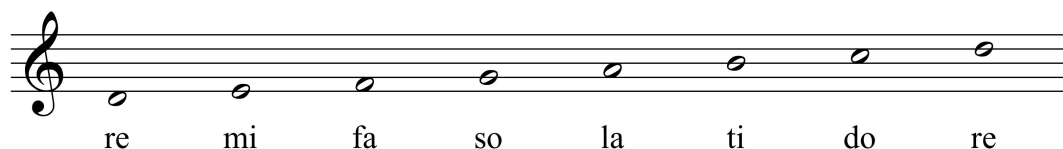


Chapter 2 – The Dorian Mode

There are eight Ecclesiastical modes: modes 1 and 2 are Dorian and Hypodorian, respectively, modes 3 and 4 are Phrygian and Hypophrygian, modes 5 and 6 are Lydian and Hypolydian, and modes 7 and 8 are Mixolydian and Hypomixolydian.⁶³ This chapter addresses melodic and harmonic improvisation within Ecclesiastical modes 1 and 2. Improvisation in the remaining Ecclesiastical modes will be addressed in the ensuing chapters.

The Dorian Mode (whose final is *re*; the final is the scale degree on which the chant terminates or ultimately rests)

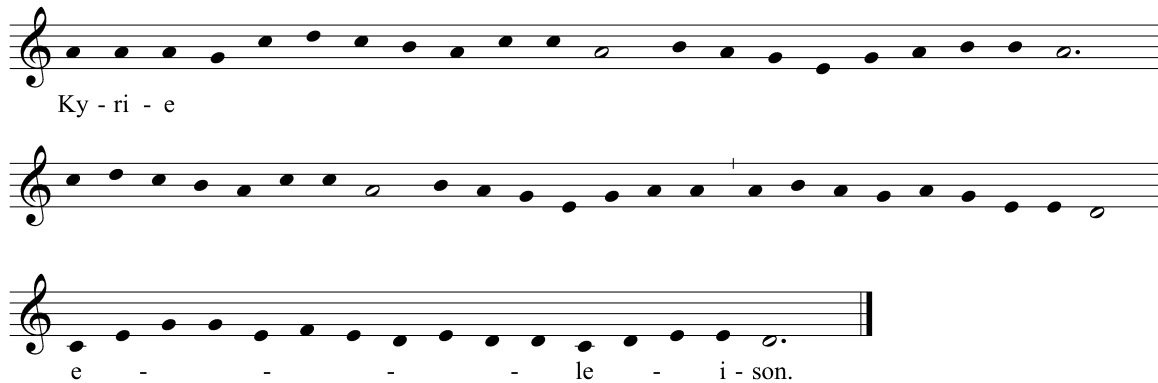
Figure 2.1



Although modes 1 and 2 share *re* as their final, each is distinct from the other because it employs different melodic ranges (or *ambitus*) as well as different dominants (the scale degree around which the melody hovers). For example, in Mode 1 (Dorian) the *ambitus* is from *re* to *re* (in Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, *re* is D) while the dominant is *la*. The *ambitus* and dominant of Mode 1 are illustrated in Figure 2.2.

⁶³ The odd-numbered modes, i.e. the Dorian mode, Phrygian mode, etc., are also known as the authentic modes (or, the authentic forms of the scales), while the even-numbered modes, i.e. the ‘hypo’ modes, are also known as the plagal modes. Since they are used to describe cadential idioms within common practice harmony, the terms ‘authentic’ and ‘plagal’ are eschewed here to avoid possible confusion.

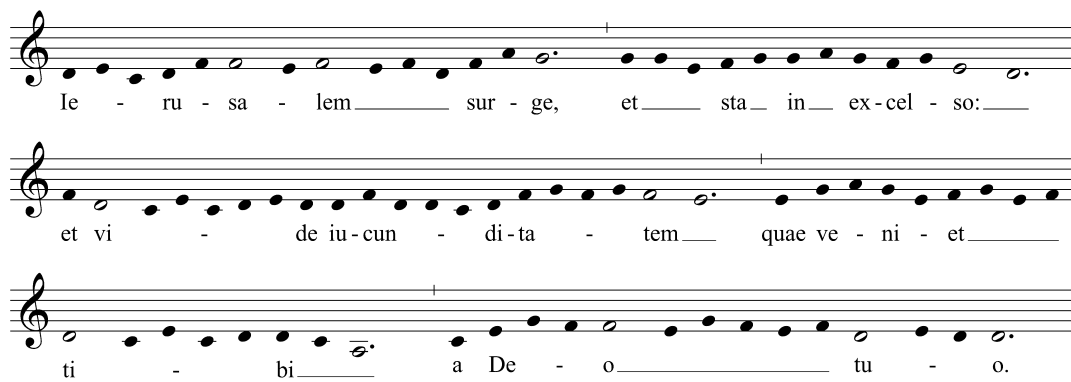
Figure 2.2 Gregorian Missal (p. 153), *Missa Splendor æterne: Kyrie*⁶⁴



As one can see, the *ambitus* of the melody found in Figure 2.2 is from *re* to *re*, with a brief expansion to *do* below the final in the last phrase. Furthermore, the melody in the first two systems hovers around *la*, the dominant of Mode 1. Lastly, the chant descends in the final phrase, resting ultimately on the final of Mode 1, *re*.

In Mode 2 (Hypodorian), the *ambitus* is from *la* to *la* while the dominant is *fa*. The *ambitus* and dominant of Mode 2 are illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 Gregorian Missal (p. 173), *Ierusalem surge*



⁶⁴ All Gregorian excerpts were transcribed and engraved by the author.

As one can see, the *ambitus* of the melody found in figure 2.3 is from *la* to *la*. In addition, the melody lingers most around *fa*, the dominant of Mode 2. Lastly, the chant terminates on the final of mode 2, *re*.

The dominant is of paramount importance because it is the tone around which the chant is constructed. Due to its position above the final, the dominant is responsible for suspending tension in a given chant, which helps maintain a sense of forward motion. In sum, the *ambitus* and dominant provide invaluable organizational parameters around which a melody can be structured.

The Unique Sonic Profile of the Dorian Mode

Throughout this and the following three chapters, each Ecclesiastical mode will be compared and contrasted with the natural minor or major scale. This is simply because the natural minor and major scales are the most commonly known among modern musicians; therefore, they serve as a logical point of reference. Although the Dorian scale most closely resembles a natural minor scale, it is distinct from the natural minor scale because it features a raised sixth scale degree. In other words, instead of including *le* as its sixth scale degree, it utilizes *la*, as seen in the examples above as well as those that follow. This subtle difference makes up the unique sonic profile of the Dorian mode. This peculiarity should be embraced by the improviser and highlighted in his melodic and harmonic use of the Dorian mode. Put differently, the performer should strive to elucidate the Dorian mode by featuring its idiosyncratic raised sixth scale degree in his improvisations.

Transposing the Dorian Mode

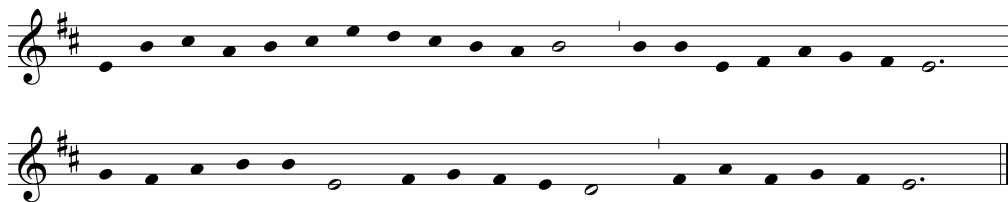
Using a moveable *do* system, the Dorian mode can be thought of as the ‘*re* mode’. For example, if one wishes to formulate a Dorian scale beginning on the pitch G, G is approached as

re. Therefore, if G is *re*, then F is *do*. Thus, utilizing the key signature for F major (comprised of one flat, which is B-flat), one may play from G to G and a Dorian scale will result. To help the student practice transposing the Dorian mode, the melodies that follow have been placed in various keys.

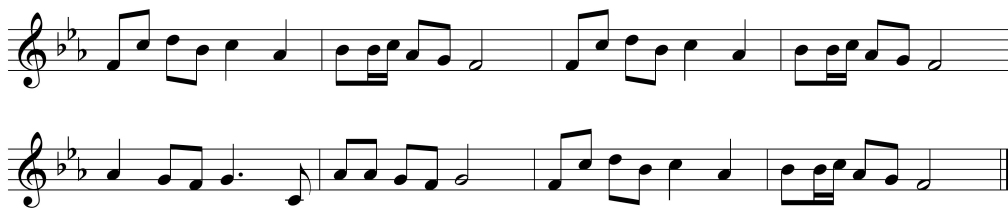
Examples of Dorian melody:

Figure 2.4

Gregorian Hymn: Ave Maris Stella



Nöel Nouvelet, medieval French carol



There were three ravens sat on a tree, Ravenscroft's Melismata, (1622)



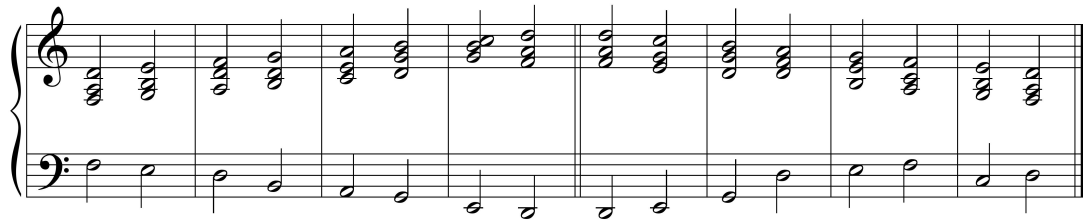
Harmonization in the Dorian Mode

“As in melody writing, so in harmonizing the old Modes, the first thing to do is to abandon all preconceived rules of present-day [common practice] writing.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ A. Madeley Richardson, *The Mediæval Modes* (New York: H. W. Gray Company, 1933), 47.

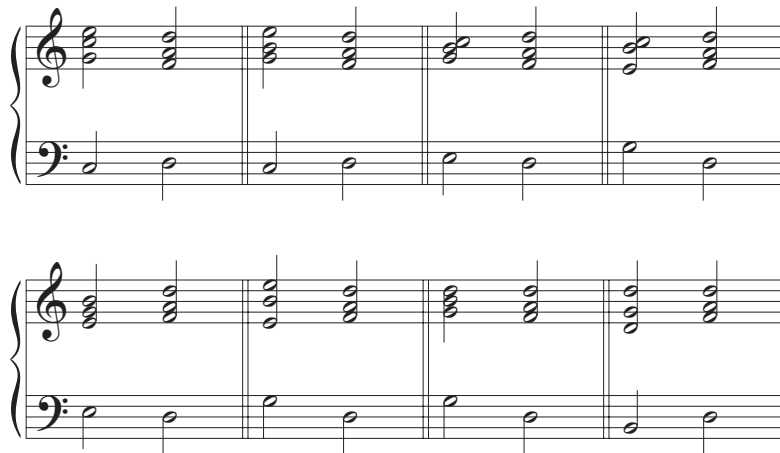
After one comprehends the construction of Dorian melody, the next step in learning to improvise within this mode is to practice harmonizing a Dorian scale. The following example is merely one solution to harmonizing the Dorian scale; the student should experiment with his own harmonization(s), bearing in mind that a Dorian sonic flavor must be preserved at all times. To this end, cadential formulas featuring the raised sixth scale degree, such as the ones found below, become very important. Lastly, the student must practice Dorian scales and their harmonization(s) in every transposition in order to gain fluency in this mode.

Figure 2.5



The following examples illustrate other cadential formulas within the Dorian mode.

Figure 2.6



Since the cadence in Figure 2.7 references a common practice technique, namely because it features a descending fifth in the lowest voice (or, an ascending fourth when inverted), it is the least preferred of all the cadences articulated here.

Figure 2.7



The improviser must fastidiously eschew such common practice associations when improvising in a modal/neo-modal style.

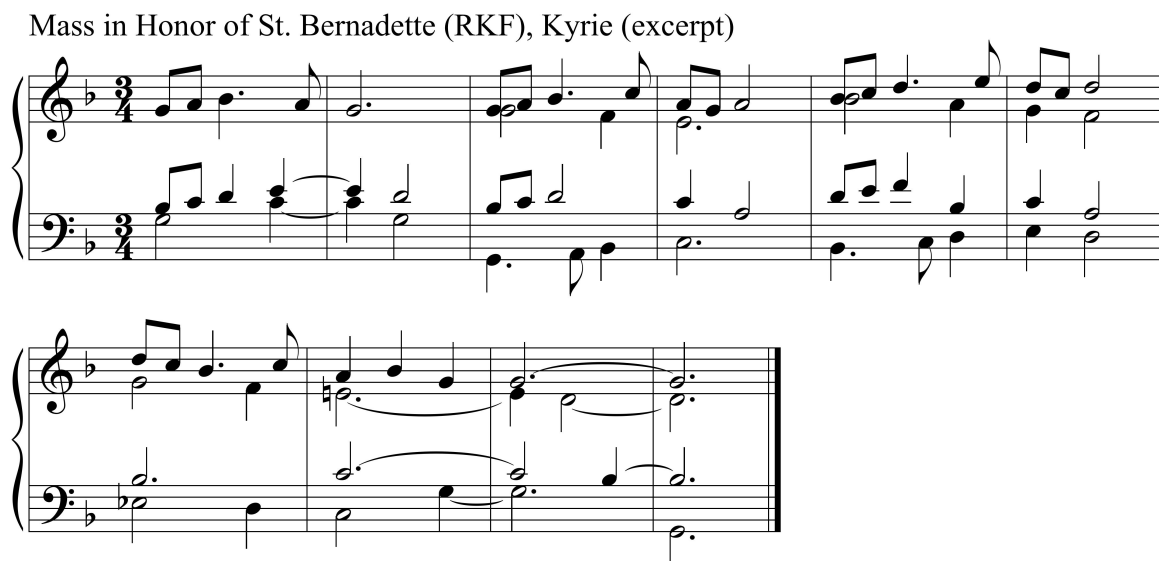
After the student has become comfortable harmonizing the Dorian scale, he is ready to address the harmonization of Dorian melody. Throughout this endeavor, one should seek to preserve the unique flavor of the Dorian mode by featuring its raised sixth scale degree in his harmonizations. Note that the following harmonizations utilize parallel fifths on occasion; in addition to connecting the following examples more intimately with Medieval practices, the intentional inclusion of such parallelisms contributes to a modal sonic profile.

In the following examples of harmonized Dorian melodies, note how the characteristic raised sixth scale degree is featured at cadential points.

Figure 2.8 Melody taken from *The Mediæval Modes* by A. Madeley Richardson⁶⁶



Figure 2.9



⁶⁶ More information is found in the bibliography.

Exercises in the Dorian Mode

In order to develop a sense of formal structure, the student will practice improvising antecedent and consequent phrases of equal proportions.

Improvise a consequent phrase (ending on *re*) after the following antecedent:



Improvise an antecedent phrase (ending on an unstable tone, possibly *mi* or *do*) before the following consequent:



Improvise an antecedent and consequent phrase of symmetrical proportions; add a harmonization.

Using the following accompaniment template, improvise a balanced antecedent and consequent phrase in B Dorian.

