

# Introduction to Modes

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Music for Analysis

Determine the mode of each of the following chants.

“A solis ortus,” Lauds for Christmas Day, Hymn 3 (*Liber Usualis*, p. 400)

A so - lis or - tus car - di - ne Ad us - que ter - rae li - mi - tem,  
Christ - tum ca - na - mus Prin - ci - pem, Na - tum Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne.

“Requiem aeternam,” Mass for the Dead (*Liber Usualis*, p. 1807)

Re - qui - em ae - ter - nam Do - na - e - is  
Do - mi - ne, Et lux per - pe - tu - a  
lu - ce - at e - is.

## The Dodecachordon

Heinrich Glarean (1488-1563) was a Swiss music theorist whose work codified the use of the modes in medieval and Renaissance music. His theoretical treatise was titled *Dodecachordon*, from “dodeca-” meaning twelve and “-chord(on)” meaning a group of notes played on strings. Glarean was the first theorist to link the modes used in Gregorian chant with the emergence of tonality, which primarily used the Aeolian and Ionian modes.

Glarean described the eight modes (four authentic and four plagal) that were used in the composition of chant tunes. In addition, he proposed the addition of four new modes that became prominent during the Renaissance, Aeolian, Ionian, and their plagal counterparts. He discussed the use of all modes in the polophonic music of the Renaissance and stated his belief that the Ionian mode was used most frequently by composers of his day. Glarean’s treatise had an enormous effect on later theorists. Many other Renaissance writers accepted his ideas on the twelve modes and based their subsequent works on his premise.

## Renaissance Polyphony

In the Renaissance period, theorists began to write about changes in the way that modes were perceived and about new methods of composition. Pietro de Aaron, in treatises written in the early sixteenth century, distinguished the *successive* method of composition from the *simultaneous* method. The simultaneous method of composition bears a greater resemblance to tonal composition than the earlier successive method. Using the simultaneous method of composition, composers constructed each line of a polyphonic texture with a regard for how that line would sound with other lines of the texture.

Eventually, composers and theorists of the later Renaissance dropped the distinctions between the authentic and plagal modes and began to refer to the six modes, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Ionian.

Toward the end of the Renaissance period, certain chordal formulas began to appear consistently at ending points in compositions, moving toward the concepts of cadences and chord progressions as we know them today. These formulas became especially prevalent as the use of the original four modes began to wane and the two newest ones, Aeolian and Ionian, became the most commonly used modes. The chordal formulas, similar to our IV–V–I progressions became the norm in compositions at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. The move away from modal music, with its lack of emphasis of chords and progressions, towards tonal music, with all its implications, was one of the signals of the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque (anvvd the Common Practice period).

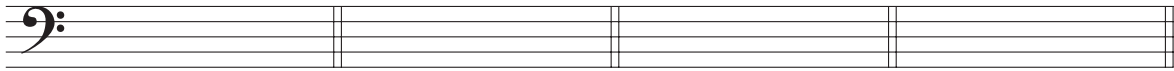
The following example from a late Renaissance mass demonstrates the growing concept of cadential progressions. Spell the chords found in the last two measures to discover if the polyphony in this piece produces a familiar chord progression.

Carlo Gesualdo, *Missa O Magnum Mysterium*, “Kyrie,” mm. 25-30

The musical score shows four staves of polyphonic vocal parts. The lyrics are: Ky-ri - e e lei - - - - - son. The music is in G minor and features complex chromaticism and dissonance characteristic of Gesualdo's style. The final two measures show a cadential progression.

## PRACTICE: The Modes Using Key Signatures

Write the key signature for each of the following modes. It will NOT be the same as the parallel major or minor key signature.



F Dorian

G Phrygian

A $\flat$  Mixolydian

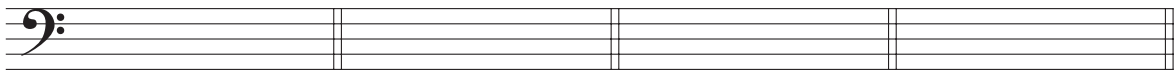
C Locrian



A Lydian

C $\sharp$  MixolydianB $\flat$  Aeolian

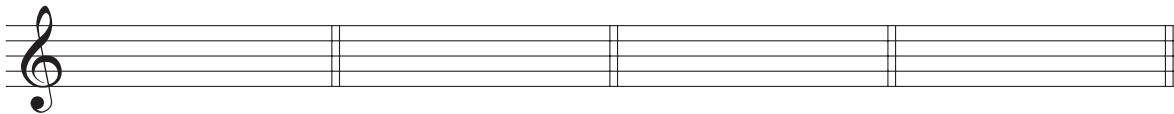
D Phrygian

F $\sharp$  Ionian

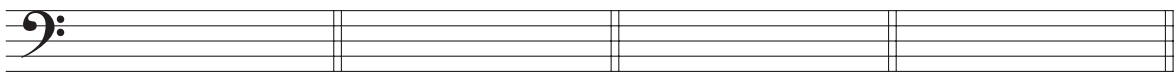
B Phrygian

C $\sharp$  Dorian

G Lydian

B $\flat$  Mixolydian

D Aeolian

E $\flat$  DorianB $\flat$  LocrianE $\flat$  Phrygian

D Mixolydian

D $\flat$  Dorian

B Ionian

G $\flat$  Dorian

F Locrian

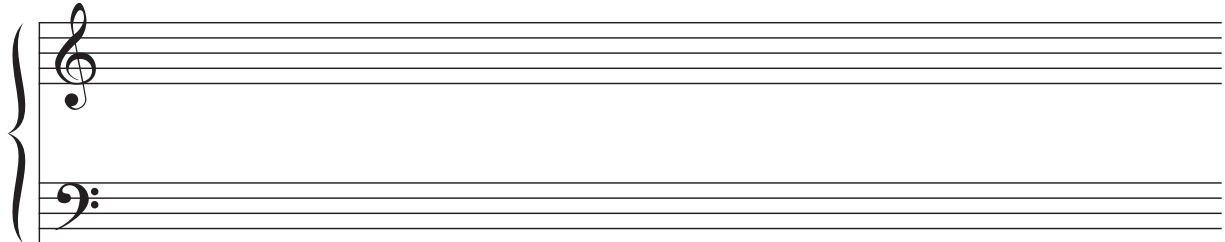
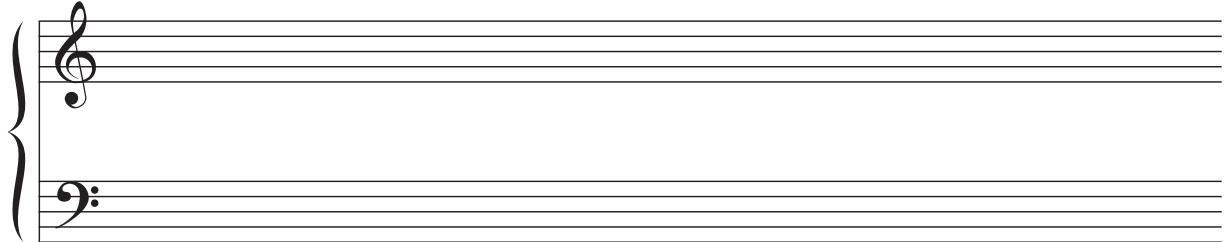
G $\flat$  Phrygian

C Lydian

### PRACTICE: Modal Progressions

Using roman numerals, write several progressions using the chord qualities specific to the mode that you choose. You should experiment with several of the modes.

Using the staves below, choose two of the progressions you wrote and create a soprano and bass line for each. Add inner voices and nonharmonic tones. Use additional staff paper if you wish to notate more of your progressions.



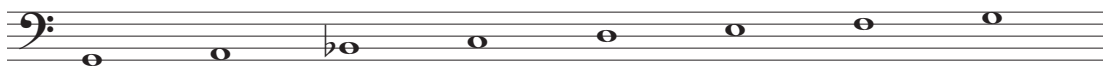
## Keyboard Exercises: Modes

The following figures demonstrate how to use a scale other than C major to perform the modes on the piano.

This is the Ionian mode starting on F. It is identical to F major.



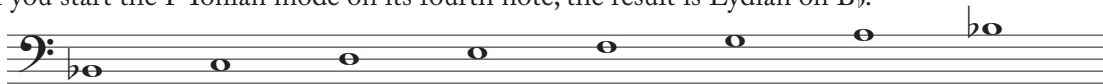
If you start the F Ionian mode on its second note, the result is Dorian on G.



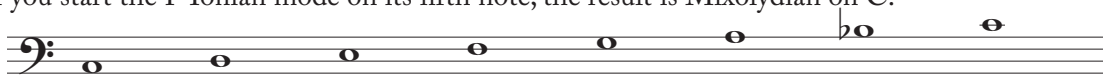
If you start the F Ionian mode on its third note, the result is Phrygian on A.



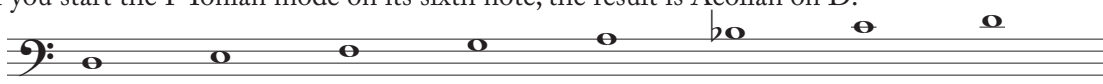
If you start the F Ionian mode on its fourth note, the result is Lydian on Bb.



If you start the F Ionian mode on its fifth note, the result is Mixolydian on C.



If you start the F Ionian mode on its sixth note, the result is Aeolian on D.



If you start the F Ionian mode on its seventh note, the result is Locrian on E.

