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SEQUENTIAL ORDER FOR THE PREPARATION, PRESENTATION, PRACTICE AND EVALUATION OF RHYTHMIC AND MELODIC CONCEPTS

MICHEÁL HOULAHAN

PHILIP TACKA

The authentic Kodály concept begins with the collection and presentation of the finest musical materials appropriate to the age and experience level of the students. Once a body of materials is selected, it should be analyzed for pedagogical content. The frequency with which the musical elements occur within a pattern in these materials is one of the factors that determines the sequence.

The principle of organization is followed in the sequence of concepts presented in this paper and based on *150 American Folk Songs*¹ and *Sail Away*² (New York: Boosey & Hawkes), two scholarly collections of folk music. The system of analysis developed by Hope Bliss at the University of Pennsylvania will be employed in analyzing the above collection of folk songs.³ As a result of this analysis, fundamental patterns emerge that become the basis for the sequence. We have listed the principle reductions of the patterns that occur in the folk songs. Each melodic pattern should be practiced with each succeeding rhythmic element or pattern. *In this manner, the sequence is not based on isolated musical elements, but rather on patterns that link musical elements together into musical phrases and songs that reveal the structure, foundation, and musical style of the song.* This procedure is in agreement with current thinking on the presentation of elements through melodic and rhythmic patterns.⁴ The learning sequence begins with the fundamentals of music because "thorough knowledge of fundamentals can almost never be assumed; it must be taught as any other subject. A superficial grounding in the basic elements of pitch will cause more problems later on than almost any other form of negligence."⁵

There are twenty-two units arranged in a sequential manner. Units dealing with melody begin with patterns based on the minor third and progress through pentatonic, diatonic, and modal scales, modulation, and

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chromaticism. Rhythmic units are presented in a similarly structured fashion, beginning with simple groupings of eighth and quarter notes and progressing through compound meter and patterns including sixteenth notes and syncopation. Each rhythmic element is practiced separately before being integrated with melodic elements. New musical elements are not introduced until ample practice has been provided. The structure of these units promotes greater confidence in the student and provide a more solid basis for skill development than do sight-reading methods that begin with the entire diatonic scale.

Each unit will be divided as follows:

1. Musical element
2. Terms and concepts associated with each element

Unit 1

Concept: Musical Pulse as related to tempo

Unit 2

Concept: 

Terms and Concepts:	Beat/Pulse
	Long and Short
	Rhythm
	Duration
	Fast and Slow
	Tempo
	Loud and Soft
	Timbre
	Note
	Note Head
	Stem

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Flag
Rhythm Name
Quarter Note
Eighth Note
Quarter Note Rest
Subdivision on the beat unit

Unit 3

Concept: 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4

According to the folk song analysis, 3/4 time is mostly associated with diatonic materials that have up beats and dotted notes.

Terms and Concepts: Bar Line
Double Bar Line
Measure
Meter
Accented and Unaccented Beat
Time Signature
Simple Meter
2/4
Repeat Sign
Metronome Marking
Form
Ostinato

Unit 4

Concept: *so-mi*

Terms and Concepts: Stick Notation
Staff
Lines and Spaces
Musical Sounds
Pitch Names
High and Low
Treble Clef

Bass Clef
s-m
4/4 meter
Melody
Musical Phrase

Unit 5

Concept: *la-so-mi*

Terms and Concepts: repeat signs
ledger lines

Unit 6

Concept: *do, re* Melodic Patterns

Terms and Concepts: *do*
re
pentatonic scale
half note
whole note
half-note rest
whole-note rest
2/2, 4/2
Simple Duple, and Quadruple Meter
Absolute Letter Names
Treble clef or G clef
Bass clef or F clef
Ledger Lines
Tie
First and Second Endings
D.C. al fine
D.S.
Pause Mark

Unit 7

Concept: Pentatonic scale, half note, whole note, breve and simple meter where the half note is the unit beat - 2/2, 3/2, 4/2.

The music materials written in 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 can be re-written changing the unit beat to a half note. In this way, students may practice relative position of notes learned, and also apply their melodic knowledge to more advanced rhythmic concepts.

Unit 8

Concept: Changing meter

This concept should be practiced as an exercise at this point in the sequence. The teacher may begin to practice changing meter by using simple duple, triple, and quadruple time signatures.

Unit 9

Concept: Frequently used rhythm patterns incorporating sixteenth and eighth notes.



Terms and Concepts: dot placed after a note (augmented dot)

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Unit 10

Concept:

low *la*./,

Patterns that begin with known rhythmic and melodic elements are best for preparing this concept rather than phrases that begin on low *la*.

Low *la* and low *so* are common in material that contains sixteenth notes.

It is important to practice this element in both *do* centered (major) and *la* centered (minor) material to make the students aware of the two different tonal areas; relative solmization teaches the students the function of the note within a tonality.

The students have been introduced to *l-s-m-r-d*. With the introduction of low *la*, the students must aurally discern whether a composition containing the elements *l-s-m-r-d-l*, is *do* centered or *la* centered; major or minor. This presupposes no theoretical understanding of major or minor scales but is dependent on aural analysis.

Low *la* is more common in connection with low *so* than by itself; therefore, low *so* can be taught shortly after low *la*. Low *la* should first be presented in *do* centered material.

Terms and Concepts:

low *la*
octave
do pentatonic scale
la pentatonic scale
extended pentatonic scale

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Unit 11

Concept: *so* Melodic Patterns

Terms and Concepts: low *so*
so pentatonic scale

Unit 12

Concept: *do* Melodic Patterns

Absolute letter names may now be introduced if they are not already known. The students may also begin to sing with absolute letter names in both treble and bass clefs. Initially they should sing materials in letter names using C=*do*, F=*do* and G=*do* to avoid theoretical explanations of sharps or flats at this point in the sequence.

Terms and Concepts: high *do*

Unit 13

Concept: Frequently used patterns incorporating sixteenth, eighth, quarter, upbeats, and dotted notes.

Terms and Concepts: Internal and external upbeats
syncopation
dotted quarter and eighth note combinations
eighth-note rest
3/4, 3/8, 3/2, and 3/16 meter

Unit 14

Concept:

fa - *do* pentachord and *do* hexachord

When teaching *fa*, it is important to remember that the students must be fluent with the pentatonic and extended pentatonic scale.

The students must know the pentatonic scale structure, transpositions involving C, F, and G *do* and absolute letter names. By leading students to aurally compare hexachord songs in C, G, and F *do* while using solfa syllables followed by singing absolute letter names, the students will discover the need for the b flat when singing in F *do*. The relationship of whole steps and half steps can logically be presented.

Terms and Concepts:

fa
half step or semi tone
pentachord
hexachord
key signature
flat

Unit 15

Concept:

ti - *la* pentachord and *la* hexachord

In analyzing musical material containing the element *ti*, much of the material is in 3/4 and in 6/8 and also has the rhythm pattern: | . | . The function of *ti* is different in major and minor scales. In the minor scale, *ti* is not a leading tone as it is in the major scale. In American folk song

materials, *ti* is more prevalent in major. *Ti* must be presented in both *do* and *la* centered material.

Once students sing *la* pentachord and hexachord composition in G *do* with absolute letter names, they will aurally and theoretically understand the concept of sharp.

Students should begin to compare and contrast songs in both major and natural minor.

With the introduction of the diatonic scale we have found that singing sequentially through the circle of fifths with absolute letter names is a useful step to help the students gain fluency with letter names. The teacher may concentrate on the C, G, *do* positions for a few lessons and then move sequentially through the other *do* positions.

Terms and Concepts:

ti
whole step
half step
passing note
auxiliary notes
all absolute letter names
enharmonic note names
scale
major scale
key signature
major key signatures
circle of fifths
transposition

Unit 16

Concept:

6/8, 9/8, 12/8, triplets and duplets

Once the students have a thorough understanding of simple, duple, triple, and quadruple time, and the difference between simple and compound time signatures, they may be introduced to other compound time signatures such as 9/8 and 12/8. The teacher may build on the level of difficulty by teaching the concept of changing compound meter. Other simple, triple, and quadruple compound meters where the dotted eighth note and the dotted half note are the beat units should also be practiced. The students should also be led to discover that melodies written in a fast tempo with a numerator of three in the time signature have the effect of a compound meter.

At this point, the teacher may begin to practice changing meter between simple and compound meter with the division of the beat remaining constant (1 in 6/8 = to 1 in 2/4). Students should practice meter changes from both simple to compound and compound to simple. The students should practice changing between simple and compound meter where the beat remains constant. This change is the same as that between duplet and triplet eighths in simple time or between eighths and dotted eighths in compound time.

Unit 17

Concept:

si and *fi*

With the introduction of these two notes, the students can be introduced to harmonic and melodic minor scales. A significant number of works in *150 American Folk Songs* and *Sail Away*, which are in major and minor tonalities, can successfully be used to introduce students to stylistic elements of classical style. Most of these songs are in period structure, melodically outline tonic, subdominant, and dominant triads and some modulate to closely related keys.

Terms and Concepts:

natural minor scale
harmonic minor scale
melodic minor scale
minor key signatures
relative keys
parallel keys
accidentals
natural sign
double sharp
double flat

Unit 18

Concept:

Altered tones

Terms and Concepts:

altered tones
numerical identification of interval quality
identification of intervals
inversions of intervals
consonance
dissonance

Unit 19

Concept:	Harmonic functions
Terms and Concepts:	tonic function dominant function subdominant function canon major triad minor triad augmented triad diminished triad inversions primary chords secondary chords cadences

Unit 20

Concept:	Modulation to closely related keys
Terms and Concepts:	modulation nearly related keys dominant modulation relative minor modulation relative major modulation pivot chord pivot note

Unit 21

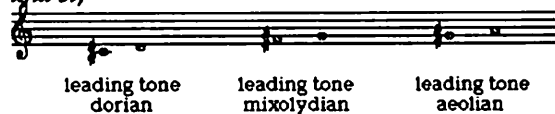
Concept:	Modes
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Medieval music is based on church modes, which are also encountered in Renaissance music, Bach chorales, folk songs, and twentieth-century works. The modes were the tonal basis of the Renaissance style, represented by Palestrina, one of its outstanding composers. One of the basic character-

by Palestrina, one of its outstanding composers. One of the basic characteristics of the Renaissance style is a tone set that combines the eight-tone system derived from the Gregorian melodic culture—all the diatonic note plus “ta.”



with the leading notes of the dorian, mixolydian, and aeolian modes, *di*, *fi*, and *si*;



this is referred to as the eleven-note tone set:



These alterations were brought about because the polyphonic style demanded the minor second be heard at cadential points. Therefore, since modal music does not move outside this tone set, the do of the range of notes does not change.

Once the students have been introduced to *f* and *t*, the teacher can practice singing scales beginning on any of the seven degrees.

For example:

a *do* scale: *d-r-m-f-s-l-t-d* (ionian mode)

a *re* scale: *r-m-f-s-l-t-d-r* (dorian mode)

a *mi* scale: *m-f-s-l-t-d-r-m* (phrygian mode)

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a *fa* scale: *f-s-l-t-d-r-m-f* (lydian mode)

a *so* scale: *s-l-t-d-r-m-f-s* (mixolydian mode)

a *la* scale: *l-t-d-r-m-f-s-l* (aeolian mode)

The following are directions the teacher may use in preparing, presenting, and practicing the modes.

1. The students sing a dorian, ionian, aeolian, mixolydian, lydian scale from the same note. Classify these scales as either major or minor; this is dependent on the interval between the root and the third of the scale.
2. The students sing the major scales. The *fa* scale may be sung with the *do* scale with the alteration *fa* instead of the *f*; and the *so* scale may be sung with the *d* scale with the alteration *ta* instead of the *ti*.

Modes and their Comparative scale names:

Lydian scale:

f-s-l-t-r-m-f

or

d-r-m-f-s-l-t-d



Mixolydian scale:

s-l-t-d-r-m-f-s

OR

d-r-m-f-s-l-ta-d



3. The students sing the minor scales. The dorian scale may be sung with the *la* scale with the altered note *fi* replacing *fa*. The phrygian scale may be sung with the *la* scale with the altered note *ta* replacing the note *ti*.

Dorian scale:

r-m-f-s-l-t-d-r

OR

l-t-d-r-m-fi s l

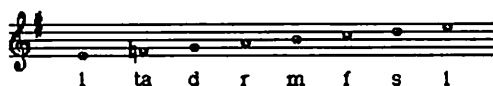
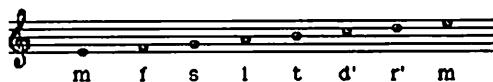


Phrygian:

m-f-s-l-t-d-r-m

or

l-ta-d-r-m-f-s-l



4. The students show the hand sign for each of these alterations and practice them with solfa and absolute letter names.

Lesson Planning

The following lesson outline may be used for each unit. Each new musical element taught will be reinforced throughout each section of the lesson plan. This will enable students to reinforce a new concept through practice exercises, sightsinging, memory work, dictation, and part singing.

1. Review of selected musical materials from previous lesson. The class begins with a warm-up session that may include echo-clapping, hand-sign singing, simple vocalises, and songs for singing. The teacher should then review previously learned materials and homework.
2. Preparation and presentation of new musical elements.
3. Introduction of theoretical terms and concepts.
4. Development of musical memory.
5. Sightsinging.
6. Dictation.

7. Part Singing

8. Review of musical materials covered during the class.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL MEMORY

Musical memory plays an important role in accurate singing and in the ability to recall a pattern for dictation. The following techniques can be helpful:

1. Memorizing by hand signs
2. Memorizing from rhythmic and staff notation.
3. Memorizing by ear.

Memorizing by Hand Signs

Once the students have experience singing from the teacher's hand signs, the sequence of hand signs begins to evoke the memory of the melodic patterns.

1. Show typical melodic patterns and ask the students to sing patterns back. Start with short patterns such as s-l-s-m or m-f-m-r-m.
2. When the melodic patterns are mastered, progress to four-bar and eight-bar melodies.
3. Show a melody in hand signs. Select pentatonic melodies or rounds. The students sing the melody in canon using solfa or absolute letter names and write down the example from memory.
4. The teacher may also give the starting pitch of a key and ask the students to sing a melody with absolute letter names while using hand signs.

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Memorizing from Staff Notation

1. The students look at a score and memorize a short fragment of a musical example, using hand signs.
2. The teacher sings the unknown part of the example. Students sing the memorized motifs.
3. Students then write the melody down on staff paper. At a more advanced level, the students can write the example in another key using a different clef.
4. Look at an example using familiar elements. Memorize the example without singing or playing.

Memorizing by Ear

Memorizing by ear is more difficult than memorizing from notation as it involves no visual aid. Melodies used for memorizing by ear should be easier than those used with notation. Extracts should be played on the piano or another instrument and sung a few times. The following procedures may be used for both rhythmic and melodic memorization.

1. Students identify the meter.
2. Students identify the ending and starting pitches.
3. Students sing the example and conduct.
4. Students sing the example with hand signs.
5. Students sing the example with absolute pitch names and hand signs.
6. Students sing the example with rhythm names.
7. Students write the exercise or play it back on the piano. Later, the example may be transposed.

The teacher may also play a melody and ask the students to sing it back in canon at the unison while memorizing the example. Later, canons at other intervals may be used. When students have gained experience in unison memory work, they can begin to memorize two-part extracts. Accompaniments may be drawn from a rhythmic pattern, a rhythmic or melodic ostinato, chord roots, a contrapuntal melodic line, or typical cadential idioms in modal or harmonic music. Memory work should also include three- and four-part work.

Procedures for the students to follow:

1. Sing the selected extracts in two parts.
2. Memorize one part silently using solfa.
3. Sing the part out loud while conducting.
4. Practice the other part following steps 1 through 3.
5. Sing both parts in a group and then as solos, using both solfa and note names.
6. Write down both parts of the extract.
7. Sing one part and play the other on the piano, or sing one part and show the second part with hand signs.

Sightsinging

Before each exercise the teacher should practice basic rhythmic and melodic patterns from the sight-reading exercise with the students while the students follow the staff notation. Difficult rhythms should be practiced with a suitable rhythmic ostinato or subdivision of the beat. Sing these preparatory exercises in the same key as the reading example. Exercises should be sung in solfège, letter names and neutral syllables. The following procedure may be used for sight reading new material:

1. Make the students aware of the meter and key. Chose an appropriate tempo.

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2. Discuss the form of the exercise. Look for repeated patterns.
3. Students should then think through the entire melody.
4. Students should conduct or use hand signs while thinking through the melody.
5. Students sing the exercise while conducting.

The sightsinging exercise may be memorized and notated. Students should continually practice reading melodic patterns with or without a specific rhythm. Teachers should devise a variety of ways to practice a reading exercise. For example: reading the melody backwards; reading a unison melody while clapping a rhythmic ostinato; singing a melody in canon at the fifth with only the first voice given.

Dictation

Dictation is closely linked to the development of musical memory, inner hearing, and reading and writing skills. It is important to spend time developing the student's memory as this skill is essential for dictation. Initial dictations should be based on patterns that have been memorized by the students. As the student's memory develops, the teacher can begin more formal dictation practice. At first, the melody should be sung by the students before notating it so the teacher may be sure the students are hearing it accurately. Initial dictation material should be based on American folk music. Later, music of other styles can be added.

The following procedures may be used for melodic dictation:

1. The teacher prepares the key of the dictation with hand signs and staff notation.
2. The teacher shows typical melodic patterns extracted from the melody used for dictation and the students sing in solfa and letter names. At the beginning stages of formal dictation the teacher may also give the student a score with the barlines indicated and certain notes or rhythms filled in to help the student's memory.

3. The teacher plays the melody on the piano, or on another instrument.
4. The students determine the final note and the beginning note as well as some or all of the following, as appropriate: mode, melodic cadences, melodic contour, patterns, and meter.
5. Students sing the melody using solfa and absolute letter names.
6. The students sing the melody with rhythm names and hand signs.
7. Students sing the melody from memory.
8. Students write the melody down.
9. Students sing the melody from their score. This melody may be used to practice other skills such as transposing it into other keys of practicing the intervals in the melody.

In addition to notating the rhythms of melodies accurately, students should also practice rhythmic dictation separately from melodic dictation. The following procedures may be used:

1. The teacher plays a melody on the piano while students establish the meter and the number of bars.
2. The teacher plays and the students conduct.
3. Students conduct and sing using rhythm syllables.
4. The students write the rhythm.
5. The teacher plays once more while the students follow the score.

Part Singing

Those who always sing in unison never learn to sing in correct pitch. Correct unison singing can, paradoxically, be learned only by singing in two parts.⁶

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Singing and playing part music are important aspects in musical training. This enables the student to learn to hear several voices simultaneously. The following procedures may be used for developing two-part singing:

1. Sing folk songs or other exercises while clapping the beat or the rhythm.
2. Sing folk songs dividing the singing by phrases in call-and-response style, or musical examples using the responsorial principle. This enables group I to hear what group II sings, and vice versa.
3. Add a rhythmic ostinato to folk songs. This can be done in five stages:
 - a. Students sing the melody while the teacher claps the rhythm.
 - b. Students and the teacher exchange parts.
 - c. Divide the students into two groups, one sing and another performs the rhythm.
 - d. Two students perform the work.
 - e. One student sings one voice and plays the other voice on the piano.
4. Students clap a series of rhythmic patterns while singing a known song.
5. Sing in two parts from hand signs. This helps students see the intervals spatially.
6. Sing simple pentatonic folk-songs in canon.
7. Sing a well-known song and at the same time clap various rhythms the teacher points to. The students may also read a known exercise while the teacher improvises an extended rhythmic ostinato. The students must sing and listen at the same time. Then try to recall the rhythmic pattern. Start with simple, familiar patterns.
8. Sing one part and clap the second part simultaneously.

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9. Two-part singing:

- a. If the two-part selection is a folk song, teach the song first either by rote or from the music, then teach the second part.
- b. Divide the class into two groups. Group A sings the top line while Group B sings the bottom. Reverse.
- c. Group A sings the bottom line and Group B claps the top. Reverse.
- d. Perform the work as a group and then with soloists. Individuals may then sing any part while clapping the other or may sing one part and play the other part on the piano.

CONCLUSIONS

The sequence is a combination of both rhythmic and melodic elements, derived from actual music, carefully unfolding in a coherent fashion. Theoretical explanations are always the final stage of musical learning. Musical concepts and elements are derived from singing games, pentatonic, major, minor, and modal folk songs.

The pentatonic scale 'is easier to sing in tune . . . , the musical thinking and the ability to sound the notes (internally) can develop better [sic] using tunes which employ leaps rather than stepwise tunes.'

Beginning with motifs derived from children's games, and advancing to pentatonic and diatonic music, allows each melodic element to be introduced sequentially using the three phases of learning outlined in this paper. As a result, the students will develop a strong association between the symbol and the sound. After careful practice, the symbol will evoke the sound experience and the sound experience will evoke the symbol. This is of prime importance in the development of musical memory, sight singing, ear training, and dictation skills. All patterns are continually put into a conceptual framework. Aural tasks are concerned with perceptual and structural tasks. Within the context of this sequence, musical elements are not abstracted from the musical example but are rather presented in relation to the entire composition.

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Kodály musical training always involves active music making. Musical learning evolves from musical experience such as singing games and dances, folk songs, and art songs, songs sung in unison, rounds, canons, part songs, themes from great instrumental music. All these are the cornucopia from which musical concepts are drawn and through which musical skills are practiced. These musical concepts and skills are then applied to more complex music, and more involved concepts evolve and further musical skills are developed. It is a spiral curriculum process in the truest sense of the word; a spiral aimed at the fullest development of the musicianship inherent in all people.⁸

NOTES

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⁷Zoltan Kodály, *The Selected Writings of Zoltan Kodály*, 46.

⁸Lois Choksy and others, *Teaching Music in the Twentieth Century*, (N. J.: Prentice-Hall. 1986): 91.