

Making a Treblito from a Treble



The 17 tines of a Treble Hugh Tracey kalimba are removed and reduced to nine to form a Treblito.

The Hugh Tracey Treble kalimba has 17 small tines and requires a great deal of dexterity to play. It is not an optimal instrument for taking spiritual music journeys. The Alto is better because the tines are larger and farther apart. However, you can go another step in that direction: if you take the 17 tines of a treble kalimba and remove every other one, you've got a simple instrument with 9 well-spaced small tines. The small tines are easy on your thumbs, and the extra space is easy on your whole being, making the instrument easy to play, permitting you to really let your body go and sort of let your mind drift high above the kalimba.



Step 1: Slip a knife or thin, strong piece of metal under the tines and between the bridge and the z-bracket. Grasping both ends of the knife, slowly push the bridge towards the end of the tines until the tines slip past the bridge and snap down on the kalimba wood. Be careful, this is one of the steps you could actually hurt your kalimba.



Step 2: Admire your work. The bridge has a metal rod on a wood bar, and they are held in place only by the tension of the tines pushing down. Likewise, the wood back stop at the head of the tines is also held in place by the tension of the tines. Now, any of these pieces could just fall away, but keep everything orderly for the following steps.

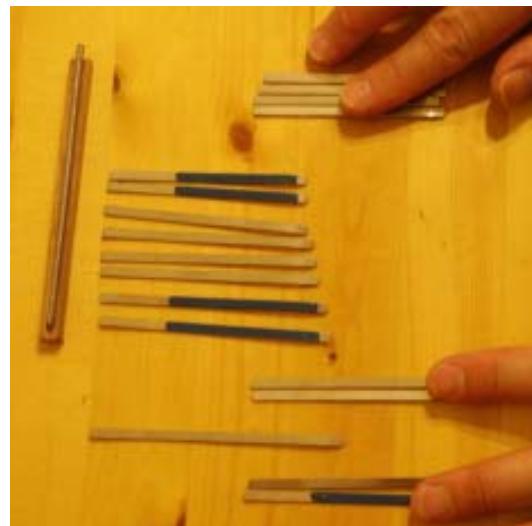
Step 3: remove the wood back stop. My tines finally went all over



Step 4: organize the tines by length.

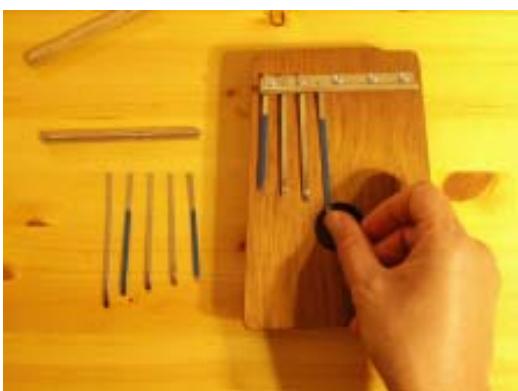


Step 5: There are 17 tines in all, and we want to have 9 in the end. We remove the 4 shortest tines and four of the five longest tines, and we will build the treblito from what is left. Save the 8 tines you aren't using in a plastic zip-lock bag with a note explaining that they go to a Treble kalimba.





Step 6: rearrange the tines with the longest in the middle, next longest to the immediate left, third longest to the immediate right, etc, and imagine how it will look when it is all back together.



Step 7: repopulate the tines on the kalimba, carefully putting them in the right spot. Note that every other gap in the z-bracket will have a kalimba tine, and the others will be empty.



Step 8: slip the back stop back under the upper parts of the tines. You may need to ease the tines on using one of the tines you are not going to use for the Treblito.



Step 9: reassemble the bridge from the wooden bar and the metal rod. Starting with the longest tines first, lift them up with a knife and ease them up onto the bridge. After each few tines is up on the bridge, nudge the bridge back towards the z-bracket so it is in position to get the next few tines up on the bridge.

Step 9 continued, lifting more tines up.

More Step 9: all of the tines are up on the bridge and the kalimba is again in essential tension. We are ready to push the bridge back up. How far? Experiment, go for what sounds good. Or before you take the treble apart, measure the distance between the z-bracket and the bridge.

Step 10: push the bridge back up into place using that butter knife again. This step requires some strength in your hands and fingers.

Step 11: while putting the treblito back together, pay special attention to the symmetry of the tines on the instrument. Aim for beauty.





Step 12: to finish up, make sure the Treblito is in tune. The tuning I use is:

Treblito Kalimba Tablature

This book does focus on spiritual and psychological issues, but it gets to those places through music, and as such, we do need to communicate some details musical information to you. One way is through the CD which comes along with the book. This CD typically has two different kinds of music -- examples of what the Treblito can or should do for a given exercise, but also a backing kalimba part which is played on a Hugh Tracey ALTO kalimba. This implicitly puts you into the framework of community, and acts as a placeholder until that day when you are able to be part of a kalimba community.

The other way that detailed musical information is communicated to you is through kalimba tablature. This kalimba tablature is basically a diagram of the Treblito kalimba with the tines stretched out. The notes you need to play are written on the tines. Unlike a regular music staff which runs across the page, the kalimba tablature runs up the page and so is parallel to the kalimba tine, which makes it easier to track the notes on paper as you play. The tab does run from bottom to top, and will take a little while to get accustomed to.