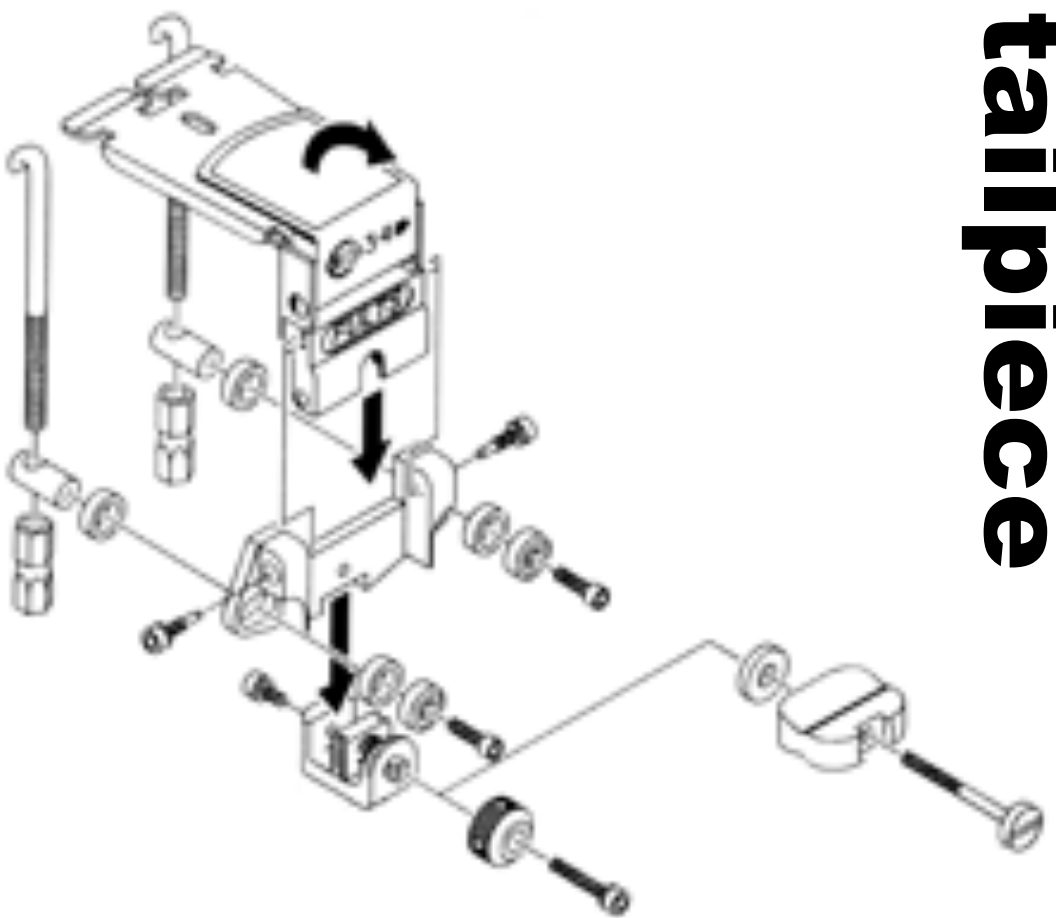
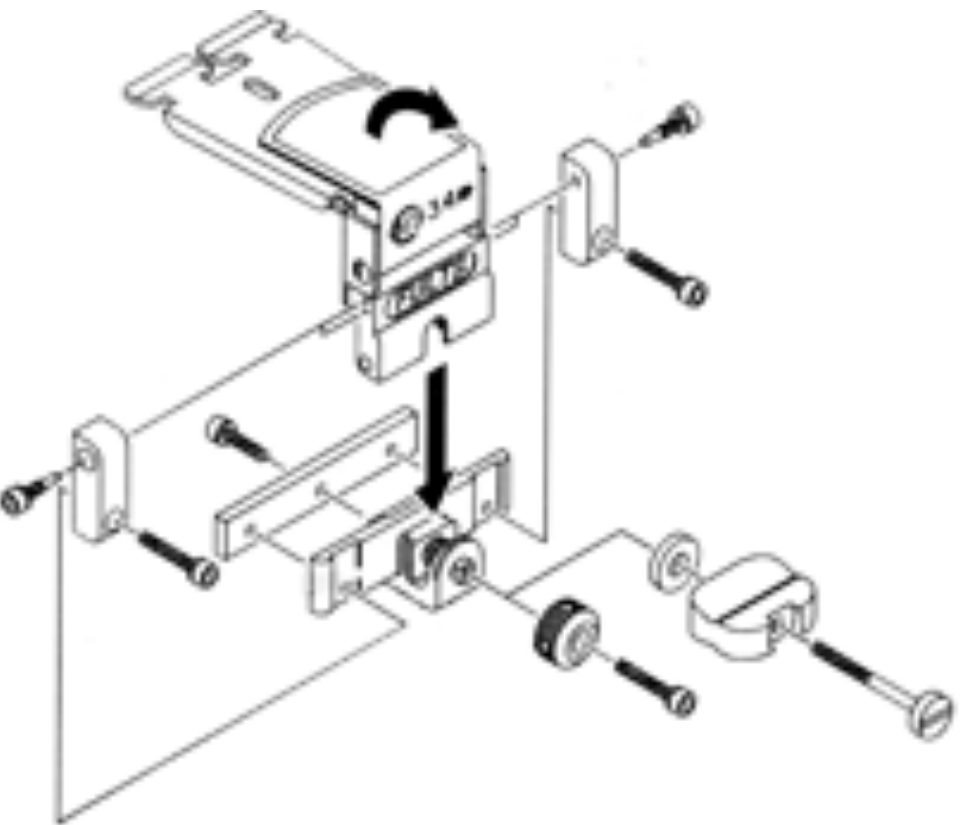


The Banjoists' Broadsheet



The FULTS tailpiece

No 229 December 2011

The Banjo's Roots, Reconsidered

by Greg Allen

"MY FATHER WAS BORN WITH THIS INSTRUMENT," Laemouahuma Daniel Jatta says. "This is part of our history." Jatta, 55, is from Gambia, a member of the Jola people. He's holding an akonting: a three-stringed instrument with a long neck and a body made from a calabash gourd with a goat skin stretched over it. Jatta's father and cousins played the instrument, but he didn't think much about it himself until 1974, when he was visiting the U.S. from Gambia, attending a junior college in South Carolina. He recalls watching a football game on TV with some of the other students. "When the football ended, there was this music program from Tennessee, and they called it country music," Jatta says. "I watched the program and saw the modern banjo being used. And the sound just sounded like my father's akonting." That experience put Jatta on a journey to explore the banjo's connections with the instrument he grew up with.

The banjo came to America with the slaves, and musicologists have long looked in West Africa for its predecessors. Much of the speculation has centred on the ngonni and the xalam, two hide-covered stringed instruments from West Africa that bear some resemblance to the banjo. But they're just two of more than 60 similar plucked stringed instruments found in the region.

Over the next two decades, while he pursued undergraduate and graduate degrees in the U.S., Jatta learned everything he could about the origins of the banjo. Eventually, he reached a conclusion. "Among all the instruments ever mentioned as a prototype of the banjo from the African region," he says, "the akonting to me has more similarities, more objective similarities than any other that has ever been mentioned."

For one thing, the akonting looks like a banjo. It has a long neck that, like those of early banjos, extends through the instrument's gourd body. It has a movable wooden bridge that, as in banjos, holds the strings over the skin head.

But for Jatta and other banjo scholars, most convincing is how the akonting is played. Players use the index finger to strike down on one of the long strings, and the thumb sounds the akonting's short string as the hand moves back upward. When Jatta looked at early banjo instruction books from the mid-1800s, he found that they described an almost identical playing style.

"What struck me was when they mentioned the ball of the thumb and the nail of the index or middle finger, I knew straight away my father was using this same style," Jatta says. "This was never a surprise to me, because I have seen this since I was

5 years old."

That early style of playing predates the three-finger style used today by nearly all bluegrass banjo players. Something similar is still used by folk and country musicians who play in a style sometimes called frailing or clawhammer.

After doing 10 years of research supported by a Swedish university, in 2000, Jatta presented his findings first in Stockholm, and then a few months later at a banjo collectors' convention in Boston. Greg Adams is a banjoist and graduate student in ethnomusicology at the University of Maryland; he says Jatta's findings on the akonting have forced many scholars to rethink their assumptions about where to look for information on the banjo's ancestors.

"A lot of the emphasis up to that point was focused on griot traditions, which is extremely important as part of the conversation as we look to West Africa," Adams says. "But what the akonting did was open up a new line of discourse."

The ngonni and xalam are instruments typically played by griots — praise singers who enjoy special status in many West African tribes. Adams says the akonting is a folk instrument, played not by griots, but by ordinary people in the Jola tribe. In terms of which tradition has the most direct connection to the banjo, Adams says it's a mistake to think of it as an either/or proposition: "Each of these traditions deserves to be explored, experienced, examined on their own terms."

Jatta plans to continue his work, documenting the akonting musical tradition and its connections to the banjo and other areas of Jola culture, through a research and education centre he's founding back home in Gambia. To hear the music as well, go to <http://www.npr.org/2011/08/23/139880625/the-banjos-roots-reconsidered>

--==<Jobsworths agogo>===-- Wall Street Journal August 26, 2011

Federal agents swooped in on Gibson Guitar raiding factories and offices in Memphis and Nashville, seizing several pallets of wood, electronic files and guitars. The Feds are keeping mum, but Gibson's chairman and CEO, Henry Juskiewicz, defended his company's manufacturing policies, accusing the Justice Department of bullying the company. "The wood the government seized Wednesday is from a Forest Stewardship Council certified supplier," he said, suggesting the Feds are using the aggressive enforcement of overly broad laws to make the company cry uncle.

In 2009 the Feds seized several guitars and pallets of wood from a Gibson factory, and both sides have been wrangling over the goods in a case with the delightful name "United States of America v.

Ebony Wood in Various Forms." The question in the first raid seemed to be whether Gibson had been buying illegally harvested hardwoods from protected forests, such as the Madagascar ebony that makes for such lovely fret boards. And if Gibson did knowingly import illegally harvested ebony from Madagascar, that wouldn't be a negligible offence. Peter Lowry, ebony and rosewood expert at the Missouri Botanical Garden, calls the Madagascar wood trade the "equivalent of Africa's blood diamonds." But with the new raid, the government seems to be questioning whether some wood sourced from India met every regulation. Musicians who play vintage guitars and other instruments made of environmentally protected materials are worried the authorities may be coming for them next. If you are the lucky owner of a 1920s Martin guitar, it may well be made, in part, of Brazilian rosewood. Cross an international border with an instrument made of that now-restricted wood, and you'd better have correct and complete documentation proving the age of the instrument. Otherwise, you could lose it to a zealous customs agent—not to mention face fines and prosecution.

John Thomas, a law professor at Quinnipiac University and a blues and ragtime guitarist, says "there's a lot of anxiety, and it's well justified." Once upon a time, he would have taken one of his vintage guitars on his travels. Now, "I don't go out of the country with a wooden guitar."

The tangled intersection of international laws is enforced through a thicket of paperwork. Recent revisions to 1900's Lacey Act of the USA require that anyone crossing the U.S. border declare every bit of flora or fauna being brought into the country. One is under "strict liability" to fill out the paperwork—and without any mistakes. It's not enough to know that the body of your old guitar is made of spruce and maple: What's the bridge made of? If it's ebony, do you have the paperwork to show when and where that wood was harvested and when and where it was made into a bridge? Is the nut holding the strings at the guitar's headstock bone, or could it be ivory? "Even if you have no knowledge—despite Herculean efforts to obtain it—that some piece of your guitar, no matter how small, was obtained illegally, you lose your guitar forever," Prof. Thomas has written. "Oh, and you'll be fined \$250 for that false (or missing) information in your Lacey Act Import Declaration."

Consider the recent experience of Pascal Vieillard, whose Atlanta-area company, A-440 Pianos, imported several antique Bösendorfers. Mr. Vieillard asked officials at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species how to fill out the correct paperwork—which simply encouraged them to alert U.S. Customs to give his shipment added scrutiny.

There was never any question that the instruments were old enough to have grandfathered ivory keys. But Mr. Vieillard didn't have his paperwork straight when two dozen federal agents came calling. Facing criminal charges that might have put him in prison for years, Mr. Vieillard pleaded guilty to a misdemeanour count of violating the Lacey Act, and was given a \$17,500 fine and three years probation.

Given the risks, why don't musicians just settle for the safety of carbon fibre? Some do—when concert pianist Jeffrey Sharkey moved to England two decades ago, he had Steinway replace the ivories on his piano with plastic.

Still, musicians cling to the old materials. Last year, Dick Boak, director of artist relations for C.F. Martin & Co., complained about the difficulty of getting elite guitarists to switch to instruments made from sustainable materials. "Surprisingly, musicians, who represent some of the most savvy, ecologically minded people around, are resistant to anything about changing the tone of their guitars," he said.

You could mark that up to hypocrisy—artsy do-gooders only too eager to tell others what kind of light bulbs they have to buy won't make sacrifices when it comes to their own passions. Then again, maybe it isn't hypocrisy to recognise that art makes claims significant enough to compete with environmentalists' agendas.

[thanx to Ulf Jagfors]

---<Letters>---

Hello Julian,

Once again a most enjoyable experience to read the Broadsheet! And I do share all your feelings regarding a vintage Paramount as compared to the newer instruments.

As you might be aware, I had sold a number of "F" models over time, because they never seemed to live up to my expectations – not as badly as those "Super Paramounts", but still. My involvement with the plectrum banjo led to parting with quite a number of tenors. As you might be aware, the same (middle to higher grade) make and model of a plectrum banjo costs about twice as much as the comparable tenor, because fewer than one in ten built in those days were plectrums. This might be different for British makes, as the plectrum banjo was equally popular in your country. Also, not being rich, plus my intention to play all of my instruments frequently (that's why I don't like to be called a collector), made it appear sensible to weed out some instruments when a new one was to be acquired. I guess it was my better understanding of Reser and how he worked, which not only led me to taking up the plectrum, but to look for tone over appearance (as a wannabe musician one should be

ashamed that this attitude is not normal!). Much to the amazement, even frustration of some (including Buddy Wachter) I chipped in my Paramount Art-craft, which sounded and looked great, but could not match those "F's". As it turned out, all of the Paramounts I have left (a pair of Leaders and a pair of F's, plus a model E melody banjo) have serial numbers below 9,000. I had never paid any attention to serial numbers, only that they would match, but this is what my ear led me to.

Another item of "variability" I found with Paramounts is that some have "a temper"; suddenly they sound dull and it takes hours of playing until they come to life again. This is one of the fortes of OMEs, they always sound as they used to, no matter what the circumstances. Unfortunately, those F's didn't come with calf skins. I am still reluctant to entertain this trouble with more than a dozen instruments. The closest I came was a Remo Renaissance head, which sounds terrific and close to calf skin on my Vega Vox plectrum. The Renaissances don't look as nice, though.

Thanks for doing the work of transcribing the Billy Bell number. It is very pleasant.

Regards,
Juergen Kulus

Dear Julian

Thanks again for another good year of the BB. The banjo history articles and anything about the structure, making and repairing are always interesting and fill many gaps in my knowledge and understanding.

Regards
Steve Lister

Dear Julian

I was so sorry to hear of your unhappy adventure in your greenhouse but it is good to read that you are so positive about the recovery process and that you are getting the fingers working again. Keep up the good work!

I have a permanently bent little finger on both hands. It is hereditary and I have been told that such a problem is endemic in people from Scandinavia. I have no idea about my ancestors. Well, the bent little finger is set at about 30 degrees from the horizontal at the centre joint on the finger. It is quite immovable which is bad news for a person who wishes to play a stringed instrument! What is worse is the inability to span more than three frets from a barre with the first finger; it rather gets in the way of the other fingers. It is all tedious and I can empathise with the problems you have of restricted movement! Whenever I mention my finger problem to others they point out that Django Reinhardt had a badly mutilated hand from his involvement in a caravan fire and that he played the guitar - and the banjo - well enough!!

Ah, well, keep practising and working at it.

Best regards
Tom Peckham

----<Playing in the USA>----

I recently visited the USA to speak at a conference, having been asked to give a short concert at the conference dinner. I said that would not be possible in the light of recent revelations concerning musicians having their visa disallowed (for ever!) if they didn't pay the extra fee (\$140, I think) and give a list of places and dates they would be playing. This arrangement is necessary whether or not you are being paid for the gig. The person inviting me didn't believe me when I told him this story, and trailed all the way to his congressman before the story was corroborated. Interestingly, some more detail emerged. It seems that it's OK to play in public so long as the audience has not had to pay to gain admittance. This could be interpreted to mean that it's OK to play in a bar, where the payment is not for admittance but for drinks. Presumably the same holds for restaurants. But it's a fine line. The best solution is to keep the volume down, play only in your hotel room, and don't advertise your little party on FaceBook!

----<The late BB>----

Not "late" in terms of finality, simply in terms of timing. This BB should have been out two months ago, but I have had a fairly horrendous time with meetings at home and abroad. Over the last two months I've been away for 2/3 of the time and being home has devolved into catching up on various domestic jobs. Anyway, nothing much on the horizon now until the end of January, when I'm off to Japan.

----<Tailpieces>----

Although my Gibson Grandad tenor banjo hasn't got the 'presence' of the Paramount F, I expect it to have a powerful tone. I was becoming increasingly disappointed with the overall sound of the Grandad when the tailpiece fell off! Well, not quite on to the floor, but it broke where the metal is bent as it comes over the edge of the bezel. I have always thought that the banjo tailpiece is more of an Achilles heel, and here was the proof! In most instruments it's not a very inspired piece of design. The attachment is frequently very sloppy - a small bolt attached to a bracket on the hoop - and the bent flap of metal is continually subject to vibration from the strings which will eventually cause a fatigue fracture - which is what happened! There are some nice simple ways around these problems. My favourite is the way Weever simply uses string, rather like a violin tailpiece. Since string has no bending stiffness it can't accumulate

fatigue damage and so doesn't break! It is entirely in tension and carries the forces of the strings very effectively. That's fine for gut or nylon strings, but not so good for steel strings which are at a higher tension. Something more robust is needed. The classic 'bear claw' works well because it has a hinge. So the bending forces tend to be taken out. But it's still a bit sloppy and the movement will tend to damp out some of the vibrations of the strings - which may or may not be a Good Thing! So it was with delight that I discovered the Fults tailpiece, independently recommended to me by Phil Davidson. The sketches on the cover of this BB, taken from Fults leaflet, show both the excellent design of the tailpiece and, through the quality of the drawing, shows that this is an item designed by an engineer. Although it looks complex, with all the bits and pieces and screws and such, when it's put together the overall design is very simple. It relies for its stiffness on a combination of its massive design (no bending fatigue here - the strings are attached to massive rods which extend under the string plate towards the bridge, both strengthening the bent area and steering the main forces away from it) and its attachment to the brackets which pull the vellum down - probably the sturdiest bits of the banjo. There are two ways of making this attachment - either a collar slipped over two adjacent brackets or a massive clip. There is full adjustment up and down, and all movements are locked once you are sure everything is in its proper place. Although this tailpiece is a bit expensive, it is extremely good in practice. The tone of the Grandad immediately improved over the entire frequency range, and it now keeps its tuning much better over time. The tailpiece looks good, too, if that is an important criterion for you. More information on <http://www.banjotailpiece.com>. Fults Banjo Tailpiece P. O. Box 155, Savoy, IL 61874 phone 217-351-3550

---<Backwell 2011>---

I turned up part way through the afternoon, having stopped off in Bristol to pick up my 'new' Paramount 'F' which had just been refretted. I dumped a load of music on the table (free to all-comers) and listened to the music. It was pleasant meeting old friends again. I also picked up a copy of BMG (new style edited by Clem Vickery) which I hadn't seen since the first issue.

Time for me to play something and I screwed up big time! The problem was a combination of new frets which were rather larger and deeper than I had expected, and the rather humid atmosphere in the hall. My fingers were glued to the fret-board! Very embarrassing. I forget what I finally ended up playing, but I was not very satisfied with it.

Things cheered up with the evening at the pub. Multiple F&C and multiple beers eased away the pain of performance and we duetted and trioted with abandon. I'm ashamed to say that it was the first time I had attended the post-concert shindig, and I realised what I had been missing. Thanks to Brian Dingley and his team for the organisation.

---<The Push Stroke>---

Well, it could be a way of initiating a nasty medical condition, but in banjo terms (especially with plectrum playing, though I suspect it could also be a type of apoyando stroke in finger style playing - you tell me!) it's the continuation of a stroke on one string to the next one, up or down depending on the initial direction of the stroke. Reser uses it in several of his compositions, notably *Lollipops*, *Fair and Warmer*, and *Ginger Snaps*. Bud Wachter (and Django Reinhardt) use it as an arpeggio device, fingering a chord shape then pushing the plectrum across the strings (something which I find incredibly hard to do evenly), often changing the chord shape up (or down) the neck to produce an effect rather like a harp in terms of the range of the arpeggio produced (I wonder if this is the technique that Brent Hayes used? He was often reported as being able to play harp solos). I've recently been exploring the technique as a way of playing fast triplets in Irish music, and include some examples in the musical supplement to this BB. The technique here is to play a down stroke on a string (2nd, 3rd or 4th), push the plectrum across to the next string (1st, 2nd or 3rd, respectively), striking this second string with another down stroke, then following with an upstroke. This can produce a very clean and quick triplet, much easier than the sort normally found in Irish music. I also think it's more musical, since it's more versatile than the 'standard' Irish triplet, which is most often just repeating a single note.

In order to illustrate this, and provide some entertainment, I hope, I have written out a couple of versions of *The Moving Cloud* (not to be confused with 'Passing Cloud', a rather expensive brand of cigarette). Unfortunately the program I use to write the music can't put enough detail in to the score, so I'll have to give some relatively detailed notes.

The first 24 bars are a fairly standard, unadorned, way of playing this piece. There are some triplets in the second strain (bars 9 to 18), and these are worth looking at. Bars 9 and 10 are identical, and the first triplet in each is played the same way - 7th fret on the 3rd string (down stroke) with the plectrum pushed on to the second string followed by an upstroke on that string. As with all triplets, the rhythm to be produced can be sung as

THE MOVING CLOUD

TRAD.

TENOR BANJO

The musical score for Tenor Banjo is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piece consists of 45 measures, organized into ten staves. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and features several triplet markings. The score begins with a repeat sign at the start of the first staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the final staff.

DONKEY LAUGH

JOE MORLEY

TENOR BANGO

MODERATO ♩=112

5

10

14

19

24

29

33

38

43

50

A

B

C

D

8VA

WITH REPEAT

CICELY.

HENRY AUSTEN.

BANJO.

5.P.

8.P.

mf

p

Rall.

f

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Turner's Dance Album No. 2". The score is written on 12 staves of music, all in a single system. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff is marked "TRIO." and features a more active melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The subsequent staves contain a variety of musical textures, including block chords, arpeggiated figures, and rhythmic patterns. The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final chord.

“diddley” (we’re into Celtic mouth music now . . .). The following B A and G are all fingered on the 2nd string, so the technique is to fret that string briefly then let it sound open for the next note. The overall effect is of a pedal D with B, A and G superimposed as a separate melody. In bars 11 and 12 the first note of the opening triplet is found at the 9th fret on the 3rd string, timing exactly the same as in the previous two bars. And the following C, B and A are all fingered on the 2nd string, with the D sounding as the open string. So good, so simple.

The second version is written out from bars 25 to 48. The triplets in bars 25 and 26 are played exactly as described above, except that the strings are 4 and 3. Bar 27 is slightly different in the movement of the plectrum is exactly the same, but the 1st string is left open only for the middle note of the triplet; the third note of the triplet is fingered on the first string. A similar move is taken in the middle of bar 31, and in the whole of the third theme in bars 42-48. Bars 33 to 40 are a bit different, in that I have moved the harmony into the minor, which comes out quite effective. This second strain is the most adaptable, in that the notes chosen on the 3rd and 2nd strings can be varied all over the place, retaining the open D as the pedal or drone note against which the others are sounded.

Another fun thing is to slide up to the first note of each triplet from a semitone below. This introduces an extra, and very typical, inflection. The third strain (bars 41 to 48) are still relatively bare of decoration, and you can try adding more triplets or sliding up to various notes ad lib. To start with, take each figure slowly. Learn the overall noise (with the notes of the triplet evenly spaced) and then allow the figure to speed up until ‘diddley’ changes to ‘brrr’.

Of course, the next thing is to apply this technique (which as far as I know, which isn’t very, is not used in Irish banjo playing – you tell me!) to all sorts of other pieces of Irish music.

---<Notes on Donkey Laugh>---

I’m always jealous of the lovely ‘typical’ banjo pieces which have been written for the finger-style instrument, especially Joe Morley’s compositions. I’ve tried to transcribe *Egyptian Princess* but have not managed it yet. However, *Donkey Laugh* has been subdued onto the fingerboard of the tenor banjo without too much problem and I present my effort in this BB. A few explanatory notes are necessary, as found on the original music. In the original version there are several repetitions of a full chord of G major, using all the strings with B and G doubled up. Now way I could do that on the tenor, so I made it a bit more interesting by moving the middle note of the chord, shown at bars 14, 16,

18 etc. Another effect in the original is the ‘buzz’, produced by crossing the bass and third strings over half way down the fret board so that a nasty non-musical sound is produced. I have tried to recreate the same feeling by playing two notes a semitone apart - in 9ths (bar 21, for instance). Here the 3rd and 1st strings are left open and the 2nd and 4th are stopped at the 6th fret. A bit of care is needed to allow the strings to vibrate freely, but a truly nasty sound results! The ‘hee-haw’ of the donkey comes in bar 36, where the two rests should be replaced by a ‘bridge rasp’ - running the plectrum across the strings behind the bridge. The same trick is used in the last note of the penultimate bar, the two previous beat being what Joe calls a ‘vellum tap’ - a relatively delicate sound. We plectrum players prefer the ‘vellum smack’ where the middle finger is flicked open from from the palm.

There are some more subtle things which I find difficult to notate on the music program I use - slurring and snapping (or hammering-on and pulling-off) which allow some limited phrasing, and the odd push-stroke. In bar 31, for instance, the first triplet is played on the 5th and 7th frets of the second string, with the A slurred and the following G snapped. The second triplet in that bar can be played with a push stroke going D-D-U. In bar 32 the triplet is again played with the B slurred and the A reached by snapping back from the B. There are other places in this piece where similar tricks can be used, and you are invited to discover them! They all add to the general texture of the piece, giving it a much softer edge than the standard tenor-banjo offering.

---<BMG revived>---

When I saw the first copy of the revived ‘BMG’ I was really rather critical. For this I received yet more criticism from those who wished the project to survive. For those people, I hope it survives. Perhaps it will. I picked up a copy of the Spring 2010 issue at Backwell. Rather cheekily numbered contiguously with the old BMG, whose internal format is retained, it contains a much greater amount of music than its model, for guitar, Hawaiian guitar, tenor and 5-string banjos, ukulele and mandolin. All these pieces are original, as are the articles, which cover a similarly wide range of subject areas. Overall quality and layout are much improved from the opening issue. For 32 pages the cover price of £5 seems rather steep, but then this is probably a small-circulation periodical. It’s published from Fakenham in Norfolk, and details of subscription are available on <http://www.cliffordessex.net>. Whence you can pay by PayPal. The editor is Clem Vickery.

---<The Resonator>---

For a few years I have been receiving a quarterly magazine – *The Resonator* – from Pittsburg, PA (USA). It's billed as "The Voice of Banjos Unlimited" (a non-profit association of banjo bands dedicated to the preservation of the banjo and its music). And that just about sums up the content. It's for four-string banjos, and has lots of reports on meetings and rallies around the USA with colour photos of the various bands and groups, plus loads of advertisements. The overall voice is very lively, and one has the impression (true, I am sure) that everyone is having just tremendous fun. There are also interviews, a smattering of tutorial notes, and lists of banjo tutors. You can subscribe via the website at <http://www.theresonator.com> and pay by PayPal or cheque. Subscription is of the order of £15 depending on how you pay.

Phil Davidson has MOVED

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Inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement by the BB.

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Nicholas KIRK plectrum banjo 36 Kilpin Hill, Staincliffe, W. Yorks tel 0192 440 2931

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Also a collection of plectrum guitar tutors and music (mostly **Django Reinhardt**). All items are mint or near-mint condition. Available from Julian Vincent, Laburnum Cottage, 48 Frome Road, BATH, BA2 2QB tel 01225 835 076 email j.f.v.vincent@bath.ac.uk

Kevin Scott has the following tenor banjos for sale: Slingerland Troubadour, Epiphone Bandmaster, Paramount Style C, Gibson TB 250, Vega Whyte Laydie, John Grey Chieftain, Bacon & Day No 2 Special, Stromberg Supertone, Reg Baynham, and the following plectrum banjos: Paramount Leader, Paramount Style A.

Kevin:-01932 886538 or 0771 3768673

Email banjokevin@ntlworld.com. Check the web site at <http://www.findajo.co.uk> for some mouth-watering pictures!

Banjo CD from **Sean Moyses**, *My banjo ... and other friends*. An hour of banjo fun with *Bei mir bist du schön*, *The Entertainer*, *King Chanticleer*, *That's my weakness now*, *American Minstrel Medley*, *Whistling Rufus*, *Autumn leaves*, *Lastic*, *Maple Leaf Rag*, *I wish I was back on the farm*, *Tamiami Trail*, *Sunnyside Medley*, *Dr. Jazz*, *Banjo Vamp*, *Midnight in Moscow*, *Stars and stripes forever*, *San and Tiger Rag*. UK customers please post a cheque for \$13 (made to Sean Moyses please) to Jacqui Huggins, 7 St. Edmunds, Mill Lane, Walpole Highway, Wisbech PE14 7QG. Online orders using Paypal are also available via www.seanmoyses.com. *It's banjo time!* CD and Banjo Backing Tracks are still available. Please enquire sean@seanmoyses.com

William BALL's CDs: 'Pompadour' (Morley compositions), 'Humoresque' (various composers) and recently issued 'Just William' (1991 American recordings) and 'More William' (1994 American recordings). £10 each or £18 for two. Prices include postage in the UK. Fred Determann, 5 Nursery Road, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 1NF.

Banjollity CD by John Whitlock's BANJO-RAMA. 20 tracks of jazz, ragtime and some original pieces by John Whitlock. £11.00 (includes p&p) from John at 8 Higher Brimley, Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 8JS, tel 01626 774710.

Harry Reser and The Clicquot Club Eskimos as broadcast in the US in 1951 and never published before. Only a limited number of tape cassettes left selling at €5 plus postage. Also reprint of Harry Reser's 20 Lesson mail course: first published in 1927, 220 pages with all 20 lessons plus some advertising, promotional material and handwritten amendments Reser had used. The price is €20 plus postage. And although the CD is sold out, you can download it in MP3 format for \$9.99 from <http://cdbaby.com/found?allsearch=reser> Jürgen Kulus, Carl-Schmincke-Str. 12, D-71229 Leonberg, Germany, e-mail: juergen@kulus.de

JULES & KEITH play **MORTON TO MOZART** on tenor banjo and piano - a CD featuring tenor banjo pieces by Reser (three of them: *Hen Cackles*, *Wampum* and *Morris Dance* are unavailable elsewhere, and you also get *Crackerjack*, *Heebie-Jeebies* and, of course, *Lollipops*), Mandell (*Get Goin'* and *Taker Your Pick*), Weidt (*My Lady Jazz*), Morton (*Grandpa's Spells* and *The Pearls*), Rags (*Rubber Plant* and *Temptation*), Crantock (*Cockney Capers*) Gershwin (*Rialto Ripples*) and Mozart (*Rondo a la Turca*). Poppy Records, 88 Mount Rd, Bath, Southdown, BA2 1LH

SOFTWARE – if you want to transcribe music with amazing ease and accuracy, go to: <http://www.seventhstring.com/xscribe/download.html> There you will find free software (for 30 days) transcribing music for banjo & other instruments.

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--==<Tail Enders>==--

Jack and the Beanstalk – review

West Yorkshire Playhouse, London

The Guardian, Dec 15th

. . . whenever inspiration threatens to flag in Gail McIntyre's production, the chickens come clucking to the rescue, wielding **banjos** and teaching the audience how to barndance.

Wade Mainer

Country music pioneer

Born: April 21, 1907; Died: September 12, 2011

Wade Mainer, who has died aged 104, was a country music pioneer credited with inventing the two-finger banjo picking style that paved the way for the Bluegrass era.

He was a member of late brother JE Mainer's Mountaineers, one of the most popular sibling duos of the 1930s and made recordings for all the major labels of the day, including RCA in 1935.

Mainer's two-finger style helped make the banjo more prominent in old-time, or early, country music. Using two fingers, as opposed to the downward strumming motion of the "claw hammer" style, allowed him to be more melodic. Born near Asheville, North Carolina, Mainer got his musical start in North Carolina's mountains and later rediscovered it in an industrial Michigan city. Concerned that country music was dying, he left the stage and the South in the early 1950s and moved to Flint, Michigan, to work for General Motors. He played only in church but eventually stopped altogether, putting the banjo under his bed for four years. He returned to music after another musician convinced the born-again Christian he could use his talents to honour God. He said in 1991 that he got back on the circuit in 1970s after country-western star Tex Ritter bumped into one of Mainer's sons.

"Ritter said, 'He's been dead for 15 years, ain't he?'," Mainer said. "A lot of people thought I was dead."

He said at the time many of his friends gave up the traditional mountain music for the faster-paced, more profitable bluegrass style. "This is the only kind of music there is that's good listening and tells a story," he said.

By the early 1950s, Mainer's style was "becoming increasingly dated", and nobody but the biggest stars made much money. But by the time he restarted in the early 1970s, there was a renewed interest in music like his because of the folk revival.

Mainer is survived by his wife Julia, whom he married in 1937, and often performed with him. They had four sons and one daughter as well as two grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. One son died in 1985.

Banjo on the WorldWideWeb

Some fun things out there - not just on YouTube. Try <http://www.homemadebanjo.org.uk>. Not only instructions for making your own banjo (a fairly basic design) but a series of links to unlikely banjos (and, it has to be said, unlikely makers!), a nice page on music theory, some introductory tunes written in tablature (5-string instrument), whittling a banjo when sat outside your tent, and other time-wasting ideas. Well written and solid.

The BANJOISTS' BROADSHEET No 229

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Dr Julian Vincent, 48 Frome Road, Odd Down, Bath, BA2 2QB. and post it back. No charge