

When students get to improvise and compose, they OWN it. They become the most integral part of their own learning process. This activity is often the ONE thing they remember about music class first, when asked.

Today we will use the ancient modes as a generator for our own exploration, improvisation, and composition.

*You'll never plow a field by turning it over in your mind.
- Irish saying*

The Modes

Ionian - the equivalent of the diatonic major scale, by far the most used and most comfortable to our modern ears.

Dorian - Ritualistic, grave, pensive, mostly minor with a hopeful lilt. One of Plato's favorites, the notes of which, "fittingly imitate the utterances and accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare."

Phrygian - Also a favorite of Plato suitable "for a man engaged in works of peace."

Lydian - a diatonic scale with the raised fourth, more major than major. It becomes impish, weird, eccentric and as Plato warned, "prone to sloth and drunkenness."

Mixolydian - a major scale with a flat tire (lowered seventh degree), this mode is happy, humorous, fun, and energetic. Old Time tunes and songs often use this mode.

Aeolian - a powerful, melancholic, poetic mode familiar to us as the natural minor scale.

Locrian - this unstable mode is rarely used... discussion may ensue.

Introduce the Modes

- Find each mode on the Orff instruments or simply demonstrate each one from the piano.
- Discuss each mode, what it sounds like, what it's distinct characteristics are.
- Play an example from the literature, adding an element of improvisation.
- Pick a mode and compose as a large group or in smaller groups.
- Share and discuss.

First, a helpful chart to guide our exploration of the modes, and to help us with our improvisations.

- from *In the Modes* (Book/CD ROM) by Chris Judah-Lauder, BPPub

Modes and Motifs for Improvisation

The image displays six rows of musical notation, each representing a different mode. Each row consists of a single staff in treble clef. The first staff is for the Ionian mode and includes four numbered motifs (1, 2, 3, 4) in circles above the staff. The subsequent rows are for Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, and Aeolian modes, each with four motifs. The motifs are short melodic phrases that explore the unique characteristics of each mode. A large, faint watermark for 'Beatin' Path Publications' is visible across the center of the page.

Ionian Four Ionian Motifs for Improvisation

Dorian Four Dorian Motifs for Improvisation

Phrygian Four Phrygian Motifs for Improvisation

Lydian Four Lydian Motifs for Improvisation

Mixolydian Four Mixolydian Motifs for Improvisation

Aeolian Four Aeolian Motifs for Improvisation

Ionian

- ◇ White keys C to C
- ◇ The Melody was composed first using the question/answer method.
- ◇ It was expanded with a B section and orchestrated in a 7th grade music class at Stewart Middle School.

CYNDI'S SONG

IONIAN

CYNDI

ARR. BRENT HOLL

Musical score for Soprano Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Alto Xylophone, and Bass Xylophone. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The Soprano Xylophone part features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The Glockenspiel part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Alto Xylophone part features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The Bass Xylophone part features a bass line with quarter notes and eighth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure.

Musical score for SX, GLK, AX, and BX. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The SX part features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The GLK part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The AX part features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The BX part features a bass line with quarter notes and eighth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure.

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Dorian

- ◇ White keys, D to D
- ◇ Composed as an example of Dorian for the combined classes at Memphis State University (now University of Memphis) by Jos Wuytack in 1979.

DORIAN CANON

1 JW

2

5

BX
CBX

Tmb.

L.Dr.

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Phrygian

◇ White Keys E to E

- from *Modal Mosaic* (Book/CD ROM) by Rob Amchin, BPPub

Phrygian Journey

Robert A. Amchin

A **Fine**

Soprano Recorder

Soprano Glockenspiel

Alto Xylophone

Tambourine

Bass Xylophone

B **D.C. al Fine**

SR

SG

AX

Tamb.

BX

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Lydian

- ◇ White Keys from F to F
 - ◇ This reflects the mallet exercises and etudes found in Music for Children. The Lydian mode is excellent for this as it is active, energetic, and encourages improvisation!
- from Ensemble (Book/CD) by Brent Holl, BPPub

SEE DEES

BRENT M. HOLL

The musical score for 'SEE DEES' is arranged for a percussion ensemble. It features four systems of staves. The first system includes Soprano Xylophone, Alto Xylophone, Tingle Bells, and Bass Xylophone. The second system includes SX, AX, Tingle Bells, and BX. The third system is labeled 'INTERLUDE' and features Conga Drum. The score is written in 3/4 time and the Lydian mode. A large watermark for 'Beatin' Path Publications' is visible across the middle of the page.

Mixolydian

◇ White Keys from G to G

- from *In the Modes (Book/CD ROM)* by Chris Judah-Lauder

Just Another Day

Chris Judah-Lauder

Introduction

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems. The first system, labeled 'Introduction', features three staves: Cowbell (top), Conga (middle), and BX (bottom). The second system, labeled 'A', features five staves: SG (top), SX (second), Cb. (third), Cng. (fourth), and BX (bottom). The third system, labeled 'B', features four staves: AX (top), Cb. (second), Cng. (third), and BX (bottom). The score includes various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines for each instrument.

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11 8 A'

SG
SX
AX
Cb.
Cng.
BX

15 Coda

Cb.
Cng.
BX

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Aeolian

- ◇ White keys from A to A
 - ◇ We'll sing and add movement to this beautiful canon.
- from *A Circle is Cast* by Libana. Available from: Libana, Inc., PO Box 530, Cambridge, MA 02140.

FLY, FLY, FLY

ERDELY, BOGA

VOICE

The musical score is written for voice in treble clef, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of two lines of music. The first line starts with a whole note on A4, followed by quarter notes on B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, and A5. The second line starts with a quarter note on G5, followed by quarter notes on F#5, E5, D5, C#5, B4, A4, and G4. The lyrics are: "Fly, fly, fly, the leaves are leav-ing the branch, cold are the winds, win-ter is com - ing." There are fingerings indicated: '1' above the first note, '2' above the eighth note, '4' above the first note of the second line, and '3' above the second note of the second line. A large, faint watermark "Beatin' Path Publications" is visible in the background.

1 2

Fly, fly, fly, the leaves are leav-ing the

4 3

branch, cold are the winds, win-ter is com - ing.

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Locrian

◇ White Keys from B to B
-from *Modal Mosaic (Book/CD ROM)* by Rob Amchin

Goblin's Dance

Robert A. Amchin

A Fine

Soprano Xylophone

Alto Xylophone

Maracas

Bass Xylophone

B D.C. al Fine

SX

AX

Mcs.

BX

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Listen to the mode.

- Find the chosen mode on the instruments.
- Play one half note on each note, ascending.
- Play one half note on each note, descending.
- Change to quarter notes, then eighth notes.

The Basics... Question/Answer improvisation.

This basic creative tool is very effective with students of all ages as a composition tool. This session will take us from improvisation to composition using rhythm and melody, specifically the diatonic modes, leading to form.

Review Question/Answer.

Aim - Build confidence with rhythmic and melodic improvisation using the Question/Answer format.

- Give the class a question using body percussion; all answer.
 - » Make sure everyone ends at the strong beat of the last measure. “Final Point.”
 - » Make sure the answers are not an exact imitation of the question.
 - » Make sure the answers are related to the question.
- Ask who wants to give the teacher a question?
- All get a partner, question answer with each other.
- Discover:
 - » The cadence point (**The Final Point**) on the last strong beat of the answer.
 - » The absence of a cadence point (**Final Point**) in the question (think CHA, CHA, CHA).
 - » The commonality or shared ideas between the question and answer. The answer should have common elements with the question.
 - » The question and answer phrases are the same length.
- Give the class a question using an Orff instrument (or the piano);
 - » Make sure everyone ends at the strong beat of the last measure *on THE TONIC*.
 - » Make sure the melodic answers are not an exact imitation of the question.
 - » Make sure the melodic answers are related to the question.
- All get a partner, question answer with each other.
- Discover:
 - » The cadence point (**The Final Point**) on the last strong beat of the answer on the Tonic note.
 - » The absence of a cadence point (**Final Point**) in the question. Discover the “tenor” note or “dominant,” a great place to end the question (but not a requirement).
 - » The commonality or shared ideas between the question and answer. The answer should have common elements with the question.
 - » The question and answer phrases are the same length.

Compose!

- Establish 4/4 meter and phrase length. A good place to start is two measures of 4/4, a total of eight beats for the question (antecedent) phrase and the answer (consequent) phrase.
- Class gets to improvise the phrase length. Don't worry too much about endings, only phrase length.
- Ask students to share.
- Pick one phrase as the question. Fix and adjust it (aha! Composition!)
- Class gets to improvise the answer phrase. (Everyone plays the question in unison, then answers. Yep, it's pretty noisy.... Go as long as you can stand it. Make 'em play quietly or! Do this whole exercise with fingers only! Or the question with mallets, the answer with fingers.)
- Ask students to share.
- Pick one answer phrase that works.
- Play the new melody!

Extensions

- Orchestrate the new melody for the students. (Use those great new skills you learned in Level 2 Orff Basic!)
- Ask students to experiment with bordun accompaniments and various ostinatos, both rhythmic and melodic to create an accompaniment.

Advantages to Composition

Students OWN this. They become an integral part of their own learning process. This activity was often the ONE thing they remembered about music class first, when asked.

I often recorded the final effort and passed out a copy on a 5-minute cassette tape as a souvenir. We would also talk about publishing, recording, copyrights, sharing, and whatever else came up in the group discussion.

It might be a good idea to print a copy of these notes and bring them with you to the workshop. On the other hand it might be fun just to play the pieces “in the moment” and refer to the notes later. As you wish....

The notes are available for download at: <http://bppub.net/WKSPNotes>

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