

Playing The Piano Dulcimer



by
Madeline MacNeil

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Forward by Sam Rizzetta

The Piano Dulcimer is a type of hammer dulcimer that is easy to understand, has all the notes of a chromatic scale, and plays equally well in all keys. This book, ***Playing The Piano Dulcimer***, begins at the beginning, guiding players in tuning and in playing the Piano Dulcimer through a variety of tunes that range from folk melodies to classical, and from blues to ragtime.

Dulcimers are known in many cultures around the world. Traditional versions have limitations. Past attempts to make dulcimers more suited to complex music resulted in instruments that were difficult to learn or impractical to build. To improve the situation, I experimented with many different note arrangements and invented many of my own. Some of these new tunings passed into common use.

In the early 1970s I built experimental dulcimers with a half-step interval across the treble bridge. This was by far the most practical and efficient way to provide all the chromatic notes through the entire musical range of the dulcimer. By 1995, further refinements, including white and black markers analogous to the piano keyboard, evolved into my Piano Dulcimer.

In this book you are introduced to the Piano Dulcimer and guided through the basics of playing it by Madeline MacNeil, a gifted musician, teacher, and friend. For feedback, insights, criticism, and encouragement during the development of Piano Dulcimers I thank Carrie Rizzetta, Nicholas Blanton, Randy Marchany, and Betsy Calvert. Madeline MacNeil and I are also grateful to Tabby Finch for editorial assistance. Welcome to the Piano Dulcimer! I hope you will enjoy it.

Cover photo: PD40 Piano Dulcimer made by Dusty Strings. Photo this page: Rizzetta Piano Dulcimer.

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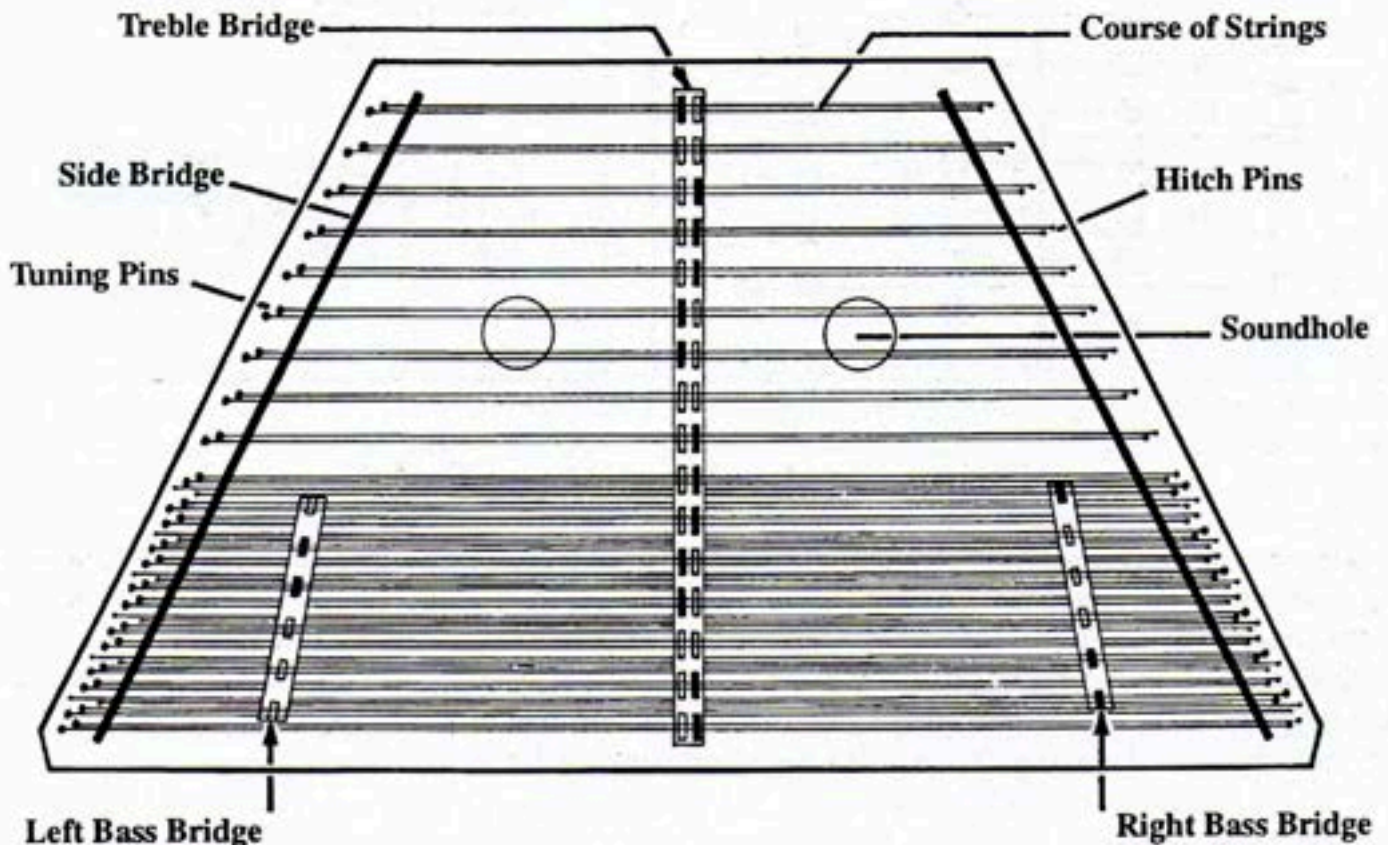
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Introduction

For centuries, players of hammered stringed instruments have expressed the music of their countries. The size of the instruments has varied as does the music. You, as a listener, might be hearing the music of the yang qin in a Chinese opera; of a santur in ensemble music in Iran; of a cymbalom in a concert in Hungary; or of a hammered dulcimer at a dance in the United States. Some of the instruments are large with many strings, while others are considerably smaller. Not only is the music unique to each instrument, hammering styles of the players differ. So an instrument that could be described simply as a box with strings that are struck becomes a voice in musical diversity throughout the world.

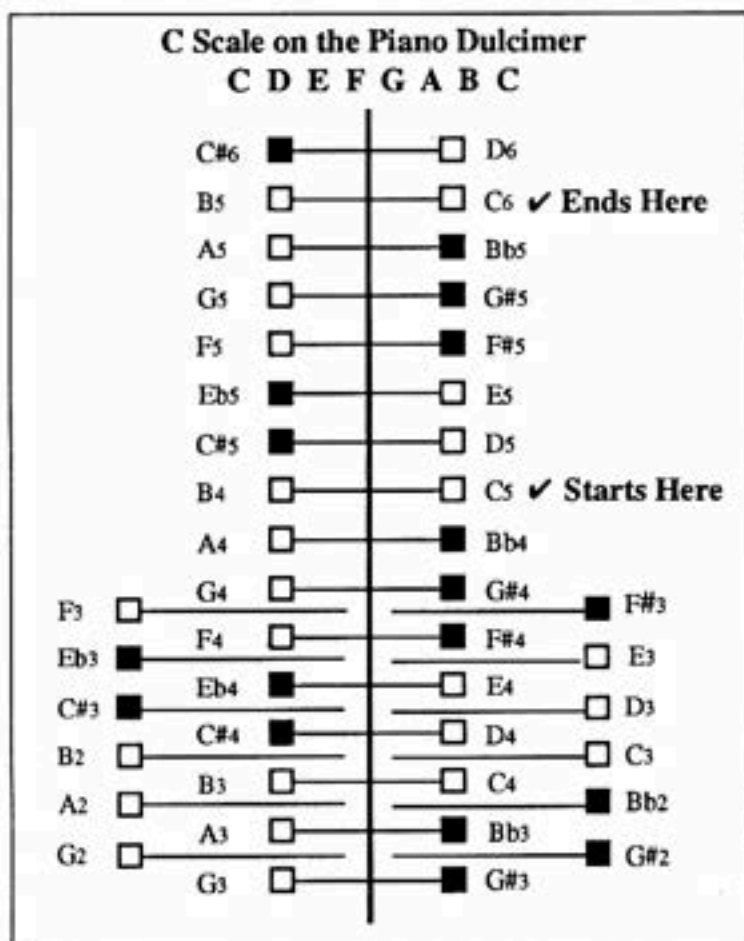
In the United States interest in the hammered dulcimer has grown as people explore their music; waltzes, old-time fiddle tunes, and songs, among them. Yet there are problems in playing music in keys with several sharps and flats on the conventional fifth-interval hammered dulcimer. This means that, for example, a melody written in the key of B (five sharps) is generally not attempted by a hammered dulcimer player. But such keys are equally manageable on the Piano Dulcimer.

I hope you've explored your Piano Dulcimer, discovering the fun of playing a kind of instrument that has been enjoyed for centuries. In this tutor, we'll explore ways to play the dulcimer that you perhaps haven't yet discovered and discuss the accessories such as hammers, tuning wrenches, and electronic tuners. Between your sessions with this book, please just play the dulcimer, picking out tunes you know. Even if this is your first musical instrument since the piano some years ago, you'll learn a lot by exploration.



Piano Dulcimer Tuning Scheme

The tuning scheme for the Piano Dulcimer uses a half-step interval across the middle (treble) bridge, unlike traditional hammered dulcimers that mostly use a fifth interval. Each course of strings crosses two markers on the treble bridge. White marks the naturals (C scale), while black marks the sharps and flats as on the piano. To play a C scale, follow the white markers upwards beginning with C. Notice that to play the C scale you play three notes on the right side, cross the bridge to the left side for four notes, then cross back to the right side for the octave C. All major scales in all of the keys make the same pattern or a mirror image of that pattern. Minor scales have their own pattern.



Piano Dulcimer Ranges

There are differences in Piano Dulcimer ranges. Comparing the tuning scheme that came with your dulcimer, you might find that your instrument has more or fewer courses. The arrangements in this book use notes available on Piano Dulcimers with a range of two octaves. If you have more notes, please improvise and add low notes where you wish. To all of you: the tunes in this book simply get you started. Make the arrangements your own by adding and deleting notes as you wish.



Sitting (or standing) at the Dulcimer

Question: Do I stand or sit to play the dulcimer? Personal preference really comes into play here. Standing or sitting isn't the important situation; being comfortable is. Adjust the stand so the tilt of the instrument is comfortable for you. If you have no stand, place the dulcimer on a table. A TV tray stand may serve for a small dulcimer. Find a comfortable tilt by placing a book or two under the dulcimer at the short-string side. As you reach for the higher notes, move your body in that direction. If you simply extend your arms, eventually you might feel discomfort in your neck, shoulders, arms, and, perhaps, your back.

Dulcimer Hammers

There are many types and styles of dulcimer hammers. While most of us have our favorites, widely differing types work well. Hammer shafts may be flexible or rigid. The drawings below show four common designs.



Simple hammer



Sculpted hammer with finger-grip handle



Double-sided hammer with one side unpadded and the other side padded for a softer sound.



Hammer for two-finger grip

Hammers, of course, are your tools for playing. Most American hammers, like those pictured above, are made to be held lightly between the thumb and index finger. The hammers that came with your dulcimer may be similar to one of the above. (In Eastern Europe and the Near East players use hammers that are held between the index and middle fingers for a two-finger grip.) Although hammers are usually designed for a specific grip, the simple hammer, pictured at the top of the page, may be used with either the thumb and index finger grip or the two-finger grip. Start with the hammers supplied with your dulcimer, but feel free to experiment.



Thumb and forefinger Grip



Two-finger Grip

The striking surface of the hammers may be bare wood or padded with a material like leather or felt to produce different tones. A rapid hoedown may favor the sharp, percussive tone of bare hammers while soft-padded hammers may bring out the beauty of a slow and lyrical tune. One of the great attributes of the dulcimer is that the tone may be varied by changing the hammers. Padding, weight, flexibility, length, balance, and grip all influence the sound. For these reasons most players collect a variety of hammers. You can have the sound of a different instrument for the price of a pair of hammers. With a bit of practice, you can flip the hammers over in the middle of a tune to change the tone.

As you play, especially in your early days with the instrument, listen carefully to the tone you produce with each hand. Try to make strokes with either hand sound the same. Eventually you should have control of the sound from loud to soft. Be sure not to hold the hammers too tightly or too loosely. If holding hammers seems alien to you, remember your early days of riding a bicycle. When was the moment you achieved the balance so you and the bike didn't tip over? What did you do? You might remember the moment, but you probably can't explain what you did; you just did it! Eventually the hammers will feel secure and light in your hands and this will be reflected in the nuances you can achieve in your playing.

Tuning Wrenches

As seen in the drawings below, most tuning wrenches are either gooseneck-shaped or T-handle shaped. Both can work well. Very small gooseneck wrenches are often supplied with inexpensive dulcimers, but they may not be the easiest to use. For fast and accurate tuning, buy the best tuning wrench you can afford. The handle on a T-handle wrench can loosen if it is not well made. A large gooseneck wrench is at least 8" long and is usually a durable, trouble-free tool. The wrench must fit your tuning pins. Most modern, portable dulcimers use zither or harpsichord tuning pins of about 3/16" diameter. But some dulcimers are made with the larger piano tuning pins and require a larger wrench.



Gooseneck Tuning Wrench



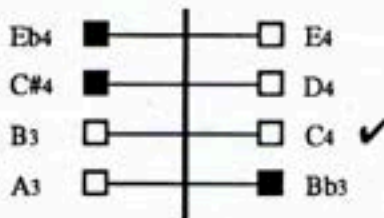
T-handle Tuning Wrench

Tuning Aids

A tuning aid is a real help in tuning the many strings of a dulcimer. The least expensive aid is a chromatic pitch pipe but they are notorious for being inconsistent and inaccurate. A better aid is an electronic tuner. There are many good ones available and prices keep getting more attractive. Just be certain to get a chromatic tuner; a guitar tuner may have only six pitches and will not be adequate. As you pluck a dulcimer string the electronic tuner "listens" to it and indicates the name of the closest note and whether it is sharp (high) or flat (low).

Tuning the Dulcimer

Tuning is daunting for most of us at first, but you will improve as time passes. Resist the urge to tune only a few notes in the middle of the dulcimer. Tuning is one of your best opportunities to learn what notes are where and to gain a general feel for the instrument. Also, it is better for the instrument to have every string in tune, thereby keeping a constant tension on the dulcimer—neither too little nor too much. Unless the instrument is dreadfully out of tune, you barely have to turn the tuning wrench. Let's practice with middle C.



Place the tuning wrench securely on the pin. Pluck the string and compare the pitch to whatever you are using as a constant (a piano, or, preferably, an electronic tuner). If the note is low, turn the tuning wrench clockwise to raise the pitch.

Stop! Before you hear that get-your-attention sound of a string breaking, understand that *very little* turning is necessary. A slight push is probably all that is needed. If you went higher than the desired pitch, turn the tuner slightly counter-clockwise. If you are turning and nothing is happening, check to make sure you are plucking and tuning the same string! People who have played the dulcimer for years still find themselves occasionally intending to tune one string while plucking the course above or below. The slightest adjustment of the string changes the pitch, so something should happen immediately.

The more you tune the easier and faster it will become, although tuning will always take some time and concentration. Every dinner party needs preparation and clean-up, and approaching all our chores with an appreciation of the Whole makes us better cooks—and musicians. The time has arrived to cook up our first tune.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star • Key of C

Study the tuning scheme below. The courses you need to play this tune are shaded. You'll notice that only the white-marked courses are used since the melody is in the key of C. It begins on the right side of the bridge. Throughout the book names of the notes (C, D, etc.) are written under the staff. The letters above the staff are chord names, used by an accompanying instrument such as the guitar.

C#6	■	□	D6
B5	□	□	C6
A5	■	■	Bb5
G5	■	■	G#5
F5	■	■	F#5
Eb5	■	■	E5
C#5	■	■	D5
B4	□	■	C5
A4	□	■	Bb4
G4	□	■	G#4
F4	□	■	F#4
Eb4	■	□	E4
C#4	■	□	D4
B3	□	□	C4
A3	□	■	Bb3
G3	□	■	G#3

Alternate the hammers when possible. On the third note you move from the right side of the bridge to the left. If you begin the tune with your left hammer, the transition to the left side of the bridge will flow easily.

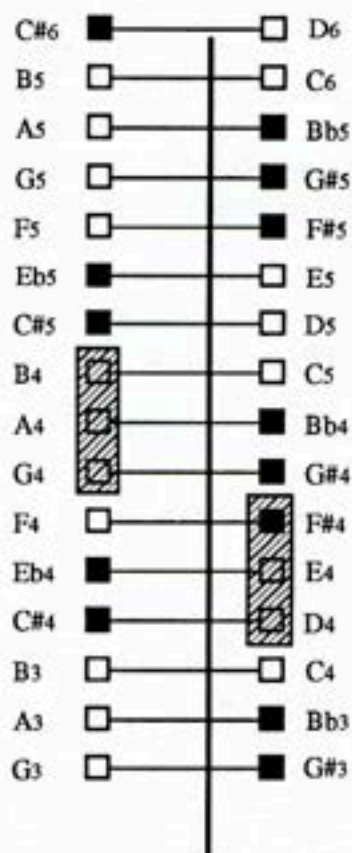


Drawing courtesy of *Dulcimer Players News*. Used with permission.

Remind yourself of hammering patterns (left, right) you like by writing them in the book when you discover them. Use a pencil in case you change your mind.

Now we'll play "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" in different keys.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star • Key of D



Begins on the right side of the bridge.

1 D D A A B B A G G F# F#

4 E E D A A G G F# F# E

7 A A G G F# F# E D D A A

10 B B A G G F# F# E E D

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star • Key of G

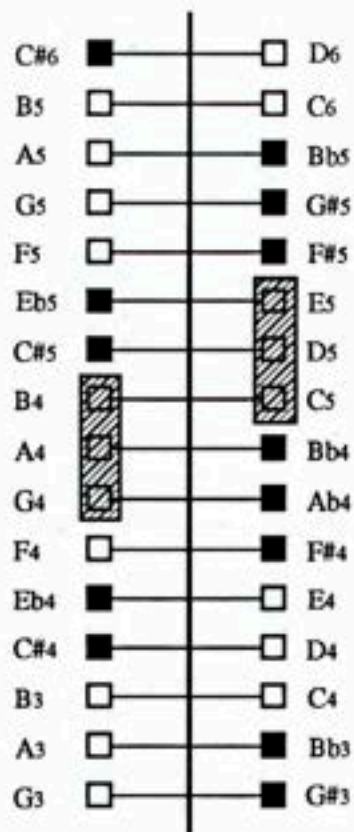
Begins on the left side of the bridge.

1 G G D D E E D C C B B

4 A A G D D C C B B A

7 D D C C B B A G G D D

10 E E D C C B B A A G



Skip To My Lou • Key of G

Measures 1-8 of 'Skip To My Lou' in G major. The melody is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains measures 1-4, and the second staff contains measures 5-8. Chords G and D7 are indicated above the first two measures of each staff. The notes are: B, B, G, G, B, B, B, D (measures 1-4); A, A, F#, F#, A, A, A, C (measures 5-8).

Down In The Valley • Key of C

Measures 1-12 of 'Down In The Valley' in C major. The melody is written in treble clef with a key signature of no sharps or flats. The first staff contains measures 1-6, and the second staff contains measures 7-12. Chords C and G are indicated above measures 2 and 5 of the first staff, and G7 and C are indicated above measures 7 and 11 of the second staff. The notes are: G, C, D, E, C, E, D, C, D (measures 1-6); G, B, D, F, D, B, C, D, C (measures 7-12).

Measures 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12 have dotted half notes, which are held for three beats. To fill out the three beats, bounce your hammers on the strings. For example: In measure 2, play E several times—left, right, left, right, etc. Or, of course, right, left, right, left...

Over The Waterfall • Key of D

Measures 1-12 of 'Over The Waterfall' in D major. The melody is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first staff contains measures 1-4, the second staff contains measures 5-8, the third staff contains measures 9-12, and the fourth staff contains measures 13-16. Chords D, A7, and G are indicated above various measures. The notes are: D, E, F#, A, G, F#, E, D, B, A, D, E, F#, A, G, E, D, A, D, D, E (measures 1-16).

Ode To Joy • Key of C

Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824

Henry Van Dyke wrote the words "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" for this melody in 1907. You might also recognize it from Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. Play measures one through sixteen and you've played the tune once. Measures seventeen through thirty-two have you playing the melody an octave higher.

1 C G C G C

E E F G G F E D C C D E E D D E E F G

6 G C G C G C G C

G F E D C C D E D C C D D E C D E F E C

11 G C D7 G C G C G C

D E F E D C D G E E F G G F E D C C D E D C C

17 C G C G C

E E F G G F E D C C D E E D D E E F G

22 G C G C G C G C

G F E D C C D E D C C D D E C D E F E C

27 G C D7 G C G C G C

D E F E D C D G E E F G G F E D C C D E D C C

Scales on the Piano Dulcimer

As you play these scales you'll see patterns emerging which should help you when you play tunes. If a note is neither sharped nor flatted, the course marking will be white. Also, whether you begin on the right side of the bridge or the left side, to play a major scale the pattern is as follows: Do Re Mi (cross the bridge) Fa So La Ti (cross the bridge) Do.

Key of G • Begins on the left side of the bridge.



Key of Bb • Begins on the right side of the bridge.

Major Scales



Key of F • Begins on the left side of the bridge.



Minor Scales

Minor scales (La Ti Do Re Mi Fa So La) have a different pattern from major scales, and, well, sound minor. Here's the pattern: La Ti (cross the bridge) Do Re Mi (cross the bridge) Fa So La.

Key of Am • Begins on the left side of the bridge.



Key of Dm • Begins on the right side of the bridge.



C#6	■	□	D6
B5	□	□	C6
A5	□	■	Bb5
G5	□	■	G#5
F5	□	■	F#5
Eb5	■	□	E5
C#5	■	□	D5
B4	□	□	C5
A4	□	■	Bb4
G4	□	■	G#4
F4	□	■	F#4
Eb4	■	□	E4
C#4	■	□	D4
B3	□	□	C4
A3	□	■	Bb3
G3	□	■	G#3

Chromatic Scales

Perhaps some of these notes look strange. You look at the tuning scheme and you don't find a Gb. Just like the piano keyboard, the Piano Dulcimer has more than one name for each course. Since you're likely to encounter more F#'s than Gb's in most of the music you play, the tuning scheme says F#. The term *enharmonic spelling* means there are different names for the same notes. In the scale below, you might know Gb as F#, Ab as G#, and Db as C#. Refer to the notes in parentheses in the tuning diagram below. Practice playing chromatic scales by rapidly alternating hands (left, right, left, right, etc.).

D chromatic • Begins on the right side of the bridge. A# is the same as Bb; D# is the same as Eb.



F chromatic • Begins on the left side of the bridge. Gb is the same as F#, Ab is the same as G#, and Db is the same as C#.



(Db) C#6	■	□	D6
B5	□	□	C6
A5	□	■	Bb5 (A#)
G5	□	■	G#5 (Ab)
F5	□	■	F#5 (Gb)
(D#) Eb5	■	□	E5
(Db) C#5	■	□	D5
B4	□	□	C5
A4	□	■	Bb4 (A#)
G4	□	■	G#4 (Ab)
F4	□	■	F#4 (Gb)
(D#) Eb4	■	□	E4
(Db) C#4	■	□	D4
B3	□	□	C4
A3	□	■	Bb3 (A#)
G3	□	■	G#3 (Ab)

Chords on the Piano Dulcimer

Again with chords, you'll find several enharmonic spellings; the chord says to play Ab and you find G# on the tuning scheme diagram. Eventually these will be easier to figure out and, really, there aren't too many of them that you'll need to know. Letters above the staff are the names of the chords.

Major Chords

These chords begin on the right side of the bridge.



Chords on the Piano Dulcimer

Major Chords, continued

The following chords begin on the left side of the bridge.

Diagram showing Major Chords on the left side of the bridge. The chords are F, G, A, and B. The notes are written on a single staff in treble clef. Below the staff, the notes are listed: F, A, C, G, B, D, A, C#, E, B, D#, F#.

Minor Chords

The following chords begin on the right side of the bridge.

Diagram showing Minor Chords on the right side of the bridge. The chords are Cm, Dm, Em, and F#m. The notes are written on a single staff in treble clef. Below the staff, the notes are listed: C, Eb, G, D, F, A, E, G, B, F#, A, C#.

The following chords begin on the left side of the bridge.

Diagram showing Minor Chords on the left side of the bridge. The chords are Fm, Gm, Am, and Bm. The notes are written on a single staff in treble clef. Below the staff, the notes are listed: F, Ab, C, G, Bb, D, A, C, E, B, D, F#.

Playing Chords Using the Chromatic Scale

Diagram showing the Chromatic Scale for playing chords. The scale is written on a single staff in treble clef. The notes are: C, E, G, C#, E#, G#, D, F#, A, Eb, G, Bb, E, G#, B, F, A, C, F#, A#, C#, G, B, D, Ab, C, Eb, A, C#, E, Bb, D, F, B, D#, F#, C, E, G.

Golden Slippers

Traditional

D

D E F# F# F# D E F# F# F# D E F# F# G F#

A A7

F# E E C# D E E E C# D E E E C# D E G F# E

D 1st ending D 2nd ending D

E D D E D D A A A A D F# E D C#

G A

B B B B E G F# E D C# C# D E E E

D Measure 18 D G

D D E F# A A A A D F# E D C# B B B B E

A A7 D

G F# E D C# C# C# C# D E G F# G F# E D

In measure eighteen (next to the last line) try bouncing your hammers to fill out the four beats for the F#.
(Tip: alternating hands and hammer strikes rapidly to create a tremolo sounds even better.)

Soldier's Joy

This is a jam session favorite! Play the A part twice followed by two times through the B part.

Traditional Fiddle Tune

A Part

D

F# G A F# D F# A F# D F# A D D C# B

A7

D

A F# D F# A F# D F# G A G F# E F# G A F# D F# A F# D F#

A7

D

A D D D E F# A F# D E G E C# D D D

B part

D

A7

D E F# F# D F# A G F# E E C# E G F# E

D

A

D

F# F# D F# A G F# E D C# B A D E F# D F# D F# A G F#

A7

D

A7

D

E C# E C# E G F# E F# A F# D E G E C# D D D

"If you hear a voice within you saying, 'You are not a painter,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced." ~*Vincent Van Gogh*

"Works with music, too." ~*Madeline MacNeil*

Southwind

Thirds (for example in measure two) are easy to play on the Piano Dulcimer—and sound so nice! Try them in this beautiful Irish air.

Measure 2

D C BG A G BG CA DB A A B

A D C BG A G EC D E G B D

G D C BG A G BG CA DB A A B

A D C BG A G EC D E G B D

G D G G GE F#D EC DB D E

D C BG A G BG CA DB A A B

A D G G GE F#D EC DB D E

D C BG A G A B C F#D GG

Minuet in G

In Bach's day the hackbrett, a cousin of the Piano Dulcimer, was played in Germany, as it is today. This well-loved music by Bach can give you a feeling of an instrument he heard.

J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
From the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*

The musical score for Minuet in G is presented in six staves, each with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The notes are written in a letter-based system below the staff lines.

Staff 1 (Measures 1-5):
 G C G C
 D G A B C D G G E C D E F# G G G C D C B A

Staff 2 (Measures 6-10):
 G D G D G
 B C B A G F# G A B G A D G A B C D G G

Staff 3 (Measures 11-15):
 C G C G D
 E C D E F# G G G C D C B A B C B A G A B A G F#

Staff 4 (Measures 16-20):
 G G D Em A
 G B G A B G A D E F# D G E F# G D C# B C# A A B C# D E F#

Staff 5 (Measures 21-25):
 G D A D A D G C G
 G F# E A D C# D D G F# G E G F# G D C B

Staff 6 (Measures 26-30):
 D D C G D G D G
 A G F# G A D E F# G A B C B A B D G F# G

Greensleeves • Melody

Lilting

Traditional English



A C D E F#E D B G A B C A A G# A B G# E A

C D E F#E D B G A B C B A G# F# G# A A

G G F# E D B G A B C A A G# A B G# E

G G F# E D B G A B C B A G# F# G# A A

Greensleeves • Arrangement

Introduction (the melody begins with the last note of measure four).
Remember the lilting tempo and avoid rushing the sixteenth notes.



A E C A B C D B G# E C B A E F# G# A A A

C D E F# E D B G A B C A A G# A C B A G# B E A

C D E F# E D B G A B C B A C B A B A G# B A G# A A B C D E F

Arrangement of Greensleeves continued...



13 G G F E D E D C B A G B C A A G# A C B A G# B E

17 G G F E D E D C B A G B C B A G# F# G A G# A B A G# A

Greensleeves

A version by Francis Cutting, a renowned composer
for the lute in the late sixteenth century.



1 A C D E C D E C BG# B C D B A B C D E C BG# B

5 CA D E F# G D E D C B F# G A G F# E D E C B E D C

9 B C A BE BG# C D E F# G A B G A G F# E D B C# D C# A A

13 C D E A E E D G F# G D B C D B A BE E E D# E B C E D E G F#

17 G D E D B C B E D C# B C# G F# E D E C B D B C BA E D C B CA E B

21 C B A E D C G F# E B A G C B A G# A G# A E C A

Westphalia Waltz

A favorite waltz played on fiddles and dulcimers, among other instruments. Where the notes are held for awhile (three beats or more, for example), you can create a nice effect by bouncing (rolling) the hammers on the strings to fill out the time.

Sheet music for Westphalia Waltz, featuring a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and 3/4 time signature. The music is divided into systems, with measures numbered 1, 7, 14, 21, 28, 36, and 44. Chord symbols (G, D, D7, C, BG, EC) are placed above the staff. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) are shown below the staff. The notes are: D, G, A, B, E, DB, G, D, G, A, B, C, AF#, D, D, A, B, CA, G, F#D, E, D, D, E, D, C, BG, G, D, B, G, D, D, D, D, D, D, D, E, E, F#, G, B, B, C, B, A, G, B, C, B, A, B, CA, E, E, E, E, E, F#, G, F#, E, D, D, E, D, C, D, C, BG, BG, C, C#, D, G, D, D, G, D, E, E, F#, G, BG, B, C, B, A, G, B, C, B, A, B, CA, EC, E, E, EC, E, E, E, F#, G, F#, E, D, D, E, D, C, B, A, G, D, B, G.

The Black Nag

Dulcimer players need jigs in the repertoire. From England, here are two favorites: "The Black Nag" (a 17th-century dance tune) and "Coleraine." Play the A part twice followed by two times through the B part.

A Part

Am Em Am

E A A B A B C B C B C D E D C B C B A A A

B Part

Em Am

A B G E B G E B G E B C D E C A E C A E C A E D C

10

Em Am Em Am

B G E B G E B G E B C D E D C B C B A A A

Coleraine

A Part

Am E Am E

E A A A B C B E E E D C B A A B C B G# E E D

5

Am E Am E Am

E A A A B C B E E E D C B A B G# E A

B Part

C G Am E

C C C D C B D G G G# A E D C B A G# B G# E F# G#

13

Am E Am Dm Am E Am

A G# A B A B C D E F E D C B A B G# E A

Playing In The Mud

This ragtime piece can be freely syncopated to add spice. Measures 15 and 16 give you a chance to play a chromatic scale or "run."

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1 C D E C D E C D E C D E D C D E F# D E F# D E

4 F# D E F# E D E F# G# E F# G# F G A F G A

7 G G7 C G C F D B D G C C B Bb A G B Bb B Bb A G C E G D# E

12 F C G G [Guitar rest.....] G E A E G B Bb A G B Bb B Bb A G G G# A Bb B C C# D

16 Guitar rest..... | G7 D# E F F# G F D B D G

18 C B Bb B Bb A G C E G D# E

20 F C7 F G E A E G F F# G G# A A

22 C G G7 C G A G E D C F D B D G C C



Drawing courtesy of
Dulcimer Players News.

Boiler House Blues

Sam Rizzetta

Staff 1: Chords: D, D7. Notes: D4, D4, E4, F#4, A4, F#4, G4, G#4, A4, D4, D4, E4, F#4, A4, F#4, G4, G#4, A4.

Staff 2: Chords: G, G7, D. Notes: G4, G4, A4, B4, D5, B4, C4, C#4, D4, D4, D4, E4, F#4, A4, F#4, G4, G#4, A4.

Staff 3: Chords: A7, D, A, 1st Ending. Notes: C#4, C4, C#4, C4, B4, A4, A4, G#4, A4, F#4, F4, E4, D4, A4, F#4, A4, E4.

Staff 4: Chords: D, Final Ending, D7, Blues Variation..., Dm, D. Notes: D4, F#4, D4, D4, A4, B4, C4, F#4, D4, F4, D4, F#4, D4.

Staff 5: Chords: D7, G, G7, D. Notes: C4, A4, B4, G4, F4, D4, F#4, D4, F#4, G4, G#4, A4.

Staff 6: Chords: A7, D, A. Notes: C#4, C4, C#4, C4, B4, A4, A4, G#4, A4, F#4, F4, E4, D4, A4, F#4, A4, E4.

This is a blues I wrote many years ago for my Augusta students to teach some rudiments of the blues on hammer dulcimer. Our classroom that year was in the old college boiler house, a dingy, cavernous brick building with no windows, annoying lighting, ventilation that rarely functioned, and a terrible echo off the bare brick walls. It has been said, "You've got to suffer if you want to play the blues." We had paid our dues and we were ready! ~Sam Rizzetta

Hiyai

Flowing, Moderate tempo

Traditional Korean

The musical score for 'Hiyai' is written in 4/4 time and consists of three staves. The notes are as follows:

Staff 1: F G Bb C Eb Eb C Bb G F Bb Bb Eb C Bb Eb C Bb C

Staff 2: G F G Bb Bb F G Bb Eb C Bb C Bb G Eb C Bb Bb C

Staff 3: Eb C Bb C Bb G Eb C Bb Bb C Bb Bb C Bb

This lovely, old melody sounds beautiful on the Piano Dulcimer with its sustaining notes. Different striking materials on the hammers (leather, felt, etc.) of course give you different sounds. Here's a creative challenge. When you can play through the tune, imagine it being played in a particular setting: outdoors, near water, in a resonant room, wherever. What instrument might have been used originally? How would your dulcimer fit into that scene? To recreate a sound, an instrument, and its setting, how might that influence your playing? Creativity, an essential part of music, sometimes takes a back seat as players strive for technical wizardry. But music played with feeling affects both the musician and the listener.

You've been creative all of your life; as an adult, perhaps your artistry blooms in your cooking, your gardening, your writing, your home decorating, your computer work, or your hat making. Each of those fields, like music, involves numerical, technical elements. But, if you think about it, the final step is you; your feeling the story and then sharing it.



Drawing courtesy of
Dulcimer Players News.

Eleanor Plunkett

O'Carolan melodies, originally written for the Irish harp, are favorites of dulcimer players.

Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738)

1 G Em C Bm Am

G A B B A G G G A G E E E D B B A G E A A B

7 D G C G D

A G A B A G E D E E F# G G B A B A G F#

12 C Bm C G Am D

G A G F# E D B D E G G B B A G E A A B A

Holy Manna

Tunes have form, a feature that actually helps you learn all of the notes. With "The Black Nag" and "Coleraine" on page 21, for example, you played a section, repeated it, then played another section and repeated that. The form of such tunes is AABB. The form of this old hymn is AABA, which means measures 1-4, 5-8, and 13-16 are the same melody. Measures 9-12, the "B" part, is different. In this sixteen-measure tune you only need to learn eight measures before you know it all. Quite a bargain!

1 A E A D A A E A

E E F# A A B B A C# B A F# E E F# A A C# B A

5 A E A D A A E A

E E F# A A B B A C# B A F# E E F# A A C# B A

9 A E A A E

C# E E E C# C# A B A C# E E E C# C# A B

13 A E A D A A E A

E E F# A A B B A C# B A F# E E F# A A C# B A

Lilac Time

Moderate tempo. Watch for the repeats. Play the A part twice, the B part twice, and the C part once.

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A Part C F C G C

1 C E G C B C G E F A G E F D G B C E G C B C G E

B Part Cm Eb Ab Gaug

4 F A G E F B C C D Eb F G Ab G F G Ab G F Eb D C B

7 Cm Eb Ab Gaug Cm C Part C Em

C D Eb F G Ab G F G F Eb D C C B A G C B A G

10 F G C Am Gaug G C

D F B A G F E D C B A G C B A G D Eb F Eb D B C

13 C Em F G C Em F G G7 C



Transition between "Lilac Time"
in the key of C and the key of F# (see next page).

Lilac Time in the key of F#

A Part F#

B F# C# F#

F# A# C# F# E# F# C# A# B D# C# A# B G# C# E# F# A# C# F# E# F# C# A#

B F# C# F# **B Part** F#m A D C#aug

B D# C# A# B E# F# F# G# A B C# D C# B C# D C# B A G# F# E#

7 F#m A D C#aug F#m **C Part** F# A#m

F# G# A B C# D C# B C# B A G# F# F# E# D# C# F# E# D# C#

10 B C# F# D#m C#aug C# F#

G# B E# D# C# B A# G# F# E# D# C# F# E# D# C# G# A B A G# E# F#

13 F# A#m B C# F# A#m B C# C#7 F#

F# E# D# C# F# E# D# C# G# B E# D# C# B A# G# F# G# A# B C# F# E# D# C# B A# G# F#

Where To Go From Here

Where to go from here? Just about anywhere you want, in short. You have the chromatic gift of a piano, with close to half its range on some Piano Dulcimers, in your hands, even though you're playing with two hammers instead of ten fingers. Piano books are sources, although you have to look for pieces that have strong melodies without a lot of full chords. I suggest the *Anna Magdalena Notebook* by Johann Sebastian Bach. Those pieces were written for students, but, since Bach wrote them, the melodies are full and lovely.

If your tastes lie with music of the church, hymn books are a great source. The various keys of the hymns shouldn't be a problem, but if you're still looking for notes, keep your tuning scheme handy when you play. You can achieve a duet of sorts by playing both the soprano and alto parts together.

Do you like country dancing? Old-time music? Irving Berlin songs? Jazz? Blues? Music is available for all of these interests. Look at some music. If you play the melody line and it sounds thin or empty look somewhere else. Think of instruments such as violins, flutes, and pennywhistles that use one line of music. There is a profusion of books for them, and many are fine as they are or adaptable to your instrument.



The author of *Playing The Piano Dulcimer* is Madeline MacNeil (1940 - 2020) whose career as performer, author, teacher, and recording artist spanned more than 50 years. She was the long time publisher of *Dulcimer Players News* and also authored many instruction and repertoire books for Mel Bay Publications. Maddie taught workshops and performed at festivals and concerts throughout the United States. Her wonderful voice and magical singing were accompanied by her tasteful playing on hammer dulcimer and mountain dulcimer. Maddie was one of the most important figures in the revival and popularity of dulcimers from 1975 to 2020.