



What Is a “Community Drum Circle”?

by Arthur Hull

The Community Drum Circle, in the context of how we are using it within our non-professional hand drumming culture, is the most basic and simple use of the drum and rhythm. It is the use of a rhythm-based event as a tool for unity. A community drum circle is a noisy and fun, family friendly event, where people come together in order share their spirit by entraining rhythmically as a percussion ensemble. They empower each other in the act of celebrating community and life through rhythm and music. People of all levels of musical expertise come together and share their rhythmical spirit with whatever drums and percussion they bring to the event. Everyone who comes and participates has something to offer the circle, and any one is welcome.

The spirit and magic of rhythm expressed on drums and percussion instruments cuts through all ages, sexes, religions, races and cultures. “Rhythm,” as Gabriel Roth says, “is the mother tongue.” Rhythm is a universal language known to everyone, even the youngest child, if we can just “remember.” So, in a very objective, yet beautiful way, an interactive rhythm event puts us all on an equal footing with each other and brings us closer together.

Co-operation and collaboration is the basic glue to a community. A community drum circle is a collaboratively self-organized musical event created, “in the moment,” by all the people who participate. When we, as a community, drum together, sharing our spirit in the form of rhythm, it changes our relationships for the positive. As we play together, we give ourselves a rhythmical massage, an emotional release and a healing. The release and healing is different for every person that is in the rhythm circle, and it happens whether we are entraining ourselves into the circle by drumming, or standing outside the circle and listening while tapping our feet and clapping along with the music. To make beautiful music together, with rhythm instruments, all we have to do is bring to the circle whatever rhythmical expertise we have to offer, along with the excitement of sharing it with other people.

People of all levels of musical expertise come together in a community drum circle and share their rhythmical spirit with whatever drums and percussion they bring to the event. They don’t have to be a drummer to participate. They don’t even have to have a drum. They can play a plastic water bottle turned upside down with the neck cut off. They can shake a soda can with rocks in it or hit two sticks together. It is enough that they are in the circle and participating.

The quality of the music produced in an event like this is not based on the rhythmical expertise of the players, but on the quality of their relationship with the other people in the circle. The result is those magical musical

moments where one powerful voice is created out of the many. In those moments, the players stop worrying about keeping time because time, as they know it, has stopped. In its place is a living breathing entity, expressing timeless joy, passion and release through the power of rhythm.

That is the beauty of a community drum circle.

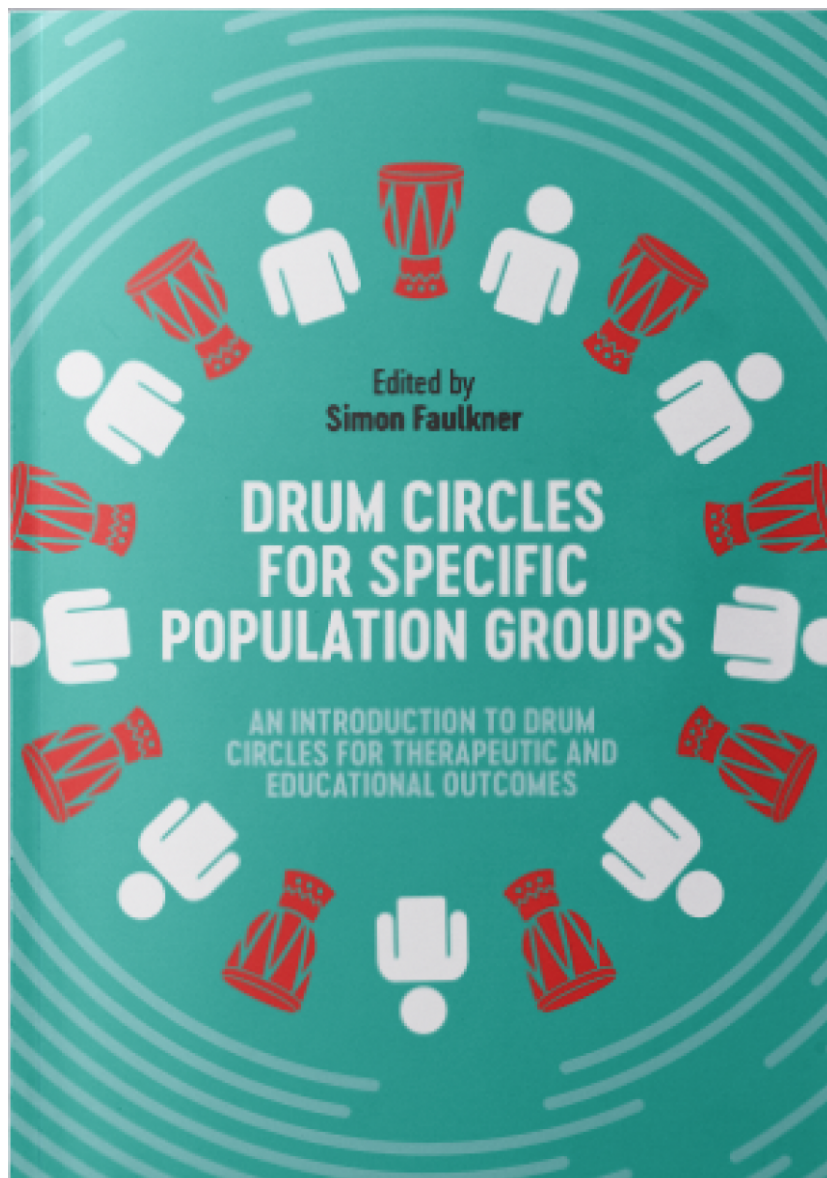
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