



PercussionPlay
Outdoor Musical Instruments



Outdoor Musical Instruments
for Children's Museums

Museums, Music and Memories

Providing musical experiences for family audiences is a valuable way to advance a thriving museum's mission, expand its audience, and strengthen its place within the community. Making music brings people together like nothing else. Offering quality musical opportunities - on real instruments – as exhibits that engage the entire family for spontaneous music-making provides a gateway to the performing arts and an engaging family learning experience.

The interactions among family members spurred by a visit to the museum can create a greater sense of family connectedness. Today, family groups come in different shapes and sizes, from children visiting with their parents or grandparents and even great-grandparents to caregivers with children aging from babies to teens. Whereas some embrace visiting museums with a multi-generational group, it can sometimes be challenging to keep the youngest in your group engaged at the same time as the older ones.



Due to its universal appeal, music can successfully bridge intergenerational gaps. Children learn through play, experimentation, and watching and listening to the grownups they love. Setting an example as an enthusiastic participant in music activities is the best thing any parent or caregiver can do to help establish a child on the road to a lifelong love of music.

Percussion Play instruments are so simple and easy to play that anyone can create exciting and fresh melodies, regardless of age, ability, or experience – perfect for beginners and reluctant players. Through musical play, you teach the power and value of music to your child. The results will be a joyful, musical child, enhanced family relationships, and a strong musical community.

“Music supports children’s all-around development and helps shape their skills in concentration, memory, and listening. In a free-play environment, where there are no wrong notes, the experience can lead to a lifelong love of music and music making”

♪ Nancy Gastel ♪

Director of Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum



Minnesota Children's Museum, MN

Minnesota Children's Museum offers its visitors a musical experience that is located in the 'Creativity Jam' musical playground. This playground features five Percussion Play instruments: [Tubular Bells](#), [Bell Lyre](#), [Large Babel Drum](#), [Harmony](#) and [Cajon](#). Visitors can now come and jam with family, friends, and other visitors.

The museum was keen to incorporate more music into the museum, recognizing that through musical play kids not only have fun, but also build upon and develop important life skills.

All the museum's exhibits are developed around the seven powers of play - the 7c's - seven lifelong skills they believe children need to thrive, now and throughout their lives:

Creative Thinking > Critical Thinking > (Self)-Control > Confidence > Collaboration > Communication and Coordination

The goal for any exhibit or program is to nourish the development of one or more of the seven powers of play in any way. Knowing that music helps develop confidence, creative and critical thinking, and communication skills, it made total sense to create a space for visitors to compose and play their own music in the 'Creativity Jam' zone.



Building For Kids Children's Museum, WI

The Building For Kids Children's Museum is a not-for-profit organization that offers specially designed exhibits, programs, and family events that engage parents, empower children, and energize communities. Their programs and interactive exhibits inspire, teach, and reinforce curiosity.

Inside their Da Vinci Art Studio is a dedicated space for music where they decided to replace their broken instruments with durable instruments that sounded beautiful and were not too loud.

The [Rainbow Trio Ensemble](#) seemed to be the perfect match since it occupied less space than the full-size instruments, featured bright and eye-catching colors, and required less budget. This ensemble features instruments tuned to the [pentatonic scale](#) which means you can play around without hitting anything inordinately dissonant and there are no wrong notes - perfect for encouraging improvisation and discovery.

"It has been wonderful to see the parents and kids interact together with the instruments. Sometimes we'll have a whole family band back there!"

♪Bre Hauboldt♪

Vinci Studio Coordinator at Building for Kids Children's Museum



Play Sharity Children's Museum, NM

Play Sharity is the brainchild of five mothers who each had the same dream: to create a clean, interactive space for children to play, discover their talents, engage in learning, and promote family wellbeing. When Play Sharity Children's Museum and Resource Lending Library created a music garden, they fully expected the children to embrace the range of instruments. However, they hadn't prepared for how the garden could transform and promote intergenerational play opportunities within their community.

What was important for the museum when creating the music garden was that it was inclusive. Instruments have been installed in a way that wheelchair users could easily navigate the garden and have equal access to make music. Inside the music garden you will find the [Harmony Flowers](#), [Petal Drums](#), and the [Rainbow Trio Ensemble](#).

Executive Director, Monica Topham, says, "Even when we are not open, people stop by and play them. We have a few adults with mental disabilities who enjoy playing the instruments, along with the children who have really embraced creating music outside. We have a lot of multi-generational homes, grandparents with young children, for instance, and it is magical to see them connect over music."

The garden has transformed the outdoor space and, importantly, is a transitional space at the museum – allowing children to top off their visit and make some music before heading home.



Cape Cod Children's Museum, MA

A non-profit organization, the Cape Cod Children's Museum - the brainchild of three Falmouth women more than 20 years ago - is a place where families can learn and play together. Located in Mashpee, Massachusetts this 8,000 square-foot museum provides a learning environment that stimulates curiosity, creativity and imagination - inspiring children and their families to engage with each other, their community and the world at large.

The Music Room at the Cape Cod Children's Museum has a variety of instruments for visitors to enjoy including a special rainbow-coloured [Sonora](#) xylophone located on the wall and a set of our very popular [Rainbow Samba](#) drums.

There are also plenty of toddler-friendly percussion instruments as well as a unique wall display of tuned PVC pipes - musical opportunities galore for children to explore, create and collaborate in spontaneous jam sessions or individual performances.

"Music ignites all areas of child development: intellectual, social and emotional, motor, language, and overall literacy. It helps the body and the mind work together"

♪ Cape Cod Children's Museum Staff ♪



Expand the Learning and Open those Outside Spaces!

As venues adjust their procedures and visitor capacities to ensure they can welcome guests back safely, there has been a renewed focus on the great outdoors that has seen outside spaces, however large or small, becoming key investment areas and successful intersections between wellbeing, the arts, and great family connections.

Making the most of outdoor spaces now and into the future has become a priority, with guests feeling more comfortable spending time outside on their family day out. Museums and attractions are now rethinking their programs, shifting their focus, and activating their outdoor spaces to offer open-air activities, exhibitions, and events.

Outdoor music zones for spontaneous music-making, using real-life musical instruments that are holistically interactive, engage multiple senses, and are responsive, can be a fantastic way to reignite an outdoor space relatively quickly and easily.



Representing music-making from many cultures around the world, an outdoor music zone will invite children and their families to explore global music, rhythms, and movement while enjoying bursts of post lockdown musical creativity.

One of the many benefits of outdoor musical instruments is they can be installed almost anywhere; on grass, on concrete, on decking, walls, or – in the case of the [Floor Piano](#) and [Stepping Stones](#) - even underground! All instruments are intended to be played while standing on the ground, meaning they require no expensive impact-absorbing safer surfacing and very little routine maintenance.

The instruments will make robust interactive exhibits designed to withstand the elements and live outside all year to provide a fun, engaging family learning experience.

“Music is a world within itself, with a language we all understand”

♪ Steve Wonder ♪





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