Rhythm Syllable Systems

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Origins

- French Time-Names, early 19th Century
- Pierre Galin, French Mathematician
  - “We should not recommend teaching a child to speak by means of reading, or place a book before him to show how to pronounce words. Yet this is what is done in music teaching: the child is required to perform from written notes; he is made to read before he knows how to sol-fa, that is, before he can speak...” (1818)
  - Used words’ syllables to match notes.

Sound Before Sight

- Rhythm syllable systems
  - Provide a way to experience rhythms
  - Facilitate the comprehension and retention of patterns in audiation (hearing/comprehending in one’s mind the sound of music that isn’t or may have never been physically present) – Gordon
- Characteristics
  - Based on how rhythm is audiated, not notated
  - Each sound associated with unique rhythm element
  - Comprehensive for as many meters and rhythms as possible
  - Conductive to performing many rhythm patterns

[Insert diagrams or visual aids if applicable]
Some Misconceptions

- Rhythm Syllable Systems are just for young kids, secondary teachers don’t need to know or use them.
- If kids are going to end up counting in secondary ensembles, why not start with counting?
- All systems work the same way.

Syllable System Menu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Name</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Original Syllables</th>
<th>Functional/Beat</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[French Time Names] – early 19th C</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>French words assigned to notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Luther Whiting Mason] – 1899s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Vowels change for strong/weak beat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Dalcroze (Eurhythmics)] – 1900s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Movement and words in running</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counting (sluca) – 1940s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Syllables assigned to subdivisions (doesn’t adjust perfectly with meter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodály (Curwen) – 1960s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Syllables assigned to notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orff – 1960s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Use in conjunction with other systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Froseth/Gordon – 1980s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusts with meter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takadimi – 1990s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusts with meter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider this

- Syllables are not the entire solution to the problem of teaching rhythm
- Sequence & scope provide context
- Heavily emphasized by Kodály approach, also Conversational Solfege
- Mathematical skills required may be beyond young students
- Fractions and time signatures are confusing.
- Beat vs. rhythm (beats must be understood FIRST)
- Functional Systems vs. Notation Specific Syllables
  - Functional: Distinguish beats and subdivisions, provide context
  - Notation specific: Identify notation
- Complex meters and rhythms, as well as tempo
You Say, I Say

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Mason} & \text{Ta} & \text{Ta} & \text{Te} & \text{Te} \\
\hline
\text{Counting} & 1 & 2 & 3+ & 4 \\
\hline
\text{Kodály} & \text{Ta} & \text{Ta} & \text{Ti-Ti} & \text{Ta} \\
\hline
\text{Orff} & \text{Will} & \text{You} & \text{Be my} & \text{Friend?} \\
\hline
\text{Dalcroze} & \text{Walk} & \text{Walk} & \text{Run} & \text{Walk} \\
\hline
\text{Froseth/} & \text{Du} & \text{Du} & \text{Dodo} & \text{Du} \\
\text{Gordon} & & & & \\
\hline
\text{Takadimi} & \text{Ta} & \text{Ta} & \text{Ta-di} & \text{Ta} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

One System To Rule Them All?

- Palmer, 1976
- Compared Kodály vs. Gordon syllables
- Concluded that students could have fun in music class even while learning music notation
- (gains made for both treatment groups, slightly better with Gordon, but not statistically significantly better)

Takadimi Proponents:

- Rhythm Syllable systems should
  - Lead to accuracy and musicality in performance
  - Provide understanding of rhythmic structure
  - Facilitate aural identification of rhythmic patterns
  - Use precise and consistent language
  - Address non-traditional issues (multi-meter, modulation of meter/ tempo, complex syncopation, complex triplet beat groupings)
- Takadimi (and Gordon, for that matter) transitions well to counting: substitute beat numbers for initial attack (Ta or Du)
- Developed as a Music Theory Pedagogical tool, not an elementary music tool (suitable for older students)
Consistency is One Key

- Literature suggests the use of a system consistently is the key.
- Young students’ brains are fairly agile, however.
- Consistency in K-12 setting
  - “Starting From Scratch”
  - Being conscious of the transfer of prior knowledge
  - Elementary music transition to counting
  - Middle school (and high school) aid transition by looking backward
  - Tools for solving sight-reading problems
- Audiation and dictation exercises for all ages

Sequence Resources

1. Kodály
2. Gordon
3. Takadimi

Echo Me...

1. Kodály
2. Gordon
3. Takadimi
Western Rhythm Syllable Systems
Historical and Background Information

Luther Whiting Mason

- 1880s
  - Student of Lowell Mason, Pestalozzian ideas
  - Adapted French Time-Names system for US and Japan
  - Unit is the measure, rather than the pulse
  - Features
    - Original syllables (not words)
    - Vowel changes in second half of measure (downbeat)
      - Ta ta te
      - Ta fa fa ta to to to
  - Lowell Mason
    - Adaptation features syllable assigned to beat: “ta”

Counting

- 1960s System (McHose/Tibbs system; Eastman System)
  - Modified by Eastman Professors Allen McHose and Ruth Tibbs
  - 1940s
  - Feel the strong beats within the context of counting
  - Simple vs. compound meter
    - 1-te, 2-te...
    - 1-te-te-a, 2-te-te-a
    - 1-la-lee, 2-la-lee
  - Gordon’s first method was similar (Tometics)
    - 1-ne, 2-ne
    - 1-na-ni, 2-na-ni
Kodály

- 1960s, from Hungarian Music Education model in Hungary (named for creator, Zoltán Kodály)
- Kodály viewed rhythm as an outgrowth of movement and dance and flow of spoken language.
- “one of the most important tasks of rhythmic education is the systematic preparation of children for comprehensive music reading.”
- Syllables assigned to rhythmic symbols
  - Ta, ti-ti, tiri-tiri (or tika tika), etc.

Dalcroze

- Emile Jacques Dalcroze
  - Method began as early as early 1900s
  - Eurhythmics, Solfege, Improvisation
    - No prescribed syllables
    - Improved rhythm syllables
    - Greek Rhythm Modes
  - May be used in conjunction with syllables, reinforce and enhance.
  - Emphasis on movement and timing, lots of games and improv.
  - Rhythm not merely the next note that follows

Orff-Schulwerk

- Carl Orff
  - Began teaching ideas in 1932
  - Method gained recognition in the 1960s
  - Sound before sight continues
  - Speech patterns take precedence
  - Associate words and syllabic divisions in speech patterns
  - Use with familiar poems, rhymes, texts or created by teacher/student
  - Often combined with Kodály (or other) syllable systems, but not prescribed by the method.
Froseth/Gordon

- James Froseth and Albert Blaser, 1970s
- Beat-based system
- Beat: “du” regardless of subdivision of the beat
- Different syllables for different subdivisions
- Edwin Gordon adopted duple meter “du-de” and triple meter “du-da-di” in the 1970s
- Conversational Solfège (Feierabend) also makes use of these syllables.
- Singing sounds more appealing
- 12-step program for music literacy

References (1 of 2)


Takadimi

- 1990s, Richard Hoffman, William Pelto, John White (Ithaca College)
- Named for an Indian Rhythm system, but designed for Western Tonal Rhythm (European/US music)
- Created by Music Theorists
  - Based on research, learning theories and best practice
- Beat-oriented (functional) syllable system
  - Syllables assigned to beats and beat subdivisions
  - Transfers regardless of meter
References (2 of 2)


