tGshnELgs>



Musical notation for 'Skroderis'. The top staff shows fret numbers for the mandolin: 4 4 5 4 | 2 0 | 0 0 4 2 | 0 5 | 4 4 5 4 | 4 2 2 | 2 2 4 2 | 2 0 0. The bottom staff shows the melody in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 2/4 time. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes.

*Skroder's sēž uz akas, lāpa savas frakas
Smuka meitiņ' garām iet, grib tam ūden' virsū liet.
Meitiņ, vai tu traka, Mana jaunā fraka!
Svētdien jāiet baznīcā, ko es vilkšu mugurā?*

Refer to the addendum for other melodies in this level of playing.



Second step. Playing in Sol (G) major

a scale in one octave, melodies without large leaps to practice the positions of the left fingers and movement of the plectrum

The second most popular and handy tonality for folk musicians is Sol (G) major. It differs from Re (D) major with the position of the 2nd finger – playing Sol (G) major within one octave, the 2nd finger always presses the 3rd fret. Also Sol (G) major starts not from free, but from the pressed 3rd string.



Position of fingers on the frets when playing Sol (G) major

2.1. Sol (G) major – one octave

Start learning this tonality with a scale, repeating each sound 8 and 4 times – the same as you did with Re (D) major. Start playing slowly and pay attention to each note – it should be clear and in tune. At the same time, follow your right hand and the movements of the plectrum. Play the scale up and backwards so that the fingers get used to the new positions.

One more thing easy to understand when playing scales is dynamics. Try to play whole scale or a part of it louder or quieter. For example, play up-going scale loud and down-going – quiet, or 8 notes loud and then another 8 – quiet. Practice it with Re (D) major as well.

Strengthen finger positions in Sol (G) major with playing melodies. .



QR 2.1
<https://youtu.be/-1iRGtk0gos>





“Labāk, meitas, padziedam” is a traditional melody of Latgale’s polka. In the beginning play it slowly and divide in parts as you did with other melodies.

2.2. «Labāk skaisti padziedam»

QR 2.2
<https://youtu.be/pfSGLDii2RY>



The musical score for 'Labāk skaisti padziedam' is presented in two staves. The top staff is a mandolin tablature with two lines, A and B. The bottom staff is a standard musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The tablature includes fret numbers (0-5) and arrows indicating downstrokes (↑) and upstrokes (↓). The melody in the bottom staff consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a repeat sign at the end.

*Labāk skaisti padziedam
Nekā blēņas runājam
Dziesmas kauna nedarija
Kā dar blēņu valodiņ`*

The right hand works in turns – downstroke and then upstroke. The only exception, as it is mentioned above, is the beginning of the phrase, which always is played down. In the tablature, these places are indicated with an arrow (↑).

“Čīžiks” is a dance from Latgale (also called “Sprigulītis”), and it is very popular among the traditional dance clubs and ensembles. The melody is simple and deliberate, and its only trinkets are dotted notes and rhythmical patterns in the second and third bars. They are easier-to-play with two downstrokes, as it is showed above the tablature (the same as in example 1.2).

2.3. «Čīžiks»

QR 2.3
https://youtu.be/OxqRoon_4Lc



The musical score for 'Čīžiks' is presented in two staves. The top staff is a mandolin tablature with two lines, A and B. The bottom staff is a standard musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The tablature includes fret numbers (0-5) and arrows indicating downstrokes (↑) and upstrokes (↓). The melody in the bottom staff consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a repeat sign at the end.

Learn also triple time melody in Sol (G) major. The melody of “Polka-Mazurka” was written down in Vidzeme, Maliena. Polka-mazurka has been a popular ball dance in the end of the 19th Century. The changes of fast and slower notes make the melody particularly eloquent when played on mandolin.

**2.4. «Polka-mazurka»**

5 3 2 2 | 3 2 0 0 | 3 2 0 0 | 5 3 2 2 | 5 3 2 2 | 3 2 0 0

7

“Kur tu teci, gailiti mans” is one of the most popular Latvian folk songs. Nowadays, it is almost mandatory at the wedding when waking up the newlyweds. Earlier it was also a dance. This melody includes all the sounds of the basic octave of Sol (G) major that you learned in this step.



QR 2.4
<https://youtu.be/-ZEJSmOD2mE>

2.5. «Kur tu teci, gailiti mans»

QR 2.5
<https://youtu.be/4gXoJ9R87to>

2 5 3 2 2 5 3 2 | 5 0 0 0 | 0 3 2 0 0 3 2 0 | 2 5 5 5

5

Refer to the addendum for other melodies of this playing level.





Third step. Changes of tonalities and rhythm

*Different rhythmical patterns to fill the long notes.
Upbeats – the beginning of the phrase played with upstroke.*

The mandolin player has an eloquent mean to create musical character, mood and style. For instruments with short aftersound (e.g., mandolin), it is common to fill long notes with several short notes. For this purpose, musicians use different rhythmical patterns that emphasize dance-like mood. Try to play Re (D) and Sol (G) majors with different rhythmical patterns!



QR 3.1

<https://youtu.be/-gMtXi9ztSs>

3.1. Rhythmical patterns a, b, c, d

A

B

C

D



These (and other) rhythmical patterns can be used to fill each long note. It has several benefits: sounding of mandolin becomes denser, more intensive (and this is important when playing in an ensemble); a melody can be refreshed; you can vary the melody by changing different rhythmical patterns, and therefore make it more interesting for both yourself and the audience.

For the next two melodies, there are given also several examples of filling the long notes. In the tabulature they are blue.

“Ēlenders” is a dance often performed in Vidzeme, but with slight variations in dance steps and different melodies, it is known in whole Europe. This version has been written down in Siberia, Lajasbulan (Latvian colony). The dance should be played leisurely.

3.2. «Ēlenders»

QR 3.2
<https://youtu.be/wTzRuXfKP18>



The musical score for "Ēlenders" is presented in three systems. Each system includes a mandolin tablature staff (labeled T and B) and a standard musical notation staff (treble clef, key signature of two sharps, 2/4 time). The tablature for the first system is: 5 0 | 0 5 4 | 5 0 | 0 5 4 | 2 4 | 5 2 | 2 0 | 0. The second system is: 2 0 | 0 | 0 4 | 0 0 | 2 0 | 0. The third system is: 0 5 | 5 | 5 4 | 4. The notation includes first and second endings, repeat signs, and blue highlights on the tablature.





“Kurkulēns” or “Tautas Kadriļa” is a dance for four couples. It has been written on the Kurzeme’s seaside. This melody also should be played cozy, leisurely.

3.3. «Kurkulēns»

QR 3.3
<https://youtu.be/XABDGgktjY>



5 2 5 2 | 0 5 5 3 2 | 5 3 3 2 0 | 1. 0 5 5 :| 2. 5 5

6 0 3 3 0 | 5 2 2 5 | 3 0 0 3 | 1. 5 2 2 3 5 :| 2. 2 0 0

Take into account that, playing a dance in a concert, the first always should be the basic melody. Add different rhythmical patterns when the theme is repeated.



There are exceptions for the first movement (downstroke) of the plectrum. For the newer repertoire, it is common to start with an upbeat – unstressed sounds in the beginning of the phrase. The upbeat is written as a part of the bar in the beginning of the melody. Sometimes upbeats are handier when started with an upstroke.





The next melody is also well-known through the Europe.
The most popular version of this dance in Latvia is called
“Ak, žīds”. It comes from Saldus district.

3.4. «Ak žīds»

QR 3.4
<https://youtu.be/jzxAtHp89sc>



10

*Ak, žīds, ak, žīds, ko dosi meitām līdz;
Pabrauc drusciņ, pabrauc drusciņ, iekrīt grāvī – blauks.*

In blue, this is an example for variation.





The traditional waltz melody “Asteres zieds” is known by musicians of the old generation in Vidzeme and Latgale. If the long sounds are not filled with shorter units, the melody of waltz is almost impossible to play with elegance. In such cases, it is possible to skip the basic theme without variation. One of rhythmical patterns is written in small print under the basic melody.

3.5. «Asteres zieds»

QR 3.5
<https://youtu.be/bTrbuA1bgz4>



The musical score for "Asteres zieds" is presented in two systems. The first system consists of a guitar tablature line and a treble clef staff. The tablature line shows the following fret numbers: 2, 2, 0, 5, 5, 0, 2, 2, 0, 3, 3, 2, 0, 0, 2, 3, 2, 5. The treble clef staff shows the corresponding melody in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). A blue rhythmical pattern is written below the first system. The second system also consists of a guitar tablature line and a treble clef staff. The tablature line shows the following fret numbers: 5, 3, 2, 3, 5, 0, 5, 5, 5, 3, 2, 3, 5, 3, 2, 5, 2, 5, 2, 2. The treble clef staff shows the corresponding melody, including first and second endings.

This, of course, is not the only example of waltz. Try to create your own versions using different rhythmical examples.

You will find other melodies and their variations in the addendum. Try to change similarly the pieces you have played before. Do not forget to pay attention to the “Three Whales” of the mandolin play: 1) the plectrum is held with the index finger and the thumb of the right hand clenched into a fist; 2) each left finger is put on the same fret; 3) the right hand always plays downstroke first, and then it goes in turns (except the upbeats).





Fourth step. More than one octave. Sol (G) major

playing outside the basic fingering of Sol (G) major – a scale and melodies in two octaves; staccato

The melodies played so far were within one octave, so you could faster learn basic principles and start playing. Now it is time to break the border. Both scales (Re and Sol) can be prolonged in both directions until two or even more octaves. You also need to break the principle that each finger has only one position; nevertheless, the basic positions do not change and allow you to feel comfortable when the melody returns in the usual range. Further, you can see the extension of Sol (G) major until two octaves. Below you will find an “extension” of Sol (G) major where one more octave is added to one you already know as well as some sounds handy to play above the base octave. The known positions are in black, but new – in blue. At this point, the highest sound Si (H) is played on the 7th fret with your pinky, but without changing position of the left hand.

Each time starting your practice, do not forget to warm-up your fingers using scales. Play each sound 8, 4, 2 times, add different rhythmical patterns and increase speed.

4.1. Sol (G) major

QR 4.1
<https://youtu.be/HeNGj9Lccas>



You can see that finger positions of the lower octave in Sol (G) major match the basic positions of Re (D) major. This simplicity (connected with possibility to use free strings in accompaniment) makes Sol (G) major the most favorite tonality of folk musicians-mandolin players. Learn the scale, repeating each note 8, 4 and 2 times and playing it upwards and back..



Now, let's play some melodies using the new positions. In melodies that are wide range, you often will see melodic leaps and necessity to change strings. Nevertheless, it should not interrupt the regular movement of the plectrum.

4.2. «Ai, ai, tēvabrāli»

QR 4.2

<https://youtu.be/DHyI4UjVJP0>

*Ai, ai, tēvabrāli, kam tu gāji rutkus zagti?
Iznāks saimnieks, sasies tevi, ieliks tevi cietumā*

In the previous pieces, the melody moved downwards from the basic octave. In the next piece, the melody goes upwards. In the upper position (7th fret of the 1st string), use 4th finger!

4.3. «Dažu skaistu ziedu»

QR 4.3

<https://youtu.be/jXwilK-03-8>




Remember to fill long notes with shorter patterns – there is an example below, but you can always use a pattern you like. Try to play Sol (G) major an octave lower to strengthen the new positions.



Before starting the next step, let's learn one more manner of playing that allows making melody more interesting and eloquent – staccato. It is short, abrupt sound. You can play staccato on the mandolin if right after plucking the string you slightly release your fingers that press the string. The finger does not press string anymore, but stays on it, so the sound gets damped. To play staccato on free string – right after plucking the string, you have to damp it with any of free fingers. However, this technique is not very handy, and is used rarely. Exercise staccato in scales! Play each note staccato and long. In notation and tabulatures relevant sounds are marked with a small dot above or under the note or relevant figure.

QR 4.4
<https://youtu.be/7pTn-g9SRdk>



4.4. Staccato

etc.





Try the new technique in action – play the Dance from Subate using staccato with notes that are marked with dots under the relevant note and in the tab.

4.5. «Dancis no Subates»

QR 4.5
<https://youtu.be/j3qhGCirYqE>



Musical score for 'Dancis no Subates' in 2/4 time, G major. The score consists of two systems. The first system has four measures of guitar tablature and four measures of standard notation. The second system starts at measure 7 and has six measures of guitar tablature and six measures of standard notation. Dotted notes in the standard notation correspond to staccato markings in the tablature.

The dance “Kazāks” includes both the new positions of Sol (G) major and staccato sounds on free and pressed strings.

4.6. «Kazāks»

QR 4.6
<https://youtu.be/xISzzSBQoMk>



Musical score for 'Kazāks' in 2/4 time, G major. The score consists of two systems. The first system has eight measures of guitar tablature and eight measures of standard notation. The second system starts at measure 9 and has eight measures of guitar tablature and eight measures of standard notation. Dotted notes in the standard notation correspond to staccato markings in the tablature.

Staccato can be played if the pressed finger is released right after the plectrum has touched the string; on a free string (10th and 12th bars) you have to touch the string with the finger prepared for the next sound. Refer to the addendum for other pieces in which staccato can be used.



Fifth step. More than one octave. Re (D) major

*Playing outside the basic fingering of Re (D) major.
Playing on the 1st string; legato.*

Let's extend Re (D) major outside the learned octave. In this tonality, you will have to "go out" from already learned positions in both directions. Playing down from the basic fingering, the 3rd finger changes its position.

5.1. Re (D) major with an extension down

The diagram shows a mandolin fretboard with notes labeled: la (open), si (2nd fret), do# (3rd fret), re (4th fret) on the top string; and re (open), mi (2nd fret), fa# (3rd fret), sol (4th fret) on the bottom string. Below the fretboard, a musical staff shows the notes: la (open), si (2nd fret), do# (3rd fret), re (4th fret), do# (3rd fret), re (4th fret), do# (3rd fret), re (4th fret), do# (3rd fret), re (4th fret). The notes are marked with blue circles and a circled '3' above the first four notes. Below the staff, a tablature line shows the fret numbers: 2 4 6 0 2 4 5 0 2 4 5.



QR 5.1
<https://youtu.be/6iSrC8S6fus>



Practice the learned positions with a popular Latvian melody "Bēdu manu lielu bēdu". This is a traditional song which is sung everywhere and by everyone.



5.2. «Bēdu manu lielu bēdu»

*Bēdu manu lielu bēdu, es par bēdu nebēdāj.
 Ram-tai ram-tai radi-ridi-rīdi ram-tai rī-idi ral-lal-lā
 Liku bēdu zem akmeņa, pāri gāju dziedādām.
 Ram-tai (utt.)*



The next melody also involves the new positions. During Winter Solstice this song is often included in the repertoire of travelling visitors in masks (ķekatas). Pay attention to the tempo – the first part of the melody is twice as slow as the second.

5.3. «Danco, lāci»



*Danco, lāci, danco, lāci, saiminiece aizmaksās |2x
 Pieci šķiņķi kaķa gaļas, trīs kukuļi grūstas maiz's |2x
 Jūsu trīsi, mēsi trīsi, Sametami čumuriņ'
 Vienam ragi, otram nagi, Trešam ļīpa pakaļā*

Playing Re (D) major upwards, if the highest note is Si (the 6th grade of the scale), the position of the hand stays the same, and you just have to use 4th finger. If the range of the melody is wider, the player must change positions on the first string, sliding a finger from fret to fret in order to play all necessary sounds. In these cases, there are no strict rules for finger changes. Depending on the melody, the movement of the fingers must be planned so that changes from



fret to fret are performed with the 1st and 2nd fingers (the strongest ones), and each of them do not play more than two consequent sounds.

QR 5.4

<https://youtu.be/1ZN2UtZc8ms>

5.4. Re (D) major in 2 octaves with position changes

In academic music, musicians try to avoid often position changes and can play whole excerpt in higher positions using all four strings. On the contrary, folk musicians as much as possible play in basic positions and uses higher positions only on the 1st string.



The waltz “Bâlais Mëness” is a romantic song, one of folk musicians’ favorites. This melody is suite to practice playing on the upper string. As it is said above, playing upwards on the 1st string you can choose fingering quite freely. In the refrain, where the melody goes upwards, you can use 4th finger to play the highest note. Nevertheless, majority will find it uncomfortable because when playing in traditional manner, only the first three fingers have been trained. Above the line, there are two possible fingerings written.

When playing in high registers, you should not play all sounds sliding just one finger unless glissando (uninterrupted sliding sound) is the aim



5.5. «Bälais mëness»

This melody can also be played octave lower, in the basic octave, but playing in the high register highlights the timbre of mandolin and is often used in an ensemble.

QR 5.5
https://youtu.be/_4wJMjuqjC4



Refer to the addendum for other melodies in D outside the basic octave.



Legato. Not always the players pay enough attention to the length of the sound. Nevertheless, when playing lyrical melodies, it is important to join notes, so the phrases become fluent, soft and singing. Legato requires good coordination of hands. To join notes fluently, the sounding note (finger) should stay pressed on the fret until the beginning of the next sound. The plectrum touches the string simultaneously with the change of left fingers, so that sound does not stop. Try to keep it in mind when both playing already known melodies and learning new ones.





Sixth step. Using side strings.

Using free strings to create accompaniment – bourdon on downbeats and upbeats (on-beats and off-beats); creating double stops

The tuning of mandolin (in fifths) allows to enrich the playable melody with accompaniment on free strings. This technique is often used by traditional violin players. It can add particular mood and fill the sounding. Unlike the violin that can create uninterrupted accompaniment – bourdon, the accompaniment on mandolin is rhythmical. In traditional play of mandolin, side strings are used to put accents on the beginnings or endings of a phrase or to emphasize dance-like character. Sol (G) major is very suitable for this technique as you can use free strings G and D, but you can also do it in other tonalities.



The dance “Gatves deja” is closely related to traditional wedding. The new married couple danced it together with wedding guests. This melody was played on kokle in the ethnographic movie filmed in Alsunga, in 1935. Nowadays, this melody is in every folkmusician’s repertoire.

Bourdon sounds are played simultaneously with melody on free string D with downstroke. Let the strings ring while melody goes on.



6.1. «Gatves deja»

Musical notation for «Gatves deja». The score consists of two systems. Each system has a guitar tablature line (A/B) and a treble clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system has 8 measures, and the second system has 8 measures. The tablature includes fingerings and accents (upstroke and downstroke) above the notes.

Emphasizing the beginning of a phrase (as in the example above), the side string is played with the plectrum going down. If bourdon is used to emphasize rhythm, it usually happens on the off-beat with plectrum going up (upstroke).



Start learning the melody of “Vēžu Dancis” slowly, paying attention to create precise accompaniment with upstroke as it is indicated above the staff (figures). In the beginning of the melody, you can add the bourbon also to the first sound (note/figure in the brackets). Play staccato sounds as well – they can change the character of the melody completely.

6.2. «Vēžu dancis»



Musical notation for «Vēžu dancis». The score consists of two systems. Each system has a guitar tablature line (A/B) and a treble clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system has 4 measures, and the second system has 4 measures. The tablature includes fingerings and accents (upstroke and downstroke) above the notes.

*Lika drusku pagaidīt, kamēr vēži izvārās
 Zupa jau ir izvārīta, vēži vēl ir upītē*

When practicing enough and acquiring free use of bourdon, it can become an impressive mean of expression, which is common in traditional music. Try this technique where it is possible and fits, also in previously learned melodies.





Similar to bourdon on free strings, it is possible to create accompaniment on pressed strings as well. Double stops are widely used, but only in particular melody fragments and in positions that are maximally handy for this purpose. Sometimes these are just few sounds or a chord in the beginning of the melody.

Remember – too much is not too good. As every other mean of expression, bourdon should not be used exceedingly often.

6.3. «Talsu zagļiņš»

QR 6.3
<https://youtu.be/10kE9s9dE>



The musical score for «Talsu zagļiņš» is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a mandolin tablature line and a standard musical notation line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system contains 10 measures, with a repeat sign after the 4th measure. The second system contains 10 measures, with first and second endings indicated by '1.' and '2.' above the final two measures. The tablature uses numbers 0-5 to indicate fret positions on the strings.

Practically, double stops are often combined with bourdon.

Refer to addendum for other melodies with accompaniment. Further double stops and bourdon will not be indicated. When you notice particular position, try to use them on your own. When playing in an ensemble, you have to listen so that the other sound does not create dissonance with the other instruments.





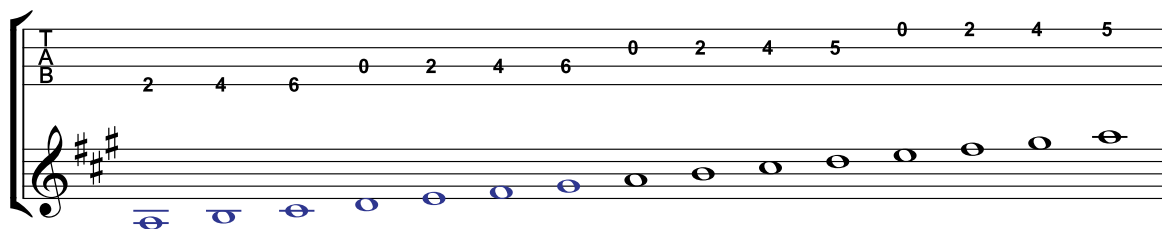
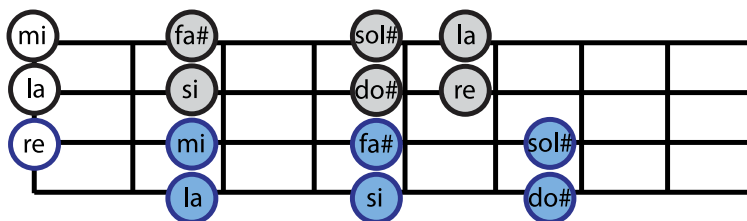
Seventh step. Other tonalities and positions

playing in La (A) major and Do (C) major, pieces with tonality changes

Besides the learned scales, there are some more tonalities starting with a free string. Folk musicians choose them rarely, but they will be useful if there is necessity to transpose the piece for a singer or to adapt it to other instruments. If you use basic fingering of Re (D) major on the 2nd string, you will get La (A) major. Playing La (A) major down, you will have to learn new positions where 3rd finger works on the 6th fret. Use the method, which is described in the fifth step of this book to play higher notes on the 1st string (if necessary).

7.1. La (A) major scale

QR 7.1

<https://youtu.be/R9YTVQ0hX5c>

The skill of playing in this tonality will be useful when you play together with Russian double-row diatonic accordion "hromka", which is very popular in our region and usually is tuned in La major.





“Ozolīti, Zemzarīti” is both a popular folk song and play-dance. Play it without hurry!



QR 7.2

<https://youtu.be/7WWdzU1PFig>

7.2. «Ozolīti, zemzarīti»

Musical notation for the song 'Ozolīti, zemzarīti'. It consists of a mandolin tablature and a standard musical staff. The tablature shows fingerings for the strings: 0 2 0 4, 2 2 2 0, 4 4 4 0, 2 4 2, 0 2 0 2, 6 2 0 4, 2 2 0 4, 2 2 0. The standard staff is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time, showing a melody of eighth and quarter notes.

*Ozolīti, zemzarīti, kam tu augi lejiņā?
 Aijā, aijā, ai-jai-jā-ā, kam tu augi lejiņā?
 Meitas tavus zarus lauza kalniņāi stāvēdam's.
 Aijā, aijā, ai-jai-jā-ā, kalniņāi stāvēdam's.
 Lauziet meitas, ko lauzdamas, galotnītes nelauziet!
 Aijā, aijā, ai-jai-jā-ā, galotnītes nelauziet!
 Lai palika galotnīte, kur putniemi uzņemties.
 Aijā, aijā, ai-jai-jā-ā, kur putniemi uzņemties.*



Do (C) major started on 4th string is similar to Sol (G) major (basic fingering), but in this register it sounds inexpressive – that is why Do (C) major is often started on 2nd string and played in higher positions, where there are different finger positions. At this time, the 1st finger changes its usual place.



QR 7.3

<https://youtu.be/VnO2Fs-3aBY>

7.3. Do (C) major scale

A diagram of the mandolin fretboard showing the Do (C) major scale. The notes are circled and labeled: mi (2nd string, 1st fret), fa (2nd string, 2nd fret), sol (3rd string, 2nd fret), la (3rd string, 3rd fret), si (4th string, 2nd fret), do (4th string, 3rd fret). The diagram shows the scale across the first five frets.

Musical notation for the Do (C) major scale. It includes a mandolin tablature and a standard musical staff. The tablature shows fingerings: 5, 0, 2, 3, 5, 0, 2, 3, 5, 0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 8. The standard staff shows the scale in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time, with notes on the 2nd and 3rd strings.





The dance "Šotis" or "Šotītis" is written down in Kurzeme Livs' shore. In Latvia, this deliberate dance was popular until the World War 1, but in Scandinavia it (with different melodies) is still danced.

7.4. «Šotis»

1. 2.

7 1. 2.

*Ko jūs raudat, jaunas meitas, kad jūs vīru dabūsat
Jūrniekiem ir tāda daba – kamēr jauni, neprecas.
Ak, Minnuška, ak, Annuška, ak trādi rīdi ra-ca-cā,
Ak, Minnuška, ak, Annuška, ak trādi rīdi ra-ca-cā.*

QR 7.4
<https://youtu.be/N0aJl0un1EY>



Refer to the addendum for other melodies in La (A) major and Do (C) major. Try to "put" (transpose) the previously played melodies in the new tonalities!



In the traditional music, it often occurs that different parts of a melody sounds in different tonalities. Such structure is characteristic for multiple-part (binary or ternary) quadrille-like dances as well as many traditional polkas. In these pieces, fingerings change depending on the part of the melody.





“Polka No Skolas Laikiem” is structured as traditional polka of Latgale. It starts in Do (C) major and continues in Sol (G) major.



QR 7.5

<https://youtu.be/iHwTrWzMaUs>

7.5. «Polka no skolas laikiem»

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a mandolin tablature line (top) and a standard musical notation line (bottom). The time signature is 2/4. The first system is marked with a first ending bracket (1.) and contains four measures. The second system is marked with a second ending bracket (2.) and contains four measures. The second ending begins with a key signature change to one sharp (F#), indicating a shift to G major. The tablature uses numbers 0-5 to indicate fret positions, and the standard notation uses a treble clef and a G-clef for the mandolin.

It can occur that one of parts sounds in minor. We will talk about minor in the next chapter.





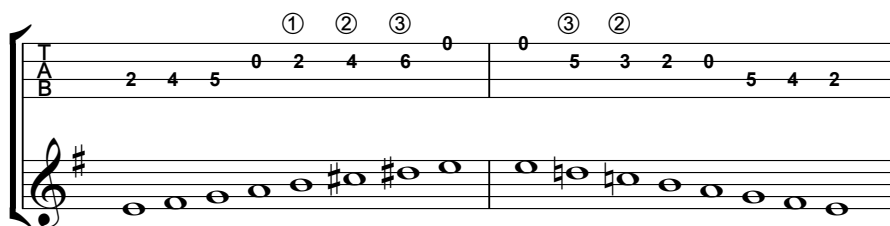
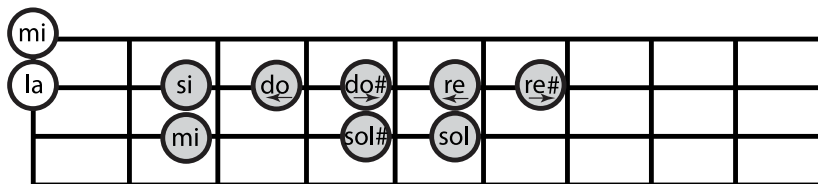
Eighth step. Chromatic sounds

Minor and chromatic sounds. Tremolo

In Latvian traditional instrumental music, melodies in minor are not widespread, but without them, repertoire of good folk musician is not complete. Dances and romances in minor usually are connected to the influence of Russian music. Similar to melodies in major, folk musicians usually chose free-string tonalities, which are simpler – Mi (E) minor, also La (A) and Re (D) minors. The peculiarity of the minor is that depending on a form of the scale the 6th and 7th grades can be raised. This means that particular sounds in up-going and down-going scale have to be played in different positions. Now, even playing in basic position, you will have to work on two contiguous frets with one finger.

8.1. Melodic Mi (E) minor

QR 8.1
<https://youtu.be/WtKW6f94Wm8>



In the scheme, the positions of the relevant sounds in up-going scales are indicated with an arrow to the right, and in down-going – to the left. Above the notes and figures, there is fingering written. Similarly to previous tonalities, the minor can be extended in both directions from the basic octave. If necessary, you can find these sounds on your own using the fingerboard tab included in addendum.





“Padespaņ” is a dance from 19th Century Russia, and different versions of it are known in all the countries of our region. One of the most beautiful “Latvian” “Padespaņ” melodies has been written down in Vandzene.

8.2. «Vandzenes Padespaņ»

QR 8.2
<https://youtu.be/AFuyvuySjkk>



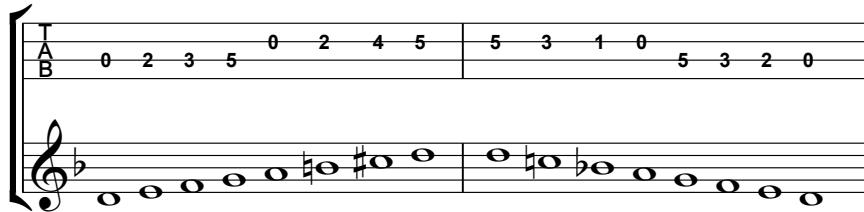
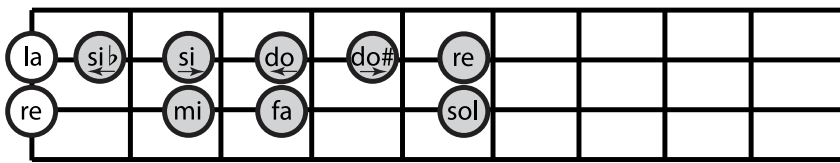
Pay attention that in the penultimate bar after the first note Mi (E), there is a caesura – a small rest. The following eight-notes should be played lighter, as an ornament.

The same as fingerings of Re (D) and Sol (G) majors can be used for learning new tonalities, the fingering of the basic octave of Mi (E) minor, when played on the 4th string, creates La (A) minor, and on 2nd string – Si (H) minor.

Likewise, you can use the fingering of Re (D) minor to play Sol (G) minor starting from the free 4th string and to play La (A) minor from the 2nd string.



8.3. Melodic Re (D) minor



“Zied Zilas Puķes Meža Malā” was one of my grandmother’s favorite songs. More than hundred years ago, during the World War 1, it was sung by Latvian Riflemen.

QR 8.3
<https://youtu.be/MDc2-jYfhh8>



8.4. «Zied zilas puķes»

Note – if there are 3 notes in the upbeat (as in this melody), start playing upstroke. Refer to the addendum for other melodies un minor.

QR 8.4
<https://youtu.be/Q-x9JluteD8>



Chromatic sounds – sounds that are “outside” the tonality – is not a rarity in melodies in major as well. They can be often seen in the “Hits” of the beginning of the 20th Century – song and dance melodies that have folklorized and now create the newest layer of our folk music. Playing these



melodies it is necessary to deviate from standard fingerings and to find the best solution for each situation. Sometimes it is useful to change the positions, but sometimes – to slide to the next fret with the same finger.

The song “O, Izabella” came into Latvia in 1940ties, but unlikely to many other melodies from that time, it is still popular.

8.5. «O, Izabella»

QR 8.5
<https://youtu.be/ttLJ03YLQJM>



Playing such melodies, the long notes are filled with smaller rhythmical values – as described in the third step. Instead of rhythmical patterns you can use tremolo. It is considered to be one of the most characteristic mandolin playing techniques; often academic textbooks of mandolin play start exactly with this technique. According to the written evidence, traditional players in Latvia almost have not used tremolo; nevertheless, playing newer repertoire, this technique is quite useful and it most probably was used in city style playing.

For tremolo, it is important that the plectrum is held properly and the base of the palm is engaged in playing. We



talked about that in the first chapters of this book; if you followed the guidance, tremolo will not cause headache to you. Playing tremolo on mandolin, you fill each long note with thirty-second notes. This creates impression of an un-interrupted sound. Playing tremolo for a longer time can be exhausting; therefore, at the beginning, it is recommended to switch between shorter tremolo sounds and usual long sounds. You can practice with all the scales you have learned so far.

8.6. Exercises for tremolo

QR 8.6
<https://youtu.be/iAHAGT2xIfI>



The image shows two musical exercises for tremolo on a mandolin. Each exercise is presented in two staves: a mandolin staff and a treble clef staff. The mandolin staff shows fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 5) and the treble staff shows the corresponding notes with tremolo markings. The exercises are in 2/4 time and D major.

Ensure that the first note after the tremolo is completely connected with the fast sounds. You can use such tremolo for varying sounds of the melody as shown in example 8.5 (with small print notes).





This is the end of our step by step book. If you have put enough effort in learning all the study material, the repertoire of the traditional music will not be a problem for you. Furthermore, different playing techniques will let you to feel self-confident when playing with friends or participating in a folk ensemble or music group. All you need is continued playing to improve accuracy, coordination and finger dexterity. The last melody in this chapter, "Makendūze", is great for this purpose. Play this dance melody as an exercise, increasing the tempo as much as possible.



QR 8.7

<https://youtu.be/j93NYn6l5m8>

8.7. «Makendūze»

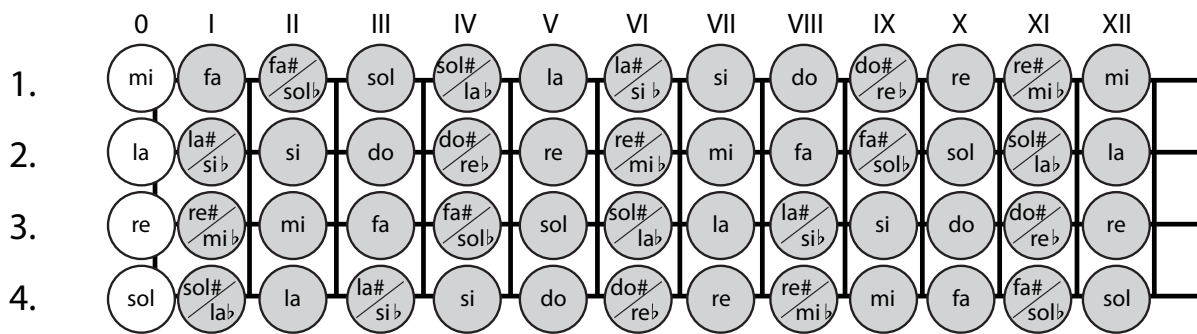
The musical score for «Makendūze» is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a mandolin tablature line (labeled T and B) and a standard musical notation line (treble clef, key signature of one sharp, 2/4 time signature). The first system contains 8 measures of music. The second system contains 8 measures, with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) indicated by brackets and first/second endings above the tablature line. The first ending leads back to the beginning of the second system, and the second ending concludes the piece.





Addendums

1. The fretboard scheme with positions for playing all sounds



Musical notation for the fretboard scheme, showing four staves (1-4) with notes and accidentals corresponding to the fretboard diagram above.





2. Tuning and adjustment of the instrument

The player must know how to set instrument's technical tuning. This should be done before playing the instrument for the first time, when strings are changed or whenever there is doubt about instrument's tune. First, after tuning the instrument, you have to check octaves by slightly pressing the string on its middle point (approximately, the 12th fret). If the string is not completely pressed, you will get a natural harmonic that is one octave higher than free string. Both the harmonic and free string should have the same pitch. If the harmonic is too high, the bridge should be moved away from the fingerboard. If the harmonic is too low, the bridge should be moved towards the fingerboard. Second, you have to compare octaves/unisons between the strings. The 1st string pressed on the 5th fret makes an octave with the 2nd string. The 2nd string pressed on the 5th fret makes an octave with the 3rd string, etc. Consequently, the 2nd string pressed on the 7th fret makes a unison with the first string, etc. If there is no consonance between these pitches (that can occur when the fingerboard has deformed), you need to find the optional tuning between the fifths of the free strings, octaves, and unisons to acquire acceptable tuning even if it is not precise.





3. Estonian and Lithuanian music materials

First Step.

«Lelenderis», a popular traditional dance from Zemaitija, Lithuania

↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑

«Kupparimuori», «Kupparimuori», Kuusalu Parish, Estonia

↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓

7

«Targa rehealune», Muhu Parish, Estonia



Second step

«Savikoja venelane», a popular dance melody, Estonia

Musical notation for «Savikoja venelane». The score consists of two systems. The first system shows a mandolin tablature with fret numbers (2 2 0 3, 2 2 2 2, 0 0 5 3, 2 2 2 2) and a corresponding treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The second system continues the tablature (0 5 3 2, 0 0 0 0, 5 3 2 0, 5 5 5 5) and the treble clef staff.

«Ėjo gudas per keimaitį», a polka melody, Lithuania

Musical notation for «Ėjo gudas per keimaitį». The score consists of two systems. The first system shows a mandolin tablature with fret numbers (5 2 2 2, 2 5 5 5 5, 5 3 3 3, 3 2 2 2 2) and a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. Above the first two measures of the tablature are arrows indicating fingerings (up and down). The second system continues the tablature (3 0 5 3, 3 2 2, 5 5 0 0, 5 3 5, 3 3 5 5, 2 2 2) and the treble clef staff, with more fingering arrows above the first measure.

«Dustaras», a dance for couples from Lithuania Minor

Musical notation for «Dustaras». The score consists of two systems. The first system shows a mandolin tablature with fret numbers (5 5 5 5 2 5, 0 0 2 3 0, 5 2, 3 0, 2 5, 0 0 2 3 0, 5 5) and a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The second system continues the tablature (3 3, 3 0 5, 2 2, 2 3 2, 0 0, 0 2 3, 2 2 0 0, 5 5) and the treble clef staff.



«Malūnėlis», a traditional dance from Aukštaitija, Lithuania

↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ 0 0 0 0 0 5 3 2 3 5 3 2 0

A B

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 3 2 0 5 0 0 0 0 0 5 3 2 3 5 3 2 0



Third step

«Studentų valsas», a popular melody, Lithuania

④ ③

A B

7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 3 2 0 5 2 5 2 2 2 0 5 0 2 3 3

2 2 2 2 2 0 2 3 3 3 3 3 2 3 5 5 5 5 5 0 2 3 3



«Tam ta tedri», Kaunas County, Lithuania

Musical score for «Tam ta tedri», Kaunas County, Lithuania. The score is written for mandolin in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of two systems. The first system has six measures of tablature and corresponding melody. The second system has two first endings, each with two measures of tablature and melody. The first ending leads back to the beginning of the piece, and the second ending concludes the piece.

«Kui sain mina aastaid kakskümmend üks», a popular folk song, Estonia

Musical score for «Kui sain mina aastaid kakskümmend üks», a popular folk song, Estonia. The score is written for mandolin in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of two systems. The first system has four measures of tablature with fingerings indicated by arrows above the notes, and corresponding melody. The second system starts at measure 6 and has four measures of tablature and melody.



«Valts», a dance melody, Estonia

The first system of music for «Valts» consists of a mandolin part and a vocal part. The mandolin part is written on a six-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a sequence of fret numbers: 5, 3, 2, 0, 5, 5, 0, 5, 2, 0, 5, 3, 2, 2, 5. Above the staff, arrows indicate fingerings: a downward arrow above the first '5', an upward arrow above the '3', a downward arrow above the '2', an upward arrow above the '0', and a downward arrow above the first '5'. The vocal part is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a 3/4 time signature. It contains a melody of quarter and half notes with a repeat sign at the end.

A small musical notation diagram showing a sequence of notes on a five-line staff: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4.

A small musical notation diagram showing a sequence of notes on a five-line staff: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5.

The second system of music for «Valts» continues the mandolin and vocal parts. The mandolin part has fret numbers: 2, 5, 3, 2, 0, 2, 4, 2, 0, 2, 0, 5, 5, 0, 5, 5. It includes first and second endings, indicated by '1.' and '2.' above the staff. The vocal part continues the melody with a repeat sign at the end.

A small musical notation diagram showing a sequence of notes on a five-line staff: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5.

A small musical notation diagram showing a sequence of notes on a five-line staff: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5.



Fourth step

Polka, Kirbla parish, Estonia

The first system of music for «Polka» consists of a mandolin part and a vocal part. The mandolin part is written on a six-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It features a sequence of fret numbers: 5, 2, 3, 5, 2, 5, 0, 0, 0, 5, 0, 0, 2, 4, 5, 5, 5. The vocal part is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes with a repeat sign at the end.

The second system of music for «Polka» continues the mandolin and vocal parts. The mandolin part has fret numbers: 5, 2, 4, 5, 2, 0, 4, 0, 0, 0, 4, 2, 0, 4, 5, 5, 5. A '5' is written above the first measure of the mandolin part. The vocal part continues the melody with a repeat sign at the end.



«Birgolio valsas», a traditional melody from Zemaitija, Lithuania

1. 2.

1. 2.

«Kolmõpaari-tands», a dance for three couples, Urvaste Parish, Estonia

8

13



Fifth step

«Inglisjakk», a first part of a dance for multiple couples, Haaldemeeste Parish, Estonia

Musical score for «Inglisjakk». The score consists of two staves. The top staff is a tablature for a mandolin, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) and a sequence of notes: 0 0 0 0 | 2 2 4 6 | 0 0 0 0 | 2 2 4 6 | 4 4 4 5 4 | 4 2 2 | 2 2 2 4 2 | 2 0 0. The bottom staff is a standard musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes.

«Kevade valss», a popular folk song, Estonia

Musical score for «Kevade valss». The score consists of two staves. The top staff is a tablature for a mandolin, showing fret numbers (0, 5, 7, 9, 10) and a sequence of notes: 0 | 5 5 2 0 5 | 5 7 5 0 | 5 5 2 0 5 | 5 5 5. The bottom staff is a standard musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 3/8 time, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes. There are two first endings (1.) and two second endings (2.) indicated above the tablature.

«Padichataras», a traditional melody From Aukstaitija, Lithuania

Musical score for «Padichataras». The score consists of two staves. The top staff is a tablature for a mandolin, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 5, 6) and a sequence of notes: 5 4 2 0 | 5 5 4 2 2 0 | 5 5 4 2 2 0 | 5 5 4 2 2 0. The bottom staff is a standard musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes. A '5' is written above the first measure of the second staff.



«Visos žuvys ežere plauko», a violin melody, Lithuania

Musical score for the violin melody «Visos žuvys ežere plauko». The score is presented in two systems, each with a mandolin tablature line (A/B) and a standard musical notation line (treble clef, key signature of one sharp, 6/8 time signature). The first system contains the first two measures of the piece. The second system contains the next four measures, including a first and second ending. The tablature includes various fret numbers (0-10) and fingerings (1-4) indicated by circled numbers. The musical notation includes notes, rests, and phrasing slurs.



Sixth step

«Siiripolka», Kolga-Jaani Parish, Estonia

Musical score for the violin melody «Siiripolka». The score is presented in two systems, each with a mandolin tablature line (A/B) and a standard musical notation line (treble clef, key signature of one sharp, 2/4 time signature). The first system contains the first four measures of the piece. The second system contains the next four measures, including a first and second ending. The tablature includes various fret numbers (0-5) and fingerings (1-4) indicated by circled numbers. The musical notation includes notes, rests, and phrasing slurs.



«Paduškele paduškele», a traditional melody, Lithuania

Musical score for «Paduškele paduškele», a traditional melody from Lithuania. The score is written for mandolin in 2/4 time, key of D major. It consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The mandolin part is shown with tablature above the staff. The tablature for the first system is: 3 2 0 | 3 2 0 | 5 0 2 3 | 5 5 | 0 3 5 3 2 | 3 2 0 | 0 3 2 0 | 5 5. The second system continues the melody with tablature: 5 0 | 5 5 5 | 5 0 2 3 | 5 5. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

«Obelytė», a traditional dance, Lithuania

Musical score for «Obelytė», a traditional dance from Lithuania. The score is written for mandolin in 2/4 time, key of D major. It consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The mandolin part is shown with tablature above the staff. The tablature for the first system is: 5 0 | 5 0 2 3 | 5 5 5 | 5 0 2 3 | 5 5. The second system continues the melody with tablature: 0 0 | 5 3 2 0 | 0 0 5 3 | 2 0 5. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

«Minu isa oli kuldimuna lõikaja», a popular folk song, Estonia

Musical score for «Minu isa oli kuldimuna lõikaja», a popular folk song from Estonia. The score is written for mandolin in 2/4 time, key of D major. It consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The mandolin part is shown with tablature above the staff. The tablature for the first system is: 0 0 | 5 4 5 | 0 2 0 2 3 | 0 5 5 2 | 5 3 3 0 | 3 2 2 0 0 | 5 4 5 | 0 2 0 2 3 | 0 5 5 2. The second system continues the melody with tablature: 5 3 2 0 | 5 0 0 | 5 5 3 2 | 5 5 3 2 | 0 0 2 3 2 3 5. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical score for «Minu isa oli kuldimuna lõikaja», a popular folk song from Estonia. This system continues the score from the previous system. It features a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The mandolin part is shown with tablature above the staff. The tablature for this system is: 5 3 2 0 | 5 0 0 | 5 5 3 2 | 5 5 3 2 | 0 0 2 3 2 3 5. Above the second system, there are two first endings marked '1.' and '2.'. The first ending has a double bar line and repeat dots. The second ending has a double bar line and repeat dots. Above the second ending, there are circled numbers 2, 1, 0, 3, 3, 2, 1, 0, 3, 3, 2, 1. Above the first ending, there are circled numbers 2, 1, 0, 3, 3, 2, 1, 0, 3, 3, 2, 1. Above the second ending, there is an upward arrow pointing to the first circled number 2. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical score for «Minu isa oli kuldimuna lõikaja», a popular folk song from Estonia. This system continues the score from the previous system. It features a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The mandolin part is shown with tablature above the staff. The tablature for this system is: 0 5 5 | 3 5 5 3 2 | 3 5 5 3 2 | 0 0 2 3 2 0 | 5 2 5. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Seventh step

«Tammeke sa matal puu», Sangaste Parish, Estonia

Musical score for «Tammeke sa matal puu». The score consists of two systems. Each system has a mandolin tablature line (labeled T and B) and a standard musical staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system contains four measures of music. The second system contains four measures, with the third measure changing to a 3/4 time signature.

«Kalvių polka», a traditional melody, Lithuania

Musical score for «Kalvių polka». The score consists of two systems. Each system has a mandolin tablature line (labeled T and B) and a standard musical staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system contains four measures of music, with first and second endings indicated by '1.' and '2.'. The second system contains four measures of music, also with first and second endings.

«Šeinis», a melody of a dance from Zemaitija, Lithuania

Musical score for «Šeinis». The score consists of two systems. Each system has a mandolin tablature line (labeled T and B) and a standard musical staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system contains four measures of music. The second system contains four measures of music, with first and second endings indicated by '1.' and '2.'.

«Kaaratsim», Hargla Parish, Estonia

Musical score for «Kaaratsim» in 2/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of two systems. Each system has a mandolin part (TAB) and a treble clef part. The first system has two endings. The second system also has two endings. The mandolin part uses fret numbers 0-5. The treble clef part includes a key signature change to D major in the second system.



Eighth step

«Šleiva kreiva karvė», a traditional dance, Lithuania

Musical score for «Šleiva kreiva karvė» in 2/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of two systems. Each system has a mandolin part (TAB) and a treble clef part. The first system has a circled '1' above the first two fret numbers. The second system has a circled '1' above the first two fret numbers. The mandolin part uses fret numbers 0-5. The treble clef part includes a key signature change to D major in the second system.

«Kord linnatänaval ma üksi kõndisin», a popular Russian song, Estonia

Musical score for «Kord linnatänaval ma üksi kõndisin» in 4/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of two systems. Each system has a mandolin part (TAB) and a treble clef part. The first system has circled numbers 1-1-1, 3, 1-1-1, and 1-1-1 above the fret numbers. The second system has two endings. The mandolin part uses fret numbers 0-6. The treble clef part includes a key signature change to D major in the second system.

«Karoobuška», Setomaa Region, Estonia

Musical score for «Karoobuška» in 4/4 time, featuring mandolin tablature and a treble clef staff. The piece includes two first endings and a second ending.

First System:

Tablature: 2 2 2 2 3 5 0 | 0 0 0 0 2 3 2 0 | 0 0 1 0 5 3 2 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 3 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Second System:

Tablature: 5 | 1 5 3 1 | 0 5 3 2 0 | 0 1 0 5 3 2 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

«Šapnagių polka», a traditional instrumental melody, Lithuania

Musical score for «Šapnagių polka» in 2/4 time, featuring mandolin tablature and a treble clef staff. The piece includes two first endings and a second ending.

First System:

Tablature: 5 2 5 5 2 | 5 3 3 2 3 | 5 2 5 5 2 | 5 3 3 2 0 | 5 3 3

Second System:

Tablature: 2 5 2 5 2 5 | 3 0 3 0 3 0 | 5 2 5 2 5 2 | 3 3 3 2 0 5 | 3 3 3 2 2



«Mandoliini polka», a popular instrumental melody, Estonia

Musical score for «Mandoliini polka», a popular instrumental melody from Estonia. The score is presented in three systems, each consisting of a mandolin tablature line and a corresponding treble clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.

System 1:

- Tablature: 0 0 | 0 5 5 5 5 5 | 5 2 2 2 2 2 | 2 5 3 2 | 3 2 0 | 0 0 | 0 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 3 2 0
- Treble staff: Melody line starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes, quarter notes, and eighth notes.

System 2:

- Tablature: 1. 2 0 | 5 0 0 | 2 0 | 5 0 2 | 2. 3 3 3 2 3 5 | 0 3 0 3 | 2 2 2 0 2 3 | 5 2 5 2
- Treble staff: Melody line with first and second endings. The first ending leads to the second ending.

System 3:

- Tablature: 3 3 2 0 0 | 5 | 4 5 4 2 0 | 6 0 2 | 0 3 2 0 | 1. 5 5 5 0 2 | 2. 5 5 5
- Treble staff: Melody line with first and second endings. The first ending leads to the second ending.



Ilmārs Pumpurs

TRADITIONAL PLAY OF THE MANDOLIN. A SELF-STUDY BOOK

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***We are glad to share our self-study book series
Play of Traditional Instruments of Baltic Region
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