

## Do Re Mi, 1 2 3 ~ by Mike Overly

Simply stated, **music** is heard as **sound** and seen as **symbol**. The symbols are given names which may create confusion because sometimes a different name is given to the same symbol. This confusion also arises in relation to concepts, thoughts and ideas. For example, **melody** is created when sounds are connected together and then played one at a time. Melody is often mislabeled by bass players, but correctly identified by musicians playing bass. For example, a bass player will call playing a melody, **lead bass**, while a musician playing bass will correctly call it, **melody bass**.

Here's another example, **harmony** is the result of more than one sound played at the same time. Confusion arises in this case because a bass player will call this, **rhythm bass**, while a musician playing bass will simply call it, **harmony bass**. The idea of lead bass may have started because generally speaking, melody leads. But the idea of rhythm bass doesn't make much sense, since melody also has rhythm. In this lesson, we'll focus on melody and leave harmony for later.

Let's begin by reviewing the **major scale** the way **Julie Andrews** sang it to us in the **Sound of Music**, you know, **Doe**, a deer a female deer; **Ray**, a drop of golden sun; **Me**, a name I call myself; **Far**, a long, long way to run; **Sew**, needle pulling thread; **La**, a note to follow sew; **Tea**, a drink with jam and bread... Wow, the hills really are alive!

This **do re mi fa so la ti** method of symbolizing sound is known as **Solfège**. Solfège began in eleventh century Italy when **Guido of Arezzo** developed a six-note ascending scale that went: ut, re, mi, fa, sol, and la. Guido borrowed these syllables from the first verse of the Latin hymn: **Ut Queant Laxis**. Then, in 1600, **Ut** was changed to the open syllable **Do**, at the suggestion of **Giovanni Battista Doni**. A seventh syllable, **si**, was added soon after from the initials for **Sancte Iohannes [Saint John]** to complete the seven tone diatonic scale. By the nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon countries had changed **si** to **ti** so that every syllable began with a different letter.

It's interesting to note that **Isaac Newton** associated the 7 solfège syllables with the 7 colors of the rainbow and theorized that each color vibrated accordingly. Thus, red [the lowest sound] has the least amount of vibration while purple [the highest sound] vibrates the most. In other words, he believed this: **C do** Red; **D re** Orange; **E mi** Yellow; **F fa** Green; **G so** Blue; **A la** Indigo [Blue Violet] and **B ti** Purple [Red Violet].

Okay, now, let's covert the solfège syllables into scale degree numbers or simply, **tone numbers**. In this transformation, **Do** becomes **tone 1**, **Re** becomes **tone 2**, **Me** is **tone 3**, **Fa** **tone 4**, **So** **tone 5**, **La** **tone 6** and **Ti** **tone 7**. This simple tone number symbolization forms the basis of the **Tone Note® Music Method for Bass** [coming Summer 2012]. In other words, by learning only seven tone numbers on your bass, you may begin playing many songs. **Tone Note®** makes music and bass so easy!

Practically speaking, there really are no songs to be played with only one tone number, **tone 1**. And there really aren't any songs to be played with only two tones, **tone 1** and **tone 2**. However, as soon as the third tone is added, **tone 3**, then, like magic, there are many songs that may be "spelled" with tone numbers and then played.

Let's begin with a simple song, **Merrily We Roll Along**. Merrily may be played on the bass by using only three tone numbers, **tone 1**, **tone 2** and **tone 3**. At this point, there is really no need to learn how to read and understand the rhythm symbols of music, **notes**. This is because you already know how to sing this song and therefore you can "imitate" its rhythm.

3 2 1 2 3 3 3 2 2 2 3 3 3  
Mer-ri-ly we roll a-long, roll a-long, roll a-long.

3 2 1 2 3 3 3 2 2 3 2 1  
Mer-ri-ly we roll a-long, o-ver deep blue seas.

By adding one more tone, **tone 4**, we can play other songs. Here is a favorite Mother Goose song, **Old King Cole**. This song uses four tone numbers, **tone 1**, **tone 2**, **tone 3** and **tone 4**. Remember, if you already know the song you can imitate the rhythm, however, if you don't already know this song, then you would have to begin learning **notes**, the rhythmic duration symbol of music.

1 1 2 2 2 3 3 3 4 4 4  
Old King Cole was a mer-ry old soul and a

3 3 3 2 2 1 1 1 1 2 2 2  
Mer-ry old soul was he. He called for his pipe and he

3 3 3 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 1  
called for his bowl and he called for his fid-dlers three.

With the addition of **tone 5**, many more songs are possible. Here is one of them, **Mary Had a Little Lamb**. It's important to note that Mary only uses four tone numbers, **tone 1**, **tone 2**, **tone 3** and **tone 5**. She doesn't use **tone 4**. This is just like spelling words in English, not all words contain all 26 letters. In fact, no one word contains all 26 letters! You probably already know **Mary Had a Little Lamb** and therefore can imitate her rhythm. Notice how similar **Mary** is to **Merrily We Roll Along**... there is only a one tone difference!

3 2 1 2 3 3 3 2 2 2 3 5 5  
Mar-y had a lit-tle lamb, lit-tle lamb, lit-tle lamb.

3 2 1 2 3 3 3 3 2 2 3 2 1  
Mar-y had a lit-tle lamb, its fleece was white as snow.

I found this interesting and perhaps you will too. The reason there are no 26 letter words in the dictionary is because the usual rules of English spelling outlaw consecutive triple letters. We put hyphens in words that contain three of the same letters in a row, so as to separate the letters. For example: bee-eater, bell-like, cross-section, cross-subsidize, shell-less and joss-stick [incense]. A person who flees is a fleer, not a fleerer, and someone who sees is a seer, not a seerer. Chaffinches used to be called chaff finches, but when the two words were merged, one of the letter 'f's was dropped. It should be noted that written representations of noises often contain triple letters, such as brrr, shhh, and zzz, but they don't really count as proper words. Too bad!

Let's continue. By adding **tone 6**, we can play **Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star**. Again, you probably already know this song and therefore can imitate the rhythm. Notice that Twinkle uses all six tone numbers, **tone 1**, **tone 2**, **tone 3**, **tone 4**, **tone 5** and **tone 6**.

1 1 5 5 6 6 5 4 4 3 3 2 2 1  
Twink-le, Twink-le Litt-le Star, How I won-der what you are.

5 5 4 4 3 3 2 5 5 4 4 3 3 2  
Up a -bove the World so high, like a dia-mond in the Sky.

1 1 5 5 6 6 5 4 4 3 3 2 2 1  
Twink-le, Twink-le Litt-le Star, How I won-der what you are.

We'll end this lesson by adding **tone 7**. By adding this final tone number of the major scale we can now play **Jack Be Nimble**. This song may be buried deep in your nursery school mind, so, once again, just like **Old King Cole**, you may have to learn the notes of rhythm. Notice that **Jack** uses all seven tone numbers, **tone 1**, **tone 2**, **tone 3**, **tone 4**, **tone 5**, **tone 6** and **tone 7**.

1 3 2 4 3 5 4  
Jack, be nim - ble, Jack, be quick.

3 5 4 5 6 5 7 1  
Jack, jump o - ver the can - dle stick.

It is my hope that this lesson has shown you how simple and easy music really is. Now, by continuing in this progressive step-by-step manner, from the beginning toward the end, I'm sure you'll realize that with patience and practice, you will be able to play and enjoy music, and your bass, at every stage of your life.

'Til next time, have some **Tone Note® Music Method** fun... I'll be listening!

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*Globally-renowned guitar and bass instructor, **Mike Overly** easily combines the worlds of deeply-rooted academic study with a well-textured performance resume. His pathbreaking **12 Tone Music Publishing** products, including the newly released **Tone Note® Music Method for Guitar**, provide valuable illuminating insights while simplifying the learning process.*

*Join Mike at [www.12tonemusic.com](http://www.12tonemusic.com) to explore and expand your knowledge of these two iconic instruments through a variety of reviews and interviews, tips and tricks and free lessons of remarkable originality, all presented in a family-friendly forum. Plus, as an added bonus, you get to follow Mr. Pick as he introduces you to fun fretboard games, jokes, riddles, quotes and more. Be sure to read the 12 Tone Music Blog where Mike offers a behind-the-scenes look at the development of his unique approach to solving the problems of modern musical notation and traditional guitar and bass methods.*

*Mike Overly's unmatched perspective on fretboard education has something for everyone ~ from the amateur hobbyist to the serious professional player ~ as well as any music enthusiast who wants to come along for the ride.*