

Hand Drums on the Move - Introduction

People of all ages love to play hand drums! Simple, creative, and rhythmic, playing hand drums is FUN. People are naturally drawn into playing hand drums. Drums provide and reinforce endless opportunities for rhythm, improvisation, meter, form and timbre. Powerful, driving, and expressive, hand drums encourage movement, yet provide a safety net where movement becomes less embarrassing, inhibitions are reduced, and music comes alive in both sound and movement. Hand drums allow students to build from the simplest performance to the most complex ensemble, from the easiest exercise to those demanding much discipline and work. In either case the outcome is exciting and the rewards build teamwork.

When teaching hand drums, two elements are essential: students must hold the drum correctly and they must play with the proper technique. Instruct students to hold the drum vertically, about waist high in their non-dominant hand while playing with their dominant hand (the one they write with). For many activities in this book, use open tones. Other strokes can be used as students grow in technique. Lots of imitative examples, using short two- and four-beat rhythmic patterns, are helpful when introducing the hand drum.

With younger children, use soft yarn mallets to replace the hand. Several pieces in this book use mallets while playing both the skin and the rim of the drum. With older, more experienced students, explore more complex sounds and rhythms: individual fingers on an open tone, brush strokes, circular strokes, and muted tones. (See glossary). In "Two in One," one person holds two hand drums in one hand, a fun and rewarding challenge!

I have been experimenting with hand drum pieces for over twenty years and find that my most successful songs are those created through the students' cooperative group music making settings. In this book I am sharing a few pieces my students love to play. I have discovered that once I present "my" composition, students will add, change, and edit to make it "their" composition. And so, look at these pieces as "models" from which your students can build. Your songs will become their compositions.

- Chris Judah-Lauder, 2001

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My first meeting with Chris Judah-Lauder in 1995 was marked by the clang, clang, clanging of an African instrument known as a gankogui. She began playing on the gankogui and everyone in the opening session of the 1995 AOSA National Conference in Dallas turned and wondered in unison, "What in the world is that clatter?" It soon became evident that there were children, LARGE children, already performing in the aisles! As they processed to the front of the hall, hand drums ringing and feet flying across the floor, our mouths opened in wonder at the cascade of swirling, jumping, rotating, dancing, and hand drumming children. The white turtleneck shirts and dark pants blended with the stage and the instruments to create a wonderful collage of color and rhythm.

I was astounded by that incredible performance, and it has been a great joy and honor to become acquainted with Chris both professionally and personally. We've taught together at James Madison University, and now we are collaborating on this book. I saw some of these activities presented both during the level classes at JMU and in Rochester at the 2000 AOSA National Conference. These activities have been waiting for 15 years to be published and Beatin' Path Publications is pleased to offer them in print for the first time.

Chris has presented at many conferences, workshops, and level courses all over the country, has written a book called Fun with Boomwhackers®, and most importantly, has taught in elementary and middle school for 25 years. She currently teaches at Good Shepherd Episcopal School in Dallas, Texas. Her college degree is from Indiana University and she received her Orff Certification at Hamline University. In addition to her teaching, she has served as local conference co-chair for the National Orff-Schulwerk Conference held in Dallas in 1995, president of the North Texas Orff Chapter, and as a regional representative for the national board of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association. Her vast experience and knowledge of Orff Schulwerk are evident in every page of this book!

- Brent M. Holl, 2001