

KEYS TO THE HIGHWAY



BY ROGER GOODMAN

In the last issue, we focused on a C major scale and extrapolated a pattern of whole-steps and half steps that define a generic major scale. This pattern was then used to construct a G major scale that had one sharp (#) and is, therefore, called the key of one sharp. I promised you that in this installment, I would show you how to generate all the scales in all the keys

and tell you how I knew to pick G as the second scale. But first, a quick review:

- The space between adjacent keys on the piano is a half step.
- Two half steps make a whole-step.
- The C major scale is played on the white keys only.
- The spacing between the notes of the C major scale is: 1, 1, ½, 1, 1, ½.
- The C major scale can be written in letters: C—D—E—F—G—A—B—C or as numbers: 1—2—3—4—5—6—7—1
- This number version is the generic major scale.
- All numbered steps are separated by a whole-step except for the half step between 3 & 4 and the half step between 7 & 1.
- All letter names are separated by a whole-step except for the half step between E & F and the half step between B & C.

To better understand our next step, let's start with the chromatic scale in the key of C. The chromatic scale consists of all the half steps as shown in the first line of the following table:

TYPE OF SCALE	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C
C Chromatic	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C
Generic Major	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1					
C Major	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C					

On the second line of the table, below the chromatic C scale, is the now familiar generic major scale in numbers and with their proper spacing. To produce our C major



scale, all we have to do is copy the letter names from above each number.

Now it's your turn. Take out a piece of paper and try the same exercise, but this time start your chromatic scale on G instead of C. Remember that there is only a half-step between E & F and between B & C. Put the numbered pattern below it with the proper spacing. Remember there is only a half-step between 3 & 4 and between 7 & 1. Bring down the letter names that line up with the numbers. This is the G major scale.

All major scales can be produced in this way. But, there is a trick: they fall in a certain order. This order is a key element of understanding music and will serve as an essential principle in later lessons. Here's how you do it: start with C, which is counted as one, then count to five and you will be on the G. You already know something important about C and G: the C major scale has no sharps and the G major scale has one sharp. If you count five starting from G, you'll be on the D. Guess what? The D major scale has 2 sharps, but I know you figured that out already. Try the rest of the scales on your paper and check it against the table shown here.

Key	Sharps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1
C	0	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
G	1	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
D	2	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D
A	3	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
E	4	E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
B	5	B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	B
F#	6	F#	G#	A#	B	C#	D#	E#	F#
C#	7	C#	D#	E#	F#	G#	A#	B#	C#

While these are not all of the scales you will encounter, they are all the major scales that include the sharp (#) keys. Next time we will look at the flat (b) keys. In the meantime, you might want to see if you can figure that out on your own using what you already know. The flat keys can be a little tricky, so be sure to stay tuned...

DEAR ALICE...

Dear Alice,

I am learning to play the fiddle, and I love to practice every chance I get. (I think I've gotten really good since I started learning three months ago!) But I guess my playing isn't up to everybody's standards yet because my wife has begun taking long walks in the evening while I practice, the neighbors have almost completed construction on their new 6-foot fence, and worst of all, our adorable cat, "Mittens," won't come anywhere near me anymore. What can I do to keep my friends and loved ones and still practice my fiddle? Any suggestions?

-Solitary in Santa Monica

Dear Solitary,

In villages in Bulgaria, when a child wants to learn to play the bagpipes (but for the sake of this example we'll say any loud and potentially offensive instrument), he is banished from the village, sent out to the fields, and not allowed to return with his instrument until he has figured out how to play it decently. For you, perhaps banishment doesn't sound particularly appealing, but ask anyone in Bulgaria—the young and improved musician is always welcomed back warmly! So pack your fiddle and some snacks and remember to wear comfortable shoes; you're heading for the hills! For a guide to good local hikes, may I recommend the appropriately titled Afoot & Afield in Los Angeles County, a Wilderness Press book by Jerry Schad. Happy trails!

-Alice

Dear Alice,

Last year during a vacation to Dublin, I bought my first bodhran. I play my bodhran almost every week at the Irish sessions. My problem is that I always seem to be the last one to realize the tune has ended, and I get embarrassed when I'm the only one still playing after everyone has stopped. This happens all the time. I think this probably happens because I can't hear the other instruments. Is there a tactful way to ask the other musicians at the session to play louder so I can hear them?

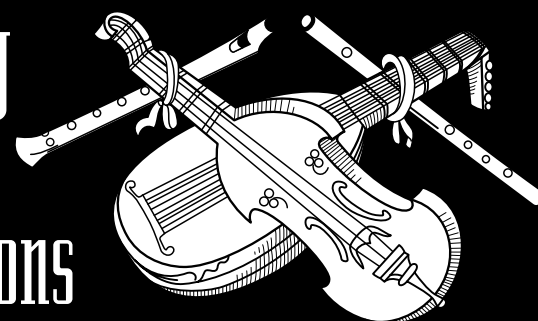
-Poundin' in Pasadena

Dear Poundin',

It's good of you to notice an imbalance at the sessions you attend so regularly. This shows that you have a keen ear for Irish music. A good first step towards a solution for your volume problem would be to ask a few of the other regular session players what they honestly think of your drumming. If they tell you it could use some work, then for the next tune, listen extra carefully to the leading instruments and adjust your own playing to match their volume and tempo. If they tell you it sounds fine, you should be suspicious that they are only saying that to be polite, and then for the next tune, listen extra carefully to the leading instruments and adjust your own playing to match their volume and tempo. If they say nothing at all, ignoring you and your humble inquiry, then for the next tune, listen extra carefully to the leading instruments and adjust your own playing to match their volume and tempo. Try this out, and I think your problem will soon be solved!

-Alice

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