

Study Guide For Teachers

Garden State Percussion

In

Meet the Beat

presented by
Young Audiences
(866) 500-9265
www.yanjep.org



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Garden State Percussion Trio brings to your school a full set of percussion instruments: vibraphone, xylophone, concert drums, timpani, cymbals — and other exotic instruments from around the world. Through hands-on participation and demonstration, students learn the art and science of percussion. The history of the percussion instrument is discussed and the many sounds of percussion are demonstrated. Students also discover how percussion instruments play a major part in creating sound effects.

LEARNING GOALS

To familiarize students with percussion instruments and to describe what distinguishes these instruments from other instrument types, such as:

- how they look;
- the manner of making a sound on various percussion instruments
- how the instruments are used in bands and orchestras

To emphasize the strong rhythmic effect of percussion instruments, and to teach children to better enjoy and understand the impact that rhythm has in music.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Before the arrival of the Garden State Percussion Trio, introduce a unit on the percussion section of the orchestra. Here are some general facts about percussion instruments for you to use:

- Percussion instruments are the oldest musical instruments.
- Our hands and feet were the first percussion instruments!
- Percussion instruments are instruments that shake and rattle, are beaten with a mallet, rubbed together, or hit with a stick. They are generally used to keep a rhythm or add tone color.
- Some percussion instruments can be tuned to a definite pitch (such as the timpani) while others are indefinite and do not change pitch.

Percussion instruments fall into four classifications: membrane sounds, wood sounds, metal sounds, and rattle and abrasive sounds.

- Membrane: snare drum, bass drum, tom-toms, tambourine, and all other drums
- Metal: triangle, cymbals, tambourine, gong, chimes, glockenspiel, etc.
- Wood: rhythm sticks, wood blocks, tone blocks, coconut shells, castanets, xylophone, etc.
- Rattles: tambourine, rattles, maracas, etc.
- The piano and harp are considered both percussion and string instruments.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Instruments of definite pitch:

The timpani, or kettledrums, are like large copper kettles with skins stretched over the tops. Screws placed around the top alter the pitch by changing the tension of the skin head; foot pedals are also used to alter the pitch. A minimum of two timpani are found in the orchestra, but they more often appear in groups of four or five. The percussionist uses mallets of different types to produce special effects; these mallets can be made from sponge, felt, rubber, or wood.

- The chimes are metal pipes of varying length suspended from a frame. When struck with a mallet, they produce a solemn sound, like that of church bells.
- The xylophone and the marimba are made of hard woods cut to many lengths and arranged like the keyboard of a piano. Both are played with wooden mallets. The xylophone has a dry, hollow sound, while the marimba has a softer tone quality.
- The celesta, which looks like a miniature upright piano, gets its sound by striking a series of steel plates with tiny hammers. It has a silvery, delicate tone.

Instruments of indefinite pitch:

- The snare drum gets its unique rattle from the metal snares attached to the bottom of the drum. When the top head is struck, the column of air inside the drum causes the snare to vibrate against the bottom head of the drum.
- The bass drum is a large instrument with two heads. When struck, it causes a thunderous sound; because of its huge size, it has a low pitch.
- The triangle is a rod of steel bent into a triangular form and open at one corner. It is struck by a thin steel bar.
- The gong is a large disc of hammered metal, struck by a soft mallet. It is of Chinese origin.
- The tambourine is actually a miniature drum with a single head. Small metal discs are inserted into the wooden hoop surrounding the head to produce a metallic jangling sound when shaken or struck.
- There are many other percussion instruments. These include the castanets, wood blocks, cymbals, and a variety of African, Asian, and Latin American instruments.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Timpanist Adrienne Ostrander has performed for numerous Broadway shows. Closer to home she is a member of the Princeton Chamber Symphony and the group Solid Brass. Percussionist Dan McMillan's career also includes both New Jersey appearances with the New Jersey Pops, the Papermill Playhouse and the Cape May Music Festival as well as performances with Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop. He has also played in the Lion King, Cats and Grease. James Neglia, a member of the Harrisburg Symphony orchestra and the Northeastern Symphony, is also the principal timpanist with the New Philharmonic of New Jersey. He has appeared world-wide in solo performances as well as with musical greats such as Plácido Domingo, André Watts, and The Moody Blues.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

Make your own percussion instruments!

- Have students find objects that resonate at different pitches when struck by a pencil. Arrange these objects in a row, placed according to pitch (high to low). Examine these objects to determine why some produce high tones and others, low tones and why some are more resonant than others. Use these instruments to perform an original composition.
- Replace the percussive instruments with drinking glasses filled with varying levels of water. Create a melody in which one student plays a pattern that others imitate exactly; then, not so exactly to create a "call-and-response," or solo/improvisational sequence.
- Box-o-phone: Place large wooden box on pad on floor or desk, and play on different sides to get different sounds.
- Thunder sheets: Take sheets of poster board, hold up in the air and flap.
- Further ideas for percussion instruments:
 - Wood blocks, sticks or stones

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Xylophone:

"Fossils" from Carnival of the Animals, by Camille Saint-Saëns

Timpani and snare drum:

Opening measures of Concerto in F, by George Gershwin

Timpani:

Canaries, by Eliot Carter

Chimes:

"The Great Gate at Kiev," from Pictures at an Exhibition, by Modest Moussorgsky

Celesta:

"Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," from The Nutcracker, by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

www.pas.org The Percussive Arts Society. Links to educational resources and children's sites.

www.playmusic.org Kids information, and games about the orchestra, music and musical instruments