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Jason Ditzian · Nov 27, 2023 · 2 min read

Klezmer Scales

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Freygish

The most common Major mode of Klezmer is the Freygish scale (also called Ahava Raba). D freygish can easily be, and is often, written in the key of Bb as the Phrygian mode (D) with a sharp 3rd.



D - Eb - F# - G - A - Bb - C - D

If written in D, the scale would be: 1 - b2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - b6 - b7 - 1

The Primary Chords used in the Freygish mode are the

I. D major

IV. G minor

vii. C minor

If we are to harmonize each note of the scale we can start to find some of the functions.

I / Dmajor/D7 acts as the tonic

II / Eb has a dominant function

#iiiidim / F#dim doesn't appear much

iv / Gm appears often as it has the predominant function

vdim / Adim as is the V chord, has the function of a V chord. Imagine the Cadence vdim -> I (Adim D)

VI+ / Bb+ doesn't work, forget it

bvii / Cm Also acts like a dominant chord and is often found at the end of phrases to return to the tonic (D)

Mi-Sheberach

The common minor scale in Klezmer is Mi-Sheberach. A D Mi-sheberach scale is usually written in C or F. In C, the scale is a Dorian mode with a #4. In F (or D natural minor) the scale is #4 and b6.



D - E - F - G# - A - B - C - D

If written in the natural minor key of F, the scale would be: 1 - 2 - 3 - #4 - 5 - b6 - 7 - 1

The Primary Chords used in the Mi-sheberach scale are the

- I. D minor
- II. E Dominant
- V. A minor

The secondary chord of Mi-sheberach is the VII chord, C major.

Adonai Molokh

Adonai Molokh is the Dominant scale in Klezmer. A D Adonai Molokh scale is usually written in the key of C with a leading tone before the I.



(C#) D - E - F# - G - A - B - C - D

If written in the key of D this would be: (7) - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - b7 - 1

The primary chords in this scale are

- I. D major
- IV. G major
- V. A major or A dominant
- v. A minor

Though Klezmer tunes are written in all keys, they usually center around (D) in the circle of 5ths. This is due to the nature of the instruments involved in Klezmer and how they are tuned.

here is a section of the circle of 5ths for E through F

(E) Freygish, Mi-Sheberach, Andonai Molokh

Freygish			Mi-Sheberach			Adonai Molokh		
E	A-	D-	E-	F#7	B-	D	E	A B7/A-

(A) Freygish, Mi-Sheberach, Andonai Molokh

Freygish	Mi-Sheberach	Adonai Molokh
A D- G-	A- B7 E- G	A D E7/A-

(D) Freygish, Mi-Sheberach, Andonai Molokh

Freygish	Mi-Sheberach	Adonai Molokh
D G- C-	D- E7 A- C	D G A7/A-

(G) Freygish, Mi-Sheberach, Andonai Molokh

Freygish	Mi-Sheberach	Adonai Molokh
G C- F-	G- A7 D- F	G C D7/A-

(C) Freygish, Mi-Sheberach, Andonai Molokh

Freygish	Mi-Sheberach	Adonai Molokh
C F- Bb-	C- D7 G- Bb	C F G7/A-

(F) Freygish, Mi-Sheberach, Andonai Molokh

Freygish	Mi-Sheberach	Adonai Molokh
F Bb- Eb-	F- G7 C- Eb	F Bb C7/A-

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