












Reconceptualizing the *Lydian Chromatic Concept*: George Russell as Historical Theorist

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Member scales of the F Lydian Chromatic Scale.

Principal scales		Lydian	—
		Lydian augmented	3rd mode of melodic minor, 7th mode of acoustic
		Lydian diminished	4rd mode of harmonic major
		Lydian flat seventh	Acoustic, 4th mode of melodic minor
		Auxiliary augmented	Whole-tone
		Auxiliary diminished	Octatonic (whole-half), diminished
Horizontal scales		Auxiliary dim. blues	Octatonic (half-whole), diminished
		Major	
		Major flat seventh	
		Major augmented fifth	
		African-American blues	

Modes of the C Lydian scale.

Mode	Spelling	Principal chordmode	Sub-principal chords
I Major	C D E F# G A B	Cmaj13#11	CM (triad), Cmaj6, Cmaj7, Cmaj7b5
II Seventh	D E F# G A B C	D13	D7, D9, D11
VI Minor	A B C D E F# G	Am13	Am (triad), Am6, Am7, Am9, Am11
III Major (IIIb/Minor +5)	E F# G A B C D	Cmaj13#11/E	C/E, Cmaj7/E, etc.
+IV Minor Seventh b5	F# G A B C D E	F#m11 ^{b5} _{b9} _{b13}	F#m7b5, F#m7b5b9, F#m11b5b9
V Major (Vb)	G A B C D E F#	Cmaj13#11/G	C/G, Cmaj7/G, etc.
VII Eleventh b9 (VIIb)	B C D E F# G A	Cmaj13#11/B	B11b9, C/B, Cmaj9/B, Cmaj9#11/B

Common chords in the modes of the F Lydian Chromatic Scale. (Inspired by Russell's Chart A.)

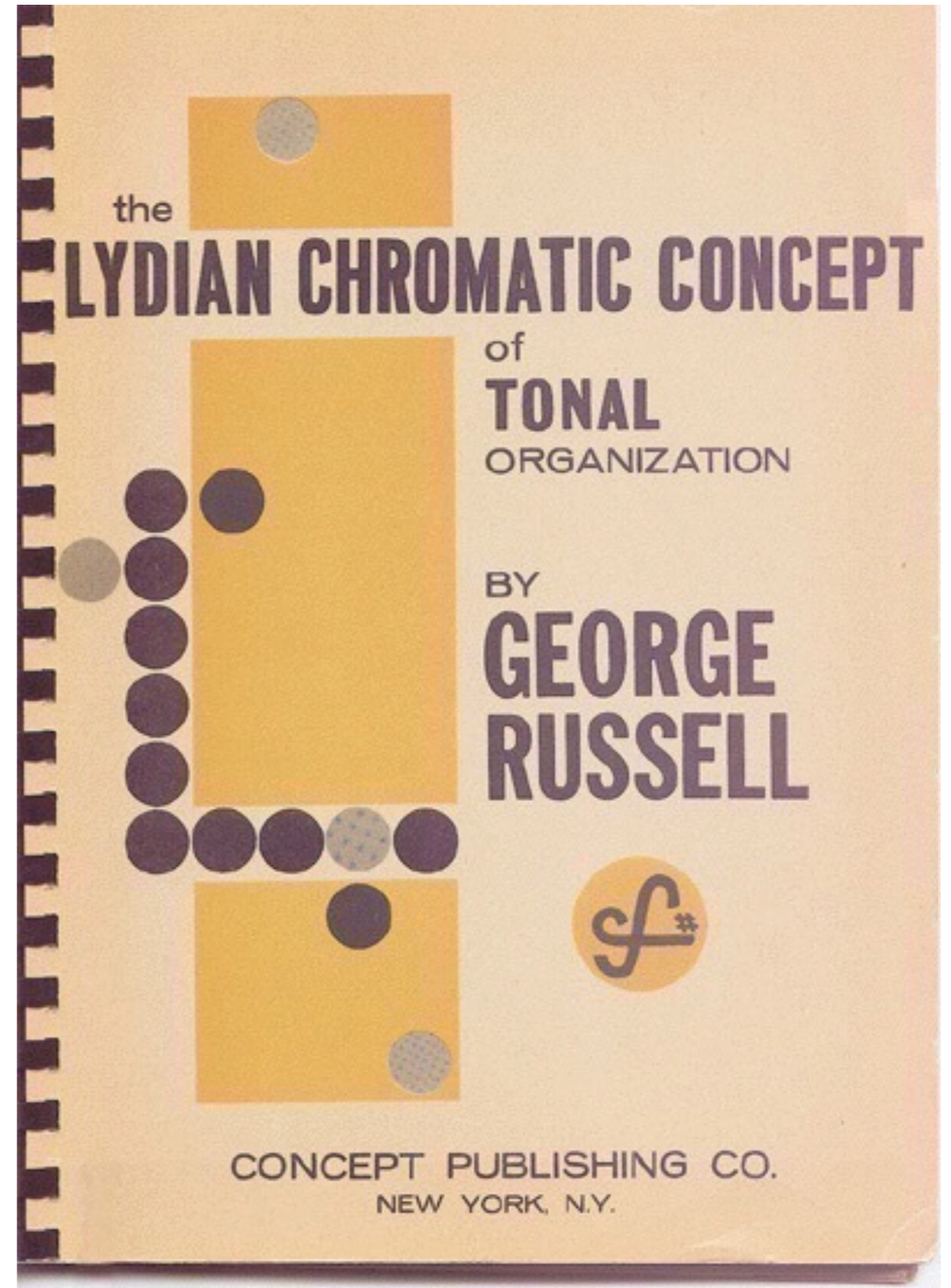
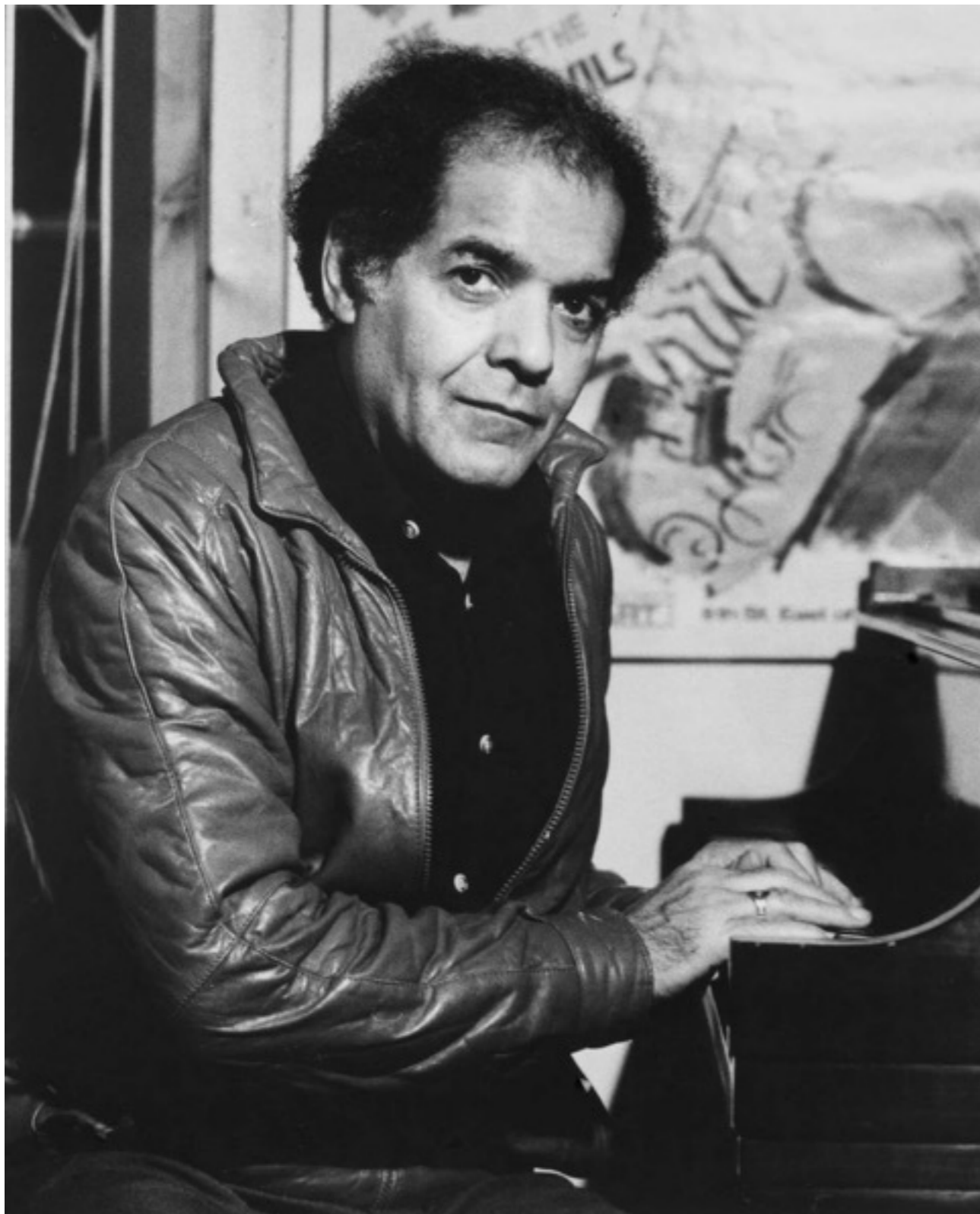
	Diatonic	Lyd. augmented	Lyd. diminished	Lyd. $\flat 7$	Whole-tone	WH diminished	HW diminished	Blues
	FGABCDE	FGABC#DE	FGA \flat BCDE	FGABCDE \flat	FGABC#E \flat	FGA \flat B \flat BC#DE	FG \flat A \flat ABCDE \flat	FA \flat AB \flat BCDE \flat
I	Fmaj7 <i>Lydian</i>	Fmaj7#5 <i>Lyd. augmented</i>	– <i>Harmonic major</i>	F7 <i>Acoustic</i>	Faug (triad)	F $^{\circ}$ 7		Fmaj7, Fm7, F7
II	G7 <i>Mixolydian</i>	G7#11, G7 \flat 5 <i>Lydian dominant</i>	G7 \flat 9	G7#5	G7#5, G7 \flat 5	G7 \flat 9, G7 \flat 5		
+IV	Bm7 \flat 5 <i>Locrian</i>	Bm7 \flat 5 <i>Locrian #2</i>	B $^{\circ}$ 7	Bm7 \flat 5 <i>Altered, dim. WT</i>			Bm7 \flat 5	
+V					D \flat 7#5, D \flat 7 \flat 5	D \flat 7#5, D \flat 7#9		
VI	Dm7 <i>Dorian</i>	DmM7 <i>Melodic minor</i>	Dm7 \flat 5	Dm7 \flat 9			Dm7, Dm7 \flat 5	
VII	E7 \flat 9 <i>Phrygian</i>	E7 \flat 9	E7alt.					

Alternate scale names are given in italics; less common chords are shown in gray.

Complete slides/examples available online via the SMT conference website or at www.mcclimon.org/projects/lcc.html.
Please feel free to contact me via email (michael@mcclimon.org) or on Twitter (@mmclimon).

Reconceptualizing the
Lydian Chromatic Concept:
George Russell as Historical Theorist

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the
LYDIAN CHROMATIC CONCEPT

of
TONAL
ORGANIZATION

BY
**GEORGE
RUSSELL**

CONCEPT PUBLISHING CO.
NEW YORK, N.Y.

- 1998 – Caplin, *Classical Form*
- 1999 – Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces*
- 2001 – Lerdahl, *Tonal Pitch Space*
- 2001 – *Lydian Chromatic Concept*, 4th ed.

Lydian Chromatic Concept

- Chord/scale equivalence
- Lydian tonal organization

Lydian Tonal Organization

a)

b)

The image displays two musical systems, labeled 'a)' and 'b)', for a piano. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both containing whole notes. A brace on the left side of the staves indicates they are part of a single instrument. System 'a)' features a treble clef with a sharp sign on the first line (F4) and a chord of five notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The bass clef has two notes: C3 and F2. System 'b)' features a treble clef with a sharp sign on the first line (F4) and a chord of three notes: F4, G4, and A4. The bass clef has four notes: C3, F2, G2, and C3.

Tonal Gravity



The LYDIAN TONIC, as the musical “Star-Sun,” is the seminal source of tonal gravity and organization of a Lydian Chromatic scale. [...] UNITY is the state in which the Lydian Scale exists in relation to its I major and VI minor tonic station chords, as well as those on other scale degrees. Unity *is* . . . instantaneous completeness and oneness in the *Absolute Here and Now* . . . above linear time.

The Lydian Scale is the musical *passive* force. Its unified tonal gravity field, ordained by the ladder of fifths, serves as a theoretical basis for tonal organization within the Lydian Chromatic Scale and, ultimately, for the entire Lydian Chromatic Concept. There is no “goal pressure” within the tonal gravity field of a Lydian Scale. The Lydian Scale exists as a self-organized *Unity* in relations to its tonic tone and tonic major chord. The Lydian Scale implies an evolution to higher levels of tonal organization. The Lydian Scale is the true scale of tonal unity and the scale which clearly represents the phenomenon of tonal gravity itself.

Lydian Chromatic Concept, pp. 8–9

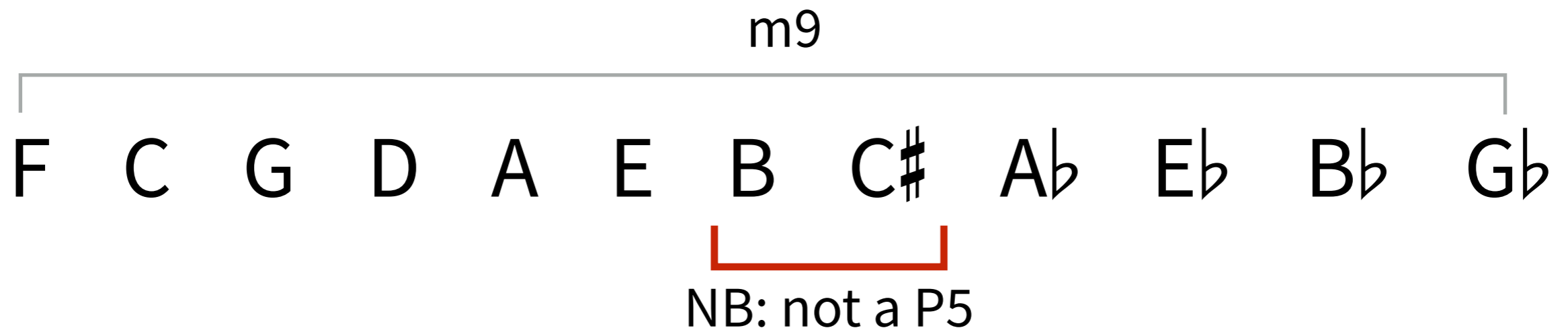
Only genius is imbued with a sense of tonal space. It is its innate awareness, just as the concepts of physical space (as extension of of the human body) and time (as growth and development of the body) are inborn, innate in every human as part of the sense of their own body.

Schenker, "Elucidations," *Tonwille* 8/9 (1924)

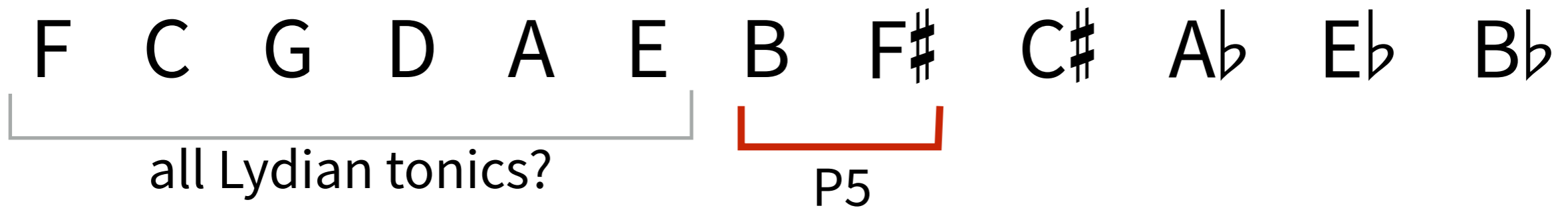
On rare occasions one encounters the substitution of an inversion for the V or V⁷ chord at the MC point. Regardless of whether the dominant has previously appeared in root position, this situation should be understood as a medial-caesura deformation, which might well impact the subsequent S.

Hepokoski/Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 26 (2008)

Lydian Chromatic Order of Tonal Gravity



Lydian Chromatic Order of Tonal Gravity



“Interval Tonic Justification”

C Lydian Scale

A musical staff in treble clef showing the C Lydian scale. The notes are C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The F#4 is marked with a sharp sign. The notes are arranged in a sequence of pairs: C4 (open), D4 (filled), E4 (open), F#4 (filled), G4 (open), A4 (filled), B4 (open), C5 (filled).

Octave Maj 7th Min 7th Maj 6th Aug 5th Fifth Aug 4th Fourth Maj 3rd Min 3rd Maj 2nd Min 2nd

A musical staff in treble clef showing the C major scale. The notes are C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The notes are arranged in a sequence of pairs: C4 (open), D4 (filled), E4 (open), F4 (filled), G4 (open), A4 (filled), B4 (open), C5 (filled). The F4 note is circled in parentheses.

C major scale

Lydian Chromatic Order of Tonal Gravity

I V II VI III VII +IV +V bIII bVII IV bII

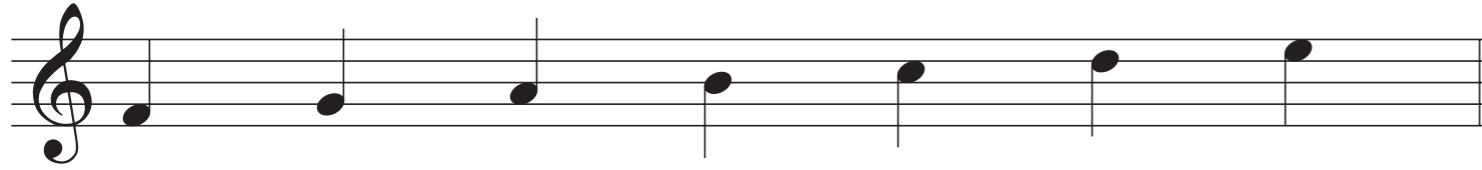
Member scale criteria

- a) a scale's capacity to parent chords considered important in the development of Western harmony
- b) a scale as being most representative of a tonal level of the Lydian Chromatic scale
- c) the historical and/or sociological significance of a scale

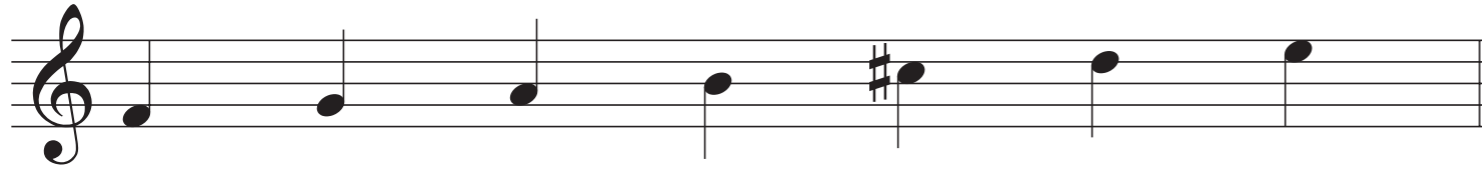
(Lydian Chromatic Concept, p. 12)

Russell's names

Other common names

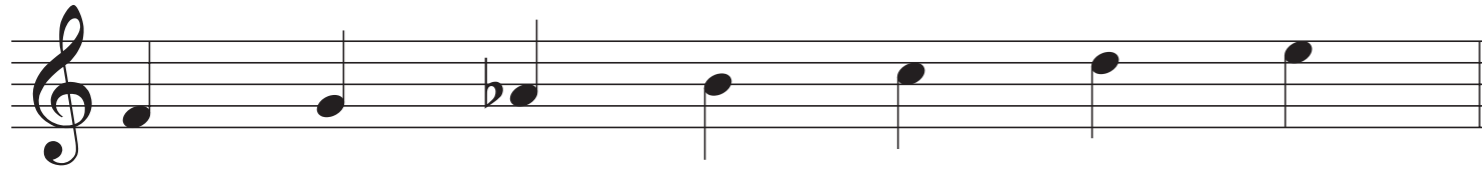


Lydian



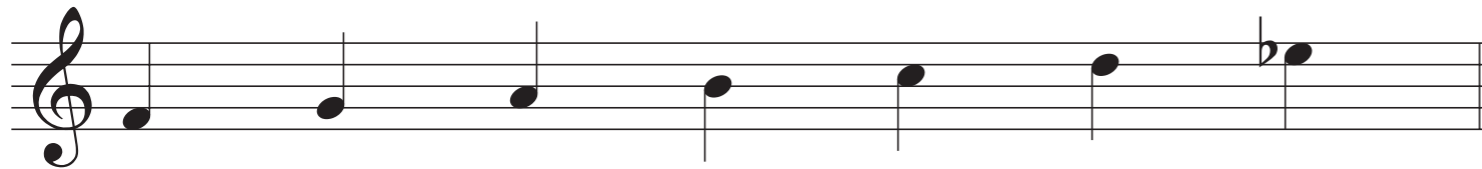
Lyd. augmented

3rd mode of
melodic minor



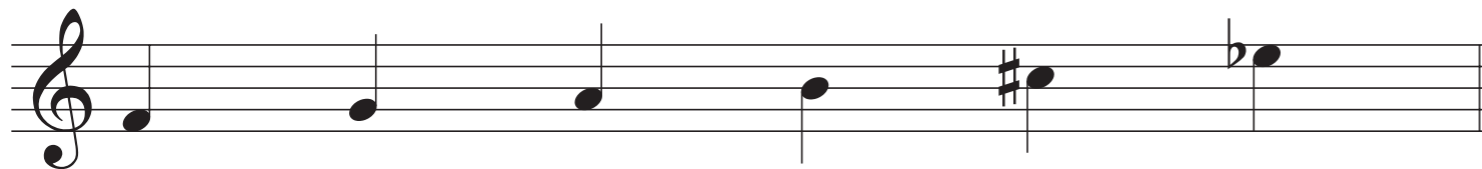
Lyd. diminished

4th mode of
harmonic major



Lyd. flat seventh

Lyd. dominant,
acoustic scale



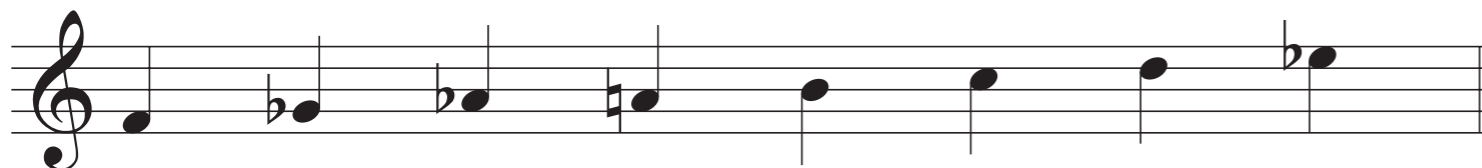
Auxiliary
augmented

Whole-tone



Auxiliary
diminished

octatonic (whole-half),
diminished



Auxiliary
diminished blues

octatonic (half-whole),
diminished

12 TONE ORDER

OUTGOING TONAL GRAVITY LEVEL

11 TONE ORDER

SEMI-OUTGOING TONAL GRAVITY LEVEL

10 TONE ORDER

SEMI-OUTGOING TONAL GRAVITY LEVEL

9 TONE ORDER

CONSONANT NUCLEUS

SEMI-INGOING TONAL GRAVITY LEVEL

7 TONE ORDER

INGOING TONAL GRAVITY LEVEL

LYDIAN
TONIC

Aux.
Dim.
Blues

Aux.
Dim.

Lydian
b7

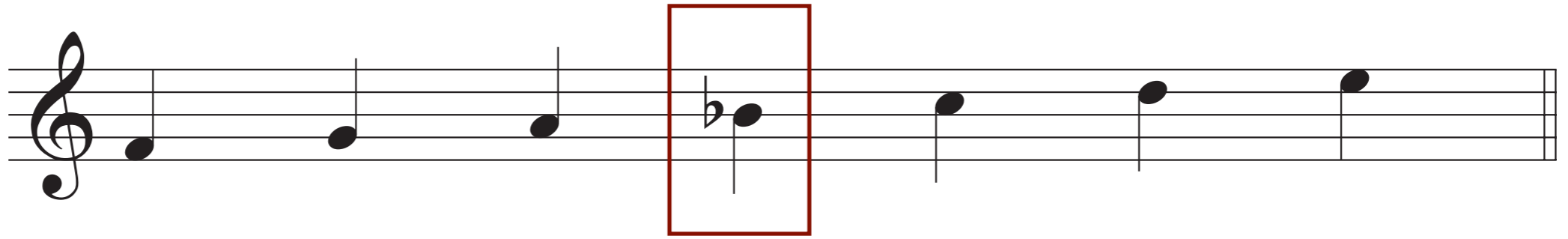
Lydian
Dim.

Lydian
Aug.

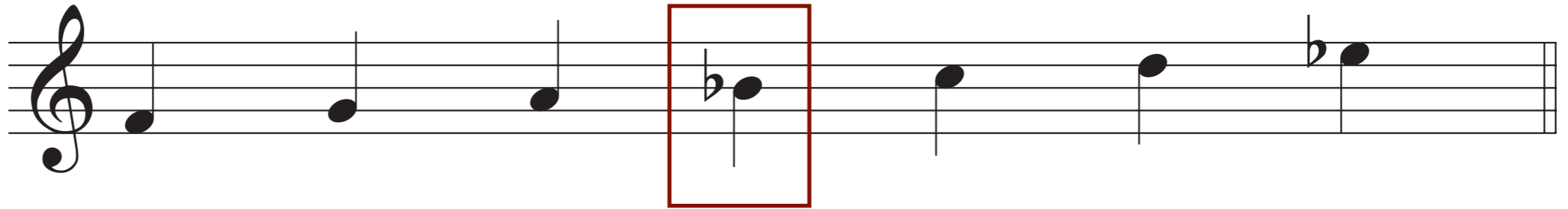
Aux.
Aug.

I	V	II	VI	III	VII	+IV	+V	bIII	bVII	IV	bII
F	C	G	D	A	E	B	C#	G#	D#	A#	E##
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
								(Ab)	(Eb)	(Bb)	(Gb)

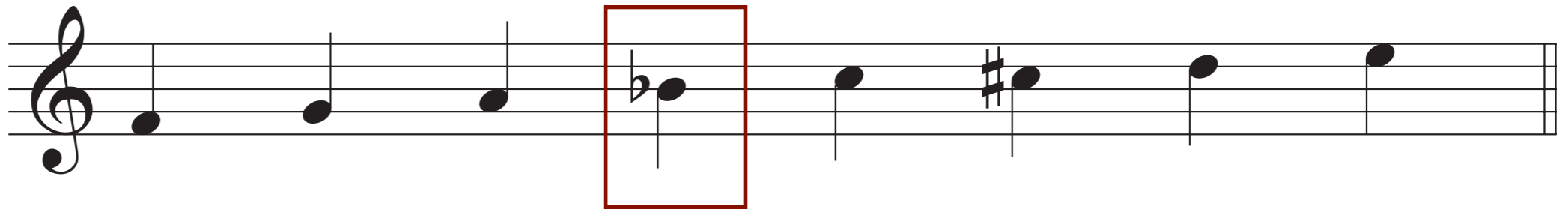
Major



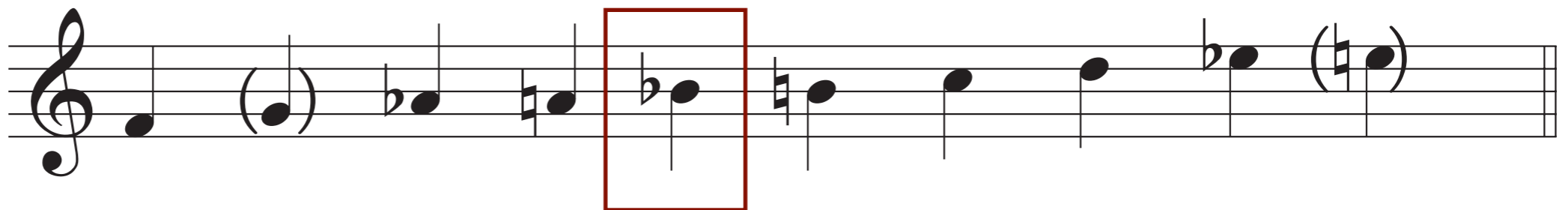
Major
flat seventh



Major
augmented fifth



African-American
blues



Chord/Scale Equivalence

In a conversation I had with Miles Davis in 1945, I asked, “Miles, what’s your musical aim?” His answer, “to learn all the changes (chords),” was somewhat puzzling to me since I felt—and I was hardly alone in the feeling—that Miles played like he already knew all the chords. After dwelling on his statement for some months, I became mindful that Miles’s answer may have implied the need to relate to chords in a new way.

This motivated my quest to expand the tonal environment of the chord beyond the immediate tones of its basic structure, leading to the irrevocable conclusion that every traditionally definable chord of Western music theory has its origin in a PARENT SCALE. In this vertical sense, the term refers to that scale which is ordained—by the nature of tonal gravity—to be a chord's source of arising, and ultimate vertical completeness; the chord and its parent scale existing in a state of complete and indestructible chord/scale unity—a CHORDMODE.

(Lydian Chromatic Concept, p. 10)

The chord and its parent scale are an inseparable entity—the reciprocal sound of one another. . . . In other words, the complete sound of a chord is its corresponding mode within its parent scale. Therefore, the broader term CHORDMODE is substituted for what is generally referred to as “the chord.”

(Lydian Chromatic Concept, p. 20–21)

Mode	Spelling	Principal chordmode	Sub-principal chords
I Major	C D E F# G A B	Cmaj13#11	CM (triad), Cmaj6, Cmaj7, Cmaj7b5
II Seventh	D E F# G A B C	D13	D7, D9, D11
VI Minor	A B C D E F# G	Am13	Am (triad), Am6, Am7, Am9, Am11
III Major (IIIB/Minor +5)	E F# G A B C D	Cmaj13#11/E	C/E, Cmaj7/E, etc.
+IV Minor Seventh b5	F# G A B C D E	F#m11 ^{b5} _{b9} _{b13}	F#m7b5, F#m7b5b9, F#m11b5b9
V Major (VB)	G A B C D E F#	Cmaj13#11/G	C/G, Cmaj7/G, etc.
VII Eleventh b9 (VIIB)	B C D E F# G A	Cmaj13#11/B	B11b9, C/B, Cmaj9/B, Cmaj9#11/B

Primary Modal Genre

A PMG is an assemblage of Principal Chord Families of similar type: a Principal Chord Family mansion housing the spectrum of variously colored Principal Chord Families of the same essential harmonic genre.

(Lydian Chromatic Concept, p. 29)

Mode 2, C auxiliary diminished

As a scale

As a chord

The image displays musical notation for the C auxiliary diminished mode 2. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first staff shows the scale: C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), Ab3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), F#3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), C3 (quarter). The second staff shows the chord: D3 (bass), C#3, B3, Ab3, G3, F#3, E3, D3 (treble). Above the chord, the text 'D13' is written, with '#9', 'b9', and 'b5' stacked vertically to its right. A flat symbol (b) is placed above the treble staff, indicating the key signature for the chord.

Primary Modal Tonic Primary Modal Genre

I major and altered major chords

II seventh and altered seventh chords

III [I] major and altered [I] major 3B (minor +5) chords

+IV minor seventh $\flat 5$ / [I] major +4B chords

V [I] major and altered [I]5B chords

VI minor and altered minor chords

VII eleventh $\flat 9$ / [I] major 7B chords

+V seventh +5 chords

Finding a Parent Scale

CHART A

Primary Modal Tonic Degrees ▼	PRIMARY MODAL GENRE OF A LYDIAN CHROMATIC SCALE	Alternate and Conceptual Modal Tonic Degrees ▼
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I Major / Altered Major (Vh) (IIIh) (Ih)

PARENT SCALE is the first in Chart A's descending order of Principal Scales to list the Prevailing Major/Altered Major chordmode over Primary Modal Tonic I.

PARENT LYDIAN TONIC is the tonic degree of the chordmode

II Seventh / Altered Seventh (+V) (VII) (III) (+IV) (IIh) (I)

PARENT SCALE is the first in Chart A's descending order of Principal Scales to list the Prevailing Seventh/Altered Seventh chordmode over Primary Modal Tonic II.

PARENT LYDIAN TONIC is the flat seventh degree of the chordmode

III Major III_B / Minor +5 (Vh Maj 3_B) (IIh Maj ^b7 3_B)

PARENT SCALE is the first in Chart A's descending order of Principal Scales to list the Prevailing Major III_B/Minor +5 chordmode over Primary Modal Tonic III.

PARENT LYDIAN TONIC is the augmented fifth degree of the chordmode

+IV Minor Seventh ^b5/ Major +IV_B (VI)

PARENT SCALE is the first in Chart A's descending order of Principal Scales to list the Prevailing Minor Seventh ^b5/major +IV_B chordmode over Primary Modal Tonic +IV.

PARENT LYDIAN TONIC is the augmented fourth degree of the chordmode

THE SEVEN PRINCIPAL SCALES OF A LYDIAN CHROMATIC SCALE AND ITS PRINCIPAL AND SUB-PRINCIPAL CHORDMODES

Lydian Scale Chordmodes

Lyd Maj 13th	13th	I Lyd Maj 13th/III _B	I Lyd Maj 13th/+IV _B	I Lyd Maj 13th/V _B	min 13th	I Lyd Maj 13th/VII _B
Maj triad	7th	Maj triad/III _B	min 7th ^b 5	Maj triad/V _B	min triad	7th ^b 9
Maj 6th	9th	Maj 6th/III _B	min 7th ^b 5 ^b 9	Maj 6th/V _B	min 6th	11th ^b 9
Maj 7th	11th	Maj 7th/III _B	min 11th ^b 5 ^b 9	Maj 7th/V _B	min 7th	11th ^b 9 +5
Maj 9th	-	Maj 9th/III _B	min 11th ^b 5 +5 ^b 9	Maj 9th/V _B	min 9th	
Maj 7th ^b 5	-	Maj 7th ^b 5/III _B (min +5)		Maj 7th ^b 5/V _B	min 11th	
I	II	III	+IV	V	VI	VII

Lydian Augmented Scale Chordmodes

Lyd Aug Maj 13th	13th +11	I LA* Maj 13th/III _B	I LA Maj 13th/+IV _B	7th +5 ^b 9	min 13th +7	I LA Maj 13th/VII _B
Aug Maj triad	7th ^b 5	Aug Maj triad/III _B	min 7th ^b 5	+9 +11	min +7	7th ^b 9
Aug Maj 7th	9th +11	Aug Maj 7th/III _B	min 9th ^b 5	7th +5	min 9th +7	7th ^b 9 +9
Aug Maj 9th		Aug Maj 9th/III _B	min 11th ^b 5	7th +5 ^b 9	min 11th +7	11th ^b 9
Aug Maj 7th ^b 5		Aug Maj 7th ^b 5/III _B	min 11th +5 +11	7th +5 +9		
Aug Maj 9th +11		Aug Maj 9th +11/III _B		7th +5 +11		
I	II	III	+IV	+V	VI	VII

*LA = Lydian Augmented

Lydian Diminished Scale Chordmodes

LD* Maj 13th	13th ^b 9	I LD Maj 13th (^b III _B)	I LD Maj 13th/+IV _B	I LD Maj 13th/V _B	min 13th ^b 5	I LD Maj 13th/VII _B
Dim Maj triad	7th ^b 9		Dim tetrachord	Dim Maj triad/V _B	min 7th ^b 5	7th ^b 9
LD Maj	11th ^b 9			Lyd Dim Maj/V _B	min 9th ^b 5	7th +9
Dim Maj 6th				Dim Maj 6th/V _B	min 11th ^b 5	7th +5
Dim Maj 7th				Dim Maj 7th/V _B		7th ^b 9 +5
Dim Maj 9th				Dim Maj 9th/V _B		
I	II	^b III	+IV	V	VI	VII

*LD = Lydian Diminished

Lydian Flat Seventh Scale Chordmodes

Lyd ^b 7 Maj 13th	11th ^b 13th	I Lyd ^b 7 Maj 13th/III _B	I Lyd ^b 7 Maj 13th/+IV _B	I Lyd ^b 7 Maj 13th/V _B	min 13th ^b 9	I Lyd ^b 7 Maj 13th
Maj ^b 7	7th +5	Maj ^b 7/III _B	min 7th ^b 5	Maj ^b 7/V _B	min 7th ^b 9	(^b VII _B)

THE SEVEN PRINCIPAL SCALES
OF A LYDIAN CHROMATIC SCALE AND ITS PRINCIPAL
AND SUB-PRINCIPAL CHORDMODES

E^b7

Lydian Scale Chordmodes

Lyd Maj 13th	13th	I Lyd Maj 13th/III ^b	I Lyd Maj 13th/+IV ^b	I Lyd Maj 13th/V ^b	min 13th	I Lyd Maj 13th/VII ^b
Maj triad	7th	Maj triad/III ^b	min 7th ^b 5	Maj triad/V ^b	min triad	7th ^b 9
Maj 6th	9th	Maj 6th/III ^b	min 7th ^b 5 ^b 9	Maj 6th/V ^b	min 6th	11th ^b 9
Maj 7th	11th	Maj 7th/III ^b	min 11th ^b 5 ^b 9	Maj 7th/V ^b	min 7th	11th ^b 9 +5
Maj 9th	-	Maj 9th/III ^b	min 11th ^b 5 +5 ^b 9	Maj 9th/V ^b	min 9th	
Maj 7th ^b 5		Maj 7th ^b 5/III ^b (min +5)		Maj 7th ^b 5/V ^b	min 11th	
	II	III	+IV	V	VI	VII

I M2 **II**

D^b

Lydian Augmented Scale Chordmodes

Lyd Aug Maj 13th	13th +11	I LA* Maj 13th/III ^b	I LA Maj 13th/+IV ^b	7th +5 ^b 9	min 13th +7	I LA Maj 13th/VII ^b
Aug Maj triad	7th ^b 5	Aug Maj triad/III ^b	min 7th ^b 5	+9 +11	min +7	7th ^b 9
Aug Maj 7th	9th +11	Aug Maj 7th/III ^b	min 9th ^b 5	7th +5	min 9th +7	7th ^b 9 +9
Aug Maj 9th		Aug Maj 9th/III ^b	min 11th ^b 5	7th +5 ^b 9	min 11th +7	11th ^b 9
Aug Maj 7th ^b 5		Aug Maj 7th ^b 5/III ^b	min 11th +5 +11	7th +5 +9		
Aug Maj 9th +11		Aug Maj 9th +11/III ^b		7th +5 +11		
	II	III	+IV	+V	VI	VII

*LA = Lydian Augmented

Finding a Parent Scale

So, if the chord is $E\flat 7$
then the Lydian Tonic is $D\flat$
and the Parent scale is $D\flat$ Lydian

Finding a Parent Scale

$E\flat 7$ – 2nd mode of $D\flat$ Lydian

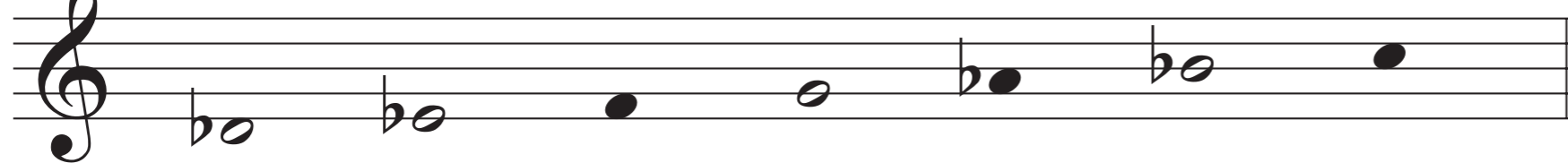


$E\flat 7$ – $E\flat$ Mixolydian

Finding a Parent Scale

E \flat 7

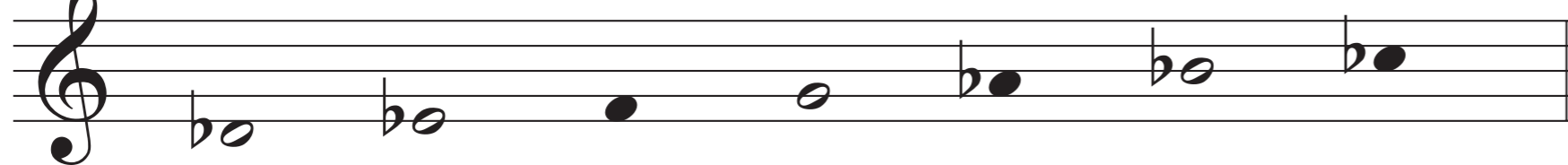
7 R 9 3 11 5 13



A musical staff in treble clef showing the notes of the E \flat 7 Lydian scale: E \flat 2, E \flat 3, G4, A4, B \flat 4, B \flat 5, D6. The notes are marked with fret numbers 7, R, 9, 3, 11, 5, 13 above them.

D \flat Lydian

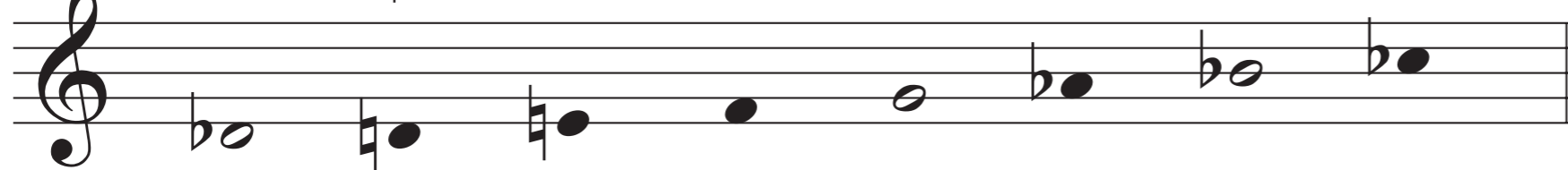
7 R 9 3 11 5 \flat 13



A musical staff in treble clef showing the notes of the E \flat 7 Lydian \flat 7 scale: E \flat 2, E \flat 3, G4, A4, B \flat 4, B \flat 5, D \flat 6. The notes are marked with fret numbers 7, R, 9, 3, 11, 5, \flat 13 above them.

D \flat Lydian \flat 7

7 \natural 7 \flat 9 9 3 11 5 \flat 13



A musical staff in treble clef showing the notes of the E \flat 7 auxiliary diminished blues scale: E \flat 2, G \natural 3, G \flat 3, G4, A4, B \flat 4, B \flat 5, D \flat 6. The notes are marked with fret numbers 7, \natural 7, \flat 9, 9, 3, 11, 5, \flat 13 above them.

D \flat aux. dim.
blues

Chord/Scale Theory after Russell

- Jamey Aebersold – *Jazz Handbook*.
- Richard Grag/Barrie Nettles – *The Chord Scale Theory and Jazz Harmony*
- Andy Jaffe – *Jazz Harmony*
- Mark Levine – *The Jazz Theory Book*
- Joe Mulholland/Tom Hojnacki – *The Berklee Book of Jazz Harmony*

Levine's chapter on chord-scale theory

- Major scale harmony
- Melodic minor scale harmony
- Diminished scale harmony
- Whole-tone scale harmony

Major-scale harmony (from Levine)

Ionian	Cmaj7 (avoid sd 4)
Dorian	Dm7
Phrygian	Esusb9
Lydian	Fmaj7#4
Mixolydian	G7 (avoid sd 4); Gsus
Aeolian	Amb6
Locrian	Bm7b5

Minor-scale harmony (from Levine)

I	CmM7	minor-major
II	Dsus \flat 9	—
III	E \flat maj7 \sharp 5	Lydian augmented
IV	F7 \sharp 11	Lydian dominant
V	CmM7/G	—
VI	Am7 \flat 5	half-diminished; Locrian \sharp 2
VII	B7alt.	altered; dim. whole-tone

The notion of chord/scale unity as the logical approach to the vertical manifestation of harmony was simply overlooked by classical Western theorists. The understanding that the term HARMONY means UNITY, and already complete VERTICAL ONENESS of elements existing in the momentary NOW above time was either missed or dismissed by the founding fathers of Western classical music theory.

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