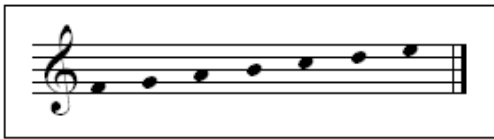


Considering the Lydian Mode

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To this writer's ear, the Lydian mode is one of the most colorful and expressive of the six modes used in the Schulwerk; yet, it is perhaps the most unexplored of the group. Most teachers are aware of the absence of the Lydian mode in the second volume Music for Children, as well as the afterthought inclusion of Lydian material in the "sixth" volume – Paralipomena. What follows are some observations regarding the Lydian mode and its place in the Schulwerk.



The Lydian mode, in its original form, is built upon the fourth degree – "F". The arrangement of intervals yields a raised fourth degree (B natural) in relation to the common major (Ionian) scale pattern.

The triads built on the given pitches present several options for harmony (non functional), whether converging melodic lines or shifting triads is the source. The listener's ear will often discern strong movement between those changing triads with no common tones between them. Thus, we have the following suggested vocabulary and accompaniment options suitable for Elemental Music. These options only reflect the Lydian mode.



I II iii iv* V vi vii

*The triad on B is diminished,
and unuseable in this work.

Strongest movement = I-II, or I-vii

Fairly strong movement = I-V

Weak movement = I-iii, or I-vi

Only three models of Lydian music exist in Paralipomena. The first example, *Von der Geburt des Herrn*, was written by Orff himself, and presents the audience with music based on a plainchant model from the late medieval era (1360), and as such, displays some typical qualities of the time: a Cantus, drone accompaniment, and Latin text. The overall harmonic path is I-V-I movement, which is fairly strong. Additionally, the V-vi drone change may be considered acceptable since it shares no common tones, and, one could argue that it is used as neighbor tone sonority providing more color than actual harmonic support. The following drone analysis shows the basic harmonic movement.

The changing drone harmony supports these Lydian triads.

I I V vi V I V vi V I

The treatment of dissonance is handled well, save for two instances where a B natural falls on the strong beat of a measure supported by an F open 5th drone (see example at left). However, considering the short duration of the actual note, the importance seems to fall on preserving the melodic line.

This example appears twice.

From this first Lydian example we have seen some typical use of melody over drone accompaniment; fairly strong drone (and, consequently triad or triad-implicit) harmonies which shift; and an overall AB form (with introduction). The use of paraphony in the introduction, and the observance of a historical style are also typical idioms in the elemental style.

The second Lydian example from *Paralipomena*, written by Orff, is *Das arm Kind*. The text is from “Woyzeck”, a drama by the German dramatist Georg Büchner (1813-1837). Orff’s love for drama and theater is evident here with the use of spoken text woven between freely-improvised music. Throughout the piece, the tonality is asserted without concern for a continuous accompaniment. The melodic contours which appear firmly establish Lydian. The example below will illustrate a few prime examples of this point. From this second example we see some familiar components of the Schulwerk: improvisation, repetition, asserting the tonic through careful treatment of the mode’s characteristic intervals, drama, and speech.

Ex. 1

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

In Examples 2 and 3, Orff uses the leading tone interval effectively to help cadence the piece. Of all the modes, only Lydian contains a true leading tone triad.

The third (and final) Lydian example from *Paralipomena*, *Lydisches Flötenstück*, was written by Keetman. The piece is scored for one soprano flute and two alto flutes, although in today's common practice, the piece is played on recorders. Later in the music, the alto flutes change instruments – to soprano flutes.

The *Flötenstück* is a wonderful example of the kind of flowing, lyrical music one is capable of making when utilizing the Lydian mode. In the opening of the piece, Keetman establishes an accompaniment of two shifting drones in the alto flutes part (see example below). The melody, provided by the soprano, sits above it.

Note Keetman's exact use of non-chord tones on weaker beats in the opening of the piece.

Drone harmony: I II I II

This melody is fairly free, in that there are several cases of dissonances on strong beats – including some with a half-step clash. However, if you consider the title of the work, *Flötenstück* (Flute Study – emphasis mine), it becomes clear that Keetman, a composer full of elemental craft, was interested in some freedom from the conventional treatment of melodies against a drone accompaniment. J.S. Bach, and other master composers, broke their own established rules for the sake of preserving their art. Perhaps Keetman falls into that category.

There is much color that comes from the found dissonances, which are notable when sounded on the flute. Unfortunately, for the elemental teacher seeking a model from which to learn, play, and compose, this piece meets that request only partly. The main culprits are the B natural and the C; they are frequently sounded over the opposite drone. Elemental style tells us to treat the B natural (the fourth degree –“Fa”) as a decoration of the third or fifth scale degrees, and, as such, should be on a weaker beat, as in the familiar passing tone or other similar treatment.

In order to better demonstrate the stylistic qualities of Elemental music found in this piece, two examples follow: the first outlines the notable dissonances, and the second presents some possible corrections – this is done for academic purposes only and is not intended to discredit Keetman's work in any way.

Original version – the red boxes indicate notable dissonances; included are several examples with notes a ½ step apart.

Musical notation for measures 1-6. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Red boxes highlight dissonances in measures 4, 5, and 6. Measure 5 features a triplet of notes.

Musical notation for measures 7-12. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Red boxes highlight dissonances in measures 8, 10, and 11.

Musical notation for measures 13-18. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Red boxes highlight dissonances in measures 13, 14, 15, and 16.

Musical notation for measures 19-24. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Red boxes highlight dissonances in measures 19, 20, 21, and 22.

Edited version – the red boxes indicate areas where the dissonances have been corrected.

The image displays a musical score in 3/4 time, consisting of four systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The first system shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (marked with a '3') and a corresponding bass line with chords. A red box highlights the triplet and the chords it aligns with. The second system has a melodic line with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note, and a bass line with chords. A red box highlights the quarter note and the chords it aligns with. The third system has a melodic line with eighth notes and a bass line with chords. Two red boxes highlight specific eighth notes and their corresponding chords. The fourth system has a melodic line with eighth notes and a bass line with chords, but no red boxes are present in this system.

Summary

Presented in these three examples were compositional conventions of Elemental Music set in the Lydian mode. Why do only three pieces in Lydian exist in the original volumes? This writer does not have an answer. But, rather than seeing the lack of Lydian material as uninspiring or unworthy of exploration, one should instead learn from these models and add new material to the canon of Elemental Music. We not only owe this task to ourselves, but to our Schulwerk as well.