

Blue Mule

The musical score for "Blue Mule" is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a boxed section label 'A'. The second staff contains a first ending bracket labeled '1.' above it. The third staff contains a boxed section label 'B' and a second ending bracket labeled '2.' above it. The fourth and fifth staves continue the piece with various chords and first/second endings.

Staff 1: Chords: G, D7₃, C. Section A.

Staff 2: Chords: G, D7₃, G. First ending bracket labeled '1.' above.

Staff 3: Chords: G, G, C. Section B. Second ending bracket labeled '2.' above.

Staff 4: Chords: D7, G, D7, G, D7.

Staff 5: Chords: G, G. First ending bracket labeled '1.' above, followed by a double bar line and a second ending bracket labeled '2.' above.

"Blue Mule", also known as "Old Blue Mule" and "Austin Breakdown" is an American reel in cut time and G Major. The parts are played AB (Silberberg), AA'BB' (Lamancusa) or AA'BB'C (Beisswenger & McCann).

"Blue Mule" was recorded for the Library of Congress by musicologist/folklorist Vance Randolph in the early 1940's from Ozarks Mountains fiddlers, where it is a regionally popular tune formerly seldom heard in other parts of the country.

The tune may have had origins in a hornpipe and is structurally similar. Mark Wilson sees resemblance with the tune "Nancy's Got a Pretty Dress On".

There is some speculation it may have derived from the play-party song "Skip to My Lou".

"Blue Mule" is usually heard played in two strains. Source Glen Rickman (1901-1982) believed the tune to have been played during the Civil War and identified his additional third part as the one a "Rebel" cousin had played [Beisswenger & McCann].

Guthrie Meade gives two early 78RPM recorded sources: Bob Miller's Hinky Dinkers (1930) and Jess Hillard & His West Virginia Hillbillies (1933).

The banjo tablature is from John Letscher.

The tune was in the repertoire of Missouri fiddlers Art Galbraith (1909-1993, who said it was learned from older members of his family) and Bob Holt (1930-2004).

It was recorded by Bill (Willie) Bilyeau for the Library of Congress.

It was printed in Beisswenger & McCann's **Ozarks Fiddle Music** (2008), Silberberg's **Tunes I Learned at Tractor Tavern** (2002) and Lamancusa's **The Gettysburg Collection of Old-Time Fiddle Tunes** (2021).

It was also recorded by Art Galbraith on **Dixie Blossoms** (1981) and Art Galbraith on **Dixie Blossoms** (1980).