

# CHORD EMBELLISHMENT

BY GLENN WEISER

**E**mbellishing a chord—the technique of taking a common chord position and adding other notes in the scale to it by lifting or putting down one or more fingers—is a widely used device for accompanying and even providing opening motifs to all kinds of songs. Such embellishments are usually easy to do and therefore within the reach of the beginner who has a good command of basic chords. In this article we'll look at common chord embellishments and see how some of them can be used with the Irish chestnut “Danny Boy.”

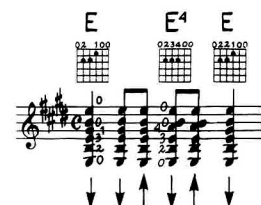
Chord embellishments give the accompaniment a more melodic character. They can be used to harmonize the vocal line or to double it. These ap-

proaches can also be freely combined, allowing the guitarist to switch from harmony to melody or vice versa in the middle of a song. In this arrangement of “Danny Boy” (page 66), I have worked out the chord embellishments to harmonize the vocal line.

Usually a chord embellishment comes between a chord and its repetition, although embellishments can be used in other ways. The following examples show chord embellishments in various situations. If you use a pick when playing them, you'll get more volume out of the guitar. The arrows underneath the standard notation indicate pick direction. Don't be intimidated by the chord names, which in some cases

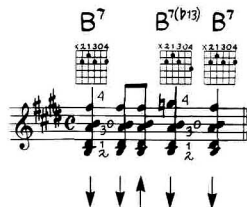
make these embellishments sound more difficult than they actually are to play. The important thing is to hear how these embellishments sound so you can try fitting them into other songs that use these same common chords.

In the following example, the E chord is embellished by E<sup>4</sup>, which is an E chord containing the fourth step of the E major scale.

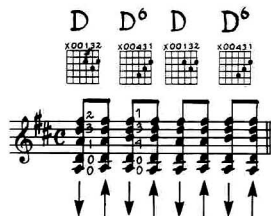


This type of chord is often called a sus4, which is short for suspended fourth, but this is usually a misnomer. Technically, a suspension is a note held over from a previous chord rather than a note added after the normal triad has already been played. Play E4 by lowering the pinky onto the third string, second fret. Lift it when you play E again.

The following is a B7 chord embellished by B7-b13, which is a blues effect. The pinky slides up the first string from the second fret to the third and then back.

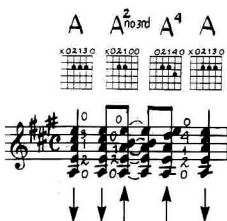


In the next example, the D chord is embellished by D6.



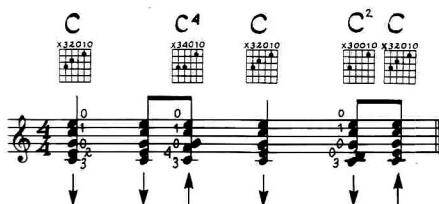
This is a common "groove riff." Keep the three fingers of the D chord down, lowering the pinky onto the third string, fourth fret, for D6.

Two consecutive embellishments are shown in this example:



As you can see, the A2 and A4 embellishments are inserted between two A chords. Start by playing the A chord, and then lift the third finger off the second string for A2. Lower the pinky onto the second string, third fret, for A4, and then lift it and play the A chord again.

Here are different embellishments played between C chords:

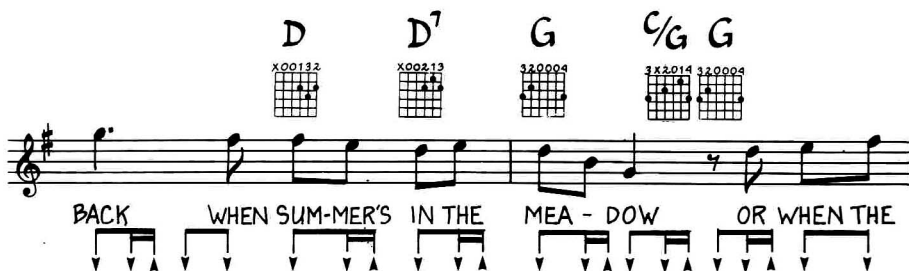
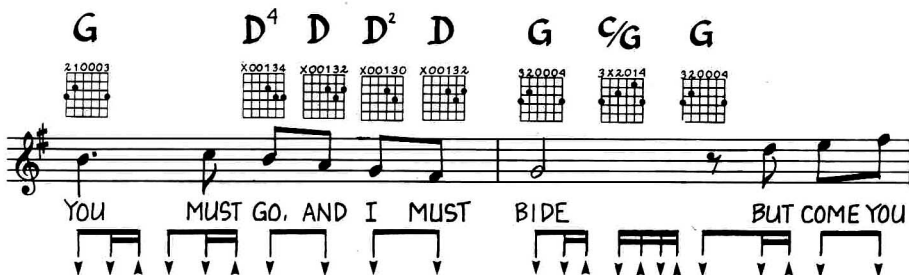
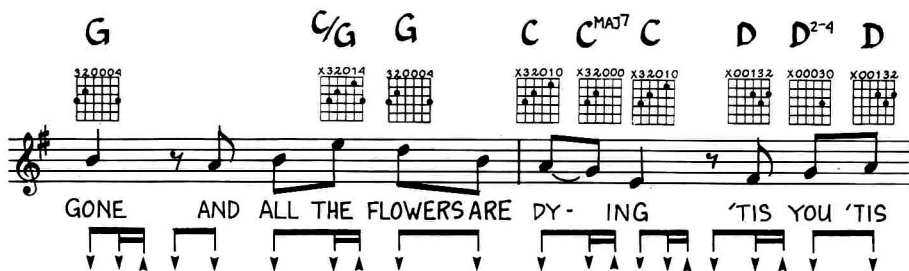
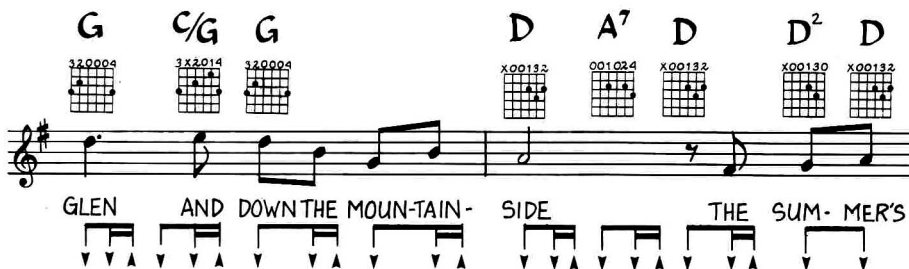
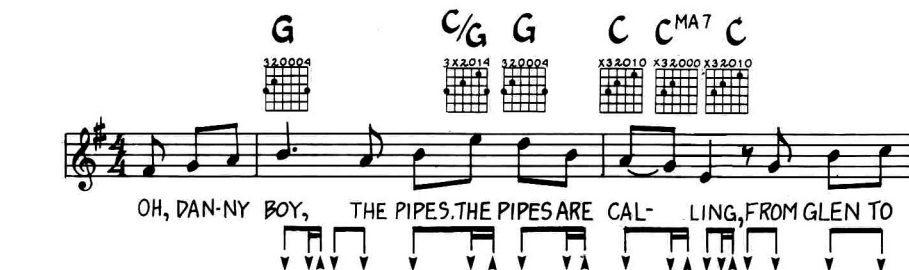


Begin with a C chord, and lower the

## Danny Boy

Traditional Irish melody, lyrics by Fred E. Weatherly

Arranged by Glenn Weiser



Em Am G D A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>4</sup> D<sup>2</sup> D

VAL - LEY'S HUSHED AND WHITE WITH SNOW 'TIS I'LL BE

G C C<sup>MAJ7</sup> C G D D<sup>2-4</sup> D

THERE IN SUN-SHINE OR IN SHAD - OW OH, DAN - NY

G D D<sup>2</sup> D<sup>4</sup> D G C/G G

BOY, OH DAN - NY BOY. I LOVE YOU SO

1. O DANNY BOY, THE PIPES, THE PIPES ARE CALLING  
FROM GLEN TO GLEN AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SIDE  
THE SUMMER'S GONE AND ALL THE FLOWERS ARE DYING  
'TIS YOU, 'TIS YOU MUST GO AND I MUST BIDE  
BUT COME YOU BACK WHEN SUMMER'S IN THE MEADOW  
OR WHEN THE VALLEY'S HUSHED AND WHITE WITH SNOW  
'TIS I'LL BE THERE IN SUNSHINE OR IN SHADOW  
O DANNY BOY, O DANNY BOY, I LOVE YOU SO
2. AND IF YOU COME WHEN ALL THE FLOWERS ARE DYING  
AND I AM DEAD, AS DEAD I WELL MAY BE  
YOU'LL COME AND FIND THE PLACE WHERE I AM LYING  
AND KNEEL AND SAY AN AVE THERE FOR ME  
AND I SHALL HEAR, THO' SOFT YOU TREAD ABOVE ME  
AND ALL MY DREAMS WILL WARM AND SWEETER BE  
IF YOU WILL NOT FAIL TO TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME  
THEN I SIMPLY SLEEP IN PEACE UNTIL YOU COME TO ME

pinky onto the third fret, fourth string for C4. Lift the pinky and play C again. Now lift the second finger off the fourth string, second fret for C2, and replace it for the last C chord.

Here, the pinky gets a workout:

F F<sup>4</sup> F F<sup>6</sup> F F<sup>2</sup>F

The pinky lowers and lifts off the third frets of the third, second, and first strings consecutively. This gives you F4, F6, and F2 chords respectively.

After you've warmed up with these examples, you should be ready for the song (at left). "Danny Boy," also known as "Londonderry Air," is rightfully one of the most famous Irish songs. The lyrics given here were written in the 19th century by an Englishman, Fred E. Weatherly, and bear the stamp of the Romantic era; the tune is a lovely traditional air from County Derry. The beauty of this air has long impressed listeners, musicians, and even musicologists. The famous Viennese violinist Fritz Kreisler praised it as "the most beautiful melody I have ever heard." In his book *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1893), English musicologist Sir Hubert Parry analyzes the melody and calls it "one of the most perfect in existence."

In this arrangement, G is embellished by C/G, which is a C chord with a G bass note (make sure you damp, or mute, the fifth string when you play the C/G chord). C is embellished by C major 7, which is done by lifting the index finger off the second string. D is embellished by either D2, D4, or D2-4. As you can see from the chord chart, you play the D2 by lifting the second finger off the first string; for the D4, you lower the pinky onto the first string, third fret; and for the D2-4, you lift both the first and second fingers from the third and first strings. Make your way through these chord changes slowly at first, making sure all the notes ring out clearly, and then work up to the indicated tempo.

Because the vocal line of "Danny Boy" covers a range of an octave and a fifth, you may wish to try capoing at different frets to find the key most comfortable for singing. Celtic tune books give the air in G, so I have followed suit here. This enables you to play the air with fiddlers and other instrumentalists, as well as singers. ■