

PlayDrums!

While recent studies have shown that music participation can play an important role in enhancing mental, emotional, physical, cultural and social wellness, drumming remains one of the most accessible, affordable and fundamental forms of music making. The PlayDrums! program combines a brief introduction to the world of drums, drummers and drumming with a hands-on lesson taught by a qualified instructor. Recommended by leading music education organizations and developed in conjunction with respected percussionists and educators Dom Famularo (drumset) and Jim Greiner (congas), the goal of the program is to give beginning drummers enough knowledge and technique so that they can drum along with a simple song by the end of the lesson— providing a positive experience for the first-time player that will encourage them to continue to enjoy the benefits of playing music throughout their lives.

PlayDrums! offers aspiring drummers of all ages a unique opportunity to experience the fun and advantages of drumming first-hand. For more information please contact your school music teacher, college music department or local music retailer or the one of following music advocacy organizations:

The Percussion Marketing Council

www.playdrums.com.

The Percussive Arts Society

www.pas.org

The Music Edge

www.themusicedge.com



Play Drums!

Five-Minute • Hands-On
Beginning
Conga Drum Lesson



developed in conjunction with

Jim Greiner

(renowned percussionist and educator)

The Percussion Marketing Council

and

NAMM

(The International Music Products Association)

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Five-Minute, First Conga Lesson

The five-minute conga drum lesson has been developed to give beginning drummers an overview of the instrument as well as the fundamental skills needed to start playing while also motivating them to continue drumming in the future.

1:00 - An overview and demonstration of beginning to advanced drumming techniques combined with a discussion of the history of conga drums and their role in traditional and contemporary music.

2:00 - Hands-on learning, including:

- How to tune the congas.
- How to play two of the basic conga sounds,—the bass sound and the open tone— clearly and consistently without hurting one’s hands.
- How to stay relaxed while playing so as to achieve and maintain a solid groove.
- How to listen while playing so as to integrate the conga part with the other parts being played.

1:30 - Instruction and performance of a basic Tumba (low conga) part while the teacher joins in with a higher (conga) part. Note: The low conga part is based on the authentic Afro Cuban Guaguanco Rumba and can be used as a basic foundation in a wide range of contemporary popular musical styles.

0:30 - Final tips, questions, answers and encouragement.

Conga Drum Basics

Here are some basic conga tuning guidelines that can be applied to the tuning of other types of drums, too.

1. Tune evenly in small to moderate increments. Tune each lug (tension point) to the same pitch so that the drum is in tune with itself. Many players, teachers and manufacturers recommend tuning by going around the head from lug to lug in a circular pattern. For some types of drums, heads (natural or synthetic) and players, tuning by adjusting lugs that are across from each other or tuning every other lug in a circular pattern can also be effective techniques.

2. Tune each drum to its “sweet spot”, the pitch where a fundamental tone sustains for the longest time when an “open tone” is played. Also, feel free to experiment with different tunings and combinations of pitches.

The conga drums are part of a family of instruments that also

includes bongos, timbales, cowbells, claves and guiros. In the Latin percussion section each of these instruments plays an important function by adding a distinctive rhythmic pattern and tone color to create an overall “ensemble” sound and feel.

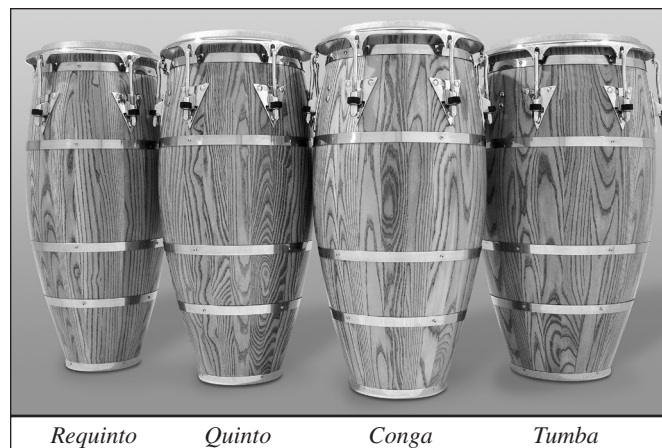
Listen to all forms of music and train your ears to recognize the different musical elements, including: Pitch (high-low), Tone Color (dark-bright), Rhythm (short/long), Harmony (complement-contrast), Texture (thick-thin), Tempo (slow-fast) and Volume (loud-soft). Most importantly, when it comes to making music, stay loose and have fun!

Conga drums have their roots in West Africa and evolved into their present form in Cuba where they are most often called Tumbadoras. Today, the term conga is widely accepted to refer to an entire family of instruments that are used in a variety of musical styles, from authentic, traditional Latin and World music to popular, contemporary forms such as Jazz, Rock and Hip-Hop/R&B.

In the Afro-Cuban tradition there are four main drum sizes which cover a full tonal range:

- The **Tumba** (TOOM-bah) is the largest diameter (12.25” to 12.50”) and lowest pitched.
- The **Conga** (KAHN-gah) is the middle sized (11.75”), mid range drum.
- The **Quinto** (KEEN-toe) is the smaller sized (10.75 to 11.00”) and higher pitched.
- Some contemporary congueros also use the **Requinto** (ray-KEEN-toe); a smaller (9.50 to 10.00”), even higher pitched drum that is becoming popular in a wide range of musical styles.

There are no specific pitches, scales or intervals that are universally recognized as the only ways to tune congas. Each player often finds his or her signature “sound” by listening to the way more experienced players tune their instruments. The tuning may also vary depending on the style of music being played, how many drums are being used at once, the physical space and the player’s preference. Some players, especially studio percussionists, do tune to specific pitches or key centers and intervals (often combinations of Thirds, Fourths or even Fifths). The main goal is to create a musical sound that is true to the nature of the instrument and that works within the context of the music in which it is being played.



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