

How Did Music Begin?



Mini Fact:

This cave painting at the Bhimbetka rock shelters in India shows people dancing.

© Arindam Banerjee | Dreamstime.com

Do you play an instrument? Some kids learn to play the piano or violin. Others join the school band.

You and your friends or family might enjoy music at home, in the car or at concerts. Even if you just like to sing, you're using a completely natural musical instrument — your voice!

Music is a big part of our modern lives. But music in one form or another has been part of people's lives for thousands of years.

March is Music in Our Schools Month. This year's theme is Music Connects Us. The Mini Page plays along by looking at the origins of some musical instruments.



The earliest musicians

Prehistoric music is music made before people were writing things down. Because there are no records, experts have to hypothesize (hi-POTH-eh-size), or make guesses, about how early people made music.

Human voices

Humans used different noises to express fear or joy. These sounds, along with some of the sounds they heard from animals, such as birds' chirping, might have led them to make music.

Finding a rhythm

When people began to use tools, for instance to pound grains, they may have done so in a rhythm, or a regular pattern. These sounds

might have led them to make other pleasing rhythms with the first percussion instruments.

Percussion instruments

Early humans probably banged rocks together to make tools. When they did, pieces might have broken off that they used for another purpose, such as scraping.

Those same pieces of stone could have been used to scrape rhythms on shells, wood or other stones.

Early people probably made clapping sounds with their hands. They also might have hit sticks on a hollow tree and noticed how loud it was. This may have been the beginning of a hollow wood instrument called a **slit drum**. These drums are still played in parts of Africa, Southeast Asia and Oceania.



Slit drums are played by the Bamileke people in Cameroon in Central Africa.

Later, people stretched animal skins over wooden frames, then hit the drums with their hands or sticks. Such drums were used in honor of animals or plants.

Some filled gourds, shells or other items with small stones, nut shells or animal teeth and shook them as rattles. They were used to accompany, or go along with, music and dance.



Gourd rattle. NPS photo by Emily Brown



photo by Bastien M

Prehistoric instruments from France. The bullroarer (upper right) is made with reindeer antler and was found in Lalinde, Dordogne.

Early music makers

One of the earliest instruments that experts have identified is the **bullroarer**. It was a piece of bone with a hole in one end where a long piece of hide was attached.

The bullroarer was "played" by whirling it overhead. Music experts think the noise of the bullroarer was intended to scare off enemies or evil spirits.

Prehistoric wind instruments, such as whistles, were probably used in hunting and in war. These whistles might have been made from the bones of birds, from shells or horns, or from a **phalanx** (FAY-lanks), or a finger or toe bone from an animal.

People made some wind instruments from bird bones, which are hollow. Those made from bone or horn had to be hollowed out.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPinstruments

At the library:

- "The Story of the Incredible Orchestra" by Bruce Koscielniak
- "Music" by Neil Ardley

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Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of music are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

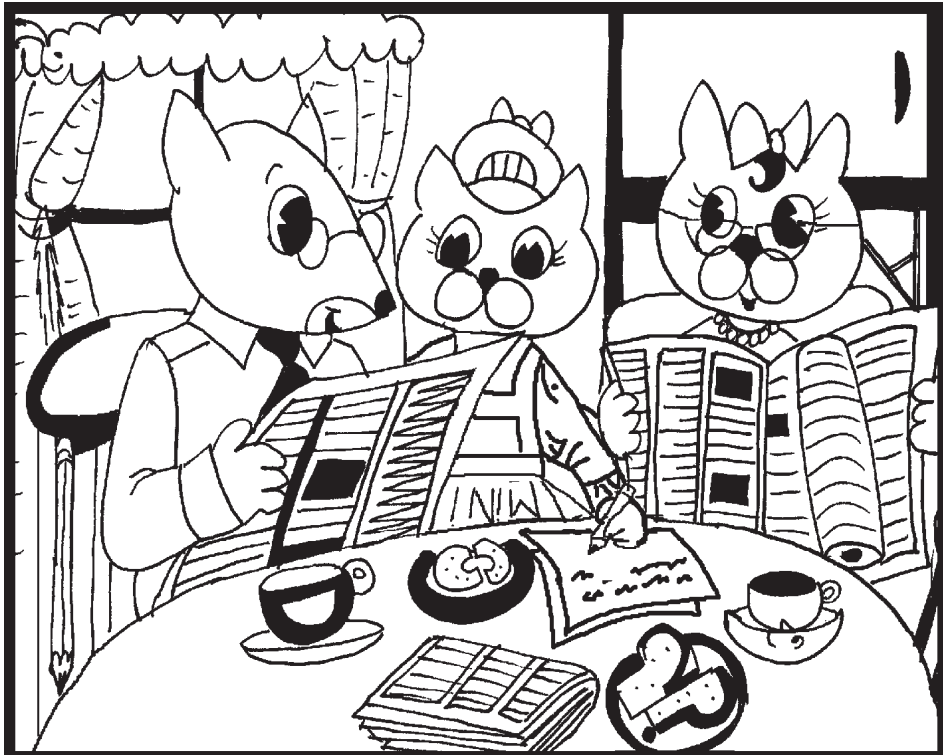


- ACCOMPANY, BONE, CLAPPING, DRUM, HORN, HYPOTHESIZE, INSTRUMENT, JOY, MUSIC, PERCUSSION, PHALANX, PREHISTORIC, RATTLE, RHYTHM, SCHOOL, SHELL, SONG, SOUNDS, VOICE, WHISTLE.

D C C L A P P I N G A Q C F B
C I R O T S I H E R P E I P W
E D Y N A P M O C C A N S H Q
C H G A R R H Y T H M O U A R
I O N G Y S D N U O S B M L A
O R O N O I S S U C R E P A T
V N S Z A I N S T R U M E N T
O S H Y P O T H E S I Z E X L
D R U M L O O H C S H E L L E
O Z E L T S I H W I S S J O Y

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Mini Spy and her family are reading and enjoying the newspaper. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



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- question mark • lima bean • letter D • carrot • comb
- word MINI • man in the • fish • pencil • letter U
- paper towel roll • moon • number 8 • number 7
- letter C • letter A • number 2 • caterpillar

Mini Jokes



Carson: What's a lighthouse keeper's favorite instrument?

Carrie: The foghorn!

Eco Note



Fleas from domestic pets now infest wildlife and feral animals on all continents except Antarctica. A University of Queensland-led global study showed that so-called cat fleas — the main flea species found on domestic dogs and cats — are carried by more than 130 wildlife species around the world. Fleas have the potential to transmit harmful bacteria, including those that cause bubonic plague and typhus, back to pets and humans.

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For later:

What's your favorite musical instrument? Why? Share your thoughts with your family or a friend.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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