

## Modes

There are two traditional methods to identify modes:

(1) The first method relates each mode's authentic form, based on the third above the authentic pitch, back to either a major or minor scale. Keep in mind that in doing so, in no way should one begin to think of the modes in a traditional tonal manner, like one does when thinking of traditional major and minor scales.

(a) "Major" Modes:

- 1) Ionian - corresponds to the major scale.
- 2) Lydian - a "major" scale with a raised 4th scale degree.
- 3) Mixolydian - a "major" scale with a lowered seventh scale degree.

(b) "Minor" Modes:

- 1) Dorian - a "natural minor" scale with a raised sixth scale degree.
- 2) Phrygian - a "natural minor" scale with a lowered second scale degree.
- 3) Aeolian - corresponds to the natural minor scale.
- 4) Locrian - a "natural minor" scale with a lowered second scale degree and fifth scale degree.

(2) The second method uses relationships between the mode's authentic and a major scale.

(a) All the modes are easily located on the white keys of the piano.

- 1) C Ionian - (located on the first scale degree of any major scale.)
- 2) D Dorian - (located on the second scale degree of any major scale.)
- 3) E Phrygian - (located on the third scale degree of any major scale.)
- 4) F Lydian - (located on the fourth scale degree of any major scale.)
- 5) G Mixolydian - (located on the fifth scale degree of any major scale.)
- 6) A Aeolian - (located on the sixth scale degree of any major scale.)
- 7) B Locrian - (located on the seventh scale degree of any major scale.)

(b) Using the above information, the correct key signature for a mode starting on any pitch can be determined with relative ease:

- 1) Since the dorian mode is located on the second degree of a major scale, this mode will use the indicated key signatures when starting on the following pitches:

a) B $\flat$  Dorian - The key signature for A $\flat$  major.

- b) F# Dorian - The key signature for E major.
- c) G Dorian - The key signature for F major.

2) Since the mixolydian mode is located on the fifth degree of a major scale, this mode will use the indicated key signatures when starting on the following pitches:

- a) A Mixolydian - The key signature for D major.
- b) Eb Mixolydian - The key signature for Ab major.
- c) F# Mixolydian - The key signature for B major.

3) The above procedure may be used for all mode forms.

Identifying which mode has been used (when analyzing) or will be used (when composing) in a particular section or sections of a work is imperative to the success of either the analysis or the composition. One must remember to truly exploit the sound of the mode. Its particular characteristics (minor or major quality, scalar half-steps, intervallic patterns) must be melodically and/or harmonically emphasized.

There is no definite musical hierarchy when using modes. There are no traditional harmonic functions (i.e. ii-V-I) and no leading tones that serve to create and project a specific tonality. However, a pitch may be projected to become like a "tonic" or central pitch in a number of ways. "Pitch foci" are pitches which gain structural significance through their duration, repetition, doubling, register, orchestration, and use of neighboring tones. In analyzing modal music, look for pitches that gain structural significance through these techniques. This, as well as a consideration of the sound or quality of the mode, will determine the type of mode (or scale) being used.