

# Holding the Banjo

The rim of the Banjo, or Resonator if one is attached, should be held on the right thigh, with the handle or arm pointing slightly upwards and towards, but not quite so high as, the left shoulder. The Banjo must lean towards the body and the right forearm should be placed in a slanting direction over the rim in such a position that the plectrum may strike the strings about three inches from the bridge. It is important that the Banjo must be held firmly in position without any assistance from the left hand, which is to be allowed free movement to facilitate fingering in different positions of the fingerboard. The left hand should be placed so that the neck of the instrument is held between the third joint of the first finger and slightly below the first joint of the thumb. All the fingers must be held higher than the fingerboard, to which, when not in use, they must be kept as close as possible. The neck must never be allowed to sink into the hollow between the finger and thumb. In playing chords beyond the first position, the ball of the thumb is moved into a position underneath the arm as the hand is moved higher up the fingerboard. When stopping the strings the tips of the left hand fingers must be trained to press down firmly as close to the frets as possible, in order that a clear tone may be produced when the strings are struck with the plectrum.

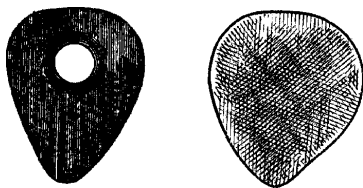
## How to hold and use the Plectrum

The first finger of the right hand is bent (not to its fullest extent) at the first joint, and the Plectrum held there by the ball of the thumb. The second and third fingers when held against the first give a firmer hold and afford better control. Movement is to be made from the wrist only and not from the arm. In order to ensure easy technique, *the wrist must be arched*. The little finger must move a about with the rest of the hand, and should lightly touch the vellum in order to keep the hand in the correct playing position. Use only the tip of the plectrum. To produce good tone it is necessary to hold the plectrum firmly and strike the strings sharply and without hesitation.

## The Strings and Tuning

The Banjo has five strings which are numbered from the right of the fingerboard, thus the first string is the one farthest from the player when the instrument is held in the playing position. The fifth string is not often used by plectrum players, and some prefer to dispense with it altogether in order to avoid its being sounded involuntarily when chords are played. It is, of course, absolutely essential to the finger style player, and can sometimes be used with advantage by the plectrist.

### THE PLECTRUM



The player should obtain a good tortoiseshell plectrum, of which there are many excellent varieties and shapes available. He should from time to time experiment with different kinds until he finds that which suits him the best.

Many players use a different plectrum for the tremolo style of playing to the one which they use when employing staccato strokes.