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# Ringers' Roundtable

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*The Newsletter of  
the Manitoba Guild of English  
Handbell Ringers  
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## CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCES

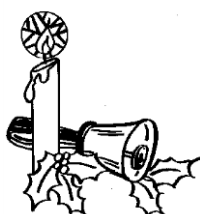
No doubt, members of the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers have completed a very busy season of bringing the glorious music of the festive season to members of their churches, schools and communities. Senior residences and nursing homes have particularly enjoyed hearing music of the Christmas season for their residents. Following is a reporting of those MBGEHR members who submitted a listing of their Christmas programs.

### GOOD NEIGHBOURS HANDBELL RINGERS

Under the direction of Klaus Froese, the Good Neighbours Handbell Ringers presented programs at Kildonan House, Lions Place, Bethania Personal Care Home and Bronx Park Community Centre. This final concert featured the Recorder Group under the direction of Linda Lurvey, and some selections were presented with both the bell ringers and recorder players.



Good Neighbours at Bethania Nursing Care Home





Good Neighbours at the Bronx Park Community Centre

### **BROADWAY-FIRST BAPTIST HANDBELL RINGERS**

Under the direction of Susan Stevenson, the Broadway-First Baptist Handbells played during a Sunday morning service as well as the Christmas Eve service.

### **RING OUT QUARTET**

Patsy Andrews-Vert, Jewel Casselman, Morna-June Morrow and Susan Stevenson presented programs at Assiniboine Links, St. Norbert Personal Care Home, Pembina Place Bethania, Waverley/Rosewood, and for the Christmas Luncheon of the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society. Three of the members played handbells in a church anthem sung by Jewel Casselman's Cherub Choir during the Lessons and Carols service at Westworth United Church.



L-R: Patsy, Jewel, Morna-June, Susan

*Ring Out!* 

## ROCHESTER RINGERS

After playing in the Eastman Choral Association's *"Sing for Peace"* concert in Steinbach, Rochester Ringers turned their attention to ringing a fascinating work by Daniel Forrest called *"A Bronze Triptych"* with the University of Manitoba Singers under the direction of Dr. Elroy Friesen. The choral work featured piano duet, handbell choir and percussion and was presented at Westminster United Church on November 30<sup>th</sup>. After that, the Rochester Ringers under the direction of recently conferred Doctor of Music Degree in Choral Conducting, Dr. Stuart Sladden turned their total attention to their presentation of Charles Dickens' *"A Christmas Carol"* at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg on Wellington Crescent. Already, audience members were asking when this production would be presented again!



*Rochester Ringers, December 7, 2019*  
*Present Charles Dickens'*  
*"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"*

Standing L-R: Laura Buchan, Sheryl Sokolies, Viola Prowse,  
Jewel Casselman, Jenny Jeffers, Lori Bodner, Dr. Stuart Sladden (Director)

Seated L-R: Karin Klassen, Morna-June Morrow, Susan Stevenson,  
Patsy Andrews-Vert





Ron Vert, Founding President of the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers, welcomes audience members to the Unitarian Universalist Church



Within 90 minutes, Rochester Ringers had completely decorated the room



Rochester Ringers' handbells and chimes ready to go!



PJ Buchan narrated Charles Dickens' *"A Christmas Carol"*





During the reading of Dicken's Christmas story, a power presentation of familiar paintings and sketches of the story could be viewed by the audience



Photo display of the Charles Dickens Centre Museum in Rochester, England



19<sup>th</sup> century bell ringing Blue Boy welcomes you to the Dickens Lighted Village



The horse carriage arriving at the Ashbury Inn





Dickens lighted village with musicians entertaining the carolers



Musicians and carolers entertaining passersby





More of the lighted village



Some of the table runners with decorative items





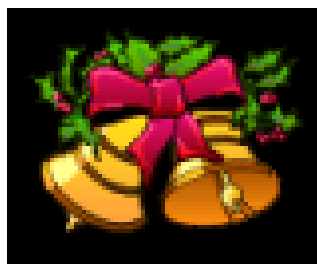
Handbell ringing angels (music box)



Although out of focus, even  
Charlie Brown's friends ring bells



Candle in a train







Dr. Stuart Sladden playing Christmas music as audience members arrived



L-R: Morna-June, Sheryl, Patsy, Viola and Susan excited to start ringing those bells

To welcome audience members, Rochester Ringers brought in many trays of delectable sweets so the audience could enjoy the program with these treats and a drink of punch or water.



Ah yes, Susan Stevenson made gingerbread cookies in the shape of handbells!

Too bad the Rochester Ringers were so busy bringing in the treats and greeting audience members and then getting into place to begin the program, that no one had access to a camera to take pictures of the trays of goodies. They had all been prepared and attractively arranged by the Rochester Ringers.





## PROLOGUE

The Manitoba Handbell Guild hosted the 2002 National Conference for the Handbell Guilds of Canada and titled it "*CHRISTMAS IN JULY*". It was so successful that when Manitoba was asked to host the 2014 National Conference we decided to present a Christmas encore featuring Charles Dickens' "*A CHRISTMAS CAROL*". The Spirits of the Past, Present and Future, became the Music of the past, of the present which in this case was 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian Era, and music yet to come – 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The conference was titled, "*A DICKENS OF A RING*".

Morna-June Morrow asked Stuart Sladden to form a group of handbell ringers to perform during the banquet at that conference. We did so, rehearsing on Rochester Avenue and thus we became known as the Rochester Ringers. It was rather ironical when we discovered that the Charles Dickens' Centre Museum is located in Rochester, England, so our name really has two places associated with the name Rochester. That was the only time the Rochester Ringers rang because Stuart was off to Edmonton to work on his Doctorate of Choral Conducting.

When Stuart returned to Winnipeg he wondered if the Rochester Ringers could reconvene. Because our initial appearance was connected with Charles Dickens, and the fact that Ebenezer Scrooge was once engaged to a lady called "Belle", why not mount a production with OUR "belles" and chimes.

Charles Dickens' "*A CHRISTMAS CAROL*" was written 176 years ago this month. Dickens himself declared it was his favourite story. Charles Dickens started working on what he called his "little Christmas book" in mid-October 1843 and had 6000 copies published on December 19, 1843. By Christmas Eve they were all sold out. "*A Christmas Carol*" has never gone out of print, and has spawn hundreds of plays, readings, TV shows and movies starring everyone from Alastair Sim, George C. Scott and Canadians Christopher Plummer and Jim Carrey, even Scrooge McDuck and the Muppets.

As Dickens told his friends, the tale of Scrooge's journey to redemption took shape during his nightly long walks through London. He'd look in people's windows and see families like the Cratchits gathered around a table or a hearth. The names of his characters came from the people he met on his walks. Tiny Tim was based on the sickly son of his sister, Fanny.

So please sit back and enjoy PJ Buchan's reading and the Rochester Ringers presentation of Charles Dickens "*A Christmas Carol*".



ROCHESTER RINGERS PRESENT  
CHARLES DICKENS' "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

(Ladybird Children's Classics, 1982)

Welcome and Introduction: Stuart Sladden

Reader: PJ Buchan

GOD REST YE MERRY, traditional English Carol arr. Cynthia Dobrinski

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL, 15<sup>th</sup> century plainsong arr. Cynthia Dobrinski

*The Man Who Hated Christmas*

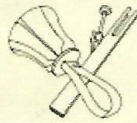
CAROL OF THE HURON, 16<sup>th</sup> century Canadian Carol, arr. Winnagene Hatch

*Marley's Ghost*

FANTASY ON GOOD KING WENCESLAS, arr. Patricia Hurlbutt

*The Spirit of Christmas Past*

A CHRISTMAS CARILLON: Medley of Five Carols: Joy to the World; Angels We Have Heard on High; Good Christian Friends, Rejoice; It Came Upon a Midnight Clear; Hark! The Herald Angels Sing arr. Margaret R. Tucker



*The Spirit of Christmas Present*

SUSSEX CAROL arr. Jason W. Krug

*The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come*

COVENTRY CAROL, 15<sup>th</sup> century English Melody, arr. Brenda E. Austin

*God Bless Us, Every One!*

JOY TO THE WORLD, George Frederick Handel arr. Barbara B. Kinyon

DECK THE HALLS, Traditional Welsh Carol arr. Cynthia Dobrinski



# *MEMBERS OF THE ROCHESTER RINGERS*

Dr. Stuart Sladden, Director \*

Patsy Andrews-Vert (Starbuck) \*

Lori Bodner \*

Laura Buchan \*\*

Jewel Casselman \*

Jenny Jeffers

Karin Klassen \*

Morna-June Morrow \*

Viola Prowse

Sheryl Sokolies \*

Susan Stevenson \*

Thank you to our willing substitute ringers:

Carolyn Lutes \*

Tracey Wright \*

\*\* Yes, sister to PJ Buchan

\*All these people have or are still conducting their own handbell choirs.

*Thank you audience members, for helping us  
to present this evening's DICKENS OF A RING!*

As reported in the July 2019 Ringers' Roundtable article, "*A Made for Movie Experience*", three members of the Rochester Ringers had a fascinating experience in a Hallmark Christmas Movie called "*The Christmas Club*". It was debuted on WTN on December 8<sup>th</sup> and repeated four more times before Christmas Eve.



Ringling on Princess Street in the Winnipeg Exchange District, Morna-June Morrow, Patsy Andrews-Vert and Viola Prowse enjoyed their "*Made for Movie*" experience

Editor's Note: It was 40 years ago that I travelled with the Bass Clef Chorus and Better Half Singers of Winnipeg to the Holy Land during the 1979 Christmas season. They performed two concerts in Jerusalem with other choirs and did a solo program in Tel Aviv, but without a doubt, the most impressive program was on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem's Manger Square, outside the Church of the Nativity. Imagine 10,000 people squeezed into the Square to hear choirs from around the world singing. When it was announced that a handbell ringing group from Nazareth would be performing, I wondered what handbells they would be using. Right on! Schulmerich Handbells made in Pennsylvania, the same set I purchased in 1973. Most MBGEHR members also use Schulmerich handbells.

*Best wishes to all as you resume your ringing in 2020!*