



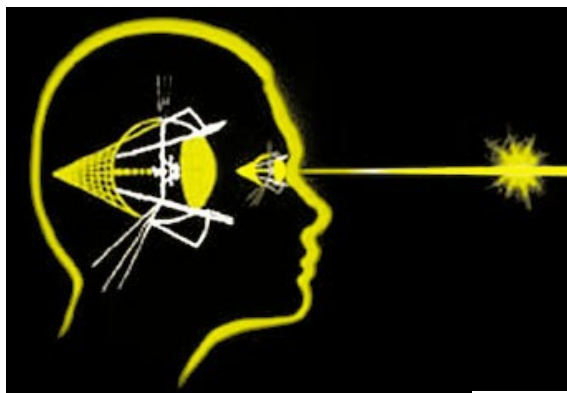
HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF AMERICA

ILLINOIS, IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI, NEBRASKA

QUAVERS NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER, 2016

Handbell Musicians
OF AMERICA



Visual Arts

9/10

VISUAL HANDBELLS

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ELECTED	ELECTED	APPOINTED
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	ILLINOIS	IOWA	KANSAS	MISSOURI	NEBRASKA
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The Raleigh Ringers

David M. Harris, Director

8516 Sleepy Creek Drive • Raleigh, NC 27613

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A community handbell choir

She got me. Sharon Schmidt embarrassed your chair in front of our Division 1 ringers at the 2016 Festival/Conference Ring in the Land of Lincoln! Right there in full view of everyone, I demonstrated how important it is to **see** what you are doing. Part of the class in basic ringing skills involved the participants being filmed while ringing a handbell to show where improvements could be made in the basic ringing gesture. I was in the room adjusting some bells and Sharon asked me to be the first victim.

I picked up a bell.

I rang the bell, thinking that I had a fair idea of what to do with my arm, my wrist, my hands, my fingers. After all, I'm the Chair, right?

Well, the video showed it all. I had no idea that my wrist was moving as much as it was **clearly** doing on the screen of Sharon's phone.

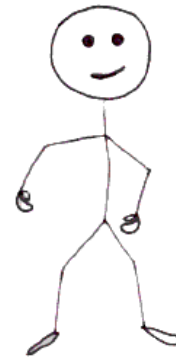
I was amazed at how valuable it was to **see** myself ring.

I put down the bell.

Read all about it in this and every *Quavers*. Your board works so hard to bring you quality events, and quality reading. If you think about it, this publication through the years has become a textbook for ringing, directing, teaching, and enjoying handbells.

[Patrick Gagnon, Area 8 Chair](#)

This is
my
thank you
dance!



Many thanks to all of you who attended our wonderful Festival/Conference in Springfield, especially to those of you in Division 1 who didn't laugh all that hard as I was shown the truth about my habits.

Many thanks to those of you who have taken the time to read my articles every other month; I do hope some of you have found what I have said to be useful, or at least clear.

Many, many, many thanks to the Area 8 board for all of the hours and all of the passion. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as your chair, and I will enjoy supporting Kristin Kalitowski-Kowal as she makes exciting plans for an **mind-blowing** Nebraska festival in 2018.

Patrick Gagnon, Outgoing Area 8 Chair

The visual presentation of our instrument is one of looks and techniques. It is an ever going balance of the two to keep audiences entertained and alert to our performances. Uniformity within a group gives you an appeal that can make any performance enjoyable.


Looks are extremely important and can set you apart from other groups. Community groups often select to wear specific uniforms and or outfits when performing. It keeps it at a professional level and looks pleasant to the eyes. Another way to keep up the looks is to have a pleasant look on your face while playing, be that smiling or just looking like you are having a good time. An audience does not want to see glowering faces and "mistake" faces when they attend a performance.

Techniques are the other part of the visual side of bells. Constantly think of how your arms are moving. To keep it entertaining, when you get to long whole notes, keep the arms in a constant flowing circle. When I played *Carillon* with Chicago Bronze, I had repeated whole notes on the C2 for at least 32 measures. Instead of just ringing the bell and letting it sit out there until I rang again, I kept my arms moving the bell in big circles. This motion, on any bells, keeps the sound moving and looks great, when all are doing it. When you have repeated notes, walk the bell up in your circle. Remember though to match your movement to the ringers on either side of you. I am a taller person, and that is something I am constantly reminding myself, especially if the person ringing next to me is height challenged. To keep it looking nice for the audience, I bring my circles lower to match the person next to

me, so our strike points are in similar spots.

At the end of the day, to keep our visual presentation going, we all need to remember just one simple thing: Have fun! By having fun, we are able to show that we really do enjoy what we are doing which is ringing bells. It will show in everything that you do, and the rest will come easy!

[Ben Hafner, Illinois State Chair](#)



"Audiences want to see you having fun and enjoying what you do, not glowering faces!"

I recently returned from the 17th International Handbell Symposium (IHS) in Vancouver, British Columbia, and wanted to share with you just a few highlights from this event.

If you're not familiar with the IHS, it's put on by the International Handbell Committee (IHC) which is made up of the national organizations from the US (including Puerto Rico), Canada, UK, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan and Australasia (Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania), with Singapore being accepted just this year. The first event was held in 1984 in Arcadia, California, and was a joint effort between the US and Japan, and has been held every two years since then, rotating among the member countries.

Each member country contributes one piece, and one conductor, to the repertoire, with the host country providing two. The Handbell Musicians of America was represented by Area 8's Ed Rollins, National President, who conducted the 700+ ringing delegates in Hart Morris' arrangement of *Deep River* (and also taught them the MIZ-ZOU chant). Each conductor had a total of about 2 hours over five days to rehearse their piece with the ringers before presenting a final concert on Saturday afternoon to a sold-out crowd.

In addition to rehearsing, there were a number of "concerts" held during the week. Several groups, ensembles and soloists performed for the rest of the attendees, which was a great opportunity to perform for a captive and appreciative audience. Although, what can be more nerve-racking than performing for **other** bell ringers? I think some of my favorite performances were Bells of the Sound ringing *Rhapsody in Blue* (on 7 octaves) and anything rung by the youth choirs from Hong Kong, under the direction of Emily Li (who was also one of the massed conductors.)

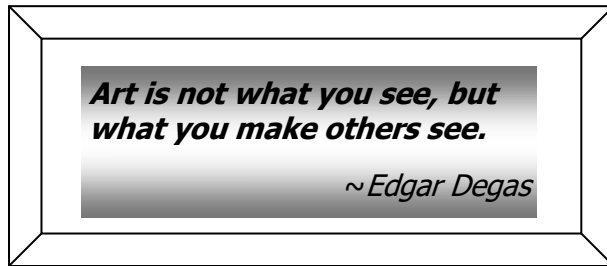
All of their music was memorized (some of the kids performed several times) and they **all** smiled.

Attendees also had the opportunity to attend a number of classes. While many focused on various aspects of handbells from ringing to conducting to member development, there were other classes that provided an opportunity to share in the cultures of the member countries such as Latin Dance, Introduction to Japanese Music, and Writing Chinese. I took a class on English Style Church Bell Ringing which provided an in-depth look at how church bells are hung and rung. We also had the opportunity to "change ring" some standard patterns on handbells which was difficult enough; imagine trying to ring them with eight different people pulling on large ropes!

Throughout the week, I was constantly reminded that no matter what language we speak or where we come from, music truly is a universal language. All of us playing the same notes at the same time on virtually the same instrument following the same director – we're all "speaking" the same language and we have no differences. The motto of the IHC is "World peace through the spirit of music." One certainly believes that is possible at an event like this.

The next IHS will be in Australia in 2018, followed by Hong Kong in 2020 and then to the US in 2022 (no location determined at this time). It was on my "bucket list" to make it to an IHS and now I hope to attend another one at some point. It is truly a unique experience that I would encourage any ringer to take advantage of it—at least once.

[*Lori Fenton, Iowa State Chair*](#)



What is art? If you Google "what is art", the first definition to pop up is "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a *visual* form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power." Ok. Well, let's Google "what is music." Music is "vocal or instrumental *sounds* (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion." Hmm. Well, as handbell musicians, I believe we are musical artists because we not only make beautiful music, but the visual side of handbells can be beautiful as well.

We've all heard our directors say, "circle, Circle, CIRCLE!!" But why do they insist that we move while we play? I mean, really, they not only want us to ring the correct note, at the correct time, at the correct dynamic, all while watching them and now we have to MOVE OUR ARMS?!? Why?! Well, it's actually very simple. What is more memorable, playing a CD of your favorite musical group or actually *watching* your favorite group? Uh-huh. According to researchers at the University of Iowa, when it comes to memory, we don't remember things we hear nearly as well as things we see or touch. I actually experienced this this summer while attending Intergenerational Handbell Camp. I was watching one of the groups perform, and I remember them doing a good job on the piece. I can't remember what the piece was, but the way they ended the piece was spectacular and moving to me. They all struck the last chord together and lifted their bells up, but instead of bringing the bells back down to damp, they all reached up with their other hand and silenced the bells by grab-

bing the rim of the bell! Only then did they move together to rest the bells on the table. I was stunned at how that move *finished* the piece. As a spectator, I enjoyed not only *hearing* them play, but *watching* them play as well.

That brings us back to why we need to move when we play. We can be a good choir that the audience likes to listen to, but then we become that CD that is in our car as background music. Now, add in the visual aspect of moving and we draw our audience into the moment and create a memory for them. We can "paint" a picture for them that sparks an emotion and sears that memory into their brains. They remember how we made them feel by not only what they heard, but by what they saw. *That* is what makes a good choir a great one. So the next time your director suggests you move those arms, or circle-Circle-CIRCLE, or hold the final note and drop down together to damp on the table, remember that it is not for *us* that we are doing it. We are making a memory for those who are *watching* us. Walt Disney summed it up best when he said,

"Do what you do so well that they will want to see it again and bring their friends!"

Who are we to disappoint Walt Disney?
Happy Ringing!

[Staci Cunningham](#) ~ [Kansas State Chair](#)

True Confession Time... I **do not** enjoy listening to sound recordings of handbell music! I prefer live performances and video recordings because I can “see” the music as I listen. I stress to my ringers that handbell ringing is a visual art—our audiences are watching what we do as well as listening to our music. At a recent handbell festival, the director told the ringers that she was going to add some “visuals” at the end of the piece to “enhance the music.” I have heard many directors say “let me see the crescendo” or “you need to look like the music.” So what are some things we should (or should not) do, to enhance the visual side of handbell ringing?

- Starting and ending a piece is so important. Stand tall, with hands at your sides, until directed to pick up bells. When the director gives the cue, everyone moves together, in sync. Sometimes a piece requires a quick pickup, sometimes a slow pickup, but it should be planned and rehearsed. At the end, no one moves until the director gives the cue. Practice this—it will make your group look unified and professional.
- Counting out loud: This is something we should never do in performance! It’s distracting and calls attention to individual ringers. It shouts “I’m insecure!” Yes, you can count (silently), but don’t let the audience see it.
- Don’t make a face (frown, grimace, look at your neighbor, shake your head, say I’m sorry, etc.) when something goes wrong. Remember that when you are ringing, you are facing your audience and they are watching. **DO** have facial expressions that are pleasant. I love to watch ringers smile and enjoy themselves when they ring.
- Guide right, guide left: In marching band, those were key words. We

were supposed to use our peripheral vision to be aware of those on our right and/or left. We were supposed to make the size of our steps match and make our lines straight. In the bell choir, we also need to be aware of the ringers on our right and left. I prefer a consistency of height levels in the bells – rather than one individual ringing very high and another ringing very low. Sometimes this might need to be adapted due to the height of individual ringers.

- Let your motions match the music: Soft sounds and soft endings—let the bells play lower toward the tables. Loud and bright sounds—get the bells up high. Let your body feel the rhythm of the piece.
- Props: yes or no? For instance—American flags and other patriotic props for patriotic music; sunglasses for a casual look on various blues, jazz and pop pieces; Santa hats for Christmas music; a pirate’s hat for *Pirates of the Caribbean*; a witch’s hat for *Ding, Dong the Witch is Dead*. The sky’s the limit for this topic—the use of a few props makes things fun for the ringers and for the audience. Be creative—let your ringers come up with ideas.
- Page turns: The curse of ringers everywhere! Plan these carefully and practice them. It’s distracting to the audience to see ringers battling the pages of the music. It’s also distracting to hear noisy page turns in a soft musical selection.

The important thing is to watch your ringers—make them look good as well as sound good. Have fun making music—for your ringers and for your audiences!

[*Cathy Benton, Missouri State Chair*](#)

There are two aspects to showing the visual side of our art. First, we have the actual placement of the bells in your situation. In your church, is the setup for your choir out in front of the congregation, at least within a reasonable line-of-sight, or are they tucked away somewhere difficult for everyone to see, such as the back corner of the sanctuary or in the balcony? If possible, it would be optimal for your setup to be where most visible, without interfering with the rest of the space needed for the service.

Showing our skill can also include getting out of the sanctuary. Take your choir to area nursing homes, libraries or schools to share your skills with others.

The other point is the actual ringing of our bells. Are your ringers working their strokes in proper circles? Are they trying to keep their strokes coordinated along the line so that it looks uniform? Are they

starting their marts at the same level?

Are their motions matching the style of the music? You don't want short, choppy motions in a piece that is more meditative, just as you don't necessarily want nice big strokes in a quick, marching-type of piece. These are all important things to consider when making your choir look as good as it sounds. Making videos of your choir as they rehearse can be very helpful for them to see what they are doing and how it fits in with the ringers around them. You may have a ringer that is convinced that they are 'doing it right', but may see that they could improve their ringing after seeing themselves on a video.

Take your choir beyond being technically good; make them enjoyable to watch as well.

[Linda Ashley, Nebraska State Chair](#)



CLINICIAN: Dr. William Payn

DATE: Friday, June 9, 2017 -
Sunday, June 11, 2017

LOCATION: Raleigh, North Carolina

Virtuoso was created by The Raleigh Ringers to be a unique opportunity for 29 advanced ringers to participate in a professional performance experience, under the baton of renowned conductor Dr. William Payn.

The three-day event will include all aspects of preparing for and presenting a formal concert, culminating in a featured performance on a concert stage as special guests during The Raleigh Ringers' Spring Concert at Meymandi Concert Hall.

Participants will be determined by an application/audition process. Deadline to apply is December 1, 2016.

Email RRadmin@rr.org for an application packet.

More information can be found at www.rr.org/events/virtuoso

The Raleigh Ringers, 8516 Sleepy Creek Drive, Raleigh, NC 27613 www.rr.org 919-847-7574

BELL DIRECTOR'S BLUES

I'm so sorry, (Mr. ____)
 I didn't mean to be so late.
 A number of things came up, you see,
 I'll give it to you straight:

I got stuck behind the death train
 On it's way to Zanzibar.
 I fell asleep while waiting
 And fell out of the car.

SO then I really tried to hurry
 But one little thing arose,
 The keys got locked inside somehow
 And I really needed those.

AND that is almost everything
 Except for a few things more.
 I tried, I tried to get here,
 But I just had to stop at the store.

AND I had a birthday party,
 And a game to referee,
 Had to put the kids to bed,
 And that's what happened to me.

Besides, I'm feeling a little woozy...
 I'm pregnant, I just found out.
 So, I had to pick up a carton
 Of ice cream and pickled trout.

AND I would have left the house on time,
 If only I'd been there.
 I was on a houseboat in Belize,
 And I had to fix my hair.

Now don't give me that skeptical look,
 That disbelieving stare.
 This really is what happened.
 It is, it is, I swear!

I was set upon by Sneetches.
 I was beat up by a duck.
 I was trampled on by elephants.
 You know I have terrible luck.

And don't bring up those prior incidents.
 Those were coincidental.
 One was a medical problem,
 The other was strictly dental.

Now that we've sorted all that out,
 I'm glad you understand.
 I have to leave a teensy bit early...
 Half an hour would be grand.

*~submitted by David L. Congdon
 (Spouse of a director)*

	<div>Chair-Elect</div> <div>Beth Ann Edwards</div> <div>Treasurer</div> <div>Sharon Schmidt</div> <div>Secretary</div> <div>Pat Latshaw</div>	

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Upcoming Events

2016	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
Sep 9-10	Flint Hills Handbell Festival	Camp Wood YMCA Elmdale, KS	Staci Cunningham
Sep 10	Back to Bells 2016	Gary UMC Wheaton, IL	Ben Hafner
Sep 17	Back to Bells 2016	St John's Lutheran Des Moines, IA	Beth Ann Edwards
Sep 17	Back to Bells 2016	St Paul Lutheran Webster City, IA	Patrick Gagnon
Sep 17	Back to Bells 2016	Missouri Baptist University St Louis, MO	Cathy Benton
Sep 17	Back to Bells 2016	St Francis DeSales Lake Zurich, IL	Ben Hafner
Sep 17	Back to Bells 2016	St Francis De Sales Lake Zurich, IL	Ben Hafner
Sep 17	Back to Bells 2016	Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Prairie Village, KS	Pat Latshaw
Sep 24	Back to Bells 2016	Evangel Temple Springfield, MO	Kathy Harrison
Oct 8	Back to Bells 2016	Raytown Christian Church Raytown, MO	Suanne Comfort
Oct 22	Show-Me Ring Rezound!	1st UMC Blue Springs, MO	Rezound!
Oct 22	Ames Fall Handbell Festival	1st UMC Ames, IA	Iowa
Oct 29	12th Annual Handchime Festival	Heritage UMC Overland Park, KS	Marilyn Lake
Nov 12 9a-5p	Fall Festival David L. Weck	Trinity Lutheran Church 1939 Elizabeth St, Crete, IL	Ben Hafner