

Hello banjo friends,

Overwhelmed yet?! I know that tonight's waltz was a toughie in many ways, but it teaches loads of good lessons, and it's just so gorgeous that I encourage you to bear with the process of learning its twists and turns at your own pace using the video, my audio play-through, and the tab--even if you aren't normally into working from tab.

As always, please let me know if between these resources and your real-time experience tonight you don't feel that you have the necessary information to finish piecing the material together. My guess is that it's more a matter of time to be spent familiarizing yourselves with the SOUND and the FEEL of "Wolves in the Wood" especially--"Lonesome John" seemed like a piece of cake in comparison--rather than there being missing information or real mechanical obstacles.

If I had to pick just one challenge in "Wolves in the Wood" worthy of special attention, it would be the B-part syncopated drop-thumbs to the FIRST string. Make sure that the preceding ghost stroke--a finger-stroke that misses all of the strings but that otherwise happens as usual on the numbered beat--is generous enough, spatially speaking, that the thumb has plenty of room to simultaneously land on that far-flung string. If your thumb feels crowded against the striking finger or the rest of the hand, use the ghost stroke to move the finger and hand even farther out of the thumb's way! Practice these patterns SLOWLY enough that you have time to really exaggerate the ghost stroke. Remember, too, to try tapping on the head with your striking finger during that beat if your hand seems more inclined to simply freeze rather than to move through the syncopated space.

Here are some nice renditions of "Wolves in the Wood" for your listening pleasure (and note the inconsistent treatment of the title; my sources, Howard Rains & Tricia Spencer, declare it to be plural Wolves and singular Wood, so that is what I call it):

-Duck Wootan's original recorded setting from 1958: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/wolves-woods>

-Howard Rains & Tricia Spencer with a fine backing band: <https://www.spencerandrains.com/product-page/the-old-texas-fiddle-vol-ii>
Consider purchasing the CD through the Spencer & Rains website, but sample the track and other selections via this Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/Old-Texas-Fiddle-Vol-II/dp/B00TQTD6U>

-Mark Gilston delivering a wonderful arrangement on mountain dulcimer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsDHJcSPcpg>

-the excellent Irish/old-time fusion band Alfi, as part of a medley and with a somewhat different structure (scroll down to find track 2): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsDHJcSPcpg>

...and here are a few great approaches to "Lonesome John," including several recognizable names:

-John Salyer's original recorded setting from the early 1940s: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/lonesome-john>

-Bruce Molsky fiddling alongside Paul Brown on banjo and Audrey Molsky on guitar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpZ62gfjTVU>

-Dirk Powell on fiddle with John Herrmann on banjo from the "Cold Mountain" book- and movie-inspired album, "Songs from the Mountain" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnkoR1968Bo>

-Beverly Smith on fiddle with Alice Gerrard on banjo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9a-COc3Cm_c

One class to go! I'll be sad to see this series end, especially since I have a bunch more Sawmill-tuned pieces than will fit in the remaining time! Please consider letting Megan or me know if another round of Sawmill repertoire would be of interest for some future online workshop series, or if there is another thrust that you might enjoy exploring together.

Cheers, Adam