

Frederick A. Mills (1869 – 1948) was a trained violinist who taught music at the University of Michigan. In 1895 he left teaching and went off to the big city to make his fortune. In New York he founded F.A. Mills Music Publishing and over the next 40 years published a long list of popular ‘Tin Pan Alley’ songs including many of his own compositions. The song “Redwing” that is so familiar to us was published in 1907 under his pseudonym ‘Kerry Mills.’ Many of his other compositions were popular in their day, but probably the most remembered other than *Redwing* is “Meet Me in St Louis, Louis” made immortal by Judy Garland.

Unlike most fiddle tunes, *Redwing* was not particularly intended for dancing. Mills called it an “intermezzo” and “An Indian Fable” but in the last 100 years it has spread around the world and been played at innumerable dances. Many scholars believe Mills took the tune from a composition by the classical composer Robert Schumann, the 1848 “Happy Farmer.” Perhaps. The simple melody has been a favorite of fiddlers for many decades. Since it lends itself to the creation of fun variations, it especially seems to be a favorite of Southwestern fiddlers such as Johnny Gimble, Junior Daugherty, Byron Berline, Bob Wills, the Quebe Sisters, etc. and guitarists like Chet Atkins, many of whom have played it in Country Swing and Bluegrass styles.

The original composition for piano was set in Eb (3 flats, see below) but as a fiddle tune, it is almost universally played in G major (1 sharp). In general, tempo is about 100 - 110.

Here are links to some fun versions:



Original Cover, 1907

“Quebe Sisters” Texas swing fiddle version , fun minor key variations by this famous trio of fiddling sisters.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp0O4Y7H56A&feature=related>

Key of G at 110bpm.

"Sons of the Sage" perform at Langston's Western Wear, OKC. Greg Burgess, fiddler; Richard Sharp, bass; Jim Garling, rhythm guitar. Oklahoma State Champion Fiddler swings thru sweet Redwing variations. Wonderful guitar and bass accompaniment as well.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96NzRQ1Y-cw>

Key of G at 110 bpm.

Chet Atkins, Johnny Gimble, Vince Gill and friends with “Asleep at the Wheel”, tribute to Bob Wills.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oXHo4ynHxk>

Key of G at 100 bpm.

‘Tiny’ Little plays a honky-tonk version on the 1959 Lawrence Welk Show!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEiNUov5z1E&feature=related>

Key of F at 120 bpm.

Next Page: “Redwing” 1907

