

Original Musical Compositions

Volume II

For Mandolin and All Other Instruments



Composed by

Phil Lawrence

*Twenty-six Original Compositions in a Variety of Musical
Styles*

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Table of Contents

Introduction	6
About the Tunes	7
Blue Fire	12
Blue Fire with Harmony	13
Blue Mandolin	14
Blue Mandolin with Harmony 1	15
Blue Mandolin with Harmony 2	16
Blue Mandolin Complete	17
By the Light of the Candle	19
By the Light of the Candle with Harmony	20
Daffodils	21
Daffodils with Harmony	22
Dawg's Bark	23
Deep in the Forest	24
Dragon Flight	25
Dragon Flight with Harmony	27
The Dream	29
Fedora Swing	31
Fedora Swing with Harmony	32
Frogs	33
Hawaii High	34
Hawaii High with Harmony	35
Hora di Micheli	37
A Joy Forever	39
A Joy Forever with Harmony	40
The Kitty Kat Waltz	41
The Kitty Kat Waltz with Harmony	42
Leaping Lemurs	43
Leaping Lemurs with Harmony	44
The Penguin Blues	45
Rambling	47
Rambling with Harmony	48

Sebastopol Swing	49
Song for Sohl	51
Song for Sohl with Harmony	52
Sunday Groove	53
Sunday Groove with Harmony	54
Tarentella di Micheli	55
Tarentella di Micheli with Harmony	56
Turkeys, Turkeys, Turkeys	57
Turkeys, Turkeys, Turkeys for Second Mandolin	58
Twilight in Sonoma	59
Una Sera a Siena	60
Where Are You	61
Where Are You with Harmony	62
The White Swan	63
About the Author	65
Phil Lawrence Recordings	67
What Others Say	68

Introduction

This is my second book of original musical compositions. The first book included just about everything I had ever written up until that point in time, 2014. Since then I've written about twenty new tunes. Here they are collected in one place, with the inclusion of several of the earlier pieces which have been edited and revised.

These tunes were mainly composed on the mandolin for the mandolin, but they are meant to be played by any instrument. This is why I have not included mandolin tablature, believing that the use of standard notation will facilitate the performance of the music.

Most of these new melodies appear on my recording projects *Blue Fire*, *Blue Mandolin*, *Mandolin Heaven*, *Mandolin Menagerie*, or *Echoes of the Silent Fountain*, all of which were published after the first volume appeared. A few have not yet been recorded, but I keep working in my studio. I have tried to include one or two harmony parts for some of the compositions which I hope enrich the music and afford mandolin students an opportunity to play together with their friends or teachers for fun.

The reader will find a variety of musical styles and genres included in this book—gypsy jazz, bluegrass, folk, blues, Latin jazz, rock, ballads, jigs, swing, and even an Italian-style tarantella. I like to cross boundaries and I like all kinds of music. I invite you to travel with me across all the musical frontiers.

Publishing a music book in a pandemic may seem quixotic, but I never pass a windmill without charging directly at it. This is a labor of love and if only a few people here and there manage to derive some pleasure from it, then the struggle will have been worth the effort.

— Phil Lawrence



About the Tunes

“Blue Fire” — A Latin jazz influenced piece in A minor. At the letter “D” it changes to the relative major to lighten the mood briefly. This tune is well suited for percussion and should be played with intensity.

“Blue Mandolin”—This appeared in Volume I, but I've included it here with the harmony parts that were not previously published. I recorded this with Ian Lubar on guitar on the *Blue Mandolin* CD. It lends itself to free improvisation over the same basic chord progressions as “On Broadway,” but with a livelier feel. Ian's driving rhythm guitar creates excitement on the recording.

“By the Light of the Candle” — composed on the piano during a blackout, something which happens frequently here in Northern California. It's a very simple melody in waltz time. The background chords should be arpeggiated. The shift from F major to A Flat major at measure 17 is emotionally effective, especially by candlelight.

“Daffodils”— started out as noodling around on an ascending A major scale in thirds. I like to noodle, but noodles have to lead somewhere coherent, so I wrapped the end of the scale around an unexpected fall to the C major in the first part. The second part shifts to the relative minor but falls again to the unexpected C chord. The whole thing is in 6/8 time, so it should skip along in a sprightly manner since it was composed in the early springtime. A good exercise in ascending scales with a two-part harmony.

“Dawg's Bark” --This tune also appeared in Volume I of this collection, but I revised measures sixteen and twenty-seven considerably and it should be played as written here. It's a simple minor blues with a swing back-beat. On my *Mandolin Menagerie* CD I added percussion, guitar, and bass.

“Deep in the Forest”— I traveled to The Oregon Rainbow Gathering with my family in 2018. Rainbow Gatherings are always held in remote areas of a national forest, so when we first arrived and set up our camp in the midst of the trees I tested the acoustics against the silence of the forest. I found that with the slightest of touches my Gibson mandolin would reverberate off the trees and shrubs all around and there were no interfering sounds from man-made machines anywhere for a hundred miles. This composition came to me on the spot as a grateful prayer of peace. Play it softly and with feeling.

“Dragon Flight” — This tune also appeared in the first volume, but I added a third part and a mandolin harmony. It's the very first tune I wrote and it was written on the day I first met David Grisman in the Sausalito Flea Market in 1979. It's an excellent pentatonic etude in A minor. It should be played very fast, as a bluegrass fiddle tune.

“The Dream” — I like to play the piano even if I'm not very good at it. One morning I awoke and I remembered that I had been dreaming that I was playing the piano, trying to sound like Chopin or Beethoven's “Moonlight Sonata.” I was able to remember the chords in my dream and I wrote them down. Some months later I added a melody and I had the opportunity to record this tune with David Grisman, who added a second mandolin part, bringing the dream to full fruition. The recording appears on my *Mandolin Menagerie* CD and as a single available on all streaming services online. The tune should be played with a sense of mystery.

“Fedora Swing” — I wanted to write something simple that swings, but it had to incorporate some kind of a surprise to keep it interesting. The diminished chords that come almost immediately after the opening root chord achieve that effect, as does the transposition to the key of B flat in the B section of

the tune. They pass quickly so they don't jar the listener and the overall positive mood is maintained. I have added a harmony that gives the melody some zest.

“Frogs” — Also known by its full name, “Ten Thousand Million Billion Pink Coqui Frogs Chanting in the Night.” This tune was inspired by the coqui frogs who dominate the soundscape on the Big Island of Hawaii every nightfall. Millions of these penny-sized critters sing a two-note song as soon as the twilight commences and their combined love calls are deafening. While vacationing in Hawaii just before the pandemic struck, I discovered that the two notes the frogs sang were F sharp and G natural in the high register around the fourteenth and fifteenth frets on the mandolin. In order to blend in with their song, I began repeating those two notes until I crafted a melody around them. In the recording on my *Mandolin Menagerie* CD I spliced an iPhone voice memo of the frogs' cacophony onto the end of the song to give the listener a sample of the reality. Hold your ears when you get to that part.

“Hawaii High” — Another melody inspired by the Hawaiian Islands. I wanted to write something lively and with a positive vibration to reflect the beauty of the environment there. It has a swing feel in D major with a key shift to E flat at the bridge to keep it interesting. I recorded this piece with Dave Zirbel on Hawaiian lap steel guitar. There are two harmony mandolins that add depth to the melody and create a rich layer of tones. The recording can be heard on my *Blue Mandolin* CD.

“Hora di Micheli” — A hora is a lively Israeli dance number. This piece was written as a companion to my **“Tarantella di Micheli.”** A tarantella is a lively Sicilian dance number. I come from a Sicilian-American family and my nephew Michael married a Jewish woman, so I wrote these two tunes as a wedding gift. They are meant to be played as a medley. I have played with The Jubilee Klezmer Ensemble since the year 2000 so I have had a lot of experience participating in Jewish weddings, barmitzvahs, and other celebrations. Play this with a klezmer back-beat.

“A Joy Forever” — Composed on the piano. Another simple melody. The chords should be arpeggiated and the player should take liberties with the timing, stretching measures to capture a romantic feeling. Plenty of opportunities to add ornaments and fills around the open spaces in the melody.

“The Kitty Kat Waltz” — Part of the *Mandolin Menagerie* CD. At the end of each A section the harmonic progression falls to the four minor and the melody is supposed to mimic the meow sound of a cat. At the time I wrote this I was reading *Le Chat Botté* in French, known in English as *Puss 'n Boots*. I was also playing a lot of O'Carolan music with one of my students, so this tune tries to capture the noble feline character of the French fable and the courtly pomp of the Renaissance. The harmonies enrich the melody, adding a sumptuous flavor to the aristocratic mood.

“Leaping Lemurs” — Inspired by a visit to the San Francisco Zoo and by listening to a fiddle tune by John Reischman, a mandolin player I have always admired. This is my attempt to write an American hornpipe. It should be played with a lilt. Try the harmony with a friend to give it a lift and imagine lemurs leaping from tree branch to tree branch as you play it.

“The Penguin Blues” — As the title suggests, this is a blues, written on my Fender Stratocaster and designed for twin guitars in harmony. Definitely has a surf guitar sound. Appropriate when you consider that penguins are sea critters. This number is included on my *Mandolin Menagerie* CD. The B section of the tune should imitate the squawking of Antarctic penguins. I listened to audios of their calls on the web before constructing the B section. The mandolin rhythm substitutes for the high hat here. It should be pointed out that penguins are the most isolated of all animals, living near the South

Pole, and this piece was composed in the depth of the isolation created by the pandemic of 2020.

“Rambling”— Another attempt at writing an American style fiddle tune. Easy for beginners, mostly pentatonic in G major though it should be played pretty fast and the last few measures involve some fingering acrobatics and some thought. Play the harmony with a friend to spice it up. Try it on the banjo.

“Sebastopol Swing” — A homage to my home town for the past thirty years. This gypsy jazz swing tune appeared on my *Blue Fire* CD. The melody employs arpeggios combined with a D minor harmonic scale. The B section shifts to a major feel and then quickly transitions back to the minor. Play this at a lively clip.

“Song for Sohl” — Basically a minor pentatonic blues with a shift to the major in the B and C sections, though it falls quickly back to the minor. This tune has a driving rhythm. It can be heard on the *Blue Mandolin* CD. Eddie Guthman plays a perfect complement to the melody on his upright bass. I combined two harmonies on one staff. Players can choose one or the other. The high harmony goes above the twelfth fret so be careful.

“Sunday Groove” — A Sunday afternoon and an effort to do something creative produced this lively upbeat piece. I was practicing with a drum machine to keep my sense of rhythm sharp when suddenly scales began to form into a pattern that developed into a melody. Two more parts were added and then the recording process sculpted this exercise into a polished work. This tune appears on my *Blue Fire* CD, complete with harmony mandolins and an entire rhythm section all recorded in my home studio.

“Tarantella di Micheli” — The companion piece to **“Hora di Micheli”** (see above). This tune appears on my CD of traditional Italian music, *Echoes of the Silent Fountain*. It's the only original composition that appears on it. A tarantella is a lively Sicilian dance tune. I've included the harmony here that appears on the recording. Add a tambourine to the mix and let the dancers take it away.

“Turkeys, Turkeys, Turkeys” — a flock of wild turkeys dominate my neighborhood here in Sonoma County. As part of my *Mandolin Menagerie* CD project, I attempted to simulate their calls with musical phrases. There had to be a two part harmony to achieve the effect of multiple turkeys. The intro is pure vaudeville kitch for a touch of humor.

“Twilight in Sonoma” — Composed on my deck one warm spring evening as the sun was going down. This Latin jazz piece can be heard on my *Blue Fire* CD where the congas, the flute, and the guitar contribute to the tropical ambiance of the melody.

“Una Sera a Siena” — similar to “Twilight in Sonoma.” Only this was meant to feature the guitar. In the springtime in Siena, Italy, the nightingales sing all night long. But you never can see them.

“Where Are You” — The melody leaves the listener suspended, awaiting some kind of final resolution to the question. Open spaces within the whole notes leave plenty of room for other instruments to reply to the question.

“The White Swan” — A guitar piece included in the *Mandolin Menagerie* CD project—another attempt to capture the essence of an animal which univerrally symbolizes tranquility and beauty. The melody glides the way a swan glides along a lake.



Phil's 1912 Gibson F2 Mandolin



Latin Rhythm lively

Blue Fire

11

Phil Lawrence

1 Am⁷ G E⁷ Am⁷ B F

6 C E⁷ Am C Am⁷ G

11 E⁷ Am⁷ D G C

15 G C D G

19 D G E⁷ E Am⁷ G E⁷

Coda Last Time Only

24 Am⁷ D.C. Am⁷ G E⁷ Am⁷

2X before D.C.

Latin Rhythm lively

Blue Fire

12

Phil Lawrence

A Am⁷ G E⁷ Am⁷ **B** F C

7 E⁷ Am **C** Am⁷ G E⁷ Am⁷ **D** G

14 C G C D G D

20 G E⁷ **E** Am⁷ G E⁷ Am⁷ D.C.

E 2X before D.C.

25 Am⁷ G E⁷ Am⁷

Coda Last Time Only

Blue Mandolin

Moderately fast rock rhythm

Phil Lawrence

1 A E D E

8 D B A

15 A G A

22 A B7 C E D

29 E D E

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36 D E D D.C.

Moderately fast rock rhythm

Blue Mandolin 1

14

Phil Lawrence

A E D E D **B** A

10 A G A

20 A B7 **C** E D E

30 D E D

37 E D **D.C.**