

Interactive Drumming

Using the power of rhythm to unite and inspire

KALANI
Interactive Drumming Workshop
Friday 3:00 P.M.

By Kalani

From performance ensembles to drum circles, group drumming offers myriad opportunities for self-expression, interpersonal connection, and strengthening bonds. Drumming has always been at the core of many community-based musical experiences including celebrations, ceremonies, and community building. As with most forms of music making, different types of experiences can be created, based on the skills and goals of the participants, as well as the experience and qualifications of the presenters.

Being able to identify the various types of group-drumming experiences is the first step in designing an effective program, since each requires different skill sets of both the presenter and the participants. The following are some of the most common.

DRUMMING ENSEMBLES

Ensembles are commonly formed for creating music for aesthetic enjoyment and/or performance. They are often organized around specific musical genres, such as contemporary or folkloric music of a specific culture. Members might be required to audition and demonstrate a certain level of musical knowledge and skill. Members commonly share musical goals, which could be to achieve a specific level of musical proficiency as a group, as well as to gain notoriety and generate income from performances and products, such as recordings.

DRUM CLASSES

Classes are designed to teach musical skills to students at various levels. Classes can be general or instrument- and/or genre-specific. The main goal is to develop one's drumming skills to enhance one's enjoyment and appreciation of music. Students often start with classes, and then move on to join ensembles, thereby further developing their skills.

DRUM CIRCLES

Community drum circles are entry-level improvisational experiences, aimed at having fun in an inclusive setting. They don't require any specific musical knowledge or skills of the participants, and the music is co-created in the

moment. The main idea is that anyone is free to join and express himself or herself in any way that positively contributes to the music. You know you're in a drum circle when: it is open to anyone who wishes to join; the music is a product of a group improvisation; there is no leader; the main goal is self-expression and being part of a community (as opposed to performance or following directions). Drum circle participants often go on to attend drum classes and may ultimately become part of a drumming ensemble.

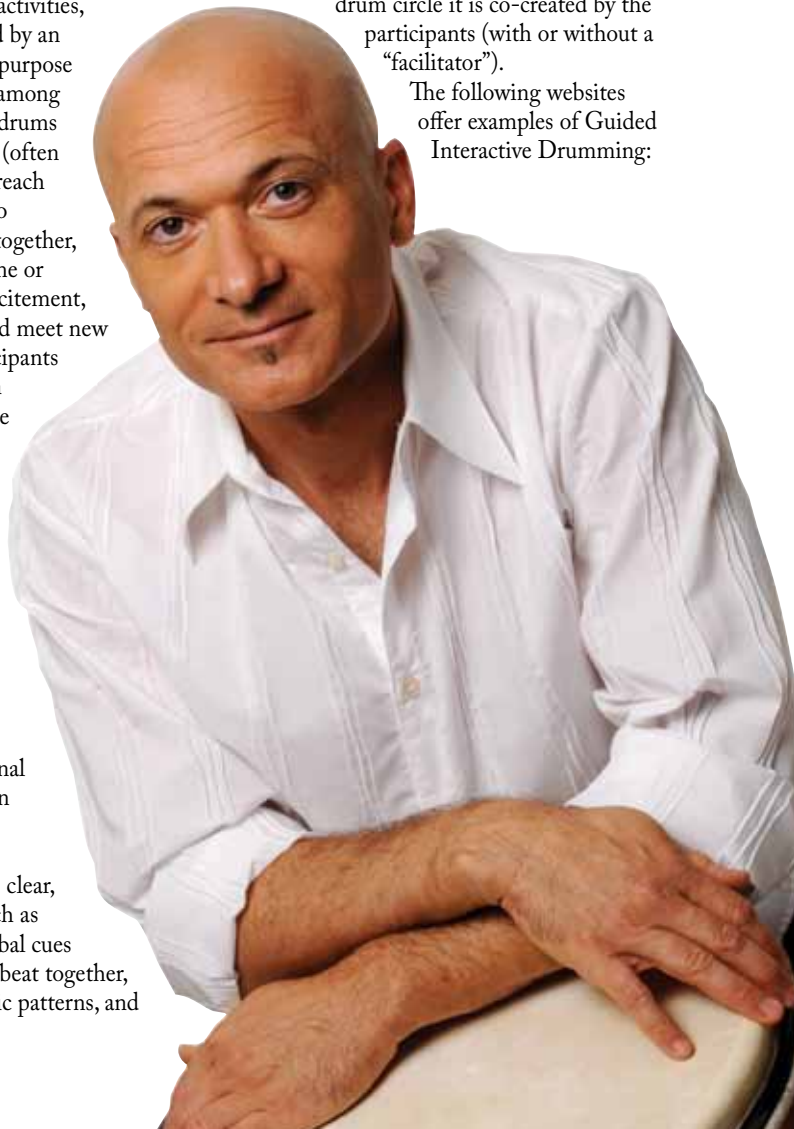
GUIDED INTERACTIVE DRUMMING

Guided Interactive Drumming experiences are directed, rhythm-based activities, often pre-planned, delivered by an individual or group, for the purpose of creating a sense of unity among members. Participants play drums and percussion instruments (often provided by the leaders) to reach such non-musical goals as to experience something new together, unite under a common theme or idea, increase energy and excitement, develop leadership skills, and meet new challenges as a group. Participants in a GID program are often seated theater-style, with the leaders facing them from a stage area. Half- and full-circle seating is also common, taking on the look of a drum circle at times.

Guided Interactive Drumming (or simply Interactive Drumming) has become a popular type of group drumming experience within institutional and corporate settings (often referred to as "corporate drumming"). GID often challenges participants with clear, attainable musical goals, such as following the visual and verbal cues of a leader, playing a steady beat together, reproducing simple rhythmic patterns, and

uniting through rhythm. GID "activities" can also include what are commonly called "rhythm games"—structured experiences that include "play rules" or "givens." A play rule or given is a set of restrictions or guidelines that structure and shape an experience, such as limiting play to a specific type of instrument (frame drum or djembe, for example) or providing rules for when and how to play, such as choosing a number from 1 to 8, then playing only on that number, as in the Developmental Community Music (DCM) game *Pieces of Eight*. Guided Interactive Drumming differs from a drum circle in that the music in GID is structured and directed by a leader (or team), whereas in a drum circle it is co-created by the participants (with or without a "facilitator").

The following websites offer examples of Guided Interactive Drumming:



- drumcafe.org
- interactivedrumming.com
- corporatedrummingprograms.com
- sewabeads.com
- zaboomba.com
- bigcircledrumming.com
- corporatedrummagic.com

Because Guided Interactive Drumming includes a “leader-follower” relationship between the presenters and the participants, there are multiple opportunities for providing structure, guidance, and shaping the experience in specific ways. Unlike a drum ensemble, where the emphasis is on practice and performance; a drum class, where the emphasis is on learning musical skills; a drum circle, where the emphasis is on improvisation and creative freedom; the emphasis in a GID experience may be selected by the leader (often at the request of the participants) to reflect the goals and values of a particular group. The orientation towards planning, structure, and guidance makes GID a suitable tool for reaching non-musical goals for groups with little or no musical experience.

For example, if the goal of a group is increasing a sense of unity within an organization, the program designer(s) can include specific activities that focus on unified play, synchrony, and entrainment. This particular goal is often accomplished by providing a steady beat, specific rhythms to imitate, and embedded messages of unity (such as through verbal chanting or gestures that indicate connection). Rather than invite participants to make up their own rhythms (improvise), they are guided and challenged to play in a unified manner as a way to demonstrate their commitment and connection.

AFFIRMATIONS

An affirmation is a statement that affirms that something is true. They are often presented through a “positive lens” and used to influence one’s outlook. Examples could include: “I am enough,” “We support each other,” and “The world is abundant.”

When coupled, drumming and affirmations can provide a powerful tool that has the potential to positively impact participants and shape their experience on physical, cognitive, emotional, and even spiritual levels.

IDEA (Interactive Drumming Expressive Affirmations) was created for this purpose. IDEA includes positive statements (affirmations) embedded into rhythm-based experiences. An example could begin with the affirmation: “Let’s go with it. Start growing it. When I feel the joy I’m showing it.” When converted to a rhythmic chant (“Voice” in the example), this statement reinforces the expression of positive feelings—something that helps to create a greater sense of connection and community. Rhythmic chants can also be converted into drumming patterns (“Percussion” in the example), played (with high and low tones) rather than spoken. This further reinforces the message when played and/or listened to by the participants, both during and after the experience. (See Example 1.)

Affirmations, in this content, are called “expressive” because they are converted from basic speech into musical expressions, both chanted and played on instruments. The repeated rhythmic chanting of a positive message, whether spoken or played on a drum, can be a powerful element in any group-drumming program because it reinforces the message through multiple forms (speaking, listening, feeling, thinking, etc.).

During my PASIC session: “Interactive Drumming Expressive Affirmations,” participants will learn how to create and use rhythmic affirmations as part of a group drumming experience. The CD, *Rhythm Spirit*, is designed around this “IDEA” and includes nine affirmations that are embedded into the music, to be played as “community drumming” rhythms along with the band. The affirmations are designed to promote a sense of community, peer support, self-confidence, self-expression, and other qualities that are at the core of personal and community functioning and wellness.

I hope you can join me for this innovative session. For more about IDEA and to learn how to play the nine rhythmic affirmations, visit kalanimusic.com and see “Community Music.”

Kalani is an internationally acclaimed multi-instrumentalist, Orff-schulwerk music educator, board-certified music therapist, and presenter. His recent CD, *Rhythm Spirit*, is a

tribute to Babatunde Olatunji and features IDEA. Kalani teaches Developmental Community Music courses (playinglaugh.com) and travels internationally as a performing artist, educator, and workshop leader. For more information visit kalanimusic.com or, on Facebook, Kalani Percussionist. [PN](#)

INTERACTIVE DRUMMING

Welcome Drum Circle

Thursday 8:00 A.M.

Bob Bloom

Interactive Drumming Workshop

Thursday 1:00 P.M.

Lori Fithian

Late Night Drum Circle

Thursday 9:30 P.M.

John Scalici

Interactive Drumming Workshop

Friday 11:00 A.M.

Kenya Masala & Special Guests

Late Night Drum Circle

Friday 9:30 P.M.

Arthur Hull

Interactive Drumming Workshop

Saturday 11:00 A.M.

Closing Drum Circle

Saturday 6:00 P.M.

Example 1

The musical notation for Example 1 consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Voice' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Percussion'. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The voice part has lyrics: "Let's go with it Start grow - ing it When I feel the joy I'm show - ing it". The percussion part features a steady 4/4 beat with a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.