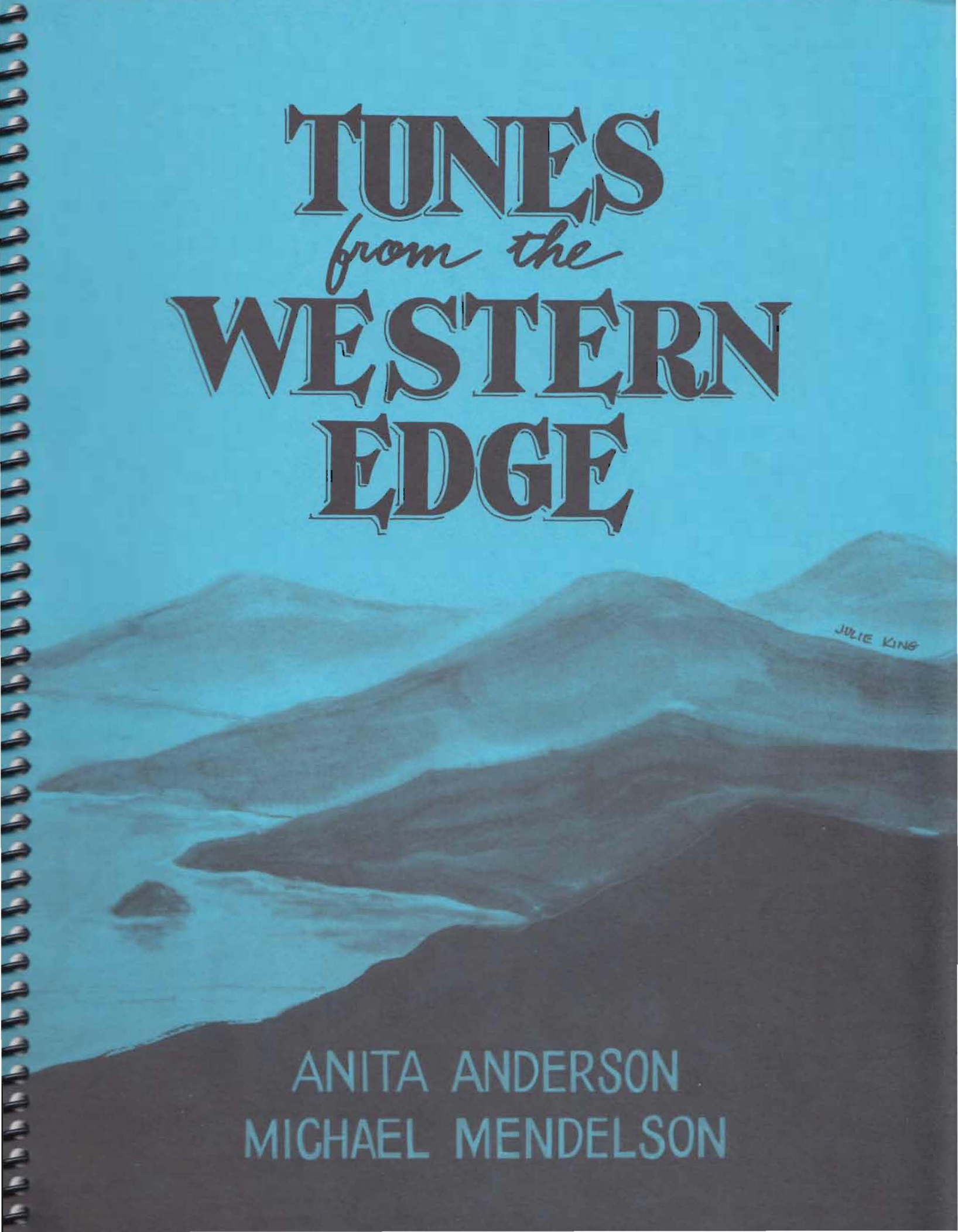
TUNES *from the* WESTERN EDGE



ANITA ANDERSON
MICHAEL MENDELSON

Tunes from the western edge

Anita Anderson
Michael Mendelson

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Further copyright stuff

Question: How do you become a millionaire playing folk music?
Answer: Start out with *two* million....

We're glad that you're looking at our book. We know that, short of riches and fame, the greatest reward we can expect for this music is having the tunes enter the repertoire. So we're also happy if you photocopy individual pages—so that your friends can learn the tunes, or so that your band can play them at community dances.

At the same time, we remind you that all of these tunes are copyrighted by the composers. And we encourage you (and your friends) to buy additional copies so that we can recoup some of our costs and maybe put out another book someday.

For additional copies of *Tunes from the western edge* ($10 + $1 postage), to get on our mailing list, or for permission to use our material for commercial enterprises, please contact us at the following address:

Michael Mendelson

[redacted]
www.SlidingScaleMusic.com

"Bus stop reel," "The ~~smooch~~ on the porch," and "Claremont waltz" originally appeared in *Brand new old-time fiddle tunes, Volume 3*, published by Voyager Publications, 424 35th Ave, Seattle, WA 98122.

Introduction

Michael Mendelson and I have been writing dance tunes since 1986. We met when I was living in the Los Angeles area and was active in the WRD ("We'd Rather Dance") string band. Called on to do a gig in Santa Barbara but without our usual fiddler, our mandolin player asked Mike to step in, and a great musical partnership was born. We found that we liked each other's musical chemistry and how the ideas bounced back and forth between us in the course of a gig.

Since we respected each other's musical tastes, we formed a reciprocal "first hearing" arrangement—we listen to each other's tunes first, long before the music makes it out to the public, to get some honest feedback and to check that we haven't accidentally "borrowed" the melody from some obscure source long since lost in our subconscious. But more important than that, knowing someone else who is actively composing has goaded both of us on to write more and better.

I have moved on to Seattle, but we still get together a couple times a year to visit, play, and even perform. *Tunes from the western edge* represents some of our more widely played music. We hope someday to put together a second volume, as time and creativity allow. In the meantime, let us know your comments or suggestions.

Anita Anderson

A note about the tune annotations:

This book is arranged with the basic melody on the left-hand page, and everything else—notes about suggested variations, chord substitutions, stylistic points—on the right-hand page. The separation is intentional, in that the material on the right-hand pages consists of *suggestions* for how to play the tunes, not *directions*. You can easily cover up the tune annotations if they prove to be distracting.

The beauty of music is that everyone interprets things differently. Try these suggestions if you like, or ignore them if you like, but above all, have fun!

About the composers

MM

I was born and raised on the San Francisco peninsula, and started playing music (trumpet and French horn) at an early age. In high school, a friend who was taking banjo lessons from the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia turned me on to bluegrass music. I bought a guitar, discovered Doc Watson, Clarence White, and Flatt & Scruggs, and was hooked. During my undergraduate days at the University of California I played an awful lot of music and earned a degree in physics. Memories of the Berkeley folk music scene are still my favorite.

After many years as a bluegrass guitarist and singer, I switched to the fiddle because it was louder and easier to carry. Over the years I have played a variety of styles, from old-timey and bluegrass to Texas-style and swing, earned a master's degree in folklore from UCLA, taught music, repaired violins, and written scholarly articles about music. I have had the distinct honor to work with, and write about, such great fiddlers as Benny Thomasson, Hugh Farr, and Tiny Moore.

I was introduced to contra dancing while living in Santa Barbara and have thoroughly enjoyed immersing myself in both the music and the dance. I play dances regularly with the Tecolote Tune Twisters, and occasionally with various other bands. I am also a member of an old-timey band (the Gap Tooth Mountain Ramblers) and a folk-rock group (Granite Tapestry), and play string quartets with friends.

AA

I grew up in Long Beach, California, and started organ lessons at 7 because cheap classes were advertised in the newspaper. After the culmination of my organ career—a year spent as a church organist when I was 17—I decided to leave the church *and* the organ and focus on classical singing. Then there was a spell playing hammer dulcimer, but since the mid 1980s I'm mainly back on the keyboard for contra dances—these days, touring with Rex Blazer and playing gigs with other Seattle musicians. I continue to sing Scandinavian folk music and abandon my dignity regularly singing do-wop with a girl group, the S-Curves.

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Anita's reel

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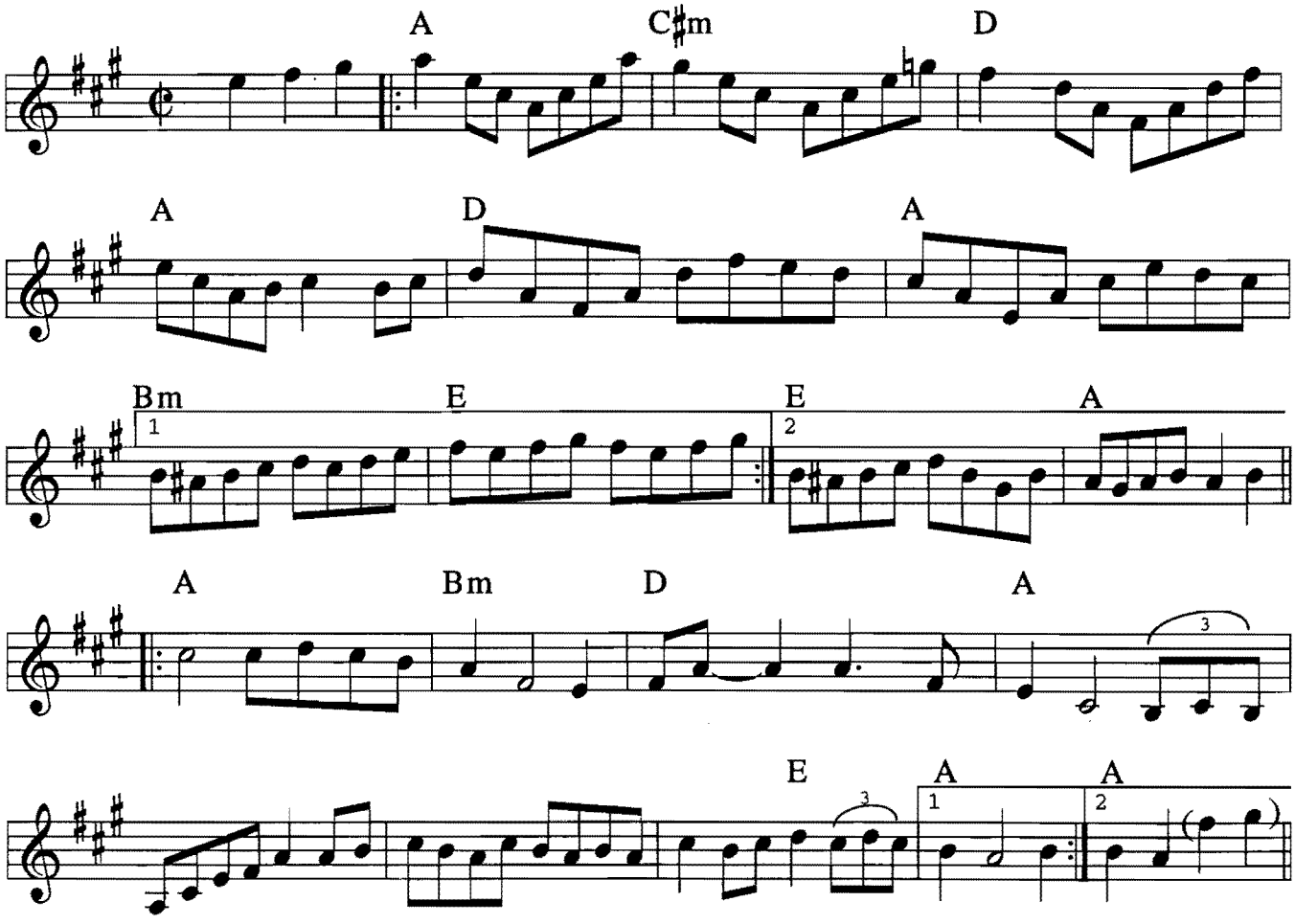


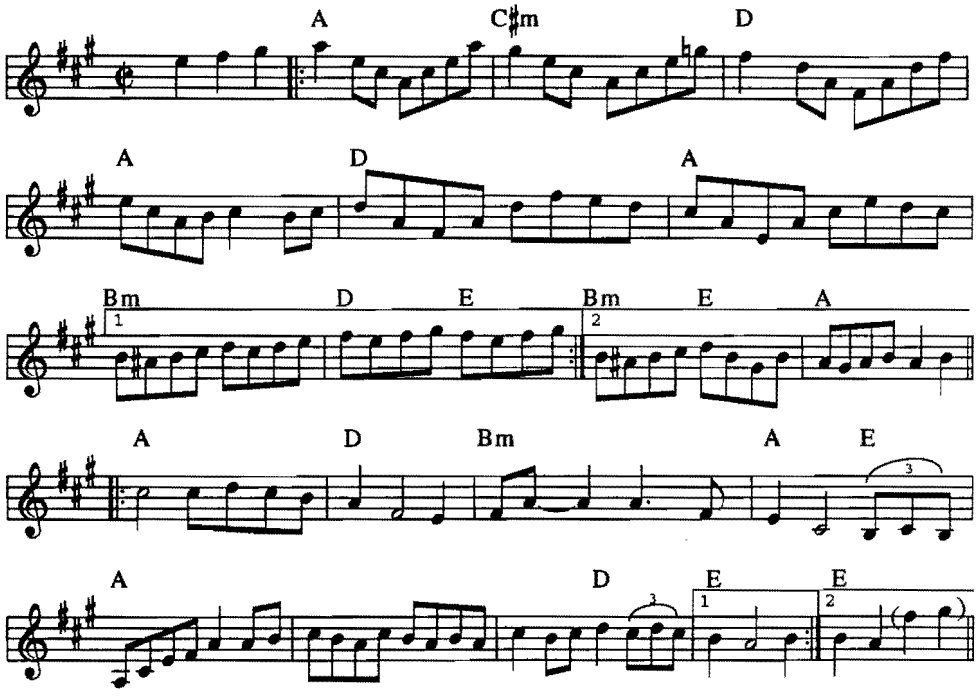
Anita's reel

Written for my friend and music partner, Anita Anderson, as a going-away gift when she left the freeways of Los Angeles for the rain of Seattle.

Performance notes (AA)

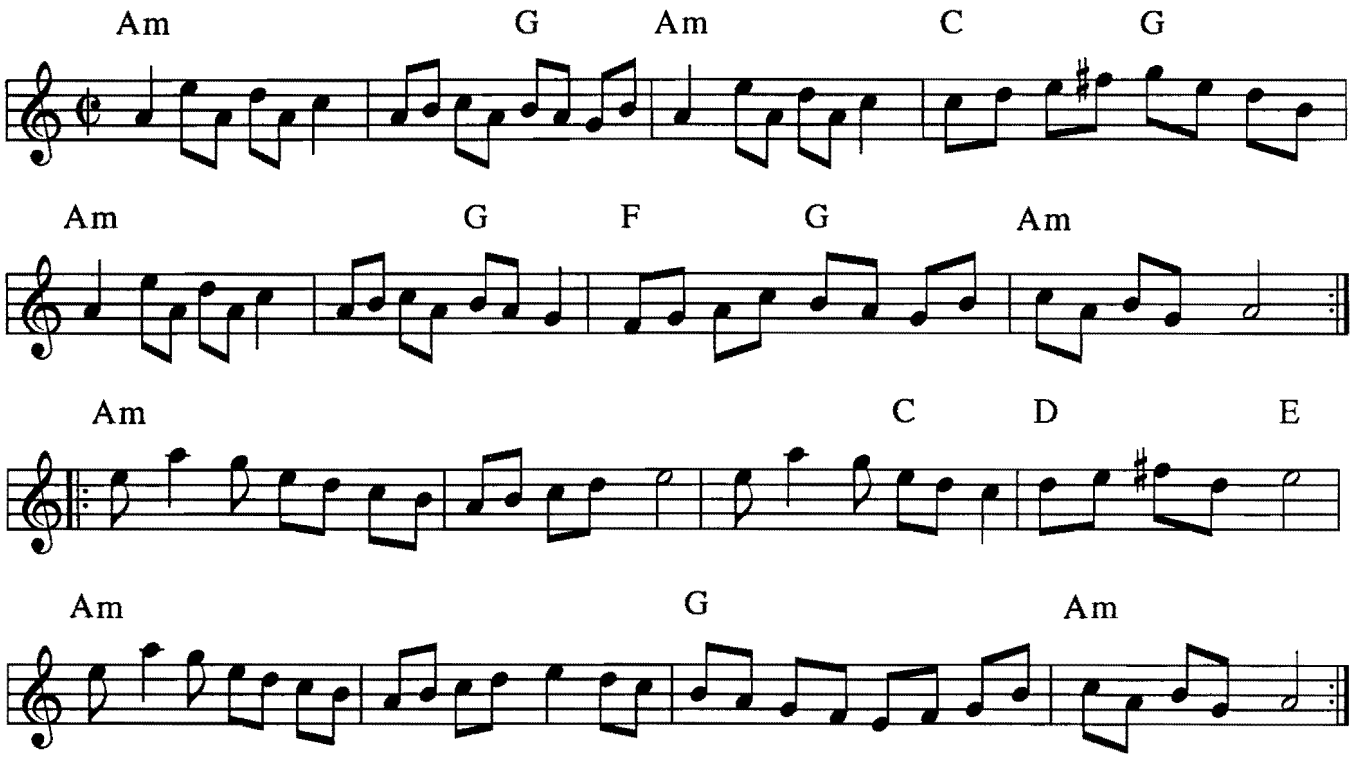
While the A part of the tune feels like a normal breakdown, the B part suddenly breaks into pure gospel march. Use this! Abandon the usual boom-chuck, play big fat chords on the piano with sturdy octaves, and urge the caller to pick a dance with a four-in-line-down-the-hall for the B1 figure.

Alternate chords



Bus stop reel

© Anita Anderson, 1987



Bus stop reel

I wrote this tune while waiting for the bus to work. You can hear it on Kevin Burke's album *Open house* (available from Green Linnet at 43 Beaver Brook Rd, Danbury, CT 96810) or on the Salmonberry tape *New England Contra Dance Music* (available from Katz Acoustic Services at 3720 41st Ave S, Seattle, WA 98144).

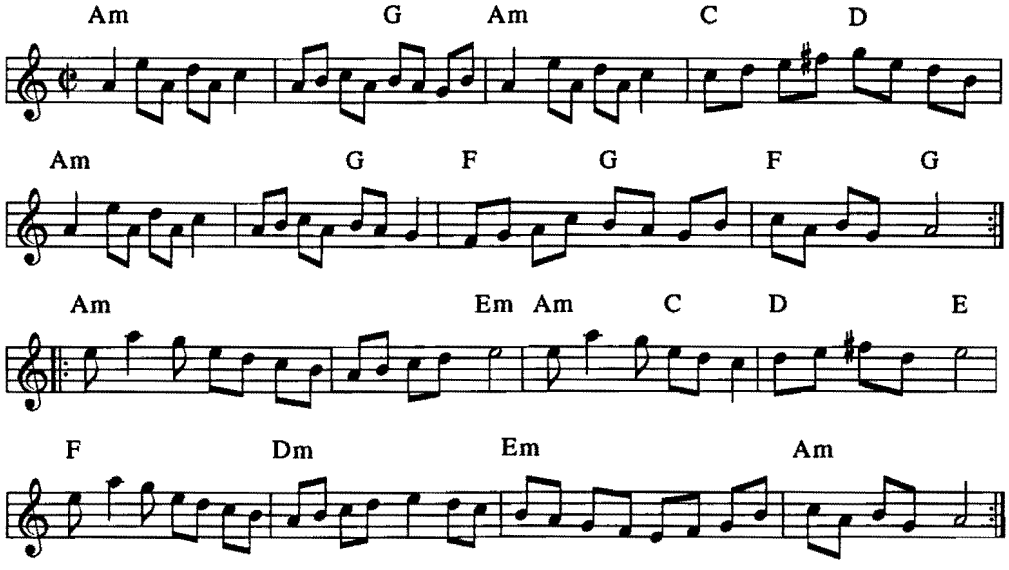
Performance notes (AA)

The tune works well played very simply, or you can start adding unusual chords (see the alternate chords below for some ideas) and syncopations.

Performance notes (MM)

A great tune for a little modal improvisation. Try using an A-pentatonic scale (A, C, D, E, G) against the chord changes for a jazzy effect.

Alternate chords



Catnip tea

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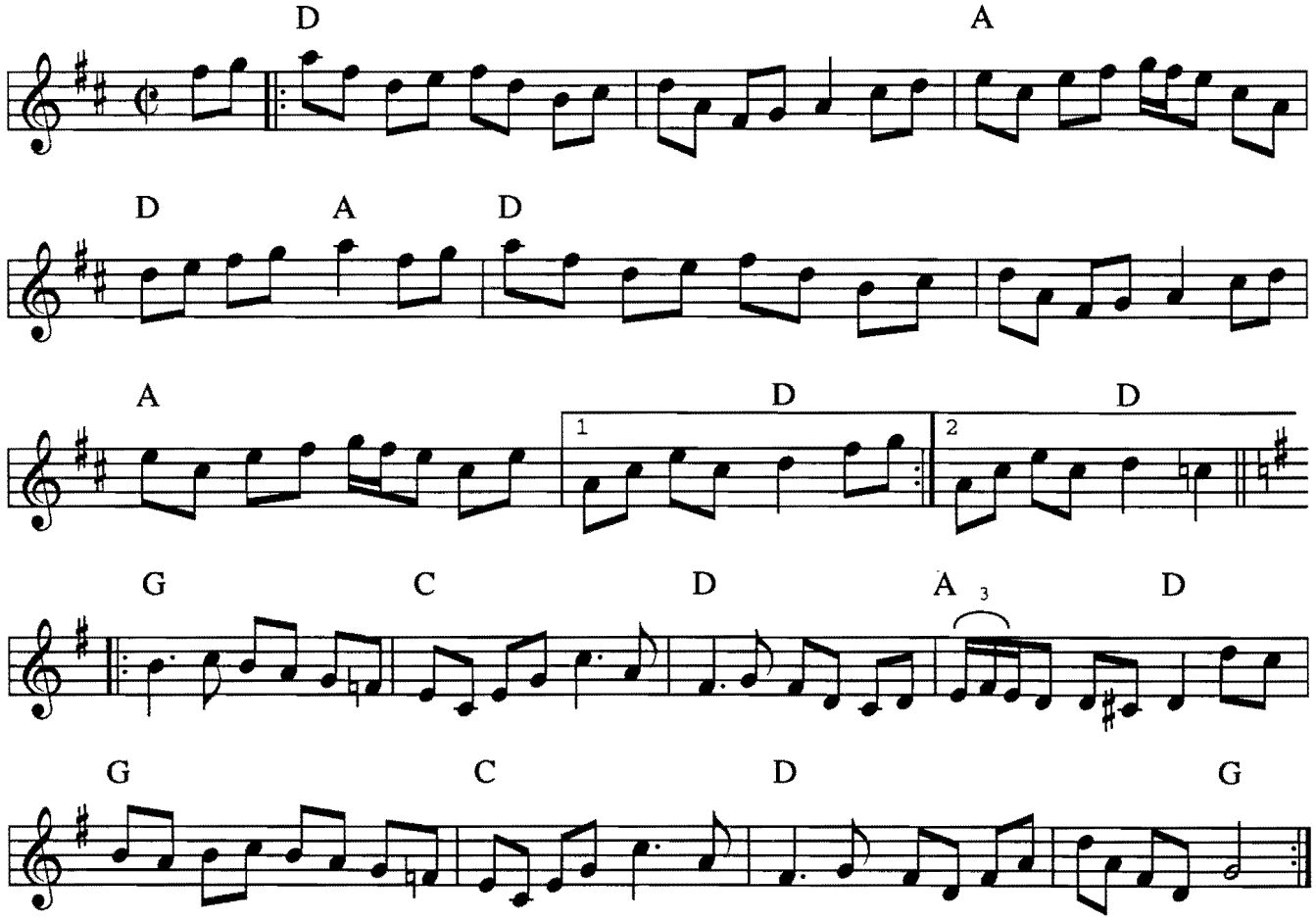


Catnip tea

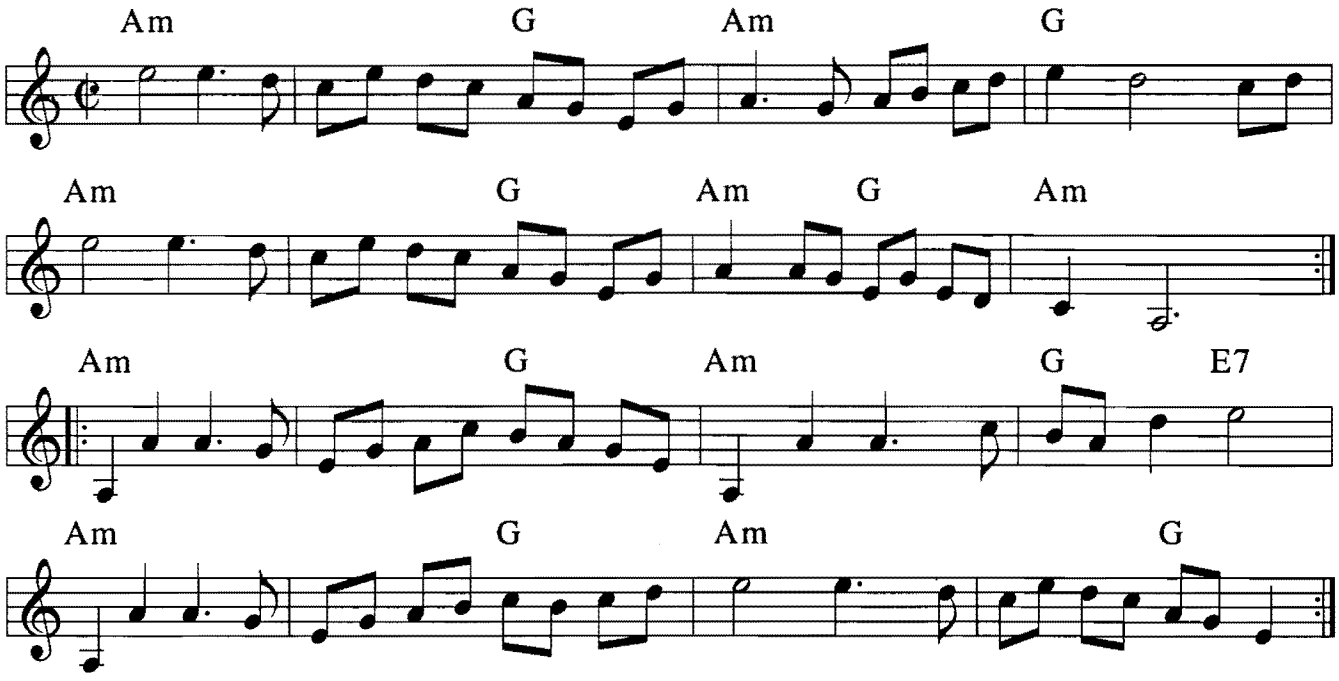
My first effort, inspired in part by the mandolin playing of my friend Mike Mullins, and in part by the music of *The wizard of Oz*.

Performance notes (MM)

I usually play this tune with a French Canadian lilt. The "Woodchopper's reel" is probably (at least for the first half) the most familiar traditional tune with a similar feel.

Dust devils

© Michael Mendelson, 1993



Dust devils

A simple, hypnotic little tune I wrote one quiet evening. In retrospect it reminded me of a hot, lazy, southwestern afternoon.

Performance notes (MM)

I prefer to play this tune at a rather moderate tempo, emphasizing the hypnotic quality by playing unison E and A notes (fourth finger against the open string) wherever there is a half or dotted quarter. This tune works equally well with piano or frailing banjo accompaniment.

Live oak

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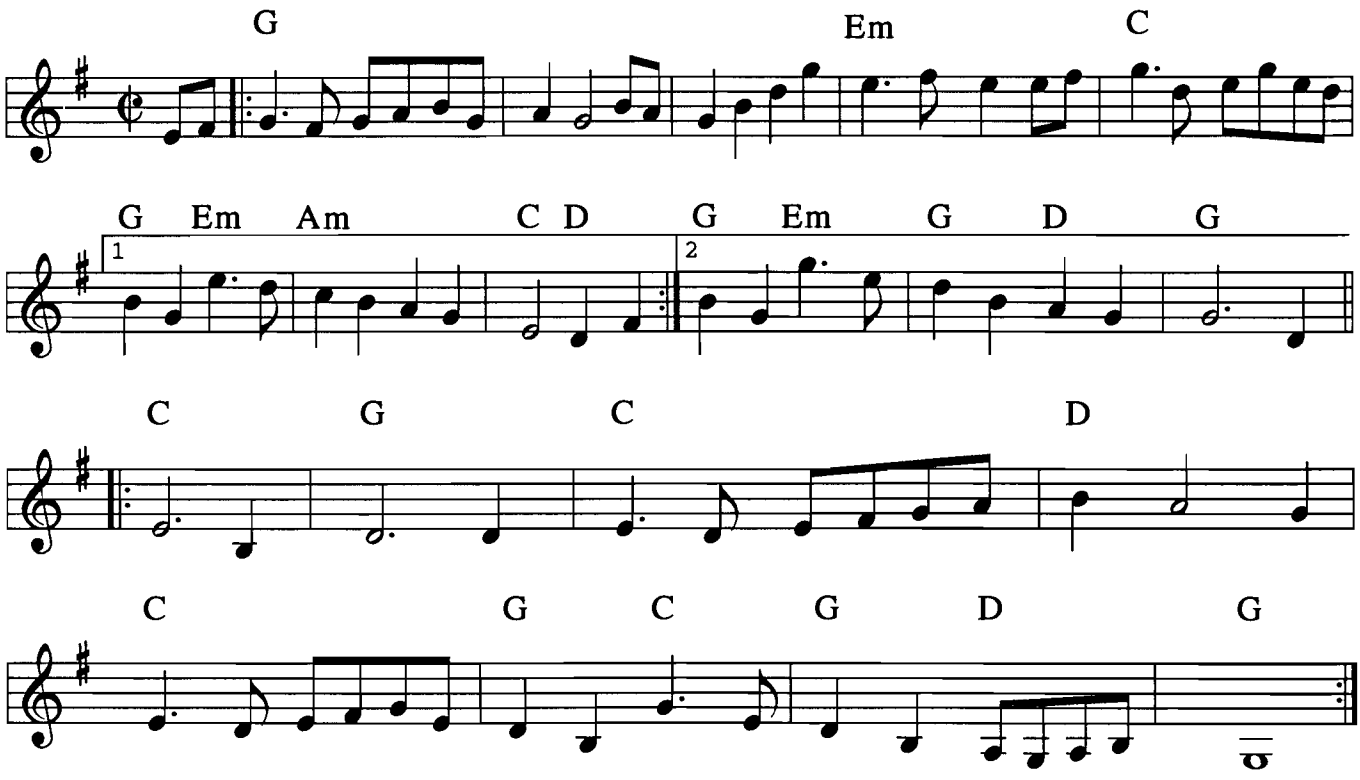

Live oak

Dedicated to Jim Mueller and the staff of our local NPR station, KCBX, who put on the Live Oak Music Festival each year. I wrote this tune after performing at the festival with my old-timey band, the Gap Tooth Mountain Ramblers.

Performance notes (MM)

I tend to play this tune on the slower side, a bit bouncy, so that it lopes along. Although piano is my preferred backup for dances, it's also a lot of fun to play with frailed banjo as an old-timey tune. In the B part, I try to drone against an open string whenever possible, giving it a southern feel.

Serendipity

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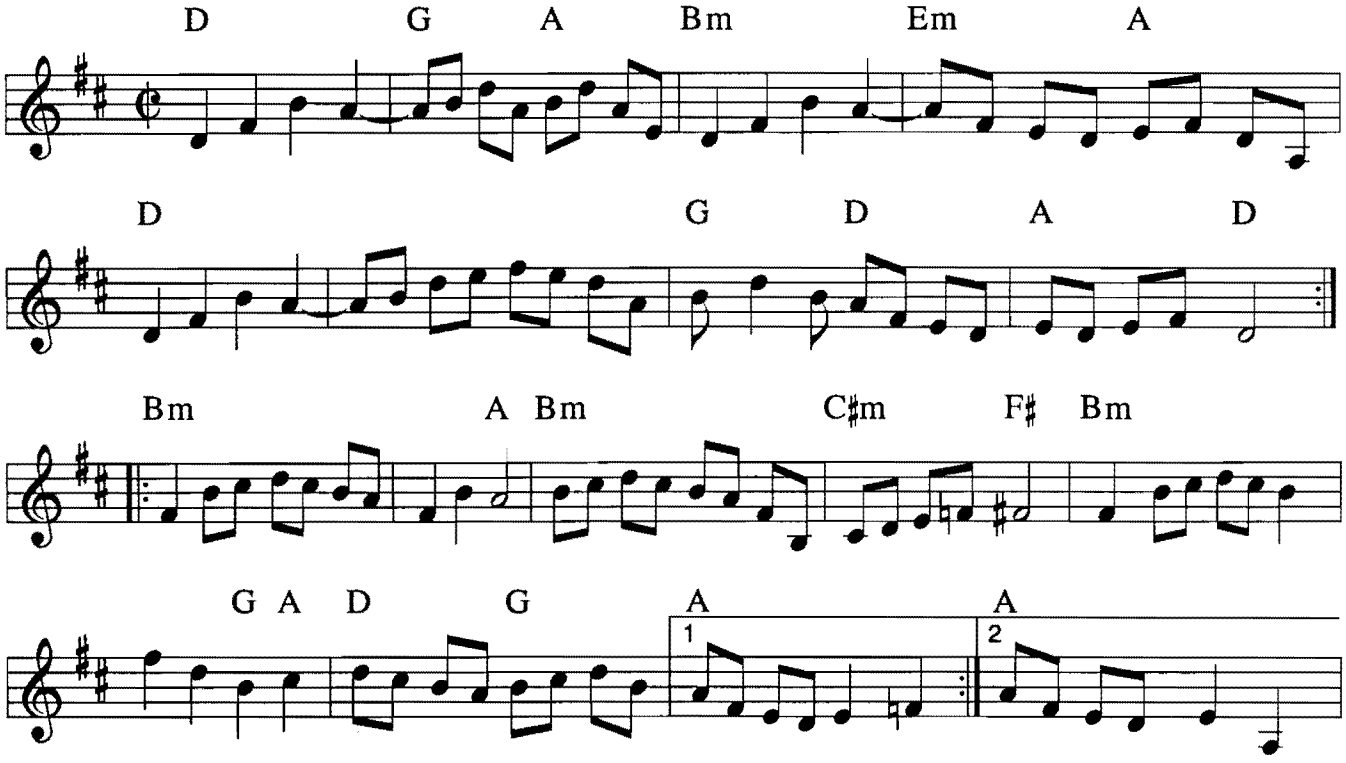

Serendipity

This tune came to me just after a musical weekend with Michael. I hadn't planned to write one, so it seemed like musical serendipity to me.

Performance notes (AA)

Heavy syncopation makes this one fun, combined with some 7th chords where appropriate.

Touch and go

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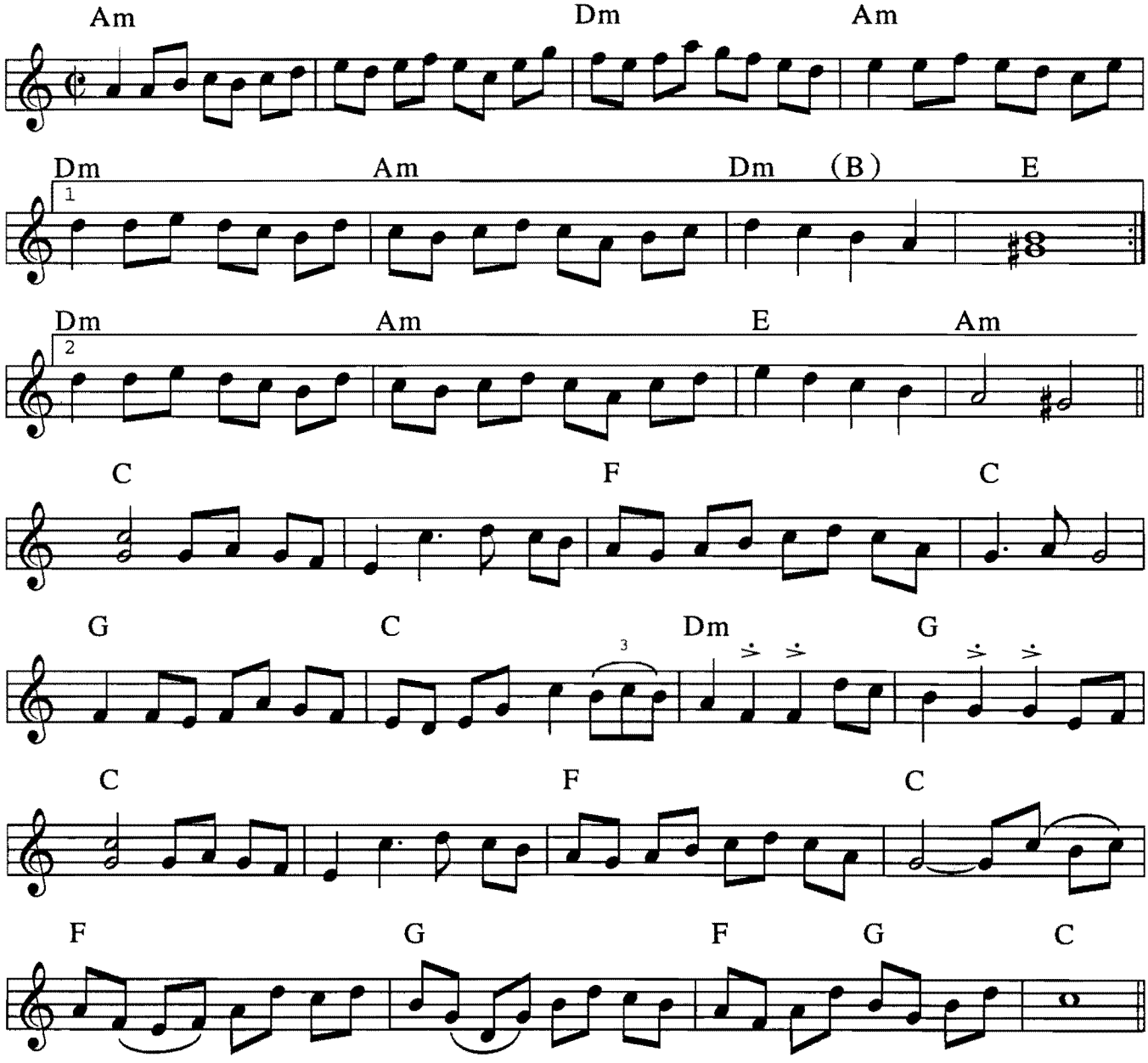

Touch and go

There was a lapse of well over a year between writing the first half and the second half of this tune. I wasn't sure that it was ever going to be finished; the creative process can often be "touch and go."

Performance notes (MM)

This one is fun to try as a bluegrass tune: rapid tempo, banjo, the works.

Performance notes (AA)

Pianists, create a Southern feel by keeping up a steady walking bass on this one.

Applesauce

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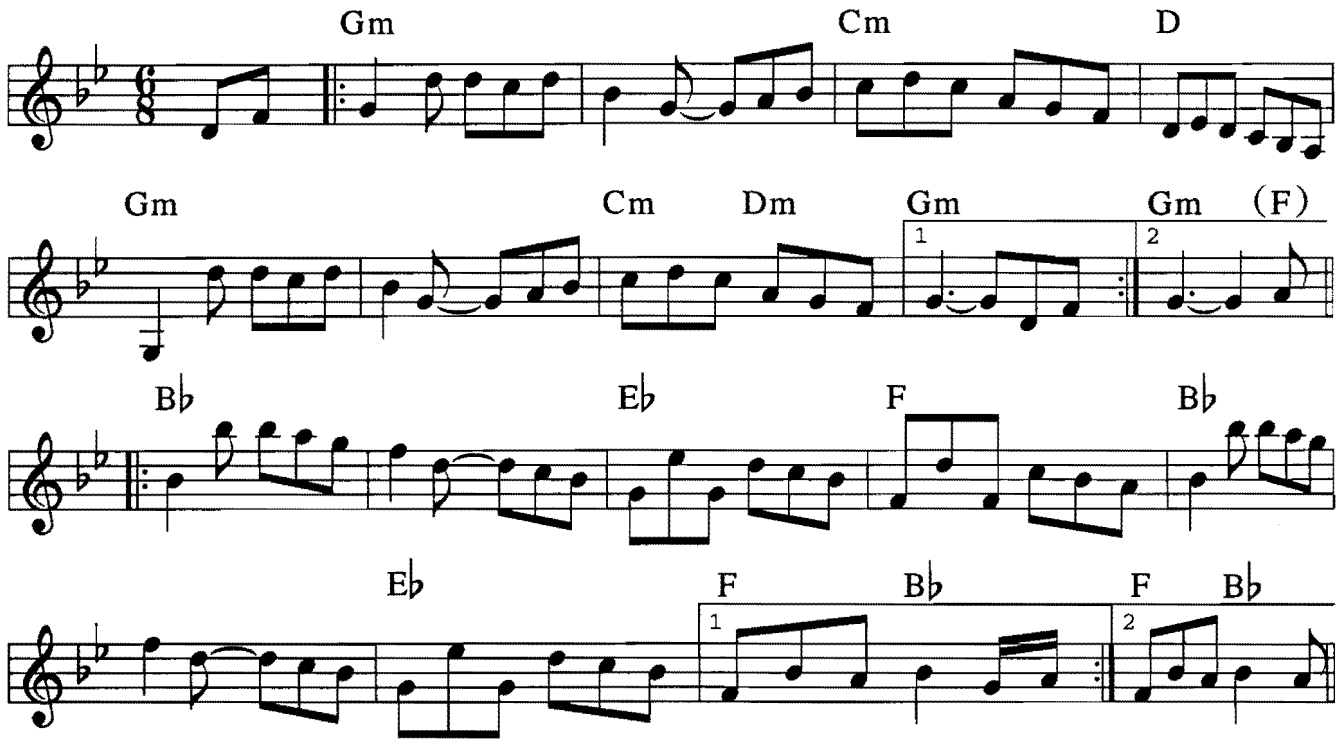
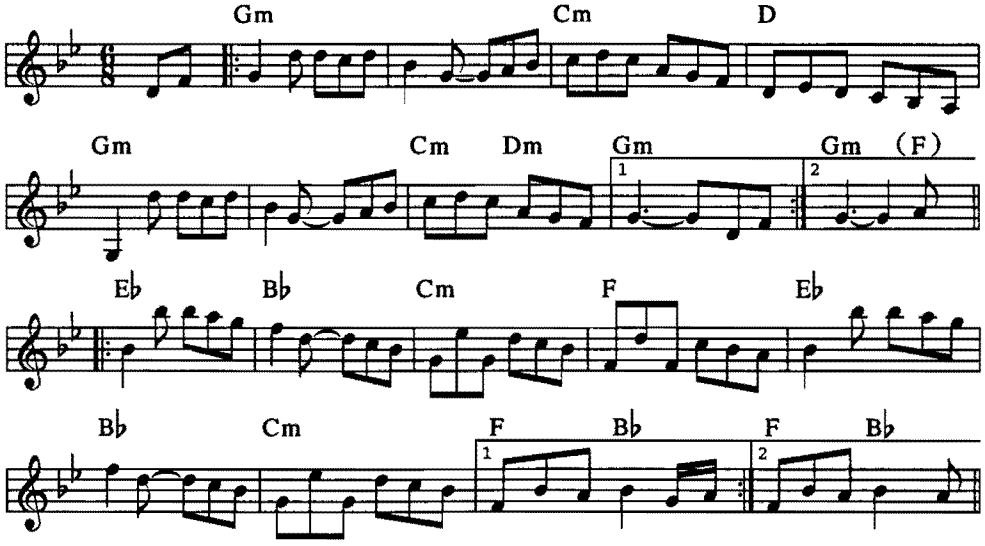


Applesauce

This Hitchcockian jig got its name from my prolific 100-year-old apple tree, which flings handfuls of ripe apples onto the pavement all during apple season. You can hear them falling in measure 4.

Alternate chords



Fiddlemaker's jig

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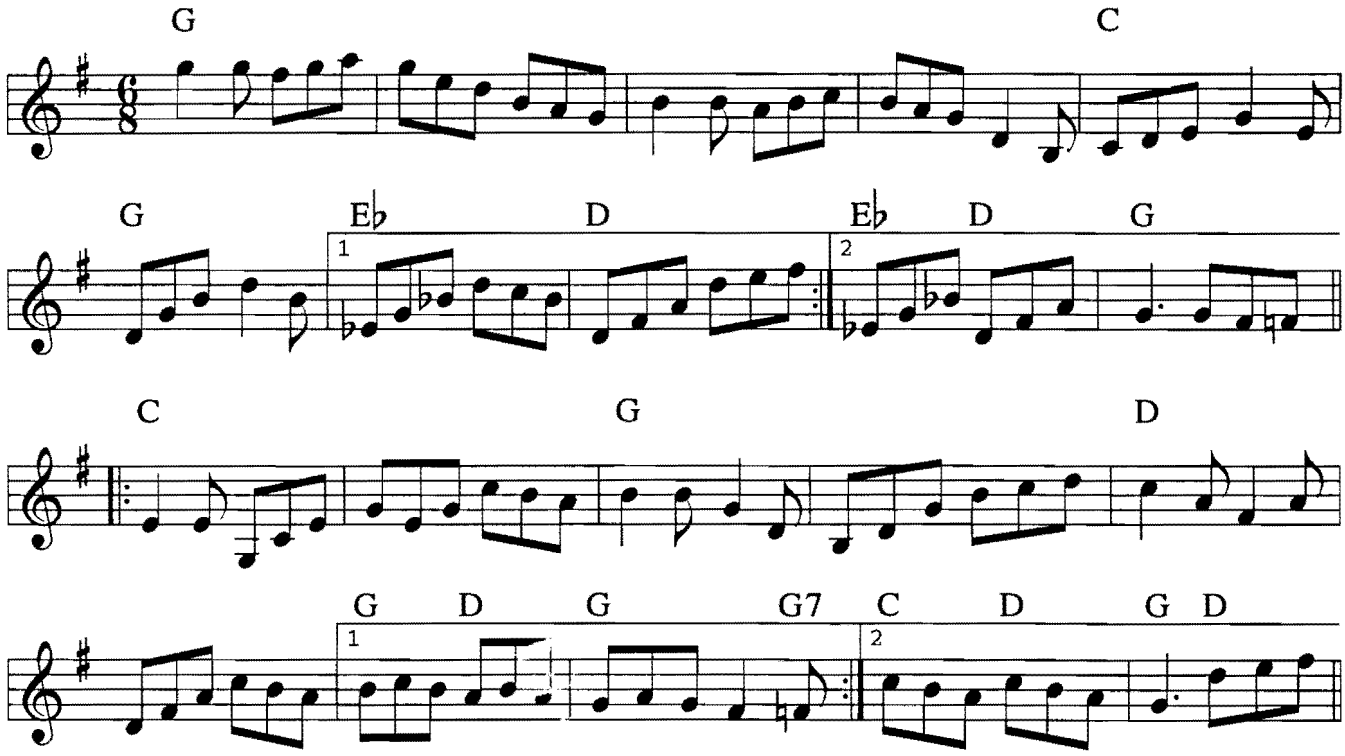

Fiddlemaker's jig

Dedicated to my good friend and master violin maker Jim Wimmer. This was the first tune I wrote on my new violin, a beautiful Guarneri del Jesu copy made by Jim. The tune seems to sound best on that fiddle.

Performance notes (MM)

Except for the E-flat chords in the A part, this is a rather straightforward jig in the Canadian style.

Halloween jig

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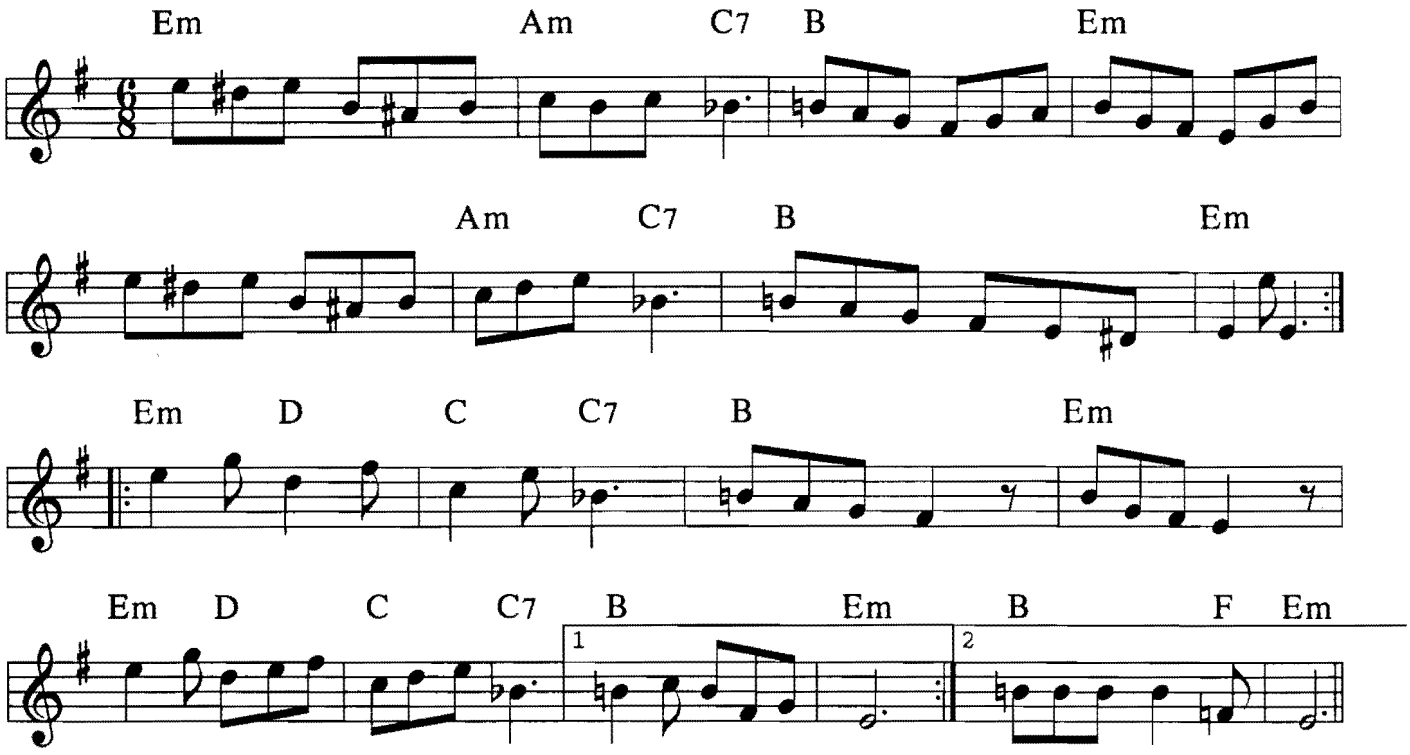

Halloween jig

Every band should have something silly and spooky to play at a Halloween dance.

Performance notes (AA)

Yuddle-ly yuddle-ly yum-ti yum, and so forth. Myself, I live for the F major chord in the last measure.

The smooch on the porch

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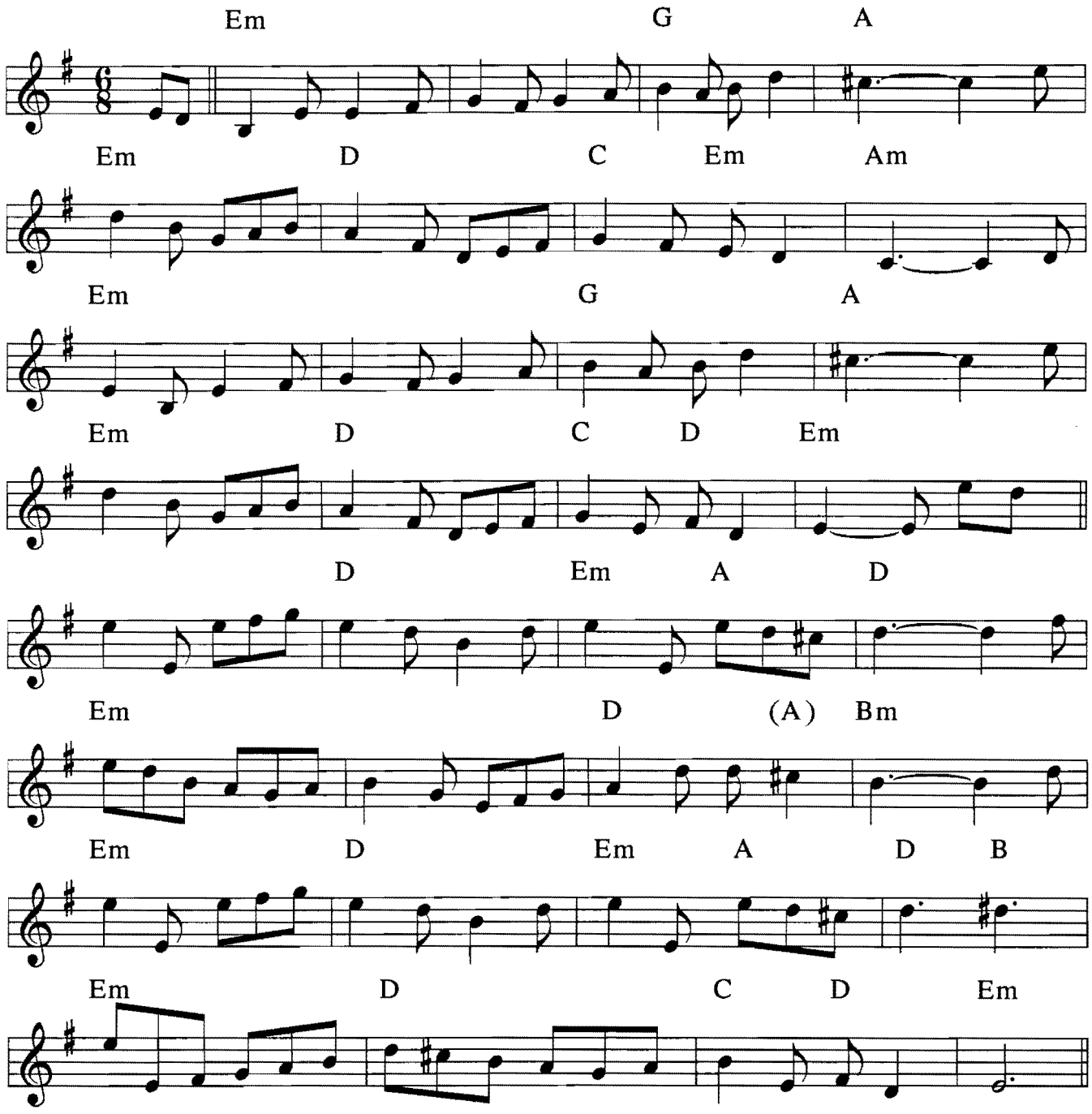


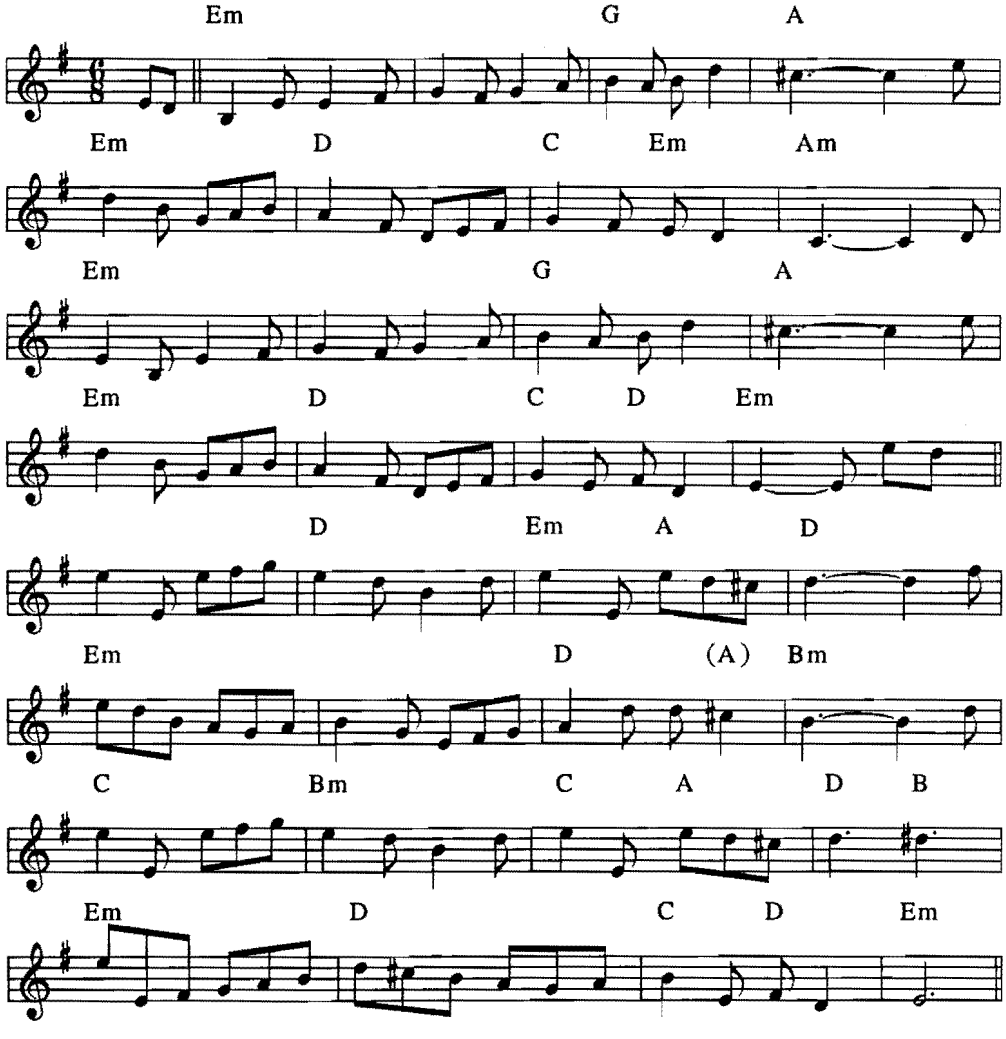
The smooch on the porch

Once upon a time, there was a smooch and it took place on a porch after the Harvest Moon festival in Santa Barbara, California. This much is known. As to the smoochee...well, he knows who he is. Can *you* find the clinch in this tune?

Performance notes (AA)

It's easy to miss the snapped 8th notes in measures 3, 7, 11, 15, 23, and 31, but I know you won't.

Alternate chords



Claremont waltz

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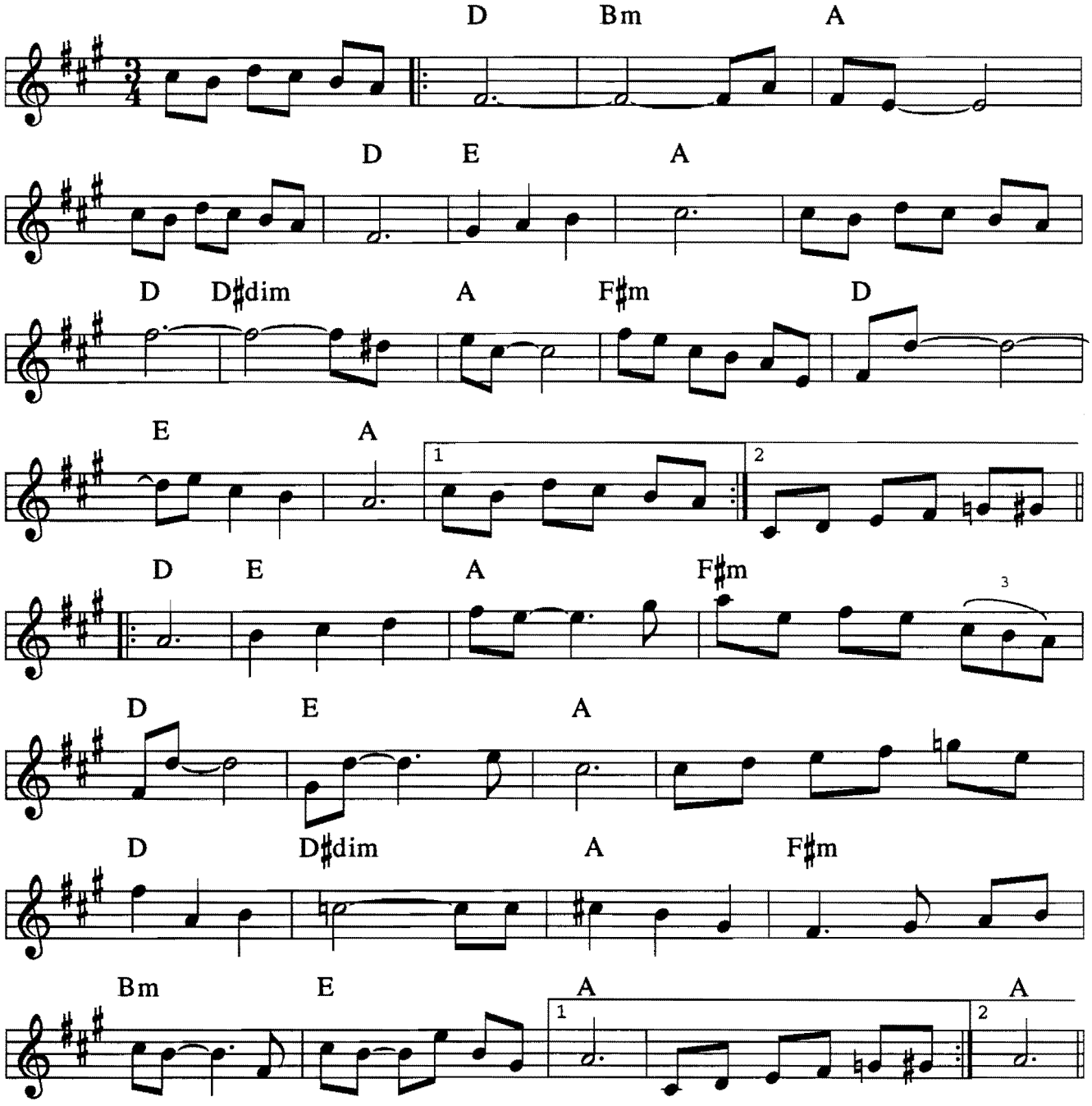

Claremont waltz

I wrote this waltz when I was playing with the Sidewinders band in Claremont, California. One of the band members hoped that I'd name it for his wife, but I told him to write his own.

Performance notes (AA)

This is a loopy kind of waltz, best played with scooped notes (particularly the ones held over the bar) and swung 8th notes. The piano accompaniment can borrow a lot from gospel and country styles. Be sure to keep some activity going while the fiddle holds those long notes.

Performance notes (MM)

The timing for the fiddler can be a bit tricky. Be aware of the pickup measure; it really is a full three beats. And be sure to put some emotion into the long tied notes.

Gently turn

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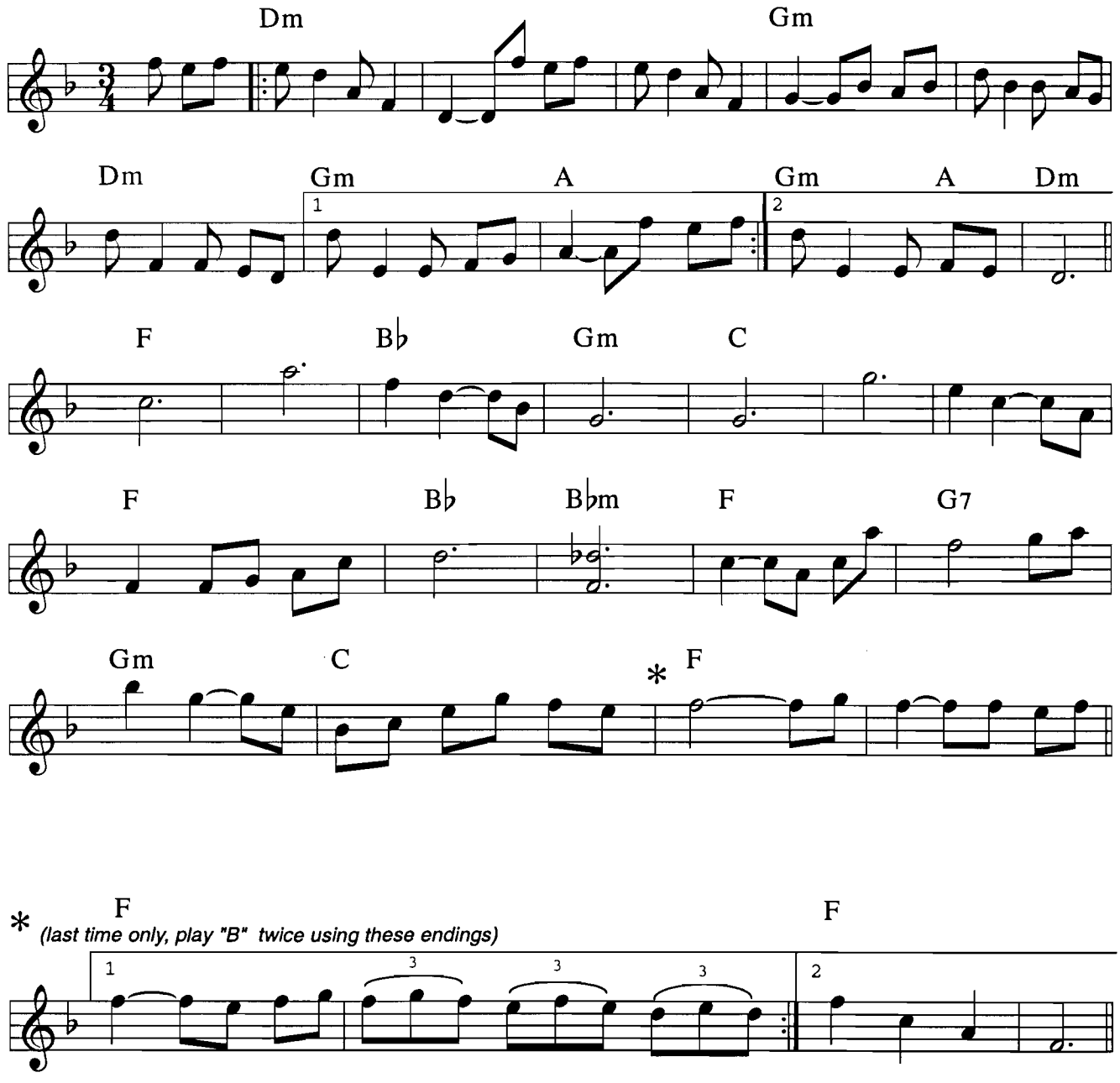
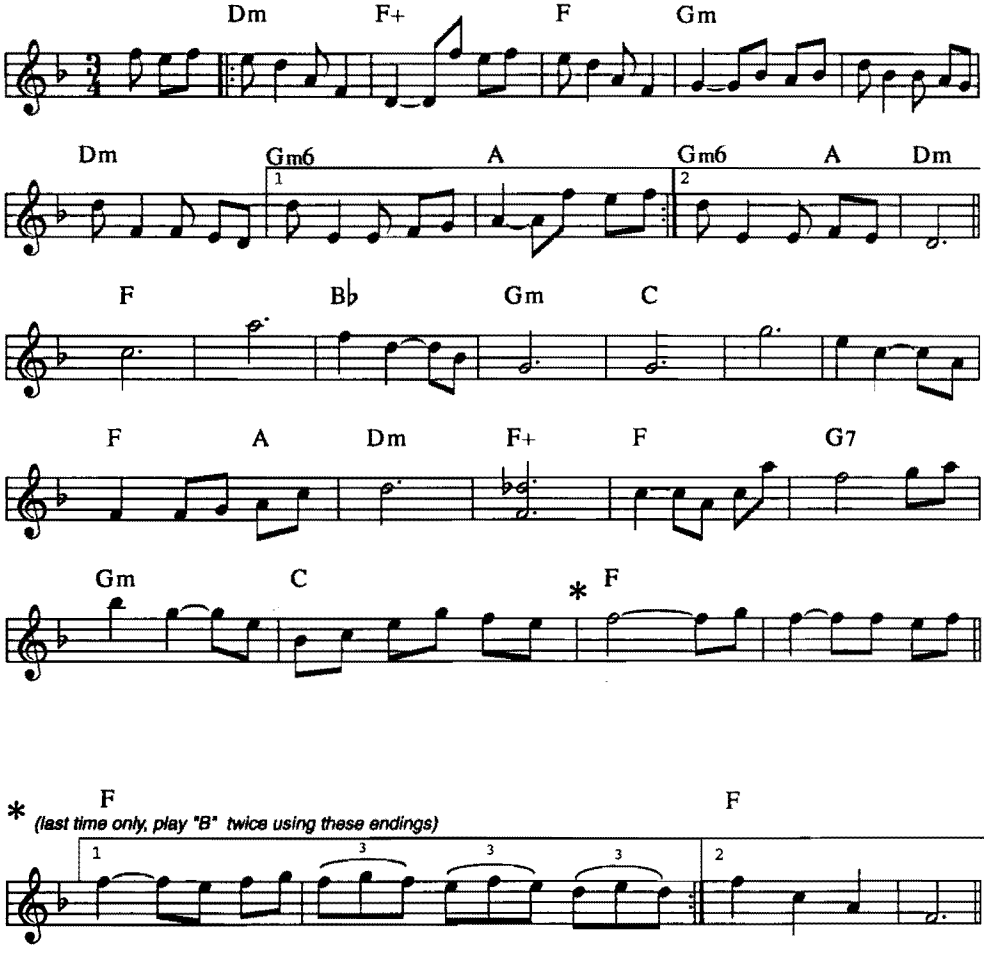


Gently turn

The title was inspired by an encounter at our Harvest Moon Dance Festival. Although I had written this waltz a number of months previously, I was at a loss for a title. One of my favorite dance partners had injured her back before the event, and was not able to take part in the festivities fully. She did agree to dance, however, on the condition that we do it very gently—hence the title.

Alternate chords



Green eyes (les yeux verts)

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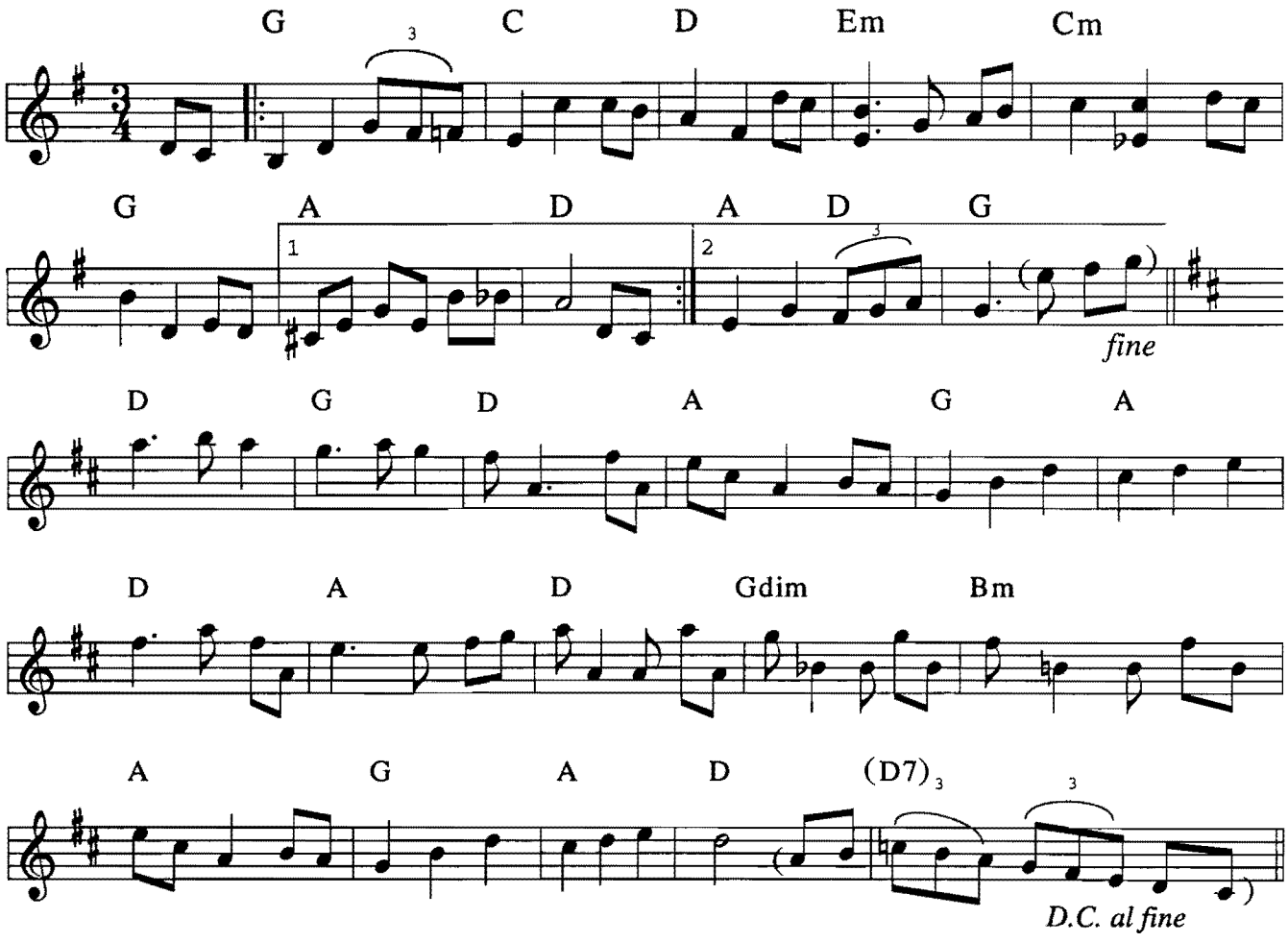
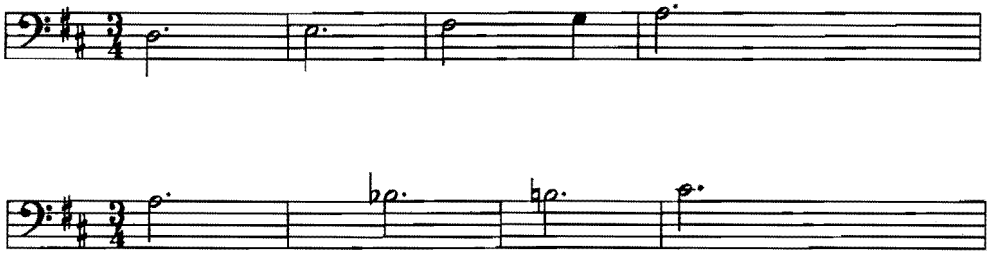


Green eyes (les yeux verts)

For Susan Forkush. I wrote this tune after putting her on a plane to begin her two-year stint with the Peace Corps in the Central African Republic. This is the only one of my tunes (that I know of) to be played on the African continent.

Performance notes (AA)

This tune's harmonic complexities provide very satisfying opportunities for the piano or other backup player. While I use basically the same chords all the time, I have found two distinct bass lines for measures 17-20, as in the following examples:



You may want to alternate them, as I do.

Performance notes (MM)

For a simple variation, try playing the B part an octave lower.

Morning light

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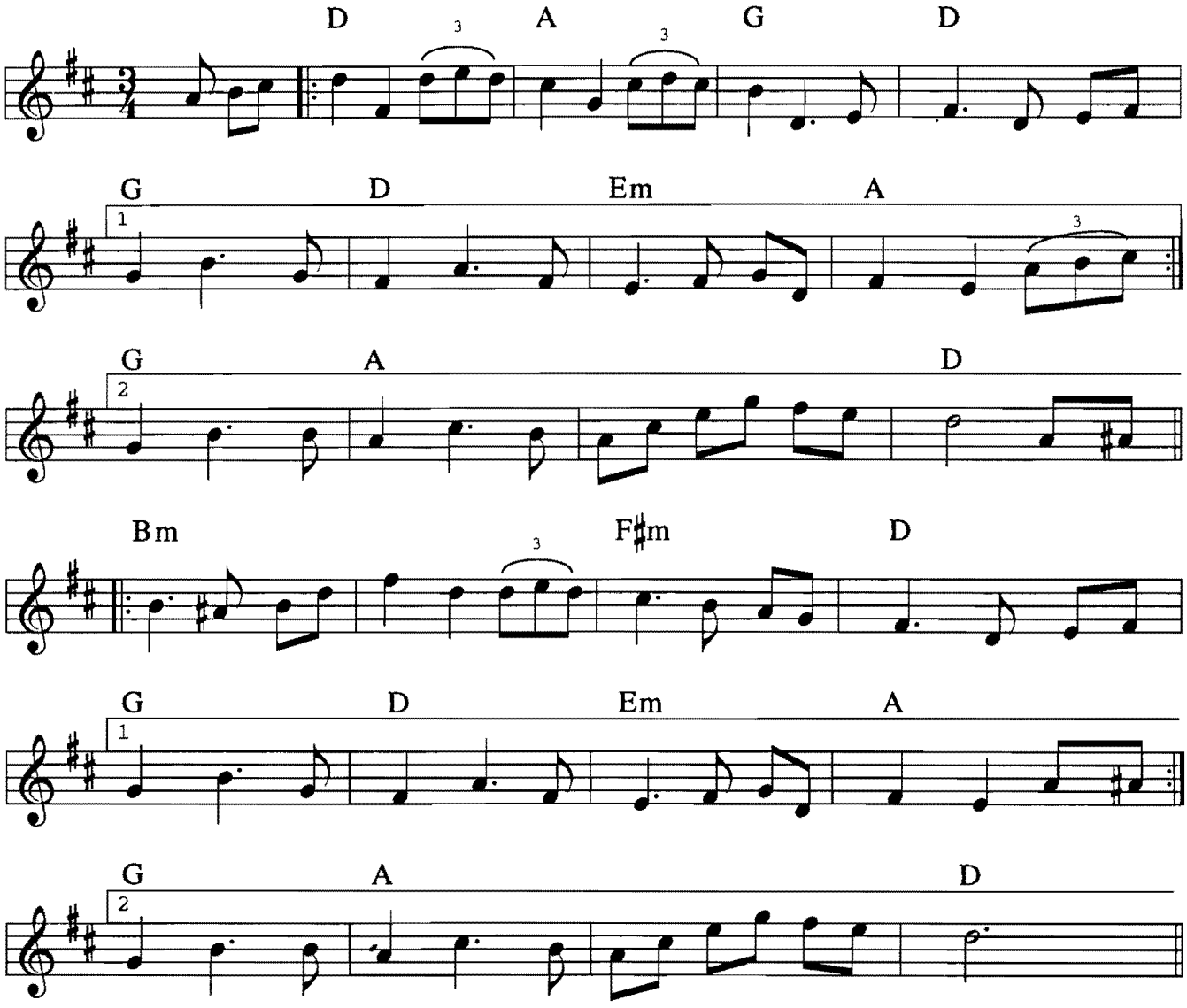

Morning light

Written to commemmorate the fiftieth birthday of my dear friend, dance partner, and contra dance caller, Cara Moore.

Performance notes (MM)

This one usually gets played with an abundance of schmaltz—syncopation and a fair amount of rubato. If there is another lead instrument involved, I often try to play a counterpoint to the melody.

Old friends and new

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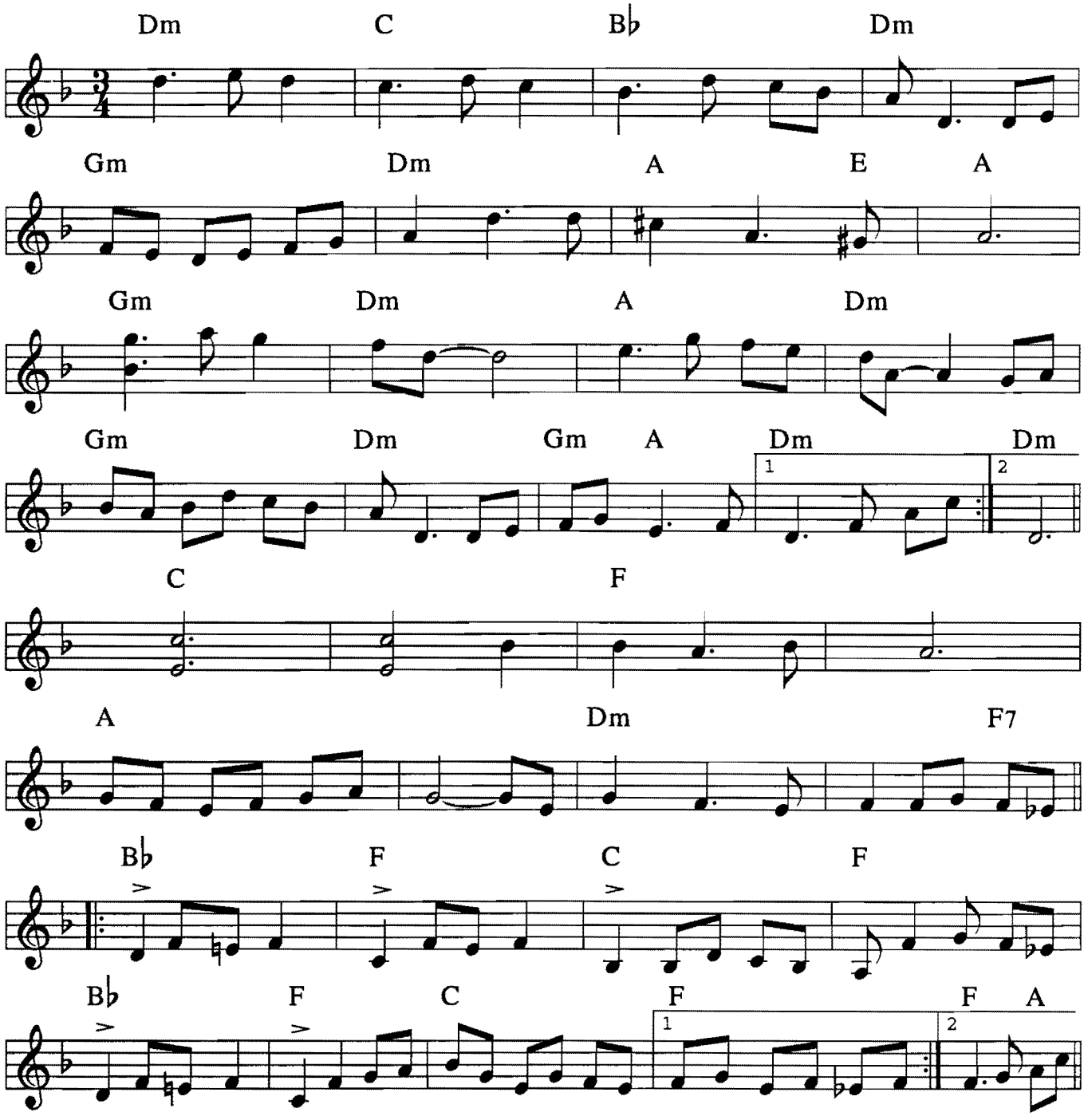


Old friends and new

Dedicated to the contra dance community of Santa Barbara.

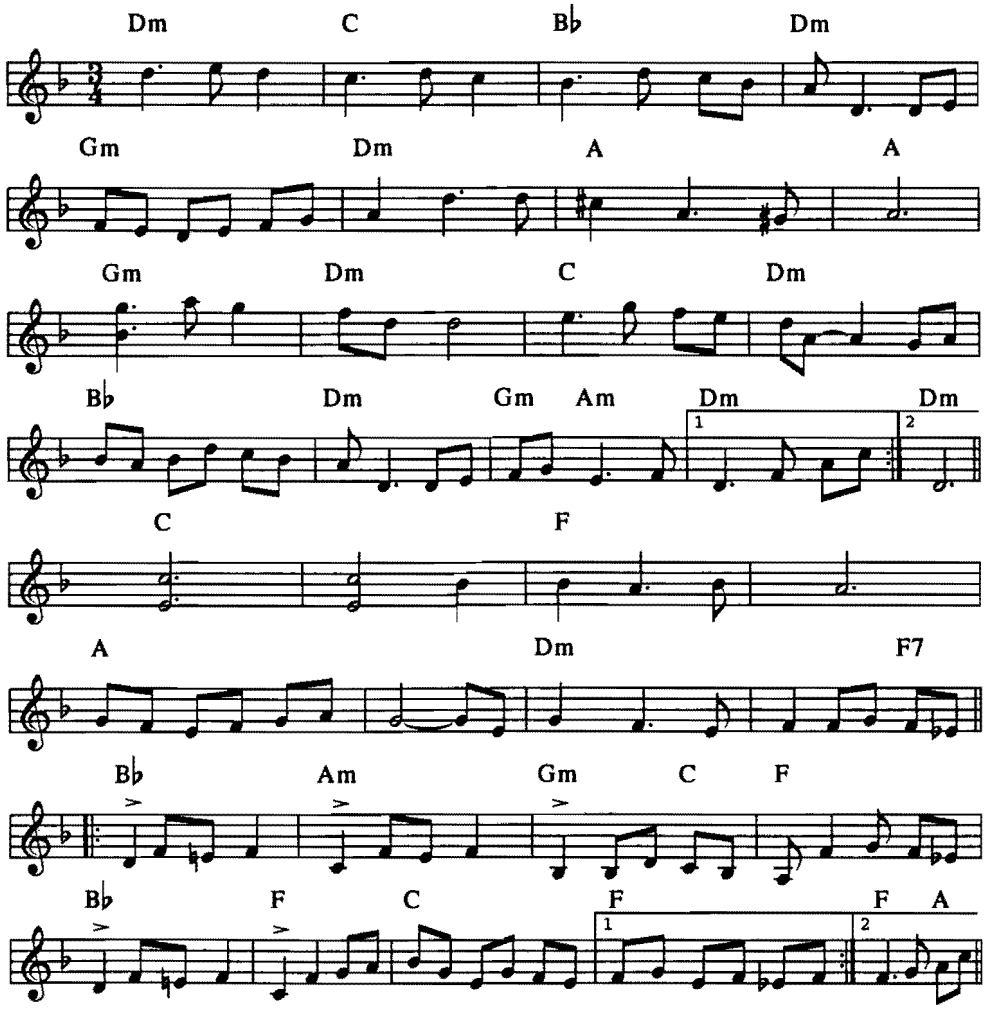
Performance notes (MM)

When I originally wrote this tune, I played it straight, as an up-tempo waltz, and it works well for dancing. Over the years, however, I have taken to playing it also as a listening piece by making it a jazz waltz.

In this setting, the first section (Dm) is swung hard (the feeling is like Dave Brubeck's "Take five"); the second section (key of F, lines 5 and 6) is in tranquil, straight waltz time; and the third section (last two lines, starting with the B-flat chord) is swung moderately to set up the return of the beginning of the piece.

If you care to play the waltz in this style, I think that you will find the tune is a lot of fun to improvise with.

Alternate chords



Bell hambo

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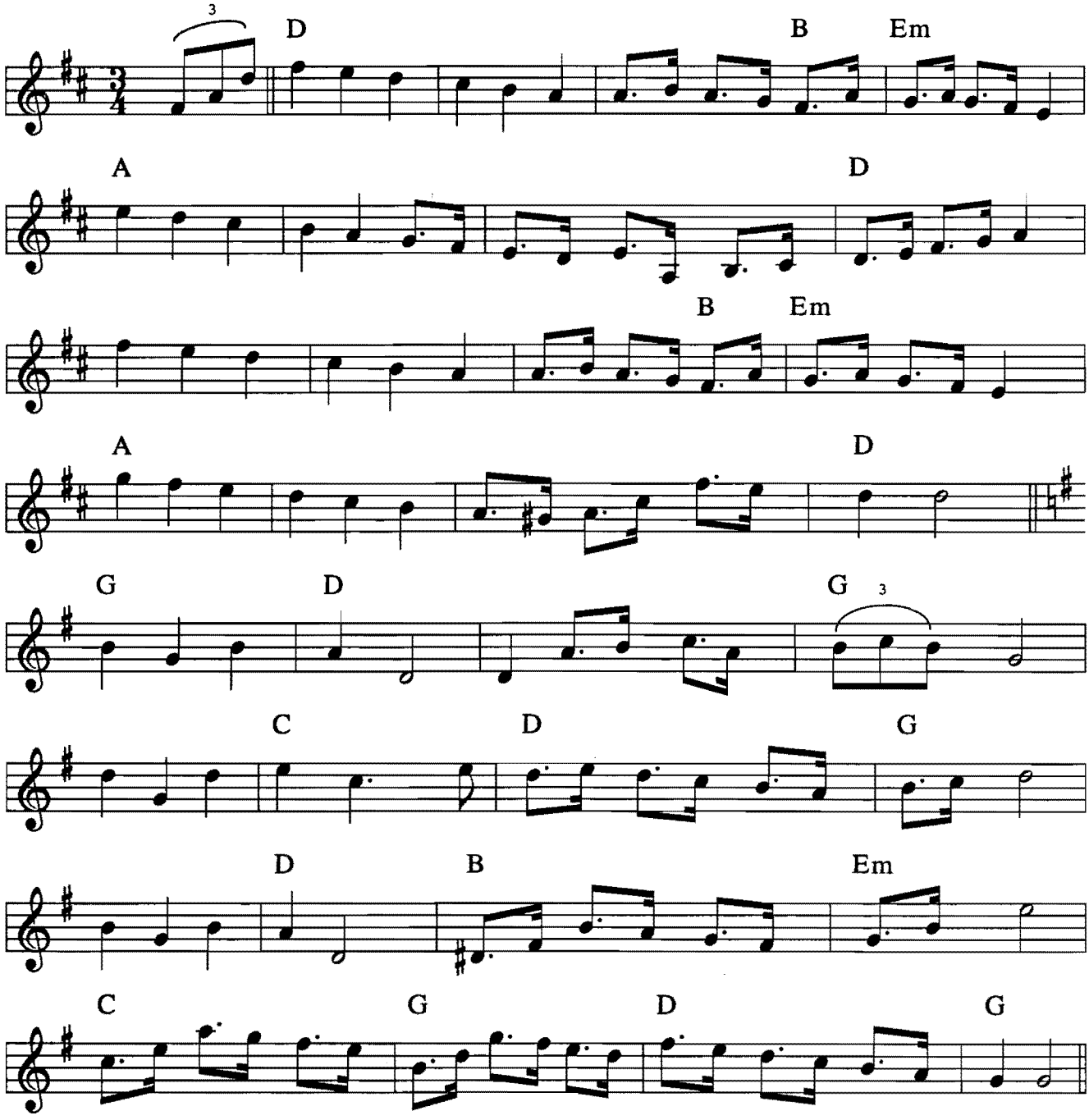


Bell hambo

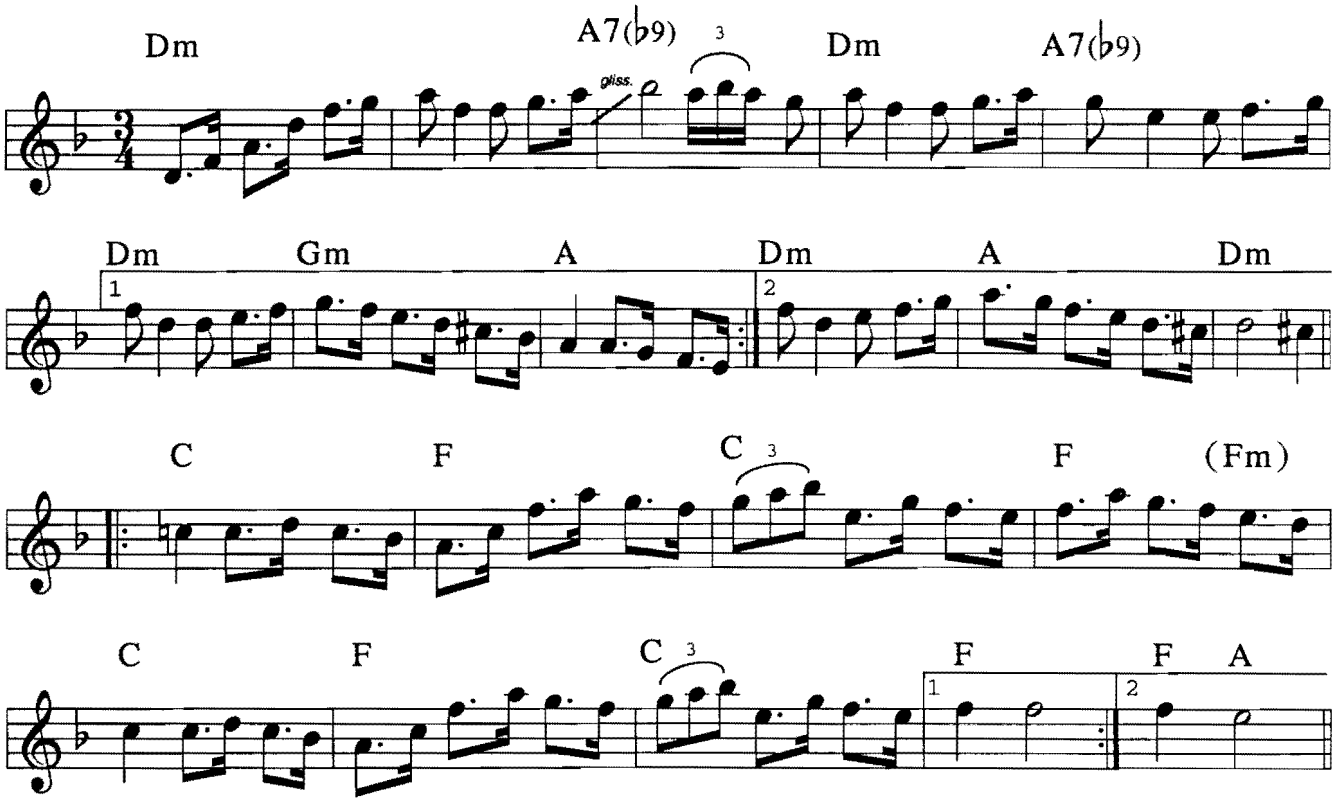
A simple hambo with a Westminster chime motif in the B part.

Performance notes (AA)

There is no real piano accompaniment tradition for hambos in Sweden, so we have to invent one. Hit heavy on beats 1 and 3 and be sure not to play it too fast—about 126 per quarter note is a good speed.

Blue moon hambo

© Michael Mendelson, 1989



Blue moon hambo

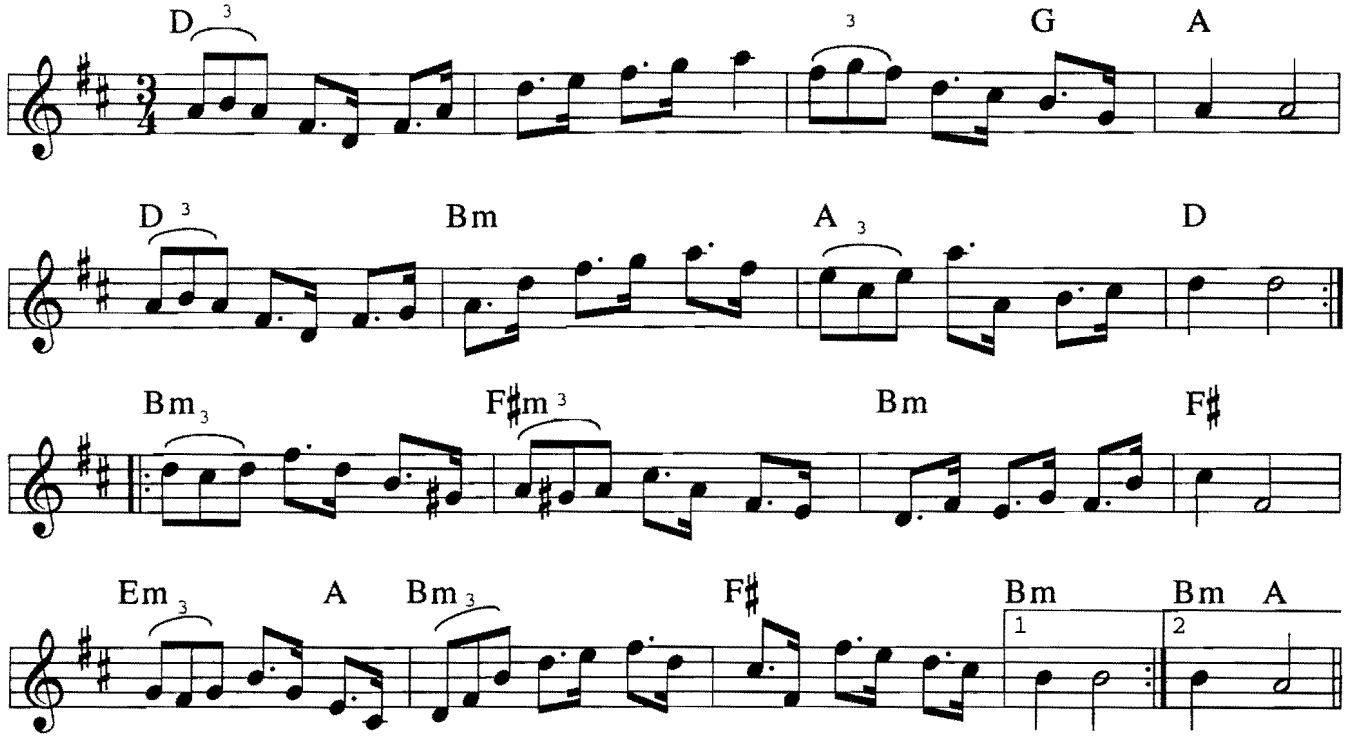
The world's first (only?) blues hambo. My fondness for blues and jazz overcame my early naiveté with regard to Scandinavian folk music. It was originally called the "Harvest Moon hambo," but I thought that this title was more appropriate.

Performance notes (MM)

I like to really stress the blues feeling in the first half of this tune by sliding *very* deliberately to that B-flat in the third measure, holding it slightly beyond the half-note value, and finally making the triplet almost a 32nd-note figure. The odd tonality plus the syncopation make for an interesting contrast in an otherwise rather conventional hambo.

Första försök (first try)

© Anita Anderson, 1986



Första försök (first try)

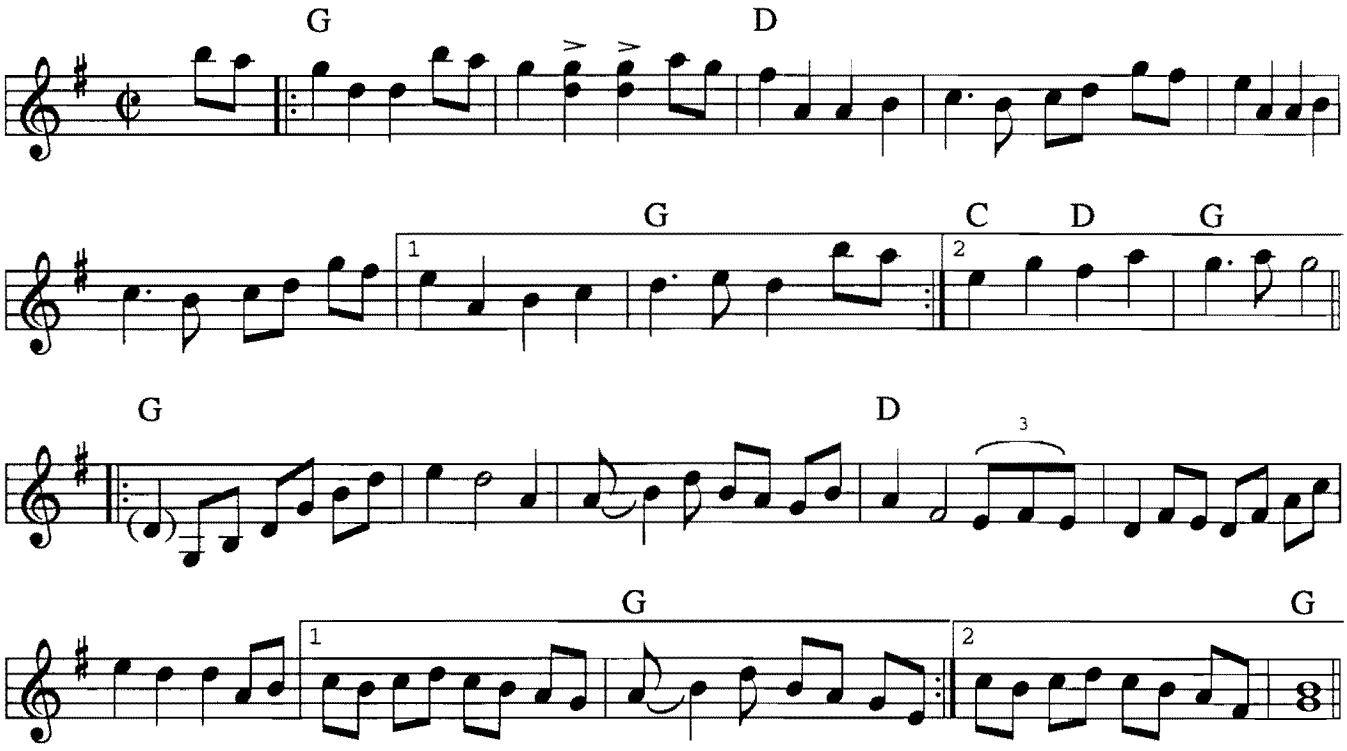
This is the first tune I ever wrote for folk dancing. I needed a hambo that would fit on a nonchromatic hammered dulcimer for the WRD band. I had waited until the last minute to find one, and then there were none suitable—so I had to write one in a hurry.

Performance notes (AA)

See "Bell hambo" for a discussion of hambo accompaniment suggestions. If you're not used to hambos, ending on the 5 chord (A) may seem a little odd, but it's really okay. Go ahead, end the whole piece on the A chord, and watch the dancers suspended in mid-step as they wait for you to play it again.

Mr Sam's ramble

© Michael Mendelson, 1992



Mr Sam's ramble

A polka! Titled for my feline friend of the past 13 years, who loves to stampede through the house, leaping over furniture and bouncing off the walls. This one's for you, Sam!

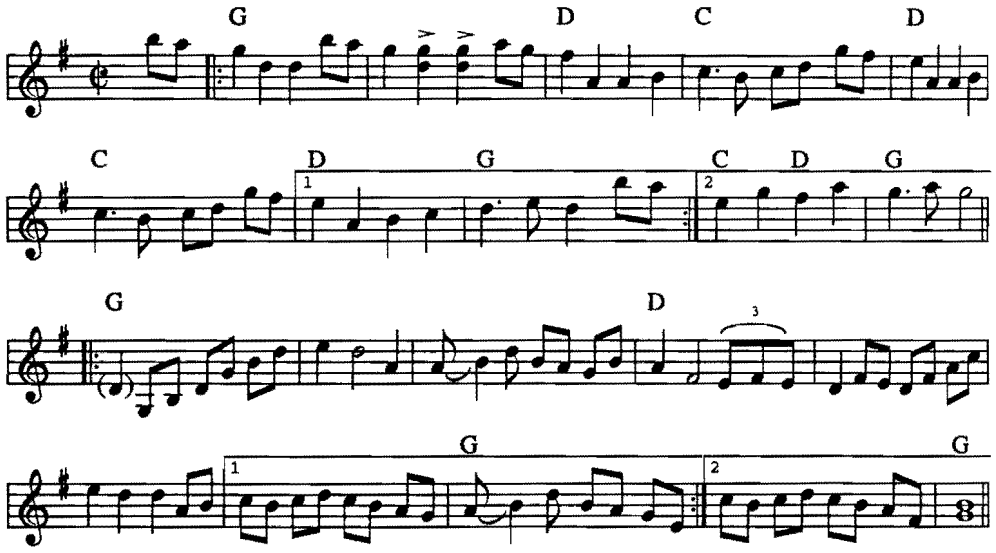
Performance notes (MM)

I often put a quarter rest in place of the first (D) note of the B part, the first time through, letting the piano play that beat (hence the parentheses). I like the effect created by a strong silent note.

Performance notes (AA)

If you'd like a faster alternation of chords, check the alternate chord version below.

Alternate chords



Goodbye to Silverlake

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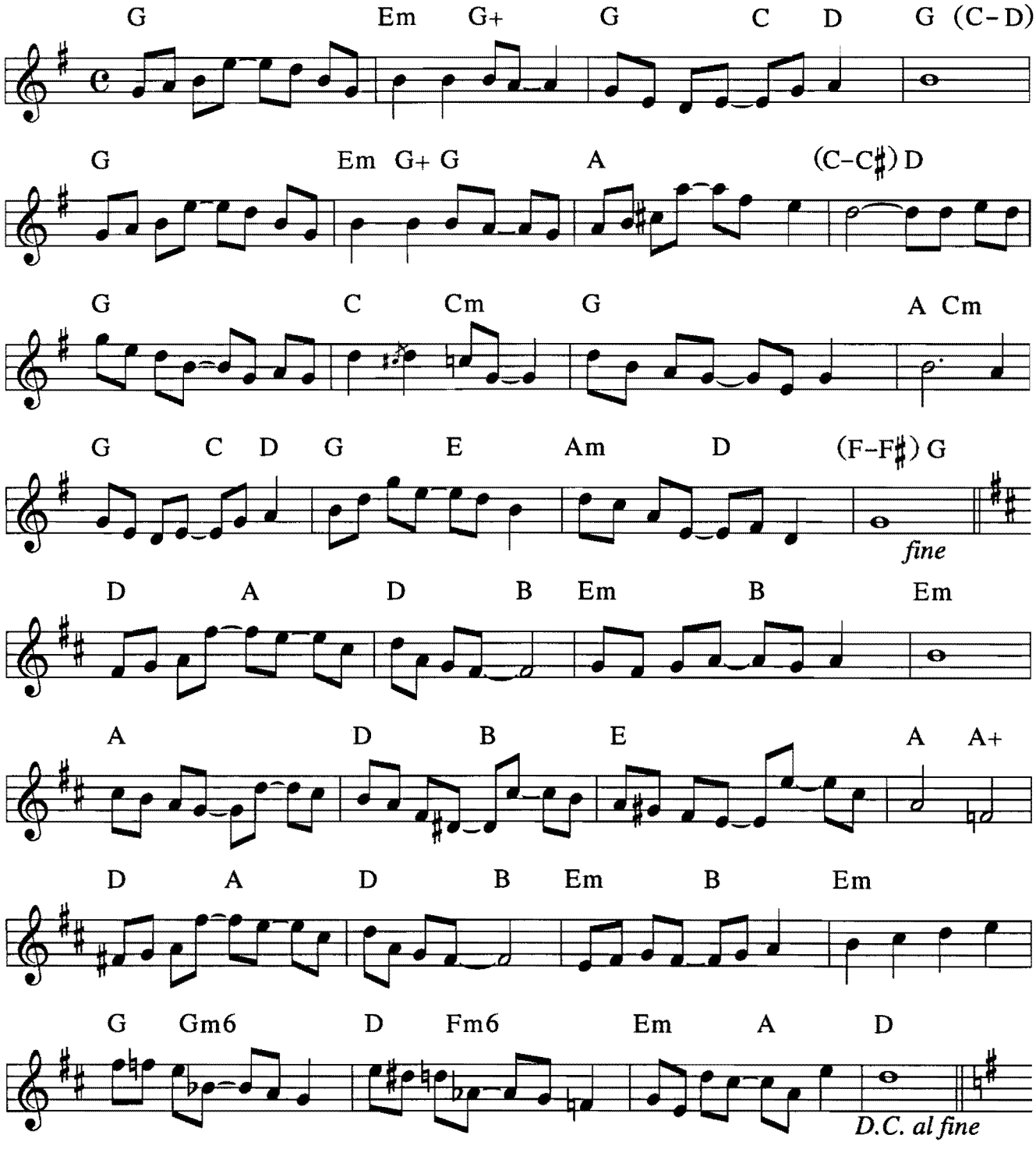

Goodbye to Silverlake

When I was with the Sidewinders band, I grew attached to Frank Hoppe's charming house in Silverlake, where we rehearsed. The night he announced that he was going to sell it and move to a bigger house further north, I wrote this tune in memory of our good times there. (Just for the record, Frank and his friends continue to have good times in his new house.)

Performance notes (AA)

This can be played as a very slow rag (quarter note = 84) or as a one-step (quarter note = 120). The optional chords in parentheses in measures 4, 8, and 16 are indeed full chords, making (in 8 and 16) a chromatic progression to the third chord.

Hillside rag

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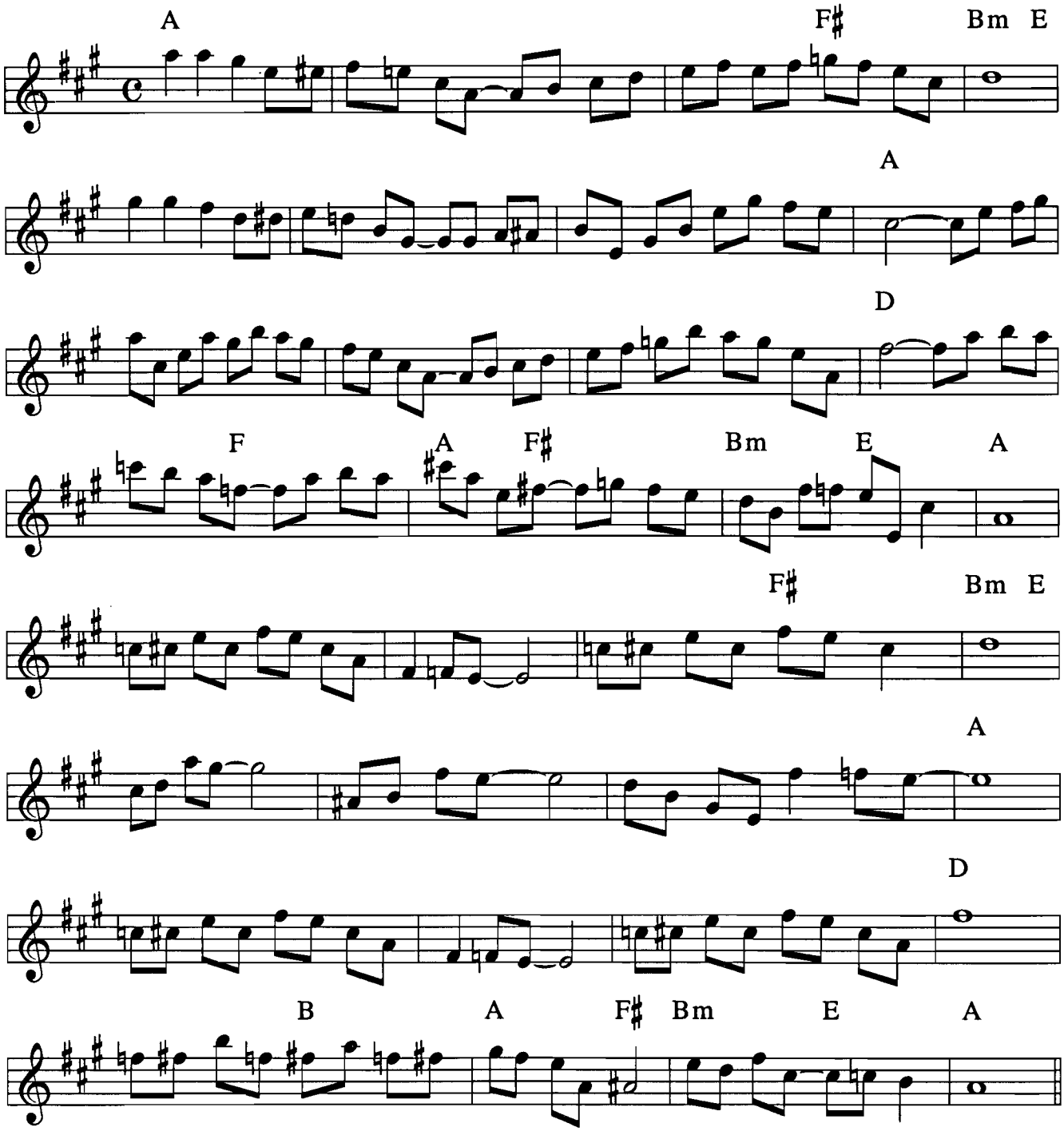


Hillside rag

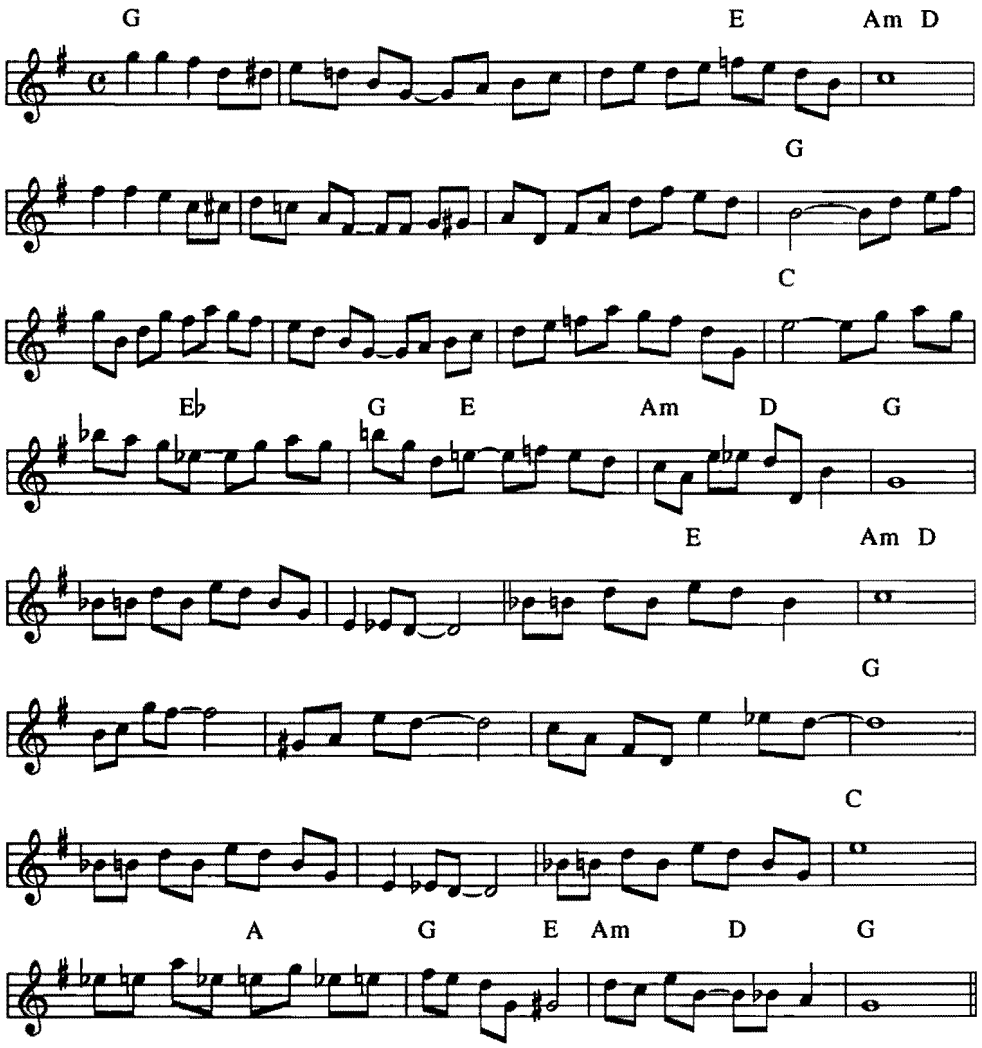
Written for my great musical buddy Michael Mendelson (who lives on Hillside Road).

Performance notes (AA)

I originally wrote the tune in G, but some fiddle players like it better in A. The piano backup I use is standard simple rag stuff, at a tempo of about 92 per half note. It sounds a little frantic at normal contra tempo, so we use it as an intermission piece or perhaps for swing.

Performance notes (MM)

The alternate arrangement in G presents different fingerings and a different sound for fiddlers. It also lies better for horn players. Ask your local clarinet player to try it on for size!



Acknowledgments

Music, to be good, must come from the heart, and in the case of dance music, from the feet too. These tunes are the result of sharing a large portion of our lives with other musicians and dancers at jam sessions, dance camps, and other gatherings.

MM

In addition to the specific friends and events that inspired the individual tunes in this book, I'd like to thank those who put up with the constant requests for reality checks and feedback: Gilles Apap, Kristina Gibbs, Jim Mueller, John Sonquist, and Jim Wimmer.

AA

Thanks to Forrest Carroll and Rebecca King, for giving some of my tunes their first public exposure; to Peter Barnes, for intent listening, encouragement, and more ideas than I could ever absorb properly; and to Jim Massengale, for providing the Fm6 chord in "Goodbye to Silverlake" (over the phone, no less) when I was stuck.

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