

Modal Melody and Harmony

MODES

A *mode* is a scale that contains a characteristic pitch that distinguishes it from the major or minor scale from which it is derived.

The major scale is also called the Ionian mode.

C Ionian

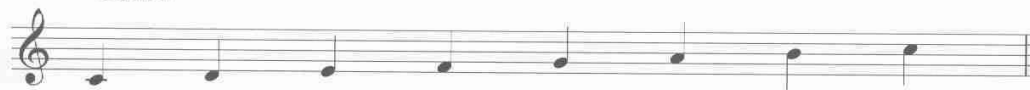


Fig. 16.1. Ionian Mode

The Lydian mode is the major scale with a raised 4th degree.

C Lydian

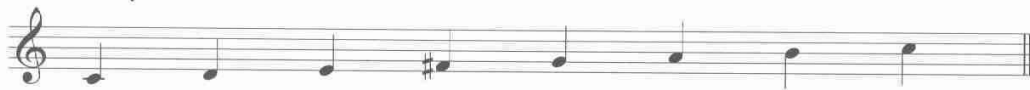


Fig. 16.2. Lydian Mode

The Mixolydian mode is the major scale with a lowered 7th degree.

C Mixolydian



Fig. 16.3. Mixolydian Mode

The natural minor scale is also called the Aeolian mode.

C Aeolian

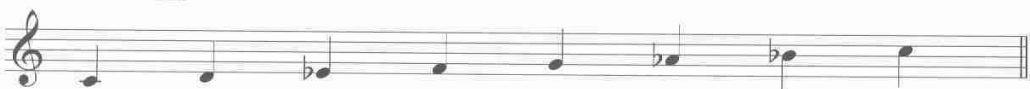


Fig. 16.4. Aeolian Mode

The Dorian mode is the natural minor scale with a raised 6th degree.

C Dorian



Fig. 16.5. Dorian Mode

The Phrygian mode is the natural minor scale with a lowered 2nd degree.

C Phrygian

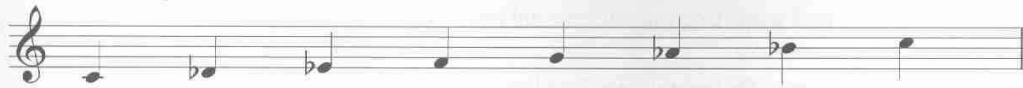


Fig. 16.6. Phrygian Mode

The Locrian mode is the natural minor scale with a lowered 2nd and 5th degree.

C Locrian



Fig. 16.7. Locrian Mode

CREATING A MODAL MELODY

A mode, like any other scale, can be the basic structure from which melodies and harmonic frameworks are developed.

When creating a modal melody, follow these conditions:

1. Emphasize the tonic note of the mode. The duration of this note should be longer than the duration of other scale degrees, and it should occur more frequently.
2. Place secondary emphasis on the characteristic pitch of the mode.
3. Melodic cadence, or resolution between degrees 2 and 1 or 7 and 1, is significant.
4. All notes of the mode should be used in the melody. This will eliminate modal ambiguity.

Here is a melody in D Phrygian:



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Fig. 16.8. Modal Melody

Notice in figure 16.8 that the tonic note, D, occurs more than any other note in this melody, and on most downbeats. The characteristic note of D Phrygian, E \flat , occurs twice. Melodic cadences occur at measures 1 to 2 (degrees 7 and 1) and 2 to 3 (degrees \flat 2 and 1). All the notes of the D Phrygian scale (D, E \flat , F, G, A, B \flat , and C) occur at least once.

CREATING A MODAL HARMONIC FRAMEWORK

There are two ways to construct modal harmonic frameworks:

1. Construct a logical bass line by:
 - a. Creating a cadence (2 to 1 or 7 to 1) after every three or four notes.
 - b. Frequently using chords that contain the mode's characteristic note.
 - c. Avoiding the tritone of the tonic scale from which the mode is derived unless you are using the Lydian mode or the Phrygian I chord.
 - d. Using chromatic alteration sparingly.

The resulting harmonic frameworks will contain standard chords, and it therefore will sound stable.

Here is a harmonic framework in G Dorian. Notice that a cadence from 7 to 1 occurs between measures 4 and 5, and a cadence from 2 to 1 occurs between measures 7 and 8. Also, chords containing E—the characteristic note of G Dorian—are frequent.



Fig. 16.9. G Dorian Framework

2. Construct the soprano and bass line using contrary motion between them. Roots of standard chords don't necessarily have to be in the bass. The resulting structures will be clusters and voicings in fourths.

Here is an example of a harmonic framework in C Lydian.



Fig. 16.10. C Lydian Framework

ACTIVATED MODAL FRAMEWORKS



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Fig. 16.11. A Phrygian Framework

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Fig. 16.12. Activated A Phrygian Framework

COMBINATIONS OF MODES IN MELODY AND HARMONY

When composing modal melodies and harmonic frameworks, you can use more than one mode derived from the same or different key. Here are some examples:

Two Modes from the Same Key Center (G Aeolian over D Phrygian):

Soloist

Piano Accomp.

Fig. 16.13. G Aeolian Melody over G Phrygian Framework

Two Modes from Different Key Centers (E Phrygian over G Dorian):

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Soloist

Piano Accomp.

Fig. 16.14. E Phrygian over G Dorian Framework

USING MODES IN IMPROVISATION

You can improvise with modes over any chord type. Make the root of the chord the mode's tonic note. (See figure 16.15.)

The musical score is divided into four systems, each illustrating a different mode used for improvisation over various chords. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a 4/4 time signature, and various musical symbols such as sharps, flats, and accidentals.

System 1: Shows five measures of improvisation. The modes are labeled above the staff: F# Lydian, F Lydian, F# Phrygian, F# Dorian, and F# Aeolian. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and single notes.

System 2: Shows four measures of improvisation. The mode is labeled as F Lydian. The bass line continues with harmonic accompaniment.

System 3: Shows four measures of improvisation. The modes are labeled as Eb Lydian, Eb Maj7, CMaj7, AMaj7, F#Maj7, and Eb Lydian. This system demonstrates how the same mode can be used over different chord types.

System 4: Shows four measures of improvisation. The mode is labeled as Db Lydian. The bass line features sustained chords and moving lines.

Fig. 16.5. Modal Improvisation

PRACTICE

Exercise 16.1. Modal Melodies

Create pure modal melodies in each mode. Vary the time signatures, tempo, dynamic marks, and phrasing. Then use a combination of modes.

Exercise 16.2. Modal Frameworks

Create harmonic frameworks in each mode. Vary time signatures and tempo. Then use a combination of modes.

Exercise 16.3. Pure Modal Melody and Harmony

Create a modal melody and accompaniment in pure modal form.

Exercise 16.4. Modal Melody and Accompaniment

Create a modal melody and accompaniment using a combination of modes.

Exercise 16.5. Modal Improvisation

Improvise on the lead sheets in appendix A. Use the roots of chords to choose which modes you will improvise with.