

DEVELOPING SIGHT-SINGING ON YOUR OWN

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- I. Music as language
 - A. Phonemes: units of sounds with meaning
 1. Pitch: S-M, S-M-L, S-M-L-D, S-M-L-D-R, complete scale
 2. Rhythm vs. beat; meter
 - B. Vocabulary: commonly used motives
 - C. Syntax: common phrase structures
 - D. Alphabet and words: phonics vs. whole language = individual notes vs. visually recognizable patterns
 - E. Grammar: harmonic implication
- II. Some analogies
 - A. Performing Shakespeare while reading at an early elementary level
 - B. Visual tracking reading a paragraph of words vs. music notation
 - C. AUDIATION happens with both words and music
- III. Building the scaffolding to support the tower: Piano skills
 - A. Buy a cheap digital keyboard and headphones.
 - B. Buy an adult beginner piano book. Or use one of the following free beginner methods:
 1. <https://www.freepianomethod.com/older-beginner-level-1-textbook-pdf-downloads.html>
 2. <http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/8/8f/IMSLP29200-PM LP64783-ltc1.pdf>
- IV. The four methods of sight-singing
 - A. Movable-do solfège
 1. do-major: do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do
 2. do-minor: do, re, me, fa, so, le, te, do
 3. la-minor: la, ti, do, re, mi, fa, so, la
 4. chromatic: do, di, re, ri, mi, fa, fi, so, si, la, li, ti, do; do, ti, te, la, le, so, se, fa, mi, me, re, ra, do (can also start on la or anything else)
 5. melodic minor raises steps 6 and 7 going up but not coming down (...la, ti, do, te, le.../...fi, si, la; la, so, fa...)
 6. harmonic minor raise step 7 but not 6 (...le, ti, do/...fa, si, la)
 7. modulating entails assigning a new do or la within a piece
 8. modal solfège can start on a variety of starting syllables (e.g. dorian on re or la [with fi], phrygian on mi or la [with te], lydian on fa or do [with fi], etc., as warranted)

B. Scale degree numbers

1. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 1 (never use 8)
2. accidentals are sung before the number (e.g. “raised four...” or “lowered seven”) relative to what’s in the key signature

C. Letter names

1. A, B, C, D, E, F, G
2. accidentals are sung after the letter (e.g. “F sharp...”)

D. Count singing

1. General rules:

- a) every counted beat is always sung, even within long notes, dotted notes, and tied notes
- b) singing every beat division (1& 2& 3& 4&) or even subdivision (1e&a 2e&a 3e&a 4e&a) is occasionally helpful (see 2. and 3. below)
- c) inhalational breaths on beat divisions are left out (usually an eighth note...e.g. “1& 2& 3 [breath] 4&”)
- d) non-inhalational lifts are left in and phrased accordingly (e.g. between eighth notes or sixteenth notes)

2. Simple meter: 1& 2& 3& 4& (3 = “tee” for clarity)

- a) triplets: 1&a 2&a 3&a 4&a OR 1-la-li 2-la-li OR “trip-o-let” as warranted
- b) simple subdivisions: 1e&a 2e&a etc.
- c) when necessary, further beat subdivisions can be handled by inserting the syllable “da” as needed (1da-e-&a or 1-eda-&a, etc...there is no perfect solution to this problem)

3. Compound meter: 1&a 2&a 3&a 4&a OR 1-la-li 2-la-li 3-la-li 4-la-li

- a) subdivision of beat is often not really possible or beneficial
- b) when necessary, beat subdivisions can be handled by inserting the syllable “da” as needed (1da-&a or 1-&da-a or 1-&-ada...again, there is no perfect solution to this problem)

V. General skill-building

A. Give your voice a brief, gentle workout every day. Use Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract Exercises (singing through a straw) and Stemple Vocal Function Exercises. For more on this, see my video and handout on the Care and Maintenance of the Mature Voice (the exercises are good for all ages!)

B. Practice the Paltrowitz solfège patterns by ear (available at <https://www.choralclarity.com/product/aural-training-sheet/> and worth the minor expense)

- C. Practice the above Paltrowitz patterns with varying rhythmic patterns.
- D. Practice general sight singing. For a general intro, see the following series of videos on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiIWQx54rdHLGxDv5s5Ovm6iCrPFi-YN9> and Roger Hale's introductory sight-singing videos at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxfJURRxSIEaAHR2rIWZrtg4pEeYWj2Ph> ...and the following materials are available for free on the web:

1. <http://www.lightandmatter.com/sight/sight.html> (highly recommended)
2. <https://ia800203.us.archive.org/17/items/cu31924021781434/cu31924021781434.pdf>
3. <https://ia802703.us.archive.org/3/items/fiftystepsinsigh00someuoft/iftystepsinsigh00someuoft.pdf>
4. https://ia800204.us.archive.org/32/items/eartrainingsight00wedgiala/eartrainingsight00wedgiala_bw.pdf
5. Bach Chorales:
 - a) http://www.pjb.com.au/mus/arr/a4/satb_chorales.pdf
 - b) http://ks.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/6/6b/IMSLP24489-PM-LP09471-CCARH_Bach_Chorales.pdf
 - c) http://ks.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/8/84/IMSLP348824-PM-LP385884-BACH_-_389_CHORALGESANGE.pdf

VI. Practicing with real music

- A. Practice sight-singing along with YouTube recordings of choral music that have the scores scrolling by.
 1. <https://www.youtube.com/user/razor8103>
 2. <https://www.youtube.com/user/takhonov>
- B. Practice sight-singing real music by finding a score to an UNFAMILIAR piece then playing a recording on good speakers or good over-the-ear (not in-ear) headphones and singing along. The advantage to this is that recordings don't stop! So if you make a mistake or get lost, you have to jump right back in!
 1. Find thousands of scores for free at:
 - a) www.cpdll.org
 - b) www.imslp.org
 2. Find recordings of thousands of pieces of choral music for free on YouTube!