

An introduction to Renaissance modes

There are four “finals”:  
(Similar to a tonic—usually the last note in the tenor.)

Dorian      Phrygian      Lydian      Mixolydian

Later on, they added two more:

Aeolian      Ionian

There are two types of each mode, plagal and authentic, depending on range (plus or minus a note or two):

(There was no mode on B.)

1. Dorian (authentic)

2. Hypodorian (plagal)

3. Phrygian (authentic)

4. Hypophrygian (plagal)

5. Lydian (authentic)

6. Hypolydian (plagal)

7. Mixolydian (authentic)

8. Hypomixolydian (plagal)

9. Aeolian (authentic)

10. Hypoaeolian (plagal)

11. Ionian (authentic)

12. Hypoionian (plagal)

Each mode emphasizes its structural 4ths and 5ths:

Dorian      Hypodorian      Phrygian      Hypophrygian      Lydian      Hypolydian

Mixolydian      Hypomixolydian      Aeolian      Hypoaeolian      Ionian      Hypoionian

Finally, a flat in the key signature transposes each mode down a 5th (or up a 4th):

Dorian      Phrygian      Lydian      Mixolydian      Aeolian      Ionian

It is typical for voice parts to alternate plagal and authentic modes, as in this duo by Tigrini:

=Dorian

=Hypodorian