



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning

Maryland

Teacher Program Guide

Assembly Date: _____

Assembly Time: _____

For Students in: _____

Uncle Devin's World of Percussion

Uncle Devin



This assembly takes students on a magical journey through the Land of Percussion that allows them to hear, see, and play different percussion instruments while gaining an understanding of the history of percussion and why it is the easiest, oldest, and most diverse form of musical creativity. Uncle Devin and his flute-playing sidekick Mr. Grasshopper will introduce students to different genres of music while showing them how percussion is the heartbeat of them all.

Contact Young Audiences for more information on this and other programs at 410-837-7577 or yamd.org

Young Audiences/Arts for Learning | 2600 N. Howard St., Suite 1300 | Baltimore, MD 21218



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Please pass along the attached teacher program guide to all participating classrooms.

Setup Requirements

- There should be at least six (6) feet between the instruments and the audience to allow for audience participation.
- One 2-socket outlet with plenty of voltage (old stages sometimes don't have enough juice in outlets).
- An offstage area for setup and prep.
- If a stage is erected, it should be at least 20' X 8' (20' wide and 8' deep)

Artist Arrival Time

30 minutes prior to performance

Suggested Introduction

“Ladies and Gentleman, Boys and Girls please give a warm welcome to the Original Drumcussionist, Uncle Devin, Mr. Grasshopper, and The Uncle Devin Show!”

Inclement Weather

DON'T WORRY! Artists will follow school closings/delays, and will work with you to reschedule the performance if necessary.

Young Audiences Contact Number

410-837-7577

After Hours / Emergency Number

Call 410-837-7577 and follow the prompts to be connected with a staff member on call.

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Artist Bio

Inside this guide:

- Artist Bio
- Program Description
- Maryland State Curriculum Connectors
- Core Curriculum Connectors
- Background Information
- Vocabulary
- List of Resources
- Pre-Performance Activities
- Post Performance Activities
- Discussion Questions

The original “Drumcussionist,” Uncle Devin has gained national acclaim as a leader in the children’s music industry with his unique musical style, real percussion instruments, and the latest in electronic drums. His CD, “Uncle Devin’s Drum Tales,” won a 2013 Parents’ Choice Presentation Award. He has been playing percussion for more than 25 years with groups ranging from Fertile Ground to the Great Dizzie Gillespie, and is a panelist who has showcased at KindieFest.



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“Uncle Devin is everything a children’s entertainer should be. Always engaging, never lacking in energy and full to the brim with fun.”

Lisa, indiemunity.com



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Maryland State Curriculum Connectors

Standards For Fine Arts:

Standard 2.0 Historical, Cultural, and Social Context: Students will demonstrate an understanding of music as an essential aspect of history and human experience.

1. Develop the ability to recognize music as a form of individual and cultural expression through experiencing music as both personal and societal expression

f. Discuss ways in which creating and performing music bring personal satisfaction

Common Core Standard Connectors

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.3 Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

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Background Information

The history of drums and percussion is as old as humanity itself. Anthropologists and historians often speculate that percussion instruments were the first musical devices ever created. In fact, the voice is considered the very first musical instrument, followed by hands, feet, sticks and rocks. It's generally accepted that Africa is the cradle of humanity, so it's not unreasonable to conclude that music formed a part of the African experience before many, if not all, other civilizations were even born. Music is deeply woven into the fabric of African life, and drums are the primordial musical instruments. The drums have been an intrinsic part of African life for countless generations.

Drums play an important role in every aspect of African life, including the physical, emotional and spiritual. African hand drums are played to communicate, celebrate, mourn and inspire. They're played in times of peace and war, planting and harvesting, birth and death. As humans spread throughout the world, so did the drum, which produced a variety of different instruments, all with a different sound and meaning.

Ancient drums have been discovered in almost every part of the world. Drums first appeared, however, in excavation from the Neolithic Era. The oldest recorded drum is from 6000 BC. Mesopotamian ruins contain small cylindrical drums that are as old as 3000 BC. Egyptian tombs have yielded small drums used for ceremonies. Several caves in Peru contain wall markings depicting drums in various aspects of societal life. It is strongly suspected that Indian drums from the Middle East are as old as 5000 BC. The American Indians used a series of wood and gourd drums for their celebrations and music, and some of these drums are still used in ceremonies today.

The modern drum set came into existence in the 1930's when various percussion instruments were combined into a set. This allowed one drummer to take the role of many. From there, drums have always been present in early music, such as the blues, and helped usher in our current musical genres. There are hundreds of different percussion instruments, which are broken down into two different groups (or families): Membraphones and Idiophones.

Membraphones are basically the drums. A membraphone is an instrument that has a membrane, or skin covering one or both ends. The timpani has a membrane on the top and the snare drum has membranes on both sides but they both work the same way. The energy that they use is also acoustic energy like other instruments. Just like when the strings of string instruments are tightened their pitch goes up, that is what happens to membraphones.

Idiophones are instruments that make their own sound. The instrument itself vibrates and makes the sound. Some idiophones would be the cymbals, gongs, xylophones, and tubular bells. Most bells have definite pitch, but gongs and cymbals don't.

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Vocabulary

- **Percussion** - anything that you can play by striking, shaking or rattling
- **Melody** - a combination of pitches and rhythms which create a theme or tune you can remember (some percussion instruments can play melodies and some cannot)
- **Dynamics** - how loud or soft a sound is- also known as volume
- **Timbre** - the tone color of an instrument, how it sounds compared to another instrument
- **Synthetic** - man-made material (Percussion instruments date back to cave man time when they were first made from bones, animal hides and other "natural" materials.)
- **Mallet** - used to strike a percussion instrument (It typically has the appearance of a light hammer with a small, rounded head. The head comes in a variety of materials of varying hardness to produce a wide range of timbres.)
- **Roll** - a method of alternating sticks or mallets to produce a sustained sound on a percussion instrument
- **Snares** - curly wires which vibrate against the bottom of the drum
- **Steady Beat** - the regular pulse of the music; it remains constant whether fast or slow
- **Rhythm** - music is divided into patterns combining notes of different values
- **Tempo** - the speed of the beat
- **Drum Rudiments** - used as exercises for performers to practice and perfect their technical skills. All rudiments have very specific sticking patterns, or the order in which sticks (right hand or left hand) are used to strike the drum.
- **String instruments** - musical instruments that produce sound by means of vibrating strings. Although often made of wood, the bodies of the string instruments are hollow inside to allow sound to vibrate within them. The part of the instrument that makes the sound is the strings, which are made of nylon, steel or sometimes gut. The strings are played most often by drawing a bow across them. The handle of the bow is made of wood and the strings of the bow are actually horsehair from horses' tails! Sometimes the musicians will use their fingers to pluck the strings, and occasionally they will turn the bow upside down and play the strings with the wooden handle. Examples of string instruments are: the guitar, violin, cello, harp, banjo, and the double bass.

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Vocabulary (continued)

- **Wind Instruments** - any musical instruments sounded by the breath or other air current. There are two types of wind instruments:
 1. **Woodwind instruments** - The instruments in this family all used to be made of wood, which gives them their name. Today, they are made of wood, metal, plastic or some combination. The mouthpieces for some woodwinds, including the clarinet, oboe and bassoon, use a thin piece of wood called a reed, which vibrates when you blow across it. The clarinet uses a single reed made of one piece of wood, while the oboe and bassoon use a double reed made of two pieces joined together. The woodwind family of instruments includes, from the highest sounding instruments to the lowest, the flute, piccolo, oboe, English horn, clarinet, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon.
 2. **Brass instruments** - Brass instruments are essentially very long pipes that widen at their ends into a bell-like shape. The pipes have been curved and twisted into different shapes to make them easier to hold and play. Like the woodwind family, brass players use their breath to produce sound, but instead of blowing into a reed, you vibrate your own lips by buzzing them against a metal cup-shaped mouthpiece. The brass family members that are most commonly used in the orchestra include the trumpet, French horn, trombone, and the tuba.
- **Percussion instruments** - instruments that make a sound when they are hit, shaken, or scraped. You might say that they help keep the beat. There are two types of percussion instruments:
 1. **Idiophones** – percussion instruments that vibrate to make a sound, such as the triangle or cowbell.
 2. **Membranophones** – percussion instruments that have a stretched membrane (like a drum head) that vibrates when struck to make sound, such as a bass drum and the timpani.

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List of Resources

- “The ABC’s of Percussion” – Available upon request
- "Drum Language of the Congo"— <http://www.philtulga.com/Talking%20with%20Drums.html#language>
- <http://www.kanyinsola.com/the%20drums.html>
- <http://www.drumdr.com/african-hand-drums.html>
- This article speaks about Native American drums: <http://www.nativeamericandrums.net/drumfacts.html>.

Pre-Performance Activities

- Discuss with the children the three basic groups in which music instruments are divided in the west.
- Discuss with children that many different types of music are called Genres and ask them to name as many genres as they can, i.e., jazz, hip-hop, country, merengue, salsa, classical, gospel, folk, rock, etc.

Post-Performance Activities

- Discuss how force is needed to produce vibration and how different kinds of vibrations produce a variety of sounds. Demonstrate how force is used to make drums vibrate.
- Design and build a drum
- Discuss various forms of pre-electronic-era long-distance messages and draw conclusions about why a culture might choose one form over another. Have small groups of students develop a code consisting of several messages that can be sent using two drum pitches, and demonstrate codes to the class by using it to successfully send messages across a classroom.

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Discussion Questions

1. Name one of the percussion instruments you learned about during the Uncle Devin Show.
2. What is one of the oldest percussion instruments?
3. Name one of the genres of music played during The Uncle Devin Show.
4. What continent is considered the origin of all music, including percussion instruments?
5. What are the three types of musical instruments called?

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Sample Lesson Plan

YOUNG AUDIENCES OF MARYLAND

Lesson Title: The Different Sounds of Percussion

Artist's Name: Uncle Devin

Teacher's Name:

School:

Grade:

Integrated Content Area:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.3

Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks.

Main Idea:

Sounds are all around us. Understanding how sound is produced makes it possible for us to manipulate it so we can decrease the number of unpleasant sounds created by things as diverse as airplanes and vacuum cleaners.

Background:

Sound is caused by a movement or vibration created by **force**. Some vibrations cause air to move, to create sound waves that we can hear. The **pitch** of the sound (how high or low the sound is), depends on how fast an object vibrates. The **volume** (how loud the sound is), depends on the degree of force used to make the object vibrate. When we increase the volume of a sound we are **amplifying** it.

With drums, we strike the skin to create a sound. The force that causes the vibration is the blow on the drum. The harder we strike, the louder the sound. You can manipulate the pitch of a drum in three ways: 1) tighten the drum's skin to make the pitch higher; 2) put a thicker skin on the drum to lower the pitch; and 3) strike the drum closer to the center to produce a slower vibration and lower pitch, which sounds more resonant.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the concepts and differences between force, pitch and volume.
- Explore the science of instrument design and construction.
- Explore the field of sound engineering.

Time:

1 & 1/2 hours (allow at least 1/2 hour for design)

Introducing the Concept:

Discuss how force is needed to produce vibration and how different kinds of vibrations produce a variety of sounds. Demonstrate how force is used to make drums vibrate.

Materials:

- different-sized, wide-mouthed jars without lids
- paper - tissue paper, letter paper, construction paper, other types of paper
- balloons
- rubber bands large enough to fit the mouth of the jar
- wooden sticks (chopsticks are ideal) or wooden spoons
- rice, small lentils or peppercorns
- paints, markers and other design material

Hands-On:

Drums can be made with just about anything. Using the materials listed, design a drum.

1. To make a drum, place paper or a balloon over the mouth of the jar. (You might even try placing the paper down with a balloon on top of it.)
2. Place the rubber band around the mouth of the jar to secure the paper/balloon skin.
3. If you like, place some rice on the skin so you can observe the vibration as you apply force to the drum. Be sure to spend some time designing the exterior of your drum.

Minds-On:

- Tap on your drums to produce sound.
- Is it different than that of other students' drums?
- Do different skins produce different sounds? What might cause these differences?
- Do different sizes of jars produce different sounds? What would happen if you filled the jars with something? Does it sound the same?
- Are different sounds produced when you strike different parts of the skin?
- What happens to the sound when you increase the force with which you strike the drum? Does the pitch or volume change?
- What happens when rice is placed on the drum? Can you see the vibrations? Does it affect the sound?
- What causes the rice to react differently when you strike the skin harder?

Teaching Tips:

- Before doing this activity, you may want to test the paper you will be using for drum skins to be sure it doesn't tear too easily.
- Try having the students work in groups of four when they are testing the drums.

Science All Around Us:

Various cultures throughout the world use drums as a way to communicate. Drum beats can signal warnings or transmit elaborate messages, much like Morse code, as long as the person receiving the message is within earshot. Have the students design their own drumming code so that they can send secret messages to their classmates.

Interconnections:

Drums have been used throughout history for religious, spiritual, technical, musical and recreational purposes. Have the students identify the types of drums used by their own culture and share the story of these drums with their classmates. They may even want to tell their story while beating a rhythm on a drum.

Sample Lesson Plan

YOUNG AUDIENCES OF MARYLAND

Lesson Title: Message Drums

Artist's Name: Uncle Devin

Teacher's Name:

School:

Grade:

Introduction:

This lesson plan offers an introduction to message drums for early primary students, suitable for inclusion in a unit on music, percussion, communication, history, or world cultures.

Message drums are actually large slit gongs, usually constructed from hollowed-out logs, that are used to send messages over considerable distances. This lesson plan, suitable for a wide range of ages, includes an explanation and discussion of message drums, and an activity demonstrating how they are used. It is a cross-discipline lesson, appropriate for a music class unit on percussion or instrument traditions around the world, a social studies unit on world cultures (message drums were independently invented in several different places, including Africa, Asia, and the Americas), a language arts unit on the history of communication or a poetry unit on the rhythm of language, or a science/math unit on codes and messages. Grade K-12 (adaptable).

Prerequisites:

Students: must be able to cooperate to accomplish goals in small groups with minimal supervision. (If they cannot, see "Adaptations.")

Teachers: Teacher expertise in music is not necessary to present this activity.

Time Requirements:

One (approximately 45-minute) class period for the presentation and activity.

Goals:

The student will learn how and why message drums have been used in several cultures around the world.

Learning Objectives:

The class will discuss various forms of pre-electronic-era long-distance messages and draw conclusions about why a culture might choose one form over another. Small groups of students will each develop a code consisting of several messages that can be sent using two drum pitches, and will demonstrate their code to the class by using it to successfully send messages across a classroom.

Standards:**National Standards for Music Education**

Standard 8 (understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts)
Standard 9 (understanding music in relation to history and culture)

Core Standard

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

National Standards in the Social Studies

Standards 1 (culture), 2 (time, continuity and change), 3 (people, places and environments), and 8 (science, technology, and society)

National Standards for the English Language Arts

Standard 9 (Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles)

Evaluation:

Base assessment on discussion and activity participation, and on each group's success in developing and using a code according to the given parameters.

Adaptations:

If the students cannot cooperate in small groups with minimal supervision, do the activity as a class instead.

Introducing the Subject:

Give young students copies of the Slit Gong Message Drum handout. If possible, show students a picture of a real message drum from a book or website. (As of this writing, there were useful photos at Art-Pacific and Papua New Guinea - BUAI Digital Information Project.)

Tell your students: Before telephones and email, before cars, planes, trains, television, radio, or even telegraph, sending messages quickly across a distance was not easy. Different cultures solved this problem in different ways.

Have the students brainstorm to see how many of these old methods of communicating they can name. Some possibilities they may come up with, or you can suggest if they have trouble naming any: special runners or pony-express-style riders; signal towers, signal fires, smoke signals, semaphore, and of course, message drums. Ask them what geographical constraints might make one method better than another, and why. For example, which would be better on a flat, open prairie? In an area with mountains, hills, or large rivers? In a heavily forested area? (If they are having trouble deciding, ask them to imagine that they are on a mountain top or an open prairie or in a thick rain forest. Would it be easy to see a signal fire? Could they find a big log to make a drum? How easy would things be for a runner or fast pony?)

Tell your students: Several cultures around the world discovered a way to send messages that could be heard over great distances. These cultures lived in places where very big trees grew. People in different parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific Rim, and the Americas sent messages using drums made out of huge logs. They would take a log from a large tree; the bigger the log, the bigger its sound would be and the farther it could be heard. A long slit would be cut in the side of the log, and the log would be hollowed out through the slit, leaving wooden ledges, or lips, on each side of the slit. If they wanted the drum to be able to make a lower note and a higher note, they would hollow it out more under one lip than under the other. To play messages, they beat on the drum's lips with sticks, beating out rhythms of high and low notes. These giant log drums are sometimes called "talking drums", but they are completely different from the famous talking drums of western Africa. Technically speaking, the message-sending logs are not drums at all, since they do not have a thin skin or membrane that vibrates when they are beaten. Instead, when an edge of the slit is beaten, the entire log vibrates like a big cylinder-shaped gong, so musicologists call this type of instrument a slit gong.

Each culture that used these slit gongs developed a message "language." The villages that used the drums would agree on a sort of code of drum "sentences." In some cultures, the drum message sounded like a real sentence, but without the words. For example, "the river is flooding" might sound like "da-DUM-da-da-DUM-da." To keep messages from sounding too much alike, they sometimes used very long, descriptive sentences to translate into their drum language. Messages could be relayed from village to village, but if the message travelled to an area where a different language was spoken, it might not be understood anymore.

After this introductory discussion, you may ask young students to draw on and color the Message Drum handout. You can get a PDF file of the handout [here](#). It is also included as a figure at the end of this module, but using the PDF file will give a nicer-looking handout. Give the following suggestions: Finish the picture on the handout by filling in details. Use your imagination. Many message drums have carvings of animals or of a face at each end. They are played by someone using a big stick or beater. Often there are small stands under each end of the drum to keep it off of the ground and let it vibrate more freely. Many message drums are kept in a shed so that they don't get rained on. Add some of these details and then color your picture.

You may also want to do "The Rhythms of Language" activity from Talking Drums and/or the "Make a Drum Code" activity below.

Make a Drum Code—Materials and Preparation:

Be prepared for a noisy activity!

Each group will need pencils and paper. You will need something to drum on and something to drum with.

The class can take turns with one set of "drums" in order to reduce the noise level. Or each group can have its own drums, so that they can practice and test possible message codes. A wooden "tongue drum" is ideal, since this is basically a small box version of a slit gong, but any drums that can produce two or three different pitches (a set of bongos for example) will do. Homemade percussion (e.g. drumming on two different sized pots with a wooden spoon) is fine, too.

Procedure:

Tell the class to imagine that they live in small villages a few miles apart. There are no telephones, radios, email, or TV. Usually, if they want to talk to their friends in the next village, they have to walk there to do it. But sometimes they might just want to send a message that their friends will get right away. They need to develop a code that both villages know. Suggest keeping the codes short and simple for clarity, and remind them that there are two ways to make messages sound different from each other: using the two different notes and making the rhythm different.

Have the class brainstorm about messages that might be useful to send. Emergency messages like "send the doctor," news like "strangers have arrived," and everyday messages like "I'll be home late" are all acceptable.

Divide the class into small groups (3 to 6 students per group). Each group is to develop a code of three to ten messages. (You decide the number, based on age, attention span, and class period length.) They decide which messages they would like to be able to send, and what rhythm stands for each message. Have older children invent a way to write the code down so that they can remember it.

After a suitable period of time, reassemble the class. Give each group a chance to show off their message code. When it is a group's turn, they split into message senders and receivers, on opposite sides of the room. (Let them take turns if there is time.) For older students, make sure both groups have a copy of their written code as a reminder. You stand with the senders and point to or whisper which message they should send. Have them beat the message on the drum(s) and see if the receivers can name the message correctly.

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