

# Heartbeat (A rhythm from *Ghana*)

## Lesson – Leading a Middle School Drum Circle

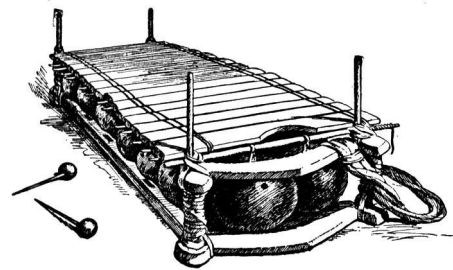
**Suggested Age Level: 6, 7 or 8.**

### Content Standards used:

2. **Content Standard:** Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
4. **Content Standard:** composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. **Content Standard:** Reading and notating music.
6. **Content Standard:** Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. **Content Standard:** Evaluating music and music performances.
9. **Content Standard:** Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

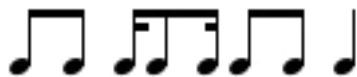
### Aim:

- To build sense of pulse and tempo.
- To build a stable ensemble rhythm.
- To learn a basic style of drumming notation.
- To learn a West African drumming ensemble.



### Process:

- Explore sounds on the drum using simultaneous imitation. (“Do what I do, at the SAME time I do it!”)  
This process lets the teacher help the students explore the voices of the drum. It also focuses the class and requires all of the students to listen and watch in order to successfully imitate the sounds and rhythms of the teacher. The teacher should vary the rhythms and tempos.

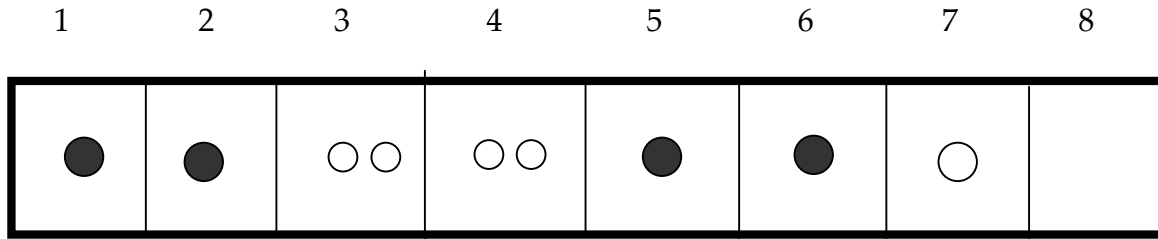


- Teach the signal. This signal is played by the teacher and tells the students to move on to the next part. If they are playing when they hear the signal, it tells them to stop; if they are stopped and hear the signal, it tells them to begin. If the leader plays the signal it can also signal a soloist, a group of dancers or other sections or parts of the activity as desired.
- Continue simultaneous imitation and exploration of the basic drum sounds as the signal is used several times to make sure everyone understands.

- Introduce a simple box notation system. (See score below.)
- Use some simple icons for some of the drum sounds discovered during the imitations activity.

Dum ● Dum-uh ●● Tak ○ Tak-uh ○○ Pah ●

- Put this diagram of box notation on the board ("*HeartBeat*") one sound at a time: learn. Start with the Dums; add the Tak, then the Tak-uhs, and finally the Pah.



*Dum* is a low sound played with the full hand in the center of the drum.

*Dum-ih* is simply the sub-division of Dum using alternate hands. (Ta, ti ti)

*Tak* is a higher pitched sound played on the outside edge of the drum with the fingers.

*Tak-uh* is simply a subdivision of the Tak using alternate hands. (Ta, ti ti)

*Pah* is a pickup to the following measure. It is played like a Tak or a Dum.

Note: All the sounds can be open (let the sound ring) or closed (damp the drum head).

### Extensions:

- Give the signal and continue with a light steady beat on the drum to provide a background for soloists. Give the signal again to resume the given rhythm.
- Use this or a similar drum rhythm to accompany your favorite African song. It works well with "Fanga Alafiya" (see box notation below)
- Use this rhythm as a background for dancing African style!
- Let the students make a drum score and compose their own "signature rhythm." These can be played as solos during the drum circle activities.

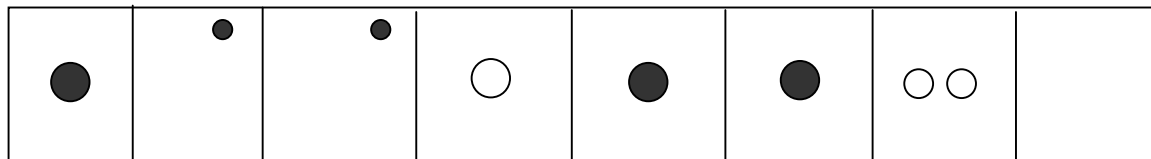
### Notes:

- Learning the basic tones on the conga drum is a joyful experience in itself. The key to a middle schooler's interest level is to find the voices of the drum. The "Coolness" of the new sounds grabs them almost immediately.

- Drumming is accessible now for schools using the new “Tubanos” from Remo. They are inexpensive but sound OK. Gradually adding the djembe, real congas, shakere, bells, only heightens the interest of the kids.
- To “Drive” the ensemble, get a djembe. It gives the bottom some strength. We all know the importance of a great bottom!
- I’ve found that students can create wonderful rhythms once they understand the notation system. It’s a wonderful way to reinforce or learn about the idea of “complementary” rhythms.



For fun: Try “Fanga Alafia”



Brent Holl lives in Bridgewater, Virginia, taught middle school General Music and Choir in Augusta County for 33 years. He is currently the Level I Basic Orff instructor for the summer course at Virginia Commonwealth University. He received a B. S. degree from Bridgewater College, an M.M.Ed from James Madison University, and has completed all levels of Orff Certification at the University of Memphis. He presents middle school workshops throughout the Eastern United States.

Mr. Holl directed the Stewart Orff Ensemble, the eighth grade general music class at Stewart Middle School from 1992 - 2006. This ensemble performed at the Virginia Music Educators Conference in 1992 and 1996, at James Madison University’s “Mallet Madness” in 1997, for the opening in-service session for the teachers of Augusta County, Waynesboro, and Staunton, Virginia, in 1998, for the opening session at the American Orff Schulwerk National Conference in 1998, and at Radford University’s “Marimba Madness” in 1999. The ensemble was the demonstration group for Mr. Holl’s session “A Pallet of Color” in March 2000 at the National MENC conference in Washington D. C.

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# Drum Score

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- Dum
- Tak
- Ta-kuh
- |     |
|-----|
| Pah |
|-----|