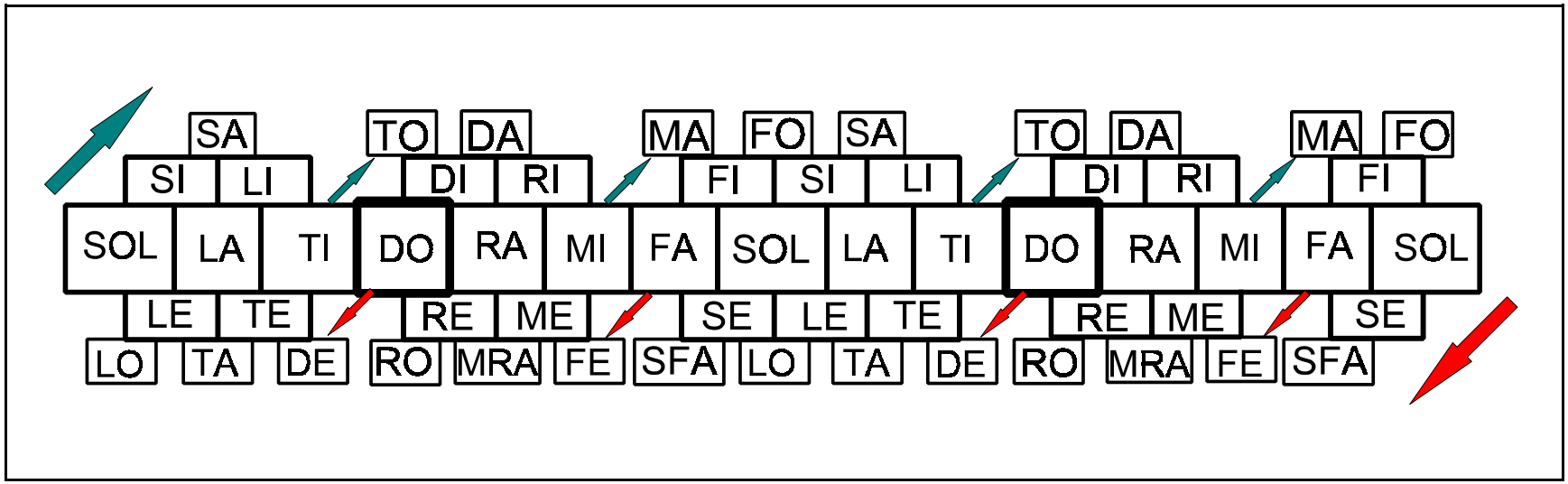
New Solfege



Rationale:

In designing the New Solfege, the author's intention is to provide a solmization system which accommodates the high level of chromaticism found in the repertoire from the late 19th century to the present and which works equally well with fixed Do, moveable Do, La-based minor and Do-based minor pedagogies. Traditional solfege has limitations and inconsistencies. For example with C being Do, the syllable for G double sharp is La--a limitation which forces the enharmonic equivalent (La). With New Solfege, G double sharp is Sa, a syllable which recognizes the written note as G with the consonant [S] and the sounded pitch with the vowel [a]. Sa is easily recognized as enharmonic with La.

The most glaring inconsistency in traditional solfege is Re. Whereas the vowel [e] is otherwise reserved for a syllable applied to a pitch chromatically lowered a half step, Re is diatonic and when lowered is changed by tradition and necessity to Ra (?!). With New Solfege, Ra is the second diatonic syllable (thus Do, Rah, Mi) and Re is the syllable when the pitch is chromatically lowered a half step. The author recognizes that slavish adherence to tradition will likely cause many to reject this revision but wishes to point out that: 1) several major revisions of solfege have taken place since 1026 AD, 2) numerous variations of solfege are currently in use internationally, and that, 3) music itself is evolving and solfege systems must adapt to these changes or risk becoming irrelevant.

The consistency of consonant/vowel usage in New Solfege provides a logical pattern which does not significantly increase the burden of learning the system. As with traditional solfege, raising a diatonic pitch by a half step always results in the vowel [i] except when the diatonic syllable already is [i]. In New Solfege, the diatonic consonant of Mi and Ti is retained and the *enharmonic* vowel is applied (Mi raised a half step becomes Ma and Ti raised a half step becomes To). Raising a diatonic pitch by two half steps consistently follows this practice (Do

raised one half step becomes Di, two half steps becomes Da). The same logic is followed with chromatically lowered pitches (thus Ti becomes Te, then Ta and Ra becomes Re, then Ro). Double consonants were employed in two cases to avoid duplication of syllables (thus Sol, Se, Sfa so that Sfa is kept discrete from Sa, and Mi, Me, Mra so that Mra is kept discrete from Ma).

The principles of well-tempered tuning (as differentiated from just or pure intonation) indicate that A-sharp is not exactly the same pitch as B-flat even though we describe these two pitches as enharmonic equivalents. This fact supports syllabic differentiation and discourages easy, perhaps thoughtless and definitely needless use of most syllabic enharmonics. By extension, B-double flat and A-natural show an even greater discrepancy of pitch than between A-sharp and B-flat.

A deficiency of New Solfege is acknowledged in the lack of a good syllable for Ra and La when either are raised two half steps–Ra, Ri, (?) and La, Li, (?) leaving no choice but the use of enharmonic equivalents, Mi and Ti.