

Clair Omar Musser

October 14, 1901 — November 7, 1998



As a tribute to the single most influential marimbist, marimba composer, and marimba designer in the history of the instrument, we present a "scrapbook" of material from Musser's personal collection of photos and mementos, generously donated to the Percussive Arts Society Museum by Musser's long-time friend Vera Daehlin. We begin with an article that Musser hand-wrote about himself, apparently to promote an upcoming concert in Arizona in the 1950s.

Clair Omar Musser

Internationally Celebrated Maestro

This photo, taken in the Salle Rameau, Paris, portrays Musser with his Wagnerian score before rehearsals began for the French Movie which featured the Imperial Marimba Sym-

phony Orchestra under his baton.

His contemplative posture reflected his momentary thoughts...as he had just been asked by the movie director, "What strokes of fate ever appeared to make him a famous Marimba Orchestra Maestro?"

Upon the director's sincerity and true interest, Musser contemplated a moment and then explained that his "life's book" might infer six genie chapters were responsible for this unprecedented status.

Chapter one — Musser was in 5th grade Lincoln School (Pa) with his violin for his Xmas program participation.

A prominent school director, Mr. Ammon Bucher, had just purchased an Edison phonograph and loaned the instrument to the program. His (five) "cylinder recordings" featured Violin selections, Enrico Caruso, Xmas music and his last number was

announced as "The United States Marine Band" featuring Thomas Mills playing "Four Little Black Berries" (solo) on the Xylophone.

This selection caused a virtual uproar. The people whistled, screamed, applauded and yelled and asked for the number to be repeated. Mr. Bucher played it again and the acclaim was more ecstatic than before.

Young Musser was awe-struck.

He bashfully went to Bucher and asked to see the recording that caused so much excitement. When he read that soloist Mills played a Xylophone, he was stunned. What kind of an instrument could possibly be identified with such a word beginning with Xy etc.

He went to the back of the school-room and paged the large Webster dictionary...Xyl etc. To his amazement, there it was — a picture of a Xylophone, mallets and description.

He decided it would be fun to use the mallets and "beat out" tunes... especially after having heard the audience screaming their love for this instrument which was new to him.

He begged his Philadelphia Aunt to get this instrument, and in short order, he was in possession of a three octave Deagan Xylophone and taking lessons from Permin Burger in Lancaster, Pa.

His teacher told him that the greatest xylophonist in the entire world was George Hamilton Green. Young Musser acquired a number of Victor Recordings by Green — and secretly determined to eclipse this celebrated virtuoso some day in the future.

By the time he had learned several Overtures and Semi Classics and performed a number of recitals, Chapter Two loomed up in this young percussionist's life.

Like a Rainbow in the Sky, the famous Big Band under the baton of Earl Fuller arrived in Lancaster to perform a concert at the Brunswick Hotel. This de Luxe Band was heralded as number 1 — (direct from New York) and featured a large Super Deagan Marimba-Xylophone No. 4726, played by Abraham Hildebrand — introduced as the leading marimba soloist of the world. Hildebrand featured 4 mallet arrangements accompanied by this great 18 piece Swing Band...and young Musser was utterly floored.

Upon his acquaintance and conversations with the Marimbist, he inquired where he ever learned to play like that. Hildebrand promptly replied that he had studied in Wash. D.C. with the unquestionably world's greatest teacher — Philip Rosenweig. Rosenweig was from Warsaw and had earlier taught Dulcimer and Cymbalon in Poland and Paris before settling in America and dedicating his life to the large 4 1/2 Octave Marimba-Xylophone which Deagan had just introduced to the Music World.

Chapter Three — young Musser naturally had to go to Washington and Baltimore to study with Rosenweig. Also, his precious Aunt came to his aid and presented him with a de Luxe 4 1/2 Octave #4726

Deagan Marimba.

Chapter Four — Musser, now considered a well-trained recitalist and heralded a virtuoso by many commentators, secured New York City management and toured the U.S., Canada and Europe, first playing the large theatres, a Warner Bros. Vitaphone Film, and eventually guest appearances with Symphony Orchestras performing concerti by the great Masters — Bach, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Paganini.

Chapter Five — Musser was appearing in Chicago as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Conductor Frederick Stock.

Thru a social affair, he met Vice president Charles Dawes and his brother Rufus who had just been elected president of the Century of Progress Committee.

At a dinner in Winnetka, Illinois, attended by the officers of the forthcoming Century of Progress Exposition, Musser heard the earnest expressions of Dawes and his associates explaining how deeply they would like to present something NEW and musically epochal for this Worlds Fair.

Musser remembered how, as a very young lad, his father had raved about the Marimba Orchestra which was featured in 1915 at the San Francisco World's Fair. He promptly joined in the discussions and proposed that the committee authorize the sponsorship of a 100 piece Marimba Symphony Orchestra for the Century of Progress Exposition. Musser agreed to design a Special Super De Luxe "Century of Progress Model Marimba," train all the orchestra members, write and conduct the music.

The pages of History report the unprecedented success of this Orchestra and the sign posts to Chapter Six.

Chapter Six found Musser designing a King George Marimba for the famous 100 piece Marimba Symphony Orchestra that toured Europe with phenomenal musical success. Gold medals, awards, Citations and wildest musical acclaim was their reward before returning to New York's Carnegie Hall and the American ac-

colades.

Other Marimba ensemble groups and orchestras under the magical baton of this dedicated Marimba Maestro include the spectacular 25 piece "All Girl" Marimba Orchestra Musser produced for Paramount Pictures and their opening performance at the Oriental Theatre Chicago Feb. 1929.

He organized and conducted an exciting 50 piece Marimba Orchestra for concerts in Tulsa, Okla. in April, 1940.

He produced a super Marimba Ensemble of 75 members for several concerts in Chicago in July 1951, sponsored by NAMM, featuring fifty marimbists playing Paganini's "Moto Perpetuo" (solo) in unison.

His 100 piece Imperial Orchestra is of record — Paris, Brussels and Carnegie Hall.

He conducted a 125 piece Marimba Orchestra, sponsored by Philips University Enid, Oklahoma April 1941.

Musser conducted a 150 piece Marimba Orchestra Chicago September 1941.

He conducted a de Luxe 200 piece Marimba Orchestra sponsored by the Chicago Tribune at Soldier's Field to an audience of 111,000 people in Sept 14, 1949.

Musser conducted a 300 piece Marimba Orchestra on the North Stage at the Chicago Fair Sept. 1, 1950, featuring a 100 piece Vocal Choir and an unprecedented battery of Contra Bass Marimbas.

As time passed and greater perfection is attained and realized in musical scoring and instrument development, we naturally improve our presentations.

Musser brings a wealth of background to our _____ Arizona concert _____ etc-etc-etc.

When he ascends to the podium, his conducting arm will wave his treasured baton which he received as a gift from Arturo Toscanini in New York in 1937.

This was Toscanini's favorite rehearsal baton which he used post 1929 while he conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra

The following text is from a brochure publicizing the Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra.

The accolade of international acclaim—sensational music triumphs on two continents—the unrestrained praises of the music commentators in both Europe and America—this is the story of the Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra.

Conceived and organized as an unprecedented music feature for the “A Century of Progress Exposition” in 1933, this Orchestra became a sensational success overnight. Music commentators Devries, Hackett, Moore and others lauded the Marimba Symphony Orchestra as incomparable and the best music at the Exposition.

Following extremely successful American engagements and coast-to-coast broadcasts, the Orchestra embarked for Europe where even greater rewards were attained. European audiences ecstatically applauded each performance. The immortal music of Bach, Wagner, Franck, Beethoven, Debussy and others is reflected in the colorful programs of the Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra.

Exclusively voiced instruments, incorporating the world’s only contrabass Marimbas, constitute the musical armament of this wonderful organization. Perfect coordination of its trained individuals is responsible for the harmonious effects achieved in the rendition of its colorful symphonies and program pieces. Of especial significance is the fact that each

member of the Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra is a virtuoso in his own right.

The Orchestra is famous for a quality of tone which can only be described as heavenly and ethereal. There is a certain clairvoyance which tends to interpret the innermost thoughts and moods of the directing mind on the podium.

The incomparable consonance of sound and harmonic effects are due to precision tuning, every instrument of the Orchestra being tuned to .001 of a cycle per second in uniformity.

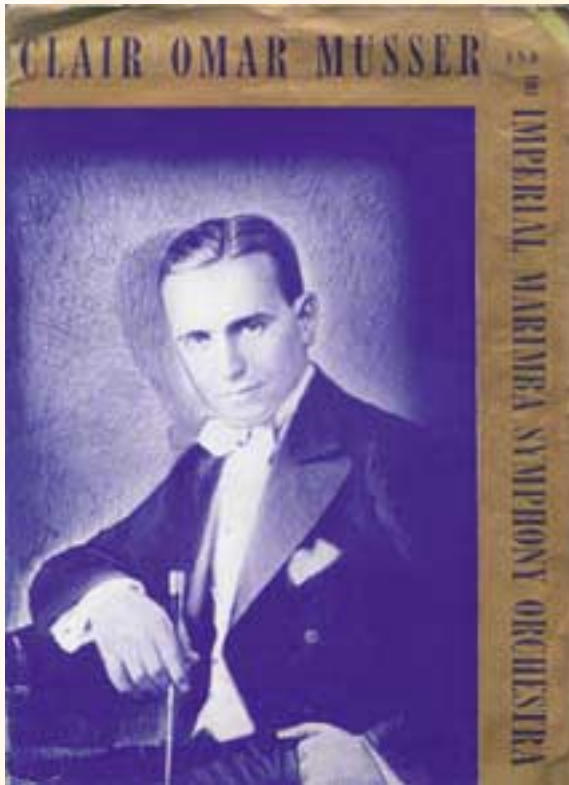
These instruments cannot be played “out of tune” and it is in passages of rapid execution, as

in Mozart, that the perfection of consonance is accentuated and perceived by the listener. The innermost passions of the soul can be portrayed by the delicate touch of the soft wool mallets to the sensitive keyboard, and yet a thunder of triple-forte can instantly be executed by the alternate use of differently voiced mallets (beaters). You of the audience are fascinated by the “West Point” precision of arm alignment during the execution of technical passages where choirs of the Orchestra members move in perfect coordination in a dexterity of arm movement.

The Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra has concertised in both Europe and America, travelling by chartered trains, S.S. Paris and S.S. Ile de France. More than ten thousand miles have been traversed to receive the plaudits of European Royalty and American music lovers. Theirs is the apotheosis of musical success—well deserved.



The Marimba Orchestra rehearsing for the Century of Progress exhibition.



The Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra in front of their private train at a stop in Cincinnati. Musser is in the center of the group on the platform of the train in the dark coat.



The Imperial Marimba Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in New York, with 100 King George marimbas played by 50 women and 50 men.

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9. Overture de Mignon A. THOMAS

reproduced by Theatrion Studio

The Celestaphone Story

By Clair Omar Musser

The "Celestaphone Story" is an unparalleled account of 20th Century Scientific Endeavor and Technological Achievement. It is the culmination of "A Boyhood Dream" and the rewarding fruition of Astronomical research and musical Physics.

The Celestaphone is a "concert grand" percussive musical instrument exclusively fabricated of rare "metal meteorites." Its musical range encompasses the chromatic scale from lowest Violin G to the 1,000-cycle C above the treble clef.

Four decades of "Siderite Collecting" from the four corners of the earth yielded 1,388 pounds of rare "Space Metals." Six hundred seventy eight pounds of this exotic material was appropriated for this unprecedented program. The ultimate "Scientific Analysis Techniques" in contemporary "Meteoritical Research" were practiced with Space Age Technology.

The unique talents of a distinguished Meteoriticist - Metallurgist - Scientist - Acoustician guided the success of this endeavor. More than 100 "Technological Specialists" in Metallurgy, Physics, Holography and Nuclear Physics assisted in this 15 year program.

Following the "Scientific Research" chronology, the Meteorites were classified for "induction melting and casting." Specimens containing the largest amounts of Nickel and harder elements were alloyed for the keyboard "Tone Bars." Cast units were then cut, ground, machined, welded, fabricated, polished, epoxied, oven baked and assembled.

In addition to the Celestaphone's 30 "Meteoritic Tone Bars," 331 instrument and resonator tube parts were meticulously fabricated.

This five billion year metal from the orbits of Jupiter and Mars conducted an unprecedented ethereal musical voice.... Meteoritical Science is barely three half centuries old, but the knowledge of these heavenly objects reaches far into the distant past. Long before man learned to smelt iron from

its ores, he used "Meteoritic Iron" to produce various artifacts. Researching languages, we find that the word iron is related to the words Sky and Star...in Ancient Egypt, the word Iron meant "Metal from Heaven."

Researching five thousand years of history, we learn that Meteorites always commanded "front-page" attention thru-out man's progress. Worshipped as Heavenly Messengers, adornment for the Queens of Egypt, Meteorites were also Anvils, Plow shares, Tools, Knives, Daggers and Swords.

Many of the "Celestaphone's Meteorites" are resplendent in their very own, unique, "earthly heritages." Signally, the ethereal tones of the Celestaphone's highest (F and A) "Tone Bars" are voices of the Sikhote-Aline Meteorite, presented to Musser by the USSR, February 16, 1960.

The Republic of the Philippines "Atomic Energy Commission" contributed a Siderite to the Celestaphone program, February 23, 1962. This rare Luzon Ataxite contained Iron, 17% Nickel, and surprising amounts of Cobalt, Phosphorus and Carbon.

The Celestaphone's "middle C Tone Bar" voices a unique "Chinese Hexahedrite" acquired by Musser in Taipei, November 17, 1961. Another Historic Siderite complements the "treble octave," acquired in 1936 from descendants of Kit Carson, who ceremoniously received the Meteorite from the Indian Chief Yellow Dog.

Other Celestaphone voices which ring from Meteorites,

Greenland, Antarctica, Mexico, Japan, France, Canada, Wales, Guatemala and Chile. "Seventy seven" of these verifiable Space visitors contributed to the creation of this "Celestially Voiced" instrument. More than a hundred pounds of the World Famous "Arizona Siderites" recovered near the giant Winslow Crater radiate in the Celestaphone. These Arizona Meteorites contain Iron, Nickel, Cobalt, Carbon, Silicon, Sulphur, Phosphorous, Platinum, Iridium, Gold, Silver and Diamonds.

To hear the music of this instrument takes you back "Five Billion" years to the Genesis of the Solar System.

The Celestaphone is an "Astro-Meteoritic Voice Composite." Truly, "Music From Out of this World."



The Marimba-Xylophone

By Clair Omar Musser

This article originally appeared in the April 1932 issue of The Etude magazine.

First, let us consider classification. There are countless people who have been erroneously informed as to the relationship between the marimba and its analogue, the xylophone. Today there is absolutely no difference whatsoever between the two instruments. *Xylophone*, derived from the Greek words, *xylo*, meaning "wood," and *phono*, meaning "sound," has been the popular name of this type of instrument on the North American continent, while, in the Central and South Americas, instruments of similar design were called *marimbas*.

Centuries before the coming of the Spaniards this type of musical instrument was the national instrument of the country which is now Guatemala. Their early instruments were such as "Webster" defines as the xylophone; but by no means were these people the pioneers and inventors of this type of instrument.

During the time of the Aryan immigrations through India, 2000 years B.C., the Hindus and the Siamese, as well as the Chinese, were playing a musical instrument resembling the marimba. This instrument was called the "ranat" (to which there are many analogues in China and Japan) and was tuned to the Chinese pentatonic scale, the tones of which may be roughly represented by our F, G, A, B \flat , C and D. It was during the reign of Confucius (d. 478 B.C.) that these instruments were enlarged to over twenty tones. All through the beginning of the Christian era they shared popularity with the ancient stringed instruments.

Early References

Later we have literary reference by Fortunatus of Poitiers (d. 609) to a characteristic instrument similar to the "ranat" used by the bards in Scandinavia and Northern Germany.

The instrument was redesigned and called the "glockenspiel." Later in the seventeenth century this instrument was made to substitute metal bars for the sound elements; and the name "xylophone" was adopted for all wooden bar instruments.

The exceptional progress of the Central American Indians in developing the marimba was due to their access to the rare woods to be found abundantly in their forests. The female "hormingo" tree, which is a species of the rosewood used in the instruments of our present day manufacture, grew abundantly in the territory which is now Guatemala. Their early instruments were not unlike the structure of those made in Europe, and they soon discovered and applied the laws of resonance. These resonators throughout the last two centuries have been made of fine cedar. The instrument migrated to Mexico, South America and Africa. The African instruments are still in a primitive state and employ gourds or calabashes as resonators. Various and weird effects have been produced by the artisans who have been manufacturing this type of instrument. Over small holes at the bottoms of the resonators a small dried skin, membrane or diaphragm has been stretched. This gives off a queer buzzing sound as the instrument is being played.

The Drummer Increases His Scope

About fifty years ago American musical instrument manufacturers began making the small xylophone as a trap instrument for the drummer. These first instruments were similar to the European xylophone and were made of various woods—maple, rosewood, cocus, and so on. The scale was our diatonic with B \flat added. While Henry Ford was busy making his first horseless carriage, fine woods were imported and new methods of tuning were devised.

Due to the resistance of the felt upon which the bars were mounted, together with the inertia of the thick



CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTO

key, the instrument gave off a crisp musical tone of short duration. It was at this time that the vaudeville stage was coming into its own. Due to its novelty the instrument gained a wildfire popularity. The colorful showmanship of the performer on the xylophone and the gymnastic effects of the dexterous player placed the act much in demand. The public applauded, and why? Simply because of the novelty of the instrument and the showmanship of the player. That was a few years ago. Today things have changed; the radio has educated the public to good music, quality, tone and expression. The vaudeville stage has reformed and presents, for the most part, artistic entertainment. The wild xylophone racket has taken the detour with the slapstick and the "bicycle-act."

While all this was going on, the American marimba made its debut. It was classed as an instrument akin to the xylophone but was at first quite distinct from it. Its characteristic resembled the Central American instrument, especially in tone. The chief features were the thin bars of the keyboard mounted on a suspended cord above the resonators, giving the bars more elasticity in vibration. Softer mallet heads were used for playing, and soon the effects obtained began to resemble an organ in tone.

The race was on—marimba versus xylophone. The manufacturers gradually forced a compromise. The finer xylophones embodied the features of the marimba and the large marimbas incorporated the finer points of the xylophone. The final result was the finely-tuned percussion instrument of today bearing the name, "marimba-xy-

lophone," the creation of the leading acousticians and sound theorists of the twentieth century.

Quieting Jangling Overtones

Why do some orchestral conductors and fine musicians tremble at the word "marimba" or "xylophone"? Simply because they have not heard the new instruments and are unaware of their fine tuning and quality of tone. The theorem of the great French mathematician, Fourier, has shown mathematically that the tone of a wooden bar upon being excited into periods of vibration is a common sum of simple tones. The composite mass of musical tones, of which one is the fundamental and the others the partials or parts of a tone, has been mathematically analyzed and purified by modern methods of tuning.

In the old methods of tuning, the bar, upon being struck by the mallet, gave off inharmonic secondary partials that were nearly as prominent as the fundamental tone. These upper partial tones corresponding to the simple vibrations of a compound motion of the air were perceived analytically. Due to their inharmonic characteristics they not only clashed with the fundamental tone of the compound but were dissonant in their relation to the temperament of the scale of the instrument itself. This manifestation caused the layman, as well as the critic, to condemn the instrument as being "out of tune."

All this has been overcome by modern science. These partials are now perfectly tuned to the fundamental tone of the compound. They have been made harmonic intervals in themselves and are not analytically perceived except by direction of attention. The ideal instrument of this type is four and one-half octaves in register, starting with the first C below Middle C on the piano and extending to G in the fourth octave above Middle C. When the proper soft wound mallets are used in the low register the tone coloring is most appealing and greatly favors that of the organ. Specially vulcanized mallets bring out a sonorous as well as a staccato tone in the entire register.

Standard compositions of the masters, both of the old and new schools,

lend themselves to a faithful interpretation. Chopin's works are suited to this instrument. Chopin, in a letter to Franz Liszt, explained that his right hand played the solos of his compositions and his left hand was both conductor and accompaniment. In like manner, the right hand score of this type of composition is easily played on the marimba, while the bass and accompaniment can be played either on the piano or by the orchestra.

A New Color for Tone Painters

Modern composers are becoming alert to the individual tone color of this newly improved instrument. Percy Grainger, noted pianist, composer and arranger, has given us several scores in which the marimba and xylophone have been called upon to play feature passages. Charles Martin Loeffler, one of our greatest composers, has been scoring generous passages for the marimba. In his recent "Evocation," performed by the Cleveland Orchestra, both the marimba and vibra-harp were featured prominently.

Adaptability of this instrument to the orchestra ensemble has long been granted. Several of the leading Universities of the country have been using the marimba in the orchestra with great success. One of the pioneers has been the symphony ensemble of the University of Illinois at Urbana. During the past few years their five-octave marimba-xylophone has occupied a major position in the band and orchestra, being utilized for playing the "harp" and difficult horn passages, such as the cornet phrases in Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade." The marimba has likewise made its debut on the concert stages of New York and Chicago with great success.

Why then are there so few artists performing on this instrument? The reasons are several, the chief one being the scarcity of teachers, coupled with a lack of musical selections that are readily adaptable by the average player. Piano music is the best score for the large instrument. Even certain master works, including several concertos and polonaises, are readily playable, with perfect results. Numbers like the *Polacca Brillante*, by Weber-Liszt, lend themselves favorably to the marimba-xylophone.

The chief obstacle, however, to full appreciation of the marimba-xylophone is the student's attitude toward its mastery. Here is a superiority complex that is lamentable. The student buys the instrument on Monday and expects to play the *Overture* to "William Tell" by the following Saturday. Is he content to resign himself to a few years' earnest work and study? No indeed! Is he willing to try producing a good tone on the instrument? Absolutely not. Instead, he secures a pair of mallets with the hardest heads he can find and brutally attacks the keyboard much like a carpenter would drive spikes in green oak. Working on a musical selection for tone color and delicate nuances is the farthest from his thoughts. Instead he tries to emulate the antics of some xylophonist he saw with a "circus band," or vaudeville show, by fiendishly playing a few measures of some overture, disregarding all marks of tempo and expression.

Where Antics Pass Unnoticed

Next in line is the radio artist. Here is a situation entirely different. The player is forced to exercise care in playing, both in tempo and deftness of touch. The radio audience is a critical one and cares nothing about the gymnastic antics of the stage player. Even in this enormous field of radio work the number of marimba and xylophone artists are few.

In a late survey of the broadcast stations of the world it was found that there are less than a dozen xylophone and marimba artists who could expect an "A" on their report card. Most of them specialize on the smaller instruments with hard mallets, playing arpeggios and variations (which they call "noodles") as a background to an orchestral ensemble. Scores of players have lost their contract renewals as well as their reputations by continuing to use an instrument that has long been antiquated and has always been out of tune.

However, success is just around that inevitable corner for the individual who will faithfully learn to master the large marimba-xylophone as a solo instrument. The graded studies for piano should be practiced thoroughly for such technical points as are applicable to the marimba. The bass pas-

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sages should be shunned, and the musical education advanced toward the mastery of the art of transcribing. No serious attention should be paid to the person who boasts that he can hold six mallets, as this style of playing is used for stage showmanship and is positively impractical musically as well as physically.

Finally, judgment must be exercised in selecting solo numbers, and the necessity of a good accompaniment music always be kept in mind.

SELF-TEST QUESTIONS ON MR. MUSSER'S ARTICLE

1. In what countries did the marimba first appear?
2. By what means is the tuning improved in the modern marimba-xylophone?
3. What composers' works lend themselves readily to marimba transcriptions?
4. What are the obstacles to full acceptance of the marimba-xylophone?
5. What special qualifications should the radio marimba-xylophone player have?

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The Musser Scrapbook



A sketch of Musser with his Marimba-Celeste.



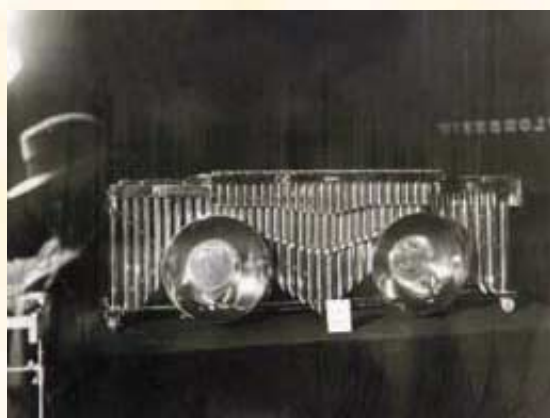
This shot was on the back of Musser's business card for his band The Serenaders. Musser is behind the xylophone.



An early photo of Musser. On the back it is inscribed: To Mother. My Babie. C.O. Musser.



From a Deagan ad of 1931: "This impressive stage setting featuring thirteen Deagan Xylophones is the finale of 'Tune Types.' Critics pronounced it one of the most striking and entertaining finales of the year. Thousands of Chicago theater-goers were thrilled by the spectacular tonal effect of a 13-piece Xylophone band—yet these twelve Abbott girls spent only five and a half hours in practice. Could any proof be more convincing that the Xylophone is the easiest of all musical instruments to play?" Musser is in the center with his Marimba-Celeste.



PONTIAC ENGRAVING AND ELECTROTYPE CO.

The Marimba-Celeste that Musser designed for Deagan combined a five-octave xylophone-marimba with a two-octave vibraharp. To facilitate playing, the vibe bars were strung in a single row with black oxidized sharp/flat bars. The lower register had pickups that were run into an amplification system connected to the two horns in the front.

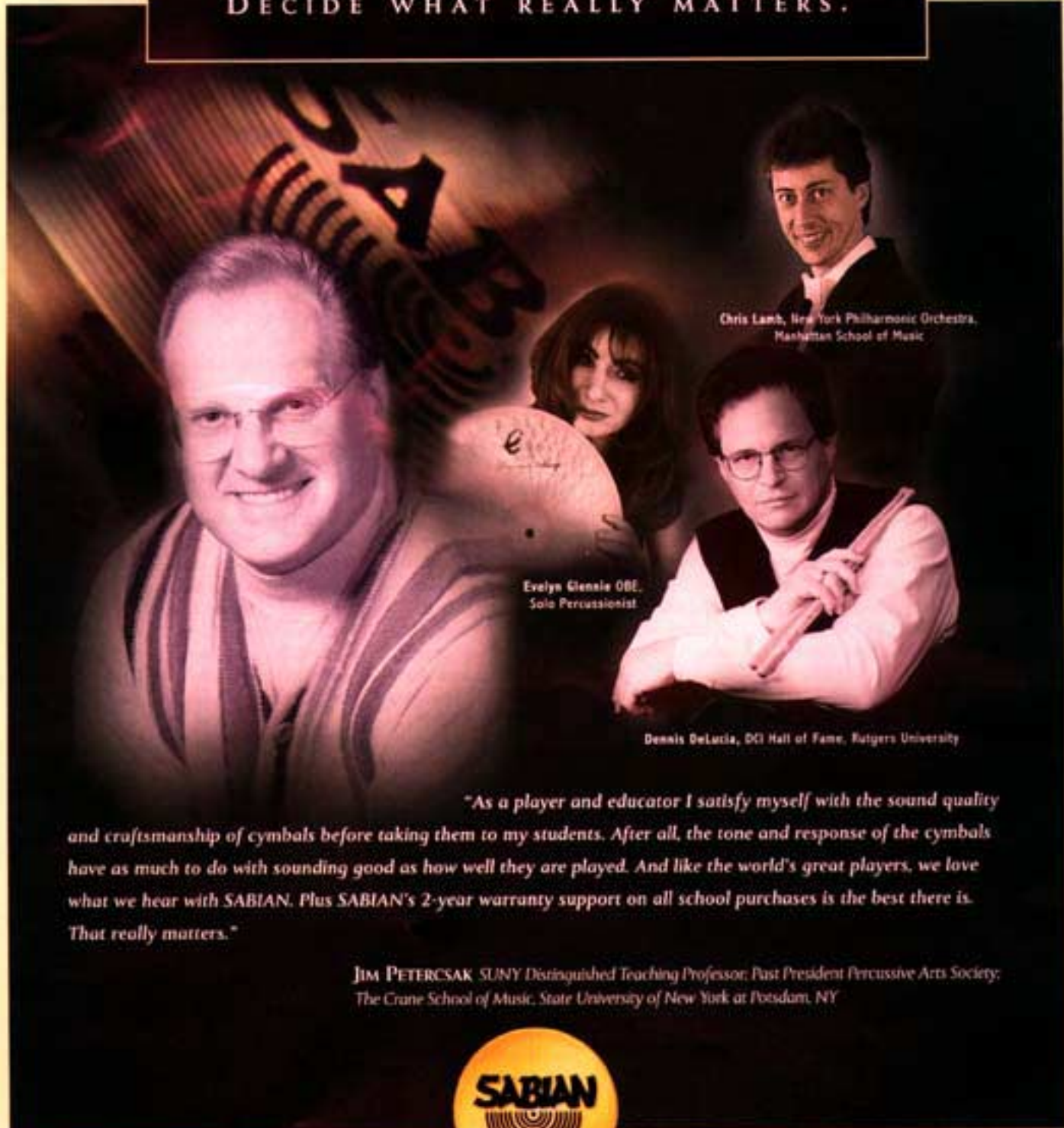


Another shot of The Serenaders, with members identified by instrument.



A player's view of the Marimba-Celeste, showing the various pedals that operated the damper bar of the vibraphone as well as those that worked with the built-in amplification system and could be used to raise and lower the volume, much like the pedals on an organ.

DECIDE WHAT REALLY MATTERS.



Chris Lamb, New York Philharmonic Orchestra,
Manhattan School of Music

Evelyn Glennie OBE,
Solo Percussionist

Dennis DeLuca, DCl Hall of Fame, Rutgers University

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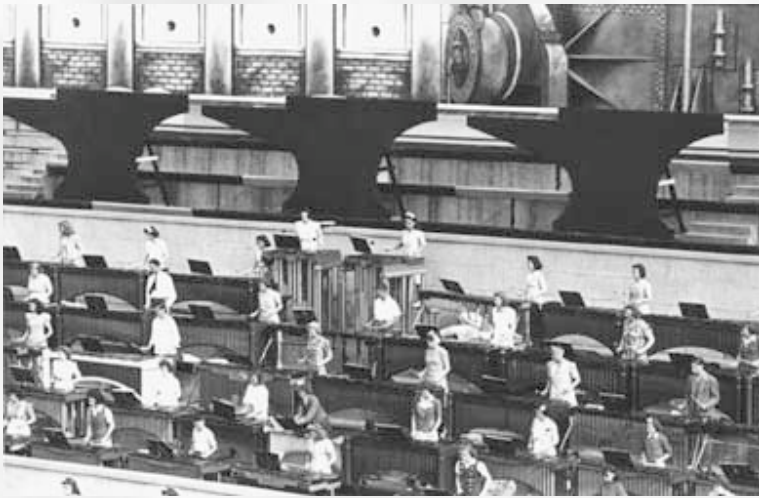
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On August 16, 1941, Musser conducted a marimba orchestra at the 12th Annual Chicagoland Music Festival at Soldier Field. The group performed “The Anvil Chorus” — hence the large anvil props behind the orchestra.



This was a touring group that Musser coached at Northwestern University. A promo ad proclaimed: “Global Glory for four Winsome Co-eds! From the cloistered precincts of Northwestern University to the fabled lands of the Orient. From the quiet of student life to the excitement and fun of a 20,000-mile government-sponsored tour, the thunderous applause of hundreds of thousands of GIs, and the enthusiastic appreciation of top officials everywhere. This was the thrilling experience of the 4 Marimba Co-eds — Dorothy Carroll, Christine Austell, Betty Lou Overmyer and Norma Jean Lutz.”



Musser taught at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois from 1942–52. This group of his students participated in a nationwide contest sponsored by *Look* magazine in 1946 to determine the country’s best non-professional ensembles and instrumentalists. The students are Joyce Kostuck, Jean McWethy, Jean Smith, Betty Atterberry and Margaret Elliston. Their awards included the National Directors Trophy, First Place National Ensemble Trophy (Senior Specialty Award) and First Place Ensemble Trophy (Midwest Divisional Specialty Classification). In addition, vibraphonist Smith won the Lionel Hampton Trophy.



A later group of Marimba Co-eds was led by Musser student Vera McNary Daehlin (front) and included Lyla Frieleigh Stoike, Mary Frieleigh Lagerquish, Nancy Van Antwerp Preusch and Rayma Hotchkiss Griffith. The members are currently preparing for a 50-year reunion.



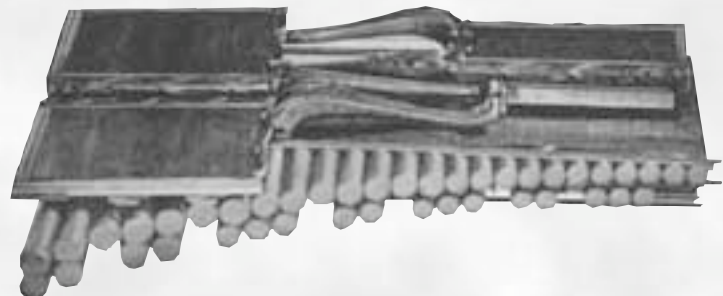
Among Musser's designs for Deagan was the Queen Anne Marimba. From the brochure: "The romanticism of the eighteenth century as revealed in the art of English furniture and cabinetmaking derives directly from the beginning of the century during the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14). Her reign first saw the extensive use of walnut as a furniture medium and has been called the beginning of the Age of Walnut. For that reason Deagan has chosen this beautifully grained wood for the Queen Anne Marimbas. Taking inspiration from the graciousness and refinement of detail which is characteristic of the best furniture of the period, Deagan has created a modern instrument in a traditional spinet shape which will fit harmoniously into the scale of modern living." The brochure went on to advise that the Queen Anne Marimba "is a beautiful and practical library table when covered." The instrument sold for \$250.



Musser with BeBe Shapp, Miss America 1948.



Musser playing one of the first vibraphones made by the company he started in 1948.



The Queen Anne Marimba was even portable!