

Clarsach - Inventing Project

As the clarsach player needs to move the blades each time there is a key change in a tune it is easier for them to play tunes that stay in the same key throughout a tune or modulate (change key) to the relative minor. The relative minor is the minor key that has the same key signature as the major. For example D major has the same key signature as B minor (two sharps) therefore B minor is the relative minor of D major, G major has the same key signature as E minor (one sharp) therefore E minor is the relative minor of G major. To find the relative minor of a major key simply go down three semitones in pitch:

D major

C#

C

B minor

G major

F#

F

E minor

Invent a reel that has its first part in a major key and its second part in the relative minor.

Write out the scales of the two keys below.



Remember that many Scottish tunes have repeated phrases. Try to incorporate this into your tune.

- Write out a two bar phrase. A good test as to whether you have written a good phrase or not is if you can still sing it 15 minutes after you have written it. Try this test on your first phrase!
- If your phrase passes the test try to shape the rest of the first part of your tune around it, being sure to include your two bar phrase again at some point.
- Try this method again but in the minor key this time to give you a second part.
- You could repeat this new two bar phrase at the same point as you repeated your original phrase in the first part. This will provide a musical link between the two parts.