

Stephen C. Parker
150 Hot Fiddle Tunes
for Fiddle and Mandolin

Reviewed by Timothy Jones



Old-time music sometimes conjures images of backwoods Appalachian practitioners well out of reach of mainstream culture, inaccessible and isolated. A spreading resurgence of interest in traditional music in urban areas and throughout popular entertainment media already renders such a stereotype doubtful. *150 Hot Fiddle Tunes for Fiddle and Mandolin* will do even more to make traditional American fiddle tunes available for musicians of all stripes and localities.

This new resource majors on American tunes (well over a hundred), with three dozen international and four classical tunes thrown in for good measure. Twenty selections come from the legendary West Virginia fiddler, Ed Haley. The grouping of many of the tunes according to the fiddler or mandolinist best known for a given version makes a great feature. A number of tunes from the likes of Bruce Molsky, Rayna Gelfert, Melvin Wine and Tommy Jarrell, as well as string bands or duos, appear together.

All are transcribed and adapted from recorded sources and arranged for fiddle and mandolin with accompanying guitar chords (and edited by Alan Davis). Standard music notation is used for all tunes (with mandolin tablature added for three of the most challenging songs).

The book captures in printed notation such old-time stand-by tunes as *Billy in the Low Ground*, *Bristly Run of John's Creek*, *Cumberland Gap*, *Forked Deer*, *Grey Eagle* (three versions in this case), *Three Forks of the Sandy*, and *Indian Ate the Windchuck*.

Adding even more to the accomplishment, the accompanying CD contains all 150 tunes in MP3 audio format electronically recorded directly from the notation program used to produce the book scores. This is not to say that the MP3 files come from actual string performances — they are electronic files, and they lack some of the nuances of their original popularizers. But they precisely reflect the printed versions and they were recorded at a moderate speed to facilitate learning. A helpful listing of recording sources encourages the reader to find the originals in many cases. Altogether, the MP3 format allows for a whopping three and a half hours of music to be included on a single disk.

One more feature makes the book a treat: Scattered throughout are photos and drawings of well-known musicians and their biographies, making this resource not only a helpful musical repository, but also a great read. A complete index, discography, bibliography and list of websites to explore rounds out the book.

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