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THE LEARNING SEQUENCE IN READING RHYTHM PATTERNS

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Music is often referred to as a “universal” language. It may not be truly “universal” but it is certainly a language. In fact, the learning stages in music are generally similar to those of language learning, which are: Hearing, Imitation, Conversation, Reading, and Writing.

The learning stages in music may be explained as follows:

1 Hearing: The child hears music that is being made in his own immediate environment and directed towards him, e.g., a lullaby.

2 Imitation: The child repeats rhythmic and melodic patterns, which are sung or played to him.

3 Improvisation: The child takes such rhythmic and melodic patterns and learns as he restructures them to make what is, for him, an original piece of music.

4 Reading: The child becomes familiar with specific sound patterns, as he experiences them through speech, making body sounds, movements and playing percussion instruments. This familiarisation stage is important and should not be hurried. When the child can respond freely, introduce notation.

5 Writing: The child now progresses to writing down the notation representing those sound patterns with which he has become familiar.

It can be seen that before a child begins the actual reading and writing of musical notation, he must have been given plenty of opportunity to hear, imitate and experience music. The sound and feel of music must be in the child’s body first, expressed in movements, singing and playing simple percussion instruments. There must be a store of musical experiences for him to relate to the notation. A repertory of songs and music should be the initial base of music reading.

The tones which make up a melody have two basic properties: pitch (high and low) and duration (long and short). Research studies show that rhythmic patterns and melodic

patterns can be isolated for early clarification. Hence rhythm alone is dealt with in this article for the sake of clarity and not as an indication that melodic concepts should not be taught hand-in-hand with rhythmic concepts.

Learning Notation

Start with speech and pictures. Choose a picture subject which interests the children. The child must feel the steady beat of music which he hears. Being able to feel the steady beat of music is most vital.

Let the quarter note be the steady beat.



Children say:

boot

boot

boot

boot



Children say:

cup

cup

cup

cup

Children say these one-syllable words and clap, walk and "play" them on their knees, laps, shoulders, etc, while they say the words. When the children feel at home with these patterns, add the eighth-note patterns:



Children say:

boots

boots

rub-ber

boots



Children say:

cup

cup

cof-fee





cup

Before relating the sound to conventional notation, an intermediate step should be introduced. Short lines for short sounds and long lines for long sounds are used.





e.g.

<u>boots</u>	<u>boots</u>	<u>boots</u>	<u>boots</u>
<u>door</u>	<u>door</u>	<u>woo-den</u>	<u>door</u>

The next step is to relate the sound to conventional notation but this should not be attempted until they have had a great deal of practice with what is advocated in the preceding paragraphs. Walking rhythms can be shown by quarter notes below the words.

<u>boots</u>	<u>boots</u>	<u>boots</u>	<u>boots</u>
			

Running rhythms can be shown by eighth notes.

<u>rub-ber</u>	<u>rub-ber</u>	<u>rub-ber</u>	<u>rub-ber</u>
			

Then one at a time the visual cues are eliminated from the picture until only the conventional notation is left.

a)    

b)    

c)    









d)    

Then combine quarter notes and eighth notes in different arrangements for the children to read, say, clap and play on the body and instruments. The rest (Z) can be introduced as "stop" as in the message of the red traffic light.

The originator of the idea of using syllables to represent the different note values was John Curwen. Following Curwen's innovation, other derivations came into use. It really does not matter which method is used as long as there is consistency. Curwen's system is as follows:

	Taa
	Taa-Tai (tah-tay)
	Taa-aa
	Taa-aa-aa-aa
	taa-fa-te-fe
$\frac{6}{8}$  or $\frac{3}{8}$ 	taa-tai-tee (tah-tay-tee)
	Saa

The Kodaly time names are identified below:

	ta
	ti-ti
	ta-a
	ta-a-a-a
	tiri-tiri
$\frac{6}{8}$  or $\frac{3}{8}$ 	ti-ti-ti
$\frac{3}{8}$ 	tri-o-la

When children are ready and have had a lot of experience with quarter and eighth notes and quarter rests, add half notes (which get two beats) and whole notes (which get four beats). Slow notes are harder for children to express in movements because they require a more controlled and slower movement. Other note values are introduced in the same manner. The order, after the sixteenth notes, are the triplets in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, followed by the dotted notes and syncopated beats.

Notation Games – Guess Which One

- 1 Make a set of cards with different rhythms drawn on them.
e.g.



- 2 Put several of these up in a row. The children clap each one, so that they are sure they know how it sounds.
- 3 Clap or play one. Ask "Which one is it?" The children guess. Sometimes a pupil can clap and ask.

Which One is Different?

Make a stencil of several rows of rhythms. Have every rhythm in each row the same, except one. Children have to circle the one that is different. Using a stencil makes it easy to supply a class with material.

People Rhythms

Rhythms can be shown by using people. Have a group of seven or eight children stand in a line. Another child "arranges" them into a rhythm.

- Children standing are quarter notes.
- Children standing and linking arms are two eighth notes.
- A child squatting down makes a rest.

After one child has "arranged" the others, the rhythm is clapped by the rest of the children.

Speech Rhythms

Speech rhythms can be written in rhythmic notation. The children clap and say the words. Then the teacher claps the word, phrase or sentence rhythm and the children guess which word was clapped.

Finally, the teacher can incorporate note learning in the teaching of songs. Reading and playing instrumental accompaniments to songs offer meaningful and practical experiences to the children.

References

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