

The Tenor Banjo.

The reason for the overwhelming popularity of the Tenor Banjo, when compared with the Five Stringed Banjo, lies mainly in its facile yet comprehensive technique, its sonority, its brilliance and its tremendous chordal possibilities.

Its regular tuning in perfect fifths places it alongside of the violin and 'cello in respect of the perfect sequence of scale and arpeggio technique.

Being higher in pitch than the "G" Banjo, it consequently possesses greater brilliance and sonority, and it combines more readily with Brass, Wood-Wind or Strings. It is not so unwieldy as the "G" Banjo, and is accordingly less fatiguing to hold.

Ever since its introduction, the "Tenor" Banjo has rapidly proved its importance, and now it is generally admitted to be the principal instrument of the Banjo family; for, however excellent the others may be for solo work, the Tenor Banjo is by far the most resourceful and for that reason is now adopted as the orthodox banjo for orchestral playing.

How to hold the Tenor Banjo.

The player will find that the Banjo is a rather heavy instrument to hold and on that account he may be inclined to grip the arm of the banjo with his left hand. This is a great fault: the left hand must *always* be free to change its position on the finger-board and must never grip the "neck" of the Banjo.

The player should seat himself as comfortably as possible, either normally, or with left leg crossed over the right. The Banjo should then be placed transversely across the left leg, and allowed to rest, with the rim of the Banjo touching the thigh, while the vellum remains in an almost vertical position.

The Plectrum, held by the right hand, must always strike downwards. The arm or neck of the Banjo should be elevated a little, so that the player's left arm forms a graceful curve.

The instrument should be held lightly by the left hand, without any grip whatever, supported by the leg. The left hand should be elevated to such an extent that the tuning pegs may be touched with ease.

At the same time, a shift from the pegs to the Bridge should not in any way unduly inconvenience the player.

The four fingers of the left hand must remain curved in a position ready to strike the notes that they are required to play.

The palm of the hand must be entirely free from the Banjo neck, while the thumb is placed on the neck, immediately underneath the second finger. The fingers are held separate from one another.

The fingers must firmly press the strings, and to facilitate this the finger nails should be trimmed rather short.

The right fore-arm should rest lightly on the rim of the Banjo, but should not press heavily upon it. The right hand should droop in a curve from the wrist, which in turn must be very loose and supple.

On no account must the right wrist be allowed to lean upon the vellum.

Tuning.

The banjo is tuned regularly in fifths, as is the case with all stringed instruments of the violin family. The music of the Tenor Banjo is usually written one octave higher than the actual pitch, but quite frequently some arrangers write Banjo parts in normal pitch. Where this is the case it is usual to endorse the part "ACTUAL PITCH".



The pupil should accustom himself to reading both types of notation with equal ease. In general it may be observed that parts written "Actual pitch" are usually somewhat more difficult than the other notation, because the highest compass of the Tenor Banjo is more frequently utilized in music written in this manner.

Throughout this tutor, unless there are specific directions to the contrary, the orthodox notation is understood. A few examples are given at intervals on the "actual pitch" notation in order to accustom pupil to both systems.

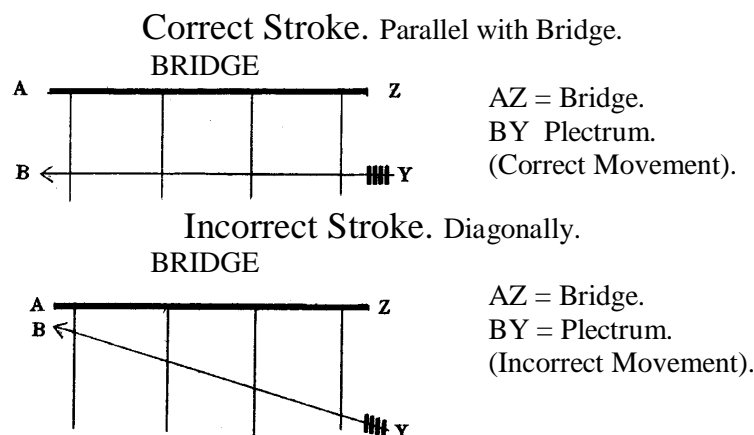
Some Banjo Tutors treat each new fret as a new position, but in the present work the author has carefully guarded against such an error. The student must always regard frets as semitone moves, while the *main* divisions are the POSITIONS.

The Plectrum.

The plectrum is the instrument by which the string is set in vibration. It is the very "snap" of the plectrum which has raised the Tenor Banjo to such pre-eminence in the modern orchestra. Hence it is essential to use this very important instrument correctly in order to obtain the best results.

The plectrum (plural - plectra) varies in shape, the usual form assuming the form of a symmetrical pear. It is held by the thumb and first digit, with the second digit assisting the balance.

The tip of the plectrum must strike the strings, and the stroke must always be parallel with the bridge and not diagonal.



In order to produce a full rich tone it is unnecessary to use any considerable force. To a certain extent the amount of thrust necessary to a good tone varies with the make and style of Instrument. Usually, however, a moderate pressure suffices to bring out a sonorous, mellow tone.

In striking the strings, great care must be taken not to displace them, and thus send them out of tune very quickly.

The Stroke.

Strokes are of two kinds, Down and Up. (▣ and √)

The *Down Stroke* (▣) is that movement of the plectrum away from the performer and towards the opposite rim of the Banjo.

The *Up Stroke* (√) is the reverse movement. It may be mentioned that in actual practice the down stroke is by far the more usual and important.

Tone production.

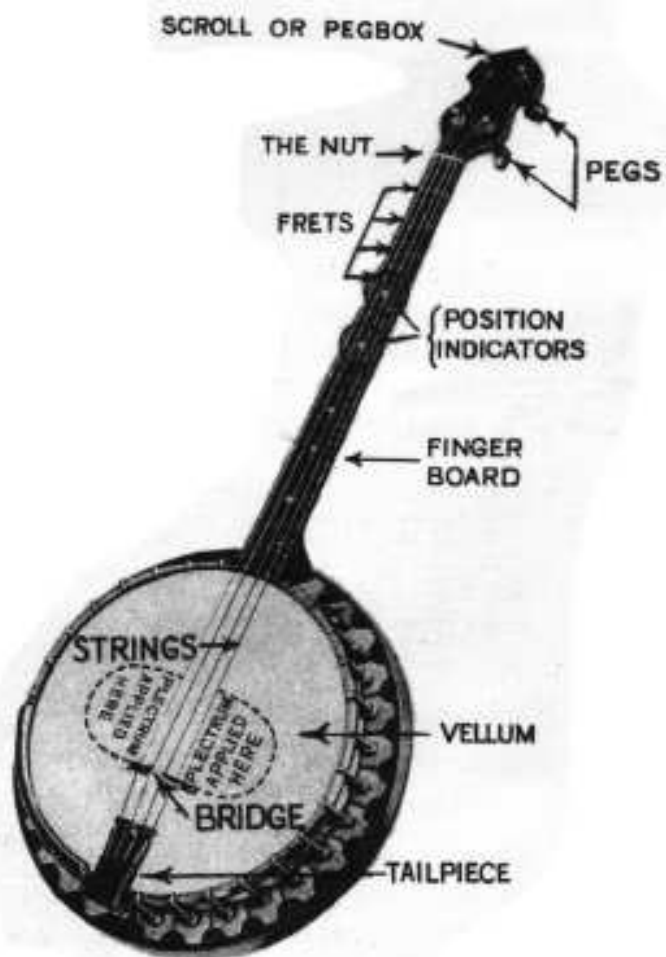
It is impossible to agree with those who say that no deviation in quality or quantity of tone is possible upon "plucked" stringed instruments. To hear any virtuoso on the Tenor Banjo is to have absolute repudiation of any such erroneous beliefs.

There are many "shades" or nuances of tone that may be varied and acquired partly by additional plectrum force, and partly by deft manipulation of left and right hands.

The normal tone of the tenor banjo is mellow, crisp but yet not "raspy". It should invariably be the earnest endeavour of the student to emulate first class players in this respect, and now that broadcasting and gramophones play their part in modern music, it is quite simple for any student to acquaint himself with the tone and style of eminent soloists.

The plectrum fulfills a most important role in Banjo playing and the remarks on "*ThePlectrum*" should be re-read in order to practice the salient points illustrated therein.

Having thoroughly grasped the directions previously given regarding the posture, position of left hand fingers etc. the pupil may then proceed to study the instrument in detail, commencing with the more elementary exercises in the first position.



SHOWING DESIGN OF TENOR BANJO AND FITTINGS