

WELS S.E. Regional Handbell Festival
April 13-14, 2024
Laudate Director's Notes
Prof. Ryan Stangl

Greetings, Laudate ringers! I'm humbled and excited to be able to serve as one of your clinicians for this year's Southeast Regional Handbell Festival! I haven't been a handbell director for very long, but I love working with my student ringers and have thoroughly enjoyed their enthusiasm (and all their guidance) over the past 5 years. I'm sure this will be a fantastic experience as we present our music to the Lord!

In general:

- Please note the **tempo indications** for each of our choir's pieces. I will strive for us to play them at those speeds.
- Note also the various **dynamic markings**, particularly the crescendos and decrescendos. They add SO MUCH to the flow and character of the music!
- As I'm sure you're all aware, **the melody is king**, so each ringer should always know if they have part of the melody, and then be sure to bring it out!

Other thoughts for each song are mentioned below. I pray that your final preparations for the festival go well!

Of the Father's Love Begotten (Krug)

This long-lived Christmas hymn is based on plainchant, so we will want it to flow smoothly along right from the beginning. To help that happen, try to feel a **slight emphasis on beats 1 and 3** amidst all those melodic quarter notes, matching up with the half note chords below them.

The dynamics include many crescendos and decrescendos, and sometimes they aren't really that drastic. We might take some liberties with that in the interest of making sure they come through.

Measures 45-47 will give us something to work on in this piece! There is a ritardando at m. 45, during which we are crescendoing to a forte fermata note at m. 46. I would like to hold that note right up to the downbeat of the next measure. This means that as the whole note decays, the ringers who enter at m. 47 should be ready to watch for my cue to continue the song, while those who need to dampen their pitch from m. 46 will need to do that simultaneously with the beginning of m. 47.

Have fun with this expressive piece!

Joy Has Dawned (Wagner)

This piece is SO MUCH MORE than the notes and rhythms! There are three lovely Christmas melodies in this piece, and sometimes the main melody notes are hidden inside chords (like the F-sharps in m. 48 on beat 4!), so as I mentioned previously, please **make sure you know who has the melody notes and bring those out!**

(Joy Has Dawned, cont'd)

There are also 2 **key changes** throughout the song, so as I tell my ringers, be sure everyone marks in their “choreography” for changing bells so we can make those transitions as smoothly as possible.

While I said earlier that “melody is the king” in music, I firmly believe that **transitions** are a close second. Often there are many interesting things that happen when we go from one section of music to another, so be sure to spend time making all the transitions in our songs as comfortable – and musical! – as possible.

Fantasy on Hyfrydol (Hopson)

What a barnburner of a setting this one is (which is probably why my students love it!)... And since it looks like it's the second-to-last piece on the concert program, it might jar our listeners just a bit! (Which is okay to do occasionally! 🤪)

Unless we're told otherwise, I plan to follow the **repeat signs** as indicated on p. 2-3. However, be ready for that ritardando at m. 27 (both times!), and if you're a quarter note player in those measures, keep an eye on me so we stay together. Be ready also to go back to the original tempo immediately, as indicated.

There are many measures with **eighth note ostinato patterns** in this piece (m. 37ff, 52ff.), so if you play during those sections be careful to settle into the beat and not rush forward. Lock your rhythms in with the hymn that's going on around you!

I'm sure everyone's favorite part is **m. 96ff!** Bell-switching choreography will be important here too, as **we will NOT want to slow down the tempo** until m. 101.

I'd like to add a **special technical consideration at m. 102**: right after striking the sforzando downbeat, please practice dropping your bells to your side as you commence to shake them... this will GREATLY enhance the sudden drop to piano that the dynamics indicate, and then as we shake we will raise them up through the measure – still slowing down – before striking the loudest downbeat you can give me at m. 103 for the final resolution. This is going to be EPIC!

Please feel free to direct any questions to me at stanglrj@lps.wels.net. I can't wait to meet you all and create some amazing music at the Festival! See you in April!