

SNARE DRUM

The snare drum is nearly 200 years old. It has two calfskin or plastic drumheads stretched tightly over a hollow metal frame. The top head is struck with wooden drumsticks, and is called the batter-head. The bottom head, or snare-head has catgut or metal wires called snares stretched tightly across it. When this untuned drum is struck on the top head, the snares produce a characteristic sharp rattling sound as they vibrate against the bottom head.



CYMBALS

Made from two large, slightly concave brass plates, cymbals are held with straps and are shaped so that when they are crashed together, only the edges touch. Although cymbals are untuned instruments, different sized cymbals produce a wide range of sound effects. Some are so small that they are played with just the fingers. Cymbals are also played by being struck with drumsticks or mallets while suspended on a string or stand.



BASS DRUM

Constructed like a snare drum, but without snares, the bass drum is much larger and is played on its side, so that either head may be struck. The beater or mallet for a bass drum is large with a soft material such as sheep's wool covering the end.



TIMPANI

Timpani, also called kettledrums, are constructed of a large copper bowl with a drumhead made of calfskin or plastic stretched across the top. When struck with felt-tipped wooden sticks, or mallets, timpani produce a specific pitch that is determined by the drum's size. That pitch is fine-tuned by tightening the drumhead with keys and foot pedals. Most bands use three or four timpani of varying sizes.



XYLOPHONE

The xylophone is a tuned instrument made of hardwood bars in differing lengths set horizontally on a metal frame. With the larger, lower-sounding bars on the left, the notes of the xylophone are laid out much like a piano. Striking the bars with hard mallets produces a bright, sharp sound. The xylophone was originally modeled after an African instrument and its name is Greek, meaning "wood sound".

PERCUSSION LINKS

<http://www.pas.org/>

<http://www.harmony-central.com/Drums/>

<http://www.lpmusic.com/>

HOW THE SOUND IS MADE

Percussion instruments include just about anything you can whack with a stick. In percussion instruments the sound source is a vibrating membrane or vibrating piece of solid material. The percussionist normally causes these materials to vibrate by hitting them, but many percussion instruments are played by shaking, rubbing, or any other way of causing vibrations.

HOW THE PITCH IS CHANGED

Because of the complex ways in which the sound source vibrates, most percussion instruments do not have definite pitch. With the instruments that do have a definite pitch, the pitch of these instruments depends on the amount of material that is vibrating, either by using different sizes of vibrating material or by adjusting the tension of the vibrating material. The percussion instruments are an international family, with ancestors from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe representing musical styles from many different cultures.