

Handbell Music Reviews

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Come to Christmas (A Christmas Processional) –

Arr. Lamb
23 octaves
Level 1

This processional is based on O Come O Come Emmanuel and O Come All Ye Faithful. The first 10 measures can be used as a processional. The piece can be played in its entirety or separated into the three distinct parts (Processional, O Come O Come Emmanuel and O Come All Ye Faithful).

Four Christmas Favorites –

Arr. Waldrop
23 octaves
Level 1, 1+, 2-

The four Christmas pieces included in this music include Jingle Bells, We Three Kings, Jolly Old St. Nicholas and Away in a Manger (Murray tune). Each piece is on two pages and gives ringers the opportunity to learn some basic bell techniques as well as DS al fine and repeats with first and second endings.

A Bit of Tchaikowsky's Nutcracker (March, Chinese Dance, and Russian Dance) –

Arr. Elery Rogers
23 octaves
Level 2

Alfred publishing has been arranging "A Bit of" series for several years. This is the first in the series at a Level 2. The notes in the pieces are not hard but the tempo in each of these pieces is quick - from 112 to 144 beats per minute. Lots of repetition in each piece so it provides ringers an excellent change to have learn to ring faster music. Because this music is so well known, it is important to pay close attention to these markings.

Christmas Fantasy –

Arr. Watanabe
23 octaves
Level 2

Christmas Fantasy has a variety of snippets to full verses of popular Christmas carols. Melodies run from treble, mid range to bass bells. There are numerous tempo changes and meter changes as the melodies are woven together. There are specific dynamic markings that directors need to pay attention to so that the music doesn't sound like "just a bunch of Christmas Carols".

Angels We Have Heard on High –

Arr. Eithun

345 octaves

Level 3

This traditional Christmas Carol is always a popular one to have in your repertoire. This exciting arrangement is filled with various bells pealing - expressing the glad tidings of the angels that first Christmas. The first verse is a traditional style arrangement, the second verse has syncopated bass with the melody in the middle bells and the upper bells pealing, the final verse has full chords and a grand finale where the bells go from mp shake to double forte in one measure.

For Unto Us a Child Is Born –

Arr. McChesney

345 octaves

Level 3+

This Handel music from the Messiah does well on handbells. All ringers busy doing something - some times there are three or four different things happening at the same time. It is vital that the director studies the score carefully so that he or she knows exactly what notes are part of which melody. The running sixteenth notes, the steadfast tempo and the grandness of the arrangement make all the rehearsal time worthwhile when it finally comes together.

Little Fugue –

Arr. Kastner

567 octaves

Level 4

Another classical piece of music transcribed for bells, Choirchimes®, Orchestral Chimes, Petit Fritzen bells, Silver Melody Bells or some combination of the above. Many of you learned how to play a fugue in piano - maybe you have forgotten what it means. After searching the internet, here is a relative simple explanation. A fugue is a composition, or compositional technique, in which a theme (or themes) is extended and developed mainly by imitative counterpoint. In the opening section, the 'exposition', the main theme or 'subject' is announced in the tonic. after which the second 'voice' enters with the answer, i.e. the same theme at the dominant (or subdominant) pitch while the first may proceed to a countersubject. This procedure is repeated at different octaves until all the voices have entered and the exposition is complete. An extra statement of the subject or answer following on the exposition is called a 'redundant entry'; a set of such entries is a 'counter-exposition'. Believe it or not, it is both fun and challenging for the director as well as the ringers. Add a variety of timbre and textures with other instruments to the music and Bach will truly be impressed!