

The background of the image is a blurred, warm-toned photograph of a musical score. A baton is visible, resting diagonally across the page. The text is overlaid on this background.

Handbells: The Art of Percussing

Handbell History, Playing and Future

History of Handbells

- China, Rome, Iraq, 1600 B.C.
- First materials were gourds to wood
- Rituals, ceremonial, public announcements
- “Modern” version: England, 17th century
- Hand ringing began for math!



“Modern Day” Handbell evolution

- 1660 William and Robert Cor cast first tuned bell
- 18th century England handbells for playing
- 19th century Bells come to U.S.
- 20th century Bell choirs begin to form in U.S.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/percussion-instrument>

Bell Tower



Handbell



What is a Handbell?

- “Bell” that is held in the hand in an upright position
- Range in size from 7 oz to 18 pounds
- Castings are made of a Bronze metal alloy of Copper and Tin
- Clapper on a spring that is adjustable
- 2 primary Manufacturers in U.S.
 - Malmark
 - Schulmerich



Spring / Rocker

Clapper

Strike point /
jewelers mark

Techniques in Ringing

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDDFAb1899w&list=RDQMvT-TodPMI9k&index=12>
- Ringing (shake / gyro / shimmer / Thumb damp)
- 4 in Hand (4iH)
- Malleting (table / suspended)
- Mart / Mart lift / Echo / Pluck
- Singing Bell

The Range of Skills

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lg9bSbfFV1Y&list=RDQMvT-TodPMI9k&start_radio=1
Bourgade Catholic H.S. “Someone Like You”
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO_Mh2xVoig
St. Olaf College “Compassion”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPfCthM1wIE>
Raleigh Ringers “Bohemian Rhapsody”

Variety in Handbell Music & Playing

- Walk off the Earth “Old Town Road”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRXv_VU35Lw

- Piano Guys with Wesley Bell Ringers “Ode to Joy to the World”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyVEKsNFDjw>

- Forte Handbell Quartet “Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_Q-YkwJ8TM

More Music Please.....

- Not just for Christmas
- Versatility in Groups that play
 - Professional Choirs
 - Community / Church Choirs
- Versatility in music that is played
 - Variety of Holidays (Religious & Secular)
 - Weddings
 - Funerals
 - Social & Civic Events

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyLU7UHDzLk> (Forte – O Come Emmanuel)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oloZL_9_7zY (Queen City Bronze)

Future of Handbells

- New England Guild of English Handbell Ringers
- American Guild of English Handbell Ringers (AGEHR)
- Handbell Musicians of America (HMA)
 - <https://handbellmusicians.org/>



Handbell Musicians
O F A M E R I C A

Handbell Musicians of
America
National Seminar 2026

Sharonville
Convention
Center

July 14th 6:00 pm

QUEEN CITY BRONZE

CINCINNATI'S PREMIER HANDBELL ENSEMBLE

QUEEN CITY BRONZE RINGS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'S
250TH ANNIVERSARY THROUGH A VIBRANT MUSICAL JOURNEY OF
THE NATION'S RICH AND VARIED MUSICAL GENRES

MAY 3, 2026

4 PM - 5 PM

ST. PAUL'S UCC*

1N. Jefferson St.
Alexandria, KY, 41001

MAY 16, 2026

4 PM - 5 PM

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH*

208 W Sandusky Ave,
Bellefontaine, OH, 43311

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HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL SEMINAR

SHARONVILLE CONVENTION CENTER

11355 Chester Rd,
Cincinnati, OH, 45246



RING AMERICA

*FREEWILL OFFERINGS APPRECIATED

WWW.QUEENCITYBRONZE.ORG



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and see the
handbells**

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References

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