

Preface to the *Just the Notes* series

All of these tunes in this series were made by ear, never written down as they were worked out; with *Just the Notes*, I've transcribed them, in the hopes that the notation will help others to learn them, on fiddles and guitars, or whatever instruments are on hand. I think of these as fiddle *tunes*, but clearly they are not your typical fiddle tunes (whatever that might mean); while I like nothing more than to play these tunes with my friends and family in informal places (like our living room, or, as it may be, our basement!), they are a bit much to pick up on the fly, at a session. But it also doesn't feel quite right to write them down, fix them on the page, imagine that they can be read like a "Classical" *composition*. They are, perhaps, somewhere... in between.

Most of these tunes were made with unusual fiddles tuned up in unusual ways. For instance, *Orton's Ode* in the QQQQ volume was "written" on the Hardanger fiddle (Norway's national instrument), tuned quite unlike the conventional violin (with a 4th between the bottom two strings, a major-3rd between the middle strings, and a 7th between the top two strings—a variant of what is known as *troll tuning*, or *trollstilt*, in Norway). These tunings are incredibly beautiful and inspiring, but pose problems for notation; writing down the notes as we hear them makes them quite hard for violinists to read, since our fingers expect the strings to be tuned in 5^{ths}. But, writing them down so that our fingers can do the walking can be confusing, since the notes we end up hearing are different than what we see on the page.

I would like fiddlers and violinists to be able to look at these transcriptions and as quickly as possible get their fingers to do the right thing. But I would also like other instrumentalists to be able to have a go at these tunes, regardless of all the tuning madness that might have played a role in their

making. So, I've written the tunes down in two ways: first, as we expect to hear them, and second, as we would finger them. The latter is the norm with traditional Hardanger fiddle notation, so will be familiar to *speleman*, but can be ambiguous, and certainly a puzzle for non-fiddlers just trying to figure out what notes are sounding, so both are important to have. To those unfamiliar with unusual tunings (sometimes known as cross-tunings, or *scordatura*), this might be confusing, but just spend some time with *Orton's Ode* or *Training West* (in the CrissCross volume), and it will all eventually make sense. Orton, by the way, was my great uncle Orton Enstad, who passed away in 2008 at the age of 102; of Norwegian descent, he was a great fan of the Hardanger fiddle.

As with all notation, these transcriptions are incomplete, and, especially these days with the ready availability of recordings and tools to help us learn from them, it just doesn't make sense to ignore the recordings that are available. So, I'm assuming that these transcriptions would be used in conjunction with the Trollstilt, QQQ, and CrissCross recordings, all of which will go a long way towards helping one make sense of these tunes. On the other hand, I don't imagine these recordings to be definitive; on the contrary, I would be thrilled for other musicians to take these tunes and make them their own, find their own ways of playing them, discover corners and closets that I've missed. For all these reasons, I've kept the notation quite basic—enough to get the notes, but not much more; no fingerings, dynamics, or micro-tuning, minimal ornaments and bowings, etc... If you want those things, listen to the recordings, or come up with your own. Another way to put this: these transcriptions are not meant to be prescriptive, but enabling. I'm *not* interested in provoking the question “what did the ‘composer’ intend here?” but rather “how can we make this our own and make it as great as possible?”

Most of my tunes in this series were made with Hardanger fiddle, usually tuned up a whole-step higher than the conventional violin. Monica Mugan, for the *Trollstilt* and *QQQ* volumes, often plays with the guitar capo'ed on fret 2. But, most of the time I've notated the tunes where a fiddler or guitarist would expect to see them, so the ‘A’-string looks like an A on the page, even if it's tuned up to a B (put another way, most of the Hardanger notation is often “in D,” meaning the instruments sound a whole-step higher than where they are written). But, don't worry about any of this! This is just so that if you are reading the notation and listening to a recording, you can understand why the pitches are higher than you expect. The tunes should be

playable on regular violins tuned to their comfortable registers or, for that matter, other non-string instruments. And in other keys.

For CrissCross, Brittany Haas made her tunes with a 5-string fiddle, also tuned up this way and that. The tunings that we used are always indicated with small notes at the beginning of the “As Fingered” lines. Some are quite extreme, and some do require a 5-string fiddle (or, in the case of *Wallflower*, a 6-string!), but many are playable, perhaps with some modification, in standard tuning and a 4-string violin. In some cases where the tune is clearly “singable,” I’ve made the secondary double-stop notes small (this is also standard practice for Hardanger fiddle notation), but sometimes it’s not so clear, in which case I’ve left both notes full-sized. Finally, some of these tunes are presented multiple ways, first in a simpler form (solo, or duo), then in a larger arrangement (with the names of the musicians it was originally arranged for). Again, nothing is meant to be definitive, but rather a useful starting point for making new versions, so you might grab part of the larger arrangement while ignoring or changing the rest, all the while arranging for, say, three recorders and sitar!

As of this writing, I have had the opportunity to hear some of these tunes played by others who have learned them with the assistance of these transcriptions; it’s been a thrill! After years of playing these tunes myself and with my great friends who I’ve made them with, it is terrifically exciting to hear and see that they can be taken up by others and made new. I hope that these volumes will enable you—whether fiddler, guitarist, pianist, recorder player, jazz musician, sitarist, singer, or whatever—to explore these tunes and make them your own.

—*Dan Trueman*
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