

musical activities for k-3 children & their parents

A stylized graphic of a drum, tilted at an angle. The drum head is represented by a blue square with a white curved line, and the drum shell is a light blue shape with a white curved line. The text 'developmental drumming' is written in a large, white, outlined font across the drum head, and 'early childhood music program' is written in a smaller, solid blue font below it.

developmental drumming

early childhood music program

Music making is essential to the healthy development of children

An addendum to NAMM's Sesame Street Music Works Program • Produced and distributed by the Percussion Marketing Council

Where To Start

The Developmental Drumming Early Childhood Music Program and Take-Home Activities were designed to provide the necessary tools to foster an early love of music making. Music participation can provide undeniable benefits to children everywhere and, because children learn by example, you are giving a child a wonderful gift by playing music with them. Not only will you be teaching the fundamentals of music making, but you will also be demonstrating that “new” and “different” things need not arouse fear or self-consciousness. You are teaching that life’s simplest “adventures” can be deeply gratifying.

The primary goal of these activities is to ensure that the children are having FUN—enough fun that they will want to continue to play music again, and hopefully, for the rest of their lives. The activities can be used for a single child and are easily adaptable for classroom or other group use. This is not a performance-based program and every effort should be made to “encourage” rather than “correct” participants. If a child hasn’t followed instructions exactly, congratulate them anyway and demonstrate the exercise again. Always keep in mind that this program was designed to be flexible, and you can (and should!) customize every activity to match the age and abilities of the participants. The Developmental Drumming Early Childhood Music Program and Home Activities are only a starting point. Take it slowly and remember that *having fun is the name of the game!*

For additional information on the powerful benefits of music to you and your child, including the most recent research on Music and the Brain, visit www.amc-music.org.

This guide is intended to provide basic information on a handful of the world’s cultures, music and drumming styles. Feel free to incorporate additional examples, substitute instruments or simplify the exercises to better fit the interests and abilities of your child or class. You are also encouraged to augment this guide with additional information and images of the countries, cultures people and percussion instruments from around the world.

Thank you for participating in the Developmental Drumming Early Childhood Music Program and for sharing the gift of music with your child!

How To Choose The Instruments And Introduce Them To Your Children

An amazing variety of children’s percussion instruments are available in stores today. It is important to understand that these instruments have been designed specifically for children and it is recommended that you select only those that meet US toy safety testing standards ASTM F963-96A for the approved age. This government rating ensures that the products are safe in terms of mechanical construction, toxicity, small parts (that could pose choke hazards), sharp edges, strangulation hazards, etc. Beyond safety concerns, a child’s instrument should be the proper size and weight and should be playable without the need for dexterity beyond the capabilities of the child. Ask a qualified salesperson at your local music store to assist you when making your selection.

The initial goal is to make your child feel comfortable with their new instrument. Tell them what the name of the instrument is, and if they are interested, you can explain the historic origins of their new instrument. This information can usually be found in product catalogs or packaging. Next, show and identify for them all of the different parts of their instrument, while encouraging them to feel the different materials and textures. Some areas to consider include: the drumhead (playing surface), drum shell (sides of the drum), carry strap, mallet handle, mallet head (end), handle (on any hand percussion instrument), striker (for a triangle), and even shaker fill (although they can’t see or touch the non-toxic fill, they can still get a “feel” for it).

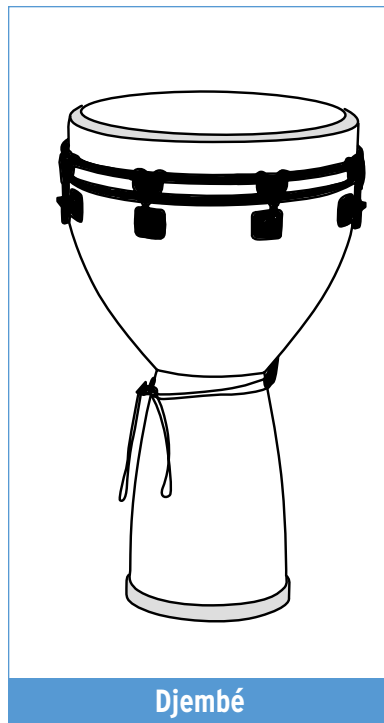
Invite your child to explore with you all of the different sounds that they can create with their new instrument. With any type of drum, experiment with the different sounds you can obtain by striking the drumhead in its center (deeper sound), the edge (higher sound), and the outer shell areas. Encourage them to try playing with the hands in a variety of ways: open-handed vs. closed-handed, hard, soft, fast, slow, and slap-release vs. slap-hold (muffled sound). Then ask them to try the same thing using the mallet head (end) and the mallet handle. They will even find a difference when holding the mallet in the center vs. the edge.

Any type of shaker can be shaken quickly, slowly, loudly, softly, and even in a circle to obtain different sounds. Hand percussion instruments are available in an amazing variety of shapes and sizes: clappers, knockers, jingles, bells, tone blocks, etc. Experiment and enjoy your discoveries!

African Poly-Rhythms

Over the course of centuries, in villages throughout the African continent, a diversity of drumming styles developed as essential religious, social, cultural and recreational activities. While African drumming introduced many tonal and rhythmic innovations, one of the most original and influential was the process of combining of multiple rhythmic layers and patterns on top of each other. Often referred to as “poly-rhythms”, these complex rhythmic patterns and unique instrument designs were handed down from generation to generation using an oral process that has allowed them to continue to flourish today. And, while it may be easier to appreciate the obvious contributions of African drumming to a variety of “ethnic” musical styles, the influence of African rhythm on the foundations of mainstream jazz, R&B and rock has just as certainly helped fuel the rapid growth of the “World Drumming” phenomenon.

Along with the *shekere* (beaded gourd) and *african bell*, the *djun-djun* and *djembe* families are among the primary West African percussion instruments



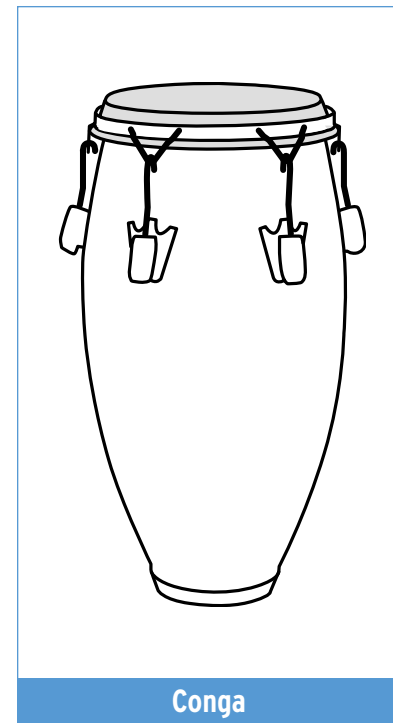
Djembé

The Mambo

Although a variety of musical styles exist throughout the Caribbean region, the Afro-Cuban style remains one of its most popular and fascinating. The development of Afro-Cuban music can be directly linked to the forced migration of the African people as slaves and their efforts to maintain their cultural and religious traditions while incorporating many new influences and instruments.

The Mambo is easily recognized by its dense, earthy sound and pulsating rhythmic feel and is but one example of how this fusion of cultures and circumstances produced new forms of music that quickly spread throughout the world.

The Afro-cuban rhythm section utilizes an assortment of drums and percussion instruments to create a full spectrum of sounds and rhythms. These instruments were originally designed to emulate traditional African instruments and were made from readily available materials such as barrels, sticks and gourds. They include *congas*, *bongos*, *timbales*, *claves*, *maracas*, *cowbell* and *reco-reco* (*guiro*).



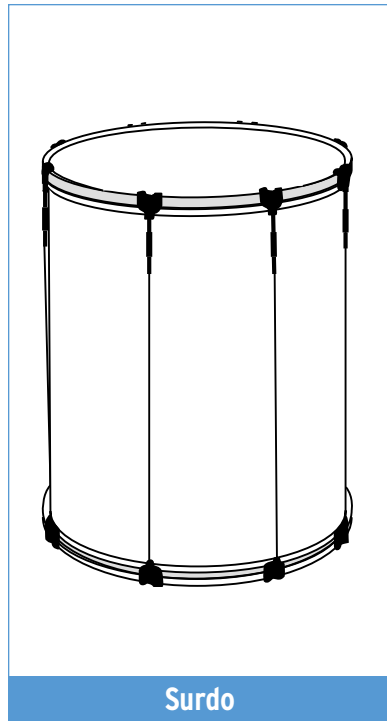
Conga

The Samba

Because it also bears a strong connection to African cultures, much of the composition and rhythmic structure of Brazilian music is similar to that of the Afro-Cuban style. However, Brazilian dance forms like the Samba are generally lighter, faster, more syncopated and more varied than those of Cuba due to the blending of a broader mix of religious, social, cultural and secular influences from Europeans and Africans as well as Brazil's own indigenous Indians.

The Samba is a festival dance that is performed in the streets of Brasil. A typical "samba school" can have 3,000 to 4,000 members and typically includes singers, dancers, giant puppets, flag bearers and musicians, including a drumming section called the *bateria*. The outrageous style and infectious groove of the Samba has kept it alive and popular to this day.

The Brazilian percussion section includes the *ganza* (shaker), *pandiero*, *agogo bells* and an assortment of differently sized *surdos* to provide a complete tonal and rhythmic spectrum.



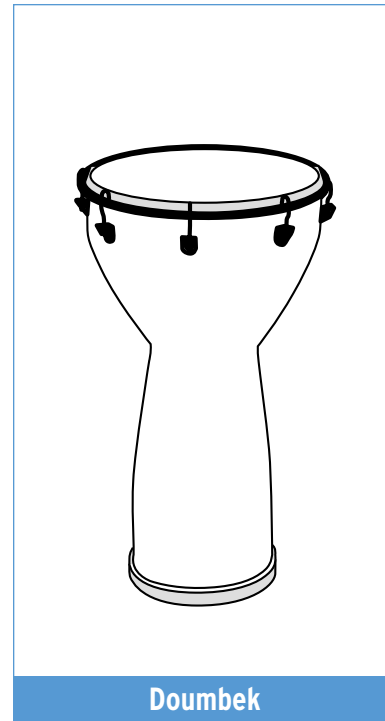
Surdo

The Arabian Dance

Originating in the Arabian areas of the Middle East, the distinctive dance form known as Belly Dancing has been practiced for thousands of years by many different cultures for many different purposes. The dance is characterized by pulsating, undulating body movements and has been used in ritual and spiritual practices, celebration, communal bonding, entertainment, physical education and simply for enjoyment.

It is thought by historians that Belly Dancing began as a religious rite and later evolved into folk art. This Arabian Dance style became a widely known form of entertainment with the European colonization of the Mediterranean region and the global exportation of Middle Eastern cultures. In fact, the Middle East continues to serve as an important cultural bridge between Europe, Africa and Asia even today.

Mediterranean styles of drumming feature ancient percussion instruments such as the *finger cymbals* and *tambourine* as well as the *goblet-shaped dombek*. During the creative era of the Renaissance, Middle Eastern percussion instruments were highly influential on Europe's emerging military and orchestral drumming styles.



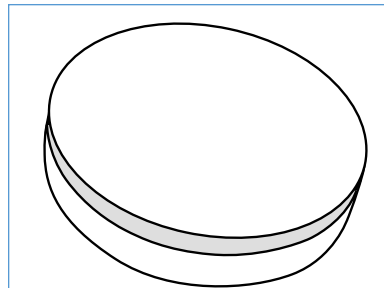
Dombek

The Irish Folk Song

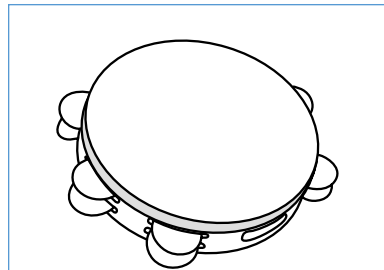
Unlike the European drums and drumming styles that are of Middle Eastern origin, Irish folk drumming traces its roots back to Europe's own pre-Roman, Celtic cultures. For centuries European folk music developed as a secular expression of the lives of the people in a community. Folk songs became a part of the culture through oral tradition and are therefore "fluid" with improvised variations in both words and music occurring as the song was passed from person to person, place to place and generation to generation.

Today, folk songs are an important part of many of cultures around the world. And fortunately, even though it has influenced other styles, the Irish folk style continues to thrive in its own authentic, unaffected form.

The primary rhythmic accompaniment for Irish Folk Songs is the *bohdran*, a medium to large single-headed frame drum that is played with a double-ended stick called a *cipin*. Other European folk music styles rely on a close-cousin of the frame drum, the *tambourine*, which incorporates metal discs called jingles and is abundant in its many varieties throughout the European region and the rest of the world.



Bohdran



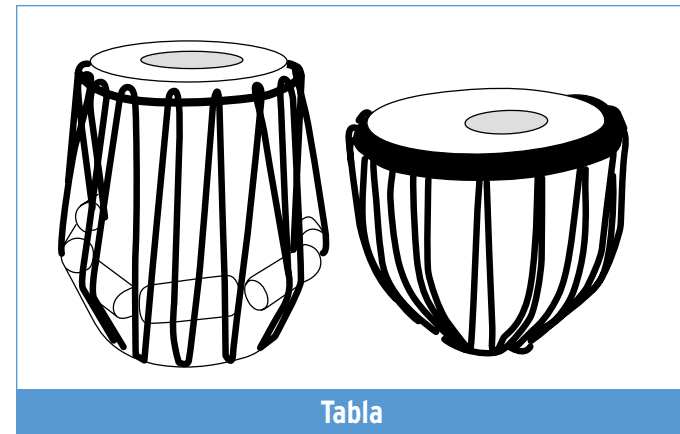
Tambourine

Irregular Time Signatures

The music of India is very rich and diverse in its origins. It is believed to have evolved from the Hindu religion as well as the many different cultures that make up India. The basis for Indian music is "sangeet", which is a combination of three art forms: vocal music, instrumental music and dance. Most Indian music is composed of 2 different parts: the Rag (the tone) and the Tal (the rhythm).

Unlike traditional Western musical styles, much Indian music is composed of phrases containing a series of irregular patterns often referred to as "odd" time signatures. These patterns can be simplified into two and three note groupings to make up rhythms of five, seven, nine and eleven beats as well as longer variations.

It is the *tabla*, a set of two rope-tuned drums, that provide the mesmerizing rhythm in a Hindustani raga, the distinctive Hindu form of music. A variety of sounds can be produced from the tabla by using traditional finger, palm and wrist techniques at different hand positions on the drum.



Tabla

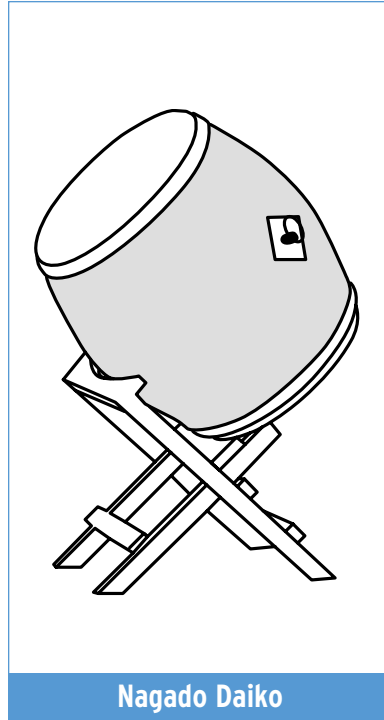
The Taiko Orchestra

Taiko is a drumming style of Japanese origin that literally means “fat drum”. For thousands of years, most Japanese villages owned at least one taiko drum that was played in celebrations, religious ceremonies and to mark the boundaries of the town (basically as far as the sound could be heard). As with many of the world’s styles, Taiko drumming employs a group of instruments and musicians to cover the high, middle and low tonal ranges. Through careful instrumentation, orchestration and, in the case of the Japanese Taiko, choreography, this approach creates a full spectrum of sounds, sights and emotions.

Musically, the taiko style is built on “ostinatos” (repetitive rhythmic patterns) played on a “choir” of drums to form an exciting, multi-layered wall of sound. The modern style of taiko was born in the 1950's and is called “kumi-daiko”. Since it was created, kumi-daiko has seen tremendous growth and has even become a required part of the Japanese elementary school curriculum.

The traditional names for taiko drums are *Nagado-daiko* (long-bodied drum), *Shime-daiko* (rope-tensioned drum), *Okedo-daiko* (“big fat drum”) and *Hira-daiko* (small drum), all of which are played by large wooden sticks called *bachi*. The taiko orchestra also often includes *chappa* (small cymbals) and *chanchiki* (small hand-held gongs) as well as gongs, clappers and rattles.

The Taiko Orchestra is Tracks No. 26-30 on the Developmental Drumming CD



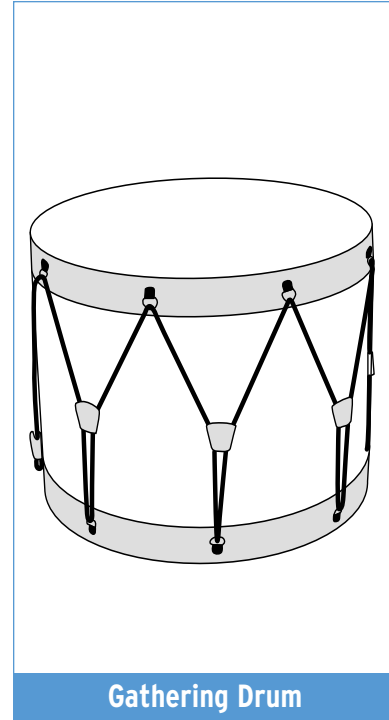
Nagado Daiko

The Ceremonial Dance

For hundreds, if not thousands of years, drumming and dancing have played important roles the lives of the Native Americans who live in the geographic area that now includes Alaska, Canada and the United States. Among these rituals are the War Dance (expressing prayer for success and thanks after a victory), the Dance of Healing (performed by shamans to drive out evil spirits), the Dance of Invocation (calling on the gods for help in farming, hunting, fertility, and other tribal concerns), the Dance of Courtship (for success in love) and the Dance of Religious Ecstasy (inducing a hypnotic or trancelike state) as well as Mimetic Dances which recreate significant events in tribal history, legend, or mythology.

While Native American drums often feature beautiful, hand-painted artwork on the shells and heads, they are characteristically among the most simple of instruments—generally made from hollowed logs or bent wood shells with glued, tacked or rope-tensioned animal skin heads. Native American percussion includes *gathering drums*, *tom-toms*, *frame drums* and *rattles*.

The Ceremonial Dance is Track No. 31 on the Developmental Drumming CD



Gathering Drum

Understanding The Developmental Benefits Of Making Music

Music has the power to engage, relax and energize us... and has been proven to play an incredibly important role in the healthy development of children. In scientific studies conducted by early childhood specialists, preschoolers who participated in organized music making over several months showed marked advantages over their playmates that did not. The children involved in music dramatically improved their abilities to work mazes, copy patterns of color, and draw geometric figures. These skills reflect spatial intelligence, the foundation for more complex types of reasoning (such as those used in math and science).

Music provides a healthy, natural and invaluable opportunity for individual expression while encouraging the development of the whole child, and enhancing cognitive, social, physical, emotional, cultural and recreational skills. Although the ability to learn continues throughout life, hands-on participation in music between the ages of three and ten seems to train the brain for higher thinking and children who miss out on the fun of playing music may also miss some critical developmental opportunities. Playing music benefits children by:

- Aiding academic aptitudes in mathematics, science, and the arts
- Promoting large and small motor development
- Increasing scholastic participation
- Cultivating concentration and focused listening
- Fostering early vocal development and enhanced social abilities
- Bolstering self image and self assurance
- Encouraging parent/child bonding (when music is practiced together)

Being a truly universal language, music creates a sense of community, and brings people together by bridging any number of cultural, age, racial, gender, political and other differences. By giving a child an instrument, you are providing them with a powerful voice to communicate that which doesn't come easily with words. Stimulating, amusing activities like playing music will capture and hold a child's interest and satisfy their craving for fun, while providing them with invaluable lessons that will endure the rest of their lives. The family that plays together stays together!