

Butler Percussion Ensemble

Cool Drumming!

Rhythm can be found all around the world, and each culture has their own style of rhythm. Percussion instruments like drums, xylophones, tambourines, maracas, bells, cymbals and keyboards create their own unique sound and rhythm possibilities. But you don't have to use a percussion instrument to create rhythm! Every time you clap or snap or tap your feet, it's rhythm. It's in the way you breathe, your heartbeat, and every step you take when you walk or run.

Rhythm is in everything if you just listen!



Butler Has Rhythm!

Butler University's Percussion Ensemble will educate and entertain you as they take you on their round-the-world trip of adventure in music.

You will be enthralled on the round-the-world trip with Butler University's Percussion Ensemble visiting distant places and discovering the way different cultures explore rhythm.

Get ready to visit and the traditional sounds of USA, Trinidad/Tobago, Africa, Guatemala, Turkey, Japan, Asia, Bali, Brazil and Armenia. In each place you will hear the traditional styles of music for each country. They will also take you to hear the calypso music of the Caribbean and the Afro-Cuban pulse of Latin America. Ending up back here at home, you'll experience the familiar rhythms of colonial military drumming and the beats of rock and jazz. You'll dance your way out of the theatre as Butler University Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Jon Crabiel, rocks the house!





A World of Percussion

Some of the most popular **non-pitched** percussion instruments are the **bongos** and the **conga**. Both of these drums were first played in Latin American countries. These instruments have been used for so long that no one really knows who first invented them. Both of these drums are played by slapping, tapping, or hitting them with the hands. A percussionist sits down to play the bongos and holds the two attached drums between his knees. The conga drum is much larger and rests on the floor between the player's knees. Which drum do you think has a lower pitched sound, the smaller bongos or the large conga?

Two of the most widely used **pitched** percussion instruments come from Africa. They are the **xylophone** and the **marimba**. Both of these instruments are made on a table-like frame with specifically tuned bars attached to it. The bars are placed in a certain order, just like a piano keyboard. The sound of a marimba and xylophone is created by striking the tuned, wooden bars with a mallet. The main difference between the marimba and the xylophone is the size. Marimba bars are larger and longer than xylophone bars. This causes the marimba to be lower in pitch.

Can you name all the percussion instruments?

Check out:

<https://www.percussion4u.co.uk/pages/a-to-z-of-percussion-instruments>

for an alphabetical listing of percussion instruments.



Beautiful Music... From an Oil Barrel?



A more unusual percussion instrument from the Caribbean Islands is the **steel drum**, sometimes called a **steel pan**. Steel drums are made from the tops of oil barrels. Steel drum players usually prefer to make their own drums. First the bottom end of the steel barrel is pounded in with a heavy mallet to create a bowl shape. Then, many circular patterns are drawn on the bottom of the bowl with chalk. These will help the musician know where to place the different notes. Then a small, sharp tool is used to punch lines of tiny holes along the chalk markings.



After doing this, the bottom part of the barrel is cut off. The player is left with a shorter or longer pan depending on whether he wants a higher or lower pitched sound. Then the musician must complete the long process of tuning the drum to 28 exact notes. This is done by tapping dents into the bowl shaped part of the pan until the correct note sounds. The process can take many days. After tuning the drum, the player attaches it to a stand and plays the finished instrument with small, soft mallets.

Based on what you know, is the steel drum a **pitched** or **non-pitched** percussion instrument?

Can a Percussion Instrument Play a Melody?

People have been making percussion instruments for thousands of years. The first percussion instrument just could have been two sticks or rocks tapped together. People today still use the materials around them to create instruments.

- Dried beans or small pebbles can be placed in an empty gourd to create a rattling sound.
- A large hollow log can be used as a drum.
- Two wooden sticks could be hit together to keep a beat.

Percussion instruments that are created or manufactured by people fall into two different categories. The first is non-pitched percussion. **Non-pitched percussion** instruments include woodblocks, tambourines, and conga drums, just to name a few. They each have their own unique sound, but it is almost impossible to play a song or a melody on these instruments. The second category is pitched percussion. A few pitched percussion instruments are the marimba, xylophone, and timpani. These instruments can be tuned to match specific notes so that they can easily play melodies. For example, it would be easy to recognize TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR if someone played it on the xylophone, but nearly impossible to recognize if it were play on a tambourine.



Check out a sample of percussionists using non-pitched instruments:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZHOu-XMrZQ>



Pots, Pans, Plastic Bags, and Drinking Straws



Percussion instruments can be made out of just about anything you can imagine. Composers have written music for plastic bags, straws squeaking in a drink lid, deflating and popping balloons, ripping newspaper, and the sound of hundreds of pennies being poured into metal buckets. Other musicians have built new instruments out of unusual materials.

Composer and inventor Phil Dadson has created a pitched percussion instrument out of many different sizes of tubes which are played by slapping their ends with large, flat, rubber bats. Barry Hall, an American musician, has built a percussion instrument entirely out of clay flowerpots. He calls his instrument the flowerpotophone.

Your Body is a Living Percussion Instrument

Percussion is the family of musical instruments that are banged, scraped, hit, or struck together to create sound and rhythm. The very first percussion instrument that we all play is our very own body. Think of the first time a baby learns to clap her hands together, or when a toddler stamps her feet to get her way. Both of these create sound and simple rhythms. As we get older, we learn to use our bodies as percussion instruments in more complicated ways.



How many times have you tapped your foot or clapped your hands to the beat of your favorite song on the radio? If you have ever done that you were creating rhythm! The amount of percussion sounds that humans can create with their very own bodies is endless. Try clapping your hands together just once. Now change the shape of your right hand. For example, if it was slightly curved, make it straight. Now clap your hands together once again. Did you hear a difference in sound? See how many different sounds you can make just by clapping your hands together.

Now that you have experienced the Butler Percussion Ensemble performance...

- What was your favorite percussion instrument played at the performance?
- Did you have a favorite song that was played?
- Was there a particular rhythm from the performance that you can remember? Can you make that rhythm with your hands or feet to share with someone else?
- Would you be interested in playing a pitched or non-pitched percussion instrument? Which kind do you like best?
- Did you learn anything new about percussion instruments that you didn't already know?
- Was there anything that surprised you about the performance?
- What interesting things, other than the performers or instruments, did you see on stage?
- Overall, did you enjoy attending this music performance?



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