



Neil Swapp
January 9, 2015
10:45 – 11:45
1111 CFA

Sight-reading A fearless approach

- Have a method
 - Systematic approach to teaching rhythm
 - Systematic approach to scale and arpeggio study
 - Systematic approach to SR prep time
- Practice sight-reading regularly
- Make it fun

Rhythm

- Teach small to large note values rather than large to small note values
- This works with all ages – elementary to advanced high school
- Students learn rhythm very quickly and accurately
- Practice with a metronome...always in "slow motion" until the concept is solid
- Always insist students count and clap
 - Each 1/16th note gets one syllable
 - Circle the syllable on which a note starts
 - Underline how long the note lasts
 - Begin easy with all 1/16th notes
 - Add ties to create eights, quarters, halves and etc.
 - Move the tie around to create syncopation
- (See attached rhythm sheet)
 - Slowly begin to increase tempo
 - After concept is solid student may begin to only say the syllable on which the note begins
 - Transition this concept to playing on a single note
- When introducing this concept, spend approximately 5-10 minutes each day, this can be reduced over time
- Include written quizzes that require students to write in, circle and underline syllables



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- I usually write the exercises on the board rather than creating them as handouts.

Scales and Arpeggios

- Systematic approach to scale and arpeggio study
 - Outline the year with target dates for each scale
 - Insist on correct notes, good intonation and correct fingerings
 - Don't always begin rehearsal with the same scale...the "warm up scale syndrome"
 - Make them fun! Create different scale exercises – a scale isn't a useful tool unless it is committed to muscle memory
 - See scale sheet
 - "Top note down"
 - "Up the A – down the B flat"
 - "Scale in thirds"
 - "Add a note"
 - "Groups of 3"
 - Etc.
 - Help students identify the value in scales
 - Analyze music in class to show them that most phrases are a combination of scales and arpeggios

MPA Sight-reading Prep Time

- Review your districts guidelines as they are slightly different district to district
- Have a plan before you enter the room – make sure students know the plan
- Prep time is usually 7-10 minutes
 - Varies district to district – some allow students and directors to preview music for the entire time, some have a "director only" preview time
- Know your students – know their weakness / strengths and etc.
 - In the prep time, don't spend time on things students will read well but focus on their weaker areas / sections.
- Preview:
 - Scan and identify the following:



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- Key
- Time signature
- Key and or time signature changes
- Tricky rhythmic patterns
- Form (road map)
- Tricky melodic or intervallic passages
- As a group
 - Have students touch the key signature with their finger – remind them of the sharp / flat etc. (high 2 etc.)
 - If you feel time allows have students finger through scale corresponding to the key
 - Have students touch time signature and discuss it briefly (especially if it is a compound meter)
 - Have students touch the road map
 - Have students touch tempo changes
- Option 1
 - Air bow and sing through the entire piece while you conduct and sing and or talk them through
 - If there is a need, stop for especially tricky spots and do a very brief “mini rehearsal”
 - Finish this read through with enough time to review trick spots
 - Don’t forget to talk about musicality, dynamics, tempo changes and etc.
 - Clap tricky spots / finger and air bow
- Option 2
 - Air bow and sing through the tricky spots of the piece.
 - Clap tricky spots / finger and air bow
 - Air bow and sing through the entire piece while you conduct and sing and or talk them through
 - Don’t forget to talk about musicality, dynamics, tempo changes and etc.
- Concluding the prep time
 - Save enough time to:
 - Remind students of road map
 - Remind students of key
 - Remind them of the “mistakes they might make”
 - Ask them if they have questions



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- Play a tuning note
- Begin

Sight-reading something every day

- No one is good at something unless it is practiced regularly!
- Have Faith!
 - Time spent on sight reading will pay for itself as students can learn music faster
- This can be something simple
 - In the beginning of the year, read a rhythmic pattern on the board
 - Sight read a passage of something you are going to play on a concert later in the year and then leave in the folder
 - Make sight reading folders
 - Purchase sight reading method books
- Daily practice
 - You learn your students strengths and weaknesses
 - Students gain skills
 - “Mock Sight reading” – go through the entire process
 - “Cold run sight reading” – pass the music out and play it without any prep

Take the fear out of it!

- Make it fun
 - What took the joy out of reading? Beginners are always eager to read the next line...what happened? We happened!
 - Sometimes our teaching methods “downplay” sight-reading
 - Sometimes we aren’t willing to let them struggle and immediately default to rote teaching
 - Sight reading challenges / games in class
 - Rhythm slides
 - Each student read a measure of a piece
 - Etc.

Rhythm - Small to Large

Count and clap

In SLOW MOTION (1/16 = 60)

1. Each 1/16 note gets one syllable
2. Circle the syllable the note starts on
3. Underline how long the note lasts

① e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Add ties to make longer valued notes

2

① e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Ask students if there is an easier way to write tied 1/16th notes

3

① e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Add ties to various parts of the beat - Continue to circle and underline

4

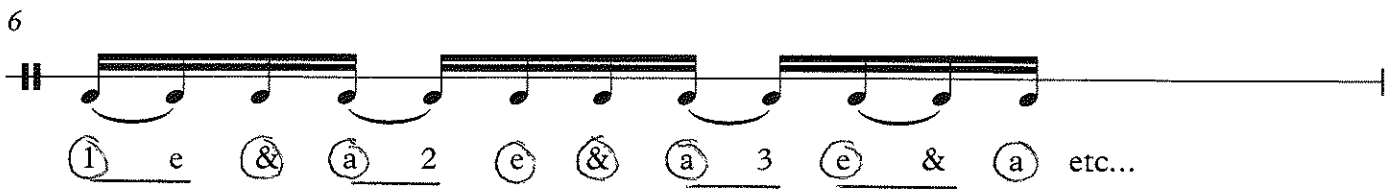
① e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a etc....

5 (rewrite)



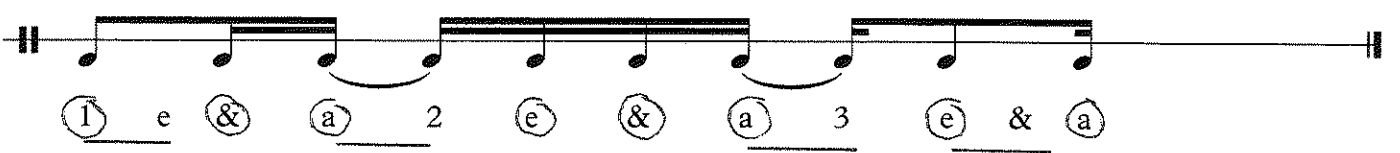
Musical notation for exercise 5. It consists of a single staff with a double bar line at the beginning. The staff contains three groups of notes, each group consisting of three eighth notes. The first group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. The second group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. The third group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. Below the staff, there are circled numbers 1, 2, and 3, each followed by a vowel: 1 e, 2 e, 3 e. There are also ampersands (&) and the letter 'a' placed between the notes. The sequence is: 1 e & a, 2 e & a, 3 e & a etc....

Add ties across the beat



Musical notation for exercise 6. It consists of a single staff with a double bar line at the beginning. The staff contains three groups of notes, each group consisting of three eighth notes. The first group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. The second group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. The third group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. Ties are drawn across the beat between the first and second notes of each group. Below the staff, there are circled numbers 1, 2, and 3, each followed by a vowel: 1 e, 2 e, 3 e. There are also ampersands (&) and the letter 'a' placed between the notes. The sequence is: 1 e & a, 2 e & a, 3 e & a etc....

7 (rewrite)



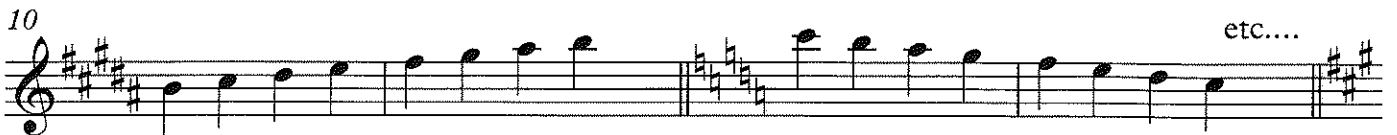
Musical notation for exercise 7. It consists of a single staff with a double bar line at the beginning and a double bar line at the end. The staff contains three groups of notes, each group consisting of three eighth notes. The first group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. The second group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. The third group has notes on the first, second, and third lines. Ties are drawn across the beat between the first and second notes of each group. Below the staff, there are circled numbers 1, 2, and 3, each followed by a vowel: 1 e, 2 e, 3 e. There are also ampersands (&) and the letter 'a' placed between the notes. The sequence is: 1 e & a, 2 e & a, 3 e & a

Scale ideas...make them fun

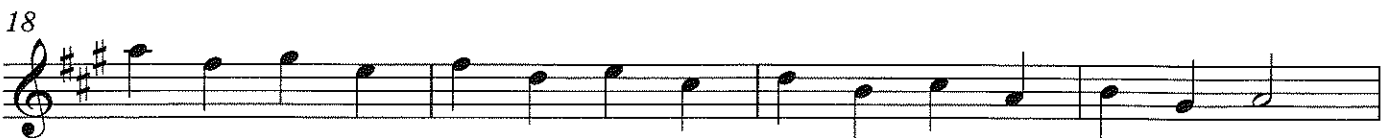
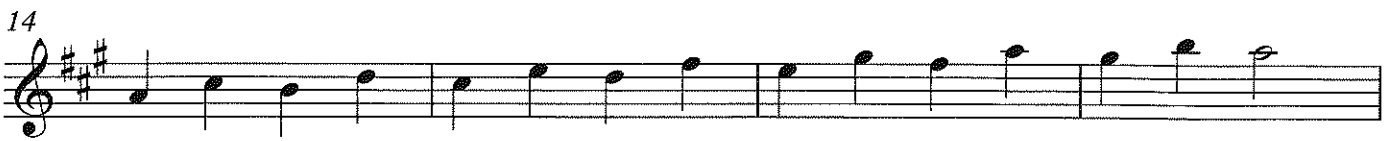
Top coming down



Up the A - down the B Flat



Scale in thirds



Add a note

