



A JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR MUSIC THEORY

MTO 27.1 Examples: Maler, Rhythmic Techniques in Deaf Hip Hop

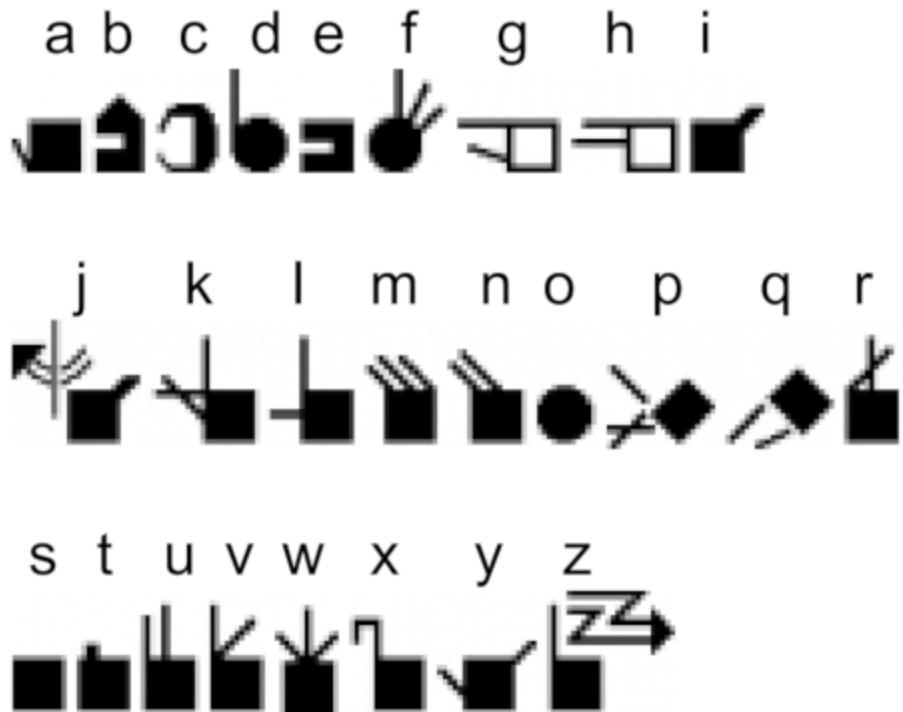
(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.21.27.1/mto.21.27.1.maler.html>

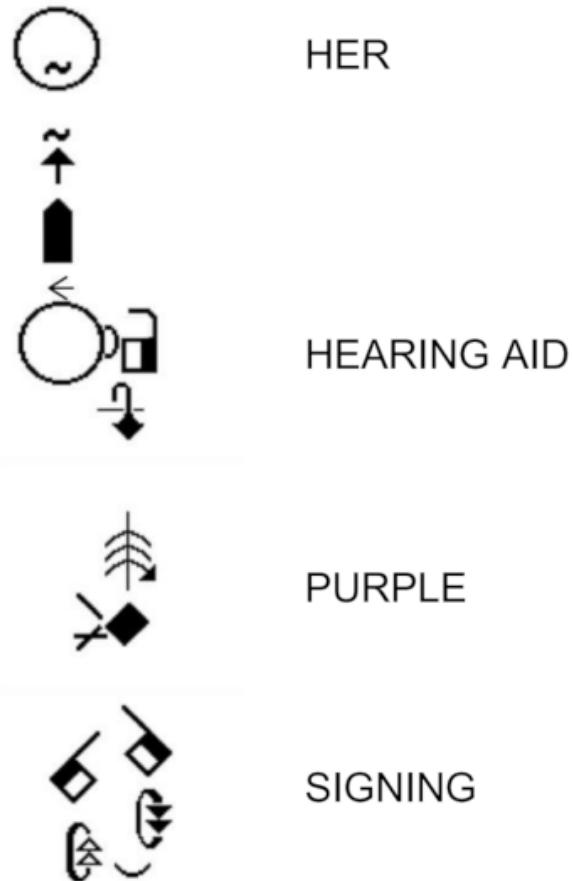
Example 1. The Sutton SignWriting symbol for “sign.”



Figure 1. The letters of the ASL manual alphabet in SignWriting



Example 2. Wawa, “Only ASL One,” opening, transcribed using Sutton SignWriting. The lyrics rapped by Wawa in English are: “Her hearing aids were purple, moving hands in a circle.” Each sign is accompanied here by an English gloss in uppercase letters that summarizes the sign’s meaning.



Example 3. Wawa, “Only ASL One,” opening, transcribed using the dip hop transcription system

The image shows a musical transcription for the opening of “Only ASL One” using the dip hop transcription system. It compares a **Signed Rap** track with a **Non-signed Rap** track.

Signed Rap: The top half of the transcription shows musical notation with lyrics in uppercase. The lyrics are: HER, HEARING AID, PURPLE, SIGNING, and DON'T KNOW. The notes are grouped into measures, with some notes highlighted in orange boxes. Above the notation are two diamond-shaped signs with diagonal lines, and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$.

Non-signed Rap: The bottom half shows the lyrics in lowercase: Her, hear - ing, aids, were, purp - le, mov - ing, hands, in, a, cir - cle, did - n't. The notes are grouped into measures, with some notes highlighted in purple boxes. Below the lyrics is a standard musical staff with notes.

Example 4. Sean Forbes, "A Song For My Haters," verse 2

Signed rap $\text{♩} = 108$

Non-signed rap

Keyboard

Snare $\text{♩} = 108$

Bass drum

2

HAVE SMOKE BLOW UP MY ASS— ONLY SOMETIMES WILL I SPEAK BACK HAVE

hav - ing smoke blown up my ass.____ But on - ly some-times will I.____ talk back, you have to

Keyboard

Snare

Bass drum

4

WORD FLUENT WITH OBSERVATIONS

HATE

EVERYONE

HAVE NO PATIENCE

be a word-smith with ob- ser- vat- ions. Hate- ful to ev'-ry-one and have no pa-tience, don't

1

6

DON'TWANT

BULLY

COMMON

HATER

wan - na be bull - ied by the com - mon ha - - - ter.

1

Example 5. Sean Forbes, "Watch These Hands," verse 2

Signed rap $\text{♩} = 123$

Non-signed rap

Look - in' look - in'

3

LOOK LIPS YOU ASK ME WHAT WRONG WITH US WHY RIDE SHORT BUS

Look at your lips and you asked what's wrong with us, why we rode the short bus, the

6

SMALL BUS TO SCHOOL I LUCKY PAST ENOUGH PAH FINISH L H

short bus to school. I was for - tu - nate e - nough I made it out of Lah - ser High School.

9

THEN BARELY ESCAPE FINISH R I T index MOST index KIDS I RIDE B-U-S WITH NEVER SEE FIFTEE

And then I made it out - ta R. I. T. most of the kids I rode the bus with nev - er saw fif - teen.

Example 6. Sean Forbes, "I'm Deaf," verse 3

Signed rap $\text{♩} = 90$

Non-signed rap

I can feel the bass, can't hear the treb - le clef,

EXPECT ____ WHEN YOU WORK DEAF

what do you ex - pect when you're so so deaf?

Example 7. Sean Forbes, "Watch These Hands," opening

Signed rap $\text{♩} = 123$

Non-signed rap

watch watch watch these hands_ they can dance, they can sing,

EXPRESS ____ EXPERT

they can dance, they can sing

Example 8. Sean Forbes, "I'm Deaf," verse 3

Signed Rap *Non-signed Rap* $\text{♩} = 90$

I PREFER NOT HEAR PREFER NOT HEAR
I'd rath - er not hear, rath - er not list -

3
I PERFECT NOTHING NEVER RESTRICT
- en, I'm the per - fect im - per - fec - tion ne - ver re - strict - ed

Example 9. A transcribed excerpt of Cardi B's "Bodak Yellow" (2017, 0:14–44)

Cardi B

Said lil' bitch you can't fuck with me if you want ed to, these ex - pen-sive these is red bot-toms

4
these is blood-y shoes. Hit the store, I can get 'em both, I don't wan-na choose and I'm quick cut a n*g-ga off so

8
don't get comf(or) ta-ble. Look I don't dance now, I make mon-ey move. Say I don't got-ta dance,

12
I make mon - ey move. If I see you (and)I don't speak, that means

14
I don't fuck with you. I'm a boss, you a work - er bitch, I make blood - y moves.

Example 10. A transcribed excerpt of Kyle's verse in Donnie Trumpet and the Social Experiment's "Wanna Be Cool" (2015, 2:32–2:44)

$\text{♩} = 115$

Kyle

It's eas - y and it's so im - por - tant, be - in' cool should-n't cost a for - tune.

3

Bab-y got her jeans from Good - will, but I bet that ass__ look good__ still. O-kyay let's re-

6

mem-ber that shop-ping at Pay - less it just means you pay less it don't mean you're bae - less.

Figure 2. Rhythm-rhyme interaction types in dip hop

Type 1	Type 3
Signed layer aligned Non-signed layer aligned	Signed layer aligned Non-signed layer not aligned
Type 2	Type 4
Signed layer not aligned Non-signed layer aligned	Signed layer not aligned Non-signed layer not aligned

Example 11. Wawa, “Faceless Man,” verse 2

Signed Rap $\text{♩} = 78$

Vocal Rap

3

4

4

Example 12. Wawa, "Only ASL One," first verse

Signed Rap

Non-signed Rap

HER HEARING AID PURPLE SIGNING DON'T KNOW

Her hear - ing aids were purp - le mov - ing hands in a cir - cle did - n't

2

— WHAT SAY BECAUSE KNOW I NERVOUS — SHE

know what she say - in' but she knew that I was ner - vous. She's

Example 13. Sean Forbes, "Two Blown Speakers," verse 2

Signed Rap $\text{♩} = 85$

PEOPLE MEET__ PROGRESS__ IMPACT__ MANY WAYS__ NOT

Non-signed Rap

Peop-le we meet a-long the way have such an ef-fect in so man-y ways.

3

EVERY-ONE LOVE YOU ALWAYS ENOUGH__ ALMOST CITY M-E-D-I-A SHOW UP

Not ev-ery-one loves you but there's alw-ays en-ough in al-most ev'-ry town the med-i-a shows up

Example 14. Sean Forbes, "I'm Deaf," verse 3

Signed rap

$\text{♩} = 90$

BLIND CAN PIANO AND H

Ste - vie Won - der nev - er saw the keys ___ and Hel - len

Non-signed rap

$\text{♩} = 90$

K CAN ___ COMMUNICATE

Kel - ler was cap - a - ble of com - mun - i - cat - ing

Example 15. Signmark, "The Letter," verse 2

Signed Rap $\text{♩} = 98$

Non-signed Rap

2

4

6

HER CRUEL WAY NEVER

RIGHT HER

MY THOUGHTS WITH EMMA HER FAMILY

In such a crude way it would ne-ver be just.

My thoughts go to the fam-i-ly of

Em-ma. Con

8

SORRY SAD OUR HEART IN SAME FOREVER

WE LOSE WE SHARE WE TOGETHER

do-len-ces, in our hearts, she lives for

e- ver.

The loss we share it brought us to-get-her.

10

SO I WRITE

LETTER SEND

THROW TO YOU

And so I wrote you this

let - ter

I