

Sight-Singing Lesson Models

It seems strange that musical instruction has always been begun through the eye of the pupil, instead of through his ear. It is surely evident that we should teach the oral language of music before the written language. For instance, we should not recommend teaching a child to speak by means of reading, or place a book before him to show him 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.

Pierre Galin

This chapter presents lesson models for choral singers who possess varying degrees of skill. It is organized sequentially, from prenotational to advanced readers. The sight-singing system presented with each lesson varies (numbers, movable "do," fixed "do"), not because the lesson requires it but to illustrate that any sight-singing system can be used. All of the lessons are designed to be presented as an activity separate from the rehearsal of the literature. Integrating sight-singing into rehearsal will be the topic of chapter 5.

At the beginning of the year, teachers must assess what the students know and can do in sight-singing. If the choir has been auditioned or comes from the same feeder school, then perhaps the teacher has the necessary information on their skill level. If not, then it is important to do some form of diagnostic assessment, such as the procedure discussed in chapter 6. Many teachers, especially in middle school, find that their students know next to nothing about reading music, because of either no elementary music instruction or elementary instruction that focused entirely on rote song learning; they are prenotational. This is the point

at which many teachers give up or make the crucial mistake of trying to teach music fundamentals via the college theory model, which often stresses rules and writing before doing. These teachers will tell you that their students *hate* sight-singing, and no doubt they are correct.

There are several important points to keep in mind in preparing to introduce sight-singing to a group of "prenotational" singers. The first is that students do not need to know all the rules or conventions of music notation to begin sight-singing. Students can perform many things before they necessarily understand them thoroughly. For example, they may not know a solfège or number system, but they can accurately sing a major scale. Knowing the sound of and being able to sing a major scale is a powerful sight-singing tool that most of your students should already possess.

The second point to keep in mind is that if you want students to learn to read *music*, use music to teach them, not exercises. Avoid lessons on isolated rhythm or pitch patterns if they do not lead to an exercise or melody being read that day.

The third point to consider is that sight-singing is an act of recognition; the singer sees a notational pattern that reminds them of a sound pattern that they can then reproduce. Thus students cannot sight-sing a pattern that they have not heard. Good sight singers can sing a melody that they have never seen or heard before, but the pitch and rhythm patterns that make up that melody must be familiar in order for the notation to trigger an internal sound model of the melody. As Kodály, Gordon, and others have stressed so often, sight-singing must be a process of sound-before-symbol. That is the central premise behind the prenotational lesson.

THE PRENOTATIONAL LESSON

If students can recognize and sing a major scale, then they can begin to read. To test, have the students sing on "la" while the teacher begins playing the major scale on the piano. While continuing to conduct, the teacher stops playing, and the students must complete the scale on their own. Another test is to play scales on the piano and have the students raise their hands when a note does not "belong" to the major scale. Having established the *sound* of a major scale, the teacher need only put labels on the seven pitches. In the same way, if students can keep a steady beat and distinguish between long and short, then they can begin to read rhythm. During the first few days, the teacher can do prereading activities such as echoing solfège or number patterns and echo clapping or chanting rhythms to prepare the students for the syllable systems they use for sight-singing.

FIGURE 4.1. PRENOTATIONAL LESSON PLAN 1.

Material

Overhead projector with transparency for rhythm patterns and F scale with numbers.



Rhythm Preparation

1. Teacher establishes a steady beat and has students join in tapping. Chant rhythm patterns on counts and have the students echo:

EX. 1 2 1 2& OR 1 2& 1—

2. Teacher points to the same patterns notated on the overhead. Students chant the rhythm patterns and continue tapping the beat. Teacher has the students chant the patterns from notation in various orders.
3. Teacher shows the students the song notated on the board. Students chant the rhythm of the song on counts. (Teacher might ask them to identify patterns from overhead in song before chanting.)

Pitch Preparation

4. Students sing a warm-up exercise on "la" that goes 1-2-3-4-5-6-5-4-3-2-1.
5. Students sing the same pattern on numbers. Students do again as teacher points to the numbered F scale on the overhead.
6. Students sing different number patterns in a steady rhythm as teacher points to them. Include the following patterns from the song:

- 1) 1-2-3-4 2) 3-4-3-2 3) 2-3-2-1

7. Teacher shows students the song on the board and has them find scale step 1 from the scale on the overhead.

Teacher says, "If this is '1,' then what number is this note?" Teacher has students identify other note numbers. (Teacher could mark numbers in under the notes at first, but it's better not to.)

Students sing pitches 1-5 and the 1-3-5-3-1 triad to tune, then sing the pitches of the song out of rhythm on numbers as the teacher points.

Reading

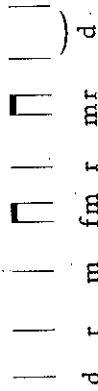
8. Students review the rhythm of the song, chanting on counts.
9. Students sing the piece in rhythm on scale numbers a cappella. Option 1: Once with piano doubling, but then do again a cappella. Option 2: Once with piano harmony, but then do again a cappella. →

FIGURE 4.1. continued

Evaluation

10. Students should always try to read straight through without stopping. Once that's done, the teacher can go back and address a problematic pattern or measure and then have students read the whole melody again.

FIGURE 4.2. THE MELODY FROM FIGURE 4.1 IN STICK NOTATION.



Having students do simple patterns from a solfège chart can be a fun and challenging way to begin their reading experience. As early as possible, however, students should begin reading melodies. The sooner that pitch and rhythm patterns are put into a melodic context, the sooner they transfer to what is happening in rehearsal. Two models of prenotational lessons are given here; both are based on the sound-before-symbol approach. Because the students must learn to associate the patterns they see with sounds that they know, these lessons may not seem like sight-singing lessons to the experienced musician, but they are a necessary first step in the reading process. The goal of the prenotational lesson is to begin to transfer what students hear into what they can reproduce.

The lesson in figure 4.1 moves the students from echo patterns of rhythm and pitch into notated versions of the same patterns. While information such as time and key signatures is present in the notated melody, it is not discussed. Some teachers leave time and key signatures off entirely at first so that they will not be a distraction. If your students have been taught using elements of the Kodály method, then they may not have seen traditional notation as often as Kodály's solfège notation. Figure 4.2 shows the melody from the first prenotational lesson in Kodály's stick notation.

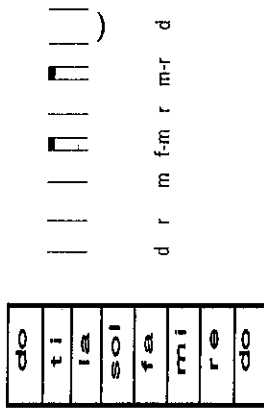
In this type of prenotational approach, the stick notation and solfège syllables serve as an intermediate step between rote learning and traditional notation. The essentials are still there in terms of rhythm and solfège, but without bar lines or other trappings of notation. Students gradually move from this kind of notation to traditional staff notation using familiar songs at first.

Another system used to represent pitches is hand signs. The pre-notational lesson in figure 4.3 shows how hand signs and stick notation could be used in a beginning lesson. While the devices are associated with Kodály, this lesson does not necessarily adhere strictly to the Kodály philosophy or sequence.

FIGURE 4.3. PRENOTATIONAL LESSON PLAN 2.

Material

Overhead projector with transparency for solfège chart and stick notation.



Rhythm Preparation

1. Teacher establishes a steady beat and has students join in tapping.
2. Teacher chants the following rhythm patterns on "tas" and "tis" and has the students echo: ta ta ti -ti and ta ti-ti ta - ah.
3. Teacher chants the same rhythm patterns while pointing to the stick notation patterns on the overhead.
4. Students echo and continue tapping the beat.



5. Students chant patterns A and B from stick notation in various orders.
6. Teacher shows the students the song notated on the board with solfège and has them chant only the rhythm on "tas" and "tis."

Teacher could ask students to identify patterns A and B from overhead in song before chanting
 Teacher could also have the building blocks of the patterns, "ta," "ti-ti," and "ta-ah," notated on the board.

Pitch Preparation

5. Teacher has students sing a warm-up exercise on "la" that goes d-r-m-f-s-l-s-f-m-r-d.
6. Teacher then sings the same pattern on solfège syllables using hand signs. Students echo with hand signs.*
7. Teacher has students sing different syllable patterns from the song in a steady rhythm from hand signs. For example:
 1) d-r-m-f 2) m-f-m-r 3) r-m-r-d

Reading

8. Teacher shows students the song on the board.
 Teacher has students sign and sing "do" again, then has them sign and chant the solfège syllables in rhythm.
 Teacher reviews any rhythm problems on "ta" and "ti."



FIGURE 4.3. continued

9. Students sing and sign d-s and the tonic triad to tune, then sing the song on solfège in rhythm with hand signs. Teacher signs in rhythm with their singing, but does not sing.
10. Teacher reviews any problem areas. Students sing and sign again while the teacher conducts or keeps the beat.

Evaluation

11. As before, students should always try to read straight through without stopping. Once that's done, the teacher can go back and address a problematic pattern or measure and then have students read the whole melody again.
 * Hand signs can be taught to the students at the very beginning of the year. They will require a lot of repetition in order to become fluent. Some teachers spend quite a bit of time having students "read" only from hand signs before introducing other forms of pitch notation.

Though they use different systems and materials, both prenotational lessons share the crucial sequence of sound-before-symbol. Students will spend a fair amount of time at this level of reading, and they do not progress out of it all at once. As certain basic patterns become familiar, the teacher can begin to skip steps and move through the lesson more quickly—for example, having students scan the melody first for difficult rhythm patterns and, if none are found, read the rhythm directly from the melody without echoing. The same can be done with pitches; after scanning for difficult spots students could read the pitches in rhythm the first time. However, as new and more difficult patterns are introduced it will be important to move back into a more prenotational sequence until the sounds become familiar.

MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS

As students begin to develop a vocabulary of pitch and rhythm patterns that they can read reliably, the teacher can begin to introduce them to more of the information contained in the score, such as note names, clefs, meter signatures, and key signatures, so that they can find the tonic independently, set the beat and the key, and begin reading. This information, when taught through sight-singing practice, will eventually allow the students to figure out the sounds of new patterns based on previous information.

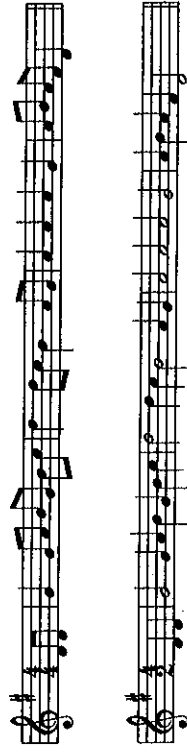
Teaching Meter Signatures

Meter signatures are not necessary for the first reading experiences, though they can be notated on the reading examples along with bar lines. If the students know what note value equals a "ta" or count, then they can read patterns without knowing meter. Prior to learning the meaning of the meter signature, students need to experience the patterns of strong and weak beats in music. Movement exercises, such as those offered by Jaques-Dalcroze and others, are a wonderful tool for developing this understanding. For example, to establish a sense of metrical stress, have students step to the beat and bend their forward knees on the strong beats while singing in solfège. An arm movement also could accompany this bending motion to reinforce the feeling of strong and weak. Another approach is to have students keep the beat by imitating a pattern of patting on strong beats and clapping on weak beats that imitates the down-up feel of the stress, such as pat-clap for duple and pat-clap-clap for triple. Teachers should offer exercises in both duple and triple meters from the very beginning to help students experience these two basic pulse groupings.

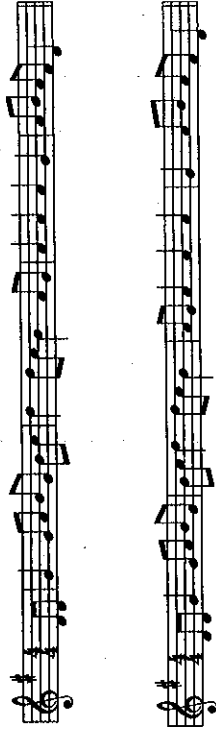
As students become comfortable showing strong and weak beats in their movements and their singing, they can derive the meter signature from this experience. Counting is probably the easiest means of introducing meter. By counting 1 on every strong beat and adding numbers to the intervening beats they can come up with the top number of the meter signature. For example, the $\frac{3}{4}$ pattern of S-W-W | S-W-W or pat-clap-clap | pat-clap-clap yields 1-2-3 | 1-2-3. If students can think of metrical relationships and their subdivisions as simply variations on duple and triple stress combinations, then the connection between the meter signature and the sound of the rhythm becomes very evident.

Once meter signatures are introduced, it is important to establish the independence of the quarter note and the "beat." To help foster this independence and demonstrate the function of the bottom number in the meter signature, take familiar pieces and/or patterns and notate them in different meters, as shown in example 4.1.

EXAMPLE 4.1. NOTATING DIFFERENT METERS.



EXAMPLE 4.2. "SIMPLE GIFTS" REBARRED WITHOUT A PICKUP.



Another game to play with meter is to rebar a melody by moving the bar line over one beat and read it again to experience the changes that metrical stress can bring to a piece. Example 4.2 shows the familiar melody of "Simple Gifts" rebared without the pickup note.

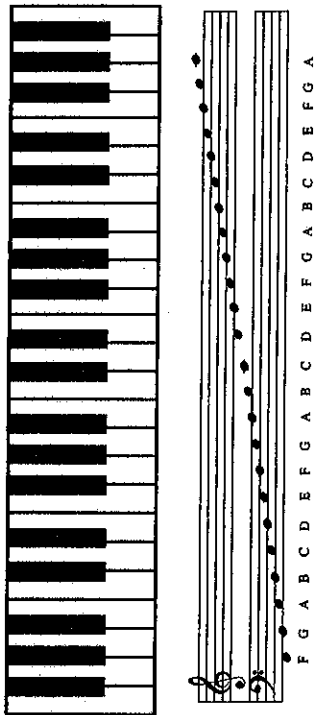
Teaching Note Names

Students do not need to know the names of the notes in order to singing in a relative solmization system. This may seem strange, but they really only need the location of "do" or "1." From there they can find the other scale steps by their location on the staff and sound them out. Early on, a teacher can identify the note name for "do" as they place it on the staff, such as pointing to the first space in treble clef and saying, "For this piece, f is 'do,'" without offering further explanation. Eventually note names are important for identifying key signatures so that students can find their own "do" and for connecting solfège to performance on an instrument such as the piano.

When a teacher is introducing the note names, several materials are helpful. The typical mnemonics for the lines and spaces, such as Every Good Boy Does Fine and FACE, are fine, but they require an extra step to be translated. In order to be functional, however, note names eventually need to be memorized. One of the best ways to achieve memorization is through drill and practice. Two visuals can be helpful in drilling note names:

1. A combination piano keyboard/grand staff as shown in figure 4.4 provides a compact but complete reference for pitch names. This has the advantage of tying note names to the sounds on the piano and of offering treble and bass clef simultaneously. A teacher could drill students using either the keyboard or the staff to test their knowledge.
2. Another visual aid that is more portable is the "hand staff." The teacher holds up his or her left hand with the palm inward and

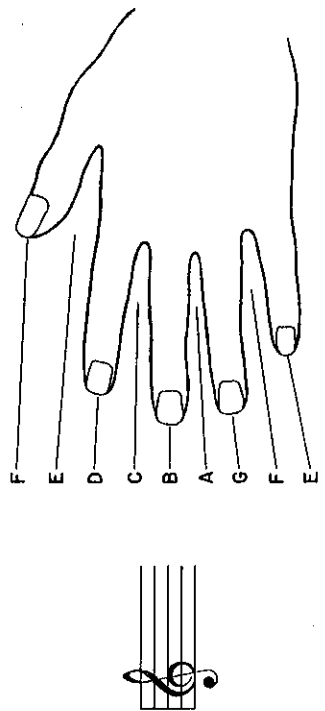
FIGURE 4.4. THE PIANO KEYBOARD AND THE GRAND STAFF.



fingers facing right to provide a model of the five lines (fingers) and spaces of the staff. Then the teacher uses the right index finger to point to various locations on the left hand in order to drill students on note names (fig. 4.5). The teacher should always specify treble or bass clef and alternate frequently, so that students are encouraged to learn the position of notes in both clefs from the very beginning. It is also helpful for students to learn that treble and bass clef are also known as G and F clef, respectively. By showing them how the bottom of the treble clef circles G and the dots of the bass clef highlight F, the teacher alerts them to a consistent reference note in each clef.

Ultimately, students should have note names memorized so that their recall becomes automatic. Timed tests are one of the best ways to ensure this kind of drill learning, and they can be a fun challenge for the students. With a grand staff on the board, the teacher points to various locations at 30-second intervals while the students write the names of the notes identified, gradually reducing the time interval to 5 seconds between notes.

FIGURE 4.5. DRAWING OF THE "HAND STAFF."



Teaching Key Signatures

Some teachers present key signatures simply by writing the circle of fifths on the board and drilling until it is learned. Recall of key signatures, like that of note names, eventually should be automatic in order to be truly functional. However, the straight drill approach has some disadvantages. First of all, it is daunting to the student who has perhaps just learned note names to try to memorize which altered notes of what type relate to which key. Second, it does not give the student any information about why key signatures are necessary.

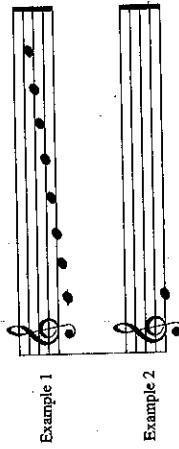
The reason students need to know key signatures is so that they can find "do" or "1," so it is helpful to teach students the relationship between the key signature and the major scale. If students are using fixed "do," then the key signatures are built into their reading as they learn which syllables to alter for fa major or sol major. Building a major scale, using the sequence demonstrated in figure 4.6, teaches students that the altered notes are necessary in order to maintain the familiar sound of the major scale. Students need not learn all key signatures at once, but using this approach they could discover the key signature for a major key built on any note.

FIGURE 4.6. LESSON SEQUENCE FOR BUILDING A MAJOR SCALE.

Material

Piano positioned with the keys facing the choir. Worksheets with note names in treble and bass clefs.

1. Students have a worksheet that looks like this:



2. Teacher has students sing the C major scale on solfège.

3. Teacher "Let's see what that looks like on the staff."

Teacher then plays each note of the C scale as notated on the sheet and asks if it belongs in a major scale. Students may sing along on solfège.

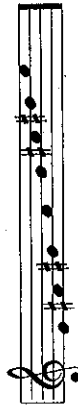
NOTE: The teacher may be able to skip this step if students know that C major is all the white keys from c to c, but it doesn't hurt to review.

4. Teacher "Now let's sing a different major scale. Let's sing the E major scale."

Teacher gives e as "do" and students sing the E major scale on solfège.

FIGURE 4.6. continued

- Teacher "Does it sound the same?"
Students "Yes."
5. Teacher "Now we're going to build a major scale starting on e. Do you think anything will change? ... What? ... Let's build scale 2 which starts on e."
- Sequence**
- Students write in notes on all the lines and spaces up through the next e.
 - Students write the letter names below each note.
 - Teacher starts on e and plays the next *notated* pitch (f natural) and asks students if it fits in the scale.
6. Teacher "Does this note [f#] sound like it fits in the E major scale?"
Students "No."
Teacher "How about this one? (plays f#)"
Students "Yes."
Teacher "How would you write that note? Remember this is 're' so it still needs to be on the adjacent space."
Students "Add a sharp."
Teacher "Let's keep going." (Teacher starts on e again and plays e-f#-g.)
Students "Does this note (g) fit in the major scale?"
Students "No."
8. Teacher proceeds through the entire scale in this way with students using their ears to build a scale that is notated like this:



Example 2

NOTE: The sequence in step 5 keeps students from notating e-g-a-b instead of e-f#-g# because all of the note names are in place before the scale building begins. The same process can be used to build keys on any pitch and in any clef. A final step to transition to key signatures follows.

Transition to Key Signatures

9. Teacher gives the students a notated copy of a familiar melody such as "My Country 'tis of Thee" in C major, and asks them to rewrite it in E major using their worksheet:

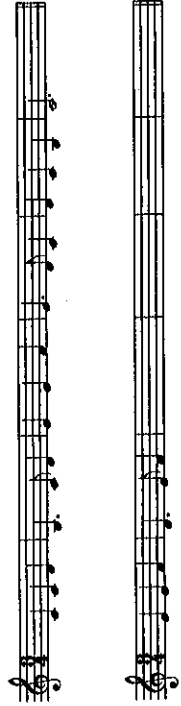


FIGURE 4.6. continued

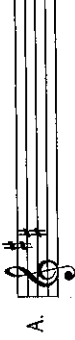
- Teacher plays the rewritten melody without accidentals and asks students what needs to be added.
- Students then add in all the sharps for E major. When they think they're done, the teacher checks it by playing what they've notated so that they can listen and evaluate their work.
- Teacher can then explain that key signatures are a kind of musical shorthand to keep from having to write in all the accidentals (sharps in this case). Referring to the E major scale they built, teacher asks them how many sharps are in E major. Instead of writing in every f#, they can "move" f# over to the far-right. This tells the person playing or singing that all f's are sharped for this piece.

Students who use relative solmization can already transpose sung melodies easily by moving "do" to a different note. The key signature is a shortcut that students begin to appreciate if they have to also transpose the written melody to a different key and write in all the accidentals. After students have "built" several keys it is interesting to have them put the key signatures in order, based on the number of accidentals, and see if any patterns emerge.


Eventually, memorization is the most desirable way to learn the key signatures, but there is a useful trick that can help students figure out the key from the key signature without memorization. In both sharp and flat keys, students can use the last accidental in the key signature to point them to the correct key. For sharp keys students can always find "do" by going up one line or space from the last sharp. However, one thing that confuses students is that some sharp keys are labeled by just the note name, like G or D, while others are called F# or C#. To them, it would make more sense to call all the sharp keys _ -sharp. By going up one line or space from the last sharp they learn the note name of the key, but there is one more step. They must check the key signature to see if *that* note has been altered; if not, then the key is called by the note name without a sharp. For example, in figure 4.7 the first two key signatures can be calculated by using the "last sharp" method. Students might come back with the answers D and F. At that point, the teacher asks them to go back and check the key signature for altered pitches.

For flat keys, students can always find "do" by going down four lines and spaces from the last flat. The last flat is counted as "4," and then the students count down (4-3-2-1). Try this system for the flat keys in figure 4.7. Again, students check the key signature to see if the note has been altered before naming the key. Since almost all the flat keys are called _ -flat, an easier trick is to simply go to the second to the last flat to find "do"; of course this does not work for F major.

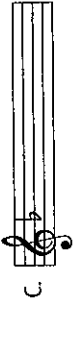
FIGURE 4.7. HANDOUT ON IDENTIFYING MAJOR KEY SIGNATURES.




A.



B.



C.



D.

Sharp Keys

1. Find the last sharp in the key signature.
2. Go up one line or space from that note to find "do." (See example A.)
3. To find the correct name of the key (i.e., the note name for "do") check the key signature to see if the note has been sharped (as in example B.)

Flat Keys

1. Find the last flat in the key signature.
2. Count down four lines and spaces starting on that flat to find "do." (See example C.)
3. To find the correct name of the key (i.e., the note name for "do") check the key signature to see if the note has been flatted (as in example D.)

Note: For all flat keys but F, the second to last flat is "do."

Once students have learned several key signatures, they can begin to learn that these signatures stand for more than one key. This is where minor "la" or minor "6" is helpful in illustrating the relationship between major and minor scales. Students must learn that when identifying keys for sight-singing they have to look not only at the key signature but also at the starting and ending pitches and other accidentals. The lesson in figure 4.11 will provide an example of a sequential approach to identifying and singing in a minor key.

These are just a few examples of how to introduce music fundamentals to a choir. The most important point to remember is that students can sing many things by sound even before they learn what all the symbols mean and their sense of sound can guide them to a deeper understanding of music fundamentals.

SINGLE-LINE SIGHT-SINGING


As students become familiar with some basic pitch and rhythm patterns and learn how to identify certain key and meter signatures, they need to be taught a consistent procedure for approaching a new piece of music. Unlike in the prenotational lessons, the students are now required to iden-

tify which note is "do" or "1," how many beats are in a measure, what note value receives one beat, and patterns in the pitches or rhythms of a melody that are problematic. By teaching students a consistent music-reading sequence the teacher ensures that they seek out the necessary information given in the notation to help them read the melody successfully. In addition, learning this procedure fosters an independence from the need for director instructions. Four music-reading lesson models are presented here, one a beginning level, the second and third slightly more advanced, and a fourth lesson that introduces another level of complexity.

The purpose of these lessons is not only to practice sight-singing but also to teach students what to look for when reading a melody. When asking students to identify different aspects of the score such as the meter and key, it is often helpful to have them explain how they got the answer. For example, in step 7 of figure 4.8 where the student identifies the key as B-flat major, the teacher asks how they know that it is major. The student might have been asked how they figured out the key from the key signature. This helps students who may not have gotten the same answer or had no clue how to find that piece of information.

The example given in figure 4.8 is rather elementary in terms of the number of questions supplied by the teacher and the "practicing" of cer-

FIGURE 4.8. A BEGINNING-LEVEL MUSIC-READING PROCEDURE.



Swiss Folk Melody from the Oxford Folk Song Sight-Singing Series, vol. 1, #46.

READING PROCEDURE (Numbers)

Rhythm

1. Teacher: "What's the meter signature?"
 Student₁: "3."
 Teacher: "What does that mean?"
 Student₁: "Three beats to a measure, quarter gets the beat."
 Teacher: "What's the starting beat?"
 Student₂: "3."
2. Teacher: "Are there any difficult or repeating patterns?"
 Student₃: "The second four measures have the same rhythm as the first four measures."
3. Teacher: "OK, let's read the rhythm on counts. Tap the beat with me, 1-2-3-ready-go."
 Teacher conducts as students read rhythm on counts, but does not give rhythm.
 (Students have trouble at the pickup from measure 4 to 5).

FIGURE 4.9. continued

Evaluate

3. Teacher "Take a moment to review any problem spots." Give students time to look through.
 4. Teacher "OK. Let's count through just from the pickup to measure 5 [if necessary]." Teacher conducts while students read rhythm on counts.
- Pitch**
5. Teacher "Look through and identify the key and starting scale step." Give students time to study.
Teacher "What scale step number do we start on?"
Student₁ "5."
6. Teacher "Look through and see if you find any difficult or repeating patterns."
Give students time to study then have them sing 1-3-5-3-1-5-1 in B-flat.
7. Teacher "Let's speak through on scale steps in rhythm."
Teacher sets slow tempo, students tap the beat and chant on numbers.

Evaluate

8. Teacher "Take a moment to review any problem spots."
Give students time to look through. Tune up in B-flat: 1-3-5-3-1-5-1.

Reading 1

9. Teacher sets slow tempo, students tap the beat and sing on numbers.

Evaluate

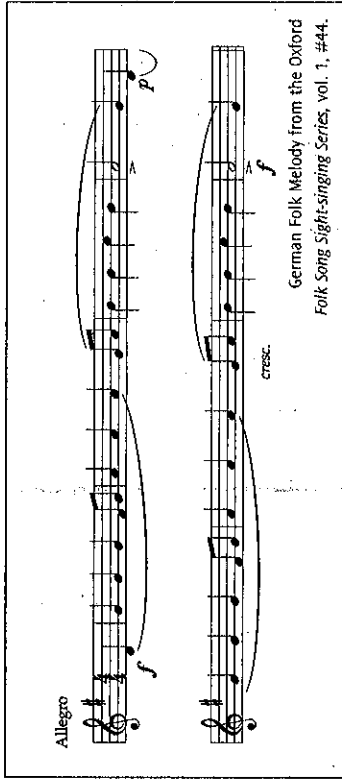
10. Teacher "Any problem spots?"
NOTE: At this point, the teacher can again work on individual measures for either pitch or rhythm, reviewing previous steps as necessary. Ask the students for suggestions on how to approach difficult spots. Emphasize the need for phrasing and dynamics.

Reading 2

11. Teacher "Where is 1?" (Students sing scale step 1.)
"Where is the starting pitch?" (Students sing scale step 5.)
Teacher sets tempo and conducts. Students sing through on numbers in rhythm.

could be made even more advanced by skipping the step of speaking through the melody on rhythm syllables. If the rhythm is not too challenging for the students, they can speak through it the first time on the pitch syllables in preparation for singing through. As more complex melodies are introduced, the teacher can increase the number of steps in the sequence to help the students be successful. When working on easier melodies the teacher can move to a procedure that relies even more on the students' own preparation, such as the example in figure 4.10. For

FIGURE 4.10. THE STUDY APPROACH.



German Folk Melody from the Oxford Folk Song Sight-singing Series, vol. 1, #44.

READING PROCEDURE (Movable "do")

1. Break students into groups of three. Give them 45 seconds to study the melody.
2. Have students identify the meter signature, the key (and tonality), the starting syllable. Can they identify any repeating patterns?

Reading 1

3. Teacher gives pitch and students sing d-m-s-m-d-s-d in G major. Teacher sets moderate to slow tempo. Students tap the beat and sing through the melody on solfège in rhythm.

Evaluate

4. Teacher "What do we need to watch out for on the next reading?"
Teacher might suggest that students try to show more of the phrasing and the dynamics throughout.

Reading 2

5. Teacher has students sing "do" (replay g if necessary) and then has them sing the starting pitch (d).
Teacher sets tempo and conducts as students sing through on solfège in rhythm.

this lesson, the emphasis is on cooperative learning and individual study prior to group reading. Notice that all three procedures mention the need for expressive elements such as phrasing and dynamics and all three give the students at least two opportunities to read through the melody.

Introducing Minor

Figure 4.11 shows how the beginning music-reading procedure can be used when encountering musical material that is more difficult or less familiar: in this case a first encounter with minor tonality. This example uses the syllable system of movable "do" with minor "la" to show the ease of introducing minor this way. Since a new pitch-reading element

FIGURE 4.11. BEGINNING SIGHT-SINGING PROCEDURE: INTRODUCING MINOR.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff is marked 'Allegro' and 'f'. The second staff is marked 'cresc.' and 'f'. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (F major or D minor), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes.

READING PROCEDURE (Movable "do"/minor "la")

Rhythm

1. Teacher: "What's the meter signature?"
 Student₁: "4."
 Teacher: "What does that mean?"
 Student₁: "Four beats to a measure, quarter note gets the beat."
 Teacher: "What's the starting beat?"
 Student₂: "One."
 Teacher: "Are there any difficult or repeating patterns?"
 Student₃: "Measure 2 has an off beat."
 Teacher: "Right, we call that a syncopated rhythm. Let's read that measure."
 Students tap the beat with teacher and read "ti-ta-ta-a-a."
 (Correct as needed.)
 Teacher: "Does that rhythm appear anywhere else?"
 Student₄: "Measure 3, and then partly in measures 4 and 6."
 Students tap the beat with teacher and read the rhythms in measures 4 and 6.
 (Correct as needed.)

3. Teacher: "Let's read the whole rhythm on 'ta-ti.' Tap the beat with me, 'ta-ta-rea-dy go.'" ("rea-dy go" = "ti-ti ta")
 Teacher conducts as students chant on "tas and tis."

Pitch

4. Teacher: "What's the key signature?"
 Student₅: "G major."
 Teacher: "How do we check to see if it is major?"
 Student₅: "Starting and ending notes, which are e and e."
 Teacher: "What solfège syllable is e in G major?"
 Student₆: "La."
 Teacher: "What does that suggest to you?"
 Student₆: "Minor?"
 Teacher: "Yes, e minor."
 Teacher: "Another way to check if a melody is in a minor key is to look for any altered notes or accidentals. In minor the leading tone, which is 'sol,' might be raised. Are there any accidentals in this melody?"
 Student₇: "Yes. There's a d#."

FIGURE 4.11. continued

7. Teacher: "How would we sing that syllable?"
 Student₇: "Change it from 'sol' to 'si'."
 Teacher: "Right. That makes it a half step from 'la' like a leading tone."
 Teacher: "Let's sing the e minor scale with the raised syllable 'si.'"
 Student₈: "What's the starting syllable?"
 Student₉: "La."
 Students sing the e minor scale on solfège with the raised leading tone.
 Teacher: "Good. Let's speak through the melody in rhythm using solfège syllables."
 Teacher sets slower tempo as students tap beat and chant solfège.

Evaluate

9. Teacher: "Are there repeating pitch patterns?"
 Student₉: "Yes. Measures 1 and 5 are the same, and 2 and 6 are similar."
 Teacher: "Good. Any potential problem patterns?"
 Student₁₀: "Measure 4."
 Teacher has students speak that measure alone to get the solfège with the rhythm.
 Teacher: "Where's la?" (Students sing "la"; teacher replays e if necessary)
 Teacher points to l-d-m-d-l-si-l on board as students sing.
Option: Teacher takes them through the following patterns:

- 1) l-si-l-t-d-t-d-r-m
- 2) m-m-d-r-m-d-l

Reading 1

11. Teacher sets slow tempo, students tap the beat and sing the melody on solfège.

Evaluate

12. Teacher: "Any problem spots?"
NOTE: At this point, the teacher can actually work on individual measures for either pitch or rhythm, reviewing previous steps as necessary.
 For example:

Reading 2

13. Teacher: "Where is la?" (Students sing "la"; teacher replays e if necessary.) "Sing the e minor scale and tonic triad."
 (Students sing.)
 Teacher: "Where is starting pitch?" (Students sing "la.")
 Teacher: "This time, try to pay attention to the dynamics as you sing through."
 Teacher sets tempo and conducts as students sing on solfège in rhythm.

is being introduced, a melody with repetitive rhythm has been chosen, so the rhythm-reading sequence is more rapid. Following the lesson, alternate procedures for minor "do" and fixed "do" are discussed.

Did you recognize the melody? Using familiar melodies that the students can discover as they read helps them to practice unfamiliar syllable combinations by providing a familiar framework. As this example illustrates, there is no reason for teachers to delay introducing minor to their students. It is simply a variation on a theme that is already established in the music-reading procedure. By identifying the key signature using the questioning procedure illustrated in figure 4.11, the teacher reinforces the fact that different tonalities can share the same key signature. A mistake that even college students can make when sight-singing is not looking ahead before they start reading and thus assuming the melody is in a major key. Minor "la" makes the transition to reading minor much easier because it illustrates the relative relationship very naturally. This is especially useful in melodies that modulate between the major and minor tonics.

If a teacher is using fixed "do," the minor tonality will happen almost by default as the student reads through the piece with the necessary altered syllable. The teacher can help students by pointing out that certain accidentals that are not part of the key signature may indicate a minor melody. Having students realize that the starting and ending pitches do not match up with the major scale will also make reading easier. In the Dalcroze method, students are asked to sing scales that start on any note of the C major scale, thus producing the different modes, including minor. Students who use fixed "do" still need to recognize the sounds of the different tonalities in order to read them effectively. Having students tune up on the scale beginning with the minor tonic will set a harmonic context that will aid them in reading the melody.

Minor "do" requires that the student identify the key as minor and then set the minor tonic as "do" with altered syllables. While this seems less efficient than using minor "la," it does have the advantage of reinforcing the connection between the syllable "do" and the tonic of a key. One of the difficulties of reading in minor "la" is the feeling of coming to rest harmonically on a syllable other than "do." Students will sometimes inadvertently shift "la" to "do" in response to this sense of minor tonic.

The Song-Learning Procedure

All of the lessons presented thus far, while different in difficulty level and material, share an underlying structure. It is this structure that students need to learn in order to become independent music readers. Figure 4.12 outlines the "song-learning procedure" that forms the basis for the sight-singing lessons. Reinforcing this procedure through a variety of differ-

FIGURE 4.12. OUTLINE OF THE SONG-LEARNING PROCEDURE.

Song Learning Procedure

1. Rhythm
 - a) Identify the meter and starting beat.
 - b) Scan for difficult and repeating patterns.
 - c) Set a steady tempo and chant the rhythm while keeping the beat.
 - d) Evaluate.
2. Pitch
 - a) Identify the key signature, tonality, and starting syllable.
 - b) Scan for difficult and repeating patterns.
 - c) Establish sense of key through tuning up; perhaps sing difficult patterns.
 - d) Set a steady tempo and chant or sing solfège (or other syllables) in rhythm.
 - e) Evaluate.

ent lessons will help students to approach reading a new piece of music in a consistent and logical way. It is also helpful to teach students the steps of the procedure directly so that they become aware of the underlying structure in their lessons.

MULTIPART SIGHT-SINGING

While single-line melodies provide the best introduction to the challenges of sight-singing, the eventual goal is to apply this knowledge to reading both solo and group literature. The use of canons to introduce multipart singing is an outstanding transition from single-line melodies, especially for students who are less experienced singing in parts. However, the canon approach is best used when the different voice parts have similar ranges, as in a treble choir. Middle school singers, especially boys, have very different ranges as their voices change. For these singers, a canon is the last thing a director wants, because the different voice parts have very different registers. Pieces with four-part harmony, in limited but different ranges, are better choices for sight-singing material at this level. Another benefit of using four-part material is that each voice part has its own quirks of harmony and voice leading in a homophonic texture to which choral singers must become accustomed. Sopranos are often surprised at the amount of skipping around that the bass part normally does. Consequently, simultaneous multipart sight-reading is a skill that must be taught in addition to single-part sight-reading. With the proper materials it is relatively easy to transfer the song-learning sequence of the single-line melody to multipart sight-singing, as shown in figure 4.13.

FIGURE 4.14. MULTI-PART SIGHT-SINGING LESSON PLAN 2.

"Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord"
Mendelssohn

READING PROCEDURE (Movable "do")

1. Teacher plays the tonic triad (broken form) and gives students 45 seconds to study the piece.
2. Students are asked to identify and discuss any potential problem spots — for example, identifying any large leaps in the voice leading.
3. Teacher plays the tonic triad again and conducts as students speak through the piece on solfège in rhythm while tapping the beat.
4. Students get 30 seconds to review what they just read and discuss mistakes.

Reading 1

5. Teacher plays the tonic triad (broken form) and has students sing their starting pitches together on solfège.
6. Teacher sets a moderate to slow tempo. Students tap the beat and sing through on solfège in rhythm.

Evaluate

7. Students review problem spots before next reading.

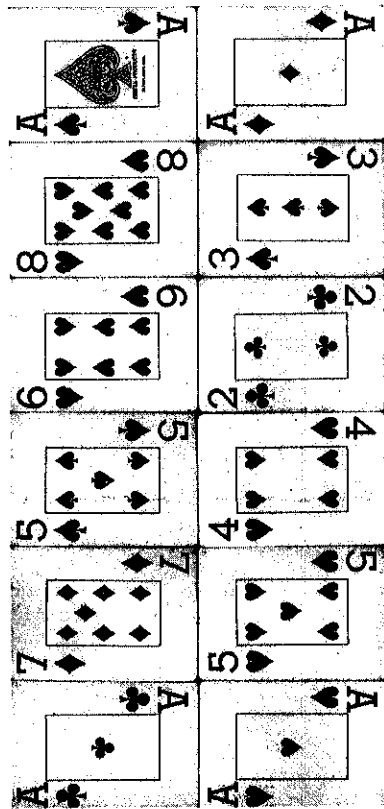
Reading 2

8. Teacher has students sing "do" (reset if necessary) and then has them sing their starting pitch.
9. Teacher sets tempo and conducts as students sing through on text.

A more advanced multipart procedure would encourage the students to try to anticipate problem spots before they read and evaluate their own performance afterward. The procedure given in figure 4.14 is similar to sight-singing procedures used in choral contests. The main difference is that students can discuss features of the melody but do not get to sing it out loud until they read it the first time.

Notice that in all of the lessons presented thus far students are always asked to keep the beat while they chant or sing. Having some movement accompany the beat reinforces the importance of rhythmic awareness

FIGURE 4.15. SAMPLE "HANDS" FOR THE SOLFÈGE CARD GAME.



and helps keep them from stopping when they run into trouble. One can see how this sequence could easily be used in rehearsal for the first reading through of a piece of literature. This is the goal of multipart sight-singing: to be able to apply the skills to reading new literature in rehearsal.

SIGHT-SINGING GAMES

Establishing a consistent procedure for music reading is an important goal of sight-singing instruction, but so is having fun. Sometimes the drill and repetition required for skill building can be presented in the form of a game. The following games are examples of how very difficult skills can be presented as a fun challenge to students. The activities build inner hearing, sense of key, rhythm-reading skills, aural skills, and solfège pattern recognition. These games should not be done in lieu of sequential instruction but in addition to it.

A Solfège Card Game

One of the best tools for practicing sight-singing is a deck of cards. Take a normal deck of cards and remove all of the face cards and the 9s and 10s, leaving ace through 8 in every suit. The melodies are read with aces as "do" or "1" and on up the scale and can be read on numbers or solfège. Shuffle the deck and then "deal" the cards face up in any number you wish. The students must sing the pattern they are dealt either individually or in a group. In order to ensure more singable melodies, it is often a good idea to stack the deck a bit by removing most of the cards for certain scale degrees. For example, a good deck for beginning sight-singing practice

might contain four aces, one 2 card, two 3 cards, one 4, three 5s, one 6, one 7, and four 8s. Another way to ensure readability is to begin and end the melodies on an acc, 5, or 8. Figure 4.15 illustrates the pitch patterns that result from two "hands" dealt from this deck. For an added challenge the cards could be laid over a rhythm pattern such as $||| \Pi \Pi \Pi$, with one card for each note value.

"Name That Tune"

Another fun way to practice use of solfège or hand signs is to play "Name That Tune." The teacher notates a pitch pattern in solfège on the board or overhead and then covers it. Students can compete individually or in teams to "name that tune" from the solfège. This is a good way to begin a sight-singing lesson because it gets students focused on reading solfège. The melodies can be notated in a variety of ways: solfège, actual notation, or hand signs (fig. 4.16). Students are not allowed to sing what they see out loud; they must come up with it internally. If the teacher wants to make this more like the real game, students can be given a clue as to the melody title and then bid for how little of the melody they need to see in order to guess.

FIGURE 4.16. "NAME THAT TUNE."

"Name That Tune"

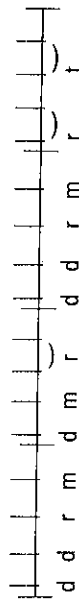
This game can be organized a number of ways. One way is to notate the tune on the board. The teacher can then uncover the tune and call on the first person who raises their hand.



The same tune could be notated using only solfège syllables with no rhythm:

d d r m d m r d d r m r t

or stick notation:



Another approach, which is more like the original game, is to have students "bid" for how many notes they need in order to name the tune. Then give them the hand signs in rhythm for however many notes they bid.

Bingo #1

A fun and challenging form of dictation is to play the game bingo where students are handed cards with short solfège patterns written in each box (fig. 4.17). The teacher sets a key and has the students tune up in the key. The teacher then calls out a letter and plays on the piano or sings on neutral syllables one of the patterns. The students then look to see if that pattern is under the letter on their cards and, if so, cover it with a piece of paper. The teacher can vary the keys and the mode of presentation throughout the game to add to the challenge. Rhythm patterns can also be used as examples, as seen under letters "N" and "G" of the sample card.¹

This game may seem very difficult (and it certainly can be), as students have to translate what they hear into solfège and then find it on the card. However, the patterns are short and the students need only look at the examples under the specific letter. The game can be made easier by lim-

FIGURE 4.17. THE BINGO EAR-TRAINING GAME.

B	I	N	G	O
d m d	d m s		FFI	
s m d	d m d			
m r d	s f m			
d t, d	d s d			
s d s	d t d			

iting the variety of patterns. That way, a simple pattern such as "d-m-d" can be used under several letters and students have fewer places to look for the necessary patterns. Another variation is to use both written and aural examples to fill in the boxes. This way students could be drilled on note names and key signatures as well as dictation. For example, the teacher could write on the board the name of a key signature, like F-sharp major or B minor, and each student would have to find it notated in a box on their card. Letter "O" of the card in figure 4.17 gives some examples for key signature practice.

Bingo #2

A second version of bingo is based not on the board game but on the song, where certain notes have to be left out or filled with claps (e.g., B-I-N-_-). This can be done while singing a simple scale or when singing a melody or just pitch or rhythm pattern notated on the board. The idea is to designate certain notes in the pattern to be sung silently. Students then have to read the melody, leaving out the marked pitches but still maintaining the correct pitch and rhythm.²

This also can become a friendly competition between groups of students to see how many notes can be removed and still sung accurately. For example, if two teams started with an ascending and descending major scale, the first team would read the scale with only one pitch marked out. If they are successful, they choose the pitch to be removed for the second team, and so on.

Instant Canons

Instant canons are a tremendous ear challenge for the students and a great way to focus attention. They can be done using either pitch or rhythm. The rhythm canon is a variation on simple echo clapping. In the rhythm canon, the teacher sets a steady beat and then claps a two- or four-beat pattern for the students to echo. While the students are echoing the pattern, the teacher claps the next two/four beats, and so on. It is surprising how quickly students can catch onto this game and how adept they can become. One technique that can help both the students and the teacher is alternating the presentation of the rhythms from side to side so that as the students echo the pattern given on the left side, the teacher claps a new pattern on the right side. A variation of this technique involves presenting each rhythm pattern by tapping a different part of the body and then having students echo by tapping the same places on their bodies. Both techniques help to differentiate between the rhythm being echoed

and the new rhythm. Some teachers even use rhythm canons as a classroom management tool; it is a nonverbal way to bring the choir back on task and into focus. This game is a good opportunity for a student-led activity as well, though they will find it challenging.

A pitch canon can be done in a similar way, with the teacher singing a solfège pattern two to four beats ahead of the students, though pitch canons should be planned out ahead of time so that the combinations are harmonically compatible. A more challenging way to do a pitch canon is to use hand signs. The teacher sets a beat and then signs the first four notes of the canon. While students are signing and singing those four notes, the teacher signs the next four beats, and so on. The teacher can choose to model the pattern silently or while singing, depending on the level of the students. Hand signs also can be used to read in harmony if the teacher is very skilled, half the class reading the right hand and half the left.

Beyond Notation

The Dalcroze approach to sight-singing often takes a very playful approach to music reading: Dalcroze's goal was to develop students' internal sense of pitch and rhythm to the point that they could "converse" musically with ease. A few ideas from Dalcroze can be used to extend sight-singing lessons to challenge the students to go beyond what is notated.

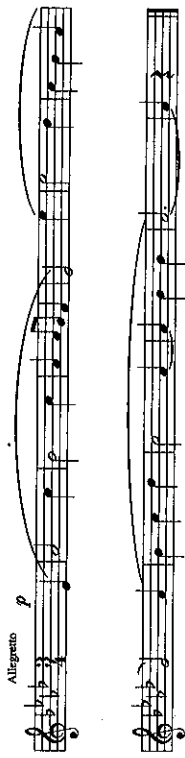
The first game is a "fill in the blanks" activity in which any melody or pitch pattern that students are sight-reading can be read again, filling in all the notes of a leap. Obviously, each note of the melody would need to be taken out of rhythm in order to do this.

A second game is to read melodies both forward and backward, keeping both pitch and rhythm accurate. This can be surprisingly difficult. Try it with the melody in example 4.3.

These two games illustrate a more playful approach to practicing music reading while actually increasing difficulty. The teacher challenges the students' aural and creative powers to go beyond what is notated and demonstrate their understanding of musical relationships. This can be taken into other areas, such as rhythm, where different measures of a melody could be read in double time or augmentation, depending on a signal from the teacher.

Games provide an excellent tool for drilling music-reading skills while offering a fun and motivating challenge to the students. Both the teacher and the students can come up with numerous variations on the games already mentioned to provide greater variety and interest in the process of developing sight-singing skills.

EXAMPLE 4.3. FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS AND RETROGRADE READING GAMES.



SEQUENCING SIGHT-SINGING INSTRUCTION

Many of the published materials presented in chapter 8 offer musical examples that are sequenced according to difficulty. While these sequences can be very helpful, they may not always reflect the pace of your students' development. In order to build sight-singing skills, the teacher must strike a balance between gradually increasing difficulty and providing sufficient repetition. A good rule of thumb is that when introducing more complexity in one area, such as a new rhythm pattern or difficult pitch sequence, make sure the material in the other areas is familiar. For example, if a teacher wants to introduce $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, then the pitch content should be mostly stepwise so that students can concentrate on the rhythmic challenge.

Sight-singing, like any skill, requires a great deal of practice. When a teacher is sequencing sight-singing lessons, it is helpful to keep in mind the three Rs of skill building: Review, Repetition, and Reinforcement.

Review

Once new content is introduced, it must be regularly reviewed, often more than the teacher might think. This is true for new musical material and more advanced reading procedures, as well as for material that has not been covered recently. New teachers often make the mistake of assuming that once a new skill has been presented and successfully demonstrated in one class period, then students "have it" and do not need to review it in the next class period. Review can take many forms. Sometimes it is just a verbal reminder to students about what was covered the day before, sometimes speaking or singing through a new pitch or rhythm sequence again before reading a different melody, and sometimes in the form of questions that highlight a reoccurrence of a particular musical element. If students have read a minor melody for the first time the day before, the teacher cannot present a new minor melody the next day and

expect all aspects of the previous day's lesson to be remembered and applied to the new melody. Students will need a great deal of practice before recognition and performance of even the simplest minor solfège become ingrained.

Repetition

Repetition relates to review in terms of the need for going over information that has been previously covered, but it also relates to the way in which skills are built. When students learn a new rhythm, for instance, they will not automatically transfer the sound of that pattern to different melodies that contain it even if you review the sound of the pattern. It would seem as though once students could accurately perform a rhythm pattern in one song, they would be able to recognize it in different melodies and recall the sound. However, that is not the case. Many aspects of context, such as pitch content, tempo, and other rhythmic aspects, can interfere with students' recognition of newly learned patterns. Students require numerous opportunities for repetition of musical material in many different contexts before they can begin to transfer what they know effectively.

Reinforcement

Teachers must constantly look for opportunities to reinforce the connection between sounds and symbols that are being learned in sight-singing. That is why teaching music reading without applying it to the rehearsal of literature can work against students' skill development. Every opportunity to point out familiar material should be taken.

Solfège and numbers are often thought of as tools for students to "sound out" music that is unfamiliar, but students first need to build the necessary sound vocabulary for these systems to be effective. A great technique is to sing already-learned songs on solfège syllables or numbers. This is similar to Kodály's approach of working from the sounds of rote songs to the reading of new material. Substituting solfège for text when singing choral literature that has already been learned and polished reinforces the sound-syllable-symbol connection. It also provides an opportunity for students to practice singing solfège musically by applying the expressive elements they have been rehearsing to a solfège context. An added benefit of this technique is that singing on solfège often improves intonation, even on learned music.

Another aspect of reinforcement is returning to simpler musical materials after students have increased their reading skills but increasing the challenge in other ways. For example, once your students are reading

pieces like "Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord" (fig. 4.14) easily on solfège, then ask them to read simpler pieces on a neutral syllable or text to begin to wean them from solfège syllables.

CONCLUSION

Through review, repetition, and reinforcement, a teacher can nurture students' sight-singing skills. Beyond that, students simply need numerous opportunities to practice and be successful. For any new melody they are presenting, teachers must ask, "What's the minimum amount of support I can offer and still give the students a successful reading experience?" If students have successful sight-singing experiences, they will begin to think of themselves as "readers." This positive attitude toward music reading contributes to students' future success as much as their skill development because it makes them willing to try.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Note: See also published sight-singing materials listed in chapter 8 for lesson models and procedures.

Henke, Herbert H. (1984). The application of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's Solfège-rhythmique to the choral rehearsal. *Choral Journal*, 24 (5), 11-14.

Phillips, K. H. (1996). Teaching singers to sight-read. *Teaching Music*, 3 (6), 32-33.

Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) Music Contest Website at: <http://www.utexas.edu/admin/uil/mus/index.html>

5

Integrating Sight-Singing into the Choral Rehearsal

"You see," he went on, "it's no use at all teaching children to sight-sing if you aren't going to allow them to exercise their skills so that they may get better and better with each practice. Some fairly enlightened choir directors practice sight-singing for five minutes. That's no good! They have to practice sight-singing all the time. That way the children have to think for themselves."

"The Choirmaster," in John Bertalot's *Five Wheels to Successful Sight-Singing*

The lesson models in chapter 4 demonstrate how sight-singing can be presented systematically to choirs at beginning and advanced levels to build essential skills. The lesson models are all designed to be presented as a separate part of the rehearsal, distinct from work on the performance literature, though the lesson material can be based on music taken from choral literature. However, it is important that a teacher's commitment to sight-singing not end at the moment that the rehearsal of the literature begins. When a 10-minute sight-singing lesson is followed by a rehearsal in which parts are pounded out on the piano, sight-singing becomes an academic exercise rather than a useful skill. However, we must acknowledge that our students' voices and musicality are often developed well beyond their musicianship skills and that there is often a wide range of reading abilities within a single ensemble. To provide literature that keeps students challenged as performers, teachers often choose music that is beyond the choir's ability to sight-read successfully. How do we deal with the challenge of incorporating reading into the rehearsal without compromising the quality of the literature we perform? Solutions to this challenge may be found in the organization of the choir program itself, the choice of literature, and the teaching approaches utilized in the rehearsal.