

# Inside This Book

<b>THE AUTHOR.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HOW TO USE THIS BOOK.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HISTORY OF THE DJEMBE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TYPES OF TUNING.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PARTS OF THE DJEMBE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Sizes _____	7
<b>HOLDING THE DRUM.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>HAND POSITIONS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Three Sounds of The Djembe _____	16
Overview of Playing Technique _____	17
Other Techniques _____	18
<b>TRADITIONAL DJEMBE RHYTHMS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Drum Notation</b> _____	21
<b>Lamban</b> _____	22
<b>Sunu</b> _____	24
<b>Mandiani</b> _____	26
<b>Goumbé</b> _____	28
<b>Zaouli</b> _____	29
<b>Kuku</b> _____	30
<b>DISCOGRAPHY/RECOMMENDED LISTENING/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>31</b>

---

## Getting Started on Djembe / by Michael Wimberly

Edited by Joe Bergamini

Book Design, Layout and Music Engraving by Rick Gratton

Photos by Andrew Lepley

Cover Design by Mike Hoff

Executive Producers: Paul Siegel and Rob Wallis

All musical examples and tracks written by Michael Wimberly

Used by permission

For information about the Hudson Music catalog of DVDs and print/audio products for musicians, please visit [www.hudsonmusic.com](http://www.hudsonmusic.com).

Copyright © 2012 Hudson Music LLC

# 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 toured with jazz artists such as Charles Gayle, Jean Paul Bourelly, Steve Coleman's 5 Elements, David Murray Octet, and Teramasa 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 Saô 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

I was introduced to the djembe and its family of drums while studying percussion at Baldwin Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. My friend from New York, Craig Brown, was majoring in classical organ at the school's conservatory. Craig was a straight-A student, a great musician, and he happened to have two djembes and a sangban (African bass drum) in his dorm room. On the weekends we would go to his room and play the drums for hours. Craig was very knowledgeable about djembe rhythms, African dance, and African culture in general. He taught us the songs and rhythms that he learned from the Chuck Davis Dance Company (which was based in New York City at that time). Little did I know that this moment in time would open a door for me to learn something that would take me on an incredible journey for the rest of my life. Since then, the music of the djembe has given me a language that allows me to communicate with people around the world. My heart is open and my soul is full of joy when I play these rhythms. I want to share these rhythms with you so you can speak with your heart by learning the language of this drum from the rhythms in this book.

## How to Use this Book

*This book is designed for the hand-drumming beginner who is interested in learning about traditional African rhythms and the standard practice of learning djembe or any hand drum. It is my hope that this book functions as a gateway to opening up your imagination while experimenting with the many different sounds, rhythms and techniques that are introduced in this book and DVD. Please keep in mind that much of Africa's history has been passed down orally from family to family, village to village, and there are many stories that describe the rhythms and dances. These rhythms will hopefully inspire you to explore African music and culture in its many forms as well as other percussion cultures from around the world. All of these rhythms can be applied, altered, and developed to fit your musical needs. Explore, experiment, and enjoy!*

# History of

## The DJEMBE



**D**jembe (pronounced JEM-bay) (also spelled as djimbe, jembe, jenbe, or yembe) is a skin-covered hand drum shaped like a large goblet and is played with bare hands. It is a member of the membranophone family of musical instruments. The djembe originated in West Africa, where it became an integral part of the area's music and tradition. As a result of the goblet shape, the density of the wood, the internal carvings, and the skin, there is a wide range of tones that can be produced by the djembe. The rounded shape with the extended tube of the djembe body gives it its deep bass and rich tone notes.

The primary tones of the djembe are generally referred to as "bass," "tone," and "slap." Striking the skin near the center with the palm produces a bass note; striking the skin nearer the rim with the fingers flat produces a tone, and the same position with the fingers relaxed so that the fingertips snap to the head of the drum

produces a slap. The slap has a high, sharp sound and the tone is more round and full. Other notes exist, but only advanced drummers can consistently create sound distinct from the others.

The djembe drum is found in all of West Africa, where it is one of the most common instruments, but since the 1990s you can find djembes all over the continent. The origin of the djembe is associated with a class of Mandinka/Susu blacksmiths known as Numu. The wide dispersion of the djembe drums throughout West Africa may be due to Numu migrations dating from the first millennium A.D. Despite the associations of the djembe with the Numu, there do not appear to be hereditary restrictions upon who can play the djembe as occurs with some other African instruments.

The djembe first made an impact outside West Africa in Paris of the 1940s (and more widely in the 1950s), and in New York at the Worlds Fair in the 1960s, with Les Ballets Africains featuring a young Papa Ladi Camara on djembe, directed by Fodeba Keita of Guinea. This resulted in a surge of interest in African drumming, especially djembe drumming.

The djembe is said to contain three spirits: the spirit of the tree, the spirit of the animal of which the drum head is made, and the spirit of the instrument maker. Properly-crafted djembe drums are carved in one single piece from hollowed-out trees. Properly-made drums are not smooth on the interior but have a series of teardrop shaped divots inside that enhances the tonal qualities. In earlier times (and still in some rural areas) djembe were used to send messages over long distances.

*(Adapted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Djembe>)*

# Types of Tuning

## Mechanical Tuning, Rope Tuning

**Mechanically tuned** djembes are tuned with a wrench in quarter- or half-turn increments. If your drum head is loose and you need to make it tighter, start by turning the nut counterclockwise, tightening each a quarter turn. Or, tighten one nut, then go to the opposite nut on the other side of the drum head. After that one, tighten the next nut moving in one direction around the head until you have tightened each nut a quarter turn. Repeat until the drum sounds good and tight as you like. Press in the center of the drum head. If there is a slight give to it, then you have room to continue tightening, or you can stop. Don't tighten too much or the skin may rip. You can loosen or tighten the nuts to make the bass of the drum sound lower or the tone and slap of the drum sound higher. Experiment.



**Rope tuned** djembes use rope to tune the pitch of the drum head. An intricate weaving of rope is laced up and down the drum through rope hoops attached to a metal ring at the edge of the drum head and at the neck located just below the bowl. The ring system holds the skin in place and pulling the rope as tight as you can stretches the skin taut. This is one of the traditional methods that evolved in the latter part of the 20th century. Prior to that drums were tightened with animal gut and pegs. Fire was used to draw out the moisture and tighten the skin. Electric hot plates were used not so long ago to do the same, but now djembe makers have designed tools to help pull the rope extremely tight.

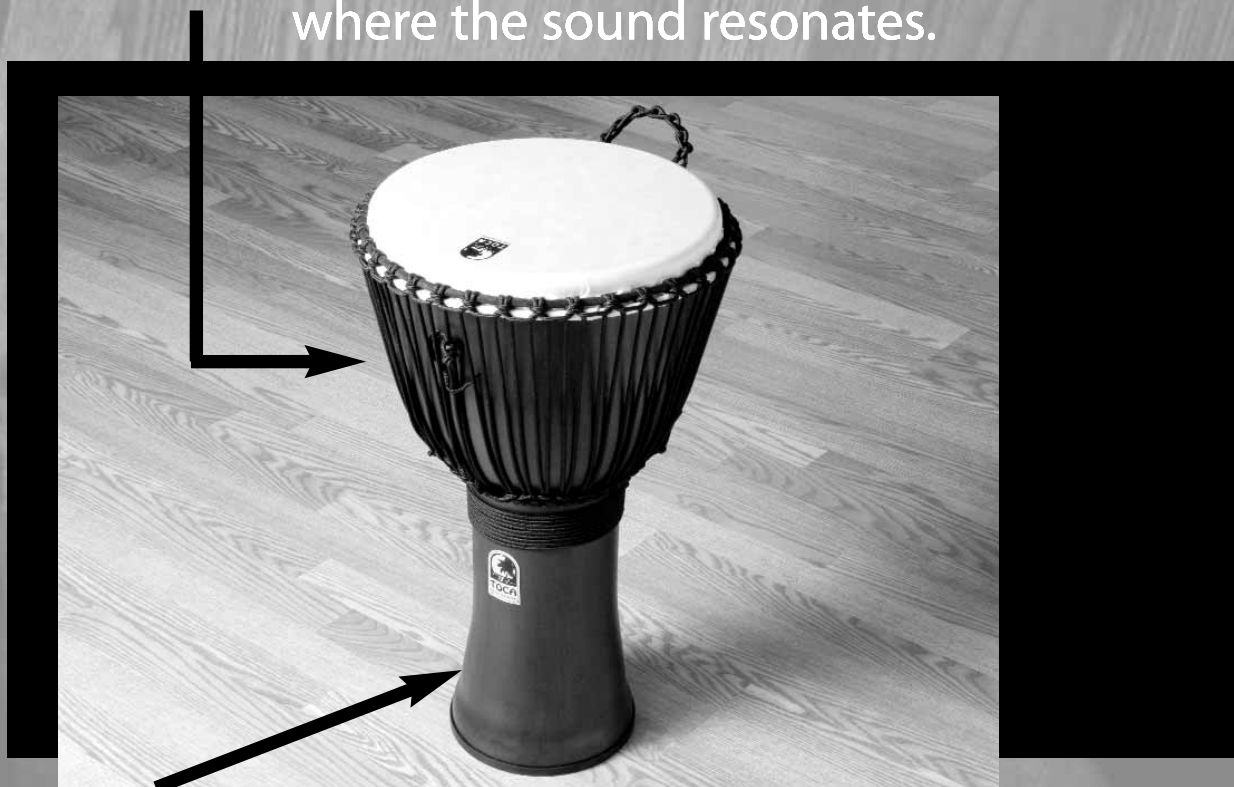


# Parts of the Djembe

**Head:** also known as the playing surface or skin of the djembe.



**Bowl:** the hollowed-out part of the instrument where the sound resonates.



**Tail:** the hollowed extension where the sound flows from.

# Parts of the Djembe - Sizes

Traditionally, djembe drums are about 12" (30cm) in diameter, varying an inch or two, but can be found in sizes from 5" (13cm) up to 18" (46cm).

Most djembes from Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Senegal are still hand-carved from traditional species of wood, using traditional tools and methods. In the 1990s, djembes started being produced elsewhere, such as in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Bali, often using modern machinery and substitute species of wood. However, these woods are softer and less dense than the traditional woods such as *lenke*, *djalla*, *dugura*, *gueni*, *gele* and *iroko*.

