

The Cuckoo's Nest

Traditional

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The musical score is written for guitar in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into systems of staves, each representing a measure or a group of measures. Chord progressions are indicated by letters (D, C, G, A7) above the staves. Fretboard diagrams show fingerings (0-4) and techniques such as hammer-ons (H), slides (Sl), and bends (1/4). The score includes first and second endings, marked with '1.' and '2.' and a repeat sign. Measure numbers 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, and 27 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

31

C G D

35

G D A7 1. D 2. D

39

C

43

D G D A7 1. D 2. D

48

A7 C G

52

D G D A7 1. D 2. D

57

D

This pretty tune is certainly of Irish origin; there are two settings in O'Neill's Music of Ireland, written in the key of G, where it is listed as a hornpipe. The tune is now very widespread. Benny Thomasson fiddled a version, and Norman Blake picked the tune, as did John Harford, who said he learned it from Charlie Collins. I have a tape of French Canadian fiddlers from Maine, who call the tune "Niches des Coucou." I once had the extreme pleasure of picking this tune with Mark Johnson, the inventor of "clawgrass," at the BNL's Maryland Banjo Academy. His far-out riff's on this tune left my head spinning. The video clip of that jam is in the Cartoons and Stuff section.

This is another one of those semi-mixolydian tunes which make melodic use of the natural seventh chord, like Mississippi Sawyer, and Staten Island Hornpipe. I say semi-mixolydian, because in some places it employs the natural seventh in the melody, in other places the major seventh.

In this setting, I often substitute Scruggs rolls or other patterns in places where the original melody follows almost geometrical arpeggios, measures 5 and 6 represent the most obvious example. This helps contribute to making it a banjo tune, without sacrificing the overall melody.