

Notes for “The Sounds, Moods and Use of Modes, Parts 1 and 2”

Overview

Modes can provide us with a lot of flexibility at the bedside, and you don’t need to be a theory major to understand and use them. You do need to be willing to spend some time “playing” with them and listening. And slow down and breathe!

It’s wonderful to know the theory of modes and where the whole and half steps fall in each mode, but not necessary to use them. I will be forever indebted to Stella Benson for her explanations and examples of modes and have referenced titles of books that have opened the doors to the modal world for me.

Both calls are focused on listening to the sounds of the modes – not on theory. Music theory is not one of my strengths, so for that information I refer you to Stella’s writings below and The Healer’s Way, one of the Level 1 required books.

Part 1

My objective in this call is to demonstrate the sound of the modes by using 2 tunes we all know, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and “Three Blind Mice.” I am using a “C” tuning throughout the demonstration. Each tune is originally written in Ionian mode. The notes used for each are:

Twinkle.... c-g-a-g, f-e-d-c g-f-e-d, g-f-d-e c-g-a-g, f-e-d-c
Three..... e-d-c, e-d-c g-f-e, g-f-e g-c-b-a-b-c-g, g-c-b-a-b-c-g e-d-c, e-d-c

During the demonstration, I play each of these in the other 6 modes – an exercise inspired by Stella Benson, The Gift of Healing Modes. I think one of the difficulties in “getting” modes is that we hear and learn tunes in the various modes, and rather than “get” the difference in how each mode sounds, we are distracted by the different tunes, rhythms and harmonies. This exercise was a real eye-opener – or ear-opener - for me.

I’m going to walk through how you do this with Twinkle, moving it from Ionian to Dorian. The tune goes up to the 5th note, then to the 6th, back to the 5th, to the 4th, to the 3rd, to the 2nd, to the 1st note. To play it in Dorian, I start on d and follow the same numbered notes in the Dorian scale that goes from d to d. So I will have the following notes.

d-a-b-a, g-f-e-d a-g-f-e, a-g-f-e d-a-b-a, g-f-e-d

Here are the notes in Lydian (f-f):

f-c-d-c, b-a-g-f c-b-a-g, c-b-a-g f-c-d-c, b-a-g-f

I encourage you to try each tune in each mode. Don’t worry about speed – just take your time and listen to the different sounds.

Part 2

In this call, I demonstrate some ways to use modes to support your flexibility at bedside. Modes allow you to create different moods without changing keys, they help you transition seamlessly between tunes or selections, and they can help you extend tunes. You can learn someone else's tunes that they've written, of course, and they are beautiful. But the real flexibility comes when you discover you can put your own melodies/harmonies on top of modal patterns.

In this call, I am again in a "C" tuning, and I use the following base patterns – notes only are indicated – listen to the rhythms on the call.

1. Fifth: 1 and 5
2. Open chord: 1-5-8
3. "In The Winter Dark" by Stella Benson, from The Healer's Way Companion, Calming Music for Anxiety, Volume II:
1st chord: 1-5-10-8 (1 is a) 2nd chord: 1-5-10 (1 is d above or below)
4. "Aqua Timbre" by Stella Benson from The Healer's Way Companion, Calming Music for Anxiety, Volume II:
5-1-8 (1 is a) 5-1-8 (1 is g)

You can play these patterns using any chords. Try them on different notes, *LISTEN*, and discover what combinations have a pleasing sound. Play around with the nursery rhymes in the different modes and add the appropriate 1-5-8 chords.

Just as we encourage you to take one or two compositions and change them to fit each therapeutic music style to get a feel for the styles, I suggest you pick one or two patterns and shift them to other notes to see how they sound. For example, play the "Aqua Timbre" pattern using f and g.

Remember, relax, keep it simple, slow down, breathe and listen. Have every note be OK. And have fun!

Resources

The Healer's Way, Stella Benson

The Gift of Healing Modes, Stella Benson

The Healer's Way Companion, Soothing Music for Those in Pain, Volume I, Stella Benson

The Healer's Way Companion, Calming Music for Anxiety, Volume II, Stella Benson