

# GET ORFF WITH RHYTHM

It is imperative that music educators provide many varied opportunities in the classroom to actively engage students musically, so that these students expand their proficiency, creativity and understandings of music. Rhythm is one of the most central elements of music, and one that is most likely to engage children regardless of age, culture, academic achievement or background. Using speech as a tool for learning rhythmic phrases is a highly valuable one and can provide students with complex rhythmic understandings.

An Orff Schulwerk approach to rhythmic learning will require a teacher to use speech, singing, playing of percussion instruments and movement to ensure that the rhythm can be felt by the body, understood by the mind and performed with proficiency by the child. Once a child has rhythmic “repertoire”, she is then able to be creative in her rhythmic performance, taking what is learned, and interpreting and testing this. In an Orff Schulwerk program, this creativity and ability to take learned repertoire and extend this learning, is a central part of this approach. When the emphasis for learning rhythm is reliant on a child’s ability to read notation, the child is then restricted to the level of that ability. How unmusical!

In an Orff Schulwerk classroom, each and every child contributes to the community of music learners. As in all areas of the curriculum, variations in knowledge, skills, the child’s interest and creativity will present itself. An Orff Schulwerk approach ensures that these differences are catered for, and that all children feel that sense of community through group music making. They contribute at their level; they are valued as a music learner; they are encouraged to experiment and improvise; and they are provided with experiences so that they can enjoy the process of learning. Does this happen in all areas of the curriculum? Music, and particularly this approach to music education, is able to contribute to a child’s life in ways that no other area can. I encourage you to attend Orff Schulwerk workshops, read literature about this approach, consider doing further Orff Schulwerk training and adopting this approach in your classroom. You’ll love it! Further information can be gained from the Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association (Australia) at [www.vosa.org](http://www.vosa.org).

## **WARM UP THOSE ITTY BITTY BITS**

- Echo movements to a variety of pre-recorded music. Clap own hand on the first beat and tap body parts (your own and others) for the other beats. Do this with various metres (4,3,7)

**P-PLATER***First you*

Click your seatbelt on before you turn the key  
 Gotta meet my honey at a quarter to three  
 Left on the clutch, and right down flat  
 Here we go baby, just like that (S. Brooke)

- Learn the speech rhyme with actions using echo.
- In car formation, drive around the room to the rhythms played on the drum.
- When the cars stop, one car provides a brief description of their car (eg. Rusty old ute – very fast lamborghini, etc).
- This then becomes an ostinato pattern that is played by that car using a variety of body percussion, while the other cars continue with the speech rhyme.
- Obtain 3 ostinato patterns.
- In groups, create rhythmic movement patterns – one pattern per phrase.
- Add a la pentatonic bordun (AE) and one participant plays the given melody or improvises melodically but keeping to the rhythm of the rhyme using the notes ACDEG while another improvise melodically but keeping to the rhythm of the rhyme using the notes A and C only.

*(Possible melody for rhyme)*

AACCDDEEDCA

A(high)AGGEEGGAAGE

EDDCACDE

AAAAACAA

- Participants transfer the ostinato patterns onto untuned percussion instruments and accompany the rhythmic movement sequences.
- Performance: Untuned percussion instruments playing the ostinato patterns; tuned percussion instruments playing a bordun and melody; group movement sequences.

**CHOPSTICK RHYTHM**

This little piggy went to market  
 This little piggy stayed home  
 This little piggy had roast beef, and  
 This little piggy had none, and  
 This little piggy cried wee, wee, wee, all the way home.

- Each participant to have a pair of chopsticks
- Standing opposite a partner, one chopstick in the right hand, the other held under the left armpit.
- Open left hand faces self
- After an introduction of 8 beats, say the rhyme tapping the chopstick on each finger (from the thumb) and tapping partner's chopstick on the rests.
- On "wee", take the chopstick from under the left arm and walk (trying not to stab people!) to a sound source.
- Tap own chopsticks together for "all the way home".
- Improvise rhythmically using the chopsticks and the sound source (eg furniture, walls, floor, etc)
- An accompaniment of CG will play and a change up an octave will signal the end of the improvisation.
- During the next introduction, participants find a new partner.
- Consider tone colour by splitting the improvisations into two groups – eg the walls and then all other sound sources.
- Create specific sound sources by placing objects in the room to divide the room into 3 sections.

- During the moving phase, all participants get to one sound source (eg. Paper on floor, rubbish bin lids, plastic bucket lids).
- This then becomes a performance piece – A = saying the rhyme with the chopstick “rest” feature with a partner – B = improvisations – A = saying the rhyme with the chopstick ”rest” feature with a different partner.

I hope that you have enjoyed this session and you gained some new ideas and repertoire. As with anything in teaching, please adapt these ideas to suit your own specific teaching situation.

Thankyou  
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