Fortunately for me, with a great love for good music and no talent, my late wife was a concert cellist. Her musical education had included fifteen years of private study in this country and a formal course at the Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Bruxelles, from which she was a prize graduate in 1914. Ignorant and curious, I asked her the reason for foreign study -- what could she learn in Belgium that wasn't taught in the United States? She listed a number of topics in reply, with emphasis on counterpoint, ensemble and solfège.

That last word was new to me, as were its near-synonyms, solfaging and solmization. In explaining it to me, with an oversimplifying analogy because of my laity in music, she began by describing solfège as "singing words in songs without words". Many people will use just the one word la and intone a musical phrase, theme or passage as "la, la, la, la, la, la" or even with a prefatory tra. With more variety, the so-called Fate Theme of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (which encodes \\textit{V}, the victory theme of the Second World War) has been rendered "ta-ta-ta taw . . . da-da-da dum". But in solfège, each note of the scale has a different word associated with it. That Fate Theme becomes "sol-sol-sol bo . . . fa-fa-fa re".

This was Greek to me in more ways than one. I neither knew the words nor could I intone in tune, being a helpless monotone. Years later, however, I became addicted to crossword puzzles, in which, one by one, a dozen or so of these words were added (literally but not musically) to my vocabulary. Some were defined simply as "musical note" and others more definitely as such-and-such a note of Guido's scale. I became curious. Who was this guy Guido? Were there other words of solfège besides those met in crossword puzzles? I was curious enough to begin some research, in encyclopedias (Groves and Britannica) and my wife's musical library.

The story is a long one -- too long to warrant more than an abstract for the current purpose. Guido d'Arezzo, anglicized to Guy of Arezzo, was a monk born nearly a thousand years ago, long before there was a well-tempered clavichord. He assigned syllabic names to the six notes of a diatonic hexachord and overlapped two hexachords for a working range (the gamut) extending approximately from 256 to 640 cycles per second. Guido proposed the names UT, RE, MI, FA, SOL and LA for the notes C, D, E, F, G and A in his lower hexachord.
had a formal lesson, I learned in Bel-
lyms, solfa-
lyms, solfege,
lyms, solfege,
lyms, solfege,

Various schemes were devised to adapt this basic system to keys
other than C and minor modes, first to enharmonic "accidentals"
and later to the tempered chromatic scale, particularly (1) the "mov-
able do" for which the sequence of words was moved from C to the key
note, and (2) the "fixed do" for which DO remained on C and new
words were coined for the five black keys. There are two different
nomenclatures for the black-key intermediates C#, D#, F#, G# and
A#: the anonymous FA, BO, TU, DE and SA (alternatively, NO),
and Obukof's LO, TE, RA, --, and BI.

In what follows, I adopt the fixed do scheme, partly because this
had been taught to my wife in solfege, and partly because it gave me
more words for the game described below. This game was suggested
by reflecting that Mimi, the tragically doomed diva of Puccini's "La
Boheme", could be represented by an E-E couplet on a musical staff.
Following this lead, I noted that the word retire could be represented
by a triplet D-B-D, several words by quadruplets, and one word by a
quintuplet. As a recreational exercise, eight words of this type have
been written in musical notation and referenced by number to their
definitions, there being one word to each measure and the words ar-
anged in alphabetical order, All of the 20 capitalized solfege words
introduced above have been used, with some repetition for extra clues.
The answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this
issue.

1. A unit contest, such as boxing
2. Calcium-magnesium carbonate
3. To embellish with care
4. Angular distance from the equator
5. A small cream-colored horse
6. An ironic composition censuring vice
7. To speak with a hissing sound
8. To sing the notes of the gamut
As a more extensive research project, I have listed 78 common words formed in this way drawn from Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. Several words not in Webster also occurred to me -- proper names such as Lalo, Mimi and Nora, and place names such as Laredo, Tulare and Lodore.

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From the above list, the most amicable words of solfege are TE, RE, DE and LA; the least amicable are ELA, UT, BI, and SOL.