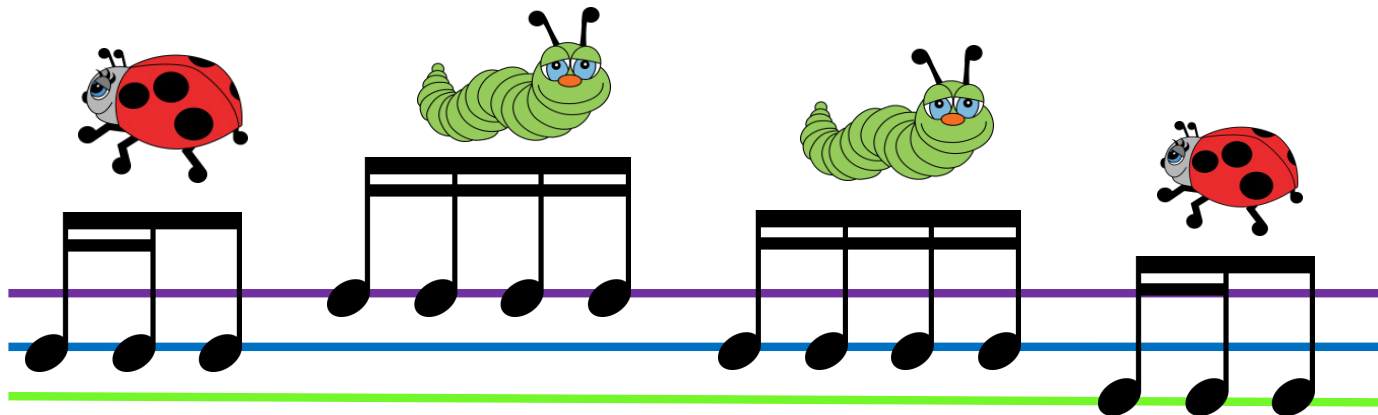


AnimalRhythm

A Primary Music Teaching Resource



by
Allan Herron

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INTRODUCTION

AnimaRhythm is a series of lesson plans and accompanying resources including posters, flashcards, musical extracts and worksheets, with strategies on how to teach a comprehensive primary music curriculum.

As a primary music specialist, I am constantly on the lookout for teaching resources that will help me to produce and deliver high quality music lessons. With time pressure a daily consideration, it is important that lessons are quick and easy to prepare. I have put together a selection of music teaching ideas and presented them in a series of step-by-step lesson plans. When used in conjunction with a school singing programme, they offer a comprehensive music scheme. It is my aim that this book will give both specialist and non-specialist educators a valuable resource bank which will help to inspire and instil a love of music in your pupils.

The AnimaRhythm theory

Music terminology can be very confusing. Consider the terms 'crotchet' and 'quaver' for example – what does a typical four year-old know about crotchets and quavers? If you ask them to clap 'crotchets' and 'quavers' they will, quite naturally, struggle. American music terminology, though it may seem more logical, can be similarly confusing for the very young how can a four year-old understand 'quarter-notes' and 'eighth-notes' if they have never studied fractions?

However, I have found that if you take the same rhythm and apply the terms 'mouse' and 'spider' - you will find that children will soon be able to match the names with the notes and that they will be able to interpret simple rhythms in a matter of minutes.

The terms 'mouse', 'spider', 'ladybird' and 'caterpillar', are already familiar concepts to most young children - they form an integral part of their learning and language acquisition from the very start. There are so many studies connecting music and language acquisition, so it makes sense that we should embrace both elements within our music lessons.

AnimaRhythm – derived from the words 'animal' and 'anima' (the Italian word for 'soul'), is a music-teaching scheme I have been developing and refining over the course of my career and it never ceases to amaze me how quickly children absorb the principles

and how much it aids their musical development. With vivid imagery and bright colours, it provides an holistic approach which is instantly accessible and appealing to young learners.

The Key Skills in Primary Music

I believe that a comprehensive primary music scheme should embrace the following five areas of learning.

Singing: is the ‘bed-rock’ of any good primary music programme and carries far-reaching benefits for children’s learning and wellbeing. Singing is such an inherent part of a child’s psyche - most children can sing or warble before they can talk and once the basics are in place, singing can promote learning in just about every other area of the curriculum. When planning your curriculum, try to incorporate at least a few of the following: nursery rhymes, actions songs, topic-related songs, traditional song, songs to encourage good singing technique and singing games to develop co-ordination. Do NOT worry if singing is not your forte, children will learn far more effectively from an imperfect live performance than they will from a perfectly performed CD.

Music and Movement: music and movement and singing games are a natural and integral part of a child’s play – think of the playground games we played as children. First and foremost these should be fun, but from a pedagogical perspective, singing games develop a plethora of key skills: co-ordination, social skills, team-work, taking turns, creativity and sensitivity as well as musical fundamentals such as starting & stopping, a sense of pulse, co-ordination and good use of the body.

Listening Skills: by developing listening skills, not only are we teaching the children to be good listeners, but we are also teaching them to be more reflective, considerate, more analytical, sympathetic and empathetic. We will also help to develop their descriptive skills and their cultural awareness and understanding. At this age, I encourage children to think about the story in the music, its mood and to talk about the various instruments that they can hear. I also encourage them to think about musical genres and start to apply appropriate terminology including, classical, jazz, pop, rock, strings, woodwind, brass and percussion.

Instrumental Music: learning how to handle and perform on a musical instrument is a valuable skill and something which the children will cherish in later life. Learning an instrument also helps to develop a multitude of important skills, including co-ordination, reading, analysis, improvisation and experimentation, description (language skills) freedom of expression, exploration, discussion and performance skills. In EY/KS1 I try to encourage as much hands on experience with as many different instruments as possible.

Creativity and Composition: children should be encouraged to develop their natural curiosity and creativity.

In the beginning, children's natural music-making may seem unstructured, but as their understanding and skills develop, this creativity will soon start to manifest in a more structured fashion. The Creativity and Composition exercises in this book will help to develop a variety of key skills include problem solving, team-building and co-operation, reading and notating, thinking outside the box... and many more. Much in the same way we teach children to read and write, teaching children to read and write music will carry similar benefits. By helping them to recognise musical symbols, basic musical notation and to match the symbols with their sounds, we are encouraging connections in the brain between what the children hear, think and see. We are also giving them the tools to be able to create and reproduce ideas of their own. At the beginning of the AnimaRhythm course we work mainly with the animal images, but gradually over the course we start to introduce music notation and standard musical terminology.

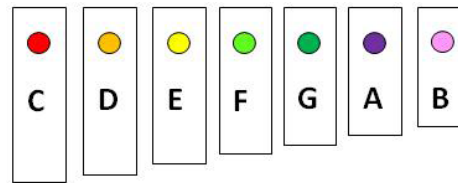
Getting Started with AnimaRhythm

Resources: the good news is that AnimaRhythm can be implemented on a minimal budget and most of the following resources can be prepared in advance and if suitably cared for, will last for years.

I have included photocopiable resources at the back of the book and before you start teaching, I suggest that you:

- Print and laminate a class set of animal flashcards. In the beginning I would suggest one of each of the animal picture cards per child and one of each of the notation cards for each child in your class. Make them big enough so that they are easy to handle, but not too big to be unwieldy.
- Print, mount and display a copy of the AnimaRhythm poster from the back of the book.
- A class set of basic tambours (with soft beaters) will be really useful.
- A class set of boomwhackers. (For a class of 30 children you will need 5 'diatonic' sets (equivalent to the white notes of the piano) of C to B as below.

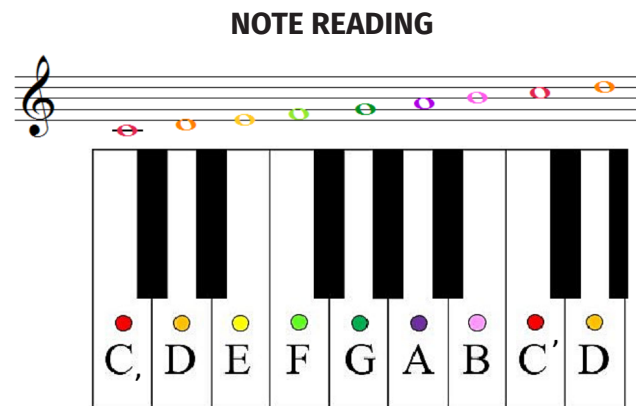
- A few sets of chimebars or several xylophones, glockenspiels or metallophones with coloured stickers, as follows:



- A large whiteboard or an interactive whiteboard (preferably with speakers).
- A class set of mini-whiteboards and pens is useful.
- Floor chalks/whiteboard pens.
- A variety of stuffed toys, including a 'key' helper. A small stuffed mouse, spider, ladybird and caterpillar would also be very useful - these are easy to find online these days.

Reading Music and Degrees of the Scale

Minimal music reading is required in order to access the lessons, however I have included below a quick reference diagram which includes the notes covered in this book, their respective colours and a keyboard diagram showing the layout of the notes on a piano, keyboard or chromatic glockenspiel or xylophone.



Aural Signals

Aural Signals are a quick easy and effective way of focussing the children and getting them ready for the next activity – all without the need for words or straining of the teacher’s voice.

Try the following aural signals on chimebars or xylophone. Start by demonstrating the signal, then mix it with ‘fake’ signals and see if the children can pick out the correct signal and respond accordingly. Once the children are familiar with the signals, why not experiment and make up some of your own?

Instruction	Notes
‘Stand Up’	G-C’
‘Sit Down’	G-C,
‘Find Your Own Space’	C,-E-G-C’
‘Turn Around’	C,-D-E-F-G-F-E-D-C,
‘Come and Make a Circle’	G- F- E- D- C,-C,
‘Make a Line at the Door’	G-E-GG-E-G

Stuffed animals and mascots are incredibly useful when teaching in the Early Years or Key Stage 1. Children of this age have an extremely vivid imagination and they love to believe that these animals can talk and have opinions of their own. From a teacher’s perspective, a stuffed animal can be almost as effective as having an additional adult in the room: they can be another set of ‘eyes’, they can reward good behaviour and also be on the alert for misdemeanours, sanction where necessary and bring comfort when a child is upset. They can also be an endless source of fun and comedy – my pupils find it hilarious when ‘Millie’ my stuffed dog is ‘naughty’!

It’s a very easy system to employ: select a toy/stuffed animal, name it, ‘talk’ to it, involve it in decision making, involve it in how you run your lessons. The children will quickly develop affection for the animal and will really listen to what it has to say! Even when the children are in Year 1 and 2 and know that the stuffed animal can’t really talk, they will still enjoy pretending.

Audio Tracks

In most of the listening and instrumental exercises, we have provided a 'play-along' track which can be used to help the children put together a performance of their own. These are usually slower than the original tracks to give the children a better chance to read and reproduce the corresponding rhythms and pitches. However, it is often helpful to play the children an extract from a professional recording to give them the opportunity to hear each piece, as the composer intended. Professional recordings can be easily sourced these days using internet search sites and subscription streaming services. Please refer to the 'Audio Guide' at the back of the book for further information on how to source recordings.

Differentiation

AnimaRhythm is a very practical and 'hands-on' approach and will be accessible at least to some degree to all children from the most challenged to the most able, including those who find it difficult to concentrate for sustained periods of time. The animals and colourful imagery will enable children who might otherwise have struggled with traditional music notation, to recognise and read basic rhythmic patterns.

Assessment

As in any subject, there will be a range of results from the 'high flyers' to those who struggle. However, I do believe that every child will benefit and will gain from the activities in the AnimaRhythm approach. Assessment opportunities are indicated within the individual lesson plans. Assessment can begin on day one of AnimaRhythm as some children will absorb the principles from the outset. Extension activities are also included where appropriate.

Learning Intentions (L.I.'s) are given under the lesson titles and should be used to formulate your own assessment criteria. I have included an assessment grid at the back of the book which you can photocopy and use as part of your assessment scheme.

Early Learning Goals

This scheme fully supports the objectives set out in the UK Early Learning Goals and in particular: Listening and Attention, Understanding, Speaking, Moving and Handling, Self-confidence & Self-awareness, Managing Feelings and Behaviour, Making Relationships, Reading, Exploring and using Media & Materials, Being Imaginative. But as I mentioned, the lessons can be used and adapted to fulfil any stipulated assessment requirements.

Progression

The lessons are designed to follow a natural progression, whilst also allowing for variety and challenge. After a series of preparatory exercises the animals are presented one or two per chapter. Introducing the animals gradually also helps to create a sense of excitement and anticipation as each new animal is met. Each chapter ends with a set of 'Reading Practice' exercises which allow the teacher to check that the concepts have been well and truly absorbed before moving onto the next. These exercises can be used in a whole class context or with individuals or small groups. The rows A to D can either be read in order or could even be cut up into lines and laminated to form the basis of a matching game. Use the 'Composition Grid' to have the children create rhythms of their own, either by cutting up the rhythms from the 'Reading Practice' or by drawing them in themselves.

Each chapter contains a selection of colour-coded lessons, based on the themes below and in this way pupils will enjoy a pleasing variety of activities and will develop a broad range of skills.

Getting Started: these exercises help to establish basic skills and classroom procedures. Most of these activities can be re-used and/or revisited throughout the course.

Elements of Music: designed to familiarise the children with some of the key concepts from the National Curriculum.

Patterns and Sequences: developing rhythmic awareness and exploring the concept of structure in music.

Rhythm and Movement: developing gross and fine motor skills and rhythmic skills.

Singing and Listening Skills: to develop confidence in the use of the singing voice and to improve listening skills.

These exercises also provide an opportunity to explore a variety of musical styles.

Instrumental Skills: introducing the key concepts with regard to handling and manipulating musical instruments.

Creativity and Composition: developing creativity and the ability to communicate effectively through music.