



# FIDDLE

## Triple Fiddle Harmony

by Cristina Seaborn

Triple fiddle is one of the fun traditions in fiddling and at fiddle contests. At Berklee College of Music, Matt Glaser had us come up with the harmony parts on the spot. Either the melody was on top, with the two harmony notes below; the melody was in the middle, sandwiched by the harmony parts; or the melody was on the bottom with both harmony parts above.

We switched who was playing the

melody or harmony parts every time we went through the same fiddle tune. We had to know the melody and the chords to do this well. Some fiddle tunes are more conducive to triple fiddle harmony. This is based on how much the melody uses the chord arpeggios, or how many runs (scales) there are in the melody.

One of my favorite triple fiddle tunes is *June Apple*. I wrote this with staggered

entrances for the melody and two harmony parts. Then we are in the thick of it with solid three-part harmony until the B section. The B section entrances are also staggered to give a little variety in the density of the triple fiddles.

An interesting thing about the triple fiddle harmony is that parallel fourths and fifths are part of the tradition. Most of the time, the harmony is in thirds. Occasion-

**June Apple — arr. Cristina Seaborn, © 2013**

ally you can use the parallel fourth or fifth for color.

The harmony parts stay within the chord. Third harmonies will work most of the time. Use your own aesthetic taste with the harmony notes you choose. If you don't like the note, you will be one note away from a note you will like.

Here is a little history on triple fiddle from *The Music of Bill Monroe* by Neil V. Rosenberg, Charles K. Wolfe: (pages 95 & 96). Go to [books.google](https://books.google) and search for "The Music of Bill Monroe."

"Who came up with the twin or triple fiddle idea is one of the more involved puzzles of [Bill] Monroe's music. Mac Wiseman had been using twin fiddles on some of his Dot

records and in personal appearances for about a year, Flat and Scruggs used Everett Lily and Howard "Howdy" Forrester on fiddles on two songs in a session in 1951: *Lonesome and Blue* and *My Darling's Last Goodbye*... [In 1954, re-recording *My Little Georgia Rose*,] it appears that Monroe, for the first time using a band that included three fiddles, wanted to see how his old favorite sounded when dressed up in a new sound."

For advanced players, Joshua Bell has a 1999 recording *Death by Triple Fiddle* on YouTube with Sam Bush, Mike Marshall and Edgar Meyer. The music download is available for \$1.29 at [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com).

For a much more accessible first piece,

I hope you enjoy playing triple fiddle on *June Apple*. My complete arrangement of *June Apple* is available within the *Seaborn Fiddle Medley* from JW Pepper <https://www.jwpepper.com>.

*Expert at fiddling and jazz improvisation, Cristina Seaborn holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in jazz violin performance from Berklee College of Music in Boston, and a Masters in Conducting for Orchestra from St. Cloud State University. She has produced an instructional video for fiddling through Mel Bay entitled Anyone Can Play Country Fiddle, CDs entitled Inside the Heart of a Musician, Seaborn Breeze, and Spirit Wind, and many arrangements for string orchestra. ♪*