

## **REMEMBERING THE HANDBELL CHOIRS DIRECTED BY AUDREY JONES 1985-2007**

MBGEHR members will recall that *Ringer's Roundtable*, Volume 22, Issue 3 from April 2018 was devoted to remembering Audrey Ethella Jones, a Manitoba handbell pioneer, who passed away on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

She taught physical education at Technical-Vocational High School in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 from its founding in 1951 until her retirement in 1985. A two octave set of Schulmerich handbells was purchased by the school in April 1966 and used by bell ringers in the classroom and as an extra-curricular activity. During the 1967-1968 school term, a dozen girls rang handbells and also appeared with the band as Majorettes, trained by Audrey. Eventually Miss Jones became Assistant Director to Fred Merrett who had begun the handbell group.

When Fred Merrett moved to Edmonton in 1973, Audrey became the sole director of the handbells, now expanded to 3 ½ octaves. Four recordings were made by the Tec-Voc Ringers in 1968, 1970, 1974 and 1980. The Tec-Voc Ringers won several classes at the Winnipeg Music Festival and played in the Final Concert. They appeared on television with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonic Choir on Christmas Fantasy programs. They appeared at two Canadian Music Educators National Conferences in Regina (1968) and Winnipeg (1981). Audrey's ringers gave concerts in western Canada, in northern United States and even as far away as Norway. An Edmonton concert in June 1974 had Tec-Voc Ringers in a joint concert with former director Fred Merrett and his Harry Ainlay High School Handbells. Over the years, the Tec-Voc Ringers performed on 226 occasions.

Upon her retirement in 1985, Audrey Jones purchased the expanded set of four octaves from Tec-Voc High School, taking them to McClure United Church where she began conducting three handbell choirs: McClure United Church Handbells (September 1985-2006), McClure Place Tenants Bell Choir (January 1986-June 2002) and the Tec-Voc Alumni Ringers (September 1986-2003). For the 1988-1990 seasons she also conducted a children's group called The Wee Ones.

Audrey's groups were so much in demand that she finally had business cards made.



The McClure United Church Handbell Ringers performed on 240 occasions over the years and the McClure Place Tenants Bell Group performed on 215 occasions. Evenings of fellowship in May each year would feature all three handbell groups and at Christmas time, all three adult choirs called collectively as The Ding-a-Lings gave Christmas concerts with proceeds being donated to the Christmas Cheer Board. The three handbell choirs performed at many other church services in Winnipeg and rural Manitoba, Seniors' Residences, Nursing Homes, The Manitoba Club, The Monarchist League of Canada, Manitoba Organization of Business and Professional Women's Clubs Conference (1994), Historical Society of the Rural Municipality of Roland, The Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Selkirk Mental Health Centre, Horizon Club of the Japanese Cultural Centre, Quota International of Winnipeg, Unicity Mall, The Girl Guides of Canada, The Catholic Women's League of Canada, Ethos Multicultural Seniors Coalition for Voluntary Services, The English Speaking Union of Canada, Retired Women's Teachers' Association, Victoria General Hospital Geriatric Medical Unit, The Senior Citizens Choir of Winnipeg, Government House, Adult Day Clubs, University Women's Club, Manitoba Society of Seniors, as well as the occasional wedding, anniversary celebrations and funerals. Her groups also took part in the annual Spring Ring concerts of the Manitoba Handbell Guild.

Audrey also directed the Age and Opportunity 185 Smith Street Ringers for a short while. In addition to directing all her groups, Audrey played in the University Women's Club Handbell Choir for many years.

Audrey was very meticulous in keeping photo albums filled with programs, photos, and other memorabilia photos like pot luck dinners and desert parties with various groups. Obviously Alumni Ringers, after they married, sent photos of their offspring to Audrey. Many photos throughout the albums show how delighted Audrey was to hold the young babies.

When Audrey moved out of her condo and into Deer Lodge Centre, she left all her music and handbells to McClure United Church. The Alumni Ringers continued on for a few years under other directors, but as of 2016 the handbells were no longer being used.

# **THE FUTURE OF MANITOBA'S OLDEST SET OF HANDBELLS**

In April 2017, Rev. Robert Campbell of McClure United Church contacted Morna-June Morrow asking if she knew of anyone wishing to buy a set of handbells. M-J went to the church to see the condition of the bells, equipment and music. Upon further exploration over several months, five groups and an individual indicated some interest. However, it was eventually narrowed down to Red River Valley Junior Academy, a K-10 Christian School run by the Seventh Day Adventist Church who showed interest in purchasing three octaves and the Canadian Mennonite University was interested to add the fourth octave to their own three octave set.

In the meantime, Morna-June offered to catalogue all the music that Fred and Audrey had collected over half a century. New files were made and the catalogue completed by April 2018. At the suggestion of Patsy Andrews-Vert, a letter was written to the Board of McClure United Church asking if the Board would consider donating the music to the Lending Library of the MBGEHR. They totally agreed and M-J picked up all the music and re-catalogued all the music into the Lending Library over the next few weeks. Each file and handbell collection was labelled with *Audrey Jones Memorial Library*.

Because Morna-June had done exploratory workshops with students at Red River Valley Junior Academy in June 2016 and 2017, she offered to do a complete servicing on the three octaves of Schulmerich bells. They were really in remarkable condition as the bells had been carefully cleaned and polished. In June, the bells were picked up and delivered to their new home. Shortly afterwards, a workshop was given to the teacher, Rubylyn Tagarao, who will begin using them with students in September 2018. Included in the purchase was a lockable cupboard which had been made by Tec-Voc students to hold the bells.



As soon as the Canadian Mennonite University can raise funds, the fourth octave will be purchased by them. So Manitoba's oldest set of handbells will carry on making music!



## HANDBELL REUNION REPORT BY KAREN KUHL

The thought of having a reunion of former handbell ringers from my choirs had been mulling around in my head for a year or so. In a way, it was a way of celebrating a milestone birthday for me and also it had been 25 years since the conception of the BRASS ANGELS, at the school where I taught.

I had a conversation with Jayme Giesbrecht, former ringer and student of mine, currently a radio host, who is frequently heard as a vocalist in various bands. Her voice is so adaptable to various styles. Although she mostly sings southern gospel and soul repertoire Jayme expressed a desire to have an avenue to sing some more works in the classical genre. So I suggested we join forces and have a recital featuring her beautiful singing and some handbell music.

Through social media and word of mouth, fourteen ringers were recruited, and after four rehearsals we presented a program of handbell solos, duets, quartets, 3 octave bell pieces, Jayme singing a solo, and two duets on May 27, 2018 in Winkler. My church graciously let us use their space as a venue for rehearsals and recital.

Friends and family attended and were such an appreciative audience as we presented the hour long concert. We performed the two handbell pieces used at the April 2018 Spring Ring - *Jesus Loves Me* and *Amazing Grace*. I had never tried the singing bowl technique so it was kind of special to incorporate this unique technique in *Amazing Grace* at my farewell/retirement event. Chimes added beautiful colour to these pieces as well. Also included were familiar pieces such as the rousing *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho*, *My Heart Will Go On*, and *Phantom of the Opera* which incorporate various techniques.



Heidi Esau & Jayme Giesbrecht with Karen Kuhl  
*Whispering Hope*



Heidi Esau, guitar, with Jayme Giesbrecht on solo bells *Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing*







Janelle James, Heidi Esau, Valorie Goossen, Jayme Giesbrecht Humperdinck's *Evening Prayer*

Rehearsals for the quartet were fun as the women learned how to move up and down the table, pass and share bells, and try not to "kiss" the bells! Their concentration paid off and they performed beautifully.

Special for me was sitting back and listening to Jayme sing *Pie Jesu* with Audrey Dick, Schubert's *Ave Maria* as a solo, and David Foster's *The Prayer* with guest Ray Giesbrecht. Wow, what an incredible voice, and I must say that I hope I can take some credit for discovering her talent when she sang in my choir as a ten year old sweetheart.



Karen Kuhl directing former Brass Angels, Southern Bells & Emmanuel Church Handbell Choir members

So... what is the future for the set of bells? At this point I am not sure, but think that the twenty five years of employing their beautiful sound in my choirs has come to an end. And what a way to celebrate those twenty five years - it was SO MUCH FUN!

## ST. ANDREW'S RIVER HEIGHTS UNITED CHURCH

Carolyn Lutes, director of the St. Andrew's River Heights United Church Handbell Choir is looking for a new handbell ringer for the fall term. Rehearsals are held in the Church Parlour from 6:30-7:45 p.m. Thursday evenings beginning September 6<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested, kindly contact Carolyn at [carolynlutes@gmail.com](mailto:carolynlutes@gmail.com)

## ROCHESTER RINGERS RECONVENE

Guild members may recall that a handbell group called Rochester Ringers was formed in the fall of 2013, in order to perform at the closing banquet of the *Dickens of a Ring* Handbell Guilds of Canada National Ringing Link Conference in Winnipeg in July 2014. Director was Stuart Sladden and this group disbanded after that performance as Stuart was moving to Edmonton, Alberta to pursue his Doctorate of Musical Arts.

In January 2018, Stuart returned to Winnipeg and is teaching courses at the Desautels Faculty of Music, University of Manitoba, in addition to conducting the U of MB Men's Bisons Choir and the Joie de Vivre Choir. And of course we know he is involved with several other ventures!

Stuart would like to reconvene the Rochester Ringers which is exactly what is happening - commencing Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup> from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Rehearsals will be held weekly and some performance dates have already been scheduled. Because this group will be playing more challenging handbell repertoire, there are confirmed ten very experienced handbell ringers. Rehearsals will be held in Morna-June Morrow's home in the Fort Richmond area of the city. For further information you may contact her at [m-jmorrow@shaw.ca](mailto:m-jmorrow@shaw.ca)

## MBGEHR MARKET

Handbell gloves, polishing cloths, polish and easel-backed binders are still available for Guild members to purchase. This is a service that the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers established several years ago to make it more convenient for members to purchase such items. Contact Morna-June Morrow at [m-jmorrow@shaw.ca](mailto:m-jmorrow@shaw.ca) if you wish to purchase anything.

Gloves	\$5.00 – \$7.00 a pair
Sunshine Polishing Cloths	\$4.50
Tube of Polish	\$9.50
Music Binders	\$11.50

Payable by cash or by cheque to Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers (MBGEHR)  
No taxes are collected.

## **CANADIAN BELL RINGERS ATTEND THE INTERNATIONAL HANDBELL SYMPOSIUM IN CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA**



**Ron Vert & Patsy Andrews-Vert**  
from Starbuck, Manitoba



The colour palette of the logo encompasses the hues of the coral that are found deep beneath the ocean of the Great Barrier Reef. Traditional dot art painting is found in the pattern at the base of the bell, to show solidarity and respect to our First Australians. The coral grows upward reaching the Daintree Rainforest fern showing that the rainforest meets the reef.  
(From IHS website)



The International Handbell Symposium is held every two years rotating between the eight different member countries of the International Handbell Committee: Australasia (Australia & New Zealand), Canada, Great Britain, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the United States of America. Canada has hosted this international event three times: 1992 in Edmonton, Alberta, 2004 in Toronto, Ontario and 2016 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Canadian conductor in Cairns was Camille Ream from Alberta. Manitoba's Morna-June Morrow was Canadian conductor at the 2000 International Handbell Symposium in Birmingham, England and Stuart Sladden was a Canadian conductor at the 2016 Vancouver Symposium.

The 18th International Handbell Symposium was held in Cairns, Queensland, Australia opening as the sun set on Monday, August 6<sup>th</sup> and concluding with the Gala Dinner on Saturday night, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The title of the symposium sought to implement the vision of the International Handbell Committee "*World peace ... through the Spirit of Music*". *Together in Harmony* conveys unity, peace, relationship building and friendship, as well as the blending of musical sounds and the combination of the various components of the universe existing together without conflict. The sub-title, "*The Reef and Rainforest Ring*", linked the ecological world to the human world and conveyed a sense of joy in our humanity. (From IHS website)



Back Row	Ron Vert (MB), Patsy Andrews-Vert (MB)
Middle Row	Ron Routledge (BC), Lorna Clarkson (BC), Fiona Bamforth (AB), Frances McHardy (AB), June Routledge (BC)
Front Row	Camille Ream (AB), Betty-Anne Hamilton (BC), Janet Alexander (AB), Kathy Zalasky (AB), Barb Hollingshead (BC), Susan Galloway (AB)



**Bell ringers in performance during the August 6-11, 2018 International Symposium in Cairns, Australia**

August 6, 2018 saw the beginning of the International Handbell Symposium, with 301 ringers, in Cairns, Australia. It was also the inaugural International Chimes Festival, with 67 ringers, and an International Youth Handbell Symposium was held with 101 ringers, in the four days leading up to the actual Symposium.

A total of 13 ringers and 2 non-ringers from Canada were in attendance. The event consisted of massed ringing under 9 different directors from the 8 member countries. The massed ringing hall rehearsed approximately 6 hours per day. Workshops were held on 2 of the days.

Canada presented 2 workshops: Susan Galloway (AB) presented *"Bells in Worship"* and Patsy Andrews-Vert (MB) presented *"Canadian Folk Songs for Handbells"*. The folk songs had been arranged by Craig Cassils, from Winnipeg, as a project initiated by Patsy and the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers. Patsy and Morna-June Morrow were involved with the editing of the arrangements and a choir of Manitoba Ringers was involved in the inaugural ringing of the folk songs. These folk songs were well received by other ringers around the world and they are eagerly awaiting the publishing of the Canadian Folk Songs for their use.

For the symposium cultural evening, the entire group from the International Handbell Symposium was transported by 8 buses to the Rainforestation Nature Park, up in the mountains above Cairns in the World Heritage Rainforest in Kuranda. This Centre is an ecological and cultural centre. Here we were treated to a Pamagirri Aboriginal Dance demonstration, a didgeridoo demonstration, a spear throwing demonstration by the two world record throwers, and a boomerang demonstration and experience. We then moved into the animal park where you could just spend



all day watching the cute koalas, petting the kangaroos and wallabies, watching the sleeping wombat, observing the cassowary bird who is responsible for scattering the seeds of the rainforest, and watching other interesting creatures of the Australian lands. The day ended with a beautiful supper at the Nature Park and some traditional dancing and singing of the “Outback and beyond”.



**The Cassowary Bird**



The final concert of the Symposium was held on August 11 in the afternoon at the Cairns Convention Centre. After “pack-up” and “transforming” for a Gala banquet, the banquet was also held at the Convention Centre. The flags were again processed with June Routledge (BC) doing the honours for Canada. Patsy Andrews-Vert spoke, on behalf of the Handbell Guilds of Canada, in support of the nomination of Carmel Daveson, Handbell Society of Australasia, for the International Handbell Laureate Award. Mrs. Sun Joo Shin, Handbell Ringers of Japan, Honorary Executive Director, International Handbell Committee presented the certificate.

In 2020, the International Handbell Symposium will be held in Hong Kong.