

Alternative Violin

Performance and Pedagogy

Overview of Presentation

- Listening
- Let's play a fiddle tune as a group! (**Old Joe Clark**)
- Let's play a fiddle tune with guitars! (**The Arkansas Traveler**)
- What is the difference between jazz violin and fiddle playing?
- The Paradox and Zen of Jazz
- Improvisation and "method"
- A list of ideas
- Skeleton of the Blues
- Scales for Blues
- Let's Play the Blues! (**The Fiddler's Blues**)
- Discussion

Listening

- Didier Lockwood (Performer/Composer/Pedagogue)
- Darol Anger (Performer/Composer/Pedagogue)
- Mark O'Connor (Performer/Composer/Pedagogue)
- Jean-Luc Ponty (Performer/Composer)
- Mike Cirillo (Performer/Composer/Occasional Pedagogue)

- Relax and Enjoy!

Didier Lockwood

- Album: STORYBOARD
- Track: Back to the Big Apple

Didier Lockwood 🗣️

- Born in Calais, France in February 1956.
- His father was a teacher at the conservatory in Calais.
- Created a music school CMDL (Centre des Musiques Didier Lockwood).
- Has recorded with Joey DeFrancesco who lives in Arizona.



Didier Lockwood

Stephane Grappelli around 1981: “There is a young violinist in Paris named Didier Lockwood; well, he still has a shell on his back, but one day he’ll get rid of that shell and really produce something. He’s between Jean-Luc and everybody else. He’s twenty-one and he came to see me like all of them do, and I feel he’s going in a certain direction which will be something really quite different from everything else in the modern style.”

Didier Lockwood

From the “Welcome” page of the *Centre Des Musiques Didier Lockwood*:

“Good final training should allow the acquisition not only of technical knowledge, but the culture of various musical styles through the strengthening of concepts in rhythm, harmony and improvisation. This complete immersion is the real key to musical expertise.

Playing alongside drummers, for example, I acquired rhythm solidity. With piano and guitar players, I became familiar with harmony. Working with brass taught me how to breathe and articulate. I learned that it is essential to mix all musical specialties in order to facilitate the kind of group playing, where human relationships match technical accomplishment.”

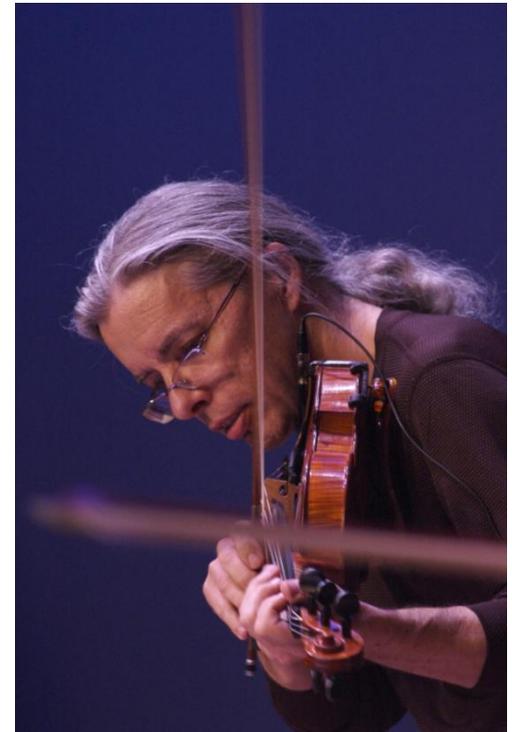
Darol Anger

- Album: TURTLE ISLAND STRING QUARTET
- Track: A Night in Tunisia

Darol Anger 🎵

(Ex: Turtle Island String Quartet)

- Darol Anger has Performed with Stephane Grappelli, Mark O'Connor, Bela Fleck, David Grisman, Vassar Clements, Jerry Douglas, Matt Glaser, Johnny Frigo, Regina Carter, John Blake.
- Darol Anger is Associate Professor at Berklee School of Music.
- Performs and teaches all over the place.
- Turtle Island String Quartet (old configuration):
 - Violin: Darol Anger
 - Violin : David Balakrishnan
 - Viola: Irene Sazer
 - Cello: Mark Summer
- Has lots of pedagogy stuff on his website.
 - **www.darolanger.com**



Darol Anger

From Darol's website www.darolanger.com in the "teaching" section:

"heigh ho! The long-anticipated explosion of interest in contemporary improvising and vernacular strings is happening now! It's an exciting time to be involved, as a string educator, in the [American String Teachers Association](#) and with the [Jazz String Caucus](#), because of the profound changes in string teaching, and the new generation of excellent musicians. It's the payoff for over 25 years of work by me and a few other even more knowledgeable and dedicated individuals, who have howled in a wilderness of our own design for so long."

Mark O'Connor and Jean-Luc Ponty

- Album: HEROES
- Track: New Country (Jean-Luc Ponty)

Mark O'Connor 🎵 and Jean-Luc Ponty



Mark O'Connor and Jean-Luc Ponty

Mark O'Connor

- Born in Seattle, Washington in 1961
- Started out on guitar, began fiddle at 11.
- Mentors were Benny Thomasson and Stephane Grappelli
- First professional job was playing guitar with the David Grisman Quintet.
- Won the National Grand Championship in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984
- Performer, Composer, Pedagogue
- Performs everywhere with everyone

Jean-Luc Ponty

- Born in Avranches, France in 1942
- Father was violin teacher and director of Avranches School of Music
- Mother taught piano.
- Plays violin, piano, and clarinet
- Studied at Paris conservatory.
- Played with the Lamoureux Orchestra before switching to jazz.
- Visited Los Angeles to play with Frank Zappa in 1969.
- Moved to USA in 1973. (Today ?)

Mark O'Connor

From "Mark O'Connor: The Championship Years 1975-1984":

"I was eight years old, studying classical and flamenco guitar. I begged my mom and dad for fiddle to the point where I tried to make one out of cardboard. It's still intact. I never got around to putting on strings. By 11 they finally gave in and bought me a \$50 fiddle. They couldn't afford much and had put money into my guitar lessons. But I begged for so long they finally got one.

Immediately I took to it and started picking out Doug Kershaw tunes. I got my first lesson a week after, and in three weeks I had learned three tunes, "Boil Them Cabbage Down," "Soldier's Joy," and "Arkansas Traveler." Then I went to a square dance and played all night, the same three tunes. I switched a note here and there and slid into a note. I wanted to avoid monotony. I was easily bored, and boredom have me the urge to start improvising. After three weeks I was already stretching it, plus I could keep time. Here I was bogged way down in the beginning range of classical guitar after four years. There's no rhythm, and I'm playing slow arpeggios and bar chords. Suddenly I'm grooving [on fiddle]...kicking it. There was immediate gratification."

Mark O'Connor

“My travels of the past 30 years have convinced me that a new American Classical Music is evolving. I have encountered thousands of students of all ages and abilities at concerts, workshops, college/ conservatory/university seminars and fiddle camps and have found repeatedly that students do not want to be "left out" of the great sounds and energy of fiddling and jazz because they wish to become fine classical players. It is my firm belief that the new American Classical Music will embrace the totality of our rich history of violin playing, and it is my sincere hope that my Method will further this process and perpetuate love for the violin.”

Jean-Luc Ponty

“I guess I transferred what I had practiced on the clarinet and tenor sax — and what I liked in the trumpet or piano in the post bebop idiom — to the violin. Since there were no other violin players in modern jazz at the time, this opened a brand new path for younger musicians. So, style is such an original approach in jazz, overall on the violin, that I don't really think there can be 'schools'. I taught a few master classes all over the world, though I don't consider myself as a teacher, but I never tried to entice anybody to play like me and I don't believe much in jazz schools at large, anyway.”

Jean-Luc Ponty

“It definitely is one of most expressive instruments and one that is closest to the human voice. It’s very archaic in fact: you run your fingers on strings attached to a stick with no predetermined notes on it while driving a bow on those strings, and it’s the contact of the flesh on the strings and the pressure of the bow that makes the quality of the sound. Besides, you hold it close to your body, like an extension of it, whereas the piano — which I also adore — is more of a mechanical instrument.”

Mike Cirillo

www.fiddlermike.com

- Cluck Old Hen (Traditional) 📢
- Escape Velocity (Mike Cirillo) 📢
- It Don't Mean a Thing (Duke Ellington) 📢

Fiddle Tunes for Student String Ensembles

www.fiddlermike.com

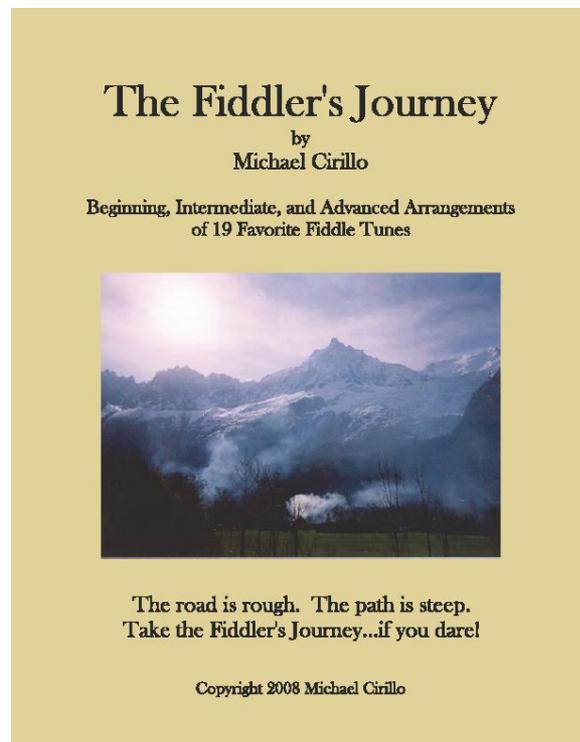
3 Arrangements
for
Student String Ensembles

by
Michael Cirillo

Boil Them Cabbage Down
Old Joe Clark
The Fiddler's Blues

Let's Play a solo fiddle tune!

- **“The Fiddler’s Journey”**: **Arkansas Traveler**
- Other good source of tunes: Dr. Peter Rolland's books 1 and 2
- www.fiddlermike.com



Playing Fiddle Tunes

- Play with friends. Trade off between fiddle and guitar.
- Be careful with vibrato. Don't use too much.
- Keep a steady rhythm
- "Old Time" fiddling uses Shuffle Stroke
- "Texas Style" need deliberate smooth bow strokes

Jazz and Fiddle Playing

- **Fiddling:** Old Time, Texas-Style, Bluegrass, Irish, Scottish, Canadian, Sam Bush's Newgrass (Progressive Bluegrass), David Grisman's Dawg Music, Mark O'Connor's Fiddle/Classical hybrids, Chris Thiles's Classical/Bluegrass crossover
- **Jazz:** Dixieland, Big-Band, BeBop, Latin, Blues, Modal, Fusion, Free Jazz, Swing, Hot Club Style, Smooth Jazz
- **Boundary Work:** Where does one style of music end and another begin?
- I have never found Boundary Work particularly useful. I do whatever makes sense in whatever situation I am in.
- **Signifiers:** Swing? Improvisation? Harmonic Complexity? Instrumentation?
- Different people have different opinions.
- **Lineage:** Picking up the subtle signifiers and tracing the lineage.
- I would suggest doing a lot of listening and sensitizing yourself to the nuances.
- **Ken Burn's 10 part series "Jazz"** is a good way to get an entertaining overview.

Improvisation and “Method”

- **Reality Check:** Although many great improvisers are now advocating various methods, few of these players actually learned using these methods. Most of them just dove in and did it. (I am not saying that these methods don't have value)
- Jazz and fiddling is about individual expression. In my opinion, one of the reasons for the wonderful diversity of styles in jazz violin is the lack of method. As jazz has left the wild vernacular and is becoming an academic discipline, I have noticed it becoming more homogeneous.
- Can one create a method that encourages a student to seek out her or his own path? To discover what inspires her and him, create personal goals, and develop a unique strategy for getting there? Could this be a broader lesson for life?
- Jazz is about creating something individual, new, and different, while negotiating within a group and a tradition. Could this be a broader lesson for life?

Stephane Grappelli

Grappelli: “I play my own style—I bought it myself from my body”

Matt Glaser: “Stephane learned to play the violin by watching and listening— watching others and listening to his own inner ear. He’d been blessed with prodigious mind-to-hand coordination as is amply evidenced by both his piano and violin techniques.

In mastering the violin, Stephane has always taken the path of least resistance and plays the way which is most natural for his body (Hence the quote above). Conservation of energy and a minimum amount of motion are the rules here. Stephane is completely relaxed when he plays—not the slightest physical strain.”

The Paradox and Zen of Jazz

- Balancing deep tradition, canonical musical vocabulary, and complex theoretical underpinnings with real-time highly individualistic self-expression/improvisation (finding your own voice within the tradition)
- On one hand: You can't just play anything you want. Improvisation is a highly disciplined art with complex consensus heuristics.
- On the other hand: You can play anything you want. There is no music police. If it sounds cool, it sounds cool. (Of course, not everyone agrees on this!)
- Thomas Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1962): Jazz is the "paradigm" and the individual player is a "model". You can have many models within a paradigm. If the paradigm is Euclidian geometry, one can model an infinite number of shapes within the paradigm.

Ideas to get started

- Put together a band and jam.
- Play along with Jamey Aebersold CDs.
- Listen a lot, figure out what inspires you. Create a virtual composite mentor.
- Learn jazz and/or fiddle tunes off recordings.
- Play along with recordings of great players.
- Alternate teaching/learning by written music and by ear.
- Learn a tune then play it in different keys in real time.
- Learn a tune then play it in different positions on the instrument in real time.
- Play the melody, slightly ornamenting and varying it as you please.
- Don't improvise mindlessly. Listen. Think. What do you want to sound like?
- Learn to accompany on a chording instrument like piano or guitar.
- Musical "conversations" or trading licks with musical friends.
- Relax! Can you find an easier way to do what you are doing?
- Get control of your vibrato. Temporarily eliminate it and reintroduce it mindfully.
- Don't forget to swing!
- Have fun! If it isn't fun, why do it?

Two Blues Skeletons

(Two Highly Reduced Outlines of the Blues in 3 sharps)

A7

D7

A7

A7

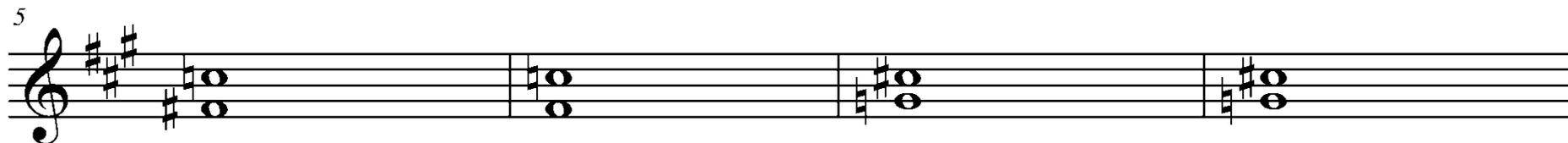


D7

D7

A7

A7



E7

D7

A7

E7



Notice how the third and the flat seventh exchange places as each note voice-leads into the succeeding chord.

Thoughts on Scales

- **In my opinion:** Scales should be used as a guide, not as a rule. In many cases, all twelve tones can be used against a given chord. A sense of “tonality” is created by placing the notes in such a way that “tonality” is evoked – if that is your intent.
- **For Example:** If you emphasize the flat 7 of the dominant resolving down into the 3d of the tonic, as in standard 18th century voice leading this, **in my opinion**, creates a sense of tonality.

The Blues Scale for 3 sharps



Use Mixolydian Mode

- A major scale played from the 5 degree.
- A more useful conceptualization is as a major scale with the 7th degree lowered a half step. This scale works well over non-altered dominant chords.

Let's Play the Blues!

- **The Fiddler's Blues**
- Be aware of timing, not just notes.
- Listen.
- Background folks need to play softer.

Dialogue

Questions? Comments? Conversations?