

CELEBRATION OF THE GREAT MOTHER



The Great Mother Headdress, also known as *D'mba*, is a ceremonial piece worn by the Baga people who live in present-day Guinea and Guinea Bassau on the western coast of Africa. This wooden carved headdress celebrates traits that are admired in the Baga tradition and spotlights the mother figure as a role model. She has big eyes and ears for seeing and listening and knowing what is happening in her community, hair braided with attention and beauty, and a flattened chest showing she has nursed and taken care of children.

When *D'mba* is worn in a ceremony, there is an accompanying dance, and music to give honor to the traits of the great mother. The headdress is very large, weighing around 83 pounds, and is worn on the shoulders of male dancers during weddings, funerals, and harvesting ceremonies. They move to the music created by instruments such as drums, a slit gong, and an antelope horn.

In this activity, we will show you how to make your own drum so you can join in the celebration.

Above: Artist Unidentified. *D'mba* (Great Mother Headdress). Before 1938. Possibly Monchon village, Guinea. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Alan Wurtzburger, BMA 1957.97

MATERIALS

Tin can, a balloon, a rubber band or tape, construction paper and other decorative materials, two pencils or wooden sticks

INSTRUCTIONS

1



Cut the bottom of your balloon off. This will be used at the top of your drumhead, so make sure it is big enough to stretch across a tin can.

2



Stretch the balloon across the top of the can and have someone help you put a rubber band or tape on to hold it in place.

3



Use construction paper, or other materials to decorate your drum. Take inspiration from *D'mba* and add raffia and wooden beads.

4



Use two pencils, pens, or wooden sticks as drum sticks.

Your drum is now complete! Join in celebrating the great mother!



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We'd love to see your work! Snap a picture of your final creation and share with us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter using the hashtag #ArtBMAFromHome for a chance to be featured.

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