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foreword

This set of materials developed by Cheryl Grosso is an excellent addition to the hand drumming repertoire. Her compositions (*Rhythm Chants*) for hand drumming ensemble draw upon elements from western art music and several non-western musical traditions. Their structure and instrumentation offer much versatility with freedom for more advanced players to experiment and improvise. The resulting music is unique, appealing, and rewarding to performers with diverse interests and experience. The *Hand Drumming Essentials* method book thoughtfully approaches the development of technique on many instruments and ensemble rehearsal activities. Cheryl's materials are a valuable resource for percussionists and the non-percussionist music educator.

John Bergamo
Renowned World Percussion Performer/Pedagogue

General Performance Information

introduction

This volume contains 12 complete performance scores of compositions for hand drumming ensemble. These compositions, *Rhythm Chants*, correlate to the publication *Hand Drumming Essentials: The Instruments, Techniques and Compositions for Ensemble Performance*. The *Hand Drumming Essentials* method book contains the necessary information for starting and developing a hand drumming ensemble and includes an appendix of seven pieces for study and performance. This supplemental volume includes pieces at a variety of levels that can be learned by young musicians and students with no previous musical training. All of the *Rhythm Chants*

can be studied and performed by more proficient musicians. Some of the compositions in this volume borrow rhythms and/or compositional elements from the musical traditions of West Africa, Cuba, India and Brazil. Most use principles of timing, part relationship, form and/or instrumentation to create pieces that reference one of the aforementioned types of music. The *Rhythm Chants* exhibit distinctive interrelationships operating within similar formal structures. The infrastructure sometimes centers on a single, authentic, non-western rhythmic pattern from which all other patterns are derived and upon which all other patterns are layered.





instrumentation

Vast differences exist among hand drumming traditions throughout the world. It is important to note that, though drums are found in many different shapes and sizes, all drums are capable of producing many similar tones. The drum sounds and strokes utilized in the *Rhythm Chants* can be applied to any hand drum. Although each type of drum has its own unique timbre, all drums are able to produce the variety of tones found in this music. The music will simply be characteristic of the drums employed.

As previously mentioned, a hand drumming ensemble can be formed with almost any combination or family of hand drums and accessory instruments. The compositions in this volume suggest barrel-shaped drums as the core of the ensemble. The three sizes of barrel-shaped drums utilized are the quinto, conga and tumba (collectively referred to as congas). This trio of congas generates the essential melodic material of the ensemble. The collective spirit of their patterns shapes the groove of each piece. The *Rhythm Chants* most often use the smallest barrel-shaped drum (quinto) as the solo instrument and it has the most active patterns. Generally, the largest barrel-shaped drum (tumba) has the least amount of rhythmic and improvisational activity. Many of the pieces utilize the surdo as the lead drum for cueing changes. Other instruments include timbales, bongos, log drums, marimba, axatse, gankogui, agogo, toke, claves, triangle, tamborim and shakers.

Ensembles of different sizes can perform the compositions in this volume. The performance notes associated with each score include recommendations regarding instrument doubling. The conga trio (quinto, conga and tumba) is used as the core of the ensemble. The double-bell and surdo are used in all but a few of the compositions. The use of accessory percussion instruments and other drums varies from one *Rhythm Chant* to the next. Regardless of the instrument doubling used in rehearsals, only one double-bell (agogo or gankogui) and one surdo should be used in performance. The ideal ensemble would include the following instrumentation: one double-bell, one or two of each additional accessory percussion instrument, one surdo/floor tom, and three to four each of quinto, conga and tumba.

musical considerations

The double-bell (gankogui or agogo) player must have a strong sense of time. This instrument is critical to the proper alignment of all parts. All members of the ensemble must know the bell part. Regardless of instrumentation, all parts must align with the timing set by the gankogui or agogo bell.

The melody, balance and timbre of the conga trio deserve considerable attention because the conga trio forms the core musical material of the ensemble. Consequently, uniformity in tuning and tone production is crucial to the overall ensemble sound. The importance of this element increases as parts are doubled. The quinto, conga and tumba parts are sometimes written as a single melodic line distributed among the three voices. Other times, the three parts complement each other within the polyphonic structure.

The conga trio parts, by design, exploit the best characteristics of each drum's sound; thus, it is important that certain tones project particularly well. The bass tone on the tumba must be heard at all times. It is a defining sound in the tumba parts. Bass tones are not easily projected but play an important role in the composite ensemble sound. Slaps in the quinto parts are very important and must project well. The quinto players must make clear distinctions between open tones and slaps. In regard to the conga parts, slap tones, bass tones and open tones have varying significance in each *Rhythm Chant*. The bass tone on the quinto is often used as a filler tone, whereas on the conga it is often a character tone.

Improvised solos must be audible above the ensemble sound. This is not easily accomplished on all instruments. Most commonly, the quinto players solo, but in several *Rhythm Chants* it is specifically suggested that other instruments be featured. Solos played on any instrument are permitted. If your ensemble is large, I recommend that the ensemble lower its overall dynamic level during most solos, although the double-bell part must remain prominent. Resume the normal dynamic level during periods of play between solos.

Generally, an improvised solo will last for as long as the soloist has something to say, after which time normal play resumes. A brief time later, another soloist will begin improvising. Not all solos, however, need to transpire in that manner. Players may choose to trade four- or eight-measure solos; or each member of the ensemble—including accessory instruments—may in turn play a four-measure solo. Many other formats are also possible.



table of instruments

The core instrumentation utilized in each *Rhythm Chant* remains consistent, but beyond this, the instrumentation varies. The table below describes frequently used instruments, including pronunciations for the less-familiar names.

Instrument & Pronunciation	Description	Notes of Interest
Hand Drums		
Quinto (KEEN-toe)	Wooden, barrel-shaped drum with a single calfskin head; 11-inch head diameter.	Synthetic shells and heads are available; head diameters vary.
Conga (KONG-ga)	Wooden, barrel-shaped drum with a single calfskin head; 11 3/4-inch head diameter.	Synthetic shells and heads are available; head diameters vary.
Tumba (TOOM-ba)	Wooden, barrel-shaped drum with a single calfskin head; 12 1/2-inch head diameter.	Synthetic shells and heads are available; head diameters vary.
Gboba (BOE-ba)	Wooden, barrel-shaped drum with a single calfskin head; 16-18-inch head diameter.	Gboba is taller than congas and has a much larger barrel and deeper tone.
Bongos	Pair of wood-shelled, cylindrical drums with 6- and 8-inch single calfskin heads.	Skin heads have a warmer tone than plastic, particularly when played with fingers.
Stick Drums		
Surdo (SIR-doe)	Metal- or wood-shelled cylindrical drum with two goatskin heads; 20 to 22-inch average head diameter.	Traditionally hangs from a strap around the player's neck and shoulders; I suggest using a stand.
Timbales (tim-BAH-lees)	Pair of metal-shelled drums with a single plastic or skin head; head diameters range from 12 to 16 inches.	Plastic heads are more durable and practical in a school setting.
Log Drums	Rectangular drums often made of plywood, with tongues or tone bars carved in the top side. One or two tones (tongues) per drum are preferred.	Also known as tongue drums and available in many configurations. Larger log drums project best in a full ensemble.
Frame Drum	Wooden shell of varying depth with one or two skin heads; head diameters range from 6-24 inches.	In this setting a 14- or 16-inch frame drum can be held between the legs and played with sticks or mallets.
Accessory		
Axatse (uh-HA-chee)	Bulbous gourd with an elongated neck; wrapped with a net of beads.	The gourd size and type of beads used greatly affect the loudness. Axatse is smaller than a shakere.
Double-bell: agogo (uh-GO-go) or gankogui (gon-KO-gwee)	Two conical metal bells formed or welded to a handle.	Both the western agogo and imported gankogui are readily available.
Double-bell: wood agogo	Two cylindrical wood bells attached to a handle.	Synthetic substitutes last far longer and cut better through an ensemble.
Basket Shakers	Small woven vessels filled with stones or pellets; a piece of gourd covers the open end.	You can make your own basket shakers, allowing you to control the tone color.
Clave (KLAH-vay)	Two rosewood, cylindrical concussion sticks.	Claves of various sizes and types of wood are available.
Cowbell	A trapezoid-shaped metal bell.	Large sizes produce the greatest distinction between tones.
Guiro (GWEE-row)	An oblong-shaped gourd with many notches carved into one side.	Cuban guiros project very well in an ensemble; metal guiros are also available.
Nuts & Nails	Various types are available; ju ju, cocoa, and goat nails are among the most common.	These are used in some non-western dance traditions. Drummers and dancers fasten them around their wrists or ankles.
Rute (ROO-ta)	A bundle of split rattan sticks or very thin dowels.	Striking rute against a resonant box or surface will help amplify its sound.
Tamborim (tam-bor-RIM)	Shallow, metal-shelled drum with a single 6-inch head.	Plastic heads work well in a large ensemble or school setting.
Tambourine	Metal jingles attached to a shallow wood shell with a single skin or plastic head.	A head is necessary for playing with the thumb, fingers and palm.
Toke (TOE-kay)	Shaped like a taco shell but made of hammered iron.	This is an Ewe instrument, often used in pairs in a traditional setting.
Triangle	Tempered steel bent in the shape of a triangle.	A 9-inch triangle struck with a heavy beater works best.
Tube Shakers	Metal, wood, gourd, and plastic vessels filled with beads or pellets.	Many types are readily available.
Keyboard		
Marimba	Play with rubber mallets; hardness varies depending upon the register.	Weave paper between the bars to simulate the African buzzing effect.



about notation

The following *Rhythm Chants* use a single-line staff. All measures included within repeat signs may be repeated ad libitum unless specified otherwise. The exact instrumentation listed in the score should be

AGOGO/GANKOGUI, WOOD AGOGO: Notes written below the staff are played on the low-pitched bell, and notes written above the staff are played on the high-pitched bell.

AXATSE: Notes written below the staff are played on the left leg, and notes written above the staff are played on the left palm.

TOKE: Toke 1 should be tuned to a higher pitch than toke 2. In some scores they are written on separate staves and in others, toke 1 is written above the staff with toke 2 written below. **SUBSTITUTION:** Thick-walled metal pipe with a 1- to 2-inch diameter struck

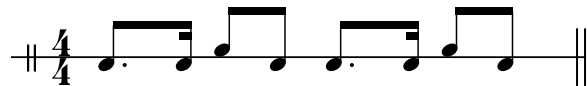
QUINTO, CONGA and TUMBA: All notes are written above the staff. All slaps are the muffled type (2-handed) unless otherwise indicated in the performance notes that accompany the score. Stroke types are indicated in the first row of letters below the staff, and sticking indications are in the second row.

SURDO: All notes are written above the staff. Stroke types are indicated in the first row of letters below the staff, and sticking indications are written in the second row.

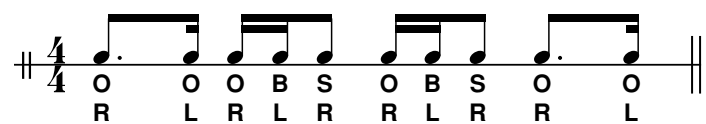
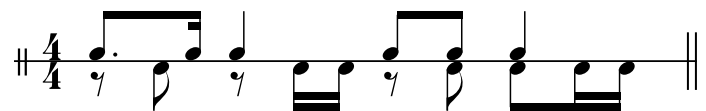
BONGOS: Notes written below the staff are played on the large drum, and notes written above the staff are played on the small drum. Stroke types are indicated in the first row of letters below the staff, and sticking indications are in the second row of letters.

TIMBALES: Notes written below the staff are played on the large drum, and notes written above the staff are played on the small drum. Timbales should always play paila during the solos of other ensemble members. With the exception of incorporated improvised rim shots, which are characteristic of timbale playing, all strokes are open unless otherwise indicated.

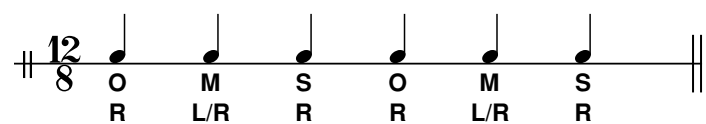
used whenever possible. For example, the double-bell is called either agogo or gankogui, but the preferred instrument is the one listed in the score. Performance notes accompany each piece.



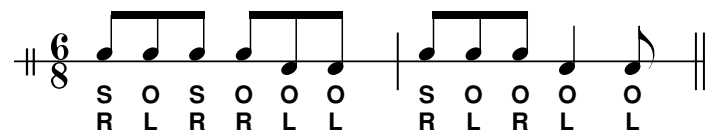
with a heavy steel rod or triangle beater. When pipes are used, they must each have a different pitch.



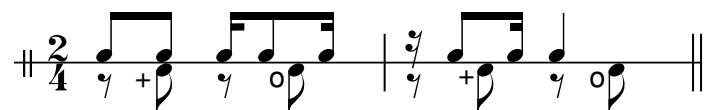
B=Bass tone H=Heel tone L=Left hand
D=Damp tone O=Open tone R=Right hand
F=Finger tone S=Slap tone



D=Dead stroke O=Open stroke L=Left hand
M=Muffled stroke S=Strike shell R=Right hand



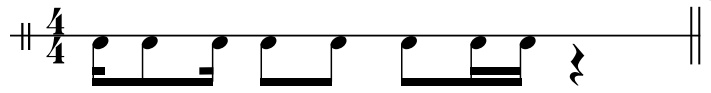
D=Damp tone S=Slap tone L=Left hand
F=Finger tone T=Thumb tone R=Right hand
O=Open tone



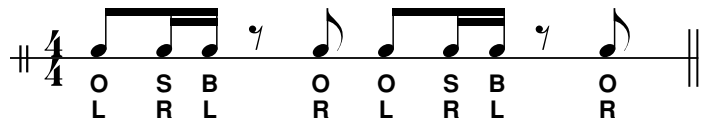
=Dead stroke o=Open stroke
R=Right hand L=Left hand



FRAME DRUM: All notes are written below the staff. It should be played with wooden sticks or very hard timpani mallets. All strokes are open.

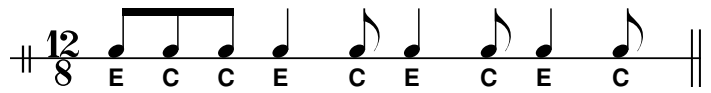


GOBOA: All notes are written above the staff. It is played with the left hand and a stick held in the right hand. Stroke types are indicated in the first row of letters below the staff, and sticking indications are in the second row.



B=Bass tone O=Open tone S=Strike shell of drum
L=Left hand R=Right hand

COWBELL: E=Strike the mouth of the cowbell on the edge. C=Strike the center of the top side of the cowbell while dampening the underside with your index finger.



MARIMBA: Low-end marimba parts should be played with medium rubber mallets. The middle register and upper register parts may be played with medium-hard and hard rubber mallets, respectively. On occasion,

you may weave adding machine paper above and below alternate marimba bars to create a buzzing effect similar to some African xylophones and marimbas.

LOG DRUMS: Two different pitches are required for each log drum part. The low pitch is written below the staff, and the high pitch is written above the staff. Most *Rhythm Chants* using log drums require more than one instrument.



RUTE: All notes are written above the staff. All stickings are alternating unless otherwise indicated.



L=Left hand R=Right hand

TAMBOURINE: C=Center stroke with full hand
F=Finger stroke T=Thumb stroke



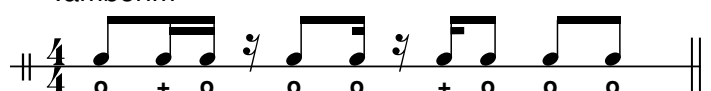
TRIANGLE and TAMBORIM:

+ = Muffled tone o = Open tone

Triangle



Tamborim



GUIRO: Notes written below the staff are down strokes, and notes written above the staff are up strokes.



— = Long stroke, scrape for full note value
• = Short stroke



rhythm chant 17: performance notes

Minimum Number of Players Required

Five players: axatse, quinto, conga, tumba, surdo
One performer on each part is the minimum.

Instrument Doubling

First: quinto

Second: conga

Third: tumba

Other: Quinto, conga and tumba may have up to five players per part. Consider doubling the axatse if you have at least nine players on the conga trio parts.

Form

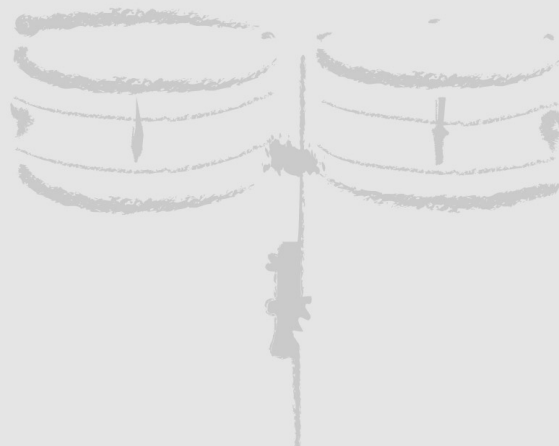
Beginning: Players enter every four measures in the following order: surdo, tumba, conga, quinto, axatse.

Continued play: Quintos solo; section quinto players may rest during solos.

Ending: A head cue is given on the downbeat of the two-measure cycle. Immediately, the axatse player wildly shakes their instrument for two measures while all others finish playing their two-measure pattern. On the next downbeat, everyone plays the *ending* pattern and stops.

Other Considerations

1. The *ending* is composed of a three-note cell played four times. The cell is equivalent to five eighth notes; therefore, repetitions of the cell do not align with beats. Players should try to feel the three-note cell cycling around the beat and not shift/create accents in an attempt to make it fit comfortably with the beat.
2. In the surdo part, "X" means to dampen the head with your fingers.
3. Regarding the *ending*: The surdo should play all open strokes, and the axatse should rest.
4. You may use up to three players on the axatse part.
5. Performers should be able to feel 12/8 as three groups of four divisions as well as four groups of three divisions.



rhythm chant 17

C. A. Grosso

$\text{♩} = 108-112$

Axatse

Tumba

Conga

Quinto

Surdo

Ending

X = Dampen with hand.

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a 12/8 time signature piece. It consists of five main parts: Axatse, Tumba, Conga, Quinto, and Surdo, followed by an Ending section. Each part is written on a single staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked as 108-112. The notation includes rhythmic symbols (quarter notes, eighth notes, rests) and letter-based notation (B, O, R, L, X) indicating specific drum sounds. The Tumba, Conga, Quinto, and Surdo parts have two lines of letter notation below the staff. The Axatse part has a single line. The Ending section is a short piece of music for the Tumba part, also with letter notation below the staff. A legend indicates that 'X' represents a dampen with the hand.