Fifty Five

tunes for Hardanger d’Amore or 5-string fiddle

by

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~ Many Arrows Music ~
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The *Just the Notes* Series:

Trollstilt
QQQ
CrissCross
Fifty Five

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Preface to the Just the Notes series

All of these tunes in this series were made by ear, never written down as they were worked out; with Just the Notes, I’ve transcribed them, in the hopes that the notation will help others to learn them, on fiddles and guitars, or whatever instruments are on hand. I think of these as fiddle tunes, but clearly they are not your typical fiddle tunes (whatever that might mean); while I like nothing more than to play these tunes with my friends and family in informal places (like our living room, or, as it may be, our basement!), they are a bit much to pick up on the fly, at a session. But it also doesn’t feel quite right to write them down, fix them on the page, imagine that they can be read like a “Classical” composition. They are, perhaps, somewhere… in between.

Most of these tunes were made with unusual fiddles tuned up in unusual ways. For instance, Orton’s Ode in the QQQ volume was “written” on the Hardanger fiddle (Norway’s national instrument), tuned quite unlike the conventional violin (with a 4th between the bottom two strings, a major-3rd between the middle strings, and a 7th between the top two strings—a variant of what is known as troll tuning, or trollstilt, in Norway). These tunings are incredibly beautiful and inspiring, but pose problems for notation; writing down the notes as we hear them makes them quite hard for violinists to read, since our fingers expect the strings to be tuned in 5ths. But, writing them down so that our fingers can do the walking can be confusing, since the notes we end up hearing are different than what we see on the page.

I would like fiddlers and violinists to be able to look at these transcriptions and as quickly as possible get their fingers to do the right thing. But I would also like other instrumentalists to be able to have a go at these tunes, regardless of all the tuning madness that might have played a role in their
making. So, I’ve written the tunes down in two ways: first, as we expect to hear them, and second, as we would finger them. The latter is the norm with traditional Hardanger fiddle notation, so will be familiar to speleman, but can be ambiguous, and certainly a puzzle for non-fiddlers just trying to figure out what notes are sounding, so both are important to have. To those unfamiliar with unusual tunings (sometimes known as cross-tunings, or scordatura), this might be confusing, but just spend some time with Orton’s Ode or Training West (in the CrissCross volume), and it will all eventually make sense. Orton, by the way, was my great uncle Orton Enstad, who passed away in 2008 at the age of 102; of Norwegian descent, he was a great fan of the Hardanger fiddle.

As with all notation, these transcriptions are incomplete, and, especially these days with the ready availability of recordings and tools to help us learn from them, it just doesn’t make sense to ignore the recordings that are available. So, I’m assuming that these transcriptions would be used in conjunction with the Trollstilt, QQQ, and CrissCross recordings, all of which will go a long way towards helping one make sense of these tunes. On the other hand, I don’t imagine these recordings to be definitive; on the contrary, I would be thrilled for other musicians to take these tunes and make them their own, find their own ways of playing them, discover corners and closets that I’ve missed. For all these reasons, I’ve kept the notation quite basic—enough to get the notes, but not much more; no fingerings, dynamics, or micro-tuning, minimal ornaments and bowings, etc… If you want those things, listen to the recordings, or come up with your own. Another way to put this: these transcriptions are not meant to be prescriptive, but enabling. I’m not interested in provoking the question “what did the ‘composer’ intend here?” but rather “how can we make this our own and make it as great as possible?”

Most of my tunes in this series were made with Hardanger fiddle, usually tuned up a whole-step higher than the conventional violin. Monica Mugan, for the Trollstilt and QQQ volumes, often plays with the guitar capo’ed on fret 2. But, most of the time I’ve notated the tunes where a fiddler or guitarist would expect to see them, so the ‘A’-string looks like an A on the page, even if it’s tuned up to a B (put another way, most of the Hardanger notation is often “in D,” meaning the instruments sound a whole-step higher than where they are written). But, don’t worry about any of this! This is just so that if you are reading the notation and listening to a recording, you can understand why the pitches are higher than you expect. The tunes should be
playable on regular violins tuned to their comfortable registers or, for that matter, other non-string instruments. And in other keys.

For CrissCross, Brittany Haas made her tunes with a 5-string fiddle, also tuned up this way and that. The tunings that we used are always indicated with small notes at the beginning of the “As Fingered” lines. Some are quite extreme, and some do require a 5-string fiddle (or, in the case of Wallflower, a 6-string!), but many are playable, perhaps with some modification, in standard tuning and a 4-string violin. In some cases where the tune is clearly “singable,” I’ve made the secondary double-stop notes small (this is also standard practice for Hardanger fiddle notation), but sometimes it’s not so clear, in which case I’ve left both notes full-sized. Finally, some of these tunes are presented multiple ways, first in a simpler form (solo, or duo), then in a larger arrangement (with the names of the musicians it was originally arranged for). Again, nothing is meant to be definitive, but rather a useful starting point for making new versions, so you might grab part of the larger arrangement while ignoring or changing the rest, all the while arranging for, say, three recorders and sitar!

As of this writing, I have had the opportunity to hear some of these tunes played by others who have learned them with the assistance of these transcriptions; it’s been a thrill! After years of playing these tunes myself and with my great friends who I’ve made them with, it is terrifically exciting to hear and see that they can be taken up by others and made new. I hope that these volumes will enable you—whether fiddler, guitarist, pianist, recorder player, jazz musician, sitarist, singer, or whatever—to explore these tunes and make them your own.

—Dan Trueman
Princeton, NJ
August 2012
Preface to ... Fifty Five

All of these tunes were made with the Hardanger d’Amore, sometimes known as a the “Five by Five” or “Five plus Five,” depending on who you talk to. I commissioned the first Hardanger d’Amore from the wonderful maker Salve Håkedal in 2010, and as of this writing there are more than 30 of them out there; it is a truly magical instrument, one that crosses the sparkle and resonance of the traditional Hardanger fiddle with the depth and flexibility of the 5-string fiddle. I was inspired to have this instrument made after my work with Brittany Haas on CrissCross; I was envious of what she could do with the 5-string fiddle but wanted to retain some of the qualities of the Hardanger fiddle that I love so much.

“Five by Five” was the original inspiration for the title of this collection, but, by chance (I assume) 55 is also the street number for the house I grew up in on Long Island, in a small town called Shoreham. I didn’t think much of Shoreham as a kid, but when I look at it now, I find it to be a truly magical place. It’s largely unknown, other than for a notorious nuclear power plant that was the cause of much angst in the 1970s and 80s, or for a grand failed experiment of Nikola Tesla in the early 20th century, but when I see it now, I am in love with the unusual road patterns and the beautiful, quiet beaches of the Long Island Sound, all a short walk from the house I grew up in.

Shoreham has a number of “downs,” which is a road suffix I haven’t encountered anywhere else: Highland Down, Suffolk Down, and, amusingly, Upham Down. These lovely little roads wind around in unpredictable ways, and I haven’t been able to find out how they came to be that way. I first thought they might be Indigenous people trails, and I had planned to make a land acknowledgement for this collection but from what I can tell, there were
no Indigenous people in that immediate area when European settlers arrived; I could be wrong though.

Whenever I walk the “downs” of Shoreham, I’m filled with memories: of particular days, places, conversations, people. Indeed, I didn’t realize how special the neighborhood was when I was a kid, and the lifelong friends my parents made there; this collection—of “Crooked Tunes from the Crooked Downs of Shoreham”—is dedicated to the “village elders,” as we called them: my mother and her friends that earned the name when they, among other things, cooked all of the food for my wedding with Monica Mugan.

Some technical information, for fiddlers interested in learning these tunes. As is the case with all the *Just the Notes* books, these notations were made after-the-fact and are NOT meant to be prescriptive; rather, they are meant to help fiddlers figure out what the notes are. These are complicated tunes and, like the traditional Hardanger fiddle tunes, quite difficult to learn by ear. But the notations are *not* meant to replace learning by ear; I don’t include bowings (though I do have some slurring, which are not set in stone), ornaments (for the most part), and I don’t see these as “definitive”—I play the tunes differently every time. They are just meant to help fiddlers find their way into these tunes, so they can then make them their own.

Let’s look at an example to illustrate the key aspects of the notation, from *Slow Eddy*:

![Notation Example](image)

First off, I use “rehearsal letters” more like tune section letters; so, you might see the A-section, and later a variation of that called A’, or a repetition called A2, and similar with B, C, and so on.
The two staves are for “As Sounding” (A.S.) and “As Fingered” (A.F.). The tuning for the instrument is indicated at the beginning of the A.F. staff.

The music is virtually always in double-stops, so I use “voices,” individually stemmed, to indicate the two different lines.

I use a combination of guitar-style string number notations (highest string is 1, lowest is 5) and violin-style finger notations, to help clarify where the fingers go, always in the A.F. line. So, in this example we begin on the 2nd and 3rd strings (the “A-string” and “D-string”, though they are actually tuned to F# and D), in third position (first finger on the 2nd string, 3rd finger on the 3rd string).

This is followed by a trill on the 3rd string (since the trill symbol is below, so associated with the lower string), trilling from the open D to the (as-fingered) B (which will be the 3rd finger on the 3rd string again). Note that in the next measure, the trill symbol is associated with the (as-fingered) F# on string 2, and it’s a trill down to D (as indicated by the small notehead). The top (as-sounding) staff clarifies what notes we should actually hear!

In measure 6, just for another example, we have a double-stop string crossing pattern, between the 3rd / 4th strings and the 2nd / 3rd strings. The second string is “open,” as indicated by the 0; it looks like the A-string, but it sounds an F# due to the scordatura.

Finally, a note about tuning for those who are curious. I play—as much as I am able to—in just intonation, primarily 5-limit (so with very sweet sounding 3rds and 6ths) though I also tend to tune m7th and some M2nds 7-limit. I think most traditional fiddlers would do this naturally, without thinking about it, at least to some extent, so don’t worry about it if none of that makes any sense to you. However, if you are interested, the world of just intonation and fiddle playing is glorious and fascinating; check out Session 2 of Reinventing the Piano, an online course I made some years ago for Kadenze.

This does mean that the tuning of the open strings is quite important. In the Slow Eddy example above, for instance, it’s important for the D-F# open strings to be just tuned (to a 5/4 ratio, so the F# will be about 14c lower than you would expect in equal temperament), and then the F#-E open strings should be similarly tuned to a 9/5 ratio; you can check if the E-string
is in tune by playing the 4th finger natural harmonic on string 4, which should match the E-string. Alternatively, you can put your second finger down on string 2, and you should be able to hear a perfectly tuned 5th between strings 1 and 2, and between strings 2 and 3. And yet another way: the D-F# and F#-E double-stops will probably generate the same difference tone (they do for me). Other tunes / tunings will have similar idiosyncratic tuning strategies. It’s a rabbit hole, so maybe don’t worry about it if you aren’t so interested, and just play the tunes however you like!

The cover art for the album and this book is by my mother Judy Trueman. She has regularly used diagrams from technical books (often physics books of my father, who was a theoretical physicist), and in this case she has used a diagram illustrating the Pythagorean comma, a very small musical interval which has historically plagued musicians and instrument builders and, to my mind, illustrates how the world is truly, deeply, fundamentally at odds with itself, in sometimes mysterious and beautiful ways. If you don’t know what I mean by that, another rabbit hole awaits…

These tunes—like all the fiddle tunes I know, and indeed the fiddle itself—are like companions to me; some I know well, others less well, some I’ve known for a long time, others I’ve gotten to know just recently. They change with time, and I become a different sort of person with each one. Some I forget for a while and have to reacquaint myself with them (the notation can help with that!), or they might find themselves turning up in a new guise via a new tuning, and they all have memories associated with them, often regarding particular people (other fiddlers I’ve played them with, friends or family I’ve played them for), experiences, or places. And while they don’t belong to any particular fiddle tradition, they are deeply indebted to a number of traditions that I’ve dallied with over the years: Norwegian Hardanger fiddle music of course, but also Irish traditional music (some of these were made as part of a weekly “Friday tune exchange” with Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh), American Old Time music, and, yes, European Classical music, which has had some wonderful “fiddle” music over the centuries. It’s basically a big mess.

—Dan Trueman
Princeton, NJ
January 2021
Dedicated to the Village Elders of Highland Down and Thereabouts:

Nancy Westover
Joyce Maggio
Connie Sullivan
Judy Chanana
Hildegard Kroeger
Yoko Ozaki
June Adams
Judy Trueman

And honorary junior member Anne Westover
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So, Dan doesn’t know this yet, unless he’s read the foreword to his own book here, but his tunes have changed my life in more ways than one. I first encountered his fiddling on his 2014 record *Laghdu* with Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh and must admit, I was in total shock. I simply had never heard a sound quite like theirs, never heard tunes played with such sensitivity and space, never heard fiddles that basked in their own resonance in the way that Dan and Caoimhín’s did. A world turned upside down—a session played with the meticulous rubato and obsessive sense of ensemble of chamber music—I simply had to wrap my head around that SOUND and learn what it meant to get inside it. This sound perplexed me so much that I moved halfway across the country to work with Dan in order to figure out this whole conundrum and to learn how to find that within my own sound, voice, and fiddle.

As fiddlers, we fall in love with tunes, melodies, and grooves, but we also fall in love with the music that happens between the notes, in the notes, in the strings, in the air. We fall in love with the tiny inflections that sprout from a sigh of the bow, the heft and heat of buzzing strings as they resonate through the jaw bone, the strident power of a birl that can adorn the stateliest marches and the flightiest reels. Deep dives into these slightest of feelings are what we live for within our instruments. And it’s as if Dan has somehow managed to crawl deep within the cracks of these microscopic moments of immense joy and write these tunes from inside these feelings themselves. These tunes *Scream* joy from the inside out.

It’s both preposterous and magical.

From the barely existent whispers of “Wardencliff Down” to the giddy and rhapsodic “Overhill Road,” it is clear this is a project of obsessive love for
the instrument. Each tune in *Fifty Five* is its own distilled universe of intersecting lines and obsessive textures, born of the fiddle but translatable across many instruments. This collection is every bit as rich and full as his previous ensemble collections, not in spite of but because of the fact this was a solo endeavor. It is chamber music for the self.

And that depth of expression is something I hope for everyone to find within the voice of their own instrument, quite possibly through the lines of this very book… The only qualm I have with these tunes is that there are not, in fact, fifty-five of them. Better luck next time, Dan.

—Annika Socolofsky  
*Boulder, CO*  
*January 2021*
Between the Trees and Sky

Dan Trueman

\( \text{\textcopyright 2003, Dan Trueman} \)
Upham Down

Dan Trueman
Fifty-five (for Oscar and Art)

Dan Trueman

A.S.

A.F.

5

B

8
Lazy Undertow

Dan Trueman
Mary Pitkin Path

Dan Trueman

A.S.

A.F.

4

B

7
Wardencllyffe Down

Dan Trueman

A.S. $d = c. 35$

A.F.

6

11 $d = c. 50$
Goldberg Slip

Dan Trueman

A.S.

A.F.

5

8

11

To Coda ♯
The original artwork by Judy Trueman, Untitled, sent as a birthday card to Monica Mugan in 2004