

Booth Shot Lincoln

Traditional

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A (G)

D
B
G
D
G

F#m (Em) A (G) See notes See notes E7 (D7)

D
B
G
D
G

A (G) F#m (Em)

D
B
G
D
G

A (G) See notes E7 (D7) A (G)

D
B
G
D
G

F#m (Em)

D
B
G
D
G

Rooth Shot Lincoln - Traditional

23 A (G) E7 (D7) A (G)

27 F#m (Em)

31 A (G) E7 (D7) 1. A (G)

36 F#m (Em) A (G)

40 E7 (D7) A (G) See notes

44 F#m (Em) A (G)

48

E7 (D7) A (G)

53

F#m (Em) A (G)

57

E7 (D7) A (G)

61

F#m (Em) A (G)

65

E7 (D7) A (G) 2. A (G)

This old fiddle tune comes from western North Carolina fiddler Marcus Martin, who was recorded by Alan Lomax in 1942. As with many old fiddle tunes, this was also a song, telling the story of the assassination of the 16th president. Bascam Lamar Lunsford recorded it in 1949.

One unusual technique in this setting is a delayed hammer, found in measures 8, 9, and 16. After the third string is plucked open, the hammer is delayed until it can provide the melody note in the appropriate spot.

Measure 24 features a gentle, controlled upward brush using the middle finger.

Here are the lyrics:

John Wilkes Booth came to Washington,
An actor great was he,
He played at Ford's Theater,
And Lincoln went to see.

It was early in April,
Not many weeks ago,
The people of this fair city
All gathered at the show.

The war it is all over,
The people happy now,
And Abraham Lincoln arose,
Arose to make his bow;

The people cheer him wildly,
Arising to their feet,
And Lincoln waving of his hand,
He calmly takes his seat.

And while he sees the play go on,
His thoughts are running deep,
His darling wife, close by his side,
Has fallen fast asleep.

From the box there hangs a flag,
It's not the Stars and Bars,
The flag that holds within its folds
Bright gleaming stripes and stars.

John Wilkes Booth he moves down the aisle,
He had measured once before,
He passes Lincoln's bodyguard
A-nodding at the door.

He holds a dagger in his right hand,
A pistol in his left,
He shoots poor Lincoln in the temple,
And he sends his soul to rest.

The wife awakes from slumber,
And screams in her rage,
Booth jumps over the railing
And lands him on the stage.

He'll rue the day, he'll rue the hour,
As God him life shall give,
When Booth stood in that center stage,
Crying, "Tyrants shall not live!"

The people all excited
Then cried everyone, "A hand!"
Cried all the people near,
"For God's sake, save that man!"

Then Booth ran back with boot and spurs
Across the backstage floor,
He mounts that trusty claybank mare,
All saddled at the door.

John Wilkes Booth, in his last play,
All dressed in broadcloth deep,
He gallops down the alleyway,
I hear those horses feet.

Poor Lincoln then was heard to say,
And all has gone to rest,
"Of all the actors in this town,
I loved Booth the best."