

July 2009 Free Flatpicking Lesson

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“Little Billy Wilson”

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome to FGM’s free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month I offer a wonderful old-time fiddle tune “Little Billy Wilson.” I learned this great tune from my band-mate and friend, Aaron O’Rourke. I enjoy learning tunes from Aaron because he, as a mountain dulcimer player, interprets tunes different than a flatpick guitarist would.

Learning melodies from other instruments is a great way to ensure a creative guitar arrangement -- I know that I am not tapping into another guitarist’s arrangement because I have never heard another guitar arrangement. As far as I know, Tony Rice never recorded “Little Billy Wilson.” I asked Aaron where he learned this tune and he said, “I’m not sure, I learned this tune a long time ago.”

I chose this tune because of its catchy melody and interesting chord accompaniment, but also for its lack of popularity. When I come across great tunes that are not among the standards, I try to do my part in spreading them around. There are so many great tunes that don’t get played nearly as much as they should (and perhaps weaker melodies that get played way too much.)

“Little Billy Wilson” is a three part fiddle tune in the key of A. I tried arranging it in open position (without a capo) but I feel, as a whole, the tune plays better out of G position with a capo on the second fret. I always learn something new about the guitar fretboard by trying to arrange tunes in different keys and I often find something intriguing in each version. Some phrases play better out of certain keys while other phrases become more difficult. I try to take into account the song as a whole and pick one position that will make the melody happy!

The “A” section of the tune is your typical eight measure section that is repeated. The “B” section is only four measures long (half the length of most fiddle tunes). In Irish music they often call tunes with four measure sections half reels. Then, the “C” section returns to an eight measure section. Don’t forget to listen to the mp3 to hear how all three parts work together. On the lesson recording I returned back to the “A” section at the end. I enjoy how the chords on the “C” section don’t resolve to the I chord (G). This lack of resolution is why I chose to play the “A” section again. To me, this gives the arrangement melodic bookends.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns on this e-lesson or any ideas for future lessons drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net. I hope you enjoy learning to pick “Little Billy Wilson” and then passing it onto your picking buddies. Doesn’t everyone enjoy a new old-time tune!

Little Billy Wilson (con't)

21 **G** **D** **G** **D** **G**

0 0 2 4 2 0 1 2 0 4 2 0 2 4 2 0 3/4 3 4 3 5 3 5 3 4 0

25 **Am** **Em** **G**

0 2 2 2 4 2 0 0 2 0 2 0 2 4 0 0 S 0 5 0 2 0 1 3 0

29 **Am** **Em** **C**

0 2 2 2 4 2 0 2/4 0 0 0 8 8 7 7 5 7 5 7 0 0

33 **Am** **Em** **G**

0 2 2 2 4 2 0 0 2 0 2 0 2 4 0 0 S 0 5 0 2 0 1 3 0

37 **Am** **Em** **C**

0 2 2 2 4 2 0 2/4 0 0 0 8 8 7 7 5 7 5 7 0 0

Little Billy Wilson (con't)

41 **G** **D/F#**

0 4 0 0 | H 0 2 0 2 | 0 | 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 4

45 **Em** **D** **G**

0 4 0 0 | H 0 2 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 0 | H 0 2 2 0 3

49 **G** **D/F#** **G**

0 4 0 0 | H 0 2 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 0 | 3 0 2 3 0 0 2 4

53 **Em** **D** **G**

0 4 0 0 | H 0 2 0 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 | H 0 2 2 2 3