

# The Modern Modes

**MODERN?**  
WAIT, ISN'T THIS STUFF, LIKE,  
**100 YEARS OLD?**

**YES, BUT WE ONLY CALL THEM "MODERN" BECAUSE WE NEED TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN A BUNCH OF UNRELATED THINGS ACROSS MUSIC HISTORY THAT, EVER SO INCONVENIENTLY, USE THE SAME NAMES!**

THE MODERN  
MODES' NAMES  
CAME FROM THE  
VARIOUS "KEYS"  
USED IN MEDIEVAL  
CHURCH MUSIC

WHICH WERE, IN  
TURN, NAMED IN  
HONOR OF THE  
LUTE RANGES USED  
IN LATER ANCIENT  
GREEK MUSIC

AND THOSE  
USED THE SAME  
NAMES AS **SCALE**  
TUNINGS DISCUSSED  
BY PLATO IN  
380 BC!

V. WILLIAMS

HILDEGARD

ARISTOXENUS

PLATO

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**  
**BRITISH ISLES.**

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 TONE** IN MINOR KEYS!

## SO WHAT ARE THEY?

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 WHOLE STEPS AND HALF STEPS... A **NEW SCALE.**

KEEPING THE SAME KEY SIGNATURE,  
WE USE **THIS** NOTE AS OUR NEW **TONIC!**



IN FACT, THESE ARE TWO OF THE SEVEN MODERN MODES:  
MAJOR IS THE **IONIAN MODE**, AND NATURAL MINOR IS THE **AEOLIAN MODE.**

BY STARTING ON THE **OTHER** NOTES OF THE MAJOR SCALE, WE GET THE OTHER FIVE MODES.

BECAUSE IT HAS  
A **DIMINISHED TONIC**,  
**LOCRIAN** IS A **THEORETICAL**  
**MODE...** IT'S NOT USED  
IN **ACTUAL PRACTICE.**

**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**

THE MODES HERE ALL SHARE  
THE SAME **KEY SIGNATURE...**  
THEY ARE **RELATED**, LIKE  
**C MAJOR** AND **A MINOR!**



MAJOR + LOWERED 7TH

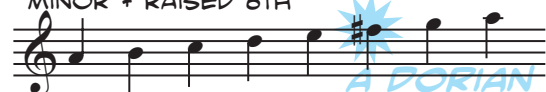


MAJOR + RAISED 4TH

A MORE **EFFECTIVE**  
METHOD OF KEEPING  
THE MODES STRAIGHT  
INVOLVES MEMORIZING  
EACH MODE'S  
**COLOR TONE:**  
THE SCALE DEGREE  
THAT MAKES IT  
UNIQUE FROM THE  
**MAJOR OR MINOR**  
SCALE WITH THE  
**SAME TONIC.**



MINOR + RAISED 6TH



MINOR + LOWERED 2ND

