Creative Harping

Modes for Moods

and their Use in Improvisation

The Locrian Mode

Timeless, Dark, Sinister, Oddball, Devilish, Oriental

In the key of C, the Locrian Mode begins and ends with the B. It is the 7th degree. It is considered one of the minor modes. In hospice and hospitals we use this mode with a patients who are taking their very last breaths. It is a mode that can suspend in timelessness. The interval of a major seventh (C up to B) is the highest degree of tension and movement. It wants to resolve It is esstatic! Yet, there is a primal experience of the seventh interval when not used as a leading tone - it is a sustained experience without falling into atonality or into a yearning for the octave. When improvising, I anchor the Locrian Right Hand with an Aeolian bass in the left hand. For instance, a B in the right hand against an Am chord in the left hand. Below are some exerpts that I found that really describe this mode.

> "OPUS ('Oirois), in. antient Greece, the chief city of the Opuntian Locrians; the walls of the town may still be seen on a hill about 6 m. S.E. of the modern Atalante, and about I m. from the thannel which separates the mainland from Euboea. LOCRIA - The Locrians were an early tribe located in central Greece, north of the Bay of Corinth. They were subdivided into four local associations; the Opondioi (East Locrians), the Ozoles (West Locrians), The Epicnimedioi, and the Hypocnimedioi."

> "In the Archaic and even the Classical period of Greece, it appears that the greatest diversity in local oral traditions was on the level of song, with a wide variety of different melodic patterns native to different locales. 1 In their diversity, the local traditions of song were less adaptable to the evolving synthesis that I call Panhellenization."

> "Corresponding to Terpander's "invention" of this scale is his "invention" of the seven-string lyre, displacing the older four-string type. The iconographical evidence of the eighth and early seventh centuries B.C. corroborates this tradition: the norm during this period is a four-string instrument, which is replaced after this period by a seven-string instrument. 1 It has been said that the spread of the seven-string lyre in the seventh century "betokens a revolution in music." 2 In terms of the Panhellenic synthesis that I am proposing, the older four-string lyre would be adequate for any single local **nomos**, while the newer seven-string lyre, which represents the "revolution" of the seventh century, would fit a wide variety of **nomoi**, irrespective of local provenience, within a new interrelated system. 3 In the diction of Pindar, Apollo is represented as leading the choral performance of 'all sorts of **nomoi**' as he plays on the seven-string lyre, which is described as **heptaglôssos** 'having seven languages' (5.24). "

> *Ionian* [= "Iastian"], *Dorian*, *Phrygian*, *Lydian*, *Mixolydian*, and *Syntonolydian*. These six **harmoniai** are de scribed in terms of fixed scales by Aristides Quintilianus, whose testimony seems to be a genuine reflex of old traditions in the actual performance of Archaic Greek lyric poetry. 2 Notable for its omission in both Plato *Republic* and Aristides Quintilianus, is the *Aeolian* mode, specifically designated as a **harmoniâ** in Pratinas of Phleious PMG 712 3 and Lasus of Hermione PMG 702. 4 Heraclides Ponticus equates the *Aeolian* of Lasus with a new replace ment category, the *Hypodorian*. Other sources equate the *Aeolian* specifically with *Locrian*, as "invented" by Xenocritus of Locri (scholia to Pindar *Olympian* 11.17); clearly such an old category as *Locrian* would be out of step with any newer systematization. According to Athenaeus 625e the *Locrian* became obsolete after Pindar. Which brings us back to our point of departure, the reference in Pindar F 140b SM to a local **harmoniâ** of the Locrians that is a rival of the *Ionian* "Muse." http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/nagy/PHTL/chapter3.html

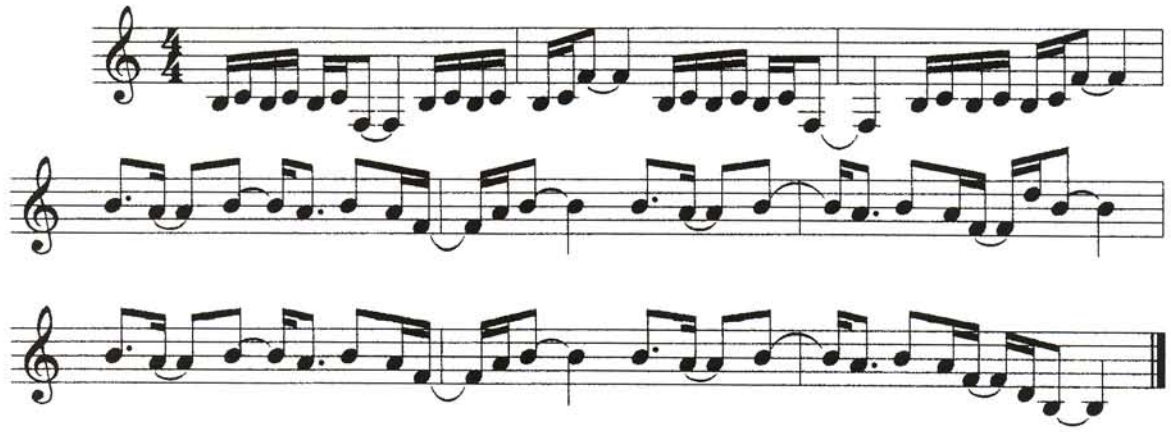
I thought it was interesting to read this next passage. Perhaps the Locrian mode was attributed to the Locrians because it sounded so diabolic and unruly. The next historical entry leads us to believe that the Locrians were indeed quite unruly.

> "ZALEUCUS, of Locri Epizephyrii in Magna Graecia, Greek lawgiver, is supposed to have flourished about 660 B.C. He is said to have been the author of the first written code of laws amongst the Greeks. According to the common story, the Locrians consulted the Delphic oracle as to a remedy for the disorder and lawlessness that were rife amongst them. Having been ordered to make laws for themselves, they commissioned one Zaleucus, a shepherd and slave (in later tradition, a man of distinguished family) to draw up a code."

"One mode was strictly forbidden. It is called the Locrian mode. You may hear this blasphemous mode by starting your scale on a "B" and playing only the white keys to the next "B." The reason this mode was forbidden was because it contained the "flattened fifth" you mentioned (called a "diminished fifth" or a "tritone" in musical terms). This was the Devil's interval. (other modes may have this same interval, but it was in such a place as one didn't really notice t for reasons too complex to go into here.) By the way, the music to "West Side Story" is based on the tritone interval.

A high school student composed this piece in the Locrian mode and name it: HEADACHE. See if indeed, it doesn't remind you of the music from West Side Story with the tunes like 'Something's Coming', 'Jetsong', and "Maria", all those with tritones.

HEADACHE



But why then, do we use this strange mode and interval at the time of a patient's release? Played very slow, it no longer has the quality of cacaphony but that of timelessness. I found this lovely passage by a man, Steven Harvey, in which he speaks about his thoughts of the modes in relationship to the seasons.

"Food for thought. Steven teaches English in Georgia, is a lover of Appalachian mountain song, and plays banjo with the local folk group "Butternut Creek and Friends". **Bound for Shady Grove** is Steven's personal journey into the spirit of the music, following the seven seasons of life.

Why four seasons? Perhaps like the days of the week or the ages of man or the dwarfs of legend, there are seven seasons in all, one for each of the ancient musical scales. The Ionian mode is the mode of spring, all lightness, rising effortlessly, it seems, like a winged seed, floating past the gray trunks of trees to open ground, where it whirls reluctantly to moist earth. Mixolydian is the mode of consummation, when young men achieve full height and the curves of a woman create a waist that will break the fifth string on any man's banjo.
In the Dorian mode the summer days drag on but the honeymoon is definitely over. Dorian is the mode of resentment, and resentment precedes sadness—that is the lesson of the sharpened sixth note, a shrill shatter ing of the minor scale. Life stings us before it hurts, we lash out before we get hurt. In the Aeolian mode we bring in the lawn chairs and hang them from nails in the basement, put up beans, freeze corn, and lock down windows. We stack firewood and fill bins, ready to wait out the winter. We get restless. We acquire a measure of loneliness. In the Phrygian mode, the groan of saws cutting winter wood reverberates in the valley every Saturday afternoon. The shaggy hide of mountain ridges shows through the bare, skeletal branches of winter trees, and the creek, so jolly in spring and a happy relief in summer, turns sinister, glittering like a knife in the sun and going gunmetal gray on cloudy days. We come to our limits in the Lydian mode . Deep in the winter of its scale we hear mostly silence, an emptiness we can no longer fill. In the Locrian mode we leave silence behind. In practice it is nowhere—and everywhere. The Locrian scale lacks a true tonic, so a tune is endless. The melody line, unable to resolve itself or come home, can't stop. There are no songs. It is where all songs end, or, more precisely, never end. We fill silence with eternity. We have at last got the ear of God, and he listens for us ...

Here is some more information about the seven-stringed lyre and modes from Ed Friedlander, MD

The Ancient Musical Modes: What Were They?

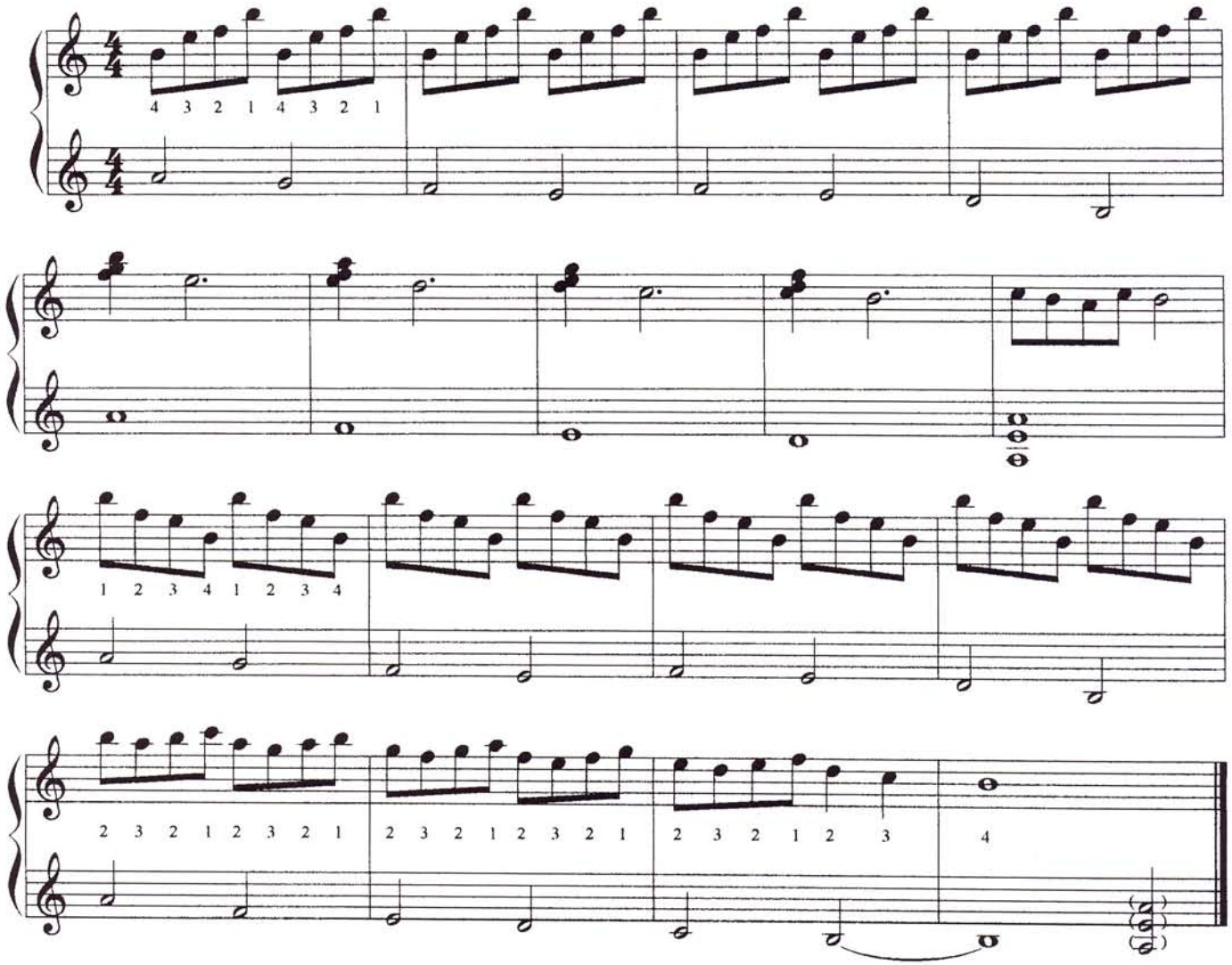
> "In the Locrian mode, the dead-center position of the dominant makes this even more unmusical. A music profes sional told me once that no ethnomusicologist has ever documented a folk tune in what medieval theorists called the "Locrian mode". I browsed a little in Plato, Aristotle, pseudo-Plutarch's "De Musica", and of course the Oxford History of Music, and came away wondering if the medieval music theorists (Boethius, Gregory the Great, their successors) really meant the same thing as did the Greeks who named the modes. Today most people (following a scholar named Westphal) tell us that the Greek modes were indeed used as "scales" with the tonic notes being the low-pitched one, just as the church mode theorists say. This seems to be based on statements in Plato and Aristotle that the modes had distinct emotive qualities, as our major and minor scales do. Another school of thought (that of Munro) claims that for the ancients, the modes were actually keys, i.e., you could play any melody in any mode. If this is true, then the ancient Greeks had either perfect pitch or a standard pitchpipe.I think people have probably liked similar tunes in different eras. I tried to figure out how the ancient Greeks would have played some of our favorites. Ancient Greek lyres typically had seven strings. (Some Hebrew lyres must have had ten strings - see Psalm 33.) The system of modes is also called "harmoniae", which meant "fitting" or "tuning". Greek writers on music talk about the normal tuning comprising two tetrachords, (a series of four notes with the lowest and highest separated by a major fourth and sharing the center string). Pythagoras and Terpander are both credited with the idea of having the highest string be an octave of the lowest string.

Here are examples of how to tune a seven-string lyre to play some popular melodies with the lowest string arbitrarily set a "C" with the tonic underlined.

Yankee Doodle (verse): C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
Man on the Flying Trapeze: C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
My Grandfather's Clock: C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
City of New Orleans (Verse; Arlo Guthrie): C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
Hi Ho ("Snow White"): C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald: C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
O Come Emmanuel (Verse): C-D-E-F-G-A-A# (original Dorian mode?)
My Darling Clementine: C-E-F-G-A-A#-C (original Ionian Mode?)
Streets of Loredo: C-E-F-G-A-A#-C (original Ionian Mode?)
I Saw Three Ships: C-E-F-G-A-A#-C (original Ionian Mode?)
My Country 'Tis of Thee / God Save the King: C-C#-D#-F-F#-G#-A# (original Locrian mode?)
It's a Wonderful Life: C-C#-D#-F-F#-G#-A# (original Locrian mode?)
Now at the Dawning of the Day (hymn): C-C#-D#-F-F#-G#-A# (original Locrian mode?)
Blowin' in the Wind (Bob Dylan): C-C#-D#-F-F#-G#-A# (original Locrian mode?)
Danny Boy (Verse): C-D-D#-F-G-A#-C (original Lydian mode?)
When Johnny Comes Marching Home: C-D#-F-G-G#-A#-C (original Mixolydian mode?)
Rock of Ages: C-D#-F-G-G#-A#-C (original Mixolydian mode?) Ten Little Indians: C-D-E-F-G-A-C (original Phrygian mode?)
Captain Kangaroo: C-D-E-F-G-A-C (original Phrygian mode?)
Bear Went Over the Mountain: C-D-E-F-G-A-(C) (original Phrygian mode?)
Where Have You Been Billy Boy: C-D-E-F-G-A-C (original Phrygian mode?)
Oh! Susannah!: C-D-E-F-G-A-(C) (original Phrygian mode?)
Aeolian mode?Popeye the Sailor Man: C-E-F-G-A-B-C
Take My Breath Away ("Top Gun"): C-D-E-F#-G-A-B
Sailing, Sailing: C-C#-D#-F-G-G#-A#
Hoppity Hooper: C-D-F-G-A-A#-C
Jingle Bells Rock: C-D-D#-F-G-A-A#
Harry Potter theme: C-C#-F-G-G#-A-A#A#

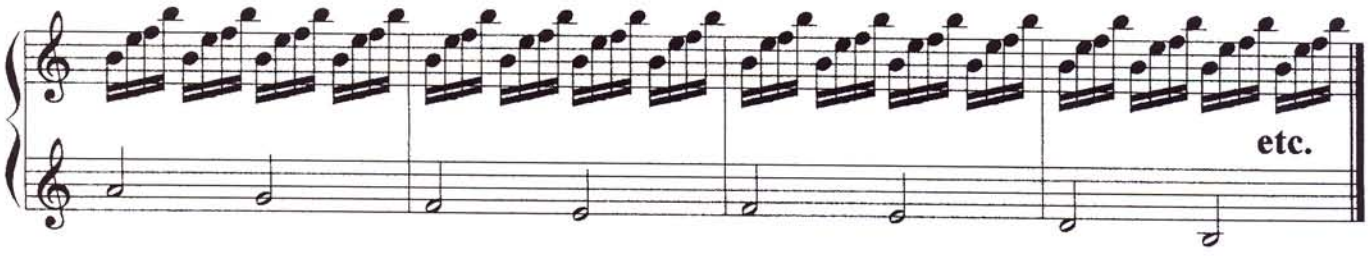
> "These are my best guesses about which was which, based on this information:
> The Greek musical system supposedly began with a four-stringed lyre playing a tetrachord C-D-E-F. When three more strings were added, they supposedly made a second tetrachord along with the fourth string. This is the "Yankee Doodle" tuning.

Locrian Exercise #1



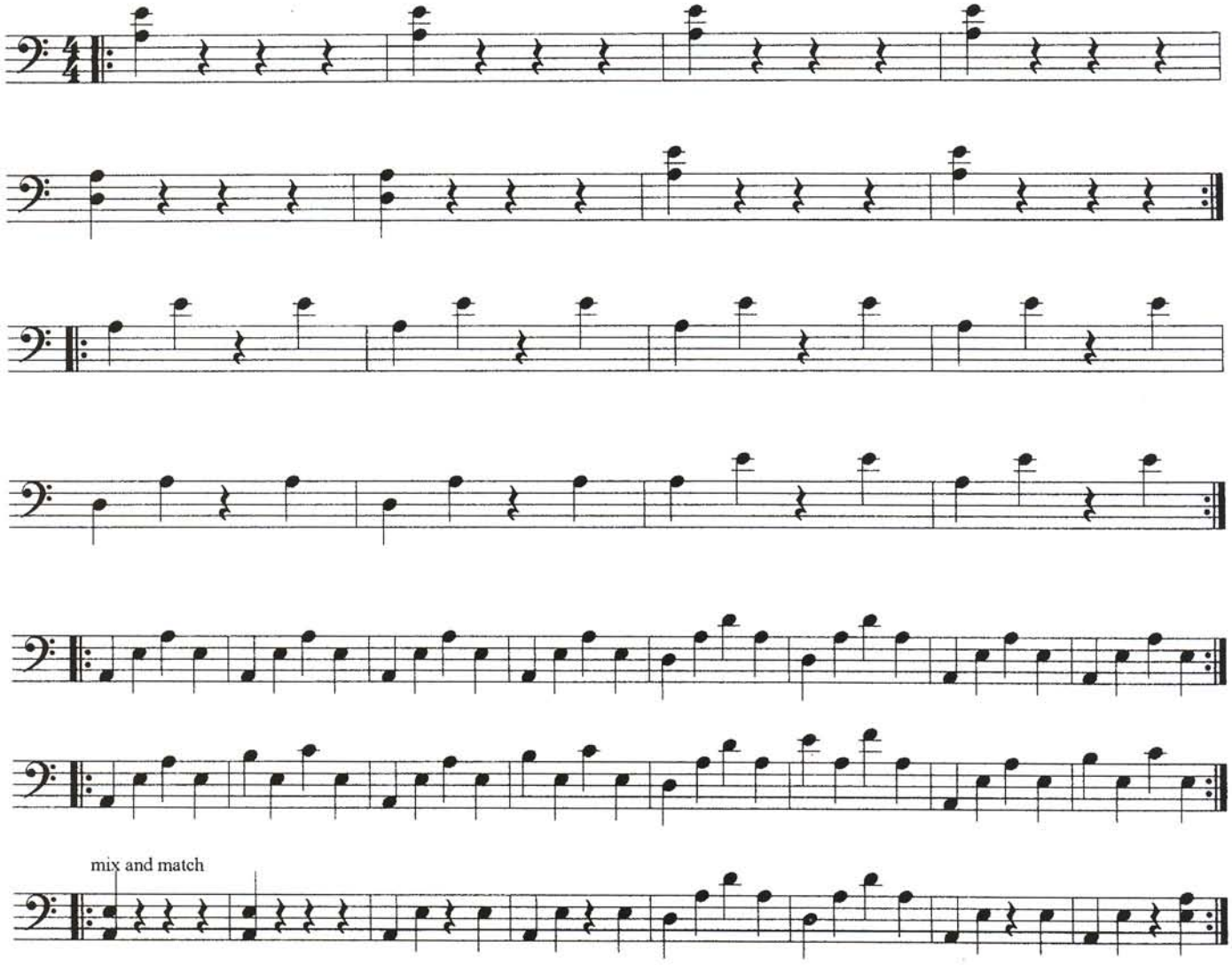
This sounds like s strange exercise because it doesn't resolve but working this exericse will eventually allow you to do the feathering arpeggios in your improvisations. If it bothers you greatly, end with an Am chord.

Locrian Exercise #2



On this exercise, double the right hand to sixteenth notes. Apply the same for the 3rd line. You are now building up speed.

Locrian
8 Bar Chord Change Phrases

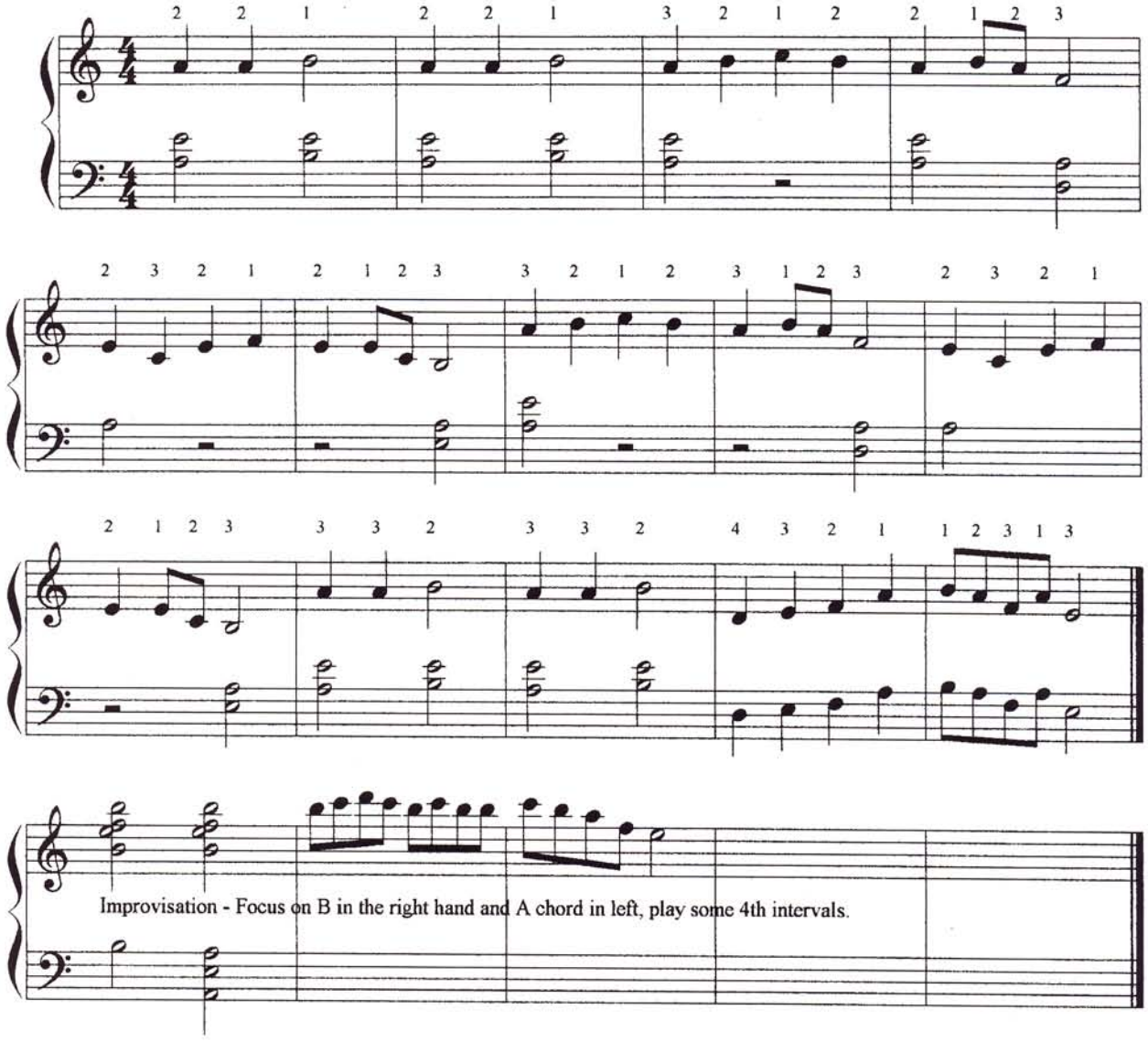


Note: Remember - the right hand needs to play along without looking at it and always center on the B note. If your right hand does not seem to move along, then you have attempted a left-hand pattern that is beyond your challenge point.

CREATIVE HARPING - Christina Tourin
Modes for Moods Series

Sakura

Beginner
Japan - arr. C. Tourin



Sakura

Intermediate
Japan - arr. C. Tourin