

# Traditional Music Slow Jam

Spring 2024



## Knowledge & Skills:

This class will NOT teach you how to play a specific musical instrument BUT you will learn:

- To listen to yourself and others at the same time
- Improve ability to play by listening and watching others and to apply it to your own instrument
- Jam session etiquette
- Technology tools available to improve playing
- New tunes
- Historical information regarding tunes
- Techniques to learn new tunes
- To play in different keys and use related chords
- Tune types (Reels; Hornpipes; Jigs; Polkas; Marches; Airs & Waltzes)
- Basic site reading skills
- "Practice" techniques
- Internet tune sources

## What Is Traditional Music?

- To my knowledge, there is no known authoritative, accepted definition of traditional music.
- For our purpose this will include traditional Irish, Scottish, English, Welsh, and North American Old-time (Appalachian, Canadian, etc.) tunes. This is generally accepted by many who play this type of music.
- The music and style has developed over the course of several centuries, but does not need to be centuries old (i.e. Ashokan Farewell, 1982).
- The music is essentially oral and aural in nature, and is transmitted from one person or generation to the next through playing and listening.
- There can be many variations and titles of the same tune due to being passed along aurally.

## What is a Slow Jam Session?

- Tunes are usually played more slowly than they are commonly played in "regular" sessions at about half speed or so before increasing the tempo more towards full speed
- Tunes are played at a pace comfortable for the majority of participants
- Opportunity to get together to learn new tunes and improve on their ability to play music with others
- Recording tunes is usually accepted at slow sessions to assist with learning the melodies
- Opportunity to learn tunes in a friendly, supportive environment; have fun and laugh at your mistakes

- Jam sessions can be conducted differently depending on the group of people, location and who leads a session. If you are new to a jam session, spend some time listening and learning what is acceptable to the group
- We will always try to play in a circle so that we can better hear each other
- We'll usually takes turns selecting tunes and give everyone a chance
- The person selecting a tune may lead the tune, but this is not a requirement
- Usually, one person will begin the tune and others begin playing when ready

### **Jam Session Observations, Thoughts and Etiquette:**

- It's not a music lesson; it's not a performance; it's for personal enjoyment.
- It is an opportunity to play and share music with others.
- It's meant to be a supportive environment for ALL levels of players. Please be respectful.
- Please leave sensitive topics (e.g. politics, religion, etc.) at the door. This is time to focus on music.
- Always tune your instrument as best you can before beginning to play.
- Play as much as you can; stretch yourself but don't stress if you can't play every tune.
- Don't be afraid to fail or to experiment.
- Listen to each other ... Learn from each other.
- As you play, listen to the group AND listen to yourself (this is not as easy as it sounds).
- Play your instrument so that all the melody instruments at the session can be heard clearly by everyone. Be sensitive to the volume of your instrument.
- ALL players, no matter what instrument, can benefit from memorizing melodies.
- Try to develop "playing by ear" ... minimize dependency on sheet music.
- Unlike playing in an orchestra, written music is only a guide for playing the tune. This can apply to melody, chords and timing.
- The only way to learn to play your instrument better is by playing your instrument.
- Don't worry about "practicing"..... just play! The more you play the more you can play.
- Avoid playing at a speed above your skill level. It's better to play a tune slowly and well than fast and poorly.