

# RINGER'S REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES

*(Or, in the words of Martin Morley, conductor extraordinaire, "How to be your director's favorite ringer!!")*

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## A. PRE-REHEARSAL TIME - Nothing conflicts with rehearsal

As you drive/walk to rehearsal, mentally prepare for the activity. Get your "mind in the game."

Arrive early, put phone away, get bells out, a pencil, gloves, mallets, singing sticks, music

Check rehearsal plan or ask Director for starting title and be ready.

page turns prepared (dog eared, clipped, etc, all bells/chimes/mallets/singing sticks ready,  
have starting bells

Only ring your part, not the part of the absent ringer next to you. Muscle memory!

Warm up: stretching exercises, bell weaving drills, difficult techniques

"Leave your ego at the door." (PL Groves)

## B. PREPARATION FOR NEW REPERTOIRE

Check bell assignment (shared bells?, chimes needed?)

Check key signature. What bells do you need first?

Check time signature, style and tempo. (tempo hint – Think of a marching band song and count to yourself 1-2-3-4. That will likely be about quarter note= 120. If the metronome # is lower, slow down your counting, and if it is faster, speed up your counting. Metronome downloads are free.)

Check dynamics – how loud are my first bells?

Are there gradual dynamic changes? (crescendo and decrescendo)

Do I have the melody or the accompaniment?

Scan for special techniques. Do I recognize what all the symbols are and how to execute them?

What do the \*, ( ), and [ ] tell me about my part?

Check the "road map" – repeats, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> endings, coda

Just FYI: If you have questions about any of these items, don't ask them before the director starts the piece unless you simply have no idea how to start. Save the questions until later. Let the director get the rehearsal started. Just being aware of many of these items will be useful in your sightreading.

## C. PREPARATION FOR REPERTOIRE IN PROGRESS

Review all markings you have made.

Can you internalize the tempo? What is the starting dynamic? What is the desired ringing style?

Who turns the page on shared music or when do you turn the page for yourself?

## D. ACTIVITIES FOR TIMES DIRECTOR IS WORKING WITH OTHER RINGERS

Keep your ears fully open to the director so you are ready to begin when and where the director indicates, and work silently!

MARK your score.

Bell changes

Dynamics –crescendo/decrescendo, reminder note of dynamic following page turns

Mistakes

How long does that LV last? Does it apply to my part?

Key changes that influence bell changes

Places where you can't ring one of your bells because both hands are busy (shared bells)

"I'd rather hear 'who can get this' instead of 'I'll get it!" (Griff Gall)

Tempo changes: including ritard and accelerando, rubato, and abrupt changes

Meter changes as in 4/4 to 6/8, etc. Also note if 6/8 will be conducted in 2, 3 or 6.

Difficult rhythm passages – mark the counts  
Notice repeats and how it affects your part. (bell change patterns, doubles, etc)  
Melody (when it is and is not yours!,) phrases, and sections  
Practice page turns – mark who is turning (shared music), notate what is at the top of the next page,  
mark exactly where and with which hand you will turn, or mark not to turn for how many beats  
Listen critically as Director is working with others. Learn to identify positive achievement. (Keep thoughts to  
yourself unless it is limited to a one-word “good!” or other affirmation.)  
MEMORIZE! (start with page turns, difficult passages, key and tempo changes)

#### E. MUSCLE MEMORY EXERCISES WHEN DIRECTOR IS WORKING WITH OTHER RINGERS

Air bells (turn handles sideways so clapper doesn't strike casting)  
Tap, slap, or knuckle handles of your bells on the table or tap foam padding for difficult rhythmic passages or  
bell change patterns  
Practice weaving patterns

#### F. CREATING A MORE PERFECT PERFORMANCE

COUNT, always and forever!  
Accept correction graciously.  
Avoid “I can get it” syndrome and share bells! The musical line and presentation are most important.  
Don't stop when you make a mistake.  
If you get lost, note where you got lost and see what “road signs” exist nearby to help you know where you are  
the next time you go through that passage.  
Practice asking your neighbor for bar numbers without being heard by anyone else. Or work out a signal for that  
neighbor to know you are lost.  
If you rang a wrong bell, analyze how it got in your hand and mark it (or improve the mark) on the change you  
missed.  
Rushing? Count, dig in, subdivide, WATCH!  
Take a breath in preparation for a unison chord.  
Look at the director one time per measure – regardless of tempo or difficulty of your part.  
Memorize page turns, difficult rhythmic passages or bell changes.  
Actively work on your posture – tall body, pleasant expression, face up and looking at Director, cut your eyes  
down to your score without moving your head.  
How do you finish?

#### G. Final thoughts.

Take your music home (and bring it back!)  
Listen to the music at home with or without the score.  
Ask to review the schedule for the coming weeks so everyone has a chance to be reminded.  
Model enjoying the process of learning and growing, and talk about how great it will be to ring this piece in  
church or in the concert. AVOID “we're not playing THIS on Sunday, are we?”  
At the end of rehearsal, say specific affirming words about rehearsal. Model supporting others.  
Help with set up/clean up on a regular basis. Be a team player.  
Treats are always appreciated! Just be aware of any serious food allergies.