

# Tunes That You Already Know

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## Introduction

This workshop is designed to help you expand your repertoire by learning some songs “that you already know”. First we will explore some nursery rhymes and other common songs that you might have learned as a child, or from the children in your lives. We will explore how you can modify these tunes and make them into something more than a simple melody. Then we will explore some folk songs that “everybody” knows. If there is time we will all share some tunes that workshop participants came prepared with and we’ll have a big jam.

Some (but not all) of the songs discussed in the workshop will be used as examples for us to try out. The Sing Out publication, “*Rise Up and Sing*” songbook was used as a reference for many of the songs, and the page numbers where the songs can be found in the book are included. This wonderful resource has the words and chords to over 1200 Songs. (ISBN: 1-8813221-2-2 - The big print edition is recommended.)

## The Happy Birthday Challenge

Ok, real quick: Can you play the melody to “Happy Birthday” on your instrument by ear, without making any mistakes? It’s actually somewhat hard to do even for experienced musicians. It’s a tricky song. We will explore why that is in the workshop. (It starts in a funny place...)

- If you play it in the Key of C Major for instance the first note is the “fourth” below C: G G A G C B ...
- Try playing the notes in the C Major Scale first, and then play the tune...
- Watch out for the octave interval.

## Songs That You Might Have Learned as a Child

Here are some songs that many people learned as kids; or perhaps you might have learned them from the children in your life...

**Brother John** (Are You Sleeping?) Frère Jacques - You just need one or two chords for this one. (In D: D and maybe an A7)

- I mess around with the rhythm; and make the tune “my own” (I do it in E) – *Demonstration...*

**Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater** (A fun but sexist song from Mother Goose...)

- This is another example of one I have fun with by adding an alternating base pattern (In D: D and G) – *Demonstration...*

**I’ve been Workin’ on the Railroad** - Dinah was the name used for a servant woman (Example; Page 172 Rise Up and Sing)

**Take Me Out to the Ball Game** – One, two, three strikes and you’re out (Let’s just sing it... Page 5 Rise Up and Sing)

**Puff The Magic Dragon** - A Peter Paul and Mary Favorite – The chords in this song are a little more complicated (Page 175 Rise Up and Sing)

## Patriotic Folks Songs

**This Land is Your Land** - A Woody Guthrie masterpiece that just about every American child learns in school (Example)

**America The Beautiful** – Words Katharine Lee Bate, music by Samuel A. Ward – Ray Charles and others tried unsuccessfully to make this an official alternate for the National Anthem. (Example; Page 1 Rise Up and Sing)

## Spirituals

**Swing Low, Sweet Chariot** – Or is it, swing low, sweet “Harriet” (Tubman) – Let’s sing this a cappella (Example; page 212 RUS)

**Simple Gifts** – A wonderful Shaker Hymn (and a great band;-) - Let’s play the melody by ear (Page 47 Rise Up and Sing)

**This Little Light of Mine** – Origin unclear; Attributed to Harry Dixon Loes – (Page 63 Rise Up and Sing)

**Amazing Grace** – John Newton – Probably the most popular folk hymns ever (Page 92 Rise Up and Sing)

## Americana Folk Tunes

**Oh Suzanna** – Stephen Foster – One of Foster’s more professionally successful songs (Example; Page 175 Rise Up and Sing))

**Camptown Races** – Stephen Foster – One good Foster song deserves another (Page 2 Rise Up and Sing)

**Freight Train** – Elizabeth Cotten’s Song that has inspired three generations of finger pickers and counting – (Example; P233 RUS)

**Summer Time** – From Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess – It can be played so many ways... (Page 35 Rise Up and Sing)

**City of New Orleans** – Steve Goodman’s classic; Arlo made it famous – A lot of chords to learn... (Page 230 Rise Up and Sing)

## Some Really Fun Folk Tunes

**John B. Sails** – Originally a folk song from the Caribbean Islands, played by the Kingston Trio and Beach Boys among others... (Example; Page 203 Rise Up and Sing)

**We All Live In A Yellow Submarine** – A Beatles song of course – (Example; Page 179 Rise Up and Sing)

**Me and Bobby McGee** – Kris Kristofferson’s (and Fred Foster’s) hit, covered by many singers including Janis Joplin; Bobby was a girl in the original... (Example)

## Some Examples: (Lyrics and Chords)

### I've Been Working on the Railroad: (Page 172 – Rise Up and Sing)

D G D E A  
I've been workin' on the railroad all the live long day; I've been workin' on the railroad, just to pass the time away  
A D G D G D A D  
Can't you hear the whistle blowin'? Rise up so early in the morn; Can't you hear the captain shoutin'? "Dinah blow your horn!"  
D G A D  
Dinah won't you blow, Dinah won't you blow; Dinah won't you blow your horn; (Repeat)  
D D A  
Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah; Someone's in the kitchen I know;  
D G D A D  
Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah, strummin' on the old banjo  
(Fee fi Fiddly-i-o – Uses same chords as someone's in the kitchen...)

### This Land is Your Land – Woody Guthrie (Page 5 Rise Up and Sing) – In the key of D

(D) G D A D  
This land is your land; this land is my land, from California to the New York Island  
D G D A D  
From the redwood forest, to the Gulf Stream waters, this land was made for you and me  
As I went walking that ribbon of highway; I saw above me an endless skyway  
I saw below me and that golden valley; this land was made for you and me

### America the Beautiful: words: Katherine Lee Bates, music: Samuel Ward (Page 1 Rise Up and Sing)

G D G D A D  
O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, For purple mountain majesties, Above the fruited plain!  
G D G C G C D G  
America! America! God shed his grace on thee; And crown thy good with brotherhood. From sea to shining sea!

### Swing Low Sweet Chariot: (Page-212 - Rise Up and Sing)

Swing low, sweet chariot; Coming for to carry me home, Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.  
I looked over Jordan, and what did I see; Coming for to carry me home? A band of angels coming after me,  
Coming for to carry me home.

(Chorus)

Sometimes I'm up, and sometimes I'm down, (Coming for to carry me home) But still my soul feels heavenly bound.  
(Coming for to carry me home)

### This Little Light of Mine – (Page 63 Rise Up and Sing)

G  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
C G  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
G Em G  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,  
G D G  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verses: Everywhere Where I go... Out in the Dark... (Make up your own...)

### Oh! Suzanna: – Stephen Foster (Page 175 – Rise Up and Sing)

D A7 D A D  
I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee; I'm goin' to Lou'siana my true love for to see.  
D A7 D A D  
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry; The sun so hot I froze to death, Susanna don't you cry.  
G D A D A D  
Oh! Susanna, don't you cry for me; I come from Alabama, with my banjo on my knee.  
I had a dream the other night, when everything was still; I thought I saw Susanna dear, A-coming down the hill.  
The buckwheat cake was in her mouth, The tear was in her eye, Said I, I'm coming from the south, Susanna don't you cry.  
(Chorus)



## Some Words of Advice

- Sing songs in your vocal range
  - On the guitar, Learn to use a capo affectively
- Learn tunes and songs in multiple keys
- Use the Circle of Fifths
  - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circle\\_of\\_fifths#mediaviewer/File:Circle\\_of\\_fifths\\_deluxe\\_4.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circle_of_fifths#mediaviewer/File:Circle_of_fifths_deluxe_4.svg)
- Learn the 1-4-5 chords in multiple keys (Examples)
  - C: C – F – G
  - D: D – G – A
  - E : E – A – B (or B7)
  - G: G – C – D
  - A: A – D = E
  - Exercise: Play Good Lovin' in all these Keys...
- Learn the relative-minor chord and minor-second chord in all the common keys (Examples)
  - C: Am, Dm
  - D: Bm, Cm
  - E: C#m, F#m (Not as easy on guitar...)
  - G: Em, Am
  - A: F#m, Bm
  - If you know the 1, 4, 5 chords and the relative-minor and minor-second, you can learn almost ANY song in any key.
    - Knowing these chords will help you in a jam.
- Jam, Jam, Jam
  - Find people to play with!
  - Do it often; You will improve, and have fun
  - Be mindful of other musicians, and give other people breaks

## About The Author:

Cliff Cole fell in love with the hammered dulcimer at the Philadelphia Folk Festival three decades ago, and he's been hammering on ever since. He started off as a drummer playing rock, jazz, and blues, and then carried that musical experience and sense of rhythm over to the hammered dulcimer and folk music.

Cliff plays in multiple music groups including Tachyonmetry, Dulcimer Boys and DayBreak.

Their music is available on Spotify, YouTube and many other digital download sites found on the web.

Cliff is very active in the folk scene. He is on the board of Perkasio Patchwork Coffeeshouse where he often works the soundboard. He also helps run the Nutmeg Dulcimer Festival and the French Creek Musicians Retreat.

James Jones made Cliff's hammered dulcimer. The full sized 2/16/18/7 instrument covers four octaves and has dampening pedal. For more information about James Jones instruments go to his web site: <http://www.jamesjonesinstruments.com>

Cliff lives with his lovely wife, Pamela, in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. He works the Director of Manufacturing for Rajant Corporation, in an office located in Malvern, Pennsylvania.

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