

The Study & Application of Bembe

Conduit Percussion Clinic Tour Fall 2017

Bio:
Conduit Percussion is North Carolina based percussion trio formed by McKayla Phillips, Isaac Pyatt, and Jacob Stephens. Formed in 2016 during their concurrent studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Conduit Percussion was developed out of a desire to share new and innovative percussion works within the Triad community.



Follow us on Instagram! @conduitpercussion
Like us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/conduitpercussion

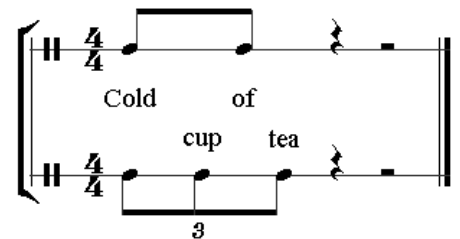


What is Bembe?

- Critical component of Afro-Cuban folkloric culture
- Sacred style of music comes from the Yoruba people of Africa who were brought to Cuba as slaves in the 19th century
 - Key terms: Sacred, Secular, Folkloric, Syncretism, & Oral Tradition
- The Afro-Cuban Lukumi people are people of Yoruban descent in Cuba. Yoruba people descend from modern day Nigeria and Benin
- Different ways to accompany sacred songs: bata drums, chekeres, drums similar to congas (barrels with skin)
- The common thread is that this style accompanies songs for the orishas, or the Yoruba deities in the religion known as “la regla de ocha” or Santería
- Many different kinds/forms of bembes: hands, sticks, hand and sticks
 - The styles we are playing today are Bembe Bakoso & Bembe Meta
- Bembe with Hands Components
 - 3 drums (High, Medium, Low)
 - Cachimbo, Mula, Caja
 - Quinto, Segundo, Tumba
 - 1 cowbell
 - Chekere(s)
 - Voice: Lead & Coro
 - Dance

The African Diaspora

- Santería is a religion of the African Diaspora; religions spread around the world with the scattering of the enslaved African people brought to the new world; originated with the traditional religious/spiritual practices of the Yoruba people
- Santería and Catholicism?
- 2 over 3 rhythm (the root of all African Diasporic Music!)
- 12/8 Bell Pattern
- It's not a waltz!



Bembe Improvisation

- In bembe, the lead drum improvises off of the dancers and the lead vocalist
- Bembe dance step that takes two complete bell patterns to resolve → sense of imitating footwork from the dance in lead drum improvisation
- It's not a waltz! 12/8 subdivided into 4 parts → tapping foot is essential, NOT optional!

12/8 Rhythmic Displacement

- Improvisation Techniques through Rhythmic Displacement
 - Add embellishments into if downbeat (any tone, land on open)
 - Revoicing (gives yourself more opportunity for expression): 1 tone, 2 tones, 3 tones, 4 tones (four groups of 3 is the funkier!)
 - Revoicing within groups of notes
 - Still about creating phrases and creative ideas, while still keeping dance step structure
 - Can play much longer phrase, but the concept is still the same
 - Play, come back, play, come back, play play play, come back
 - Cycle and resolve (1.2-4 go by)
- Applications in other percussion areas
 - Drumset
 - Marching Band playing techniques
 - Marimba mallet independence
 - Hemiolias / hearing rhythms "outside" the meter

Let's Play Bembe!

- Remember that this is an oral, folkloric tradition → no sheet music
- Chango Orisha
 - Syncretization of Saint Barbara and Saint Jerome
 - Orisha of drumming, dancing, thunder, and fire
 - The essence of masculinity
 - Colors are red and white
- Let's Sing!
 - Lead: Orisha kowo kowo, kowo eleri
 - Coro: Orisha kowo kowo

Resources

- The Conga Drummer's Guidebook - Michael Spiro
- Introduction to the Conga Drum DVD - Michael Spiro
- Bakini: En el Nuevo Mundo CD - Michael Spiro & Joe Galvin
- www.congamasterclass.com

Questions?

Notation Key

Congas $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Bass Open Muff Slap H heel T toe tc touch

Bembe

Bakoso

Cachimbo $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Mula $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Caja $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Bell $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Meta

Cachimbo $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Mula $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Caja (w/R stick, L hand) $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

Bell $\text{H} \frac{12}{8}$

4

7