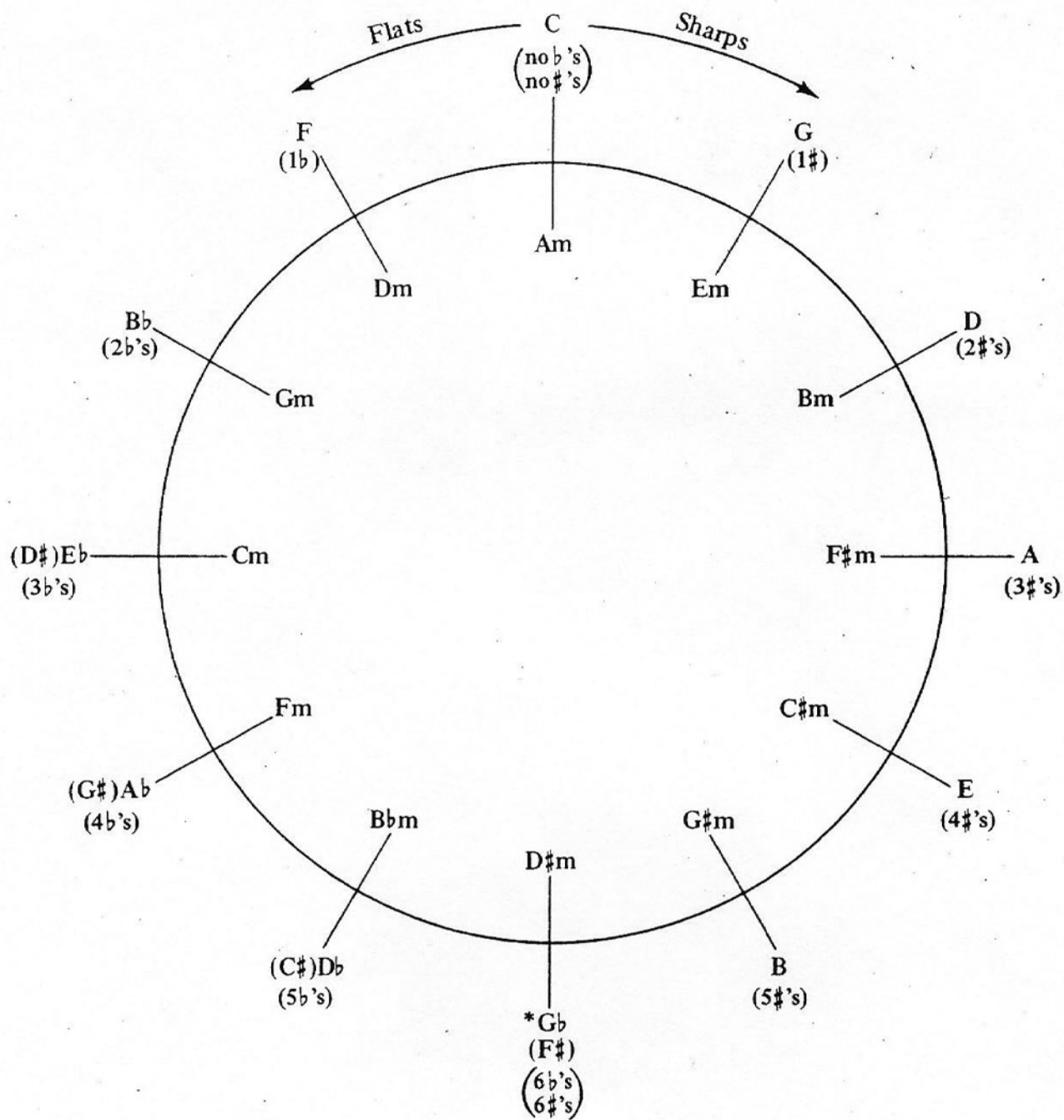


THE CHORD CLOCK (Circle of Fifths)



This is a chord clock. It can be used in three ways:

1. It can be used to determine the number of sharps or flats in a given key.
2. It can be used to determine the basic chords in a key.
3. It can be used to transpose music. This means to change the key.

You can determine the key of a particular piece by looking at the key signature. The key signature is the sharps or flats found at the beginning of each staff. The number of sharps or flats in the key signature determines the key in-which the piece is written. If a piece has one or more sharps in its key signature, it will be in one of the keys on the right half of the chord clock. If a piece has one or more

*F# and Gb are *enharmonic*. This means the same pitch for two different note names.

flats in its signature, it will be in one of the keys on the left half of the clock. For example, the key of C or Am will have no sharps or flats in its key signature. The key of G or Em will have one sharp sign in its signature, the key of D or Bm will have two sharps in its signature, the key of A or F#m will have three sharps in its signature, etc. The key of F or Dm will have one flat in the signature, the key of Bb or Gm will have two flats in the signature, the key of Eb or Cm will have three flats, etc.

You can determine the six basic chords in a given key by also using the chord clock. To find the basic chords in a key, take the chord having the name of the key (key chord) and the first chords to the right and to the left of it. Those three chords and their related chords (chords on the inside of the clock will correspond with the outside chords) make up the six basic chords in any given key. For example, to find the chords in the key of G, find G on the chord clock. Use the chords to the right and left of it (C and D) and their related chords (A minor, B minor, E minor) to give you the six basic chords in the key of G. The chords would be G, C, D, Am, Em, and Bm.

This process can be very helpful to the person who wants to play a piece by ear. If you want to play "Down in the Valley" without the use of music, choose the key you want to use. For instance, use the key of G. You know that the six basic chords for that key are G, C, D, Am, Em, Bm. Start by singing the melody and strumming a G chord (most simple folk songs begin with the key chord); then, when it sounds like the melody you are singing conflicts with the chord you are playing, change to one of the other chords in the key. If you change to a chord that still conflicts, change to another chord in the key until you find the one that sounds correct.

The chord clock can also be used to transpose (change the key). The easiest keys for the guitar are G, C, and D and Em, Am, and Bm. If you want to make the chords in a piece simple, play the song in one of these keys. Suppose a piece is written in a different key and the chords look like the ones in the example below:

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The staff contains five measures, each with a chord name written above it: Bb, Eb, Gm, F7, and Bb.

These chords can be transposed and made simple by:

1. Changing the first chord in the piece to one of the simple key chords (G, C, D, etc.)
2. Finding on the chord clock the original first chord in the piece.
3. Finding the new chord on the clock you are changing the original chord to.
4. Seeing which direction and the number of steps you went to change the old chord to the new chord.
5. Changing the rest of the chords in the piece the same number of steps and in the same direction as the first chord was changed.

Example

Change the first Bb chord to a G chord. Then, find Bb on the clock and notice that we had to go four steps (counting the Bb chord as #1) clockwise to get to a G chord. Now, we change the rest of the chords in the piece four steps clockwise. Notice that the number of steps and the direction you change the first chord in the piece will determine the number of steps and the direction you change the rest of the chords. Shown below are the original chords and the new chords to the example:

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The staff is divided into five measures. Above each measure, two chord names are listed: the original chord and the new chord. The original chords are Bb, Eb, Gm, F7, and Bb. The new chords are G, C, Em, D7, and G. An arrow points from the new G chord to the original Bb chord, indicating the transposition.