

On-line Musicians' Workshops: Hints & Tips



A Trip to Bavaria (4x32 Reel)

Welcome to these hints and tips for the reel A Trip to Bavaria. They were originally part of the materials for the Berks/Hants/Surrey Border Branch musicians' collaborative project that ran from 1st January 2021 until 1st March 2021 and which formed the basis of a Celebration of Music and Dance streamed on the evening of Saturday 13th March 2021.

Of course, these hints and tips will only scratch the surface of what gets covered in a lot more detail on a normal musicians' workshop.

So let's have a quick look at the style and technique that makes these reels uniquely Scottish and that will give the dancers the inspiration they need to dance well.

Hopefully you will have already had a quick look at the materials that I have prepared so that the tunes are familiar.

You can of course use these hints and tips alongside the backing tracks and videos that are accessed from the workshop web site at www.craigellachie-band.co.uk/

What is contained in these hints and tips is not 'the gospel' of what is right or wrong. It is based on over 40 years playing for Scottish Country Dancing: what I have learnt from watching, listening and talking to other musicians and what dancers tell me helps them dance well and with enthusiasm.

Have a go at what I suggest (even if you disagree) as in coming to that decision the process of thinking about how you play will invariably have changed what you do.

Our aim as musicians then is to lift the dancers off the floor and inspire them to want to move to our music. This doesn't just happen and there are things that we do as musicians that cause this to happen. These hints and tips will hopefully begin to reveal some of the mystique that surrounds playing for dancing.

First off let's quickly look at some instrumental technique that will help you on your way. I suggest that you use the first tune in the set to explore this.

Articulation – this is instrument-based

Your playing needs to be crisp and light and not legato and turgid. So what do I mean by that?

For accordions – it is almost as if the RH notes are hot, the LH is a crisp Bass – not what some call a 'honking bass'. This gives more air in the bellows to use for the nuances and expression I want with individual notes. I also try and keep to four bars in – four bars out with the bellows – this will depend on how tight your box is – but ensures that you can keep control of them.

Mark your music if you find this difficult at first - you will find that you will vary this depending on what you are playing – it is not an exact science.

For fiddles – generally try and use the upper part of the bow, and aim for a down bow on the first beat of the bar using slurs, bowings of convenience and/or single bows where appropriate.

On-line Musicians' Workshops: Hints & Tips



For keyboards – keep your bass crisp and listen to the **balance** between your RH and LH and keep your RH short. Also think about the light and shade of your RH technique. You also have to listen very carefully and ensure that your RH chord – the off-beat – is placed precisely on the third and sixth quaver in each bar and that they do not creep forward.

If you have a drummer playing with you who uses a hi-hat then you may need to do some work ensuring their hi-hat and you second and fourth beats of each bar are together.

Now play the first 16 bars of Remmots of Herford (original tune for A Trip to Bavaria) – that is the first 2 As. For the first 8 play as you did before reading these notes and then for the second 8 I want you to make a conscious change that embraces what I've just talked about.

[\(Remots of Herford 16 bars\)](#)

Did you hear and feel the difference? Again imagine if you were a dancer the effect that this would have on you. You now need to try and build that into your playing every time you start.

Phrasing:

Like Jigs most reels are phrased the same – that is 2-bars, followed by 2-bars followed by a 4 bar phrase. It is clearly evident.

This means that you will be focusing on the links between bars 2 into 3, and 4 into 5 which is the link into the four bar phrase that plays out to the end of bar 8. Then bar 8 – 1 and off you go around again.

Take the first 16 bars of the Remots of Herford again and see if we can put this phrasing into practice.

[\(Remots of Herford - 16 bars\)](#)

Repeat that exercise again but this time for the first 8 I want you to just play the notes – just like you were at the beginning of these hints and tips - then on the second 8 bars really think about the articulation **and now the phrasing as well** – feel the difference – and whilst in this 'multi-task' mode imagine the effect that this will have on the dancer.

[\(Remots of Herford 16 bars\)](#)

Hopefully you will have noticed the difference – this helps the dancer move and especially gives them the impetus for the flight they may need.

See if we can sustain this over the first 32 bars of the Remots of Herford

[\(Remots of Herford – 32 bars\)](#)

Did it work? – You can obviously go back to repeat points and check detail.

On-line Musicians' Workshops: Hints & Tips



Here are some other points that you will need to consider when you work on the other tunes.

Remots of Herford:

Keep your playing crisp and build in the phrasing. This is a good tune to really get this into your musical thinking as it is relatively easy. Remember if you are a pianist or a drummer this phrasing is as equally as important to your playing as it is to the melody line players.

The Smith's Farewell to Shetland:

Notice the one-note difference between the opening phrase of the B music at bar 17 with the repeat of the phrase at bar 21.

Scapa Flow:

The second time through the A music you use the bars printed above the stave.

Remots of Herford (return in A)

There is a lot going on in this return to the original tune. Some serious and some fun! In bars 3 – 4 and 7 – 8 both of these bars are tacet (silent). I have left the metronome tick in for the time being – I will remove this later. When we play this at dances usually the dance floor fills in the missing bars!

The second part in the B music is for fiddles so fiddles would you please record the last tune again but with the 2nd part. This will only be 32 bars.

The master track for this is here and I have given you the 16 bars (whole B music) of the previous tune to help you get into it.

[\(Remots of Herford 32 bars in A\)](#)

Now play through the whole set – twice each tune and put into practice all that we have discussed here so far.

[\(A Trip to Bavaria 4x32\)](#) MP3

[\(A Trip to Bavaria 4x32 bars\)](#) Video

Remember those instrumental techniques that give you nice crisp playing, phrasing 2+2+4 and those little note nuances which all go together to help make it Scottish in style.

Happy playing!