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# Ringers' Roundtable

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*The Newsletter of  
the Manitoba Guild of  
English Handbell Ringers  
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Basic ringing techniques explored in the Choir room



Broadway- First Baptist Church in Winnipeg

On November 4<sup>th</sup> twenty handbell ringers participated in the Manitoba Handbell Guild workshops at Broadway-First Baptist Church. Two workshops were run concurrently for all three sessions. As there were several novice bell ringers many chose to attend Susan Stevenson's first session to learn about basic ringing techniques in the Choir Room.



Checking your grip of a handbell

Others met in Friendship Hall to explore fun games to improve your ringing with Patsy Andrews-Vert and Tracey Wright. We began by bouncing tennis balls on the first beat of every measure while listening to taped music. The main idea was to start throwing the ball before the beat – this was the prep or upbeat. Depending on the tempo of the music, the bounces had to be controlled carefully. When double bouncing with a partner, it often ended in balls flying in many directions!



Each bouncing balls to one another at the same time



Bouncing on beat one to your partner

The hula hoop was used to check your posture and shift from one foot to another to keep the hoop moving. Oh dear! I think many of us have lost our pelvic shifts over the decades, but Tracey can do it!



Another game used the colours of a traffic light with these indications: Green light means to ring or shake fast. Amber light meant ringing slowly with big circles, while the red light meant you damp. An alternative was to use the amber light to practice special techniques (martellato, pluck, echo etc.) This was a good way to teach damping.



Patsy made use of a scarf in your hand while you are ringing a bell. If the scarf goes limp, your bell has stopped moving. If the scarf won't move you are ringing too close to your body. If the scarf floats, you are ringing correctly!



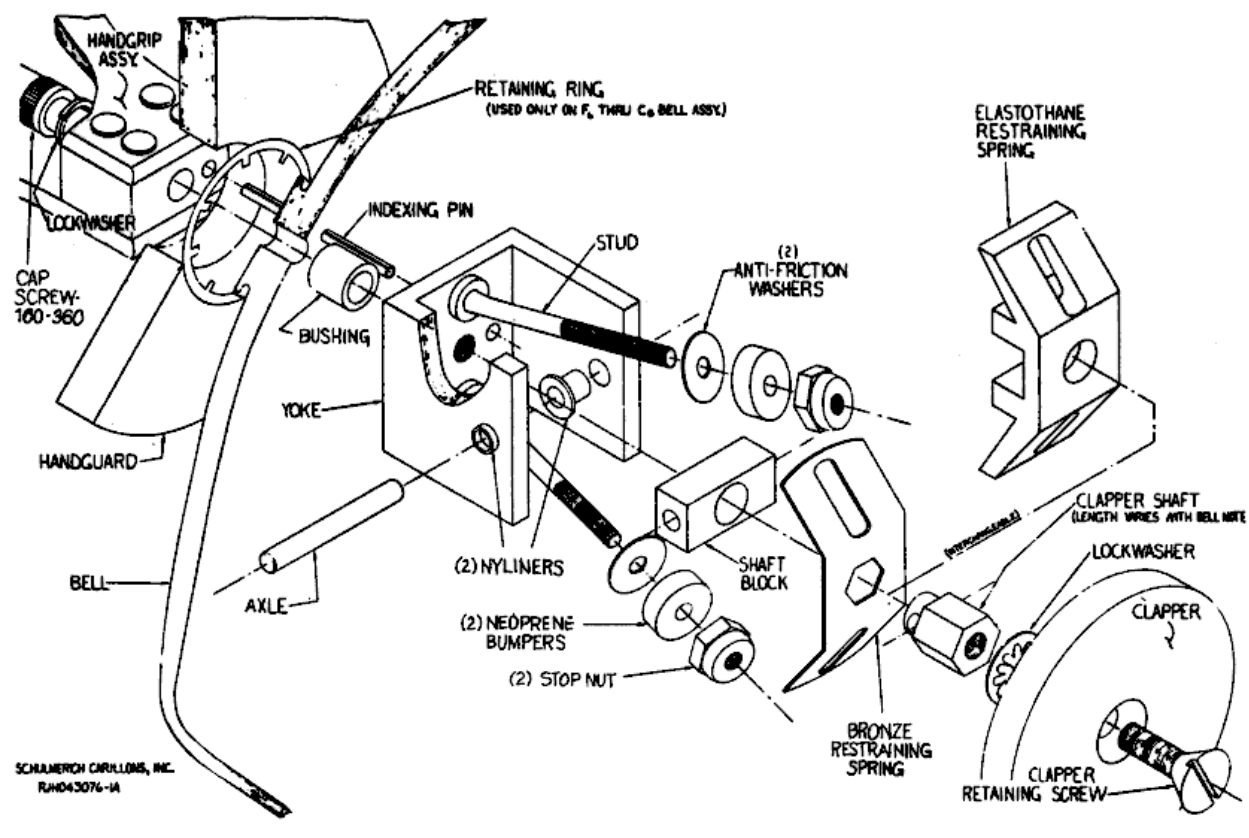
Floating scarves to ensure correct ringing technique

A final game to test practice rhythm was to tap the handles of the bells with specific rhythms. Playing "air bells" was a good way how your arms and body should look with the dynamics and expression you want to convey.

In the second session, Patsy was teaching basic conducting patterns and beginning ensemble playing.



Morna-June spoke of taking care of handbell cases, how to clean and polish the bells, cleaning the handles, how to adjust tension of the clapper shaft. She spoke of trouble shooting common problems that may occur in bells. A chart clearly showed the names of the many different parts in a Schulmerich handbell. She also showed how to replace a broken pellethane spring. Then the challenge was on to disassemble a bell and later on to reassemble it and adjust the tension of the clapper shaft. This took quite some time to accomplish.



There was a lunch break which also included the Annual General Meeting chaired by Patsy Andrews-Vert. It was decided that besides the director of each bell choir, that another choir representative be identified.

**DIRECTORS: KINDLY PROVIDE A SECOND NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION TO [m-jmorrow@shaw.ca](mailto:m-jmorrow@shaw.ca)**

Morna-June gave reports on the following topics: MBGEHR archival material held at the Provincial Archives, Membership, Financial, Editor and Guild Market Sales. Tracey Wright and Marianne Dagenais will be working on updating the website. Patsy asked if anyone was willing to host the annual Spring Ring in April. Date has not been finalized but tentatively we are thinking of Saturday, April 28, 2018. Monica McGowan of Minnesota/South Dakota has been tentatively booked for a workshop next October.

Stuart Sladden and Monica McGowan will be the clinicians at the International Music Camp 2018. July 8-14, 2018 is open to Grade Five to Adult (beginner to intermediate level) and the shorter course July 28-31 is for adults only (intermediate to advanced level).

Ron Vert invited MBGEHR members to also become a member of Area VII of the Handbells Musicians of America as membership provides a wealth of information and resources and the ability to participate in their events.

The International Handbell Symposium will be held in Cairns, Australia next August. Patsy and her husband Ron are anxious to attend this international event and look forward to snorkeling in the Great Barrier Reef! Erwin Stroobach of Ontario won the HGC Composition Competition and his "*Creator of Light – Aurora Borealis*" will be featured at the International Handbell Symposium in Cairns.

As National Chair of the Handbell Guilds of Canada, Patsy reported that HGC has been working on new Governance documents this past year. Big changes to the national guild are on the horizon.

Four names were drawn for the 1974 and 1980 recordings of the Tec Voc Handbell Ringers who were conducted by two of our Honorary Life Members, Fred Merrett who began the art of handbell ringing in Manitoba in 1966 with Audrey Jones.

After lunch, our final session had Susan Stevenson speaking about how handchimes work, how to play them with detailed references and resources. What to do when problems in the sound occur were covered. Special techniques used with handchimes were explored and of course, the use of handchimes with handbells.

Back in Friendship Hall Morna-June spoke of ringing opportunities when a full handbell choir is not available. How does ringing in a full choir differ from ringing in an ensemble setting? The importance of laying bells in keyboard fashion was emphasized. The technique of "weaving" is a vital part of playing in ensembles. Hips and knees need to be relaxed as you have to move freely to your right and to your left in order to play many more bells. Breathing acts as an internal metronome and aids counting together, executing clean musical entrances and creating musical phrases. Transferring a bell to a partner sometimes occurs in difficult passages. Various decisions that have to be made by the group were discussed. A detailed list of resources for Duets, Trios, Quartets and 12 bell repertoire were included in the handout.





## *Ring Out!*

Patsy Andrews-Vert   Jewel Casselman   Morna-June Morrow   Susan Stevenson

### PRESENT TWO CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCES

Saturday, December 2, 2017 at 1:30 p.m.  
Assiniboine Links - 4025 Roblin Blvd.

Saturday, December 16, 2017 at 2:30 p.m.  
Sturgeon Creek Retirement Residence II  
707 Setter Street across from Grace Hospital

*May the sounds of ringing bells bless your Christmas season!*