

The Educational Potential of Solmization of the Augmented 4th Frame in Japanese (Children's) Songs

Abstract

Numerous experts advocate the importance of starting music education with children's songs from one's own country. This method is crucial for learners to understand their cultural background and develop musical sensitivity deeply. However, in Japan, music education often needs more detailed explanations about these songs' specific musical roles and values, hindering the effective use and maximization of their learning impact.

In a presentation I made at the Kodály Society meeting in Los Angeles last year, I introduced a solmization method based on four types of perfect fourth intervals(frames) foundational to traditional Japanese music: "Re Do La," "Mi Do Ti," "Fa MI Do," and "So Mi Re." This method demonstrated that the upper core tones of these intervals align with the finalis of church modes before the transition to tonal music, suggesting parallels between the tonal music transitions in Japanese and Western music. This transition implies that the Japanese perfect fourth intervals may be similar to church modes in Western music, indicating a significant cross-cultural similarity in musical structure evolution.

Previous research by Goro Kakinoki and others has shown that Japanese music encompasses a variety of interval structures beyond the perfect fourth, including perfect fifths and thirds. Building on this, my study proposes solmization for two new types of augmented fourth intervals, "Ti La Fa" and "Ti So Fa," discovered in Japanese children's songs. Through the analysis of songs such as "Edo Lullaby," "Rabbit," and "Okinawa Children's Song," we explore the educational value these augmented fourth intervals bring to music education.

While earlier studies, including those by Kikuko Kanai and Ken'o Kubo, have highlighted the characteristic melodic lines of the augmented fourth, they have yet to reinterpret these progressions within the solmization framework. This study, therefore, contributes significantly to solmization research in music education by offering a new perspective on integrating these intervals into educational practices. It anticipates the development of new theoretical frameworks and innovative teaching methods in music education.

Looking forward, I plan to expand my research to include the relationship between these fourth intervals and the ancient Greek tetrachord, the introduction of solfège in atonal music education starting from perfect fourth interval structures, and the relationship between fourth intervals and intonation. These studies aim to contribute to constructing theoretical frameworks and innovating practical teaching methods in music education, potentially revolutionizing how music is taught and understood across cultures.

Keywords: Perfect Fourth Interval(frame), Augmented Fourth Interval(frame), Japanese Song