

Tube drums

[homemade percussion home](#)

These are the homemade drums that are causing such a stir in the drumming for wellness scene this year.

Tube drums, made from heavy cardboard cylinders are currently **THE RAGE**, thanks to facilitator and founder of the Eldermusic group at Yahoo, **Annie O'Shea**.

The idea of using heavy cardboard concrete forms, used for pouring concrete, for drums is not entirely new. Banek and Scoville described such tube drums in their book *Sound Designs* years ago, but they used goatskin and were a little different, hanging in different lengths, different pitches from a rope or cable.



Annie has added several crucial modifications that are great, such as a viable synthetic head material (pack cloth) and the use of an embroidery hoop as a reinforcing ring. (!)She also added the cutouts at the bottom that let the sound out, like the REMO brand TUBANOS®.

The Eldermusic group has been alive with ideas for these instruments, with participants coming up with new ideas and adaptations, including Beverly Nadelman (she has posted a jillion good ideas), [Randy Brody](#), and others. To really get the entire lowdown, and see all the images, you should [join the eldermusic group](#) at Yahoo and read the archives..

The eldermusic list was established to facilitate communication between people currently working with elders in any setting and using music. There is sharing about instrument making, sources of instruments/supplies , facilitation ideas, and encouragement and support of each other.

Annie has given us permission to post her very basic instructions and a photo or two here, and Massage Therapist Lorraine Achey has offered her more detailed instructions, complete with list of tools, materials, and procedures from beginning to end.. If you want the detailed version it is pasted in below Annie's..Thanks to both ladies for their generosity in making this stuff available to Rhythmweb readers..

Annie: "Here are the absolute BASICS..."

1. Cut an 8, 10 or 12 inch diameter tube in whatever length you want. (They usually come in 4 ft lengths). Cut scallops or rectangles in the bottom to let the sound out. (Lorraine Achey has wisely suggested that you postpone this step until after the head is stretched, to avoid damage to the bottom during the stretching process.)
2. Cut 2 wooden embroidery hoops to size and glue onto the inside of the head, one inside the other placing the areas of the cuts across from each other. I also glue a short piece of hoop over the area of the inside hoop where it was cut to fit together. One may be enough depending on how tight you want to pull the heading fabric. I use Titebond II Wood Glue. Be sure to clamp for a couple of hours. I also add Gorilla Glue in any places where there is a gap between the glue and the tube wall.



ALTERNATIVE: You can also buy plastic embroidery hoops and use these instead of the wooden ones. I only use one of these instead of two They cut very easily with a hacksaw and **DON'T NEED ANY GLUE!!** You have to be a little more careful when you pull the heading material taut.....if you don't pull evenly they can end up egg shaped. (they still work, though!)

3. Using a white craft glue like ModPodge or Elmer's or Aleene's original tacky glue, apply a cotton or cotton blend fabric.....or any other fabric that will glue...to the drum...or you could paint them also. My drums are all somewhere between 18- 27 inches high so I buy 3/4 yard of a fabric that is 44-45 inches wide. Leave at least an inch down on the top without fabric....the heading material glues better to the cardboard tube surface than fabric. Leave at least an inch down on the top without fabric....the heading material glues better to the cardboard tube surface than fabric. Trim the top edges and turn under the bottom edges , gluing securely to the underside..
4. Cut out an appropriate size circle or square of "pack cloth" material. This is a coated nylon available at many fabric stores and on the web.
5. Soak the pack cloth in water for at least one hour. This is important. It takes awhile for the water to soak in.
6. With another person helping, staple the pack cloth onto the top, pulling as tightly as possible. Staple all the way around,(I use 1/4 inch staples,some use 3/8 inch) alternating sides to get a good tight pull. Trim away the excess pack cloth. Wrap black electricians tape around the staple area to flatten and cover. **Note: There is an alternative to stapling. See the update below.**
7. Apply either ribbon or a strip of the same material (or whatever you like!) around the drum to cover up the staples and electrician's tape.
8. I buy plastic tubing at the local True Value hardware store, cut it in the same length as the "feet", split it open lengthwise and slip onto the leg to protect the fabric from fraying out and tearing. I have also used sticky backed felt to finish off the legs. I had one person discover she could get a cool sound by banging the entire drum against the floor.....and so I came up with some protection for that particular creative act!

For mallets we use 12 inches of 1/2 inch dowel with a 1 inch wooden dowel ball that has a 1/2 inch hole already drilled into it. We just glue these on and sometimes cover in matching material. I have covered most of my mallets with colorful fleece to dampen the sound depending on where I will be and what group I will be working with.

These drums elicit wild ideas and creativity and are very fun to make especially with a group. Enjoy and please let me know how it's going and what new ideas you came up with!