

# Area 7 Election Time

The Treasurer, Secretary, and Chair-Elect are voted upon by the membership, and the results are typically announced at the Area 7 festival. Information on the electronic ballot will be coming soon. The nominating committee has presented another excellent slate of nominees for these positions. You will receive information on this election from the National Handbell Musicians of America shortly. The election will run May 1-31, and results will be shared on June 26 at the festival in St. Cloud. Please take the time to read about these six fabulous candidates and make an informed decision about the Area 7 leadership for the next several years.

## FOR THE OFFICE OF CHAIR-ELECT



### **Billy Brandt**

William (Billy) Brandt is a music educator currently working as the Director of Choirs at Freedom High School, where he leads the vocal and handbell music programs. In addition, Brandt serves as the Director of Choirs for the United Church of Christ in New London, Wisconsin, where he leads the handbell program, including directing the Spirit Bells handbell ensemble. Lastly, he is the Instructor of Music Literacy and Instrumentalist Coordinator for the Badger State Girl Choir.

As an educator, Brandt has twice been nominated for the GRAMMY Award in the Music Educator category. Ensembles under Brandt's direction have performed on high profile stages across the world, including the Festival of Three in 2023 where Brandt made his international debut conducting concerts in Finland, Latvia, and Estonia. Moreover, Brandt's ensembles have premiered works with notable composers, produced recordings for television, and are regularly invited to perform at festivals. Brandt will also make his Carnegie Hall debut in 2027. Finally, in 2023 Brandt launched the Small School, Big Song festival, which invites rural schools from across Wisconsin to join together in singing with international performers.

As a composer, Brandt has works being performed on both national and international concert stages. His music is in print with publishing houses such as MorningStar, Alfred/Jubilate, From the Top Publishing, Paraboloid Press, and Meadowlark Melodies and has appeared on prestigious curated lists such as JW Pepper's Editor's Choice list. Moreover, Brandt has been honored to commission works for a variety of ensembles and events. Brandt holds a master's degree in Music Education from Boston University and a Bachelor's of Music Education from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, with a certification in PK-12 Choral/General.



### **Dorisa Nelson**

Dorisa Nelson has nearly thirty years of ringing experience in various community and church choirs throughout Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. She doesn't remember ever choosing to ring handbells; with her mother in charge of the youth handbell choirs at the church, her participation was as obligatory as going to school. Fortunately, what started as just another thing to do on Wednesday nights grew into a passion, a source of serenity in an increasingly chaotic world and a medium through which many lifelong friendships have been formed.

Despite her extensive training provided by the best instructors around, her track record is not without error. During Anthornis in 2014, she famously cracked a G3 by

swinging it into the end of a chime that was hanging over the edge of a table. The noise was terrifying and the repercussions of this event have followed her around to this day, but, you know what they say: Live, learn, and check your surroundings before swinging a bell.

Dorisa's previous involvement with the Area 7 Board includes serving as the editor from 2014-2017, event logo design, general schlepping assistance, and coordinating the Festival Conference ringing floor layouts since 2010.

Professionally, Dorisa is a licensed architect, project manager, and certified interior designer, currently employed by Hennepin County, with extensive experience in healthcare and judicial design.

In her free time, which there never seems to be enough of, Dorisa enjoys writing and fixing up her ancient house in Hopkins, MN that she shares with her husband and two children, both of whom spent their toddler years sitting on handbell tables during her rehearsals. She currently rings at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Eden Prairie, MN, where her husband is the senior pastor, and subs in choirs throughout the Twin Cities when the need arises.

## **FOR THE OFFICE OF TREASURER**



### **Eric Kvasnicka**

Eric has been mesmerized by handbells since he was a child watching the bell choir at church. When he was a freshman at St. Olaf College, he jumped at the chance to learn the art of handbell ringing. He joined the bell program and rang for four years there. After graduating, he joined Bells of the Lakes in the Twin Cities, where he has rung for the past five years. In his day job, he is an attorney at a law firm in Minneapolis. Outside of work and handbells, he enjoys cross-country skiing in the winter, running in the summer, and reading all year round.



### **Michelle Finlon**

Michelle Finlon began ringing handbells at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Eagan, MN in middle school, and returned there to ring again starting in 2010 after a hiatus for college and graduate school. Since handbells and handbell ringers are so much fun, she joined Twin Cities Bronze in 2018.

She has been the CHIME Representative on the Area 7 Board since 2020, the Festival equipment wrangler since 2022, and also served as the Youth Events Planner from 2014-2017.

Michelle spends her days solving problems, building automations, and digging into the details as a Business Systems Manager for a company of over 500 employees. She has spent over 10 years working in business systems supporting the finance, accounting, and operations teams with data integrity and process improvements. She loves data, spreadsheets, color coordination, and making sure everything is correct!

## **FOR THE OFFICE OF SECRETARY**



### **Cynthia Clanton**

A lifelong musician, Cynthia Clanton was introduced to chimes in worship about 15 years ago and quickly fell head over heels for all things handbells. She joined Bells of the Bluffs, based in Red Wing, Minnesota, 12 years ago and added Bells of the Lakes to her handbell obsession eight years ago. Playing with both groups fills her calendar and her heart. Cynthia has participated in local, regional and national handbell events from Anthonis and Area 7 festivals to the HMA national seminar. When not ringing, Cynthia works in corporate communications in the Twin Cities, helps manage her family's farm, and enjoys spending time with her children and grandchildren. She is from Hampton, Minnesota.



### **Lesley Gommels**

Lesley currently works as the Administrative Assistant at her church, St. John's Lutheran Church in Stewartville, MN. She first started playing handbells in the early 90s at Rochester Central Lutheran School (RCLS) and took many years off from playing but started ringing again at her church in 2017 or so. Musically, she is also part of the Rochester Community Band and play the clarinet and alto clarinet. When not ringing, Lesley enjoys watching sports — mostly baseball, but she like football and basketball too. She spends time on many crafts, but mostly cross stitching, basic knitting, and patchwork quilts. She also enjoys cooking and baking and spending time with her family and fiancé.