

Music 233

Chapter 21, Mode Mixture

These notes are a distillation of Kostka/Payne's Tonal Harmony. They are in no way a substitute for reading and working through the actual text book.

Overview

Mode mixture or mode borrowing entails the use of tones that belong to the other, parallel mode of a given key. It most usually refers to the major mode using ("borrowing" or "mixing") notes from the parallel minor mode. The effect of mode mixing is the coloring of a particular passage with chords that might feel slightly out of step, or seem conspicuous, but certainly not functionally incorrect—like the effect of metaphor.

For example, in the key of F major, mode mixture would incorporate the use of a note from the parallel minor (F minor). A D-flat could be borrowed/mixed—it could be used instead of a D-natural. This borrowing would affect any chords that involved the 6th scale degree, most notably the IV chord (Bb major) would be transformed into a Bb minor chord, like the typical iv in the key of F minor.

Other examples of mode mixture might already be familiar. In the minor mode, the raised 3rd of the tonic triad, the Picardy third (makes the tonic triad major instead of minor), was used to end most minor key compositions from the early 1500s to about the middle of the 1700s.

Even the very common major V (the dominant) in the minor mode can be thought of as borrowing or mixing in the raised 7th scale degree from the parallel major. The same goes for the melodic minor raised 6th scale degree. While these examples are not thought of as the same kind of mode mixture as when major borrows from minor, the comparison is easy to draw.

The b6 in the major mode

- Uses the lowered 6th scale degree found in the parallel minor
- Called "b6" regardless if the note is natural, flat or double-flat
- Is the most frequently encountered type of mode mixture

<u>Allows (diatonically)</u>	<u>to be (with the b6)</u>
vii ^{o7}	vii ^{o7}
ii	ii ^o
ii ⁷	ii ^{o7}
IV	iv
vi	bVI (in conjunction with the b3)

The b3 in the major mode

<u>Allows</u>	<u>to be</u>
I	i
iii	bIII (in conjunction with the b7) – not common
IV ⁷	iv ⁷ (in conjunction with the b6)

The b7 in the major mode (not common)

<u>Allows</u>	<u>to be</u>
vii ^o	bVII (often used as V/bIII)

Analysis

- The borrowed chords are merely labeled with their appropriate lower-case roman numeral without further qualification
- If the root of a chord is lowered (like "bIII") then the "b" is also indicated

Tonicization

- Borrowed chords can be tonicized just like diatonic chords: "V⁽⁷⁾/bVI"

Modulation

- Mode mixture facilitates modulations to potentially foreign keys
- Borrowed chords can be used as common pivot chords for modulation purposes
- Tonicized borrowed chords can become diatonic chords in a new key: the borrowed iv chord of F major (a Bb minor chord) can pivot as the vi chord of Db major