



Welcoming Mother Drum

story

GARLYN MAGINNIS

The moon is full. The fire spits crackling embers; altar prayers ride on clouds of sage smoke to the pulse of the circle below. The entrancing rhythm becomes its own entity. The ancient dragon rears up out of hibernation to dance in the cosmos. I am lost in this sacred vibration of space and sound. My hands intuitively keep in time with those of my sisters'...

We are housewives, artists, teachers, and mothers. In quilting bee fashion, we meet once a month. The blanket we produce is a blanket of sound waves. We are women drummers. We faithfully gather to

recharge, reconnect, and rekindle something that is primal and necessary in each of us. The drum circle is our holy ground on which we pay homage to the Divine Mother. It's a time we may remember our origins, celebrate our differences and unite with the ancient Drum. We are not professional percussionists; we make mistakes, laugh, and get back on track. Such simple fun is a welcome break from the consuming demands of an increasingly complex world.

For years I believed I was "rhythmically challenged." Consequently, I avoided all percussion instruments until my late twenties, while camping at a medieval event, I became enchanted by the tinny sound of the Middle Eastern Doumbek. So I took up belly dancing to become

one of those shimmying goddesses with undulating snake arms. I bared my firm Maiden midriff adorned with henna and chains of tiny bells. I sensuously spiraled around bonfires, making love to every flickering flame. My long tresses and jewel-dappled silken fabrics flowed out behind me and vanished into the sultry night of a summer bygone. *Dum dum tek ka dum ka tek ka tek ka, dum dum tek ka dum ka tek ka tek ka* ... It was the incessant rhythms that continued to resonate in my ears and pulse through my veins long after the campfire burned down. So, I eventually bought a Doumbek and took a few lessons, which lead to collecting more drums down the road. Turned out I wasn't rhythmically challenged at all!

I remember the first public drum circle I attended. I was pregnant with my first child and I couldn't help but wonder how all the external thumping was affecting my baby. I relaxed and began my own steady tempo, knowing that my baby was in sync with me. I remembered the sentiments of Layne Redmond in her video, *Rhythmic Wisdom*. The sound of the drum is very like the first sound a fetus hears, the mother's heartbeat pulsating through the womb. Redmond also mentioned that, by four months of age, a female fetus has all her eggs contained within her ovaries. Since I knew I was having a girl, in a sense, I was drumming to my potential grandchildren. I thought of my own grandmother who, while carrying my mother, held me, too, in sacred egg form. In this way, we may trace our maternal bloodline back to the original woman. My mother must have been thinking of Her on a winter's day in 1969 when she chose Eve, "mother of all living," for her daughter's middle name. Of course, we are all connected to Her, and drumming helps strengthen our awareness of this connection.

It's been five years and two blessed births since that contemplative evening, and motherhood is everything "they" said it would be — the toughest job on earth, but the most rewarding. It has made me more appreciative of the sacrifices my own mother made for me; now I am making some of the same sacrifices for my children.

As I write this article, I've been interrupted so many times. No, it's not a good time to write, but when is? First there was the humongous pee puddle next to the potty chair that demanded an immediate clean-up. Then it was the urgent reporting of a crayon thief on the loose, warranting a full investigation

by Detective Mom. With crayons retrieved there continued several more pleas of boredom amongst the ever-present buzz of chaos. Just as I'm beginning to feel frazzled, fried, and frustrated, my daughter walks in and hands me her latest drawing. She says it's a portrait of me. Above my purple hair she has written, "I love you, Mommy." My son shares his last bit of soggy cracker and throws his arms around my neck. I carry him to his crib and, without an ounce of resistance, he nestles down for an afternoon nap. I breathe a sigh of relief.

There are other days which seem anything but rewarding. A sibling squabble over the green bear nobody wanted yesterday or a tantrum over the sliced apple that's no longer whole could eventually lead to a total, inexcusable meltdown. I can only rise above the normal level of patience and sheer exhaustion just so long before either imploding or exploding. Then, out of the blue, a friend calls — I think that her "mother-in-distress alarm" must have gone off — or that she really is psychic. She says she just "lost her cool" and screamed at her three-year-old. The truth is, we all "lose it" sometimes; this doesn't make us bad mothers. We get tired; we need time to ourselves; we are human, after all. It's what bonds us with each other.

On those rather weary days, sometimes I turn to my drum to recharge myself. (In fact, drumming reminds me that I still have a Self to recharge.) I drum to escape the hectic demands of daily life; I drum to forget the chaos, only to remember it again. For it is from chaos that which life springs forth. After an hour of drumming I always come back to my family with renewed energy, ready to embrace whatever "chaos" may bounce my way. Drumming allows the mind to

focus on repetition, and then, let go. It is during this time that drumming becomes less conscious and more automatic, allowing our thoughts to wander freely; drumming becomes an act of being, rather than an act of doing. For me, it brings about as much inner peace as any other form of meditation.

The night is near; the moon is rising; the tide of the Great Mother's Blood is high. The air pulses with anticipation as the women, my kin, begin to gather 'round the dragon's pit for another rhythmic frenzy. Tonight I choose the Mother Drum, a mahogany Djembe with goddess-carved design and shell inlay. She's a beauty! We light the fragrant herb and offer our quiet blessings to one another, to the Earth, to our ancestors, and to our children, seedlings of the future. Mother Drum begins. Dum tek ka dum tek ka dum dum tek ka tek ka... The others follow. The circle vibrates. The dragon wakes. Our rhythms soon gel into one entrancing buzz. We break the barrier of time and find our ancient lineage. I am among my sisters, the Delphic priestesses, once again. I am in my mother's womb. I am everywhere and nowhere. I am She. The heart of the circle surges upward; my consciousness rises with it and rides on the waves of the eternal cosmic symphony. ©

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