

1-1-2022

Mode Mixture in John Mayer's Continuum

Gabe Fankhauser

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/jmtp>



Part of the [Music Pedagogy Commons](#), and the [Music Theory Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fankhauser, Gabe (2022) "Mode Mixture in John Mayer's Continuum," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*. Vol. 36, Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/jmtp/vol36/iss1/12>

This Resource is brought to you for free and open access by Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy by an authorized editor of Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections.

Mode Mixture in John Mayer's *Continuum*

Name: _____

G. Fankhauser

Part Writing

1. John Mayer, "Stop This Train" (*Continuum*, 2006), 1:15–2:00 <https://youtu.be/2UiX4dUUjWc?t=75>
- Write parts for SATB, starting in 4/4 meter in *close position* (G, B, D, F \sharp). In m. 1, the sevenths need not resolve down. In m. 2, the cadential six-four resolves to a dominant as expected, but then two passing tones continue a chromatic descent: the figured bass " \flat_3-2 " represent scale degrees $\flat_7-\hat{6}$. Watch for parallel fifths at the cadence, with B to A in the melody. There is a way to revoice m. 2 to avoid them, but parallel fifths may be OK in this genre. If you keep them, label them.
 - The word "stop" is accompanied by $ii^{\flat 6}_5$, "borrowed" from the parallel minor, with an unusually dissonant 7–6 suspension. Identify the rare "seventh-chord" quality on the downbeat (G-B \flat -D-F \sharp): _____
 - What is the topic of the song? What is the "train" that Mayer wants stopped? The major key might imply a positive mood, but dissonance in the verse and the chorus express a heavier narrative. Explain.
 - Sing each of your parts along with a recording. Each quarter note represents a measure.

Verse 2					Chorus				

D:	IV ⁷	I ⁷	IV ⁷	I ⁷	(7–6)	ii ⁰⁶ ₅	I ⁶	V ⁷ /V	V ⁸⁻⁷ ₄₋₃₋₂	I
Lyrics:	Don't know how else to say it. I don't want to see my parents go. One generation's length away From fighting life out on my own.				Stop this train. I want to get off and go Home again. I can't take the speed it's Moving in. I know I can't, but, Honestly, won't someone stop this ... train?					

**Analysis**

2. John Mayer, "Gravity" (*Continuum*, 2006)
- At the end of the introductory guitar solo in his studio version, Mayer plays a leap from E up to A (see the somewhat simplified version in "a"). In some more recent live versions, however, he plays an E \flat up to A (see "b"). What scale degree is altered, and how is it altered? _____
- Why might have Mayer chosen to make that alteration? (See the lyrics below.)

To fit with the E \flat , the band changes its harmony from C^{add6} (C-E-G-A, often written simply "C6"). While they could choose A⁰⁷/C (C-E \flat -G-A, often written Cm6), they play F7 (F-A-C-E \flat). Provide harmonic analysis of these two options:

In G, A⁰⁷/C (or Cm6) = _____.

In G, F7 = _____ (HINT: Not "V⁷/bIII")

Lyrics: Gravity is working against me,
and gravity wants to bring me down.

- a. Studio version (0:29–0:34)

<https://youtu.be/7VBex8zbDRs?t=22>

Slow blues

G C C6

- b. Some live versions

Slow blues

G C F7

G: I IV

Live in LA with Alessia Cara (2017), c. 1:02

<https://youtu.be/UY7FpJbODvE?t=57>

Live in Singapore (2019), c. 2:16:15

<https://youtu.be/0cQftXU5D9s?t=8170>