

Area III Spring Festivals - Spring 2008  
Rehearsal Notes for Genesis Track - Ocean City and Hampton  
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**General suggestions**

With a little score study, directors can improve the learning process of ringers by preparing them with the skills and knowledge they will need before they are faced with applying those challenges in the music.

**Practice rhythmic patterns and handbell techniques first in rote exercises.** Once the mind and body know how to perform a skill, finding and performing it in the music is much easier. (See the Jan/Feb 2008 Overtones for my article on Unison Exercises, which covers some of this.) Some pieces offer unison exercises. You can create similar exercises for other pieces as well.

**Watch transition points.** Whenever anything changes, ringers find extra challenge: key changes, time signature changes, technique changes (from ringing to marting or mallets), bell changes (picking up a sharp or flat, or moving from bells to chimes), fermatas, slowing down, speeding up, page turns, starting and stopping. Practice these issues repeatedly until they become the "easy section" of the piece.

**Practice the end of the piece first.** Usually the final measures of a piece are the weakest because they are different (see transitions) and because they have been [practiced far less than any other part of the piece. The remedy? Practice this part first! Then move back a few measures, practice those, and play to the end. Then move back a few more measures, practice them and play to the end. In this way, the ringer becomes more confident as they come to the end of a piece, not more anxious.

**Practice dynamics as you learn.** We tend to perform what we know best, and if a spot has been rung loudly during practice, it's hard to turn that into soft for performance. We perform what we practice!

**Stress ringing presentation.** It's unfair for us to not guide our choirs to ring beautifully. They CAN make circles and ring with style. We just have to help them remember to do it. (Again we perform what we practice.)

**Encourage your ringers to count out loud for themselves.** Counting out loud solidifies a ringer's understanding of where they are in a measure, and how to move from one measure to the next. It also saves the director from making inevitable mistakes. The

counting then gets softer until it is no longer audible, but still "thought" by the ringer.

**Encourage your ringers to look up** at your as often as they can, in transition spots especially and on the first beat of the measure. Directors can't help if they aren't watched. Have them ring "sections" of music, not just from note to note. If a ringer can feel their place in a phrase, then they are a part of the music not apart from the music.

### **Specific Ideas for Rehearsals - Genesis Track 2008**

*Accolade* (Wissinger) - Use the practice sheet to cement the eighth note skills required in the piece. Make sure dampers are clean and ringing styles are similar. Watch voicing dynamics (who has the melody line?) Be careful to keep a steady tempo, as the thumb dampers tend to speed up.

*Ring Praise, O My Soul* (M. Tucker) - This piece is more expansive, so use larger sweeping ringing circles when possible. Practice the chime section in slow motion, perhaps isolating the chimes and practice just those notes (if you do not have chimes, play all the notes on bells.) Some ringers are required to play both bells and chimes. You might teach simple four-in-hand for these section. If this is not possible, simply pass the "offending notes" to the person to the right or left, if they are available. For example, in m. 68 the E5 bell can be malleted by the FG5 ringer. I indicate this by drawing a "smile" marking under the note. In m. 73, the FG5 ringer can ring the A5 bell. In m. 78, the B5 bell can be rung by the CD6 ringer (and marked with a "smile," and the F5 chime can be rung by the DE5 ringer. (Marked with a "frown" to indicate it goes to the ringers below.)

*Savior of the Nations, Come* (Moklebust) - Long slow ringing strokes, blending harmonies and a feeling of calm are needed for this piece.

*I'm Just a Poor Wayfaring Stranger* (Waldrop) - You might teach the bass malleted rhythm by rote - have the ringers sing it with "Doo's," then have the treble Thumb Dampers sing in with their mandolin-like "chicks." Then have the middle bells sing their part. Note some special techniques: gyros are simply done with the wrist, as if spinning a lasso. Tolloed bells swing from vertical to upside down back to vertical on the beats indicated. (Be careful to practice this in slow motion with slightly bent arms, so bells don't hit anything or anyone!) Echoes are produced after ringing the bell and lightly tapping the bell lip on the pad on the beat indicated. Resonance should continue. Chimes in m. 53 may be played on bells if necessary. The transition back to mallets in m. 68 should be seamless. Practice this part a lot!

If you do not have mallets, for the bass part you might try lightly marting the bells on the pads (Martellato - to ring the bell flat into the pad from about 4" high - no resonance continues. Do not mart lower than C4.) For the entire bass part, you could have ringers pluck on the table (Pluck - with bell on the pad, hold the clapper between thumb and two fingers, and "throw" the clapper down to casting.) Smaller bells may also be thumb

damped. For the treble suspended bell part, simply ring. Or you might take this opportunity to buy some mallets for richer color and more ease in playing many pieces.

If you do not have mallets or chimes and would like to have some available at the Festival, please let me know at least 6 weeks before the Festival.

Text to Poor Wayfaring Stranger

I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger,  
While traveling through this world of woe.  
Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger  
In that bright world to which I go.  
I'm going there to see my Father;  
I'm going there no more to roam.

Refrain

I'm only going over Jordan,  
I'm only going over home.

I know dark clouds will gather round me;  
I know my way is rough and steep.  
But golden fields lie out before me  
Where God's redeemed shall ever sleep.  
I'm going there to see my mother;  
She said she'd meet me when I come.

Refrain

I'm only going over Jordan;  
I'm only going over home.

I'll soon be free from every trial,  
My body sleep in the churchyard;  
I'll drop the cross of self denial  
And enter on my great reward.  
I'm going there to see my Savior,  
To sing His praise forevermore.

Refrain

I'm only going over Jordan;  
I'm only going over home.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by e-mail. Best wishes preparing your choirs for an exciting experience of growth and fellowship at the Genesis Track at the upcoming Area III Festival.

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