

Drumming in Africa

Africa is a large continent where lots of different styles of music are popular. Drumming is popular in many African countries and there are several types of drum that are used.

Different drums are popular in different areas and are used for various types of music.



Traditional African Instruments



Djembe

A single-headed, goblet-shaped drum that is played with the hands.



Dundun

A large double-headed drum played with a stick. Often worn on the shoulder using a strap. Often a bell-like instrument is mounted on the dunun. A dunun can produce three sounds: open, muted and the bell sound.



Agogo

A bell-like instrument that can produce two pitches. Often leads the ensemble keeping everyone else in time.



Talking Drum

A drum with skins on both the top and bottom of its body. It is played with a beater and the performer is able to squeeze the drum's tension chords, which changes the pitch of the drum, imitating a human voice.



Mbria (Idiophone)

A thumb piano. Traditionally made of wood but have metal keys to create different pitches.



Shekere

A shaker made of dried gourd wood and beads or cowries woven into a net covering the gourd.

Call and response A short phrase followed by an answering phrase.

Poly rhythm More than one rhythm played at the same time.

Homophonic texture Singing or playing the same rhythm together at the same time.

African Drumming Techniques



BASS

Played in the middle of the drum with fingers closed.



TONE

Played on the edge of the drum with fingers closed.



SLAP

Played near the edge of the drum with hand relaxed and fingers open.