

Track 2-1a. slow

basic setting

traditional Irish jig

melody stays on same strings as violin for A part

Fiddle tunes in most older and many contemporary collections are noted in the basic, bare-bones version seen on this page - with no chords, bowings, accents, tempo or dynamics noted. This creates a mystery that must be solved. How do we interpret what's there? What does 'style' mean and how do we find it? What rhythms do we play? It helps to consider every tune **setting** (24) like the one above or even the more annotated examples here as a jumping-off point rather than an end result. Fiddlers add an overlay of left hand-ornaments, variations and right hand bowing licks and rhythms to each "starter" tune like the one above, dressing it up in their own regional or adopted style. The rhythm, pulse, or **groove** (8) of a tune are what drive it, with melody changing constantly in pursuit of rhythm. Think of what you see above as a template or matrix of the tune, needing to be dressed up in style. Changing tone coloration (note bendings and left hand ornaments) is fun, but the real challenge for a fiddler is in making those ornaments *serve* the rhythm, making a tune dance to the beat. That's what gets the dancers moving and grooving!

The following page shows a fully stylized Irish **setting** of *Swallowtail Jig*. Other tunes in this collection detail only a few **style markers** per tune, but this first lesson is highly ornamented to show everything possible.

Most fiddling is done in first position. That's a good thing at 104-120 beats per minute with the focus on *rhythmic variations* which recast the melody slightly differently each time through a tune. We pick and choose ornaments to fit a 32-bar round of the tune, swapping ornaments and bowings back and forth, drumming new rhythms on the tune. Remember that *all* ornaments create rhythm, so timing is more important than anything else in fiddling.

Use the CD tracks as practice aids to help you stay in rhythm as you explore the book.

1b. Swallowtail Jig

VIOLA

Irish setting

Track 3-1b. slow • Track 4-1c. lesson • Track 5-1d. fast

traditional Irish jig

♩ = 108

Up-bow leading (16) E m

roll-up (25)

slurring into the downbeat (15) uses as much bow for the single note as for the two slurred notes

5 E m E m D E m E m

E m flick (23) buried inside slur E m jig turn (25) uses half a bar in 6/8 E m grace-notes modify doubled pitches D bend note or smear up reefing the bow (13)

10 trill (25)

14 E m E m D E m E m

Chords (8) - drive the first upbow and this one almost plays itself

E m E m D D E m E m D E m

19

Tune analysis & style overlay for interpreting fiddle music:

Analyze each tune for style, beat placement, form and chord structure

1. Style: Uses Irish "set" of jig ornaments, bowings, and rhythms: *flicks, smears, dotted quarter turns, trills, reefing, & rollups*. Pick and choose three or four from among them for each repetition of the tune, moving them around to create and accent new rhythms. Left-hand ornaments are added to the melody as a last step when they can be incorporated at normal playing tempos. Work each one up to speed using the lesson CDs and slow-down computer software or a metronome, increasing the tempo each session until you're up to speed. All ornaments are played without taking any time of their own, often at the beginning of phrases. Cut notes short just a little to leave time for ornaments and more importantly, to leave space within a tune. Don't, however, speed up when you do that. Leave the space and stay locked in the groove.

2. Form: 6/8 meter, structured evenly in two repeated 8-bar phrases, played AABB for 32 bars.

3. Beat Placement: Straight up on the beat, but *slurring into the downbeat*. Try slurring into the bar on an *UP-bow* to give a lilt to jigs.

4. Chord structure: E Dorian (E minor) - The harmony moves in a line, *i - VII - i*, in this case *Em - D - Em*. This is one of the four harmony types discussed in this book: **Dorian** (modal minor), commonly in Irish, Scottish, French-Canadian and Southern Appalachian music. With only two adjacent chords to identify, there's time to find more rhythms to play over them, as in the example above. See also *Diatonic Chords, 19; Chord Wheel, 18; Harmonic Structure, 19; Minor/modal chord progressions, 20*.