

Boomwhackers - The Big Bang for the Baby Budget

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I. Background and Overview

A. How they came to be...

1. Craig Ramsell, 1994; wrapping a gift; 3 foot long cardboard tube cut in two; started hitting stuff; liked the sound; got an idea; experimented with materials; 1998, Boomwhackers born.
2. Read the story at: boomwhackers.com/coolstuff/history.
3. Acquired by Rhythm Band in 2009.

B. Uses (Ranked by usefulness from my experience)

1. Prop for movement
2. Rhythmic instrument
3. Bass notes & Orff replacement - especially BX & CBB
4. Building chords
5. Composition
6. Handbell approach (melodies, harmonies)
7. Note reading
8. Play with mallets (Whack Pack)
9. Color coordinated note reading

C. Benefits

Inexpensive, easy to play, fairly durable if played properly, colorful, simple, fun, versatile (with octavator caps, basses and chromatics), ambidexterity, preparation for recorder songs.

D. Considerations

Tone quality, legato/staccato, storage (basses), fragile if not played properly, hand bell approach requires audiation skill, temptation to use visually not aurally, fixed “do” imprinted on tubes, kids not likely to have them at home, can’t play melodies by oneself very easily.

E. Technique & Care

Find the sweet spot, be gentle, explore ways to play (hand, knee, floor, click, slap, roll/tremolo).

F. Getting the Big Bang

Have enough sets (at least 3-4 sets of trebles), use octavator caps, get a set of basses with caps and 1-3/4” felt furniture pads, chromatics, extension set.

• Use Boomwhackers to help kids _____ music, not just learn _____ music!

II. Activities and Materials

A. “A Minor Melody” - Grade K-adult. The trickle up effect.

1. Concepts: Roll/tremolo; Am, G, Fmaj7 chords; form; beat keeping; locomotor movement; mirroring; echoing; audiation; rhythmic improvisation; broken bordun; note reading.
2. Boomwhackers as props, rhythmic instruments and Orff instrument substitute.
3. Boomwhacker movement activity (make circle).
 - a) Intro - Am roll in measures 5-8; V1 - teacher/leader taps BW 2 sets of 8 then changes, class mirrors; V2 - drums enter, walk 8 beats, tap BW wherever 8 times; B section (2 choruses) - 1st chorus, teacher/leader creates 1 measure echo patterns; 2nd chorus, create two measure echo patterns; V2 - walk 8 steps, rhythmic improvisation 8 beats.
4. Teacher or student led rhythmic echoing or solfege, partner games, circle games, rhythmic & melodic improvisation. Use solo accompaniment track to reinforce steady beat.

B. “B-A-G Lady” - Grade K-adult. Beatful and artful.

1. Concepts: form, steady beat, expression, crescendo, audiation, focused listening, locomotor movement.
2. Boomwhackers as props and rhythmic instruments.
3. “Shopping Cart” movement activity (can be done in a circle or as free movement).

- a) Make believe character (like Big Bird); begin as statue; **Intro** - come to life as drums get louder; **V1** - walk and waddle; **V2** - reach and grab; **Bridge** - tap BW's up high 2 sets of 8 beats, tap BW's down low 2 sets of 8 beats; **V1 & V2** as before; **end** as a statue - freeze!
- C. Building chord progression to "Twinkle, Twinkle" using I-IV-V chord - Grade 2- adult**
1. Use fingers, hand signs or colored cards from Boomwhacker website to indicate chords. Make certain students can sing melody.
 2. Play chord roots on bass BW's; C, F, and G7 chords on treble BW's.
- D. "VFX" - Grade 1 - up. Using BW's as props & rhythmic instruments.**
1. Concepts: Syncopated rhythm (syn-co-pa-ta-ta); artful, non-locomotor movement; 2 & 4 measure phrases; form (A, A, B, A); texture; dynamics; focused listening; timbre; changing chords; how music gets exciting (dynamics, texture, instrumentation); sopranino recorder/movement solo in V3.
 2. Process
 - a) Identify "sync-o-pa-ta-ta" rhythm and whole notes.
 - b) Tap rhythm w/right hand. Cross over on every whole note.
 - c) Identify the form: Intro, V1, V2, Bridge, V3, Coda. What builds excitement?
 - d) Optional: Create movement to highlight B section.
 - e) Optional: Play melody; identify chord progression.
 - f) Invite someone to move (dance) to the sopranino recorder solo in V3.
- E. "Hot Cross Buns" in G. Grade 3 - up. Let's have a band!**
1. Concepts: mi-re-do melody, harmony, form, I-V7 chords.
 2. Multiple uses of Boomwhackers: melody, harmony, chords, bass notes, rhythmic improvisation. Having an F# would be nice but not essential.
 3. Process
 - a) Sing melody with lyrics, solfege and note names. (B, A, G) - the lead singer.
 - b) Learn harmony the same way. (D, C, B up a third) - the backup singer.
 - c) Assign melody & harmony notes to BW's.
 - d) Two rows of students - melody seated, harmony stand behind (visual representation).
 - e) Sing twice - first time all sing & play melody, add harmony.
 - f) Learn chord progression (G & D7). Use homemade colored chord card.
 - g) Add BBW's to roots of chords - the bass player.
 - h) Build chords with treble BW's - the rhythm guitar/keyboard player.
 - i) Learn the coda: BBBB, AAAA, G.
 - j) Play along with accompaniment track from *Big Mouth Blues*.
- F. Stegosaurus - Learning the cowbell part - Boomwhackers as rhythm instruments**
1. From *Dinosaur Rap and Rondo*, by Jim Tinter
 2. Use the BW's to teach ALL your students the cowbell at the same time!
 3. Cowbell plays on beats 2 and 4. Anchor the part to the lyrics ("He's big, he's strong, etc.")
 4. After every word "stegosaurus," the cowbell plays two eighth notes instead of quarter note.
 5. Continue pattern until "He's nine feet tall..." (the V/IV chords), where you play on every beat for eight beats.
 6. Continue playing on beats 2 and 4 to end song.

References:

Suzuki, Shinichi. *Nurtured by Love*.

Recorder, jazz, choral, movement, and Boomwhacker materials by Jim Tinter:

A Minor Melody

B-A-G Bossa Nova

Big Mouth Blues

Dinosaur Rap and Rondo

Jingle Bells in 10 Flavors

VFX

This session partially sponsored by:

Web Resources:

recorderman.com

boomwhackers.com

