

When you write a song  
and talk to the elderly,  
and pray to the spirit world  
and to your higher power  
you will become stronger inside.  
And more unknown answers  
will come to you.

Contemporary Inuit musician Willie Thrasher



**The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center**

9500 College Station, Brunswick, Maine 04011

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Cover: Luke Anguhadluq, *Shaman Entering the Drum Dance*, Baker Lake, 1976.  
Silkscreen. Robert and Judith Toll Collection.

All photos by Dean Abramson, except Musician, photograph by Dana Williams.

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# A Resounding Beat

MUSIC IN THE INUIT WORLD

## A Resounding Beat

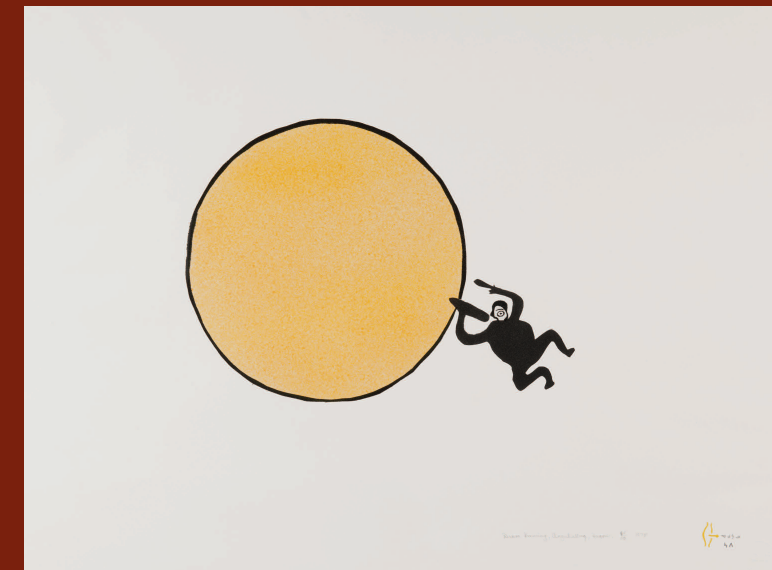
MUSIC IN THE INUIT WORLD

**T**raditional and contemporary music is a vibrant part of Inuit society. Inuit visual artists often portray traditional drummers, singers, and dancers in their works, highlighting the ways such performances and songs are crucial links to the past.

In the print on the cover, artist Luke Anguhadluq uses color and shape to emphasize the link between the drum, the community, the shaman, and the spirit world. Seen from above, a shaman waits in the entrance tunnel of a snow house, perhaps returning from a visit to the spirit world. Men, one with a drum, stand in the front of the house, while tattooed women sit on the platform in the rear.



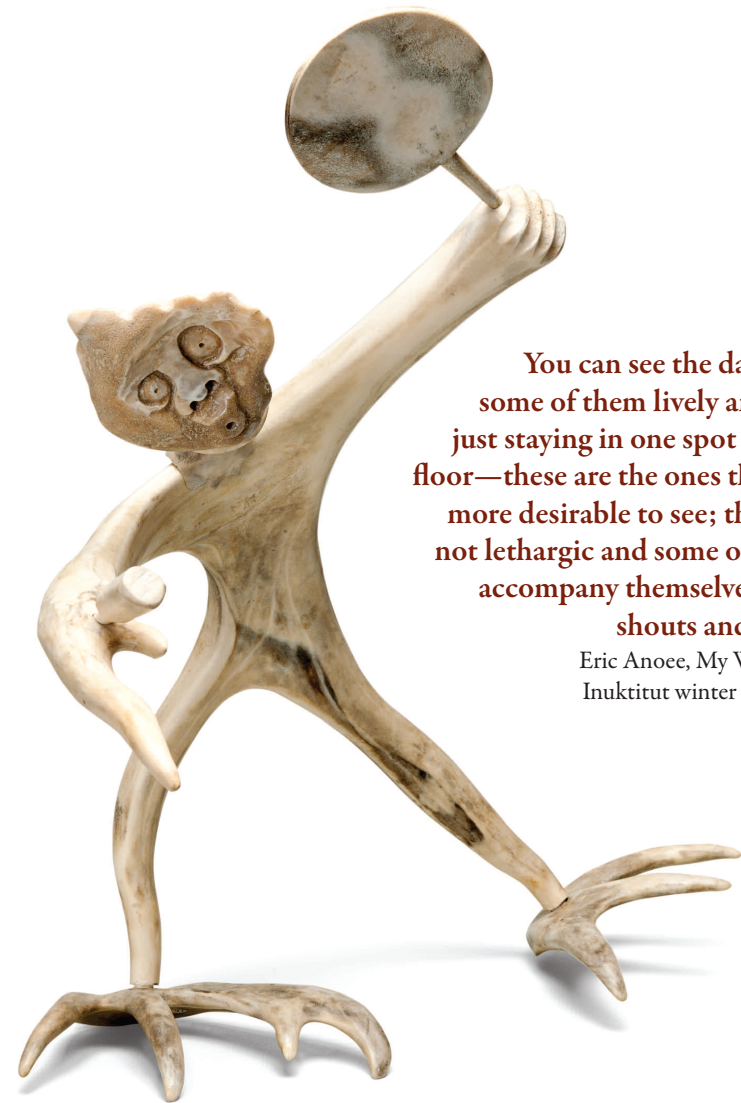
Iziasie Kopalie, *Drummer*, Iqaluit, 2001.  
Stone and antler. Robert and Judith Toll Collection.



Luke Anguhadluq, *Drum Dancing*, Baker Lake, 1975. Stencil. Robert and Judith Toll Collection.

## Drumming

Drums were the only musical instrument in Inuit communities for thousands of years. They were used to accompany singing during feasts and shamanic ceremonies when shamans could enter into communication with the spirit world. Through drum performances, which always include singing and dancing, Inuit connect with their ancestors and the spirits of animals.



Louie Qingnaqtuq, *Shaman's Drum Dance*, Gjoa Haven, 1980. Antler. Robert and Judith Toll Collection.

You can see the dancers,  
some of them lively and not  
just staying in one spot on the  
floor—these are the ones that are  
more desirable to see; they are  
not lethargic and some of them  
accompany themselves with  
shouts and cries.

Eric Anoe, My Writings.  
Inuktitut winter 1977:18



Paul Aaluk, *Drum Dancer*, Gjoa Haven, 2001. Antler and stone. Robert and Judith Toll Collection.

## Throat Singing

Throat singing, or *katajjaqtut*, is a popular game played by Inuit girls and women. They stand facing each other, close together, and engage in a rhythmic singing back-and-forth, one repeating the phrases of the other or complementing them, until one of them makes a mistake or laughs. These songs often include mimicking sounds in nature, as well as ancient words whose meaning has been lost.

Silas Qayaqjuaq, *Throat Singers*,  
Hall Beach/Ottawa, 2001.  
Antler and stone. Robert and  
Judith Toll Collection.



Rene Okatsiak, *Throat Chanters*,  
Arviat, 1997. Stone. Robert and  
Judith Toll Collection.

## An Evolving Tradition

Music continues to have an important role in Inuit society. Young people explore both their traditions and new musical genres, and visual artists reflect some of these changes in their work. Johnny Saggiatok's *Musician*, with his electric guitar and an accordion by his side, reflects the reality of the growing Inuit music scene.



Johnny Saggiatok, *Musician*, Cape Dorset, 1994. Stone. Museum purchase. Photo by Dana Williams