

# Hard Times

Stephen Foster (Public Domain) Arrangement (c) Copyright 2003 by Donald J. Borchelt.  
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**D** **G**

**D** **A7** **D**

1. 2.

**G** **D**

**A7** **D**

**G** **D** **A7**

**D** **G**

26

31 **D** **A7** **D**

1. 2. **G**

35

**D** **A7**

40

3. **D** **G**

45

**D** **A7** **D**

49

1. 2.

53

**G** **D**

57

This has become one of my all time favorite tunes to play, yet its really a fairly simple arrangement. Another Stephen Foster tune rediscovered by bluegrass and old-time pickers, it was written in 1855, just a few years before the start of the Civil War. Nearly a century and a half later, its made its way into the bluegrass repertoire, both as a vocal and as an instrumental. The complete title is "Hard Times, Come Again No More." Foster's empathy for the poor is something we don't usually associate with the mid-19th century, at the height of the minstrel period:

While we seek mirth and beauty, and music light and gay,  
 There are frail forms fainting at the door;  
 Though their voices are silent, their pleading looks will say,  
 Oh hard times, come again no more.

Now that I find myself at mid-century, having had my own measure of tragedy, I've come to understand that one's music isn't just a collection of licks, it has to have heart and soul. Sometimes to find that you need to set the banjo down.

There are a few challenging things within the arrangement. Measures 5 and 8 use an odd kind of reverse roll, and measure 8 complicates things further with a hammer thrown in. Both measures incorporate a fourth string drone note- the usual warning about not playing it too loud. Much of the up the neck version, though, employs a simple four note clawhammer-like pattern which I use a fair amount. The right hand thumb or index finger plays the first note, followed by a left hand hammer, pull off or slide, followed up by a right hand thumb and then middle finger. Nothing hard there, but effective.

The down the neck version, starting at the end of measure 54, is basically straight Scruggs style. Remember that the first note of measure 59, marked with a small diamond, is a harmonic note. The MIDI software can't really replicate this bell-like effect.

This is another setting where I've added a second banjo, tabbed in track 2, arranged in clawhammer style, to help highlight the harmony part.