



5 STRINGER

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THE AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY

Get Yo' Ticket: The Life and Legacy of Harry C. Browne

By Henry Sapoznik

Despite his singular odyssey from musician to matinee idol to media missionary, the once ubiquitous Harry C. Browne is known today—to the extent he is, that is—for the minstrel and coon songs you'll hear on these discs. Together with his life story they form a Cook's Tour of nineteenth-into-twentieth-century American popular culture. It's a great, if troublesome, ride.

When Browne was born in 1878, America's near-half-century obsession with minstrelsy was on the wane. But if the minstrel show's one accurate transmission of black culture was in the playing of the banjo, no one furthered it better than he.

Browne's was the first generation to grow up with sound recordings, a newfound depth of access difficult to grasp today. Still, the first soundscape to inform his musicianship was community and home, where he learned how and what to play from his banjoist father, Ike. Minstrel songs were big on the menu.

By 1916, when Browne entered Columbia's New York studio to make these recordings, what he chose to wax bordered on preservation. And the instrument he carried under his arm was equally storied.

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In their initial retooling of the gut-stringed gourd with which slaves serenaded their misery, Southerners appropriated a music as blithely as they did a people. The way it was played—beating down on the strings with a fingernail of the right hand while thumbing the short string to produce a driving pulse—was also African-derived.

Known successively as “stroke,” “frailing” and “clawhammer,” that thrumming syncopation was unlike anything else in the American aural lexicon. And from the 1840s to the 1880s it became the heartbeat of pop music and culture, served forth by white performers in burnt cork whose dance, jokes, and song emulated the very stuff they lampooned. This corona of homage limns the eclipse of blackface now as it did when it was first popularized—surprisingly, to some, in the Northeast.

In the 1820s, from amid the cauldron of Manhattan's Five Points district—recreated so vividly in Martin Scorsese's 2002 film *Gangs of New York*—a performer named Thomas “Daddy” Rice hit the road with a song-and-dance routine called “Jump Jim Crow,” purportedly taught to him by a deformed black stable hand. Apocryphal or not, the herky-jerky caricature went viral, birthing minstrelsy as well as national pop culture (and sadly, ultimately, a nomenclature for segregation).

By the 1840s the Virginia Minstrels had established a structure for the genre at large. Amid their antics they all played instruments: tambo (tambourine) and bones (oblong castanets), accordion, fiddle, and most centrally banjo, its gourd now replaced by a wooden-hooped body and tacks swapped out for simple adjustable brackets, with the addition of a fifth bass string and metal fingerpick (called a thimble) to amplify the strokes.

By the century's end, though, “picking,” with its genteel and culturally vetted European provenance, had gained popularity over the more rhythmic (read: “barbaric”) minstrel style. As developments such as frets made the instrument easier and more rewarding for amateurs, “guitar-style” trumped “banjo-style” playing among the growing

ranks of aficionados. (Between 1880 and 1910 virtually every American university had a banjo club, banjo historian Eli Kaufman notes.)

Echoing the voicings of mandolin orchestras, full-spectrum hybrids proliferated, from the plinky piccolo banjo to the lumbering, rumbling bass version that came to resound in every fashionable concert hall. Still, as banjo music progressed from blackface to black tie, five-string was king.

Contemporary minstrel shows were fast supplanting banjo-centric accompaniment, with more sets, more songs, ten times the number of performers, and separate brass bands or orchestras. The original model was now merely indicated by comic archetypes like “Mr. Tambo” and “Mr. Bones,” while the banjo, likely to have been inaudible in that mass of sound, was reduced to a fetish object, more evoked than played.

New blackface repertoires had also emerged: the increasingly popular “jubilee” faux spirituals, which depicted blacks as pious but simpleminded, and “coon” songs, caustic soundtracks to the many social and political reversals for American blacks of the post-Reconstruction period. Amid a revived Ku Klux Klan and pandemic of lynching, their more biting lyrics carried the attendant irony that blacks themselves now composed and performed them onstage, validating willful mischaracterization.

By the time the American public had moved on to its next annexation of black culture—ragtime—minstrelsy was disappearing from the popular stages of urban theaters. “Some maintain that minstrelsy is here to stay, while others insist that there are no more minstrel shows,” noted Edward LeRoy Rice in his 1911 book, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy: From “Daddy” Rice to Date*. Unquestionably changed was the delivery, evidenced by new outlets like medicine shows and how-to primers like *When Cork Was King* (1921) and *The Minstrel Encyclopedia* (1926), cheap paperbacks filled with “comic” dialogs, blunt dialect renderings, and a curious collage of song suggestions from “Old Black Joe” to “The Heidelberg Stein Song” to “Aloha Oe,” a reflection of adapting to survive.

In one form or other, though, amateur performances from Boy Scout troops to church groups to Odd Fellows kept minstrel shows going through the approach of the Civil Rights era. Down South, meanwhile, musicians continued an active repertoire of the songs, eventually and unintentionally purging their offensive aspects within the myriad of commercial hillbilly records of the 1920s. A half-century later these records helped fuel a revival of old-time music, with adherents largely unaware of its provenance.

By the 1950s in general, and certainly in terms of scholarship of any underlying art, minstrelsy had become—and largely remains—American music’s crazy aunt in the attic. A few visitors did sneak in, however.

“There was no intention on the part of the men who wrote the songs... to hurt the Negroes’ feelings,” the journalist Jim Walsh wrote in a piece about Harry C. Browne for his January 1958 *Hobbies Magazine* column “Favorite Pioneer Recording Artists.” (Frederick Douglass might have disagreed.) A more deliberate reexamination of the foundational music emerged with the 1962 publication of *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy*, by Hans Nathan, which included period song transcriptions. And in 1969 the blues master Taj Mahal alluded to the form by including a coon song-style instrumental on his historic twin-album set for Columbia, *Giant Step/De Old Folks at Home*.

While the electric *Giant Step* LP traced the black roots of blues, R&B, and rock ‘n’ roll, Taj’s solo turn on the *Old Folks* LP tells the story of acoustic black music, which he clearly felt would not have been complete without his version of “Colored Aristocracy,” a frailest banjo tune that became a stylistic watershed in the nascent old time music community. If Taj eschewed commentary in presenting the genre, the title of the tune he selected—like the album cover, a late-nineteenth century image of a black string-band trio posing before its well-dressed white audience—speaks tomes.

Around the same time, a librarian named Dena Epstein began writing articles based on her research into black vernacular music. Epstein, who hailed from a politically progressive well-to-do Jewish family in Milwaukee, came to study black culture after finding the 1867 book *Slave Songs of the United States* amid the stacks at the New York Public Library in the 1950s. (The biopic *The Librarian and the Banjo*, released shortly before her death in 2010, shows the history of and modern gratitude for her contribution.)

Epstein’s 1975 *Ethnomusicology* article “The Folk Banjo: A Documentary History” made an early strong case for the African provenance of the banjo. But she drew the line there. “The supposition that the early minstrel theater was modeled on improvised slave entertainments is credible but not yet proven,” she wrote in her 1979 book, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*, adding: “In any case, the minstrel theater is outside black folk music no matter how closely they may have been related.”

A more-targeted examination of the subject was under way in the work of banjoist and writer Robert Winans. In addition to seminal articles published in the late ‘70s and

early '80s, at Hans Nathan's recommendation, a recreation of mid-nineteenth-century minstrelsy called *The Early Minstrel Show* was produced for New World Records in 1985. The project drew from banjo instruction manuals, revealing the complexities and nuances of this black-derived playing style. For Winans, a professor of American literature and folklore at Gettysburg College, the music trumped all.

"Some of the songs on this recording contain racist lyrics," he wrote in the liner notes. "This might be thought reason enough not to resurrect this material, but anything with so much cultural impact deserves serious study. We need to listen to this material in its historical perspective and understand that the study of it is not a validation of its racist sentiments."

Almost by definition, banjo enthusiasts continue to decode and reveal minstrelsy and its music. By the mid-1970s, the Bremono Bluff, Virginia-based banjoist Joe Ayers had developed an interest in the genre that resulted in a four-volume anthology of minstrel recordings—and his 1985 television turn as a Confederate banjoist in the TV miniseries *North and South*, engendering a cadre of acolytes.

In 1997, collector/historians Peter Szego, Hank Schwartz, and Jim Bollman brought together a group to celebrate and study the banjo, from its African roots to the early twentieth century. With its mix of ethnomusicologists, builders, musicians, and preservationists, the Banjo Collector's Gathering remains a clearinghouse of banjo history and a hothouse for new research projects related to it.

Over the course of these gatherings the banjo builder and historian George Wunderlich began workshopping the concept of a website, which he went on to launch, with Greg Adams, in 2006. The Banjo Sightings Database, in addition to its mission of engendering "accurate reproduction and conservation of surviving 19th Century banjos," has stimulated a new generation of banjo builders to reanimate period instruments, through which minstrel songs really sing.

Though short lived, the Black Banjo Gathering, helmed by banjoist/writer Tony Thomas from 2004 through '07, was dedicated to "uniting musicians, scholars and enthusiasts in celebrating the banjo tradition and to recognizing its African, Afro-Caribbean and African-American origins." Thomas can recall no mention of minstrelsy amid the convened.

"As the pattern of extreme oppression and public acknowledgment of African-American inferiority changed, blackface minstrelsy—among blacks and whites—disappeared," he says. "It isn't complicated." What interested him, as well as dedicated BBG attendees like Dom

Flemons, Rhiannon Giddens, and Sule Greg Wilson (whose group Sankofa Strings eventually morphed into the Grammy Award-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops), was black reclamation of the banjo.

In its unthinkable arc of function—from the mouthpiece to the mocking of slavery, to a weapon for Civil Rights, to its furtherance today by musicians black, white, and every shade in between—the banjo, like minstrelsy itself, is a fascinating vehicle for studying the uneasy but unquestionably fruitful dynamic between black and white culture. Perhaps we are finally ready to examine and evaluate this musical moment in a way that acknowledges its tasteless and timeless aspects, without the one denying the other.

It's here in the offing, in the canon of Harry C. Browne.

To be continued...

Rally Recap thru the Eyes of the ABF's "South Carolina-Low Country Constituency"

By Marc Smith

Hi y'all!

While I have been an ABF member for a number of years, it was not until we (myself and Miz Diane) retired in 2019 that I could actually participate in a Rally. Of course, then we had the bedbug disaster and then the shutdown. Fall of 2022 was thus my first Rally. Back surgery kept me from attending the 2023 Spring Rally but Tuesday, October 24, 2023 saw me packed and excited to head north for my 2nd Rally. "Have Cello-Banjo, will travel."

We live about 5 miles south of the border... the North Carolina border, that is. The most direct path (as plotted by Google Maps) makes it a 12-13 hour drive, a feat I can no longer support in a single day! I simply find that Hagerstown, MD is a good "halfway" point. I also avoid the D.C. area, for obvious reasons.

The drive up was uneventful, thankfully I have Sirius XM radio. I have had to stop listening to audio books in the car as I get so absorbed in the stories that I have driven well past my destination on several occasions.

The drive from Hagerstown to Palmyra is one of my most favorite and least favorite paths. The scenery is always amazing but once in NY, the crazy-quilt of backroads is wearing. I saw a large number of Amish buggies this time.

I arrived at the hotel Wednesday after lunch. The clerks have always been pleasant and welcoming, this time was no different. However, it seems they have some issues with their system. One clerk reported that I was #3 to arrive

and that “Drew was around here somewhere.” After I had gotten my banjos and luggage to my room, another clerk asked me why I was staying at the hotel. “I’m with the banjo players,” I responded. He pulled an awkward face, looked at the computer and said, “Sir, I have the ABF Rally blocked out for November 10. I think you’re here 2 weeks early!” I knew better. Drew, knocking at my door a little later, confirmed it.

Thus spake the whirlwind. Apologies in advance if I get things out of order or on the wrong day... much of it is a blur!

I was really looking forward to playing in the afternoon concerts. I had all my parts in order and felt I was prepared. HA! By the time I had a full practice with Drew, I was so confused and frustrated (with myself) that I was ready to drive home that night. Full credit to Drew for keeping me going. I’m an amateur, and self-taught. Sitting

up there with professional musicians is very intimidating... and enlightening. Nobody’s perfect, everybody has memory lapses, gaffes and fumbles. I just thank Dog I’m not on somebody’s payroll (oh, yeah... *that* wouldn’t last long!).

Last year I had backed a few pieces in the afternoon concerts and thumped my way thru the Orchestra numbers. I played one piece in the Round Robin... and I talked myself hoarse. This year I played in all but 3 of the concert pieces... plus the challenging “Echoes of The Snowball Club.” With all the concert practices and my love of gabbing with friends new and old, I never found a moment to practice my round-robin numbers. I promise, next year I’ll play some tunes. Really!

Thursday, I woke ready to crack on. Blissfully, I had a lazy morning... having breakfast, sitting out in the lobby talking and just enjoying myself. Seeing all the early birds come thru the doors kept me smiling. I’m not going to name



AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY RALLY FALL 2023

TOP ROW: Adam Sielger, Lauren Lang, Hugh Howes, Paul Draper, Clarke Buehling, Marc Smith, Norma Shearer, Doug Kiessling, JoAnn Azinger, Madeleine Kaufman, Sam Harris, Norm Azinger, Tim Spacek.

SEATED: John Bernunzio, Eli Kaufman, John Cohen, Joel Hooks, Drew Frech, Ruth Vitale, Frank Vitale.

everybody. I remember faces far better than names anyway. Suffice to say, I enjoyed seeing *all y'all**... it is starting to seem to me like the best family reunion ever (and no elderly Aunts squabbling over who makes the best chicken 'n' dressing either. (Aunt Versie's is the best, BTW)).

Practice, practice and more practice. I've now realized that I need to do a lot more prep ahead of time and that I'm simply destined to lose track at the worst possible moment. As much as I worked on them, several of my sheet-music parts were not trustworthy. Drew steered us thru the road-maps of the tunes, corrections were made, etc. Oh, and I talked myself hoarse again. Such fun! I had to hit the hay at 11pm, I was beat!

Friday, was very similar, except more so. More people coming in, more gab, much more music. After lunch, we took on the first Round Robin. The great thing is that if you can't play, passing isn't a big deal. I love hearing everyone play their pieces... I enjoy thumping along with the group numbers... and I learned that I had an unlooked-for responsibility as the tame Cello-Banjoist. I had no idea that people were actually listening to me and depending on my thump-thump. When I stumble or drop out, it has an effect. Ay, yi yi! I have some woodshedding to do!

Happily, I survived playing in the Friday concert. It was a lot of fun and we'd practiced enough that I wasn't in total panic mode. I was amazed at the sound levels in the jamming afterwards. I actually had my hearing aids go into "protection mode" a couple of times. The joint was jumpin' and "Smokey Mokes" appeared to be the favorite.

Saturday, more of the same. Thank goodness nothing happens before lunch. Second Round Robin was full of good tunes and great playing. The Edison cylinder machine recording session was like experiencing living history.

The concert Saturday evening was a lot of fun and yet again, I survived. While I really enjoy the Orchestra, I got distracted and fell apart for the end of "Snowball Club"... and got a well-deserved raspberry... I treat it as motivational. I'll get better!

The highlight of the evening was the Halloween Treat. A call was put out for banjos (and players) nominally in different tunings. Three C banjos (Cello, Regular and Piccolo), 2 Banjeaurines in F (regular and Bass), and a regular banjo in Bb. Under Drew's direction, each tuning subset played the A part of "Sunflower Dance" as a demo. Then, the whole group played the whole tune together (sans transposition) for an amazing cacophony. Much laughter... and they stuck it out *and* played in time, ending properly together. It was a great thing and I hope it becomes a regular Fall Rally item!

Thus ended the whirlwind. The jamming commenced and lasted well into the night. I talked myself hoarse again.

I left early Sunday morning on a dreary, rainy drive South. Thankfully, the rain petered out in Pennsylvania somewhere and I had clear sailing to Hagerstown and then Monday home. As always, the drive home always seems shorter. It was 75F in South Carolina... but temps were dropping. I spoke to Drew yesterday (Nov 1) and he reported 4" of snow on the ground! I'm sure glad I missed driving in that!

While I will miss the Spring Rally (again), I am already practicing for the 2024 Fall Rally. I'm really looking forward to doing it all over again!

* "all y'all" is the global "you" in the South. It is meant to include you, your family, your pets, ancestors, etc.

ROUND-ROBIN FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Drew Frech: *Delerium Rag, Dance of the Goblins*

Adam Siegler: *Maple Leaf Rag, St. Louis Tickle*

Frank Vitale: *Carolina Hop*

Ruth Vitale: *Minor Jig, Oh Rugged Cross*

Clarke Buehling: *Cotton Pickins', Woodland Park Waltz*

Sam Harris: *Progressions, Grace & Beauty*

Tim Spacek: *Kingdom Coming, Get Crackin'*

Doug Kiessling: *Alpine Waltz, Little March*

Hugh Howes: *Spanish Fandango*

Lauren Lang: *You and a Canoe, Queen of the Burlesque*

Joel Hooks: *Old Suse (Wing Dance), Hanover Jig*

Paul Draper: *The Lion, Beacon Jig, Blue Eagle Jail*

John Cohen: *Ballad No. 1*

ROUND-ROBIN SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Drew Frech: *Broomstick Serenade*

Lauren Lang: *Egyptian Princess*

John Cohen: *Leaning on the Garden Gate, Horace Weston's*

Celebrated Minor Jig

Paul Draper: *G. Swain Buckley's Celebrated Minor Jig, Bluebell Valse*

Joel Hooks: *Simpson's Funny Little Jig, Hooks' Creeping Jig*

Tim Spacek: *Old Vienna, Keynotes Rag*

Hugh Howes: *Spanish Fandango*

Sam Harris: *Clematis Waltz, A Banjo Frolic*

Clarke Buehling: *L'infanta March, Maria Mazurka*

Doug Kiessling: *Merry Gavotte, Alpine Waltz*

Frank & Ruth Vitale: *Funny Mike's Reel, In the Garden*

Adam Siegler: *Polonaise in A, Thumbs Up*



Rally Snaps – October 2023

Left Column:

Saturday Evening Concert: Joel Hooks,
Gavin Rice, Drew Frech, Marc Smith.
Round-Robin: Marc Smith, Sam Harris.

Right Column:

Clarke Buehling plays some favorites for an
enthused audience.
Sam Harris cuts a cylinder with Wyatt Marcus
of the Edison Recording Project.
Round-Robin: Clarke Buehling, Ruth Vitale,
Frank Vitale.





Rally Snaps – October 2023

Round-Robin: Paul Draper (off camera), Joel Hooks, Doug Kiessling, Lauren Lang, Hugh Howes.

The Saturday night concert ends with a special, spooky performance of Sunflower Dance. John Cohen, Joel Hooks, Gavin Rice, Drew Frech, Lauren Lang, Tim Spacek.



Looking Back

In ABF Five Stringer #90, a number of ABF luminaries shared their opinions about whether it's alright to raise the bass string to D – a dilemma that remains unresolved to this day.

.6

RAISE 4th TO D - OK?

It was three years ago that ye scribe first touched the fingerboard of a five string banjo. A lot of notes have flown over the dam thing, to twist a phrase. Not the least, is, "should I raise the 4th to "D", or work it out with the Bass left at "C". This issue came up fast, as one of the first numbers I tackled was "Footlight Favorites", which indicates a raised 4th. I asked Bill Bowen, and he said he never raised the Bass. He also told me Fred Van Eps never changed the 4th string. That was good enough for me at the time. However, I found that I was bypassing some good music because there was really no sensible way to play some tunes without changing the tuning. This tickled my curiosity rib, so let's find out what many good players do about the problem. Our findings are mighty interesting, we think.

BERT GEDNEY, now 92 and still playing, says, "I do tune my bass string to D on occasions. That is the way I was taught. I really believe it adds charm to the number. Later years I took up C notation and have become accustomed to it, and I rarely ever resort to D tuning."

ALLAS MILLER observes, "I would leave the decision up to the players. I use the C only..never change. However, C or D, it is still the 5 string banjo. Formerly, I did change the tuning, but discovered by cutting the corner or change a note or two one can still play with C."

ALEX MAGEE, a real great artist, offers the following: "In my opinion the Bass string should be tuned to C instead of D. You get nicer chord formations, and more beautiful harmony. The C gives vibration and volume to several other keys that you don't get with the D. When I was learning to play, my teacher taught me the "Spanish Fandango" with a high bass, but I found out later I could play it as easily with a C Bass. I have no objection to offer if anyone wants to use the High Bass, but to me it's like going back to the days of Horace Weston and the boys who used to play the stroke style... everything they played was mostly in the key of G...and they could make more noise than 4 or 5 of us playing finger style."

FRANK A WEBB, one of the Webb Brothers, a real authority on tremolo playing, states: "Morell was a great musician having written much music, one piece of which was named, "Sebastapol". He arranged it for the Banjo with the strings tuned entirely different than the usual style, yet he got tantalizing music from it. The old German, Johan Schneider, who taught us Webb Brothers Counterpoint, liked the banjo and used different ways of tuning the strings. A few writers have used the "D" tuning where the C Bass is tuned to "D". Farland wrote some of his Transcriptions with the bass string elevated to "D", and DeLano used it in his "Angels' Lullaby", (which Farland pronounced as the most musical banjo number ever written) as well as Tommy Glynn in some of his pieces. In much of our Webb Brothers arrangements we used in various ways the Circle of 4ths and Circle of 5ths. With it the "C" notation became as easy as the original "A". It is altogether a matter of taste."

CHARLOTTE ROBILLARD, one of the finest lady banjoists of all time writes, "I raise mine to "D" for certain selections, whenever I deem it wise. I feel that the preference should be left to the individual. When a true artist sits down to render a 5 string banjo solo, that Bass string will be where he or she wants it to be, C or D, and the artist is certainly not concerned about the opinions of a few 5 string players who only Think their way is the right way. The only concern in the mind of a true artist, is to play that banjo solo clear and clean, and really "put it over" in the true sense of the word."

LLOYD LONGACRE, one of the finest players we have today, remarks, "I seldom use the elevated bass anymore. The string that I am using has a fine tone, but it cannot stand the added strain when tuned to D. I have no objection to the D bass. If you find you can play the selection easier, elevate the bass...after all, the public won't object. They want to hear and enjoy a good banjo solo."

HARRY BOWEN, one of our very fine pickers, writes; "I never raise my 4th to "D". I find that I can play most pieces marked "fourth to D", just as good by leaving it at "C". I do believe, however, that some of the old compositions such as Glynn's

and Eno's, while they can be played with 4th to C, will lose some of their brilliance. The 4th, when tuned to "D" and then let down to "C" will always raise, then we have our banjo out of tune. Most of us have trouble enough playing in tune without using the "D" tuning. I have no objection to anyone using the "D" Bass, but not for me."

ELMER DAWSON, a Farland authority, and a great player states; "J. H. Jennings, Paul Eno, Babb, and many others wrote their music with Bass to "B" (A notation), and many tunes could not be played any other way. Now with the "C" tuning, I say, leave it there! There is no reason to tune to "D", but if the music can be played with more ease, then I would say to tune as you like. Farland published much music where we had to tune the bass up to "D". It gives the banjo a crisper tone, but we all had trouble with the string breaking."

JOHN SLOAN, a fine English banjoist now residing in U. S. has this to say, "If the composers ask the player to use "D" Bass it's obviously the easiest way out. For instance, if I intended to play a medley in different keys, I wouldn't like to stop and keep messing around with the peg head. I have used two banjos occasionally, one with "D" and one with "C", but that too is a nuisance. Oakley used "D" Bass in several of his solos. I think the banjo has a bit more ring to it in G-major with "D" Bass. I suppose it could get monotonous, especially in one key all the time."

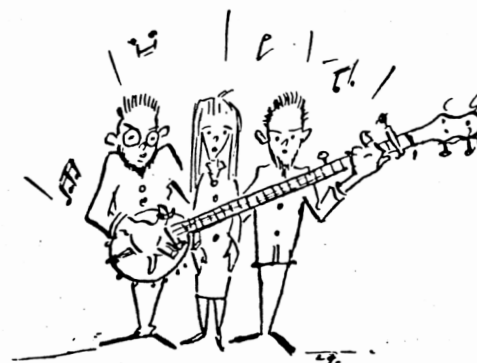
FANNIE HINELINE, a great woman banjoist, says simply. "To change the Bass string, elevating the tone "C" to "D" in C notation, makes playing the banjo easier, giving more power in tone to the other strings, also when playing octaves, gives closer harmony. The banjo is a very difficult instrument to play well."

CLIFF SPAULDING, banjo soloist, authority and our librarian offers this, "Lansing and Weidt, among others, used to be afflicted with "Bass to D-itis", and much of the time it was unnecessary. There are only three pieces that I can think of that lose by changing. One is "University Grand Waltz" by Glynn. The other two are "Sky High Galop" by Glionna, and "Prairie Breezes Waltz" by Grant. There are others, but these come to mind."

ERV CRITES, 1963 Winner of the Van Eps Memorial Award, puts it this way, "I do not raise the Bass to "D" anymore. When I did and I played two pieces one after another, the bass string would get out of tune while playing the second piece, if it were tuned to D. About 1940 I wrote Fred Van Eps and asked him where I could get bass strings that would stand "D" tuning. He answered, "Why tune to "D", I never use it." Lansing, Weidt, Bickford and others used the "D" tuning, but I visited Farland at Plainfield in 1943 and he said he never used the "D" tuning until he started playing with the pick."

TOM EDWARDS, our fine friend and artist from England, sums it up, "I do not see any reason why any player, if he wishes, should not raise the "C" string to "D". I do, and find it quite helpful with several solos. Mic Broad, with some of his ragtime numbers, raises the octave string a half tone. He then plays both "Maple Leaf Rag" and "Entertainer" in their original key. I know there are plenty of players over here who use the "D" tuning."

The replys to our "survey" have been most interesting to your editor. We hope they prove helpful to many of our members. "To Each His Own" seems to be the composite of the opinions. Do anything you can to make the solo sound the way you like it. We do not, however, subscribe to the Capo or any mousetrap device to change keys. The folk singing banjo crowd use these extensively, and it is a bit disturbing. They are so much in the public eye today, and the 5 string banjo image is one of an accompaniment instrument played with claw-like picks on the right hand, and a grotesque Capo clamped on the neck..Tsk..Tsk.



A Note on the Music in This Issue

The following selections, originally published by L.B. Gatcomb, were composed by banjoist Ike Brown, father of Harry C. Browne. They are reproduced here in their original form, i.e., in A notation. One can easily transpose them into C notation using the method explained in *5 Stringer* issue number 102, or one can learn to read in both "A" and "C" as many fine banjoists past and present have done.

4 GATCOMB'S BANJO AND GUITAR GAZETTE.

ELITE POLKA REDOWA.

IKE BROWNE.

BANJO. *mf* *tr* 8th Pos. 6th Pos.

5th Bar. 5th Bar. 8th Pos.

6th Pos. 5th Pos. 2d Bar. 1st. 2d. 8* Fine.

TRIO. 5th Bar. 3d Bar.

1st. 2nd.

D.S. al Fine.

Copyright, 1890, by L. B. GATCOMB Co.

LITTLE DARLING MAZURKA.

IKE BROWNE.

1st. BANJO. 3 Bar. 2 Bar. 3 Bar. *f* *mf*

2nd. BANJO.

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a series of chords and ends with a double bar line and the word "FINE." above it. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, featuring a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody from the first system, with dynamic markings *f* and *p* alternating. The lower staff continues the bass line accompaniment.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody with dynamic markings *f* and *p*. The lower staff continues the bass line accompaniment.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody with dynamic markings *f* and *p*. The lower staff continues the bass line accompaniment.

The fifth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody with dynamic markings *p* and *f*. The lower staff continues the bass line accompaniment.

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The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a harmonic accompaniment of chords. The first measure is marked with *D.S.* and the second measure with *p*.

The second system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line from the first system. The lower staff continues the harmonic accompaniment with chords.

The third system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line. The lower staff continues the harmonic accompaniment with chords.

The fourth system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line. The lower staff continues the harmonic accompaniment with chords. The system ends with the marking *7 Pos.*

The fifth system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line. The lower staff continues the harmonic accompaniment with chords. The system ends with the marking *D.S. al Fine.*