



TEACHER'S NOTES

UNIT:Carnival of the Animals

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ORIGINATION: <http://www.tuned-in.org>

ABOUT THE WEBSITE

These pages support and develop aspects of the QCA scheme of work for music at KS1 and KS2, *Unit 9: Animal Magic*. This unit '*develops children's ability to create, perform and analyse short descriptive compositions that combine sounds, movements and words*'. In this unit, children are presented with the starting- point of music about animals in order that they may begin to recognize and explore ways in which sounds can be used descriptively. They consider how combinations of musical elements including pitch, duration, dynamics and tempo can contribute to the effectiveness of these musical descriptions.

Vocabulary

Pupils use words and phrases related to:

- duration, *eg pulse, rhythm, longer, shorter, sustained*
- timbre, *eg brittle, silvery, etc.*
- tempo, *eg faster, slower*
- pitch, *eg moving by step, moving by leap (jumps)*
- notation, *eg note names C, D, E* In addition, pupils should explore vocabulary to describe the musical characters of the animals: **e.g. majestic (lion) gliding, graceful (swan),**

Sound sources:

- voices, tuned and untuned instruments, keyboards

The Carnival of the Animals provides excellent opportunities for composing, performing, listening and appraising. Intended as 'a grand zoological fantasy', the work is a sympathetic and amusing parody of animals.

A number of the musical sketches will be very familiar to children, as they have been used in films and adverts. Pupils are likely to recognise Wild Asses from the film *Babe*, Aquarium from the *Nissan Primera* adverts and *Alton Towers*, and possibly *Fossils* from a *Tesco* advertising campaign.

Children should be encouraged to compose their own suite of pieces depicting real or imaginary animals.

Some children will try to produce stereotypical 'sound effects' in their musical interpretations of animals. Given that their early experiences of singing songs about animals positively encourage 'barnyard sounds' (e.g. *Old MacDonald*), this is hardly surprising.

To minimise this, encourage children to consider the *qualities of movement* animals display rather than the sounds they make. This will involve consideration of pitch (high and low), melody (proceeding by leaps and/or steps), pace (fast/slow), dynamics (loud/quiet), timbre (quality of sound), texture (thin/thick).

Using the on-line Pupil pages

The pages

- introduce the background to *The Carnival of the Animals*
- include musical examples of number of Saint-Saens sketches of animals
- Illustrate ways in which Saint Saens uses humour
- Make suggestions for performance and composition
- Place *The Carnival of the Animals* within its musical, historical and social context

Saint-Saens

Saint-Saens was a well- respected and extremely versatile nineteenth-century French composer. He was very knowledgeable in a number of areas, including natural history.

Apart from *The Swan*, the *Carnival of the Animals* was never intended for publication. It was intended only to provide a little amusement for Saint Saens' friends by poking gentle fun at the music and musicians of the day.

Written while on holiday in Austria, the *Carnival of the Animals* parodies the work of Rossini, Mendelssohn, Offenbach and even himself!

Kangaroos

Saint Saens' kangaroos progress by giant leaps and carefully controlled landings. Children are invited to compose their own kangaroo music featuring melodies progressing by leaps. The activity relates to the QCA KS1 unit *Taking Off*, in which pupils explore pitch and melodies proceeding by leap and step.

Note

The Natural History museum, London is currently profiling the endangered *mole cricket* (another famed leaper!) through an exhibition and related activities including movement activities

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/>

Aquarium

A gentle tune on the violins is accompanied by rippling figures on the piano.

The activity suggests the construction of a graphic score modelled on fish in an aquarium

Children should consider quick, darting movements of small fish near the surface, the graceful movements of Angel fish in the middle of the tank and larger, slow-moving fish towards the bottom of the aquarium.

The levels suggest high, middle and low-pitched sounds, played at different speeds reflecting the movements of the fish.

The *Pets forum Group* website contains video clips of tropical fish (Windows media). However, these are quite short and take some time to download.

<http://www.petsforum.com/cis-fishnet/FTFFACichlid.htm>

Screensavers of fish are good starting points for considering ways fish move, and could suggest ideas for children's graphic scores.

Commercial and free downloads available from variety of sources including:

<http://deitysoftware.com/aquarium.htm>

Fossils

The xylophone plays a brittle-sounding and busy tune. This resembles the xylophone melody in Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre*.

Could this be:

- a tune played on a dinosaur's ribcage?
- an army of fossil collectors frantically chipping at rock surfaces with specimen hammers?

'*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*' interrupts the tune briefly, before it returns again.

Children are introduced to the orchestral xylophone. Discuss differences between this and xylophones found in school: experiment with felt-headed and hard plastic beaters to match the sound (*timbre*)

children are asked to find other instruments capable of making short, brittle sounds. These need not be pitched instruments. (*Try Woodblocks and claves*).

Persistent hammering and tapping falls into rhythms. Children could experiment with layering rhythms.

The 'hammering and chipping' may be interrupted by

- a quote from a nursery rhyme? (*Baa baa black sheep, Hickory Dickory Dock*, etc.).
- an well-known classroom song (*Row your boat?*)
- Phrases from a television 'soap' (lots of children can play the first phrase of *Eastenders*).

Tortoises

In Saint-Saens' day, the frenetic and high-kicking Can-Can (or *Chahut*) was considered scandalous. Performed at the Moulin Rouge, the famous Paris cabaret and dance hall, it is immortalised by Toulouse-Lautrec's poster *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue*

The music of the Can Can is from Offenbach's opera *Orpheus in the Underworld*

Offenbach's famous Can-Can is slowed down to a crawl for the tortoises!

The suggestion that children 'perform' music for a tortoise's dance is left open-ended deliberately.

Some children might choose to compose a slow dance suited to a tortoise.

Other children might enter into the joke and re-arrange an unlikely piece of music. Many children enjoy performing dance routines to disco music. Usually, they know the words

and can sing the melodies. They might consider how an up-tempo number could be adapted to suit a tortoise!

Elephant

Here, the piano accompanies a tune played on double-bass suggesting a slow and rather laboured waltz. The elephant is no nimble-footed ballerina!

Children are given the opportunity to parody familiar tunes here and in *The Tortoise*. Children might compare this with *The Swan*. Here, the beautiful cello melody with its rippling piano accompaniment is everything *The Elephant* isn't.

Hens and Cockerels (not featured in pupils' on-line pages)

The sketch depicts with wonderful precision the clucking of hens, and their jerky and deliberate movements as they scratch and peck. The 'cock-a-doodle-doo' of a cockerel interrupts this a number of times, followed by self-important strutting. Tension mounts as a chicken prepares to lay an egg, and the piece ends abruptly as the egg is released.

Outline the above scenario to the children, and encourage them to re-enact this using vocal and body sounds only. Barnyard impressions are quite acceptable here!

A simple storyboard might be prepared. Children should consider how their performance should suggest the excitement and suspense preceding laying the egg. They might consider the effect of a drum role in Magic or Acrobatic performances.

After children have listened to and talked about each other's compositions, listen to Saint-Saens' *Hens and Cockerels*. Discuss the instruments featured eg. *violin sliding from note to note [glissando]*, *piano playing the 'clucking' melody and the 'cock-a-doodle-doo'*.

Children might then rework and develop their compositions with the addition of instruments. There are opportunities for string players to imitate the cockerel's gait by sliding from note to note (*glissando*).

Web links

There is a short Quicktime movie of Tasmanian Native Hen feeding at <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/wildlife/birds/nathen.html>

