



# The Bass Drum

Gran Cassa • Grosse Trommel • Grosse Caisse

by Kristen Shiner McGuire



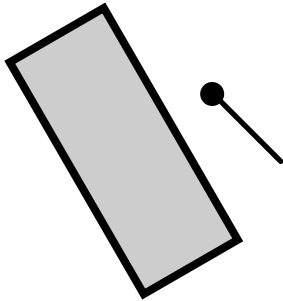
## I. Tuning

- A. Sound should be low “boom” with no specific pitch
- B. Tune resonating (ringing) head slightly higher than batter (hitting) head.
- C. Make sure the pitch of the head is the same at each T handle (place hand on center of head and tap at each handle).
- D. Check for “extra-musical” sounds like rattles (often a loose part that may be tightened).

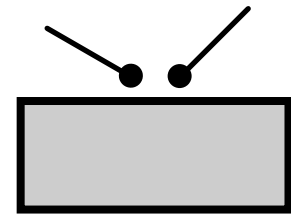
## II. Set Up

- A. For suspended bass drum, tilt slightly for general playing; lay flat for long rolled sections.

*General*



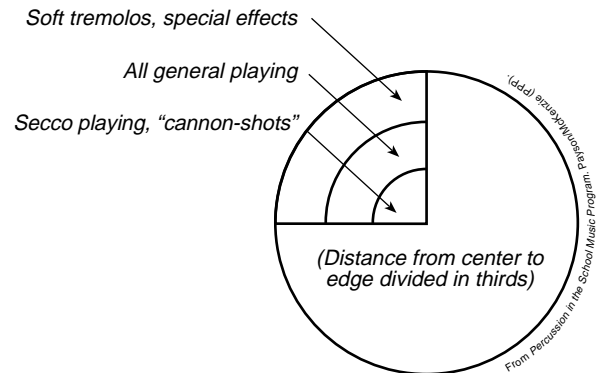
*Rolls (long sections)*



- B. Make sure “stops” (brakes) are on wheels before playing or you’ll be chasing the drum across the floor!

## III. Playing areas

- A. General—half way between edge and center
- B. Drier sound for short notes/accents—Center
- C. Rolling—towards edge, on opposite sides (2 beaters)  
—near edge with double-ended beater





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## IV. Playing Techniques/Musicality

- A. **Stroke** comes from wrist and arm; PULL sound out of the drum.
- B. For steady pulse with shorter note values (e.g., keeping the beat for a march), place few fingers of non-playing hand on head while other hand plays. (This is called MUFFLING.)
- C. **For longer note values**, strike halfway between edge and center and let ring for full note value.  
NOTE: In some cases, written bass drum note values do not match those of corresponding parts in low brass (for example) playing the same musical line. In this case, play same note values as lower brass.

Example: Written Bass Drum part:

Lower brass part:

- D. **Dampening**—to completely stop the sound, place one hand on the resonating head and one knee on the batter head.

## V. Mallets

- A. Use mallets specifically for bass drum (**not** timpani mallets, for example).
- B. If possible, use a pair of matched beaters for rolling.

## VI. Exercises

Bass Drum—medium beaters

$\text{♩} = 100$

Bass Drum—hard beater

$\text{♩} = 138$

→ pair medium beaters

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