

## Houston Bronze Ensemble

Volume 4, No. 1  
January, 2017



*Dedicated to HandBell Excellence  
Ensuring the future of handbells for ringers and listeners.*

### Calendar of Events

Houston Bronze Ensemble is currently scheduling events for 2017 and beyond.

Contact us at:

P.O. Box 541741  
Houston, TX 77254

Phone: 1-866-908-RING (7464)  
www.houstonbronze.com

Email:  
info@houstonbronze.com  
eventcoordinator@houstonbronze.com

### CALENDAR:

#### Trinity Klein Lutheran Church

**Sunday, April 30, 2017 4:00 pm**

Concert Series  
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.  
Spring, TX

### MATCH

Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston

**Friday, May 5, 2017 7:30 pm**

3400 Main St.  
Houston, TX 77002

#### Tomball United Methodist Church

**Friday, Dec. 1, 2017 7:00 pm**

1603 Baker Drive  
Tomball, TX 77375

### MATCH

Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston

**Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017 7:30 pm**

3400 Main St.  
Houston, TX 77002

[LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!!](#)

*Newsletters will be issued in January, April, July, and October. Newsletters will be issued electronically through emails, on the website ([www.houstonbronze.com](http://www.houstonbronze.com)), and on Facebook. We hope you will enjoy them.*

It's the most *Wonderful Time* of the year!

Our 2016 season is complete and we had a great time with our concerts this year. We also enjoyed the preparation for them. All members were challenged to raise their level of preparedness at each rehearsal, having notes worked out by the end of September. We were then able to focus on the ensemble. Everyone's work paid off. We presented two wonderful concerts, received over 60 LIKES on Facebook during late November and December and had over 4,000 views of our Facebook page. We heard some wonderful comments on the concerts and we are ready to begin 2017 where we left off. We will continue to challenge ourselves to bring you **EXCELLENCE** in all that we do. Our concert season was not without some trials as our UHAUL leaked leaving us with wet foams and some wet bells when we arrived for our second concert. We dried everything off using hair dryers and towels and went ahead to play a great concert. For those of you who were able to join us in December, we thank you. We hope to see you and those who couldn't join us in December at our spring concerts. Below are some comments that we received in December:

- *You all are just excellent musicians.*
- *I didn't know handbells could sound like that.*
- *Professional, precise and pure joy. Thanks for such a wonderful Christmas gift.*
- *It was phenomenal*
- *People, listen to this! Handbells on steroids!*
- *That was just excellent. Your understanding of the rhythmic hierarchy is impressive. Bravo!*



## *A Note From Our President*

At this time of year, the word “new” is all around us. There is certainly something alluring about anything new.

Whether it’s as simple as reading a new book or wearing a new outfit or as challenging as developing a new habit, new elements in our lives provide a sense of exhilaration. As exciting as new things and adventures are, moving out of our comfort zones and accepted routines is also a little frightening. As 2017 begins, Houston Bronze is definitely experiencing both the thrill and the fear of moving forward in our re“new”ed goals of excellence in enjoyment and education!

During the fall semester, many hours of hard work resulted in enjoyable concerts filled with beautiful Christmas classics and rousing new arrangements. Small groups rang at a variety of events throughout the Houston area to spread Christmas cheer. Outside of rehearsal time, members of the group led three different workshops sharing their love and knowledge of bells with others in the community. A mentoring relationship was also begun with the Brookwood Community’s handbell choir and four scholarships were awarded to students attending College Ring-In. It was an exciting and fast paced few months!

After a short break, enthusiasm for the new year is high as we begin preparing for a busy spring filled with multiple events (FebFest for Houston area groups and Bronzefest for Texas college and community groups) and our own concerts. Plans are also underway to develop even more educational opportunities for both adults and children. While the journey will certainly be filled with exhilarating and sometimes scary twists and turns, 2017 truly looks to be an exciting year in our re“new”ed pursuit of excellence!

**LIKE us on [FACEBOOK](#)**

## *Thank you!*

Houston Bronze Ensemble would like to thank our contributors for their donations during this past year. You have helped us to send our director to a national handbell event, purchase new music and equipment, offer scholarships to students to attend College Ring-In, and so much more. It is because of you that we are able to continue to bring you our dedication to EXCELLENCE.

### *Corporate Contributors*

ExxonMobil          Phillips 66          Shell Oil  
Amazon                  iGive

### *Individual Contributors*

Lloyd and Judy Clayton  
Sam and Linda Conner  
Jerry Conry  
Stephen Driver  
Tom and Patricia Ellerbrock  
Robert and Linda Ellison  
Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston  
Dean and Sherry Hunter  
Mike and May McEvelly  
Ken and Lorna Noack  
Bob and Ruth Seiwel  
Christine and Joseph Theis  
Wilson Van Tine





## *Reflections of a Rookie Ringer*

*By Jimmy Clark*

My journey started with an email to Bill Nave, the artistic director of Houston Bronze, this past summer asking about auditions for the Houston Bronze Ensemble. Auditions had been held a couple of months earlier, but I was hoping for at least one empty spot, or to possibly be added to the substitute ringer roster. I had played handbells since college, even spent a few years as a director of an advanced church-based handbell choir, so I thought I was up to the challenge. I mention the director part only because during this time I think I had played every bell we had (sometimes while directing) when a substitute ringer was not available, so technically, I can play any position. Some better than others. After hearing there was one more audition opportunity, I prepared by practicing ringing and weaving techniques, using handbells, wooden spoons, empty bottles or anything else I could get my hands on. I pulled music out of my library to assess my sight reading skills, which needed some work, but felt I was ready for the audition. I wish my audition performance matched my level of confidence, but sadly that was not the case (anxiety got the best of me); however, I was invited to join the ensemble, ringing primarily lower bass bells.

This is the part where I highlight some differences between a church-based handbell choir and a professional ensemble. A predictable topic, but indulge me. Rehearsals started and ended much like I was used to, but setup took longer because of the seven octaves of bells (plus duplicate bells), silver melody bells, Petit & Fritsen bells, cymbells, chimes, and percussion (cowbell included). I faced a steep learning curve as the music was at a higher level than I was used to in my church handbell choir, and there was much more to learn than the one or two pieces played during worship services every month or so. Rehearsals had a serious tone, were intense, and challenged my abilities as a musician and a member of a professional ensemble.

Prior to Houston Bronze, the largest bell I had played was C3, a bell used in many church handbell choirs, but still considered a luxury depending on the budget and available ringers. I was quickly introduced to the C2, which weighs in at almost 20 pounds and close to 20 inches tall. The music for the Christmas program was challenging enough, but

learning to maneuver the larger bells took several weeks. We changed positions for each piece so I got a break from the larger bells. With 17 ringers on the roster, instead of the typical 15, we had two extra ringers each piece to play percussion, pick up extra bells, or sit out if not needed.

After a few months of rehearsals, it was time for the Christmas concerts. It was hard work getting to this point, but I was looking forward to friends and family hearing what I had spent months working towards. I was expecting a certain amount of performance anxiety for the first concert, but I was not expecting how emotional I would get during the second song in our program, "On Christmas Day in the Morn" arranged by Fred Gramann. This happens to be one of my favorites, and the one in which I sit out. I stood slightly off stage with my eyes closed listening to beautiful music played by some of the most talented musicians I know. Afterwards, I wiped away a few tears and joined the ensemble for the rest of the program, ending with Wizards in Winter. Now that it is a fun one to play.

Now for some takeaways from my experience. If you are a director, encourage your ringers to experiment playing different bells. Challenge them with music not necessarily at the level they are now, but where they want to be. If you are a ringer, let go of the idea that you must play every bell assigned in every piece of music. Ask for help, and help others. Encourage each other to go past the notes on the page and ring musically. And finally, practice on your own outside of rehearsals. There is one more piece of advice – audition for Houston Bronze Ensemble. Follow us on Facebook for more information about auditions in the coming months. Would I do this all over again? You bet, and I am! The spring concert is just under 4 months away!





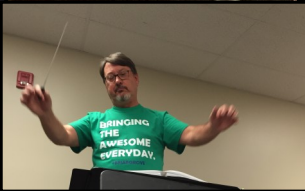
Houston Bronze Ensemble



*Dedicated to excellence to ensure the future of handbells for ringers and listeners.*



Christmas, 2016





# Excellence in Education

## Houston Bronze Partnering with Brookwood Handbell Choir

As we began this year to search for more ways that HBE can broaden its educational outreach, we had a wonderful opportunity present itself to us. This partnership is still in its infancy and we are learning how we can best help this wonderful organization. To this point we have only attended a few rehearsals and enjoyed being with the members of the ensemble. We expect to learn far more from these musicians than we will ever give. We are looking forward to forming a lasting relationship with the ensemble at Brookwood. If you are unfamiliar with Brookwood, here is a copy of an article from their website explaining who they are and what they do.

*“People with disabilities can make beautiful music with handbells. Don’t believe that? Just listen to the Brookwood Handbell Choir!”*

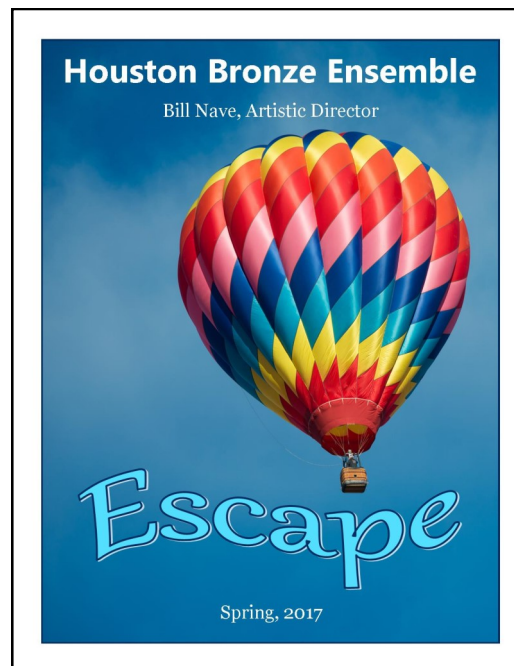
*Located on a beautiful acreage west of Houston in Brookshire, Texas, Brookwood is a God-centered, educational community, where adults with special needs have meaningful jobs and live life abundantly... without government funding.*

*The Brookwood Handbell Choir is composed of 16 citizens who have mastered playing music with colored scrolls and a set of 3-octave handbells. The system was adapted from the Handbell Musicians of America under the leadership of world renowned pianist, Linda McKechnie, in 2007.*

*The Brookwood Handbell Choir has played for numerous churches, senior groups, private luncheons, and the Houston Astros – where they rang the National Anthem! Their most recent performances include ringing for the Houston Grand Opera, the Houston Symphony, the Brookwood Spring Gala and the Brookwood Volunteer Benefit Luncheon. They also perform regularly at Brookwood for many special occasions.”*

For more information about the Brookwood Handbell Choir, please check out their website at

[http://www.brookwoodcommunity.org/  
community/handbell.php](http://www.brookwoodcommunity.org/community/handbell.php)



Our spring concert dates are set and we have started rehearsals. Final details are still in the making but we wanted to be sure you have our dates on your calendar. We hope you will “Escape” with us as you allow the music to take you to the moon and beyond!

**Trinity Klein Lutheran Church**  
**Sunday, April 30, 2017 4:00 pm**  
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Spring, TX

**MATCH**  
Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston  
**Friday, May 5, 2017 7:30 pm**  
3400 Main St.  
Houston, TX 77002



## Change of Address

Houston Bronze Ensemble has changed their address. Our new address is:

Houston Bronze Ensemble  
P.O. Box 541741  
Houston, TX 77254

# Houston Bronze Ensemble College Ring-In Scholarship



*Dedicated to HandBell Excellence*

*Ensuring the future of handbells for ringers and listeners*

The Houston Bronze Ensemble awarded three \$100.00 scholarships to the College Ring-In held in Dallas, Texas. Scholarships were given to two students from Baylor University. One of these students is from the Houston Area. A third scholarship was granted to a student from California who attends Syracuse University. We congratulate them. Houston Bronze recognizes the need to invest in the future of handbells by supporting these young handbell players. Each recipient was asked to post on Facebook while attending the event. They were also asked to write a follow up report about the event. Without knowing one of reasons for giving the scholarships, ensuring the future of handbells, they each touched on it in their follow up.

## *From Tessa*

The college ring-in was an experience that took my love and appreciation for ringing to new heights. To begin with, it gave me a much better appreciation for just how lucky I have been to grow up in bell programs that really developed my skills, without them I would not have been able to focus so much on improving my musicianship throughout the ring-in. The part I enjoyed the most was being in an environment where everyone had a true passion and talent for ringing, allowing me to focus more on musical refinement with precision as a whole and as Michael Joy put it, really “feeling the music” rather than just reading notes off the page. I have already begun to take this experience and translate it into ringing within the Baylor group. The experience has fine tuned my attention to detail and has pushed me to take ringing in my life down a more serious path.

## *From Nathan*

CRI was quite the experience for me... I've only been ringing consistently since August 2016 (before which I'd had minimal experience around handbells, though having an extensive musical background served as a wonderful catalyst). One of the things I enjoyed most about CRI while I

was there was the incredible musicality of all the musicians. It's a thrilling experience to be surrounded by musicians who are so keyed into the music. The experience I gained over the three days, has encouraged me to pursue any opportunity to mentor other musicians. One such example is teaching new ringers about the basics of handbells and encouraging their interest. Mentoring others through music has been a passion of mine, and I believe my experiences with CRI have given me a wider scope through which I can help others.

## *From Elizabeth*

While in Dallas ... the energy in the room when we played together was palpable; everyone in the room was connected with the music and with each other. Handbells is about so much more than playing the notes we see on the page, and we took it beyond. I learned that when you really look at everything the composer has put on the page, it paints a clearer picture in your head of what's going on (be it what they were thinking when they wrote it or what you're imagining in your own mind), and that gives emotional enrichment to the music that you make.

We talked about the idea of the body being an instrument, and the body being an extension of the bell, as well as how we use our sagittal space to augment transitions in the music. That really resonated with me because watching everyone else and their different styles of ringing, I saw how much ringing is a visual art form as much as it is aural.

Needless to say, without College Ring-In, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to spend time working with and learning from other amazing musicians, becoming a better ringer and sharing my passion in the process. It was wonderful that this event was able to bring together young people in the handbell community to ring together and create friendships and talk about new ideas. It was a great musical moment for me, and I'm going to keep trying to get the handbell choir at Syracuse started up again, because I think I would miss bells too much if I didn't.



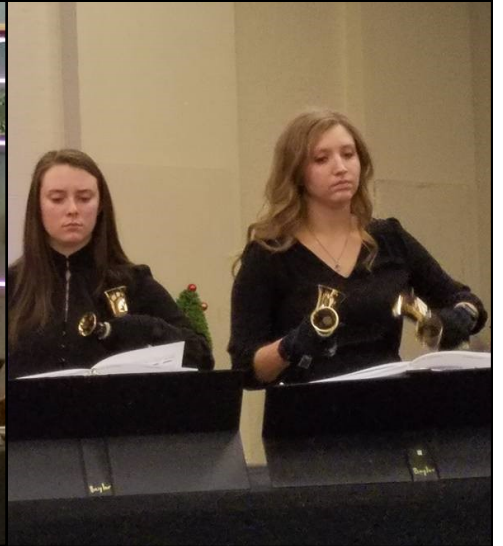
# Pictures from College Ring In



College Ring In 2017 Michael Joy, Director



OUCH!!!!



End of a long day of rehearsal



## The Houston Bronze Ensemble

Houston Bronze Ensemble is currently scheduling events for 2017 and beyond. If you are interested in hosting the entire ensemble or perhaps just a small group for a full concert, party or wedding, please get in touch with us at:

P.O. Box 541741  
Houston, TX 77254

Phone: 1-866-908-RING (7464)  
www.houstonbronze.com

Email:  
info@houstonbronze.com  
eventcoordinator@houstonbronze.com

Houston Bronze Ensemble also loves conducting workshops for handbell organizations throughout the Houston area. We would love to do one for your group.



## About The Houston Bronze Ensemble

The **Houston Bronze Ensemble** is a professional, auditioned, handbell ensemble made up of musicians from the greater Houston area. The founders of HBE, Jeff Weiss, Christine Anderson, and Hart Morris, met for lunch one day in 1988 looking for a way for Houston area handbell directors to have a place to play. They began by writing on a napkin the names of the people who might want to be a part of this ensemble. This was our beginning. In the fall of 1988 Hart Morris became the first director of Houston Bronze. After Hart moved to Memphis, Tennessee, the ensemble rang under the musical direction of arranger and composer Margaret (Maggi) R. Tucker until 1994. During the 1995 season, the group rang ensemble style with various ringers, including G.W. 'Dub' Shepherd, Andrew Bowen and David VanderMeer, directing the ensemble. Conductors since then have included David VanderMeer, Dolan Bayless, Ben Harris, Ruth Seiwel and James Roberts. Bill Nave was appointed the artistic director in August 2014.

The ensemble celebrated its 25th Anniversary year in 2014. In December 2014, Houston Bronze Ensemble was honored with an invitation to perform with the Houston Symphony as a part of their Family Concert Series. In July 2015, the ensemble was invited to and performed at Pinnacle 2015 held in Dallas, TX.

The ensemble rehearses every Tuesday evening with a focus on excellence in precision and expression. The ensemble plays a variety of genres of music but always with the goal of excellence.

Houston Bronze Ensemble holds a 501(c)(3) non-profit status.





# BE A FRIEND OF HOUSTON BRONZE



- Attend our concerts.
- Bring a friend to a concert
- Join our email list! You will then receive this newsletter in your email. You will also be placed on our list to be notified of future concerts and events. Join us by going to our [website](#).
- LIKE us on [FACEBOOK](#).
- Like Facebook entries and pictures.
- Share Facebook entries.
- Check out our website, [www.houstonbronze.com](http://www.houstonbronze.com)
- Volunteer to help at concerts—handing out programs, selling CD's, etc.
- Shop [Amazon Smile](#) and designate Houston Bronze Ensemble Inc as your organization. Amazon will contribute to HBE when you shop!
- Donate to Houston Bronze Ensemble. All donations, large or small, are welcome!!

A 501(c)(3) Corporation—All donations to HBE are tax deductible.

## Contribute to Houston Bronze Ensemble

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(As it should appear in our programs and newsletters)

I wish my gift to be anonymous. Please do not list my name in programs or newsletters.

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Benefits of Being a Friend of HBE

- Direct mailing of newsletter
- Your name listed in HBE programs and newsletter
- Advance notice of public concerts

Please send donations to: Houston Bronze Ensemble P.O. Box 541741 Houston, TX 77254

You may also contact our treasurer at [info@houstonbronze.com](mailto:info@houstonbronze.com) to make arrangements to contribute via credit card

LIKE us on [FACEBOOK](#)

Check out our [YouTube](#) Channel

