

## 6.3 Analyzing Diatonic Modes

When analyzing to determine the scale or mode of a passage:

**STEP 1:** Find the *tonal center*. See "*tonic by assertion*" below.

**STEP 2:** Create a *pitch inventory* by listing all the notes low to high starting on the tonal center.

**STEP 3:** Determine the scale or mode in use, based on the *tonal center* and *pitch inventory*.

### Tonic by Assertion

*Tonic by assertion* = Establishing a *tonal center* without the formulas of common practice period music.

*Common practice period tonality* (about 1600-1910) uses melodic formulas like Mi-Re-Do and cadential progressions like V-I, ii-V-I, etc. to establish the tonic as the *tonal center*. Many *pitch-centric pieces* written after 1900ish establish a tonal center *without* these melodic and harmonic formulas, making it more difficult to see the tonal center.

*Tonic by assertion* emphasizes the tonal center with one or more techniques such as:

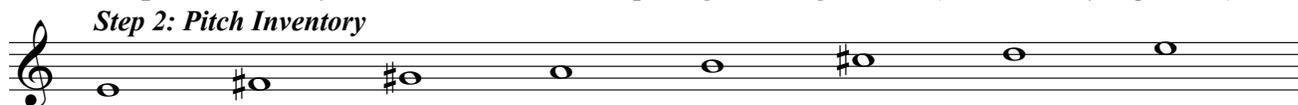
1. **Repetition:** Doubling the note, repeating it, or using it as a pedal point or in a repeating pattern.
2. **Position in the passage:** Making the note the first and/or last note of the passage or movement.
3. **Dynamic emphasis:** Using a louder dynamic or accent marks.
4. **Range emphasis:** Making the note the highest or lowest note of the passage or movement.
5. **Rhythmic emphasis:** *Metric accent* (placing the note on downbeats);  
*Agogic accent* (using longer rhythmic values to emphasize the note).
6. **Harmonic emphasis:** Pairing the note with a harmony or note that is a perfect fifth above.

### Scale/Mode Analysis Example



**STEP 1:** The *tonal center* is E. Although B is emphasized in the first two measures, E is highest, lowest, the most frequent, and the longest rhythmic value (agogic accent). Also, B is a perfect fifth above E.

**STEP 2:** The *pitch inventory* lists all the notes in the passage starting from E (*without a key signature*):



**STEP 3:** Because there are seven notes (don't count E twice), and because the accidentals fit a diatonic key signature for three sharps (F#, C#, and G#), this is a diatonic mode (see 6.2 *The Diatonic Modes*). When analyzing diatonic modes, find the answer using a relative **OR** parallel approach (**NOT** both!):

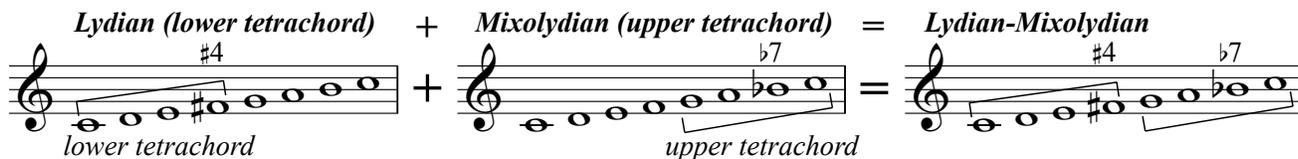
*Relative approach:* 3 sharps = A major. E is the *fifth* scale step in A major, so this is *mixolydian*.

**OR**

*Parallel approach:* This scale is E major with the seventh step lowered (D natural), so it is *mixolydian*.

### Hybrid Modes

*Hybrid mode* = Mode formed from the *lower* tetrachord of one diatonic mode and the *upper* tetrachord of another. Most common are Lydian-Mixolydian (below) and Phrygian-Dorian (natural minor w/ b2, #6).



### Special Cases

1. Scales and tonal centers may change from passage to passage within a single movement.
2. Sometimes a note or two may be missing from the mode. If so, comment on which mode(s) it *could* be if the notes were there.
3. For more than 7 or less than 7 distinct pitches, check 6.4 *Additional Contemporary Scales*.