



Easy Christmas Carols on the 10-Note Kalimba



This is a DEMO Version of the
Easy 10-Note Christmas eBook.

You can [purchase the full download](#)

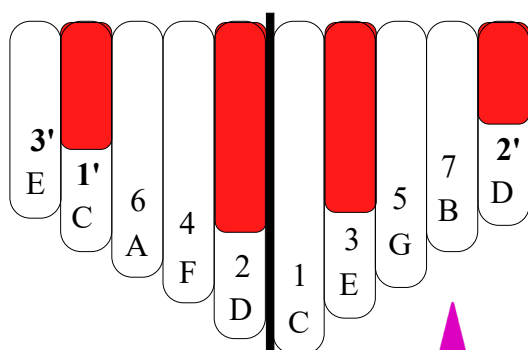
Mark Holdaway

Brighten Your Holidays with Christmas Carols on the Kalimba!

Christmas carols coming from the kalimba is one of my favorite things! The kalimba's sweet, soft and soothing sounds, like a nostalgic music box... carrying the tradition of beautiful Yuletide songs we all remember from our childhood. Add a little bit of your own expressive mojo, you have a music so simple, so pure, so beautiful, so delightful, that it can move hearts, heal minds and souls, and lift them up in joy.

Christmas music on the kalimba is quickly becoming a new holiday tradition for many around the world. This book brings remarkably full arrangements to the simple 10-Note kalimba, using a very easy change that reorients the existing notes but only requires slightly altering one of them.

C Tuning - 8 Carols To Play

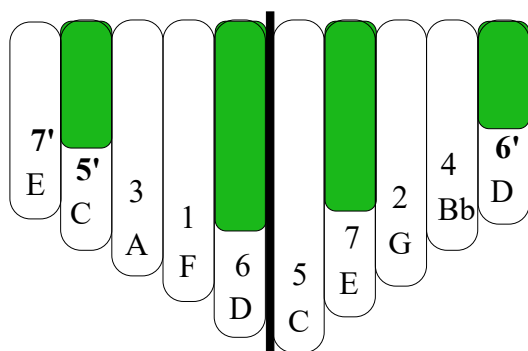


Any songs in Red tablature can be played in standard C major tuning.

The Green songs require F tuning.

You can put your kalimba into F with the simplest of all possible retunings - changing a single tine by a half step.

Retune just one tine



The other tines are unchanged, but you now interpret the F as the key note, and low C is the 5th.

Being able to reach that low 5th greatly expands the number of songs the 10-Note can play!

F Tuning - 20 Carols to Play



Watch me re-tune from C to F in 10 seconds.

Learn more about tuning:

kalimbamagic.com/tuning

DEMO Version
has intro material and
just these two songs.

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DEMO Version

Each Song is Rated by Difficulty - See Table of Contents

The book starts out with the 8 songs you can do in the standard C Tuning (red section), sorted into four different levels of difficulty. The second part of this book presents the songs in the F Tuning (in green), also sorted by the level of difficulty.

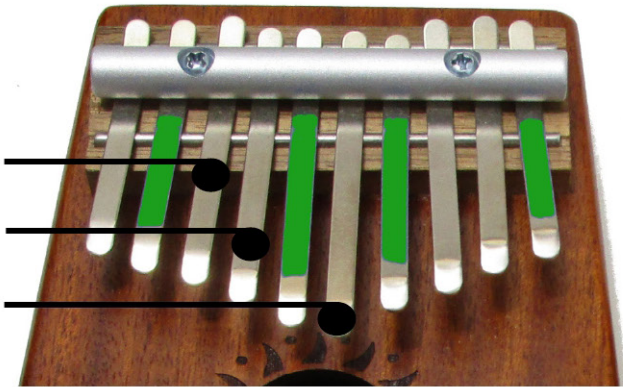
Level 1 - Generally has just the melody notes.

Level 2 - Harder melodies, and rhythms, two-note harmonies.

Level 3 - More complex rhythms, melodies with three-note chords.

Level 4 - Songs with four-note chords, more complex melodies, and counterpoint (two melodies).

Painted Tines



Four painted tines on the 10-Note are guideposts that help you navigate the kalimba and remember which tines to play.

The tablature also shows the same painted tines, and this will help you transfer the notes from tab to kalimba.

If your kalimba's tines are unpainted, you can use a Sharpie marker to mark your tines. Sharpie marker comes off with alcohol wipes if you want a "clean" look.

Kalimba Tablature

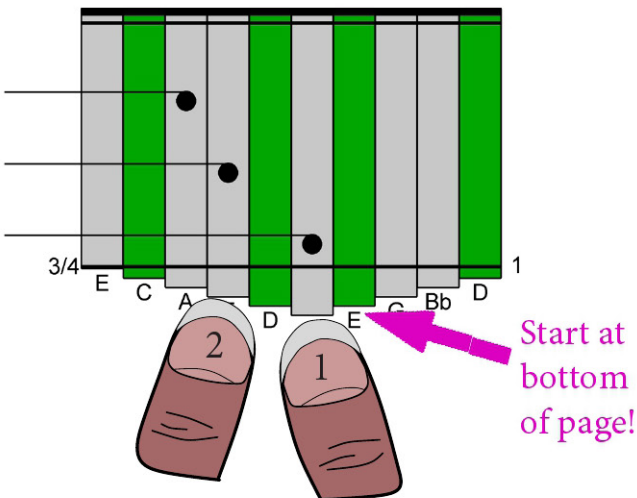
Kalimba tablature is a map of the kalimba, stretched up the page, with note symbols plopped down on the tines to show you which tines to play to accomplish a particular song.

Kalimba tablature reads from bottom up.

Different note symbols indicate how long to wait before playing the next note.

For help understanding this, learn more at:

kalimbamagic.com/tablature



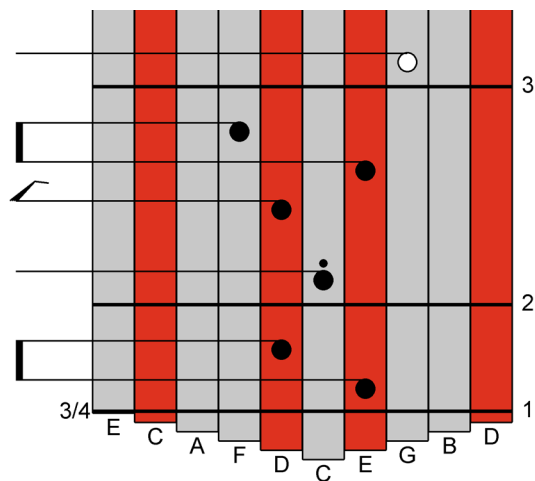


The Sound Icon

Listen to How the Music Goes

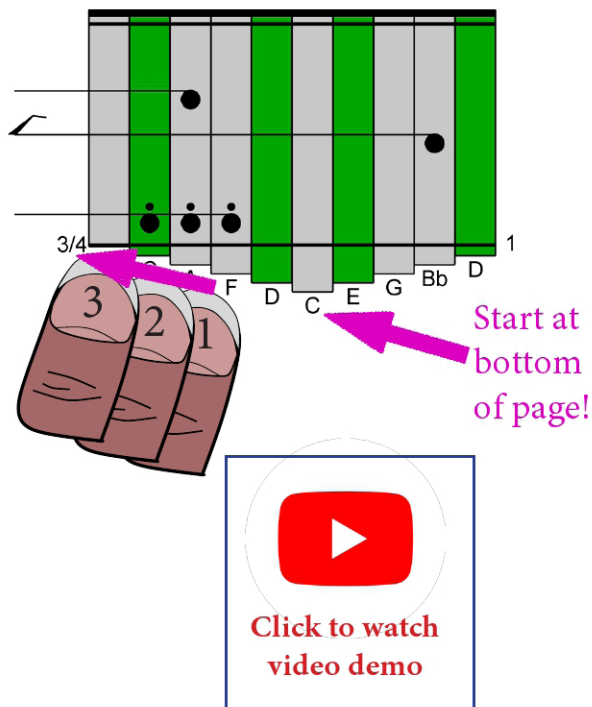
Most people can correctly play the notes they see in the tablature. But without a lot of experience reading music notation, some people have trouble with the rhythm (the exact timing of the music), which is what makes a song a song.

If you have difficulty making a song work from the tablature, click on the sound icon next to the tablature to hear a live rendition (by yours truly) of that song with all of its familiar notes, spaces, and emphasis. It can really help!



Notice These Things in the Tablature

- * The tablature starts from the bottom - you can tell from the measure numbers to the right of the tablature.
- * The note each tine is tuned to is indicated at the bottom.
- * The tine second from the right will be marked "B" in C tuning and "Bb" in F tuning
- * The fraction "3/4" in the lower left indicates "3/4 time" or that there are a total of three beats in each measure.
- * In this case "The First Noel" has less than three beats in measure 1. Why? You can do this at the very start of the music - it is called a "pickup," and is the first word of the song.



The 3-Note Glissando

The kalimba's tuning is such that any three adjacent notes on the left side or the right side will make a beautiful chord. The problem is: how do you play those three times all at once?

The answer is to touch the lowest tine you are to play with your thumb nail, and gracefully slide it over and outward to touch the other two tines you need to play to accomplish the chord.

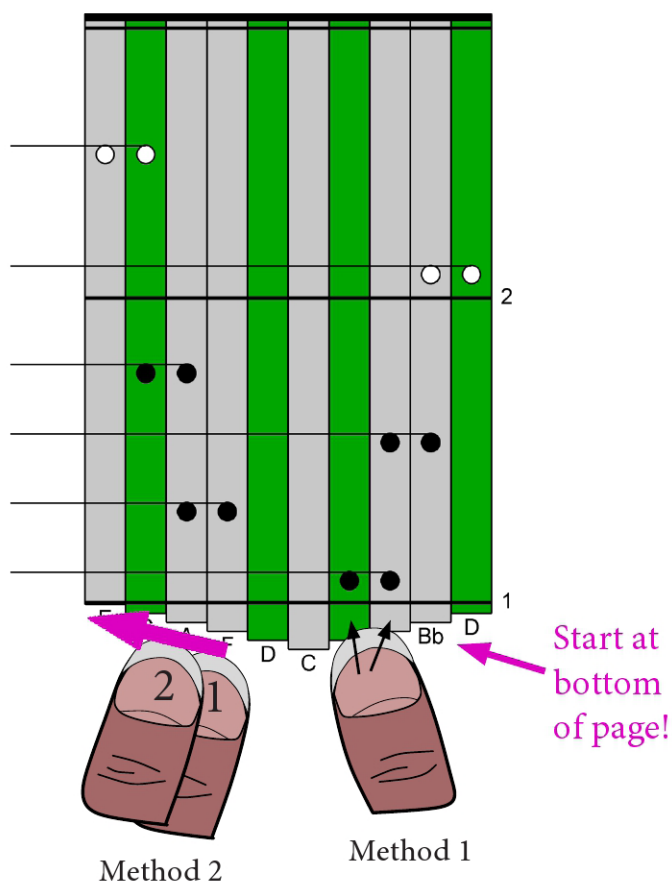
This is the *glissando* technique. It is a good technique to master,

The 2-Note Glissando

Any two adjacent tines on this kalimba will make a third interval. Sometimes a major third, sometimes a minor third - it doesn't matter, as they both sound beautiful.

There are two ways to make these 2-note chords:

- 1) Place your thumb nail right between those two adjacent tines, catching the ends of both, and pluck straight down.
- 2) My preference is to do a little 2-note glissando, and slide the thumb outward, from the lower to the higher note of the pair. This causes a slight delay between the low note and the high note, but I feel this gives a charming feeling to the music, making it sound like an old-fashioned music box.



Need More Help?

If you find this book too challenging, try these first:

[Fun and Games on the 10-Note Kalimba](#)

[Everything You Need to Know About Playing the 10-Note Kalimba](#)

History of the Kalimba

The first kalimbas were thought to have been made in Western Africa, around present-day Cameroon, about 3000 years ago. These earliest kalimbas were made with bamboo bodies and raffia tines (from palm fronds). These instruments were easily tunable and had a rather earthy sound.

The Iron Age started some 3000 years ago in the Middle East, and it spread out into the ancient world in a wave of innovation. When the Iron Age revolution met up with the wave of bamboo kalimba innovation that was also spreading across the continent, one happy result was the creation of metal tines for kalimbas, about 1300 years ago in the great Zambezi River Valley, which is in the vicinity of modern-day Zimbabwe.

The metal-tined kalimbas spread out across Africa over the centuries, and each group of people would alter the kalimba's design and tuning to match their own music. The kalimba was an incredibly flexible instrument in that way. Each new instrument was given a new name in a different language.

Meanwhile, back in the Zambezi Valley, the birthplace of the metal-tined kalimba, the Shona people created a huge instrument, the *mbira dzavadzimu*. Made with an 8-note scale (similar to the underlying scale of your 10-Note kalimba), with between 20 and 25 tines, the *mbira* was capable of very complex and beautiful music that could put a listener into a trance, often intended to attract the spirits of the ancestors. This is the most famous traditional kalimba, and is now played by more people than ever before.

In 1920, a young English lad named Hugh Tracey went to Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) to learn farming. He would often hear field workers playing the *mbira* and was strongly drawn to it. Thus began his life-long fascination with, and drive to discover and preserve, traditional African music. He traveled tens of thousands of miles across Africa, recording and documenting the music and the instruments played in rural areas, before the reach of western popular music could weaken and replace that music.

In 1954, Hugh Tracey started to build the "Hugh Tracey Kalimba" and market it around the world. Inspired by design elements of many different traditional kalimbas, the Hugh Tracey kalimba played a western scale and made beautiful western harmonies.

The 10-Note kalimba in your hands is an intellectual child of the Hugh Tracey kalimba, just as the Hugh Tracey kalimba is an intellectual child of the traditional African instruments.



About Reading Kalimba Tablature and Playing Music with Your Thumbs

Kalimba tablature has some similarities to five-horizontal-line, standard staff music notation. Kalimba tab can be easily understood by some people with previous musical experience; others, even old hands, can find making that leap more challenging. The human brain has great variability!

In standard staff music, the lower a note is on the staff, the lower it will sound. Staff notation is most essentially connected to the music itself, whereas kalimba tablature is most essentially connected to the tines that must be played to accomplish a particular song. While standard notation is a map of sound, kalimba tablature is a map of the kalimba and where to go on it to make sounds. And getting anywhere on a kalimba involves the thumbs and exactly what motions must be made to accomplish a song.

Here's an illustrative discussion: Right at the beginning of "Up on the House Top" (at the bottom left of the page) are two notes right next to each other - E and G. There are three ways that this two-note *chord* could be accomplished: (1) you could place your right thumb between the E and G tines and pluck them both; (2) you could first pluck the lower tine, E, and slide on to also pluck G - a two-note glissando; (3) you could play G with the right thumb and *cross over*, playing the E with left thumb.

Crossing over is a very handy technique, though I don't think there are any songs in this collection which require the thumbs to cross over. Logically, the low (central) note, C, belongs to the right thumb. Why is this logical? If you use the right thumb to play the low note, ascending the scale C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, works smoothly with an alternating right-left pattern.

And that gives you a hint to this body of music: the songs I have written down here are easy to play, at least for me. I have arranged them using easy, natural movements of my thumbs. If there is something the music is asking you to do that feels difficult or awkward for your own thumbs, take that opportunity to see if you can understand what makes the music difficult, and ponder if there is not another way to do this music that would be easier. In some cases, that might mean leaving out a note or two. For example, in the first notes of "Up on the House Top" you could just forget about the E altogether - it is a harmony note - that is, a helping note. The melody note - that is, a required note - is the G.

Finally some tablature tips:

- * Start by listening to the recording (click on sound icon in upper left corner) and follow along with your eyes, from note to note on the tablature. If you get lost, start over again.
- * Play (without the recording), reproducing the notes in the tablature on kalimba, as slowly as you need to go.
- * If a section is tricky, break it down into two-measure bits, and slowly increase your speed.
- * You can also break the music up into left and right parts, learn them separately, and then combine.

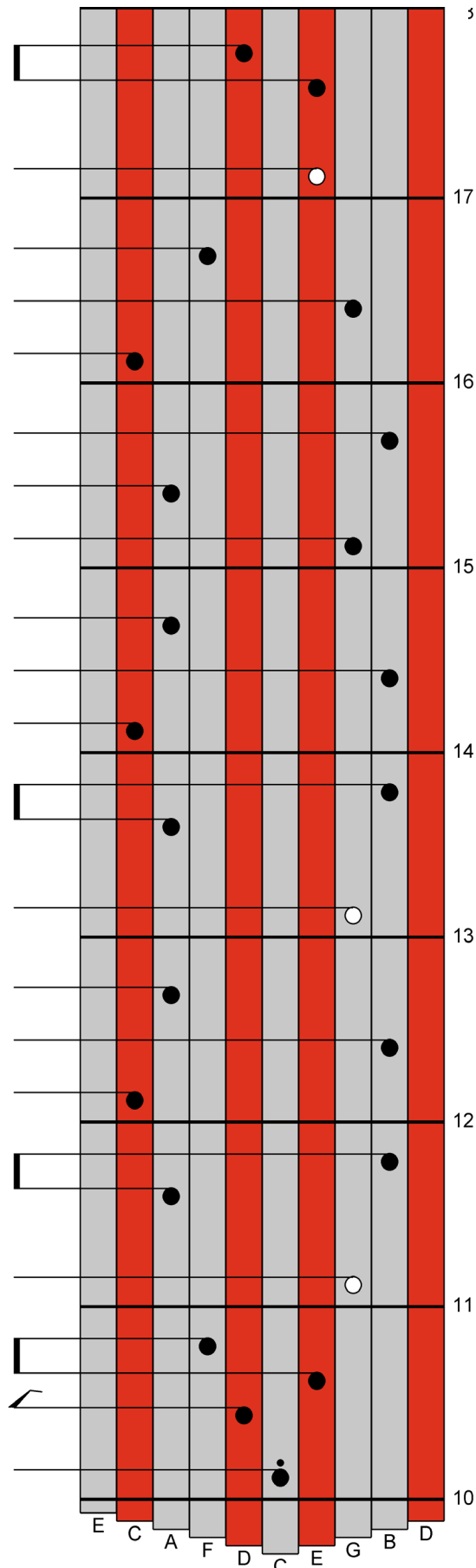
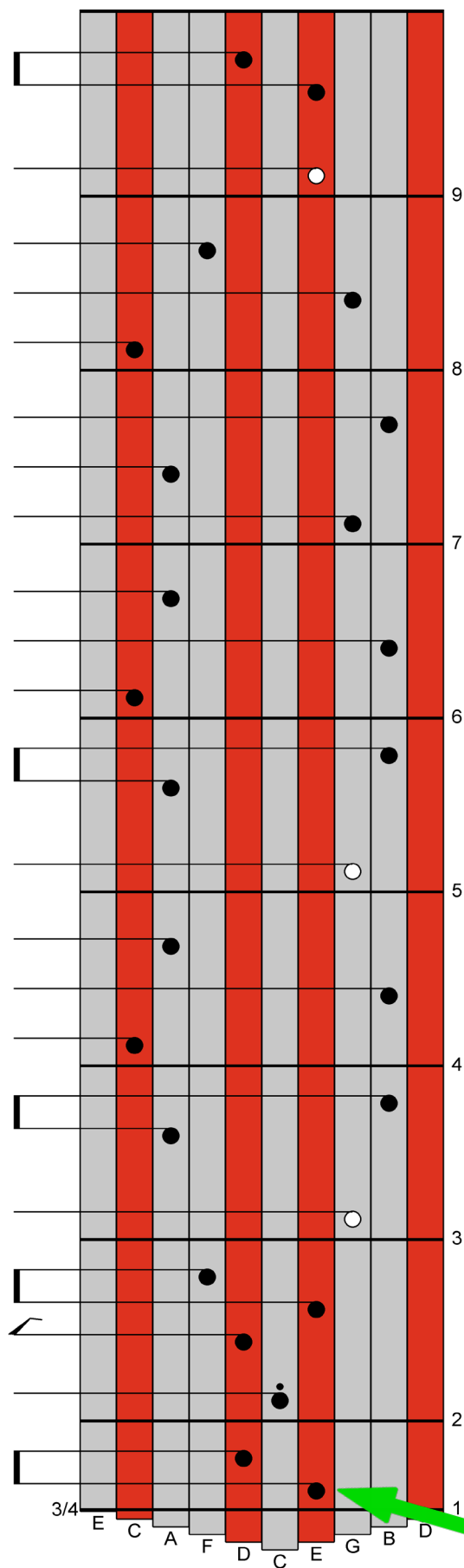
And if you need more help, remember this link for instruction on tablature, note length, and more:

kalimbamagic.com/tablature



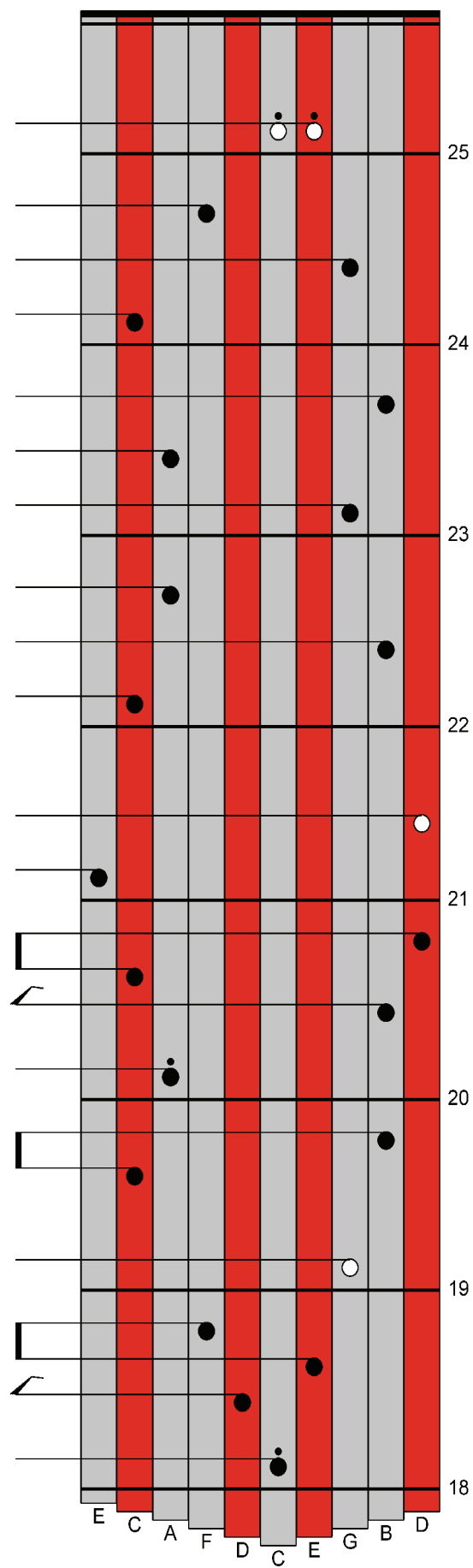
The First Noel

Level 1



The First Noel

Level 1 (continued)



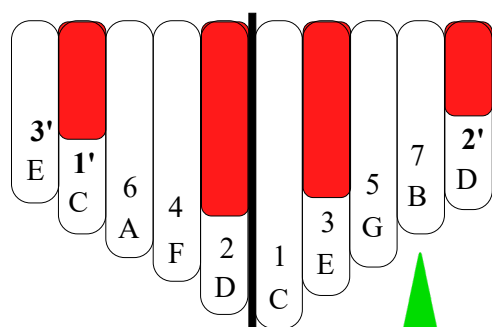
Retuning to F - The Easiest Retuning You Can Do

You may be wondering a couple of things about all this. One, if the F Tuning is so much more useful than the C Tuning (F Tuning has 20 songs in this book, C Tuning only has 8), why didn't my kalimba come tuned in F, with a Bb, in the first place? Let us look into this...

Because it's a great kalimba for learning to play (and one tuned to F is not.) The 10-Note kalimba is a beginner's instrument, the student model, designed to help you grow and transition into the more powerful 17-Note kalimba. In fact, your instrument is the inner (lowest) 10 notes of the 17-Note kalimba. There is a strong psychological power when you have the root note be the lowest note, right in the center, as your 10-Note has. This central root note is home base, and no matter how far away you get, you can always jump back to that note and know exactly where you are. These are excellent features for an instrument that is a learning tool. So having a 10-Note in C is a great thing.

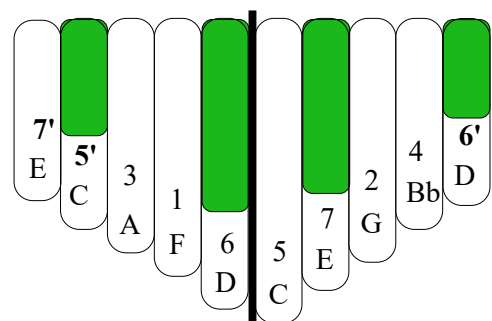
Another question you may have is this: Retuning from C to F sounds like it should be difficult. It seems one should have to retune every single tine... by a lot. C to F, D to G, etc. But instead, the retuning is easy. How is this so?

C Tuning - 8 Carols



Retune This One Tine →

F Tuning - 20 Carols



Watch me retune
from C to F in
10 seconds.

By making a very simple change.

If you retuned every note in going from C to F, it would take you more than an hour on your first attempt... and while you would be in the key of F, you would not be able to play any different songs, just the 8 songs in C tuning, tuned up to F.

Instead, I am directing you to retune by "going one step around the **Circle of 5ths** (a map of all the keys that shows the relationship of the keys to each other). Like a skillful judo move, by changing one single tine, just one little bit, you achieve a huge change in the instrument's layout as well as the songs you can play on it.

How does this work?

In F tuning, we are no longer considering the lowest note, C, to be the root note. It is now the 5th note. This means there are four notes lower than C that are missing. If you had extra-long tines, you could build a kalimba that had the missing notes: "F G A Bb" or "1 2 3 4" in the key of F. But they are absent from your kalimba - just remember them.

In fact, the top note is missing too - you have F, G, A, B, C, D, E... but not high F.

So, let that sink in: nowhere can you play a full F to F scale, but you can play a lot more songs. A huge number of songs don't just follow the scale up and down... but rather dip down to the 5th below the root (1, F) note.

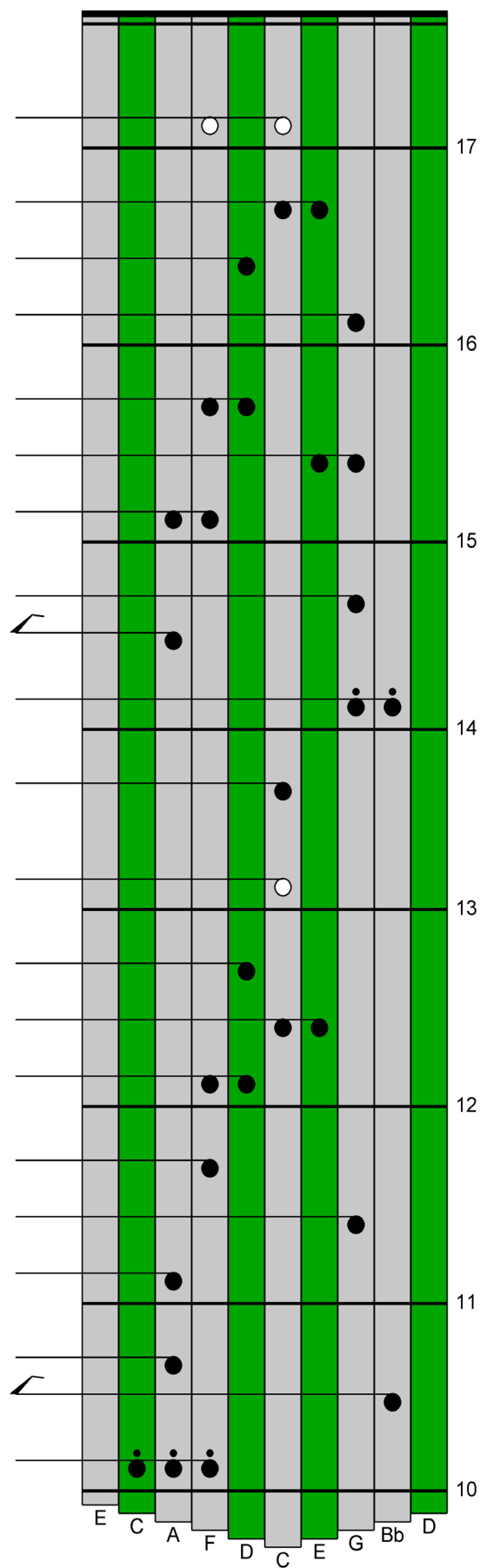
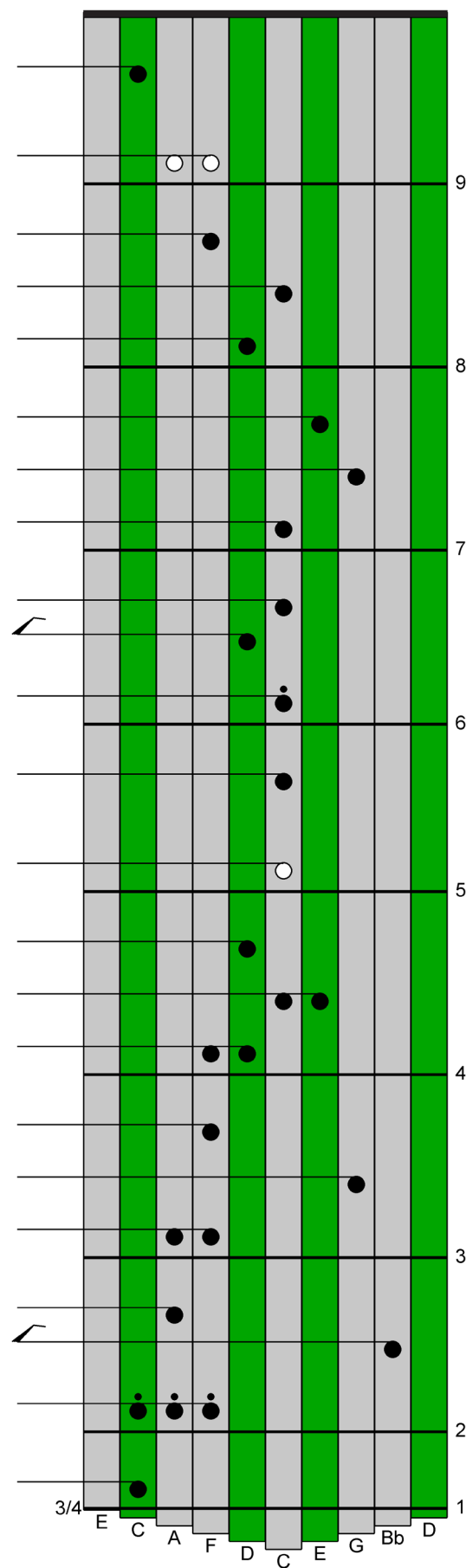
That 5 → 1 move is very important in every corner of western music. In this book's list of Christmas carols in F, the interval between the 5 and the 1 is very easy to hear, in "I Saw Three Ships," "The Twelve Days of Christmas," and "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," and so many others.

Learn more: kalimbamagic.com/tuning



DEMO Version

Away in a Manger (American version) Level 3



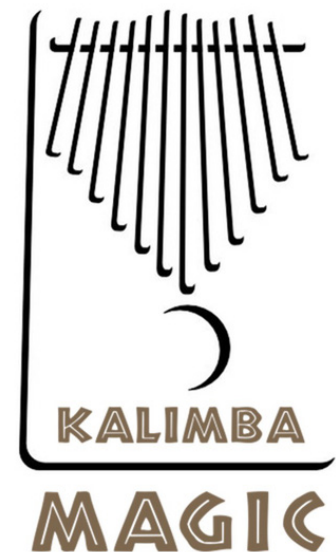
About Kalimba Magic

Kalimba Magic is a business dedicated to the proposition that the kalimba is a real instrument capable of amazing music. Kalimba Magic has the broadest collection of kalimbas for sale in the world. The videos on the Kalimba Magic YouTube channel have had several million views.

We specialize in creating instructional guides and resources to help you get the most out of your kalimba. Our website has the best info on playing your kalimba and keeping it sounding good.

To help you get the most out of your kalimba, we have created 26 hardcopy kalimba books and 44 ebooks, most based on our ingenious and flexible kalimba tablature, which shows you exactly which tines to play to accomplish each song.

Kalimba Magic has been selling high quality kalimbas, kalimba books, and kalimba music online, and repairing, retuning, and reinvigorating your tired old kalimbas, since 2005.



About Mark Holdaway

Mark has been playing kalimba since 1986 when he met a stranger who played the Hugh Tracey Alto kalimba really well. Mark chased after the memory of that man's most excellent playing for the next 10 years, but since then has been following his own path.

Mark is a talented multi-instrumentalist and accompanist, playing guitar, bass, mandolins, recorder, marimba, percussion, kalimbas, karimbas, sansulas, and mbiras.

Mark enjoys exploring new kalimba tunings, learning and understanding traditional African music, writing music and books, improvising, teaching, performing... and dancing.

Mark has lived in Tucson since 1995, where he is an active member of the folk and world music scene. Since finishing his career as a radio astronomer in 2006, Mark has devoted himself full time to his business, Kalimba Magic. For fun, Mark loves to hike in the deserts, canyons and mountains of southern Arizona and New Mexico. And he always takes a few kalimbas with him.

Mark's mission is to spread the history, magic, pride, and joy of the kalimba around the world.



*Mark Holdaway
Kalimba Wizard*

Photo: Kathleen Dreier



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Christmas carols on the
Kalimba can be so sweet
and touching. And whoever
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notes? It's a mystery, and a
wonderful one at that!