

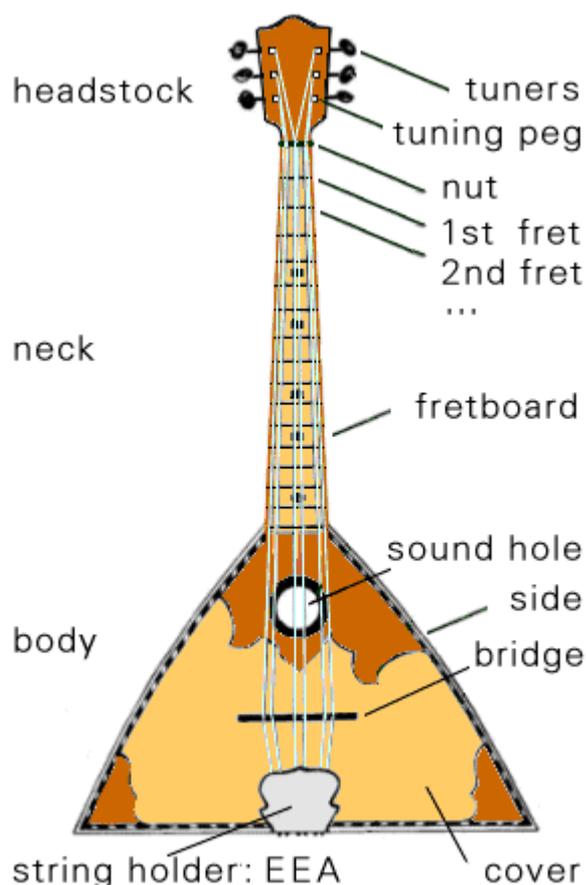


The Balalaika School

Here it is, the Balalaika, an instrument of the Russian people, small and slight and so modest with its three strings, and yet so versatile: It can – like the guitar, and very well also together with it – accompany songs with chords and give the song this typical Russian sound. But of course its speciality is to play melodies: To strum a cheerful dance song so playfully, to sing about lonely birch-trees and lost love so longingly, and to strike up a cossack dance so stimulatingly that nobody can sit still any longer – that's what only a Balalaika can do.

The Prim-Balalaika introduces itself

Its full name is "Prim-Balalaika", because it has – from the Second-Balalaika which is a little bigger, to the Bass-Balalaika which is as tall as a man – still five bigger sisters which play together in a Balalaika orchestra.



But all Balalaikas have this characteristic triangular shape. That was created in the 17th century as the simplified reproduction of an old-russian three-string lute called "Domra" which had a nearly circular, very skilfully and costly built resonance body – the common people could not afford to buy this precious instrument, and they copied it for themselves with a simple triangular body. So the Balalaika from the first beginning has been an instrument of the people, of the peasants and workmen, fishers and trappers, and in the Balalaika songs it tells us about the life of the simple people, about their work and their feasts, their sorrows and joys, about love and longing, and servitude and liberation ...

The Balalaika originally has three catgut resp. nowadays nylon strings, but today it is mostly built with six steel strings: The Balalaika loses a bit of its typical timbre, but it gains a brighter and more sonorous sound. Since the six strings are put on as three double strings there is actually no essential difference if you have a Balalaika with three strings or a Balalaika with

three double strings. So, if we talk about the "three strings" of the Balalaika in this course we mean the same also for the "three double strings".

Tuning, strumming and fingering

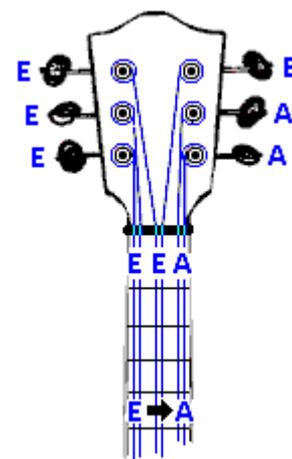
In former times, the Balalaika often had only two strings: "When they play the Balalaika they strike both strings with a finger or a quill, but they play the melody only on one string, while the other string adds perpetually the same tone" – this description in an old lexicon explains us some peculiarities of tuning and playing our Balalaika, even if it has three strings today and wants to be played with a bit more skilfulness.

Tuning

the Balalaika is rather simple: Two of the three strings resp. double strings have the same tone E" – this is the tone of the upper E-string of the guitar.

To keep your Balalaika always correctly tuned you could buy a pitch pipe for the guitar, blow its highest tone and tune the E-strings of your Balalaika until they match the tone of the pitch pipe.

In order to tune the A-string just hold down one of the E-strings at the fifth fret: So you will get the tone A" – the tone of the third Balalaika string.



Strumming

is done between the sound hole and the start of the neck, usually with the finger-tip of the right index finger.



You also can strum the strings with a pick made of felt or plastic: So some Balalaikas get a better sound – and some index fingers are very grateful for that.



In the pictures you see the posture of your right hand. It is not changed while you strum the strings. All the movement is done only by your wrist. Your hand moves up and down, quite loosely, but your arm does not move, also the fingers don't change their position. Your fingers are loose, not at all cramped, and if they hold a pick they grasp it softly.

The technique of strumming the Balalaika resembles that of other stringed instruments. Those who already play a guitar, a banjo, a ukulele or a mandolin will easily go through the following introduction into strumming techniques. Nevertheless, please, join in! Let us begin: Hold your Balalaika ready to play!

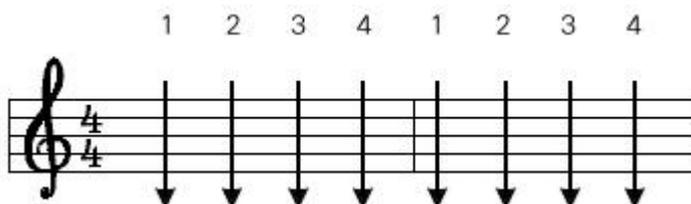
Your left hand is just holding the neck near the nut. That is the only thing it has to do now; your left fingers should not even touch the strings.

Your right hand is waiting above the strings between neck and sound hole, and soon it will take action – we can focus all our attention on our right hand.

For the accompaniment with chords we have to know how to beat the time, if possible in different manners according to the rhythms and the characters of different songs. If you join a merry party with your instrument and perform two or three Balalaika melodies, this could very well animate your friends to start singing their own songs, and suddenly you are urged to accompany their singing with chords. Of course the Balalaika can accompany also an English sea-shanty, or an Italian tarantella, and in its high pitch it sounds very nice together with guitar or akkordion music. You can find all the chords you might ever need in the Appendix of this book – but later! Now let's learn the basic strumming techniques first:

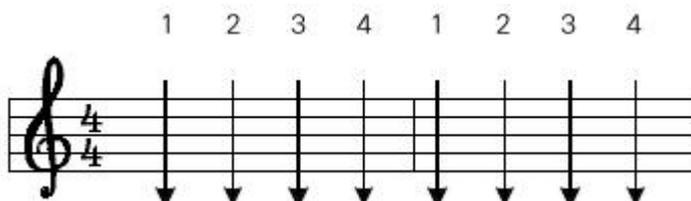
- If you strum the chords keeping time, your right hand moves downwards and thereby strikes the strings, then is moved back upwards without touching a string, and when it moves down the next time it strikes the strings again. Try this! Now let's beat a common time, with four crotchet notes, that means: Each time with four downward beats – please count aloud:

One – Two – Three – Four – One – Two – Three ...



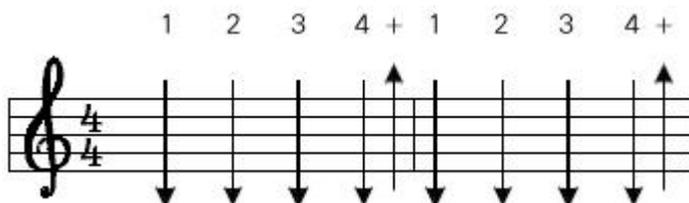
- In a common time, usually the first and the third beat are emphasized, while the second and the fourth beat sound a littler softer. Count aloud, and emphasize the "One" and "Three" with your voice and your strokes:

One – Two – Three – Four – One – Two – Three ...



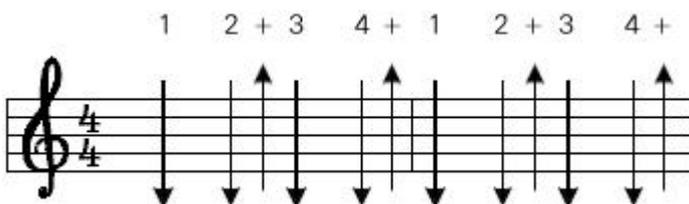
- To find an attractive variation we can strike the strings also when we move our hand upwards – here for example after the fourth stroke. Please count aloud, insert a quick "and" after the fourth stroke, and at the same time strike the strings when your hand moves backwards up:

One – Two – Three – Four and One – Two – Three ...



- In the same way we can double also the second beat. After some exercise, when you can play this rhythm fluently and quickly, it sounds like the gallop of horsemen:

One – Two and Three – Four and One – Two and Three ...



If you choose one of these strumming techniques or if you better invent a new beat of your own – that depends from the character of the song and from the rhythm of its melody.

For playing the melody it is necessary to follow the rhythm of the song even more precisely, because each note of the melody requires an own beat.

- You can pluck the tone alone: You strike only the one string which plays the melody with your right thumb or with a pick in one single downward movement so that it gives a single sound for each note.
- You can strum the tone as part of a chord: You strike all the strings in one single downward stroke so that the tone of the melody is to be heard together with accompanying tones on the other strings.
- You can play the tone with a tremolo: Your right hand is ceaselessly moving up and down and strikes the strings with each movement, downwards as well as upwards, so that the strokes follow each other without a break and you hear a long-lasting continuous sound. Performing a tremolo, you can strike all the strings so that you hear a chord, or quaver just the one string with the tone of the melody.

Please, try all these techniques, and if you feel that more exercise would be good here and there, you can do it in the course of the Balalaika School.

The tremolo is a special challenge, but every Balalaika player should master it. Let's start right now, and pay attention, that also here your right arm doesn't change its

position, that all the movement flows out of your wrist, that your wrist remains absolutely loose, and that only your right hand swings up and down quickly, and more quickly, and even more quickly – until you hear this lasting, whizzing, typical Balalaika sound.

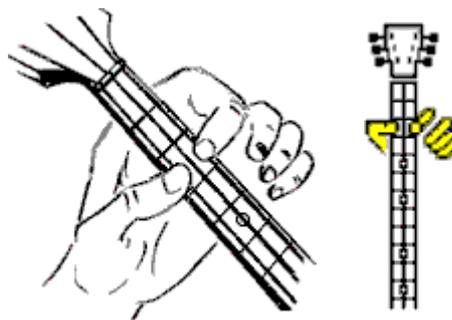
You can insert a tremolo into the songs where you like and so create an interesting and eventful performance.

Fingering

needs all five fingers of your left hand, including the thumb.

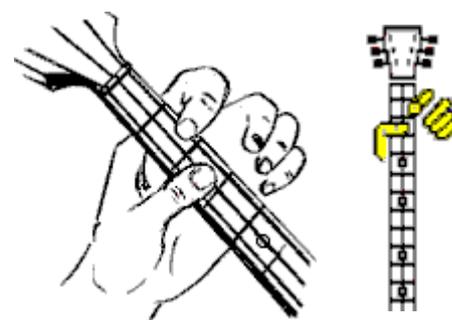
Here you see thumb and index finger grasping around the Balalaika's neck and holding the both outer strings, the outer E-string and the A-string, at the third fret, while the other E-string in the middle remains untouched and rings free when you strike the strings.

Try this! When all three strings ring clearly, this finger position gives a C-Major chord.



Also here thumb and index finger grasp around the neck of the Balalaika. Your thumb is lying across both E-strings at the third fret, while your index finger holds down the A-string at the second fret.

Try also this finger position until all strings ring clearly. This is the finger position for the G-Major chord.



You see that both finger positions are figured twice: First as a drawing, and then as a schematic pattern. From now on, you will see such a pattern above each note of our songs: It will show you the finger position you can use to play each note on the Balalaika. It is not a prescription, just a suggestion: If you find a better finger position, use yours!

Now try the change between the two finger positions you have just learnt:

 <p>C-Major position and check: Do all strings ring? Okay! Then ...</p>	 <p>G-Major position and check: Do all strings ring? Okay! Then ...</p>	 <p>C-Major position and check: Do all strings ring? Okay! Then ...</p>	 <p>G-Major position and check: Do all strings ring? Okay! Go on ...</p>
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Here's another fine exercise: Change the finger positions keeping time! Strike a common beat, and play four crotchets in C-Major, then four crotchets in G-Major, then again four crotchets in C-Major and so on. Count aloud, and change at "One":

C – Two – Three – Four – G – Two – Three – Four – C – Two – Three – Four ...

The diagram shows three groups of guitar chord diagrams. The first group is for C major, with fingerings 2, 3, and 4. The second group is for G major, with fingerings 2, 3, and 4. The third group is for C major, with an ellipsis. Below the diagrams is a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The staff shows a series of downstrokes corresponding to the rhythm: four downstrokes for the first measure, four for the second, four for the third, and four for the fourth.

When you can keep time without being put out by the change, we can dare to accompany our first song:

Our first song: "Evening bells"

We accompany the song now with the two chords C-Major and G-Major.

Evening bells

arranged for the accompaniment with two chords

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system includes a guitar diagram, a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef, and lyrics. The first system shows the C major chord (fingerings 2, 3, 4) for the first four beats and the G major chord (fingerings 2, 3, 4) for the last two beats. The lyrics are "Ve - tsher - ni zvon, ve - tsher - ni zvon,". The second system shows the G major chord (fingerings 2, 3, 4) for the first four beats and the C major chord (fingerings 2, 3, 4) for the last two beats. The lyrics are "kak mno - ga dum na - vo - dit on.".

Vetsherni zvon,
vetsherni zvon,

The evening sound,
the evening sound,

kak mnoga dum
navodit on ...

how many thoughts
it arouses ...

This soulful song wants to be played slowly. Strike each tone with a simple downward movement at a moderate speed. So you have enough time for the two needed changes of your left hand, and the following chord can sound neat and clear from its first stroke on.

Please, play the little melody again and again – this song has many verses! Soon you will be able to change the finger positions without hesitation, and finally even without looking at your left hand.

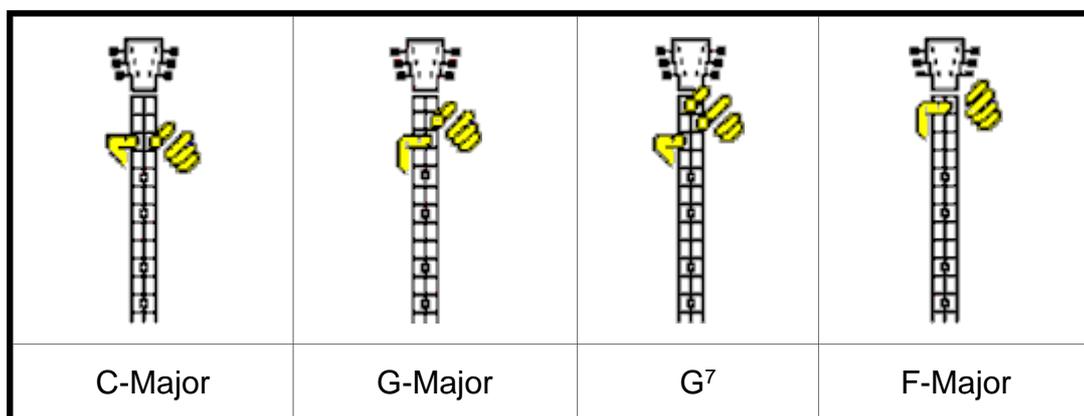
You can hum the tune, while you are accompanying it with Balalaika chords, or sing it, and: Sing the words in Russian! The English translation of the songs in this book is just an explanation, it is not meant to be sung – Russian songs want to be sung with their Russian words!

The Russian language is rendered into latin letters here according to the usual international transcription – this mode is worldwide spread, and to know its rules is useful anyway. Please, give your aching fingers a little break, and read the Pronunciation Guide in the Appendix to prevent misunderstandings and mistakes right from the beginning.

And when you finally can focus your whole attention on the Russian words, and yet manage to change your finger position without any problems – then we can take the next step here.

Our first song "Evening bells" – with four chords

In order to accompany our little song in a more soundful way we have to learn two more finger positions, because a regular accompaniment in the key C-Major always requires the following four chords:



The C-Major and G-Major positions are already very well known to us. Only the G-Septim chord "G⁷" and the F-Major chord are new and want a little exercise, before you try the new accompaniment of our song:

Evening bells

arranged for the accompaniment with four chords

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a balalaika. Each system includes a balalaika icon on the left, a staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, and a series of chord diagrams above the staff. The first system has four chord diagrams (C, F, G, C) and four more (C, C, C, G). The second system has four chord diagrams (G, G, G, G7) and four more (G, F, G7, C). The lyrics are written below the staff.

Ve - tsher - ni zvon, ve - tsher - ni zvon,
 kak mno - ga dum na - vo - dit on.

Vetsherni zvon,
 vetsherni zvon,
 kak mnogo dum
 navodit on ...

The evening sound,
 the evening sound,
 how many thoughts
 it arouses ...

Learn these four finger positions, and the changes from one to another, and you virtually can accompany every song which can be sung and played in the key C-Major.

Take any song book where the chords are written above the notes, and you will find quite a row of songs which can be accompanied with our four finger positions. Try them, no matter if they are Irish ballads or Greek fisher songs. And if you belong to a singing group or a music band you could ask to play the songs in C-Major, if possible, and if you find a kind guitar player who will tell you what chord to play and when to change to the next, you will soon be one of the party with your Balalaika.

Perhaps you also want to try various kinds to strike the strings now: First one stroke for each note, then maybe a little tremolo at the long notes ...

Well, after we have bravely worked our way through the accompaniment of the "Evening bells" with chords, we will dare a first step now towards the high art of

playing the Balalaika:

Our first song "Evening bells" – playing the melody

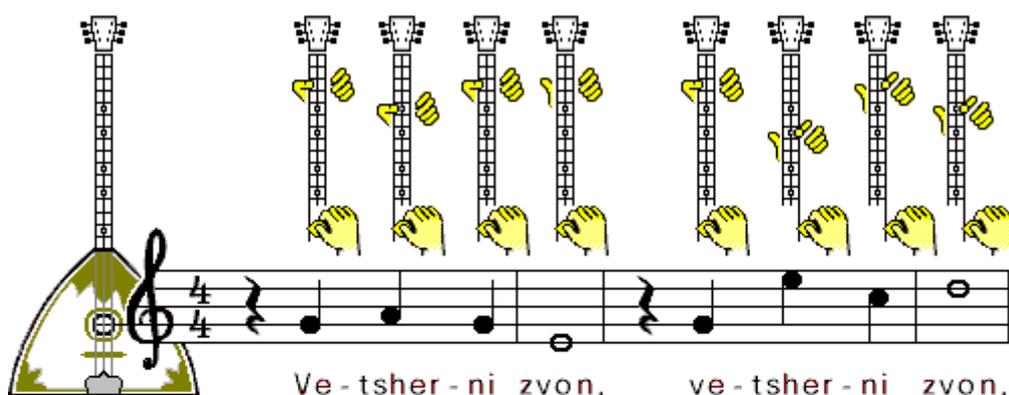
If you have a melody, and you want to play it on your Balalaika, you always start with plucking the single notes, and when you have found all of them you exercise them again and again until you can pluck the melody fluently.

Searching and plucking the melody is always **the first step**, and when you will be a Balalaika virtuoso some day you will still start exactly this way.

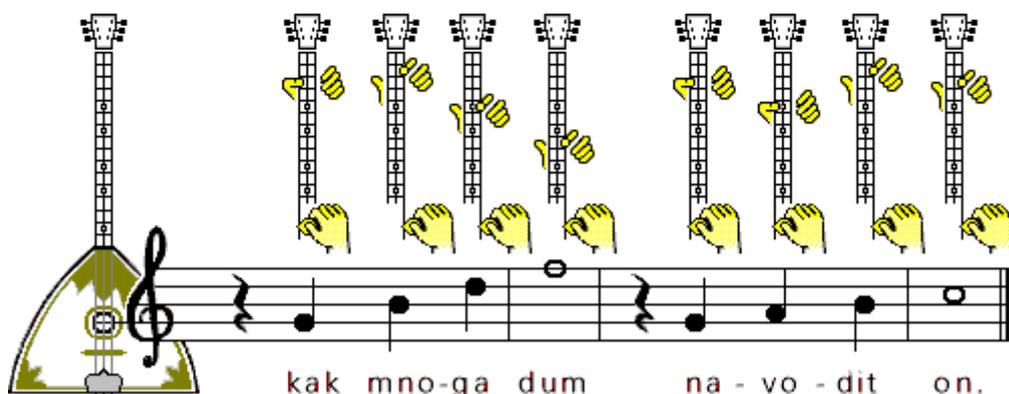
Now let us pluck the melody of the song "Evening bells" on our Balalaika! The following patterns show you where you can find the tones. Put the thumb or index finger of your left hand, according to the patterns, on one string, and pluck only this one string with the thumb of your right hand or with a pick:

Evening bells

Plucking the notes of the melody



The first part of the melody is shown on a musical staff in 4/4 time. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Above the staff are eight fretboard diagrams showing the left hand finger placement for each note: 1st fret (index), 2nd fret (index), 3rd fret (index), 4th fret (index), open string (thumb), 1st fret (index), 2nd fret (index), 3rd fret (index). Below the staff is the Russian text: "Ve - tsher - ni zvon, ve - tsher - ni zvon,".



The second part of the melody is shown on a musical staff in 4/4 time. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Above the staff are eight fretboard diagrams showing the left hand finger placement for each note: 1st fret (index), 2nd fret (index), 3rd fret (index), 4th fret (index), open string (thumb), 1st fret (index), 2nd fret (index), 3rd fret (index). Below the staff is the Russian text: "kak mno-ga dum na - vo - dit on.".

Vetsherni zvon,
vetsherni zvon,
kak mnoga dum
navodit on ...

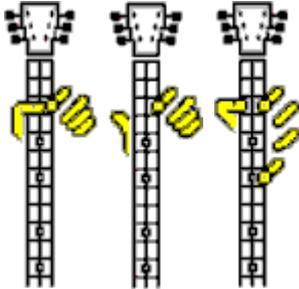
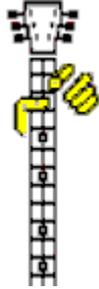
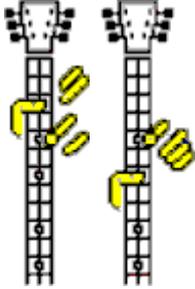
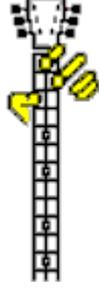
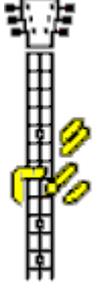
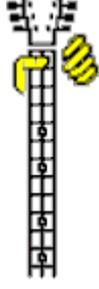
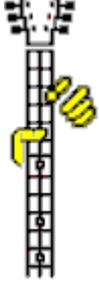
The evening sound,
the evening sound,
how many thoughts
it arouses ...

After a little exercise you will be able to play this short melody fluently. Maybe you

could also try a tremolo on one string – in the Balalaika orchestras the Prim-Balalaika very often plays the melody in this way, and also if you play as a soloist you can very well quaver a passage on only one string now and then.

After having learnt how to pluck the notes of the melody, **the second step** is always to find a finger position for each note which holds down the melody tone on its string, adds accompanying tones on the remaining strings and, as a whole, results in a harmonic chord.

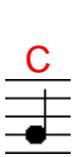
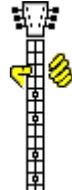
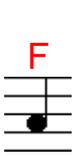
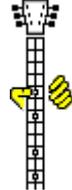
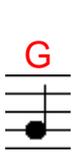
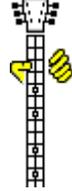
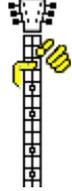
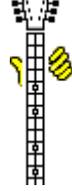
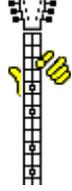
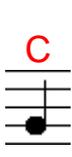
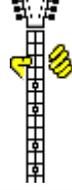
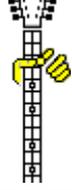
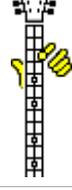
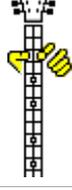
We remember that C, G, G⁷, and F are the chords to accompany the "Evening bells" song, and we stick to these chords also when we now play the melody. But on the long fretboard of our Balalaika there are many different finger positions which can produce these chords – depending from the pitch of the melody tone we want to integrate:

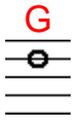
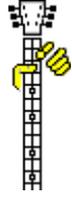
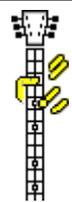
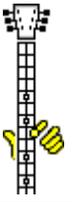
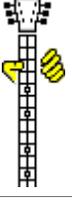
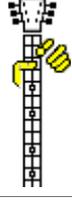
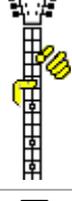
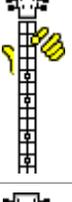
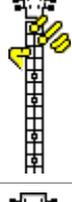
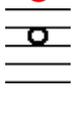
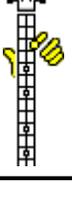
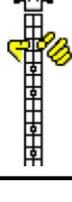
<p>We already know this C-Major chord:</p> 		<p>But also these are C-Major chords:</p>
<p>We already know this G-Major chord:</p> 		<p>But also these are G-Major chords:</p>
<p>We already know this G-Septim chord:</p> 		<p>But also this is a G-Septim chord:</p>
<p>We already know this F-Major chord:</p> 		<p>But also this is a F-Major chord:</p>

Did you try the new finger positions? A little exercise would be good, because we need them when we play the melody!

Please, strike the chords which you see in the same row, and hear that they use various tones but in fact realize the same harmony.

We will go through the "Evening bells" melody now, note by note, and explain, why and when we will need these finger positions:

Chord Note	Melody tone	Finger position	Explanation
			The first note of the "Evening bells" melody is located on the E-string at the third fret. We have to integrate it into a C-Major chord. We use our well-known C-Major position, but in a slight variation: To enforce the melody tone we lay the thumb across both E-strings.
			The second melody tone on the E-string at the fifth fret must be embedded into an F-Major chord. Also here we lay the thumb across both E-strings and find a matching accompanying tone for the index finger on the A-string at the third fret.
			The third tone at the third fret of the E-string shall be part of a G-Major chord. Okay, let's take our normal G-Major position! It holds down the melody tone on both E-strings, so it will ring loud and soundful.
			The fourth note is the deepest tone of our Balalaika: E on the untouched E-string. Also this tone shall ring on both E-strings in order to emphasize it. The index finger on the A-string at the third fret makes it a C-Major chord.
			The next tone, like the first note of our melody, is at the third fret of the E-string again. Also here we change the usual C-Major position a bit and lay the thumb across both E-strings in order to enforce the melody tone.
			Now we use a little trick: Since the melody jumps upwards for only one tone and then returns, we can let our hand in a C-Major position and hold down the high note with our little finger on the A-string.
			Here the melody has returned, and we just lift our little finger from the A-string: Our index finger is already in the right position to hold down the next melody note, and the accompanying C-Major chord is also already prepared.

			<p>The melody note at the fifth fret of the A-string requires a new finger position: We have to move our left hand along the fretboard until the index finger can hold down the melody note at the fifth fret and the thumb can be laid across both E-strings at the seventh fret to produce a G-Major chord.</p>
			<p>The next note of our melody is located on the E-string at the third fret and must be completed to produce a G-Major chord. Well, let's use our well-known G-Major position here, and perhaps we can strike the both E-strings, where the thumb holds down the melody note, a little stronger to enforce this tone.</p>
			<p>Here we can let our fingers in the G-Major position because thus they hold down also the next melody tone at the second fret of the A-string. The only change is that we now could strike the A-string a little stronger to emphasize this tone of the melody.</p>
			<p>Also here we still keep our hand in the G-Major position, we just add a little variation: While the thumb keeps holding down the E-strings at the third fret, the melody note at the fifth fret of the A-string is held down by our ring finger.</p>
			<p>Now we have to move our hand, but the finger position remains almost the same when the ringfinger holds down the melody tone at the eighth fret, and the thumb holds down both E-strings at the seventh fret to produce a nice G-Septim chord.</p>
			<p>Now our finger acrobatics are over. All the next positions are already well-known. Here you need our old G-Major position to play the melody note at the third fret of the E-string.</p>
			<p>This melody note at the fifth fret of the E-string is held down by the thumb while the index finger finds a matching accompaniment at the third fret of the A-string to make it an F-Major cord.</p>
			<p>This is our old G-Septim position. It plays the melody note at the second fret of the A-string and adds a beautiful accompaniment to produce the required G-Septim chord.</p>
			<p>And here is our good old C-Major position. It plays the melody note at the third fret of the A-string and accompanies it with our well-known C-Major chord to give the song a harmonic end.</p>

Now there is only one small step left to join these finger positions together, one after the other, and you can play the melody of our first song on your Balalaika.

Here is – for the last time, and with its full words now – the beautiful Russian folksong "Evening bells", arranged for the high art of playing the Balalaika: for playing the melody!

Evening bells

arranged for playing the melody

Ve - tsher - ni zvon, ve - tsher - ni zvon,

kak mno - ga dum na - vo - dit on.

Vetsherni zvon,
vetsherni zvon,
kak mnoga dum
navodit on ...

O yunykh dnyakh
f krayu radnom,
gdye ya lubyl,
gdye otshi dom.

I kak ya, snim
navyek prastyas,
tam slyshal zvon
f pasledni ras.

I skolkikh nyet

The evening sound,
the evening sound,
how many thoughts
it arouses ...

About the days of youth
at my home-place,
where I loved,
where my father's house is.

And how I, from it
parting for ever,
heard this sound there
for the last time.

And how many no longer

uzhe v zhivýkh,
tagda vesyolýkh
maladýkh.

I krepok ikh
magilný son,
nye slýshen im
vetsherni zvon.

are among the living now,
who were happy then
and young.

Deep is their
sleep in their tombs,
inaudible is to them
the evening sound.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

You will soon be able to play this little melody fluently if you exercise a bit. If the finger-tips of your left hand start aching from holding down the thin Balalaika strings there is, sorrily, no other way than to go through it: The skin of your finger-tips will soon harden by itself, and you will never more feel any pain when playing a stringed instrument. You may give your fingers a short rest when the tips start glowing, but go on and try again soon.

It gives a very nice sound when you play the melody, and a second instrument is accompanying you, maybe another Balalaika or a guitar which simply plays the chords which you see in red letters above the notes here.

But then you both are bound to these chords. Your accompanist cannot replace them by other chords which would sound better in his opinion. In that case, you both have to agree to change to the new chords. This is possible, of course. We have seen, that a melody can very well be accompanied in different ways:

Remember: At first you have accompanied the "Evening bells" melody with two chords – that was not wrong, only a bit simple. With four chords you could give the melody much more expression. But – *what* you want to express, that is something very individual: your quite personal comprehension of this song.

However someone plays a tune – he always expresses his very personal interpretation of the song, and that has influence even on the harmonies he chooses to embed the melody in. So, the chords shown above the notes in the following songs are not the only possible chords, and the finger position patterns above the red chord letters are not the only possible way to play the melodies. They are meant to be a help, a good advice, a recommendation, not more. As we said before: All this is a suggestion, not a prescription!

Our second song: "Stenka Razin"

Also this melody is well known in the western world long since. Friends of Russian vodka have made drinkings-songs of it like "Vodka, Vodka, drink of heaven, Vodka, Vodka, drink of hell" in English and in many other languages.

But originally our new song tells us about a great hero of the Russian people, the Ataman of the Don Cossacks Stepan ('Stenka') Timofeyevitsh Razin, who was the

hope of millions of oppressed peasants when in 1667 he and his Don Cossacks set themselves at the head of the biggest insurrection of peasants in the Russian history. Everywhere in the southern half of the Russian Empire the peasants rose against serfdom and exploitation. The armies of the tsar had to fight for four years to put down the insurrection, Stenka Razin was caught in the end, and cruelly put to death at Moscow. But he stayed alive in the legends of the poor people, in novels and movies, in symphonies by Glazunov and Shostakovich – and in this song, where Stenka Razin in a very drastic way shows his fierce determination to give everything, his love and his life, for the fight against slavery and oppression.

Properly, you could learn how to play this melody by yourself now, without further explanations, for you already know all the chords of this song. But there are several new finger positions, so let's go through this song first, line by line, before you are confronted with the whole song. Please, take your Balalaika and try each single line now, so it will be easier then!

iz za os - tro - va na stre - zhen,

In the first line of this song all finger positions are already well known. All the lines of this song begin with two notes which are held down by the thumb on the E-strings, and the following notes are played by the fingers on the A-string. To emphasize the melody, we could strike especially the E-strings when we play the both first melody notes of each line.

na pros - tor ryetsh - noi vol - ný

The second line also begins with a G-Major chord, and we let the E-strings ring a bit louder. But then the melody jumps upwards, and we have to move our whole hand: The thumb moves from the third to the seventh fret and remains there, while the fingers play the melody notes on the A-string. Only at the last note of this line the thumb moves again, up to the eighth fret, and together with the index finger it forms a new C-Major position which is worth to remember.

vý - plý - va - yut ras - pyis - ný - e

Now the thumb can stay at the eighth fret for almost the whole line. Also here he holds the two first melody tones on the E-strings, after that the tone of the thumb is just the accompaniment for the melody notes which are played by the fingers on the A-string. But at the before-last chord the thumb moves to the seventh fret in order to give a beautiful G-Major chord, before it returns to the eighth fret and concludes this line with our new C-Major chord.

os - tro - grud - ný - e tshel - ný.

The last line begins with our well-known G-Major position, and also here we strike the E-strings a bit louder to enforce the first two notes. Then the melody jumps upwards, and the hand follows first into our new C-Major position, then downwards again, using positions which we already know, and the last two notes of the song are played with our old chords G-Septim and C-Major.

Take your time to work through each single line. You will see that sometimes the same melody notes, in different places, require different finger positions, because we always try to find the most comfortable combination of finger positions.

We also try to keep our left hand at the same position if even possible, because each shift of our hand along the neck into a new position requires time and special attention.

And did you notice the tricky technique to let the thumb at the same fret and play always the same accompanying tone, while quick fingers play the melody? This technique is typical for the Balalaika, and you will detect it in most of the following songs. When the thumb holds down the accompanying tone, we have all four fingers free to play the melody: This enables us to play briskly and without much effort.

Now let us join the four lines of the melody together, and you can play the whole song without problems:

Stenka Razin

Diagram showing the fretboard for the first line of music. The fretboard is shown with yellow arrows indicating finger placement for each chord. The chords are G, G, C, G, G, C, C, G.

3/4
Iz za os - tro - va na stre - zhen,

Diagram showing the fretboard for the second line of music. The fretboard is shown with yellow arrows indicating finger placement for each chord. The chords are G, G, G7, G7, G7, G7, C.

na pros - tor ryetsh - noi vol - ný

Diagram showing the fretboard for the third line of music. The fretboard is shown with yellow arrows indicating finger placement for each chord. The chords are C, C, F, F, F, F, G, C.

vý - plý - va - yut ras - pyis - ný - e

Diagram showing the fretboard for the fourth line of music. The fretboard is shown with yellow arrows indicating finger placement for each chord. The chords are G, G, C, G7, G7, G7, C.

os - tro - grud - ný - e tshel - ný.

Iz za ostrova na strezhen,
na prostor ryetshnoi volný

From beyond the island to the river,
to the wide plain of the river waves

výplývayut raspyisnýe
ostrogrudnýe tshelný.

Na pyeryednem Styenka Razin
obnavshis sidyit s knyazhnoj,
svadbu novuyu spravlyayet,
on vesyolý i khmelnoi.

Posadi ikh slýshen ropot:
"Nas na babu promenyal!
Tolko notsh s nyey provozhalsya,
sam na utro baboi stal!"

Etot ropot i nasmeshki
slýshit grozný ataman,
i on moshtshnoyu rukoyu
obnyal persianki stan.

Brový tshornýe soshlisya,
navigayetsya grazu,
buinoi krovuyu nalilisya
atamanový glazu.

"Fsyo otdam, nye pozhaleyu,
buinu golovu otdam!"
razdayotsya golos vlastný
po okrestným byeregam.

A ana, patupya otshi,
nye zhýva i nye myertva,
moltsha slushayet khmelnýe
atamanový slava:

"Volga, Volga, mat' rodnaya,
Volga, ruskaya ryeka,
nye vidala tý padarka
ot donskovo kazaka!

I shtob nye býlo razdora
myezhdu volnými ludmi,
Volga, Volga, mat rodnaya,
na krasavitsu – primi!"

Moshtshným vzmakhom
podýmayet
on krasavitsu-knyazhnu
i za bort yeyo brosayet
v nabezhavshuyu volnu.

"Shtosh vý tshortý priumýli?
Ey, tý, Filka, shut, plyashi!

sail painted
arrow-breasted ships.

On the first one Stenka Razin
is sitting with a princess in his arms,
he is celebrating his new marriage
and is merry and drunken.

Behind them there is a murmur to be heard:
"He has exchanged us for his wife!
He was only one night together with her,
and in the morning he has become a woman
himself!"

This murmur and this jeering
comes to the ears of the grim Ataman,
and with his mighty arm
he circled the body of the Persian princess.

His black eye brows came together
and, like a rising thunderstorm,
impetuous blood came rushing
into the eyes of the Ataman.

"I will give everything, and won't regret it,
I'll even give my tempestuous head!"
his mighty voice sounds
across the river banks.

And she, with downcast eyes,
more dead than alive,
silently listens to the drunken
words of the Ataman:

"Volga, Volga, dear mother,
Volga, you Russian river,
you have not seen a present
from a cossack of the Don!

And that no discord may rise
among free-born men,
Volga, Volga, dear mother,
on account of a beautiful woman – take her!"

With mighty energy he lifts
the beautiful princess high
and throws her overboard
into the approaching waves.

"Why do you devils hang down your heads?
Hey, you, Filka, come on and dance!"

Griyanyem, bratsý, udaluyu
na pomyin yeya dushi!"

Iz za ostrova na strezhen,
na prostor ryetshnoi volný
výplývayut raspisnýe
Styenki Razina tshelný.

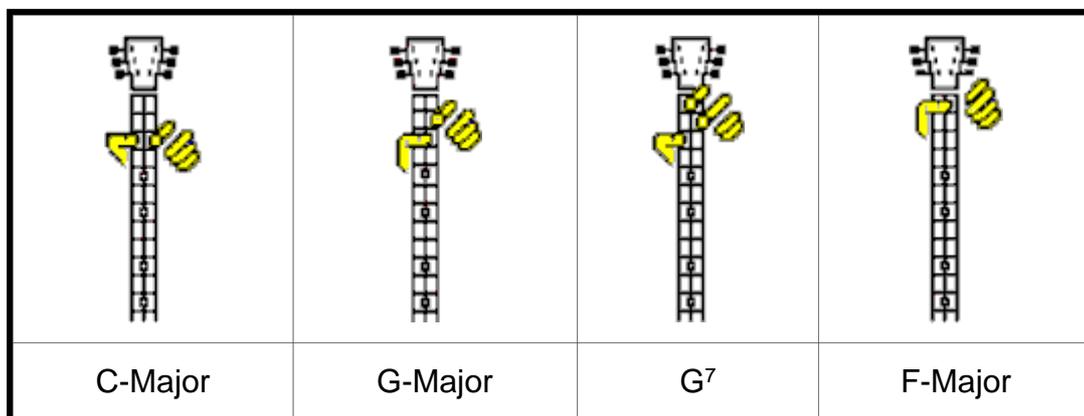
Let us sing, brothers, an audacious song
in memory of her soul!"

From beyond the island to the river,
to the wide plain of the river waves
sail the painted
ships of Stenka Razin.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

The song in honour of the great popular hero is always performed slowly, almost solemnly. So you have enough time to place all your fingers correctly before you strum the chord, and then listen carefully: You can be content with yourself when you change the finger positions so quickly that all strings ring clear.

Also we must not forget to learn how to accompany this song with chords. Please, look at the red letters above the notes and play just the chords while you sing the melody. Here you see once more the finger positions which are needed to accompany a melody in C-Major:



Our third song: "Moonlight"

Through this whole cheerful, vivacious dance song you can use the tricky technique to play the melody with brisk fingers while you hold on the accompanying tone with your thumb. At the beginning the finger positions may need some accustoming, but if you exercise a bit they will enable you to play the tune with rapidity. And that is what you need because this song is outmost lively.

Several text versions are known, and they all are witty, roguish, cheeky. On certain occasions you easily can add a few rhymes of your own, too, because form and contents of the verses are rather unpretentious. Maybe that is the reason why this song is often performed only with instruments – the racy melody is more important than the words at any rate. You might say that this tune is an obligatory stock-piece of every Balalaika orchestra.

Mostly the performance begins at a slow pace, but the tempo is increased from verse to verse until the fingers are gliding over the strings like a whirlwind ... Only

when the last dancer gets out of breath and gives up, a long Balalaika tremolo catches up the rapid tempo and leads over to a last verse which begins very slowly again, with a coquettishly accentuated rhythm, but then quickly grows faster and faster and in the end abruptly stops with a mighty blow.

Moonlight

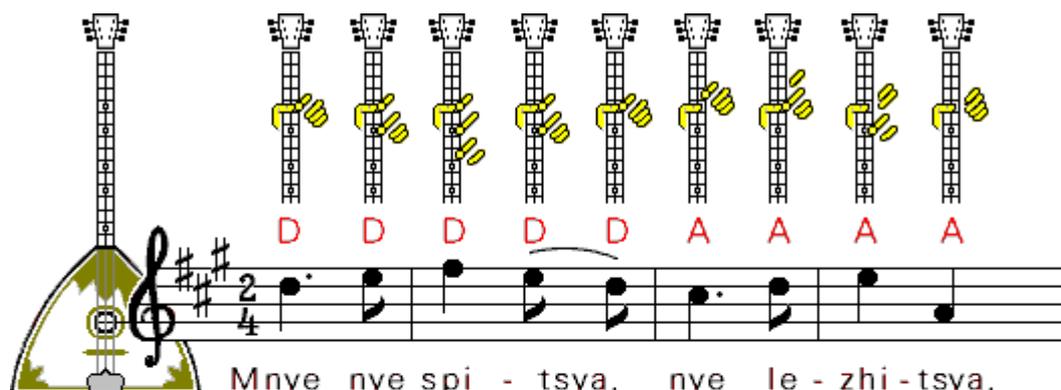


Diagram illustrating the first line of the song "Moonlight". It shows a balalaika fretboard diagram with fingerings for chords D and A. The musical notation is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: Mnye nye spi - tsya, nye le - zhi - tsya,

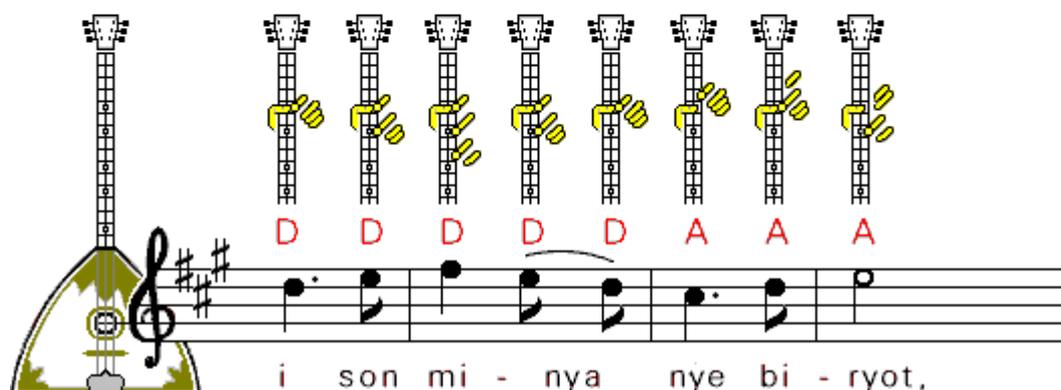


Diagram illustrating the second line of the song "Moonlight". It shows a balalaika fretboard diagram with fingerings for chords D and A. The musical notation is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: i son mi - nya nye bi - ryot,

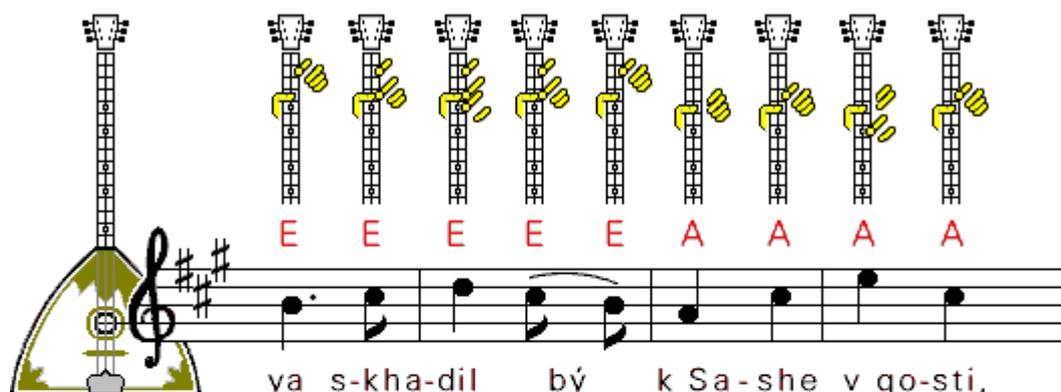


Diagram illustrating the third line of the song "Moonlight". It shows a balalaika fretboard diagram with fingerings for chords E and A. The musical notation is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: ya s-kha-dil bý k Sa-she v go-sti,

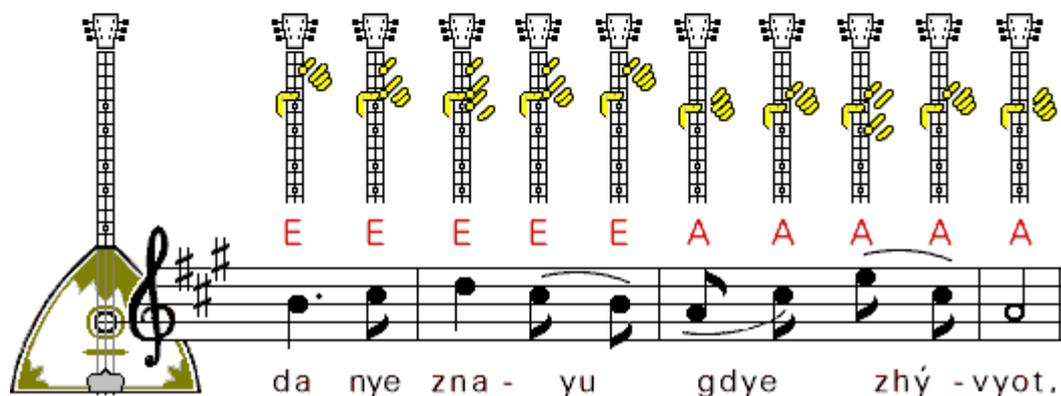


Diagram illustrating the fourth line of the song "Moonlight". It shows a balalaika fretboard diagram with fingerings for chords E and A. The musical notation is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: da nye zna - yu gdye zhý - vyot.

Mnye nye spitsya, nye lezhitsya,
i son minya nye biryot.
Ya s-khadil bý k Sashe v gosti,
da nye znayu gdye zhývyot.

Ya s-khadil bý k Sashe v gosti,
da nye znayu gdye zhývyot.
Paprosil bý tovarisha
moi tovarish dovidyot.

Paprosil bý tovarisha
moi tovarish dovidyot.
No tovarish lutshe, krashe,
bayus, Sashu atabyot.

Svetit myesyats, svetit yasný,
svetit byelaya zarya,
osvetila put'-daroshku
vdol do Sashina dvora.

Padkhazhu ya k Sashe, k domu,
no agnya u Sashi nyet.
Pastutshal ya pod okoshkom –
moya Sasha krepko spit.

"Stýdno, stýdno tibye, Sasha,
so vetshera rano spat!"
"A tibye, moi drug, stýdnyeye
do polunotshi gulyat!"

I cannot fall asleep, not stay in bed,
sleep will not fetch me.
I would like to visit Sasha now,
but I do not know the way.

I would like to visit Sasha now,
but I do not know the way.
I could ask my friend,
my friend would show me the way, sure.

I could ask my friend,
my friend would show me the way.
But my friend is better and more beautiful,
I am afraid he will alienate Sasha from me.

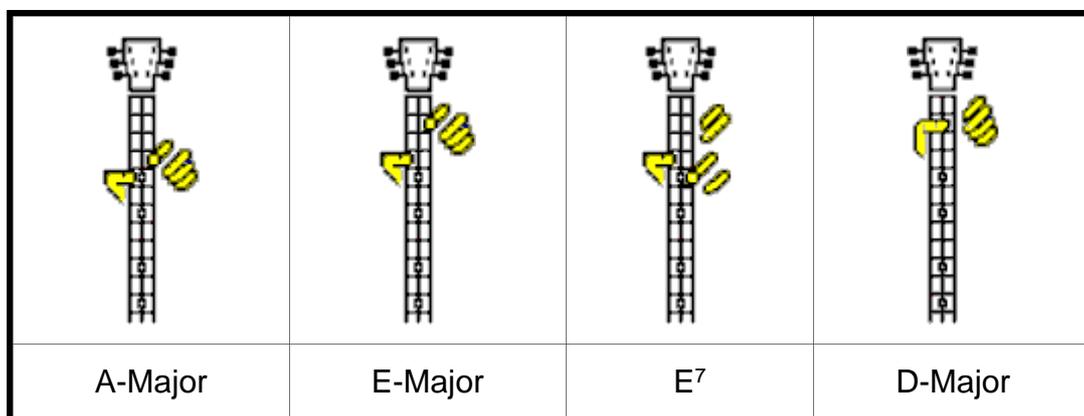
The moon is shining, bright and clear,
shining with its white light,
and it illuminated the whole small path
all the way to Sasha's farmstead.

And when I come to Sasha's house
I see no lights.
I knocked at the small window –
my girl-friend Sasha is fast asleep.

"Shameful, shameful for you, Sasha,
to sleep so early in the evening!"
"It is even more shameful for you, my friend,
to roam and ramble until midnight!"

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

Did you notice that we have changed to new key here? It is A-Major, and here are the finger positions for a chord accompaniment in A-Major:



It pays to learn these finger positions because the basic note of the A-Major key is A, and that is also the basic note of the melody string of your Balalaika. That is why you can play many songs very comfortably in A-Major. Please, accompany the

"Moonlight" melody also just with chords to accustom your fingers to the new positions.

Our fourth song: "Juniper on the hill"

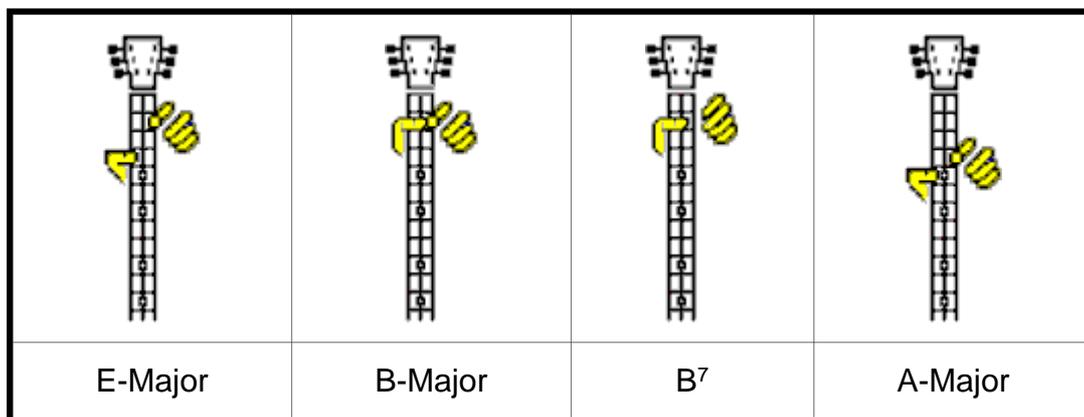
Here comes again a smart dance song. It also has this characteristic two-fourth time which we already know from the "Moonlight" melody – each beat is stressed, there is no breathing-time, no break, no rest, beat by beat the melody goes on and shakes up everybody by its marked rhythm which is repeated line by line.

The words tell us about an old love sorcery: "Kalina", the male harsh wild juniper, and "Malina", the female round sweet raspberry in the garden, were the sacred plants of the goddess Lyuli. Among the other old-slavic gods – Dazhd-Bog, god of the sun, and Perun, god of the thunder, and Veles, god of the herds – Lyuli was responsible for the earth, for growth and fertility, for springtime, and for love – and so she obviously was the favorite goddess of the Russian rural people, and we find her name and her holy plants and even tales of her miracles still nowadays in the widely known song "Kalinka" and in many other Russian folksongs.

So the friendly heathen goddess could merrily survive the christianization and thousand years of Russian orthodox state church, because the people toughly stuck to their old songs and customs: "Whose business is it ...?"

Here the young girls walk to the hill, break green twigs of juniper and strew them on the path – and the understandig goddess knows the secret wishes of the girls and sends help: Promptly a daring young lad on horseback comes riding along the path and gives the girls an inviting wink ...

We play also this song in A-Major. But sometimes the melody changes to E-Major harmonies, so let us first have a look on the finger positions which we need for a chord accompaniment in E-Major:



E-Major chords will appear, as in this song, mainly in connection with other keys; on the Balalaika it is rather unusual to play a whole song in E-Major. But it is a favorite pitch for singing songs. So, if you want to accompany a singing group now and then it would be good to know those finger positions of the E-Major chords.

But now let's turn to our new song:

Juniper on the hill

Diagram of a guitar neck showing chord fingerings for the first line. The fretboard is marked with dots, and yellow arrows indicate finger placement. The chords are labeled in red below the fretboard: A, A, E, E⁷, E⁶, E, A, A, A.

Musical notation in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 2/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The lyrics are: Kak na go - rye ka - li - na.

Diagram of a guitar neck showing chord fingerings for the second line. The fretboard is marked with dots, and yellow arrows indicate finger placement. The chords are labeled in red below the fretboard: A, A, E, E⁷, E⁶, E, A, A, A.

Musical notation in treble clef, key of D major, and 2/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The lyrics are: kak na go - rye ka - li - na...

Diagram of a guitar neck showing chord fingerings for the third line. The fretboard is marked with dots, and yellow arrows indicate finger placement. The chords are labeled in red below the fretboard: B⁷, B, E, E, E⁶, E, A, A, A.

Musical notation in treble clef, key of D major, and 2/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The lyrics are: Nu shtozh, ko - mu dye - lo, ka - li - na.

Diagram of a guitar neck showing chord fingerings for the fourth line. The fretboard is marked with dots, and yellow arrows indicate finger placement. The chords are labeled in red below the fretboard: B⁷, B⁷, B, B, E, E, E⁶, E, A, A, A.

Musical notation in treble clef, key of D major, and 2/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4. The lyrics are: nu, ko - mu ka - ko - ye dye - lo, ka - li - na.

Kak na gorye kalina,
 kak na gorye kalina ...
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, kalina?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, kalina?

Pod goroyu malina,
 pod goroyu malina!
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, malina?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, malina?

Tam dyevitsy gulyali,
 tam krasnye gulyali.
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, gulyali?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, gulyali?

Kalinushku lomali,
 kalinushku lomali.
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, lomali?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, lomali?

Na dorozhku brosali,
 na dorozhku brosali.
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, brosali?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, brosali?

Yekhal parin udaloi,
 yekhal parin udaloi.
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, udaloi?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, udaloi?

Mignul dyevke maladoi,
 mignul dyevke maladoi.
 Nu shtozh, komu dyelo, maladoi?
 Nu komu kakoye dyelo, maladoi?

As juniper grows on the hill,
 as juniper grows on the hill ...
 Whose business is it, that there's juniper?
 Whose business is this, that there's juniper?

So the raspberry grows underneath,
 so the raspberry grows underneath!
 Whose business is it, that there grows the raspberry?
 Whose business is this, that there grows the raspberry?

There went the young girls,
 there went the beautiful girls.
 Whose business is it, where they went?
 Whose business is this, where they went?

They broke twigs from the juniper bush,
 they broke twigs from the juniper bush.
 Whose business is it, what they broke?
 Whose business is this, what they broke?

They strewed them on the path,
 they strewed them on the path.
 Whose business is it, what they strewed?
 Whose business is this, what they strewed?

A daring lad on horseback came along,
 a daring lad on horseback came along.
 Whose business is it? He was a daredevil!
 Whose business is this? He was a daredevil!

He gave one of the young girls a wink,
 he gave one of the young girls a wink.
 Whose business is it? She was young!
 Whose business is this? She was young!

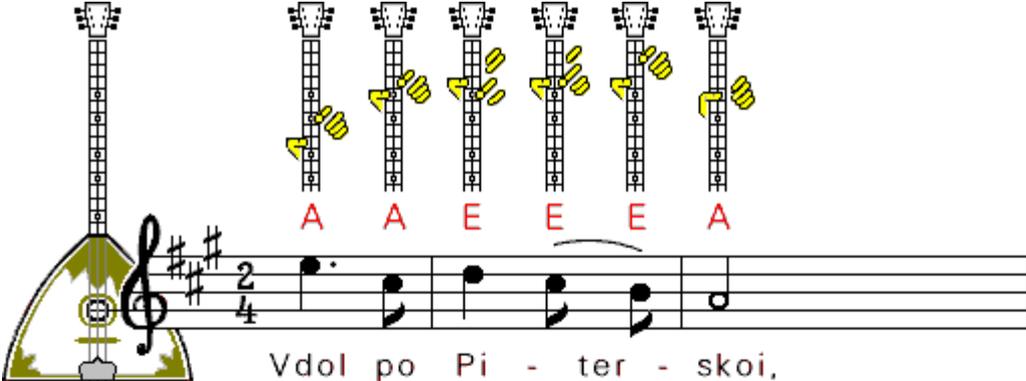
(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

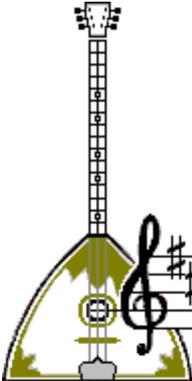
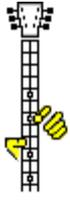
Try a chord accompaniment of this song, too. If you meet a Sext chord (E⁶), you could use the given finger position or play the pure Major chord (E-Major) instead.

Our fifth song: "Along the Petersburg Road"

This melody begins so bright and ends so sad: The young man who dashes along the Petersburg Road with his troika and a ringing bell right into the Tverskoi-Yamskoi quarter, which is the most ill-reputed quarter of the old Moscow – this young man is Dunya's darling who has forsaken his loving girl ...

Along the Petersburg Road

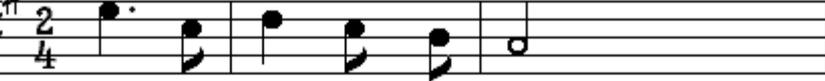


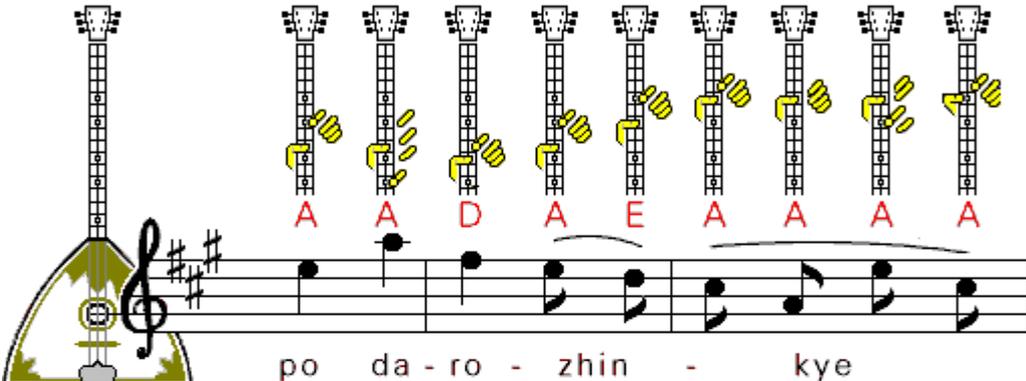


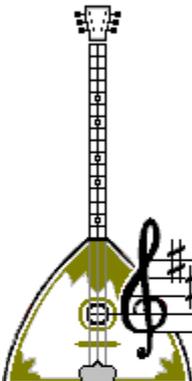
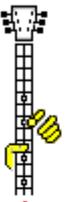
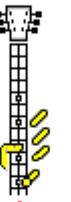
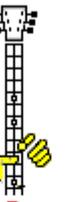
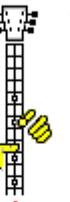



 A A E E E A



 Vdol po Pi - ter - skoi,



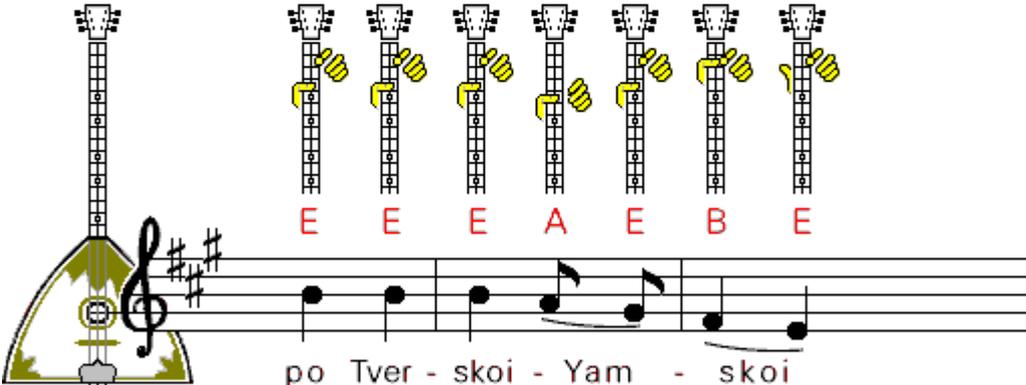


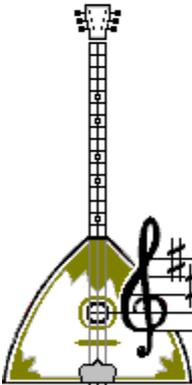


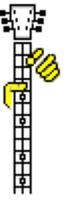
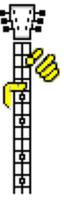

 A A D A E A A A A

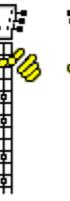
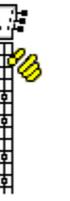


 po da - ro - zhin - kye





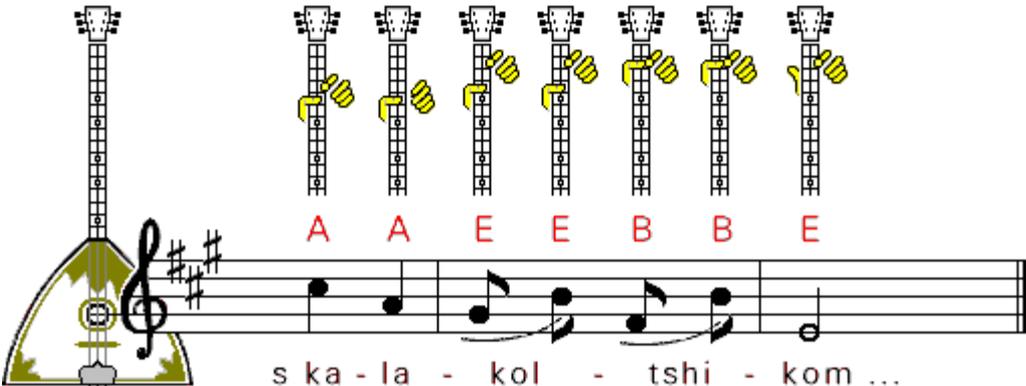



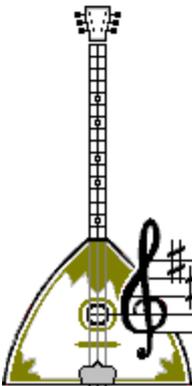




 E E E A E B E



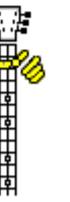
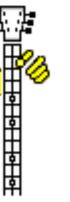
 po Tver - skoi - Yam - skoi









 A A E E B B E



 s ka - la - kol - tshi - kom ...

Vdol po P*it*erskoi,
 po darozhinkye,
 po Tverskoi-Yamskoi
 s kalakol'tshikom ...

Along the Petersburg Road,
 along the small lane
 to the Tverskoi-Yamskoi Quarter
 with a little bell ...

Pyishit milinikoi
 ko mnye gramotku,
 ko mnye gramotku,
 vyest' nye radostnu:

"Nye sidyi, Dunya,
 pozno vetsherom,
 ty nye zhgi svetshi
 vosku yarovo!

Ty nye zhgi svetshi
 vosku yarovo –
 ty nye zhdi k sibye
 druga milovo!"

Vdol po Piterskoi,
 po darozhinye,
 po Tverskoi-Yamskoi
 s kalakoltshikom ...

He writes to his dear one,
 to me, a note,
 a small note to me,
 a sad message:

"Don't sit, Dunya,
 so long in the evening,
 and don't burn the candles
 of the clear wax!

Don't you burn the candles
 of the clear wax –
 and don't wait any longer
 for your darling!"

Along the Petersburg Road,
 along the small lane
 to the Tverskoi-Yamskoi Quarter
 with a little bell ...

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

Did you also feel, at the end of this melody, that it was somehow incomplete, unfinished, asking for more? You are right!

This song has an odd and very seldom peculiarity: It has no end!

We are accustomed to the musical rule that a melody must end with the basic note of its key, or at least with its basic harmony. So, if we play a song in A-Major, it should end with the note A, or at least with an A-Major chord, in order to let the melody tension come to a final rest.

But there is no doubt that this song ends in E-Major: The tension is still there and calls for the next verse to be appended immediately. This new verse begins in A-Major which may relax the tension for a moment, but the new verse at once develops a new tension which again remains undissolved at the end and asks for the next verse ...

So verse comes after verse, without a break, and yet the melody tension remains open through the whole song, like a question which is waiting for an answer, like an unstilled longing – like the love of Dunya in this song, who is still hoping that her darling might get wise and come back to her.

Only at the very end, when all verses are played, you could yet arrange a harmonic conclusion if you one last time return to the beginning and play the first notes of the melody again and let your performance end in A-Major – play just the first line "Along the Petersburg Road" slowing down the melody and letting the last tones die away: Maybe Dunya's darling will also come back this way?

Our sixth song: "Suliko"

This song, so full of soul and oriental magic, comes from the Caucasus.

Suliko

arranged for playing the melody in A-Major

Ya mo - gi - lu mi - loi is - kal,

no ye - yo nai - ti nye lekh - ko.

Dol - go ya to - mil - sya i stra - dal.

Gdye zhe tý, ma - ya Su - li - ko?

Ya mogilu miloi iskal,
no yeyo naiti nye lekhko.
Dolgo ya tomilsja i stradal.
Gdye zhe t́y, maya Suliko?

Rozu po puti vstretil ya
f poiskakh uidya daleko.
"Roza pozhaley, utyesh minya,
nyet li u titya Suliko."

Roza naklonivshis slekhka,
svoi buton paskrýv shiroko.
Tikho prosheptala mnye tagda:
"Nye naiti titye Suliko."

Sredi roz dushistykh, f teni
zvonko pyesnyu pel solovyey.
Ya u solovya tagda sprasil
Suliko gdye on pritail.

Soloveyka vdrug zamoltshal,
rozu klyuvom tronul lekhko:
"T́y nashol, shto ishtshesh", on skazal,
"vyetshným snom zdyes spit Suliko."

I was looking for my sweetheart's grave,
but it was hard to find.
For a long time I was worrying and suffering.
Where are you, my Suliko?

I met a rose on my way
when I was searching far away.
"Please, dear rose, give me comfort:
Is Suliko perhaps with you?"

The rose bowed a bit
and widely opened her bud.
Then she softly whispered:
"You must not look for Suliko any longer."

Among the fragrant roses, in the shadow,
a nightingale brightly sang his song.
There I asked the nightingale
where he had hidden Suliko.

Suddenly the little nightingale fell silent
and softly touched the rose with his beak:
"You have found what you look for", he said,
"Suliko is sleeping here in eternal slumber."

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

Who is still aware nowadays that this simple song with its touching, longing tune had to go through the ups and downs of a spectacular political career?

Since this song, like Stalin, came from Grusinia it was held to be "Stalin's favourite song", and for a long time it was sung often and fervently. Later, when Stalin's personality cult was condemned in 1956, also "Suliko" was banned and was not heard for years ...

But today there is a new generation, and they can sing this song again, unencumbered by the resentments of the past – just because "Suliko" is a beautiful song.

The melody is written down here in A-Major, and you have bravely struggled your way through the highest heights of your Balalaika – that is all right, for these high notes must be played also in many other songs again and again. But that here almost one half of the melody must be played above the tenth fret, that is perhaps kind of overdoing it.

So here is the "Suliko" melody once again, transposed to another key: Here it is written down in D-Major, and perhaps you would rather want to play it this way.

Suliko

arranged for playing the melody in D-Major

Ya mo - gi - lu mi - loi is - kal,

no ye - yo nai - ti nye lekh - ko.

Dol - go ya to - mil - sya i stra - dal.

Gdye zhe tý, ma - ya Su - li - ko?

Sorri! We cannot transpose every melody to another key in order to find an easier way to play it, as we did here with our song "Suliko".

True, the Balalaika has a long neck and a lot of frets to play many notes, but of

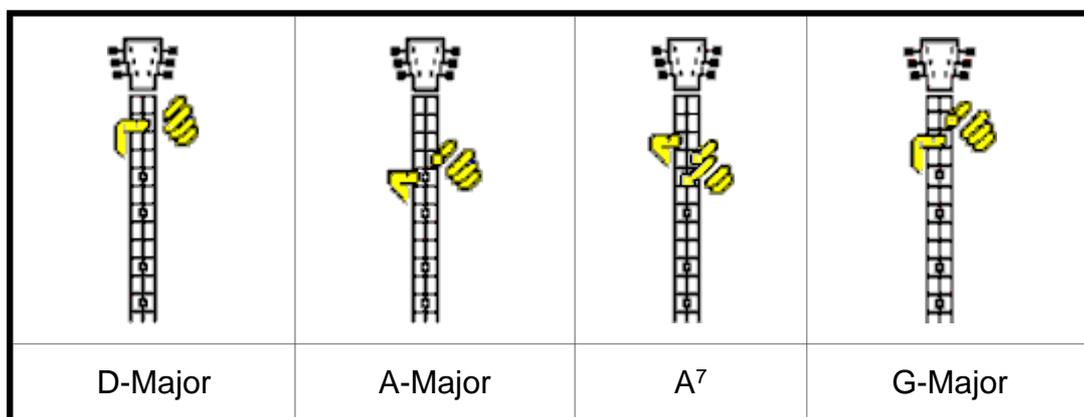
course its range is limited – in fact to hardly two octaves, from E^{II} to C^{#IV}.

That is enough, because the vocal range of a normal singing-voice also doesn't reach farther, and the "Suliko" melody with its small span of only seven notes even fits several times into this range.

But other Russian folksongs need the whole range of the Balalaika, and if we want to play them we have to try a bit and find out in what key they fit into the Balalaika range.

So we can play "Stenka Razin" only in C-Major, "Along the Petersburg Road" only in A-Major, and our next song about the "Monotonous little bell" only in D-Major which we already know from our second version of "Suliko".

But first let us have a look at the finger positions for a simple chord accompaniment in our new key D-Major. We have seen all of them already before. But in order to impress them on your mind and to exercise them a bit, you could accompany "Suliko", and also our next song, simply with these chords.



Our seventh song: "Monotonously the bell is sounding"

Also this soulful song has become well known in the western world. Dear reminiscences awake – not by evening bells this time, but by the little monotonous bell of a troika.

The troika – this is a typical Russian manner to harness three horses side by side in front of a coach or a sleigh. The horse in the middle is running in a thill the shafts of which are fixed in position by a board arched high above the horse's back. In the top of this bow there is always a small bell which is ringing all the way to keep the horses running. With three horses in front and usually only a light load behind, the troika is faster than any other horse-drawn vehicle.

So the troika dashes along the dusty road, with its familiar little bell jingling all the way and echoing from afar, and the coachman sings one of these heart-moving Russian folksongs – all this lets the passenger's soul go up in flames.

Monotonously the bell is sounding

Ad - na-zvutsh-no gre - mit ka - la - kol-tshik,

i da - ro - ga pý - lit - sa slekh - ka,

i u - ný - lo po rov - no - mu po - lyu

raz - li - va - yet - sa pyesn yam-shtshí - ka.

Adnazvutshno gremít kalakoltshik,
i daroga pýlitsa slekhka,

Monotonously the little bell is sounding,
and the dust on the way is stirred up a bit,

i unýlo po rovnomu polyu
razlivayetsa pyesn yamshtshika.

Stolko tshufstva v toi pyesnye unýloi,
stolko tshufstva v napyewe radnom,
schto v grudyi moyey khladnoi, astýloi,
razgaryelosya sertse agnyom.

I pripomnil ya notshi drugiye
i rodnýe palya i lyesa,
i na otshi, davno uzh sukhiye,
nabyezhala, kak iskra, slyeza.

Adnazvutshno gremít kalakoltshik,
izdalí otdavayas slekhka,
i umolk moi yamshtshik, a daroga
predo mnoi daleka, daleka.

and sadly over the plain field
flows the song of my coachman.

There was so much feeling in this song,
so much feeling in the familiar tune,
that in my cool breast
my heart inflamed.

And I recalled other nights,
and the fields, and the woods of my home,
and into my eyes which had been dry so long
a tear rose like a spark.

Monotonously the little bell is sounding,
slightly echoing from afar,
and my coachman fell silent, but the way
in front of me is still so long, so long.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

The musical notation shows an artistic arrangement of this old traditional song by A.Sveshnikov; with its triplets it looks very complicated. But don't let this deter you from playing this beautiful melody!

Listen, how Russian choirs perform this song: Always slowly, very emotionally, expressively, with deep feelings, and with a very free rhythm – you should play this melody likely!

Our eighth song: "Bright face, round face"

This song takes us to a new fascinating world. Until now, we have played songs only in Major keys, but we will detect the true treasure of Russian folksongs when we turn to the Minor keys now.

Our new song helps us to do this step: It begins in C-Major, and then turns to A-Minor. You can play the melody without problems, using the finger position patterns, and enjoy the beautiful melody before we learn a bit more about the new A-Minor key.

The words of this old song of the Kuban Cossacks tell us that also these rough and pugnacious warriors have only one thing on their mind: A beautiful young girl, looking all lilies and roses, with a face bright and soft, round and sound, who is standing there and breaking twigs of juniper ...

Sorrily I don't know more than this one verse but you can easily guess how the story goes on if you remember the love sorcery the song "Juniper on the hill" told us about: Twigs of juniper, thrown on the way, will soon bring on a handsome young man. Well, a true cossack won't want a lot of asking!

Bright face, round face

Bye - lo - li - tsa, kru - gla - li - tsa,

kra - sna - ya dye - vi - tsa

pri do - li - nush - kye sta - ya - la,

ka - li - nu la - ma - la.

Byelolitsa, kruglalitsa,
krasnaya dyewitsa

Bright face, round face,
beautiful young maiden

pri dolinushkye stayala,
kalinu lamala ...

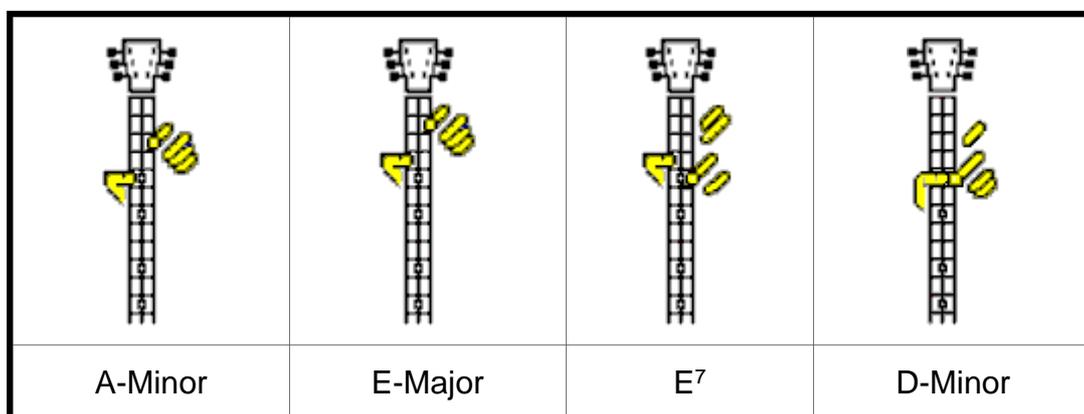
stood there near the small valley,
and broke twigs of juniper ...

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

All we need to know about Major and Minor is in this song, and we can say it in a few sentences:

- | The melody consists of four lines: The first two lines in C-Major are followed by the last two lines in A-Minor. This shows us: C-Major and A-Minor are related keys, they use exactly the same notes, only the scales are different: The C-Major scale begins with its basic tone C, the A-Minor scale with its basic tone A – exactly as in this song: The C-Major part begins with the note C, the A-Minor part begins with A.
- | The words "Major" and "Minor" are derived from the different construction of the scales:
 The first notes of the C-Major scale are: C, D, E – two full steps.
 The first notes of the A-Minor scale are: A, B, C – one full step and one half step, because the distance between B and C is only a half-tone.
 So these first two steps are bigger (in Latin *bigger = maior*) in the Major scale, and smaller (in Latin *smaller = minor*) in the Minor scale.
 Further you see that our new A-Minor key must have been very important in music history because the notes of the A-Minor scale are: A, B, C, D, E, F, G – A-Minor has been the fundamental scale for naming the notes in the alphabetical order.
- | If the chord accompaniment – as here with red letters – is written above the notes, the Major chords are usually characterized by capitals, and the Minor chords by small letters: **A** = A-Major, **a** = A-Minor.

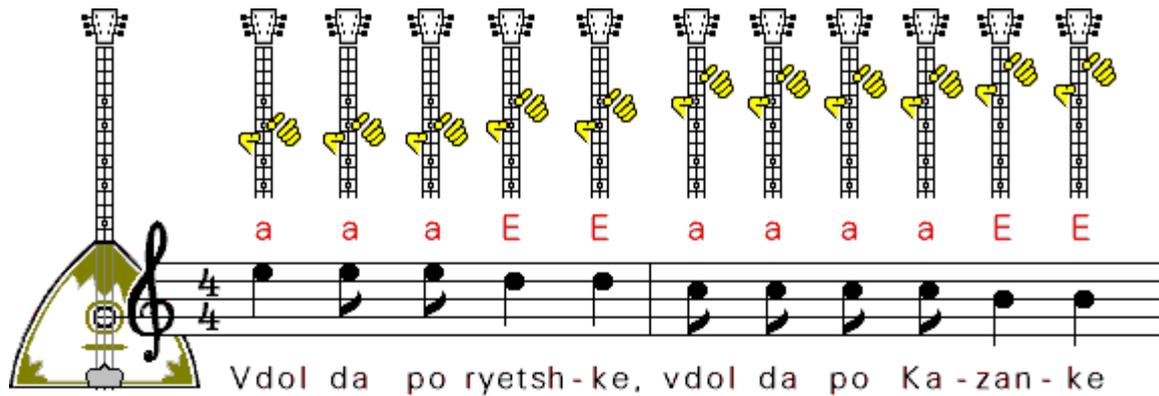
And here you see the finger positions for the A-Minor chords. They are as important for us as the A-Major chords because the basic note of these keys is A, and this is also the basic note of the A string where we usually play the melody.

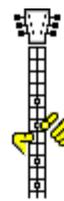
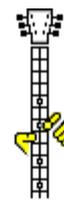


Our ninth song: "Kazanka"

This song has a quite simple and so beautiful melody:

Kazanka





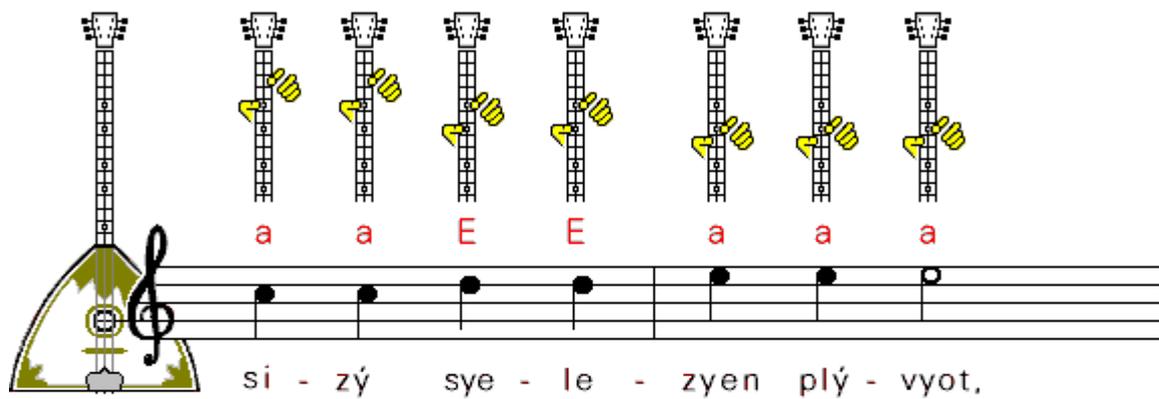




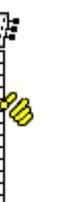


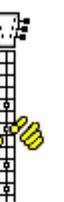


Vdol da po ryetsh-ke, vdol da po Ka-zan-ke



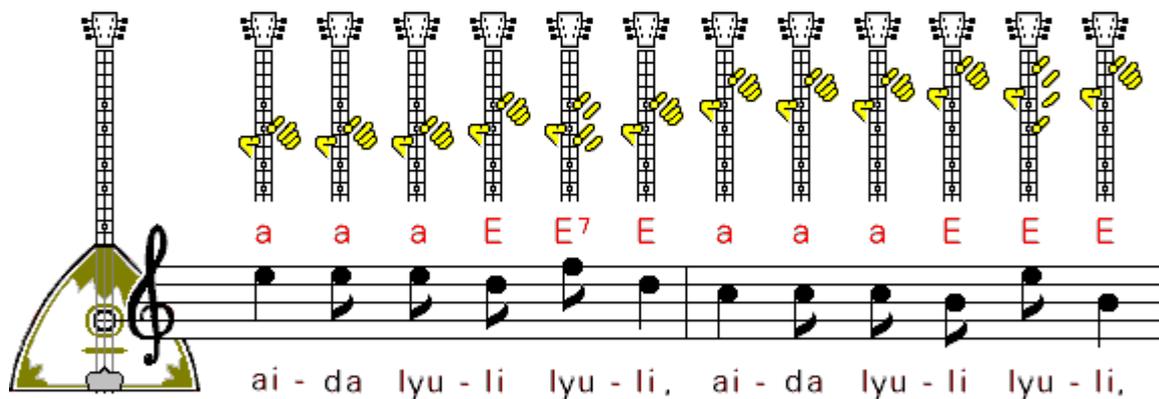


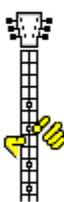
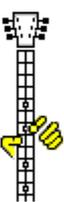





si - zý sye - le - zyen plý - vyot,





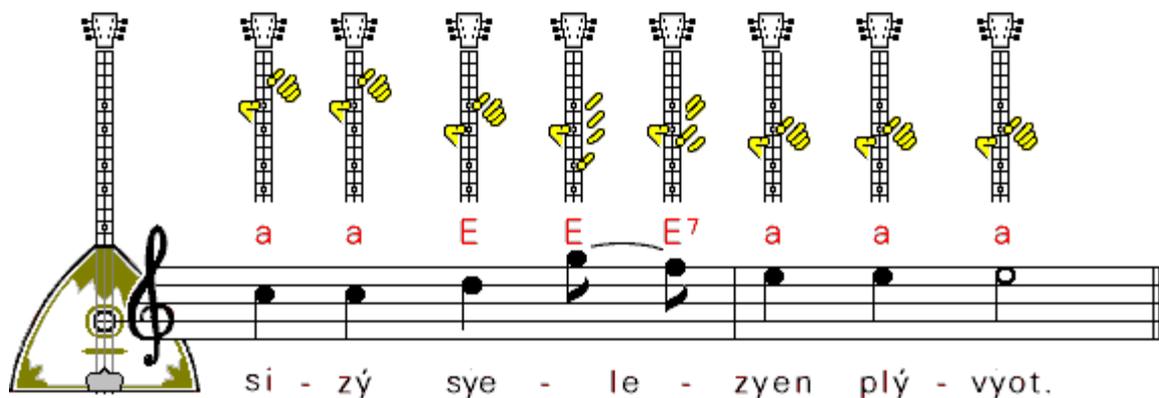








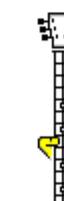

ai - da lyu - li lyu - li, ai - da lyu - li lyu - li,














si - zý sye - le - zyen plý - vyot.

Vdol da po ryetshke,
vdol da po Kazanke
sizý syelezyen plývyot,
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
sizý syelezyen plývyot.

Vdol da po byereshku,
vdol da po krutomu,
dobrý maladyets idyot,
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
dobrý maladyets idyot.

Sam on so kudryami,
sam on so rusými,
razgavarivayet on,
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
razgavarivayet on:

"Komuzh mayi kudrý,
komuzh mayi rusý
dostanutsya rastshesat',
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
dostanutsya rastshesat'?"

Dostavalis kudrý,
dostavalis rusý
krasnoi dyevitse tshesat',
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
krasnoi dyevitse tshesat'.

Ana ikh i tsheshet,
ana ikh i gladit,
volos k volosu kladyot,
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
volos k volosu kladyot.

There on the river,
there on the Kazanka,
there swam a greyish blue drake,
aida Lyuli Lyuli, aida Lyuli Lyuli,
there swam a greyish blue drake.

There on the bank,
there on the steep bank,
there went a good young man,
aida Lyuli Lyuli, aida Lyuli Lyuli,
there went a good young man.

He had curly hair,
blond and curly hair,
and he begins to talk,
aida Lyuli Lyuli, aida Lyuli Lyuli,
and he begins to talk:

"To whom my curly hair,
my blond and curly hair,
will allow to comb them,
aida Lyuli Lyuli, aida Lyuli Lyuli,
will allow to comb them?"

There his curly hair,
his blond and curly hair,
allowed a beautiful maid to comb them,
aida Lyuli Lyuli, aida Lyuli Lyuli,
allowed a beautiful maid to comb them.

And she combs his curls,
and she smooths his curls,
and puts hair to hair,
aida Lyuli Lyuli, aida Lyuli Lyuli,
and puts hair to hair.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

Lyuli, the old-slavic goddess of love, obviously is a good address for lovesick people: In the song "Juniper on the hill" she is grateful for the love sorcery of the girls and sends them a daring young man. And here is another miracle: The lonely young man takes a walk to the river to ask Lyuli who will ever comb his curls, and the helpful goddess immediately sends a beautiful young girl.

Perhaps you are astonished that all the Balalaika chords of the "Kazanka" song let the middle E-string ring free. This is possible here because the only harmonies of this melody are A-Minor and E-Major, and the tone E of the untouched middle E-string is part of both of these chords.

This may recall us the original way to play a Balalaika which had only two strings. How did that sound? Well, give your thumb a rest, hold down just the melody notes

with your fingers on the A-string, and strum all three strings so that both E-strings ring free – maybe an interesting variation for your performance of this song.

Another variation again gives a different sound, when you put your thumb not only on one E-string but always lay it across both E-strings. Try that – I am sure this sound will please you, too.

You know, the finger position patterns which you see above the notes in all our songs should not prevent you from realizing your own inventions. Theoretically, you can put your thumb only on the outer E-string, leave the middle E-string untouched and let it ring free in all C-Major, E-Major, A-Major, A-Minor and E-Minor chords, instead of laying your thumb across both E-strings all the time. Often it is simply a matter of your personal taste which of these two possibilities you prefer.

Our tenth song: "Kalinka"

No other Russian folksong is as well known all around the world as this "Kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya ...": The thrilling chorus with its expressive rhythm in words and music, which is repeated three, four times, and with each repetition grows faster, more enthusiastic and more ecstatic, and then the sudden change to the slow, soft, nearly longing melody of the verses with their unfulfilled dreams of love – all this gives us an impressive picture of the wide spectrum of human passions.

The words recall us some facts we know already from other songs: "Kalinka" (juniper) and "Malinka" (raspberry) obviously were the traditional offerings to the old-slavic goddess of "Mother Earth", of spring, and love, and fertility, called "Lyuli" – as the traditional heavenly ally of the Russian rural population, and of the people in love, she survived the christianization and is alive still nowadays in quite a lot of folksongs.

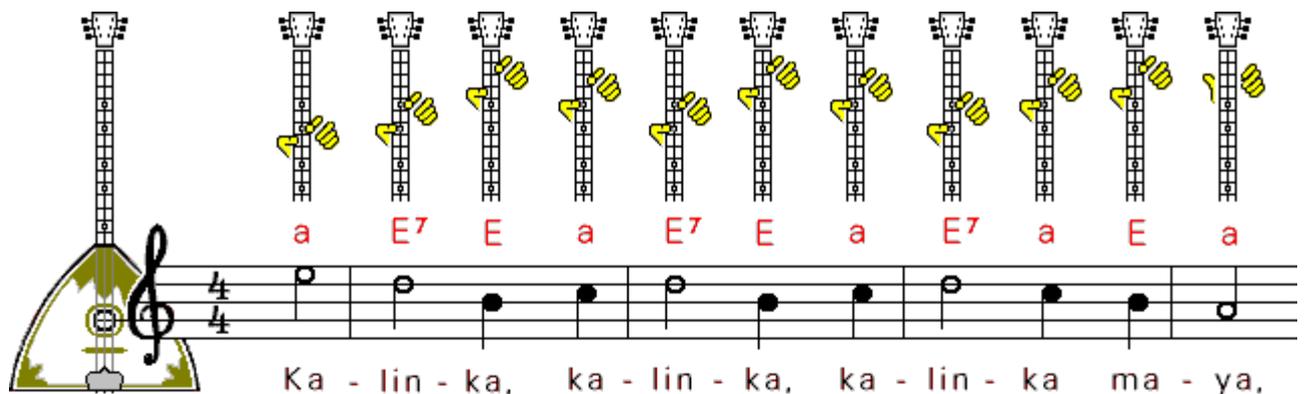
Most of these songs begin with a very similar melody: The first line of the song "Kazanka", and of "Juniper on the hill", and of all the other Lyuli songs in our Collection of Russian Folksongs always begins with the high note E and goes down towards the basic note A. So we can assume that they all go back to a common origin, maybe to a very old hymn or a pagan ritual in honour of the goddess Lyuli.

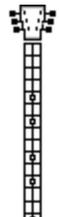
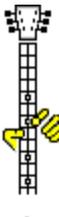
The song "Kalinka" could be this original, or at least resemble it largely. It still has the antiphonic form of a liturgy:

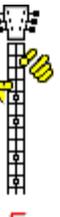
The chorus, repeated by the community until ecstasy, recalls the offerings to the goddess's mind again and again, and the verses, sung by the priest alone, address Lyuli directly and articulate what the people want to get from her in return: Maybe a rich harvest, or a large family, or the rescue from famine, from epidemics, from aridity or from war ...

In the modern form of this song, only one request is left which is not less important: The wish for love!

Kalinka

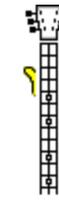






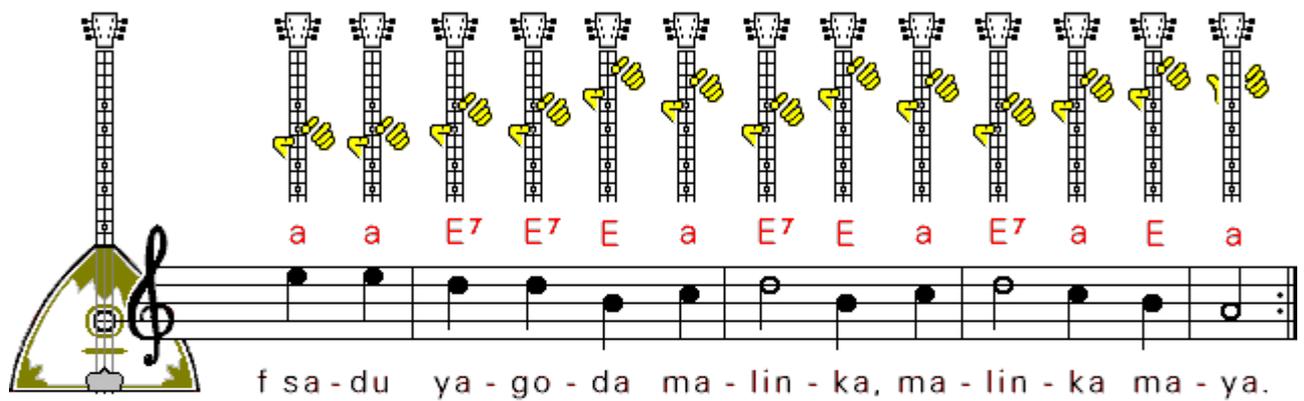


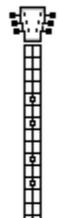



a E⁷ E a E⁷ E a E⁷ a E a

4/4

Ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka ma - ya,





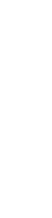






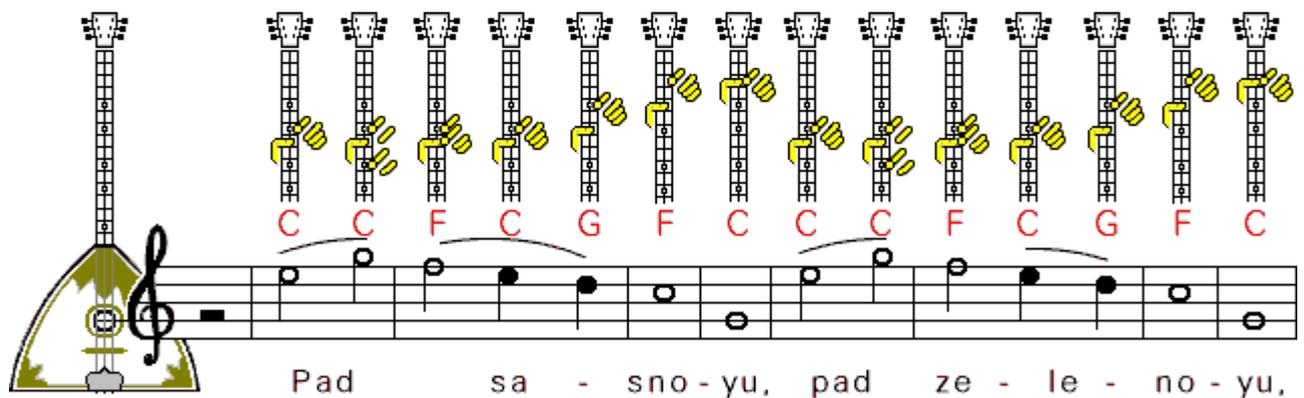


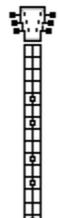




a a E⁷ E⁷ E a E⁷ E a E⁷ a E a

f sa - du ya - go - da ma - lin - ka, ma - lin - ka ma - ya.











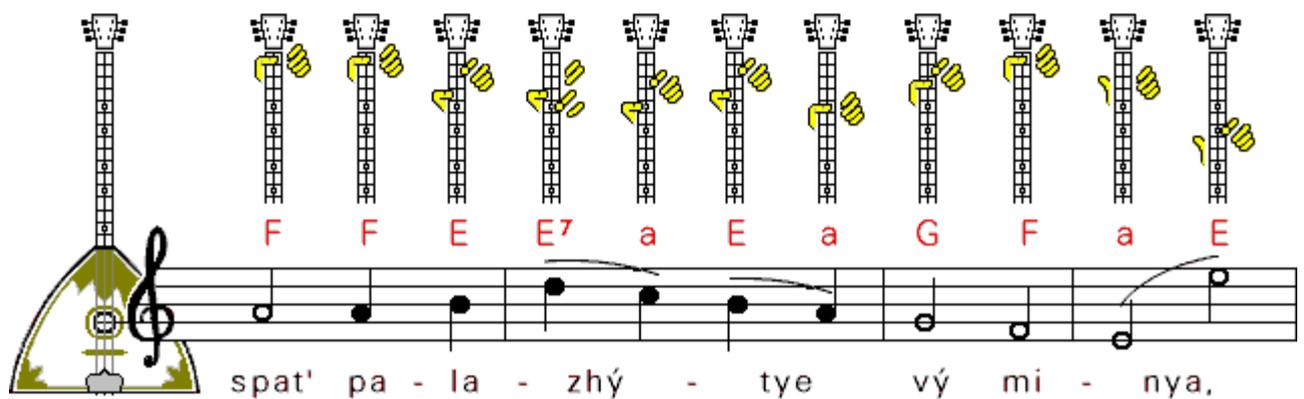


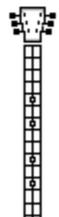
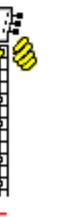




C C F C G F C C C F C G F C

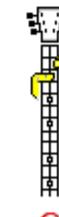
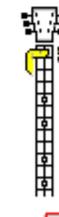
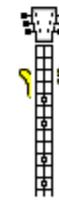
Pad sa - sno - yu, pad ze - le - no - yu,



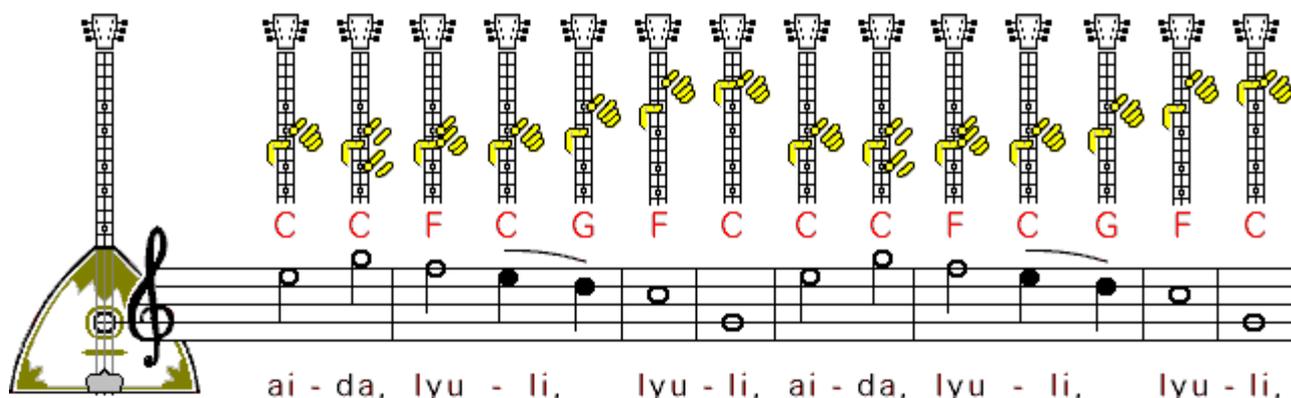




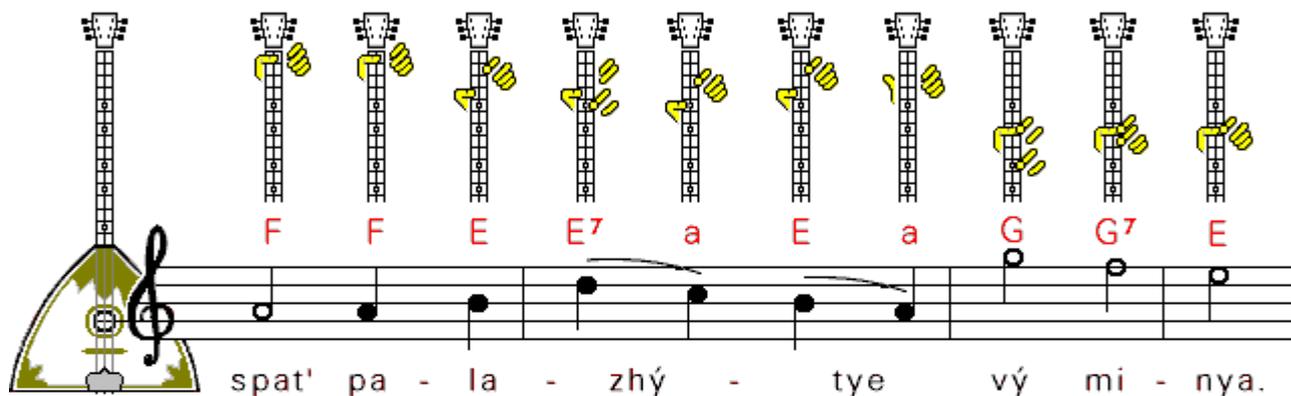

F F E E⁷ a E a G F a E

spat' pa - la - zhý - tye vý mi - nya,



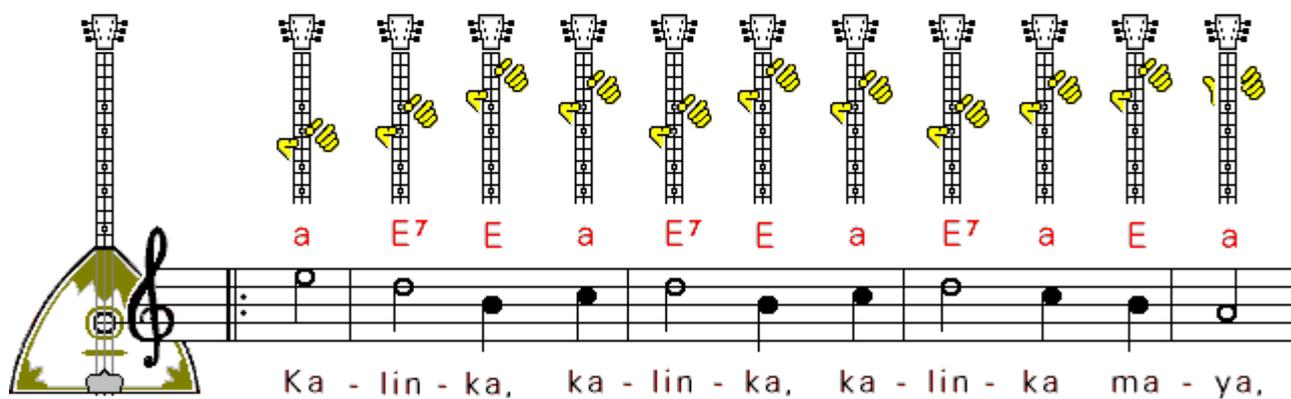
C C F C G F C C C F C G F C

ai - da, Iyu - li, Iyu - li, ai - da, Iyu - li, Iyu - li.



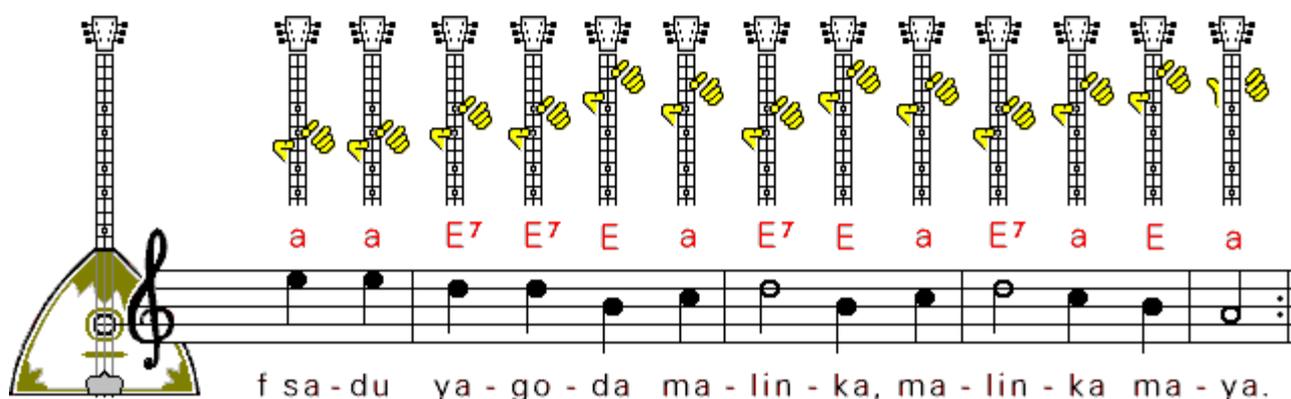
F F E E⁷ a E a G G⁷ E

spat' pa - la - zhý - tye vý mi - nya.



a E⁷ E a E⁷ E a E⁷ a E a

Ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka ma - ya,



a a E⁷ E⁷ E a E⁷ E a E⁷ a E a

f sa - du ya - go - da ma - lin - ka, ma - lin - ka ma - ya.

Kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya,
f sadu yagoda malinka, malinka maya.

Juniper, juniper, my juniper,
in the garden the berry, my raspberry.

Pad sasnoyu, pad zelenoyu
spat' palazhýtye vý minya,

Under the pine, under the green pine,
lay me down to sleep,

aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
spat' palazhýtye v́y minya.

Kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya,
f sadu yagoda malinka, malinka maya.

Akh t́y sasyenushka, akh t́y zelenaya,
nye shumí zhe nado mnoi,
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
nye shumí zhe nado mnoi!

Kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya,
f sadu yagoda malinka, malinka maya.

Krasavitsa, dusha dyevitsa,
palyubi zhe t́y minya,
aida lyuli lyuli, aida lyuli lyuli,
palyubi zhe t́y minya!

Kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya,
f sadu yagoda malinka, malinka maya.

aida, Lyuli, Lyuli, aida, Lyuli, Lyuli,
lay me down to sleep!

Juniper, juniper, my juniper,
in the garden the berry, my raspberry.

Oh you dear pine, oh you green pine,
don't you rustle so loud over me,
aida, Lyuli, Lyuli, aida, Lyuli, Lyuli,
don't you rustle so loud over me!

Juniper, juniper, my juniper,
in the garden the berry, my raspberry.

Beautiful maid, dear maid,
please fall in love with me,
aida, Lyuli, Lyuli, aida, Lyuli, Lyuli,
please fall in love with me!

Juniper, juniper, my juniper,
in the garden the berry, my raspberry.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

The chorus "Kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya ..." is played at the beginning, then each time between the verses, and finally at the end, and each time it is repeated not only once but three or four times: The first passage begins extremely slowly, but then the tempo increases continually and reaches a furious speed in the last passage.

A Balalaika player should be very well prepared for this, and have a special set of finger positions for each passage:

1st passage, slow:

Ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka ma - ya ...

These are the finger positions you see also in the song above, and this way the chorus will sound best: Each note of the melody has its own finger position – but your hand is continually changing positions, up and down the fretboard, and this requires much time which is available only at the beginning when the chorus is performed still very slowly.

2nd passage, faster:

Diagram illustrating the 2nd passage, faster. It shows 11 guitar neck diagrams and a musical staff. The neck diagrams show the hand moving from the 1st fret to the 2nd fret and then staying there. The musical staff is in 4/4 time with notes: a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), E (1st fret), a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), E (1st fret), a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), a (open), E (1st fret), a (open). The lyrics are "Ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka ma - ya..."

Here the hand moves only twice from the first high notes downwards and then remains in this position near the nut – this saves time!

3rd passage, very fast:

Diagram illustrating the 3rd passage, very fast. It shows 11 guitar neck diagrams and a musical staff. The neck diagrams show the hand staying at the 2nd fret. The musical staff is in 4/4 time with notes: a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), E (1st fret), a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), E (1st fret), a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), a (open), E (1st fret), a (open). The lyrics are "Ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka ma - ya..."

Now your hand remains always in the same position for you can touch the high notes also from down there – another simplification which enables you to play faster.

4th passage, furious:

Diagram illustrating the 4th passage, furious. It shows 11 guitar neck diagrams and a musical staff. The neck diagrams show the hand staying at the 2nd fret. The musical staff is in 4/4 time with notes: a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), E (1st fret), a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), E (1st fret), a (open), E⁷ (2nd fret), a (open), E (1st fret), a (open). The lyrics are "Ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka, ka - lin - ka ma - ya..."

At the end you play the melody only on the A-string and let both E-strings ring free, because the note E gives a well sounding chord with all melody notes.

Our eleventh song: "Cossack patrol"

This song really comes galloping along:

Cossack patrol

arranged for playing the melody in A-Minor

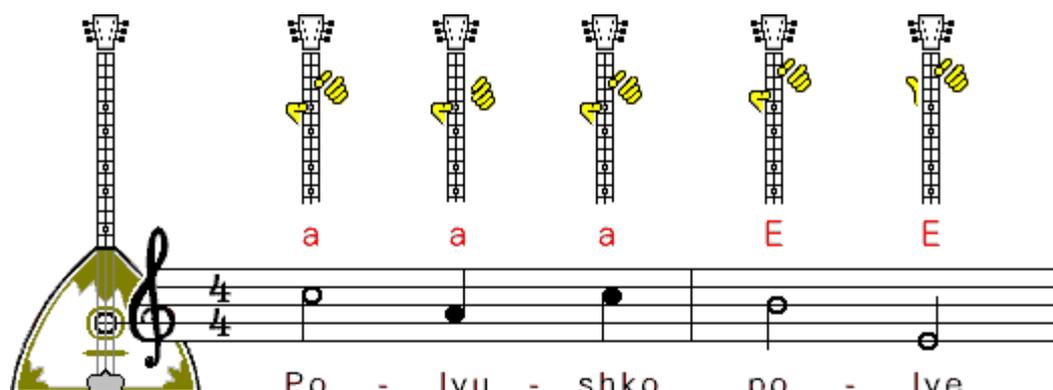


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the first line of music. The notes are: a (1st fret), a (1st fret), a (1st fret), E (open), E (open).

4/4

Po - lyu - shko, po - lye,

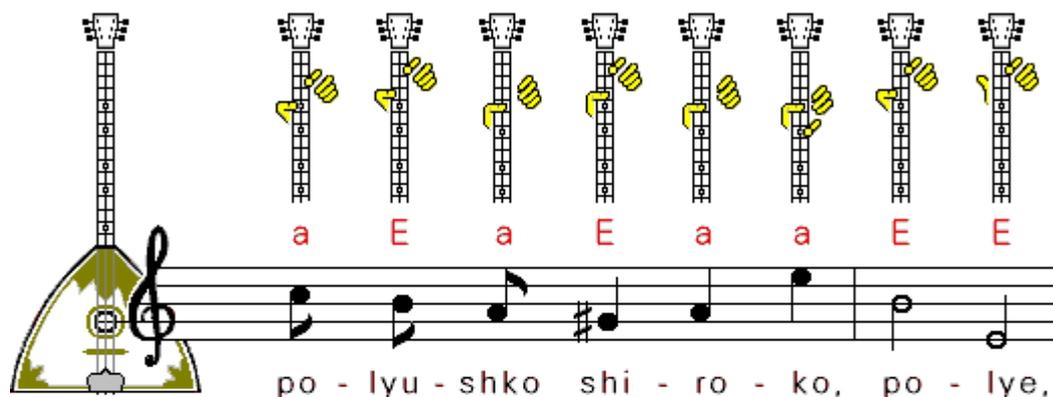


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the second line of music. The notes are: a (1st fret), E (open), a (1st fret), E (open), a (1st fret), a (1st fret), E (open), E (open).

a E a E a a E E

po - lyu - shko shi - ro - ko, po - lye,

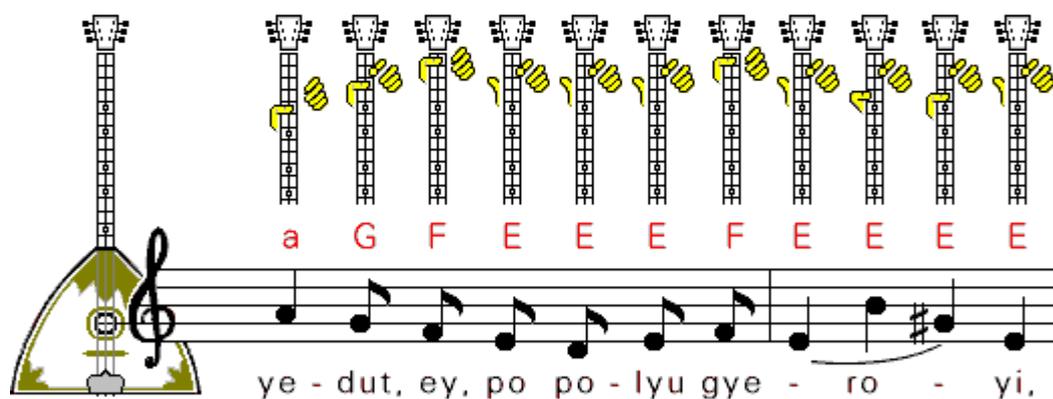


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the third line of music. The notes are: a (1st fret), G (2nd fret), F (1st fret), E (open), E (open), E (open), F (1st fret), E (open), E (open), E (open).

a G F E E E F E E E E

ye - dut, ey, po po - lyu gye - ro - yi,

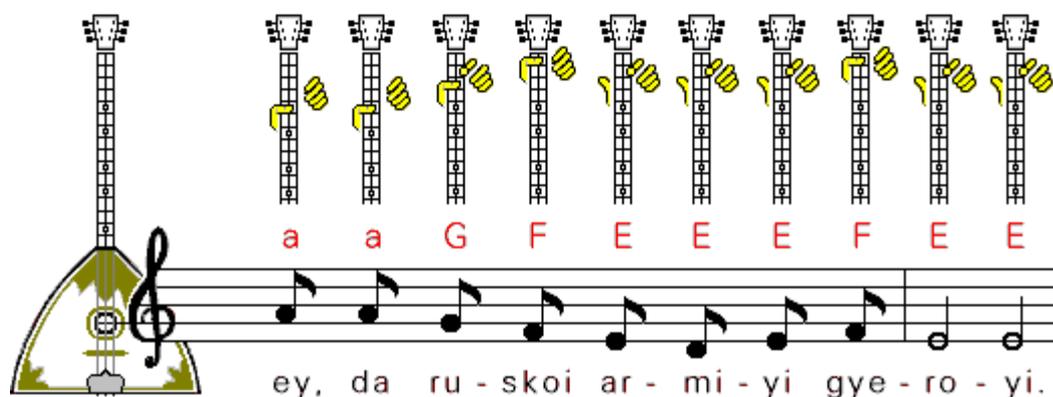


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the fourth line of music. The notes are: a (1st fret), a (1st fret), G (2nd fret), F (1st fret), E (open), E (open), E (open), F (1st fret), E (open), E (open).

a a G F E E E F E E

ey, da ru - skoi ar - mi - yi gye - ro - yi.

Polyushko, polye,
polyushko shiroko, polye ...
Yedut, ey, po polyu gyeroyi,
ey, da ruskoi armiyi gyeroyi.

Dyevushki platshut,
dyevushkam sivodnya grustno:
Milý da v armiyu uyekhal,
ey, da milý v armiyu uyekhal.

Dyevushki, gliantye,
dyevushki, utritye slyozý!
Pust' po silnyeye grianyem pyesnyu,
ey, da nasha pyesnya boyevaya.

Tol'ko mý vidyim,
vidyim mý syeduyu tutshu:
Vrazhya da sila iz za lyesa,
ey, da vrazhya sila slovno tutsha.

Field, my field
my wide field ...
There the heroes ride, hey, over the field,
hey, the heroes of the Russian army.

The girls are crying,
the girls are sorrowful today:
Their darling went away to the army,
hey, their darling went away to the army.

You girls, look here,
girls, wipe off your tears!
The louder let us sing our song,
hey, our pugnacious song.

We only see
a grey cloud:
The army of the enemy behind the forest
hey, the enemy's army like a cloud.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

This song with its inspiring melody, which is restlessly driving on, was created in the years of the Russian civil war in 1918-1922. It probably was sung by the "Whites" first, but soon also by the "Reds" – the enthusing song had surmounted the front-line, and both sides sang about their vague hope to see nothing of the enemy but a grey cloud of dust when he made off behind the wood.

"Cossack patrol" – this was the title of an instrumental piece which made the melody of this song popular also in the western world several decades ago. In the meantime also Russian choirs and Balalaika orchestras have accustomed to name this song "Cossack patrol".

If you study the musical notation thoroughly you will find that there are two notes which cause problems: In the third and in the fourth line the melody goes down to the note D which is not at all available on the Balalaika.

If you now compare these two notes and our finger position patterns you will detect that we have cheated a bit: Instead of the unattainable note D we simply play E and an E-Major chord. Well, this is perhaps pardonable, because if we could play the note D it would just change our E-Major chord into an E-Septim chord – so we would not cause a dissonance even if other instruments or singers would intonate the correct note D at the same time.

And this little cheating pays because we can play the melody rather easily this way: Our left hand remains permanently in the same position near the nut – so there is much space left for a treble!

Ah, if we only had two Balalaikas! Then one Balalaika would play the melody, and the other one could improvise a treble in a higher pitch, maybe like this:

Cossack patrol

1st Treble

Diagram of a Balalaika with a hand position on the strings. Below it is a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, half note C5, quarter note D5, quarter note E5. Chords 'a', 'a', 'a', 'E', 'E', 'E' are written below the notes. The lyrics are: Po - lyu - shko, po - lye.

Diagram of a Balalaika with a hand position on the strings. Below it is a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note D5, quarter note E5, quarter note F5, quarter note G5, quarter note A5, quarter note B5, quarter note C6, quarter note D6, quarter note E6. Chords 'a', 'E7', 'a', 'E', 'a', 'a', 'a', 'E7', 'E', 'E' are written below the notes. The lyrics are: po-lyu-shko shi-ro - ko, po - lye.

Diagram of a Balalaika with a hand position on the strings. Below it is a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note D5, quarter note E5, quarter note F5, quarter note G5, quarter note A5, quarter note B5, quarter note C6, quarter note D6, quarter note E6. Chords 'F', 'G', 'F', 'E', 'E7', 'E', 'F', 'E', 'E' are written below the notes. The lyrics are: ye - dut, ey, po po - lyu gye - ro - yi.

Diagram of a Balalaika with a hand position on the strings. Below it is a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note D5, quarter note E5, quarter note F5, quarter note G5, quarter note A5, quarter note B5, quarter note C6, quarter note D6, quarter note E6. Chords 'F', 'F', 'G', 'F', 'E', 'E7', 'E', 'F', 'E', 'E' are written below the notes. The lyrics are: ey, da ru - skoi ar - mi - yi gye - ro - yi.

Ah, if we only had three Balalaikas! Then the first Balalaika would play the melody, and the second one could improvise a treble, and the third one could just pluck the notes of the melody high up on the A-string, one octave above the melody:

Cossack patrol

2nd Treble, plucked or played in a tremolo on one string

The first line of music is in 4/4 time. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a single staff. Above the staff, six balalaika necks are shown, each with a yellow hand icon indicating the plucking of a string. The notes are: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5.

Po - Iyu - shko, po - Iye,

The second line of music continues the melody. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, a quarter note G5, a quarter note A5, a quarter note B5, a quarter note C6, a quarter note D6, and a half note E6.

po - Iyu - shko shi - ro - ko, po - Iye,

The third line of music continues the melody. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: a quarter note F#6, a quarter note G6, a quarter note A6, a quarter note B6, a quarter note C7, a quarter note D7, a quarter note E7, a quarter note F#7, a quarter note G7, a quarter note A7, and a half note B7.

ye - dut, ey, po po - Iyu gye - ro - yi,

The fourth line of music continues the melody. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: a quarter note C8, a quarter note D8, a quarter note E8, a quarter note F#8, a quarter note G8, a quarter note A8, a quarter note B8, a quarter note C9, a quarter note D9, and a half note E9.

ey, da ru - skoi ar - mi - yi gye - ro - yi.

If you now add also a few percussion instruments to imitate the clatter of the hooves of the cossack patrol which comes riding along – first approaching, then passing by, and finally vanishing in the distance – then you can create a stage-worthy performance of this little song:

- | Prelude:
One percussion instrument begins hardly audible, the other ones join in. They set the pace, a snappy gallop rhythm, and keep it through the whole song: Ram ratatam ratatam ratatam ...
- | 1st verse, softly:
The first Balalaika strikes in, first plucking, then strumming the melody.
The second Balalaika joins in when the second half of the verse begins.
- | 2nd verse, increasing:
The first and the second Balalaika strum the melody.
The third Balalaika joins in, first plucking, then also strumming the melody.
- | 3rd verse, loud:
The first and the second Balalaika strum the melody.
The third Balalaika plays the 1st treble.
- | 4th verse, climax:
The first Balalaika plays the melody.
The second Balalaika plays the 1st treble.
The third Balalaika is tremoloing the 2nd treble.
- | 5th verse, decreasing:
The first and the second Balalaika strum the melody.
The third Balalaika is plucking the 2nd treble.
- | 6th verse, dying away after the first half of the verse:
The first Balalaika plays the melody softly.
The second Balalaika plucks just the notes.
- | Postlude:
The percussion instruments grow softer and softer and finally silent.

Applause, applause, applause!!!

On the other hand – if we don't just plan a stage-worthy arrangement for three Balalaikas – we really have not to cheat when we find that a melody surmounts the range of our Balalaika: We simply try another key, which allows to play the whole melody – we did that already several times in this course, and we have always found a suitable key for each melody. So, if the "Cossack patrol" doesn't fit in A-Minor, let's play it in E-Minor:

Cossack patrol

arranged for playing the melody in E-Minor

Po - lyu - shko, po - lye,

po - lyu - shko shi - ro - ko, po - lye,

ye - dut, ey, po po - lyu gye - ro - yi,

ey, da ru - skoi ar - mi - yi gye - ro - yi.

So we can play the whole song on the A-string and bring the melody to bear more impressively than we could do in the A-Minor version.

Our twelfth song: "Dark eyes"

This old Russian gipsy tune is also played in E-Minor:

Dark eyes

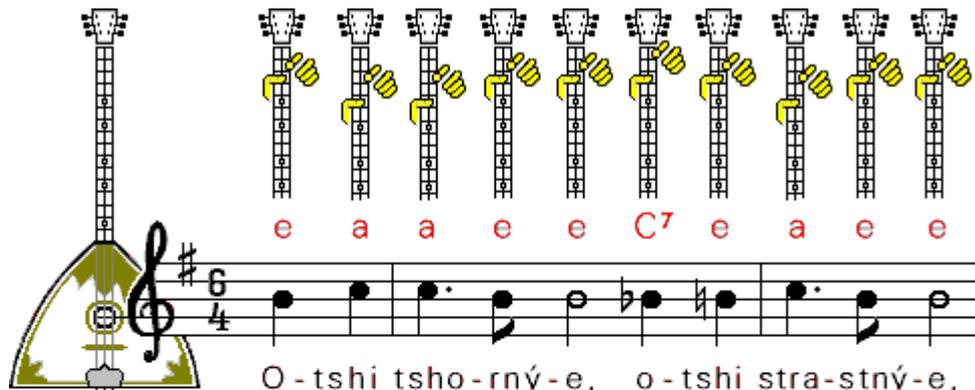


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the first line. The notes are e, a, a, e, e, C⁷, e, a, e, e. The corresponding musical notation is in G major, 4/4 time, with notes on a treble clef staff.

e a a e e C⁷ e a e e

O - tshi tsho - rný - e, o - tshi stra - stný - e,

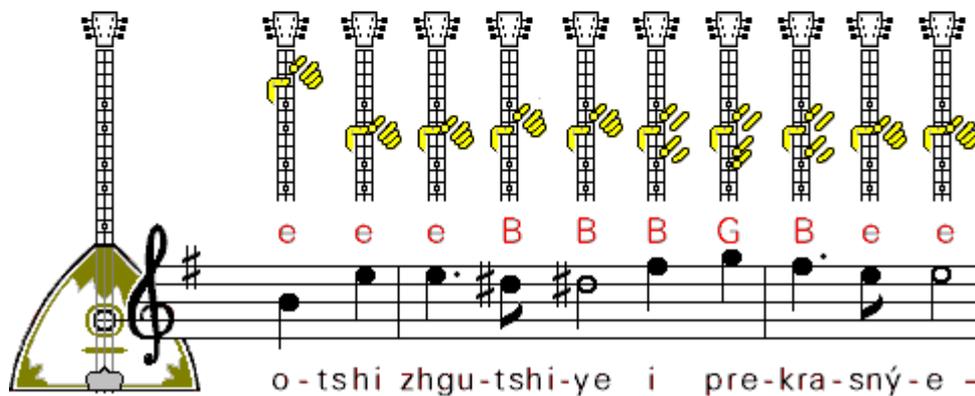


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the second line. The notes are e, e, e, B, B, B, G, B, e, e. The corresponding musical notation is in G major, 4/4 time, with notes on a treble clef staff.

e e e B B B G B e e

o - tshi zhgu - tshi - ye i pre - kra - sný - e -

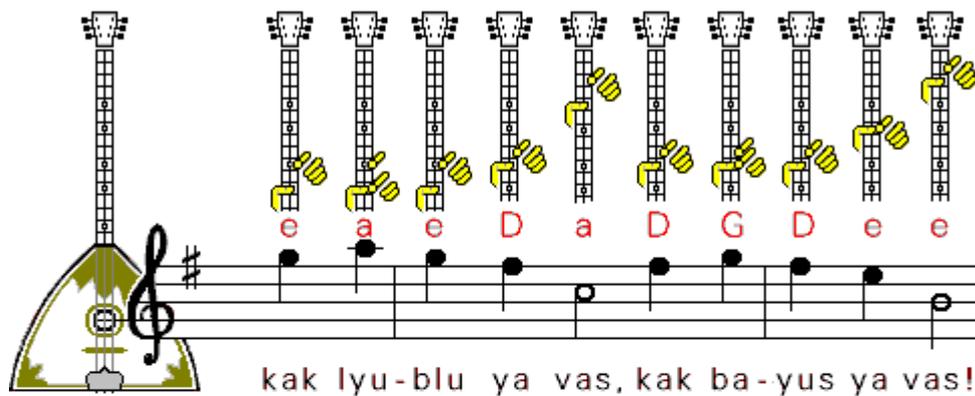


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the third line. The notes are e, a, e, D, a, D, G, D, e, e. The corresponding musical notation is in G major, 4/4 time, with notes on a treble clef staff.

e a e D a D G D e e

kak Iyu - blu ya vas, kak ba - yus ya vas!

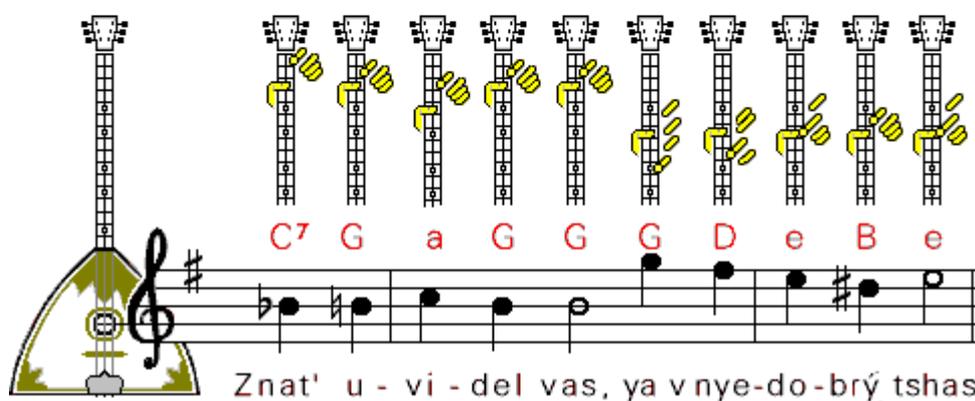


Diagram of a guitar neck showing fingerings for the fourth line. The notes are C⁷, G, a, G, G, G, D, e, B, e. The corresponding musical notation is in G major, 4/4 time, with notes on a treble clef staff.

C⁷ G a G G G D e B e

Znat' u - vi - del vas, ya v nye - do - brý tshas.

Otshi tshornýe, otshi strastnýe,
otshi zhgutshiye i prekrasnýe –
kak lublyu ya vas, kak bayus ya vas!
Znat', uvidel vas ya v nyedobrý tshas.

Okh, nyedarom vý glubiný tyemney!
Vizhu traur v vas po dushe mayey,
vizhu plāmya v vas ya pabyednoye:
Sozhenu na nyom sertse byednoye.

No nye grusten ya, nye petshalen ya,
uteshitelna mnye sud'ba maya:
Fsyo shto lutshevo v zhizni bog dal nam
v zhertvu otdal ya ognevým glazam!

Dark eyes, passionate eyes,
burning and so beautiful eyes –
how I love you, how I fear you!
Since I saw you I have had no good time.

Oh, your deep darkness is not for nothing!
I see the grief about my soul in you,
I see the invincible flames in you
which burn my poor heart.

But I am not sad, and not depressed,
my fate seems comforting to me:
All good things God gave us in our life
I have sacrificed for these ardent eyes.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

This melody is easy to understand because it is so simple, and it is a real catchy tune because it is so inventive and stimulates our musical imagination:

The plain theme at the beginning – consisting of only five notes – is repeated again and again through the whole verse, but each time in a new variation, each time with more temperament, so that the inversion of this theme at the end can hardly catch up the unleashed verve – you'll want to sing and play this tune again and again.

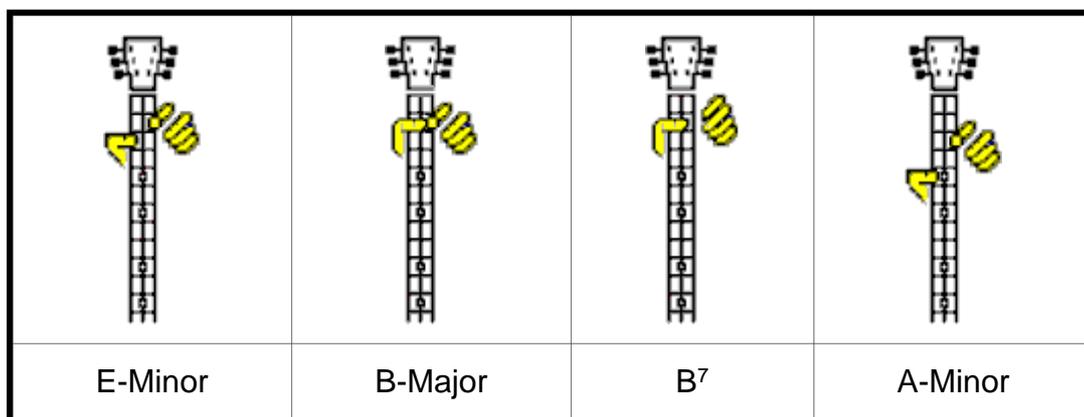
If you hear a good performance of this old song about the ardent, irresistible glances from the dark eyes of a gipsy beauty you will perhaps be surprised that the artists create many more variations of their own, so that the melody varies from verse to verse. This song is downright an invitation to give vent to your imagination and realize new varieties of this enthusing melody.

Perhaps also you may want to improvise a bit with new variations of your own in order to vary your second and third verse inventively – the gipsies would be delighted!

We can't play this song in A-Minor. Try it: If you begin with the lower note E of the untouched E-string, or if you start at the higher note E at the seventh fret of the A-string – each time the fretboard appears to be too short to play all notes of the melody. So we change the key, as we did also with the song "Cossack patrol", and play this melody in E-Minor, too.

In our last two songs you could see that the harmonies often change from E-Minor to G-Major, because E-Minor and G-Major are also related keys, just like the related keys A-Minor and C-Major. In the Table of Finger Positions in the Appendix you will find more relationships between Major and Minor keys, but these two are the most important.

And here are the finger positions for a chord accompaniment in E-Minor. We already know the most of them:



This was the last key you have learnt in this Balalaika School. You know four Major keys and two Minor keys now, and on this condition you will be able to learn how to play every song on your Balalaika by yourself – for the chord accompaniment as well as for the performance of the melody.

Our last song: "Cossack lullaby"

At the first glance, the title is a bit astonishing: If you think of "cossacks", a "lullaby" would be about the last thing to remember.

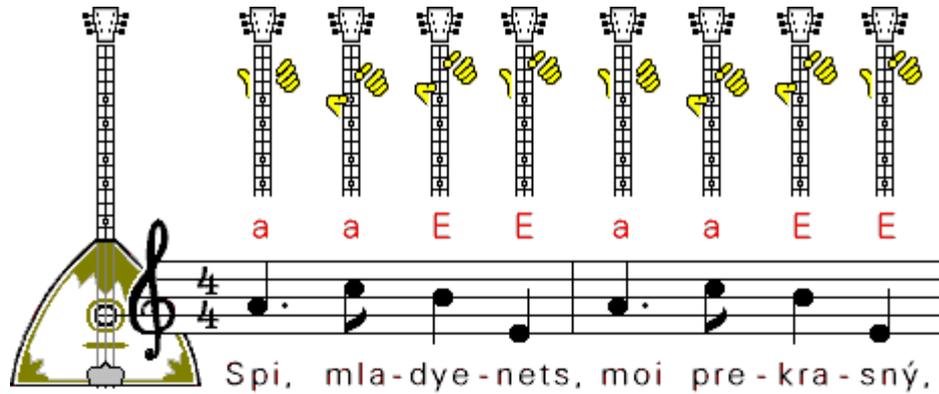
Cossacks – they were daring fellows, escaped bondmen, who had managed to shake off all persecutors and to beat their way through the wideness of the Russian Empire until they had crossed the frontier and finally could feel free. And there, at the Dnyepyr and the Don, at the Volga, at the Kuban and in Siberia, soon whole bands of these pugnacious daredevils had gathered, and they conquered their own territory in the unquiet, always contested borderland, and lived as free peasants now in their fortified villages which they had to defend permanently against enemies from all sides.

Proudly they named themselves after the Mongolian word "kozak" which means "a free man", they were not liable to pay tribute or obedience to anybody, they did not accept any authorities, and in war times they elected one man from among them to be their leader and called him "Hetman" or "Ataman", but when war was over, he became again what they all were: a simple free peasant.

Many great artists have been inspired by the proud, free, pugnacious life of the cossacks: Ilya Repin with his colossal painting "The cossacks write a letter to the Turkish sultan", Alexander Glazunov with his sinfony "Stenka Razin", Nikolai Gogol with his novel "Taras Bulba" – they all have set classic memorials of this cossack glory.

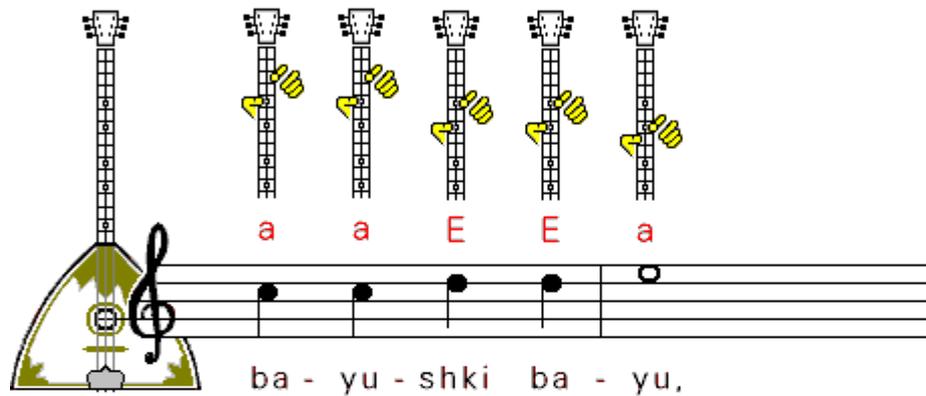
And in Gogol's novel, there is the moving description of the mother with her devoted love and her fearfull forbodings about the fate of her sons, which the great poet Mikhail Lermontov so impressivly composed in his "Cossack Lullaby" that soon became a genuine folksong:

Cossack Lullaby



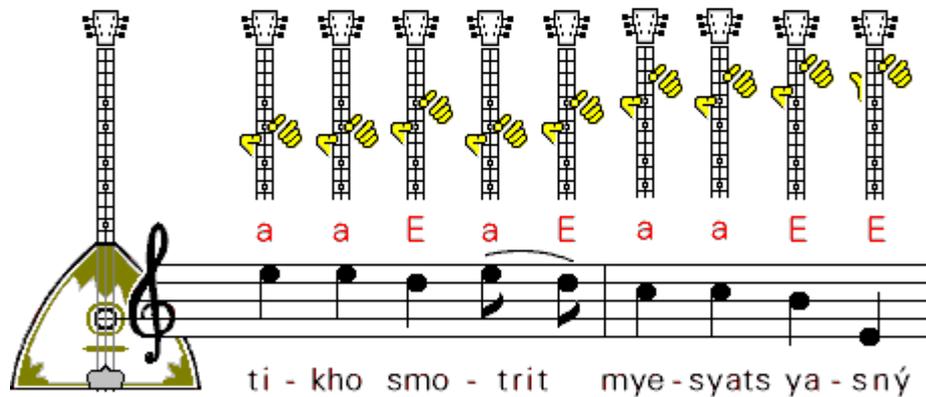
a a E E a a E E

Spi, mla-dye-nets, moi pre-kra-sný,



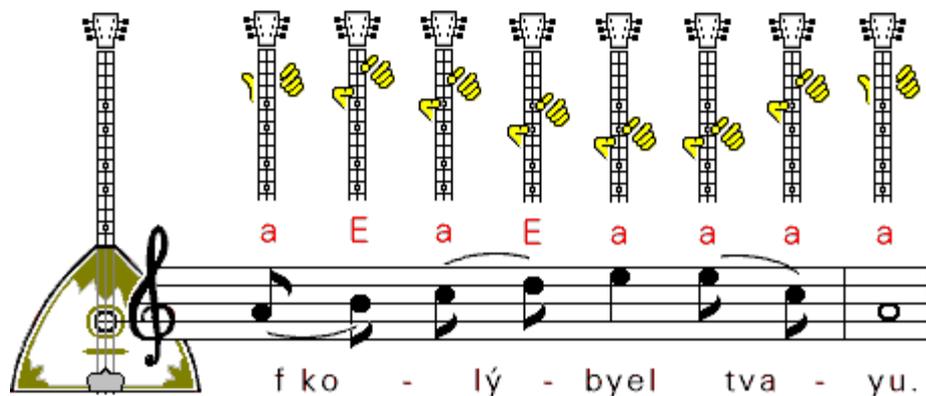
a a E E a

ba - yu - shki ba - yu,



a a E a E a a E E

ti - kho smo - trit mye-syats ya - sný



a E a E a a a a

f ko - lý - byel tva - yu.

Spi mlad̄yets, moi prekrasn̄y,
 bayushki bayu,
 tikho smotrit myesyats yasn̄y
 f kolýbyel tvayu.

Sleep, good boy, my beautiful,
 bayushki bayu,
 quietly the moon is looking
 into your cradle.

Stanu skazývat' ya skazki,
pyesenki spayu,
tý-zh dremli, zakrývshi glazki,
bayushki bayu.

I will tell you fairy tales
and sing you little songs,
but you must slumber, with your little eyes closed,
bayushki bayu.

Sim uznayesh, budit vremya,
branoye zhityo,
smyelo vdyenish nogu f stremya
i vazmyosh ruzhyo.

The time will come, then you will learn
the pugnacious life,
boldly you'll stem your foot into the stirrup
and take the gun.

Ya sedeltse boyevoye
sholkom razoshyu.
Spi, ditya mayo radnoye,
bayushki bayu.

The saddle-cloth for your battle horse
I will sew you from silk.
Sleep now, my dear little child,
bayushki bayu.

Bogatýr tý budish s vidu
i kazak dushoi.
Pravazhat' tibya ya výdu,
tý makhnyosh rukoi.

You will look like a hero
and be a cossack deep in your heart.
I will hurry to accompany you,
you will just wave your hand.

Skolko gorkikh slyoz ukradkoi
ya f tu notsh pralyu!
Spi, moi angel, tikho, sladko,
bayushki bayu.

How many secrete bitter tears
will I shed that night!
Sleep, my angel, calmly, sweetly,
bayushki bayu.

Stanu ya toskoi tomít'sya,
byesutyeshno zhdat',
stanu tselý dyen' molít'sya,
po notsham gadat'.

I will die from longing,
I will wait inconsolably,
I will pray the whole day long,
and at night I'll tell fortunes.

Stanu dumat', shto skutshayesh
tý f tshuzhom krayu.
Spi-zh, paka zabot nye znayesh,
bayushki bayu.

I will think that you are in trouble
far away in a foreign land.
Sleep now, as long as you don't know sorrows,
bayushki bayu.

Dam tibye ya na darogu
obrazok svyatoi,
tý yevo, molyasya bogu,
stav pyered saboi.

I will give you on your way
a small holy icon,
and when you pray to God, you'll
put it right in front of you.

Da, gotovyas v boi apasný,
pomni mat' svayu.
Spi, mladyenets, moi prekrasný,
bayushki bayu.

When preparing yourself for the dangerous fight
please remember your mother.
Sleep, good boy, my beautiful,
bayushki bayu.

(Russian Pronunciation Guide: see Appendix!)

The wonderful, simple melody which the people found to sing his poem divides each one of Lermontov's verses into two halves. So, to understand the original structure of his poem, you have to reunite every two verses of the song to one poetical verse: You will easily understand that they belong together, and each poetical verse ends with the line "bayushki bayu".

"Bayushki bayu" is what Russian mothers sing when they rock their babies to sleep – just a lovely soft sound, no words that could be translated. When the children get older this is abbreviated to "Bai bai!" – "Sleep well!"

You can play this song easily at sight, can't you? You don't need any more explanations, any more advice, any new finger positions. You get all this done easily by yourself now.

Epilogue

School is over!

But learning goes on, of course: In my Collection of Russian Folksongs you will find much more songs with finger position patterns which enable you to learn how to play the melody on your Balalaika by yourself.

And soon you will try a new tune you have heard somewhere, you will first pluck it on one string, then find the matching chords and finger positions, and finally create your own performance of the song.

And if you, by chance, should meet another Balalaika player, take a sharp look at his fingers, make him show you new finger positions, new strumming techniques. And try by yourself, find interesting sounds. This Balalaika School could give you basic knowledge, but real art is always individual. Find your own way, your own style, your own interpretation of the Russian folksongs.

But I don't want to say good-bye to you without expressing my high respect if you really have struggled through this Balalaika School till the end. With an immense patience, diligence, and pertinacity you have opened up a new world for yourself: The rich world of the great Russian folk music – not as a passive listener, but as an active Balalaika player who gives this music his personal touch. Congratulations!

Properly, I don't want to say good-bye to you at all, but want to stay in contact. Please send me a mail, if you have questions or problems with your Balalaika, or if you have suggestions for an improvement of this Balalaika School, and I would be especially delighted if you learn a new song somewhere which should be added to my Collection of Russian Folksongs, so that everybody could enjoy it ...

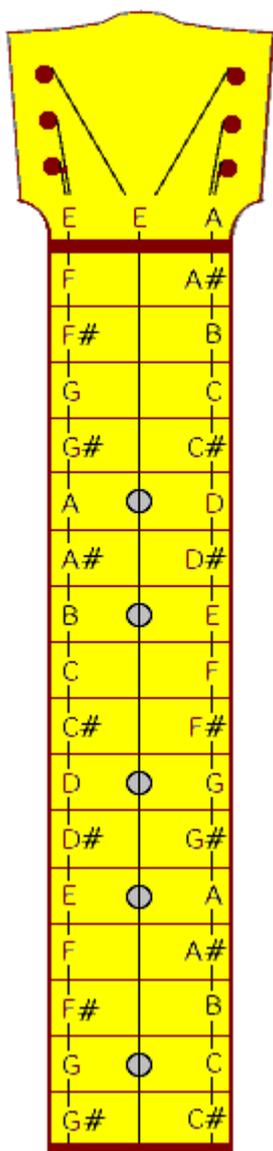


I know that from now on you can't get rid of your Balalaika – this lovely, small, slight, modest, and yet so versatile, expressive instrument – and I wish you that it always may bring pleasure to you and all your listeners.

Kai Kracht

Appendix: The Fretboard

Here is – a bit schematically figured – the fretboard of the Prim-Balalaika showing the names of all the notes you can play on it.



The picture shows only the names of the higher half-tones, but not the names of the lower half-tones. But your Balalaika is a "well tempered" instrument which means that every half-tone lies exactly in the middle between two full-tones, and can serve as well as the higher half-tone of the one as also as the lower half-tone of the other full-tone. So each one of the following pairs of names means exactly the same tone:

$$D_b = C\#, E_b = D\#, G_b = F\#, A_b = G\#, B_b = A\#.$$

So, if you want to hear a D_b , you can put your finger on the place of a $C\#$, because D_b is just another name for $C\#$ here.

The names of the tones on the outer E-string are of course valid also for the inner E-string. They are left out in the picture only for the purpose to make the fretboard marks visible.

The fretboard marks usually are small round disks which are embedded in the wood of the fretboard. On most Balalaikas the marks are placed in the same way as you see them here in this picture. That is why you see exactly this order in all the finger position patterns of our songs in this Balalaika School, and also in the Collection of Russian Folksongs.

If the marks on your instrument should be located in a different order, you could – at least as long as you work with the finger position patterns of this Balalaika School – blacken the supernumerous marks on your fretboard resp. add the missing ones by pasting or painting a little white dot on your fretboard.

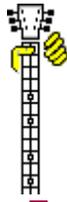
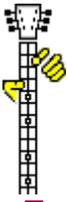
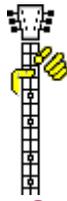
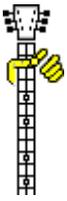
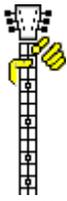
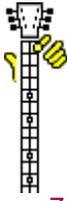
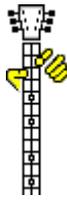
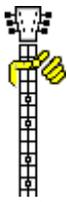
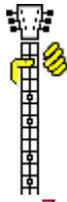
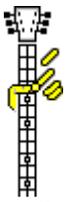
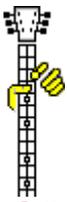
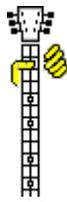
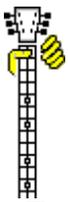
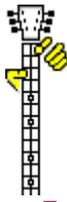
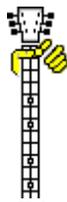
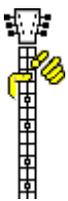
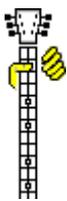
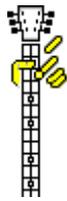
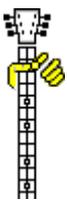
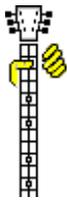
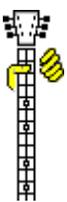
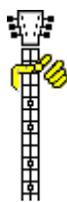
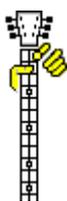
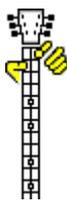
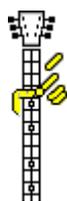
If you want to play a certain note now ...

simply put your finger on the fretboard in that place where you see the name of the note in the picture, and pluck its string. Then you will hear the tone of the wanted note.

If you want to know which note your finger is holding down ...

just look for the same position in the picture which your finger is in on the fretboard, and there you will read the name of the note..

Appendix: Table of Chords and Finger Positions

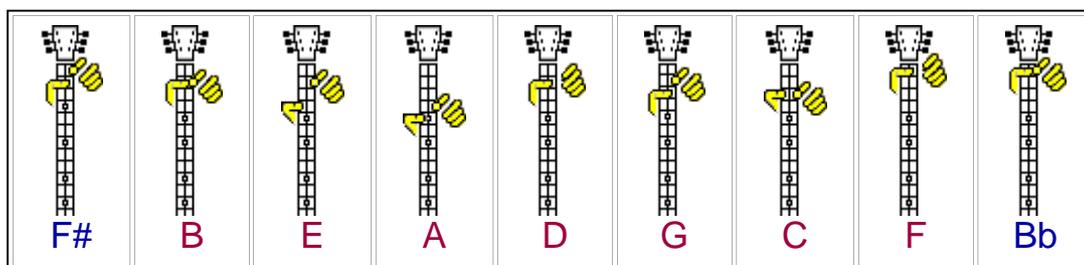
C-Major	 C	 G	 G ⁷	 F	A-Minor	 a	 E	 E ⁷	 d
D-Major	 D	 A	 A ⁷	 G	B-Minor	 b	 F [#]	 F ^{#7}	 e
E-Major	 E	 B	 B ⁷	 A	C#-Minor	 c [#]	 G [#]	 G ^{#7}	 f [#]
F-Major	 F	 C	 C ⁷	 B ^b	D-Minor	 d	 A	 A ⁷	 g
G-Major	 G	 D	 D ⁷	 C	E-Minor	 e	 B	 B ⁷	 a
A-Major	 A	 E	 E ⁷	 D	F#-Minor	 f [#]	 C [#]	 C ^{#7}	 b
B-Major	 B	 F [#]	 F ^{#7}	 E	G#-Minor	 g [#]	 D [#]	 D ^{#7}	 c [#]

The big table shows the finger positions which you need to accompany a melody sung or played in any diatonic key. For sure there are more subtle ways to play these chords, but here are the easiest for the hand of a beginner.

On the left of the big table you see the accompaniment for each diatonic Major key, and on the right side of it you see the finger positions of the related Minor key.

Nobody has to master all these 56 finger positions of the big table! In your musical practice you will notice that there are only a few keys of them in permanent use – you can learn and exercise these few important keys here in our

Crash Course on Chord Accompaniment:



In this small Crash Course table you see that each red letter has two neighbours:

- | B has the neighbours F# and E,
- | E has the neighbours B and A,
- | A has the neighbours E and D ...

And here is the surprising news: These neighbours are the change chords:

- | From B-Major you change to F#-Major and to E-Major,
- | From E-Major you change to B-Major and to A-Major,
- | From A-Major you change to E-Major and to D-Major ...

And which change chords belong to C-Major? Look at the table:

C has the neighbours G and F. That means: For a song sung in C-Major you need C-Major and the change chords G-Major and F-Major.

And D-Major? What change chords do I need now? Look at the table:

D has the neighbours A and G. So you need the D-Major chord and the change chords A-Major and G-Major.

He who has understood this principle has to learn just these nine finger positions to accompany songs in all the usual Major keys.

Of all the Minor keys in the big table you only have to learn E-Minor, A-Minor, and D-Minor with their change chords – that is quite sufficient for your usual practice.

Appendix: Pronunciation Guide for the Russian Words

Properly, Russian language should be written in Cyrillic letters, of course; Latin letters cannot replace them correctly. But the international transcription which is used here can help you to achieve a sufficiently true Russian pronunciation if you observe the few following rules:

a, e, i, o, u – the vowels are always pronounced the same way: "a" as in "bar", "e" as in "bed", "i" as in "bid", "o" as in "bore", "u" as in "blue".

b, d, f, k, m, n, p, t ... – most consonants are pronounced the same way as in English. The only exceptions are:

g – is always pronounced as in "go".

r – is rolled with the tip of your tongue.

s – is always voiceless, as in "son",

z – is always voiced, as in "zone".

sh – is voiceless, as in "mesh",

zh – is its voiced counterpart, sounding like the s in "measure".

kh – is a guttural sound, unknown in English. Mostly it is pronounced roughly, as in Scotch "loch"; only in combination with a following "e" oder "i", the guttural "kh" is pronounced smoothly, without friction.

y – has a double meaning in the international transcription, as it has in the English orthography: It is used to signify a vowel, as in "hymn", as well as a consonant, as in "you". To avoid misunderstandings in our transcription, we have introduced an additional distinctive mark here: The vowel is written «**ý**» with an accent, the consonant is written as a simple «**y**». That means:

ý – is always pronounced as the "dull *í*" in "bill";

y – is always pronounced as in "you", "yet", "yellow". If the "y" is standing behind a consonant, it softens this consonant – in the Russian word «nyet», for example, this sounds as if you try to speak an «n» and a «y» simultaneously, and you hear a "ny" – a "soft n" followed by a very slight "y".

' – has the same function – it softens the preceding consonant: «mat'» is pronounced with a "soft *t*" and a slight "y" behind, as "maty"; «tol'ko» as "to/lyko"; «gulyat'» as "gu/lyaty"...

a, e, i, o, u, ý – the underlined vowel signifies the stressed syllable of a word. In Russian, the stressed vowel is lengthened and strongly emphasized.

The emphasis is very important in Russian. It mustn't be changed, otherwise the

pronunciation of the whole word would change, and often also its meaning!

In all, the Russian language is pronounced more gutturally than the English. So it sounds more dull, soft, and powerful.

And that is the main reason for us to bother so much about the Russian language here. The peculiar sound of this language is an essential part of the special character of the Russian folksong. You cannot replace the language without depriving a song of a basic element of its originality. With an English text it still can be a nice song, it can even become an international hit like "Those were the days, my friend" – but it certainly has ceased to be a Russian folksong.

That is why the English translations of the songs of this collection are not meant to be sung. They are only analogous translations which explain the meaning of the Russian words. For a Russian folksong has to be sung with its Russian text – and, if you can, with a Balalaika – in order to really remain a Russian folksong.



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