



To NHBD Members:

You may download a free copy of "The Addition System for Teaching and Learning Rhythm" from <http://www.nhbda.org/corcoran-addition-system-for-counting-rhythm.html>.

Please feel free to pass the link along to your friends and colleagues. It's free! No strings. I'm a retired Plymouth State University band director with a strong desire to help improve musical literacy with our kids.

The pdf is about 44MB, so it may take awhile for the download, depending on the speed of the connection you have.

You have my permission to make copies of any or all exercises as needed for your students.

If you have any questions about it, please don't hesitate to give me a call (603-968-3392).

The whole basis of "The Addition System" is internalizing the pulse, i.e., feeling note divisions. If you need some help as to how pulse counting actually sounds, just give me a call. It may sound dumb when you hear it for the first time, but it absolutely works. You just need to be patient and very persistent. The results tend to sneak up on the kids. The day comes when, wow, it's just there! It's really best to follow up the counting of an exercise with singing or playing it on (at first) one pitch. It is surprising how the students don't inevitably make the connection with counting the rhythm and "how the music goes." In time, this problem disappears. Some of my students/graduates say that their ensembles often get to the point where they can count much more complicated music than they can actually play. I guess that's not a bad problem to have.

I've always thought that clapping rhythms was an unwise activity. Clapping lacks one of the fundamental elements of rhythm, that being "duration." It's not just when the note begins that counts, but exactly how long it lasts. When one learns pulse counting, internalizing note divisions is an inevitable by-product. The main reason we clap rhythms is because we've seen our own teachers do



it. There's an "apparent" benefit, but later on you'll realize that you've created other problems. Kids can usually recognize that they've sung or played an incorrect pitch, but they'll play the wrong rhythm 'til the cows come home if it "feels right." I've known even advanced ensembles to fall into this. With The Addition System, it's not just the "rhythm" that improves, but the timing as well.

Pulse counting "internalizes" the pulse, which is what you want. Clapping and tapping are external activities. Foot-tapping, while harmless, requires no particular skill. Even non-musicians can do it!

If you think that you will be catching some attitude, choose one or two exercises, set an achievable goal, work quickly, making it as fun and as interesting as you know how, but limit the amount spent on it each rehearsal to 10 minutes at the very most. It helps to make a real effort to make your skill development work fun as well as challenging. Not only is this smart, it's absolutely vital, in my view. Great teachers in all subject areas do that. High expectations, a fun learning environment...the possibilities are endless. When the kids say, "This sounds silly!" you can laugh and say, "Yes, it kinda does!.....but it works. OK, going on....."

Good luck,

Gary

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