



TEACH-IN: HARMONICA

by Glenn Weiser

Helpful hints & suggestions from instrumental masters

THE WALTZ ON HARP

Waltzes must have been highly popular among its first players when the harmonica was invented in Germany in the late 1820s. This dance, once considered quite daring because of the embrace maintained by the couple, came from Southern Germany and Austria, and by the 1780s had spread throughout Europe. It got a boost up the social ladder in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna, where diplomats decided the fate of post-Napoleonic Europe by day and waltzed by night.

The waltz that follows, arranged with a tongue-blocking line, probably comes close to the way the harmonica was first played.

Waltzes are played in three-quarter time, with the accent on the first beat of each measure. You can accent by using slightly more breath on Count 1. An accent mark (>) shows you to accent the first beat in each measure of Exercise 1.

Exercise 1

Exercise 1 consists of two lines of musical notation in 3/4 time, key of D major. The first line contains measures 1-4, and the second line contains measures 5-8. Each measure has an accent mark (>) over the first beat. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers below the notes.

Either tongue blocking or lip blocking can be used to play waltzes, but because the harmonica was originally designed to be tongue blocked, that's the technique we'll use in the remaining exercises and the solo.

Exercise 2 consists of a scale in dotted half notes with a single note on Count 1 and tongued chords on Counts 2 and 3 of each measure. Remember to keep the chords "clipped" or staccato.

Exercise 2

Exercise 2 consists of three measures of musical notation in 3/4 time, key of D major. Each measure starts with a single dotted half note on Count 1, followed by two tongued chords on Counts 2 and 3. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers below the notes.

Exercise 3 consists of two lines of musical notation in 3/4 time, key of D major. The first line contains measures 4-6, and the second line contains measures 7-8. Each measure has a dotted half note on Count 1, followed by a quarter note on Count 2 and a quarter note on Count 3. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers below the notes.

Now repeat the dotted half-note scale, but with chords on all three beats of each measure, creating a different feel. Make sure you use a little more air on the first chord in each measure.

Exercise 3 presents the scale in measures consisting of a half note followed by a quarter note in 3/4 time. Play the melody note and the chord on Count 1. On Count 2, play the chord while holding the note. Then play a note and chord again on Count 3.

Exercise 3

Exercise 3 consists of three lines of musical notation in 3/4 time, key of D major. Each measure has a half note on Count 1, followed by a quarter note on Count 2 and a quarter note on Count 3. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers below the notes.

Now play a quarter-note scale with chords on each beat. Follow this with Exercise 4, which uses the common waltz rhythm consisting of dotted quarter and dot-

ted eighth notes. The melody notes and chords are played together on the first and third beats of the measure. The chord comes in on the second beat with the single note coming on the “and” portion of the second beat.

Exercise 4

Now switch to common time and play a scale in eighth notes, practicing with both an even eighth and swing eighth rhythm.

I learned “Country Waltz” from *25 Old Tyme Fiddle Hits*, an underground classic collection of traditional music originally marketed by K-Tel. This fine anthology of mostly New England and French Canadian fiddling unfortunately lists only the titles of the tunes and not the artists. And in the case of this waltz, it appears the producers didn’t know the actual title, either. It should be played with a swing eighth feel, and has been arranged with tongue chords on each beat.

Glenn Weiser is the author of two harmonica books (Fiddle Tunes for the Harmonica and Blues and Rock Harmonica), two Celtic guitar books (The Minstrel Boy and Harp Music of O’Carolan for Solo Guitar) and the transcriptions of 70 Little Walter solos. In addition to teaching professionally, Glenn performs solo acoustic blues, Celtic music with Greg Schaaf, and blues and old-time music with the St. Regis String Band. You can write to him in care of Sing Out!, P.O. Box 5253, Bethlehem, PA 18015-0253, or send e-mail, with Harmonica Teach-In in the subject line, to singout@libertynet.org.

see next page for “Country Waltz” ...

COUNTRY WALTZ

D Harmonica

Swing eighth notes

Moderate; ♩ = approx. 132

Chords: D, A7, D, G, D

5 ④ 4 5 6 6 ⑤ 4 ④ 4 5 6 8 7 ⑧ 8 ⑨ ⑧ 9 8 7 ⑦ 7

Chords: E7, A7, D, A7, D

⑧ 8 ⑧ 7 ⑦ ⑥ 6 ⑥ 6 ⑤ 4 ④ 4 5 6 6 ⑤ 4 ④ 4 6 7

Chords: G, D, E7, A7, D (1. and 2. endings)

8 7 ⑧ 8 ⑨ ⑧ 9 8 7 ⑦ 7 ⑧ ⑥ ⑦ 7 5 ④ 7 6

Chords: A7

8 ⑧ 7 ⑥ 6 ⑤ 4 ④ 4 5 6 7 ⑥ ⑦ ⑥ 6 8 9 ⑨ 8 ⑧ 7

Chords: D

⑦ 7 ⑦ ⑥ 6 ⑦ ⑧ ⑩ 9 6 8 ⑧ 7 ⑥ 6 ⑤ 4 ④ 4 5 6 7

Chords: Em, A, E7, A7, D (1. and 2. endings), D.S.

⑥ ⑦ ⑥ 6 8 9 ⑨ 8 ⑧ 7 ⑦ 7 ⑦ ⑥ 6 ⑥ ⑦ 7 6 7 5 ④

