

Step to the Music, Johnny

The musical score for "Step to the Music, Johnny" is presented in five staves. The key signature is D major (one sharp) and the time signature is 2/4. The first staff begins with a boxed letter 'A' above a 'D' chord. The second staff has 'D' and 'A' above it. The third staff has a boxed letter 'B' above a 'D' chord, followed by 'A'. The fourth staff has 'D' and 'A'. The fifth staff has 'D'. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a reel.

"Step to the Music, Johnny" is in John LaMancusa's web collection where he attributes it to Bruce Green, a collector and player of old-time music of Kentucky. I have not found it listed on any of Green's CDs.

The tune is a reel in D major. The parts are played AABB.

The banjo arrangement is by John Letscher.

"Step to the Music, Johnny" is an obscure tune. It was printed in Ira W. Ford's **Traditional Music of America** (1940). Ford provided not only the tune, but in this case, the oral tradition handed down with it:

During the Civil War, a foraging party of Northern troops came upon a dance attended by a large body of Confederate soldiers. Surrounding the place and taking them by surprise, the invaders captured the Southerners without a shot being fired. The fiddler, not a soldier although a strong Southern sympathizer, became somewhat sarcastic in his remarks to the Northerners, so they decided to take him along with the other prisoners. One of the Yankees conceived the idea of having the fiddler play a lively tune to march by on their way back to the Northern lines. So, at the bayonet's point, the fiddler obeyed. From time to time the Yankees would yell: 'Step to the music, Johnny!' which subsequently became the accepted name for this tune.

It was recorded by Jim Taylor and Friends on **The Civil War Collection Volume Two** (2001).