

An Ear-First Approach to Musical Thinking, the Feierabend Way

with
Conversational Solfege



Presented by

John Crever

Feierabend Association Endorsed Teacher Trainer

Excerpted from Conversational Solfege
by John M. Feierabend



John Feierabend's Conversational Solfege An Ear-First Approach to Musical Thinking, The Feierabend Way



Conversational Solfege is a Kodaly-inspired music reading curriculum that can plug into any music program at 8 -15 min per Lesson. John Feierabend, the leading researcher on music and movement development in children and former OAKE National President, offers his work Conversational Solfege as a sequence of elements to more closely reflect the traditional American folk song repertoire and efficiently guide students through elementary school years to lifelong music literacy.

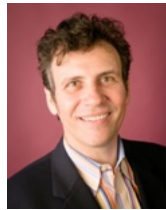
Overview of John Feierabend's Approach to Musical Thinking Method, Techniques, Implementation

Presenter:

John Crever

Endorsed Teacher Trainer

Feierabend Association of Music Education



John Crever is a musician and educator with over 30 years of classroom music teaching, performance, coaching, production, arts management, and community organizing experience.

John comes to us today as a Feierabend Association for Music Education Endorsed Teacher Trainer. John hopes today to inspire other music teachers to strive to provide a rich music literacy curriculum to all our learners.

AGENDA

Part 1 Rhythm

Conversational Solfege: A 12 Step Method

Reading Readiness: Tuneful, Beatful, Artful

Rhythm Reading Overview: Experience the Steps *with* Techniques: Steps: 1-5, 6-8, 9-12

Level 1: Unit 1 (moving in twos), Units 2-3 (moving in three)

Part 2 Tonal

Level 1: Unit 4 (Tonal - DRM) Overview

Experience the Steps *with* Techniques moving in twos then moving in threes: Steps: 1-5, 6-8, 9-12

High-Lights of Unit 5 and Beyond



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The 12 Steps of CONVERSATIONAL SOLFEGE™

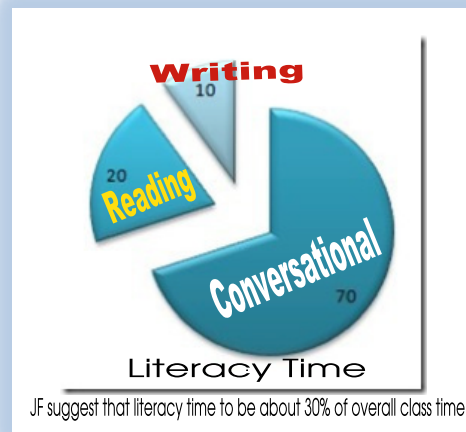


READINESS	CONVERSATIONAL SOLFEGE	READING	WRITING
1) Rote	2) Rote 3) Decode – Familiar 4) Decode – Unfamiliar 5) Create	6) Rote 7) Decode – Familiar 8) Decode – Unfamiliar	9) Rote 10) Decode – Familiar 11) Decode – Unfamiliar 12) Create

Also remember:

- 1) Sing for the class not with the class.
- 2) Develop skill with patterns before songs when decoding.
- 3) Develop inner hearing at every stage.
- 4) Most learning takes place when a child sings individually by themselves.
- 5) Develop vocal proficiency before instrumental applications at any level.

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Conversational Solfege Close-up of Rhythmic Procedures

CONVERSATIONAL : 70% of Literacy Time

Step 1 Rote – Learn a song/rhyme (demonstrate the element)

Step 2 Rote

- Patterns Set 1A – Technique – Echo Me

Step 3 – Conversational Decode familiar patterns and songs

- Patterns Set 1A – Decode– Technique– Spell This
- Yankee Doodle (lower elem) – Decode– Technique– Spell This
- Closet Key (lower elem) – Decode– Technique– Spell This
- Good King Wenceslas (upper elem) Decode– Technique– Spell This
- Heal and Toe – Decode– Technique– Spell This

Step 4 – Conversational Decode Unfamiliar

- Patterns 1B Technique: Spell This, *next lesson* I'm Thinking of Something, or Drum Messages
- Miss White – Technique: Spell This, *next lesson*: I'm thinking of something,

Step 5 Conversationally Create.

- Technique: think for yourself
- *Next lesson* – Technique: Q&A
- *Next lesson* - Technique: Think for yourself but don't change this

Assess: 90% Success? Move on or Go Back

Step 1 is always a future objective. Students learn to sing repertoire that uses a specific melodic or rhythmic concept for the next unit.

Steps 2-5: Transitioning from rote echoing to independent decoding, Students listen and respond with solfege syllables first with familiar material, then unfamiliar material, lastly, improvising their own musical thought

READING: 20% of Literacy Time

Step 6 Rote: Technique: Echo Familiar A Patterns

Step 7 - Decode Familiar Patterns then Songs

- A Patterns
- Familiar songs (past unfamiliar now familiar)

Step 8 – Decode Unfamiliar Patterns then Songs

- B Patterns
- Unfamiliar songs
- Classical Tie-In – Sight-Reading with the Orchestra:

Students see the notation for the first time, of Familiar first then unfamiliar, patterns, rhymes and songs and respond with the correct syllables.

WRITING: 10% of Literacy Time

Lead up to Writing with discussing the formation of the notation

Step 9 – Copy – Flash cards work well: Patterns first, then songs: Steps 9-12:

T: People Notes, Note Cards, White Boards/paper: run steps 9-12

Step 10 – Writing

Decode Familiar (Dictation)

Step 3 + Step 9 = Step 10

Step 11 – Writing

Decode Unfamiliar (Dictation)

Step 4 + Step 9 = Step 11

Steps 12 – Writing

Create (Composition)

Step 5 + Step 9 = Step 12

Students respond by writing musical thoughts in notation.

Unit One: Writing Worksheet

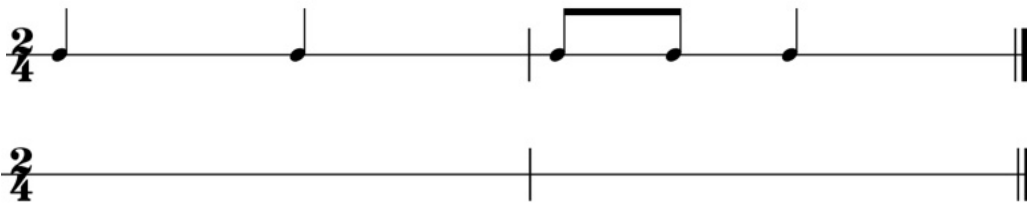
Four Steps in 10 minutes.

Do it together.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

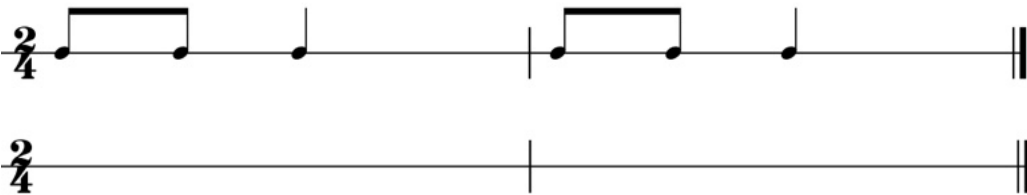
Unit 1 - Writing with

1. Copy this

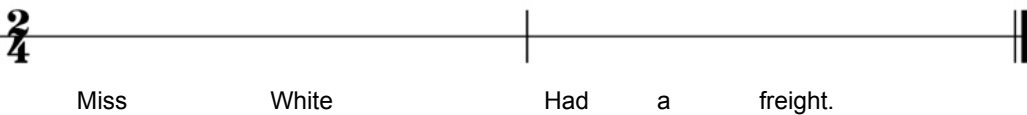


Step 9
Writing

2. Copy this



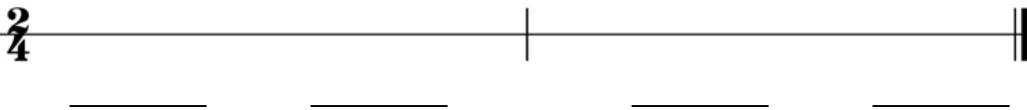
3. Decode this



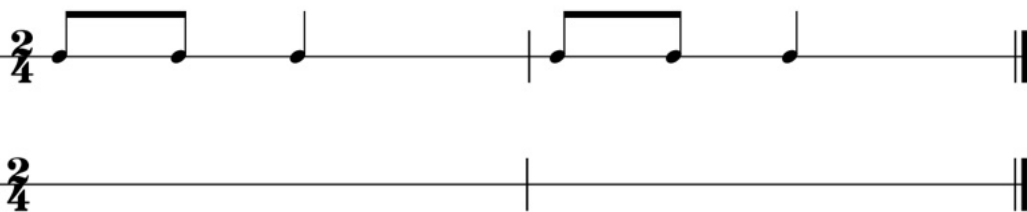
Steps 10-11
Dictation
Procedure

1. Listen
2. Copy/Echo
3. Decode
4. Write

4. Secret Message



5. Write an answer to this question



Step 12
Composition
Procedure

1. Listen
2. Respond
3. Decode
4. Write

Step 1 **TONAL** Procedure

Experience the Element and Recreate it. Sing the song and play the game.

Conversational Steps 2-5 TONAL

1st	2nd	3rd
No Rhythm/Meter	Duple	Triple
<p>Step 2 – echo/copy/Rote Patterns Set 4A No rhythm <i>Technique</i> – “Echo”</p> <p>Step 3 – Conversationally Decode familiar Patterns then Songs Decode Patterns 4A, No rhythm – <i>Technique</i>: “Spell This”</p> <p>Step 4 – Conversationally Decode unfamiliar Patterns then Songs Decode Patterns 4B, No then Songs <i>Technique</i>: “Spell This”</p> <p>Step 5 Conversationally Create with No rhythm, <i>Techniques</i>: “Think for Yourself”, Q & A</p>	<p>Step 2 – echo/copy/Rote Patterns Set 4C Duple– <i>Technique</i> – “Echo “</p> <p>Step 3 – Conversationally Decode familiar Patterns 4C then Songs Decode Duple Patterns 4C then songs (Snail/Closet) <i>Technique</i>: “Spell this”</p> <p>Step 4 – Conversationally Decode unfamiliar Duple Patterns then Duple Songs “Spell this”</p> <p>Step 5 Conversationally Create with Duple. <i>Techniques</i>: “Think for Yourself, ..But Don't Change This</p>	<p>Step 2 – echo/copy/Rote Patterns Set 4D Triple– <i>Technique</i> – Echo</p> <p>Step 3 – Conversationally Decode familiar 4D Patterns then Songs Decode Triple Patterns 4D then songs (Fais Dodo/Long Legged Sailor) <i>Technique</i>: “Spell This”</p> <p>Step 4 – Conversationally Decode unfamiliar Triple Patterns then Songs then Triple songs <i>Technique</i>: “Spell this”</p> <p>Step 5 Conversationally Create with Triple <i>Techniques</i>: “Think for Yourself”, “Rapid Rules”.</p>

Steps 6-8 & 9-12 will look similar to Steps 2-4: first with reading no rhythm then reading in two and then reading in threes, first patterns then songs using the “**Tonal Techniques**” from pages 19-52 in the purple Teacher Manual, Conversational Solfege Level 1.

UNIT 4 WRITING – ONE PAGE TONAL Writing sheet

CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS LEVEL 1

A CHALLENGE TO EXPLORE

Unit 4

Name _____

Compose a melody

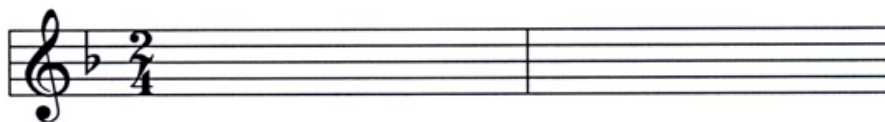
Using  and 

- 1) Create a melody for the words below.
- 2) Sing your melody for the class.
- 3) Play your melody on an instrument.

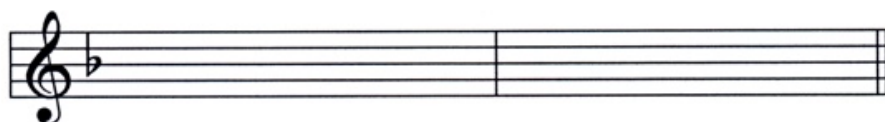
Composing STEPS:

- Think it
- Sing it
- Decode it
- Write it

Begin by improvising an answer. Step 5 technique “



See a pin, pick it up.

















All the day you'll have good luck.

Writing-Create

Conversational Solfege Scope and Sequence

Literature-Based Rhythm and Tonal Sequence

Level 1	Keys
1) 2/4 – quarter/paired eighths  2) 6/8 – dotted-quarter/three eighths  3) 6/8 – quarter/eighth  4) <i>drm</i>	F Major
Level 2 5) <i>drm s</i> 6) 2/4 – quarter rest  7) 2/4 – half note  8) 6/8 – dotted-quarter rest  9) 6/8 – dotted-half note  10) <i>drm sl</i> 11) <i>drmf s</i> 12) <i>drmf sl</i> 13) 6/8 – eighth/quarter 	G Major D Major
Level 3 14) <i>Low s</i> 15) 2/4 – eighth note upbeat  16) 6/8 – eighth note upbeat  17) 2/4 – eighth rest  18) 6/8 – eighth rest  19) <i>Low l</i> 20) <i>Low t</i> 21) 2/4 – paired sixteenth notes  22) 6/8 – paired sixteenth notes  23) <i>High d</i> 24) <i>High t</i>	B-flat Major E-flat Major A Major d minor e minor b minor g minor c minor f-sharp minor

Level 1 is intended to start at any age. If begun in 2nd/3rd grade, then **Level 2** can be completed by the end of 5th grade.

Levels 3-6 are intended for Middle school and high school performing ensembles once Levels 1-2 are mastered

Unit Planning Steps:

- Imagine your class
- Pick 6 age-appropriate songs support the element intending to focus on.
- Arrange the six songs: easy action songs first (1, 2), easily accessible but not active (3, 4), most challenging, longer songs (5, 6)
- Plan daily lessons that use Techniques to exercise the 12 Step plan
 - Step 1: Rote: Play the game and learn the song till everyone can sing the song correctly alone and with others. 3-8 weeks before. Songs 1 & 2.
 - Steps 2: learn patterns by rote Patterns A
 - Steps 3- decode familiar Patterns A and song 1&2
 - Step 4: Unfamiliar Patterns B and songs 3 & 4
 - Step 5: improvise patterns Techniques from book (eg. Say something different, Q&A,)
 - Step 6: Rote, connect sight to sound (Patterns A)
 - Step 7 Read familiar patterns then songs, 1- 4
 - Step 8 read unfamiliar patterns then songs, 5-6
 - Step 9: Rote – Copy Notation – work on penmanship and connection of reading to writing (patterns and segments of songs)
 - Step 10-11 Dictation of familiar & unfamiliar patterns (A and B), then songs, 1-6
 - Step 12 Compose Original Musical Thoughts. Feier-Math (5+9=12)

****See previous pages for how the tonal steps differ from the rhythmic units (i.e. patterns A, B, C & D)**

6 Possible Songs for use in Units 1-4

<u>Lower Elementary</u> 1 Heal and Toe <small>familiar</small> 2 Bridge of Avignon <small>familiar</small> 3 Mitty Matty 4 Yankee Doodle 5 Los Pollitos 6 "2,4,6,8" <u>Classical Tie-in Piece, Sight Reading with the Orchestra at the end of Step 8:</u> The Crane, Tchaikovsky		<u>Upper Elementary</u> 1 Heal and Toe <small>familiar</small> 2 Good King Wenceslas <small>familiar</small> 3 A la Puerta 4 Savez vous Plantez 5 Los Pollitos 6 Ruben Rachael <u>Classical Tie-in Piece, Sight Reading with the Orchestra at the end of Step 8:</u> The Can-Can, Offenbach	
Unit 2 1 Old Raggy/ Sing Me Another 2 We Come from Spain/Stirring Brew 3 Oliver Cromwell 4 Over the Prairie/Woodman Alphabet 5 Hand Pattern #3 6 Oh My Fish in the Sky Classical Tie In: Kaiser Waltz		Unit 3 1 Charlie's Neat/ Sailor Sailor 2 I's the B'y 3 Oh How Lovely 4 We Three Kings 5 When I get Home 6 Fais Dodo Classical Tie In: Sorcerer's Apprentice	
		Unit 4 1 Long Legged Sailor 2 Snail, Snail 3 Mother may I go Out to Play? 4 Closet Key 5 There She Goes 6 Shosheen Sho Classical Tie In: The Carillon	

Want More?

Dive deeper into the Feierabend approach. 24-hour professional development courses are available nationwide. To stay current on upcoming trainings, join the Feierabend Association for Music Educators (FAME) newsletter:

<https://www.feierabendmusic.org/join-fame-mailing-list/>

Join the Facebook community: [Feierabend Fundamentals](#) for a community of Feierabend educators. Inquire on the page if there is a regional group in your area. This is also where we will promote all events and regional Feier-Happenings. There's also Instagram and Twitter groups.

Also, visit the website www.feierabendmusic.org to learn more about John Feierabend and the Association. Here's information about the approach and professional membership with access to exclusive new content updated monthly. First-time members get \$10 off the \$60 membership. Use discount code **FAME2025**

To view all Feierabend published resources available from GIA Music Publishing, go to www.giamusic.com/feierabend-resources

Connect with John Crever by email: info@music-ade.com and at www.music-ade.com
Connect by text or phone: 503-278-5959.

Stay Connected - [Click to join my Newsletter](#)

Use this link to schedule time to chat: [Schedule Time with John Crever](#)

Did you know there's also a [podcast](#)?

There's also a Conversational Solfege instrumental community for band and orchestra teachers using the curricula with their instrumental ensembles. Ask at the Facebook page



Music-ade, LLC

Music Teacher Training in Feierabend Methodology

I'm a Musical Person



I'm Tuneful, Beautiful and Artful



Dr. John Feierabend is considered one of the leading authorities on music and movement development in early childhood. He is a Professor of Music and the Director of the Music Education Division at The Hartt School of the University of Hartford and is a past President of the Organization of American Kodály Educators. Dr. Feierabend makes frequent presentations both in the United States and abroad and is the author of over 60 books, articles, CDs, DVDs, and videotapes.

A music educator for over 30 years, he continues to be committed to collecting, preserving, and teaching the diverse folk music of our country and using that folk music as a bridge to help children understand and enjoy classical music. His books are a result of his belief that when many generations share common experiences such as traditional folk songs and rhymes, it helps them develop a valuable but dwindling commodity—a sense of community. When adults share childlike memories with children, they not only connect children with their ancestors, but they also enrich their children’s childhood and enable their children to someday tap into their own delicious childhood memories to share that same repertoire with their children.

In addition, research has suggested that these traditional activities provide precisely the tonal, rhythmic, and expressive experiences that are needed to develop one’s musical sensitivities. Children fortunate enough to have these songs and rhymes shared with them will grow to become adults who will not only be musically sensitive to music in their lives, but will also be musically able to connect to their children through music play.

Dr. Feierabend’s research has resulted in two music curricula: *First Steps in Music*, a music and movement program for infants through early elementary aged children, and *Conversational Solfege*, a music literacy method for use in general music classes. Dr. Feierabend is currently working on *Lomax: The Hound of Music*, a public television series that is based on his *First Steps in Music* curriculum.

Dr. Feierabend has been honored by the National Association for Music Education (MENC) as a Lowell Mason Fellow, received the Outstanding Educator Award from the Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE), and was the first American recipient of the international LEGO prize, an award given annually to someone who has “helped to make the world a better place for children to live and grow.”