

The Festival of Silent Drums

120-minute plan · 4 players · Bring people together

The shared drums are silent. A council host, small performers and crowd stewards need an opening they can all accept.

Content notice: Public performance pressure. Describe a beat instead of playing or singing it.

GM overview

Four opening slots are the actual negotiating resource. Toma begins by asking for two council slots but accepts one after a visible reply slot is reserved. Rue needs two protected invitations, for a quiet performer and a newcomer; the two may decline without cancelling the event. Esen needs one crowd reply plus a marked aisle. Allocate all four and take the extra action to mark the aisle before the drum opening. A handclap compact needs Rue and Esen but gives the council its welcome after the opening instead. A quiet procession remains possible with no agreement. Read the terms before asking for offers and record the specific concession each party makes.

What is really happening

Lio accepted a silence cloth to keep the council from drowning out small performers. Its four tabs lift only after freely accepted turns for a quiet performer, a newcomer, the ensemble and a reply. A clap opening works while the cloth remains.

Opening agreement and read-aloud

Agree on subjects to soften or skip. Each player names an ordinary skill and a reason to help. Evidence does not require a successful roll; uncertainty changes time, cost or obligations.

Sticks bounce over the drums. Nothing answers. A child claps on the steps and every head turns toward that small, perfectly audible sound.

Time and preparation

120 minutes: Hear the silence first

Opening agreement: 10 minutes

Try the cloth and hear three requests: 30 minutes

Compare drum and clap compacts: 40 minutes

Stage the agreed opening: 30 minutes

Closure and debrief: 10 minutes

The cloth demonstration is earned in play. Leave the final slot unused on the clap route; the council's welcome moves after the opening instead of being silently counted as consent.

Starting information: Opening program

Starting state: Opening slots = 4; Small performers accept = false; Stewards accept = false; Council accepts = false; Aisle marked = false; Cloth terms understood = false; Council rejects the opening offer = false

With 4 players: share the roles of mapper, evidence keeper, speaker and timekeeper.

If the group gets stuck

A refused invitation can become a described rest. If a party rejects the whole compact, use the quiet procession. It opens the stalls but forfeits the performance; do not declare the cloth cured.

Festival square

Read aloud: Toma holds a card with two large empty boxes.

GM: Toma asks for a formal welcome and reprise. He can surrender the reprise if the public gets its own reply.

The council must be heard later if it loses both opening turns.

Choice: Offer one welcome and a later reprise

Ask: Give the last opening slot to the council and move the reprise?

Requires: Stewards accept is true and Council rejects the opening offer is false. Spend 1 Opening slots.

Council accepts: true

Result: Toma crosses out the opening reprise and accepts one welcome.

Choice: Record the council's refusal of a single opening slot

Ask: Accept the refusal and offer a later welcome after a clap opening?

Requires: Available. Council rejects the opening offer: true; Council accepts: false

Result: Toma declines the one-slot opening. A later welcome can accompany the clap compact; the shared-drum compact is unavailable.

Costume tent

Read aloud: Rue touches a tab; the room seems to hold its breath.

GM: Rue explains the invitation sequence, never demands a player perform. Protect two small voices with two slots.

Choice: Ask Rue to demonstrate the tabs

Ask: What makes an invitation different from a command?

Requires: Available. Cloth terms understood: true. Reveal Four cloth tabs, Opening program

Result: The quiet tab lifts for a willing whisper and falls back when the demonstration ends.

Choice: Protect the two small invitations

Ask: Reserve two of four slots, with the right to decline?

Requires: Available. Spend 2 Opening slots. Small performers accept: true

Result: Rue accepts the written invitation terms.

Rehearsal steps

Read aloud: Esen taps an aisle on the paving with a broom.

GM: The clap route needs no drum repair. Esen accepts one reply slot, but still insists the aisle be physically marked.

Choice: Reserve the crowd's reply

Ask: Use one opening slot for an audience response?

Requires: Available. Spend 1 Opening slots. Stewards accept: true. Reveal Steward's chalk plan

Result: Esen recruits clap leaders and asks you to mark the lane.

Choice: Mark and staff the aisle

Ask: Who stands at the two ends while the opening proceeds?

Requires: Available. Aisle marked: true

Result: The crowd shifts back, leaving a continuous lane.

Choice: Open with handclaps

Ask: Keep the drums silent and give the council its welcome afterward?

Requires: Small performers accept is true and Stewards accept is true and Aisle marked is true.

Result: The leaders start a small clap that travels around the square.

Closure: Hands carry the festival

Silent stage

Read aloud: Lio offers the sticks handle-first and waits.

GM: Lio will lift tabs only after invitations are accepted. Check the three stances and aisle, then resolve the opening in the order printed on the invitation card.

Choice: Offer the four opening turns

Ask: Invite quiet, newcomer, ensemble and reply in order?

Requires: Cloth terms understood is true and Small performers accept is true and Stewards accept is true and Council accepts is true and Aisle marked is true.

Result: Lio lifts each tab as its invitation is answered.

Closure: An opening with room to answer

Bell balcony

Read aloud: The bell rope reaches down toward an empty audience lane.

GM: The full opening can be called here. A late council welcome is visible to everyone from this balcony.

Connections and changing routes

Festival square - Costume tent: Pass the costume line. Available.

Festival square - Rehearsal steps: Walk the audience edge. Available.

Costume tent - Silent stage: Follow the colored cloth. Available.

Rehearsal steps - Silent stage: Use the performer ramp. Available.

Silent stage - Bell balcony: Climb the bell stair. Available.

Toma - Council host

Goal: Give the festival an audible welcome

Offers: Surrender a reprise if the crowd gets a reply.

Will not accept: The council cannot simply be erased from the program.

Voice: "One welcome, then I can listen."

Track: Council accepts

Rue - Small performers' representative

Goal: Protect quiet and newcomer invitations

Offers: Two willing performers and a cloth demonstration.

Will not accept: An invitation must allow refusal.

Voice: "A space on paper is not yet a turn."

Track: Small performers accept

Esen - Crowd steward

Goal: Make the reply accessible and the aisle clear

Offers: Handclap leaders and aisle markers.

Will not accept: No crowded opening without an exit lane.

Voice: "Leave room to answer and room to leave."

Track: Stewards accept

Lio - Keeper of the silent drums

Goal: Make room for freely accepted small voices

Offers: The cloth and a tab-by-tab opening demonstration.

Will not accept: No tab is lifted by commanding a performer to accept.

Voice: "Ask once, then leave room for the answer."

Discovery card: Four cloth tabs

Give only when revealed in play.

Blue: a quiet invitation. Green: a newcomer invitation. Gold: an ensemble turn. White: an audience reply. An invitation may be declined. Write who offers each turn and what a refusal changes.

Player task: Arrange an opening and leave space for a substitute sound.

GM answer: Protected invitations, ensemble welcome and audience reply meet the four terms without compelling performance.

Discovery card: Opening program

Give only when revealed in play.

Four slots total. Small performers request two. Stewards request one reply. Council requests a welcome and reprise. Cross out or move one request before assigning the four slots.

Player task: Make a visible counteroffer instead of promising five turns.

GM answer: Move the council reprise later; or use claps and move the entire council welcome later.

Discovery card: Steward's chalk plan

Give only when revealed in play.

Audience benches surround the stage. A straight lane from the steps to the square remains empty. Mark who will hold each end of it. Claps and voices remain audible without drums.

Player task: Assign aisle stewards and compare the clap opening.

GM answer: Marking the aisle is its own required action; accepting a reply slot alone does not do it.

State sheet

Opening slots: 4 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 4)

Small performers accept: false (stance)

Stewards accept: false (stance)

Council accepts: false (stance)

Aisle marked: false (flag)

Cloth terms understood: false (knowledge)

Council rejects the opening offer: false (stance)

At any place: Lead a quiet procession

Open the fair by walking the stalls and postpone the disputed program?

Requires: Available.

The banner moves slowly between stalls; the drums remain covered.

Ending: An opening with room to answer

Requires: Council accepts is true and Small performers accept is true and Stewards accept is true and Aisle marked is true

The cloth becomes four ordinary scarves. The quietest beat opens a sequence everyone helped shape.

Next: Who keeps the accepted program for next year?

Ending: Hands carry the festival

Requires: Small performers accept is true and Stewards accept is true and Aisle marked is true

The fair opens to claps. The council welcomes visitors later; shared drum rights remain to be negotiated.

Next: When will Lio and the council revisit the instrument agreement?

Ending: A festival on foot

Requires: Available

The stalls open during a quiet procession. The opening performance is cancelled, but nobody is pressured into giving up a voice.

Next: Whose invitation should begin the next meeting?

The Festival of Silent Drums - GM decision map

