

Aeolian Tonality

Ted Greene — 1986, August 3

The Aeolian tonality type seems to be the granddaddy (mammy?) of them all, both historically and in terms of frequency of usage. Maybe that's why it was coined "The Natural Minor" a long time ago. It probably has more *range* of color and mood within it than any other minor key type, so let's see why, by beginning with a look at its Diatonic Triads:

Key of Gm	i	ii°	bIII	iv	v	bVI	bVII
	Gm	A°	Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F

One thing about Aeolian that's kind of convenient to remember and deal with is that the "one, four and five" chords are all minors, just like the tonality itself. We've already taken a little look at the iv chord on the first Dorian page, but let's look again at the V chord:

Key of Gm:

Gm	Cm	Gm	Gm	Dm	Dm	Gm
10	10	10	15	13	10	10
i	iv	i	i	v	v	i

You may have noticed that the v chord was in Dorian too as one of the diatonic triads, so this phrase could easily be converted to Dorian by simply changing the iv (Cm) to IV (C). Try it....

Now transpose this phrase to the keys of Em, C#m and Bbm and play all four keys non-stop. Also in Dorian.

Reminder: You will be getting so much more out of all this if you force your mind to think of the chord names and functions (i, iv or v) while you are playing.

There are a variety of ways to give Aeolian more warmth. Before we get to the most exciting of these let's see about helping the iv sound even more appealing:

If we write out the Diatonic 7th chords of Aeolian....

i7	iiø7	bIII maj 7	iv7	v7	bVI maj 7	bVII7
Gm7	Am7b5	Bbmaj7	Cm7	Dm7	Ebmaj7	F7

...and then substitute the iv7 for the iv (and the v7 for the v) at the end of the following phrase:

If you try the last two chords here as plain minors rather than m7's, maybe you'll be able to better appreciate the beauty of the iv7.

Another beautiful sound on the iv in Aeolian is the "add9":

Practice this example until you can play it fluidly and study the logic of each chord move very carefully.

This next and last phrase for now, is the hardest yet, physically. Pay particular attention to the sustained notes. Learn it a little at a time, work slowly and carefully and master this phrase! Remember, we're doing it for *your* hands and *your* ears, not mine, so if you want to cuss me out, fine...just do the work anyway.

AEOLIAN TONALITY

© 2008
Jed Williams

The Aeolian tonality type seems to be the granddaddy (mummy?) of them all both historically and in terms of frequency of usage. Maybe that's why it was coined "the Natural Minor" a long time ago. It probably has more range of color and mood within it than any other minor key type so let's see why, by beginning with a look at its DIATONIC TRIADS:

Key of Gm

i	ii°	vii°	iv	v	vii°	viii
Gm	A°	Bb	Cm	Dm	E°	F

★ One thing about Aeolian that's kind of convenient to remember and deal with is that the "one, four and five" chords are all minors, just like the tonality itself. We've already taken a little look at the iv chord on the first DORIAN page but let's look again and also at the v chord:

Key of Gm

★ You may have noticed that the v chord was in DORIAN too as one of the diatonic triads. So this phrase could easily be converted to Dorian by simply changing the iv (Cm) to IV (C). Try it.....

★ Now transpose this phrase to the keys of Em, C#m and Bbm and play all 4 keys non-stop. Also in DORIAN.
 ★★ REMINDERS: You will be getting so much more out of all this if you force your mind to think of the chord names and functions (i, iv or v) while you are playing.

★ There are a variety of ways to give Aeolian more warmth. Before we get to the most exciting of these let's see about helping the iv sound even more appealing: if we write out the DIATONIC 7th chords of AEOLIAN

i7	ii°7	vii°7	iv7	v7	vii°7	viii7
Gm7	Am7b5	BbA7	Cm7	Dm7	E°A7	F7

and then substitute the iv7 for the iv (and the v7 for the v) at the end of the following phrase:

if you try the last 2 chords here as plain minors rather than m7's, maybe you'll be able to better appreciate the beauty of the iv7.

★ Another beautiful sound on the iv in Aeolian is the "add 9":

Key of Gm

Practice this example until you can play it fluidly and study the logic of each chord, move very carefully.

This next and last phrase for now, is the hardest yet, physically. Pay particular attention to the sustained notes. Learn it a little at a time, work slowly and carefully and master this phrase! Remember, we're doing it for your hands and your ears, not mine so if you want to curse me out, fine.... just do the work anyway.

KEY OF Gm: