

## HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF AMERICA

ILLINOIS, IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI, NEBRASKA

# **QUAVERS** NEWSLETTER

JULY, 2017

Handbell Musicians









Officers

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# More Than Picking Music

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#### **ELECTED ELECTED APPOINTED**

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FINANCIAL ADVISOR: Stephen Swanson

MEMBERSHIP: Michael Allen

EDUCATION: Lauran Delancy

HISTORIAN: Open

RESOURCE LIBRARIAN: Open

	ILLINOIS	<u>IOWA</u>	KANSAS	MISSOURI	<b>NEBRASKA</b>
Chair	Ben Hafner 1S175 Dillon Ln Villa Park, IL 60181 630.696.6929	Lori Fenton 3213 45th St Des Moines, IA 50310 515.229.6712	Staci Cunningham 21370 Harper Rd Chanute, KS 66720 620.433.7223	Jeff White 2576 Pioneer Dr St Louis, MO 63129 314.803.6324	Linda Ashley 9107 Meadow Dr Omaha, NE 68114 402.320.5312 402.397.9551 (h)
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	Registrar Kristin Kalitowski- Kowal	Chimes Aaron Hansen	Past Chair Cherryl Cox	Membership, St Louis Sherry Boland	Chimes Coordinator Nancy Youngman
	Chime Mentor Diane Oster	Eastern Rep Cat Walker		<b>Christie White</b>	Jessica Kite Mike Allen
	Chime Loan Coordinator Patti Mangis	Western Rep Yvonne Johnson			Joyce Miller Angela Wright
	Food Coordinator Anna Piro				Charles Cohen
	Central Illinois Rep Pam Wall				
	Western Illinois Rep Don Wood	$\overline{}$	$\overline{\mathcal{C}}$		



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### <u>Kristin Kalitowski-Kowal</u> ~Area 8 Chair

Happy summer! Are you taking a break from handbells or are you still going strong? Directors may be looking into repertoire for your next season. This edition of *Quavers* offers some tips for that selection. Be sure also to check out our spotlights on some of the 2018 Bring It! Ring It! Festival repertoire that we announced last edition (which you can find here).

The Area 8 Board is excited to give you more information on the performing groups you'll be able to see next summer. Timbré will be performing our opening night concert on Thursday, June 27. Larry and Carla Sue will give us a taste of their 8 bell music on Friday, June 28.

Finally, we have some Area 8 business we need to attend to. Handbell Musicians of America has tasked the Areas with updating their bylaws and provided a guideline for doing so. It's been a process, but your Area 8 Board has completed the revision process with National and it is now ready for our members to vote on its adoption. The **Area 8 website** has a page that will link you to the current and proposed bylaws, as well as a chart about what the differences will be. We hope you find that the revisions create a more straightforward version. Voting will begin on July 20 and end on August 5. All active members will have a chance to vote online. Instructions will be sent via email in mid-July and will also be available on the bylaws update page of the Area 8 website.



# IS ALL THE FESTIVAL MUSIC APPLICABLE?

Area 8 chose the **Sesame Street theme song** because of its intergenerational appeal: everyone from children to youth to senior adults knows the song that's "sweeping the clouds away."

As a school or public organization, one might say, "Sure, we can do this!" But as a church, how does one tie Sesame Street into the service? Here are some recommendations that might convince you that, "Yes! It can be done."

- What about an opening for Vacation Bible School to introduce the kids to bells?
- This is sure to be a hit at the church talent show. Parents of kids born in the '70s and those same kids will have fond memories of growing up learning their ABC's and 123's.
- How about for traveling music as the little ones come forward for the children's sermon by just playing the first verse and chorus?
- Or when they leave the sanctuary headed off to Sunday School?
- If your church has a puppet ministry, the choir could open the show for them.
- Do you have a poet in your group? Try rewriting the lyrics to fit your church. Sunny day sweepin' the clouds away On my way to where God's peo-ple meet.

Can you tell me how to get, how to get to Kensington Street?

While **Bound for South Australia** is a fisherman's song, or "sea shanty" with a rousing refrain, it would work great for World Communion Sunday (**October 1, 2017**) or a missions festival. This arrangement calls for tower swings and mart-lifts that emulate the

motions of ship-work (*Heave away! Haul away!* )

If checking scripture references for the next year, be sure to watch for those that refer to fishermen: Is. 19:8, Jer. 16:16, Ez. 47:10, Mt. 4:18 or 13:48, Mk. 1:16, and Lk. 5:2.

And last but not least, Australia Day is celebrated **January 26, 2018**!





RING S'MORE is a special feature for the 2018 Area 8 Festival. Watch upcoming issues to find out more details.

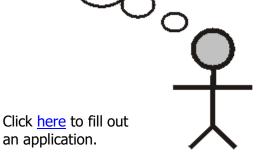


Pre-Conference Productor's Track



On Wednesday night and Thursday morning, Area 8 will be hosting a Pre-Conference Director's Track for those individuals that would like four additional hours of intimate director topics that are critical to being successful.

Sure wish I could teach at the Area 8 Festival....







Timbré is a professional lyrical percussion ensemble, featuring handbells, percussion, keyboards, and dance. We are dedicated to advancing the artistic growth of handbells by setting high standards of musical performance and by encouraging composers to write new works for handbells. Our Artists are some of the handbell world's finest handbell musicians and teachers.

Timbré's Artistic Director, Michèle Sharik, is known world-wide as a teacher of ergonomic handbell techniques, as well as a handbell soloist and conductor. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Visual and Performing Arts from Cal State, San Marcos and a Graduate Certificate in Performing Arts Medicine from Shenandoah University. Michèle is Master Teacher of Handbell Techniques for the Certification Program of the Handbell Musicians of America, and serves as Past Chair and SoCal Regional Coordinator of Area 12.

Find Timbré on Facebook, and visit our webpage at <a href="https://www.Timbre-Ensemble.org">www.Timbre-Ensemble.org</a>
Don't miss this amazing opportunity to learn from some of the best!



Carla has been ringing with the Wokingham All Saints handbell group for over 20 years. She also spent a number of years as a member of the South East Region Bell Orchestra, the Rowland Ringers Ensemble, and Hurst Handbell Ringers. In recent years, Carla has been a member of Pizzazz Handbell Trio, representing the UK at a handbell festival in Tallinn, Estonia, and the Finchampstead group "Inspiration", which was nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2012. Larry is a fifth-generation Californian, and was introduced to handbells in 1987. He has been a member of several church bell choirs as well as Bay Bells, the longest-running community ensemble on the West Coast. As a bass-ringing specialist, he was the Artistic Figurehead and conceptual founder of Low Ding Zone, the worlds first bass-only handbell ensemble, and wrote most of their repertoire for their eight-year existence. Larry is also an experienced director and clinician for handbell festivals and events. Larry and Carla co-directed the handbell choir at Los Altos UMC until 2016 when they moved to Holland, Michigan.

#### **Ben Hafner**

#### ~Illinois State Chair

When it comes to selecting music for a community handbell ensemble, there are multiple things to consider. I have a reminder list of things to think about when choosing music, and the challenge is always to strike the right balance within each of these considerations:

Ability level/s: This may seem obvious, but sometimes not so much. The reality is that there is rarely an ensemble where everyone is capable of ringing level 5 pieces, for example. But there will inevitably be *some* who are, and who will be disappointed if there are too many level 3 pieces on the program. It's a matter of finding enough balance so as not to frustrate the more advanced ringers while not overwhelming the less advanced.

Musical variety: Again, it's obvious that a program should always have variety in terms of tempo, dynamics, techniques; to keep an audience interested as well as the ringers. This would be true of any musical medium, but most especially with handbells. The auditory and visual experience is very different with a fast rhythmic piece than a slow, lyrical one. Both are necessary to showcase our instrument, and the goal should be to find a balance that demonstrates all that handbells can do.

**Old vs. new**: Repeating pieces from previous seasons serves three purposes: it saves on rehearsal time, it saves money, and it allows for revisiting pieces that ringers particularly enjoyed. But if an ensemble repeats too frequently, or has too many repeat pieces within a program, it can be a 'downer' for the group and a negative message to repeat audiences.

**Categories**: Most of us tend to divide handbell music into the broad areas of sacred, secular, classical, or original compositions. One of the benefits of a community handbell ensemble is the advantage of playing secular pieces. It's something most ringers want and expect, since many ring with church groups as well. But on the other hand, community ensembles frequently play concerts in churches, so at least some sacred pieces might well be expected or even required for those performances.

Themed vs. eclectic programs: As a director, I like themed programs. A program of "Movie Themes" or "Music from Around the World", for instance. It is, though, more challenging to find enough balance of musical variety and categories within some themes. A program of "Movie Themes" eliminates original compositions, for instance.

Audience vs. ringer appeal: These two considerations can often be in conflict. Ringers, especially more advanced ringers, frequently want to play the newest and most esoteric original compositions. But most audiences (those made up of non-ringers and non-musicians) tend to want to hear what they know. How do we keep ringers and audiences happy? Again, balance.

Ringer input: It doesn't come as a surprise that ringers have strong opinions about the music they want to play. A lot of the balancing act required in programming music needs to take the ringer into consideration. But actually asking ahead for ringer input? A scary thought for some directors, but it can be an empowering thing for them to have some input, even if all suggestions can't be accommodated.

Striking the perfect balance within all of these areas as well as among them is impossible. But being aware of them and at least taking them into account helps us as directors to arrive at a program that is fun, challenging, and achievable for ringers. And more importantly, a memorable and educational musical experience for our audiences that furthers interest in the art of handbell ringing.

Andrea Handley, Musical Director of Chicago Bronze

#### Lori Fenton

#### ~Iowa State Chair

As a director choosing music for a handbell choir, the most obvious consideration is the minimum number of octaves your choir can ring. For some choirs, such as my own, there are no options to ring more than the 3-octaves we have. So of course, I will only search for 3 or 3-5 octave music.

The second most obvious consideration is the difficulty level of the music. Choosing music that is too simple will only cause boredom among your ringers making them wonder why they are participating. Choosing music that is clearly too difficult will only cause frustration and possibly friction between ringers who can handle their part and those who can't. Most directors understand this distinction and know what levels are best to keep their ringers challenged. Given these parameters, however, does not mean that beautiful arrangements at easier levels of difficulty should not be chosen. Several times I have been surprised by the comments my choir has received after ringing simpler arrangements. Choosing a range of difficulty levels also varies the practice and performance experience for each ringer, even giving those who face more performance anxiety an encouraging, positive ringing experience.

Within each difficulty level ranking there can be considerable variation as well. Ringing techniques, chromatic musical themes, optional handchime parts, and rhythm all contribute to how challenging a piece can be within any given level. Tempo alone can shift the difficulty level of a song. Take "Carol of the Bells" for example. Playing it at 180 beats per minute is certainly harder than playing it at 120 beats per minute. The director has the flexibility to alter a song's level of difficulty just by the tempo in which it is conducted. I certainly evaluate handbell music across all levels I've deemed appropriate for my choir when evaluating and deciding what music to choose.

The third consideration in picking music for my choir is actually a combination of elements: the musicality of the piece, its appropriateness for the season or service, and the growth factor for the handbell choir. Is the music interesting? Does it have a technique new to the choir I'd like to introduce? I'm always looking for music that has a different sound than what we've either recently rung or usually ring. As I choose several music pieces months in advance, I consider the variety between my choices. I value giving our church congregation new listening experiences from the bells each time they ring—a surprise factor of sorts!

The handbell choir I direct started as a hand-chime choir as that was all our church could afford. We have since acquired a 3-octave set of English handbells and are now in our fourth year of ringing with both types of bells. It has been an exciting and rewarding journey for both me and the ringers. There's something new that can be learned from each song. It might be challenging rhythms, a new combination of ringing techniques, or just trying to make a song as musical as possible. This is the growth factor I consider when choosing music. This is also the reason why I favor moving ringers to different ringing positions.

So do I ever make poor choices in music? Yes, there have been a few regrets, but more often than not, I find the music selection that initially gave me pause is often the song that ends up becoming a favorite of ours and our church members. I know from personal experience that successful ringing can be defined in many ways. It might simply be just ringing the entire song without a major blunder. Or it might just be that "oh my gosh, why did I pick this song" piece the handbell choir knocks musically out of the park. This unexpected thrill is why many continue to love handbell ringing! Don't be afraid to stretch outside of those comfort zones—yours and your ringers—and be bold when choosing your next piece.

> Karen Kraemer, Director of Music at First Unitarian Church, 1800 Bell Ave., Des Moines

#### <u>Staci Cunningham</u> ~ Kansas State Chair

Before I became a director, I never really thought about "behind the scene" happenings. Once I took over as director, I quickly learned what all had to happen to be ready for choir rehearsal. You may not realize it, but a lot goes into choosing what music the choir is going to play.

I have spent many hours sitting on the floor of my living room with music spread around me, notebook in my lap, pencil in my hand and a computer beside me with the internet ready to search at my command. I have looked through and listened to hundreds of pieces of music just to find that perfect piece that will fit the event for which we are playing. So, what exactly, do I look for when picking music?

The first church I directed had me spending countless hours planning out the season. This is because we had to follow the lectionary and the music had to correspond with the verses. I would look up the verses, then find songs that would complement those verses. Armed with my list of songs, I would then look at music sites, my personal library or the church's library to see if I could find pieces with, or close to, the titles that went with the verses. If I found a title, I still wasn't done! Next, I had to look at the octaves to make sure it fit the choir and I also had to look at the level to make sure it wasn't too hard or too easy for the choir to play. Whew! Once I found something that might work, I would try to listen to it to see if it really was something the choir could learn. Only then would I order the music, or pull it from the files and place it in front of the choir.

The church I direct now is a little less time consuming, but it still sees me on my living room floor. I no longer have to plan for pieces to match the lectionary, so I have a little freedom there. Now I get to listen to

pieces and if I like them, we can play them! Of course, I still have to look for pieces that fit my choir, i.e. Level 1-2 and 2-octaves. I also look at the type of piece it is; one that is fun and upbeat for prelude and one that is shorter and more contemplative for offering.

And now you know some of what goes on "behind the scenes". Your director does do a lot more than stand in front of the room waving their arms. If you think about it, thank them for all they do at your next rehearsal. I'm sure they will appreciate it!



ANYONE can become a certified handbell musician. By going through this program, you can further your education and then become qualified to teach at the state, area and/or national level.

Visit the <u>national website</u> to gather more information.

Watch the next *Quavers* for which certification classes will be offered at the Area 8 Festival in Omaha.

#### **Jeff White**

#### ~ Missouri State Chair

Selecting music is always one of the fun parts of directing a handbell choir. Many times, I'm excited to consider the possibilities and then get to hear the music come to life and sound. One of the biggest factors, of course, is the group for which I'm selecting. When I conducted the ringers at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, I had an evolution of ups and downs throughout my 15 year tenure. We'd added the fifth octave to the set. At one point, they were able to ring level 4 music!

It has been my philosophy to actually disregard the number of octaves and levels when selecting music. I ask myself "What is possible with this piece?" I take some consideration of the season, especially for a church choir, but not too firmly locked in to a particular tune. I've known directors who have told me "Oh my choir couldn't ring level 3 music." Well, you don't know that for sure. Sometimes just one single measure can move a level up. Plus, they're humans, so they are capable of learning. I look for music that is enjoyable for the ringers to ring, and for the intended audience to hear. I try to have a mix of easier music and one or maybe two pieces that will challenge them. The secret of getting your ringers to be able to ring higher levels is to give them something in that level.

My favorite memory was when I had the choir learn a piece which was level 2. They struggled with it, but eventually we had it learned and played it in church. I continued to challenge them with music, and a few years later, pulled out that initial level 2 piece. They had it learned again within a rehearsal or two. One of my ringers said "Why was this so hard last time?!" which was met with resounding agreement! My response: "Because you've grown in your skills."

So my advice to directors: Don't lock yourself in because you think "oh they can't do this." Maybe they can...it just might take longer. For a harder piece, select it in the fall with the goal that you'll ring it by the end of the season—or even next season. Work on it gradually, and mix in easier stuff so they can get some "wins" too.

### BRONZE FESTIVAL ENSEMBLE

Don't have a community group in your area but you'd like to give it a try? Sign up for the Bronze Festival Ensemble under the direction of Larry Sue.

### <u>Linda Ashley</u> <u>~ Nebraska State Chair</u>

Many factors come into account when selecting music for my ensemble. The first most obvious factor is purpose. Is this music for worship or concert, seasonal, general or for a special occasion.

For my own church choirs, I generally do not purchase music blindly. I make use of the demo CDs and mini-scores provided by the publishers. I listen to the CDs, following the score, mainly reading the part that my weakest player would be ringing. If that part is accessible to that ringer, the rest of the choir will likely be comfortable with the piece. Most of my ringers are not comfortable with changing positions within the choir.

At our church, we have a small committee that selects the hymns for each month. They have been providing me with these lists. Our choirs play for the prelude each Sunday, so if we have an arrangement of one of the hymns, I try to use that piece for our prelude. If we have no music to match the hymns, I try to fit the piece to the theme of that Sunday. Hope Publishing has a lectionary calendar that lists hymns, choral and handbell selections appropriate to each Sunday of the church year. I have found this very useful. You can find this calendar at <a href="http://www.hopepublishing.com/r plans/work.plans.cgi?cal\_id=80">http://www.hopepublishing.com/r plans/work.plans.cgi?cal\_id=80</a>

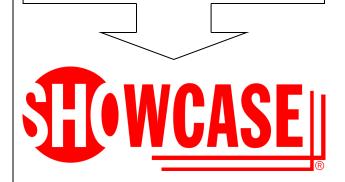
For our church choirs' upcoming concert, I have tried to choose a variety of tunes: melodic and thoughtful, lively and engaging, tunes that show off the various techniques unique to handbells, and a patriotic tune or two as our concert is the week before the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We are even making use of our boomwhackers, just for fun. We have two 3-octave choirs with a number of ringers ringing in both choirs. I am combining the choirs in order to ring a 5-octave piece as a finale.

The possibilities are practically endless.



Worship track opportunity at Bring It! Ring It!

Performance opportunity for attending full ensembles, soloists and small ensembles in 2018.



# Upcoming Events

2017	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
7/8-11	Master Class in Conducting Dr. William Payn	Hyatt Regency Orange County Garden Grove, CA	National
7/9-13	Intergenerational Handbell Camp	Heartland Center Parkville, MO	Camp
7/11-15	National Seminar various	Hyatt Regency Orange County Garden Grove, CA	National
7/13-15	Distinctly Teen Hart Morris	Hyatt Regency Orange County Garden Grove, CA	National
8/19	St Louis Area Reading Session	Kirkwood Baptist Kirkwood, MO	HAGSTL
2018	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
Mar 8-11	Distinctly Bronze West Fred Gramman	Resort at the Mountain Welches, OR	National (details n/a yet)
Jun 27-30	Bring It! Ring It! Area 8 Festival	Hotel RL Omaha 3321 S 72nd St Omaha, NE	Area 8
Jun 28-30	Bring It! Ring It! Area 8 YouthFest	Hotel RL Omaha 3321 S 72nd St Omaha, NE	Area 8
Jul 17-21	National Seminar Various	Grand Rapids, MI	n/a
Jul 19-21	Distinctly Teen	Grand Rapids, MI	n/a
Aug 6-11	18th International Symposium	Cairns, Australia	International



Do you have unanswered questions regarding YouthFest?

Contact Beth Ann Edwards

