

# Opera Reel

The musical score for "Opera Reel" is written in D major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of 12 staves of music. The key signature is D major, and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes various chords and ornaments:

- Staff 1:** Chords D and A7. Includes a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 2:** Chords D, G, A7, and D.
- Staff 3:** Chords A7, D, G (with triplet), and A7.
- Staff 4:** Section **A** (boxed). Chords A7, D, A7, and D.
- Staff 5:** First ending (1.) with chords G and A7. Second ending (2.) with chords G and A7. Section **B** (boxed) with chords D and G.
- Staff 6:** Chords A7, D, and A7 (with first ending 1.).
- Staff 7:** Section **C** (boxed). Chords A7, D, and D (with first ending 1.).
- Staff 8:** Chords A7, D, D, A7, and D.
- Staff 9:** Chords A7, D, and A7.
- Staff 10:** Chords D, A7, and D.

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"Opera Reel", also known as "Celebrated Opera Reel", "Duke of Cornwall's Reel", "Grand Opry Reel", "McDonagh's Reel" and "Tommy Gunn's Reel" is an American, Irish, Scottish and English reel known in Missouri, New York, New Hampshire, New England, southwestern Pennsylvania and Michigan in D Major (most versions) or C Major (Howe/Accordeon). It is played in standard or DDae fiddle tunings. The parts are played ABCD (Silberberg), ABCDD (Christeson), AABBC (Ruth), AABBCDD (Bayard, Brody, Ford, Gow, Howe, Kennedy, Linscott, Sweet), AA'BBCCDD (Phillips): ABBCDD (Cole, Miller & Perron), ABBCDD (Bronner).

Bayard (1981) did not find it in any collection older than the early 19th century (however, earlier printings did exist).

Despite the tune's association with New England contra dancing, an American claim of provenance (or even partial provenance) is not supported by the evidence.

"Opera Reel" was published in Dublin in 1795 in a gentleman's literary journal called **Walker's Hibernian**. Anne Loughran and Vic Gammon's **Sussex Tune Book** (English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1982) contains what may be a cognate or ancestral melody under the title "The Duke of Cornwall's Reel" sourced from a manuscript music book compiled by William Aylmore of West Wittering (Sussex, England). Aylemore was a clarinet player whose book contains dance, military and religious music and is dated 1796 in one place and 1818 in another.

"Opera Reel" is one of "100 essential Missouri tunes" listed by Missouri fiddler Charlie Walden. It was also in the repertory of influential Texas fiddler Benny Thomasson.

This transcription is close to the version in Cole's.

The similar title, "Celebrated Opera Reel" was used by Elias Howe in his mid-1850's publications, but that name has also been employed for other tunes.

It was printed in Adam's **Old Time Fiddlers' Favorite Barn Dance Tunes** (1928), Bayard's **Dance to the Fiddle** (1981), Brody's **Fiddler's Fakebook** (1983), R.P. Bronner's **Old Time Music Makers of New York State** (1987), Christeson's **Old Time Fiddler's Repertory, vol. 1** (1973), Cole's **1000 Fiddle Tunes** (1940), DeVille's **Universal Favorite Contra Dance Album** (1905), Ford's **Traditional Music of America** (1940), Harding's **Original Collection** (1928), John Gow's **A Favorite Collection of Slow Airs, Strathspeys and Reels** (c. 1804), Howe's **Complete Preceptor for the Accordeon** (1843), Howe's **Musician's Omnibus, No. 1** (1861), Howe's **Diamond School for the Violin** (1851), Jarman's **Old Time Fiddlin' Tunes**, Kennedy's **Fiddler's Tune-Book: Reels & Rants, Flings & Fancies** (1997), Kerr's **Merry Melodies, vol. 4** (c. 1880's), Laufman's **Traditional Barn Dances with Calls & Fiddling** (2009), Edmund Lee's **Mrs. Parker's Selection of Scotch Tunes, Strathspeys and Reels**, Linscott's **Folk Songs of Old New England** (1939), Low's **The Dulcimer Instructor** (1858), Miller & Perron's **New England Fiddler's Repertoire** (1983), Phillips' **Traditional American Fiddle Tunes, vol. 1** (1994), Robbins's **Collection of 200 Jigs, Reels, and Country Dances** (1933), Ruth's **Pioneer Western Folk Tunes** (1948), Silberberg's **Fiddle Tunes I Learned at the Tractor Tavern** (2002), Sweet's **Fifer's Delight** (1964/1981), Sym's **Sym's Old Time Dances** (1930) and Wilson's **A Companion to the Ballroom** (1816 & 1840).

It was recorded by Rodney Miller on **New England Chestnuts** (1980), Jasper Bisbee (Michigan)(78 RPM) 1923, The Canterbury Country Orchestra, F&W String Band, Arm and Hammer String Band on **Stay on the Farm**, De Dannan on **Ballroom** (1987), Grant Rogers on **Ballads and Fiddle Tunes**, Norman Blake on **Rising Fawn String Ensemble**, Frank Ferrel In **Boston Fiddle: The Dudley Street Tradition**, Grant Lamb on **Tunes From Home**, Trapezoid on **Trapezoid** (1975) and Old Bay Ceili Band on **Crabs in the Skillet** (2011).