

Hangman's Reel

The musical score for "Hangman's Reel" is written in D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a key signature change from D major to A major (one sharp) and contains a first ending bracket labeled 'A'. The second staff continues in A major and includes a first ending bracket labeled '1. D'. The third staff features a second ending bracket labeled '2. D' and a section labeled 'B'. The fourth staff contains a section labeled 'C'. The fifth staff includes a section labeled 'D'. The sixth and seventh staves conclude the piece with various chord progressions and repeat signs.

Section A: A major, E7, A, E7, A, E7, A, E7

Section B: D, A, A, E7, A

Section C: E7, A, E7, A, E7

Section D: D, A, A, D, A, D, A, D

"Hangman's Reel" is an old-time breakdown from southwestern Va. in A Major. It is played in AEae or AEac# fiddle tunings. The parts are played AABB, ABCD (Silberberg), AABCCDD (Songer), AABCCDD (Kuntz) or AABCC'DD (Phillips).

The origins of the tune are somewhat obscure. Some players claimed a British source but many collectors doubt it. Susan Songer and Clyde Curley (1997) report that New York fiddler Judy Hyman (of the Horseflies) believes it originally derived from the Québécois tune "*Reel du Pendu*" (Hanged Man's Reel) and that it was rendered in a Southern old-time style by younger upstate New York fiddlers. Whether the tune was a Southern traditional tune or a "revival" processing, it has since become a very popular "festival tune" among younger old-time fiddlers and frequently heard at square dances.

It was printed in Phillips' **Traditional American Fiddle Tunes, vol. 1** (1994), Silberberg's **Tunes I Learned at Tractor Tavern** (2002) (appears as "Hanged Man's Reel" and Songer's **Portland Collection** (1997).

It was recorded by Kirk Sutphin on **Old Roots and New Branches** (1994), John McCutcheon on **The Wind That Shakes the Barley** (1977), The Heartbeats on **Living in Black and White** (1990), Bill Northcutt, Bill Clemmons and Doc Hamilton on **Old Time Hoedown** (1968).