



## **Duo Style Mandolin**

by Jim Dalton

This heading represents a range of styles and techniques developed by late 19th and early 20th century mandolinists. This style is currently enjoying a bit of a renaissance and new techniques are being developed by players such as Evan Marshall and Radim Zenkl. Rather than outlining all of these techniques at this point, I'll introduce some exercises that will lead to the development of the most-used types of duo style playing techniques.

The basic idea is that a single mandolinist gives the impression of a duet by clearly differentiating the various musical elements. This usually means (1) playing the melody in tremolo and the accompaniment (below the melody) in single strokes or (2) playing the melody in tremolo and the accompaniment in left hand pizzicato.

These are the techniques that I introduce in the pdf lesson exercises.

Of course, the melody may also sound below the accompaniment and other techniques, such as harmonics, may be used to make the parts distinct. I'll try to address some of these at a later date.

Meanwhile, here is a bibliography of English language materials on duo style mandolin:

# **Bibliography of English Language Materials for Duo Style Mandolin**

## **Historical:**

**Sparks, Paul, The Classical Mandolin, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.**

This fine book on mandolin history gives clear background on the duo style technique and its various flowerings.

## **Practical:**

**Bickford, Zahr Myron, The Bickford Mandolin Method, New York: Carl Fischer, 1920.**

In four volumes -- the duo style studies are in book III. This method and the one by Pettine are the most detailed treatments of duo style and for most other aspects of mandolin technique for that matter.

**Bickford, Zahr Myron, The Bickford Method for Mando-cello, Kalamazoo, MI: Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Co., 1913.**

Contains a four-page intro to duo playing on the mandocello written in Universal Notation (treble clef sounding 2 octaves lower than written).

**Lansing, G.L., 33 Special Studies for the Mandolin, Boston: The B. F. Wood Music Co., 1898.**

Includes several duo and "duet studies, tremolo with left hand pizzicato etc.

**Marshall, Evan J., Duo-Style A to Z: A Comprehensive Method for Solo Mandolin in Duo-Style, from Entry Level to Artist Level, San Gabriel, CA: Evan J. Marshall, 2004.**

Marshall's book is effective and pedagogically sound. The technique that he describes (and that he, himself uses) is a bit different than the "classic duo style" of the early 20th century players but quite impressive (at least in his hands). A bonus is the CD that demonstrates the exercises and compositions.

Of interest to some: Marshall's is the only book on this list that includes tablature (along with standard notation). Serious players in duo style, or many other styles for that matter, should learn to read notation. It simply isn't that hard and the benefits far outweigh the frustrations.

**Pettine, Guisepe, Pettine's Modern Mandolin School, Providence, RI: Rhode Island Music Co., 1900 [1st edition]**

**Part II and III** [in one volume] contains a brief intro to duo style

**Part IV Duo Style of Mandolin Playing**

**Duo Primer: 24 Selections in "Duo Style"**

Some duplication between the volumes but not much. Again, this is one of the most detailed of the American mandolin methods.

**Place, William Jr., The William Place Jr. Method for the Mandolin, New York: Mills Music Inc., 1936.**

Volume 3 of this method introduces duo style and also includes a few solos in the style.

**Siegel, Samuel, Siegel's Special Mandolin Studies, New York: Jos. W Stern & Co., 1901.**

Siegel includes some preparatory exercises, left hand pizzicato, harmonic duo style ("...original with the author" and "Two Compositions in Duo Form").

**Stauffer, Aubrey, Thirty Progressive Studies for the Mandolin, Aubrey Stauffer & Co, 1923.**

Technical studies -- some quite difficult that lead one to be able to play pieces that should never be played on the mandolin.

**Stauffer, Aubrey, Forty Grand Mandolin Solos of the Most Famous Songs, Chicago: The Chart Music Publishing House, 1924.**

Basically the "Top Forty" of the 19th century: parlor songs, civil war songs, hymns etc. -- many in duo style or with some duo style sections. Some are quite difficult, all are definitely "of the period".

## **Self-promotion:**

**Dalton, Jim (composer), Etudes Book I for Mandolin, Salem, MA: Singing String Music Publications, 2006.**

Contains etudes in for various techniques including duo style.

**Dalton, Jim (arranger), Ten Christmas Songs arranged for Solo Mandolin, Salem, MA: Singing String Music Publications, 2006.**

Includes arrangements in various solo styles including duo style (strange sentence, isn't it?)

Free sample pdf of *Stille Nacht*.