

Congas & Bongos

Bare Bones Productions

These drums are played with the hands and are therefore called "Hand Drums"

Congas & Bongos

These two are often mistaken for each other. Most people don't even know that there is a difference but there is. **Bongos** are played mostly in Cuban style music. Bongos are the two little drums



Fig. 1

and are usually held and played between your knees. The smaller the drum and the tighter the drum-head, the higher the drum will sound. The most typical rhythm played on the Bongos is called 'Martillo'. Bongos often ad-lib and play solos and interesting Poly-rhythms.

These poly-rhythms are used to "talk" with the bigger, lower sounding Congas' poly-rhythms. When the horns and piano really start jamming in Salsa, The bongo player or "Bongocero" will pick up a *Bongo Bell* and play poly-rhythms that "talk" to the "Timbalero's" *Mambo bell*. It's believed that Bongos as we know them today evolved from the Abakua Drum trio "bonko" and it's lead drum "Bonko Enchemi" These drums are still a fundamental part of the Abakua Religion in Cuba, which is still only accessible to the Initiates. Even today, these drums look much like the bongos we know, if they were joined with a wooden piece in the middle."

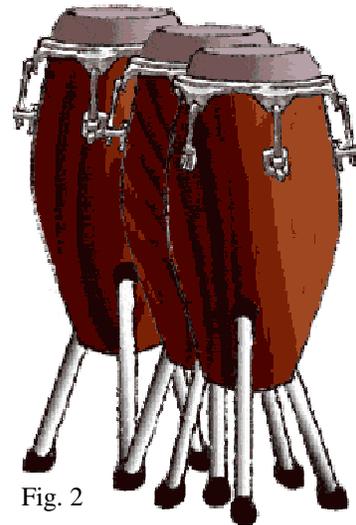


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Conga is the name most commonly used to refer to the large drums in *fig.2* *It's name may come from the Congo Region in fig.3*. This family of drums is traditionally called *Tumbadoras*. The middle size Tumbadora is the *Conga*, while the larger is the *Tumba* and the smaller the *Quinto*. As we mentioned, Congas originally come from Africa but are used in many kinds of music from Hip Hop to Reggae, Rock to Pop, Salsa to Funk. The most popular rhythm played on the Congas is called *Tumbao*.

History of the Conga The ancestors of these drums came from the Congo region of the African continent *fig.3*. They were simply hollowed out logs with animal skins stretched over them and nailed or tied in place. At the time of the development of the modern Conga, the African Slaves in Cuba were not allowed to play African Drums so a new type of drum was made in much the same way as barrels. Separate slats of wood or staves were glued together and held in place with metal bands while they dried. Metal tuning rods were affixed to the drum shells as early as the 1920s and the hides of Cow or Water Buffalo were stretched around metal rims and allowed to dry. This modern rim system allows the drums to be easily tuned. Because the new type of drum was not really African in origin it prevented persecution of it's players.