



Building a Traditional Tune Repertoire

by Wendy Anthony

Whiskey Before Breakfast

(Key of D)

The Tune:

Whiskey Before Breakfast is a traditional tune made popular by Manitoba fiddler Andy DeJarlis, in the 1950's, and is found in the repertoire of the Métis of Canada. It is also known as *Spirits Of The Morning* in the Canadian maritime provinces. This tune is a favourite at many Bluegrass jams & festivals across North America (though some might even call it overplayed!) as well as Old-Time Jams & even some Celtic sessions.

Whiskey Before Breakfast
Traditional

Part A

Chords: D, G, D, A, D, G, D, 1. A, D, 2. A, D, Em, A, D, A, G, D, G, D, 1. A, D, 2. A, D

5
T
A
B

9
T
A
B

13
T
A
B

17
T
A
B

(Listen to the Whiskey Before Breakfast MIDI at [120](#) & [160](#) bpm)

Techniques:

- **Overview of Tune:** Like many fiddle tunes, the theme of the first 4 measures of Part A are repeated in the second 4 measures. These sections can be played exactly the same, or you can try changing a few of the notes for variety. The chord structure in Part A is different than in Part B. Part A starts with an ascending run of the first 5 notes in the scale of D. Part B starts with two sets of octave D notes: a low D followed by a high D, one octave apart. The first high D is held for the value of a full quarter note, resulting in a syncopated rhythm for the next set of octave D notes.
- **Chords:** In Part A, the chords are as follows: D(I) | D(I) | G/D(IV/I) | A(V) | D(I) | D(I) | G/D(IV/I) | A/D(V/I). In Part B, an Em (ii) chord is used in the 12th measure & the last 4 measures (14-17) change chords twice each measure: D(I) | D(I) | Em(ii) | A(V) | D/A(I/V) | G/D(IV/I) | G/D(IV/I) | A/D(V/I)
- **Pick Strokes:** Pick all 1/4 notes with Downstrokes & all paired 1/8 notes with Down/Upstrokes. In the first measure of Part B, the first set of octave D notes is played with a Down/Up stroke, while the second set of octave D notes is played with a Up/Down stroke, creating a syncopated rhythm.

Variations:

1. **Intro & Ending:** Try some different introductory &/or ending notes.

Intro Ending

E
A
D
G

2 4 6 4 4 2 0 2 4 0 2 0

3

2. **Variations:** Substitute 1/8 notes in place of 1/4 notes; try sliding up to the 7th fret of one set of strings while playing the next set of open strings in measures 6 & 12

Whiskey Before Breakfast
Variations for some measures

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the song "Whiskey Before Breakfast". Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature, and a guitar chord diagram below it. The strings are labeled E, A, D, G, B, E from top to bottom.

- System 1:** Shows measures 3, 6, and 7. Chords G and D are indicated above the staff. Measure 3: G chord, notes G4, A4, B4, C5. Measure 6: D chord, notes D4, E4, F#4, G4. Measure 7: D chord, notes D4, E4, F#4, G4.
- System 2:** Shows measures 10-12. Chords D and Em are indicated above the staff. Measure 10: D chord, notes D4, E4, F#4, G4. Measure 11: D chord, notes D4, E4, F#4, G4. Measure 12: Em chord, notes E3, G3, B3.
- System 3:** Shows measure 16. Chords G and D are indicated above the staff. Measure 16: G chord, notes G4, A4, B4, C5.

3. **Lyrics:** Mike Cross has written humorous lyrics to this tune, found on his CD *Live & Kickin'*, which has become a popular addition at Bluegrass festivals & campground pickin' sessions, though his melody arrangement for the verse differs from the traditional one.

Comments or Suggestions?

Keepin' tuned ...
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