

You may have noticed that there are no flats in these mode signatures. Modal scales that include flats, such as G Dorian, D Aeolian, and F Ionian are encountered in the special repertoires of the fiddle, banjo, and accordion. Players of keyed flutes and pipes can play in these modes as well, but traditionally they rarely do.

Throughout this book I will be using such mode signatures. Therefore, when you see a signature of two sharps, for example, don't assume that the tune is in D major (Ionian) or B minor (Aeolian). It could just as easily be in E Dorian or A Mixolydian. There is a growing trend toward using these mode signatures, as they result in fewer accidentals and they reflect the true modal nature of Irish music.

PENTATONIC MODES

Some tunes use fewer than seven notes, such as tunes that are in a five-note, or *pentatonic* mode. There are two such pentatonic modes common in Irish music. The first is formed by omitting the fourth and seventh notes of the Ionian mode. In the tonality of D this yields a scale of D, E, F-sharp, A, and B. We could call this the "Ionian Pentatonic" mode. The second is formed by omitting the third and sixth notes of the Dorian mode. In the tonality of E this yields a scale of E, F-sharp, A, B, and D. We could call this the "Dorian Pentatonic" mode. Note that these two examples, which are shown below, contain the same pitches and therefore share the same mode signature, though they have different tonal centers.

Even though neither of these pentatonic modes contains a C-sharp, the C-sharp is included in their mode signatures. If a player were to use a C as either a passing tone or as a variation of a tune in one of these modes, it would properly be a C-sharp, not a C-natural.

In practice there are few Irish tunes that adhere strictly and totally to either of these pentatonic modes. Most of them include at least one instance of one or both of the missing scale degrees. Many tunes have one part that is in a pentatonic mode while its other parts are not.

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled "D Ionian Pentatonic" and the bottom staff is labeled "E Dorian Pentatonic". Both staves are in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The D Ionian Pentatonic scale is represented by five notes: D4 (first line), E4 (first space), F#4 (second line), A4 (second space), and B4 (third line). The E Dorian Pentatonic scale is represented by five notes: E4 (first space), F#4 (second line), A4 (second space), B4 (third line), and D5 (third space). The notes are placed on a five-line staff with a brace on the left side.



Figure 1-4. Examples of the two pentatonic modes found in Irish music, the Ionian Pentatonic and the Dorian Pentatonic.

The Ionian Pentatonic mode is commonly encountered with a tonal center of either D or G. An example of a tune in this mode is the three-part reel, *Christmas Eve*. The second and third parts of the tune contain a few passing notes that fall outside the pentatonic mode. The first part of the reel *The Banshee* is also in this mode.

The Dorian Pentatonic mode can be found with a tonal center of D, E, G, A, or B. An example of a tune in this mode is *Tom Billy's Jig*. (Complete versions of these three tunes appear in Section 7 on p. 347, 348, and 338, respectively.) The reel *Peter Flanagan's* is also in the Dorian Pentatonic mode. A transcription of flutist Cathal McConnell's recording of this tune appears in Section 8, p. 402.