

Make a Marimba, Play a Marimba!

Let's make a homemade marimba to use in your classroom and learn some basic techniques and styles of playing the marimba.

A Marimba Piece - Orff Style

See Dees (*from Wood Songs by Brent M. Holl*)

Aim:

- Reinforcement of advanced mallet technique.
- Incorporation of text and rhythm.
- Introduction to the Lydian Mode.

Process:

- Review basic mallet technique, holding, alternation.
- Play low F first on half notes, then quarter, then eighth, then 16th. then the reverse.
- Change pattern to first two measures of See Dees.
- Learn last two measures and ending (advanced version: double the rhythm).
- Add the Jingle Bells.
- Add the whip.
- Add the "upside down" bordun (the bass drone is "understood").

Extension:

- Add a B section.
- Temple block plays straight eighth notes.
- Make a rap song out of the following text: adapted from: *Our Show* -Jack Prelusky, From Sweet & Silly Poems, (A Muppet Press /Golden Press Book)

*Our show should be terrific, We practice all week long,
But when the curtain rises, Almost everything goes wrong.*

*Sometimes the show is awful, Sometimes it's even worse;
It hardly ever seems to go The way that we rehearse.*

*The jokes are all forgotten And the band sounds really weird;
Half the cast is missing And the props have disappeared.*

*The dialogue is backward, Someone tumbles on his face.
The stage is in a shambles, It's an absolute disgrace.*

*Our bows are really clumsy, It's a really sad display,
But since we do the best we can It's probably OK!*

*When the week is finally over, It is wonderful to go
And putter in my garden Where I watch the flowers grow!*

SEE DEES

BRENT M. HOLL

The first system of the musical score consists of five staves. From top to bottom, they are labeled: SOPRANO XYLOPHONE, ALTO XYLOPHONE, SINGLE BELLS, WHIP, and BASS XYLOPHONE. All staves are in the treble clef with a common time signature (C). The Soprano and Bass Xylophone parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Alto Xylophone part consists of chords. The Single Bells and Whip parts have a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes.

The second system of the musical score consists of five staves. From top to bottom, they are labeled: SX, AX, SING. BLS., WHIP, and BX. All staves are in the treble clef with a common time signature (C). The SX and BX parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The AX part consists of chords. The SING. BLS. part has a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The WHIP part has a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The system is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure is marked with a '3' above it, the second with a '1', and the third with a '2'. The third measure ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

A Marimba Piece - African Style

Abudah (from Wood Songs by Brent M. Holl)

What's New:

- Learn a basic syncopated pattern as a generator for melody
- Reinforce mallet technique advancing to 16th note rhythms
- Learn to shift from an A section to a B section
- Learn about double stops
- Learn a basic Shakere pattern as accompaniment

Process:

- Learn the SX A section first.
 - ♩ Use imitation first, then show the notation for the syncopated pattern.
 - ♩ Break down the arpeggio pattern in the last two measures and learn using a visual.
- Learn the SX B section.
 - ♩ Emphasis is on precision with 16th notes.
 - ♩ Learn to shift from the A section to the B section.
 - ♩ Make sure the form is learned well. (How many times is the 2 measure motif repeated in the B section?)
- Learn the CBX part.
 - ♩ Emphasize the basic syncopated pattern that everyone learned in the SX part.
 - ♩ Learn the B section, noting that the rhythm has shifted to straight 8's.
 - ♩ Combine with Soprano part and work till secure.
- Learn the BX part.
 - ♩ Click sticks together on the rests.
 - ♩ Add the two syncopated measures, noting the use of double stops, and the straight 8 ending.
- Learn the two alto parts.
 - ♩ Note the similarity in rhythm to the soprano part.
 - ♩ Spend some time breaking down the double stop rhythm.
- Learn a basic Shakere accompaniment pattern.



ABUDAH

A

BRENT M. HOLL AND TRAVIS WILLS

Musical score for the first system of 'ABUDAH'. It consists of five staves: Soprano Xylophone, Alto Xylophone 1, Alto Xylophone 2, Bass Xylophone, and Contrabass Xylophone. The music is in 3/4 time and features a melodic line in the soprano and alto xylophones, a bass line in the bass xylophone, and a contrabass line in the contrabass xylophone.

Musical score for the second system of 'ABUDAH', starting at measure 4. It consists of five staves: SX, AX 1, AX 2, BX, and CBX. The SX staff continues the melodic line from the first system. The AX 1 and AX 2 staves play chords. The BX staff plays a bass line. The CBX staff plays a contrabass line.

7

all except last time

last ending

8

11

A Marimba Piece - Aussie Style

Grace and Favor by Jon Madin (from his book, *Marimba Music 1*)

What's New:

- Incorporating other instruments into the marimba ensemble
- Learning chords and chord changes
- Making melodies from simple 5 note patterns

Process:

- Establish the key of C.
- Ask for 5 note melodies going up and down.
- Keep working till you find: CDEFG; FEDCB; and ABCDE.
- Put on a cadence, add a repeat and final cadence and play the whole thing.
- Add a bass part, working from the descending 5 note scale: CBAGF.
- Add the cadence: GCG.
- Add chords with marimbas, guitars, recorders, or any other available instruments.
- Add the B section. Note the contrast to the 5 note scale patterns and the single note repeated 5 times.

Marimba Making at Crystal Spring Elementary Fall - 2008

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The Project:

The assigned task was to make one 3 1/2 octave marimba and one bass marimba at Crystal Spring Elementary School with the help music teacher, Gretchen Jensen, and the students from Grades K - 5. The school PTA provided the funding for the project. These marimbas were designed by Jon Madin, author of the books: *Marimba Music 1* and *2*.

The older students worked on tuning the tone bars using a mallet and wood chisel, while the younger students did the sanding and smoothing. We worked on the marimbas a total of four days with each marimba taking two days to complete. The frame and resonator pipe modules were made with parent help in a local wood shop. They were assembled and mounted at the school. Ms Jensen decorated the frames and pipe modules with assistance from the school's art teacher. The goal of the marimba making activity was to let the students help make the marimbas, to observe the assembly process and finally learn to play them!

The Process:

An essential part of the project was to find a parent woodworker able to do the complicated task of measuring and cutting each tone bar to the required length, thickness and width. Our carpenter/parent also adapted and built the frame. Mr. Holl and Ms Jensen built, tuned, and mounted the tube resonator modules.

The students were able to tune the bars with hammer and chisel and get them reasonably close to the correct tuning. Some fine tuning by Mr. Holl and Ms. Jensen finished each tone bar. We used an electronic tuner.

The students took to their task with great enthusiasm. Mr. Holl had them go off in groups of two with each pair working on one bar. As they worked they would go to the electronic tuner and check the tuning of the bar. Mr. Holl helped them determine how far up or down in pitch they had to go and where to cut next. As each bar was finished it was mounted on the marimba frame. It was great fun to watch the marimbas slowly grow into complete instruments. Of course, the students played the new bars to see what they would sound like, which only added to their desire to finish the instruments and "get to the music."

Younger students were not asked to use the hammers and chisels but were able to sand and smooth the bars. Third graders were allowed to try the mallet and chisel with the help of Mr. Holl. Each student practiced making small "chips." The Fourth and Fifth grade students were able to work with the mallet and chisel independently.

The two marimbas were built with materials available at local hardware and auto parts stores. We used paduak wood for the marimba bars and white pine for the frames. The bass resonator tubes were made from thin walled 3" and 4" S&D PVC Drain pipe and the marimba tubes from 2 1/2" and 2" PVC pipe.

Credits:

Marimba Music 1 - Simple arrangements for diatonic marimbas, xylophones and other instruments by Jon Madin. © Jon Madin, 1994.

Wood Songs - Ensemble pieces for xylophones and marimbas grades 4 - 8 by Brent Holl. © 2003 Brent M. Holl. All rights reserved. Beatin' Path Publications, Ltd. 302 East College Street, Bridgewater VA. 22812.

Other Marimba resources:

Ensemble - Easy and intermediate pieces for Orff Ensemble Grades 4 - 8 by Brent Holl. © 2002 Brent M. Holl. All rights reserved. Beatin' Path Publications, Ltd. 302 East College Street, Bridgewater VA. 22812.

Hot Marimba and Marimba Mojo - Zimbabwean-style music for Orff instruments by Walt Hampton. © 1998 Walt Hampton/World Music Press. World Music Press, PO Box 2565 Danbury CT 06813.

Behind Bars - Percussion ensembles for young musicians by Mari Schay. © 2006 Woodsprites Publishing, Portland Oregon. woodsprites@qwest.net

Wooden Voices - Twelve original works for marimba ensemble, beginning to advanced by Eric Schopmeyer, Adrienne Leverette, Rebekah Phillips, and Lars Campbell. © 2006 Woodsprites Publishing, Portland Oregon. woodsprites@qwest.net

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