

Rehearsal and Performance Notes and Suggestions

Area I Festival/Conference 2011

Michael Kastner

I am thrilled and it is very much my pleasure to be a part of Area I's 2011 Festival as one of your two conductors! Like you, I will be the recipient of many months hard work and preparation on behalf of your Area I Board and Festival Committee.

My goals in massed conducting are to lead you through the process of turning your months of preparation into musical moments **WHILE HAVING FUN**. Massed ringing has its challenges musically; with the appropriate connection between ringers and director *great things will happen!* Undoubtedly we will have fun between my own conducting manner and Bill's style, *fun is in the recipe*. But you will see that musicality is my real hot-button and our fun will always include an element of musicianship in the mix. I also very much believe in movement in handbell ringing. You may find yourself feeling stretched to perform correct notes, dynamics, stay together, ***AND*** move. If so, bravo! That's what festivals are for.

Please prepare yourselves for the massed ringing experience by remembering that there is a different dynamic than ringing in your own choir. Feel free to take risks and be out of the box compared to what you do in your own group after all, you're "covered" by several hundred of your bell-buds should you make a mistake. And prepare yourselves for a different level of watching and anticipating - massed ringing can be musical, but it requires some accommodations. Fabulous massed ringing can be achieved by approaching these challenges with your talent and with a spirit of cooperation and community that our festival is sure to bring.

I feel that I know a good many of you from my time in New England as Massachusetts Chair, Area Chair-Elect and Area Chair. It will surely be great to renew friendships; if you have never met me before, I know you'll enjoy working with me. My desire for you is that you'll leave the Area I event jazzed, convinced that true music can come from bells from you! and that energy and enthusiasm will carry you through the time between festivals in your own programs.

I look forward to June and working with you to generate fun moments musically. Or is it musical moments while having fun?

Michael Kastner

Massed Ringing Rehearsal & Performance Notes

How Can I Keep From Singing / arr. Arnold Sherman

Singing bell technique – be ready – don't miss out on half the fun. (What fun? Why, going to the hardware store and picking out a dowel!) You can use anything that will make the bell “sing”. Claves work great too (wooden ones, not plastic). The back page of the score has a great description of how to do this technique, so please review it with all the ringers and bring a couple of extra dowels, just in case.

In your rehearsals, practice a lot of “stretch” in the tempo in meas. 4-21. For example, put a fermata (hold) over beat 2 of meas. 8. Without spelling all the potential places out for you, consider this section as “rubato” (robbed-time). That's where music happens!

Massed ringing rule number 1 – anything that ends in “mosso” means look up and get a new tempo (eg. meas. 31, meas. 48).

Meas. 49 will likely repeat multiple times to allow the singing bell to get established. One modification for our rehearsal and performance: treble bell ringers, please work out duplicating C6 – C7 notes in meas. 51 (pickup from meas. 50) through 60 on chimes. Everyone has something to do. Want some inspiration? Read the text supplied on the front page. How can you keep from ringing?

A Simple Dance / arr. Michael Glasgow

This piece moves! We're doing it right when you feel it in “one” instead of in “three.” It also begs for movement! Place one foot in front of the other – not purely side-by-side. Flex your knees and bounce along with the beat.

Technical challenges include plucking on beats two and three of most measures. Please do use the plucking technique and not mallets. Mallets will destroy the “one” feeling by being too strong. If you can manage it, where it says TD (thumb damp) us plucking instead. Remember that mart-lift is a technique to achieve the desired articulation and not a dynamic level (eg. meas. 19, meas. 32). Whoa! Check out that key change at meas. 42 – G4, G5 ringers especially (write yourself a note in meas. 41 and a reminder in meas. 46).

No arranger can leave this tune “simple” and true to form, Mr. Glasgow gives us a challenge in meas. 80 – 95. If you cannot play the “ossia line” (above the normal grand staff) then please play the grand staff. If you want to take on the challenge of playing the

ossia staff, please practice a few times playing only the down beats being very precise on beats 1, 2, and 3. Then add in the triplets.

Massed ringing rule number 2: ritard means look up; molto ritard means look up a lot (meas. 112, 114).

Renewed Spirit/ Michael Mazzatenta

Ahhh... gotta love a title like that at a bell event! This piece is very straight-forward. With the staccato techniques and eighth-quarter patterns throughout, the tendency will be to emphasize the quarter note. Please make sure it's eighth quarter; not eighth quarter. Chimes would be lovely meas. 26 – 42. (If you don't have chimes, please do not play bells in those measures). And, oh, a key change (meas. 26, meas. 60) would be sooooo much appreciated. All bells are suspended and played with a mallet on the last measure (84) so, right now, write this on meas. 1: *mallet needed – last bar*. Hopefully, this will eliminate a last-minute scramble for the mallets. My preference for a malleted bell is to hold it upright in the ringing position. While it can be malleted “upside-down” the visual can be chaotic for the audience.

Rhapsody / Judy Phillips

I hope that there are a good number of you who will try this optional massed piece. It's bound to be fun to do as a massed number! “Agitato” (sounds like a type of potato, doesn't it?) means “agitated” **Definition:** The Italian musical term **agitato** is an indication to play quickly; with agitation and excitement. Well, yes, that does mean we're going to take this as fast as you can handle it. But don't abandon musicality. It starts fast – but not loud. Those little one-measure cresc. and decresc. markings (eg. meas. 10, meas. 12) are really tricky at fast tempo. The rule is this: bells are a subtle instrument – if you want someone to hear that you've done a crescendo or decrescendo, then you have to over-emphasize it. Start each cresc. at pp (not mf) and cresc. to ff in one bar. Likewise, decresc. from ff to pp in one measure. You absolutely cannot go overboard with this I'll let you know when it's too much dynamic contrast. Even more emphasis on a 2-bar cresc. like in meas. 44 ... HEY! Was that a key change at meas. 33?...

Chimes in meas. 79 – 97 may be duplicated on Petit & Fritsen bells (Dutch bells) if you have them. This is a great place to put in a contrasting sound in a bell concert!

Greetings and Welcoming Comments to Tins

Welcome to this event! For many of you, this may be your first big handbell event. Or you may be a veteran Tins ringer. You may feel yourself intimidated or inadequate in the presence of “all those experienced ringers.” Regardless of your own experience in handbells, remember two things about bell ringing: 1) we all started right where you are! and 2) handbell ringers are the best, most encouraging and supportive folks on the planet!! Feel welcomed and enjoy the moment!

If you are reading this ahead of the festival, you already know that a festival starts months before the actual event. Tins music is designed to be simpler for various reasons – newer ringers need to start at a more approachable level to build confidence and to allow for learning musical techniques along with all the correct notes.

As a clinician and conductor, I have my most fun with new ringers. This “ah ha” moments are precious and remembered for a lifetime! And I happen to believe that Tins ringing can be musically outstanding. Often newer ringers are more “pliable” than those ones with “all that experience” and we *can* create fabulous music together. Please allow me to lead you through the process of having fun while readying our music for presentation to others (a humbling but rewarding experience).

Aria / Michael Helman

Curve balls right away – check the key and the fact that we will use chimes. The “vib” notation (meas. 1, 2, 3, 4) is called “vibrate” which, in fact, is what a bell does. But it means to add a tremolando (rapid reiteration) of a note. How we do that is to play the bell on the beat indicated, then wobble it back-and-forth (like a windshield wiper – but faster and not as far). LV means let-vibrate. Since we normally damp the bell after its correct length, what LV does is make the bell sustain until one of two things (usually) happens: another LV or a R (ring) symbol. This is like the “hold” pedal of a piano (down on beat one; up and back down again on the next measure, etc.). Chimes play (instead of bells) beginning in measure 21 with the diamond-headed notes. There are not a lot of dynamic changes in the piece, but don’t miss your golden opportunity to shine in meas. 41-44 with a four-bar crescendo. Play strong throughout pages 6 & 7, then end softly.

Bwana Awabariki / arr. Susan Nelson

Note the use of chimes with bells – right from the start (meas. 2). Movement will be key on this piece. Play with one foot in front (not side-by-side) and don't be afraid to dance in fact, PRACTICE IT (your director may ask you to do this while playing!!) African music often has elements of procession (starts in the distance and gets louder as the procession passes, then softer again as the procession passes). So long crescendo passages are common. The rule of thumb is – if you think you are playing too loud to do an effective crescendo, then get softer right before it starts. Then get louder than the score actually calls for (bells are a subtle instrument – loud needs to be played louder than you think it does to get the musical effect across). Staccato notes are played with mallets – bells resting on the padded table. The RT (ring-touch) notation (meas. 73, 83) is where you play a quarter note as a sixteenth note with a dotted-eighth rest. The arranger is asking for a short note, but not staccato. This is unique to bells – what other instrument to you “hug” immediately after playing it? The final note in measure 92 is a mart-lift. The bell is played into the padded table, then lifted all the way up while it is still ringing. Bass bells don't do this – just the treble.

Still, Still, Still / arr. Cathy Moglebust

Bells and Christmas – sooooo compatible we can do this in June and get away with it! I love it! About the only technical challenge is in getting all the LVs in the right places. Once we're comfortable with this piece, I am going to start to stretch you as musicians. So get ready to play with the tempo – if you want a head-start, practice meas. 13-14 fast and 15-16 slow; the more advanced version of this is accelerando meas 13-14 and decelerando meas 15-16 with an atempo at meas 17. When we rehearse together, we will play with the feel of this piece in this way. It will allow us to express something musically that cannot be printed. At measure 40, play all notes up high (and raise up unplayed bells to participate in the visual effect). After we play the final chord, add a vibrato and slowly lower all bells – even ones which did not play) to the table. There will be no cutoff – this is like snow falling – they get there when they get there.