


# Triangle (instrument)

## Triangle

	
<b>Classification</b>	Hand percussion, idiophone
<b>Playing range</b>	
Single note, open and closed	

The **triangle** is an idiophone type of musical instrument in the percussion family. It is a bar of metal, usually steel but sometimes other metals like beryllium copper, bent into a triangle shape. The instrument is usually held by a loop of some form of thread or wire at the top curve. It was first made around the 16th century.

## Shaping

On a triangle instrument, one of the angles is left open, with the ends of the bar not quite touching. This causes the instrument to be of indeterminate or not settled or decided pitch. It is either suspended from one of the other corners by a piece of thin wire, string, or gut, leaving it free to vibrate, or hooked over the hand. It is usually struck with a metal beater, giving a high-pitched, ringing tone.

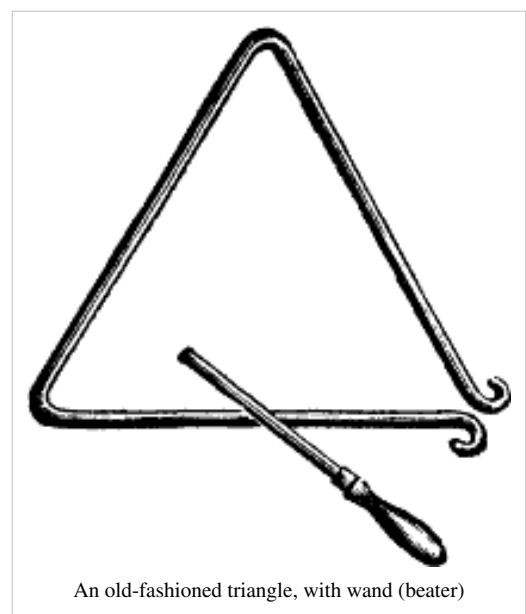
Although the shape is today generally in the form of an equilateral triangle, early instruments were often formed as isosceles triangles. In the early days the triangles had jingling rings along the lower side.

## Use and technique

In folk music, forró and rock music a triangle is often hooked over the hand so that one side can be damped by the fingers to vary the tone. The pitch can also be modulated slightly by varying the area struck and by more subtle damping.

The triangle (known in Cajun French as a 'tit-fer) is popular in Cajun music where it serves as the strong beat, especially if no drums are present.<sup>[1]</sup>

In European classical music, the triangle has been used in the western classical orchestra since around the middle of the 18th century. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn and Ludwig van Beethoven all used it, though sparingly, usually in imitation of Janissary bands. The first piece to make the triangle really prominent was Franz Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1, where it is used as a solo instrument in the third movement, giving this



concerto the nickname of "triangle concerto". In the 19th century, the triangle was used in some music by Richard Wagner, such as the "Bridal chorus" from *Lohengrin* (opera). The triangle is used extensively in Hans Rott's Symphony in E major, particularly in the BIS recording, and in later recordings, the conductor has reduced its role. [2]

When ignoring pitch modulation and damping, the triangle appears to require no specialist ability to play and is often used in jokes and one liners as an archetypal instrument that requires no skill to play. The Martin Short sketch comedy character Ed Grimley is the best known example. A triangle player is also the subject of a Cleveland-based mockumentary called *Triangles and Tribulations*. However, triangle parts in classical music can be very demanding, and James Blades in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* writes that "the triangle is by no means a simple instrument to play". In the hands of an expert it can be a surprisingly subtle and expressive instrument.

Most difficulties in playing the triangle come from the complex rhythms which are sometimes written for it, although it can also be quite difficult to control the level of volume. Very quiet notes can be obtained by using a much lighter beater — knitting needles are sometimes used for the quietest notes. Composers sometimes call for a wooden beater to be used instead of a metal one, which gives a rather "duller" and quieter tone. When the instrument is played with one beater, the hand that holds the triangle can also be used to damp or slightly modify the tone. For complex rapid rhythms, the instrument may be suspended from a stand and played with two beaters, although this makes it more difficult to control.

It is historically associated with calling people to dinner, especially in nineteenth century depictions.

## In popular culture

A notable player of the triangle is John Deacon of the rock group Queen. He played the triangle in live performances of Killer Queen, hanging it from his microphone. It can be heard in short breaks on the Joni Mitchell song "Big Yellow Taxi". Noted zydeco musician Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin started his musical training on the triangle as a child.

The triangle also provides the trademark percussion during the opening bars of Henry Mancini's famous theme for *The Pink Panther*.

The opening theme for *Blackadder Goes Forth* includes Baldrick playing a single note on a triangle at the end of the song.

The percussionist with the Foo Fighters had a twenty-second triangle solo in front of 85,000 people each night when the band played Wembley Stadium on the 6th & 7 June, 2008. Other notable triangle players include English folk singer Norma Waterson and newcomer Moody Mascott from the new wave/minimalist German French pop group Kommando Trash. Kommando Trash's 52nd track 'Listen, Appreciate' features the triangle. In addition, the Israeli Progressive Metal band Solstice Coil released a parody video on the well-known American Progressive Metal band Dream Theater, in which the prominent character was a triangle player known as "Triangle Guy". [3]



Angelika Kauffmann: *L'Allegra*, 1779

## Notes

- [1] "Louisiana Voices Glossary" ([http://www.louisianavoices.org/edu\\_glossary.html](http://www.louisianavoices.org/edu_glossary.html)) (Under definition for Tit-fer). . Retrieved 2008-03-08.
  - [2] "OUP: Richard WAGNER (1813-1883)" (instruments used), Oxford University Press, 2006, webpage: OUPcoUK-Wagner (<http://www.oup.co.uk/hirecat/Wagner/>).
  - [3] "The Natural Causes Carries On", Solstice Coil, 2011 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEMA3Ptoo5Q>).
-

# Article Sources and Contributors

**Triangle (instrument)** *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=449296186> *Contributors:* Addaick, Aitias, Ajnewbold, Alansohn, Allstarecho, AmericanLeMans, AmiDaniel, Andre Engels, Apparition11, Asmadeus, Baller McGee, Bearingbreaker92, Beninho, Big Smooth, Bobianite, Bobo192, Bobrayner, Bodnotbod, Boris Barowski, Bruxism, Cactus.man, Camembert, Cameron789787, Capricorn42, Carlharding, ChaosFish, Chepny, Chris the speller, Crazyinas, DavidBrooks, Deathhawk, Diomidis Spinellis, E2eamon, EWS23, Epbr123, EvanHarper, EvanSeeds, Ewulp, Folkvanger, Frankieyuan, Freddythehat, G1595, Graham87, Gurch, Hanacy, Hede2000, Herbee, J.delanoy, JForget, Jeff G., KGasso, Kareeser, Kchishol1970, Knyazhna, Kouban, Lelkesa, Liftarn, Lightdarkness, Lupin, M7, Martimsaintive, MatthewVanitas, Mendaliv, Merlion444, Merphant, Michael Hardy, Michael miceli, Micru, Minesweeper, Mintleaf, Miss Madeline, NawlinWiki, Nuno Tavares, Nyh, Oneiros, Orphan Wiki, PhilKnight, Philip.t.day, Philipp Wetzlar, PoccilScript, Qmwne235, Qwfp, Ranveig, Raymondmckeeever, Rgoodermote, Rjd0060, Romanm, Sa lucia, Salix alba, Scottandrewhutchins, Seans Potato Business, Sebras, Sluzzelin, Smappy, Spiritia, Stephenb, Sylvertwyst, TUF-KAT, Tassedethe, Tedernst, The Thing That Should Not Be, TheGerm, Tide rolls, Trueborn, Uncle Dick, Voyagerfan5761, Welsh, Wikid77, Woohookitty, Xav71176, Yekrats, Zanimum, ZaphodBeeblebrox, 174 anonymous edits

# Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

**Image:triangle 001.jpg** *Source:* [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Triangle\\_001.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Triangle_001.jpg) *License:* Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike *Contributors:* Anon

**Image:Triangle instrument.png** *Source:* [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Triangle\\_instrument.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Triangle_instrument.png) *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Infrogmation, Lokal Profil, Svdmolen, Wst, 2 anonymous edits

**Image:Angelika Kauffmann Allegra.jpg** *Source:* [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Angelika\\_Kauffmann\\_Allegra.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Angelika_Kauffmann_Allegra.jpg) *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* AndreasPraefcke, Bukk, FA2010, Frank C. Müller, Mattes, Skipjack, Wikig, Wst

# License

---

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported  
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)