

TONALITY

Tonality is basically another name for the 'Key' that the music is written in. There are basically four different types of key that you might have to identify in the exam. (Although I doubt, very much, if they will realistically expect a GCSE pupil to be able to identify a piece in a 'Mode'.)

The Four Types of Tonality

- **Major – Happy Sounding** – The most popular choice for pieces of Pop music. Often the key used in fanfares or music for celebrations. **Can sound relaxing.**
- **Minor – Sad / evil / tense** – Most often used for sad or sombre occasions such as funerals. Not many Pop songs use 'minor' tonality. Minor pieces of music are often used to portray evil or spooky events in films. **Sosban Fach.**
- **Atonal – Weird / Unsingable** – Literally means 'without key'. If a piece of music sounds wacky and you can't sing along to it or there is a great deal of clashing and horrible sounding notes then this is said to be Atonal. Many pieces of music that are 'atonal' also have a lack of pulse.
- **Modal / Mode – Folk Style** – Modes are basically variations on the white notes of the keyboard, e.g. a scale going from D to D, using D as the starting point. *Are You Going To Scarborough Fair?* is a typical example of a piece written in a 'mode'. **I do not expect you to have to identify a mode in the exam, but it might come up.** If it does come up, and you can't decide if a piece is major or minor because it sort of mixes up, then the chances are it is in a 'mode'.