



THE BIRTHPLACE OF RHYTHM

Art Form: Music

Style: Percussion

Culture: Global

Technical Needs

- ❑ One- two microphones (wireless or lapel if possible)
- ❑ One table, 3' x 5'
- ❑ Three chairs

Meet the Artists

Members of the Pulse Beat Music collective include:

John Knecht has traveled to over 25 countries to study hand percussion and folk songs. He is the founder of Pulse Beat Music and teaches extensively with Urban Gateways, the International House of Blues Foundation and Highland Park High School.

Michael Toolles has taught hundreds of Chicago students how to drum. Originally from Memphis, he has a specialty on snare drum and drumset. He performs throughout Chicago with bands such as Spider Monkey and Yves Francois Rocambu Jazz Orchestra.

Ashley Muenstermann is a percussionist and dancer who has been studying since the age of two. She has completed two round-the-world trips for musical study and teaches West African drumming and dance.

Jason “Wolfie” Wolf is a professional drummer with a specialty in West African percussion. He speaks fluent French and has toured the country with famous dance instructors like Moustapha Bangoura.

Susie Lofton is an actress, singer and percussionist. She has performed African folktale storytelling performances and is the lead singer in local jazz funk band Spider Monkey.

About the Performance

The Birthplace of Rhythm is an entertaining exploration of percussion around the world. The drummers from Pulse Beat Music serve as rhythmic anthropologists, taking students on a tour of drumming and singing across the continents. The four available formats of this show include: 1) Global (West Africa, the Middle East, northern Europe, South Pacific, United States and Brazil) 2) The Western Hemisphere 3) The Eastern Hemisphere 4) West Africa. The overall theme of global community is reinforced as students see the similarities and differences that exist between various cultures and their music. Students are invited to participate in the rhythm making process as the show builds toward its festival finale. The Birthplace of Rhythm is an upbeat celebration of all of the places where rhythm can be found throughout the world.

Contextual Information

Rhythms are patterns that move through time. These patterns are found everywhere in nature; the cycle of the seasons, the migration of the animals and the arrival of the tides are all rhythms. The beating of the human heart and act of breathing are also rhythms. It's no wonder that humans incorporate rhythm into almost every aspect of their lives.

There are an endless number of instruments that humans use to create their own rhythms. These are called "percussion instruments," and they usually make a sound when they are struck with another object.

Scholars divide percussion instruments into two major categories: membranophones and idiophones. Membranophones make their sounds when a stretched skin or membrane vibrates. All drums fall under the category of membranophones. Idiophones make sounds when their own substance vibrates. Bells, gongs, and tambourines are all idiophones.

Idiophones and membranophones have been found in excavations worldwide as early as 6000 BC. These instruments were used to bring together communities, as they were used long before that time and are still used today. Percussion instruments are played in religious and civil ceremonies in every country on Earth. In many cultures, percussion instruments have possessed a ritual healing significance for thousands of years.

Today, scientific research is exploring and confirming that rhythm and percussion can help to regulate and even heal the human body. Some medical personnel use drumming as a form of therapy for hospitalized patients. In the corporate world, businesses use drum circles to bring their employees together and build a sense of teamwork and community. In nearly every sector of our

modern society, rhythm continues to be a powerful tool that connects people with each other, their world and themselves.

Vocabulary

- Berimbau:** one of the world's first stringed-percussion instruments, a berimbau has the shape of a bow and arrow and is played throughout Brazil
- Claves:** two round sticks of hardwood found frequently in Latin American orchestras, which create a loud, resonant sound when struck together
- Doumbek:** a Middle Eastern hand drum with a drumhead usually made of sheep skin, fish skin, or plastic
- Djembe:** a native drum of West Africa made from a single piece of hardwood attached to a goatskin drumhead by a net of tuning strings
- Dynamics:** the loudness and softness of music; forte means loud while piano means soft
- Idiophone:** an instrument that makes a sound when its components strike itself, such as a bell, rattle or shaker
- Membranophone:** a drum or any instrument that makes a sound when its attached skin or membrane vibrates
- Shaker:** an idiophone that produces a rattling sound by using seeds, beads or any dry objects within or without the instrument
- Snare drum:** the traditional marching drum of Europe and North America having several wire strands (or snares) on its underside that vibrate when the drum is struck
- Tempo:** the speed of a piece; quickly (presto) or slowly (largo)