

Ancient “Percussion” Instruments of Mexican Indian Civilizations

Huehuetl - Aztec big drum from a hollow trunk. There's different sizes with different carving designs symbolizing different aspects in different ceremonies. Huehuetl in Nahuatl (the Aztec language) means voice of the grandfather.

Teponaxtle (or Mayan Tunkul) – two-toned wooden slit log drum (different sizes and carving designs also). The Teponaxtle and Huehuetl are always played together in Aztec music and dances. In Nahuatl it means singing wood.

Tarahumara Drums - from the Tarahumara Indians of Northern Mexico. The sound of this drum represents thunder.

Bubaleks - Mayan water gourd drums are floating inverted hollowed out gourds, producing a rich, unique sound. Also used by the Yaqui Indians of Northern Mexico.

Ayotl - Turtle shell drums. Tapping percussion, often played with deer antlers. The turtle offers their body to make music to walk in beauty.

Oyoyotl - Cascabeles, seeds of the Ayoyote tree (Danzante ankle wraps & hand rattles).

Chichahuastli ; Ayacaxtli - rattles & shakers of seedpods, goat hooves, deer toes.

Tenabaris - cocoon rattles. From the Yaqui Indians. Represent the transformation in life. The cocoon rattles around his legs were once homes of the butterflies. As they dance they want the butterfly to know that, even if he is dead, his spirit is alive and his house is occupied.

Homichichahuastli – big rasp.

Tepehuan - Arco Musical Bow

The gourd has always been around and has many uses as vessels, etc. Xavier likes to create instruments with them such as: water gourd drums, large Mayan trumpets, big rasps, rattles, and the Musical Bow. The Musical Bow is a huge gourd with the top and bottom cut out. Around the top rim is an armrest to hold a 9-foot bow. When played the string makes two very unusual tones. This is much larger than the ones used by the Tepehuanes Indians of Northern Mexico. It is very ancient **PREDATING ANY DRUMS!** The Indians use it in their ceremonies for the 'hunt ceremony'. In the beginning this instrument was a real weapon (bows and arrows). But the hunters play around the fire and sing at the same time, and they hit the bowstring with an arrow. The sound was very quite, but through the years they changed it and added a little gourd to make more resonance. Through more years they put a big gourd on the floor, and played the big bow on top of the gourd. Now the bows and arrows transformed to musical instruments.

Ancient “Flute” Instruments of Mexican Indian Civilizations

Tlapitzalli – Flute in Nahuatl language. The flutes are in different materials, wood, bamboo, and clay. Clay flutes are made in chambers -single, double, triple, and quadruple. But the most important is to use clay (of course) because clay represents the singing mother earth. And the earth is brown and so is the color of their skin. And for the ancient civilizations these flutes are very sacred.

Xavier was the first to bring these double and triple clay flutes into the United States, and now many wood flute makers have copied this idea making these drone flutes.

The “Fire Flute” – Sounds of the Night Spirits, this flute is very dramatic having fire flaming off the end of it. When played the clay warms, making haunting and spiritual sounds. Invented by Xavier, they are the only ones in the world with no one else having this rarity. These now famous flutes can have from 7 to 14 chambers in one! Some of these chambers are ocarinas replicating wind, eagle, hawk, and bird whistles. By having everything contained all in one flute he doesn't have to pick up any other ocarinas or flutes. The Fire Flute was born from a vision during a Huichol Indian peyote ceremony in 1976. Xavier was watching the fire, and the fire was singing and dancing. A little fire flame came jumping to him and gave him the inspiration to make this unique flute.

Wind Whistle – A captivating instrument, creating sounds of the wind.

Chichtli – Clay whistle ocarinas creating different bird sounds.

Dead Whistle - Found only in Mexico it is used for the death ceremony, and has later transformed for the "Day of the Dead Ceremony" whistle.

The Aztecs used it in their death ceremony when some important hierarchy died. They took the body through the streets with 100 or more dead whistles screaming and drumming, then continued to the burial tomb site or pyramid.

Also the Aztecs used them went to war. They practically frightened the enemy by their drumming, dancing, and lots of screaming dead whistles.

Xavier makes his look like skulls, which alone look very scary and intimidating. He is the only maker of this unique instrument known to us.