

The scale begins at the fifth fret, and it is a very hauntingly minor mode. At least one murder ballad is played in the Phrygian (“Pretty Polly”) and blues can be played in it, too.

THE LYDIAN MODE

Originally the F-mode, the Lydian was very popular in Renaissance times with wandering troubadours. The Lydian begins on the sixth fret, and its scheme is $1-1-1-\frac{1}{2}-1-1-\frac{1}{2}$. The tuning notation is:

(X+6) (double octave)
(X+3)
X
X

Once again, to avoid breaking strings, lower the pitch of the dulcimer one or two notes to a C or a B. Don’t let the double octave notation throw you—it’s not particularly hard to do. When you think it through, you’ll find the Lydian’s bass string is only one note below where it would be in an Ionian tuning. To check the bass, fret the unisons on the first fret and the bass on the second—you should get the same note an octave apart.

Except for a very strange, minor fourth tone of the octave, the Lydian could be another Ionian. The development of these two modes and the addition of a B-flat note was part of the rapid advance of harmony that occurred in music in the early sixteenth century. Any tunes you can play in the Ionian that don’t require the fourth tone of the scale will adapt to Lydian tuning. Some basic songs are “Cripple Creek,” “Little Liza Jane,” and “Shortnin’ Bread.”

So here are five more modes. Each one has its own very special “mood,” so take time to listen to each of them. What feelings does each of them evoke within you?