

1985

The History and Development of the Marimba Ensemble in the United States and Its Current Status in College and University Percussion Programs (Musser).

David Paul Eyler

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THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARIMBA ENSEMBLE IN THE
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UNIVERSITY PERCUSSION PROGRAMS

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col.

D.M.A. 1985

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THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARIMBA ENSEMBLE
IN THE UNITED STATES AND ITS CURRENT STATUS IN
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PERCUSSION PROGRAMS

A MONOGRAPH

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
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M.M., The Ohio State University, 1979
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ABSTRACT

In comparison with other percussion instruments, the marimba made a belated entrance into the musical world of the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine the history and development of the marimba ensemble in the United States and to determine its current status in collegiate percussion programs.

This study begins by tracing the history of the marimba from its origins in Indonesia and Africa, to its migration to the Americas during the early days of the slave trade. During the first decades of the twentieth century, marimba bands from Mexico and Guatemala toured extensively in the United States, performing native folk music and arrangements of light orchestral repertoire. The novelty of the marimba contributed to its popularity on the vaudeville stage. Clair Omar Musser capitalized upon the novelty of the instrument; moreover, his preoccupation with massed performing groups and his talents as a promoter helped establish the concept of the marimba as an ensemble instrument.

The recognition that Gordon Peters' Eastman Marimba Masters attained through appearances on television and radio, with symphony orchestras, and at youth concerts and social engagements made them one of the most popular marimba organizations during the 1950s. Peters was one of the first to recognize that the marimba ensemble could be a great aid in training percussionists to read music, and develop a familiarity with different musical styles. Through the success of the Marimba Masters, other college ensembles were initiated.

A questionnaire to solicit information from a selected sampling of the major college and university music programs in the United States was used to determine the current status of the marimba ensemble in American institutions of higher education. To obtain the necessary information, surveys were mailed to 248 collegiate institutions that had full NASM accreditation, and had a full-time percussion instructor listed in the Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, U.S. and Canada (1982-1984). Questions were designed to investigate rehearsal procedures, number and types of instruments, ensemble set-up plans, and concert information. Questions concerning marimba ensemble values, literature, and artistic merits were also included.

The results from the questionnaire revealed that seventy-two percent of the American universities surveyed include a marimba ensemble as part of their present program. One hundred and fifty-seven respondents (98.13 percent) believed that there is a real need to develop new literature for the marimba ensemble. It would appear that if the marimba ensemble is to maintain its artistic integrity, it will have to generate quality literature written specifically for it.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In comparison with other percussion instruments, the marimba made a belated entrance into the musical world of the United States. It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that marimba bands from Mexico and Guatemala first toured the United States, after which the popularity of the marimba steadily increased throughout the early years of the twentieth century. This popularity is evidenced by the use of the marimba in acoustic recordings and the appearance of marimba orchestras comprised of hundreds of players which performed in this country and abroad.

Importance of the Study

Recently, the marimba ensemble has become an integral factor in percussion pedagogy in college and university music programs. The importance of the marimba ensemble experience for the college student has been expressed by Gordon Peters, founder and director of the famous Eastman Marimba Masters:

One of the best insights of the benefits of this marimba ensemble experience was to see the change it made in the improvement of the capabilities and attitudes of the students. I remember seeing students who at first were reticent or incapable of playing keyboard-mallet parts, readily accepting these parts after playing in a marimba ensemble for a time.¹

Since its inception at Northwestern University in the early 1940s, and subsequent successful debuts at the Eastman School of Music and other institutions of higher education, the marimba ensemble has found a permanent home in the academic musical scene. Therefore, it is important that its history, literature, and current status, which to date has gone virtually undocumented, be carefully and thoroughly investigated.

Purpose of the Study

Because the marimba ensemble has developed into a viable medium of musical expression and has become a significant factor in contemporary college and university percussion programs, the purpose of this study was to examine the history and development of the marimba ensemble in the United States and to determine its current status in collegiate percussion programs.

¹Gordon B. Peters, The Drummer, Man: A Treatise on Percussion, rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Kemper-Peters Publications, 1975), p. 235.

Objectives of the Study

Specific objectives of this study were to document the following: (1) the activities of the Guatemalan marimba bands in the United States; (2) the use of marimba ensembles during the vaudeville era; (3) the contributions of Clair Omar Musser to the marimba ensemble movement; and (4) the current status of college and university marimba ensemble programs. A fifth objective was to survey the currently available literature written for the marimba ensemble.

Procedures of the Study

To accomplish the first three objectives of this study, information from authoritative sources such as the comprehensive studies of Vida Chenoweth, Frank MacCallum, Gordon Peters, and David Vela, and the practical articles of such performer-composers as Clair Omar Musser, James Moore, and James Dutton were used. Personal interviews and letters from persons associated with the growth and development of marimba groups were a primary source of information.

A questionnaire and personal letters to solicit information from a selected sampling of the major college and university music programs in the United States were

used to accomplish the fourth objective of this study-- documentation of the current status of college and university marimba ensemble programs.

To accomplish the final objective--a survey of the currently available literature written for the marimba ensemble--information from the questionnaire, personal interviews, letters, as well as the resources of the Percussive Arts Society's Mallet Ensemble Literature Committee were used.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to a discussion of marimba groups that were either founded in the United States or toured extensively throughout this country.

The discussion of marimba literature in this study does not include works for wind band, symphony orchestra, or marching band which feature marimbas.

Criteria for the selection of questionnaire recipients were: (1) National Association of Schools of Music accreditation of the particular institution, and (2) availability of a full-time percussion teacher with faculty status. The College Music Society's Directory of Music

Faculties in Colleges and Universities (1982-84)² was used to develop a list of percussion instructors who met these criteria.

The Percussive Arts Society's Solo and Ensemble Literature for Percussion³, which represents the most recent and comprehensive listing of mallet ensemble repertoire, was the source of the literature surveyed in this study. This survey focused primarily upon the works of a few composers and arrangers, such as Clair Omar Musser, Gordon Peters, James Moore, Ruth Jeanne, and David Vincent, whose efforts have resulted in the most popular pieces in the marimba ensemble repertoire, as evidenced by performances in colleges and universities throughout the country.

Definition of Terms

Throughout the course of the text the terms marimba ensemble, marimba orchestra, marimba band, and marimba group are used interchangeably.

²College Music Society, Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, U.S. and Canada (1982-1984), 9th ed. (Boulder, Colorado: College Music Society, 1982).

³Percussive Arts Society, Solo and Ensemble Literature for Percussion (Urbana, Illinois: Percussive Arts Society, 1982).

A marimba is defined as a large xylophone originating in Africa and ". . . introduced to America possibly in pre-Columbian times or by the slave trade."⁴ In its developed form, the marimba consists of:

. . . a series of graduated, tuned wooden slabs, laid parallel to one another and supported at 2 points that form vibrational nodes. . . . The modern instrument has a varying compass, that of the larger instruments being c^1-c^4 , with wooden slabs arranged in 2 rows like the keys of a piano, laid on strips of felt or rubber. Each slab is furnished with a tubular metal resonator suspended vertically beneath it, the whole arrangement being set in a wheeled metal frame. The slabs can be tuned by reducing the length to raise the pitch or by reducing the thickness to lower it.⁵

Throughout this paper "marimba ensemble" is defined as a group of musicians numbering from three to several hundred, playing instruments of the marimba type. Many of the marimba groups performing during the vaudeville era also included the use of xylophones as well as non-percussion instruments.

A "mallet-keyboard ensemble" is defined as a mixed group of instruments selected from the tuned keyboard instruments of the percussion family which include the marimba, vibraphone, orchestral bells, xylophone, chimes,

⁴Sibyl Marcuse, Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary, 2nd corrected ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), p. 331.

⁵Ibid., pp. 590-91.

and celesta. All other terms will be defined in the text as needed.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I contains the Introduction to the Study, consisting of the Importance of the Study, Purpose of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Procedures of the Study, Limitations of the Study, Definition of Terms, and the Organization of the Study.

Chapter II traces briefly the marimba's history leading to the activities of the Guatemalan marimba bands and their subsequent movement into the United States. This chapter also describes the use of marimba ensembles during the vaudeville era.

Chapter III focuses on Clair Omar Musser and his contributions to the design and manufacture of the modern marimba, and the development of the marimba ensemble movement. It also examines the marimba ensemble as an integral part of college percussion programs. Professional marimba ensembles composed of graduates from college and university percussion programs are also discussed.

Chapter IV contains the Analysis and Results of the data solicited by the questionnaire. Summary tables and statistical findings concerning the questionnaire sent to

college percussion instructors who are full-time faculty members of schools which have full accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music are provided.

Chapter V contains the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations drawn from this study.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARIMBA FROM ITS ORIGINS TO ITS INTRODUCTION INTO THE UNITED STATES DURING THE FIRST DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Westward Migration of the Marimba

Although the ancestry of the marimba is somewhat obscure, there is evidence to support the fact that instruments of the xylophone type originated in Southeast Asia, and spread almost entirely around the world. A marimba is a xylophone of Africa.¹ Bruno Nettl gives the following account of its origin:

¹According to Vida Chenoweth, the word marimba or its variation malimba is of African (Bantu) origin and refers to an instrument composed of wooden bars, graduating in size from bass to treble. Underneath each bar is a gourd resonator. Vida Chenoweth, "Defining the Marimba and the Xylophone Inter-Culturally," Percussionist, Vol. 1, No. 1 (May 1963), pp. 4-5. The terms "xylophone" and "marimba" are used interchangeably by ethnomusicologists with no regard for structural differences between the instruments we refer to as "xylophones and marimbas" currently being manufactured in the United States and Europe. Concerning the structural differences between xylophones and marimbas manufactured in the United States see Gordon B. Peters, The Drummer, Man: A Treatise on Percussion, 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Kemper-Peters Publications, 1975), p. 154.

. . . Approximately fifteen hundred years ago, a group of Malayo-Polynesian speaking peoples migrated to Africa, probably to Madagascar, and carried it with them. This fact has been generally accepted, since certain tribes in Madagascar speak Malayo-Polynesian languages and since Kunst has found some correspondences in the tuning of Indonesian and African xylophones. The highest development of the xylophone is in the area nearest Madagascar, and further evidence for its importation lies in the similarity of the East African xylophone orchestras to the gamelan orchestras of Java and Bali.²

There are also many similarities in tuning and other structural details between the modern African marimba and Indonesian xylophones which further justifies the conclusion that the xylophone was brought to Africa from Indonesia.

The musical culture of the Chopi of Portuguese East Africa includes semiprofessional xylophone orchestras which are used to accompany long ceremonial and spectacular dances. It is likely that the entire Chopi system of xylophone orchestras with their elaborate compositional techniques and common use of heterophony is an importation from Indonesia by way of Madagascar.³ Hugh Tracey's Chopi Musicians contains a detailed description of the complex xylophone orchestras of the Chopi of East Africa and also of their

²Bruno Nettl, Music in Primitive Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 100-101.

³Ibid., pp. 11-12.

poets, composers, and conductors.⁴

From Africa the xylophone traveled westward with Negro slaves to Central and South America, where the instrument was adopted by some Indian tribes.⁵ According to Tracey, the first African slaves were taken to Brazil from the east coast of Africa about the year 1530.⁶ In 1561 Charles V of Spain signed an authorization permitting the importation of Negro slaves into Guatemala; however, the first written accounts of the marimba in the Americas are dated over 100 years after this. The instrument was once known in Peru and Brazil, and is still played in Ecuador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico, and Guatemala, where it holds the status of being that country's national instrument. It was here in Guatemala that the modern marimba keyboard as we know it today, with a fully chromatic range, was developed. The first instruments of this type were built by Sebastián Hurtado in 1894 and made popular by the famous Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band of

⁴Hugh Tracey, Chopi Musicians: Their Music, Poetry, and Instruments (London: Oxford University Press, 1948).

⁵Nettl, Music in Primitive Culture, p. 101. Bob Becker states that some Central American musicologists find evidence for an indigenous marimba type actually predating the African instruments. Interview with Bob Becker, noted marimba authority, Knoxville, Tennessee, 6 November 1983.

⁶Tracey, Chopi Musicians, p. 118.

Guatemala.⁷ The modern era of factory-manufactured instruments of the marimba-type began about 1910 with the J. C. Deagan and U. G. Leedy Companies leading the way. These manufacturers used the finest quality rosewood available for bars and equipped each instrument with nickel-plated brass resonators.⁸

Structural Development and Evolution of Instrument Types

The xylophone in its simplest form consists of a single slab of wood, or a few unattached slabs, played across the player's legs, over a hole dug in the ground, or on two logs laid on the ground parallel to each other. These three most primitive forms of the instrument are called, respectively, leg, pit, and log xylophones. The leg xylophone is most likely an extension of the log xylophone type.⁹ This instrument, made by putting a few bars across

⁷James Blades, "Marimba," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 6th ed., 20 vols. (London: MacMillan Publishers Limited, 1980), p. 682.

⁸In manufacturing practice of this period, wooden bar instruments of different ranges are called xylophones if they extend no lower than middle c, otherwise they are termed marimbas. Frank K. MacCallum, The Book of the Marimba (New York: Carlton Press, 1969), p. 31.

⁹Sibyl Marcuse, A Survey of Musical Instruments (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 23.

the legs of someone sitting on the ground, must be played by a second person. With the pit xylophone, a hole dug in the ground serves as a resonator for the slabs of wood.

A more complex instrument may have the pieces of wood laid on, or fastened to two parallel logs that function as a frame.¹⁰ The trough-like space under the bars then assumes the function of a primitive, nonselective resonator. These instruments may include calabash "gourd" resonators placed under the slabs to increase the sound and a device for suspending the instrument from the player's neck.¹¹

The highest development of the xylophone was in the area near Southeast Asia where it originated. The instrument is found on the mainland in Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, and in Java and Bali. As early as the fourteenth century, a trough xylophone was illustrated in temple reliefs at Panataran, Java, which show instruments being played by performers striking two pieces of wood simultaneously with two sticks in one hand.¹²

¹⁰Sibyl Marcuse, Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary, 2nd corrected ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), p. 590.

¹¹Nettl, Music in Primitive Culture, p. 98.

¹²James Blades, "Xylophone," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 6th ed., 20 vols. (London: MacMillan Publishers Limited, 1980), p. 562.

Thailand possess two xylophone types called the ranat ek and ranat thum. The ranat ek has approximately twenty-one bars with a long, narrow trough resonator; the ranat thum, although very similar, has only seventeen bars and is pitched an octave lower.

Java has several sizes of trough xylophones. The largest, the gambang kayu, has sixteen to twenty-one bars of wood or bamboo. A small instrument of the trough-type is the saron jemblung, which contains only six bars of bamboo laid over a carved trough. In Burma, a trough xylophone known as the pattala, is the royal xylophone of Burma. Trough and resonators are the most prevalent types found in Indonesia, and are in use in Africa as well.

Evidence of the importation of Indonesian keyboard instruments into Africa during the first centuries of the Christian era has been documented by A. M. Jones, who bases his findings on the organology and performance techniques of the keyboard instruments. Jones examined many of the structural details of these instruments and noticed that the arrangement and tuning of the bars were similar on both African and Indonesian xylophones. He also noticed that similar performance techniques are used in both Indonesia

and Africa.¹³ The manner in which the playing mallets are constructed in Africa and Indonesia show considerable similarities. Jones believes that colonies were established in Africa by Indonesians during the first centuries of the Christian era and the keyboard instruments were brought with them.¹⁴

In 1562, a letter by Father André Fernandes, the first Christian (Portuguese) missionary to the Chopi, gives the earliest written description of the marimba in Africa.¹⁵ He describes their instruments as ". . . many gourds bound together with cords, and a piece of wood bent like a bow, some large [gourds] and some small, . . . to the openings in which they fasten trumpets with the wax of wild-honey to improve the sound."¹⁶

In the northern parts of the Republic of the Congo, marimbas called manza, kalangba, karangba, kalangwa, or kalanba are known as "arc-marimbas" because of a handle-like

¹³A. M. Jones, Africa and Indonesia: The Evidence of the Xylophone and Other Musical and Cultural Factors (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 136.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁵Vida Chenoweth, The Marimbas of Guatemala (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), p. 54.

¹⁶Tracey, Chopi Musicians, p. 145.

attachment which assumes the shape of an arc.¹⁷ These instruments are also found in the southern regions of the Republic of the Congo and around the basin of the Sankuru and Kasai rivers. Another instrument from this region, the madimba, is an arc marimba with calabash resonators that includes a vibrating aperture.¹⁸

As mentioned above, the Chopi of East Africa possess large xylophone orchestras which are used to accompany the dance, songs of celebration, and songs of public commentary, which ". . . have to do with social injustices, current events and reproof of wrong doers, so that the orchestra and singers by their public declamation serve the purpose of a court, newspaper, and pillory."¹⁹ A Chopi xylophone orchestra consists of about ten different instruments made in several sizes. The Chopi instruments, known as timbila, are basically the same prototype as the Indonesian xylophones brought to Africa centuries ago. Jones states that:

¹⁷Vida Chenoweth, "Marimbas of the Congo," Percussionist, Vol. 2, No. 3 (June 1965), p. 15.

¹⁸Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 59.

¹⁹Ibid.

. . . a Ranad Ek player from Thailand could cross the Indian Ocean, sit at any Chopi Sange xylophone [an alto timbila], and find in front of him an instrument of the same range, the same scale, and even approximately the same pitch as that which he plays in his own country, and he could play all his own Thai tunes correctly on this African xylophone.²⁰

Some similarities between the Chopi and Indonesian instruments include the arrangement and tuning of the bars, use of wooden "distance-pieces" between pairs of notes, individual resonators, and the manner in which mallets for playing the instruments are made. Two structural features that seem to be African contributions are the use of a straining bar or "arc," and resonators with vibrating apertures. These two features are not found on Indonesian xylophones.

The functions of the "arc" or straining bar are to ". . . prevent the instrument from falling right over when on the ground, to assist the player on his control of the instrument while he plays (many players by twisting their leg play with it swaying in the air), and to act as a distance piece to keep the instrument away from the body when it is played while standing or walking."²¹ The vibrating membranes used by the Chopi are made from the peritoneum

²⁰Jones, Evidence of the Xylophone, p. 91.

²¹Tracey, Chopi Musicians, p. 132.

of an ox, a small jerboa, or from the diaphragm of the kwewa. According to Kirby, pieces of Spider's web are attached to a circular opening in each calabash resonator by a small round ferrule of resin.²² These membranes give an edge to the tone and are particularly effective in the open air, especially at night.²³ Chenoweth states that the Africans play their music in the evening ". . . when the day's work is finished, and most players believe that the night air enhances the sound of the marimba."²⁴

Two additional African contributions include the practice of playing while standing or walking, and the perfection of playing techniques in which players hold two mallets in one hand.²⁵ African musicians are proficient both as solo and ensemble players and ". . . in the Congo four-mallet technic is employed with the left hand accompanying the right."²⁶

²²Percival R. Kirby, The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa (Johannesburg, South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press, 1968), p. 47.

²³Tracey, Chopi Musicians, p. 139.

²⁴Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 63.

²⁵The technique of playing with two sticks or mallets in each hand is termed by most percussionists "four-mallet technique."

²⁶Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 64.

The Guatemalan Marimba

As stated above, the African xylophone came to the Americas during the early days of the slave trade.²⁷ An exact date of the marimba's arrival in the Americas will probably never be known. It was over one hundred years after Charles V of Spain signed the authorization allowing Negro slaves into Guatemala (1561) that the first written accounts of the marimba appear. In 1653 a balladeer named Núñez mentioned the marimba as ". . . forming part of the orchestra . . . played in the cathedral festivities."²⁸ A reference is given by the historian Domingo Juarros in which he describes the dedication and opening of the Cathedral of Santiago de los Caballeros in what is now Antigua on 5 November 1680, which relates that the music was played by "military drums, kettledrums, bugles, trumpets, marimbas, and other instruments which the Indians use."²⁹ Chenoweth believes that the gourd marimba is today ". . . firmly integrated in the culture of the Mayaquiche Indians of Guatemala and has been

²⁷Marcuse, A Survey of Musical Instruments, p. 27.

²⁸Núñez, work unnamed, quoted in Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, pp. 74-75.

²⁹Domingo Juarros, Compendio de la Historia de la Ciudad de Guatemala, 3rd ed. (Guatemala City, 1936), vol. 2, p. 241, quoted in Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 74.

since the middle of the seventeenth century. . ."³⁰ Therefore, at some point between the beginning of the slave trade in Guatemala (mid-sixteenth century) and the dedication of the Cathedral of Santiago (1680), the marimba was introduced to the Guatemalan highlands from the Congo. The fact that the Indians adopted the instrument as a part of their culture showed that it fulfilled an inner need. The marimba in Guatemala occupies a place ". . . more important than that which it held in Africa, its country of origin."³¹

The Guatemalan marimba in its simplest form ". . . resembles the African instrument: rectangular wooden keys strung in a frame hang over dried gourds acting as resonators."³² In Guatemala today, there exist three forms of the marimba, each of which represents one stage in the structural evolution of the instrument; the marimba con tecomates, the marimba sencilla (both diatonic instruments), and the marimba doble. Chenoweth believes the theory that the marimba con tecomates (arc marimba), is the oldest of these three forms and was first developed in southeastern Africa and later

³⁰Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 65.

³¹Ibid., p. 66.

³²Luis Marden, "Guatemala Revisited," National Geographic, Vol. 92, No. 4 (October 1947), p. 540.

spread to Guatemala by way of western Africa. There are direct similarities between the Guatemalan arc marimba, also called marimba de arco, and the Chopi timbila:

The principles and the technic of construction of the Chopi timbila are very similar to those of the arc marimba of Guatemala. As if he were describing the construction of a Guatemalan marimba keyboard, Hugh Tracey . . . writes of the hard wood sought, cured, and tuned by the Chopi marimba-maker. He tells of the tuned gourd resonators beneath the keys and especially the vibration aperture in the gourds whose membrane is held in place by a ring of beeswax. He describes the arc which holds the instrument away from the player's body when he plays standing or walking. Even the mallets are like the Guatemalan. They are described as having wrapped heads made of strands of crude rubber, the larger, softer heads for the bass range and the smaller, harder ones for the treble.

The scale, too, of the Chopi instrument is similar to the Guatemalan arc marimba.³³

Chenoweth further states that even though there are many similarities in these two instruments one can easily see that ". . . they belong to separate locales or periods."³⁴ The only real structural difference between the African marimba and the Guatemalan marimba de arco in use today, is the separation of the bars on the Guatemalan instrument by the use of spacing pegs.

The principal type of marimba found in Guatemala today is the marimba doble (also called the marimba cuache).

³³Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 55.

³⁴Ibid., p. 56.

The marimba doble or "chromatic marimba" is a Guatemalan invention. This is the instrument heard most often in hotels, the municipal parks, on the radio, and playing for fiestas. It is the instrument of the Ladinos, who are ". . . people of Indian descent who no longer follow the native customs."³⁵

As the name may suggest, the marimba doble is not one instrument, but actually two, one being slightly larger than the other and including a range of over six octaves, called the marimba grande, and the smaller instrument known as the marimba cuache, requinto, piccolo, or tenor.³⁶ The smaller marimba usually has a range of about four octaves, giving the two instruments of the marimba doble a composite keyboard approximating that of a piano, with a range extending from G² to b³.

The individual bars of this keyboard are shaped in the form of elongated rectangles. The bars are made from either the hormigo (Platymiscium dimorphandrum Donn) or the granadillo rojo (Amerimon granadillo) trees, with hormigo

³⁵Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 4. There are typically two scales used in Guatemala, one a seven-note diatonic scale used by the Indians, and the other the chromatic scale used by the Ladinos.

³⁶Ibid., p. 9.

being the wood preferred by most marimba makers.³⁷ The size of the bars gradually diminishes from bass to treble. Holes are drilled crosswise near the ends of the bars so that they may be strung on a frame.³⁸ Each bar of the instrument must be tuned by removing wood from the underside at the center to lower the pitch, or by shaving wood from the end of the bar to raise the pitch.

To secure the bars on the frame, small wooden pegs on which eyelets are mounted are placed in holes drilled in the tops of the rails. The holes are drilled at appropriate intervals, so that each bar is flanked by a peg. A suspension cord is then strung through the holes drilled in each bar and the adjacent eyelets. This structural feature seems to be a Guatemalan innovation.

The resonating chamber, or cajon harmonico (harmonic box), of the marimba doble is made by gluing strips of wood together to form the shape of a rectangular box open at the top. Woods used for resonators are red cedar or cured cypress, although mahogany is sometimes used. The resonator is hung from the support rails of the frame with two wooden

³⁷Ibid., p. 10.

³⁸The holes in the bars on the marimba con tecomates are drilled vertically rather than horizontally.

lips on opposite sides of the open end. These shaped resonators constructed by the Guatemalans are a vast improvement over those on the African instrument, which are made from gourds only approximating the size needed for each bar.

The resonators are proportioned to fit the individual bars and gradually increase in size, with the largest resonator at the bass end of the instrument reaching a length of three feet and a width of nine inches. Maximum response from each bar is possible only if the bar and its resonator are carefully tuned to a perfect unison.

Two rows of resonators are needed for the marimba doble, since it is a chromatic instrument containing an upper and lower row of bars.³⁹ The Guatemalans began the practice of inserting "dummy" resonators under the upper row of bars, or "black keys," to make the instrument more visually appealing. The insertion of "dummy" resonators also reduces the risk of damage to a gapped row of resonators.

The Guatemalan marimba makers imitate the African custom of attaching vibrating membranes to each resonator.

³⁹It should be noted that on the Guatemalan marimba, the keyboard has a slightly different arrangement than that of the piano. On the Guatemalan instrument, a "black key" is placed in direct alignment with its corresponding "white key."

Frank MacCallum has described the membrane and its effects as follows:

. . . Near the lower pointed end of each resonator is a hole about $3/8$ inch (.953 cm.) in diameter, over which is secured on a ring of pliable wax a circular piece of cured pig's or cow's intestine. The wax (cera de Campeche, or shoemaker's wax) allows the membrane to be tightened or loosened to give the best tension for the best tone. This device . . . is known as the charleo, which term includes the sound also.

When the bar above is sounded the membrane vibrates sympathetically with the air column and gives a loud humming sound like that of a reed instrument, which dies out with the vibrations of the bar. The membrane, or tela, loudening the voice of the resonator enables the marimba to have the great range of notes it has and imparts the characteristic tone which is rich in overtones. Such marimbas sound well in an auditorium and can hold their own with an orchestra, but in a closed room are deafeningly loud.⁴⁰

Mallets used by the Guatemalans are very similar to those of the Chopi. The Chopi construct timbila mallets of varying size and hardness to bring out the best tone from each register of their instrument, using very large-headed mallets for the bass, and small, hard heads for the highest tones of the instrument. The handles of Chopi mallets are usually made from mukusu wood and are shaped so that the diameter of the stick increases at the end where the rubber head is attached, to help secure it to the shaft. To construct the heads of the mallets, the Chopi pull off long

⁴⁰MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 20.

strands of rubber from a rubber vine (mbuygo or ibuygo) and wrap them around the thick end of the shafts. Each player may use several varieties of mallets while performing at a given time.

Sticks (baquetas) used to play the Guatemalan marimbas are made from the wood of the huitzicil tree, which is a dry, brittle, inflexible wood. They are seventeen inches in length and 5/8 inch wide with long strips of rubber wrapped around one end of the stick to form the mallet head. Each register of the marimba requires a specialized mallet. The mallet head is designed with a particular tone color in mind. The mallet for the bass register may be as large as 1 3/4 inches wide to produce a soft tone while a treble mallet would be much smaller and produce a much brighter or harsher tone. Therefore, mallets for the bass register would not be appropriate for the treble since they would be too soft.

The marimba doble is usually played by seven men, four at the marimba grande, and three at the smaller marimba cuache. The two instruments are placed in close proximity, either end to end or in a "V" arrangement. A string bass and trap drums with cymbals are also traditionally added to

complete the ensemble.⁴¹ Although most of the ensembles contain only men, some all-women groups do exist, such as the ensemble from the Belén School for girls in Guatemala City, and the "Marimba Las Chivitas" in Quetzaltenango.⁴² Combination of the sexes are not found in Guatemalan ensembles.

A third type of marimba played in Guatemala is known as the marimba sencilla or "simple marimba." Chenoweth believes this instrument is a "transitional marimba" between the marimba con tecomates and the marimba doble.⁴³ Its construction is very similar to the marimba doble except that it is tuned to the diatonic scale and is played only as a single instrument like the gourd marimba. One instrument however, can be played by several performers (from two to five marimberos), and Chenoweth reports seeing a larger instrument played by five marimberos, three playing in the treble register and two in the bass.⁴⁴ Based on the structural details of the marimba sencilla, it seems logical to

⁴¹Performers within a marimba ensemble are known as "marimberos." Interestingly, the noun "marimba" is used to designate the entire ensemble of musicians as well as the mallet keyboard instruments utilized.

⁴²Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, pp. 19-20.

⁴³Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 47.

assume that it would have preceded the marimba doble in development, although this has not yet been substantiated.

In comparing the three stages of the development of the marimba in Guatemala--the marimba con tecomates, the marimba sencilla, and the marimba doble--one can see that Guatemalan ingenuity can be credited with several significant contributions which helped transform a primitive gourd-resonated instrument into a marimba that compares favorably with its modern counterpart. The Guatemalans improved the sound of their instrument by freely suspending each bar on strings laced through eyelets and holes horizontally bored through the bars. They greatly improved the tone and carrying power of the marimba by building individual resonators for each bar instead of relying on such natural materials as gourds. The vibrating apertures, borrowed from the Africans, were retained and improved upon.

The Guatemalans also played an important role in the development of multiple-player performance. The xylophone orchestras of the Chopi combined a large number of instruments into one ensemble, whereas the Guatemalans chose to increase the range of their instruments to accommodate as many as five players.⁴⁵

⁴⁵David Vela states that in 1840 the marimba keyboard was enlarged to five octaves thus allowing a larger number of

The Hurtado Brothers'

Royal Marimba Band of Guatemala

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, marimba ensembles gained in popularity in the capital city of Guatemala and the provinces. They were heard at every occasion from religious ceremonies to secular dances, public celebrations and festivities. Many of these ensembles were composed of players from the same family.⁴⁶ The Ovalles, Barrios, Bethancourts, and Hurtados were renowned marimba-playing families. Of these, the Hurtados are especially significant because they were very instrumental in introducing the Guatemalan marimba to North America.

Señor Sebastián Hurtado of Almolonga, Quetzaltenango, paterfamilias of this line of distinguished marimbists, began

players (three to four) to perform. The instrument was still a single (diatonic) keyboard corresponding to the white keys of the piano. By the end of the century, marimbas of six and one-half octaves were available. David Vela, Information on the Marimba, ed. by Vida Chenoweth (New Zealand: Institute Press, 1957-58), p. 55.

⁴⁶In fact, Marden states that if a man has several children spaced over a few years, native Guatemalans will say that he ". . . has a regular marimba of a family." Luis Marden, "To Market in Guatemala," National Geographic, Vol. 38, No. 1 (July 1945), p. 88.

playing and perfecting the marimba at a young age. Sebastián did a considerable amount of playing and touring with the marimba. On one of his tours in 1894, he traveled to Mexico to perform with the Sirco Trevino Marimba Band. Members of the family claim that he introduced the "single keyboard" marimba to Mexico during this trip.⁴⁷

According to David Vela, Sebastián was the first person to construct a chromatic marimba in the shape of the piano keyboard.⁴⁸ He was assisted by his brother, Toribio, and by Julian Paniagua Martinez, director of a military band, who helped with the tuning of the bars.⁴⁹

⁴⁷MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 24.

⁴⁸Vela, Information on the Marimba, pp. 60, 63. Earlier, Vela states that in her book on the marimba, historian Mercedes Camacho claims two teachers from Chiapas (today a Mexican state but formerly a province of Guatemala), are given credit for the transformation of the marimba with the introduction of the chromatic keyboard (pp. 31-32). These Chiapan teachers are Don Carazon Borrás and Don David Gomez. According to Don Victor Miguel (pp. 59-60), the first chromatic keyboard marimba was made in the capital city by José Chaequin and Manuel López, both from Jocotenango. This instrument was to have been presented at an exhibition in the capital in 1874, but Chenoweth has found no record to exist of this exhibition. Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 76. Generally, most historians attribute this instrument to the two Hurtado brothers, Sebastián and Toribio.

⁴⁹Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 63.

Sebastián married Manuela Benitez in 1871. Five of their twelve children, sons Vicente, Arnulfo, Celso, Jesús, and Mariano, began playing their father's marimba while very young, as a form of recreation.⁵⁰ The four sons of Sebastián's older brother, Toribio, also played the marimba. Named Jesús, Daniel, Gabriel, and Toribio Jr., they were referred to as the "older Hurtados." There was a fierce rivalry between them and Sebastián's sons, the "younger" Hurtados.

The first of the Hurtado bands was organized in 1896. Composed of the "younger" Hurtados, the Sebastián Hurtado and Sons Marimba Band traveled throughout Guatemala, playing native Indian music for weddings, fiestas, and tribal ceremonies. They traveled by horseback, mule, burro, or, when necessary, walked distances as far as forty miles.

There were numerous marimba bands in Guatemala at this time and the competition between them was keen. Fights were common, and many marimberos often carried knives. The Hurtados at one time armed themselves with guns, but luckily were never involved in a fight.⁵¹

⁵⁰The instrument played by Sebastián's sons was one of the largest made at this time, and encompassed a range of six and one half octaves.

⁵¹Ken Wong, "World's Luckiest Man, 83, Made Music All His Life," San Francisco Examiner, 14 March 1979, sec. B, p. 2.

Initially, the Hurtados played mostly native Indian music. However, Sebastián encouraged his sons to expand their repertoire with the inclusion of classical and light classical works. Piano music was a popular choice for adaptation to the marimba. Franz von Suppé's (1819-1895) "Poet and Peasant" overture was the first "classical" composition learned by Sebastián's sons.⁵²

The typical Guatemalan marimba band had a repertoire of as many as five hundred pieces, including popular dance music, waltzes, foxtrots, Latin dances, semi-classical, and classical works.⁵³ The Hurtado brothers learned their music by ear.⁵⁴ Mariano Valverde, who was the teacher of Sebastián's sons, helped them arrange music for the marimba by first playing it on the piano. Felipe Baten, a violinist, assisted the Hurtados with other musical aspects such as rhythm and tempo. The Hurtados held their daily practice

⁵²It took the boys one week to learn the work. Sebastián's marimba was constructed with "D" as the lowest bass note for this particular composition. Personal letter from Eleanor Hurtado, wife of Celso Hurtado, Ashland, Oreg., 18 July 1983.

⁵³MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 26.

⁵⁴Chenoweth states that the average marimbero in Guatemala lacks any formal music training and learns his entire repertoire by ear. Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 20.

sessions in the parlor of their home.⁵⁵

Sebastián's chromatic marimba was heard in a public performance on 21 November 1899, when the Hurtados' concert at the President's Birthday Fiesta attracted the attention of Manuel Cabrera, President of Guatemala, who invited them to his Palace to play for his mother.⁵⁶ President Cabrera offered to send each of the boys abroad for further musical training, but Sebastián declined his offer, because his sons' contributions to the support of the family were indispensable.⁵⁷ Mariano Valverde recalls a concert given by Arnulfo, Celso, Jesús, and Mariano on 15 September 1901, in front of the Palace of Quetzaltenango, at which Sebastián was awarded a silver medal and a diploma from the Guatemalan Government for perfecting the chromatic marimba.

By the turn of the century, the marimba was an integral part of Guatemalan culture. Knowledge of the instrument began to spread to other countries as Guatemalan ensembles began to tour abroad. In September of 1901, the

⁵⁵Eventually, Guatemalan marimba ensembles held their practices in small studios located just off the main street. These studios are usually no more than an empty, bare room just large enough for the marimbas and players.

⁵⁶Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 60.

⁵⁷Personal letter from Eleanor Hurtado, 18 July 1983.

sons of Toribio Hurtado brought a marimba sencilla to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, but due to the assassination of President McKinley in that city on 6 September, they returned to Guatemala having been unable to display their talents.

Sebastián's sons continued to gain valuable experience performing for the expositions of 1904 and 1907 in Guatemala City. They became so popular that during one of the daily concerts at the 1907 exposition, Sebastián was invited to take the boys on a tour of the world, but encountered great opposition from his wife to this idea. However, after the death of Mrs. Hurtado the following year, the plans for a tour to the United States finally materialized.

In 1908, Sebastián's sons set sail for New Orleans to begin a tour that was scheduled to last only six months; however, the band's enthusiastic reception by the American public extended their stay to almost five years. With a Guatemalan named José Asturios Moreno as their manager, the Hurtado marimba band opened at the White City Summer Resort (near New Orleans) where their versatility and colorful native costumes made an instant impression.⁵⁸ They were the

⁵⁸Jesús B. Hurtado, "A Comprehensive History of the Hurtado Family of Guatemala: Masters of the Marimba (1900-1958)," Paper presented to the Gerhardt Marimba-Xylophone Collection by Mrs. Celso B. Hurtado, Baltimore, Md., 1958.

"sensation of the season" at White City, but unfortunately, Moreno pocketed almost \$2500 of their receipts and left the Hurtados stranded and seeking other employment.⁵⁹ Arnulfo and Celso were forced to play in honky-tonk houses to earn money for meals. However, the band survived this crisis, and, after playing at various locations throughout the city, was featured in a well-known New Orleans restaurant. Mr. H. E. Carroll, a professor at the University of Saint Louis, heard the group and persuaded the youngsters to let him become their manager. Carroll became a second father to the boys, teaching them to speak English and caring for their personal needs.

From New Orleans, the Hurtados traveled to New York by train, where they lived for three months.⁶⁰ Once in New York, Carroll found them a job in a theater on East Fourteenth Street. William Morris, of the William Morris Agency, heard the band and signed them to a contract. They joined a troupe composed of Sir Harry Lauder, Julian Eltinge, Emma Carus, and Madame Bertha and toured the American Music Hall

⁵⁹"White City; The Sensation of the Season, The Marimba Band," Daily Picayune, 30 August 1908, New Orleans, La., pp. 7, 10.

⁶⁰During the three months on the train, the Hurtado band played at various stops (division points) along the way, and always to a large audience.

circuit playing in such cities as Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Late in 1910, the William Morris Agency sent the Hurtado band to Europe. They played in Amsterdam, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin, London, Paris, entertained the Duke of Windsor, and "were a smash in Holland."⁶¹ The Viennese were amazed at the way the Hurtados played their beloved waltzes. Audiences there were wildly enthusiastic, and their clapping, foot stomping, and whistling made a profound impression on the young Hurtados. Although the band was asked to return to Europe the very next season, Arnulfo was stricken with pneumonia and the brothers were forced to decline and return home, hoping that a change of climate would help Arnulfo. However, his condition deteriorated and he died in 1913. Sebastián had preceded him in death the previous year.

The Hurtados went to work reorganizing and enlarging their band with Celso as the leader. He renamed the group the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band. New to the group were two nephews, Joaquin and Oscar (brother Vicente's sons), and three other players, Virjilio Piedrasante (a cousin), Ernesto Rivera, and Lorenzo Alonzo.

⁶¹Wong, "World's Luckiest Man," p. 2.

Early in 1915, at the request of the Guatemalan Government, the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band became the official Guatemalan Representative at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. The Exposition was held from 20 February to 4 December, and celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal. The Hurtados performed concerts daily at the Guatemalan pavillion, receiving one hundred dollars a month each for their expenses. They entertained during the visits of Presidents Wilson, Taft, and Roosevelt, played at official banquets and private parties, and performed during the afternoon at a cafe in the Exposition and nightly at the Rex cafe. The President of the Exposition invited the Hurtados to play for the inauguration of the California Building at the Exposition. According to Celso's wife, they were the sensation of the entire Exposition, and could not fill all of the requests for special concerts at evening parties and balls. People lined up hours ahead of time in order to get in the Guatemala Pavillion to hear the Hurtado Brothers' Band.⁶² At the close of the Exposition in December, the Royal Marimba Band received the gold medal of honor for their outstanding contribution to the Exposition.

⁶²Personal letter from Eleanor Hurtado, wife of Celso Hurtado, Ashland, Oreg., 12 August 1983.

The Hurtados did not return to Guatemala, except for an occasional visit, due to their continued engagements in the United States.⁶³ Three months before the Exposition closed, the Hurtados were contracted to appear in the Orpheum Theatre circuit in Seattle, Tacoma, and Spokane, Washington. After completing their engagement at the Exposition, they played almost eight weeks in each city.⁶⁴

It was also during the Panama-Pacific Exposition that the Hurtados made their first marimba ensemble recordings for the Columbia Recording Company. Representatives of Columbia Records were so impressed with Celso Hurtado and his Royal Marimba Band that they immediately sent their men and recording equipment from New York to San Francisco to record the band on location at the Exposition. Their first recording,

⁶³In Jesus Hurtado's manuscript, "The History of the Hurtado Family," he reflects on a violent earthquake that rocked Guatemala on 18 April 1902 causing much destruction. The aid supplied by the American Red Cross during this disaster left such a profound impression on the boys that they entertained thoughts of eventually making the United States their home. Beginning with this 1915 Exposition, their dreams had finally materialized.

⁶⁴It should be noted here that immediately following the 1915 Exposition, the other three members of the band, Virjilio Piedrasante, Ernesto Rivera, and Lorenzo Alonzo, returned to Guatemala while the remaining Hurtados began the Orpheum Theatre tour.

made about August 1915, included von Suppé's "Pique Dame" and "Poet and Peasant" overtures.⁶⁵

When these recordings were made, the equipment was not yet able to record the bass register of the marimba. Several schemes to correct this problem proved unsuccessful. One idea involved the construction of an extra large funnel to help increase the range of sound. In desperation, Jesús, the marimbist who played the bass part, was required to pound out the bass notes on the piano. Later, the tuba player from John Philip Sousa's band was called in to reinforce the bass.

Early in 1916, at the end of their brief tour of the Orpheum circuit, the Hurtados traveled to Camden, New Jersey, to record for the Victor Talking Machine Company. During

⁶⁵Gordon Peters states that the Hurtados traveled to New Jersey and ". . . made the first marimba phonograph recordings" for the Victor Talking Maching Company after the close of the 1915 Exposition. Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 151. Likewise, Chenoweth gives 1915 as the year (Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 76) for the Hurtado Band's Victor recording, which is further supported by Vela (Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 64), who states that some thirty selections were cut during that same year (1915). However, it would have been virtually impossible for the Hurtados to record in New Jersey during that period since the Exposition did not close until 4 December 1915, after which the Hurtados immediately began their tour of the Orpheum Theatres in Washington State. In information supplied to the author by Mrs. Celso Hurtado, she attests that the first recording was produced by the Hurtados for the Columbia Record Company in 1915. This is further documented by William Cahn in The Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings (1877-1929) on page 34.

recording sessions which lasted about six weeks, the band made approximately twenty records for Victor. One selection by the Hurtado band, "Love's Power Waltz" by Santa Maria, recorded in 1916 on Victor Records, has been included in Stanford University's time capsule, Archive of Recorded Sound, to be opened in 100 years. On the flip side of this recording is the famous "Stars and Stripes Forever," with the composer John Philip Sousa (1854-1932) conducting.⁶⁶

The majority of the Royal Marimba Band's records were made during a two-year period beginning in 1915. A total of about thirty-eight discs on the Victor, Columbia, and Brunswick labels were issued. Their best seller was the "Pique Dame" overture, a Columbia recording, which sold a half million copies during the first week.⁶⁷

Some of the compositions recorded by the Hurtados were in a jazz style--the new "up-beat" dance music they encountered on their first trip to the United States in 1908. Several of the brothers began to write and arrange pieces in

⁶⁶Dan Frishman, "It's Old, But It's Exclusive," San Francisco Examiner, 29 April 1959, sec. 1, p. 4.

⁶⁷Wong, "World's Luckiest Man," p. 2.

this new style.⁶⁸ For a comprehensive listing of works recorded by the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band, the reader should consult William Cahn's The Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings (1877-1929), and also Brian Rust's The American Dance Band Discography: 1917-42.⁶⁹

While recording for Victor, the Hurtados were signed to appear in the 1916 Ziegfeld Follies in New York with W. C. Fields and Olive Thomas. They were introduced by Will Rogers, the master of ceremonies on opening night at the Amsterdam Roof Garden on Forty-Second Street.

After one year with the Ziegfeld Follies, the Hurtado band went to Philadelphia (1917) for a two-week engagement at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, which, due to their popularity, was promptly extended into the following year. While performing at the Ritz-Carlton they adopted the costume that was to

⁶⁸The music which the boys encountered at this time is now more commonly referred to as "ragtime." It was not until the end of the First World War that "jazz" began to exert a strong influence and "jazz marimba bands" were created.

⁶⁹William L. Cahn, The Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings (1877-1929) (Rochester, New York: By the Author, 107 Council Rock Avenue, 1979); Brian Rust, The American Dance Band Discography: 1917-42 (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1975).

become their trademark: bolero shirts, cumberbunds, and bandanas wrapped around their heads.⁷⁰

In 1919, following a hotel engagement in Washington, D.C., the R.K.O. Company contracted the Hurtados and other acts such as Trini Ramos, Warren Jackson, and Dario, for a touring vaudeville show titled "Spanish Dreams." For the Hurtado brothers it was their eighth tour of the United States. The following year, the same agency engaged the band for a hotel circuit which included the Los Angeles Alexandria Hotel, the Green and Huntington Hotels in Pasadena, and the Palace and Fairmont Hotels in San Francisco.⁷¹

The agency booked the band for an extended engagement at the La Baltabarin in Hartford, Connecticut, which began in mid-1921. After playing there for almost three years, the marriage of band members and their desire to settle in one locale prompted a move to New York City around 1925. Work became increasingly scarce, in part, due to the advent of

⁷⁰According to Oscar Hurtado, the boys had dressed in tuxedos at a previous engagement in Philadelphia and the audience was quite unimpressed. Wong, "World's Luckiest Man," p. 2.

⁷¹Personal letter from Herbert Fitch, San Francisco, California, to Governor Earl Warren, Sacramento, California, 28 April 1953. Letter made available to the author from the personal files of Edwin L. Gerhardt, Baltimore, Maryland.

talking motion pictures. Bickering amongst the brothers contributed to the eventual disbanding of the original group.⁷²

The following year Jesús became the leader of a very successful marimba band from Mexico, named the Solis Brothers. With the Solis Brothers, Jesús toured the Alexander Pantages circuit, and in 1928 shared billing with Miss Mae Murray, appearing contemporaneously with Jack Benny, Marie Dressler, Signor Friscoe, Jimmy Savo, and Sophie Tucker. Around 1930, Jesús became the leader of another Mexican marimba band and eventually settled in San Diego, where he married and played in the Agua Caliente, a major casino, for seven years (until 1937).

In New York, Celso Hurtado managed to keep remnants of the original band together, performing at hotels in New York and Canada, and also continued to make recordings. In the early 1930s, the band, under new management, played for debutantes Gloria Vanderbilt and Brenda Fraser, and in 1935 and 1936 performed at the famous Pre-Cat Club near Times Square. Mario, the youngest brother, found success playing

⁷²Wong, "World's Luckiest Man," p. 2. Conflict among the brothers stemmed from each wanting to be the leader, due to the higher salary involved.

in the Washington, D.C., area during this time, while returning to play with Celso's band for special events.

In 1938, Celso brought the band to San Francisco, where, after twelve years, they were again reunited with Jesús. Jesús had moved there with his family after the Agua Caliente casino in San Diego had closed.⁷³ After playing only casual dates around the San Francisco area, Celso Hurtado and his brothers were contracted to play for the 1939 and 1940 Treasure Island (Golden Gate) Exposition in San Francisco. Afterwards, the members of the Hurtado family adopted San Francisco as their home, while playing only special club dates in and around the Bay area.⁷⁴

Oscar Hurtado states that by 1943, the group was playing as many as three engagements in one day, beginning with a tea dance at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, which lasted until 3 p.m. in the afternoon, three shows at Treasure Island, and a nightly 10 p.m. show at the La Fiesta, a North Beach

⁷³Unaware that the other brothers were in San Francisco, Jesús moved there, under doctor's orders for a change of climate, with his wife and two children.

⁷⁴Members of the original Hurtado ensemble (1915) included Celso, Jesús, Joaquin, and Oscar, and by this time they were joined by various members of the Bethancourt and Ovalle families.

nightclub at Columbus and Bay.⁷⁵ The band was also honored by being featured at the La Marimba Club. All of the Hurtado brothers eventually became United States citizens and remained in California.

By 1944, Celso Hurtado had established a reputation in his native country and the United States as a virtuoso marimbist. In Guatemala it is rare for a solo performer to gain recognition for his talent because of the emphasis on marimba ensembles. There are, however, three marimberos that have become well-known for their art--Celso Hurtado, José Bethancourt, and Efraín Tánchez. Chenoweth states the following about these individuals:

Hurtado is unequalled in his interpretations of the Indian folkstyle called the son, and he adds to his repertoire transcriptions of European works by such composers as Paganini and Liszt. José Bethancourt champions Guatemalan popular music, and Efraín Tánchez plays in a relaxed, jazz manner.⁷⁶

In May of 1944, Celso Hurtado returned home to Guatemala after an absence of twenty-nine years. He performed a solo recital (with piano accompaniment) on 12 May 1944

⁷⁵Wong, "World's Luckiest Man," p. 2.

⁷⁶Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 20. The "son" is the most popular native dance rhythm of Guatemala. This dance, usually in triple meter with occasional interpolations of a binary rhythm, is derived from the European ballroom dances of the nineteenth century. Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 147.

in the Lux Theatre, playing a marimba which he had designed and built in San Francisco.⁷⁷ This marimba, made from the finest Guatemalan wood, contained rubber vibrators under the bars which were controlled by a motor and attached to a pedal so that the volume could be altered.⁷⁸ On 7 April 1947, Celso returned to New York where, billed as "the World's Greatest Virtuoso of the Marimba," he gave a recital in Carnegie Hall, the first recital on that stage of a solo marimbist. His program, composed entirely of his own arrangements, included the following selections: Concerto No. 1 and "Campanella" by Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840), Hungarian Dance No. 6 by Johannes Brahms (1833-97), "Dance Macabre" by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), "Evocation" and "Almeria" from Suite Iberia by Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909), "Ritual Fire Dance" by Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), "Caprice Basque" by Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908), "Malaguena" by Ernesto Lecuona (1896-1963), Waltz No. 1 by Frédéric Chopin (1810-49), and Franz Liszt's (1811-86) Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2. Celso was assisted by pianist Narciso Figueroa for this performance. The recital, attended by a capacity audience, was received with the highest acclaim by marimba enthusiasts and critics

⁷⁷Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 64.

⁷⁸Ibid.

alike. A critic for the New York Times wrote:

Celso Hurtado, who was born in Guatemala but is a resident of California, tried something different at Carnegie Hall last night--a solo program for the marimba. He played an instrument he had designed himself, and he achieved astonishing feats of virtuosity as to speed, crossing of hands, intertwining of the four sticks with which the marimba is played and the achievement of varying sound effects.

To watch Mr. Hurtado's skillful deployment over the instrument was as fascinating as observing a trick acrobat.⁷⁹

The tremendous popularity of the Royal Marimba Band can be attributed in part to the unique style of orchestration, which gave the ensemble a balanced, full sound. Under the direction of Arnulfo, the group consisted of only four marimbists playing one large marimba. When Celso took over the leadership of the band, he added a five and one-half octave marimba and three players, which increased the range of the ensemble. Melody lines were doubled or sometimes even tripled, counter-melodies and harmonies were spread over several registers, and a string bass was added to reinforce the bass line.⁸⁰

⁷⁹"Celso Hurtado Heard: Presents a Solo Program on the Marimba at Carnegie Hall," New York Times, 8 April 1947, p. 34.

⁸⁰One player would play the melody with the right hand and an accompaniment with the left hand, in piano style. Jesús, the bass player of the ensemble, played the low bass notes with the left hand while using the right hand to play the "cello counter-melodies."

The importance of the Hurtados in regard to the development of the marimba as a vehicle for solo and ensemble performance in the United States must not be underestimated. Their numerous tours around the country and performances on recordings gave the American public many opportunities to witness the Guatemalans' national instrument. However, to understand the full magnitude of the Guatemalan involvement in the development of the marimba ensemble movement in this country, it is necessary to examine other families of marimba playing artists, whose ensembles made an invaluable contribution.

Other Families of Guatemalan Marimba Players

In Guatemala, the marimbero generally ranked low on the social scale. He was paid very little for his services and was usually dependent upon another source of income. The marimberos found that their music making was held in low regard by learned musicians, who were slow in recognizing its merits. Vela observes that ". . . professional musicians, finally, will approach the marimba players to teach them new pieces, to correct their execution of them or to better their style."⁸¹ When performing, the marimbero assumed a complete

⁸¹Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 57.

change of character. He was clean-shaven, well-groomed and wore a suit or colorful costume.⁸²

The main centers of marimba ensemble activity in Guatemala were the cities of Quetzaltenango, Antigua, Guatemala City, and Huehuetenango. Quetzaltenango was the birthplace of many popular ensembles which included Los Bethancourt, Los Ovalle, Los Piedrasanta, Los Salazar, Los Solares, Vos de Occidente, Las Chivitas, Altenses, and Estrella Altense.⁸³ Jousis Bethancourt later became famous in New York City, and his nephew, José Bethancourt, played in the Mexican Police Marimba Band before eventually moving to Chicago, where he gave solo performances while employed as a musician at the National Broadcasting Company.⁸⁴

Well-known ensembles from Guatemala City included Los Aldanas, Alma Belenita, Alma India, Estrella Azul, Maderas que Cantan, Gloria Tecpaneca, Chapinlandia, Niña de Guatemala, and Maderas de mi Tierra, among numerous others. Other notable ensembles included the Marimba La Internacional, directed by Andrés Archila, the Los Conejos of San

⁸²Chenoweth, Marimbas of Guatemala, p. 24.

⁸³Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 66.

⁸⁴Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 152.

Pedro, and the Los Hermanos Barrios and Los Chatos of San Marcos. The latter, directed by José I. Juárez, included four brothers, Estanislao, Andrés, Bonifacio, and Arnulfo.⁸⁵ The Velásquez sisters, along with their teacher Humberto Oliva, formed La Reina de las Marimbas (Queen of the Marimbas), which became popular in Nicaragua and Panama as well as Guatemala. In subsequent years, other popular Guatemalan ensembles were the Palma de Oro Marimba and Hermanos Marin Marimba in 1938, the Alma India Marimba and La Antigua Marimba in 1947 and 1949 respectively, and the Police Marimba Band (1949) and the Army Marimba Band (1950).

Among the numerous Guatemalan marimba ensembles, a few can be singled out for their special accomplishments and importance to the history of the marimba ensemble movement in the United States. Appearing at the President's Fiesta in November of 1899, along with Sebastián Hurtado's Sons, were the Chávez brothers of Ciudad Vieja, Antigua. Formed first as a quartet, four players on one marimba, the Chávez ensemble used four instruments and sixteen players for this Fiesta. Their playing so captivated the public that it brought about a second performance in which ". . . they received the honor of alternating with the conservatory

⁸⁵Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 66.

orchestra and the military band and succeeded in winning over the public which applauded all the numbers of their repertoire, especially Xelajuh which was repeated three times."⁸⁶

Among the numerous marimba groups appearing in the Guatemalan capital from 1900 until 1905 were ensembles directed by the two Porras brothers, the Beteta brothers, and the Guzmán brothers.⁸⁷ Federico Guzmán, an excellent marimba builder and leader of the Guzmán Brothers' Band, was also among the first to construct a chromatic marimba. One of his instruments was presented by the Guzmán brothers at the Industrial Exposition in 1905, which was held at the Central National Institute of Men.⁸⁸ Unlike most modern marimbas, which have the "black keys" raised slightly above the "white keys," this instrument had "the sharps and flats . . . dovetailed into the 'white' keyboard."⁸⁹ In 1901, Bonifacio, Francisco, and Pedro Tánchez formed the Tánchez Brothers' Band, performing mostly salon and dance music. They also built marimbas of superior quality.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 63.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 64-65.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 60. The Guatemalan Government presented Guzmán with a gold medal and a diploma for his efforts.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 61.

The contributions of Rosendo Barrios Sucesores and his family are particularly important. Vela speaks of Don Rosendo's dedication to the construction of his marimbas:

. . . for Don Rosendo to make marimbas was something more than a simple profession, it was an artistic delight, a creative fruition. He looked to the marimbas as daughters, tried to marry them well and followed their careers through the years, . . . It is no wonder that he preoccupied himself with the quality and condition of the materials, subjecting them then to proof and special treatments. He was not contented . . . with having the wood sent to him; he was interested in seeing it on the tree so that he could advise or direct the cutting and initial preparation, since all that was to follow would be left in his care. He would make excursions throughout the country in search of hormigo whose characteristics and regional variants we knew by heart.⁹⁰

With his two sons, Miguel Angel and Mario, the Barrios firm began constructing marimbas in 1911 and later exported them to surrounding Central American countries. European countries soon demanded his marimbas, and instruments were sent to Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Denmark, England, and the United States.

As early as June 1896, The Miramba [sic] Players from the Guatemalan city of Antigua were touring with the Orpheum Theatre circuit in the United States.⁹¹ A few

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁹¹Bernard Sobel, A Pictorial History of Vaudeville (New York: The Citadel Press, 1961), p. 62.

years later, during the early years of the twentieth century, several other family ensembles established reputations both in their native country and abroad. One of these, known as the Fry Brothers' Band, playing on a single keyboard marimba, toured throughout Europe during the 1901-1902 season with the Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth.

A group well-known in both Guatemala and the United States was the Marimba Ideal (or Ideal Marimba Band), directed by Señor Francisco Bartolomé Ramírez. Born in Guatemala City in 1877, Señor Ramírez, like Sebastián Hurtado, became a great builder of marimbas. Ramírez's three sons, Luis Emilio, Gabriel Enrique, and Juan Francisco, along with four other players (Juan Folgar, Angel Lázari, Rafael Tomé and Sr. Paz), made their first trip to the United States in 1911 for a two-year tour, returning to Guatemala in 1913. The Ideal Marimba Band was also featured at the 1915 Exposition in San Francisco, playing the music of Guatemala and other Central American countries, for the tea-time entertainment at the Honduras building. While in the United States, the Ideal Marimba Band played in 208 cities which included the states of California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New Jersey, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona,

Nevada, and Utah.⁹² Luis Emilio Ramírez remained in the United States.

Another marimba group from Guatemala receiving recognition at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 was the eight-member Blue and White Marimba Band under the direction of Mariano Valverde. Following the Exposition, the group completed a tour of the United States, which culminated in New York City with performances at the famous Hippodrome Theatre. There, in March 1916, it was the first marimba ensemble to record for the Victor Talking Machine Record Company. In July of that year Columbia Records announced:

The Blue and White Marimba Band, latest Columbia artists, have been the elect musical sensation of New York's social season. Besides appearing all winter in the Hippodrome, these musicians have played in the private homes of practically the Blue List of New York's '400.' Their musical gifts are now offered the public through their first Columbia recordings.⁹³

The Blue and White Band remained in the United States, recording for Victor, Columbia, Empire, Okeh, and Pathe and by 1920 had produced some twenty-four discs. In 1933, the Blue and White Band toured in Paris for nine months and

⁹²Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 69.

⁹³"New Marimba Band A Wonder," Columbia Record Catalog, July 1916, p. 12.

returned there again in 1936 for a three-month tour.⁹⁴

The Los Chintos Marimba Band, an ensemble well-known in Central America, made an instant impression on the citizens of the United States upon their arrival. Directed by Jacinto and Carlos Estrada, the Los Chintos marimba began a tour of North America in 1916. Their recordings for the Victor Record Company were widely distributed and in great demand by the American public. Several members of the ensemble, including director Don Carlos Estrada, took residence in the United States. Estrada became well-known in the United States as a marimba virtuoso.⁹⁵

Approximately eleven years after the Hurtado brothers' historic tour of Europe, the Quiroz brothers' ensemble completed a European tour. With information supplied by the family, Vela gives the following account of the Quiroz brothers' tour:

The Quiroz brothers, a brilliant ensemble which brought fame to the marimba ensembles Azul, Blanca and La Joya, went to Europe in July, 1923, under the direction of Ricardo Quiroz and under contract to Arturo Aguirre Matheu. In London they played in the following salons: Royal, Alhambra and Trocadero, and they also played in other English cities. In Paris they played in the hall of the Grand Opera, in the hotels Claridge,

⁹⁴Personal letter from Eleanor Hurtado, wife of Celso Hurtado, Ashland, Oreg., 22 September 1983.

⁹⁵Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 65.

Ritz, and Continental, and also in the night club Perroquet. In Berlin they appeared at the Schola Theatre and in the hotels Esplanada, Bristol, Eden and Kaiserhof. That tour ended in September, 1925, but Baudilio Quiroz went on to Belgium with the marimba, returning to Guatemala in 1926.⁹⁶

The Excelsior Marimba Band is well remembered in the United States for its Columbia recordings made about 1920. Abroad, this ensemble played in ". . . the royal winter palaces of Madrid, in the Dorado Theatre of Barcelona, in the Gran Kursal in San Sebastian, in Paris at the Hotel Ritz, in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Leipzig, Bremen, and other German cities."⁹⁷

Signor Friscoe and his Guatemalan Marimba Ensemble gained notoriety in the 1920s while performing in vaudeville. The popularity of this group has been noted in Leedy Drum Topics:

One of this season's headline vaudeville attractions is Signor Friscoe and his Guatemalan Ensemble. It is also one of the most expensively staged and highest salaried acts in the business. Every drummer and xylophonist in the land knows what a wonderful artist Friscoe is.⁹⁸

Another touring ensemble was the Azuley Blanco Marimba Band, a group which came to the United States and recorded for Columbia Records about 1923.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 65.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 68.

⁹⁸"Signor Friscoe and his Guatemalan Ensemble," Leedy Drum Topics, Vol. 1, No. 7 (January 1925), p. 9.

Making a somewhat belated appearance in the United States were several important Mexican ensembles which became well-known through their phonograph recordings: the Marimba Chiapas, Marimba Tipica Orchestra, the Cardenas Quartet, and the Marimba Orquesta Tipica Lerdo. About 1938, the Pan American Marimba Band, the Tuxtleca Marimba Band, and the Don Carlos Marimba Band were performing. The Hermanos Barrientos Marimba Band appeared around 1953 with the Mi Farolita Marimba Band coming from Honduras in 1948 and the Alma Marimba Salvadorena from Salvador in 1938.⁹⁹

Recordings by Central American Marimba Bands

The first marimba recordings were of marimba groups from Guatemala. The heyday for these Central American ensembles was the period from about 1916 to 1920. The Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band, Blue and White Marimba

⁹⁹Vela argues that the marimba was brought from Guatemala to Mexico, El Salvador, and Honduras by players who emigrated there from Guatemala. Vela, Information on the Marimba, p. 66. The marimba became an integral part of the musical culture of Chiapas, a Mexican state bordering Guatemala, due mainly to the efforts of two influential Mexicans, Carazon Borrás and David Gomez. The Chiapas marimba bands generally followed the Guatemalan practice of playing music by ear and borrowing pieces from the standard "classical" repertoire (transcriptions). Their lively and spirited music was performed by a varying number of players, but ". . . often as many as six persons could be found playing on one long instrument." Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 152.

Band, Los Chintos Marimba Band, Cardenas Marimba Band, Excelsior Marimba Band, and the Marimba Centro de Americana Guatemala, with Don Carlos Estrada as leader, among numerous others, brought the sound of the Latin American marimba to the United States through their recordings and personal appearances while displaying their ". . . excellent ensemble playing that is typical of all Guatemalan marimba groups."¹⁰⁰ In particular, the popularity of the Hurtado brothers is expressed in this Columbia Records release:

The Hurtado Brothers and their Royal Marimba Band are acclaimed for their music not only in their native Guatemala, but throughout South America, Central America, Mexico, and the United States. You will find this typical marimba music restful, charming, and fascinating. . . .¹⁰¹

Tracing the history of recordings of marimba groups like the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band is difficult because, customarily, as a group changed recording companies, the name used by the group would also change. The Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band of Guatemala shortened their name to "Royal Marimba Band" when recording on Columbia

¹⁰⁰William L. Cahn, The Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings (1877-1929) (Rochester, New York: By the Author, 107 Council Rock Avenue, 1979), p. ix.

¹⁰¹Record jacket notes for Marimba Music, performed by the Hurtado Brothers and Their Royal Marimba Band (Columbia Records Set C-71, 1941).

Records in 1915-16 and again in 1927. On the Regal and Romeo labels of 1930, the Royal Marimba Band was a pseudonym for the Dixie Marimba Players. On these labels in 1930, this group is definitely not the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band, but probably Joe Green's Novelty Orchestra. The Dixie Marimba Players in earlier recordings (1926-1930) was a group directed by Celso Hurtado. On the Dixie Marimba Players' recordings under the Banner label, they are called the Royal Marimba Band.¹⁰²

Members of the Hurtado family became very active in the recording studio during the 1920s. Celso Hurtado either performed in, or directed many such ensembles. The Miami Marimba Band, with Celso Hurtado as leader, recorded from 1924 to 1928 under the Vocalion label, but used the following pseudonyms when recording for other companies: Castlewood Marimba Band (1922-31)¹⁰³ on the Brunswick label, Melody Marimba Band (1925) on Coliseum, Pacific Marimba Band (1925) on Aco, Palm Beach Marimba Band (1924-25) on Beltona, Savile Marimba Band (1924-25) on Duophone, Tadeo Vincente and His

¹⁰²Brian Rust, The American Dance Band Discography: 1917-42 (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1975), p. 412.

¹⁰³The dates noted in parentheses are the year(s) of record production.

Brazilian Marimba Band (1926) on Vocalion, and Zulma's Marimba Band (1925) on Homochord. Four other groups known to include members of the Hurtado family were the Argentine Marimba Band (ca. 1923-24), the Castilians, a pseudonym for the Meximarimba Band (1926), and the Southland Marimba Players (ca. 1928).¹⁰⁴

Development of the Xylophone in
Western Musical Art

The history of the marimba has been traced from its origins in Southeast Asia and the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago to further development and refinement in Africa. African slaves brought the instrument to Central America where Guatemalans adopted the marimba as their national instrument, making several structural innovations in its construction. To examine its history further, we must follow the development and progress of the xylophone to Europe.

The xylophone, with its roots in Africa and Southeast Asia, came to the United States by way of Europe. Marcuse informs us that the xylophone was brought to Europe from

¹⁰⁴Telephone conversation with Eleanor Hurtado, wife of Celso Hurtado, Ashland, Oreg., 15 June 1983.

Indonesia.¹⁰⁵ Its name is derived from the Greek xylon meaning "wood," and phone meaning "sound." The instrument was first mentioned by Arnold Schlick in 1511 by the name of hultze glechter ("wooden stick") in his Spiegel der orgelmacher und organisten (1511).¹⁰⁶ A xylophone (stroh fiedel) is depicted in Martin Agricola's Musica instrumentalis deudsch (1528), and a century later in Michael Praetorius' (1571-1621) Syntagma musicum (1618).¹⁰⁷ The name stroh fiedel ("straw fiddle") is descriptive of this early form of the xylophone which consisted of wooden bars laid over bundles of straw.

Early in the nineteenth century the xylophone was popularized as a solo instrument by the Russian Jew Michael Josef Gusikow (1806-1837), whose playing attracted the admiration of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Liszt.¹⁰⁸ In a letter to his mother on 18 February 1836, Mendelssohn wrote

¹⁰⁵Marcuse, Survey of Musical Instruments, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶Marcuse, Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary, p. 591.

¹⁰⁷James Blades, Percussion Instruments and Their History (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1970), p. 203. Both of the instruments are also pictured in Stauder et al., "Schlaginstrumente," Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, vol. 11, col. 1788.

¹⁰⁸MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 30.

that Gusikow ". . . is inferior to no player on earth either in style or execution, and delights me more on his odd instrument than many do on their pianos, . . . I have not enjoyed a concert so much for a long time."¹⁰⁹ Gusikow's history is presented as follows:

He was born at Sklot, a little town near Mohilev, where his family had been musicians for upwards of a hundred years. . . .

. . . Gusikow . . . set to work to make a musical career possible for himself. For this purpose he chose a musical instrument of the street or village fair, and resolved to introduce such improvements into its tone and range as would make it capable of the most subtle shades of execution and interpretation. This instrument, called Jerova I Salomo by the Jewish peoples, was of most ancient origin . . . but the use of it had spread . . . among the Tartars, the Cossacks, the Russians, the Lithuanians, and as far as Poland. It was formed . . . out of a number of slats or strips of pinewood upon a bed of straw . . . played with a pair of hammers like a cymbalom. . . .

Gusikow increased the number of the strips . . . to two and a half octaves, disposed chromatically, not in the order, alternatively, of semitones, but arranged in a particular way in order to facilitate his execution. . . . Three years were spent by Gusikow, from 1831, in perfecting his instrument. But, at length, his preparations were complete, and in July 1834 he set forth with his four brothers or relatives to Kiev and to Odessa, where he performed in the opera house and was heard by the violinist Lipinski, who has left an account of him. . . . It was due in large part to the encouragement of Lipinski that Gusikow undertook his journey to Western Europe, appearing with wild success in Vienna, in Milan, in Germany, in Paris, and in Brussels, where his health completely broke down, and it was evident that he was dying. . . .

¹⁰⁹Blades, Percussion Instruments, p. 307. MacCallum states that Mendelssohn accompanied Gusikow on a public concert in Berlin in 1830. MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 30.

. . . Further accounts of his genius are given by Mendelssohn, who heard him play in Germany; and by Fétis, the musical biographer, who . . . saw him continually during the four months that he was ill in bed in Brussels, and dying, and took down from him, personally, the facts and details of his life.¹¹⁰

Gusikow performed well-known pieces, including Russian, Polish, and Jewish popular melodies and folk songs, along with some of his own compositions. Peters states that "his most successful number was a transcription of Paganini's La Campanella."¹¹¹ Gusikow died on 21 October 1837 during a concert at Aix-la-Chapelle.¹¹²

The instrument made popular by Gusikow was a four-row xylophone consisting of ". . . a series of twenty-eight crude wooden bars arranged, semitonally, in the form of a trapezium, the four rows resting on five straw supports."¹¹³ The player stands at the wide end of the instrument. The four-row xylophone can still be found in some Continental orchestras, and is still manufactured there.

During the nineteenth century the xylophone appeared in several new guises, as the Triphon and the Tryphone.

¹¹⁰Sacheverell Sitwell, Splendours and Miseries, 3rd ed. (Glasgow: University Press, 1944), pp. 149-50.

¹¹¹Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 134.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 135.

¹¹³Blades, Percussion Instruments, p. 307.

Sachs refers to the Triphon as a xylosistron (invented in 1810), while the Tryphone, introduced about 1870, has been credited to the Parisian Charles de Try, the greatest xylophone virtuoso of the later nineteenth century.¹¹⁴ Try's instrument may have been constructed in the manner of a piano with two rows of bars. It is also speculated that Saint-Saëns, hearing the instrument through Try's performance, was attracted to the xylophone and used it in his "Danse Macabre" (1874).¹¹⁵

For many years, the xylophone's first appearance in an orchestral score has been attributed to Saint-Saëns, but recent investigation has uncovered a composition entitled "Champagne Galop" written by the Danish composer Hans Christian Lumbye in 1845, which includes a solo part for xylophone. Lumbye refers to it in his music as "traespil" ("play of wood"). A conductor of that era, Emilio Wilhelm Ramsoe (1837-95), in his interpretation of the programme of the "Champagne Galop," refers to the instrument as having the sound of a champagne cork popping out of a bottle. The author has traced this composition to the Royal Library in

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 309.

¹¹⁵Percy Scholes, The Oxford Companion To Music, 9th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 788.

Copenhagen which contains the score and parts. The score is not Lumbye's original score, which has been lost, but is a set of parts belonging to Lumbye's son, Carl Lumbye, that can be considered trustworthy.¹¹⁶

In "Danse Macabre" (1874) Saint-Saëns uses ". . . the dry and hollow notes of the instrument [to] represent the bones of skeletons as they dance over the stones of a graveyard."¹¹⁷ Twelve years later, he again used the xylophone with the very same theme to portray "Fossiles" in Carnival of the Animals (1886). Later appearances of the xylophone include its debut in a symphony, the first movement of Mahler's Sixth Symphony, its frequent uses by such composers as Hindemith, Walton, Britten, Stravinsky, Kabalevsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Puccini, and Ketèlbey, to, more recently, appearances in works by Boulez, Messiaen, Ravel,

¹¹⁶Personal letter from Mette Müller, director, Musikhistorisk Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark, 18 October 1983. The author was made aware of this composition from a recording of the "Champagne Galop" in the Gerhardt Marimba-Xylophone Collection by the Copenhagen Symphony Orchestra. ("The Music of Hans Christian Lumbye," recorded by the Copenhagen Symphony Orchestra on Capitol Records #SG7253, Lavard Friisholm conductor.)

¹¹⁷Harold D. Smith, Instruments of the Orchestra By Sight, Sound and Story; A Description of the Instruments and Their Uses (Camden, New Jersey: Victor Talking Machine Co., 1918; revised by Frederick J. Schneider, Camden: RCA Manufacturing Co., 1937), p. 65.

Tippett, and Lutoslawski, which place great technical demands on the performer.

In the United States, John Calhoun Deagan began his first experimentations with making bar-percussion instruments around 1880. This was prompted by his discontent with the accuracy of tuning of the orchestral bells being used in symphony orchestras. Clair Musser states that during this same period:

. . . American musical instrument manufacturers began making the small xylophone as a trap instrument for the drummer. These first instruments were similar to the European xylophone and were made of various woods--maple, rosewood, cocus, and so on. The scale was our diatonic with B-flat added.¹¹⁸

In 1888, Deagan constructed the ". . . first true xylophone of orchestral quality" which included tubular brass resonators under the tone bars for maximum sound projection.¹¹⁹ This instrument launched the career of the modern xylophone, beginning with its use in recordings, and as a form of popular entertainment by vaudeville performers around the end of the First World War.

¹¹⁸Clair Omar Musser, "The Marimba-Xylophone," Etude, Vol. 50, No. 4 (April 1932), p. 251.

¹¹⁹Hal Trommer, "A Chronology of the J. C. Deagan Company," (Chicago, Ill.: By the Author, 4231 N. Wolcott Avenue, 1983), p. 2. [Paper privately printed and presented to the author by Hal Trommer, Knoxville, Tenn., 6 November 1983.] By the mid-teens, Deagan precision tuning forks and tuning bars were established as the "tuning standard of the

Early Xylophone Recordings

In 1877 Thomas Edison produced the first sound recording device. The North American Company, which was formed in 1888 and owned all of the Edison phonograph patents, issued its first list of musical selections available for use with coin-slot music machines in 1890. The xylophone was a popularly recorded instrument on cylinders, and later on records, because its tone reproduced so well. The acoustic phonograph and the xylophone developed simultaneously from 1890 until about 1925. Cahn refers to this period as the "golden age of the xylophone."¹²⁰ Concerning the recording process at this time, Cahn states the following:

Recordings at that time were made in small studios with walls stripped of anything that might absorb sound. At one end of the room was a partition from which protruded one or several horns. Performers would stand directly in front of the horns, and the sound of their instruments would enter the bells of the horns and be funneled to a diaphragm situated behind the partition,

world." About this same time, the Deagan company introduced the quality mark "Nagaed" (Deagan spelled backwards) which was used to identify Honduras rosewood ". . . meticulously selected for uniform resin density, quarter-sawed grain, color and overall perfection, for tone bars of superior-grade models of xylophones, marimba-xylophones and marimbas-phones." Trommer, "Chronology," pp. 3-4.

¹²⁰William L. Cahn, "The Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings (1877-1929)," Percussionist, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring-Summer 1979), p. 134.

where an engineer would be monitoring the recording. The sound waves would then cause the diaphragm to vibrate and to activate a stylus, or recording point, thereby cutting into a groove on a rotating wax cylinder.¹²¹

A. T. VanWinkle was the first xylophonist to record for the North American Company. He recorded forty-two phonograph cylinders on 26 August 1889, and another eighty-nine records during the next two days for use in coin-slot machines. On the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of December, that same year, VanWinkle made another 206 records.

The North American Company declared bankruptcy in 1894, which freed its subsidiaries to act on their own. One such company was the Columbia Phonograph Company. In 1896, Edison proceeded to organize the National Phonograph Company. These two companies cornered the market as producers of cylinder records and machines.

In 1896, Edison began producing the first of his standard two-minute wax cylinders, which were made until 1912. Charles P. Lowe became the first xylophonist to record for Edison. He recorded a total of twenty-one different selections between 1896 and 1901, including

¹²¹Cahn, Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings, p. iv.

waltzes, polkas, galops, and popular songs.¹²² Around 1903, Frank J. Hopkins recorded fifteen selections for Edison while the first solos for orchestral bells were played by Edward F. Rubsam in 1902.

The Columbia Company files have been lost through the years, but an 1893 catalog of Columbia's two-minute wax cylinders mentions Emma Williams, probably the first woman xylophonist to record on cylinders.¹²³ Charles P. Lowe, A. Schmehl, and Harry A. Yerkes also recorded for Columbia subsidiaries.

Albert Benzler left the Edison Company to become musical director and sole soloist for another major cylinder producer, the United States Phonograph Company. He recorded nine xylophone solos and fourteen bell solos. One of Benzler's xylophone solos, "Peter Piper March," was possibly played more than any other cylinder ever recorded. According to an article in the Talking Machine World in November 1910, this march was played 40,444 times as recorded by an

¹²²Cahn states that Lowe also recorded for many other cylinder record companies including the New Jersey Phonograph Company, the United States Phonograph Company, the Bettini Phonograph Laboratory, and the Reed and Dawson Company. Cahn, Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings, p. iv.

¹²³Cahn, "Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings," p. 137.

automatic counter on the machine at the penny arcade where the cylinder was placed.¹²⁴

Edison developed the Amberol cylinder in 1908, and four years later, the new and improved Blue Amberol, which increased playing time to four minutes. Mallet players on these cylinders included Charles Daab, Lou Chiha Friscoe, John Burckhardt, William Dorn, and George Hamilton Green. There were thirty-two xylophone solos, twelve bell solos, and one orchestral bells and xylophone duet recorded on the Blue Amberol cylinders.¹²⁵ In 1912, the Edison Company began producing discs and frequently the same recording sessions were used to make both Blue Amberol cylinders and Diamond Discs. Other companies that produced cylinder records, which also included bell and xylophone solos, were the Kansas City Talking Machine Company, Chicago Talking Machine Company, Lambert Company, Bettini Company, and the United States Phonograph Company, as well as companies in Europe.¹²⁶

¹²⁴Jim Walsh, "Favorite Pioneer Recording Artists: Albert Benzler," Hobbies, Vol. 58 (January 1954), pp. 29, 35.

¹²⁵Duane Deakins, "Comprehensive Cylinder Record Index Pt. III," Edison Blue Amberol Records (1959), p. 13.

¹²⁶Cahn, "Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings," p. 138.

In 1906, the Victor Talking Machine Record Company, formed in 1901 by Eldridge R. Johnson in Camden, New Jersey, swept the industry with the introduction of the Victrola. Early xylophonists for Victor included Peter Lewin, Chris Chapman, and Albert Mueller, while later, from 1914 to 1919, the playing of William H. Reitz became very popular. Columbia's xylophonist of the same time period was Howard Kopp. He recorded xylophone, bells, and chime solos, in addition to several snare drum solos with piano accompaniment.

The years before and during the First World War brought many xylophone and marimba soloists and ensembles to the recording studios. After the War, however, dancing became the rage and only music with a danceable beat was accepted. Those performers who could adapt to performing live in the dance-hall bands continued in popularity.

Radio broadcasting was in its infancy in the 1920s. The recording industry, however, was facing financial ruin. The Depression had its effect on the recording industry just as it did on American businesses in general. The Edison Company folded in 1929 and by 1933, the majority of record companies had closed their doors.¹²⁷

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 144.

Around the end of the First World War, the xylophone attracted the attention of vaudeville performers who saw the instrument's entertainment potential. Unfortunately, the xylophone was not desired for its artistic values, but rather for the ". . . colorful showmanship of the performer . . . and the gymnastic effects of the dexterous player."¹²⁸ The following is an account of the typical vaudeville xylophonist:

In the olden days the xylophone used to be the sensation with band and vaudeville performers. Often, dressed up like 'Mrs. Astor's horse,' with iridescent spangles and red velvet lambrequins, it provided an instrument upon which the player was expected to go through all kinds of acrobatic contortions, especially when he played his 'chef d'oeuvre,' the William Tell Overture, with breathtaking accelerandos, and arrived at the finale like a foaming race horse. . . . Will Mahoney, the famous tap dancer, even used to dance out tunes with his feet, while jiggling on a giant xylophone.¹²⁹

In one particular vaudeville act, a xylophonist known as the Great Lamberti performed on his instrument to the thunderous applause of the audience who was actually cheering for a young woman performing a strip-tease behind him on stage. Concerning the vaudeville xylophone, Clair Musser states that the public was overwhelmed by the ". . . novelty of

¹²⁸Musser, "Marimba-Xylophone," p. 251.

¹²⁹"Marimba Supersedes Xylophone," Etude, Vol. 56, No. 9 (September 1938), p. 561.

the instrument and the showmanship of the player."¹³⁰ Even as recently as 1967, the vaudeville treatment of the marimba is perpetuated. In the Universal-Ross Hunter Pictures' production of Thoroughly Modern Millie, Carol Channing, one of the movie's leading characters, dances on top of the marimba pretending to "tap" out a melody on the bars.

Following the death of vaudeville, the xylophone regained its prominence as a concert instrument mainly through the efforts of the Japanese xylophonist Yoichi Hiraoka. Hiraoka prefers the xylophone to the marimba even though he must constantly battle the stigma of its association with vaudeville, which still exists in the minds of many conductors, concert managers, and audience members. He bases his preference of the xylophone as a solo instrument on its "better tone quality for performance with an orchestra." He goes on to say that "the sound of the xylophone is more brilliant . . . while the marimba is a fine blending instrument and sounds best in ensembles."¹³¹

Hiraoka toured extensively with the xylophone, playing transcriptions of works by Bach and Mozart, and

¹³⁰Musser, "Marimba-Xylophone," p. 251.

¹³¹James L. Moore, "Meet Xylophone Soloist Yoichi Hiraoka," Percussive Notes, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Fall 1973), p. 14.

contemporary works for the xylophone. He was so well-respected for his talents that composer Alan Hovhaness (b. 1911) dedicated his Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints to Hiraoka, who premiered it with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on 4 July 1964. The following year he performed the same composition with the New York Philharmonic at the invitation of André Kostelanetz.

The Contributions of the Green Brothers to the
Marimba Ensemble Movement

It is virtually impossible to discuss the marimba or xylophone of the first part of the twentieth century without bringing up the name of George Hamilton Green. Green, a xylophone virtuoso, was born in 1896 in Omaha, Nebraska. A composer, arranger, teacher, stage and recording artist, he began playing a xylophone he himself had made at age eleven. By the time he moved to New York City in 1917 to become a member of Earl Fuller's Rector Novelty Orchestra, he was acclaimed by the Edison Phonograph Monthly as ". . . one of, if not the greatest xylophone players in the world."¹³²

Through his feature work on numerous radio stations, recordings, publication of many solos and several method

¹³²"George Hamilton Green," Edison Phonograph Monthly (February 1917).

books, and as a magazine cartoonist, George Green became a well-known celebrity. He was featured on radio stations WJZ and WEAP in New York where he played for the "Wrigley's Spearmint," "Philco," "General Motors," "Klein Shoes," "Royal Typewriter," "Maxwell House Coffee," "Dutch Masters," "A and P Gypsies," and "Cleister Bells" programs, among others. In addition to his solo recordings for Edison mentioned above, Green performed with many other groups which were recording dozens of records, including three combos, the All Star Trio (1918-20), Blue Ribbon Trio (1922-23), and Broadway Trio (1923). These later ensembles included piano, alto saxophone, and featured Green on xylophone.

George Hamilton Green and his brother Joe Green were two of the most prolific recording artists in and around the New York City area during the years 1917 through 1940. They formed the Green Brothers' Novelty Band which performed from 1919 to 1924. The brothers also played in many other groups which produced discs for Columbia, Edison, Victor, Brunswick, Pathe, Okeh, Emerson, and other recording companies. Some of these groups included the Alexander Brothers' Xylophone Band (1922), American Marimba Band (1918-20), American Marimbaphone Band (1918-19), Broadway Xylophone Orchestra (1922), California Brass Marimba Orchestra (1921), Clark's

Marimba Band (1922-23), Dixie Marimba Players (1928-29), Emerson Xylo-Phiends (1919-20), Glenwood Marimba Band (1924-25), Harvey's Xylophone Band (1920), Hawaiian Marimba Players (1929), Imperial Marimba Band (1919-21), Marimba Dance Orchestra (1925), NonPareil Novelty Band (1920), Xylophone Specialty Orchestra (1920-22), and the Yerkes Jazarimba Orchestra (1917-19), with Harry Yerkes as director.

At one point their group was simply named for the recording company for which they were working. For example, when performing on the "Okeh" record label, they were known as the Okeh Marimba Band (1920-22). In addition, the Green brothers used their family name in a number of ensembles in which they participated, such as the Green Brothers' Xylophone Orchestra (1919), the Green Brothers' Mellorimba Orchestra (1921), and the Green Brothers' Xylo-Rimba Orchestra (1925-27).

The first recordings of the Imperial Marimba Band in 1917 are considered by Cahn to be of a Guatemalan group, though later discs carrying the same name are obviously by a different ensemble, of which the Green brothers were probable members.¹³³ The American Marimbaphone Band recorded selections for Columbia in 1917 and 1918, while the Red,

¹³³Cahn, Xylophone in Acoustic Recordings, pp. ix-x.

White, and Blue Marimba Band, Yerkes Marimbaphone Band, and Marimba Band followed the next year. All of these groups also probably included the Green brothers along with Harry Yerkes and William Dorn as performers.¹³⁴

Joe Green became very popular during the period of 1925 to 1935 as leader and namesake of such groups as Joe Green's Vibraphone Dance Orchestra (1925), Novelty Marimba Band (1926), Trio (1927), Novelty Orchestra (1927), Novelty Dance Orchestra (1928), Marimba Players (1930), Marimba Band (1930), Orchestra (1930), and Ambassadors (1931). Green also directed the Royal Music Makers (1927), the only group not bearing his name. In 1927, Leedy Drum Topics gave evidence to Green's popularity, stating the ". . . Joe Green's Novelty Marimba Band is hailed as one of the most sensational hits ever presented to New York audiences . . . [and] will soon make a tour of the country's leading movie theatres."¹³⁵

¹³⁴Brian Rust lists all of the known recordings by the Green brothers on pages 655 to 678.

¹³⁵"Joe Green's Novelty Marimba Band," Leedy Drum Topics, Vol. 1, No. 14 (April 1927), p. 16. Leedy Drum Topics was first published in 1923 by the Leedy Manufacturing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, with their sales manager, George H. Way, serving as editor. The magazine contained photographs and valuable information on percussion topics. By 1925, its circulation had reached 50,000 copies. Before it was discontinued in October 1939, a total of twenty-eight issues were published.

The Early Development of the North American Marimba
and Its Performers

It has been previously shown that the marimba was introduced to the United States by touring ensembles from Guatemala and Mexico performing the music of their native country, transcriptions of orchestral and piano works, plus original compositions and arrangements of our popular music. Like the xylophone, the marimba also became popular as a vaudeville instrument, in part, because ". . . it attracted to it entertainers who realized its visual rather than its musical possibilities."¹³⁶

Frank MacCallum states that "about 1910 marimbas were first made in the United States."¹³⁷ The J. C. Deagan Company in Chicago produced the nabimba, their version of the Central American marimba, between 1910 and 1918. Concerning the construction of that marimba, Peters states the following:

These first American instruments had tapered metal resonators in which [an] animal membrane had been mounted. They had an adjustable mechanism that held the membrane and permitted compensation for humidity

¹³⁶Vida Chenoweth, "The Marimba Comes into its Own," Music Journal, Vol. 15 (May-June 1957), p. 12.

¹³⁷MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 31.

effect. These humidity fluctuations, however, were greater than anticipated, and only fifty models were built.¹³⁸

Hope Stoddard is of the opinion that the marimba's popularity was given impetus at the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco.¹³⁹ From this point forward, the marimba and xylophone jockeyed for a position of favor among performers and entertainers alike. This conflict between the xylophone and marimba resulted in a ". . . compromise instrument called the 'marimba-xylophone' in which . . . the lower register . . . was tuned in octaves like a marimba; the upper register . . . tuned in fifths like a xylophone."¹⁴⁰

Between 1915 and 1920, the Deagan Company built marimba-xylophones with ranges of three to six octaves.

MacCallum notes:

The period from about 1910 to 1920 was the most glorious for marimba manufacture. At that time the finest were made though they lacked the refinements of tuning introduced later.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 153.

¹³⁹Hope Stoddard, "Xylophone, Marimba, Glockenspiel, Vibe," International Musician, Vol. 51 (October 1952), p. 25.

¹⁴⁰John Richard Raush, "Four-Mallet Technique and its Use in Selected Examples of Training and Performance Literature For Solo Marimba" (DMA treatise, University of Texas, May, 1977), p. 101. The tuning of the overtones, either by fifths or octaves, is the main difference between xylophones and marimbas.

¹⁴¹MacCallum, Book of the Marimba, p. 31.

Two other important companies involved in the manufacture of bar-percussion instruments at this time were the Mayland and U. G. Leedy Manufacturing Companies. The latter produced its first chromatic resonatorless xylophone in 1895, and made instruments with resonators beginning about 1905.

Instruments of the marimba-type became increasingly popular and gained recognition as production by these manufacturers grew. Around 1922, the Majestic Marimba Band, Music Lovers' Marimba Orchestra, and Nathan Glantz and his Marimba Band (Hollywood Marimba Band) produced recordings, while a year later, the Joseph Samuels' Xylophone Novelty Orchestra, Joseph M. Knecht's Dance Orchestra, and the Azuley Blanco Marimba Band also became popular. By 1925, the list of marimba ensembles performing on record and stage was lengthy.

It was during this period that the first group of prominent United States marimbists appeared:

Red Norvo with his orchestra centered around his marimba provided some of the most thrilling jazz of the 1930s. The Green brothers, William Dorn, Eddy Rubsam, Sam Herman, and Harry Breuer in the East, and Ralph Smith and Dillon Ober in Chicago helped to bring the instrument into prominence.¹⁴²

¹⁴²Stoddard, "Xylophone, Marimba, Glockenspiel, Vibe," p. 25.

About 1924 another marimbist became important as leader and namesake of the Harry Breuer Trio. Harry Breuer made his debut in 1921 in New York City. He, along with Joe Green and William (Billy) Dorn, was a featured marimbist with the Yerkes Jazzarimba Orchestra. A fourth marimbist, Eddie Rubsam (Billy Dorn's cousin), was later added along with strings, three saxophones, and a rhythm section consisting of piano, tuba, drums, and banjo, for the orchestra's performances on Columbia Records and club dates in the New York City area. The name of the group was changed to the Flotilla Orchestra for an engagement in a New York City night spot known as the Flotilla Restaurant.¹⁴³

The Popularity of the Marimba in

Radio and Motion Pictures

Early experimentation in radio broadcasting had begun as early as 1910, when Lee DeForest produced a program starring Enrico Caruso from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. However, it was not until 2 November 1920, when station KDKA of Pittsburgh broadcast a combination of election returns interspersed with recordings, that radio broadcasting began on a large scale, bringing a tremendous

¹⁴³Personal letter from Harry Breuer, Brightwaters, New York, 9 March 1982.

variety of entertainment into the American home.¹⁴⁴ Because of the radio's increasing popularity, it actually contributed to a decline in the phonograph industry. Sales of sheet music, which had previously been a big business, dropped as music broadcasting "replaced the piano as home entertainment."¹⁴⁵

Eventually three principal networks evolved in the United States: NBC, CBS, and ABC. During the 1920s and 30s, marimba and xylophone players performed on radio both as soloists accompanied by the station orchestra or dance band, and in xylophone and marimba ensembles playing the popular music of the day.

During the latter part of the 1920s, Harry Breuer was one of the most popular xylophone artists to appear on the air. In 1927, he played lead xylophone in a marimba band broadcasting via NBC radio and under the direction of

¹⁴⁴A milestone in radio broadcasting took place in 1916 when David Sarnoff, then a contracts manager to the American Marconi Company, ". . . recommended that transmitting stations be built for the purpose of broadcasting speech and music and that 'a radio music box' should be manufactured for general sale." Kenneth Reginald Sturley, "Golden Age of Broadcasting," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 30 vols (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1982), p. 427. With his miraculous idea, Sarnoff succeeded in making the radio a household utility. Marion Klamkin, Old Sheet Music (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1975), p. 124.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

David Grupp. The marimbists in this group included Eddie Rubsam, Irving Farberman, and Billy Paulson.¹⁴⁶ The programs usually consisted of light concert pieces, novelty piano numbers such as Felix Arndt's (1889-1918) "Nola" (1913), as well as popular dance tunes. In that same year, Breuer performed on the "Roxy and his Gang" radio program, broadcast coast to coast over the NBC network each Monday evening. This program, known as "Radio's First Great Entertainment Success," originated from the Roxy Theatre and featured the Roxy vocal and instrumental soloists, who appeared regularly at the Roxy Theatre, together with the Roxy Theatre Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erno Rapee.¹⁴⁷ Later, when the Radio City Music Hall opened, the Roxy's Gang programs were presented every Sunday morning from the Music Hall broadcast studio, also on the NBC network.

During 1927, 1928, and 1929, Harry Breuer and Sammy Herman were featured as a xylophone duo with B. A. Rulfe and

¹⁴⁶Billy Paulson, a very fine marimbist, was the xylophone soloist with the Arthur Pryor Band in the late 1920s and early 1930s. During the 1940s and 50s, he was very active in New York as a studio musician playing on top radio programs, such as the "Telephone Hour," and on early television programs such as the "Hit Parade" and the "Kate Smith Show," among others.

¹⁴⁷Jeffrey E. Bush, "Interview with Harry Breuer," Percussive Notes, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring-Summer 1980), pp. 52-53.

the Lucky Strike Hit Parade Orchestra on NBC. Sammy Herman was a member of the NBC staff for many years playing for scores of major radio programs including Abe Lyman's "Waltz Time" with Frank Munn, Paul Whiteman's "The Old Gold Hour," and on the "Manhattan Merry-Go-Round," on whose theme he was featured. George Hamilton Green was also very active in performing on numerous radio programs in the New York City area. Harry Breuer directed a marimba quartet which was featured on CBS radio broadcasts around 1930 and 1931. These programs would always consist of popular dance tunes.

Latin-American music was also popular, as evidenced by the broadcasts of Celso Hurtado and his Marimba Typica Band. The group performed over as many as twenty-eight stations during Sunday morning programs in 1934.¹⁴⁸ José Bethancourt, nephew of Jousis Bethancourt (a famous marimbist in Guatemala and then later in New York City), became staff musician at the National Broadcasting Company facilities in Chicago. He inspired many North American marimbists through his teaching and performances as a featured soloist. Bethancourt's repertoire centered around transcriptions of violin, piano, and orchestral music.

¹⁴⁸"Marimba Typica Band; Throbbing Latin-American Music," Radio Stars Magazine (April 1934), p. 70.

Before the advent of "talking" pictures, instrumentalists, including xylophonists and marimbists, were employed to accompany silent films. In 1926, a marimba band appeared in La Fiesta, one of the first Vitaphone Prologues by Warner Brothers which introduced sound to the public.¹⁴⁹ In the film Tropic Holiday, copyrighted by Paramount Pictures on 22 July 1938, the San Cristobal Marimba Band played most of the musical score. Reg Kehoe and his all-girl marimba band were used in movies (titled "movie shorts") that were shown to United States troops in Europe during the Second World War. In recent movies about the 1920s and 30s, marimbas and xylophones are included. One example is the Universal-Ross Hunter Pictures' movie entitled Thoroughly Modern Millie (1967), in which one of the leading ladies dances on top of a marimba.

Marimba Bands of the 1930s

By the fourth decade of the twentieth century, marimba bands had gained in popularity as evidenced by their frequent appearances at state fairs, dance and club engagements, conventions, and in radio, television, and vaudeville shows. The marimba band formed and directed by

¹⁴⁹John Kobal, Rita Hayworth (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), p. 34.

J. Reginald Kehoe of Reading, Pennsylvania, typify the many groups that flourished during this period.

Beginning his teaching career in 1920, Reg Kehoe organized his first "all-girl" marimba band in 1930. Teaching each of the women to play the marimba, Kehoe gradually developed a complete show routine which combined singing, dancing, acrobatics, skits, and performances on the accordion. His wife, Fern Henry Kehoe, a dancer, directed all of the dance routines, while participating as a member of the band throughout its thirty-two year history.

Reg Kehoe and His Marimba Queens became one of the most popular groups from Lancaster County, giving more than 4,000 performances during its thirty-two year career while ". . . appearing in such places as the Steel Pier and the [Hamid's] Million Dollar Pier at Atlantic City and at scores of fairs."¹⁵⁰ Commencing on 13 August 1938 with the "Taneytown Fair" in Carroll County, Maryland, the band began performing on the state-fair circuit, which eventually led them from Maine to Florida and later to the mid-West. In addition to these and numerous local engagements, the band performed on Broadway with Jackie Gleason, made two extended tours of western Canada, played for various radio programs, and

¹⁵⁰"Reg Kehoe, Marimba King, Dead at 76," Intelligencer Journal, 11 February 1978, Lancaster, Pa., p. 2.

appeared on programs with such names as Benny Goodman, Paul Whiteman, and the Dorsey Brothers.¹⁵¹

The first recordings of Kehoe's band were glass records made in October of 1941 from an engagement at WBT Radio in Charlotte, North Carolina.¹⁵² These recordings included some of the most popular numbers from the group's repertoire, such as William "Count" Basie's (1901-84) "One O'Clock Jump" (1938), Cole Porter's (1891-1964) "Begin the Beguine" (1935), Vincent Youmans' (1898-1946) "Tea for Two" (1924), Lester Lee's (1905-56) "Pennsylvania Polka" (1932), Larry Clinton's (b. 1909) "Study in Brown" (1937), and Jimmy McHugh's (1894-1969) "On the Sunny Side of the Street" (1930). At one point in their career, Kehoe, known as the marimba king of the eastern seaboard, was asked to evaluate the reason for the band's great success and popularity. He replied, "it's smart, good-looking girls, who can play real good music and, at the same time, display good figures and bare legs."¹⁵³ The band was eventually "driven

¹⁵¹Jack Brubaker, "Marimba Reunion," New Era, 16 April 1982, Lancaster, Pa., p. 18.

¹⁵²"Marimba Vets Recall 'Old Days'," Sunday News, 25 April 1982, Lancaster, Pa., sec. A, p. 4.

¹⁵³"Final Curtain-Call for Moose Jaw's Big Evening Grandstand Performance," Moose Jaw Times-Herald, 10 July 1943, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, p. 1.

off" the circuit with the increasing high cost of travel, and the advent of "rock and roll" music. The group's final performance was given in April 1962.

By the mid-1930s, hosts of other ensembles of the same type were in existence throughout the United States. The variety show became extremely popular during this time. The Royal Collegians Marimba Band of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, directed by Damon H. Shook, was formed in 1930. The versatility of this ensemble, typical of many such vaudeville novelty marimba bands, is evidenced by the following:

That the marimba band is one of the most popular musical ensembles today, both because it is a deviation from the conventional and because of its all-embracing appeal, is proved by the sensation that the Royal Collegians Marimba Band creates wherever it plays. Made up of high school and college students who were taught and are directed by Damon H. Shook, every member plays saxophone and at least one other instrument with the result that the organization besides being a marimba band is a saxophone band and a dance band as well, and plays concert, radio, theatre, and dance engagements the year around. [This] band is made up of twelve instrumentalists who live in Milwaukee and vicinity and uses four solo xylophones, three accompanying mellorimbos, [sic] three obbligato marimbos, one Monarch bass marimba, and one Grand marimba--all Leedys. Organized five years ago and is steadily gaining in popularity with ever-increasing demands for its services.¹⁵⁴

Jack Kurkowski's Xylophone Band of Richmond, Indiana, was formed in 1933. This thirteen-member ensemble, also known as Jack's Xylophone Band, included boys and girls

¹⁵⁴"Royal Collegians Marimba Band," Leedy Drum Topics, Vol. 1, No. 25 (December 1935), p. 24.

between the ages of eleven and eighteen. Each member doubled on some other instrument or participated in a specialty act. The group, which was taught and directed by Kurkowski, performed in vaudeville shows, chautauquas, state fairs, on radio, and for convention engagements for about eight years, and were constantly in demand.¹⁵⁵

Arlene Stouder and Her Marimba Band originated in Bremen, Indiana, a town which is just south of South Bend. This band, popular in 1939 and 1940, ". . . played numerous radio, dance, and club engagements in Northern Indiana."¹⁵⁶

The manufacture of marimbas and their sales in local music stores tremendously increased during this same time prompting the need for private instruction and resulting in the formation of marimba ensembles. The popularity of the marimba in 1940 is evidenced by the following:

It would have surprised no one if the decline of vaudeville had been accompanied by a similar decline in marimba popularity, but never has any instrument experienced a swifter and more dramatic rise in popularity, . . . marimba sales to dealers by one manufacturer alone have increased 318 percent in the past six years--and the sales curve is still going up. Startling too, is the fact that there were no temporary 'dips' in

¹⁵⁵"Jack's Xylophone Band," Leedy Drum Topics, Vol. 1, No. 27 (January 1939), p. 6.

¹⁵⁶"Arlene Stouder and Her Marimba Band," Leedy Drum Topics, Vol. 1, No. 27 (January 1939), p. 9.

this curve in any of the past half-dozen years of economic depression and recession setbacks. Each year showed a startling increase in sales over the year preceding it.¹⁵⁷

In many instances, purchasing an instrument entitled the buyer to free lessons by a qualified instructor. As part of this "lesson-plan selling," marimba ensembles were initiated. A prime example was the Summerhays Music Company of Salt Lake City, Utah. Beginning their marimba sales in 1938, the company sold seventy-eight instruments the following year with as many as thirty marimba students receiving instruction at one time. The Salt Lake City Marimba Symphony was formed, sponsored by Mr. H. B. Summerhays, and included thirty-one marimbists who performed for the local community on public concerts and radio broadcasts.

In Wheeling, West Virginia, the C. A. House Company had twelve children from ages five to nine enrolled in its children's marimba ensemble, while the Kansas City Toy Symphony included seventy-five "tiny tots" in its group, many of them playing marimbas. The latter ensemble

¹⁵⁷"No Sales Ceiling in Sight! Dealers Everywhere Are Converting 'Hot' Marimba Opportunities into Added Profits," Piano Trade Magazine (April 1940), p. 20. The J. C. Deagan Company placed an advertisement on the same page suggesting that dealers turn their sales efforts to the marimba and other mallet-played instruments because "one dealer in a moderate-sized western city . . . stepped up [marimba] sales from \$120 to \$5600 in a single year."

performed four concerts at the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco during June of 1939. In the small town of Elyria, Ohio, Wagner's Music Store had an eleven-member ensemble consisting of students of all ages, while the Jenkins Music Company store in Oklahoma City and Bartlesville, Oklahoma, had notable success with young-member groups directed by Ray Smith and Ruth Bourquin, respectively. Charles Watts, with the Charles E. Wells Company of Denver, Colorado, organized and directed both a junior and senior marimba orchestra selected from pupils enrolled in the Wells studio.

The area of eastern Pennsylvania was a hotbed of marimba activity during this same period. Participants in ensembles from Allentown, York, Lancaster, and Lebanon played a major role in the Musser marimba movement during the 1930s. James Betz, a marimba teacher in Allentown, organized ensembles of as many as fifty performers.

Other notable ensembles included the Drum Shop Marimba Band in Phoenix, Arizona, founded in 1931, and the Wichita Marimba Band which began the following year. Smaller ensembles, such as the Rosewood Marimba Trio in Baltimore, Maryland (1938), and the Dutton Marimba Trio, organized around 1940 and based in Chicago, were numerous throughout the United States.

Large-scale stage productions were common at this time, and the marimba played an important role in them. In Washington, D.C., the Homer L. Kitt Company, in cooperation with Charles Newton (the Deagan eastern sales representative), and the Earle Theatre, sponsored a marimba and dance revue in conjunction with the world premiere of the film, Mr. Smith Goes To Washington. For this 1939 production:

. . . the Kitt Company rented sixteen marimbas to the theatre and, in a few weeks, taught the theatre's permanent line of chorus girls a marimba routine which brought enthusiastic applause from the audience. The resultant publicity, worth thousands, created so much interest in the marimba, and convinced so many people that anyone can learn to play in a short time, that the Kitt store quickly sold the sixteen marimbas which had been rented to the Earle Theatre for the show, and then ordered more and kept right on selling them.¹⁵⁸

Earlier that decade, in July 1930, the J. C. Deagan Company sponsored a similar presentation in Chicago. The show, entitled "Tune Types of 1930," featured the Abbott dancing girls performing the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Tannhäuser (1845) by Richard Wagner (1813-83), "Turn on the Heat" (1929) by B. G. DeSylva (1885-1950), Lew Brown (1893-1958), and Ray Henderson (1896-1970), and "Tain't No Sin To Dance Around in Your Bones" (1929) by Walter Donaldson (1893-1947), playing on thirteen Deagan xylophones. The "Tune

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 22.

Types Xylophone Orchestra" performed to a "packed house" in the Oriental Theatre in Chicago under the direction of Clair Omar Musser. The Abbott girls, who had never played the xylophone before, were able to present the concert after only five and one half hours of practice.¹⁵⁹

About two years later, during the fall of 1931, another xylophone ensemble, the Imperial Xylophonists, became prominent in this locale. Under the direction and management of Ira R. Anthony, this twelve-member ensemble performed in fourteen theatres during that season. In 1930, J. C. Deagan organized and directed an ensemble of fifteen players and marimbas which were featured in elaborate stage productions in the larger theatres in and around the Chicago area.¹⁶⁰

To this point, the marimba of the United States existed primarily as a solo instrument utilized on the vaudeville stage and as an ensemble instrument when joined with other marimbas, and, occasionally, nonpercussion

¹⁵⁹"Xylophonists Thrill Audiences After 5½ Hours Practice," Popular Mechanics (November 1930), p. 63.

¹⁶⁰Gordon Peters states that this ensemble was ". . . the first American attempt at marimba ensembles." Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 160. This obviously cannot be true, as we have already been introduced to numerous groups which originated and performed in the United States.

instruments.¹⁶¹ Like the xylophone, the marimba also encountered opposition as a serious instrument on the concert stage. Stoddard notes that:

In South America where the instrument is in high vogue, it boasts a galaxy of virtuosi. Here in North America, it has made itself a worthy addition to dance ensembles and cocktail units. In the concert field it is less in evidence. . . . here the going is hard since the player has to buck an unfortunate aura held over from the days of vaudeville when they pulled bananas out of the instrument and had dancers performing behind it, as part of the 'act.'¹⁶²

Only recently have such notable performers as Clair Musser, Vida Chenoweth, Jack Connor, Doris Stockton, Burton Lynn Jackson, and presently Gordon Stout and Leigh Howard Stevens given the instrument its notoriety and brought the marimba to prominence on the concert stage.

It has been noted that the United States marimba is based on the instrument introduced by the Guatemalans. Chenoweth states that "marimba-makers there were the first to apply the chromatic scale to the instrument, . . . but notwithstanding their improvements the acoustical perfection of the marimba may be traced to Chicago, not to Central

¹⁶¹Unlike the xylophone, the works for which are numerous, the marimba can boast only of a few works in the orchestral repertoire in which it is represented. Among the few composers using the instrument are Berg, Stravinsky, Dallapiccola, Loeffler, Arnold, Holst, Copland, and Grainger.

¹⁶²Stoddard, "Xylophone, Marimba, Glockenspiel, Vibe," p. 25.

America."¹⁶³ By the period 1930 to 1950, the center of marimba manufacture and marimba ensemble activity had been firmly established in the mid-west, namely the city of Chicago. Gordon Peters gives the following reasons for this:

1. Clair Musser taught for several years at Northwestern University, which is in Evanston, Illinois, a city adjoining Chicago.
2. Musser's pupils often settled around Chicago and taught in schools there.
3. At one time there were four manufacturers of marimbas within a 200-mile radius of Chicago.
4. Chicago was the center of American marimba orchestras from 1930 through about 1950.
5. Chicago became the home of José Bethancourt, one of Guatemala's outstanding marimbists.¹⁶⁴

Chenoweth states that "so much of the credit in the scientific progress of the marimba belongs to Clair Omar Musser, that the concert marimba can be called an American instrument, the others 'forerunners'."¹⁶⁵ Therefore, to continue the history of the marimba, the accomplishments of Clair Omar Musser must be examined.

¹⁶³Vida Chenoweth, "Made in Guatemala," American Record Guide (May 1959), p. 705.

¹⁶⁴Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 165.

¹⁶⁵Chenoweth, "The Marimba Comes into its Own," p. 12.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARIMBA ENSEMBLE FROM CLAIR OMAR MUSSER TO THE PRESENT DAY

Clair Omar Musser

Few men have contributed more to the popularity of one instrument than Clair Omar Musser. Musser is one of the most familiar names in the percussion world today. Born on 14 October 1901 in Manheim, Pennsylvania (Lancaster County), Musser has been the dominant figure in marimba development in the United States during this century, distinguishing himself not only as an innovator, designer, and manufacturer of the instrument, but also as a conductor, composer, arranger, educator, and marimba virtuoso.

Musser began his musical education with his father, who was a violinist, and subsequently studied the xylophone, piano, and violin. He traveled to Baltimore and Washington, D.C., to study marimba with Philip Rosenweig, a teacher from Warsaw who taught the dulcimer and cimbalom in Poland and Paris, before making the United States his home and

dedicating his life to teaching the marimba. Musser also studied conducting, theory, and harmony.

As a scientist, Musser developed classroom planetaria and other teaching materials, beginning in the late 1950s when this nation began space exploration. His inventions are found not only in schools and universities, but also at Cape Kennedy, the Air Force Academy, and many international astronomical observatories.

In the 1970s, Musser combined his interests in science and music to create an instrument known as the celestaphone. This instrument resembles the vibraphone in both appearance and sound. Over \$38,000 was spent producing the celestaphone, which included 678 pounds of grade AA siderites (nickel-iron meteorites). His interest in meteorites resulted in an extensive meteorite collecting program. The meteorites used in the celestaphone were collected from many parts of the world, including the USSR, Philippines, and Taipei, China.¹

Musser has more than forty international patents for musical instrument design and invention. As early as 26 May 1932, he became a member of the distinguished Acoustical

¹"Clair Omar Musser; Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame 1975," Percussive Notes, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Winter 1976), p. 26.

Society of America because of his prominence as an educator and engineer in acoustics and musical physics.² He is also a member of the American Society of Metallurgists, the Society for Research on Meteorities, the Society for the Advancement of Science, and the Smithsonian Institute.

As a designer, Musser patented numerous features and original designs of keyboard percussion instruments. Some of the models of marimbas he designed include the Century of Progress, the King George, the Queen Anne, the Windsor, the Imperial, the Mercury, the Century, the Diana, the Neo-Classic, and the Canterbury. During Musser's career, he ". . . designed special instruments for Leopold Stokowski, the Duke of Windsor, Percy Grainger, Paul Whiteman, Lawrence Welk, Horace Heidt, Dick Powell, Buddy Rogers, Shirley Temple, Miss America, and scores of other notables."³

While residing in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1925 and 1926, Musser designed a massive musical instrument known as the marimba-celeste. An account of the instrument, built at the J. C. Deagan factory in Chicago, is given in the August 1930 issue of Metronome Music Magazine:

²Ibid., p. 25.

³Ibid.

The basis of the instrument is a wood bar percussion [sic] five octaves, two notes in range, covering both xylophone and marimba registers. In addition, two octaves of vibra-harp is provided, these bars being placed in a third rank giving the general appearance of a gigantic three manual pipe organ console.

Radio plays its part too, for there are microphonic pick-ups in the lower register and these are connected to an amplifying system and . . . two immense horns . . . By suitable controls the volume can be swelled and diminished as in a pipe organ. Other pedals control mechanical bar actions and tone duration on the vibra-harp.

The net result is a wide variety of possible tonal combinations. . . .⁴

The premiere appearance of the marimba-celeste was at a concert given at Orchestra Hall in Chicago. Twenty-two members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra assisted Musser on this concert, which featured the works of Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826), Ambroise Thomas (1811-96), and Frederic Chopin (1810-49). Musser's performance was very well received. Music critic Herman Devries stated that Musser

⁴"Clair Omar Musser Introduces Mighty Marimba-Celeste," Metronome Music Magazine (August 1930), p. 34. The marimba-celeste was built at an initial cost of \$7,200 and was later insured for \$10,000. Assisting Musser in the design of the instrument were several electrical engineers from the R.C.A. Victor Phonograph Company. The instrument, termed the "world's first electronic marimba," had ". . . reverb, amplifiers and twin ten-inch Rice/Kellog Dynamic Speakers," along with foot-controlled "bass effects" which could control the volume of the instrument and either blend with or amplify above a 110-piece symphony orchestra when playing a concerto. The marimba-celeste was capable of achieving tone colors of both vibraphone and marimba at the same time. "Clair Omar Musser; Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame 1975," p. 25.

was ". . . without a doubt a remarkable virtuoso--a master of the instrument whose conquest of this difficult percussion instrument achieves technic of dazzling perfection."⁵ Concerning the performance of Weber's Polonaise Brillante, another reviewer added ". . . this was a veritable 'tour de force' which left the audience in almost silent amazement before it could begin applauding."⁶

From 1927 until 1930, Musser toured throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe performing on the marimba-celeste as a recitalist and guest soloist with symphony orchestras. He was the premiere Warner Brothers' Vitaphone xylophonist, and recorded for the leading phonograph companies as well. He also spent one season as percussionist with the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra.

In February of 1929, Musser organized and directed a twenty-five-piece, all-girl, marimba ensemble for Paramount Pictures for its opening performance at the Oriental Theatre in Chicago. As mentioned above in Chapter II, Musser directed the xylophone orchestra known as the "Tune Types Xylophone Orchestra," and a fifteen-piece marimba ensemble organized by J. C. Deagan in 1930. Musser's

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

conducting talent enabled him to guest conduct on various radio broadcasts in the United States during the late 1930s.

In 1930, Clair Musser joined the Deagan firm as manager of the mallet instrument division, bringing with him an extraordinary talent for instrument design and an exceptional ability for promotional activity. Hal Trommer states that ". . . by 1932, [Musser] had conceived a revolutionary marimba design dominated by aesthetics which established a precedent for the design of all top-of-line professional model instruments in the future."⁷ Following World War II, Musser severed his relationship with the Deagan Company and organized his own company, Musser Marimbas, Inc., in 1948. Faced with severe financial problems, Musser sold his company to Bill Lyons of the Lyons Band Instrument Manufacturers in 1956, who in turn, sold it to his employee, Dick Richardson, in 1961. The final episode in the history of the Musser Company took place in 1966 when the Ludwig Drum Company purchased the

⁷Hal Trommer, "A Chronology of the J. C. Deagan Company," (Chicago, Ill.: By the Author, 4231 N. Wolcott Avenue, 1983), p. 7. Paper privately printed and presented to the author by Hal Trommer, Knoxville, Tenn., 6 November 1983.

Musser Company from Richardson and retained him as president of that division.⁸

From 1942 until 1952, Clair Musser served on the faculty of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He was the head of marimba studies and, as such, instructed and coached a great majority of today's outstanding marimba artists and teachers.

Throughout his musical career, Musser wrote and arranged compositions mainly for marimba and marimba ensembles. By 1941, he had published fifty-three works, which included piano solos and sacred music, in addition to solos and arrangements for the marimba and vibraphone. Gordon Stout suggests that Musser may have written a total of twelve opera of ten pieces each for marimba.⁹ Today, there are only a few of these works available, most of which are published by Studio 4 Productions in Northridge, California.

⁸In 1981, the Selmer Company purchased Ludwig Industries, thus also the Musser division; but Dick Richardson moved to the position as president of the Slingerland Drum Company which also includes the J. C. Deagan Company.

⁹Interview with Gordon Stout, held during the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana, 13 November 1981.

In 1975, Musser was elected to the Percussive Arts Society's distinguished Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the area of mallet percussion. Musser was also selected to become a member of the Royal Oxford Music Society and Kappa Kappa Psi.

Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra

Of all Musser's contributions, the one for which he has gained the most recognition was the organization of large marimba ensembles. That his idea was not completely unique is evidenced by the following:

There is no limit to the possibilities of this instrument, . . . and with a number of players on each instrument a band of unrestricted size is entirely feasible. . . ; we predict that at no great future date the public will have an opportunity of listening to bands of immense proportions made up entirely of marimba-xylophones.¹⁰

This prediction, made by the J. C. Deagan Company in its 1920 catalog, finally became a reality in 1933, when Clair Musser organized a 100-piece marimba orchestra which was later featured at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago (Chicago World's Fair).

The events leading to the formation of this marimba orchestra were as follows. Clair Musser, during an appear-

¹⁰"Deagan Marimba-Xylophone," Catalog R, J. C. Deagan Inc., Chicago (1920), p. 49.

ance in Chicago as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, met the former vice-president of the United States Charles Dawes and his brother Rufus, who had recently been elected president of the Century of Progress Committee. Marg Holmgren gives the following details concerning their meeting:

. . . At a dinner in Winnetka, Illinois, attended by the officers of the forth-coming Century of Progress Exposition, Musser heard the earnest expressions of Dawes and his associates explaining how deeply they would like to present something NEW and musically epochal for this World's Fair. Musser remembered how, as a very young lad, his father had raved about the 19-piece Honduras Marimba Orchestra which was featured in 1915 at the San Francisco World's Fair. Musser promptly joined in the discussions and proposed that the committee authorize the sponsorship of a 100-piece marimba symphony orchestra for the Century of Progress Exposition.¹¹

The World's Fair Marimba Band, as it was also known, was commissioned by Dawes, who helped Musser by raising nearly \$100,000 for this project. Musser designed the marimbas, the prototype of which is known as the "Century of Progress Model," selected and taught each of the orchestra members, and also arranged all of the music for the group and served as conductor.

¹¹Marg Holmgren, "Clair Omar Musser and the Marimba Symphony Orchestra," Percussive Notes, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Spring-Summer 1978), p. 20.

The J. C. Deagan Company made a total of 100 Century of Progress Model marimbas. Twenty-five were four and one half-octave instruments (\underline{c} to \underline{f}^4), and the remaining seventy-five, three and one half-octave instruments.¹² Each members' name was engraved on a gold plate affixed to the front of the marimba. All of these instruments were finished in green "Mother of Pearl." Each member had to purchase his own instrument, the cost of which was \$350 for the three and one half-octave instruments, and \$500 for a four and one half-octave marimba. Several new features were introduced by Musser in these instruments: (1) music racks mounted on the frame of the instrument, (2) tension springs, and (3) symmetry of design.

Members of the orchestra received their instruments about March 1933. The majority of the players in the group were not marimbists. Musser recruited instrumentalists with a variety of backgrounds, including violinists and pianists, and gave private lessons to each. There were about twenty to twenty-five members from the Chicago area that rehearsed regularly in a small group during that spring

¹²It is interesting to note that in 1978, one of these four and one half-octave marimbas was sold in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for \$16,000. Personal letter from Clair Omar Musser, Studio City, Calif., to Michael Combs, Knoxville, Tenn., 5 March 1981.

and summer at the Deagan factory. The separate units of the ensemble were not assembled until one day before the opening of the Fair, at which time Musser rehearsed the mass entourage in two final dress rehearsals.

Five selections were chosen by Musser for the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra: the "Bolero" by Eustacio Rosales, the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Tannhäuser by Wagner, the "Largo" from the New World Symphony by Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904), the overture to the opera Carmen by Georges Bizet (1838-75), and the "Repasz Band March" by Charles C. Sweeley.¹³ This would be the first performance in which Musser would conduct Rosales' "Bolero." In an interview almost fifty years later, Musser explained his part in bringing this "Latin-flavored song" to the world, which began while Rosales and Musser lunched together. During these meals, Rosales frequently hummed a tune which

¹³The "Repasz Band March" was composed in 1897 by the Repasz Band's celebrated trombonist Charles C. Sweeley. The piece served as the group's signature tune and ". . . is said to be the second-most-played march in the world, exceeded in number of performances only by Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." Gene Bardo, "The Legacy of the Repasz Band," Instrumentalist, Vol. 37, No. 6 (January 1983), pp. 33-34. Many of the published copies of this work credit Harry J. Lincoln as the composer.

Musser encouraged him to write down. Later, Musser arranged the "Bolero" for marimbas.¹⁴

Musser arranged each selection in a five-part format and divided the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra into sections of twenty members each. During this period, Musser's technique of scoring became somewhat standardized, and is illustrated in the following example (Ex. 1) from the "Pilgrims' Chorus" by Wagner.

In this excerpt, the first marimba (Marimba I) covers the obbligato part in the violins. Marimbas II and III play the tenor and bass vocal parts respectively, while the fourth marimba is assigned the viola line. The fifth marimba, also called the bass marimba, plays the string bass/cello parts throughout, with an occasional octave transposition.

The music for the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra was all hand copied. Musser enlisted the help of orchestra members for this task. It was later engraved and published by Forster Music Company of Chicago, in 1941.

¹⁴John Drybred, "Concert Reunites Five Marimba Players," Intelligencer Journal, April 1979, Lancaster, Pa., p. 68.

Ex. 1. RICHARD WAGNER, "PILGRIMS' CHORUS" FROM TANNHÄUSER.
Example of Clair Omar Musser's technique of scoring
for five marimbas.

The image displays two musical staves for the 'Pilgrims' Chorus' from Wagner's Tannhäuser. The top staff shows the first system, and the bottom staff shows the second system. Each system includes five marimba parts (I, IV, II, III, V) and vocal parts (Viol. I, Viol. II, Br., Ten., BaS., and Vel. K.B.). The marimba parts are written in a complex, rhythmic style, often using triplets and sixteenth notes. The vocal parts include German lyrics. In the first system, the lyrics are 'sichen während des Folgenden an dem Berg.' and 'Opa - - - - - du'. In the second system, the lyrics are 'vorsprange vorbei langsam das Tal entlang dem Hintergrunde zu.)', 'Hail ist dem Hü - - - - - Ber be - - - - - schie - - - - - den, er'.

Marimba I

Marimba IV

Marimba II

Marimba III

Marimba V

Viol. I

Viol. II

Br.

Ten.

BaS.

Vel.

K.B.

sichen während des Folgenden an dem Berg.

Opa - - - - - du

vorsprange vorbei langsam das Tal entlang dem Hintergrunde zu.)

Hail ist dem Hü - - - - - Ber be - - - - - schie - - - - - den, er

Between 19 and 26 August, the World's Fair Marimba Band performed concerts each afternoon and evening on the steps of the science building at the Fair. A disc recording was made of the group featuring the "Bolero" on one side, and the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Tannhäuser on the other.

Following the Exposition, Musser was awarded the Gold Medal of Honor from the Century of Progress Committee, and was also decorated by the Brazilian government, who bestowed upon him the Borez Award, for his musical achievement at the Fair. If one may believe a somewhat biased source, the Deagan Company reported that an unprecedented two million people witnessed the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra's performances during that week, and ". . . music critics lauded this orchestra comparable [sic] to the greatest symphony orchestra of all time."¹⁵

International Marimba Symphony Orchestra

While still revelling in the tremendous success of the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra at the Chicago World's Fair, Musser went to work preparing for yet another marimba orchestra, which he named the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra. Musser arranged a European tour for this orchestra, which would conclude with a concert at Carnegie Hall in New York City. The destination of the group was London, where concerts for the twenty-fifth anniversary Golden Jubilee for the coronation of King

¹⁵"The Marimba Band and Orchestra: The Deagan Century of Progress 100-Piece Symphonic Marimba Band," Promotional Flyer, J. C. Deagan, Inc., Chicago, Ill., 1934.

George V and his Queen (Mary) were to take place Saturday night and Sunday morning, 27-28 April 1935.

Musser designed a marimba, appropriately called the "King George," especially for this auspicious event. Each instrument conspicuously displayed the British coat of arms, with each orchestra member's full name engraved on a gold-filled shield on the front of the instrument, engraved by the internationally famous artist Alexander Jacobs.¹⁶

The J. C. Deagan Company made only 102 King George model marimbas: 100 for the members of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra, one for Clair Musser's personal use, and one remaining instrument for use as a spare. After producing the 102 King George marimbas, Clair Musser, intent that this design never again be duplicated, had all of the materials for constructing the King George marimba destroyed. Musser insisted that these limited edition instruments be the exclusive property of the members of the orchestra. Each instrument was personalized to the point of being adjusted to the correct height of its owner.

Musser also continued the practice of arranging the music in five voices, just as he had with the Century of

¹⁶Jacobs was at this time the head of the engravers in the United States mint, a position he had held for more than seven years.

Progress Marimba Orchestra. Therefore, one-fifth of the instruments were made in the low range beginning Small c to c⁴, in order to play the lower bass part. The remaining marimbas had a four-octave range of Small f to f⁴.

Like the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra, this new ensemble was to have 100 members, however, Musser retained only thirteen players from that first group. He also decided that the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra should consist of fifty men and fifty women ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-five. Recruiting advertisements were placed in newspapers in many cities around the United States. Musser auditioned each applicant in person, usually discussing his proposal with their parents. Members of the orchestra came from as far away as San Francisco and Los Angeles, but almost half of the group was centered around Chicago, Illinois, Clair Musser's home. Thirty members were located in eastern Pennsylvania, while the remaining few were spread from New York to North Dakota. The members in the Chicago contingent met regularly at the Deagan factory for rehearsals with Musser. Carl Fisher, the assistant conductor of the Orchestra, rehearsed the players from the eastern Pennsylvania area every Saturday and Sunday, beginning in the fall of 1934, on the second floor of the Farmers Supply House on East King Street in Lancaster,

Pennsylvania. Musser tried to monitor the progress of as many players as possible, but those members in more distant areas had to prepare mostly on their own. Musser sent letters to his members exhorting them to practice diligently. One such message pleaded "PLEASE . . . PLEASE . . . PLEASE practice your orchestra part incessantly and when you think you can play your part well enough please remember that there is no such thing as perfection, at least in music."¹⁷ The musical background of the membership ran the gamut from a Hollywood studio musician and college music graduates, to high school students, some of whom had never played a marimba before. It was probably this latter group, in particular, that Musser was addressing when he wrote:

. . . By all means practice your 'roll' as I am more concerned about this than anything else in the orchestra. I WANT A LIGHT DELICATE FAIRLY RAPID ROLL WHICH PRODUCES ONLY MUSIC AND NO BAR NOISES OR HAMMER DETONATIONS.¹⁸

Each member was obliged to purchase his own instrument at a cost of \$500. This fee also purchased the two

¹⁷Personal letter from Clair Omar Musser, Chicago, Ill., to International Marimba Symphony Orchestra Members, 11 January 1935. Letter given to the author by Mrs. Betty McCauley, Lancaster, Pa. (Capitalizations his).

¹⁸Ibid. (Capitalizations his) Please see appendix A on page 230 for a copy of the complete letter sent by Musser to the members of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra.

carrying trunks for the marimba and all major expenses of the trip for each performer. Musser had received more than \$40,000 in pledges from music patrons who were interested in the future success of this new orchestra. These funds supplemented the members' payments to cover the expense of hotels, train and ship transportation, and educational trips in Paris.

The members from the western states gathered in Chicago, and traveled by special train with the Chicago contingent to the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, on Sunday, 14 April 1935. This group, which consisted of about two-thirds of the total International Marimba Symphony, presented a concert series on three consecutive evenings, beginning on Tuesday, 16 April, in the Cameo Ballroom of the Greenbrier.

The International Marimba Symphony Orchestra performed during the height of the resort's spring season. Greenbrier historian Robert Conte states:

. . . Spring, or more precisely right about Easter time, was always the most popular time of the year here. Guests from the Northeast and Midwest travelled here for an early glimpse of spring where they were joined by many wealthy patrons migrating from their winter homes in Florida to their summer homes in the North. . . . April of 1935 was a continual round of polo, riding, swimming, and fashion shows. For a century, the Greenbrier and White Sulphur Springs were known for the elaborate balls and formal dances.

. . . Despite the national depression, the Greenbrier seemed able to maintain a steady patronage. I suspect that the Marimba Orchestra performed here to provide a rather glamorous send-off to their European tour.¹⁹

The Thursday, 18 April concert was broadcast nationwide from the Greenbrier's Cameo Ballroom, over the Columbia Broadcasting System. The program consisted of the "Bolero" by Rosales, the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Tannhäuser by Wagner (both of which had previously been performed by the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra), "Pomp and Circumstance" by Edward Elgar (a special arrangement included especially for the British concerts), "Kammenoi Ostrow" by Anton Rubinstein (1829-94), the first two movements from the Symphony in D Minor by César Franck (1822-90), and Chopin's Prelude in E Minor. In a newspaper article the following day, it was stated that the listeners of the nation-wide broadcast thought "it was impossible to realize a hundred similar instruments were playing, the general effect being of but five or six, indicating excellent direction."²⁰

Following the orchestra's appearance at the Greenbrier Hotel, the group traveled to New York City. There,

¹⁹Personal letter from Robert S. Conte, Historian, Greenbrier Hotel, White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., 19 August 1982, pp. 1-2.

²⁰"Marimba Symphony Orchestra Heard In Fine Broadcast," Times Press, 19 April 1935, Streator, Ill., p. 1.

after being joined by other members from the Northeast, they embarked from the port of New York on Saturday morning, 20 April 1935, on the S. S. Paris for Southampton, England. While on board, practice sessions were held with about twenty members at a time, because there wasn't a room large enough to accommodate the entire group. The problem of performance space would continue to plague the orchestra during their European tour. Members of the group report that all one hundred players never performed together at any concert because no stage was ever large enough to accommodate the full orchestra. Personnel for each performance was decided by Clair Musser and Carl Fisher, the assistant conductor, prior to each concert. A concert was given by a select group of twenty members in the Grand Salon Ballroom of the S. S. Paris on Monday, 22 April, at 9:45 p.m.

The original itinerary had the orchestra presenting two concerts in Royal Albert Hall in London on 27-28 April. The concerts were in connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary Golden Jubilee, and King George and Queen Mary were to have been in attendance. Unfortunately, both of the performances were abruptly cancelled. Earlier that year, Ray Noble's Dance Orchestra, a very popular British group,

had come to New York City to perform. However, through a contract dispute with the American Federation of Musicians Union, local No. 802 in New York, the full group was unable to give its performance. In a maneuver of political retaliation, a representative from the British Ministry of Labor met the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra at the ship upon arrival, and informed them that they would not be allowed to perform in Royal Albert Hall.

The Atlantic voyage, which lasted seven days, finally ended Friday evening, 26 April, in Le Havre France. The orchestra members took the boat train to Paris that same evening. Sight-seeing occupied the first few days of their Paris stay.

The International Marimba Symphony Orchestra's European concert performances opened with an evening concert at the Salle Rameau in Paris on Thursday, 2 May 1935. Two rehearsals of four hours' duration had been held earlier that day. Columnist Marcel Coudeyre summarized the concert as:

. . . a splendid success from the point of view of curiosity as well as appreciation.

Standing in front of their instruments, the performers play with their mallets and achieve sounds which soften or increase like [those of a] pipe organ. The ensemble is truly harmonious and very musical. The playing of Spanish dances and the sounds of the carillons contributed to the colorful interpretation

of the music. Without ever attaining the sublime, the 'Marimbas' put us in an atmosphere of high musical standards. It is true that not even the slightest monotony is felt, even after a lengthy hearing of this music.

Some virtuosi enhance this orchestra which is much in vogue in America. The Parisian public, who are so aware of musical things, cannot remain indifferent to the 'Marimbas.'²¹

Early Saturday morning the group left for Brussels. After arriving there in the mid-afternoon, the orchestra performed that very evening in the Grande Salle du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles (Great Room of the Palace of Beautiful Arts of Brussels). The program consisted of Chopin's Prelude in C Minor, Rosales' "Bolero," the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Wagner's Tannhäuser, Rubinstein's "Kammenoi Ostrow," and "In A Monastery Garden" by Albert Ketèlbey (1875-1959). The special version of Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" that Musser had arranged especially for the London concerts closed the first half of the program. The second half of the program consisted of the first and second movements of the Franck Symphony in D Minor, the "Largo" from Dvořák's New World Symphony, and concluded with the overture from the opera Mignon by Ambroise Thomas (1811-96).

²¹Marcel Coudeyre, "Symphony Orchestra of Marimbas," Paris L'Information, 4 May 1935, Paris, France, p. 7.

This concert by the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra on 4 May was the opening music event of the 1935 Brussel's World's Fair. Paul Tinel, critic for Le Soir, wrote:

We were waiting for crashing sounds, mercilessly boring into our eardrums, opening wide the metallic flood-gates; we thought of witnessing the impressive spectacle of 100 Siegfrieds hammering multiphonic anvils with all their might . . . there was nothing like that.

Regarding execution, almost all the effects are beautiful, particularly the organ effects, the suave murmurings, and the extreme fineness of the pianissimo, which form a backdrop for melodic sketches. Such phenomenon has given great seductiveness to Ketèlbey's piece 'In a Monastery Garden.' The distant sonorities seem to be those of an Aeolian harp, vibrating in the wind, and the picturesque imagination of the composer was well reproduced. It is as if each note from a bell-like tone falls on the vaporous harmonic tissue like a drop of gold.

Finally we must say that not only are all these musicians technicians of the first water, they are musicians with profound sensitiveness, just like their leader, Mr. Musser.²²

As soon as the orchestra members had packed their instruments they returned to Paris. The next day (Monday) was another busy one for the troupe. In the afternoon, the Fox and Paramount Motion Picture Companies made a movie of the group. Later that evening the orchestra again presented a concert at the Salle Rameau. Following the performance, Maurice Imbert, critic for Les Débats, wrote:

²²Paul Tinel, "The Symphony Orchestra of One Hundred Marimbas," Le Soir, 6 May 1935, Brussels, p. 5.

This orchestra produces soft and melodious, yet rather strange sounds, dry and metallic. The tones are remarkably well blended and remind one of the basses in organs. Offered in this manner, the E Minor Prelude of Chopin was ravishing. The other sonorities evoke those of the piano and the harp. His [Mr. Musser's] colleagues are perfectly controlled. [i.e., well-trained]²³

A Viennese impresario suggested that the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra extend its tour to eighteen more European cities. The offer had to be declined because a concert had already been scheduled at Carnegie Hall shortly after the orchestra was to return to the United States. One can only speculate as to the results of this tour extension, had it occurred.

On Wednesday, 8 May, the group boarded the S. S. Ile de France for its return trip to New York. Arriving in New York City the following Tuesday evening, 14 May, the orchestra stayed at the Lincoln Hotel near Times Square until the Thursday evening performance in Carnegie Hall. The International Marimba Symphony Orchestra performed before a "large and enthusiastic audience" at Carnegie Hall that evening.²⁴ However, as with its European tour, the

²³Maurice Imbert, "Concerts and Recitals: The Marimba Orchestra," Les Debats, 6 May 1935, Paris, France, page unknown.

²⁴"Music in Review: A Marimba Symphony," New York Times, 17 May 1935, p. 25.

full orchestra was again unable to perform together as a unit, even with an addition built onto the present Carnegie Hall stage. Only seventy-eight players appear in the publicity photographs taken before the performance.

The program consisted of the same works the group had played in Paris and Brussels, however, reviews of the 16 May performance were not always as complimentary as those received in Europe. For example, the New York Herald Tribune carried this review the following day:

[Musser] . . . assured those present that they would hear quite a different version of the Franck work than they were accustomed to hearing from their favorite symphony orchestra. He also informed them that Franck was very fond of the harp when he wrote the D Minor Symphony and that he had striven to imitate in his transcription the sounds of that instrument. Leaving aside all questions of taste in procedure of this kind, the reason for presenting accepted masterworks intended for the piano or orchestra on an instrument of such limited possibilities as the marimba was not made evident by the results.

The sounds produced on this occasion were not of a kind to evoke esthetic sensations. The noisier moments resembled the wailing of a calliope and the effect otherwise was one of unalleviated monotony. An audience of good size applauded in friendly fashion.²⁵

Another critic wrote about the performance of the Franck Symphony in much the same manner:

²⁵"Marimba Orchestra Plays Program at Carnegie Hall: 100 Performers Offer Franck Symphony Arrangement," New York Herald Tribune, 17 May 1935, p. 12.

. . . As the second movement advanced, however, it became less easy to recognize the music either as a symphony in general or the D minor in particular.²⁶

He also commented that:

In the course of the concert the players used two pairs of wooden hammers, one of them padded and the other not. The piano effects, done with the padded hammers, were often skillfully graduated and agreeable to hear. When the musicians seized the other hammers and rattled off fortes and fortissimos the results were not so good.²⁷

Not all of the reviews were so harsh however.

Leonard Liebbling, a critic who was already familiar with the music of the marimba, spoke of himself as he stated:

I still like the marimba, although I prefer it in light music, and think that matters like symphonic scores sound best when played by the kind of instrumentation indicated by the composer.

However, the I.M.S.O. group achieved some excellent effects in tone-shading and dynamics, and at times gave an astonishing semblance of 'legato' quality. Technically and musically, the band has been well trained, and Mr. Musser controls it ably.²⁸

Plans had also been made for the full one hundred-piece orchestra to tour ten of the larger cities in the United States by chartered train, after completing its

²⁶"Marimba Music in Novelty Bill: Carnegie Hall Concert by 100 Players," New York Daily News, 17 May 1935, p. 1.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Leonard Liebbling, "Marimba Orchestra Offers An Array of Standard Music," New York American, 17 May 1935, p. 12.

New York engagement. Orchestra members were to receive a small salary each week. A sizeable radio contract, as well as a motion picture to be made in Hollywood during the troupe's stay in Los Angeles, had also been planned. Unfortunately, the tour never materialized.

Following the Carnegie Hall concert, the instruments, showing signs of extreme wear and tear as a result of their poor handling while packing and unpacking during the European tour, were returned to the Deagan factory for repairs. This was yet another expense for the J. C. Deagan Company, which had subsidized much of the trip, and had been left in serious financial straits as a result. Fortunately however, with the ever-increasing popularity of the marimba and its sales boom towards the late 1930s, the Deagan Company was able to recover its losses.

The concert tour of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra exposed many people to this unusual instrument by means of live performances, radio broadcasts, and motion pictures. Peters states that ". . . Musser's advertising and performance with the organization had so improved opinion about the marimba that it was no longer looked upon as a poor satellite of the xylophone."²⁹

²⁹Peters, Drummer: Man, pp. 161-62.

With the conclusion of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra's tour, Clair Musser relaxed his efforts of touring with large massed ensembles, although he remained quite active in promoting marimba groups.

In May 1935, when the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra disbanded, some members of the group who were reluctant to stop performing, organized smaller marimba ensembles. Five members of the orchestra's Pennsylvania contingent banded together forming a group called Phil Diehl and his Marimba Orchestra. Philip Diehl served as conductor of the marimba quintet. Clair Musser wrote Diehl to wish his group success, stating that he had heard "comments from worthy critics . . . [about] the meritorious balance of [their] programs," which included pieces they had learned as members of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra.³⁰ Musser also remarked about the "particular praise . . . given the fine stage appearance of [the] ensemble."³¹ It is not surprising that Musser remarked favorably about the uniforms worn by the group, which were the same as he had required of his group. The men dressed in formal attire,

³⁰Personal letter from Clair Omar Musser, Chicago, Ill., to Philip Diehl, Lancaster, Pa., 27 January 1936. Personal files of Betty McCauley, Lancaster, Pa.

³¹Ibid.

white tie and tails, and the ladies wore floor-length white gowns. Musser suggested that much of this new group's success was due to his previous efforts, stating that:

It is easy to understand the significance of your fine musical effects, for every individual member of your ensemble possesses a thorough understanding of the marimba--each of them having been [a member of] the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra.

This distinction, coupled with their ownership of the beautiful and exclusive King George Marimbas, should insure a glowing future for your Orchestra.³²

Musser also attempted to perpetuate the success of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra's tour by selecting five marimbists for a tour of the mid-west and western United States on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad in 1936. Besides Musser himself, the group included Marion Musser (Clair's wife), George Seaberg, Burton Lynn Jackson, and William F. Ludwig, Jr. The Santa Fe Railroad provided room, board, and transportation. In turn, the group was expected to perform two-hour concerts at the railroad's division points. In May 1936, the tour started in Chillicothe, Illinois, and, after performances in ten cities across the nation, it concluded in San Bernardino, California.³³

³²Ibid.

³³Personal letter from William F. Ludwig, Jr., Chicago, Ill., 18 March 1982, pp. 1-2.

The music for this small ensemble was selected from the repertoire of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra. Piano solos were added, however, to lend variety to the program. The piano soloists were William F. Ludwig, Jr., George Seaberg, and Clair Omar Musser, Jr., who was only eight years of age at the time of the tour.

A year later, in 1937, a twenty-seven-piece marimba orchestra, also conducted by Musser, performed for the Annual American Music Manufacturer's Convention in Chicago. The following year, Musser tried to reunite members of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra for the NBC nation-wide "Magic Key" radio broadcast on 31 July 1938. The orchestra, composed of about ninety members, included some marimbists who had not previously been with the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra because many original members had withdrawn from the unit. The program, which featured two selections, the overture to The Magic Flute by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), and "Flight of the Bumble Bee" by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), was broadcast live from the Civic Theatre in Chicago.

No formal reunion of the full International Marimba Symphony Orchestra has ever been held. However, there was an attempt by Willis Rapp, assistant professor of music at

Millersville State College, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to reunite the members of the Pennsylvania contingent on Wednesday night, 11 April 1979. In his desire to expose his students to the marimba ensemble literature of Clair Musser, he had located members of the original International Marimba Symphony Orchestra who lived in the Lancaster County area around Millersville. He invited them to attend a special concert and reunion at the college, and to participate in the concert if they so desired. Of seventeen original International Marimba Symphony Orchestra members in attendance, including Clair Musser himself, eight former players unpacked their music and King George marimbas to play once again under Musser's baton.

Through the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra and Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra, Clair Musser had introduced the modern manufactured marimba to concert audiences in both Europe and America. From the grand ballrooms in Paris and Brussels to Carnegie Hall in New York City, from ocean liner dining rooms to school gymnasiums at railroad division points, Musser's groups were seen and heard by audiences ranging in size from a few to several thousand. During the eight years that Musser had been organizing and directing large marimba

orchestras, he had helped to popularize the marimba. Musser did not, however, cease his involvement in marimba orchestras after completing his work with the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra. Instead, he foresaw the opportunity to continue to expand the marimba's sphere of influence and continued to travel around the United States organizing and directing marimba ensembles.

Other Marimba Organizations Developed by Musser

In the late 1930s, Musser turned his interests to the Oklahoma area, particularly Enid and Tulsa. It has been suggested that Musser's interest came from one of his students, Vida Chenoweth, whose father owned a music store in Oklahoma and invited Musser there for clinics and concerts. Musser began recruiting yet another group of marimbists which performed for three consecutive years at the Tri-State Music Festival in Enid, Oklahoma, beginning in 1939.

Musser organized a twenty-five member marimba orchestra for the seventh annual Tri-State Band Festival, held from 19-21 April 1939, at Phillips University. Its repertoire consisted of several simple pieces. The following year, however, Musser expanded his program. The marimba orchestra grew in size to fifty-five

participants, and included the addition of two "contra bass" marimbas that Musser had designed for the J. C. Deagan firm. These special instruments, which encompassed a range from Great C to Small f, were shipped from Chicago especially for this concert. Program selections grew in scope and difficulty, and included Mozart's overture to The Marriage of Figaro, the "Andante" from Symphony No. 5 by Piotr Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840-93), "Flight of the Bumble Bee" by Rimsky-Korsakov, "In A Monastery Garden" by Ketèlbey, "Bolero" by Rosales, and "Pomp and Circumstance" by Elgar.

The eighth annual Tri-State Band Festival was held from 17-20 April 1940. Musser's marimba ensemble of that year toured the Oklahoma area after the Festival. On Friday, 26 April, in Tulsa, the group presented an afternoon matinee for area school children. That evening, the marimba orchestra, augmented by the Tulsa Civic Choral Society, presented a program featuring Wagner's "Träume," a "Kyrie eleison" chant, and the compositions by Ketèlbey, Rosales, Mozart, and Elgar mentioned above. Musser prepared a special arrangement of "Pomp and Circumstance" featuring the massed chorus of 150 voices. Musser also performed two solos on the vibraphone, "Evening Star" by Robert Schumann (1810-56), and "Tea for Two" by Vincent Youmans (1898-1946).

For the ninth annual Tri-State Band Festival, Musser organized the largest marimba orchestra of the series to date, recruiting 120 marimbists from thirty-three colleges and universities in eleven states. Musser called them the "cream of the college crop." Each performer paid his own way to participate in this group. Musser utilized a forty-member chorus in two of the selections; "Largo" from the New World Symphony by Dvořák, and "Finlandia" by Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). He even sent to Cuba and the Dutch East Indies for nearly 100 additional rhythm instruments to augment the two Latin-American Suites, "The Carioca" from Youmans' Flying Down to Rio (1933), and "Siboney" from Get Hep to Her Love by Ernesto Lecuona (1896-1963).³⁴

The Festival concert was held on Friday, 18 April 1941. The day before, the marimba orchestra presented a nation-wide half-hour concert over the Mutual Broadcasting System. A recording was also produced from this performance.

For the first time in the nine-year history of the Tri-State Festival, the 4,000 seat Convention Hall auditorium was filled to capacity. People were actually turned away

³⁴"Clair Musser, Wizard Of Marimba, Is Arranging One Of World's Greatest Such Concerts At Tri-State Festival," Enid Daily Eagle, 18 April 1941, Enid, Okla., p. 1.

after the aisles were filled by standing patrons.³⁵ In addition to the compositions mentioned above, the program included selections from the opera Carmen by Bizet, "Artists' Life Waltz" and "Emperor Waltz" by Johann Strauss (1804-49), the third movement of Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto in G Minor, and Frank's Symphony in D Minor.

Musser's interest and involvement in organizing large performing ensembles demonstrated his skills as a promoter and showman. On Saturday, 16 August 1941, 150 marimbists from twenty states performed in the twelfth annual Chicagoland Music Festival held at Soldiers' Field in Chicago. This was the largest marimba orchestra ever assembled. Never before had a marimba ensemble been featured at the Festival.

The Chicagoland Music Festival was sponsored by the Chicago Tribune Charities, Inc., in cooperation with other newspapers, civic, and musical organizations, and was always held at Soldiers' Field. Concerning the history of the Festival, the Chicago Daily Tribune reported:

. . . the gigantic Chicagoland Music Festival . . .
has touched the lives of more than a million people
from coast to coast. . . .

³⁵"Marimba Orchestra Makes History," Presto Music Times (May 1941), p. 21.

. . . It has brought a new appreciation of music to thousands. And it has helped hundreds of aspiring young musicians up the ladder toward success.³⁶

The Festival Marimba Symphony Orchestra, as it was called, gathered at the north end of the arena in Soldiers' Field. The 150 marimbas, weighing twenty-seven tons and valued at more than \$100,000, were positioned on fifteen rows of terraced platforms 100 feet long, rising to sixty feet above the stadium floor. Positioned on the top row were two contra bass marimbas that Musser utilized to add a rich bass sound to his marimba symphony orchestra. Each bass marimba stood more than six feet tall and was provided with elevated runways which made it possible for the performer to reach the massive rosewood bars.³⁷ These instruments, which had been designed by Musser and used in the Tri-State Music Festivals in Oklahoma, had recently been loaned to Leopold Stokowski for one of his concerts with the Youth Orchestra of Chicago.³⁸

³⁶"Festival Grows Beyond Dreams Of Its Founders: Lives Of More Than Million Have Felt Its Effect," Chicago Daily Tribune, 14 August 1941, Chicago, Ill., p. 7.

³⁷Charles Leavelle, "Sweet Chariot To Swing Low At Music Festival: Mighty Negro Chorus Getting Ready," Chicago Daily Tribune, 11 August 1941, Chicago, Ill., p. 2.

³⁸"Festival Throng To Hear Massed Marimba Music: Historic Event Only One Of Surprises on August 16," Chicago Daily Tribune, 20 July 1941, Chicago, Ill., p. 11.

The Chicagoland Music Festival began at 6:30 p.m. and lasted until after ten o'clock. Musser's Festival Marimba Symphony Orchestra, scheduled to begin at 8:56 p.m., was only allotted twelve minutes of the entire program. The group performed selections from the opera Carmen by Bizet, "Finlandia" by Sibelius (for which a forty-voice choir joined the marimba ensemble), and concluded with "Carioca" from Youmans' film score Flying Down To Rio.

The three hour and forty-two minute festival program was broadcast coast to coast over 105 radio stations by the Mutual Broadcasting network. More than 85,000 reserved seat ticket holders witnessed the event. In addition to the paying audience, there was a festival cast of 13,000: 4,400 vocalists in the choruses, 3,000 instrumentalists in the world's largest plectrophonic orchestra (fretted instruments), 1,500 performers in the mammoth accordion massed band, and 3,000 players in the massed brass band, besides those in the Drum and Bugle corps, baton twirlers, and flag carriers.

Of the thousands in attendance at the festival and the many more listening to the radio broadcast, only those in Soldiers' Field were able to experience the visual as well as musical sensation of the marimba orchestra's performance. When the time came for the Festival Marimba

Symphony Orchestra to perform, all of the field lights were extinguished. Twelve hundred colored lights, concealed at the bases of the marimbas, were lit to produce a rainbow effect as the lights shone against the resonator pipes. The Chicago Daily Tribune prepared its readers for this performance by reporting these details the day before the Festival:

As the mood and tempo of the music changes, the lights will dim and brighten, and during the playing of the lively 'Carioca' the rainbow will reverse itself, the top band [red] becoming the lower [blue] and the others reassembling themselves in inverse order. A motor driven rheostat will accomplish this.³⁹

For the thirteenth annual Chicagoland Music Festival, held on 15 August 1942, Musser devised a plan that he hoped would top his group's performance at the previous festival. He organized 160 marimbists in the Festival Marimba Symphony Orchestra. Again, as the previous year, the two contra bass marimbas were utilized. The program included the "Dance of the Comedians" from The Bartered Bride by Bedřich Smetana (1824-84), the "Bolero" by Rosales, and Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto in G Minor in which the marimba orchestra accompanied the Festival's winning piano soloist. The finale

³⁹Charles Leavelle, "Festival Cast Of Thousands Moves On City: Chicago Becomes Music Mecca For Two Days," Chicago Daily Tribune, 15 August 1941, Chicago, Ill., p. 7.

for the Festival Marimba Symphony Orchestra was the "Anvil Chorus" from the opera Il Trovatore by Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). As the marimbas played, an eighty-voice male choir sang words specially written by Musser to Verdi's music titled "On To Victory." A publicity release which appeared in the Chicago Sunday Tribune the week preceding the festival announced that:

The finale will be 'The Anvil Chorus,' from Verdi's opera Il Trovatore, done on a gigantic scale. Mounted high above the terraced marimbas will be ten of the largest anvils ever built. They will be played by stalwarts wielding sledge hammers with six foot handles. Bursts of vivid electric fire will accompany the crash of the hammers . . . The hammers and anvils in this interpretation will symbolize American industry in its drive toward all out war production for victory.⁴⁰

An enlarged group, accompanied by eighty voices, singing words Musser had written himself, and the ringing of ten gigantic anvils were not the conclusion of his plans for this event. He combined his interest in music with his activities in astronomy and cut up eighty-eight rare specimens of meteorites he had collected as a hobby in connection with his astronomical studies to produce 160 small cubes. As reported in the Chicago Sunday Tribune the week before the concert:

⁴⁰Charles Leavelle, "Festival Throng To See Marimba Spectacle Again: Unique Music Thrilled '41 Audience'," Chicago Sunday Tribune, 2 August 1942, Chicago, Ill., p. 12.

Each of the cubes has been attached to an electric device which produces the same abrasive friction as the planetary metals encounter as they plunge to earth from outer space. The resulting manifestation is a shower of dazzling star dust that restores to the surfaces of the comet's fragments the same luminescent glare that marked their arrival on this globe.

One of these devices will be affixed to each of the 160 massive marimbas that will be terraced 60 feet up in the north end of Soldiers' field in rows 75 feet long. The frictional discharges of star dust that will light up the marimba symphony orchestra and the vast field will be controlled by a synchronous device which will function coordinately with Musser's baton. Thus, the flaring light will rise and die on the beat with the music.⁴¹

Coincidentally, the annual fall of the Perseid meteorites, of which Musser's specimens were once a part, was visible in the Chicago area at the same time as the Music Festival.⁴²

Following the Chicagoland Music Festival of 1942, Musser turned his efforts toward his teaching at Northwestern University and the formation of his new company, Musser Marimbas, Inc. One marimba ensemble directed by Musser as part of the music education program at Northwestern University was the Marimba Coeds. This group of

⁴¹Charles Leavelle, "Comet Energy Will Light Up Music Festival: Arrange Dazzling Display For Soldiers' Field," Chicago Sunday Tribune, 9 August 1942, Chicago, Ill., sec. A, p. 10.

⁴²This was the first time in history that the planetary power of the heavens was used as part of a man made musical spectacle. Leavelle, "Comet Energy," p. 10.

from four to seven young women participated in many tours including an appearance at Carnegie Hall.

Musser centered his activities around the University's programs for several years, but the excitement and thrill of striving for something bigger and better pushed him again into promotions of large marimba orchestras. He organized and conducted a 200-member marimba orchestra which performed at Chicago's Soldiers' Field on 14 August 1948. Two years later, August 1950, his 300-piece marimba orchestra appeared at the Chicago Railroad Fair. During July 1951, Musser assembled a seventy-five-member marimba orchestra for several concerts in the area; these programs were sponsored by the National Association of Music Manufacturers.

Musser left Northwestern University in 1952 and moved to the West Coast where he became employed by the Howard Hughes Scientific Industries Corporation for about five years. Music was set aside temporarily to make time for astronomy, studies in the planetarium, and experiments for NASA. During this period (1950s) Musser also earned the doctorate degree in the field of engineering from Oxford University. Musser continues to be a consultant for NASA even to the present day (1985).

Although kept busy by his scientific projects, Musser conceived the formation of a marimba ensemble larger than any he had previously organized. Based upon letters of inquiry he had received as a result of a published article about his previous activities in massed marimba orchestras, Musser proposed forming a 500-piece marimba orchestra to perform at the Hollywood Bowl in Hollywood, California, in what he termed the 1980 International Marimba Festival. Musser sent a detailed letter to fifty prominent members of the Percussive Arts Society around the United States and abroad in order to solicit support for his proposal. A copy of this letter may be found in appendix B on page 233.

The International Marimba Festival of 1980 never materialized, even though Musser's letter was enthusiastically answered by percussionists and marimbists not only in the United States, but also from those in several foreign countries including Japan. Unlike marimbists of several decades earlier who packed their own instrument into the car and drove to the concert site, Musser was disappointed to find that performers now felt it to be too expensive to travel and transport their marimbas. He therefore cancelled his plans for the largest massed marimba orchestra ever assembled.

Through the efforts and accomplishments of Musser, the design of the modern marimba and the repertoire for the marimba ensemble became somewhat standardized. His scientific background enabled him to make the innovative changes necessary to transform the marimba from an assortment of gourds, animal skins, and wooden blocks, into an acoustically satisfactory musical instrument with standardized dimensions that made it commercially feasible to manufacture. The numerous instruments he designed for the J. C. Deagan Company, and later for his own company, are known throughout the world.

Clair Musser was the first to expand the marimba's potential as an ensemble instrument by increasing the number of instruments and players in his marimba orchestras. In the Tri-State Music Festival of 1939, his marimba orchestra had only twenty-five performers, but the following year the number grew to fifty-five, and by 1941 he had recruited 120 marimbists. For the thirteenth annual Chicagoland Music Festival in August of the next year, his Festival Marimba Symphony Orchestra consisted of 160 members, and several years later, he conducted 200 and 300-piece ensembles in 1948 and 1950 respectively.

In his transcriptions and arrangements, Musser treated the marimba ensemble as an orchestra in its own right. Even though transcriptions had previously been performed by touring Guatemalan and Mexican marimba bands, Musser's five-part arrangements of the standard orchestral repertoire provided a steady diet of literature for his ensembles, and became a popular source of music for numerous other groups for several decades to come.

The importance of Clair Musser to the marimba movement was apparent to the founder of the Eastman Marimba Masters who wrote:

During the period from the 1930s through the early 1950s, scores of ardent players and young prospective players turned their attention to the possibilities of making concert careers with the marimba. This can be attributed largely to the marimba ensemble activities and promotion of Clair Musser and the Deagan Company and particularly to Mr. Musser's dynamic personality, talent, and teaching.⁴³

The majority of recent virtuosi and teachers of the marimba have either been pupils of Musser or their students. The status of the marimba in the world today is largely due to the untiring efforts of this remarkable individual.

⁴³Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 164.

Eastman Marimba Masters

During the 1940s, the marimba increasingly became a part of the teaching of percussion instruments in institutions of higher education. Much of the credit for the popularity of the marimba in college percussion programs must be given to Musser.

Gordon Peters attended Northwestern University for one year in 1949-50 and played in Musser's university marimba ensemble of eighteen players. In January of 1954, Peters formed a marimba ensemble of his own at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, entitled the Marimba Masters. This group initially consisted of five marimbists and a string bass player, but was later "modified to just four marimbas, xylophone and bells, string bass, and several percussion instruments (seven players)."⁴⁴ Peters states the following about his marimba ensemble:

The basic motivation for the formation of the group was to provide an ensemble experience for percussionists comparable to that of other instrumentalists. This initial laboratory project soon lead [sic] to other activities including professional engagements, a commercial recording, a percussion ensemble, and an annual percussion ensemble composition contest.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid. The early stages of the Marimba Masters are discussed in considerable detail by Peters in his source The Drummer: Man.

⁴⁵Ibid.

The first recital by the Marimba Masters was given on 11 March 1954 in Kilbourn Hall at the University of Rochester. Included on this program were six pieces arranged by Musser; the overture to The Marriage of Figaro by Mozart, "Dance of the Comedians" from The Bartered Bride by Smetana, "Largo" from the New World Symphony by Dvořák, excerpts from the opera Carmen by Bizet, "Bolero" by Rosales, and the "Pilgrims' Chorus" from Wagner's Tannhäuser. Also included was an arrangement by Peters of Wagner's "Träume," and the premier performance of an original composition entitled "Chorale for Marimba Quintet" by Robert Resseger.⁴⁶ The program notes written by Peters for this recital, convey the motives and objectives in the formation of the ensemble.

The benefit that an instrumentalist obtains from playing in the smaller sized ensembles provides him with experience that is invaluable in both his solo and orchestral playing. Solo-wise, the problem is one of individual artistry and musicianship; in the orchestra it is primarily kinesthetic, aural, and visionary co-ordination: staying together with the orchestra. Hence, ensemble experience from this viewpoint serves as a bridge between the two. It, of course, serves as an end in itself as displayed in string quartets, wind quintets, etc.

The percussionist seems to have been sorely neglected along lines of solo and ensemble repertoire. Orchestrally, the percussionist has been largely resolved into a reinforcing and coloristic capacity. In the band, surely, the percussionist plays a larger role, but this is usually of either a martial or again a reinforcing capacity.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 280.

This marimba ensemble has been formed with the intention of providing this much needed experience of ensemble playing to the percussionist. The repertoire for marimba orchestra is small and presently consists largely of transcribed orchestral and operatic works. Mr. Resseger's Chorale for Marimba Quintet, written especially for this recital, is a very welcome addition to our library. The most work in the field of marimbas has been done by Clair Omar Musser: composer, teacher, virtuoso, designer, and manufacturer of marimbas. Mr. Musser has written several original works for solo marimba and has done much transcribing of literature for the instrument both in the solo and ensemble categories.

The utilization of the string bass serves both as a substitute (instead of bass marimba) and color instrument in this group. Marimba orchestras of Central and South America often use string bass along with the bass marimba providing a very firm and moving rhythm. The problems of diversity of tone color are somewhat remedied by the use of mallets of differing textures and through the introduction of various other instruments of the percussion family.

The marimba itself is fast becoming a permanent member of the concert stage as displayed by performances in the larger recital halls, such as New York's Town Hall and appearances of marimbists with symphony orchestras throughout the nation.⁴⁷

The next day, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle gave the following review of the concert:

The new marimba ensemble of the Eastman School of Music, organized by six students of the percussion department under direction of Gordon Peters, made an instantaneous hit with a large audience in Kilbourn Hall yesterday noon.

Its first appeal, no doubt, was as a novelty, for this is believed to be the first ensemble of its kind in any music school, but its second appeal was on the strength of a really charming tone quality.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 222.

The instruments obtained some very effective counterpoints and subtleties [sic] of tone color. A first performance of a well devised Choral for Marimba Quintet by Robert Resseger, an Eastman student of composition, won a round of applause for the composer, who was in the audience. Jane Reidy, soprano, sang Wagner's 'Träume,' effectively with the marimba accompaniment.⁴⁸

Immediately following the recital, the group was asked to play a concert for the Rochester Commerce Club. Peters states that:

. . . the founder of the Rochester Commerce Club, [David Harvard] was in the audience, drawn largely by curiosity. After the concert he contacted the group and asked if they would play for one of the Club's weekly luncheon-entertainments. This was the first instant that the idea of a marimba ensemble for other than laboratory ensemble practice had occurred to the group. From this initial engagement, the group went on to play for a long list of organizations.⁴⁹

Members of the group soon began arranging other pieces for the ensemble, and their library grew considerably. After the first few years, the Marimba Masters' library consisted of over 100 works, all but five of which were transcriptions. In fact, Raush comments that ". . . the transcription was as important to this modern group as it had been to Gusikow and to a host of vaudeville xylophonists and

⁴⁸Harvey Southgate, "Marimba Ensemble A Hit in First Performance," Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 12 March 1954, Rochester, N.Y., p. 21.

⁴⁹Peters, Drummer: Man, p. 223.

marimbists."⁵⁰ This need for additional original literature for the ensemble prompted an annual "composition contest" which was initiated in the spring of 1955. To give further impetus to the contest, the winning composition was guaranteed publication by Music For Percussion, Inc. For a complete list of the Marimba Masters' repertoire, see appendix D of Peters' book, The Drummer: Man.

Following several performances at Rochester's Sports Arena, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, and Kilbourn Hall, the Marimba Masters made their first appearance on a concert with the Rochester Civic Orchestra, Dr. Paul White, conductor, on Saturday, 19 February 1955. Their portion of the program included Smetana's "Dance of the Comedians," Lecuona's "Malagueña," a "Fantastic Dance" by conductor White, "Samba-Cumana" by Barclay Allen, the traditional "Greensleeves," the "Largo" from Dvořák's New World Symphony, and the "Bolero" by Rosales. In a review of the 19 February concert with the Civic Orchestra, Harvey Southgate, critic for the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, stated:

⁵⁰John R. Raush, "Four-Mallet Technique and Its Use in Selected Examples of Training and Performance Literature For Solo Marimba" (DMA dissertation, University of Texas, 1977), p. 109.

The unique marimba ensemble made up of Eastman School of Music students which over the last year has been making a name for itself, last night joined with the Civic Orchestra in a pops concert at the Auditorium that left everyone seemingly in a happy mood. It was about a year ago that this group of percussionists organized under the leadership of Gordon Peters to put the marimba back in its place as a concert instrument. The ensemble struck a spark right away and since then it has been perfecting its technique and enlarging its repertoire to the interesting point revealed last night. One feels that Mr. Peters and associates have started something here that may cut quite a figure in the light concert field.

. . . Last night five [marimbas] were played together, with Mr. Peters conducting and with a string bass, played by Donald Snow. The other marimbists were John Beck, James Dotson, Theodore Frazeur, Douglas March and Mitchell Peters--all expert and well drilled in the intricacies of unison playing.

One was hardly prepared for the degrees of color and expression obtained. The lively rhythms and tunes were to be expected, but last night there was serious music too, like the Largo from Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, and the 'Comedian's Dance,' of Smetana, with its exacting counterpoint. And this sort of music was brought off as if it 'belonged,' not something imposed on an instrument primarily designed for dance and syncopated rhythms.

At its second appearance the group played a fetching 'Fantastic Dance,' by Dr. Paul White, Civic Orchestra conductor, that was admirably suited to the marimba pattern, 'Cumana,' by Allen, 'Greensleeves' and Lecuona's 'Malaguena.' The last named which was squarely within the Spanish metier of the instrument, was so roundly applauded that the 'Stars and Stripes' march, with orchestra, was added. An audience that was bigger in its applause than in numbers whistled and clapped its approval.⁵¹

⁵¹Harvey Southgate, "Marimba Group, Orchestra In Lively Pops Concert," Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 20 February 1955, Rochester, N.Y., p. 7B.

Not long after this program with the Rochester Civic Orchestra, Gordon Peters' marimba ensemble gave its next Kilbourn Hall recital on 1 March 1955. Joining the ensemble for this concert was soprano Beverly Sparks and cellist Jon Engberg on the "Cantilena" from Bachianas Brazilieras No. 5 by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), and flutist David Gilbert and Shelly Gruskin, piccolo, for Gordon Peters' own composition "Siamese-Kham-Hom" (Sweet Words).

On Monday evening, 23 May 1955, Peters' ensemble joined forces with the Calvary Choristers Concert Choir, under the direction of Harry Watts, to present a program at Calvary Baptist Church in Rochester. Harvey Southgate reported the following about this evening program:

The Calvary Choristers concert choir plus the Gordon Peters Marimba Ensemble add up to entertainment of the sort that draws people from their television sets and other interests in these competitive days. Last night before an overflowing audience in Calvary Baptist Church the choir of 40 voices directed by Harry Watts gave its 26th annual concert and divided the evening's tumultuous applause with the marimba group, made up of Eastman School percussion students, which in its year or so of life has developed into quite a concert attraction.

The marimba outfit . . . is already headed for an engagement on the Arthur Godfrey program next month. The group does about everything with these xylophone-like instruments that the old vaudeville teams used to do, and they have added arrangements of serious music

. . . that gives it all a new and thoroughly delightful musical character. Of course there are plenty of bouncy numbers too, including malagueñas and mambos and polkas, done with all the Latin-American trimmings.⁵²

The following month, June 1955, after just one year in existence, the Marimba Masters succeeded in getting an invitation to audition for Arthur Godfrey's CBS "Talent Scouts" radio and television program in New York City. It was just shortly before their appearances on the Godfrey show that the group adopted the name "Marimba Masters."

Their first appearance on Godfrey's "Talent Scouts" came on Monday evening, 6 June. The Marimba Masters were also on his morning show on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday that same week. In all, the ensemble made a total of eleven appearances in two weeks on Godfrey's programs, and were heard in many cities coast to coast over the CBS radio and television network.

The following fall, the Marimba Masters were the featured attraction on the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra's second Pops concert in Kleinhans Music Hall (Buffalo) on 28 October 1955. Billed as "Marimbas at the Pops," the Marimba Masters selections included many new additions to

⁵²Harvey Southgate, "Chorus, Marimbists Score," Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 24 May 1955, Rochester, N.Y., p. 14.

their repertoire: the "Turkish March" by Mozart, the "Andante Cantabile" from Tchaikowsky's Symphony No. 5, "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" from Pictures at an Exhibition by Modest Mussorgsky (1839-81), "Thunder and Lighting Polka" by Johann Strauss, "Zigeunerweisen" by Sarasate, "Holiday for Strings" by Rose, "Cumana" by Allen, and the traditional folksong "Greensleeves." Theodolinda C. Boris, of the Buffalo Evening News, gave the following review of the concert:

The technical skill and excellent musicianship of the Marimba Masters at Friday evening's 'Pop' concert of the Buffalo Philharmonic in Kleinhans Music Hall made their offerings thoroughly delightful, and the audience's response indicated that the group would get a rousing welcome on a return visit.

The young men, all students at the Eastman School of Music, not only have been well-trained, but they themselves have a fine sense of musical logic and expressive good taste. Accents and tempos showed an understanding of metrical values and the ability to apply it. There was imagination in their use of tone shadings and dynamics.

The arrangements of pieces from the symphonic and popular repertoire were unmannered and pleasing.⁵³

The impression by Boris was further substantiated in the Buffalo Courier-Express:

⁵³Theodolinda C. Boris, "Marimba Masters Delight Audience At Pop Concert," Buffalo Evening News, 29 October 1955, Buffalo, N.Y., p. 6.

Marimba music won loud applause . . . last evening. . . .

In stylings that sparkled with discriminate artistry, the ensemble expressed themselves in superb dynamics and sonorities of organistic quality.⁵⁴

This concert with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra was witnessed by some 1,900 people at Kleinhans Music Hall.

The Marimba Masters continued to indulge the public with performances at local civic events. On 31 March 1956, the group made its second appearance with the Rochester Civic Orchestra, this time with Frederick Fennell as guest conductor. However, perhaps the biggest event to occur that entire winter and spring (1956) was the taping and release of a commercial recording on Kendall Records featuring the Marimba Masters. A total of sixteen selections was recorded, including pieces from classical, romantic, popular, and Latin-American repertoires. The selections on the album are as follows: "Cumana" by Barclay Allen, "Marcha de Pequeno Polegar" by Pinto, "Bolero" by Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925), David Rose's "Holiday for Strings," the "Polka" from the Golden Age Ballet by Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75), "La Comparsa" by Lecuona, "Thunder and Lightning Polka" by Strauss, the two folk songs "Greensleeves" and "Londonderry

⁵⁴"Marimba Masters Win Applause At Music Hall," Buffalo Courier-Express, 29 October 1955, Buffalo, N.Y., p. 3.

Air," "Comedians Galop" by Dmitri Kabalevsky, "Dance of the Mirlitons" from the Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky, "El Cumbanchero" by Hernandez, "Scherzoid" by Ken Wendrich, Smetana's "Dance of the Comedians," "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" from Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, and the "Largo" from Dvořák's New World Symphony. Recorded in the Kilbourn Recital Hall at the Eastman School by the Kendall Recording Corporation of Rochester, and released the last week of March 1956, the album received favorable reviews from around the country. One such review read:

The very nature of this group, seven marimbas and a string bass, dictates use of music in the lighter vein, but it's all worth-while music, carefully chosen and expertly arranged, mostly by the members themselves.

Under Peters' direction, such numbers as 'Green-sleeves,' 'Londonderry Air,' 'Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks' from Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' and the Largo of Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony are played with expressive feeling.

The marimba being of Mexican origin, the Latin-American tunes seem especially fitting.⁵⁵

Another reviewer added:

If you like to relax, with your nerves safely in the hands of seven artists who play an unusual instrument with high virtuosity, we highly recommend the Marimba Masters, a long play from Kendall Records of Rochester.⁵⁶

⁵⁵George H. Kimball, "Marimba Lab Project Booming; Now on Wax," Rochester Times-Union, 7 April 1956, Rochester, N.Y., p. 11.

⁵⁶Nell Lawson, "Disc Data," Buffalo Evening News, 18 February 1957, Buffalo, N.Y., p. 15.

Charles Menees of the Saint Louis Post-Dispatch gave the recording a "highly recommended" review, while stating that the marimba, "not too well represented on recordings, is exploited to full beauty, and with remarkable skill."⁵⁷

The following season, fall 1956, the ensemble made a return appearance with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra at Kleinhans Hall on Friday evening, 1 February 1957. This second performance with the Buffalo Orchestra won high praise from critic Kenneth Gill:

For the second time in two seasons, the Marimba Masters of Rochester graced the weekly pop concert at Kleinhans Music Hall and amazed the audience with the artistry contained in such an ensemble.

Normally one would expect the usual theatrical style on this type of instrument, but last night, this unit, based on percussion of the keyboard type, again rode the gamut from Bach to Khatchaturian with nothing but the highest praise due for intelligence and exceptional talent.

Under Gordon Peters' direction, the Marimba Masters have come to international fame and rightly so. 'Londonderry Air' or a Bach prelude from the 'Well-Tempered Clavichord' were as tastefully arranged in style and temperament as Lecuona's 'La Cumparsa' or Smetana's 'Dance of the Comedians.'⁵⁸

⁵⁷Charles Menees, "Popular Recordings: Shaw Set To Music," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 23 April 1956, St. Louis, Mo., sec. C, p. 7.

⁵⁸Kenneth Gill, "Praise Won By Marimba Group's Style," Buffalo Courier-Express, 2 February 1957, Buffalo, N.Y., p. 2.

Two months later, the Marimba Masters gave several local public school performances before its fourth annual program at Kilbourn Hall on 12 April 1957. By this point in the group's career, the Marimba Masters had become quite an attraction to the concert going public. Southgate commented that "in the three years since it was formed, this group has mellowed into a first class concert group."⁵⁹

Perhaps the biggest event for the group occurred on 12 January 1958, when the Marimba Masters appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show." The ensemble had previously appeared with Sullivan on a program at the Eastman Theatre on 20 November 1957, in which he was the master of ceremonies for a variety show sponsored by the Rochester Civic Music Association. After hearing the group perform, Sullivan invited them to make the guest appearance on his show in January. The Marimba Masters again gained nation-wide exposure through the coast to coast television broadcast of Sullivan's program.

On 29 March 1958, the Marimba Masters made its third appearance with the Rochester Civic Orchestra.

⁵⁹Harvey Southgate, "Percussion Concert Nets Prize Winning Number," Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 13 April 1957, Rochester, N.Y., p. 5.

During the following year, the ensemble performed regularly at numerous local high school and civic functions.

The highlight of the 1959 spring concert season came on 3 March, when the Marimba Masters presented its final concert, a culmination of five years work, in Eastman's Kilbourn Recital Hall. This was to be the final concert in Kilbourn Hall for three members of the group, including Peters. As a tribute to the Marimba Masters success, not only at this concert, but through the group's five year existence, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle printed the following:

For a rousing windup, the Marimba Masters, directed by Gordon Peters, made some typically delightful music. This writer, who hailed the first concert by this group five years ago, found last night's performance a rich fulfillment of an early promise. The group never sounded better, as it drew a string of new pieces from its repertoire, including a medley from 'My Fair Lady,' an ingenious arrangement of the March of the Siamese Children from 'The King and I,' a number from 'L'Arlesienne,' the fine 'Deep Purple,' 'Siboney' and a medley of Scotch airs.

The personnel of the group changes, but in its management of the lovely soft-toned instruments, plus string bass, and the skill with which the contrapuntal lines are handled, this group, so far as this writer is concerned, is in a class by itself.⁶⁰

Although members changed from year to year, the personnel of Peters' ensemble usually included the most

⁶⁰"Percussionist, Marimba Masters in Novel Concert," Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 4 March 1959, Rochester, N.Y., p. 20.

advanced percussion students at the Eastman School of Music. Most were members of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, the Eastman Symphonic Wind Ensemble, or the Eastman Philharmonia Orchestra. William Street, Professor of Percussion at the Eastman School, continually supported Gordon Peters in his efforts with the development of this phase of the percussion program. The Marimba Masters' schedule usually included some twenty to thirty performances each season, many of which were return engagements with symphony orchestras and local school and civic organizations. Thus, during its five year history, the group presented approximately 150 concerts.⁶¹

Upon completing his degree work at Eastman in 1959, Gordon Peters accepted a position with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Fritz Reiner, becoming a member of the orchestra's percussion section. Ronald Barnett, a senior from Hellertown, Pennsylvania, and a former member of the Marimba Masters, became director of the group the following season, fall 1959, and changed the group's name to the Marimba-Aires.

⁶¹"IHS Graduate To Appear With Marimba Masters," Irondequoit Press, 5 March 1959, Irondequoit, N.Y., p. 7.

The marimba ensemble at Eastman gave only a few performances over the next several years. When John Beck, presently Associate Professor of Percussion Instruments at Eastman and one of the original members (1954-56) of the Marimba Masters, accepted the teaching position in 1967, the marimba ensemble program had been more or less discontinued by his predecessor William Street. In his program, Beck included only the percussion ensemble until a marimba band was formed to play "ragtime" music during the early to mid-1970s. This group became quite popular, and a formal marimba ensemble was organized to include both ragtime and contemporary marimba ensemble literature in its repertoire.⁶²

The Status of the Marimba Ensemble

Following Gordon Peters' Marimba Masters

Gordon Peters' Marimba Masters, although not the first marimba ensemble in a college or university setting, was one of the first groups to gain considerable recognition outside of the college environment, through appearances on radio and television, with symphony orchestras, at youth concerts, and at social engagements. These accomplishments gave impetus to the formation of marimba ensembles at other

⁶²Personal letter from John Beck, Percussion Instructor at the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, N.Y., 12 May 1982.

institutions of higher education around the country. Percussion instructors that also began marimba ensemble programs during this time included James Dutton at the American Conservatory in Chicago, Charmaine Asher Wiley at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, and Carolyn Reid Sisney at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. In addition to her collegiate ensemble, entitled the "Hammerettes," Carolyn Sisney also trained many younger students to play the marimba and the accordion, and combined them both in her studio and on the concert stage.

In the early 1960s, Gordon Peters began teaching at Northwestern University and directed the collegiate marimba ensemble, while also performing in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His efforts at Northwestern have been continued by his former student Terry Applebaum.

These early marimba ensembles depended mainly upon students or performers who owned their own instruments. During the period after the Second World War, particularly from about 1950 to 1961, there were few, if any, marimbas being manufactured in the United States with the exception of several instruments marketed by Musser Inc., due to the scarcity of rosewood. It was during this same time period that many universities began offering academic credit for

percussion ensembles. The University of Illinois School of Music is generally recognized as being the first institution to give formal academic credit for its percussion ensemble in 1950. As more colleges required mallet performance of their percussion students, the marimba ensemble was adopted as a viable medium to enhance this area, and it grew in scope and stature. The resumption of the manufacture of marimbas in the mid-1960s, coupled with the acceptance of percussion performance in college degree programs, resulted in the growth of college marimba ensemble programs.⁶³

Several college instructors with a special interest in the marimba were able to develop thriving marimba ensembles within their percussion programs. Two such individuals were Peter Tanner and James L. Moore. Moore began exerting a strong influence in the field of marimba education after forming the first marimba group at The Ohio State University in 1966. The first full concert by the marimba ensemble under Moore's direction was on 21 February 1969. The program consisted of the "Comedian's Gallop" by Kabalevsky, Eine Kleine Kachtmusik by Mozart, "Gopak" from the Fair at Sorochinsk by Mussorgsky, "Largo" from Dvořák's New World

⁶³With the development of synthetic-bar instruments (Kelon) in the mid-1970s, the cost of a marimba became significantly reduced. This promoted the study of the marimba and encouraged the formation of marimba ensembles.

Symphony, "Scherzo" from Tchaikowsky's Symphony No. 4, Leroy Anderson's "Plink, Plank, Plunk," and Moore's own arrangement of "Baja Ballads." According to Moore, one of the group's most successful performances occurred several years later at the Percussive Arts Society's Second National Conference held in Chicago, on 21 December 1974.⁶⁴ This performance, along with the release of a commercial recording by The Ohio State University Percussion and Marimba Ensemble, entitled Concepts in Percussion, helped to spark much interest in both percussion and marimba ensemble music.

Moore's efforts in promoting and arranging music for marimbas led him to organize a Summer Marimba Camp which has been an annual activity since 1971. The Summer Marimba Camp was held for the first three years on South Bass Island, Put-In-Bay, Ohio, but later moved to the campus of The Ohio State University. This camp offers to students and teachers, opportunities for ensemble playing, master classes, private instruction, improvisation and sightreading, studying music theory and arranging, performing solo and ensemble recitals, and features evening programs by faculty and guest artists. During the camp's fifteen year history, such artists as

⁶⁴Personal letter from James L. Moore, Percussion Instructor at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 16 March 1982.

Leigh Howard Stevens, David Samuels, David Friedman, Gordon Stout, Bill Molenhof, and Linda Pimentel have appeared. This camp continues to exist today and is unique in its contribution to marimba education.⁶⁵

Peter Tanner, a former member of the acclaimed Eastman Marimba Masters, has been very active in writing and arranging music for marimba ensembles. After coming to the University of Massachusetts in 1969, he formed the UMass Marimbas in 1974, which for several years, was the only marimba ensemble in New England. On 9 April 1980, the UMass Marimbas performed at the Music Educators National Conference twenty-seventh meeting in Miami Beach. The program, which was enthusiastically received by the audience, consisted of a variety of selections from many different periods of music history and included two arrangements by Tanner, the "Hunting Song" by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47), and "About the Maypole" by Thomas Morley (1557-1602), the "Bolero" by Rosales, "Marcha de Pequeño Polegar" by Pinto, "Golliwog's Cakewalk" by Claude Debussy (1862-1918), "Adagio for Strings" by Samuel Barber (1910-81), "Syncopations" by

⁶⁵Organized in the summer of 1979, the Birch Creek Music Academy's Marimba, Vibes, and Steel Drum Workshop in Door County, Wisconsin, has also offered students and professionals of all ages an opportunity for summer study.

Berkowitz, the "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" from Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, and Bizet's "Farandole" from L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2.

During the mid-1970s, the Percussive Arts Society, an international group of percussion teachers and students, became active in sponsoring and promoting marimba ensembles. From 1977 to the present, the Virginia/District of Columbia chapter of the Percussive Arts Society has sponsored an annual "Marimba Extravaganza." The event is hosted by an academic institution and organized by the percussion instructor of the host school. Marimba ensembles from colleges in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., are invited to participate. The individual ensembles perform on the first half of the program, and the massed ensemble, generally of about fifty to seventy-five marimbists, constitutes the second half. Each conductor of the smaller groups conducts one work with the large ensemble. The Extravaganza has expanded to include groups from colleges as far away as North Carolina and Tennessee.

On 29 October 1978, a fifty-piece marimba ensemble performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Tempe, Arizona. The fifty-piece PASIC Marimba Orchestra, as it was titled, was designed to include one student from each state. Participants were

selected from a taped audition. Some of Clair Musser's best known works were programmed for this concert, as well as a few additional pieces that were arranged specifically for the ensemble. Included were arrangements/transcriptions by Karen Ervin and Marj Holmgren, and an original work commissioned by composer Daniel Kessner. Clair Musser himself made a special guest appearance at the concert and conducted the ensemble.

Numerous marimba ensembles have been organized by former collegiate marimba ensemble members or their teacher/directors in order to perform at various activities, including local civic and social functions. Early in 1980, Kevin Lepper, a former student at New Mexico State University, formed a group known as That Memorial Ragtime Marimba Band. Shortly after its inception, this ensemble was invited to perform for J. C. Deagan's 100th year anniversary celebration which was held at the National Association of Music Manufacturers Convention in Chicago on 30 June 1980. Noted marimbists Gordon Stout and Paul Smadbeck assisted during a performance which included many of George Hamilton Green's popular xylophone "rags," the "Bolero" by Rosales, "Chase the Clouds Away" by Chuck Mangione, and "At The Woodchoppers Ball" (1939) by Woody Herman (b. 1913).

Since 1980, this marimba group has performed at the Percussive Arts Society's International Conventions in 1980 and 1981, the Triton College Day of Percussion, the 1980 and 1982 Illinois Day of Percussion, at the R. J. Daley Center on 8 April 1981, and at many clinics, festivals, and high school youth concerts.

Other ensembles that have enjoyed great popularity include the Charm City Marimbas in Baltimore, Maryland, the Wichita Marimba Band, the El Paso Marimba Band (featured on NBC's "Real People" television program), the Southern California Marimba Orchestra (directed by Vera Daehlin and presented on Robert Schuller's "Hour of Power" television broadcast), and the Marimba Ensemble of the United States Navy Band. The latter group, formed in the late 1960s, included four marimbists and a rhythm section, and used one of the two huge bass marimbas built and used by Musser with his marimba orchestras.

Recently, the marimba ensemble movement received impetus by the resurgence of ragtime music arranged for solo xylophone and marimba ensemble. A highly talented percussion group called Nexus recorded ragtime arrangements featuring xylophone soloist Bob Becker accompanied by four marimba players and a trap drummer on its 1976 recording entitled Nexus Ragtime Concert. Formed in 1971 as an improvisatory

group to perform the music of many different cultures and eras, Nexus adopted the ragtime repertoire, particularly that of ragtime xylophone master George Hamilton Green, and featured it during the group's 1976 tour of Japan. Based in Toronto, Canada, the group has toured England, Europe, the United States, and the Far East, and have performed with several symphony orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic. Nexus has also recorded five record albums and made the sound track for the Academy Award-winning documentary The Man Who Skied Down Everest. They have also led a variety of workshops and held residencies at universities in Canada and the United States. Nexus' performances on recordings, along with the group's national and international tours and convention concerts, have set a standard which many college and university groups try to emulate.

In 1978, the Eastman Marimba Band, with Gordon Stout as director, produced a similar recording of ragtime music for xylophone solo and marimbas. Although some of the selections recorded on the Eastman Marimba Band's album, entitled Nola, duplicated those on the Nexus recording, they are different arrangements, employing one less marimbist. Both of these recordings sparked an explosion of ragtime music for marimba ensemble in colleges and universities

beginning in the late 1970s. This "ragtime revival" is evidenced by the growing number of "rags" still being programmed by many college marimba groups.

Marimba Ensemble Literature

Until recently, literature written specifically for the marimba ensemble has been very limited. The Guatemalan marimba bands have very large repertoires; however, they consist mainly of arrangements of folk songs that are learned by rote. For the early marimba groups in the United States, such as the Green Brothers' Marimba Band, Reg Kehoe's Marimba Queens, or Clair Musser's marimba orchestras, it was typical for the ensemble's director or one of its members to prepare arrangements specifically designed for that group. Many college marimba ensembles have made use of such arrangements.

The increased interest in marimba ensembles and their music encouraged many directors and arrangers to begin making their compositions available to others. In California, Earl Hatch, who had become very active with marimba ensembles as early as the 1940s, assembled his own catalog of ensemble music. His library, called Marimbas Unlimited, presently contains over 600 of his manuscript marimba ensemble arrangements. It was in response to requests for the

music played by his groups that Hatch organized one of the largest collections by any individual. Hatch's marimba ensembles, including both amateur and professional players of all ages, have performed throughout southern California, and once even in Carnegie Hall. Recently, Hatch's groups have consisted of professional studio percussionists in the Hollywood area.

Another private source of manuscript marimba ensemble music was Ruth Jeanne. She was a violinist and pianist chosen to be in Musser's Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra of 1933 because of her music reading skills. Later, she formed ensembles of her private marimba students. Beginning in the early 1950s, Jeanne began making manuscript copies of her marimba ensemble arrangements available. Since the late 1970s, her popular arrangements of Mexican and Guatemalan folk songs, classical piano and orchestral selections, and pops favorites, have been published by Permuis Publications in Columbus, Ohio.

Several other percussion teachers have gained considerable recognition for their work in the field of marimba ensemble music. David Vincent began writing for marimbas in the early 1970s, and has developed an extensive catalog of arrangements and original works while directing

marimba ensembles at the University of Miami (Florida) and East Tennessee State University (Johnson City). Gordon Peters found it profitable to make his arrangements available exclusively through Franks Drum Shop in Chicago. In 1982, he moved his library to Drums Unlimited in Bethesda, Maryland. John Baldwin, percussion instructor at Boise State University, and Ron Fink at North Texas State University, have both also developed rather large catalogs of marimba ensemble music.

Two percussion teachers who began their own publishing companies in order to provide a source for the compositions of selected percussion composers are James Moore and Joel Leach. Founded by Moore in 1976, Permus Publications is a source for Moore's arrangements and those of other composers such as Ruth Jeanne. Joel Leach, percussion instructor at California State University at Northridge, formed his own company, Studio 4 Productions, which began including marimba ensemble literature in its catalog in the mid-1970s.

In previous years, only a very limited amount of music for the marimba ensemble had been published because most music publishers felt it would be an unprofitable venture. Two notable exceptions were the Forster Music

Company of Chicago, which handled many of Clair Musser's orchestral transcriptions (1941), and Alberto Colombo in Hollywood, California, which published some selected arrangements for "marimba-xylophone band" in 1938. A few years later, Rubank of Chicago published the Marimba Ensemble Folio, a unique two-volume collection of four-part transcriptions.

In recent years, several other publishing houses have incorporated marimba ensemble music into their catalogs. These include Music For Percussion, Southern Music Company, Kendor Music, Percussion Arts, HaMar Publications, Volkwein Brothers, and Lang Percussion.

With the increase in marimba ensemble activity, a need for more mallet percussion ensemble literature became apparent. The composition of original marimba ensemble literature had been initiated by Gordon Peters as a result of his composition contest held while he was at Eastman. Compositions for from two to nine players have been composed for a wide range of instruments and ability levels. In recent years, works of this nature have been successfully commissioned by several universities. The most comprehensive listing of the literature currently available for the

mallet percussion ensemble may be found in Solo and Ensemble Literature for Percussion published by the Percussive Arts Society.⁶⁶

Beginning with Clair Omar Musser's efforts at Northwestern University in 1942, and continuing through the formation of the Eastman Marimba Masters by Gordon Peters in 1954, a solid foundation was laid on which other institutions of higher education could build their marimba ensemble programs. In many universities, the marimba ensemble has steadily increased in popularity to the point where it now occupies a position of importance equal to that of the percussion ensemble. Its use for pedagogical purposes has now made the marimba ensemble an integral part of the curriculum of the percussion student in many college and university programs. The current status of the marimba ensemble in the college setting is the subject of the following chapter.

⁶⁶Percussive Arts Society, Solo and Ensemble Literature for Percussion (Urbana, Ill.: Percussive Arts Society, 1982).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Introduction

The current status of the marimba ensemble movement in college and university music programs has gone virtually undocumented. It was decided therefore, that further research was appropriate in this area. For this particular study, it was decided to solicit information from college and university percussion instructors through the use of a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was sent to college percussion teachers whose schools had full National Association of Schools of Music accreditation. This survey was a general inquiry into the position of the marimba ensemble in their percussion programs.

Procedures

Throughout the 1982 fall semester at Louisiana State University, tentative examples of this questionnaire were scrutinized by the faculty members of the graduate music

committee, as well as numerous fellow graduate students and percussion teachers, who offered suggestions for improvement. The survey was further tried and tested on other percussion specialists in the field for their examination and constructive criticism. The respondents who participated in this pilot survey provided valuable information concerning the clarity of the questionnaire.

The original questionnaire consisted of four letter-sized pages. The excessive length of the questionnaire was a major concern during the period of revision. Therefore, it was decided that in light of the time demands put on percussion instructors, a shorter instrument would solicit a better response. The size of the document was reduced to one legal-sized page, front and back. After careful study and revision, the questionnaire was then submitted to John Raush (graduate advisor) for final approval. A copy of the questionnaire may be found in appendix C on page 238.

Limitations

Prior to mailing the questionnaire, the tentative list of "college percussion instructors" had to be qualified by imposing the following limitations to insure a population sample of viable size:

1. The institutions had to be full members in the

National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), as listed in the 1983 NASM Directory.¹ Five hundred and nineteen institutions qualified under this limitation.

2. Each institution in this study had to have the availability of a full-time percussion teacher with faculty status as identified by code "36," in the Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, United States and Canada (1982-1984).² Full-time faculty status was identified by members with a rank of either instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor. Institutions with percussion teachers listed as lecturers, part-time, and adjunct teachers were not included as part of this survey.

The resultant institutional sample, as defined by the above limitations, consisted of 248 college institutions with full NASM accreditation, which had a full-time percussion instructor listed in the Directory of Music Faculties.

The first mailing of the 248 questionnaires took place on 14 March 1983. Each percussion instructor was asked to return the survey by 8 April 1983. An addressed,

¹National Association of Schools of Music, NASM Directory 1983 (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Schools of Music, 1983).

²College Music Society, Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, U.S. and Canada (1982-1984), 9th ed. (Boulder, Colorado: College Music Society, 1982).

stamped, return envelope was enclosed for the convenience of the percussion teachers. For those instructors not responding by 8 April, a follow-up letter, along with another copy of the initial questionnaire, and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope, was sent on 20 April 1983. Copies of these two letters may be found in appendix D on page 243.

Following the closing date of the first mailing, 8 April 1983, 108 instructors (43.54 percent) had returned their survey. A total of sixty-seven teachers (27 percent) responded to the second mailing of the questionnaire. As of 1 September 1983, a return rate of 70.56 percent was achieved with 175 responses received. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the survey as guaranteed in the cover letter, all responding institutions were tabulated by number rather than by name. An alphabetical listing, by state, of all institutions responding to the questionnaire may be found in appendix E on page 246.

Results of the Data

The first five areas of the survey are concerned with the basic personal and professional information of the percussion teachers: their name, institutional affiliation, academic rank, degrees held, and the approximate number of

percussion students in their program. The majority of the 175 surveyed percussion teachers was divided almost equally between associate professors (25.59 percent) and assistant professors (27.97 percent). For a complete break-down of their academic ranks, please refer to table 1. A few of the instructors identified themselves as lecturers or part-time employees, which was contrary to the information previously taken from the College Music Society's Directory of Music Faculties when setting up the limitations for the survey's population sample.

TABLE 1

ACADEMIC RANK OF RESPONDENTS

Academic Rank	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Full Professor	30	17.85%
Associate Professor	43	25.59%
Assistant Professor	47	27.97%
Instructor	37	22.02%
Lecturer	6	3.57%
Part-Time	4	2.30%
Teaching Assistant	1	.59%

Over half of the respondents, one hundred and ten (65.47 percent), had attained their Master of Music degree. The Doctor of Musical Arts degree was tabulated separately from the Doctor of Philosophy degree because, unlike the requirements for a Ph.D. degree, performance is a dominant part of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree program. Table 2 shows the highest educational degree attained by the 168 respondents.

TABLE 2

HIGHEST DEGREE HELD BY THE RESPONDENTS

Degree	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Doctor of Musical Arts	27	16.07%
Doctor of Philosophy	16	9.52%
Master of Music	110	65.47%
Bachelor of Music	12	7.14%
Diploma	3	1.78%

The final demographic question asked for the approximate number of percussion students in their program. Even though the survey was about marimba ensembles, college and university music programs include this as part of

percussion studies if its included at all, as indicated in the first question of the survey. The number of students involved in the percussion program ranged from zero to one hundred.³ The average number of students was fourteen. The largest number of single responses, sixteen (9.58 percent), was for a twelve-student program.

The first question of the questionnaire asked if a marimba ensemble was included as part of the music program at that particular university. One hundred and twenty-five (72 percent) of the respondents to this question stated that they included some type of marimba ensemble activity in their programs, while forty-eight (28 percent) did not.

Questions two through fourteen were directly related only to those institutions with marimba ensembles. Of those schools with a marimba ensemble, only forty-three (34 percent) indicated in question two that they regularly scheduled it to meet at a time different from their percussion ensemble. Question three asked how many times per week the marimba ensemble meets. Almost two-thirds of the groups, seventy-four (63.24 percent), met once a week. The majority of the others, thirty, met twice a week. Other responses are noted in table 3.

³Six institutions responded that they had no percussion students ("majors") in their program.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF TIMES PER WEEK THAT
MARIMBA ENSEMBLE MEETS

Number of Rehearsals	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
1	74	59.20%
2	30	24.00%
3	6	4.80%
4 or more	9	7.20%
varies	6	4.80%

Question four requested the number of minutes per marimba ensemble rehearsal. The greatest number of responses (sixty-nine) was for the time span from more than thirty minutes to one hour. Within that time period, thirty-one respondents specifically stated fifty minutes as their rehearsal time. The number of minutes per marimba ensemble rehearsal is shown in table 4.

Since universities and colleges do not use a standardized system of assigning credits to subjects, question five asked if the students in the marimba ensemble received academic credit for their participation. Students

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF MINUTES PER REHEARSAL

Minutes	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
30 minutes or less	13	10.74%
31 to 60 minutes	69	57.02%
61 to 90 minutes	19	15.70%
120 minutes	7	5.78%
time varies	13	10.74%

in seventy-one institutions (55 percent) received some level of academic credit.

Question six asked the approximate number of students participating in the marimba ensemble program. Thirty-three (27.50 percent) of the teachers had five students in their ensemble. Twenty-nine (24.17 percent) marimba ensemble programs include ten or more members. The size of the marimba ensembles are shown in table 5.

Questions seven and eight were concerned with concert performances. Question seven asked if concerts featuring only the marimba ensemble were given, and forty-seven schools (37 percent) responded affirmatively. The

TABLE 5

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF STUDENTS
PARTICIPATING IN THE MARIMBA ENSEMBLE

Number of Students	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
3	3	2.50%
4	11	9.17%
5	33	27.50%
6	17	14.17%
7	4	3.33%
8	22	18.33%
9	1	.83%
10 or more	29	24.17%

approximate number of concerts given per year by marimba ensembles ranged from none to more than four. Two concerts per year received the most responses. The exact number of responses to question eight are shown in table 6.

The following question asked respondents to give the name of their group, if it was different from "marimba ensemble." Many instructors simply called their ensemble by the institution's name, followed by marimba ensemble.

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF MARIMBA ENSEMBLE CONCERTS PER YEAR

Number of Concerts	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
0	7	6.48%
1	23	21.29%
2	48	44.44%
3	16	14.81%
4 or more	14	12.96%

Several ensembles had given themselves more unique titles such as: the Rosewood Marimba Band, Wood Rollers, Baroque Bars, Ragtime Marimba Band, Wonderbars, Marimba Choir, Marimba Masters, and Marimba Orchestra.

Question ten contained two parts. The first portion asked if a conductor leads the marimba ensemble, while the second portion asked if he was a faculty member, graduate assistant, or student conductor. Ninety ensembles (70 percent) utilized a conductor. Some groups had several possible conductors to choose from, but the majority of conductors, eighty-three, were of faculty status. Eighteen responses indicated a graduate assistant conductor, and in sixteen cases, student directors were leading the ensembles.

Questions eleven and twelve solicited information concerning the number of marimbas available for rehearsals, and instruments, other than marimbas, that are regularly used with the ensemble. As shown in table 7, the number of instruments available for rehearsals varied greatly.

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF MARIMBAS AVAILABLE FOR REHEARSALS

Number of Marimbas	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
1	1	.78%
2	9	6.98%
3	30	23.26%
4	35	27.13%
5	22	17.05%
6	12	9.30%
7	6	4.65%
8 or more	14	10.85%

Question twelve asked for a listing of instruments used regularly with the marimba ensemble. Three possibilities were given (string bass, piano, and trap drum set) with an opening for other possible instruments to be listed. The

instrument utilized most often other than the marimba in the marimba ensemble was the trap drum set (43.75 percent). The string bass was a close second (41.41 percent). Even from the time of the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band during the first part of this century, the string bass was used in the marimba ensemble to help reinforce the bass line. With the advent of electrified instruments, electric basses have replaced some of the accoustical bass instruments.

Besides marimbas, many marimba ensembles include other mallet-keyboard instruments, especially the vibraphone. Listed in decreasing order of popularity, the piano, xylophone, bass marimba, synthesizer, and celesta were other keyboard instruments reported in addition to the marimba and vibraphone. Timpani and other small "trap" instruments (such as a tambourine or maracas) were also noted by a few respondents. The keyboard percussion instruments (17.97 percent), piano (14.06 percent), and auxiliary percussion (10.94 percent) were listed less than half as often as the drum set and string bass.

In response to question seven, only thirty-seven percent of the respondents reported that concerts devoted exclusively to the marimba ensemble were given at their

schools. In question thirteen, respondents were asked if marimba ensemble literature was incorporated into their percussion ensemble concerts. Of the one hundred and twenty-nine respondents to this question, one hundred and twenty-two (94.57 percent) stated that they did perform assorted marimba ensemble selections on their percussion ensemble concerts.

Many teachers did not respond to question fourteen, which asked them to draw a diagram of their "set-up" for marimba ensemble. Only seventy-two actual set-up diagrams, from 41.14 percent of the respondents, were submitted. Among these, there was little consistency other than keeping the "solo" part, or first marimba player, towards the front of the ensemble: there appears to be no standard arrangement of instruments for a marimba ensemble. Question fourteen concluded the portion of the survey answered by only those instructors whose program included a marimba ensemble.

Beginning with question fifteen, all survey respondents, both those with and without a marimba ensemble, were asked to give their personal and professional opinion concerning the value of the marimba ensemble and its music. The beliefs expressed about the primary values students derive from a marimba ensemble experience in comparison

to those in other ensembles can be classified into five basic categories. The values of playing in a marimba ensemble were:

1. to develop musicianship (48.76 percent),
2. to gain a chamber music experience including performing without a conductor and stage experience in a small group (17.91 percent),
3. to improve reading skills (14.93 percent),
4. to play literature of different stylistic periods (14.43 percent), and
5. to learn arranging and/or scoring skills (2.49 percent).

The purpose of question sixteen was to find if the respondents believe the marimba ensemble has artistic merit as a medium of performance over and above its value as a teaching tool. One hundred and forty-six teachers (90.68 percent) expressed the opinion that there is artistic merit in the marimba ensemble as a performance medium, while only ten (6.21 percent) disagreed.

Questions seventeen through twenty-one were concerned with the literature available to the college and university marimba ensembles. Respondents were asked in question seventeen to list five works for the marimba ensemble (or marimba

with other keyboard percussion instruments) which they considered to be significant. One hundred and seventeen responses (66.86 percent) of the total one hundred and seventy-five respondents provided the information requested. The information gathered from question seventeen is summarized in table 8. Table 8 contains several compositions, such as "Gainsbourough" by Thomas Gauger, and the "Toccata for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble" by Robert Kelly, which are actually works for percussion ensemble and not marimba ensemble. The total responses for Bach's "Preludes and Fugues" and Barber's "Adagio for Strings" includes all of the arrangers reported.

In addition to this list, thirty respondents (24 percent) included Bob Becker's arrangements of George Hamilton Green's ragtime compositions. Another eight respondents (6.4 percent) listed works from the library of arrangements by Gordon Peters. These included the "Polka" from the Golden Age Ballet (four responses), the traditional "Green-sleeves" (three responses), and the "Largo" from Dvořák's New World Symphony (two responses). Seven respondents (5.6 percent) included arrangements by William Cahn, while another six respondents (4 percent) listed transcriptions by Clair Musser. Numerous other titles received only one to four votes, and were not included in this list.

TABLE 8

SIGNIFICANT MARIMBA ENSEMBLE LITERATURE

Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Title of Composition	Composer/Arranger of Composition
25	20.0%	Woodwork	Jan Bach
20	16.0%	Prelude and Dance for Mallet Instruments	Ronald LoPresti
19	15.2%	Octet for Keyboard Percussion	Kenneth Snoeck
18	14.4%	Quintet for Mallet Instruments	Serge de Gastyne
15	12.0%	Two Movements for Mallets	William Steinhort
13	10.4%	Gainsbourough	Thomas Gauger
11	8.8%	Toccata for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble	Robert Kelly
10	8.0%	Chorale for Marimba Quintet	Robert Ressegar
9	7.2%	Octet for Mallet Instruments	J. David Morris

TABLE 8--Continued

Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Title of Composition	Composer/Arranger of Composition
8	6.4%	Bolero	Rosales/Musser
8	6.4%	Preludes and Fugues	J. S. Bach/many arrangers
6	4.8%	Adagio for Strings	Samuel Barber/many arrangers
6	4.8%	Lento for Marimba Ensemble	John Schlenck
5	4.0%	Antithesis	Richard Voohaar
5	4.0%	Selections from Carmen	Bizet/Musser
5	4.0%	Prelude for Four Marimbas	Stanley Leonard
5	4.0%	Swords of Moda-Ling	Gordon Peters

Question eighteen asked the respondents for their opinion of the marimba ensemble music currently available. Four definitive choices were given on the questionnaire (excellent, good, fair, and poor), but several respondents designated a range of value of, for example, excellent to good, or good to poor. Of one hundred and sixty-one responses, the largest number, sixty-seven (41.61 percent), classified the existing repertoire as "good" music. However, an almost equal number, sixty-four respondents (39.75 percent), labeled the music as "fair." Twenty-one teachers (13.04 percent) rated the available marimba ensemble music as being of "poor" quality, while only nine (5.59 percent) classified the repertoire as "excellent." The comments that accompanied some of the judgements centered on the lack of availability of original compositions. Composers and music publishers both were identified as the reason for the lack of good music. Many schools, as suggested by the comments, rely heavily on transcriptions for their concert repertoire.

Transcriptions have historically played an important role in the marimba ensemble movement; however their musical merit has often been questioned. Question nineteen asked if the respondents favored the use of transcriptions. A response of one hundred and thirty-nine teachers (89.10 percent) in favor of using transcriptions to only seventeen

(10.9 percent) against resulted. The positive point of view toward transcriptions seemed to center around the possible exposure students receive by performing music of time periods other than the twentieth century. There is no original marimba ensemble material from earlier historical periods. The next most frequent comment was not as positive toward the use of transcriptions. Basically, the teachers in this group do not favor transcriptions, but use them because of a lack of available original literature by talented composers.

In the responses to questions eighteen and nineteen, a dissatisfaction with the music currently available for marimba ensembles was evident. Question twenty solicited the view of respondents regarding the need for developing new literature for the marimba ensemble. One hundred and fifty-seven of one hundred and sixty respondents (98.13 percent) believed that there is a real need for developing new literature for the marimba ensemble.

As revealed in the responses to question twelve, which listed other instruments regularly used with the marimba ensemble, many other mallet-keyboard instruments are added to the traditional marimba ensemble grouping of four to five marimbas. Question twenty-one asked if there

is a need for developing new literature for the mallet-keyboard ensemble. The respondents answered this question exactly the same as the previous one concerning marimba ensemble literature. Mallet-keyboard ensembles are intended to use many keyboard instruments, not just marimbas. The actual instrumentation is dictated by the work to be performed and marimbas may not even be included.

The purpose of the last two questions was to search for reasons why a marimba ensemble was not included in a university's music program. By finding out through question twenty-two how the percussion teacher perceives his strengths and weaknesses in the area of mallet performance, and reviewing his answer to question one, it may be possible to find a correlation between the instructor's personal abilities and whether or not a marimba ensemble is included in the program. Of one hundred and sixty-three respondents, one hundred and seventeen teachers (71.78 percent) indicated that mallet performance was one of their strongest areas of specialization. Reviewing this group's answers to question one, which asked if they included a marimba ensemble in their music program, ninety-eight teachers indicate that they were strong in the area of mallet performance and also directed marimba ensembles. Those ninety-eight teachers represent

83.76 percent of the teachers with an emphasis in mallet performance and 78.4 percent of those with a marimba ensemble program. Conversely, of those instructors that indicated a self-perceived weakness in the area of mallet performance (forty-six), over half, twenty-six (56.52 percent), still included a marimba ensemble in their program.

The next question is central to the issue of why marimba ensembles are not a part of some music programs. In question one, forty-eight teachers (28 percent) stated that there was no marimba ensemble available at their schools. Question twenty-three asked for specific reasons from the teachers as to why they did not include a marimba ensemble as part of their present program. A lack of instruments and an insufficient number of students were the two most frequently reported problems that prevented the percussion teachers from having a marimba ensemble. By referring to question eleven, which asked how many marimbas were available for rehearsals, the problem many colleges and universities have in providing marimbas for the percussion department is reinforced. Almost a third (31.01 percent) of the respondents to that question had only three or less marimbas available to them for group rehearsals. Two other

reasons for not including a marimba ensemble in the school's program were that the instructor did not have time in his teaching schedule, and that the music available was not worth the time that would be spent in rehearsals.

At the conclusion of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to submit any comments, suggestions, and/or observations they might have had. The responses are listed in appendix F on page 258.

Summary

This chapter describes the status of the marimba ensemble in today's colleges and universities in the United States. To accomplish this task, a questionnaire was sent to all NASM schools that employ a full-time percussion teacher. The survey was divided into two major sections. The first section solicited specific information on the school's marimba ensemble, while the second portion requested the opinions of the teachers, even those without an ensemble, concerning marimba ensemble music.

The size of the groups varied greatly. Even though an ensemble program of only five participants received the most responses, running a close second were programs with more than ten students. Forty-five percent of the responding schools did not offer their students academic

credit for participating in the marimba ensemble. Sixty percent of the marimba ensembles rehearsed only once a week, and the average rehearsal lasted for an hour or less. Many of these groups presented two concerts each year. However, some marimba ensembles perform only as an enhancement of the percussion ensemble concert. Most of the marimba ensembles (70 percent) utilize a conductor and the faculty member is usually in that position, but several groups have students as directors.

Just as there was a wide range in the number of marimba ensemble participants, so also is there a variety in the number of marimbas available for rehearsals. Some schools complained that their program did not have enough marimbas even to support a marimba ensemble, but some of the smaller schools have not let their limited supply of marimbas hamper their programs because they utilize other keyboard instruments to cover the parts. Other schools have marimbas sufficient to double parts and involve a larger number of students. To complement the marimba, other instruments are sometimes used. The drum set and string bass were the most popular for that purpose.

The teachers believed the value of the marimba ensemble was to teach musicianship to their percussionists,

to improve their keyboard skills, and to expose them through the chamber music experience to literature of different stylistic periods. It is the transcriptions of music from other style periods that many ensembles depend upon for their repertoire. Almost unanimously (98.13 percent), the teachers said that the marimba ensemble is in need of high quality, original literature. Music presently available could be rated only as good to fair. The reason for problems relating to music literature of poor quality was the reluctance of composers and music publishers, who, for lack of a market, were not motivated to supply new material for the marimba ensemble.

In searching for reasons why some colleges and universities do not include a marimba ensemble in their music program, no correlation could be found between a teacher's expertise in mallet performance and his program offerings. Over half of the teachers (56.52 percent) who acknowledged a weakness in their mallet performance offered a marimba ensemble to their students. The two major problems hampering the development of a marimba ensemble at many of the schools were a lack of instruments and an insufficient number of students available to participate.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this monograph was to investigate the history and development of the marimba ensemble in the United States, and to determine its current status in college and university percussion programs. There were five specific objectives of this study. They were (1) to document the activities of the Guatemalan marimba bands in the United States; (2) to trace the history of marimba ensembles during the vaudeville era; (3) to investigate the contributions of Clair Omar Musser to the marimba ensemble movement; (4) to determine the current status of college and university marimba ensemble programs; and (5) to survey the currently available literature written for the marimba ensemble.

In chapter II, the origins of the marimba were examined. The instrument was traced from its origins in Indonesia and Southeast Asia to East Africa during the first

centuries of the Christian era. There, the Africans made several structural advances in the construction of the marimba--the use of a straining bar or "arc," and resonators with vibrating apertures. Other African contributions included the practice of playing while standing or walking, and the development of playing techniques using two mallets in one hand.

From there, the African instrument came to the Americas during the early days of the slave trade, probably between the middle of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The three forms of the Guatemalan marimba were then examined: the marimba con tecomates, the marimba sencilla, and the marimba doble. Chenoweth believes that the "arc marimba," marimba con tecomates, is the oldest of these forms and was first developed in southeastern Africa. The weight of the evidence indicates that the African marimba first came to the Americas by way of Guatemala.

The Guatemalans initiated the practice of inserting "dummy" resonators under the upper row of bars to reduce the risk of damage to a gapped row of resonators. The Guatemalans can be credited with several significant contributions which transformed a primitive gourd instrument into one that is comparable with its modern counterpart.

They improved the marimba by freely suspending each bar on strings between spacing pegs, built individual resonators for each bar, extended the range of the keyboard, and retained and improved upon the vibrating membrane used by the Africans.

In the remaining portion of the second chapter, the emergence of the marimba in the United States, mainly through the efforts of families of Guatemalan marimba-playing artists, was outlined. The Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band, with Celso Hurtado as leader, brought the Central American marimba to the United States. The group's repertoire consisted mainly of Guatemalan folksongs and transcriptions of orchestral literature. Other notable groups from Central America touring in the United States included the Chávez Brothers' Marimba Band, the Ideal Marimba Band, the Blue and White Marimba Band, the Excelsior Marimba Band, Los Chintos Marimba Band, and Signor Friscoe and his Guatemalan Marimba Band. These and other Central American marimba groups helped to popularize the instrument in the United States through their numerous tours around the country and performances on early disc recordings.

The xylophone came to the United States by way of Europe, becoming popular initially through cylinder, and

later, disc recordings. This "golden age of the xylophone" lasted from about 1890 until 1925. Later, the xylophone and marimba were featured in radio broadcasts, motion pictures, and vaudeville shows, which further helped bring the instrument to the attention of the American public.

Between 1905 and 1920, the J. C. Deagan, Mayland, and U. G. Leedy Companies, began manufacturing bar-percussion instruments. As production by these manufacturers increased, instruments of the marimba type became increasingly popular. The first group of prominent North American marimbists, which included Red Norvo, the Green brothers, Billy Dorn, Sam Herman, and Eddy Rubbsam, appeared on recordings beginning in the 1920s.

During the 1920s and 1930s, marimba and xylophone players performed on radio both as soloists accompanied by the station orchestra or dance band, and in xylophone and marimba ensembles playing the popular music of the day. Harry Breuer was one of the most popular xylophone artists to be featured on the radio. Latin American marimbists Celso Hurtado and José Bethancourt were also popular on radio broadcasts in the United States.

By the fourth decade of the twentieth century, marimba bands had gained in popularity as evidenced by

their frequent appearances at state fairs, dance and club engagements, conventions, and on radio and vaudeville shows. Reg Kehoe's Marimba Queens, the Royal Collegians Marimba Band, Jack Kurkowski's Xylophone Band, the Salt Lake City Marimba Symphony, and the Imperial Xylophonists were some of the more popular groups during this time.

In chapter III, the accomplishments of Clair Omar Musser and his contributions to the marimba ensemble movement were discussed. Musser, through his reputation as an outstanding marimba virtuoso, contributed to the recognition of the marimba as a solo instrument. As chief designer for the J. C. Deagan Company, Musser was responsible for helping to standardize the design of the modern manufactured marimba. In his transcriptions and arrangements for marimba ensemble, Musser treated that ensemble as an orchestra in its own right, using the five-part format of a string section. A great promoter, Musser was able to organize marimba orchestras ranging in size from twenty-five to three hundred members. His obsession with size revealed an obvious instinct for showmanship. This was also evident in his penchant for such effects as the use of colored lights, anvils, and fragmented meteorites. As a conductor, composer, arranger, instrument designer, showman, educator, and

performer, he did more than any other single individual to popularize the marimba and its music.

The recognition that Gordon Peters' Eastman Marimba Masters attained through appearances on television and radio, with symphony orchestras, and at youth concerts and social engagements made them one of the most popular marimba organizations during the 1950s. Peters was one of the first to recognize that the marimba ensemble could be a great aid in training percussionists to read music, and develop a familiarity with different musical styles. Subsequent college and university groups modeled their marimba ensembles after the Eastman Marimba Masters.

The work of Clair Musser and Gordon Peters helped make the marimba ensemble an important addition to college music programs. Their achievements in this area encouraged the formation of other such ensembles as exemplified by the growth of marimba ensembles at the collegiate level from the mid-1960s to the present day. Beginning with the ensembles of James Moore and Peter Tanner, and continuing through the late 1970s with the resurgence of ragtime music, the marimba ensemble has experienced a steady growth and popularity.

In chapter IV, the status of the marimba ensemble in college and university music programs in the United States

was examined by using a questionnaire to solicit information from college percussion teachers. In order to obtain the necessary data, questionnaires were mailed to 248 college institutions which had National Association of Schools of Music accreditation and a full-time percussion instructor listed in the College Music Society's Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities, United States and Canada (1982-1984). Of the 248 institutions surveyed, 175 responses (70.56 percent) were received.

In order to investigate the marimba ensemble's role in the college music program, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first segment was applicable only to programs which included a marimba ensemble. The second portion of the survey was to be answered by all respondents.

Question number one asked if a marimba ensemble was included in the university's music program. Seventy-two percent of the respondents said they did have such a group; however, only thirty-four percent of them were able to regularly schedule it separate from percussion ensemble. The majority of the respondents (59.20 percent) stated that their marimba ensembles met only once a week, with the average length of rehearsal being from more than thirty minutes to an hour. Just over half of the institutions

(55 percent) offered performers academic credit for their participation. The number of participants in the marimba ensemble varied greatly from school to school. Thirty-seven percent of the institutions presented concerts featuring only the marimba ensemble. Almost half of these ensembles (44.44 percent) gave two concerts per year. However, ninety-four percent of the respondents stated that they incorporated marimba ensemble literature into their percussion ensemble concerts. Of the seventy percent of the marimba ensembles which had conductors, the majority (83 percent) were directed by a faculty member. The number of marimbas available for rehearsals varied from only one to more than eight. Many ensembles used other mallet-keyboard instruments, such as the xylophone and vibraphone, in addition to marimbas. With the exception of other keyboard instruments, the string bass and trap drum set were the most frequent additions to the marimba ensemble.

In questions fifteen through twenty-one, all respondents, including both those with and without a marimba ensemble, were asked to give their opinions concerning the value of the marimba ensemble and its music. Nearly half of the instructors (48.76 percent) stated that developing musicianship is the primary value that students derive

from the marimba ensemble experience. Ninety percent of the respondents expressed the opinion that there is artistic merit in the marimba ensemble as a performance medium.

Questions seventeen through twenty-one of the survey asked for an analysis of the literature available to college and university marimba ensembles. A summarization of respondents' choices of five of the most significant works for marimba ensemble or mallet-keyboard ensemble is shown in table 8 on pages 185-86. Forty-one percent of the instructors judged the existing marimba ensemble repertoire as being of "good" quality, while almost an equal number rated the current music available only as "fair." The comments that accompanied some of the judgements centered on the lack of availability of original compositions. Approximately ninety percent of the respondents favored the use of transcriptions for two reasons. First, transcriptions can be utilized as a way of exposing students to the music of style periods other than the twentieth century, and second, transcriptions augment a rather limited repertoire of available original works. Almost all of the respondents (98.13 percent) expressed the belief that there is a real need for new original literature for the marimba ensemble and mallet-keyboard ensemble.

Conclusions

The findings of this investigation support the following conclusions:

1. First appearing in the United States as a primitive folk instrument, the marimba became popular on the vaudeville stage primarily by virtue of its novelty. Clair Musser also capitalized upon the novelty of the instrument; however, Musser's talents as a showman and promoter, and his preoccupation with large groups, popularized the marimba as an ensemble instrument. It was largely through the efforts of Musser that the concept of the marimba as an ensemble instrument was given its major impetus.

2. Through his accomplishments at the Eastman School of Music, Gordon Peters set a precedent by standardizing the marimba ensemble as a small chamber group capable of performing at the college level. Because of the success of the Marimba Masters, other college marimba ensembles were initiated.

3. The marimba ensemble has experienced a steady growth at the collegiate level from the mid-1960s until the present day. There is an increasing awareness on the part of college percussion teachers of the pedagogical benefits of a marimba ensemble experience.

4. With the development and manufacture of instruments using synthetic bars during the mid-1970s, the price of a marimba was significantly reduced. This promoted the study of the marimba and encouraged the formation of marimba ensembles.

5. Results from the questionnaire indicated that seventy-two percent of American colleges and universities that employ a full-time percussion teacher and are members of NASM include a marimba ensemble as part of their music program.

6. One hundred and fifty-seven respondents (98.13 percent) believed that there is a real need to develop new literature for the marimba ensemble. It would appear that if the marimba ensemble is to maintain its artistic integrity, it will have to generate quality literature written specifically for it.

7. Information from the questionnaire revealed that a large amount of marimba ensemble literature is performed on percussion ensemble concerts, indicating evidence of a trend to include works for marimba (and mallet-keyboard) ensemble on percussion ensemble programs.

8. There appears to be a trend at the collegiate level toward programming literature written for the mallet-

keyboard ensemble as evidenced by the number of mallet ensemble compositions being performed. Composers are exploring the sound potential of all the mallet-keyboard instruments.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. In order to develop a total perspective of the history of the marimba ensemble, a thorough study should be made of the pre-American marimba movement including the contributions of the Hurtado family and other Guatemalan ensembles.

2. Since this investigation only briefly examined the numerous marimba ensembles performing during the first decades of this century, it is recommended that detailed biographical data be acquired on the marimba ensembles of the first half of the twentieth century.

3. It is recommended that further research into the unique contributions of Clair Omar Musser to the marimba movement be initiated. A study of Musser's original compositions for the marimba should be made.

4. Further study should be given to those marimba groups performing outside of the United States.

5. It is recommended that a discography of marimba music be compiled.

6. A follow-up study to determine the current status of the marimba ensemble in college and university music programs should be made periodically.

7. A marimba ensemble should be offered at all institutions where staff and instrument availability make it feasible. The marimba ensemble should be offered in conjunction with private study on the mallet instruments.

8. Attempts should be made to encourage composers to write significant literature for the marimba ensemble. This could be the result of commissions.

9. An annotated guide of literature for the marimba and mallet-keyboard ensemble should be made available to percussion teachers so they may be better informed to make a selection of compositions best suited for their particular ensemble situation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERSONAL LETTER FROM CLAIR OMAR MUSSER
TO MEMBERS OF
THE INTERNATIONAL MARIMBA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PERSONAL LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL MARIMBA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

January 11, 1935

DEAR ORCHESTRA MEMBER:

The following pertinent news items should interest you--

Definite arrangements have been made for us to sail on the French Liner "Paris" April 20th, 1935, Saturday 11 A.M.

Following our European sojourn we embark Havre on the "Ile De France" and return home New York City May 14th.

So that you may understand properly we arrive in New York on the 14th.

European concert dates will be sent to you shortly.

The four selections Pomp and Circumstance, Largo, Kamanoi-Ostrow, and Prelude by Rachmaninoff are with the printer now and will be mailed to you next week positively. Sorry to have not been able to send them January 5th but these arrangements took more work than I had contemplated.

Information regarding formals, chaperons, and officers will be in the mail shortly.

Passport information will also be forthcoming.

PLEASE .. PLEASE .. PLEASE practice your orchestra part incessantly and when you think you can play your part well enough please remember that there is no such thing as perfection; at least in music. By all means practice your "roll" as I am more concerned about this than anything else in the orchestra. I WANT A LIGHT DELICATE FAIRLY RAPID ROLL WHICH PRODUCES ONLY MUSIC AND NO BAR NOISES OR HAMMER DETONATIONS.

As soon as these four additional selections are in the hands of the entire orchestra, making a total of six, I will personally begin checking on all members with the exception of a few who are too distant from my office headquarters.

Other news will be mailed to you regularly. Best wishes to you all.

CLAIR OMAR MUSSER
Director and Conductor

APPENDIX B

**LETTER FROM CLAIR OMAR MUSSER
TO PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY ASSOCIATES REGARDING
THE 1980 INTERNATIONAL MARIMBA FESTIVAL**

Percussive Arts Society

HALL OF FAME MEMBERS
1973 - 1978

NOVEMBER 26, 1979

DEAR P.A.S. ASSOCIATE:

I WRITE YOU TODAY IN OUR POSSIBLE MUTUAL INTERESTS
IN A MAGNANIMOUS MUSICAL PROPOSAL.

THIS IS UNQUESTIONABLY AN UNPRECEDENTED..."BLUE PRINT
FOR EDUCATION AND CONCERT PERFORMANCE"...IN THE ROMANTIC
HISTORY OF THE MARIMBA.

THE EVOLVEMENT OF THIS EXCITING "MARIMBA FESTIVAL
PLAN" WAS CHAMPIONED BY THE PRECEPTS AND SUGGESTIONS OF
NEARLY TWO HUNDRED P.A.S. MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES WHO APPEAR
TO HAVE ARDENT AMBITIONS WITH THE MARIMBA.

FOLLOWING THE RELEASE AND DISTRIBUTION OF
"PERCUSSIVE NOTES" MAGAZINE...SPRING/SUMMER EDITION 1978...
VOLUME 16 - NUMBER 3, I BEGAN RECEIVING LETTERS FROM P.A.S.
MEMBERS AND THEIR ASSOCIATES ON THE SUBJECT OF MARIMBA
ENSEMBLES, ORCHESTRAS, AND EDUCATION.

IN THIS SPECIFIC ISSUE OF PERCUSSIVE NOTES...
THERE APPEARED STORIES AND REFERENCES TO SOME OF "THE WRITER'S"
MARIMBA ORCHESTRA ACCOLADES...INCLUDING THE 300-PIECE
MARIMBA ORCHESTRA....CHICAGO, SEPTEMBER 1, 1950.

I HAVE RECEIVED A TOTAL OF 171 LETTERS "TO DATE"
WHICH MOSTLY INFER INTEREST IN "UPDATING" A SUPER MARIMBA
ORCHESTRA....AND, POSSIBLE UNPRECEDENTED CONCERTS, T.V.,
FILMS, AND RECORDINGS, ETC.

THESE LETTERS REPRESENT NEARLY ALL OF THE
UNITED STATES AND SEVEN (7) FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

I HAVE GIVEN THE SUBJECT ENDLESS AND SERIOUS THOUGHT.
I ALSO DEBATED THE VARIOUS FEATURES WITH SPONSORS, EDUCATORS,
STUDENTS, ET AL.

FOLLOWING A LENGTHY PERIOD OF SINCERE STUDY AND PLANNING, I HAVE DEDUCED THE FOLLOWING...."SUGGESTED" PROGRAM....WHICH I SET FORTH FOR YOUR ANALYTICAL STUDY...AND, COMMENTS FROM YOUR ACE STUDENTS AND PERCUSSIVE ASSOCIATES.

THRU-OUT THE AFOREMENTIONED LETTERS, I FELT A COINCIDENT EXPRESSION BY THE WRITERS INFERRING THEIR INTERESTS IN EDUCATION— (IN ADDITION TO THE CONCERT AND ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES.)

I ASSESSED THE FULL PICTURE...AND, SET FORTH THE SUGGESTED PROGRAM AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) NAME: (A) INTERNATIONAL MARIMBA FESTIVAL
(B) INTERNATIONAL MARIMBA CLASSIC - 1980
- (2) DATE: EIGHT DAYS - MID-1980—
- (3) PLACE: LOS ANGELES, CA AREA—
- (4) 500 ENROLLERS - MARIMBISTS - NO MORE...NO LESS.
- (5) AGES: 17—30
- (6) (A) MEMBERSHIPS: 50 U.S. STATES
(B) FOREIGN COUNTRIES—10
- (7) MASTER CLASSES UNDER WORLD'S GREATEST TEACHERS AND VIRTUOSI.
- (8) LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR 500 ON LEADING COLLEGE CAMPUS..
- (9) SPECIAL VIBRAPHONE SECTION
- (10) WORLD'S GREATEST MARIMBA CONCERT BY 500 PLAYERS IN HOLLYWOOD BOWL.
- (11) FILMS AND TV PRODUCTIONS
- (12) DELUXE RECORD ALBUMS
- (13) TOURS TO DISNEYLAND, MOVIE STUDIOS, ETC.

THIS SHOULD UNQUESTIONABLY BE THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS "EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT EVENT" IN THE THOUSANDS OF YEARS HISTORY OF THE MARIMBA AND ITS ANALOGUES.

THE CLINICS AND "PERSONAL INSTRUCTION SESSIONS" WILL AFFORD THE ATTENDEES THE EPITOME IN KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES AND PERFORMANCE.

MASTER ARTISTS FROM TEN (10) COUNTRIES ARE ASSURED.

SPECIAL CONCERTS BY VISITING MARIMBA ORCHESTRAS FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES WILL BE SCHEDULED.

THE PLANS FOR THE 500-PIECE MARIMBA FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA CONCERT IN HOLLYWOOD BOWL WILL FEATURE UNPRECEDENTED ELECTRONIC EFFECTS AND METRONOMIC PERFORMANCE.

IT APPEARS THAT 1980 IS THE YEAR FOR OUR CLASSIC AND MARIMBA FANTASIA AND CALIFORNIA SEEMS TO OFFER THE IDEAL SETTING IN VIEW OF ALL THE EXCITING SIDE ISSUES THAT CAN MAKE THIS A MEMORABLE EVENT IN THE LIFE OF THE PARTICIPANT.

IN ADDITION TO THE MOVIE STUDIOS....THERE ARE MORE THAN "THREE (3) SCORE" PLACES OF INTEREST AND EXCITEMENT FOR THE "FESTIVAL ATTENDEE".

THESE EMBRACE EVERYTHING FROM THE MOVIE STUDIOS, TOURS, MUSEUMS, ETC....TO THE "LION COUNTRY SAFARI", THE HOME OF NEARLY 150 LIONS ROAMING FREE THRU THE AFRICAN VELDT.

YOU CAN DRIVE THRU BUSH COUNTRY AS ZEBRAS, ANTELOPES, AND GIRAFFES STARE AT YOU IN YOUR TRAVELING CAGE.

THE FINANCIAL ASPECT AND COST TO THE PARTICIPANT IS SENSIBLE AND REASONABLE.

MEMBERS WOULD BRING THEIR OWN MARIMBA AND WOULD PAY A NOMINAL FEE FOR THE EIGHT-DAY EVENT WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THEIR LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS AND SEVERAL TOURS, ETC.

THEY WOULD SHARE IN THE PROFITS FROM CONCERTS, FILMS, T.V., AND RECORDINGS.

WE WOULD ENCOURAGE ENSEMBLES FROM VARIOUS CITIES (AND STATES) AND THE ULTIMATE "MUSICAL GAIN" WOULD BE RECIPROCAL.

I AM SENDING THIS PROPOSAL TO YOU AND FORTY-NINE (49) OF OUR ASSOCIATE P.A.S. CHAIRPERSONS.

IT IS MY EARNEST HOPE THAT YOU WILL DEEPLY CONSIDER THE FOREGOING, AND...I WILL CERTAINLY BE INFLUENCED BY THE MAJORITY OF ANSWERS AND SUGGETIONS THAT I HOPE TO RECEIVE.

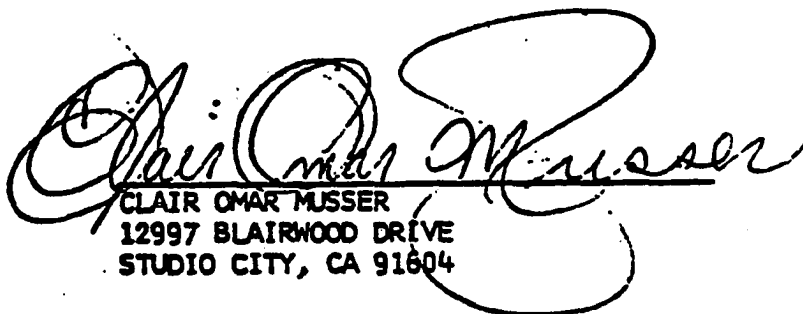
IF MY "FELLOW MARIMBA ASSOCIATES" WOULD BE SO INCLINED,
I TRULY BELIEVE THAT WE...(COLLECTIVELY) COULD EXECUTE THIS
INTERNATIONAL MARIMBA CLASSIC - 1980...WITH SENSATIONAL ACCLAIM
IN UNPRECEDENTED MUSICAL BENEFIT TO EACH AND EVERY PARTICIPANT.

I SHALL DEEPLY APPRECIATE YOUR CONFIDENTIAL REPLY,
AND LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU AFTER YOU HAVE STUDIED THE
GENERAL PROPOSAL.

IN CORDIAL MARIMBA FELLOWSHIP...

I REMAIN -

SINCERELY,



CLAIR OMAR MUSSER
12997 BLAIRWOOD DRIVE
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

APPENDIX C

**MARIMBA ENSEMBLE QUESTIONNAIRE
SENT TO COLLEGE PERCUSSION INSTRUCTORS**

MARIMBA ENSEMBLE SURVEY

Institution Name: _____

Your Name: _____

Academic Rank: _____

Degrees Held: _____

Approximate Number of Percussion Students in Your Program: _____

(Please circle the appropriate answer or fill in the blank for the following questions.)

1. Do you include a marimba ensemble in your music program? (If your answer to this question is "no," please go to question number 15.) Yes or No
2. Is the marimba ensemble regularly scheduled to meet at a time different from percussion ensemble? Yes or No
3. How many times per week does marimba ensemble meet? _____
4. How many minutes per session does marimba ensemble meet? _____
5. Do students receive academic credit for marimba ensemble? Yes or No
6. Approximately how many students participate in the marimba ensemble? _____
7. Do you give concerts featuring only the marimba ensemble? Yes or No

8. Approximately how many concerts are given each year by the marimba ensemble? _____
9. Please give the name of your group, if different from "marimba ensemble." _____
10. Do you use a conductor with the marimba ensemble? If so, check one of the following: Yes or No
faculty _____; graduate assistant _____;
student conductor _____.
11. How many marimbas do you have available for use in marimba ensemble rehearsal? _____
12. Which of the following instruments (if any) do you use regularly with the marimba ensemble?
String Bass ____; Piano ____; Drum Set ____; Other _____
13. Do you incorporate pieces featuring the marimba ensemble on percussion ensemble concerts? Yes or No
14. If you use a standard set-up for your marimba ensemble, please draw a diagram of it:
15. What primary values do you believe students derive from the marimba ensemble experience that they may not receive in other musical ensembles?

16. Do you believe that the marimba ensemble has artistic merit as a medium of performance over and above its value as a teaching tool? Yes or No
Comment:
17. Please list five works for marimba ensemble (or marimba with other keyboard percussion instruments) which you consider to be significant pieces in the literature:
a.
b.
c.
d.
e.
18. What is your opinion of the music presently available for the marimba ensemble?
Excellent ____; Good ____; Fair ____; Poor ____.
Comment:
19. Do you favor the use of transcriptions? Yes or No
Why or why not?
20. Do you believe there is a need for developing new literature for the marimba ensemble? Yes or No
21. Do you believe there is a need for developing new literature for the mallet-keyboard ensemble? Yes or No
22. Is mallet performance one of your own strongest areas of specialization? Yes or No

23. If you do not include marimba ensemble as part of your present program, please state your reason(s).

24. Please list any comments, suggestions, and/or observations you may have.

APPENDIX D

**COVER LETTER AND FOLLOW-UP LETTER
TO MARIMBA ENSEMBLE SURVEY**

COVER LETTER TO MARIMBA ENSEMBLE SURVEY

March 14, 1983

Dear Percussion Instructor:

I am gathering information for a doctoral monograph in music concerning the current status of the marimba ensemble in college and university percussion programs. The enclosed brief survey is being sent to all full-time university percussion instructors whose schools have full National Association of Schools of Music accreditation.

Any information received from you in this survey will be treated confidentially. All data will be reported in summary form; neither persons nor institutions will be mentioned by name. Results from this study will be made available upon request.

Your prompt completion and return of the survey by April 8, 1983, will be appreciated. Please return, along with the completed survey, a copy of a recent program in which your marimba ensemble appeared, if available. An addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

David P. Eyler

Enclosures

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO MARIMBA ENSEMBLE SURVEY

April 20, 1983

Dear Percussion Instructor:

On March 14 I mailed a survey on marimba ensembles to your office. At this time I have not yet received your reply.

In the event that the original may have been lost in the mail, I am sending you another copy of the survey and an addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience. As a percussion teacher, your opinions regarding this topic are of vital importance.

Please help insure the validity of this project by completing the survey and returning it at your earliest convenience. If by some chance our letters have crossed in the mail, please disregard this letter.

Sincerely yours,

David P. Eyler

Enclosures

APPENDIX E

RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

TO THE MARIMBA ENSEMBLE QUESTIONNAIRE

RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

Alabama

Alabama State University, Montgomery

University of Alabama, University

Auburn University, Auburn

University of South Alabama, Mobile

Arizona

University of Arizona, Tucson

Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff

Arkansas

Arkansas State University, State University

Arkansas Tech University, Russellville

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

University of Central Arkansas, Conway

California

California Institute of the Arts, Valencia

California State University, Fresno

California State University, Hayward

California State University, Long Beach

California State University, Los Angeles

California State University, Northridge

University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Colorado

University of Colorado, Boulder

University of Denver, Denver

Western State College of Colorado, Gunnison

Connecticut

Yale University, New Haven

District of Columbia

Catholic University of America, Washington

Florida

Florida State University, Tallahassee

University of Central Florida, Orlando

University of Florida, Gainesville

University of Miami, Coral Gables

University of Tampa, Tampa

Georgia

Georgia State University, Atlanta

Georgia Southern College, Statesboro

University of Georgia, Athens

Hawaii

University of Hawaii, Honolulu

Idaho

Boise State University, Boise

Illinois

American Conservatory of Music, Chicago

Eastern Illinois University, Charleston

Millikin University, Decatur

Northwestern University, Evanston

Quincy College, Quincy

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

University of Illinois, Urbana

VanderCock College of Music, Chicago

Western Illinois University, Macomb

Wheaton College Conservatory of Music, Wheaton

Indiana

De Pauw University, Greencastle

Indiana State University, Terre Haute

Indiana University, Bloomington

University of Evansville, Evansville

Iowa

Drake University, Des Moines

University of Iowa, Iowa City

University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls

Kansas

Benedictine College, Atchison

Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg

University of Kansas, Lawrence

Washburn University, Topeka

Kentucky

Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green

Louisiana

Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

Northeast Louisiana University, Monroe

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches

University of New Orleans, New Orleans

Maryland

Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore

University of Maryland, College Park

Massachusetts

Boston Conservatory of Music, Boston

Boston University, Boston

New England Conservatory of Music, Boston

University of Lowell, Lowell

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Michigan

Albion College, Albion

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti

Northern Michigan University, Marquette

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Wayne State University, Detroit

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo

Minnesota

Gustavus Adolphus College, Saint Peter

Mississippi

Delta State University, Cleveland

University of Mississippi, University

University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg

Missouri

Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg

School of the Ozarks, Point Lookout

Montana

Montana State University, Bozeman

Nebraska

Chadron State College, Chadron

Hastings College, Hastings

Kearney State College, Kearney

New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire, Durham

New Jersey

Glassboro State College, Glassboro

Jersey City State College, Jersey City

Trenton State College, Trenton

New Mexico

Eastern New Mexico University, Portales

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

New York

Eastman School of Music, Rochester

Ithaca College, Ithaca

Manhattan School of Music, New York City

Nassau Community College, Garden City

State University of New York, Fredonia

State University of New York, Crane School of Music, Potsdam

State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo

North Carolina

East Carolina University, Greenville

Pembroke State University, Pembroke

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro

North Dakota

Minot State College, Minot

North Dakota State University, Fargo

Ohio

Bluffton College, Bluffton

Capital University, Columbus

Kent State University, Kent

Miami University, Oxford

Muskingum College, New Concord

Oberlin College, Oberlin

Ohio Northern University, Ada

Ohio State University, Columbus

Ohio University, Athens

Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware

University of Akron, Akron

University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati

Oklahoma

Cameron University, Lawton

Oral Roberts University, Tulsa

Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford

University of Oklahoma, Norman

University of Tulsa, Tulsa

Oregon

University of Oregon, Eugene

Pennsylvania

Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh

Duquesne University, Pittsburgh

Edinboro State College, Edinboro

Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana

Millersville State College, Millersville

Pennsylvania State University, University Park

Temple University, Philadelphia

Rhode Island

University of Rhode Island, Kingston

South Carolina

Furman University, Greenville

Limestone College, Gaffney

University of South Carolina, Columbia

Winthrop College, Rock Hill

South Dakota

Northern State College, Aberdeen

South Dakota State University, Brookings

University of South Dakota, Vermillion

Tennessee

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City

Fisk University, Nashville

Memphis State University, Memphis

Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro

Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Texas

Baylor University, Waco

Del Mar College, Corpus Christi

East Texas State University, Commerce

Lamar University, Beaumont

North Texas State University, Denton

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville

Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches

Texas Tech University, Lubbock

Texas Wesleyan College, Fort Worth

University of Texas, Austin

University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington

University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso

West Texas State University, Canyon

Utah

Brigham Young University, Provo

Utah State University, Logan

Weber State College, Ogden

Vermont

University of Vermont, Burlington

Virginia

Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg

Old Dominion University, Norfolk

Shenandoah College and Conservatory of Music, Winchester

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond

Washington

Central Washington University, Ellensburg

Eastern Washington University, Cheney

Walla Walla College, College Place

Western Washington University, Bellingham

West Virginia

Marshall University, Huntington

West Virginia University, Morgantown

Wisconsin

Alverno College, Milwaukee

Lawrence University, Appleton

University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point

University of Wisconsin, Whitewater

Wyoming

University of Wyoming, Laramie

APPENDIX F

FREE RESPONSES FROM COLLEGE PERCUSSION INSTRUCTORS REGARDING THE MARIMBA ENSEMBLE QUESTIONNAIRE

FREE RESPONSES FROM COLLEGE PERCUSSION INSTRUCTORS

1. "Marimba ensembles are good particularly for students who need to learn how to read without memorizing. . . The transcriptions are good for them to experience musical nuance and phrasing."
2. "I'm not very informed on marimba ensemble music, that's why I can't be much help. There is too much serious music to be learned and absorbed in four years, without spending too much time on wind ensemble, percussion ensemble, rep. orchestra, etc., etc., etc. There aren't enough hours spent practicing and playing in fine orchestras as it is!"
3. "I always include at least one marimba ensemble composition on each percussion ensemble program, however we do not have a separate marimba ensemble group. This is due to the amount of ensembles within the school that need percussionists (New Music Ensemble, Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Ensembles, Chamber Ensembles, Orchestra, and Bands). With a department of only ten percussionists it is difficult to fill these ensembles with percussionists and still leave time for students to practice. Eventually as our department continues to grow, I would very much like to form a full-time marimba ensemble. The marimba ensemble is very limited to transcriptions, I would like to see an increase in original marimba ensemble literature. I feel many people associate the marimba ensemble with ragtime literature, the ensemble has a great deal of potential beyond ragtime and this is where original compositions are needed."
4. "David - a very good questionnaire, and I wish you the best of luck and support from all those you have contacted. I would be very interested in the results of this survey."
5. "I have enclosed a tape of our recent concert. I consider this to be basically a keyboard ensemble. I hope you enjoy it."

6. "Overall I feel a percussion ensemble is a far more worthy performing group."
7. "I have been a member of percussion ensembles since 1962 (age 12) and know the tremendous possibilities of music written for percussion instruments. While I am not well versed in literature for mallet-keyboard ensembles, I can lend my support to any project that would further this form of music."
8. "We have been unable to have the same kind of group this year as last year because of the loss (through graduation) of key players and not being able to replace their talent as yet. Small department."
9. "The marimba ensemble or its concept belongs in every school or department that has percussionists. It may initially appear to be a novelty item, but the musical offerings and musical benefits to the students are many, and often the type of musical experience that traditionally percussionists have not been involved in."
10. "This semester the 'percussion ensemble' is a mallet ensemble. This is the first time I've tried it. We may go to percussion ensemble one semester and mallet ensemble the next."
11. "In general, ensembles should be formed in response to compositional needs, rather than pedagogic. There needs to be a balance between performance skills (individual), and ensemble skills. Fine players can adapt to any ensemble situation."
12. "At present we have no percussion majors and only two elective percussion students. One is a mallet student. I am a one person instrumental and music education department and consequently am spread very thin and have not recruited as I would like to have for marimba and mallet-keyboard ensemble. Our college is 1200 enrollment and is experiencing student interest changes. Thanks for including us in your survey."
13. "David - I would like to see your document when completed; Good luck."

14. "I am very interested in the results of your survey. If you publish them or turn them into a thesis please let me know where I could purchase a copy. Best of luck in your work."
15. "The only draw back I can see is the limitation of most schools ability to purchase enough marimbas. In composing works for this type of ensemble, the composer should think in terms of instrument substitution: Ex. two marimbas, one xylophone and vibraphone (optional string bass) for the normal four to five marimbas."
16. "Sorry I can't be of more help. We have a very small program at the present time. Good luck on your project. Let me hear of your findings. Best Wishes."
17. "Most of our non-keyboard oriented students find keyboard ensembles most enjoyable."
18. "We don't have a marimba ensemble mainly because we are concentrating in other areas like the music of other cultures."
19. "I would be very interested in knowing how often the instruments are tuned in the various colleges you survey? This is a major problem inherit with the ensemble musically speaking - we can't control pitch!!"
20. "Hope to have some of the Hayward ensembles published in near future. Look forward to performances in other schools."
21. "Your questions seem to exclude the possibilities of improvised performance for this ensemble. This is of course the great tradition of these instruments and one which should be included in a survey of this type."
22. "I'd like to know where you are working on your Doctorate - My doctoral committee won't allow any 'yes or no' questions on any survey materials!!"
23. "I think too much emphasis is put on the marimba in our music schools. This doesn't seem right to me because the marimba is very rarely used in the professional world."

24. "I cannot answer your questions concerning a marimba ensemble since I am limited to a session of one hour to each student at _____. Since my forte in teaching is repertoire from all fields and since I have experience in these fields, it is virtually impossible for me to include a marimba ensemble in my schedule. I urge the students to do this on their own."
25. "I would like to see marimba ensemble performance pushed to the limit for all percussion majors."
26. "Sorry for the delay in returning your survey form, but I have just returned to _____ about mid-September after a year's leave. The fellow that took over for me, when I left last year, left very suddenly and I was called back in on the spur-of-the-moment. This must account for my missing your first letter. Also, I must inform you that my predecessor dropped the percussion and marimba ensembles, so we have neither at present. Now that I am back, this situation will change and the information on the survey form reflects the program's status as I expect it to be in the fall. Again, I apologize for the snafu, but I hope this information will be helpful. Thanks for your interest and I'll be looking forward to seeing the results of your study. You didn't mention in this letter where the results will be published . . . in P. A. S. perhaps? If you had not considered this, please do. I think it would be of considerable interest to the members."
27. "We do play a lot of mallet ensemble music, using whatever assortment of mallet instruments we have."
28. "Thank you for your interest in this project! We have a major program for marimba ensembles and marimba orchestra each summer at _____."
29. "We put together marimba duets, trios, etc. from time to time. It is not a regular group. Time is a problem as well as numbers. Some years we have had six players and we met once a week. It was a good time and the students learned considerable."
30. "Good idea - would like to see the results."

31. "Arrangements and transcriptions seem to be plentiful. More original works are needed."
32. "I tend to use mallet-keyboard ensembles more, due partly to the lack of more than two marimbas at our school."
33. "Good luck on your project. If I can be of any more help, please feel free to contact me."
34. "I appreciate your focus but let's not overemphasize this media at the expense of others."
35. "I will be interested to see the results of your survey. This project of yours seems to be well organized and will benefit our work in this area!"
36. "I have been interim Director of Bands for the past year and have not been able to devote the time I feel necessary to my percussion department. I will be returning to my previous position in the summer and hope to get back to percussion."
37. "I believe the marimba ensemble will only attain artistic merit if the 'composer' is willing to write for it. Original works are the key. I have never heard a transcription that didn't sound worlds better on original instruments. That is not the case of some transcriptions in other mediums."
38. "Marimba ensembles should be part of every percussion department. New music must be written to enhance the strength of the ensemble. . . ."
39. "Marimba ensemble could also be Independent Study and not take the place of Percussion Ensemble."
40. "My primary concern is building a solid body of good pieces for percussion ensembles (and solo) and not imposing on composers limitations as to instrumentation."
41. "One must remain flexible and adaptable as works must sometimes be modified as to available instruments and performer abilities."

42. "I chose not to include the collections of ragtime arrangements . . . which are available; of course I view all of these as important, challenging and entertaining works."
43. "Less time should be spent on marimba in general, and more time should be spent on the instruments (xylophone, bells, snare drum, accessories, timpani, drum set, vibes) that are used in the 'real world' by working, performing percussionists. Except for the exceptional performer, marimba, as a career is a dead end."
44. "Good survey, should yield much information. I wish we knew how many mallet ensembles are 'active' in the world, 200? 1,000? 10,000? etc.?"
45. "Congratulations on designing this survey! Please provide me with a copy of the results. Good luck."
46. "I prefer the idea of keyboard percussion rather than only marimba ensemble. We play both."
47. "In the last ten years I have programmed and conducted some sixty percussion ensemble concerts. I strive to present only 'art music' and will not program junk. I don't feel there is enough good music to have a full time ensemble, even though we can get up to twenty marimbas together at a time. It's also hard to get them all together (logistics). Percussionists who tacetly reject transcriptions have their ears up their _____. It seems to me the question ultimately deals with GOOD music vs BAD music. (This applies to many genres and instruments, not just marimbas!)"
48. "Good idea, David. Glad to hear from you. Stay in touch with results or other projects."
49. "More questions on marimba ensemble being an integral part of the percussion ensemble program which is the way it exists in most schools."
50. "I would like to see the results of this survey. If you have any suggestions for literature, I would love to hear them."
51. "Good luck"

52. "It is too easy to become 'common' or 'trite' or unartistic with most of the literature. Most peoples expect that we are always 'showy' or 'clowns' or entertainers."
53. "I have recently discovered that there is a substantial amount of literature available for flute ensemble that is adaptable to marimba ensemble. I am particularly impressed with the works of Alry Publications, P. O. Box 24494, Denver, CO. 80224."
54. "Finding good percussion ensemble music is difficult. Mallet ensemble is not as hard because I can use string quartets if needed."
55. "Much fine work is being done in this area, but we must develop a larger body of works originally for the medium in order for it to be a viable medium."
56. "I include music that demands the utmost of every keyboard percussion instrument. Let me know exactly what you get from this inquiry! I believe it can only be positive. Keep in touch."
57. "When I think of marimba ensemble, I think of no less than eight players. A quartet is a chamber group, not a marimba ensemble! (semantics) You will get a wide range of responses without this distinction."
58. "I would expand our offering if I had more literature of quality to keep it going. We have tried to meet a marimba group separately on three different occasions, but each time we exhausted our material and I felt that we were not meeting the students' musical needs. I have since coordinated the mallet ensemble numbers into our regular percussion ensemble programs."
59. "Surveys by nature have limited value since they often reflect an ideal rather than actuality. The development of the various arrangements of music for mallet ensembles reflects the need at each school to develop the percussionist into a more sensitive musician. I would suggest reviewing Gordon Peters' comments on the formation of the ensemble at Eastman in the late 1950s. Those reasons are still valid."

60. "The percussion program here is growing slowly and I plan on doing more with mallet ensembles in the future as the ability of students improves."
61. "At the present time we have available only two marimbas and have not started a serious program of this type. Questions have been answered to the best of my ability, considering that we must substitute other mallet instruments for marimbas, producing only training-type results, and not for the public."
62. "When decent sounding marimbas, vibes, and xylophones, become as affordable to the young aspiring percussionist as, say an excellent quality snare drum (\$200-\$325), then the physical opportunity to get on the 'melody' bandwagon will be marketable to school district's (and their budgets), music publishers, composers, parents, etc. Exposure: besides some recognition of groups like Nexus, the marimba ensemble really only exists at some college-level music programs. All it would take is some event, group or soloist, gaining wide-spread national 'popular' recognition in order to educate the masses as to the beauty and potential of this so called new musical sound called a marimba ensemble."
63. "I would be interested in a listing of appropriate works for marimba ensemble. We are planning on establishing one in this coming year. Thank you!"
64. "Marimba ensembles appropriate for pre-college instruction same as accordion."
65. "Students do many transcriptions and also arrange pop things. Most of my students do not play keyboards when they get here so I hit it very hard but try to find (or arrange) pieces they will be able to handle."
66. "I do not consider myself an expert on the percussion mallet instruments. _____ is a small, private college, and I am teaching here as a retirement job, teaching woodwinds, brass, percussion, conducting, and instrumental methods."

67. "I believe the marimba ensemble to be of primary importance as part of a percussion program."
68. "We only use a percussion ensemble because of limited numbers."

VITA

David Paul Eyler was born on 8 February 1955, in Baltimore, Maryland, the son of Ruth Whiteford Eyler and Thomas Roland Eyler. He graduated from Bel Air Senior High School, Bel Air, Maryland, in May 1973. Mr. Eyler was awarded the Bel Air Lions' Club Award for Excellence in Instrumental Music. While residing in the Bel Air area, he studied timpani and percussion instruments with Dennis Kain, timpanist of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Charles Memphis, Chairman of Percussion Studies at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and Robert Mitchell, percussionist with the West Point Military Academy Band.

Mr. Eyler attended Frostburg State College in Frostburg, Maryland, and graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education and Applied Percussion in May 1977. He organized the Frostburg State College Percussion Ensemble during his freshman year and directed the group for four years. As a senior, he was featured as marimba soloist with the Frostburg State College Symphonic Band and was selected by the faculty to receive the Senior Honor Award in Music. During his undergraduate degree program he appeared in the 43rd edition of Who's Who Among

Students in American Colleges and Universities, received the Charles E. Lutton Memorial Merit-Scholarship Award, and was a finalist for the Danforth Graduate Fellowship.

In September 1977, he entered the Graduate School of The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and served as graduate teaching associate working under the supervision of Dr. James L. Moore. In March 1979, Mr. Eyler was awarded the Master of Music degree, summa cum laude, from Ohio State, and the following fall, entered the Graduate School of the Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in August 1979, working toward the Doctor of Musical Arts degree. He served as graduate assistant under the supervision of Dr. John Raush from August 1979 until May 1984. During the 1981-82 school year, Mr. Eyler served as assistant conductor of the Louisiana State University Symphony Orchestra. He has been Principal Percussionist of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra from August 1979 until the present, the Baton Rouge Opera Orchestra (1982-84), and drum set specialist for the Baton Rouge Symphony New Hyperion Ragtime Orchestra and Louisiana Soundstage Orchestra.

Mr. Eyler has served as Chairman of the Percussive Arts Society's Mallet Ensemble Literature Committee, been a member of their Discography Committee, and reviewed new music and recordings for Percussive Notes Magazine. He was

a clinician for the 1980 Day of Percussion at Louisiana State University and has been an adjudicator for marching bands festivals, All-State Band and Orchestra auditions, and District Solo and Ensemble Festivals around the state. In July 1984, he became the Director of Bands at Redemptorist Junior and Senior High Schools in Baton Rouge. Since 1979, he has maintained a private percussion studio.

Mr. Eyler's original compositions and arrangements for percussion instruments have been published by Music For Percussion, Permuis Publications, and the Musser Division of Ludwig Industries. His articles on percussion topics have appeared in The Instrumentalist, Percussive Notes, and the Percussionist Journal. His professional memberships include the Percussive Arts Society, Louisiana Bandmasters Association, Music Educators National Conference, Louisiana Music Educators Association, College Music Society, American Federation of Musicians, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, and Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honor Society.

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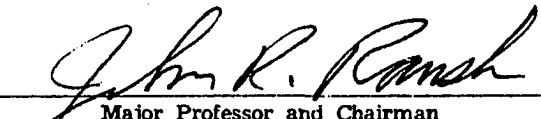
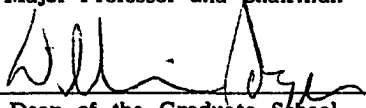
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: DAVID P. EYLER


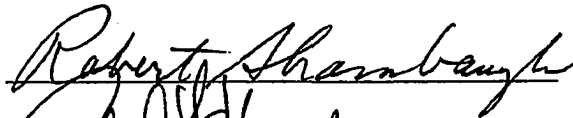
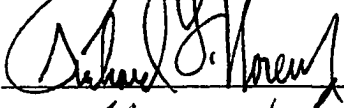
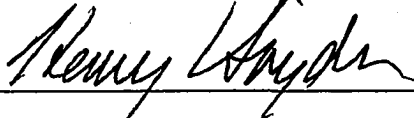

Major Field: Percussion Performance

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Ensemble in the United States and its Current
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Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

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