

*Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*  
**Free E-mail Newsletter Lesson**  
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**“Brilliancy”**

**Arranged by Mickey Abraham**

Hello, and welcome to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* free monthly flatpicking lesson. This month I have chosen to share a beautiful tune from the Irish fiddling tradition entitled “Brilliancy.” This tune has always fascinated me due to its amazing use of arpeggios, unique feel, and understated simplicity. I’m certain you will find this melody pleasing to your fingers and your ears. Since this is a lesson, it should go without saying, but practice slowly and carefully, paying attention to your technique (pick strokes, corrected hand positions, and timing). In the end, you will be a cleaner and more musical musician!

Let’s first take a look at the overall construction of the tune. The song is in the key of A and has three parts. Each part is eight measures long and each part is played twice. I love fiddle tunes that have a third part, they seem to take the listener on a melodic journey and often save the coolest part for last. Check out the lesson mp3 to hear how the third part really sums up the musical message that “Brilliancy” is trying to convey. Most fiddle tunes ended up with two sections to match the old-time contra dances. Some tunes used to have three parts but, over time, they began being taught and played as two part tunes like “St. Anne’s Reel” and “Big Mon.”

The melody to “Brilliancy” reminds me of almost a classical/baroque piece of music, but with an Irish hornpipe bounce. The use of chord arpeggios and wide intervallic passages makes the tune sound very advanced and difficult, but this arrangement falls quite nicely on the fingerboard. I play the entire first and third sections out of 2nd position except for the few times where I use my first two fingers on the first two frets. The open strings allow me to shift up and down with ease. You will never hear my fingers swishing against the strings because I shift while the open strings are ringing.

This “open string” concept becomes even more important when tackling the second part. At first, you will be in fourth position using your index and pinky for the fourth and seventh frets. Next, you will be in fifth position for the following phrase that uses the fifth and ninth frets. In order to move positions smoothly, it is crucial to let the open string ring before and after the position shift ring out -- this way you will have, literally, ONE beat of musical time to get your left hand to where it needs to go. This shifting technique is used by all the great flatpickers.

For the backup, there is nothing too tricky here. I based the chords almost entirely on the classic I, IV, V progression, which in this case, is A, D, and E. You will, however, encounter a Bm (the II chord in the key of A) twice. I really enjoy the movement the Bm gives the piece. But, to be honest, I find the backup very secondary -- in some ways, this tune is so melodically intriguing that it almost does not need a chord player. The notes are based so heavily on outlined chord shapes and melodic ideas, that many of the chords are “implied” while picking the melody. This is a sign of a well thought out tune!

I hope you enjoy working on “Brilliancy” and adding this fantastic tune to your list. If you have any questions or comments on this e-lesson or great ideas for future e-lessons you’d like to see featured here, just drop me a line at [michabraham@comcast.net](mailto:michabraham@comcast.net).

# Brilliancy

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1

A D A D A E

TAB

2 1 2 0 0 2 0 5 2 3 2 5 0 2 2 3 0 2 0 2 3 2 0 2 1 2 0 1 2 1 1

H P

2 3 2 0

5

A D A D E A E A

TAB

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

H P

2 3 2 0

10

E A D A E

TAB

7 0 4 7 0 4 7 0 9 0 5 9 0 5 9 0 10 0 9 0 7 0 5 0 4 0 2 0 3 3 2 0

14

A Bm E A A

TAB

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

# Brilliancy (con't)

19 **A** **D** **Bm** **E**

**H P**

23 **D** **E** **A** **E** **A** **A**