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presents

'TIS THE TIME OF RINGING

an astounding afternoon
with an uncommon English handbell ensemble
presenting pleasing seasonal music

Sunday, December 22, 2024

SACRAMENTO JAPANESE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
6929 Franklin Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95823-1811
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3:00pm

LAUDATION

Arnold B. Sherman (1990)

Mr. Sherman (1948-2024) was a free-lance composer and co-founder of Red River Music. His undergraduate work in music education was done at Montgomery College, Rockville, MD, and Baylor University, Waco, TX. He was the founder and Director of the East Texas Handbell Ensemble. A clinician and guest conductor, he led choral and handbell workshops, festivals, and reading sessions throughout the United States, Canada, England, Japan and the Bahamas. He served as Director of Music for 9 years at the Texas Shakespeare Festival in Kilgore, TX.



Arnold has over three hundred choral and handbell pieces in print and had been an active member of the AGEHR where he served as Area IX Chairman. Perhaps one of his most notable works is “Grazioso,” which was commissioned in memory of Norma Taubert Brown, a handbell ringer who died of cancer. The music tells the story of Norma’s life, her struggle with illness, and her ultimate journey to heaven. RiverBells has often featured this moving piece in its concerts.

“Laudation” comes from the Latin *laudation*, meaning “praise” or “commendation.” This piece follows the oft-used fast-slow-fast format. It begins with a flourishing fanfare featuring all the bells of the table and morphs to a pleasing melody based on the introduction. A third of the way through, a change of key and an abrupt alteration of tempo in the middle, slower section highlights a less bombastic, more serene melody. Unique among ringing techniques is the skill called “malleting above the table,” during which the ringer holds the bell upright or downright and strikes it gently with the appropriate padded mallet (mallet size and density depends on the mass of the bell). The resulting sound is glassy, tender, fragile. After this section, the piece concludes with a return to the opening sonority.

Mr. Sherman passed away early this year. In memory of his significant contribution to the art of handbell ringing, we begin our concert with one of his dramatically exceptional works.

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

French carol, *Gloria arr.* Ron Mallory (2017)

“Angels We Have Heard on High” is a Christmas carol from a traditional French song of unknown origin, *Les Anges dans nos campagnes*. The English lyrics were paraphrased by James Chadwick (1818-1832) who was an Anglo-Irish Roman Catholic priest, and second Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. He is remembered as a man of great personal dignity and charm, with gentleness of manner. He died in Newcastle and was buried at Ushaw.

The song’s subject is the birth of Jesus Christ as narrated in the Gospel of Luke, specifically the scene outside Bethlehem where shepherds encounter a multitude of angels (messengers) singing and praising the newborn child. In America, the text is largely sung to the tune *Gloria*, a traditional French carol rearranged by American Edward Shippen Barnes (1887-1958), a graduate of Yale University. He worked as organist at the Church of the Incarnation, NY, Rutgers Presbyterian Church, NY, St. Stephen’s Episcopal



Church, Philadelphia, and the First Presbyterian Church, Santa Monica. He also composed two organ symphonies, other smaller organ works, arranged works for the organ, and wrote books about religious music. He wrote an instructional organ method, *The School of Organ Playing*, and was editor of the magazine *American Organ Monthly*. He died in Idyllwild, CA.

The most memorable feature of the hymn is its chorus, “Gloria in excelsis Deo,” where the “o” of “Gloria” is fluidly sustained through 16 notes of a rising and falling melismatic (flowing) melodic sequence.

Mr. Mallory is a versatile musician with hundreds of pieces in print for a variety of instruments and ensembles. Outside of music, Ron’s primary interest is astronomy, and he is actively involved in science education. Many of his musical compositions are written on astronomical themes. Ron has a master’s degree in choral conducting from the University of Washington and a bachelor’s degree in music composition from California State University, Long Beach, CA. He also studied astrophysics at the University of California, Irvine, CA. Ron currently lives in Mulvane, KS.

AFRICAN NOËL

African Noël

arr. André Jerome Thomas (2006)

arr. for handbells by Cathy Moglebust (2008)

Linda Small, *Soprano*

Sharon Sowers, *Congas* Lucille Sakakihara, *Tambourine* Shigeko Shibata, *Shaker*

“African Noël” is a joyful winter holiday song based on the Liberian folk song “Banuwa.” Legitimately the Republic of Liberia is a country on the West African coast bordered by Sierra Leone to its northwest, Guinea to its north, Ivory Coast to its east, and the Atlantic Ocean to its south and southwest. It has a population of around 5.5 million and covers an area of 43,000 square miles. The official language is English. Over 20 indigenous languages are spoken, reflecting the country’s ethnic and cultural diversity. The capital and largest city is Monrovia.

The original lyrics of “Banuwa” mean “Don’t cry, little girl, don’t cry,” derived from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. The melody of “Banuwa” was later adapted to new lyrics, “Sing Noël, Sing Noël, Sing We Noël.” It is a versatile song used for Christmas or Kwanzaa concerts. There are differentiated Orff arrangements that include activities for both early and upper elementary students. The word “Noël” comes from the Old French word *nael*, which means “gift of God.” A variation of this word made its way into Old French as a reference to the Christmas season and later into Middle English as *nowel*. The spelling with a diaeresis over the “e” (Noël) is used to indicate that the two vowels are pronounced separately rather than as a diphthong. This piece layers different instruments, starting with percussion and voice.

Mr. Thomas (b. 1952) is an American composer and conductor. He served as a professor of music at Florida State University and the artistic director for the Tallahassee Community Chorus. In addition to his conducting and composition credits, Thomas is a published author, having written *Way Over in Beulah Lan’: Understanding and Performing the Negro Spiritual* as well as numerous journal articles. Thomas

grew up in Wichita, KS with his two sisters and mother. Thomas' mother cleaned buses for Continental Trailways and sang in church. According to Thomas, this singing initiated his fascination with music. Thomas explored choral music and instrumental music. During his elementary school years, he infrequently took piano lessons from various members of his church. This musical training notwithstanding, Thomas was predominantly self-taught musically during his early childhood.



Upon entering junior high school, Thomas decided to pursue piano formally. He began taking lessons at Wichita State University, and in the eighth grade he won the Federated Music Clubs Piano Competition. During this time, Thomas participated in his junior high school's choir and began disliking spiritual and gospel music which he has since become known for composing. He once remarked:

“I must admit, I was not fond of these settings, even through high school. As a young black man, I really didn't identify. This was not the black music that I knew, and it certainly wasn't the music that I experienced at my church! The text utilized dialect and it made me feel as if performing this music gave white people a chance to make fun of black people. I never really heard the message in the text; I only heard the way it sounded. We certainly weren't allowed to speak like that in my home and it denoted ignorance in my mind.”

While the discomfort may have continued throughout high school, it did not stop him from being actively involved in music and composition. At 16, Thomas accepted the role of Minister of Music at Tabernacle Baptist Church. He began arranging music to meet the needs of his choir. However, his time as a music minister was not easy. Many of the choir members balked at taking instructions from such a young person. This created enough tension for him to eventually leave the choir.

Thomas' influence ranges beyond conducting. He is the author of various choral education editions. An active composer, he has been published by 7 publishing companies. His writing frequently addresses the struggle of becoming a black “classical” composer, as well as the challenge of performing ethnic music (spirituals and gospels) with integrity.

Mrs. Moklebust (b. 1958) has developed and directed handbell music programs since 1983, and has played bells since childhood. With her dynamic, positive approach and skilled conducting, she is in national demand as a handbell clinician and festival conductor. As one of today's most popular handbell music composers, she has written nearly 500 compositions and arrangements. Her music has been described as “pure joy to ring and listen to, having a uniquely delightful sense of melodic and rhythmic interaction, with elegant form and style.” She has been commissioned to write music for festivals and other events, as well as for many individual handbell ensembles.

Mrs. Moklebust began her musical career as a public-school instrumental music instructor in South Dakota. She has performed as principal or section percussionist with several professional and community

bands and orchestras throughout the upper Midwest, and teaches classes in percussion for music events. Cathy has played in, conducted, and coached church and community handbell ensembles in South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa. Since 1989, she has worked in the music retail and publishing industry.

She earned both her B.A. (Music/Percussion, 1982) and M.Ed. (Teacher Education/Music, 1988) at South Dakota State University, in her hometown of Brookings, SD. She was encouraged in composition by her music theory professors – the late Mary Alice Spencer Berger (1946-2012) and the late Dr. Paul H. Royer (1922-2003) – and studied instrumental conducting extensively with the late Prof. John F. Colson (1933-2022). Her handbell education began in 1970 with the Towers Handbell Choir of First Lutheran Church in Brookings, under the direction of the late Mrs. Barbara Berntson (1929-2018). She attended her first handbell event as a high school student when the Towers Handbell Choir participated in the 1975 AGEHR National Handbell Festival in Logan, UT, under the direction of the late Donald Allured.

APPALACHIAN CHRISTMAS

1. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
2. The First Noël
3. Silent Night
4. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

It's curious what makes this seasonal medley especially *Appalachian* in flavor, but we might guess it to be the rhythmic accompaniment and the upbeat percussive sounds on bells. Various percussive techniques are displayed with skill by the ringers including thumb damp, echo ring, shake, mallet roll, and ring-touch. Without doubt, you'll find your foot tapping and your body swaying to the musical pulse.

Ms. Waldrop is a graduate of Baylor University with both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Music Theory with an emphasis in Composition. Tammy has been writing and arranging for handbells and vocal choirs since 1980, placing over 375 publications with 19 publishers. She has held music editor positions at Word music, Ring Out! Press, and Alfred Music Publishing and has served as a church musician in numerous churches in various denominations. She is a frequent clinician/director for workshops, music weeks and festivals across the country. She is past Musical Director for the Community Handbell Ensemble, Strikepoint of Texas.

Currently she coordinates fine arts and handbell participation in worship at First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood. Tammy enjoys vegetable and herb gardening, cheesemaking, writing children's fiction and showing dogs. She resides in New Caney, TX.

Traditional Christmas carols

arr. Tammy Waldrop (2009)



WEST INDIES CAROL

Jester Hairston (1956)
arr. Sondra K. Tucker (2017)

Linda Small, *Soprano*
Sharon Sowers, *Bongos* Lucille Sakakihara, *Claves*

Shigeko Shibata, *Shaker*

Mr. Hairston (1901-2000) was an American composer, songwriter, arranger, choral conductor and actor. He was regarded as a leading expert on black spirituals and choral music. His notable compositions include “Amen,” a gospel-tinged theme from the film *Lilies of the Field* as well as a 1964 hit for The Impressions, and the Christmas song “Mary’s Lil’ Boy Child” – which is the formal title of this selection.

Hairston was born in Belews Creek, a rural community on the border of Forsyth, Rockingham, and Guilford counties, NC. His grandparents had been slaves. At an early age, he and his family moved to Homestead, PA, just outside Pittsburgh, where he graduated from high school in 1921. His father was killed in a job-related accident. Subsequently the young Hairston was raised by his grandmother while his mother worked. Hairston heard his grandmother and her friends talking and singing about plantation life and became determined to preserve this history through music.

Hairston initially majored in landscape architecture at Massachusetts Agricultural College in the 1920s. He became involved in various church choirs and choral groups. Accompanist Anna Laura Kidder (1867-1949) saw his potential and became his benefactor. Kidder offered Hairston financial assistance to study music at Tufts University, was one of the first black students admitted to Tufts, and graduated in 1929. Later he studied music at the Juilliard School.

Hairston pledged the Chi chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity in 1925, ahistorically African American fraternity. Since the fraternity’s founding on January 5, 1911, at Indiana University Bloomington, it has never restricted membership based on color, creed, or national origin though membership traditionally is dominated by those of Black heritage.

Hairston worked as a choir conductor in the early stages of his career. His efforts with Broadway choirs eventually led to singing and acting parts in plays, films, radio programs, and television shows. Hairston sang with the Hall Johnson Choir in Harlem for a time but was nearly fired from the all-black choir because he had difficulty with the rural dialects that were used in some of the songs. He had to shed his Boston accent and relearn the country speech of his parents and grandparents. Francis Hall Johnson (1888-1970) told Hairston, “We’re singing ain’t and cain’t and you’re singing shahn’t and cahn’t and they don’t mix in a spiritual.” The choir performed in many Broadway shows, including *The Green Pastures*. In 1936, the choir was asked to visit Hollywood to sing in the film *The Green Pastures*. Russian composer Dimitri Tiomkin (1894-1979) heard Hairston and invited him to what would become a 30-year collaboration in which Hairston arranged and collected music for films. In 1939, Hairston married Isabel Margaret Lancaster aka Swanigan (1939-1986), a union which lasted 47 years.

Hairston wrote the song “Mary’s Boy Child” in 1956. It had its genesis when Hairston was sharing a room with a friend who asked him to write a song for a birthday party. Hairston wrote a tune with a calypso rhythm (because the people at the party would be mainly West Indians), originally titled “He Pone and Chocolate Tea” (*pone* being a type of corn bread). The song was never recorded in this form. Sometime later



Walter Schumann (1913-1958), at the time conducting Schumann's Hollywood Choir, asked Hairston to write a new Christmas song for his choir. Hairston remembered the calypso rhythm from his old song and wrote new lyrics for it, which became "Mary's Boy Chil'." Harry Belafonte (1927-2023) recorded it in 1956.

Hairston also arranged the song "Amen," which he dubbed for the film *Lilies of the Field*, and arranged traditional Negro spirituals. Most of Hairston's film work was in the field of composing, arranging and choral conducting. He also acted in more than 20 films, mostly in small roles, some uncredited, including some of the early Tarzan films as well as *St. Louis Blues*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Lady Sings the Blues*, *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka* and *Being John Malkovich*. Hairston starred in John Wayne's *The Alamo* (1960), in which he portrayed "Jethro," a slave owned by Jim Bowie. In 1962's *To Kill a Mockingbird* Hairston portrayed the uncredited role of the father of accused rapist Tom Robinson. In 1967's *In the Heat of the Night*, Hairston portrayed the butler of a wealthy racist being investigated for murder. In both films, Hairston shot scenes alongside men who won an Academy Award for Best Actor in those respective films for portraying white Southerners navigating their jobs through a racially divided culture.

In 1961, the U.S. State Department appointed Hairston as Goodwill Ambassador for the USA. He traveled all over the world teaching and performing the folk music of the slaves. In the 1960s, he held choral festivals with public high school and college choirs, introducing them to Negro spiritual music, and often led hundreds of students in community performances. His banter about the history of the songs along with his engaging personality and sense of humor endeared him to many students. In 1985, he took the multiracial group Jester Hairston Chorale to sing in China at a time when foreign visitors would rarely appear there.

During his nationwide travels, Hairston checked local phone books for other Hairstons, and reunited many people on his family tree, both black and white. He composed more than 300 spirituals. He was the recipient of many honorary doctorates, including a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts in 1972 and a doctorate in music from Tufts in 1977.

Hairston appeared on the television situation comedy *The Amos 'n' Andy Show* as society sophisticate Henry Van Porter and portrayed the character of Leroy on both the radio and television *Amos 'n' Andy* programs. He also played the role of Wildcat on the show *That's My Mama*. In his senior years, he appeared on the show *Amen* as Rolly Forbes. His last television appearance was in 1993 on an episode of *Family Matters*. Hairston also played the role of "King Moses" on radio for the Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall show *Bold Venture*.

Ms. Tucker is a well-known composer for handbells, choir, organ, and flute ensemble. Since 2013 she has served as Handbell Editor for Alfred Handbell, a division of Jubilate Music Group. She is in demand as a conductor and clinician, and has led denominational seminars for PCUSA, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Methodist Church, ELCA, and the Southern Baptist Church, and has served on the faculty of numerous Handbell Musicians of America local, area, and national events. Her

compositions are published by most major church music publishing houses. Her music degrees are from the University of Arkansas and the University of Memphis. Additionally, Sondra self-publishes flute ensemble music under her own QuickSilver Publications imprint and handbell titles under her Casa Publications. Away from music, Sondra is an avid knitter, swimmer, and motorcycle rider.

1. Long time ago in Bethlehem, so de Holy Bible say:
Mary's boy child, Jesus Christ, was born on Christmas day

[Chorus] Hark, now hear the angels sing, a new king is born today
And man will live forevermore because of Christmas day.
Trumpets sound and angels sing. Listen to what they say:
That man will live forevermore because of Christmas day.

2. While shepherds watch their flocks by night, them see a bright new shining star.
Them hear a choir sing. The music seemed to come from afar.
3. Now, Joseph and his wife, Mary, come to Bethlehem that night
Them find no place for to borne the child, not a single room was in sight. [Chorus]
4. By and by, they find a little nook in a stable all forlorn
And in a manger cold and dark. Mary's little boy was born. [Chorus]

WINTER MILKY WAY

Yukiko Nishimura (2012)
arr. Paul W. Allen (2024)

Sharon Sowers, *Sleigh bells, Triangle*

Ms. Nishimura (b. 1967) is a Japanese composer and pianist currently based in Los Angeles. Born in Kyoto, she began to study music by her own volition at an early age. She began taking piano lessons when 4 years old and composing at the age of 7. After graduating from Tokyo University of the Arts as a composition major in 1990 she began private study with Dr. Alfred Reed (1921-2005) at the University of Miami, FL and continued at the Manhattan School of Music, NY with Dr. Richard Danielpour (b. 1956). She has been commissioned to write by performers, performing groups, and organizations. Among her projects, she composed music for "Edison's Frankenstein 1910," the first silent horror film in American film history, theatrical projects, and collaborated work with Noh players, the Japanese traditional theater workshop.

Ms. Nishimura has also composed for piano, marimba, percussion, chamber music, band music, music for string instruments and orchestra. "Winter Milky Way" was originally composed for string orchestra, then rearranged by herself for symphonic band. About the composition, she says:



“The image of this music is the color of white. If I could express this ‘whiteness’ in my music, I believed it would be a pleasant experience for me. The music brings the smell of winter season: you can imagine the snow or chilly air, or maybe even clear skies and ice; one could also feel the joy of the holiday season. The first theme of this music from me should be played with a deep emotion. Long phrases are important. It is also important to be in tune between the instruments. The middle section sounds vibrant and lively. The staccatos are merry and cheerful. The tenuto staccatos are not so light but not heavy. This piece would be fitted to the holiday season as well. Please enjoy playing (and creating) your own winter atmosphere.”

Mr. Allen (b. 1947), a composer, arranger, and retired teacher in Sacramento, CA, was introduced to this piece in 2024 while playing euphonium with the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band under the baton of Tom Seaton. It seemed to call for an expression in handbells. Permission from the publisher was granted, and this arrangement evolved through the collaboration of the handbell choir. This performance is the premiere of this arrangement.

ADVENT PASSACAGLIA
Savior of the Nations, Come

music, *Nun Komm, Der Heiden Heiland*
from Walter’s *Geistliche Gesangbüchlein* (1524)
setting, *Mehrstimmiges Choralbuch* (1906)
words, Ambrose of Milan (c. 397)
translated from German to English by William M. Reynolds (1851)
arr. Linda R. Lamb (2017)

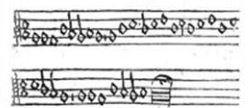
Linda Small, *Soprano*

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (originally, *Nu kom der Heyden heyland* and translated as “Savior of the nations, come,” or literally, “Now come, Saviour of the heathen”) is a Lutheran chorale with words written by Martin Luther (1483-1546), paraphrased from *Veni redemptor gentium* (“Come, Redeemer of the nations) by Ambrose (339-397), and a melody, *Zahn*, probably composed by Luther and found in a collection of the hymns of the German Evangelical church in 6 volumes from 1889 to 1893. It was printed in the *Erfurt Enchiridion* of 1524 – an *enchiridion*, or handbook, which is defined as “quite useful for the Christians of today to carry for the constant practice and contemplation of spiritual songs and psalms, faithfully and skillfully rendered in German,” so states the catechism.

The song was the prominent hymn for the first Sunday of Advent for centuries. It was used widely in organ settings by Protestant Baroque composers, most notably Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), who also composed two church cantatas beginning with the hymn. English versions include “Savior of the Nations, Come” by William Morton Reynolds (1812-1876), a Protestant minister and professor of Latin, published in 1851.

A *passacaglia* is a musical composition or dance that originated in 17th-century Spain, characterized by a repeating bass line and endless variations. Probably the most familiar piece featuring this form is Pachelbel’s *Canon in D*.

© Hymnus, *Veni redemptor gentium.*



© *Wia kom der Heyden heiland-der runggfrayen
lynd erkennnd Das sich wannber alle welt-
solch gepart vnu befielt.
Nicht von Adams blot noch von Fleischollen es
dem heyligen geist-
Zif Gottes wort vns den eyn
mensch-und blut eyn frucht weibe fleisch.
Der runggfray lob schwanget wurd-
dachs bleib
luchstert eyn beuod-
Zucht erfar mich tught
schen-
Abt da wer zu fernem tzen.
Er gieng aus der kamer seyn-
dem kunglichen sael
to reyn-
Abt es set ein mensch eyn hell-
seyn weg
er zu lauffen erlie.
© *ern laufft kam vom vatter her-
und keret wider
zum vater-
fur hyn wudert zu der hell-
vnd wider
zu Gottes huld.**

The term *passacaglia* (Spanish, *pasacalle*; French, *passacaille*; Italian, *passacaglia*, *passacaglio*, *passa-gallo*, *passacagli*, *passacaglia*) derives from the Spanish *pasar* (cross, pass) and *calle* (street). It is primarily an instrumental effect created around a ground bass and is often serious in character. The form is similar to the *chaconne* – a contrasting musical form which features a repeated harmonic progression, or series of chords, with variations on top. The form was a kind of competitive challenge among composers during the Baroque period. In this selection, you’ll first hear the *ground bass* in the lower bells during the first eight measures. However, throughout you’ll catch the same “theme” duplicated in many registers while the vocalist sings all six verses (in English).

1. Savior of the nations, come; Virgin’s Son, here make Thy home!
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.
2. Not by human flesh and blood; By the Spirit of our God
Was the Word of God made flesh; Woman’s offspring, pure and fresh.
3. Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child Of the virgin undefiled!
Though by all the world disowned, Still to be in heaven enthroned.
4. From the Father forth He came And returneth to the same.
Captive leading death and hell High the song of triumph swell!
5. Though, the Father’s only Son; Hast o’er sin the vict’ry won.
Boundless shall Thy kingdom be. When shall we its glories see?
6. Brightly doth Thy manger shine Glorious is its light divine.
Let not sin o’ercloud this light; Ever be our faith thus bright.
7. Praise to God the Father sing. Praise to God the Son, our King.
Praise to God the Spirit be Ever and eternally.

WITHIN THE DARKEST NIGHT

Derek K. Hakes (2004)

It’s seldom that, during the Christmas season, a profound anthem is written in a minor key, and enjoyed. A few examples of this departure from the custom are *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*, *Carol of the Bells*, *What Child Is This*, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*, *Sing We Now of Christmas* and *’Twas In the Moon of Wintertime*.

Within the Darkest Night, paraphrasing the familiar poem “Within our darkest night,” captures the characteristic, almost idiomatic and metaphorical state of extreme hardship, despair, or emotional turmoil, where the “darkest night” indicates a period of significant challenges or personal struggles that feel overwhelming and seemingly without hope. Mostly associated with the Lenten season, the legendary weeks before Jesus’ birth were crushing, and the anticipation of a glorious event was not without a sense of despair and hardship – hardly without the drama of Easter but still within its own crisis.

According to an anonymous source, “Derek is a very private person and I know nothing about him other than he has a real gift and heart for music and composing.” This composition, as well as many of his others, proves the observation. This Lenten hymn, written by Hakes with lyrics by Brad Prinz (1955-2005), parallels the scenes at Gethsemane and at the cross where the skies became dark and heavy. The power of the work is in the clear, unobstructed way in which the plan of redemption is presented. It’s a lengthy piece, but the with the variations in accompaniment and intriguing harmony, it certainly passes the enchanting test.

Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, that never dies away.
Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, that never dies away.

AWAY IN A MANGER

James Ramsey Murray (1887)

arr. Ron Mallory (2023)

Linda Small, *Soprano*

This is a very familiar and one of the most popular Christmas carols in the English-speaking world. The great majority of early publications ascribe the words to German Protestant reformer Martin Luther. Many went so far as to title the carol “Luther’s Cradle Song” or “Luther’s Cradle Hymn,” to describe the English words as having been translated from Luther, or to speak of its alleged popularity in Germany. Richard Hill (b. 1942), in a 1945 comprehensive study of the carol, suggested that “Away in a Manger” might have originated in “a little play for children to act or a story about Luther celebrating Christmas with his children,” likely connected with the 400th anniversary of the reformer’s birth in 1883. The claim of Luther’s authorship continued to be stressed well into the 20th century, but the carol is now thought to be wholly American in origin. The two most common musical settings are by William J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921) and Murray.

Mr. Murray (1841–1905) was an American composer and author of songbooks. His work includes hymns and Christmas music, published by Root & Cady as well as S. Brainard Sons. Among a popular arrangement of “Away in a Manger,” he helped write “Daisy Deane” in an American Civil War camp (1863). This is a reminiscence about meeting Daisy Deane in a flowery meadow in springtime with green grass, flower buds, birds singing, and how she outshone the flowers. The scenery faded and Daisy is reported as dead. The narrator’s memory of her remains fresh and love endures. “None knew thee but to love thee thou dear one of my heart.” The song is “strophic” – the same music is used for each stanza or verse of the lyrics – for chorus, piano, and voice. Murray helped produce the singing lesson book *The Pacific Glee Book* with Frederic Woodman Root. (1846-1916). A portrait of him by Jacob Henry Hall (1855-1941) is in the Library of Congress. Murray was born to a Scottish family, and died in Cincinnati of Addison’s disease.



1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed. The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.

The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay. The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky, And stay by my cradle 'till morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, And take us to heaven to live with thee there.

INTERMISSION

PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN B^b

Johann Sebastian Bach (1739?)

BMV 553 from *Eight Short Preludes and Fugues*

arr. Fred A. Merrett (1992)

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1980) requires 55 full-sized, small print pages on the life and career of Bach (1685-1750), including 22 pages alone devoted to list his musical works. This particular composition is included in *The Eight Short Preludes and Fugues* (also *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues*), BWV 553–560, a collection of works for keyboard and pedal formerly attributed to Bach but now believed to have been composed by one of Bach's pupils, possibly Johann Tobias Krebs (1690-1762) or his son Johann Ludwig Krebs (1730-1780), or by the Bohemian composer Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1656-1746).

An analysis of the score of *Eight Preludes* by musicologist Peter Williams (1937-2016) claims that “Though frequently charming and melodious, they could hardly have been written by J. S. Bach for his pupils since their ‘standard of counterpoint and general musicianship’ does not fit the period in question, nor does the scarcity of copies suggest they were much used, [...] even as part of a bigger compendium. Nevertheless, the pieces do amount to a fine book for learners, teaching whether or how to add pedal, use a second manual, and register according to so-called key characteristics.”

Bach's authorship of BMV 553 is further discounted as being more like an *allemande* (a Renaissance and Baroque dance) by Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) because the prelude combines features of an Italian *concerto* (a “concert” or contest of competing or contrasting instruments) or an organ *praeludium* (a short musical piece which introduces a larger work). The brief fugue is more substantial than a *fughetta* (a short fugue). The style of the two musical motifs is more similar to those of Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706) or Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer (c.1656-1746).



It is interesting to note that in 1977 two Voyager spacecraft were launched, intended for any extraterrestrial life form, or far future humans, to find and learn about our way of life. On these spacecraft was placed the Voyager Golden Record, containing sounds and images selected to portray the diversity of life and culture on Earth. Dr. Carl Sagan (1934-1996) of Cornell University assembled 115 images with

spoken greetings from Earthlings in 55 languages, a variety of natural sounds, along with musical selections from different cultures and eras. Bach is the most-represented artist, appearing in his *Second Brandenburg Concerto*, a selection from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and the *Third Partita for Violin*. When additional Bach pieces were nominated, lore claims that Sagan denied the selection because he thought we might not want to overwhelm any extraterrestrial guests.

Bach studied music, organ and violin, and composed for all instruments and media except opera. He had a fine singing voice, and was the boy soprano at Lüneberg (from whence he once walked 30 miles to hear Johann Adam Reinken (1643-1722) play the organ in Hamburg). His first compositions were played in 1700, and for over 20 years he was alternately employed and dismissed from a variety of positions and opportunities. While organist at Mühlhausen in 1707 he married Maria Barbara (1684-1720), his cousin by whom four children survived. In 1719 he traveled to Halle to meet Georg Frederic Handel (1685-1759), but alas! Handel had already left – so the two greatest composers of the era never met. Eighteen months after the death of his wife he married Anna Magdalena (1701-1760), daughter of a musician. In 1722 he applied for and received appointment as cantor at the Thomasschule in Leipzig, where he remained for the rest of his life. He fathered 20 children, many of whom did not survive childhood. His eyesight began to fail in 1749, and he was totally blind by the time he died of a stroke. He was buried in an unmarked grave, undiscovered until 1894.

Finally, our *Prelude and Fugue in B^b Major* was published under this title even though it's arranged and you'll enjoy it in C major – which adjustment makes the work a little more achievable for an English handbell choir. It hosts section repeats throughout, which we will ignore due to length. Nevertheless, this is a delightful diversion during an afternoon of Christmas music.

AND THE TREES DO MOAN

originally, *And the Trees Did Moan*

Dogwood Daughter (2014)

Southern Mountain Folk Song

arr. Carl Eugene Wiltse (1991)

Linda Small, *Soprano* Sharon Sowers, *Triangle*

This is a haunting original carol from an album called “Appalachian Christmas: Folk Carols from the Mountains.” At first, it laments the meanness of King Herod who sent his soldiers through the land, ordering them to find and kill male babies under the age of two, so as to make sure certain that the new born king would never threaten his own reign. But of course, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had already escaped into Egypt where they stayed until after Herod's death.

Here's a note by Martha Maria, the Oak Ridge, TN composer from her website: “I'm Dogwood Daughter, also known as Lily Cat Music for Kids, Martha and Mom. I work from my studio behind my house in the Cumberland Mountains. I'm a one-woman operation, compose all the music, write the lyrics, play and sing all parts. I record for my general audience as Dogwood Daughter and produce children's music



as Lily Cat Music for Kids. LOTS of music on my website, please visit! Thanks.”

This is an interesting arrangement, aside from the fact that it was originally recorded with only the first verse about Herod. It’s harmonically intriguing in that it’s written in a minor key, unusual for a carol. The composer, lyricist, and performer are the same person. Someone – possibly Wiltse or maybe Ms. Maria at a later time – added extra verses which complete a theological, narrative concept of restoration through grief. The verses themselves are lengthy, mournfully interrupted by a single-phrase chorus, and with the added lyrics posit a singular message about wood. The piece was intended for single voice, guitar, and synthesizer, expertly arranged for large handbell ensemble.

Mr. Wiltse (1945-2021) and his wife Pamela Bayes (1944-2022) were residents in Scotland since 2005. Carl was an elementary music specialist most of his career, mostly in Holland, MI. He was an award-winning composer of choral and handbell music, a choirmaster of the Grand Rapids Choir of Men and Boys, founding director of Embellish Handbell Ensemble, and on the staff of Holland First and Grand Rapids Trinity United Methodist churches. He was associated with the Bay View Week of Handbells in northern MI for 40 years, serving as director for 14. He was a frequent vocal soloist both in the Midwest and in Scotland.

The music itself is intriguing, beguiling, mesmeric. And it was through that medium alone that we were introduced to the title. However, Wiltse’s arrangement appended the extra verses to the final page of the published copy:

1. In the valley of Judea, Cold and wintry blown,
Christ will come one frosty morning. And the trees do moan.
Darkened skies and men a-stumbling; High above there shone
One bright star a-moving eastward. And the trees do moan.
2. Herod and the ruling Romans Stately sat upon their thrones;
Sent the soldiers out a-looking. And the trees do moan. And the trees do moan.
Mary took her little baby; Set out all alone;
Down in Egypt-land they tarried. When the trees do moan.
3. Jesus then became a carpenter; Worked with wood and stone.
Nails he drove and crossarms fashioned. And the trees do moan.
There one day while in the forest black, One tree he picked for his own.
A Christmas tree, an evergreen one! And the trees do moan. And the trees do moan.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS MY TWO FRONT TEETH

Donald Yetter Gardner (1946)

arr. Matthew Prins (2010)



Gardner (1913-2004) was an American songwriter best-known for this novelty. He was born in Portland, PA and earned a bachelor's degree in music from West Chester University. While teaching music at public schools in Smithtown, NY he asked the class what they wanted for Christmas and noticed that almost all of them had at least one front tooth missing and answered his question with a lisp. Gardner wrote the song in 30 minutes. In a 1995 interview, Gardner said, "I was amazed at the way that silly little song was picked up by the whole country." It was published in 1948 after an employee of Witmark music company heard Gardner sing it at a music teachers' conference. The song was introduced in 1948 by The Satisfiers on Perry Como's radio show, and originally recorded for RCA Victor by Spike Jones and His City Slickers

on December 6, 1947. The record reached the top of the pop charts in 1948, and again in 1949. Gardner later became a music consultant for a major music publisher in Boston, wrote songs for music textbooks, and composed numerous hymns including "Man Shall Not Live by Bread Alone but by Every Word of God" and "Oh, Give Thanks Unto the Lord."

Mr. Prins composes across the musical spectrum. Along with currently directing four handbell choirs and having over 100 handbell compositions published, he has composed and produced over 250 pieces of media production music, many of which have been used by the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, and other cable networks; national television and radio advertising campaigns; and The Masters golf tournament and NCAA basketball on CBS.

AS LATELY WE WATCHED

1. Austrian carol
2. Ding, Dong, Merrily on High
3. While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

The Christmas season features more demand for the familiar songs than any other season, and many more melodies than can be sung in an entire series of seasonal concerts. Thus evolved the *medley*, a composition incorporating tasteful but brief sketches of three or more tunes woven together under a thematic umbrella.

Mrs. Page (b. 1943) has masterfully accomplished this challenge using three related and beloved carols. She received a B.M. degree in vocal music education with a concentration in piano and a M.M. in music theory with a concentration in organ from the University of Kentucky. Active as a composer, clinician, and organist, she has served on the Music Committee of the Southern Baptist Hymnal (1991) and as handbell editor for the Celebrating Grace Hymnal Supplemental Music Resources (2010). For several consecutive years, she received the ASCAP Standard Award.

Mrs. Page taught organ as an adjunct faculty member at Mercer University in Macon, GA, and theory in addition to organ as an adjunct faculty member at Lander University in Greenwood, SC. She served as director of the Austin Peay Community Children's Chorus in Clarksville, TN for three years.

Traditional carols

arr. Anna Laura Page (1998)

Formerly the Handbell Music Editor for Alfred Publishing Co., she has authored numerous choral works for children, youth, and adults as well as compositions for handbells, organ, and piano.



Austrian Carol (known more familiarly as “Still, Still, Still”) is a folk tune from the district of Salzburg. The tune appeared for the first time in 1865 in a folksong collection of Vinzenz Maria Süß (1802–1868), a writer and the founder of the Salzburg Museum. The words describe the peace of the infant Jesus and his mother as the baby is sung to sleep. The text has changed slightly over the years, but the modern Standard German version remains attributed to Georg Götsch (1895–1956), a German music teacher. There are various English translations.

Ding, Dong, Merrily on High first appeared as a secular dance tune under the title “Branle de l’Officiel” in *Orchésographie*, a dance book written by the French cleric, composer and writer Thoinot Arbeau, pen name of Jehan Tabourot (1519–1593). English composer George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848–1934) supplied the text and the carol was first published in 1924 in his *The Cambridge Carol-Book: Being Fifty-two Songs for Christmas, Easter, And Other Seasons*. Woodward took an interest in church bell ringing, which no doubt aided him in writing it. Woodward was the author of several carol books, including *Songs of Syon* and *The Cowley Carol Book*. The *macaronic* style (a fashion style from the 1760s and 1770s, that mixes languages or words) is characteristic of Woodward’s delight in archaic poetry. Charles Wood (1866–1926) harmonized the tune when it was published with Woodward’s text in *The Cambridge Carol Book*. Sir David Willcocks (1919–2015) made an arrangement for the second book of *Carols for Choirs* (1970).

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks is a traditional Christmas carol describing the Annunciation to the Shepherds (an episode in the nativity of Jesus described in Luke 2, in which angels tell a group of shepherds about the birth of Jesus), with words attributed to Irish hymnist, lyricist and England’s Poet Laureate Nahum Tate (1652–1715). The exact date of Tate’s composition is not known, but the words appeared in Tate and Nicholas Brady’s 1700 supplement to their *New Version of the Psalms of David* of 1696. It was the only Christmas hymn authorized to be sung by the Anglican Church; before 1700 only the Psalms of David were permitted to be sung. In the Church of England, most carols had roots in folk music and therefore were considered too secular to be used in church services. By the end of the 18th century, carols had received approved status, so many tunes have been associated with this carol. It is written in common meter and based on the Gospel of Luke 2:8–14. It is the only one of the 16 works in the 1700 supplement to still be sung today. The carol text is sung to a wide variety of tunes, the two most common ones being *Winchester Old* in the United Kingdom, and a variation on a Handel aria arranged by Lowell Mason (1792–1872) in the United States.

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY Henry Thomas Smart (1816) *arr.* Cynthia Dobrinski (1996)

Mr. Smart (1813–1879) was an English organist and composer. He was born in London, nephew of the conductor Sir George Smart (1776–1867) and son of a music publisher, orchestra director, and



accomplished violinist (*also* called Henry Smart). His sister was the artist and composer Harriet Anne Smart (1817-1883). He was educated at Highgate School and then studied for the law, but soon gave this up for music. In 1831, Smart became organist of Blackburn parish church (where he wrote his first important work, an anthem), then of St Giles-without-Cripplegate, then of St Luke's, Old Street; and finally of St. Pancras New Church, in 1864, which last post he held at the time of his death, less than a month after receiving a government pension of £100 per annum. Smart was also skilled as a mechanic, and designed several organs. He was invited by William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875) to join the Committee of his Bach Society leading to the first English performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in 1854.

Though highly rated as a composer by his English contemporaries, Smart is now largely forgotten, save for his hymn tune "Regent Square," which retains considerable popularity. It is commonly performed with the words "Christ is Made the Sure Foundation," "Light's Abode, Celestial Salem," or "Angels from the Realms of Glory." His many compositions for the organ (some of which have been occasionally revived in recent years) were described as "effective and melodious, if not strikingly original" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* 11th Edition (1911), which also praised his part songs (vocal SATB tunes to secular or non-secular texts). His cantata "The Bride of Dunkerron" was written for the Birmingham Festival of 1864; and another cantata was a version of the play *King René's Daughter* (1871). His oratorio *Jacob* was created for Glasgow in 1873; and his comic opera *Bertha or The Gnome of Hartzburg* was produced with some success at the Haymarket in June, 1855. In the last 15 years of his life, Smart was practically blind.

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) greatly admired "Regent Square" and wrote his own lyric "God of Grace and God of Glory" purposely hoping that it would be largely sung to Smart's tune. He was horrified when, in 1935, *The Methodist Hymnal* instead set his lyrics to John Hughes' (1873-1992) tune "Cwm Rhondda" ("Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah").

Mrs. Dobrinski (1950-2021) was an American composer and arranger of handbell music, born in Lorraine, KS. She has more than 175 works in print. She also worked as an instructor and conducted nearly 350 handbell workshops and festivals internationally. Many of the ringers performing today have either performed under her baton or seen her in concert. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Texas Christian University and her Master of Music degree in organ performance from Northwestern University. She was a Fulbright scholar and taught for 15 years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Her arrangement of this piece is an enjoyable tour using bells and chimes in a variety of meters. The melody transforms slightly but ends with her trademark flourish.

BETHLEHEM PASTORALE

Sheep May Safely Graze (1713)
Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd
Cantata BWV 208, Johann Sebastian Bach
English folk song: *Forest Green*
arr. Laren Lakey Buckwalter (2020)

This delightful medley interweaves two familiar melodies, the barest minimum for a medley of any type. In form, usually a “medley” presents one song, finishes it, presents the other song(s), then concludes. This arrangement really *interweaves* two lovely tunes. At times the two melodies appear at the same time.

Schafe können sicher weiden is a soprano aria to text by Salomon Franck (1659-1725), a German lawyer, scientist, and poet, working at Weimar at the same time as Bach, and the librettist. A *librettist* comes from the Italian word *libretto*, lit. “booklet”, and is the text used in, or intended for, an extended musical work. Franck wrote the texts of some of the best-known Bach cantatas. The piece is part of the cantata *Only the lively hunt pleases me*, also known as the *Hunting Cantata*. Like Bach’s “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring,” this aria among others is frequently played at weddings. However, the cantata itself was written for a birthday celebration of Christian, Duke of Saxe-Weißenfels (1682-1736). Bach was based at the nearby court of Weimar, and musicians from both courts appear to have joined in the first performance in Weißenfels, the largest city in central Germany. Bach is known to have recycled much of his music for other celebrations, but this delightful song remained unpublished until after his death.

Conveniently, in Weimar Bach had a Baroque instrumental ensemble at his disposal including two horns, instruments associated with the hunt. However in this movement 9 of the complete work, the singer is *not* accompanied by the full ensemble but rather by two recorders and continuo (probably a harpsichord). The use of flute-like instruments typically suggests pastoral music. Since the revival of Bach’s music in the 19th century, “Sheep may safely graze” has been arranged successfully for other instruments. The piece’s title evokes a pastoral scene and has been referenced in discussions of how European culture depicts domestic animals and sheep in particular. In the cantata, the recitative and aria are sung by the role of the ancient Roman god of shepherds, flocks, and livestock. The delightful melody compares the peaceful life of sheep under a watchful shepherd to the inhabitants of a state with a wise ruler:

“Sheep can safely graze Where a good shepherd watches over them.

Where rulers are ruling well, we may feel peace and rest and what makes countries happy.”

Forest Green is the tune most often sung in England as “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” It is in fact a folk-song called “The Ploughboy’s Dream,” collected and arranged in 1903 by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) when he heard it sung by Isaac Longhurst (1833-1901) at Broadmoor in Surrey. The song was possibly written by Henry Garman (1830-1901?) about whom precious little is known. The text was written by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), an Episcopalian clergyman and author, graduated from Harvard University in 1855 at the age of 20. He worked briefly as a school teacher at Boston Latin, MA, but upon being fired, felt that he had failed miserably. He wrote, “I do not know what will become of me and I do not care much....I wish I were fifteen years old again. I believe I might become a stunning man: but somehow or other I do not seem in the way to come to much now.” In 1856, he began to study for ordination in the Episcopal Church in the Virginia at Alexandria, VA and graduated in 1859. This became the key to his notoriety.

He began increasing his influence as a Broad churchman, meaning that he was allowed great latitude in his opinions on Anglican doctrine. Attaining substantial moral stature as a preacher and patriot, he

was also a man of great physical bearing, standing six feet, four inches tall. During the American Civil War he upheld the cause of the North and opposed slavery; his sermon on the death of Abraham Lincoln was an eloquent expression of the character of both men. His 1865 sermon at Harvard's commemoration of the Civil War dead likewise attracted attention nationwide.

In 1869 he became rector of Boston's Trinity Church. He wrote that his only ambition was "to be a parish priest and, though not much of one, would as a college president be still less." Today, he is probably best known for authoring the Christmas carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Brooks also introduced Helen Keller (1880-1968) to Christianity, and herself to Anne Sullivan (1866-1936).

HALLELUJAH CHORUS from *The Messiah* George Frideric Handel (1741) words, Charles Jennens arr. Ellen Jane Lorenz (1981)

HWV 56, known as *The Messiah*, is an English-language oratorio – a large-scale musical work for orchestra and voices, typically a dramatic narrative on a religious theme, performed without the use of costumes, scenery, or action. The text was compiled from the King James Bible – an Early Modern English translation of the Christian Bible for the Church of England commissioned in 1604 and published in 1611, by sponsorship of King James VI – and the Coverdale Psalter – compiled by Myles Coverdale (1488-1569) and published in 1535 as the first complete Modern English translation of the entire Bible and the first complete printed translation into English – by Charles Jennens (1700-1773) was an English landowner and patron of the arts. As a friend of Handel, he helped author the libretti of several of his oratorios, most notably *Messiah*.



It was first performed in Dublin on April 13th 1742 and received its London premiere a year later. After an initially modest public reception, the oratorio gained in popularity, eventually becoming one of the best-known and most frequently performed choral works in Western music. Jennens's text is an extended reflection (not a biography or life story by any means) on Jesus as the Messiah called "Christ."

The three-part structure of the work approximates to that of Handel's three-act operas, with the "parts" subdivided by Jennens into "scenes." Each scene is a collection of individual numbers or "movements" which take the form of recitatives, arias, and choruses. There are two instrumental numbers, the opening *Sinfony* in the style of a French overture, and the pastoral *Pifa*, often called the "pastoral symphony," at the mid-point of Part I. The text begins in Part I with prophecies by Isaiah and others, and moves to the annunciation to the shepherds, the only "scene" taken from the Gospels. In Part II, Handel concentrates on the Passion of Jesus and ends with the *Hallelujah* chorus. In Part III he covers Paul's teachings on the resurrection of the dead and Christ's glorification in heaven.

The music for *Messiah* was completed in 24 days of swift composition. Having received Jennens's text sometime after July 10th, 1741, Handel began work on it on August 22nd. His records show that he had

completed Part I in outline by August 28th, Part II by September 6th, and Part III by September 12th, followed by two days of “filling up” to produce the finished work on September 14th. This rapid pace was seen by Jennens not as a sign of ecstatic energy but rather as “careless negligence,” and the relations between the two men would remain strained, since Jennens “urged Handel to make improvements” while the composer stubbornly refused. The autograph score’s 259 pages show some signs of haste such as blots, scratchings-out, unfilled bars and other uncorrected errors, but according to the music scholars, the number of errors is remarkably small in a document of this length.

At the end of his manuscript Handel wrote the letters "SDG"—*Soli Deo Gloria*, “To God alone the glory.” This inscription, taken with the speed of composition, has encouraged belief in the apocryphal story that Handel wrote the music in a fervor of divine inspiration in which, as he wrote the *Hallelujah* chorus, “He saw all heaven before him.” Audience members traditionally stand up when the chorus begins in because of the music’s beauty. The tradition is said to have started when King George II (1683-1760) stood up during the London premiere of I in 1743, and the audience followed to avoid offending him. However, there is no evidence that King George II was ever at the premiere, or that he stood up during it. The earliest known source of the story is a second-hand account from the 1770s. There are also no newspaper or eye-witness accounts that mention the king. Nevertheless, the tradition continues.

RiverBells SACRAMENTO, an independent adult consort of handbell experiences and experiments, is a CA non-profit and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation. We first gathered in the fall of 1998 at Cosumnes River College with 10 ringers; we had to skip a season-and-a-half due to COVID, so – if our math is right -- this is our twenty-fifth season. Our revamped and redesigned website has drawn ringers both from the area and musicians coming in from out of the area. With a whopping 16 ringers this semester, our emphasis – aside from seasonal demands – has been to perform original music composed idiomatically for the English handbell choir, and to feature swing (Big Band) sounds on this unique percussion instrument. We hope this lifts up, thrills, and challenges both ringers and audiences.

We are an open, inclusive choir. If you ring and wish to apply for membership, contact us through our website. We have never turned away anyone who wanted to join if they had the dedication and determination to learn (there’s a personal reason for this policy). If you desire both to learn to read music and to ring, join our beginner’s class every Wednesday evening at 5:45pm for an hour at our host location. We’ll provide all that you need, *gratis*.

To initiate a contract for a performance at nearly any location for almost any reason, contact the director through our website. Our rates are reasonable and negotiable (up to a distance); we prefer a concert performance and audience attention that’s at least as long as it takes us to set up all of our toys.

Your interest in our music may take the form of donating time or funds to our art. We perform many concerts for free, and travel quite a bit. Donations of all kinds from many individuals inspire us, as you can see from our acknowledgments page. No one in our ensemble is paid, even though they are professionally-disposed, and reasonable expenses are reimbursed. We have several special projects (amplification equipment, additional bells) toward which you may contribute.

Paul W. Allen (b. 1947) retired as a 7th and 8th grade teacher of music, English/Language Arts, math, and computer sciences from James Rutter Middle School in the Elk Grove Unified School District, CA in 2015. He continues to be a musician (performing on trombone, euphonium, tuba, handbells), conductor, and teacher. As composer and arranger of works in the handbell field (and a few diversions for the symphonic band), he focuses on music idiomatically written for the English handbell as well as arrangements of swing music from the Big Band Era in America. Over 25 of his compositions have been published. He has also arranged for symphonic band several worthwhile rags from the Joplin era.



He has five academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts in Humanities from La Verne College, La Verne, CA (now, the University of La Verne); Master of Divinity from Bethany Theological Seminary, Oak Brook IL; B.A. in music/drama from California State University, Sacramento; California teaching credential in music, drama, English, history, and sociology; and Master of Music in Composition from CSUS. His Master's project was *Rhapsody for Band and Bells*, premiered in 1999 at CSUS by the 59th Army National Guard Band and Bel Tempo Handbell Choir. In 2000 he was inducted as a member of the Delta Xi Chapter of Pi Kappa Lambda, the National Music Honor Society.

While an ordained minister, he held a pastorate in Nebraska 1972-1975, returning after that time to his native California to pursue a degree in music and drama at Sacramento State University, graduating in 1981. In the fall of 1998, he and his wife Susan founded *RiverBells*, a community handbell ensemble which just celebrated its 25th year. This unique ensemble is an open and inclusive choir, features many of the best adult ringers in the area, and has performed with such organizations as the American River College Symphonic Band, the Folsom Lake Symphony Orchestra, the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band, the Valley Choral Society, and at festivals and conferences throughout California and Nevada. They have also performed in the Harris Center for the Performing Arts at Folsom College as well as at the Vacaville Performing Arts Center. The group often performs at retirement villages and other social gatherings. **RiverBells Lite** is a 6-7 ringer adjunct of the larger ensemble, prepared to perform in smaller venues.

He served as first President of the Sacramento Symphonic Winds, as well as their utility trombonist. He was one of the new members of the El Dorado Brass Band of Old Sacramento, a select group of brassists playing music of the era of the civil war. He was a counselor of young people at the Sacramento Job Corps Center. For 5 years he selected the music for and conducted the voices of the South Sacramento Ecumenical Parish Choral Concerts. When called, he performs trombone in pit orchestras, most often with the River City Theatre Company. He administered the Sacramento Spring Ring for 20 years with Susan, premiering two of his commissioned works during that time. He served for two years on the Area XII Board of Directors, as well as on the Board of the Sacramento Recorder Society.

He has retired as Secretary of the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band, but continues to play euphonium with them. He has performed second and fourth trombone with the 30's 40's 50's Dance Band, and second, then first trombone with the Ben Ali Shrine Band. Currently he's celebrating life after teaching with three cats and his wife, Susan – who incidentally has rung bells since 1975, both as a soloist and in ensembles.

⇐A BRIEF HISTORY OF HANDBELLS⇒

-- adapted by Paul W. Allen from Philip Bedford © 1986

A *handbell* is a bell designed to be rung by hand. It is a percussion instrument. To ring a handbell, a ringer grasps the bell by its slightly flexible handle – traditionally made of leather, but often now made of plastic – and moves one’s arm to make the hinged clapper strike the inside of the bell. An individual handbell can be used simply as a signal to catch people’s attention or summon them together, but handbells are also often heard in tuned sets or two or more octaves (25 bells).



Handheld bells have a long history. Credit for the development of the modern hand bell, or “handbell,” is accorded to brothers Robert and William Cor in Aldbourne, Wiltshire, England, between 1696 and 1724. The Cor brothers originally made *latten* bells (“horse bells,” or decorative effects on borders, rivets or other details of metalwork) for *hame boxes* (a “hame box” is a device that attaches to the top of a horse collar and contains several bells that ring when the horse moves), but for reasons unknown they began tuning their bells more finely to have an accurate fundamental tone, and fitted them with hinged clappers that moved only in one plane (forward and backward). A foundry in Loughborough, Leicestershire, that originated in the 14th century became John Taylor & Co/ in 1784. The accurate pitch and the two-dimensional movement of the clapper defines “tuned.”

Originally, tuned sets of handbells, such as the ones made by the Cor brothers, were used by change ringers to rehearse outside their towers, practicing the complicated algorithms of change ringing without exceeding the neighbors’ patience. It was also more pleasant for the ringers to practice in the warmth of the local pub rather than in a cold tower in winter. The handbell sets used by change ringers had the same number of bells as in the towers – generally six to twelve, evenly-tuned to a diatonic scale (as the *pianoforte* is tuned).

There is no reliable record when the bell was invented. There are pictures from early Chinese dynasties which clearly show bells, not the open method version beloved of bell ringers but the “Noddy” (stout) variety. Indeed, they have been used by different civilizations in religious rites even before the development of a written language. They are mentioned in *Exodus* as part of Hebrew worship and they are shown decorating the robes of priests.

The early founders of the Celtic church in Britain – Saints Aiden, Cedd, and Patrick – brought with them four-sided bells similar to Austrian cowbells. St. Patrick’s bell is still in his shrine in Dublin. In fact, handbells were the first bells to have appeared in England; the Romans used them to summon their servants. The large portable handbells which succeeded them were made of riveted iron plates immersed in molten bronze.



When the Christian church was recognized by Constantine in Rome and came out of hiding, foundries began to increase the size of bells and priests hung them outside their churches. Paulinus at Nola in Campania supposedly was the first to have done this, and from his action derives the words *campanile* and *campanology* (an Italian bell tower, especially a *freestanding* one).



One of the rules of the church from this time read, “Let all priests at the appointed hours day and night toll the bells in their churches, then celebrate divine worship.” This regular tolling became crucial to citizens in early days; it was the only way they had of clocking the time. The word *clock* derives from the Dutch word for bell, “klok.” The French “cloche” is also similar. In France in the 13th century bells were rung at 6:00 a.m. (Matins), Midday (Midi) and 6:00 p.m. (Vespers). These bells were later called the “Ave Maria” bells or the “Angelus.” In Britain “Midi” was called “None” or *noon* as it is today. Strange that this should be from the Latin “none” for “nine,” being nine hours after the first office “Prime” at 3:00 a.m. So, noon is really 9 o’clock not 12 o’clock!

In medieval times bells were steeped in superstition because of their long association with religion. Bells were baptized, and once baptized had the power to ward off evil spells and spirits. Bells were hung in doorways to protect visitors and the visited from the evil spirits which always lurked around the door awaiting the chance to slip inside. A visitor would ring the bell to drive away the spirits, then pass inside—which is the likely origin of the present-day *doorbell!* This custom also led to the “Passing bell” which was rung to drive away spirits who stood at the foot of a bed and about the house ready to seize a person’s soul as s/he died. The local ringers who were paid to ring the *passing bell* were compensated more for a big bell because it kept the spirits further away and gave the departing soul a head start.

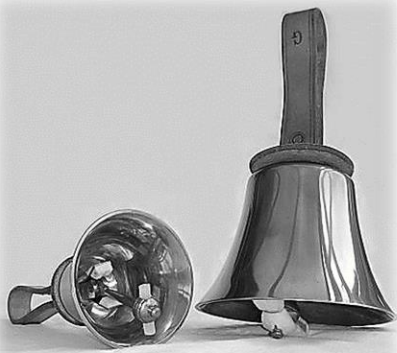
The sound of consecrated bells was also believed to dispel thunder and lightning and to calm storms at sea for all to which demons were believed to be responsible. When a tempest broke out bells would ring to clear the storm. This happened for example at Sandwich in Kent, in the “great thundering” of 1502, and again in 1514. The “great thundering” was still in use against hail in Southern France in the 19th century, as it was in Cornwall for those in peril on the sea.

After bells had moved outside the church in Paulinus’ time, they continued their development within the church. *A cappella* chanting (voices only) was replaced in popularity by more elaborate modes of liturgical accompaniment which included bells, stringed and wind instruments, and small organs. Many mistranslations of the Latin “cymbala” used both for cymbals and bells in early times exist in psalms today, e.g. “Praise him upon the loud cymbals (*big bells*), praise him upon the well-tuned cymbals (*tuned handbells*.)” Early illuminations (images, pictures) show small chimes of handbells hung from rods. In the early Middle Ages instructions for sung masses included the use of bells to double the tenor line, which carried the tune.



During the later Middle Ages, the pipe organ ousted wind instruments, strings, harps and bells, and it is likely that bells were relegated to cupboards and boxes, perhaps in the towers (note the irony!), to be rung again during the 16th and 17th centuries by tower bell ringers.

Tune ringing became popular in the 1700's when the more musical tower bell ringers discovered that there were far fewer limitations to ringing *handbells* than ringing swinging tower bells – and there were likely to be more of them. They found that they could ring tunes, firstly carols and hymns, then chamber music and eventually the popular classics. By the middle of the 19th century tune ringing had reached its heyday. At Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, handbell ringing competitions were held from 1855-1925, to which special excursion trains ran, and bands (not “choirs”) from throughout the North of England played on up to 200 bells. Owing to World War I and the invention of radio, apart from a very few large teams who kept going in the North of England, team membership dwindled and interest generally waned.



By the early 1960's in England, most handbell owners were tower bell ringers or Societies, and they rang tunes on their bells only during the Christmas season. But gradually the art of tune ringing was revived, with each musician handling two bells at a time – and often more! In modern times, music teachers and other leaders have realized the potential of bells and many schools and organizations continue to include tune ringing in their curricula. A rally of local teams was organized at Norbury, Cheshire in 1966. This was so successful that those who took part decided to form a

Society, and the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain was thus born at Ashton-Under-Lyne in 1967.

In the United States of America, the handbell tune ringing revival got off to an earlier start. Handbells were probably first heard there during the mid-19th century. The American impresario, PT Barnum, imported the “Lancashire Ringers” from England as a novelty, and called them “Swiss Bell Ringers!” A number of other itinerant “bands” performed to the public throughout the Eastern States.

Modern handbell tune ringing in the U.S.A. owes their present standing to Mrs. A.A. Shurcliff in 1902. She was gifted a set of 10 handbells in London by Arthur Hughes, then the general manager of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, after achieving two separate two-and-a-half-hour change ringing peals in one day. In 1926, upon returning from a trip to England, she rang carols on handbells on Beacon Hill, Boston. The sound was heard and liked by many, who responsively sent to England for additional handbell sets. Interest snowballed under her guiding hand. The New England Guild was formed in her living room in 1937. 1954 saw the birth of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers (now, Handbell Musicians of America), also at her home. Tune ringing in America has never looked back

The two major defining characteristics of English handbells are their clappers, and ability to produce overtones. The clapper on an English handbell is on a hinge and moves back and forth in a single direction, unlike a school bell in which the clapper swings freely in any direction. It also has a spring that holds the clapper away from the casting after the strike to allow the bell to ring freely. Furthermore, the shaft of the clapper is rigid, such that the bell may be held with its mouth facing upward. The overtones on an English handbell are a 12th (an octave and a perfect fifth) above the fundamental, while Dutch handbell—such as Petit & Fritsen—focus on the overtone a minor 10th (an octave and a minor third) or a major 10th (an octave and a major third) above the fundamental. Handbells can weigh as little as 7 oz (200 g) or upwards of 18 lb (8.2 kg).

A carillon is an instrument played with a keyboard and consists of at least 23 bells. The bells are cast in bronze, hung in fixed suspension, and tuned in chromatic order so that they can be sounded harmoniously together. They are struck with clappers connected to a keyboard of wooden batons played with the hands and pedals played with the feet. Often housed in bell towers, carillons are usually owned by churches, universities, or municipalities (observe the carillonneur and his keyboard to the right).



The Ringers

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