

## Bucket Band

Bucket band is a tool for learning rhythms and beginner improvisational techniques and in a simple, interactive way. I learned about bucket band through Orchkids, an inner-city program where I've been volunteering teaching music after school for 5 years.

Each student gets a bucket and a pair of drum sticks. We start out with simple call and response, or what I call "echoes". I ask the group to echo a simple rhythm that I play. Often put a lyric to it, for example, "pea-nut but-ter pie," will equate to four  $\frac{1}{8}$ <sup>th</sup> notes (pea-nut-but-ter) and one  $\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> note (pie).

I'm secretly teaching my instrumentalists how to read and understand rhythmical values (basic music theory). We're also secretly learning how to listen to each other, and how to build a cohesive group sound. It also helps at-risk youth to get out their aggressions in a productive way. Once they understand values ( $\frac{1}{8}$  notes,  $\frac{1}{4}$  notes, etc) we come up with a short riff. We all repeat the riff three times, and the fourth time I let the students improvise using the rhythms that we learned.

I've been using bucket band in my core middle school curriculum for **TK years**, and I've found that starting with buckets helps the students in a few ways. First, it demystifies the idea of playing an instrument: anyone can play a bucket. Second, it's so simple that it encourages experimentation. By giving them a solid baseline and letting them improvise off of that, bucket band creates a comfortable space to explore rhythmic concepts without the students worrying about sounding perfect

Having everyone on the same instrument, so to speak, also helps the students get a reference for complicated rhythms. Later on I will do similar exercises with their actual instruments, trumpets, clarinets, or what have you.

