

Rehearsal Notes for Handbell Directors

2016 Big Sky Festival

Polson, MT April 29-30, 2016

General Comments: The composers of these pieces have provided much of this information (*in italics*). In general, close attention to the markings in the music and of course, knowing the music well enough to be able to watch the conductor are the keys to a successful performance. Be especially attentive during all tempo changes marked in the score (either new tempos, or *accelerando* / *ritard* markings). At these points, it will **not** be optional to watch the conductor! Thank you for your preparation for the festival. I very much look forward to our making music together, and am also looking forward to meeting you!

Feel free to email me at rringer@rr.org with any specific questions you might have.

A Mighty Fortress / arr. Kath Wissinger

Notes from Kath:

Ah, this piece was originally written as a trio (oops! too hard!) - then massaged into a quartet for a teen group (there is a published version of the quartet/quintet, which is compatible) - it seemed a natural fit for 3-5 octave large groups, too - so I was pleased when the publisher accepted both scores

I really like the reprise of the mallets and treble line at the end. M. 50 snags many ringers with the rhythm change-up. My 4iH player in the quartet found this measure particularly tricky. The big rest in m. 53 was originally put in there to allow him to regroup his bells for the last chord!

3 oct. score - is missing a rit. in m. 45.

Come, Thou Fount of Ev'ry Blessing / arr. Cathy Moglebust

--Start the beginning very softly ('p' instead of 'mp').

--Work to make as much contrast as possible between the beginning, rhythmic section and the middle legato section (beginning at m. 43)... before it returns to the rhythmic feel again at m. 76.

--Start the mallets notes in m35 as 'p', then cresc to m39, before the decrescendo begins

--Take note of the melodic "echoing" between the chimes and the bells in the middle section. Like the other similar lines mark a 'p' on the top line on m54, beat 3 – and mark an 'mf' on the chime part m56, beat 3.

--In m65, change the half note to a dotted half note – so it lasts through the whole measure. In addition, add a fermata on that same note. Move the 'R' from the third beat of m65 to the downbeat of m66.

--Be very soft in m101, then subito forte on beat 3 of 102.

--Accent the bass notes on beats 2 and 4 in m103 and m104.

--Don't be tempted to slow down at all in m 103-104. No ritard here.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel / arr. John Behnke

Notes from John:

As a hymn for Advent, I wanted it to start with some mystery. The SB technique sets the mood and I used "Rejoice, Rejoice" on chimes as a refrain in the beginning and at the end.

The second part of the piece is a bold and contrasting plea asking God to come again using big full chords. This stanza gently returns to the mood of the beginning, this time with the bells echoing the "Rejoice, Rejoice."

It was meant to be a simple yet poignant setting, allowing a level 2 choir to use the singing bells and both bells and chimes to full use. I hope that ringers will enjoy ringing it.

Prelude on O Sacred Head / arr. Dan R. Edwards

Notes from Dan:

My original arrangement of "Prelude" was actually rather short. The editor suggested I expand it by allowing the cello to take the melody on the second strain and let the treble instruments assume a descant. I think it turned out quite nicely.

Combining Bach's Prelude in C with O Sacred Head was one of those "ah-ha" moments. I was amazed at how well the melody of the chorale and the arpeggio figures from the Prelude fit together so nicely. In a way, the piece almost wrote itself.

O Sing a Song of Bethlehem / arr. Judy Phillips

From Judy:

It got the "O Sing a Song of Bethlehem" title simply because other arrangements tend to use the Kingsfold name. I actually learned the tune as "I Feel the Winds of God Today" when I was a child, but that text seems not to be around much any more.

It's sort of a thoughtful setting of the tune- not loud or fast, for the most part. The little canon and loud section (meas. 50- 68) add a bit of musical contrast before the quiet ending. I had to encourage my group to play out in that part- the canon only works if it's strong, and they were a bit afraid of it at first. The cessura in meas. 64 is a full, dramatic break. My choir tried to just skate through it, and that didn't work as well. Once they remembered to watch (duh!) it went much better.

Song of Peace / Arnold Sherman

--The beginning of this piece should be played with very little circular motion. Strike the chords and "stick" them (freeze with the arm extended), helping to provide the "harsh and brittle" feeling that Arnold has asked for here. Watch INTENTLY during the first 9 measures, as we'll stretch out each measure a little longer than it's indicated value (basically, put a "tenuto" on each half note).

--Move the ritard in m43 to the middle of m42.

--Add a fermata over the C5 in m44 (we'll hang on that for a while).

--The Mart-lifts in m61 and m65 should be LVED through the entire measure.

--Add a fermata over the whole note in m74.

--Add a ritard on beat 3 of m77

--Add a fermata on m78 (there won't be a beat pattern in m78 and m79, so you'll have to watch!)

--In m80 through m86, every 2 measures (80, 82, 84, 86) we'll add more choirs, starting from the front of the massed ringing area. We'll start with the front several rows playing softly at m80, and then add more rows at 82 and 84 and then all will play at 86. (we'll obviously have to work this out during the massed rehearsals, but I just wanted to give you an idea of what we'll be doing here).

--At m88 through m95, we won't sing (yet!), but the top melody note should be played on chimes. At m96 through the end, the melody should be played on both bells and chimes.

--We **won't** take the repeat back to m96 from m111.

--As for the singing part (this is a bit hard to explain, so please ask questions if you don't understand!). First of all, think of the "Dona Nobis Pacem" vocal part as the three traditional parts that we often sing. These parts are spelled out here:

- The vocal part written in the handbell score at m88 we'll call part A.
- The vocal part written in the handbell score at m96 we'll call part B.
- The vocal part written in the handbell score at m104 we'll call part C.

--The handbells will play the parts as they see them in the score, but we'll sing as follows:

- When we get to the handbell part at m88: No singing, just introduce the "Dona..." melody on chimes.
- At m96: bells and chimes are playing the melody indicated, but we'll sing part A in unison.
- At m104: bells and chimes are playing the melody indicated, but each choir will divide into 3 equal-sized parts and sing part A, part B, and part C at the same time during this section.
- At m112: All singing stops, melody on both bells and chimes through m115.

Celtic Farewell / Linda Lamb

From Linda:

As for special thoughts, this was my class piece my second year at Concordia, studying with Arnold Sherman. That would have been in the summer of 2002, and the dedication was for our minister of music, whose last Sunday would have occurred while I was in Wisconsin. His wife, Becky, played flute, played in our handbell choir, and loved celtic things. She has since passed away from a rare form of cancer.

Things that didn't make the score that I wish might have: well, it was 2002, and I was pretty new at this whole thing (my first piece was published in 1997) and I might have made more extensive use of handchimes if I'd even known they existed back then! Celtic Farewell is my favorite of all my pieces

Cantad al Senor / arr. Hart Morris

From Hart:

I liked the tune very much, I'm fond of the 6/8 - 3/4 tension in this kind of thing - those together were the prompt to do the arrangement. Pretty unimpressive, yes?

Not a biggee, but the foot note is incorrect at the bottom of pg. 5: it's "mm. 53-54, and in 61-62." Oddly, 57-58 are the correct mm., but should include 59.