Melody in Other Places Examples

This blog was written in support of my article of the same name in the Spring 2018 issue of BMG magazine. For more specific information, refer to that article. Not yet subscribed to BMG? Too easy; go to http://cliffordessex.net and subscribe! I've been writing for them for six years now.

In summary, 'Melody in Other Places' refers to playing the melody (with chords) somewhere other than the D string (as in Chord Melody). The melody note can occur on any string within a chord; the only requirements are a good knowledge of where those notes are in a particular chord, and the physical technique for using them.

It would be easy to conclude that the Classic banjo pieces that utilize the 'Staccato Bass Melody and Accompaniment' technique (page 71 in Emile Grimshaw's updated *Plectrum Playing for Modern Banjoists*) were specially written to accommodate it. That is only partially correct; a better way to put it would be that the melodies were slightly modified to work better with it. In that spirit, one could play almost any melody—from either the Classic or popular genres—using the technique. In fact, I would venture to say that with a little practice and imagination, you would be surprised at how easily this is accomplished! Herewith are some examples from both genres.

1. First off, here is the promised full-length arrangement of *Four Leaf Clover*. Don't take it as 'gospel'; there are many different things I could have done here. It is hard to find a sing-along song that this basic technique *cannot* be applied to: [go to https://youtu.be/Ign9hbpiScY for video, which includes the simple exercise from the article]

2. Next is a great example from Emile Grimshaw's *Scotch Broth*, using the melody from *Loch Lomond*:

3. Next is a short example from the great Perry Bechtel's arrangement of *Oh Susanna*. I learned this arrangement 30 years ago, making it the first time I encountered the technique (*long* before knowing what it was called). Perry's primary teacher (Fred Bacon, of Bacon and Day fame) was a Classic banjoist by the way, which alone should justify the historical importance (and relevance to today) of the style. Want to 'play it like Perry?':

4. In the Classic repertoire, the technique is often used in the 'Trio' section. It makes for a nice dynamic contrast; first time through, quiet melody on the bass strings, second time through, chord melody. A great example is from *Return of The Regiment*:

5. I would be remiss if I didn't include the modified Trio section from *A Banjo Vamp*, the other piece featured in the article.

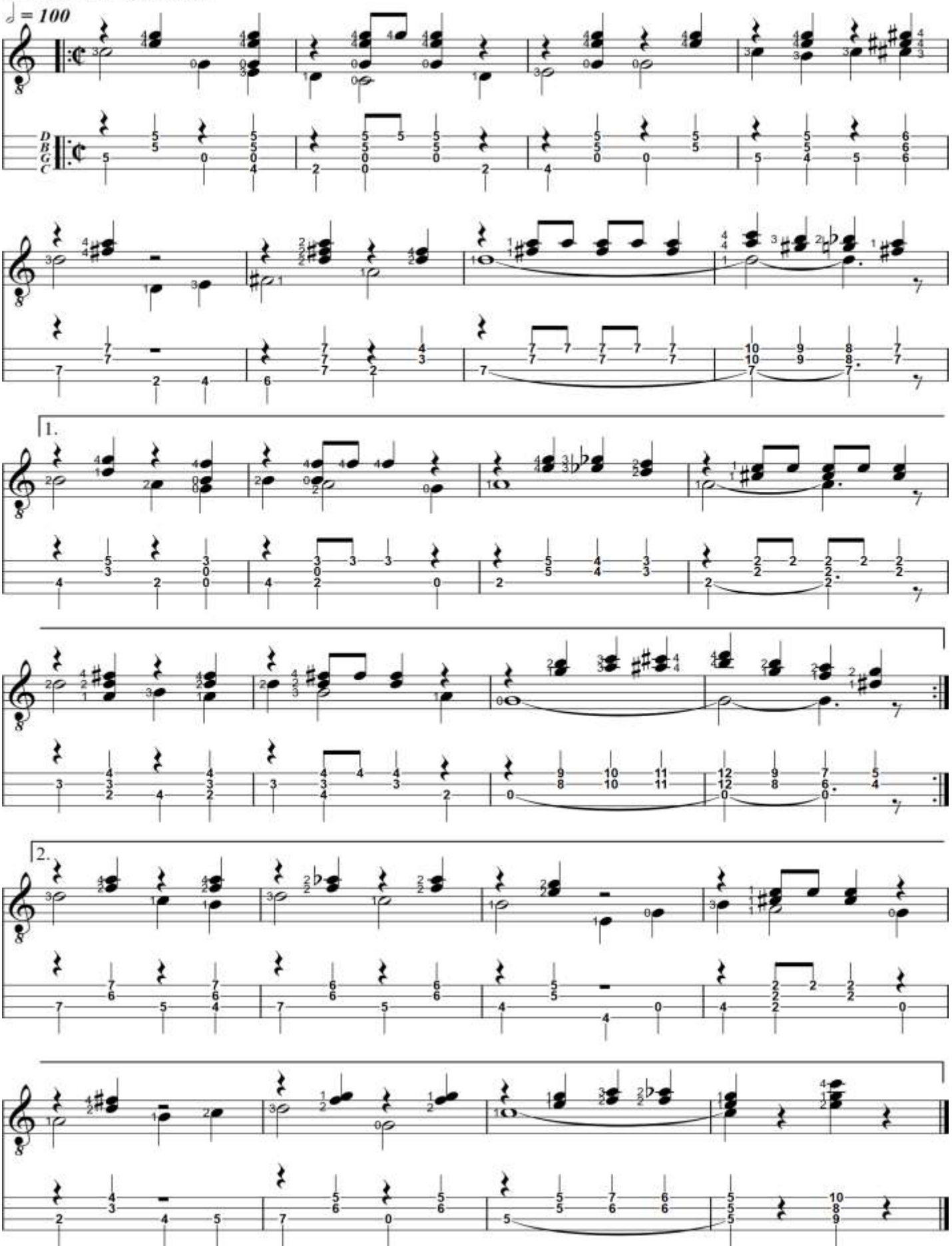
I could give examples from many other Classic and sing-along songs; in fact, this alone would make for an interesting book! The ultimate goal of this exercise should be to fit the technique into songs 'on the fly.' When you've learned these examples, try the technique on other favorite songs.

#1; *Four Leaf Clover* (next page)

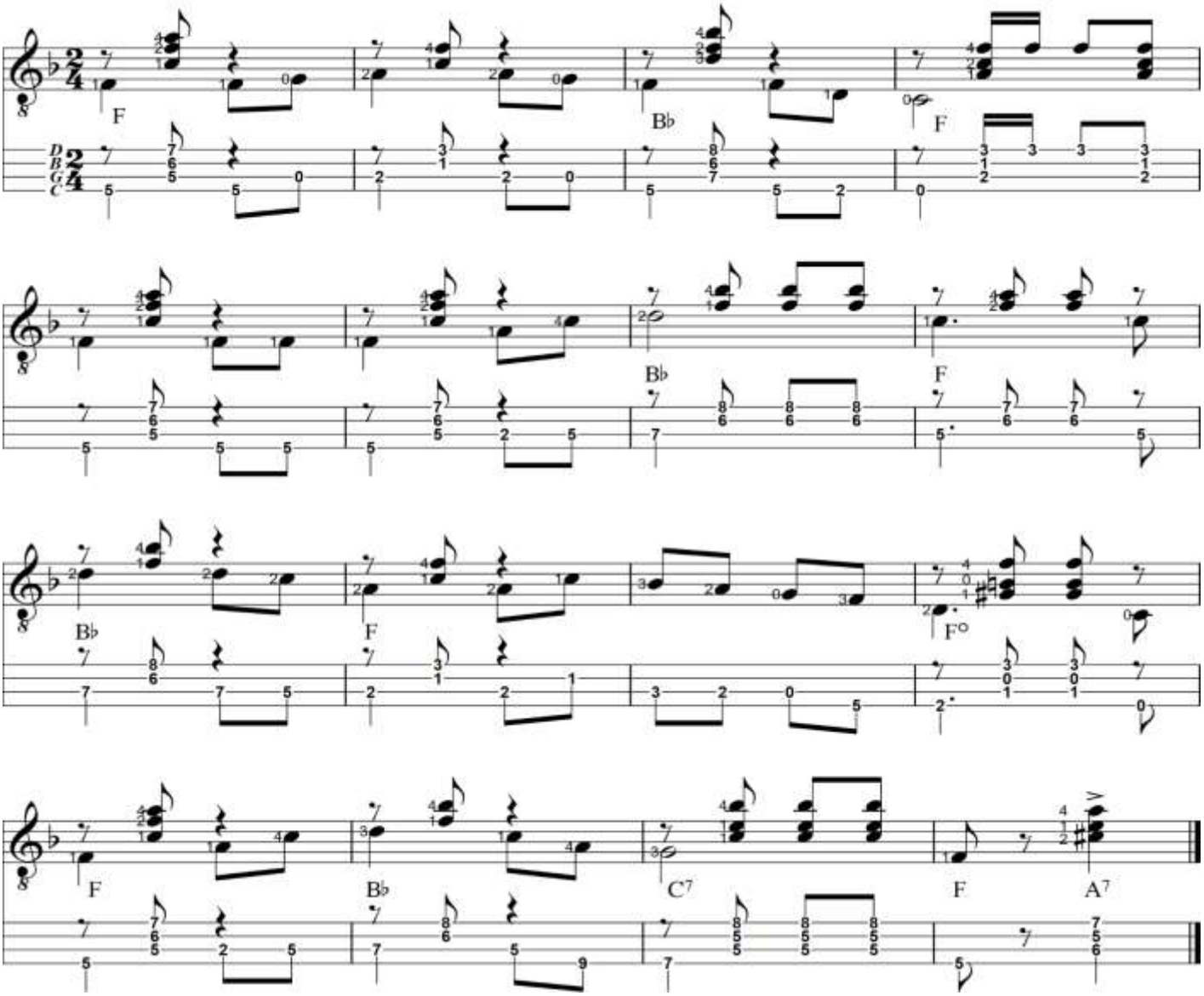
FOUR LEAF CLOVER

Plectrum Banjo
arranged by Ron Hinkle

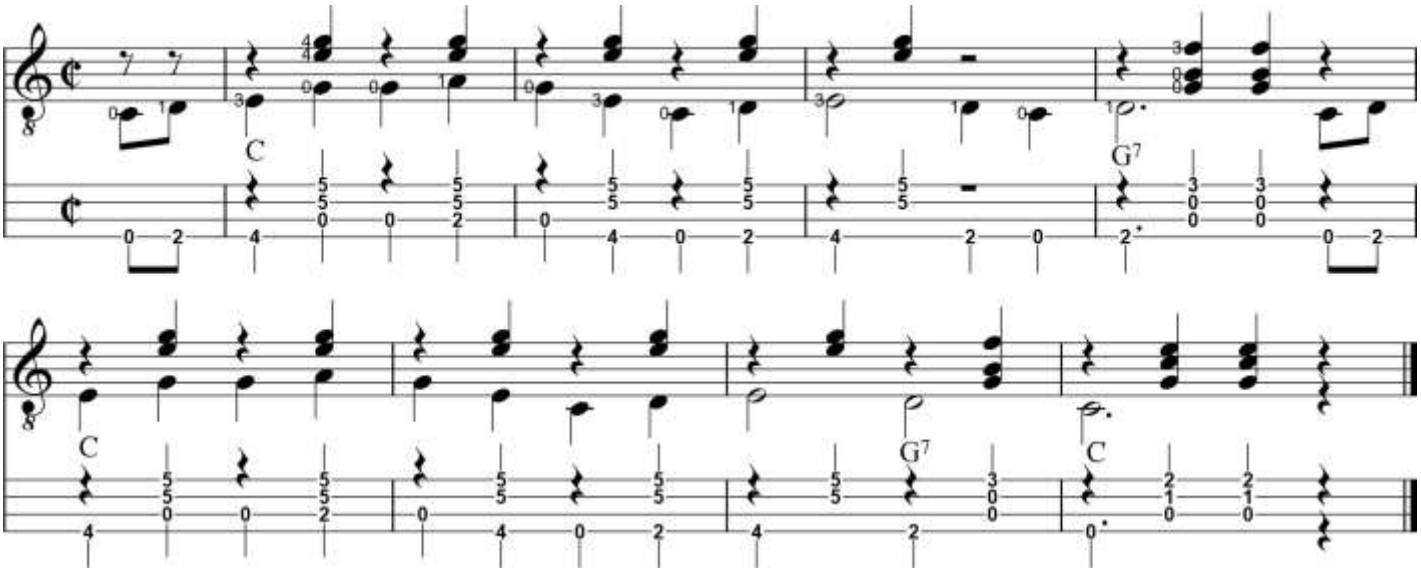
Mort Dixon



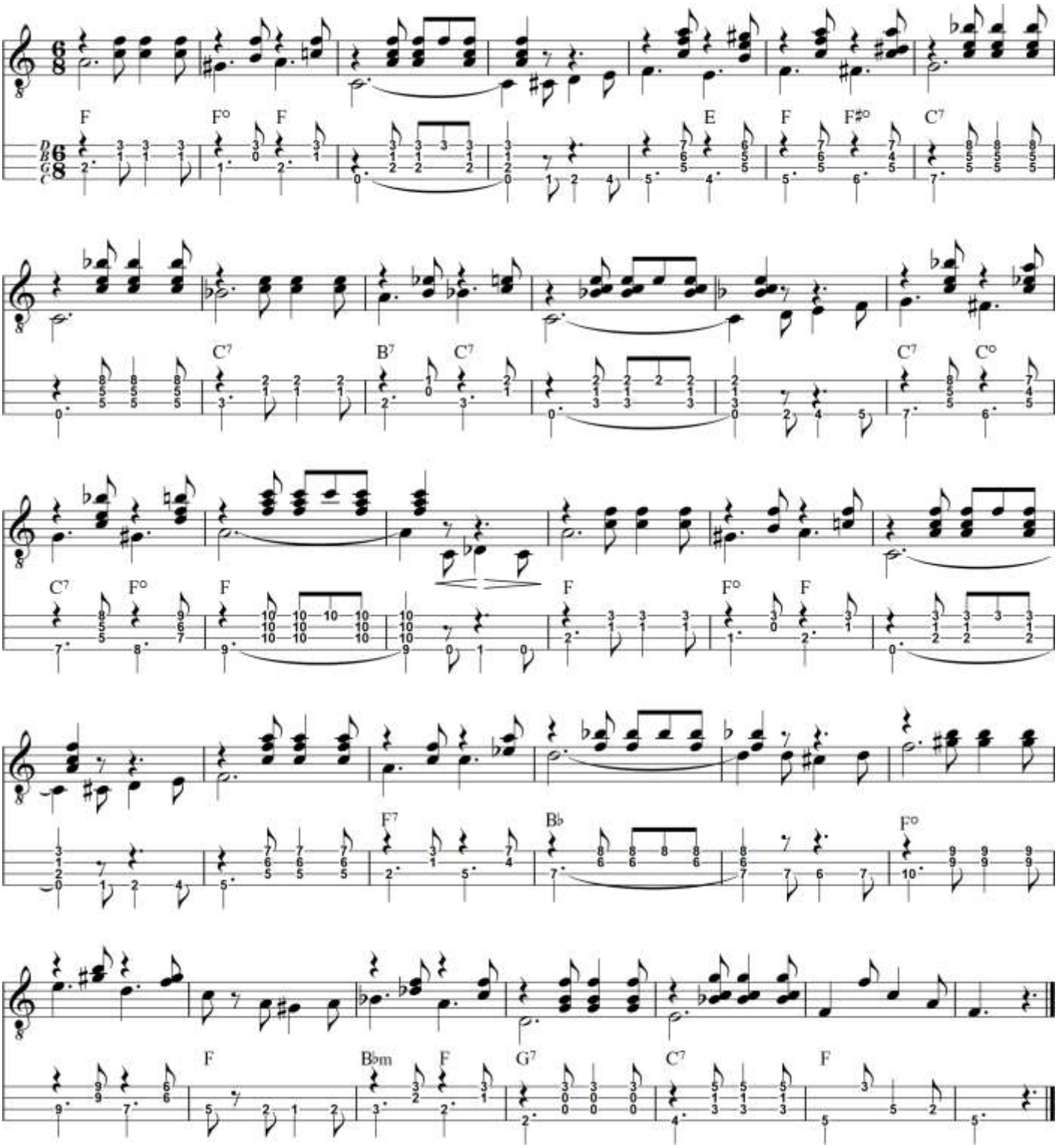
#2; *Loch Lomond,* from Emile Grimshaw's Scotch Broth

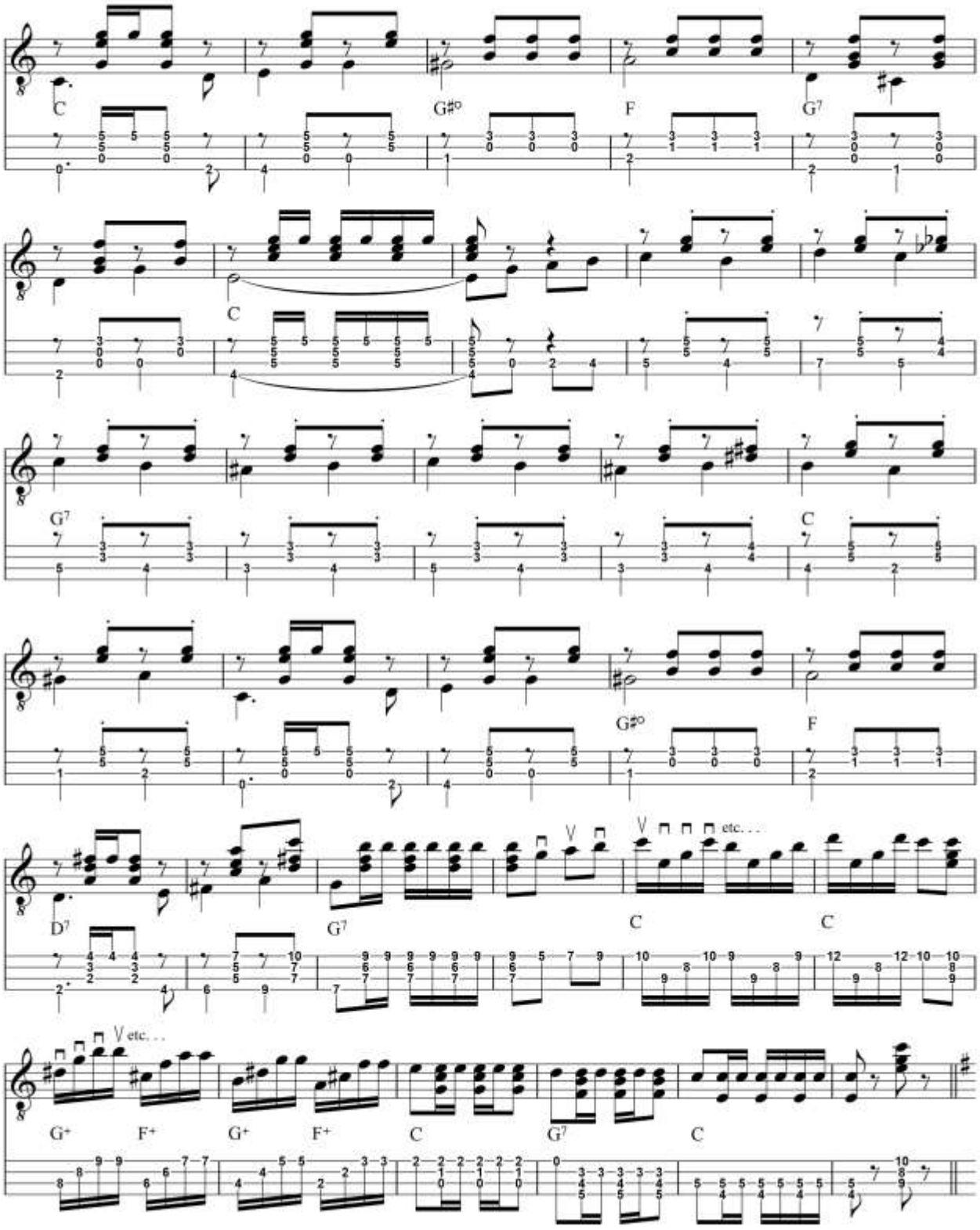


#3, *Oh Susanna*, from Perry Bechtel's Dixie Medley



#4, Emile Grimshaw's *Return of The Regiment* (Trio)



A Banjo Vamp

(page 4 supplement,
as played by Ron Hinkle)