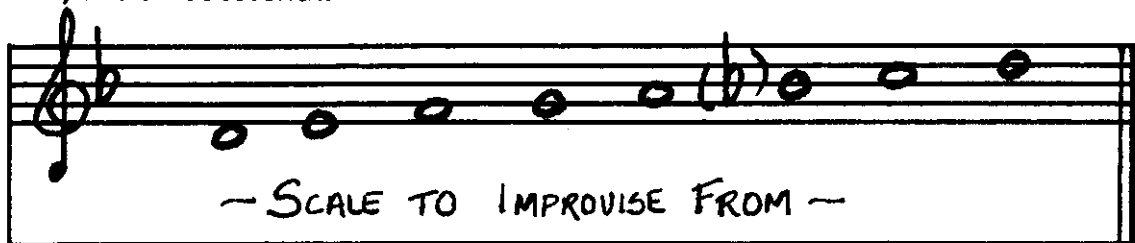


SHIP ON THE OCEAN (STORMS ON THE OCEAN)

This traditional Appalachian song reflects a more recent period in our concept and style of arranging. First of all, we are both in separate tunings. There is a great amount of confusion in trying to link historical modal names with actual tunings. Modes not only refer to their own individual scales (particular arrangements of the whole-tone and half-tone steps), but they are also associated with one specific keytone. Chromaticists and modern modalists are continually misrepresenting and misconstruing what the other group has to say about the nature of the tunings in which they are playing.

For instance, the introductory dulcimer in this arrangement is tuned to D-G-C. This means that if the treble strings are held down at the sixth fret while the others are strummed open, the dulcimer will be voicing what appears to be the tonic of the Lydian Mode. But since the Lydian's keytone is that of F, what occurs is a Lydian-type scale transposed to the keytone of C. (For reference we'll call this a C-Lydian.) In this same tuning, if we leave the middle and treble strings open and hold down the bass at the fourth fret, we'd be playing the tonic of the G-Dorian. In this song the dulcimer leaves the treble string open and holds down the middle and bass strings at the first fret, placing the scale into D-Aeolian. The second dulcimer is tuned C-A-D and is played only on the treble strings. The second fret becomes the key center, thus placing it also in D-Aeolian. Both dulcimers end up sharing the same scale (Aeolian) and the same key (D).

The confusion of linking modal names to modern keys and scales can be greatly reduced once it is recognized that contemporary Modalists are generally transposing the key centers of their scales (which they prefer to still call by their historical modal names). Modalists would do well to learn that what they refer to as an Aeolian played in D is in these modern times called the relative minor of F major. This is the natural minor as opposed to the harmonic or melodic minor. You could also say that it is a D scale with a flat third, a flat sixth, and a flat seventh.



The tablature for this song reflects only the central theme from which the improvisations are made. The melody is easy to play, using only the first three notes of the scale and the seventh (leading tone). Occasionally the fourth note of the scale is added for tension and then resolved up to the fifth tone (dominant). The beauty of the song lies in its simplicity. The two dulcimer parts are tied together by juxtaposing the accents within the rhythm. One effect is a slow-motion trill that resolves on the fifth. This provides a launching point for the intertwining runs up the fretboard. The theme lends itself to spontaneous improvisation, and that is truly the nature of this arrangement.