

Expanding Movable *Do* Solfège

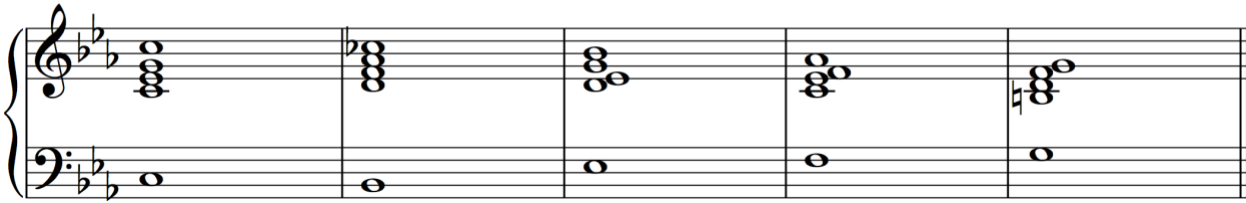
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The movable *Do* solfège system is an invaluable pedagogical tool, illustrating the functional relationships notes have to a tonic. Yet the currently codified set of syllables fails to address certain tonal phenomena common in popular music, namely secondary chords with 7^{ths} and/or extensions. This document presents some of movable *Do*'s shortcomings and proffers a syllabic solution.

Consider the following progression:

Key: Cm



Im

$bVII_{7b9}$

$bIII_{\Delta 7}$

IVm7

V7

(V_{7b9} of $b\hat{3}$)

Movable *Do* can easily express the function of all the notes in four of the chords, yet presently there is no way to show the function of the C^b in the second chord. Calling it “*Do^b*” – to borrow from fixed *Do* – requires two syllables, thereby defeating the purpose of using solfège for sight-singing, especially in faster passages.

This is an example of why more solfège syllables must be added to the movable *Do* system.

Below is a chart of solfège syllables containing all permutations of a single applied accidental:

b	Syllable (‡)	#
<i>De</i>	<i>Do</i>	<i>Di</i>
<i>Ra</i>	<i>Re</i>	<i>Ri</i>
<i>Me</i>	<i>Mi</i>	<i>My</i> (pronounced mī)
<i>Fe</i>	<i>Fa</i>	<i>Fi</i>
<i>Se</i>	<i>Sol</i>	<i>Si</i>
<i>Le</i>	<i>La</i>	<i>Li</i>
<i>Te</i>	<i>Ti</i>	<i>Ty</i> (pronounced tī)

Four new syllables join the established list: *De* (a lowered *Do*), *My* (a raised *Mi*), *Fe* (a lowered *Fa*), and *Ty* (a raised *Ti*). In the progression above, one can now analyze the second chord as *Te-Re-Fa-Le-De*. These added syllables will prove useful in singing chromatic melodies, but they can also describe specific situations in functional harmony that previously defied labeling with movable *Do* syllables. The next page offers several examples of their application:

Key: C

I V₇ \flat V₇ (P) IV₇

\flat V₇ is a chromatic passing chord between V and IV, occasionally occurring in interpretations of blues tunes. With the newly added solfège syllables, one can now understand this chord as *Se-Te-Ra-Fe* resolving by half step to *Fa-La-Do-Me*.

Key: C

I VI₊
(V₊ of $\hat{2}$) II₇
(V₇ of $\hat{5}$) V I

In order to make a chromatic soprano melody spanning the first four chords, the 5th of the second chord is raised. Now this chord can be understood as *La-Di-My*.

Key: C

III_m \sharp VII^o₇ VI₇ II₉ \sharp VI^o₇ V₇ I
 $\hat{6}$ $\hat{5}$
 (\sharp VI^o₇ of $\hat{2}$) (V₇ of $\hat{2}$) (V₉ of $\hat{5}$)

This progression features ornamental \sharp VI^o₇ chords in a circle of 5^{ths}. The \sharp VII^o₇ chord, functioning as \sharp VI^o₇ in the key of scale degree $\hat{2}$, can now be thought of as *Ty-Ri-Fi-La*.

This document does not address double-sharps and double-flats, as they rarely occur functionally in popular music. Yet if necessary, for double-flats, one could lower all *-e* sounds to *-a* (with the exception of *Ra*, which could become *Ro* or *Ru*); for double-sharps, one could raise all *-i* sounds to *-y* (with the exceptions of *My* and *Ty*, which could take a *-ce* sound at the end, yielding *Myce* and *Tyce*, respectively).