

MUSIC THEORY.aargh©

Why Cb? (Session 39)

By Dr. Ona Pinsonneault

In the short amount of time that I have been ringing bells I have purchased a few scores, usually for Festivals and Anthornis. I have rung in the battery, close to the ringer on the B4 C5 bells. One rehearsal the ringer turned to me and asked, “Why do I have a Cb?” It was difficult in a short amount of time to convince the ringer that “Cb” was a real note, “Why can’t they just use ‘B natural?’ ”, the ringer asked.

I looked through the scores that I own and have discovered that the amount of time that “Cb” is needed is about 1 per cent of the time. There are multiple uses for “C” and “C#”, but not “Cb.” Reasons for using any bell would be to fulfill one of two things, a melodic or a harmonic purpose. The bell used is either part of the melody or part of the harmony.

Melodically here is a “Cb”. Sandra Winter opens her composition called “Genesis” (*Bechenhorst Press, Inc, 2009*) with this sequence. (Some notes have been omitted for clarity.) The composer wants measures 5-8 to sound like 1-4 but transposed up a third. The exactness of this transposition creates a “Cb” on the third downbeat of measure 5-7. (Does the ringer appreciate having a “Bb” and a “Cb” to play, clearly one with each hand?)

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Sandra Winter's composition "Genesis". The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system shows measures 1-4. The second system, starting with a measure rest, shows measures 5-8, which are transposed up a third from the first system. A "Cb" note is clearly visible on the third downbeat of measure 5 in both staves.

Harmonically a Cb Major chord was used by Betty Radford in “A Spirit of Joy” (*From the Top-Music, 2017*). This example contains measures 19-22. Again, the Cb Major chord sounds the same when written B, D# F#, but imagine how that would look for ringers. Also, this composition is in the key of Eb Major, a key with three flats. Flats are related to this key.

The image shows a snippet of musical notation for Betty Radford's "A Spirit of Joy", measures 19-22. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: D^b add6, C^b, A^bm, and B^b. Below the staff, the chord voicings are written: Db F Ab Bb, Cb Eb Gb, Ab Cb Eb, and Bb D F.

I have decided that this column will be my last submission on a regular basis. I am always open to discussing theory questions that you may have. You can continue to reach me at pinsonoj@gmail.com and I will get back to you either directly or through Clapper Chatter. (Sometimes we all have the same perplexity!) I love being with you and will continue to ring! **Ona Pinsonneault, May 2020**