

A look back at events you have taken part in on the South Bank



Striking distance: PlanetDrum tutor Alain Maurel demonstrates stick technique; (below) a participant finds the groove

the room filled with a rhythmical noise. The six new drummers were grinning from ear to ear as it dawned on them that they were the ones making the music. 'It was absolutely brilliant and inspiring,' said first-time stickswoman Sarah Gem. 'My adrenalin was sky-high – I felt connected with the whole group because of us all playing the rhythms together.'

Matters became more complex in the intermediate class as a workmanlike Pocock concentrated on technique and playing on the beat, and then off it, to a riveted group who went through the exercises with looks of intense concentration. 'We'll have a little jam,' said Pocock once the group had mastered the pop and Latin grooves. Again, an earthy, funky beat resonated round the room, backed by Maurel and Schmitt on congas and hand-drums. A bunch of hip-hop kids outside the windows danced madly. 'Yeah. Brilliant,' nodded Pocock, and everyone's exhilarated faces showed they were in complete agreement.



In with a BANG!

With expert guidance from the PlanetDrum tutors at the Rhythm Sticks festival, even a complete percussion novice was able to find a funky beat, as Tina Jackson discovers

Hitting things with sticks for a living must be quite therapeutic because it would be hard to find a more chilled-out, friendly trio than Alain Maurel, Mirko Schmitt and Louis Pocock, the drum tutors from PlanetDrum, one of London's finest drum and percussion schools. Beneath their laid-back attitude lurks serious musicianship which results in high-quality teaching. PlanetDrum founders Maurel and Schmitt number MC Lyte, Michael Ball, The Prodigy, Missy Elliott and the Lilith Fair on their CVs. As the participants discovered in their day of drum-kit workshops – part of the Rhythm Sticks festival – learning to

work your way around a set of drums is demanding but also enormous fun.

First up were the beginners, who looked terribly excited and slightly nervous. Carefully and enthusiastically Maurel worked them through the basics: what the kit consists of, how to hold the sticks so that they become an extension of the arm, how to sit. Then it was straight into hitting the snare, bass and cymbal to a count, with Maurel gently but firmly building up both the students' confidence and the insistent rhythm.

Gradually gaining in courage, the participants quickly mastered the ability to do different things with three limbs, and

Round the word

RFH maps to hand, young children take up the Literacy Trail

The Royal Festival Hall is well-known as a hive of creativity, but this autumn its own geography will be used to spark children's imaginations and encourage them to read, write and consider how to make the most of words.

The Literacy Trail, an attractive, colour-coded leaflet, uses various RFH landmarks to trigger young people's creativity. The

project is the brainchild of RFH Education and created by four South London primary school teachers and the writer Malaika Rose Stanley.

Children follow a map in the form of a leaflet with questions designed to create starting points for stories, poems and activities related to what's happening on the different levels of the building. Sample question: 'Find the Voice Box. How many different ways can you use your voice?'

Although the Trail, which involves writing, drawing and listening, is aimed at five- to 11-year-olds, older children will also be able to enjoy some of the areas it explores and a vital point of the Trail is that it can be picked up at any point round the building.

Beverley Russell Burke, a Level Six teacher at Hillmead Primary School with a particular interest in children's literacy, is one of the contributing teachers. 'The RFH has so much going on that it's ideal to stimulate ideas and discussion,' she says. 'It's important to make learning fun. The RFH isn't school, but there's so much learning to be had just by being there. The key to the Literacy Trail is that it stimulates children's imaginations, and encourages them to read books. Imagination enriches a child's entire life.' TJ

Literacy Trail leaflets can be picked up in the Royal Festival Hall Main Foyer. To further explore children's literature, visit the Imaginarium installation at the RFH Ballroom from 9 Oct-9 Nov.