



Historical Development and Learning of Marimba in Chinese Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The significance of the historical development and learning of the marimba in Chinese educational institutions lies in the evolutionary and developmental process of these institutions and the interesting nature of the learning process. It is necessary to study the introduction and learning process of the marimba. The aim is to explore the historical development and learning of the marimba in Chinese educational institutions.

Materials and Methods: Qualitative research and content analysis were used, based on the principles of the historical development of the marimba, to convey and promote Chinese culture through marimba sound, playing techniques, and the learning process in educational institutions.

Results: The marimba was introduced to China in the 1980s. Teaching and playing methods mainly follow the international mainstream. Due to its low popularity, few schools offer marimba courses. Automatic lifting systems have emerged. There is scope for further development. The learning is comprehensive, in-depth, and innovative, helping students gain proficiency and cultivate musical literacy and innovative abilities. It originated in Guatemala and spread worldwide, entering China in the 1980s. In China, it has gradually become an important part of the music education system. Courses and training programs have been established in various educational institutions. Learning requires basic skills and the pursuit of artistic expression and cultural understanding. In the future, the marimba will have broader prospects with the development of music education and the acceleration of the internationalization process.

Conclusion: Despite its initial lack of popularity, the marimba—which was brought to China in the 1980s—has grown to be an essential part of the country's music education program. Students develop proficiency and musical literacy through thorough and creative teaching methods, and as internationalization and music education progress, the instrument's future in China appears bright.

Keywords: Marimba; Historical Development; Chinese Educational Institutions

Introduction

The marimba is one of the most important melodic percussion instruments, used in a wide range of contexts, with a beautiful sound and unique tone. It was introduced to Latin America in the 17th and 18th centuries, and later became an instrument of the Indians and was included in their ceremonies. The marimba has profound cultural significance in Latin America. It is not only an instrument but also an important part of Indian culture. In the traditional ceremonies and celebrations of the Indians, the marimba is often used to play religious music and dance music to pray for the blessing and gift of the gods. The timbre of the marimba is unique and has various playing methods, which can express rich emotions and artistic conceptions, so it is widely used in the music of Latin America. It not only adds a unique charm to the local musical culture but also becomes an important tool for the people of Latin America to express emotions and inherit culture. In addition, the performance of the marimba has also become a part of the ceremony for some Indian tribes to pray for the harmony of the universe and the happiness of the people. The marimba music played in San Marcos de Guna in Guatemala is very similar to the music of the Sissala people in Ghana, Africa.

In China, the marimba has gone through several stages of development, and although it was introduced late, it has developed rapidly and has been introduced into the professional teaching system, and Chinese musicians and composers have begun to write related works. The marimba began to develop in the era of Professors Liu Guangsi and Zhao Ji of the Central Conservatory of Music, and the now-famous Liu Gang and Li Biao were the first students taught by them. The marimba was slowly being noticed by some





people at that time, but it was still relatively rare. Prof Liu Guangsi and Prof Zhao Ji were the first group of people to come into contact with the marimba, and it was only in the era of Prof Yang Ruwen at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music that the marimba became popular in colleges and universities, which was close to 2000 at that time.

After the marimba was introduced to China in the 20th century, its development has been relatively rapid, and has already become a popular musical instrument. Chinese marimba players have not only made great progress in playing techniques and musical expressiveness, and gained wide recognition internationally, but also Chinese conservatories and music schools have begun to offer marimba courses to train professional talents. The development of the marimba in China has its unique aspects. For example, Chinese marimba players combine it with traditional Chinese culture to create a large number of marimba works with Chinese characteristics, and at the same time actively promote Chinese marimba music internationally to enhance the understanding and love of Chinese music culture by others. In other regions, the marimba was introduced to Latin America around the 17th and 18th centuries and became an instrument of the indigenous people, and it is also used in Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, North America, South America, and Central America. In Africa, it is widely used in traditional music and religious ceremonies, full of rich cultural characteristics. In Latin America, it has become an important instrument and is used in various musical styles such as jazz, rock music, and pop music, showing a strong sense of rhythm and dynamics.

There are obvious differences between Latin America and China in the use and perception of musical instruments. In terms of the use of musical instruments, marimba and other percussion instruments in Latin America occupy a key position in their music, and are often used in various styles such as jazz, rock music, and pop music, showing a strong sense of rhythm and dynamics. At the same time, instruments such as guitars are also widely used. In China, there is a rich variety of national musical instruments, such as erhu, guzheng, pipa, etc., which are widely used in traditional music, folk music, and some modern music creations, and great attention is paid to the mellifluence and charm of the melody. In terms of perception, music in Latin America is often closely linked to dance. People's perception of musical instruments focuses more on their role in creating a warm atmosphere and expressing emotions, and they have a relatively high sensitivity to rhythm. In China, the perception of musical instruments is often related to cultural inheritance and artistic conception expression. Great attention is paid to conveying specific emotions and cultural connotations through musical instrument performances, and relatively more emphasis is placed on the study and inheritance of musical instrument playing skills. For example, at a carnival in Latin America, the performance of various percussion instruments makes people's blood boil, while in a classical music concert in China, the audience is more immersed in the delicate timbre and emotional expression of musical instruments. These differences fully reflect the profound influence of different cultural backgrounds and musical traditions in the two regions on the use and perception of musical instruments.

Studying the introduction and learning process of the marimba in China is of great significance. Firstly, as an instrument with unique timbre and playing style, the research on its introduction and learning process can greatly enrich the diversity of Chinese music culture and bring new elements and expressions to the field of Chinese music, thereby broadening the possibilities of music creation and performance. For example, skillfully integrating its sound in some modern music works can create novel and unique musical effects. Secondly, understanding this process helps to improve the music education system and provides more teaching resources and ideas for music educators, which is conducive to offering marimba courses in music schools or training institutions to cultivate professional performing talents and further promote the development of music education. Moreover, since the marimba is widely used internationally, studying its development process in China can strongly enhance the exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries in the field of music, enabling Chinese musicians to have deeper interactions and cooperative performances with international counterparts and enhancing cultural understanding and friendship. In addition, the research on the introduction and learning process of the marimba can also inspire the inspiration of music creators, allowing them to create musical works with Chinese characteristics by





using its unique timbre and playing skills. For instance, those works that integrate the marimba with Chinese traditional music elements show unique charm. Finally, it is itself a part of the development of music history. Researching this process helps to record and preserve the important stages and changes in the development of Chinese music, providing valuable materials for future generations to understand the context of music development.

The novelty and significance of this research are highly emphasized. This study offers a fresh perspective and in-depth exploration of the introduction and learning process of the marimba in China, which has not been comprehensively investigated before. It not only enriches the understanding of the integration of diverse musical elements in Chinese music culture but also has a profound impact on promoting music education, enhancing international exchanges, inspiring creative works, and documenting the crucial stages of music history. This research fills a gap in the existing literature and provides valuable insights and contributions to the field, opening up new avenues for further research and development.

As a marimba student, the author occupies a unique position. The personal experience of the author as a marimba student brings a distinctive perspective and in-depth understanding. Through years of personal learning, practice, and immersion in the world of the marimba, the author has gained a deep understanding of its nuances, challenges, and joys. This first-hand experience enables the author to provide insights based on real-world encounters and practical understanding. These experiences provide valuable viewpoints in terms of the introduction and learning process, such as understanding the difficulties faced when initially grasping the instrument, the progress of skill development, and the impact of different teaching methods. The author can draw on personal struggles and achievements to analyze how the marimba has integrated into the Chinese musical landscape and how it has influenced and been influenced by the existing musical context. Such unique insights can greatly enhance the depth and authenticity of this research, providing a more comprehensive and meaningful exploration of the subject matter.

The interesting learning process of the marimba as it entered the Chinese education system and educational institutions is also explored, including interest promotion, learning basic skills, developing musicality and musicianship, performing together, creativity, and improvisation. Because of the far-reaching significance of its evolutionary history the development process of important educational institutions and the interesting learning process, it is necessary to study the introduction and learning process of the marimba. Given that there is very little literature on the marimba in China that affects teaching and learning, the author, as a student of the marimba for many years, hopes to make the marimba understood and to make a small contribution to the relevant educational programs in China by writing this thesis, whose objectives include To study the historical development of the marimba in China and its study in Chinese educational institutions.

Objectives

1. To study the historical development of Marimba in China from the early 20th century to the present, focusing on significant changes in construction, playing techniques, and cultural significance.
2. To study Marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions, focusing on curriculum development, teaching methodologies, student performance, and resource availability in primary and secondary schools.

Literature review

1. The historical development Marimba

Wang (2015: 1) explains that there is still no international consensus on the origin of the marimba. One view is that the marimba originated in Africa. Another view holds that it originated in Guatemala, a Central American country. There is also a claim that it originated in South-East Asia. According to ancient Greek literature and history, it is believed that the marimba initially originated in Guatemala. From there, it spread to the East, mainly to countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, and other Southeast Asian countries, where it was developed. Later, it traveled to Africa via the





Indian Ocean. In the 16th century, black African slaves brought the marimba back to Guatemala, where it was further perfected and developed through a series of refinements. Additionally, Robert Jackson (2023: 1 cited by Shi, 2023) points out that as the most representative keyboard instrument among percussion instruments, the marimba is the most beautiful instrument in the world, having the ability to emphasize rhythm while also presenting a beautiful melody similar to that of a piano.

2. Marimba learning

Mo (2020: 154) explains that to learn how to play the Marimba, you should first master the correct posture. Before striking the Marimba, you should relax your shoulders, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, relax your arms, and let your arms hang naturally. With the correct posture, you can then start to strike the Marimba and explain that as a prominent melodic solo percussion instrument, the Marimba comes with various playing techniques. In the initial stages of learning Marimba, the two-mallet method is employed. Early Marimba compositions were played using two mallets, with a single form of expression and only one melody. From the Baroque period to the 20th century, Marimba adapted to various types of music to enrich its repertoire. To enrich the repertoire, the performer adapts a wide range of music from the Baroque period to the 20th century with piano accompaniment. To stimulate the interest of beginners, the performer adapts a diverse array of music from the Baroque period to the 20th century with piano accompaniment.

3. Music Chinese educational institutions

Lu (2020: 182) explains that from the 1980s when the popularization of percussion music in China began, the social awareness of percussion music was dominated by jazz drum performance. At the beginning of the popularization of percussion in China in the 1980s, children who were interested in playing percussion instruments in society were triggered to learn from jazz drums in pop bands.

4. Historical Theory

Li (2017) explains that in 2012, researchers discovered the earliest flutes in the Hochle Fels Cave in southwestern Germany. Scientists believe that these flutes emerged in ancient times, approximately 42,000 to 43,000 years ago, and the materials used to make the flutes were bear bones and mammoth tusks. Not only in Germany but also in many countries around the world, in historical records and archaeological achievements, bone flutes have appeared many times. For example, in China, there is the Jiahu bone flute from 7000 to 9000 years ago, and in Austria, there is the reindeer bone flute from 19,000 years ago. Most of the flutes in ancient times were made of animal bones. When comparing the evolution of these ancient musical instruments with that of the Marimba, we can see that although the early flutes were mainly made of animal bones, the Marimba has its unique development path. The Marimba has evolved and diversified in terms of materials, playing techniques, and musical expressions. It has adapted to different musical styles and cultural backgrounds, showing its flexibility and innovation.

5. Music Theory

Li (2007: 24) explains that the rich tonal variety of the marimba is obtained by the player using different mallets with different hammer strokes. For marimba tone control training, pay attention to the following issues and explain about good tone color is directly related to the position of the keyboard strike. The soundboard is the main part of the marimba's articulation, the position of the upper and lower stringing of the soundboard has the least resonance and is the place where the volume and tone are the worst, the middle of the soundboard is the thinnest position of each soundboard, and the tone of this point is full and rounded, with full resonance, and we should always play in this position as much as possible. In addition, the top and bottom ends of the soundboard resonate OK, and in a pinch, you can temporarily strike the bottom and top ends of the top row of keys (equivalent to the black keys on a piano) and the bottom end of the bottom row of keys (equivalent to the white keys on a piano). Note that when you strike the bottom end, you should strike the corner of the bottom end. The best place to strike each soundboard is located right in the center of the soundboard, and you should try to place all points of the falling mallet on the best strike point. In this way, the small soundboard will produce good tone and sound effects.





Conceptual Framework

The research uses the main concepts in the study with the scope of area, time, and main study content according to the following issues.

1. The introduction and development of the marimba: introducing the origin of the marimba, when and how it was introduced to China, as well as its spread and development in China.

2. Learning Process and Methods of Marimba: To explore the learning process and methods of marimba, including the mastery of basic skills, the cultivation of musicality and musicality, cooperative playing, and creativity.

3. Teaching Practice and Achievements of Marimba: Analyze the teaching practice and achievements of Marimba, including teachers' teaching methods and students' learning achievements, as well as Marimba's performance in various competitions and performances.

4. Future development and trend of marimba: to explore the future development and trend of marimba, including its prospect and development direction in music education and percussion instrument education.

In the conceptual framework, "Introduction and Development" mainly refers to exploring at what specific time and in what way the marimba was introduced to a specific area such as China, as well as its spread and the development and change process it has experienced in this area.

"Learning Process and Methods" focuses on the exploration of the specific steps, processes, and various ways and means used in learning the marimba, including the control of basic skills, the cultivation of musical quality and musical sense, the improvement of cooperative playing ability and innovation ability, etc.

"Teaching Practice and Achievements" focuses on analyzing the actual operation situation and the achieved results in the process of teaching the marimba, covering the teaching methods of teachers, the learning achievements of students, and the specific performance of the marimba in various competitions and performances.

The purpose of "Future Development and Trends" is to deeply explore the future development direction and trend of the marimba, including its prospects and possible development directions in the field of music education and percussion instrument education.

Methodology

The Study of Historical Development and Learning of Marimba in Chinese Educational Institutions has 2 objectives of the research to study the historical development of Marimba in China and study the Marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions which uses qualitative research methods.

1. A qualitative research methodology was used, and data collection included documentary research (through platforms such as China's National Knowledge Infrastructure) and fieldwork (including online interviews, structured and unstructured interviews, and observations with teachers in several schools).

2. Research tools included interview forms, observation forms, tape recorders, cameras, video cameras, and so on. After the data were classified and stored, the data were analyzed in terms of the historical development of the marimba in China (such as the entry into China, changes, entry into educational institutions, differences in different stages of time, and the position of the marimba in China) and the learning of the marimba in Chinese educational institutions (such as the learning process, pieces of music used in teaching and learning, melodies, and learning directions, and so on).

3. The data Analysis in the study of the historical development of Marimba in China.

Uses principles and content analysis methods of the historical development of the Chinese marimba, including historical classification and historical organization and principles of data analysis and methods of content analysis of marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions, the authors carry out the collation of relevant music data and classifications.





4. The research presentation includes sections such as an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and recommendations.

Results

The marimba, a xylophone-like keyboard percussion instrument, was introduced to China in the 1980s. In terms of teaching and playing methods, China has mainly followed the mainstream international approach. Due to its low popularity, only a few schools offer marimba courses. With the development of technology, marimbas with automatic lifting systems have appeared. Although the marimba is not as well developed in China as some traditional instruments, there is still considerable room for development.

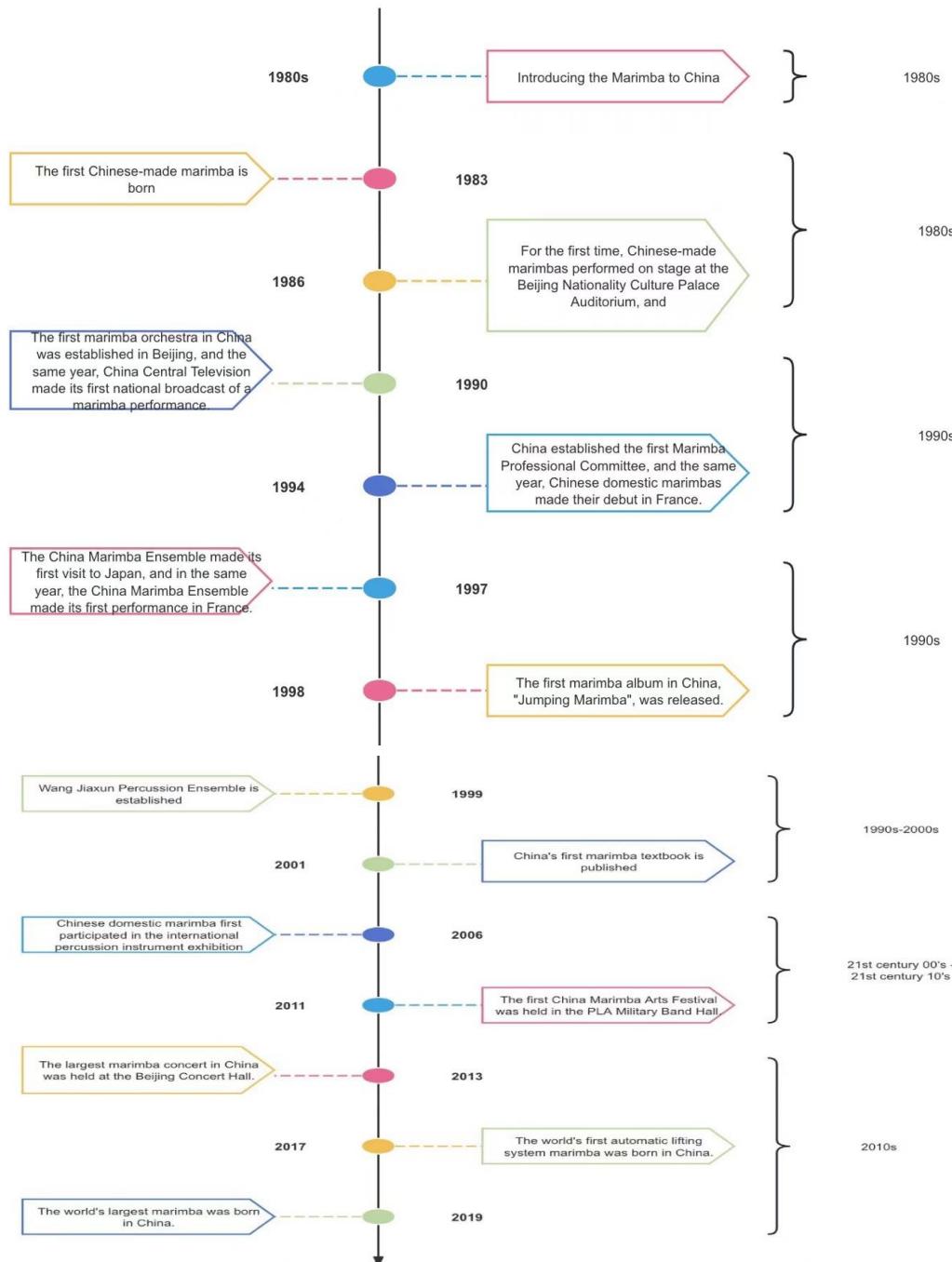
1. In the study of the historical development of Marimba in China. The first objective has the results of the study according to the data analysis issues as follows The Marimba's arrival into China, Changes of Marimba entering China, Status and Development of the Marimba in China, the marimba and entering educational institutions in China, The Differences in Marimba from time to time and Marimba status in China and of the Marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions. The marimba has been one of the most important percussion instruments since it was introduced to China, and this has never changed. Miss Chen Yao said. The marimba is a percussion instrument with a long history. Over time, there have been some differences in the design, manufacturing, and playing techniques of the marimba. For example, in different eras, the material, size, and number of keys of the marimba may change to meet the needs and preferences of musicians. In addition, different musical styles and cultural backgrounds may also affect the performance and interpretation of the marimba. In China, the marimba is not as well-known and popular as some traditional Chinese musical instruments.

However, in recent years, the marimba has begun to attract more attention and interest due to the development of music education and the increasing exchange of international music. Some music schools and art institutions now offer marimba courses and performances, and more and more Chinese musicians are beginning to explore and perform on this instrument. The marimba is an intriguing and distinctive musical instrument. Its status and development in China are gradually increasing. Whether in the international music scene or the local music community, the marimba is anticipated to gain more recognition and space for display in the future.

As mentioned above, the marimba was introduced to China in the 1980s. It is like the xylophone and belongs to the category of keyboard percussion instruments. After decades of development, the marimba is becoming increasingly popular with a wider audience. In terms of playing techniques, China mainly follows the international mainstream. Due to the low popularity of the instrument, only a limited number of educational institutions offer marimba courses. In addition, the Chinese marimba has undergone a process of evolution, starting with the mutilation of European trapezoidal xylophones, followed by the introduction of tubular marimbas, and finally the development and production of these instruments in China, with continuous updating of materials. With the advancement of science and technology in China, marimbas with automatic lifting systems have also been developed. Although the status of the marimba in China is relatively inferior to that of some traditional musical instruments, its potential for future development is considerable.



Timeline of Chinese Marimba Development (1980s-2019)



Timeline of Chinese Marimba Development
 Source: Miao (2024)



2. In the study of Marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions. In the second objective has the results of the study according to the data analysis issues as follows The Marimba learning process in Chinese educational institutions, The Marimba songs used in teaching and learning Chinese people, The Melody used in learning marimba management of Chinese people, and the development of Marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions

The marimba has become a regular instrument used in various orchestra performances in China, and it is also a mandatory instrument in the domestic music exams, so the students who learn the marimba are comprehensive in the direction of music. Mr. Hao Bo said. In Chinese educational institutions, the learning of the marimba is not merely about acquiring the skills required to play a musical instrument. It is also about fostering students' comprehensive musical literacy. Through intensive study and practice, students will not only improve their playing skills but also their music appreciation and creativity.

As the primary instrument in the percussion program, learning the marimba requires a great deal of patience and perseverance. Students begin with basic techniques and gradually master the intricacies of playing, which requires a significant amount of practice and time commitment. However, it is this pursuit of excellence in technique that motivates students to continue their musical studies.

Furthermore, the teaching of marimba in China is also oriented towards international integration. A considerable number of teachers are overseas returnees who have acquired advanced teaching concepts and methods from abroad and integrated them with domestic teaching resources to create a marimba teaching system with Chinese characteristics. It is also noteworthy that marimba teaching in China places a strong emphasis on cultivating students' innovation abilities. In addition to learning traditional classical works, teachers encourage students to try adapting or creating new musical compositions. This innovative learning approach not only enhances students' self-confidence and sense of achievement but also injects new vitality into marimba teaching in China.

In conclusion, the learning of the marimba in Chinese educational institutions is characterized by comprehensive, in-depth, and innovative approaches. Through systematic study and practice, students not only gain proficiency in marimba performance but also cultivate their musical literacy and innovative abilities, laying a solid foundation for their future musical careers.

Finally, we elucidate the marimba learning process in Chinese educational institutions. Typically, students first learn the snare drum, and then, following a period of basic training, they commence learning the marimba. During the teaching process, a variety of marimba pieces and melodies are employed in the weekly marimba specialization classes. The direction of learning follows the pace of the West and adopts international mainstream teaching methods.

The marimba was introduced to China in the 1980s. It is a keyboard percussion instrument like a xylophone. In terms of teaching and playing methods, China mainly adopts the international mainstream methods. Due to its low popularity, only a few schools offer marimba courses. With the development of science and technology, marimbas with automatic lifting systems have come into being. Although the marimba is not as well established in China as some traditional instruments, there is considerable scope for further development.

Discussion

In the discussion section, the findings will be further analyzed and situated within the context of the significance of the research in this thesis. The study of the historical development and learning process of the marimba in China will provide insight into the instrument's important role in Chinese music education and cultural legacy. An in-depth study of the history and development of the marimba in China enriches Chinese music history. The study of the marimba can provide references and insights for the development of music education in China, as well as experiences and lessons for the education of other musical instruments. Due to time and resource constraints, this study focuses on some regions and organizations in China and may not fully represent the overall situation of marimba in China. Future studies can further





expand the scope of the study to cover more regions and organizations to obtain more comprehensive and importantly important data.

Conclusion

1. In the study of the historical development of Marimba in China.

The historical development and learning of the marimba in Chinese educational institutions discovered that the marimba was evidence of musical instruments that occurred in ancient Greek literature and history. The marimba first originated in Guatemala, then spread to other parts of the world, and began to enter China in the 1980s. The marimba belongs to the same category of keyboard percussion instruments as the xylophone. Before the marimba was introduced to China, China mainly used the European trapezoidal xylophone. China follows the international mainstream in marimba playing methods, with two-mallet, four-mallet, and six-mallet playing methods, of which the four-mallet method can be subdivided into various types.

The status and development of marimba in China. Marimba has not existed in China for a long time and is not very popular. Marimba programs are not offered in general high schools, but only in art high schools, general high school music classes, or professional colleges. Marimba is mainly distributed and popular in developed cities and the marimba is an instrument with a distinctive charm, and its status and development in China is gradually increasing. Internationally, marimba is expected to gain more recognition and a greater presence on the music stage. Similarly, in the Chinese music community, marimba is anticipated to become more prominent.

2. In the study of Marimba learning in Chinese educational institutions.

In China, the marimba experienced an early spread and development and gradually became an important part of the music education system. In the percussion program, the marimba is the main instrument. Students are required to master the snare drum before beginning the marimba. Typically, students undergo three to four months of basic training on the snare drum before they can learn the marimba as a melodic instrument.

Marimba songs used in teaching and learning of Chinese people A diverse range of marimba pieces are employed in the classroom, encompassing traditional classical and contemporary compositions, as well as music from various cultural backgrounds and Marimba melody used in learning marimba management of Chinese people and helps students improve their understanding of rhythm, harmony, and musical emotion, and melodic exercises enhance finger dexterity and musical perception. Learning tunes in different styles, marimba study is divided into beginner, intermediate, and college levels.

Over time, Chinese conservatories, colleges, universities, and primary and secondary schools established marimba courses and training programs, training a significant number of marimba teachers and enthusiasts. Learning the marimba requires the mastery of basic skills but, more importantly, the pursuit of artistic expression and cultural understanding. In the future, with the further development of music education in China and the acceleration of the internationalization process, the marimba will have a broader development prospect in China.

Recommendation

The thesis examines the historical development and learning process of marimba in Chinese educational institutions, and concludes that it may have the following significance:

1. Fills a research gap in the field of marimba music education in China.
2. Provided references and insights for music education and instrumental music education.
3. Promote international music exchange and cooperation.

At the same time, the thesis also puts forward suggestions for future research, concluding that with the continuous development of Chinese music education and the speeding up of the internationalization process, the future of marimba in China will be even broader.

Future research can further explore in depth the role and influence of marimba in music education and cultural exchanges, providing more reference and support for the development of music education in





China. At the same time, international cooperation can also be carried out to promote the exchange and development of marimba on a global scale.

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