

# The Drums

## Early History

The drum is one of the earliest instruments invented. Originally the drums were made of hollow tree trunks with the ends covered in animal skin. It is very difficult to tell exactly where the drum, as we know it today, came from as it is represented in the art of several cultures. On the other hand, around 2000 B.C., the Africans used the drums for alerting tribes, as well as for other musical purposes.

## Later Developments

The drum has made some interesting developments over time, despite the simplicity of the instrument. Both the Greeks and the Romans invaded Africa and took the idea of the drums from there. These two cultures were the first to use the membrane drum (animal skin). The Romans used the drums for the marching of their armies.

Later, the Moors started to make use of the drums themselves. Around 800 A.D., they began to stretch animal intestines across the head of the drum to produce a sharper sound. Today, we call these "intestines" snares. Of course, now we use metal strings rather than animal body parts.

Another type of drum was made popular by the Arabics around the 13th century. These people established the *kettle drum*, which today is often called the timpani. The term kettle drum comes from the fact that the drum is in the shape of a kettle.

After the creation of the electric guitar, drummers started to experiment with the electric drum. This instrument is made up of flat panels that are attached to a computer which creates the sound.



## Beginning Players

There is more to percussion than the drum. Beginning players often confuse playing concert percussion with the drum kit. Although the kit is very useful in all types of music, students must first learn some of the basic rudiments of concert snare and bass drum. Below are some requirements that students should have for them to be successful on the drums:

1. Players should have a good sense of pulse or tempo, as many other musicians will depend on them for the speed of the music being played
2. Students must have a basic sense of rhythm, in order to focus on the rudiments of the instrument.
3. Once performers have moved on to the drum kit, they should have good co-ordination. Students will need to be able to play several different rhythms in different limbs (arms and legs) all at the same time.

## In Performance

Even though the drum was originally used in marching bands (from military and tribal roots), the percussion section has grown in use since its first creation. Performers such as James Blades have become very popular playing orchestral and concert percussion. Other musicians, such as Max Roach and Art Blakey, have made the drum kit extremely popular in jazz music. Finally, rock music has made the drum kit very useful thanks to players like John Bonham of Led Zeppelin, Ringo Starr of the Beatles, and Travis Barker of Blink 182.