

CASMEC Session Notes for *Teaching Musicianship with Choral Repertoire*

Presented by **Eniko Niké St. Clair, D. M. A.**

Assistant Professor / Director of Choral Activities

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

eastclair@cpp.edu

General premise of the presentation: using movable-do solfège and the Curwen hand-signs are powerful tools in creating equity and accessibility in our classrooms. These teaching tools can serve all students, especially those lacking access to private music instruction, aiding them in assimilating music literacy skills quickly and effectively.

We should continue teaching these skills in high schools. It is but one way of cultivating audience members in future concert halls and ensuring that our art form thrives for generations.

Developing musicianship in the choral classroom and teaching music literacy are lifelong gifts we can give our students which they can treasure and build on as adults. (E. g., they can continue singing or playing in community or church ensembles.)

So, how do we do it? We teach a bit of literacy every day with high quality repertoire so we could stop teaching everything by rote. Some benefits of utilizing this system will include faster assimilation of the material, heightened attention to intonation, effective ways of correcting pitch issues, ensuring long-term music reading abilities.

This presentation is firmly rooted in Hungarian Kodályian musicianship teaching principles: we teach high quality repertoire to access music quickly and effectively. To facilitate these principles, the Kodályian system uses a simple but comprehensive solfège syllable system *mostly* based on the key signature displayed in the music. We use as many as all seven diatonic scale notes as tonal centers. In other words, not everything should or can be boiled down to a Do scale or La scale with chromaticism. (FYI, in addition, the Hungarian system uses *La-minor* and not Do-minor.)

1. Explanation of the movable-do system. I'll provide examples for utilizing the syllables, special attention will be given to the la-minor scale.
2. Simple warm-ups in the major, the natural and harmonic minor scales (l-t-d-r-m-f-s/si-l). Scales in canon.
3. Introduction of the modal scales on solfège: Dorian=Re scale, Phrygian=Mi scale, Lydian-Fa scale, Mixolydian=So scale, Aeolian/Minors=La scales; Semitone-Pentatone scales: Mi and Ti.
4. Musical examples of the modal scales from songs and choral literature. Musical excerpts displayed to **read and sing** together on solfège in **bold**:
 - Dorian: Re scale
 - *Personent hodie* arr. by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker

- *Personent hodie* from “Behold New Joy – Ancient Carols of Christmas” arr. Shawn Kirchner
- **Jigs arr. by David Moore**
- ***I wonder as I wander*** arr. by John Jacob Niles and Lewis Henry Horton

- Phrygian: Mi scale
 - ***Wenn ich einmal sollen scheiden (the O Sacred Head melody)*** arr. by J. S. Bach

- Lydian: Fa scale
 - ***Four Slovak Folk Songs III*** arr. by Béla Bartók

- Mixolydian: So scale
 - *Mairi’s Wedding* arr. by Dave and Jenny Perry
 - *Bright Morning Stars* arr. by Shawn Kirchner
 - ***The Bright Star of Belle Isle*** arr. by Debra Scroggins
 - ***Dwijavanthi*** arr. by Ethan Sperry

- Minor: La scales (natural, harmonic, melodic)
 - ***My Love’s in Germany*** arr. by Mack Wilberg
 - *The Turtle Dove* arr. by R. Vaughn Williams
 - *Ani Maamin* arr. by Max Helfman

Examples of non-Western “exotic” scales

- Semitone-Pentatone scales
 - **Ti-pentatone: Lou Harrison *La Koro Sutro***
 - **Mi-pentatone: *Sakura* (Japanese Folk Song)**

 - Leading-tone Phrygian/Spanish Phrygian: Mi scale with a leading tone (#3)
 - ***Dravidian Dithyramb*** arr. by Ethan Sperry

 - Major with Mixolydian flavor: Do scale with Ti&Te or So scale
 - ***Desh*** arr. by E. Sperry

 - Double leading-tone Phrygian: Mi scale with two leading tones (#3, #7)
 - ***La Llorona*** arr. by Vicente Chavarria
 - *Muerte de Antonito el Camborio* from “Concierto para coro” by Miguel Astor
5. Modulation: what and how do we do it? Changing the do on a pivot note.
- ***Tantum ergo*** by Fauré
6. Chromaticism: how far do we take it?
- Canons by Haydn, Mozart, Caldara