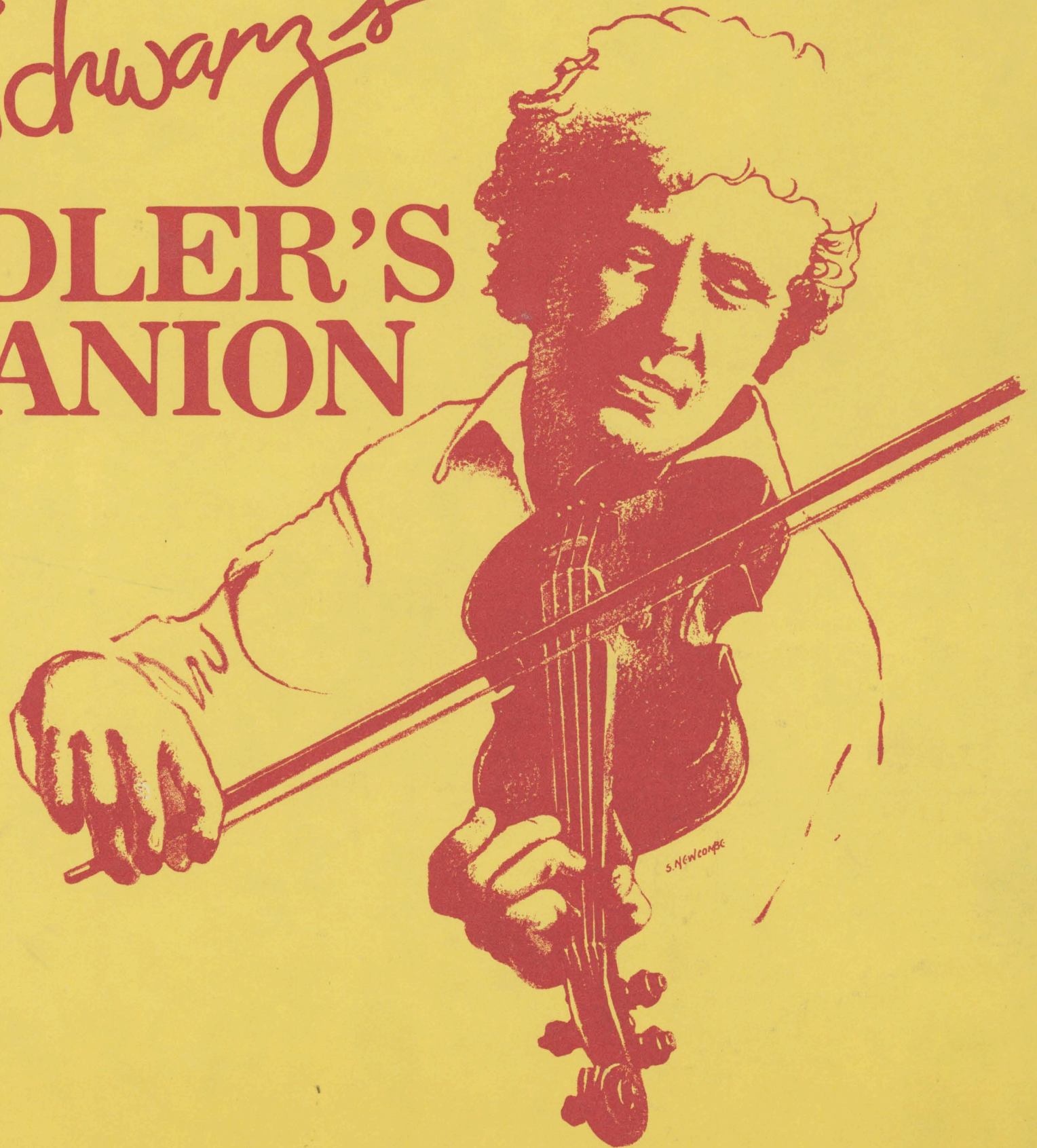


FOLKWAYS RECORDS FM 8350

*Trocy Schwarz's*  
**FIDDLER'S  
COMPANION**



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MUSIC LP



## FOLKWAYS RECORDS FM 8350

### TRACY SCHWARZ'S FIDDLER'S COMPANION

SIDE A	SIDE B
ARKANSAS TRAVELER	JOHN BROWN'S
SAIL AWAY LADIES	DREAM
RAGTIME ANNIE	BILLY IN THE LOW
SALLY GOODIN	GROUND

BONAPARTE'S RETREAT
TOO YOUNG TO MARRY
JUNE APPLE
FLOP EARED MULE
I WENT TO THE DANCE

This recording deals with fiddle playing that, once common only to rural North America, is now found everywhere. "Fiddling" differs from orchestral violin playing in three essential ways: the emphasis of a ringing, sustained treble sound; a regular, easily heard beat (usually some form of dance tempo); and its use of ornamentation, technical devices through which the fiddler conveys all kinds of moods and messages.

In learning a fiddle tune traditionally, that is, by ear, there arises the problem of how to separate the basic melody from the ornamentation. Must each version be absorbed as a whole?

The Fiddle Companion attempts to answer this question by demonstration with a selection of standard tunes, giving first the basic melody, and then developing the ornamentation around this foundation until a reasonable "version" takes form. Therefore, this record can be used both for learning tunes and for learning techniques.

DETAILED TRACK-BY-TRACK HINTS, HELPS, AND COMMENTS BY TRACY ARE ENCLOSED.

Tracy is accompanied by his wife, Eloise, on guitar

# Tracy Schwarz's FIDDLER'S COMPANION

RECORDED AT JOHN MORRIS'S OLD HOMESTEAD  
STUDIO, BRIGHTON, MICHIGAN.  
PRODUCED BY MICHAEL JAHNCKE.  
ARTWORK BY STEVE NEWCOMBE, APPLETON, WI

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Folkways 8359  
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FOLKWAYS RECORDS FM 8350



**"TRACY SCHWARZ'S FIDDLE COMPANION" GUIDE TO THE ART OF  
OLD TIME FIDDLING IN BASIC AND ORNAMENTED STYLES.**

My format on side A has been: I. To play the tune at regular speed (although maybe a little simpler than usual); II. To play and develop the tune slowly; III. To play the tune at regular speed again, this time with guitar accompaniment, to regain anything lost in the "unreal" slow demonstration. On side B the tunes are played as I usually do them; that is, country style, with a strong Southern Appalachian Mountain flavor.

To simplify matters, here are some technical terms and their definitions:

—Nashville Shuffle: a series of sets of bow strokes, each set made up of one long stroke quickly followed by two short (saw) strokes — the sets are repeated automatically, giving a shuffle sound.


—Old Time Shuffle: a recurring pattern of bowing; it differs from the Nashville Shuffle in that it holds one note a bit longer than its neighbor.

—Ornamentation: those notes and techniques that do not belong to the basic melody; fill-in techniques; sometimes called embellishment.

—Saw Stroke: where bowing is at a one-to-one ratio with the notes; for each new note, you move the bow in the opposite direction.

—Shuffle: a bowing technique producing rhythm through continuously recurring patterns; as in the Nashville Shuffle.

—Time: sense of rhythm; as in "to have good (bad) time."

—Trill: a rapid movement by the noting hand that produces three notes in the space of one; as in 

—Two String Harmony: where two adjacent strings are bowed and noted simultaneously, producing a harmony of two notes; e.g., C# and E (in the key of A).

—Unison: Where two adjacent strings bowed simultaneously produce the same note; as in A (on the string) with A (on the D string).

**SIDE A**

**The Arkansas Traveler** (Key of D): Our first tune is a standard square dance piece that you'll find in most every fiddler's repertoire. Many old time groups performed a skit with this tune where the country bumpkin out-talks the city-bred Arkansas Traveler, then does an about-face in order to learn the B part of the tune from the city slicker.

As with many tunes, the structure of this one can be described as being Part A and Part B, and each part has "lines," numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. In general terms, Part A of this tune is played low (mostly on the C and D strings), while Part B is played high (on the E and A strings). Part B is sometimes called the fine part.

It might be easier to learn this first tune by following the development closely. Therefore, in ((II.) Part A:

1st time: I played the very most basic melody of Part A, lines 1, 2, 3, and 4.

2nd time: Now I added a few more notes — fiddle notes — around the basic melody, added some rhythm with the bow, at times bowed unisons to add ringing (sustain).

3rd time: I added still a few more notes so that the tune becomes more interesting to listen to, and flows better.

4th time: Maybe one or two more notes, to polish it up.

5th time: Here, in lines 3 and 4, I used many more saw strokes, because they make the tune more lively.

6th time: This last time the bow rocks in a 1-2 rhythm (from left to right) for yet another element of ornamentation.



In (II.) Part B:

1st time: This is your basic Part B, lines 1, 2, 3, and 4.

2nd time: Now fiddle notes are starting to come in around the basic melody, but still not enough to make a good version.

3rd time: More notes again, some of which are unexpected and tricky to execute.

4th time: Now we have enough notes to make a decent version of the B part (if played at regular speed).

5th time: About the same, but it flows better. Notice how most lines are bowed on one string, while the end of line four is bowed on two strings, like a chord.

6th time: Only one different note here, but notice how it changes the character of the line, you could say it gives its color a different shade.

7th time: The speed is gaining a little. Some notes are left out now to gain impact.

8th time: Now it's almost at the regular speed and it's a fully acceptable version. From some of the earlier stages of development you can glean ideas for different ornamentation.

**Sail Away Ladies** (Key of G): This tune is a favorite of mine for teaching because it's so different and so old time. The famous early Grand Ol' Opry entertainer Uncle Dave Macon made a recording of this tune with words, and this version here (learned from Uncle Bunt Stephens' record) is very similar.

The emphasis of the tune is therefore on melody, rather than on repetition. You had lots of shuffle in the Arkansas Traveler, but here the bow stops and starts a lot, according to the demands of the melody. You have to have a good time to play a tune like this and make people want to get up and dance.

The A part of this fiddle tune does not require much ornamentation. In the B part, the rocking of the bow functions as your embellishment.

The blow-by-blow description you had for the Arkansas Traveler is gone now — your ear will be your best guide.

**Ragtime Annie** (Key of D): Ragtime music found its way into the fiddling tradition many years ago, and this is one of the most popular and persistent tunes of that type. It probably bears little resemblance to the original ragtime sound anymore, but it makes a good number for square dances, jam sessions or even contests.

The structure of its melody allows more ornamentation in the A part by means of adding more and more notes bowed with saw strokes. A little rhythm also is supplied to this part by rocking the bow, and a fuller sound comes with the use of two string harmonies.

In most fiddling traditions, the B part of Ragtime Annie is played pretty straight, left pretty much as it is so that the beauty of its melody can shine out. However, in a fiddling tradition as highly innovative as the Texas contest style, this would be considered only the beginning.

**Sally Goodin** (Key of A): When I'm teaching I always get to this tune real soon. It's in the key of A for one thing, which is the easiest key to sound good in, at first. And Sally Goodin teaches the use of the 4th finger (the pinky), for noting. And what's more, it teaches rhythm and gives lots of opportunity for ornamentation.

To my mind it's the rhythm of this tune that makes it such a good one. For that reason I demonstrated the use of two different bow strokes: the Nashville Shuffle and the Saw stroke. The entire tune can be played using only one of these strokes, but this wouldn't be as good fiddling as when several different strokes are used to give variety to the ornamentation.

Sally Goodin is an exciting tune. This is emphasized not only through the use of unisons at the A and E notes (which brings in the traditional ring of true fiddle playing). On top of all that, since the tune doesn't have much range — an octave at the most — there is lots of repetition within a short time, and this gets to be like a chant. Maybe this is why some people have thought of the fiddle as the devil's instrument.



**John Brown's Dream** (Key of A): An old time mountain tune found around the Galax, Va./Mt. Airy, N.C. area, which has recently gained national popularity. It has a different kind of drive than, say, Sally Goodin, but it moves right along at a continuous, brisk pace. It always goes well in combination with 5-string banjo because of its recurring patterns. Structurally speaking, this is also a well developed tune, with its five parts — A, B, C, D, and E (which is played low, on the G and D strings, to reflect and imitate part D).

The techniques of ornamentation used here are centered in the use of 2-string harmonies throughout the tune, together with an old time shuffle that fills in between the emphasized notes with rhythm in a regular pattern.

**Billy In The Lowground** (Key of C): Our only C tune here. It captures the ear with its use of the beautiful related A minor chord in the A part, and the way it soars up into the B part. Some versions carry out the A4 and B4 parts an extra beat or two and make the tune even more unusual this way.

Ornamentation comes here in forms similar to those we've seen so far. Any number of different bow strokes can be used to play it, and in the Texas contest style quite a bit of improvisation is allowed.

**Bonapart's Retreat** (Key of D, Bonapart's Retreat Tuning: (from the fourth string) D, D, A, D): Here's an old timer that sounds like bagpipes and sports a historical title as well. It's quite unusual in our collection here, since it has four parts, it's played in an open tuning with a low drone string (#4, tuned from G down to D), and the rhythm in part A is different than in the rest of the tune.

Tuning the fiddle to a chord (rather than the universal G, D, A, E) enhances and amplifies the ringing more than ever would be possible otherwise. The disadvantage here is that tunes in different keys require a pause for re-tuning, something that is awkward with a stage band. The natural result has been the death of most of these tunes. Fortunately, Bonapart's Retreat seems to survive nevertheless.

Another ornamentation we hear this time is the trill, something that has all but disappeared from Southern playing.

**Too Young To Marry** (Key of D): For some reason this tune has an unusual number of titles. It's known also As "Buffalo Nickel," "Chinky Pin," "Time For The Old Folks To Go To Bed," and many more. It's pretty old and very well known, which could explain its many aliases.

Whatever its title, it's catchy and fairly easy to learn. Ornamentation is made up mostly of more notes, much as in the preceding tunes. I played one of the A parts through using as many notes as possible to give some idea of how far you can go with ornamentation. Notice also, at places like the beginning of B1, a jump ahead of time to the first note gives the tune more snap, makes it more lively, and therefore embellishes it.

**June Apple** (Key of A): Another mountain tune from the Galax/Mt. Airy region. We get treated here to a little bit of a wonderful sound in fiddling (and in traditional music in general), that which is called "modal," or simply "lonesome." It comes from playing certain notes flat on purpose, or even leaving certain notes out altogether. Listen to parts A1 and A2 — hear the flatted 7th note. At times you hear the same thing in B4 (one octave lower). This is a real old time mountain sound, and when it's put together with slides and bluesy notes it makes the basis of the Bluegrass sound.

**Flop Eared Mule** (Keys of G and D): Another rural favorite, remarkable for its use of two keys: G in the A part, and D in the bridge, or B part. Its form reads: A B B A. The double ending ("shave and a haircut, two bits), played here is not as old time as a single ending would be. You see, old time and modern players each have their particular preferences for beginning and ending patterns, and as is with ornamentation, they rarely mix them up.

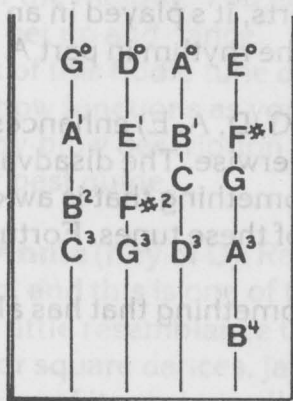
**I Went To The Dance** (Key of G, universal tuning tuned down one whole tone, A position): In southwest Louisiana among the Cajun-French people, a wonderful style of Southern Country fiddling has been developing alongside what we've already heard represented here, and this Cajun fiddle style has had many of its beginnings in the same places as other Southern styles. The tune "J'etais Au Bal Hier Au Soir," or "I Went To The Dance Last Night," sounds a whole lot like "Cindy," but uses some ornamentation that's just different enough to put this way of playing in a category of its very own.

The art of second fiddling exists in Cajun country too. Part way through the piece I've demonstrated the back-up technique used for second fiddle, then thru the magic of overdubbing I played second fiddle to myself.

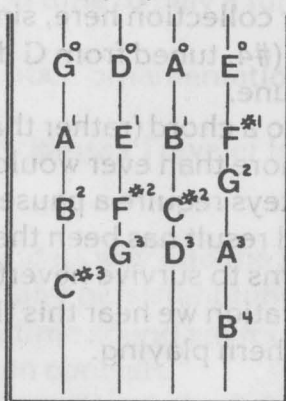
Tracy Schwarz

March, 1978

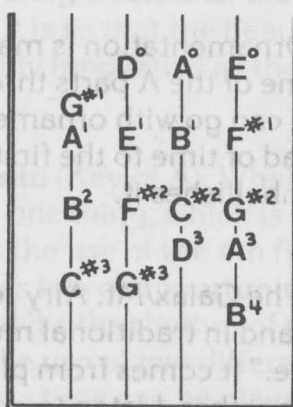
G major positions



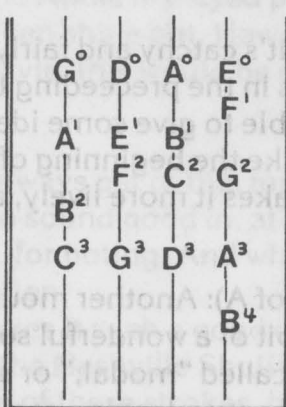
D major positions



A major positions



C major positions



Other instructional records produced  
by Tracy Schwarz:

Folkways 8359 - Learn To Fiddle

Folkways FM 8361 - Traditional Cajun Fiddle

Folkways FM 8362 - Cajun Fiddle Old and New

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