

# Chicken Reel

Teacher Resources

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Information



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Activity 5 Learn

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## Chicken Reel

Composer: Joseph M. Daly arr. Leroy Anderson.

Genre: Dance Music

### Introduction

Chicken Reel is a dance tune, composed and published in 1910, with words by Joseph Mittenenthal added shortly after that. Along with Turkey in the Straw, it has become part of modern American folk music and has been used in many animated cartoons. There are many versions: for guitar, for fiddle, for orchestra, as a song. Nearly all include the imitation of chicken sounds.

The orchestral version, arranged by Leroy Anderson, is the one that is part of the Animal Kingdom concert presented by the TSO, and is the basis for the first activity. Search “Chicken Reel Leroy Anderson” and choose your version.

Note: the rooster crow just before the end is done by a clarinet player using just the mouthpiece.

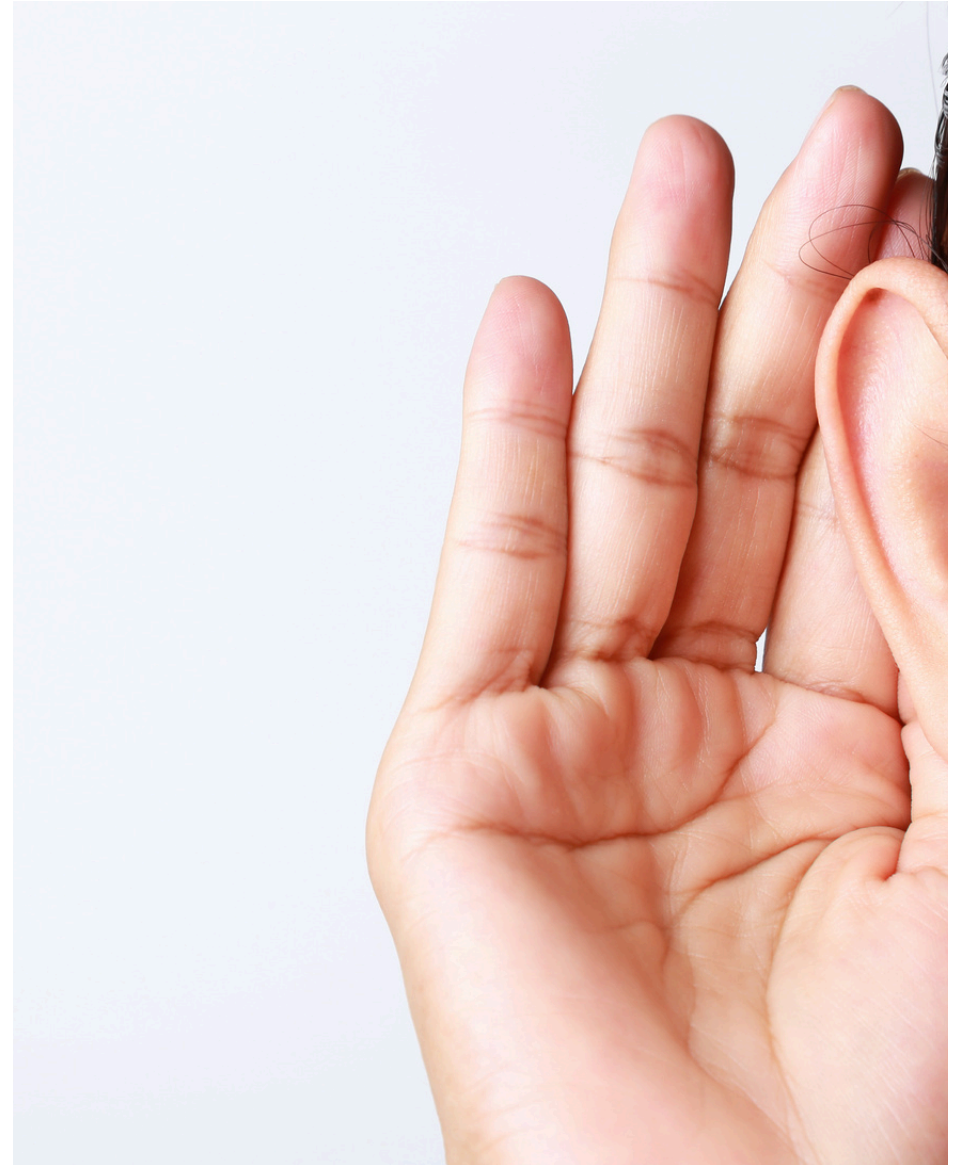




Play the music without telling students anything about it.

- Ask them to describe aspects of the music – instruments they can identify, tempo (speed) of the music, rhythm, character (mood).
- Ask where they might they hear music like this and why? What does it remind them of?
- Tell students its name and lead a discussion about what characteristics of a chicken the music might be describing.
- Compile a list of adjectives that describe the music.
- Listen again to the music. Is it a good description of what a chicken does?
- What aspects of the music help to achieve this?

**[Click here to listen to Chicken Reel](#)**





Use the link to the piano version of [Chicken Reel linked here](#) and learn the moves below. During the other sections, students could add body percussion patterns while keeping their feet still. Hands should be waist level or higher, so that elbows stick out like chicken wings.

### DANCE STEPS AND COUNTS

The overall Sequence pattern is Introduction, A, A, B, B, A, Bridge, C, C, A, Ending

**INTRODUCTION:** (8 counts)  
Tap R foot 8 times.

**“A” SEQUENCE** (32 counts)

A1: Grapevine R 8 steps, then L 8 steps

A2: Strut forward 8 steps, R foot first, then backward 8 steps, R foot first

Repeat “A” SEQUENCE

**“B” SEQUENCE** (32 counts)

B1: Star R (4 counts), Star L (4 counts)

B2: Forward Touch R (4 counts), back and stomp (4 counts), Forward Touch L, back and stomp

Repeat “B” SEQUENCE

Repeat “A” SEQUENCE

BRIDGE (8 counts) Tap L foot 8 times.

**C” SEQUENCE** (32 counts)

C1: R Together Turn (8 counts), L Together Turn (8 counts)

C2: Toe Touch and stamp (R first, then L)

Repeat “C” SEQUENCE

Repeat “A” SEQUENCE

Ending (4 counts): Bow (2 counts), clap clap (with music)

### Step description

Grapevine R: Sidestep R, L foot crosses in front of R, sidestep R, L foot crosses behind R.

Grapevine L: Sidestep L, R foot crosses in front of L, sidestep L, R foot crosses behind L

Strut: Step heel forward on 1st beat, toe touches ground on 2nd beat.

Moving backwards, toe touches the ground first, then heel

Star: One foot toe tap forward, side, back, together; repeat with other foot  
Forward, Touch, Back and Stomp: step nominated foot forward, touch other together, 3 steps back and stomp on 4th count

Right Together Turn: Step R, bring left beside it, ¼ turn (90°) R foot and repeat 3 times until facing the front again.

Left Together Turn: Step L, bring right beside it, ¼ turn (90°) L foot and repeat

3 times until facing the front again.

Toe Touch and stamp: Tap toe in front and bring foot back in place (R, L, R or L, R, L), then hitch other knee.



## Create a Sound Picture

Have students think about where they might find chooks (or other types of poultry) create a sound picture (soundscape) of that environment, make a graphic score of it and perform the work for the class.

A score, graphic or conventional, shows what sounds are happening together and in what sequence, what the sound source is, how long the sound lasts and how loud it is. It should be possible for each group to perform the work of all the other groups, with fair accuracy and similarity of interpretation.

**Use the following example to teach students how to create a soundscape and a score using a familiar environment (such as a classroom):**

- List all the sounds you're likely to be able to hear. Group them according to whether they are continuous (such as the hum of an air-conditioner), intermittent but repeated (for example traffic noise), occasional or one-off sounds (a sneeze, the bell for the start of lunch, a PA announcement).
- Draw a large oblong (landscape orientation) on the whiteboard. The horizontal axis is time passing, starting from the left-hand edge.
- Devise a symbol for each sound and decide how it will be made. What sound sources are available? Think about classroom instruments, found sounds, body percussion, voices. (Hint: avoid having continuous sounds being made by anything breath-controlled!)
- Place the symbols for continuous sounds all along the bottom edge so that each one lasts for the whole length of the piece. Then place the symbols for the other sounds at appropriate places above the continuous sounds. Agree on a way to indicate the relative volumes for each sound; perhaps by size, or by adding a dynamic marking (in music, f=loud, p=soft).
- The Key (or Legend) for your graphic score should indicate what each symbol represents which sound and which sound source will be used for each.
- Allocate sound sources to students and have them perform the piece. Keep it together by moving a ruler or pointer from left to right along the score, aiming to cover the distance in about 1 minute.





## Extension Activity - What is the Structure?

**Target: Grade 5-6+**

The overall Sequence pattern in the first half of the music is: Introduction, A, A, B, B, A, Bridge, C

Explain to the class that music, like a building, has a structure to it. Each section is identified by a name or letter such as Introduction, Section A, Section B etc. Each section differs from another in the use of instruments, type of tune, volume, tempo, the type of accompaniment used and sometimes even the key of the music.

Often sections repeat a number of times, but to keep the music interesting a composer will make some small changes, like varying the number of instruments playing, having the tune in a higher or lower register, adding different parts to the accompaniment or just changing the volume.

Listen to the piece and identify the main features of each section. Focus on instruments, volume, speed of the music and if there are many or a few instruments playing.



Section	What do you hear?
Introduction	Full orchestra
A	Flute has the tune
A1	
B	
B repeats	
A3	
Bridge	<u>Similar to the</u>
C	

Now listen to the whole work. What happens next?



## Cross Curricular Activities

This kind of music, particularly played on fiddles (violins), is very popular in the part of the USA called Appalachia. Find out more about Appalachia and the country lifestyle associated with it.

Show your students this video of a Barnyard Dance:

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH.](#)

List all the verbs related to dance steps and have students demonstrate what they think is meant. Make another list of words that describe the energy of the music and then have students make their own poem using those words.

Make a class display of named, coloured images of as many breeds of chickens as you can (Rhode Island Reds, Buff Orpingtons, Silver-laced Wyandottes ...). The display could include information about each as well as the image.

