

Rehearsal Notes
Area I Festival Conference
University of Massachusetts
June 23-26, 2011
Bill Alexander, Conductor

General Comments:

I am delighted to be one of your conductors for the Area I Festival Conference. A lot of preparation has gone into making this a memorable and musical experience. Your efforts to prepare the music before the festival will benefit everyone. I believe that I am an extremely easy conductor to follow, but that means nothing unless you are able to look up and see what I'm doing. Massed ringing is unlike any other musical event. No matter how well your group plays together, massed ringing will be a challenge. Identify all tempo changes and musically rough areas and work them until you feel comfortable looking away from the page. Because of the limited time for rehearsal, it is even more important that the pieces are well prepared.

For those of you who have never met or worked with me, I can assure you that my goals for this and any festival, concert, service, rehearsal or workshop are to make music sound like music and to have fun in the process. We WILL have fun! See you in June.

Bill Alexander

Coppers

Reverie

Judy Philips

This is one of the three pieces in Judy Phillip's "Triptych", all of which will be played during the festival's final concert. The most difficult section will be the beginning 12 measures. It's going to take a lot of watching to have the entire massed group lock up together and still allow me to move the tempo around. Practice playing that section as many different ways as you can. Place a decrescendo in the bass on measure 107. You will need to brush this down to make way for the pickups to 108 in the treble.

For The Beauty of the Earth

J.D. Frizzell

J.D has put together a very nice setting of these two pieces. As I studied the score, I kept thinking that this wasn't going to be very difficult. I still believe that, but only from a technical and note-reading standpoint. I think this is going to be much more of a challenge to get a massed group mentally linked than we think. Imagine all we will be able to do with dynamics and expression. I can't find anything to tell you about this piece that isn't already on the page. I intend, if anything, to over-do the dynamics and try to get all of you to breathe together. Search for the phrases.

Spanish Dance

Kevin McChesney

In order to have the energy this style of piece demands, the tempo will most like be very close to what's notated. Don't place a break between the shakes measures 87-89. If you are one of the people malleting the final note, make sure that it's held no longer than the ring touch in the treble bells.

Bronze

Pat-A-Pan

arr. Fred Gramann

The biggest question I get is “How fast are you actually going to take this”? I intend to hit 92. It’s a pretty short piece, so once we get it down, repetition to polish it won’t be a problem. Not everyone can afford all those low “2” bells. I found that a capped Boomwacker™ bounced off a carpet square does indeed sound like that malleted F2 in measure 16 and saves a few thousand dollars. This piece can be a lot of work, but I sure hope you enjoy it.

Wizards in Winter

arr. Rima Greer and Tim Waugh

I’ve put off writing this one until the very last. There are so many options, and so many people who know this piece by the Trans Siberian Orchestra, and so many of you who have found what works best for your situation, that it’s a little stressful to come up with a single way where everyone will be happy. So I’ve decided to find a combination that we’re all sure to hate. No, no, no, we will all love it...repeat after me: “We will all love it.”

Now that I have you all glassy-eyed, here we go. First, you have to get this up to at least 144 beats/minute, maybe even faster. Next, we’re going to have nearly 100 ringers working very hard on this and I don’t see any reason why they should be covered up by an electric bass or keyboard. Our goal as Bronze level ringers is to play the seemingly impossible. I would like you to figure out how to play all of the notes on all of the staves. My group has started work on this and we’re going to make it work somehow with 11 ringers. It’s been fun to watch all the negotiations to take and get bells.

We WILL play chimes in 36-43 and 62-77. Measure 2-15: all mallets. As marked in 16-19. Ring measure 20-22 (damping in the upper line will be impossible for many of you, but don’t worry about it). The E5 on beat 1, measure 42 should be a chime. I think the option of mallets in the bass at 52 is good. No matter what Tim thinks, TD the notes as marked in Measure 57. Ring starting beat 2 measure 58. Mart the bass clef chord in measure 58. I like the sound of combining the chimes in the upper staff and the “ossia” bells at 62, so play both. Ring all the bass bells at 82.

There are some conflicts starting at measure 92 where the upper staff B5 plays while also marting in the next staff down. Just ring it and don’t worry about us missing the mart. I believe there are many others like that. The final note does indeed have the bass notes as a mart-lift. Make sure it’s damped on beat 2.

The follow are possible solutions to some of the problems, but it depends on your setup and bell assignments. These come directly from Strikepoint ringers:

B4C5 player can play E5 chime (L hand) and A5/B5 chimes (R hand-4-in-hand), C4D4 player can play D5 chime.

I’ve heard that at least one group added percussion. I may be very interested in including it. Good luck to all of you and be creative. I can hardly wait to see what we come up with.

Bronze (continued)

Te Deum

H. Dean Wagner

I love this piece! It's big, it's loud, it has tons of bass bells, and did I mention that it's big? The introduction will take some time to get together. We'll all be arriving with completely different ideas on how fast (and slow) this should go. Once that's done, no problems. At 33 make the dynamic marking "mp" starting on beat 4. Same with measure 111. I am assuming we will have a 7th octave available. Please double down as notated in 44-52 and 120-123. Pay no attention to the "***" on the bottom of page 12, except for perhaps playing the G2, Bb2 and C3 on chimes if you wish. At measures 125 and 126 release the shake just before beat 4. I'll give you each of the final 2 eighth notes in 126.

Roundelay

Judy Phillips

This is one of the three pieces in Judy Phillip's "Triptych", all of which will be played during the festival's final concert. This one won't be overly difficult for us, but it does have its challenging parts. The changing meter feel will be easy after a few times through. Measure 46 will probably be an issue. The marts on beats 5 and 6 usually are late. Just don't let it happen. Once we get to measure 61 the meter will continue in "6", but we need to hear and feel the pulses reminding us that "3" is still around somewhere. Bring out that 3-feel each time it comes up. It will happen in all the registers eventually. On the last note, start practicing to have all bells (and hands) down. Nobody should be left holding up a bell.