

Miles Musician

*1 Arundel Crescent
Surrey Hills, Victoria 3127
Australia
Phone/Fax: 61+3 9880 7060
Mobile: 0411 447726
wemiles@hotmail.com
ABN: 141 904 951 00*

23rd May 2005

To Whom It May Concern,

I am very excited about the potential of Thumtronics' musical innovations, especially with respect to issues apropos the teaching and learning of music.

In my 35 years as a professional musician and music educator, I've done pretty much everything from recording session and tour work to composing/arranging/scoring, from lecturing/teaching to producing. For the last 11 years, much of my focus has been upon the design and delivery of the state senior secondary music education curricula and their assessments for the Victorian (Australia) Certificate of Education (VCE). In my research, curriculum design and implementation capacities I have been exposed to and analysed virtually every system and approach to music pedagogy throughout the Western world. I am currently in the final stage of my doctoral (PhD) thesis, "Improving the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Music and Music Performance Study Designs: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment Practices and Relevance for Further Music Studies". Many of the key recommendations of my dissertation have already been adopted, both within the current study designs as well as the updated versions of the subjects, these managed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and endorsed by the Department of Education and Training (DET), both constituents of the Victorian state government. In addition, I have lectured in musicianship, performance studies, music theory and analysis, and pedagogy (teacher training) at tertiary/post-secondary level for many years. I hold a K-12 certification in music education (Colorado, USA), have had considerable experience as a primary and secondary school music teacher, and have tutored and trained children's choirs with members as young as seven years of age. My graduate studies were in the composition and analysis of contemporary music. Given my professional background and the length of time I have held significant state-level curriculum and assessment positions and titles, it is fair to say that I have considerable expertise and am well known and respected throughout the realms of music education in Australia, especially regarding issues of curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment methodology.

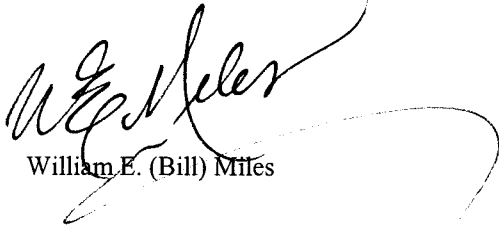
I had thought that nothing in music education could surprise me, but Thumtronics' innovations have been a revelation. Consider first what Thumtronics has called "Isomorphic Solfa" or more recently "ThumSolfa." ThumSolfa's combination of isomorphism, tonic solfa, and electronic transposition is a true breakthrough. ThumSolfa reveals the patterns of intervals in music so consistently, visually, and elegantly that its potential impact on music education is hard to overstate. Using ThumSolfa, students should be able to grasp the fundamentals of music at a substantially earlier age – for example, perhaps much of the material taught at Senior-/Matriculation-/Year 12-level can be dealt with comprehensively as early as Year 8 or 9. Further, by making the patterns in music so obvious and tangible, ThumSolfa allows music educators to present what are currently considered to be "advanced concepts" of analysis and structure relatively early in a person's musical education, giving students a framework for a deep understanding of music that is extremely difficult to teach today, especially in the common environment where the majority are uninitiated and/or inexperienced – virtually "beginners", by and large.

These benefits extend well beyond the basics of music education. At the university level and beyond, ThumSolfa appears to have the potential to make the most advanced analyses and theoretical constructs easier to teach, learn, and apply. For weeks now I have been trying to find potentially problematical holes in the ThumSolfa system; thus far I have been unable to locate any that cannot be dealt with easily. It appears to be as robust an analytical tool as anything else in music today, while being far easier to use and to "think"/perceive.

Thumtronics' innovations even bring microtonality – the division of the octave into more than twelve semitones – into the mainstream of music. First, it provides a keyboard with more than 12 keys per octave, which no other mainstream instrument does. Second, Thumtronics has identified an overlooked breakthrough in music theory – the importance of aligning a timbre's partials with the steps of the scale in which it is played – which can make microtonal music pleasingly consonant. This combination has the potential to alter mainstream music substantially, as did the addition of chromatic notes to the diatonic scale at the start of the Common Practice period and the addition of "blue notes" to formalised jazz early in the 20th century.

As to the Thummer itself, as a practicing musician, I can hardly wait to get my hands on one. The expressive potential of the Thummer is a giant step forward. I expect that the combination of a big leap in expressive power and an equally big leap in ease of learning should make Thumtronics' innovations both popular and, retrospectively, as significant a development as the electric guitar in the 50s, 60s and 70s and/or the keyboard/synthesiser in the 80s, 90s and "noughts".

The potential impact of Thumtronics' innovations is hard to overstate. As indicated above, in music education, performance and composition, it is entirely possible that the innovations will usher in a new era. As recently as three weeks ago, I thought that I had seen just about everything that comprises Western music and music education. Now, a new and exciting vista for the teaching and learning of music is opening up ahead of me. Indeed, I am confident that, when exposed to Thumtronics' innovations, other serious musicians and educators will feel as I do: this is an exciting advancement that most probably represents the most substantial of the "great leaps forward" in the modern era.



William E. (Bill) Miles