

The English Handbell

A musically tuned bell with a handle made of leather or plastic which allows it to be held in the hand. The inclusion of the word “English” is based upon the history of the handbell itself and pertains to the clapper suspension. The modern tuned handbell is English in origin. Its clapper is mounted and hinged so that it will strike both forward and back in a single plane. Restraining springs prevent the clapper from laying against the handbell when it is held with its mouth upright. The English handbell is made of bell bronze (ca. 80% copper and 20% tin) and is tuned in such a way that the fundamental and the 12th overtone are dominant.

The Handchime

The handchime is a metal tube, most commonly an aluminum extrusion, slotted and cut to produce a musical tone. The length of the slot in the tubing determines the fundamental pitch which is the clearly dominant tonal element. The length of the unslotted portion (that which is held in the hand) is fitted with a plug to provide substantial reinforcement of the pitch produced by the slotted portion (the tines). The clapper mechanism is externally mounted and strikes the tube at a predetermined point to produce the desired pitch.

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


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Part A - Handbell and Handchime Notation

I. Notation Symbol Chart

Terminology

BD	Brush Damp
CD	Controlled Diminuendo
	Damp Sign
	Echo
	Gyro
	Handbell Tree
HB	Handbell
HC	Handchime
HD	Hand Damp
	Notehead shape used for a handchime part to distinguish it from a handbell part
LV	Let Vibrate or <i>Laissez Vibrer</i>
Mal.	Mallet
+	Mallet on suspended handbell
+	Mallet with handbell on table
↑	Mallet Lift
	Mallet Roll on suspended handbell
+	
	Mallet Roll with handbell on table

II. Layout

Music should be limited to eight staves per page.

Black ink on white paper is most desirable.

Use the largest practical-sized notes for greatest legibility.

Optional notes should be full-sized and enclosed in parentheses (), square brackets [], angled brackets < >, or braces { }.

Music for sets of 25 or more handbells (2-3 octave set, *Example 1*) should be printed on two staves, one treble and one bass. The bass staff includes all notes through C#5, first ledger line above the bass staff, as shown below:

Example 1

2 or 3 Octaves
Handbells Used: 17, (22)

The musical notation for Example 1 consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is written in a single melodic line across both staves. The notes are quarter notes. The top staff contains notes from G4 to G5, with the final three notes (G5, A5, B5) marked as optional with a bracket and the word 'opt.' above them. The bottom staff contains notes from G3 to G4, with the final two notes (G4, A4) marked as optional with a bracket and the word 'opt.' below them.

There are situations where only one staff need be used, such as when music begins with a single, extended melodic line.

It may be desirable that a handbell part be printed separately when handbells are used with other instruments or voices.

Composers should suggest a tempo indication (e.g., ♩ = ca. 72). Dynamic markings and other standard notational practices should be used as guidelines for performance.

The cover or title page usually lists the range of handbells in this manner:

Example 2

Inventory Number Level Number	Title	Composer/Arranger	Octaves	Price
AG20091	Fanfare	Handel/arr. Smith	2 Octaves	\$4.95

L2

All measures should be numbered consecutively; numbers should be placed above the barline and in large enough type to be readily legible at arm's length.

III. Paperstock

Paper stock should be of a weight sufficient to permit hard usage in the three-ring easel-type binders in common use, or to stand upright on a music stand. It is suggested that not less than 60 lb. paper stock in bound collections and not less than 70 lb. paper stock in single compositions be used. 8 ½ x 11" non-coated, non-glare finish paper is recommended.

VII. Cautionary Accidentals

A cautionary accidental is customarily used as a reminder that an accidental from the previous measure has been cancelled. The use of parentheses on cautionary accidentals is not recommended. (*Example 10*)

Example 10

Example 10 is a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is in 2/4 time and features a sequence of notes with various accidentals (sharps, naturals, and flats) that are cancelled in subsequent measures. The notation includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the notes. The piece concludes with several notes marked with accents (>).

VIII. Notational Devices for Handbell and Handchime Techniques

Ring or R

R indicates the normal manner of ringing and damping according to note values. Also the use of **R** indicates a return to the normal ringing and damping technique after a passage when another style or technique, such as **LV** or Pluck, has been used. (*See page 19*) It is understood that handbells are to be rung in normal fashion at the beginning of a piece without the use of the symbol **R**.

LV

LV is a term meaning "Let Vibrate" (*laissez vibrer*), allowing handbells to resonate, regardless of note values or rests, until damping is indicated. **LV**, if placed above the treble staff (*Example 11a*) or below the bass staff (*Example 12*), applies to that staff only. An **LV** centered between staves (*Example 13*) applies to both staves. **LV** markings are used as follows:

1. Successive **LV** marks signify that all previously sustained notes damp precisely where the new **LV** begins. (*Example 11a*)

Example 11a

Example 11a is a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is in 2/4 time and features a sequence of notes. The notation includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the notes. The piece concludes with several notes marked with accents (>). The **LV** markings are placed above the treble staff and below the bass staff, indicating that the notes should be allowed to vibrate until the next **LV** marking.

Part B - Handbell and Handchime Music Difficulty Level System

Assigning Difficulty Levels to Handbell and Handchime Music

Rhythm, Articulation, Dexterity

The AGEHR, Inc.

As handbell and handchime repertoire and techniques have increased in number and complexity, the need for a method of assigning difficulty levels has become apparent. Having music available with an assigned difficulty level will:

- ◆ help directors select repertoire best suited for their choirs
- ◆ help directors select literature that requires specific skills and techniques
- ◆ assist teachers in creating a curriculum
- ◆ provide a framework for educational assessment
- ◆ serve as a motivational tool that encourages choirs to improve their skills
- ◆ help publishers select new releases for a balanced catalogue

The following system should be used only as a guide. Tempo, number of ringers, handbell assignments, etc. will have a dramatic effect on the difficulty of any music selected.

Comments for Directors, Publishers, and Editors

1. Key changes and accidentals ARE handbell and handchime changes.
2. Tempo is VERY IMPORTANT in assigning level of difficulty.
3. Handchimes should be considered as a special category. However, when used with handbells within the same piece, a handchime should be considered a “handbell” change.
4. When a piece contains a six-measure (or less) phrase of technical difficulty above the specific level assigned, the piece should not be raised to the next level of difficulty. That phrase should be treated as a “special practice” spot for learning.
5. Shelley, four-in-hand, grace notes, and sharing of handbells are directors’ decisions based on the size of the group, number of handbells, and dexterity of the ringers.
6. Difficulty levels are assigned for “traditional size” handbell choirs, i.e., 11-13 ringers. All levels are cumulative.
7. Each difficulty level is described by eight criteria. They should be used to determine the level of the work before selection.
8. On multiple octave publications, different levels may be assigned to specific octave designations. Example: a 3-5 octave publication may have the following designations: 3 octaves L3, and 4-5 octaves L4.
9. A plus or minus may be added to any level designation when appropriate.

Part C – Solo and Ensemble Notation

I. General Notational Concerns Applicable to Both Solo and Small Ensemble Music

1. Notational symbols for handbell techniques as listed in the AGEHR *Handbell and Handchime Notation* booklet which are considered standards for large group handbell music shall also apply to solo and ensemble ringing.
2. Notational symbols should be kept simple and used sparingly to avoid overcrowding the page.
3. Performance suggestions may be indicated with footnotes or symbols in the score.
4. The AGEHR *Handbell and Handchime Music Difficulty Level System* does not apply to solo and ensemble music.

II. Symbols Common to Solo and Ensemble Music

The following designations should be printed in lower case, italic, bold print. (See *Example 37* below.)

<i>r</i> or <i>rh</i>	<i>r</i> or <i>rh</i>	right hand
<i>l</i> or <i>lh</i>	<i>l</i> or <i>lh</i>	left hand
<i>r-l</i> or <i>rh-lh</i>	<i>r-l</i> or <i>rh-lh</i>	a handbell passed from the right hand to the left hand
<i>l-r</i> or <i>lh-rh</i>	<i>l-r</i> or <i>lh-rh</i>	a handbell passed from the left hand to the right hand
<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	shoulder damp
<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>	table damp

Example 37

Example 37 shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff contains four measures of music. Measure 1 is marked with a '1' and a slur over the notes. Measure 2 is marked with a '2' and the annotation 'lh-rh' above the notes. Measure 3 is marked with a '3' and the annotation 'rh-lh' above the notes. Measure 4 is marked with a '4' and the annotation 'rh' above the notes. The second staff contains six measures of music. Measure 5 is marked with a '5' and the annotation 'lh' above the notes. Measure 6 is marked with a '6' and the annotation 's' above the notes. The dynamic marking 'mf' is placed below the first staff.