

We use many skills when we ring in a handbell choir. Ringing the bell, reading the music, counting the rhythms and playing as an ensemble are all essential skills for the beginning group. Educators tell us that new skills are best learned by breaking them up into their component parts and then teaching those parts consecutively. Ringers tell us that they just want to ring bells and make music!

This book is an attempt to teach the essential skills needed for beginning ringers by presenting rote exercises to drill each new skill followed by a musical piece that uses that skill. By using rote drills, we eliminate the need for reading music at the same time we learn new ringing techniques. Each musical selection contains only those skills which have been previously presented. Rote drills involve the entire bell choir and the musical selections present each new technique or rhythm in both treble and bass clefs so that ALL of the ringers learn ALL of the skills. Although the exercises were originally developed for three octave handbell choirs, instructions are given to adapt the exercises to handchime choirs or for use with two octave groups. Each musical selection appears in both two octave and three octave versions.

It is our hope that beginning handbell choirs will find in this collection music that can be used in the very early weeks of rehearsals and that will build the needed skills before they are encountered in the music. Be sure to review the rote exercises and related music found in each skill as needed. This will help to reinforce lessons already learned and bolster the confidence of new ringers.

The exercises have been developed over a period of several years, as they were needed for beginning groups. The musical selections have been "field tested" with a beginning group of sixth graders, whose patience we greatly appreciate!

Verita and Erin MacGorman

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