

The Short Guide to the 2B Kalimbas

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The 2B kalimbas are a line of kalimbas with magnets in them for attachment to an amplifier frame, made by the German kalimba maker Thomas Bothe.

These unique instruments are only available at Kalimba Magic. We carry the 2B/9 (9-Note kalimba), the 2B/9B (9 note with buzzers), 2B/14 (pictured above with resonator frame), and the 2B/14L (a larger 14 note kalimba).

2B Kalimba Tunings: Each 2B kalimba is created by Thomas Bothe with a unique tuning. Kalimba Magic has documented many of these tunings at the Thomas Bothe *Learn How to Play Kalimba* page:

<http://kalimbamagic.com/a2b>

When Kalimba Magic ships these marvelous little kalimbas, we will include a tuning diagram documenting the tuning the kalimba is in now, but you may also retune your kalimba. We recommend you have a tuner and a desired tuning printed out to refer to. Loosen the wing nuts by about half a turn. If you need to tune a tine to a higher note, gently but persistently push the tine in a bit (wiggling back and forth helps) to shorten the vibrating length. Play it and use the tuner to determine what note is being played. Repeat until you are within about 5 cents of the desired note. If you accidentally go too high, use something to push the back end of the tine to increase the vibrating length of the tine, lowering the note. Use something soft so that you don't scratch the wood. I use Jim Dunlop 1mm black guitar picks. After you have gotten the kalimba as you think it should be tune-wise, play a bit on it - does this tuning make sense? If not, can you isolate an incorrectly tuned tine? When it is as it should be, re-tighten the wing nuts by 1/2 turn, and verify the tuning. You may have to retune a few tines by 10 or 20 cents. For more info on tuning kalimbas in general, see:

<http://kalimbamagic.com/tuning>

Avoid screwing the wing nuts too tightly, as this can permanently bend the tines. If the wing nuts are too loose, you can have buzzing on the tines. While buzzing on the 2B kalimbas is rare when the wing nuts are properly-tightened, you may sometimes want to use the "paper trick" to stop a buzz (see "Fundamentals of the Kalimba" on the same "Learn How" web page).

2B Kalimba Playing Tips: Consider your kalimba to occupy two different "spaces" at once - the space of all notes on the lower row, and the space of all notes on the upper row. In most of Thomas Bothe's tunings the lower row and the upper row will both make a beautiful chord. You can hang out (ie, improvise with the notes) on just lower row notes for a time - how long is your choice, but I would say start out with four or eight beats, and then go to the upper row and hang out for the same length of time. Usually the lower row will define the dominant space, and the upper row will define an alternate chord away from that dominant space. There are many ways to make variations - leave out some of the notes on each row as you alternate between lower and upper; or change the length of time you stay on a row before switching to the other row; or change the rhythm you are playing. Try playing the same rhythm or thumb pattern on the lower and then upper rows. Then try to play with a "qus-

tioning” rhythm on one row, and then giving an “answering” rhythm on the other row. Next, try to understand how the two rows are related to each other. Adjacent tines on the upper and lower rows are sometimes an octave apart, or otherwise form a distinctive interval. Remember those connections. Look for chords or groups of notes that sound great together that include both upper and lower row tines, and when you find such a group, try to remember those tines and how they sound or how they make you feel.

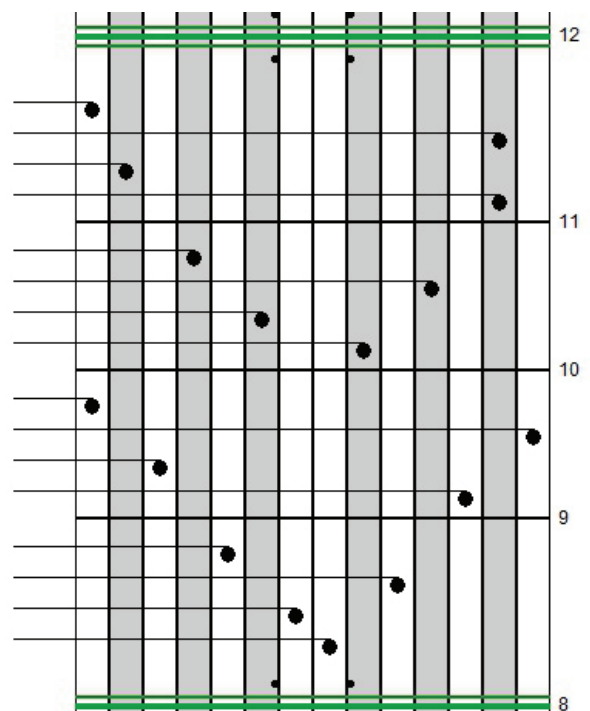
Some 2B tunings are straight scales. In these tunings, start on the lowest note and alternate left to right on the lower row tines to go up the scale. The scale will be continued on the longest of the upper row tines, again alternating left to right to successively shorter tines to ascend the scale. Straight scale tunings are more similar to the common Hugh Tracey Alto or Treble Kalimba tunings, and the “two space” model doesn’t result in such great music as it does in the more common “two space” 2B tunings.

Instructional Materials for select 2B kalimba tunings are available. The way it works: somebody with a particular tuning requests some instructional material. Usually I work for about an hour or two and charge them about \$30 for my work in creating music, scales, and chords in tablature notation for their particular kalimba tuning. These materials are also available for sale after they have been commissioned, for \$10. You will get several pages of exercises or music on tablature and MP3 files of what those exercises sound like.

The tablature to the right illustrates the sort of music that is included in these instructional materials for a 2B/14 kalimba. The upper row tines are in gray and the lower row tines are white columns. The first two measures use all lower row tines, and the second two measures use upper row tines plus one lower row tine. This music is repeated as a loop. Other musical variations are also offered.

The following 2B Kalimba Tunings have instructional materials:

- 2B/14 Eb Mixolydian
- 2B/14 F# minor Pentatonic
- 2B/14L Dorian 1
- 2B/14L Mixolydian 1



Magnets are embedded in the wood body of the 2B kalimbas, and little magnetic feet with the opposite pole exposed will snap tightly to the 2B kalimba body. These magnetic feet are used to bind the 2B kalimba to a resonator frame. Most people do not actually purchase the resonator frames, but you can use a variety of objects as resonators - cardboard boxes (such as the shipping box for these kalimbas), plastic leftover containers (tupperware or **Glad**), or even wooden craft boxes with very thin wood tops or bottoms (visit **Michaels** for these). If you lose a magnetic foot, Kalimba Magic does have a small supply of replacement feet, BUT Thomas Bothe’s batches of kalimbas have not always been of the same polarity (meaning the feet I have might be of the wrong polarity for your kalimba. Oops!

If your questions are not properly addressed here, you can always contact me at:

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