

HMA Area 1 Festival 2025

June 26-29, 2025
Worcester State University
Worcester, MA

Score Notes

From Stevie Berryman

Who's Excited?

Me! I'm so excited! I can't wait to dig into this gorgeous music with you all. I'm sure I know a few of you, but most of you probably have never seen me direct, and that's a problem for a bunch of random musicians who have to form a cohesive ensemble in a few hours. So a bit about me: in the 10+ years I've directed the Houston Chamber Ringers, we've performed at the HMA National Seminar twice. The first time we made the whole audience stand up and dance the Cotton Eyed Joe. The second time we asked volunteers to sing solo along with us, karaoke style, and there was a T-rex tangentially involved. So expect this event to be fun, but also expect to be asked to do things you've never done before. Just roll with it.

General Notes

1. **Precision** The difference between good and great ensembles is the ability to strike a whole note chord in unison. "Close," in handbells, is the same as "sloppy."
2. **Technique** I am 100% a technique geek. I believe that with proper technique, we can solve any problem. But the way I ask you to ring will likely be different than what you've been taught. You haven't been taught incorrectly (probably), but handbells are babies in the instrumental music world, and technique is always evolving as we figure out new ways to make cool sounds. So for this one weekend, humor me and do it the way I say.
3. **Expression** Expression is EVERYTHING for handbell choirs, otherwise we are just an extremely cumbersome music box. I'm talking about the expression of your ringing, but also the expressions on your face. If you don't know your part well enough to ring and

smile at the same time, then you don't know your part well enough. The smile...or whatever expression is appropriate...isn't an afterthought: it's part of your technique.

4. **Molto ritards** My molto ritards are slower than you are used to. They are slower than any reasonable director would take them. Just cross them out and write "Stevie rit" over it. If you don't watch, you will be too early.
5. **Mark everything** Clean music shows arrogance, not ability. So go ahead and mark your bell changes, where you pick up chimes, where you drop mallets, how you are going to turn the page. This is a lot of music to cover in a short amount of time; you will need markings.

The Music

MASSED

1. **Morning Light** (MFM20347 - S. Berryman) What fun; thank you for this!
 - a. This piece has a beautiful melody line, but it's frequently in danger of being overshadowed by the accompaniment. Protect the melody and bring it forward.
 - b. I know, there are 16th notes in the bass. If it's too much to ring, yes, you may mallet them.
 - c. Every note in m. 67 will be individually cued.
 - d. To everyone ringing a D6: you're my heroes. Really work on that crescendo/decrescendo swell; it adds so much!
2. **Oh Happy Day** (MAP44794 - T. Waldrop) If you can sing along with this piece, it's going to be so easy and so much fun. If you have to count out those rhythms every measure, you are going to have a very, very long rehearsal. Count so that you know where your notes fall in the measure; and then after that just feel the beat when you ring.
 - a. There's a sneaky C5 chime in the treble clef in m. 24.
 - b. M. 46 and 74 are tricky. Offbeats require counting, and these are further complicated by the eighth note at the end of the preceding measure.

- c. Make sure you read and understand the instructions for the repeat starting in m. 56.
 - d. We'll add a crescendo in m. 100.
3. **Fanfare and Intrada** (MBEHB777 - J. Krug) This piece is big, bold, and fun, and should come together quickly once everyone is confident in the mallet rhythm. The trick here is to not let the mallets overwhelm the melody.
 - a. Plan to crescendo through every shake.
 - b. Mallet technique is everything. Make sure you are alternating your hands!
 - c. There's a sneaky *ritard* at the bottom of page that leads to an *a tempo* at the page turn. Be ready!
4. **Recollection** (MCGB973 - T. Waugh) I've rung "Recollection" under Tim Waugh's direction. I've used it numerous times at festivals, and talked with Tim at length about its genesis and meaning. I'm in no way Tim Waugh, but out of all his wonderful music, this is the piece I feel most confident saying, "This is how Tim wants it done." It will be so beautiful.
 - a. We will double the last chord on chimes. Make a note on the FIRST page of your music, above the first measure, to set up the chimes you need. A note on the last measure that says "Get the C7 chime" isn't helpful.
 - b. In mm.9-15 the treble bells will ring up higher than normal: what Tim liked to describe as "eyebrow height."
 - c. Mm. 43-48 says "mallets optional." I'm sorry that I can't clarify this for you yet. I will need to hear what it sounds like in the room before I decide, but I lean towards ringing instead of malleting.
 - d. In mm. 68-75 the upstem trebles will play their notes one octave higher than written. E.g., the phrase uses the notes D6-C7, but you will ring it with D7-C8 (if you have 5 octaves), and you will NOT play the lower octave that is written. If you only have 3 octaves, play it as written.
 - e. M. 87 should be played *mp*, so that the final chord (played *p*) does not overwhelm it.

TINS

5. **Night of the Father's Love** (MLC202487L - P. Choplin) It is a rare treat to find a Level 2 piece that is this gorgeous, this moving.
 - a. The bass chords playing the quarter-half figure must be rock steady. Do not push the tempo!
 - b. These chords must be struck precisely together. It looks easy on the page, but this takes a lot of focus!
 - c. Follow all dynamic and expression markings closely.
 - d. The two melody lines are of equal importance. Know when you are part of the melody and bring it out.

6. **Prayer for the Innocents** (MLC21964L- M. Helman) In a concert themed around "love," this may be the most important piece in the entire festival. Let's do it justice.
 - a. Watch the ritard from m. 24 into m. 25. Its placement on the page makes it tricky.
 - b. We will add a slight accelerando in m. 32.
 - c. I will subdivide m. 96. You'll know exactly where to place each eighth note (if you watch!),

7. **It's Time for Sayang Sayang** (MMBPH1SG - D. Lim) This one is happy, catchy, and really different!
 - a. There are several repeated notes, sometimes as part of the melody. Move the notes "up the ladder" by ringing each just slightly higher than the last, as if you were touching the rim of the bell to the rungs of an imaginary ladder.
 - b. The runs of mart-lifts in mm. 97-98 need to stay close to the table to keep the tempo.

This is going to be amazing.

Stevie Berryman