

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 NOTE** 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 TONES AND SEMITONES... 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!**



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.**

