

# The Minor Scales

THERE ARE ACTUALLY TWO THINGS THAT DEFINE A **KEY**: THE **KEY SIGNATURE** IS THE MOST OBVIOUS ONE, BUT ANOTHER IMPORTANT PART OF A KEY IS THE **TONIC**... THE **NOTE** AROUND WHICH THE KEY **CENTERS**.

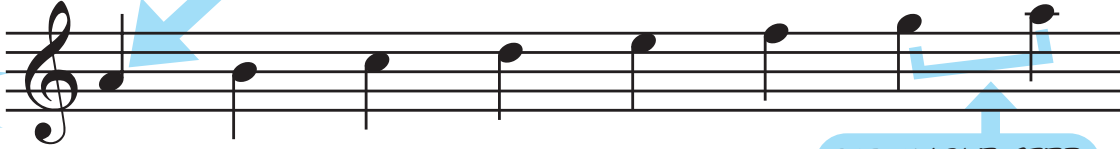
THIS KEY IS DEFINED BY A KEY SIGNATURE OF **NO SHARPS AND FLATS**, BUT ALSO BY THE FACT THAT IT **CENTERS AROUND C**.



BUT WHAT IF WE **CHANGE** THE **TONIC**? WHAT IF WE USE THE SAME NOTES FOR THE KEY SIGNATURE, BUT CHANGE THE **NOTE** THAT THE KEY IS **CENTERED AROUND**?

IF WE CENTER THE KEY AROUND THE **SIXTH SCALE DEGREE** OF THE MAJOR SCALE, WE GET A NEW SCALE: THE **MINOR SCALE**.

THE  
NATURAL  
MINOR  
SCALE



THE THING IS, **COMMON PRACTICE PERIOD** COMPOSERS WEREN'T ALL THAT CRAZY ABOUT THIS SCALE, BECAUSE IT LACKS SOMETHING THE **MAJOR SCALE** HAS: A **HALF-STEP** FROM **SEVEN** TO **ONE**.

THE **WHOLE STEP** HERE DIDN'T HAVE THE **TENSION** THEY LIKED GOING INTO THE **TONIC**!

SO HERE'S WHAT THEY DID: THEY **RAISED** THE LEADING-TONE BY A **HALF-STEP** WITH AN **ACCIDENTAL**. THIS GAVE THEM THE **TENSION** THEY WERE LOOKING FOR!

THE  
HARMONIC  
MINOR  
SCALE

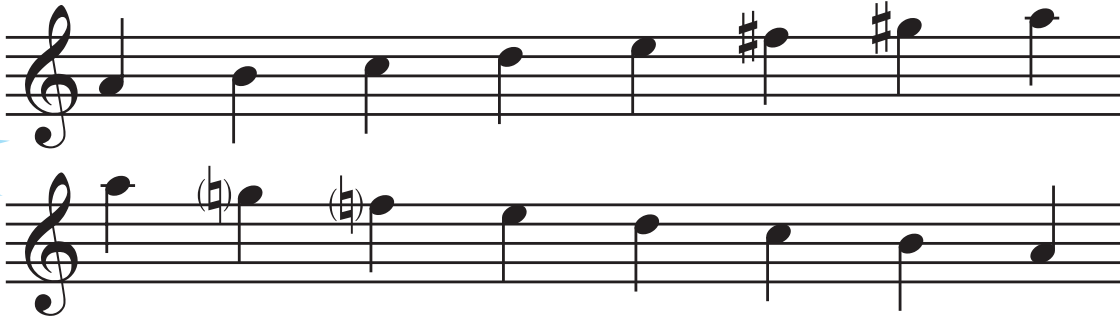


THIS SCALE IS GREAT FOR BUILDING **CHORDS**, SO WE REFER TO IT AS THE **HARMONIC MINOR SCALE**. HOWEVER, COMPOSERS DIDN'T USE IT FOR WRITING **MELODIES**, BECAUSE IT HAD A **PROBLEM**: AN **AUGMENTED SECOND** BETWEEN THE **SIXTH** AND **SEVENTH SCALE DEGREES**.

SO, FOR **MELODIES**, THEY MADE ANOTHER CHANGE: THEY ADDED **ANOTHER ACCIDENTAL** TO RAISE THE **SIXTH SCALE DEGREE** BY A **HALF-STEP**.

NOW WE ONLY HAVE **WHOLE STEPS** AND **HALF-STEPS**!

THE  
MELODIC  
MINOR  
SCALE



NOW, REMEMBER... THE REASON WE **RAISED** THE **LEADING TONE** IN THE FIRST PLACE WAS TO CREATE TENSION FROM THE **SEVENTH SCALE DEGREE** TO **TONIC**. BUT IN A **MELODY**, IF THE **SEVENTH SCALE DEGREE** IS FOLLOWED BY THE **SIXTH SCALE DEGREE**, WE DON'T NEED THAT TENSION, SO WE DON'T NEED TO RAISE THE LEADING-TONE AT ALL.

THE WAY WE ILLUSTRATE THIS IS BY DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN **ASCENDING MELODIC MINOR** AND **DESCENDING MELODIC MINOR**; FOR **DESCENDING MELODIC MINOR**, WE DON'T RAISE **ANYTHING**!