

Foreword

This is a book for musicians who are passionate about their craft—so passionate that they want to know where it comes from, how it works, and what its possibilities are. This volume is not a casual read, but if you want to thoroughly understand the melodic and harmonic function of scales and modes, Brent and Barkley will take you on a fascinating journey.

Modality begins, well, at the very beginning, with a look at some basic laws of physics involving intervals and the overtone series. Through a step-by-step process, the authors go on to trace the evolution of the pentatonic scale, major scale, modes, and ultimately all of the scales commonly employed by jazz musicians.

Throughout the discussion, they make it clear that all scales (yes, even symmetrical scales—and there are more than you think!) are formed as logical extensions of the basic major scale modes, which themselves are simply collections of consonant fourths derived from the overtone series.

The advantage to examining a scale in terms of its derivation and component parts is that you gain a basic understanding of its inherent characteristics and why it behaves the way it does. The authors elaborate on this as they discuss the cadences and progressions of the various modes one-by-one. We may know from experience that bII-i cadences are effective in Phrygian modes, while bVII-i cadences work well in Aeolian modes, but few of us have explored the reasons why.

The section on The Chromatic Modes is challenging, but also fascinating and worth delving into. The only 'criticism' I could conjure up was, *"Well, I don't think of it that way, but I wonder what other possibilities these concepts might open up for me?"*

This book has been carefully thought out, and explores musical relationships that many of us never dreamed were possible. Few individuals, including musicians, take the time to discover or appreciate the innate mathematical beauty of how music is put together. *"Unified field theory"* is an appropriate subtitle for this volume. It's just uncanny how the surface complexity of music reduces to utter simplicity and sheer logic.

Although some will read the volume cover-to-cover (not at one sitting!), others will find it more suited as a reference work. The copious appendices cover a broad array of topics with clear tables and charts.

If your approach to music theory is, *"I know what works, but I want to know why and what else I might explore,"* then this is the book for you.

Dr. Robert Rawlins

Coordinator of Music Theory and Chair of the Department of Music at Rowan University
Author of *"Jazzology: The Encyclopedia of Jazz Theory for All Musicians"* (with N.E. Bahha) and *"A Simple and Direct Guide to Jazz Improvisation"* (Hal Leonard Corp)

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