

2024 Mandolin Camp North Class List- subject to change

Shin Akimoto

Duo Class with Mike Compton (All)

We are fortunate to have one of Japan's most successful mandolinists with us at MCN'24. The class will provide a vehicle for Shin to talk about his life playing mandolin in Japan, his approach to playing bluegrass mandolin duos, his work in the Rag Papa Jug Band, the musical advice he received from the late John Hartford on crossing genres in music. If we're lucky we may even get Shin to share with us his favorite gyoza restaurant list!

Bluegrass in Japan with Dick Bowden and Kelly Stockwell (All)

English version of the annual festival guide for Moonshiner magazine, and a list of music clubs where bluegrass can be heard throughout the country and a list of local bluegrass societies. Shin is the Festival Director of the Takarazuka Bluegrass Festival (started in 1972), which is believed to be the second oldest bluegrass festival in the world. "It is a fossil that has never become a major event and still retains the atmosphere of the bluegrass festivals of the 1970s." Travelers who want to enjoy bluegrass music in Japan can ask Shin for help/advice. He can give some pointers on how to enjoy their stay in Japan with a focus on bluegrass music.

Mandolin as a Second Language with Jim Richter (MSL) (All)

This class pairs Japanese Bluegrass mandolinist Shin Akimoto and American blues mandolinist Jim Richter to explore the shared language mandolin provides. The class examines improvisation, back up, and (most importantly) listening in jam settings, even when there is not a shared repertoire.

Jason Beals

Petting Zoo (in Sage Hall throughout the weekend)

Travel back in time to the early 1920s when Mandolin Orchestras ruled the earth! Cities, towns, and college campuses yielded to the plectral tide of the mandolin ensemble, forming themed or maker sponsored groups to perform the latest music — some surviving to this day. Often accompanied by guitars and harp-guitars, the robust mandolins were supported by their larger mandola and mandocello siblings in intricate rhythmic and sonic counterpoint with the "colossus of tonal power", the mandobass laying down the early grooves. Check out why "Every one a Gibsonite" was a thing by trying out various period instruments — among them the only complete Lyon & Healy set in the world.

Chris Brashear

Five tunes from the Ozarks

Arkansas Traveler, One For Possum, Oklahoma Redbird, Taney County Breakdown, Malindy

Five Tunes from the Ozarks (part 2)

Cross Tuning the Mandolin

Run Little Hank

River songs

Why you need to take your mandolin with you, including on river trips

River songs

Why you need to take your mandolin with you, including on river trips (part 2)

Flynn Cohen

Ornamentation for Irish Tenor Banjo & Mandolin

Learn to Play a Traditional Jig for Irish Tenor Banjo & Mandolin

Improvising Bluegrass Mandolin

With closed positions Scale and arpeggio exercises for mandolin

Dropped-D GUITAR

accompaniment basics (Irish/Celtic fiddle music)

Flatpicking Irish Traditional Music on GUITAR

Mike Compton

Duo Class with Shin Akimoto (All)

We are fortunate to have one of Japan's most successful mandolinists with us at MCN'24. The class will provide a vehicle for Shin to talk about his life playing mandolin in Japan, his approach to playing bluegrass mandolin duos, his work in the Rag Papa Jug Band, the musical advice he received from the late John Hartford on crossing genres in music. If we're lucky we may even get Shin to share with us his favorite gyoza restaurant list!

Monroe/The Later Years; Doing More With Less (I-A)

As the Father of Bluegrass progressed through the aging process he developed ways of getting around melody lines that allowed him to do more with slides and slurs and working out of chord forms. His style evolved into a more impressionistic art form than in the early days of the genre. We will take a look at a couple of my favorites from that time and work them through.

Mando Country Blues Repertoire Class (I-A)

The blues is a vital contribution to the formation of first generation Bluegrass music. In my opinion it's where the style gets its major ingredients for that feeling you get in your gut when you hear that high lonesome sound. Class will work through a few notable numbers by some of the earliest popular country blues mandolinists.

Mando Backup Styles/How to Stay on the Lead Singer's Good Side (All)

What in tarnation do you do when you find yourself having to play backup lines for a lead singer who fancies him or herself as the next "Tater" Swift? Make them sound better by your tasteful musical support, that's what. You'll always have a job in music if you make the boss sound good! Let's have a look at some things you can do.

What's Your Rhythmic Base? Working 2's, 3's (and 4's) (I-A)

How do you establish the pulse of a piece of music? What can you do to give it a sense of momentum and energy? Rhythm. Without rhythm music has been described as a "chaotic mess of random sounds". Melody and rhythm are intimately connected. Music is described by some as being either "2's or 3's" or multiples thereof. We'll work with a few examples to back up that viewpoint.

Sharon Gilchrist

Watch the Guitar Player! How to Follow Chord Progressions in a Jam with Lincoln Meyers (AB-I)

Picking up a chord progression on a song/tune one has never played or heard is essential to jamming with others. Strangely enough for mandolin players, learning to watch a guitar player's chord shapes is one of the best ways to follow chord changes on the fly. In this class, Sharon and Lincoln will explain why and how to do this. To be clear, this class is for mandolin players!

Embellishing Fiddle Tune Melodies: (AB-I)

An often important and yet forgotten first step in improvisation is embellishing the melody. This skill can also be thought of as creating variations on the melody and truly needs to be in place before players expect themselves to wax poetic while improvising solos that stray far from the melody. This should be very encouraging to those who don't know, span the gap between fixed melodies and improvised solos. We'll learn several specific embellishment techniques and how to practice them so they actually show up in your playing. This class is specifically for mandolinists and is applicable to advanced beginners as well as mandolinists who have a hard time creating variations on the melody or improvising or simply haven't taken a very detailed approach to developing improvisation.

Play a melody in all 12-keys!: (AB-I)

In this class we'll learn a classic closed-position finger pattern on the mandolin and apply it to songs with I, IV and V chord progressions. This must-know pattern for all mando players. A great time to learn this concept is when players have learned many basic tunes (likely fiddle tunes) and have started jamming with others. About this time, players wonder how to solo over songs they have never heard or played before when such songs come up in jams. Knowing this pattern is one essential key in being able to do exactly that - and it works in all 12 keys!

Two Original Hartford Tunes from *John Hartford Fiddle Tune Project, Vol. 1* (I-A)

After the passing of John Hartford, his family discovered close to 3,000 original fiddle tunes by Hartford written in standard notation by hand in spiral notebooks. John's daughter, Katie Hogue-Hartford is bringing these tunes to life by having them recorded and making these records available to the public. She hopes players far and wide might learn the tunes, enjoy playing them and perhaps even see some become jam standards. Let's make that happen! In this class, I'll teach one or two Hartford tunes from the Vol. 1. These will be taught by ear with transcriptions provided at the end of class.

Integrating Licks from Transcribed Solos into One's Improvisation (I-A)

It's super frustrating to transcribe and learn solos in hopes of building one's vocabulary only to never experience licks from those solos showing up in one's improv. In this class, we will walk through a step by step practice method for helping you do exactly that as well as discuss some key observations to make during this process.

Skip Gorman

Old Time Mountain and Bluegrass GUITAR for Singing

Sound like you're actually from the mountains! We'll choose songs and work on some of the great old timey guitar runs that were developed by legends like Jimmie Rodgers, Riley Puckett, Gene Meade and Doc Watson, as well as go through various ways the first generation bluegrass players handled their accompaniment. Personally, I feel this is an important class as much of this nuance is disappearing amongst the jazz and hot licks enthusiasts.

Simple, Lovely and Rare Waltzes from a Bygone Era

We'll talk about simplicity and beauty and work on right hand tremolo.

Fiddle Tunes in the Key of A

(using the right hand as a bow stroke) We'll work on tunes like GREY EAGLE, SALT RIVER, CATTLE IN THE CORN, DUSTY MILLER.

Ragtime Tunes on the Mandolin to Beat the Band

We'll work on tunes like HAWKINS RAG (C), DALLAS RAG (F), BALTIMORE RAG (C) to evoke that 1890's sound.

Barn Burners Bluegrass Breakdown

(G), Rawhide (C), Sticking close to the original melodies.

Lorraine Hammond – Beginner/Fresh Start Track

Session 1 – Get a (gentle) grip (B)

We'll cover holding and tuning, how to coordinate the pick, left hand position, and how to play simple chords and lead lines. Simple tab reading.

Session 2 – Mapping a tune (B)

A quick review of session one basics, then a tune that we will choose together and learn by ear (I'll teach you guidelines) and then write out in tab.

Session 3 – Back-up, (don't push) (B)

A quick review of session one basics, then on to chords for accompaniment. We'll consider old time and bluegrass chord forms and play with each.

Session 4 – Right Hand Rhythms (B)

A quick review of session one basics, and the emphasis is then on picking patterns and options for right hand rhythms, from boom chukkas to chops. Plenty of good tunes to try ideas out on.

Session 5 – Moving Forward (B)

We'll review and play through material from the earlier sessions, adding resources, warm-ups and best practice techniques to include in your mandolin future. Bring your questions.

Bennett Hammond

GUITAR Why Should We Work So Hard? (All)

Less is more. Reduce your effort in jams, or any accompaniment setting, with chordal shorthand.

Jacob Jolliff

Technique with Ethan Setiawan (All)

In this class, we'll go over posture, left and right hand technique, as well as how it all works together. Ethan and Jake will share and contrast their two unique approaches to technique. While we will move at a somewhat quick pace, any mandolinist will be able to get something applicable out of this.

Jazz mandolin with Ethan Setiawan (I-A)

Mandolin has a surprisingly long history in swing and jazz music of many descriptions. From early swing through bebop and beyond, there's plenty of great examples of how to play jazz on the mandolin out there. We'll explore chord voicings, improvisation over jazz chord progressions, and stylistic considerations, among other topics that may come up.

Embellishing Bluegrass (and other) Melodies

We'll cover a blueprint for building mandolin solos based around the melody.

Comprehensive Fretboard Knowledge

We'll outline an approach for getting to know the entire fingerboard through arpeggios, scales, and tunes.

Practicing Strategies (All)

We'll talk about different overarching strategies for how and what to practice.

Carl Jones

Arpeggio Bound Breakdown

In this workshop we will learn to stack chord tones on one string and also crossing the strings finding patterns along the way. We will put them together into a warmup exercise and then play a classic old time tune where arpeggios do abound.

Learn Big Beamer

In this class I will teach everyone a D tune I wrote to celebrate the amazing musician; David Surette who's versatility and joviality left us all better off from his good nature and great musicianship. It's a tune I like to believe he would have enjoyed playing.

Waltzing with Harmony

In this session we will learn a nice waltz (It's always good to know another waltz!), look at ways to back it up (chordwise) and explore ways to find harmony to the tune. How can that not be fun!

Slants and Reaches

(2 string chords on the fingerboard) Here is an easy way to have more textures in your back up chords and also makes improvising handier. If a slant doesn't work the reach will probably do the trick! We will learn a few basic steps to "connect all the dots."

GUITAR Smaller Stringsets for Bigger Sounds

In this class, we will use 2 and 3 string chords to find the same sounds on different string sets. This will let us start to see how easy it is to use the entire fingerboard for the sounds you need, while also giving our pick hand a good way to improve greatly. Octaves, unisons and arpeggios will be our best new friends.

Don Julin

Playing The Changes (I-A)

Learn to create beautiful melody lines through any chord progression. This melodic voice-leading technique will give your improvised melodies direction and drama. Students should have a basic understanding of chord theory to get the most out of this class.

Improve Your Groove/Increase Your Speed (I)

This workshop focuses on how to use your metronome to improve your sense of time and space, allowing you to play faster, smoother, and more musical in any style. This intermediate-level workshop is open to anyone who wants to improve their groove.

Pentatonic Melodies By Ear (All)

What do the melodies of Amazing Grace, Angelina Baker, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Nine Pound Hammer, The Old Home Place (verse), Poor Wayfaring Stranger, and Long Journey Home all have in common? All of these melodies are made up of the same five notes. We call this specific group of pitches a Pentatonic Scale. Once you learn a few accessible positions to play these pentatonic scales on your mandolin (or whatever instrument you play), you can unlock the melodies to many of your favorite tunes. See how five notes can change your world.

Three Easy Double-Stops (I)

Double stops are a great way to add a bit of that high-lonesome sound to your mandolin playing. This intermediate-level workshop is for mandolin players looking to add double stops into their playing. You will learn three fundamental double-stop shapes that unlock the secret of double-stops on the mandolin. Students should have a basic understanding of chord theory.

The Pentatonic Arpeggio (I-A)

Improvising a solo based on a chord progression is a common approach that most experienced improvisers are comfortable with. This class will show how to "play the changes" using a different pentatonic scale for each chord. Students should already have a basic understanding of pentatonic scales.

Claudine Langille

Intro to Irish Tenor Banjo (AB)

Starting with selection and setup, moving into tunes, including some classic reels. My spare banjo will be available for you to try. Mandolins and octave mandos welcome too.

Learn a Greek Bouzouki Tune (I-A)

Adapted for mando/octave mando, with harmony part

Harmonies, COUNTERMELODIES and Variations (I)

Some ideas for choosing harmonies.

Try a 2-part round! (AB-I)

Telemann's Allegro, from Six Canonic Sonatas for 2 flutes, sounds great on mandos, has a simple first part. Fun on the classical side, highly addictive!

Simple Mando Accompaniment for Singing (AB)

Some ideas for putting together backup for a song-Choosing a key, finding ways to enhance. Bring a song to try, time permitting.

Erynn Marshall

First-Time Fiddle for Mandolin Players

Ok – you know it's tuned the same so you already have a sense of how to note the fiddle. Ever been curious to try it out and learn the basics of sound production with the bow? Come learn that the fiddle is easier than you thought and give it a whirl (no instrument required). Erynn Marshall brings to Mando Camp North 4 decades of playing experience and can show you how to get started on fiddle journey, how to sound better faster, be more comfortable with the instrument and have fun.

Erynn is also available all weekend for short private fiddle lessons for folks of any playing level.

Lincoln Meyer

Flatpicking Fundamentals BG Guitar (AB-I)

Let's take an in depth look into the art of flatpicking. We'll discuss the importance of alternate picking, cross picking, floating tone, timing, economy of motion and relaxation techniques.

Exploring Bluegrass Rhythm Guitar (AB-I)

We'll look at a variety of rhythm patterns, walking bass lines, and some practice techniques to help make your rhythm playing more interesting and fun!

OK, So You Want to Get Better at Practicing

Practicing sounds like an awful lot of work! Is it supposed to be difficult, or can it be fun? How do I best utilize my practice time? How structured should it be? What do I work on? How do I know when I've practiced enough? These are all important questions. We'll look at ideas and tips that can help you develop a practice routine that works best for you.

Navigating the Fingerboard (I-A)

Understanding the fingerboard can sometimes be daunting. Let's take a look at how to better understand what's going on with discussions including chords, scales, patterns and some tips and tricks to help you get around more efficiently and effectively.

Watch the Guitar Player! - How to Follow Chord Progressions in a Jam -with Sharon Gilchrist (AB-I)

Picking up a chord progression on a song/tune one has never played or heard is essential to jamming with others. Strangely enough for mandolin players, learning to watch a guitar player's chord shapes is one of the best ways to follow chord changes on the fly. In this class, Sharon and Lincoln will explain why and how to do this. To be clear, this class is for mandolin players!

Ben Pearce

Know Thy Mandolin (All)

The construction and constituent parts of the mandolin, how each contributes to the functioning of the mandolin as a whole. Setup tweaks that you can do yourself to improve playability. How to take care of your instrument and identify when things are amiss.

Learning the Numbers--I, IV, V (AB-I)

The most common bluegrass and folk progressions and the mandolin as a great tool for playing rhythm along with them. And we'll unlock a fundamental secret to navigating the mandolin fingerboard.

What Key... Who Cares?

(AB-I) Want to back up a singer who insists on capoing at the first fret on every song or plays in G#? By looking at chords as movable "blocks" instead of specific fingerings, we can use them to play in many keys. We'll also look at the melodic side of this coin.

Dissecting Double Stops (I)

Understanding double stops in terms of scales as well as partial chords helps underscore their harmonic underpinnings, their place in the chords over which they are played. How to use double stops in both lead and backup playing.

Get a Grip! (I-A)

Look behind the most ubiquitous bluegrass "grip" shape to its harmonic underpinnings and extend them as a source of endless variation of licks, fills, and improvisational direction.

Jim Richter

Soloing Over Blues and Rock Changes (All)

Rock and blues tunes aren't necessarily the most common place in mandolin music. Sometimes when introduced at jams, they can be perplexing for mandolinists coming from the fiddle tune or jazz side of mandolin music. This class discusses common blues and rock forms and strategies for creating dynamic solos.

The Mandolin of Jimi Hendrix (I-A)

Jimi Hendrix was washed in blues, rhythm and blues, and southern gospel (ala Pop Staples) music traditions. He could be incendiary, pensive, or downright beautiful in his compositions. This class looks at mandolin arrangements of Jimi Hendrix classics that include Voodoo Chile, Hey Joe, Little Wing, Angel, Purple Haze, Castles Made of Sand, and Spanish Castle Magic.

Nothing But the Blues (AB-I)

Yank Rachell once said once said, "I've had the blues so long they done turned into the blacks!" This class focuses on the blues idiom—basic framework including rhythm, harmony, and melody. Class will look at some classic mandolin blues by Charlie McCoy, Yank, and Johnny Young, but more importantly will focus on practical elements of blues that will expand the mandolinists immediate implementation of blues in their playing.

Arranging Rock Tunes for Mandolin (I-A)

This class intends to teach you how to ROCK! The mandolin is an incredible rock instrument and many classic rock tunes by bands such as AC/DC, Black Sabbath, Steve Miller, BTO, etc. work well on mandolin without the need "bluegrassify" them. This class will look at the process of how to arrange electric guitar oriented rock music for mandolin.

Mandolin as a Second Language with Shin Akimoto (MSL) (All)

This class pairs Japanese Bluegrass mandolinist Shin Akimoto and American blues mandolinist Jim Richter to explore the shared language mandolin provides. The class examines improvisation, back up, and (most importantly) listening in jam settings, even when there is not a shared repertoire.

Steve Roy

Various Approaches To Improvising (I-A)

What Was That Chord?

How to identify the chords to songs that you don't know in a jam setting

Grateful Dead Style Mandolin

Learn the art of adapting the mandolin to the Grateful Dead's musical approach

Working up Melodies on The Mandolin (AB-I)

The art of sprucing up melodies on the mandolin using double stops, rhythmic variations, and connector notes.

How To Lead Songs and Tunes in a Jam

Tips for making your jam run smoothly

Ethan Setiawan

Technique with Jacob Jolliff (All)

In this class, we'll go over posture, left and right hand technique, as well as how it all works together. Ethan and Jake will share and contrast their two unique approaches to technique. While we will move at a somewhat quick pace, any mandolinist will be able to get something applicable out of this.

Jazz Mandolin with with Jacob Jolliff (I-A)

Mandolin has a surprisingly long history in swing and jazz music of many descriptions. From early swing through bebop and beyond, there's plenty of great examples of how to play jazz on the mandolin out there. We'll explore chord voicings, improvisation over jazz chord progressions, and stylistic considerations, among other topics that may come up.

Music not Meant to be Played on the Mandolin (All)

While there's so much great mandolin-centric music out there, there's a whole world of inspiration beyond it as well. We'll think about how to take inspiration from instruments including drum kit, violin, horns, and piano, and apply it to our playing.

Octave Mandolin (AB-I)

The octave mandolin is an increasingly popular instrument among mandolinists wanting to sound like guitarists. We'll demystify how to get around the instrument, and what translates well from standard mandolin vs what doesn't. We'll spend a short time in class talking about the mandola and how to use it as well

Choro (I-A)

Choro is a beautiful tradition from Brazil that features the mandolin. We'll do some listening to classic and contemporary Brazilian mandolinists, and then learn a simple fun choro melody. We'll also check out some rhythmic patterns that can be used for accompaniment.

Don Stiernberg

Everything Matters (AB-I)

Technique Tips for Beginning Players Holding the pick. Pick hand position. Fretting hand position. Setup and it's effect on your sound and technique. Forming and changing chords. Getting a clean sound. Getting a full tone. Using all your fingers. Tremolo development. Staying relaxed. Visualizing things on the fretboard and how the mandolin helps you.

STYLES OF IMPROVISATION FOUND IN BLUEGRASS and FIDDLE TUNES (I-A)

Genre specific approaches to creating spontaneous solos, what most players in these styles do. Referring to the tune's melody. Referring to the tune's chords and progression. Matching scales or modes or group of tones(pitches)with a chord or progression. Rhythm patterns that are commonly used and unique to a style.

Styles of Improv found in Jazz and Swing (I-A)

Genre specific approaches to creating spontaneous solos, what most players in these styles do. Referring to the tune's melody. Referring to the tune's chords and progression. Matching scales or modes or group of tones(pitches)with a chord or progression. Rhythm patterns that are commonly used and unique to a style.

Repertoire for Bluegrass (All)

Tunes and songs you should know. Cool tunes that should be played more often. Proper chord voicings and rhythm strokes for crafting a rhythm part. Finding your place in a rhythm section. Melody playing. Soloing. Improv strategies.

Repertoire for Jazz and Swing (All)

Tunes and songs you should know. Cool tunes that should be played more often. Proper chord voicings and rhythm strokes for crafting a rhythm part. Finding your place in a rhythm section. Melody playing. Soloing. Improv strategies.

Billy Thibodeau

Bluegrass GUITAR Rhythms, Back Up and Fills. (AB-I)

In this class we will demonstrate bluegrass guitar rhythm and alternative rhythms to match the song. We will be demonstrating guitar back-up during vocals. Also we will study the "G" and variations. At the end of the session students will understand bluegrass rhythm, other voicings, when and when not to use a capo and have several "G" run options.

Solos in Multiple Keys Made Easy (AB-I)

Playing solos in multiple keys can be scary but we will learn a few easy positions on the neck to make it less scary and more successful for beginner players. We will learn some starting places on the neck that will reflect even the difficult or more scary keys like Bb, F, even G#.

Let's Talk About Fills Shall We? (I-A)

Fills can be fun and cool. We will learn when and learn some really cool riffs that will help the lead singer focus on their vocals.

Voicings and Improvisation (I-A)

This can be tricky but together we will brainstorm when and where on the neck of a mandolin to improvise. We also will learn some cool licks to use when this opportunity arises. This session was a hit last year. We discovered lots of places on the neck to play solos, chords and back-up.

The Inner Secrets of the Mandolin Chop. (AB-I)

Here we will learn the importance of the "chop" and find easy and alternate ways to find and implement chords. Also we will learn how to use chords as a fill or back-up.

Ken Thomas

So you want to Record your Band? (All)

Fundamentals of recording acoustic & bluegrass music in a Recording Studio.

Joe K Walsh

Mandolin Language (I-A)

Vocabulary based around avoiding string crossings on down strokes - at faster speeds, many mandolin players (Ronnie McCoury, Grisman, Steffey, for example) use melodic phrases and language that avoid downstroke string crossings. We will learn some of these melodic choices and will practice internalizing them, which will give us some phrases that are more playable at faster tempos.

The Homecoming Song (All)

A one hour mandolin ensemble. We will learn this friendly, groovy song by South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim. With harmony parts and various complimentary rhythmic patterns, we will arrange this tune for a mandolin ensemble. If you have a mandola, octave mandolin, or mandocello, bring it!

Five Ones (I-A)

Creative choices are made much easier when we understand the way that a note we might choose relates to a given chord. Seeing these relationships is easier if we can envision the arpeggios of the chords we are playing. In this session we will practice playing major 7th and dominant 7th arpeggios in all keys, and in all inversions, deepening our understanding of arpeggio patterns and the sounds they can give us.

Learn a beautiful Peter Ostroushko Tune

The late, great Minnesotan mandolinist Peter Ostroushko is sorely missed, but his music lives on. One of his (many) great tunes is the simple but evocative tunes Medicine Bow. We will learn this tune.

Sounds that Joe Thinks are Beautiful

In this session we will check out and play a number of sounds that strike me (Joe) as beautiful, such as playing the major 7th on a four chord, or an add9, or diatonic 7th intervals, or voicings with 2nds. We will work on finding these sounds in multiple keys and ranges.

Tony Watt

Introduction to Harmony Singing - ALL INST (All)

Have you ever listened to three people sing harmony on a chorus and wondered what they were singing and how they knew how to do it? If you want to get a complete introduction to the ins and outs of harmony singing, then this class is for you! We will learn all about the different roles in harmony singing and the role that harmony singing plays in jamming. We will also cover many of the biggest challenges to - and most efficient strategies for - learning harmony singing. There are no prerequisite songs, and you don't need to be able to read music or play lead, but please be aware that we will be learning the number system on the spot and using it in this class.

Introduction to Ear Training - ALL INST (All)

Have you marveled at those musicians who can just pick up a tune on the fly, and play a melody-based solo seemingly instantaneously? Have you ever wanted to be able to find the melody of a song so you could incorporate it into your solos or sing it cleanly? While some people may be born with a strong ear for melodies, most of us have to work hard to develop the ears to do it. Fortunately, ear training includes a set of skills that you can learn and practice just like learning chords or solos. The class is open to all levels but is geared towards those who have trouble finding either the melody or chords on their instrument.

Introduction to Music Theory - ALL INST (All)

Are you sure you know what people are referring to when they say "1, 4 & 5" versus "1, 3 & 5"? Do you know the difference between modes and modal music as they relate to traditional music? Music Theory is a wide-ranging collection of concepts that are common to nearly all styles of music, and help musicians gain a faster and deeper understanding of music. In addition to the number system (1, 4 & 5 versus 1, 3 & 5), this class will focus on the sounds of traditional music (major, minor, modal, and bluesy), the relationships between keys, notes, and chords, the basics of harmony, and advanced concepts in rhythm such as syncopation. This class is focused on the most practical aspects of music theory, particularly as applied to traditional and acoustic music.

The Three Most Important Practice Techniques Ever - ALL INST (All)

Have you ever wondered why some students progress faster than others? Or have you wondered what the pros really work on when they have free time to practice? This class will review the practice techniques that are the most effective and most efficient at helping musicians improve. Obviously, that means we'll only be covering... sorry, no spoilers! With these Most Important Practice Techniques Ever, you can become the musician you've always dreamt of... time and energy to practice still required!

Introduction to Improvising - ALL INST (B-I)

Have you ever wanted to stop playing by rote memorization and start improvising? Although it's usually considered an advanced technique, it's never too early to start improvising provided you have a practical framework to work in. We will discuss the big picture of improvisation - such as melody versus non-melody soloing and fiddle tunes versus singing songs - before diving into some in-class improvising. We will focus on one or two blues scales to introduce some of the fundamentals of improvising, as well as discuss the more complicated approaches to making up your solos on the fly. If making up music in the moment with no real idea what you're going to play sounds like fun to you, then this class will be a great place to get started safely.

Maddie Witler

Technique From the Ground Up (All)

Thoughts on the mechanics of playing the mandolin for the left and right hand. Good reminders for any level of player. Right hand technique and left hand technique. How to stay loose, get good tone, get clean smooth notes, play fast, work on difficult moments.

How to Sound Good in a Band or Jam (I-A)

What to think about when playing in any size group, finding a unique role in the music, supporting the other musicians and contributing to the overall sound. Things to think about when playing live shows, dealing with sound systems, keeping the audience engaged. Being a good band member on tour and being able to be consistent gig after gig.

Improvising (I-A)

Ideas for improvising, whether it's on fiddle tunes, bluegrass, other styles, or nothing at all. How to get started making small variations, continuing motifs, or creating new melodies over the form. What's appropriate and when. Come with questions, leave with answers (and maybe more questions).

Time and Rhythm, Chopping and Not Chopping (I-A)

Ideas for playing rhythm in bluegrass or not bluegrass. Chopping, strumming, cross picking. How to feel time and develop a strong sense of it. How to play something that supports the folks you're playing with and makes them sound better.

Maddie Witler Masterclass (All)

Come and play me something! Have a short little private lesson in front of the class so we can all learn together. We'll figure out where you're at, what you'd like to work on, and what to do next to get better. There'll be time for 4-5 folks to participate but more are welcome to attend, lots to learn from what others are doing. I'll have a sign up sheet at the class so arrive on time if you'd like to play.