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## Getting Started on Cajón / by Michael Wimberly

Edited by Joe Bergamini

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# The Author

# Michael Wimberly

**M**ichael Wimberly is a classically-trained percussionist and composer who holds a master's degree in music from Manhattan School of Music. But it is his study of African percussion that makes his compositions most unique and sets both audiences and critics on fire. Michael has defied categorization by mixing European textures, ancient African rhythms, and modern American music, creating a muse of sound that is as electrifying as it is multi-cultural.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Michael discovered at an early age that he had a passion for music. Since then, he has recorded, performed and/or toured with jazz artists such as Charles Gayle, Jean Paul Bourelly, Steve Coleman's 5 Elements, David Murray Octet, and Teramaso Hino Quartet; world music artists Paul Winter Consort, John McDowell, and Mamma Tongue; funk and R&B legends George Clinton and the Parliament Funkadelics, D'Angelo, Angie Stone, and Alyson Williams; and rock icons Vernon Reid, Henry Rollins, Blondie, and Mickey Hart. As a soloist, Michael has performed with Berlin's Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra, Vienna's Tonkuntsler Symphony Orchestra, International Regions Orchestra, and composed for the Yakima Chamber Orchestra in Yakima, Washington.



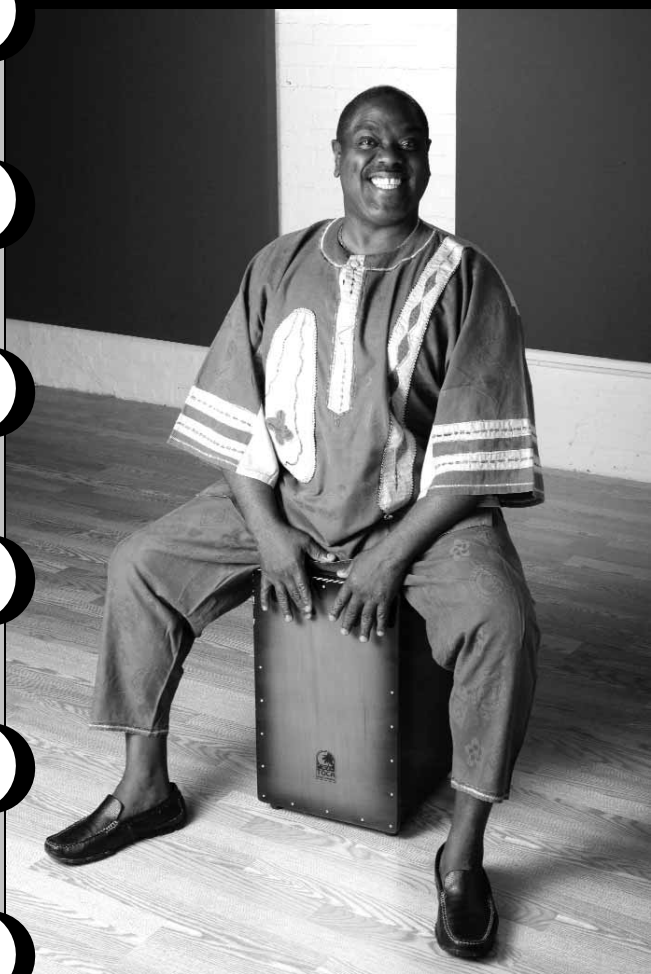
Michael's compositions appear in the repertoire of luminary dance companies Urban Bush Women, Joffrey Ballet, Alvin Ailey, Philadanco, Forces of Nature, Ailey II, Complexions, Ballet Noir, Alpha Omega, Purelements, and The National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique.

As CEO of MW Productions Sound Design (a Michael Wimberly Entertainment Company), Michael has positioned his musical scores and sound designs in several New York City Off-Broadway theaters including The Public Theater, Cherry Lane Theater, The Women's Project, Ensemble Studio Theater, The Greenwich House Theater, The Harvey 651 @ BAM, and Lincoln Center Performing Arts Center. Regional theaters include The Cleveland Playhouse, Cleveland, OH; Cross Roads Theatre, New Brunswick NJ; Bates College, Portland MN; Syracuse University, Syracuse NY; The Kennedy Center, Washington DC; Columbia College, Chicago IL; Paramount Theater, Seattle WA; The Seasons, Yakima WA; and The Alliance Theatre in Atlanta GA.

Michael's work with young adults and children of all ages has positioned him to work as a teaching artist under the umbrella of the US Department of Education, Arts Connection, Cooke Academy, Ethical Cultural Fieldston School, KOSA International Drum Camp, Lehman College, the Museum for African Art, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Central Park Conservancy, and as music faculty with Bennington College, VT. Michael's passion for teaching music inspired him to create a percussionist showcase and clinic event called the Power of Drum held in New York City; Yakima, Washington; and Saõ Miguel in the Azores, Portugal. Currently, Michael is President of the Michael Wimberly Cooperative - Together with Music, which is located on the island of Sao Miguel, Portugal.

# Author's

# Introduction



This book is intended for beginners and advanced beginners who are interested in learning cajón and my approach to it. As a drumset player, I tend to approach hand percussion instruments with a drumset player's intuition. That means I see the cajón as a bass and snare drum and basically play the instrument like I'm playing a drumset—except I use my hands. This instrument has origins dating back 200 years, and many rhythms have been developed for cajón over that time which have nothing to do with drumset, so for me to use the instrument this way gives me an immediate reference point to pull from and build on.

The great thing about the cajón is you don't need calluses on your hands to make a good tone or slap. You will make great sounding rhythms right away, and I assure you that you and your friends will create wonderful music by using the rhythms from this book and DVD!



## How To Use This Book

*The purpose of this book and DVD is to inspire people who want to expand their understanding of the cajón and have fun learning new rhythms and approaches to making music. For those of you who don't read music, the DVD can help you hear and understand the general sound of what's written in this book. This is not a definitive collection of rhythms and techniques that explain the history, origins, and purpose as to why these rhythms exist or how they are used. Instead, I have chosen these rhythms simply because they are fun to play and can be a valuable resource to you if you need an authentic rhythm or a hybrid rhythm for a certain occasion. Hopefully, the basic techniques and rhythms I introduce will function as a springboard for you to explore the endless possibilities of musical expression. I encourage you to listen to music that uses the cajón, that way you'll expand your knowledge of all the possibilities of how to play this instrument. Most importantly, have fun!*



# Brief History of the CAJÓN



**T**he cajón plays an important role in the traditional music of Peru and Cuba, where people have been transforming small dresser drawers into box drums for centuries. The cajón was most likely developed in coastal Peru during the early 19th century, where it is associated with several African-Peruvian genres.

The first cajóns were reportedly made from fish crates by enslaved Africans of West and Central African origin. When the Africans were brought to South America and Cuba, they were not allowed to play drums. Over time they started to use simple

wooden boxes and shipping crates as substitutes. Most of this took place in secrecy, since there were grave punishments for this type of activity. Nonetheless, the cajón was born. The instrument reached a peak in popularity by 1850, and by the end of the 19th century cajón players were experimenting with the design of the instrument by bending some of the planks in the cajón's body to alter the instrument's patterns of sound vibration.

Knowing that the cajón comes from African musicians in the Spanish colonial Americas, there are two complementary origin theories for the instrument. It is possible that the drum is a direct descendant of a number of boxlike musical instruments from West and Central Africa, especially Angola, and the Antilles. These instruments were adapted by Peruvian slaves from the Spanish shipping crates at their disposal. In port cities like Mantanzas, Cuba, they used codfish shipping crates. Elsewhere, small dresser drawers were used. Another theory posits that slaves simply used boxes as musical instruments to combat contemporary Spanish colonial bans on music in predominantly African areas. In this way, cajóns could easily be disguised as seats or stools, thus avoiding identification as musical instruments. In all likelihood it is a combination of these factors—African origins and Spanish suppression of slave music—that led to the cajón's creation.

In contemporary times, the instrument became an integral part of Peruvian and Cuban music. In Cuba, it is known as a Cuban box drum, and was originally used to play Rumba Yambu. Now the cajón is flourishing in many other styles, like the flamenco music of Spain, the traditional music of India, South America, and Africa, and adapting to contemporary styles blending with ancient rhythms from around the world.

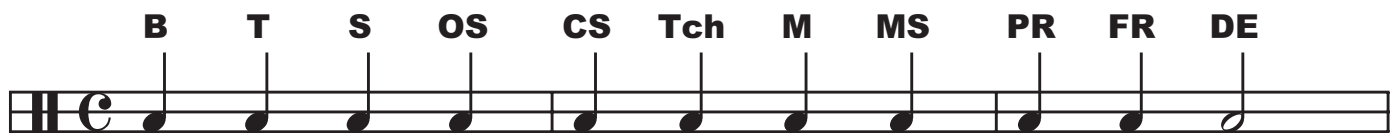
*Adapted from*

*<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cajon>*



# Drum Notation

**Note: if you don't read music, no problem! All the rhythms are clearly demonstrated on the DVD. Use the "chapter selections" menu on the DVD to find the rhythm you want to work on, and learn by copying what is played. Then, look at the corresponding page in the book and you will see how the rhythm looks on paper!**



- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>B - Bass</b>         | <b>MS - Muted Slap</b>  |
| <b>T - Tone</b>         | <b>PR - Palm Roll</b>   |
| <b>S - Slap</b>         | <b>FR - Finger Roll</b> |
| <b>OS - Open Slap</b>   | <b>DE - Drum Edge</b>   |
| <b>CS - Closed Slap</b> |                         |
| <b>Tch - Touch</b>      | <b>R - Right Hand</b>   |
| <b>M - Mute</b>         | <b>L - Left Hand</b>    |

