

Table of Contents

	Page	Track
Preface	3	
Biography	4	
Acknowledgements	4	
Chapter 1: History and Background of the Jembe	5	
Why is the instrument spelled the way it is?	6	
What does the word “jembe” mean?	6	
Chapter 2: Drum Types and Anatomy	7	
Traditional Drums	7	
Modern Drums	7	
Drumheads	7	
Chapter 3: Tuning Up	8	
Mali-Weave Tuning.....	8	
Conga-Style Tuning	9	
Cinch-Style Tuning.....	9	
Chapter 4: Playing Positions	10	
Standing.....	10	
Sitting	11	
Chapter 5: Playing Techniques	12	
The Bass Tone.....	12	1
The Open Tone	13	2
The Slap Tone.....	14	3
Chapter 6: Hand and Rhythm Exercises	16	
Warm-up Pattern No. 1.....	16	4
Warm-up Pattern No. 2.....	16	5
Warm-up Pattern No. 3.....	17	6
Rhythm No. 1	17	7
Rhythm No. 2	17	8
Rhythm No. 3	18	9
Rhythm No. 4	18	10
Rhythm No. 5	18	11
Rhythm No. 6	18	12
Chapter 7: Performance Ensembles	19	
About the Music.....	19	
Rhythm Arrangements	20	
Kassa	20	13–19
Dansa	21	20–26
Dundunba	22	27–33
Thinking Creatively.....	22	
Chapter 8: Drum Care	23	
Cases	23	
Replacing a Traditional Head.....	23	
Replacing a Contemporary-Style Head	27	

Chapter 5: Playing Techniques

As with any technique, the main objective is to produce the best result with the most efficient motion. With this in mind, I invite you to continuously observe your body and hand positions while performing the following techniques. When I play, I try to maintain body, arm and hand positions that are as close as possible to that of being completely relaxed. This way, I know I'm not using more energy than needed to perform a technique, and I'm not asking my body to do something that feels unnatural.

I have developed hand positions for the different tones that do not vary greatly. This way, I minimize the time and energy it takes to move between them, allowing me to play faster and for longer periods of time without getting tired. The bottom line is that if your body starts to stiffen up or hurt while playing, it's sending you a message that you need to change your technique. Because most good players listen to their bodies, they have very few injuries or calluses on their hands. They've taken the time to figure out what works and what hurts. Playing with your hands does not have to be uncomfortable—it may take some time, but developing good technique will always serve you well in the long run.

Three basic tones are produced on the jembe: the *bass tone*, *open tone*, and *slap tone*. By mastering these three tones, you'll be able to play virtually any traditional jembe pattern. Of course, there are far more sounds one can produce, but these three are the basic building blocks, often at the core of any additional sounds you may hear played on the drum.

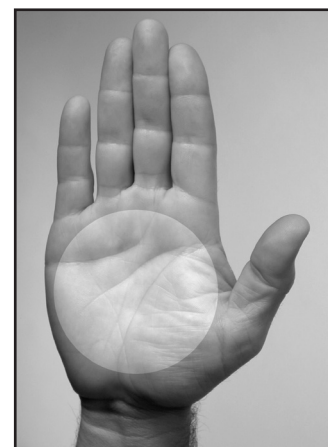
The Bass Tone

To play the *bass tone*, find a comfortable playing position and place your hand on the drumhead between the center and the edge. Avoid the very center of the head, as this is a node or "dead" spot and will not produce the best possible sound (see photos). Striking the drum in the center will not transfer the energy to the entire head because the head vibrates *around* the center, not *in* it. As with all techniques, allow your body to be very relaxed and in a natural position. Your arms do not need to be held out from the shoulders, but can rest freely at your sides.

When striking the drum, let your hand bounce off freely. Don't press down onto the head as this will mute the head and stop the vibrations. By letting your hand bounce off freely, the head is allowed to resonate and the air will vibrate inside the drum, thus producing the bass tone. A key factor in producing a good bass tone is to keep the foot of your drum open by not placing it flat on the ground. Your drum should either be held at an angle or suspended on a strap or stand. It helps to play over a solid surface such as hard wood or cement. Playing over carpet, grass, or a similar rough surface will absorb the sound and reduce volume.

To Play a Bass Tone:

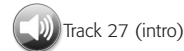
1. Raise your arm from the elbow.
2. Allow gravity to pull your arm to the drumhead, and keep your hand flat with fingers together.
3. Focus the weight of your hand to the palm area.
4. Let the head bounce your hand back to the raised position.



“Dundunba” is named after the largest dundun, and originates from the Hamana and Kouroussa regions of Eastern Guinea. It is played for a special male dance, often referred to as “dance of the strong men,” where men show their skill and strength. There are many versions of dundunba. This one is played with a rolling, triplet feel.

DUNDUNBA

(Eastern Guinea)



Arranged by
Kalani

Fast ♩ = 120–140

Jembe 1

Jembe 2

Kenkeni

Sangba

Dundunba

Key

- = Open Tone
- × = Slap Tone, Dundun Press, Bell
- ◆ = Bass Tone

Thinking Creatively

While it is important to know how a specific rhythm is played—and in some cases, why it is played—it is of little use to get caught up in a mindset that seeks the “one” way to play a specific rhythm. Music exists in a river of time and change. I have noticed some players taking the position that the way they learned to perform a certain rhythm is the “right” way, because they believe their source to be “the original,” and that other versions are somehow not as valid. Isn’t the most important aspect the feeling behind the notes?

The point is that there are many ways of playing drums and many variations of the rhythms taught by master drummers from a variety of regions, time periods and countries. My hope is that students will not get caught up in rhythmically “policing” one another, but will focus on the larger picture of what it means to be a musician and follow an artist’s path—one that celebrates life and welcomes diversity and innovation. Beginners should be allowed to find their way while advanced students may benefit from remembering what it felt like to be a beginner and offer support and guidance to those who are new to drumming or a particular genre.