

**Flatpicking Guitar Magazine**  
**Free E-Newsletter Lesson September 2010**

**Two Classic Melodies:  
“Turkey In the Straw” and “Arkansas Traveler”**

**arranged by Mickey Abraham**

Greetings to all you e-lesson readers out there. I welcome you, once again, to another installment of FGM’s free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. Each month, when you click here, you will find something new to add to your guitar technique and overall flatpicking guitar knowledge.

I try to mix things up from time to time in order to continue offering a little something for everyone. This month, instead of arranging two versions of the same tune, I chose to give you two different classic melodies.

I paired these great tunes together because “Turkey In the Straw” and “Arkansas Traveler” are both flatpicking standards that have made their way into mainstream pop- culture. Many folks will recognize the first couple measures of these melodies, but unless they are a bluegrass or folk musicians, they might not know the names of these tunes.

My first exposé to “Turkey in the Straw” was as a kid, hearing the ice cream truck coming down the road in my neighborhood. I must say that Aubrey Haney’s Texas swing version is more musical to me now, but nonetheless, the sounds coming from the ice cream truck implanted that melody in my head. To many, the “Turkey in the Straw” melody will get folks singing the famous children’s lyrics, “Do your ears hang low? Do they wobble to and fro?” I am not sure where those lyrics are from originally.

As for “Arkansas Traveler,” I feel I first heard this tune in a Bugs Bunny cartoon. It was a slow and bouncy version done in a very low octave. I even remember some kind of lyrics that included the word “bumblebee.” Am I getting off track? The point is that these melodies are so great that they have been used and enjoyed by many musicians over the years.

Although the “Turkey in the Straw” and “Arkansas Traveler” are often associated with feelings of childhood simplicity, they are actually pretty tricky melodies to pick and have quite interesting chord back-up to go with it. I chose to arrange this lesson with very straight forward melodies and traditional chords; these version are free of any hot licks and are designed to be simple interpretations of these iconic melodies. As you work through this lesson remember to pick carefully; pay attention to your timing and proper pick direction. If you are not familiar with proper pick direction please see my e-lesson called “Pick Stroke Theory.”

I hope you enjoy working on these great classic fiddle tunes. I suppose that if you play nothing else, and you learn these two tunes, you are well on the road to being a flatpicker! Finally, any questions, comments, or concerns on this e-lesson or any great ideas for future e-lessons? email me at [michabraham@comcast.net](mailto:michabraham@comcast.net)

# Arkansas Traveler

arranged by Mickey Abraham

1 C Am G C G

Musical notation for measures 1-3. The treble clef staff shows a melody in 4/4 time. The guitar tablature below shows fingerings: measure 1 (0, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2), measure 2 (0, 0, 1), and measure 3 (3, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 3, 1, 2, 0).

5 C Am G C F G C | G C

Musical notation for measures 4-6. Measure 4 continues the previous pattern. Measure 5 introduces a new melody with notes F and G. Measure 6 is a repeat sign. Measure 7 starts with a new melody. The guitar tablature includes a double bar line between measures 5 and 6, and a '2' above measure 7.

10 C F C G C G C G

Musical notation for measures 7-9. The treble clef staff shows a melody. The guitar tablature shows fingerings: measure 7 (3, 0, 3, 1, 0, 3, 1, 0, 3, 1, 0, 0), measure 8 (1, 1, 3, 3), and measure 9 (0, 3, 1, 0, 3, 0).

14 C F C G C F G C | G C

Musical notation for measures 10-12. Measure 10 continues the previous pattern. Measure 11 introduces a new melody with notes F and G. Measure 12 is a repeat sign. Measure 13 starts with a new melody. The guitar tablature includes a double bar line between measures 11 and 12, and a '2' above measure 13.

