

Using Chorale-style Solfeggio to Teach Harmonic Progression

Blaise Ferrandino – Texas Christian University

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The benefits of solfeggio

- transposition issues are mitigated in the instrumental ensemble
- movable “do” allows for transferability of scale degree relationships
- a phoneme to affix to a pitch allows for better recognition, retention, and reproduction.
- It’s a pitch - not a fingering!
- Allows for similarities and differences suggested by standard musical notation to be made more evident. Pitch and, consequently, linear relationships are made clear regardless of rhythms, articulations, etc.

The solfeggio matrix, derived from repertoire

- a) Harmonic progression is derived from repertoire (or created anew)
- b) Normalizing rhythms and dealing with non-harmonic tones
- c) Vertical vs. horizontal pitch space
- d) Benefits of using existing repertoire
- e) Gives instrumentalists a chance to sing without complex rhythms.

Free singing, playing, and improvisation – SING! (with repeat)

- a) Sense implicit in progression and derived lines. Improvisation implies a given.
- b) Multi-level lesson – students can explore at their individual level of comfort.
- c) Different types of lines can be called for – melody (flutes, et al), alto (2nd clarinets, et al) and tenor (2nd horn et al) - more static, bass (tubas et al) - more disjunct etc...Students gain awareness of natural linear tendencies as well as more disjunct movement.
- d) Awareness of linear progression within context of harmonic progression – especially important in instrumental ensembles.
- e) Within limitations of ensemble, various rhythms might be attempted.
- f) Students may try “connecting dots” in pitch space by adding non-harmonic tones.
- g) Progression may be played while students improvise
- h) Some may sing while others play.

Hearing/Notating

- a) Staff may be printed on the same page with the matrix
- b) Students circle, then notate what they play/sing
- c) Students sing, circle, then notate what others play/sing.
 1. While silent
 2. While playing/singing – yes this can get complex, but we can and do do it. The matrix gives a format in which we might better articulate what we hear.

Visual Analysis

- a) Comparing matrix to source material
- b) The benefits of having been “involved” with that which you now examine. It is superior to playing/singing just one line in that you have experienced the entire texture.
- c) Comparing existing lines to what was played/sung and notated
- d) Finding the movement of the notated lines within the matrix
- e) Examining the sense of the composed lines. How and why do they work and interact
- f) Lesson is flexible depending upon student level and desired outcomes

Aural/Visual Analysis

- a) If available, play a recording of the source work encouraging students to follow along on the matrix as well as the printed score.
- b) Students may play printed parts with the recording OR improvise over the recording using the matrix. This is particularly exciting. New lines may be improvised, notated, and performed. Note: Directors might want to limit number participating.

Summary

- Allows for the simultaneous development of many skills.
- Allows players to sing within their comfort level, and play from a “score” which shows the entire harmonic/linear texture.
- Mimics one manner in which composers create from existing material.
- Exposes students to repertoire from the inside out. They better understand the composer because they “walk a mile in his/her shoes”.
- Clearly shows the interrelationship between harmony and line. Music relies on the interaction of these two aspects. Harmony is a vertical snapshot of ongoing linear motion, while lines proceed as they might influenced by the nature of the harmonic/contrapuntal implications. We feel this intuitively when we perform. Through the use of solfege matrices we can better see and articulate it as well.

Aus meines Herzens Grunde

Musical score for the first system, labeled '1'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a melody in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. There are various musical notations including eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. A first ending bracket is present at the end of the first system.

Ich dank' dir, lieber Herre

Musical score for the second system, labeled '2'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a melody in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. There are various musical notations including eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. A first ending bracket is present at the end of the second system.

