



Drumsets Instruments Explanatory Document

Bongo



Bongo or **bongos** are a Cuban percussion instrument consisting of a pair of single-headed, open-ended drums attached to each other. The drums are of different size: the larger drum is called the *hembra* (female) and the smaller the *macho* (male). It is most often played by hand and is especially associated in Cuban music with a steady patten or ostinato of eighth-notes known as the *martillo* or "hammer". They are membranophones, or instruments that create sound by a vibration against a stretched membrane.

Bongos are typically made of wood, metal or composite materials attached by a thick piece of wood. The bongo head can be made of animal skin or synthetic material.

Bongo drums produce relatively high-pitched sounds compared to conga drums, and should be held between the knees with the larger drum on the right when right-handed. They are traditionally played by striking the drumheads with the fingers and palms, although some contemporary compositions require drum sticks. Bongos can also be muted by placing part of the hand on top of the head while striking it. In Cuban music, bongos are usually played by the same musician as the cowbell. These drums can also be played on a stand, as is the case with concert orchestras and bands.

Conga



The conga, or more properly the tumbadora, is a tall, narrow, single-headed Cuban drum with African antecedents. It is thought to be derived from the Makuta drums or similar drums associated with Afro-Cubans of Central African descent. A person who plays conga is called a "conguero". Although ultimately derived from African drums made from hollowed logs, the Cuban conga is staved, like a barrel. These drums were probably made from salvaged barrels originally. They are used both in Afro-Caribbean religious music and as the principal instrument in Rumba. Congas are now very common in Latin music, including salsa music, merengue music, Reggaeton, as well as many other forms of American popular music.

Most modern congas have a staved wooden or fibreglass shell and a screw-tensioned drumhead. They are usually played in sets of two to four with the fingers and palms of the hand. Typical congas stand approximately 75 cm from the bottom of the shell to the head. The drums may be played while seated. Alternatively, the drums may be mounted on a rack or stand to permit the player to play while standing.

There are five basic strokes:

- Open tone (*abierto*): played with the four fingers near the rim of the head, producing a clear resonant tone with a distinct pitch.
- Muffled tone (*tapado*): like the open tone, is made by striking the drum with the four fingers, but holding the fingers against the head to muffle the tone
- Bass tone (*bajo de palma*): played with the full palm on the head. It produces a low muted sound.
- Slap (*seco*): the most difficult technique producing a loud clear "popping" sound (when played at fast and short intervals is called *floreo*, played to instil emotion in the dancer).

- **Touch (toque de punta):** as implied by the name, this tone is produced by just touching the fingers or heel of the palm to the drum head. It is possible to combine a touch of the palm with a touch of the fingers in a manoeuvre called heel-toe (manoteo), which can be used to produce the conga equivalent of drumrolls.

The moose call or glissando is done by rubbing the third finger, supported by the thumb, across the head of the drum. The finger is sometimes moistened with saliva or sweat, and sometimes a little coat of beeswax is put on the surface of the conga head to help make the sound. The moose call is also done on the bongos.

To bend the pitch of the congas, a conguero sometimes uses his elbow to shift around on and apply pressure to different parts of the head; this causes the note to change. This is not a traditional stroke, but it is common in modern salsa and rumba.

Occasionally sticks are used on congas: some sticks, such as the Regal Tip's conga sticks, are made to imitate the sound of a hand hitting a conga; even timpani mallets, timbale sticks, etc. have been used on congas, despite the fact that the conga is usually called a hand drum.

Surdo



The surdo is a large bass drum used in many kinds of Brazilian music, most notably samba where it plays the lower parts from a samba band.

Surdo sizes normally vary between 16" or even 14" and 26" or even 29" diameter. In Rio de Janeiro, surdos are generally 60cm deep. Surdos used in the northeast of Brazil are commonly more shallow (50cm deep). Surdos may have shells of wood, galvanized steel, or aluminum. Heads may be goatskin or plastic. A Rio bateria will commonly use surdos that have skin heads (for rich tone) with aluminum shells (for lightness). Surdos are worn from a waist belt or shoulder strap, oriented with the heads roughly horizontal. The bottom head is not played.

For samba-enredo (Rio-style Carnival samba), surdos are played with one percussion mallet, damping the head with the other hand. In more intimate settings with smaller bands, a surdo player may make elaborate use of damped hits and the free hand. In samba-reggae it is common to play the surdo with two mallets.

Timbales



Timbales are familiar instruments in all forms of Cuban music. They are a part of the polyrhythmic sounds that originate from a deep African tradition and have become a part of a distinctly Caribbean and Cuban sound. The history of the timbale drum goes back hundreds of years, and takes its place in the important events that have shaped Cuba and the Caribbean.



1. Timbales are generally two drums that appear side-by-side. Each drum comes in a different size. The larger drum is usually 14 inches and appears on the left side of the smaller drum. The smaller drum is to the right of the musician. Sounds are produced on the drums with a 12-inch wand or stick.
2. Timbales are commonly used in the musical styles of rumbas, guaraches, and other forms of Cuban music. Timbales have a rhythmical sound that is distinct to these musical styles, creating a softer, polyrhythmic sound.
3. The timbales were first introduced by Haitians who immigrated to the island and were a part of the slave rebellion of 1791. The drums began appearing in danzon, a Cuban style of music that was derived from the French contredanse.
4. Generally, danzon used the timpani, a similar style of drum. But the timpani were too heavy and immobile and had a much heavier sound. The timbales replaced the timpani in Cuban music because they were easier to move around and they had a sound that was softer than the timpani.

5. The history of the timbales follows the history of musical styles in Cuba. From 1879-1916, the danzon was typically played by *orquesta tipica*, a Cuban musical group or orchestra. An *orquesta tipica* typically employed woodwind and brass instruments, violins, acoustic bass, guiro or gourd scraper, and a creole timpani to create their sound. But by the early 1900s, the musical sounds changed when the types of orchestras playing danzon underwent a metamorphosis as well. *Charanga francesa*, another type of Cuban orchestra, replaced the *orquesta tipica*. While the instruments employed by the *charanga francesa* remained the same, there was one change. The creole timpani, which had a heavier sound, was replaced by the timbales. Since then, the timbales have been a familiar feature in all Cuban musical styles.

Agogo



An agogô (Yoruba: agogo, meaning bell) is a single or multiple bell now used throughout the world but with origins in traditional Yoruba music and also in the samba baterias (percussion ensembles). The agogô may be the oldest samba instrument and was based on West African Yoruba single or double bells. The agogô has the highest pitch of any of the bateria instruments.

The African agogô bell is also called the gangkogui or gonkogui. It is made of metal with each bell a different size. This allows a differently pitched note to be produced depending on which bell has been hit. Originally wrought iron, they are now manufactured in a variety of metals and sizes for different sound qualities. The most common arrangement is two bells attached by a U shaped piece of metal. The smaller bell is held uppermost. Either bell may be hit with a wooden

stick to make a cowbell like sound or less commonly a clicking sound is produced by squeezing the two bells together.

Tambo = Tambourine

Vibraslap



A vibraslap is a percussion instrument consisting of a piece of stiff wire (bent in a U shape) connecting a wood ball to a hollow box of wood with metal "teeth" inside. The percussionist holds the metal wire in one hand and strikes the ball (usually against the palm of their other hand). The box acts as a resonating body for a metal mechanism placed inside with a number of loosely fastened pins or rivets that vibrate and rattle against the box. The instrument is a modern version of the jawbone.

- Sound created when the ball end is struck against the palm of the hand
- Sound can be varied simply by rotating the sound chamber
- Two styles made from wood and a third made from metal
- The wood versions have warm crisp tones while the metal

version produces a metallic clatter with longer sustain.

Shaker



The word shaker describes a large number of percussive musical instruments used for creating rhythm in music.

They are so called because the method of creating sound involves shaking them—moving them back and forth rather than striking them. Most may also be struck for a greater



accent on certain beats. Shakers are often used in rock and popular styles to give the j ride pattern along with or substituting for the ride cymbal.

A shaker may comprise a container partially full of small loose objects such as beads which create the percussive sounds as they collide with each other, the inside surface, or other fixed objects inside the container – as in a Rainstick, Caxixi or Egg shaker. While many shakers are played with one's hands, another variety of shakers can be played with the feet. One example is the Farmer Foot Shaker pedal.

Maracas



Maracas (sometimes called rumba shakers) are a native instrument of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala and several nations of the Caribbean and Latin America. They are simple percussion instruments (idiophones), usually played in pairs, consisting of a dried calabash or gourd shell (cuia "cue-ya") or coconut shell filled with seeds or dried beans. They may also be made of leather, wood, or plastic.

Often one ball is pitched high and the other is pitched low. Some have thought the instrument of prehistoric Moroccan origin, however there are in existence clay maracas used by the natives of Colombia, 1500 years ago. The word maraca is thought to have come from the Tupi language of Brazil, where it is pronounced 'ma-ra-KAH'. They are known in Trinidad as shac-shacs.

Although a simple instrument, the method of playing the maracas is not obvious. The seeds must travel some distance before they hit the leather, wood or plastic, so the player must anticipate the rhythm. One can also strike the maraca against one's hand or leg to get a different sound.

Cabassa [Cabasa]



The cabasa, similar to the shekere, is a percussion instrument that is constructed with loops of steel ball chain wrapped around a wide cylinder. The cylinder is fixed to a long, narrow wooden or plastic handle. It was originally of African origin, and constructed from dried oval- or pear-shaped gourds with beads strung on the outer surface. Modern manufacturers have built a more durable cabasa that they call an afuche-cabasa (pictured). It provides a metallic, rattling sound when shaken or twisted, similar to the sound of a rattlesnake. It is often used in Latin jazz, especially in bossa nova pieces. Precise rhythmic effects can be gained by the advanced player. The player places his non-dominant hand on the metal chain, to provide pressure, while holding the wooden handle with the other hand and twisting the instrument back and forth as per the rhythmic pattern desired. In addition to Latin

music, many band and orchestra pieces call for the cabasa.

Guica (Cuica)



Cuíca is a Brazilian friction drum often used in samba music. The tone it produces has a high-pitched squeaky timbre.

The body of the cuíca is normally made of metal. It has a single head, normally six to ten inches in diameter (15–25 cm), made of animal skin. A thin bamboo stick is attached to the centre of, and perpendicular to, the drum head, extending into the drum's interior. The instrument is held under one arm at chest height with the help of a shoulder strap. To play the cuíca, the musician rubs the stick up and down with a wet cloth held in one hand, using the thumb of the other hand to press down on the skin of the drum near the place where the stick is attached. The rubbing motion produces the sound and the pitch is increased or decreased by changing the pressure on the thumb.

Guiro



The güiro is a Puerto Rican percussion instrument consisting of an open-ended, hollow gourd with parallel notches cut in one side. It is played by rubbing a wooden stick ("pua") along the notches to produce a ratchet-like sound. The güiro is commonly used in Latin-American music, and plays a key role in the typical cumbia rhythm section. The güiro is also known as calabazo, guayo, ralladera, or rascador. In Brazil it is commonly known as reco-reco.

The güiro is made by carving parallel fluting on the surface of the shell of the gourd. It is played by holding the güiro in the left hand with the thumb inserted into the back sound hole to keep the instrument in place. The right hand usually holds the scraper and plays the instrument. The scraper is more properly called a "pua". Playing the güiro usually requires both long and short sounds, which are made by scraping both up and down in long or short strokes. The güiro, like the maracas, is usually played by a singer. The instrument's rasping sound adds counterpoint to folk music but is less often used in salsa bands.

Taiko Drums



Japanese taiko drums have been developed into a wide range of percussion instruments that are used in both Japanese folk and classical musical traditions.

Taiko, in general, are stick percussion instruments. With the exception of the kotsuzumi and ootsuzumi, all taiko are struck with bachi. They have heads on both sides of the drum body, and a sealed resonating cavity. Taiko are also characterized by a high amount of tension on the drums heads, with a correspondingly high pitch relative to body size. This high tension likely developed in response to Japan's wet and humid summers when most festivals take place. Many taiko are not tunable, and a drum with high head tension would counteract the slacking effects of humidity.

Cajon



A cajón ("crate," "drawer," or "box") is a box-shaped percussion instrument original from Peru, played by slapping the front face (generally thin plywood) with the hands.

Half to three quarter inch (1.3 to 2 cm) thick wood is generally used for five sides of the box. A thin sheet of plywood is nailed on as the sixth side and acts as the striking surface or head. A sound hole is cut on the back side opposite the head or tapa.

The top edges are often left unattached and can be slapped against the box. The player sits astride the box, tilting it at an angle while striking the head between his knees. The modern cajón has several screws at the top for adjusting percussive timbre and may sport rubber feet. Some versions may also have several vertically stretched cords pressed against the tapa for a buzz like effect or tone. Guitar strings, rattles or drum snares may serve this purpose. The percussionist can play the

sides with the top of his palms and fingers for additional sounds. There are also tube cajón, which are played like a conga.

Claves



A pair of small wooden cylinders that produce a distinct tone when struck together and that play the claves rhythms. One clave rests in the cupped palm of your hand while the other hand holding another clave strikes it in the middle. In a popular music ensemble, ones that produce a high pitch (usually known as Son Claves) are used so that its sound can cut through. In Rumba, the clave that is cupped in the hand often has a crescent shaped groove in the middle and it is bigger than the one that is used to strike it.

Arabic Instruments

Tabla (Tabl, Tablah) [General Arabic name for drum]

Typically, a large, cylindrical double-sided drum, played with the hand on one side and with a beater on the other. The name is widely used, though the instrument itself has regional variations.

Rik (Riq, Rikk) [Doff (Daff, Duff)]



The riq (sometimes called daff) is a small tambourine (approx. 8.5 inches in diameter & 2.5 inches deep) traditionally covered with a goat or fish skin head, stretched over a wooden frame inlaid with mother of pearl. The riq has five sets of two pairs of brass cymbals (approx. 2 inches in diameter) spaced evenly around the frame, and called 'sagaat' in Arabic. The cymbals are what produces the exciting jingle sound. Although fish or goat skin heads are valued for their warm and natural sound, their main problem is that they are very sensitive to humidity and can easily lose their tightness. Traditionally riq players had to heat their riqs just before the performance. Since the riq skin could stretch again after 5-10 minutes, professional riq players often had to own two identical riqs, heating one while playing the other, and switching between songs.

In the late 1980s, a mylar-headed, aluminum (or wooden) bodied instrument was introduced and was adopted by a number of professional riq players. Modern riqs are tunable, and allow heads to be replaced without having to be glued. The riq is especially valued for the variety of sounds it can produce and appreciated for the subtle yet virtuosic manner in which it is performed. In the first half of the 20th century it was common for the riq to be the sole percussion instrument in art-music ensembles. In the second half of the 20th century, with the addition of the tabla and other percussion instruments to these ensembles, riq players adopted a technique that emphasizes the cymbal over the membrane sounds.

Duhulla (Doholla)



DOHOLLA are a very large size dumbek (ranges 6 or 8 pegs).

The Egyptian dumbek or tabla is the probably the best known style of arabic drum. Dumbeks (aka darabukeh, derbekeh, dumbelek, tabla, tarabuka) traditionally hail from throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans, and vary slightly in technique and manufacture style according to region. Nowadays they are popular worldwide, and are showing up in drum circles being lighter and with more potentially ornate finger technique than djembe.

They are now copying the look of Egyptian drums in Turkey because the design is well-suited to advanced technique, but excepting 'emin' brand drums (from Istanbul), the Egyptian ones are generally heavier than their Turkish cousins (an asset in tone and playability). They are cast aluminum and finished with a coating and mother of pearl inlay.

Katem (Maktoum)



A large, round-based drum played between the knees, meaning 'background'. The Katem plays only part of the rhythm, the bass, giving it strength and dynamism.

Sagat (Zills)



Zills - The Turkish name for small metal finger cymbals, also known as "sagat" in Arabic. The dancer wears them over the thumb and middle finger of each hand and plays them by striking together the rims of each pair. In this way the dancer embellishes the music with light tinkering rhythmic patterns.

Nakarazan



The naqqāra is a drum with a rounded back and a hide head. It is thus a membranophone. The term naqqāra, also naqqarat, naqqarah, naqqāre, nakkare, nagora comes from the Arabic verb naqr- that means "to strike, beat".

This percussion instrument is often played in pairs, where one naqqara will produce low pitch beats called nar and the other for the high pitch beats (the female). The instruments are beaten with short wooden sticks bent outward at the upper ends called

damka.

Cuban Instruments

Shekere (Chekere)



Like the conga drum, the chekere is African in origin. Specifically, the chekere comes from Nigeria, where it is known as an agbe. Made from a dried hollow gourd, the chekere is wrapped in a mesh of beads or shells. The musician shifts the mesh back and forth between his hands, creating a rhythmic sound somewhat like a smoother version of a maraca shaker.

Pailas



Paila criolla is the term given to a shallow single-headed drum with metal casing, invented in Cuba, and initially used by street bands in the 19th century. They are shallower in shape than single-headed tom-toms and come in double sets, tuned an octave apart. The player (known as a timbalero) uses a variety of stick strokes, rim shots, and rolls on the skins to produce a wide range of percussive expression during solos and at transitional sections of music, and usually plays the shells of the drum or auxiliary percussion such as a cowbell (cencerro). Pailas are always hit with straight batons that have no additional head. Hits are made on the top and on the metal sides.

The shells are referred to as cáscara (the Spanish word for shell) which is also the name of a rhythmic pattern common in Cuban music that is played on the shells of the pailas to keep time. The shells are made of metal. The heads are light and tuned fairly high for their size. Pailas are now often called timbales, but the term timbales is ambiguous, because it was also used to describe kettle drums.