

"KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE"

This popular American song originally written in 1899 by Ada Blenkhorn (1858–1927) with music by J. Howard Entwisle (1866–1903). The song was popularized in a 1928 recording by the Carter Family. A recording of the song with The Whites was featured in the 2000 movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

In 1899 Ada was inspired to write this hymn by a phrase used by her nephew. Her nephew was disabled and always wanted his wheelchair pushed down "the sunny side" of the street. The Carter Family learned of the song from A. P. Carter's uncle who was a music teacher, and they recorded the song in Camden, New Jersey in 1928. "Keep on the Sunny Side" became their theme song on the radio in later years. A.P. Carter's tombstone has a gold record of the song embedded in it.

Performance Notes:

1. There is a good example of this tune on YouTube with Maybelle and the Carter sisters. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qEhj-rQSAU&feature=related>. Their arrangement is in the Key of C. I also used the Key of C (no capo) since it also fit my vocalist's range. I've seen it performed in other keys, such as D and higher. The key you chose will ultimately depend on the vocal range of your singer(s).
2. The first arrangement is the vocal line. It's straight forward and a good start for the beginning Dobroist to get familiar with melody in the C major scale.
3. The recording begins with a kickoff on the Dobro. This is based on the last four measures of the Dobro solo; measure 61 (last half) to measure 65. This is good technique to remember if you need to start off a song with a short kick off; just play the last 4 measures of the solo or vocal line.
4. The Dobro solo on the recording begins at measure 33. I've included a full solo in the tablature; Verse and Chorus. However, in real life, especially when playing in a group with a vocalist, it's normal to play only the Verse of the song as a solo. So, in this arrangement, the Dobro solo begins at measure 33 and ends at measure 49.

5. The Dobro backup begins at measure 66 on the second verse. Try not to be too busy with your backup. Simple block chords are a very effective. Remember, your backup is to compliment the vocal, not overshadow the message.
6. At measure 69, I play an arpeggio (broken chord) on the C major chord just as the vocalist pauses to take a breath.
7. The next two lines of the vocals are rather “negative”; “crushing hopes”, “storm clouds” etc. So, I gave the Dobro a bit of a lonesome sound by placing the bar at the 12th and 17th frets. The triple slashes (///) indicate a fast wavering left hand vibrato with a quick alternation of the thumb and middle fingers. This technique is explained in detail in my book, Bluegrass Dobro Volume 1. I like to start the technique softly and gradually build the tension with more volume the bring the volume back some. Make the Dobro cry!
8. The backup from measures 88 to the end are mostly straight block chords. There’s no need to play them hard and loud. Let the group hold the rhythm foundation and the vocals with harmony shine. At measure 89, I break up the G major chord with another arpeggio. Notice that this is a significant spot where the singers pause to take a breath. So, an arpeggio fits perfectly.

Keep On The Sunny Side

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A. Blenkhorn (Lyrics)
J. Entwisle (Music) - 1899
Arrangement by Jay Buckey

Vocal line:

1 C F C

There's a dark and a trou - bled side of life,

5 G

There's a bright and a sun - ny side too;

9 C

Though you meet with the dark - ness and strife

13 G C

The sun - ny side may al - so find you.

18

F

Keep on the sun - ny side al - ways on the sun - ny side

22 C

G

keep on the sun - ny side of life. It will

26 C

F

C

help us ev - 'ry day, it will bright - en all the way, if we

30 C

F

C

G

C

Keep on the Sun - ny Side of Life.

The complete arrangement for “Keep on the Sunny Side”, including:

- Dobro arrangements for the vocal line, solo and backup.
- multiple play along mp3s at slow, medium and faster tempos,
 - with or without the Dobro
 - with or without the lead and/or harmony vocals

are on this page: http://jaybuckey.com/music_pages/downloads/isd/isd.htm