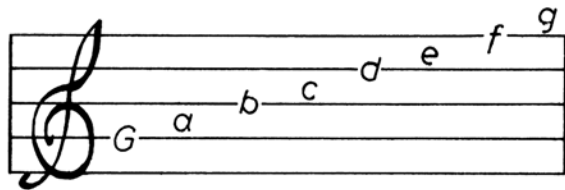


Let's find out what this Mixolydian mode is all about, now that we know how to tune into it and have done some strumming. A mode is a particular arrangement of seven notes plus the repeat. Most modes end on an octave, although some obscure ones end on a fifth or a fourth tone. (These are not used very much, however, except in monastic Gregorian chanting.)

The fret arrangement of the dulcimer is based on the assumption that the first, or open note, is "G." If we play the white notes on a piano between G above middle C and G above high C (G and g, in our illustration), the letter values of the notes played would look like this on a music staff.



We would have just played a scale—a succession of tones and half-tones alphabetically labeled and arranged in ascending or descending order from any given note, or keytone, to its octave tone eight notes away. This is the scale of the Mixolydian mode.

Some people claim that in the sixth century B.C. the mathematician Pythagoras, by means of a single vibrating string called "monochord," established the mathematical ratios of the scale which has been the basis of music in the West. The chart (on p.41) from an early seventeenth-century German physics book portrays one conception of the diatonic scale.

But whatever the history, if you refer the letter values of the Mixolydian mode to the dulcimer's diatonic fretboard, you can plainly see that each of the frets carries a note value going up the scale. It's also obvious that the spaces between the frets "b-c" and "e-f" are proportionately smaller than the spaces between the other frets.

