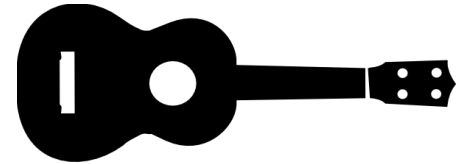


STRING BAND: TEACHING KIDS TO SING AND PLAY

a workshop for CASMEC 2018

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Teaching students in elementary school to sing in parts can be a challenge. Young singers often have trouble singing in tune without something to match pitch with.

By adding ukuleles to choral music instruction and requiring that all students sing AND play, we put a tool for matching pitch into their hands. Ukuleles also illustrate intervallic relationships, including the all important *do-so* and *so-mi-la* combinations very nicely. And playing and singing at the same time gets kids feeling like rock stars!

Wee Willie Winkie

This *so-mi-la* tune is from *Volume I, Music for Children* by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, but also any *so-mi-la* song will do, provided it is in C.

Speak, then sing the words to “Wee Willie Winkie.” Develop some accompanying movement.

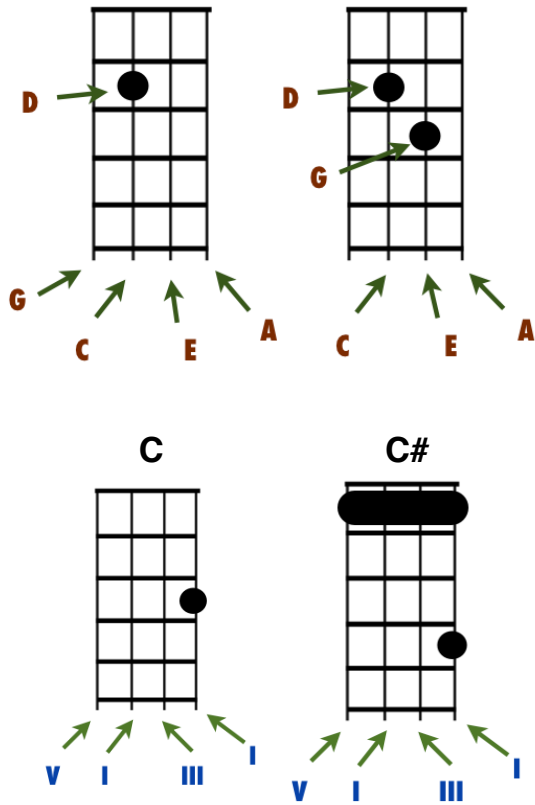
For measures 5 and 6 add a four beat clapping improv in response to “rapping at the window” and a four beat vocalization in response to “crying at the lock.”

Transfer this understanding to the ukuleles by playing the song on the open 4, 2, and 1 strings. Teach the melody using solfege or by singing the string names, as in “4 - 2/2 - 4 - 2 - 4 - 2/2 - 4”

Have students play and sing in pairs. Switch partners by “running through the town.”

4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1

G C E A G C E A



Using the ukulele for vocal warm ups

Although the ukulele is easiest to use as a chord-producing instrument, developing a few simple picking patterns on individual notes is a very useful thing to do.

The uke contains 4 of the 5 notes of the C major pentatonic scale: *do* (C), *mi* (E), *sol* (G), *la* (A).

By adding *re* (D) as shown, or *re* and *sol* on the second string (some find this pattern easier to play) teachers and students can add individual notes to their arrangements while developing their ability to recognize pitches and intervals.

In the same way, your favorite vocal warm-up exercises can be learned in C and then played in any key, by using the pointer finger to “bar” across all four strings.

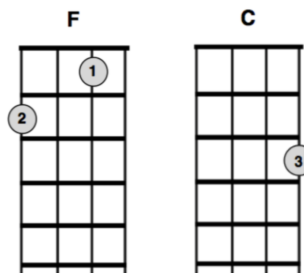
Los Niños En España Cantan

traditional song from Mexico

Using the ukulele with solfege

C is not an ideal key for young singers, but F is.

By moving *do* to F we can create some lovely accompaniment — instrumental, vocal, or both — for this traditional round from Mexico.



Simple Gift

Traditional

Tis' the **(F)** gift to be simple
 Tis' the gift to be free
 Tis' the **(C)** gift to come down where you ought to be
 And **(F)** when we find ourselves in the place just right
 T'will **(C)** be in the valley of **(F)** love and delight

When true simplicity is gained
 To bow and to bend we **(C)** shant be ashamed
 To **(F)** turn, turn will be our delight
 Til by **(C)** turning, turning we **(C)** come 'round right

Strumming on 2 Chord Songs

Learning to strum and sing is a great way to illustrate chord changes and there are lots of great two chord folk songs. The key is to focus on the transitions. Use this progression:

- Play the transitions only
- Play the downbeat only
- Add up beats, then the shuffle beats — move on when the previous step can be played successfully
- All steps can be played on top of each other, making it possible for students at different levels of development to play together

Moving, strumming, and singing

Encouraging children to move while they play and sing is a good way to improve their proficiency at all three. Teaching in different modalities at the same time is a good practice anyway, as it encourages whole brain learning and integration of sensory information, and covers a wider range of multiple intelligences.

“Tideo” is a well known partner-switching game/dance. There are many examples online.

Students stand in concentric circles — everybody moving to the right on “pass one window” and pat-clap-patting on “ti-de-o,” while singing the song.

In this version the students also have ukuleles. Ask them to replace pat-clap-clap with down strokes on C and G as shown.

For the chorus they can work on their shuffle technique, while they do-si-do with their partners.

Tideo

Pass one window, ti - de - o

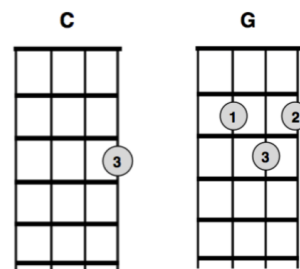
Pass two windows, ti - de - o

Pass three windows, ti - de - o

Jingle at the window, ti - de - o

C shuffle Tideo, tideo. Jingle at the window, ti - de - o

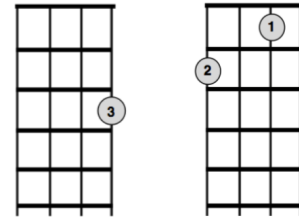
C shuffle Tideo, tideo. Jingle at the window, ti - de - o





THREE LITTLE BIRDS

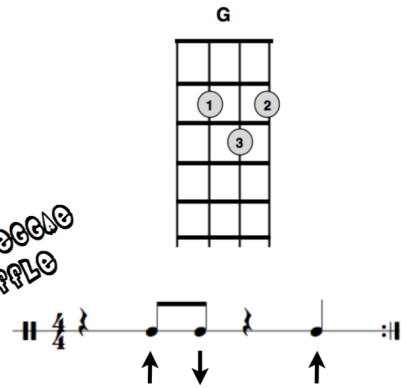
Bob Marley



A (C) Don't worry about a thing,
 'Cause (F) every little thing gonna be all (C) right.
 Singin': "Don't worry about a thing,
 'Cause (F) every little thing gonna be all (C) right!"

B Rise up this mornin',
 Smile with the (G) risin' sun,
 Three little (C) birds
 Pitch by my (F) doorstep
 Singin' (C) sweet songs
 Of melodies (G) pure and true,
 Sayin', (F) "This is my message to (C) you-ou-ou: "

BASIC REGGAE SHUFFLE

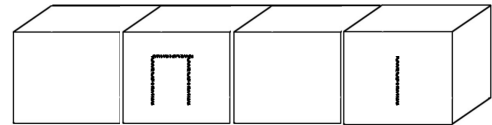


Playing and singing in a groove

The ultimate goal for general music education, whether it involves singing, playing, or dancing, is to get kids to internalize musical practices - to behave musically. Music with a sense of swing is particularly good for emphasizing the "groove."

The ukulele is also a percussion instrument, and so it can be used to teach more challenging swing rhythm patterns, such as reggae.

I use boxes with *tas* and *ti-tis* on them to illustrate the subdivision of the beat. Try configuring the boxes in different combinations, where the *tas* are down strokes and the *ti-tis* are down-up.



Eventually, let this morph into the *rest - ti-ti - rest - ta* shuffle pattern that runs through all reggae music..

Ask students to strum the pattern on C, then on F, then on G. It can be challenging at first, but once they lock into the groove, they tend to sing and play with real feeling!

There are even more 3 chord I-IV-V folk songs to chose from. Teaching students these five chords will enable kids to accompany themselves for shows, in the classroom, or just for fun.

