

Drowsy Maggie

Traditional

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The musical score is written for a six-string instrument in 2/4 time. It consists of 22 measures. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various guitar chords (Em, D, A7, G) and fretted notes with fingerings. There are also some special markings like a treble clef and a double bar line with repeat dots. The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord (Em).

I used to play a lot of Irish fiddle tunes, but in recent years I have gravitated more to Appalachian and other music in the American vernacular. One of the reasons is that over time as I have evolved a style which integrates both Scruggs and melodic style, I have come to favor both tonal sustain and a more impressionistic approach to melody. Traditional Celtic music, if it accepts the banjo at all, is more comfortable with the more linear, staccato sound of the tenor banjo. One five-string bluegrass picker who has made the transition with great success, using an elaborately developed single string, "Reno style" approach, is Chris

Grotewohl. You can hear some sound clips of his amazing picking, and look at some tab examples, at <http://irish5string.homestead.com/chrisG.html>.

One of the Irish tunes I've kept up with is Drowsy Maggie, which was always one of my favorites. Drowsie Maggie is one of those tunes which moves back and forth between the key of E minor in the A part to D major in the B part. When you have a tune which is solidly in two keys, it immediately begs the question, do you use a tuning which favors the first key, or the second. (Pickers who always use open G don't face that issue.) Since the A part has quite a bit of D chord arpeggio in the melody, it is clear that open D tuning works best. It would be neat, though, if some nice open E drones could be worked in, but you can't always have everything you want.

Notice the quick hammer and pull off triplet in measure 17. This is just to demonstrate that anywhere you hammer or pull-off to obtain the melody, you could substitute this trill effect, to introduce a little extra ornament. It is best not to overwork this technique though, or the arrangement can begin to sound too pretentious.