

# Marimba Music 1

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**By Jon Madin**

**Easy arrangements  
for diatonic marimbas,  
Xylophones, recorders  
and other instruments**



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# Introduction

This is a collection of pieces either composed or adapted for diatonic marimbas, xylophones, recorders and other instruments. In choosing these pieces, simplicity in at least one or two parts was a priority in order to make the music accessible to groups of mixed musical ability.

All of these pieces have been played successfully in situations ranging from primary and secondary school workshops to community groups and festival sessions.

Adaptations are often necessary - a simpler version of a piece, eg., using only the first half of the melody or only the ostinatos and some percussion, can still sound great. A few more challenging pieces and variations have been included - there are usually some accomplished musicians in any group.

My approach is to use simple music as a vehicle for a successful group musical experience.



Andy Rigby, Jon Madin, and Martin Tucker

# Marimbas

Marimbas are xylophones with a deeper range of notes.

The diatonic marimbas for which these arrangements are intended developed from instruments that Andy Rigby played in Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Initially we made a set of marimbas based on the African instruments. I then combined a soprano and tenor xylophone into one 3.5 octave marimba similar to the long Central American multi-player marimbas and designed a box resonator for it.

This configuration has proved suitable for construction by people with only basic wood-working skills and in school working-bee situations.

***Make Your Own Marimbas*** (Jon Madin) is an illustrated guide for making 3-player box and pipe-resonated marimbas, a bass marimba and a 13-note mini-marimba.

***Make Your Own Wacky Instruments*** (Jon Madin) has instructions for making various percussion instruments which sound good with marimbas. Plastic barrel drums, shaker rings and cassettaraccas are especially suitable.



# Teaching Hints

This book should be used in conjunction with the CD. As well as demonstrating the melodies, bass lines, etc., you can also gauge appropriate playing styles, moods, arrangements and instrumentation possibilities better than from this book alone.

Keep in mind also that tunes like **Boris**, **Catchbottle**, and the **Drumcondra Waltz** make effective pieces with only the first half played repeatedly. The second half could be tackled by more advanced players, resulting in a verse/chorus effect. **Chopsticks** sounds good like this at festivals. Everyone can manage the first half - only a few the second.

You can teach these tunes by playing a short section (singing the note names at the same time) and asking the players to copy you. Add more sections, then try the whole line. Mix in the bass, middle and percussion parts, and you have the basis of a piece of music.

The next step is to make the piece more interesting and expressive for the performers.

Here are some suggestions, using the piece **Catchbottle** as an example.

1. Conduct the piece using dynamics and tempo as the variables.
2. Let one of the players be the conductor.
3. Using prearranged signals, feature different parts of the band as the piece is being played, e.g., bass players only, followed by bass and percussion, then by everyone.
4. Try 2-bar 'breaks.' At the start of bar 8 of **Catchbottle** blow a whistle 4 times (on the crotchet beats). That's a signal for everyone to play a C, G, or their percussion instrument once, then leave the rest of the two bars silent before playing on the first beat again. During these breaks, try solos on particular instruments (especially percussion) and improvisation. Another signal starts everyone playing again.
5. Use alternative instrumentation, keyboard sounds, recorders, etc.
6. Make up songs to fit the music. Workshop the song in small groups, perhaps with a theme in mind.
7. Make up a dance to fit the music. I often use only the



first 8 bars to **Catchbottle** (with whistle breaks) as dance music. An example of dance is having alternating leaders make up actions the others then copy. The breaks then lend themselves to interesting 'freezes.'

## Recorders

Recorders and keyboards can provide excellent timbral contrast to the marimbas and other percussion in these arrangements. For each piece I have indicated which lines are suitable and whether the standard required is easy or advanced.



# CATCHBOTTLE

By Jon Madin

## AGE RANGE

8 and up.

## REMOVE BARS?

Melody players can remove F's and B's.

## PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

Bass players can clap their rhythm before playing it.

## RECORDER

Yes. The melody could be played with 2 groups of players. Descant recorders play the first 2 bars, treble recorders the second. Both groups could play the 2nd half of the melody. The whistle part can be played an octave lower.

## EXTENSIONS

Using whistle signals, try the "Catchbottle Spin."

The musical score for 'Catchbottle' is presented in four systems. Each system includes a Melody line (treble clef), a Middle line (treble clef), and a Bass line (bass clef). The first system has a 4/4 time signature and features a melody of quarter and eighth notes, a middle part of quarter notes, and a bass line with rests and quarter notes. Chords C and G are indicated below the bass line. An 'Alternative Melody' line is shown below the bass line, consisting of whole rests. The second system continues the melody and middle parts, with a bass line including chords C, G, F, Am, and G. It also includes an 'Alternative Melody' line. The third system is for the Tambourine, with two staves. The top staff shows rhythmic patterns with stems, and the bottom staff shows 'Thump' and 'Bang' symbols corresponding to the patterns. The score is watermarked with 'Beatin' Path Publications'.

Melody

Middle

Bass

F Am G

Alternative Melody

Melody

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Catchbottle Spin". It consists of five staves. The first three staves are labeled "Melody", "Middle", and "Bass". The "Bass" staff includes chord symbols: F, Am, and G. The fourth staff is labeled "Alternative Melody". The fifth staff is labeled "Melody". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The music is divided into measures, with some measures containing rests or specific rhythmic markings.



Doing the "Catchbottle Spin" at Kyneton Primary School.

All the parts of this piece are moderately easy.

I teach the melody as 4 crotchets, then a semibreve, and with the 6th bar the same as the 2nd and 4th. Rhythmic and melodic details can come later.

The middle line players should hold one beater the wrong way round. Every second beat (marked on the score with an accent) will have a sharper timbre, especially if the beater hits over the end of the tone-bar. This effect works well with 12mm dowel beaters - probably not with thinner types.

There is an alternative B part melody, played here on the tin whistle. Recorder or flute would be fine.

Note where the whistle signal is marked in bar 8. Its explanation is in the introduction, as are other suggestions for this piece.

Students at Kyneton invented the "Catchbottle Spin." During a whistle 'break,' the players spin around once, clacking their beaters as they go.

# THE ROCKING DOGS

Jon Madin

## AGE RANGE

10 and up.

## REMOVE BARS?

B, E, and F can be taken out to make the bass simpler if required.

## PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

Practice the riff of the second section - slowly in quarters first, then add the dotted rhythm, and speed it all up gradually.

## RECORDERS

Yes, on the first and third sections especially.

## EXTENSIONS

Add lots of percussion to Sections 2 and 3.

The first section would be enhanced with rainsticks, finger cymbals, soft shakers, etc.

Melody *Rolling Section*

*p*  
Ostinato

*p*  
Bass Am

Melody <sup>9</sup>

*f*  
Bass C Am

*f*  
Perc. Bang

Thump

Melody <sup>13</sup> **D.C. al Fine**

Bass D G D G

Perc.

Detailed description: The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes a Melody line (treble clef, 4/4 time) with a 'Rolling Section' of chords, an Ostinato line (treble clef, 4/4 time) with a rhythmic pattern, and a Bass line (bass clef, 4/4 time) with a rhythmic pattern and 'Am' chord. The second system includes a Melody line (treble clef, 4/4 time) starting at measure 9, a Bass line (bass clef, 4/4 time) with 'C' and 'Am' chords, and a Percussion line (bass clef, 4/4 time) with 'Bang' and 'Thump' notes. The third system includes a Melody line (treble clef, 4/4 time) starting at measure 13, a Bass line (bass clef, 4/4 time) with 'D' and 'G' chords, and a Percussion line (bass clef, 4/4 time) with rhythmic notes. The score concludes with 'D.C. al Fine'.

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