The Modern Modes

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AND, TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, EACH OF THESE THINGS USE THE NAMES TO REPRESENT DIFFERENT CONCEPTS! Fortunately, right now, we're only worried about the modern modes.

These modes are used a lot... especially in folk music. As for standard western repertoire, they are first prominently featured in the post-romantic music of the early twentieth century in the British Isles.

So what are they?

B to B: The Locrian Mode

G to G: The Mixolydian Mode

F to F: The Lydian Mode

E to E: The Phrygian Mode

D to D: The Dorian Mode

A more effective method of keeping the modes straight involves memorizing each mode's color note: the scale degree that makes it unique from the major or minor scale with the same tonic.

Major + lowered 7th

Major + raised 6th

Major + lowered 2nd

Major + raised 4th

Keeping the same key signature, we use this note as our new tonic!

One of the primary characteristics of these English modalists is that they tended to avoid the strong tensions of the common practice period... for example, they avoided chords that used a tritone... and avoided raising the leading note in minor keys!

Well, remember when we created the natural minor scale by starting with a major scale, but using the sixth note of the scale as the tonic? It gave us a new pattern of tones and semitones... a new scale.

In fact, these are two of the seven modern modes: major is the Ionian mode, and natural minor is the Aeolian mode.

The modes here all share the same key signature... they are related, like C Major and A Minor!

Major + lowered 7th

Minor + raised 6th

Minor + lowered 2nd

Minor + raised 4th