

The Story of the Kalimba

according to Mark Holdaway, PhD

Is it Kalimba, Karimba, or Mbira?

Hugh Tracey Introduces the Kalimba

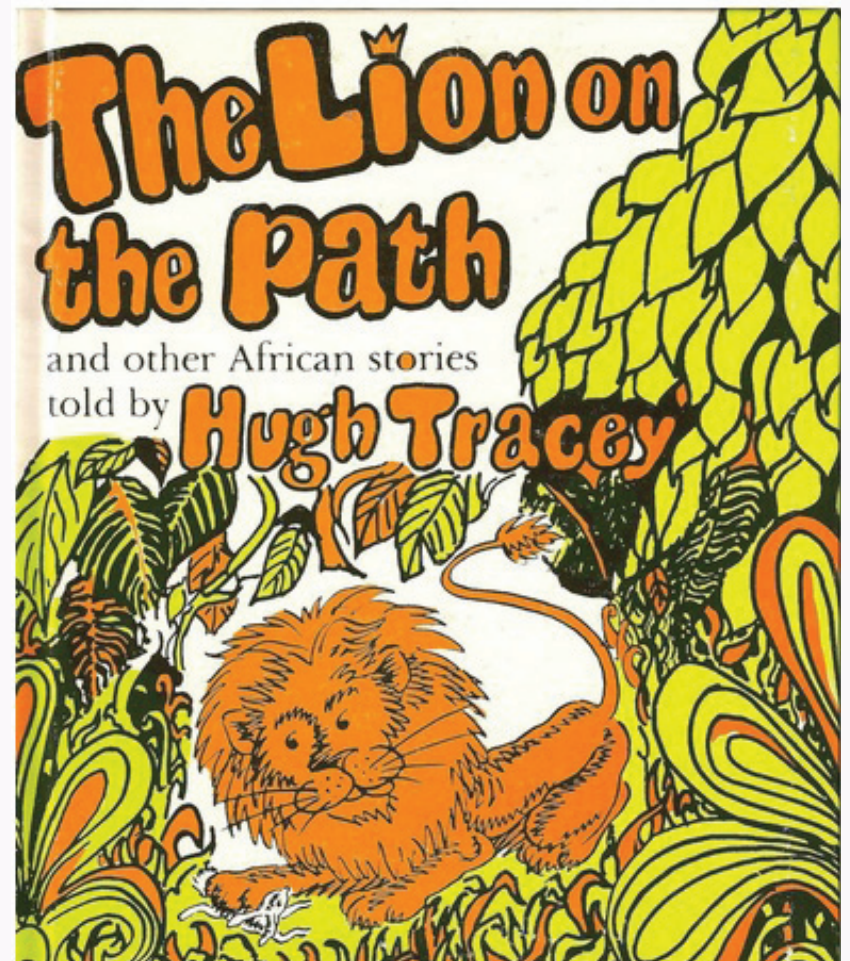
Hugh Tracey was all about telling stories...

Performance: “The Lion on the Path”



Hugh Tracey
1903-1977

Unknown bow player





Andrew Tracey, b. 1936
Still living in Grahamstown, South Africa
Ethnomusicologist and performer
Director of ILAM 1977 - 2005

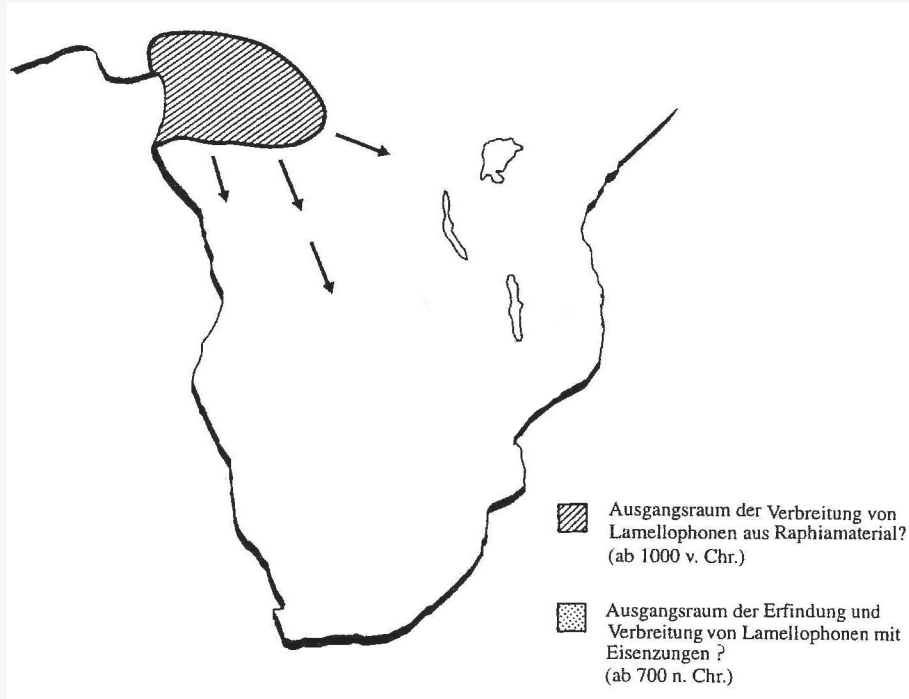


Gerhard Kubik, b. 1934
unknown flute player
Still living in
Vienna, Austria
Ethnomusicologist and
blues performer



Diane Thram, director of ILAM, 2006 to present, b. ~1950?
To Diane's right is Kitlagat Kwambai of ILAM.

The first kalimbas - about 3000 years ago - originated around present day Cameroon, and were made of bamboo and other plant materials.

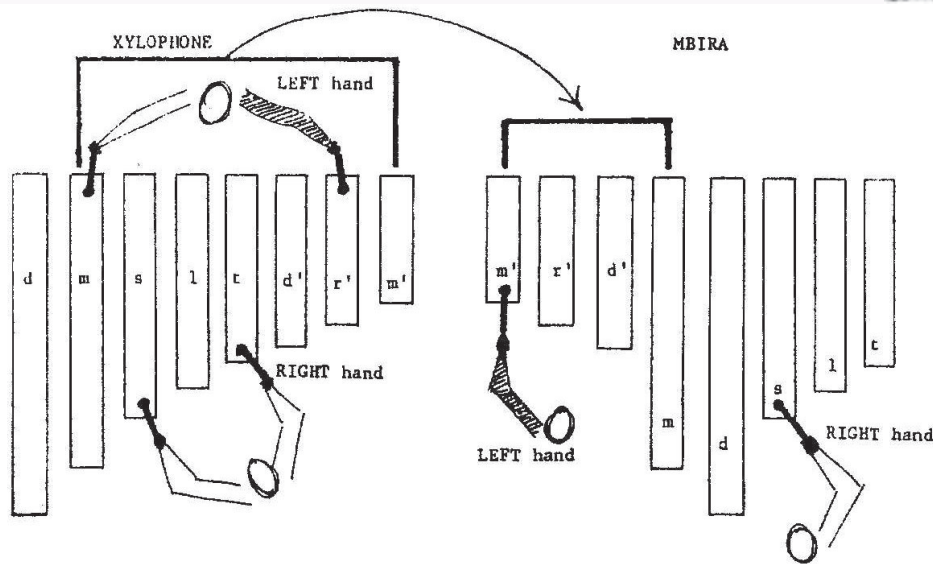
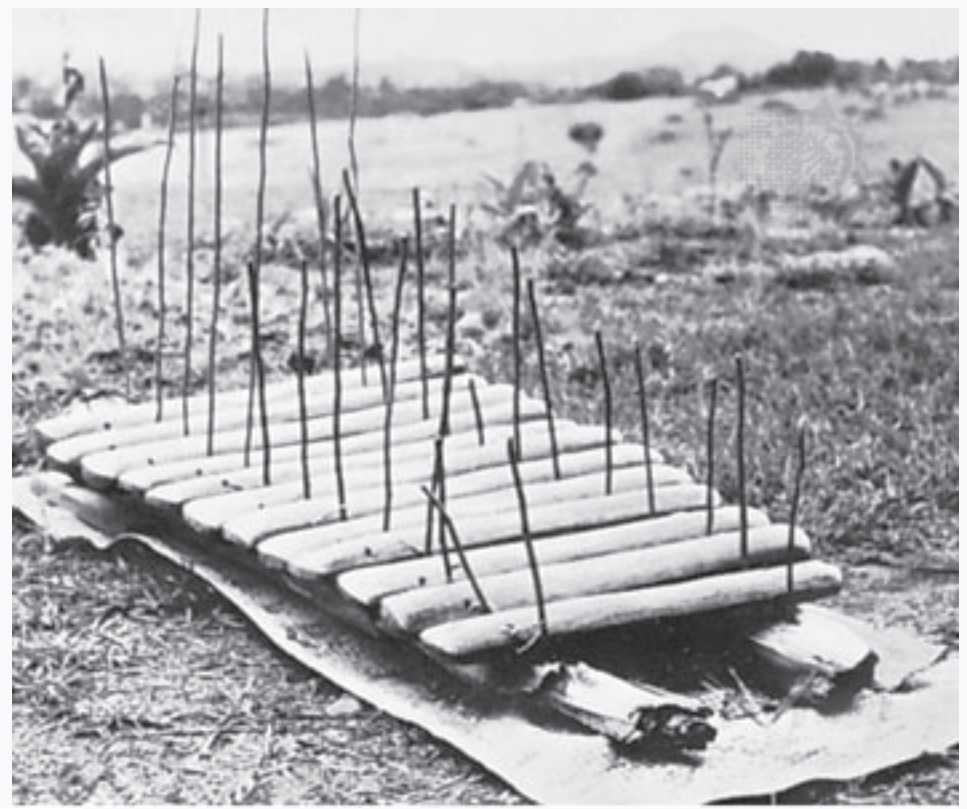


The plant-based tines do not lend themselves to persistent tunings.

Performance: bamboo kalimba

A Portable Xylophone?

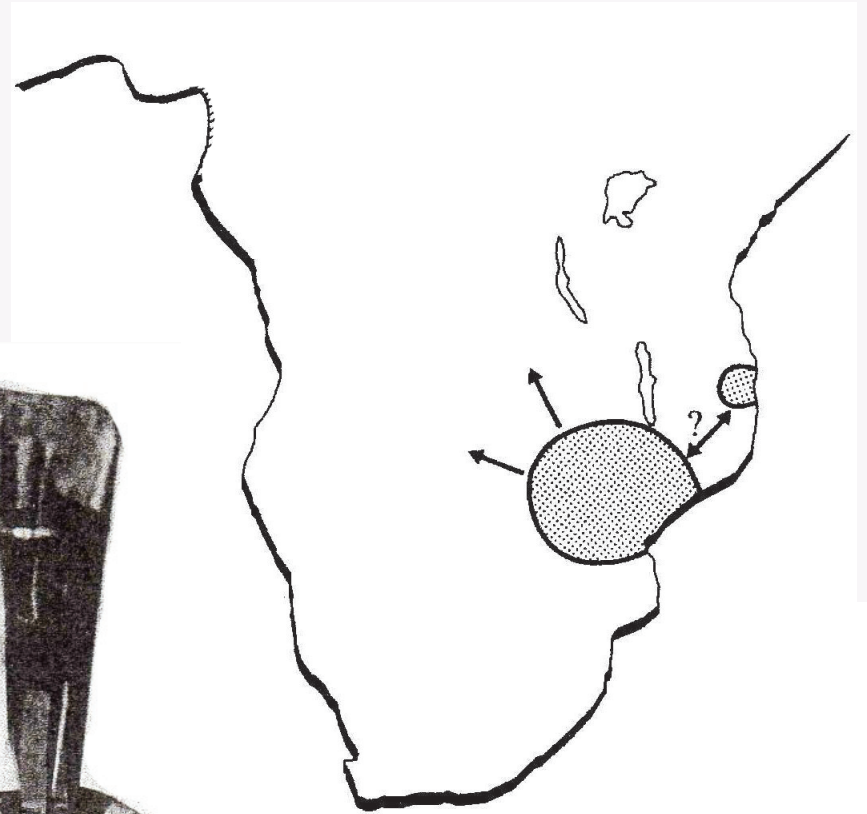
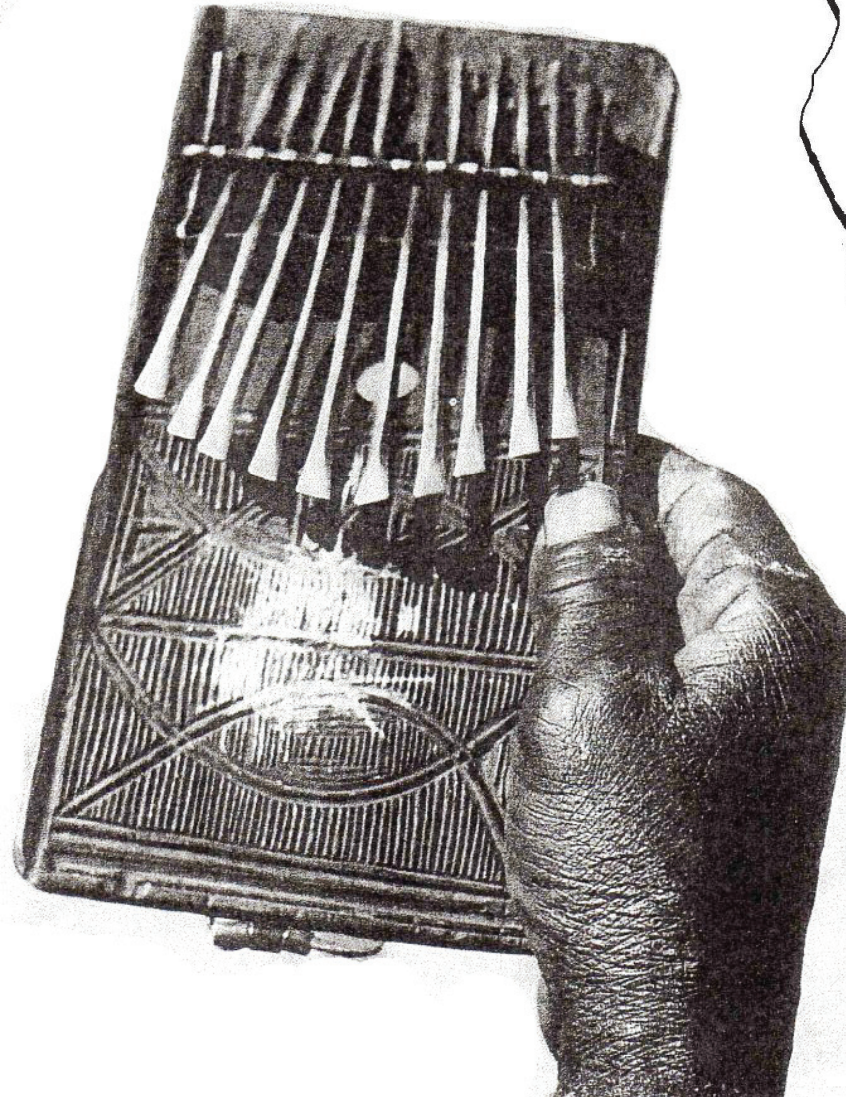
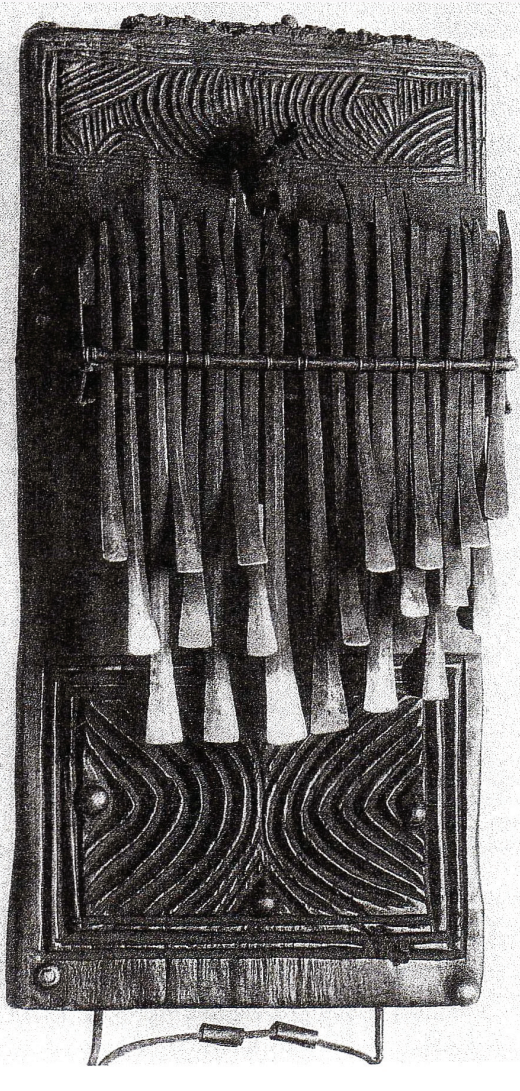
In Africa, log xylophones were played by people beating the ends of the wood bars. As the logs were not fastened down, they would sometimes move, and the player on the opposite side would need to hit the log back. This simple physical necessity of returning the log introduced a degree of balance into the xylophone music.



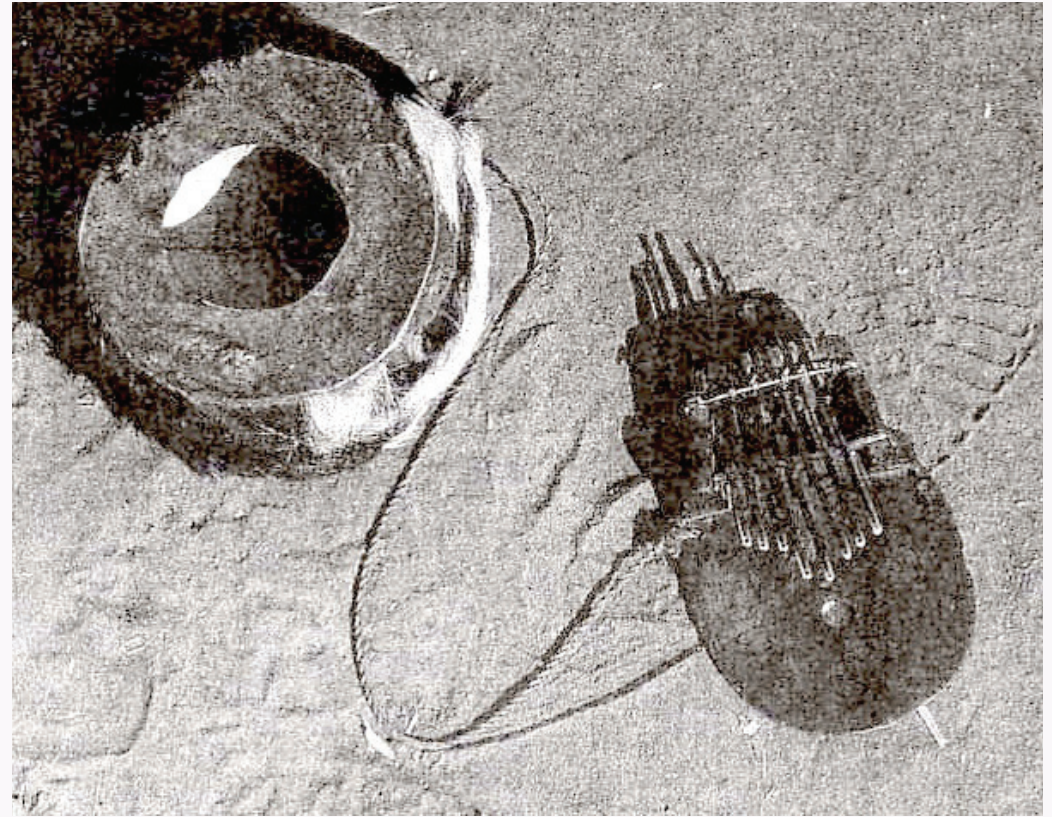
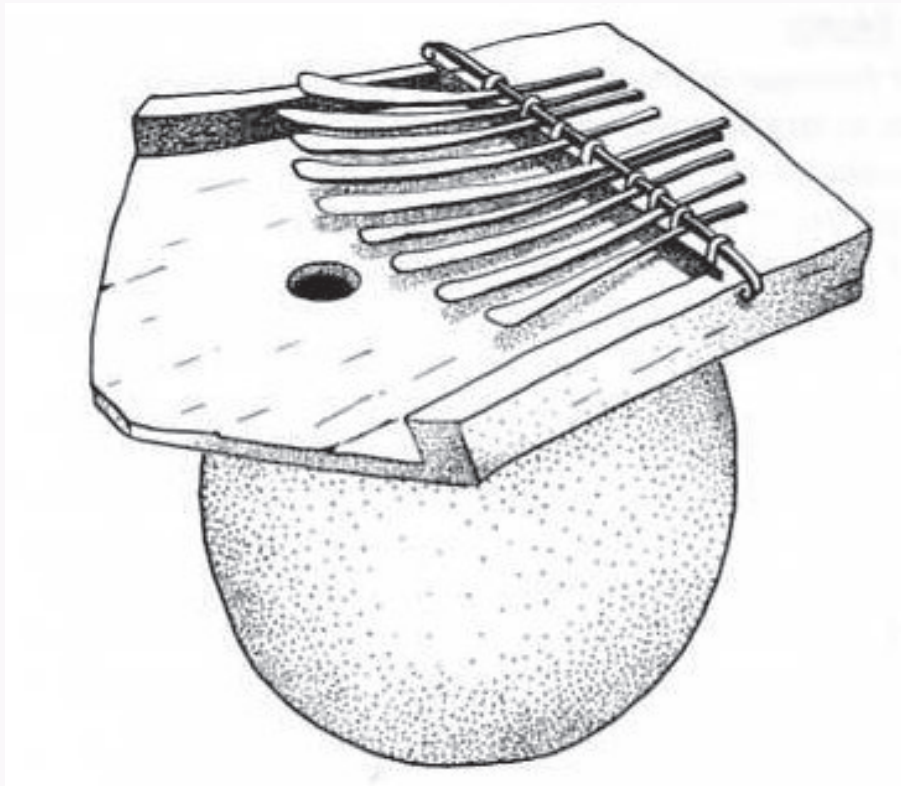
A widely-held theory is that the kalimba is a portable instrument inspired by the xylophone. Built into the xylophone music is the energy of two people on opposite sides playing interlocking patterns.

The kalimba also has interlocking patterns, between the right and left thumbs. It is as if the two people playing the xylophone are subsumed into the left and right hands of the individual playing kalimba.

Metal-tined kalimbas made
in the Zambezi Valley
1300 years ago, c. 700 AD

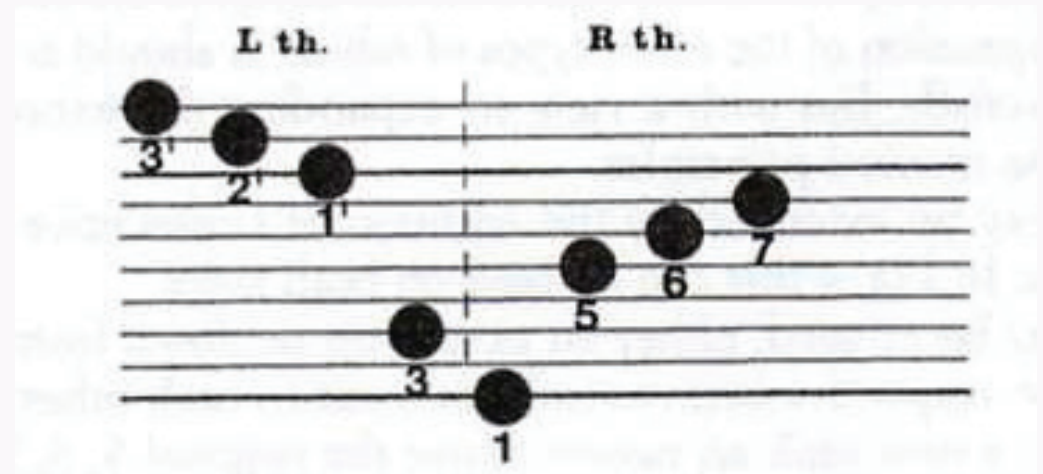


Activity:
Pass around
little kalimba.



Performance:

- * Play Earl Stutzman's Karimba - c. 1950
- * Play Student Karimba (AM Jones, 1950)



Great Zimbabwe - ruins from a time of prosperity, c. 1200 - 1500 AD



Peace and prosperity gave rise to more complex music:

Karimba - 13, 15, or 17 tines

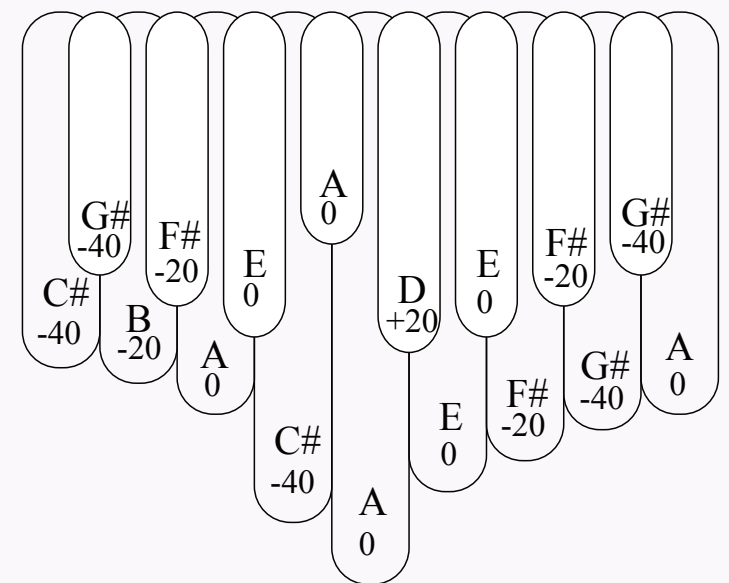
Mbira Dzavadzimu - 21-25 tines

Chemutengure - from Shona Spirit





The karimba added an upper row of notes to facilitate in making beautiful variations.





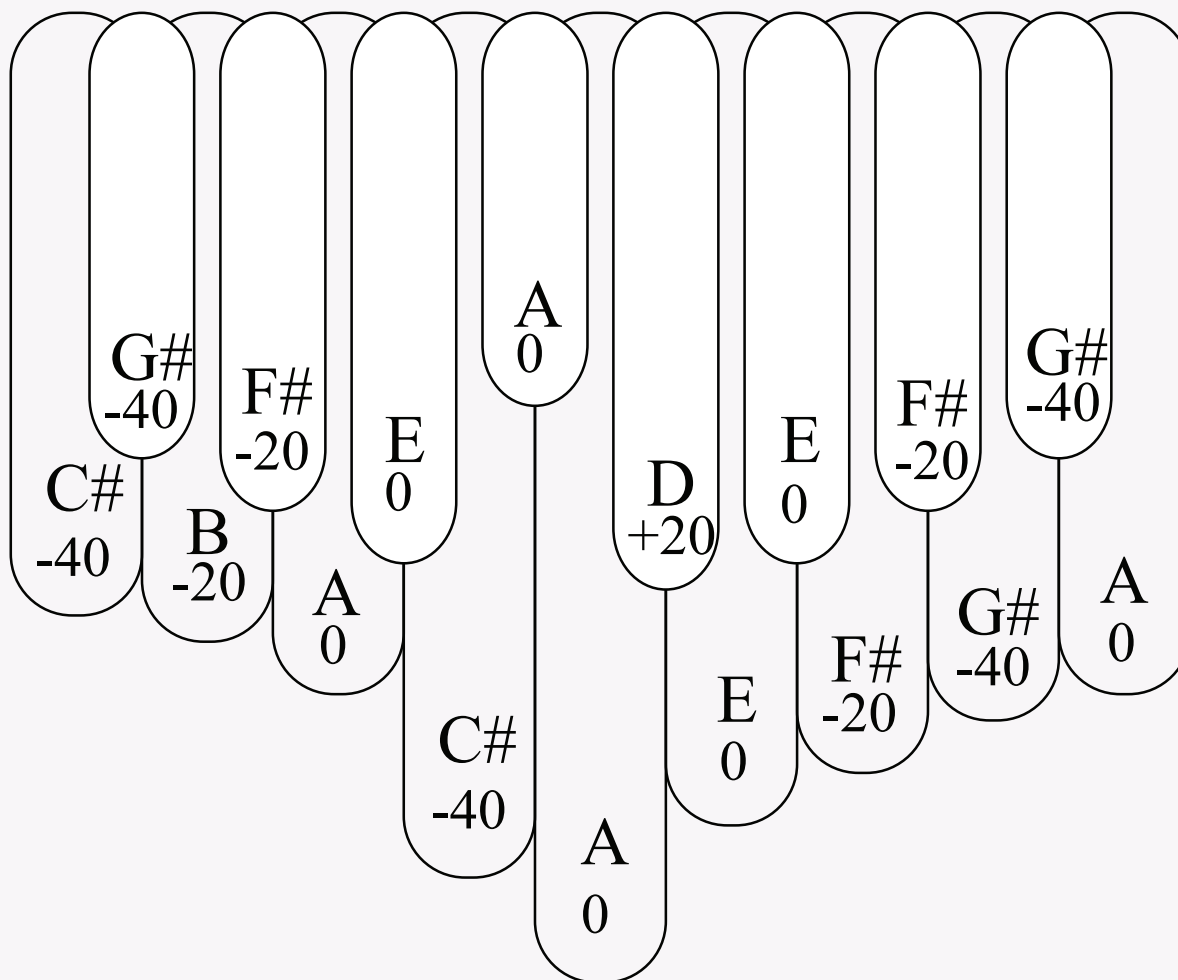
Based on tunings studied by Andrew Tracey:

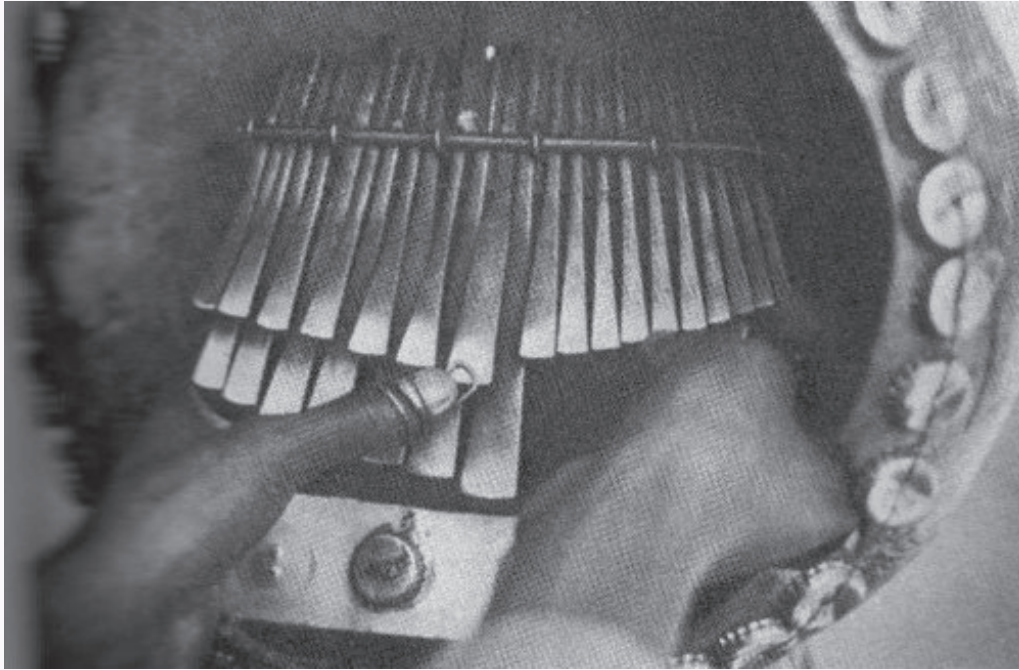
Perfect Octaves

Perfect 5ths

3rds, 6ths, and 7ths are in between
major and minor western intervals

Blue Note?





The Mbira Dzavadzimu

Notice these things:
Placed inside a gourd
Bottle cap buzzers
Metal thumb protector
(optional)

Four phrase music evolved
from two phrase music

2 Phrase: Shumba Panzira (2015) - Russia!

4 Phrase: Nhemumusasa (1972)

Two Phrase Music: Karimba

I iii vi phrase 1
C Em Am
C (F) (pop version)

I iii V phrase 2
C Em G
C G(7) (pop version)



Two Phrase Music: Karimba

I iii vi
C Em Am

I iii V
C Em G

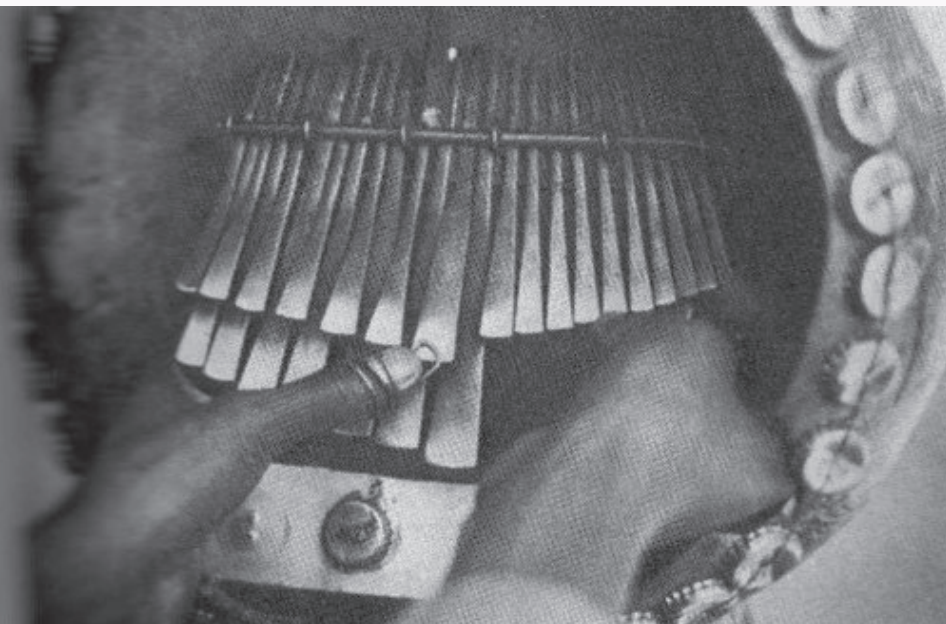
Four Phrase Music: Mbira

I iii V phrase 1
C Em G

I iii vi phrase 2
C Em Am

I IV vi phrase 3
C F Am

ii IV vi phrase 4
Dm F Am



Spiritual nature of the mbira dzavadzimu

The wood represents the earth

The metal tines represent all the living things

The buzz represents the voices of the ancestors

Mbira players at a bira ceremony

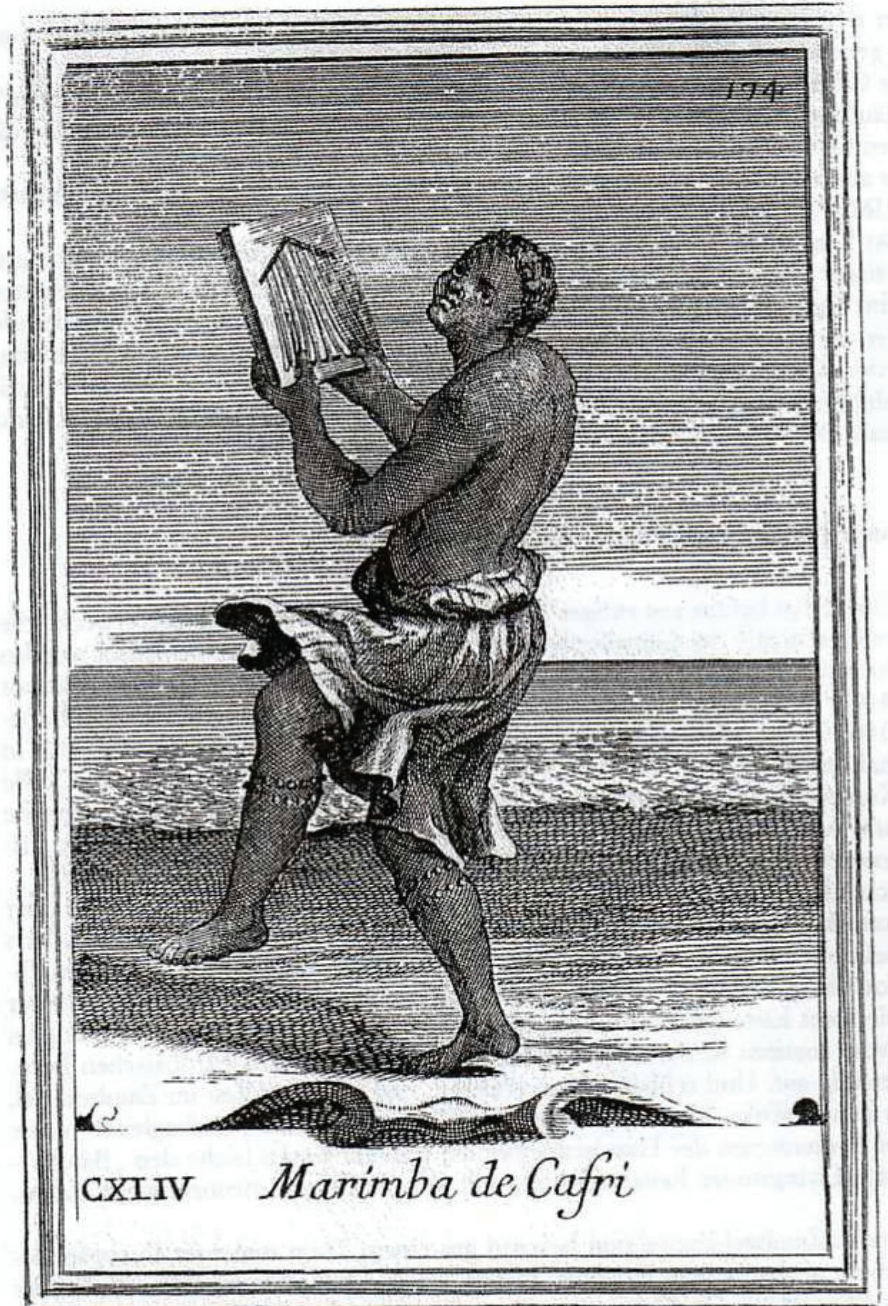


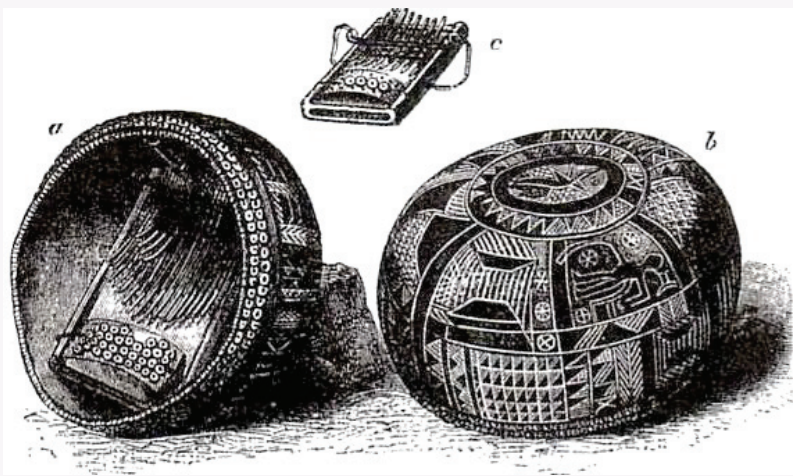
A spiritual medium



The mbira / karimba had a rich prehistory before it was noticed by Europeans.

Portuguese explorer/missionary Father Dos Santos was in present-day Mozambique in 1586 and documented the playing of the 9-note iron-tined instrument he called “ambira”. The players would grow their thumb nails long to play, and the instrument produced a “sweet and gentle harmony of accordant sounds”.

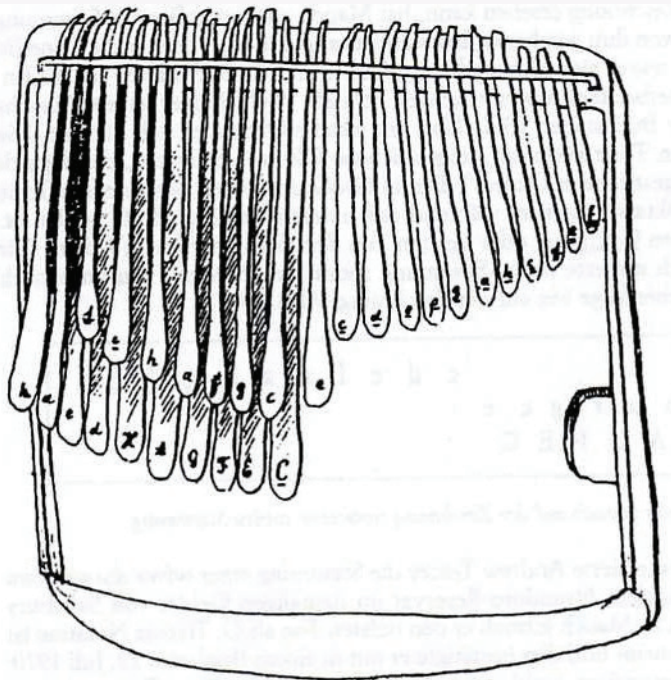




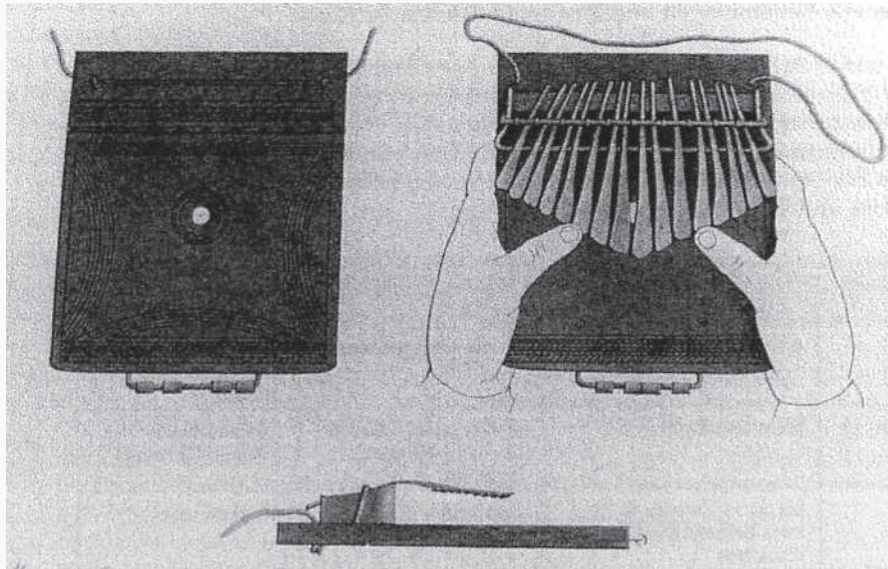
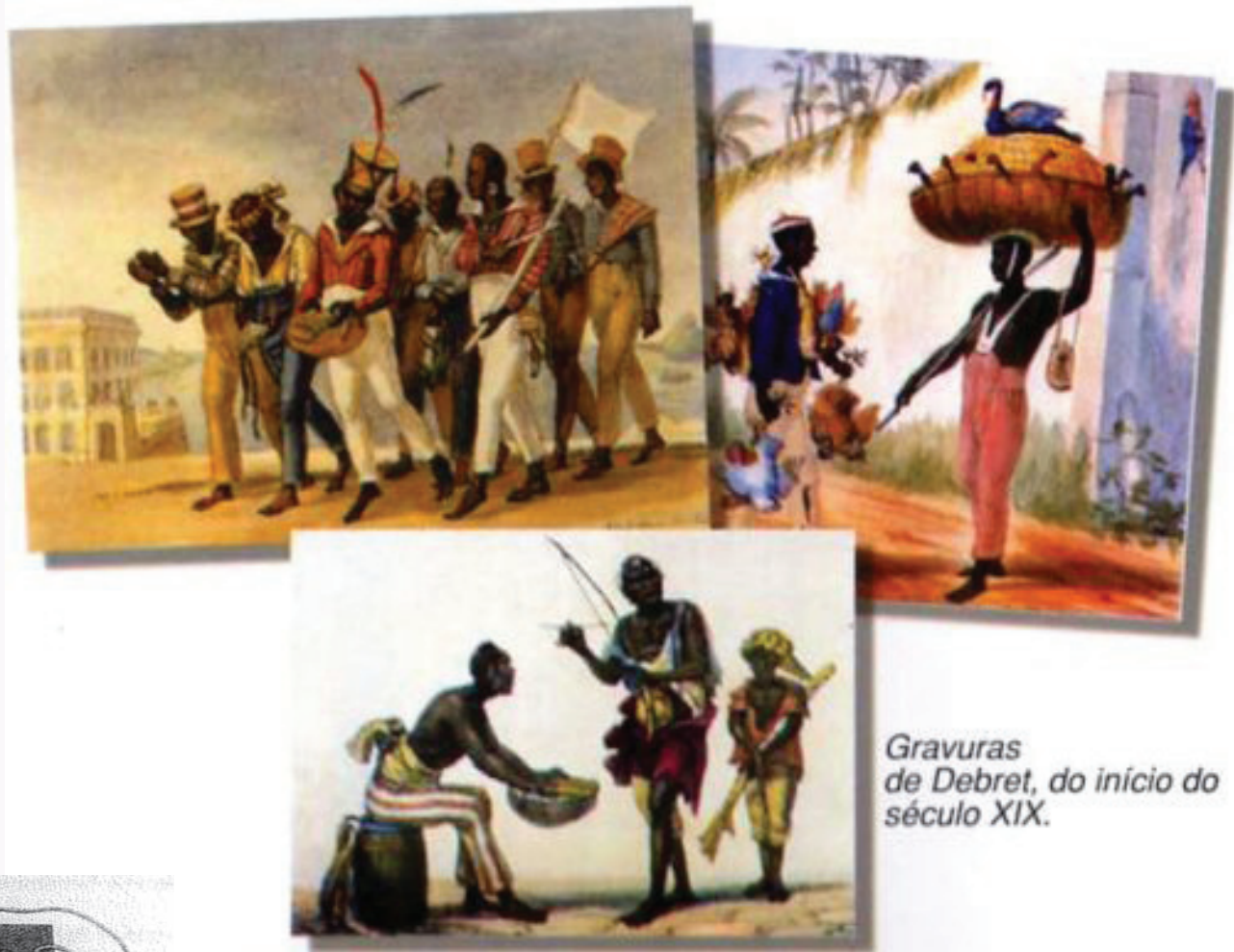
David Livingstone brought an illustrator on his expeditions across central Africa c. 1854, and they documented the mbira, a smaller sanza, and mbira and marimba being played together.



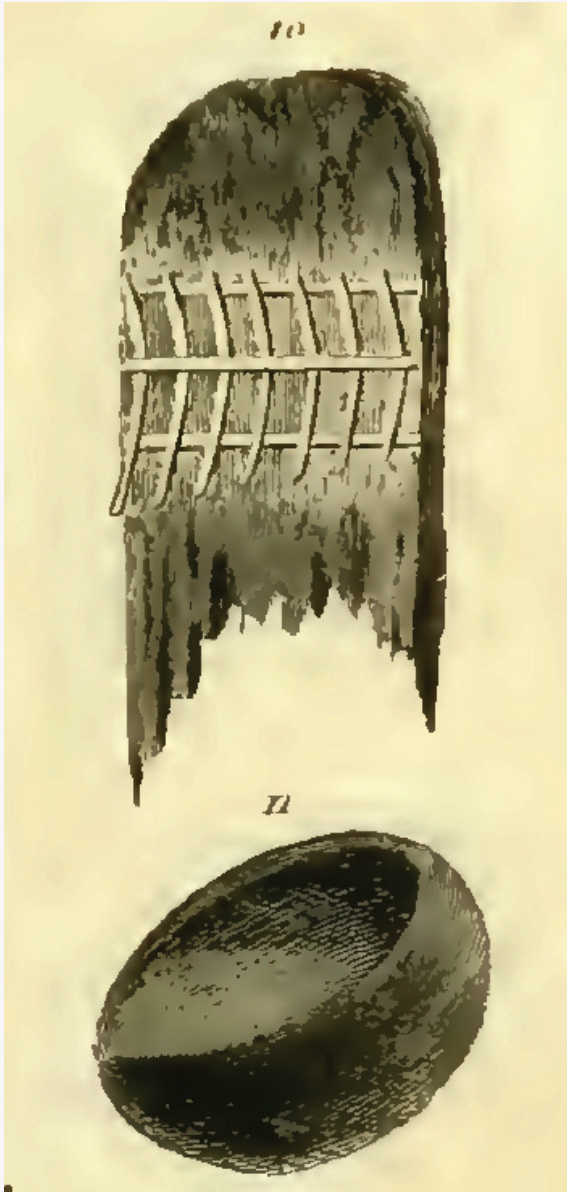
Carl Mauch, a German explorer, documented the tuning of the mbira dzavadzimu in 1872. Almost 150 years later, the tuning is essentially the same, though most instruments today have fewer tines.



Meanwhile, Africans who were forcibly removed from Africa and sold as slaves brought the kalimbas to the New World.



Paintings above by French artist Jean-Baptiste Debret, c. 1830



This illustration is from John Gabriel Stedman's 1796 book with the catchy title:

The Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the wild coast of South America, from the year 1772 to 1777: (subtitle omitted)

Stedman was in the Dutch military working against the slave revolt. While in Surinam he lived and traveled with a slave woman as his wife, but left her when he returned to his white wife in Holland.

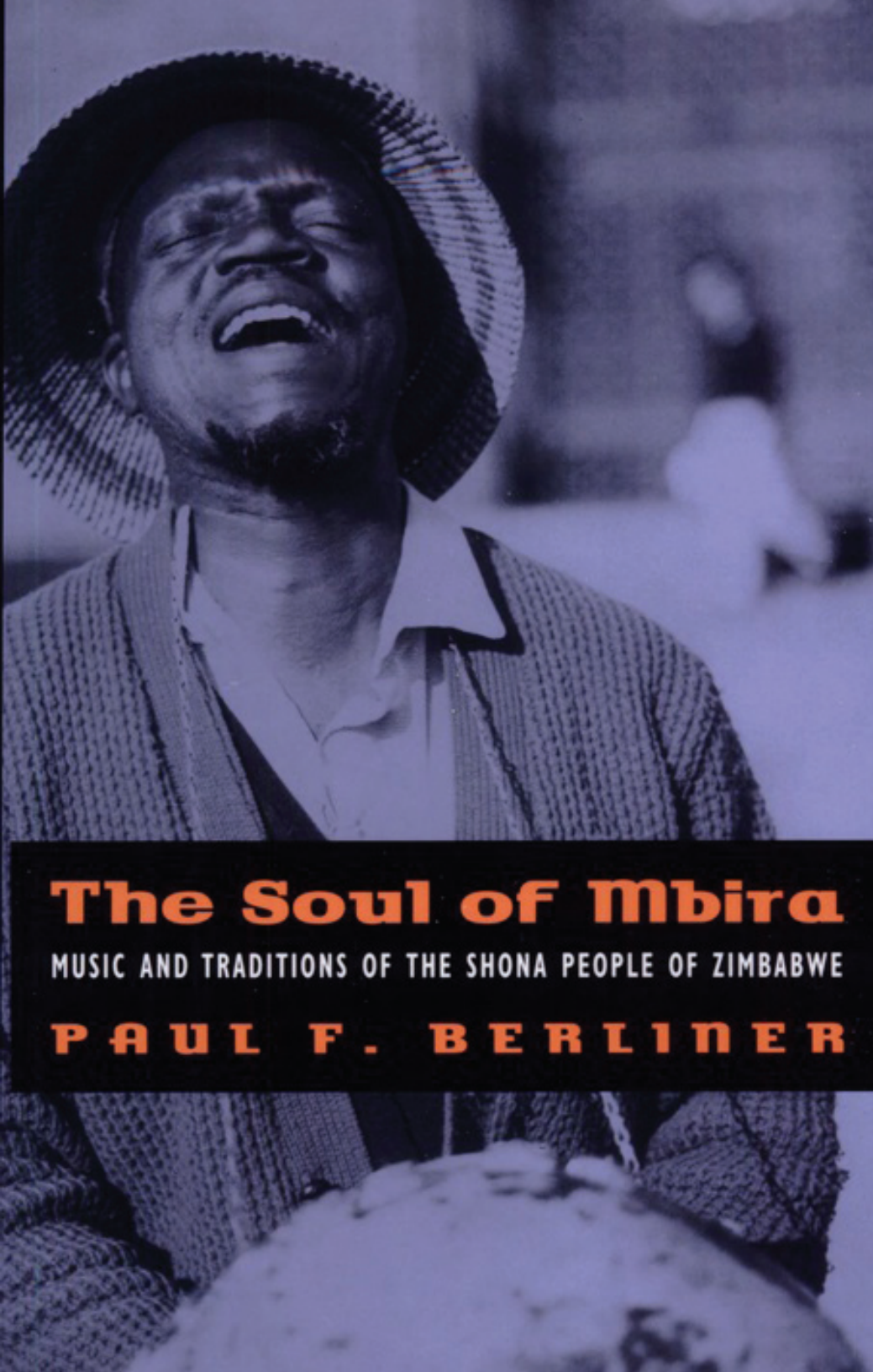
His book was widely used as evidence of the dehumanizing aspects of slavery, but he himself did not take a strong stance against slavery.

William Blake could have been the illustrator.

In Cuba and Jamaica, c. 1800, metal strapping from rum barrels was mounted onto wooden shipping boxes, and the **Rumba Box** or **Marimbula** was born.

The Jolly Boys





The Soul of Mbira

MUSIC AND TRADITIONS OF THE SHONA PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE

PAUL F. BERLINER

In America... the “Marimba Brett”

African Americans in late 1800s New Orleans had a kalimba they called the “Marimba Brett”.

“A single strand of wire ran lengthwise of a bit of wooden board, sometimes a shallow box of thin wood, some eight inches long by four or five in width, across which, under the wire, were several joints of reed about a quarter of an inch in diameter and of graduated lengths. The performer... held the board in both hands and plucked the ends of the reeds with his thumbnails.”

-- George Cable
as reported in *The Soul of Mbira*.

Hugh Tracey came to Africa in 1920 at the age of 17.

He obtained funding for expeditions, 1928-1957

Radio work

Western influences & urbanization threatened African music.
He documented the state of traditional African music during that period.



Hugh Tracey's career reached a double pinnacle in 1954:

- * Founded International Library of African Music (ILAM) to further research

- * Founded African Musical Instruments (AMI) to make the Kalimba





**The legacy of Hugh Tracey:
Thousands of recordings of
traditional African Music**

www.greenstone.ilam.ru.ac.za

The International Library of African Music - Video

Hugh Tracey at ILAM on Kalimbas

Kana Ndoda - in the field

Kana Ndoda - Andrew Tracey

My Favorite Hugh Tracey Field Recording

Repatriating Hugh Tracey's Recordings: Chemirocha


Repatriation Project Video from ILAM

The legacy of Hugh Tracey: Popularization of a western-oriented kalimba

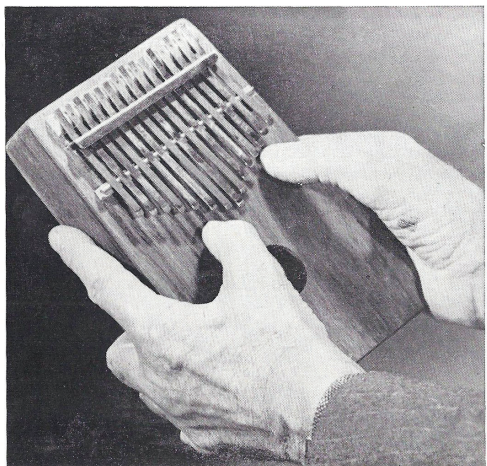
- 1954 African Musical Instruments files legal papers
Starts building Treble kalimbas based on several trad. kalimbas
- 1960 ? Hugh Tracey signs a distribution deal with Creative Playthings
- 1968 Kalimba Manual - by Hugh Tracey and son Andrew Tracey

INSTRUCTION MANUAL

THE
HUGH TRACEY



a new
Musical Instrument
from Africa



There are five original types of Mbira or Likembe to be found in Africa, each being distinguished by the shape of its sound-board and the nature of its array of notes or reeds. The **Kalimba** is a box resonated Mbira which embodies several improvements in design and performance, now making it a practical small instrument for anyone either inside or outside Africa. It is the latest example of the truth of the two thousand year old Roman saying "Ex Africa semper aliquid novi." . . . "There is always something new out of Africa."

2. HOW TO PLAY YOUR KALIMBA

Most people will prefer to learn the **Kalimba** by ear, so here are a few suggestions for starting this way. If you prefer to learn with music, look ahead to page 8, "Further Instructions".

Hold the **Kalimba** comfortably between the hands like a book, with the reeds pointing downwards. It is best to hold it upright

Patents Nos. 22,565, 60/3777 and 900,796. Other Patents Pending.
68/7040

2

- Performance:**
- * **Treble
Kalimba**
 - * **Alto
Kalimba**
 - * **Pentatonic
Kalimba**



Wait a Minim featured Hugh Tracey's sons Andrew and Paul and the kalimba. This musical review toured the world for 6 years (1962-1968) with 453 shows on Broadway.

The cast is from South Africa -
- and they are all white!



The Kalimba played on the West End and Broadway stages in the musical show "Wait a Minim" by Paul Tracey, accompanied on guitars by Andrew Tracey (*left*) and Jeremy Taylor. This photograph was taken while they were appearing on British television.

Taj Mahal on the Flip Wilson Show in 1973



Maurice White - Earth Wind and Fire - “Kalimba Story”

Kalimba, kalimba, ooh!
Play me a tune
Kalimba, kalimba, yeah!
I'm glad I found you
Kalimba, kalimba, woo!
Play me a tune
Kalimba, kalimba, mmm!
Sends a message to you
-- Maurice White

Maurice White Kalimba Solo





Changing Times

Hugh Tracey dies in 1977.

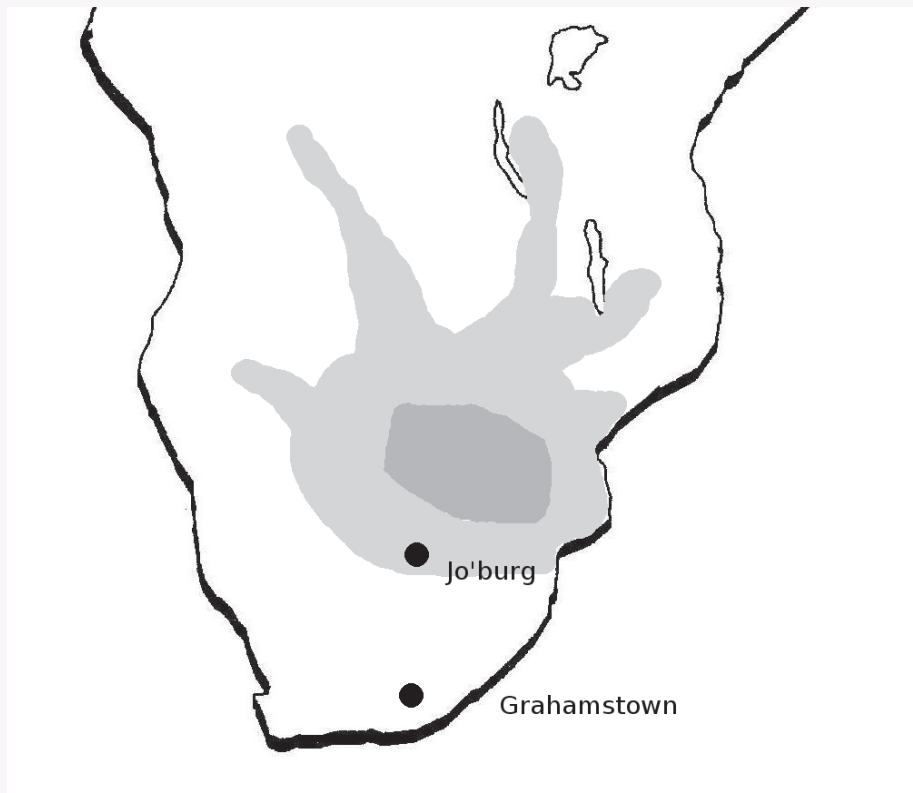
Andrew Tracey takes over ILAM
(stays until 2005).

Andrew's wife Heather takes over AMI
(stays until 2000).

Message from the world 1977-1994:
Apartheid stinks - boycott South Africa

ILAM loses funding, AMI loses sales

To keep both institutions: Andrew
moves both to Grahamstown, ILAM is
housed by Rhodes University, outside
the "Kalimba Belt"



Creating My Own Kalimba Legacy

After playing kalimba for almost 20 years, I took on my first student in 2004: Jordan McGary (pictured).

I invented Kalimba Tablature for Jordan.

I started my business Kalimba Magic in 2005

24 Kalimba Books,
30 Kalimba Instructional Downloads

In 2011, I hired Jordan to assist me in tuning, setting up, and packing kalimbas. He is now also involved in marketing and product development.

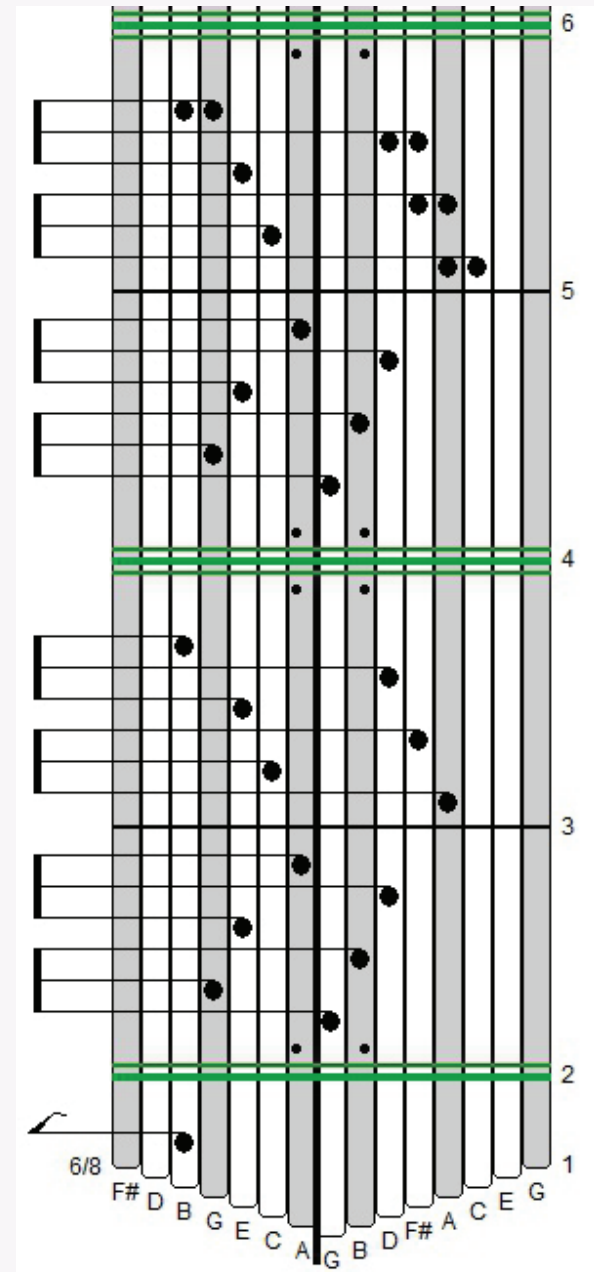


Writing in Kalimba Tablature Software (KTabS)



Kalimba Tablature

- * Staff notation references pitch - a trained musician can look at the staff and know exactly how a piece will sound, but must learn how to translate those pitches to the instrument.
- * Kalimba Tablature is a map of the kalimba - each column on the page maps to a tine on the kalimba.
- * Kalimba Tablature shows you exactly which tines to play to accomplish a song and reveals the geometrical patterns of the music.
- * Each different kalimba requires its own tablature.



My view

**The kalimba has all the wrong notes removed.
Each tuning is set up for some set of songs.**

Sansula in A minor vs E Major

Pentatonic G Major Tuning

Pentatonic G Minor Tuning

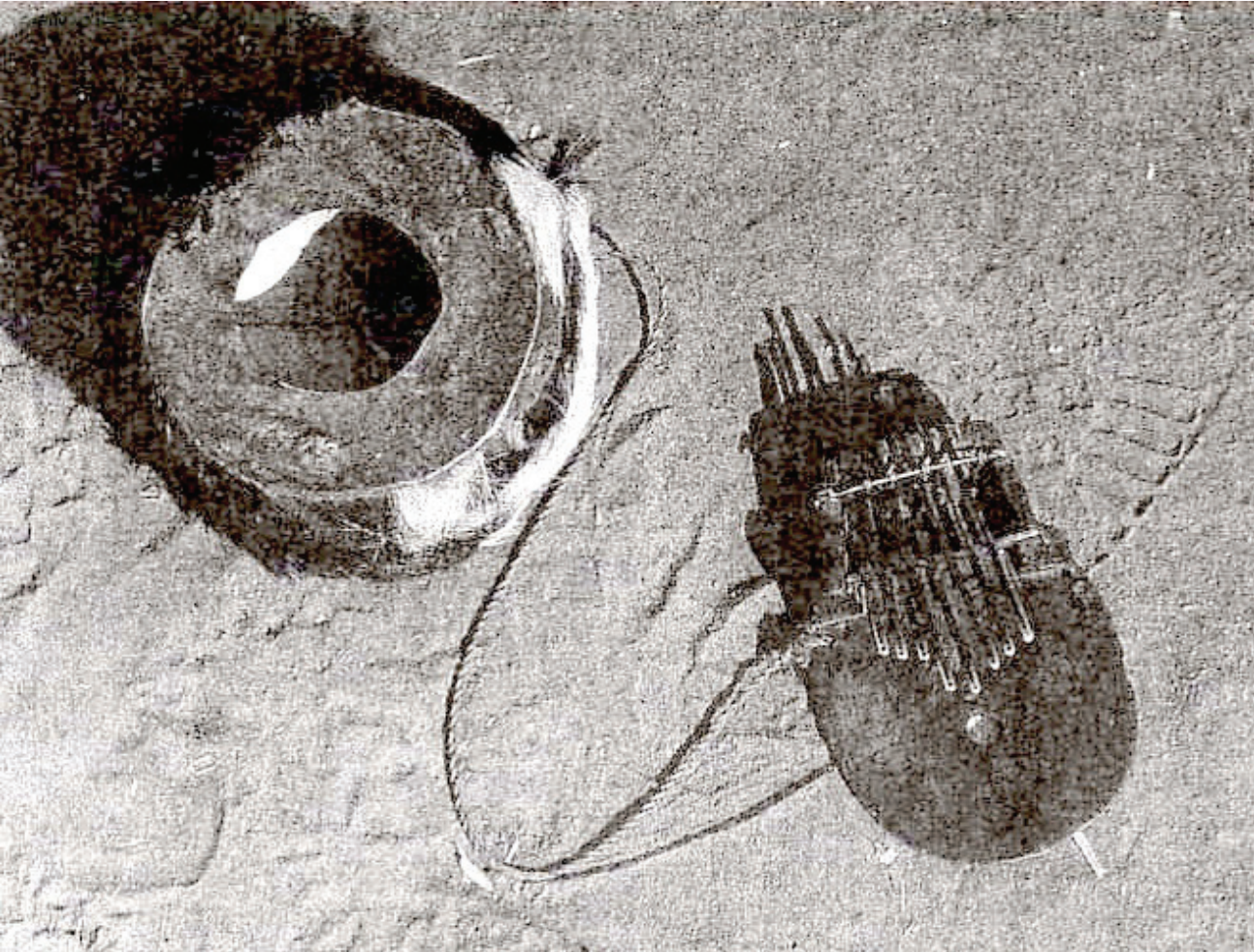
Pentatonic G Ake Bono Tuning

Modern Kalimba
(It's not just for lullabies anymore)

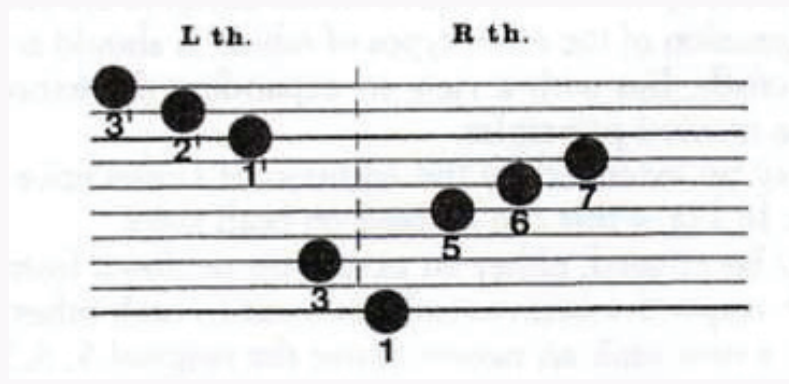
Kevin Spears - Electric Kalimba

R.P. Collier - Kalimba Artist

SaReGaMa - Kalimba Solo for Lotus

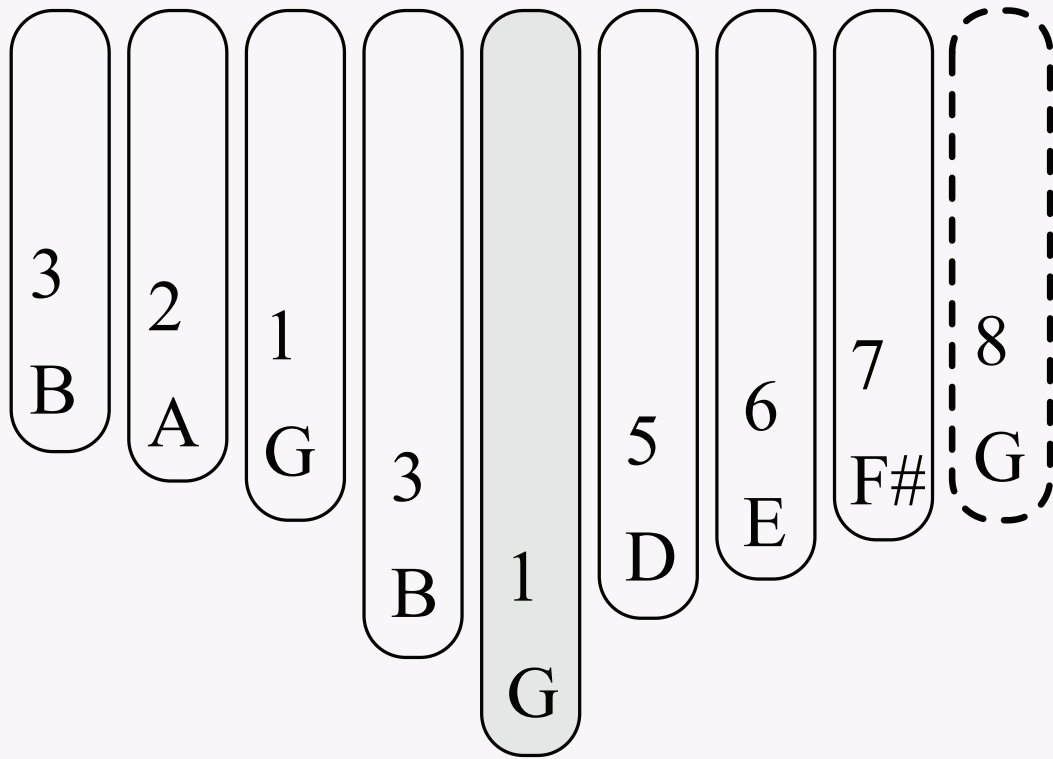


Please join me on the Student Karimba, a reconstituted version of what is thought to be the “original mbira.”

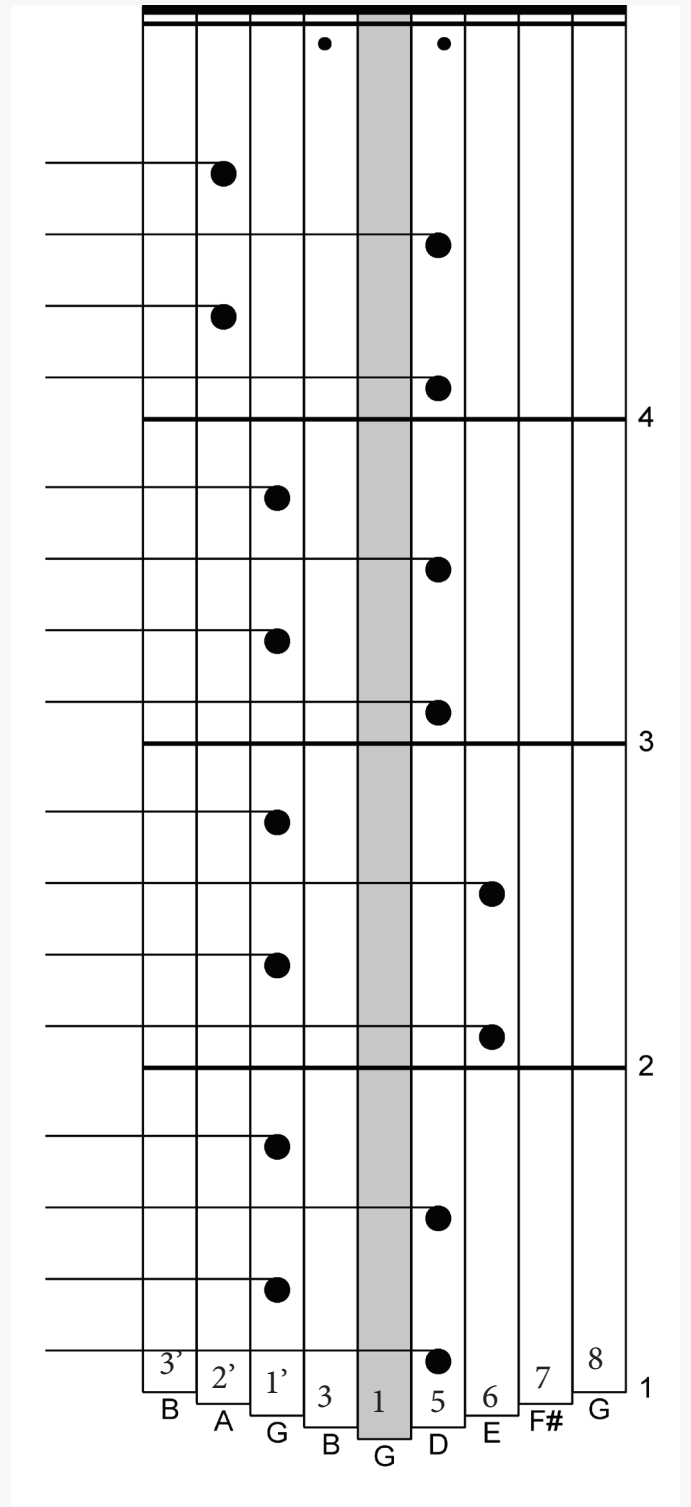


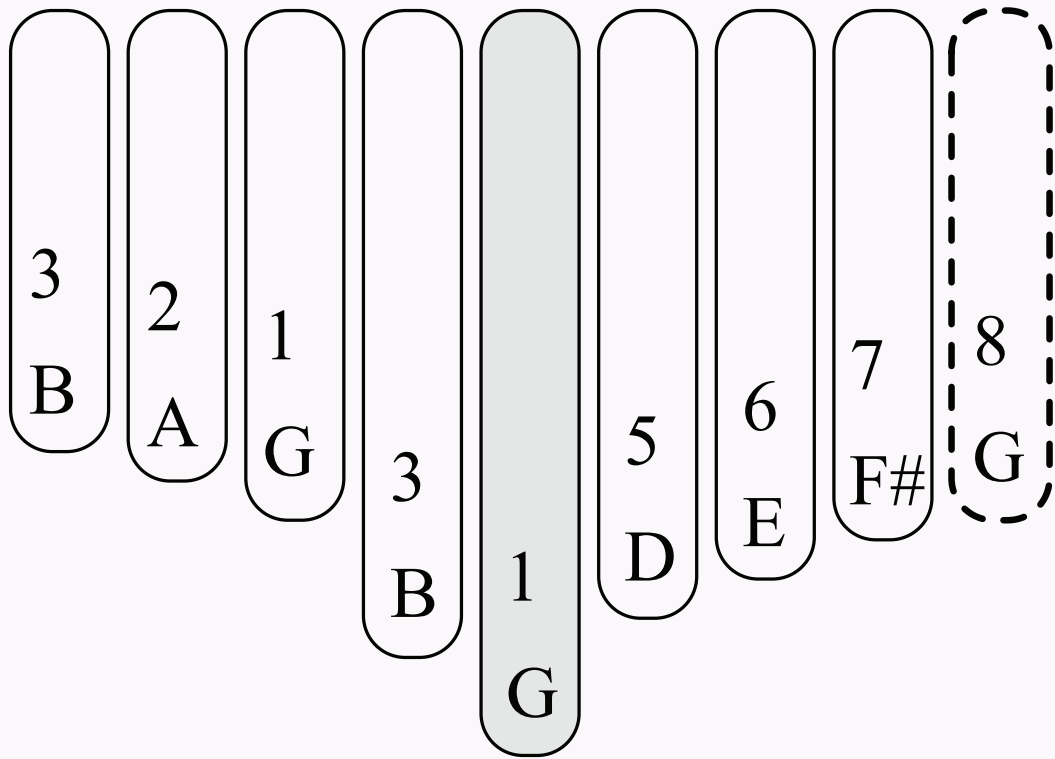
Student Participation Exercise





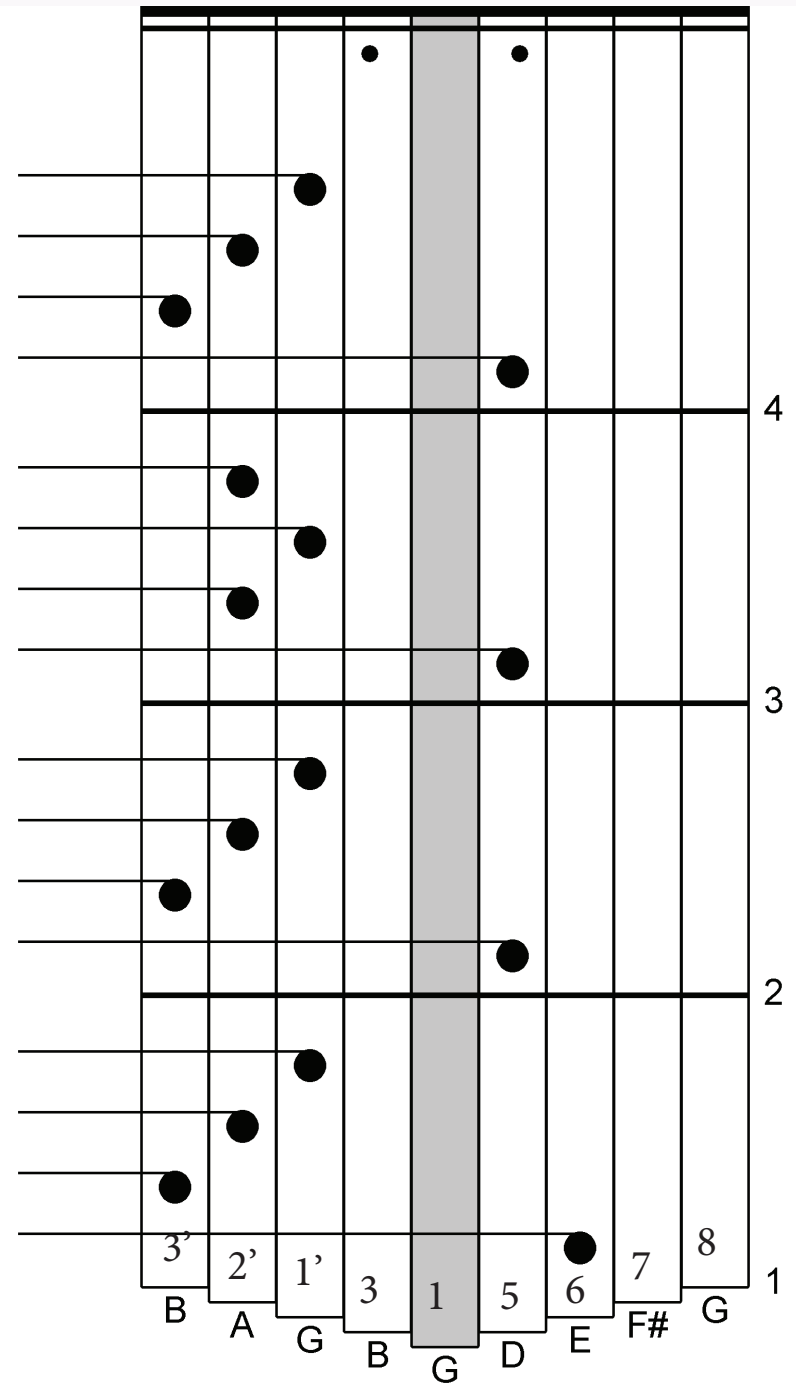
Something fun and easy that is representative of the “two phrase” music often played on the karimba.

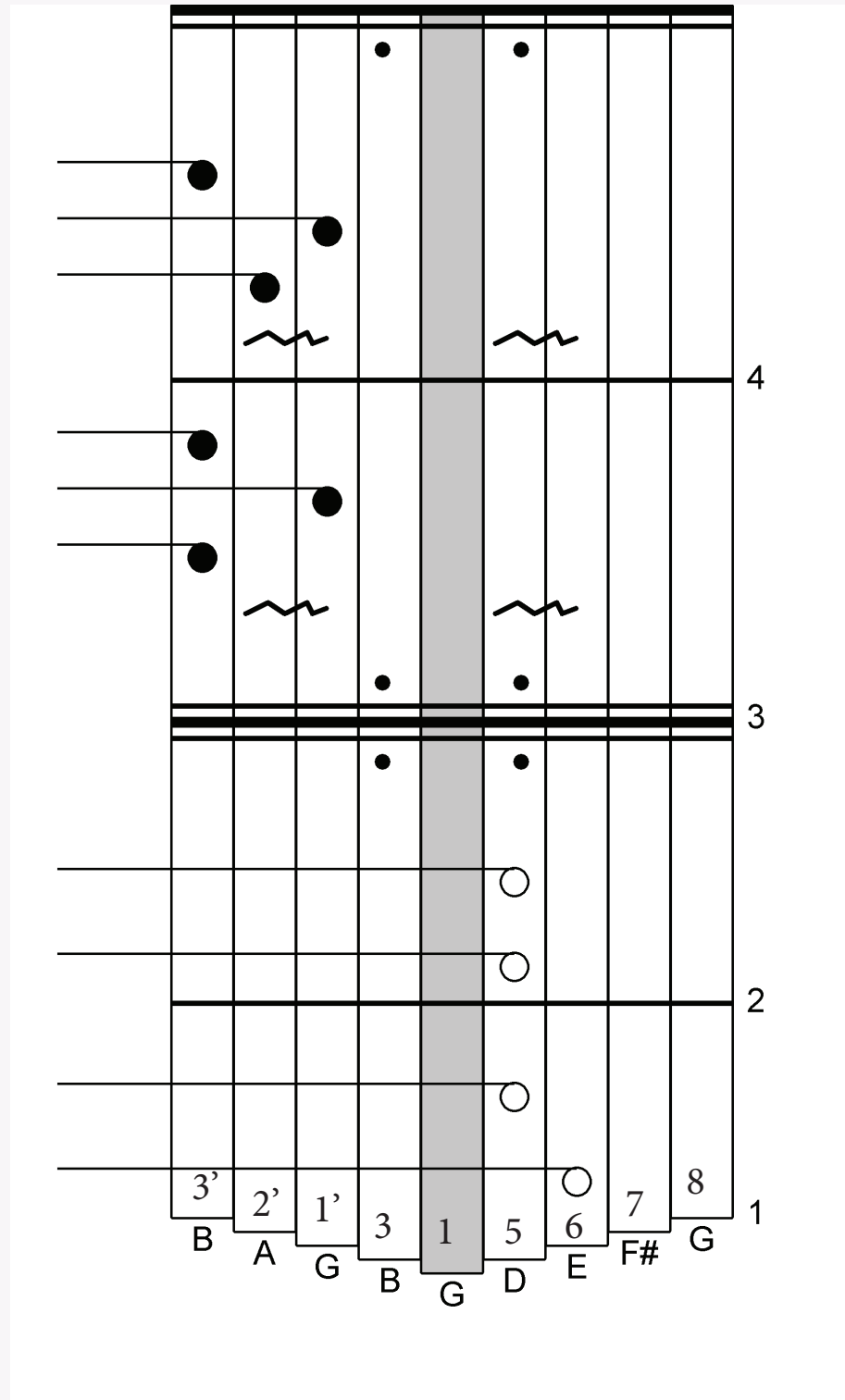
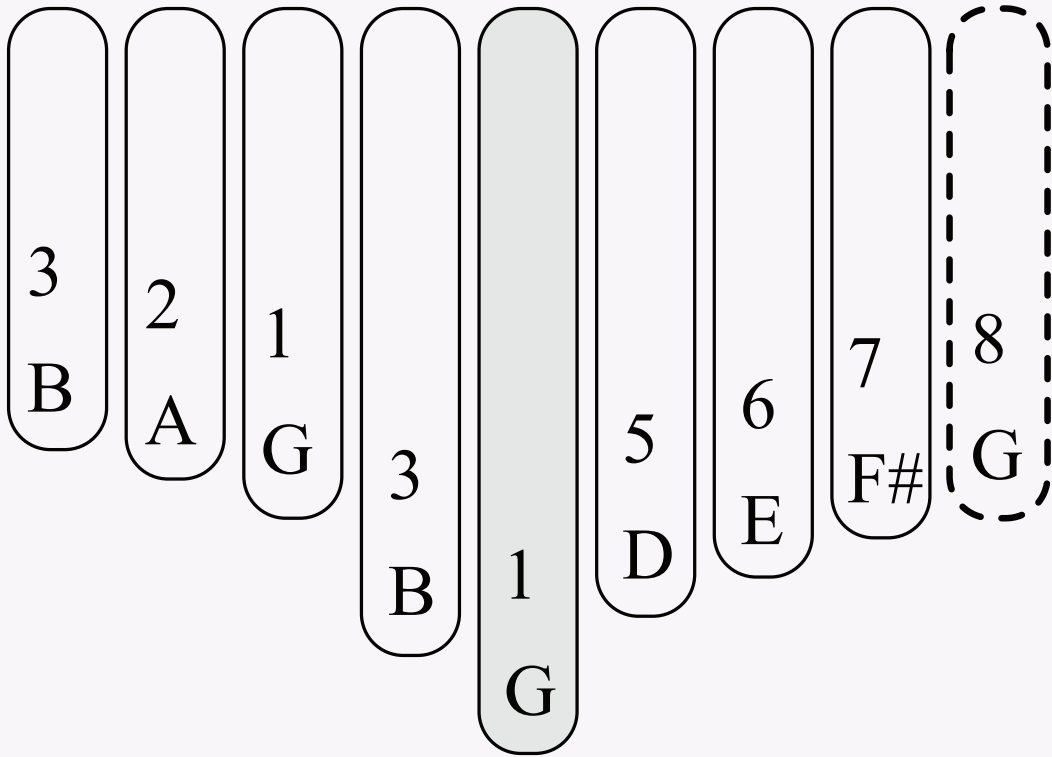




“Rova Ngoma Mtawasa”

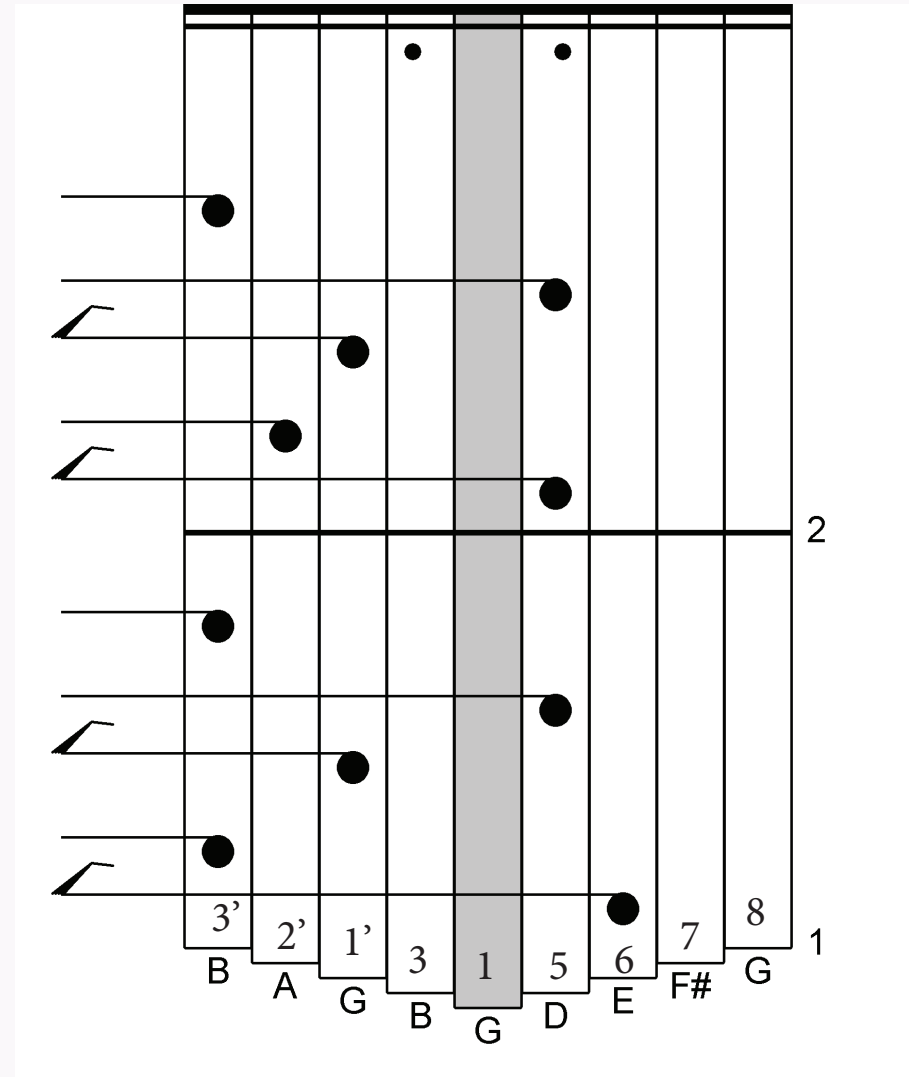
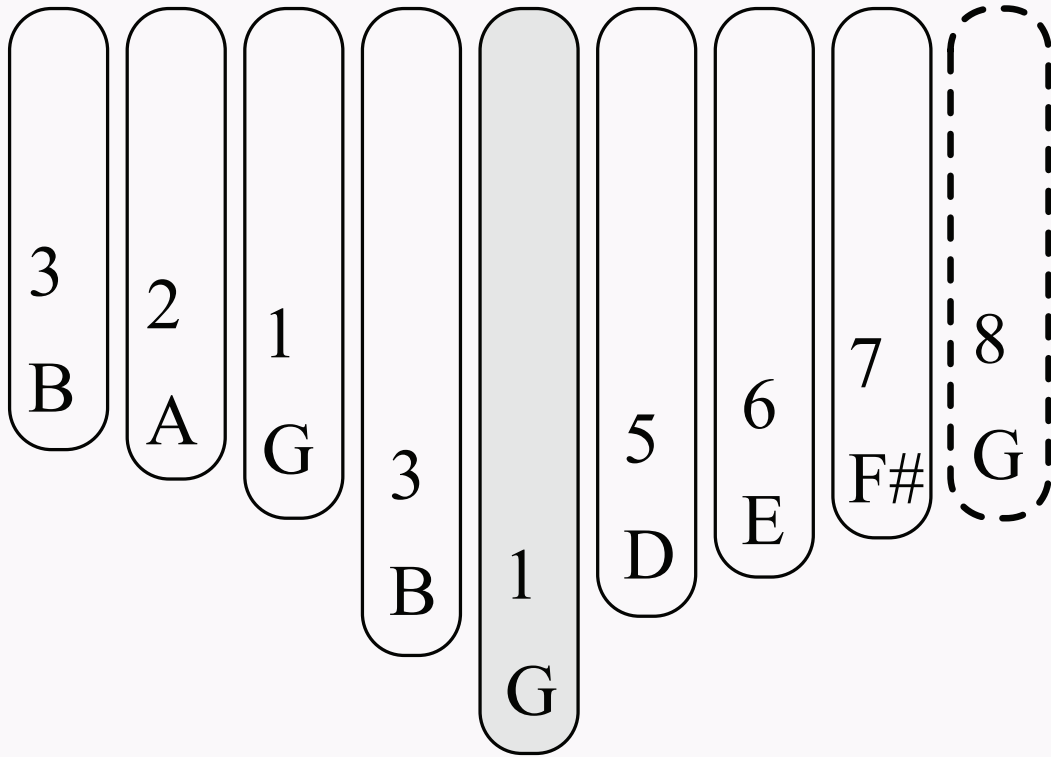
learning exercise 1





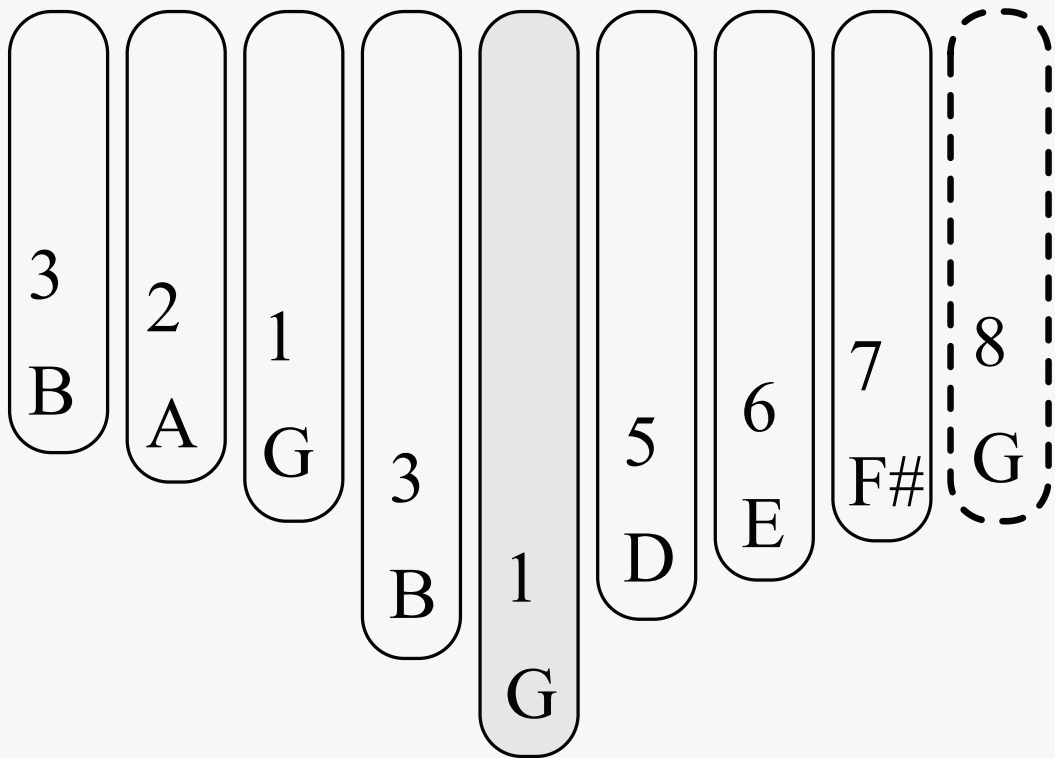
“Rova Ngoma Mtawasa”

learning exercise 2



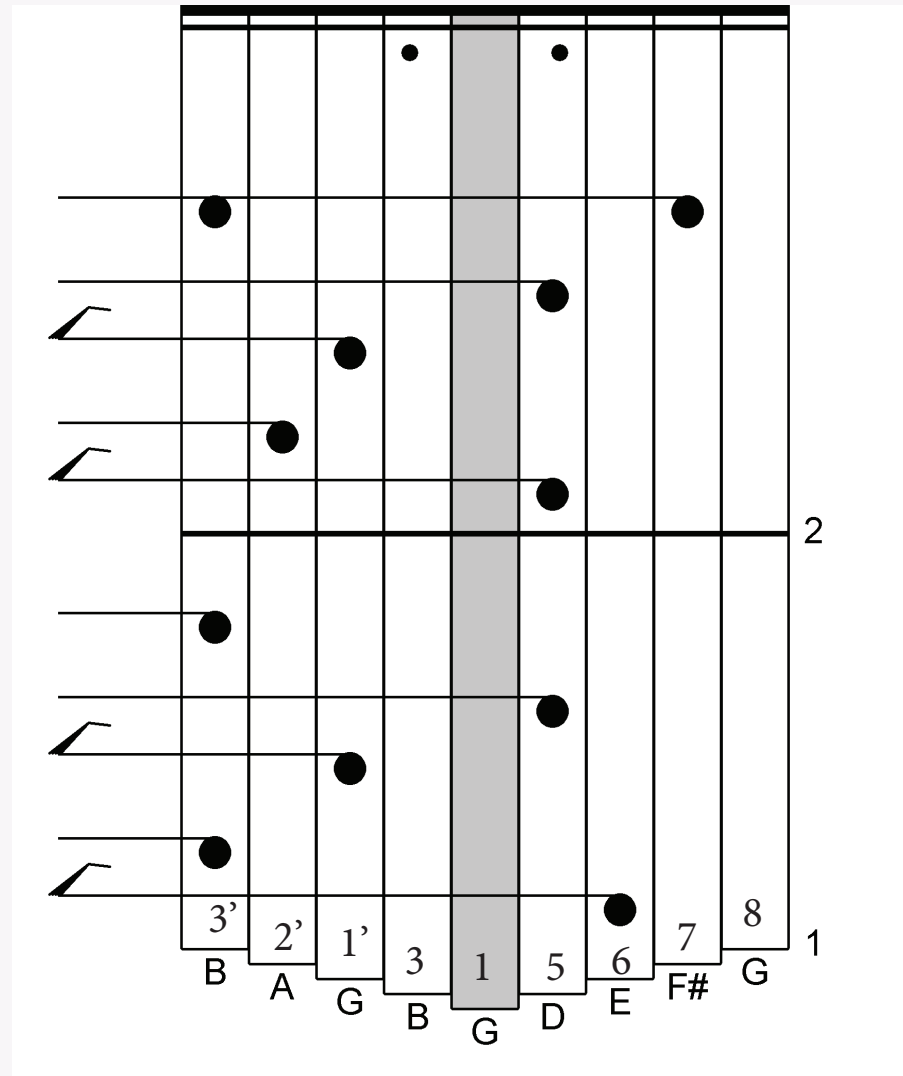
“Rova Ngoma Mtawasa”

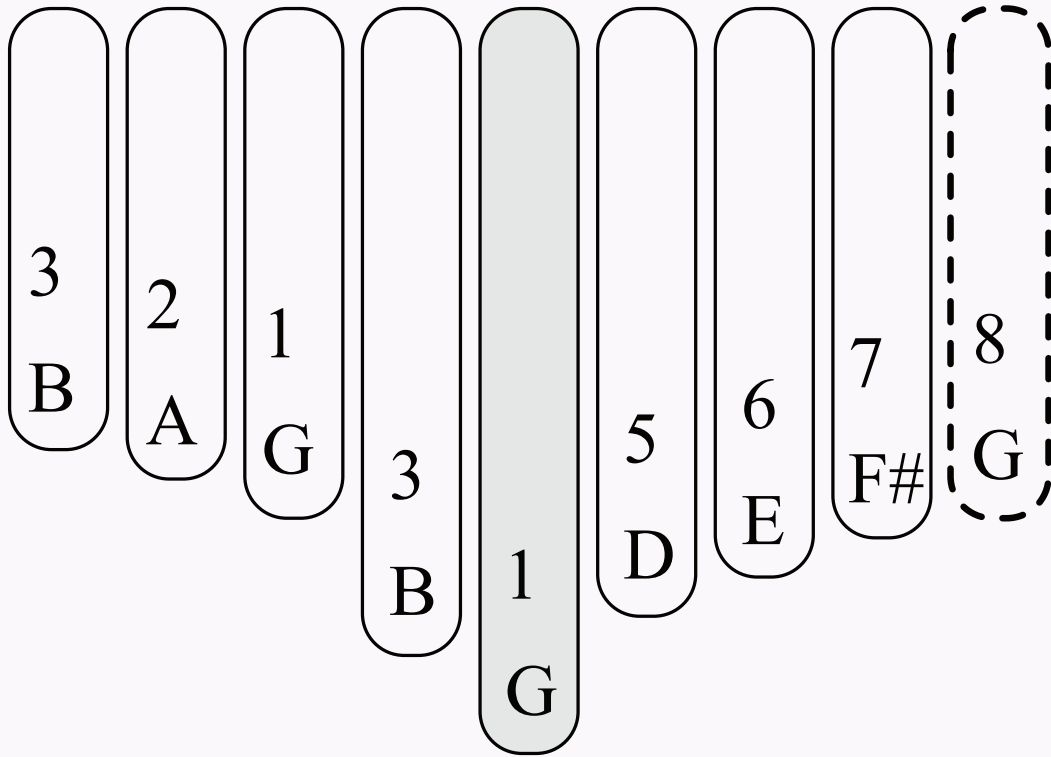
basic part



“Rova Ngoma Mtawasa”

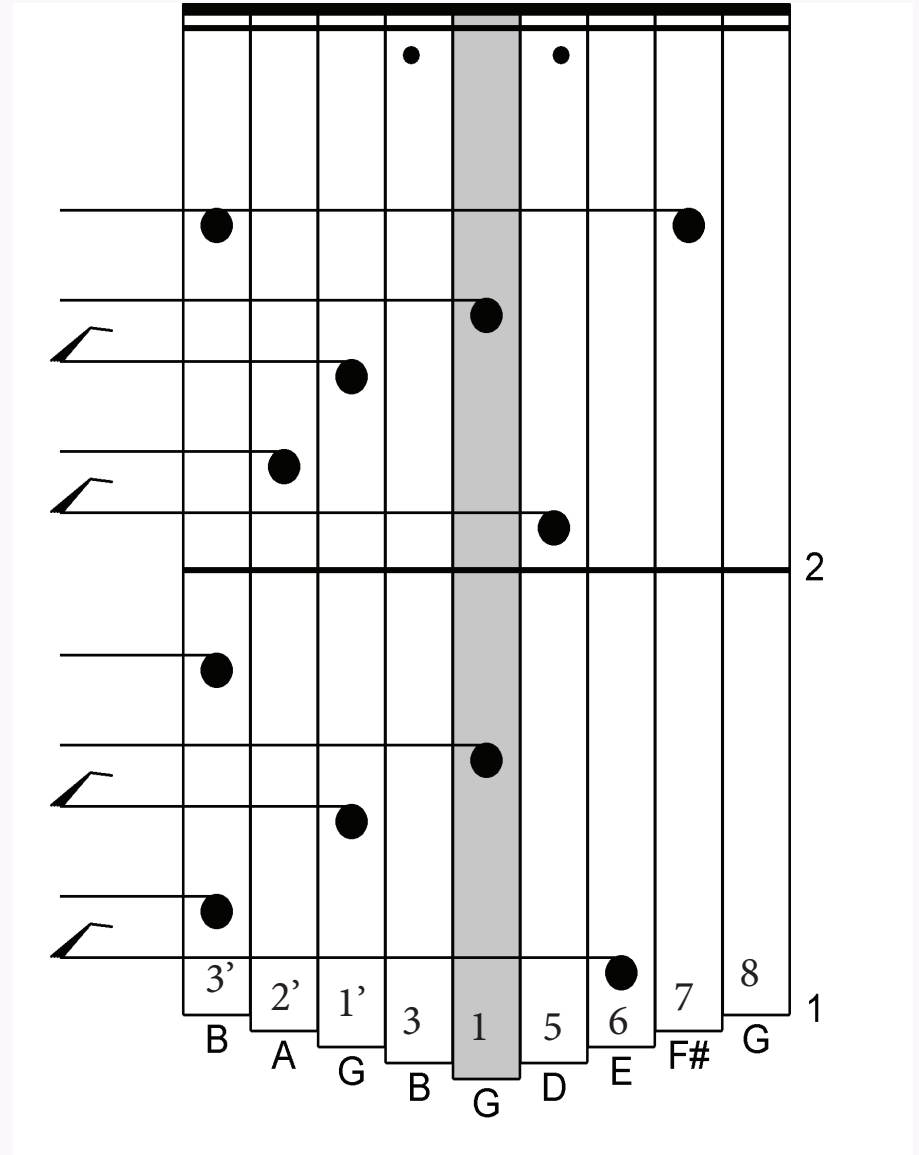
variation 1

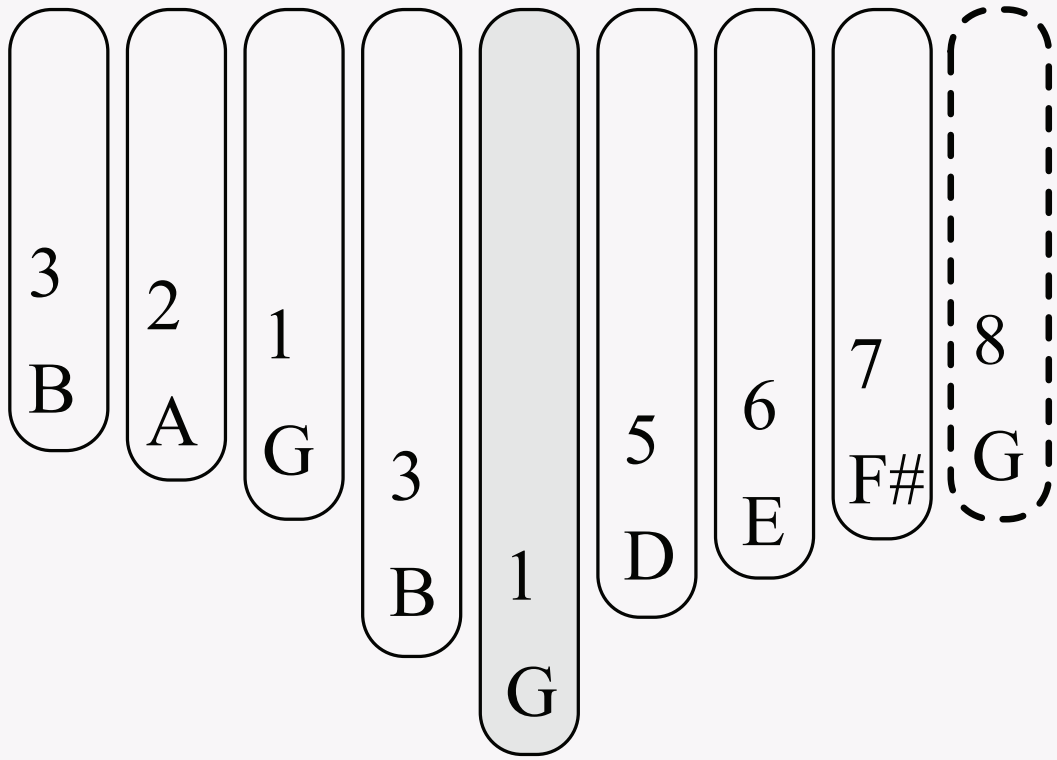




“Rova Ngoma Mtawasa”

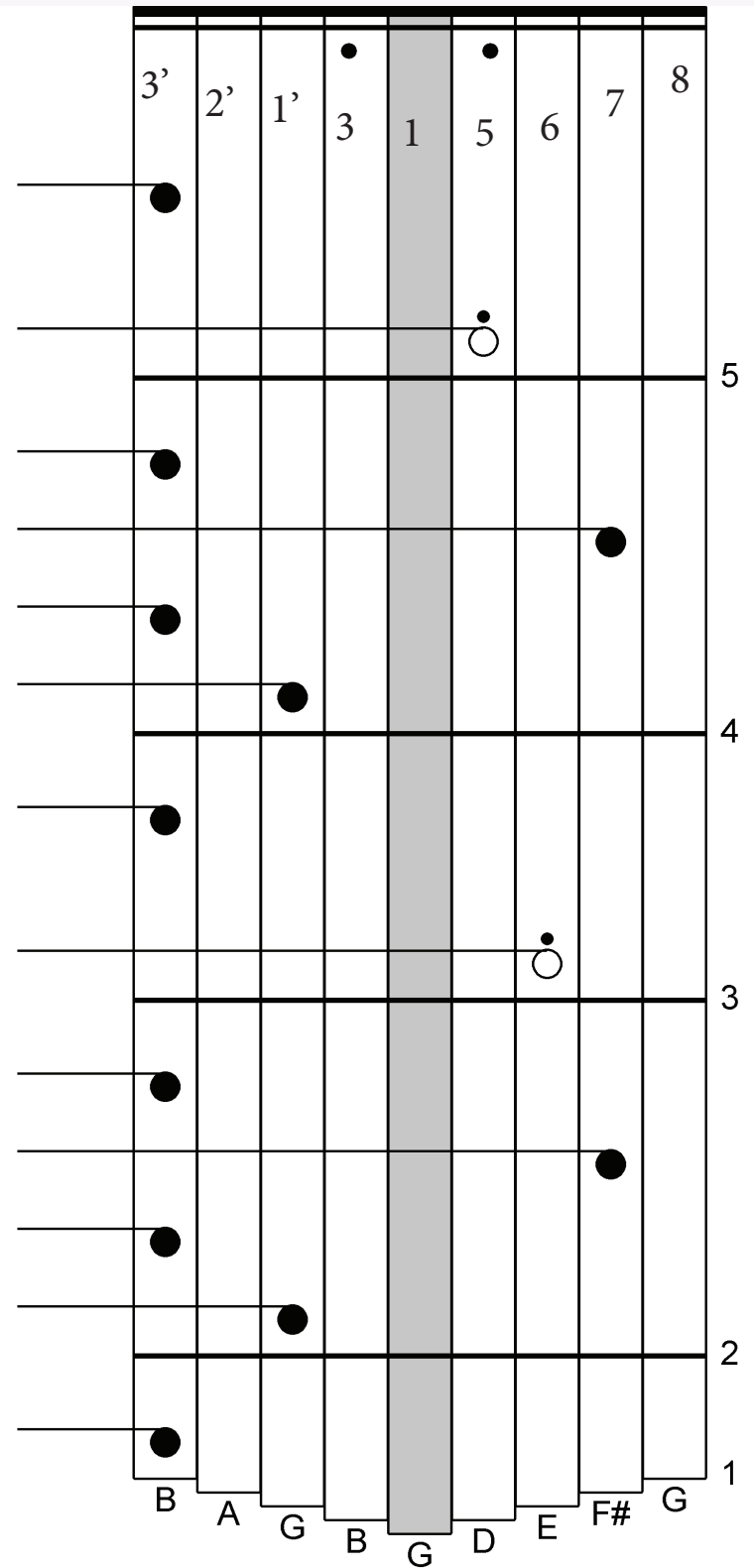
variation 2

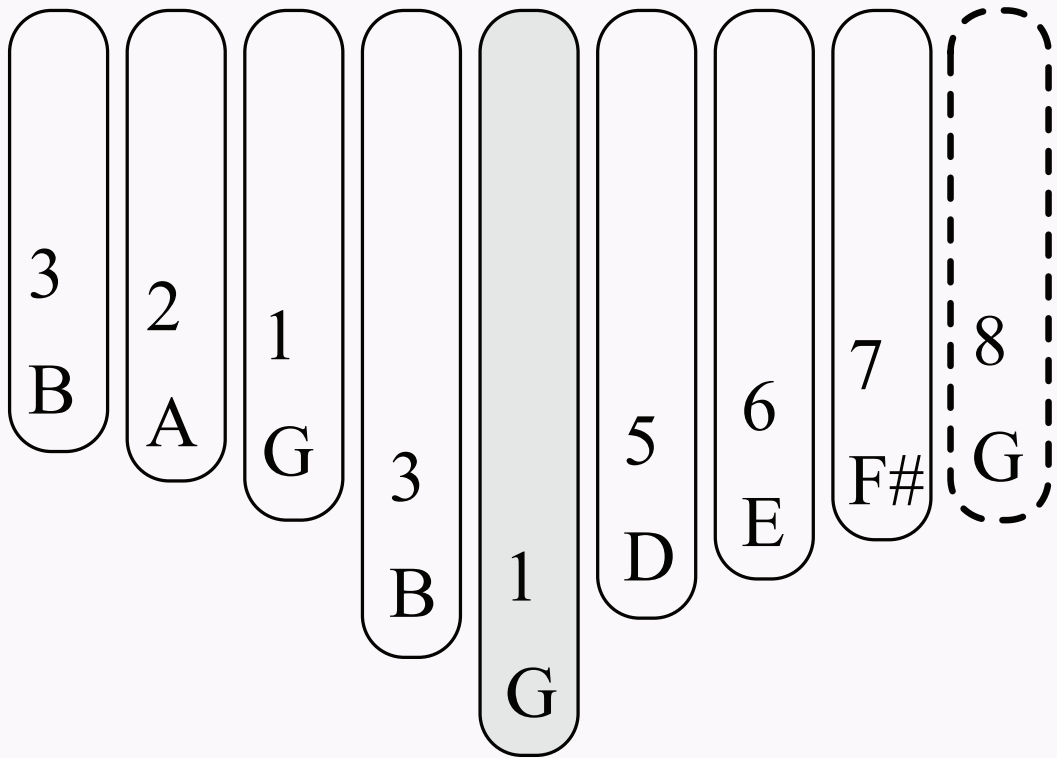




“Bustu M’Tandari”

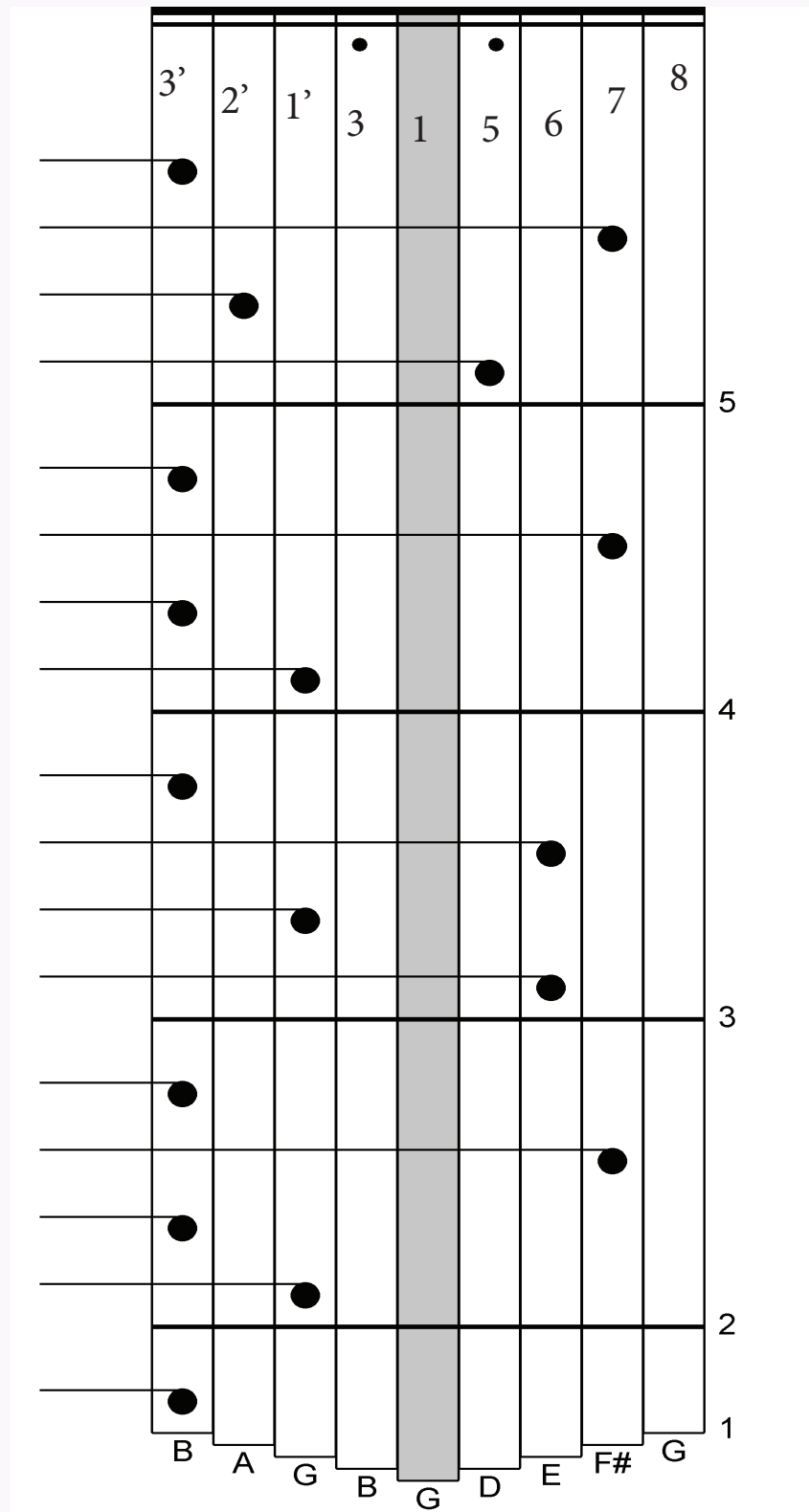
learning exercise 1

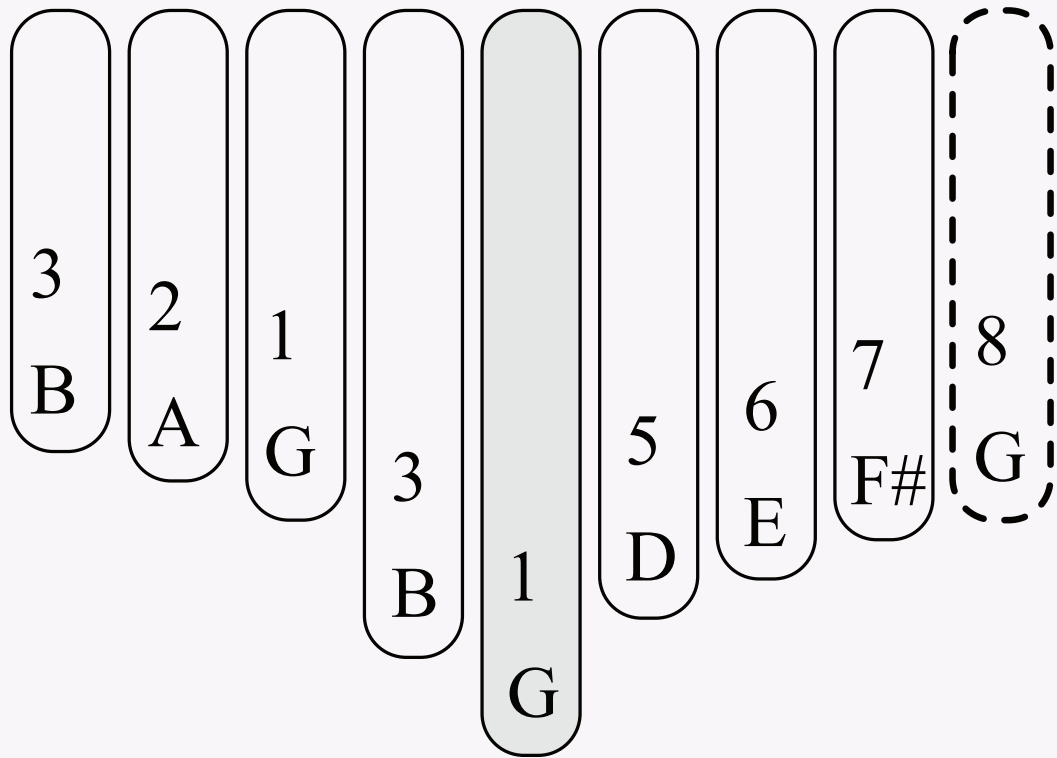




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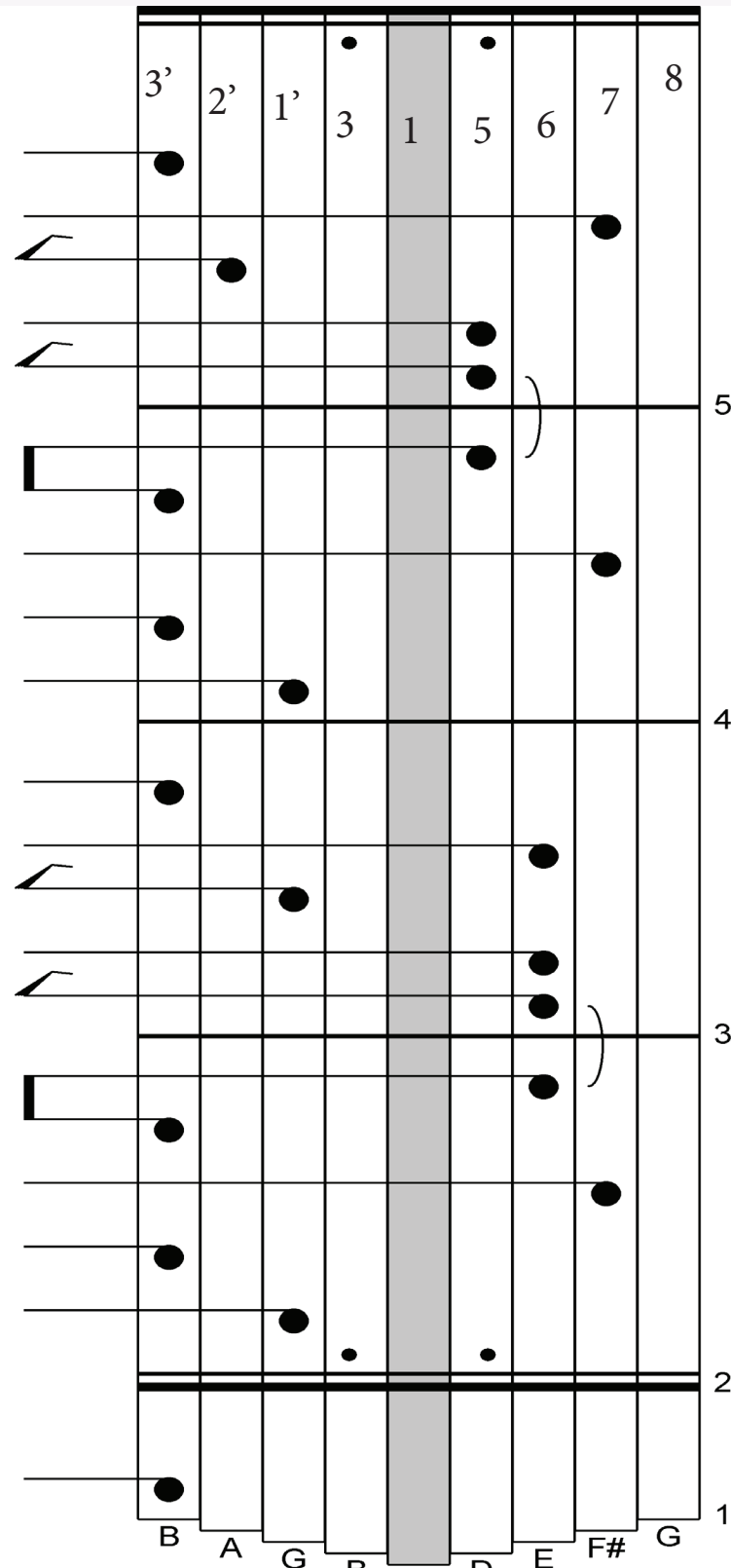
learning exercise 2

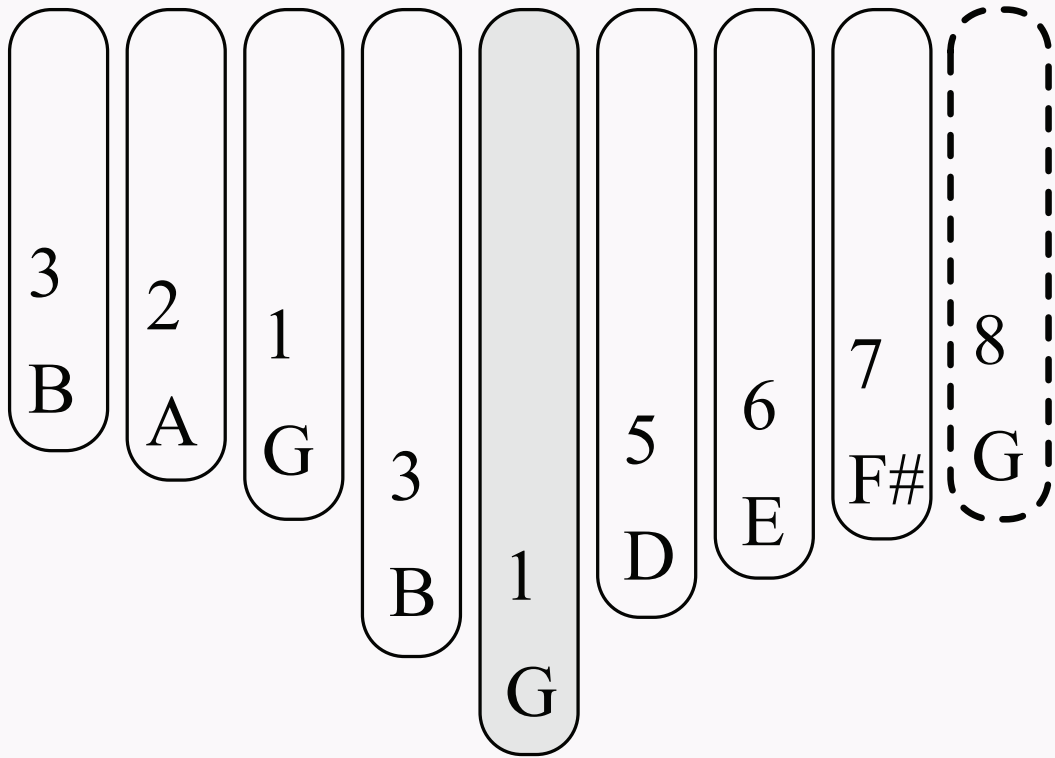




“Bustu M’Tandari”

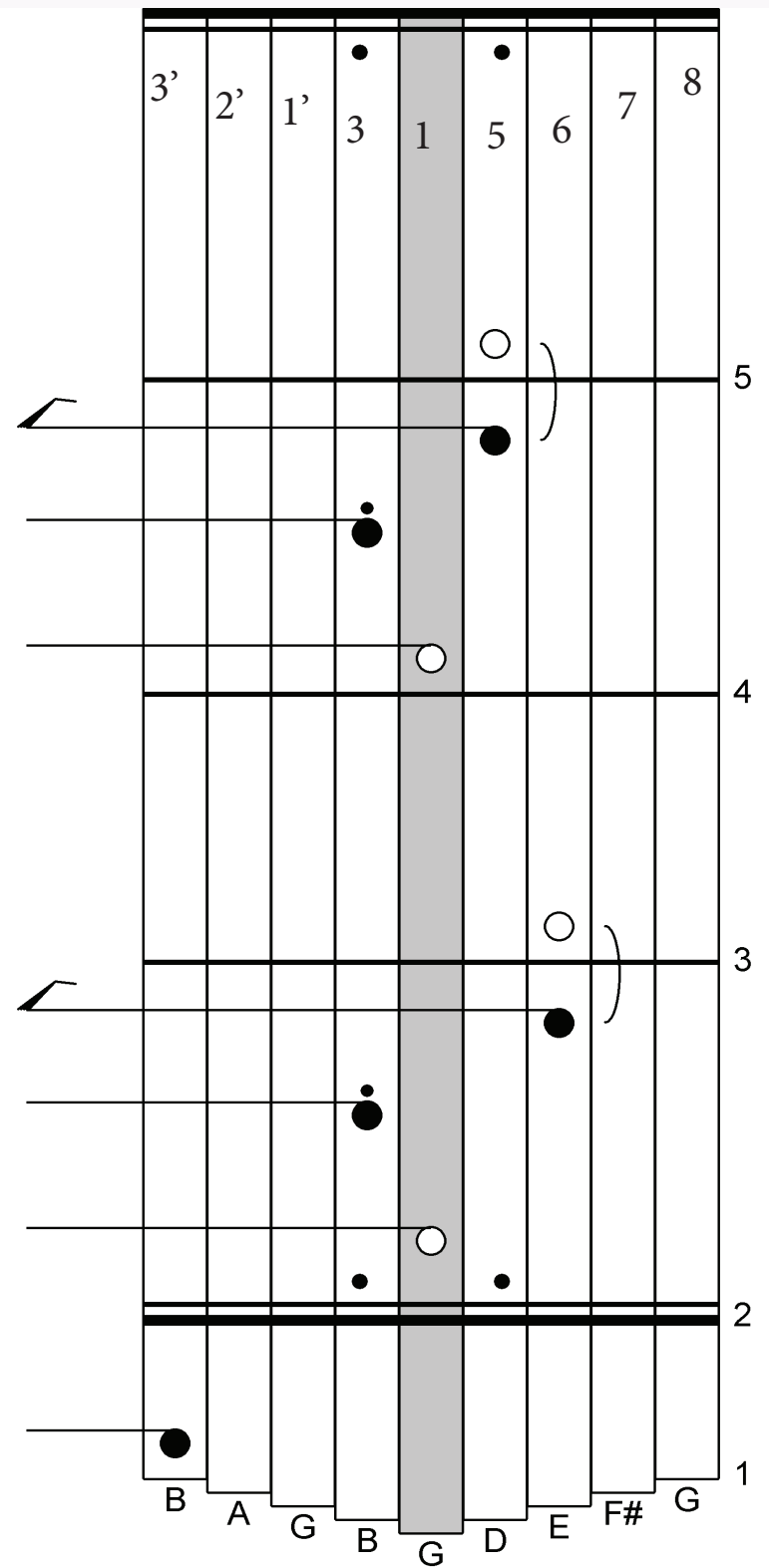
basic part (minus something...)

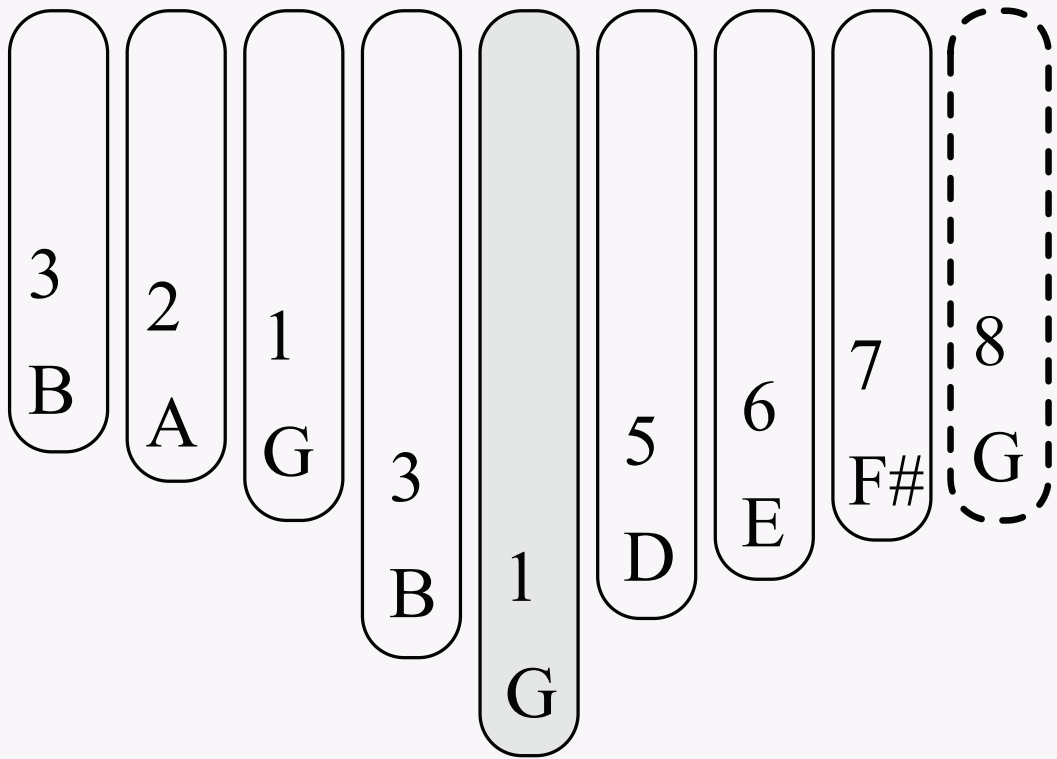




“Bustu M’Tandari”

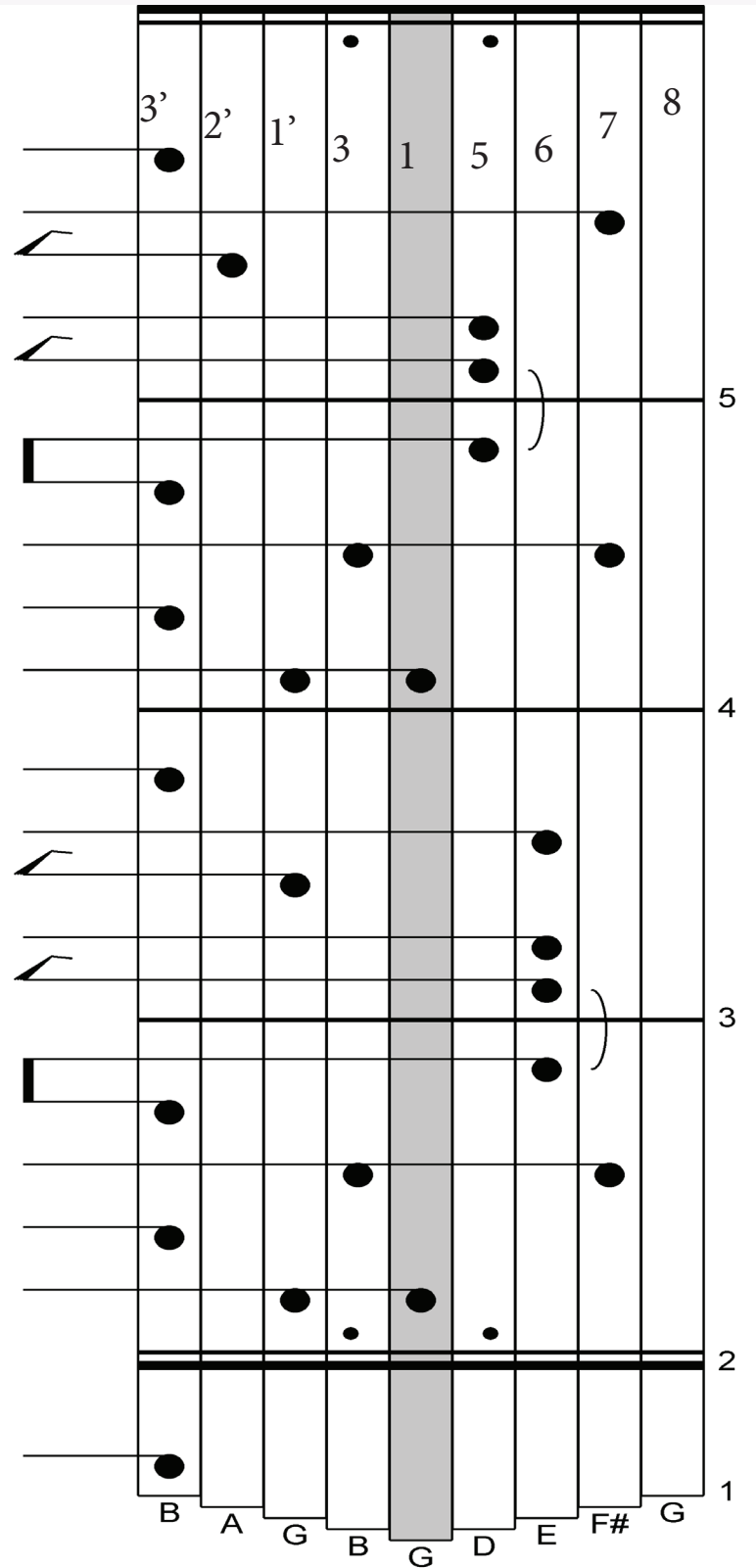
hidden part

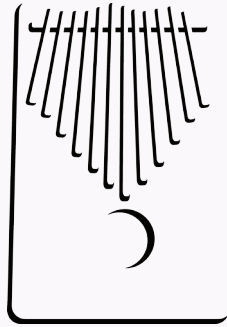




“Bustu M’Tandari”

full basic part



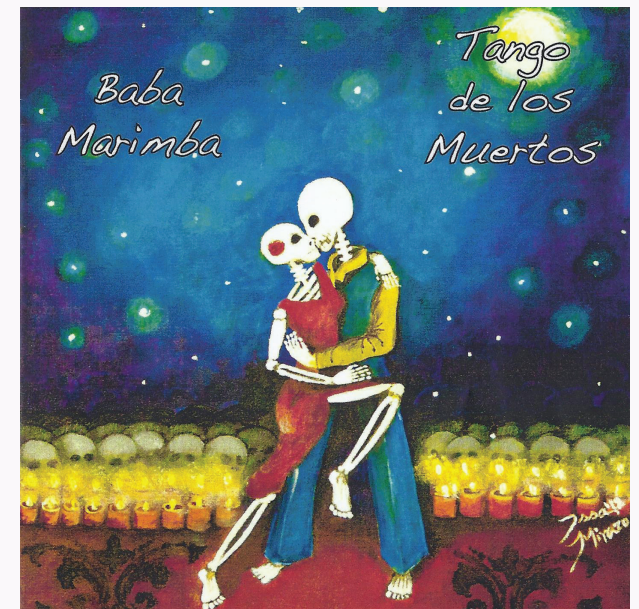
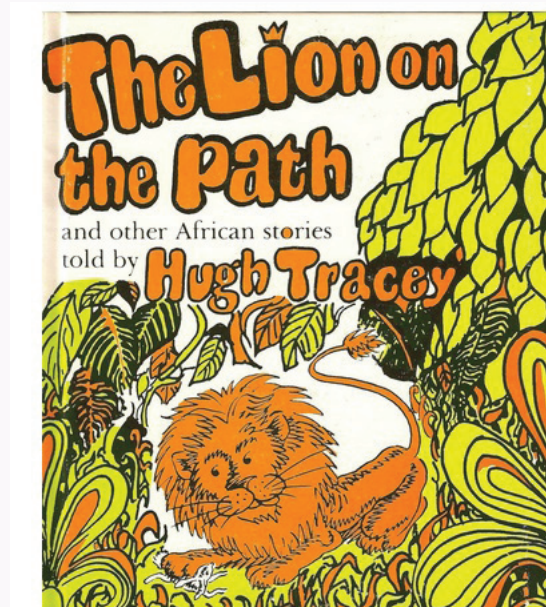


Kalimba Magic

Mark Holdaway, PhD

Tucson, AZ

Some of the little things you can get at
www.kalimbamagic.com:



Some of the bigger things you
can get at kalimbamagic.com:



www.kalimbamagic.com