

## **Handbell Musicians of American Area 1 Handbell Festival Conference Rehearsal Notes** **Matthew Compton, Coppers and Bronze director**

Hello, fabulous ringers! I am so excited about our upcoming time together to create some amazing music with each other. I think this event is going to be a phenomenal chance to really dive into these challenging but exciting pieces! I hope you will take the time to really dig into each piece before the event that way when we get together we can focus on ensemble building and musicality expression more than anything. My notes will not point out things like tempo changes, techniques, etc. unless I specifically want something different than what is written in the score. You are all capable musicians and will be able to recognize the things already in the score. ☺ These will be for more stylistic choices and changes needed to achieve that. If you have any questions about the pieces, need help with any sections for bell changes, etc, please do not hesitate to email me at [mcomptoncomposer@gmail.com](mailto:mcomptoncomposer@gmail.com)

### **Coppers:**

#### **Ride On – arr. Brenda Austin**

Brenda is a phenomenal composer/arranger, conductor, and just all-around fantastic human being who I hope you've either met, or will eventually have the chance to! This arrangement we will do together is very, very fun! It's also largely straightforward and easy to latch on to the many different patterns throughout the piece.

- m. 1-4, and similar sections – I want these accents and shakes to be fanfares, almost trumpet-like as if you were announcing something, which in this case, we are!
- Throughout the piece with any mallet patterns, your main beats are the most important notes, 8<sup>th</sup> notes, and 16<sup>th</sup> notes should all be less intense than main beats, that way we can hear the pulse easier. Plus, if you relax tension on those off-beats and 16<sup>th</sup> notes, the piece will keep the drive in tempo keeping the piece moving forward.

#### **Ubi Caritas – arr. Matthew Compton**

This arrangement came out of a moment of messing around on a piano while listening to some music (specifically this setting of Thaxted from the video game *Civilization 5* - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30r\\_1NoKldo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30r_1NoKldo)) and discovering that you can layer Ubi Caritas with the Thaxted tune! I had also recently discussed with Beth Davidson, one of my ringers in Bells of the Cascades, about her favorite tunes, and both of these happened to be on her list, so as I arranged this, it just made sense to dedicate the piece to her!

- m. 8 – I'd recommend giving the Ab6/7 to the B6C7 ringer to mallet that way the suspended mallets can just gently play their notes – LV the suspended mallets here, damp on beat 4 of m. 9.
- m. 34-46 – Do not become married to a strict tempo in this section, we will fluctuate tempo quite a bit here! Maybe in your rehearsals, consider running this section adding random tempo changes that way everyone becomes very used to how this section rings, but adding different accelerandos and ritardanos. The success of this section will be largely dependent on the flexibility of ringers! Let the music and phrasing guide you here ☺

### **Ubi Caritas (cont.)**

- m. 63-77 – this section may take some creative assigning of parts for the Bb4-Db5 chimes, especially as the C5 chime moves between treble and bass clef.
- m. 77 beat 2 - m. 85 – The two melodies are superimposed here and should both be confidently heard.

### **Glad Adoration – arr. Christian Guebert**

Similar to his twin brother, Alex, Christian writes absolutely incredible handbell music. He also has quite the range of choral music as well! This delightful arrangement of “Praise to the Lord the Almighty” is a welcome and fresh take on the classic tune. One of the things I like about this arrangement is the unexpected chords and rhythmic placement of the bass chords. Some are where you expect them to be, others not. It’s brilliant! Keeping a light touch on the piece will allow the piece to have the flexibility and agility it needs to sound confident.

- LV is your best friend in this piece! Use the LV to not restrict your ringing to keep the bells flowing at a moderately fast tempo.
- **Upper treble ringers** – there are many places throughout the piece where there are 7’s by themselves without the 6’s, be mindful of pitch accuracy in the 7’s.
- m. 5-17 – be mindful of where the melody notes are and be sure to bring out those specific pitches.
- m. 92-93, and other mart-lift places – please make the lifts “pop” and have a very bright effective by very quickly lifting the bell after striking the table from the mart.

## **Bronze:**

### **Outburst – Karen Lakey Buckwalter**

A totally different (but absolutely fantastic) take on the Buckwalter-style, this piece is FAST and requires a lot of relaxed playing, which may be the opposite of what feels natural on this piece. Breathing through the fast changes will also help this too. We will work heavily on some musical phrasing to NOT have this piece just feel like a wall of loud bell ringing. This piece will require a lot of flexibility and a light touch to your playing in order for the piece to have the tempo it needs to. This doesn't mean to play softer, but to relax any tension you might have, that way you can keep the piece flowing throughout! Much of the piece is rung, with no indication for LV in most of the piece. Take this with a grain of salt. I think if you're hyper-focused on damping, it can slow you down. Use your musical intuition to decide what makes sense for damping.

- **Low bass up through P6 (FG5)** – m. 98-112 - Throughout this section with going back and forth between mallets and ringing, keep the bells close to the table so you can quickly move to mallets. If you find the timing to be tricky to land, we may split the room a bit and have half the room do the ringing just before/after, and half start and end the mallets. Let me know if you're finding yourself struggling a bit here!
- **P2, P3 (EF4, GA4)** – m. 153, 154, 157, and 158 – P3 (GA4) play F#4

### **Spiritus Sanctus – Matthew Compton**

This piece has become a personal favorite of mine over the last couple of years, just because of the bright nature of the piece! You can read about the inspiration for the title and the characteristics of each section. Much of what I'm going for with this piece is telling a story of exploration and confidence, so we will reflect that idea in our playing.

- m. 23-36 – treble bells mallet here, do not TD, I don't love the "clicking" sound that TD usually gives.
- m. 73 – I want these chords to feel very heavy and give almost a feeling like they're suspended in time. If you have enough hands/people to double these chords on chimes without losing any notes or cutting anything off early, please do! Especially any notes A3 and down. Treble bells, note how long the LV's last for in this section, I want the sound to carry for as long as possible.
- m. 81-89 is a long time to LV, maybe write a reminder somewhere in the middle of that section to make sure all notes carry through.
- m. 112-113 and the like – the marts can very easily start to get sloppy here, so consider placing a bit of your hand on the casting of the bells to keep the marts nice and tight, without choking the sound, and marting very close to the table to keep the rhythms tight.

## **Caelitus Mihi Vires – Christian Humcke**

One of the coolest pieces for our instrument, I think this piece deserves to be played by every handbell ensemble. It's so innovative in the sounds it creates with the chords, and use of voicing of each chord. I don't think I'll ever get sick of this piece.

- m. 1-8 – this will have a lot of rubato to it, so be ready to be flexible in playing each couple of measures!
- If you own any 2's in chimes please add the following:
  - o m. 34 – A2, E3, C#4 chimes
  - o m. 41 – C2, G2, chimes
  - o m. 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113 – B2, LV'ing the pitch for 2 measures

## **The Winner Takes it All – arr. Greg Urban**

I'm so excited to do this arrangement! Greg has really made this piece work so well for the instrument and I think it will be a lovely addition to our programs! It's not technically super challenging, but the music will be best made by knowing the piece extremely well and connecting the musical line to each other. Practice engaging with the musicians around you and seeing how your part fits into the "piano accompaniment" or the vocals and really working to create a smooth, flowing soundscape as you rehearse and really become familiar with the piece! The arrangement really speaks for itself, so I don't have much to add here that we can't add in our time together! Just enjoy the piece!

Take note of Greg's "Notes" on the front cover indicating information about square noteheads, chimes, LV's, etc.

- I would like all shakes to be like that of a vocalist's vibrato rather than a blasting shake. Don't feel the need to immediately start the shake, but also don't shake at a forte dynamic like shakes tend to do. Add some crescendo to each shake within the dynamic context of each section. I think this might take some experimenting, but it will allow each phrase to have a different feeling to it.