

Travelin' Music

Suggestions for Director's Comments

The director will probably want to handle all the narration unless one of the ringers is highly qualified to do it. The narrator must be able to speak slowly and clearly; it is unlikely that the announcer will have microphone. If using a ringer instead of the director, make sure this person can be seen and heard from their normal position in the bell choir because waiting for the announcer to move away from their ringing position and back again for each announcement leaves too much "dead time".

At your last rehearsal before the trip tell the ringers what you plan to say and briefly rehearse them on the demonstrations you will use; also practice bowing from behind the music stands.

The following explanations, printed in normal type, make the commentary look longer than it is. The actual comments between selections, shown in *italic print*, are relatively short.

The titles appear as headings throughout the text. The actual comments in *red print* are intended for use after a song; comments in *blue print* are lead-ins to the next piece.

1. Awakening

When the group is in place, ready to begin the performance, start the program by playing *Awakening* with no comments from the narrator. If a representative from the venue wants to introduce you and/or your group before you begin to play, face the audience during the introduction; bow slightly to acknowledge the introduction and audience before turning around to direct the first selection.

After the applause, turn around, smile and ask,

*"Are you awake yet? You should be because **Awakening** was the title of our opening number.*

Continue by introducing the group as a whole.

"We are the (name of your group) from (name of church or school)."

If you know that someone in the audience is a friend or relative of a ringer or someone in your church or school, point that out using a comment similar to the samples below.

For a ringer: *"The grandmother of Eric, one of our ringers, lives here at (name of venue)."*

Other connections: *"Martha Morris, a resident here, is a member of our church."*

"Robert Martin, the social director at (name of venue) is the son of our school's principal."

"We have come to share the joy of music with you."

*"Music for the Morning is the theme of our first group of songs. We will continue with **Sunrise**."*

2. Sunrise

After *Sunrise*, the bell choir should sit down while the 5 ringers get in place for the next selection. If you are using the ringers who normally play the positions D5—F6, perhaps they can move their stands forward slightly.

When you introduce this group, call attention to the reason, if any, that they are in this group. My multigenerational choir pioneered this *Travelin' Music* book; the five high school youth played the selections for five ringers. At another time there were five members of one family in my choir; this family group occasionally played for small events away from the church. Another simple reason for being in the small group is that these ringers play the positions called for in the quintet. Announcing individual names is not necessary at this time.

“The eleven ringers in our(multigenerational) bell choir represent a wide range of ages (or represent the older youth in our church or a special gifted and talented program at our school). The five youth in the choir will play the next piece for you on a related instrument called choir chimes. (if you are using chimes) What comes after the sunrise? Morning Has Broken, of course.”

3. Morning Has Broken (5 ringers)

The five ringers should bow in unison from behind the music stands, move the stands back into line if necessary and all ringers should move back to their regular positions.

“The last song in our opening group is a hymn, When Morning Gilds the Skies.”

Before you begin the next group of selections consider giving a brief explanation of handbells.

“Handbells are slightly similar to a piano keyboard; they have white notes and black notes. One obvious difference is that we need eleven ringers to play our instrument because each ringer can only play two notes at once.

*Our set of bells includes large bells for the low notes, (C4-C5 hold up their natural bells)
medium sized bells for the middle range, (C5-C6 hold up their natural bells)
and smaller bells for the high notes. (C6-C7 hold up their natural bells)*

This is a 3-octave set of bells; that means we can play three scales:

low; (C4-C5 ring up the scale one quarter note for each pitch, damping after each pitch)

middle; (C5-C6 ring up the scale one quarter note for each pitch, damping after each pitch)

and high.” (C6-C7 ring up the scale one quarter note for each pitch, damping after each pitch)

Immediately signal them to ring down the scales in the same manner, starting with C7, repeating the C6 and C5 to start down the 2nd and 3rd octaves.

“Make a Joyful Noise, our next song, illustrates the contrast between the full choir and the various ranges from high to low.”

5. Make a Joyful Noise

“It is time for another hymn. The Beautiful Earth is an arrangement of two hymn melodies: ‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’ followed by ‘For the Beauty of the Earth.’ Near the end we hope you can hear short bits of ‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’ in the high bells over the other melody in the middle and low bells.”

6. The Beautiful Earth

“We have a few more selections inspired by the natural beauty around us.”

If using chimes for then next piece, hold up one of the larger chimes, pointing out that it resembles a large *tuning fork* with a mallet attached to one side.

*“As you probably noticed in an earlier piece, the chimes have a softer, more mellow sound. That makes them a good choice for **Green Meadow, Warm Sun.**”*

7. Green Meadow, Warm Sun

“The beginning of two different stanzas of the CRUSADERS' HYMN fits our nature theme.

*Fair are the meadows, fairer the woodlands
Robed in the blooming garb of spring.*

and

*Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight
And all the twinkling, starry host.*

8. Fair Are the Meadows

The small group should move into place again.

“Our small group is going to play for you again.”

If it seems appropriate, this is as good time to introduce the five ringers in the small group, especially if one or more of them is related to someone in the audience. Step to the side so that you don't block them and say,

“Starting at this end, I want you to meet (clearly say each name in order down the row).”

*“Reflecting on the beauties of nature often calls our hearts to praise. Listen now as our quintet plays **Rejoice in the Lord.**”*

9. Rejoice in the Lord

“Bell choirs customarily ring behind tables covered with thick, foam pads; these tables hold the music and the extra bells not needed in a specific composition. Since it is cumbersome to transport these tables and large pieces of foam, we devised a way to ring without tables by letting the ringers keep their extra bells on the floor and exchange bells when necessary.

*Turning to the chimes again, we'll play another original composition for handbells entitled **Oriental Breeze.***

10. Oriental Breeze

“Music is a powerful medium that can lift our spirits and restore the soul. I like the slogan I saw on a coffee mug: ‘God gave us music so we can pray without words.’”

*“That brings us to another hymn medley, **Two Hymns of Praise.** We are sure you will recognize both hymn tunes.*

11. Two Hymns of Praise

“Let me explain why you just saw one of the ringers hand me a bell; you might have seen that happen a few times earlier in our program. Some compositions call for “accidentals,” extra notes that are not in the key signature. Each ringer is responsible for two white notes plus the sharps and flats that belong to those notes. When the music needs an accidental, the ringer must put down the natural bell in order to ring the sharp or flat of that note. Although this process, called a “bell change,” is no problem when ringing from tables, it does present a difficulty when

ringing without tables. Music with lots of bell changes is simply not feasible. Therefore, we are using a book of pieces created specifically for ringing without tables. Many of the compositions in this collection do not have bell changes. Absolutely crucial accidentals have been assigned to the director.

*Our last few pieces are lighter in nature. We are sure you will recognize the old, old tune used in **The Daisy Bells**.*

12. The Daisy Bells

*The quintet has one more piece for you. We hope you enjoy listening to **Dancing Spirits** as much as they enjoy ringing it.*

13. Dancing Spirits

*For a change in mood (and tone color) (if switching to chimes) the full choir will play a lush arrangement of **Danny Boy**.*

14. Danny Boy

Bells have one basic tone color—the ringing sound. Over the years ringers and composers have developed a few techniques to add more timbres. Although we have not been able to use many of these techniques because they require tables, you have heard three different ones today:

***shake** (signal the ringers to demonstrate by shaking the first chord in #15 for 3 beats, cutting off on cue)*

***ring touch** (signal the ringers to demonstrate by ringing the first measure in #15 as written, stopping with a RT on the first chord of measure 2)*

***thumb damp** is “tink-tink” sound you heard in “The Daisy Bells.”*

*You will be able to hear the contrast between thumb damps and normal ringing when we play **Bells Español**.*

15. Bells Español

If it seems appropriate, this is as good a time to introduce the rest of the ringers, especially if any of them are related to someone in the audience.

*The last piece of our light-hearted music is called **Fiesta**. It has a **ring touch** at the end.*

16. Fiesta

It has been a pleasure to play for you today. We hope our music brightened your spirits.

We want to close our presentation with one of America's best patriotic songs.

17. America, the Beautiful

Make a final bow; then acknowledge the ringers and bow again with them.