

## Music on the Web - Some Basic info and Starting Points

Chuck Boody August, 2008/June 2009

### Finding Music to Listen to or Purchase

**<http://www.live365.com/>** Literally Thousands of radio stations you can listen to free on your computer or pay a bit and get higher quality sound and fewer (or no) commercials. Every genera you can think of. Search of "Hammered Dulcimer" shows 9 stations.

**<http://cdbaby.com/>** CDBaby is probably the best single source of music from independent artists. You can search for artists, genera, style, instrument, and a variety of other ways. You can listen to cuts up to 2 minutes in length from all or most of the tracks on albums and buy albums or mp3 files (see below) direct. Best to try several searches. For example "Hammered Dulcimer" does not bring up Karen Ashbrook's albums, but a search by her name will.

### Finding Music to learn from notation or by ear.

#### Common Storage Formats:

**Graphic:** GIF PDF PNG - All of these are common ways to store "sheet music." PDF gives the highest quality print outs, but all three provide perfectly useable copies. Most modern computers have built in software to handle these formats. If you don't you can get a free PDF reader at **[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)** You will also find some Postscript (PS) files on the web. On the Mac these will be automatically converted to PDF by the Preview program that comes on all Macs. I am not sure how they are handled on the PC.

**Sound:** WMA (sometimes WMV), and mp3 files can be found on the web and provide "real" music. Mp3 files are the files that small audio players like the iPod and many cell phones use. How good they sound will depend on the encoding method used. They can be nearly indistinguishable from CD audio or no better than the sound from a cheap table radio playing AM radio.

MIDI files provide very small files that will play through MIDI instruments that are built into most modern computers. How good they sound depends on the quality of the MIDI instruments used to play them. Strictly speaking MIDI files are essentially indications of when and how a note is begun, how long it lasts and how loud it sounds. They are not sound files and in fact can be converted to music notation by many programs. One of their most useful qualities is the ability to change the playing speed making it easy to play along.

Again most computers have software to play these formats. If yours doesn't you can go to **<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>** and get quicktime free which will play most of these and many more formats.

#### Music Notation Schemes

There are many schemes for encoding music so it can be printed out. Every music notation program has a language associated with it.

## ABC

Only one language is commonly used by a variety of programs and that is **ABC**. ABC began life as a simple way to quickly jot down tunes and has evolved into a fairly complete method for notating all aspects of music. See the abc example sheet. There are tens of thousands of tunes available in ABC, and fortunately there are simple ways to convert the language into either standard notation or MIDI files that can be played. The starting place to find out about ABC (which by the way is not usually capitalized) is <http://www.walshaw.plus.com/abc/> Chris Walshaw was one of the developers of the language and remains involved with it. Sites where you can get programs to translate abc into notation or sound are listed there. Some common ones are listed below and the Walshaw site list all of them.

[http://www.lesession.co.uk/abc/abc\\_notation.htm](http://www.lesession.co.uk/abc/abc_notation.htm) One of several tutorials on abc on the web, and a good one. Google “abc tutorial.”

<http://www.abc2win.com/> abc2win was the program that first appeared which could easily translate abc files into notation or sound. While it has some serious limitations, particularly the lack of error checking which has resulted in thousands of sloppy abc files on the web, it remains the standard on the PC. To fully use it will cost about \$25, though you can use most of it free.

<http://www.barfly.dial.pipex.com/> Barfly is the standard Mac program. It is shareware but most of the features are available free.

<http://celticmusic.ca/skink.html> Five Line Skink is a free program that runs on both platforms and works well. Version 2 adds many features including superior printing using abcm2ps. Particularly good with songs that have words in context. A fine program getting better.

[http://www.concertina.net/tunes\\_convert.html](http://www.concertina.net/tunes_convert.html) is a site that will automatically convert an abc file into a variety of printed music and sound formats. There is one “gotcha” in using it that is covered on the conversion example sheet.

<http://www.folkinfo.org/songs/abconvert.php> A second site that will convert an abc file. The same “gotcha” exists for this site, but they have a helpful error message.

### Other common notation formats on the web

You will also find many tune files in the format the program Noteworthy Composer uses and in the format Band in a Box uses. Noteworthy Composer is a very good program and there are free readers for it (see <http://www.noteworthysoftware.com/nwc2/viewer.htm> ) but is available only for the PC and not for the Mac. Band in a Box files can be used on either platform, but you must own the program. <http://www.band-in-a-box.com/> There are free demo versions of the program though that are time limited if you wish to try it.

## Sites for collections of music (just a starting point)

### A couple of general warnings

There are many files of music on the web with tunes that are not in the public domain. You can easily find, for example, “Ashokan Farewell,” “Crested Hen(s).” or “Dark Island” none of which is in the public domain. Most of the composers of these and similar tunes are perfectly willing to have their music distributed, but if you plan to do that you should contact the composer for permission to do so. Be as respectful of composers as you are of their often wonderful music. And if you are not, they can bring legal action.

There are many badly transcribed versions of tunes on the web. This happens when someone who is not particularly familiar with music notation decides to write down a tune and make it available. You can find 3/4 tunes transcribed in 4/4 and all sorts of other common errors. You can also find errors in the musical language (like abc) that may change the length of particular notes. You can find some truly strange suggestions for chords. And, you can find legitimate quite different versions of the same tune. So, use the music you get as a guide and not as a gospel.

### Downloading items that show as links

Often the items are designed to be viewed or heard on the computer. If you want to collect the sound or sheet music files for use off the computer you can usually right click (on a PC or Mac with that capability) or hold down the control key and click (on the Mac) on the link to the file. Usually this will bring up a dialogue allowing you to save the file.

**<http://www.zamzar.com/>** A site that will download and convert most videos and audio files on the net...free! You can also pay and get more power and capability. Instructions are quite clear and a simple way is provided to add the capability to your web browser with a single click.

### Sites with sheet music and/or sound files of Traditional music

**<http://www.slowplayers.org/>** MIDI, GIF and ABC files of the “standard” Irish session tunes. Links to many related sites.

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/r2music/folk/sessions/>** You can print the music here, but you’ll need special software to capture the music. The sound is excellent sets of session tunes played by excellent players. If Irish sessions are your thing this is a wonderful starting point.

**<http://www.hetzlersfakebook.com/>** about 550 traditional tunes in rather nice MIDI versions. Intended for “play along” use. Not limited to Celtic tunes. Some PDF files of notation for selected pieces and some historical information about some tunes. A truly excellent source for play along tunes for the traditional music player.

**<http://www.walshaw.plus.com/abc/>** Lists most of the large collections of abc files. A good place to browse.

**<http://trillian.mit.edu/~jc/cgi/abc/tunefind>** A search by title or part of title or country or almost anything else will return a list of the files found with options to see them as gifs and/or download them in almost any format. You can miss your tune if you put in too much of the title.

You sometimes need to be creative about how to search. Be warned that there are some files out here that are very badly done. But there are probably 40,000 files indexed (or so). John Chambers has indexed most of the other common abc sites.

**<http://www.oldmusicproject.com/>** Gateway to complete works of Carolan, O’Neills Music of Ireland and several other large collections. ABC, MIDI, GIF and NMC (Noteworthy Composer) formats.

**<http://www.thesession.org/index.php>** Supposedly devoted just to Irish music, but really much more than that. Many tunes with abc, printable sheet music and comments about the tunes. Also some lively discussion sections, and a large listing of contents of recordings. Be careful with the transcriptions, there are many badly transcribed tunes. Usually the comments sections point that out though.

**<http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/index.html>** The Fiddler’s Companion. Many abc files and extensive historical information about tunes and tune history.

**<http://www.kitchenmusician.net/>** Home site of the “Kitchen Musicians” Sara and Maynard Johnson. Many many tunes in GIF and MIDI format, Serious and humorous historical information and much much more.

**[http://www.cranfordpub.com/tunes/abcs/abc\\_tunes.htm](http://www.cranfordpub.com/tunes/abcs/abc_tunes.htm)** Mostly Cape Breton pieces. ABC, GIF and MP3 files of real performances. Thousands of tunes

**<http://rigel.csuchico.edu/~pubscout/songs.html>** Mostly ABC files, some GIF. Heavily Celtic, but also common tunes from other traditions. Well selected. Some songs with words.

**<http://www.folkinfo.org/songs/>** An extensive collection of songs (not tunes) with words. Available as ABC, GIF, PDF, MIDI and test files. Sadly no chord names are included. Music from excellent sources and well transcribed.

**<http://www.campin.me.uk/>** Jack Campin’s page has wonderful and unusual collections in abc format. Mostly but not all Scottish. An excellent discussion of modes in scottish music includes more than 200 music examples in abc.

**<http://members.aol.com/printsnat/midifile.htm>** A small collection of MIDI files presenting the unadorned tunes. Much basic repertoire is here and it is a good starting point for “by ear” people.

**<http://www.me.psu.edu/lamancusa/tunes.htm>** Mostly Old Time Fiddle tunes, but many other repertoires are here too. MIDI and PDF files and some field recordings in mp3 format. Lots of standards here, I think most of what is played in the Evert Jams I’ve been in is here.

**<http://www.contemplator.com/folkmid.html#top>** Lyrics and MIDI files of a large number of songs (as opposed to tunes).

**<http://sniff.numachi.com/>** An alternate site for the Digital Tradition. Thousands of traditional songs. This site provides ABC, Postscript, GIF, PNG MIDI, Pennywhistle and Lap Dulcimer Tab versions

**<http://dulcimers.com/tunes/index.shtml>** Sharon Skaryd’s collection of tunes. MIDI and PDF files. A good source for many common Evert tunes.

**<http://www.village-music-project.org.uk/about.htm>** A growing collection of tunes found in various British manuscripts. ABC files.

**<http://www.themorrisring.org/more/Tunes/index.html>** A handbook of Morris dances collected by location. Variants of many of the tunes as used in various dance groups. ABC

**<http://music.gordfisch.net/tradmusic/pmwiki.php/Main/HomePage>** Traditional songs and dances. ABC notation. Tunes organized by dance type.

**<http://p.peyremorte.free.fr/Partitions/Partitions.php?lng=en&idx=29>** Lots of various folk scores. Formatted for Melody/Harmony assistant, but readable, printable, and playable using a free plug in. Instructions on site. Many continental Europe tunes.

### Collections of other kinds of music

**<http://www.musicaviva.com/fsmd/index.tpl>** A directory of sources...Many Many! A very extensive collection. Really a collection of collections and a grand starting place.

**<http://www.alisdair.com/gearsoftware/biablanks.html>** The starting place for files in Band in a Box format. You need to own Band In A Box to use these files. You can find an excellent collection of fiddletunes and bluegrass tunes there.

**<http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/>** Every Christmas piece you ever heard of. Mostly just the texts, but some have MIDI files, PDF files, GIF files, or Noteworthy Composer music notation format.

**<http://ibiblio.org/mutopia/index.html>** Mutopia-an ongoing collection of music from classical composers. PDF and .ps files available. A broad spectrum of kinds of music.

For hymns Google “Hymnal” There are extensive collections available mostly in MIDI and Lyrics format only

### Videos (see note on how to capture)

**<http://tradlessons.com/>** Videos intended to help learn specific tunes on specific instruments

**<http://www.youtube.com/>** If you don't know about youtube you probably need more help than this workshop can give. Lots of videos of all kinds and qualities of musical performances.

## ABC Convert-A-Matic

Simply paste the text for a **single** ABC tune in the box below and click on the “Submit” button.

```
T:Paddy O'Rafferty
C:Trad.
M:6/8
K:D
dff_ cee|def_ gfe|dff_ cee|dfe_ dBA|\
dff_ cee|def_ gfe|faf_ gfe|1_ dfe_ dBA:|2_ dfe_ dcB|]
~A3_ B3|gfe_ fdB|AFA_ B2c|dfe_ dcB|\
~A3_ ~B3|efe_ efg|faf_ gfe|1_ dfe_ dcB:|2_ dfe_ dBA|]
fAA_ eAA|def_ gfe|fAA_ eAA|dfe_ dBA|\
fAA_ eAA|def_ gfe|faf_ gfe|dfe_ dBA:|
```



## ABC Convert-A-Matic

Simply paste the text for a **single** ABC tune in the box below and click on the “Submit” button.

```
X:1
T:Paddy O'Rafferty
C:Trad.
M:6/8
K:D
dff_ cee|def_ gfe|dff_ cee|dfe_ dBA|\
dff_ cee|def_ gfe|faf_ gfe|1_ dfe_ dBA:|2_ dfe_ dcB|]
~A3_ B3|gfe_ fdB|AFA_ B2c|dfe_ dcB|\
~A3_ ~B3|efe_ efg|faf_ gfe|1_ dfe_ dcB:|2_ dfe_ dBA|]
fAA_ eAA|def_ gfe|fAA_ eAA|dfe_ dBA|\
fAA_ eAA|def_ gfe|faf_ gfe|dfe_ dBA:|
```


**Title: Paddy O'Rafferty**

**Note:** the image below is just a low-resolution preview. For the best quality, be sure to print out the PDF version! Visit <http://www.adobe.com> to get the latest Acrobat (PDF) file viewer -- it's free. Yes, the MIDI version is approved by the International Elevator Music Society, and no, I can't make it better. [Click here](#) for information and help about the format options below.

[\[MIDI music file\]](#) [\[PDF Sheet Music\]](#) [\[ABC source\]](#)

**Paddy O'Rafferty**

*Trad.*



The image shows a musical score for the piece "Paddy O'Rafferty". It consists of three staves of music written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 8/8. The music is a traditional Irish dance tune. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second staff has a first ending bracket labeled "1" and a second ending bracket labeled "2". The third staff continues the melody. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Amazing

Type part of a title or a perl pattern and click on the  button.

Options

[title](#)  [music](#)  [codes](#)  [contour](#)

Width:  min  thin  wide  max

Limit:  Threshold:  Sel:

--- formats ---

**Get** [txt](#) [abc](#) [ps](#) [eps](#) [pdf](#) [gif](#) [png](#) [midi](#)

--- Tune information ---

**XM K Hdrs Title**

1	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 4/4 Dmaj LR	Amazing Adventures Of D
2	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	11 3/4 D "CLw	Amazing Grace (#007)
3	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	11 3/4 D "CLw	Amazing Grace (#007)
4	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 3/4 G ILQZ	amazing grace
5	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	737 3/4 G LQSZ	Amazing Grace
6	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	737 3/4 G LQSZ	Amazing Grace
7	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	18 3/4 G "BLRSZ	Amazing Grace
8	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	18 3/4 G "BLRSZ	Amazing Grace
9	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	2850 3/4 G CFLOWZ	Amazing grace
10	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	2850 3/4 G CFLOWZ	Amazing grace
11	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	2845 3/4 G CFLOWZ	Amazing grace
12	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G "LZ	Amazing Grace
13	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G "LZ	Amazing Grace
14	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G "LZ	Amazing Grace
15	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G CLQZ	Amazing Grace
16	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G CLQZ	Amazing Grace
17	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G CLQZ	Amazing Grace
18	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G CLQZ	Amazing Grace
19	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G CLQZ	Amazing Grace
20	<a href="#">get</a> <a href="#">txt</a> <a href="#">abc</a> <a href="#">ps</a> <a href="#">eps</a> <a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">gif</a> <a href="#">png</a> <a href="#">midi</a>	1 9/8 G CLQZ	Amazing Grace

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