DRUMHEAD TENSIONING DEVICE AND METHOD

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ABSTRACT

In a tunable drum, a connector member in the drum is attached by linkages to a tuning ring, and is threadedly coupled by a tuning linkage to a retaining member fixed to the drum. Rotation of the tuning linkage with respect to the drum moves the connector member longitudinally and, as a result, adjusts the tension of the drumhead. In one embodiment, a motor is coupled to the tuning linkage such that an operator can manually adjust the tuning via a motor. In another embodiment, a transducer and tuning circuit can automatically provide control signals to the motor based on a difference between a desired frequency and a determined frequency.

29 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets

--- Diagram ---

[Diagram of a tunable drum mechanism with various components labeled and connected by signals: USER MANUAL CONTROL INPUT, ACTUATION SIGNAL, MOTOR CONTROLLER, MOTOR CONTROL SIGNAL, MOTOR, ROTATION OF DRIVE SHAFT, TUNING CIRCUIT, ACTUATION SIGNAL, VIBRATORY OUTPUT SIGNAL, DRUMHEAD.]
Fig. 5

Fig. 6
DRUMHEAD TENSIONING DEVICE AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 10/133,241, filed Apr. 26, 2002, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,667,432 which is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 10/015,489, filed Dec. 12, 2001, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,441,286 which is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 09/878,516, filed Jun. 8, 2001 (now issued U.S. Pat. No. 6,410,833).

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention is directed toward percussion drums and, in particular, to apparatus, systems and methods for adjusting the tension of a drumhead.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Percussion drums have been used for hundreds, if not thousands, of years to produce sounds either alone or in combination with other musical instruments. A typical drum has a hollow body or shell over which a drumhead is stretched. A typical drumhead is circular and terminates at its outer boundary at a rigid or substantially rigid rim. When the drumhead is placed over the mouth of the shell, the rim is positioned slightly outside of the shell. A tensioning ring is positioned over the rim and is attached to the shell to retain the drumhead in tension across the mouth.

The tensioning ring is commonly attached to the shell by a number of threaded rods that extend between the tensioning ring and brackets at the outer surface of the shell. Threaded nuts are tightened on the threaded rods to move the tensioning rod toward the brackets, thus tightening the drumhead. A typical drum has six or more of such threaded rods. Accordingly, adjusting the tension in the drumhead typically requires the tightening of six or more separate nuts.

A number of tuning mechanisms have been developed in the past to make tuning the drumhead easier. Most of these mechanisms are incorporated into kettle drums, such as that illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 4,831,912 to Allen et al. Other mechanisms, such as those illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 4,244,265 to Tutrup and U.S. Pat. No. 4,909,125 to Fece, have been developed for other types of drums.

None of the devices known to the inventor provide a simple and affordable drumhead tuner that is as easy to use with or without a drum stand. Embodiments of the invention allow an individual to quickly and reliably tune the drum either manually, by operating a motor, or automatically by way of a tuning circuit.

In one particular embodiment, the drum incorporates a shell, a drumhead, a tuning ring, an adjustment or tuning assembly and a motor to drive the tuning assembly. The shell has opposing first and second ends with a first mouth at the first end and a second mouth at the second end. The drumhead covers the first mouth, and is retained against the shell by the tuning ring. The tuning ring is held against the drumhead by a number of cords, cables or other elongated linkages. The cables extend from the tuning ring to the adjustment assembly through holes in the shell. The motor selective drives turning assembly in response to actuation signals. A user or operator may manually operate the motor, or a feedback mechanism employing a tuning circuit may automatically operate the motor based on a difference between a desired vibrational frequency of the drumhead and a determined vibrational frequency of the drumhead.

In another embodiment, a stand for retaining and tuning a drum includes a number of legs, a drum engagement member coupled to the legs, the drum engagement member dimensioned to supportingly engage at least a portion of the drum, a second coupling movably supported by the legs and dimensioned to detachably engage a first coupling of the drum when the drum is supportingly engaged by the drum engagement member, and a motor having a drive shaft drivingly coupled to the second coupling, the motor selectively operable to move the second coupling with respect to the legs.

In still another embodiment, a tuning assembly for a drum includes a connector member sized and shaped to be positioned inside the drum, the connector member being attachable to the tuning ring by a plurality of linkages extending from the tuning ring into the drum such that longitudinal movement of the connector member with respect to the drum will change the tension of the drumhead, and a motor having a drive shaft coupled to the connector member, the motor selectively operable such that rotation of the drive shaft longitudinally moves the connector member with respect to the drum and, as a result, will adjust the tension of the drumhead.

In still another embodiment, in combination a drum and a stand for retaining the drum include a plurality of elongated links having first and second ends, the first end of each of the links being coupled to the tuning ring, the links extending from the tuning ring into the shell through a plurality of holes in the shell, a connector member positioned inside the shell, the second end of each of the links being coupled to the connector member, a first coupling received in the shell for movement with respect therewith and coupled to the connector for transmitting movement thereto, a motor mounted to the stand, the motor having a drive shaft, and a second coupling sized and dimensioned to drivingly engage the first coupling, the second coupling coupled to the drive shaft of the motor for being moved thereby.

In yet a further embodiment, a method for tuning a drumhead on a drum includes determining an operational state for a motor based at least in part on a frequency of vibration of the drumhead and operating the motor in the determined operational state to vary a tension of the drumhead. Determining an operational state for a motor based at least in part on a frequency of vibration of the drumhead may include selecting a first operational state corresponding to a rotation of a drive shaft of the motor in a first direction.
if the frequency of vibration of the drumhead is above a first
reference frequency level, selecting a second operational
state corresponding to a rotation of the drive shaft of the
motor in a second direction if the frequency of vibration
of the drumhead is below a second reference frequency level,
and selecting a third operational state corresponding to no
rotation of the drive shaft of the motor if the frequency of
vibration of the drumhead is between the first and the second
reference frequency levels.

In still a further aspect a method for facilitating the tuning
of a drum comprises extending a plurality of linkages from
a tuning ring at an end of the drum to a connector member
positioned inside the drum such that axial movement of the
connector member results in axial movement of the tuning
ring, coupling the connector member to a motor, and oper-
ating the motor such that rotation of a drive shaft of the
motor results in axial movement of the connector member.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an isometric view of a drum and a drum stand
according to one particular embodiment of the present
invention.

FIG. 2 is an isometric cutaway view of the drum and
the drum stand of FIG. 1, illustrating a tuning assembly accord-
ing to this particular embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a sectional elevation view of an upper portion of
the drum of FIG. 2, seen along Section 3—3.

FIG. 4 is an elevation view of a lower portion of the drum
of FIG. 2 illustrating the tuning assembly engaged with a
portion of the drum stand of FIG. 2, shown with portions of
the invention cut along a diametric section.

FIG. 5 is a plan view of a connector member in the form
of a spider member of the tuning assembly of FIG. 4.

FIG. 6 is a sectional elevation view of the spider member
of FIG. 5, seen along Section 6—6.

FIG. 7 is an isometric view of a lower portion of the
of the drum of FIG. 4 and an actuator from the drum
stand of FIG. 4.

FIG. 8 is an isometric view of an actuator of a drum stand
according to another particular embodiment of the present
invention, shown in an operative configuration.

FIG. 9 is an isometric view of the actuator of FIG. 8,
shown in an inoperative configuration.

FIG. 10 is an elevation view of a lower portion of a drum
and a tuning assembly according to another embodiment of
the present invention, shown with portions of the drum cut
along a diametrical section.

FIG. 11 is a sectional elevation view of an upper portion of
a drum according to another embodiment of the present
invention.

FIG. 12 is a sectional elevation view of a lower portion of
a drum according to another embodiment of the present
invention.

FIG. 13 is a functional block diagram of a drumhead
tensioning device having a motor, motor controller, user
manual control input, user reference frequency input,
transducer, and tuning circuitry, according to a further illus-
trated embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 14 is an isometric view of a drum and a drum stand
according to one particular embodiment of the present
invention employing at least some of the elements of FIG.
13 where the motor is mounted to the drum stand.

FIG. 15 is an isometric view of a drum and a drum stand
according to one particular embodiment of the present
invention employing at least some of the elements of FIG.
13 where the motor is mounted within the drum.

FIG. 16 is a partial front, top isometric view of a drive
shaft, threaded rod and sleeve for securely coupling the
threaded rod to the drive shaft.

FIG. 17 is a partial isometric view of an alternative tuning
assembly according to one particular embodiment of the
present invention for use with or without a motor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE
ILLUSTRATED EMBODIMENTS

The present detailed description is generally directed
toward systems, apparatus and methods for reliably and
accurately tuning a drumhead, and for preventing accidental
adjustments to the drumhead’s tension. Several embodi-
ments of the invention allow an individual to tune the
Drumhead through manual control of a motor and/or through
automatic control of the motor to achieve a desired fre-
quency of vibration.

Many specific details of certain embodiments of the
invention are set forth in the following description and in
FIGS. 1-17 to provide a thorough understanding of such
embodiments. One skilled in the art, however, will under-
stand that the present invention may have additional
embodiments, or may be practiced without several of the
details described in the following description.

FIG. 1 generally illustrates a drum 12 and drum stand 14
according to one embodiment of the present invention. The
drum 12 generally has a shell 16, a drumhead 18 and a
tuning ring 20. The shell 16 in the illustrated embodiment is
in the form of a conga drum. The inventor appreciates, and
one of ordinary skill in the art will understand, that the
present invention can apply to a wide variety of drum types.
For simplicity purposes, however, the following disclosure
is directed toward the illustrated conga drum version of the
present invention.

The illustrated drum stand 14 has three legs 22 supporting
an upper ring 24 that encircles and retains the drum shell 16
when the drum 12 is in the drum stand. The upper ring 24
can be padded to protect the surface of the shell 16, and
be coated with a surface treatment to prevent the shell from
rotating with respect to the drum stand when the shell is fully
sealed therein.

FIG. 2 best illustrates a tuning assembly 26 within the
drum 12 engaged with an actuator 28 on the drum stand 14.
The tuning assembly 26 incorporates a connector member
such as spider member 30, a threaded rod 32, and a retaining
member 34. The connector member is denominated herein
as a “spider” member 30 where the connector member has
elongated arms, but may take other forms as discussed below.
The spider member 30 is connected to the tuning ring
20 by a number of cables 36. Each cable 36 is coupled to the
tuning ring 20 at a location outside the shell 16, extends
through a hole 38 in the shell, and is coupled to the spider
member 30 at a location inside the shell 16. As discussed
in more detail below, the threaded rod 32 passes through the
retaining member 34 before terminating at a key 40 at its
lower end. In the illustrated embodiment, the key 40 is
positioned above a bottom rim 42 of the shell 16 so the drum
12 can be set on a flat surface without the key impinging
upon the flat surface. The retaining member 34 is fixed to the
shell 16, as discussed in more detail below.

FIG. 3 illustrates the relationship between the drumhead
18, the tuning ring 20 and the cables 36 in this particular
embodiment. The drumhead 18 is generally circular, and
terminates at its outer edge at an enlarged rim or bead 44.
The bead 44 is positioned slightly outside the shell 16 when the drumhead 18 is properly fitted on the shell. The tuning ring 20 is complementary in shape to the shell 16 to fit over the shell and contact the enlarged bead 44 along its entire perimeter. Thus, urging the tuning ring 20 downward results in an increased tension in the drumhead 18. An upper surface 46 of the tuning ring 20 is curved downward, and is smooth to allow an individual to comfortably play the drum. A lower surface 48 of the tuning ring 20 has a number of hairs of prongs 50 spaced about the perimeter of the tuning ring to align with the holes 38. Each prong 50 projects inward from the lower surface 48 and upward when configured for use. The pair of prongs 50 thus creates a fastener to which an elongated rod 52 at the upper end of the cable 36 can be retained. The cable 36 can be wrapped around the elongated rod 52, or can be attached by any other means generally understood in the art. As discussed above, the cables 36 extend downward from the tuning ring 20, through the openings 38 in the shell 16 to the tuning assembly (not shown).

FIG. 4 illustrates the tuning assembly 26 according to the present embodiment. The spider member 30 is suspended between the cables 36 and the threaded rod 32. A threaded distal end 54 of the threaded rod 32 engages a complementary threaded opening 56 in the spider member 30. Rotation of the spider member 30 with respect to the threaded rod 32 thus results in relative axial movement between the spider member and the threaded rod. As discussed in more detail below, this relative axial movement ultimately results in changing the tension of the drumhead 18. The lower ends of the cables 36 each terminate in an enlarged head 58, that is retained by the spider member 30.

The retaining member 34 of the illustrated embodiment is in the form of a cross with an aperture 60 at the intersection of four legs 62. Each leg 62 terminates at its distal end in a threaded portion 64. An elongated nut 66 having internal threads 68 extends through the shell 16 and threadedly engages the threaded portion 64 of each leg 62. The outer end of the elongated nut 66 terminates in a bolt head 70. In this illustrated embodiment, a washer 72 and a decorative plate 74 are positioned between the bolt head 70 and the shell 16. The retaining member 34 is thus fixedly attached to the shell 16. The inventor appreciates as would one of ordinary skill in the art that many different variations can be made to this particular structure without deviating from the spirit of the invention.

The threaded rod 32 extends from the spider member 30 through the retaining member 34, where an enlarged, annular shoulder 72 prevents the threaded rod from moving axially toward the upper end of the drum. A bearing 74 is positioned between the annular shoulder 72 and the retaining member 34 to allow the threaded rod 32 to rotate with respect to the retaining member with reduced friction. Because the threaded rod 32 is prevented by the retaining member 34 from moving axially upward, when the threaded rod is rotated with respect to the spider member 30 the spider member moves downward toward the retaining member.

The inventor and one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate that many various structures can be used to move a connector member such as the spider member 30 axially with respect to the threaded rod 32. For example, as illustrated in FIG. 10, a threaded rod 132 can be threadedly engaged with a retaining member 134 and a shoulder 172 at the extreme distal end of the threaded rod can be seated above a connector or spider member 130 such that rotation of the threaded rod with respect to the retaining member causes the threaded rod, and with it the spider member, to move axially. The inventor appreciates that still further variations can be made without deviating from the spirit of the invention.

FIGS. 5 and 6 further illustrate the spider member 30 of the present embodiment. In the illustrated embodiment, six arms 76 project outward, corresponding to the six cables (not shown). For situations where more or fewer cables are used, the spider member 30 would have a different number of arms 76 to correspond with the number of cables in such a situation. The arms 76 are spaced radially at roughly equal angles with respect to the other arms to evenly distribute the forces that the cables 36 exert on the spider member 30. Each arm 76 terminates at its distal end in a groove 78. The groove 78 is sufficiently wide to receive the length of a cable 36 (not shown), but sufficiently narrow to prevent the head 58 (not shown) at the lower end of the cable from passing through the spider member 30. As illustrated in FIG. 6, a bottom surface 80 is tapered to compensate for the angle of the cable 36 as it extends upward from the spider member 30 and outward toward the tuning ring 20 (not shown). The inventor appreciates that other variations or shapes can be used for the spider member 30 without deviating from the spirit of the present invention. For example, a disk-shaped plate with deletions distributed about its perimeter could be used. Likewise, the spider member 30 need not be flat, but instead could be curved downward to provide additional strength and/or to obviate the need for the tapered bottom surface 80.

FIG. 7 better illustrates the key 40, and the actuator 28 of this particular embodiment. The key 40 is fixedly attached to the extreme bottom end of the threaded rod 32. In the illustrated embodiment, the key is in the shape of a Greek cross, although it is appreciated that any number of regular or irregular shapes (other than a circle) can be substituted therefore. The key 40 incorporates four engagement members 82 to facilitate rotating the threaded rod 32. The engagement members 82 are sized to allow an individual to manually rotate the threaded rod 32 in addition to allowing the individual to rotate the threaded rod using the drum stand. Accordingly, configurations for the key 40 that facilitate both manual and assisted rotation would be optimal.

The actuator 28 has a number of channels 84 therein configured to complement the engagement members 82 on the key 40. The channels 84 are open to the top to allow the key 40 to be lowered into the actuator 28 from above when the drum is placed in the stand. The actuator 28 is fixed to the drum stand 14 to prevent relative rotation between the actuator and the stand.

FIGS. 8 and 9 illustrate the operative and inoperative configurations, respectively, of another embodiment the actuator of 128. The actuator 128 is connected to the stand 114 by an upper linkage 186 and a lower linkage 188. A locking member 190 is positioned between the upper and lower linkages 186/188 to retain the linkages in axial alignment. In this configuration, i.e., the operating configuration, the actuator 128 is upright and positioned to receive the key (not shown) for tuning the drum.

In FIG. 9, the actuator 128 is in the inoperative configuration. In this configuration, the locking member 190 has moved from the locked position to the unlocked position, allowing the upper linkage 186 to move with respect to the lower linkage 188. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper linkage 186 is pivotally connected at a hinge 192 to the lower linkage 188. The locking member 190 is a sliding collar that, when moved upward, exposes the hinge 192 to allow the actuator 128 to move into the inoperative con-
figuration. When the actuator 128 is moved into the operative configuration, the locking member 190 is able to slide downward over the hinge 192 until it contacts a raised section 194. When the locking member 192 has slid downward until it contacts the raised section 194, the locking member prevents the upper linkage 186 from pivoting with respect to the lower linkage 188, retaining the actuator 128 in the operative configuration. The inventor appreciates that other configurations can be used to perform the above function, and thus various alterations and modifications to this illustrated structure would not deviate from the spirit of the present invention.

FIG. 11 illustrates a tuning assembly 201 according to another embodiment of the present invention. In the illustrated embodiment a headrum 218 is retained against a shell 216 by a tuning ring 220. The tuning assembly of this particular embodiment incorporates a fastener 203, a plurality of linkages 205, a connector member 207, and a threaded rod 232. The parts of the drum and tuning assembly are that are not discussed in detail below are similar or identical to the corresponding parts discussed above. Accordingly, the applicant does not describe these features again.

The fastener 203 is coupled between the tuning ring 220 and the linkage 205. In the illustrated embodiment, an upper end 209 of the fastener 203 is curved and extends through a complementary opening in the tuning ring 220. Similarly, a lower end 211 of the fastener 203 has an opening engaged with the linkage 205. The exact manner of attaching the fastener 203 to the tuning ring 220 and/or to the linkage 205 can vary dramatically without deviating from the spirit of the present invention. A cap or similar structure can be captively engaged with the linkage 205 to prevent the fastener 203 from disengaging from the linkage.

The linkage 205 is pivotally mounted to the shell 216 by a bracket 215. The bracket is mounted to the shell 216 by screws or other suitable fasteners. The bracket 215 has a central opening 217 that aligns with openings 238 in the shell 216. A rod 219 extends generally laterally across the opening 217 in the bracket 215, and serves as a fulcrum about which the linkage 205 can pivot during operation. The rod 219 can be integral with the bracket 215, or can be affixed or otherwise engaged therewith in any suitable manner.

The linkage 205 is contoured to pivot about the rod 219 during operation. In the illustrated embodiment, a ring 221 is formed along the length of the linkage 205, and encircles the rod 219. Because as discussed below the linkage 205 will be urged upward during operation, the upper portion of the ring 221 can be slotted or removed to facilitate engagement of the linkage 205 with the rod 219. The linkage 205 projects a relatively short distance outside of the shell 216, and projects inwardly toward a center line of the shell. Because the length of the portion internal to the drum is significantly greater than the length external to the drum, the force necessary to move the internal end of the linkage 205 is substantially lower than the resultant force generated by the external portion of the linkage.

Each of the linkages 205 engages the connector member 207. In a manner similar to the described above, the connector member moves longitudinally during operation in order to tune the drum. Consequently, the linkages 205 are coupled to the connector member 207 in a manner that allows for relative rotation between the two. In the illustrated embodiment, the linkage 205 rests in a complementary recess 223 that retains the linkage in the proper radial alignment during operation. The inventor appreciates that the linkages can be coupled to the connector member in a wide variety of ways without deviating from the spirit of the present invention.

The threaded rod 232 is engaged to rotate with respect to the connector member 207. In the illustrated embodiment, the threaded rod 232 is seated within an annular depression centrally located in the bottom of the connector member 207. A lower portion of the threaded rod (not shown) can be engaged with a structural member as discussed above to threadly move in a longitudinal direction with respect to the shell 216. When the threaded rod 232 moves longitudinally, the connector member 207 moves as well. The inventor appreciates, however, that the threaded rod 232 can instead be threadly engaged with the connector member 207 such that rotation of the threaded rod results in translation of the connector member. Consequently, the relative movements of the threaded rod 232 and the connector member 207 function similar or identical to those described above.

During operation, the user can rotate the threaded rod 232 to move the threaded rod and the connector member 207 longitudinally within the shell 216. When the connector member 207 moves up or down as oriented in FIG. 11, the external portion of the linkage 205 moves in the opposite direction. As a result, when the connector member 207 moves upward the external portion of the linkage 205 moves downward and the drumhead 218 is tightened. Because the length of the portion of the linkage 205 internal to the drum is substantially greater than the length of the linkage external to the drum, the amount of force required to move the connector member is substantially less than the resulting force exerted by the linkage 205 on the fastener 203 and, in turn, drumhead 218.

Embodiments of the present invention have numerous advantages over devices of the prior art. For example, because the key is manipulable both by hand and with the drum stand, the invention allows an individual to conveniently tune the invention both with and without the drum stand, and allows an individual to easily remove the drum from the drum stand to prevent accidental changes to the tension of the drumhead. To further prevent accidental changes, the cables extending from the tuning ring to the tuning assembly of the present invention extend almost entirely inside the drum shell. Thus, the drummer’s hands, knees or the drum stand will not accidentally contact the cables, putting them in further tension and accidentally altering the tone of the drum.

Still further, because the actuator of the present invention is movable between operable and inoperative configurations, the drum can be left in the drum stand between uses and during use without the risk of accidentally changing the tension in the drumhead. Instead, the user merely moves the actuator into the inoperative position and uses the drum without worry that the tension of the drumhead will accidentally be changed.

Still further, because the tuning assembly is retained entirely within the boundaries of the shell, the drum can be set on the ground or otherwise carried and utilized without structural members getting in the way.

FIG. 12 illustrates another embodiment of the present invention. In the illustrated embodiment, threaded rod 332 is engaged to rotate with respect to the drum, as discussed above. The threaded rod 332 has a worm gear 333 fixed to it to rotate with the threaded rod during operation. The worm gear 333 has teeth 335 spaced around it, as is generally understood in the art. The teeth 335 on the worm gear 333 are emmeshed with a complementary thread 337 on a screw member 339.
The screw member 339 is oriented perpendicular to the worm gear 333, such that rotation of the screw member 339 results in rotation of the worm gear 333. The screw member 339 is fixed to a shaft 341 that extends across the internal cavity of the drum. One end of the shaft 341 is rotatably coupled to a bushing 343 in the shell of the drum, and the other end of the shaft extends through a similar bushing 345 on an opposing side of the shell. The shaft 341 projects beyond the shell, outside of the drum, and terminates in a handle 347.

During operation, the user can manually rotate the handle 347 to tune the drumhead. When rotated, the handle 347 causes the shaft 341 to rotate. When the shaft 341 rotates, the screw member 339 also rotates which, as discussed above, causes the worm gear 333 to rotate. When the worm gear 333 rotates, the threaded rod 332 rotates with it. As discussed above, when the threaded rod 332 rotates, the tension in the drumhead changes. Thus, when the handle 347 is turned, the drum is tuned.

FIGS. 13-17 show alternative embodiments of the present invention. In particular, FIGS. 13-16 show embodiments employing a motor, while FIG. 17 shows a tuning assembly 26 which may be driven by the illustrated motor, or may be driven manually as previously discussed. These alternatives will now be discussed with reference to the particular FIGS. 13-17.

FIG. 13 shows a motorized drum tuning system 401 for tuning the drumhead 18 via the tuning assembly 26. The motorized drum tuning system 401 employs a motor 403 such as a servo motor having a drive shaft 405. The motor 403 is generally responsive to actuation signals 407a, 407b to turn the drive shaft 405 either clockwise or counterclockwise, or to stop or not turn the drive shaft 405. Thus, the motor 403 may have three operating states, clockwise rotation, counterclockwise rotation, and no rotation. As discussed in detail below, the drive shaft 405 of the motor 403 is coupled to, or is some embodiment forms a part of, the tuning assembly 26 to adjust the tension in the drumhead 18, for example by driving elements of the tuning assembly 26 such as the connector member (e.g., spider member 30, 130 and/or threaded rod 32, 132 (FIGS. 2, 4 and 10), connector member 207 and/or threaded rod 232 (FIG. 11), or threaded rod 332 and/or worm gear 333 (FIG. 12)).

The motorized drum tuning system 401 may optionally include a manual control input 409, allowing a user or operator to manually control the operation of the motor 403. The manual control input 409 can take the form of a switch or transducer having three switching states, corresponding to respective ones of the operating states of the motor 403. For example, the manual control input 409 may take the form of a "touch-sensitive" transducer, such as transducers that are responsive to skin or body characteristics for instance temperature (e.g., infrared sensitive), resistivity, and/or chemistry. Also for example, the manual control input 409 may take the form of a touch-sensitive transducer responsive to an electrical ground supplied by the a user touching the transducer 409. Some suitable touch-sensitive transducers are commercially available from Technical Solutions of Silvan, East of Melbourne, Australia.

The motorized drum tuning system 401 may also optionally include a motor controller 411 for converting actuation signals 407a, 407b into motor control signals 413 suitable for controlling the operation of the motor 403. The structure and operation of motor controllers is generally known in the art of motor control.

The motorized drum tuning system 401 may also optionally include a transducer 415 and tuning circuit 417 for allowing the user or operator to automatically tension the drumhead 18 to tune the drum 12. The transducer 415 detects the vibration of the drumhead 18 as a vibratory input and provides a vibratory output signal 421 to the tuning circuit 417 which is proportional to the frequency of vibration of the drumhead 18. The transducer 415 can take any of a variety of forms, for example a microphone to acoustically detect vibrations of the drumhead, a laser or other light source and receiver to optically detect vibrations of the drumhead, or a piezoelectric or other suitable tactile sensor to tactiley detect drumhead vibrations.

The tuning circuit 417 receives the vibratory output signal 421 at an input and compares the frequency of vibration of the drumhead 18 to at least one reference level representing a desired frequency of vibration of the drumhead 18. The desired frequency may be supplied by the user or operator via a user reference frequency input 423 as a reference signal 425, or may be predefined in the turning circuit 417. The user reference frequency input 423 may allow the user to enter any desired frequency or frequency range, or may allow the user to select between a number of predefined frequencies or frequency ranges. The user reference frequency input 423 may take the form of a switch, or may take the form of a sample to acoustically sample a sound created by another drum or instrument. The tuning circuit 417 supplies an actuation signal 407b either directly to the motor 403, or indirectly via the motor controller 411.

The tuning circuit 417 may be implemented as a set of discrete electrical/electronic components and/or may be implemented as an integrated circuit such as a microprocessor, digital signal processor ("DSP"), or application specific integrated circuit ("ASIC"). U.S. Pat. No. 6,291,755 to Hine et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,966,790 to Freeland et al., U.S. Pat. No. 5,936,179 to Merrick et al., U.S. Pat. No. 5,877,444 to Hine et al., and U.S. Pat. No. 5,777,248 to Campbell disclose various tuning circuits for stringed instruments. In operation, the tuning circuit 417 compares the determined vibratory frequency of drumhead 18 with a desired vibratory frequency. If the determined vibratory frequency of drumhead 18 is approximately equal to the desired vibratory frequency, the drum 12 is in tune, and no adjustment is necessary. If the determined vibratory frequency of drumhead 18 is not approximately equal to the desired vibratory frequency, the drum 12 is not in tune, and an adjustment is necessary. The tuning circuit 417 may employ a range around the desired vibratory frequency for determining whether the drum 12 is in tune. For example, the tuning circuit 417 may compare the determined vibratory frequency to an upper and a lower reference frequency level, the upper and lower reference frequency levels being set some defined amount above, and below the desired frequency, respectively. The reference frequency levels should be set so as to prevent the feedback mechanism from unnecessarily oscillating about the desired frequency. The respective distances between the desired frequency and the upper and lower reference frequency levels may not be equal in some embodiments, and may be equal in other embodiments.

FIG. 14 shows one illustrated embodiment of the motorized drum tuning system 401. The motor 403 and a printed circuit board 427 incorporating the tuning circuit 417 are enclosed in a housing 429, which is mounted to the drum stand 14. Power is provided via a common electrical cord and plug 431, or via batteries 433. The user manual control input 409 takes the form of a foot actuated pedal. The transducer 415 takes the form of a microphone mounted on the drum stand 14. Alternatively, the transducer 415 may be
mounted on the housing 429. The drive shaft 405 of the motor 403 extends out of the housing 429 and is fixed to the actuator 28 to rotatably drive the actuator 28 in clockwise and counterclockwise directions. The actuator 28 selectively engages the key 40, for example when the drum 12 is received in the drum stand 14 to serve as a selectively detachable coupling. Operation of the motor 403 turns the actuator 28 and key 40 to selectively adjust the tension in the drumhead 18.

FIG. 15 shows another illustrated embodiment of the motorized drum tuning system 401. The motor 403 and printed circuit board 427 are received in the shell 16 of the drum 12. The transducer 415 may take the form of a microphone mounted on the printed circuit board 427. The transducer 415 may also take the form of a light source and receiver pair, mounted to the printed circuit board 427 so as to provide a clear optical path between the light source, the drumhead 18 and the light receiver. Thus, the light source may direct light to the drumhead 18, which reflects the light to the light receiver for detecting vibrations of the drumhead via time delay or phase shift methodologies. A reflective material may be employed on the inside surface of or as part of the drumhead 18 to increase the reflectance thereof. The transducer 415 may further take the form of a piezoelectric or other tactile sensor attached to inside surface of the drumhead 18. Alternatively, where the transducer 415 is a microphone, the transducer 415 may be mounted elsewhere, such as on the drum stand 14 or shell 16. In the embodiment of FIG. 15, the drive shaft 405 has a threaded end, and thus the drive shaft 405 serves as the threaded rod 32, 132, 232.

FIG. 16 shows a structure for coupling the drive shaft 405 to the threaded rod 32, 132, 232. The drive shaft 405 and threaded rod 32, 132, 232 have complimentary mating end portions 435, 437. A sleeve 439, may be positioned over the mating end portions 435, 437 to secure the coupling. (FIG. 16 shows sleeve 439 in a non-secured position to better illustrate the mating end portions 435, 437.) The coupling structure 435, 437, 439 of FIG. 16 may be employed with the embodiments of FIGS. 14 and/or 15.

FIG. 17 shows an alternative embodiment of the tuning assembly 26, which may be incorporated in the manual or motorized embodiments generally described above. FIG. 17 also illustrates the printed circuit board 427 in further detail.

The alternative embodiment of the tuning assembly 26 illustrated in FIG. 17 employs a linear rail or rack 441 to translate the connector member (e.g., spider member 30, 130, connector 207). The rail 441 includes a number of teeth for being driven by engaged by a number of teeth on one or more gears 443 driven by the drive shaft 405 of the motor 403. The rack 441 may be employed with the other embodiments discussed above to realize the translation of the various actuating elements of those embodiments, such as the connector member 207 (FIG. 11).

The printed circuit board 427 includes the tuning circuit 417 implemented using a DSP 445 and a random access memory (“RAM”) 447. The printed circuit board 427 also includes the motor controller 411. The motor 403 and the transducer 415 also may be mounted to the printed circuit board 427 to create a unitary package, allowing easy installation in the housing 429 (FIG. 14) or drum 12. The unitary package may allow for simple pre-market and/or aftermarket installation.

The inventor appreciates that the illustrated configuration is indeed merely illustrative. One of ordinary skill in the art, after reviewing the present disclosure, will appreciate that there are many equivalent means of transferring rotational movement from a first shaft to a second, unaligned shaft. In addition, the gear ratio between the two shafts can be adjusted to increase or decrease the torque transfer from the first shaft to the second shaft.

All of the above U.S. patents, U.S. patent applications publications, U.S. patent applications, foreign patents, foreign patent applications and non-patent publications referred to in this specification and/or listed in the Application Data Sheet, are incorporated herein by reference, in their entirety.

From the foregoing it will be appreciated that, although specific embodiments of the invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration, various modifications may be made without deviating from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is not limited except as by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A drum, comprising:
   a shell having a first mouth at a first end and a second mouth at a second end, the second end being opposite the first end along a radial axis of the shell;
   a drumhead covering the first mouth, the drumhead having a rim about its outer edge, the rim being positioned outside the shell;
   a tuning ring positioned over the drumhead, the tuning ring having an opening therein shaped to receive the first end of the shell and to prevent the rim from passing through the tuning ring;
   a plurality of elongated links having first and second ends, the first end of each of the links being coupled to the tuning ring, the links extending from the tuning ring into the shell through a plurality of holes in the shell;
   a connector member positioned inside the shell, the second end of each of the links being coupled to the connector member;
   a retaining member positioned within the shell on the side of the connector member toward the second end of the shell, the retaining member being coupled to the shell to retain longitudinally fixed with respect to the radial axis of the shell;
   a tuning linkage threadedly coupled between the retaining member and the connector member such that rotation of the tuning linkage moves the connector member longitudinally with respect to the radial axis and, as a result, adjusts the tension of the drumhead; and
   a motor having a drive shaft selectively operable to rotatably drive the tuning linkage with respect to the retaining member to tune the drumhead.

2. The drum of claim 1, further comprising:
   a user operable switch communicatively coupled to provide an actuation signal to the motor.

3. The drum of claim 1, further comprising:
   a user operable switch communicatively coupled to provide an actuation signal to the motor, the user operable switch having at least three states including a first state in which the actuation signal causes the motor to rotate the drive shaft in a clockwise direction, a second state in which the actuation signal causes the motor to rotate the drive shaft in a counterclockwise direction and a third state in which the actuation signal causes the motor to not rotate the drive shaft.

4. The drum of claim 1, further comprising:
   a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration of the drumhead; and
a tuning circuit having an input coupled to the transducer to receive the vibratory output signal from the transducer and having an output to supply an actuation signal proportional to a difference between a frequency of the vibratory input signal and a reference frequency.

5. The drum of claim 1, further comprising:
   a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration of the drumhead;
   a tuning circuit having an input coupled to the transducer to receive the vibratory output signal from the transducer and having an output to supply an actuation signal proportional to a difference between a frequency of the vibratory input signal and a reference frequency; and
   a motor controller having an input coupled to the output of the turning circuit to receive the actuation signal and having an output coupled to the motor to provide a motor control signal corresponding to the actuation signal.

6. The drum of claim 1, further comprising:
   a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration of the drumhead;
   a tuning circuit having an input coupled to the transducer to receive the vibratory output signal from the transducer and having an output to supply an actuation signal proportional to a difference between a frequency of the vibratory input signal and a reference frequency; and
   a user operable reference frequency input coupled to the tuning circuit to select the reference frequency for the tuning circuit.

7. The drum of claim 1, further comprising:
   a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration of the drumhead;
   a tuning circuit having an input coupled to the transducer to receive the vibratory output signal from the transducer and having an output to supply a first actuation signal at a first time, the first actuation signal proportional to a difference between a frequency of the vibratory input signal and a reference frequency; and
   a user operable switch communicatively coupled to provide a second actuation signal at a second time, the user operable switch having at least three states including a first state in which the actuation signal causes the motor to rotate the drive shaft in a clockwise direction, a second state in which the actuation signal causes the motor to rotate the drive shaft in a counterclockwise direction and a third state in which the actuation signal causes the motor to not rotate the drive shaft; and
   a motor controller having an input coupled to the output of the turning circuit and to the user operable switch to receive the first actuation signal at the first time and the second actuation signal at the second time, the motor controller further having an output coupled to the motor to provide a series of motor control signals respectively corresponding to the first and the second actuation signals.

8. The drum of claim 1 wherein the motor is mounted at least partially within the shell.

9. A stand for retaining a drum and tuning a drumhead on the drum, the drum having a first coupling that is movable to adjust the tension of the drumhead, the stand comprising:
   a number of legs;
   a drum engagement member coupled to the legs, the drum engagement member dimensioned to supportingly engage at least a portion of the drum;
   a second coupling movably supported by the legs and dimensioned to detachably engage the first coupling of the drum when the drum is supportingly engaged by the drum engagement member; and
   a motor having a drive shaft drivingly coupled to the second coupling, the motor selectively operable to move the second coupling with respect to the legs.

10. The stand of claim 9 wherein the motor is selectively operable to move the second coupling with respect to the legs by rotatably driving the second coupling about a radial axis of the drum.

11. The stand of claim 9 wherein the motor is selectively operable to move the second coupling with respect to the legs by rotatably driving the second coupling about a radial axis of the drum and wherein the second coupling is selectively movable between an operative position in which the second coupling will engage the first coupling when the drum is retained by the stand, and an inoperative position in which the second coupling will not engage the first coupling when the drum is retained by the stand.

12. The stand of claim 9 wherein the second coupling projects upward when in an operative position such that lowering the drum into the stand when the second coupling is in the operative position will result in engagement between the first and second couplings.

13. The stand of claim 9 wherein the second coupling is pivotable between an operative position and an inoperative position.

14. The stand of claim 9, further comprising:
   a user operable switch communicatively coupled to provide an actuation signal to the motor.

15. The stand of claim 9, further comprising:
   a user operable switch in the form of a foot pedal communicatively coupled to provide an actuation signal to the motor.

16. The stand of claim 9, further comprising:
   a transducer positioned to detect vibration of the drumhead when the drum is retained by the stand, the transducer producing a vibratory output signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration of the drumhead; and
   a tuning circuit having an input coupled to the transducer to receive the vibratory output signal from the transducer and having an output to supply an actuation signal proportional to a difference between a frequency of the vibratory input signal and a reference frequency.

17. The stand of claim 9, further comprising:
   a transducer positioned to detect vibration of the drumhead when the drum is retained by the stand, the transducer producing a vibratory output signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration of the drumhead;
   a tuning circuit having an input coupled to the transducer to receive the vibratory output signal from the transducer and having an output to supply an actuation signal proportional to a difference between a frequency of the vibratory input signal and a reference frequency; and
15 a user operable reference frequency input coupled to the
16 tuning circuit to select the reference frequency for the
tuning circuit.

18. A tuning assembly for a drum having a drumhead
5 retained thereon by a tuning ring, the tuning assembly
comprising:

19. The tuning assembly of claim 18 wherein the drive
10 shaft is directly connected to the connector member to rotate
the connector member therewith.

20. The tuning assembly of claim 18, further comprising:
a tuning linkage coupled to the drive shaft for rotation
15 therewith and threadedly coupled to the connector
member such that rotation of the tuning linkage longitudi-
nally moves the connector member with respect to the
drum.

21. The tuning assembly of claim 18, further comprising:
a tuning linkage mounted for longitudinal translation with
25 respect to a radial axis of the drum and fixed to the
connector member to translate the connector member
therewith; and

22. The tuning assembly of claim 18 wherein the motor is
30 sized and shaped to be received at least partially inside the
drum.

23. The tuning assembly of claim 18 wherein the motor is
35 mounted to a stand configured to support the drum.

24. The tuning assembly of claim 18, further comprising:
a tuning linkage coupled to transmit movement to the
connector member; and

25. In combination a drum and a stand for retaining the
40 drum, the drum having a shell and a drumhead retained
thereon by a tuning ring, the combination comprising:
a plurality of elongated links having first and second ends,
45 the first end of each of the links being coupled to the
tuning ring, the links extending from the tuning ring into the
shell through a plurality of holes in the shell;

26. The combination of claim 25, further comprising:
a user operable switch communicatively coupled to pro-
provide an actuation signal to the motor.

27. The combination of claim 25, further comprising:
a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the
40 drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output
signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration
of the drumhead; and

28. The combination of claim 25, further comprising:
a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the
drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output
signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration
of the drumhead;

29. The combination of claim 25, further comprising:
a transducer positionable to detect vibration of the
50 drumhead, the transducer producing a vibratory output
signal corresponding to at least a frequency of vibration
of the drumhead;

55 a motor controller having an input coupled to the output of
the tuning circuit to receive the actuation signal and
having an output coupled to the motor to provide a
motor control signal corresponding to the actuation
signal.

* * * * *
It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

**Column 12.**
Lines 45, 48 and 67, "drumhead" should read as -- drumhead --.

**Column 13.**
Lines 10 and 27, "drumhead" should read as -- drumhead --.

**Column 15.**
Line 18, "drumhead" should read as -- drumhead --.

Signed and Sealed this

Thirtieth Day of August, 2005

[Signature]

JON W. DUDAS
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office