

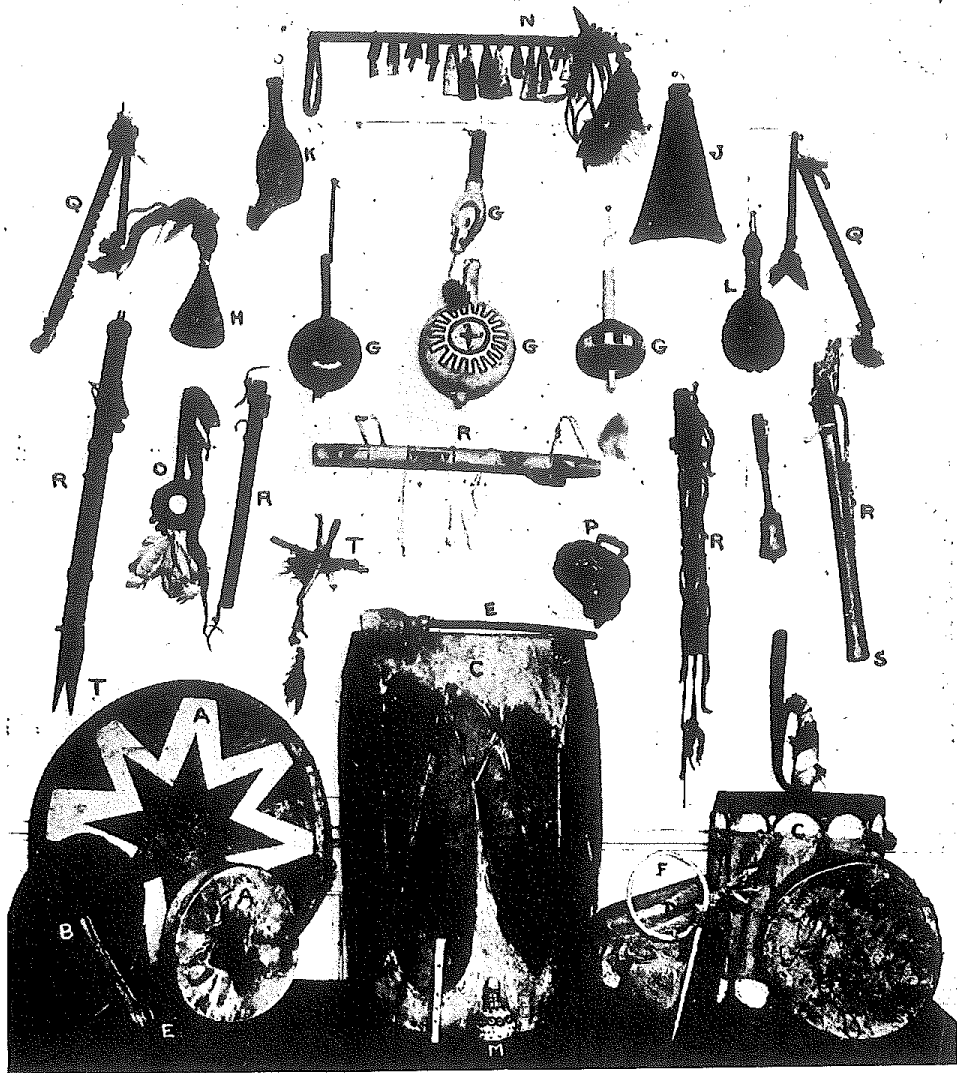
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INDIAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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INDIAN MUSICAL AND NOISE-MAKING INSTRUMENTS

MUSIC, principally in the form of songs, has always played a very important part in the lives of the American Indians. The carrying on of almost every form of human activity was formerly accompanied by singing; and even today, despite the advance of white civilization, thousands of songs are still performed. To a very great extent, singing is connected with religion; and, since the Indian introduces his native religion into almost everything he does, it follows that one or many songs accompany nearly every action. The basic idea of singing seems to be that by means of it the Indian is able to add to his own inherent magical powers some portion of that mysterious power which fills all things in nature. For a further discussion of this idea see reference 1, page 62.

The greater number of Indian songs are sung to the accompaniment of instruments which produce a strongly marked beat, such as the drum, the rattle, and the notched resonator or morache; evidently because rhythm is associated in the Indian mind with the supernatural.

DRUM. There are three main types of this instrument. (1). The small hand drum, which usually has but one head, but which may have two. (2). The large two-headed drum, commonly made of wood. (3). The water drum, a keg shaped article equipped with a single removable head and containing a certain amount of water.

The hand drum (A) is made by stretching a piece of hide over a circular band of wood several inches wide. The drum is usually from 10 to 16 inches in diameter. The cords which keep the head taut are tied together in the back and form a handle (B). Such a drum can easily be carried and so is commonly used where circumstances require that the drummer move about.

The large two-headed drum (C) is generally made by hollowing out a section of log and stretching skin over each end. There is considerable variation in size, from about 1 foot to 3 in height and 1 to 2½ feet in diameter. Metal kegs and washtubs, and ordinary bass drums of white manufacture are sometimes used. In the southwestern Pueblos the large drum is usually held and beaten by a single standing player, while on the plains and in the east it is placed on the ground and struck by several seated men. Sometimes the drum is suspended from stakes, held by others than the player, or supported by a group of players.

The water drum is made by hollowing out a log from one end only. Near the solid end a small hole is bored to allow the water to escape. The head is made of a large piece of skin which is held tightly in place by a hoop which fits closely to the sides of the instrument. Before playing the head is removed and water is placed in the opening. The head is then dampened and replaced. The presence of the water adds greatly to the resonance of the drum. Such drums are not very large, 18 inches being an average height. This type is most common in the north central section of the country.

The heads of nearly all drums are painted with decorative or symbolic designs. Very often these pictures are connected with something seen in a dream by its owner.

In the southwest single headed drums are made of pottery (D). On the northwest coast long wooden boxes are beaten by the heels of men seated upon them. Poles or planks and stiff flat sections of rawhide are struck by some tribes. Inverted bowl shaped baskets and half gourds also serve as drums. The peyote cult uses small iron kettles.

DRUMSTICKS are usually made of a short slender stick with a padded knob on one end (E). Sometimes this knob is made by wrapping rags

around the stick and in other cases a bit of skin is packed with some soft material and tied in place. The Apache and Navaho use a stick with a bare end bent in a complete circle (F). Carved wooden knobs turned at right angles to the stick are found in the north central region. Some tribes use sticks without knobs and others beat with the palm of the hand.

Drum beats are arranged in many different combinations of weak and strong or slow and fast. A peculiarity of Indian music is that often the drumbeat and the voices are not together, but simultaneously maintain different times. Some of the large two-headed log drums produce two notes, one at each end, because of the difference in diameter of the log. In certain songs the drummer quickly reverses his instrument.

RATTLES are used by all tribes. The most common type consists of a hollow container filled with small loose objects and fastened on a short handle. The gourd (G) is probably the most used container. Small rawhide globes (H) are common among the Pueblos and in the plains region. The northern Woodland tribes made rattles of birchbark or elm bark (J) boxes. On the northwest coast extremely elaborate carved and painted wooden rattles are found (K). The Iroquois made rattles of turtle shells (L). In the southwest clay rattles are used (M).

Another type of rattle has a number of small objects suspended so as to strike each other or some hollow article to which they are tied. Dew claws of animals, teeth, shells, pods of plants, copper and tin jinglers and bells are all tied to sticks (N), to articles of clothing or ceremonial paraphernalia (O) so as to strike together with any motion. The Pueblo tribes tie such objects to small turtle shells (P), which are worn under one knee. Flat or castenet-shaped wooden clappers are used on the northwest coast. Some California tribes use cocoons.

NOTCHED RESONATOR. (Q) This appliance, often called by the Spanish word "morache", has two parts, a stick, long bone or similarly shaped article on which are cut a long series of quite deep notches, and a shorter smooth stick or bone, often a shoulder blade, to rub back and forth over the notches. Usually one end of the notched stick is placed on a drum, an inverted basket, a dried, hollow pumpkin rind, a sheet of iron or the like which will give resonance to the rattling of the smooth stick over the notches. The other end is held by the player. This noise making contrivance is now confined to the southwest though in one form or another it has been found in many places in the world.

FLUTE. This wind instrument is primarily used in courting but is also used with some Pueblo ceremonies. The typical form is a hollow tube, 1 to 2 inches in diameter and 1 to 3 feet long, with a boxlike contrivance bound on the top near the mouthpiece and a row of holes pierced in the top from below this box to near the end. A straight round stick of some soft straight grained wood is split in two and the halves hollowed out, except near one end where a thin bridge is left. This divides the tube into two sections, the smaller wind chamber and the long flute tube. The half tubes are tightly fastened together with resin or glue. This bridge and the box above mentioned are manipulated to produce the sound making apparatus. For details of this construction see reference 1, page 94. The holes seem to be spaced to fit the fingers rather than in accord with any scientific plan. Flutes are also made of cane, pith-filled woods and clay. The Apache use the nose flute. About a dozen soft notes can be blown on the average flute. The Hopi make a

flute bell-mouthed like a clarinet (S). The mouths of some flutes are carved into animal or bird heads (T).

WHISTLES are made from the wing bones of large birds, wood, reeds and, formerly, of quills. These latter were used by the Mandan, who tied rows of large quill whistles together like pan-pipes. The Hupa of California made pan-pipes of bone. The bone whistles, commonly from eagle wings (T), are characteristic of the medicine-men and Sun dancers of the plains tribes. They produce a single, shrill high note. The wooden instruments are long slender open tubes with a whistle mouthpiece. They produce 8 or 10 high notes and are used in courting and some dances. Large wood whistles occur on the Northwest Coast.

FIDDLE. The Apache are the only Indian people who have evolved any sort of a stringed instrument played with a bow; but it is very likely that this was not an independent invention but rather a crude attempt to copy the violin of the Mexican. A section a foot or so long is cut from the hollow stem of the agave or aloe. Wooden disks are inserted in the ends. One or two horsehair strings are stretched along the tube over a crude bridge. One end of the tube is pressed against the player's body while a short, deeply curved bow of wood and horsehair is drawn over the strings.

MUSICAL BOW. This primitive forerunner of the jew's harp is found in many parts of the world, but in America north of Mexico only the Maidu of California make use of it. A string, wire or vine is stretched on a short bow. One end of the wood, and sometimes the string, is grasped by the teeth or held before the open mouth, which serves as a resonator. The tight string is struck by a small stick, producing a small soft sound, the pitch of which is varied by opening and closing the mouth-resonator.

BULL-ROARER. This contrivance is hardly a musical instrument, but as a noise maker it is included here. It is simply a flat piece of wood an inch or so wide and 6 to 12 inches long, to one end of which is fastened a long stout cord. When used the string and paddle are rapidly rotated at arm's length, which causes the paddle to spin so fast that a loud whirring noise is produced.

GAME CALLS. In hunting many tribes use various contrivances to imitate the calls of game birds and animals.

Compiled from the following sources by Jean Allard Jeançon and F. H. Douglas:

1. *The American Indians and Their Music*—Densmore. The Woman's Press, New York, 1926.
2. Article on Musical Instruments—Fletcher. *Bulletin* 30, Vol. 1, page 960. Bureau of American Ethnology.
3. Article on Rattles—Swanton. *Bulletin* 30, Vol. 2, page 355. Bureau of American Ethnology.
- 4-11. *Bulletins* 45, 61, 75, 80, 90, 102, 110 and 114, of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Chippewa, Teton, Sioux, Northern Ute, Mandan and Hidatsa, Papago, Menomini, Yuman and Yaqui, Nootka and Quileute music—Frances Densmore. *American Anthropologist Magazine*.
12. *Distribution of the Musical Bow*. Vol. 11, old series, page 93.
13. *Musical Areas in . . . North America*—Helen Roberts. *Publications in Anthropology* 12, Yale University, 1936.

Pictures of instruments 1-13; Analysis of drum beats, 4-11. General discussion of Indian music, 1.