

Hello banjo friends,

Are we feeling overwhelmed yet? I hope not! Even though the length of The Wandering Boy--whether learned or perceived by ear, or delivered via tab--is considerable, the banjo challenges therein I believe to be quite manageable. Continue looping two-measure phrases the way that we kept working up to doing in tonight's session, and then just gradually add one phrase to the previous or next, bypassing familiar content whenever it reappears, and before you know it, those colossally long A and B parts will be complete.

In the interest of not droning on any longer this evening than I already had, I glossed over the final ending options for this tune. The more colorful form that I quite like is included in the tab, which we can spend a moment at the start of next week's class working through if there is interest. A simpler alternative is to take the final "idling" phrase of the B part and turn its second measure from another space-filler and pickup notes leading to a new A part into...a single whole-note-value open second string. Easy, if not quite as (melo)dramatic. I also gave the fretless gourd banjo-specific portion of tonight's program rather short shrift, so if you all have further playability-related questions or thoughts to share on that score, we can certainly continue the discussion next time.

Taking one step backward, here is the link to the private, for-your-eyes-only YouTube video supplement to last week's class on Stillhouse: <https://youtu.be/bZhZSs7s8f4>

Now, let me share with you some interesting renditions of The Wandering Boy, with my two primary sources listed first:

-Paul Brown clawhammering alongside Mike Seeger's fingerstyle banjo accompaniment, from their "Way Down in North Carolina" album from 1996: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp0dLCDR_dc

-Bruce Molsky plays banjo here, another selection from his wonderful 2007 "Soon Be Time" album (and no, that album has not magically aged by ten years since last week's email; I just mistyped its year when I linked to it before): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjImYWagDwU>

-fiddler Frank Jenkins in a late 1920s recording delivering a solo version that seems to have inspired the various banjo settings of the tune: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/wandering-boy>

-the Carter Family song by the same title in a recording from 1927, with their characteristic quirky phrasing somewhat disguising the resemblance to our instrumental tune: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxVZ8N_DMds

-here is the Carter Family again, this time in a live performance on a Mexican radio station in 1939. Their phrasing here is squarer than in the earlier recording, which makes it easier to hear the relationship between the instrumental tune's A part and the song's verse/chorus melody and chord structure. However, I miss the earlier setting's IV chord-oriented chorus opening, which matches our tune's B part: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QYKQ-RRva8>

-the Stanley Brothers' 1952 cover of the Carter Family's song (with a few adjustments to the lyrics), a setting that has inspired subsequent bluegrass musicians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDXJk173HKs>

Please let me hear from you if anything from the classes or the accompanying resources generates

questions, confusion, or new ideas. As you can probably tell, I eat, sleep, and breathe banjo, so your emails are a delight to the senses!

Cheers,
Adam