



ILLUSTRATION No. 2

Correct Position for Playing the Tenor Banjo

HOLDING THE INSTRUMENT IN CORRECT POSITION

The Tenor Banjo is held on the right leg rather close to the body, with the neck pointing upward at a slant so that the left hand is about even with the left shoulder. The neck of the instrument is allowed to rest lightly against the knuckle joint of the left hand, the thumb being pressed lightly against the opposite side. It is very important that the left hand does not grasp the neck tightly as this would hamper its movement in many ways. Study the Illustrations very carefully.

HOLDING THE PICK AND USING THE RIGHT HAND

The pick, or plectrum is the shape of an egg, except that the narrow end comes to a point. If you had to play the Tenor Banjo without a pick you would naturally pluck the strings with the bare tip of your index, or pointing, finger. You can imagine how your finger would feel after a while. It would become bruised and blistered. Besides, you assuredly would not get the kind of tone you are anxious to produce. The pick saves you

all this trouble. It saves your finger tip and it helps you produce good Tenor Banjo tones.

In using the pick, then, place it on the index finger of the right hand, as you see it in Illustration No. 5. If you will observe carefully, you will see that the point of the pick is about a quarter of an inch beyond the tip of the finger. You will also notice something else. The tip of the pick points a trifle outward from the hand. It does not point in exactly the same direction as the finger itself. You can see that easily in Illustration No. 6, too. Close your hand now, that is, close it as much as is necessary, to bring your thumb down and hold it as you see in Illustration No. 6. Do you notice that you need not squeeze the pick tightly to have a good grip on it? As a matter of fact, the more comfortably you hold it, the better it is. I don't mean that you are to hold it so loosely that the pick may easily fall from between the fingers. To hold it too loosely is as bad as holding it too tightly.

ILLUSTRATION NO. 3

The Finger on the Seventh Fret

In Tuning the Tenor Banjo



ILLUSTRATION NO. 4

Balancing the Arm and

Plucking the Strings.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 5

Position of Pick

A number of problems will confront you in first learning the Tenor Banjo. If you will be careful about them, as I am sure you will be, these problems or difficulties will soon evaporate into thin air, so to speak. Yes, they will become easy, as you practice them from day to day. A problem (I suppose you thought of it already) is how high above the strings you are to hold your hand, if you are to play best and easiest. You can see for yourself that if you hold it too high you will miss the strings by a mile and your hand motions will be wasted. And you can also see that if you hold your hand too closely to the head—well, you won't be able to move your hand at all. The pick will be caught between the strings and will stick there.

BALANCE RIGHT ARM FOR BEST RESULTS

Balance your right arm on the rim of the Tenor Banjo as you see it in Illustration No 4. Make a close observation of the various features of holding the instrument and pick as you see it in this illustration. You see the easy natural curve at the wrist? That enables you to play freely and to move your arm gracefully from one string to the next, and back again. Balancing your arm on the rim also makes it easy for you to gauge the closeness with which your pick is to the strings. Regulate this position in a manner that you will pluck the strings gracefully and efficiently.

In acquiring this position you will find that in the beginning you may be a little

too close to the head and again you will be just a little too far away from it. With careful practice for about a half hour each day you will soon discover the exact distance at which to hold it. You will not only find it, but you will feel as though you always played the Tenor Banjo. Yes, the balancing of the arm on the rim of the instrument will do all that for you. It will finally give you a knack that will make your playing the envy of all around you.

HOW TO MAKE A DOWN-STROKE

The strokes are made by swinging or rolling the hand back and forth, or rather up and down — not by a sideways motion of the hand, made from the wrist joint. To make a down-stroke, the hand is raised two or three inches above the string and then suddenly dropped with a quick motion and a little force.

There must be a feeling of relaxation and repose after each down-stroke, no matter how quickly the hand is brought back to its former position.

Before going any further, you may practice the downstroke on the open strings until you get the knack of it fairly well. Then, we must lay the instrument aside, and take up the important study of notes.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 6

Position of Pick Between Fingers