

# The Evolution of Rhythm Syllables in Gordon's Music Learning Theory

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While rhythm syllables do not enjoy the rich historical legacy that accompanies tonal syllables,<sup>1</sup> the use of rhythm syllables is perhaps more common in music classrooms today than the use of tonal syllables. Time-value names, mnemonics, note values, 1 e-and-a, and French time names are among the most prevalent systems currently in use.<sup>2</sup> Most music teachers agree that instruction is more efficient and effective when a system of rhythm syllables is part of the instructional process.

Gordon's use of rhythm syllables is a significant departure from tradition in terms of purpose, characteristics, and applications. The traditional role of rhythm syllables has been to assist in "counting" and "time keeping;" the purpose of rhythm syllables in Gordon's music learning theory is to facilitate audiation and the retention of rhythm patterns in long-term memory.<sup>3</sup> Most rhythm syllable systems are based on note values, which causes them to be illogical from a functional point of view; Gordon's rhythm syllables are based on beat function, which gives them an internal logic within and among meters. Most rhythm syllable systems are inherently unmusical and cumbersome to apply; Gordon's syllables are characterized by an ease of articulation and the potential for musical expression. As should be ex-

pected, the application of Gordon's rhythm syllables in the classroom requires a familiarity with specified teaching techniques. With the intent of providing a better understanding of important and controversial issues related to the use of rhythm syllables, the purpose of this article is to discuss the evolution of the rhythm syllable system associated with Gordon's music learning theory. The specific issues of rhythm learning and rhythm syllables will be preceded by brief information about the events that spawned Gordon's interest in developing a theory of how children learn music, and by information about the concept of audiation.

## Background

In 1965, Gordon's *Musical Aptitude Profile* (MAP) was published. The primary purpose of MAP is to provide objective information that will enable teachers to teach to the individual differences among students. Soon after MAP was published, music teachers began to request practical applications for adapting instruction to students' individual musical needs. The development of Gordon's Music Learning Theory began as an answer to those requests. His first attempt at articulating a theory of how children learn music came in *The Psychology of Music Teaching* (1971). Subject to the constant growth and development that accompanied years of practical and experimental research, his most recent documentation of the music learning process appears in the Fifth Edition (1989) of *Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content, and Patterns*. Though originally conceived as a theoretical model, Gordon's Music Learning Theory has recently taken on a practical application in the form of *Jump*

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*Right In: The Music Curriculum* (1986) and *Jump Right In: The Instrumental Series* (1989).

## Audiation

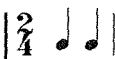
Because the development of Gordon's Music Learning Theory and the evolution of his rhythm syllables are inextricably linked to the concept of audiation, audiation will be an important underlying element throughout the remainder of this paper. When Gordon (1976, p. 2) coined the word audiation, he defined it as the ability to hear music for which the sound is not physically present. Audiation provided a more precise definition of musical imagery (aural perception and kinesthetic reaction), the term that was associated with MAP and other tests of music aptitude. When originally conceived, audiation was also not unlike the more commonly used terms "inner hearing" and "silent singing." In the most recent edition of *Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content, and Patterns* (1989), Gordon devoted an entire chapter to the explication of seven types and six stages of audiation.

Audiation is perhaps best understood when compared to imitation. An individual who imitates a language pronounces the words correctly without giving meaning to the words. That is true when someone reads or speaks in a foreign language but does not understand the meaning of the words. An individual who imitates music is unable to give meaning to music. For example, a person who imitates rhythmically may be able to engage in counting and time keeping; but that individual may experience difficulty maintaining a consistent tempo. An individual who imitates tonally may be able to perform a melody on an instrument, and in many cases, that individual may also be able to sing the melody. The individual who imitates tonally, however, may sing with faulty intonation and may experience difficulty when singing a harmony part to that melody. In extreme cases, the individual who only engages in imitation may not recognize the same piece when it is performed by another individual. It should be understood that imitation is not unimportant; one must be able to imitate in order to audiate. It is audiation, however, that forms the bases for all musical

behavior. Audition requires comprehension, and it occurs when an individual gives tonal and rhythmic meaning to music through reading, writing, creating, improvising, listening, and performing.

## Defining Rhythm

Rhythm understanding, along with tonal understanding, has been one of the bases of Gordon's music learning theory from its inception. In 1971, Gordon (pp. 67-69) provided an operational definition of rhythm in terms of 1) tempo beats, 2) meter beats, and 3) melodic rhythm. He described the tempo beat as the walking, marching, or swaying beat in the music, and he provided notational examples

in duple meter: 

and in triple meter: 

Tempo beats, according to Gordon, were temporally equal (equally spaced in time) and organized in pairs. He described meter beats as two or three equally spaced beats superimposed over the duration of a tempo beat. Because meter beats establish the meter of the music, Gordon regarded them as more important than tempo beats. For example, duple meter is established when two equally spaced beats are superimposed within the duration of a tempo beat,

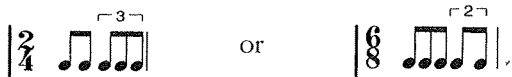


and triple meter is established when three equally spaced beats are superimposed within the duration of a tempo beat,



Melodic rhythm is the result of the simultaneous interaction of tempo beats, meter beats, and shorter and longer rhythm values. In addition to basic duple and basic triple meters, Gordon defined uncommon duple, uncommon triple, basic mixed, uncommon mixed, basic unusual, and uncommon unusual meters. He used the terms basic and uncommon to refer to the frequency with which the patterns occur in the literature,

and he used the terms usual and unusual to refer to patterns in which the tempo beats were temporally equal and temporally unequal, respectively. He used the term mixed meter to refer to patterns in which the tempo beats were temporally equal, but the meter beats were grouped in two's and three's.

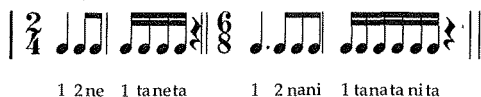


## Assigning Rhythm Syllables

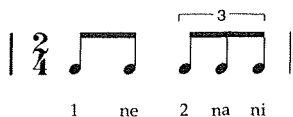
In assigning rhythm syllables to various patterns and meters, Gordon (1971, p. 73) provided the following rules. Rhythm syllables should

- 1) be fundamentally different for patterns in duple, triple, and unusual meters;
- 2) be fundamentally different for tempo beats and for each successive meter beat;
- 3) provide for all basic and uncommon patterns;
- 4) be easily articulated vocally;
- 5) not be associated with individual note values; and
- 6) not conflict in name with tonal syllables.

In light of those rules, Gordon (1971, pp. 74-75) assigned the following syllables to basic duple and basic triple meters:



The “ne” was pronounced like “na” in *nation*; the “na” was pronounced like “no” in *notch*; the “ni” was pronounced like “ne” in *neat*; and “ta” was pronounced like “to” in *topic*. Gordon applied the same syllables to mixed meter

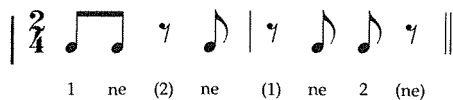


He devised the syllables “1 be” and “1 ba bi” for meter beats in unusual meter patterns, patterns in which the tempo beats are not temporally equal.



Gordon retained “ta” for subdivisions of meter beats in unusual patterns, because those subdivisions do not affect the function of the tempo beat or the meter beat. In Gordon’s 1971 system, numbers were always associated with tempo beats in all meters.

Gordon (1971, p. 75) advocated performing silently rhythm syllables that correspond with rests in rest patterns in all meters.



In like fashion, he suggested sustaining the appropriate syllables for patterns comprising ties and notes of longer duration than a tempo beat or a meter beat.



Gordon (1971, p. 77) recommended that teachers making use of rhythm syllables in classroom instruction use the echo technique. He also recommended the use of preplanned and spontaneously created dialogues and rondos.

## Discussion

Considering the aural constructs upon which the rhythm imagery subtests of MAP are based, one can infer that Gordon defined rhythm in terms of the aural aspects of music. In other words, one should be able to determine aurally the meter of a piece of music without the aid of music notation. Although Gordon’s definition of tonality was somewhat consistent with the traditional definition of tonality, his operational definition of meter as the relation between tempo beats and meter beats was a distinct departure from the traditional definition of meter. According to the traditional definition, music written with a 2/4 measure signature is simple duple meter, and music written with a 6/8 measure signature is compound duple meter. When Gordon (1971) provided examples of duple meter written in 2/4, he was in agreement with the traditional definition of duple meter. When he provided examples of triple meter written in 6/8, he was depart-

ing from the traditional definition of meter.

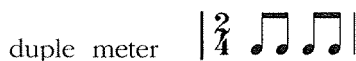
Much of the confusion and controversy surrounding Gordon's rhythm syllable system stems from his nontraditional use of words such as meter and meter beats and from his labeling music written in 6/8 as triple meter. In the absence of a label for the aural aspect of the rhythm dimension of music—a word parallel, perhaps, to the word "tonality" for the aural aspect of the tonal dimension of music—Gordon chose to use the words "meter" and "meter beats." Further, he chose to use 2/4 and 6/8 to represent duple and triple meters, respectively, because those measure signatures provided two tempo beats within each measure for both duple and triple meters.



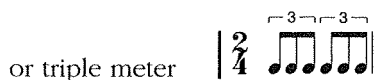
The pairing of tempo beats was central to his operational definition of rhythm, and it was logical from a visual perspective when students were first learning to read music. It also provided a smooth transition to other time signatures (Gordon, 1971, pp. 80-84).

In retrospect, less confusion would exist had Gordon stated that 2/4 *could* be duple meter and 6/8 *could* be triple meter, in much the same manner that the key signature with one sharp *could* be major tonality. The key signature with one sharp could also be E minor, A dorian, B phrygian, etc. It follows

that 2/4, considered from an aural standpoint, "could" be:



duple meter

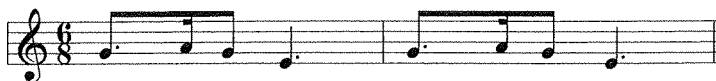


or triple meter

although the latter would be rare because of notational inconvenience. Similarly, 6/8 *could* be triple meter, as in "Silent Night," or it *could* be duple meter, as in Sousa's "Washington Post March" (see Figure 1).

Several factors contributed to Gordon's redefinition of the rhythm dimension of music in 1971. One was probably a conflict between his traditional music theory training and his aural experiences as a jazz musician.<sup>4</sup> Another was the relatively primitive stage of Gordon's understanding of aural perception and musical imagery at that time as compared to his recent concept of "audiation." While musical examples may have helped to clarify his definitions at the time, they may have only muddled the water in the long term. What is clear from Gordon's 1971 exposition on rhythm is that he defined rhythm in terms of the aural and kinesthetic properties of music, and he assigned rhythm syllables on the basis of rhythm functions (tempo beats, meter beats, and melodic rhythm), not on the basis of note values.

### Silent Night



### Washington Post March



**Figure 1.** Excerpts of "Silent Night" in Triple Meter and "Washington Post March" in Duple Meter

## Gagné's Influence

In his earliest attempt to formulate a theory of how children learn music, Gordon drew upon the research and writing of many cognitive psychologists outside the discipline of music. Gagné (1965) was particularly influential, because his model encompassed both Gestalt and associationist theories. Gagné's levels of learning are hierarchical, ranging from simple perceptual learning to complex conceptual learning. Gagné's hierarchy of eight types of learning, along with Gordon's (1971, pp. 57-59) application of music learning to each level, is shown in Figure 2.

As can be seen in Figure 2, "Gordon's Application to Music Learning" was too general to address the use of rhythm syllables. Nonetheless, by concurrently working on the establishment of a rhythm syllable system, Gordon was stating that he considered rhythm syllables to be important. One can only assume that, in Gordon's appraisal, the Gagné model was not sufficiently compre-

hensive to embrace all important aspects of music learning.

## A Learning Theory for Music

Gordon first presented his theory of how children learn music in *Learning Sequence and Patterns in Music* (1976 and 1977). His music learning theory has evolved through three subsequent editions of *Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content, and Patterns* (1980, 1984, and 1989). Gordon's music learning theory is distinctly musical in character, but at the same time it reflects the influence of Gagné and other cognitive psychologists (Woodruff, Piaget, Bruner, & Ausubel).<sup>5</sup> Figure 3 shows Gordon's (1976, p. 8) music learning sequence.

Gordon's music learning sequence contains many similarities to Gagné's eight levels of learning. The only label to remain intact, however, is the label for the verbal association level of learning (see figures 2 and 3). The accommodation of rhythm syllables that

| Gagné's Eight Levels of Learning                          | Gordon's Application to Music Learning  |
|---|---|
| PERCEPTUAL LEARNING                                       |   |
| 1. Signal Learning  | 1. Simple perception of sound   |
| 2. Stimulus-Response Learning                             | 2. A musical sound--the response which it elicits from the listener   |
| 3. Chaining   | 3. One response becomes the stimulus for another response, etc.   |
| 4. Verbal Association                                     | 4. Spoken or written descriptions are used to identify responses (i.e., names of lines and spaces, time-value names of notes, and the names of key and meter signatures). |
| CONCEPTUAL LEARNING                                       |   |
| 5. Multiple Discrimination                                | 5. The ability to differentiate aurally or symbolically between major and minor, duple and triple, etc.   |
| 6. Concept Learning                                       | 6. The ability to transfer and generalize multiple discrimination understandings to unfamiliar music.   |
| 7. Principle Learning                                     | 7. Understanding of a theoretical nature (i.e., duple and triple meter in terms of note values, etc.)   |
| 8. Problem Solving  | 8. Basically the same as principle learning; both form the bases for creative thinking.   |
| <b>Figure 2. Gagné's Levels and Gordon's Applications</b> |   |

was absent in Gordon's original application of the Gagné model is present in his 1976 music learning sequence. Specifically, the verbal association level of learning encompasses the use of rhythm syllables and the classifications of meters and their respective categories. Gordon cites the purpose of verbal association in relation to spoken language:

Without words (names) to represent the multitude of objects in our environment, conceptualization could take place in only a minimal way. One thinks with words; the fewer words in one's vocabulary, the more limited one's thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Thinking in terms of the language analogy, verbal association is a process for giving names to rhythm patterns. By participating in verbal association levels of rhythm learning, individuals enlarge their rhythm vocabularies; subsequently, they can engage more fully in higher levels of rhythm learning.

At the verbal association level of learning, rhythm syllables are assigned to patterns that have been learned through the use of neutral syllables at the aural/oral level of learning (see Figure 3). In addition to teaching

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| DISCRIMINATION             |
| Aural/Oral                 |
| Verbal Association         |
| Partial Synthesis          |
| Symbolic Association       |
| Reading-Writing            |
| Composite Synthesis        |
| INFERENCE                  |
| Generalization             |
| Aural/Oral-Verbal-Symbolic |
| Creativity/Improvisation   |
| Aural/Oral-Symbolic        |
| Theoretical Understanding  |
| Aural/Oral-Verbal-Symbolic |

**Figure 3.** Gordon's (1976) Music Learning Sequence.

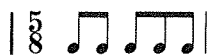
rhythm syllables, the teacher should teach the classifications of meters and their respective categories at the verbal association level. The classifications and categories contained in Gordon's *Rhythm Content Learning Sequence* (1976) are shown in Figure 4. The "classifications" represent several changes from his earlier labels.<sup>7</sup> The "categories" include divisions, elongations, rests, ties, and upbeats, in addition to tempo beats and meter beats.

Gordon's operational definition of rhythm

| CLASSIFICATION               | CATEGORIES   |
|------------------------------|--|
| Usual Duple                  | Tempo and Meter Beats<br>Divisions and Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Usual Combined               | Tempo and Meter Beats<br>Divisions and Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Unusual Unpaired Nonmetrical |  |
| Unusual Unpaired             | Tempo and Meter Beats<br>Divisions and Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Usual Triple                 | Tempo and Meter Beats<br>Divisions and Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Unusual Paired               | Tempo and Meter Beats<br>Divisions and Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Unusual Paired Nonmetrical   |  |

**Figure 4.** Gordon's (1976) Rhythm Content Learning Sequence

conforms to his 1971 definition in terms of “tempo beats,” “meter beats,” and “melodic rhythm.” His rhythm syllables remain constant as well, except for one notable addition. Gordon (1976, pp. 118-119) assigned the following syllables to unusual meter, i.e., meters in which the tempo beats are not temporally equal.



Du be Du ba bi

or



Du be Du be Du ba bi

Prior to 1976, numbers had been assigned to tempo beats in both usual and unusual meters. Gordon justified the use of “Du” for tempo beats in unusual meter because it emphasizes the difference between usual and unusual meter. It also highlights the fact that tempo beats may or may not be paired.

In 1980 Gordon defined verbal association in terms of vocabulary (rhythm syllables) and proper names (names of tonalities and meters), and he made significant changes. Regarding vocabulary, he replaced the numbers “1” and “2”, previously associated with tempo beats in usual meter, with the syllable that he had begun in 1976 to associate with tempo beats in unusual meter—Du. He replaced the consonant “n” in “ne” and “na ni” with the consonant “d.” For example,



1 ne 2 ne

becomes



Du de Du de

and



1 na ni 2 na ni

becomes



Duda di Duda di

Gordon (1980, p. 197, and 1989, p. 265) credits the influence of James Froseth and Albert Blaser for his decision to extend the syllables that he used previously for tempo beats in unusual meter



Du be Du ba bi

to a parallel use in usual duple and usual triple meters. The practical research of Froseth and Blaser indicated that the syllables were easier to comprehend, and that they were easily transferred to instrumental performance.

Regarding proper names, Gordon replaced the terms “tempo beat” and “meter beat” with the terms “macro beat” and “micro beat,” respectively. He justified the changes by citing the confusion created by the “established association the average reader had for the old terms.”<sup>8</sup> He defined the macro beat in terms of long or large, and he defined the micro beat in terms of short or small.

Gordon’s current system of rhythm syllables was essentially established by 1980. Several examples of Gordon’s rhythm syllables for usual duple meter, usual triple meter, usual combined meter, and unusual paired meter, are shown in Figure 5. The first example in each classification includes macro beats, micro beats, and divisions. The second example in each classification includes all functions.

Gordon has continued to modify and expand his skill learning sequence and rhythm content learning sequence in response to the results of practical and experimental research, but each retains most of the characteristics of the earlier models. It is interesting to compare the contemporary versions shown in figures 7 and 8 with the earlier versions shown in figures 3 and 4.

## Practical Applications

Although Gordon’s rhythm syllable system has remained unchanged for nearly a decade, its application in the classroom has undergone many revisions in response to the results of practical and experimental research. It is not surprising that some confusion has accompanied the use of the system. In 1984, Gordon (pp. 36-37) expounded on the issue of sign and symbol in an attempt to clarify the purpose and application of rhythm syllables:

In music, signs are audiated or aurally perceived and symbols are visually perceived.

Verbal associations are signs which have internal logic, in contrast to symbols, which are arbitrary.

In other words, "a sign is, and a symbol represents." Rhythm syllables (signs) should be performed (chanted) and symbols (notation) should be read. Students should not read signs (du de du de); they should read the notation



that represents those signs. Also, because of the arbitrary nature of symbols, different symbols (notation) may represent the same signs (rhythm syllables). For example, the notated patterns in Figure 6 (next page) sound the same because they represent the same signs.

Gordon (1980, p. 100) coined the word "enrhythmic" to refer to those patterns that sound the same but are notated differently.

Gordon's research on tonal and rhythm pattern difficulty (1978) yielded valuable information for teachers wanting to adapt in-

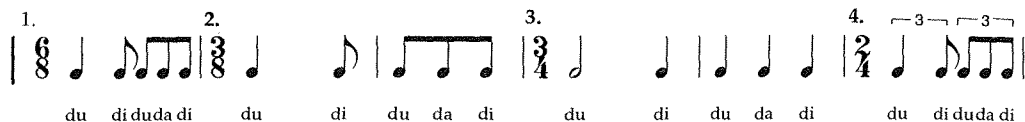
struction to individual musical differences among students. Easy, moderate, and difficult tonal patterns and rhythm patterns became the bases of the learning sequence activities component of *Jump Right In: The Music Curriculum* (1986). Students are taught rhythm patterns and tonal patterns in accordance with their tonal and rhythm aptitudes. The patterns are taught separately so that students will attend to the rhythm aspect of music when rhythm patterns are being taught, and to the tonal aspect of music when tonal patterns are being taught.

Techniques associated with teaching rhythm patterns and rhythm syllables have been improved and clarified by use of the *Tonal and Rhythm Pattern Audiation Cassettes* (Gordon, 1981), the *Tonal and Rhythm Pattern Cassettes* from *Jump Right In: The Music Curriculum* (Gordon & Woods, 1987), and the *Home-Study Cassette* from *Jump Right In: The Instrumental Series* (Grunow & Gordon, 1989). The availability of the cassette tapes has facilitated aural practice on a large scale and has led to greater uniformity

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Du de Du Du ta de ta Du ta de</p>       | <p>Du da di Du Du ta da ta di ta Du da ta di</p> |
| <p>Usual Duple Meter</p>                   | <p>Usual Triple Meter</p>                        |
| <p>Du de ta Du da di Du Du ta da ta di</p> | <p>Du ba bi Du be Du Du ta be</p>                |
| <p>Usual Combined Meter</p>                | <p>Unusual Paired Meter</p>                      |

**Figure 5.** Gordon's Rhythm Syllables for Macro Beats, Micro Beats, Divisions and Elongations, Ties, Rests, and Upbeats in Usual Duple Meter, Usual Triple Meter, Usual Combined Meter, and Unusual Paired Meter.





**Figure 6.** Enrhythmic Rhythm Patterns

in the pronunciation of the syllables. A change in the pronunciation of the syllable "ta" is also evident on those recorded examples. Gordon (1971) recommended pronouncing the "ta" like "to" as in *topic* for division patterns. To facilitate the rapid pronunciation of "ta" in patterns such as



the "ta" has evolved into "ta" as in *tamale*. Teachers using learning sequence activities

also employ expressive performance and musical breathing as a part of rhythm pattern instruction.<sup>9</sup>

## Summary and Conclusions

The rhythm syllables associated with Gordon's music learning theory evolved over a span of less than a decade (1971-80). It should be understood that the purposes for using those rhythm syllables, and the proper application of rhythm syllables to music instruction, are more important than the actual syllable characteristics (Du ta de ta, Du da di, etc.). When applied by a skillful and knowledgeable teacher, the rhythm syllables associated with Gordon's music learning theory serve to enhance rhythm audiation more efficiently than will any system based on note values. On the other hand, regardless of how easy the syllables are to articulate and transfer to instrumental performance, they will serve no better than many other syllable systems when the teacher does not adhere to the proper sequence and the appropriate techniques. When that is the case, the syllables will only encourage imitation without audiation, and the effects will be short-lived.

The changes in Gordon's rhythm syllables (vocabulary and proper names) over time are related to a shift in his operational definition of rhythm. Originally, Gordon defined the tempo beat as the walking, marching, or swaying beat, or as the conductor's beat. From the beginning, his syllables were distinguishable from other syllables because they were assigned to "functions" (tempo beats, meter beats, etc.). By 1976, while his operational definition of rhythm was unchanged, he no longer characterized the tempo beat as the walking, marching, or swaying beat in the music. By 1980, Gordon changed the labels "tempo beats" and "meter beats" to "macro beats" and "micro beats" respectively.

|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| DISCRIMINATION                 |
| Aural/Oral                     |
| Verbal Association             |
| Partial Synthesis              |
| Symbolic Association           |
| Reading/Writing                |
| Composite Synthesis            |
| Reading-Writing                |
| INFERENCE                      |
| Generalization                 |
| Aural/Oral - Verbal - Symbolic |
| Reading/Writing                |
| Creativity/Improvisation       |
| Aural/Oral - Symbolic          |
| Reading - Writing              |
| Theoretical Understanding      |
| Aural/Oral - Verbal - Symbolic |
| Reading - Writing              |

**Figure 7.** Gordon's (1989) Skill Learning Sequence

| METER CLASSIFICATION        | PATTERN FUNCTIONS  | METER CLASSIFICATION          | PATTERN FUNCTIONS  |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Usual Duple                 | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats | Usual Triple                  | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Usual Combined              | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats | Unusual Paired                | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Unusual Unpaired            | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats | Unusual Paired<br>Intact      | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats |
| Unusual Unpaired,<br>Intact | Macro and<br>Micro Beats<br>Divisions and<br>Elongations<br>Rests<br>Ties<br>Upbeats | Multimetric/<br>Multitemporal | All Meters<br>All Tempos   |
| Monometric<br>Monotemporal  | All Meters<br>All Tempos   | Polymetric/<br>Polytemporal   | All Meters<br>All Tempos<br>Multimetric/<br>Multitemporal                            |

**Figure 8.** Gordon's (1989) Rhythm Content Learning Sequence.

**Figure 9.** An Illustration of Subjective Microbeats.

He characterized macro beats as long or large, and micro beats as short or small. Gordon's concept of macro beats appears to be more inclusive than his original concept of tempo beats.

There is perhaps a logical explanation for this change. When Gordon began to develop his theory of how children learn music in 1971, he was writing from a theoretical point of view guided by his music aptitude research. By 1976, he was actively engaged in the practical application of his theory. Apparently the process of practical application led Gordon to alter his perception of the tempo beat, until it often becomes what is now known as a micro beat. In current terms, the walking, marching, or swaying beat in the music is sometimes the macro beat and sometimes the micro beat.

Of course, subjectivity plays a big part in the process of feeling and labeling the temporal qualities of music. One person might feel macro beats at the X points in Figure 9, another at the Y points, and a third at the Z points. What is important to effective rhythm instruction is that music teachers use a rhythm syllable system that promotes efficient rhythm learning. Specifically, the system should be based upon beat function so that persons can internalize the aural and kinesthetic properties of music. The rhythm syllable system associated with Gordon's music learning theory offers those advantages.

## Notes

1. Guido d'Arezzo introduced tonal syllables in the eleventh century to aid in teaching music reading. Rhythm syllables were introduced with the Galin-Paris-Chev  system in France in the nineteenth century.

2. For additional information about the history of tonal and rhythm syllables and comparisons of various syllables, see *Readings in Music Learning Theory* by Walters and Taggart (1989) and *Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content, and Patterns* by Gordon (1989).

3. Rhythm syllables (vocabulary) and the names of meters and rhythm pattern functions (proper names) constitute the rhythm portion of the verbal association level in Gordon's Music Learning Theory. Therefore, vocabulary and proper names actually facilitate the retention of rhythm patterns in long-term memory. The remaining portion of the verbal association level comprises vocabulary and proper

names for the tonal aspect of music.

4. Gordon's traditional theory training was with Allen Irvine McHose at the Eastman School of Music. For a time, Gordon was the bass player in the Gene Krupa Band.

5. For more information regarding the influence of other psychologists in Gordon's Music Learning Theory, see *The Psychology of Music Teaching* (1971), Chapter Four, "The Application of Current Learning Theories of Music Education."

6. Gordon (1976), p. 10.

7. Within this article, see pp. 57-58.

8. Gordon (1980), pp. 88-89.

9. For additional information about the techniques for teaching rhythm patterns and rhythm syllables, see the Reference Handbook for Using Learning Sequence Activities from *Jump Right In: The Music Curriculum* (Gordon & Woods, 1986) and the "Teacher's Guide" from *Jump Right In: The Instrumental Series* (Grunow & Gordon, 1989).

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