



Festival 2026 Updates

by Lori Fenton, Area 8 Chair

In early October, the Area 8 Executive team met in person at the site of next summer's 2026 Area 8 Festival in La Vista, NE. We are very excited about the venue and the plans we have for June 17-20, 2026! This issue is full of all the details you will need to start planning for next summer.

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For those who have been to our Area 8 Festival before, we have made some changes to the schedule from prior years. Please look for the labels of NEW, UPDATED and RETURNING on the following pages.

In the Spring 2025 issue of Quavers, we introduced you to this year's theme, United We Ring. While this theme is based around our country's 250th anniversary, it also aligns with the vision of the Handbell Musicians of America, which is "Uniting people to create a diverse community in which handbell musicians of every skill level realize their full potential through a musically-respected art form."

Whether you are new to ringing handbells or have been ringing for many years, I hope you appreciate just how amazing and diverse our handbell community truly is. I have handbell friends all across the country and around the world. While we are all different in many ways, we all share the same love and passion for the same instrument.

I hope you will join us in La Vista next year to celebrate our connections, our community, and our country through the art of handbells.



Festival Venue

La Vista Hotel & Conference Center

La Vista, Nebraska

The Festival will take place at the La Vista Hotel & Conference Center, just south of I-80 if you are coming from the east or west (12520 Westport Pkwy, La Vista, NE 68128). The Conference center is connected to both an Embassy Suites by Hilton hotel and a Courtyard by Marriott hotel. We have a guaranteed block of rooms at both hotels for each of Wednesday through Saturday nights. Our reduced rate is \$249.00 (plus taxes) for single or double occupancy. A link for booking rooms will be provided when registration opens.

Hotel Amenities

- Both hotels are connected to the Conference Center and it is a short completely indoor walk from your room to all the ringing, classes, meals and concerts. The walk from the Courtyard is all one level, while the walk from the Embassy Suites includes a short flight of stairs or elevator.
- All of our event guests staying in either hotel will be able to take advantage of both the included breakfast (with a voucher) and afternoon reception offerings at the Embassy Suites.
- Both hotels have pool and fitness facilities and additional dining options.

La Vista, Nebraska

La Vista, Nebraska, sits on the western side of Omaha, NE. If you choose to spend more time in the area, check out the Sarpy County tourism website or the Omaha Visitor's bureau website. Omaha is the home of the College World Series, which will be taking place June 20-22.

Registration

Registration costs for the main festival are:

Super Early Bird \$240 (through March 31)

Early Bird: \$250 (April 1 to April 30)

Regular \$275 (May 1 to May 31)

Registration will open mid to late January. Registration will include three meals, two concerts, and three class sessions as well as access to vendor shopping and the silent auction.

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2026 Festival Clinicians

Kathryn Jurado

President-Elect, Handbell Musicians of America



Kathryn Jurado

A musician with over 30 years of performance experience, 20 years of non-profit volunteer work, and lifelong church music ministry service, Kathryn Jurado has quickly gained prominence in the handbell community as a ringer and director. She is starting her first year as the Director of Handbell Activities at Landon School in

Bethesda, Maryland, where she will lead students from grades 5 through 12. Kathryn also serves as President-Elect on the national board of Handbell Musicians of America, and is the Handbell and Instrumental Editor of Alfred Handbell, a division of Jubilate Music Group.

Born in Puerto Rico, Kathryn holds both a Bachelor and Master of Music degree from the University of South Florida in Tampa. As a freelance oboist and private teacher, she has performed with groups such as Opera Tampa, the Venice Symphony, The Tampa Bay Symphony, The Villages Philharmonic, and performances of La La Land Live, and with Ray Charles, the Irish Tenors, and pop superstars Hanson.

Kathryn served as music director and Vice President of Magic of Bronze, an Orlando-based community handbell ensemble, which was a featured performance choir at the 2020 HMA National Seminar, as well as a term as Associate Director of the Suncoast Bronze Ringers community handbell ensemble in the Tampa Bay area. Kathryn has led a handbell ensemble at the University of South Florida, taught music in the Hillsborough County Public Schools for over a decade, served as Province Officer with Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity, and was the handbell director at Lake Magdalene Church (formerly UMC) in Tampa.

In 2022, Kathryn was the clinician for Reaching for Bronze (now known as Crescendo) in New Bern, North Carolina. She was the handbell clinician for the Florida Chapter of the Fellowship of Worship Artists' Worship Arts Week in Fruitland Park, Florida in 2024 and 2025, HMA Area 4's Bells of the Caribbean in 2024, HMA's 2025 College Ring-In, and the 2025 Utah Spring Ring. Kathryn was a faculty member at HMA's 2025 Pinnacle event in Wichita, Kansas, and is looking forward to leading handbell festivals in Delaware, Montana, and Nebraska in 2026.

Carlos E. Rivera Aponte

Chair-Elect, Area 4



Carlos E. Rivera Aponte

Regarded as one of Puerto Rico's foremost handbell masters, Carlos E. Rivera Aponte has had a fruitful career of more than thirty years as director of various handbell programs in Puerto Rico, Venezuela,

Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Colombia. Carlos received a Bachelor of Arts with a major in education and music from the University of Puerto Rico. He later received his master's degree in music education with an emphasis on choral music at Florida State University's College of Music in Tallahassee, Florida. He is an active handbell clinician and has inspired many people to become involved in handbell ringing and musicianship. He describes himself as a handbell missionary, in his belief that "there are so many people who have not been able to be in contact with this wonderful instrument; once they do, they'll fall in love with it."

Carlos served two years as an at-large member of HMA National Board and now is the HMA Area 4 Chair-Elect. He currently works as Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, music professor and choral conductor at the University of Puerto Rico-Carolina. He founded San Juan Handbell Ensemble in February 2024.





Festival Scholarship

If you know someone who has not been to one of our Area 8 festivals, but would benefit, take note. Thanks to the success of our Silent Auction the past two festivals, we once again will be offering TWO scholarships for Festival 2026.

Each scholarship recipient will receive:

- One full registration to the Area 8 Biennial Festival, including the Director's Seminar and included meals.
- A \$400 lump sum reimbursement to assist with travel or/and lodging.
- A one-year membership to Handbell Musicians of America.

Applicants for this scholarship must be:

- Someone that has the intent and desire to establish, revive, or help continue a handbell program. Applicants could be a handbell ringer, handbell director, or someone that appreciates handbells and has some big ideas.
- A first-time attendee of an Area 8 Festival.
- A resident of the five-state Area 8 region (Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska).
- Willing to write an article for *Quavers* following the 2026 Festival summarizing their Festival 2026 experience and sharing how their new knowledge will be put into practice.

More information and the application form will be made available after registration opens.

Festival Teacher Applications

Patrick Gagnon, Education Chair for Area 8, is soliciting individuals to teach sessions at the Area 8 Festival/Conference in LaVista, Nebraska, in June 2026. These sessions could cover a wide range of topics, including the following:

- Handbell techniques (treble or bass techniques, malleting, stopped sounds, damping, etc.)
- Choir management (recruiting, retention, rehearsal techniques, funding, etc.)
- Topics not directly related to handbells, but still important for ringers (mindfulness for musicians, being a healthy musician, group dynamics, etc.)
- Any other topic that you think you have helpful information to share with the festival participants

Teacher applications can be found [here](#). Please download the application and follow the instructions. The deadline to return completed applications is December 15, 2025. Our goal is to offer an educational component to Festival that will be meaningful and memorable.





Festival Schedule

Day/Date		Event	Time
Wednesday	17-Jun	BronzeFest rehearsal (with breaks)	1p - 5p
Wednesday	17-Jun	BronzeFest Dinner (on your own)	5p - 7p
Wednesday	17-Jun	BronzeFest rehearsal	7p - 9p
Thursday	18-Jun	BronzeFest rehearsal	9a - 11a
Thursday	18-Jun	BronzeFest Lunch (provided)	11a - 1p
Thursday	18-Jun	BronzeFest rehearsal (with breaks)	1p - 4p
Thursday	18-Jun	Vendor load in	1p - 5p
Thursday	18-Jun	Director Track	1p - 5p
Thursday	18-Jun	Ringer Registration and load in	1p - 5p
Thursday	18-Jun	Plated Dinner, BF concert, member meeting	6p - 8p
Thursday	18-Jun	Bonus Rehearsal	8:15p-9:15p
Thursday	18-Jun	Reading Session (tentative)	9:30p – 10:30p
Friday	19-Jun	Rehearsal #1	8:30a - 9:30a
Friday	19-Jun	Class Session #1	9:45a -10:45a
Friday	19-Jun	Rehearsal #2	11a - 12p
Friday	19-Jun	Lunch Buffet/Spotlight Concert	12p - 1:30p
Friday	19-Jun	Class Session #2	1:30p - 2:30p
Friday	19-Jun	Rehearsal #3	3p - 5p
Friday	19-Jun	FREE evening	
Friday	19-Jun	Optional event at SmashPark	6p - 9p
Saturday	20-Jun	Rehearsal #4	9a - 10:30
Saturday	20-Jun	Class session #3	10:45a - 11:45a
Saturday	20-Jun	Box Lunch	12p - 1:30p
Saturday	20-Jun	Rehearsal #5 and concert run-through	1:30p – 3:30p
Saturday	20-Jun	Break and Concert Prep	3:30p - 4p
Saturday	20-Jun	Concert	4p - 5p
Saturday	20-Jun	Pack up and Load out	5p - 7p
Saturday	20-Jun	Reception (tentative)	7p - 9p

2026 Festival Extras

Returning Events

Director's seminar

On Thursday afternoon we will offer a session specifically for Directors/Conductors (for an additional fee). The agenda will be available once registration has opened.

Music Swap

Back by popular demand!! Do you have music sitting in your file cabinets that your choir hasn't rung for 20 years? Are you looking to expand your limited library? Do you like to recycle? Bring all those dusty folders of handbell music that you're ready to part with to Festival next summer. Leave them in a designated place we will have available. For a donation to the Area 8 Scholarship fund, other Festival participants can take some or all of what you brought.

Silent Auction

Funds raised from the Auction will assist with scholarships for future Festivals. Check your closets and attics now to see what you might donate. Gift cards, services, and other creative items are always welcome. Be ready to bid on some soon-to-be-favorite take-aways. Check the website and future *Quavers* issues for more information.



New/Updated Events

Opening Dinner, Concert and Member Meeting

We will kick off the Festival with a dinner on Thursday evening which is included with your registration. The BronzeFest choir will perform and we will also hold the required member meeting (we promise it won't be long!).

FREE Evening

The board listened to your feedback and we have built in a FREE evening to the schedule. After registration opens, we will provide information about restaurants and activities in the area. Or feel free to do your own research. We are also tentatively planning a group event at SmashPark for those who might care to attend.

Bonus "Warm-Up" Rehearsal

A low-stress opportunity to ring through the music before the first downbeat on Friday morning. This event will be free of charge this year.

Showcase Concert

Another change for this year is the format of the Showcase Concert. The concert will take place during the provided lunch on Friday, June 19th.

We are opening the concert to ANY performers, not just handbells and not just musicians! Do you have another musical talent you would like to share? Are you a magician or a stand-up comedian? Please make sure your offering is family-friendly and a-political. Music stands and a keyboard can be provided as needed. An application will be made available after registration opens.



Massed Ringing

There will be only one ringing division this year and all pieces will be a Level 2-3+. There will also be an optional Level 4 piece for any group or ringers that choose to ring. Please note that this piece is also going to be part of the BronzeFest repertoire but will be modified slightly for the massed ringing. The rehearsal schedule will be adjusted to accommodate rehearsal time specifically for this piece.

Repertoire

Our conductors have chosen a mix of pieces that represent a variety of American music styles and experiences. Please note this is not the concert order.

Title	Composer/Arr.	Level/Oct	Publisher	Code
All American Hometown Band	Walter & Carol Noona	3+**, 4-6	AGEHR	MAG46018
Down in the River to Pray	Danile Lee Gibby	3+, 5-7	From the Top	MFM20873
Rockin' Jerusalem	Benjamin A Tucker	3, 3-5	Jubilate Music Group	MJMG1561
Gospel Roundup	Joel Raney	2+, 3-5	Hope Publishing	MHP3100
Dream a Little Dream of Me	Nicholas A Hanson	3+ 3-6	Jubilate Music Group	MJMG1562
Northern Lights	Margaret R Tucker	3+**, 3-5	Art Masters Studio	MAMHB7
El Cumbanchero - *Optional*	Abad	4, 4-6	Sheet Music Plus	Pending publication

**This piece is listed as a Level 4 on Jeffers but our directors feel they are closer to a level 3+.

Bronzefest

What is BronzeFest?

BronzeFest is a group of up to 30 advanced-level ringers who will present a concert of up to six (level 3 and above) selections. This year, all BronzeFest activities will take place on June 17th and 18th ahead of the main festival and will perform as the festival's opening concert on the evening of the 18th. Ringers are then free to enjoy the rest of the festival offerings on Friday and Saturday.

Bronzefest Registration Process

BronzeFest is a separate registration process with a separate registration fee. Ensemble members will be selected through an application process, and position assignments will be made ahead of time. Musicians are

Repertoire

expected to purchase and rehearse the music ahead of the event. BronzeFest rehearsals will begin on Wednesday afternoon. Participants will be on their own for dinner on Wednesday afternoon but will be provided lunch on Thursday.

Who Should Apply?

Successful BronzeFest musicians should have experience with ringing advanced music, are willing to put in extra time before the Festival to prepare the music. They should have access to the appropriate equipment for their assigned position for learning music before BronzeFest begins. Ringers should be eager to ring with new neighbors (and possibly in a new position), and look forward to making music with a new conductor.

Title	Composer/Arr.	Level/Oct	Publisher	Code
Blue Skies	Sondra Tucker	4, 4-6	Jubilate Music Group	MJMG1445
Escape Velocity	Jason Krug	5, 5-8	Jeffers	MJHS9490
Cumbanchero	Abad	4, 4-6	Sheet Music Plus	Pending publication
Sky-Tinted Waters (may only do movements 1 and 3)	Cathy Moglebust	4, 4-6	Choristers Guild	MCGB395
American Carillon	James Weber	4, 5-7	Beckenhorst Press	MBEHB625
Firework	Michael Glasgow	3+, 3-7	Hope Publishing	MHP2654



Chris Peck
Illinois State Chair
Area 8 Past Chair

*Want to join a
dedicated,
passionate
group of
musicians?*

Can You Serve?

by Chris Peck, Past Chair

Did you know? Helping others can improve your well-being! Doing good for someone else can lower your blood pressure and increase your longevity as well as your happiness.

Have you enjoyed reading the *Quavers* or meeting new handbell friends at an area festival or a state event? Area 8 strives to present these opportunities and so much more to our members and we need your help to continue to do so in the future.

Every two years, members of Area 8 elect officers for the next two years. In 2026, we'll be electing a secretary, a treasurer, and a chair-elect (who will go on to serve as chair for a two-year term followed by two years as past-chair). These officers, plus the chair and the past-chair, make up the Area 8 Executive Committee, which is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Area 8.

Area 8 executive officers share a few traits – they are passionate about handbells, are organized, like to communicate, seek out new ways of doing things, and are willing to be leaders. Do you or someone you know fit the bill? If so, please contact me.

Here is a mini-summary of each officer's responsibilities:

Chair-elect: During the two years as chair-elect, support the chair as needed and learn how the board operates. During the following two years as chair, you're in charge of keeping the area running, including any area-wide events, membership, education initiatives, finances, and communication. That doesn't mean you do everything yourself – delegation is a key to being a successful chair. Finally, you serve as past-chair for two years. At that point, you're supporting the chair and handling responsibilities delegated to you.

Treasurer: In your two-year term, you'll manage the area's finances with the assistance of the Area's financial advisor. That includes handling the banking account as well as reporting the area's financials and ensuring that all state and federal requirements are met.

Secretary: The secretary creates and submits agendas and minutes from all Executive and full board meetings,

If you would consider being on the ballot in 2026, please contact me at pastchair.area8@handbellmusicians.org. Thank you!

Can I Scan That?

A Guide to Digital Handbell Music Rights

by Dick Crusinberry, Iowa Chair, and Shelly Siemers, Des Moines Concert Handbells Librarian

The increasing use of tablets and PDF sheet music is transforming how musicians practice, perform, and manage their libraries. This shift from traditional paper music spans all genres, including classical, jazz, and rock, and handbell music is no exception. More ringers are turning to digital formats, raising important questions about the legal use of digital music.

The short answer: it's complicated and constantly evolving. As with most new technologies, digital music began largely unregulated. Over time, regulation creeps in, often inconsistently, before standardized policies emerge. Right now, we're in that messy middle stage: a fragmented landscape with varying rules from different publishers.

For reference, Handbell Musicians of America (HMA) requires that, at HMA-sponsored or endorsed events, digital copies of print music must be accompanied by written permission from the copyright holder. You must also bring the original hard copy and the written permission with you at the event.

Policies from copyright holders vary widely. The most flexible allow you to make one digital copy per legally purchased print copy, while the strictest forbid any scanning and require either a direct digital download or a watermarked digital file purchased from the publisher. To complicate matters, some publishers only sell digital music in bulk (5 or 6 copies minimum) making it impractical for small groups or individual use.

One potential solution is the Digital Site License (DSL), available through Jeffers Handbell Supply. A DSL allows unlimited digital or paper copies for the license holder's use. It's not transferable, and not all titles are available this way, but it's an excellent option when available.

So, what's the best approach?

1. Purchase a DSL, if available.
2. If not, purchase digital downloads directly from the publisher.
3. If that's not possible, seek permission to scan a legally purchased print copy.
4. If none of these options work, you cannot use the music digitally.

This process can be daunting for handbell directors and librarians, but the good news is that standardization is likely on the horizon. The move to digital music isn't going away, and eventually, publishers will develop consistent policies that both protect copyright and support the practical needs of musicians.



*Dick Crusinberry
Iowa State Chair*

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Amy Knudsen
Kansas State Chair

Bob's goal that first year was to give a Christmas performance in the prison facility.

Handbells in Prison? Why Not?

Amy Knudsen, Kansas Chair

At the end of November, Bob Abbott will start his third season bringing bells into the Lansing Correctional Facility in Lansing, KS to teach incarcerated men how to ring bells. Bob sings in the volunteer choir of the East Hill Singers, which is the men's choir in the same facility, so the transition to bells seemed inevitable. All he needed was the equipment, right? Well, not so fast. It takes a lot more than just the bells themselves. Let me start at the beginning.

Bob went to an East Hill Singers concert at a church in Johnson County, KS in the fall of 2021. He decided that he wanted to join the choir and perform alongside the men. On Monday nights, men volunteers meet to rehearse at a church in Overland Park, KS, and on Tuesday nights, the same director goes into the correctional facility to teach the inmates the same music. The two groups get together at the end of each semester to present concerts hosted by churches in the eastern Kansas area. Bob completed an application to enter the prison, went through training and a background check, and received an official identification card that allows him entrance into the facility to participate as a mentor among the prison singers.

Bob, having taught music for many years at the Branson Public High School, including three daily classes of handbells, had an idea—what if he started a bell choir to keep the men involved, especially during the holiday season? But he would need equipment and permission from the Department of Corrections, among other things.

He went through the prison system and submitted a proposal to bring the bell program into the facility. He then posted in Handbell People on Facebook in May of 2022 wondering if any churches might have unused bells sitting around in their closets.

"Not long after that post," he said, "Northland Cathedral in Kansas City, MO reached out." They had a 3-octave set of Schulmerich bells just sitting around and volunteered to lend their bells for the program. They were in rough shape, so Bob refurbished them and he was in business.

After the last fall concert of the East Hill Singers, usually the last Sunday before Thanksgiving, he told the singers that he would be back the next week, but with handbells. He sold them on the idea that learning to play bells would make them better singers, by learning more music, and continue to give them their musical outlet.

That first year, he started with about 14 choir members. He first taught them the basics of ringing and reading music notation. He taught by rote. He has a very colorful quilted banner that he uses to teach change ringing. There are no tables, foam or music stands. The inmates sit in plastic, white patio chairs. Without stands, the men move small plastic patio-type tables in front of their chairs and lean over to read their music. As Bob said, "Not the best for posture."

Everyone's background in music varies. They all started out with one bell and later worked their way up to two. They started with the bells in the 5's, and then as more men joined, they moved up to the little bells and down to the bigger bells. Some inmates expressed concern over dropping any of the bigger bells. Bob had to remind them that they were big, strong men and if they held the bell the way that he taught them, they would be fine. There was one young man who had rung in his church and even remembered how to four-in-hand.

There got to be enough ringers that Bob needed a second set of bells with a larger range. He had been singing in the choir at the Resurrection Brookside UMC in Kansas City, MO. Once they heard about his program, they offered the bells sitting unused in their closet – a 5-octave set of Malmark bells and a 3-octave set of chimes.

When one of the inmates asked about ringing 'Carol of the Bells,' Bob took that idea to his wife, Ruth, who had a piano studio in her home for years. She pulled out a basic setting of the song and Bob got to work. He wrote out letter names on a long sheet of old perforated printer paper, and he would point to the letters as the music moved along. It wasn't the best method, but it worked.

He taught by demonstrating, using the *Processionals for Handbells* by Barbara Semmann. And he also used the *Ring Along Christmas Favorites* by Ardis Freeman. For those not familiar, each book is coded to one note of the scale. When the word of the song is circled, your bell plays. When the word is underlined, you damp.

Bob's goal that first year was to give a Christmas performance in the prison facility. They were able to invite the other men from the Minimum-Security Unit, and at that first concert they had 35 men attend. The ringers demonstrated what they had learned: ringing basics, change ringing, a procession, and they played "Carol of the Bells." Then the ringers distributed handchimes and went into the audience to guide all participants to ring and sing Christmas carols in the 'Ring Along' books. "What fun," Bob said, "to watch the group ring with energy and sing with enthusiasm. Perhaps it

wasn't all in tune, but it was a celebration." The evening concluded with holiday cookies and chocolate milk. "For a little while," he recalled, "the men were removed from where they were and experienced a bit of Christmas joy."

As performers, we all know that we typically wear 'concert dress.' Since the men have only prison-issue clothing, they decided on their best standard issued blue jeans, white t-shirts and their red, knitted beanies. Bob said, "They kind of reminded me of the seven dwarfs, except these guys were a lot bigger." But it didn't matter what they wore, it was the teamwork that brought it together.

Now, the schedule at the facility is different than we are used to. Breakfast starts at 4 a.m. Most inmates are tasked with jobs either in the facility itself, or out in the community. By the time that supper gets served at 4 p.m., many men would rather use their free time, typically from 5 to 7 p.m., relaxing and doing other things. Bob tried to have a ringing program in the Spring, but he quickly learned that the inmates would rather spend their time outside in the sun than stay inside to ring. He learned that trying to continue the program after Christmas was also difficult. Inmates stopped coming to the rehearsals, and when he inquired why, he was told that often times the inmates are missing their families over the holidays and just want to spend time alone.

In the beginning, he was told not to learn too much about the participants. There are websites where anyone can look up why a person is in prison, and Bob felt the pull to start looking into some of his ringers' backgrounds. But then he stopped himself. He said he didn't want to learn about their past; he wants to focus on who they are today.

So for now, Bob will continue his late-fall rehearsals, culminating with the Ring and Sing program right before Christmas. He looks forward to working with the men, teaching them to be part of something bigger than who they are alone, and learning that there is a story of redemption in everyone.



Byron Jensen
Nebraska State Chair

Saying Goodbye to “Old Friends” And The Loss of Handbell Programs

by Byron W. Jensen, Nebraska Chair

Sadly, the once-vibrant collegiate handbell program that I founded has come to an end since my retirement three years ago. After directing it for twenty years, including in my initial year of retirement, Hastings College made changes to its music program that did not include bells. This is entirely understandable, as numerous variables must be considered to continually develop the most impactful curriculum that will prepare students for a music career.

In the aftermath of this loss, the college's handbells, chimes, and music were transferred to the school's sponsoring church and repurposed for worship, as well as for two newly developed community ensembles that cater to both advanced and beginning ringers. Most of the tables and foam were donated to a regional church that aspires to start a handbell program. Reflectively, my initial disappointment at losing an “old friend” at the college feels more like an organ donor sustaining the lives of other people.

Unfortunately, a similar scenario, albeit without any outcomes at this point, is unfolding in two other institutions that I am aware of, where handbells and equipment sit idle in closets, accumulating mold. (They are not located in Hastings.) Reaching out to these places to gauge their interest in selling their sets has yielded mixed results. I understand the issues and am empathetic to the situation where demographics (namely, aging congregations and/or a lack of ringers) create angst over selling handbells that were purchased with memorial funds and other private donations, without raising rancor from those donors. I have made it my mission to “liberate” such sets and place them into places where the instruments can once again make music. So far, it has not been a successful endeavor.

Most of us are probably aware of similar plights within and around our community. Here in Hastings, there are four churches with handbells, with only one providing service music on a monthly basis. Two are hanging on like a torn sheet of music in need of reinforcers, and the other is seemingly waiting for a director to revive its program. I'm not that latter person, but I am making it my mission to reach out to these three churches to see how I might be able to assist them. Ideally, the presence of youth who participate in school music programs and unchurched community musicians might help sustain a struggling handbell choir, or perhaps even stimulate a complete revival of the program. An unfortunate circumstance of my collegiate program closing shop was the loss of students who assisted with directing and/or ringing in these churches.

In speaking with people at the two institutions whose handbells have been idle for several years, I have observed genuine emotions. One is a sense of sorrow, knowing that their once-glorious handbell program has evaporated into thin air. Two, dejection in recognizing that such a program will most likely never come back without the right people stepping into place. And three, palpable shock in opening airless cases and seeing a white substance, along with the smell of mildew. Their “old friends” have lost their luster and purpose. I have learned that I also must be a counselor, to some extent.

I end with two questions: How many sets of bells (and accompanying equipment) are in your community that haven't seen the light of day for several years? How can we get our “old friends” back on the table?

The Great Christmas Ring: Two Opportunities

What is The Great Christmas Ring?

The Great Christmas Ring is a massed ringing event for English Handbells and Handchimes held in December in public venues throughout the world. Groups of musicians, each ringing 2 natural bells or chimes in a 3-5 octave range, perform a selection of holiday favorites for a public audience. The purpose of the event is to unite handbell musicians and bring the joy and quality of handbell ringing and music to the general public in a festive and fun atmosphere.

Think “Tuba Christmas” for handbells. Everyone with any level of experience ringing is welcome to join in!

What you need

Bring your two bells (C3- C8, four if ringing D6 - C7 so you can shelly ring) and a music stand. No sharps or flats are needed, no bell changes are needed, so no tables are needed. You may want to bring a pad if you’re ringing big bells and want to set them down between selections.

Cost

You will need to purchase a music book for \$25, which includes a \$10 registration fee. If you already have a book, you just pay the \$10 registration fee.

What you get

You will receive a commemorative participant button, you will have a great time, and you’ll have the satisfaction of making someone’s holiday season brighter.

Great Christmas Ring Locations

**North Park Mall
Davenport, Iowa**
November 29

10:30 am check-in, 11:00 Ringing

Get more information [here](#).

or email:
info@riverbendbronze.org

**Coralville Mall
Coralville, Iowa**
December 13

2:30 check-in, 3:00 Ringing
Register [here](#) by November 27.

For more information, please
contact [Laura Kastens](#)





Nancy Youngman
Chimes Chair

Two of the most recent groups that were loaned the chimes were so thrilled with the instruments that they purchased their own sets ...

Area 8 Loan Programs for Chimes

by Nancy Youngman

In Area 8, we actually have TWO programs for loaning chimes. As with every Area in the nation, we participate in the Area Chimes School Loan Program, in which, through the generosity of Malmark, each state is furnished with a set of chimes to loan to schools, either public or parochial. In Area 8, each state also loans a set of materials for the use of the school while they're using the chimes. We also pay for a year's subscription in the Guild, with the hopes that the schools will be so successful with the program that they will buy their own set and continue on in the Guild once their loan period is over. If interested, the school can buy a new set directly through Malmark, or can purchase the loaned set at a reduced rate. The Area 8 State Chimes Chairs are: Patti Mangis of Illinois, Patrick Gagnon of Iowa, Amy Knudsen of Kansas, Christie White of Missouri, and Nancy Youngman of Nebraska. You can find information about the program and links to the State Chairs under each of the states on our website, [Area 8 Handbell Musicians of America](http://area8.handbellmusicians.org).

Our SECOND loan program, the Non-School Handchime Loan Program, includes two sets of chimes, one a 3-octave set and the other a 4-octave set. These are available to loan to any state in our area for any group outside of school—community groups, retirement homes, churches, Bible Schools—whatever the need may be!!

These are available for a 4-month period: January – April, May – August, or September – December. Two of the most recent groups that were loaned the chimes were so thrilled with the instruments that they purchased their own sets once the loan period was over!! That definitely isn't a requirement, but it does show that once groups can see how wonderful it is to play these chimes, they want them as a permanent part of their program. One of the sets was used this summer for a recital by Claudine P. Giebs Myers for requirements of a Master of Arts in Community Music degree at Judson University. The focus of the degree is to "move beyond the conservatory or concert hall and into the lives of ordinary people." What a fantastic course of study!! And, our loan program and the Handbell Musicians of America got an acknowledgment on the recital program. Please contact Area Chime Chair Nancy Youngman at chimes.area8@handbellmusicians.org if you are interested in borrowing a set of chimes to enhance your activity!

Does Your School Qualify?

Area 8 offers a handchime loan program to schools in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

Qualifying schools will receive:

- 3-octave set of handchimes for one semester (approx. 4 months) with teaching materials
- support network and/or mentor
- one-year membership to Handbell Musicians of America.

To check availability of handchimes for loan or to submit an application, please contact Nancy Youngman, Area 8 Chimes Chair.

To learn more about the Chime Loan Program, visit the [Area 8 website](#).

A video featuring Nancy Youngman describes in detail the Area 8 chime loan program and can be found [here](#).

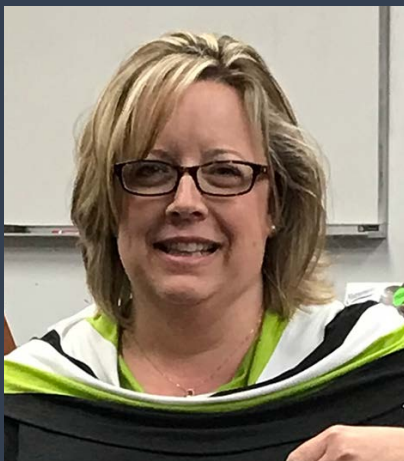


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Cynthia Seputis
"Into the Forest" Participant

*I came home
with the
knowledge
and confidence
to choose
repertoire,
string the
bells up on
the bell tree,
and then learn
several bell tree
solos which
I performed
in worship
services*

Into the Woods with Bell Trees

by Cynthia Seputis

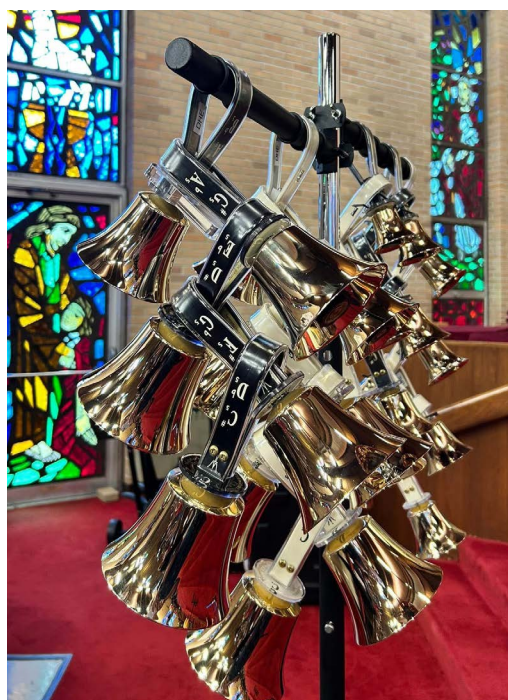
Just as a pebble thrown into a body of water creates ripples that expand outward, so too did Laura Blauch's Introduction to Bell Trees session at the 2024 HMA National Seminar in Hartford, Connecticut. I attended that session, and it started me on my bell tree journey, a journey that took me to Livonia, Michigan, this past August to participate in Into the Forest, a unique national event sponsored by HMA and devoted to educating ringers about all things bell tree in a supportive and collaborative environment.

Organized by Karen Van Wert, Teri Gregory and Alison Pruett, Into the Forest registration was capped at 30 participants to allow for as much hands-on experience and individualized attention as possible. The thirty attendees came from as far away as California, Florida, and Canada to gather at Holy Cross Lutheran Church and learn from each other. There were sessions on bell tree basics, equipment, repertoire for combined bell tree and small handbell choir, and advanced bell tree techniques.

Because many participants brought their own equipment, there were multiple bell trees in each classroom, allowing ringers to try out new techniques on the spot. In addition, there was a practice room set up that could be used to try out various mallets or get some solo practice in between sessions. Lunches and dinners were brought in, allowing participants to freely converse and get to know each other better over meals. Marie Clyatt-Larson and Kim Braswell were in attendance as well, representing HMA and providing support to make sure that everything ran smoothly.



Sample bell tree mock-up for home practice



Bell tree set up for performance

Into the Woods, continued

At lunch, there were “Pop-Up” concerts where small groups performed repertoire written for bell tree and bell choir combined. One participant used the format to try out a new piece she had arranged. These pop-ups were designed as informances and gave ringers the chance to play through more repertoire in front of an audience without the pressure of having to put on a polished performance.

One of my favorite parts of the event were the two sessions entitled “Back Stage Pass.” Held right after the lunch hour, these sessions gave ringers who were going to perform at the final concert a chance to talk about and share the backstory of their pieces. I was planning to perform a Linda Lamb arrangement of *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* and was able to share the story of meeting Linda at the bell tree session I’d attended in Hartford. That chance meeting led to a shared Uber ride to the airport, a subsequent correspondence and friendship, and continued support and encouragement in my bell tree journey.

The event concluded with a performance, open to the public, featuring thirteen participants performing a wide variety of selections from the bell tree repertoire. The concert began with a processional by Louise Frier, the ringer who first conceived of bell trees, aptly titled *The Journey*. The processional was followed by single- and multi-string solos with and without piano accompaniment, a table to bell tree solo, and even a piece played exclusively on Malmark CymBells®, all played by performers ranging from novice first-timers to advanced bell tree ringers.

As a novice bell tree ringer, I came home with the knowledge and confidence to choose repertoire, string the bells up on the bell tree, and then learn several beginning and intermediate bell tree solos which I performed in worship services at several local churches. In a recent email, HMA Executive Director Linda Onorevole wrote that “It is important to all of us at Handbell Musicians of America that we provide positive, educational, and enjoyable experiences for all our participants.” I can say that, without a doubt, my experience at Into the Forest was all this and more—it exceeded the already sky-high expectations I have for HMA events. I’d encourage any Area 8 ringer with even a passing interest in bell trees to consider attending the next Into the Forest and taking advantage of this amazing chance to learn more about the unique artistry of bell tree ringing.

Cynthia Seputis lives in Arlington Heights, IL, where she proudly rings with Chicago Bronze. Other ringing experiences include Zenith Handbell Ensemble, Distinctly Bronze East, and Bay View Week of Handbells. When not practicing handbells, Cynthia keeps busy directing two church handbell choirs and doing her best to learn more about this amazing instrument. Despite her 22 years of ringing experience, she says that what she has left to learn about handbells could fill a G2 bell case!

left: left to right: Cynthia Seputis with her bell tree heroes

right: Area 8 participants from left to right: Karen Van Wert (organizer), Joyce Zartman, and Cynthia Seputis



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Amy Knudsen



Upcoming Area 8 Events

November 2025

November 30

11:00 am The Great Christmas Ring
North Park Mall, Davenport, Iowa

December 2025

December 4

6:00 pm Hastings Community Music Academy Handbell Choirs Sing and Ring
First Presbyterian Church, Hastings, Nebraska

December 5

12:00 noon Bell-issimo Christmas Concert
St. Paul Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska

7:00 pm Lawrence Community Handbell Choir in Concert
First United Methodist Church, Topeka, Kansas

December 6

3:00 pm RiverBend Bronze Christmas Concert
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Peoria, Illinois

3:00 pm River City Ringers of Omaha A Night of Wonder Holiday Concert
First Presbyterian Church, Hastings, Nebraska

7:00 pm Lawrence Community Handbell Choir in Concert
St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Lawrence, Kansas

7:00 pm Bells in Motion Presents: A Ringing Christmas
Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Normal, Illinois

December 7

2 pm and 6 pm Bell-issimo performs with Lincoln Symphony Orchestra
Lied Center for Performing Arts, Lincoln, Nebraska

3:00 pm Lawrence Community Handbell Choir in Concert
First Baptist Church, Lawrence, Kansas

3:00 pm Rebellion Handbells, The Stars of Christmas
Hope Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri

3:30 pm Plymouth Church Sounds of the Season: Handbells for the Holidays
Plymouth United Congregational Church, Des Moines, Iowa

4:00 pm Bells in Motions Presents: A Ringing Christmas
First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

December 8

7:00 pm Rebellion Handbells, The Stars of Christmas
Nazareth Living Center, St. Louis, Missouri

December 12

7:00 pm RiverBend Bronze Christmas Concert
St. John's United Methodist Church, Davenport, Iowa

7:00 pm Rezound! Holiday Concert
St. James Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Missouri

7:00 pm River City Ringers of Omaha A Night of Wonder Holiday Concert
St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Omaha, Nebraska

December 13

2:00 pm RiverBend Bronze Christmas Concert
St. John's United Methodist Church, Davenport, Iowa

Quavers Fall 2025

Publishing in Quavers

4 publications per year,
published once each season.

Articles

Articles are due on the
10th day of January, April,
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a concert or event for
inclusion, click [here](#) or
go to the A8 Website,
Events page.

Questions?

Please send all questions
and comments about
this and future *Quavers*
publications to Beth Ann
Edwards, Editor:
[newslettereditor.area8@
handbellmusicians.org](mailto:newslettereditor.area8@handbellmusicians.org)

*Please check
websites for
the most
up-to-date
calendar
and event
information.*

December 13

2:00 pm River City Ringers of Omaha A Night of Wonder Holiday Concert
First Presbyterian Church, Bellevue, Nebraska

3:00 The Great Christmas Ring
Coralville Mall, Coralville, Iowa

3:00 pm Rezound! Holiday Concert
First Christian Church, Independence, Missouri

4:00 pm Rebellion Handbells, The Stars of Christmas
Kirkwood United Methodist Church, Kirkwood, Missouri

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Sounds of the Season
Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church, Elmhurst, Illinois

7:30 pm River City Ringers of Omaha A Night of Wonder Holiday Concert
Presbyterian Church of the Master, Omaha, Nebraska

December 14

2:30 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Winter Concert: Winterscapes
Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Indianola, Iowa

3:00 pm Rezound! Christmas Concert
Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, Kansas

4:00 pm River City Ringers of Omaha A Night of Wonder Holiday Concert
Trinity Lutheran Church, Omaha, Nebraska

December 15

7:00 pm Chicago Bronze Holiday Concert
Encore Village, Schaumburg, Illinois

7:00 pm Rebellion Handbells, The Stars of Christmas
Friendship Village Sunset Hills, St. Louis, Missouri

December 19

7:00 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Winter Concert: Winterscapes
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Urbandale, Iowa

December 20

3:00 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Winter Concert: Winterscapes
Plymouth United Congregational Church, Des Moines, Iowa

December 21 & 22

3:00 pm (12/21) and 7 pm (12/22) Christmas at the Cathedral with the
St. Joseph Community Chorus, 519 N 10th Street, St. Joseph, Missouri

March 2026

March 1

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert
First Congregational Church of Western Springs, Western Springs, Illinois

March 8

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Downers Grove, Illinois

April 2026

April 12: 4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert
Oswego Presbyterian Church, Oswego, Illinois

May 2026

May 17: 4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert
Spring Creek United Church of Christ, Rockford, Illinois

Quavers Fall 2025

National Events

Visit <https://handbellmusicians.org/events/>
for more information

January 23-25, 2026

Virtual Winter Workshop

February 26 - March 1, 2026

Crescendo and Distinctly Bronze East
New Bern, North Carolina

March 8

National Seminar, Sharonville, Ohio

March 1, 2026

Crescendo and Distinctly Bronze East
New Bern, North Carolina

July 14-18, 2026

National Seminar
Sharonville, Ohio

July 9-11, 2026

Conducting Masterclass
Cincinnati, Ohio

August 3-11, 2026

International Handbell Symposium
Aberdeen, Scotland

June 17-20 Area 8 Festival

La Vista Hotel and Conference Center
La Vista, Nebraska

- Bronzefest
- Directors seminar
- Massed ringing
- Classes

