

At some point you will probably want to play music with other musicians. This is not an uncommon desire, but for too long dulcimer players have been left out in the cold because nobody quite knew what to do with them. So, if you're planning on playing with a guitarist, here's some help for you and your friend from our friend Jake Bell.

Initially I thought this section should be called "What To Do When a Guitar Player Meets Up with a Dulcimer Player," and although this is not the title of this chapter, it still states the basic question.

Most guitarists don't immediately understand what modal music is all about, since they are not familiar with the jargon of dulcimer playing. Consequently, when faced with the problem of playing with a dulcimer, a guitarist might be at a loss to tell the dulcimer player what he should tune to. And you, the dulcimer player, might not have any idea what his instrument is all about either.

Now. Some alternatives.

The guitarist may put his guitar back into the case and quickly leave the scene, avoiding hours of mind-boggling explanations and counter-explanations leading to second thoughts about guitar playing that may cause him to consider taking up fly-fishing instead.

On the other hand, you both may make an attempt to work out your music and come to grips with the chromatic and modal musical approaches.

What you must always keep in mind is that your dulcimer is tuned modally, while the guitar is a chromatic instrument. It's got all the keys and all the notes. Your dulcimer has only the key in which you are tuned and the modal scale. Furthermore, as you know, you only have some of the notes he has, and you must determine which mode contains the notes of the tune of the song you both want to play.

The first thing you both should do is tune to the same keytone. If nothing else, at least the instruments will be tuned together. First tune the guitar.