

Mapping Music: Strategies to Help Students Learn and Memorize Music More Effectively
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What is Mapping?

- A technique for learning and memorizing music more efficiently. Use with any instrument, any stage of learning, any level.
- Draw a “map” showing key features of a piece or section. For specific memory problems, include only what you need to play that part without the music.
- Drawing the map promotes mental organization, making memorization easier.
- Mapping reinforces theory, improvisation, analysis, and reading skills.
- Maps provide insight into a student’s learning process.
- Combine with other strategies. Reduce the likelihood of overuse injuries.

How we use mapping in our teaching and performing:

1. Overview a piece before practice.

- Identify main sections, themes, keys, harmonies, textures, etc., as appropriate.
- Use any symbols that help you – or make up your own.
- Use a blank sheet of paper or Colgin’s memory-map template.

2. Solve specific problems in learning and/or memorizing a piece.

- For longer works, focus on a single section or element where needed - rhythm, harmony, etc.

3. Develop quick-learning skills: Map a short, simple piece away from the instrument. (Shockley)

- Students first listen to the piece. They follow the score and imagine playing it.
- They then draw a quick map, and see how much they can play from their map.
- If they forget, they can make up (improvise) something like it, then check the score.

4. Provide a resource for students with reading challenges or dysfunction (Colgin)

- Individuals with strong eye muscles tend to be good readers (and resist memorizing)
- Those with weak eye muscles, slow to focus, and dyslexics find mapping helpful for learning (personal experience)

5. Full-time job means less practice time for the professional musician. (Colgin)

- Makes practice more efficient, strengthens intellectual memory
- Maps made years earlier can help restore memory when relearning.

Examples of Piano Maps (Shockley)

- Basic Map (early level): Bartok *Hungarian Folk Song*
- Overview of a Longer Work: Schumann *Whims*
- Mapping Away from the Piano: Hartsell *Moonlit Shores* and Schytte *Etude*

- Mapping Ornaments: Chopin *Nocturne*, op. 9 no. 3
- Skeleton Map: Schubert *Impromptu*, op. 90 no. 4 (Trio)
- Mapping Complex Chords: Ginastera *Creole Dance*
- Mapping Complex Rhythms: Copland *Piano Variations*
- Completing Memorization: Beethoven *Sonata*, op. 14 no. 1. Rondo

Student Maps:

- Bach Prelude in c minor, Kabalevsky Folk Dance, Brahms Capriccio.

Mapping a Song Text (for singers):

- A. Scarlatti *Se Florindo è fidele* ("If Florindo is faithful")

Examples of beginning maps for single-line instrument (Colgin):

- Scale study with static pattern throughout 12 major and minor keys. (Taffanel-Gaubert)
- Chromatic-scale study: octave streams by beginning on diatonic chord tones, 1-3-5, etc. (Moyses)

Memory-Map template (Colgin)

- Simple melody using memory map template: 4-bar phrasing, a-b-a form
- Maps of Granados' *Hibiee-Jibiees*: 1999 and 2008.
- Difficult orchestral passage: Glazunov *Violin Concerto*, (cambiata sequences written as diminished 3rds)
- Concerto movement in double-exposition form, mapped more extensively (Mozart, *K. 313, I*)

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