

How to Build a Tincanarimba

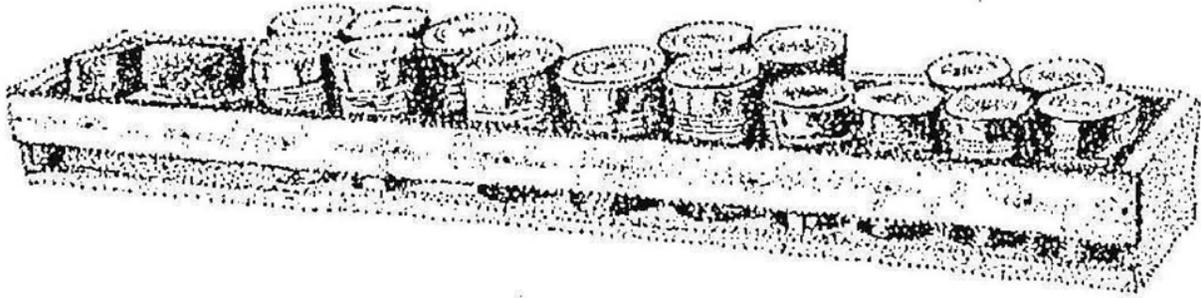
Sharon Anway

1. Collect lots of tin cans with molded bottoms, including tuna cans. Have your friends and extended family save cans for you, or raid recycling bin ("re-recycling!")
2. Find a long, flat box, such as a closet rod box or a shelving unit box, to hold your tin cans. You may have to adjust the size of the box (after you've selected your cans) by folding, cutting, and/or taping (for example, the finished box could be about 37" long, 6" wide, and 3" high).
3. Find some chopsticks for beaters. "Fancy" chopsticks with metal-tipped handles work especially well. Use the handle end to strike the cans. You can also slip pan of a clear plastic straw over the "eating" end of the chopstick to make the chopstick longer and to improve its balance.
4. Find a permanent magic marker for labeling the note each can makes.
5. Bring your collection of cans to a keyboard or a piano.
6. Holding a can, hit it with a chopstick (or the magic marker) and try to determine its pitch by finding that note on the keyboard. Label the can with that note. (Sometimes it's difficult to determine the pitch of a can, because the can may have loud, high overtones that accompany a lower pitch. Also, of course, the can may not be in standard pitch--it may be slightly higher or lower than a particular note on our keyboard). If you have trouble with this step, ask a musical friend to help you determine the pitches of your cans. Tuna cans usually have lower notes, and some large cat food cans (such as IAMS) have high notes. Vegetable and soup cans together give a variety of notes. Be patient! (Those within hearing distance will need to be patient, also!)
7. Gradually assemble a scale, choosing the cans with the best lone and the truest pitch--you can either use a major scale (the "do re mi" scale---such as GAB C D E F# G), a pentatonic scale (the black notes or a piano---F# G# A# C# D#), a complete chromatic scale (the white AND black notes on a piano), or scale of your choice. If you collect LOTS of cans, you might find all these notes:

F#	G#	A#(orb)	C#	D # (or Eb)	F#	G#			
F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A

With even more (tuna) cans, you might be able to add C, D, and E at the low end, and possibly an A# (or Bb) at the high end. The length of your box, along with the number of cans you've collected, will determine the number of notes in your scale. (If you put the tuna cans on top of half of an egg carton, they will be about the same height as the other cans.)

8. (Optional) Line the inside bottom of your box with vinyl shelf liner, and put your cans on top of it. This allows the cans to vibrate more freely, and it also keeps them from sliding around as much.
9. Now you're ready to play! Have fun!



Drawing by Robin Goodfellow

Constructivist Education

Constructivist education promotes learning and development by engaging children in interesting activities that inspire experimentation with all its groping and error. These activities stimulate children to invent new problems and new solutions. Teachers foster cooperation between adults and children and among children themselves in a classroom atmosphere based upon mutual respect. This educational environment promotes children's self-regulation, assumption of responsibility, and a feeling of community among children and teachers.

“The path of civilization is paved with tin cans.”

Elbert Hubbard

American author and publisher (1856-1915)