

STUDY AND COMPARISON
OF THE
MARIMBA AND XYLOPHONE
IN
CONTEMPORARY SYMPHONIC LITERATURE

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
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The "Study and Comparison of the Marimba and Xylophone in Contemporary Symphonic Literature" is an original library study which includes the analyzation of symphonic scores and the findings of these analyses.

Chapter I contains the "Overview, Outline and Definitions." In the Overview the reason for this subject area chosen for research is stated. The Outline lists all the compositions that were used in Chapter III (Contemporary Use of the Xylophone in Symphonic Works) and Chapter IV (Contemporary Use of the Marimba in Symphonic Works). The Definitions section pertains to the physical differences between the two instruments. The bars, resonators, range, overtones and mallets are discussed.

In Chapter II, "A Comparative Historical Background of the Marimba and Xylophone," the writer deals with the various possible origins of these instruments and with the evolution of the slab instruments, describing the leg xylophone, log xylophone, table and bail xylophones and the gourd xylophones.

Chapter III, "The Contemporary Use of the Xylophone in Symphonic Works" deals only with the xylophone in contemporary literature. In doing research for this chapter the author found the xylophone to be used predominantly in large

symphonic works as a reinforcement tool. Due to the physical make-up of the instrument, the kind of wood used for the bars, length and thickness of the bars and its range, most composers used its brittle and non-blending tone in fast and loud passages.

Chapter IV, "Contemporary Use of the Marimba in Symphonic Works," deals only with the scoring techniques of the marimba in contemporary literature. One clear observation was found in doing research for this chapter: the marimba is included in the symphony orchestra when a battery of percussion instruments is used rather than a lone percussion instrument. It was also found to be a blending but independent instrument given important musical lines to execute rather than being used as a reinforcement tool. It more frequently was found in smaller ensemble avant-garde works.

Chapter V, "Summary and Conclusions," relates how the xylophone is used most often in climatic and fortissimo passages and, most frequently, to enforce other instruments, such as the flutes, piccolo and violins. The marimba, in contrast to the xylophone, is very seldom used as a reinforcement instrument but more often used as an integral part of the orchestra in more subtle musical passages. The dynamic markings are usually softer than those that include the xylophone. It is concluded that the marimba has not yet been as fully exploited in symphonic literature as the xylophone and

that there is a great possibility for the inclusion of this instrument in the symphony orchestra in the future as composers become more aware of the capabilities of it.