

The Ringers

Nick Carrol Susan Coddington-Allen* Cheryl Crane*
Ryland Fernandez Sheila Howerter Lenore Koller
Cheri Meadows Ekuah Ramsey Gilmore Tammy Sigl
Stan Slavin Alison Sliwa* Raquel Walkin
Julie Williams* Vee Williamson Sharon Wonder*

with additional and grateful thanks to

Lucy Sakakihara Beth Jen Beverly Green Lisa Harwell

The Rev. Dr. Kelley O'Connor

*members of the RiverBells SACRAMENTO Board of Directors

-
- RiverBells LITE coordinated by Susan Coddington-Allen•
 - Rehearsal and performance space provided by Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church•
 - Cargo trailer donated and lettered by Daniel and Mercedes Riggleman•
 - Cargo trailer customized by Craig Yonker and John Harrison•
 - Aesthetics and concert logistics coordinated by Susan Coddington-Allen•
 - Table covers and table logo stitched by Elisabeth Walkin•
 - Tablet risers conceived by Crystal Skinner•
 - Tablet logistics coordinated by Alison Sliwa and Susan Coddington-Allen•
 - Website maintained by Scott Hosner•
 - Website initially designed by James Garcia, Heather Hogan and *Flagship Design* (Sacramento City College) •
 - Social media publicity managed by Beth Lambert Jen and Alison Sliwa•
 - Nursing advice provided by Sharon Wonder and Lenore Koller•
 - Liability coverage underwritten by Mercer Insurance Group•
 - Equipment maintained by Susan Coddington-Allen•
 - Music tablets and ancillary equipment underwritten by several anonymous benefactors•
 - RiverBells “wedges” designed and constructed by Keith Mockford•
 - Printing services afforded by Allison Sekikawa at SCC *Graphic Impressions*•
 - Promotion and production services provided professionally by *Amber Shaver* (center manager) and *Ashley Santisteven* (box office manager) of the Harris Center production company•



www.riverbells.org

Paul W. Allen, Music Director

Cheryl Crane, President

Susan E. Coddington-Allen, Personnel Manager

THE SEASON OF MEMORIES IN MUSIC

a spellbinding afternoon of astounding holiday music
performed by an extraordinary musical ensemble

Sunday, December 18, 2022

SACRAMENTO JAPANESE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
“THE GARDEN CHURCH”

6929 Franklin Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95814

3:00pm

ANTIPHON

Hal H. Hopson (1988)

“Antiphon” – from the Greek “anti” = *in return*, and “phone” = *in sound* – is a passage (usually from Scripture) meant to be sung before and after verses from the Psalms or canticles of Holy Scripture. Hopson has not provided the scriptural inspiration for *Antiphon*, nor need he; the piece is dynamically marked “With Expressive Dignity” for the musicians and could be used to surround any of the plaintive psalms. Its brevity, understated dynamics, non-dramatic harmonies, and thin texture highlights, above all, a prayerful mood.

Hopson (b.1933) is a prolific composer and arranger, clinician, teacher, and promoter of congregational singing with more than 3,000 published works, especially of hymn and psalm arrangements, choir anthems, and creative ideas for choral and organ music in worship. He has degrees from Baylor University (BA, 1954), and Southern Baptist Seminary (MSM, 1956), and served churches in Nashville, TN, most recently at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church in Dallas, TX. He was on national boards of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians and the Choristers Guild, and taught numerous workshops at national conferences. In 2009, a collection of 64 of his hymn tunes were published in *Hymns for Our Time: The Collected Tunes of Hal H. Hopson*.

ADESTE FIDELES

John Francis Wade (1711-1786)

(“O Come, All Ye Faithful”)

arr. Cynthia Dobrinski (1990)

Sheila Howerter, *Electric Organ* Nick Love, *Trumpet* Linda Small, *Soprano*

Wade was an English hymnist often credited with creating this hymn most familiarly translated in 1841 by Frederick Oakeley (1802-1880). In 1845, after the Jacobite rising, Wade fled to France to become a lay teacher of music, exiled there among other English Catholics. He had been accused that his liturgical books were often decorated with Jacobite floral imagery, and thereby had coded Jacobite meanings. He described the hymn *Adeste Fideles* as a birth ode to Bonnie Prince Charlie, replete with secret references only decipherable by the “faithful” followers of the Great Pretender, James Francis Edward Stuart.

The hymn (text and tune) has been attributed to numerous composers but was first published in 1751 in Wade’s *Cantus Diversi*. It is typically circulated with four verses, though five additional stanzas can be found. We invite you to follow our Ms. Small in singing with us:

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.



Come and behold him, born the King of Angels.
O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him.
O come, let us adore Him: Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation.
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!
O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him.
O come, let us adore Him: Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning.
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.
O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him.
O come let us adore Him: Christ the Lord!

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

Regent Square

arr. Patricia Hurlbutt (2017)

Linda Small, *Soprano*

Scottish poet, hymn writer, and editor James Montgomery (1771-1854) from Sheffield was theologically trained in the Moravian Church, so his writings often reflect concern for humanitarian causes, such as the abolition of slavery and the exploitation of child chimney sweeps. He had hoped that his name would live on through his epic poetry, such as “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed,” “Prayer is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” “Stand up and Bless the Lord,” “The Lord Is My Shepherd,” and the carol “Angels from the Realms of Glory.” However, he was young when his parents died, his literary pursuits were unsuccessful, he was imprisoned twice on charges of sedition, and while editor of the *Sheffield Iris* – a local newspaper which failed. He did write some long poems, received with mixed reviews. In all, he composed 400 hymn texts though only 20 of them are sung today.

His text has been set to a variety of tunes, including *Regent Square* (Henry Smart, 1813-1879), *Lewes* (John Randall, 1716-1799), and *Wildersmouth* or *Feniton Court* (Edward Hopkins, 1818-1901). In the United Kingdom, the hymn came to be sung to the French carol *Iris* (*Les anges dans nos campagnes*, or *Angels We Have Heard on High*). Sometimes the “Gloria in excelsis Deo” refrain is even sung in place of Montgomery’s original lyric: “Come and worship Christ the new-born King.”

The melody *Regent Square*, the most common tune in the United States, is reportedly an association with the publisher of the first hymnal to contain it, James

Hamilton (1814–1867), a prolific author of religious tracts and minister of the Regent Square Church situated in London.

The hymn was first printed on Christmas Eve, 1816, in the *Sheffield Iris*. A newspaper Montgomery purchased attempting success, though it only began to be sung in churches after the collection was reprinted in 1825 in *The Christian Psalmist* and in the Religious Tract Society's *The Christmas Box or New Year's Gift*.

Our rendition of this bright arrangement represents the arrival of the distant angels come to make their great pronouncement. After the news has been delivered in 7/4 and 4/4 meter, the angels move away to other locations, dimming off in the distance.

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

Gloria

arr. Kyler Brengle (2016)

The text of the song was written by an unknown author in Languedoc, France. The most common English text was paraphrased in 1862 by James Chadwick (1813-1882), Roman Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle in northeast England. Chadwick's lyrics were clearly inspired and original in some sections, including the title, but were loosely translated in other sections. It is considered a derivative work. The carol quickly became popular in the West Country, where it was described as *Cornish* by R. R. Chope (1830-1928), and featured in William Adair Pickard-Cambridge's *Collection of Dorset Carols*. It has been translated to other languages, widely sung and published. Modern hymnals usually include all the verses indicated below.

Gloria is a name of a traditional French carol based on the hymn tune *Les Anges dans nos campagnes* (literally, "The angels in our countryside") arranged by Edward Shippen Barnes (1887-1958), a graduate of Yale University, who was organist for 20 years at First Presbyterian Church, Santa Monica, CA. He composed two organ symphonies, other smaller organ works, arranged works for the organ, and wrote books about religious music. He also wrote an instructional organ method, *The School of Organ Playing* (1921), and was editor of the magazine *American Organ Monthly*.

Proto-Biblical use of the term "angel" meant "one who delivers good news." When you receive a pleasant communication from no apparent source, you have been given an *angelic* message. If this message directs you to something immoral or evil, then the message has come from "the depths of hell." But if the words are good, then you've probably been contacted by "angels from the realms of glory."

"Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing.

And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.
|: Gloria in excelsis Deo! :|

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly songs?
|: Gloria in excelsis Deo! :|

Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
|: Gloria in excelsis Deo! :|

See Him in a manger laid
Whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid.
While our hearts in love we raise.
|: Gloria in excelsis Deo! :|

BRING A TORCH, JEANNETTE, ISABELLA

Traditional French carol

arr. Ron Mallory (2017)

Lucy Sakakihara, *Claves*

Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle originated from the Provence region of France in the 17th century. The song is usually notated in 3/8 time. The hymn was subsequently translated into English in the 18th century. It was never meant to be sung at Christmas, but was considered dance music for French nobility. It first appeared in print in 1688 with the Provençal text *Vènès lèu, Vèire la piéucello; Vènès lèu, Genti pastourèu!* in a collection of twelve Provençal *noëls* by Nicolas Saboly (1614-1675). The popularity of the melody is attested by its use four years later by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704) for the drinking song, *Qu'ils sont doux, bouteille jolie* in a 1672 revival of Molière's *Le médecin malgré lui*.

Charpentier was a French Baroque composer during the reign of Louis XIV. He dominated the Baroque musical scene in 17th century France because of the quality of his prolific output. He mastered all genres, and his skill in writing sacred vocal music was especially hailed by his contemporaries. His compositions include oratorios, masses, operas, *leçons de ténèbres*, motets, and numerous smaller pieces that are difficult to categorize – smaller works for one or two voices and instruments which resemble the Italian cantata of the time.

In the carol, the characters "Jeannette" and "Isabelle/Isabella" are two female farmhands who have found the Baby Jesus and his mother Mary in a stable. Excited by this discovery, they run to a nearby village to tell the inhabitants, who rush to see the new arrival. Visitors to the stable are urged to keep their voices quiet, so the newborn can enjoy his dreams. To this day, on Christmas Eve in the Provençal region, children dressed as shepherds and milkmaids carry torches and candles while singing the carol, on their way to Midnight Mass.

Contrary to tradition, our arrangement may rouse the Christ-child. It begins with malleted accompaniment, then the melody appears in the high bells. The conclusion is rambunctious, loud, and stentorian.

CANTAD AL SEÑOR

Oh, Sing to the Lord!

Brazilian folk song

arr. Hart Morris (1999)

Vee Williamson, *Marimba* Julie Williams, *Flute*

Lucy Sakakihara, *Maracas* Nick Love, *Claves* Linda Small, *Castanets*

Tammy Sigl, *Guest Conductor*

It is as difficult to depict mainstream Brazilian folk songs as it is to characterize mainstream American folk music. However, the native peoples of the Brazilian rainforest play instruments including whistles, flutes, horns, drums and rattles. Much of the area's folk music imitates the sounds of the Amazon Rainforest. When the Portuguese arrived in Brazil in mid-1500, the first natives they met played an array of reed flutes and other wind and percussion instruments.

The Jesuit missionaries introduced songs which used the Tupi language with Christian lyrics, an attempt to convert the people to Christianity, and also introduced Gregorian chant and the flute, bow, and the clavichord. During the colonial period, documents detail the musical activities of the major Roman Catholic cathedrals and the parlors of the upper classes, but data about musical life outside these domains is sparse. Some information is available in writings left by such travelers as Jean de Léry (1536-1613), a Huguenot pastor who produced the first known transcriptions of native American music: two chants of the Tupinambá, near Rio de Janeiro.

Morris (b.1946) is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University (Church Music/Voice) and the University of Houston (Choral Conducting), with additional studies in percussion at Oklahoma City University and the University of Houston. He was Minister of Music at Asbury United Methodist Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma, from 1992-2012, and served in the same capacity at churches in Florida, Texas and Tennessee. He has directed AGEHR/HMA National Seminars and festivals, conferences and workshops and twice represented the US as a conductor for International Handbell Symposia. He is a published composer of handbell and choral music and a professional percussionist, so you can expect a multitude of stricken instruments in this and other arrangements of his. We suspect his scoring of the marimba – a tuned idiophone made of wood – in this arrangement aims to replicate the balafon.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Cantad al Señor un cántico nuevo. | 1. Sing to the Lord a new song. |
| 2. El es creador y dueño de todo. | 2. He is the creator and owner of all. |
| 3. Cantad a Jesús porque el es digno. | 3. Sing to the Lord because He is almighty. |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4. Es el quien nos dio su Espíritu Santo. | 4. It is He who gave us the Holy Spirit. |
| 5. Cantad al Señor, “¡Amén, aleluya!” | 5. Sing to the Lord. Amen! Alleluia! |

THE CHRISTMAS SONG

Mel Tormé (1925-1999) and Robert Wells (1922-1998)

arr. Douglas E. Wagner (1992)

Linda Small, *Soprano*

Chestnuts Roasting on An Open Fire was originally by written Tormé in 1944 under the title *Merry Christmas to You*. According to Tormé, the song was penned during a blistering hot summer in an effort to “stay cool by thinking cool.” Tormé recalled about the lyrics written by Wells, that “I saw a spiral pad on his piano with four lines written in pencil. They started, ‘Chestnuts roasting ..., Jack Frost nipping ..., Yuletide carols..., Folks dressed up like Eskimos.’ Bob didn’t think he was writing a song lyric. He said he thought if he could immerse himself in winter he could cool off. Forty minutes later that song was written.”

Nat King Cole recorded the song in 1946, and then on a whim did a second recording with gentle strings in the background. This became the hit, the preferred rendition. Tormé himself recorded the song in 1954, and again in 1961, 1966, and 1992. It has spawned several parodies, including *Chipmunks Roasting on An Open Fire*, as well as the 1989 *Simpsons Roasting on An Open Fire*. The sentimentality of the tune coupled with the nostalgic message of the lyrics, especially when sung by “The Velvet Fog,” who couldn’t be with us tonight, makes this one of the season’s favorites.

DANCE OF THE REED FLUTES from *The Nutcracker Suite*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

arr. Jeffrey A. Hall (1997)

Lenore Koller, *Tambourine*

Tchaikovsky was a Russian composer of the Romantic period. His would make a lasting impression internationally composing some of the most popular concert and theatrical music in the current classical repertoire, including the music for the ballets *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, the *1812 Overture*, his First Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto, the *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy*, several symphonies, and the opera *Eugene Onegin*.

Although musically precocious, Tchaikovsky was educated for a career as a civil servant since there was little opportunity for a musical career in Russia at the time and no system of public music education. When an opportunity for such an education arose, he entered the nascent Saint Petersburg Conservatory, from which he

graduated in 1865. The formal Western-oriented teaching that Tchaikovsky received there set him apart from The Big Five: Balakirev, Cesar Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Alexander Borodin.

Dance of the Reed Flutes was scored for a trio of flutes within the orchestra, accompanied by a thumping harmony in the lower instruments. In a kind of heavy-handed way, this piece is also light and graceful.

If you've had the pleasure to hear the entire *Suite*, you may have noticed, or recalled, that Tchaikovsky *discovered* some fundamentally delightful melodies. In fact, even if you're hearing these tunes for the first time, you are hauntingly drawn to want to hear them again. Tchaikovsky does what a lot of composers do – he does repeat these themes, often exactly as they had been heard. In fact, in the first piece of the Suite, *Miniature Overture*, the signature eight-measure melody repeats five times! This is a delightful plus, and means that once the musicians have learned one tune, they have pretty much learned most of the entire selections. *Reed Flutes* is a ridiculous little excursion because of its hesitancy. Not only does the melody once get going, it then slows and nearly stops – hesitates – before rushing on. Notice also all of the repeated notes, as if the ringers are tapping on a telegraph key. . .

DECK THE HALLS

Traditional Welsh Melody
arr. Jason W. Krug (2017)

Nick Love, *Trumpet* Lenore Koller, *Sleigh Bells* Lucy Sakakihara, *Slapstick*
Vee Williamson, *Tambourine*

Originally titled *Deck the Hall with Boughs of Holly* – the opening line of the first verse – this is a traditional Christmas, yuletide, and New Years' carol. The Welsh melody dates back to the 16th century and belongs to a winter carol, *Nos Galan*, while the English lyrics, written by the Scottish musician Thomas Oliphant (1799-1873), date to 1862, Vol. 2 of *Welsh Melodies*. a set of four volumes authored by John Thomas (1826-1913), including Welsh words by John Jones (Talhaiarn, 1810-1869) and English words by Oliphant. Oliphant was an early 19th-century Scottish musician, artist and author whose works were well known in their day. He wrote the chorale for the wedding of the future King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. He was educated at Winchester College but left early. He became a member of the London Stock Exchange but after a short time walked away to pursue his interest in music and literature. He was well-known for translating famous German works into English, a feat made even more amazing considering the possibility that he didn't speak German.

There are three original verses – “Deck the halls,” “See the flowing bowl before us,” and “Fast away the old year passes.” However, the translation from the more significant original Welsh is as follows: “The best pleasure on New Year's Eve, Is house and fire and a pleasant family, A pure heart and brown ale, A gentle song and the voice of the harp.”

AN ENGLISH CAROL

Good King Wenceslaus

Piae Cantiones (1582)

arr. Arnold B. Sherman (1990)

Nick Love, *Trumpet*

Piae Cantiones ecclesiasticae et scholasticae veterum episcoporum (“Pious ecclesiastical and school songs of the ancient bishops”) is a collection of late medieval Latin songs. It was assembled by Jaakko Finno (1540-1588), a clergyman and headmaster of the cathedral school at Turku, a city on the southwestern coast of Finland at the mouth of the River Aura. The compilation was printed by Theodoricus Petri Rutha (c.1560-1630), the publisher of the first Finnish-language hymnal, as well as a catechism and a prayer book. He came from an aristocratic family in Finland, and was educated at Rostock in northern Germany.

The collection contains a wide variety of songs for school use, with sacred or moral texts. The collection includes 74 Latin and Swedish/Latin songs sung at the time in Finnish cathedral schools, most notably in the school at Turku. Most of the songs are of course religious in nature but some, for example *Tempus adest floridum*, are secular school songs. The lyrics in the collection testify to the moderate nature of the Protestant Reformation in Sweden. Although some Catholic nuances have been purged, many songs still carry strong traces of the cult of Virgin Mary (e.g. *Ave Maris Stella*). The melodies of *Piae Cantiones* are medieval by nature. The origin of the songs and melodies varies. Many originate from central Europe, but quite a few seem to have been written in Nordic countries.

One of the purposes for printing the collection seems to have been keeping these songs from falling out of use, and this goal certainly was achieved. The collection was reprinted in 1625, with the addition of several monophonic songs, as well as a few polyphonic songs written by editor Daniel Friderici (1584-1638), a composer working in Rostock. He wrote many high-quality secular and sacred polyphonic vocal works, which became widely known in his lifetime and afterwards. He wrote *Musica figuralis* which taught techniques of singing. New prints and selections continued to appear in the following centuries, and some of the songs seem to have been kept in use in Finnish schools even into the 19th century.

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

Cranham
music, Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
text, Christina G. Rossetti (1830-1894)
arr. Martha Lynn Thompson

Linda Small, *Soprano*

In the Bleak Midwinter is a poem by the English poet Christina Rossetti. She was a writer of romantic, devotional and children's poems, including *Goblin Market* and *Remember*. She also penned the words to *Love Came Down at Christmas*, set to music by Anglican composer and organist Harold Darke (1888-1976) as well as others. She was a sister of artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), featured in several of his paintings, including the one at the left.

This poem is commonly performed as a Christmas carol, originally published in 1872 as *A Christmas Carol* in the January, 1872 issue of *Monthly* and was first collected in book form in *Goblin Market, The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* (Macmillan, 1875).



Holst composed a musical setting titled *Cranham* (which means "spur of land frequented by crows") in *The English Hymnal* (1906). It was named the best Christmas carol in 2008 in a poll of some of the world's leading choirmasters and choral experts. It is a hymn tune setting suitable for congregational singing, since the poem is irregular in meter and any setting of it requires a skillful and adaptable tune. The hymn is titled after Cranham, Gloucestershire, a residential area of east London

LO, HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING

16th century German carol
arr. Cynthia Dobrinski (1993)

Julie Williams, *Flute*

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen (literally "A rose has sprung up") is a Christmas carol and Marian hymn of German origin. It is sometimes also called "A Spotless Rose" and "Behold a Rose of Judah." The rose in the German text represents the Virgin Mary. Its two verses make reference to the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah, which in Christian interpretation foretell the Incarnation of Christ, the royal genealogy of Jesus, and to the Tree of Jesse, a traditional symbol of the descent of Jesus from Jesse of Bethlehem, the father of King David. The image was especially popular in medieval times, and it features in many works of religious art from the period

Because of its prophetic theme, the hymn is popular during the Christian season of Advent.

The hymn has its roots in an unknown author before the 17th century. It first appeared in print in 1599 and has since been published with a varying number of verses and in several translations. It is most commonly sung to a melody harmonized in 1609 by the German composer Michael Praetorius (1571-1621).

The second verse of the hymn, written in the first person, then explains to the listener the meaning of this symbolism: That Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the rose that has sprung up to bring forth the Christ child, represented as a small flower ("*das Blümlein*"). The German text affirms that Mary is a "pure maiden" ("*die reine Magd*"), emphasizing the doctrine of the Virgin birth of Jesus. In Theodore Baker's 1894 English translation, on the other hand, the second verse indicates that the rose symbolizes the infant Christ.

SING WE NOW OF CHRISTMAS

Noël Nouvelet
arr. Kevin McChesney (1997)

Musicaldom is rife with examples of a beloved *text* that has been housed in various *musical* settings. The *Doxology* is an excellent example, the same words can be sung to the traditional *Old Hundredth*, *Awake My Soul* and *With the Sun*, *Gloria Patri*, *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*, as well as *The House of the Rising Sun* and dozens of others. Musicaldom also has examples of *melodies* which swap texts.

Noël Nouvelet is a perfect illustration of the latter. We most fondly associate this tune with *Sing We Now of Christmas*, centered on the Advent season. But Lent deserved its due too, so entered John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872-1958), an Anglican priest, author, and hymnwriter, who also wrote books on architecture, history, and theology. The text housing *Noël Nouvelet* became *Now the Green Blade Riseth*.

Noël Nouvelet was used central to several other texts in English of a hymn based on the writings of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), an Italian Dominican friar and priest, an influential philosopher and theologian, and a jurist in the tradition of scholasticism from the county of Aquino in the Kingdom of Sicily. The tune is central to his *Adoro Te Devote*, which is *A Meditation on the Blessed Sacrament*, a private prayer.

The *New Oxford Book of Carols* (1992) lists 13 French verses to this tune. The carol celebrates all of the figures in the crèche, the handmade nativity scenes found throughout France, where they are part of the Christmas celebration in homes and in town squares. This song would be sung privately by families at home and in community gatherings rather than as part of the public liturgy.

It was printed in the 1721 *Grande Bible des noëls, taunt vieux que nouveaux*. Even so, they made alterations to several of the French verses, according to their notes, which contain additional material to which the reader is referred. Translations into English and variations in French would all be severely colored by the denominational differences which existed between Christian faiths and doctrines. The song is in a minor key, in Dorian mode. It shares its first five notes with the hymn, *Ave, Maris Stella Lucens Miseris*.

It is interesting to note that *nouvelet* comes from the same root as *noël*, and both denote “news” or “newness.” This was originally a New Year’s carol, as opposed to a Christmas carol, with versions dating to the early 1500s. Numerous versions have been found, largely inconsistent. The tune itself is in a Dorian mode and echoes in its first five notes the Marian hymn *Ave, Maris Stella Lucens Miseris*. Nevertheless, the carol remains popular both in French and in its English variations. Here is the translation from the French:

1. New Christmas, Christmas we sing here,
Devout people, let us shout our thanks to God!

Chorus: Let us sing Christmas for the new King! (repeat)
New Christmas, Christmas we sing here.

2. Let us sing Christmas for the new King! (repeat)
New Christmas, Christmas we sing here. (Chorus)
3. The angel said! Shepherds leave this place!
In Bethlehem you'll find the little angel. (Chorus)
4. In Bethlehem, all united,
Were found the child, Joseph, and Mary too. (Chorus)
5. Soon, the Kings, by the bright star
To Bethlehem came one morning. (Chorus)
6. One brought gold, the other priceless incense;
The stable thus seemed like Heaven. (Chorus)

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

St. Louis
Lewis Henry Redner (1831-1908)
arr. Cynthia Dobrinski (2003)

The text for this hymn is set to the tune *St. Louis* in America and to *Forest Green* in England. Dobrinski’s arrangement, is plaintive, has an uncharacteristic counter-melody, and requires a lot of the rubber-band approach to tempi and dynamics.

The lyric was written by Phillips Brooks (1835–1893), an Episcopal priest, then rector of Church of the Holy Trinity, PA, and later of Trinity Church, Boston. He was inspired by a visit to the village of Bethlehem in the Sanjak of Jerusalem in 1865. Three years later, he wrote the poem for his church, and his organist Lewis Redner added the music. Redner writes this about the collaboration:

“As Christmas of 1868 approached, Mr. Brooks told me that he had written a simple little carol for the Christmas Sunday-school service, and he asked me to write the tune to it. The simple music was written in great haste and under great pressure. We were to practice it on the following Sunday. Mr. Brooks came to me on Friday, and said, ‘Redner, have you ground out that music yet to “O Little Town of Bethlehem”?’ I replied, ‘No’, but that he should have it by Sunday. On the Saturday night previous my brain was all confused about the tune. I thought more about my Sunday-school lesson than I did about the music. But I was roused from sleep late in the night hearing an angel-strain whispering in my ear, and seizing a piece of music paper I jotted down the treble of the tune as we now have it, and on Sunday morning before going to church I filled in the harmony. Neither Mr. Brooks nor I ever thought the carol or the music to it would live beyond that Christmas of 1868.

“My recollection is that Richard McCauley, who then had a bookstore on Chestnut Street west of 13th Street, printed it on leaflets for sale. Rev. Dr. Huntington, rector of All Saints’ Church, Worcester, MA, asked permission to print it in his Sunday-school hymn and tune book, called *The Church Porch*. and it was he who christened the music *Saint Louis*.”

Two other musical versions also exist setting the same text. Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941), an English composer, organist, and educator who held the title Master of the King’s Music 1934-1941 served with the Royal Air Force during the First World War, during which he composed the *Royal Air Force March Past*, and was music adviser to the British Broadcasting Corporation, for whom he gave commended talks on music 1924-1941. Davies’ version is called *Wengen* or *Christmas Carol*, published in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1922). *Christmas Carol* is usually performed only by choirs rather than as a congregational hymn because the first two verses are for

*O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep & dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The Everlasting Light
The hopes & fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight*

treble voices with organ accompaniment with only the final verse as a chorale/refrain harmony. This setting includes a recitative from the Gospel of Luke at the beginning, and cuts verses 2 and 4 of the original 5-verse carol. This version is often performed at the service of *Nine Lessons and Carols* in King’s College, Cambridge.

The second version of William Rhys-Herbert (1868-1921) who was a Welsh composer, conductor, organist, and pianist. He composed numerous operettas for performance in schools, and also published songs, part-songs, and cantatas. He became the first organist at Jerusalem Chapel near Resolven in South Wales. where a concert was later held to raise funds so that he could study professionally. By the age of 19 he had published his first composition. At the heart of his work is a cycle of sacred cantatas – *Bethlehem, The Nazarene, Bethany, Calvary* and *Olivet*. By far the most successful was *Bethany*; first published in 1909, it quickly became his most celebrated piece. It is from this cantata that the melody *Bethany* houses Brooks’ text. It was performed widely in the USA during the 1920s and 30s. Many of Rhys-Herbert’s more than one thousand compositions are part songs for male voices. Many others are for children.

STILLE NACHT

Franz Xaver Gruber (1787-1863)
arr. Betty Garee (1980)

Gruber was schoolmaster and organist in Arnsdorf. His written account regarding the composition



of the carol gave no mention of its legendary inspiration. According to Austria’s *Silent Night* Society, one thesis is that the church organ was no longer working due to recent flooding (which eventually destroyed the church entirely). Father Joseph Mohr (1792-

1848), an Austrian Roman Catholic priest and writer, had already written the lyrics of a song titled *Stille Nacht* in 1816. Mohr brought the words to Gruber and asked him to compose a melody with simple guitar accompaniment for the next day’s church service. They premiered the carol in Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria during mass on the night of December 24, 1818.

Gruber reported that Karl Mauracher, an organ builder who serviced the instrument at the Oberndorf church, was so enamored of the song that he took it home with him to the Zillertal, a valley in Tyrol renowned for its musical tradition. From there, two travelling families of folk singers, the Strassers and the Rainers, included the tune in their shows. Singing it around Christmas 1819, the Rainers performed it for an audience that included Franz I of Austria and Alexander I of Russia. Its first U.S. performance was 1839 in New York City. By the 1840s it was reported to be a favorite of Frederick William IV of Prussia. During this period, the melody changed slightly from triple meter to duple and become the version commonly played today. It was first published in 1833, first recorded in 1905. In 2011, it was declared an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

WE THREE KINGS with “Farandole” from *L’Arlesienne Suite No. 2*

John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820-1891) and Georges Bizet (1838-1875)
arr. D. Linda McKechnie (1998)
Sheila Howerter, *Electric Organ* Nick Love, *Trumpet*

Originally titled *Three Kings of Orient* (and also as *We Three Kings of Orient Are* or *The Quest of the Magi*) this is a Christmas carol written by Hopkins in 1857. At that time he was serving as the rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Williamsport, PA. He wrote the carol for a Christmas pageant in New York City. It was the first widely popular Christmas carol written in America.

Hopkins structured the carol so that the first and last verses of the carol are sung together by all three as “verses of praise,” while the intermediate three verses are sung individually with each king describing the gift he was bringing. The refrain proceeds to praise the beauty of the Star of Bethlehem. The Magi’s solos are typically not observed during contemporary performances of the carol.

Although he originally worked as a journalist for a New York newspaper and had studied to become a lawyer, he chose to join the clergy upon graduating from the University of Vermont. Hopkins studied at the General Theological Seminary in New York City and after graduating and being ordained a deacon in 1850, he became its first music teacher five years later, holding the post until 1857 alongside his ministry in the Episcopal Church.

During his final year of teaching at the seminary, Hopkins wrote the carol for a Christmas pageant held at the college. It was exceptional in that Hopkins composed *both* the lyrics and music. It was sung within his circle of family and friends. Because of the popularity it achieved among them, Hopkins decided to publish the carol in his book *Carols, Hymns, and Songs* (1863). It was the first to be featured in *Christmas Carols Old and New* (1871), a collection of carols published in the United Kingdom by Henry Ramsden Bramley (1833-191) and John Stainer (1840-1901). In 1916, the carol was printed in the hymnal for the Episcopal Church. The carol was also included in *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928), which praised the song as “one of the most successful of modern composed carols.”

McKechnie has imaginatively combined this carol with the predominant melody from the second movement of Bizet’s *L’Arlesienne Suite*, incidental music composed by Bizet for Alphonse Daudet’s (1840-1897) drama of the same name, translated as *The Girl from Arles*. The drama was dropped after 19 performances. Bizet’s music consisted of 27 numbers for a chorus of 24 and small orchestra of 26 instruments, ranging from background music (*mélodrames*), only a few measures long, to *entr’actes*. The work was dismissed by critics as too complex for popular Parisian tastes. It is not often performed now in its original form. However, Bizet fashioned two, very popular four-movement suites (1872 and 1879) for full orchestra.

WHITE CHRISTMAS

Irving Berlin (1888-1989)
arr. Cynthia Dobrinski (1989)

Linda Small, *Soprano*

Born in Imperial Russia, Berlin arrived in the United States at the age of five. He published his first song, *Marie from Sunny Italy* (1907), receiving 33 cents for the publishing rights, and became known as the composer of numerous international hits, starting with 1911’s *Alexander’s Ragtime Band*. For much of his career, Berlin could not read sheet music, and was such a limited piano player that he could only play in the key of F#. He used his custom piano equipped with a transposing lever when he needed to play in other keys. He was known for writing music and lyrics in the American vernacular: uncomplicated, simple and direct, with his stated aim being to “reach the heart of the average American” whom he saw as the “real soul of the country.”

During his 60-year career he wrote an estimated 1,500 songs, including the scores for 20 original Broadway shows and 15 original Hollywood films, with his songs nominated 8 times for Academy Awards. Many songs became popular themes and anthems, including *Blue Skies*, *Easter Parade*, *Puttin’ on the Ritz*, *Cheek to Cheek*, *Happy Holiday*, *Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better)* and *There’s No Business*

Like Show Business. His Broadway musical *This Is The Army* (1942) was adapted into the 1943 film of the same name.

Berlin’s lyrics reminisce about White Christmases. Stories vary regarding its origin. One chronicles that he composed it in a hotel in La Quinta, CA in 1940. Conversely, the Arizona Biltmore claims their location as the honor. Berlin wrote the song while sitting poolside at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa in Phoenix, AZ. The next morning—Berlin usually stayed up all night writing—he went to his office and told his musical secretary, “Grab your pen and take down this song. I want you to take down a song I wrote over the weekend. Not only is it the best song I ever wrote, it’s the best song anybody ever wrote.” The introductory verse pokes fun at a well-off Los Angeleno who, amid orange and palm trees, longs for a traditional Christmas “up north.” Berlin later dropped the verse but kept the now-famous chorus. *White Christmas* was introduced in the musical *Holiday Inn* (1942). It has often been noted that the mix of melancholy—“just like the ones I used to know”—with comforting images of home—“where the treetops glisten”—resonated strongly with listeners during World War II and the Armed Forces Network was flooded with requests for it.

Dobrinski (1950-2021), who arranged some of the compositions performed today, was an American composer of primarily handbell music. She has more than 175 titles in print. She also worked as an instructor and conducted about 350 handbell workshops and festivals internationally. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Texas Christian University and her Master of Music degree in organ performance from Northwestern University. She was a Fulbright scholar and taught for 15 years at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN from *The Messiah, an Oratorio*

Georg Frederick Handel (1685-1759)
arr. Kevin McChesney (2006)

Nick, Love, *Trumpet*

Handel was a German-British Baroque composer well known for his operas, oratorios, anthems, *concerti grossi*, and organ concertos. He received his training in Halle and worked as a composer in Hamburg and Italy before settling in London in 1712, where he spent the bulk of his career and became a naturalized British subject in 1727. He was strongly influenced both by the middle-German polyphonic choral tradition and by composers of the Italian Baroque. In turn, Handel’s music forms one of the peaks of the “high baroque” style, bringing Italian opera to its highest development, creating the genres of English oratorio and organ concerto, and introducing a new style



into English church music. He is recognized as one of the greatest composers of his age.

Handel started three commercial opera companies to supply the English nobility with Italian opera. In 1737, he had a physical breakdown, changed direction creatively, and addressed the middle class making a transition to English choral works. After his success with *The Messiah* (1742), he never composed another Italian opera. His orchestral *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* remain steadfastly popular. One of his four coronation anthems, *Zadok the Priest*, has been performed at every British coronation since 1727. Almost blind, he died in 1759, a respected and rich man, and was given a state funeral at Westminster Abbey.

Handel composed more than 40 *opere serie* over a period of more than 30 years. Since the late 1960s, interest in Handel's music has grown. The musicologist Winton Dean (1916-2013) wrote that "Handel was not only a great composer; he was a dramatic genius of the first order." His music was admired by Classical-era composers, especially Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven.

While not the climactic song of *The Messiah* (1741), which distinction rests with little dissent to *The Hallelujah Chorus, For unto Us a Child Is Born* features similar melismatic passages that are a delight for both performer and audience member. This song appears halfway through Part 1 of the three-part oratorio. And we believe that, in this climax to our concert *sans* text, you can "hear" the lyrics in your head nevertheless.

RiverBells SACRAMENTO, an independent adult consort of handbell experiences and experiments, is a CA non-profit and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation. We first gathered in the fall of 1998 at Cosumnes River College with 10 ringers; we had to skip a season-and-a-half due to COVID, so – if our math is right -- this is our twenty-fifth season. Our revamped and redesigned website has drawn ringers both from the area and musicians coming in from out of the area. With a whopping 16 ringers this semester, our emphasis – aside from seasonal demands – has been to perform original music composed idiomatically for the English handbell choir, and to feature swing (Big Band) sounds on this unique percussion instrument. We hope this lifts up, thrills, and challenges both ringers and audiences.



We are an open choir. If you ring and wish to apply for membership, contact us through our website. We

have never turned away anyone who wanted to join if they had the dedication and determination to learn (there's a personal reason for this policy). If you desire both to learn to read music and to ring, join our beginner's class every Wednesday evening at 5:45pm for an hour at our host location. We'll provide all that you need, *gratis*.

To initiate a contract for a performance at nearly any location for almost any reason, contact the director through our website. Our rates are reasonable and negotiable (up to a distance); we prefer a concert performance and audience attention that's at least as long as it takes us to set up all of our toys.

Your interest in our music may take the form of donating time or funds to our art. We perform many concerts for free, and travel quite a bit. Donations of all kinds from many individuals inspire us, as you can see from our acknowledgments page. No one in our ensemble is paid, even though they are professionally-disposed, and reasonable expenses are reimbursed. We have several special projects (amplification equipment, additional bells) toward which you may contribute. A quick look at our performance calendar (again, go to our website!) tips you to the seriousness we approach our music. If you are a business or corporation and wish to offer us a grant-in-reciprocity, suitable acknowledgement can be arranged.

We are very grateful for both your loyal presence and your enthusiastic attention this afternoon. We hope that it was worth the effort and that you had an informative good time. Keep tuned to our website for further news about this and other developments. Tell your friends.

When we went "shopping" for another "home" for our musical endeavors in the summer of 2020 (community handbell ensembles often have to flex our locations), we met with some gracious promises who were impressed with our history and our forward-thinking concepts but couldn't make the commitment. However, when we first visited the **Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church**, their office staff and their pastor at the time, the Rev. Motoe Yamada Foor, we had a premonition. That initial meeting, in addition to a very welcoming worship service, sealed an agreement that has delighted us. While we are not officially part of the church's musical ministry, we perform during their worship services four times every year and enjoy their hospitality under their new pastor, The Rev. Dr. Kelley O'Connor.

Therefore, we are very thankful for our hosts, the **Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church**. They have provided us a room to rehearse weekly, and it is our pleasure to perform four times each year during their worship services as well as provide beginner's classes there to anyone interested. They are a loving and gracious group, and many of their members have donated substantially to our efforts. We look forward to a long, felicitous

relationship with them. If you wish, you may bring your friends to witness today's concert again tomorrow at SJUMC, 3:00pm.

Paul W. Allen is a retired 7th and 8th grade teacher of music, English/Language Arts, math, and computer sciences from James Rutter Middle School in the Elk Grove Unified School District. He is a musician (trombone, euphonium, tuba, handbells), conductor, and teacher. As composer and arranger of works in the handbell field, he focuses on music idiomatically written for the English handbell as well as arrangements of swing music from the Big Band Era in America. Over 25 of his compositions have been published.

He has five academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts in Humanities from La Verne College, La Verne, CA; Master of Divinity from Bethany Theological Seminary, Oak Brook IL; B.A. in music/drama from California State University, Sacramento; California teaching credential in music, drama, English, history, and sociology; and Master of Music in Composition from CSUS. His Master's project was *Rhapsody for Band and Bells*, premiered in 1999 at CSUS by the 59th Army National Guard Band and Bel Tempo Handbell Choir.



In the fall of 1998, he and his wife Susan founded *RiverBells*, a community handbell ensemble which just celebrated its 24th year. This new ensemble features many of the best adult ringers in the area, and has performed with such organizations as the American River College Symphonic Band, the Folsom Lake Symphony Orchestra, the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band, the Valley Choral Society, and at festivals and conferences throughout California.

He served as first President of the Sacramento Symphonic Winds, as well as utility trombonist. He administered the Sacramento Spring Ring for 20 years with Susan, premiering two commissioned works during that time. He served for two years on the Area XII Board of Directors, as well as the Board for the Sacramento Recorder Society. He is now the Secretary of the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band, plays euphonium with them, and performs on fourth trombone with the 30's 40's 50's Dance Band. As an ordained minister, he held a pastorate in Nebraska for three years. Currently he's celebrating life after teaching with three cats and his wife, Susan.

↔A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT HANDBELLS↔

A *handbell* is a bell designed to be rung by hand. It is a percussion instrument. To ring a handbell, a ringer grasps the bell by its slightly flexible handle – traditionally made of leather, but often now made of plastic – and moves the arm to make the hinged clapper strike the inside

of the bell. An individual handbell can be used simply as a signal to catch people's attention or summon them together, but handbells are also often heard in tuned sets.

Handheld bells have a long history. Credit for the development of the modern hand bell, or "handbell," is accorded to brothers Robert and William Cor in Aldbourne, Wiltshire, England, between 1696 and 1724. The Cor brothers originally made *latten* bells ("horse bells," or decorative effects on borders, rivets or other details of metalwork) for *hame boxes* (a "hame box" is a device that attaches to the top of a horse collar and contains several bells that ring when the horse moves), but for reasons unknown they began tuning their bells more finely to have an accurate fundamental tone, and fitted them with hinged clappers that moved only in one plane. A foundry in Loughborough, Leicestershire, that originated in the 14th century became John Taylor & Co in 1784.

Originally, tuned sets of handbells, such as the ones made by the Cor brothers, were used by change ringers to rehearse outside their towers, practicing the complicated algorithms of change ringing without exceeding the neighbors' patience. It was also more pleasant for the ringers to practice in the warmth of the local pub rather than in a cold tower in winter. The handbell sets used by change ringers had the same number of bells as in the towers – generally six to twelve, evenly-tuned to a diatonic scale (as the *pianoforte* is tuned).

There is no record when the bell was invented. There are pictures from early Chinese dynasties which clearly show bells, not the open method version beloved of bell ringers but the "Noddy" (stout) variety. Indeed, they have been used by different civilizations in religious rites even before the development of a written language. They are mentioned in *Exodus* as part of Hebrew worship and they are shown decorating the robes of priests.

The early founders of the Celtic church in Britain – Saints Aiden, Cedd, and Patrick – brought with them four-sided bells similar to Austrian cowbells. St. Patrick's bell is still in his shrine in Dublin. In fact, handbells were the first bells to have appeared in England; the Romans used them to summon their servants. The large portable handbells which succeeded them were made of riveted iron plates immersed in molten bronze.

When the Christian church was recognized by Constantine in Rome and came out of hiding, founders began to increase the size of bells and priests hung them outside their churches. Paulinus at Nola in Campania is supposedly the first to have done this, and from his act derives the words *campanile* and *campanology* (an Italian bell tower, especially a free-standing one)

One of the rules of the church from this time read, “Let all priests at the appointed hours day and night toll the bells in their churches, then celebrate divine worship.” This regular tolling became crucial to citizens in early days: was the only way they had of telling the time. The word *clock* derives from the Dutch word for bell “klok.” The French “cloche” is also similar. In France in the 13th century bells were rung at 6:00 a.m. (Matins), Midday (Midi) and 6:00 p.m. (Vespers). These bells were later called the “Ave Maria” bells or the “Angelus.” In Britain “Midi” was called “None” or *noon* as it is today. Strange that this should be from the Latin “none” for “nine” being nine hours after the first office “Prime” at 3:00 a.m. So, noon is really 9 o’clock not 12 o’clock!

In medieval times bells were steeped in superstition because of their long association with religion. Bells were baptized, and once baptized had the power to ward off evil spells and spirits. Bells were hung in doorways to protect visitors and the visited from the evil spirits which always lurked around the door awaiting the chance to slip inside. A visitor would ring the bell to drive away the spirits, then pass inside—which is the likely origin of the present-day doorbell! This custom also led to the “Passing bell” which was rung to drive away spirits who stood at the foot of a bed and about the house ready to seize a person’s soul as he died. The local ringers who were paid to ring the passing bell were paid more for a big bell because it kept the spirits further away and gave the departing soul a better start.

The sound of consecrated bells was also believed to dispel thunder and lightning and to calm storms at sea for all of which demons were believed to be responsible. When a tempest broke out bells would be rung to clear the storm. This happened for example at Sandwich in Kent, in the “great thundering” of 1502 and again in 1514. The “great thundering” was still in use against hail in Southern France in the 19th century, as it was in Cornwall for those in peril on the sea.

After bells had moved outside the church in Paulinus’ time, handbells continued their development within the church. *A cappella* chanting (voices only) was replaced in popularity by more elaborate modes of liturgical accompaniment which included bells, stringed and wind instruments, and small organs. Many mistranslations of the Latin “cymbala” used both for cymbals and bells in early times exist in psalms today, e.g. “Praise him upon the loud cymbals (*big bells*), praise him upon the well-tuned cymbals (*tuned handbells*.)” Early illuminations (images, pictures) show small chimes of handbells hung from rods. In the early Middle Ages instructions for sung masses included the use of bells to double the tenor line, which carried the tune.

During the later Middle Ages the pipe organ ousted wind instruments, strings, harps and bells, and it is likely that bells were relegated to cupboards and boxes, perhaps in the towers, to be rung again during the 16th and 17th centuries by tower bell ringers.

Tune ringing became popular in the 1700’s when the more musical tower bell ringers discovered that there were far fewer limitations to ringing *handbells* than ringing swinging tower bells – and there were likely to be more of them. They found that they could ring tunes, firstly carols and hymns, then chamber music and eventually the popular classics. By the middle of the 19th century tune ringing had reached its heyday. At Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, handbell ringing competitions were held from 1855-1925, to which special excursion trains ran, and bands (not “choirs”) from throughout the North of England played on up to 200 bells. Owing to World War I and the invention of radio, apart from a very few large teams who kept going in the North of England, team membership dwindled and interest generally waned.

By the early 1960’s in England, most handbell owners were tower bell ringers or Societies, and they rang tunes on their bells only during the Christmas season. But gradually the art of tune ringing was revived. Music teachers and other leaders have realized the potential of bells and many schools and organizations continue to include tune ringing in their curricula. A rally of local teams was organized at Norbury, Cheshire in 1966. This was so successful that those who took part decided to form a Society, and the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain was thus born at Ashton-Under-Lyne in 1967.

In the United States of America, the handbell tune ringing *revival* got off to an earlier start. Handbells were probably first heard there during the mid-19th century. The American impresario, PT Barnum, imported the “Lancashire Ringers” from England, but called them “Swiss Bell Ringers!” and a number of other itinerant teams performed to the public throughout the Eastern States.

Modern handbell tune ringing in the U.S.A. owes their present standing to Mrs. A.A. Shurcliff in 1902. She was gifted a set of 10 handbells in London by Arthur Hughes, then the general manager of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, after achieving two separate two-and-a-half-hour change ringing peals in one day. In 1926, upon returning from a trip to England, she rang carols on Beacon Hill, Boston. The sound was heard and liked by many, who responsively sent to England for additional handbell sets. Interest snowballed under her guiding hand. The New England Guild was formed in her living room in 1937. 1954 saw the birth of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers (now, Handbell Musicians of America), also at her home. Tune ringing in America has never looked back.

-- adapted by Paul W. Allen from Philip Bedford © 1986