

Hello banjo friends,

What fun this month of Southwest Virginia fiddle tunes for clawhammer banjo has been—and it's not quite over! I sincerely hope that you all are enjoying the tunes themselves, the associated and sometimes curious banjo techniques, and the sacred time that you have allocated for learning and savoring this special music.

Since both of tonight's tunes are unpredictable in some respect—"Ship in the Clouds" for its crookedness and its rather quirky melody, "Tommy Love" for its syncopation—I can't overstate the value of listening to them a bunch as you continue to work them out. This listening ideally will incorporate both the banjo settings from class and the historical fiddle settings that inspired my arrangements. It's one thing to memorize the necessary motions for playing a tune, but it's another thing to have listened enough to the tune to KNOW where it is heading next, with your hands following your ear's lead. As far as banjo mechanics are concerned, be patient with the potentially new "triangle" and "slant" positions, revisiting the relevant loops from class and continuing to loop those sections slowly and carefully. The benefit of these somewhat tricky positions is that every note that they produce will have a stronger, richer sound than if we were to use a more linear layout for the same notes—but it may take a bit of practice for these notes to come out consistently strong.

Here are some older and somewhat less-old recordings to enhance your enjoyment and understanding of tonight's material:

-fiddler Taylor Kimble, born in 1892, from Laurel Fork in Carroll County, plays "Ship in the Clouds" with family members in this recording of indeterminate age: <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/ship-clouds-0>

-a fine stringband featuring fiddler Lisa Ornstein alongside Andy Cahan on banjo and Laura Fishleder on guitar renders "Ship in the Clouds," from their same-named 1978 album: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvCkgbLcazU>

-fabulous Patrick County fiddler Dudley "Babe" Spangler, born in 1882, plays "Tommy Love" in this wonderful stringband-style recording from 1948. If this isn't great old-time dance music, I don't know what is! <https://www.slippery-hill.com/content/tommy-love-0>

One more session to go—but not next week, due to travel conflicts for Megan and me both. Use this extra week in between to catch up on previous weeks' tunes, listen to any linked resources that may have escaped your attention earlier, and gather any questions that I can address either via email or in our final class on Monday, November 20!

Cheers,
Adam