

# 11<sup>th</sup> National Percussion Workshop Gdańsk, Poland

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Joshua Watkins



*Caribbean Rhythms  
of Trinidad and  
Tobago Clinic  
Materials*

[www.jwpercussionstudio.com](http://www.jwpercussionstudio.com)



# Trinidad Traditional Drumming

Josh Watkins

**Session Description:** While many music programs integrate the study of Steelpan and occasionally Tamboo Bamboo, Trinidad Traditional drumming is often absent. Integrating this historically significant tradition can be an exciting way to enrich the educational experience on students of all levels. It can also add variety to concert programs.

**Concise History Timeline:**

- First inhabitants of Trinidad and Tobago - Caribs and Arawaks
- August 1, 1498 Christopher Columbus landed and renamed the island “La Trinidad” in honor of the Holy Trinity
- Spanish Rule first
- 1797 - British rule
- 1814-1816 Merikens come to Trinidad following the War of 1812
- 1833 - Great Britain outlawed slavery
- 1845 - Indentured labor primarily from India arrive in Trinidad (some came from other places)
- 1881 - Clashes between the poor and the authorities led to riots during the 1881 Carnival and again in 1883 (known as the Canboulay Riots)
- 1884 - Peace Preservation Ordinance, a law banning noisy musical instruments in enacted
- 1890s - Introduction of Tamboo Bamboo- people began cutting bamboo into various lengths, and either stamping them on the ground or striking them against one another.
- 1930s - Metal containers replaced bamboo as the primary source for rhythmic music
- 1951 - Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra travels to Europe

**Drums:** Three drum set – Bass, Fuller, and Cutter

**Tones:** Trinidad Traditional Drumming is primarily made up of two tones sometimes called tone and variation. **Tone** is executed by striking near the center of the drum with the whole hand.

**Variation** is executed by striking the drum with the fingers near the edge of the drum. In the following notation the tone is on the bottom space and the variation is on the third space.

Warmup exercises:

I use exercises like these to teach the two tones and for warmups.



Signal: This signal is used in many different styles. The signal is used to communicate beginnings and endings of sections as well as starting and stopping.



Bongo:

Bongo is a traditional practice of drumming, singing, and dancing during the wake before a person's funeral. \*Fun Fact, limbo originated in Trinidad and was part of the wake.

Cutter:

The cutter is the highest drum. The cutter plays the signal as needed and improvises. This is a sample of a standard "cut" that is frequently used in several styles.



Fuller:

The fuller is the middle drum and plays a consistent pattern. This is a pattern that is used in several styles. In some styles the fuller will play the same part as the bass.



Bass:

The bass is the lowest drum and plays a consistent pattern with little variation. This variation is played more in the southern part of the country.



Calinda:

Calinda is a style that is played for stick fighting (also known as Kalinda). In this style the bass and fuller play the same part. The interaction of the drumming and the fighters is an integral part of the build up. The + sign is used to communicate that the tone is muted.



If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [jwpercussionstudio.com](http://jwpercussionstudio.com) or [jmw83d@yahoo.com](mailto:jmw83d@yahoo.com).

# Tambo Bamboo

1. Tamboo Bamboo
  - a. Bamboo stamping tubes that took on the role that was previously filled by drums in Trinidad following the Peace Preservation Ordinance.
  - b. From *Tambour* (French for drum) Bamboo later became Tamboo Bamboo
2. Tamboo Bamboo Ensemble
  - a. Ensemble made up of bamboo stamping tubes
  - b. Voices of the Tamboo Bamboo ensemble mirror the secular traditional drumming and Orisha drumming
  - c. Three or four voices are most common
    - i. Expanded on to accommodate more players in larger ensembles, the names of the voices and roles are not standardized and are not the same from one ensemble to the next
    - ii. Cutter, Foulé/Fuller, Chandlers, and Bass/Boom
  - d. Bottle and spoon is frequently used in these ensembles
  - e. Commonly replaced drums in Kalinda groups, Carnival processions, accompanying calypsonians, and Orisha
  - f. Commonly accompanied by singing

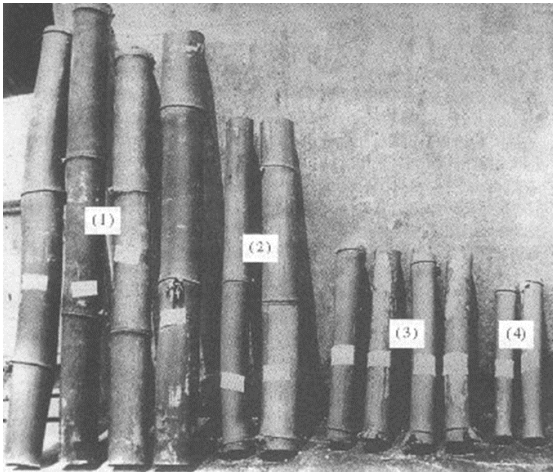


Figure 1: 1. Bass 2. Foulé 3. Cutters 4. Chandlers picture from SeeTobago



Figure 2: Tamboo Bamboo Ensemble Canboulay 2013 picture by Maria Nunes

## Time Line

- First inhabitants of Trinidad and Tobago- Caribs and Arawaks
- 1498 – August 1, 1498 Christopher Columbus landed and renamed the island “La Trinidad” in honor of the Holy Trinity
- Spanish rule – described as incompetent by some historians
- French Catholic Plantation owners that had come from other Caribbean islands were the first to bring enslaved African people to Trinidad
- 1797 – British rule
- 1833 – Great Britain outlawed slavery
- 1845 – indentured labor primarily from India (some came from Nigeria/Yoruba Land and other locations)
- 1881 – Clashes between the poor and the authorities led to riots during the 1881 Carnival and again in 1883 (known as the Canboulay Riots)
- 1884 – Peace Preservation Ordinance, a law banning noisy musical instruments
  - With the passage of this law, drumming in the streets was effectively crushed.
- 1890s – Tamboo Bamboo – People began cutting bamboo into various lengths, and either stamping them on the ground or striking them against one another.
  - Bamboo, while plentiful on the island is not very sturdy material by the 1910s, tamboo bamboo bands had increasingly incorporated other sounds (Stuempfle)
- 1930s – By the 1930s, metal containers had completely replaced bamboo as the **primary** source for rhythmic music (young people tended to move to metal and older people tended to hang on to the bamboo tradition)
  - Some of the players discovered that the dented surface of a metal can produce a pitch on either side of a dent
  - Discarded biscuit tins (cookie or cracker tins) and caustic soda barrels were very commonly used (Crix tins are commonly used now)



- 1934 – Tamboo Bamboo was banned (the nature of this is being questioned by some historians)
- 1940s – Pan was developing quickly
- 1951 – Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra travels to Europe

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# Tamboo Bamboo

Trinidad and Tobago

Compiled by Josh Watkins

Trinidad  
from Darlington Theodore

Small or Cutter

Medium Small

Medium Large

Large

Bottle

This section of the score is for the Trinidad piece by Darlington Theodore. It consists of five staves, each representing a different percussion instrument. The music is in 4/4 time. The Small or Cutter part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' (zap) symbol above some notes. The Medium Small part has a steady eighth-note pattern. The Medium Large part has a pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' symbol above some notes. The Large part has a pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' symbol above some notes. The Bottle part has a pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' symbol above some notes.

Tobago  
from Khalen Alexander

Small or Cutter

Medium Small

Medium Large

Large

Bottle

This section of the score is for the Tobago piece by Khalen Alexander. It consists of five staves, each representing a different percussion instrument. The music is in 4/4 time. The Small or Cutter part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a '3' (triple) symbol above some notes. The Medium Small part has a steady eighth-note pattern. The Medium Large part has a pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' symbol above some notes. The Large part has a pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' symbol above some notes. The Bottle part has a pattern of eighth notes with a 'z' symbol above some notes.

Trinidad  
from George Goodard  
Dudley, 33

Tamboor Bamboo

Cutter

Foulé

Boom

Bottles

This musical score is for the piece 'Tamboor Bamboo'. It consists of four staves. The 'Cutter' staff features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with beams, often grouped in pairs. The 'Foulé' staff has a similar eighth-note pattern, but with a more complex, syncopated feel. The 'Boom' staff is simpler, using dotted eighth notes followed by a quarter rest. The 'Bottles' staff consists of eighth notes with beams, often appearing in pairs. The piece is written in a 2/4 time signature.

Trinidad  
From Ellie Mannette  
Bailey, NP

Cutter

Foulé

Boom

Bottle

bottles can  
be added  
to taste

This musical score is for the piece 'Trinidad'. It consists of five staves. The 'Cutter' staff has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with beams. The 'Foulé' staff has a similar eighth-note pattern. The 'Boom' staff uses eighth notes with beams. The 'Bottle' staff has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with beams. The fifth staff is a simple line with a few notes and rests, and is accompanied by the text 'bottles can be added to taste'. The piece is written in a 2/4 time signature.

Trinidad  
from  
Everaldo Watson

# Tamboor Bamboo

Cutter



Musical staff for Cutter, featuring a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Second



Musical staff for Second, featuring a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bass



Musical staff for Bass, featuring a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bottles



Musical staff for Bottles (top), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.



Musical staff for Bottles (bottom), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

Common  
bottle  
and cutter  
rhythms



Musical staff for Common bottle and cutter rhythms (top), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.



Musical staff for Common bottle and cutter rhythms (second), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.



Musical staff for Common bottle and cutter rhythms (third), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.



Musical staff for Common bottle and cutter rhythms (fourth), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.



Musical staff for Common bottle and cutter rhythms (fifth), featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.




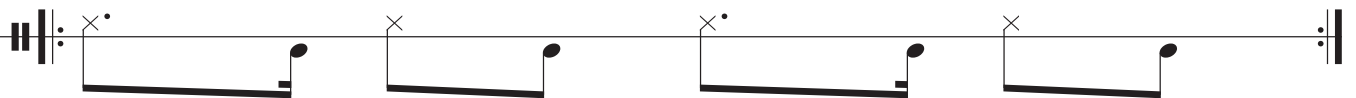
# Steel Band Congas

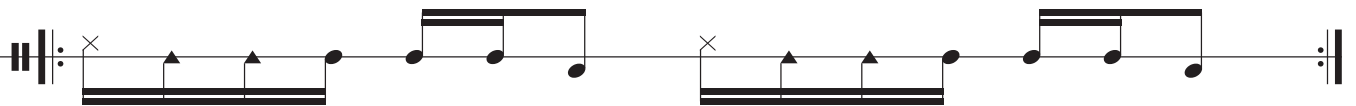
## Basics

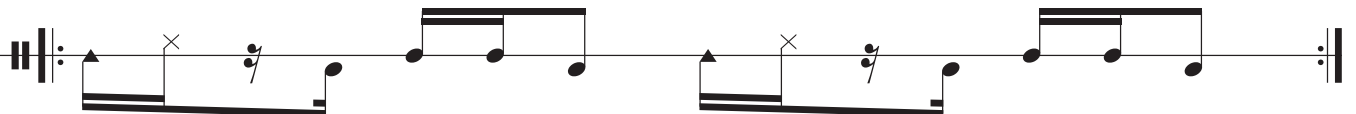
1. 


2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

# Steel Band Irons

The musical score is written for six brake drums in 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature. The notation is as follows:

- Brake Drum 1:** A continuous eighth-note pattern: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter.
- Brake Drum 2:** A pattern of eighth notes with a grace note: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter.
- Brake Drum 3:** A pattern of eighth notes with a grace note: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter.
- Brake Drum 4:** A pattern of dotted quarter notes: dotted quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter, dotted quarter.
- Brake Drum 5:** A pattern of eighth notes with a grace note: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter.
- Brake Drum 6:** A pattern of eighth notes with a grace note: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter.

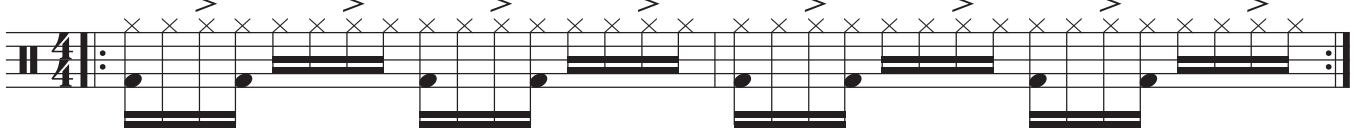
# Steel Band Scratchers

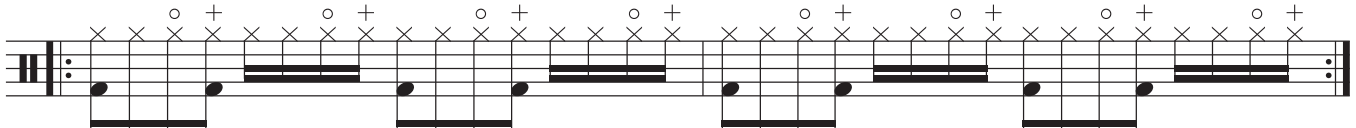
## Basics

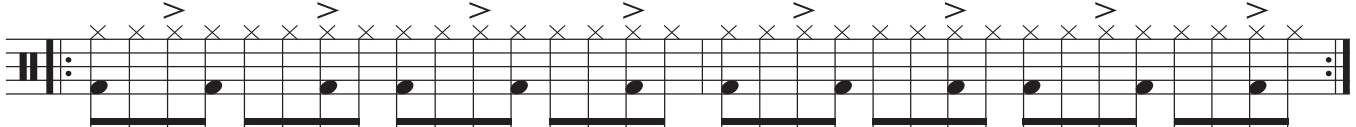
The image shows a musical score for four guiro parts, labeled Guiro 1 through Guiro 4, in 4/4 time. Each part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of four measures. Guiro 1 and Guiro 2 play a sequence of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5. Guiro 3 plays a sequence of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, with a slash and a tilde symbol (~/) above the first note of each measure. Guiro 4 plays a sequence of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, with a slash and a tilde symbol (~/) below the first note of each measure. All notes are marked with an accent (>).

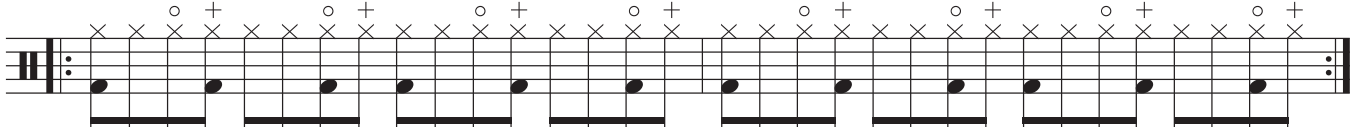
# Calypso Drumset Patterns


## The Basics


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13.

14.

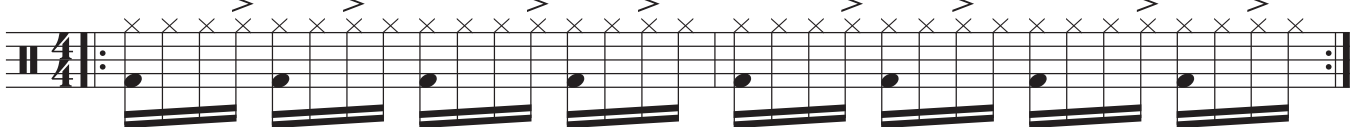
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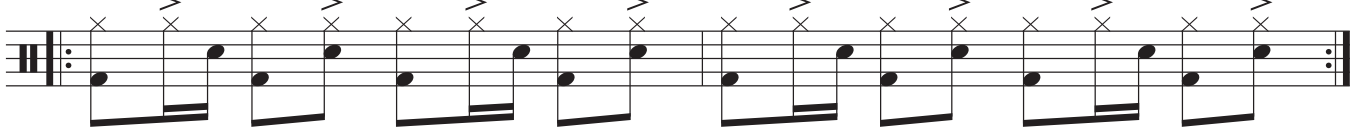
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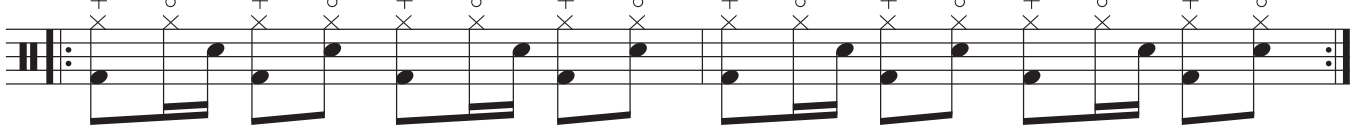
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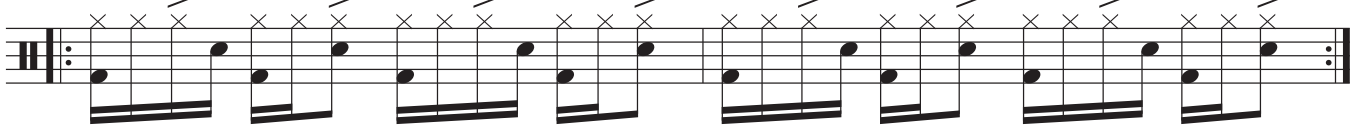
# Soca Drumset Patterns

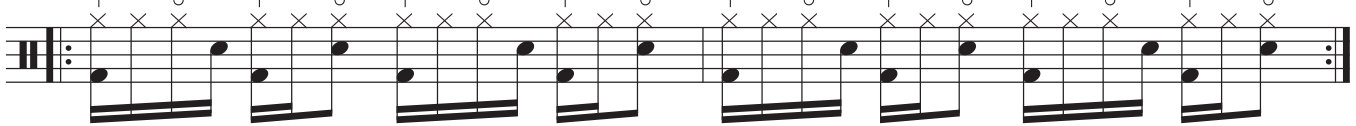
## Soca and Beyond Basics


1. 

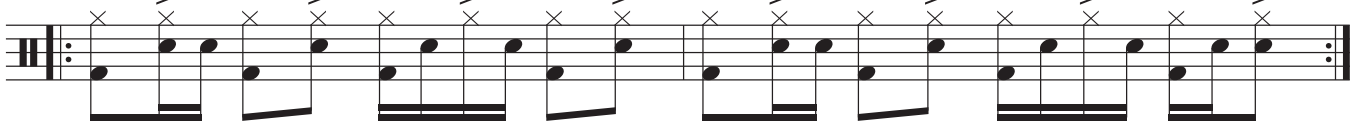
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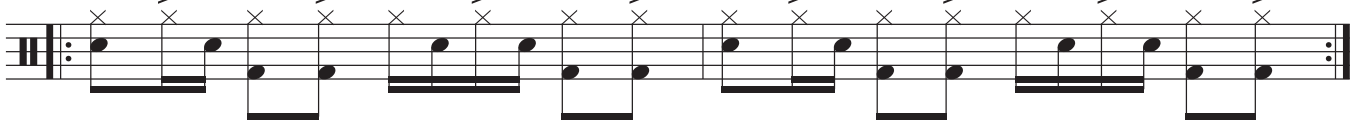
3. 

4. 

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8. 

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10.

Ola by Olatunji  
2015

Improvise H.H. to fill out

Jump for Joy by Super Blue  
2000

Bacchanal Time by Super blue  
1993

Mr. Fete by Machel Montano 2012

Savannah Grass by Kes 2019

Hello by Kes  
2018

\*try to play steady 16ths with one hand too

my variation