Child Grove

Traditional

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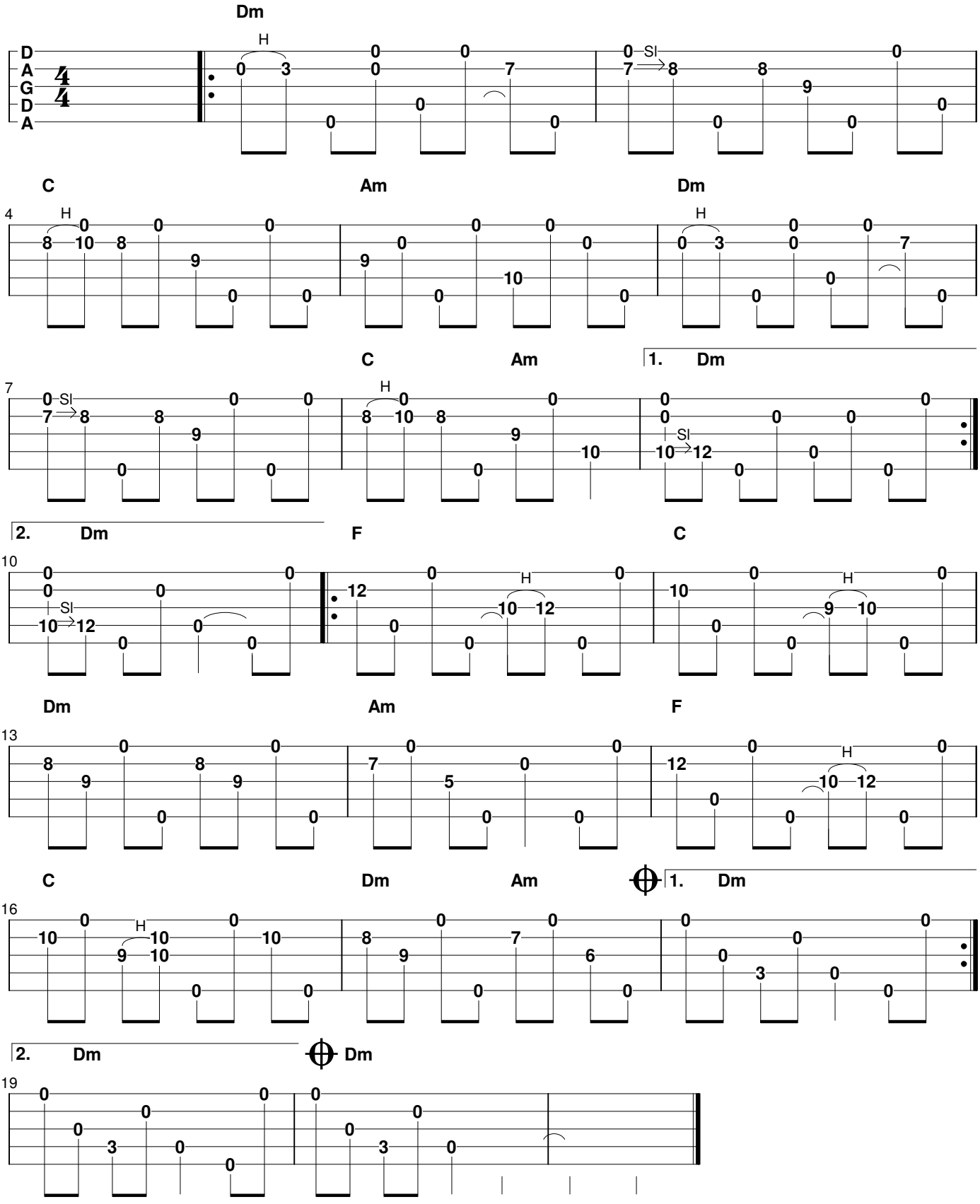

I learned this very old English country dance tune from Boston area clawhammer player Ed Britt, who generally plays the tune in medley with Sally in the Garden. Ed is the world's foremost authority on David L. Day, the inventor of the Whyte Laydie banjo, and is one of those collector/experts who can tell you at a glance everything about a quality turn of the century instrument, including the identity of the pearl engraver. Ed is one of those rare experts who can do it as well as study it; he designed the OME company's "Gryphon" model, which is a dazzling but tasteful instrument. All that and he picks good, too!

This arrangement of Child Grove uses the open D version of sawmill, or mountain modal tuning, in that the string normally tuned to the third is tuned up to the fourth instead. This tuning works well for tunes in both Dorian mode, and Aeolian mode, the latter reflecting our modern minor scale, which is more or less what this tune is. I say more or less, because in this arrangement the sixth note of the scale doesn't appear to firmly distinguish it from Dorian mode. Also, as with a lot of tunes with medievil roots, such as Greensleeves, the natural seventh is abandoned at the very end of the tune in favor of the major seventh, as the tune resolves to the tonic, in the section medievil scholars would have called the cadence. All of this makes the tune modally somewhat ambiguous.

Note that in the fifth measure the fourth note, the open first string, is emphasized. That syncopated dynamic is part of the original music, published in the 18th Century in "Playford's Dancing Master," and faithfully respected by Ed Britt, and now by me. The folk tradition continues.

This arrangement has a lot of open fourth string drones. Remember that the ghost notes in parentheses are just there to remind you to let the earlier picked note ring, they should not be played again.