Appendix 1

Solfège Syllables

Standard syllables

Solfège is a system for sight-singing music that applies standard syllables to the notes. Singing with solfège syllables makes it easier to hear and remember the sound of intervals. The following syllables are common to most solfège systems in English-speaking countries:

C major scale:

Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do
("doh") ("ray") ("mee") ("fah") ("soh"/"lah") ("tee") ("doh") "soul"
[or Si]

Chromatic syllables

Chromatic syllables use "-i" (said "ee") for the sharps and "-e" (said "ay") for the flats. Since Re already has an "e" on the end, it changes to Ra (said "rah").

Fixed do versus moveable do

In the fixed do system, the pitch C is always Do. Fixed do systems may keep the same syllables for sharps and flats (F, Fb, and F# are all "Fa"). For major keys in the moveable do system, Do is always the first scale step (tonic). Moveable do systems use the chromatic syllables for accidentals.

G major scale:

Fixed do: Sol La Ti Do Re Mi Fa Sol
(or Si)

Moveable do: Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do
Moveable do:  
Do-based and la-based minor

There are two ways to sing minor using moveable do: using Do for the tonic or using La for the tonic. The different forms of minor sometimes require syllables for accidentals (in bold below). Remember: "me" is pronounced "may," "te" is pronounced "tay," etc.

Singing with scale degree (scale step) numbers from one to seven is another common system. Sometimes the number eight is used when the melody approaches the tonic from below.

Sample melody

The g minor melody below illustrates five syllable systems: (1) fixed do, no chromatic syllables; (2) fixed do, with chromatic syllables; (3) moveable do, la-based minor; (4) moveable do, do-based minor, and (5) numbers. Singing the letter names of the pitches is also possible. Since the music modulates, moveable do and numbers would change to d minor to continue.

Bach, Fugue 16 in G minor, BWV 861 from WTC, Book I

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Moveable do:  

G melodic minor scale:

Do-based: Do Re Me Fa Sol La Ti Do Do Te Le Sol Fa Me Re Do
La-based: La Ti Do Re Mi Fi Si La La Sol Fa Mi Re Do Ti La

Singing with numbers

G major:

Scale steps: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

(8)

Sample melody

The g minor melody below illustrates five syllable systems: (1) fixed do, no chromatic syllables; (2) fixed do, with chromatic syllables; (3) moveable do, la-based minor; (4) moveable do, do-based minor, and (5) numbers. Singing the letter names of the pitches is also possible. Since the music modulates, moveable do and numbers would change to d minor to continue.

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Moveable do:  

G melodic minor scale:

Do-based: Do Re Me Fa Sol La Ti Do Do Te Le Sol Fa Me Re Do
La-based: La Ti Do Re Mi Fi Si La La Sol Fa Mi Re Do Ti La

Singing with numbers

G major:

Scale steps: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

(8)

Sample melody

The g minor melody below illustrates five syllable systems: (1) fixed do, no chromatic syllables; (2) fixed do, with chromatic syllables; (3) moveable do, la-based minor; (4) moveable do, do-based minor, and (5) numbers. Singing the letter names of the pitches is also possible. Since the music modulates, moveable do and numbers would change to d minor to continue.

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