Golden Slippers

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome to FGM's free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. Once again, I'd like to thank all those who take the time to email me your thoughts and positive feedback. I enjoy hearing what you have to say and more that you write to me, the more interactive I feel with the e-lessons. What tunes would you like to see featured here?

I feel I have chosen a great tune for this month. With so many great tunes it is often a challenge to select one melody over another -- I love so many tunes and styles of flatpicking. In addition to selecting tunes that a like, I also try to offer tunes that will improve your overall technique, enhance your guitar knowledge, and add valuable repertoire to your flatpicking jams. If "Golden Slippers" is not in your flatpicking repertoire then grab your guitar and let's begin. Even if you have played this song you may find my version interesting and worth learning.

The Backup:

Playing backup to "Golden Slippers" is rewarding, inviting, and easy. The A section consists of two chords, D and A. First, we play D D D A and then we swap the pattern for the answer… A A A D. I am a big fan of songs that can be played with two chords. There is an intrinsic simplicity to the two chord song, but it means we have to play with groove and feeling…really letting the two chords do their harmonic work.

When playing chord backup on the B part there is one thing to look out for. On the B part repeat, hold the A chord one measure longer before resolving back to the D. This gives our B2 a grander ending, thus distinguishing itself from B1.

The Melody:

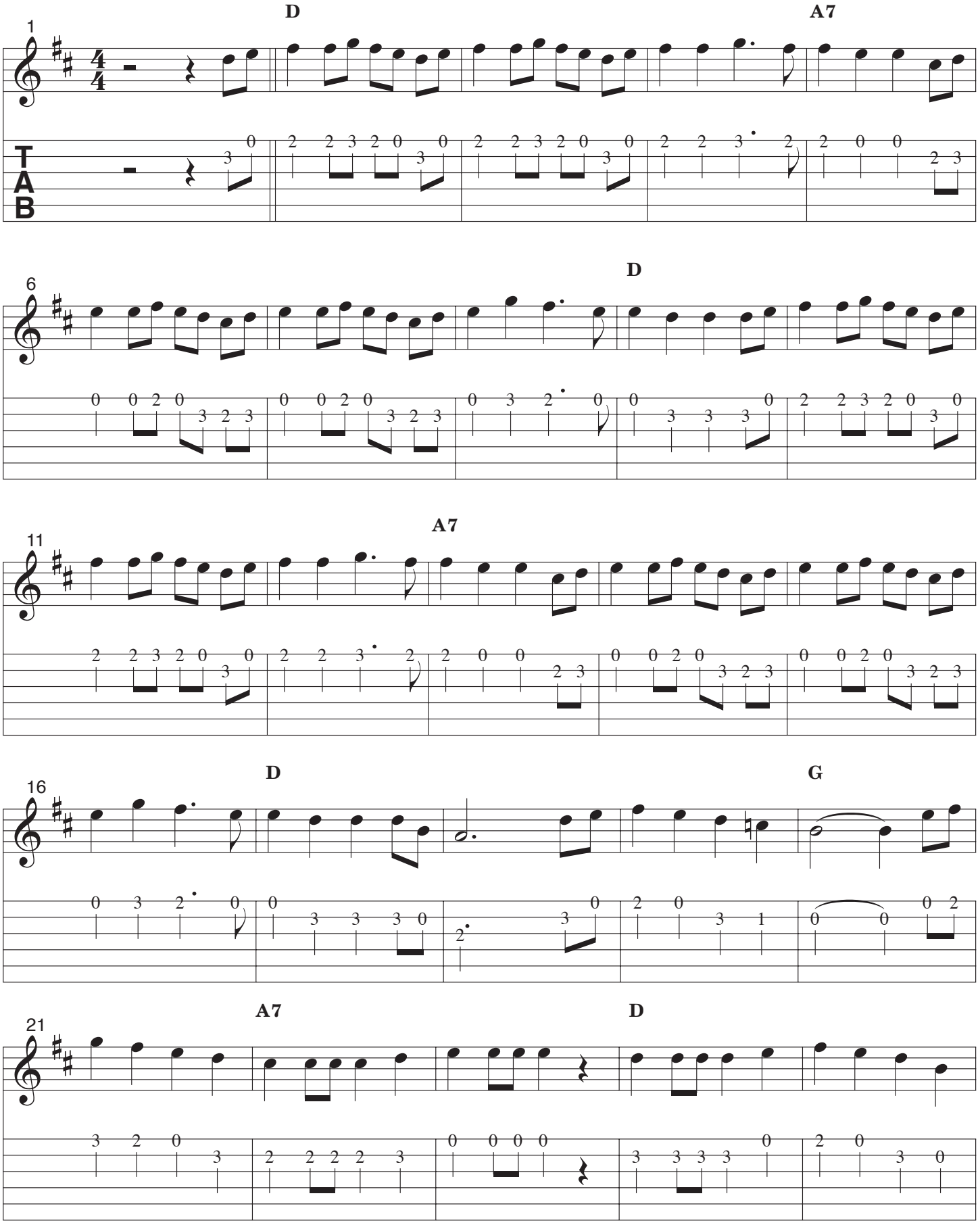
I have once again chosen a tune that has a relentless question and answer theme to it. The first line of the tune (first four measures) states a wonderful theme that is answered by the following four measures. This tune is easy to recognize and memorize because of it's conversational quality. The B section is like a winding musical conversation that utilizes rhythmic themes to make it work. One of my favorite parts is where we strike the C natural (b7th) on the way to the G chord. This is the only note that is not part of the D major scale and it seems to be placed so perfectly. It is not uncommon to hit the flatted seventh of the I chord on route to IV chord, but in this case I feel it really defines that moment in the melody.

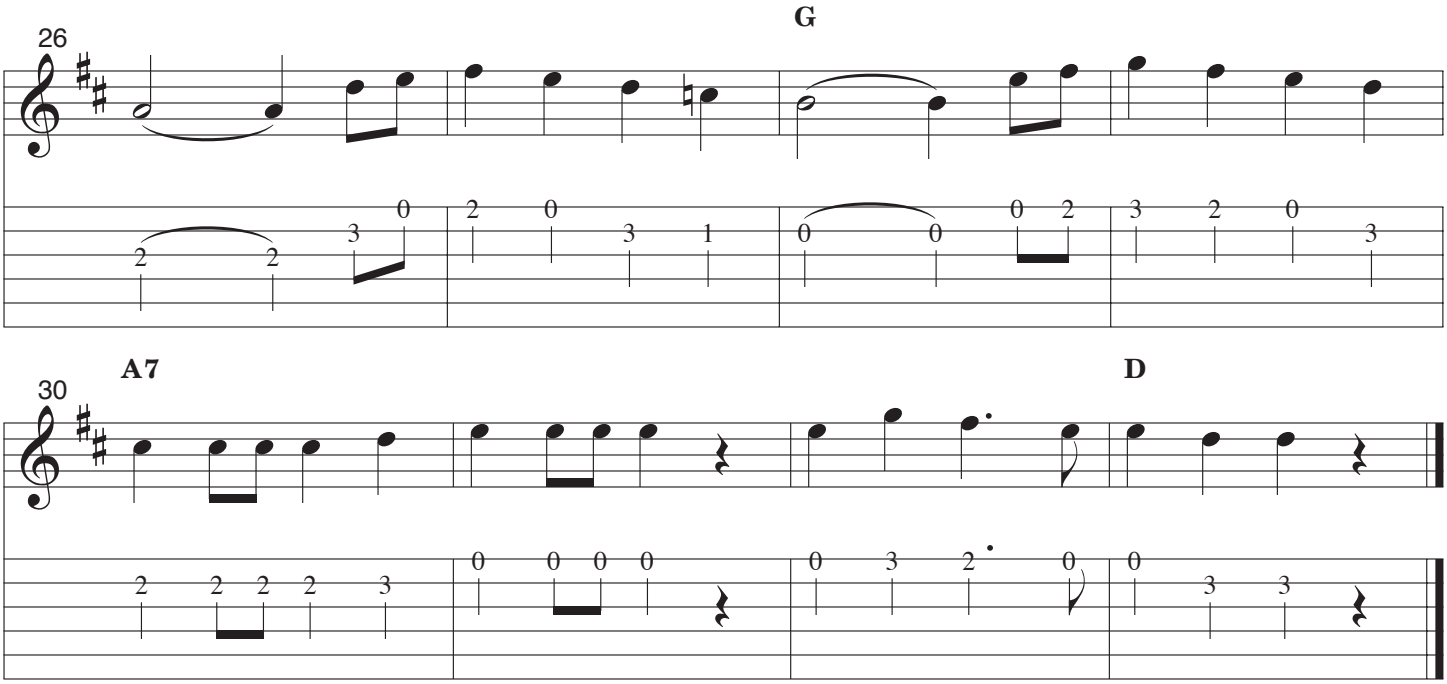
The Harmony:

Once you are feeling comfortable with the melody, try moving up the neck to the harmony part. Writing harmonies is not an exact musical science. The framework for harmonizing in thirds (notes that are three notes away in a major scale) seems to work best for most fiddle tunes. When harmonizing in thirds we may run into some strange moments so it is important to take into account what the chord will be and make the proper adjustments (this sounds like a good future lesson). Different harmonies will evoke different sounds -- pleasant, bluesy, scary, etc. I think you will find this harmony to be pleasant and traditional. To hear it all you need two picker friends, one to play chords, one to pick the melody, and you on the harmony!

Thanks for clicking on this month's free e-lesson. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns on the "Golden Slippers," past tunes, or any other random thoughts, just drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net.

Golden Slippers




G
26
2 2 3 0
2 0 3 1
0 0 0 2
3 2 0 3

A7
D
30
2 2 2 2 3
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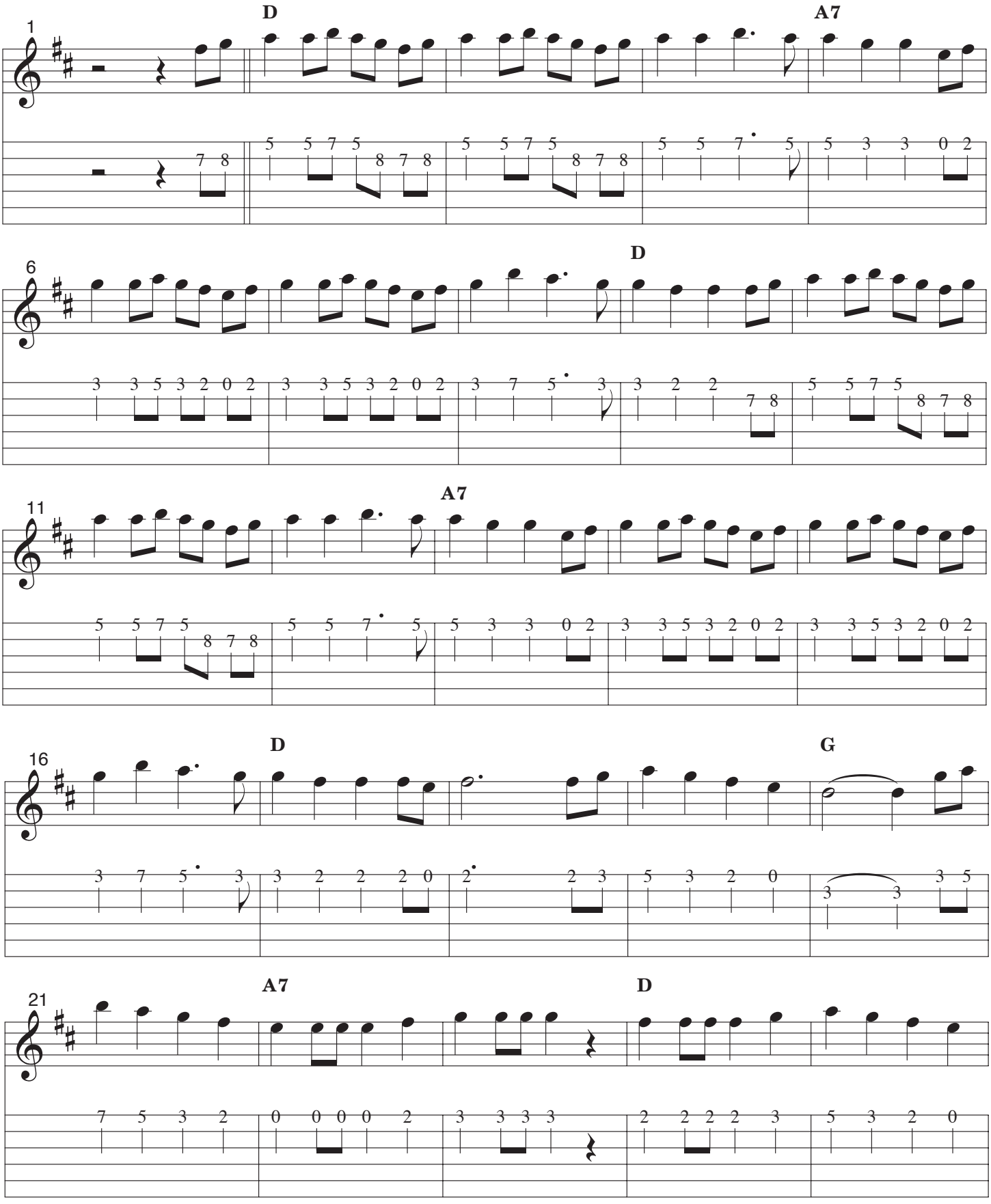
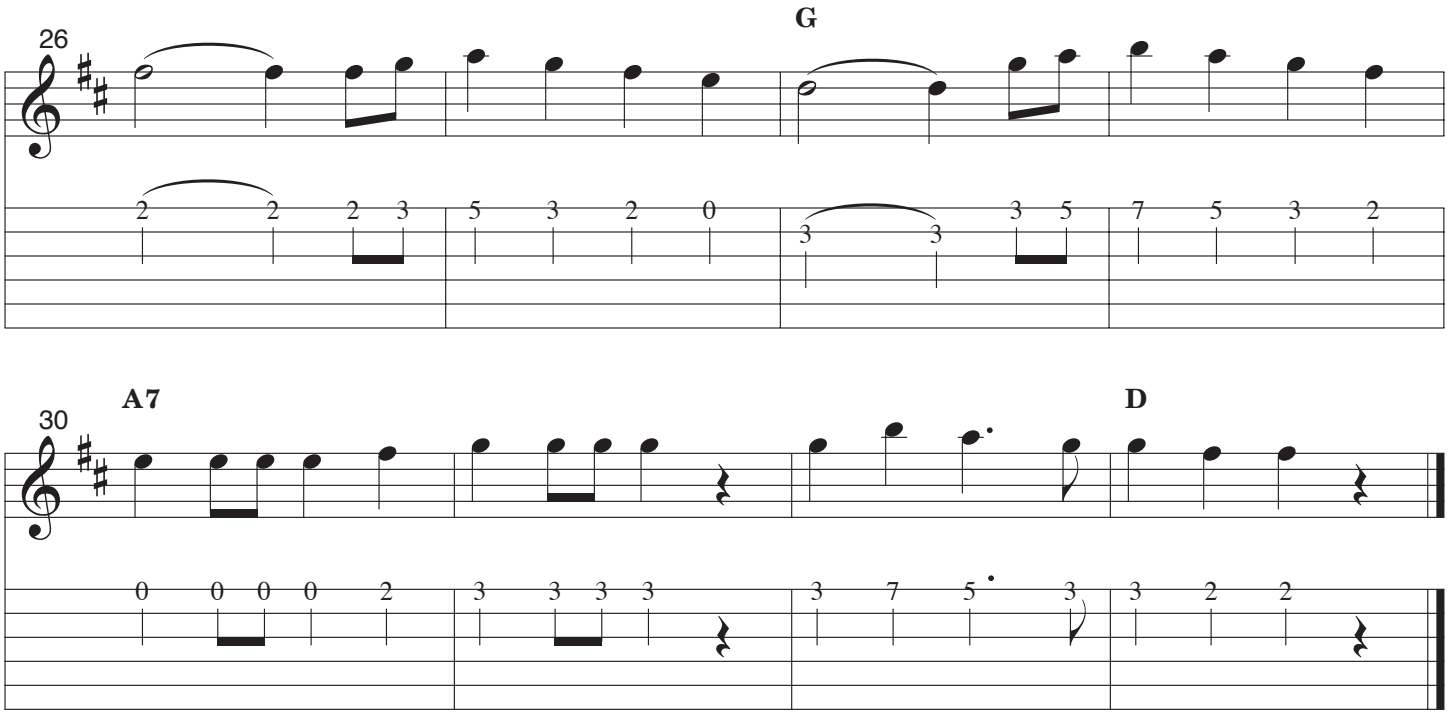
0 3 3

Golden Slippers (harmony)




26
G
2 2 2 3 5 3 2 0 3 3 3 5 7 5 3 2
30
A7
D
0 0 0 0 2 3 3 3 3 3 7 5 3 3 2 2