

Introduction to Scales and Modes for Elementary Students

Objectives:

Students will be able to recognize, differentiate, and meta-cognitively recognize each of four different modes or scales (i.e. whole tone, Dorian, pentatonic, and blues). These modes will be presented as values, tools, and/or components of music making and comprehension.

Depending on their skill level students will also be able to freely improvise or “compose” by singing in each of these modes or scales.

A secondary objective is an attempt to present musical values from a global perspective.

Purpose:

This lesson attempts to further articulate the complexities and components of music which fit into the larger cultural curriculum for elementary students.

Materials:

- Mac laptop with speakers
- Internet connection (not mandatory)
- Slide projector
- Powerpoint software
- Human voice
- Websites (integrated into presentation)
- Piano
- Paper and pencils

Anticipatory Set:

Improvise at the piano on a whole tone scale while showing a timed set of pictures of the earth from outer-space followed by other planets, the solar system, and recent pictures from Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, etc.

Procedure:

1. Discussion of what we are hearing (**whole tone scale**): What does it sound like? How does it make you feel? Pictures of happy face, sad face, ambiguous face, mad face appear. Students are to make notations of how it makes them feel without telling anyone.
2. Further discussion about results and images.
3. Improvisation on piano with pictures of outer space
4. Defining of scale or mode followed by pictures of keyboards with colors outlining played mode. Teacher sings modes in call and response manner.
5. Continuation of process through each of the modes with listening and visual examples for comparison and contrast:

- Modes examples:
<http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Frontrow/9379/scalemode.html>
 - **Whole tone** scale-piano
 - <http://www.c-alanpublications.com/mp3/wholetone-clip.mp3>
 - **Dorian**- sing a chant for them (Kyrie from “Cum jubilo” mass)
 - Teacher will sing
 - **Pentatonic**- Examples of Traditional Chinese and Native American music using scale:
 - <http://www.ibiblio.org/chinese-music/html/traditional.html>
 - native American tune
 - **Blues scale** - Muddy Waters
 - <http://www.muddywaters.com/home.html>

Check for student understanding?

Comprehension is evident if students respond to a larger list of listening examples when provided at random.

Closure:

Students apply awareness of scales to their current favorite piece of music.

Extensions:

Future lessons could present music from different cultures and draw connections through use of scales and modes.