



Clapper Chatter

Minnesota • North Dakota • South Dakota • Wisconsin • Manitoba

Volume 39 • Issue 3 • August 2025

Area 7

Handbell Musicians
OF AMERICA



Pinnacle 2025

A look back

Message from the Chair



by Paul McKenzie

Greetings. I hope that you are enjoying summer.

Area 7 has been host to several great handbell concerts this summer. They have been very creative and well presented. I also attended Pinnacle in Wichita, Kansas, where I heard some amazing concerts — and our own Twin Cities Bronze was a part of that.

Creativity abounds. Handbell groups have gone to great lengths incorporating unique ways of presenting their music. Here is a list of very effective things that I've seen:

- Up to 7 octaves of bells and chimes, silver melody bells, Petit & Fritsen bells
- Additional instruments (violins, cello, flute, percussion, bass, guitar, piano)
- Singing
- Staging
- Costumes
- Programs (comic book, QR code, program notes)
- Speaking (introducing pieces, storytelling, translating)
- Unique setups
- Some conductor-less groups
- Varied repertoire (orchestral transcriptions, new pieces, a few sacred selections)

At Pinnacle I attended some interesting classes. One dealt with our emotional connection to music — which was quite moving. Another dealt with copyright issues and the composing/arranging process. I attended a reading session of Pop music arrangements.

An especially interesting class for me was about Concert Programming. It dealt with repertoire (of course), attire, venue, instrumentation, setup, etc. Of particular interest to me was the topic of speaking/narration. In most situations, the director speaks between songs to “fill the gap” while the players rearrange their bells for the next piece. The conclusion is that most speaking is longer than it needs to be. Many spoken interludes are unrehearsed, so the effect is too casual. Also, often the speaking simply duplicates what's already written out in the program. The prevailing sentiment: Less speaking, that is well-written, benefits the performance more than “filler.”

I am looking forward to our 2026 Festival in St. Cloud, in less than a year. I had the opportunity to meet our guest conductor from Puerto Rico, Carlos Rivera-Aponte and the composer of our commission, Matthew Compton. Conductors Jill Mahr and Jennifer Cadwell join the team for some great music-making. The repertoire for our festival is so exciting and spans the musical spectrum.

Make plans now to join us. If you have never attended a festival, this one is perfect for you. If you are a returning veteran player, this festival will offer more never-seen-before highlights. Our worship will feature music from unique sources, and will invite the congregation to speak, sing and ring. “. . . a great cloud of witnesses . . .”

Stay cool. 🎵

Reflection on Pinnacle

by Jennifer Cadwell

Having just returned from Pinnacle, HMA's national event in Wichita, Kansas, I wanted to share some of the highlights with you.

From July 9-12, over 350 people gathered from across the country and around the world to share in their love of handbells and handchimes. Ten concerts were performed, including a concert from Area 7's own Twin Cities Bronze!

Registrants attended up to nine classes they could choose from the 54 classes offered. Or they could participate as part of a ringing track for three of those class periods on intermediate, advanced or Pop/Rock tracks with excellent clinicians. We visited the Handbell Commons to meet the 41 vendors, which included publishers, manufacturers, bell merchandise, area focused tables, community groups, and fellowship time with one another. Carol Scheel was again in attendance at Heitz Handbell with music, bells gifts, and more! Area 7 had a table with a memorial to Bill Alexander.



Area 7 representatives soaking in all that Pinnacle has to offer.



Twin Cities Bronze performing at Pinnacle

One of my favorite parts about national events are the concerts. This year, the concerts were in a beautiful theatre that had excellent acoustics, and we could really see all the hardwork that went into each performance.

HMA does a good job selecting performers that represent different facets of handbells. We got to experience solo ringing, bell trees, cymbells, a stellar quartet, and full 7-octave ensembles. Along with the bells and chimes, instruments like saxophone, flute, cello, bass, violin, piano, voice, and percussion were highlighted in the program. Music selections ranged from new compositions commissioned for the ensemble, folk songs, movie themes, hymns, classical arrangements, and Pop tunes.

No two concerts were alike, and each ensemble showcased unique aspects of ringing. Concerts were

performed by Columbia Handbell Ensemble, Forte Handbell Quartet, Pikes Peak Ringers, Embellish Handbells, soloist Emily Li, Twin Cities Bronze, Arsis Handbell Ensemble, Rezound! Handbell Ensemble, Distinctly Teen, and Concordia University Irvine Handbells. We appreciate that the performances were live streamed on YouTube for those who couldn't attend in person to watch from home so they could be part of the Pinnacle experience as well.

Pinnacle classes were offered on a number of different topics, including administration for bell groups; livestreaming, website creation, fundraising events, using digital technology, and streamlining organizational operations. Technique classes were held on bass bells, four-in-hand, six-in-hand, mallets, weaving, and rhythms. Discussions were offered on creating and sustaining a community ensemble along with fundraising, holding auditions,



Forte Handbell Quartet.



Embellish Handbells

and touring. There were classes with hands-on opportunities to increase your skills and classes that were discussion-based to get registrants thinking of new ideas. With 54 classes to choose from, there was truly something for everyone.

Part of the joy of attending a national event is getting to know people from other parts of the country as well as deepening the connections with Area 7 friends. There is plenty of time to have a meal with new friends or chat in the Handbell Commons. Area 7 members in attendance at Pinnacle were National Board Member Tracey Bowers; Area 7

board members Paul McKenzie, Jennifer Cadwell, Cheryl Ulmer, and Paul Kingsbury; Area 7 past board members Cathy Moklebust, Lori Potter, Jessica Westgard Larson, and Carol Scheel, Area 7 friends Billy and Dorea Brandt, Jana Larson, and Tracy Scheel; and Distinctly Teen ringer Genevieve Cadwell.

Next July, HMA will hold National Seminar in Cincinnati, Ohio. And Area 7 will hold our festival conference in St. Cloud, Minnesota in June. I hope you make plans to join us at one of these great handbell events! 🎵



Rezound! Handbell Ensemble



Soloist Emily Li



Arsis Handbell Ensemble



AREA 7 AT PINNACLE



From the Twin Cities Metro Sub-Chair



by Akudo Omeoga

We All Need a Little Restoration

One of the loveliest aspects of ringing handbells is the fact that it brings people together. That's it! You don't have to finish reading

anything else! BUT if you're continuing on — why else do we ring if not for the connections that we gain? There is a peace that we feel when a song touches the audience in the way you intended it to.

I had the honor of ringing with several different groups this year, as well as sitting in on many different practices as Sub Area Chair, and I've gained wonderful connections through this experience! I've been able to see community being built in unique ways, whether that is taking a break with milk and cookies with the ringers at Peace UMC in Shoreview, fun exciting lunch dates with the Ding Dong Dollies, commiserating over puzzles in the very intergenerational Hennepin Chime at Hennepin UMC, fun holiday parties with fun games with Bells of the Lakes, and praying together at the ever-growing, ever-loving Hamline UMC; ringing handbells is SO MUCH MORE than ringing.

Making music is definitely important — the last concert I played in with Bells of the Lakes reminds me of that. And the community aspect of ringing can never be replaced. I loved going and watching wonderful groups such as Bells of the Bluff having continuous fun; Twin Cities Bronze showing why their expertise has led them to be chosen to ring as a top-ranked group at Pinnacle; to the formation of Ring Out and having tears in my eyes to see such an important group in the Twin Cities; beautiful community being made is at the forefront of bell ringing! Each group member that picks up bells in their right and left hands (or perhaps just one if you're ringing on the low, low bass) brings beautiful

music to the family, friends, and the community that hears the product of sometimes weeks of hard work. To me, that is absolutely what ringing handbells is all about.

Restoration. Something that keeps me restored are emotions that audience members share after playing, such as the one a friend made while listening to "Restored" by Sandra Eithun at the closing Bells of the Lakes concert. She texted, looking for a recording of the concert specifically for "Restored," because it put her in a different atmosphere. I can relate to that because it was very hard to keep from sobbing when the last chord was played.

Each time I've rang "Restored" this year, (and it's been many) — with Hennepin Chime at the funeral of a highly revered member that passed away; with Hamline UMC talking about the restoration that the choir had and is going through from ringing on cardtables 6 feet apart (COVID days) to having a designated spot in the sanctuary; with Bells of the Lakes as an important part of our concert series; my soul has felt some kind of restoration. That feeling wouldn't be there without the community that I play with and the community that I play for.

"He restoreth my soul" (Psalm 23:3) – my community is restored and I know goodness and mercy is waiting for us, just listen for it.

Happy Summer! 🎵



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 @RaleighRingers	 @RaleighRingers

Find a Nearby Area 7 Community Group

MINNESOTA

Bells of the Bluffs

Redwing, MN

bellsofthebluffs.org

Bells of the Lakes

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

www.bellsofthelakes.org

Ding Dong Dollies

Twin Cities, MN

Great River Resonance

St. Cloud, MN

www.greatriverresonance.org

Joy BRingers

Fergus Falls, MN

maryjane41@aol.com

Northfield Handbell Ensemble

Northfield, MN

www.facebook.com/NorthfieldHandbells

Ring Out!

Minneapolis, MN

www.ringoutmn.org

Rochester Area Handbells

Rochester, MN

rochesterareahandbells.org

Strikepoint

Duluth, MN

www.strikepoint.com

Twin Cities Bronze

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

twincitiesbronze.org

wRight Ringers Community Handbell Ensemble

Buffalo, MN

www.facebook.com/wRightRingersHandbells

SOUTH DAKOTA

Bells of the Hills

Rapid City, SD

www.bellsofthehills.com

Sioux Empire Handbells/Heartland Handbells

Sioux Falls, SD

www.facebook.com/HeartlandHandbells

WISCONSIN

Bell Crazy Handbell Ensemble

Lake Mills, WI

www.facebook.com/groups/378241232198/979

Encore! Handbell Ensemble

Oshkosh, WI

encorehandbellensemble.org

Great River Ringers

La Crosse, WI

www.facebook.com/GreatRiverRingers

Madison Area Concert Handbells

Madison, WI

madisonhandbells.org

Maestro Productions Inc./Ringing Badgers

Madison, WI

www.maestroproductions.org/ringing-badgers.html

Milwaukee Handbell Ensemble

Milwaukee, WI

www.milwaukeehandbells.org

Milwaukee LGBTQ+ Handbell Ringers

Milwaukee, WI

sites.google.com/view/milwaukeeeqbtqringers

Don't see your group listed?

Contact editor.area7@handbellmusicians.org

From the South Dakota Sub-Area Chair



by Cheryl Ulmer

Movin' Right Along!

At the risk of borrowing a song title from the Muppets, I think it's time for us all to do just that — move right along! I realize we'll probably live with the

after-effects of COVID indefinitely, yet that cannot be the “forever excuse” and reason for not being able to fill a choir or an ensemble. I hope I can offer some incentives to make things exciting again!

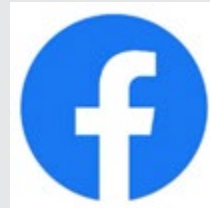
If you are fortunate to live in a community or area where your tables are always full and your ringers are rarely absent, then I won't pinch you to wake you from your beautiful (fairytale) dream. More than likely, you'd welcome some suggestions for finding substitutes.

1. The MOST important one: Work TOGETHER with bell directors from area churches or community groups to create a database of ringers and the positions where they feel most comfortable. (In the Dakotas, that could mean 25, 50, or even 100 miles away!) This is a whole lot easier than having to search for someone on Sunday morning.
2. Find that one creative ringer who simply loves rotating parts and switching positions. Keep them motivated and challenged to continue ringing!
3. Join forces with a bell choir from another church and alternate directors and sites when making a presentation. Logistics can be tricky, but organization and planning will make it work!
4. This may sound a bit insensitive, but (other than last-minute emergencies) have ringers commit to their personal schedules a year in advance. It's liberating when ringers know when they are needed and when they can be free to travel. Encourage them to let you know their upcoming schedules ASAP.
5. Rehearse and play lots of ensembles, quartets, or 2-3 octave pieces, BUT be sure to have everyone

from your group have the opportunity to be involved in at least one ensemble. This works very well when the “snowbirds” fly South in the winter.

6. Plan a Saturday area handbell workshop for multiple groups, then either play at worship or present a mini-concert with whomever can stay and ring after the event. (It won't matter if there are some “holes” in the table.)
7. Food works wonders and gets people to show up! Plan a simple potluck meal or a fellowship refreshment time after rehearsals.
8. Don't ever make a ringer feel guilty if they must be absent. That is how we lose ringers. I always say, “We'll make it work”, even if I don't have a clue how I'll do it.
9. Buddy up! Use the buddy system: Find a piece that can be compatible with playing it on handbells, as well as chimes, then encourage less experienced ringers to join in the presentation playing chimes or bells if an extra set is available.
10. I didn't have the opportunity to be a cheerleader in high school, so this is my chance to do it now! Like the popular cheer goes: “Let's get fired up!” 🎵

Keep in touch with
Area 7 on Facebook



Join CUMC in Rochester, Minnesota, for a Milestone Handbell Anniversary

by Paul Kingsbury

The handbell program of Christ United Methodist Church (CUMC) in Rochester will celebrate its 60th anniversary on November 9th, 2025.

The celebration will include a concert that afternoon including all three of the current ensembles, with ringers ranging in age from 6 to politeness-forbids-details-but-definitely-way-up-there. The concert will also feature the premiere of a new composition

commissioned for the occasion, a joyous setting of "I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing," by Brian Childers.

CUMC is also inviting alumni of the program to return for a pick-up choir. Music will be distributed ahead of time and rehearsed on Saturday November 8th. (Selections will be forgiving for alumni who may have rusty ringing skills.) If you are an alum of the CUMC bell program or if you know or are related to an alum who might be interested in participating, please connect with us at email@cumethodist.com for more details.

The handbell program at CUMC has been a source of joy, worship, and community for six decades, touching countless lives along the way. Join us to celebrate this legacy. 🎵

STRIKEPOINT

Summer Tour 2025

Friday, August 1 • TBD

Cathedral of Christ the King
1410 Baxter Ave., Superior, WI

Saturday, August 2 • 7:00pm

St. Andrews Catholic Church
501 NW 16th St., Grand Rapids, MN

Sunday, August 3 • 7:00pm

First Presbyterian Church
650 2nd Ave. N., Fargo, ND

Monday, August 4 • TBD

First Baptist Church
1555 Paul Bunyan Dr., Bemidji, MN

Tuesday, August 5 • 7:00pm

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
1429 North Dakota St., Aberdeen, SD

Wednesday, August 6 • 7:00pm

Lutheran Memorial Church
320 E. Prospect Ave., Pierre, SD

Friday, August 8 • TBD

Custer, SD

Saturday, August 9 • TBD

Glenwood United Parish Church
10 17th Ave. NW, Glenwood, MN

Sunday, August 10 • 7:00pm

First United Methodist Church
230 E. Skyline Parkway, Duluth, MN

Artistic Director Derek Bromme • dbromme@css.edu • Duluth, Minnesota

Working with the Autism Society to Plan a Kid-Friendly, Sensory-Friendly Handbell Concert

by Lisa Bourget

How welcoming is your bell choir to less typical audiences?

Madison Area Concert Handbells (MACH) has been struggling with how to balance helping younger kids feel welcome at concerts with accommodating audience members who bought tickets expecting to enjoy the music without the distracting wiggles and noises that come with youngsters. Its solution was a specific concert dedicated to families — with some advance planning that helped broaden that concert’s appeal even further.

“As an organization, we really want to reach kids, not discourage them from attending,” says Kris Lee, a MACH ringer. MACH also knew that ticket costs for multiple adults and kids made it difficult for some of their younger ringers’ friends to bring their families to the concerts. And they have ringers with vivid

memories of hearing bells as a child and knowing “I want to do that.” MACH had previously worked directly with some of Wisconsin’s Madison-area schools, but grant funding to support that activity is no longer available.

“There’s a theater in Madison that does some sensory-friendly performances in a more relaxed setting, and I have friends who are neurodivergent,” said Kathie Brohaugh, another MACH ringer. “I thought some of those adjustments could work for a handbell concert.”

Kathie did a lot of research and then contacted the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin for advice. She found that the organization was more than willing to help. “They told me they do this all the time, and it was helpful to speak with someone with more expertise.”



I can sit in this room if I need a break from the concert or if the music gets too loud.

Part of the “social story” prepared by the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin for the concert.



Young audience members with paper cup “bells” ready to ring.



Audience members could bring headphones if desired.



Director Nick Bonaccio takes questions from the audience.

Some of the Autism Society’s advice had to do with letting people know what to expect, both in advance and at the outset of a concert.

“We knew we couldn’t address the volume for a live concert,” Kathie explained, “but we could provide links to YouTube videos that would give a sense of the range of likely sounds so that families could decide in advance. And before we started the concert itself, we could let the audience know what was coming: this is bells played softly, and this is bells played loudly. We wanted to prepare them for the volume and also the different kinds of sounds they would hear.”

To help with expectations, the Autism Society offered to prepare a “social story” that could be posted online. It sent a photographer to the venue and created a concise narrative to go with the pictures that explained the event in advance.

“We also learned that it was OK to advertise a sensory-friendly concert even if we couldn’t provide some things,” Kathie noted. “We could let families know they were welcome to bring fidgets (objects that can help with self-regulation, focus, and managing anxiety or stress) and headphones, something we weren’t providing ourselves.”

The venue itself was important. MACH planned its sensory-friendly, kid-friendly concert for a church that had a separate “quiet room” where music could be piped in with the volume controlled.

MACH also worked on some hands-on items. Kris developed activity sheets geared for various ages, thinking it might possibly work as a fidget for some. She also created paper cup handbells so children could (silently!) “ring” along with the choir.

Allowing movement was beneficial for both younger and neurodivergent audiences. “The two focuses went well together,” Kris noted. “Many times, neurodivergent accommodation benefitted everyone.”

MACH deliberately shortened its concert for its planned audience. Ultimately, the group decided that half of its regular program (divided by intermission) provided for a shorter concert while also meeting

ringers' needs. MACH also decided to encourage a free-will offering at the family-friendly concert instead of charging for tickets.

Advertising a kid-friendly, sensory-friendly concert also helped manage the expectations of those who might attend that concert for their own purposes (maybe the time or location was more convenient), thus helping avert the potential for complaining about enthusiastic 3-year-olds.

MACH held two full concerts on May 17 and 18 with receptions following, plus a free "kid-friendly relaxed concert" the afternoon of May 17.

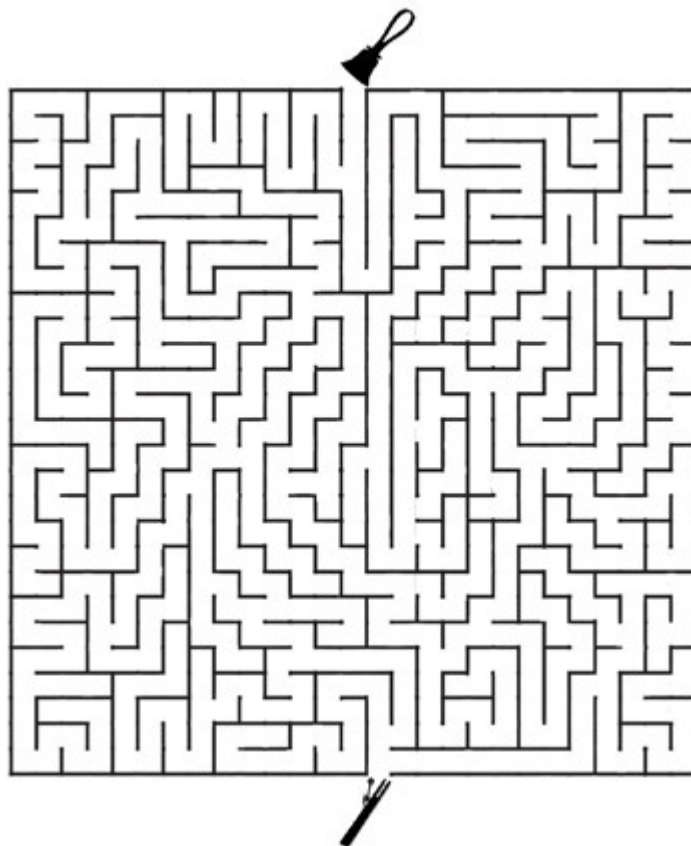
"It went really well," said Kathie about the relaxed concert. "We had about 62 in attendance, including one family from the Twin Cities, and we had a very positive response in the survey we provided. One said that their kid loved music, but they didn't feel comfortable attending previously; others said it was helpful to know their children could walk around."

Kathie noted that there were little ones, but also some in maybe the age 10 to 12 range. At the beginning, there was a bit of "kid noise", but it was very respectful. MACH's director, Nick Bonaccio, provided an appropriate introduction.

"Nick did a really nice job, making it a teaching moment, such as one bell played quietly and then loudly, and then exposing the full bell choir. He was very welcoming. We had lots of kids' hands up during the question-and-answer part, and lots of people came up to talk and see the bells afterwards."

Many of the paper cup bells went home as keepsakes. "They were super popular!" said Kris. "There was one child on the way out who asked if they could take more – they wanted four so they could do 4-in-hand at home."

Would MACH consider future such concerts? "Yes, we want to do this again," said Kathie. "We might make some adjustments — maybe consider the afternoon before a concert versus the weekend before at our dress rehearsal. The activity sheets are already done and could be printed again, and we still have enough paper bells for more concerts." 🎵



Part of the activity sheet for older youth.

Handbell Musicians of America Membership Levels

Individual Membership: \$95/year

Group Membership for your church, school,
organization: \$95/year

Retired Director Membership (65-plus, no longer
leading an ensemble): \$70/year

Student Membership (full-time college or high
school student): \$25/year

Sub Membership (individuals ringing with an
organization that has a group membership):
\$10/year

For more information, contact Christina Herold
membership.area7@handbellmusicians.org



Distinctly Teen 2025

by Genevieve Cadwell

This year's Distinctly Teen, conducted by clinician Carlos Rivera-Aponte, was made up of teenagers from schools and churches in Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, plus the Washington D.C. area. Distinctly Teen is a program held each summer by Handbell Musicians of America that invites ringers of all capabilities between the ages of 13 and 18 to come and ring. Parts are assigned in advance without an audition, and many parts are doubled, so you often have friends ringing your same bells! We were also given our music to practice ahead of time, so we were able to start ringing together having already seen and practiced our parts. This allowed us to really dig into the little details that bring the music to life.

During our two and a half days of rehearsals, we were able to attend four musician showcases, which included Pikes Peak Ringers, Embellish Handbells, soloist Emily Li, and Estonia's Arsis Handbell Ensemble, in which everyone was blown away by their performance. Teen ringer Hale Astrich said that while "we're playing level 3+ music, they're inventing a whole new level of music." Ringer Bryce Taylor also mentioned that "they made it look so effortless."

We were also given the opportunity to play a handbell themed game of Jeopardy! with Mitchell Eithun, which was a lot of fun, as the four teams all displayed their handbell knowledge in what also served as a

fantastic icebreaker. During this time, we were given a rather in-depth lesson on carillons, which all of us nerdy teen handbell ringers found very interesting. In what ended up being just over 12 hours of rehearsal, we managed to learn and nearly perfect five different Latin-based pieces that were all successful because of Carlos' constant reminders for us to count out loud. As you may imagine, this simple yet often overlooked task quickly became the answer to all our problems.

We were given two other important pieces of advice, the first being to fully soak in each concert, with Carlos sharing that every "music performance is a once in a lifetime opportunity, you never get to recreate it in the same way," along with a reminder to always keep learning from and get to know your fellow handbell-loving friends at events such as Pinnacle. A fact that Carlos supported by telling us that "I direct with the baton that my friend whom I met at the 1994 AGEHR conference in Tampa gave me when he passed. I carry my friends with me because they continue to teach me."

Even the best musicians always have something to learn, and these events are not only a great opportunity to hone our craft of handbells, but they are also rather addicting. In fact, I first met one of my fellow ringers, Breanna Kennedy, at the Area 7 Young Ringers Camp in 2023. That was the first event that her family ever attended, and after that, they were hooked and have been coming to HMA events ever since!

The unanimous favorite piece throughout the group was Hart Morris' arrangement of "Libertango," which Elsa Mejeur said was "definitely my favorite, but by

far the trickiest,” and Sandra Eithun’s arrangement of “Sway,” which featured one of the premier performances of Schulmerich’s handbell glockenspiel. The other piece that we really enjoyed was HMA President Greg Ashurst’s “Jamaican Holiday,” which had a fun improv section and catchy tune that we were all humming along to throughout the day, even if “we took that just a tad bit fast” during the concert as pointed out by ringer, Ewan Davis. Needless to say, we enjoyed all the pieces we played, and I know that all of us had loads of fun performing with other talented youth handbell ringers.

Thank you to everyone who helped organize this event, as well as to everyone who allowed us to borrow their equipment. I would like to give a special shout out to Hillary Marotta, who coordinated all of Distinctly Teen, thank you so much! I can’t wait to see what we will ring next year at National Seminar in Cincinnati, Ohio! 🎵



Genevieve Cadwell and director Carlos Rivera-Aponte



Ringling with Purpose: The Impact of Handbells on a Rural Wisconsin School District

by Karla Hulne

I am a proud public school instrumental music educator.

Depending on the school district, being a music educator can mean a lot of different things. I am fortunate enough to work in a place that allows me to create a program that I am passionate about. So here, in a very rural community in Western Wisconsin, that means handbells!

In addition to my concert bands, marching band, pep band, and ukulele ensembles, I am also the founder and director of three incredible handbell choirs. Of course, I am proud of their many achievements, but greater than that, I am so excited to share with you what these remarkable young people have contributed to our community.

When I began working in the small town of Blair, Wisconsin, I learned that the local Lutheran church had a 3-octave set of handbells that hadn't been used in quite some time. I eagerly contacted the church to see if we could borrow them. They graciously agreed. We have gradually added on to our octaves through some fundraising and generous gifts from the community. But our partnership with the church remains.

Finding time to run a handbell group was challenging. In a small town, kids are involved in everything, so running up against the sports schedule was out of the question. Without many other options, we decided that our best option would be before school. My superintendent, Mr. Lynn Halverson offered the following insight: "Students eagerly arrive before the first bell rings and parents ensure their children have transportation to participate. This shared commitment underscores the value the community places on this unique musical offering."

I now have rehearsals every day before school, and the elementary students rehearse during their lunch recess. After nearly two decades of teaching handbells in the public school, interest is growing enough to start offering exploratory handbell electives to other students throughout the school day.





What keeps these groups strong and thriving is an ongoing commitment to a high performance level. I am systematic in my approach to choosing repertoire. My younger groups are the future of my program, so I am conscious of scaffolding in the skills necessary to play more difficult music. We explore all techniques and branch out into solo and small ensemble material to allow some of my highest achieving students to push themselves even further. They might be young, but they are only limited by their physical ability to lift the bells.

We receive many performance requests, some arriving more than a year in advance to make sure we can get it scheduled. We do as many as the students are able, and it's such a joy to make connections with adults who have rung in the past, some who even used the very same set of bells that we currently ring. One set of 3-octave bells has connected generations of musicians in this rural community, nestled in the driftless region.

Each year, all of my groups put on a Christmas concert. My senior handbell members get to decide each year where the donations should go. Over the years, we have given back over \$20,000 to organizations in our community, such as the local humane societies, New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Center, the local food pantries, and so many more.

But perhaps the most profound experience for my students is when they choose to donate the money

to Project Christmas. Project Christmas provides Christmas gifts and necessities to families in need in our area. My students do the shopping anonymously and wrap each gift. Watching my students understand the difference they are making in their community is one of the most rewarding parts of my career. I am not only shaping excellent musicians but also good citizens.

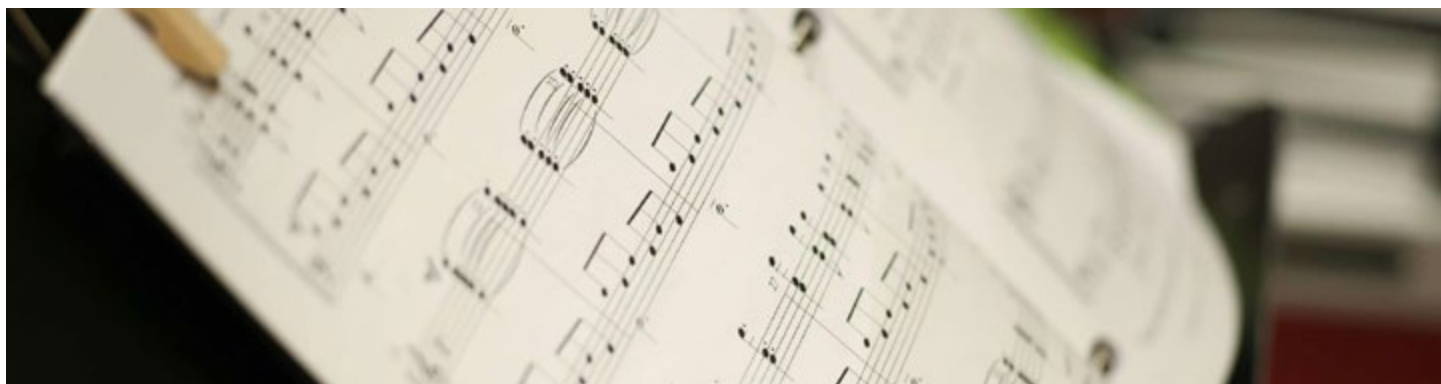
My students spend the second half of the year preparing for solo/ensemble contest. Students prepare pieces for performance for judges who give them feedback. It is my honor to serve on the handbell music selection committee at the state level, to choose the required repertoire that will challenge the student ringers throughout our state to achieve the highest levels of performance.

Samantha Aguilar will be a senior in the 2025-2026 school year, but she has been a bell ringing since she was 8 years old. Samantha offers the following wisdom: "Some days may be longer than others, but in the end, each and every person in our group has their very own reason to be committed to something so great and beautiful. One thing I know for sure is that each and every one of us do it because we love music and the person who taught us. Handbells have been a big part of my life, and I plan to continue playing as long as I can. I owe it to Karla Hulne for taking her time and teaching me something I never expected to have such a great impact on my life."

Many of my students have now been ringing for the majority of their lives. Some of them still ring in college and community groups. I have former students (now long grown) who stop by now and then to drop off a souvenir bell from their world travels because it reminded them of me. I'm sure my demands to "subdivide!" and my well-intentioned white lie of "one more time" will echo in their ears for years to come.

I'd like to close with another quote from my superintendent, Mr. Lynn Halverson. "The handbell program at Blair-Taylor is more than just a musical experience. It's a model of how rural schools can foster deep engagement, build lasting traditions, and teach the values of teamwork, service, and excellence. In the hands of a dedicated educator and eager students, even the smallest instruments can make a big impact." 🎵

Bio: Karla Hulne is a professional music educator and master adjudicator for the Wisconsin School Music Association. Her handbell ensembles have a long-standing tradition of excellence in performance, with over a decade of perfect scores at the district and state level and four Exemplary Performance Awards, given out to less than 4% of state qualifying entries. She is a University of Wisconsin Distinguished Alumni and a Herb Kohl Fellow. She was a quarter finalist for the Music Educator Grammy Award. She is also the former Publications Manager/Editor for Area 7 HMA and was a presenter at the La Crosse Festival Conference in 2024. She can be reached at hulnek@btsd.k12.wi.us



If you are interested in advertising in *Clapper Chatter*, we have a variety of plans that could fit your needs.

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If you would like to know more, contact Jen Welch at editor.area7@handbellmusicians.org

**Deadline for the next
issue of *Clapper Chatter*
is October 10, 2025**

**Heitz Handbells
and Music**

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From the Area 7 Events Coordinator



by Alanna Teragawa

Here's a look at upcoming Area 7 events to watch for. Planning also is well-underway for the Area 7 2026 Festival!



ANTHORNIS 2025

Friday, October 31 to Saturday, November 1, 2025
Westwood Lutheran Church
St. Louis Park, MN

Clinician: Amy Maakestad

Costs:

- \$165 for non-HMA members. Price includes one-year HMA membership with all of its benefits.
- \$70 per person for HMA members or members of an HMA member organization.
- \$15 per person for Friday night reading session only.



Maakestad

Registration will open September 1st.

Friday Reading Session 7:00 – 8:40PM:
Sight-read a variety of handbell compositions that highlight different techniques and skills.

Saturday Schedule 8:30AM – 3:30PM:
Rehearsal of the repertoire (listed in the box at right)

to prepare for the 3:30 concert. Concert is open and free to the public.

AGAIN THIS YEAR:

Westwood Lutheran Church has invited ringers of this Anthornis event to participate in their Sunday worship service November 2nd at 9:00AM. We will need enough ringers for one 5-6 octave choir. Indicate your willingness to participate in this event during the registration process. Those selected will receive a \$30 reimbursement. One or two of the songs from this year's Anthornis event will be performed.

More event information can be found online at
<https://area7.handbellmusicians.org/anthornis-2025>

Anthornis Repertoire

- Song of the Flowers – Kevin Mazimas Ko
3-5oct L4 AG806777
- From Everlasting to Everlasting – Julie Turner
3-7oct L3 SONOLOGY
- Rondo Passacaglia – Cynthia Dobrinski
4-5oct L3+ HP1237
- Canticle for a Festive Day – Kevin McChesney
3-6oct L5 HB182
- After the Silence – Jason Krug 4-8oct CGB1288

START MAKING PLANS TO ATTEND THE AREA 7 2026 FESTIVAL CONFERENCE

June (25) 26-28, 2026
River's Edge Convention Center
St. Cloud, MN

www.visitstcloud.com

www.stcloudriversedgeconventioncenter.com

Follow updates on the Area website:
<https://area7.handbellmusicians.org/festival-2026>



Rivera-Aponte



Mahr



Cadwell



Kingsbury

Festival Repertoire

MASSED RINGING – all ringers

- DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE – Hart Morris 3-5oct L3+ HP2684
- VIGOREAUX – Barbara Scheffter 3-5oct L3 FM20860
- ALONG THE WATER – Sandra Eithun 3-6oct L3 AG36071
- SKYE BOAT SONG – Matthew Compton 3-7oct L3 EGM111, with viola/cello & 2 voices

In addition to the Massed Ringing pieces, choose one division based on your skill level:

COPPER DIVISION

- ADORO DE DEVOTE – Jason Krug 3-6oct L3- GMH350031, with cello
- PSALM 139 – Fred Gramann 3-6oct L3- CGB1276

BRONZE DIVISION

- NOVUS – Jason Krug 5-6oct L4+ FM20568
- AURORA – William Payn 5-7oct L4+ CGB1320

Costs:

- \$345 for full 3-day Festival **for non-HMA members**, includes one-year HMA membership with all of its benefits, or \$215 per person Daily Rate for either Friday or Saturday only. OR:
- \$250 per person **for HMA members or members of an HMA member organization** for full 3-day Festival, or \$120 per person Daily Rate for either Friday or Saturday only

Lodging:

Best Western Plus Kelly Inn Hotel attached to River's Edge
\$142 per night plus taxes for the following options:
2Q, 2Q-Dlx plus sofabed, 1K, or 1K-Dlx plus sofabed

Clinicians:

- Carlos E. Rivera-Aponte – from Puerto Rico
- Conductor of Co-Massed Ringing, Bronze Division and Bronze Plus Ensemble

Jill Mahr – from Northfield, MN

- Conductor of Co-Massed Ringing and Copper Division

Jennifer Cadwell – from Maple Grove, MN

- Conductor of the Conference Choir

Paul Kingsbury – Rochester Area Handbells

- Showcase Concert on Friday night – open to the public

Specialty choirs:

For those who want more ringing time than class time, there are two options for an additional fee and an additional performance:

CONFERENCE CHOIR – Join one of the two choirs that represent this ensemble, with a skill level of up to L3+

- LIGHT OF THE WORLD – Jason Krug 5oct handbell choir and a 5 oct handchime choir. HB493

- ASHOKAN FAREWELL – Sandra Eithun/Jay Ungar 3-6oct L3 HP3019
- COMMISSIONED PIECE based on the hymn tune DUKE STREET – Matthew Compton – in honor of Jennifer Cadwell's service to Area 7 as Chair and to those who served with her.

BRONZE PLUS ENSEMBLE – For those who can proficiently ring Level 5 music. The first 14 qualified applicants will be accepted.

- AMERICAN CARILLON – James Weber 5-7oct L4 HB625
- ALLEGRO CON FUOCO – Arnold Sherman 3-7oct L5 HB825
- SI TUVIERAS FE (If You Have Faith) – Brian Seemann 3-7oct L5 FM20707

Festival class topics and faculty:

Listed below are the class updates for the Area 7 2026 Festival Conference in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Classes are taught on June 26-27 (Fri & Sat).

- Motivate & Educate Children About Bells & Chimes
- Reading Session: Use of Alternative Instruments in Handbell Music
- Drum Circle
- Smooth Operator
- Craft Classes

- Healthy Ringing & Adaptations for Those with Injuries
- I'm New Here, Now What?
- Handbell/Handchime Maintenance
- The Fun of Non-Performing Handbell Ensemble
- Using Media to Engage Your Audience
- Copyright/ASCAP Laws
- Conducting – A Refresher or a Beginning
- Bell Trees
- Brain Games

Listed here are the names of secured faculty:

- Cathy Moglebust
- Tracey Bowers
- Jennifer Cadwell
- Cheryl Ulmer
- Michelle Jensen
- Mary Yerks
- Monica McGowan
- Paul Kingsbury
- Amy Maakestad
- Jeff Cadwell
- Bonnie Tranby
- Karen Van Wert
- Sandy Mullaney
- Matt Gender

See you in St. Cloud! 🎵

Winning 2026 Festival Logo

Area 7 held a contest for people to submit a logo for the St. Cloud festival. Thank you to those that submitted logos, we had many great options! Congratulations to Dorisa Nelson for creating the winning logo.



Area Events Calendar

October 31-November 1, 2025

ANTHORNIS

An Area 7 Event

Clinician: Amy Maakestad

Westwood Lutheran Church

St. Louis Park, MN

area7.handbellmusicians.org/anthornis-2025

June (25) 26-28, 2026

AREA 7 FESTIVAL

Rivers Edge Convention Center

St. Cloud, MN

area7.handbellmusicians.org/festival-2026

For additional information, go to

area7.handbellmusicians.org/events

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