



DRUMMING

WITH SENIOR

CITIZENS

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DRUMMING WITH SENIOR CITIZENS

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CHAPTER 1:

The History Of Drum

THE HISTORY OF DRUM

Like no other instrument, the drum is simply associated with early mankind. It is assumed, not incorrectly, that the earliest civilizations had drums. It is as natural to people as the heart beat, and that connection is often made. But the purpose and evolution of drums have come a long way, and it's interesting to take a look back at the development.

As early as 6000 BC, the ancient Mesopotamians were thought to have used drums. Thousands of years old cave drawings were found in Peru. But perhaps no place is more closely associated with drumming than Africa. Here, the drum wasn't only a musical instrument, but held strict religious and spiritual ceremonies. The drum was a necessary part of life and not just a means of musical expression, however noble a goal that is.

Over the years, the drum has had still more purposes. The beat of the drum signaled the advance of armies all over the world, as its booming tones and repetitious thuds marshaled the fighting spirit of men of all tempers and nations. People responded to the drum. Whatever purpose it was serving, it always managed to excite.

In the early twentieth century, people realised that more than one drum could be played at a time, and so kits were invented. At first, drums of similar sounds were paired, and an assortment of other percussive instruments was assembled within arms reach. Soon this gave way to foreign sounding drums all being sounded together on one kit, with various foot pedals and other methods of striking the drum. The syncopation required to play one drum was increased and drummers had new roles, and with this, new possibilities. The snares and bass drums were essentially made the way drums had been for centuries—a covering wrapped around a hollow base and it incorporated cymbals and tom toms, something invented in China thousands of years ago. Different genres used the various drums to different degrees, and in different ways, but overall, the drums sounded different in every music. It's funny to think about such an ancient instrument having such a recent history, but the new assembly changed so much about its playing that individuals were demonstrating new techniques, possibilities, and grooves in various styles of music.

The development of the drum has paralleled developments in human society: in a crude linear fashion, it has gone from being part of spiritual ceremonies, to warfare, and to a time of intense technological change it has itself becoming increasingly more complex, and even global in the way it has incorporated elements from all over the planet. In keeping with the accelerated pace of modern developments is today's electronic drums. In a nutshell, the stick hits a synthesizer pad which sends a corresponding sound signal to play out of an amplifier, allowing for practically unlimited amounts of sounds to be programmed and for unprecedented control of volume. It obviously hasn't replaced acoustic drums, but it continues the tradition of drums echoing the people who play them!

The material of the drum skin can also vary from place to place, culture to culture. The skins of assorted animals such as goats, sheep and antelopes can be used as well as synthetic materials.

It is not uncommon to see an arrangement of drums called a 'drum kit.' This allows the musician to use all of their limbs to produce numerous sounds and pitches.

There are few simple classifications of drums which can be considered. Shape is undoubtedly the most familiar, with the majority of drums falling into one of these forms:

- * Cylindrical drums
- * Barrel drums
- * Conga drums
- * Waisted drums
- * Goblet drums
- * Bowl drums

There is another classification dependent on which side the drum has its head. A drum can have two heads on either side of the body, or alternatively, one drum-head on the top of the body. There are drums which have been designed to be easy to carry around, such as those used in street parades, and drums which are immobile.

When we listen to music such as rock, the drums we are hearing are inevitably part of the aforementioned drum kit - a selection of drums that are non-pitched and can be used together in harmony. The sounds and rhythms one can create with a drum kit are so diversified that a number of music genres can use them to create their preferred sound.

The bass drum is large and when played, creates a very low pitch. More specifically we are talking about the orchestral bass drum, the smaller 'kick' drum and the pitched bass drums. Orchestral drums are the larger of the three and are primarily used in orchestral concerts. The kick-drum is the largest drum in a drum kit and is utilized with a foot pedal. The last one mentioned, the pitched bass drum, is a popular choice for marching parades and the drums corp.

The snare drum has plastic or calf skin drumheads stretched securely over a metal frame that is hollow. The top head is beaten with drumsticks that are wooden, and is known as the 'batter-head.' The snare-head, also called the bottom head, has wires of metal called snares that are stretched across it. When this drum is struck on the head, the snares give off a sharp rattling sound, since they are vibrating on the snare head.

A tom-tom is a drum shaped like a cylinder that doesn't have a snare. It goes all the way back to the Native America and Asian cultures and was not added to the drum kit until sometime in the early 20th century. It is now thought to be an essential component to the drum kit and can consist of up to three units of different size. One of those is mounted on three-legs and sits to the left of the bass drum. The other two are usually hanging on either side above the bass drum.

CHAPTER 2:

The Power Of Drum And Rhythm Healing

The Power of Drum and Rhythm Healing

From the earliest times drums and their rhythms have been at the centre of social and cultural activities all over the world, in fact, it is said to be man's oldest musical percussion instrument. However, drums have not always been used for creating music or entertainment. In African tribal cultures, drums bore an important role in the use of rituals and religious ceremonies, to express themselves and for communication purposes. Across history, the drum has been used in warfare, both as a means of giving signals to the soldiers and to create noise and drive fear into the enemy. The drum is a deep and sacred element of Native American culture, believing the beat of the drum to be in sync with the heartbeat of mother earth. And now? The primitive drumming circle is emerging as a significant therapeutic tool in the modern technological age. Drums and drumming are increasingly being used as powerful means of improving health and well-being, personal development and improving communication by large companies and corporations, music therapists, youth groups, schools and even prisons.

Music therapists and therapy programs are increasingly using drums and rhythm to promote healing and self-expression. Drumming can be very therapeutic, helping us to get in touch with our inner selves as well as being a fun way to relax and rejuvenate our mind, body, and soul. Recent research indicates that drumming accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system and produces feelings of well being. Study results demonstrate that drumming is a valuable treatment for stress, fatigue, anxiety, hypertension, asthma, chronic pain, arthritis, dementia, mental illness, migraines, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, stroke, paralysis, emotional disorders, ADHD sufferer's, people with learning difficulties, a wide range of physical disabilities as well as for recovering addicts, older people, troubled adolescents and prisoners.

Drumming induces deep relaxation, lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress. Moreover, drumming promotes the production of endorphins, the bodies own morphine-like pain killers, and can thereby help in the control of pain and those suffering grief. Drumming and rhythm is such a powerful tool as it permeates the entire brain. The sound of drumming generates neuronal connections in all parts of the brain even where there is significant damage or impairment such as in ADHD. The process of drumming engages both the linear, rational left side of the brain (in the learning of polyrhythmic parts and the analysis of how rhythms fit together) and the creative, intuitive right side of the brain (in the entrainment of rhythm in the body and the appreciation of the music). The two brain hemispheres often emanate different wave frequencies; drumming, like deep meditation, brings them into synchronisation, creating feelings of euphoria and flowing creativity.

Group drumming can complement traditional talk therapy methods. Players can drum out their feelings without saying a word or without having to reveal their issues. Drumming circles, ensembles and making music together in a group can be a unifying experience, encouraging self-expression and camaraderie as well as lots of hands-on fun!

Drumming together breaks down barriers, builds personal and team confidence, it releases stress, motivates and creates spontaneity.

Many Companies and Corporations are searching out consultants to organize drumming workshops as team building programs. The workshops aim to encourage employees to work more effectively - playing drums together becomes a metaphor for how people work together as a team. The workshops aim to improve communications, break down barriers, boost morale, motivate, re-energise staff, cut stress and increase productivity. As barriers are broken down and the junk falls away, people become more honest with each other and conflicts are resolved, leaving the team more in tune with each other.

The rhythm and order of drumming even provides a creative outlet for even the most hardened individual. Drumming workshops have been used in prisons and with young offenders - providing creative ways to re-channel negative energy, diffuse anger and build team spirit through the power of percussion.

Many community groups, youth groups and centres have introduced informal drumming workshops to bring children and adults together in a fun-filled, cooperative environment where they build community, create music and learn a new skill that they can even take away and share with their friends. Drumming captures the heart of most who encounter it. Drummers don't have to worry about melody or chords and absolutely NO previous musical experience is required.

So, it seems the drum continues to play a central role in our society. Why not find the rhythm and beat of your own drum? There are many drumming communities across the country promising anxiety release, physical toning, spiritual growth, creativity and personal empowerment whilst being a whole lot of fun - who couldn't use that?

CHAPTER 3:

Lessons and Practicing

How Drum Lessons Can Help You Become A Better Player On Any Instrument

If you're willing to practice the techniques you learnt from drum lessons regularly, then drum lessons are definitely for you. However, if you're not willing to make a daily time commitment to practicing playing the drums, you still can benefit from taking lessons, but you'll definitely learn at a much slower pace than a drummer who practices would.

The main reason that regular practice is so important for drummers is that when you practice something like a drum roll, the movements done by your fingers and wrists slowly get embedded in your muscle memory, making it easier for you to play a drum roll the next time you see. This concept also applies to your feet and the bass drum.

Want to start grooving? You have to practice!

In addition, the most important thing for a drummer to do is to really feel and understand the rhythm of whatever drum beat they're playing so they can start grooving to it. When a drummer's playing near perfect rhythm, they're making the drum set piece they're playing come alive, allowing the listener to feel the drum beat. Sounds cool, right? You may be thinking, 'just how can a drummer accomplish this?' The answer, of course, is to practice regularly. Not only do you have to practice regularly; you also have to practice the right way to understand the concept of rhythm and groove, which is where lessons by a good drum teacher will come in handy.

Finding a drum teacher

Go to your local drum store, and ask them if they offer drum lessons. If they don't, look around the store for any bulletin boards where drummers post band information and you may be able to find an offer for weekly drum lessons. Still, can't find a drum lesson? Try your local community centers, or try going to any places with musical equipment and asking around there. By then, you should be able to find somebody offering a drum lesson. You can also try checking out the links on the bottom of this page for a few different directories of drum lessons being offered all over the US.

The drum teachers that I've talked to are all very passionate about drums, and many of them play professionally in bands, so you should be able to get a good lesson from just about any drum teacher. Most drum teachers offer lessons once a week, for 30 minutes to an hour. (I'm sure though if you wanted to take more lessons a week, you could.) Monthly lessons should be affordable (I pay 60 dollars per hour lesson, but if you're really on a tight budget, you might be able to negotiate with the teacher for a lower price.

Anyone can benefit from a good drum lesson

What you work on during a drum lesson will be different depending on your skill level. Beginners may work on snare drum rudiments and drum fundamentals, while more intermediate and advanced drummers work on how to play jazz independence, odd meters and drum solos. (You can really work on anything you want though, just ask your drum teacher what you want to learn and I'm sure they'd be glad to help you.) No matter what your skill level, a good drum teacher should be able to listen to whatever you're playing on a drum set and immediately tell you what you're doing incorrectly and correctly.

Being One With the Beat

While every musical instrument requires that you have a sense of rhythm and beat, the beat takes on a different meaning if you are a drummer. If you are in a band, you know that the drummer sets the tone for the whole band while they are playing.

Although in the background, the drummer takes the lead and controls the beat and timing for the rest of the members. Drumming teaches you when to take the lead, how to be in union and harmony with a team, and essentially how to be one with the beat of any song.

Workout and Physical Exertion

Drumming requires a lot of movement, and even though you are seated on a throne (drummers version of a seat), you still get a great workout. Your hands gently clench the drumsticks as you move your wrists back and forth while methodically hitting the hi-hats and snare, and occasionally (or very frequently depending on your style) you heave and stretch your arms forward and back reaching to hit tom toms, crashes, splashes, and rides making for awesome fills and rolls. Your feet control the bass drum and the hi-hat, and these also require much movement. In addition, the rest of your body cannot help but to live in the moment and sway and groove to the melodies that are being created.

Yes, drumming requires constant movement which gives you a major workout benefit. So, it is safe to say that you may very possibly be able to lose weight and get in better physical shape if you do choose to take up drumming.

Coordination

Can you rub your stomach with one hand while patting your head with the other? Well, drumming can require two-way, three-way, and even four-way coordination. If you want to increase your coordination and dexterity, learning to drum can help you.

Learning to play an instrument can be fun, while at the same time you are able to acquire skills and develop good qualities. If I have not got you pumped on taking up drumming, I would settle with being able to persuade you with learning to play a musical instrument. We would all be able to survive without music. However, things will be fairly dull. Music adds flavor and color to life, so enjoy it in any way that you are able to.

How drum lessons have helped me

I've been taking drum lessons for years now, and I've some excellent tips on how to practice better technique, play quicker, and become a better drummer overall. The best benefit of drum lessons definitely are to learn the concept of drumming from a veteran in the drumming world.

CHAPTER 4:

Benefits of Playing Drums

Benefits of Playing Drums

Drummers are a different breed of people - they are set apart from other musicians. They have a totally different job, and different feel with their instrument. They are required to be able to move, and separate themselves from the rest of the band. Although they are still musicians, and share much of the same qualities, you cannot really compare a drummer to a melodic musician. There are certain things that you get out of drumming that you can't get out of other instruments.

Physical Benefits Of Drumming

The first obvious benefit to drumming is the physical aspect to it. Like mentioned above, drumming is a physical activity, one that takes a lot of energy. Sit on a seat, move your hands and feet around the kit at fast speeds, for long periods of time, and see how you feel. Tired? It's not an easy job. The cardio muscles in drummers are much more developed than in non-drummers. For all the parents out there who have trouble getting their young ones to get some exercise, try sitting them on a drum kit. Not only will they get the exercise they need, they will also have fun!

Mental Benefits Of Drumming

Drumming takes a lot of work, time, and energy that- when done right- is very rewarding. These kinds of reward can be seen and heard very easily; so drummers are very self motivated. This determination and focus you learn can be applied to any situation. When playing a beat, drummers use every part of their mind to make sure every part of them is playing on time. For the younger kids out there, this helps to develop fundamental skills in channeling their mind, and focusing on one thing. Any parents out there who have kids suffering with ADD or ADHD? This is a big benefit for you. Getting your young ones to start playing the drums is a great way to help them take out their excess energy on something that is very useful, and physical.

Musical Benefits Of Drumming

Throughout this article you may get the impression that a drummer is not a musician. This is far from the truth. Being a musician is just another benefit of being a drummer. Having the feeling like you are accomplished is a feeling that no one can explain. Being in a band or other music group will give you confidence and meaning that other activities just cannot give you.; If you are a parent of a child who is lacking in self confidence, drumming may be the solution for you.

Playing the drums can be the most rewarding experience. It will keep you active, it will keep you thinking, and it will keep you in the know. I would strongly suggest drumming to parents with kids of any type. It helps shape the personality of a person by teaching them some fundamental life skills

CHAPTER 5:

Health Benefits of Playing Drums for the Seniors

Health Benefits of Playing Drums for the Seniors

Contrary to popular belief, drumming is not just for kids, young adults, rock stars or hippies. Drumming, as a therapy or healing art, benefits those with everything from stress and anxiety to neurological disorders like dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Drumming within a group improves teamwork, inspires creativity and can bring a smile to the faces of even our oldest friends and family members. Senior citizens are among the many different groups of people that are experiencing the health and wellness benefits of drumming, whether as a participant or an audience member.

Some senior citizens may have problems with mobility or may be facing serious disorders like Parkinson's disease. Studies show that by introducing new skills and ideas, the brain can be stimulated, and nerve pathways may even regenerate, helping to alleviate many neurological symptoms that seniors may experience. For those who are able to drum, the action of drumming is a great form of exercise for the upper body, and helps stimulate the heart aerobically. Even those with arthritis or other issues who cannot physically drum can be stimulated just by listening and being surrounded by the rhythms of Djembes, bongos and other hand drumming and percussion instruments.

Research has shown that fewer doctor visits and less illness was experienced in populations where seniors participated in musical group activity and dance. Drum circles especially can improve cognitive activity by allowing seniors to be a part of something they feel has purpose. Keeping seniors engaged and active by participating in recreational and therapeutic drumming activities in a community setting is fundamental to long term health and wellness and their overall quality of life. The magic of music makes people more socially active, responsive and alert.

Senior drumming is an interactive event that allows seniors to create their own music. Seniors are greatly affected as they feel the vibrations of the music. They smile and laugh, hands open and close, memories return, and they often start singing and dancing.

These are the main health benefits of drumming for the senior:

Drumming reduces stress and boosts the immune system

Studies have shown that drumming lowers both blood pressure and stress hormones. The active component of drumming helps reduce stress in a number of ways. It's fun, it's physical, and it's a great diversion from other stress-filled activities. If you need to vent, what better way than to hit something?

Drumming is also meditative, inducing relaxed mental states that reduce anxiety and tension. Drumming combined with deep breathing and visualization techniques offers even more stress reduction benefits. "We know that stress takes a toll on the immune system," says Ann Webster, Ph.D. "When you're under stress, blood levels of stress hormones go up and your body is no longer able to

make killer cells and other cells of the immune system in the amounts it normally would, and that can lead to disease progression. Reducing stress is very restorative. It gets the system back in balance.”

A recent medical research study indicates that drumming does boost the immune system. According to cancer expert Barry Bittman, MD, the study demonstrates that group drumming actually increases cancer killing cells, which help the body fight cancer and other viruses.

Drumming produces deeper self-awareness by inducing synchronous brain activity (Hemispheric Coordination) and promoting alpha waves

Studies of the human mind have found that the two sides of a human brain often work at different levels and at different rates. Drumming activates both sides of the brain and can help the mind achieve hemispheric coordination, a situation where both halves of the brain are active and brain waves are synchronized. This coordination can lead to integrative modes of consciousness, which may include greater insight or creativity.

Drumming also can increase alpha waves in the brain. The increased alpha activity can help drummers and others to calm their minds or even achieve a meditative state. Group drumming and its effect on alpha waves are now being used to help people with addictive personalities and people who are ‘hypervigilant.’

Drumming helps to release negative feelings and emotional trauma

Drum therapy has successfully been used with patients and others suffering from emotional traumas including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Drumming can help people express and address emotional issues. The physical stimulation of drumming also removes blockages and produces emotional release. Sound vibrations resonate through every cell in the body, stimulating the release of negative cellular memories. “Drumming emphasizes self-expression, teaches how to rebuild emotional health, and addresses issues of violence and conflict through expression and integration of emotions,” says Music Educator Ed Mikenas.

Drumming helps us to connect with self and others

Group drumming creates a sense of community and a powerful shared experience. It has been used as a successful team building experience to teach groups to work together, to listen to each other, and to achieve common goals. Group drumming discourages isolation, and self-centeredness and promotes communication and involvement with the group. On a personal level, a drum circle also provides an opportunity to connect with one’s own spirit at a deeper level. People who are sick, addicted, or afflicted with other conditions are out of sync with themselves. By putting these people in sync with themselves and with healthy individuals, it is possible for them to feel and enjoy a healthier state of being.

Drumming helps us connect to the natural rhythms all around us

Rhythm is all around us though we are often unaware of it. The sun, the moon, and the seasons follow regular rhythms. Our bodies have natural rhythms, which are a part of us every day. Natural rhythms rule us, even on a cellular level. Recent scientific ‘string’ theories even suggest that on a subatomic level, the smallest particle of the universe, that which makes up all things, is nothing more than tiny vibrating ‘strings’ and that their vibration, or rhythm, is what makes things what they are. Under this theory, everything is rhythm, literally.

Drumming connects us to rhythm, puts us in touch with natural cycles, and makes us aware of rhythm all around us.

Drumming provides a path by which we may access a higher power

Drumming produces a sense of spirituality, connectedness, and community, integrating body, mind and spirit. By allowing participants to achieve a more relaxed, meditative mental state, drumming allows people to enter states of higher consciousness. Drumming can coordinate the brain's two hemispheres and synchronize the lower and frontal areas of the brain, which can lead to feelings of greater understanding and insight, which is often the basis for a person's connection to a higher power.

Drumming grounds us in the present moment

Drumming is interactive. It's about timing and coordination, both of which force participants to be in the present moment. This helps a person to be grounded in the present moment: When a person is firmly grounded in the present, stressful situations in the past are forgotten and worries of the future are minimized.

Drumming helps us to reach a state of self-realization

Drumming is a great form of self-expression. A drummer beats the drum and immediately receives feedback from the drum. This immediate feedback loop helps drummers achieve self-expression and self-realization. Drumming provides a method by which people can hear and be heard, a non-verbal language by which they can express themselves. The drummer is at once a useful part of the group and a unique individual.

Drumming is fun

Drumming releases endorphins in the human brain that cause feelings of happiness and euphoria. It's a great reason to gather with other people, to share in a common experience, and to do something enjoyable. A participant in a drum circle is part of a whole that is much greater than the sum of its parts, and drumming is accessible to an extremely wide range of people. Drumming is fun and that's the bottom line.

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