

Merry Christmas!

Actually, I hope it isn't **already** Christmas, because you might need a little time to work up some of these arrangements before the big day.

The traditional carols included here are my own personal favorites, and I hope that many of them are yours, too. No snowmen or reindeer here, just the lovely old carols that you hardly ever hear on the radio these days.

This is not an entry level book on how to play the mandolin; for that kind of material, see my **Mandolin From Scratch** book. It'll take you through the basics of playing chords, scales and melodies, and chord-melody arrangements. This **tunebook** is an adjunct to that **method** book.

The Musical Keys

There are 21 carols here in 3 keys: **G**, **D** and **Am**. You can find out more about the structure and meaning of keys from my method book. All you need to know now is that a key is a collection of chords that centers around one particular chord, the key chord. Usually it's the first, last and most frequently played chord in the song. We have **10** tunes in the **Key of G**, **8** in the **Key of D** and **3** in the **Key of Am**; these are among the best keys for the mandolin because of all the nice open strings you get to play.

The Plain Arrangements

Open the book to any page and you'll find a **Plain** arrangement on the left side and a **Fancy** arrangement on the right side for the same carol. The Plain arrangement centers around **Tablature Diagrams** that show the **melody notes** in a larger, bolder font, along with more occasional (and optional) **chord tones** in a smaller, lighter font. This is standard Tablature, where the 4 horizontal lines represent the 4 strings (1st string at the top, 4th string on the bottom) and the numbers represent the **frets** you need to press.

Over the Tab you'll see the letter names of the **chords** that can be used to accompany the melody, using either another mandolin, a guitar or some other chordal instrument.

And there are some optional chords in a smaller, lighter font that change more often. If you choose to ignore these, the carol will still sound fine and be much easier to play. But if you **CAN** manage to work in these chords, the tune will sound more as it should.

Under the Tab you'll see the **beats** "1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +" or "1 + 2 + 3 +" for each **measure**. This tells you exactly when to play the notes (the Tab numbers) as you count out these beats evenly. Under the beats are the most common **lyrics** for singing the first verse.

At the bottom of the page are mandolin **chord diagrams** and lyrics for additional verses. The chord shapes (the numbers here are **finger numbers**) are simple ones that have mostly open strings, though some are partial **barre chords** (1st finger covering several strings).