

MARIMBA HUB IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

More than 20 years into democracy, South Africa is still plagued with vast historical inequalities. The majority of learners residing in the many impoverished townships across the country only have basic access to sub-standard education, and almost no access to education / extra-curricular activities of an arts and culture nature.

Marimbas are uniquely suited to the South African scene. They do not require electricity and provided they are well-looked after only require tuning twice a year. The fact that ALL kinds of music can be played on the marimbas including pop, jazz, classical, African etc makes it the perfect instrument to be taught in schools and centres. With 3 combination marimbas and 1 bass marimba and 22 dummy keyboards 33 children are able to be taught at one time in a fun-filled and highly focussed lesson.

No prior knowledge of music is required. Joan Lithgow from Education Africa has perfected a unique teaching methodology that allow children to learn to play in a very short space of time. For trainers that do not read music, memory joggers are developed – this is graphic notation for music literate persons. The use of dummy keyboards allows for trainers to reach far more children than just the number which is dictated by the number of marimbas available. The set of marimbas we are recommending accommodate 11 players and together with the dummy keyboards 33 children can learn to play marimbas at the same time.

One 'Marimba Hub' is able to reach between 100 and 200 children.

Here are a number of immediate reasons why this marimba hub programme works so well in townships:

1. Cultural development and preservation of traditional music.
2. Job creation for a number of facilitators.
3. 100 – 200 high school and primary school children attend the marimba classes at the hub.
4. Raised self-esteem among learners.
5. Keeping learners off the streets will help address the currently high statistics regarding teenage pregnancy, crime, substance abuse, spread of HIV/Aids and STDs.
6. Identifying and developing undiscovered talent.
7. Development of communities through music.
8. Emerging bands to perform for their community as well as corporate events.
9. Showcasing the musical talent of youth.
10. The **holistic benefits of marimba** playing in all aspects of education and life skills. Please refer to *27 Reasons why every child needs to learn to play the Marimba* (see below).
11. Each year, funding permitted, we take a marimba band from one of our hubs on an overseas tour. We spend over 100 hours training the band and the band and their teacher spend at least another 200 hours rehearsing on their own. The impact this has is tremendous:
 - The injection of such intense work on these select children has a remarkable effect on their concentration and focus which is carried through to their school work.
 - Their peers from the hub start learning all the new repertoire and so the standard of the hub in general rises significantly.

- There is a greater emphasis placed on appropriate behavior and life skills leading up to the tour. The children are taught conflict management, how to treat each other with respect as well as basic etiquette and behavior. This ALL rubs off on their peers and family members.
 - For most of the families whose children go on tour this is the first time that someone in their family has ever travelled on a plane or has gone overseas. These tours change not only the children's lives but they change a whole community. Most of the families affected are extremely poor and hardworking but have never been rewarded for their hard work. For the first time ever the parents see that sometimes in life if you work really hard (which the children have to do to get to an international standard) they will be recognized and rewarded). It gives hope to families and communities at large!
12. Each year our International Marimba and Steelpan Festival brings together 2000 performers from all over South Africa as well as the rest of Africa. This is true SOCIAL COHESION in action. The performers are from all different social strata yet meet on common ground, make friends, cheer each other along and are a shining example to the rest of the world.
13. **Social Cohesion** is uppermost in our minds with all our projects. We also are always aware of encouraging Pride in South Africa and pride in our South African Heritage.

The children learn marimba playing within a team and group environment. Through marimba playing children are continually stimulated on a musical and (but more importantly) on an educational level. Playing marimbas targets the need for core educational development often lacked by children who grow up in economically difficult circumstances.

Playing marimbas in a team has proven statistically to improve their educational, emotional and social maturity allowing the individual child to gain much needed resources and life skills to compete in the world.

1. VENUE AND EQUIPMENT

1.1 A suitable venue has been sourced that has the following:

- Adequate room and security to house the marimba equipment.
- A number of schools in the surrounding area that would be interested in being part of the programme together with the children from the Boys and Girls Club.
- Willing teachers and/or community members who would like to be trained as marimba teachers.

1.2 Once funding is received the Hub will be resourced with marimbas, dummy keyboards, a djembe drum, covers and bags for the marimbas as well as books.

2. TRAINING AND MONITORING

- 2.1 A suitable date will be established and the prospective teachers will attend an initial 30-hour implementation programme where they will be taught not only how to play marimbas but also to teach marimbas to large groups of children at the same time. They will also be taught how to manage the hub and how to implement the programme successfully. A further 10 hour upgrading workshop will take place after 6 months.
- 2.2 Once the initial training has been completed the programme will be implemented in the Hub and all participants in the Hub will have lessons on a weekly basis.
- 2.3 The goal is to have 5 x 1-hour classes per day after schools come out and to have at least 100 children attending marimba classes per week.
- 2.4 A staff member of the Education Africa Music Department will then visit the Hub twice a month or 20 visits per year in order to monitor, support and evaluate teacher training so as to maintain consistent standards of training.
- 2.5 Marimba teachers will be expected to attend upskilling workshops three times per year.
- 2.6 Once the training is completed, additional staff members that require training will need to attend subsequent training sessions when new Hubs are formed.
- 2.7 The Hub will be required to keep a record of each lesson that is taught. This record will include the content of the lesson, a comment on how the lesson has progressed as well as the age-group and number of children per class. Templates will be provided at the initial training sessions.
- 2.8 The Hub will be required to keep a record of attendance as well as the full names, race and ID numbers of all the children attending. The Hub will also need to have on record the full names, race and ID copies of all the teachers who work in the hub.

3. ADDITIONAL COMMITMENT REQUIRED BY THE HUB

- 3.1 The Hub is required to participate in Education Africa's annual International Marimba and Steelpan Festival, and may be required to participate in the annual Education Africa Sounds of Celebration Concert as well as in marimba gigs that may arise from time to time.
- 3.2 Subject to funding being available, a marimba band from the Hub may be selected by Education Africa to travel internationally on an Arts and Culture tour.

27 REASONS WHY EVERY SOUTH AFRICAN CHILD NEEDS TO LEARN TO PLAY THE MARIMBA

- Create performers and audiences for the Arts.
- Develop sensitivity and appreciation for the Arts.
- All genres of music can be played on marimbas.
- No prior knowledge or musical experience is needed.
- Teachers/facilitators can be trained within a relatively few hours and learners are able to play a piece of music in their very first lesson.
- Players can advance from beginners to fantastic performers within a short space of time.
- Concentration skills are greatly enhanced and worked upon when learning to play marimbas.
- Self-confidence and self-esteem are greatly boosted as there is a part for every child to play, regardless of ability.
- Playing music together is a team effort! Each and every member of the team is equally important.
- Because of the recommended technique of playing marimbas: hand to hand/ alternating hands—both sides of the brain are being exercised equally. This does not often happen in many other activities.
- Because it is recommended that hands are alternated all the time, crossing of the midline becomes second nature.
- Listening skills are greatly enhanced when playing marimbas: players need to play absolutely together to create a piece of music.
- Through various games and exercises learners' aural training skills may be developed.
- The science of sound production can be demonstrated and studied through the marimba.
- Through singing and spelling games on the marimba, language skills and spelling is improved.
- The bars on the marimba are fairly wide so learners with poor fine-motor coordination are still able to play with ease.
- It is a known fact that maths and music are inter-related. Marimba music is strongly based on patterning: maths is also full of patterning. It goes without saying that the one helps and reinforces the other.
- There are lovely maths games that can be combined with marimbas to encourage and enhance maths learning.
- Physically and mentally challenged individuals can play marimbas and be part of a marimba band.
- Fine- and gross-motor coordination are constantly being worked on when the learners are playing marimbas.
- Learners who do not have dexterity in their fingers for whatever reason often find it difficult, if not impossible, to play a melodic musical instrument. The marimba offers these learners the opportunity to play a melodic instrument.
- The nature of the music for marimbas is such that there are very easy parts and then there are parts that are graded according to abilities.
- By using dummy keyboards in the classroom every learner is focused on playing at the same time. This alleviates discipline problems.
- With imagination, patience and a sense of fun the music classroom is transformed into a magical soundscape.
- The marimba is a robust, low maintenance, portable instrument that does not need electricity to operate!
- Leadership skills are encouraged when marimba bands are formed as different learners are appointed as leaders of each piece performed.
- The instruments sell themselves in the classroom and EVERYONE wants to play!