

# The Marimba Workshop

## Marimba Monthly

With the easing of lockdown restrictions having taken place this month, there has been tremendous feelings of “normality” flooding our country and specifically a bit of the marimba industry. It gives us as a company great pleasure to see a few professional marimba bands getting back into a bruised and battered gigging scene. We are also seeing a much larger number of school marimba bands getting back to “mask wearing” teaching, rehearsals and performances. We would again encourage all marimba teachers to push for their schools to get back to teaching and playing. The difference between sitting at a socially distanced maths desk wearing a mask is exactly the same as standing at a socially distanced marimba wearing a mask except for one thing: playing marimbas will do a huge amount of mental good for your students, teachers and school as a whole. Please refer back to our June Newsletter should you need some concrete, written advice to convince your principals and heads of department. We would love to hear from you if you are back making marimba music, please email us or post on our Facebook page.

In this month’s newsletter we are highlighting the fantastic work done by Margriet Van Zyl at Pretoria Oos Laerskool with her marimba band and programme. This month we have decided to combine the “throwback” section with the “Look Mom I’m famous” section. We are going back to 2010 when Joan trained a marimba band from Eden Park/Thokoza to perform with Gloria Gaynor on her hit track: “I will Survive”. We again have our usual sections highlighting our various products and new sheet music available, as well as the final staff highlight of Master Marimba Builder Willy!

With warm musical love, The Marimba Workshop Team

We would love to hear feedback about this newsletter, please get in touch at:  
[Bradley@marimbaworkshop.co.za](mailto:Bradley@marimbaworkshop.co.za)



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## Product Highlight

As part of our add-on products we also sell Djembe Drums. Djembe Drums make for perfect accompaniments to marimba bands as well as in their own capacity in drum circles. Our drums are produced in Ghana and come in 2 sizes.



## What Sets us apart:

Marimba Workshop instruments are specifically designed with the Orff Schulwerk teaching philosophy in mind. They work perfectly with current Orff Xylophones, Metallophones and Glockenspiels as they work in similar ways with the ability to remove the notes and seamlessly change keys: a KEY feature of all ranges of our instruments.

Follow us on Social media for regular updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheMarimbaWorkshop/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHnuvBUhgZvFojc1b-bYZHhg>



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## THE MARIMBA WORKSHOP (Pty) Ltd STAFF HIGHLIGHT



Name: William Mndebele

Willy is our master marimba builder. Having taken over most of the marimba production from Ian nearly 10 years ago he has made a vital impact on thousands of children's lives through the hundreds of marimbas he has built. His attention to detail and expert craftsmanship ensures you are receiving high quality marimbas made with love and passion for the industry! We are proud to have Willy as one of the champions of The Marimba Workshop Family.

# Throwback feature

In 2010 Joan was approached by NPO Education Africa to train a pre-existing marimba band for a fundraising tour to New York City. As part of the tour the band would perform at a fundraising gala event with the world-renowned Gloria Gaynor singing her hit: "I Will Survive" which Joan arranged for marimba band. You can view the video at this link: <https://youtu.be/k6lyDhpf5UQ>



Most of these 10 young band members were in grades 6 and 7 with the youngest member, a dancer, being in grade 3. The band members were from Stoneridge Primary School in Eden Park and were taught by Nonzame Zekane. Never before had Joan worked with such dedicated and attentive marimba players! Their performance at the fundraiser at the Loeb Boathouse in Central Park was flawless and truly impressed not only the audience members but equally importantly Gloria Gaynor, herself and her two band members. These young children were so professional in their performance as well as their behaviour. They were true ambassadors of Education Africa, Stoneridge Primary, The Marimba Workshop and South Africa!



The truly amazing part is that we have been able to reconnect with all those band members who are now fully independent adults in their early 20's. We are all super proud of them having formed their own careers and lives.



Our winter tuning special is unfortunately over. We are, however, still tuning. Contact us today to book your marimbas in for tuning.



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## SCHOOL HIGHLIGHT

School: Laerskool Pretoria Oos

Province: Gauteng

Teacher: Margriet Van Zyl

We all know the saying “Brown eyed girl met blue eyed boy, love at first sight”. If I must write a story about the Marimba band of Laerskool Pretoria-Oos it will probably almost sound the same with different wording: “Music teacher met a marimba for the first time, love at first touch”.

Our marimba journey started in 2012 when I was introduced to the marimba at an Orff Schulwerk levels course for music teachers. We had the privilege to play marimba for an hour during the week’s course. Joan Lithgow taught us different songs and skills and how to teach the marimba to children. It was absolutely wonderful! I just knew that I need to take this wonderful experience back to my school and teach my pupils to play the marimba. Something incredibly special also happened during that week of marimba playing. I had meningitis earlier in 2012 and had some short-term memory trouble afterwards. But with all the alternating movement of marimba playing and training that week, my memory issues disappeared.

I knew that the marimba was a foreign instrument in our Afrikaans culture, and I did not have the school budget to buy these wonderful instruments. So, it took some faith and a lot of explanation to introduce these instruments and to convince the school board that this will make a big musical difference in our school. In the end the financial committee agreed to acquire our very own school marimbas.

Our band started off in 2013 with 3 combination marimbas and 1 bass. We had 10 members in our first marimba band.

Our first year of marimba playing was very introductory. There was not a lot of understanding regarding these instruments, but after our first concert and attendance at the Pretoria eisteddfod there was no turning back. The wonderful African sounds and energetic and joyful experiences were contagious. In the following year, 2014 we were privileged to buy 2 more combination marimbas and another bass marimba. It was also our first year of attending the International Marimba Festival in Johannesburg, a fantastic opportunity. The band members grew to 20 pupils.



## SCHOOL HIGHLIGHT (CONT.)



As from 2015- 2018 our marimba journey grew stronger as we were able to purchase some more marimbas so that every child in our school could have a place at a marimba to play during school times in music class or during band practice. We attended the International Marimba Festival each year and undertook two tours during this time. In 2017 we attended the “Music in the mountains festival” hosted by the Drakensberg Boys’ Choir School and made beautiful marimba music in the mountains. In 2018 we tour to Nelspruit to take part at the Marimba Festival, Curro College was hosting. During this tour we took a detour through the Kruger National Park and gave a concert on the banks of the Sabie river in Skukuza. This is something that we will never forget. It was an unforgettable experience to play African music in the African bush.

In 2019 so many children attended the auditions to be part of the marimba band, that we have decided that it is wrong for any person to qualify to play the marimba, any child who wants to play the marimba must have the opportunity to do so. We formed a Marimba club for each grade (Gr 4-7), as well as a competition marimba band that will take part at competitions. It was amazing to see 100 pupils playing marimba during each week. Each group had their own afternoon time slot to practise and make marimba music. At the end of that year we had our own little Marimba festival in the Brooklyn theatre in Pretoria where each group had the opportunity to perform.



Now in 2020 the marimbas at Laerskool Pretoria-Oos are quiet due to the pandemic, but to make good wine it is necessary for the vines to rest each year. So, we as marimba players are resting hoping to produce a good wine when the time is right to play again!



In closing, I would like to mention the support we received from The Marimba Workshop, who built our marimbas. The vision they had to start a company building marimbas has given joy to so many children and music teachers. Thank you for the ongoing support and marimba opportunities you are giving us!

Check out this awesome video of our featured school highlight this month:

<https://www.facebook.com/margriet.vanzyl/videos/2001038966682603/>



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## NEW MUSIC FOR SALE

In next month's issue we will be launching a new "Intermediate" series of Books. In the mean time you can legally purchase copyrighted sheet music marimba arrangements of various popular pieces on Sheet Music Plus. This month we are highlighting: Happier By Marshmello featuring: Bastille. This arrangement is perfect for an early intermediate band. You can purchase the sheet music here:

[https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/look\\_inside?R=21811780](https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/look_inside?R=21811780)



### **A little Success story for Marketing**

A few months ago Ian was driving our company vehicle to one of our suppliers. He happened to have a set of instruments in the back of the car from a recent Marimba Band gig that Brad had done but had been too lazy to take out of the car. A gentleman in the business park happened to coincidentally see the instruments in the car, enquired from Ian who gave him our company card, and within 2 weeks a new set of marimbas was purchased for a school in the East Rand. This little story of fate, coincidence and (in wildlife safari terms), "right place right time" really highlighted the power of marketing to us. As such we are very excited to have branded our company's VW Combi. We hope you might spot us on the highway soon! By the way, sometimes laziness can be used as a marketing tool!



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# Upcoming Events

The Education Africa **Virtual** International Marimba and Steelpan Festival will be taking place on Facebook between 1 December and 13 December 2020. Please visit the dedicated website for all the details: <https://www.internationalmarimbafestival.org/virtual/index.asp#openModal>

Not only are there marimba and steelpan band competitions in various sections and categories but there are also solo marimba, solo xylophone, solo vibraphone and solo steelpan competitions as well!

The closing dates are as follows:

Closing date for the registration for the **solo** competitions: 2 October

Closing date for the registration for **marimba and steelpan band** competitions: 2 October

There are limited numbers for each of the competitions so please ensure that you register timeously!

You are able to submit **ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE** for the Festival. Please visit the website for guidelines.

If you would like to advertise your marimba/music-related event for free please email:  
[bradley@marimbaworkshop.co.za](mailto:bradley@marimbaworkshop.co.za)  
 (all adverts are subject to approval)



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