

MADISON

AREA

CONCERT

HANDBELLS



www.madisonhandbells.org

## Madison Area Concert Handbells

# Messenger

Fall 2008

### *Glories of Christmas*

Rollicking arrangements of holiday music, old and new, await you at Madison Area Concert Handbells' December concerts. Based on a "Glories of Christmas" theme, the concert features several pieces that include well-known "gloria" choruses as well as pieces of such stature that they are, indeed, glorious representations of the season.

Performances will be held:

<b>Friday, Dec. 12th</b>	7:30 p.m.	Asbury United Methodist Church
<b>Saturday, Dec. 13th</b>	7:30 p.m.	Asbury United Methodist Church
<b>Sunday, Dec. 14th</b>	3:00 p.m.	First Congregational UCC

*On This Day, Earth Shall Ring* opens the concert with persistent percussion driving the handbell melody of PERSONENT HODIE to an exuberant conclusion. Then, a contrast of mood, heard in *Cantique de Jean Racine*, illustrates the beginning of the Christmas story events as presented by our musicians. This beautiful piece, with its rich harmonies enhanced by an additional choir playing handchimes, foretells the "Everlasting Light" to come. Next, a German chorale harmonized by M. Praetorius in the 16<sup>th</sup> century fulfills Isaiah's eloquent prophecy as the expressive *Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming* is played. Though contemplative in character, a flute and mixed meters make it a very exciting piece. Organ, trumpet, timpani, and solo and audience singing follow in a grand arrangement of *Angels We Have Heard on High*, a favorite carol with florid *glorias*. Carrie Ingebritsen then sings *Angels' Carol* by the contemporary English composer/conductor John Rutter who tells of Christ's birth with a warm and wonderful melody. All are encouraged to come to the manger in *Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella*, a carryover of torch and candle traditions from the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, in the French district of Provence. We conclude the first half of the program with a striking arrangement of *Joy to the World* for bells, flute, organ, piano, and audience participation.

*A New Gloria* opens the second half of the concerts with robust harmonies and melodies that call for our full six octaves of bells and seven octaves of chimes, including chimes so large that they must be struck with a mallet instead of played by hand. A medley of three carols, including *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*, follows as we play *Sing We All Noel*. Triplets against duplets at different pitch levels showcase the various carols with the texture becoming more complex as the piece advances. The next medley, *Hymns of Christmas*, presents the audience with another opportunity to participate in singing well-loved carols. Then the tambourine and hand drum give rhythmic sparkle to *The Holly and the Ivy*, an arrangement with special syncopation challenges for the ringers. Two secular pieces that celebrate the holiday season follow. The popular *Winter Wonderland* features percussion on its reprise and *The Skaters*, a series of waltzes, is enhanced by Anne Aley playing the French horn. A magnificent collaboration of organ and bells closes the program with *We Three Kings* arranged in combination with Bizet's *Farandole* from *L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2*.

We invite you to attend one of our concerts; they are a wonderful way to experience the true joys of the Christmas season through music! Advance tickets may be bought at Borders Book Shops and Orange Tree Imports. Tickets will also be available at the door. For more information, please visit [www.madisonhandbells.org](http://www.madisonhandbells.org).

**Experience the uniquely beautiful music of one of America's finest handbell choirs!**

## **MACH's Service to the Community**

Just as we have in the past four years, MACH is again planning to enhance music programs in the public schools. In the Spring, Susan Udell and Kristi Menninga will teach classes of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders to play the handchimes in Madison, Cambridge, McFarland, DeForest, and Waunakee. These students will then be treated to a concert by our full choir at the Middleton Performing Arts Center. We have received so many positive evaluations in the past that we continue to solicit grants that will support this outreach since it is a project that is not included in MACH's regular budget. Thus far, the Alliant Energy Foundation and the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission have confirmed their support; we are most grateful!

In the 2008-09 season, MACH will also continue to perform for those in nursing homes, hospitals, and elder-care facilities. Starting in December with visits to Harbor House, Independent Living, and the UW Hospitals and Clinics, our full choir will present concerts and help audience members to play handchimes so that they can accompany singing of familiar carols.

These concerts give stimulation and feelings of accomplishment, revive memories of good times past with family and friends, and offer much needed respite from day-to-day health concerns. Our ringers not only spread joy to others, but receive it back from the enthusiastic responses we receive from our audiences. It is a privilege to share our music with these folks who cannot otherwise attend or participate in cultural events. Our thanks go to all who contribute to MACH for helping to support these outreach concerts for the elderly and infirm.

## **Easy Fundraising Opportunity**

Help support MACH through the Simplified SCRIP Program. SCRIP is a term used to describe gift cards or gift certificates that contribute a designated percentage to a school or organization. Amounts of contributions vary, depending on the merchant issuing the gift card. From gasoline or groceries to electronics or clothing, you will find SCRIP can be used to purchase almost anything. With the holidays just around the corner, what a convenient and easy way to start your holiday shopping!

Here's how it works: You can purchase Simplified SCRIP Cards to spend just like cash for yourself or use them as gifts. When these gift cards are purchased, a percentage of the amount spent is donated to MACH. You receive the full amount while also supporting MACH! There is a nominal cost for shipping of the gift cards – less than \$1 for up to 6 cards ordered.

There are over 100 merchants included in the SCRIP program. Some of the merchants who are currently participating include PDQ (3% to MACH), Cops and Woodman's grocery stores (3% to MACH), TGI Fridays (5% to MACH), and Lands' End (5% to MACH). Visit the Simplified Scrip website, [www.schooltimesnet.com](http://www.schooltimesnet.com), where you can print order forms and see a full listing of the participating merchants. You may order over the phone or online.

Thank you for supporting MACH and helping us continue to serve the community through high-quality performances of handbell music.

## **How You Can Help**

We receive some income through ticketed concerts, paid performances, and CD and advertising sales. We also receive grants and support from corporations and foundations. However, the largest source of our income is individuals like you who make contributions to MACH. We mail out a letter of request for support just once each year and greatly appreciate the response we receive. If it weren't for the generosity of so many kind individuals, MACH could not continue to provide its fine handbell music and educational services to Madison and other communities throughout Wisconsin.

If you have already given us a contribution this year, we thank you again for your generosity. If you have not yet given, we ask you to please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to MACH today.

## MACH and MSO

On the first weekend of December, MACH will appear with the Madison Symphony Orchestra in their Christmas Spectacular concerts in Overture Hall. This will be our fourth appearance with MSO and it's always a treat to do so. Not only do we collaborate with the magnificent sounds of the orchestra, organ, and choruses, but, as in the past, we also perform a solo piece. There is something special about playing for an audience of 2,200 each night amid all the holiday glitz and glitter of that marvelous theater! We'll play *A Bellsong Fantasy* with the orchestra and chorus to open the program. That will be followed by *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* with youth choirs, and *We Three Kings* arranged with Bizet's *Farandole* for bells and orchestra. Our solo is *On This Day, Earth Shall Ring*, a fitting piece, considering that handbells are playing! The two latter pieces will give you a sample of what we'll perform in our own concerts the following weekend. We invite you to attend!

## MACH Welcomes New Members

**Debi Robey** first heard handbells in a shopping mall and didn't learn until later how great they could sound with proper acoustics. She was roped into subbing at a rehearsal when a co-worker, who was the daughter of a bell director, found out she could read music. Now, 25 years, 3 states and 6 bell groups later, this bell-a-holic is delighted to be in Madison and a member of MACH. Debi especially likes community groups like MACH, for the higher level of commitment and musicality they offer, not to mention travel opportunities! Debi has played at the White House with the Heidelberg Handbells of PA, in New York City with the Malmark Ringers of PA, and toured in England and Puerto Rico with the Agape Ringers of Chicago.

Since husband Ray took a new chemical engineering consulting job here in Madison, they have spent the last year fixing up, packing, selling, moving, buying, unpacking, and fixing up. While she decides what to do "when I grow up," Debi enjoys exploring all the free summer concerts and great restaurants in Madison and, as a new "empty nester," learning various forms of electronic communication while staying in touch with daughters Kim working in Chicago and Alison attending college in Boston.

After ringing for most of her childhood and adolescence in handbell choirs in Texas, **Leticia Bode** took several years off from handbells before returning to ring with MACH beginning in Spring of 2008. She is thrilled to be back and especially enjoys the community and challenge of ringing in MACH. Leticia works as a teaching assistant while progressing towards her PhD in American Politics at the University of Wisconsin. In her free time she enjoys cooking, reading, and spending as much time as she can with her three nieces and two nephews.

**Maggie Gleason** started playing handbells at her church in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Handbells have been part of her family for as long as she can remember. Both of Maggie's parents started playing when she was very young, and as her two older brothers reached junior high, they started also. Maggie played through high school, but then in college, she no longer had a choir to play in regularly. Maggie didn't realize how much she had missed playing until she joined the choir at a church here in Madison, after moving two years ago from Lincoln, Nebraska.

After playing for a year at her church in Madison, Maggie decided she was still looking for something more, so she got the courage to try out for MACH. She's really excited to have the opportunity to play with such an amazing group. She is learning a lot and getting better with each rehearsal. Though Maggie's two bell groups keep her busy, in her free time she enjoys sports, especially college football, biking, cooking, cross-stitching, and shopping at SuperTarget, where she also works.

MACH would also like to welcome **Shawn Ray** as its new Executive Director. Shawn is not a "ringer" but increases his enjoyment of handbells with each piece he hears. Shawn has an extensive musical background that started when he was five years old and playing the recorder. Since that time he has gone on to graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Music Education and a Master's degree in Business Management.

Shawn is very excited to be working with such an outstanding musical group and hopes to spread the word about all of the good things MACH does for its listeners and for the community.

Mark Your Calendars!

## ***Baroque & Beyond***

Associate Director: Mark Bloedow

**Sunday, May 3, 2009** at 3:00 p.m.  
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church  
5700 Pheasant Hill Rd., Monona

And

**Saturday, May 9, 2009** at 7:30 p.m.  
Asbury United Methodist Church  
6101 University Ave., Madison

Address Service Requested

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See and hear us on the Web!  
[www.madisonhandbells.org](http://www.madisonhandbells.org)

## **Bells on the Brain**

by Joanne Juhnke, MACH Ringer

"Even in the absence of external sources, most of us are incessantly playing music in our heads." -- Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*. One of my favorite aspects of ringing with MACH is that I get to hear bell music in my head for several months each semester. It doesn't happen right away for me. Sight-reading is not my strongest suit, and the music doesn't really come together for me until I can hear in my mind what my contributions are supposed to be. Then... I can start rehearsing on the bus en route to and from work. Provided that I've taken the music home, I can pull a score out of my backpack, follow it with my eyes, hear the bells in my head and imagine what it would feel like to ring my bells in the right places.

This commuter style of rehearsal was validated for me this summer when I read *Musicophilia* by Oliver Sacks, a neurologist whose writing on music and the brain is filled with fascinating case studies. These lines in particular about mental piano rehearsal jumped off the page at me: "I not only 'hear' the music, but I 'see' my hands on the keyboard, and 'feel' them playing the piece... Even if it is involuntary and unconscious, going over passages mentally this way is a crucial tool for all performers, and the imagination of playing can be almost as efficacious as the physical actuality."

Virtual bell rehearsal enlivens my commute and polishes my performance at the same time. Sometimes I even get to converse about the bells, as curious seatmates peer over at the score and say, "That's surely not for piano, is it?"

Yes, I've got bells on the brain -- and I wouldn't have it any other way!