

FUNDAMENTAL TONE

Newsletter of Area I, Inc.

American Guild of English Handbell Ringers

Atlantic Provinces, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Volume XXI, No. 2

May 2007

AGEHR Area I Officers

Elected Officers

Chair:

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chair@agehrarea1.org

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(978-851-3024)

chairelect@agehrarea1.org

Past Chair:

Debra LeBrun

(978-486-3245)

pastchair@agehrarea1.org

Secretary:

Linda Lamb

(603-886-1512)

secretary@agehrarea1.org

Treasurer:

Holly Cerullo

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National Liaisons

Education:

GriFF Gall

education@agehrarea1.org

Special Needs:

Jeannie Cushman

specialneeds@agehrarea1.org

*Other Officers are listed
on page 2.*

Notes from Nancy

I have tried, for the past two years, to use Notes from Nancy as a way to highlight activities and information about Area programs, events and opportunities available to ringers and directors, and Board activities. I have also used this forum as a way of communicating with you about areas where your feedback would be helpful or was necessary. I want to thank those who responded to those requests; your input was helpful in guiding Board decisions made on your behalf.

Ordinarily, this would be my last opportunity to share with you in this way; my term as Chair was slated to end at the Biennial Meeting to be held during Festival/Conference '07, at URI. You may have noticed, however, that you have yet to receive a ballot for the election of Board Officers. Despite diligent work on the part of our very competent Nominating Committee, we do not, as yet, have a full slate of officers to present to you for that election; therefore, following discussions as a Board, we have extended the time frame for the election and the present officers will remain in place until that process is completed. The Area I Board has the responsibility to ensure communication with the membership and AGEHR, assess the needs of the Area and provide as much support as possible to individuals, groups, State organizations and the entire membership in order to nurture and enhance the visibility, skills and joy of our art form, as well as ensure the fiscal viability of the organization. The Board meets 3 times yearly, with the addition of the Biennial meeting held at our Festival/Conferences.

I would encourage those of you who are active in your State bell activities and/or have benefited from opportunities and events provided by the Area, to strongly consider sharing your leadership skills with the Board and accept nomination to an office. Your energy and ideas are
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Visit the Area I web site at: **www.agehrarea1.org**

NOTES FROM NANCY...

essential to ensure that Area I continue to move forward in the years ahead. So please, if you are in a position to help out in this way let me know by contacting me at chair@agehrarea1.org.

The Board will be considering a variety of things at their upcoming meeting in May. In addition to our regular business, we will be creatively looking at:

- Outreach to youth ringers and ways to address the unique interests and needs of this age group.
- Our existing events to see if they are addressing our mission and meeting your needs in the most meaningful and effective way. If you have ideas you would like us to consider, please let us know.
- Ways to continue increasing the visibility and understanding of the value of handbells and hand chimes in music education, and supporting the ability of music educators to include this instrument in meeting National standards in music education.

I had the opportunity recently to participate in the Area Advisory Council meeting of AGEHR in Tulsa,

Oklahoma. It was the first opportunity that the Area Chairs and other Area officers had the opportunity to work with the new Executive Director, Jenny Cauhorn. I came away from this meeting excited about the direction the national organization is moving. It was obvious that the National Board is dedicated to visiting each Area and meeting and talking to as many members as possible. Board member, Michael McCrary, will be participating in our Festival/Conference at URI in June, so please, take the opportunity to meet and speak with him. Jenny is interested in strengthening the relationship between the Areas, the Areas and the national office, and the Area leadership and the National Board. Under the umbrella of the mission statement and goals established by that Board, she is working to strengthen the ability of the central office to be the resource to the membership that it should be. During the meeting we all engaged in a "visioning" session to look at the future of AGEHR, and help define the role the central office and the Board of Directors can have in helping us at the Area and local levels. Jenny has a vision that strongly mirrors our own, and that of all the Areas; she is talking about the same things the Area I Board has been considering as a result of what we have heard from all of you as we have worked

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Additional Area I Officers

Appointed Officers

<i>Festival/Conference Chair</i>	Sue Henderson (978-851-3024) fcchair@agehrarea1.org
<i>Historian/Archivist</i>	Barbara Bussart (401-765-8015) historian@agehrarea1.org
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<i>Webmaster</i>	Linda S. Lamb (603-886-1512) webmaster@agehrarea1.org
<i>Bradford Scholarship</i>	Debra LeBrun (978) 486-3245 pastchair@agehrarea1.org

State/Provincial Chairs

<i>Atlantic Provinces</i>	TBA
<i>(Canadian)</i>	canchair@agehrarea1.org
<i>Connecticut</i>	Susan Wilber (203-407-4189) ctchair@agehrarea1.org
<i>Maine</i>	TBA mechair@agehrarea1.org
<i>Massachusetts</i>	Patrick Gagnon (978-851-0513) machair@agehrarea1.org
<i>New Hampshire</i>	Tomi Salzmann (603-774-3547) nhchair@agehrarea1.org
<i>Rhode Island</i>	TBA richair@agehrarea1.org
<i>Vermont</i>	Jerilyn Bergdahl (802-425-2177) vtchair@agehrarea1.org

together. With Jenny's energy and commitment to respond to our input, I believe we have a bright future ahead.

We are presently only weeks (less than 12) away from our Festival/Conference to be held June 28–July 1, 2007 at the University of Rhode Island. This is one of the biggest benefits the Area offers its members; four days to be together with others who share our passion for handbells, learning, ringing, laughing, and sharing. The F/C chair, Sue Henderson, and her committee have worked hard to make sure that this festival provides a variety of classes and tracks to support newer ringers and directors in the development of their skills, confidence, and participation in a massed ringing event such as this, as well as providing learning opportunities to increase and reinforce the skills and musicality of everyone attending. If you have held off registering for this event, I strongly urge you to consider attending (it was just such a festival that I attended after I had been ringing only 6 months that sealed my fate), and visit our website to become a part of F/C '07.

I want to remind you of some of the benefits and resources available to you as a member of AGEHR and thus, specifically, Area I:

- Our State Chairs do an incredible job reaching out to bell choirs and groups in their states, providing support, information and mentoring when requested. Information about how to contact your state chair can be found on our Website. I encourage you to do so. If you find yourself directing a bell choir when you have never worked with handbells, they can provide you with information about learning opportunities and mentoring to support the development of your skills in this area. They can also help arrange for skilled ringers or directors to work with individual groups.
- We have an incredibly effective Chime Loan program. The use of hand chimes in educational settings to meet National Educational Standards for music education has been documented. AGEHR is looking at ways to present a national event to support educators in using Handbells

and Hand Chimes to effectively support music education. For more information about our program and available supports, please visit our website and contact our Educational Liaison, Griff Gall.

- Special events throughout the year.
 - We will be holding two Skill Building Workshops for newer ringers this October. One will be held in Norwich, CT; the other in Chelmsford, MA. Look for more information on the Web site soon.
 - The Directors Seminar is traditionally held in February. Look for more information about this event in the near future.
 - State Events such as reading sessions, and Spring Rings

I just want to inform you of a few initiatives underway at the national level. AGEHR is presently seeking Nominations for Honorary Life Memberships. The criteria for this honor are in the most recent Overtones (March/April). If you know of someone in our Area that meets the criteria, please let your State Chair or me know so we can make sure qualified Area I members receive the recognition they deserve. The central office has initiated a membership drive. If you know of a bell choir that is presently not a member of AGEHR, please share your experiences with Area I and encourage them to join. It is only through increased participation of such groups in the organization that we can continue to insure our growth and the benefits we can provide.

In closing, it is important for you all to remember that Area I is not the Board; Area I is you. I urge you to get involved, to share with others in our Area, to increase your love of ringing through participation in the opportunities provided. It has been an honor to be your Chair these past two years. I look forward to meeting and ringing with you for many years ahead.

Keep ringing!!!! 

Nancy Reynolds, Area I Chair

Reports from the Board

CONNECTICUT

The **2007 Connecticut Spring Ring** will be history by the time this goes to press and we hope it will have been another successful event. We are still looking for someone to step up to the plate and take on the organization of this event going forward as Cheryl Harger will be stepping down after doing a fantastic job organizing it for the past several years. A repertoire reading session will be held on October 20 at First Church of Christ, Congregational, in Middletown, CT.

Several concerts and ringing events will be occurring in Connecticut this spring:

Hockanum Valley Ringers

Sunday, April 29 7:00 PM
Trinity Lutheran Church
Corner of Meadowlark Road and Route 30
Vernon, CT

Shoreline Ringers

Friday, May 18, 7:30 PM
St. Patrick's Cathedral
213 Broadway
Norwich, CT



Photo of some of the 40 registrants at the Rhode Island Repertoire Reading Plus!, Saturday, February 10, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Pawtucket, RI. Hosts were Patrick Campbell and the RI Handbell Advisory Board; clinicians: Ed Henderson, Dan Moore.

Farmington Valley Massed Ring

Sunday, May 6, 4:00 PM
South Congregational Church
242 Salmon Brook St
Granby, CT

Participating choirs are from Avon Congregational Church, First Congregational Church of Canton Center, First Congregational Church, Simsbury, Memorial United Methodist Church, Avon, and South Congregational Church, Granby. 🗑️

Susan Wilber, CT State Chair

MASSACHUSETTS

It is STILL an exciting time to be chairperson for Massachusetts! Our three community choirs are in full swing preparing for concerts, tours, and collaboration with local choral groups. Plans are underway for a fall skill-building workshop, and for members to attend the Area 1 Festival/Conference at the University of Rhode Island.

Our first annual Spring Ring was a huge success, with twenty-five registered groups, twelve playing solos, and all participating in massed ringing. The host school, Tewksbury Memorial High School, was presenting on the same evening "We Will Rock You," a musical featuring songs of the rock group Queen. Our reception coincided with that show's intermission, so both audiences enjoyed our reception. It was a wonderful day of rehearsing and a wonderful night of music on both sides of the school. I especially enjoyed meeting those of you who were participants, and hearing your choirs ring. For my ears the standout pieces were the youth massed piece ("Festive Praise" by Susan Geschke) and the three massed pieces which will be performed at the Area 1 F/C at URI, featuring collaboration with brass, tympani, flute, guitar, and an army of percussion.

Plans are underway for several events in May involving our community choirs. One such event is
(continued on next page)

the inaugural **Boston Handbell Festival** on Tuesday, May 15, 2007, at Old South Church, Copley Square, Boston. **Back Bay Ringers**, **Merrimack Valley Ringers**, and **New England Ringers**, as well as two church-based choirs, the **Hancock Carillon** of Lexington, MA, and the **Old South Ringers**, of Boston, MA, will ring solo selections and two massed pieces under the direction of Karen E. Leonard. Proceeds from free-will offerings taken at this event will go toward the purchase of new sets of handchimes for music teachers in local Public Schools. The week prior to this festival, the world premiere of Kathleen Wissinger's *Imprezza* will occur at the third annual **Highlands Handbell Festival** in Danvers, MA, with the Back Bay Ringers, the Highlands Chime Choir, and the Merrimack Valley Ringers.

I would like to welcome our newest Massachusetts AGEHR Area I members!!!! Helen Hamel, Ann Lee Ellis, Charles H. Sides, Gail Page, and Patricia

Ramey are new members from February and March 2007. Although all of Area I is dear to me, it is all of you awesome Massachusetts handbell people that make this such a great job!

Here are some things to think about for the future:

- I need someone to run the Massachusetts Youth Spring Ring (two of you have already offered, and believe me, I will be calling).
- I need someone to help me create a Massachusetts AGEHR Area I Web site and link it to the "big" Area I Web site
- I need help finding unused handbell sets in Massachusetts
- I need you all to go to www.AGEHR.org and edit your membership data

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UPCOMING APPEARANCES

2007 PERFORMANCES

Sunday,
May 6, 4:00PM

With In Choro Novo
Village Church
2 Central Street
Wellesley, MA

Tickets: \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door

Tuesday,
May 15, 8:00PM

Boston Handbell Festival
Old South Church
645 Boylston Street
Boston, MA

Freewill offering

Sunday,
June 3, 4:00PM

St. Paul's Cathedral Music Festival
38 High Street
Worcester, MA

Tickets: \$10 adults, \$5 students and children

June 2007


Area I Festival/Conference
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, Rhode Island

Date & Time TBD

Would your organization like to present an NER concert? Contact us at newenglandrings@aol.com, or call us at 978-851-3024. Host venues are currently sought anywhere in New England for Summer 2007, the 2007 Holiday Season, and Spring and Summer 2008.

REPORTS FROM THE BOARD...

- I need you all to keep telling me how you are doing and what your handbell “troubles” are.
- I need as many people as possible to go and “root” for the New England Ringers at the 2007 AGEHR Area I Festival/Conference opening concert on Thursday, June 29, at the University of Rhode Island.

Thank you for making it to the end of another installment and I look forward to hearing from you, and to meeting you in June!! 

Patrick Gagnon, MA State Chair

VERMONT

What does a State Chair do? The immediate response to this question is “so many interesting things!” But that really doesn't help you understand the role of a State Chair. In this short article, I intend to try to answer this very pertinent question, although I can only answer from the perspective of being the Vermont State Chair.

Vermont directors and ringers are wonderful people, as are handbell enthusiasts everywhere! As State Chair, I have a unique chance and a heartfelt responsibility to interact with the people in my state to further the art of handbell ringing. I enjoy getting to know people, to be available to answer questions, and to be receptive to new ideas. We share ideas and define goals by meeting together several times each year in different venues around the State, including the Vermont Spring Ring, Directors' Workshop, Directors' Roundtable and Summer Meeting, and Mini-Rings. Each meeting and event strives to fulfill the common goals of skill building and education for all directors and ringers and promotes friendship and camaraderie among all participants.

Planning, defining goals and sharing ideas stretches beyond the State level to Area I, as well. State Chairs and elected Area I officers and other Board members meet several times each year to coordinate the duties and activities necessary to make

Area I thrive and be responsive to the needs of handbell ringers in Area I. Volunteering in this capacity is both humbling and exhilarating because there is always something to learn, yet with the experience and enthusiasm of the group, we accomplish so many of our visions to promote handbell ringing at its best.


Of course the whole experience of being a State Chair requires an open mind and a willingness to learn new skills. There are certain responsibilities that come with the job, as there are with all jobs. I prepare a newsletter several times each year to keep our members informed, write reports, answer e-mail inquiries, prepare agendas and budgets, work with committees on events, and even write “Fundamental Tone” articles!

As State Chairs, we work for all of you and therefore appreciate your thoughts, ideas and feedback. Together let's strive to continue the dynamic, responsive interactions of the handbell ringing tradition throughout our states and Area I.

State News:

The Directors Roundtable was held January 28, 2007 and hosted by Averill Tinker. Thirteen directors had a chance to review Spring Ring 2007 repertoire, exchange ideas and celebrate achievements. Kim Strepka presented a workshop after lunch entitled “Musicality through Motion Language” based on Leban's movement theory. The workshop was extremely informative and very well received.

Over 60 ringers attended one of two **Mini-Rings** that were held on opposite sides of the State. The mini-ring in St. Johnsbury was hosted and directed by Phil Brown, and the mini-ring in Burlington was hosted by the Northern Bronze community choir, and directed by Carolyn Harris, Mary Jane Wirsing, Marilyn Sink and Jerilyn Bergdahl.

The **26th Annual Vermont Spring Ring** was held in West Rutland, VT, on April 28th. Over 260 ringers are registered. Monica McGowan was the clinician for the day. 

Jerilyn Bergdahl, Vermont Chair

It is with a very heavy heart that we share the news regarding the passing of **Elizabeth Bradford** at the age of 101 years. “Zabeth,” as she was called by her close friends, will be remembered as a pioneer in the use of handbells in the classroom and an inspiration to all that met her.

A member of the Beacon Hill Ringers under the direction of Margaret Shurcliff, Elizabeth fell in love with ringing handbells at an early age and ultimately became a driving force in the creation of the New England Guild of Handbell Ringers, serving many elected positions. In 1954 the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers was formed and Elizabeth served as Secretary to the National Board of Directors.

Opinionated, to say the least, but all the while loving and supportive, her infectious laugh and bright spirit will be missed.

Information regarding donations in her memory will be forthcoming.



Photo of

Elizabeth Bradford

with one of her many students, 1960.



spring concert

june 15, 2007 8:00 pm

old south church, boston, ma

back bay ringers

tickets available at the door:

adults: \$15.00

students and senior citizens: \$5.00

A True Musician

By Dave Ruder, Area XII

Handbell ensembles, be they church or community, are normally made up of housewives, engineers, teachers, bankers, doctors, students or whatever. There is no list of those best suited to being a handbell player. And notice, the list rarely includes professional musicians.

There may be members of the bell team who have had a great deal of musical training, even a music degree. But rarely do you find in a handbell ensemble someone labeling themselves as a “handbell performer” for their life’s profession.

Is this a problem? Absolutely not! What is the bond, or glue, that holds the group together? The answer is obvious, making beautiful music on handbells. Of course, there is a great deal of

socializing and fun as well!

The next question is tougher. Can this motley crew (in the best sense of the word) of housewives, engineers, teachers, bankers, doctors, and students make real music in the musician’s sense of the word?


One does not need a music degree to be a musician (although it can help). Many who have degrees are not TRUE musicians in the highest sense of the word. And many who do not have degrees are TRUE musicians in the astral sense.

Musicians draw on life’s lessons and infuse meaning into the music they perform. They attend quality concerts, purchase quality recordings, and listen until the music becomes part of them.

They learn about the composition, the history surrounding the work and the composer’s background, if possible. They continue to try and grow in their understanding of music and its nuances. They learn and grow from their successes and failures.

Bruce Adophe expresses it well in his book, *What to Listen for in the World*.

Who is a true musician?

- A true musician hears before doing.
- A true musician loves ideas better than systems.
- A true musician feels before analyzing.
- A true musician discovers patterns everywhere.
- A true musician connects anything to anything else.
- A true musician enjoys the feeling of sound and the sounds of feeling.
- A true musician plays through silences.
- A true musician can find pulse in a single tone.
- A true musician listens to lilt, accent, vowels and consonants, not just words.
- A true musician listens to the still, inner voice. 

Reprinted with permission from the September 2006 Clapper Chatter, Area VII newsletter.

Coming Events

Farmington Valley Massed Ring, May 6, 2007, 4:00 p.m.,
South Congregational Church, Granby, CT.

Boston Handbell Festival, May 15, 2007,
at Old South Church, Boston, MA.

Festival/Conference '07, June 28–July 1, 2007, at the Ryan
Center of the Univ. of Rhode Island. Contact: Sue Henderson.

Ringling Link 2008, July 2–5, 2008, Canada’s National Handbell
Festival at the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario:
Contact: ringinglink2008@yahoo.ca

Skill Building Workshops (2), October 13, 2007,
Norwich, CT, and Chelmsford, MA.

What the listener perceives is musicality, not difficulty.

How do we choose music for our ensembles? Choosing music for an ensemble is an important task for a director. Many factors go into the selection of repertoire besides the director's aesthetic preferences. The American Guild of English Handbell Ringers has created a leveled system of rating music by difficulty level which can be a helpful tool when selecting music. These levels are clearly described in the Notation Handbook. Grading music by difficulty is not unique to handbell music, however grading systems are usually found in music intended for educational sys-

tems, like elementary and middle school band music and simple choral pieces. My concern with the level system is that we may become obsessed with the idea of going to the next level, even when we might not be ready to do so. In this article I would like to reflect on what the level system really means, and how we can use the system to wisely choose music for our ensembles. I will also explore why we should not be level obsessed and how developing musical habits will ultimately be most beneficial for our ensemble and our "audience." (Just as a note, I use the

word "audience" throughout this article in reference to anyone who is listening to the performance of the music. This performance maybe a church congregation in a worship setting or maybe an audience for a community ensemble. I want to be clear that most of what you will be reading is my opinion, so please feel free to disagree with what I am writing.)

Level system:

As explained in the Notation Handbook "The following system should be used only as a guide.

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Keep Your Handbells Looking Their Best!

Simichrome® Polish

Restore that "new" look to your bells with Simichrome Polish, recommended by handbell manufacturers. Apply the ammonia-based polish to the bell surface with a soft cotton cloth (our cleaning cloths are perfect for this). Spread the polish evenly with a circular motion, then wipe off. This polish oxidizes tarnish and restores the original luster to the bells.

1102	50 gram tube	\$8.50
1103	250 gram can	\$26.75
1104	1000 gram can	\$68.55



Cloths for Polishing

After each rehearsal, use these cloths to clean your bells. Inner red cloth has jeweler's rouge embedded in the cloth for cleaning. The outer buffing cloth wipes away the rouge and light tarnish.

1001	Polishing Cloth	\$3.00
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Polishing cloths may cause staining of gloves or covers. Use with caution.

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Use these treated cotton cloths to polish bronze castings quickly and easily. Safe for most metals, these cloths also protect by leaving an invisible layer of anti-tarnish protection. Each packet contains two 4" x 6" moistened polishing cloths in a reclosable foil pouch. The collector's tin of six 6" x 10" cloths includes one pair of nitrite gloves.

1108	Package of 2 Cloths	\$4.50
1109	Tin of 6 Cloths w/Gloves	\$16.95



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1140	Flitz 50 gram tube	\$9.99
1141	Flitz 150 gram tube	\$19.99
1142	Flitz 906 gram can	\$44.99



Cleaning Cloths

Not pictured. Use one cloth to apply the polish to the bell casting. Remove the polish with a second cloth. A third cloth picks up any remaining residue. The lint-free interlocking knit does not unravel. Cloths may be washed and reused, but each washing reduces absorbency.

1011	4 oz. package	\$2.95
1014	16 oz. package	\$9.95



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MUSICALITY...

Tempo, number of ringers, handbell assignments, etc., will have a dramatic effect on the difficulty of any music selected. The leveled system rates music based on eight criteria which include: meters, notes and rest values, rhythmic elements, techniques, handbell/handchime changes, articulation, dynamic levels, and tempo." AGEHR has listed levels from one to six, one being the most basic. For each level, specific elements are listed which may be characteristic of a piece of that level. The level system is useful in describing the general

difficulty level of a selection; however, a closer examination of a selection may reveal that the level system does not fully reflect the nature of a piece of music.

Variables for choosing music:

Many variables go into music selection. A church ensemble needs to be aware of the season or theme of the Sunday. A community ensemble may also have a theme for their programming. The director obviously needs to be aware of the number of octaves the ensemble can perform musically, and finally the director needs to take into account the ability level of the ensemble. When initially looking for music, the level system may help narrow down the search, but don't let yourself become focused on the number of the level. After all, a level is just a number and it does not refer to the quality of the music, just the difficulty.

Developing musical habits:

A handbell ensemble has many musical challenges to explore. Learning or continuing to develop proper ringing technique and building an ensemble that performs together musically is something that can take many months or even years. As I begin working with a new ensemble one of my main goals is developing strong musical habits for each ringer. Musical habits are competencies that reinforce healthful and musical ringing. Examples of musical habits might include paying attention to the melody line in a piece of music, and learning that we usually try to bring out the melody

Chime-Loaner Program:

Do you know of someone who teaches music in schools? Do they use handbells or chimes? If they do not, then do them a favor and recommend the chime-loaner program through Area I. We have several three-octave sets of chimes, plus resources to send out to schools that would like to explore the use of handchimes in their music programs.

Please contact Griff Gall at ggall@backbayringers.org if you have any questions regarding the Area I chime-loaner program.

New Members

Please welcome our newest members to Area I:

First Congregational Church,
Guilford, CT

Dave Wallace, Manchester, CT

Ellen Thibodeau,
Charlton City, MA

Lisa A. Brown, Cohasset, MA

Ellen P. Bourne, Natick, MA

Kathleen DeFrias, North
Dartmouth, MA

Martha Brantigan-Stowell,
Wellesley, MA

Jennifer Brazeau, Hudson, NH

**Norwich Congregational
Church,** Norwich, CT

Hockanum Valley Ringers,
Manchester, CT

Gail Page, Andover, MA

Patricia Ramey,
Framingham, MA

Pinkerton Academy, Derry, NH

Lisa Durkin, Plainville, CT

Nancy S. Tong, Milford, NH

and allow the supporting harmony notes to be softer. Ringers should be expected to damp cleanly and execute stopped techniques in a way that is musically sensitive. Charging the ringers to be responsible for dynamics that are printed in the scores, and following the musical lines are also important habits for ringers to develop. When ringers are expected to develop and be responsible for these skills, then the overall musicality of the ensemble will increase.

Developing these habits takes time. If the director chooses music that is technically challenging for the ensemble, then the director runs the risk of having to pay too much attention to teaching the notes, and these habits may lose their focus. One example of how the labeled "level" assignment may be misleading is *Grazioso* by Arnold Sherman. This piece is listed as a level 2+ easy. If an ensemble
(continued on next page)

simply plays the notes as they appear, it may be a level 2+ as described by the Notation Booklet published by AGEHR; however, to play this piece musically and sensitively an ensemble has to be aware of the rubato and be sensitive to the dynamic changes. Ringers that have the technical abilities to ring at a level four or even level five, can look at a piece like *Grazioso* and really work on the beautiful expressive nature of this piece. A group that is just approaching level 2+ music may be able to use this piece as a challenge piece that could be learned over several months. Special attention could be given to dynamics, legato line and melody ringing. What is important is not that this is a level 2+ piece, but that it can be a beautiful and rewarding piece for an ensemble to learn, and a piece that can be a moving experience for the audience.

Challenging your group:

Certainly I am not advocating that you do not challenge your ensemble. Choose one or two challenge selections that offer flexibility in programming (maybe an original composition as opposed to a hymn tune that is related to a specific season). When focusing on the challenge pieces, always take the time to point out the habits of musicality that the ringers are working on. These challenge pieces can be useful in rehearsing techniques and should also build ensemble confidence.

Conclusion:

When we perform, our listeners are not going to see the level



“Hi all—When you read this, it will be May 2007—one short month before **Festival/Conference '07**. I do hope that all of you have been working on the music we will be performing with 750 ringers—so exciting!!! Please read all the registration notes on the Area I Web site to make sure your group is prepared. I look forward to welcoming you all to this exciting event.”

Sue Henderson, FC '07 Chair
Area I Chair Elect

number, and frankly even if they could, most of them just would not care. If the ensemble is performing as part of a worship service, the purpose of that performance is to supplement the worship through prayerful music making. If your ensemble is performing in a concert setting, then the audience is listening to be entertained. In either case, your ensemble should be sharing the most musical performance it is capable of sharing. The audience is not going to be concerned if you choose all level three pieces, or all level one pieces. They want, and should hear, pieces that are performed well. Choose music that promotes beautiful ringing and ensemble building and that your ensemble can have

a positive musical experience with. Composers have been creating more and more level one and easier level 2 pieces that are wonderful pieces of music. When choosing music, think about the musicians you are fortunate enough to be working with. What are their strengths? What skills do they need to work on? Don't worry about the fact you have four octaves of handbells and only enough people to ring three octaves. Ring three octaves beautifully! The level system is a useful guide in musical selections, but do not let yourself as a director become level obsessed. 🛠️

Happy ringing!
Griff Gall, Education Liaison

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