

Vol. 10, No. 2
April, 2023



Houston Bronze Ensemble
EXPECT EXCELLENCE

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

HOUSTON BRONZE ENSEMBLE
2023 Concerts and Performances

Saturday, May 20, 2023 7:30 pm
MATCH
Ticketed Concert

Sunday, May 21, 2023 4:00 pm
Trinity Klein Lutheran Church
Free concert

Thursday, July 13, 2023 5:30 pm
Handbell Musicians of America
National Seminar
Irving, Texas

Friday, December 1, 2023 7:30 pm
MATCH
Ticketed Concert

Saturday, December 2, 2023 7:00 pm
Tomball United Methodist Church

Houston Bronze Ensemble is currently scheduling events for Fall, 2023 and beyond. To schedule a concert, contact us at:

Email:

info@houstonbronze.com
eventcoordinator@houstonbronze.com

www.houstonbronze.com
P.O. Box 541741
Houston, TX 77254
Phone: 1-866-908-RING (7464)



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“Imagine how the world could be so very fine, so happy together!” –Garry Bonner and Alan Gordon

Happiness can only grow when shared with YOU. Our concert of music and poetry, “Happy Together”, will underscore the events and diversity of our lives as Houstonians from our hot summers and busy freeways to the Texas big blue sky and from beautiful sunsets and sunrises to trips into space. Join us as we share our joy of making music together in this fabulous city we call home. The concert will include three premiere performances. Houston Bronze is Happy Together, and we would love to share that happiness with you.

In this newsletter you will find lots of exciting things that have happened to the ensemble since our last newsletter. You will also find a wonderful article by ensemble member DruEllen Duncan about where she finds relief from stress. Be sure to check out the remainder of this letter!

Check out our [YouTube](#) Channel.



A Note from our President —Kathy Beard

Welcome to the spring edition of the HBE newsletter. Many exciting things are happening! With Sondra Tucker, Stevie Berryman, and members of the music family of First Congregational Church, the Houston Bronze Ensemble wished Maggi Tucker a fond farewell as she and her husband move away from our city. There's an article included about that event later in the newsletter. Coming on April 22nd is the Lemonade Handbell Festival ... an additional event conceived by Sondra Tucker and Stevie Berryman. Houston Bronze will be there to lend a hand where needed. Then it's May and concert weekend! Make sure your calendars are marked for the 3rd weekend in the month.

Spring is also a time of sadness and joy for HBE. We knew from the beginning that Sondra and Roger were with us for only one year. We knew plans were always for retirement and the move home to Memphis. What a year it's been! If you missed our Christmas concert you missed one of the best Houston Bronze concerts ever! Sondra brought out mirth and merriment in us that we didn't know we had. It was lots of fun for the audience as well as the ringers.

Sondra has selected pieces for our spring concert that have tested us. We continue to work hard in rehearsals preparing music that will entertain as well as challenge. You'll want to listen for the themes woven throughout the songs. And then prepare to sing along because we are all HAPPY TOGETHER!

It is with sadness we will say goodbye to Sondra and Roger in July following our performance at National Seminar. And with joy, we will welcome Dr. David York as our new Artistic Director! Many thanks to Sondra (and Stevie) for the suggestion to reach out to him. I know David will continue to push us, just as Sondra has. As we turn another page in the history of the Houston Bronze Ensemble, I'm excited about the future! Please stay tuned!



A Note from our Artistic Director—Sondra Tucker

Preparations for our spring programs are well underway. Our show, titled "Houston Bronze Is Happy Together" was a deliberate choice on my part. I envisioned a program that showcases not only what it means to be a musician in Houston and how the Houston Bronze Ensemble is such a vital part of the musical life of our city, but how exciting and gratifying it is to be a part of this wonderful ensemble. We truly are happy together, and that's where the very best music is made.

This show is rhythmic and busy and exciting and beautiful. From music representing outer space to our summer heat and our western heritage, the songs in the show are varied, and I'm betting there will be something for everyone. We hope to see you at one of our May concerts in person! You'll be glad you came.



Collage by DruEllen Duncan

Treated with wonderful handbell sugar cookies by Kathy at our spring retreat. [Cookies from Savannah Café and Bakery.](#)



Thank you to Trinity Downtown Lutheran Church for providing us with rehearsal space and storage space for all of our equipment. We are forever grateful to you.



INTRODUCING DAVID YORK

“I often think of bell playing as a giant hacky sack game where we’re pitching various musical responsibilities around the tables, doing our best to keep it in the air, and hopefully with a little style and lot of joy!” —David York

We want to introduce to you David York who will become the new artistic director of Houston Bronze beginning in the fall of 2023. The opening quote is from David’s application for director. Reading this made me smile. We already knew he would bring humor and energy to the position. David came to Houston from Portland where amongst many other musical groups, he directed Bells of the Cascades. In Houston he is Artistic Director of Pride Chorus of Houston and the music director of Houston Christmas Revels. He is also the Director of Music at First Congregational Church. We welcome David to the Houston Bronze family and are excited to have the opportunity to ring under his leadership.



Distinctly Teen \$100.00 Scholarship

The Houston Bronze Ensemble is happy to announce that we will be granting a scholarship to a ringer who is attending the Handbell Musicians of America Distinctly Teen 2023 (<https://seminar.handbellmusicians.org/ns-23/distinctly-teen/>). The event will take place July 13 - 18 in Irving, TX. Nick Hanson will direct this year's Distinctly Teen is designed for individual young ringers (8th-12th grades) who wish to stretch their ringing skills and challenge their musicianship. Please email us at **scholarship@houstonbronze.com** to express your interest in being considered for this scholarship. If you know someone who might be interested, please share this with them.



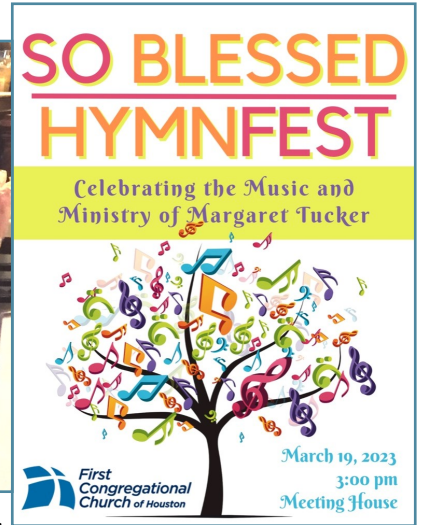
5 OCTAVES of PETIT AND FRITSEN BELLS



THANK YOU!!

On March 3rd HBE took delivery of 5 octaves of Petit and Fritsen handbells. Thank you to Wilson Van Tine and Phillips 66 for making the purchase possible. We also want to thank Christopher Brewer of [The Music Note](#), located in Pennsylvania, for selling us these bells and for his efforts in getting them to us. They are beautiful and we will enjoy them for many years to come. We can’t wait to include them in our music. They sound fabulous! Look for them at our May concerts!





On Sunday, March 19th, Maggi Tucker was

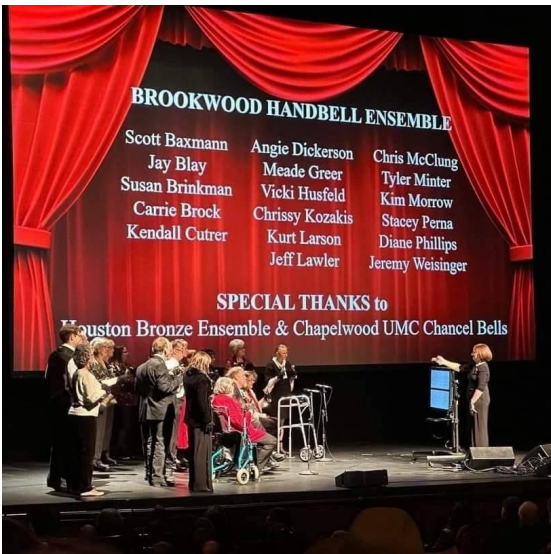
honored with a HymnFest at her church, First Congregational Church of Houston. This hymnfest celebrated all the many contributions this wonderful woman has made to her church, to music, and to handbells in Houston and beyond. The event was organized by Sondra Tucker and directed by Stevie Berryman. A joint handbell choir made from past, present, and future members of Houston Bronze Ensemble, First Congregational Church Decibells, Fairhaven United Methodist Church Handbell Choir and the Meeting House Choir, a special ensemble assembled to perform for this event, joined to present a program consisting of arranged hymns and original compositions for handbells and other instruments. These selections were all composed or arranged by Maggi. There were also words of appreciation offered honoring Maggi and the reading of a special tribute written by her husband, Bob.

Houston Bronze has a special relationship with Maggi as she was our second director and played a vital part in the growth of HBE. Margaret Tucker followed Hart Morris as director of HBE. She conducted her first concert in December, 1989. The ensemble had only been in existence for one year, and if she had not stepped in, we might not be here today. She brought us to national recognition in 1994 when she took the ensemble to perform at Handbell Exploration in Scottsdale, Arizona. We thank and honor her and the members in those beginning years of HBE for carrying the torch of excellence and setting the standard high.

She and her husband will be moving from the Houston area shortly, and she will be missed. We wish them well. We have been **SO BLESSED** to know and work with Maggi throughout the history of Houston Bronze.



A Red Carpet Night with Brookwood



January 26th was such a special night. The Brookwood Community held a red carpet event at the Hobby Center in downtown Houston. They were premiering a new documentary, *The Brookwood Story*, showcasing the inspirational story behind the community of Brookwood. The citizens of Brookwood walked the red carpet prior to the start of the show. The Brookwood Handbell Ensemble, directed by our own Diana Montgomery, opened the performance with two pieces. They were joined by handbell ringers from Chapelwood UMC and the Houston Bronze Ensemble. The documentary was filled with inspiring testimonials and stories from the citizens and its founder, Yvonne Streit. It was an evening to remember.

BROOKWOOD WEEKEND RETREAT



On Feb 7th, we loaded the truck to haul all of our equipment to Brookwood for our weekend retreat. Rehearsal began on Friday at 5:00. Following dinner of barbeque, we rehearsed again. After rehearsal we went to a Holiday Inn Express. Before turning in, we celebrated the evening of rehearsal and enjoyed each other's company at an after rehearsal party. Of course, we had some wonderful snacks including delicious sugar cookies decorated for Valentines and a bell one with each of our names! Thank you, Kathy! On Saturday rehearsals began again at 8:30. We had a delicious lunch from the [Café at Brookwood](#). On Saturday we had some visitors from the Brookwood Handbell Ensemble join us. They got to try lifting the 2's. We had cookies for them as well. Our own Diana Montgomery directs the Brookwood Handbell Ensemble. It was a great retreat with lots of progress made on our music for the spring concerts.



Like us on FaceBook!



Fred Gramann



Distinctly Bronze East 2023

Three current members and two past members of Houston Bronze met in New Bern, North Carolina from Feb. 23-26, along with about 170 other ringers from across the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Japan. The ensemble rehearsed for 3 1/2 days and presented a concert on Sunday afternoon. New Bern is a delightful city with bears scattered all around the city. Bern is derived from the German word for bear. We all stayed in Hanna House, a beautiful B&B with a wonderful host, Camille. This was our 13th year to fill the house with Houston Bronze ringers and friends.



Diana Wilson Linda



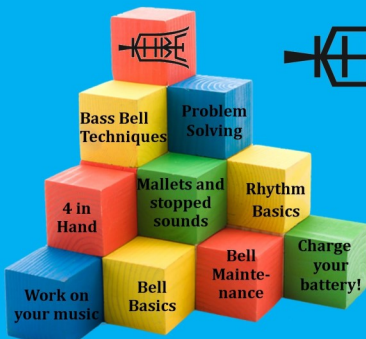
Ben Wilson Jimmy


Diana Linda



Schedule a Workshop







HOUSTON BRONZE ENSEMBLE
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Build a Bell Workshop

<http://houstonbronze.com/build-a-bell-workshop.html>

Houston Bronze Ensemble is available to you for workshops throughout the year. You may pick the topics from a list of classes. If you don't see what you need, please ask. The best part is there is no need to pack your bells and travel. We come to you! This is offered without a fee. For more information and to request a workshop go to <https://www.houstonbronze.com/build-a-bell-workshop.html>.



From the



Music: My Peace Bringer by DruEllen Duncan

In real life, I'm a teacher. I get to hang out with 9 and 10 year olds during the day. This past week in class, my kids and I read an article about the history of two popular children's games, and how throughout history, games have helped people through tough times. During the height of COVID, Roblox, an online children's game, found a 40% increase in usage, mainly due to the fact that it was a way for kids to "talk" to their friends and "play" with their friends while everyone was in quarantine. Candyland was invented in 1948, by a teacher no less, when she saw rows and rows of children stuck in a hospital ward due to polio for months on end, bored. The article went on to say how games, like Monopoly and Sorry!, were popular during the Great Depression. Since money was tight and families couldn't afford to go out, they stayed in. Games gave them an outlet to find enjoyment.

I asked my kids what strategies they, or even the adults in their family, had to help if they were having a tough or stressful time. The saying is true, "Kids say the darndest things!" I heard answers such as: draw pictures, read a book, eat chocolate ("That's what my mom always does." What teachers learn about the families of their students would probably embarrass the adults they live with!), reach for the ice cream "straight out of the carton", and cuddle with my teddy bear. Those are just a few.

That got me to thinking about what I do in a stressful time. Chocolate is definitely a go-to. Ice cream ranks up there, too. Getting a hug from my son can solve a world of problems. But I think my main go-to is music. There is plenty of research out there to say that chocolate, specifically dark chocolate, can help relieve stress. I've found articles dating back from 2009 to January of this year that can support that claim. The articles for research on ice-cream seem to go back and forth as far as if ice cream is good for relieving stress or if it is just a temporary sugar high. As far as hugs, I found an amazing article that gives me "20 Amazing Benefits of Hugging According to Science." And there are so many more articles to back up the research of the benefits of hugs. But even more than that, there are thousands of articles that can back up the claim that music can help calm, relieve stress, and reduce anxiety.

Of course, when I start listening to music, I'm not thinking about what the research says. I'm thinking about how the music makes me feel. When I'm in a sad mood, I don't go for the totally energetic, bouncy, happy music; I turn to the mellow, low-key tones. When I'm in an excited mood, that's when the bouncy, happy, energetic tunes start to play, most of the time very loudly. And to be perfectly honest, my not-so-great voice is singing loudly along with them (this is why I keep my classroom door closed when I have my music playing after school). You don't normally think about being stressed and being in an excited mood at the same time, but there are times that they just tend to go together, such as when you're getting ready for the last day before Christmas break. The kids' presents need to be put together, the party supplies have to be lined out to make sure you have everything needed, the parent's presents have to be wrapped, and so on. It's an exciting time, but it is definitely a very stressful time. And let's just say that they can hear Christmas music in the next hall over.

Not only does listening to music help relieve stress but playing a musical instrument can also help you decompress. It's true. Tuesday nights, for example, we gather together for rehearsal. The Ensemble members come from all over the area, from all different areas of occupations or are retired. Some members come in relaxed, but some come flying in, running late, because something went wrong at work, or traffic was a killer on the drive in, many different reasons. Shoulders are tight when we start ringing. But as the evening goes on, the shoulders start to relax. Tension eases. The smiles to come to the surface. Music: the great medicine begins to take over.

During rehearsal, we do tend to come up against some bumpy spots that we must work through. (We wouldn't have to keep going back to work on them if we had it already figured out, right?) But even as we're working and working and working and working, and sometimes, even working some more, on those bumpy spots, because we're there together and playing music, it doesn't seem as if it is actually work. It doesn't become what one would think that something so tedious should become. I guess because music brings me a sense of calmness, it doesn't become such a stressful situation for me. Now, there are times that I do get frustrated and irritated, mostly at myself, but it goes away almost as quickly as it comes on. Music: my peace bringer.

I hope you have something to use to help you, what I call, decompress. Something that when your shoulders are tight you can do to help you loosen up and relax. I'm all for the chocolate, but that does tend to have a negative effect on the hips if you eat too much. I'm all for the ice cream; just watch out for the brain freeze. I'm all for hugs, except when the smell of the teenager precedes him and he is dripping in sweat. (Although sometimes I plug my nose and hug him anyway, cringing when I feel the sweat through his shirt.) But there's rarely a time when you can go wrong with music. It may take you a little bit to find the right song or the right station to listen to, but I'm pretty sure that there is something out there for everyone. So, turn on the music, and don't be afraid to turn it up! There is probably someone out there who will sing along with you.

The Houston Bronze Ensemble

Houston Bronze Ensemble is currently scheduling events for 2023 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. <http://houstonbronze.com/build-a-bell-workshop.html>



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About the Houston Bronze Ensemble

The Houston Bronze Ensemble is a professional, auditioned, handbell ensemble made up of musicians from the greater Houston area. Known as Houston's premier handbell choir, the ensemble performs regular concerts in the winter and spring as well as at community events, regional and national handbell events, weddings, and private parties. In 2014 HBE had the honor of performing with the Houston Symphony. The group plays a wide variety of musical genres, always with the goal of EXCELLENCE.

Founded in 1988, Houston Bronze Ensemble was started as an avenue for Houston area handbell directors to have a place to ring. A lunchtime meeting with Jeff Weiss, Christine Anderson and Hart Morris in attendance and with only a napkin to write the names of those who might be interested is what started it all. The rest, as they say, is history. In the fall of 1988, Hart Morris became the first director of Houston Bronze. After Hart moved to Tennessee, the ensemble rang under the direction of Margaret R. Tucker. In the 1995 season, the group rang ensemble style with various ringers, including G.W. Shepherd, Andrew Bowen, and David VanderMeer, directing the ensemble. Artistic Directors since then have included David VanderMeer, Dolan Bayless, Ben Harris, Ruth Seiwel, James Roberts and Bill Nave. Sondra Tucker was appointed the artistic director in June 2022.

Houston Bronze recognizes the importance of investing in the future of handbell ringing. We offer a variety of educational opportunities designed to meet the unique needs of churches and schools who wish to build or improve their handbell program. Workshops designed to meet the specific needs of a choir, mini concerts, and petting zoos are a sample of what we provide to the Houston area handbell community. Houston Bronze also offers scholarships to students wishing to attend College Ring-In, an event sponsored by Handbell Musicians of America.

Whether it is through a concert, playing at your wedding, party, private or community event, conducting a workshop for your ensemble, or presenting an educational program for your school, we would love to share our art with you! Please look at our website, www.houstonbronze.com for more information about our group and what we offer. Feel free to contact us at info@houstonbronze.com with any questions or requests. We look forward to working with you to provide handbell excellence to meet your needs!



Thank you!

Houston Bronze Ensemble would like to thank our contributors for their donations during this past year. In the past 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.

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