

Hey Kids, It's a Xylophone



The Xylophone is a member of the percussion family. Unlike most percussion instruments, it produces a pitch when struck.

History

The earliest xylophone originated in 2000BC, documented by temple carvings of musicians playing suspended wooden bars. Xylophones were seen in Asia by the 9th century, and later in Africa. By the 16th century they had reached the European continent. By the 19th century, the xylophone had grown quite popular due in part to the extensive tours of Russian xylophone virtuoso Michael Josef Gusikov.

How It's Played

To make a sound on the xylophone the player must strike a bar with a mallet. When the xylophonist strikes a bar with a hard mallet, the xylophone produces a bright and sharp sound. When the xylophonist strikes a bar with a soft mallet a more muted sound is produced.

How It's Made

Xylophone bars are made from rosewood or, more commonly, Kelon which is a very durable fiberglass. After the material is selected, the bars are cut and shaped in various lengths. Longer bars play low notes while the shorter bars play high notes. A cord is strung through holes in both ends of each bar to hold them in place and to allow them to vibrate freely. Resonator tubes are then fabricated and placed below each bar to amplify the sound. Concert xylophones typically have 42-48 bars that are arranged like a piano keyboard.

The Percussion Family

The xylophone is a member of the percussion family. The percussion family includes the timpani, snare drum, bass drum, xylophone, glockenspiel, chimes, gong, cymbals, and many smaller percussion instruments.

Fun Fact

The sounds of Fred Flintstone's twinkling toes at the bowling alley aren't made by his toes... they're made by a xylophone!

