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One Hundred Years of the Concert Marimba:  
American and Japanese Innovation and Convergence,  
1915 to 2014

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**Abstract**

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The United States and Japan are the two main contributors to the development of the concert marimba and its repertoire. There is an account in each country about how the concert marimba developed, but each is missing the parallel aspect of the story. In this dissertation, I will weave both strands together in order to provide a more complete story of the development of the concert marimba from 1950 to 2014 in both the United States and Japan. I will discuss the two approaches that initially emerged in the two countries, the roots of their approaches, and how they converged to result in the design, construction, and repertoire of the modern concert marimba.

This dissertation details the significant historical and musical interactions between the United States and Japan that affected the development of the marimba and its repertoire from its ancestry through 2014. Topics include the emergence of the concert marimba both in popular culture and as a “classical” instrument, cultural perceptions of the instrument in each country, advancements in four-mallet marimba pedagogy and repertoire, the expansion of the instrument’s range, the increase in the number of marimbists, and the emergence of world marimba competitions. All of these factors ultimately contributed to the marimba’s recognition as a concert instrument in the field of classical music.

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Prologue

III FESTIVAL  
INTERNACIONAL  
DE VIBRÁFONO  
Y MARIMBA

VIBRACIONES

Directora, marimbista, artista multi-media con una gran experiencia. Ha presentado conciertos y recitales en EE.UU., Japón y Europa. Canta y toca en diferentes estilos: clásica, contemporánea, jazz, pop, gaita venezolana, dhruwad tradicional de la India, canto gregoriano y otros. Es bachiller en música de la Universidad Western de Washington y tiene una maestría en música de la universidad de Washington.

[songs-of-hope.tumblr.com/Memmi](http://songs-of-hope.tumblr.com/Memmi)

Concierto de Memmi Ochi  
(invitada de Japón)

Fecha: 29 / 01 / 13 - Hora: 7:30 pm  
Lugar: ICPNA Miraflores



Para enterarte de nuestras actividades,  
búscanos:



Festival Internacional de Vibráfono  
y Marimba Lima - Perú

Figure P.1 Festival Flyer for “Vibraciones”  
*Festival Internacional de vibráfono y marimba*, in Lima, Peru.

“Memmi Ochi, JAPON.” There I was, in the promotional photo of myself, smiling from my computer screen. It was shortly before I was leaving to perform at “Vibraciones,” the international vibraphone and marimba festival, in Lima, Peru. When I saw the concert flyer sent to my e-mail, I had to think about it for a second. Along with

my name, the word “Japon” was written on the page. It is true that I am Japanese, and they were not misrepresenting anything by stating that one of their international guest artists was from Japan. However, I felt a slight hesitation, almost akin to feeling guilty, as though I was not being completely honest in saying that I am Japanese.

I was born and spent my childhood in Japan, and I have been in the United States for more than half my life. Although I received a solid musical foundation in my early years in Japan, I am much more familiar with the American educational system, especially higher education. When I saw the Japanese flag and the word “Japon” next to my name on the flyer, I thought about the expectations people would have of me as a person and as a Japanese marimbist. I don’t play like many of the Japanese marimbists. My teacher in Japan once complimented my playing by saying that she didn’t see femininity in my playing—meaning that I was not playing like many of the Japanese female marimbists. At the same time, it was not that I wanted to see “Memmi Ochi-EE.UU.” on the flyer. Not at all. I don’t play like typical American marimbists either. It didn’t feel accurate to advertise myself as a Japanese marimbist without adding some small print. Living in both countries has blurred the border between them so much that I can no longer tell what is what and which came from where—both in my thinking and in my playing.

When I introduce myself, I often joke that I am “half-Japanese,” “half” meaning that the time I spent in Japan is half my lifetime. I am not American, but I am definitely not like the Japanese who live in Japan all their lives. My best friends from high school, all of whom still live in Japan, often say, “Memmi is a foreigner who speaks very good

Japanese.” They often find my thoughts and comments very interesting and drastically different from those of their Japanese friends.

Growing up in Japan, I felt that I could not conform to the expectations that society had for a small child—even more challenging, for a girl. I was raised in a household that was not very traditional, and my parents encouraged me to articulate my thoughts and to express my opinions and ideas. However, once I stepped outside, I was met with comments such as “What could you know as a child?” or “Did I ask your opinion?” or “Your thoughts and opinions don’t matter; just do as you are told.” Growing up with those mixed messages and different ways of thinking, it was very confusing to me as a small girl who was fiercely independent and had a mind of her own. I was a smart enough child to understand the expectations of society, but, in my heart, I knew that I couldn’t conform to what they wanted me to be—which was not who I was created to be. I was not smart enough to use the system to my advantage. In addition to my communication with my parents, music provided a way of expressing myself, and it provided a safe place to “be.”

Although my personality is more in accordance with American culture and living in the United States feels more comfortable in many ways than living in Japan, living in the United States means that I have to live as an outsider. Music continues to be my refuge. When I don’t fit into the stereotype of being “Japanese” or “American,” people often put me into an “artist” box, and I am able to continue being the truth of who I am. Oftentimes, I am neither American nor Japanese, but I am an “artist” in people’s eyes, as well as in my own eyes, so I don’t have to think too much about my “Japanese-ness” or “American-ness.”

Seeing the flyer that day really made me think about where I am and the unique path that I have taken. Most of the Japanese marimbists I meet outside of Japan have completed their undergraduate training before leaving Japan to study abroad. Many of those who come to the United States for a master's degree or performer's certificate often return to Japan after two or three years. Marimbists trained in Japan frequently have a distinct performance style that can be identified, at least in the United States, as "Japanese." I think that I have retained some Japanese-ness in my playing. At the same time, because I continued my training in the United States, my "Japanese-ness" didn't get refined as purely as it could have been. Both my undergraduate and graduate training were completed in United States, so I am well aware of the standard methods and pedagogy in the U.S. colleges and music schools. Furthermore, most of my teachers have been American, and I have seen more American performers than performers from any other country. All of these factors influenced me greatly as I developed my own performance style. In the midst of the diverse styles and teachings, one thing remains consistent: my love for the marimba. So, naturally, whether in Japan or in the United States, whenever I spoke with people, many of my conversations were related to the marimba. I was continually surprised by the vast differences in people's awareness of the marimba. The variations were evident among individuals not only within each country but between the two countries.

In Japan, the marimba is widely known by the general public, since, along with the violin and piano, it is one of the instruments commonly taken up by young children. In Japanese thought and practice, the word "marimba" nearly always refers to the

concert marimba, which is thought of as an instrument used in the western classical tradition, both as a solo instrument and in chamber music.

By contrast, in the United States, it is my experience that the general public often is not aware of what the marimba is, and if they know the marimba, their understanding rarely coincides with the image of the concert marimba that Japanese people picture in their minds. I have given many recitals and concerts in the U.S., and there are always people in the audience who are seeing the marimba for the first time. In Japan, it would be highly unlikely to give a concert where the audience members have never seen the marimba before. When I meet new people in the U.S., often times I have to explain what the marimba is, or I am asked, "What is a marimbist?" I have never had an interaction like that in Japan. In the United States, even when people do know what a marimba is, they are less likely to picture the concert marimba. Instead, they are likely to mention Mexican and Zimbabwean marimba bands, the Baja Marimba Band, or Frank Zappa's music. Since these styles do not relate to the concert marimba and the repertoire and technique that I have been studying, I used to think that it was a lack of awareness on people's part when they didn't know the concert marimba and its style and repertoire. I was upset and felt that "they should know better!" It was a very similar feeling to the time when I was young and I saw my parents' photo albums from before they were married. In the photo, my mother and her friends were wearing dresses with large prints and a lot of different colors that obviously clashed with each other, which I can only describe as hideous. I was embarrassed that anyone in his/her right mind, let alone my own mother, would wear something as horrible as that in public, and I was upset with them, as though grown-ups who knew better were acting silly. During my

many encounters with the general public in the United States, I had a similar “they should know better” feeling when they repeatedly told me about these “marimbas” that weren’t relevant to what I was doing. However, as I continued to live in the United States, and as I continued my study of the marimba and its history and evolution, it became clear to me that these different perspectives were a result of the varied backgrounds and history that the marimba had in each country. As I became more curious and started researching, I realized that people in Japan and the United States each have their own account of how the concert marimba came about.

The marimba and the xylophone look similar, and often, method books for the marimba are also written for the xylophone. Even so, when it comes to the history of the xylophone, the United States and Japan have distinctly different histories. Despite the fact that American and Japanese marimba repertoire and performance styles are different, upon closer look, the histories of the concert marimba from these countries are similar and closely related. Starting in 1950, the year that the concert marimba was introduced to Japan by American missionaries, the separate histories start to intertwine. Because of language and perhaps distance, I feel that each version of marimba history after 1950 is missing essential components: the details of the evolution occurring in the other country. When it comes to deciphering the materials and information from both the United States and Japan, I believe that my “half-Japanese-ness” has finally come to good use. In many ways, I have become bicultural and bilingual. I have access to both perspectives and languages. I am quite familiar with both American and Japanese cultures. I have come to know both educational

systems well. It is as though I am standing on a bridge and seeing two streams of water merge. I can see clearly where each came from and where and how they finally joined.

Through this writing, I will provide a more comprehensive history of the concert marimba after 1950 as well as a description of the different backgrounds up to 1950. In addition, I will provide information that I hope furthers readers' understanding of the history of the concert marimba and expands their awareness of its capability and versatility. Not understanding the whole picture of the marimba is like missing out on all the richness that comes with it. It's like looking at one part of a rainbow and thinking it is only yellow. Right now, typical understandings of the marimba for both Japanese and Americans are like that. By providing all the information I've gathered, I hope to expand the typical Japanese and American understandings of what the marimba is. In recent years, I have noticed that the sound of the marimba can be heard more both in the United States and Japan. I very much hope that the multi-faceted nature of the marimba will enrich our lives as more opportunities to listen to the instrument become available.

## Introduction: Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive view of the development of the concert marimba and its repertoire. The United States and Japan are the two main contributors to its development. Each country has its own account of what happened but each is missing the parallel aspect of the story. This dissertation will describe both strands to weave a more complete story of the development of the concert marimba. This study focuses on the history of the concert marimba from 1950 to 2014 in the United States and in Japan. It discusses the two approaches that initially emerged in these two countries, the roots of those approaches, and how they converged to result in the modern concert marimba repertoire. The development of the instrument is critical to the development of the repertoire, so this factor is also addressed.

Chapter One starts with a brief overview of the history of the marimba and outlines the ancestry and the development of the marimba up to 2014. The earlier development lays a foundation for understanding the development of the concert marimba.

Chapter Two outlines the use of marimbas and xylophones in the United States and Japan before 1950. It examines the difference in historical backgrounds, and the way marimba-like instruments were used in each country. An awareness of the difference is critical to gaining a deeper understanding as to how the instrument and its repertoire developed distinctively in the two countries.

Chapter Three focuses on the emergence of the “classical” marimba in the United States and Japan between 1950 and 1975. This chapter illustrates how the marimba continued to develop differently in the two countries. It also addresses significant musical interactions and their effect on these developments. These interactions are: the arrival of the Musser marimbas in Japan; the creation of Japanese contemporary solo/chamber music for the marimba; and the effects of Keiko Abe’s recordings and performances in the United States.

The fourth chapter describes the emergence of the marimba in popular culture in the United States and Japan. It examines the perception of the marimba in the two countries. An overview of the use of the marimba in popular music will uncover the underlying perceptions of the marimba. Studies and examples of the use of marimbas provided in the chapter include a song by Frank Zappa, music by the Baja Marimba Band, and examples from musical theater. Japanese illustrations come from easy-listening recordings, such as music from Central and Latin America.

Chapter Five summarizes the period of rapid developments in marimba technique and design in the United States and Japan from 1976 to 1986. This chapter documents many of the significant developments for the concert marimba: Leigh Howard Stevens’ technique revolution; the invention of synthetic keyboards; and the range expansion of the marimba by Keiko Abe and the Yamaha Corporation.

Finally, Chapter Six examines developments from 1986 to 2014. This chapter covers multiple developments that took place during this period: the acceptance of the five-octave marimba as standard; the expansion of the repertoire as it was evidenced in the 1986 National Endowments for the Arts Commission in the United States; changes

in the pedagogy—specifically the focus on four-mallet marimba playing in colleges and high school music programs; the increase in the number of students and performers of the marimba; and the growth in world marimba competitions since their inception in 1995. All of these factors ultimately contributed to the marimba’s recognition as a concert instrument in the field of classical music.

## CHAPTER 1

### Brief Overview of the Evolution of the Marimba

When people hear the word marimba, it is not always clear that they all picture the same instrument. Some might think of the *gyil*,<sup>1</sup> the Ghanaian marimba, while others might think of marimba bands often heard in Guatemala. Since there are so many different kinds of marimbas throughout the world, a definition should be clarified at this point. The marimba that the author pictures immediately in her mind, the one that she grew up playing, is commonly referred to as a “concert marimba,” a wooden keyboard instrument that was modified from the Guatemalan marimba. Although this dissertation focuses on the concert marimba and its development only in the United States and in Japan, it is necessary to trace the roots of the marimba to understand the basic history of the instrument.

The basic mechanics of the marimba and marimba-like instruments, such as the xylophone, are actually simple, and it is believed that marimba-like instruments have existed throughout human history.<sup>2</sup> If one digs a hole, places a piece of wood across the hole, then strikes it, a sound comes out. Organologists often refer to this type of instrument as a trough xylophone. Different timbres or pitches can be created depending on the width, thickness, and type of wood, as well as the depth and width of the hole. Eventually, humans created more portable devices to parallel the basic amplifying effect of the trough, including resonating tubes or hollow gourds placed

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<sup>1</sup> In the U.S., to refer to the Ghanaian marimba, the word *gyli* is used more commonly. *Gyil* is a singular form.

<sup>2</sup> [Percussive Notes article](#)

under each piece of wood, allowing the instrument to be transported to different places. Two of the earliest documentations of marimba-like instruments are the *ranat* in Greece, dating to 3500 BCE, and the *voarangi* in Egypt, from about 3700 BCE. Archeologists working in the region of Nineveh and Babylon also discovered evidence of ancient marimba-like instruments made of solid stone and jewels with resonator tubes.<sup>3</sup> Some Indonesian gamelan orchestras include the wooden-keyed *gambang*, which has a box-like resonator structure beneath its wooden bars.



Figure 1.1 Indonesian gambang at the University of Washington.

One basic type of African marimba uses carefully chosen, pitch-matched dried gourds under each bar for resonation. In the Central American marimba, a long squared pipe-like structures hang under each of the bars. While the structure of these resonators differ, each serves the same basic purpose—to amplify the sound of the instrument.

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Peters, *The Drummer: Man*. (Wilmette, Illinois: Kemper-Peters Publications, 1975): 120.

### Asia

According to researchers, the oldest Asian marimba-like instrument is the *pien-chung*, with bars made of marble or jade. The *pien-chung* was believed to be similar to the *ranat*, and records show that they may have existed as early as 2697 BCE. Later *pien-chung* consisted of twelve bars made of wood, metal, or bamboo. The oldest marimba discovered to date, called the *goong lu*, was found in Northern Vietnam in 1949; it appears to have utilized bars of stone rather than wood. A *goong lu* discovered in 1980 dates back to 1500 BCE.<sup>4</sup>

### Africa



Figure 1.2 Gyl from Ghana (Photo by Kendra McLean).

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<sup>4</sup> Sara E. Smith, “The Development of the Marimba as a Solo Instrument and the Evolution of the Solo Literature for the Marimba” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1995): 5.

It is generally believed that the marimba was brought from Southeast Asia to the African continent on a trading ship. From letters that Catholic priests wrote back to their own countries and to the Vatican, historians can trace the mention of marimba-like instruments spreading from modern day Mozambique to South Africa, then northwards to Ghana and other northern African countries.<sup>5</sup> There are many types of African marimbas, but they are generally played while sitting down, since the gourds they commonly use are rounded shapes. Many of them come with a buzzing sound, created by stretching spider egg sac membranes across holes drilled in the gourds.



Figure 1.3 Gyl (side-view), with gourds hanging underneath each bars.  
(Photo by Kendra McLean)

The word “marimba” comes from the *Bantu* language of the Zulu people. It means “singing of many tongues.” The prefix “*ma*” indicates the plural form, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Trevor Wiggins, and Joseph Kobom. *Xylophone Music from China* (1992).

meaning of “*rimba*” is “tongue/singing.”<sup>6</sup> Depending upon the region, an African marimba can be called *kalimba*, *mbira*, *balo* (as in *balofon*), or *gyil*, to name a few. According to Stanley Sadie in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, British gold-pro prospector Richard Jobson described a marimba-like instrument as the principal instrument of Gambia in 1620. Sometimes the words “marimba” and “kalimba” have been used interchangeably to refer to marimba and another instrument, the *mbira*, commonly referred to as the thumb piano in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

### Latin America



Figure 1.4 Marimba de tecomates from Guatemala, displayed at Museum of Musical Instruments in Hamamatsu, Japan.

Africans taken to Latin America to be sold as slaves created new wood-bar instruments with materials available in their new surroundings. They continued to call

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<sup>6</sup> B. Mitchell Williams, “Mbira/Timbila, Karimba/Marimba: A Look at Some Relationships Between African Mbira and Marimba.” *Percussive Notes* 30 no.1 (February 2002): no page number.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

their new instruments marimbas. Latin American marimbas can be found from Mexico to Nicaragua.<sup>8</sup> One of the earliest recorded sightings of these marimbas by outsiders occurred in the sixteenth century, during invasions by the Conquistadors in Chiapas, Mexico. Originally, many Latin American marimbas were designed to be played while sitting down, just like the African ones. But later marimbas made by native Latin Americans used longer and straighter gourds than those used in the typical West African instrument, allowing performers to stand while playing. Over the course of time, marimba makers in Latin America developed long, coffin-shaped wooden box resonators, rather than gourds.<sup>9</sup> Today, most Latin American marimbas are played while standing up, although some of the “Indian” (indigenous American) marimbas are played by seated performers, especially when their resonator gourds are small. Latin American marimbas followed African patterns of not only tuning and instrument construction, but also the timbral preference for a buzzing sound. In the Latin American marimba, this sound is created with a *charleo*, usually made of the intestines of a cow or a pig, rather than the spider egg sac material used in the African traditions.

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, “The Development of the Marimba as a Solo Instrument and the Evolution of the Solo Literature for the Marimba” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1995): 13–16.

<sup>9</sup> The marimba with wooden resonators was called the *marimba sencilla*, and it became common by ca. 1875.



Figure 1.5 *Charleo* (the circular object) at the end of resonators.

Another significant contribution to the marimba was the invention of the *marimba doble*, which refers to marimbas with double-layered keyboards. Up to this point, African and Latin American marimba-like instruments had just a single row of keys. The popularity of marimba bands in Guatemala brought many modifications, including additional row of bars (sharps and flats), making the layout of the chromatic marimba was similar to that of the piano keyboard. However, the accidentals were placed directly over each note as opposed to in between two notes like on the piano keyboard. This chromatic marimba was seen as early as 1874. As in Africa, the marimba quickly became a staple instrument throughout Central America. Marimbas became essential for ceremonies and parties, especially in Guatemala and the Mexican

region of Chiapas in the old Mayan Kingdom. Early in the twentieth century, there was a strong belief among Guatemalans that the marimba was native to Guatemala. Some scholars believed it so strongly, it appears, that evidence was even forged to “prove” that theory was true. Today, Guatemalans have come to terms with the fact that the marimba’s origins are non-Guatemalan. But the fact that the instrument still has a hold on the Guatemalan imagination can be seen in many parts of the country’s culture, including in many poems written about the marimba.

### The United States

In 1908, a Guatemalan marimbist, Sebastian Hurtado, toured most of the major cities in the United States with his Guatemalan marimba band. The band also toured Europe in 1910. However, it wasn’t until the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915 (also known as the San Francisco World’s Fair) that the Guatemalan marimba came to the attention of instrument making companies.<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter, Deagan and Leedy, who had already produced xylophones by that time, started to modify Guatemalan marimbas for the U.S. market.

The United States was not completely unaccustomed to seeing marimba-like instruments prior to 1915. By the early 1900s, mallet-keyboard instruments, such as xylophone and glockenspiel, were becoming more frequently used in orchestral music.<sup>11</sup> These instruments became available through the United States manufacturers by the 1890s. Originally a clarinetist trained in England, John Calhoun Deagan (1852–1932,) manufactured his first glockenspiel in Chicago in 1880 and his first xylophone in

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<sup>10</sup> Editor, “Claire Omar Musser” *Percussive Notes* 37 no. 2 (April 1999): 6–7.

<sup>11</sup> *Danse Macabre* was composed in 1874, Dukas’ *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* was composed in 1896–97.

1885.<sup>12</sup> Deagan's rival instrument maker, Leedy, began producing chromatic resonator-less xylophones in 1895.<sup>13</sup> Although a few experimental models of xylophones and marimbas were produced in the first half of the twentieth century, the basic instrument designs still used today soon became standard in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

The concert marimba in the United States gained further recognition through Clair Omar Musser, a prominent teacher and instrument maker, who popularized the instrument with his touring "marimba orchestra" in the 1930s and 1940s. Several marimba concerti in the 1940s and 1950s were written for performers showcasing impressive two- and later four- mallet technique.

### Japan

In 1950, the Lacour Music Mission came to Japan from the United States and offered a series of ten-day concerts and evangelizing events all over Japan.<sup>15</sup> This was the first time that the marimba was brought to Japan and the first time the Japanese heard the sound of the marimba. By the 1960s, composer-performer collaborations became more common. New original compositions for the marimba were written, many of which eventually became an integral part of the standard canon of the marimba repertoire. Unlike American concerti, which favored more elements of jazz and traditional classical-like themes, Japanese marimba concerti were composed in the style of contemporary Western "avant-garde" music, often away from the traditional tonal structure of classical music. Although the marimba was frequently used in

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<sup>12</sup> Deagan catalogue.

<sup>13</sup> Leedy catalogue.

<sup>14</sup> According to Deagan Catalogue "G," steel marimbas and Nabimbas (rosewood bars with special resonators) are available in different ranges.

<sup>15</sup> Lacour was a Methodist missionary.

popular music, by the early 1980s, it was more commonly perceived in Japan as a classical solo/chamber instrument, rather than a solo instrument used in popular music.<sup>16</sup>

### From the 1960s Onward

The late 1960s and 1970s, both in the United States and Japan, was a revolutionary and innovative period for the marimba, its repertoire, and technique. After the five-octave concert grand marimba was first introduced, in 1984, this design became more and more established. Concert halls and music schools were filled with concert marimbists and students of the marimba. World-wide marimba competitions have been held every year in the United States, Japan, and Europe since 1995. As a result, the marimba is now accepted as a concert instrument throughout the world. As of this writing, in 2016, there is no international standard for the dimensions of the marimba, so, unlike the piano, the physical distance between two adjacent notes could be drastically different from one manufacturer to another. At music schools, marimba competitions and festivals, a variety of marimbas from different manufacturers must be available to serve marimbists who require different instruments. As the instrument becomes more and more accepted into mainstream concert halls, and more composers write for the marimba, more percussionists are drawn to the instrument, resulting in a demand for better instruments to be made by a new generation of marimba manufacturers. This process continues to drive further evolution of the instrument.

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<sup>16</sup> Author's interview with Nanae Mimura, September 6, 2012.

### So What About the Xylophone?

The xylophone is very similar to the marimba, except that it is much smaller in size, higher in pitch, and produces a much brighter sound. Many people in the United States are familiar with the sound of the xylophone from its extensive use in cartoon soundtracks. Because the ancestry of the xylophone is somewhat similar to yet very different from that of the marimba, a very brief history of the xylophone is included here to eliminate any confusion between the two instruments. Both the xylophone and the marimba are thought to share the same Asian origin. The marimba traveled to Africa, while the xylophone traveled to Turkey, and on to Europe. In 1511, the German composer Arnold Schick referred to a xylophone-like instrument as *ahultze glechter*, which means “wooden percussion.” This was one of the earliest indications of an instrument of this kind outside of European bas-reliefs that date back to the fourteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

In Eastern Europe, some Roma musicians played a xylophone-like instrument called the *strohfiedel* or “straw fiddle,”<sup>18</sup> so named because its bars rested atop rolled strands of straw. Some straw fiddles had triple or even quadruple keyboards instead of the double keyboards that the modern concert marimba has.<sup>19</sup> Around the 1830s, a virtuoso straw fiddler from Russia named Joseph Gusikow was highly celebrated.<sup>20</sup> It is said that composers such as Mendelssohn and Saint-Saëns witnessed performances

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, pp.23–24.

<sup>18</sup> Many standard concert marimba transcriptions today include “gypsy” or “gypsy influenced” tunes such as “Csardas” and “Zigeunerweisen.”

<sup>19</sup> The YouTube clip of a Czech Strohfiedel virtuoso, Bena Havlů, playing Paganini’s Caprice no.24, can be found at [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc3rnVw-xpQ>].

<sup>20</sup> Smith, p. 25.

featuring straw fiddles, which eventually resulted in the first known xylophone part written in symphonic music, in 1874 (in Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*.)

The instrument makers in Europe modified the straw fiddle, creating the chromatic xylophone by the late nineteenth century. There were two different systems that European makers used to manufacture the xylophone. One is the Roeser system, where quadruple keyboards were laid out and played much like a dulcimer. The other is the Roth system, in which bars were arranged much like a piano keyboard, except that the instrument was played from the larger end of the instrument, as with the bell lyre.<sup>21</sup> American instrument maker J. C. Deagan first modified the European xylophone by using the Roth system, with the player facing the instrument similar to the way as a pianist faces the piano. Today, this is the only type of symphonic xylophone used in orchestras world-wide.

In 1910, the Japan-British Exhibition took place in London, and the European xylophone, or *strohfiedel*, was brought to Japan by Kenshi Nagai and the thirty-six men from the Imperial Japanese Army Toyama Band, who were there to perform at the exhibition. In 1921, Sotaro Komori brought a Deagan four-octave xylophone to Japan, and it was immediately used in Imperial military bands.<sup>22</sup> Xylophones were also used in silent movie theatres.

Because the sound of the xylophone was compatible with radio and early recording technology, the symphonic xylophone began to be used much more frequently outside of the symphony orchestra. By the 1930s, it quickly gained

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Author's interview with Yoshihisa Mizuno, September 17, 2012/Smith, p. 65.

recognition as a solo instrument, both in the United States and in Japan. In the U.S., the xylophone was used commonly in vaudeville theater performance, ragtime, and jazz, while in Japan it was used primarily to play classical transcriptions. In both cases, the arrival of the xylophone predates the arrival of the marimba. Because it arrived first, the xylophone cast a big musical shadow onto the marimba and its repertoire, since composers' images of the style and the sound of the earlier xylophone music deeply affected how pieces for the marimba were composed. This will be examined much more closely in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2

### Use of Marimbas and Xylophones in the United States and Japan before 1950

#### First Marimbas in the United States

The history of marimba production in the United States has been recorded many times and there have been many books and articles written about this topic already.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, this section will be brief to minimize redundancy, and only critical dates and events will be mentioned.

The late 1800s to early 1900s was a period when many people in different parts of the world became more and more fascinated with cultures outside of their own. Thanks to the World's Fairs in Paris, many artists, including painters and composers, became fascinated with Japanese *ukiyo-e* paintings and different items from Japan, a phenomenon commonly referred to as *Japonism*.<sup>24</sup> People in the United States saw the Guatemalan marimba for the first time when the Hurtado Brothers Royal Marimba Band came to perform at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1915.<sup>25</sup>

By then, instrument makers such as Deagan and Leedy were already manufacturing xylophones, so it didn't take long to "Americanize" the Guatemalan marimba into the concert marimba as we know today. There were four major modifications done by the American marimba makers: 1) changing of the material for

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<sup>23</sup> Brade's *Percussion Instruments and Their History*, and England's *Percussionist's* article "History of Xylophone and Marimba" to name a few.

<sup>24</sup> Monet had a Japanese garden at his residence, and many of his paintings of the garden are well known. His painting of his wife dressed in kimono, *Madame Monet en costume Japonais*, 1875, bears the influence of the *Bijinga* style of *ukiyo-e*. Debussy's *Poissons d'or* from the set two of *Images*, 1907.

<sup>25</sup> David P. Eyler. "The Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band of Guatemala," *Percussive Notes* 31 no. 3 (February 1993): 50.

the bars from hormingo to rosewood;<sup>26</sup> 2) placement of the accidental bars was modified to reflect the layout of the piano, so that accidentals fell between diatonic notes rather than directly above them (traditional Guatemalan marimbas had their accidentals directly above the note as opposed to in between two notes); 3) changing the design and material of resonators—from a single coffin-shaped wooden box under all bars to a round metal tubes under each bar; 4) the deliberate omission of the “buzzing” mechanism. It is intriguing that both indigenous Africans and Latin Americans believed that the buzz of the marimba is what gives the soul and spirit to their marimba, and, that both consider a marimba without the buzzing mechanism to be without spirit. Since this author was familiar only with the concert marimba, the first time she heard a recording of Mexican marimba, she thought there was something wrong with the recording or the speakers. In any case, Deagan produced the first concert marimba, model 350, with three octaves ranging from F3 to F6,<sup>27</sup> which went onto the market in 1918, only three years after the San Francisco World’s Fair.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Peters, 144-149.

<sup>27</sup> Appendix A details the system of specifying ranges used in this dissertation.

<sup>28</sup> The first marimba built by Deagan was the model 350, three octaves ranges from F3 to F6, produced between 1918 to 1925.



Figure 2.1 Deagan “Diana” Model 40, manufactured from 1939-42,  
(Photo by Paul Hansen).

#### Marimbas Used before 1950

According to Deagan’s “Catalogue G,” there were at least thirty-six different models of marimbas produced from 1918 to 1950.<sup>29</sup> Most were made with rosewood bars,<sup>30</sup> and the resonators were made of brass. During World War II, some resonators were made with cardboard because the use of metal was restricted. Leedy also produced marimbas, even though most of their mallet-keyboard products were xylophones and xylomarimbas.<sup>31</sup> The earliest Leedy catalogue available online at the time of this writing features the Solo-Tone Straight Marimba in 1934. Evidence seems to indicate that Leedy was the first manufacturer who produced aluminum resonators. In the 1943 catalog, the Royal Marimba was described as having “resonators [that] are

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<sup>29</sup> “Deagan Marimbas” [<http://www.deaganresource.com/marimbas.html>].

<sup>30</sup> In the catalogue, they use the term “nagaed wood bars.” Nagaed (Deagan spelled backward) referred as Honduras rosewood.

<sup>31</sup> The xylomarimba (sometimes “xylorimba,”) is a hybrid of the marimba and xylophone.

aluminum with beautiful polish finish.”<sup>32</sup> Between 1934 and 1949, Leedy produced at least four four-octave professional model marimbas with rosewood bars.<sup>33</sup>

The ranges of these marimbas vary, but most four-octave marimbas have a range from C3 to C7. However, a fair numbers of models came in a three-and-one-half octave layout, going down to an F3, while others had a four-octave design running from F3 to F7. It seems that manufacturers were trying to offer various options for consumers—some marimbas were made three octaves from G3 to G6, while common student models were just two octaves, from C3 to C5. Deagan also produced two bass marimba models— the Century of Progress and the King George, both of which ranged from C2 to C4. It is interesting to note that Musser’s Canterbury marimba, produced in 1948, went down to an A3, an octave and one-third below middle C. However, it did not catch on immediately, and the four-and-one-third-octave marimbas did not become the standard until the mid- to late 1970s.

#### Use of the Marimba before 1950

There was very little music written for the marimba before 1950. Paul Creston composed his *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra Op. 21* in 1940. A significant body of marimba pieces were composed by Clair Omar Musser, and a few surviving pieces were originally copyrighted in 1948.<sup>34</sup> Aside from this small body of pieces, the marimba in this era was used primarily for playing transcriptions of classical pieces written for other instruments.

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<sup>32</sup> 1943 Leedy catalogue, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Solo-Tone Straight Marimba (1934), Royal Marimba (1941), Solorimba (1941), and “Argentine” Marimba in 1949.

<sup>34</sup> More details about Musser will be mentioned in the following section.

The majority of transcriptions are from the standard classical canon of vocal and instrumental pieces, and are mostly accompanied by piano. Repertoire from violin and flute were commonly played in their original ranges; cello transcriptions had to be played an octave higher than written. Other examples include Felix Mendelssohn's *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges, Op. 34-2* from the voice repertoire,<sup>35</sup> and Fritz Kreisler's *Liebesleid* and *Shön Rosmarin* and Nicolo Paganini's *Caprice No. 24 in A minor* from the violin repertoire.<sup>36</sup> George Bizet's "Minuet" from *L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2* and Camille Saint-Saëns' "Le Cygne" came from the flute and cello repertoire.<sup>37</sup>

By 1950, there were a few original compositions written for xylophone by xylophone virtuosi such as Harry Breuer, Red Norvo, and George Hamilton Green. Most of these pieces are in popular styles such as ragtime and early jazz. Examples of these compositions includes "Fiesta Waltz," "Dance of the Octopus," "Triplets," and "Rag Time Robin."

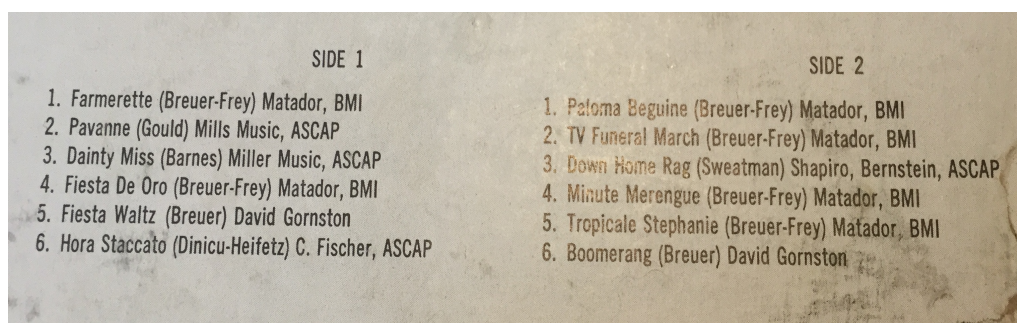


Figure 2.2 Pieces recorded on xylophone from Harry Breuer's *Mallet Mischief*. Harry Breuer and His Quintet, Audio Fidelity 5882 (1958).

<sup>35</sup> Also referred as *On Wings of Song*.

<sup>36</sup> Also referred as *Love's Sorrow* and *Fair Rosmarin*.

<sup>37</sup> "Minuet" from *L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2* is sometimes referred to as *Menuet de la jolie fille de Perth*.

Marimbists also borrowed pieces from the solo piano repertoire by taking most of the melody lines in the right hand; the left-hand accompaniment was played by a piano accompanist. Chopin's *Valse du petit chien*, *Op. 64-1*, is a typical example of these types.<sup>38</sup> Transcriptions from the "light" classical orchestral repertoire, such as the overture from Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* and Emile Waldteufel's "Les Patineures Valse" were also performed often by marimba taking the melody line.<sup>39</sup> In addition, some concerti, especially from the violin repertoire, were performed on the marimba with a piano accompaniment and occasionally with orchestras.

Even though most of the repertoire was for a solo marimba, these transcriptions were almost always accompanied. When marimba was not accompanied by the piano or by the orchestra, it was used in an ensemble. It should be noted that marimba ensembles already had quite a body of repertoire consisting of classical orchestral transcriptions, thanks to Musser's marimba orchestras (see below). Even though the focus of this dissertation is on the concert marimba after 1950, background information regarding Claire Omar Musser will provide a deeper understanding of the subject; therefore, Musser's contributions will be examined briefly in the following section.

#### Clair Omar Musser

Claire Omar Musser (1901–1998) is considered to be one of the major contributors to the development of the concert marimba in the United States. Unlike George Hamilton Green or Harry Breuer, whose fame came earlier as xylophone virtuosi in vaudeville of the 1910s and 1920s, Musser was the first to play the marimba

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<sup>38</sup> Commonly known as the *Minute Waltz*.

<sup>39</sup> Commonly known in English as *Orpheus in the Underworld*, composed by Jacques Offenbach, and the *Skaters' Waltz* by Émile Waldteufel.

exclusively in concert settings. His major contributions include inventing the Musser Grip (a new way to hold two mallets in one hand), manufacturing an improved instrument, teaching the next generation of marimbists, composing music for the marimba, and forming marimba orchestras.

Musser enjoyed his reputation as a marimba virtuoso and concertized in the United States, Canada, and Europe—eventually performing concerti with symphony orchestras, and playing his own transcriptions of Bach, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Paganini.<sup>40</sup> Some believed that the invention of his Musser Grip aided technical advances that weren't considered to be possible prior to its introduction.<sup>41</sup>

Musser started working as an instrument designer and tuner at the Deagan Company in 1930, and later established his own marimba company, Musser Marimba Inc., in 1948. Even though the company was sold in 1956 and has since been owned by different companies, Musser marimbas are still produced and are continue to be widely known.<sup>42</sup> One can find Musser marimbas in most colleges and universities throughout the United States as of this writing. The first concert marimbas brought to Japan were Musser marimbas. When Keiko Abe's first marimba album became available in the United States, she was pictured with a Musser marimba.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Editor, "Claire Omar Musser" *Percussive Notes* 37 no. 2 (April 1999): 6–7.

<sup>41</sup> Author's interview with Larry Mahlis, May 26, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Musser was sold to Lyon Band Instrument and Manufacturers in 1956, then to Ludwig in 1965, to Selmer in 1981. As of this writing, Musser is still a Selmer company.

<sup>43</sup> Keiko Abe. *Contemporary Music From Japan Volume I: Works for Marimba*. (Candide CE31051), 1970.



Figure 2.3 Keiko Abe pictured with her Musser marimba in the liner notes from *Contemporary Music From Japan Vol. I: Music for Marimba*.

Musser also served as a professor of marimba at Northwestern University, and he chaired the department from 1942 to 1952. The first master's degree recital in marimba performance was given in 1948 by Musser's student Carolyn Reid. During Musser's tenure, many students who were trained under him spread that training across the country to a young generation of marimbists.<sup>44</sup> Vida Chenoweth, who is "hailed as the 'first concert marimbist,'" was one of Musser's most prominent pupils. Musser also composed numerous études and little pieces for the marimba, mainly as pedagogical studies for his students. Even though there were fifty-three works published in 1941, only eight of his more than one hundred known pieces have been published as of this writing.<sup>45</sup> Musser also transcribed many romantic and light

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<sup>44</sup> Other well-known pupils of Musser are BeBe Shopp, the Miss America of 1948, and Doris Stockton, who released an album in 1948 entitled *Marimba Classics*, with many popular transcriptions such as "Tico-Tico."

<sup>45</sup> The author of the Wikipedia Musser article states, "Musser assigned an opus number to 10 works at a time, and then began a new set. Since we know of works up to opus 11, it can safely be assumed that over 100 works have been lost." This seems to be widely accepted since this author personally heard the same claim

classical pieces for marimba and piano. Many of his compositions and transcriptions are still used by marimba teachers.

Starting in the late 1920s, he formed various marimba ensembles, which he called “marimba orchestras.” The first was gathered in 1929, the twenty-five-piece “All-Girl Marimba Orchestra.” The number of instruments and players varied, depending on the occasion. In 1933, at the Century of Progress International Exhibition in Chicago, Musser conducted the 100-piece marimba orchestra, which had fifty female and fifty male marimbists. He performed multiple duties for this project: designing the instruments, arranging the music, choosing the players, and conducting and rehearsing the orchestra.

Musser designed Deagan’s King George Marimbas, which are well known for their elegant and intricate design, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of England’s King George V in 1935. Even though the orchestra was not able to actually perform at the intended occasion because of a legal issue upon arriving in London, their concerts in France were well-received.

The largest marimba orchestra Musser assembled was for the Chicago Railroad Fair in 1950, with 300 marimbists.<sup>46</sup> By the 1950s, the instruments could be found in music stores across the United States, including in West Coast cities such as Seattle and

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from many of her instructors throughout her academic training. As of this writing, there are eight works of Musser published by Studio 4 Music.

<sup>46</sup> Editor, “Claire Omar Musser” *Percussive Notes* 37 no. 2 (April 1999): 6–7.

San Francisco, with some stores offering marimba lessons. This is the fruit of Musser's and his students' efforts in popularizing the concert marimba.<sup>47</sup>

Although he later focused his career on science—working for NASA and other organizations—Musser managed to also contribute to the introduction of the concert marimba to Japan. It was one of his students, Laurence Lacour, who along with his wife, Mildred Lacour, brought the concert marimba as a tool to spread Christianity from 1950 to 1966.<sup>48</sup> A young percussionist (not yet a “marimbist,” because the term didn't exist in Japan) named Keiko Abe was present at one of many Lacour's music-centered evangelical gatherings, which turned out to be a watershed moment in both her life and the future of the concert marimba.

#### The “Way” to the First Marimbas in Japan

As previously mentioned, the first marimbas were brought by Laurence Lacour and his group of missionaries in 1950. However, by this time, Japan already had a rich xylophone tradition, thanks to virtuosi such as Yoichi Hiraoka and Eyichi Asabuki,<sup>49</sup> both of whom will be discussed later, to establish the musical background as it relates to the topic. Since the history of the xylophone in Japan falls beyond the scope of this dissertation, the author would like to refer readers to previous research conducted by others for in-depth and more detailed information.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Tom Collier saw the marimba on display at Myers Music in downtown Seattle in 1957. His father first purchased a Deagan three-and-one-half octave marimba, and a Musser four-octave instrument in 1960. Jack van Geem took marimba lessons at a music store in the Bay Area in the mid-1950s.

<sup>48</sup> He also used harp and trombone for his program.

<sup>49</sup> According to the standard Hepburn system of romaji notation, Asabuki's name should be spelled Eiiichi, however, the spelling of Eyichi is used in this dissertation since that's how he published his name.

<sup>50</sup> Recommended research by Akiko Goto and Mark Ford. “Yoichi Hiraoka: His Artistic Life and His Influence on the Art of Xylophone Performance.” PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2013, and Ryan C.

Even before the 1900s, Japan was no stranger to xylophones, since boat-shaped xylophones were most likely introduced during the 1600s from Indonesia or China.<sup>51</sup> Even though the primary focus of this dissertation is the concert marimba after 1950, it is helpful for the reader to be familiar with the background history and undercurrent of what took place leading up to 1950 to gain deeper understanding of the development of the concert marimba in Japan. These portions of history in regard to the marimba and xylophone are not widely known either in the United States or Japan.

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Scott. "The Art of Marimba in Tokyo: Emergence in the Twentieth Century." PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> According to research conducted by Professor Mutsuko Fujii at Sensoku Gakuen College of Music in Kawasaki, Japan, the old government trade record did not survive the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki in 1945. It is therefore no longer possible to date which country first brought the boat-shaped xylophone to Japan from the Japanese record. The Dutch record still exists at the National Archives in Holland. However, since a person with the reading knowledge of old Dutch would have to go to each scroll to find a specific ship and its contents, the task is less likely to be accomplished. The scrolls of the record from the time period stretch out to 125km.

### The Boat-Shaped Xylophone<sup>52</sup>



Figure 2.4 Boat-shaped xylophone from Edo period.<sup>53</sup>

Boat-shaped xylophones can still be seen today in Indonesia. The Japanese boat-shaped xylophone, also referred to as *Edo mokkin*, is believed to have Javanese origin.<sup>54</sup> It is a single-keyboard xylophone without individual resonators, but the boat-shaped box underneath the bars acts as a resonating chamber. It is a single-player instrument, since the instrument is not big enough for multiple players. The player also sits and uses a pair of mallets—one in each hand. However, the handle of the mallets can be different from standard concert marimba mallets. While concert marimba mallets

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<sup>52</sup>The majority of the research was conducted extensively by Professor Mutsuko Fujii and the members of the Marimba Research Institute at Sensoku Gakuen College of Music. Some of her articles are already published in English through the Percussive Arts Society, but others are yet to be translated. Without her advice, support, and guidance, the Japanese portion of this research would never have been as extensive. Even though she is acknowledged in the beginning of the dissertation, the author wishes again to express her gratitude to Professor Fujii.

<sup>53</sup>Haags Gemeentemuseum. *The Ear Catches the Eye: Music in Japanese Prints*. (Leiden, the Netherlands, 2000), 22.

<sup>54</sup>According to Smith, Shaun Hour Wei escaped Ming Dynasty of China in 1629 and arrived in Nagasaki with an instrument called *mugin*, a xylophone with a range of two or three notes more than an octave. However this author was not able to find the source of this particular information.

always have straight handles, some boat-shaped xylophone mallets are pictured with a hook-shaped tip, somewhat similar to the curved stick used to play an African talking drum. Since mallets with straight handles have been found as well, it can be assumed that there were different types of mallets, but the detailed backgrounds on different types of mallets are not clear at the time of this writing.

#### The Use of the Boat-Shaped Xylophone



Figure 2.5 Geisha playing a boat-shaped xylophone with hook-tipped mallets.  
Personal collection of Professor Yukitoshi Morishige  
at Sensoku Gakuen College of Music.

According to Professor Fujii's research, the boat-shaped xylophone had three distinct uses in Japan: to accompany boating songs, to be used in Min-Shin-gaku, and to be used in music for kabuki theater.

First, it was originally used to “accompany boating songs performed by the boatmen, who were also responsible for the management of the boats, when official domain boats set sail” (c. 1700).<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, the boat-shaped xylophone was used in chamber music settings in Min-gaku and Shin-gaku. Min-gaku is traditional aristocratic music from the Ming Dynasty of China, while Shin-gaku refers to the popular music of commoners from the Qing Dynasty. According to Professor Morishige of Senzoku Gakuen College of Music, Min-Shin-gaku, and Shin-gaku in particular, was very popular until the early 1910s. These types of music were played also by geishas in Nagasaki, and later by geishas in Tokyo.



Figure 2.6 A geisha board game with geishas playing musical instruments (form the mid- to late Edo period). Personal collection of Professor Yukitoshi Morishige at Senzoku Gakuen College of Music.

<sup>55</sup> Fujii, PAS Database Vol. 3.

Lastly, boat-shaped xylophones were used in kabuki. In *Tenjiku Tokubei Kokubanashi*, a kabuki play that premiered in 1804, a boat-shaped xylophone was played on stage by the actor who plays the main character. Since the production was an extraordinary success, the boat-shaped xylophone was used in the *geza* (the off-stage music ensemble) for kabuki theaters for some time after that. However, it is no longer used in kabuki as of this writing, unless *Tenjiku Tokubei Kokubanashi* is being performed.



Figure 2.7 Kabuki actor Kikugoro Onoe, performing in *Tenjiku Tokubei* (c. 1800) playing the boat-shaped xylophone with hook-tipped mallets. This type of picture served as a “headshot” to promote actors.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Haags Gemeentemuseum. *The Ear Catches the Eye: Music in Japanese Prints*. (Leiden, the Netherlands, 2000), 124.

Even though these particular uses were not directly related to the concert marimba, Japanese culture was richly steeped in the sound of the xylophone by the time the concert xylophone was introduced to Japan.

### The Concert Xylophone in Japan

As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, J. C. Deagan modified the European straw fiddle to its current layout by using a modified Roth system. Deagan produced the first concert xylophones in 1885, which were used by the Japanese Imperial Military Band by 1921. The young Yoichi Hiraoka, who later became a xylophone virtuoso, saw a xylophone being played at a silent movie theater in Tokyo as early as 1920.<sup>57</sup> Even though the xylophone was used in silent movies, the instrument's real popularity in Japan came through the playing of transcriptions of European classical music, with a repertoire of pieces similar to those played in the United States. With strong European influences, the repertoire closely mirrored popular pieces in Europe, especially Germany, in the light classical genre. American xylophone rags were not played widely in Japan at that time, at least not often enough for the general public to make an automatic connection between the sound of xylophone and vaudeville music.

Before 1950, two xylophonists were recognized as virtuosos — Yoichi Hiraoka and Eyichi Asabuki.<sup>58</sup> While Hiraoka spent some of his performance career in the United States, Asabuki remained in Japan for the most part. Asabuki's contributions will be examined closely in a later chapter, since he established the Japan Xylophone

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<sup>57</sup> Akiko Goto and Mark Ford. "Yoichi Hiraoka: His Artistic Life and His Influence on the Art of Xylophone Performance." (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2013), 4.

<sup>58</sup> Hiraoka was also well-known in the United States in the 1930s since he was a xylophonist with NBC.

Association (JXA) in 1950. Even though the organization bears the name “xylophone,” its members play the marimba primarily, and they use term “xylophone” to refer interchangeably to both marimba and xylophone.

#### Music Education in Japan prior to 1950

Even though the topic of music education is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the author wishes to introduce some background only as far as it relates to the topic.

Followed by almost 250 years of the closed-door policy of the Edo Period, the Meiji Period (1868–1912) is considered to be the beginning of the modernization and Europeanization of Japan.<sup>59</sup> In 1879, the Japanese government established the Music Education Implementation Unit, and in 1889, this organization acquired a boat-shaped xylophone as a part of its effort to find instruments that were suitable for the standardized general music education. However, it should be noted that the Meiji Government was not at all enthusiastic about music education in schools since, traditionally, music was considered to be only for “women, children, sick and invalids.” Eventually and reluctantly, general music education prior to the end of World War II in 1945 included singing, and most schools had a little organ or harmonium; well-to-do schools had pianos.

After World War II, during the U.S. occupation, the General Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (commonly referred in Japan as GHQ) required instrumental music education in schools, but supplying brass and wind instruments for all the students was impossible due to the devastation from the war.

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<sup>59</sup> As previously stated, the period for *Sakoku* in history textbooks in Japan is from 1639 to 1854. However, since the government started implementing the policy gradually, the author considers the year 1612, when it banned Christianity, to be the beginning of *Sakoku*—rejection of foreign influences by the government.

However, Japan's abundant supply of wood allowed for the distribution of the table-top xylophone throughout the country as early as 1949. Fujii stated:

In 1947, the Japanese Ministry of Education directed all domestic elementary schools to use the xylophone as a pedagogical instrument based on guidelines taken from the Fundamental Education Act. In response to this, Japanese elementary schools began to use the portable xylophone in music classes. Due to the exceptionally high demand, not only musical instrument companies, but even woodworking shops began production. Each firm produced over 1,000 xylophones per month. Those manufacturers could often not keep up with demand.

Miyakawa Marimba, the oldest marimba manufacturer in Japan—originally a wood factory and not an instrument maker—produced the first table-top xylophones in 1947, and the first marimba in 1949, the same year Yamaha began producing xylophones.<sup>60</sup> Even though the production of Miyakawa Marimba's first marimba predates the arrival of the American concert marimba by one year, it is widely acknowledged that the timeline for the concert marimba in Japan began with the Lacour Missions in 1950. The use of the xylophone in general music education contributed to public awareness of the instrument, and it would later play a big role in producing generations of Japanese marimbists.

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<sup>60</sup> Miyakawa Marimba model-1 had a three-octave range (F3-F6).

### Chapter 3

#### Emergence of the “Classical” Marimba in the United States and Japan

##### from 1950 to 1976

##### United States: Overview 1950–1976

From the 1950s to the mid-1960s, the concert marimba gained more and more recognition. Marimba ensembles and marimba soloists appeared in different concert venues and on television shows. During this time, a few compositions were written for the marimba, while transcriptions of classical music comprised the majority of music published for the marimba.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, a fair number of pieces had been composed for the marimba, especially by composer-performers who already had acquired facility with the instrument. Early 1970s recordings of Japanese marimba solos exposed American marimbists to new textural and timbral concepts. Around this time there was more interest in studying the marimba, and more players started to explore the technical possibilities of the instrument. All of these elements resulted in a technical revolution and range expansion, which took place very rapidly over the next few decades, attracting more interest from a younger generation of students and composers.

##### Students of Marimba from 1950 to 1965

During the 1950s and 1960s, marimbas were fairly available in music stores around the country. Most commonly, students of the marimba took private lessons with instructors connected with a local orchestra. Some music stores offered marimba lessons in addition to selling marimbas. Jack van Geem, a former principal

percussionist with the San Francisco Symphony, recalls taking marimba lessons at the music store where his parents purchased a marimba for him. Many of Claire Omar Musser's students were scattered throughout the country and were teaching marimba lessons.

There were several marimba method books published and available by this time. Musser's *Modern Marimba Method for Beginners* was published in 1938, the first method book published exclusively for marimba. Rubank's *Music for Marimba* by Art Jolliff, was published in 1946. Most other method books were published for the xylophone. Morris Goldenberg's *Modern School for Xylophone, Marimba, and Vibraphone*, a method book still used widely today, was published in 1950. Phil Kraus, then a famous New York City studio percussionist, published *Modern Mallet Method for Vibes, Xylophone, and Marimba* in 1958. He subsequently published two other volumes to make a three-book series of progressive lessons.

Mallet player Tom Collier, who gave his first public performance at age five, remembers using Jolliff's method book when he first started learning the marimba. His father, who played the trumpet, kept a "lesson ahead" of Tom, and gave him weekly lessons.

#### Colleges and Universities from 1950 to 1965

If a student wanted to study marimba exclusively in college, Northwestern University was the only place where there was an official marimba program. Other music schools offered percussion programs, but they did not offer a marimba major. The Eastman School of Music had an active marimba presence—Gordon Peters formed the Marimba Masters in 1954 and appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1958. The

ensemble was active until 1959. However, in most states, such as Washington State, there were no full-time percussion professors at any university or college. Instead, instructors were part-time or adjunct faculty members, whose chief employers were local symphony orchestras. Many of these players had been in military bands during World War II<sup>61</sup> and were not familiar with the marimba and its potential as a viable solo instrument.

It is interesting to note that during that time, many teachers preferred students not to play (and not to start on) the marimba because they believed it would hinder students from building solid xylophone technique, in part because they believed that the xylophone was “less forgiving” compared to the marimba in terms of tone production. To further illustrate this sentiment, the description in the Deagan Catalogue G states:

Marimbas are daily coming into greater use, there being two principal reasons for same, one being that the Marimba while operated similar to the Xylophone is very much easier to play as the tone of a Marimba is sufficiently sustained so that rapid execution and fine technic is not necessary in the playing of same as with a Xylophone.<sup>62</sup>

#### Performers of the Marimba from 1950 to 1965

Vida Chenoweth, a student of Musser, gave her debut solo recital in Chicago as a marimbist in 1956, and had given more than 2000 recitals worldwide by 1961.<sup>63</sup> By 1962, she had given two Carnegie Hall recitals, and almost all the music composed for

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<sup>61</sup> Both Walter Rosenberger and Buster Bailey were in military bands during World War II.

<sup>62</sup> Deagan Catalogue G, reprinted for *Percussive Notes Research Edition Vol. 24 numbers 3/6*, p.112

<sup>63</sup> “At the height of her career, an oven explosion threatened her with the loss of fingers on one hand. As her hand miraculously healed, she decided to do whatever she could to better life on earth for all people. Following her Christian beliefs, she chose a career as a linguist, which resulted in several years of study and research in remote areas of the Pacific Islands in order to translate The New Testament into the Usarufa language[, which is spoken primarily in Papua New Guinea]. From there she pursued a career in ethnomusicology, receiving her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of Auckland.” James A. Strain on Vida Chenoweth, PAS Hall of Fame. [<http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/halloffame/ChenowethVida.aspx>]

the marimba in the United States was written for her. Most notably, Robert Kurka's *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra, Op. 34* was composed for Chenoweth and premiered by her in 1959.

#### Music Composed for the Marimba from 1950 to 1965

Some of the notable compositions from this period are still performed today. Alfred Fissinger's *Suite for Marimba* was published in 1950, and Emma Lou Diemer's *Toccata for Marimba* in 1955.<sup>64</sup> There were also teaching pieces such as *Etude 1955*, composed by marimbist Earl Hatch, who wrote many etudes for his own students. However, these pieces were not published and not widely known or available at that time.

In addition to Kurka's *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra*, James Basta composed *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* in the same year. Guatemalan composer Jorge Álvaro Sarmientos composed *Concertino para Marimba y Orquesta* in 1957, which was premiered by Chenoweth in Guatemala as soloist in 1960, and was premiered in the United States in 1964. Sarmientos' *Concertino* is the first of its kind composed for the four-and-one-third-octave marimba.

Alan Hovhaness' *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints, a Concerto for Xylophone and Orchestra*, was composed in 1965 for Japanese xylophonist Yoichi Hiraoka. Even though it is composed for xylophone, the piece is frequently performed on marimba. Matthew Kocmierski, a percussionist/marimbist who occasionally worked with Hovhaness from the mid-1980s until the composer passed away (2000), remembers that the composer was open to the piece being played on the marimba despite the fact

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<sup>64</sup> According to Rebecca Kite, Diemer composed *Toccata for Marimba* for Al Payson.

that he had composed it for the xylophone.<sup>65</sup> It is interesting to note that Hovhaness composed for Hiraoka's instrument, a Deagan Artist Series xylophone, which sounded as written rather than an octave higher like a conventional xylophone.<sup>66</sup> In either case, it is still one of the first marimba concerti that is frequently performed by classical marimbists today.

#### Marimbas Used from 1950 to 1965

The first four-and-one-third-octave marimba, the Canterbury, was produced by Musser in 1948. Even though the four-and-one-third-octave marimba was now available, the majority of instruments in existence at that time were only four octaves. Compositions for the four-and-one-third-octave marimba did not begin to appear until the instrument became widely available. During this period, Musser and Deagan were now the primary manufacturers of the marimba.

According to Leedy's online catalogue, the last year they manufactured a marimba was in 1953.<sup>67</sup> Since the same catalogue uses the phrase "with 57 years of marimba making," it appears Leedy's first marimba was produced in 1896. After 1949, Leedy produced two more professional model marimbas that had a four-octave range. Their Monarch marimba was made to resemble beautiful furniture similar in style to a salon piano, with black pearl inlay and a chromium frame stand. Leedy also produced many other student model marimbas throughout the years. After 1953, Leedy shifted their attention solely to drums. Jenco, primarily a drum-making company, based in

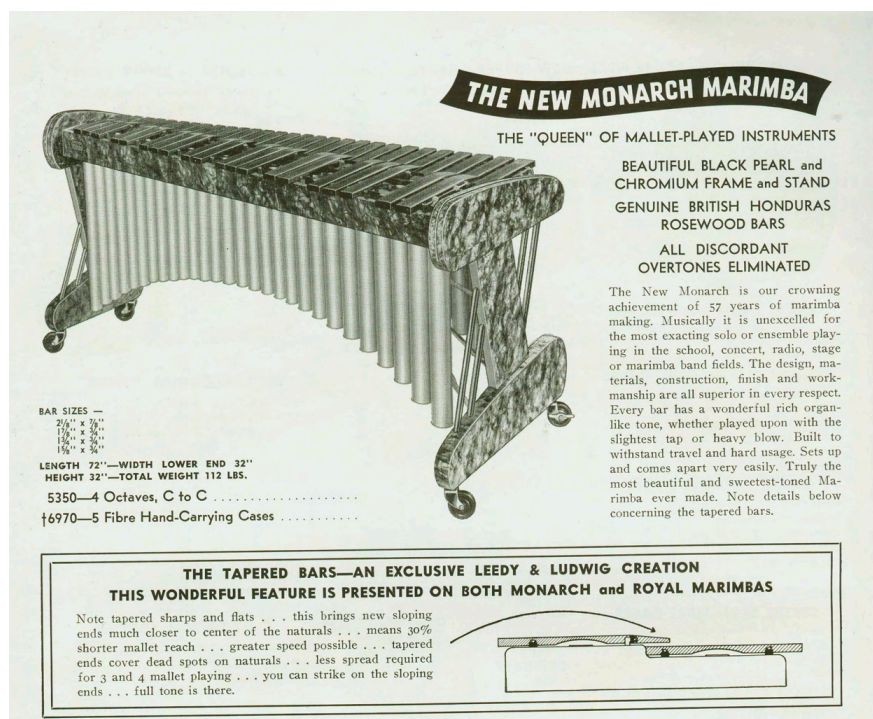
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<sup>65</sup> An interview with Matthew Koemieroski, May 12, 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Hiraoka played on custom-made Deagan Artist Series no. 236 that extends to a C below middle C (C3).

<sup>67</sup> There are no more listings of marimba in the 1959 catalogue.

Decatur, Illinois, also produced marimbas directed at the student market. In general, Jenco's instruments were not preferred by professional mallet players.



**THE NEW MONARCH MARIMBA**

THE "QUEEN" OF MALLET-PLAYED INSTRUMENTS

BEAUTIFUL BLACK PEARL and CHROMIUM FRAME and STAND  
GENUINE BRITISH HONDURAS ROSEWOOD BARS  
ALL DISCORDANT OVERTONES ELIMINATED

The New Monarch is our crowning achievement of 57 years of marimba making. Musically it is unexcelled for the most exacting solo or ensemble playing in the school, concert, radio, stage or marimba band fields. The design, materials, construction, finish and workmanship are all superior in every respect. Every bar has a wonderful rich organ-like tone, whether played upon with the slightest tap or heavy blow. Built to withstand travel and hard usage. Sets up and comes apart very easily. Truly the most beautiful and sweetest-toned Marimba ever made. Note details below concerning the tapered bars.

**BAR SIZES —**  
2 1/2" x 7/8"  
1 7/8" x 3/4"  
1 3/4" x 3/4"  
1 1/2" x 3/4"  
1 1/4" x 3/4"

LENGTH 72"—WIDTH LOWER END 32"  
HEIGHT 32"—TOTAL WEIGHT 112 LBS.

5350—4 Octaves, C to C . . . . .  
†6970—5 Fibre Hand-Carrying Cases . . . . .

**THE TAPERED BARS—AN EXCLUSIVE LEEDY & LUDWIG CREATION**  
**THIS WONDERFUL FEATURE IS PRESENTED ON BOTH MONARCH and ROYAL MARIMBAS**

Note tapered sharps and flats . . . this brings new sloping ends much closer to center of the naturals . . . means 30% shorter mallet reach . . . greater speed possible . . . tapered ends cover dead spots on naturals . . . less spread required for 3 and 4 mallet playing . . . you can strike on the sloping ends . . . full tone is there.

Figure 3.1 Leedy Monarch marimba from the 1953 catalogue.

### Japan: Overview from 1950 to 1976

During the 1950s, Japan continued to experience the chaos of post-War rebuilding. The xylophone was taught throughout the country as a part of a standard music education program in elementary schools. Several of Asabuki's young students, notably Yoshihisa Mizuno, age eleven, and Keiko Abe, age thirteen, received prizes at music competitions and started playing professionally.<sup>68</sup> Their engagements included playing for educational radio programs. There was high demand for radio programs,

<sup>68</sup> Mizuno received the Minister of Education Prize at the NHK Music Competition in 1947, and Abe won a "Western Music Audition" in 1952.

especially after the GHQ permitted private companies to begin broadcasting in September of 1951.

As the country regained economic stability, concerts were offered more frequently. Since the 1950s, “new music” concerts have been regularly organized by composers, and even though avant-garde music never gained mainstream popularity, Japanese performers and composers were greatly influenced by the new music. The marimba became a favorite instrument for Japanese composers, and interest in writing for and performing on the marimba grew during this time.

In the early 1960s, notable players of the marimba started to appear. In 1960, Yoshihisa Mizuno gave his first marimba recital, sponsored by the newspaper *Tokyo Shinbun*, and in 1962 the Xebec Marimba Trio was formed by three students of Asabuki’s—Keiko Abe, Shizuko Ishikawa, and Noriko Hasegawa. The trio began to make recordings and to concertize in the greater Tokyo area. Since both Mizuno and the Xebec Marimba Trio played music from classical and popular genres, their contribution to popular music will be discussed in the next chapter.

The late 1960s to the early 1970s was a revolutionary period in concert marimba playing. As avant-garde music was attracting the attention of composers and performers alike, composer-performer collaborations began to happen more frequently. Because Tokyo was, and still is, the cultural center of Japan, with a high concentration of artists, composer-performer collaborations were much easier facilitated there.

By the late 1960s, composers without a marimba performance background had already written several marimba pieces, a few of which are still being performed

today.<sup>69</sup> Keiko Abe, dissatisfied with the conventional performance and composition styles associated with the marimba, decided to pursue a career as a solo marimbist, specializing in contemporary music that echoed the artistry of Mozart and Beethoven. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Abe gave three recitals and made several recordings of original compositions by Japanese composers.<sup>70</sup> In 1969, she started a collaboration with Yamaha to produce concert marimbas that would meet the demands of contemporary marimbists. Between 1950 and 1975, Japanese composers produced a body of marimba compositions that formed a standard repertoire, and Japanese manufacturers created professional instruments that facilitated the performance of this new music.

#### Students of Marimba from 1950 to 1965

Since the xylophone was widely used in elementary music education, every Japanese child was familiar with the instrument. The Tokyo Xylophone Club was established by Asabuki in 1950 and became the Japan Xylophone Association in 1957. His students taught marimba and xylophone throughout the country. The generation of the marimbists that followed Abe and Mizuno studied xylophone in school, and many of them took private lessons from marimba teachers, many of whom were students of Asabuki's.

#### Colleges and Universities from 1950 to 1965

In Japanese higher education, music and arts were traditionally studied in specialized schools, such as the select few music conservatories or art colleges, rather

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<sup>69</sup> Miyoshi composed the *Conversation Suite for Marimba* in 1962, and *Torse III* in 1965.

<sup>70</sup> *Keiko Abe: Contemporary Music from Japan: Vol. 1 Music for Marimba* (Candide CD 31051) was released in the United States in 1972.

than in universities. At the time of this writing, there are only around forty music schools in Japan. Most are private; only four of them are public—one run by the national government (Tokyo University of Arts), two by prefectural governments (Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music and Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts) and a city government), and one by a city government (Kyoto City University of Arts).

From 1950 to 1965, there were fewer schools in operation in the Greater Tokyo Area than there are today. Tokyo University of Arts, Musashino Academia Musicae, Kunitachi College of Music, Ueno Gakuen University, and Tokyo College of Music were a few of those music schools; all are still in operation. Starting in the 1960s, more conservatories were established, such as Toho Gakuen School of Music and Senzoku Gakuen College of Music. However, music schools during this time offered general percussion studies only. There was not yet a marimba-specific major offered anywhere in Japan. As in the United States, instructors at these schools were mostly percussionists from major symphony orchestras.

#### Performers of the Marimba from 1950 to 1965

Besides Mizuno and Abe, there were a few players who were known as marimbists and/or percussionists, including Masao Yoshikawa and Takuo Takuma, and the remaining members of the Xebec Marimba Trio—Shizuko Ishikawa and Noriko Hasegawa. In 1962, the six of them formed the Tokyo Marimba Group to commission new works for the marimba; they gave two concerts of new works for solo marimba in 1962 and 1965. Shoji Kudo was another notable marimbist and instructor, many of whose students became professional marimbists or percussionists. Since Kudo's first

marimba recital in 1957, he has been active playing the marimba and appeared on music programs on television. He is the founder of the Yokohama Mokkin Club in 1950, and worked closely with Asabuki.

#### Music Composed for the Marimba from 1950 to 1965

According to the program notes from Abe's second recital given in 1969, by 1965, there were twenty pieces written for marimba by Japanese composers, some of which have become part of the standard repertoire. Akira Miyoshi's *Conversation Suite* was composed in 1962, and his *Torse III* was composed in 1965. Yuzo Toyama's *Serenata Marimbana* was composed in 1962, and premiered by Takuo Tamura at the Tokyo Marimba Group's first concert. Hikaru Hayashi's *Contrasts for Two Marimbas* was composed in 1965 and premiered by Mizuno and Tamura at the second concert put on by the Tokyo Marimba Group. The second movement of Toshimitsu Tanaka's *Two Movements for Marimba* was premiered in 1965 by Mizuno.<sup>71</sup> Both movements together were premiered in 1968 by Abe.<sup>72</sup> Commissioned by Yoichi Hiraoka in 1963, Toshiro Mayuzumi's *Concertino for Xylophone and Orchestra* was composed in 1965, but it was premiered by Yoshihisa Mizuno.<sup>73</sup> Even though it was written for xylophone, like Hovahness' *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints*, it is frequently performed on marimba.

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<sup>71</sup> According to Kite, the first movement was originally composed as a two-mallet piece, but Mizuno did not perform the first movement. Abe liked piece but wanted to modify the first movement to be more suited for the current marimba technique. After meeting with Tanaka, Abe's modifications were approved; only then was the modified piece performed.

<sup>72</sup> In the published music of *Two Movement for Marimba*, the composer, Toshimitsu Tanaka described Abe's involvement in the first movement.

<sup>73</sup> It was commissioned by Hiraoka in 1963, but it was not premiered by him. According to Mutsumi Tsuzaki, a xylophonist and a Hiraoka scholar, the piece was supposed to be premiered by New York Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein conducting, but since Hiraoka disliked the piece it was never performed by him.

Abe composed a four-mallet etude, *Frogs*, in 1964. All the pieces mentioned above are still performed regularly.

According to Rebecca Kite, an American marimbist who conducted an extensive research on Abe and her life, the Tokyo Marimba Group pooled their finances to commission pieces from composers, establishing a practice that continues to be common today: a composer-performer collaboration:

After the completion of *Conversation*, Abe commissioned other Miyoshi pieces and, during the development of these compositions, the composer met with Abe in her home studio to discuss his ideas and to learn, from her, what the musical possibilities of the marimba truly were. This would become Abe's normal working relationship with almost all her later commissions—a close collaboration with each composer.<sup>74</sup>

Even today, since idiomatic writing for the marimba requires specific knowledge and is different from writing for the piano, composer-performer collaborations are still quite common.<sup>75</sup>

#### Marimbas Used from 1950 to 1965

The majority of marimbas used in Japan during this period were imported from the United States. In professional settings, Musser or Deagan marimbas were used. There were educational model marimbas produced by Japanese manufacturers, and all of the xylophones used in elementary schools were produced by Japanese manufacturers.

Located in Tochigi Prefecture, Miyakawa Marimba had produced table-top xylophones since 1947, and by 1950/51, they had produced a few models of xylophones and marimbas. The first Japanese-made marimba was produced by

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<sup>74</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe, A Virtuoso's Life*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>75</sup> Composer Steven Mackey discusses his collaboration/communication with Nancy Zeltzman in his program notes to *See Ya Thursday*, according to the program notes written in 1993.

Miyakawa, and the model-18 Tohnekkō, meaning “a small horse” in the local dialect, was F3 to F6, three octaves.<sup>76</sup> However, they were not yet professional-quality instruments because they were not able to acquire an import permit for rosewood.<sup>77</sup> The Yamaha Corporation, which was making xylophones as early as 1949, did not begin producing marimbas until 1971.<sup>78</sup> Saito Gakki began marimba production in 1965, initially making keyboard percussion instruments to be used in schools.<sup>79</sup> Known as Kori in the United States until the mid-2000s and still known as Concord in Europe, Korogi began producing xylophones in 1949. They produced professional model marimbas until 1975.<sup>80</sup> Given the absence of Japanese-made professional model marimbas, Abe purchased a professional model four-octave Musser marimba in 1957.

#### Japan from 1966 to 1976

By this time, it became increasingly evident to composers that the marimba had more potential for avant-garde and contemporary music than they had ever imagined. After Abe’s solo recital in 1968, it became clear that the marimba was no longer a novelty instrument confined to popular music. Because of Abe’s performances, many composers were awakened to the fact that the marimba could help them express their voices creatively, and they also began to see the marimba’s worth as a serious solo instrument. Teruyuki Noda, the composer who wrote commissioned pieces and worked with Abe closely on her 1968 recital, wrote, “I felt that a new period

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<sup>76</sup> Miyakawa Shashi, pp. 135 Deagan, Musser, and British maker, Premier, had the priority to import rosewood.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 132

<sup>78</sup> Fujii PAS article Vol. 2

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> “History of Korogi” The Korogi Website [<http://www.korogi.co.jp/quality/evolution.html>]

was starting for the marimba. Everyone else thought so, too. After Abe's performance, I recognized that the marimba was equal to other, more traditional instruments in the orchestra." As marimbists continued to search for original compositions written for the instrument, many new important pieces were composed, the majority of which became part of the standard repertoire.

#### Students of the Marimba from 1966 to 1976

The xylophone continued to be used in elementary schools, and many students of Asabuki taught marimba lessons. Mutsumi Tsuzaki, a marimbist and xylophonist who inherited Hiraoka's xylophone, grew up in Kyoto. She recalls taking marimba lessons from one of Asabuki's students, Mutsuko Taneya, who still lives in Nara. According to his memoir, marimbist Hisayoshi Takuma remembered his marimba lessons in Yokohama with Shoji Kudo, who was considered to be one of a marimba virtuoso and a pedagogue. Takuma began studying the marimba with Kudo at age of three in 1956 until the late 1960s. He and his elder brother, Masazumi, who was four years older, took marimba lessons with Kudo, and they performed professionally as the Takuma Xylophone Brothers. (Again, the term "marimba" and "xylophone" were used interchangeably). Takuma recalled the passionate and strict teaching of Kudo, who was in his twenties then. Even if a percussionist or marimbist did not study with Kudo, he or she might have used his comprehensive set of marimba method books, *Mokkin no Method Marimba Albums* (1976, 1985, and 1993). The three-volume set is still regarded as one of the standard teaching tools.

### Colleges and Universities from 1966 to 1976

By this time, a few more music conservatories had been established and gained reputations in the Greater Tokyo Area. As previously mentioned, Senzoku Gakuen College of Music was established in 1962, and Toho Gakuen School of Music began instruction in 1961. In 1970, Toho Gakuen School of Music hired Abe as an adjunct faculty member to teach marimba exclusively even though they did not yet offer a marimba major. Hisayoshi Takuma chose to go to Musashino Academia Musicae in 1971 because it was the only school that offered a marimba major at that time. Michiko Takahashi has been the marimba instructor there since 1970. According to Takuma, the body of marimba pieces percussion and marimba students were required to learn in Japanese music colleges during that time period consisted almost exclusively of avant-garde solo and chamber music.<sup>81</sup>

### Performers of the Marimba from 1966 to 1976

During this time, Keiko Abe was undoubtedly the leading figure of the marimba in contemporary music in Japan. Junko Ogawa<sup>82</sup> was the most prominent marimbist in Western Japan. In 1966, she gave a solo marimba recital in Osaka, including the Japanese premiere of Earl Hatch's *Introduction and Tarantella* and a marimba transcription of Dimitri Kabalevsky's *Violin Concerto in C major, Opus 48*. Ogawa received permission from the composer to perform this concerto on the marimba when

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<sup>81</sup> Hisayoshi Takuma, *Ore no marimba kiite mite kurenai?* (Tokyo: Any, 2006), 27.

<sup>82</sup> Mutsumi Tsuzaki *Mokkin Days: Hiraoka Yoichi ten-i muho no ongaku jinsei* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2013), 268–269.

Kabalevsky visited Japan.<sup>83</sup> Ogawa became a well-respected performer and educator. She is president emeritus of the Kansai Marimba Association, established by her father, Hiroshi Ogawa, in 1952.<sup>84</sup>

Mutsuko Taneya gave her debut solo-marimba recital in 1968. She has been commissioning new music for solo marimba, and she performs transcriptions of older classical pieces as well as contemporary music. As more and more percussionists and marimbists commissioned works for the marimba, composer-performer collaborations grew into a tradition. Michiko Takahashi, a percussionist and marimbist a generation after Abe, has commissioned and premiered many works for marimba, including Takemitsu's *Gitmalya* in 1974.

#### Keiko Abe and Her Three Solo Recitals

From 1966 to 1976, several important events took place in the history of the concert marimba. Between 1968 and 1971, Keiko Abe presented three solo marimba recitals, each entitled "An Evening of Marimba: In Search of Original Works for Marimba." Out of these recitals were born many compositions that students of marimba today recognize and have perhaps studied or performed. These pieces will be discussed in detail in the following section.

In addition to Miyoshi's *Torse III* and Tanaka's *Two Movements*, which had been premiered earlier, the following pieces were premiered at Abe's first recital in 1968:

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<sup>83</sup> According to Tsuzaki, Hiroshi Ogawa was a businessman who run the New York branch of a Japanese trading company in right after the War. Living in New York City, a metropolitan city filled with music, made him realized the importance of music in the lives of Japanese children who were suffering from the devastation of the War. He was instrumental in starting Nara Mokkin Club in 1952, which eventually became the Kansai Marimba Association.

<sup>84</sup> Mutsumi Tsuzaki, "NAXOS no Kouzai"  
[\[http://www.tsuzakimutsumi.com/naxos%E3%81%AE%E5%8A%9F%E7%BD%AA%E3%80%82.html\]](http://www.tsuzakimutsumi.com/naxos%E3%81%AE%E5%8A%9F%E7%BD%AA%E3%80%82.html)

*Dialogue for Marimba and Three Instruments* by Yakekuni Hirayoshi, *Divertimento for Marimba and Alto Saxophone* by Akira Yuyama, *Time for Marimba* by Minoru Miki, and *Quintetto per Marimba, 3 Flauti, e Contrabasso: "Mattinata"* by Teruyuki Noda. In 1969 Abe recorded these pieces from the recital, along the concerti of Miyoshi's and Miki's, and released a box set of LP albums on the Columbia Records label.

At the Second Recital, in 1969, Miyoshi's *Conversation Suite* was performed again, but all other pieces were world premieres. These compositions and composers are as follows: *A Projection for Marimba and Four Instruments* by Toshiya Sukegawa, *Haiku for Marimba* by Hideo Kobayashi, *"Ji-uta": Music for Marimba and Five Instruments* by Masaharu Kikuchi,<sup>85</sup> *Marimba-Stück mit Zwei Schlagzeuger* by Maki Ishii, and *Imagery* by Minao Shibata.

The Third Recital was given two years later, in 1971, and the following pieces were premiered: *Globus* by Yoshihiro Irino, *Suite for Marimba* by Yoshimitsu Tanaka, *Mirage* by Yasuo Sueyoshi, *Meniscus* by Katsuhiko Tsubonoh, *"Holidays" for Marimba* by Yoshio Hachimura, and *Concerto pour Marimba et Ensemble à Cordes* by Akira Miyoshi.

#### The Tokyo Quintet

In 1973, to explore the marimba's potential as an instrument worthy of contemporary chamber music, Abe formed a quintet, choosing musicians with whom she had collaborated in her previous recitals. The musicians she chose were the ones she thought would be a good fit musically and would have passion for the same musical direction—exploring the boundaries of contemporary music by working with living Japanese composers. The instrumentation for this group, which became known as the

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<sup>85</sup> Kikuchi also composed another version of *Ji-uta*, for marimba, contrabass and bass drum.

Tokyo Quintet, was marimba (Abe), percussion (Makoto Aruga), flute (Ryu Noguchi), clarinet (Motoe Miyajima), and string bass (Masahiko Tanaka). Since the instrumentation was uncommon, the group had to commission new pieces. Before the ensemble disbanded, in 1979, they had commissioned several pieces, including Miyoshi's *Nocturne*. The Tokyo Quintet created a new instrumentation for contemporary quintet, which American marimbist William Moersch would use when he formed his New York Quintet in the early 1980s.

#### Music Composed for the Marimba from 1966 to 1976

Many pieces performed at the three solo marimba recitals given by Abe are part of the standard repertoire today. Kite writes:

It is not too grandiose to say that the three classical marimba recitals Keiko Abe produced and performed in the late 1960s and early 1970s altered music history. Without these concerts, it is hard to imagine how the marimba would have achieved its rightful place on the classical concert stage—beside other, more familiar orchestral instruments.

Abe's national fame in Japan, the result of decades of professional performances in all kinds of venues, in collaboration with the years she spent nurturing relationships with gifted contemporary composers, allowed her to accomplish the unthinkable: changing the minds of the sophisticated music public about the nature of her beloved but not generally understood instrument, the marimba.<sup>86</sup>

*Time for Marimba*, *Mirage*, *Divertimento for Marimba and Alto Saxophone* are the most often performed repertoire from these recitals.

In addition to these pieces, Miki's *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* was premiered in 1969 by Abe. Shinichiro Ikebe's *Monovalence I* was composed in 1972. Takemitsu's marimba concerto, *Gitmalya*, was commissioned and premiered by Michiko

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<sup>86</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso's Life*, 60.

Takahashi in 1974. Tokuhide Niimi's *For Marimba I* was composed in 1975, and premiered by Yoshitake Akase.

### Marimbas Used from 1966 to 1976

By the late 1960s, Abe and several composers became increasingly dissatisfied with the sound of her Musser marimba. According to Abe, it was composer Minoru Miki who first voiced this serious concern while he was in the audience at one of her concerts. Abe recalls, "after the concert, he came running to the greenroom, and said, 'Oh my goodness! You won't believe it! When you play lower notes really loud, it sounds as though you are beating on a piece of wood, just like the ones you use to put across ditches to walk on.'"<sup>87</sup> After another composer, Miyoshi, expressed a similar concern, Abe began searching for a solution. Even though she admitted that it was a big gamble to terminate her endorsement deal with Musser, she believed if she wanted to "challenge the world" as a Japanese musician, a Japanese company should be the one to build her "ideal" marimba, one that would meet her technical demands.<sup>88</sup> She proposed that Yamaha build a marimba that could withstand the demand of contemporary music, so this was how the historic collaboration began. Yamaha produced their first four-octave marimbas (YM-4000) in 1971.<sup>89</sup> In 1973, in further collaboration with Abe, Yamaha introduced the YM-5000, an instrument that could provide a low bass range

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<sup>87</sup> This author was present at Abe's Q & A session at The Tenth Keiko Abe Marimba Academy. August 4, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Abe also mentioned that the ease of communication and relatively short distance to the factory were also deciding factors, and this allowed her to create more time for her family.

<sup>89</sup> According to Kite, it is now relabeled as YM-4500.

extended out to four-and-one-half-octaves. The YM-5000 became her standard concert instrument. After Yamaha produced its own marimbas, many Japanese students purchased them, most likely because the domestic instruments were easier to obtain and less expensive, but more importantly because the new repertoire they were learning required the new range and sounds of the lower octave.

Korogi began manufacturing table-top xylophones in 1949 and finally produced student model marimba in 1969, then a four-octave marimba (650DX), followed by a four-and-one-half-octave marimba (750), in 1972. However, the lowest note of the 750 marimba was the same C as that of the regular four-octave marimba, and it extended up to an F above the highest C (F7). As the demand for marimbas grew, Korogi decided to produce professional model marimbas in 1975.

Saito Gakki also started out by manufacturing table-top xylophones and student model marimbas in 1965. Initially, their four-octave marimbas, No. 250 and No. 280, had bars made of birch. In 1973, they manufactured their first four-octave rosewood marimba, MS 77, and in 1975, MS 35, another four-octave rosewood marimba. These were considered student models and were widely distributed to elementary, junior, and senior high schools.

#### United States from 1966 to 1976

The United States did not see much significant change in attitudes toward marimba playing and repertoire until the mid-1970s. The repertoire was still limited to transcriptions and a few original compositions. Despite the great interest in contemporary music in the United States, with composers such as John Cage, Lou Harrison, and Michael Colgrass writing avant-garde and experimental music for

percussion, the marimba still was not widely considered a serious solo instrument during the 1960s. It was not until the music of Japanese composers arrived in the United States that American composers, marimbists, and percussionists were awakened to the possibility of utilizing the marimba in contemporary music.

In 1972, a recording became commercially available: *Keiko Abe Contemporary Music from Japan Vol. I, Music for Marimba*. This author interviewed a few American percussionists and marimbists who had been studying or playing percussion by this time; all recall the astonishment of listening to Abe's recording for the first time. Regardless of their musical preferences, they all recalled never having heard anything like that on the marimba prior to that time. It provoked them to think about the marimba differently than they had previously.



Figure 3.2 Album cover for *Contemporary Music From Japan Vol. I: Music for Marimba* by Keiko Abe (1972).

David Loeb, a faculty composer at Mannes College of Music, had made annual trips to Japan, and was therefore familiar with the country's contemporary music scene. Matthew Kocmierski, who studied there from 1974 to 1976, acquired a photocopied manuscript of Miyoshi's *Conversation* from Walter Rosenberger,<sup>90</sup> and immediately started learning the piece. Kocmierski recalls, "Although Walter (Rosenberger) gave me the piece, he did not really want to work on it with me, but David (Loeb) encouraged me and I performed it at Mannes."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Author's interview with Matthew Kocmierski, May 12, 2015.

Manuscripts like these were handed from percussionist to percussionist, so it is hard to verify who had what music in which year. This author acquired a photocopied manuscript of Miyoshi's *Conversation*, which is likely to be the original version before its publication, since there were a few different notes in the published score. This particular manuscript is harder to read in places, perhaps because it had been photocopied so many times. However, thanks to these manuscripts, a body of Japanese compositions, many commissioned and premiered by Abe, were beginning to be performed in the United States. In 1973, Karen Ervin gave a U.S. premiere of Miki's *Time for Marimba*, and Michael Rosen gave a U.S. premiere of *Torse III*. Miyoshi's *Concerto* received a United States premiere in Seattle in 1975 by the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Louis Richmond, with Tom Collier as soloist.

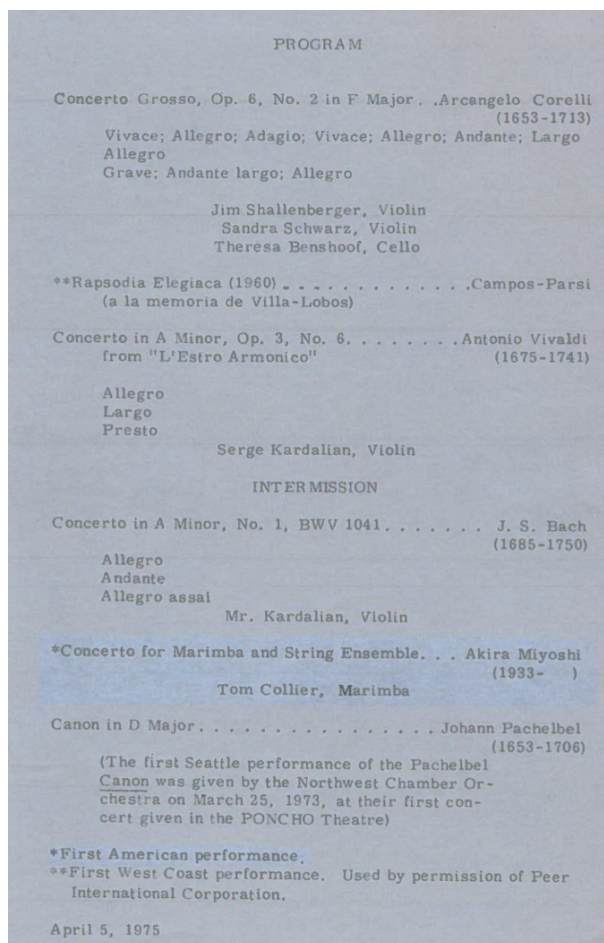


Figure 3.3 The program of Collier's U.S. Premiere of Miyoshi's *Concerto for Marimba and String Ensemble*.

### Students of the Marimba from 1966 to 1976

Marimba students during this time continued to have few options. Most were limited to private marimba lessons unless there was a marimba ensemble near where they lived. The majority of pieces they learned were transcriptions. One method book from this period, Garwood Whaley's *Fundamental Studies for Mallets*, was published in 1974. Goldenberg's *Modern School* continued to be widely used at the time.

### Colleges and Universities from 1966 to 1976

In colleges and universities, things did not really change drastically for the marimba. Schools still encouraged students to play mallet instruments, but not necessarily to focus on solo marimba playing. Especially among orchestral players, the general sentiment was that “four-mallet playing is something you have to get through in college and you would never ever need it again,”<sup>92</sup> which was generally true at that time.

However, at the Eastman School of Music, evolutionary changes were in the making. Even after the Marimba Masters disbanded, in 1959, strong interest in marimba remained. In 1972, aspiring marimba students Gordon Stout and Dave Mancini founded the Eastman Marimba Band and started performing. While they were successful in reviving interest in playing xylophone rags, recording the album *Nola* in 1976, they did not commission new music to be written for the marimba. In 1971, another student, Leigh Howard Stevens, entered Eastman, thinking that he would become a drum set player, but ultimately decided that he would focus on playing the marimba.<sup>93</sup>

The year 1968 was a significant year for percussion in Washington State. Marty Zyskowski, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, was hired as the first full-time instructor of percussion at Eastern Washington University. He started the school’s percussion program, which thrived under his direction.

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<sup>92</sup> In conversation with Kendra McLean, she recalls her teacher, who received undergraduate training in the mid-1970s, telling her about the uselessness of four-mallet marimba playing and marimba solo pieces in “real” life.

<sup>93</sup> Lauren Vogel Weiss, Leigh Howard Stevens, PAS 2006 Hall of Fame [<http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/halloffame/StevensLeighHoward.aspx>]

### Performers of the Marimba from 1966 to 1976

Karen Ervin was a percussionist who championed contemporary music; she also played the marimba. Sifler's *Suite for Marimba* was written for her, and it was recorded in 1972 on her album *Karen Ervin, Percussionist*. In 1973, she gave the American premiere of the *Quintetto per Marimba, 3 Flauti, e Contrabasso, "Mattinata."*<sup>94</sup>

In 1972, Michael Rosen began teaching at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio after serving as principal percussionist in the Milwaukee Symphony for six years. He was deeply interested in Japanese contemporary music and was instrumental in bringing Abe to perform in the United States. He gave the American premiere of Miyoshi's *Torse III* and Miki's *Marimba-stück mit Zwei Schlagzeuger* in 1973,<sup>95</sup> and he performed these pieces for the percussion community at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in the following year.<sup>96</sup>

### Music Composed for the Marimba from 1966 to 1976

Composer Paul Sifler wrote *Suite for Marimba* in 1971, but aside from that piece, there were still few pieces written by non-percussionist composers. Perhaps because of the lack of original marimba compositions, percussionists and marimbists began taking matters into their own hands. Mitchell Peters, the principal timpanist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, composed solo marimba pieces such as *Yellow after the Rain* (1971) and *Sea Reflections* (1971). Given the nascent state of marimba technique at the time, Peters' compositions presented a significant challenge for even professional percussionists and marimbists, a fact that may surprise many younger

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<sup>94</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso Life*, 239

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 239

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 84–85

players, who are likely to have first encountered these four-mallet pieces as beginners.<sup>97</sup> However, in recent years, as the technical proficiency on the instrument is gained at a much younger age, these pieces are now considered beginning pieces, which can be performed by students who are learning four-mallet playing.<sup>98</sup>

In 1974, Gordon Stout wrote *Two Mexican Dances for Marimba*, though it was not published until 1976. Even so, it is still considered to be a core piece of the standard marimba repertoire. Techniques Stout used were very innovative at the time, and the piece gave composers and marimbists new insights as to what the marimba could do.

Leigh Howard Stevens made the following observation:

Those [*Two Mexican Dances*] were seminal works that changed the future of the marimba because of their textures and ground-breaking techniques they introduced to four-mallet literature. The left hand in the ‘First Mexican Dance’—disjunct, leaping, Alberti-like bass—was unprecedented and a huge musical leap—pun intended!—for the marimba and its compositional possibilities. Likewise, the filigreed four-mallet patterns of the ‘Second Mexican Dance,’ forming intricate harmonies, had no historical or pedagogical roots in the previous marimba literature. They set the marimba off in a new direction.<sup>99</sup>

### Marimbas Used from 1966 to 1976

Between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, there was little if any change in terms of instrument design. Deagan and Musser continued to manufacture marimbas, but after Abe’s four-and-one-half-octave instrument was introduced, some American performers ordered Yamaha marimbas from Japan. By the mid-1970s, more pieces were written for the four-and-one-third-octave marimba, with alternate note suggestions for four-

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<sup>97</sup> In an interview with the author, Julie Spencer recalls playing “professional level” repertoire during her high school days.

<sup>98</sup> Lone Star Percussion, one of the biggest percussion retailers, rates the difficulty level for *Yellow after the Rain* as medium, and states, “a great choice for percussionists fairly new to 4 mallet marimba.”

<sup>99</sup> Lauren Vogel Weiss, “Gordon Stout, 2012 Hall of Fame” [<http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/halloffame/GordonStout.aspx>]

octave marimbas. Generally speaking, the majority of the Deagan and Musser marimbas were four octaves, though a few schools and professional players owned four-and-one-third-octave instruments. They were still very rare.

By this time, manufacturers had more or less finished their experiments with the material of the bars; almost all were made of rosewood. However, instrument makers tried to produce the bars with more synthetic materials such as fiberglass in order to withstand environmental changes in temperature and humidity. Musser created and patented a fiberglass material they named Kelon. Kelon xylophones came out as early as 1970, but it would be a few years before Kelon marimbas would be manufactured.

## CHAPTER 4

### Emergence of the Marimba in Popular Culture in the United States and in Japan

#### United States

The xylophone gained its initial popularity in the United States through solo performance of rags and novelty pieces on the vaudeville stage. Early acoustic (and later electric) recordings of such performances were also popular, in part because the xylophone was easier to record than many other instruments.<sup>100</sup> The marimba entered American consciousness in the shadow of this much more popular mallet-keyboard instrument. Even today, the marimba is not widely considered to be a serious concert instrument by the general public. Family members of students who study the marimba constantly discover a gap between what they think they know about the marimba music (popular songs) and the marimba that students are learning, (contemporary classical repertoire).

What, then, are the images and impressions of the marimba in American culture? Where do Americans get those particular ideas? The answer lies largely in popular culture. In this chapter, non-classical use of the marimba is examined.

#### Jazz

Since Red Norvo first entered the scene in the 1920s, other jazz vibraphonists, such as Emil Richards, Gary Burton, Bobby Hutcherson, and Stefon Harris, have all

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<sup>100</sup> Library of Congress, "About National Jukebox" [<http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/about/acoustical-recording>]

played the marimba as well as the vibraphone, but that discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the author believes that at least three examples of the marimba in jazz are worth mentioning: the Sauter-Finegan orchestra,<sup>101</sup> the Roger Kellaway Cello Quartet, and the duo Double Image. Though rooted in jazz, the Sauter-Finegan orchestra went beyond jazz into a more third-stream direction, featuring the marimba played by Joe Venuto on such songs as “When Two Trees Fall in Love” in 1953. The Roger Kellaway Cello Quartet’s 1970s recordings featured marimbist Emil Richards. The group performed Kellaway’s original jazz compositions, which utilized an unusual combination of cello, marimba, double bass, and piano. Double Image is a marimba and vibraphone duo, formed in 1977, featuring Dave Samuels and David Friedman, who perform jazz, arrangements of popular music, and more thoroughly composed contemporary pieces.

#### Dick Schory’s Percussion Pops Orchestra

From 1957 to the early 1970s, percussionist, arranger, and composer Dick Schory, inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 2011, organized percussion pops orchestra concerts and recordings featuring percussion graduates of Northwestern University. Northwestern University’s Percussion Ensemble was one of the first college percussion ensembles to focus on mallet-keyboard instruments. The Dick Schory Percussion Pops Orchestra started out with twelve percussionists, two guitarists, a string bassist, a harpist, and a keyboardist. By 1960, it had grown to a twenty-two-piece ensemble. Their repertoire included arrangements of popular songs,

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<sup>101</sup> According to Matthew Kocmierski, both Walter Rosenberger and Buster Bailey played in this group earlier, between their time in military bands and the New York Philharmonic. Bailey may have played the piano as he often did in the military.

Broadway show tunes, standard jazz tunes, folk songs, ragtime pieces, classical music transcriptions, and themes from films and musicals.<sup>102</sup>

Schory's albums were released by RCA Victor and were very popular. *Wild Percussion and Horns A' Plenty* (1960) resulted in a Grammy nomination for the Arranger of the Year for Schory. He subsequently received this nomination every year until 1963. Furthermore, he received a Best Live Recording of the Year Grammy nomination for his 1970 recording *Dick Schory ... Carnegie Hall*. Over the course of many years, several now-famous musicians played in Schory's Percussion Pops Orchestra, including Gordon Peters, who had been a member of the Marimba Masters at Eastman a decade earlier, Gary Burton, one of the innovators of jazz vibraphone, and Joe Morello, a jazz drummer who was best known for performing with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. In addition, two more Percussive Arts Society Hall of Famers, Frank Arsenault, considered the father of American rudimental drumming, and Bobby Christian, who was with the Chicago Symphony, performed with Schory.

For a span of about fifteen years, the Dick Schory Percussion Pops Orchestra helped familiarize audiences with percussion and mallet-keyboard instruments including the marimba. While the style of Schory's arrangements may seem slightly outdated to today's college percussion majors, it is not unreasonable to argue that their field of study owes something to his work, since many percussionists and marimbists old enough to remember Schory's music recall their initial exposure to the marimba and other percussion instruments through his recordings.

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<sup>102</sup> A few examples of these tunes are: "St. Louis Blues," "Londonderry Air," "Twelfth Street Rag," "Come Bach with Me (Bach Fugue in D minor)," "Theme from Pink Panther," "Hello Dolly," and "Autumn Leaves."

Terry Snyder is another bandleader/percussionist worthy of mentioning along with Schory. His series of albums, *Persuasive Percussion* and *Provocative Percussion* (both came in two volumes released in 1959 and 1960), were similar in style to Schory's Percussion Pops Orchestra. Terry Snyder and The All Stars, though, used more than just percussion, adding brass instruments, saxophone, bandoneon, and piano. The group's focus was mostly on mallet-keyboard instruments, including the marimba, and performed music from various styles. Marimba was often featured as a melody instrument in tunes such as "Misirlou" and "Orchids in the Moonlight," and was used to play counter-melody or accompanying role in tunes including "Blue Tango" and "Temptation." According to All Music Review by Stewart Mason:

Snyder's remarkable skills on a variety of percussion instruments are what makes *Persuasive Percussion* perhaps the definitive instrumental album of the space age pop era. This first volume of the four-part *Persuasive Percussion* series sets the template not only for the other three, but also for all the audio-spectacular percussion records issued in the wake of this album's phenomenal commercial success (two years in the Billboard Top 40, including 13 weeks at number one).<sup>103</sup>

According another review by Tony Wilds, "two *Persuasive Percussion* albums sold wildly and turned the recording industry on its ear, ultimately resulting in imitative projects by nearly every major label."<sup>104</sup>

### Exotica

Exotica is a genre of music that stemmed from jazz and Latin American music. Its initial popularity was in the 1950s and 1960s. Today, some song titles and the

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<sup>103</sup> Stewart Mason, *All Music Guide* "Review: *Persuasive Percussion*, Vol. 1." [<http://www.allmusic.com/album/persuasive-percussion-vol-1-mw000875538>]

<sup>104</sup> Tony Wilds, *All Music Guide* "Review: *Persuasive Percussion*, Vol. 2." [<http://www.allmusic.com/album/persuasive-percussion-vol-2-mw0001044204>]

presentation and staging of exotica would most certainly be considered politically incorrect. The term “exotica” came from the title of an album recorded by Martin Denny in 1957. Even though Denny was a pianist, he almost always used the marimba and the vibraphone in his band.

The music was intended to evoke nostalgic stereotypical images of far and distant cultures as they were conceived by Americans of Western European heritage. Denny performed “ethnic” music from Africa, Asia, Hawaii, and Latin America—especially Amazonia and the Andes. Even though Denny’s recordings sometimes include music from a particular culture, it was not always authentically performed. In order to evoke images of foreign cultures, Japanese *koto*, Chinese bell tree, and Indonesian gongs and bamboo sticks—instruments from different cultures that were considered to be “exotic”—were used by Danny and other exotica groups.

Denny's influence spread not only because his recordings and performances of exotica were widely popular, but also because members of his group built on the style when they launched their own commercially successful groups. Hawaiian-born Arthur Lyman secured a position in Denny's group playing vibraphone, but eventually left to form his own ensemble. Like Denny, Lyman freely borrowed and re-arranged songs from other "exotic" cultures. He had particular success in 1959 with a cover of the 1954 Japanese hit "Otomi-san" (misspelled on his record as "Otome-san").<sup>105</sup> Lyman's earlier departure from Denny's group opened the door for another mallet-keyboard player, Julius Wechter, who took Lyman's place. Wechter, too, would eventually leave Denny to create his own ensemble, the Julius Wechter Quartet, but soon found more success in

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<sup>105</sup> A 1964 TV broadcast can be seen on YouTube at [[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SdxlWrh-sU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SdxlWrh-sU)]

the Los Angeles recording studio scene as part of the famed Wrecking Crew. After playing on recordings by the Beach Boys and many others, Wechter would go on to form the Baja Marimba Band (see below).

Like Schory's Percussion Pops Orchestra, exotica continued the tradition of percussion-based entertainment music, and the genre helped the general impression among the American public of the marimba as an instrument from exotic cultures. Just as the xylophone had been associated with vaudeville music earlier in the 1900s, the marimba began to develop its own association with popular entertainment music. The use of the marimba in these genres reflected the role of the xylophone in its earlier period—virtuosic, fast two-mallet playing, or accompanimental block chords for four mallets.

#### The Tijuana Brass and the Baja Marimba Band

Formed by Herb Alpert in 1962, the Tijuana Brass came through the stream of exotica, performing Mexican-influenced music tinged by a jazz sound. According to Julius Wechter's website, Alpert called Wechter to record "The Lonely Bull" in 1962.<sup>106</sup> After that recording became a hit, Alpert auditioned studio musicians to form a working band in 1965. Even though none of the Tijuana Brass were of Hispanic heritage, the group infused their music with the style of Mexican mariachi band and jazz. Julius Wechter played the marimba and the vibraphone.

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<sup>106</sup> David Wechter, *Julius Wechter and Baja Marimba Band* "Obituary for Julius Wechter: Born May 10, 1935–Died February 1, 1999" [<http://www.juliuswechter.com/gallery/julius.php>]

Riding the success of Tijuana Brass, Wechter formed the Baja Marimba Band,<sup>107</sup> which featured the marimba extensively. The group's musicians had jazz backgrounds, and played jazz and Mexican-influenced popular music. The band consisted of marimba (sometimes two marimbas), trumpet, trombone, flute, saxophone, guitars, drum set, and percussion. Although the group's work promoted politically incorrect stereotypes of Mexican culture, it certainly boosted the visibility of the marimba, even if added to the instrument's "exotic" reputation.

One example from the Baja Marimba Band's repertoire is the 1968 tune "Sunrise Sunset," from the 1964 Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, composed by Jerry Bock; the original score did not include the marimba.<sup>108</sup> The Baja Marimba Band's arrangement is a jazz-influenced instrumental, featuring Wechter's virtuosic two-mallet marimba playing.

The popularity of Alpert and Wechter's style faded, leading to the disbanding of Tijuana Brass in 1969 and the Baja Marimba Band in 1971. Although Alpert's group had a reunion in the 1980s and toured across the United States, they never again achieved the popularity or fame they had acquired in the late 1960s.

#### Frank Zappa Band and Ruth Underwood

"Composer, guitarist, singer, and bandleader, Frank Zappa was a singular musical figure during a performing and recording career that lasted from the 1960s to

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<sup>107</sup> In an interview with the author, Emil Richards mentioned that he was the original marimbist of the Baja Marimba Band but that because his schedule did not permit him to perform all the time with the band, he recommended that Wechter replace him.

<sup>108</sup> Sarah Erlewine, *All Music Guide* "Review: Fiddle on the Roof." [<http://www.allmusic.com/album/fiddler-on-the-roof-original-broadway-cast-recording-mw0000193792>]

the '90s."<sup>109</sup> Most notable of the Frank Zappa Band in regards to the marimba was his collaboration with Ruth Underwood, the band's exclusive mallet-keyboard percussionist until 1974. Underwood was a classically trained percussionist and marimbist who studied at Juilliard. During her tenure with the Zappa's band Mothers of Invention, she played on several albums, including *Apostrophe* and *Roxy and Elsewhere*, on which marimba was featured extensively. After Underwood's departure, Ed Mann took over the position and played the mallet-keyboard parts for the band until Zappa's death, in 1993.

#### Film Music and Broadway Musicals

The use of the marimba in Hollywood films, though very minimal, began as early as the late 1930s. Erich Wolfgang Korngold's score for 1938 film *The Adventures of Robin Hood* used a marimba. Another, more exposed example is the famous "Tin Man's Dance" in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, whose music was composed by Harold Arlen. Even though a few measures of the marimba are recognizable in both films, the use of the marimba was extremely limited and minimal in film music until the 1950s. One notable film, created in 1959 by Dr. Seuss, is *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T.*, which includes a dance routine that featured the marimba exclusively. Dancers dance around and on a marimba-like instrument, most likely based on a lithophone, a marimba made of stone bars. The score was written by Frederich Hollander with Hans J. Salter providing underscoring.<sup>110</sup> This was typical teamwork on film music.<sup>111</sup> The marimba can also be

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<sup>109</sup> Ruhlmann, William, *All Music Guide* "Artist Biography: Frank Zappa"  
[[www.allmusic.com/artist/frank-zappa-mn0000138699/biography](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/frank-zappa-mn0000138699/biography)]

<sup>110</sup> IMDbv "5,000 Fingers of Dr. T: Full Cast & Crew."  
[[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045464/fullcredits?ref=tt\\_ov\\_wr#writers](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045464/fullcredits?ref=tt_ov_wr#writers)]

<sup>111</sup> Author's interview with Paul Hansen, June 1, 2008.

heard in Richard Rodgers' scores for the film versions of the musicals *The King and I*, in 1956, and *South Pacific*, in 1958.

Henry Mancini composed music for the 1962 film *Hatari*, which uses the marimba in the background. Through the 1970s and 1980s, the marimba continued to be used sparingly in orchestral film music, mostly as a background or color instrument.

However, the 2002 film *Catch Me if You Can* utilized the marimba as a solo instrument. The film's score, composed by John Williams, features marimba solos throughout the movie performed by Alan Estes, a well-known Los Angeles studio musician.

The use of the marimba in Broadway musicals has been sparse and limited. Marimba was used in a limited fashion as far back as the Broadway production of *South Pacific* in 1949, utilizing two-octave "G's" in the song "Some Enchanted Evening."<sup>112</sup> The marimba became more prominent on Broadway in the early 1980s. Musicals such as *La Cage aux Folles* in 1983, and the Joseph Papp revival production of *Pirates of Penzance* in 1981, utilized extensive four-mallet solo marimba parts arranged and performed by William Moersch.<sup>113</sup> The parts were so complex that when the show toured the United States, Karen Irvin, a marimba virtuoso from Los Angeles, was hired to play the marimba with the touring orchestra.<sup>114</sup>

In 1997, a Broadway adaptation of Disney's animated film *The Lion King*<sup>115</sup> was created featuring the most extensive use of the marimba as of this writing. The score,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> When the production was in Seattle, Tom Collier played percussion in 1981.

<sup>115</sup> Disney's *Lion King* created a headline both in the United States and Japan because of the similarities to the characters, settings, and storyline created by Osamu Tezuka in his manga and animated

composed by Hans Zimmer, utilized two marimba parts, each using four mallets, with an additional balafon part. (The reader may recall from Chapter Two, that the balafon is a tribe-specific name for a type of African marimba with gourd resonators strung below the bars.) The production had to create a specifically tuned balafon for *The Lion King* to meet the Western tonal system. The part is extensive enough that the marimbists have to travel with the production.

At the time of this writing, *My Heart Is the Drum*, a new Broadway musical set in Ghana, is in development in Seattle, featuring an extensive solo marimba part orchestrated by *The Lion King's* orchestrator, Robert Elhai, and performed by Paul Hansen.<sup>116</sup> The style of writing for the marimba part is very similar to intermediate four-mallet marimba solo compositions, idiomatically written for the instrument.

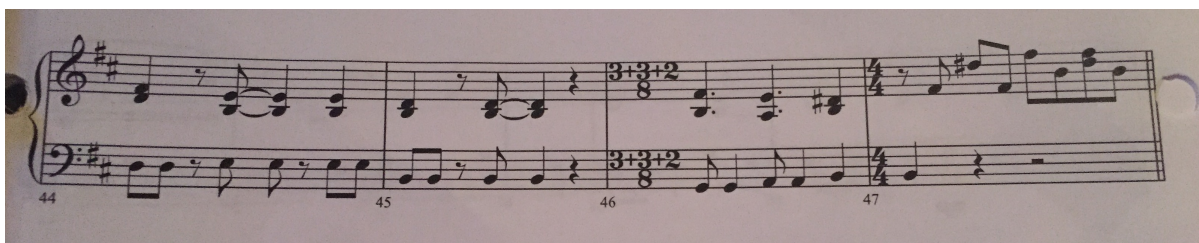


Figure 4.1 Excerpts from *My Heart is the Drum*, composed by Phillip Palmer “Today Begins Her Life” Percussion 1 (marimba) part, mm. 44–47. The writing reflects typical four-mallet marimba technique of the 2010s. Unpublished material, used with the permission by the composer.

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television series *Jungle Emperor Leo* (translated and broadcasted as *Kimba, the White Lion* in the United States.) Hailed as the Walt Disney of Japan, Tezuka published what became *Jungle Emperor Leo* in installments in *Manga Shonen* from 1950 to 1954, and created the animated television series and movies, which were released between 1965 and 1966. After *The Lion King's* release, in 1994, a group of Japanese manga artists sent a joint letter of complaint to Disney asking them to acknowledge Tezuka's influence, but Disney formally rejected these assertions. In the end, Mushi Productions, who owned the rights to Tezuka's work, decided that a lawsuit against Disney would sully not only the memory of Walt Disney, for whom Tezuka had always professed profound respect, but Tezuka's memory as well.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Paul Hansen, March 28, 2016.



Figure 4.2 *My Heart Is the Drum* Flyer.

### Television Shows

Henry Mancini featured the marimba extensively in his jazz scoring of the television shows *Peter Gunn* in 1958 and *Mr. Lucky* in 1959. Los Angeles studio musicians Victor Feldman and Larry Bunker were Mancini's regular mallet players at that time.<sup>117</sup>

In the 1970s, Jerry Goldsmith composed many soundtracks for television including *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1974–78) and *Harry O* (1974–76), both of which

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<sup>117</sup> Author's interview with Paul Hansen, March 28, 2016

used the marimba, mostly as a color instrument with the rest of the orchestra.<sup>118</sup> In 1996, composer W. G. “Snuffy” Walden used the marimba as a solo instrument in the opening of *Early Edition*, a drama series aired on CBS from 1996 to 2000.<sup>119</sup>

### Popular Music

In the 1960s, the marimba began to be utilized more frequently in popular music. Ben E. King’s 1960 hit “Spanish Harlem” featured the marimba in a key role, played by Phil Kraus. The American rock band the Beach Boys’ “All Summer Long,” recorded in 1964, starts with a marimba solo played by bandleader Brian Wilson; the instrument is then used accompanimentally throughout the song. In 1966, the British rock band, The Rolling Stones used the marimba in their song “Under My Thumb.” The ostinato marimba part in the song was improvised and played by their guitarist, Brian Jones. A 1969 Billboard number one hit, “Sugar Sugar,” by the Archies, a fictitious cartoon rock band, also utilized a minimally repeating marimba phrase throughout the recording.

Starbuck, a rock band from Atlanta, Georgia, recorded “Moonlight Feels Right” in 1975,<sup>120</sup> featuring a long marimba solo in the middle of the song, played by their percussionist, Bo Wagner. The marimba, however, was not used in any other part of the song’s arrangement and was most likely used to attract the attention of popular audiences who might have originally expected to hear a guitar solo.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Conversation with Tom Collier, February 24, 2016

<sup>119</sup> *TV.com* “Early Edition” [<http://www.tv.com/shows/early-edition/>]

<sup>120</sup> Although it was recorded in 1975, “Moonlight Feels Right” was released in 1976.

<sup>121</sup> Tom Collier was hired to transcribe Bo Wagner’s marimba part to be published in a magazine in 1975. Collier did not recall what magazine he transcribe this for.

Captain Beefheart, an American musical innovator and rock singer, used the marimba in his 1972 song “The Spotlight Kid.”<sup>122</sup> Coincidentally, a percussionist named Ed Marimba (born Art Tripp) played the marimba, which simply doubled the guitar line and repeated the same phrase. Sir Elton John recorded the Caribbean-themed song “Island Girl” in 1975, featuring a marimba played by John’s percussionist, Ray Cooper, utilizing basic two-mallet technique.

In the 1980s, it seems that the marimba was starting to be used simply for its unique colorful sound without the meaning of exoticism attached to it. Violent Femmes, a punk rock band from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, recorded “Gone Daddy Gone” in 1982.<sup>123</sup> The marimba part, an ostinato pattern, is used throughout the song, with an extensive solo in the middle. The popular British group Bananarama released their 1983 hit, “Cruel Summer” in the United States in 1984.<sup>124</sup> The song features a marimba playing a simple two-mallet opening with the same phrase repeated between each verse. Another British group, the Thompson Twins, used the marimba very minimally in the background of their 1983 top ten hit song, “Hold Me Now.”<sup>125</sup> The two-mallet part on the marimba was played by the group’s percussionist, Alannah Currie. An American singer-song writer, Tom Waits, has utilized the marimba frequently in his recordings. His 1985 album *Rain Dogs* featured marimba in many of its songs. In 2002, Waits’ “All the World Is Green” features a two-beat moving bass line with after-beat

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<sup>122</sup> Jason Ankeny, *All Music Guide*, “Artist Biography: Captain Beefheart.”  
[<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/captain-beefheart-mn0000988638/biography>]

<sup>123</sup> Jason Ankeny, *All Music Guide*, “Artist Biography: Violent Femmes.”  
[<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/violent-femmes-mn0000922200/biography>]

<sup>124</sup> Jason Ankeny. *All Music Guide*, “Artist Biography: Bananarama.”  
[<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/bananarama-mn0000785101/biography>]

<sup>125</sup> Stephen Thomas Erlewine, *All Music Guide*, “Artist biography: Thompson Twins.”  
[<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/thompson-twins-mn0000567570/biography>]

chords assigned to a five-octave marimba. Even with the use of a five-octave marimba, the writing was minimal, requiring the use of only two mallets.

Formed in 1990, the Chicago-based band Tortoise (often described as “post-rock” for their stylistic inclusivity, extended-length pieces, and lack of vocals) have long incorporated both marimba and vibraphone in their work. According to John Bush,

Tortoise revolutionized American indie rock in the mid-'90s by playing down tried-and-true punk and rock & roll influences, emphasizing instead the incorporation of a variety of left-field music genres from the previous 20 years, including Krautrock, dub, avant-garde jazz, classical minimalism, ambient and space music, film music, and British electronica.<sup>126</sup>

One song in particular, “Djed,” from the band’s 1996 album *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, features marimba and vibraphone playing in the interlocking minimalistic style pioneered by composer Steve Reich. John Herndon and John McEntire play the marimba and vibraphone for this segment, though like all members of the group, they migrate from instrument to instrument during the course of a given song. Given the logistical issues of touring (wear and tear on wooden bars, for example), the band eventually shifted away from actual marimbas in live settings, relying instead on the synthetic marimba sound of a malletKAT. Tortoise continues to record and perform, releasing their latest album, *The Catastrophist*, in 2016. The use of synthesized marimba sound and the use of electronic mallet-keyboard instruments will be mentioned in Chapter Six.

A notable collaboration between the Icelandic popular singer Björk and British percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie took place on a recording of Björk’s song “Oxygen.” The recording was featured on Glennie’s *Greatest Hits* album in 1998, and on Björk’s

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<sup>126</sup> John Bush, *All Music Guide*, “Artist biography: Tortoise.”  
[<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/tortoise-mn0000180023/biography>].

*Iceland Mysteries* album in 2003. Björk's voice is accompanied by marimba throughout the piece in a four-mallet chorale style. The late David Bowie, who was a British singer-songwriter, actor, and record producer, used the marimba in his 1984 hit song "Blue Jean."

### Japan

Generally speaking, Keiko Abe's performances and conceptions in contemporary music have been so influential that the marimba is now thought of a serious instrument requiring sophisticated technique. Upon learning that this author was studying marimba in college, her neighbor in Japan exclaimed, "Oh! What a complicated instrument she chose!" On the surface, it seems like Japanese understanding of the marimba is the product of contemporary classical music. Japanese children were raised playing the xylophone in elementary schools up until the 1970s,<sup>127</sup> and generations after that period are familiar with the marimba and the xylophone in instrumental ensembles in general music classes in elementary schools. Perhaps the most prominent example of the use of the marimba in Japanese popular music that comes to mind for American audiences is the song "Sukiyaki" and the marimba solo in the song's introduction.<sup>128</sup> Just the Japanese people are aware of the style of marimba playing in contemporary classical music, they are equally aware of the other, more popular face of the marimba. In pop culture, the marimba is deeply rooted in the hearts of the Japanese, evident in its use in countless uses recording of popular songs.

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<sup>127</sup> The preferred instrument in general music education in Japanese elementary school changed to recorders sometime in the mid-1970s. The exact year was unknown at the time of this writing. Under the new guidelines from the Ministry of Education, students learn soprano recorder in elementary schools from grade 4 to 6 and alto recorder in junior high schools from grade 7 to 9.

<sup>128</sup> "Sukiyaki" was a convenient but wrong English language title. The song lyrics themselves had nothing whatsoever to do with the Japanese dish.

### Marimba Radio Programs

With the establishment of private radio stations in 1951, Eyichi Asabuki was hired by New Japan Broadcasting (now Mainichi Broadcasting) in Osaka to play for a fifteen-minute marimba radio program for children. It was entitled *Penguin Time*, and was sponsored by Shionogi/Sun Star toothpaste, which used a penguin as its registered logo. The opening song was already written, but Asabuki composed the closing song, “Penguin Polka.” The piece is still programmed regularly on many marimba concerts and recitals today.<sup>129</sup> Until 1957, Asabuki played the marimba on the show seven days a week. Unfortunately, his father’s death called him back to run his family business, forcing Asabuki to give his marimba feature on the show to one of his students, Yoshihisa Mizuno. Mizuno subsequently played until the end of the program.<sup>130</sup> It is interesting to note that the opening song of *Penguin Time*, entitled “Penguin-san” (“Mr. Penguin”) was first aired on September 3, 1951 in the beginning of the program. “Penguin-san” was composed by Teruaki Hiraoka with lyricist Yoshio Shigezono. In the original recording, the marimba was most likely performed by Asabuki himself.

The Xebec Marimba Trio also had a daily marimba program called *Good Morning Marimba*, for Radio Kanto from 1964 to 1965. The music they performed on the radio were arranged by Abe, and the trio went into the recording studio several times a week to record several shows at a time.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> “Penguin Polka” is included in *The Xylophone Album Vol. 1—beloved xylophone song selections* (Asabuki as the chief editor) published in 1961.

<sup>130</sup> Author’s interview with Yoshihisa Mizuno, September 17, 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso Life*, 41.

### Non-Japanese Music <sup>132</sup>

Immediately after the War, phonograph records were scarce and had to be imported, mostly by American military men. In the 1950s, as the country became more stable and wealthy, the demand for musical entertainment grew. Record companies and radio and television stations began producing music that were recorded domestically. From 1961 to 1966, Angel Records Japan produced roughly 140 albums of Western (i.e. non-Japanese) classical and popular music.<sup>133</sup> One of the popular genres was Central and Latin American music. Yoshihisa Mizuno recalls that albums in these styles were often recorded by groups of studio musicians who did not necessarily perform together as organized ensembles even though the record might be released under a name such as Tropical Melodians. The Tropical Melodians were led by guitarist Takashi Yamada. Instrumentation of the group included rhythm guitar, two flutes, marimba, piano, string bass, and several Latin percussion instruments. According to the liner notes of *Chu Nanbei Ongaku Shu*, the ensemble covered a wide range of music from countries and regions beyond Central and Latin America, including Spain, Pakistan, Israel, India, Africa, and Southeast Asia.<sup>134</sup> Albums that Mizuno performed on had titles very similar to those of exotica albums made in the United States.

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<sup>132</sup> Without the help of Yoshihisa Mizuno, this section could not have been completed. He was generous in providing recordings, playing musical samples, and telling many stories about life in the recording studios in the 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>133</sup> Fujisk Kayou Daikoushin [<http://www.geocities.jp/fujiskre/kaog.html>]

<sup>134</sup> Liner notes from *Chu Nanbei Ongaku Shu* (Music of Central and Latin Americas) Angeles Books 32, 1962.



Figure 4.2 Album cover for *Chu Nanbei Ongaku Shu*.  
 (“Music of Central and Latin Americas”) Angels Books 32, (1962).

Two such albums recorded by Takashi Yamada and the Tropical Melodians are *Nostalgic Guitar Moods* (1961) and *Central and South American Music—Latin American Journey through Music* (1962). Internationally famous tunes such as “Brazil,” “the Girl from Ipanema,” “El Cumbanchero,” “Granada,” “Lady of Spain,” and “Dark Eyes” were recorded on these albums. In addition, Mizuno’s name was found under the Leon Pops Orchestra on King Records Japan. On the album *Exotic Sounds Spectacular—Home Concert Series Vol. 3, accordion and marimba*, Mizuno and Masao Yoshikawa were listed

as marimbists. The album features a Russian folk song, a French chanson, some Spanish songs, and Latin American popular songs.



Figure 4.3 Takashi Yamada and the Tropical Melodians, with Mizuno at the marimba. Liner notes from *Chu Nanbei Ongaku Shu* (“Music of Central and Latin Americas”) Angels Books 32, (1962).

#### Xebec Marimba Trio<sup>135</sup>

From 1962 to 1967, the Xebec Marimba Trio recorded six albums of popular music, consisting mostly of arrangements of Latin American popular music and some Japanese traditional songs. “Frenesi,” “Besame Mucho,” “Desafinado,” and “Tico Tico” in the Latin American category, and “Konpira Fune Fune,” “Lullaby of Itsuki,” and “Zui Zui

<sup>135</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso Life*, 29–69.

Zukkoro Bashi” are the Japanese traditional songs. In addition, the trio recorded hit songs from movies such as *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing*.

### Television Programs

In Japan, one of the most recognizable pieces of music featuring the marimba is the theme song for *Today's Cooking*, which began in 1957 as a ten-minute television program; in 1976, it was extended to the current format of twenty-five minutes.<sup>136</sup> Isao Tomita, who collaborated with Keiko Abe on many recording sessions, was the composer of the show's theme song. At the time he wrote the theme song, the Xebec Marimba Trio happened to be in the building just as he finished composing, and they were immediately summoned to a recording studio to record the theme.<sup>137</sup> In addition to the three marimbas played by the Xebec Marimba Trio, the instrumentation included snare drum, woodblock (to depict the sound of ingredients being cut on a cutting board), guitar, and string bass. The use of the marimba on the theme song for *Today's Cooking* was instrumental in popularizing the instrument with a large Japanese audience. The song is often played in many junior and senior high school wind ensemble concerts to introduce the percussion section, or in children's concerts to introduce the marimba.

Not all uses of marimba are as universally recognizable as that of the *Today's Cooking* theme, but marimba is widely used in television dramas—not always as a theme song, but for incidental music composed specifically for each show. Just as it is

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<sup>136</sup> *Today's Cooking* is still the longest running television program in Japan. The NHK Publication also publishes monthly textbooks to accompany the program.

<sup>137</sup> Abe recalls that Tomita specifically sought out the Xebec Marimba Trio to record the theme, but he was given a less than twenty-four-hour notice, a day before the first show is to air, to compose the theme song. He composed it within three to four hours in front of the studio, the production staff searched for any musicians in the building.

impossible to track down every single drama that used popular music, the same is true for television shows and movies. Below are selected examples of the marimba used in television dramas. It is interesting to note that marimba is often used freely in any type of drama, including period dramas depicting life in Japan centuries before either the concert marimba's invention or its appearance in the country.

*Mito Koumon*, a long-running period drama aired from 1969 to 2011, featured music composed by Chuji Kinoshita. Marimba was used not so much as part of an orchestra, but along with the vibraphone and the xylophone, it was used more frequently in very exposed and recognizable ways. *Furuhata Ninzaburo* is a *Colombo*-like police drama aired from 1994 to 2006, with music composed by Kazunori Maruyama and Yusuke Honma. The music loosely took on the style of Mancini, which includes the frequent use of mallet-keyboard instruments including the marimba.<sup>138</sup> *Aibo*, another police drama aired since 2000 with the music composed by Yoshihiro Ike, features the marimba mostly as part of the orchestra setting but an occasional solo making the marimba more identifiable. It seems the use of the marimba began changing in the late 2000s, when composers began using the marimba more soloistically in very exposed and recognizable ways. The following are selected examples of such uses of the marimba.

*Ann Donatsu* ("An-donuts") is a 2008 coming-of-age drama about a young Japanese pastry chef, and the music features exposed marimba solos, using both two- and four-mallet technique, and some passages for more than one marimbist. The show's music is composed by Kouji Endo. Hiroyuki Sawano composed the music for *My*

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<sup>138</sup> The marimba is most recognizable in the tune "Suspicion."

*Girl* in 2009, and Eishi Sagawa composed for *Tokujo Kabachi* in 2010. A graduate of Berklee College of Music, Yasuo Nakajima composed for the 2011 drama *Bartender*, and the use of marimba in his work is especially noticeable.

The marimba is also used in children's programming. In earlier days, the xylophone was used more frequently on children's shows, but in the twenty-first century, just as with music for dramas, composers seemed to prefer the marimba instead. However, many of these pieces uses synthesized marimba sounds, and they are not played on the concert marimba. The use of synthesized marimba sounds will be discussed briefly in Chapter Six. One particular example, "Marimba no Yuugi," by Tsuneyoshi Saito, can be heard frequently in the music for the children's program *Kamen Rider Kiva*, from 2008. Episodes feature the "marimba" used as a melody instrument with string accompaniment.

#### Film Music

The marimba has been used in Japanese film scores since the 1950s. In 1959, Takanobu Saito treated the marimba as a solo instrument with orchestra accompaniment in the Yasujiro Ozu film *Ukigusa* ("Floating Weeds").

By the twenty-first century, the marimba was being utilized in more soloistic and recognizable ways. *Tenshi no Tamago* ("Angel's Egg") from 2006 features a score by Yoshihide Otomo using guitar, strings, and a very prominent marimba solo of very few notes. Korean composer Sung-woo Cho scored the 2008 film *Watashi to Inu no 10 no Yakusoku* ("Ten Promises to My Dog"), incorporating the marimba, clearly recognizable as a melody instrument in the orchestra.

### Popular Music

One of the most recognizable uses of the marimba in Japanese popular music is “Ue wo Muite Aruko.” It is also known as “Sukiyaki” in the United States, composed by Hachidai Namamura, and sung by Kyu Sakamoto in 1961. An immediate hit in Japan, the song was released in the United States on May 3, 1963, and stayed at the number one spot on the Billboard chart from June 15 to June 29, 1963.<sup>139</sup> Kyu Sakamoto was given the Golden Record Award in 1964. The opening marimba solo was performed by Yoshihisa Mizuno of the Tokyo Marimba Group.<sup>140</sup> This short marimba solo became so recognizable to Japanese audiences that even today, people can identify the song by hearing just a few notes of this solo. In 1972, the Drifters recorded “Red Envelope” (in Japanese, “Makka na Futo”), a re-make of the original hit, sung by Katsuhiko Haida in 1947. The 1972 recording used the marimba both to double the vocal melody and to play countermelodies independently. The original tune, composed by Albert von Tilzer, was known in the United States as “Oh By Jingo” (but by other names as well, with different lyrics). There are many versions of “Oh By Jingo” with various instrumentations performed by ensembles including Lanin’s Roseland Orchestra, Lu Watters’ Yerba Buena Jazz Band, and Spike Jones’ band; the song was also sung by many popular singers of the time such as Danny Kaye and Margaret Young. The 1920 recording by the All Star Trio (Wheeler Wadsworth on alto saxophone, Victor Arden on piano, and George Hamilton Green on xylophone) is available online through the

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<sup>139</sup> According to the TBS Television footage of *Sekaini Nemuru Mabusoshino Mikoukai Maruhi Eizou Daihakkutsu Special*, aired on Jan. 11, 2001, Kyu Sakamoto also appeared on *The Steve Allen Show* on August 15, 1963.

<sup>140</sup> Author’s conversation with Akiko Suzuki, August 4, 2015.

Library of Congress.<sup>141</sup> It is interesting to note that the English song lyrics of “Oh By Jingo” are not related to the Japanese song lyrics of “Red Envelope,” just as the English language lyrics of “Sukiyaki” bore little resemblance to the original Japanese lyrics of “Ue wo Muite Aruko.”

A conservatory-trained violinist turned singer-songwriter, Masashi Sada, is known for using the marimba in his music. Marimbist Hisayoshi Takuma has been performing with Sada since his first solo concert in 1976.<sup>142</sup> Takuma, a child protégé marimbist performing since age four and a student of Michiko Takahashi at Musashino Academia Musicae, was disinterested in contemporary music of the mid-1970s. Immediately upon graduation, Takuma joined Sada’s backup band primarily as a marimbist, with occasionally playing percussion.<sup>143</sup> He is featured from time to time especially on rock-like songs such as “Kurumi no Hi” (1976) and on melancholic songs such as “Kanpaku Sengen” (1979). At the time of writing, Takuma still performs with Sada regularly, and many of Sada’s concertgoers expect Takuma to appear at Sada’s concerts. It is very unusual for a popular singer in Japan (or in the United States) to collaborate with a marimbist on a consistent basis over a long period of time.

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<sup>141</sup> Library of Congress, “Oh By Jingo” [<http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/7532/>]

<sup>142</sup> *Takuma Hisayoshi Official Website* “Profile” [<http://www.takuma-hisayoshi.com/profile.htm>]

<sup>143</sup> Hisayoshi Takuma, *Ore no marimba kiite mite kurenai?* (Tokyo: Any, 2006), 17–29.

## Chapter 5

### Rapid Development Period in the United States and in Japan from 1976 to 1986

#### Overview

The period from 1976 until 1986, the year the first five-octave marimba was manufactured, saw a great change in the world of the concert marimba. It is also the period during which the two streams of American and Japanese marimba cultures finally merged. In the United States, Leigh Howard Stevens and Gordon Stout introduced new four-mallet techniques that expanded performance possibilities for the concert marimba. Not only were compositions for solo marimba by Japanese composers being performed more frequently, but artists such as Keiko Abe began performing formal concerts internationally, including in the United States, beginning in 1977. The news of Leigh Howard Stevens and Gordon Stout reached Japan as well. Their compositions and transcriptions were immediately studied and performed by many young marimbists.

Both American and Japanese marimbists and composers had to deal with the constant range expansion of the marimba during this period. Japanese and American marimbists had to learn new compositions by composers from their respective countries. The Percussive Arts Society, an American professional organization, began hosting international conventions in 1976, providing international performers, including Abe, a platform to perform, further promoting Japanese and American marimba musical cross-breeding.

The Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)

The Percussive Arts Society began in 1961. Its founding members were professional percussionists and educators.<sup>144</sup> They hoped to “bring up to date the present standards in solo and ensemble contests, stimulate a greater interest in percussion performance and teaching, and promote better teaching of percussion instruments.”<sup>145</sup> Beginning in 1971, smaller events, such as the Day of Percussion, were held in different locations, and in 1974, the first Percussive Arts Society National Conference (now called the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, or PASIC), was held in Rochester, New York, at the Eastman School of Music, in 1976.

According to Rebecca Kite, at the first PASIC, Leigh Howard Stevens and Gordon Stout gave clinics on marimba music and technique.<sup>146</sup> Their technique and style were unlike those of any other marimbists at the time. Emil Richards, who was in attendance recalls, “I’ve never seen anything like that before.”<sup>147</sup>

Leigh Howard Stevens

Leigh Howard Stevens developed both new techniques and mallets. He is often credited for inventing a one-handed roll, while Vida Chenoweth claims that she was the one who taught the one-handed roll to Stevens.<sup>148</sup> Keiko Abe was already using the one-handed roll in her composition “Frogs” in 1958. No matter who the inventor was in the truest sense, the one-handed roll is associated with Stevens as one of his technical

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<sup>144</sup> Remo Belli, the founder of Remo, was among them. He was a professional drum set player before starting his company.

<sup>145</sup> *Percussive Arts Society*, “History of PAS” [<http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/history>].

<sup>146</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso Life*, 239.

<sup>147</sup> Author’s interview with Emil Richards, May 26, 2015.

<sup>148</sup> This author met and spoke with Chenoweth at PASIC in 1999, and she commented about the one-handed roll.

innovations, paving way for new technical and compositional possibilities for the marimba. His other contribution was creating a new type of mallet, which differed greatly from previous marimba mallets. The yarn was wrapped loosely around the mallet head and wrapped only vertically, rather than in the traditional way of horizontally wrapping close to the mallet head at the end of the wrapping process.

Even though playing classical transcriptions was nothing new to marimbists, the pieces Stevens was transcribing had not previously been attempted. He transcribed piano pieces to be played only by himself, which was extremely unusual at that time. Most marimba transcriptions of piano pieces up until that point had included piano accompaniment. In addition, Stevens also commissioned new contemporary pieces for the marimba, with some becoming part of the standard repertoire for the instrument.

In 1979, Stevens published *Method of Movement*, a comprehensive method book explaining his unique four-mallet marimba technique. Stevens later noted that he had to start his own publishing company, Marimba Productions, because publishers did not want to publish *Method of Movement* “with so many pages of text and diagrams!”<sup>149</sup> Publishers believed there was no market for this type of method book, so Stevens published it himself, with great success, proving there was a market for a growing population of concert marimbists world-wide.<sup>150</sup> At the time of this writing, generations of marimbists younger than Stevens might not imagine how to learn four-mallet marimba technique if it were not for his *Method of Movement*.

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<sup>149</sup> Mostly Marimba.com website, “History of the Companies.”  
[<https://www.mostlymarimba.com/home/about-our-companies.html>]

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

Seeing Stevens in 1976 at the Los Angeles Day of Percussion,<sup>151</sup> Tom Collier remembers everyone being completely blown away by his technique. All the Los Angeles studio musicians who were there talked about his technique after his performance. It certainly prompted Collier to think about the untapped possibility of the marimba and to take marimba more seriously as a concert instrument.<sup>152</sup>

### Japanese Influences in the United States

As discussed in Chapter Three, some Japanese composers' manuscripts were brought to the United States by marimbists resulting in the music being passed from player to player. However, actual performances by Japanese marimbists were hardly known to American marimbists until 1972, when Keiko Abe's album *Keiko Abe Contemporary Music from Japan Vol. I, Music for Marimba* became available in the United States. Matthew Kocmierski recalls being startled when he heard Abe's recording for the first time. Even though he had a deep interest in contemporary music, he had not imagined yet how the concert marimba could fit into the contemporary music scene. Compositions written for the marimba were not the type of music he was drawn to perform at that time. He had already been exposed to and performed some Japanese contemporary marimba solos, but after listening to Abe's recording, Kocmierski gained a new perception of the concert marimba's potential.

In an interview with the author, Matthew Kocmierski mentioned that in New York at that time, he and William Moersch were the only two young marimbists who were really interested in pursuing the concert marimba in a direction similar to

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<sup>151</sup> Emil Richards, who saw Stevens perform earlier, was instrumental in bringing Stevens to perform at the Los Angeles Day of Percussion.

<sup>152</sup> Author's conversation with Tom Collier, May 27, 2015.

Japanese contemporary music.<sup>153</sup> In 1982, Moersch formed the New York Quintet, whose instrumentation was based on Abe's Tokyo Quintet. His group commissioned pieces and gave concerts. He was also very active in commissioning works for the marimba, and became a central figure in receiving the National Endowment of the Arts Consortium grant in 1986.

In 1975 and 1978, the Japanese publisher Ongaku no Tomo published two volumes of the works for solo marimba that Abe had commissioned, which made it easier for the American players to acquire the scores. As the interest in contemporary Japanese music increased, more of these pieces were performed by American marimbists. American premiers of the Japanese pieces were frequently given, and Japanese contemporary marimba music became an essential part of repertoire for students and professionals alike.

#### Keiko Abe's Performance Tour in the United States

In 1977, Abe was invited to perform at PASIC in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she used a prototype of a four-and-one-half-octave marimba, the YM-5000, which would not be commercially available until the following year. By the time Abe performed in Knoxville, American marimbists and percussionists were already familiar with her commissioned pieces, and many had already heard her recording. Additionally, Abe performed and taught at ten different colleges and universities before and after PASIC, after which she appeared in Alice Tully Hall in New York City,<sup>154</sup> broadcast live on WQXR Radio, New York.

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<sup>153</sup> Author's interview with Matthew Kocmierski, March 22, 2016.

<sup>154</sup> Kocmierski attended this performance.

In 1981, Abe received a return invitation from Michael Rosen, a professor at Oberlin College, to perform again at PASIC, this time in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also toured major colleges and universities gave concerts, clinics, and master classes. Furthermore, Abe was invited to perform again at Music from Japan<sup>155</sup> in New York, where she gave the American premiere of Akira Ifukube's *Lauda Concertata for Orchestra and Marimba*.<sup>156</sup> Born in 1914 and raised in Hokkaido, Ifukube, a nationalistic composer, utilized musical elements from the Ainu—the indigenous people of Hokkaido whose culture differs from most of Japan. Ifukube's piece was originally composed in 1976 for xylophone virtuoso Yoichi Hiraoka's fiftieth-year anniversary concert in 1978, then entitled *Lauda Concertata per Xilofono ed Orchestra*, but it was never performed in that form. Three years later, it was revised for the marimba, utilizing four-mallet technique and a four-and-one-half-octave instrument. The revised and renamed piece was premiered in Tokyo by the Shinsei Nippon Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Kazuo Yamada.<sup>157</sup> The piece was recorded twice more—in 1990 and 1993—both times with Abe as soloist. The success of Abe's American tours led her to more international performance opportunities.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> According to the concert announcement, Naoyuki Mirua was Music from Japan's artistic director, and the concert was entitled Symphonic Works in Premiere. Miura, a bassist in the New York City Opera Orchestra, helped Kocmierski get Japanese marimba music in the mid-1970s.

<sup>156</sup> Ifukube is also known as the composer for the Japanese television show *Godzilla*.

<sup>157</sup> Takafumi Fujita, *Lauda Concertata for Marimba and Orchestra (1979)* Orchestra Nipponica website. Fujita was a student of Ifukube. [[http://www.nipponica.jp/archive/notes/tune\\_lauda.htm](http://www.nipponica.jp/archive/notes/tune_lauda.htm)]

<sup>158</sup> At the question-and-answer session at the Keiko Abe Marimba Academy in 2015, Abe recalled that "because I terminated the contract with Musser, there was no opportunity for me to perform internationally for ten years. But now, I am really grateful for that time because I could really anchor in Japan and fine tune my art." This author was present at this session.

### Students of the Marimba from 1976 to 1986

Both in the United States and Japan, the marimba was (and still is) not the number one popular instrument for children to study. Private lessons were almost the only way to study the marimba in the United States. Fortunately, there were many marimba teachers through out the United States who had studied with Musser, and by this time, *their* students were now teaching. Similarly, in Japan, the students of Eyichi Asabuki and Yoichi Hiraoka were now teaching throughout the country. Asabuki's Japan Xylophone Association was active for a quarter of a century, becoming a well-known organization among the xylophone/marimba community.<sup>159</sup> Thanks to xylophone education programs in elementary schools, Japanese children had become interested in learning the marimba. Even after xylophone education was discontinued in the late 1970s, children's interests in playing the marimba continued, thanks to children's marimba ensembles, including Marimba Ponies and Hiroshima Marimba Junior Marimba Ensemble, which were established in the 1980s and appeared both in concerts and in the media.

### Colleges and Universities from 1976 to 1986

Up to the mid-1970s, most college percussion programs had been focused on orchestral percussion playing. As percussionists began to play more instruments in different styles, the scope of many of these college percussion programs began to be more varied.

At the same time, many college percussion programs in the United States were heavily influenced by Leigh Howard Stevens' new four-mallet technique. Larry Mahlis,

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<sup>159</sup> Asabuki's organization used the word "xylophone" interchangeably with "marimba."

an undergraduate percussion major at Weber State College (now Weber State University) in Utah in the late 1970s to early 1980s, recalled experiencing Stevens' short residencies at his school. His percussion instructor, Douglas J. Wolf, received a master's degree in music from the University of Michigan and was well aware of Stevens' work. Wolf made a point of every student learning to play the marimba and master four-mallet technique using Stevens' grip. Even a percussion-oriented student like Mahlis could understand the unique opportunity presented by Steven's visits in 1978 and 1979. "It [a one-handed roll] sounds so smooth and beautiful. When he [Stevens] came and performed, we were blown away. We were shocked. None of us were near that level, of course ... and even our instructor was serious but couldn't play the Stevens grip as well [as Stevens]." Mahlis considers Stevens' visit to Weber State College as the highlight of his college career. "People are just amazed by [Stevens' technique]. I felt like we were a little bit privileged. Because it was a smaller school and there were a few of us who were serious as majors so I thought like we were really lucky ... I felt like we were privileged. A little special. That made us work harder and learn it right ... I remember him [Stevens] saying that he practiced hours and hours to get some of this stuff ... and being able to hear him say those things, makes you feel like, you know how it is? You are like, 'Ooh, you are getting this information from someone [who] has solve[d] these puzzles.' And that felt special. So I felt it was privileged." Mahlis recalls how his fellow students knew of Stevens' accomplishments and sensed that not only was he changing the world of concert marimba rapidly, but that his students were a part of that revolution. At that time, only about fifty percent of college students were using Stevens' grip, but Wolf was instrumental in introducing Stevens

and his technique in Utah.<sup>160</sup> After *Method of Movement* was published in 1979, interest in this new technique spread, and many students switched to Stevens' technique. A still younger generation of students learned to play four-mallets with Stevens' grip from the beginning of their marimba studies.

More and more colleges were beginning to hire full-time percussion faculty, and percussion programs flourished in the United States. Michael Rosen, who was instrumental in bringing Keiko Abe to the United States in 1979 and 1981, was teaching at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and Michael Udow was teaching at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor.

Both in the United States and in Japan, the concert marimba had become a more integral part of the percussion studies in just a few short years, and students were now expected to master four-mallet technique as undergraduates. At Toho Gakuen School of Music, where Abe taught, students were able to major in marimba, though most other music schools did not yet allow students to study just the marimba.

#### Performers of the Marimba from 1976 to 1986

Leigh Howard Stevens, Gordon Stout, Karen Erving, and William Moersch were recognized as marimba virtuosi in the United States. Keiko Abe continued to trail-blaze with her commissions, compositions, and performances. Michiko Takahashi and Mutsuko Taneya were marimbists of the same generation as Abe. Michiko Takahashi by this time had become an internationally recognized percussionist and marimbist, the first marimbist and the first non-westerner to receive the Gaudeamus International

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<sup>160</sup> Author's interview with Larry Mahlis on May 26, 2015.

Interpreters Award, in 1973.<sup>161</sup> Mutsuko Taneya has been actively performing since 1968, giving a Carnegie Hall recital in 1989. It is interesting to note that she brought the concert marimba to China in 1981, giving concerts and recitals.<sup>162</sup>

By this time, the first generation of marimbists trained by Abe had begun concertizing and commissioning new works for the marimba. Mutsuko Fujii graduated from the Tokyo University of Fine Arts in 1971 and has since commissioned more than sixty works for the marimba, including *Hiten Seido II* (1983) and *Hiten Seido III* (1987).<sup>163</sup> Fujii concertized internationally after winning second place at the Panmusik International Competition in 1977. In 1979, she went on a performance and teaching tour to introduce Japanese contemporary repertoire in the United States, visiting schools such as Wichita State University and Louisiana State University. She also performed at the Enid Tri-State Music Festival in Enid, Oklahoma.<sup>164</sup>

#### Music Composed for the Marimba from 1976 to 1986

During this period, much of what current marimbists know as the standard repertoire began to appear. Abe composed *Michi* in 1978; it was premiered in the United States in 1979.<sup>165</sup> David Maslanka composed *My Lady White* for marimbist Lauren Vogel in 1980. *Merlin* was composed in 1985 by Andrew Thomas, commissioned by William Moersch. In 1986, *Reflections of the Nature of Water* by Jacob Druckman was premiered by Moersch, and Stevens premiered *Velocities* by Joseph

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<sup>161</sup> This award is given to the winners of the International Gaudemus Competition for Interpreters of Contemporary Music competition, which began in 1963.

<sup>162</sup> According to Mutsumi Tuuzaki, who studied with Taneya.

<sup>163</sup> Hitenseido II and III are composed by Maki Ishii

<sup>164</sup> Biography of Fujii Mutsuko [<http://www.sanukite.com/sanukite/mutsuko-fujii.html>]

<sup>165</sup> *Michi* was not published until 1979.

Schwantner. These two pieces were a part of the National Endowment of the Arts Solo Marimba Commission, which will be discussed in the next section.

Abe commissioned a piece for marimba solo with percussion ensemble from Minoru Miki, which was premiered in the Netherlands with the Amsterdam Percussion Group during her tour in 1984. *Marimba Spiritual*, scored for solo marimba and three percussionists became “one of the most frequently performed and recorded marimba works ever.”<sup>166</sup>

According to M. Christine Conklin, who researched and catalogued marimba concerti published from 1940 to 2000, there were fourteen marimba concerti written during this period. Of the fourteen, a few are still performed as a part of the standard repertoire, including works by Neil DePonte and Akira Ifukube in 1976, Robert Kreutz in 1979, Neboja Zivkovic in 1984, Peter Klatzow in 1985, and Ney Rosauero in 1986.<sup>167</sup> Most of the concerti from this period are written for the four-and-one-third-octave marimba, reflecting the fact that this instrument had finally become commonly used. Ifukube wrote for a four-and-one-half-octave marimba since he had originally written for xylophone (some parts were taken down an octave), and Abe had already had an instrument that covers the range. Zivkovic and Klatzow composed their works for the four-and-one-sixth-octave marimba.<sup>168</sup> During this period, both American and Japanese marimbists began frequently performing pieces composed by non-American/Japanese composers.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso Life*, 90.

<sup>167</sup> Conklin, M., Gipson, Richard, and Wakefield, William. *An Annotated Catalogue of Published Marimba Concertos in the United States from 1940–2000*, (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2004), 96.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Klatzow is a composer from South Africa, and Zivkovic is a composer-performer from Serbia.

The 1986 National Endowment for the Arts Solo Marimba Commission<sup>170</sup>

In the United States, individual efforts toward commissioning works for solo marimba did not seem to bear the same fruit as Keiko Abe's did in Japan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Because there was no substantial body of literature for solo marimba composed by established American composers, American marimbists had an urgent need to commission such works if they were to move the marimba's status forward to a more serious classical instrument. William Moersch, marimbist well known for commissioning new works, began commissioning music for the marimba in 1980 and headed a consortium to commission works for solo marimba by established composers. Along with Moersch, Leigh Howard Stevens and Gordon Stout were in this consortium, which resulted in three new works, two of which have become part of the standard repertoire: *Reflections of the Nature of Water* by Jacob Druckman and *Velocities* by Joseph Schwantner.<sup>171</sup>

Marimba Recordings

In 1976, Keiko Abe recorded Japanese contemporary marimba solos on an album entitled *Japanese Solo Marimba Music, Keiko Abe Reveals the Essence of the Marimba*. Karen Erving recorded *A Marimba Recital*, and Gordon Stout recorded *Music for Solo Marimba* in 1977.<sup>172</sup> Leigh Howard Stevens recorded William Penn's *Four*

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<sup>170</sup> A detailed background and study of this commission can be found in the 2005 dissertation by I-Jen Fang, "The 1986 National Endowment for the Arts Commission: An introspective analysis of two marimba works, *Reflections on the Nature of Water* by Jacob Druckman and *Velocities* by Joseph Schwantner, together with three recitals of selected works by Keiko Abe, Christopher Deane, Peter Klatzow, Wayne Siegel, Gitta Steiner and others." (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2005).

<sup>171</sup> The third piece is *Islands from Archipelago: Autumn Island* by Roger Reynolds, premiered by Stout at the same time as these pieces.

<sup>172</sup> Kite, *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso's Life*, 239.

*Preludes For Leigh Howard Stevens* for the American Contemporary Series.<sup>173</sup> Perhaps reflecting the reasons publishers had shied away from publishing Stevens' *Method of Movement*, solo marimba recordings did not (and still do not) have a big market. Even though there weren't very many recordings, they were highly sought after by marimbists and students of the marimba.

#### Marimbas Used from 1976 to 1986

By the mid-to-late 1970s, more marimbas were made with a four-and-one-third-octave range in the United States. However, not everyone seemed to have access to the extended instrument, a fact demonstrated by the common practice, from the mid-1970s to early 1980s, of placing anything below the lowest note of the four-octave marimba in parentheses.<sup>174</sup>

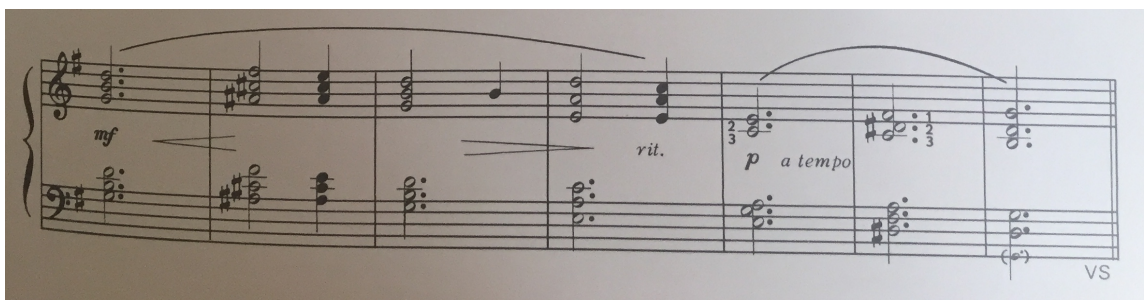


Figure 5.1 An example of notes out of four-octave range put in parentheses Shirley Hixton "Portrait of Twilight" from *Two Scenes for Marimba*, mm. 14–20. Copyright in 1978, Permuis Publications, used by permission.

In collaboration with Keiko Abe, Yamaha produced a four-and-one-half-octave concert marimba, a prototype of which Abe used in her 1977 concert tour of the United States. After becoming available to the general public in 1978, four-and-one-half-octave

<sup>173</sup> The title of the album is *Penn/Wilson/Peck* by Composers Recordings Inc. (CRI), CRI SD 367.

<sup>174</sup> Another example is in the last measure of "Flaming Dawn" from Shirley Hixton's *Two Scenes for Marimba*, copyright in 1978, low B-flat is in parentheses, and D-flat and F are written without parentheses.

instruments were widely used to play contemporary repertoire, and the instrument immediately became the new standard among professional marimbists. Even though marimbists had to wait until 1986 to purchase a five-octave instrument, Abe herself began using a prototype with a range extension in 1980.

Korogi spent three years manufacturing their first professional model marimbas, and beginning with a four-and-one-third-octave marimba, model 800, and a four-and-five-sixths-octave (four-and-one-third plus upper range going up to an F7) marimba, model 850 in 1978. They began North American distribution through Custom Music of Ferndale, Michigan, rebranding themselves as Kori in 1979. In 1982, Korogi also began European distribution with Pustjens Percussion Products in Holland, under the name Concorde.

Saito Gakki continued to manufacture student model marimbas. In 1979, their model MS 100 was a four-and-one-half-octave instrument with a range extending upward, C3 to F7. Their MS 200 was a four-and-one-third-octave marimba, A2 to C7, manufactured beginning in 1984.

In the late 1970s, Musser also manufacturing Kelon marimbas. Paul Hansen owns a first generation Kelon marimba made in 1977, and which was the first Kelon marimba in the Pacific Northwest. In the meantime, in 1985, Leigh Howard Stevens signed on as a designer with Musser, who in the mid-1980s produced a four-and-one-sixth-octave marimba, the M450 Grand Soloist Marimba, going down to E2, an octave and a sixth below middle C. The low E made guitar transcriptions playable in the actual register. Douglas DeMorrow had established DeMorrow Marimba, located in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, was in operation by this time. DeMorrow already had a

prototype of a five-and-one-third-octave marimba, going down to A1, two octaves and one third below middle C, in 1986, when he first met Gordon Stout.<sup>175</sup>

Once the largest manufacturer of the marimba, Deagan was at the tail end of its business. According to its Catalog “G,” Deagan continued to manufacture synthetic bar marimbas. Between 1976 and 1980, Deagan produced three models of synthetic bar marimbas, three models of rosewood marimbas, and one amplified bass marimba.<sup>176</sup> Aside from the four-and-one-third-octave Bandmaster (653 and 654), Deagan’s models were incompatible with contemporary repertoire of the time, since their range did not extend beyond four and one-third octaves.

#### Range Expansions by Yamaha and Keiko Abe

In 1971, Yamaha produced a four-octave marimba, YM-4500,<sup>177</sup> in collaboration with Abe. She used the instrument exclusively until 1984. As Abe continued to realize the possibilities the concert marimba held in helping her realize her artistic vision, it became increasingly clear that a four-octave instrument was no longer serving her needs. Yamaha was able to produce a four-and-half octave marimba (YM-5000), which allowed Abe more musical freedom of expression. The instrument became available to the public in 1978. By 1981, at the time of Abe’s performance tour of the United States, Yamaha created an extension that reached to C2, two octaves below middle C. Finally, a five-octave marimba, Yamaha YM-6000, was built in 1984,<sup>178</sup> which Abe used to concertize wherever she performed. She recalls:

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<sup>175</sup> Lauren Vogel Weiss, *Percussive Arts Society* “Hall of Fame: Gordon Stout” [<http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/halloffame/GordonStout.aspx>].

<sup>176</sup> Deagan Catalogue G [<http://www.deaganresource.com/>].

<sup>177</sup> According to Kite, it was originally labeled YM-4500, but now it is labeled as YM-4000.

<sup>178</sup> YM-6000 became commercially available in 1989.

A five-octave marimba gives the same lowest note as a cello, and if I have these notes, I can cover most of a repertoire. Additionally, the lower register maximizes the characteristically mellow sound of the marimba while the higher register is still capable of producing the twinkling sound of wood. Even though holding mallets for the low register is really tough physically for me, I suspected I could withstand the weight of the mallets up until five octaves. If it goes any lower than this, in order to produce a decent tone, I would probably have to use heavy bass mallets specifically designed to play in ensembles...which means dealing with huge mallet heads, and holding four mallets would be too physically demanding for my fingers.

After considering all of these factors, I suspected that a five-octave marimba would become a standard for concerts and recitals. That is why I asked Yamaha to produce a five-octave marimba. We worked really hard to have the range expanded, but after we produced the four-and-half octave marimba, marimba makers all over the world came up with their versions of the same range within six months. After YM-6000, six months to a year was all they needed to produce their own five-octave marimbas. Thanks to that, a five-octave marimba became the standard concert instrument today. All of these stemmed from the Yamaha engineers' and my deep desire to produce deep rich sound in the low register!<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Yamaha website. "Interview with Keiko Abe." Translated by the author.  
[[http://jp.yamaha.com/products/musical-instruments/percussions/artists/interview/keiko\\_abe/01/](http://jp.yamaha.com/products/musical-instruments/percussions/artists/interview/keiko_abe/01/)].

## Chapter 6

### Development of the Marimba from 1986 to 2014

#### Overview

The period between 1976 and 1986 had been a time of a rapid development for the concert marimba, but in the following two decades, the world of the concert marimba underwent even more changes and developments. In the early 2000s, Akiko Suzuki, a well-known and respected marimba pedagogue in Japan, lamented the fact that she could no longer keep track of all the new compositions written for solo marimba.<sup>180</sup> Many publishing companies dedicated to percussion music had been established, producing an extensive amount of marimba music every year—a trend that still continues as of this writing. As more students were attracted to the study of marimba, national and international marimba competitions were created. More colleges began offering majors in marimba performance. As more players began playing the marimba exclusively, the percussion community at large some reluctantly accepted the existence of marimbists who do not play percussion.<sup>181</sup> Jack van Geem, professor of Percussion at the San Francisco Conservatory, recalled late in the first decade of 2000s finally allowing an undergraduate student to focus on the marimba exclusively because of that student's sheer determination to do so.

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<sup>180</sup> Author's conversation with Akiko Suzuki, marimbist, marimba pedagogue, August 4, 2015.

<sup>181</sup> Up to the 1990s, percussion students were encouraged to be well-rounded, studying everything in undergraduate programs. However, by the mid-2000s, undergraduates were encouraged to specialize in a field early on.

### International Competitions

The International Percussion Competition Luxembourg began in 1989, hosting its first dedicated marimba competition in 1995. Out of fifty participants, Polish marimbist Katarzyna Mycka and Japanese marimbist Momoko Kamiya shared first prize. The seven jury members each composed a work for solo marimba,<sup>182</sup> and Emmanuel Séjourné's *Katamiya*, whose title came from combined names of the two winners, is still performed regularly. Both Katarzyna and Kamiya went on to have international performance and teaching careers.

The Leigh Howard Stevens International Competition was also first held in 1995, the first competition dedicated just to the marimba. The first prize winner, French marimbist Eric Sammut, and the third prize winner, Taiwanese marimbist She-e Woo, also went on to have international performing and teaching careers.

The World Marimba Competition, held at different locations in Europe and Asia, was first held in 1996; the latest was held in 2008. Prize winners from many of these competitions, including Katarzyna Mycka, Eric Sammut, Marta Klimasara, Jasmin Kolberg, Bogdan Bacanu, Fumito Nunoya, Shinsuke Ishihara, and Emiko Uchiyama have gone on to teaching and/or performance careers as of this writing.<sup>183</sup>

The Universal Marimba Competition and Festival Belgium has been held since 2001, with the latest being held in 2015. The seventh competition is scheduled to take

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<sup>182</sup> Terry O'Mahoney, "Seven Pieces for Marimba Literature review." *Percussive Notes* 26 no. 2 (April 1998), 71.

<sup>183</sup> World Marimba Competition "Winners"  
[<http://www.worldmarimbackompetition.com/html/winners.html>].

place in 2017. The International Marimba Competition in Linz, Austria, has been held since 2006, with the latest one being held in 2015.

### Marimba Festivals

Marimba-specific music festivals have been held in the United States and in Japan. While there are many local festivals, a few internationally recognized festivals should be mentioned. Leigh Howard Stevens has held a yearly Summer Marimba Seminar since 1980, and Nancy Zeltsman has held the Zeltsman Marimba Festival since 2001. The Keiko Abe Marimba Academy has been held since 2007. Fernando Meza hosted the Marimba 2010 International Festival and Conferences at the University of Minnesota. In addition, some of the marimba competitions listed mentioned in the previous section hold marimba festivals during the time of their competitions.

### Keiko Abe PAS Hall of Fame

In 1993, Abe was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame, the first woman and the first non-American to receive such an honor. It is rare for the Percussive Arts Society to induct someone who is not a percussionist or a drummer into the Hall of Fame. As of this writing, there are 114 inductees, but only five are marimbists—Claire Omar Musser in 1975, Vida Chenoweth in 1994, Leigh Howard Stevens in 2006, and Gordon Stout in 2012. Two others are non-Americans—the Canadian percussion ensemble NEXUS, in 1999, and British percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie, in 2008.<sup>184</sup> According to Lauren Vogel Weiss, “Abe began her acceptance speech with humility”:

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<sup>184</sup> Babatunde Olatunji, who moved to the United States from Nigeria in 1950, was inducted in 2001.

Perhaps it is better for me to think of this honor as a recognition of the possibilities of the marimba, and the many fine composers who have written such wonderful music for me to experience and share with audiences and other marimbists. I also accept this award in honor of the many women who have made great contributions for [sic] humanity through music...I share this honor in celebration not only of the marimba, but also for music, musicians, and music teachers from around the world who create good conditions for better communication and understanding through the universal language of music.<sup>185</sup>

### Students of the Marimba from 1986 to 2014

Even though there were only a few marimbists concertizing and teaching internationally in the 1980s, students had many more marimbists to look up to and idolize by the mid-1990s. Amy Putnam, principal percussionist with the Tacoma Symphony, observes a difference in the sentiment amongst percussionists between the time of her graduate studies at Juilliard and college students in the first decade of the 2000s. "I just think that the times have changed now. When I was in college, I was encouraged to do everything, so I did it. I liked it all. But kids nowadays, they are encouraged to specialize early on, like [medical] doctors, you know?"<sup>186</sup>

In the 1980s, a few students chose to study outside of their native countries with international marimba virtuosi such as Keiko Abe.<sup>187</sup> By the 1990s, as the international competitions and marimba festivals became widely available, even more students chose to study the marimba outside of their home countries.

Some Japanese marimbists, including Momoko Kamiya and Nanae Mimura, studied in the United States and then went back home to teach and to concertize, while others, such as Makoto Nakura and Naoko Takada, choose to stay in the United States to teach and perform. Gwendolyn Dease, an associate professor of percussion at Western

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<sup>185</sup> Lauren Vogel Weiss, "PAS Hall of Fame: Keiko Abe" (n.d.). [<http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/halloffame/AbeK.aspx>]

<sup>186</sup> Author's conversation with Amy Putnam, March 16, 2016.

<sup>187</sup> Dame Evelyn Glennie and Robert van Sice studied with Abe for a short term in the late 1980s.

Michigan University, received the Keiko Abe Prize at the Second World Marimba Competition in 1999, and then went to Japan to study with Abe. Robert van Sice, professor of percussion at Yale University, the Peabody Conservatory, and the Curtis Institute of Music, also studied with Abe. These types of musical exchanges in the 1990s would have influence on the way these marimbists teach and perform, further promoting the musical cross-breeding between the United States and Japan, as well as with the rest of the world.

#### Colleges and Universities from 1986 to 2014

In the United States, a few colleges began allowing students to major in the marimba, and others that did not offer a marimba degree granted students the flexibility to focus on studying the marimba. In the late 1990s, this author remembers that many percussionists were surprised that she wanted to study just the marimba. “Then what do you do after you graduate?” was the comment she encountered the most, especially at PASIC. After getting used to so much opposition to the idea of specializing in the marimba in the United States, the experience in Japan was shocking. Marimba students in Japan were surprised that this author had to study percussion also at the university where she was attending. “You can play the timpani, too? That’s pretty cool!” was a typical comment from such students. By the end of the twentieth century, most colleges and universities who offered a major in percussion required entering freshmen to demonstrate four-mallet technique in the audition. A decade earlier, orchestral excerpts requiring two-mallet technique might have been sufficient for such entrance auditions.

Since 1993, Nancy Zeltsman, recognized as one of the marimbists dedicated to commissioning repertoire from living composers, has been teaching marimba exclusively at the Boston Conservatory. Because she is one of the few marimbists in the United States who uses and promotes the traditional cross-grip, the same mallet grip many Japanese marimbists use, many Japanese marimbists seek her out for their graduate studies. Her four-mallet marimba method book, *Four Mallet Marimba Playing: A Musical Approach for All Levels*, was published by Hal Leonard in 2003.

After two decades of performing in New York City, William Moersch began teaching at Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory, while he started a program offering marimba studies a graduate degree. He then moved to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he is an associate professor and director of percussion studies, as of this writing.

#### Performers of the Marimba from 1986 to 2014

Since the concert marimba is a relative newcomer to classical music, student marimbists now have a unique vantage point and the privilege of living in the same time period as most of the marimba virtuosi.<sup>188</sup> Born in 1901, Claire Omar Musser, the pioneer of the concert marimba, passed away in 1998, and many of Musser's first-generation students are no longer living. Karen Ervin, for example, passed away in 2004, but some of Musser's other students, including Vida Chenoweth, born in 1929, remain. Keiko Abe, Yoshihisa Mizuno, Michiko Takahashi are still actively teaching and concertizing. Mutsuko Taneya commissioned and gave the world premiere of Toshi

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<sup>188</sup> To draw a comparison, none of the violin students at the time of this writing could study with Paganini or Heifetz. Likewise, none of the pianists could study with Chopin or Liszt.

Ichiyangi's marimba concerto in 2013, and gave a sixty-fifth-anniversary recital in 2014. The list of marimbists who are actively performing seems to keep growing.

In this current period, especially in the United States, a large number marimbists are associated with colleges and universities. Some marimbists have full-time teaching engagements, while others hold one or more part-time appointments at more than one school. It is especially common for Japanese conservatories and colleges to hire many part-time instructors on a part-time basis so that they have time to devote to their own performances careers. Many well-established marimbists are already mentioned in the previous sections and chapters. There are a few well-established marimbists who do not hold teaching engagements, including Julie Spencer, Nanae Mimura, Eriko Daimo, Shinsuke Ishihara, and Kunihiro Komori.

#### Non-American/Japanese Performers of the Marimba

Even though this dissertation focuses on the concert marimba in the United States and in Japan, three non-American/non-Japanese marimbists should be briefly mentioned because of their contributions to the American and Japanese concert marimba community. Interestingly three of them are percussionists and do not play the marimba exclusively—Ney Rosauero, Evelyn Glennie, and Emmanuel Séjourné.

Ney Rosauero, a Brazilian-born composer-performer, served as the director of percussion studies at the University of Miami in Florida from 2000 to 2009. His earlier compositions, such as *Three Preludes for Solo Marimba*, became available in Japan in the early 1990s, and they immediately became popular among students of the marimba.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Author's conversation with Akiko Suzuki, August 4, 2015.

His first marimba concerto is one of the most frequently performed marimba concertos in recent years.

Dame Evelyn Glennie is a British percussionist who studied with Keiko Abe. She recorded Abe's composition *Michi* twice, in 1990 and then in 1995, and has recorded a few more of Abe's and other Japanese composers' pieces. Furthermore, she recorded Ney Rosauero's *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* on her album *Rebounds*, in 1992. Even though the tempo in the first movement is much faster than indicated in the score, her recording was instrumental in popularizing Rosauero's concerto worldwide.<sup>190</sup> Glennie was also a Percussive Arts Hall of Fame inductee in 2008, and performed at PASIC six times prior to being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

French composer-performer Emmanuel Séjourné both concertizes and serves as a jury member for international marimba competitions, contributing to the internationalization of marimba literature began the United States and Japan. Many of his compositions, including *Nancy* (1989), *Katamiya* (1995), and *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* (2005) have become a part of standard marimba repertoire. Additionally, his compositional style influenced younger generations of composers and performers by helping to legitimize marimba compositions of a more tonal nature in contemporary classical music.

#### Music Composed for the Marimba from 1986 to 2014

According to many educators and performers this author interviewed, it had become increasingly hard to keep track of all the new compositions written for the

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<sup>190</sup> M. Christine Conklin. "Annotated Catalogue of Published Marimba Concertos in the United States from 1940–2000." (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma), 54–57.

marimba by the mid-1990s. More publishers were publishing music for the marimba, and even more composers were writing for the marimba. As college percussionists became more technically proficient with four-mallet marimba technique, the demand for unaccompanied solo pieces increased.

Even though it is impossible to list all the more recent pieces written for the marimba, at least a few should be mentioned: *Northern Lights* by Eric Ewazen, published in 1989; *Variations on Lost Love* by David Maslanka, published in 1997; and *Three Moves for Solo Marimba* by Paul Lansky, published in 1998. *Khan Variations* was composed by Alejandro Viñao in 2001, commissioned by a group of marimbists organized by Nancy Zeltsman, with the assistance of New Music Marimba.<sup>191</sup> This type of commission, with multiple performers jointly commissioning a composer, is frequently seen as of this writing. Takatsugu Muramatsu composed *Land* in 2004 for Momoko Kamiya; the piece is one of the first marimba compositions utilizing traditional tonality and hummable melody by Japanese composers to become a part of the standard repertoire.

Even though established composers are writing music for the marimba more frequently, a significant body of repertoire is composed by composer-performers. Marimba virtuoso Julie Spencer is well-known for her trailblazing compositional style and technique, composing not only for the marimba but also orchestral and chamber works. *Tribeca Sun Flower* and *Chelsea Window*, both copyrighted in 1993, and *Brothers*

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<sup>191</sup> Bogdan Bacanu, Michael Burritt, Ricardo Gallardo, Eduardo Leandro, Nanae Mimura, William Moersch, Peter Prommel, Gordon Stout, Jack Van Geem, Robert Van Sice, Nancy Zeltsman and Alan Zimmerman are the twelve marimbists who commissioned the piece.  
[<http://www.vinao.com/KHAN%20VARIATIONS1.html>]

*in Peace*, copyrighted in 2000, have been especially popular with marimbists. By this period, works by composers who are neither American nor Japanese have begun to appear more frequently than in the previous periods. Keiko Abe continued to compose solo marimba pieces as well as solo marimba with different instrumentations. *Variations on Japanese Children's' Songs*, composed in 1982, and the *Dream of the Cherry Blossoms*, composed in 1984, are two of Abe's most frequently performed pieces. Many of her solo pieces were collected in three volumes, published in 1987, 1997, and 2007. A Serbian percussionist/marimbist, Nebojša Jovan Živković, composed solo marimba pieces, including *Ultimatum I* in 1994/1995 and *Ilijaš*, in 1996, as well as two marimba concerti written in 1984/1985 and 1997.<sup>192</sup>

There have been more than twenty marimba concerti composed since 1986, and the range of the marimbas used varies. Composers by this time could choose what range they wrote the piece for. In 1999, thirteen years after the five-octave marimba became commercially available, German composer-performer Eckhard Kopetzki composed *Konzert für Marimba und Streicher*, written for a four-and-one-third-octave marimba. Emmanuel Séjourné's concerto, composed in 2005, is by far the most performed of the concerti from this time period, as of this writing. Other concerti frequently performed are written by composers such as Andrew Thomas in 1990, Tomas Svoboda in 1995, and Eric Ewazen in 1999. Some marimba concerti originally composed for symphony orchestra have been arranged for wind ensemble or for percussion ensemble, increasing the opportunities for the works to be performed.

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<sup>192</sup> Joshua James Webster, "Performing the Keyboard works of Nebojša Jovan Živković." (thesis, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, 2008), 46, 51.

Keiko Abe's *Prism* was written for solo marimba in 1986, rearranged in a concerto form, as *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Wind Ensemble* in 1995; turned into a piano reduction also (in 1995,) and rearranged as *Prism Rhapsody for Marimba and Wind Ensemble* orchestra in 1996, with a second edition in 2001. In 1992, a two-marimba version of *Prism*, titled *Prism for Two Marimbas*, was composed. An arrangement for two marimbas, entitled as *Prism Rhapsody II for Two Marimbas and Orchestra*, was made in 2001, and *Prism Rhapsody II for Two Marimbas and Wind Ensemble* was published in 2003. Finally, *Prism Variations for Marimba Ensemble and Three Percussionists* was composed in 2005.

From this period, two frequently performed concerti for marimba with wind ensemble exclusively should be mentioned. David Maslanka's *Concerto for Marimba and Band* was composed in 1990; it is most frequently performed with college wind ensembles. Written in 1993, Alfred Reed's *Concertino for Marimba with Winds* is frequently programmed in Japan, especially since Reed is revered as "a god of wind ensemble."<sup>193</sup> For the newer works composed starting around the year 2005/2006, it is too early to tell whether or not they will withstand the test of time and become part of the standard repertoire.

#### Marimba Recordings from 1986 to 2014

At the time of this writing, the recording medium has changed drastically compared to 1986. Individuals can easily record themselves to produce CDs or online

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<sup>193</sup> This author remembers hearing the term used by teachers at her middle schools (two different schools since she transferred to a different school) in the early 1990s.

albums relatively inexpensively. However, until around the first few years of the 2000s, other than attending live performances, CDs were one of the few vital sources for new compositions to be heard. Therefore, recordings up to the first half of the first decade of the 2000s are mentioned in this section.

Leigh Howard Stevens' *Bach on Marimba* was released in 1987, and his *Marimba When...* was released in 1993. Both albums exclusively feature transcriptions for unaccompanied marimba solo. Robert van Sice recorded three albums from 1990 to 1996; his 1990 album of marimba concerti by Alan Hovhaness,<sup>194</sup> Peter Klatzow, and Frank Nuyts, and his 1992 album, *Japanese Music for Marimba*, introduced these already existing pieces to the wider marimba community. Between 1990 and 2003, Dame Evelyn Glennie recorded twenty-six albums, which also served as vital resources for students learning about new marimba and percussion pieces.

It is hard to track down the exact numbers of recordings by Keiko Abe that have been released in the United States. According to her official website, she has recorded more than fifty CDs, DVDs, and videos,<sup>195</sup> many of which undoubtedly have been utilized by generations of marimbists to learn new repertoire.

#### Marimbas Used from 1986 to 2014

By the mid-1980s, Musser was the only one of the major American marimba manufacturers in operation. However, Marimba One and Malletch had by then begun their operations and have grown to be major American marimba companies. Ron

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<sup>194</sup> Ever since from the time of Hiraoka's premier, Hovhaness' *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints* is typically performed with cuts. The Seattle Symphony's recording with Ronald Johnson as marimba soloist is the only commercially available recording of this concerto in its entirety.

[[http://www.naxos.com/catalogueue/item.asp?item\\_code=8.559717](http://www.naxos.com/catalogueue/item.asp?item_code=8.559717)]

<sup>195</sup> Keiko Abe, "Profile" [<http://www.keiko-abe.com/japanese/profile/profile.html>]

Samuels established Marimba One in 1989, while Leigh Howard Stevens left Musser in 1985 to establish his own marimba manufacturing company, Mallettech, a new division of his already existing mallet production company, in 1991. His first marimba model was shown at PASIC in 1992. DeMorrow continues to manufacture custom-made marimbas.

Yamaha designer Yasuyuki Semba realized the significance of an instrument that was easy to assemble and disassemble. He spoke with marimbists from all over the world, many of whom expressed reservations about purchasing an instrument that takes so much effort to move around, even if they find its sound magnificent. Semba and his team produced the YM-5100, a five-octave marimba that is easier to transport. Unlike the YM-6000, which was made in collaboration with Abe exclusively, the YM-5100 was produced by listening to the voices and opinions of many working professional marimbists and percussionists. Later, in 2008, another Yamaha designer, Ayumi Irisa, and her team, along with Abe, produced the YM-6100 model, another five-octave marimba that maintains the sound quality and external beauty of YM-6000 while being lighter and easier to assemble and disassemble.

Korogi, who by the time of this writing claims to be the biggest marimba manufacturer in Japan, produced their first five-and-one-half-octave marimba, with the same lowest note as the Yamaha but going up another half an octave to an F in the upper register, from C2 to F7. Between 1987 and 2008, Korogi produced four professional models of five-and-one-half-octave marimbas.<sup>196</sup> Korogi is branded as

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<sup>196</sup> Fujii Mutsuko, Fujii Database Vol. 2, 17–20.

Concorde in Europe. In the United States, it was branded as Kori until 2006 and has been sold as Korogi by Percussion Source since 2016.<sup>197</sup>

Since 1988, Saito Gakki manufactured professional model marimbas with “high-grade Honduran rosewood,” producing three models of five-octave marimbas between 2000 and 2008.<sup>198</sup>

Although Europe and other parts of Asia are not discussed in this dissertation, a Dutch instrument maker, Adams, has an active presence both in the United States and Japan. Another Dutch manufacturer, Majestic, and a Taiwanese company, Dynasty, have some presence in the United States at the time of writing.

With many new manufacturers now producing marimbas, the future of the instrument seems bright, with more innovation and development to come, and with the instrument more widely used than ever before. However, like other manufacturers who use the large amount of a single natural material, marimba makers face a serious problem: shortage of rosewood. Unfortunately, the details of this topic fall outside the scope of this dissertation and therefore will not be discussed here in any detail. However, it does seem likely that just as the marimba makers of the past found ways around their own technological challenges, those of the future, in the quest of the best-sounding instrument, will continue this tradition of innovation as technology improves and manufacturers continue to be creative.

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<sup>197</sup> Korogi website, “History of Korogi”. [<http://www.korogi.co.jp/quality/evolution.html>]

<sup>198</sup> Fujii Mutsuko, *Fujii Database*, Vol. 2, 12–16.

### Synthesized Marimba Sounds and the Concert Marimba

With the advancement of digital technology, including MIDI, beginning in the 1980s, synthesizers were able to better simulate the sounds of many existing instruments. The term “sample” is commonly used to distinguish between the acoustic sound and the digital recording of an instrument’s sound. The point of sampling is to reproduce the sound without physically having the instrument in the space. Sampling can be advantageous in situations where the space, personnel, instrumentation, and/or budget are an issue, especially when the instruments in question are impractically large or hard to acquire; the concert marimba often fits in the description. From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, more and more film music, popular music, and Broadway musicals began using samples. Ringtones on mobile phones, as well as television commercials and advertisements often use the samples of a marimba sound. There are several marimba ringtones on iPhone, and a currently well-known set of Bank of America jingles are purely done with samples of marimba sounds.

In popular music, synthesized mallet-keyboard instrument such as malletKAT, Xylosynth, and Marimba Lumina have become common in recent years. At the Yacht Rock Summer of Smooth Concert in 2013, Starbuck performed their 1976 hit “Moonlight Feels Right,” but Bo Wagner played his signature solo on a malletKAT instead of the concert marimba. Tortoise, too, eventually moved away from using the concert marimba and vibraphone, and began touring with malletKAT.

With the popularity of virtual marimbas on the rise, it might seem likely that use of sampled marimba sounds might surpass that of the concert marimba, and the concert marimba would be used less. Instead, these this trend seems to have led to further

musical “cross-breeding,” where what was original composed for samples were played on the concert marimba. Hans Zimmer’s “You’re So Cool” from 1993 film score *True Romance* featured the sampled marimba sound. In fact the film begins with an exposed “marimba” solo. But this piece was later arranged for marimba and percussion ensemble. One version is arranged for two marimbas (three players), with percussion by Michiko Noguchi, published a collection of marimba ensemble arrangements called *Marimba Favorites Vol. 2*. The other version, arranged for a large percussion ensemble including xylophone, chimes, and percussion, has been performed by the Binghamton University Percussion Ensemble.

Many mobile phone ringtones provide multiple options of marimba sounds, which are all samples. Some of these ringtones have been arranged and performed on the concert marimba in percussion and marimba ensembles. User-based video websites such as YouTube are filled with people, from students to adults, playing ringtone melodies on the concert marimba.

Many venues, most particularly those used for musical theater performances face a space issue in the orchestra pit. In Broadway musicals, not just marimba but many other instruments were replaced with samples, which are performed on keyboard or malletKAT. *Beauty and the Beast*, *Crazy For You*, *Secret Garden*, and *Miss Saigon* are all scored for the malletKAT. However, there are often exceptions to this now common practice. Originally, the parts for marimba and most other mallet instruments used in the musical, *Miss Saigon* were programmed electronically, thus intended for samples in the original Broadway production because of orchestra pit space issues. The 2005 Seattle production, in which all the parts were played

acoustically, resulted in an unusually large percussion set up with a footprint of twelve feet by ten feet. This would not have been possible in an orchestra pit on Broadway.



Figure 6.1 2005 Miss Saigon set-up with all the instruments played acoustically.

Paul Hansen, the percussionist for this particular production of Miss Saigon, explains why the actual concert marimba is not often used in musicals:

Why is marimba often sampled in shows?: A couple of reasons 1) Simply put, marimbas often just won't fit into the available space, and is easily programmable into mallet Kats and keyboards 2) Marimba is often combined with other sounds in percussion books - for example, Boobam and Marimba combined in *Mary Poppins*. Kalimba and Marimba in *My Heart Is the Drum*. Also, there was a "skeleton marimba" sound in *Shrek*, which had to be played electronically.<sup>199</sup>

It is difficult to predict whether the use of the concert marimba in the non-classical field will decline in the near future. At the time of this writing, since both the sample marimba sound and the concert marimba are finding their own niche, perhaps

<sup>199</sup> Author's interview with Paul Hansen, March 28, 2016

more musical cross-breeding will take place. Technology is likely to advance and create new issues, so further investigation on this particular topic will be worthwhile at much later date.

## Epilogue

“The more I practice and the more I study, the more I feel I don’t know anything about the marimba. I can’t even play this instrument in the first place.” It was in the spring of 2014 that I confessed my big, dark secret. I was sitting across from Kendra McLean, my duet partner, a percussion colleague, and a dear friend since my undergraduate days, and we both were writing our dissertations. In my early childhood, I loved music but none of the instruments I played seem to make sense in totality...giving me the freedom to be myself fully. When I first heard the deep, beautiful sound of the marimba, I was immediately attracted to its warmth and the color I see by listening to the tones of the marimba. By the time I began learning four-mallet technique, I was fully in love since, to me, it was the only instrument allowing me to physically move freely, to play melody, harmony and rhythm at the same time. I did not enjoy the piano as much because I felt that I was confined to the piano bench, not able to move as freely. Even though I love the marimba, I imagined that “living” with the marimba must be like being with an “perfect” but “impossible” lover—a sentiment similar to “I love everything about him, but he does not care for me.” The more I practiced, the more I wanted to play: I wanted to create a note more resonant than the last one, I wanted to recreate quiet whispers of the moonlight, majestic sunrise, or magnificent sunset...whatever I heard and saw in my heart and mind, I wanted to recreate it all with the marimba.

It seemed as though the further I go down the trail, the more I realize that the destination is still thousands of miles away. Judging by the wisdom of virtuoso musicians of the past and present, I understood enough that this is not an uncommon

sentiment for musicians and artists. I was, however, not at all prepared to experience a similar ordeal when researching the marimba.

The experience I had was very similar to my childhood experience. As I flipped through pages of photo albums of my parents prior to my birth, there were so many pictures of “my parents” that I did not recognize. “Oh, please! People! Don’t tell me that you guys were dressed like that going to college...let alone walking in public! How embarrassing...” “Who is this little boy holding his mother’s hand?...oh wait, that’s my dad!” Looking at the last page of the album, a sweet young couple in a black-and-white photo was smiling at me. At that moment, I must have been in fourth grade, I felt a sense of tiny panic welling up in my heart—in a different light, my beloved parents felt like different people, strangers whom I have never known. Yet, these pictures were of my beloved parents...the ones I had known all my life. It was such a strange feeling, and the temporary sense of disorientation felt like everything I knew prior to that point was being destroyed.

Studying the marimba’s history, especially its use in popular music in the late 1900s as well as in Japan in the 1800s, had a similar effect on me. I lost the sense of who I thought she, the marimba, was. (I tend to think of the marimba as “she.”) I was mortified and horrified by the way the marimba was used in American rock and popular music. My beloved marimba was literally hammered on by drummers on a good day, sometimes, even worse, by non-percussion background instrumentalists on a bad day. There were only a few musicians, mentioned in chapter four, who had the “proper” training to play the marimba. When I saw a YouTube video of a five-octave marimba, Yamaha YM-6000 to be exact, being used just to play a simple two-mallet

pattern, I could not help but think “what an incredible waste it is to use a beautiful five-octave marimba when the player hardly seems to know how to get the rich and resonant rosewood sound out of the instrument.” By that point in time, I had been researching on the range expansion of the marimba for so long. I even interviewed designers at Yamaha and spoke with Ms. Abe herself to hear how much care, passion, effort, and pride have gone into producing this particular model of marimba—straight from the horse’s mouth! I have visited the Marimba One and Yamaha factories to witness, first hand, the extent of precision, skill, and experience required to build these beautiful instruments. “What a waste” was really the only thing I could think of. When I expressed my frustration and rather unkind and critical judgment, one of my colleagues said, “Remember—a lot of those musicians don’t have the training to deal with the instrument...but because the marimba sounds so amazing, people are still attracted to it.” Then, it was only then...that it finally came full circle. Those “horrible,” untrained rock and pop band musicians were just like me. I, too, am still not sure how to play this beautiful instrument despite many years of studying, but the “marimba sounds so amazing” that I’m attracted to it, and I want to keep playing even though I cannot play the way I wanted. It was that simple.

This “aha moment” gave me a realization that I now have a far better understanding of both streams of American and Japanese marimba traditions than when I first began the journey of researching. A more comprehensive understanding of both American and Japanese backgrounds, history of the concert marimba and its use in different genres beyond the classical music gave me both perspectives fully. Rather than being “half-Japanese,” a person lacking the full understanding of Japan, I gained

both Japanese and American understanding. It is as though I became a hybrid—on multiple levels. I even gained the understanding of why “they”—people in different musical and instrumental backgrounds—want to play. My heart was filled with happiness again, and it felt like the time when I saw my parents’ photo much later in life accepting that these hideously dressed college kids were my parents after all, and that I still loved them. The photo no longer embarrassed me, and I simply loved my parents just the same, if not slightly more, because now I knew the part of them that I had not known before. In the same way, by realizing that so many of us from different musical backgrounds are attracted to the sound of the marimba, I could still love and appreciate the instrument in many different “circumstances.” All is well—peaceful and calm. I was content, and a deep desire overtook me simply to “play with ‘Miriam,’” my marimba, only to have fun.

Through this journey, a seven-year undertaking of extensive research on the marimba, sojourners from the United States and Japan gracefully extended helping hands—teachers, mentors, musicians, and instrument makers alike. We all are connected through the marimba. I cannot express the depth of the gratitude I have for all of them. Even though I still play the marimba and feel like I cannot play to make her sound as beautiful as she truly is, I love and appreciate her more...including the part of her that I normally do not see and who she was in the past.

One day, my duet partner, Kendra, commented after a rehearsal, “your saying [that] you don’t know how to play the marimba is crazy.” Even though that’s not how I feel, perhaps she is right. She has known me long enough to be well aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and her judgments are free from the internal experiences

and emotions that I go through. Compared to the time in college when we practiced together, despite the fact that we still look the same, many things have changed. Even so, when we play together, it feels as though nothing has ever changed and that time stood still, yet at the same time, we could hear in each other's sounds that we have grown and the time has passed. In the midst of a strange yet serene space in time, the sound of the marimba remains unchanged. As I hold these things gently in my thoughts, the end of Keiko Abe's poem "The Waves" echoed in my heart:

Born today  
 Gone tomorrow  
  
 tomorrow  
 the day after tomorrow  
  
 from the ancient of time  
 the sound of the waves is the same<sup>200</sup>

As my muse, the marimba, guided me (and many others) through an incredible journey thus far, it is my sincere hope that the marimba will enrich the lives of sojourners of music—regardless of whether or not they play, how they play, and/or what style they play in. With profound gratitude and respect for the marimba, I look forward to the next chapter of my walk with her.

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<sup>200</sup> Rebecca Kite, *Abe Keiko, marimba to ayunda ongaku jinsei*. (Tokyo: Yamaha Music Media Corporation, 2011), 80. Translation by the author.

### Appendix A: Specification of Ranges

There are a few different way of notating a specific octave without using music notation. One way is to use the standard 88-key piano keyboard and count upwards from the lowest note. For example, the lowest note of the piano would be A1 with highest being C88. However, it is hard to identify which octave a note is in until individuals become familiar with the system. Therefore, in this dissertation, the following system is used. According this notation, the A at 440 Hz. is labeled A4, which is A49 in the 88-key method. Below is a picture of a five-octave marimba (Yamaha YM-5100) as a reference.



Figure A.1 Yamaha YM-5100, a standard five-octave marimba.

The lowest note of a typical five-octave marimba is C2. From the lowest octave, each octave is numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Based on this system, the (piano) middle C is C4, and the highest note is C7. Typical marimba ranges in this notation are as follows:



Figure A. 2 Four-octave from C3 to C7



Figure A.3 Four-and-one-third from A2 to C



Figure A. 4 Four-and-one-half from F2 to C7



Figure A.5 Four-and-one-sixth-octave from E2 to C7



Figure A.6 Five-octave from C2 to C7

## Appendix B: List of Permissions

In order to complete this dissertation several permissions were needed in compliance with the law.

### 1. University of Washington Human Subject Division

Date: 11/04/2014

PI: Ms. Memmi Ochi,  
School of Music

CC: Thomas Collier

Re: Human Subjects Application #48180,  
*"Doctoral Dissertation: 100 years of the concert marimba: American and Japanese innovation and convergence, 1915 to 2015"*

Dear Ms. Ochi,

The Human Subjects Division received the above-named Human Subjects Application on 9/2/2014. This application has been reviewed by Subcommittee EG. As the application describes, you propose to conduct historical interviews with individuals who participated in the development of concert marimba in the US and Japan in order to fill in gaps in the current historical literature. In your most recent responses to the subcommittee's screening questions, you have clarified that your project is not designed to be generalizable. There is no research question or hypothesis and the interviews you plan to conduct are intended to document and understand events that have already occurred. This is a historical inquiry project and the "findings" of your interviews will not be applicable to other settings or circumstances.

Based on this information and the definition of "research" under 45 CFR 46.102(d), the UW Human Subjects Division has determined that this activity does not meet the federal definition of "research." This determination means that the activity is not subject to 45 CFR 46 and does not require review by the IRB. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

If you have further questions or concerns, feel free to contact me.

Best regards,

Bailey Bell  
Human Subjects Review Administrator

2. Permus Publications e-mail correspondence, April 28, 2016:

To whom it may concern;

My name is Memmi Ochi and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Percussion Performance at the University of Washington School of Music in Seattle, Washington. I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation entitled "One Hundred Years of the Concert Marimba: American and Japanese Innovation and Convergence, 1915-2014."

I wish to obtain permission to display some measures from Two Scenes for Marimba by Shirley Hixson. (I am not certain if you still publish this piece. It is copyrighted in 1976.) The measures that I am interested in showing are in Flaming Dawn, rehearsal letter E until the end of the movement (total of 6 measures) and in Portrait of Twilight, five measures after the rehearsal letter F until the end of that system (total of 7 measures.)

Please let me know any specific information to include in the dissertation.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Memmi Ochi

Hello,

Yes, you may certainly use the measures in your document. The Two Scenes for Marimba by Shirley Hixson is still published by Per-Mus Publications and is available on our website, [<http://www.permus.com>] [www.permus.com](http://www.permus.com) under Drums and Percussion/ Mallet Solos.

Regards,

Dr. Cary Dachtyl,  
Owner  
PerMus Publication LLC

3. Phillip Palmer (Composer for *My Heart is the Drum*) e-mail correspondence on June 1 and 2, 2016:

Dear Mr. Palmer,

My name is Memmi Ochi and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Percussion Performance at the University of Washington School of Music in Seattle, Washington. I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation entitled "One Hundred Years of the Concert Marimba: American and Japanese Innovation and Convergence, 1915-2014."

Through Paul Hansen, I was fortunate enough to learn about *My Heart is the Drum*, and wish to obtain your permission to display four measures of the marimba part to be used as an example of writing for four-mallet marimba playing in musical theatre.

The measures I am interested in showing are:

Song: "Today Begins Her Life"  
Part: Percussion 1 part (marimba)  
Measures: 44-47

Please let me know any specific information to include in the dissertation.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Memmi Ochi

Dear Memmi,

Yes, of course you can use it. I'm flattered! Would love to see the relevant analysis, too.

Also, let me know if it would be useful to have PDF or Sibelius file.

Phillip

Appendix C: List of Individuals Contacted and/or Interviewed

[United States]

Dan Adams, percussionist, Seattle, WA.

Greg Campbell, percussionist, Seattle, WA.

Tom Collier, jazz vibraphonist/marimbist and percussionist, Seattle, WA.

Ian Dobson, percussionist, Seattle, WA.

Paul Hansen, percussionist, Seattle, WA.

David Johnson, vibraphonist, Valencia, CA.

Larry Mahlis, percussionist/drum set player, Seattle, WA.

Kendra McLean, percussionist, Federal Way, WA.

Danlee Mitchell, former percussionist at San Diego Symphony, San Diego, CA.

Amy Putnam, percussionist/marimbist, Renton, WA.

Susan Pascal, jazz vibraphonist, Seattle, WA.

Emil Richards, marimbist and percussionist, Toluca Lake, CA

Julie Spencer, marimbist/composer, Bingen, Germany

Jason Treuting, percussionist, New York, NY.

Ben Thomas, jazz vibraphonist and bandoneonist, Seattle, WA.

Ruth Underwood, marimbist and percussionist for Frank Zappa, Studio City, CA.

Jack Van Geem, retired principal percussionist and assistant timpanist of San Francisco  
Symphony, San Francisco, CA.

[Japan]

Keiko Abe, marimbist/composer, Tokyo, Japan.

Mutsuko Fujii and the Marimba Research Group at Sensoku Gakuen College of Music,  
Kawasaki, Japan.

Akiko Goto, percussionist, Tokyo Japan.

Ayumi Irisa, Yamaha instrument designer, Hamamatsu, Japan.

Nanae Mimura, marimbist, Kawasaki, Japan.

Yoshihisa Mizuno, marimbist, Tokyo, Japan.

Yasuyuki Semba, Yamaha instrument designer, Hamamatsu, Japan.

Akiko Suzuki, marimbist, Tokyo, Japan.

Mutsumi Tsuzaki, marimbist and xylophonist, Kyoto, Japan.

### Appendix D: Marimba Stories

During the course of research and interviews, I came across a few episodes about the marimba that were interesting to me, but that were not strictly relevant to my main topic, the historical development of the marimba and its repertoire. Nonetheless, I believe they are worthy of including here, since they help demonstrate the breadth of the history of the concert marimba.

Amy Putnam, the principal percussionist of the Tacoma Symphony, owns a Leedy marimba made in 1930. It used to belong to marimbist and comedian Roy “Doc” Pickard who used to play the Leedy marimba on cruise ships.



Figure D.1 Leedy marimba made in the 1930s, formerly owned by Doc Pickard. A previous owner added a center bar on the bottom to strengthen the frame.  
(Photo by Amy Putnam)



Figure D.2 and D.3 Doc Pickard pictured with his Leedy marimba.  
(Photos courtesy of Amy Putnam)

Tom Collier, director of percussion studies at the University of Washington, owns a Musser Canterbury Marimba made in 1948, the year it first became available. In 1984/85, Collier bought it from the original owner in Aberdeen, Washington. The original owner played this marimba in his church beginning in 1948. Collier still performs with the instrument.



Figure D.4 Musser Canterbury marimba made in 1948.  
(Photo by Tom Collier)

Paul Hansen acquired a first generation Musser Kelon marimba while he was in high school, in early 1977. The instrument “moved” to the University of Washington while he was a student there, until his 1983 graduation. While many of the Kelon xylophone bars seem to turn green as the time passes, the bars of this instrument have retained their color for the most part.



Figure D.5 Hansen’s first-generation Musser Kelon marimba. (Photo by Paul Hansen)

Hansen used this marimba for the 1995 production of *Smokey Joe’s Café*, a musical based on the songs of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. One of the best known is “Spanish Harlem”, which was originally written for the marimba but scored in the musical for a MalletKAT. Hansen used the actual marimba instead.



Figure D.6 Hansen playing his Musser Kelon four-and-one-half octave marimba at the *Smokey Joe's Café* set. (Photo courtesy of Paul Hansen)

Matthew Kocmierski ordered a Yamaha four-and-one-half-octave marimba (YM-4900) in 1991, after receiving a phone call from William Moersch letting him know that it would become available in the following year. The instrument was built for Moersch for his premiere of Libby Larson's *Marimba Concerto: After Hampton* with the Long Beach Symphony, conducted by JoAnn Falletta, on October 24, 1992. According to Conklin, "the title of this piece refers to legendary jazz vibist Lionel Hampton," and "*After Hampton* was a private consortium commission, a collaboration of thirteen orchestras."<sup>201</sup>



Figure D.7 Yamaha YM-4900. Four-and-one-half-octave marimba.

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<sup>201</sup> M Christine Conklin, "An Annotated Catalog of Published Marimba Concertos in the United States from 1940–2000," (PhD diss. University of Oklahoma, 2004), 72.

Jason Treuting of the group So Percussion grew up in Westlake Village, California. In high school, he had a private marimba teacher who had studied under Claire Omar Musser. Vera Daehlin<sup>202</sup> (Treuting's teacher) "was the concert master of the big marimba orchestra Musser put together at Soldier Field in Chicago among other marimba orchestra concerts." In the early-1990s, Daehlin loaned Treuting one of her King George marimbas for him to use for practice at home, which was kept in Treuting's living room.<sup>203</sup> He was later loaned a black rosewood marimba that had been Claire Omar Musser's personal instrument. Around the same time, Treuting met Musser in a nursing home late in Musser's life. Musser then came to Treuting's high school senior recital in 1995, when Treuting performed Musser's Etude Op. 6 no. 8, "Nature Boy."<sup>204</sup> This story is one of the living examples of Musser's direct influence many decades after his contribution as a teacher.



Figure D.8 Vera Claire McNary (Daehlin)

<sup>202</sup> Vera Claire McNary Daehlin (July 21, 1923–August 15, 2015)

<sup>203</sup> Author's conversation with Treuting, February 4, 2016.

<sup>204</sup> Jason Treuting, e-mail message to author, May 31, 2016.

### FESTIVAL THROG TO HEAR MASSES MARIMBA MUSIC

Historic Event Only One of Surprises on Aug. 16.

#### Festival Tickets

Tickets for the 1941 Chicago Festival Music Festival, which will be held on Saturday night, Aug. 16 at 8:30 p.m. and on Aug. 17 at 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. at the Chicago Festival Music Festival.



Mr. [Name] of [Organization]

Chicago's first and only festival... The festival will feature a variety of musical performances...

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### Gifts from the Past



Gifts from the Past... The festival will feature a variety of musical performances...



Members of the Marimba Orchestra

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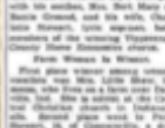
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### PURDUE MUSICAL FETE IS TRIUMPH FOR ONE FAMILY

5,000 Hear University's Festival Preliminary.

#### BY PHILIP MARSHALL

When the Purdue Musical Fete is held on Saturday night, Aug. 16, at 8:30 p.m. and on Aug. 17 at 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. at the Chicago Festival Music Festival.



Members of the Marimba Orchestra

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5 Tube Superhoh... Model 400

Large Speaker—Excellent Tone... Model 400

On Sale at Busch's 5 Stages Tone... Model 400

Emerson Phc... Model 400

Busch's... Model 400

37 E. Madison... Model 400

Chicago, Ill. 60601... Model 400

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### MAYOR DELAYS TRIP TO QUESTION EX-POLICE CHIEF

Chicago, Ill., July 20 (AP)—Mayor Edward J. Kelly today would not go to Boston to interview Edward J. Connelley, ex-policeman.

Chicago police chief Kelly is to be interviewed by Connelley in a matter of days, Kelly said.

Mayor Kelly, who has stated that he would not go to Boston to interview Connelley, said he would not go to Boston to interview Connelley.

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SAFETY FOR YOUR EYES... The Fair Optical Department gives

Figure D. 9 Chicago Tribune on July 20, 1941. Part 1 Page 11. Article about Musser's Marimba Orchestra.

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