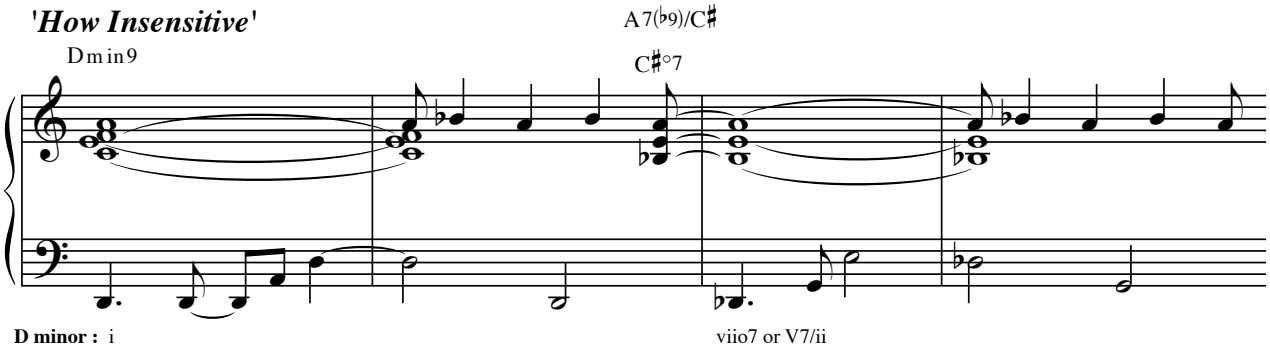
The Aeolian Mode

The second measure of Antonio Carlos Jobims' 'How Insensitive' (Ex.6.1i) employs the natural sixth in the melody. Note the melody demonstrates the natural or flattened 6ths gravitational pull toward the 5th scale degree. Another common employment of the Aeolian mode and its natural or flattened 6th is in line progressions such as that demonstrated in Ex.6.1j

Ex.6.1i

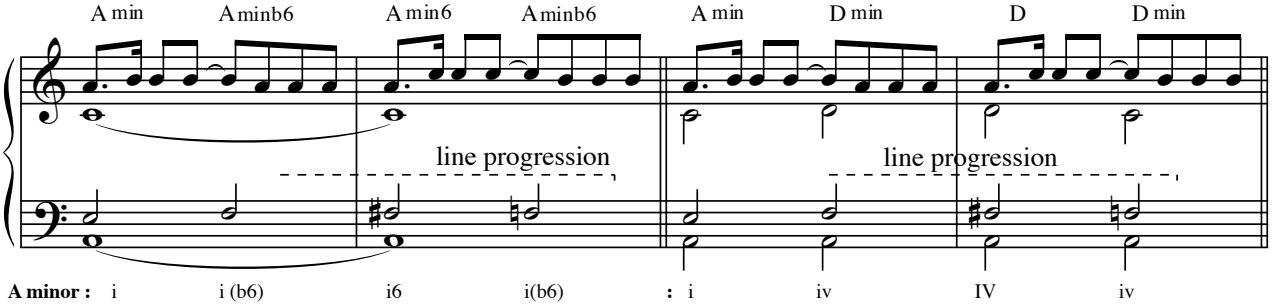
'How Insensitive'



Observe the line progression in the left hand of Ex.6.1j from the 'James Bond' movie theme. Notice how the natural 6th of the scale (F) is referred to as the b6 when using chord symbols. This is a common practice in Jazz chord nomanclature and is due to the mode's infrequent use in comparison to minor modes that have a raised 6th, such as the dorian or melodic minor.

Ex.6.1j

'Movie Theme'



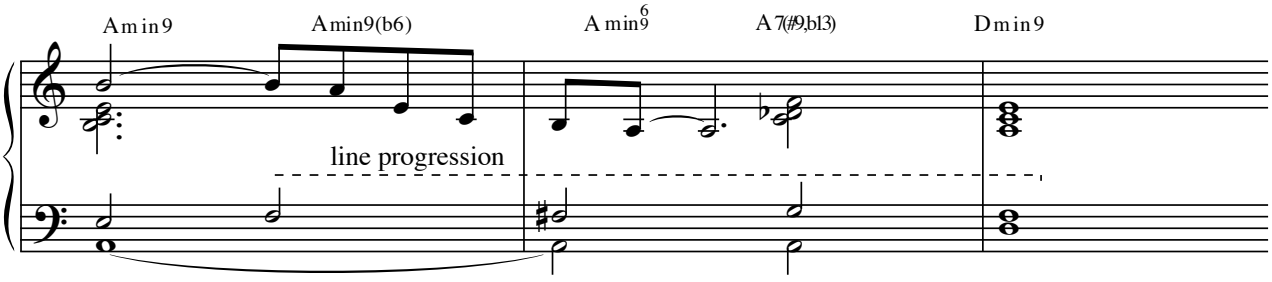
Ex.6.1k

'Reharmonized Movie Theme'

Often when line progressions takes place the harmony significantly changes or a modulation occurs, as demonstrated in the 'Reharmonized Movie Theme' above (*Ex.6.1k).* Notice this line progression becomes part of each new harmony and/or key as it modulates into the iv minor (D) and then V7/V (D7) chord. The below version of 'Cry Me a River' (Ex.6.1l) also demonstrates a line progression employing the natural or flattened 6th.

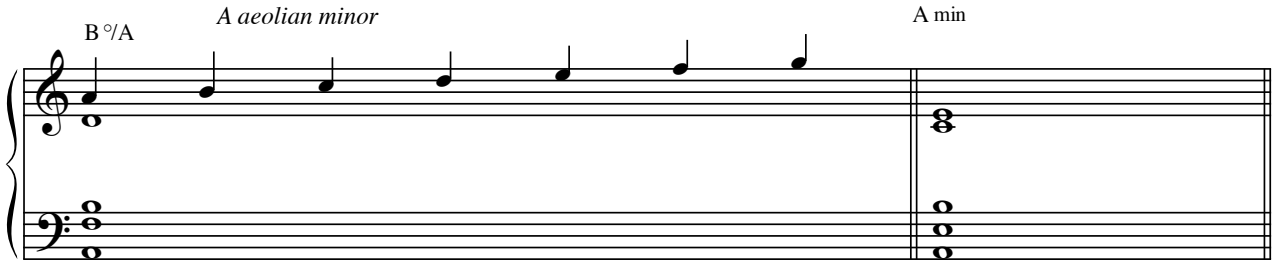
Ex.6.1l

'Cry Me a River'

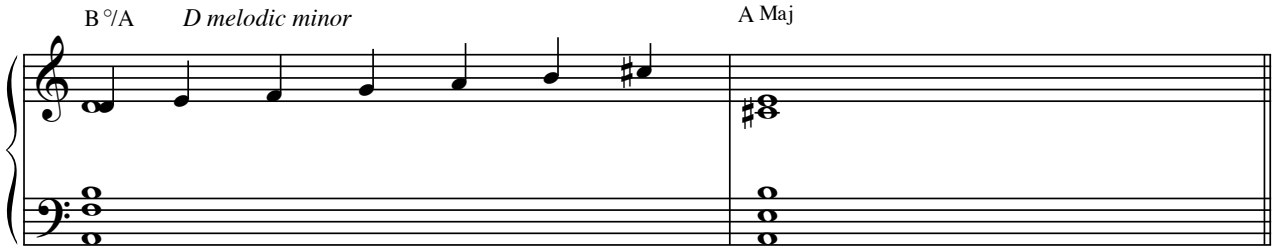


The Aeolian Mode

Ex.6.1m



Ex.6.1n



There is one other harmony I'd like to discuss in regard to the Aeolian mode or natural minor before moving on. Although the voicings in Ex6.1m & n above do not employ the 3rd and 7th degrees of A minor, the A minor Aeolian mode would be an acceptable scale choice for constructing melodies and/or improvising in conjunction with these harmonies. This is especially the case with Ex.61m, which resolves to minor.

The chord in the first bar of Ex.61m is also commonly employed in pedal sections and musicians often think of it in different ways. Here are a few;

A diminished triad one whole step above the root, i.e. BøA

A minor 6th chord in 2nd inversion one perfect fourth above the root, i.e. Dmin/A

A half diminished 7th chord in 3rd inversion, i.e. Bø/A

Having mutiple ways to think of a sonority like this better enables us to identify, replicate or implement it in different keys and/or varying musical contexts.

As previously mentioned, when these chords resolve to a minor key, the Aeolian mode is the preferred scale choice for melodies. When the chord resolves to a major triad, as Ex.61n, the melodic minor scale a perfect fourth above the root (in this case D melodic minor) is the preferred scale choice. For more about this and harmonies related to the melodic minor scale refer to the chapter 'Melodic Minor Harmony' on page 68.