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VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Workshop:

Introduction to The Ukulele

Learn the parts of the ukulele and how to play a C chord, as well as the significance of the instrument in Hawaiian culture. You will also be introduced to the musical compositions of Queen Lili'uokalani, the last queen of Hawaii.

Teaching Artist:
Kevin Smith

Workshop duration: 25 minutes - 45 minutes



Transcript

Hi there! My name is Kevin Smith. I use the pronouns he/him/his, and I'm a musician and Teaching Artist at Snow City Arts. I'm excited to be spending time and making music with you today. Feel free to pause this video at any time if you want to try out something you just learned, or if you just want to take a break.

Alright, without further ado, let's make that music!

Today, I'd like to introduce you to the **ukulele**. We're going to go through some different terms to talk about the different parts of the instrument, and then we're going to get into playing. So, let's get started.

The ukulele became popular in Hawaii in the 1800s and was seen as a tool for developing Hawaiian culture in opposition to the culture of the white colonists. The last monarch of Hawaii, **Queen Lili'uokalani**, was one of the island's most influential composers. She wrote over 165 songs! Most notably, the popular song "Aloha OE," which was featured in the 2002 Disney movie "Lilo and Stitch."

["Aloha OE" plays]

Okay, we're going to start with the largest part of the ukulele. This whole area is called the **body**. And one of the most noticeable things on the body is this hole. That is called the **sound hole**. Now, back here where the **strings** are connected to the body, this is called the **bridge**. Now, as we move up, we come to the **neck**, the next major part of the ukulele. And on the neck, we find our **frets**. Those are the little bars that go across what is called the **fingerboard** or **fretboard**. So, each one of these frets is what's going to get us a different note.

Now, as we continue to move up, we get to the **head**. The head is where you'll find the **tuners**, which we'll get into at another time. But those help change the note of each string.

[student cover of "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars plays]

All right, so now let's hold the instrument. What you want to do is to hug the ukulele's body against your body, using your forearm. So, place the instrument about two-thirds the way up your arm towards your elbow and then just hug it.

Transcript Continued

What you want to do is make sure that your hand is closer to the neck, as opposed to being directly over the sound hole. It'll give it a nicer tone when you strum.

Now, with the left hand, we've got a couple of different options. Traditionally, a lot of people will put their thumb on the back of the neck, so that their hand is free to swing out from underneath, and their fingers are able to curve towards the fingerboard. That's great. If that seems comfortable for you, go for it.

If not, you can hold the ukulele the way that I usually do, which is by putting the neck on this part of my hand, just letting it rest there. My fingers are still coming up from underneath and able to swing towards the fretboard.

So now we're ready to play.

So go ahead, using your thumb or your index finger or whatever is most comfortable, and pluck each string. Each string has its own name and note associated with it. So starting from the top and going down, we've got the G, C, E, and A. One more time. That's G, C, E, and A.

[student cover of "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars plays]

All right, so now what we're going to do is we're going to find the A string. And we're going to find the third fret. So you can just count each fret: one, two, and three. And that's where we're going to put a finger. Go ahead and pick any finger. I'm going to use my ring finger. And I'm going to put it on the string right next to that third fret, but not directly on top of it. That's where you're going to get the best sound. So, putting my finger there. And I'm squeezing it.

Now, if we did everything right, we're going to hear different notes when we put that A string. Nice.

Next step is we're going to strum each string. So again, taking your thumb, pointer finger or whatever is most comfortable for you, we're going to strum it from top to bottom in one quick motion. I'll use my index finger.

What you just played, what you just heard, is called the **C chord**. It's home base for the ukulele. You're going to be playing a lot of C chords. So now, go ahead and keep strumming and try to keep a steady beat. I will show you.

Transcript Continued

There you go. Enjoy!

[student cover of “Count on Me” by Bruno Mars plays]

Thanks again for making music with me today. Hope you had fun and we can get to do it again soon. Until then, keep on playing.

If you are interested in receiving school credit

for the work you have completed in this workshop, or if you would like to have your work **displayed in a Snow City Arts exhibition space or virtual gallery:**

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Contact us at programs@snowcityarts.org if you have questions, would like to offer feedback, or would like to continue working with us virtually.



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