

Houston Bronze Ensemble

Newsletter

Volume 3, No. 4

October, 2016



Dedicated to HandBell Excellence

Ensuring the future of handbells for ringers and listeners

Calendar of Events

Houston Bronze Ensemble is currently scheduling events for 2016 and beyond.

Contact us at:

P.O. Box 53886
Houston, TX 77052

Phone: 1-866-908-RING (7464)

www.houstonbronze.com

Email:

info@houstonbronze.com
eventcoordinator@houstonbronze.com

Holiday Concerts:

2016

Tomball United Methodist Church

Friday, Dec. 2, 2016 7:00 pm
1603 Baker Drive
Tomball, TX 77375

MATCH

Midtown Arts and Theater
Center Houston
Saturday, Dec. 3, 2016 7:30 pm
3400 Main St.
Houston, TX 77002



Check out more places to hear the Houston Bronze Ensemble during the holiday season on page 2 of the newsletter.

Newsletters will be issued in January, April, July, and October.

A festive holiday-themed graphic featuring green pine branches, red and silver ornaments, and white snowflakes. The text is centered on a white background.

Houston Bronze Ensemble
It's the most
Wonderful Time
of the year!

Tomball United Methodist Church
Friday, Dec. 2, 2016 7:00 pm
1603 Baker Drive
Tomball, TX 77375

MATCH
Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston
Saturday, Dec. 3, 2016 7:30 pm
3400 Main St.
Houston, TX 77002

We hope that you will join The Houston Bronze Ensemble for our holiday concert, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year". Allow the music of Houston's premier handbell ensemble to take you on a holiday journey that will bring visions of mistletoe, hot chocolate, family gatherings, holiday parties, sparkling lights, and the birth of a baby. You are sure to hear one or more of your favorite carols, sacred and secular, done in a variety of styles from carols in a spicy Latin flavor to the ethereal backdrop behind other favorite carols. As we move through our selections, you will experience a variety of emotions from light hearted fun to contemplation to excitement. Please join us as we celebrate this holiday season.

From Our President—Lorna Noack



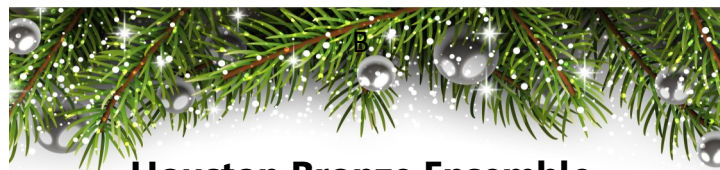
If you were asked to describe the Houston Bronze Ensemble to someone unfamiliar with us, what would you say? Would you

talk about the number and size of the bells we own and play? Would you use words like serious and traditional or trendy and innovative? Would your description focus on our performances or would it include other bell related activities? Would you say we're like every other bell choir or that we're totally unique?

Now that there are multiple community bell choirs in Houston, we realized the need to clearly define specific things for which we wanted to be known. This led to the formation of a branding committee to answer questions like "Who is HBE? What do we want to be known for? What distinguishes us from other bell choirs?" Throughout the entire process of self-evaluation, brainstorming, and determining an action plan, there was one word that kept reoccurring – excellence. We want HBE to be a group of excellent ringers playing excellently so that audiences have enjoyable, excellent experiences. We also want HBE to be a group that is actively involved in our Houston community providing excellent educational opportunities to ensure the future of handbells.

Hopefully by now, you've seen this focus on excellence in our "enhanced" logo, the new look of our [website](#), our [YouTube channel](#), and our [Facebook](#) page. Behind the scenes, we are also making every effort to intentionally choose excellence. All members, both returning and new, auditioned in June to insure that we truly have excellent ringers. Members were also challenged to learn their parts early so that our rehearsals can be focused on making excellent music. We sent our director, Bill, to National Seminar to enhance his skills to lead the group in an excellent way. We have already led three workshops to help others reach higher levels of excellence.

We hope that you have plans to join us for one of our ["It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"](#) concerts and that you truly enjoy the performances. We especially hope that the next time someone asks you about the Houston Bronze Ensemble, you will enthusiastically describe us as "that excellent group."



Houston Bronze Ensemble Excellence in Enjoyment

Besides our concerts on December 2 and December 3, there are other places where you can enjoy the sounds of Houston Bronze during the holiday season. Check out the dates below.

Sunday, December 4, 2016

More information coming soon!



Saturday, December 10, 2016

6:00-9:00 pm

Lights in the Heights

More information coming soon!



Tuesday, December 20, 2016

7:00 pm and 8:00 pm

Zoo Lights

Houston Zoo

2017

Trinity Lutheran Downtown

Sunday, January 8, 2017

8:15 am and 10:50 am

Epiphany Services

Houston, TX

For the latest information on where you can hear HBE in performance during this holiday season, please check out our website or on Facebook.

[LIKE us on Facebook!!](#)

Houston Bronze - Excellence in Education

Bell Maintenance Workshop For members of Trinity Lutheran Downtown



Houston Bronze Ensemble has been busy working with the handbell community in the surrounding area during the fall. We have conducted three workshops for various organizations in the months of August and September. We began with a bell maintenance workshop for Trinity Lutheran-Downtown, the church that provides space for our rehearsals and equipment storage. We then conducted a Back to Bells Workshop for Area 9 and finally to end September, we were at Clear Lake UMC providing separate workshops for new and experienced members of their ensemble. One attendee commented "It was a terrific evening. I never fail to learn from this amazing group."

Clear Lake UMC Workshop

9/26/2016

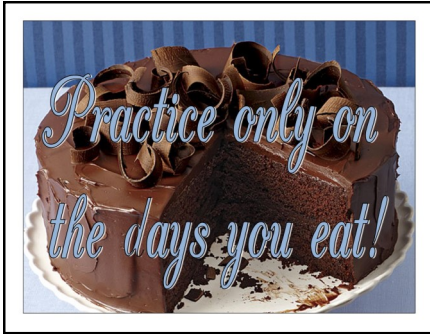
BACK TO BELLS

9/24/2016



PRACTICE TIPS

Submitted by Linda, Sarah, Jimmy and Lorna



As we began our new season of ringing we ran a series of practice tips and posters on Facebook. These tips were shared by members of the ensemble. If you are not on Facebook we invite you to join us by LIKING us on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/HoustonBronze/>

Tip #1: As I first begin to go over my music, I mark the pages where there is a problem spot. As I practice, I never start where the problem is but always back up a measure or two. The problems may be in the transition to that measure which sets up the mistake. Time is valuable. I may not play through the entire piece each day, but I know where I need to work first. Start SLOWLY and play it correctly!

Tip #2: My method of practice depends on what I need to work on. If it's early in the semester and I have several pieces to look at (meaning several different positions), I go over trouble spots with spoons and forks. Spoons for naturals and forks for sharps/flats. No knives. Quick weaving passages would get dangerous, even with butter knives. This can really help with figuring out weaving and bell change choreography. The muscle movements aren't exactly equivalent, but it's close enough for the early stages. If it's later in the season and I just have one or two trouble spots to work on in particular, I will actually take those bells home and practice off of the foot of my bed with the bells themselves. I have collaborated with other ringers as well, for figuring out difficult passages. If all else fails, I at least look through my music in the evening to keep it fresh in my mind.

Tip #3: Start slowly and practice with a metronome. Begin practicing difficult passages slow enough so that you can play it correctly. If you go too fast and continue to make mistakes, slow it down!! Otherwise you are simply practicing your mistakes. Once you can play it several times in a row correctly then and only then should you bump the tempo up a few ticks. Take your time. The race is not won by rushing ahead. Progress may have periods when you push forward quickly but hit a wall. Don't be discouraged. Simply keep up the practice and you will succeed. As you do this methodical practice, you are also practicing the

muscle memory necessary to eventually play the passage up to tempo.

Tip #4: COMMIT As we began our year with our initial business meeting, we talked about the commitment of each ringer to the ensemble. The level of that commitment from each ringer in practice and fulfilling other responsibilities of the ensemble is crucial to our success.

Tip #5: My piano professor in college told me two things that have stuck with me, as far as practicing goes: slow it down until you can play it correctly, and play it 5 times right for every 1 time wrong. He said that practice doesn't make perfect, practice makes permanent. The more times you play it right, even if it's painfully slow, the more you solidify your muscle memory. And anyone who has ever played any kind of music knows that muscle memory is absolutely key to playing well under the pressure of a concert or recital. And the only way for muscle memory to form is by repetition. Make sure that your repetitions are correct... the muscle memory is forming, whether you want it to or not, so make sure your muscles are remembering how to play it right!

Tip #6: I use empty bottles to practice complicated bell changes, and commit movement to muscle memory. Pier 1 or World Market usually has a good selection of decorative bottles in various sizes to match the size and weight of the bells I play. If needed, a dry erase marker is used to mark the bottles.

Tip #7: Before even picking up a bell, I begin my at home practice by studying the music looking for key signatures and places where they change, dynamic markings, tempo markings and tempo changes, and accidentals. If available, I like to listen to a recording of the piece while following along. Kitchen utensils then make great practice tools. Since I often play treble 4-in-hand positions, I use wooden spoons for the 6's, plastic spoons for the 7's, and rubber scrapers for chimes. (Some days this requires washing dishes first!) At first, I go slowly to build muscle memory, work out coordination issues of making bell changes, and master tricky rhythms. As the semester progresses and notes are learned, my practice becomes more focused on mental review making sure I know where I'm turning the page and what's coming up next on each page turn, where I'm changing bells, what the next dynamic marking is, etc. When I can see and hear the music in my sleep, I feel confident about being prepared for concerts!

The Houston Bronze Ensemble

Houston Bronze Ensemble is currently scheduling events for 2016 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 53886
Houston, TX 77052

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.



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- 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
- 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

Contribution Form

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.

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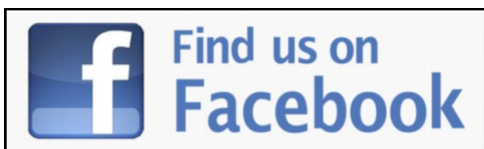
- Direct mailing of newsletter
- Your name listed in HBE programs and newsletter
- Advance notice of public concerts

Please send donations to: Houston Bronze Ensemble P.O. Box 53886 Houston, TX 77052

You may also contact our treasurer at info@houstonbronze.com to make arrangements to contribute via credit card

LIKE us on [FACEBOOK](#)

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Visit our website:
www.houstonbronze.com

Thank you!!

If you are a contributor to HBE and your name has been omitted or your listing is inaccurate, please let us know so we can correct our records.

As of December 2015

Contributors

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals and corporations over the years, Houston Bronze Ensemble has been able to purchase a variety of equipment, participate in handbell events, and present concerts in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Florida, Nevada, and Tennessee. The equipment purchased through donated funds includes 7 octaves of **Schulmerich** handbells, a 4 octave duplicate set of **Schulmerich** handbells, 6 octaves of **Malmark** handchimes, **Port-a-Bell** cases, tables, pads, mallets, stand lights, assorted musical instruments, and a trailer in which to haul all of the above. Thanks to the very generous donations of two wonderful people, we have added a set of **Schulmerich** Silver Melody Bells and a set of **Malmark** Cymbells to our list of equipment. Donations also help to purchase music, print programs, rent concert venues and so much more. Continued generosity from sponsors allows the ensemble to expand our musical horizons and bring varied sounds to our concerts. This generosity also allows the Houston Bronze Ensemble to bring a unique experience to people unfamiliar with the art and music of handbells.

The Houston Bronze Ensemble, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

All donations are tax deductible.

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