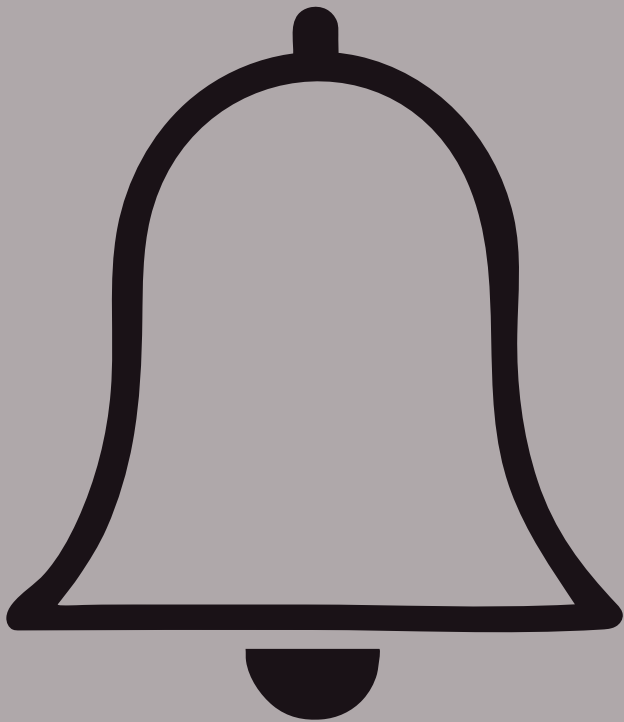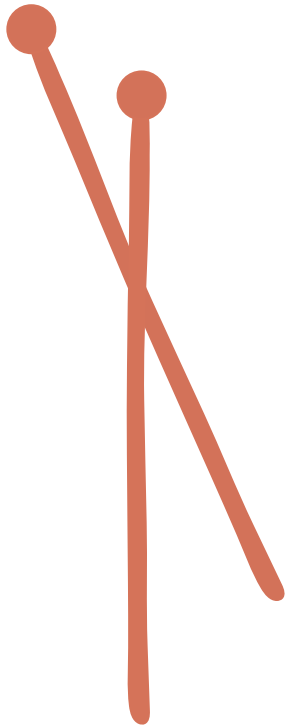*Sammy Lee.*

Sounds Familiar.

The process of 'marimba'; iPhone's default ringtone.

Ringer

Sounds Familiar.

Sammy Lee.

Ringtones are used to notify an incoming call; you may recognise the melody of 'Marimba', iPhone's default ringtone.

Since Apple's release of the first iPhone back in 2007, the history of 'marimba' has been hidden to all. Apple's most distinctive and catchy feature is also a confounding conundrum to many.

In this article, we will delve further into the origins and process of iPhone's default ringtone, 'Marimba'.

The Marimba is a percussion instrument, stemmed from the xylophone family. Xylophone-like instruments are commonly played across Asia, West and Central Africa. The term 'Marimba' is generated from 'ma', meaning "many", and 'Rimba', meaning "single bar xylophone". The Marimba is constructed from wooden bars, resonators (tubes which hang below the bars, typically made from aluminium) and played by striking the bars with wooden mallets with rubber ends, wrapped in yarn.

Dr Gerherd Lengeling was Apple's aural software guru, helping create GarageBand and believed to be the creator of the 'Marimba' ringtone on GarageBand. GarageBand is an Apple application, a complete music studio at the touch of your fingertips. GarageBand allows you to compose and edit digital audio such as music or podcasts. Back late 2005, Apple released GarageBand JamPack 4 for Mac computers, which included Symphony Orchestra Instruments. GarageBand included a widespread collection of software instruments and Orchestra loops; this enticing technological advancement provided the user with exceptional sound quality and utility. Thus, it has been rumoured that "Dr Gerherd Lengeling may have directly or indirectly created the marimba iPhone ringtone on a Mac using GarageBand. However, this is not apparently officially discussed or otherwise revealed." (Forbes, 2013). Though he is relatively masked, I believe Dr Lengeling is one of Apple's leading masterminds behind such a successful concept.

Symphony Orchestra

Why is 'Marimba' the default ringtone?

Ringtones operate to immediately attract our attention, redirecting you to pick up the phone. The science behind ringtones has been conducted by researchers from Bell Laboratories. As studied, "a ringtone should be very clear and distinct in the central audio range for human hearing. That range is from around 2 kHz to 4 kHz, with dynamics from quietest to loudest of around 96 dB." (Victor H. 2014). In saying so, iPhone's ringtone, 'Marimba' fits Bell Laboratories criteria for a suitable ringtone. "It is rich in tonality and contains a number of harmonic and anharmonic overtones. The sound is unique enough that the human brain could easily detect the sound even when layered in a crowded soundscape." (Forbes, 2013).

In conclusion, the 'Marimba' ringtone was a huge success in the ringtone industry and as iconic as the Apple brand itself. Thanks to the help Dr Gerherd Lengelling and studies from Bell Laboratories, Steve Jobs chose 'Marimba' to be the default ringtone out of 25 other set ringtones for Apple. From ancient instruments to digital trinkets, "the marimba ringtone alluded to cultural sophistication and echoed Steve's eclectic style."(Forbes, 2013). The mystery of this ringtone will forever remain but for now, 'Marimba' will still command everyone's attention.

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Human Hearing Range.

130 dB
Plane taking off

110dB
Pheumatic drill

96db
iPhone ringtone

80dB
Playground

60dB
Normal voice

40dB
Whispering

3