Rote Song Treasure Hunt

Folk Song: Cotton Eyed Joe

The Folk Song “Cotton Eyed Joe” predated the American Civil War, originating as a work song sung by slaves in the American South. There have been many versions of the lyrics throughout different decades, but they all follow a similar story of a man who had his sweetheart stolen by someone else. There have been speculations on whether “Cotton-Eyed Joe” refers to STDs, but those speculations have never been confirmed. The song has evolved over the years, beginning as a simple spiritual which later evolved into various types of dance music. The tune is popular today as a line dance that involved hopping on one foot, spinning, and clapping. This folk tune was originally in cut time and the melody outlines a pentatonic scale.

