

S P R I N G 2 0 2 1



Alberta
Guild of English
Handbell Ringers

The Peal

The Official Newsletter of the Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers

And the Show Must Go On!



Three Hills' **JuBELLation** was not about to miss Christmas Eve come COVID lockdown or winter blizzard as they performed in the new facility of the Prairie Tabernacle Congregation. (cont'd p.)

Coming to an ALGEHR Rhythms Zoom screen near you!

Handbells 101- Part 2

March 20, 2021

Round 2 of basic and special techniques as well as some advanced "fun stuff" with Emmy!

Intro to Conducting

April 18, 2021

Introduction to conducting with honorary Canadian Ellie Hodder!

Percussion with Damien

TBC (May 2021)

Percussion and bells with Damien and the MOB from Singapore!

www.algehr.org to register for ALGEHR Rhythms!

Pandemic Presidential Ponderings

Even I am beginning to feel gloomy – which is really not like me at all. I keep telling myself that the first bike ride (I don't do the riding in snow stuff) and seed planting is only six weeks away.

A few nights ago, I dreamed that every room in my house was littered with toys, crayons, miniscule bits of snipped paper and stuffies of all sizes, colours and stages of decay. Last Sunday my dream came true – after four days of a mix of grandchildren visiting and some sleeping over (all legitimate, seriously - and just to clarify that all the grandchildren are legitimate as well as the reason they were visiting Grandma and Grandpa). Grandchildren are just wonderful when we live in normal times – playgrounds, the Museum, the Zoo, swimming pools, bug collecting, a trip from Century Park to Clareview on the LRT etc. We adore them all but alas, last week was one to test the patience of Job. Not only was every attraction closed but it was too frigid even to venture outside most days. I even drove a few blocks to drop select grandchildren off at preschool and school because of the cold while our own offspring (their parents) were quick to remind me that when they were small, we made them walk to school, even when it was 30 below. I did bundle the Calgary grandchildren up and insist that we were going to go sledding. It didn't help that the four-year-old produced four non-matching mittens from her backpack, one of which was a totally unsuitable left-hand glove for the ambient temperature. They were distinctly unimpressed as I tried to ensure them that it would be fun. And as an aside, I always think sledding is a dangerous pastime and have to close my eyes and not watch as small children hurtle down an icy slope. But they had fun! I didn't. Fortunately, Grandpa had stayed at home and prepared his outstanding buttermilk-pancakes-with-maple-syrup supper. At bedtime, they asked if they could come and live with us – the ultimate compliment.

Last November the ALGEHR Board launched *ALGEHR Rhythms*, a series of monthly webinars between December 2020 and May 2021. Our goal was to provide learning opportunities for ringers, most of whom were unable to ring during the pandemic. We planned the webinars to be a combination of learning, entertainment and broadening horizons. Sounds a breeze, right? We are now at the halfway mark with three webinars still to come, and I still have lots to learn about planning and executing the model webinar. You've all been on Zoom webinars and meetings. I know that once you get the basic idea of how to download the app, what to click, how to mute, how to conceal yourself from your fellow attendees, it's pretty much plain sailing. However, as an organizer, I found it more than a bit of a challenge (I'm a Boomer, need I say more?).

But I'm getting ahead of myself; how do you design a series of webinars for a diverse group of people who have a love of handbell ringing to knit them together? How do you find topics that are educational and entertaining? Do you decide on a fixed day and time? But the issue I lost most sleep over was what to charge for attendance. It would have been lovely to have offered webinars free to all attendees, whether ALGEHR members or not, particularly during the pandemic. However, we also wanted to make ALGEHR membership a benefit to attendees. The final compromise was to offer the first two webinars free to everyone and make the remainder free to members and \$10 to non-members. Time will tell whether this is the right strategy. The Board approved a small group of people to make a start – myself, **Tammy-Jo Mortensen**, **Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin**, and **Sharon Vogrinetz**. It was clear from the start that Sharon, with her Olympic speed capacity to absorb and process information, outstanding expertise with anything electronic and ability to jiggle and juggle numbers in her head made her the immediate tech go-to-person. Together with Emmy as the website expert and social media coordinator, they made short work of organizing registrations, advertising and handling money.

Emmy and Tammy-Jo, with their substantive knowledge of everything bells, had great ideas on topics and engaging presenters. I am so fortunate to work with such a trio of talented people!

In the next few months, we will be planning a membership drive; our falling membership is a cause for concern and admittedly with youth events cancelled and Discovery being postponed in 2020, it is a bit difficult for ringers to see the benefits of becoming an ALGEHR member. The more members we have, the more we can offer in terms of support for youth and adult ringers. Kudos to all Board members for their ideas on making ALGEHR a vibrant organization.

Also on the cards is a review of the ALGEHR website. I have been delinquent in following this up but time to roll up the sleeves and get the website updated and repair things that are incorrect or missing. We are fervently hoping that **Discovery 2021** will go ahead although we are aware of other in-person events scheduled for the fall moving to a virtual platform. We can still hope that this event will happen in person!

As always, thanks to Emmy for her skill and effort in assembling **The Peal** this month.

Fiona

Fiona Bamforth, President



Deadlines, deadlines.....don't miss out!!!!

Did you know....that the **2nd International Handbell Symposium** (1992) held right here in Edmonton was such a success that the surplus generated from this event was invested in an endowment (the **Symposium Endowment Fund or SEF**) of which the annual interest provides financial support to individuals, bell groups or event organizers for projects that support the Alberta Guild's mission statement?? The five categories under which one can apply are of equal value and weighting – International Symposia, Provincial workshops or programs, capital purchases, outreach and scholarships.

So if you've been dreaming about adding another octave of bells or chimes, attending an event (virtual or the old-fashioned way - in person!) or even just getting your group started, check out the details as the deadline is March 31, 2021!

Also, to all those budding composers, the **Fred Merrett Award for New Compositions** and to all those extraordinarily hard-working, award-winning music teachers, the **Stan Morris Excellence in Teaching Award** deadlines are also March 31, 2021! Get all the info at www.algehr.org.

More COVID Capsules

After Christmas, ringers of **Bell Canto** at Highlands United Church in Edmonton wanted to continue rehearsals but how could we make that happen? We decided to try online rehearsals. Before we started, every ringer got a Rubbermaid container with their bells, music, mallets, clips, pencils, light, etc and a music stand.

During the rehearsals we have tried some different things.

- Everyone but the director mutes their mic. We tried leaving them all on but that is just a mess of sound because the timing is different for everyone due to various technical reasons we don't need to understand. So only the director is heard but no bells can be heard.
- Having ringers play while watching the director quietly conduct does not work when you are trying to juggle a music stand, a monitor, Ipad or phone, and get the bells going and follow the music. That's out.
- We tried having the director count out loud while the ringers played. That wasn't too bad, but ringers couldn't always hear that and it was still a bit tough to find your place if you got lost.
- Then we added a metronome on the director's phone with the counting. That actually worked pretty well, although it is tougher to deal with tempo changes or any other grand flourishes the director may want to make.
- Where we have landed for now is to have the entire piece playing so ringers can play along and the director counts out measure numbers (more so I feel useful!). For us that means, the director inputs each piece into an online music program and blasts it through a speaker loud enough so the computer's mic picks it up. Of course any chatting we do also comes through VERY loud and clear, but that is what volume controls on the computer are for.

Are online rehearsals ideal? No, however ringers get to learn their notes and become familiar with the music. We have kept the music simple and with minimal changes. We chat about tempo or dynamic changes but it is hard to work through them or to really pick out challenges. And most of all we are enjoying the fellowship, giving amusement and hope to our congregation when they hear that we are persevering to add to the pre-recorded services when we can, and we'll be almost ready to record as soon as we can get together in person. And we've got some different ideas about how we might record next.

~ Submitted by Carol Bergum, Director, **Bell Canto**



Greetings from Handbell Musicians of Canada

Warm greetings to all Canadian handbell musicians! It is with great excitement and anticipation that, as of January 25, 2021, your first fully elected board of directors has taken the helm of the newly formed **Handbell Musicians of Canada**.

As Chair of this inaugural board, I would like to acknowledge the vast amount of hard work that the Interim HMC Board members have poured into our organization. They have reshaped our national handbell association and, with great care and passion, have set us on a path that I and the others on our new board are excited to explore.

I'd like to take this opportunity to invite everyone who has not yet joined HMC to do so. One of the main transformations from the former **Handbells Guilds of Canada** is that the new iteration of our organization is one where individual musicians make up our members, regardless of their affiliation – or not! – with a provincial guild. This means we can welcome and serve all those who are part of our musical community, even if they don't have the more local support of a provincial guild. We are so thrilled to truly be a community that stretches from C, to C, to shining C (if we've kept up with the polishing, that is).

Becoming a member is much easier than trying to get over a bad pun - check out our website for details: www.handbellmusiciansofcanada.ca. It's fast, easy, and fully online.

Along with our website, check us out on Facebook and Instagram. These are the main platforms where we will be sharing news of new initiatives and events that our new board will be rolling out in the coming months. We look forward to seeing where 2021 takes us!

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy, and musically full New Year!

Ellen Ramsay
Chair, HMC



Christmas Eve with JuBELLation (cont'd from p.1)

Our program was about 12 minutes in length and included interesting selections. “Go Tell It on the Mountain” gave a delightful, upbeat opener followed by the bright spirited “In Dulci Jubilo”. “The Little Drummer Boy” with its captivating rhythmic pattern certainly engaged the listeners. Our director, **Vi Berg**, wrote a beautiful Cradle Song by blending Brahms Waltz in Ab and the familiar “Away In A Manger” tune into an arrangement. Concluding our mini program was “Silent Night”, again beautifully arranged by Vi. On verse 2 of the arrangement the melody chimes were featured by playing the melody while the high bells played an obligato. The congregation joined the ringers as together voices and bells blended on verse 3.

Since the program was presented on-line many friends and family members enjoyed watching the program in the comfort of their homes. Words of commendation were received from near and far bringing joy and thanksgiving to **JUBELLATION!**

(Footnote: The choir was given permission to practice and perform as an “educational program” under **Three Hills Arts Academy**. The sanctuary met the government requirements of 15% capacity audience, there was 2 meter distancing, and everyone wore masks.)

~ Submitted by Rhoda Murray, SEF Coordinator & **JuBELLation** Ringer

ALGEHR Rhythms (and the beat goes on!)

A BIG thank you to all those who have supported this new endeavour – both as webinar attendee and survey respondent! Thanks for your invaluable feedback, comments, and *patience* as we continue to navigate along uncharted waters. It is through this important information that we are able to improve the variety and quality of our offerings. In this inaugural season, there are three more opportunities for you to learn and share in March, April, and May. As an ALGEHR member, this is one of the benefits your Guild provides you to continue our connections and encourage musical and mental stimulation – please take full advantage!!

If you have any suggestions or ideas for topics you would like to see considered or if you would like to get involved as volunteer or presenter, please contact President Fiona at president@algehr.org.



Editor's Encore

Sooooo, what new amazing talent(s) have you discovered during lockdown that had been hidden in the bowels of your soul? How many afghans have you knit for every great auntie on your step-mother's side? Did you venture out during the -40°C temps to blow bubbles? (I did, but my photos and videos were so abysmal I don't dare share them with anyone!) When my trusty toaster oven died, I accidentally happened upon an air fryer toaster oven and have been in cooking heaven ever since...

I am certain I am not the only one to have adventures from the ridiculous to the "hey-that's-really-cool" so please share your tales!!! For now, I will just leave you with my version of "how it started" and "how it ended" – if anyone is REALLY bored and needs a new hobby, I would be happy to share my latest torture project!!! (And it even comes with its own handy piece of plywood for easy transport lol!)



~**Peal** photo credits to Carol Bergum, Jason Ewert, Ellen Ramsay, and Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin

Contact your Board!

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Next Peal deadline!! May 15, 2021 ~ Please send me your submissions by this date!!!