



Kazoos



The kazoos we know and love are a type of *mirliton*, an instrument you play by singing, speaking, or humming into it. A membrane changes the sound of the voice. The simplest form of *mirliton* are combs covered with paper.

The instrument we call the kazoo originated in the United States in the 1850s and was important in Black American music. It was common in vaudeville music, early jazz bands, and country string bands.

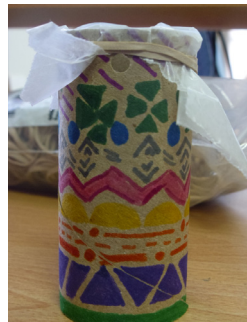
Over time the kazoo has become less used in everyday music, though there are still musicians who use them! There are also composers who have written about them: *The Danse des Mirlitons* in *Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker* is one example.

Make your own kazoo at home!

1. Select a cardboard tube for the body of your kazoo.
2. Punch a hole half an inch from the end of the tube.



3. Decorate the roll with paint, crayons, or markers.
4. Put a square of wax paper over the end of the tube closest to the hole you punched.
5. Secure the wax paper with a rubber band.



6. Hum into your new kazoo! This is tricky, but you can't blow, you have to hum loudly.
7. Can you figure out what is vibrating to make the sounds you hear?

