

Raise Every Voice and Sing!

Strategies for Helping 'Monotone', 'Tone-Deaf', and 'Non-Singers' find their Voices

Presented by Topher Keene

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Gordon's Sequential Language Vocabularies



Build the listening vocabulary first, develop listening skills and test their ability to identify what they hear

Address common pitch-damaging technique issues:

- Poor breath support
- Tension in neck/jaw
- Poor registration (chest/head/mix/falsetto)

Instructional Sequence For Pitch-Challenged Singers

Hearing:

- Can the singer identify High/Low?
- Can the singer identify large pitch motion?
- Can the singer identify small pitch motion?
- Can the singer identify pitch consistency?

Producing:

- Can the singer produce a variety of sounds High/Low?
(imitation, cat meows, barks, etc.)
- Can the singer produce large pitch motion? (sighs/sirens or jumps)
- Can the singer produce small pitch motion? (sliding)
- Can the singer produce pitch consistency?
(hold one note without wavering in pitch)

Identifying:

- Can the singer identify when you match their pitch or not?
- Can the singer identify if you are higher/lower/the same pitch?
- Can the singer identify when you go out of tune with them and when you return to their pitch?
(thumbs up, thumbs down)
- Can the singer guide you back to the correct pitch
(pointing up/down)

Instructional Sequence For Pitch-Challenged Singers

Following:

- Can the singer follow your directions to move their pitch up/down?
- Can the singer follow you when your pitch moves from theirs?

Matching:

- When you sing, can the singer follow your directions to match pitch?
- When you sing a pitch, can the singer close their eyes and match it with careful listening?
- Can the singer match your sung pitch?
- Can the singer match a piano or other instrument?
- Can the singer match pitch at the octave?

Echoing:

- Can the singer echo a pattern you sing first, singing along?
- Can the singer echo a pattern you sing first, while you play piano?
- Can the singer echo a pattern you sing first, without singing along?
- Can the singer echo a pattern you play on piano, playing along?
- Can the singer echo a pattern you play on piano, a cappella?

Additional Suggestions

Singers often sing out of tune (or too loud) because they can't hear themselves, let them know this is normal! (consider getting a set of HearFones so they can hear themselves better)

Ample use of echoing
(animal sounds, sighs and sirens, simple patterns)

Individual singing every day
(Attendance: "Hello Susie" "Hello Mr. Keene" on so/mi, etc.)

Always get the struggling singer to produce a pitch first, you match them, don't make them match you

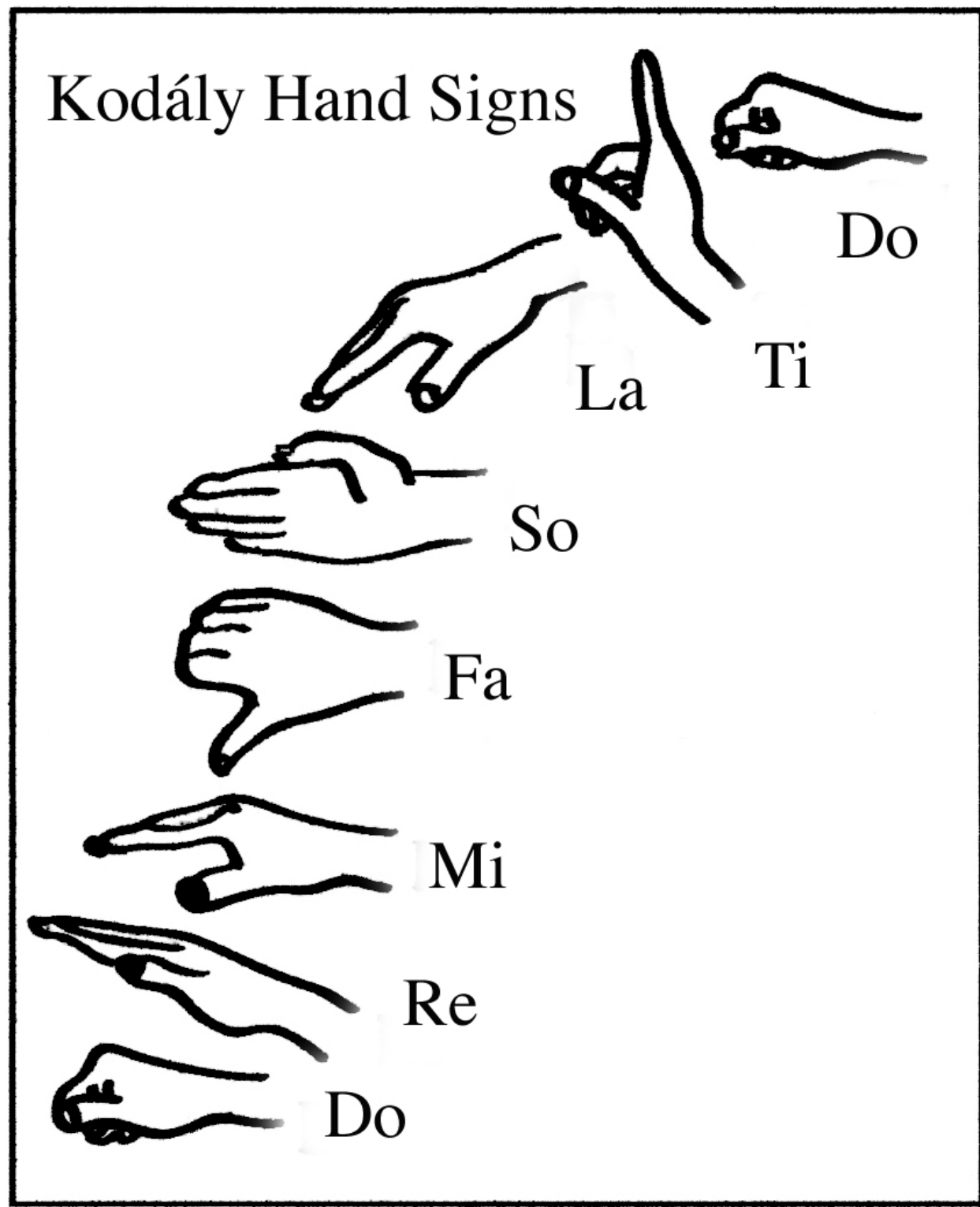
Never single out individual students in front of their peers unless they volunteer, make singing individually a daily part of your classroom and make corrections to individuals while the rest of the class is singing.

Try the 'long tone' game, how long can you hold a pitch on one breath. They love the competition and you can float around the room individually assessing pitch-matching and offering instruction to strugglers.

Make sure they know what singing in tune feels like!

Rearrange parts, add ostinatos, simplify parts, reduce ranges, make the music work for your singers.

Consider arranging your own music, or commissioning a piece with your singers' abilities in mind.



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Selected Resources

Let's Play Music Podcast - Singing in Tune with Topher Keene

<https://anchor.fm/letsplaymusic/episodes/Ep--4---Singing-in-Tune-with-Topher-Keene-ekdv1u>

"Teaching Children to Sing Beautifully in Tune"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g083wmqO3_w

Keynote: "Singing From the Heart: Let Love Drive Your Curriculum"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6wNnSBwnT8>

Demonstration: Instructional Sequence For Pitch-Challenged Singers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psocgZK42iA>

Topher Keene Professional Development:

TopherKeene.com/speaking

Topher Keene MP3 Vocal Warmups/Exercises:

SoundCloud.com/TopherKeene/sets