

Aeolian Mode

The Aeolian mode is called the natural minor. It is the mode, or key if you like, that we think of as THE minor key. The scale that defines the mode is called the natural minor scale. If the 7th tone of the scale is raised a half step the scale become the “harmonic minor scale.” For example the Aeolian mode scale of A Aeolian is A B C D E F G A. The harmonic minor scale of the key of A is A B C D E G# A. In the harmonic minor scale the Vmajor chord is dominant. A harmonic minor would use an E major chord as its V chord.

The Scale of the Aeolian Mode

Solfege	<i>la</i>		<i>ti</i>		<i>do</i>		<i>re</i>		<i>me</i>		<i>fa</i>		<i>so</i>	
A-Aeolian	A		B		C		D		E		F		G	
^c E-Aeolian	E		F#		G		A		B		C		D	
B-Aeolian	B		C#		D		E		F#		G		A	
Step		<i>whole</i>		<i>half</i>		<i>whole</i>		<i>whole</i>		<i>half</i>		<i>whole</i>		<i>whole</i>

Chords Characteristic of the Aeolian Mode

Primary harmonic definition is given by this rule of thumb: *The important chords of a mode are the tonic chord (the one that names the mode) and any chord that includes the most recently added altered tone of the mode. But not any diminished chords, please.*

The most recently altered tone of the Aeolian mode is b6th. So, the characteristic chords are im (chord built on the tone that names the mode) vim and bVI.

A-Aeolian

The key signature is the same as “C”. The most recent altered tone of this mode is the b6th. So any chords that contain F natural are characteristic of this mode. The characteristic chords are: Am, Dm, F

E-Aeolian

The key signature is the same as “G”. The most recent altered tone of this mode is the b6th. So any chords that contain C natural are characteristic of this mode. The characteristic chords are: Em, Am, C

B-Aeolian

The key signature is the same as “D”. The most recent altered tone of this mode is the b6th. So any chords that contain G natural are characteristic of this mode. The characteristic chords are: Bm, Em, G

The relative minor of the Aeolian mode is the Phrygian mode.

Mode Relations

Aeolian mode is the relative minor of Ionian mode.

Examples of Aeolian Melodies

Just think of any familiar, sad ballad you'll probably find an Aeolian melody.

Farewell to Spain