

# Answering Bedside Requests

## Part 1: Template for Melody

The major scale is a template for melodies in major keys. You can use the tonic sol-fa system (Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do) or use scale degrees (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1). The object of either approach is to find what the starting note would be against the major scale template. Does the melody start on Do, (1)? on Mi, (3)? on Ti (7)?

Let's try finding the starting note against the C major scale template with a few simple tunes everyone knows:

- |                           |                        |       |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 1. Oh Danny Boy           | starting scale degree: | _____ |
| 2. Over the Rainbow       | starting scale degree: | _____ |
| 3. The Way We Were        | starting scale degree: | _____ |
| 4. All I Ask of You       | starting scale degree: | _____ |
| 5. As Time Goes By        | starting scale degree: | _____ |
| 6. Auld Lang Syne         | starting scale degree: | _____ |
| 7. I Will Always Love You | starting scale degree: | _____ |

Once you have that, you can begin to fit the tune to the harp. It's a good idea to fit the tune to a "simple" key rather than a key you would randomly pick to sing it in – that key may not be one that you have your harp tuned to, and rather than flipping levers, try things out in C, and if later you want to try other keys, you can transpose the tune. On piano, stay on the white keys. For guitar, there may be other keys that are easier to choose, but our focus in this call is on harp.

The next step is to find the rest of the melody on the harp -- Remember the 3 D's:

- Direction (up, down, same?)
- Distance (skip 1, 2, 3 strings?)
- Duration (hold 1, 2, 3 counts?)

Hum along either in your head or out loud. If you're doing this as an answer to a request it's a good idea to say "hmm... let's see if that works on the harp." That way, patients can be involved in the process and might get a kick out of suggesting a song you can add to your repertoire. Then as you hum along, they just might join you!

There are plenty of melodies that stay in one key, but many are in a different mode, or will have one or two notes outside the key. Then in the jazz genre, many are simply not playable without continual lever changes.

## Modal and Minor Melodies

Some songs (mostly in the folk idiom) are in Mixolydian mode, and they will sound like major keys until you get to that one note that is not in the major scale – the flatted 7. You can think 1 2 3 4 5 6 and then “flat 7.” Using G Mixolydian, the scale would be G A B C D E F G (F natural is the “flat 7”).

Here are a few tunes that are in mixolydian:

1. Old Joe Clark starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Angel From Montgomery starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Great Silkie starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_
4. On Broadway starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Some tunes are mostly major but have the flat 7 as an accidental:

1. First Time Ever I Saw starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Long and Winding Road starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Bridge Over Troubled Water starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Two additional modes are minor keys. The “relative minor” is the classical key that would share a key signature with the major key it's "related" to, beginning on the 6<sup>th</sup> degree of the major scale. It is also known as the *Aeolian* mode. Another minor mode is the *Dorian* mode, which begins on the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree of the major scale. It's sometimes difficult to tell which mode a minor piece is in until you reach the note that is different between the two scales. The note that is different between these two is the 6<sup>th</sup> degree of the minor scale. There is also the *harmonic minor scale* which is the same as the Aeolian mode, but with a raised 7<sup>th</sup> degree. Many minor key songs switch between the Aeolian mode (or relative minor key) and the harmonic minor scale.

Let's do a few minor key examples:

1. Besame Mucho starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_
2. We Three Kings starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Scarborough Fair starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Evil Ways starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Those Were the Days starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Greensleeves starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Love Story starting degree: \_\_\_\_\_ mode: \_\_\_\_\_

## Accidentals

Not all songs fit into one scale – many songs from the jazz, pop, and musical theater genre will go outside the key too much to be playable without one hand constantly flipping levers. But some have only a few “outside” notes and you can either flip levers or omit them, and add an ornament or a substitution.

A common folk tune that has an accidental in the melody is The Ash Grove – the accidental can be accommodated with a lever flip or you can substitute it with the note that is a third above the accidental. This works for many tunes where there is just one note that is out of the key. The accidental is often the leading tone of another key – so for a song in the key of C major, you may run across an F# -- which is the leading tone of G major. The leading tone is the third of the chord that is the V chord of G, which is D major (D, F#, A). You can substitute the note that is a third higher which is A, instead of playing the F#. You would need to decide how critical it is to the melody to decide whether to do a lever flip or substitute the third higher. A few more tunes with this kind of accidental are:

Dream (All I Wanna Do)  
America the Beautiful  
Minuet in G

Some tunes have a flat 6 in the melody. This is based on the harmony changing from a major IV chord to a minor iv chord. In the Key of C, that would be the Ab in an Fm chord. If you don't have Abs on your harp, you can substitute G#. But this would need to be played with a lever flip rather than substituting another note from the chord, as it will be more essential to the melody.

Daniel  
Sleepwalk  
What I Did For Love

Other accidentals are just chromatic elements that can be skipped or ornamented – or you can choose to make the lever flips. Here are a few examples:

I've Been Working on the Railroad  
Silver Bells  
The Old Rugged Cross

Playing bedside requests is, of course, for the benefit of the patient, and not a test of your ability or musicianship. It can be great fun to find the spots where the notes are not in the key. I often approach the request with "Well, let's see if this would work on the harp." And then I take the tune as far as it can go -- even if it's just the first phrase or the main hook in the chorus -- and the patient is smiling, reminiscing, or at times, laughing with me at how it does or doesn't work on the harp.