

Developing Notational Literacy through Music Learning Theory

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I. What is audiation?

- a. Gordon defines audiation as:
 - i. Ability to hear sound without sound being present
 - ii. Ability to notate/write what is heard
 - iii. An active response that allows listeners to anticipate tonal/rhythmic patterns in more familiar music while also predicting tonal/rhythmic patterns in less familiar music

II. Why is audiation important in a choral ensemble setting?

- a. Notational Literacy
 - i. Sight Reading
- b. Tonal/Rhythmic Memory
 - i. Patterns
- c. More efficient rehearsals
 - i. Faster paced, notes/rhythms learned more quickly

III. How do we begin teaching audition?

- a. Gordon's Skill Learning Sequence
- b. Sequencing
 - 1. Aural/Oral
 - a. Teacher sings patterns/students repeat – no syllables
 - 2. Rote Teaching
 - a. Mother Tongue
 - i. We learn to speak by imitating our parents
 - ii. We learn the Western musical vocabulary by imitating the tonal/rhythm patterns.
 - b. Isolate and intentionally teach patterns
 - i. "Stock the well"
 - c. Reinforce patterns with repertory
 - i. Folk music (Kodaly/Orff)
 - ii. High quality literature (Meaningful and Significant)
 - ii. Verbal Association
 - 1. Teacher introduces syllables by singing patterns using the syllables
 - a. Rote Teaching
 - i. Students begin to associate syllables with patterns.
 - iii. Partial Synthesis
 - 1. Teacher sings tonal/rhythm patterns on neutral syllable – students sing using the solfege/rhythm syllables
 - 2. Teacher signs tonal patterns using the Curwin Handsigns – students sing patterns using the solfege syllables.
 - iv. Symbolic Association
 - 1. Reading – Students learn what each pattern looks like using notation.
 - a. Stick notation for rhythm at first
 - b. Full rhythmic notation later

- c. “Do” clef for pitch
- d. Teach clefs later

IV. Reading Readiness

- a. Use of the Curwen Handsigns
 - i. If we think of audiation, at least at the beginning, as a mental-aural response to a visual stimulus, notation and/or hand-signs, then we can systematically teach the process of sight-singing.
 - ii. Using the hand-signs as a kinesthetic reinforcement of the visual tonal and rhythmic patterns.
 - iii. Using familiar/common patterns, have students sing what they see
 - 1. Incorporate both major and all forms of minor
 - a. Pentachords (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, Fa, Mi, Re, Do)
 - b. Chords (Do, Mi, Sol, Mi, Do)
 - i. Add La, Sol, Fa, chord
 - ii. Sing inversions of the chords
 - c. La based minor (Relative Minor)
 - i. Add Si and as leading tone and Fi as leading tone modulation to V, also melodic minor)
 - d. Sign and sing tonal patterns from the music to be studied
 - i. Teach each part before they read it as an exercise
 - ii. Teach difficult patterns isolated from the music as an exercise
 - e. Sign and sign tonal patterns in a rhythm pattern
 - f. Sign familiar songs or a part of a song they already know
 - g. Sign a pattern, then sing the pattern
 - i. Lengthen the pattern to more than one or two measures
 - ii. Add rhythm

V. How do we incorporate audiation in rehearsal?

- a. Sight Singing
 - i. Festival Ensemble Sight-Reading
 - 1. Frequent Observations
 - a. Choirs chant the solfege in rhythm while kinesthetically beating the quarter note
 - i. Chanting the solfege on rhythm is not audiation
 - ii. Try having students sign the pitches in rhythm instead
 - b. Rehearse the rhythm but not the pitch
 - c. Minimal to No Silent Rehearsal
 - 2. Teachers, student leaders, and all musicians can sign the solfege!
 - 3. Teach audiation!
- b. Steps to Sight-Reading
 - 1. Identify Meter/Key

2. Establish Key using chord (one of the familiar patterns you have already taught)
 3. Sign/Sing the pentachord and chord of the key
 4. Identify familiar patterns (rhythmic and tonal)
 - a. Sign and audiate tonal patterns
 - b. Macrobeat and subdivisions
 5. Chant the solfege in rhythm
 - a. 1st rhythmic rehearsal
 - b. Review syllables (identifying patterns)
 - i. 1st tonal rehearsal
 6. Sign the solfege in rhythm while audiating (silent rehearsal)
 - a. 2nd rhythmic rehearsal
 - b. Audiation
 - i. 2nd tonal rehearsal
 7. Sing through the example while using hand-signs in rhythm
 - a. 3rd rhythmic rehearsal
 - b. Audible pitch
 - i. 3rd tonal rehearsal
 8. Review and correct mistakes
 - a. Audibly singing more than twice is rehearsal, not sight-singing
- c. Sight Reading Overview
1. Provide students with the key (tonal center) and allow time to internally hear the melodic/rhythmic line as a whole.
 - a. You can visually assess if they are doing this by watching their hands.
 2. If you advocate the initial separation of rhythm and melody when sight reading, you can still incorporate using the hand-signs on the melodic segment.
 3. Higher-level critical thinking skills: Encourage musicians to do rhythm and melodic auditions at the same time. That's the goal!
 4. Using hand-signs to show rhythmic duration greatly improves rhythm reading and accuracy

VI. Dictation

- i. Common mistake: ensemble teachers tend to only focus on one method of transference: sight to sound. We must also teach sound to sight.
 1. Literacy implies we can not only read, but also write. This directly applies to music literacy.
- ii. Provide melodic examples to students; sing the examples and have students choose which one you sang
- iii. Provide rhythmic examples in the same manner as melodic
- iv. Melodic Dictation (No Rhythm) (Partial Synthesis)
 1. Sing a melodic passage
 2. Have students sing back the melodic passage
 3. Have students write the melodic passage

- a. You could consider providing starting pitch initially
- v. Rhythmic Dictation (No Melody)
 1. Say a rhythmic passage
 2. Have students repeat the passage back to you
 3. Have students write the rhythmic passage
- vi. Melodic and Rhythmic Dictation (Sung and with Handsigns only)
 1. Follow the same steps as previously described
 2. Establish key signature and meter
 3. Consider a rhythmic pattern bank
 4. Consider providing starting pitch

VII. Repertoire Connection

- i. We must find more effective ways to connect sight reading skills to the repertoire we have our students sing. (Relevance)
- ii. Identify difficult passages in our repertoire and present them before students see them in their music
 1. Ensures success during read-through
 2. Reinforces tonal/rhythmic memory
- iii. Use sections of studied pieces for sight-singing
- iv. Use sections of studied pieces for dictation
- v. Introduce a new piece by having students audiate the melody

Helpful Sources

- The Book of Tunes for Beginning Sight Reading –J.M.F Feireabend
- [www. Sightreadingfactory.com](http://www.Sightreadingfactory.com)
- SmartMusic