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# Ringers' Roundtable

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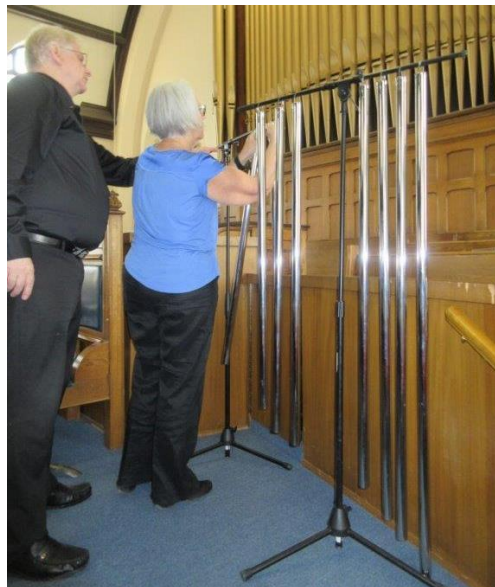
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## *SPRING RING 2019*

*Please note that some photos were taken by Susan Stevenson during this year's Spring Ring rehearsal. However, when she was ringing or directing no photos were taken. To give you an idea of performing groups not photographed that day, some photos have been inserted from last December 15<sup>th</sup> joint Christmas program by Broadway-First Baptist Handbells and Rochester Ringers. The Ring Out photo at the Legislature was taken on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019*

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Spring Ring of the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers took place on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at Broadway-First Baptist Church. Ron Vert, Founding President of the MBGEHR was Master of Ceremonies. Ron and his wife, Patsy Andrews-Vert (National Chair of Handbell Musicians of Canada) attended the 18<sup>th</sup> International Handbell Symposium which was held in Cairns, Australia in early August, 2018. Patsy presented a workshop on *Ten Canadian Folksongs* arranged for three octave handbells and hand chimes by Winnipeg composer, Craig Cassils. These were warmly received by the delegates. We are presently arranging to have them published. To begin this year's Spring Ring concert, Patsy directed the massed ringers in two of those Folksong arrangements, *Un Canadien errant* and *Vive la Canadienne*.

The Good Neighbours Handbell Ringers meet once a week at the Bronx Park Community Centre on Henderson Highway. Under the direction of Klaus Froese, Good Neighbours played Douglas E. Wagner's arrangement of *Seek Ye First* coupled with the famous canon by Johann Pachelbel. Their second selection, *Salvation is Created*, a Russian hymn arranged by Klaus Froese incorporated handbells, hand chimes, tubular bells and glockenspiel.



Klaus Froese and Viola Prowse hanging the orchestral chimes

Previously known as the Sturgeon Creek Chimers, they adopted their new name of Cheery Chimers this past year following the amalgamation of several churches in their area. They meet at Prairie Spirit United Church in the former Sturgeon Creek United Church building. Under the direction of Klaus Froese, the Cheery Chimers played two selections from John Behnke's *Chime In*, featuring *Praise to the Lord Almighty* and *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*.



Klaus Froese rehearsing with the Cheery Chimers

At this point in the concert, the Good Neighbours Handbell Ringers and Cheery Chimers combined their efforts in Martha Lynn Thompson's arrangement of Charles Wesley's *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*. This was followed by an original composition by director Klaus Froese, *Joyous Celebration for Antiphonal Bells and Chimes*. The piece used antiphonal effects inspired by the historic tradition of the Cathedral of St. Mark's in Venice where music was performed by two choirs in interaction, often performing alternate musical phrases as separate groups and also together in union.





Cheery Chimers and Good Neighbours rehearsing *Joyous Celebration* for Antiphonal Bells and Chimes

After teaching at Clifton School for the past 15 years, Lori Bodner is now arousing the passion for handbell ringing with her students at Fort Rouge Elementary School. With a borrowed set of three octaves of Schulmerich handbells, this novice group received the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers Trophy at the recent 101<sup>st</sup> Winnipeg Music Festival as the most outstanding performance by a handbell group. They began playing Sandra Eithun's arrangement of the Canadian folksong *Land of the Silver Birch* followed by a delightful performance of *A Simple Pizzicato* by Derek Hakes.



Lori Bodner directing Fort Rouge Handbells



Using mallets in *A Simple Pizzicato*

There has never been a trio performance at an annual Spring Ring concert until this year when Morna-June Morrow rang bells, Patsy Andrews-Vert played flute with Stuart Sladden on piano in Susan Nelson's arrangement of French composer, César Franck's well-known *Panis Angelicus*.





Rochester Trio performs a trio version of *Panis Angelicus*

It has become tradition that there will always be substitute ringers required at Spring Ring concerts. Trinity Lutheran Church Handbells from Starbuck had one substitute in their ensemble who did not even have a chance to rehearse with the group beforehand. A case of best sight reading ability at this point in time! From Brian Childers *Endless Victory*, a collection of titles for Lent, Holy Week and Easter, the quintet played *Were You There?* and concluded with *All Glory, Laud and Honour*.



Trinity Lutheran Church Quintet from Starbuck, Manitoba

Since the early 1970's Broadway-First Baptist Church has had handbell choirs and in recent years has added five octaves of Schulmerich Melody Chimes. Their first selection used William Kirkpatrick's simple hymn melody *Trust in Jesus* which moved in various sections through bells and chimes from one octave to another. The arranger included the first few measures of a well-loved children's hymn at the very end of the piece. For their second selection, they played a medley of Classical Easter tunes, including the *Hallelujah Chorus*, *Judas Maccabeus* and *Hymn to Joy* utilizing martellatos, shakes and mallets to emphasize the joy of Easter.



Broadway-First Baptist Handbell Choir in concert on December 15, 2018

At this point, Patsy Andrews-Vert, Trinity Lutheran Handbell Director from Starbuck, Susan Stevenson, director of Broadway-First Baptist Bells, and Morna-June Morrow former director of many handbell choirs over the past 50 years, were joined by Lakewood School Music Specialist Jewel Casselman in their Ring Out! Quartet arrangement of Ardis Freeman's arrangement of *Pick a Winner*, which was malleted throughout. The quartet and audience burst out laughing at the conclusion of this interesting work. For their second selection, the Quartet took Charles Maggs arrangement of *How Firm a Foundation* and rearranged it using both handbells and chimes.



Ring Out! Quartet ringing at Lieutenant Governor's New Year's Day Levee 2019 at the Manitoba Legislature

The National Ringing Link Conference of the Handbell Guilds of Canada was hosted by the Manitoba Handbell Guild in July 2014. Stuart Sladden was asked to form a group to perform at this event. Seeing as how the conference was based on Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, featuring Christmas music of the past (pre-1800), present (Victorian Era) and future (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries), the conference was entitled *A DICKENS OF A RING!* Morna-June had visited the Charles Dickens Museum in Rochester, England and had a pictorial display of this museum. So the group became known as the Rochester Ringers. They only played at this conference as director Stuart Sladden went to Edmonton to pursue a Doctorate in Choral Conducting. Upon his return to Winnipeg, he asked if the Rochester Ringers could be resurrected. And so the Rochester Ringers reinstated themselves in September 2018, and guess where they hold their weekly rehearsals – yes, believe it or not, the Rochester Ringers rehearse on Rochester Avenue! Their first selection, *Andante in F minor* subtitled *Psalm of Hope*, is a memorial tribute by composer Michael Helman upon the death of his father.



Rochester Ringers performing at Broadway-First Baptist Church on December 15, 2018

To conclude the 2019 Spring Ring, the Rochester Ringers performed a very challenging work by Brenda Austin called *Reconciliation*. Imagine! This piece changed time signatures a total of 17 times! Master of Ceremonies Ron Vert thanked the church for hosting this year's Spring Ring, with special accolades to all the performers and their directors for putting the RING into SPRING!

In addition to directing Rochester Ringers, Stuart is on the Faculty of the International Music Camp, has an ongoing relationship with a major handbell festival in Hong Kong, and is director for the Bison Men's and the Joie de Vivre choruses.

## *WITH A VOICE OF SINGING AND RINGING*

On Friday evening, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 at St. John's College Chapel on the campus of the University of Manitoba, two groups of musicians under the direction of Stuart Sladden, rehearsed for two concerts featuring the singing talents of the Joie de Vivre Choir and the ringing talents of the Rochester Ringers. The program was presented Saturday evening, May 4<sup>th</sup> at St. John's College, and then repeated Sunday afternoon, May 5<sup>th</sup> at St. John Brebeuf Church in River Heights.







# WITH A VOICE OF SINGING AND RINGING

**JOIE DE VIVRE CHOIR** WITH **ROCHESTER  
RINGERS**

Stuart Sladden, Conductor  
Charmaine Bacon, Pianist

**SATURDAY, MAY 4, 7 PM**

St. John's Chapel  
92 Dysart Road

**SUNDAY, MAY 5, 3 PM**

St. John Brebeuf Church  
Lanark & St. John Brebeuf Place

*Joie  
de Vivre  
Choir*



Stuart Sladden rehearsing the Joie de Vivre Choir with Charmaine Bacon as accompanist

Joie de Vivre Choir is a mixed community choir of adult singers. It was first formed in 2000 under the directorship of the late Helga Anderson, and was a program of the division of Preparatory Studies of the Marcel A. Desautels Faculty of Music, University of Manitoba for the next 14 years. In the summer of 2014 it re-formed as a community choir under the direction of Dr. John Tanner. Last year the choir welcomed Stuart Sladden in the role of conductor, and this was the third concert performed with him.

The Rochester Ringers, also under the direction of Stuart Sladden were pleased to be involved with the Joie de Vivre Choir for these two concerts.

The Joie de Vivre choir began *With a Voice of Singing* by Martin Shaw, followed by a Thomas Morley madrigal *April is in My Mistress' Face*. Canadian composer Stephen Chatman's *An Elizabethan Spring* featured three selections entitled *Spring, the Sweet Spring; There is a Garden in Her Face*; and *The Urchins' Dance*. Eric William Barnum's *After Music* completed the first set.

Because of the available space in the Chapel, the Rochester Ringers played in the centre facing one another rather than being stretched out along 30 feet of table. The ever changing rhythmic patterns of Hart Morris' *Cantad al Señor* began the handbell section. Michael Joy's *Dorian Dance* featured a total of 47 time signature changes which kept the bell ringers on their toes! The beautiful *Andante in F minor* by Michael Helman was a very musical performance with great range of dynamics.

A particularly haunting *Illumina* by Matthew Prins featured soprano Yannah Courtney, Brianne Kaldor-Mair on cello, Charmaine Bacon playing the harp part on keyboard, along with the Rochester Ringers providing most of the music with the choir added in towards the climax of the composition. This proved to be a fine collaboration between the two groups and was very much enjoyed by the audience.

Rochester Ringers played Jason Krug's *Inception* followed by a very challenging work by Brenda Austin entitled *Reconciliation*.

Joie de Vivre sang their second set featuring an arrangement by Emily Crocker of *Eatnemen Vuelie* and finished with *Earth Song* by Frank Tichell. After closing remarks by Lynne Mitchell-Pedersen, Joie de Vivre and Rochester Ringers, along with Leigh Karras on oboe, brought the concert to a close with a beautiful rendition of *A Gaelic Blessing* by Derek K. Hakes.

A reception was held afterwards in the Atrium, although some performers stayed behind as everything had to be put back into place, and all the handbell equipment had to be packed into vehicles and transported to St. John de Brebeuf Church where the entire concert would be repeated Sunday afternoon, May 5<sup>th</sup>.

After considerable restaging of the Rochester Ringers was made, the entire program from the night before was repeated Sunday afternoon. The very high ceiling of St. John's Chapel resulted in a stunning kaleidoscope of sound. With the choir and bell ringers being placed in two places at St. John Brebeuf, the sound was not as splendid as it had been the night before. Again, after the concert, a reception was held in the Parish Hall. There was no doubt about it, this collaboration by Stuart Sladden of singing and ringing was greatly appreciated by both members of Joie de Vivre and Rochester Ringers and those in attendance.





Joie de Vivre Choir directed by Stuart Sladden at St. John Brebeuf Church



Rochester Ringers in rehearsal at St. John Brebeuf Church