Caxixi

(pronounced ‘ka-shee-shee’)

Brazilian caxixi are multipurpose shakers, of African origin, consisting of a closed basket over a flat bottom or base. Initially found in a variety of shapes, sizes, and configurations throughout Africa and South America, these rattles are typically woven from thin reeds with a circular base cut from a dried gourd. They are filled with seashells, seeds, beans, beads, or pebbles, and are played singularly or in pairs.

Originally, caxixi were played as a companion to the berimbau (an African musical bow with a hollow gourd resonator) in accompanying music for Brazilian Capoeira, a particular type of martial arts competition. Apart from the berimbau, they are played by shaking up and down, or outward and inward, with the internal substance striking against the gourd bottom for the high-pitched accented sounds, or back-and-forth against the woven sides of the basket, producing a softer “fill” sound.

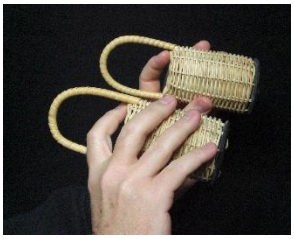
Berimbau

While each basket may have somewhat differing sound characteristics, some players prefer the higher-pitched sound in the right hand, the lower in the left hand. Because the sound is noticeably delayed in relation to hand movements, most performers consider playing an instant ahead of the pulse to achieve “in-time” results. Musicians such as Airto Moreira, Ricardo Souza, Cabello, and others, can be found among internet performances and tutorials.

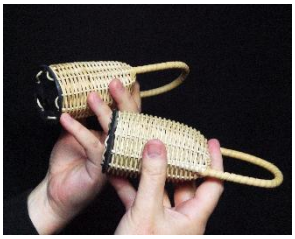
Below: shown are the *LP 354A-Caxixi Small* instruments with durable plastic bases.

PLAYING POSITIONS

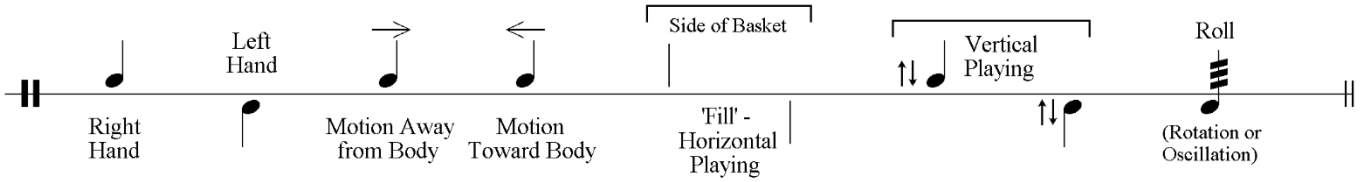
Playing Downward



Playing Outward
(away from body)



Playing Inward
(toward body)

Playing Sideways

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