

DNA Dulcimer Ditties

Arranged in two volumes by Carol Walker

In her new *DNA Dulcimer Ditties* tab books, Carol Walker has produced a collection of 105 familiar tunes that are carefully organized to lead the player gradually through arrangements of gently increasing difficulty.

Though the two books are designed as a continuous progression, each book in the series stands as a fully independent collection. Novice players can start with Book 1 (which contains lots of clearly written introductory material about how to hold, tune, fret, strum, and chord the instrument) and work their way through the arrangements of both books. More experienced players may decide to start with Book 2. Taken together, the two books comprise a truly comprehensive program for learning both tunes and techniques. There's enough material here to keep a budding dulcimetist engaged and rewardingly challenged for years!

By choosing tunes that “everybody knows,” Carol eliminates one of the hurdles to learning and allows the player to focus instead on performance. To guide the player through the arrangements, Carol introduces new techniques, chords, and musical ideas gradually and one at a time. This ensures that the player has time to absorb each new technique in the context of several songs, and to build up confidence. The books are full of helpful explanations and hints at the tops of pages, but there are also numerous guidelines, suggested fingerings, and attention-grabbing icons embedded in the arrangements themselves to give the player on-the-spot reminders and tips right where they are needed.

The accompanying CDs provide quick reminders about how the tunes go and also give players a clear guide to just how the arrangements in the books are meant to sound. On the CD for Book 2, there are four extra tracks containing helpful mini-lessons to aid the player in understanding new techniques when they are introduced.

It may be hard to believe that there are 105 tunes out there that “everybody knows,” but these melodies really are in our musical DNA. In working through the books, I encountered a few whose titles didn't ring any bells, so I thought I was unfamiliar with the tunes. But sure enough, once I began to play these, it turned out that I did recognize them after all. You will too!

Bill Collins
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(Bill Collins is a well-known musician in the world of mountain dulcimer, and has been extending the art and repertoire of the instrument since the early 1990's. He has been described by his fellow dulcimetists as a brilliant player, with great versatility. He is generally recognized as a gifted teacher, extremely clear and well-organized, and is very generous with his time and sharing music.)