

# WORLD MUSIC DRUMMING

## Transforming Lives . . . Building Community

### How Do You Find the Right WMD Ensemble to Go with Songs, Chorals, or Recordings?

One of the most common questions on our World Music Drumming Facebook group page is, "What WMD ensemble goes with (name song, choral, or recording here)? So, to help us all think about that issue, here are some thoughts on the subject:

1. Start by singing/playing the song, choral, or recording to **get the "feel"** -

- **meter** (don't be faked out by a printed time signature that may throw you off - songs are often written in 4/4 when the feel is really cut time)
- **beat subdivisions** (are the beats subdivided into equal eighths or sixteenths, or is it a triplet "swing" feel?)
- **tempo** (the speed will tell you a lot about what ensemble works with it)
- **style and cultural background** (where does the piece come from? what instruments and traditions are appropriate?)
- **energetic or subdued** (this aspect of "feel" is crucial to making good choices)
- **written percussion parts** (an arrangement of a song in a book or choral piece may include suggested percussion parts; these may or may not be helpful - sometimes they are written by people who know little about drumming traditions)
- **bass part** (often this is one of the best ways to key into the feel and the real meter)

2. Which existing WMD ensembles **fit the above criteria**? (not just WMD Ens 1-7 in TE, but also those in auxiliary books like *New Ensembles and Songs*, *More New Ensembles and Songs*, *Peanut Butter Jam*, *Beatbox*, *Global Grooves*).

- **modify?** (you may find a fit, but you may wish to play fewer parts; e.g., Ens 1 works great with "Give Light," but it sounds better without the bell and gankogui; you may also need to take into account factors like the grade level of your students or how much time you have to put things together)
- **none fit** (if no WMD ensembles work with your criteria, you have several choices such as a) creating your own ensemble, b) looking in other non-WMD sources - perhaps one of the books written by other WMD faculty)
- **no drums** (some pieces just should not be accompanied by drums or xylophones)
- **hybrids** (you can achieve interesting effects by **mixing styles on purpose**; we regularly use the Middle-Easter-styled "Desert Fire" ensemble to accompany John Krumm's "Dance for the Nations" (a 3-part round that has nothing to do with that style) and John said he liked it; but don't do this by accident)