

Prepared Solmization Debate

We will be discussing various systems of pitch solmization in class on Monday, September 15. In order to help us consider all of the issues involved in choosing a solmization system as well as weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, we will begin the class with a debate. Groups of three or four students have been assigned to work together to prepare for this debate. At the beginning of class that day, each group will be randomly assigned to advocate for one of four basic systems:

- some fixed system (fixed-*do* solfège, fixed letter names, etc. — your choice)
- movable-*do* solfège with *do*-based minor
- movable-*do* solfège with *la*-based minor
- movable scale-degree numbers

Each speaker will have one minute to present some benefit of the assigned system, point out a shortcoming of other systems, and/or rebut criticism from groups representing other systems. We will rotate continuously from group to group; once you have spoken, you cannot speak again until everyone else has had a chance. We will make six rotations around the groups, so each person will speak at least twice.

Keep in mind that you must come to class ready to advocate any system (even if you don't actually like it) and to ask probing questions about other systems. You are welcome to use any resources you like to prepare: Michael Rogers' and Gary Karpinski's books, other books and articles, online information, your colleagues, etc. Don't worry, you will have an opportunity to express your real opinion after the debate.

Important ground rule: Some people systematically alter a traditional solmization system. For instance, my esteemed FSU colleagues use scale-degree numbers, but they have students say "raise" when a diatonic note is sharped (such as the leading-tone in a minor key). Some other people have students say "rev" (for "raised seven") or "shev" (for "sharp seven"). However, the vast majority of people who employ scale-degree numbers just use numbers with no inflection. The illustration below demonstrates how most people use a variety of popular systems. You can certainly find exceptions, but the syllables shown are typical. For the sake of simplicity (and avoiding confusion), I will ask you to assume the *standard usage* of any given solmization system during our debate. Please see me in advance if you're unsure about norms of usage.

A melodic fragment with a variety of typical performances



Fixed- <i>do</i> solfège:	sol	fa	mi	re	sol	fa	sol	la	ti
Inflected letters:	G	F	Es	D	G	Fis	G	A	Bes
Scale-degree numbers:	one	sev	six	five	one	sev	one	two	three
Movable- <i>do</i> , <i>do</i> -based minor:	do	te	le	sol	do	ti	do	re	me
Movable- <i>do</i> , <i>la</i> -based minor:	la	sol	fa	mi	la	si	la	ti	do