

# Fiddling for Classical Kids

*Providing stylistic fundamentals for Celtic,  
Bluegrass, Old-Time, Texas, and Jazz Fiddling*

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## Introduction

This book focuses on important fundamental elements that can be found in Celtic, bluegrass, old-time, Texas, and jazz fiddling: **1) the shuffle, 2) the displaced shuffle, 3) the Georgia shuffle, and 4) no-slur swing bowing.** Each element is presented in a lesson below.

Usually, the best fiddlers mix all of these elements together, depending upon the musical line and the improvisation of the player. The tunes in this book mimic this practice and will establish a good technical and stylistic foundation, enabling the student to pursue their favorite genre.

This book is available in violin, viola, and cello/bass. **All parts are interchangeable** (no transposing!). Have fun switching between the tune and the accompaniment ("comp") with your favorite violinist, violist, cellist, or bassist.

One more thing: Although the tunes are primarily Celtic and old-time, they serve as a great launching pad for bluegrass, Texas, jazz, rock, and other improvisational styles because of their easy chord progressions and infectious melodies. Have fun!

## Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to a few of my most recent teachers and influences: Cyrus Taylor, Liang Lee, Mark Dudrow, Wendy Johnson, Tom Purdy, M B to the C, Francis Quinn, Darol Anger, Greg Schochet, Mom & Dad, and the Propellerheads.

*Audio recorded, produced, and mastered by Ed Caner using the Fats Fred Mobile Recording Facility, Jaroso, Colorado and Lakeside, Ohio. The fiddle used on the recording is a Luis and Clark carbon violin.*

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# Fiddling for Classical Kids

## Lesson 1. The Shuffle Bowing

- found in bluegrass, Celtic, old-time, and sometimes Texas and jazz fiddling

### Example 1

### Fiddling Essentials:

1. Keep the bow on the string with consistent pressure and speed throughout each bow stroke. In other words, play legato, "connect" the notes, and pay attention to the dynamics (no bouncing or pulsing!).
2. The quarter note is the quiet note, and gets VERY LITTLE bow distance (remember, a fast bow is loud, a slow bow is soft).
3. Swing the eighth notes.
4. Start very slowly, subdividing the triplets, and build up to a minimum of 100 bpm in cut time (a metronome is a great tool for this!).
5. Plan ahead (don't start near the frog!).

### Hint...

- Remember to swing!

The shuffle is actually played like this:

### Example 2

Shuffle Exercise - Slurred 8th Notes in the shuffle:

### Example 3

### Helpful Hints:

- Forget the left hand and focus on the swing rhythm and dynamics outlined above.
- Tap your toe on beats 1 and 3 — it's not easy!

One more thing...

- A crescendo on the quarter note adds rhythmic drive to the shuffle:

### Example 4

## Lesson 2.

## The Displaced Shuffle Bowing

- found in bluegrass, Celtic, old-time, jazz, and sometimes Texas fiddling

Shuffle bowing displaced to the left from Bonaparte's Retreat:

### Example 5

Shuffle bowing displaced to the right from Bonaparte's Retreat:

### Example 6

### Fiddling Essentials:

1. Keep the bow on the string with consistent pressure and speed throughout each bow stroke. In other words, play legato, "connect" the notes, and avoid "pulsing".
2. Swing the eighth notes.
3. Start very slowly, subdividing the triplets, and build up to a minimum of 100 bpm in cut time (and use a metronome!).

Hint...

- Remember to swing! The first example above is actually played like this:

### Example 7

### Extra notes:

- The displaced shuffle is simply the shuffle with the slur moved either to the left or to the right by a single eighth note.
- Specific dynamics are not important (as they are with the shuffle), and the dynamics often change depending upon the musical line.
- You will find different combinations of the displaced shuffle in jazz, swing, Celtic, bluegrass, and just about any other style of fiddle music that swings. But you will rarely find the same displaced pattern for more than a measure or two (that would be boring!).

## Lesson 3. Georgia Shuffle

- *found in Celtic, bluegrass, old-time, and sometimes jazz and Texas fiddling*

Example 8

*Georgia shuffle bowing from Bonaparte's Retreat*  
This is two exercises: 1) start down-bow and repeat and 2) start up-bow and repeat.

### Fiddling Essentials:

1. Keep the bow on the string with consistent pressure and speed throughout each bow stroke. In other words, play legato, "connect" the notes, and pay attention to the dynamics (*no bouncing or pulsing!*).
2. Move the bow FAST on each single 8th note.
3. Swing the eighth notes.
4. Start very slowly, subdividing the triplets, and build up to a minimum of 100 bpm in cut time (*remember to use a metronome!*).

### Extra notes:

- This bow stroke is very "swing-friendly" and can produce a huge accent with the single (non-tied) note.
- The Georgia shuffle sounds very much like the basic shuffle, and can often be substituted for it.

## Lesson 4.

### No-Slur Swing Bowing

- *found in Texas and jazz fiddling, and sometimes Celtic, bluegrass, and old-time*

### Important Note:

- Many swing players play long passages without slurs, usually in a down-bow, up-bow pattern. However, this creates a problem: the down-bow note has a longer value than the up-bow note, and the bow naturally works its way to the tip if the dynamics are consistent. In order to solve this problem, we sometimes add "catch-up" slurs to take us back toward the middle of the bow. Even so, most Texas-style fiddlers have mastered this stroke without the need to "catch-up", but this is difficult and takes time and practice.

Example 9

*No-slur Swing Bowing (with "catch-up slur")*  
from *Lady Anne Montgomery*

### Fiddling Essentials:

1. Keep the bow on the string with consistent pressure and speed throughout each bow stroke. In other words, play legato, "connect" the notes, and pay attention to the dynamics (*no bouncing or pulsing!*).
2. Swing the eighth notes.
3. Start very slowly, subdividing the triplets, and build up to a minimum of 100 bpm in cut time (*remember the metronome?*).
4. As the tempo gets faster than 100 bpm, the triplet quarter note becomes *shorter* and the triplet eighth becomes *longer*, until you almost have straight eighth notes!

# 1. Shortnin' Bread (shuffle exercise)

CD tracks 2 (slow) and 3 (fast)

Traditional  
Arranged by Edward M. Caner

**A**

**B**

## Fiddling Essentials (Review):

1. Keep the bow on the string with consistent pressure and speed throughout each bow stroke. In other words, play legato, "connect" the notes, and pay attention to the dynamics (no bouncing or pulsing!).
2. The quarter note is the quiet note, and gets VERY LITTLE bow distance (remember, a fast bow is loud, a slow bow is soft).
3. Swing the eighth notes.
4. Start very slowly, subdividing the triplets, and build up to a minimum of 100 bpm in cut time (a metronome is a great tool for this!).
5. Plan ahead (don't start near the frog!).

## 2. Angeline the Baker (shuffle exercise)

CD tracks 4 (slow) and 5 (fast)

## Traditional

Traditional  
Arranged by Edward M. Caner

C

G

D

B

G

C

G

D

A musical score for three staves of bassoon parts. The top staff uses a bass clef, the middle staff uses a bass clef with a sharp sign, and the bottom staff uses a bass clef with a sharp sign. The score consists of four measures. The top staff has eighth-note patterns: the first measure has a single eighth note, the second has two eighth notes, the third has one eighth note followed by a dotted half note, and the fourth has one eighth note followed by a dotted half note. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs: the first measure has two pairs, the second has three pairs, the third has two pairs, and the fourth has three pairs. The bottom staff has eighth-note patterns: the first measure has two eighth notes, the second has one eighth note followed by a dotted half note, the third has one eighth note followed by a dotted half note, and the fourth has one eighth note followed by a dotted half note.