

S U M M E R 2 0 2 1



The Peal

The Official Newsletter of the Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers

Our New VP North!



One-dose summer?

One would think that we should be used to our yo-yo life this past year and a half. Based on social media evidence, many of you have taken up new hobbies while baking, cross-stitching and knitting your creativity into all kinds of cool results – **so PLEASE share your photos with us!!** And don't despair, there are reasons to "save the date" (see right) including a very unique experience sponsored by our good friends in **Area X** which features all kinds of familiar faces from around the globe. Who needs to travel when the world can come to **YOUR** computer screen – **FOR FREE?! Don't miss out!!!**

<http://area10.handbellmusicians.org/>

Tammy-Jo Mortensen has been involved with handbell ringing for over 25 years as a ringer, conductor, soloist and adjudicator of handbell festivals and compositions, and as a workshop clinician. She was the Music Director at Robertson-Wesley United Church in Edmonton for 16 years, where she worked with two five octave handbell groups – the **Robertson-Wesley Ringers** and **Nova Bells** as well as the choir, and she also worked with several elementary school handbell groups during that time. She has conducted and given workshops internationally at handbell and choral events in Korea, Australia, England, and Denmark as well as all over Canada. Throughout her career, **Tammy-Jo** has sought out education and experiences which have advanced her skills to a higher level. She has a Bachelor of Music in Organ from the University of Alberta, a Master of Music in Organ from McGill University (Montréal) and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting also from the U of A. **The Board is lucky to have you!**



Save the Date!

Area X FREE
Conference

June 25-26, 2021

Travel the world in a
glo-bell virtual tour!

<https://area10.handbellmusicians.org/>

HMA National
Seminar

July 13-17, 2021

In-person or virtual

<https://handbellmusicians.org/>

A Virtual
Discovery 2021

October 15-16, 2021

Stay tuned for more
info at

<http://algehr.org/>

Presidential Pandemic Ponderings

It's May and we have embarked on our second camping trip of 2021, but sadly without our 13-year-old special canine companion, Ruggles. Determining the right time for euthanizing a pet is heart-breaking but Ruggles was having trouble breathing and eating. As eating was his very favourite occupation (he was a food thief; fortunately, his short stature made it impossible for him to steal anything too much), the decision to euthanize him while he could still enjoy treats, was made a little easier. But I really thought we would be able to take him on this trip. I have brought his collar and leash along, so he is with us in spirit.

Our little camper comfortably accommodates two adults and either two dogs or two small grandchildren (but definitely not both). Not content with sprawling out on the dog/grandchild bed, Ruggles preferred to squeeze himself between Steve and myself on the minimally sized queen bed, leaving our larger canine, Mabel, to stretch out on the dog/grandchild bed. This forces us both to sleep squished up to each side while Ruggles luxuriates in the middle part. It was no surprise this morning for both of us to wake up on each side of the bed with an empty Ruggles-sized oval between us. And so many reminders of him around – Ruggles could never pass a ball without possessing it. We have probably about 100 balls, none of them ours originally, all in various states of decay, sitting in a large box in the yard. Many times, he would fall asleep with a ball in his mouth, looking like Sir Winston Churchill smoking a fat cigar.

Our first camping trip of the season was to Dinosaur Provincial Park, one of our favourites, partly influenced by having a paleontologist daughter. In the neighbouring campsite there was a camper van with a concert harp inside. Turns out that this was a professional harpist taking a trip across Canada with her harp and ginger cat and giving concerts en route. The evening of our arrival, we were treated to an impromptu concert starting with *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* and ending with some flamenco music. All would have been perfect if it wasn't for our hyper-alert, hyper-anxious, hyper-vigilant, hyper-everything Berger Picard/mongrel mix-up, Mabel. Of course, someone playing the harp at a campground draws a lot of attention and a crowd had gathered. Mabel decided that the audience deserved to hear her add a vocal accompaniment to the music. Hearing Mabel's vigorous contribution to the concert, Ruggles, facing in completely the opposite direction to the music, joined in the chorus, having no clue why and what he was barking at. And then Mabel spotted Misty, the harpist's feline companion. What followed was embarrassing and she ended up being banished from the venue and secreted in the camper for the next hour.

I would not have thought a year ago that we would still have restrictions on handbell ringing at this juncture. However, there are some good things happening with **ALGEHR**. Our annual awards have recently been announced. Congratulations to **Catherine Bevan**, winner of the **Fred Merrett Award for New Compositions** in two categories. Catherine received the award for two compositions, *Voyageur's Dance Suite* (Category C) and *Rachmaninoff for Bells- Vocalise Op. 34*. (Category D). Congratulations to **JuBELLation**, Three Hills Arts Academy Handbell Choir, which received funding from the **Symposium Endowment Fund (SEF)** to purchase a Schulmerich F3 bell as an addition for their four-octave handbell set. **JuBELLation** is one of the few handbell choirs that has been able to meet in person to practice and perform over the past few months.

ALGEHR's first webinar series, ***ALGEHR Rhythms***, has ended and **Sharon Vogrinetz** has sent out a short survey to all members and attendees for feedback and suggestions for future webinars. I think we had a good mix of topics and I've included a summary of the webinars in this issue. We plan to initiate a second series in September and would like to get your input.

Discovery 2021, Season of Ringing – Virtually Together, will take place on 15-16th October 2021. Fiona Miller and her organizing committee are putting together a lively program on a virtual platform. In addition to workshop sessions, there will be a concert of pre-recorded music submitted by handbell choirs. Our Annual General Meeting will also take place during ***Discovery 2021***.

Ongoing work for the Board includes a website renovation with the never-ending and valuable help of **Cliff Linton** and **Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin** and continuing discussions on whether **ALGEHR** could be a conduit for Alberta composers to make their music available to handbell choirs, a much more complex issue than I had anticipated.

Finally, if you are thinking of making a donation to **ALGEHR**, there is an additional benefit to making it during June when **CanadaHelps** features the *Great Canadian Giving Challenge*. From June 1st to June 30th, every dollar donated to any of the 15,000 charities registered with **CanadaHelps**, which includes **ALGEHR**, will be entered into a draw for a \$20,000 prize awarded to one charity. To donate, go to the **CanadaHelps** website, **CanadaHelps.org**, search for **Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers** as the charity and make your donation.

Enjoy the summer as it stretches before us! As always, thanks to Emmy for her skill and effort in assembling ***The Peal*** this month.

Fiona

Fiona Bamforth
President, **ALGEHR**



Handbell Discovery 2021

ALGEHR Discovery 2021 presents

SEASON OF RINGING

Virtually together

October 15 & 16

**Virtual sessions for
youth & adults**

*Multiple sessions
to help all levels
get reacquainted
with the bells,
the techniques
and the music.*

*Keep watching for
more details.*



ALGEHR Rhythms: Season 1

Preamble

It was at the November 2020 Board meeting that we first discussed an **ALGEHR** webinar series as a means of maintaining interest in handbell ringing while not ringing during the pandemic. Everyone was Zooming – so why not us?

After a round of brainstorming, the idea gelled into something we thought we could handle – a monthly webinar from December to May providing a combination of Entertainment, Enlightenment and Education in the realm of handbells. I must be frank and admit that the Board was (and still is) concerned about decreasing Membership and thought that webinars would be an opportunity to showcase **ALGEHR**, encourage ringers to renew their annual subscriptions, and non-members to join **ALGEHR**. During that meeting, I was sitting in my favourite place at home (the sunroom) and my other half, Steve, was in his favourite place (the kitchen) and overhearing suggestions for names, yelled out, ‘you can call it ALGEHR Rhythms!’ And so we did.

The ‘tech team’ consisted of myself, **Tammy-Jo Mortensen, Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin and Sharon Vogrinetz**. We purchased a Zoom account, developed protocols for how to run a webinar, provided some basic information for Zoomers, and worked on a means to make registration and secure payment transaction easy. That done, we were ready to think about the remaining questions – when, what, and how much.

When: a fixed time and day each month? No, we chose a flexible option because of presenter availability and choosing a fixed day would mean some people could never attend.

What: broadly there was one Entertainment webinar, one Enlightenment webinar and four Education webinars. But really, each webinar was a mix of the 3 E’s.

How much: the first two webinars were free to all attendees, the remaining four were free to ALGEHR members and \$10 for non-members.

The Webinars

Entertainment: Just before Christmas, **Isabela Ramos** entertained us with ‘**A Christmas Ding-Aling-Along, Wishing you Could Ring-Aling-Along**’, her choice of handbell music for Christmas. Some lovely pieces were selected, and Isabela’s lively and amusing presentation was a joy when we were preparing for a somewhat muted Christmas season.

Enlightenment: In February, **Dr. Andrea McCrady** presented ‘**Like Angels’ Harps Sounding Forth – A Day in the Life of the Peace Tower’s Carillonneur**’. This was a compelling talk about carillons in general and the Peace Tower Carillon in particular, including everything from its history to maintenance of the bells. The session ended with a selection of music written or adapted for the carillon. It was fascinating to hear how Dr. McCrady moved from her career in family medicine to her role as Dominion Carillonneur. And did you know that the only manual carillon in Alberta is in St. George In-the-Pines Anglican Church in Banff?

Education: the education webinars focused on new ringers and conductors. **Tammy-Jo Mortensen** and **Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin** each presented a webinar for beginner ringers: ‘**Handbells 101 – (Almost) Everything You Wanted to Know About Handbells But Were Afraid to Ask**’, **Part 1 (January) and Part 2 (March)**.

Both webinars covered basic ringing techniques, using *Exploring Handbells Books 1 and 2* by **Betty B. Radford**, a well-respected handbell educator, composer and **ALGEHR** member. Becoming bolder with Zoom technology, we included videos of handbell ensembles playing music included in *Exploring Handbells - Bell Époque* (director Annie Hergott) playing *Huron Carol*, and Alberta Youth ensembles playing *Floating (Borealis Rings)* and *Three Acrobats (Ringing Explosion)*. Several teachers attended both sessions and there was a lively side discussion on how to keep school handbell choirs ringing safely during the pandemic.

Our third educational webinar (April), '**Conducting for Beginners**', was presented by **Ellie Hodder**, a well-known handbell teacher and clinician, ALGEHR member, and honorary Canadian from Portland, Oregon. Starting with an outstanding and instructive video presentation on conducting techniques, she moved on to demonstrate directing of *For the Beauty of the Earth* (arranged by **Larry Sue**) with scores distributed to all participants to follow along.

Finally in May, we moved to **Plink! Plank! Plunk!**, a workshop on malleting presented by **Damien Lim**, Director of **Ministry of Bellz (MOB)**, from Singapore. This was an innovative live (and lively) presentation and with two cameras and microphones set up in Damien's studio, the techniques, for example how to hold the mallets, where on the casting to strike, were clearly demonstrated.

So what next? We are planning a second webinar series starting in September and already have some ideas for presenters. You will have received an online survey giving you an opportunity to suggest topics for webinars and if you would consider presenting a webinar, having gained a fair bit of technical know-how over the last six months, we can help you make it happen! Please email me with questions or ideas at president@algehr.org.

~ Submitted by Fiona Bamforth, ALGEHR President

JuBELLation Performance ~ March 21, 2021



JUBELLATION (Three Hills) was again privileged to present a program of handbell music on March 21 at Prairie Tabernacle in anticipation of the Easter season. The choir provided approximately 20 minutes of prelude music, to which the congregation had been invited to come a bit earlier to hear. The selections included two brilliant arrangements, communicating joy and praise. They are entitled, *Hallelujah* and *Jubilant Ring*. Between these notes of exultation was a more meditative medley of *Spirituals*. In designing the arrangement, our director, **Vi Berg**, opened the medley with *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* in the key of F followed by a transition to the key of Ab. In the first verse of *There Is a Balm in Gilead* the mallets played the bass bells, most of which were in thirds and sixths, against the melody line played by the treble bells. The second verse moved the melody to the lower register and in the high register of the bells, the mallets played colorful harmonic textures. The final piece in the medley, *All Through the Night*, was played on melody chimes in verse 1. Verse 2 was played on the bells with several spots of trills on Bb6 and C7.

The remaining two selections, *Deep River* and *Thine Be the Glory* were arrangements I brought home from the **2016 Vancouver Symposium**. We are blessed to have a capable mother and daughter team to play the oboe and cello for *Deep River*. What a beautiful arrangement it is! *Thine Be the Glory* was a triumphant rendition of such majestic music. The congregation responded with enthusiastic applause and the pastor warmly welcomed the choir back any time.

We were saddened that our May 16 final performance was closed down due to the COVID situation. However, it is understandable and we live in hope that our program can be performed in the Fall.

~ Submitted by Rhoda Murray, **ALGEHR** Board Director/**JuBELLation** Member, Three Hills

Fred Merrett Award for New Compositions

The **ALGEHR** Board is pleased to announce the following winners of the **Fred Merrett Award for New Compositions**:

Category C (any # of oct, L 3-6) ~ *Voyageur Suite* by **Catherine Bevan**

Category D (solo/ensemble) ~ *Rachmaninoff for Bells- Vocalise Op. 34* by **Catherine Bevan**

Symposium Endowment Fund (SEF) Grant

This year, the **ALGEHR** Board awarded a \$750 **Symposium Endowment Fund Grant** to the **Three Hills Arts Academy Handbell Choir** in Three Hills.

Congratulations to all applicants in our awards programs!

Thank you for contributing to the growth and development of handbell repertoire and programming in Alberta!

Editor's Encore

What a difference a year can make – or not. Across our province so many bells have been silent for so long. **Jubiloso!** and **JuBellation** (under the direction of **Debbie Rice/Isabela Ramos**) were two ensembles fortunate enough to continue ringing and we capped the season with an all-day marathon recording session at King's University. Not only did we have to contend with drive-through graduation festivities and traffic, the fans had to be turned off for optimum audio levels. So, along with our custom-made masks (thanks **Judy!**), we not only succeeded in creating a memorable video souvenir of our COVID year, we also lost about 10 lbs of sweat in the process!



Photo credits: Fiona Bamforth, Rhoda Murray, Isabela Ramos

Contact your Board!

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Fiona Bamforth | President | president@algehr.org |
| Tammy-Jo Mortensen | VP North | vpnorth@algehr.org |
| Margaret Dunkerley | VP South | vpsouth@algehr.org |
| Sharon Vogrinetz | Treasurer | treasurer@algehr.org |
| Judy AtLee | Secretary | secretary@algehr.org |
| Lucy Graham | Membership | membership@algehr.org |
| Vacant | Education | education@algehr.org |
| Cathy Larson | Fred Merrett Award | composer@algehr.org |
| Rhoda Murray | SEF Grant | sefgrant@algehr.org |
| Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin | Peal/Social | peal@algehr.org / social@algehr.org |
| Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin | Past-President | pastpres@algehr.org |

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