

Author's Reply

LIBERATION OF SOLMIZATION: SEARCHING FOR COMMON GROUND

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I am indebted to professors Houlahan and Tacka for their reply to my "Comparison of Pedagogical Resources in Solmization Systems," *JMTP* (Spring 1991). It is obvious that my esteemed peers bring to this debate a wealth of experience and thought, which supports my contention that each solmization system *does indeed* offer pedagogical resources. As I wrote then: "The selection of a method ought to be justified by its potential as a pedagogical resource," and "Judicious application of a system presumes a high regard for contexts, purposes, and outcomes . . ." (*JMTP*, page 2). It is upon these grounds—resources and contexts—that I wish to respond in the hope that it might stimulate further debate.

With respect to pedagogical resources it is interesting to note that the rejoinder to my "flotilla of arguments" came NOT from advocates of a fixed system, but of a movable system. Interesting indeed, and propitious, for it gives me the opportunity to redirect my argument from the perspective of five presuppositions that Old World, and "Americanized" movable-functionists might hold in common (as it were, to re-launch my fleet from Houlahan's and Tacka's own anchorage). I shall use these mutually-held presuppositions to develop seven propositions that I doubt if my opponents can refute, though I am certain that they shall try.

First, I assume that Houlahan and Tacka would agree, the reason we both advocate movable systems is for the pedagogical resources that they provide *vis a vis* fixed systems: specifically, their ability to provide a language—phonemic identity—for tonal functions. Notwithstanding their protestations about naming structures being primarily a notational-theoretical exercise (therefore somehow specious), it is possible to identify the function of what one hears, by means of syllables, without reference to notation. This, the *la*-minor and *do*-tonic systems both do; we are therefore

on common ground. Where we disagree is that Houlahan and Tacka would require students to learn two languages, one for major, and another for minor.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is a distinction worth careful consideration (in spite of my opponent's claim that the number of syllables required by any given system is a "trite" consideration). If the Old World's Charles the Fifth was used to speaking French to women, Spanish to men, German to his horse, and Latin to God, presumably he had his reasons; and if Houlahan and Tacka wish to teach students one language for major and another for minor, presumably they have their reasons. Their explanation of those reasons—"the Americanization of Solmization," in this issue of the Journal—leaves me unconvinced.

I continue to maintain that *la*-minor not only requires that students learn additional syllables to express the most frequently encountered tonal functions, it also requires that they be able to decipher which one of two possible meanings they ought to ascribe to each syllable. While we do this in language (e.g., "The bat flew across the stadium" could refer to a furry creature with wings or to a piece of wood used to hit a baseball), in a musical context it seems, somehow, arcane. In the context of more complex tonal functions, such as chromatic and borrowed chords, the *la*-minor system imposes a formidable array of combinations indeed, as Table 1 demonstrates:

The table shows that *la*-minor system-students are required to learn the combinations of BOTH columns; the *do*-tonic system, by contrast, requires that they learn only the second. This means that most *la*-minor constructions have two names: The V7/V, for example, is rendered *ti-ri-fi-la* in minor, but *re-fi-la-do* in major. The table shows, moreover, that nearly every *la*-minor construction can be used to represent harmonic entities with radically different functions: for example, *sol-ti-re-fa* connotes V7/III in minor but V7 in major. We shall let the reader be the judge as to whether this is a "trite argument for the rationalization of one solfege system over another," as claimed by Houlahan and Tacka. We shall also let the reader decide if Houlahan and Tacka were correct when they contested my statement: "It is in the context of secondary chromatic relationships and modal borrowings, that the deficiencies of *la*-minor manifest themselves most clearly." When a student is solfeging in the major mode, but encounters a tonal entity that is borrowed from the parallel minor (as frequently happens), the *la*-minorist is forced to represent those structures using syllables that are most likely to be perceived as alterations of major mode, not the syllables pertaining to what he has been taught should represent the minor mode from which the structures are truly derived.

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Table 1.

Chord	Minor mode	major mode
N	te re fa	ra fa le
V ⁷ /III(bIII)	sol ti re fa	te re fa le
V ⁷	mi si ti re	sol ti re fa
V ⁷ /VI(bVI)	do mi sol te	me sol te re
V ⁷ /iv(IV)	la di mi sol	do mi sol te
V ⁷ /ii		la di mi sol
V ⁷ /V	ti ri fi la	re fi la do
V ⁷ /iii		ti ri fi la
vii ^{o7}	si ti re fa	ti re fa le
vii ^{o7} /vi		si ti re fa
vii ^{o7}	si ti re fi	ti re fa la
vii ^{o7} /vi		si ti re fi
vii ^{o7} /V	ri fi la do	fi la do me
ct ^{o7} /I ⁶		ri fi la do
Fr+ ⁶	fa la ti ri	le do re fi
Gr+ ⁶	fa la mi ri	le do me fi

Syllable designations of altered chords and V⁷ in la-minor
(Leading tones and altered scale degrees are in bold type)

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Proposition 1: The reason that *do*-tonic and *la*-minor people both advocate a movable system is that such systems facilitate recognition of, discussion of, and production of, tonal characters and functions. They do this by providing a language—phonemic identity—for those characters and functions.

If my contenders do not agree with this proposition, then we had best furl the sails now, for there is no *terra firma*. If there is no common ground, then I challenge them to present one rational argument for movable function of any stripe. Their writings intimate that they would agree, so we shall sail on.

I assume that the protagonists of *la*-minor would concede that the essential function we desire our syllables to name is the *sense of centeredness in a tonic* (which is, to be sure, the tonal morpheme for every character and function that tonality might possibly invoke). So, I offer a second proposition with the request, if Houlahan and Tacka do not agree, that they might explain which tonal function they wish to identify, and how their system identifies that function better than the *do*-tonic system.

Proposition 2: The essential tonal character and function that movable systems seek to identify is the sense of centeredness in a tonic.

I have used the terms “character and function” because, as my counterparts formalized in their reply, they believe that, in addition to its function, each scale degree also possesses a character (like body, soul, and spirit). They argue that rootedness in minor has a different “character” (not to be confused with “function”) from rootedness in major. Accordingly, they propose that in a major mode we should call the morpheme for centeredness, *do*; but in a minor mode we should call it *la*. But the “streamlined” solfegist would maintain that, when it comes to tonal centeredness, any alleged character difference (as distinct from function) between tonic major and tonic minor is either a figment of their imaginations, a byproduct of their nomenclature, a mis-identification of function, or so imperceptible to most people as to be pedagogically insignificant. Accordingly, the morpheme should be *do* in all instances.

Though I do not believe that there is a difference of “character” (as distinct from “function”) between scale degrees, I have used their term in my first two propositions, and am willing to temporarily concede that point in order that we might proceed with the following argument. If the alleged

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difference of character does indeed exist, therefore requiring different morphemes, then the *la*-minor system is riddled with inconsistencies that, by its own *sine qua non*, make it unsuitable for use in a university theory or ear-training course.

How so? If Houlahan and Tacka truly believe that centeredness in minor and major have different characters, it is baffling that they are content to call both character AND function of the third scale degree/minor by the same phoneme that they use to ascribe the character and function of tonal centeredness in major. Are not these entities also heard differently; do they not therefore require different phonemes? If it is true (as in the quote cited in fn. 27) that "the *doh*-minorist's claim that he uses one name to describe identical phenomena falls to the ground because the effects of keynotes in major and minor . . . are not identical," then, surely the corollary is also true: the *la*-minorist's claim, that the different effects of rootedness in minor and major require DIFFERENT syllables, falls to the ground (and I mean "crashes") when they use the SAME syllable to represent the third scale degree/minor that they use to represent tonal centrality in major.

Likewise inconsistent, the *la*-minorist uses the syllable *ti* to name a function that, in major, is usually on its way up, but, in minor, is usually on its way down. Do not the tonic/major and mediant/minor have different characters and functions; do not the leading-tone/major and supertonic/minor have different characters and functions? Yet, after having asserted that tonic/minor and tonic/major require different phonemes because they are different aural entities, Houlahan and Tacka betray no hint of discomfiture calling the aforementioned structures *do* and *ti*, in spite of the fact that these scale degrees are heard, according to their own hermeneutics, as manifesting not only different characters, but radically different functions (more so, I submit, than any "character" difference that is presumed to exist between tonic/major and tonic/minor).

Therefore I declare my third and fourth propositions, with the request that, if my opponents do not agree, they should please explain how application to the third scale degree minor of the same syllable expressive of the character and tonal function of centeredness in major is not counterintuitive in light of their agreement with propositions one and two. Further, I wish the reader to be the judge as to whether I was correct (as Houlahan and Tacka dispute) in writing that such sharing of phonemes between centeredness in major and the third scale degree minor, "insinuates a dependence upon the major to define the minor, as if to suggest that the minor cannot exist independently of its relative." It is doubtful that my opponents will agree with these propositions, so I challenge them to refute them without abandoning propositions 1 and 2.

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Proposition 3: If tonal centrality in minor is heard as having a different "character" from centrality in major, therefore requiring a different phoneme, then it is counterintuitive for one to use identical phonemes for radically different functions and characters between relative modes. Not only is such usage counterintuitive, it is pedagogically hurtful; the lexicon of symbols is thereby compromised by numerous inconsistent meanings.

Proposition 4: An effective lexicon provides that identical characters and functions shall be identified in a phonemically consistent manner regardless of the context in which they are heard.

I stress the word "heard," because my critics and I agree upon a third point—to wit, solmization works best when it names tonal functions independently of their notation. Much of their argument is based upon this supposition, which, regrettably, is couched in language that surely gives the reader—unfamiliar with my former work—the impression that the advocates of *do*-tonic movable would not agree. We do indeed agree, without hesitation, and without qualification, as I stipulated formerly in the second of my six assumptions.

Houlahan and Tacka correctly assert that *la*-minor can be applied to sounds apart from the consideration of notation whatsoever. To their credit, they meticulously document studies showing the efficacy of a pedagogy that teaches students to recognize sounds before having to deal with symbols—my point exactly. Not to their credit, they neglect to show, because they cannot show, that the *do*-tonic system fails to facilitate such a result. Put into positive terms, the *do*-tonic system, too, teaches students to recognize sounds before having to deal with symbols. Not only so, but is my contention that *do*-tonic does this better than *la*-minor.

How? The method I shall use to demonstrate my thesis is necessarily abstruse, but, if the kind professors will be alert and patient, I am confident they shall taste of its logic, though they might not savor its result. Imagine that you hear a slow flute-like sound that begins with a pitch, moves upward a perfect fourth, upward a major second, back down a major second, down a minor second, and back up a minor second. Suppose, furthermore, that upon hearing this melody you have a firm sense of tonal centeredness in the second pitch. Finally, suppose that I tell you that the melody is not finished; I shall withhold the ending until my friends have answered a couple of questions.

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First, *la*-minorists, are you able and willing to solmize what you have heard? . . . pause No, I sense that you are not willing, because you are not able. For if you do not know the mode, and if you do not know how the melody will unfold in its next two pitches, then how can you possibly know which one of your two symbols for tonal centeredness—*la* or *do*—to apply to the second pitch; I do not blame you for pausing. You should know, however, that the most unskilled of my students could probably solmize that example as easy as pie (excuse the streamlined Americanism). Here, listen: *sol do re do ti do*.

Now I shall provide you with two possible endings. The first ending continues with a descent of a minor third followed by a major second in the same direction. The second ending continues with a descent of a *major* third followed by a *minor* second in the same direction. Now my *la*-minor champions are ready to apply their syllables. The impartial reader is asked to compare his syllables with those of the *do*-tonicist, then to decide the following question: which string of syllables accurately represents the tonal structures that sounded the same? Different?

La-minor syllables

Ex. 1: *sol do re do ti do la sol*

Ex. 2: *mi la ti la si la fa mi*

Do-tonic syllables

Ex. 1: *sol do re do ti do LA sol*

Ex. 2: *sol do re do ti do LE sol*

My fifth proposition, then, is nothing less than the second of six assumptions from my earlier work, which I repeat now for emphasis. I know that my colleagues on the opposite side agree, because it comprised the crux of their argument against my earlier work (though I cannot fathom why they chose to sail this tack since, refuting nothing, they merely added credence to what I had already written).

Proposition 5: The ideal solmization system will facilitate the recognition of musical structures and their transfer to written symbols. Students are better served when they learn first to recognize sounds, then the symbols, and not the reverse. The ideal solmization system will be oriented toward the ear, not toward the eye, causing students to become absorbed first with sounds, second with symbols (*JMTP*, p. 3).

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Now, with great respect for my partners in debate, I ask them to recall my earlier melody, with its two endings, and to bring their unflagging sense of collegial humor to an imagined colloquy in which we shall at last decide: which system is better oriented toward the ear? Question: "Distinguished professors, was it necessary for you to analyze what you heard before you were able to apply syllables to the earlier examples?" Answer: "Yes, it was because we first had to determine whether the melody was major or minor."

Aloysius—Ah, then you do admit that the *la*-minorist must analyze what he hears.

Josephus—I admit, but I am full of questions. Do you mind explaining to me the purpose of analysis?

Aloysius—Certainly, the purpose of analysis is to inform the ear, thereby to develop musicianship and to increase one's listening pleasure. Which causes me to wonder, Josephus, why you appear to be suspicious of analysis, implying that the people who practice such alchemy *obscurum per obscurius*, namely, theorists, are in pursuance of the "separation of theory and skill development" (as you have written). You yourself have conceded, your own pedagogical system requires that you, too, must analyze before you can apply your method to facilitate the development of listening skills.

Josephus—I see the error of my ways. But please tell me, why do I need syllables in the first instance; and, in the second instance, is this not "turning the field of music into a dead language?" as I have written elsewhere.

Aloysius—No, not at all. The purpose of syllables is to give the neophyte a vocabulary with which to show the master what has been perceived, remembered, and understood about the structure of a melody, and that this might be done before having to contend with the complexities of notation. For if a student hears something, but does not remember it, or, if she remembers it, but does not understand its structure, she will not be able to put her eloquent musical thoughts into writing. Likewise, the purpose of syllables is to enable the neophyte to show the master what she has recognized and understood of aural structures symbolized by the written page. For if a student sees symbols, but does not recognize the sounds they represent, she will not be able to audiate, and if she cannot audiate, she will not be able to make the proper sounds, much less make them musically. And if she has no vocabulary with which to communicate with the master, how is the master to know what the neophyte does or does not

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understand, or at what stage the neophyte is having difficulty, or how, even to help her overcome that difficulty. You see, my dear Josephus, the problem with your *la*-minor syllables is that you were incapable of employing them to show me that you had perceived and understood the most fundamental tonal characteristic of my example—its tonal centeredness—until after I had appended the final pitches (though I am certain that you had perceived the center before I appended the final pitches).

Josephus—This is beginning to make sense, but why did you omit the last two notes? Were you trying to: a) “disassociate yourself from the music education profession as is the tendency for music theorists; or b) could it be that you do not fully understand the implication of the *la*-minor system?” (translated loosely from something I have written elsewhere)

Aloysius—You should not be so abrasive my dear Josephus. No, the reason I omitted the last two notes was to introduce you to the concept of prevenient, isomorphic, metamodal structure in melody . . . pardon me for lapsing into *chiaroscuro*, but some things cannot be painted any other way. You see, you could not use your syllables to identify a single structure that you heard until after you had identified the mode; yet, the structures surely existed prior to and independently from, the mode. This means that the essential substance of tonality—centeredness in a single pitch—is supra-modal; and, if supra-modal, then modal functions themselves are necessarily infra-tonal, meaning that they exist after, and are dependent upon, centricity. It is strange, therefore, that, after having named the supra-modal functions of the first six notes, you found it necessary, for the sake of a different pitch in the second ending, to re-name all prior functions when, in fact, those functions remained unchanged. So you can see, if I may quote one of your own writings, “it would be quite ridiculous for students to solmize the second example with [mi] as the final note.” In truth with the exception of the seventh pitch, both examples sounded quite the same in terms of their characters AND tonal functions.

Josephus—I see the error of my ways. In my system of naming pitches I cannot identify the most basic elements of a melody independently of the mode, though I may perceive and understand many of those elements before I have perceived the mode. And if I do not perceive the mode, then it is impossible for me to use my system to verbalize to you, the teacher, a single structure that I may have recognized; I am stuck. And if I am stuck, you are no

less stuck, because you do not know what it is that stuck me: the mode or the melody's prevenient, isomorphic, metamodal structure. I understand, furthermore, that your method required but one changed syllable, representing the one pitch that distinguished the first ending from the second, and the one scale degree that defined the mode. Your method helped me to understand what was the same and what was different about the two examples. I agree now with your earlier writing that the *do*-tonic system "is better suited to teach the aural particulars of major and minor."

Aloysius—Do not worry about that mistake. You couldn't avoid it because your attention had not yet been called to it. And do not distress yourself overmuch with analysis. You see, we both do it. The difference is, that you do it while processing sound-to-syllable-to symbol, while I do it the other direction: symbol-to-syllable-to-sound.

Josephus—If what you say is true, master Aloysius, then my method offers certain resources that are particularly helpful when going from notation to syllable to sound; I don't have to do too much analysis of notational symbols before I can apply syllables—ugh, analysis, I dislike it.

Aloysius—Conversely, inasmuch as I am required to do a less-complicated analysis of sounds before I apply syllables, my method offers resources that are useful when going from SOUND to SYLLABLE to NOTATION. Do you see now why I was correct in my assertion that *do*-tonic works even better than *la*-minor in a purely aural context?

Josephus—I see, and I am full of admiration. But what about atonal music. Does not the *la*-minor system better "... indicate the tonality or the keyality" of atonal melodies (as I have written elsewhere)?

Aloysius—My dear Josephus, now I am truly perplexed! As the system has not yet been invented, I am not entirely sure upon what essence the atonality, of which you speak, is built; yet I am quite confident in declaring upon etymological grounds that neither your system nor mine could possibly contribute to a sense of tonality or keyality in atonal melodies, since the meaning of the word is - "without tonality."

Josephus—By the nymphs of Parnassus, I am mistaken once more! I shall take steps to correct my errors.

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Proposition 6: Whereas, a) the *la*-minor system requires comparatively MORE analysis when going from sound to sight; b) the *do*-tonic system requires comparatively LESS analysis when doing the same thing; c) the *la*-minor system requires one to recognize the mode before one can apply a single syllable; and (d) the *do*-tonic system requires no such recognition of the mode in the context of heard sounds . . . we agree that the latter system is less complicated to use in an aural context than is the former. The *do*-tonic system is oriented more toward the ear than is the *la*-minor system.

Surely my critics will not take umbrage over the light-hearted satire, for they share with me yet a fourth presupposition: specifically, that context is an extremely important consideration in the matter of which system to use. Being practitioners of Kodaly, Houlahan and Tacka advocate *la*-minor because it affords undeniable resources that appertain to the pedagogy of notationally semi-literate persons; as I wrote:

Two advantages [of *la*-minor] . . . are worthy of immediate recognition. First, sophisticated theoretical knowledge is not needed to solfege *la*-minor at sight, explaining why the system is advocated by teachers of young students. Second, in the *la*-minor system alone, the singer who has progressed to the reading stage, and who can identify the tonic pitch (major) of each signature, calling that pitch *do*, can sing [music in] any of the seven modes associated with that signature (*JMTP*, p. 13).

The locution “sophisticated theoretical knowledge” was, I confess, overstating the problem. “Rudimentary theoretical knowledge” would have been less frightening, yet have conveyed my point. And my point is: just as Josephus was required to recognize the mode before he could use *la*-minor syllables to identify the tonal functions of what he HEARD, the *do*-tonicist is required to recognize the mode before he can use syllables to identify the tonal functions of what he SEES. In that sense *do*-tonic solmization is a less-than-appropriate exercise for individuals who are in the process of mastering the rudiments of music notation. What teacher, in his right mind, would dare attempt to explain to elementary students how they might recognize, through visual cognates, whether the music represented by a particular key signature is major or minor? Better to defer that rubric to a later day, and then only to that “elite who are able to ‘decode’ the

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divergent approaches . . . of our current theory programs," to quote Houlahan and Tacka.

My seventh proposition follows. While I do not entertain any doubts about its rationality, I do doubt if my opponents will concede the question; as I wrote earlier, "everybody has his preference . . ." (p. 1). We know that preferences are not always rational.

Proposition 7: In the context of individuals who have not mastered the symbols of notation, *la*-minor is a pedagogically sound approach and should be preferred. In the context of the university theory and ear-training curriculum, where students have mastered the symbols of notation, *la*-minor is pedagogically inferior to the *do*-tonic system, which should be preferred.

Before identifying our last area of concord, I wish to call into question several casuistic themes that permeated the Houlahan and Tacka response. First, they seem annoyed that people of my species (university theory teachers) would "create untold difficulties for average music students" by requiring them to do something as bizarre as to analyze a written melody before they attempt to put it into sound. Certainly they would not have students trot off tunes willy-nilly without giving some forethought to structure. Too, as I emphasized in my earlier treatise, my context is the university, a place where we assume aspiring musicians know a thing or two about notation (and what they don't know we dare place in the laps of music educators). Here, too, we assume that an aspiring musician needs to be taught how to tell, from visual cues alone, whether a piece is in major or minor. In consideration of the double-entendres that are possible in the *la*-minor system, I wonder who is really creating untold difficulties.

Second, Houlahan and Tacka betray what I would characterize as polite loathing for theorists and analysis. I am not a psychologist and I shall not attempt to explain their attitude. I do suspect, however, that the word "analysis" has a private meaning for them, and that my use of that word was so privately colored that the critics were unable to comprehend most of what I wrote. When I wrote of analysis in the context of ear training, I wrote neither of Fortesque PC sets nor Schenkerian fundamental structures, but of the fundamental ability to *think about*, disassemble, reconstruct, criticize, and understand what one is hearing or reading. That is pretty much the orthodox meaning of the word in educational circles. Students must learn to think (analyze) before they can ever begin to audiate. Houlahan and Tacka have not shown how their system develops thinking skills or how the

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do-tonic does not facilitate, or how *la-minor* is superior to *do-tonic* in facilitating the formation of analytical skills.

"Audiation," they assert (and in so doing they do not correct my own use of the word), "is the hearing of music in one's mind when the sound is not physically present." Understood thus, audiation has nothing to do with the "seeing ear" (a concept upon which they lavish most of their reply) but everything to do with the "hearing eye." "Attaching a solfege syllable to the name of a note will not result in the development of sight reading or ear training," they write.

I have never believed such a thing, nor did I imply it in my article. What I did write was that "solmization works because it associates phonemes with various musical constructs that, with repetition, enable students to audiate sound from sight, and perceive sight to sound" (p. 3). The key words are "associates" and "enables," whose meanings are not nearly so simplistic as insinuated by Houlahan's and Tacka's words—"attaching" and "results."

Because a student recognizes that the pitch "A" (in the key of D) is the dominant, and applies the syllable *sol*, does not mean that he has audiated the dominant. But, if he applies the syllable AND recognizes the sound associated with *sol* (and this is likely to happen "with repetition"), then he has, in fact, audiated. So, why is it necessary to go through the intermediary steps of analyzing to determine the scale degree is number 5, name it *sol*, then recognize the sound of *sol*? The reason we apply the syllable is because the aural function we call *sol* assumes different shapes, visually, depending upon the key and clef. *Sol* is just a convenient notationally independent name that we have attached to the sound of the dominant, not the analytical concept nor the score. Having named the function, the student is in a better position to recall what *sol* sounds like after which he will be able to produce the sound in a musically informed manner.

The *la-minor* system itself requires that students go through this analysis-naming-recognition-audiation-production sequence. I wonder, therefore, why Houlahan and Tacka felt that it was necessary to make a distinction between the two systems in this regard, not to mention their attempt to pillory theorists and theory in the process. Unnecessary, too, was their pedantic foray into the "theory" of learning modalities; we have no argument with this, and *la-minor* offers no resource that *do-tonic* does not also offer.

Before quitting the question, I suggest that it is possible that the use of syllables over a treatment period of approximately 50 to 100 hours sets into motion a conditioned response such that the combination of kinesthetic, muscular, auditory, and tactile sensations of producing a syllable may enable the audiation of that syllable to happen with greater fluency. I have

no proof, but I strongly suspect that it does happen for most people. If it does not happen, there remains sufficient reason to use *do*-tonic solmization in the classroom, if only to provide a notationally independent, singable, language that consistently articulates the basic functions of tonality. But, if the hypothesis eventuates to be empirically demonstrable, I predict that the effect shall be more measurable as a result of *do*-tonic treatment than *la*-minor. If, in fact, audiation is facilitated by conditioned response to a signal, then it can only be weakened by garbling the signal (that is, using one signal to condition more than one response as the *la*-minor system necessarily would).

The last of Houlahan's and Tacka's themes was the wretched state of theory and theory teaching. "In traditional theory courses," they write, "students are presented with theoretical information to provide a foundation for their aural understanding." The readership of *JMTP* might wish to know if there is a basis for them to make such a claim other than their experience (as they wrote). Houlahan and Tacka continue: "...for example, major and minor scales are explained to the students in a theoretical manner, and the students are then asked to use syllables or numbers for sightsinging and dictation." Again, do they have proof that this is the way it is done. And if they have proof, so what? What evidence can they cite to support the notion that providing students with a cognitive scaffold upon which to hang all this aural stuff is not, in fact, beneficial?

"Every musical concept," they write, "...should be discovered by the students' own active participation in the class." If, by this they mean that interaction and participation are good things for teachers and students to do, and do often, then I agree. But if they mean that there is no place for acculturation by means of the transmission of concepts and facts from one person to another, then I, along with most educators, would disagree. Imagine the physicist who stands before his class and says "several decades ago a man by the name of Einstein discovered an important theory. Your assignment is to discover it yourself by means of active participation"; or, "there is great power in the atom, discover it."

In our own discipline, Houlahan and Tacka write that, "All theoretical information is derived from an aural understanding of musical elements and concepts." Really! You mean to say that if I listen long enough to the *Art of the Fugue* I will actually hear and recognize Bach's name; if I listen hard enough to the twelfth and fifteenth variations of the *Goldberg* I will actually understand that they are inverted canons at the fourth and fifth respectively; if I listen carefully enough to the *St. Matthew Passion* Bach's multifarious symbols for the cross will leap to my conscious attention? This is fantastic! It is also a fantasy.

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There are many aural structures that are best perceived after an initiation; there are many theoretical concepts and structures that, if we waited for students to discover them, we would be waiting a very long time. I can appreciate the emphasis upon bridging the gap between talking about, and listening to, music; I understand the need to be continually integrating the two. It is for this reason that many theorists begin class by listening to music. But my colleagues have surely overstated their case to the prejudice of transferring the modes and codes of music, from one generation to the next, by means of discursive interaction between individuals who know the information and individuals who do not. This, too, is an important learning modality.

Finally, I and my colleagues must feel no compunction, no pangs of guilt, over Houlahan's and Tacka's *caveat* that the American academy is circling the wagons so the "theory wins and music students lose" (last sentence). We have our faults, but collusion to swindle students is not one of them. While such phraseology (to quote the music man) has a nice ring to it, it sheds more heat than light.

But enough of this bifurcation. The truth about extremists of all ilk is that we need each other for intellectual sustenance. As the southern preacher used to say, "The problem with the left wing and the right wing is that they are both flapping on the same old bird." In debates such as this, I often find myself being pushed toward the middle. If, as Houlahan and Tacka write, North American universities "... continue to graduate music students, a disturbingly high percentage of whom are, from the standpoint of aural skills, musically illiterate ...", then perhaps this exchange will help nudge us ALL in a different direction. And, hopefully, Houlahan and Tacka might recognize that they are as much a part of the problem as they are part of the solution (as they pointed out, nearly as many ear-training programs use *la-minor* as use *do-tonic*).

Which leads me to my fifth, and final, area of accord. In their learned reply, my worthy counterparts began to quack very much like theorists; and, though they might not like the canard, they are nevertheless welcomed to the flock. Like seminarians, we relish animated debate so long as there is a general round of hand-shaking when it is over. And, if we *do-minorists*, as you call us, can recognize that you have the best interests of your students at heart, we certainly hope that you might do the same for us—join us on common ground that is truly worthy of any group or system. For education, like religion, requires that we have faith: in systems, methodologies, students, administrators, peers, even janitors. It requires, more, that we get our faith out of the halls and into actions, which I know, by their many publications, and eagerness to join this fray, Houlahan and Tacka have done. In the final analysis, it is most important that we believe in what we

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do—as my critics surely do—and when we do that, we cannot help but see success from time to time. And that is a point of common ground that we share even with those who favor fixed.