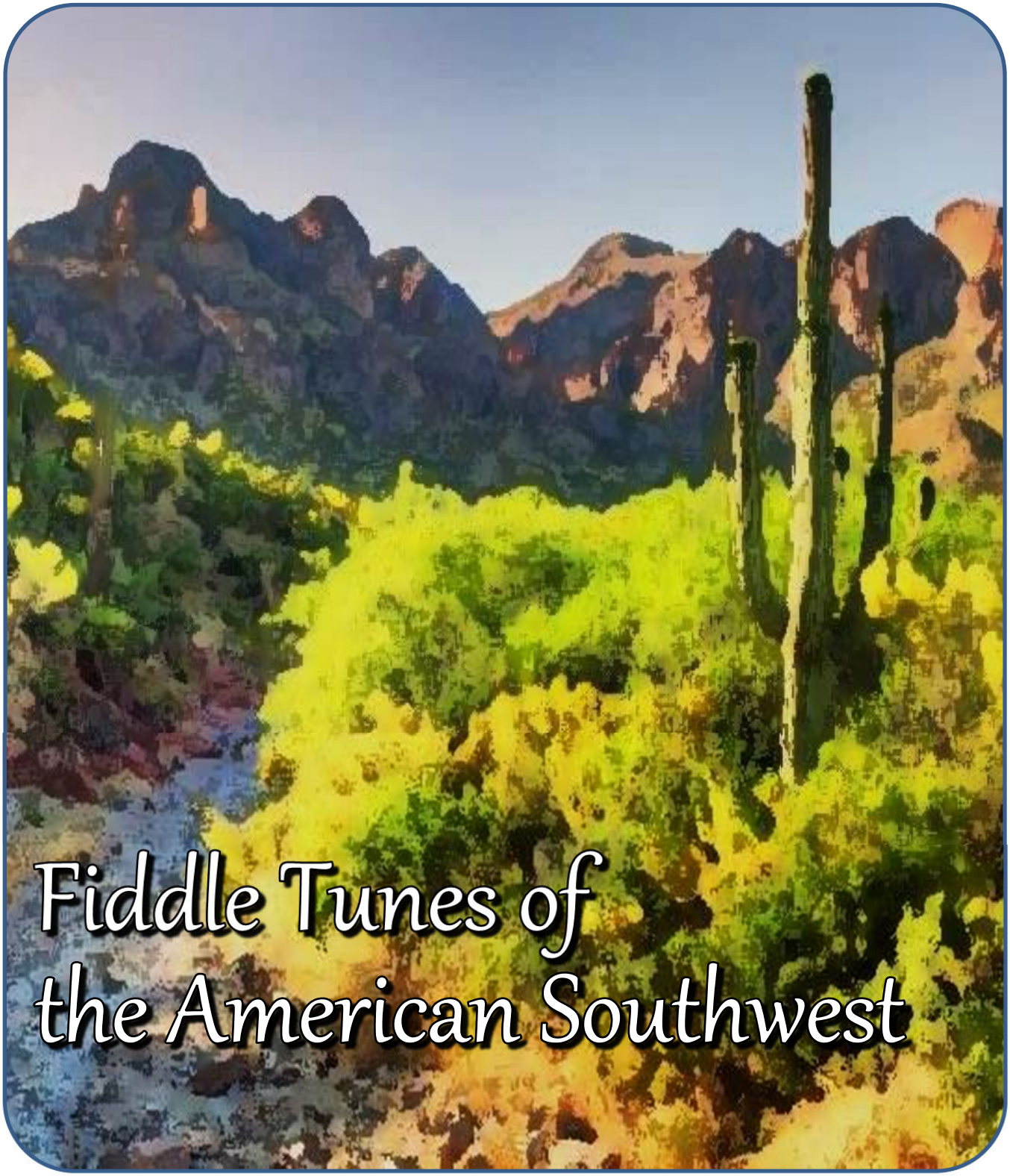


Traditional fiddle tunes of Arizona and New Mexico;
from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, Cleofes Ortiz and others;
transcribed by John S. Lamancusa

Fiddle Tunes of the American Southwest

Transcribed by John S. Lamancusa
June 2022

I was first introduced to the enchanting music of the American Southwest by Larry Edelman, at the Rocky Mountain Fiddle Camp in 2007. I was especially captivated by the unique rhythms and harmonies of the Gu-achi Fiddlers from Arizona. In order to learn and remember the tunes, I transcribed them from original source recordings, some of which were field tapes of dubious quality. Those transcriptions are reproduced here. Also included in this collection are tunes from Cleofes Ortiz, Lorenzo Trujillo and Antonia Apodeca. Current performers and preservers of this musical tradition include Scott Mathis and Linda Askew of the Soda Rock Ramblers, and Jeanie McLerie and Ken Keppeler of Bayou Seco (www.bayouseco.com).

The **Gu-Achi Fiddlers** hailed from the Southern Arizona town of Gu-Achi in the Sonora desert. They belonged to the Tohono O'odham Nation, formerly known as the Papago. They were led by two fiddlers, Elliot Johnson (d. 1993) and Lester Vavages, and backed up by Gerald Leos Sr. (snare drum), Tommy Lopez (bass drum) and Wilfred Mendoza (guitar). Their music is a melting pot of Native American, Mexican and European styles and harmonies: schottisches, polkas, two-steps and mazurkas filtered through the indigenous melodies of the O'odham. Interestingly, their fiddles were consistently tuned about one whole step lower than standard. This tuning probably evolved as a way to make expensive violin strings last longer, and resulted in a very unique sound. The fiddle tradition of Southern Arizona dates back to the days of Spanish colonization, when Catholic missionaries introduced the native peoples to European instruments and tunes. The Tahonos quickly adopted the instruments and absorbed the rhythms, giving birth to a form of old-time fiddle music that is uniquely Southwestern, a tradition that has survived until today.

Cleofes Ortiz (1910-1996) was a well-known fiddle player from northern New Mexico. Ortiz was born on Pajarito Plateau near Rowe, New Mexico. When he was eight years old he made his first fiddle from a lard bucket, with screen wire strings. He learned most of his tunes from his cousin Emiliano Ortiz, who taught him both the local dance traditions and tunes he had picked up in lumber camps throughout New Mexico and Colorado. When he was fourteen, Ortiz began

to play for local bailes (dances) and continued until his marriage and a growing family of nine demanded all of his time. In about 1975, he resumed his violin playing, performing at weddings, funciones (feast days), festivals, and senior centers in his area. In 1986, he received the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts from Gov. Tony Anaya. Ortiz died on the 17th March 1996, a few weeks short of his eighty-sixth birthday, in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Lorenzo Trujillo began playing mariachi and traditional southwest Hispanic music as a teenager with the Mariachi Alegre and The Southwest Musicians. Over the past 40 years, he has presented thousands of concerts, lectures, and demonstrations, and has published extensively about traditional music and dance of the Southwestern U.S. He has recorded and performed for television, radio and on numerous CDs. He was awarded the 1996 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, acknowledging his work as a folk violinist, guitarist, vocalist, musician, ethnic dancer, folklorist, arts administrator, and culture bearer for approximately five decades. Dr. Trujillo holds two doctorates: Doctor of Education and Juris Doctor. He currently works as a performer and teacher in the Music Department of the Metropolitan State University in Denver, as Director of Hispanic Music at the Conservatory of Music for the Cathedral/Basilica at the Immaculate Conception in Denver, and as an attorney in private practice.

Antonia Apodaca (1923- 2020) was a beloved icon of New Mexican folk music. She was a musician and songwriter for over 80 years. Her primary instruments were accordion and guitar, along with her passionate voice and treasure chest of traditional music. From a family of musicians, her mother played the accordion and guitar and her father the guitar, accordion, and violin. At the age of 18, she met her future husband, Macario "Max" Apodaca a fiddler from Carmen, a village near Mora, New Mexico. They settled in Wyoming in 1949 where they lived for 30 years, performing together for both the Hispanic and Anglo communities at dances and local events, and raising five children. They returned to New Mexico in 1979.

Antonia received the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 1992, the same year she appeared at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. "Toni" received the New Mexico Music Commission's Platinum Music Award for lifetime achievement in 2018.

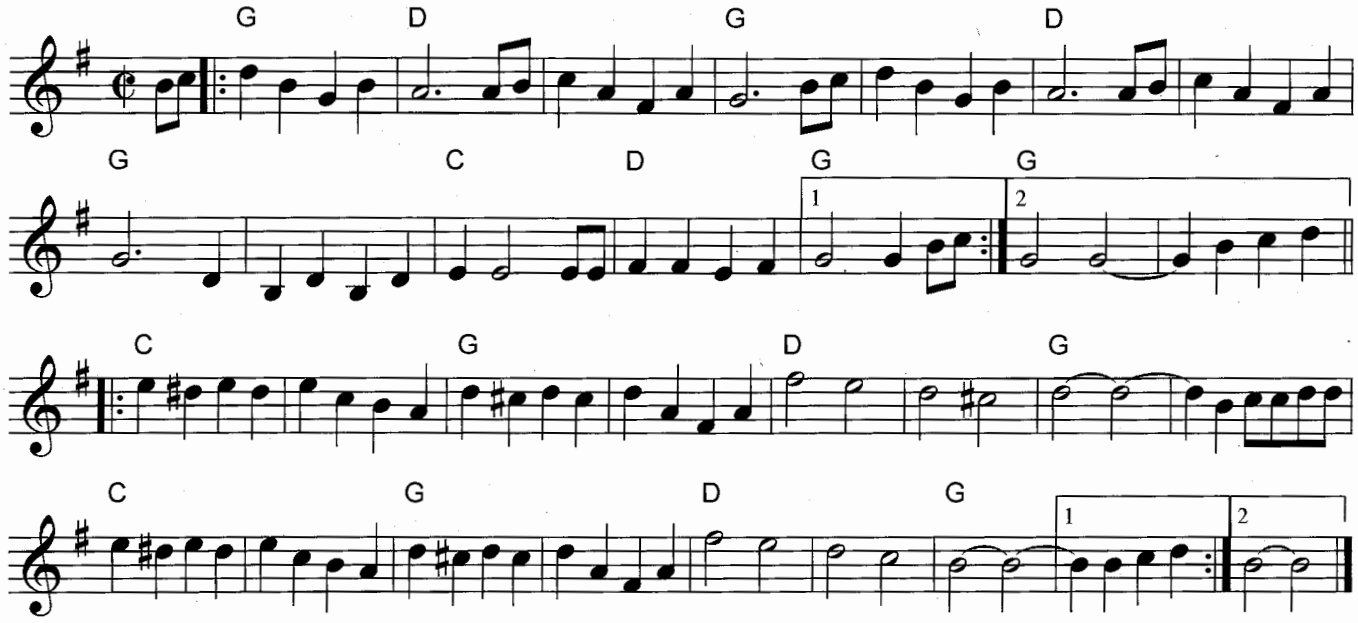
Contents:

Tune Name	Key	Source, *album title*
Ali Oidak Polka	G	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Valse Apasionado	G	Trad., Larry Edelman from Lorenzo Trujillo
Biscuit Cheeks Two Step	D	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
Cababi Polka	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Caballito Blanco	G	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
La Cadena Waltz	G	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Celeya Polka	G	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
La Comancha Waltz	G	Trad. as played by Lorenzo Trujillo
El Coyote	C	Larry Edelman from **Dances of Early Calif. Days** book
Cuadrilla	D	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
Cuatro Por Cuatro Polka	G	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
E. J. Special Polka	*D*	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Elliott's Favorite Waltz	A	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Valse Emiliano	Gm	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Valse de Escoba	G	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
First Choice Two Step	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Hohokum Polka	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
It's In There	G	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
Valse de Jose y Raphaelita	D	by Antonia Apodaca, *Bayou Seco: 20 Years in the Bewilderness*
Libby Bird Song Mazurka	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Lonnie's Polka	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Memories in Ajo	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Mi Suegra Aprietan Mis Botas	G	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Valse de los Panos	G	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Paul's White Sox Polka	G	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
La Pecosita	G	by Valentin Elizalde played by Scott Mathis
Pinto Beans Two Step	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Polfa (Polka in F)	F	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Polka de Rapho	G	by Scott Mathis, *Bayou Seco: Little Pleasures of Life*
Purple Lilies Polka	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
El Quelita	D	The Gu-achi Fiddlers, field recording
Redondo de Leyba	C	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Saint Rose of Lima Mazurka	D	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Santa Rosa Processional	D	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
Second Time in San Javier Two Step	G	*The Gu-achi Fiddlers*
Squash Fields	D	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
Tampico Hermosa Polka	G	Cleofes Ortiz*, Violinista de Nuevo Mexico*
Uncle Charlie's	D	Bayou Seco from The Gu-achi Fiddlers, *More Memories in Cababi*
Varsovienna	G	Trad., Larry Edelman from Lorenzo Trujillo

Go to: https://www.me.psu.edu/lamancusa/tunes.html for audio recordings and more tunes

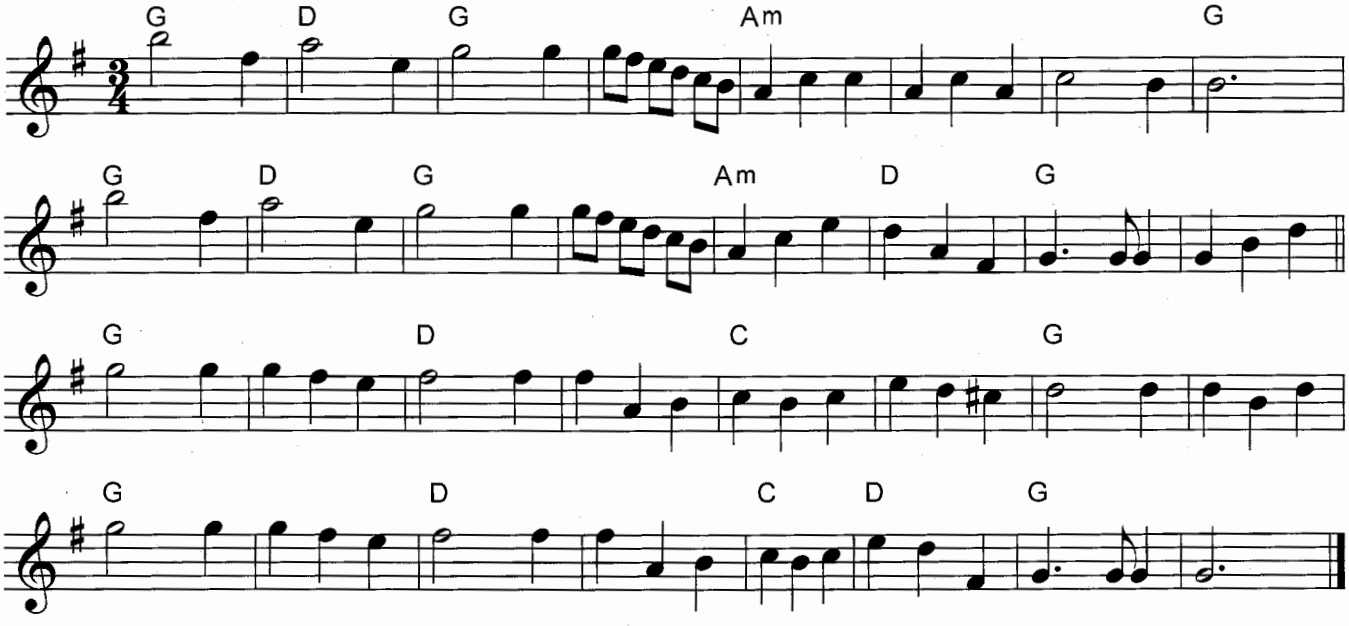
Ali Oidak Polka

Gu-achi Fiddlers



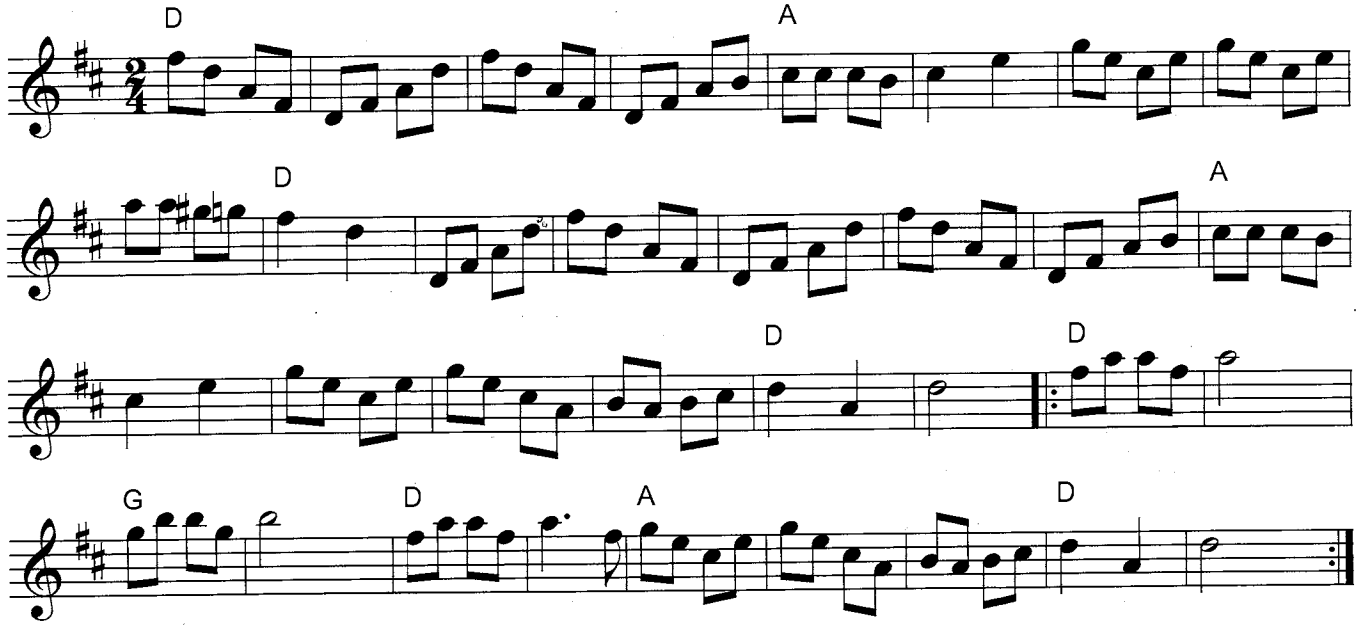
Valse Apasionado

by Lorenzo Trujillo



Biscuit Cheeks Two Step

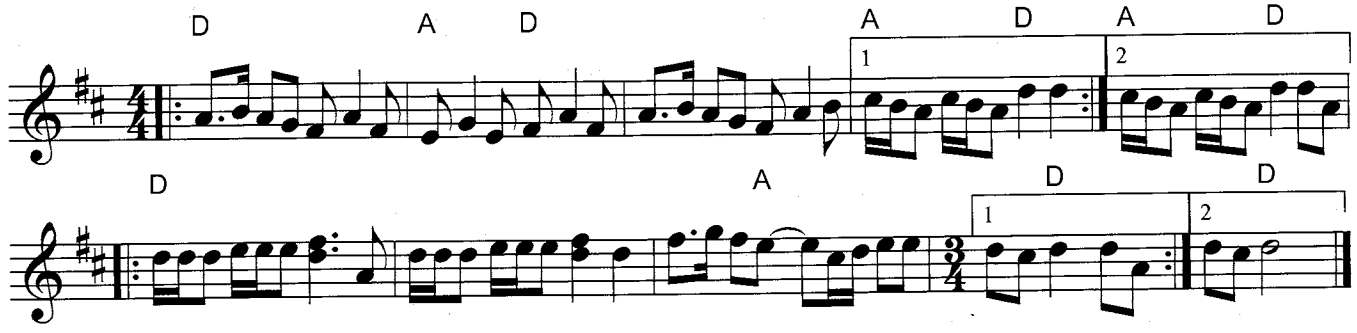
Chotis, Bayou Seco from
the Gu-achi Fiddlers [Memories in Cababi]



Played with syncopation, B part is played 3 times

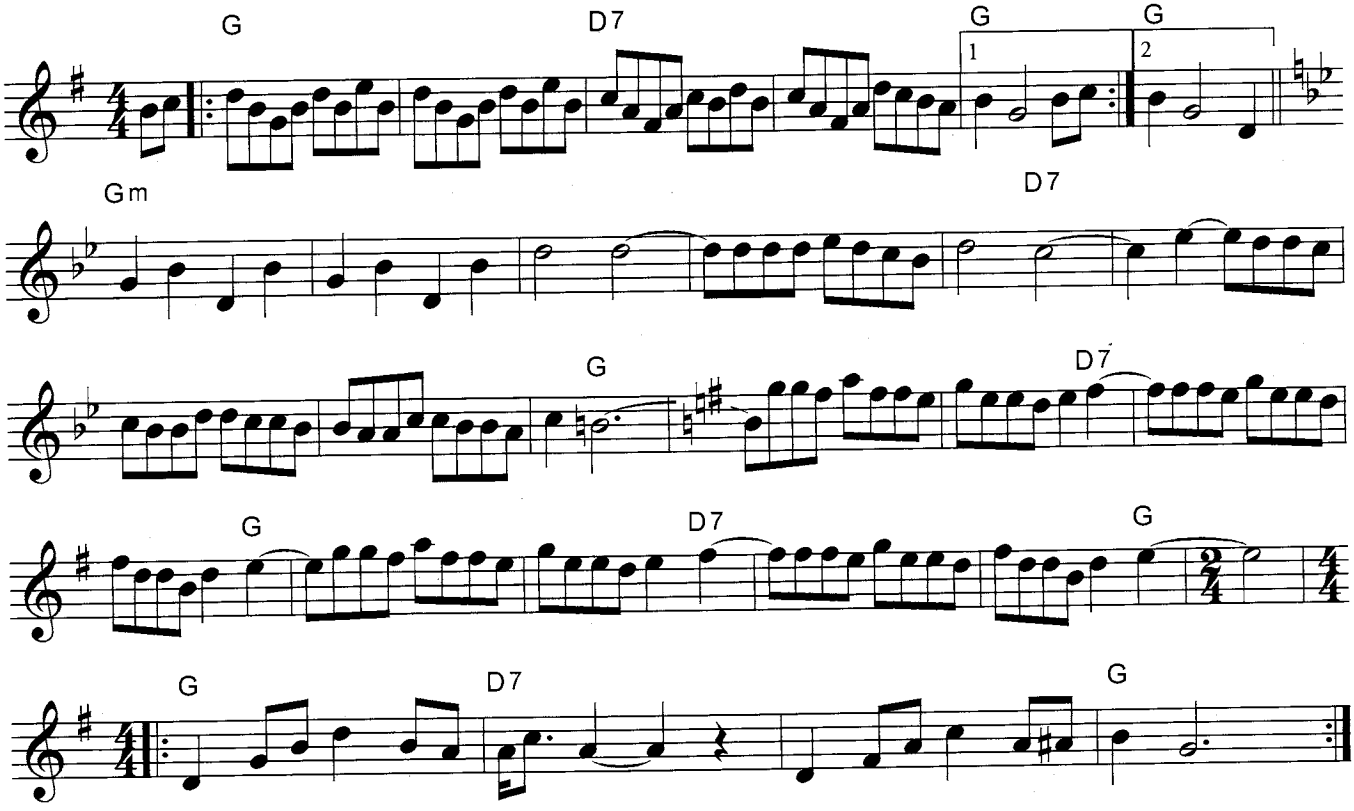
Cababi Polka

The Gu-achi Fiddlers



Caballito Blanco

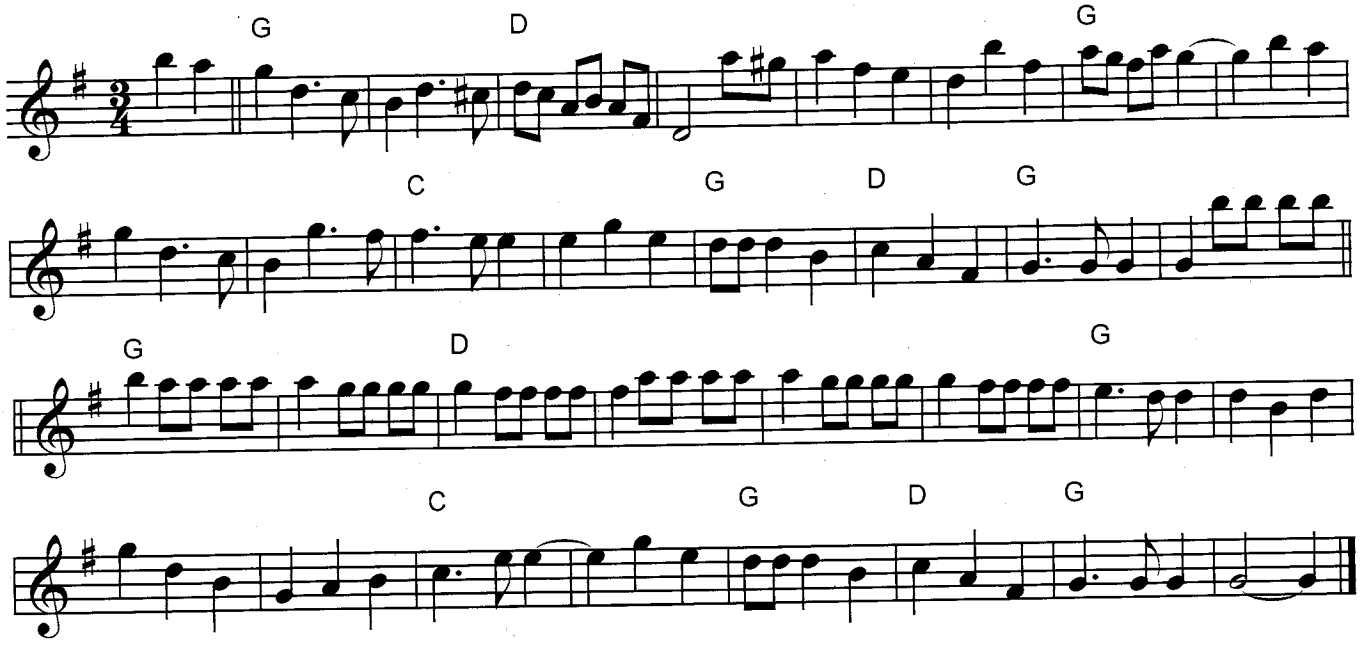
Bayou Seco from Elliott Johnson
[Memories in Cababi]



played with syncopation

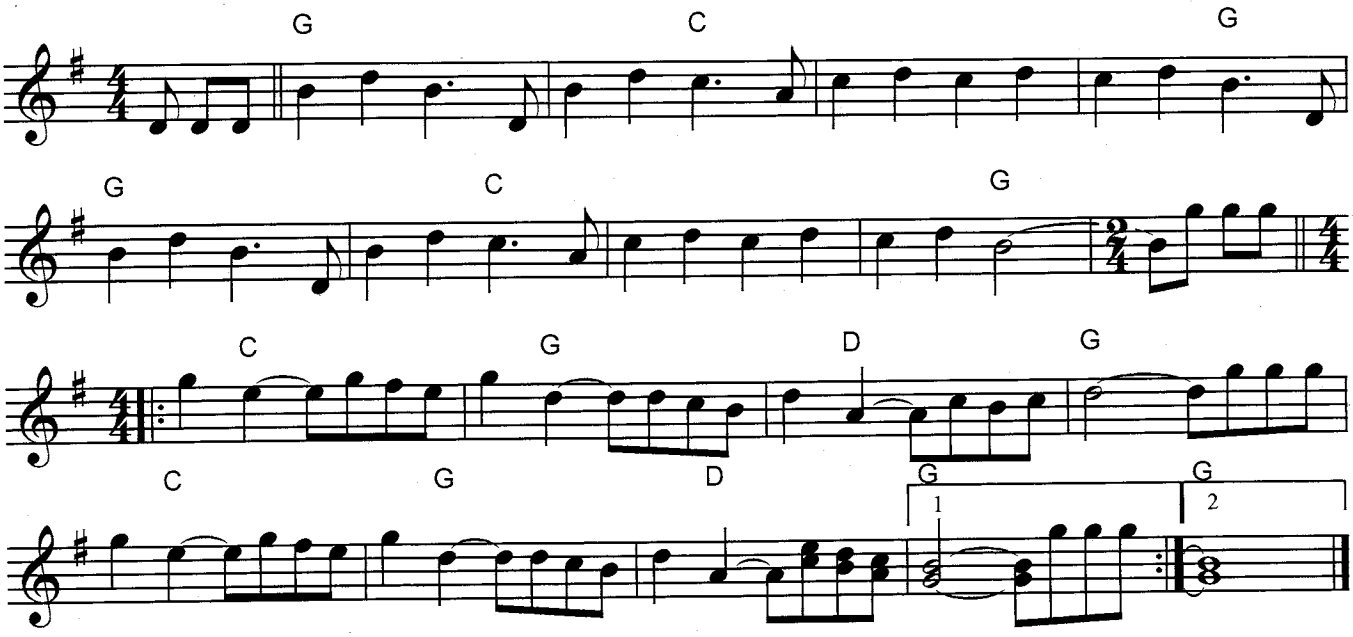
La Cadena Waltz

Scott Mathis
from Cleofes Ortiz



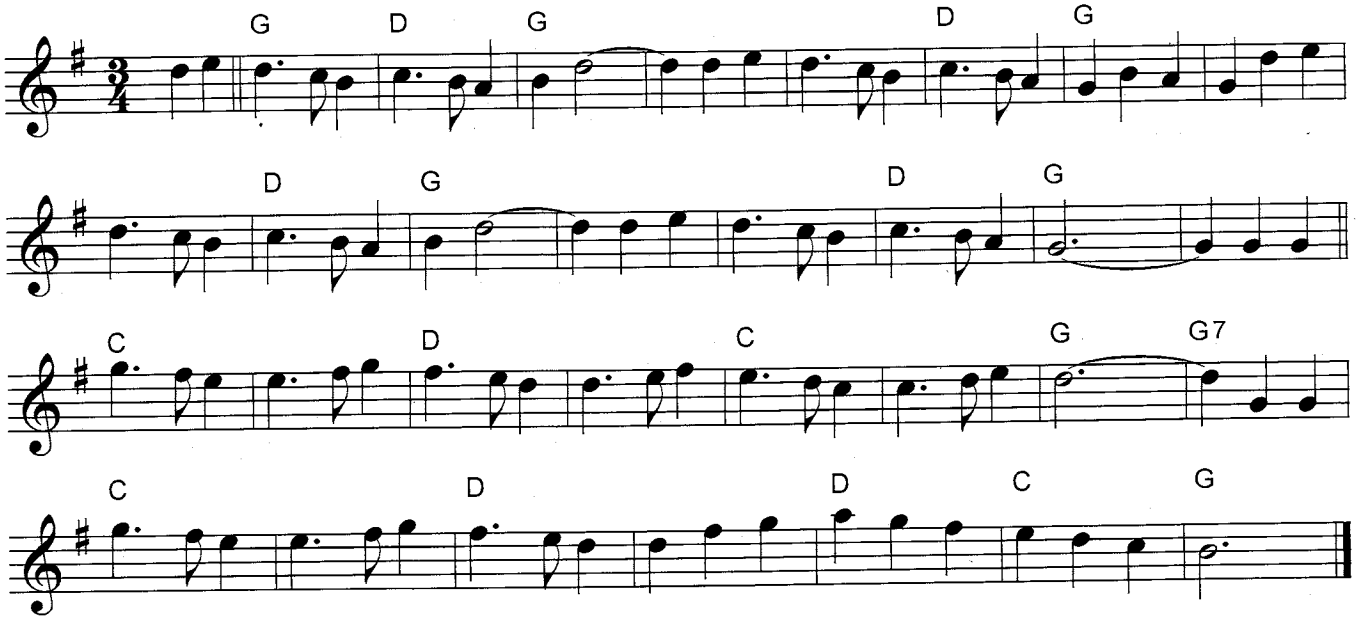
Celeya Polka

The Gu-achi Fiddlers



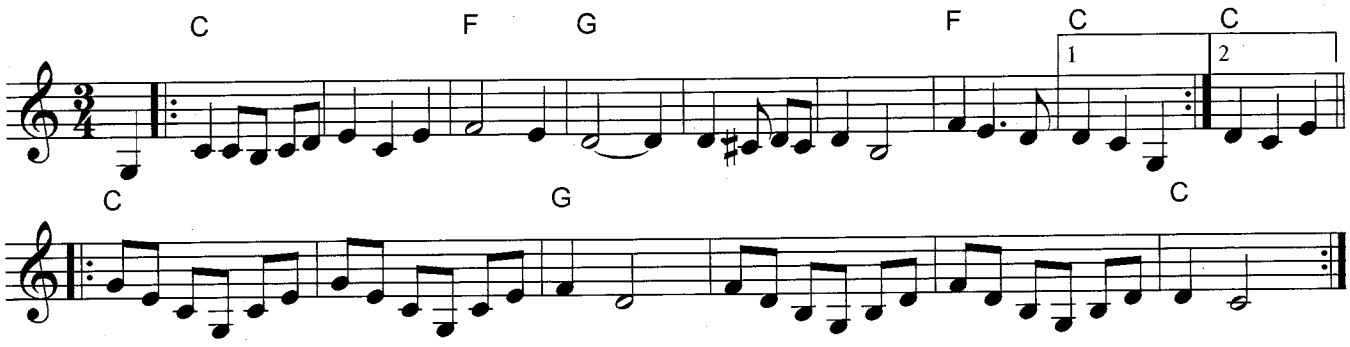
La Comancha Waltz

by Lorenzo Trujillo
as played by Larry Edelman



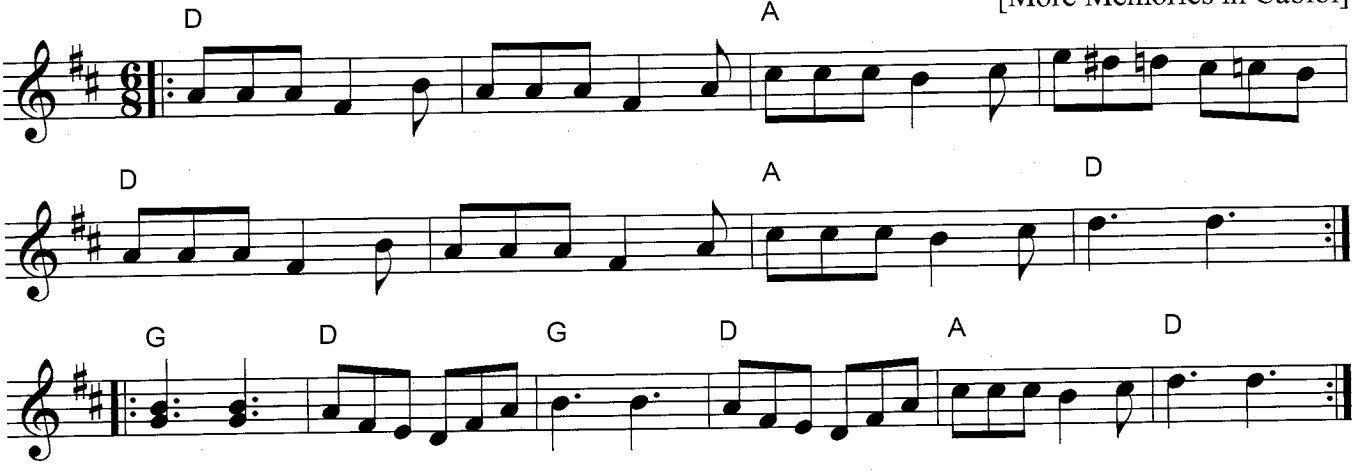
El Coyote Waltz

Larry Edelman



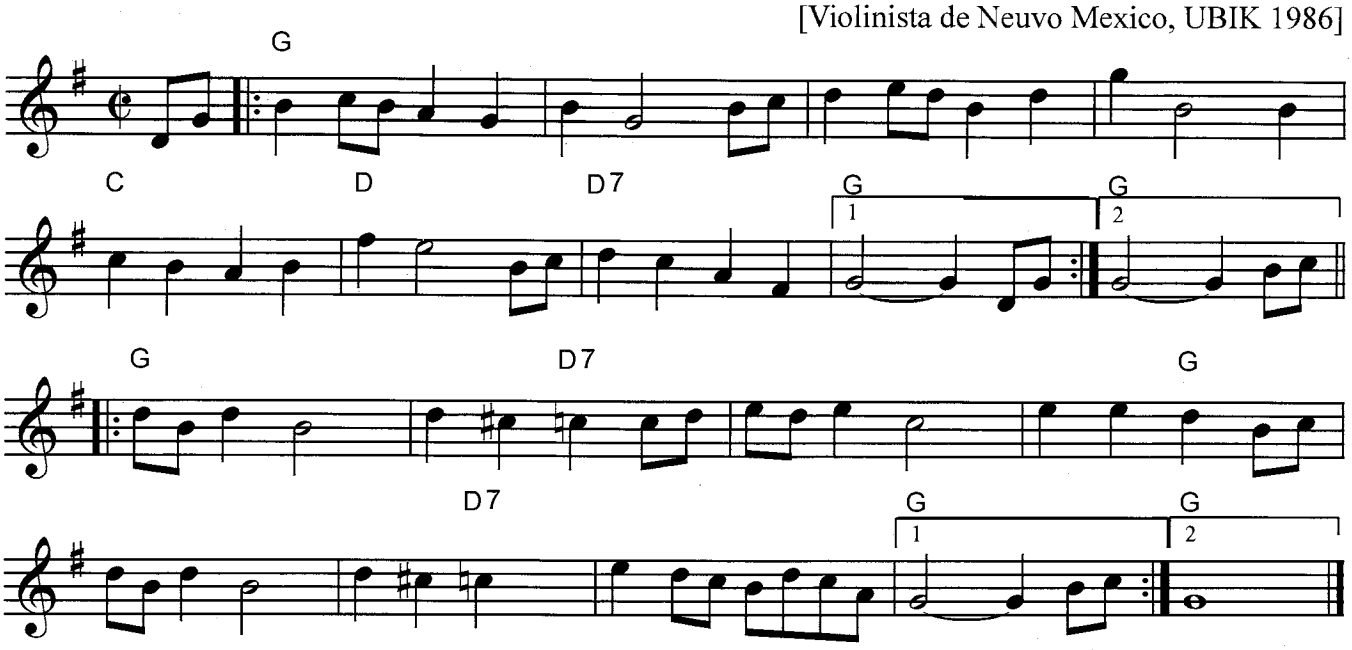
Cuadrilla

Bayou Seco fromthe Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cabibi]



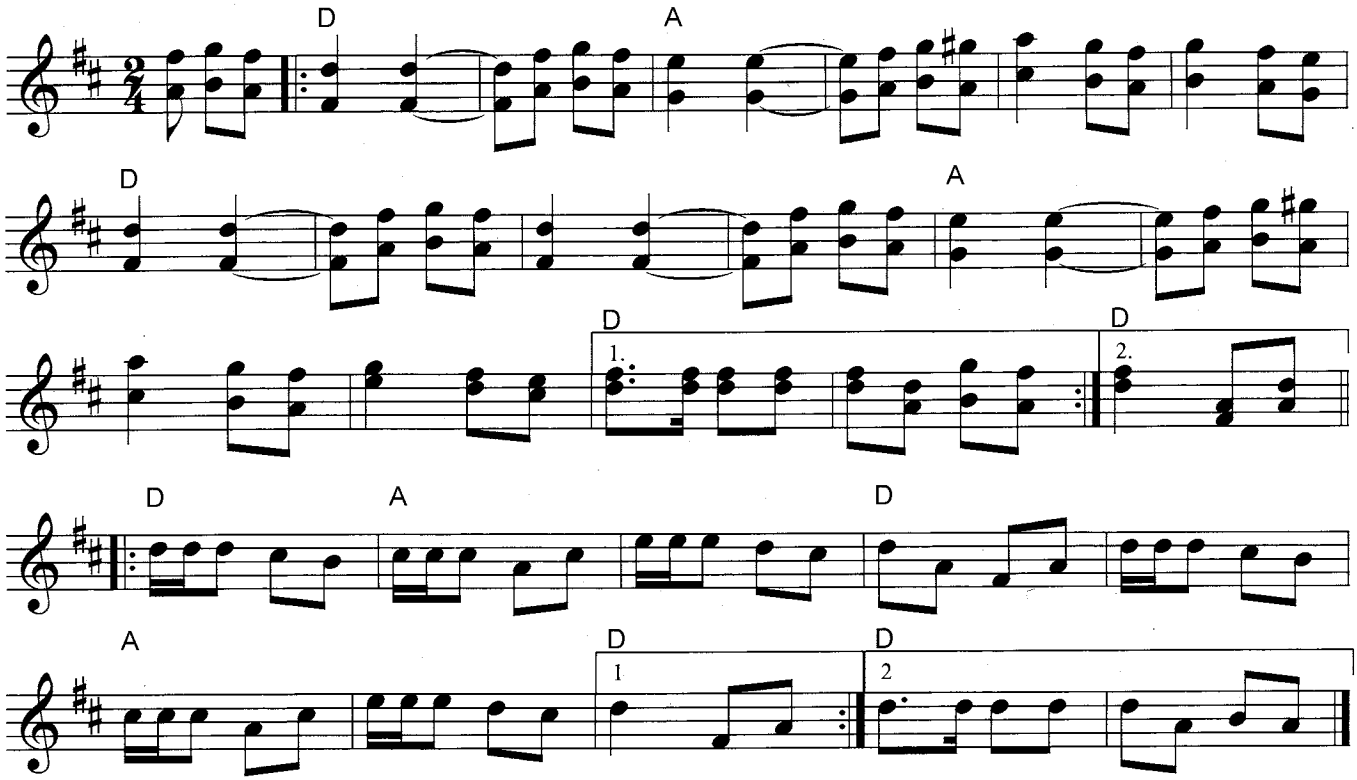
Cuatro Por Cuatro Polka

Cleofes Ortiz
[Violinista de Neuvo Mexico, UBIK 1986]



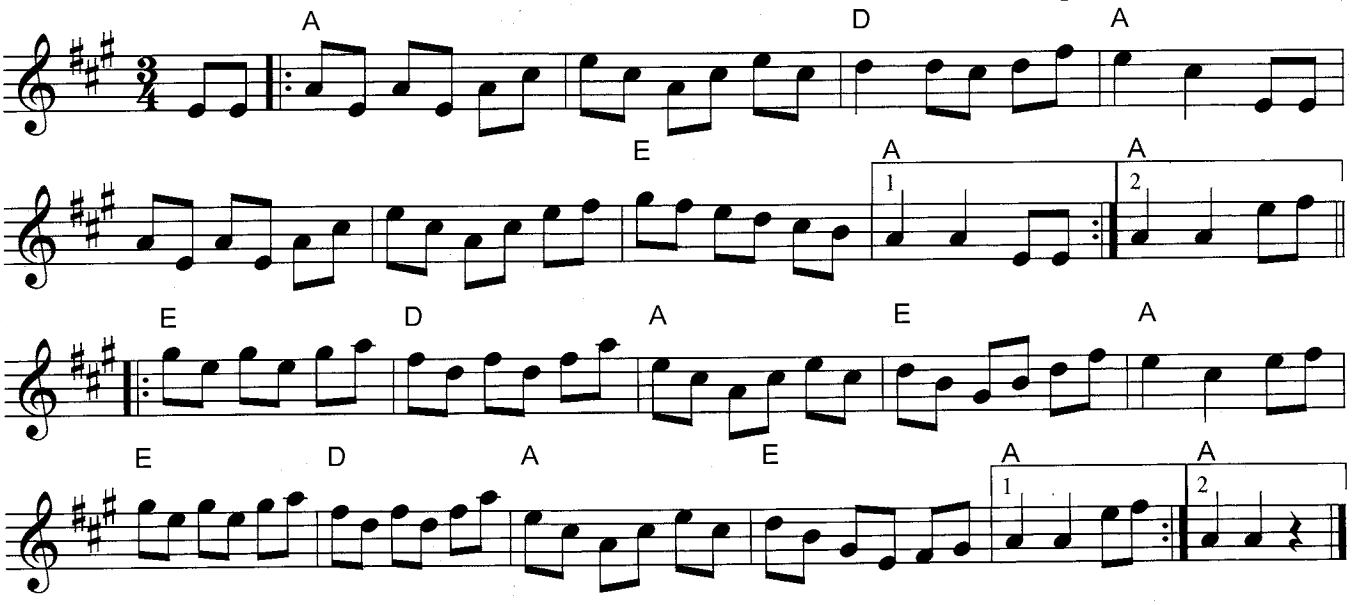
E. J. Special Polka

[Gu-achi Fiddlers] and
Bayou Seco [Memories in Cababi]



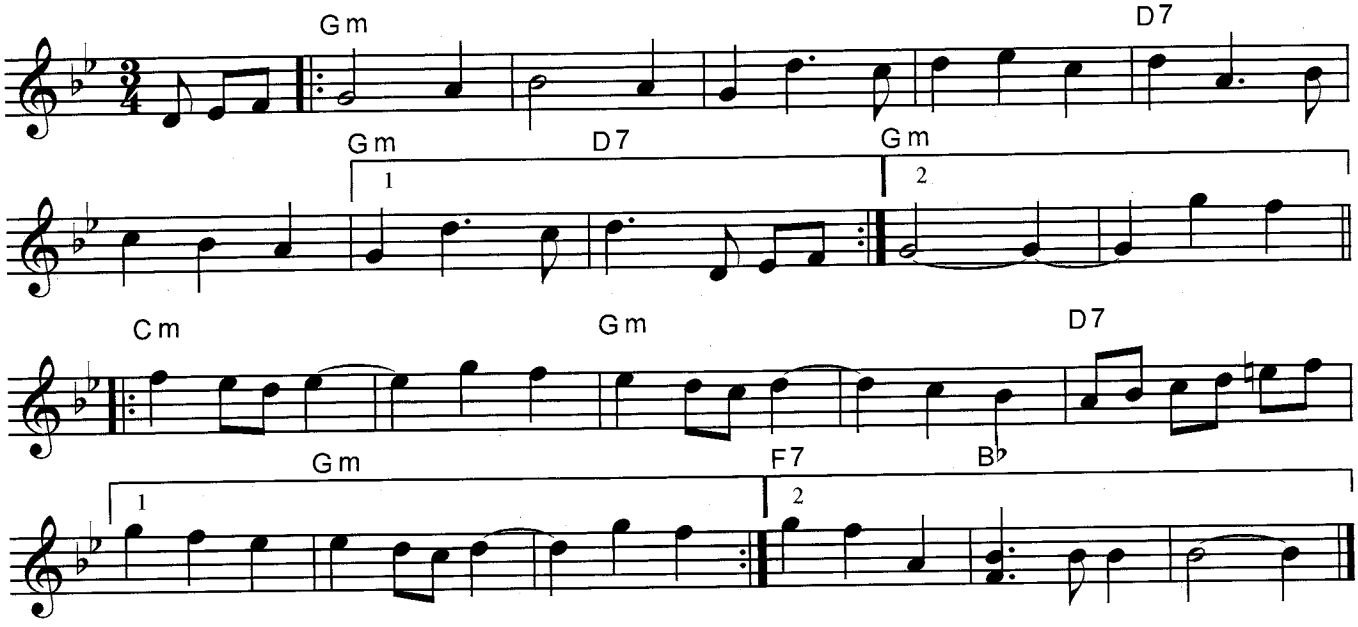
Elliott's Favorite Waltz

Bayou Seco from Elliot Johnson
[Memories in Cababi]



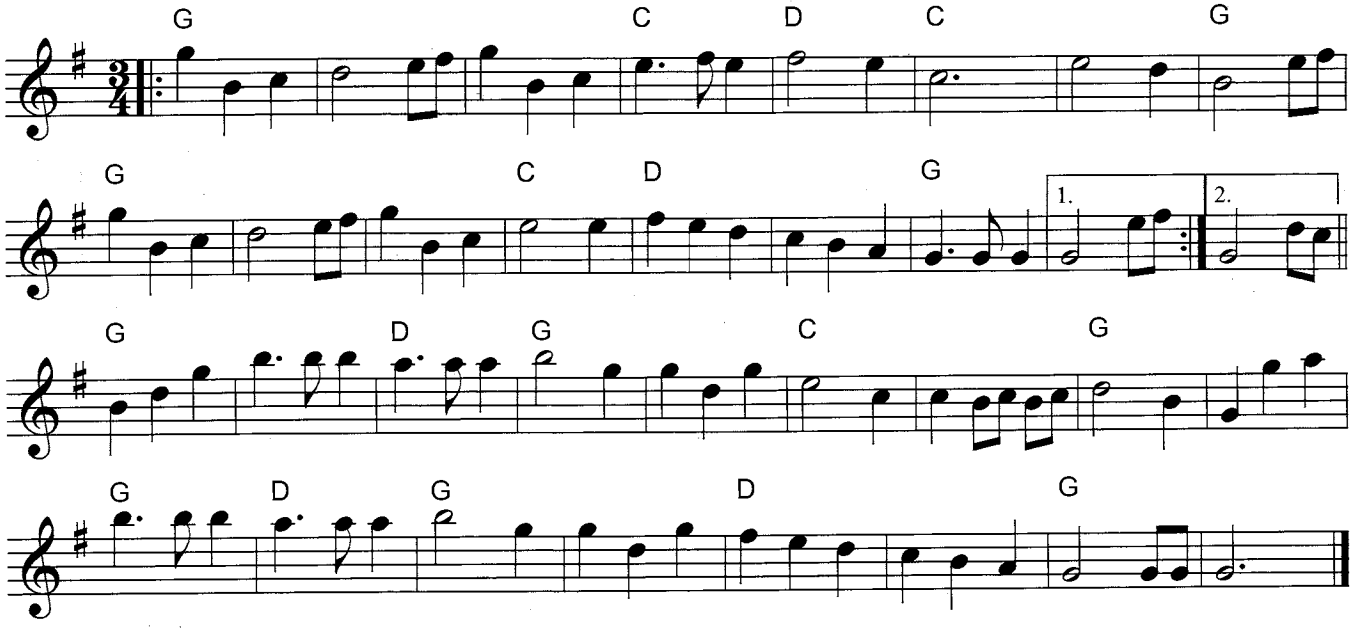
Valse Emiliano

Cleofes Ortiz
[Violinista de Nuevo Mexico]



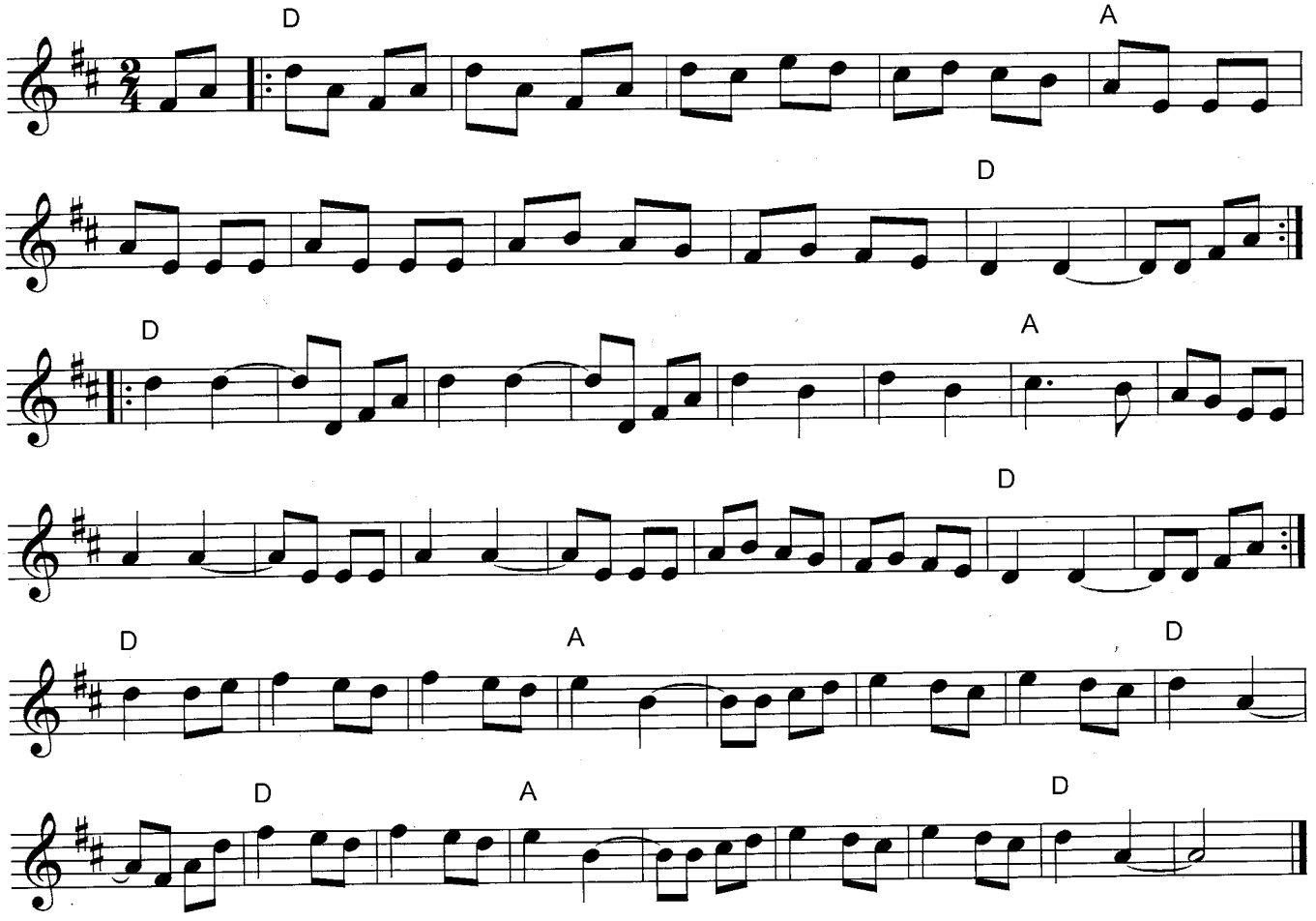
Valse Escoba

Cleofes Ortiz
[Orquestra Cleofonica]



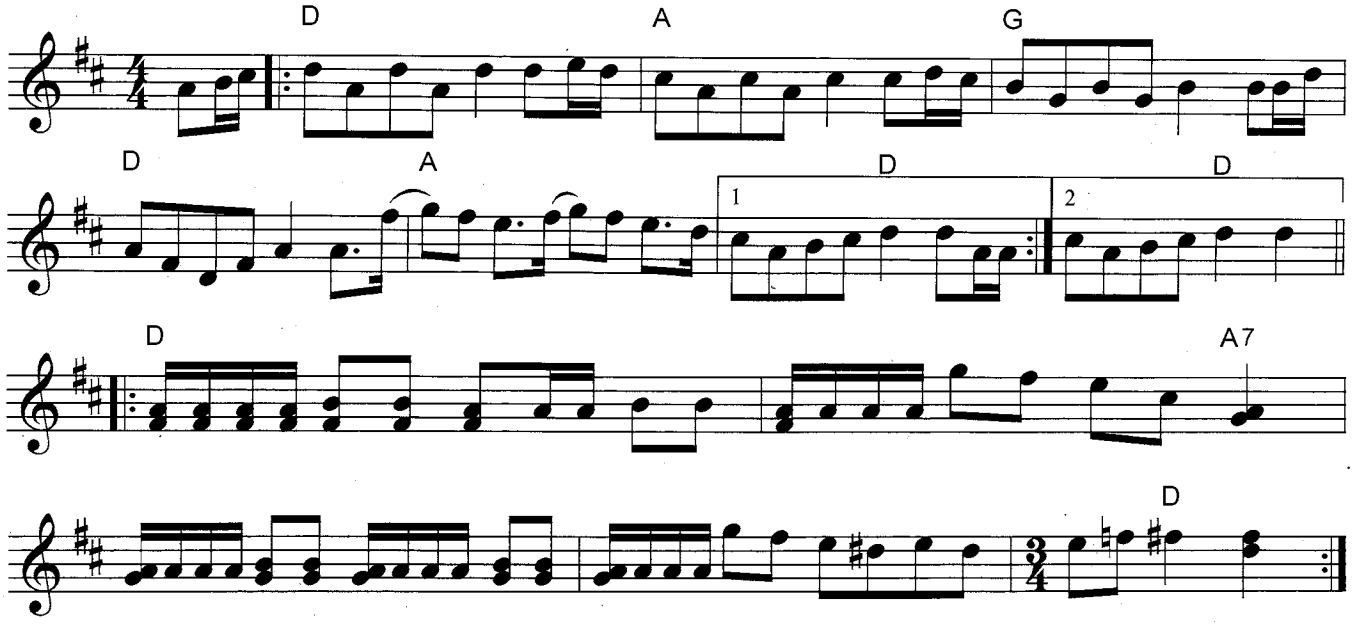
First Choice Two Step

Chotis, Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



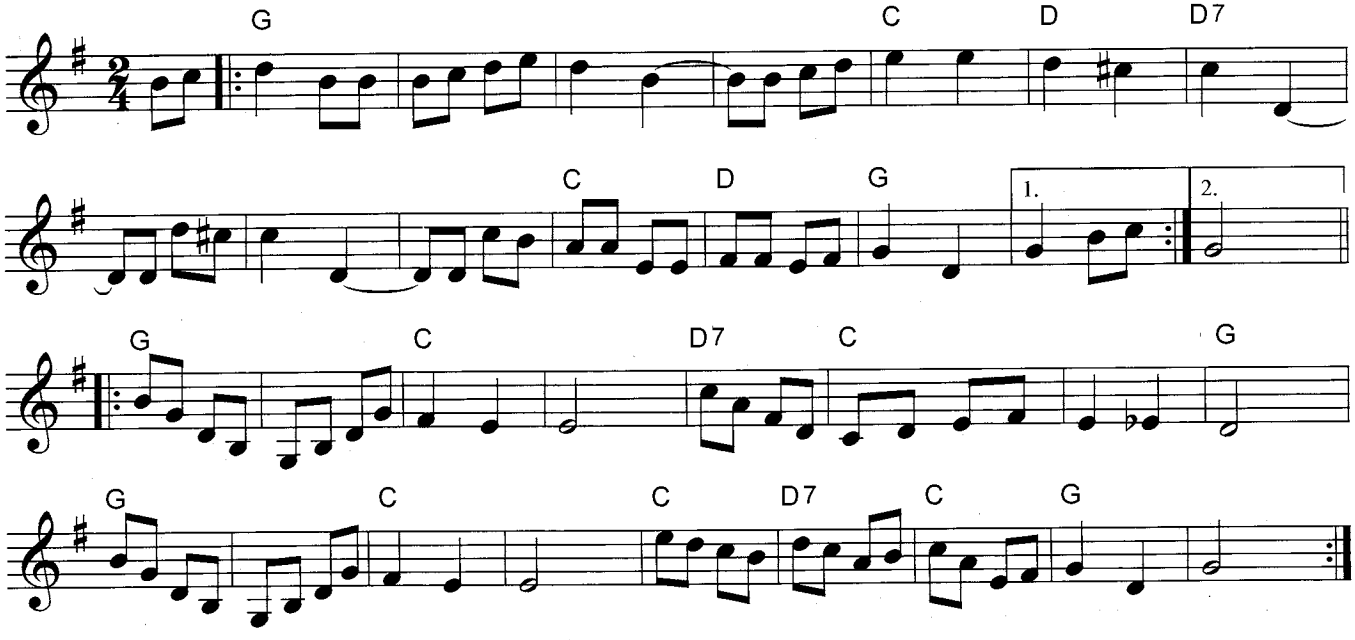
Hohokum Polka

[Gu-achi Fiddlers] and
Bayou Seco [Memories in Cababi]



It's In There

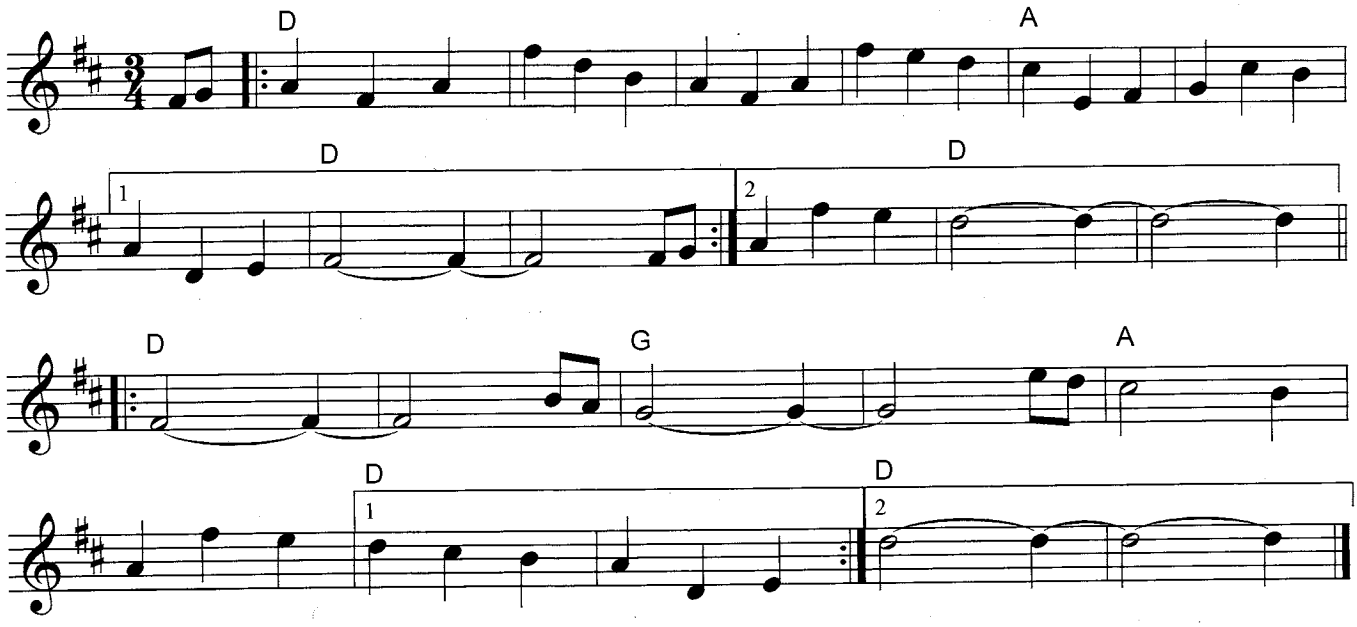
Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



played with syncopation

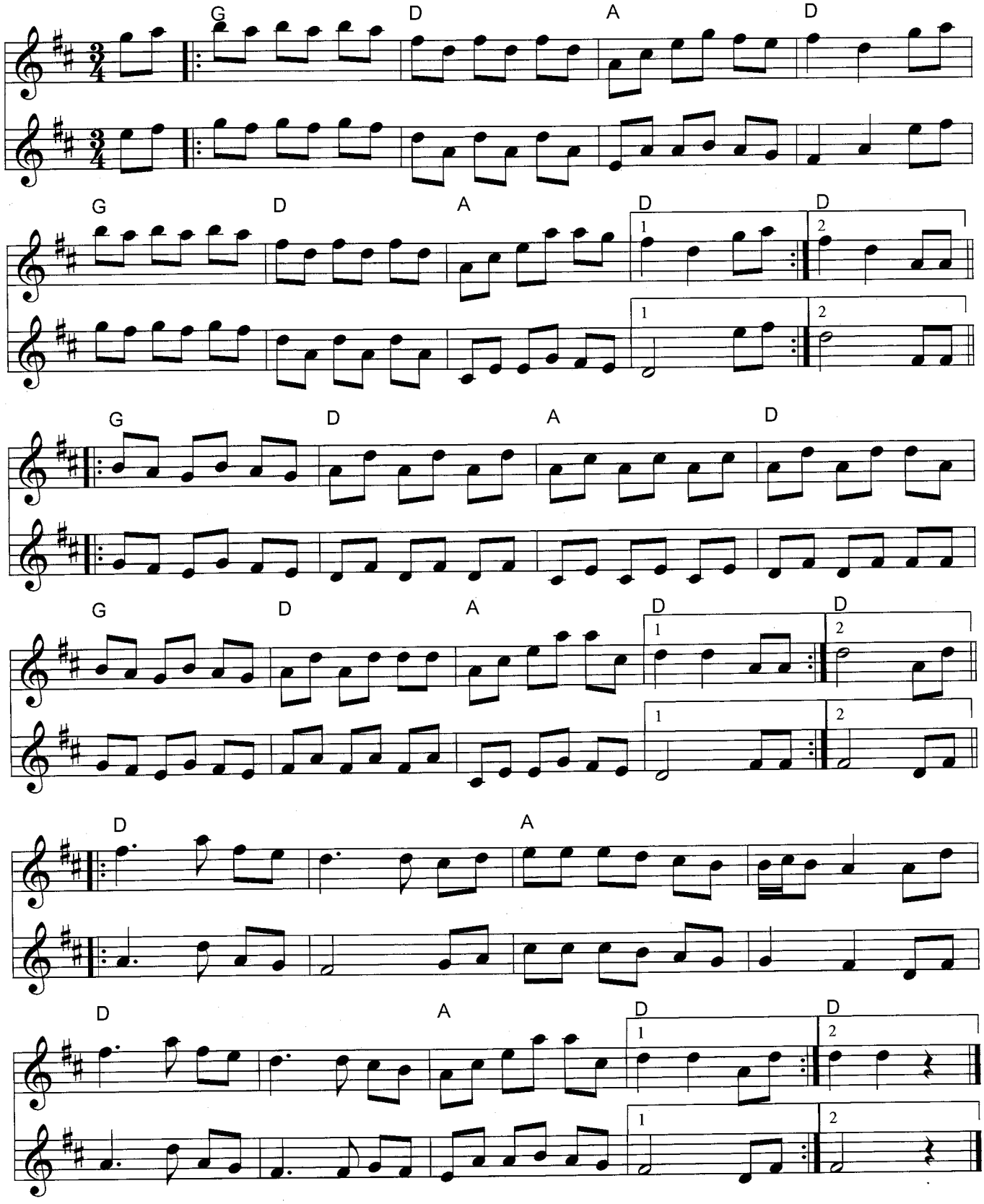
Valse de Jose y Raphaelita

by Antonia Apodaca, Bayou Seco
[20 Years Happy in the Bewilderness]



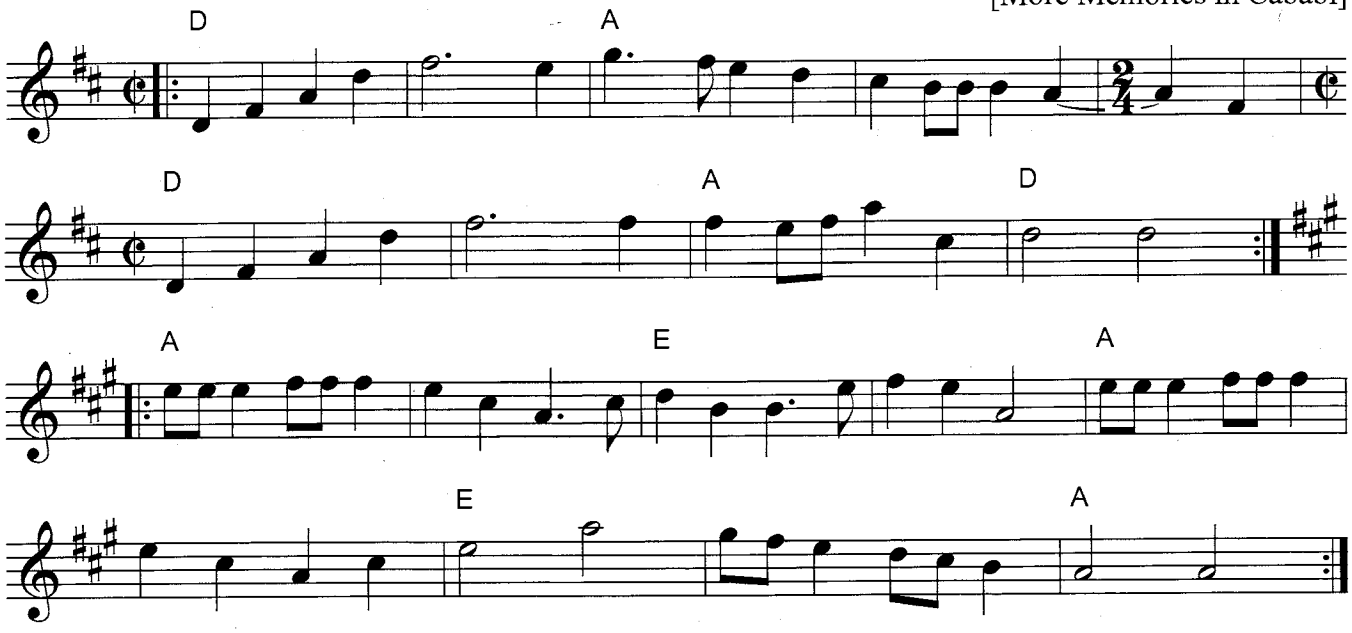
Libby Bird Song Mazurka

The Gu-achi Fiddlers



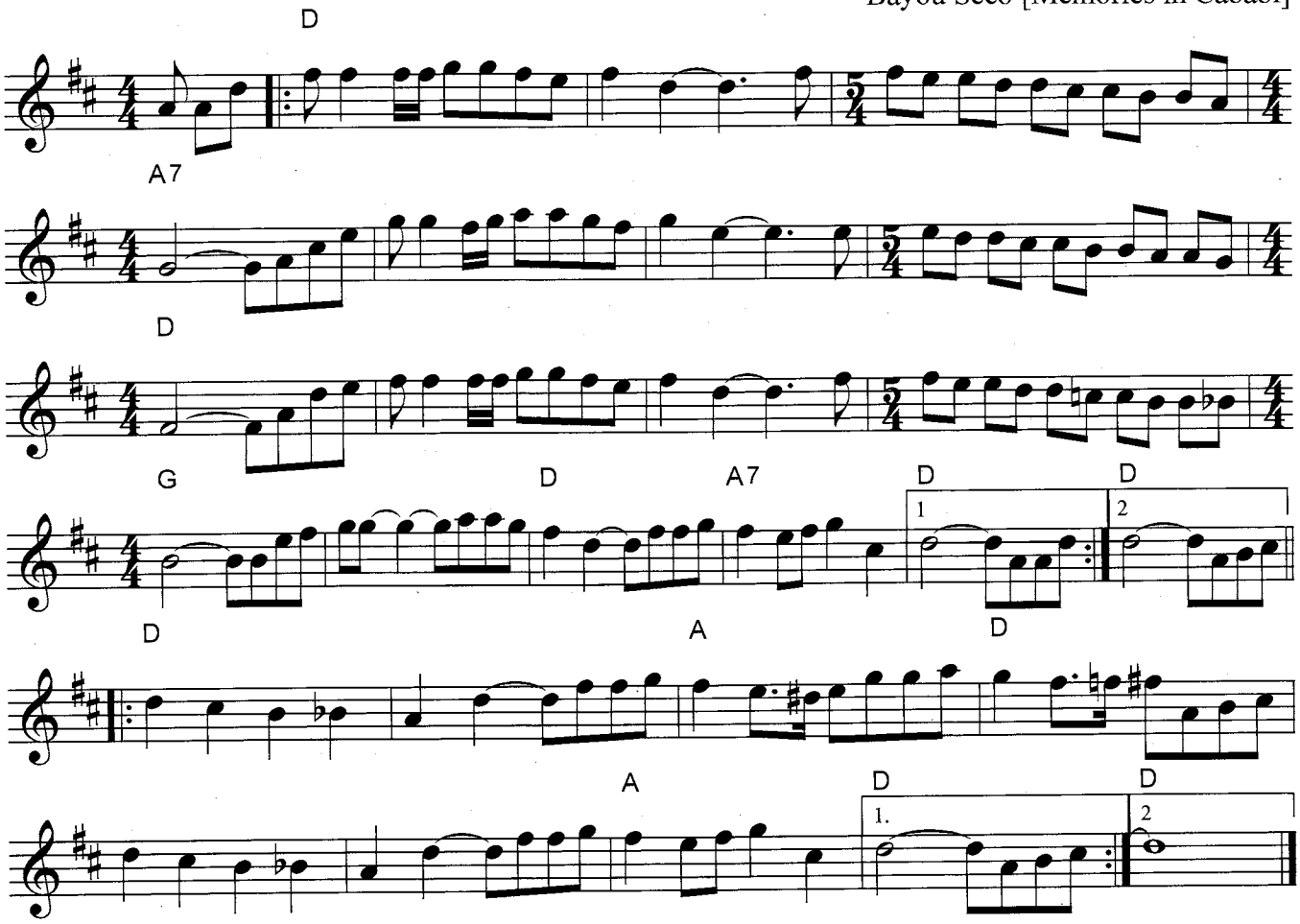
Lonnie's Polka

Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



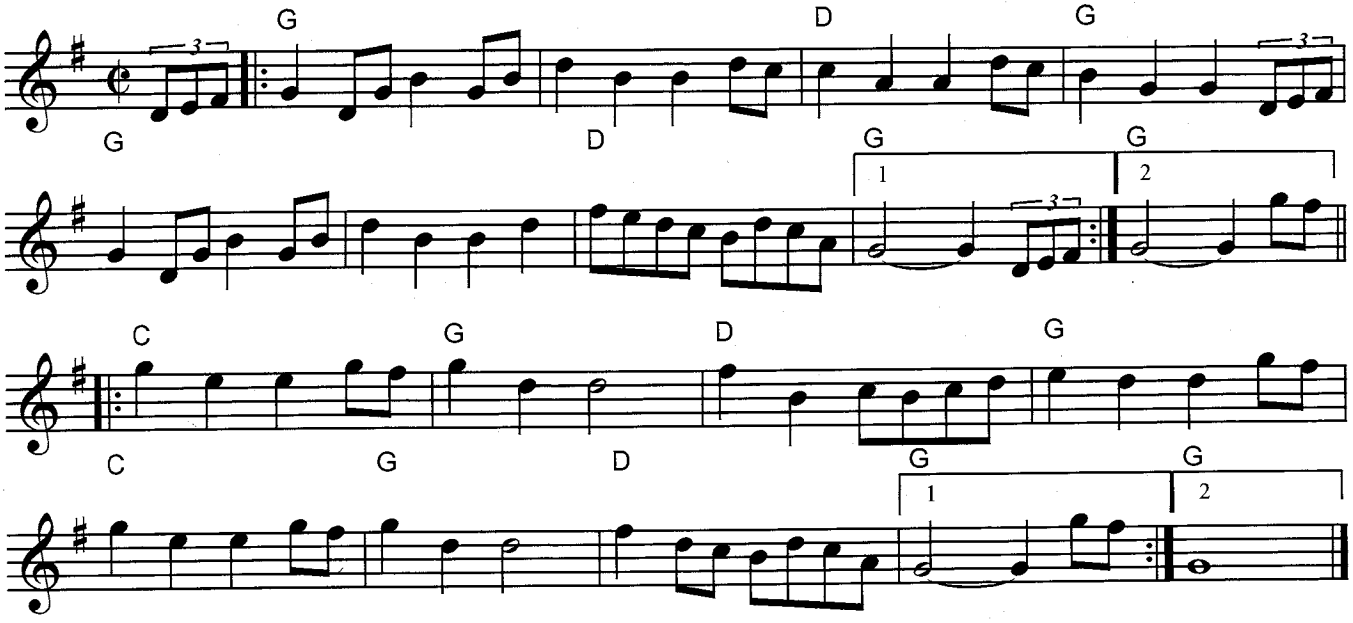
Memories in Ajo Polka

Guachi Fiddlers and
Bayou Seco [Memories in Cababi]



Mi Suegra Aprietan Mis Botas

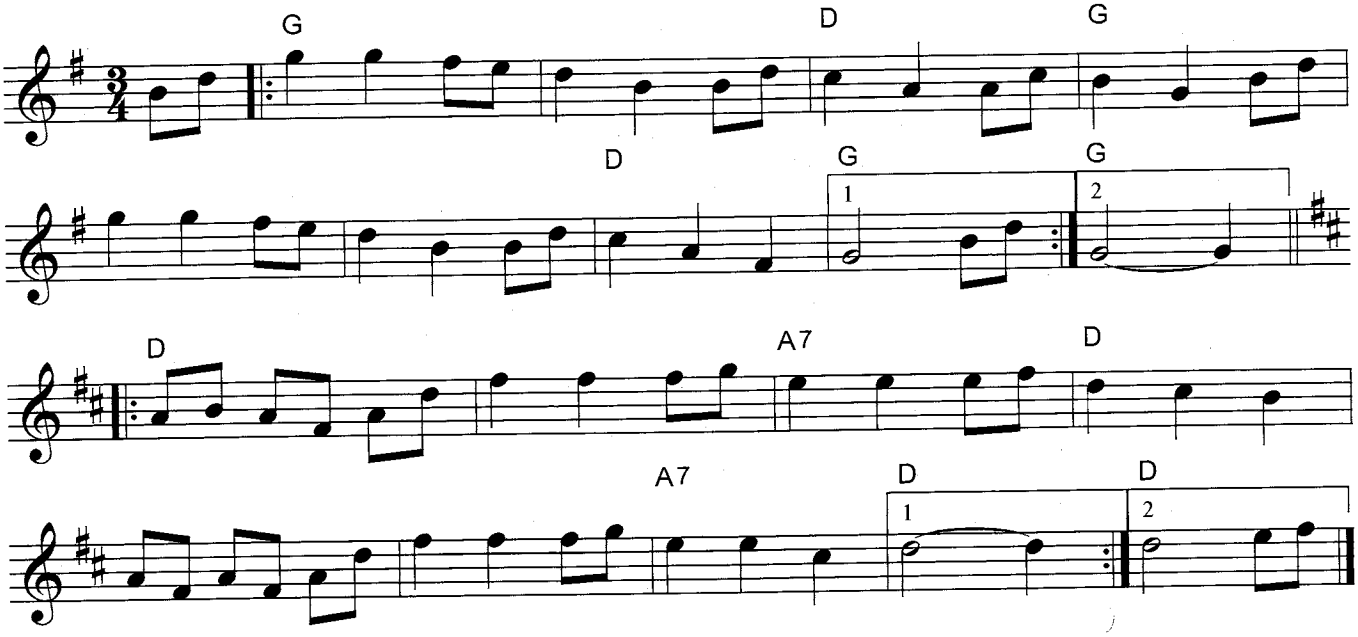
Polka, Cleofes Ortiz
[Violista de Nuevo Mexico]



Translation: My Mother-in-Law Has Tightened My Boots

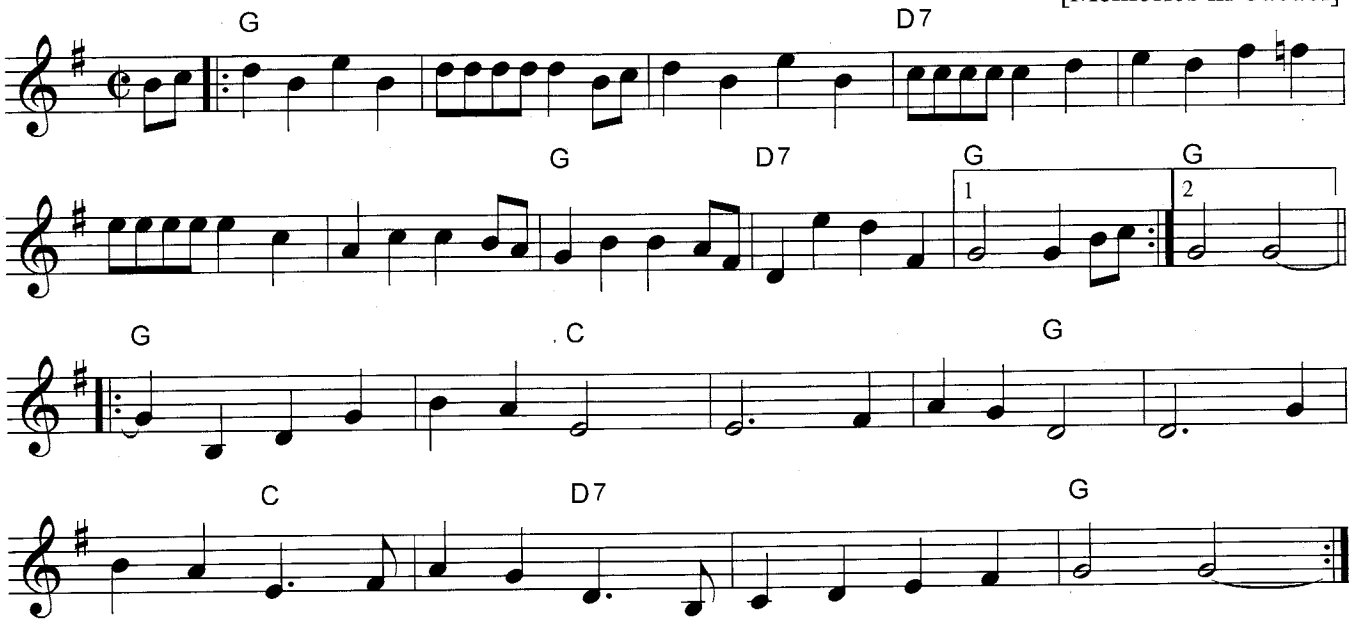
Valse de los Paños

Cleofes Ortiz
[Orquestra Cleofonica]



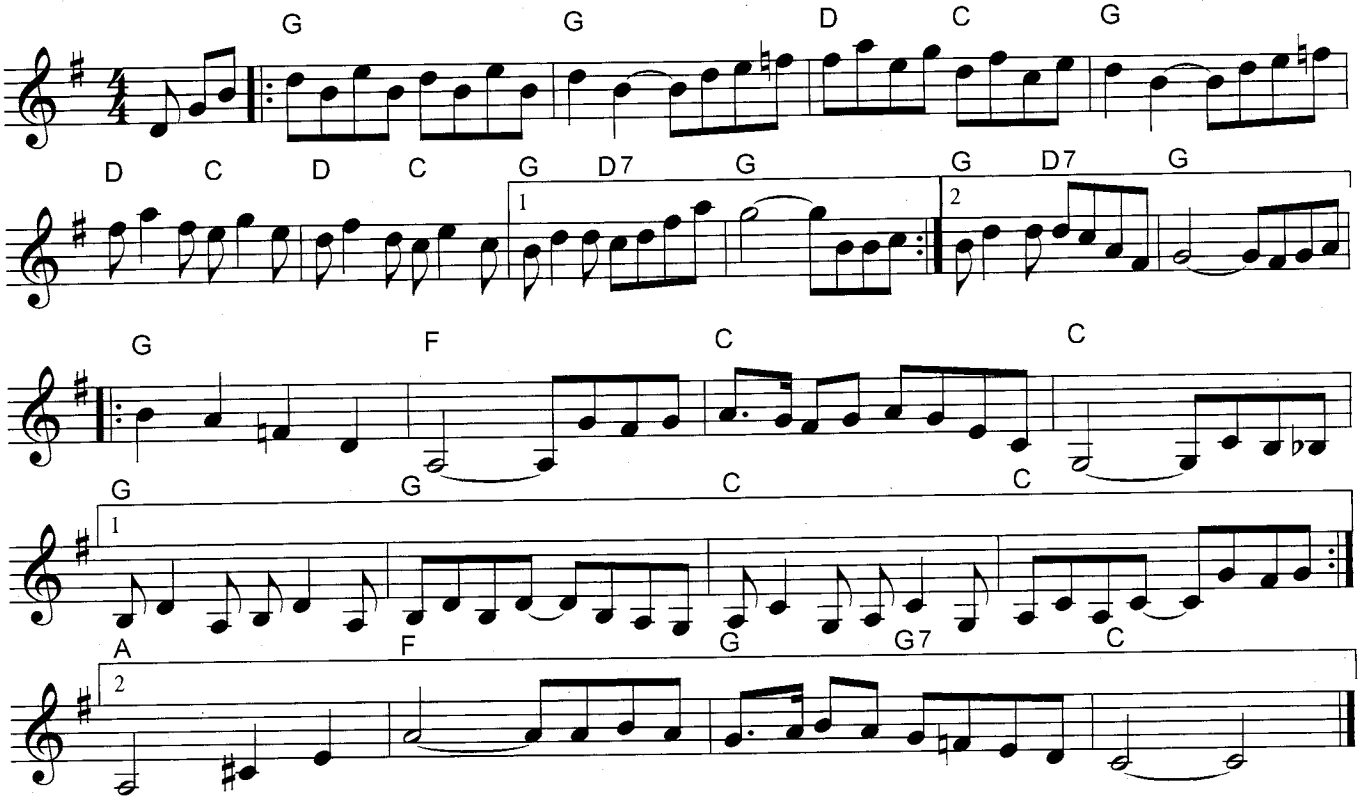
Paul's White Sox Polka

Bayou Seco from Elliott Johnson
[Memories in Cababi]



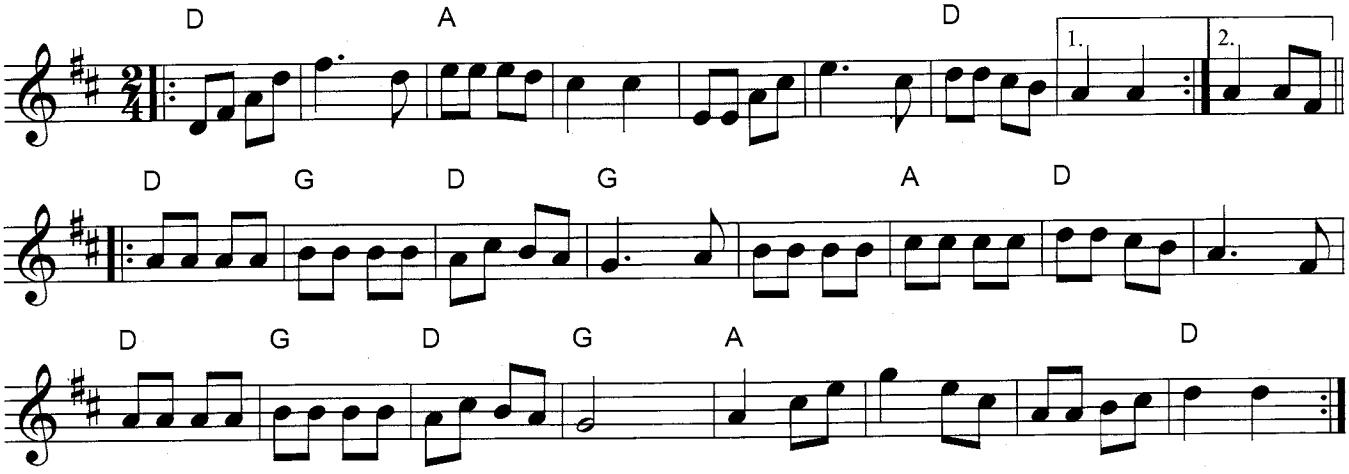
La Pecosita

by Valentin Elizalde
as played by Scott Mathis



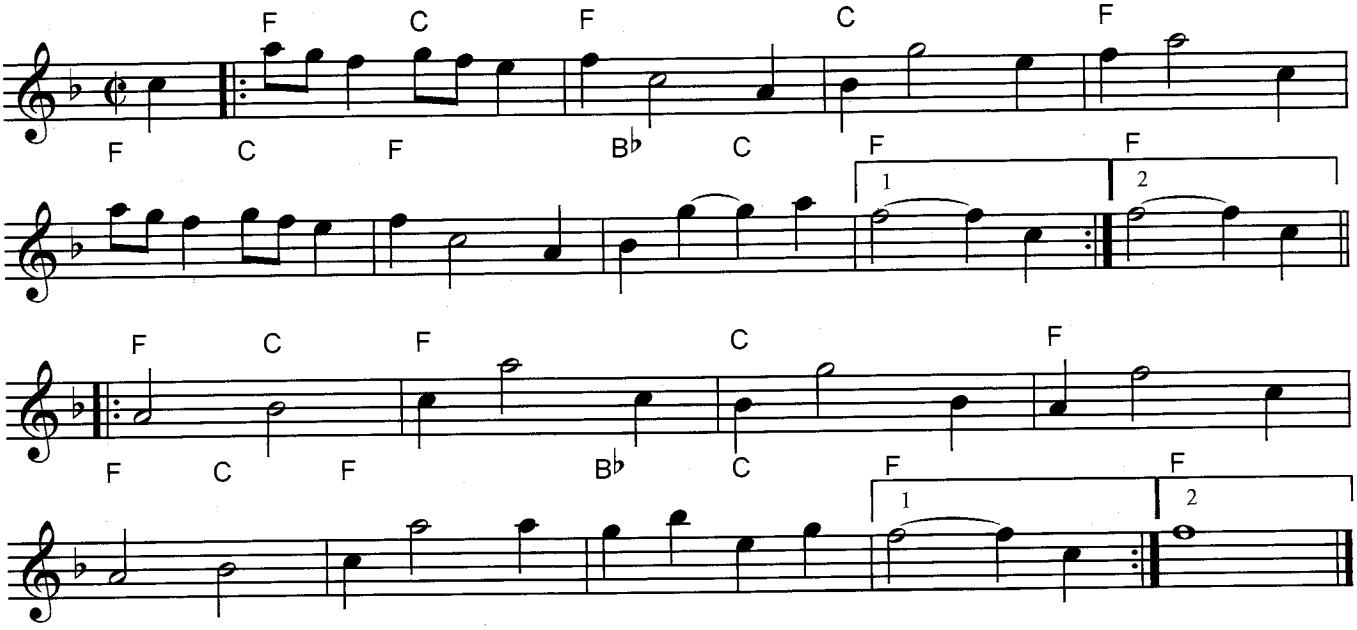
Pinto Beans Two Step

Chotis, Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



Polfa

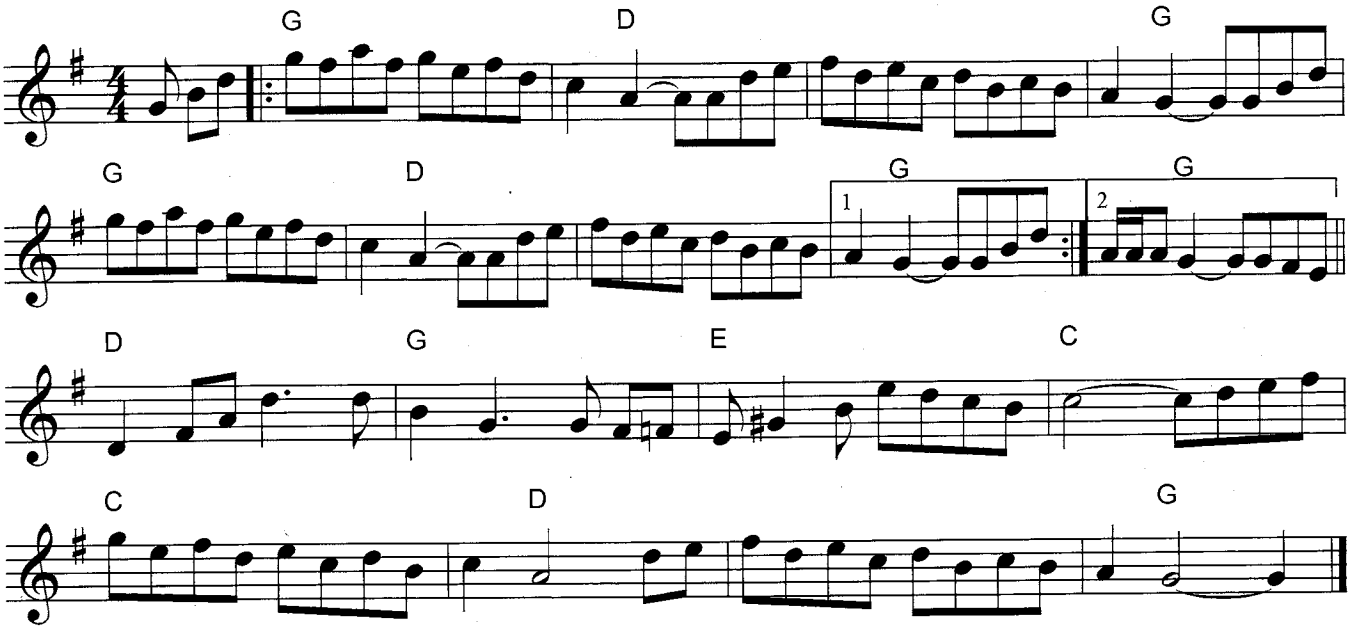
Polka, Cleofes Ortiz
[Violinista de Nuevo Mexico]



Polka de Rapho

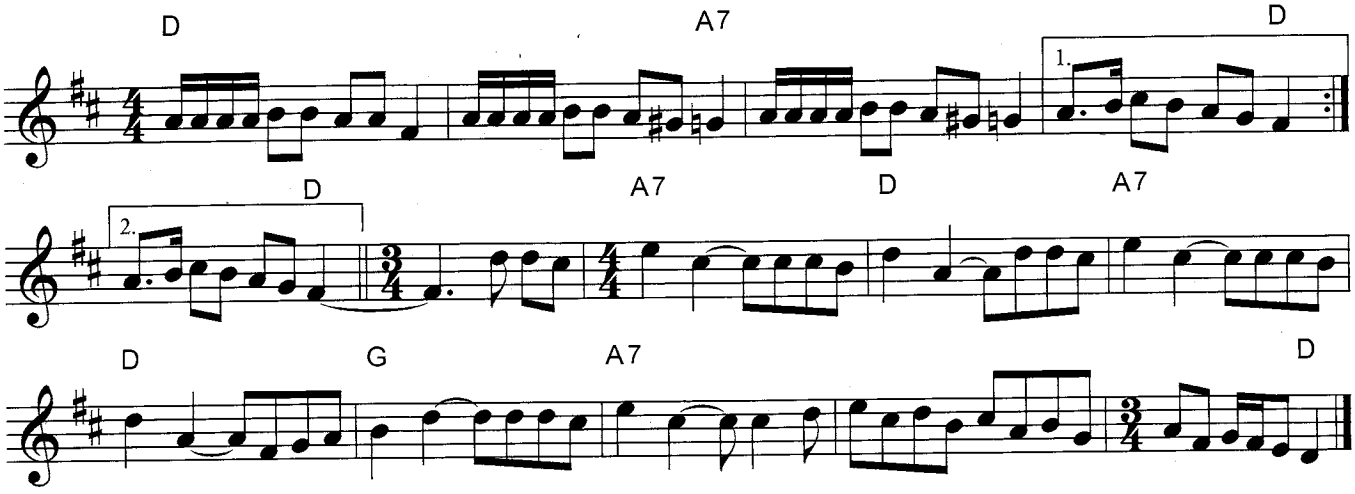
by Scott Mathis

[Bayou Seco: Little Pleasures of Life]



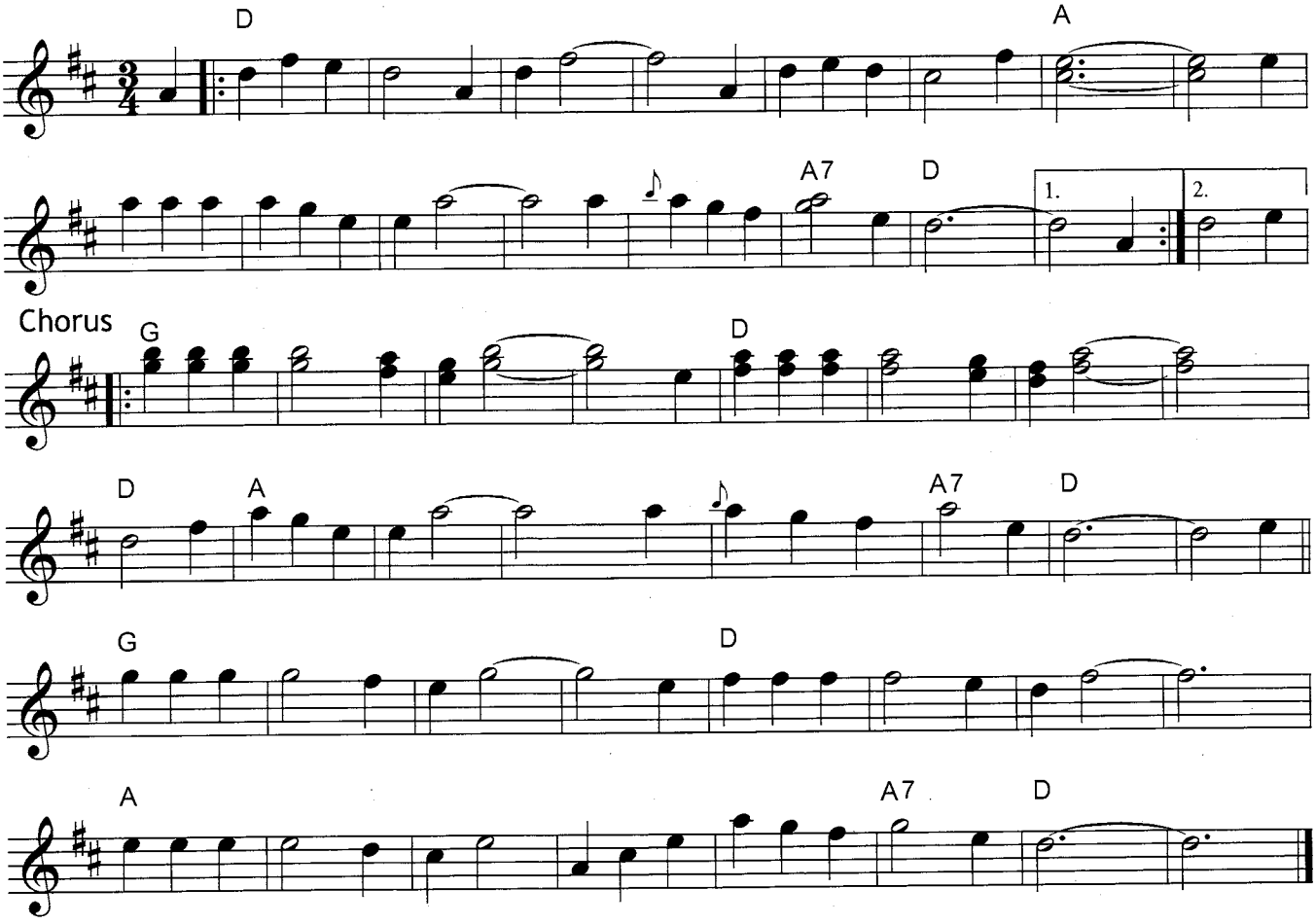
Purple Lilies Polka

The Gu-achi Fiddlers



El Quelite

Traditional Mexican Folk Song
Gu-achi Fiddlers, field recording



Qué bonito es el quelite, Bien haya quien lo formo
Que por sus orillas tiene, De quien acordarme yo

Camino de San Ignacio, Camino de San Gabriel
No dejes amor pendiente, Como el que dejaste ayer

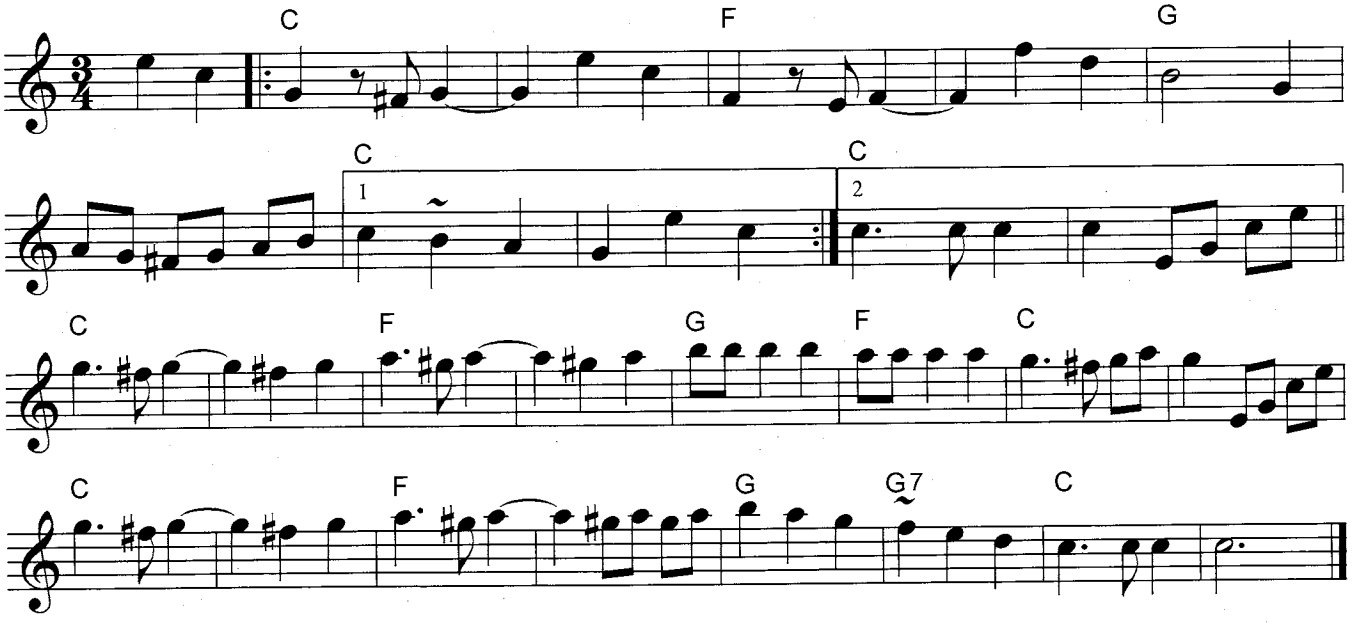
Chorus:
Mañana me voy mañana
Mañana me voy de aquí
Y el consuelo que me queda
Que se han de acordar de mí

Al pie de un encino roble, Me dio sueño y me dormí
Y me despertó un gallito, Haciendo "quiquiriquí"

Cuando pases por el puente, No bebas agua del río
Ni dejes amor pendiente, Como dejaste el mío

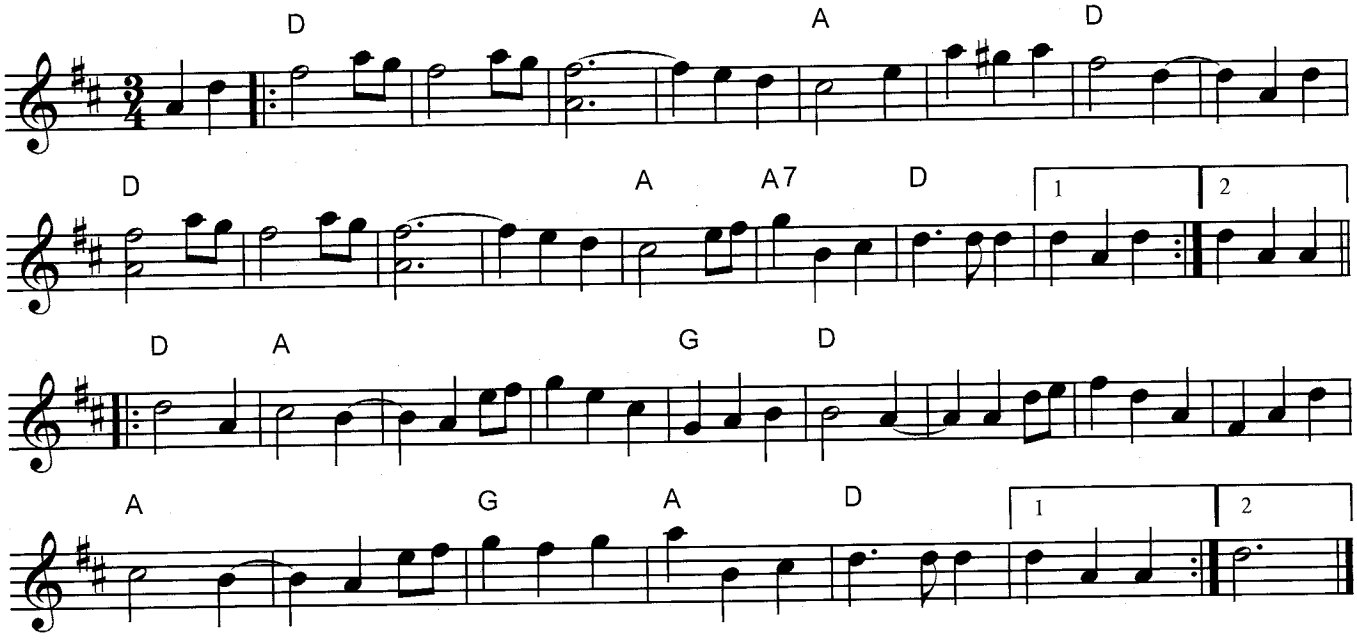
Redondo de Leyba

Cleofes Ortiz
[Violinista de Neuvo Mexico]



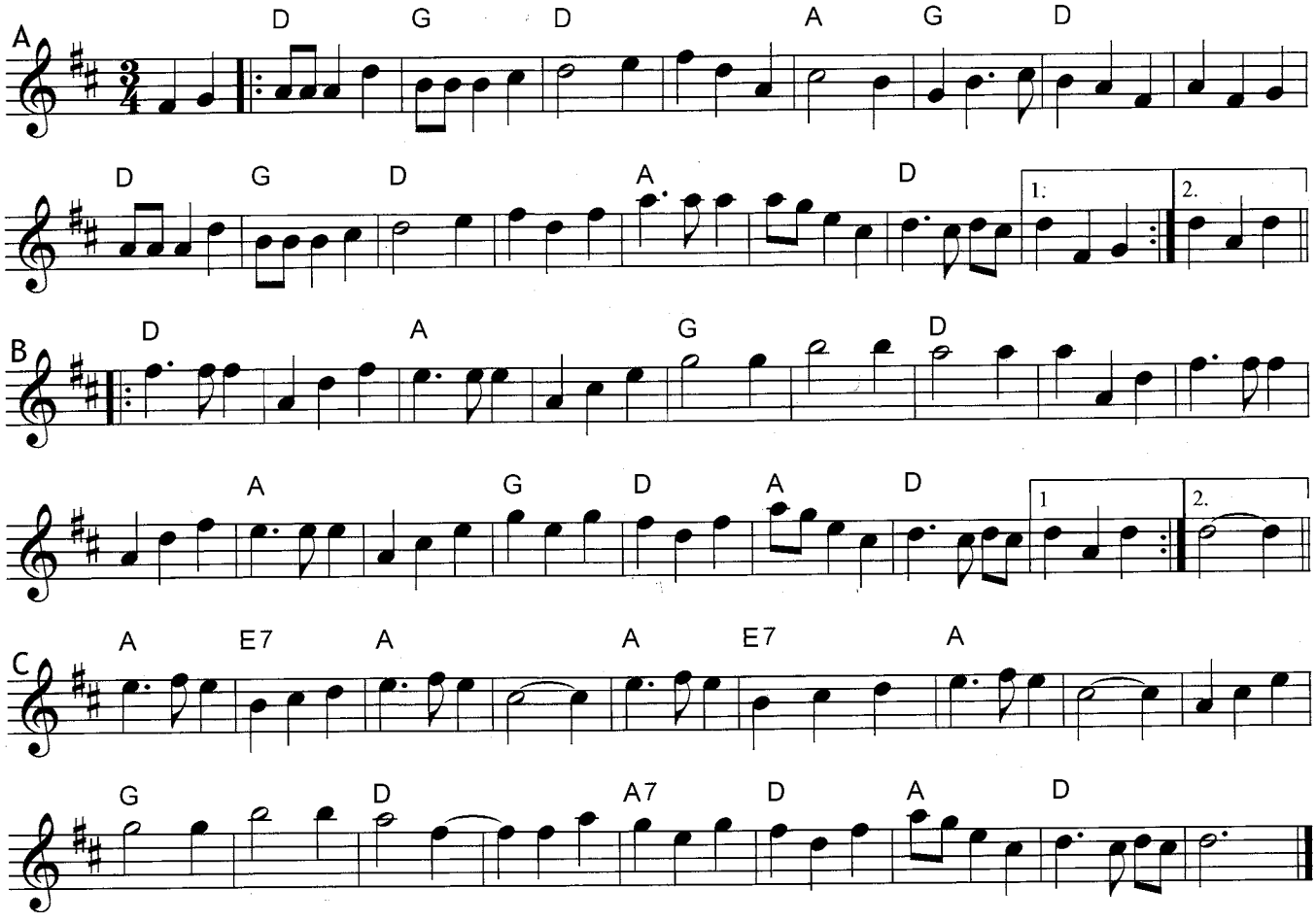
St. Rose of Lima Mazurka

The Gu-achi Fiddlers



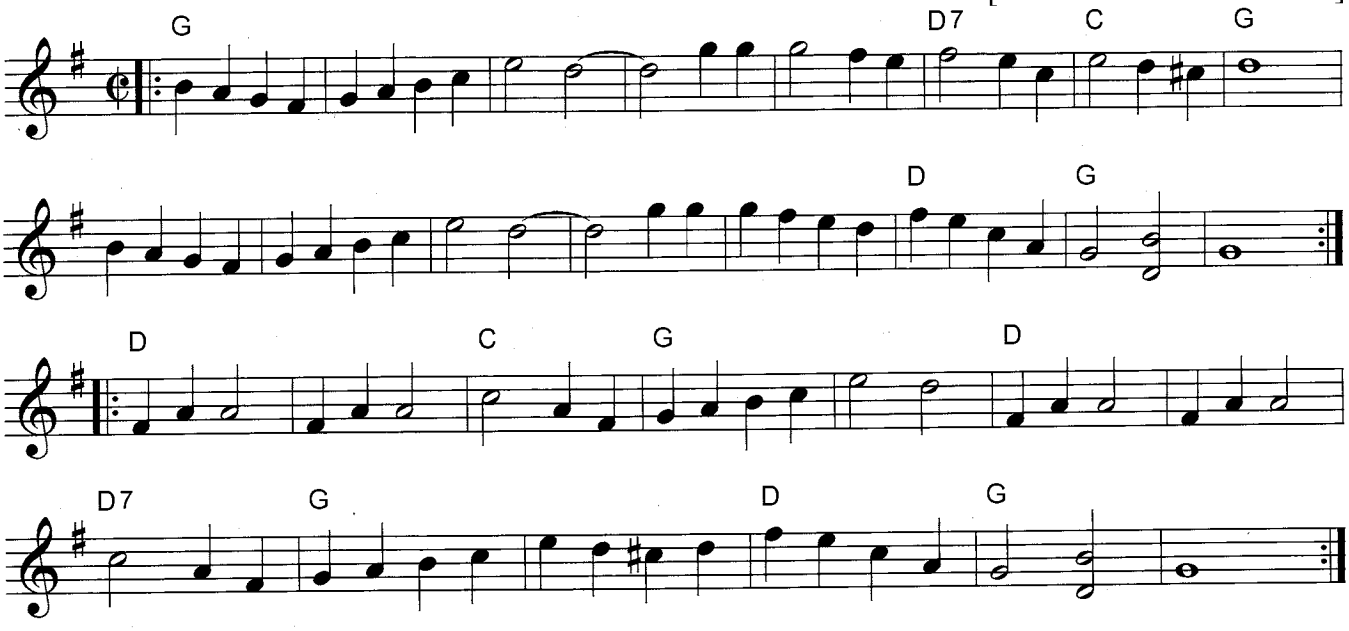
Santa Rosa Processional

Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



Second Time in San Javier Two Step

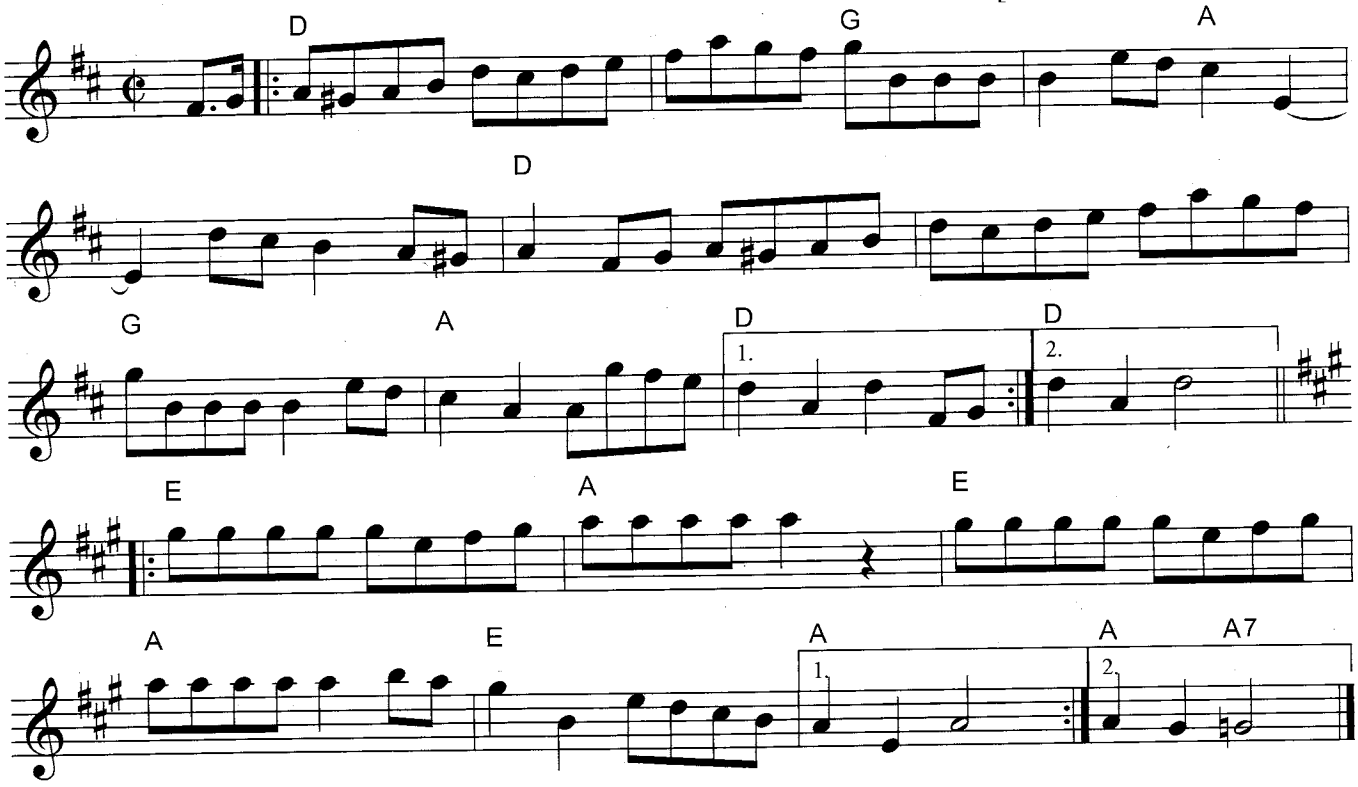
Chotis, Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



Played with syncopation

Squash Fields

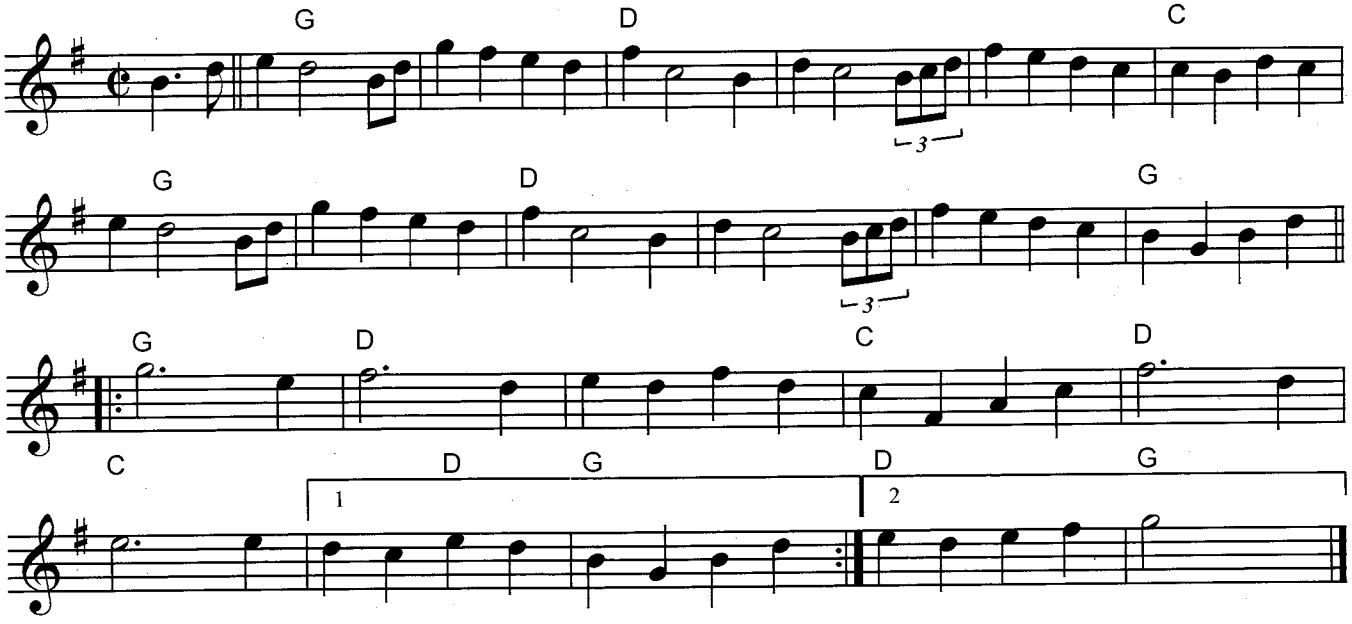
Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



Played with syncopation

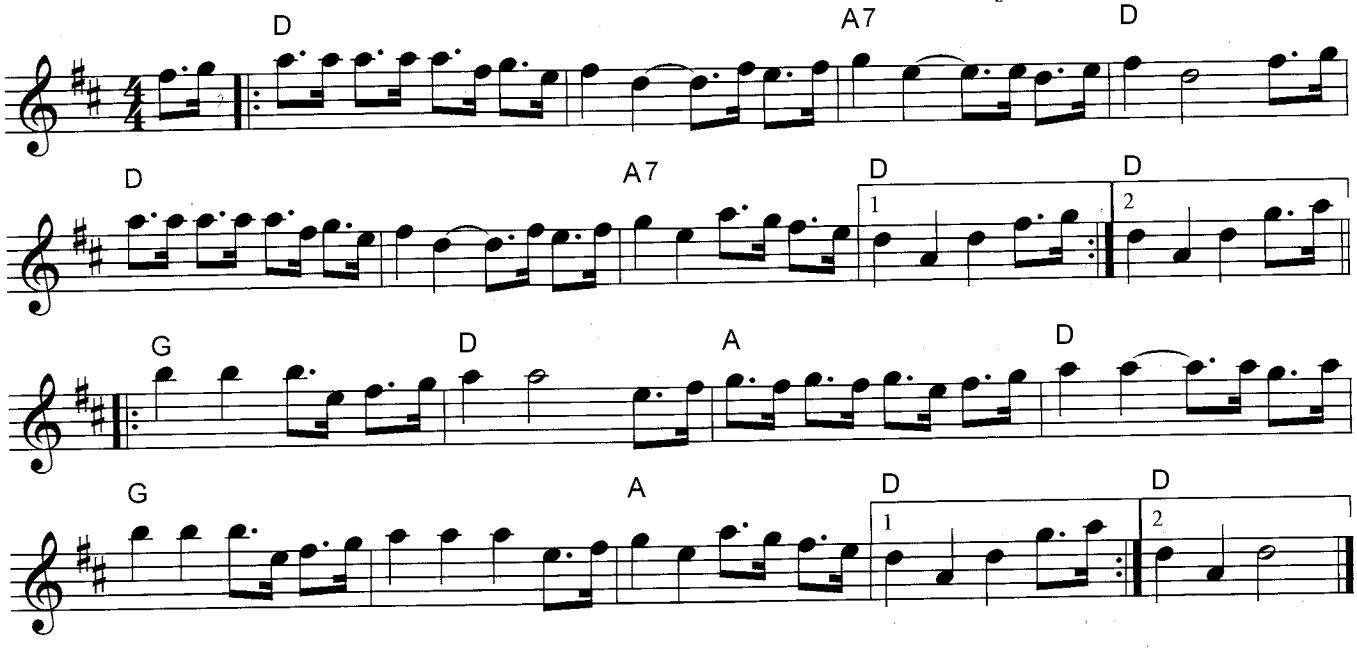
Tampico Hermosa

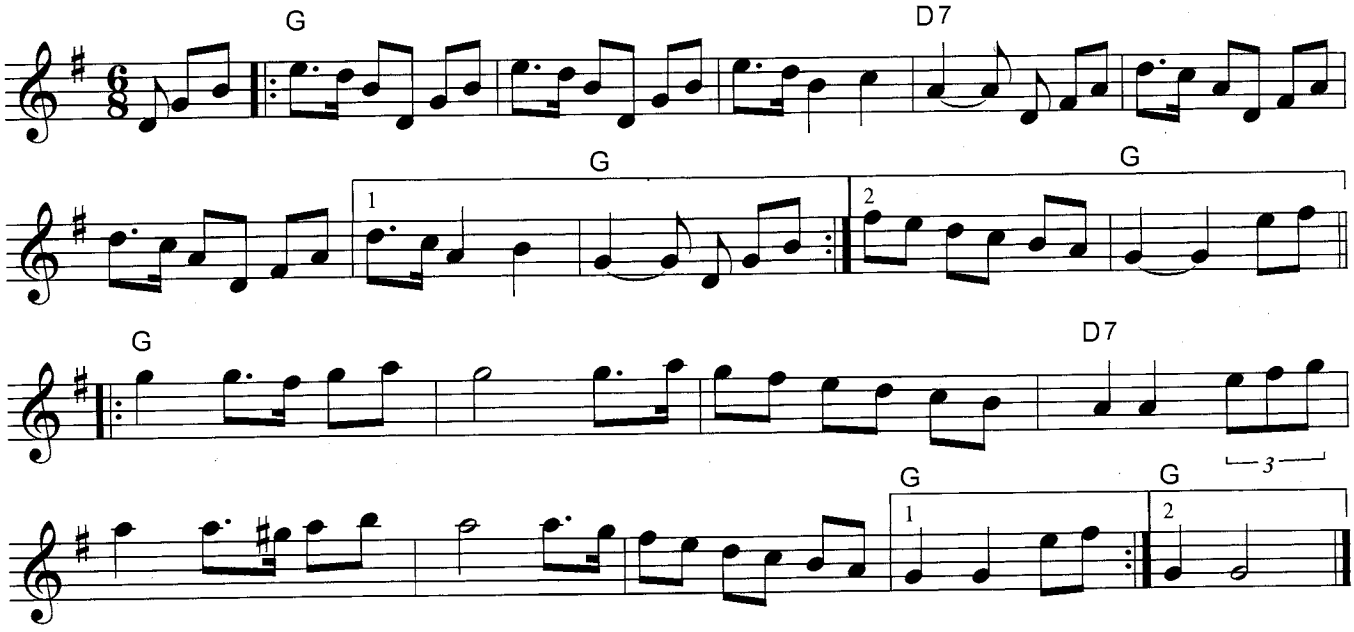
Polka, Cleofes Ortiz
[Violinista de Nuevo Mexico]



Uncle Charlie's

Bayou Seco from Gu-achi Fiddlers
[More Memories in Cababi]



Varsovienna

Spanish Colonial Dance
Larry Edelman from Lorenzo Trujillo