

# BEGINNING BAND

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## *Rhythmic Solfeggio And The Beginning Student*

The beginning music student is required to develop an understanding of numerous topics simultaneously: melodic and rhythmic notation, nomenclature, intonation, technique and tone. One of, if not the most difficult to understand, is beat and rhythm. The most common reason is that both are subjects that are not easy to convey by the instructor, nor easy to understand by the student. Thus, students tend to comprehend and reason beat and rhythm through trial and error, and not just through lecture and demonstration.

An integral part of the trial and error process is by incorporating the technique of *Rhythmic Solfeggio*. This technique is most beneficial because it grants the student the ability to master both subjects aurally, while simultaneously developing his/her inner sense of the rhythmic pulse. The following, is a three step process of teaching *Rhythmic Solfeggio* that I have found to be most beneficial for my students.

Before beginning, I find it necessary to clarify a common misconception by students, which is that beat and rhythm are one in the same. Therefore, it is important to define, in simplistic terms, the differences between both topics. In turn, students can begin to make a cognitive connection before they begin to partake in this exercise. For example, beat determines how fast and how slow a work of music is to be performed and its pulse is constant. In comparison, rhythm determines how long or how short a note is held. The constant pulse of beat guides the musician on how fast or slow he/she must count the rhythm of the music. Furthermore, it is helpful to explain to the student that music is organized sound. Therefore, without beat and rhythm, there can be no music, because both are responsible for organizing it.

The first step of this process is to have the student count aloud while performing and their instrument. Understandably, this cannot be done if the student is studying a wind instrument. For these students, have them count aloud while clapping the rhythms of the music. As soon as eighth notes are introduced, have the student subdivide by using the word "and" as he/she counts aloud. Subdivision

guides the student's reasoning skills pertaining to the relationships between notes of varying length, while refining his/her sense for the rhythmic pulse.

Step two requires the student to clap his/her hands on every down-beat (including rests) while saying "Taah" or "Too" for each note; just as the student would do while playing his/her wind instrument. In conjunction with clapping on the down-beat, the student can now feel how beat and rhythm work in consort. The third and final step focuses upon conducting patterns. Here, the student will perform the rhythmic exercise while saying "Taah" or "Too", but this time, the student will have to conduct to the appropriate time signature, instead of clapping on the downbeat.

Lastly, the instructor may wish to embellish or enhance the aforementioned by having the student perform with a metronome, or a recording that coincides with the rhythmic pattern he/she is to perform. For those students who are having a difficult time correlating beat and rhythm, the instructor should consider tapping a steady pulse on the shoulder of their student as the student performs the rhythmic exercise; and/or as the student observes the instructor perform the exercise.

Cumulatively, this approach to teaching *Rhythmic Solfeggio* should greatly assist your student's understanding of beat and rhythm, while enlightening his/her inner feel for the rhythmic pulse.

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