

Instruments Made of Wood

By Natalie Mason for BCMG TREE project

Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group



Viola

The viola is a string instrument related to the violin, cello and double bass. You play the viola with a bow or the strings can be plucked using your fingers. In Italian the technique of playing with a bow is called *arco* and plucking the string with your finger is called *pizzicato*. The particular viola and bow featured here were made by instrument makers in Argentina and Birmingham, England.



Amadinda

The amadinda is a type of xylophone once played in the royal courts of Uganda. It is *pentatonic*, which means it is tuned to 5 different notes. You can see the keys of the amadinda in the video / photo have been numbered accordingly. Unlike some xylophones, this is not a soloistic instrument, and requires co-performers to play. You can hear historical recordings of amadinda music in the British Library 'Sounds' archive: <https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Peter-Cooke-Uganda/025M-C0023X0011XX-1700V0>



Budongo

The budongo is a type of lamellophone from Uganda. Lamellophones are sometimes known as 'thumb pianos'. Here, the wooden box forms a resonator for the instrument. Budongo was often used to accompany walking and singing. You can read more about this instrument, and hear some recordings on Dr. Peter Cooke's website: <https://www.drpetercooke.uk/uganda/budongos-okemes-and-lukemes/>



Rainstick

Found in many school instrument cupboards, the rainstick originates from South America. It is constructed from a dried cactus with its spines pushed inside to create a lattice for the pebbles and seeds to hit as they fall down the tube, creating the sound of moving water.



Osegu

Made from bamboo, the osegu are single pitch flutes from Uganda. Music played on the osegu flutes requires a group of musicians to create a melody. These osegu flutes are marked with different colours to show the different notes. The music can then be written using colourful shapes that tell each person which pipe to play when, and for how long. A historical recording of osegu music can be heard here: <https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Peter-Cooke-Uganda/025M-C0023X0021XX-0300V0>



Kokle

This is a type of plucked string instrument which is part of the Baltic box zither Psalter family. There are many different types of kokle, and this one is a recently made instrument from Latvia. The kokle has been named an important part of Latvia's Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO). Here is an Easter story which features the kokle and other musicians and instruments from Latvia: <https://youtu.be/MRQD1YuJObw>



Djembe

This is a type of drum from West Africa, played using bare hands. It was traditionally played by blacksmiths in the community but is now played by people all over the world as an instrument enjoyed globally. To learn more about the construction of the djembe - its journey from tree to drum - and the context of this instrument in Baro, Guinea see the short film 'Foli' or 'Rhythm' (particularly 2:15-6:47): <https://youtu.be/IVPLluBy9CY?t=135>

Piano

The long name for the piano is pianoforte. It is played using a keyboard, with a hammer for each note hitting the strings inside the piano. The piano featured here is an upright piano. The alternatives to this instrument are the grand piano or the digital piano! You might notice that the piano also has pedals which the pianist controls with their feet to sustain notes or create a quieter sound.

