

# BONGO DRUMS



Although some sources cite Peru or Africa as the origin of the bongo drums, it seems more likely that the bongo drums and their musical style used today originated in eastern Cuba in the late 1800s. Bongos consist of two small drums joined together side-by-side by a center block. One drum, the hembra, is larger than the other, the macho. Bongos are traditionally held between the legs, with the macho in the upper left position.

The shell or base of these drums is usually made of a hardwood, with a leather or skin top or “head” of cowhide, goat skin or other covering. Originally, the skins were tacked in place and the tone tuned by applying heat, but by the 1940s, lugs were developed to adjust the tightness of the drum head and facilitate tuning.

The bongos are struck with the pads of the fingers or other parts of the hand. Hitting the drum heads with the bony joints of the fingers can cause injury. Playing these drums with different parts of the hand and fingers, on different parts of the drum head, and with varying pressure, changes the sound, or “voice” of each drum.

## WEB SOURCES:

### BONGO MANIA

- <http://www.bongomania.com/eng/articles/thebasics1.html>
- <http://www.bongomania.com/eng/articles/thebasics2.html>

### MSN Encyclopedia “Drum (musical instrument)”

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761570843/Drum.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761570843/Drum.html)

### Music of Puerto Rico, Instruments – Bongos

<http://www.musicofpuertorico.com/en/instruments/bongos.html>

### RHYTHMWEB “History of the Bongo Drums”

<http://www.rhythmweb.com/bongo/history.htm>

### WWW.WORLDDISCOVERIES.NET “Cuban Music History”

<http://www.worlddiscoveries.net/Latin%20Issue/Cuban%20History.htm>

### Music Outfitters “Bongos (Bongo Drums)”

<http://www.music/outfitters.com/ethnic/bongo/htm>

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# CONGA (TUMBADORA) DRUMS

The conga or tumbadora drums we are familiar with today probably developed in Cuba when slavery was officially abolished, approximately 1886. The tumbadora or conga most likely evolved from the drums used by the African Bantu or Congalese slaves in Cuba. As these newly freed slaves left the plantations and came to the larger cities, especially Havana and Matanzas, they brought their music and musical instruments with them.

In its African origins, the tumbadora drums were constructed from a single log. To avoid persecution for playing African instruments (especially in religious ceremonies), the construction was changed to a stave construction (similar to staves used in barrels). Lug-tuned drums became popular in the 1950s and replaced heat-tuned drum construction methods.

There are several types of conga drums, which are played by a conguero or congacero. The natural rich tones of the conga, make these drums popular for a wide range of instrument combinations and music styles.

## WEB SOURCES:

### MOPERC “Congas”

[http://www.moperc.com/html\\_anglais/congas\\_an.htm](http://www.moperc.com/html_anglais/congas_an.htm)

### VP Hawaii “Conga Drum History”

<http://www.volcanopercussion.com/html/history.html>

### Harmony Central Drums & Percussion, “Frequently Asked Questions”

<http://www.harmony-central.com/Drums/faqs.html>

### ArtDrums

- [http://artdrum.com/FAQ\\_WHAT\\_IS\\_A\\_CONGA\\_DRUM.htm](http://artdrum.com/FAQ_WHAT_IS_A_CONGA_DRUM.htm)
- [http://artdrum.com/DICTIONARY\\_LATIN\\_PERCUSSION\\_MUSIC.HTM](http://artdrum.com/DICTIONARY_LATIN_PERCUSSION_MUSIC.HTM)

“A History of the Conga Drums” by Nolan Warden in Percussion Notes, Feb. 8, 2005

[http://www.nolanwarden.com/Conga\\_Drum\\_History\(Warden\).pdf](http://www.nolanwarden.com/Conga_Drum_History(Warden).pdf)

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