

***Soldier's Joy* Notes** (fiddle tunes workshop week one) Matt McConeghy 2/2012

The Fiddler's Companion website (<http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/FCfiles.html>) lists multiple sources for *Soldier's Joy* in tunebooks printed in Britain the late 1700s, and in the USA around 1800. It is probably the most recorded of all fiddle tunes from the days of the early hillbilly groups such as the Skillet Lickers up to the present day when it has been recorded by dozens of top Bluegrass artists from David Grier to Bill Monroe. When Fiddler's Magazine polled its readers for the most popular tune, *Soldier's Joy* was the undisputed favorite. Almost every printed fiddle collection includes a version of this tune, from dotted hornpipes to breakdowns, even a pretty good jig version recorded in Arizona over 60 years ago. The tune is known by many alternate titles, "King's Head", "French Four", "Rock the Cradle Lucy", "I am my mother's darling boy", "Payday in the Army", etc.

This tune is uniformly played in D major, and has been recorded at a tempo of from 80 to 130 or more. Probably the most famous version is from the North Georgia string band 'Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers' Their 1929 version starts with "Grab that gal and shake a foot" and then rolls away at a typical dance tempo of 125 bpm. They recorded the tune again in 1934 at a more sedate 115 bpm (and cleaned up the lyrics for their more strait-laced fans!)

*Chicken in the bread tray scratchin' out dough,
Granny will your dog bite? No, child, no.
Ladies to the center and gents get best
Hold on you don't let her rest.*

*Grasshopper sittin on a sweet potato vine, (x3)
Along come a chicken and says you're mine.*

*I'm a-gonna get a drink, don't you wanna go? (x3)
Hold on Soldier's Joy.*

*Twenty-five cents for the morphine,
Fifteen cents for the beer;
Twenty-five cents for the morphine,
... gonna take me away from here.*

(Skillet Lickers 1929)

*Rock the cradle, Lucy
Rock the cradle by
Rock the cradle, Lucy
Don't let the baby cry!*

*Rock the cradle, Lucy
Rock the cradle arm
Rock the cradle, Lucy
Keep that baby warm.*

(Skillet Lickers, 1934)

And many other verses...

*I am my mama's darling child (x3)
And I don't care for you.*

*Dance all night, fiddle all day,
That's a Soldier's Joy.*

Google online for some excellent tabs for mandolin and guitar. Especially, Mike Rolland of Bisbee has an excellent teaching video of this tune - he starts with a simple version and then shows it can be jazzed up to sound really impressive. Search You Tube for '***Soldier's Joy You Tube***' fiddlinmikerolland. Mike has quite a few other excellent videos that teach Fisher's Hornpipe, Liberty and other popular fiddle tunes...

This is a pretty standard version of the tune, with added guitar tab...

Soldiers' Joy

www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

OK, two parts, A and B, each 8 measures, 16 downbeats. Each part is repeated. A part: the first 'system' of notes is A F# D F# - that is, a D major chord, the next measure goes to the D note. Then the same again, then down to an E note (part of an A chord, the '5th'), then the D chord again, then an inversion F# A F# D -- an upside down D chord, and then E A E C# - an A chord, and end with a D. D is part of a D chord, but also part of a G chord, so if you just have a D note, you have to listen and decide whether you want to have a D chord or a G chord. In the B part, the tune goes to F# F# D F# A - another D chord - then we go to a walk down E D C# B A - a G chord will do - then F# D F# D F# and E C# E C# in the next measure. The tab gives a choice, D or Bm. Minor? a full chord has to have at least three notes so, a D chord would have D F# A but there's no A in this little part of the tune, only the D and F# so the arranger has taken artistic liberty and changed the feel of the tune a little by using a B minor chord - that is, B D F# instead of D F# A.

24

30

Above: about as simple as it can get, but still easily recognizable as Soldier's Joy. (from Easy Versions of 24 Tunes by Chuck Morgan of the Old Fiddler's Club of Rhode Island.

Below: just to show how far variations can go, here is a jig (6/8) version from Arizona collected over 60 years ago. Think "tumpitty – tumpitty – tump – tum – tum!"

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Source: Viola "Mom" Ruth ~ Pioneer Western Folk Tunes (1948)