

Course Content - Percussion Instruments

Historical Facts about Percussion Instruments

- A percussion instrument is any instrument or object that you have to shake or hit to make sound.
- The surface of a percussion instrument can be wood, metal, or anything that makes a sound when you hit it or shake it.
- Percussion began thousands of years ago with sticks, logs, and animal skins. Ancient Africans used drums as a way to communicate. They would bang drums with sticks or their hands to send warning signals, tell stories, and have celebrations.
- William F. Ludwig and his brother Theobald created the drum-set in 1909. They did it by inventing a spring driven drum-pedal that made it possible for drummers to play more than one drum at a time. They also created a pedal that allowed drummers to switch the cymbals on and off with their foot. That invention created the Hi-Hat.
- The largest drum-set in the world contains 340 pieces.

Percussion Instruments and Families

- The percussion family is divided into two groups of instruments. The first group is called “Pitched” percussion. These instruments make notes with a certain pitch. Some examples of Pitched instruments are timpani, xylophone, vibraphone, tubular bells, and the piano. The second group of percussion is called “Un-pitched” percussion. This family of percussion includes all the instruments that produce a single sound or note. Some examples of Un-Pitched Percussion include Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Bongo’s and Tambourine.
- You can make a percussion instrument out of just about ANYTHING! These kinds of percussion are sometimes called ‘Found Instruments’.

Music in Life Lesson:

The Music in Life lesson is a moment to engage in active listening. The Music in Life lesson song for this course is "Banana Boat" by Steel Drums of the Caribbean. Students are invited to think about how the music makes them feel, think and move. Music is an individual experience; active listening encourages students to choose their own musical path.

Highlighted Famous Percussionists

- **Lionel Hampton** played the vibraphone. He was called ‘king of the vibes’, ‘boss of the backbeat’ and ‘mister excitement’.
- **Viola Smith** was one of the first female professional drummers.
- **Tito Puente** was a salsa percussionist and Latin jazz composer.
- **Buddy Rich** is one of the greatest Jazz drummers ever. He started playing at a very early age and was a regular performer on Broadway stages at the unbelievable age of 4!
- **Karen Carpenter** was playing drums and singing some of the biggest mellow pop hits of the 1970s. Karen and her brother Richard formed a band called the “Carpenters” and they even had their own TV show.
- **Max Roach** was an American jazz percussionist, drummer, and composer. He was a pioneer of bebop jazz and many people consider Max to be one of most important drummers in history, because not only was he a great drummer but he also worked hard on civil rights for all Americans.
- **Gene Krupa** was an American jazz and big band drummer, actor and composer.
- **Sheila E.** started her professional percussionist career at the early age of 15 and is a top drummer and percussionist for everyone from Herbie Hancock to Beyoncé
- **Neil Peart** is a Canadian drummer in the rock band “Rush”. The way he plays the drums has been an inspiration to many young drummers today. He has a unique way of combining hard rock beats with jazz and big band rhythms.
- **Evelyn Glennie** is a Scottish percussionist and composer who has won many awards for her orchestral performances.
- **David Van Tieghem** is an American percussionist and composer who’s best known for the way he plays “found” instruments.
- **Keiko Abe** is a Japanese composer and marimba player.
- **Dave Grohl** is an American rock musician, multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter, and producer