

Introduction

As the demand is increasing for this most popular instrument of the Banjo family "The Tenor Banjo" and knowing there is a long felt want for the right kind of a Method, hence I wrote this book and sincerely hope the work will be of value.

Being a Musician for over 25 years both as a player and writer for the various stringed instruments, I gained a wide experience on the "Tenor Banjo" ever since it came into prominence and have made a careful study of its strong and weak points.

I have tried to bring to light an Instructor which will prove a worthy addition to all beginners and teachers. Though limited in length, it should build the proper foundation for the preliminary work and keep the student enthusiastic if studied properly and conscientiously. My chief aim is to put the pupil on the right material which will bring forth the accomplished and desired results in the least possible time which is lacking in most of the instructors of to-day.

May the student work hard and follow William Mason's advice: "You will not take music lessons all your life. Work therefore every day to make yourself as independent as possible".



Rise of the Tenor Banjo

One of the most remarkable events in the musical field, has been the rapid growth of the Tenor Banjo. Although little more than ten years old, it has developed into a husky youngster, growing bigger and stronger with such rapidity that its popularity seems assured for all time, because it has reached a stage which must be considered more than a fad:- It has become a fixture.

The amazing response of musicians to its facility is in direct contrast to their former apathetic attitude toward other standard banjo instruments. Violinists, pianists, cornetists, cello players and various members in the orthodox orchestra have succumbed to the Tenor Banjo charm. In the dance halls it is recognized as a necessity, in the cafe and cabaret its drawing power is unequalled, and in the home its exhilarating tones make the old man smile and forget his business troubles.

Although new in application the tenor's origin sprang from noble parentage, for it is really a banjo tuned like a viola in the regular violin orchestra. It might, with propriety, be called a Viola Banjo. The left hand fingering resembles viola methods, but the right hand, using a plectrum instead of the bow, gives the instrument that characteristic banjo tone. Herein lies the cause of the Tenor Banjo's power and influence in creating popularity. The masses have long demanded a tone which, while being musical and rhythmical, possesses a snap that keeps abreast of this active and speedy age. They got it in the tenor, and immediately appropriated it for their own use as a safety valve for importing some stability to their enthusiasm.

But there are additional reasons for the tenor's quick jump into public favor. It is easy to play, it may be employed as a melodic or harmonic instrument; it adjusts itself to the score of the violin, viola or violin-cello and when it comes to a pinch it can deliver a good part from a piano score. An explanation of this extraordinary versatility can be traced to the fact that its music is written in the treble clef, the tones produced being an octave lower than the violin.

For solo work the tenor Banjo has many good points which appeal to the discriminating musician, quite a number of expert performers using it for the stage and concert platform.

In the orchestra it has become more firmly established, not only as an instrument for supplying chords but also for playing leading parts along with first violin.

For the young student who wishes to study the art of music and become a player quickly there is scarcely another instrument that will hold his attention better than a Tenor Banjo.

STANDING AND SITTING POSITION FOR HOLDING THE TENOR BANJO



The Standing Position



The Sitting Position

How to Hold the Tenor Banjo

Hold the instrument in an upward position and rest the bottom of "Banjo" on Right knee. Slant the right elbow at an outward angle, curving the wrist so it will be two or three inches from surface of head. Pick slightly from bridge. best tone is produced by picking about two inches from bridge, of course the softer or lighter tone is produced four or six inches upward from bridge.

The Pick or Plectrum and How to Hold it

Get a flexible or soft pick to start with. Place pick between the first finger of the right hand and thumb. It is not necessary to hold too firm. Might suggest to give it a little play and with a free wrist much can be accomplished in a very short and reasonable time. Always remember to arch the wrist about two inches from the bridge and hold the pick in a certain manner to avoid the clicking and scratchy tone at the strings.



How to Place the Pick



How to hold the Pick

Valuable Hints for the Tenor Banjo Player

It is not always necessary to play all four strings. Some of our leading Tenor Banjoists frequently employ two and three strings at a time depending upon the harmony.

Always watch the progression of the melody as often the higher note of the chord will produce a discord if such a top note is played with the full chord. In such cases it is recommended to substitute a single note or play melody that will harmonize for that period.

Should you encounter a measure too difficult for you it is advisable rather than play a discord to rest for that measure as there is no harm done by laying out.

Do not attempt to use many different strokes during the same strain but employ strokes most appropriated. The single and plain strokes are always the most popular and pleasing to the ear.

Often memorize a good TENOR BANJO Solo as this will make your instrument more interesting and enjoyable.

Get your strokes from the rhythm employed by the orchestra paying strict attention to the Piano and Drummer which should assist you wonderfully in deciding upon your strokes.

Practice modulations in various keys frequently as their use often occurs.

Very often a same chord may progress into a higher position therefore it is urged that you practice the same chords in various positions.

For variety use chords with different strokes and positions and alter when making a repeat.

Never attempt to drown the orchestra with your Tenor Banjo playing but rather harmonize equally.

There are some different tunings often used for the Tenor Banjo better termed as "fake tuning" such as Ukulele, Guitar tuning etc. The logical tuning for the Tenor Banjo is the straight tuning as thoroughly described in this method.

In order to produce a good lively and snappy tone, play with plectrum near the bridge.

Different orchestras vary in taste, some orchestra insists on a straight Vamping or Chord style while others prefer melody and chords combined. This method has covered both styles thoroughly therefore be prepared to meet the occasion.

When playing chord style Tenor Banjo, play distinctly and make all chords resolve in a smooth-like flowing manner pleasing to the ear.

Always remember that Tenor Banjo music is written one octave higher than it is actually played. This is the correct notation for the Tenor Banjo being officially recommended by the American Guild of Banjoist Mandolinist and Guitarists during the 1922 convention at New York City. This is called the octave or Universal Notation.

As a final hint remember to carefully follow the above hints and with conscientious practice and often make it possible for you to hear a good Tenor Banjoist, you should have no trouble in becoming a competent Tenor Banjoist.