

Rhythm Play!



Rhythm Activities and Initiatives
for
Adults, Facilitators, Teachers, and Kids!

Kenya S. Masala

Illustrations by
Crystal Presence & Gabriela Masala

A Source Consulting Group Publication

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Kenya Masala and Source Consulting Group
Austin, Texas; USA

kenya@sourceconsultinggroup.com



This book is dedicated to my amazing wife and life partner Gabriela, who brings the magic and music of play to my life every day.

Thanks to Chris Cavert for constant inspiration, and to Maria Skinner and Bete Pfister for the phenomenal job of editing!

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For more information or to purchase additional copies of this book and other materilas, contact Kenya Masala at:

www.sourceconsultinggroup.com

www.rhythm-play.com



Terra Ruddy Sola Diamond & River Summer Vanessa

Baba olaFunji Mamady Keifa Fara Tolno Shiven The WMG Bafucaxe

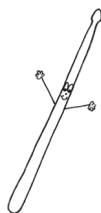
Team Za Boom Ba: Kenya, Yarrow, Kimi, Bete, Jade, Swami, CLIFF, MZ, Alfie

Jorge Alabe Jorge Martins Michael Spiro Arthur Hull Christine Stevens

Thank you!



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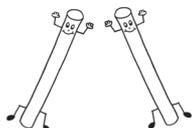
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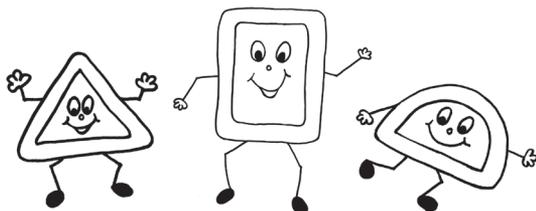
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*“All people from all walks of life, all colors,
have various things that they can do together to create harmony,
and it is the simplest thing to make music and sing together.”*

Baba Olatunji

INTRODUCTION

By reading this book, and experiencing these activities, you'll tap into your innate sense of rhythm; even if you've thought you had none. Indeed, everyone has rhythm! Having worked with thousands of people all over this country (and folks from other wonderful lands) I can say that everyone has rhythm. It's just a fact. Your heart beats, you walk, you breathe, your eyes blink; it's all rhythm. And, if you didn't have rhythm, you wouldn't know when you were *off* the rhythm! How's that for some fun logic? But really, what it all comes down to is that we all have innate rhythm, and it's a wonderful thing to explore.

Benefits

The benefits of drumming and rhythmic play are many, and there are now specific scientific studies proving these benefits. The therapeutic value of drumming is also gaining great recognition. Youth and adults, people with disabilities, people experiencing ADHD, and people in recovery, all benefit from the powerful yet simple experience of group rhythm. (*See the Health Rhythms section at www.remo.com for a fantastic overview of these breakthrough studies.*)

Hospitals, schools, and prisons are becoming increasingly aware of the healing, soothing, and educational value of rhythm, song, and dance. All ages experience the neurological and physical benefits that come from participating in rhythm and movement circles. Rhythm bridges cultural boundaries and brings people together. It's not just fun; it really *is* good for us! In many rhythm experiences, I've watched as hundreds of people feel the magic, cut loose, and light up in ways they've never before experienced.

Using this Book

This is an ever-evolving collection of activities using various, easy-to-find rhythm instruments. They are perfect for use in team building and music therapy sessions, classroom learning (making learning really fun) and for conference energizers. The activities fit almost any age; if a participant can firmly hold a stick and use it to hit another object in a regular pattern, they can do just about all of these activities. The activities are broken down into instrument-specific sections. Some activities will crossover; that is, you can use various instruments for the same activity. Activities that defied a specific category are found in the **Multi-Instrument Games** chapter of the book (pg. 93).

You don't have to be a musician to facilitate these activities. As I mentioned earlier, anyone and everyone has rhythm. While practice helps (as with anything) there are some simple techniques for immediate rhythm creation. In the second section, you'll get lots of tips on instant rhythm creation. If you want to take your rhythm facilitation to the highest level, read the book *Drum Circle Spirit* by Arthur Hull, the Granddaddy of drum circle facilitation. Or better yet, check out one of his dynamic trainings. You can find more of his information at www.drumcircle.com.

I suggest that you try these activities yourself before you do them with a group (unless it's a group of facilitators and you are experimenting). Give yourself some practice, and minimize the uncomfortable element of surprise that can occur when an activity does not go the way you intended. The activities are written in a very kinesthetic manner; you'll better understand the directions if you actually get up and try them as you read.

Certain activities in the Sticks, Boomwhackers® tuned percussion tubes, and Sound Shapes® sections are sequenced. That is, the skills and challenges build from one activity to the next in specific order. To get the most out of these activities, I recommend having your group do the first activity in each sequence before moving to the next.



Feel free to modify as you go; I encourage you to explore and play around with the ideas here, and let me know what you create. The world of rhythm is indeed infinite, and can provide hours of very interesting activities, so play, play, play! That's really what this is all about.



Skills Index

Besides the opportunity to play and have fun, these activities can be used to develop or practice specific skills in leadership, group cohesion, and affective skills enhancement (active listening, clear communication etc.). The **Activity Skills Index** on page 133, lists the primary skill focus for each activity, the challenge level, and the appropriate age group for each activity. The index is a great reference for matching an activity with a group.

Challenge Level

The activities range in challenge level from 0 to 5. A challenge level of “0” means the activity is very easy to facilitate and easy for participants to do with little explanation. These are great energizers, warm-up or quick transition activities. A challenge level of “5” means there is more facilitation required and thus more skill building during the activity. These are great for problem solving and focused team building, and you may want to debrief the experience to reinforce learning. Regardless of the challenge level, each activity can be modified to make it easier or more difficult depending on your group’s needs.

Variations

In the **Variations** section of each activity, you will find ways to extend an activity as well as suggestions for adding challenges. These suggestions can often provide insights for making the activity unique to your group and situation, and can increase the versatility of an activity.

Equipment

For equipment all you need are the instruments covered in the book (egg shakers, sticks, Boomwhackers®, and Sound Shapes®) plus a large cowbell or jam block (see page 17). Quantity depends on your budget and group size. Instrument details are covered at the beginning of each section.

Celebrate!

Throughout the activities, you'll notice instructions to celebrate. This is important. When you praise and acknowledge individual or group accomplishments it keeps the spirit of rhythm and play alive. Rhythm and music making can sometimes feel risky for participants, so consistent, supportive encouragement invites even the shyest person to jump in and experience the groove. Celebration feeds the soul of exploration.

Play Activities

If you've never facilitated group play activities, (and even if you have), you may want to explore other books and training methods (not necessarily rhythm based, but still totally fun). They will help you practice the "play" mind. Some of my all time favorites are by Chris Cavert (www.fundoing.com) and Sam Sikes (www.learningunlimited.com). Their websites are definitely worth a visit. More information is available in the **Resources** section on page 119.

More Training

All the activities in this book can be experienced in single- or multiple-day training sessions led by Source Consulting Groups's facilitators. Training sessions are one of the best ways to fully understand the power and joy inherent in Rhythm Play.

Enjoy, keep groovin', and keep in touch!
kenya@sourceconsultinggroup.com



Everybody has rhythm.



Formations

“Every time a group of kids or a community sits down and creates rhythmical synergy together, the world is a better place.”

Arthur Hull, Drum Circle Spirit

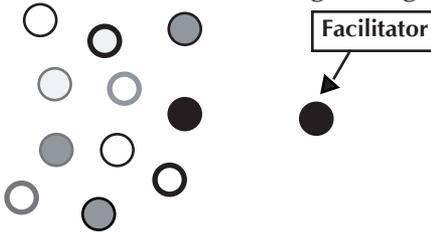


FORMATIONS

Each activity has a specific formation that makes the rhythmic experience flow. Review these before you jump into the activities so you can facilitate with more clarity. The formations assume that participants will be standing; for sitting you may need to make simple modifications.

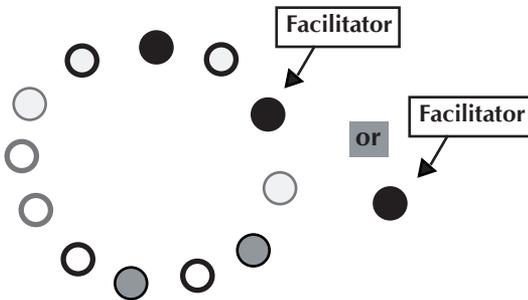
CONGLOMERATE

In this formation, the group can stand randomly, facing the facilitator with enough space between each participant so they can move their arms without hitting a neighbor



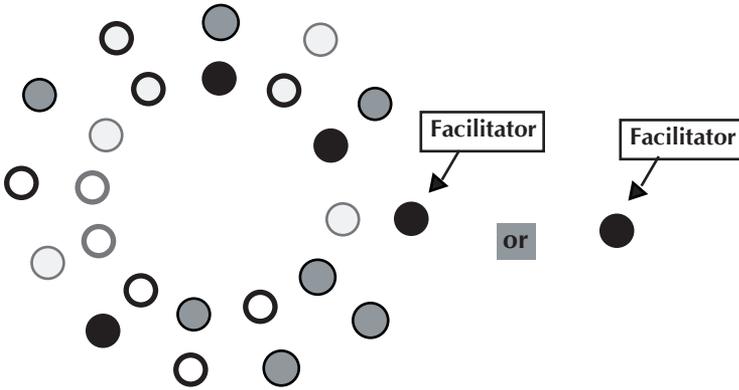
LARGE CIRCLE

Everyone stands in the circle so you can see each person's eyes. Adjust the space as needed for comfortable body movements and/or swinging drumsticks. The facilitator may be part of the circle or stand outside the circle, depending on the activity and the number of participants. If you are working with limited space, set up two independent circles and have participants stand as close together as is comfortable or appropriate.



CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

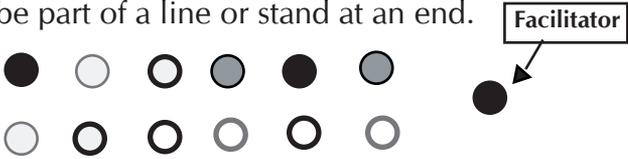
This is very similar to the **Large Circle** formation except that there are two circles: one inner and one outer. The inner circle participants face the outer circle participants and line up with a partner from the outer circle. This works best with even-numbered groups. The facilitator may be part of a circle or stand outside the circles, depending on the number of people needed for the activity.



PARALLEL LINES

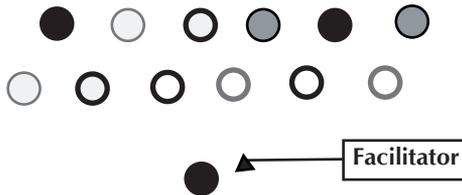
The group is split evenly into two, and participants stand facing each other in two lines.

Depending on the activity and number of participants, the facilitator may be part of a line or stand at an end.



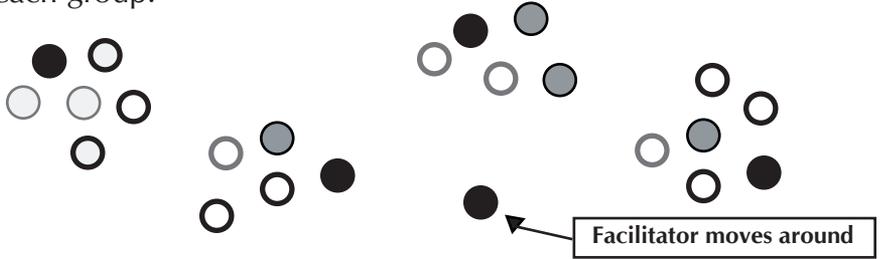
STAGGERED LINES

The group is split evenly into two lines. Participants stand facing the facilitator so that those in the back line do not have a person in the front line blocking their view.



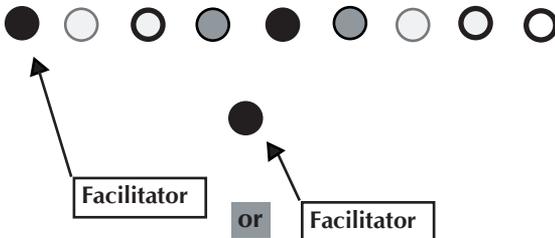
SMALL GROUPS

Depending on the size of your entire group, small groups might consist of 3 to 6 people. Have small groups locate themselves in different parts of the room so they can work as undisturbed as possible for small group activities. They may utilize any other formation within their small groups to help them accomplish tasks. The facilitator moves around the room, offering any necessary support to each group.



SINGLE-FILE LINE

This is a standard single file line. Depending on the activity, participants may stand shoulder to shoulder or facing the back of the person in front of them. The facilitator stands as part of the line or wherever participants can see (or hear) her.





Play and explore...



Connecting with Rhythm

“Rhythm is the soul of life. The whole universe revolves in rhythm. Everything and every human action revolves in rhythm.”

Baba Olatunji



OVERVIEW

O.K.; so you've always wanted to play a rhythm instrument and maybe felt somewhat intimidated. Or maybe you are a virtuoso and just need a few more ideas for working with groups. That's what this section is about: finding grooves. They're all over the place...really! Grooves are *everywhere*.

The first thing to keep in mind is that a rhythm is simply a repeated pattern. Even a simple repeated pattern has much merit, as long as it stays connected to a **Pulse**. I describe the Pulse as the basic feel or count of a rhythm (for most Western music it's: 1-2-3-4 / 1-2-3-4 etc.). If you listen to any song on the radio and clap your hands or tap your feet to the beat, you've found the Pulse.

I often ask a group (rhetorically), "What happens to you if you don't have a Pulse?" Pretty obvious answer; folks usually shake their heads or say, "That's not so good..." I'll also ask, "What happens to you if *your* Pulse is not steady, or if it's weak or erratic?" Again, the answer is obvious, "You can't stand up." "You're in bad shape." "You'd be weak." It's the same thing with a rhythm; the Pulse has to be strong and steady to keep the rhythm or groove alive.

Now, who's responsible for the Pulse? Usually, the group points to me and laughs! But eventually it becomes clear: each person in the circle is responsible for keeping the Pulse and thus the groove, alive. It's part of the unspoken responsibility we take on when we make rhythm together. It's part of the unspoken lesson of community and team building that happens in any rhythm circle. To support your group, however, a facilitator should have handy either a large cowbell or a jam block (see pictures). These instruments are usually loud enough to be heard over the other instruments and are good for supporting the Pulse.

That leads to the last bit of wisdom around instant rhythm: *listening*. The way to keep the Pulse alive is to listen. As a skill, active listening is hard to teach. In rhythm experiences, the lesson teaches itself. It's essential to have a group simply play a Pulse to understand and develop this important skill (see the activity called **The Pulse** on page 20).

Another basic rhythm skill is called a **4-count stop**. Once you get the groove going, it's fun to know how to get everyone to stop together. Simply count 4 Pulses in the *tempo* (the speed of playing), and say or signal, "Stop," on the 5th Pulse. E.G.:

The Pulse: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4 (etc.); Then the stop: "1-2-3-4-Stop!"

You can also use a count to start playing. I usually count 3 Pulses, then say, "And," on the 4th Pulse; instruments kick in on what would be 5:

"1-2-3-and go!" (Play starts on "go;" you can use a hand motion to signal it).

It's beneficial to clarify starts and stops so the group feels unified. It also adds to the enjoyment.

To sum it all up, all you need to make rhythm is a willingness to *listen* for the *Pulse* and keep it alive. Rock on.



My frusky cowbell



LP's® Jam Block®

Brain Rhythm

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 40+

Challenge Level: 0

TIME

10 minutes; longer if you are working with younger children

INSTRUMENTS

None; just the body

FORMATION

Large Circle or Staggered Lines

INSTRUCTIONS

1) Get the group to stand in a large circle or staggered lines so that the entire group can easily see you. Let everyone know that getting loose makes the jam, *JAM!* A “jam” happens when everyone grooves together.

2) Explain that *breathing* is the most important part of this activity. You may get some chuckles and stares. However, it’s true; participants will need to remember to focus on the rhythm of their breath to get through the activity. Also encourage participants to find their own rhythm. They can go as slow or as fast as is comfortable to them. This activity is not about keeping up with other participants; it’s about finding their own Pulse, so there won’t be a specific group Pulse kept during the activity. The movements purposely cross the left-right planes of the body, or activate the left and right limbs independently; this stimulates the left and right brain integration.

3) While standing in place, begin crossing and uncrossing your legs in front of you (left across right, right across left, etc.). Ask the group to do the same so that everyone is doing the movement together. Tell the group to focus on breathing. Coordinating breathing with moving, helps each person find their rhythm.

- 4) After a few moments instruct the participants to start swinging their arms front to back (like a robot walking, only not so stiff). *Keep the feet moving at same time!* Now there should be more laughter as folks simultaneously integrate both movements while focusing on breathing. Give them lots of encouragement as there's more coming.
- 5) After a few moments, add heads turning left and right while feet cross and arms move front to back. *Remind them to breathe!* The breath keeps them connected to their rhythm.
- 6) Next, ask them to begin wiggling their fingers and toes with everything else still moving. *Remember the breath!*
- 7) Finally, invite participants to add blinking their eyes rapidly...seriously! It's a riot, and folks get a kick out of trying to do all these simultaneous movements. Don't forget to cheer them on (if you can cheer while you are performing all the movements as well).
- 8) Count to four and say, "Stop" (a 4-count stop: 1-2-3-4-stop!). Have everyone raise their arms up and stretch high, hold the breath for a moment while stretching, then relax down with an exhale. Add another round of the same or add new movements that you create.

NOTES

This activity is about left and right brain integration. It's a key to successful rhythm experiences, so I often use it as a starter. For younger or novice participants, keep your initial instructions simple. As the group gets comfortable, add more complex movements. You are only limited by your comfort and imagination, so improvise, experiment, and have fun with this!

VARIATIONS

Make up your own movements, and be as creative as you can. Practice a few before you try them with a group. Be sure to have the movements cross the left-right planes of the body, or activate the left and right limbs independently. For adventurous groups, integrate getting down on the floor (sitting or laying) for more movements. Also, have small groups of 3 to 4 people create movements for the entire group to try.

The Pulse

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 40+

Challenge Level: 0

TIME

5 to 10 minutes; longer if you choose

INSTRUMENTS

Anything you have available (bells, Sound Shapes®, Boomwhackers®, shakers etc.)

You could consider clapping, but it makes hands sore if it goes on for too long. The facilitator should use an instrument that can be heard above the group (a cowbell or jam block).

FORMATION

Large Circle or Conglomerate for smaller spaces

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Play a slow Pulse on any instrument you have: 1-2-3-4 / 1-2-3-4 etc.
- 2) Invite the group to join in and keep the Pulse. Inevitably, it will speed up without you doing anything. Stop the group as soon as this happens, and ask them what they heard. Someone will probably say, "We sped up!" The rest of the group will usually agree. You continue, "That's good to notice; it means we're listening." Let them know they're about to do the same thing (play just the Pulse), but this time their challenge is to keep the Pulse at the tempo (speed) you began: no speeding up and no slowing down.
- 3) Start the Pulse again, and ask the group to join in. The facilitator's job is to hold on to the original Pulse no matter what. It's great practice!
- 4) After a short while you'll feel the group lock into the Pulse. Cheer them on! Now let them know you are going to time the Pulse; their task is to hold an even Pulse for one minute without you (the facilitator) playing. If they waver, alert them with a motion, sound, or funny facial expression, and see if they can bring it back on.

If not, you can jump in to get it back on track. If it totally falls apart, it's a great opportunity to discuss listening and team cooperation. Try to get that full minute in before moving to the next step. Always cheer them on!

5) If the group is still into it, start the Pulse again. Once everyone is locked in, say, "Let's speed up slowly." Let it speed up and then ask them to hold the Pulse when you feel it's at a good tempo. Speed up again and hold. Now slow down. If the group is listening, you'll begin to notice that the tempo changes happen almost simultaneously; this is real synergy. Start and stop a few times so the group can practice following tempo changes. Use a few variations to complete the activity.

NOTES

This activity gets the group to listen and tune into each other and the Pulse. It's another great introductory activity and can be done with no previous rhythm experience. Your primary task as facilitator is to keep a strong and constant Pulse at whatever tempo you have chosen.

VARIATIONS

Let other members lead the tempo changes. What do you notice in the group dynamics when different people lead? Also, how fast or how slow can the group maintain (the key here is *maintain*) a clear Pulse. Can they come up with strategies to keep themselves on Pulse? This is great for community building.



Everyone Can do it!

Rhythm in the Kitchen

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 40+

Challenge Level: 1

TIME

5 to 10 minutes; longer if you choose.

INSTRUMENTS

Anything you have available; voices and clapping will work if you have no instruments.

The facilitator should use an instrument that can be heard above the group (cowbell or jam block).

FORMATION

Large Circle, then Small Groups (*variation*)

INSTRUCTIONS

1) Tell the group you are going to build a “rhythm-peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich. I often ask, “What’s the first thing you need?” Some folks say the peanut butter, but I’m not sure how to start a sandwich with just peanut butter, so I start with bread. I then ask folks what type of bread they would like to use. The answer is usually white or wheat, and that’s the rhythm pattern for the bread: *white-or-whole-wheat*. Or you can just choose one flavor: *whole-wheat-bread* (more fun for the rhythm than just playing “*white-bread*”).

If you emphasize (chant) the syllables of *white-or-whole-wheat*, or *whole-wheat-bread*, you get a nice simple rhythm.

E.g.: *White-or-whole-wheat*: there are 4 syllables here that create a rhythm pattern.

Whole-wheat-bread: there are 3 syllables here that create a rhythm pattern.

If you tap your feet to the syllables while you chant it, you’ll hear the pattern.

2) Using instruments and voices, play call-and-response with the group (you play a pattern and say the chant, they echo it back also saying the chant). You may want to start each rhythm that way. (See **Call and Response** in the Sticks section on **pg. 43** for more on this idea.)

3) Once the group has this groove pattern down (the *Pulse* is inherent in the groove), it's time to add the next ingredient to the sandwich. Have the group chant the words "spread peanut butter," or just "peanut butter." Again, emphasize the syllables to make it rhythmic (spread-peanut-bu-tter). Practice until the group has it down.

4) Split the circle in half by designating two sides. You'll designate the sides by motioning; the people will stay as they are in one large circle. One side will be the bread, the other the peanut butter. Their challenge will be to play their rhythms on instruments and keep the patterns in sync. Encourage participants to say the words to help keep them in the groove.

Start the bread group, and then bring in the peanut butter group; the groups (sections of the circle) will be simultaneously chanting and playing their parts. As facilitator, keep the *Pulse* on your instrument so there is a point of reference. If they can keep the two parts going, stop them after about a minute; stop sooner if it falls apart. Practice it a few times.

5) If they've got that, add the third ingredient, the jelly! (If not, work with more simple combinations of patterns.) Strawberry is my favorite, and it's a great rhythm (straw-be-rry-je-lly). Divide the circle into three sections, and assign a rhythm to each section. Always start with the bread, as it's closer to the *Pulse*, then add the peanut butter, then the jelly.

Here are the rhythms:

- 1) *White-or-whole-wheat, or whole-wheat-bread*
- 2) *Spread-pea-nut-bu-tter or just Pea-nut-bu-tter*
- 3) *Straw-be-rry-je-lly*

Once all the parts get going simultaneously, you should have a really cool vocal PBJ groove...nice!

6) Let the three parts play as long as it sounds good and is still fun for participants (watch and feel the energy). You can keep the *Pulse* going, or assist any of the parts that need a "reminder." End with a *4-count stop*. Celebrate the successful groove! If the group is up for it, try a few variations; it's fun to hear the mixing of rhythms that can happen with the voice.

NOTES

This activity utilizes rhythmic syllables in words. Once you understand how to do this, you are in with the groove! You can use just about anything to create rhythms (even people's names: ken-ya-ma-sa-la). The possibilities for play are limitless.

VARIATIONS

What other recipes have great words? Pizza? Pasta? Use recipes that have lots of fun ingredients; there are endless choices available. For kids, throw in funny food combinations like "sar-dines-and-to-fu" (yum). For more ideas, you'll find some rhythm recipes (pg. 131) in the resource section for you to try. If you have a large group, you can split into small groups of 4 to 6 people and have each person in each of the groups create a chant. Can they keep the groove when each person is chanting simultaneously?

For another variation, choose an instrument (or instruments) to play at specific times during a chant. For example, have only bells or small Sound Shapes® play when a word in the chant begins with the letter "p."

Pea-nut-but-ter: The bells would play on "pea" or "pea-nut."

Play-in'-loud-mu-sic-in-the-paw-paw-patch: The bells would play on "play," "paw-paw," and "patch."

You can create different arrangements with other instruments as well. Bells could play on "p" words and shakers play on "m" words. Use your imagination and invite the group's imagination. Make it as simple or as complex as the group can handle...starting with simple is *always* good.

