
Four-In-Hand Dexterity Drills

Handbell Musicians of America Virtual Bell Academy, Monday May 15, 2017

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NOTE: This webinar assumes you have already learned the eleven different ways to do Four-in-Hand (4iH). For detailed explanations of the various methods, please see Handbell Musicians of America's Virtual Bell Academy two-part episode "The Right Tool for the Job" Parts 1 & 2, from Monday, May 8 & Wednesday May 10, 2017.

Introduction

The Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary defines "dexterity" as:

- the ability to use your hands skillfully
- the ability to easily move in a way that is graceful

Both of these abilities are important for any musician, in terms of musical accuracy and expression, but studies have also shown that while our manual dexterity decreases as we age, continuing to practice dexterity exercises not only helps our brain to "stay young," but may also slow the onset and decrease the pain of existing arthritis. With all these benefits, there's no time like the present to get started!

This set of drills begins with basic bell handling skills and progresses to more complicated skills. Be sure to do these drills with each hand separately and then together to help you achieve true dexterity in all the various methods of 4iH!



"It is only by prudence, wisdom, and dexterity, that great ends are attained and obstacles overcome. Without these qualities nothing succeeds."

—Napoleon Bonaparte

*Source/Notes:

Napoleon : In His Own Words (1916)

BASIC IN-HAND SKILLS, PART 1

One bell in hand

PASS PRIMARY HAND TO HAND: Version 1

- seat primary bell normally
- pass to other hand (giving hand opens, receiving hand comes up from under)

PASS PRIMARY HAND TO HAND: Version 2

- shift seat forward, as if you were going to do a TD
- pass to other hand, then pull bell back into regular seat

PASS SECONDARY HAND TO HAND

- start with bell in secondary push position
- pass to other hand secondary (giving hand opens, receiving hand comes up from under)
- *Repeat, starting with bell in secondary ring position*

SPINNING BELL (PRIMARY), Version 1

- seat primary bell normally
- use fingertips to rotate bell quarter turn, so bell picture is toward midline of body
- rotate bell another quarter-turn (bell pic forward)
- rotate bell another quarter-turn (bell pic facing out)
- rotate bell another quarter-turn (bell pic toward body)
- *Repeat, rotating bell other direction*
- *Repeat with other hand*
- *Do both hands at the same time*

SPINNING BELL (PRIMARY), Version 2

- shift seat forward, as if you were going to do a TD
- repeat sequence from Version 1
- return bell to original seat
- *Repeat, rotating bell other direction*
- *Repeat with other hand*

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- *Do both hands at the same time*

SPINNING BELL (PRIMARY), Version 3

- repeat sequence from Version 1, but do half-rotations rather than quarter
(try to make it smooth, without stopping at quarter position)
- *Repeat, rotating bell other direction*
- *Repeat with other hand*
- *Do both hands at the same time*

SPINNING BELL (SECONDARY)

- start with bell in secondary push position
- rotate bell a quarter turn, into secondary ring position
- rotate it back to secondary push
- *Repeat with other hand*
- *Do both hands at the same time*

PASSING BELL IN SAME HAND, PRIMARY TO SECONDARY & BACK AGAIN

- start with bell seated back as normal in primary ring position
- shift seat forward to make room
- move index finger so bell is in secondary push position
- move index finger again so bell is in primary, seated forward
- shift seat back again
- *Repeat with other hand*
- *Repeat, using Secondary Ring position, then repeat with other hand*
- *Do both hands at the same time*

PASSING BELL IN SAME HAND, PRIMARY TO SECONDARY & BACK AGAIN, MIXING STYLES

- repeat above exercise, starting in primary thumb-knock position
- go to secondary push (quarter rotation)
- go to secondary ring (half-rotation)
- *Do both hands at the same time*

BASIC IN-HAND SKILLS, PART 2

Two bells in hand

PASSING INTO SECONDARY: STACKED METHODS

Start with one bell in each hand, seated normally.

PASS INTO PARALLEL PUSH (SHELLEY)

- left hand, shift seat forward (this makes it easier to pass)
- right hand, rotate bell one quarter turn counter-clockwise (bell pic away from midline of body, pointing out) & open space between index & ring fingers
- pass left hand bell into right hand secondary to form a Shelley
- remove right hand secondary to left hand primary and shift seat back to normal again
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO PARALLEL RING (WENDY)

- left hand, shift seat forward
- right hand, rotate bell one quarter turn clockwise (bell pic toward midline of body) & open space between index & ring fingers
- pass left hand bell into right hand secondary to form a Wendy
- remove right hand secondary to left hand primary & shift both hand's seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO RING & PUSH

- left hand, shift seat forward
- right hand, rotate bell one quarter turn clockwise (bell pic toward midline of body) & open space between index & ring fingers
- pass left hand bell into right hand secondary to form a Ring & Push
- remove right hand secondary to left hand primary & shift both hand's seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO BRITISH/JAPANESE

- left hand, shift seat forward
- right hand, rotate bell one quarter turn counter-clockwise (bell pic away from midline of body, pointing out) & open space between index & ring fingers

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- pass left hand bell into right hand secondary to form a British/Japanese
 - remove right hand secondary to left hand primary & shift both hand's seats back to normal
 - *Repeat in other hand*

PASSING INTO SECONDARY: INTERLOCKED METHODS

Start with one bell in each hand, seated normally.

PASS INTO SHELLEY

- left hand, shift seat forward (this makes it easier to pass)
- right hand, rotate bell one quarter turn counter-clockwise (bell pic away from midline of body, pointing out), open 3 fingers (middle, ring, & pinky), leaving circle of support (thumb & index) intact
- left hand, insert handle of left hand bell inside handle of right hand bell (bell pic toward body), then rotate bell so bell pic is facing out (try with 1 finger between bells, or 2 fingers between bells to see which is more comfortable to you)
- using left hand, rotate right hand secondary bell so bell pic is pointing toward body, pull bell out of right hand primary bell's handle, & shift both seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO WENDY

- Just kidding! We cannot pass into Wendy because Wendy cannot be interlocked! :-)

PASS INTO RING & PUSH

- left hand, shift seat forward & rotate bell so bell picture faces right
- right hand put handle of bell inside handle of left hand bell (try with 1 or 2 fingers between bells to see which is more comfortable for you)
- remove right hand secondary to left hand primary & shift both hand's seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO BRITISH/JAPANESE

- left hand, shift seat forward
- right hand, rotate bell one quarter turn counter-clockwise (bell pic away from midline of body, pointing out), open 3 fingers (middle, ring, & pinky), leaving circle of support (thumb & index) intact

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- left hand, put handle of bell inside handle of right hand primary, keeping bell pic toward body (try with 1 or 2 fingers between bells to see which is more comfortable for you)
 - remove right hand secondary to left hand primary & shift both hand's seats back to normal
 - *Repeat in other hand*

PASSING INTO SECONDARY: REVERSE STACKED METHODS

Start with one bell in each hand, seated normally.

PASS INTO SHELLEY

- left hand, shift seat forward
- right hand, shift into secondary push
- left hand, put bell into right hand primary push
- remove right hand primary to left hand primary (take from under), shift right hand secondary to right hand primary, & shift both hand's seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO WENDY

- right hand, shift into secondary ring
- left hand, put bell into right hand primary ring
- remove right hand primary to left hand primary (take from under), shift right hand secondary to right hand primary, & shift both hand's seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO RING & PUSH

- right hand, shift into secondary push
- left hand, put bell into right hand primary ring
- remove right hand primary to left hand primary (take from under), shift right hand secondary to right hand primary, & shift both hand's seats back to normal
- *Repeat in other hand*

PASS INTO BRITISH/JAPANESE

- right hand, shift into secondary ring
- left hand, put bell into right hand primary push
- remove right hand primary to left hand primary (take from under), shift right hand secondary to right hand primary, & shift both hand's seats back to normal

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- *Repeat in other hand*

IN-HAND MOBILITY DRILL

- start in RH Shelley
- using RH fingers, rotate primary bell a quarter turn clockwise; you're now in ring & push
- rotate secondary bell a quarter turn clockwise; you're now in Wendy
- rotate primary bell a quarter turn counter-clockwise; you're now in British/Japanese
- *Repeat with left hand*
- *Repeat with both hands at same time*
- *Reverse the sequence*
- *Repeat with both hands at the same time, but start the RH in Shelley and the LH in British/Japanese*

IN-HAND RINGING DRILLS

For these exercises, the bells are numbered as follows:

- 1 = LH Primary
- 2 = RH Primary
- 3 = LH Secondary
- 4 = RH Secondary

Ring each bell individually in all 24 possible sequences), using each method in stacked, interlocked, & reverse-stacked forms:

1 2 3 4	1 2 4 3	1 3 2 4	1 4 2 3
1 3 4 2	1 4 3 2	2 1 4 3	2 1 3 4
2 3 1 4	2 3 4 1	2 4 1 3	2 4 3 1
3 1 2 4	3 1 4 2	3 2 1 4	3 2 4 1
3 4 1 2	3 4 2 1	4 1 2 3	4 1 3 2
4 2 3 1	4 2 1 3	4 3 1 2	4 3 2 1

- *Repeat above, but BACK RING!*

Ring 2 bells together in all 3 possible combos, using each method in stacked, interlocked, & reverse-stacked forms:

1 2; 3 4 1 3; 2 4 1 4; 2 3

- *Repeat above, but BACK RING!*
- *Additional challenge: use different methods in each hand!*

IN-HAND DEXTERITY USING 3 BELLS

Do each exercise using each method in stacked, interlocked, & reverse-stacked form

Start with 2 bells in right hand, 1 bell in left hand primary

- pass RH secondary to LH secondary and back again

Start with 2 bells in right hand, 1 bell in left hand primary

- pass RH primary to LH secondary & back again

Start with 2 bells in right hand, 1 bell in left hand primary

- pass RH primary to LH secondary
- shift RH secondary to primary
- pass LH primary to RH secondary
- shift LH secondary to primary

- *Repeat all of the above, but start with 2 bells in right hand, 1 bell in left hand secondary*
- *Repeat all of the above, but start with 2 bells in left hand, 1 bell in right hand primary*
- *Repeat all of the above, but start with 2 bells in left hand, 1 bell in right hand secondary*

IN-HAND DEXTERITY USING 4 BELLS

Do each exercise using each method in stacked, interlocked, & reverse-stacked form

Start with 2 bells in right hand, 1 bell in left hand primary, 1 bell on table

- using ring & pinky fingers of RH, pick up table bell by bottom of loop, then place it into LH secondary
- using ring & pink fingers of LH, take RH secondary by bottom of loop, and place it on the table

TABLE DRILLS

Links to both videos can be found at www.TheGoldenDance.com/4iH.html

SECONDARY WEAVE:

Start with 4 bells on the table, as normal

- ring 1 2 3 4, 4 3 2 1 in secondary push, then secondary ring

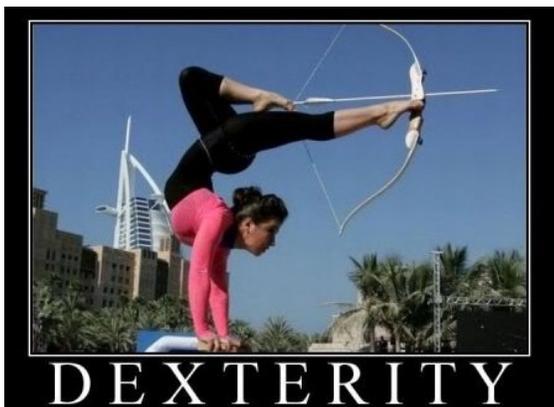
NOTE: for this exercise, the secondary is the only bell in hand; there is no primary

- Repeat, but BACK RING!
- Repeat but holding a bell in primary (any bell, we're not going to ring it at this time; we are only ringing the secondary), cycling through the stacked versions of the Shelley, Wendy, Ring & Push, and British/Japanese methods. Then do interlocked British/Japanese, then interlocked Ring & Push.
- Repeat the above, but BACK RING! (NOTE: It's very difficult to back ring the bells individually in a Shelley or Wendy configuration. Can you do it? Can you back ring them together?)
- Additional challenge: try this exercise using the reverse-stacked forms. (This means you will have to start with your in hand bells in secondary, then pick up & release the primaries under them. Ring only the secondaries, not the primaries.)

PICK UP AND RELEASE (TRAVELING 4iH):

Start with 6 bells on the table, as normal. Pick up bells 3 & 4; they will be your primary "constants" for this exercise. Do this exercise in the stacked versions of the Shelley, Wendy, Ring & Push, and British/Japanese methods, being sure to ring the bells individually. Then do interlocked British/Japanese, then interlocked Ring & Push. (Do not do interlocked Shelley.)

- ring bells in sequence: 1 2 3 4 5 6, 6 5 4 3 2 1
(NOTE: when 3 & 4 ring, they will be the only bells in your hand)
- ring bells in sequence: 1 3 2 4 3 5 4 6, 6 4 5 3 4 2 3 1
- ring 2 bells simultaneously 13 24 35 46, 46 35 24 13
- Repeat, but BACK RING!



Conclusion

REMEMBER: You are teaching your brain and your muscles new tricks! Good, consistent technique requires patience and there is no substitute for slow and steady practice. Diligent, consistent practice of these drills will help you develop true dexterity in all the various methods of 4iH. Good luck!