
Ringers' Roundtable

*The Newsletter of
the Manitoba Guild of English
Handbell Ringers
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Heartiest welcome to new individual members who have joined the MBGEHR for the 2020-2021 season:

- Karen Peters of Randolph, Manitoba, who directs the handbells at Steinbach Mennonite Church with a three-octave set of Schulmerich handbells
- Erin Hammond, N-6 Performing Arts & Visual Arts Support teacher who directs handbells at Montrose Elementary School in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 with a two-octave set of Schulmerich handbells
- Karen Kuhl, a returning individual member who conducted many handbell groups in Winkler, including the Brass Angels and Southern Bells Handbell Choir. Her Brass Angels also made some recordings over the years.

And of course, we welcome our returning handbell choirs:

- A'Cabella from First Presbyterian Church in Brandon under Karen Wall
- Broadway-First Baptist Handbell Ringers in Winnipeg under Susan Stevenson
- Trinity Lutheran Handbells of Starbuck under Patsy Andrews-Vert

As mentioned in the *Ringers' Roundtable*, Volume 25, Issue 1 in September 2020, during this unprecedented global pandemic crisis over COVID-19, many of our activities have ceased, including the ringing of handbells and chimes. A summary of daily, weekly, and monthly items sent to members since mid-March was listed for March, April, May, June, July, and August.

Normally, the MBGEHR would be offering its members a free fall Read and Ring session or a workshop which would include the Annual General Meeting. However, due to the global pandemic which befell the world in mid-March 2020, everything in our world changed significantly. In lieu of the Annual General Meeting, a summary of the 2019-2020 year was sent out in an October 1st email.

We quite understand if your group cannot meet this season; you may not wish to renew your membership. And that has proven to be the case as membership only has three choirs registered as members.

Good Neighbours Handbell Ringers did begin to rehearse in the fall but since then have had to shut down. Six members of Broadway-First Baptist Handbell Ringers played a sextet 12-bell version of "Give Thanks" at the Sunday morning Thanksgiving Service. Susan Stevenson is planning to do a Christmas bell tree solo next month. The bell ringers in Starbuck have played as a small ensemble, and director Patsy Andrews-Vert has been taping the piano accompaniment and then playing the solo bell part on a bell tree. It has been encouraging that bell ringers at Montrose School have been allowed to ring bells, while many other school groups have not met. Although the St. Andrew's River Heights United Handbells are not meeting, the church has graciously loaned its three-octave set of Schulmerich handbells to Linden

Christian School for use in their high school music program. And your Editor is trying to review some Christmas season handbell solos.

EXCITING NEWS FROM THE HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF CANADA



The Handbell Musicians of Canada website is full of exciting news and information.
www.handbellmusiciansofcanada.ca

Upon reading the history of the Handbell Guilds of Canada (HGC) on the above mentioned website, you will gain insight into the reasons for the formation of the HGC and also why, in recent years, of the original five provinces that formed the HGC, only the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba were left as Guild members. It was time to rethink how a national organization could provide valuable leadership and resources to the handbell ringers across our vast country.

The former HGC has been totally reformed and reorganized as the Handbell Musicians of Canada (HMC), a process that has taken well over six years to finally come to fruition. Patsy Andrews-Vert, Susan Stevenson, and Tracey Wright from Manitoba have worked diligently all that time with the Interim Board. Morna-June Morrow was on the Nominating Committee to ascertain handbell personnel who would be willing to serve on the new national organization.

The HMC is open only to individual members - \$10 for members, \$7 for students.

The following is an excerpt of their Inaugural Board found on the above website.

The Incoming Handbell Musicians of Canada Inaugural Board

Sincere congratulations and thanks to all the nominees who stood for election to ***make a difference*** for our new national organization. And thanks to the incredible turnout of HMC members who voted to have their voice heard. The election took place in October 2020, and the board is currently in transition planning. An inauguration date will be announced shortly.

Chair	Ellen Ramsay	Penticton, BC
Past-Chair	Patsy Andrews-Vert	Starbuck, MB
Chair-Elect	Debbie Fingas	Cobourg, ON
Secretary	Lisa Kyriakides	Newmarket, ON
Treasurer	Cathy Koski	Edmonton, AB
Membership Secretary	Kathie Zalasky	St. Albert, AB
Director-At-Large	Imran Amarshi	Burnaby, BC
Director-At-Large	Ian Costinak	Saskatoon, SK
Director-At-Large	John Hooper	Edmonton, AB
Director-At-Large	Christie Noseworthy	Nanaimo, BC
Director-At-Large	Jim Winslett	Calgary, AB
Director-At-Large	Tracey Wright	Winnipeg, MB

A LOOK BACK TO THE HISTORY OF HANDBELL RINGING IN CANADA

It seems appropriate that during this year of ongoing self-isolation that we might take time to reflect on the past. In the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers May/June 2002 issue of *Overtones*, the magazine published an International Perspective of Handbells in Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong, and Canada. Your Editor, Morna-June Morrow, and Edmonton's Alison Wood were asked to write the history of handbells in Canada. Following is a lengthy but nevertheless summarized version of that four-page article, remembering that statistics have vastly increased over the past 18 years since this article was written. Both writers are Honorary Life Members of Provincial Guilds—Alison of ALGEHR and Morna-June of MBGEHR.

From AGEHR May/June 2002 issue of *Overtones*.

Canada is the second largest country in the world with a relatively small, ethnically diverse population. We have several distinct geographic regions, two official languages, and a great variety of open expanses of land. This, in some way, is responsible for the way in which the Handbell Guilds of Canada was formed and why we in Canada have just begun the process of forming a truly national organization.

There is uncertainty regarding when the first set of bells arrived in Canada, and to what area. There was a bell set in Moncton, New Brunswick in 1964 and a set of "silent" Whitechapel Bells at Knox-Metropolitan Church in Edmonton, Alberta prior to that time. It is largely due to the work of John Nelson, Senior, of Calgary, that handbell ringing began proliferating in western Canada. He began working with Schulmerich Carillons in 1953 and was Schulmerich's Canadian representative when that company began increasing its handbell production of sets in 1962. John's church, First Baptist Church in Calgary, purchased a set in 1963. By 1966 there were sets of bells in almost every province in Canada. Malmark handbells began to arrive in 1985.

Given Canada's size, population, the expense of communication, and the diverse needs of each province, it was no wonder that various groups began to see the merit of forming associations to help foster the art of handbell ringing. In Alberta and Saskatchewan, most handbell sets were in schools; in Ontario and the Maritimes, most were used in churches; in Manitoba and British Columbia, they were divided among churches and schools. As provinces began to form guilds, they worked to meet the needs of all members, but obviously the focus was different in each case. Even now in 2002, as ties between the guilds have increased, a large part of Canada has been underrepresented in our structure. It is difficult to find bells in French-speaking Quebec, and the Atlantic region finds it geographically much easier to relate to Area I of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers.

ALBERTA GUILD OF ENGLISH HANDBELL RINGERS

Besides the work of John Nelson (1921-2015) in Calgary and Douglas Millson, the Provincial Carillonneur who introduced bells to Edmonton, Cyril Mossop, Music Supervisor of Calgary Public Schools, was looking for an instrument in elementary schools that could help prepare students for the band programs of Junior High. By 1967 it became policy to buy up to ten sets of bells each year in Calgary. Eventually whenever a new school was built in that city, the capital cost automatically included the cost of a piano and a set of handbells. In Edmonton bells were introduced to the school system by Fred Merrett, who had started the first handbell group in Winnipeg and had moved to Edmonton in the fall of 1973. He started with a three-octave set at Harry Ainley School and the parent group expanded the set to four-and-one half octaves. Edmonton Public purchased 16 sets within the next two years, which were lent to teachers for half a year, provided they had taken a three-session workshop from Fred. With the help of parent fund raising, there were about 150 sets in Calgary, 90 sets in Edmonton, and about 50 sets in smaller cities in the province.

Several churches followed the lead of First Baptist in Calgary and Robertson United in Edmonton, and by 1983 several adult groups had formed. In 1983 John Nelson pushed for his dream of a Canadian Guild, buoyed by the enthusiasm generated by a workshop given by Donald E. Allured, a former President of the AGEHR. The Alberta Guild was the first in Canada, with John Nelson as President. Over the next few years, the Guild wrote by-laws and manuals, and created a variety of festivals and

workshops for its members. A working relationship was created with Area X of AGEHR, the logo was designed and registered, and a newsletter, *The Peal*, was developed.

In July 1992 the ALGEHR hosted the 5th International Handbell Symposium in Edmonton where they hosted the USA, Japan, Australia, Great Britain, Korea, and Canada. The HGC was officially recognized by the International Handbell Committee as the national body for handbell ringing in Canada during this International Symposium.

ONTARIO GUILD OF ENGLISH HANDBELL RINGERS

Barbara Plante invited Ontario bell ringers to meet at First St. Andrew's United Church in London, Ontario in 1985, and the OGEHR was formed with an executive led by Alan Barthel. The Ontario Guild is divided into four areas: west, east, central, and south central, with about 150 sets of bells in 75 various cities and towns. In addition there are 3-4 groups from Quebec, a choir from Maine, USA, and one from the Northwest Territories (Nunavut) registered with OGEHR.

OGEHR conducts a director's workshop each year, sponsors a handbell composition competition, oversees a scholarship fund, and informs its members through its *Clapper Chatter* newsletter and OGEHR website. Its largest activity is the Biennial Festival, the last being held at the University of Western Ontario in London with 520 ringers. In London there are several soloists and duet ensembles and a quartet, The Bellissima Ringers.

SASKATCHEWAN GUILD OF ENGLISH HANDBELL RINGERS

The driving force behind the SGEHR was Carol Petrie (1949-2000) who had been introduced to handbells in Scotland and was instrumental to getting them into her church and the school system in Saskatoon. She had been present in Calgary when the AGEHR was formed and became determined to do the same for her province. An official executive was appointed September 27, 1986, with its first meeting in Regina. Past Presidents have included Carol Petrie, Susan Pentelichuk, and Diane Cawood. In 1988 Grace Hill named the newsletter *Handbell Happenings*, and Tracey Boyle designed the logo.

Of the 60 sets most are in Saskatoon Public Schools, Regina and Aberdeen school systems, and several churches like Eston, Melfort, North Battleford, Outlook, Prince Albert and Swift Current.

BRITISH COLUMBIA GUILD OF ENGLISH HANDBELL RINGERS

In October 1991 in Kelowna, British Columbia, a steering committee met to discuss the possibility of forming a BC Guild, which occurred in 1993 with its founding in Abbotsford when 90 ringers met for a workshop and to elect an executive. It was incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the BC Societies Act on January 18, 1995. The members span all ages, ringing chiefly in church or community choirs. Through its newsletter, *Quarter Notes*, and the BCGEHR website, information is related to members about what is happening locally, nationally, and internationally. Lorraine Loewen served as President 1993-1997 and the current president is Anne Hill.

MANITOBA GUILD OF ENGLISH HANDBELL RINGERS

The first Manitoba handbell group was formed in 1966 at the Technical-Vocational High School in Winnipeg under the direction of Fred A. Merrett, assisted by Audrey Jones. Mr. Merrett moved to Edmonton in 1973, continuing a long career as a leading educator, workshop clinician, massed ringing director, and composer/arranger of handbell music. He has coordinated the Handbell Music Camp at the International Peace Gardens on the border between North Dakota and Manitoba for the past 22 years.

In order to promote the art of handbell ringing, the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers was formed April 8, 1995 in Starbuck with Rev. Ron Vert as founding president. MBGEHR sponsors local workshops, read-and-ring sessions, and a provincial Spring Ring Festival, in addition to disseminating information and news through its provincial newsletter *Ringers' Roundtable* and the MBGEHR website. There are 32 sets in Manitoba, although no more than four octaves are being used by various church groups, school divisions, college level, and seniors groups in the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon, as well as several rural areas of Carman, Lac du Bonnet, McGregor, Minnedosa, Starbuck, Stead, Steinbach, and Winkler.

With the MBGEHR officially joining the Handbell Guilds of Canada in 1996, Canada was now linked with five of its ten provinces from British Columbia eastward through Ontario, thus providing the "Ringing Link" needed to host its first National HGC Conference in 1998 in Saskatoon, followed by the 2000 Edmonton Conference. The third National Ringing Link will be held in the geographical center of Canada in Winnipeg, from July 3-6, 2002. Winnipeg is known as the Christmas Capital of Canada, so what better way to celebrate the hottest month of the year than by hosting a conference titled, "Christmas in July," with ringers from across Canada and from our neighboring American states, especially our friends in AGEHR's Area VII.

ATLANTIC CANADA

According to John Nelson, as of July 2000 there were 69 sets of bells in the Atlantic region of Canada's Maritime provinces. In a letter dated November 7, 2000, Marjorie C. Barteaux of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, said the idea of an Atlantic Guild first arose during a Bellfest of choir directors at Truro, NS, in 1992. Letters were sent in early 1993 to all handbell choirs in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland to investigate interest and to request comments and suggestions. To date there has been no further action. Because of proximity of AGEHR's Area I, bell ringers often participate in events given by the northern New England states.

NEW BRUNSWICK

In 1964 at First Baptist Church in Moncton, New Brunswick, Dr. Ralph Fitch formed a two-octave choir using what is believed to be the first handbell set in Canada. Jerry McFarland formed the Harriet Clark Memorial Handbell Choir in October 1966 at Brunswick Street Baptist Church in Fredericton and was director for 23 years. The ringers represented their province at the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton (1978) and the Canadian Heritage Festival in Vancouver (1980) and performed for Queen Elizabeth II in 1984. The Barbara Boudreau Memorial Handbell Choir operates at Wesley Memorial United Church in Moncton. David Steeves teaches handbells at Devon Park Christian School and at Devon Park Baptist Church in Fredericton.

NOVA SCOTIA

First United Church Handbell Choir in Truro, NS, began in 1971 after a visit from the Moncton choir. St. James Presbyterian Church bought bells in 1988. The United Protestant Church in Sydney, Cape Breton Island, bought a set in the 1970s when Queenie MacKeigan was organist and choir leader. Terry Hurrell founded the handbell choir at Zion United Church in Liverpool. They represented NS at the Canadian Music Educators' Association National Conference in Winnipeg in 1981. Terry currently conducts the St. Matthew's United Church in Halifax. The Carillon Choir, organized in 1977 by Stuart Belson at St. James United Church in Dartmouth, has performed in the Maritimes, Ontario, and Bermuda and has taken part in the 1996 AGEHR Eastern National Conference at Portland, Maine and the Orono, Maine conference in 1999. In May 2001 Stuart Belson, who now directs the Metamorphosis Handbell Choir in Ottawa, Ontario, took his group to Iqaluit in the newly created Territory of Nunavut in the Arctic Circle, some 200 miles south of the Arctic Circle.

THE HANDBELL GUILDS OF CANADA

Although the Canadian guilds had the intention of eventually forming a national organization, the impetus to take that step was a result of the International Handbell Committee. When Alberta decided to host the IHS in Edmonton in 1992, guild members decided to meet by phone once a year, hold a Canadian composition competition, develop policies for choosing a Canadian conductor and representative to International Symposia, and set up a notation system for this organization, later to be referred to as the Handbell Guilds of Canada.

One way to communicate was through the provincial websites: Handbell Graces, Handbells in Canada, and Handbells Etc. The latter website has an excellent newsletter as well as a catalogue of items, music reviews, new releases, handbell events, the purchase of Malmkär bells, and links to other handbell websites around the world, as well as information about the 11th IHS to be held in Toronto, Ontario in 2004.

In a conference call on January 28, 2001, HGC National Chair Morna-June Morrow found enthusiastic agreement among the five guilds to elect a formal National Executive and Board of Directors that would begin their duties on September 1, 2001. Having come full circle, Alison Wood, as the first chair of the embryonic Canadian guild, now has returned as National Chair of the HGC.



Updated comments on the above article. Carol Petrie (1949-2000), Founding President of the Saskatchewan Guild, was chosen to be the Canadian conductor at the 9th International Symposium in Birmingham, England. She was to give workshops at the upcoming July 2000 National Ringing Link Conference in Edmonton. HGC National Chair Morna-June Morrow received a telephone call in Edmonton from Carol in hospital, stating that she was too ill to travel to Edmonton and asking that Morna-June find a replacement to take over her workshop sessions. In a later call, Carol, also asked M-J to take her place as director at the IHS in Birmingham. Upon her return home to Winnipeg, M-J stopped in Saskatoon to see Carol who had just been released from hospital. They looked at the piece she was to conduct, "Lullaby of the Iroquois," based on the poem by Pauline Johnson, with handbell music composed by Saskatoon's Patricia Thompson. Just a few days later, M-J and a former Carol Petrie student, Tracey Wright, drove to Saskatoon to attend Carol Petrie's funeral. How tragic it was to see members of Carol's handbell choir who were to perform in Birmingham, alas, without their director.

Alison Wood kindly helped Morna-June learn a few words in Japanese and Korean before she flew to England to conduct 800 bell ringers from ten countries on four continents. Attending the meeting of the International Handbell Committee was quite a lengthy meeting, as one had to wait for translations into Japanese and Korean. Eventually Alison Wood became the first Canadian to become Chair of the International Handbell Committee from 2004-2008. In 2016 at the 17th IHS in Vancouver, BC, Alison was awarded the International Handbell Laureate Award for her strong leadership provincially, nationally, and internationally.

HOT OFF THE WEBSITE OF THE HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF CANADA



*The Board of Directors of the newly re-organized
Handbell Musicians of Canada and the HMC
Interim Board of Directors are honoured
to recognize Alison Wood's achievements with the
first HMC Honourary Lifetime Achievement*

Heartiest congratulations to you, Alison, on this well-deserved accolade!



The MBGEHR sends its very best wishes to you and your families during this most unprecedented Christmas season that sees relatively little handbell and chime ringing going on at the present time during this global pandemic. Let's just say "Merry Christmas" to each of you, and may we look forth to a better 2021. Perhaps in the winter, this fellow may show up giving us a glimmer into ringing once again!

