

FOREWORD

The average player of Tenor Banjo prefers to practice studies of the pretty, melodious type rather than the common monotonous exercises. In arranging this material for your perusal, I have been careful to bear this point in mind.

Step by step, I have endeavored to impart the secrets of single-note technique, and have also occasionally introduced melody combined with four-note chords, using as part of my material violin duets that were written by the famous composers PLEYEL and MAZAS.

To make this work more interesting, I have arranged a teacher's or 2nd Banjo Part. The 2nd part, which you will find as an insert to this book, contains Chords, Arpeggios and Counterpoint. It is advised that the scholar practice both parts; on finishing these duets he will find himself benefited noticeably in more ways than one. His task will be agreeable and very satisfactory.

He will learn to perform his own part and eventually will not be confused or bewildered by listening to the counterpoint that appears in the accompaniment. He will have played in a variety of rhythms, and, if he has done well, he will have learned to play his part strictly in time, regardless, in a sense, of what his companion is doing. He will have become more musical and proficient

I maintain that there is less work in chord playing than in single-note technique. To single-pick the strings in a snappy and clear manner it is obvious that the player must have considerable training. Synchronizing the fingers of the left hand and the pick of the right hand necessitates delicate control, and this can only be attained by plentiful practice of systematically arranged studies.

Inasmuch as it is not practical to present all this material under one cover, I have found it necessary to confine this work to two volumes _Book 1 (Graded: Easy to Medium)_ Book 2 (Graded: Medium to Difficult). The scope of these two volumes, together with my well-known McNeil Chord System for Tenor Banjo, covers every phase of Tenor Banjo playing in use today.

If the student will conscientiously follow the instructions as herein set forth, he will eventually become a competent player and will be able to "hold his own" among top-notch musicians.

I take this means of wishing you abundant success.

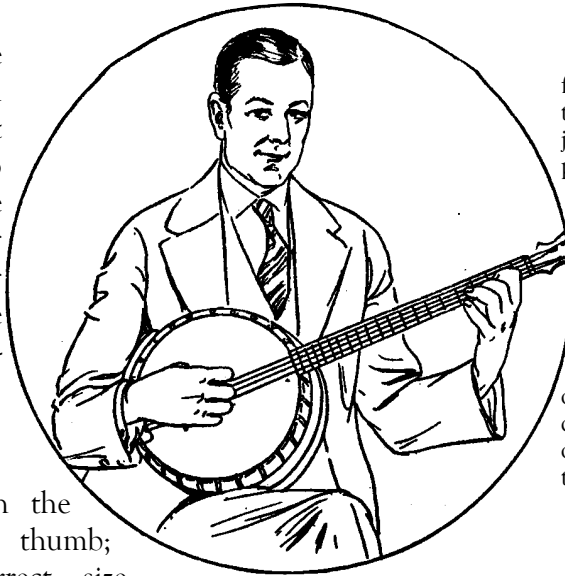
Charles McNeil

How to Hold the Tenor Banjo

Hold the instrument half-tilted against the right side with middle of the right fore - arm firmly pressing against the instrument just above the tail-piece. The neck of the banjo is held between the ball of the thumb and the index finger of the left hand - the finger touching the neck at a point where the finger joins the hand - the thumb underneath the fingerboard - the palm of the hand not touching at all. (See Fig. 1.)

The Right Hand

The pick or "plectrum" is held between the extreme ends of the index finger and thumb; the accompanying illustration shows correct size (Fig. 2.) the shaded portion signifies exactly which side of the pick is held lightly between the thumb and index finger - do not grasp pick tightly - do not pinch. To get the rest of the fingers in correct position, imagine you are holding a ball. (Fig. 3.) The tip of the pick moves lightly back and forth across all four strings. Always remember, however, that the wrist must be elevated about three inches and hang loosely at all times, being thoroughly relaxed and free from tension (Fig. 4.)



Notice where the forearm is resting on the rim of the Banjo; just left of the tail-piece.

Also note the altitude angle of the neck, it is elevated and held outward from the player.

Again note, Banjo rests on the right thigh—the crease in the trousers is opposite the center of the Banjo rim.

Fig. 1

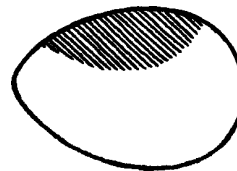


Fig. 2

Correct size of pick (plectrum) May be tortoise shell or celluloid.

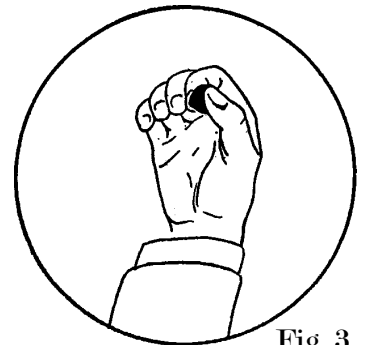


Fig. 3

Proper way to hold pick

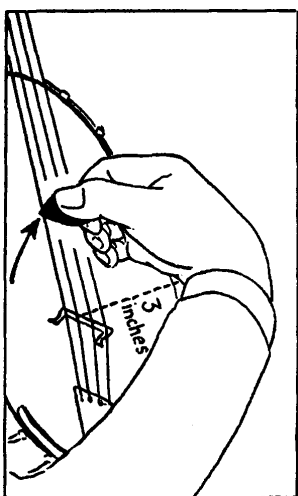


Fig. 4

The right hand, with relaxed (limber) wrist, is one of the very important points in Banjo playing. To learn how to thoroughly relax your wrist, arch same as shown in Fig. 4. Twist wrist upward about two inches, carefully observing that the movement is by wrist only - the forearm must not be used and is therefore, comparatively, held rigid - then let the wrist drop on the 4th string in a sort of "don't care" manner. After stroking the 4th string, the pick leans against the 3rd string. This manipulation produces the correct down-stroke. Lifting the wrist again and repeating the operation results in a series of down-up strokes similar to a "fanning movement". Fashion this movement as that of a pendulum and the wrist-bones as the pivot, remembering to keep the forearm in its original place on the rim of the instrument. When performed properly, the forearm merely rolls forward and backward on its fatty part.

The down stroke is used most by the Banjoist, being employed to sustain quarter-notes. See table of general rules for stroking, page 10. In single-note technique, the pick strikes the strings at a 45° angle and the body of the pick hits flat against the strings and not cornerwise. The fingernail of the little finger is allowed to drag lightly and freely on the calfskin head, acting as a gauge to permit the pick to "bite into" the strings about an eighth of an inch.

In chord playing the pick is used in a more perpendicular manner (90°) and the fingernail does not touch the head of the Banjo.

2d BANJO PART

TEACHER'S BOOK

Mc Neil's
Progressive
Studies for
Tenor Banjo

Vol. I.

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MADE IN U.S.A

TO TEACHERS:

In view of the fact that there is a much needed want of material that can be applied to teaching Time, Tenor Banjo Notation, Correct Fingering, Systematic Stroking, Single-note Technique and General Musicianship, I have compiled Mc Neil's Progressive Studies for Tenor Banjo arranged in duet form.

During my years of teaching the Tenor Banjo, I have had to resort to makeshift methods of using violin and piano music. It is obvious, for many reasons, that this did not meet the desired need, besides causing much extra work such as marking fingering, strokes, explanation regarding notation, etc.

In presenting this work to you for use in your profession, I have endeavored to avoid the common mistake of arranging the studies in an inconsistent manner. In other words: I have been anxious to keep away from changing the mode of Time, Positions and Keys too suddenly. On the other hand, I have tried to present material that is beneficial to the student and well worth the teachers efforts.

Again, in arranging this music I have marked the proper fingering (using as a basis cello fingering in the 1st and 2nd position) and likewise, I have marked the intricate stroking, which is fundamentally correct and conforming to the method used by the majority of well-known teachers and players of the Tenor Banjo.

It is advised that the teacher use the 2nd Banjo Part and play with his scholar right from the very beginning. This tends to teach independence on the pupils part and at the same time the prettiness of the duets makes the pupil take interest and he will find his lesson period enjoyable instead of monotonous. You will find that these studies from number six on are splendid material for Banjo Club practice.



The study of CHORDS, PRACTICAL HARMONY and PROFESSIONAL COACHING FOR THE BUSINESS BANJOIST, will be found in the 100-page book

Mc NEIL CHORD SYSTEM FOR TENOR BANJO

by

CHARLES MC NEIL