

Integrating iPads into your Classroom Instrumental Ensemble

with Jo Eames

What are the tools?

We can use iPads with a whole class, or we can use iPads within a class or group setting.

Apps and online resources to turn an iPad into an instrument:

GarageBand	App already loaded onto Apple devices	There's a huge amount of scope for all levels and abilities. The student can play a keyboard, guitar, drum kit, bass, strings. Loops can be created but also pre-built loops can be manipulated. Simplify by adding note names to keys (this is in iPad settings, not within the app!) or reducing the number of notes.
Prodigies Bells	Free app or online version through web browser	Excellent resource if using colour for pitch. A wide variety of options to play, from just one note, up to 2 chromatic octaves.
Chrome Music Lab	Online resource accessed through web browser	Variety of different apps to choose from which can make music at different levels. All are colourful and loop-based. Good for using as a basis to play along with or for solo work within a piece.
Incredibox	Free version on web browser, or purchase the full app	Creates vocal and beatbox loops which are great for playing or singing along.
Loopimal	Not a free resource	Colourful loop-maker, very easy to use.
Thumbjam	Not a free resource	Excellent resource for using the iPad as an instrument and lots of flexibility in settings to make notes become pictures, symbols or colours.

Things to think about:

- Before you launch in, consider the purpose of the iPad in the ensemble. Is it playing a rhythm, a pitched pattern or a loop? Then think about the app or software that would work best and give this to the student to explore creatively. Over time, they might be able to choose the app for themselves once they know what they are trying to achieve musically, but too many options can be overwhelming.
- If using loop-creating software, use one example and build the piece around it with other instruments, voices and body percussion. Multiple iPads playing loops will be almost impossible to sync up!
- It's important to hear the iPad at the same level as other instruments, so it will need a speaker as the in-built speakers are too quiet once everyone else joins in.
- Bluetooth speakers cause a lag when playing as a live instrument. This can be very frustrating for the player, so connect with a cable.

Creating a piece of music

Two ways to do this to try with your students:

Option one: iPad first

Demonstrate using a loop on the teacher iPad or on the board, and give students their parts to play along. This could be using other instruments, body percussion or voices. Then after the students explore the loop-creating software, have one example used in the class that you all play/sing along with. Small groups could make an ensemble with one iPad between them.

Option two: Piece of music first

Our example was **Three Little Birds** but you can use the principles with any piece of music!

There is a version of this on SingUp: <https://www.singup.org/song-bank/song/372-three-little-birds/>

or on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcJMnV2RYHg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPlyhjSxdEY>

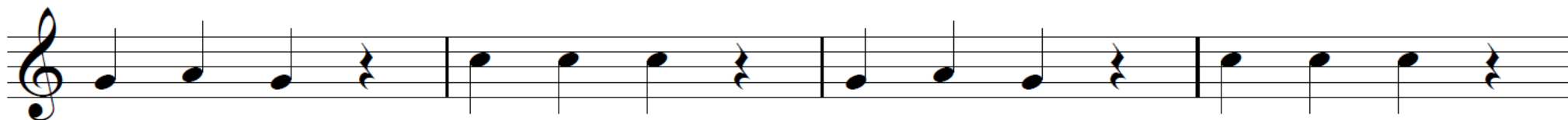
Teach the patterns that you want the students to play with the song. The beauty of this approach is that the parts can be as simple or complicated as you choose, and you can allow students to choose a part that they feel confident with or allocate parts to particular children.

Use the iPad as an instrument to play one of the parts, just like any other instrument. This will work with a GarageBand instrument or an app like Prodigies Bells, so students can play the part in real time alongside their peers.

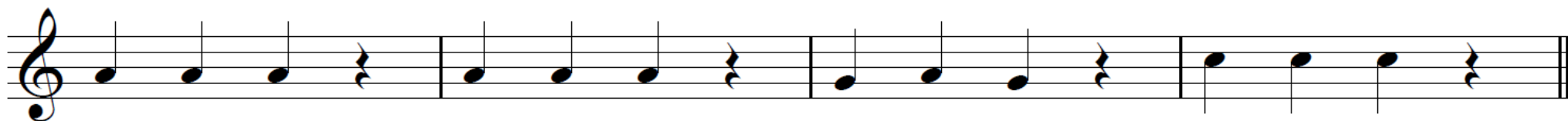
The parts I use for Three Little Birds can be found in the pages that follow. Note that these are for playing along with the chorus of the song, not the verse. Enjoy!

Three Little Birds (GAGCCC)

G A G C C C G A G C C C



A A A A A A G A G C C C



Three Little Birds (GAG)

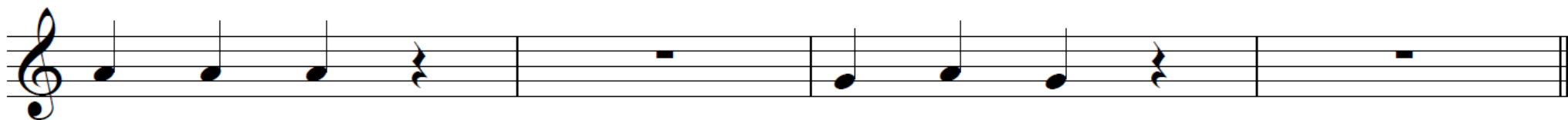
G A G

G A G



A A A

G A G



Three Little Birds (EFE)

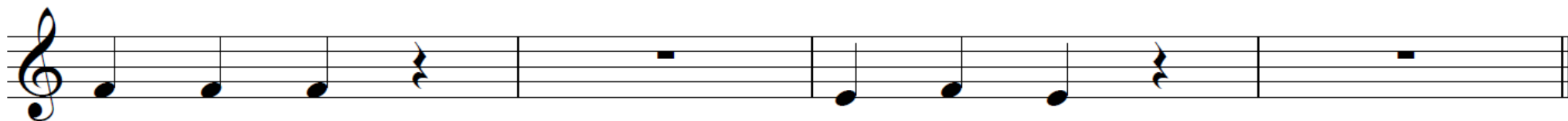
E F E

E F E



F F F

E F E



Three Little Birds (CCC)

ccc

ccc



ccc

ccc



Three Little Birds

(Bb instruments)

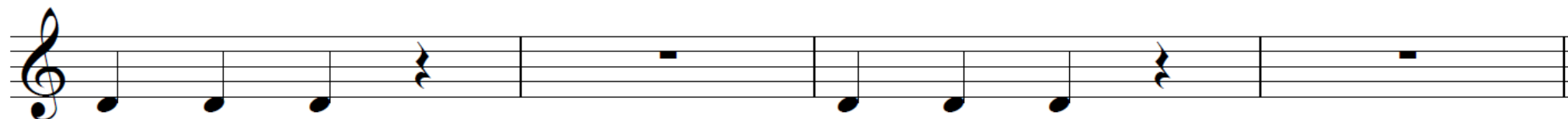
D D D

D D D



D D D

D D D



Three Little Birds

(counter-melody)

1 2 C D C G E D C 1 2 C D C G E D C



count to 8

1 2 C D C G E D C



Three Little Birds

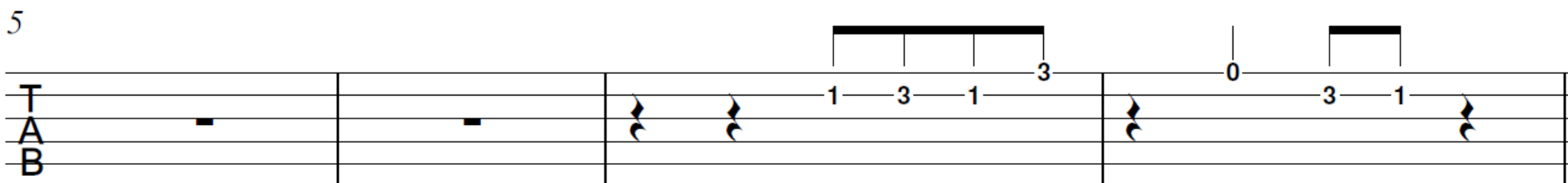
(counter-melody)

1 2 C D C G E D C 1 2 C D C G E D C



count to 8

1 2 C D C G E D C



Three Little Birds

(counter-melody adv)

C D C G

E D C

C D C G

E D C



A A A A A

A A Bb A G

C D C G

E D C



Three Little Birds

(ukulele chords)

C

Don't worry about a thing

F

C

Because every little thing is gonna be alright

C

Singin' don't worry about a thing

F

C

Because every little thing is gonna be alright