Key Stage 2 2006

ENGLISH

Modified large print

Levels 3-5

Reading booklet

Heart Beat



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Acknowledgements: pages 6–7 adapted from Good Vibrations: My Autobiography by Evelyn Glennie, Hutchinson, 1990.

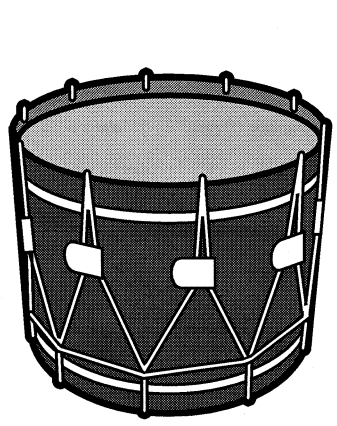
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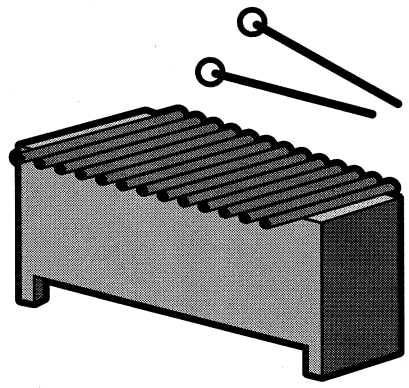
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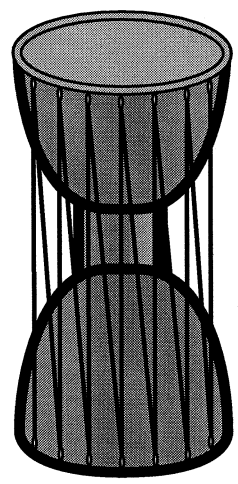
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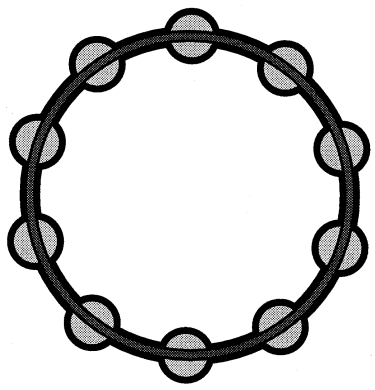
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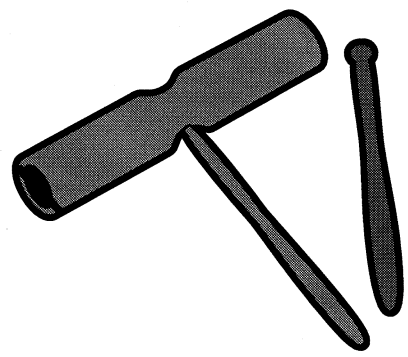
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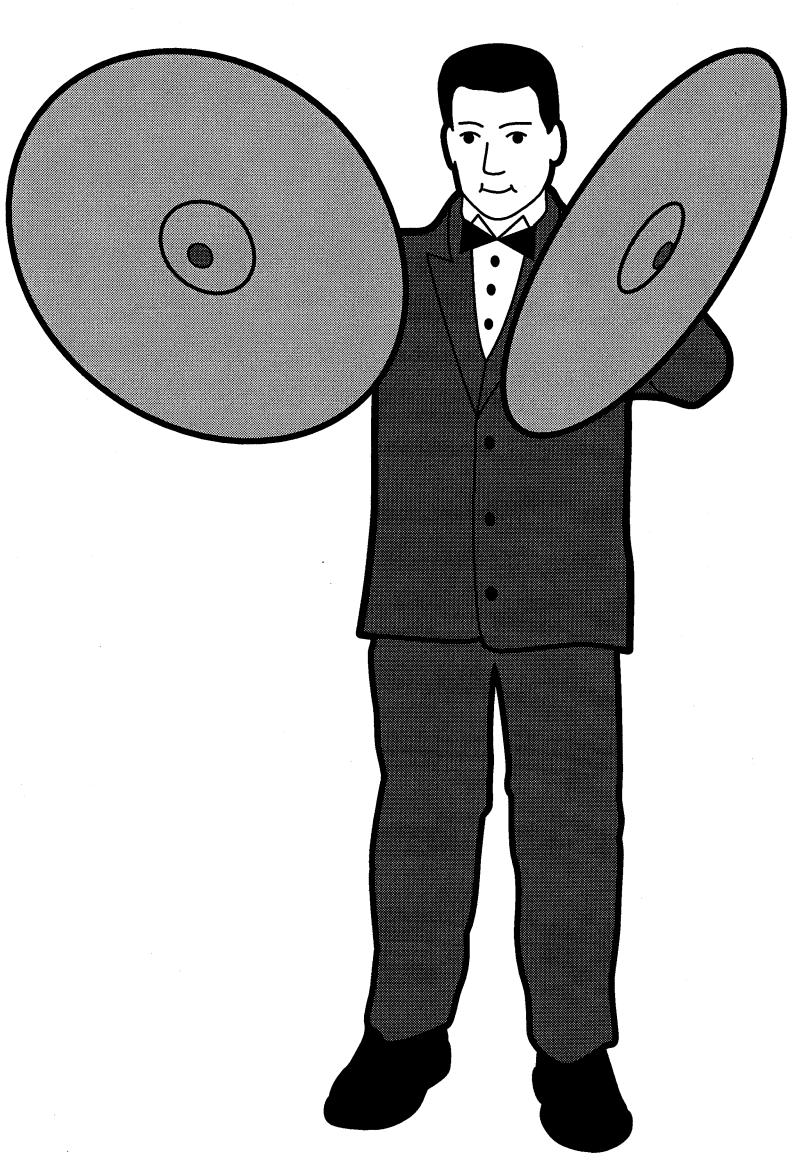
Introduction

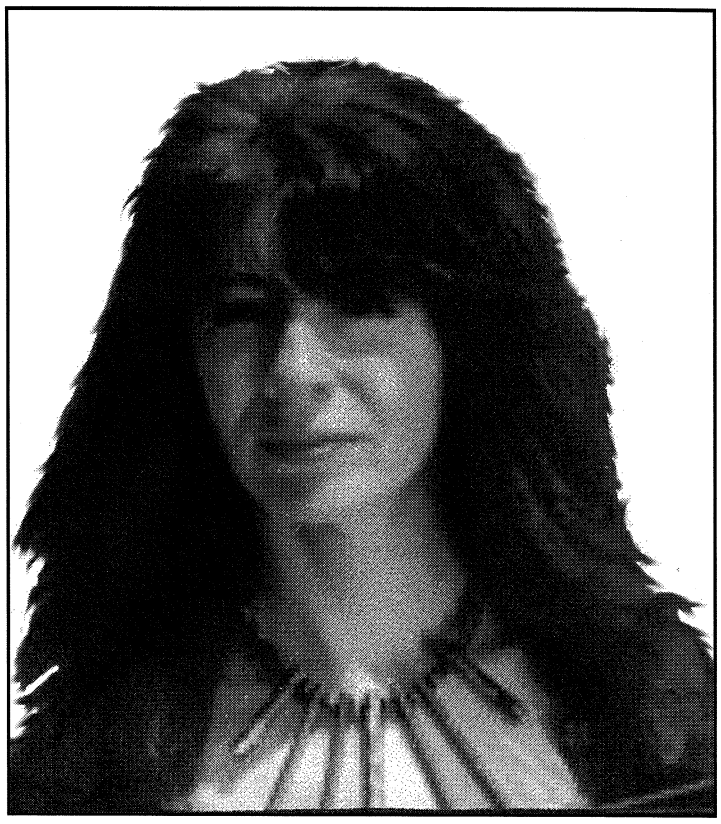
Drums … bells … cymbals …

Any instrument that you hit to create music is a percussion instrument: whether you shake it, tap it with bare hands or beat it with sticks.

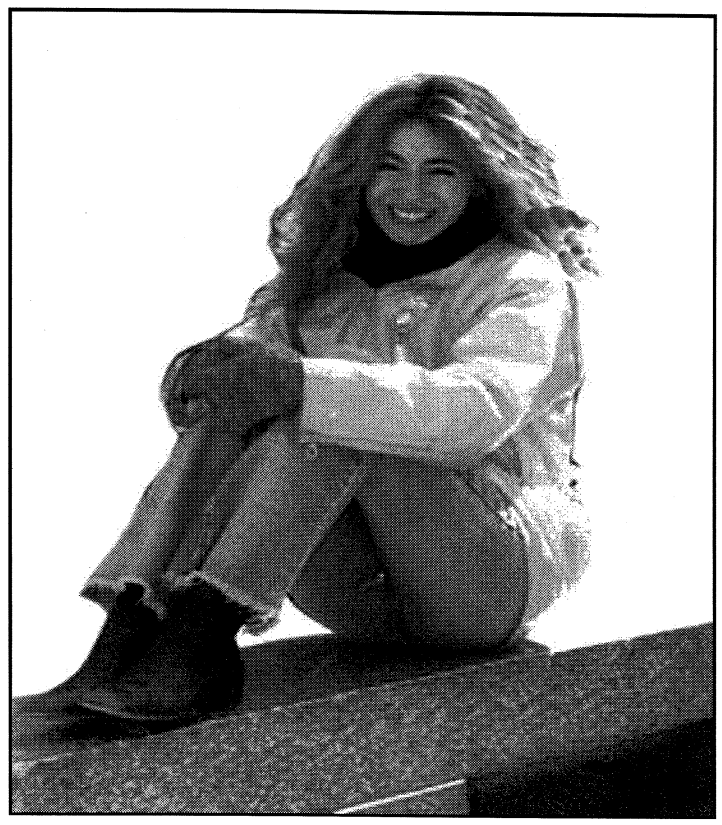
Did you know that, apart from the human voice, percussion instruments are the oldest musical instruments in the world?

Since the earliest times, people have enjoyed the thumping, beating and drumming of percussion. This booklet will tell you something about that fun and the importance of percussion to people all over the world.





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Evelyn Glennie – a short biography

Evelyn Glennie is a well-known musician who plays many different percussion instruments. She is the first ever solo full-time percussionist. She has played all around the world with famous orchestras and musicians. On pages 6 to 8, you can read from her autobiography, Good Vibrations; but first, here is a short outline of her life so far.

Evelyn was born in 1965 and grew up with her two brothers on a farm in north-east Scotland. From an early age, when she started to learn the piano, recorder and clarinet, it was clear that Evelyn was unusually gifted in music.

While still at primary school, Evelyn started to lose her hearing. By the age of 12 she was almost completely deaf. At secondary school, she stopped playing most other instruments in order to put her effort into percussion. Here she began to excel as a talented musician, with support from family and teachers, especially Mr Forbes, her percussion teacher.

In those days, because of her deafness, it was difficult for Evelyn to be allowed to attend the local secondary school. Later on, in 1981, she had an even bigger struggle to get into the Royal Academy of Music in London, where she wanted to continue her studies in music. At first, the Royal Academy was unwilling even to interview her but she was finally accepted. She did better than anyone expected and completed her studies while still exceptionally young – before her 20th birthday.

In 1988 Evelyn won the **Young Musician of the Year** competition and since then her career has taken off. She has become an outstanding professional musician, winning countless prizes and awards, and has performed with many world-class musicians all over the globe. Evelyn appears on television frequently, presenting music programmes such as 'Soundbites'. She has also written and performed music – not only for television, but also for film. She has even developed her own musical instrument – a new range of cymbals.

Some of Evelyn's major achievements:

- gives around 110 concerts a year
- has recorded 18 albums
- has performed in over 40 countries
- has collected over 1800 instruments
- uses up to 60 instruments in a live performance
- was the first classical musician to have her own website.



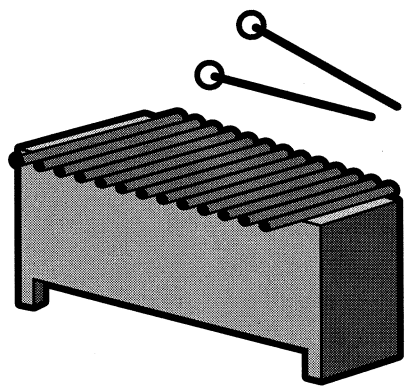
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Evelyn Glennie – autobiography

Evelyn published her autobiography, Good Vibrations, in 1991. These are extracts, adapted from her book. Here, Evelyn describes how she first became inspired to take up percussion instruments and how she 'hears' music, even though she is deaf.

People often ask me why I decided to take up percussion. It's difficult to say why exactly. I always knew that I wanted to be a musician, but my enthusiasm for percussion may have dated back to the time in my childhood when I went to a local competition and saw Isabel, a young girl, playing the xylophone. She was brilliant, just amazing, and I thought, 'I didn't realise a xylophone could do this.' Once I went to secondary school I found there were many more percussion instruments to discover, which may be why I was so determined to try them.

I remember going through to the percussion room. It was tiny, with one window, and what I saw was a xylophone, a couple of hand-tuned timpani (often known as kettle drums), a drum kit, an upright piano, books and papers stacked in heaps, a great long cupboard for more papers, and bits of instruments everywhere; the room was so small and so crowded that I could hardly move.
Mr Forbes, my teacher, told me to play some notes on the xylophone. You can usually tell when you test someone like this whether they have natural ability simply by the way they handle the sticks. I'd never used sticks before but I picked them up and played with no stiffness or awkwardness.



xylophone



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I know how music sounds by what I feel. I can sense musical sound through my feet and lower body, and also through my hands. I can identify different notes according to which part of my foot feels the vibrations and for how long, and by how I experience the vibrations in my body.

Mr Forbes taught me how to develop my senses. He used to tell me to put my hands on the wall outside the music room and then he would play two notes on two drums and ask me, 'Okay, which is the higher note?' I'd tell him which I thought it was, and he'd ask me, 'How do you know?' So I'd tell him I could feel it maybe in the upper part of my hand, while I felt the other note all the way down to my wrist. Or we'd discuss what was happening in my feet and legs as I played the drums, or listened to a piece of music. Similarly, I always knew when a door banged or the phone rang, and my ability to sense sound developed as I became more and more dependent upon it.

Anyone can experience these effects, of course; if you put your hands on both sides of a piece of paper when a radio is on, you can feel the vibrations coming through the paper, and most young people have experienced the vibrations that pour through the lower limbs at the strong bass beats of a 'high-powered' disco.

Music isn't just a question of sounds. The thing about playing percussion is that you are not just creating sound, not just playing notes or beating out a pattern. You are creating emotions from inside yourself that can be sometimes beautiful and uplifting but are, sometimes, ugly or disturbing. To be a good musician, music has to come from deep inside you, from a seed growing in your heart.



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Drumming Around the World

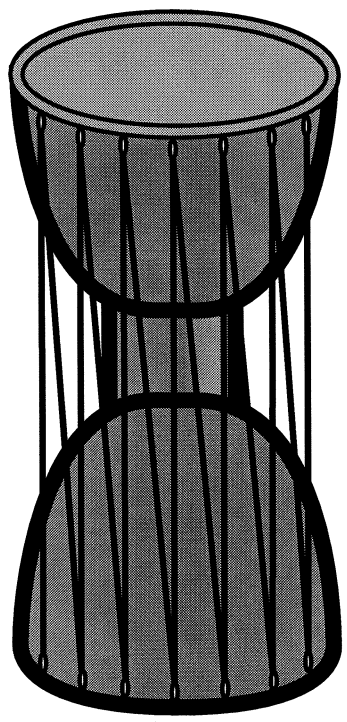
Drums are used in cultures all around the world. There is a vast range of sizes and shapes, sounds and melodies. Here are just a few.

West Africa – Kalangu

In some parts of West Africa, people sometimes still use drums as a means of communication.

'Talking drums' are used to communicate over long distances in Ghana and Nigeria. Drum messages are sent over distances as great as 30 kilometres. They may be used to announce births, deaths and marriages, to welcome leaders or to convey important information. The kalangu drum from Nigeria is famous for its ability to 'talk'. By pressing the strings which run down the sides of the drum from top to bottom, the player can raise and lower the note produced, so that it almost sounds like a human voice.

Kalangu drum

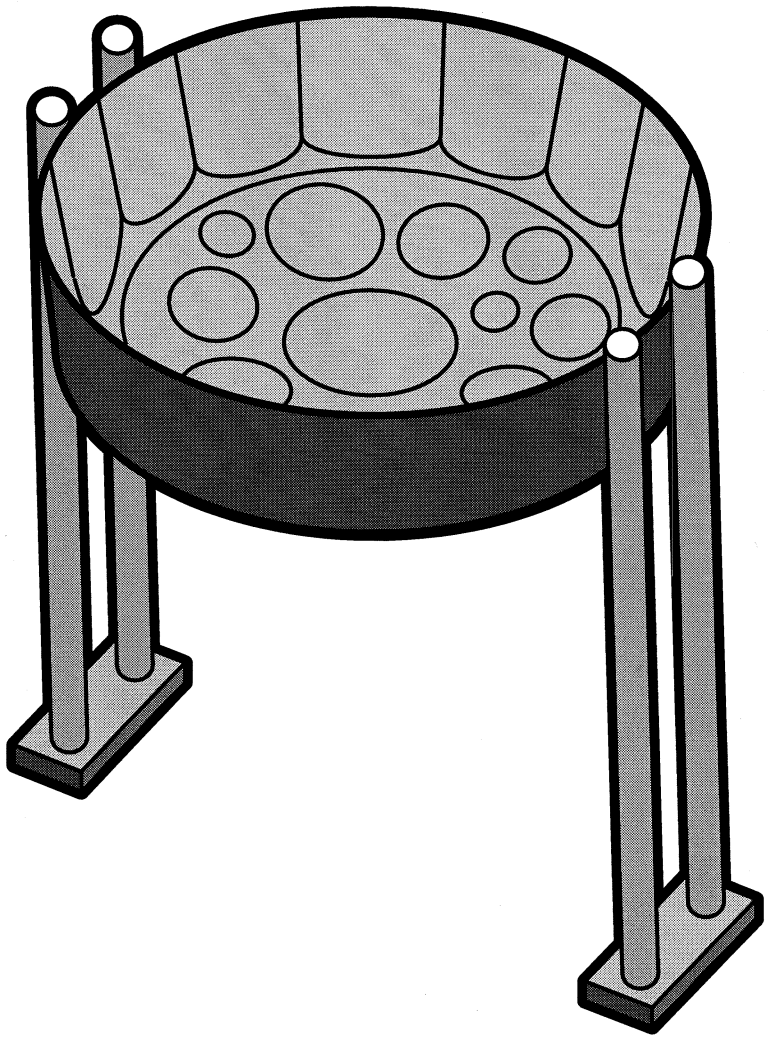


The Caribbean Islands – Steel Drums

Scrap metal is used to make these drums, first played by steel bands in the Caribbean. A large oil drum is cut down, leaving the top and part of the side. Metal panels are formed by hammering the top of the drum. The sound of each panel is different. The overall effect of a band of steel drums, when they are hit with rubber-tipped drumsticks, is a rich and metallic sound.

As there is no fixed pattern for the notes on steel drums, the players must memorise the layout of the notes on each individual drum. It takes a great deal of skill to play steel drums. When a large band plays together, the effect is rhythmic and lively. The music played by steel bands is so appealing that they are now popular all around the world.

Steel drum

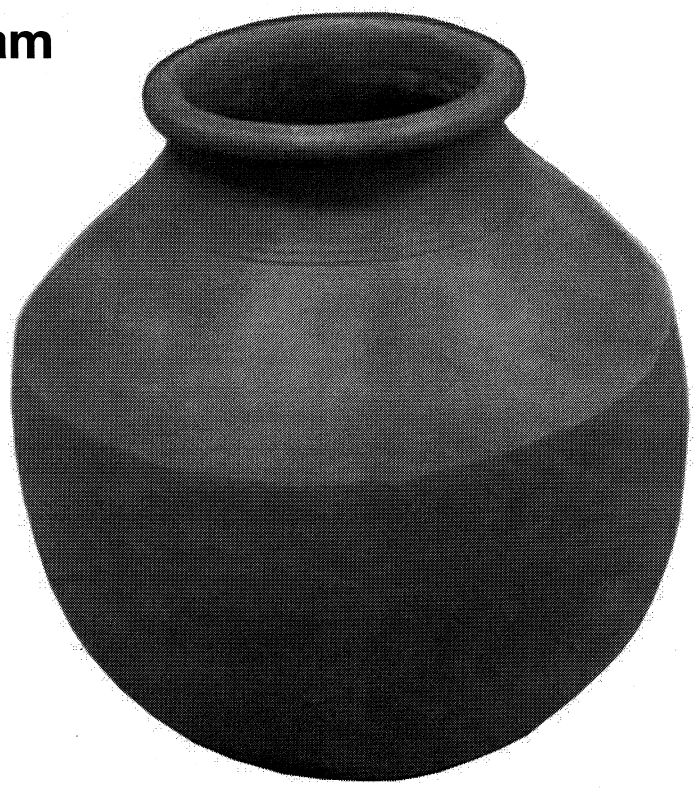


South Asia – Ghatam

In India, music is closely tied to religion and spirituality. It is believed to give people energy, develop emotions and courage, and touch the heart. India has a great many musical instruments, including many types of drum.

The ghatam is really a large clay pot with a single hole at the top which is pressed against the player's stomach. The player slaps the ghatam with the left hand to produce low notes while producing higher notes with the fingers and nails of the other hand. By moving the hole closer to and away from the body, the player can produce a variety of tones.

Ghatam



Europe and North America – The Drum Kit

In many parts of the world, as well as Europe and North America, modern electronic music has taken the place of traditional, hand-made instruments. The typical drum kit, used for rock music and jazz, generally consists of a bass drum, a snare drum, tom-toms and cymbals. Some of the cymbals are designed for playing with single hard strokes ('crash' cymbals) while others are tapped rhythmically in time with the music ('ride' cymbals). The 'hi-hat' allows cymbals to be clashed together with a pedal.

The drums and cymbals are played with sticks, brushes or sometimes, for special effects, soft beaters.

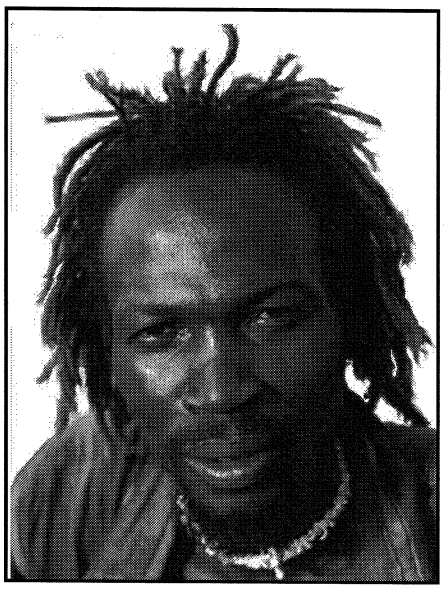


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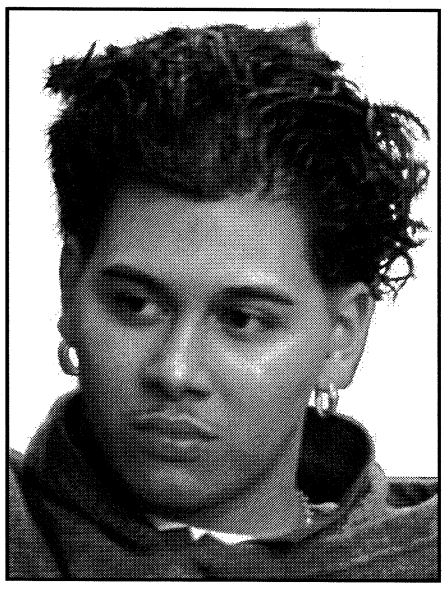
Lots of young people are drawn to the idea of learning the drums or other percussion instruments. It isn't always easy to decide whether you are suited to a certain musical instrument. This is what some drummers and percussionists have said about their instruments.

Pinto Wells has a steel band.



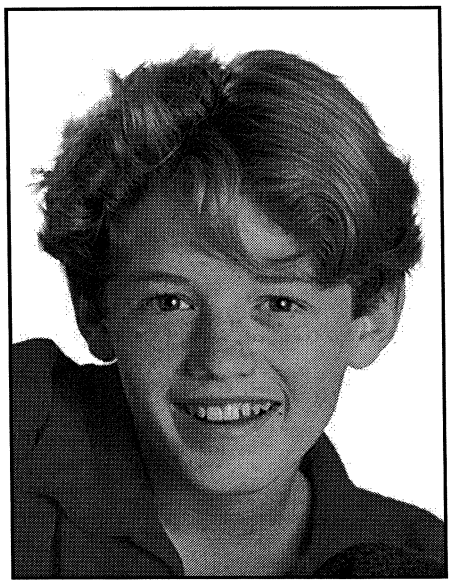
'The pans are big and heavy and this makes it hard for setting up and packing away. You have to have some good friends to help with the heaving around. A useful saying is: "If you can't carry it, you shouldn't play it".'

Jez Kamal is a drummer in a rock group called Spartan Sea Rhinos.



'Drumming is not for anyone who likes a quiet life.'

Peter Hunter plays in Portsdown School Orchestra.



'Drumming is great fun. You sit at the back of the orchestra, surrounded by exciting kit, having a fantastic time bashing everything in sight. But it isn't all that easy. You have to hit the right drum at the right time and at the right loudness. The most important thing for a drummer is a very exact sense of timing and rhythm. This gets better with practice, but even to start with you should be able to count a steady four beats. Drummers don't play a tune – they keep the time.'

Lara Brook is a member of May Middle School music club.



'If you play percussion, you have the fun of playing all the "odds and ends" that everyone else is too grand to play. This can mean playing bass drum and cymbals with your feet, timpani with one hand, side drum with the other, trying to turn over a page of the music and wondering how on earth you are going to be able to reach the tubular bells which have to be played NOW. It's great fun, though.'

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Reading booklet

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