IS FOR AVOCADO

A Collection of Jigs, Reels, Waltzes and Other Tunes

by Ethan Hazzard-Watkins

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Dedicated to my grandfather Edwin Watkins (1925-2006), always a lover of poetry, music and unfettered human creativity.

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Contents

Introduction 4
A note on transcriptions, chords, & styling 5
The tunes 6-43

A is for Avocado 6
Chicago 7
Church Hollow 8
Covert Fromage Pickup Operation 9
D Minor Reel 10
The Descent 11
Escape from Istanbul 12
The Fiddler's Farewell to the Moon 13
Glass Island Reel 14
Grattan Street 15
Head Gasket 16
Heart Grow Fonder 17
The House on the Hill 18
Indecision 19
January Reel 20
Last Light of Day 21
Laura and Jeff's Wedding 22
Laurels 23
Lowe's Welcome to Boston 24
The New Banjo 25
Pattons' Christmas 26
The Perky Jig 27
Red Curry 28
The Remarkable Recovery of Mr. Edwin Watkins 29
Respectively 30
Riff for Roger 31
The Rocky Road to Cork 32
Sarah's Red Leather Jacket 33
The Satellite 34
Simple 35
Slang Contra 36
Sniff the Whiskey 37
Squirrel Chase 38
Trip to Pisgah 39
Two Exactly 40
Waltz of the Eagles 41
Wurlitzer 42
Zinnia's Favorite 43

Bibliography / Discography 44
About the author 45
Acknowledgements 46
Ordering information 46
Index by tune type 47

Introduction

Here is a book of original tunes written between the years of 1997 and 2006. These compositions have many stories behind them; each one recalls a person, place, musical experience or crazy adventure that has inspired, challenged or otherwise influenced me over these years. I am excited to see these tunes collected together in a single volume and to have the chance to share them with musicians far and wide.

To some it may seem odd to publish a collection of original music in a traditional style. (Isn't this music supposed to be as old as the hills?) To me it seems perfectly natural. I am a fiddler and composer rooted in the New England dance music tradition, and my compositions draw on the forms and conventions of that music. I am lucky to be steeped in a tradition that values innovation, and to be part of a community of musicians and dancers who encourage creativity with their enthusiasm for new tunes. Every tradition needs this newness in order to remain vital.

I hope you will enjoy these tunes and that you will find at least a few of them worthy of adding to your repertoire. Please don't hesitate to be in touch and let me know what you think.

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins
ethan@ethanhw.com

A note on transcriptions, chords & styling

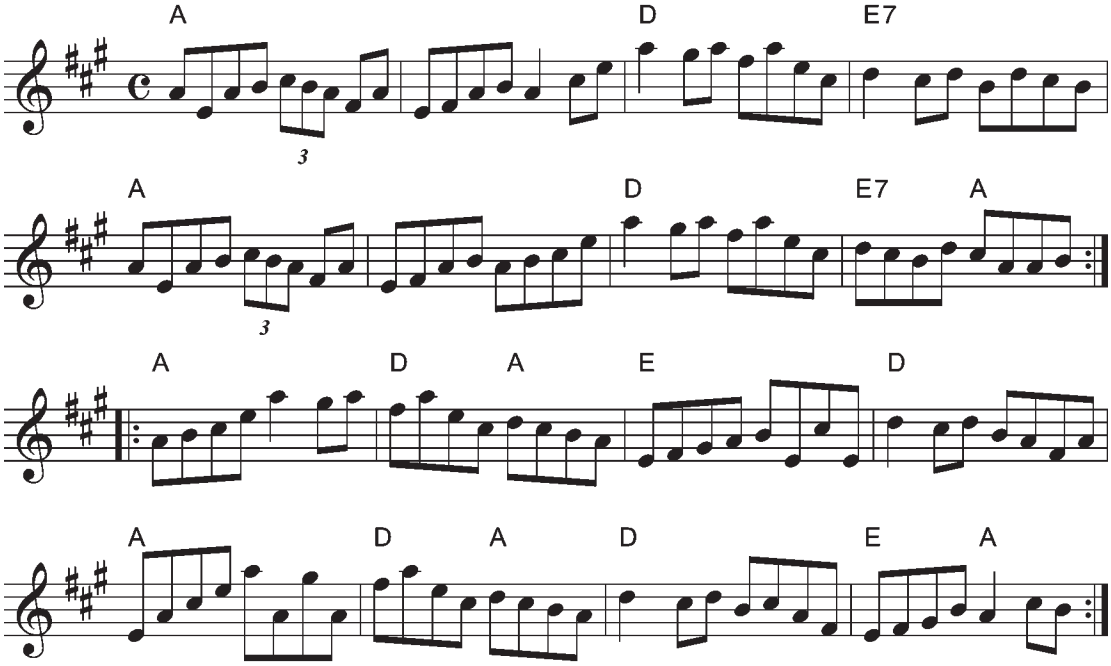
So much of the character of traditional music depends on interpretation by individual musicians and stylistic nuances that can't really be conveyed through written music. In this book I offer transcriptions of my tunes without bowings, ornaments, pickup notes or articulations unless they are essential to the melody. If you've been playing this music for years you know what to do. If you are just starting to play traditional music your best bet is to study with an experienced instrumentalist; attend dances, concerts and sessions; and listen to recordings. As you learn to interpret the music on your instrument, you will be able to make the written notes come alive.

Likewise, the chords given here are intended as a starting point from which rhythm players can develop an accompaniment that suits their taste and their instrument. Please don't take this written music too seriously; rather, use it to make the tunes your own. To hear how I and others have interpreted these melodies check out the CDs in the Discography on page 44.

One further note: Photocopying this book of copyrighted material is rude and amounts to stealing from an independent artist. If you need to copy a few pages to share with bandmates that's probably okay, but I've got plenty of copies of the book, and you can order them easily for a modest sum (see page 46 for ordering information).

A is for Avocado

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2005



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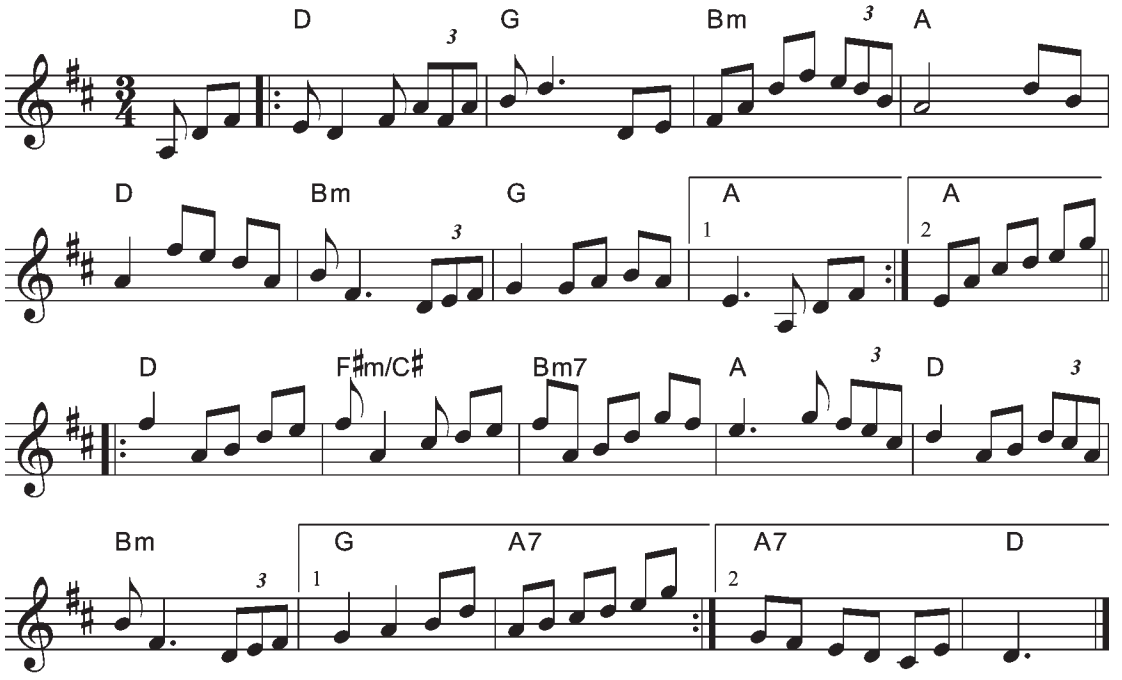
The avocado is an amazing and delectable food, a unique item that transforms all that it touches and inspires great happiness when consumed. This tune, in the joyful key of A, celebrates that miraculous fruit.

Chicago

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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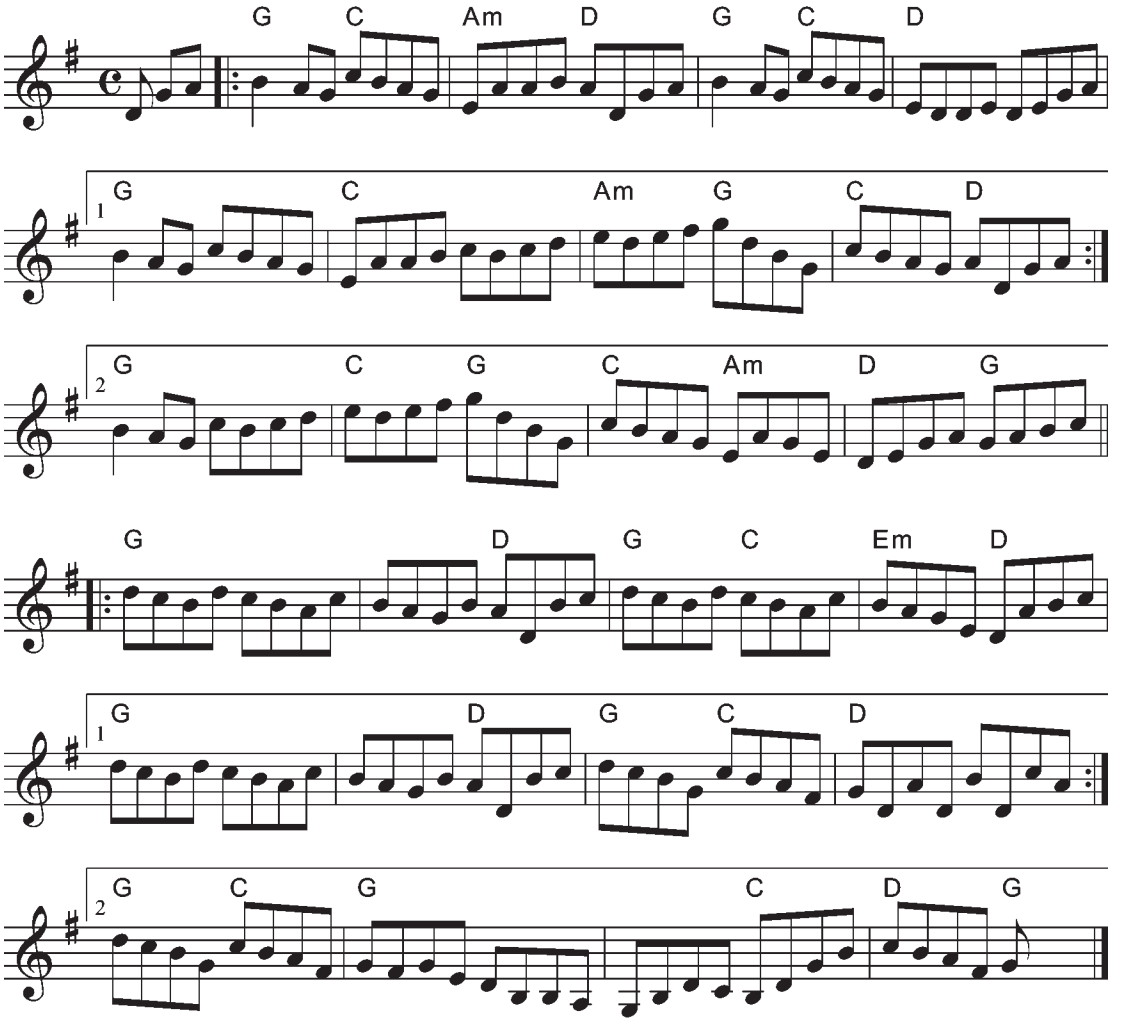
I wrote this waltz at the home of Josh Dunson while on tour with Peter Siegel in Chicago. The melody should be played swung, with a dotted eighth/sixteenth feel.

Church Hollow

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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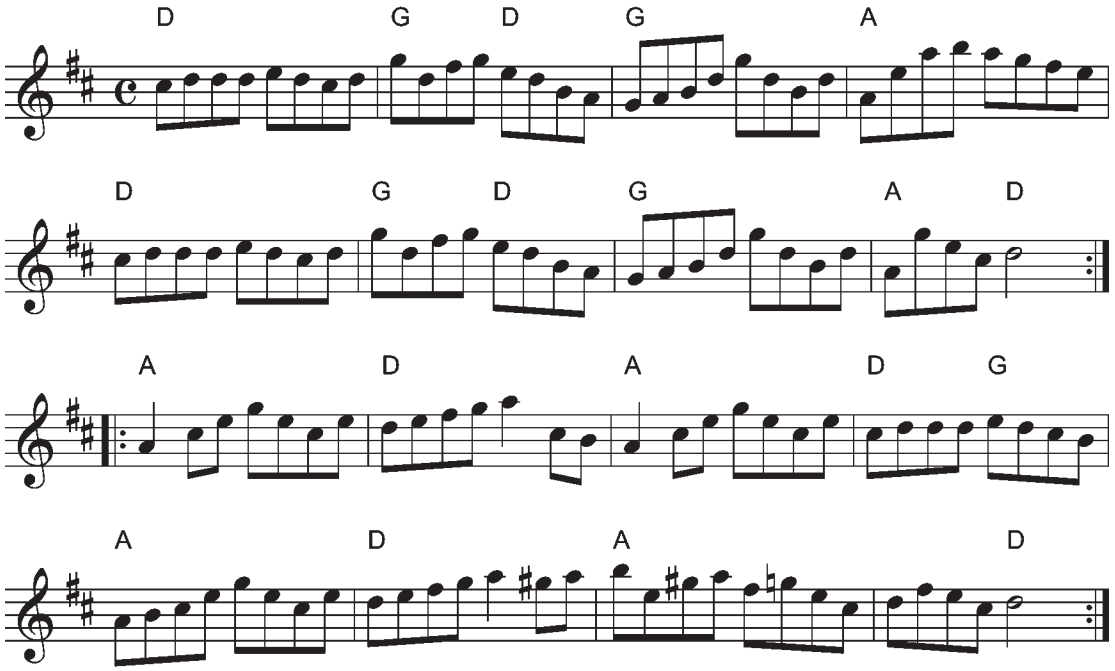
I wrote this tune while staying at the home of Jonathan and Charlene Morse on Church Hollow Road in Marlboro, VT for a few weeks during the summer of 2003. I recorded Church Hollow on *In the Window*, and Heathen Creek recorded it on *24 Hours*.

Covert Fromage Pickup Operation

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2005



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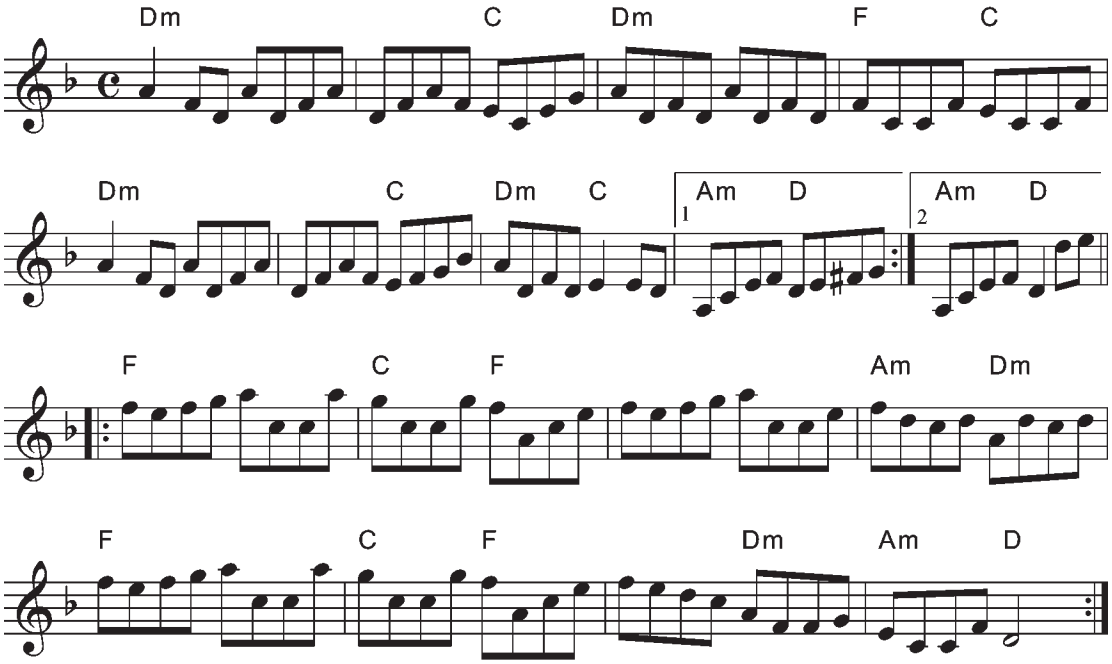
During the summer of 2005 I toured with my band Beeswax Sheepskin in the southeastern US. This tune came into my head one hot, sticky day while I was walking around Greensboro, NC. A Covert Fromage Pickup Operation is a highly secretive, technical maneuver for procuring cheese in the parking lot of a French supermarket.

D Minor Reel

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2001



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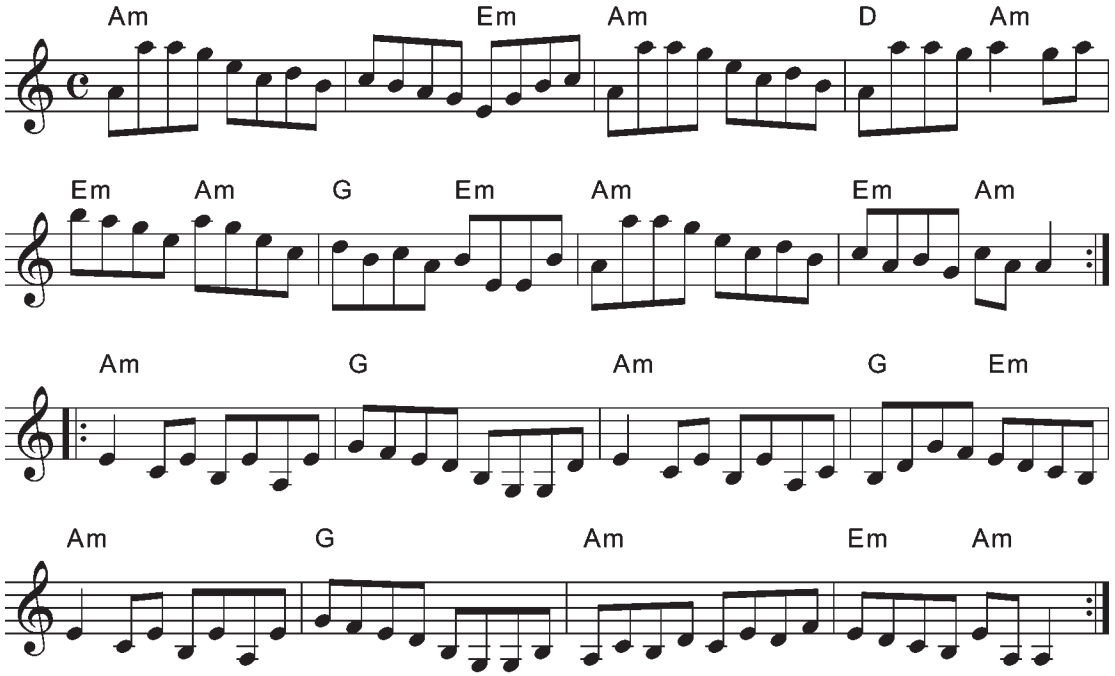
I don't remember exactly when or where I wrote this tune. I hear it as a slow reel. The ending D chords should be played as open fifths.

The Descent

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2001



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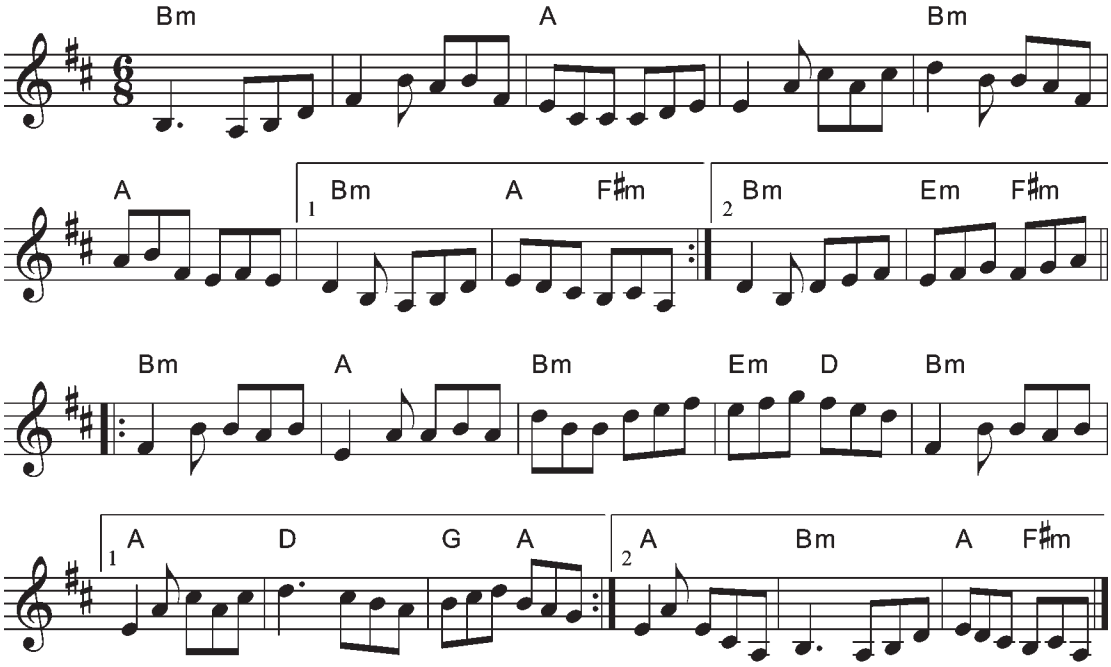
In the fall of 2001 I toured in Europe with my college band The Barefoot Four. We were abroad on September 11th, and we followed the news of the attacks in the papers as we traveled. I wrote this tune one evening in Scotland at a time when a US invasion of Afghanistan seemed imminent. To me the world appeared headed for a downward spiral of violence, and the mood and title of this tune reflect that feeling.

Escape from Istanbul

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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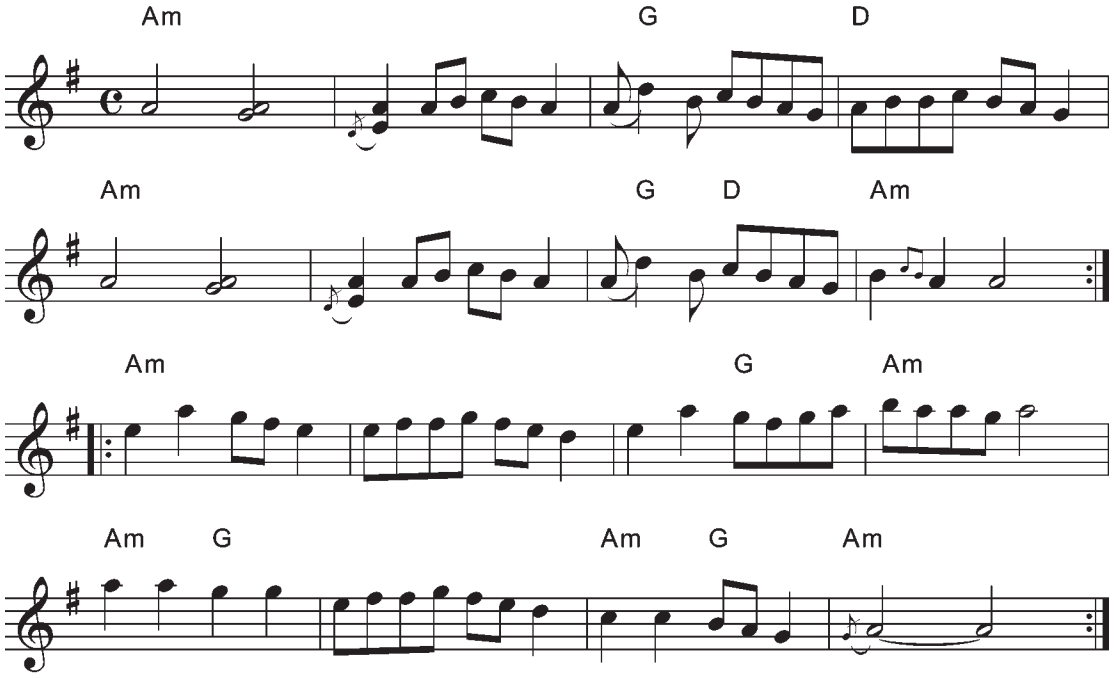
In August 2004 I met up with Anna Patton in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, and we traveled together from there to Istanbul. Istanbul is a beautiful city, with gorgeous parks, teeming bazaars and lovely oceanfront walks. It is also huge, expensive and overwhelming. When we left by overnight bus back to Bulgaria, exhausted, hungry and nearly penniless, we felt as though we had made a narrow escape. I wrote this tune the next day.

The Fiddler's Farewell to the Moon

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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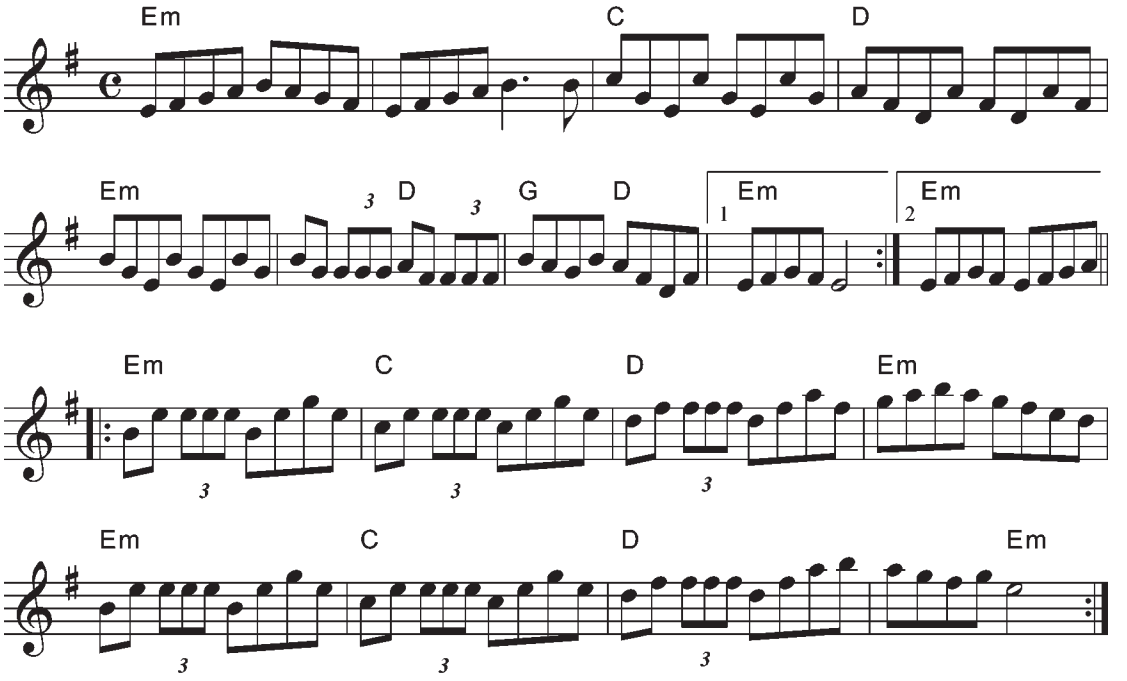
I wrote this melody one cold October evening in the midst of a lunar eclipse while I was experimenting with playing my fiddle in the ADAE tuning. I recorded this on *In the Window*, 2005 where I tuned a step down (GCGD) and played in the key of G to create a looser sound. This tune won second place in the 2005 Shar Music Fiddle Tune Composition Contest.

Glass Island Reel

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 1997



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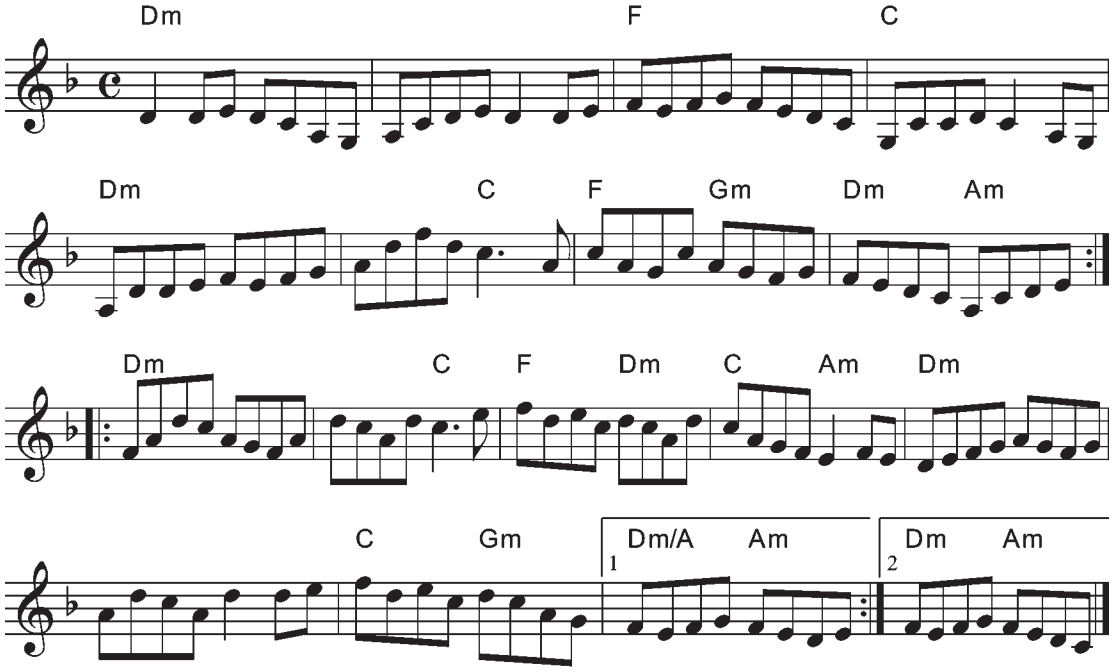
This is the first tune I ever wrote. It grew out of my first experiences learning about chords and experimenting with them on the fiddle. The Em-C-D progression seemed exciting, and the tune developed from there. Susan Conger included this tune in her book, *Along the River*, and recorded it on her CD of the same name. It was also recorded by The Moving Violations on their first album, *Faster Than A Walk,* and by Out of the Wood on *Down the Hall*.

Grattan Street

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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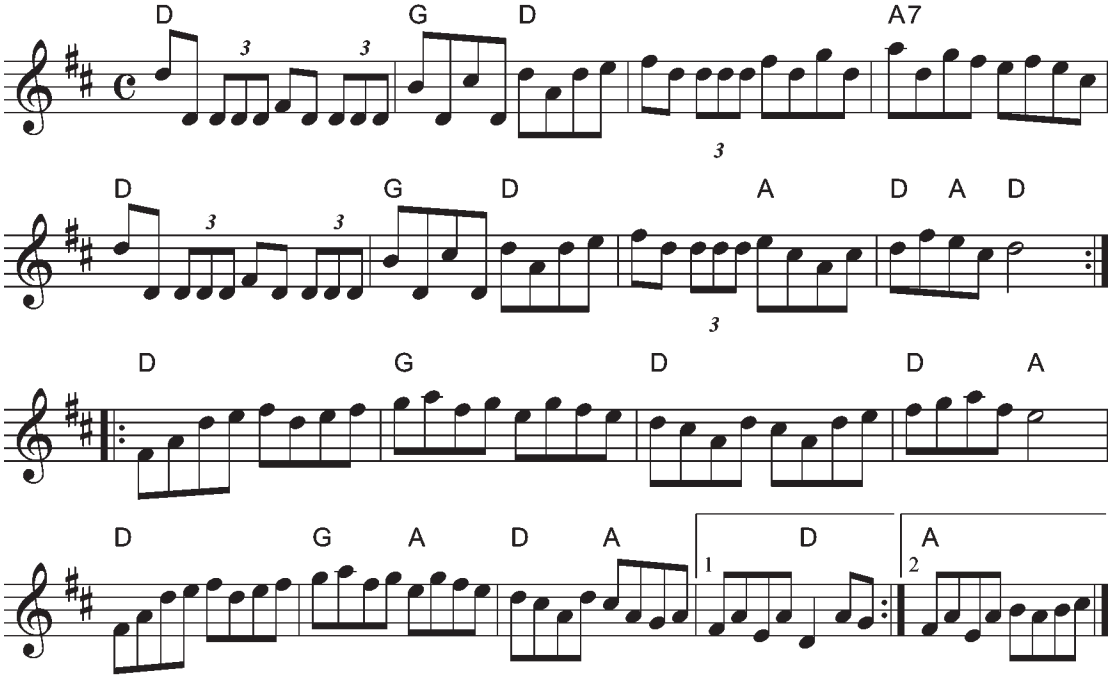
During the summer of 2003 I spent several weeks in Ireland performing with a crazy thrown-together band and traveling around to attend festivals. I composed this tune one evening after a late night session in the city of Cork, where I was staying with hammered dulcimer player Christie Burns in her flat on Grattan Street. This was recorded by Heathen Creek on *24 Hours*.

Head Gasket

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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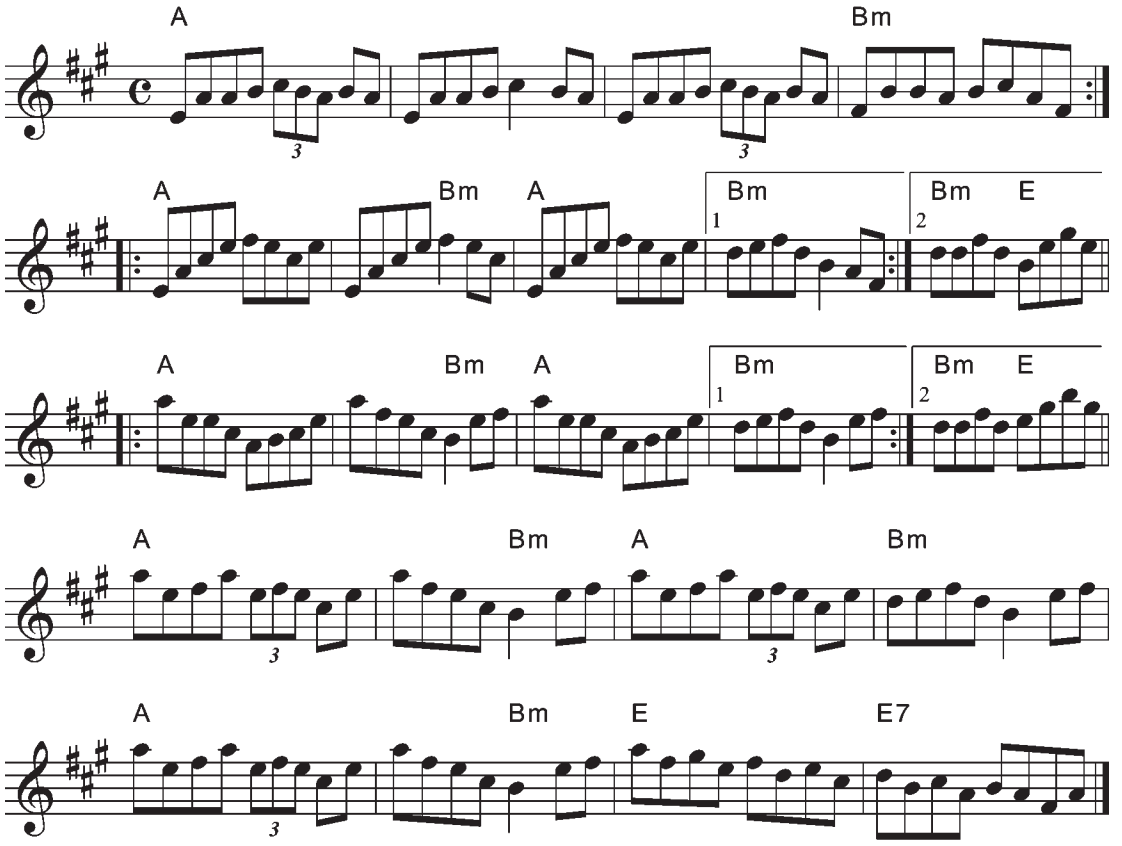
I composed this tune around the time that the head gasket in my ’93 Honda Accord blew on the way to a recording session. For those of us who depend on our beat-up old cars nearly as much as on our instruments and caffeinated beverages, may our head gaskets last a million miles!

Heart Grow Fonder

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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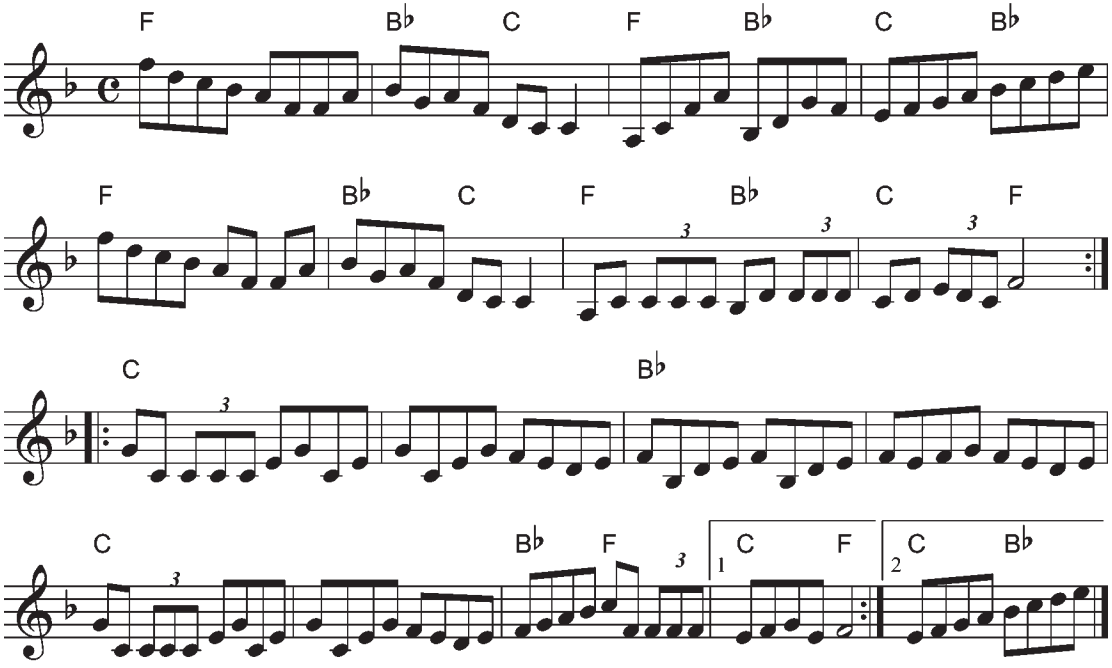
They say that absence makes the heart grow fonder, but if you are already quite fond of someone and they go away, then absence just makes you sad. I recorded this tune on *In the Window*.

The House on the Hill

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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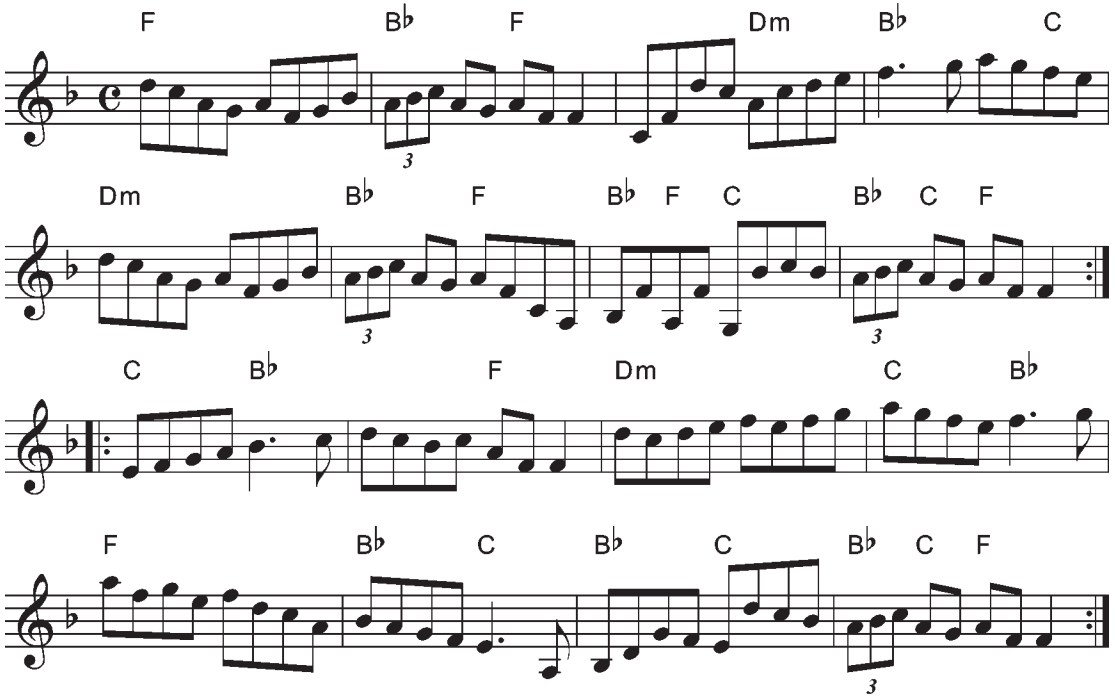
During 2003 and 2004 I lived in a lovely post and beam house owned by Seth Houston in the hills of Dummerston, VT. Late one evening as I was driving home a fragment of this tune came into my head, and luckily it stayed there until I reached the house at the top of the hill and wrote it down. The rest of the tune followed in the morning. I recorded this on *In the Window*.

Indecision

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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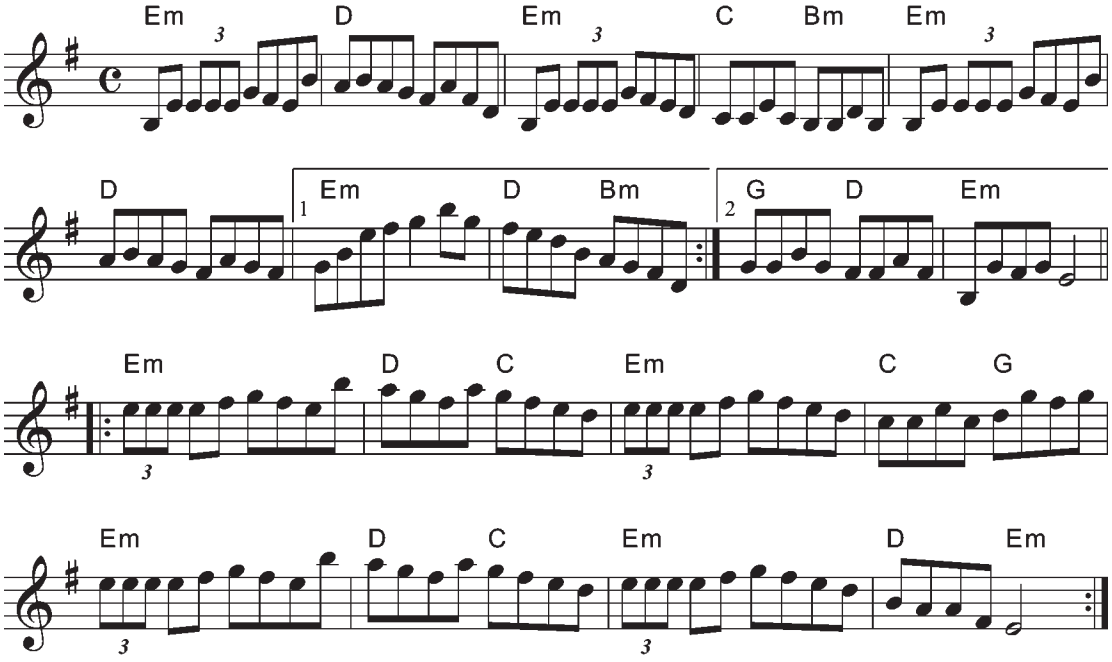
This is a slow, elegant tune to be played at about half of contra dance tempo.

January Reel

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2001



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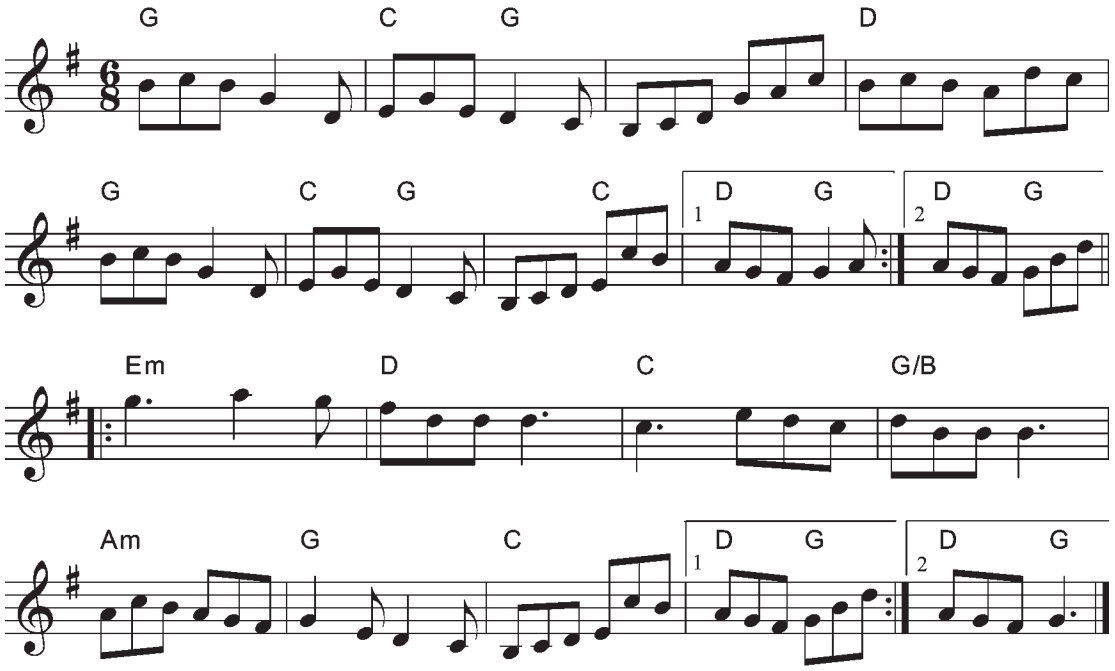
I composed this tune very quietly in the middle of a snowy January night while everyone in the house was sleeping.

Last Light of Day

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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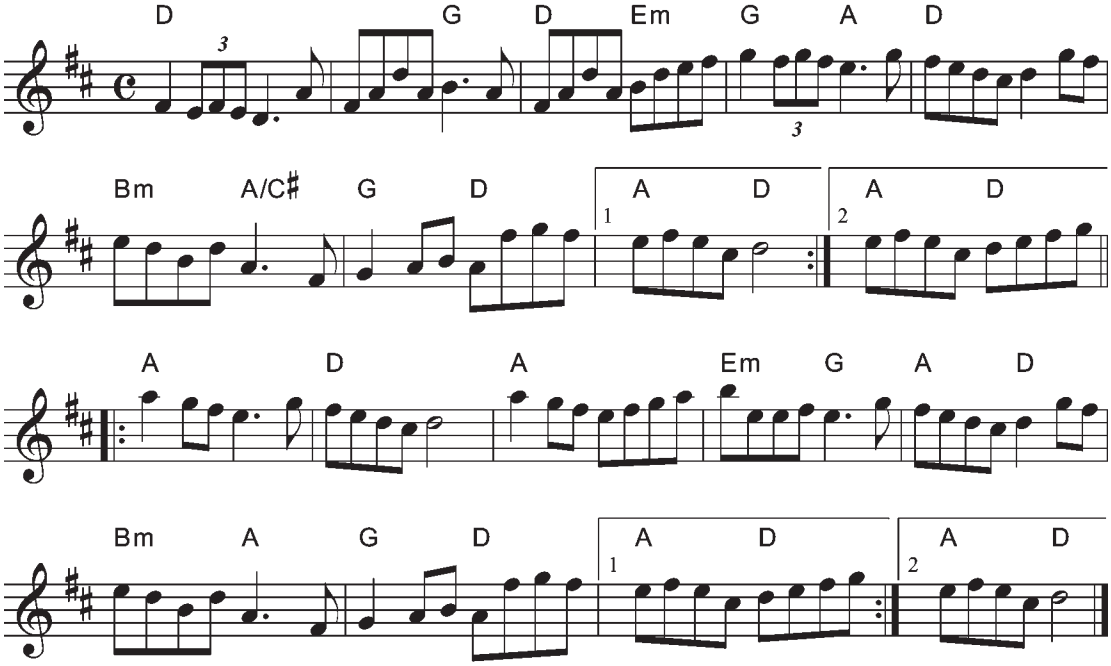
I wrote this tune in Rick Mohr's living room one winter afternoon as the sun slipped beyond the horizon.

Laura and Jeff's Wedding

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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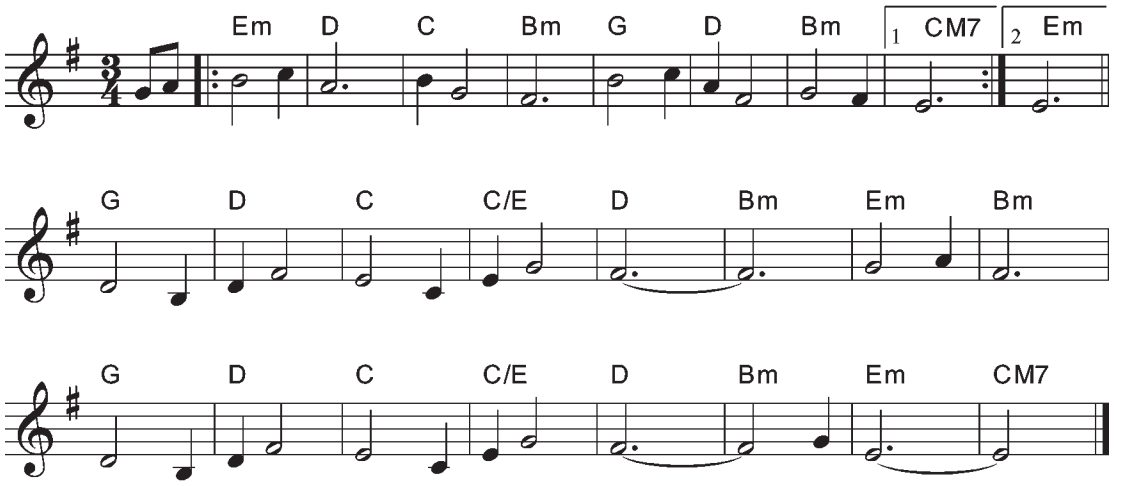
In the wee hours of the morning after Pinewoods English and American Week in 2006 I caught a plane to Minnesota to attend the wedding of Laura Smith and Jeff Gold. I wrote this tune earlier that week, thinking of them and wishing them happiness together. I hear it as a slow marchy reel.

Laurels

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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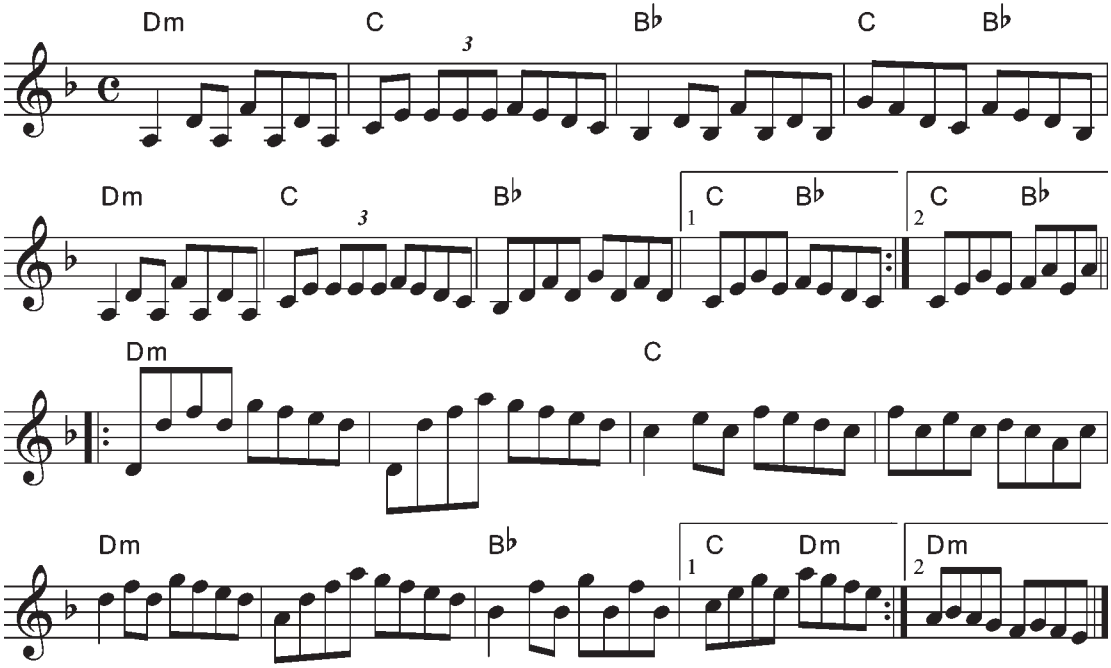
In November of 2004 I visited my grandfather Edwin Watkins in a nursing home called "The Laurels" after he had suffered a stroke. Lamenting his illness, I wrote this tune. He recovered briefly (see The Remarkable Recovery, page 29) but passed away in the spring of 2006 after suffering another stroke. Thanks to Peter Barnes for writing these lovely chords.

Lowe's Welcome to Boston

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2002



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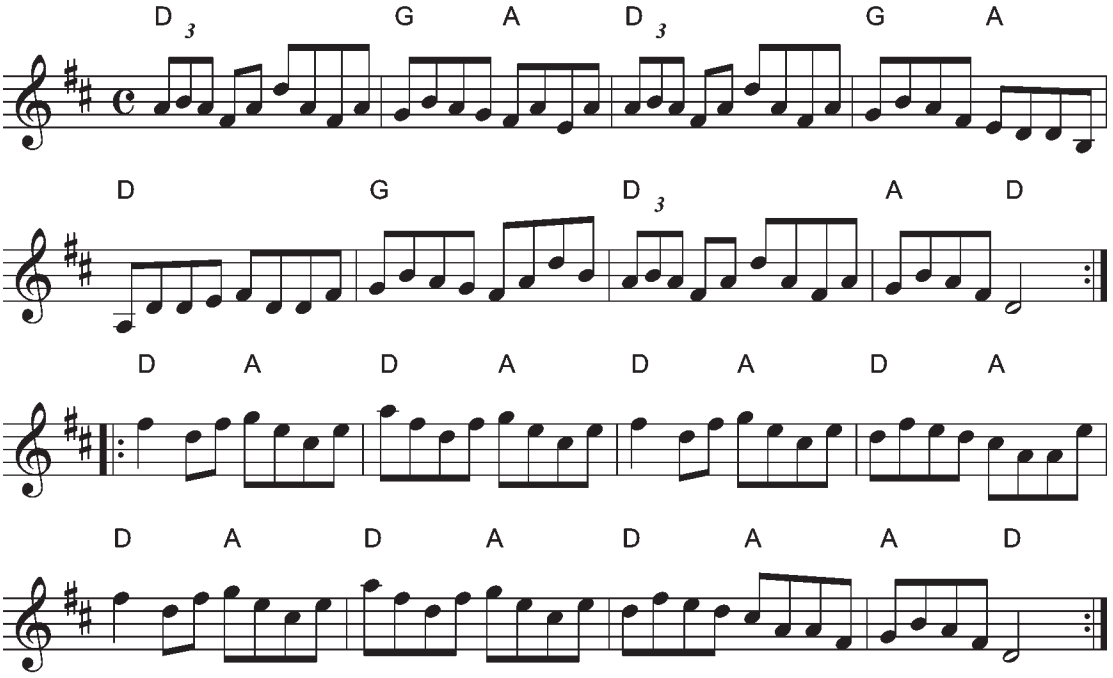
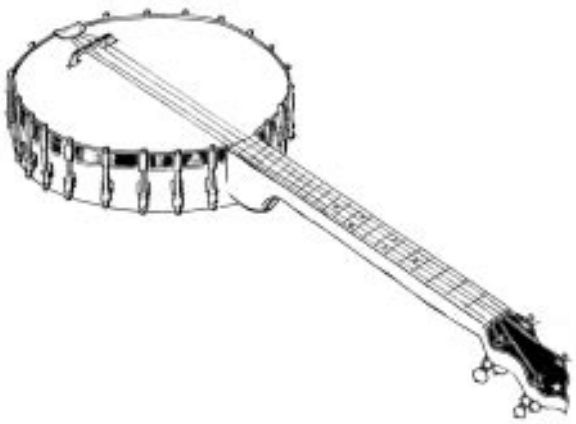
During my brief stint living in Cambridge, I spent a good deal of time playing in the Boston subways. I made lousy money busking, but I met a lot of memorable people. One day a worker from a downtown construction site danced spiritedly as I played. He introduced himself to me as Lowe, and his enthusiasm is memorialized in this tune. Recorded on *In the Window*.

The New Banjo

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003





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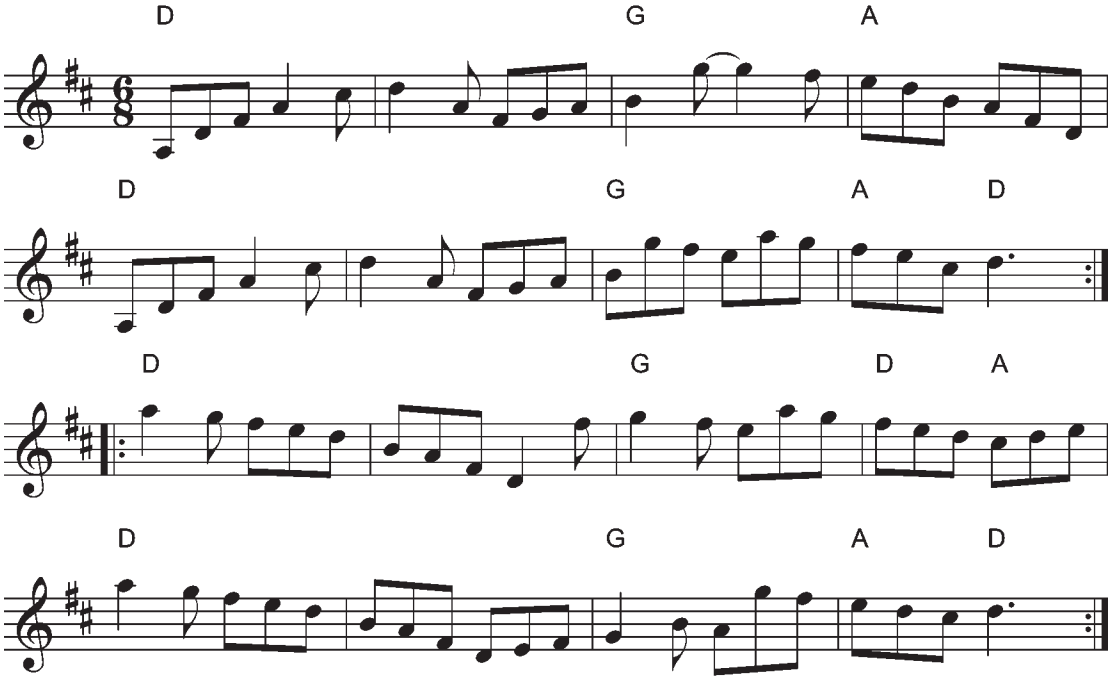
In 2003 I purchased a lovely tenor banjo, and this tune came out as I was starting to find my way around the fretted fingerboard of the new instrument. I recorded this tune on my fiddle on *In the Window*.

Pattons' Christmas

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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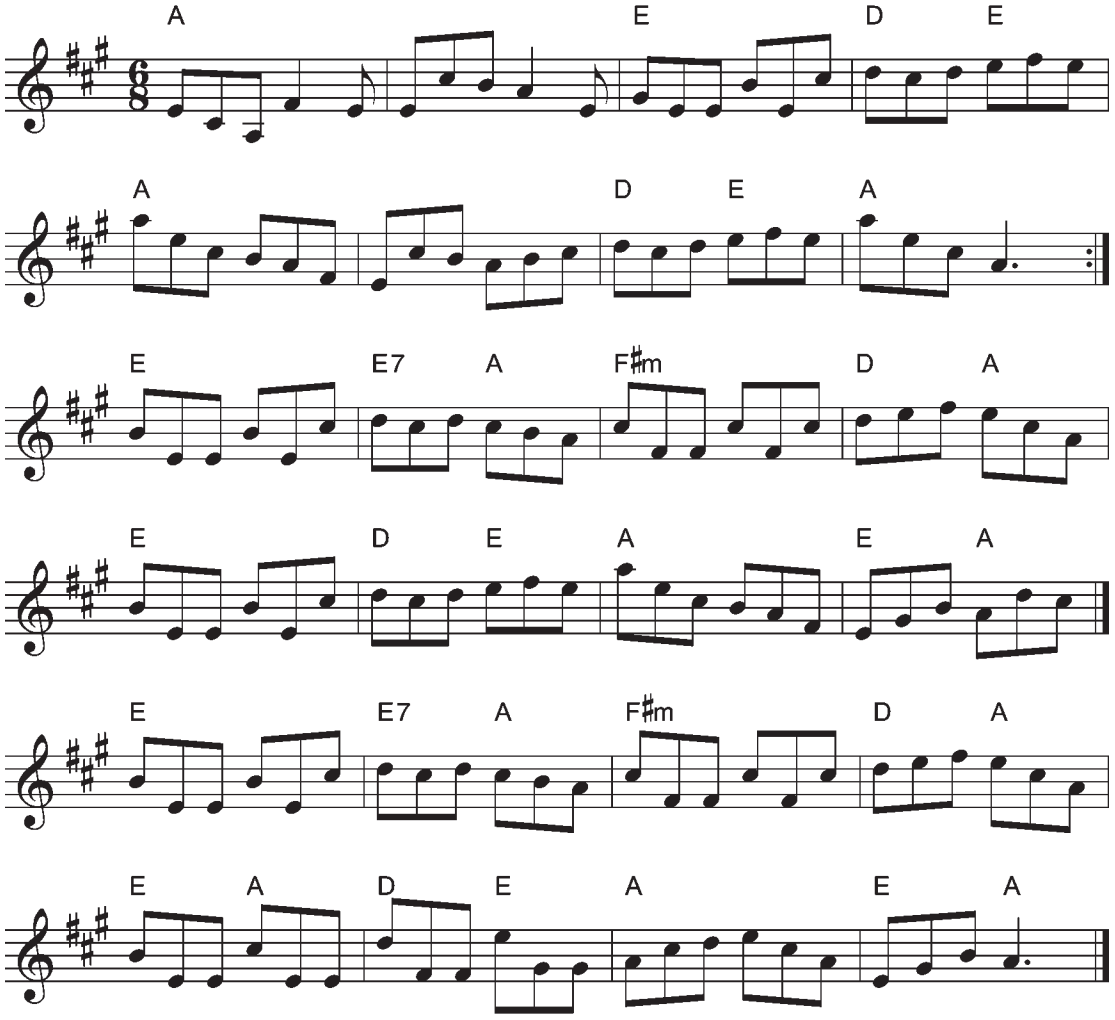
Written at the home of Anna, Ben, Will and Debbie Patton in Bakersfield, VT on Christmas Day, 2005.

The Perky Jig

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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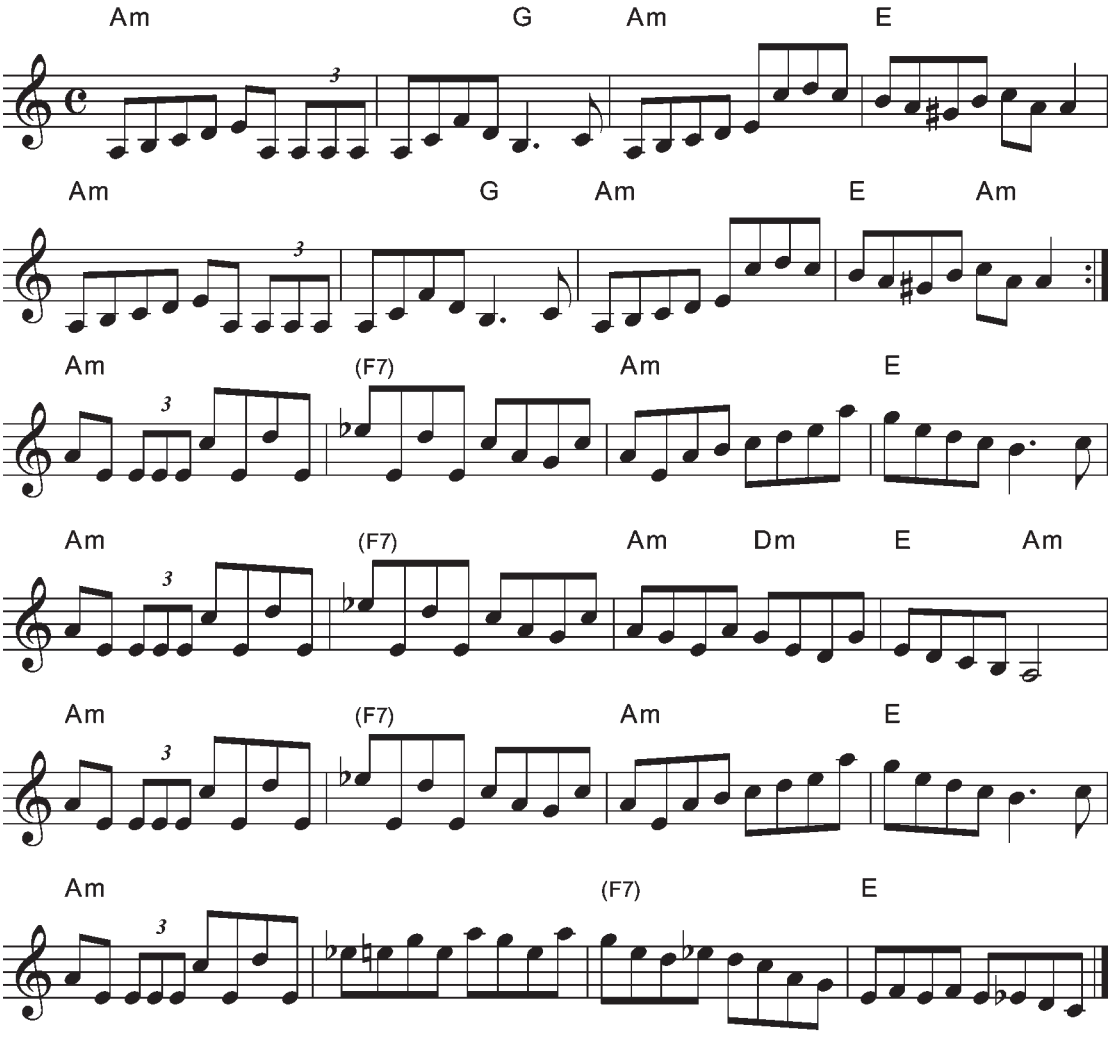
This tune is annoyingly happy given what a bad mood I was in when I wrote it, at home, alone, on a dreary, drizzly autumn evening.

Red Curry

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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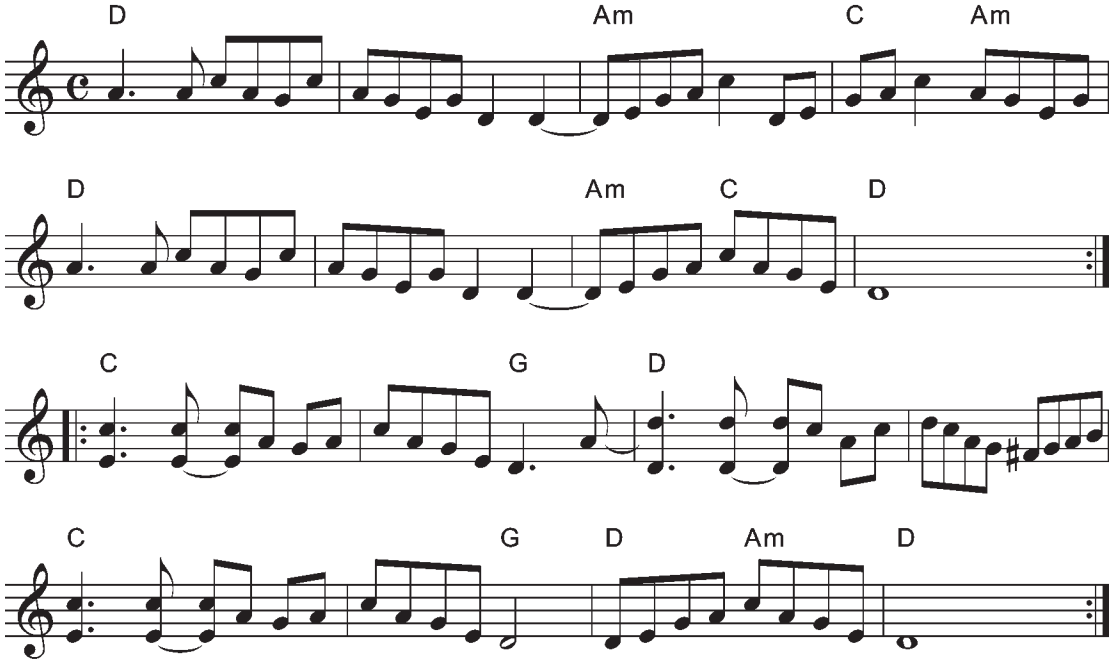
I wrote this spicy little tune one evening in May after a dinner of delicious coconut curry.

The Remarkable Recovery of Mr. Edwin Watkins

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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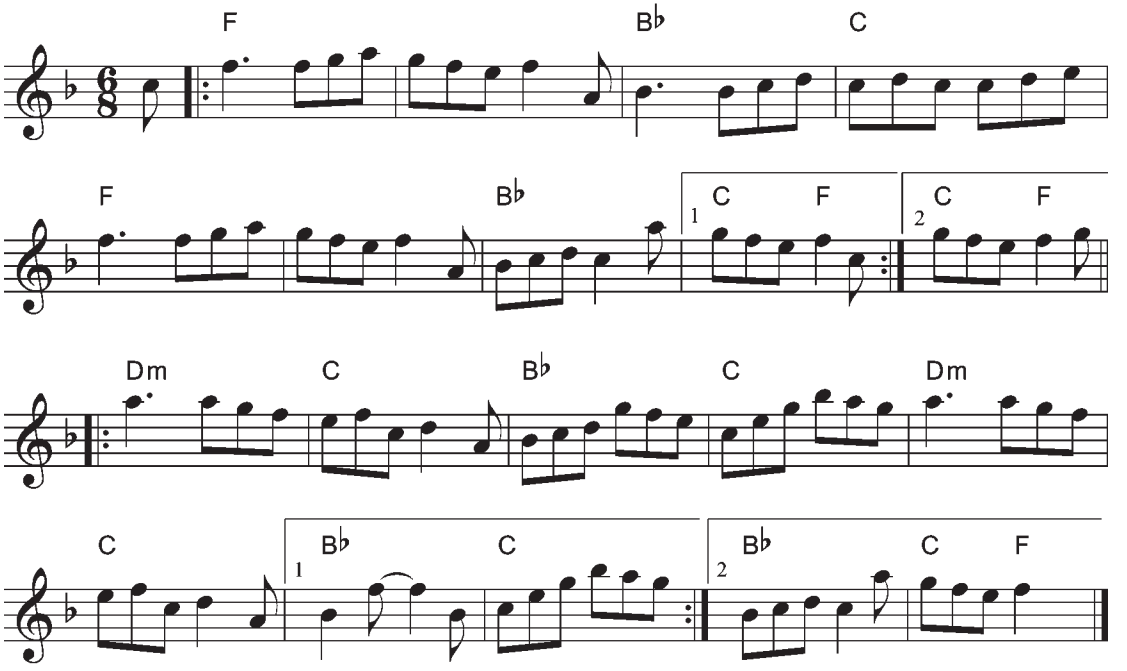
After suffering a stroke in late 2004 (see Laurels, page 23), my grandfather made a speedy recovery and was able to move back to his own apartment and live independently. Always a lover of music, art, poetry and words, he was overjoyed when I played this tune at his 80th birthday party.

Respectively

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2005



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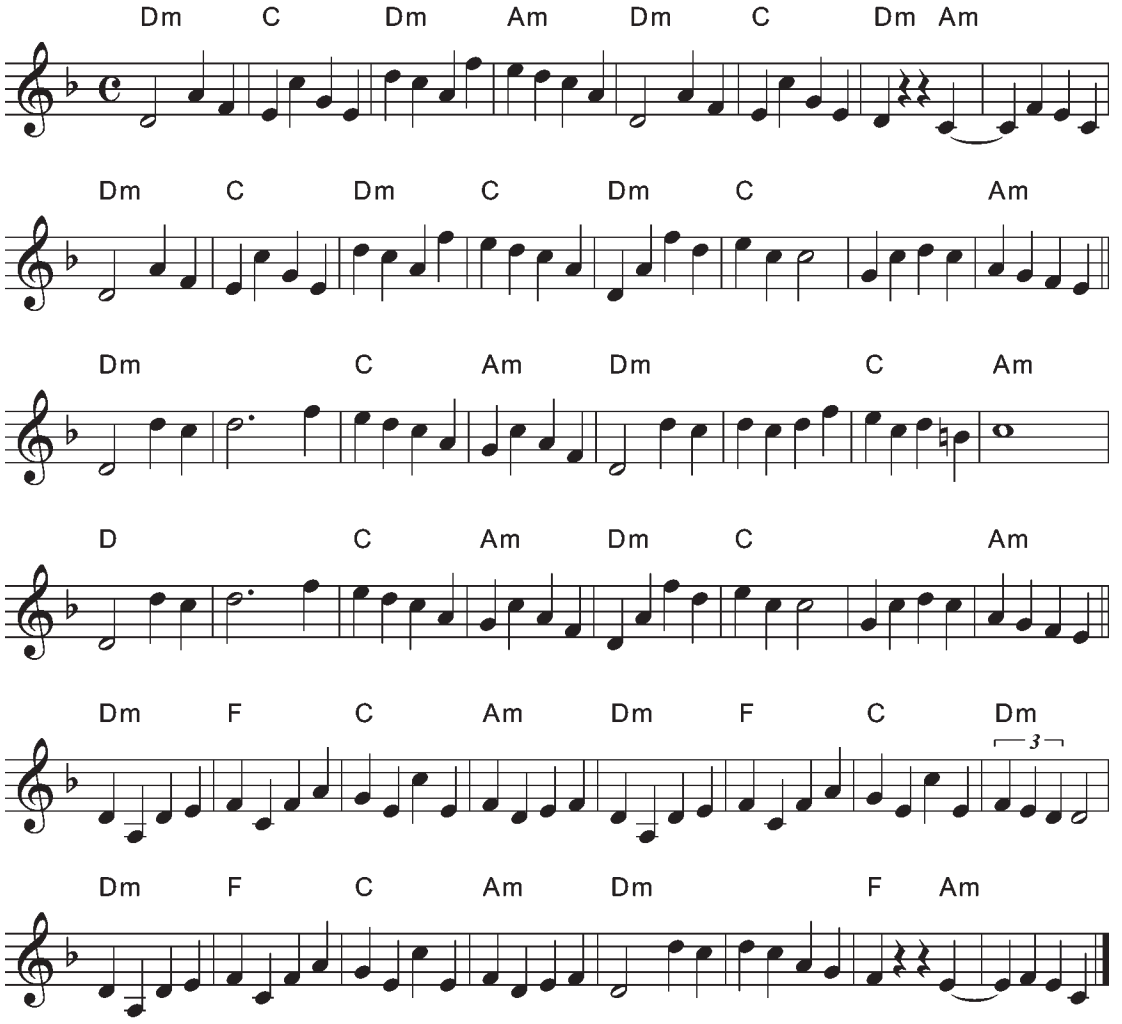
For my friends Naomi Morse and Elvie Miller; may their lives be filled with passion and romance. I composed this tune on the tenor banjo as written, but it is also beautiful when played an octave down.

Riff for Roger

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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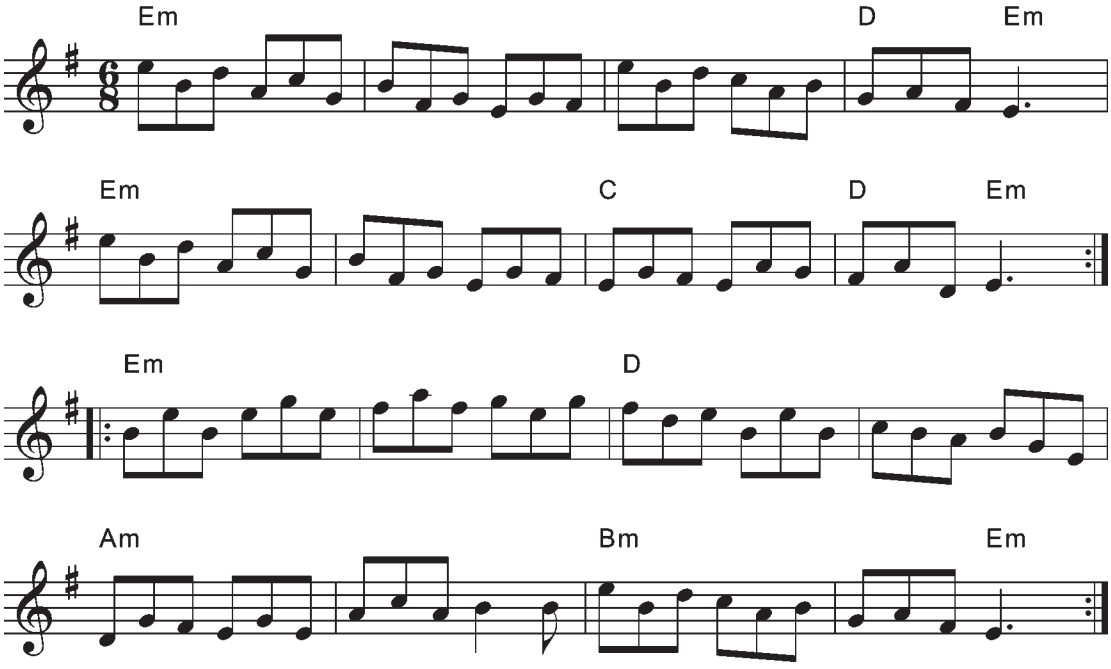
I wrote this riff with Roger Kahle's guitar playing in mind, and it is dedicated to him.

The Rocky Road to Cork

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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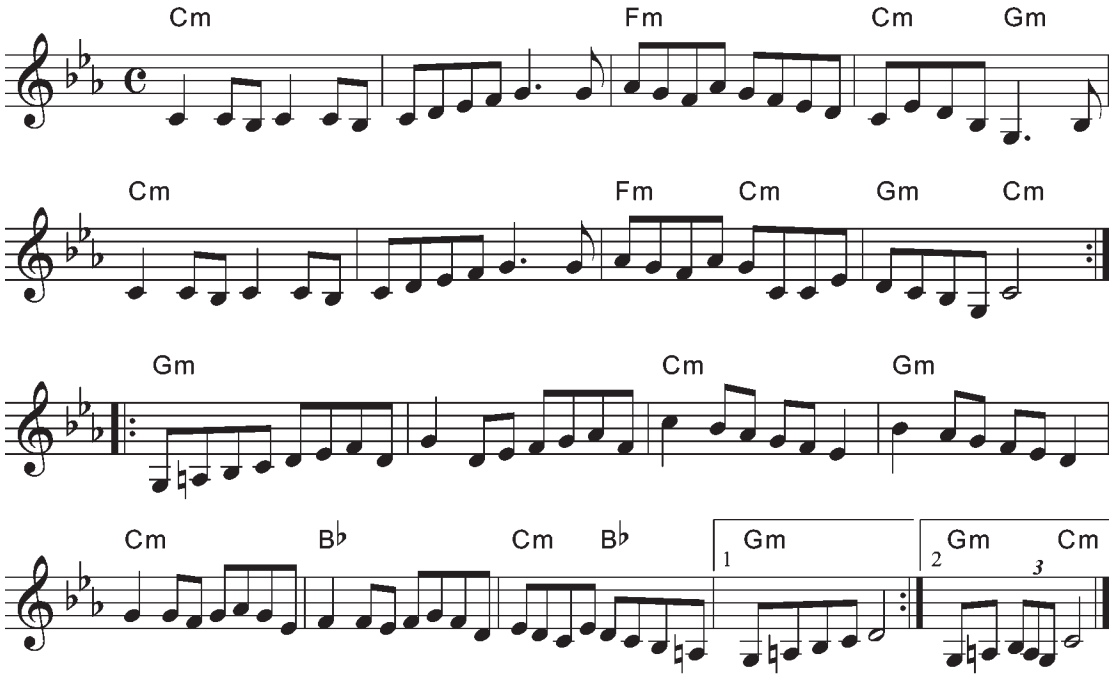
I wrote this tune after a grueling trans-Atlantic journey that included multiple segments of car, train, bus, plane, and foot travel. It is an odd tune, inspired by the unique experience of jet lag and travel-induced exhaustion.

Sarah's Red Leather Jacket

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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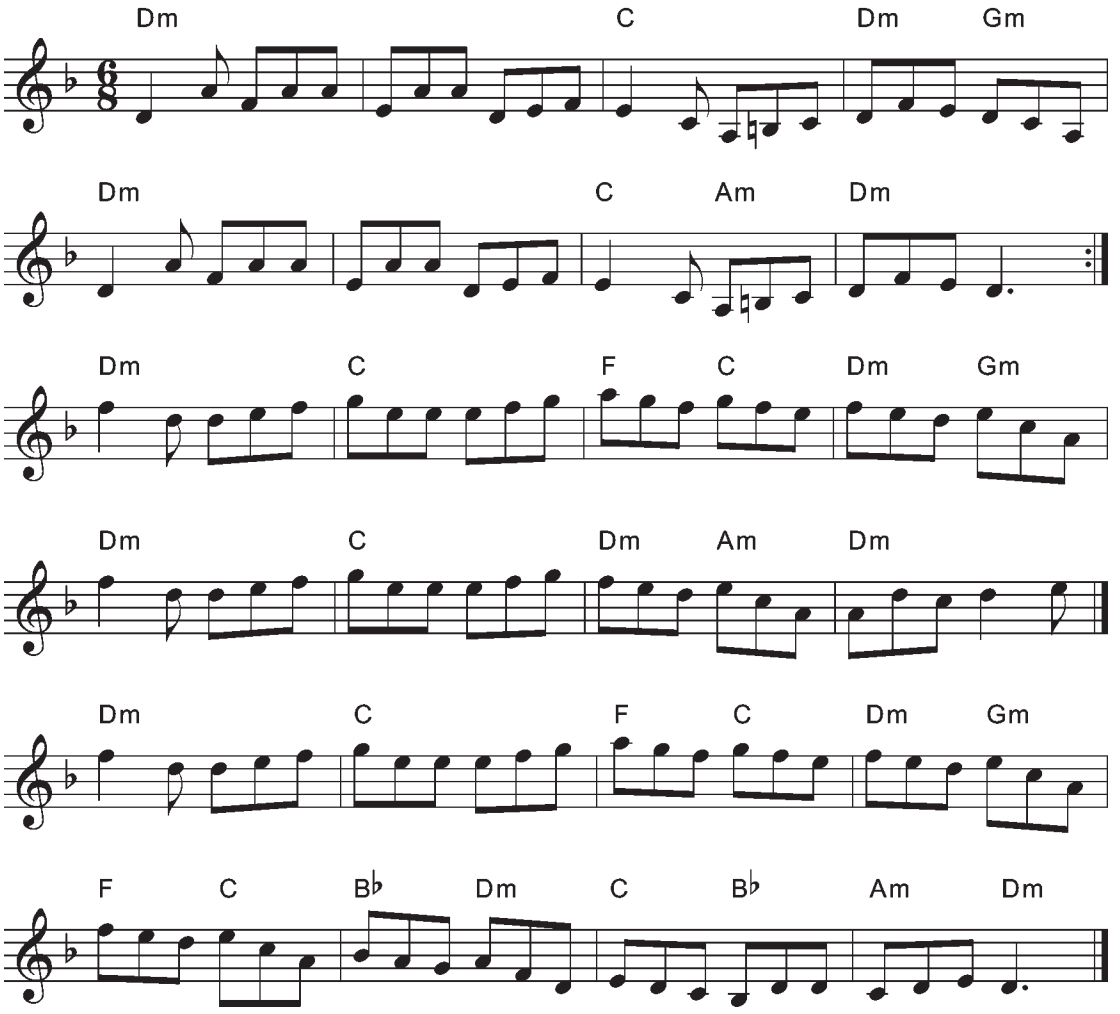
I wrote the A part of this tune early one morning while huddled in my tent at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. The B part came later with the help of Anna Patton. Sarah Mossman, a fine fiddler whose gracious hospitality I have enjoyed on several occasions, is the proud owner of the jacket in question.

The Satellite

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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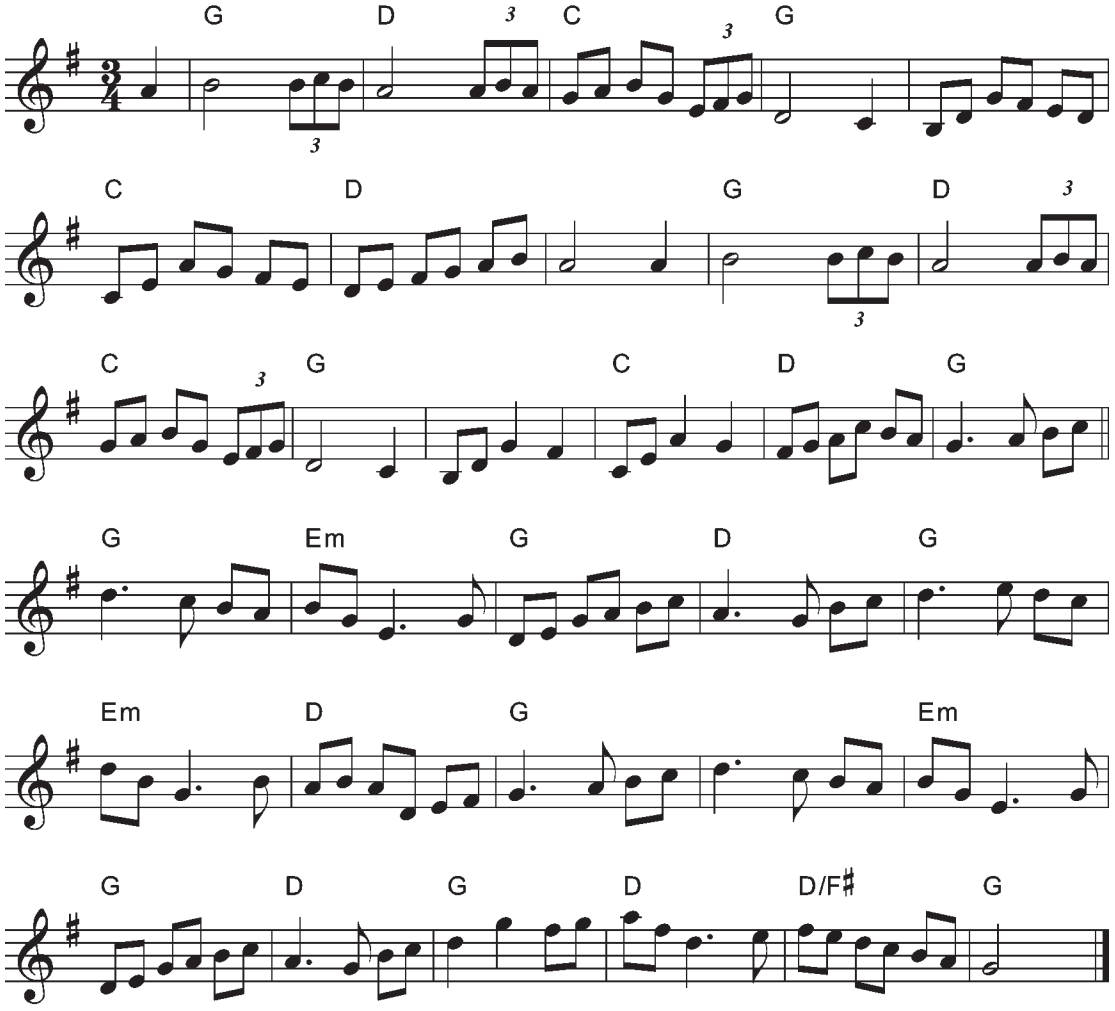
I wrote this tune after playing an outdoor concert at Camphill Village Carrick-on-Suir, a residential community for people with developmental disabilities in southeastern Ireland. One audience member spent the entire concert walking circles around the band. I found this a bit disconcerting, but I think the twirling orbit was simply her way of enjoying the music.

Simple

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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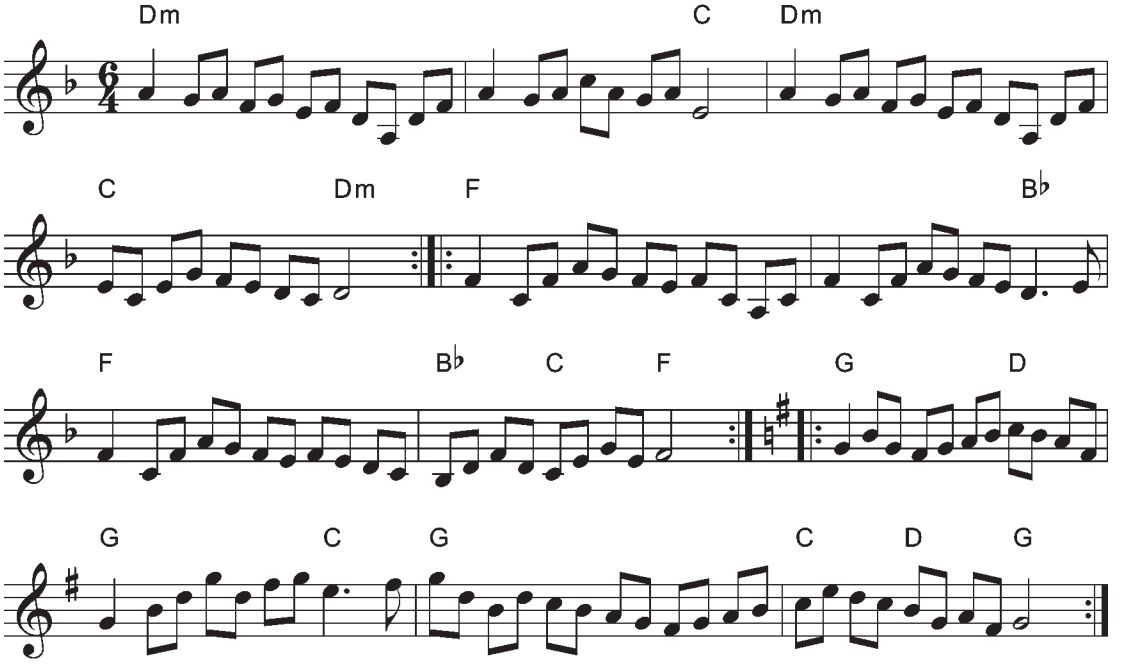
A waltz for Anna Patton.

Slang Contra

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2005



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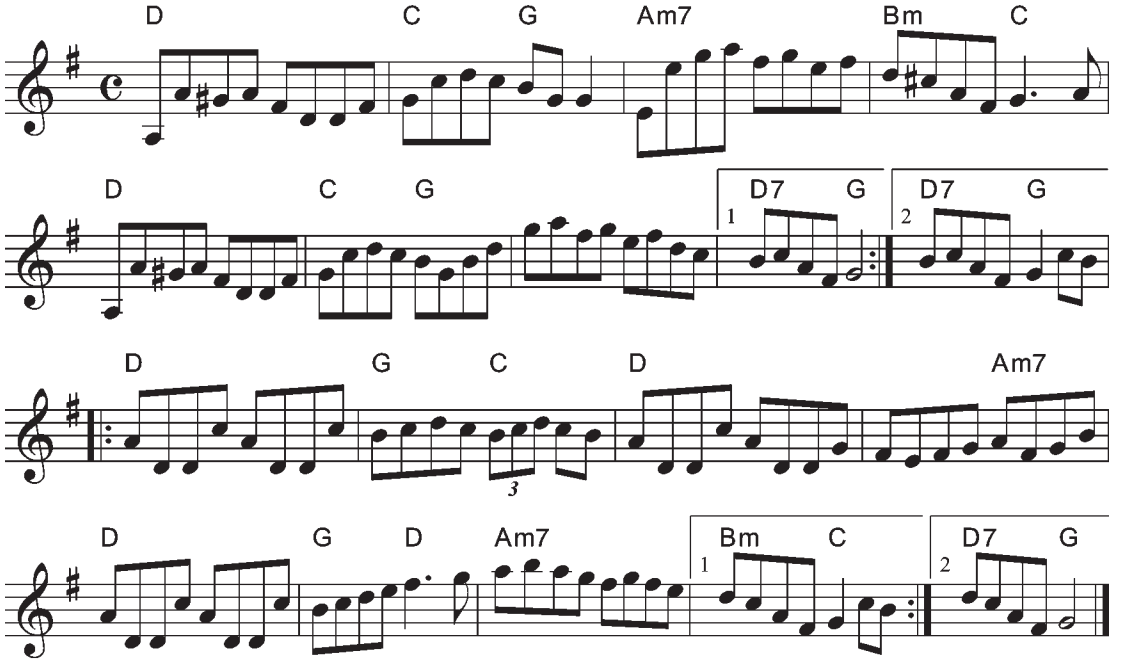
Rick Mohr, a fine caller from Watertown, MA, enjoys writing contra dances that push the limits of the form. One such dance, called the Joy of Six, features figures in phrases of six beats (instead of the usual eight), and is meant to be danced to a Slangpolska (a type of Scandinavian tune in 3/4). I wrote this tune in 6/4 based on the form of that dance, but with more of a reel-like feeling. For more information on Rick's dance, visit: http://home.comcast.net/~rickmohr/

Sniff the Whiskey

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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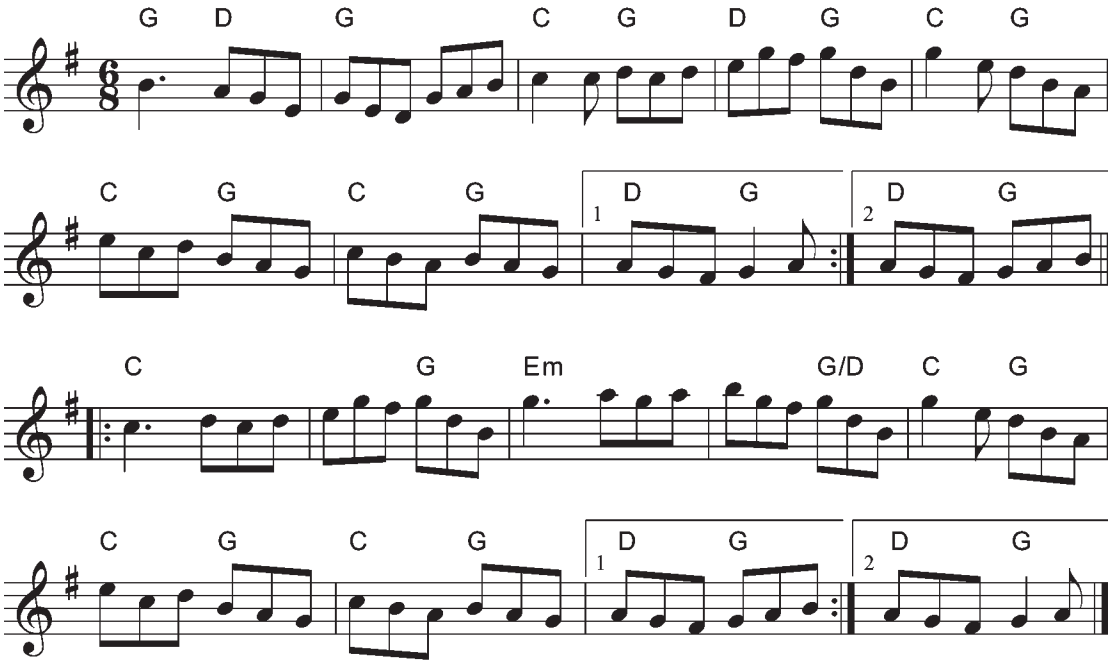
I composed this tune while on tour with Elixir in Washington DC, and named it for a dear friend who doesn't drink much but sometimes likes to sniff the whiskey.

Squirrel Chase

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2003



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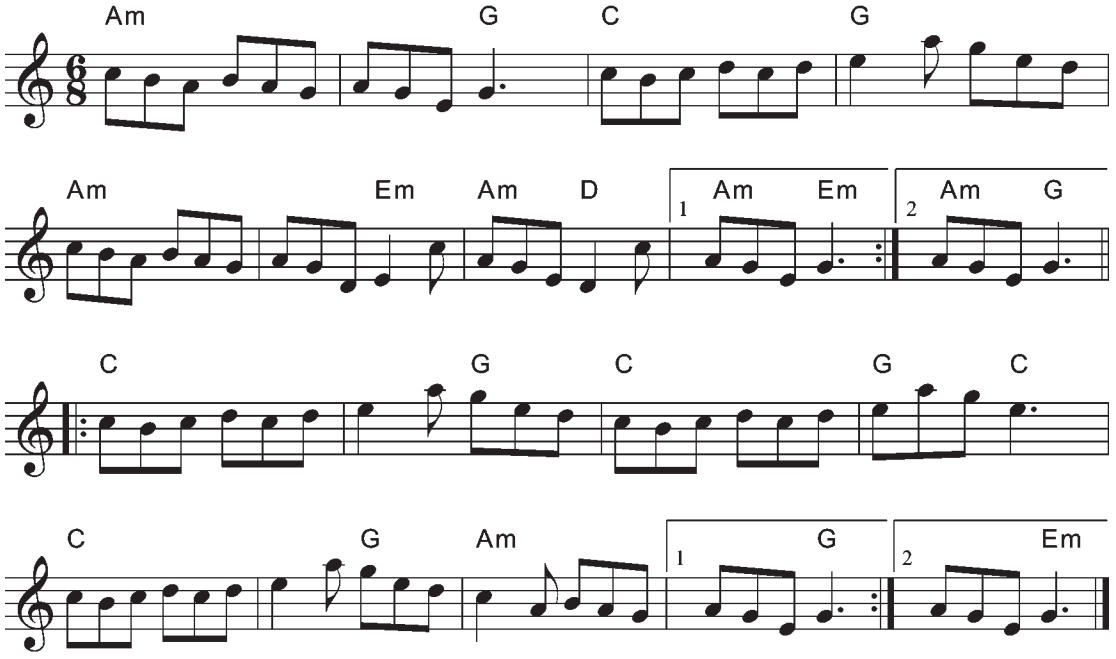
Long live squirrely tunes! This one was actually squirrelier when I wrote it, but experienced minor de-squirrelification at Anna Patton's insistence.

Trip to Pisgah

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2005



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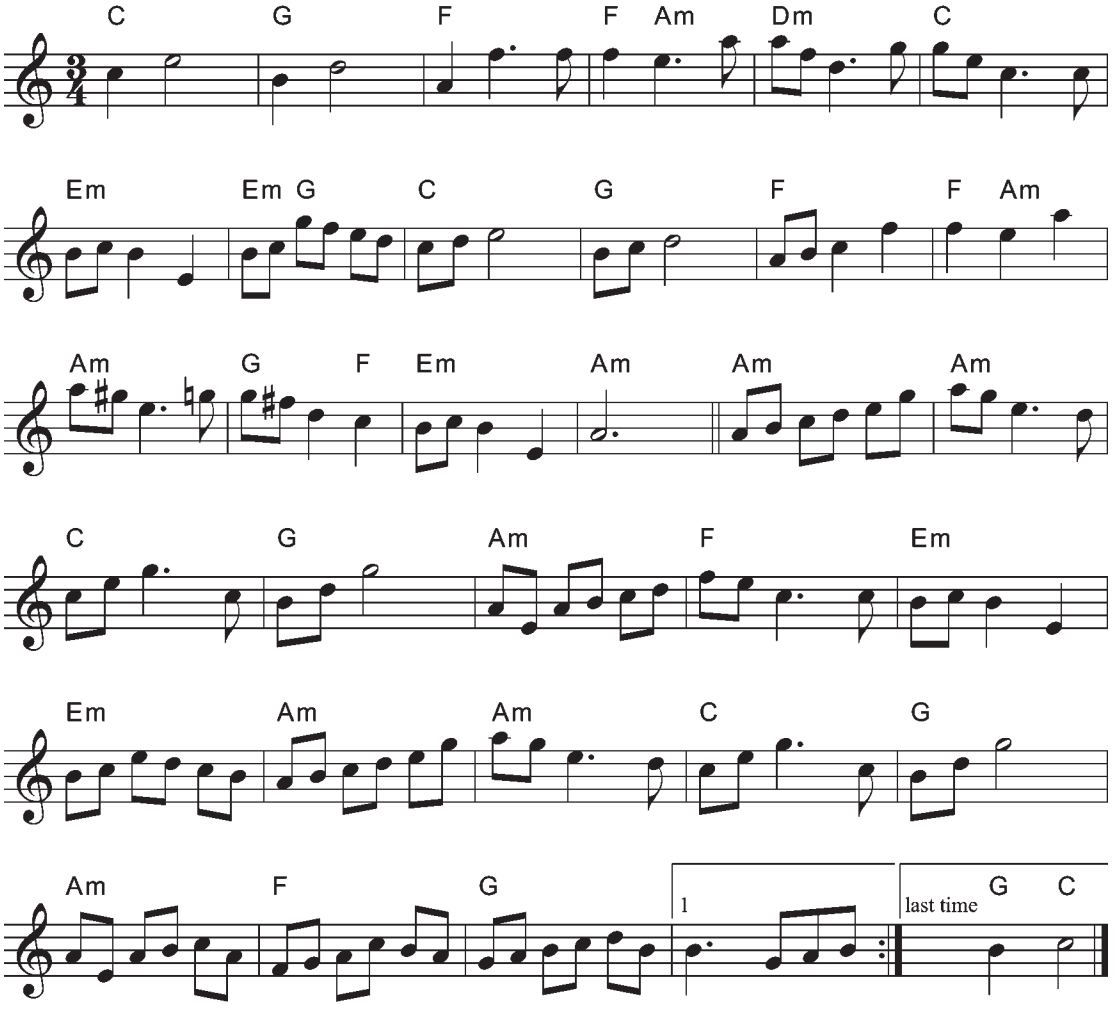
I wrote this tune one lazy summer evening after returning home from a picnic at Pisgah State Park in southwestern New Hampshire.

Two Exactly

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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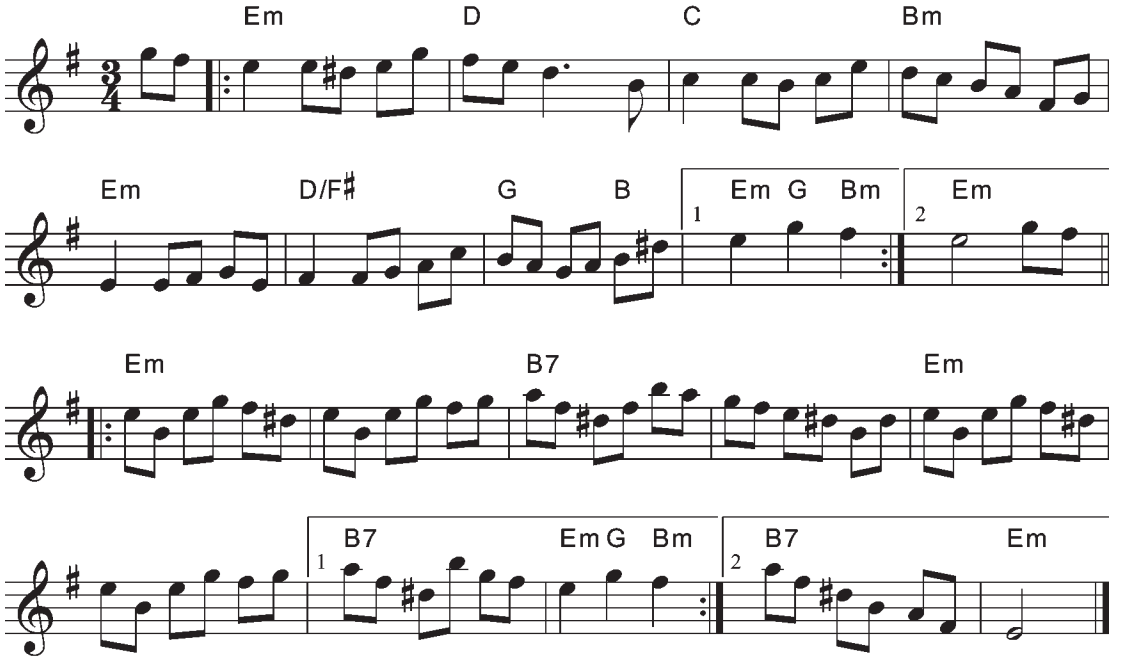
I composed this waltz exactly two weeks before leaving on a trip to Bulgaria. Recorded on *In the Window*.

Waltz of the Eagles

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2005



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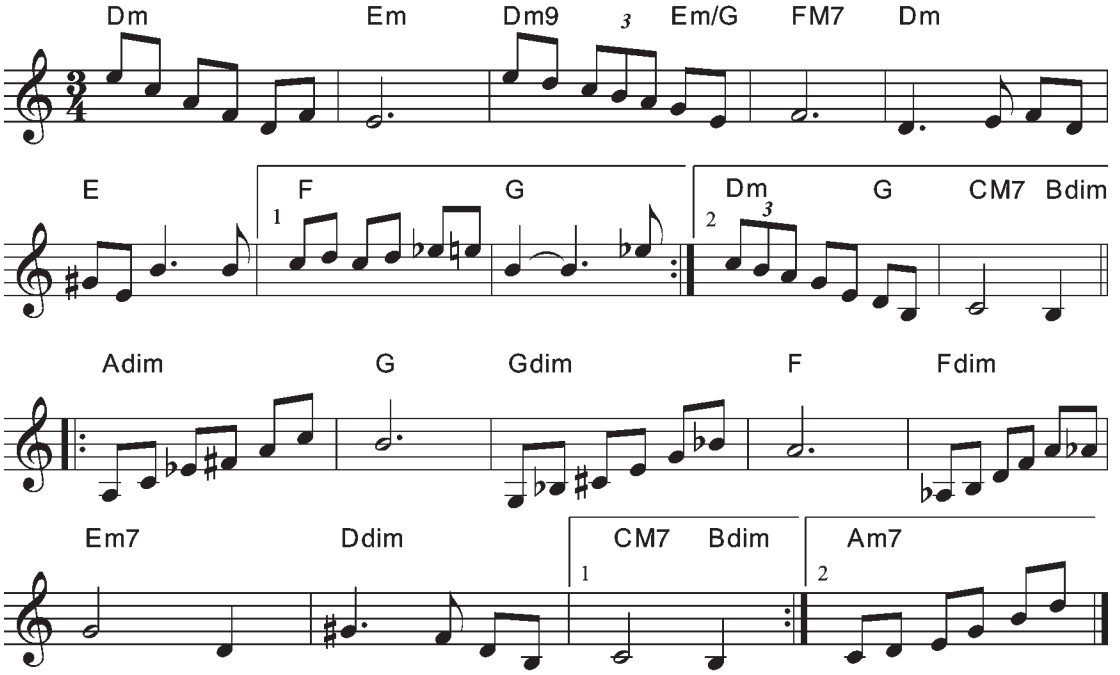
Deep in the north woods of the Adirondacks, far from any highway or factory, computer or telephone, lies Carry Falls Reservoir. There you'll find a bit of paradise where you can eat when you're hungry, play tunes all day, and watch the bald eagles soar overhead as you swim in the cool water.

Wurlitzer

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2006



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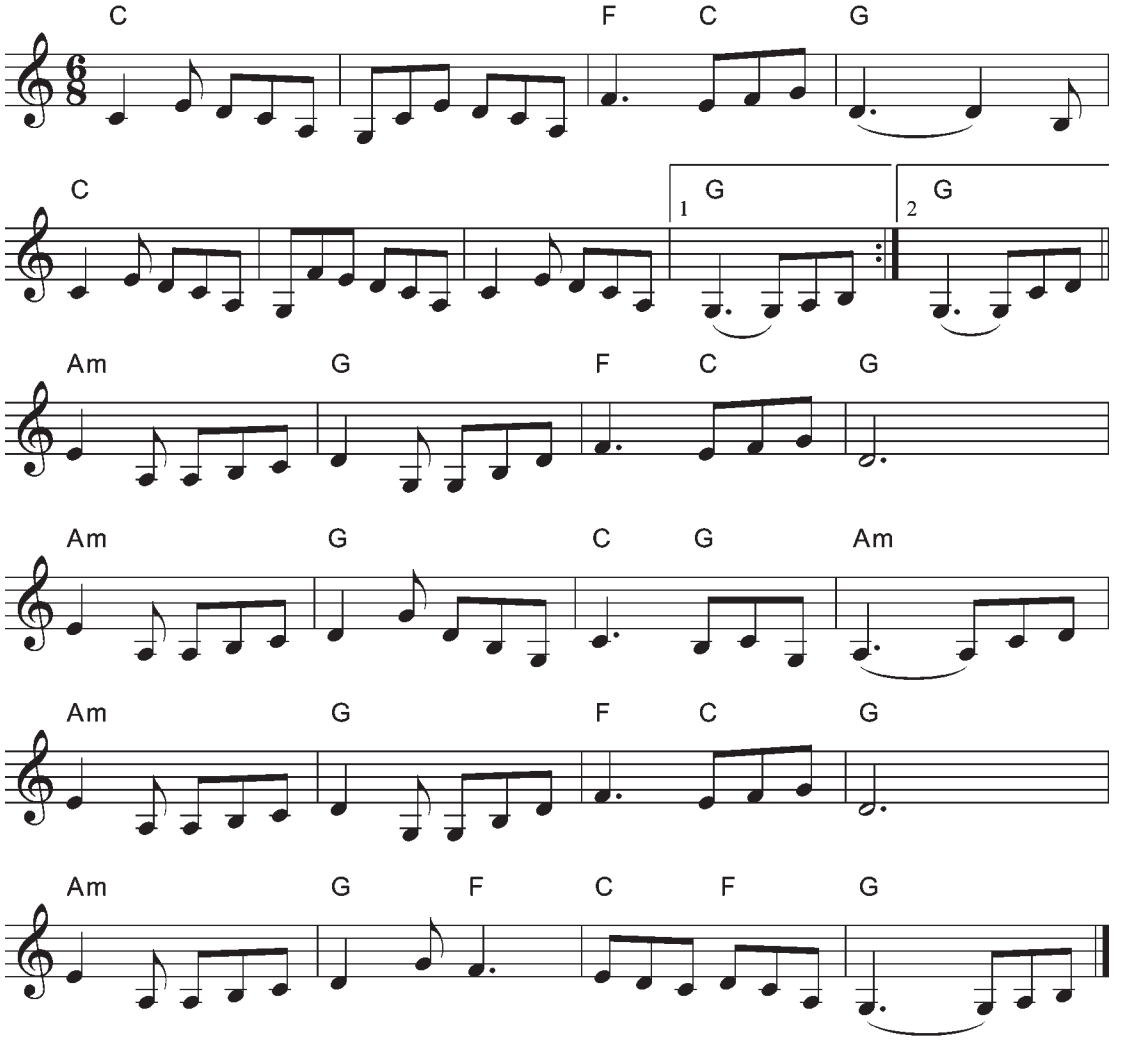
I wrote this waltz partly on my fiddle and partly on the horribly out-of-tune Wurlitzer upright piano that belongs to my landlord and sits in my living room. You probably won't like this tune. That's fine.

Zinnia's Favorite

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, 2004



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A jig for Zinnia Siegel, daughter of Peter and Michelle Siegel. I wrote this tune in the lower octave of the fiddle's range (as written), but it can also be played an octave up. Recorded on *In the Window*.

Bibliography / Discography

Information about books and CDs that have included tunes by Ethan.

Arnold, Jo (Ed.) (2004). *WeBeJammin Chord Book.* Rolla, MO: self-published.
Book of chords for over 100 fiddle tunes, including Glass Island Reel. Contact jobejammin@yahoo.com

Beeswax Sheepskin (2007) [CD]. Brattleboro, VT: self-released.
Upcoming release from this Vermont-based band will include A is for Avocado, Red Curry, Respectively, Sniff the Whiskey, and Trip to Pisgah.
See http://www.beeswaxsheepskin.com

Conger, Susan (Ed.) (1999). *Along the River*. Montague, MA: self-published.
A collection of compositions by musicians from the Connecticut River Valley of western MA and southern VT. Includes Glass Island Reel and 31 (a tune by Ethan not included in this book). See http://www.alongtheriver.com

Conger, Susan (2000). *Along the River* [CD]. Montague, MA: self-released.
Selections from the book played by Susan Conger and friends. Includes Glass Island Reel and 31. See http://www.alongtheriver.com

Hazzard-Watkins, Ethan (2005). *In the Window* [CD]. Brattleboro, VT: self-released.
Ethan plays fiddle with guest musicians on various instruments. Includes Church Hollow, The Fiddler's Farewell to the Moon, Heart Grow Fonder, The House on the Hill, Lowe's Welcome to Boston, The New Banjo, Two Exactly, and Zinnia's Favorite. See http://www.ethanhw.com

Heathen Creek (2004). *24 Hours* [CD]. Boston: self-released.
Debut album from this innovative contra dance band. Includes Church Hollow and Grattan Street. See http://www.heathencreek.com

The Moving Violations (2001). *Faster than a Walk* [CD]. Westmoreland, NH: Great Meadow Music.
Exciting performances of contra dance, Scandinavian, Balkan and original tunes. Includes Glass Island Reel. See http://www.movingviolations.com

Out of the Wood (2004). *Down the Hall* [CD]. Sandpoint, ID: self-released.
Idaho based band plays contra dance tunes, including Glass Island Reel, and a few songs. See http://www.outofthewood.net

About the author

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins grew up in Amherst, MA where he was exposed to traditional music from an early age through his parents' involvement in the contra dance scene. He studied classical violin as a child and made the switch to fiddle in tenth grade while studying with Van Kaynor. He began playing for contra and English dances at the Munson Library in South Amherst in eleventh grade, and soon after that he composed his first fiddle tune (see Glass Island Reel, page 14).

In 1997 Ethan moved to St. Paul, MN to attend Macalester College, where he joined the college's traditional music ensemble and became involved in the Twin Cities Irish music scene. At Macalester Ethan continued to perform for dances and to compose fiddle tunes, although his academic studies focused on just about everything other than music. He graduated in 2001 with a degree in political science, and in 2002 he moved back to New England to focus on music.

In 2005 Ethan released his first recording entitled *In the Window,* which includes eight of his own compositions along with traditional and contemporary material from Ireland, Quebec, New England and elsewhere. Ethan now resides in Brattleboro, VT where he works as a musician, teaches fiddle lessons and continues to compose music. He tours frequently, playing for dancing and listening audiences throughout the US and Europe with bands such as Firetruck, Beeswax Sheepskin, Elixir and The Figments.

For more information about Ethan's performances, bands, recordings and other musical projects, visit:

http://www.ethanhw.com

Acknowledgements

Many, many people have encouraged me over the years in the endeavor of writing music. Van Kaynor sparked my initial interest in composing, Susan Conger spurred me on by including two of my tunes in her collection *Along the River*, and countless musical friends and colleagues have supported me by playing the things I've written. Many thanks to all of them.

I am indebted to Peter Barnes for his generous assistance in writing chords for many of these tunes and grateful for his encouragement about the book in general. Roger Kahle, Bob Mills, Peter Siegel, Seth Houston, Elvie Miller and Timm Triplett have also contributed accompaniment suggestions and chord ideas for my tunes. If you like the chords, thank them; if not, blame me.

Thanks to Mary Lea and lydia ievins for their extremely careful and thoughtful proofreading of text and music; to Heidi Henkel and Andrea Heny for additional editing; and to Keith Murphy and Susan Conger for advice on publishing and layout considerations. Thanks also to Jean Hazzard for her support.

Special thanks are due to Anna Patton, who has always supported my efforts to compose with her willingness to try my newest tune and to offer frank feedback about my compositions. Her friendship has been an inspiration for many of the melodies in this collection, and our musical collaborations have provided an arena for refining, arranging and performing a good number of these tunes. For all of this I am deeply grateful.

Ordering information

To order additional copies of this book send $15 plus $2 shipping per copy to:

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins
P.O. Box 1372
Brattleboro, VT 05302

To order books or CDs online visit:

http://www.ethanhw.com

For other inquiries please contact Ethan by email at:

ethan@ethanhw.com

Index by tune type

Tune name	Key	Page
Reels		
A is for Avocado	A	6
Church Hollow	G	8
Covert Fromage Pickup Operation	D	9
The Descent	Am	11
Glass Island Reel	Em	14
Grattan Street	Dm	15
Head Gasket	D	16
Heart Grow Fonder	A	17
The House on the Hill	F	18
January Reel	Em	20
Lowe's Welcome to Boston	Dm	24
The New Banjo	D	25
Red Curry	Am	28
The Remarkable Recovery of Mr. Edwin Watkins	D	29
Sarah's Red Leather Jacket	Cm	33
Sniff the Whiskey	G	37
Jigs		
Escape from Istanbul	Bm	12
Last Light of Day	G	21
Pattons' Christmas	D	26
The Perky Jig	A	27
Respectively	F	30
The Rocky Road to Cork	Em	32
The Satellite	Dm	34
Squirrel Chase	G	38
Trip to Pisgah	Am	39
Zinnia's Favorite	C	43
Waltzes		
Chicago	D	7
Laurels	Em	23
Simple	G	35
Two Exactly	C	40
Waltz of the Eagles	Em	41
Wurlitzer	C	42
Other		
D Minor Reel	Dm	10
The Fiddler's Farewell to the Moon	Am	13
Indecision	F	19
Laura and Jeff's Wedding	D	22
Riff for Roger	Dm	31
Slang Contra	Dm/F/G	36

A is for Avocado

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