

# Professional Fiber Castanets

## A Guide to Playing Black Swamp® Handle Castanets

Your Black Swamp® Professional Concert Castanets are made with a dense fiber composite castanet. The hardwood handles have our original unique design that make BSP castanets the most versatile available. Here's just a few things that our exclusive design allows you to do:

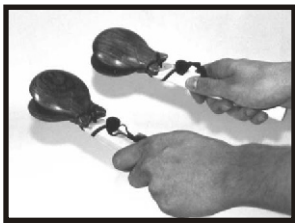
- Play the castanets in the air or on your knee
- Adjust the elastic tension in seconds with the thumb knob
- Play a redoble roll with ease

### Holding the castanets

Play the castanets individually and determine which castanets are low pitched (*macho*, male) and which are high pitched (*hembra*, female). Traditionally, most accents and strong beats are played with the *macho* castanets, which are placed in the left hand. We suggest you place the *macho* pair in your strong hand, or the hand that leads most often.

For most playing situations, hold the handle with the black knob facing you. In this manner you can play in the air or on your knee. Playing them in the air produces the fullest sound, and is visually effective

and dramatic (as castanet playing should be). Knee playing will produce a slightly muted sound with a lower pitch. Experiment to find many different timbres.



### Adjusting the elastic tension

For less tension, simply loosen the knob a few turns and let the elastic relax. For more tension, pull the end of the elastic taut before loosening the knob, then loosen the knob and pull the end to the desired tension. Do not over-tighten the black knob — minimal pressure will hold the elastic securely.

### Playing a redoble

A *redoble* is a long, clattering castanet roll found in flamenco music. This effect is possible by turning the castanets so that the black knob is facing down, or toward your knee. Play rapid single strokes with one pair against your knee. You should hear two strikes, one strong and the other weak. The first strike is from hitting your knee, and the weaker strike is from the rebound. Practice each hand individually, then play a rapid, single-stroke, alternating roll to mesh the two sounds together. With a little practice, you should be able to produce a dense, clattering *redoble*.

Single strokes can also be played on your knee with the knob facing down. Keep the bottom castanets close to your knee to avoid the rebound stroke, and experiment to find the correct tension. When tensioned properly, you should be able to play a mix of rolls and articulated rhythms with ease.

### Replacing the Elastic

If you use your castanets often and find the response sluggish or adjustments are no longer effective, you may have to replace the elastic. You can buy 1/4" wide elastic from any fabric store.

- (1) Thread the elastic through the castanet pair .
- (2) Thread each end through one of the smaller holes in the handle, taking care that the castanets will aim the correct direction when tightened.
- (3) Bring each end up its respective side of the handle and loop under the elastic in the direction of the knob.
- (4) Thread both ends down through the large hole in the handle and pull the entire system taut, making sure that the elastic rides in the notches on the sides of the castanets.
- (5) Tie a knot in the ends of the elastic, and stretch the elastic over the castanets.
- (6) Secure elastic under the knob in an "X". Continue to tighten the elastic system until the desired tension is reached.