

The Victorian Folk Music Club
Incorporated



FINDING CHORDS 101

Wattle Day Workshops 2020



What we will learn



- A simple three step process
- How to find the key and mode for any tune or song
- 3 basic chords in every key / mode
- From sheet music or by ear

Chord neighbourhoods



Home



Half away



Away



One simple process



- Step 1: Find the 'home' chord (key and mode)
- Step 2: Find the changes
- Step 3: Find the 'away' chords

STEP 1

Find the key and mode

Most common keys for Celtic tunes



D major

E Dorian



G major

A Dorian



Lots of key signatures in BBS are wrong!

'Home' chords



| Key / mode | Home chord |
|------------|------------|
| D major | D |
| E Dorian | Em |
| G major | G |
| A Dorian | Am |



BBS examples

- G major
 - Bonnie Doon (3)
 - Blackthorn Stick (7)
 - Clare Jig
 - Bog Down in the Valley
- A Dorian
 - Rakes of Kildare (8)
 - Tenpenny Bit (15)
 - Rocky Road to Dublin (31)
 - Junior Crehan's (79)
- D major
 - Shandon bells (19)
 - Off she Goes (28)
 - Rose Tree (45)
 - Soldier's Joy (55)
- E Dorian
 - Lannigan's Ball (16)
 - Kid on the Mountain (34)
 - Pat Horgan's #2 (36)
 - The Rights of man (77)



What about Minor?

- Classical minor not so common in older Celtic tunes
- More common in American and European folk songs, and more modern folk songs such as:
 - The House of the Rising Sun
 - St James Infirmary
 - Charlie is my Darling
 - Tumbalalika
 - Havah Nagilah
 - The Shearer's Dream (Joy Durst)
 - Brisbane Ladies (Joy Durst)
 - The Streets of Forbes (Joy Durst)

Keys and modes for songs



- Can be anything!
- Singer chooses what suits their voice
- Most common are C, G, D, F, Bb and Eb
- Guitarists:
 - For Bb, capo 3 and play as though you are in G
 - For F, capo 3 and play as though you are in D

STEP 2

Find the changes



Finding the changes

- Find the right Home chord
- Just keep playing the Home chord quietly all the way through the tune / song and notice where it doesn't fit
- When you can hear the places, write them down on the sheet music or lyrics (or just remember them!)

Example 1



GOODBYE TO THE GIRLS OF KALGOORLIE

Kalgoorlie was probably Australia's closest parallel to America's Wild West at the turn of the century, and the people who lived there had flair. One young man who over-speculated on the stock market and had to leave town, didn't just slink out. First he wrote these verses to the Kalgoorlie newspaper, the Sun.

Music by J. Lahey

Arr. by P. Evans

Bright

Ad-ieu to gay stroll-ing in race-course or park, To
ramp-ing or roll-ing on lawns af-ter dark, While mus-ic as
cend-ed and pleas-ures ^{were} blend-ed, The lov-ers ex-tend-ed could
lis-ten or lark.

Example 2



DAVY, DAVY KNICK-KNACK (Country dance / hornpipe / reel / Morris tune)

3

Traditional English

A musical score for the piece 'Davy, Davy Knick-Knack'. It consists of three staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The first staff begins with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff features a repeat sign after the third measure. The third staff concludes with a repeat sign. The music is characterized by rhythmic patterns typical of a hornpipe or reel.

Example 3



TENPENNY BIT

Three Little Drummers

Traditional Irish

The musical score for 'Ten Penny Bit' is presented on three staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The first staff contains the first six measures of the piece. The second staff contains the next six measures, including a repeat sign (double bar line with two dots) after the fourth measure. The third staff contains the final six measures, also ending with a repeat sign. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some quarter notes and rests.

Example 4



DROWSY MAGGIE

Traditional Irish

The musical score for 'Drowsy Maggie' is presented in three staves. The first staff contains the melody, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (D major), and a 3/2 time signature. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a repeat sign at the end. The second and third staves provide harmonic accompaniment, primarily using eighth and quarter notes in a similar rhythmic pattern to the melody. The key signature and time signature are consistent throughout the piece.

Example 5



BOYS OF BLUEHILL

Beaux of Oak Hill / Lads of North Tyme

Traditional Irish

A musical score for the piece 'Boys of Bluehill'. It consists of four staves of music, all in treble clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a 4/4 time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes). The second and fourth staves end with double bar lines and repeat dots. The third staff begins with a repeat sign (two vertical lines with dots) and continues with the melody.

STEP 3

Fill in the Basic chords

The Basic chords



| Key / mode | Home chord | 'Away' chord | Half 'away' chord |
|------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| G major | G | D7 | C |
| D major | D | A7 | G |
| E Dorian | Em | D | (Bm) |
| A Dorian | Am | G | (Em) |

Example 1



GOODBYE TO THE GIRLS OF KALGOORLIE

Kalgoorlie was probably Australia's closest parallel to America's Wild West at the turn of the century, and the people who lived there had flair. One young man who over-speculated on the stock market and had to leave town, didn't just slink out. First he wrote these verses to the Kalgoorlie newspaper, the Sun.

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Example 2



DAVY, DAVY KNICK-KNACK

(Country dance / hornpipe / reel / Morris tune)

3

Traditional English

A musical score for the piece 'Davy, Davy Knick-Knack'. It consists of three staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The first staff begins with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff features a repeat sign after the third measure. The third staff concludes with a repeat sign. The music is characterized by rhythmic patterns typical of a hornpipe or reel.

Example 3



TENPENNY BIT

Three Little Drummers

Traditional Irish

A musical score for the piece 'Ten Penny Bit' by Three Little Drummers. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first six measures. The second staff contains the next six measures, including a repeat sign (double bar line with two dots) after the fourth measure. The third staff contains the final six measures, also ending with a repeat sign. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of traditional Irish music.

Example 4



DROWSY MAGGIE

Traditional Irish

The musical score for 'Drowsy Maggie' is presented in three staves. The first staff contains the melody, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (D major), and a 3/2 time signature. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a repeat sign at the end. The second and third staves provide accompaniment, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line that supports the melody. The key signature and time signature are consistent throughout the piece.

Example 5



BOYS OF BLUEHILL

Beaux of Oak Hill / Lads of North Tyme

Traditional Irish

A musical score for the piece 'Boys of Bluehill'. It consists of four staves of music, all in treble clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a 4/4 time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes). The second and fourth staves end with double bar lines and repeat dots. The third staff begins with a repeat sign (two vertical lines with dots) and continues with the same melodic pattern.



Refinements

- Sometimes the Basic chords aren't enough!
 - See 'All the chords in major' in the Appendix
 - If none of these work, try the 'away' chord of the normal 'away' chord
- Sometimes tunes / songs change key in the middle!
 - Celtic tunes often switch to Dorian in the second (B) part
 - Some tunes may switch to a different mode in the middle of one part – for example, Staten Island (BBS 48) goes to D Mixolydian in the middle of Part B
- Maybe you have the wrong mode?
 - If Em or Am works at the start but the Basic chords for Dorian don't work, try minor (see Appendix)

APPENDIX

More information than you want

Try for D



Try this
chord

If it sounds right, key and mode
could be

D

D major

Em

E Dorian

Bm

B minor

Try for G



Try this
chord

If it sounds right, key and mode
could be

G

G major

Am

A Dorian

Em

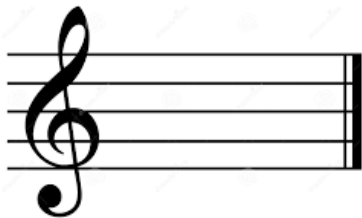
E minor

Try for C



Try this
chord

If it sounds right, key and mode
could be



C

C major

Dm

D Dorian

Am

A minor

Keys and modes for Celtic tunes

'Major'

- D
- G
- A

Not 'major'

- E Dorian
- A Dorian
- A Mixolydian
- D Mixolydian



Mixolydian (less common)

- The King of Laoise (BBS 69) D Mixolydian
- Banish Misfortune (BBS 27) D Mixolydian
- Another Jig Will Do (BBS 33) D Mixolydian

- Old Joe Clark G or A Mixolydian
- Athol Highlanders part 4 A Mixolydian



Basic chords for Mixolydian

| Key / mode | Home chord | 'Away' chord | Half 'away' chord |
|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| G Mixolydian | G | F | C |
| D Mixolydian | D | C | G |
| A Mixolydian | A | G | D |



Basic chords for minor keys

| Key / mode | Home chord | 'Away' chord | Half 'away' chord |
|------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| A minor | Am | E7 | Dm |
| E minor | Em | B7 | Am |
| D minor | Dm | A7 | Gm |

All the chords in major!



| Scale degree | E major | A major | D major | G major | C major | F major | Bb major | Eb major |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| I | E | A | D | G | C | F | Bb | Eb |
| ii | F#m | Bm | Em | Am | Dm | Gm | Cm | Fm |
| iii | G#m | C#m | F#m | Bm | Em | Am | Dm | Gm |
| IV | A | D | G | C | F | Bb | Eb | Ab |
| V | B7 | E7 | A7 | D7 | G7 | C7 | F7 | Bb7 |
| vi | C#m | F#m | Bm | Em | Am | Dm | Gm | Cm |
| vii | D#dim | G#dim | C#dim | F#dim | Bdim | Edim | Adim | Ddim |

Other modes

'Major-ish'

- Ionian (major)
- Mixolydian
- Lydian

'Minor-ish'

- Dorian
- Aeolian (Natural minor)
- Phrygian
- Locrian