

Glenn Weiser is a multi-instrumentalist from Albany, NY. If playing fiddle tunes on the harmonica is your thing, be sure to check out Glenn's book, aptly titled *Fiddle Tunes for Harmonica* (available from Centerstream Publishing, Box 5450, Fullerton, CA 92635). It's \$16.95 and includes a cassette.

Fiddle Tunes - Tongue Blocking Style

In my first workshop (SOI V.34#2), I mentioned that there are two ways to play the harmonica: lip blocking and tongue blocking. In lip blocking, the lips pucker into a shape that creates an opening just big enough to cover one hole, preventing the holes on either side from sounding and allowing the harmonica to be played one hole at a time. All of my previous columns have been geared to this technique.

In tongue blocking, the mouth covers four holes, the tongue is placed over the leftmost three, and the single hole on the right is sounded by the corner of the mouth. The tongue can then be lifted off the lower holes and replaced, providing an accompaniment to the melody. I usually prefer lip blocking for Celtic and Northern tunes, which tend to have a lot of notes. But for Southern tunes, which are often melodically sparser, I lean toward tongue blocking. For this issue's workshop, we'll look at tongue blocking and try the Appalachian tune, "Spotted Pony."

If you are new to tongue blocking, the first step is to learn to isolate a single note with the mouth in tongue-blocking position. When you can do this, try playing the major scale: 4-blow, 4-draw, 5-blow, 5-draw, 6-blow, 6-draw, 7-draw, 7-blow. Play the scale first ascending and keeping the tongue down, then descending. Next, add some rhythm by tapping your foot slowly and holding each note for two taps (a half note).

When you can do this, try lifting the tongue and sounding a chord. Then replace the tongue over the holes so that only one reed is again sounding.

After this becomes easy, do the following three exercises. These have been devised to show you common tongue-blocking techniques, and are presented in a two-part format. The upper part consists of single notes and represents the single holes played with the corner of the mouth. The lower part consists of a percussion line. Here an uncircled x represents a blow chord and a circled x represents a draw chord. Rests indicate that the tongue is held down.

When doing these exercises, play the scale descending as well as ascending. When you can do these, you should be ready for the tune.

Exercise 1 - The Slap

As you play each note in the scale, quickly lift the tongue and slap it back down over the lower holes on the "and" of each count. This will produce a staccato chord (the term *staccato* indicates a clipped, percussive quality to a note or chord). Meanwhile, hold the single notes to their full length. You should slur between 6-in and 7-in, using the same breath for both notes as in lip blocking.

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Ex. 1 - The Slap

Exercise 2 - The Lift

Here the scale is in half notes. Play the single note on the count of "one." On the count of "two" lift the tongue and on the count of "two and" slap the tongue back down. Play the next note on the count of three. On four, lift the tongue and on "four and" slap it back down.

Ex. 2 - The Lift

Exercise 3 - The "Shuffle" or Double Lift

This produces the equivalent of "shuffle" bowing. On the count of "one," play the single note. On "two," lift the tongue and slap it back down. Lift and slap again on "two and." On "three," play the next single note. Lift and slap on both "four" and "four and."

Ex. 3 - The "Shuffle" or Double Lift

Spotted Pony [MA #3076]

"Spotted Pony" is an Appalachian tune which I learned from Robin Osgood, a fiddler in the Albany, NY area. When you first go over the tune, try playing the melody alone, without the tonguing. Then try including the tonguing in the measures where the melody moves in half notes. Finally, work in the tonguing in the measures where the tune moves in running eighth notes. As you can see, I have used different tonguing patterns in the parts of the tune where the melody repeats. This has been done in order to give you more varied practice, and also to show that there are different ways to do the tonguing in a tune. I'll be telling you more about tongue blocking in future workshops. If you have any questions, write me at Box 2551, Albany, NY 12220. Adios!

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