



tony trischka



Smithsonian Folkways

territory

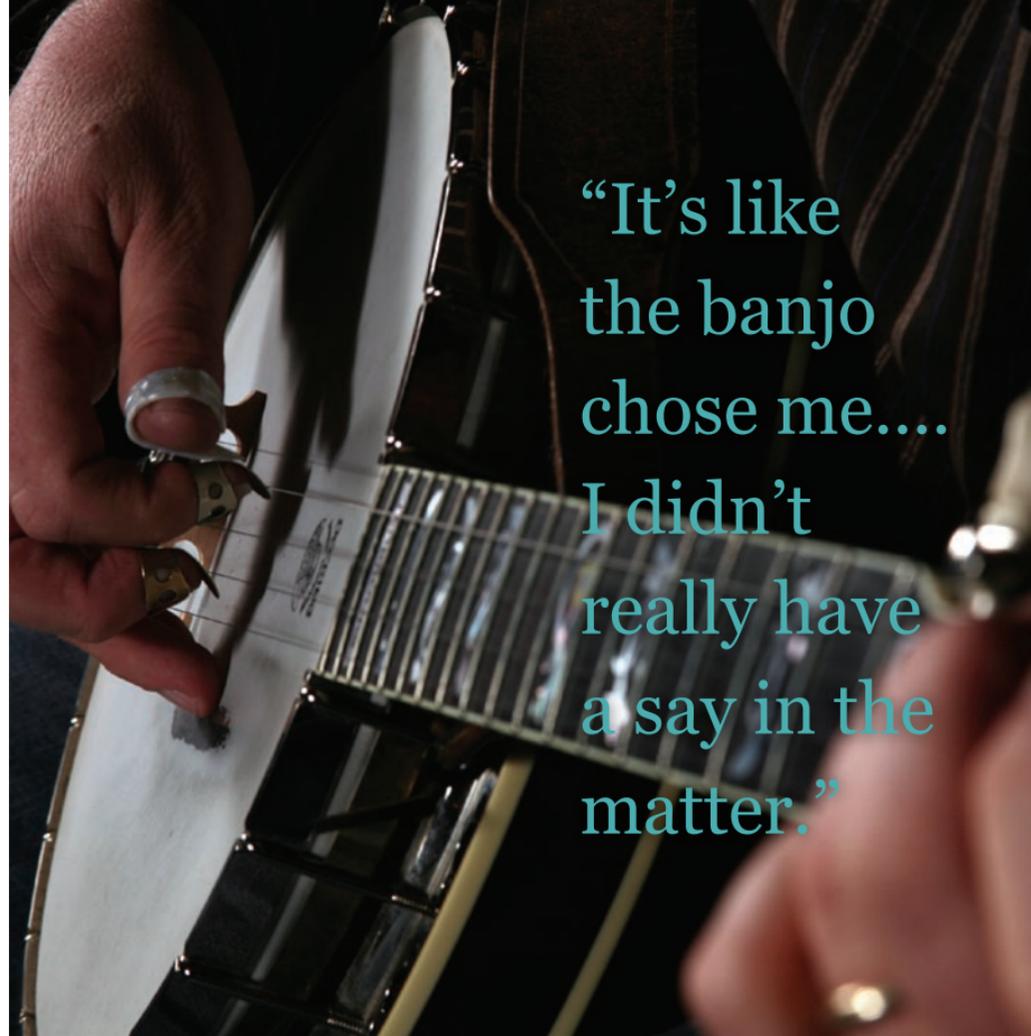
tony trischka territory

1. FOX CHASE 3:30
2. LEATHERWING BAT (trad.) 3:32
3. RAINBOW YOSHI 2:27
4. FRENCH CREEK/BURNING SPRINGS 3:21
5. ZOE 2:16
6. JOHN HENRY MEDLEY:
JOHN HENRY (trad.)/BONAPARTE'S
RETREAT (trad.)/TWISTS AND
TURNS 3:18
7. TROMPE DE L'OREILLE 2:47
8. HAWAII SLIDE-O 2:22
9. JOHN COHEN'S BLUES 1:47
10. MOLLY AND TENBROOKS
(arr. Bill Monroe/Bill Monroe Music, BMI) 2:46
11. SEAN 1:57
12. THE NEXT BIG THING 4:03
13. NOAH CAME TO EDEN 4:12
14. EIGHTEEN 1:54
15. CELTIC MEDLEY:
ST. ANNE'S REEL/ DROWSY
MAGGIE/RED HAired BOY/
THE BLACKBIRD/RED HAired
LASS (all songs trad.) 3:01
16. SALT RIVER (arr. Bruce Molsky) 2:43
17. BANJOLAND (Joe Morley) 3:00
18. OLD STONE CHURCH 4:30
19. GOURD BANZA 1:44
20. BRIGHTSHADE/CAROLINA
TRAVELER (Earl Scruggs/Scruggs Music
Inc., BMI)/CASEY JONES (trad.) 3:57
21. LAKE FLORA 3:29

* Unless otherwise noted, all songs written or arranged by Tony Trischka / Tone Zone Music, BMI, admin. by Bug



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“It’s like
the banjo
chose me....
I didn’t
really have
a say in the
matter.”

TONY TRISCHKA TERRITORY by Bob Carlin

Have you ever heard of a bluegrass banjoist referencing *Black Banjo Songsters of North Carolina and Virginia*, Kentucky oldtimer Lee Sexton, black harmonicists DeFord Bailey and Sonny Terry, and musician and folklorist Mike Seeger? Tony Trischka does this on just the first cut of this CD. These sources would make sense if we were discussing a member of bluegrass generation one, such as founding father Bill Monroe or guitarist Clyde Moody. They might seem incongruous for banjo innovator Tony Trischka, from the first generation of bluegrass musicians to turn the “tradition” on its head by introducing influences from rock ‘n’ roll and jazz. However, those who have been closely following Tony’s musical journey should have seen this CD coming.

In *Territory* Tony Trischka shows the influence of late 19th- and early 20th-century classic banjo playing, Pete Seeger’s up-pick sing-along accompaniments, African and African-American string band music, four-string tenor Irish-Celtic plectrum-style banjo, Hawaiian slide/steel guitar, John Hartford’s iconoclastic Americana, old-time musician Mike Seeger’s prebluegrass picking styles, as well as Tony’s own roots in the three-finger methods of Earl Scruggs and melodic banjo innovator Bill Keith. On banjos strung with nylon and steel, and made from gourds, metal, and wood, we get twenty-one tracks with thirty tunes, two-fifths of them preexisting and three-fifths newly composed by Trischka. Of those twenty-one tracks, twelve are purely solo, leaving the banjo

out on its own, stark and gutsy. There are four banjo duets, one each with Mike and Pete Seeger, Bill Evans, and Bill Keith. *Territory* also features the only published recordings of Tony’s brief stint with fiddler/banjoist Bruce Molsky and guitarist/pianist Paula Bradley (aka Jawbone). Lastly, Tony Trischka’s current touring band of young talent with fiddler Brittany Haas, guitarist/singer Michael Daves, and Skip Ward on bass present four pieces that explore the world between old-time fiddle tunes and bluegrass music.

Interestingly enough, one of the things that gives Tony’s playing on this recording its distinctive sound is the eschewing of the “standard” bluegrass banjo “G” tuning (gDGBD fifth to first string), used on eight cuts, for the “C” tuning (gCGBD) that was customary in the 19th century. Trischka also references folk tradition by employing the old-time banjo “C” tuning (gCGCD) for three pieces. And if you are expecting the biting tone of the standard bluegrass banjo à la the Gibson Mastertone model, you’ll only find that on a cut or two. Part of the tonal shift is helped along by Trischka’s choice of instrument. On this record, and in performance, Tony has replaced the standard sound of the Mastertone for a mellower Deering Tenbrooks model.

Tony Trischka’s music has always swung widely between projects like his *Double Banjo Bluegrass Spectacular* (2007), those with wide critical and audience support, and other more radical but no less important musical experiments. During the mid-1970s, Tony pushed the limits of bluegrass with the wildly eclectic band Breakfast Special. Although the group wasn’t

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BANJO *by Bob Carlin*

Historically speaking, banjos evolved in sound and structure right along with the music that's been played on them. Part of American history as long as there have been West Africans in the New World, the banjo in fact could be said to have been more consistently at the center of musical movements in the United States than any other instrument.

Lute instruments with short, unfretted strings and membranous soundboards have been found in West African countries like Mali, Senegal, and Gambia going back at least one thousand years. The "classical" lutes of the griots or *jelis*, called variously *halam*, *hodou*, *tinbit*, and *ngoni*, feature a hollowed-out trough-like wooden body with a cow skin stretched over the opening for a soundboard. A round dowel-like neck is inserted into one

end and emerges through a hole cut in the head toward the other end onto which the bridge and horsehair strings are anchored. There are two or more noting and a number of drone strings tied to the neck with pieces of rawhide. The "folk" lutes, like the *akonting*, use a larger gourd body over which the skin is stretched. Unlike the griot lutes, the neck goes all the way through the skin head, emerging at the other end of the gourd. *Akontings* have three strings, two long noted ones and one short string, arranged much like the early American proto-banjos described below.

When enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas, they brought with them these instruments, either in their memories or in actuality. Once here, the instrument developed first into a gourd-bodied proto-banjo and then, by the 1840s, into something

like the banjo we know today, with a round body of bent wood and the five-string layout of four long and one short "thumb" string.

After the Civil War, frets made their way from the European guitar family of instruments over to the banjo. Mass manufacturing methods made it possible to refine many pieces of the banjo and contributed to making the instrument more suitable for large concert halls. In this period, the rim body became heavier with the addition of more brackets to hold on and adjust the skin head, and a metal "tone ring" to increase volume and high frequencies.

By the 20th century, four-string banjos had joined their five-string cousins. In fact, you could make a

continues on page 9

embraced by the traditional bluegrass community, it attracted a diverse audience with an appetite for the band's mixture of bluegrass, rock, Hawaiian, and klezmer. Trischka's tenure with the group Skyline in the 1980s faced similar resistance from the strict traditionalists while casting a net towards yet another musical audience. The band played a blend of folk, pop, and bluegrass and built a core following over a period of nine years. Tony's forays placing the banjo into rock/jazz settings in the late 1990s shifted his fan base once again. With his fearless musical curiosity always at the forefront of his playing, Tony never rests on his laurels. While we, the audience, aren't always brave enough to follow Tony's musical explorations, we ultimately benefit from his willingness to experiment regardless of the risks.

A native of Syracuse, New York,

Tony Trischka's early interest in the banjo was kindled by his parents' albums of the Almanac Singers, as well as the Kingston Trio's rendering of "Charlie on the MTA" in 1963. Two years later, Tony joined the Down City Ramblers, where he remained through 1971. That year, Trischka made his recording debut with double banjo group Country Cooking on their album *15 Bluegrass Instrumentals* (Rounder Records). In 1973, Tony began a three-year stint with Breakfast Special.

During his time with Breakfast Special, Tony recorded *Bluegrass Light* and *Heartlands*, two solo albums for Rounder featuring his own compositions. As fellow banjoist Ben Freed wrote in *Banjo Newsletter*, "Tony was the first to create a significant body of original work for bluegrass banjo outside the genre's usual confines. His endless ability to write captivating melodies has secured his artistic status as much as his signature style of picking. And his groundbreaking ideas for composition and arrangement have legitimized the experimentation of the progressive players that came later."

After one more solo album in 1976, *Banjoland*, Tony went on to become musical leader for the Broadway show *The Robber Bridegroom*. Trischka toured with the show in 1978, the year he also played with the Colorado-based Monroe Doctrine bluegrass band.

In the early 1980s, Tony Trischka began performing and recording with his new group, Skyline. Subsequent albums under his own name during his tenure with Skyline included *A Robot Plane Flies over Arkansas* (1983) and a collection of bluegrass-tinged original compositions, *Hill Country* (1985). In 1984, Tony performed in his first feature film, *Foxfire*. Three years later, he worked on the

A Short History of the Banjo (cont.)

banjo equivalent of just about every plucked string musical instrument simply by grafting the neck of a mandolin, ukulele, or a guitar onto a banjo body. This gave the players of other string instruments the ability to get the banjo sound without learning the fret board of the five-string. It also gave bands a wide range of rhythm instruments that could cut through the sound of a large ensemble, which came in handy when groups were called upon to make transcriptions on the primitive equipment utilized by the nascent recording industry. Around the same time, metal replaced 19th-century gut, silk, and horsehair as the string material of choice.

As the 20th century progressed, banjos became more sophisticated in their design and construction. A closed back (or "resonator") and more mas-

sive tone rings were added for the increased volume needed for performances in larger concert halls during those days before the advent of sophisticated sound amplification systems. These changes made the instruments louder still and probably contributed to the stereotype of a banjo as a loud and obnoxious music maker, which continues to some extent to this day.

Throughout the banjo's long and varied history, several right-hand techniques have dominated for exciting the strings. West African music is differentiated from European lute styles by the use of a downward striking motion with the fingers of the right hand. This method survived to the New World, where Anglo-Americans learned it from African Americans, and dubbed it "stroke" or "banjo" style. Other names for this downward motion used in folk tradition

continues on page 12



music for an off-Broadway production of *Driving Miss Daisy*. The following year (1989), Skyline recorded its final album, *Fire of Grace*.

After Skyline, Trischka released two solo recordings, *World Turning* (1993) and *Glory Shone Around: A Christmas Collection* (1995), and the two CDs featuring his “jazz” group, *Bend* (1999) and *New Deal* (2003). Since 1993, Trischka has also been a member of the supergroup Psychograss and appeared on three of their recordings as well as in concert and festival appearances with the band.

While some five-string banjoists have gotten more and more modern in their playing, Tony Trischka’s journey has carried him away into other musical genres and back again into banjo history and tradition. His watershed moment occurred at the Tennessee Banjo Institute when he heard the minstrel style actually being played. Held every other year from 1988 to 1992 in a state park just east of Nashville, the Banjo Institute was the first attempt in modern times to bring together all the divergent banjo styles under one

“... [T]he very first thing I played on it was ‘Ode to Joy’ from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. So I guess I’ve never had preconceived notions about the banjo.”

roof. These gatherings of banjo instructors, students, makers, dealers, and historians signaled the first rumblings of the instrument’s comeback. Without the Tennessee Banjo Institute there would be none of the myriad banjo events today, none of the acclaim the instrument has received or the understanding of its history.

For Tony, the Banjo Institutes pushed his music in a different direction. It was there that he originally heard British classic banjo virtuoso Chris Sands, saw African musicians up close, and was first introduced to gourd banjo visionary Scott Didlake. The change in Trischka’s focus is dramatically portrayed in the camp photos. By the last Banjo Institute, Tony is pictured holding the Didlake *banza*. A photo of that instrument appeared in the collage featured in the CD booklet for his 1993 release *World Turning*.

A Short History of the Banjo (cont.)

include frailing, clawhammer, rapping, and banging. By the late 19th century, banjoists had borrowed from the guitar a method of up-picking the strings that used the thumb and the first two fingers of the right hand (aka three-finger picking). This style has predominated on the five-string banjo through many styles of music up to the present time. And with some variation, this is the method utilized in bluegrass music and by Tony Trischka.

Along with a variety of playing styles, the banjo has been emblematic of many of America's most notable musical movements. In the mid-19th century, stroke-style banjo was central to the first true American popular musical form, blackface minstrelsy. Popular songs and dance tunes combined Anglo perceptions of African syncopation with lyrics about rural Southern slave

life. Minstrelsy was succeeded in the popular arena by classic-style banjo in the late 19th century. For this, guitar-style three-finger picking was utilized by concert artists and in the burgeoning middle class to play popular tunes and light classics of the day. Young ladies courted their suitors with wistful five-string melodies, and ensembles of banjo family instruments filled the clubhouses at boarding schools, colleges, and universities with the sound of plunking strings. The approach made its way into country music as well, where it fit well as accompaniment to the Tin Pan Alley songs emanating from large American cities that were being adapted and adopted by fiddle- and banjo-led aggregations.

Around World War I, the five-string banjo went out of fashion, to be replaced with the four-string tenor

and plectrum instruments played in a flat-picking chord style. Virtuoso vaudevillians and dance band rhythm sections all featured these fancy banjoists. Finally, just after World War II, a young North Carolinian took the lessons he'd learned from finger-picking country musicians and codified them into a new three-finger approach that he sent nationwide over the airwaves of the Grand Ole Opry. From then on, the banjo was primarily associated with Earl Scruggs and bluegrass music.



In many ways, it was fortuitous for Trischka that the Tennessee Banjo Institute came along when it did. By 1988, his band Skyline was in the process of disbanding, and he was poised for a fresh direction. At the conclusion of the third and final Banjo Institute, Tony was ready to take what he had absorbed from historical styles and apply it to a new, somewhat solo show portraying the passage of the banjo through history.

World Turning augured Tony Trischka's new direction. The album was light on bluegrass and the progressive stylings found on some of Trischka's other recordings, and heavy on historic styles and references to the history of the banjo. Under the guise of a gathering of musical superstars, Trischka integrated different banjos, right-hand playing techniques, and repertoire into his own original compositions. Made around the same time as Tony's inclusion in the early banjo sampler *Minstrel Banjo Style* (also for Rounder), *World Turning* was the inspiration for Tony Trischka's live history of the banjo shows.

Territory, like *World Turning*, is grounded in historical banjo styles yet forges ahead with original compositions that showcase Trischka fifteen years later—more refined but no less daring or inspired. Following his own interests and muse, Tony charts new territory that spans past and present, tradition and innovation. Obviously, his musical experiences now are deeper and more varied, and the influences of banjo styles other than bluegrass are now more integrated into his playing and compositions.

So where is Tony Trischka headed next? Right now, Trischka is playing within a “traditional” string band ensemble of fiddle, banjo or double banjo, guitar, and string bass with vocals. He is revisiting the bluegrass form with his young bandmates' interpretations of traditional stylings. Tony is also opening the eyes of bluegrassers to the deep history of that important American musical institution, the banjo, and hopefully directing them to new sources for their own grounding and inspiration. With any luck, Tony Trischka's inclusion on this CD of musicians from the old-time side of the fence will encourage other banjo interactions across the stylistic gulf that currently divides traditionally based American music.

In many ways, Tony is following the lead of the late John Hartford, who, in his return to old-time fiddle music in his later years, advised bluegrass musicians to “go back, young folks, go back.” Trischka has taken up that mantle, and in doing so, will connect the many streams of banjo music. For this, along with his other accomplishments as a writer and player, Tony Trischka is bound to earn himself a special place in banjo history.

Bob Carlin, Lexington, NC
November 2007





TRACK NOTES by Tony Trischka

Except as noted, I'm playing a Deering Tenbrooks model.

1. Fox Chase

Tuning: aDGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo; Michael Daves, guitar and vocals; Brittany Haas, fiddle; Skip Ward, bass

A few years ago I was teaching at Sonny Osborne's NashCamp banjo weekend and saw a 1950s film of DeFord Bailey playing solo harmonica on a tune called "Fox Chase." It was a transcendent experience. In a fit of inspiration I went into another room and wrote a "Fox Chase" of my own. I never tabbed or recorded it, promptly forgot it, and then kept the concept in the back of my mind—someday

I needed to come up with another "Fox Chase."

In late spring of 2007 I wrote a pinky-intensive, fiddle-tuney A section, but was stuck for a B part. I started rooting around for other "fox chases"—since it's a tune template for old-time and blues players of the past—to give me some inspiration.

I got hold of Sonny Terry's *The Folkways Years, 1944–1963* (Smithsonian Folkways) to check out what he was doing on his "Fox Chase." Within hearing three of Sonny's notes I had my inspiration for the B part. The C section followed in quick pursuit.

I played it for Mike Seeger shortly thereafter, and he assured me that he could hear two dogs in the tune...no greater seal of approval.

The lyrics are a mixture of mine and some borrowings from a couple of other old-time sources. Michael nails the vocal beautifully while navigating a dense thicket of verbiage.

The fabulous Brittany is playing five-string fiddle in a cross tuning (with psychotically powerful bowing).

Check out *Black Banjo Songsters of North Carolina and Virginia* (Smithsonian Folkways) for Dink Roberts' and John Tyree's wonderful versions. Lee Sexton also has a great banjo arrangement on *Lee Sexton and Family* (Field Recorder's Collective FRC 105).

Mama yelled, "Tom, you better get your horn / Fox got a chicken, sure as you're born."

He grabbed ole Copper, his best hound / Headed out to where the hill went down.

Why does the hound got the fox on the run? / 'Cause he's got the hunter and the hunter's got the gun.

Hound said, "Fox, you're 'bout to fall. / In just a short while you're gonna be hangin' on the wall."

That hound ran the fox up, out and in / Splashed 'cross the stream where the ducks did swim.

Said "Keep your nose to the wind / If you wanna keep your skin."

The sun went down, the hunter slowed / Copper chased Fox past the owls and the toads.

As they headed off, the moon shone down / That's the last Tom saw of the fox and the hound.

2. Leatherwing Bat

Tuning: gDGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo; Pete Seeger, banjo and vocal; Bruce Molsky, fiddle

My mother went to school with Pete's wife Toshi years ago at the Little Red School House in New York City. So I've had some sort of connection to the Seegers since I was growing up. My parents would play music by the Almanac Singers, the Weavers, and Pete around the house. Though I recorded with Pete playing guitar on my Rounder Christmas album, *Glory Shone Around*, this was my first opportunity to play double banjos with him on CD. The great thing is, he was willing to vocalize on this...and he rarely sings out solo these days.

After the session in Garrison, New York, Bruce offered to drive

Pete back up to his home in Beacon. As Pete was about to get in the car, he noticed something reflecting the spring sun in the verdant grass near the house where we were recording. He walked over and picked up a broken headlight which had been thrown away. He got back in Bruce's car with the headlight in his lap, fully prepared to take it back to Beacon to place in his recycling. When I came out to say goodbye, I offered to take it. Pete said, "As long as you dispose of it properly." I did. Pete walks the walk.

3. Rainbow Yoshi

Tuning: gCGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

Named by my son Sean, this bluesy tune has an alternating thumb thing going on. The dropped C on the fourth string always provides a low tonic gravitas.

4. French Creek/Burning Springs

Tuning: gDGBD (for three of these strings it doesn't matter what the dang tuning is)

Tony Trischka, banjo; Michael Daves, guitar; Brittany Haas, fiddle; Skip Ward, bass

The first time I really got to hang out and play with Brittany was at a festival in New York State in 2005.

We were scheduled to do a workshop (Five String vs. Five String) and had no repertoire. In her infinite wisdom, Brittany suggested doing five fiddle tunes, one on each string. In other words, each tune had to be played exclusively on one string.

Taking this concept into original territory, I wrote these two pieces with the chillingly evocative titles. I've also composed a tune on the fourth and second strings (not included here) and am waiting for a waft of inspiration to complete the fifth string. This works on any string instrument—and may I suggest you try to compose your own tunes if you're a player.

5. Zoe

Tuning: gCGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

This was inspired by my beautiful daughter when she was about six months old. It bloomed out of my Deering John Hartford model with nylon strings. The A part is a simple folk-like melody that I contrapuntally embellish as it goes along. I use thumb and three right-hand fingers for the beginning of part B...the advantage of not using picks.

6. John Henry Medley: John Henry/Bonaparte's Retreat/Twists and Turns

Tuning: aDF#AD

Tony Trischka, banjo

This is a collection of three pieces in D tuning. Earl Scruggs recorded “John Henry” in D tuning on *Foggy Mountain Banjo*, but this is primarily an alternating thumb arrangement. I heard Etta Baker play this beautifully and gently on slide guitar on her *One Dime Blues* recording (Rounder Records CD2112). She never went to the V chord, but leaned towards the IV chord at the end of each verse. She was the inspiration for my arrangement.

My good fiddle pal Kenny Kosek—a four-string wizard if ever there was one—taught me this version of “Bonaparte's Retreat.”

I learned the very last section from John Hartford while dueting with him in a darkened classroom late one evening on the campus of Elkins College in West Virginia. He learned it from the remarkable fiddler Ed Haley and told me that it represented Napoleon's loss to the Russians.

I fashioned the last tune while twisting some of Bill Keith's pegs at the end of my headstock. The pegs have special "stops" that allow you to tune between two notes perfectly. I love the effect and have written a number of tunes over the years featuring these crafty gizmos. I also throw in some harmonics. I hope this comes across more as music than gimmicks ahoy.

7. Trompe de l'oreille

Tuning: gDGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo; Bill Keith, banjo (first solo); Paula Bradley, piano

The suggestion for using double banjos with New England-style piano came from Béla Fleck.

Bill has been a hero of mine since 1963. His influence on me has been incalculable.

Paula is a newer friend and is great at laying down that bedrock rhythm. And how many people do you know who own a National ukulele?

Bill starts and then I join in. Paula plays the part of Jo Ann Castle perfectly.

The A-part melody starts on the downbeat, then halfway through is repeated, but offset by half a beat so that the downbeat becomes the

upbeat. This trick of the ear prompted Bill—he is possessed of French fluency—to bequeath the above title to the chanson.

8. Hawaii Slide-O

Tuning: eAEG#B

Tony Trischka, banjo

I wrote this and three other tunes included on this album to be performed on the NPR show, *The Next Big Thing*, in January of 2005. The premise of the show was to interview musicians, actors, dancers, artists, writers, etc., and discuss works in progress. I decided to write these tunes, on four separate banjos, specifically for the show.

I play this tune on a one-of-a-kind National banjo made by

Ron Saul out in San Luis Obispo, California. I first saw Tony Furtado playing it at the Telluride Festival in Colorado and craved it like crazy. It finally ended up in my hands. Having played pedal steel guitar a bunch in the 1970s, it wasn't too much of a stretch to use a slide on my left-hand ring finger. There is precedent. Gus Cannon played some slide banjo back in the late '20s, and Béla Fleck did the same when he wrote and recorded a tune called "Bonnie and Slyde" on the Flecktones album *UFO Tofu*.

9. John Cohen's Blues

Tuning: gDGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

As the years roll on, I become ever more impressed with John Cohen's gifts as a filmmaker, photographer, musician, and chronicler of the profound musics of the past, musics that still inspire and have deep relevance in the present and remind us of what lies at the heart and soul of America.

Another offering for *The Next Big Thing*. I wrote this after chatting with John at Nora Guthrie's Christmas party. I play this on my 1883 Fairbanks-Cole, and eschew picks.

10. Molly and Tenbrooks

Tuning: gDGBD, capo at fourth fret

Tony Trischka, banjo; Michael Daves, vocals and guitar; Brittany Haas, fiddle; Skip Ward, bass

Just one of my favorite bluegrass tunes. Bill Monroe put his own spin on this Kentucky racehorse song, and Michael Daves sings the hooves off it.

11. Sean

Tuning: gCGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

A song I wrote for my wonderful son.

12. The Next Big Thing

Tuning: gCGCD; Keith tuners tune the second string from C down to B, the third string from G down to F.

Tony Trischka, banjo

I wrote this for the aforementioned NPR radio show. It helped with the title. Lots of crazy tuning working out of double C. The A section is coming out of the high lonesome arena to some extent. Part B leans in a Celtic direction, which in some ways begat the high lonesome gestalt. The third section (following an up-the-neck variation on part A) is based on a technique I picked up from listening to J.D. Crowe. There's an ongoing fourth-string drone throughout. While pedaling that, I'm hitting double stops on the second and third strings. It helps the banjo to sound a bit more orchestral than it usually does.

13. Noah Came to Eden

Tuning: gDF#AD (D tuning)

Tony Trischka, banjo; Mike Seeger, harmonica, banjo

I composed this after playing a rain-drenched solo set at the Charlie Poole Festival in Eden, North Carolina, in 2005...great festival, too much water. Thus the beginning of the tune.

When it came time to record, I could think of no one I would rather have play on this than Mike Seeger. Originally I was just going to ask him to play banjo. The night before the session I realized this would sound great with his harmonica added on, and, boy, did it! Thanks, Mike!

14. Eighteen

Tuning: gCGCD

Tony Trischka, banjo

This is an anniversary song for my wife, Assunta. The song is made up primarily of successive groupings of three measures of 6/8 time.

15. Celtic Medley: St. Anne's Reel/Drowsy Maggie/Red Haired Boy/The Blackbird/Red Haired Lass

Tuning: gDGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

I've had the great pleasure to go to Ireland a number of times in recent years for the Johnny Keenan Banjo Festival. There, my interest in Celtic music has been rekindled. This

medley reflects that in-country experience.

I'd have to say my main inspiration has been Gerry O'Connor, whose stunning four-string sorties have left me gasping for air. He's able to take a tune and raise it to an unbelievable level. I learned the Irish version of "St. Anne's" from him. I picked up "The Blackbird" from Jerry and Bernie McGann—the father of modern-day Celtic banjo—at a late-night picking session at the Johnny Keenan Festival in Longford in 2006. "Drowsy Maggie" and "Red Haired Lass" come from the O'Neill book (*O'Neill's Music of Ireland*). I had the amazing Séamus Egan show me "Red Haired Boy" at a banjo show in the early '90s. It's somewhat of a bluegrass standard, and I wanted to find out how to play it closer to the Irish way.

16. Salt River

Tuning: gDGBD, capo at second fret

Tony Trischka, banjo; Brittany Haas, fiddle; Michael Daves, guitar; Skip Ward, bass

The bluegrass standard "Salt Creek" is issue from the loins of "Salt River." There are many geographic and musical "Salt Rivers" in this world, and this particular arrangement comes from the playing of the remarkable Bruce Molsky. It has an almost unbearable level of high lonesome intensity, and Brittany burns the house down with this here and in live performance.

17. Banjoland

Tuning: gCGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo; Bill Evans, second banjo

This is a snazzy double banjo tune composed by the great British five-stringer Joe Morley. It probably dates from the mid-1920s, though I don't have its exact date of composition. I first heard my compadre and banjo wizard Bill Evans play it and was then compelled to learn it myself. Bill came east from California, and I was able to snag him long enough to go into the studio and record this arrangement. Banjo sheet music from this era often featured the lead solo, a banjo accompaniment, and a separate piano accompaniment. So, depending on who your musical buddies were, you were covered.

18. Old Stone Church

Tuning: gDGCD, capo at second fret

Tony Trischka, banjo; Bruce Molsky, banjo and fiddle; Paula Bradley, guitar

Waltzing into 4/4, this features Jawbone, an old-time/bluegrass fusion band that the three of us put together in 2005ish. Here I get to do some clawhammering with the multitalented Bruce. Paula lays down the solid rhythm. I love the high lonesome sound, whether it comes from Bill Monroe, Dock Boggs, or Roscoe Holcomb. That flavor was the inspiration for this tune.

19. Gourd Banza

Tuning: dGDGA

Tony Trischka, banjo

This was the fourth tune slated for *The Next Big Thing* show. As it turned out, I ended up not using this one, but here it sees the light of day.

I play this on a beautiful *banza* I was given a few years ago by David Hyatt while performing in Arkansas. It's a gourd instrument of African origin that preceded the drum-construction instrument we know today. It was played by Africans and African Americans in slave times and is currently seeing somewhat of a resurgence.

The tune has a bluesy flavor, probably in the white, high lonesome end of the spectrum.

20. Brightshade/Carolina Traveler/Casey Jones

Tuning: gCGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

The opening tune is in the key of F, lovely but underutilized territory for the banjo.

“Carolina Traveler” is Earl’s version of “Mississippi Sawyer” from John McEuen’s first *String Wizards* album. The grand simplicity of the quarter-note octave Cs that begin part B are ample evidence of Earl’s genius. “Casey Jones” is a train song my mother sang for me when I was young. John Hartford once told me that he’d played this with Earl at a jam session in the mid-’80s. This is my vague re-creation of that arrangement, as played to me by John after hours at the Birchmere.

21. Lake Flora

Tuning: gCGBD

Tony Trischka, banjo

I wrote this at the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, across the way from Seattle, around 1990. It was named for a lovely body of water that was the recreational hub of the workshop.



CREDITS

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Associate producers: Deborah Miller and Richard James Burgess

Tracks 1, 4, 10, 16: recorded and mixed by Michael Daves, Brooklyn, NY

Track 2: recorded by Art Labriola, Garrison, NY

Tracks 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20: recorded and mixed by Pete Reiniger at Private Ear Recording, Hyattsville MD

Track 7: recorded by Aaron Hurwitz at NRS studios, West Hurley, NY

Track 13: recorded by Pete Reiniger at Private Ear Recording, Hyattsville, MD

Track 17: recorded by Tom Tedesco at Tedesco Studios, Paramus, NJ

Track 18: recorded by Russ Martin at Viscount Studios, Providence, RI

Tracks 2, 7, 13, 17, 18: mixed by Ronnie Freeland, Clarksburg, MD

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Tony Trischka plays Deering Banjos and GHS strings (010, 011, 013, 022, 010).

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