



Julie's Joyful Noise

WORLD DRUMMING * CHILDREN'S MUSIC/DRUMMING * CHORAL MUSIC

Introducing the Drum to Children

To start children off with drumming, it's best to find drums that are easy for children to play. Remo makes a selection of children's drums that are well made, durable and produce good sound quality. The best Remo drums to choose for very young children are those that are made so that they do not rest fully on the floor, like the Tom Drum, the Gathering Drum and the Tubano Drum. These drums naturally allow air to circulate within the drum to produce sound. As children get older, ages 9 or 10 and up – they will be able to play the Djembe – as they will be able to hold it properly. The djembe should be tilted slightly away from the drummer, as the drummer wraps their legs around the drum or holds it between their knees to steady it. The following are easy exercises and teaching tools:

Learning to STOP!

Children should be taught immediately a sign for playing the drum and for stopping. It is a good idea, from the beginning, to introduce drumming with a count-in – 1,2,3 and...It is also important to have a word or signal so that children stop drumming at once. The word “BOP” can be used effectively for this purpose.

Exercise #1: 1,2,3 and – children may play any rhythm that they choose on the drum, but must stop on the word “BOP”. This is practiced until all the children stop immediately upon hearing the signal word. I also ask them to raise their hands in the air - especially when they are young - as this emphasizes the fact that they have stopped drumming.

Children should be taught two of the methods for hitting the drum. The Bass – occurs inside the outer edge of the drum on the flat surface and should be played with one hand at a time (alternating hands – right, left, right, left). The bass produces a lower sound. Children should be taught that their hands should bounce off the drumhead like a “trampoline” and not rest on the drumhead, as this deadens the sound of the drum. Their hands should bounce, never too high, as they want to be ready to produce the next sound.

The Tone – occurs at the edge of the drum, close to the drummer's body. If the children lay their hands over the edge of the drum so that their thumbs are touching and their pointer fingers are touching to produce an upside down heart-shape, they will know exactly where to place their hands in order to produce the tone sound. Children should play the tone with one hand at a time as well – (alternating right, left, right, left). The tone produces a higher pitched sound.

Exercise #2: 1,2,3, and... as the adult calls out “Bass” and then “Tone” the children alternate between the two drum sounds. Children can be coached by the expression and example of the teacher to play more quietly and to play louder. They must stop together on the word “BOP”.

Learning Basic Rhythms

Basic 4/4 rhythms are divided up into 4 beats. As the children become more familiar with the basic components of 4/4 rhythms, it is a perfect opportunity to enhance math and counting skills. For young children, however, the four basic types of notes: whole notes, half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes – can be counted as “Jungle Rhythms”. Rhythm Cards provide an important visual and facilitate the learning of these rhythms. Because the pictures are accompanied by words and notes, even young children feel that they are “reading”. You can ask the children, “Would you like to read the pictures, the words or the notes?”

Exercise #3: 1, 2, 3 and BIG EL-E-PHANT

The Whole Note gets 4 beats or can be counted – 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and
For the young child, a whole note can be counted as: BIG EL-E-PHANT

The children strike the drum in the bass on the word BIG allowing for 4 counts. It is important that the children and the teacher repeat the words (syllables) as they drum them. The teacher leads them and exaggerates the movement of hitting the drum in the bass on the word BIG. Repeat: BIG EL-E-PHANT and “BOP”.

Exercise #4: 1,2,3 and HI – PPO

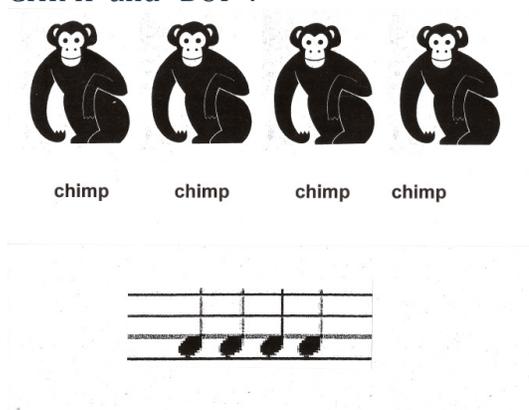
The Half Note gets 2 beats or can be counted – 1 and 2 and
For the young child, two half notes can be counted as: HI -PPO

The children strike the drum in the bass on the syllables HI and PPO, allowing for 2 counts on each syllable. It is important that the children and the teacher repeat the words (syllables) as they drum them. The teacher leads them and exaggerates the movement of hitting the drum in the bass on the syllables HI and PPO. Repeat: HI – PPO and “BOP”.

Exercise #5: 1,2,3 and CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP

The Quarter Note gets 1 beat or can be counted – 1 and
For the young child, four quarter notes can be counted as: CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP

The children strike the drum in the bass for each CHIMP. It is important that the children and the teacher repeat the words (syllables) as they drum them. The teacher leads them and exaggerates the movement of hitting the drum in the bass on the words CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP. Repeat: CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP and “BOP”.

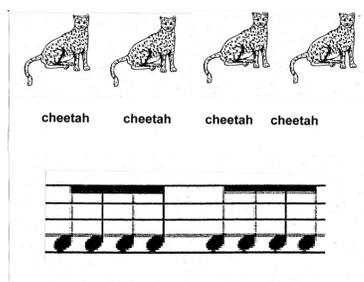


Exercise #6: 1,2,3 and CHEE-TAH CHEE-TAH CHEE-TAH CHEE-TAH

The Eighth Note gets 1/2 beat or can be counted as 1
The children strike the drum for each syllable of CHEE-TAH.

It is important the teacher and children emphasize each syllable. This rhythm should be played twice as fast as CHIMP. It may be necessary to slow down the other rhythms so that this rhythm is not too fast for the children.

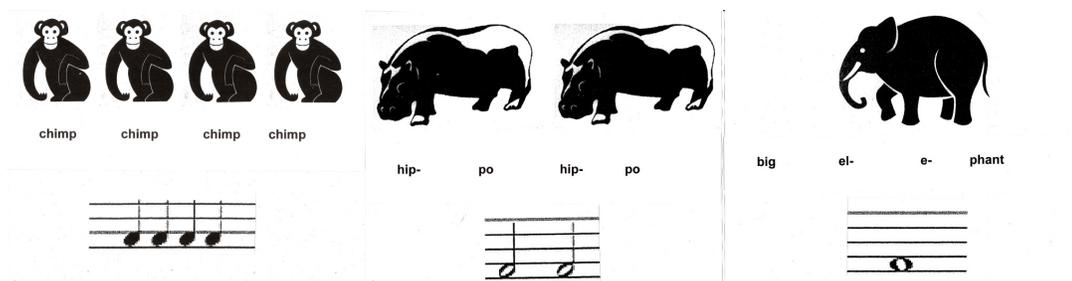
*It is interesting to note that because this is a faster rhythm, children often forget about keeping a consistent beat. They are anxious to drum as fast as they can. It is good to give them opportunities to do this, but not during this exercise, as the point of this exercise is to learn the eighth note rhythm. Repeat: CHEE-TAH, CHEE-TAH, CHEE-TAH, CHEE-TAH and "BOP".



"Would you like to read the pictures, the words or the notes?"

Once children are comfortable with these basic rhythms, they can be put together to create longer patterns. For example: CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP CHIMP

HI - PPO CHEE-TAH CHEE-TAH CHEE-TAH CHEE-TAH BIG EL- E- PHANT! Using the "Rhythm Cards", the children can make up their own rhythms. Children can also begin to learn to write each of the notes, creating their own songs.



It is also important to have children move and "dance" to these rhythms - in order to feel rhythm as a total body experience. The teacher can play each rhythm as children move across the floor - moving their feet to the beat of the drum. Children can also vocalize these rhythms as they move!

Exercise #7: The Freeze Dance - children move to the "Jungle Rhythms" as the teacher plays them, moving their feet to the beat of the drum. When the teacher stops playing abruptly, the children "freeze" in space. If they're still moving when the drum stops they are "out" and can help the teacher watch the remaining children to see if they continue to move when the drum stops. For younger children - or when children are sensitive about being "out", the game can just continue. Surprisingly, most of my students prefer playing so that children are "out". I tell them it is an opportunity to be my "helper".

Using Drums to Enhance Nursery Rhymes

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (naeyc.org) has a position paper entitled, "Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices" that can be downloaded and used as a resource. Research presented validates the importance of using nursery rhymes, songs and poems to help young children prepare to read.

Including a drumbeat to emphasize the rhythm and rhyme scheme in nursery rhymes keeps children more engaged in the learning process and helps to facilitate the memorization process.

Exercise #8: Little Miss Muffet - *It is always important to recite nursery rhymes with children before drumming, not only to make the children more familiar with the rhyme, but also to explain and interpret some of the language. For example, in this rhyme, the word tuffet must be defined for children along with the words, "curds and whey". Children will appreciate the rhyme better if they know that a young girl is sitting on a chair eating cottage cheese when she is frightened by a spider!

The teacher leads as the nursery rhyme is recited and the children strike the drum for each word of the rhyme. The word "spider" can be substituted by the children for other "scary creatures" and the drumming can change to represent the size of the creature. For example, children may drum quickly and quietly when the word "spider" is recited in the rhyme, but if the animal substituted for spider is "T-Rex", the drumming may be loud and slow.

Exercise #9: Hickory, Dickory, Dock - Hickory, Dickory, Dock can be lead in much the same way as Little Miss Muffett, substituting different animals and drumming rhythms for the mouse. It can also provide a good counting exercise for young children. How many times did the clock strike? Children can count out loud and strike the drum the correlating number of times.

Exercise #10: Humpty Dumpty - Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall...Humpty Dumpty had a great fall! This is a great time to let the children do a loud drum roll with a big "BOP". All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again!

Try lots of different nursery rhymes. This Little Piggy Went to Market, Jack and Jill and Pat-a-Cake are all great nursery rhymes. With Pat-a-Cake substitute out the letter "B" for baby for each of the children's names in the drum circle.