Playing Modes on the Native American Flute

by R. Iván Iriarte

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http://www.ivaniriarte.com/.

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R. Iván Iriarte

NAF TABlature by R. Carlos Nakai

Flute Fingering Fonts courtesy of Clint Goss: www.NAFTracks.com

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- Thank you, Chery'l for showing me the Native American Flute.
- Thank you, John Vames for teaching me to play the Native American Flute.
- Thanks to my friends Sherry Vames, José Becerra and Luis Alejandro Hernández for your help.
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- To all my *flutie* friends at INAFA, for unknowingly motivating me to write this book.
- Rafael y Mercedes – my Parents: I always honor you.
- To Marta: Love always...

Iván

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INTRODUCTION

During the 2012 INAFA Convention in Eau Claire, WI the author of this book had the privilege of presenting a brief session titled *Beyond the Pentatonic Scale: Playing Modes on the Native American Flute*. The response to the presentation was fortunately very positive; many participants expressed interest for more about the subject. Such a positive response motivated the author to write this book.

A pentatonic scale is by definition any musical scale consisting of five notes, and there are many of such scales. The better known version of a pentatonic scale, which can be viewed as "major" or "minor" depending on the note we place at the bottom, is very common and found in music all over the World. Examples of the use of this Pentatonic scale include the music of Celtic countries, Hungary, West Africa, Sami people, Greece, China, and Japan, among many other. It seems like this scale resonates with humanity in some way that transcends cultural and ethnic characteristics.

We know that traditionally Native American Flutes (NAF's) were constructed using the maker's body parts (arm, fist, fingers) as units of measure. The finger holes were in most part evenly spaced, to the comfort of the maker-player. The result is that the majority of older NAF's do not conform to any conventional western tuning. Modern NAF's, however, are almost always tuned to produce a conventional Minor Pentatonic scale. Today, when we hear the music played by the majority of bearers of the Native American tradition, many of their melodies are based on this scale. Also the majority of amateur NAF players limit their tonal palette to the Minor Pentatonic scale. We should respect the practice of this tradition, and recognize those who use the NAF to express legitimate Native American music and culture. On the other hand, today many music enthusiasts have discovered this beautiful instrument and thrive to explore its use in different musical idioms. One of these possibilities is to play or improvise melodies based on other scales, such as the western ***modes***.

On this book we will focus on learning fingerings and ***sounds*** of several modal scales (Ionian, Dorian, Mixolydian…). These modes are frequently associated with different moods and melodic colors. They can be used as basis to create improvised melodies – from the soul – in a manner similar to the well-known Minor Pentatonic scale. There are also some known tunes that have their melodies constructed from modes rather than the conventional major and minor tonalities that are more common in western music. This book will present some of these tunes, but the main focus will be on using the modes to improvise melodies.

The author of this book presumes that the reader is not a complete beginner playing the NAF. There are some excellent books that can be used to begin playing the NAF. These are listed in the reference section at the end of the book. In order to gain the most benefit from studying the material in this book, the reader should have some basic knowledge of the NAF, be able to play some melodies using the Minor Pentatonic scale, and understand the commonly used TABlature system developed by R. Carlos Nakai.

Presuming that most readers will not be trained musicians, the author will limit himself to a minimum of necessary theoretical concepts. The reader will be encouraged to familiarize herself or himself with the sounds of the modes, and of course with the fingerings on the NAF.

All the musical examples intended to be played on the NAF are notated using the TABlature system by R. Carlos Nakai. All the fingering diagrams are courtesy of Clint Goss: www.NAFTracks.com

SUGGESTED WAY TO USE THIS BOOK

In order for you to obtain the most benefit from this book, consider the following suggestions:

1. Read the first three chapters to obtain some fundamental information about modes. Do not worry too much about memorizing every piece of information written on these sections. Aim to understand the general concepts presented.

2. Study the modes one at a time in the order they are presented. Try not to do too much in a short time. Learning the modes in the order they are presented will facilitate the learning process, because you will be able to build your knowledge about one mode using the foundation of the previous mode. They are derived from each other in a logical manner.

3. For each one of the chapters that cover the modes (Chapters 4 – 9) follow the same procedure:

    a. Read the information presented.

    b. Play the notes of the mode in a scalar fashion (from lower note to top) following the fingering chart provided.

    c. Get a feeling for the ***sound*** of the mode.

    d. Play the exercises provided in order to get a feeling of melodic patterns that are common for the mode.

    e. Listen to the example of an improvised melody on the corresponding Audio *Track.* The tracks can be downloaded from the author's webpage. They were played on a NAF tuned to ***A minor***. If your flute is tuned to a different key it will sound different, but you will still get an idea of how you may improvise melodies with each mode.

    f. Play your own improvised melodies, following the suggestions about which notes to emphasize in your phrases. Aim to play the melodies that you "hear" in your inner ear, following your sense of how the mode ***sounds***.

    g. Listen to the written piece provided as an example for each mode (all except Phrygian).

    h. Learn to play the written piece.

4. Above all, ***enjoy*** the music while learning these new ways to express your musical self. The author's sincere wish is that you have ***fun*** while playing with this book.

CHAPTER 1 - FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS ABOUT MODES

Musical modes are defined in western musical theory as scales or ways to organize musical notes in order to use them as an “alphabet” to construct melodies. The origin of modes dates back to ancient Greece. In the context of Greek music, the concept of modes refers to different ways of tuning a seven string lyre, and is based on theoretical concepts developed by Pythagoras (500 BC) and Aristoxenus (335 BC). The names of musical modes were derived from different ethnic groups or tribes in Greece (Dorians, Phrygians, Lydians).

The use of modes was adopted by the Catholic Church during the middle ages as the basis for *Gregorian chant*. The modes used in Gregorian chant had names similar to the ancient Greek ones, but the arrangement of tones was different.

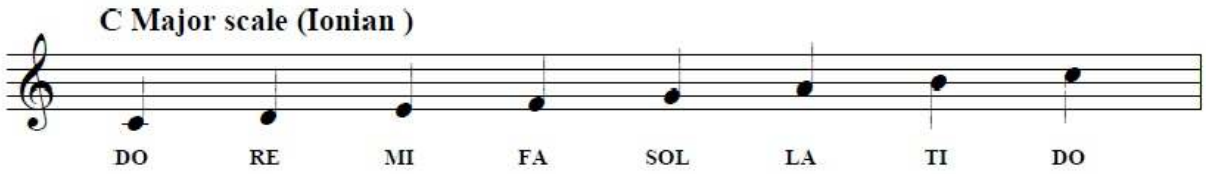
Western music after the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical periods adopted the almost exclusive use of the major and minor scales (“keys”). The use of traditional modes was practically discontinued in western classical music. However, we can appreciate that many folk cultural traditions use melodies based on modes.

In the twentieth century there was a resurgence of interest in the use of musical modes. In their modern usage, modes are defined as different tonal arrangements derived from the conventional Major scale. Part of the modern interest in modes came from the work of many composers such as Percy Grainger, Béla Bartók and others trying to evoke the moods of folk music. In the world of Jazz, artists like Miles Davis and John Coltrane began to compose pieces and develop improvisations based on modes. Also in the world of Jazz, the theory of modes has become the mainstream method of teaching what music educators call chord-scale relationships, as a basis for improvisation over standard songs. This latter approach to the use of modes is different from the one used in this book.

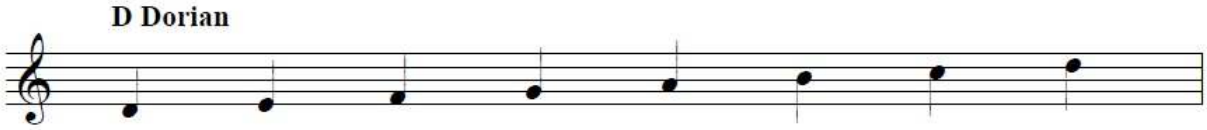
CHAPTER 2 - SOME NECESSARY THEORETICAL PRINICPLES

Modern musical theory defines *seven* modes, derived from the conventional Major scale. They adopt the names of ancient Greek modes, although the ***sounds*** of modern modes do not correspond to those of ancient Greek music. In order to have some understanding of modes and be able to use them when improvising on the NAF it will be necessary to deal with some unavoidable theoretical concepts. For readers who have some musical background and can read musical notation it should be fairly easy to follow the discussion below. For people without any musical background the concepts may be less easy to understand, but certainly not impossible.

One important concept that is fundamental in both western music and music from other cultures is the idea of a ***tonic*** note. When we listen to a song or piece of music there is usually a note that we hear as being the "home base" or the point where we want the music to return or finish. This is the "Do" when we hear music using the well-known Major scale of western music (Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti-Do). This scale is illustrated below in conventional musical notation.

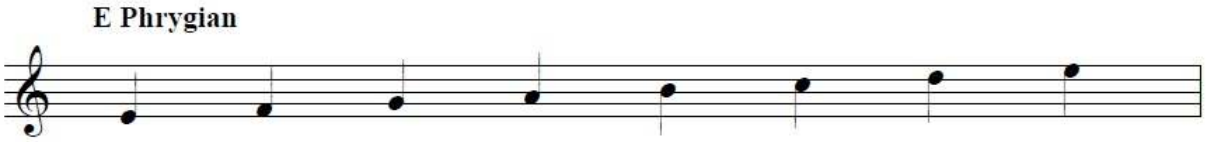


The note designated "Do" is the tonic. When we construct melodies using the notes of this scale (in this case they are the white notes on the piano), our ear wants the melody to return or finish on the note "C" (Do). Now, imagine that we continue to work only with the notes of the C Major scale (the white notes on the piano), but we shift our "feel" of the location of the tonic to the "*second degree*" or the note "D". Using the same notes, we now construct a scale with "D" as the bottom note. Now we have the D *Dorian* mode.

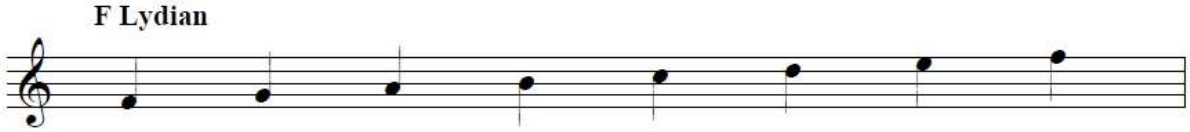


So now we construct melodies or songs combining the notes in such a way that our ear takes us to end our phrases or the song on the note "D". When learning the different modes it is recommended that we get familiar with the ***sound*** of each mode, not only with the theory of how they are constructed. In this way we will be better prepared to use them in a musical way when improvising or playing a song based on a mode.

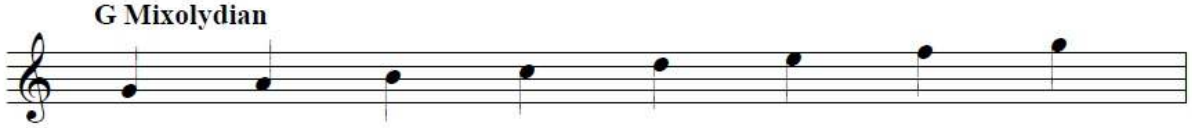
We can continue this process of using the notes of a C Major scale, but shifting the *tonic* to other notes. If we now use the *third degree* of the scale ("E" or Mi) as the new tonic, we have the E *Phrygian* mode.



Now we construct a mode with the notes of a C Major scale, using the *fourth degree* as the tonic. We get the F *Lydian* mode.



Construct a mode with the notes of a C Major scale, using the *fifth degree* as the new tonic. This is the G *Mixolydian* mode.

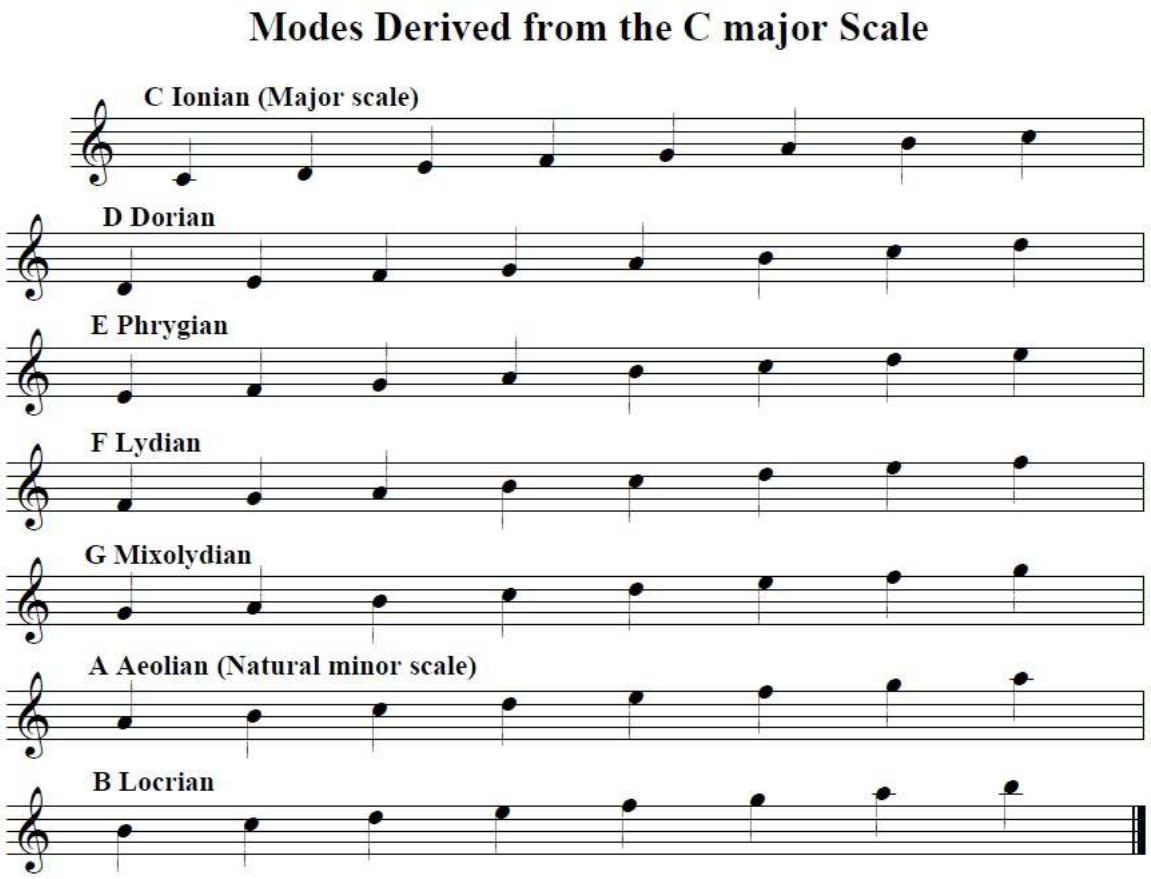


By continuing with this process, we can construct seven modes from a single Major scale, one mode for each note of the scale. The names that are given to the seven modes are shown on the following table:

Tonic of mode –relative to Major scale	**Name of mode**
I	Ionian (Major scale)
II	Dorian
III	Phrygian
IV	Lydian
V	Mixolydian
VI	Aeolian (Natural Minor scale)
VII	Locrian

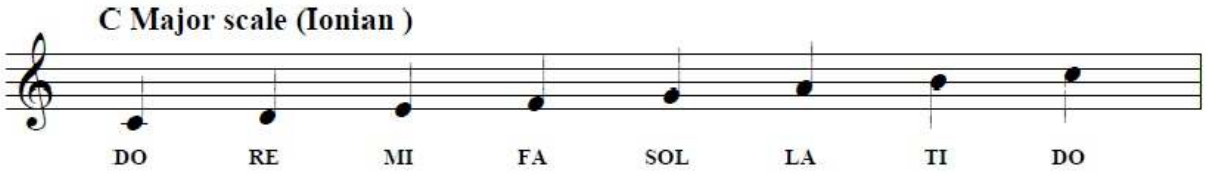
As may be seen on the table, the seven modal scales include the two common scales that used in conventional Western music. The Major scale is the same as the *Ionian* mode; the Natural Minor scale is the *Aeolian* mode.

The seven modes are presented below in conventional musical notation:

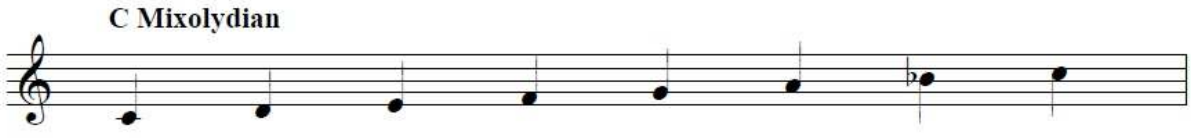


This manner of explaining the construction of modes is the one most commonly found in music theory books. However, if we want to use this system to construct modes on the NAF it becomes impractical (although possible) because of the limited range of the instrument. If we begin with a Major scale on the NAF and construct the modes from this Major scale in the manner explained, the subsequent "tonics" for the modes will get higher and higher, getting out of the NAF's range after the second or third mode. So, there is another manner to construct and understand modes, which is more practical to work on the NAF.

Let's begin again with the C Major scale:



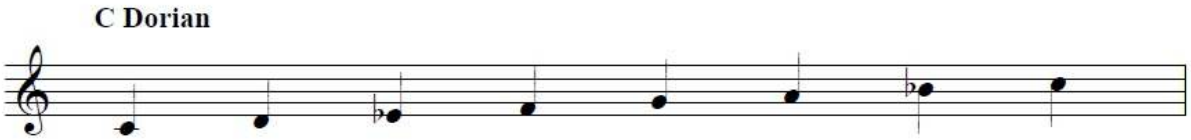
Now, instead of moving the *tonic* to a different degree, keeping the same notes of the scale, we will keep the note “C” as the tonic, and change *one note* of the scale in order to change its “color”. We will begin by *lowering* the *seventh degree* of the Major scale by a half step, that is, change the note “B” or “Ti” to a “Bb”. When we do that, we get the C *Mixolydian* mode.



Readers who have some musical background and are familiar with notation will appreciate that the C *Mixolydian* mode contains the same *notes* as an “F” Major scale (all white notes on the piano except for the Bb). That is, C Mixolydian is a mode using the notes of an F Major scale, but using the *fifth degree* of this Major scale (“C”) as the *tonic*. If you refer to the previous table, you may relate this information and appreciate that the Mixolydian mode is derived from a Major scale, using its *fifth degree* as the *tonic*.

If you do not have previous musical background, you may disregard the previous paragraph and concentrate on understanding that the *Mixolydian* mode sounds *like a Major scale with a lowered seventh*. This lowered seventh is what we call the *characteristic note* of the mode. It is what makes a Mixolydian melody sound different from one based on the Major scale. So, when we improvise on this mode we will try to emphasize this note, and the melodic movement *from this note to the tonic*.

Now, starting with the Mixolydian mode that we just constructed, let us change *one other* note. Now we will lower the *third degree* by a half step, change the note “E” or to an “Eb”. When we do that, we get the C *Dorian* mode.



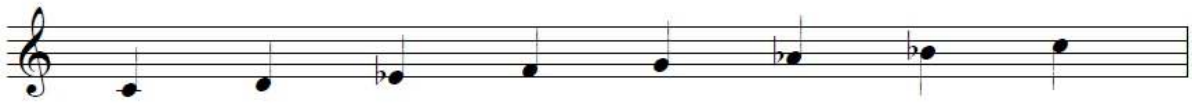
Readers with a musical background will appreciate that the C *Dorian* mode contains the same *notes* as a “Bb” Major scale (all white notes on the piano except for the Bb and Eb). That is, C Dorian is a mode using the notes of a Bb Major scale, but using the *second degree* of this Major scale (“C”) as the *tonic*.

If you do not have previous musical background, you may disregard the previous paragraph and concentrate on understanding that the *Dorian* mode sounds *like a Major scale with a lowered seventh and lowered third...* or as a *Mixolydian mode with a lowered third*.

Once we have a scale or mode with a lowered third, we say that it has a “minor” quality. Since there are several types of minor scales and modes, and ***all of them*** contain a lowered (minor) third, the notes that will help us “tell them apart” – and behave as characteristic notes of these modes are the sixth and seventh degrees. When improvising melodies on the Dorian mode, in addition to the *third degree*, we tend to emphasize the *sixth and seventh degrees*.

Continuing with this process, we now begin with the C Dorian mode and lower *another note* by a half step. In this case we will lower the *sixth degree* from “A” to “Ab”. By doing this we get the C *Aeolian* mode, which is the same as the C *Natural Minor* scale.

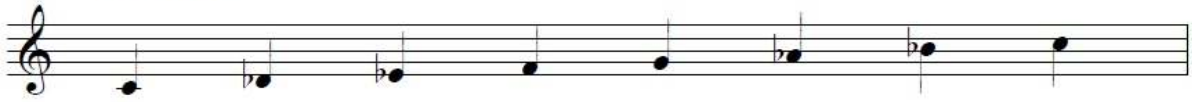
C Aeolian (Natural minor scale)



The *Aeolian* mode sounds *like a Dorian mode with a lowered sixth*. When we improvise melodies on the Aeolian mode, in addition to the *third degree* (which says “this is a *minor* sound”) we emphasize the *sixth degree* as the characteristic sound.

We can do this process once more and lower this time the *second degree* of a C Aeolian mode by a half step, from “D” to “Db”. This will give us the C *Phrygian* mode.

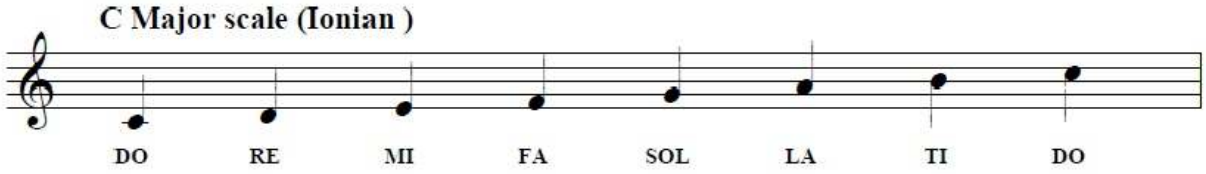
C Phrygian



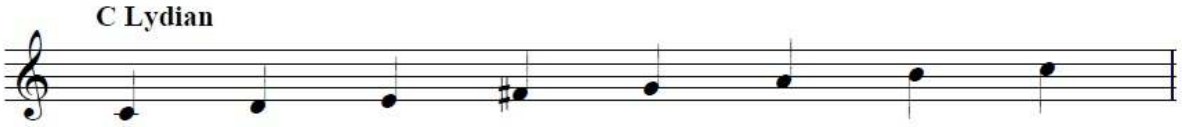
The Phrygian mode sounds *like an Aeolian mode with a lowered second degree*. This lowered second becomes the *characteristic sound* of the Phrygian mode. Most people will recognize the sound of this mode because of its frequent use in *Flamenco* music.

If we lower the fifth degree of the Phrygian mode by a half step we get the *Locrian* mode. In this book we will just mention this mode for the sake of completeness. Although jazz musicians use this mode in the context of playing over chord changes, the mode is *almost never* used to improvise in the manner we are discussing in this book. The reason is that when we lower the *fifth degree* of a scale, it loses the strong sense of having a *tonic*, which is the fundamental concept that we are addressing. Melodies constructed on a Locrian mode tend to have a *very strange* quality and are not well appreciated by most ears.

In order to discuss the last remaining mode we need to go back to where we began deriving modes with this system. Let us go back to our good old C Major scale.



Now, instead of changing one note by lowering it by a half step, we will take the fourth degree (F) and *raise it* by a half step to F#. We have just created a C *Lydian* mode.



The Lydian mode sounds *like a Major scale with a raised fourth degree*. This raised fourth becomes the *characteristic sound* of the Lydian mode.

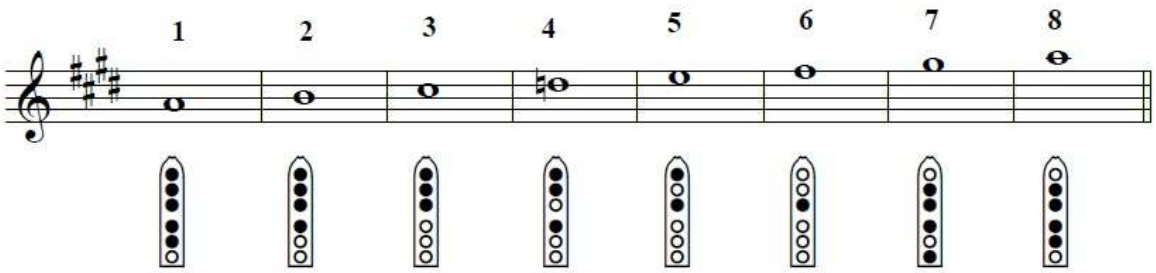
Although this chapter ended up being a little longer than originally planned, the summary of all the "theory" you have to know to construct modes on the NAF is summarized on the table below:

Name of mode	**What note we change**
Lydian	Raise 4th degree of Major scale
Ionian	**Major scale**
Mixolydian	Lower 7th degree of Major scale
Dorian	Lower 3rd degree of Mixolydian
Aeolian	Lower 6th degree of Dorian
Phrygian	Lower 2nd degree of Aeolian
Locrian	Lower 5th degree of Phrygian (then forget about it)

CHAPTER 3 - CONSTRUCTING MODES ON THE NAF

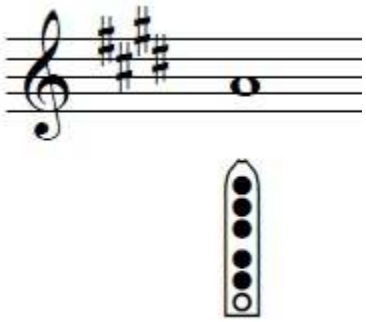
In order to construct modal scales on the NAF, we will follow the second method explained in Chapter 2, that is – we will begin with the Major scale and construct the remaining modes by changing one note at a time. Most NAF players become familiar with the fingerings for the Major scale, shortly after they have learned the basic fingerings for the pentatonic scale. The most common fingerings for the Major scale on the NAF are shown on the following figure:

Major scale



The fingerings for the higher two notes (seventh degree and higher octave) may vary on different NAF's. So, you may need to make adjustments for different flutes. You will find several alternate fingerings on the Appendix.

The *tonic* (home base = 1st degree) for this Major scale is this note:

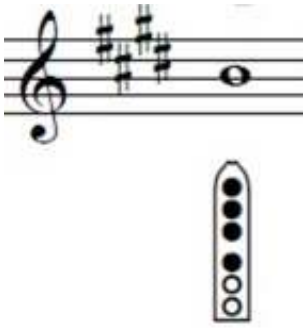


Which is notated as an "A" on Nakai TABlature system.

We *could* construct all the remaining modes by sequentially altering one note at a time from this scale. The fingerings for all the modes constructed in this manner from this Major scale are shown in the Appendix. However, the author has found that these fingerings present two major disadvantages for people beginning to improvise with modes:

1. Many cross-fingerings are required
2. In improvised melodies we frequently approach the tonic from the seventh note below. If we use the "A" note as tonic, the note below will require the tricky "half-hole" fingering.

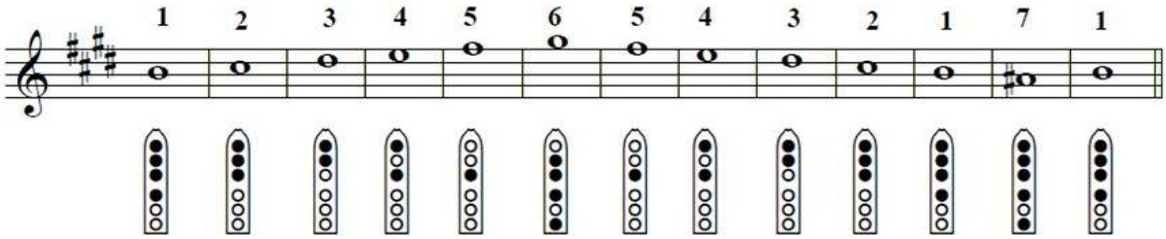
For the two reasons above, the author recommends that to begin working with modal melodies we construct fingerings beginning with a Major scale that uses the following note as tonic:



Which is notated as “B” on Nakai TABlature system.

The fingerings for this Major scale are shown on the following figure:

Major scale



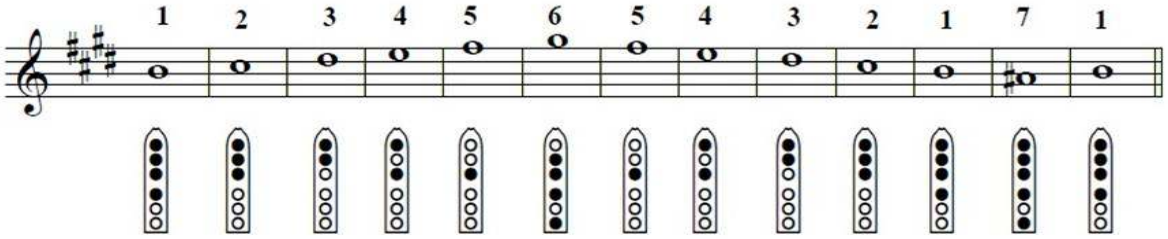
Observe that there is a tradeoff involved in using this scale. In exchange for the advantages of getting fewer cross fingerings when we construct the remaining modes, and having access to the “*seventh below the tonic*” degree, we will have to put up with one (probably slight) disadvantage: We now do not have available the upper notes (7 and 8) of the Major scale. For the remaining modes the upper seventh degree will be playable but the top octave note will not be available.

On the next six chapters, we will start with this version of the Major scale and progressively change one note at a time to construct all of the modes that are practical to play (all except Locrian).

CHAPTER 4 – THE IONIAN MODE

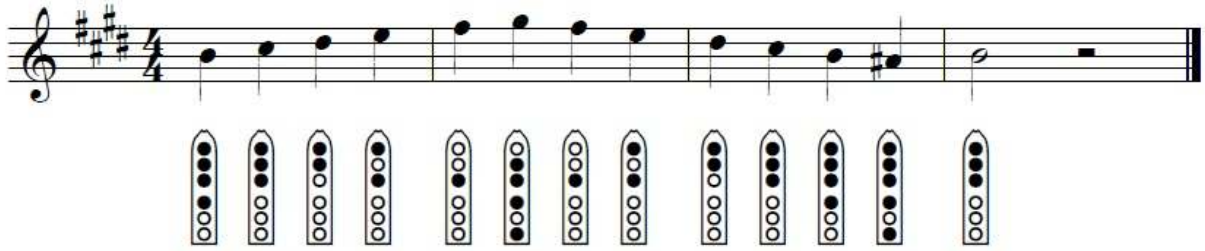
We will begin with the Ionian mode, which is the same as the Major scale. We have already shown the fingering for the scale:

Ionian mode (Major scale)

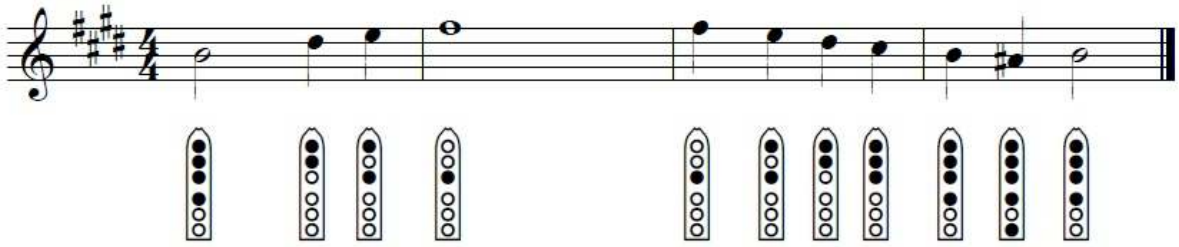


To become familiar with the sound and fingerings of this scale, play the following exercises:

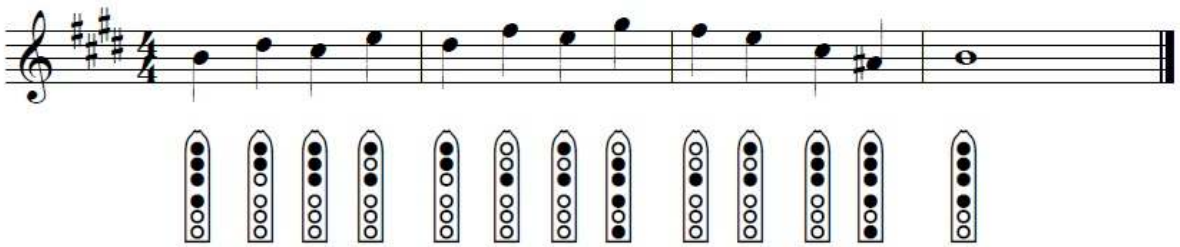
Exercise 1



Exercise 2

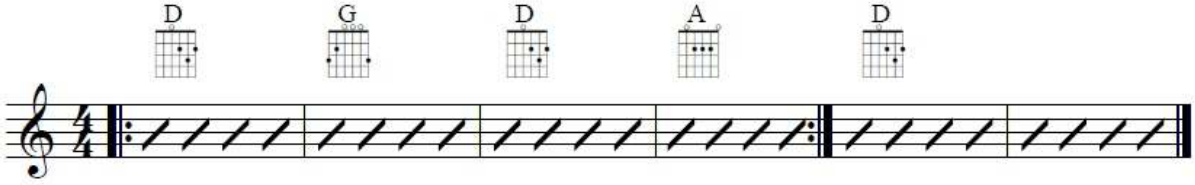


Exercise 3



After you learn the previous three exercises then begin improvising your own melodies with the Ionian mode (Major scale). The melodies do not have to be complicated or technically difficult. Aim to end your musical phrases on the *tonic*.

If you have a friend who plays guitar or some other instrument that can make chords, you can play together using chord progressions based on the Ionian mode. One example of such a chord progression is illustrated below:



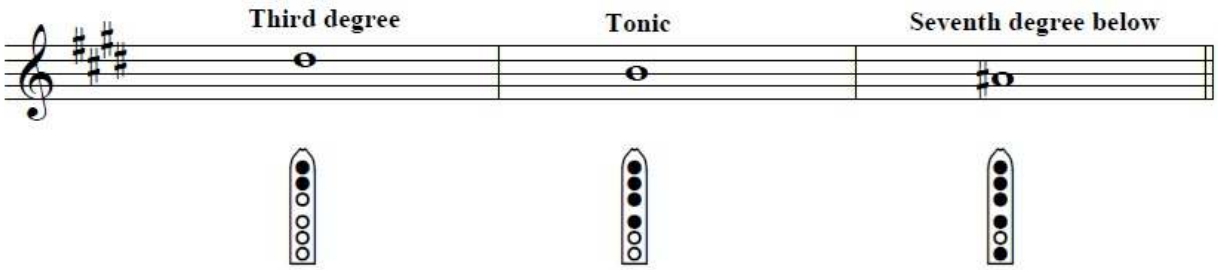
This chord progression will work with the given fingerings if your NAF is in A minor. If your NAF is tuned to another key, your accompanist will need to transpose the chords according to the following table:

Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db
	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb
	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db
	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab
	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db

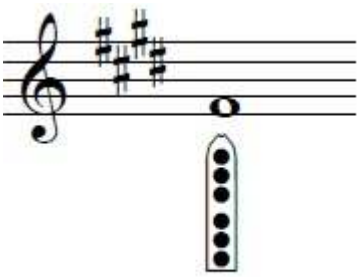
Some guitar players will prefer to play these chord progressions using a Capo. The following table presents the same chord progression using simpler chords on the guitar with a capo.

Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
Capo Fret	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	2	-	1
	D	D	E	E	E	G	G	A	A	A	C	C
	G	G	A	A	A	C	C	D	D	D	F	F
	D	D	E	E	E	G	G	A	A	A	C	C
	A	A	B	B	B	D	D	E	E	E	G	G
	D	D	E	E	E	G	G	A	A	A	C	C

Track 1 demonstrates some improvised musical phrases using the Ionian mode. Observe the tendency to use the *third degree* of the scale (notated as "D#) frequently, since this is one of the most characteristic notes of the Major scale (Ionian mode). Also observe the tendency to end phrases on the tonic, and to approach the tonic from the seventh degree below. These melodic patterns will help convey the sound of the Ionian mode.



After you become comfortable improvising melodies with the Ionian mode, you may want to play the traditional tune on shown on the following page **(Track 2).** It is based on the Ionian mode (Major scale). Observe that this piece also includes the note fingered with all the holes closed.



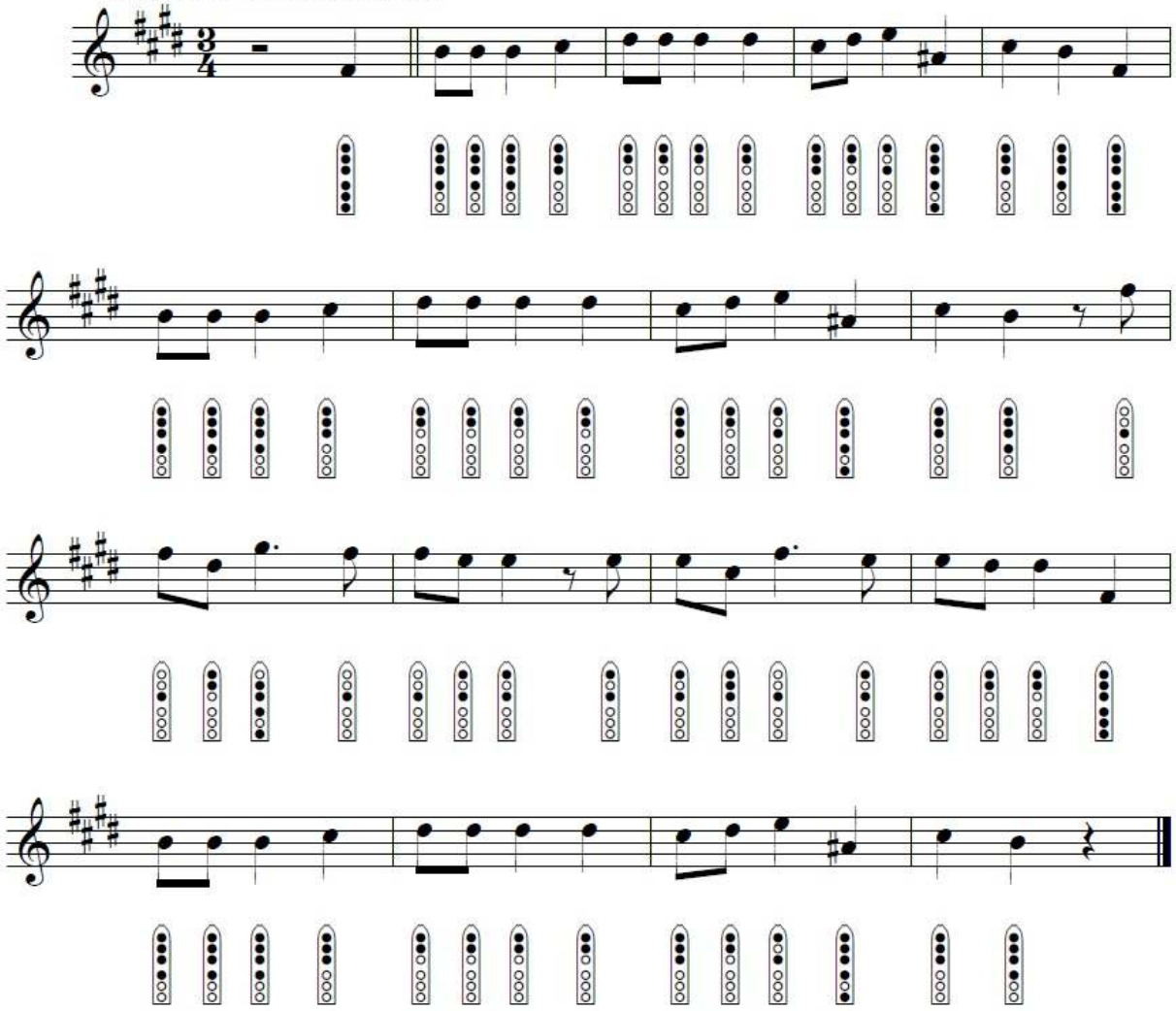
Which is notated as "F#" on Nakai TABlature.

Although this note was not included in the previous fingering chart, it also belongs to this Ionian mode. Readers with musical background will recognize this note as the fifth degree of the scale <u>*below*</u> the tonic. This note is used in many songs, and is another advantage of using our "B" note as the tonic. It will also be available when we address all the other modes using this tonic.

O Tannenbaum (O Christmas Tree)

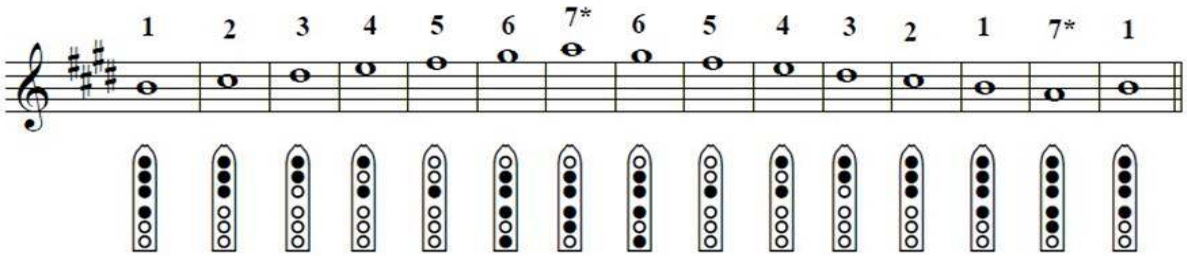
Traditional

Ionian mode (Major scale)



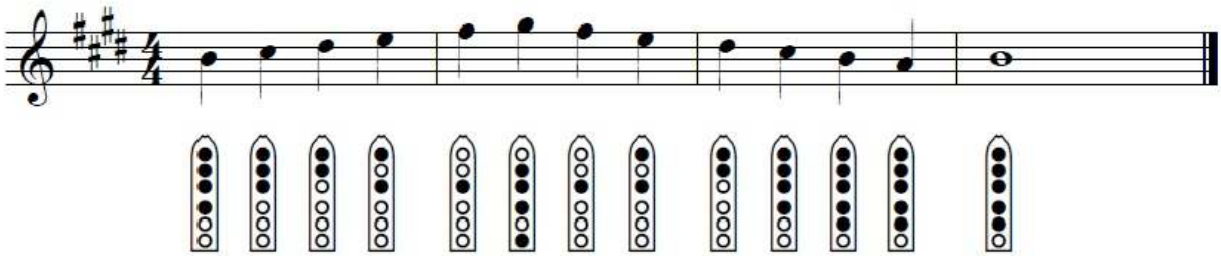
CHAPTER 5 – THE MIXOLYDIAN MODE

In order to construct the Mixolydian mode on the NAF we will retain the “B” note as the tonic and lower the *seventh degree* of the Major scale by a half step. So our fingering for the Mixolydian mode will be similar to the Major scale except for one note. In reality we will have two different fingerings, because now the *seventh degree* will be available both *below* and *above* the tonic.

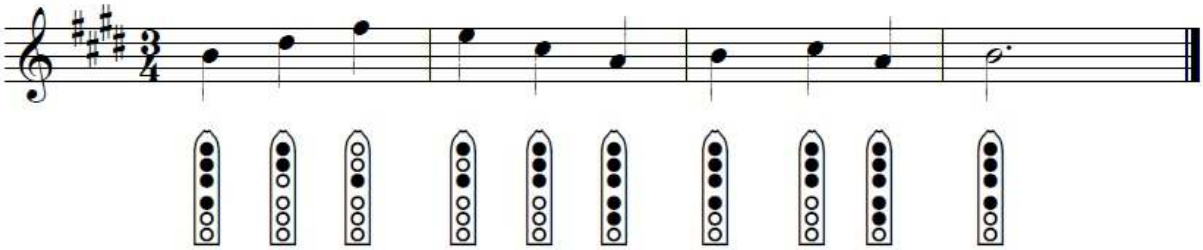


To become familiar with the sound and fingerings of this mode, play the following exercises:

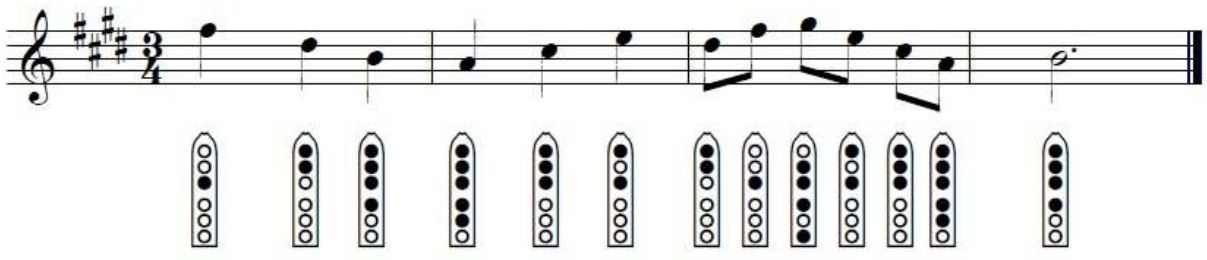
Exercise 4



Exercise 5

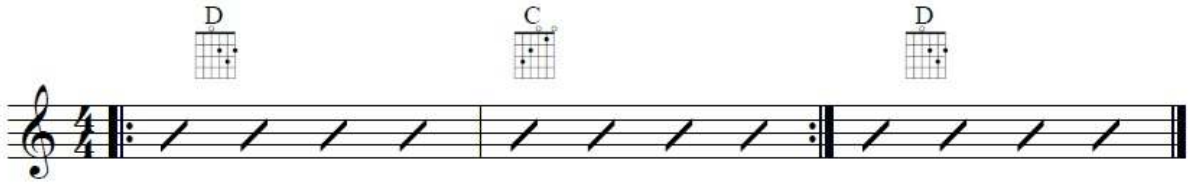


Exercise 6



As with the Major scale, once you get comfortable playing the previous exercises then you should begin improvising your own melodies with the Mixolydian mode. Aim to end your musical phrases on the *tonic*. Play the seventh degree with some frequency, to remind the listener that this is a *different color* from the Major scale.

You can also play with your guitarist or keyboard player friend using chord progressions based on the Mixolydian mode. One example of such a chord progression is illustrated below:



As with the example on the Ionian mode, this chord progression will work with the given fingerings if your NAF is in A minor. If your NAF is tuned to another key, your accompanist will need to transpose the chords according to the following table:

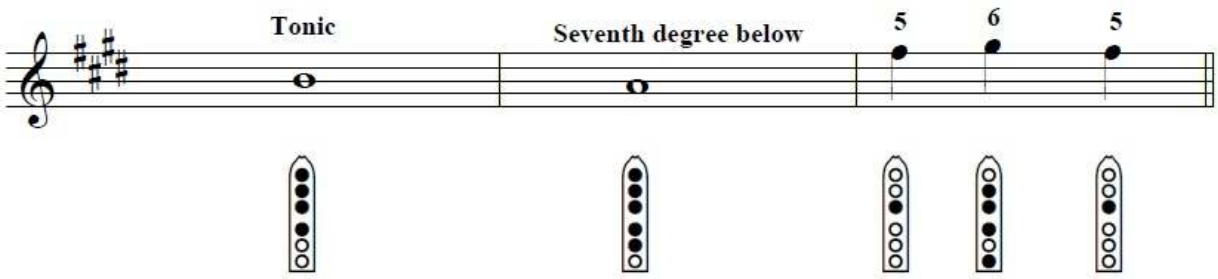
Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#
	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#

The following table shows the same chord progression with the guitar using a capo:

Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
Capo Fret	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	2	-	1
	D	D	E	E	E	G	G	A	A	A	C	C
	C	C	D	D	D	F	F	G	G	G	Bb	Bb
	D	D	E	E	E	G	G	A	A	A	C	C

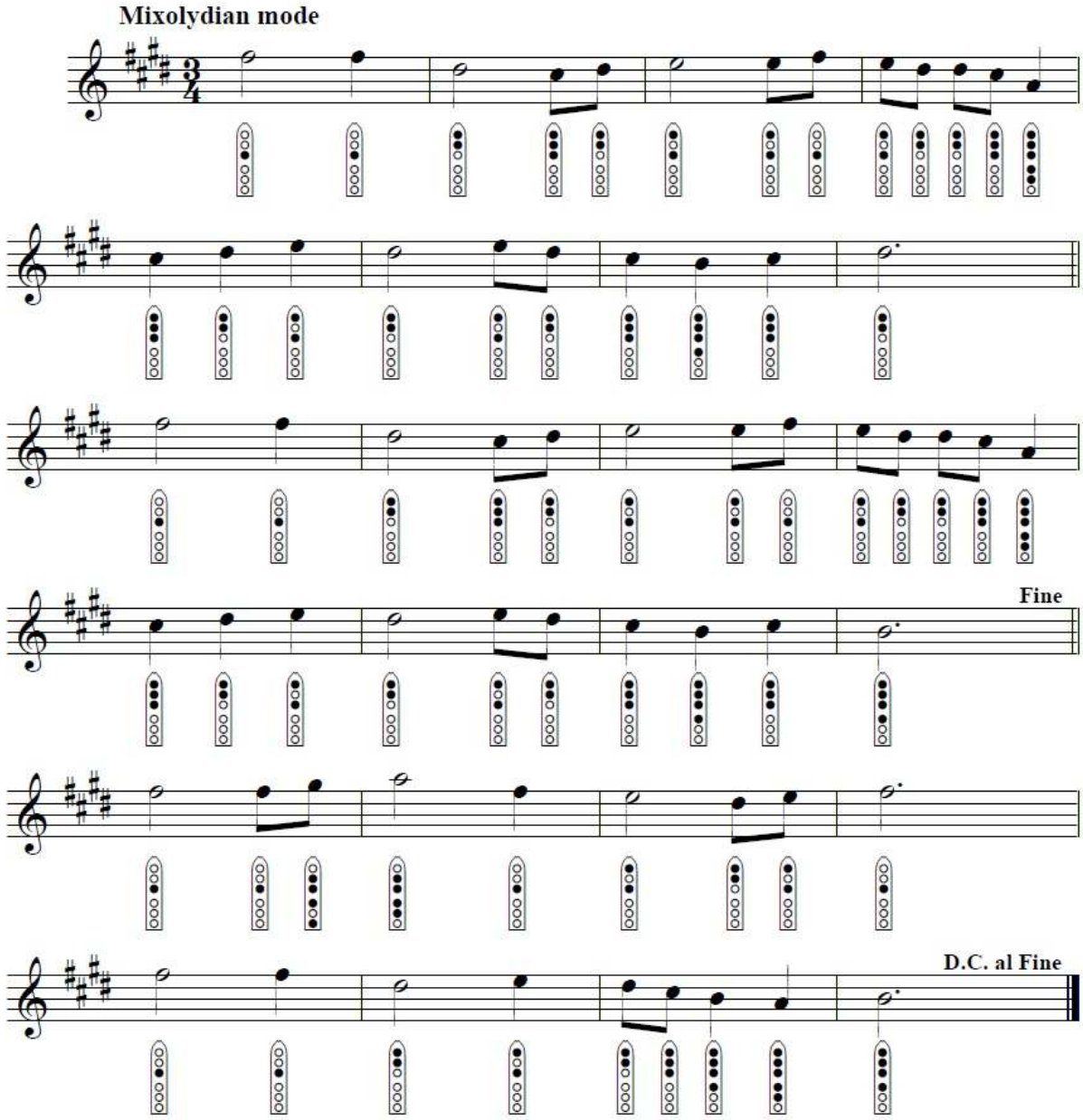
To the ears of the author, this mode has a certain “pastoral” quality to it that makes it very enjoyable to play and to listen.

Track 3 demonstrates some improvised musical phrases using the Mixolydian mode. Observe again the tendency to end phrases on the tonic, and to approach the tonic from the (lowered) seventh degree below. Also the melodic pattern “5-6-5” near the top of the flute range is very common in this mode. These melodic patterns will help convey the sound of the Mixolydian mode.



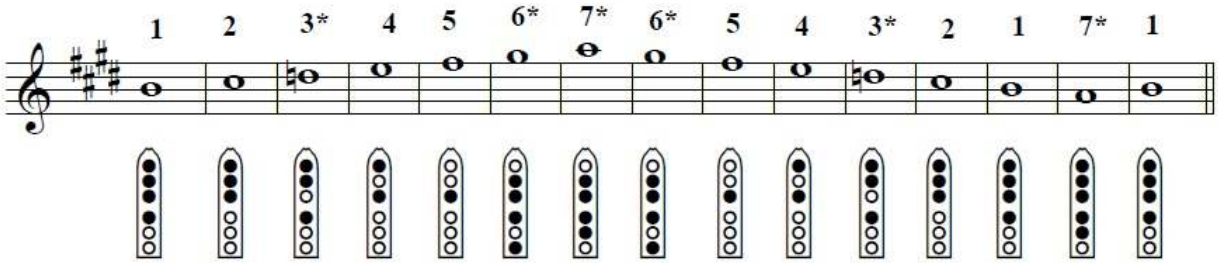
After you feel comfortable improvising melodies on the Mixolydian mode, learn the piece in the following page **(Track 4)**. This piece is one of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* – a collection of several hundred pieces that were probably heard in the court of Alfonso X – or “Alfonso the Wise”, king of Castile and Leon (Spain) during the 13th century (1252 – 1284). The majority of these Cantigas are based on modal scales, which were prevalent in European music during the Middle Age.

Que Muyto Meu Pago
Cantiga #263
Traditional from Castile & Leon - 13th Century Spain



CHAPTER 6 – THE DORIAN MODE

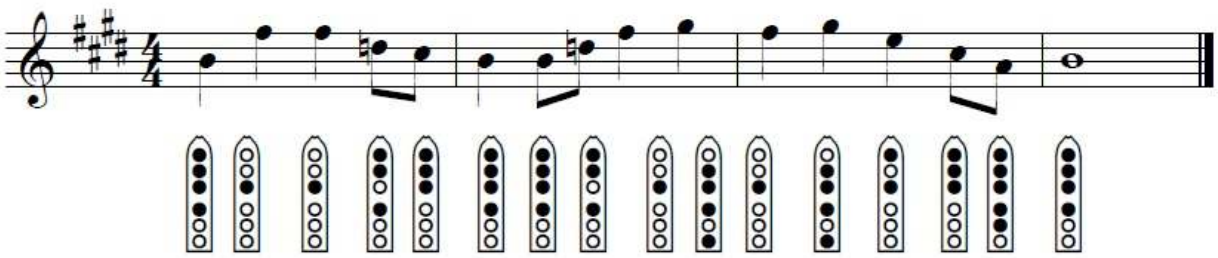
To construct the Dorian mode on the NAF we will continue the same process as before, changing one note from the mode that we learned previously. From the fingering that we already learned for the Mixolydian mode, we will lower the *third degree* by one half step. The fingering for the Dorian mode will be similar to the Mixolydian except for one note:



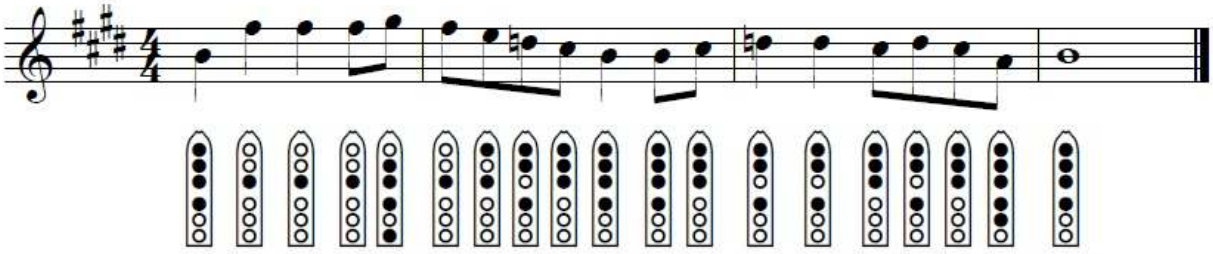
The Dorian is one of several modes that have a "minor" quality. This is due to the lowered (minor) third degree. The modes that have a lowered third degree tend to have a "darker" sound, compared with the "brighter" sound of modes that have a major third (like Ionian and Mixolydian). The sixth and the seventh degrees of the Dorian mode are the other two *characteristic notes* that differentiate this mode from other minor scales. These notes should be emphasized on improvisations.

To become familiar with the sound and fingerings of this mode, play the following exercises:

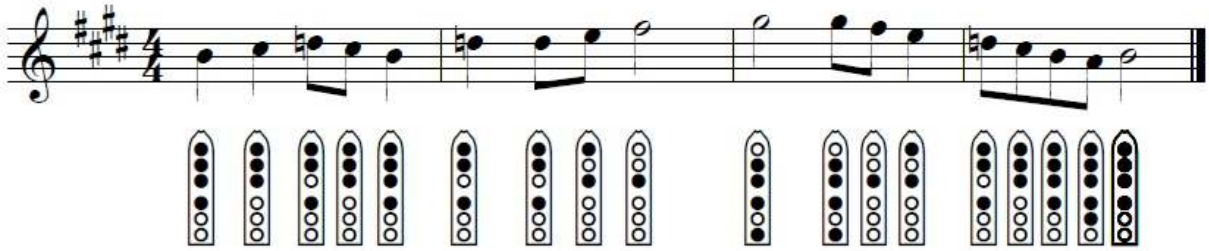
Exercise 7



Exercise 8

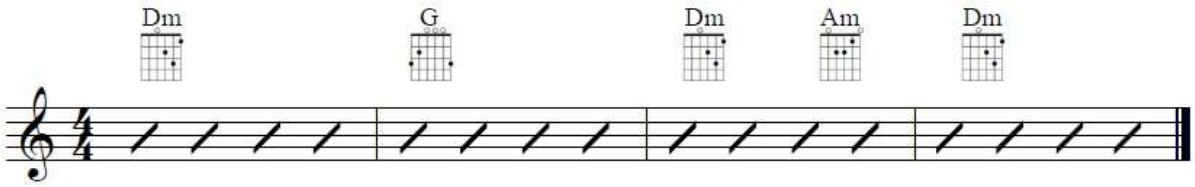


Exercise 9



As before, once you become familiar with these fingerings and the sound of the Dorian mode, begin to play your own improvised melodies. Remember to end most of your phrases on the tonic, and to emphasize the *third*, *sixth* and *seventh* degrees.

The following is one good chord progression to use if you play with a guitar or keyboard accompanist:



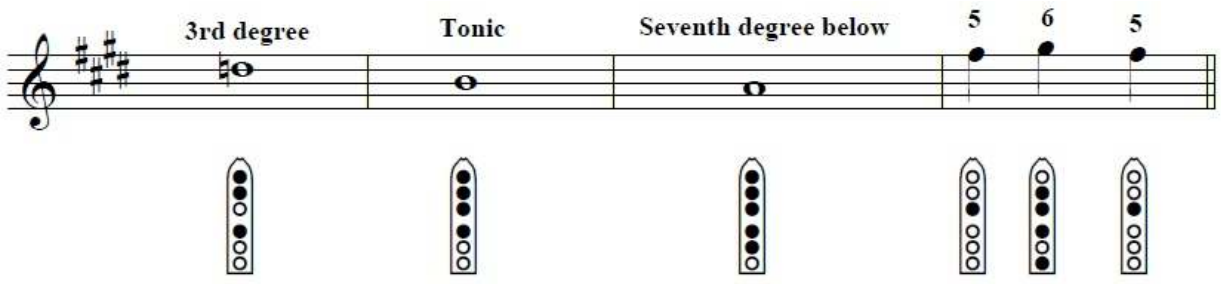
The chords will work as written if you play on NAF tuned to A minor. To play with flutes in other keys the chords should be transposed according to the following table:

Flute Key	**A**	**Bb**	**B**	**C**	**C#**	**D**	**D#**	**E**	**F**	**F#**	**G**	**G#**
	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	F#m	Gm	G#m	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m
	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#
	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	F#m	Gm	G#m	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m
	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m	Dm	D#m	Em	Fm	F#m	Gm	G#m
	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	F#m	Gm	G#m	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m

If your guitar playing friend prefers to use a capo, the following table shows the chord progressions:

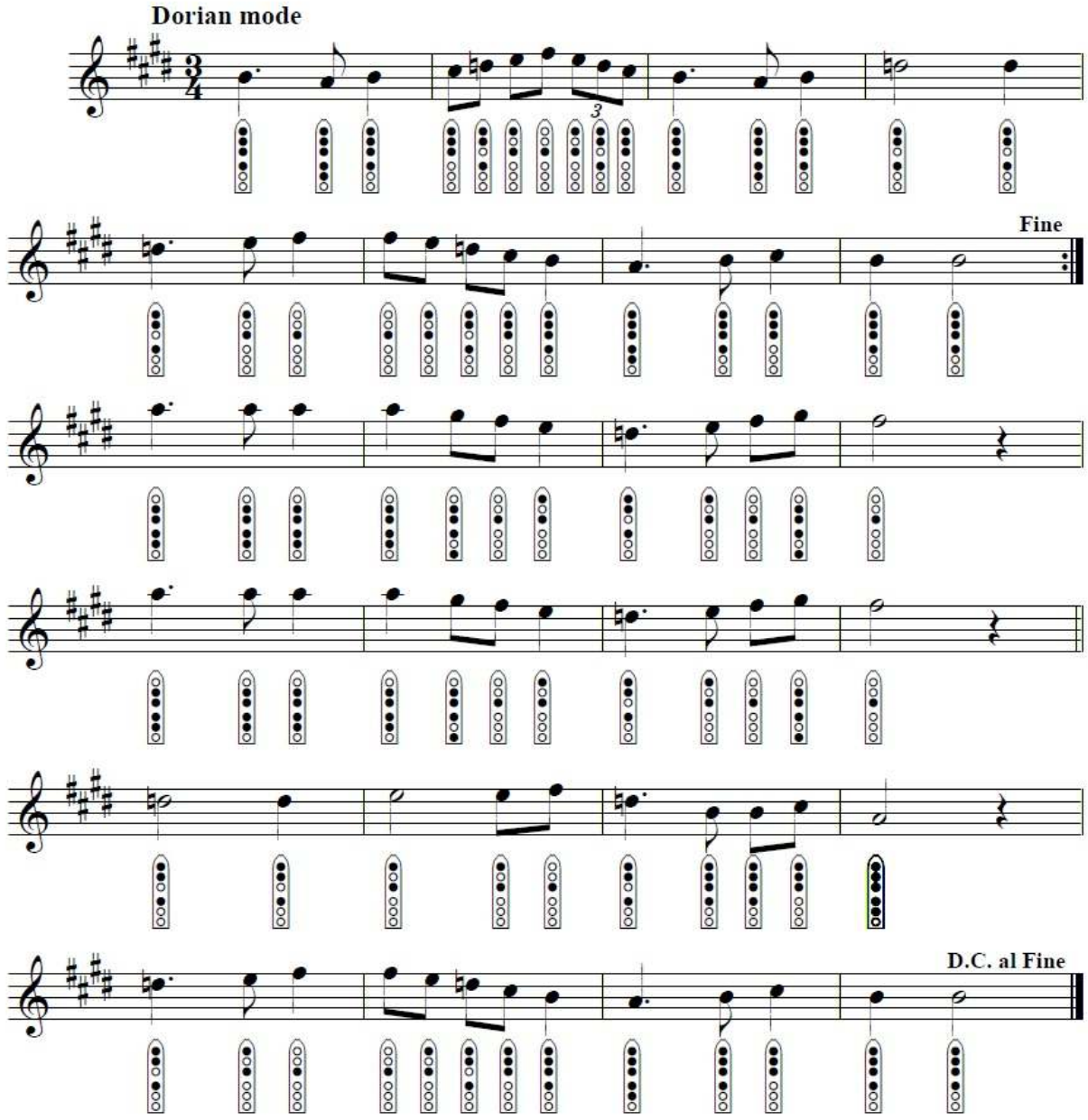
Flute Key	**A**	**Bb**	**B**	**C**	**C#**	**D**	**D#**	**E**	**F**	**F#**	**G**	**G#**
Capo Fret	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	2	3	4
	Dm	Dm	Em	Em	Em	Gm	Gm	Am	Am	Am	Am	Am
	G	G	A	A	A	C	C	D	D	D	D	D
	Dm	Dm	Em	Em	Em	Gm	Gm	Am	Am	Am	Am	Am
	Am	Am	Bm	Bm	Bm	Dm	Dm	Em	Em	Em	Em	Em
	Dm	Dm	Em	Em	Em	Gm	Gm	Am	Am	Am	Am	Am

Track 5 demonstrates some improvised musical phrases using the Dorian mode. When you improvise, aim to end the phrases on the tonic. The *third degree* of the mode should be used rather frequently, to emphasize the minor quality. Similar to the Mixolydian mode, approaching the tonic from the seventh degree below, and using the melodic pattern “5-6-5” near the top of the flute range will help convey the sound of the Dorian mode.



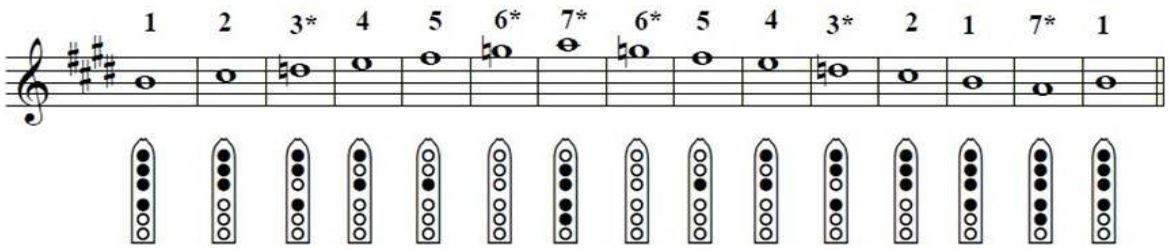
After you spend some time improvising your own melodies on the Dorian mode, learn the song shown on the following page **(Track 6)**. This is another *Cantiga* from Castile and Leon, composed during the 13th Century in Spain. In this case, the melody is constructed using the Dorian mode. When you learn this song observe the emphasis given to the *sixth* and *seventh* degrees of the scale on the second section. These two notes, in addition to the lowered (minor) third define the sound as Dorian.

Rosa das Rosas
Cantiga #10
Traditional from Castile & Leon - 13th Century Spain



CHAPTER 7 – THE AEOLIAN MODE

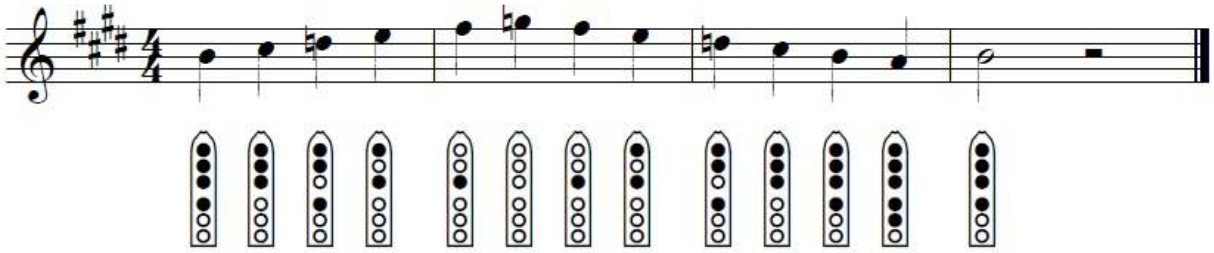
The Aeolian mode is also known as the *Natural Minor scale*. To construct the Aeolian mode on the NAF we will start from the fingering that we already learned for the Dorian mode and lower the *sixth degree* by one half step. The fingering for the Aeolian mode will be similar to the Dorian except for one note:



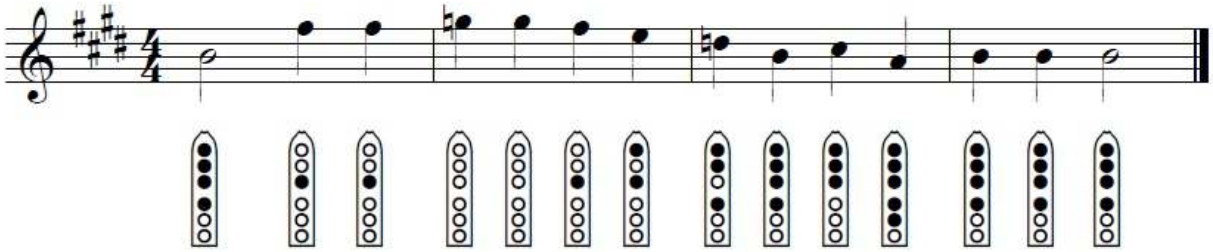
The lowered sixth, seventh and third degrees are the characteristic notes of this mode. The lowered sixth gives a *longing* quality to the Aeolian mode. Many times composers use this mode when they want to convey this kind of mood.

Play the following exercises to become familiar with the Aeolian mode:

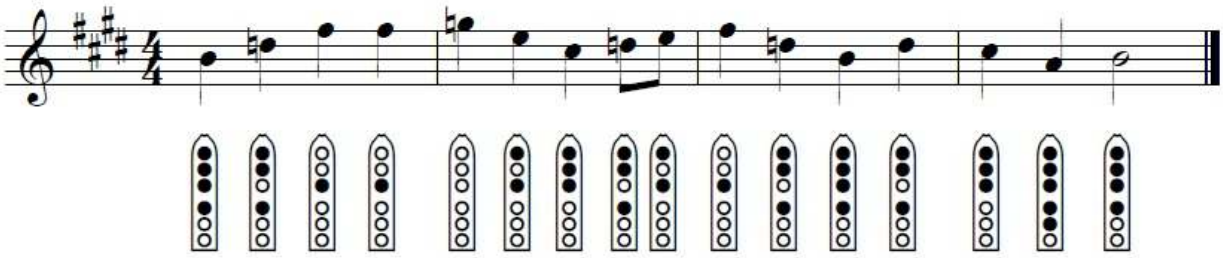
Exercise 10



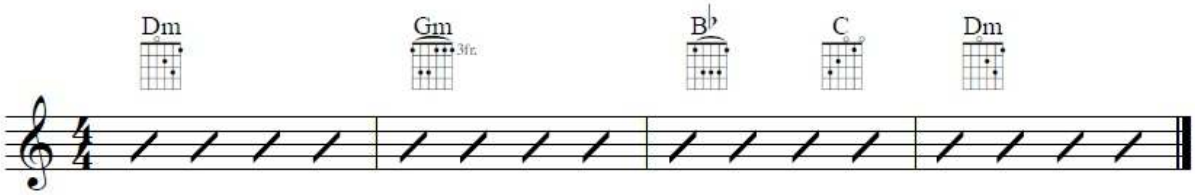
Exercise 11



Exercise 12



As before, you should improvise your own melodies, emphasizing the characteristic notes and aiming to end on the tonic. If you decide to play with guitar or keyboard accompaniment, the following progression is characteristic of the Aeolian mode:



If your NAF is in A minor the chords will work as written. As with the previous examples, if your flute is in a different key, have your accompanist transpose with the following table:

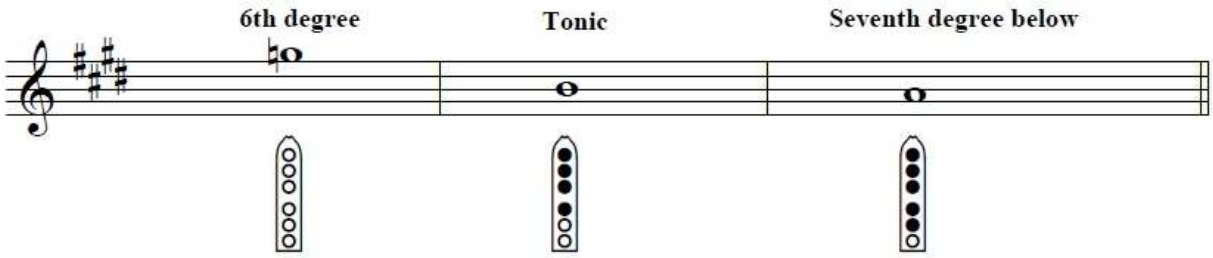
Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	F#m	Gm	G#m	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m
	Gm	Abm	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	F#m
	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A
	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	F#m	Gm	G#m	Am	Bbm	Bm	Cm	C#m

As in previous chapters, the following table shows the same progression using simpler guitar chords with a capo:

Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
Capo Fret	-	1	-	1	2	3	4	-	1	2	3	4
	Dm	Dm	Em	Em	Em	Em	Em	Am	Am	Am	Am	Am
	Gm	Gm	Am	Am	Am	Am	Am	Dm	Dm	Dm	Dm	Dm
	Bb	Bb	C	C	C	C	C	F	F	F	F	F
	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	G	G	G	G	G
	Dm	Dm	Em	Em	Em	Em	Em	Am	Am	Am	Am	Am

Track 7 demonstrates some improvised musical phrases using the Aeolian mode.

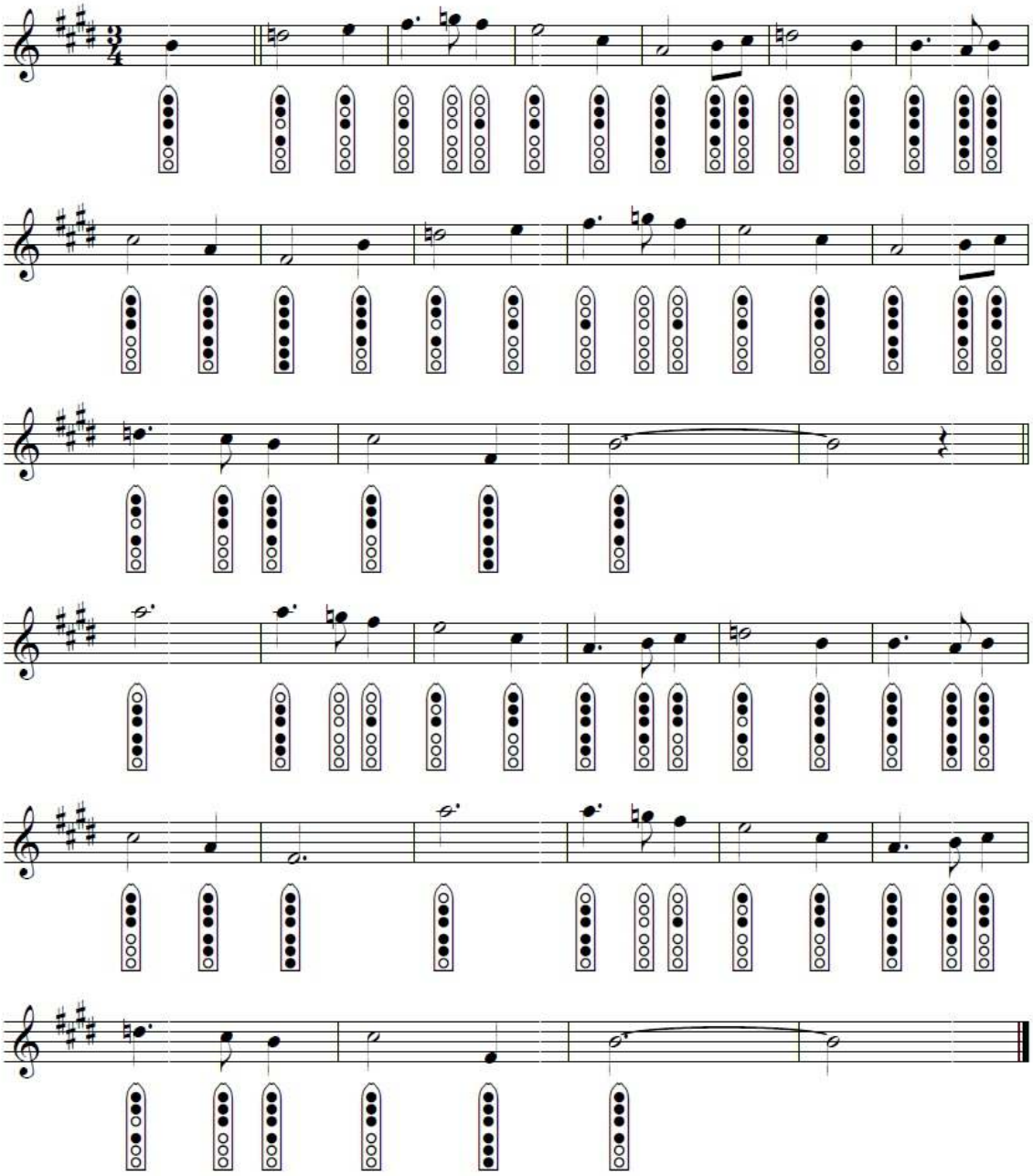
Observe again that the *third degree* of the mode is used rather frequently, to emphasize the minor quality. The lowered sixth degree of the scale (notated as “G natural”) is emphasized, since it is a characteristic note of the Aeolian mode. As usual, we have the tendency to end on the tonic note and to approach the tonic from the seventh degree below.



The traditional song *Greensleeves* has become a favorite among people from different cultures. There are several versions of this piece, using different forms of the minor scale. One of the most frequently heard versions uses the natural sixth and seventh degrees, which are characteristic of a scale we know as the Melodic Minor scale (not covered in this book). The following version of *Greensleeves* uses the Aeolian mode exclusively (with the lowered sixth and seventh), and has become the favorite version of the author **(Track 8)**.

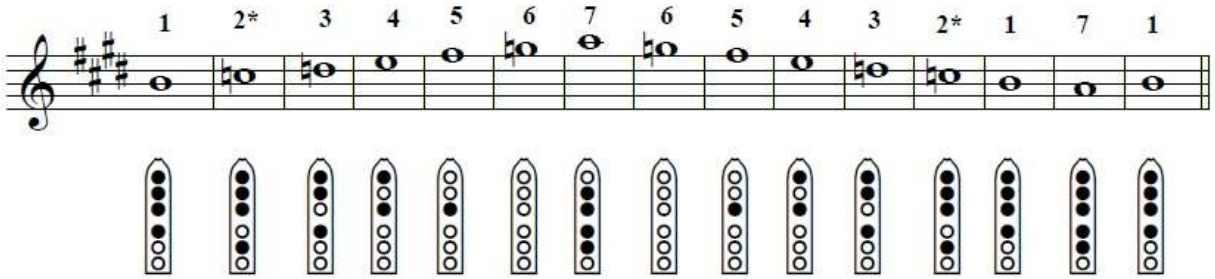
Greensleeves

Traditional



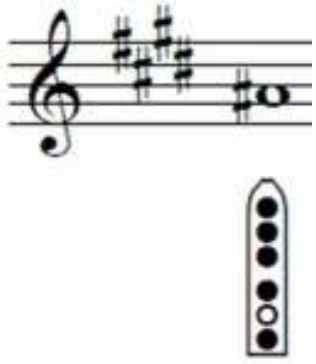
CHAPTER 8 – THE PHRYGIAN MODE

We can construct the Phrygian mode on the NAF following the same procedure that we have done so far, that is lower one note from the previously learned Aeolian mode by a half step. We lower the *second degree* by a half step and we obtain the following fingering:



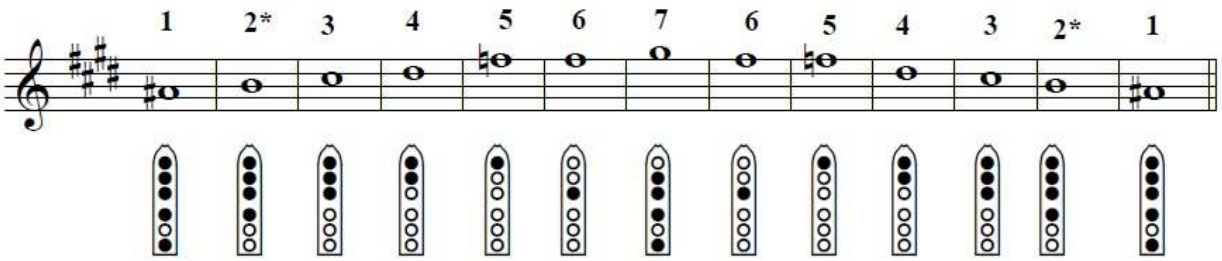
In this case however, we encounter a little problem. In the Dorian and Aeolian modes that we learned there was only one cross-fingering required, for the third degree of the scale. Now we see that the second degree also requires a cross-fingering, making it somewhat impractical, especially if we are *beginning* to get familiar with this mode. We do not want to have our minds occupied with too many unfamiliar things at the same time – learning the ***sound*** of the mode plus dealing with some weird fingering pattern. So, the author suggests that you ***do not*** use this fingering to play *at this time*. Use it only to understand that the Phrygian mode is constructed by *lowering the second degree of the Aeolian mode*; now disregard this fingering.

The author suggests that to become familiar with playing on the Phrygian mode you change the *tonic* note. Our tonic for this mode will be this note:



Which is notated as an “A#” in Nakai TABlature.

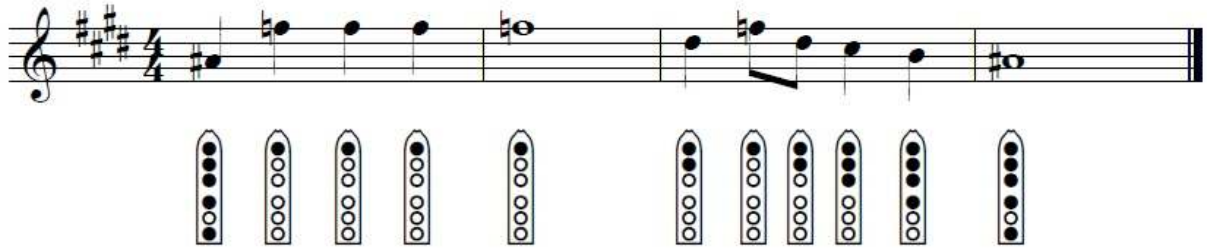
The fingerings for the Phrygian mode using “A#” as the tonic are shown in the following figure:



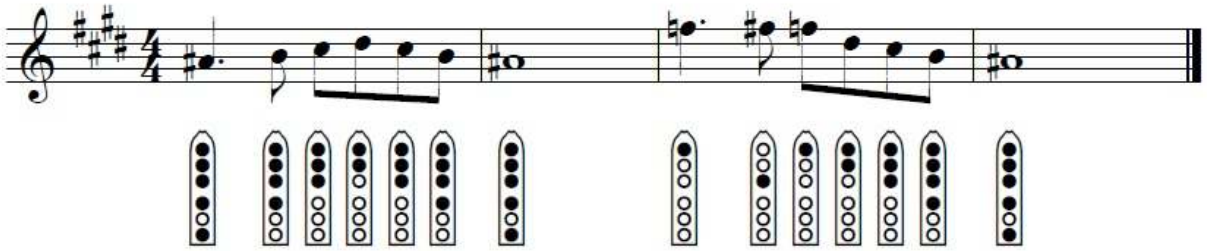
Observe that starting from the tonic you only need to lift the *lower finger* of each note to get to the following one, until you get to the top two notes. When you listen to the Phrygian mode, probably it will sound reminiscent of Flamenco or maybe Middle Eastern music. Sometimes in both Flamenco and Middle Eastern music we hear a variation of the Phrygian mode that theorists call the “Phrygian Dominant”, but we will stay here with the regular mode.

Play the following exercises to get familiar with this beautiful mode:

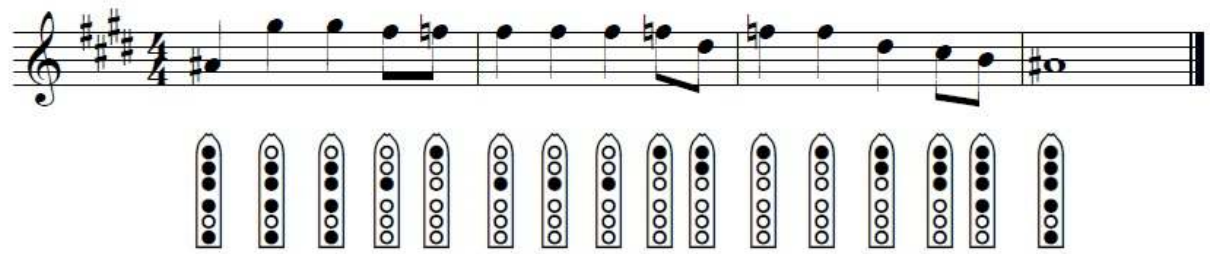
Exercise 13



Exercise 14

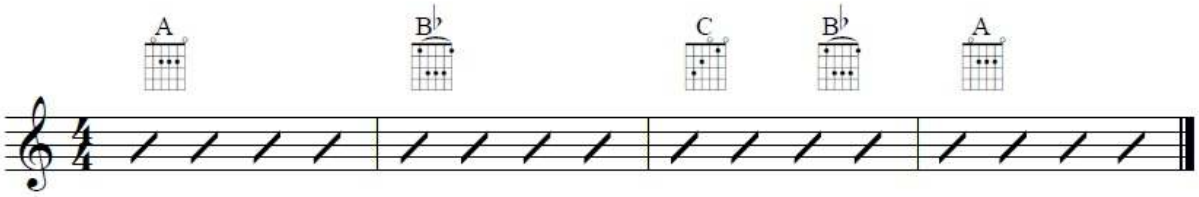


Exercise 15



The note that more strongly defines the quality of this mode is the *lowered second* degree (notated as “B” in these examples). When you improvise melodies on the Phrygian mode, if you emphasize lines that *descend toward the tonic* passing through the second degree, you will convey the sound of the mode.

The following chords provide a good accompaniment for an improvisation on the Phrygian mode:



You have probably observed than on all the previous modes, the chord progressions presented had the tonics on concert “D” and would fit our fingerings with an A minor flute. With the Phrygian mode we changed the tonic note on the NAF, and also changed the tonic chord on the guitar to concert “A”. This will work with a NAF tuned to the key of F minor. If your NAF is tuned to another key, your accompanist will need to transpose according to the following table:

Flute Key	**F**	**F#**	**G**	**G#**	**A**	**Bb**	**B**	**C**	**C#**	**D**	**D#**	**E**
	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab
	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A
	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A
	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab

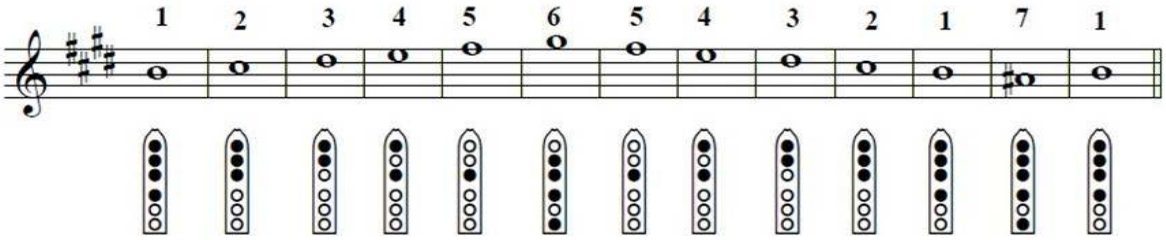
The Phrygian mode has an interesting musical “flavor” because although it is theoretically a “minor” type of mode, it sounds well when the accompaniment plays the tonic chord as a *major chord*, as demonstrated in the previous example. Since this progression involves using a chord just one half step from the tonic, there is no real “easy” way to play this progression on guitar. Most guitar players prefer to play the progressions starting either on an “A” or “E” chord using a capo to get the correct key. The following table shows these chords with a capo:

Flute Key	**F**	**F#**	**G**	**G#**	**A**	**Bb**	**B**	**C**	**C#**	**D**	**D#**	**E**
Capo Fret	-	1	2	3	4	5	6	-	1	2	3	4
	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	E	E	E	E	E
	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	F	F	F	F	F
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	G	G	G	G	G
	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	Bb	F	F	F	F	F
	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	E	E	E	E	E

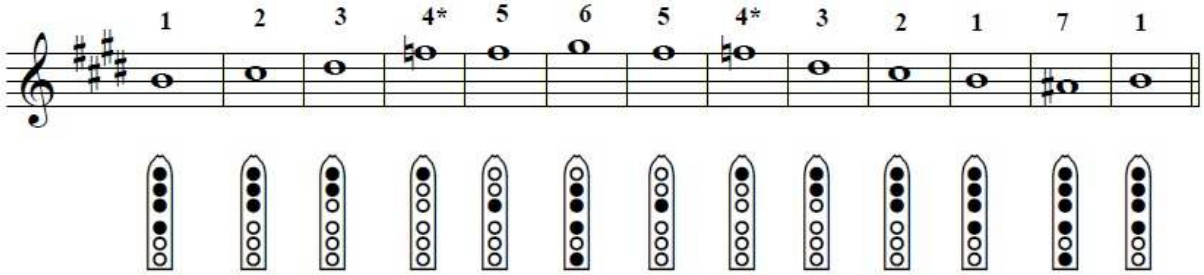
Track 9 demonstrates some improvised phrases on the Phrygian mode. We emphasize ending melodic phrases on the *tonic*. *Avoid ending a phrase* on the *third degree* of the mode. It will tend to sound wrong, especially with the accompaniment above.

CHAPTER 9 – THE LYDIAN MODE

The last mode that we will discuss in this book is the Lydian mode. In order to construct this mode on the NAF we have to go back to the Major scale (Ionian mode) because instead of *lowering* a note from a previous mode, as we have been doing so far, this mode requires that we *raise* the *fourth degree* of the Major scale by a half step. So, we go back and review the fingering for the Major scale with "B" as the tonic:



And now raise the fourth degree of this scale, obtaining the following fingering:

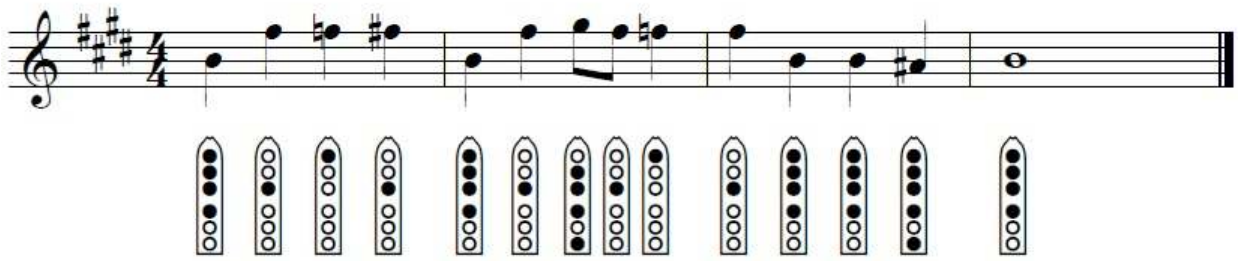


If you want to get a sense of the Lydian ***sound***, think about the ***opening phrase*** (not the rest of the song) of ***María*** by Leonard Bernstein, from the musical *West Side Story*. The ***Simpsons Theme Song*** is another melody based on the Lydian mode. The raised fourth gives the Lydian mode its distinctive flavor. Jazz musicians like to use the Lydian mode at the ending of songs in major keys, especially ballads.

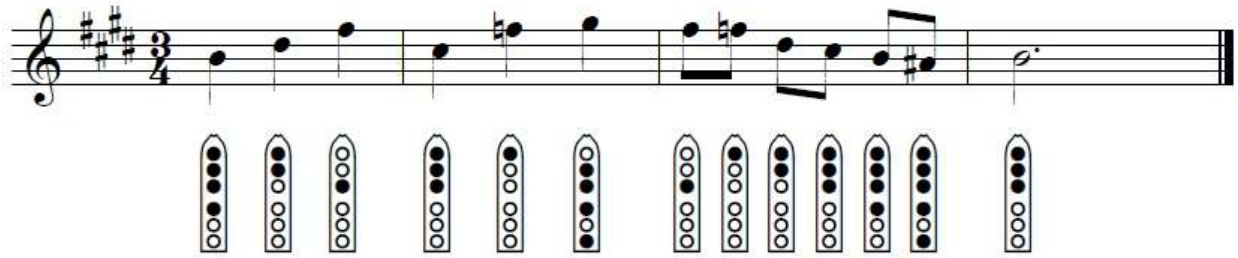
Observe that the fingerings for the Lydian mode using "B" as the tonic are the same as for the Phrygian mode using "A#" as the tonic. This is because both of these modes use the notes from the same parent Major scale. You don't have to worry about the theory behind this. It will just be convenient for you that if you already learned the fingerings for the Phrygian mode on the previous chapter, you will not have to learn any more different fingerings for this one. You only have to shift your sense of which note serves as the *tonic*.

Practice the following exercises to become familiar with the Lydian sound, before you begin improvising your own melodies.

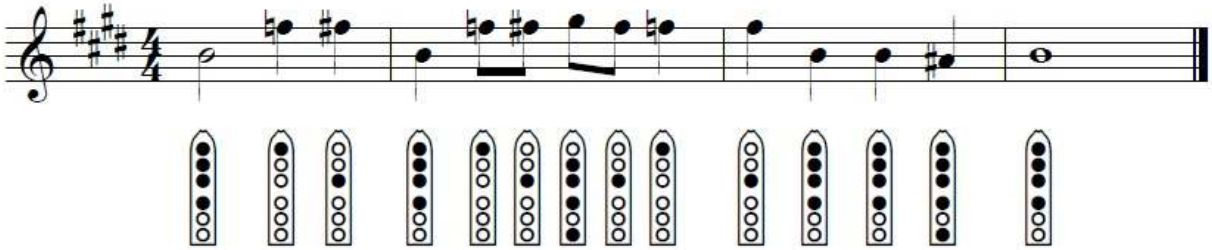
Exercise 16



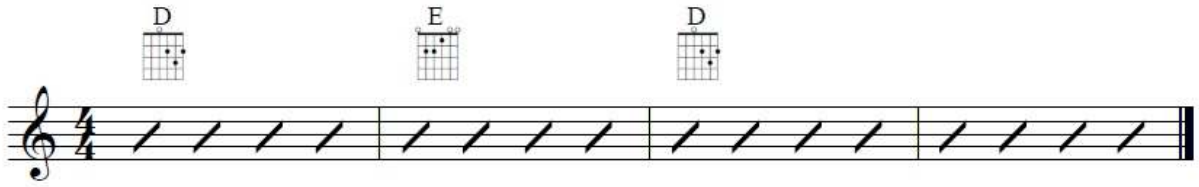
Exercise 17



Exercise 18



Improvise your own melodies by yourself or play with your guitarist friend who can use this progression:



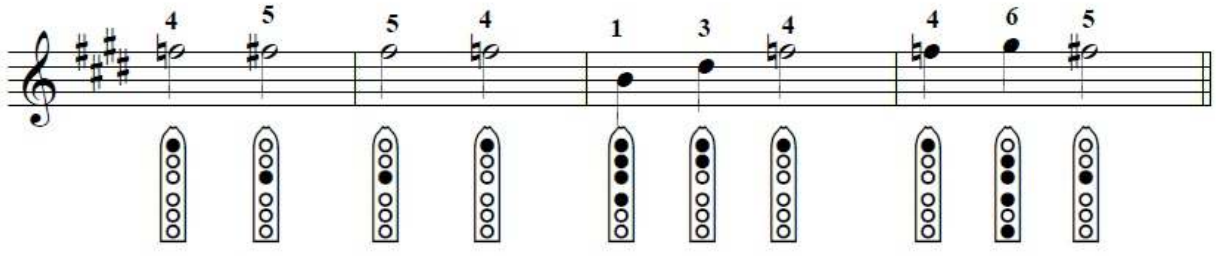
The chords shown above will work if your NAF is tuned to A minor. With other flutes the guitar player will need to transpose using the following table. Also the guitarist may play the progression in one of the simpler keys using a capo.

Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db
	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb
	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db

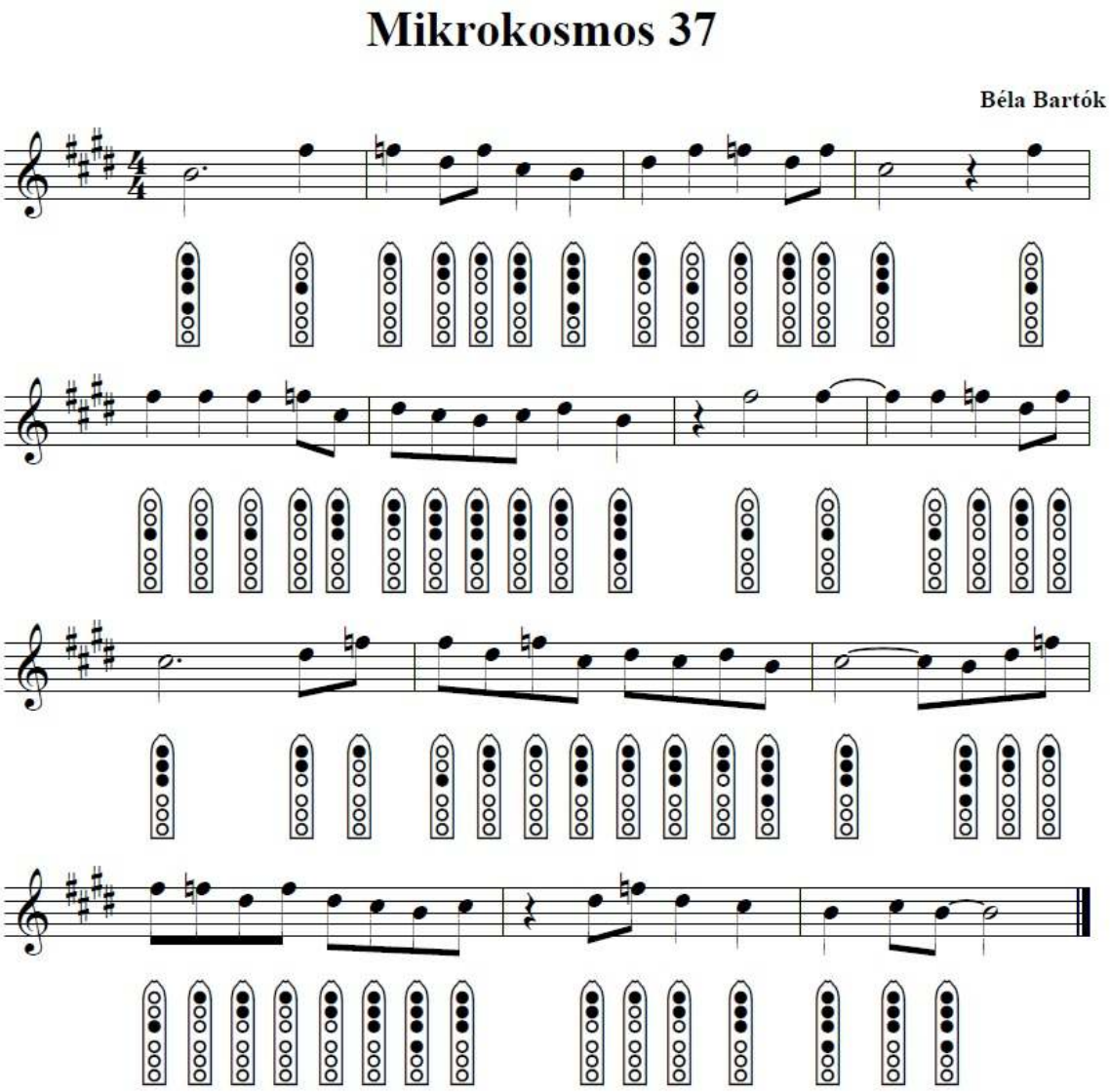
Flute Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
Capo Fret	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	-	1	2	-	1
	D	D	D	F	F	G	G	A	A	A	C	C
	E	E	E	G	G	A	A	B	B	B	D	D
	D	D	D	F	F	G	G	A	A	A	C	C

Track 10 demonstrates some improvised musical phrases using the Lydian mode.

The most characteristic note of the mode is the *raised fourth* (notated as “F natural”) and it should be emphasized in improvisations. Frequently used melodic patterns that will help convey the Lydian sound are: “4-5”, “5-4”, “1-3-4”, and “4-6-5” among other.

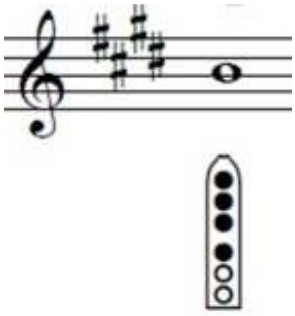


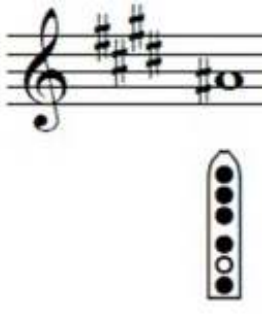
Play this short piece in Lydian mode by the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók **(Track 11)**.



CLOSING REMARKS – FOR FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

The fingerings and patterns that have been presented in this book are those that appear to be easier to learn when a NAF player wants to experiment for the first time with modal sounds. They are particularly useful to use for improvisation. We have covered modes that use the note notated as “B” in Nakai TABlature as the tonic, except for the Phrygian mode, in which we used “A#” as the tonic.

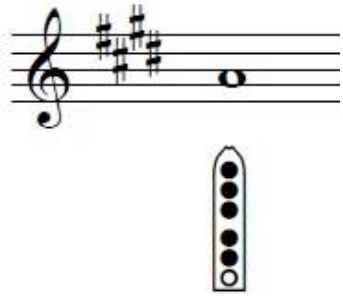


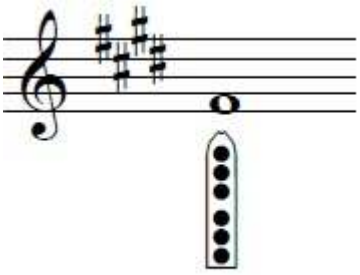


In reality, it is *possible* to construct *any* mode from *any* note on the instrument. On the NAF we do not do it because in many instances the fingerings that we get are impractical or the notes get out of range.

When we are not improvising, but playing specific pieces or songs, sometimes we need to use modal scales using a different tonic than the one we learned. For example, the song may require us to play the note that is a full octave above the tonic. If we play the song using the notated “B” as the tonic the higher note will not be available. In those instances, it may be useful to learn fingerings for modes using different tonic notes.

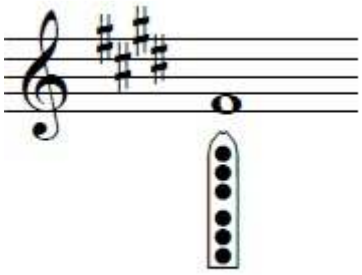
The author has found that modes built on the tonics notated as “A” and “F#” on Nakai TABlature are the more practical.





When we use modes based on one of these two notes as the tonic there is usually a tradeoff between the advantage of having access to higher notes of the mode and the disadvantage of complicated cross-fingerings or half-hole fingerings. Working with these tradeoffs is one of the beauties of playing the NAF.

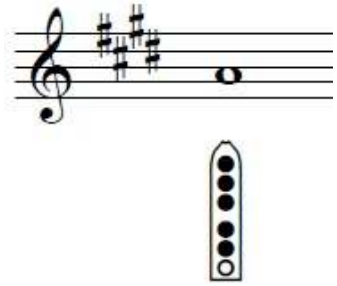
All of the modes using the note “F#” as the tonic...



...will require a half-hole fingering for the second degree.

The fingering for the ***lowered second*** degree of the Phrygian mode can be particularly tricky. Another disadvantage of using this tonic is the fact that you do not have access to *any notes* below the tonic. Other than that the fingerings for most of the modes from this tonic are not particularly difficult. The Mixolydian and Dorian modes from this tonic are useful to learn. The Aeolian is also reasonable.

Modes using the note “A” as the tonic...

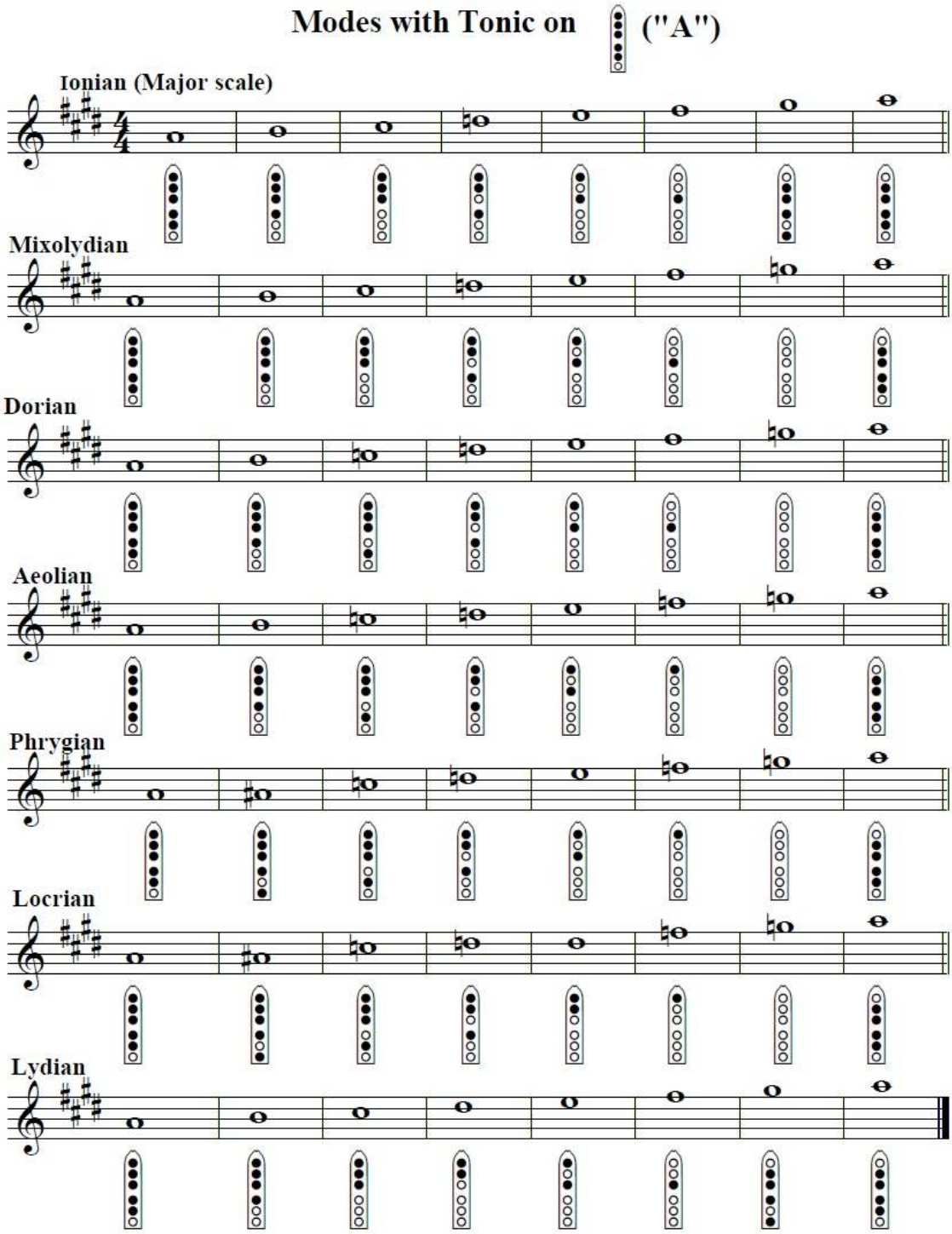


...have the disadvantage of requiring several cross-fingerings.

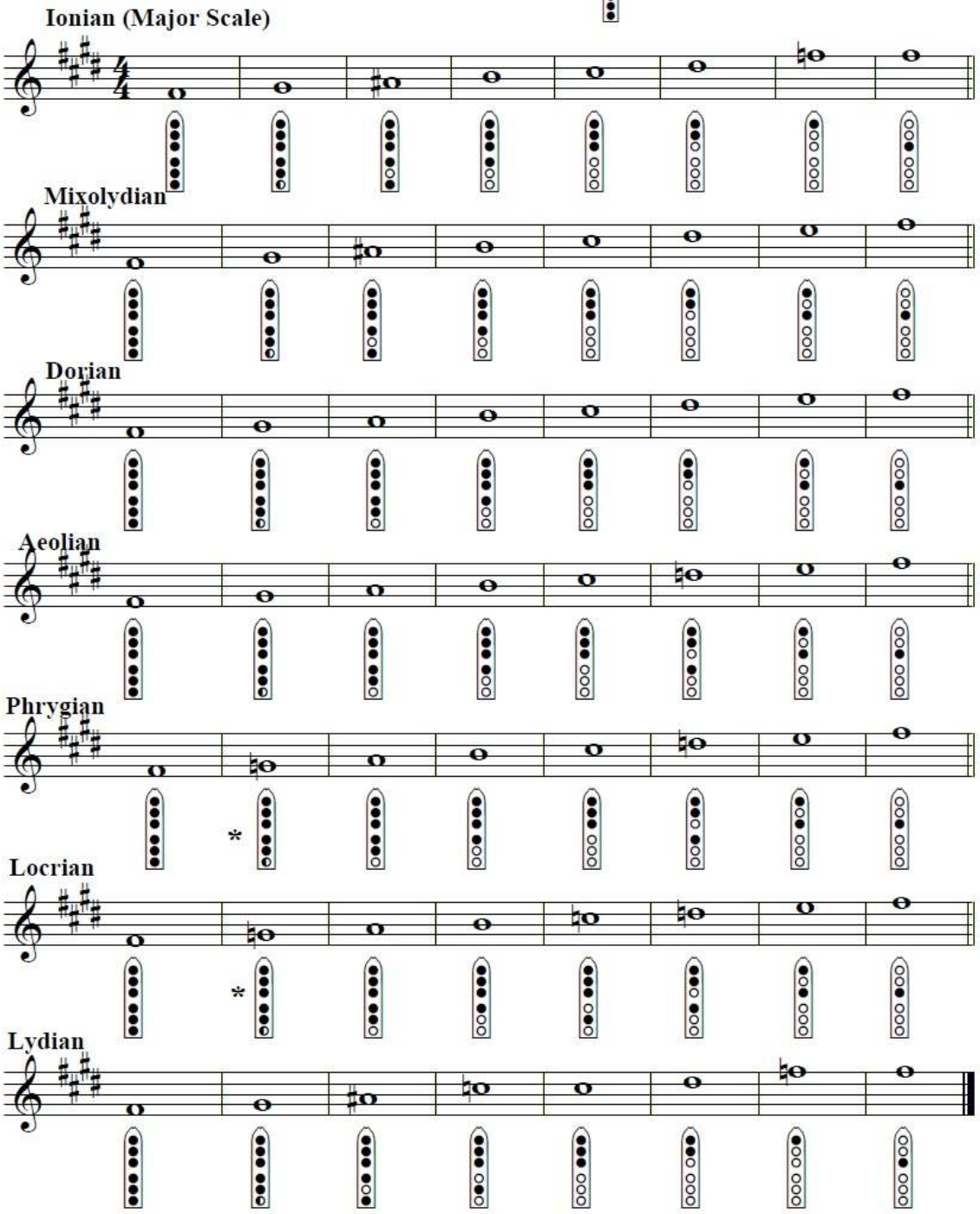
The exception is the Mixolydian mode, which is actually easier to do than the Major scale. Another disadvantage is that in order to play the *seventh degree below* the tonic we need one of the tricky half-hole notes.

In the Appendix you will find the fingerings of all the modes based on the two tonic notes mentioned above, as a reference. As a review to the content of all the book, you will find the fingerings for the modes with the tonic note notated as “B”. Also, you will find a version of the traditional song *Scarborough Fair*, which is based on the Dorian mode. The range of this song reaches the upper octave of the tonic, so we cannot play it using the notated “B” as the tonic. In this “F#” Dorian version there is no way to avoid “half-holing”. Sometimes we can cheat by *sliding* to this note from below as a “grace note” or “scoop”. Otherwise the fingerings are not very complicated. The original song ends by approaching the tonic from the *seventh degree below*. This note is not available when we use “F#” as the tonic, so we need to make a slight adjustment to the original melody on the note right before the last bar.

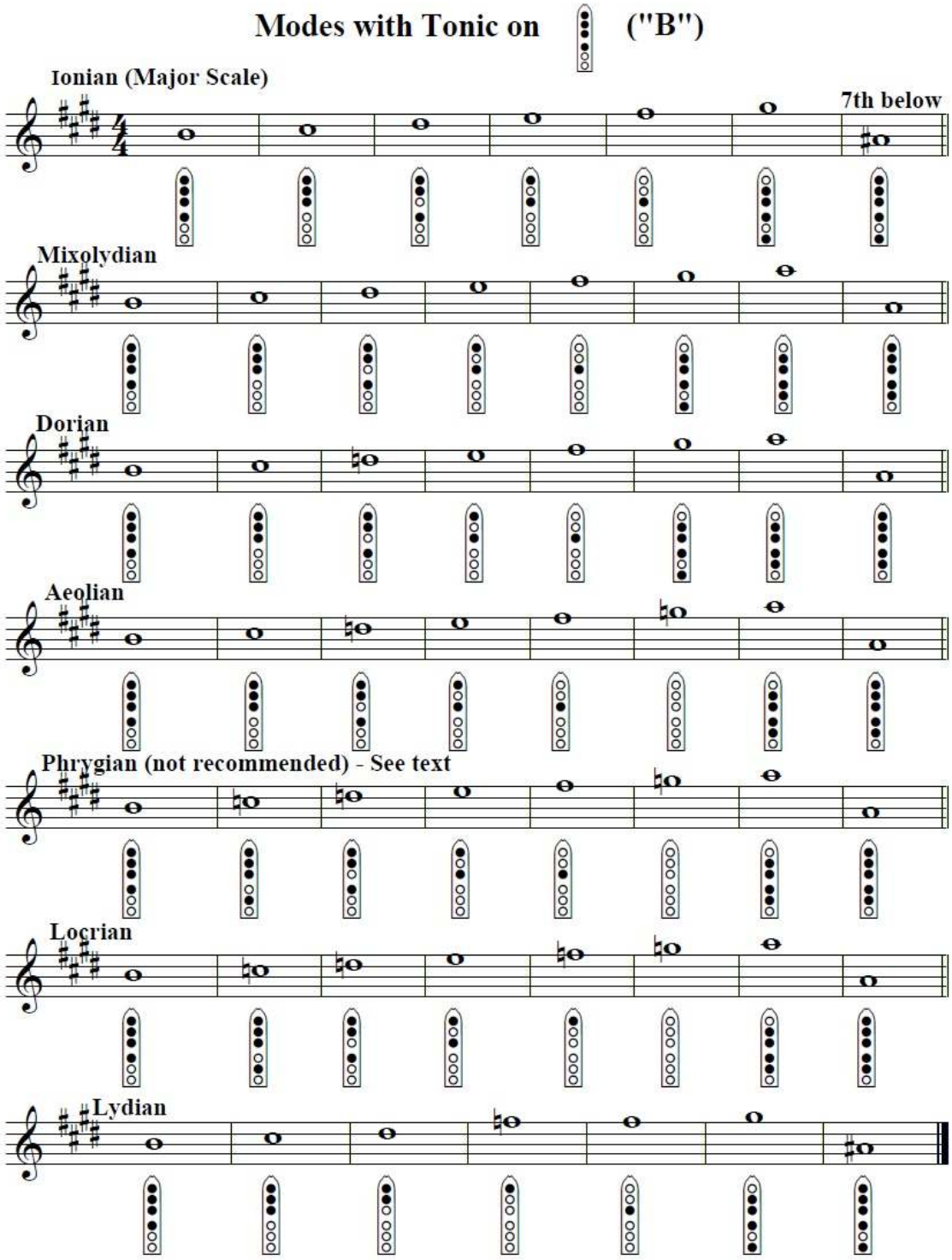
APPENDIX


Modes with Tonic on ("A")
Ionian (Major scale)
Mixolydian
Dorian
Aeolian
Phrygian
Locrian
Lydian

Modes with Tonic on  ("F#")



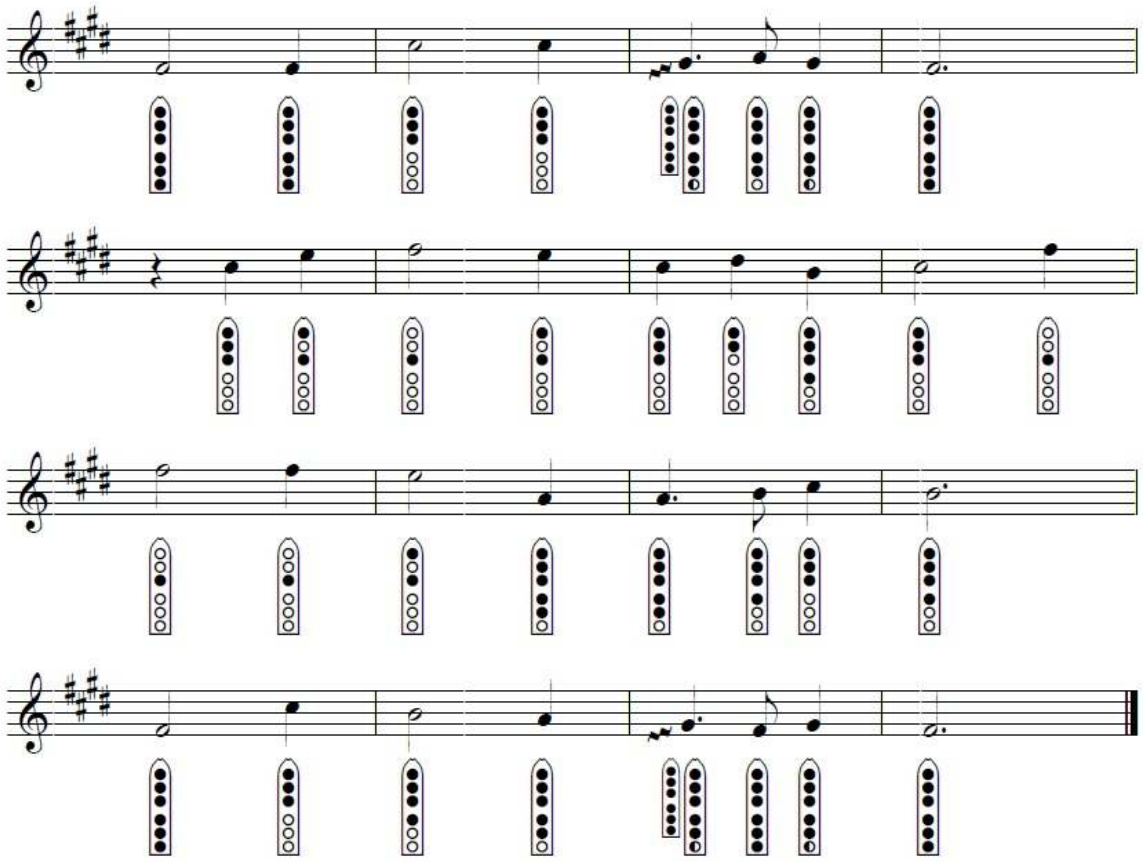
* The "half-hole" fingering for this note can be very tricky. Uncover less than half the hole.


Modes with Tonic on ("B")
Ionian (Major Scale)
7th below
Mixolydian
Dorian
Aeolian
Phrygian (not recommended) - See text
Locrian
Lydian

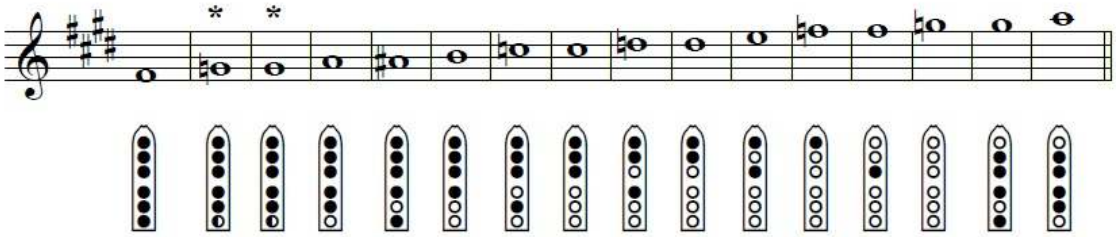
Scarborough Fair

"F#" Dorian

Traditional

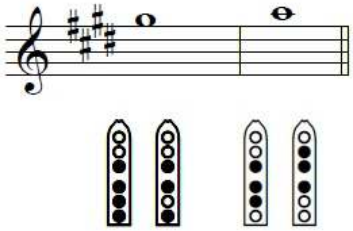


Fingering Chart for NAF



* **The difference between these two notes depends on how much of the "half-hole" is uncovered. You need to experiment.**

On some flutes the two higher notes may work better with these fingerings.



Yet, on some other flutes the fingerings may be even different. Again, you will need to experiment.

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