

Tricks of the Treble Trade

Taming the Tumult of Tiny Tintinnabula

Michele@TheGoldenDance.com
Michele.Sharik@Gmail.com

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

Look, I'll be honest: I have made some mistakes in my years of ringing—OK, a *lot* of mistakes!—but that has forced me to become a sort of “Handbell MacGyver”.

I have made so many mistakes over the course of my ringing career that I was forced to develop a solution for just about any handbell problem I was faced with—and sometimes more than one solution!

In effect, making mistakes has made me an expert in NOT making mistakes—or, more accurately, in how to deal with and recover from mistakes.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

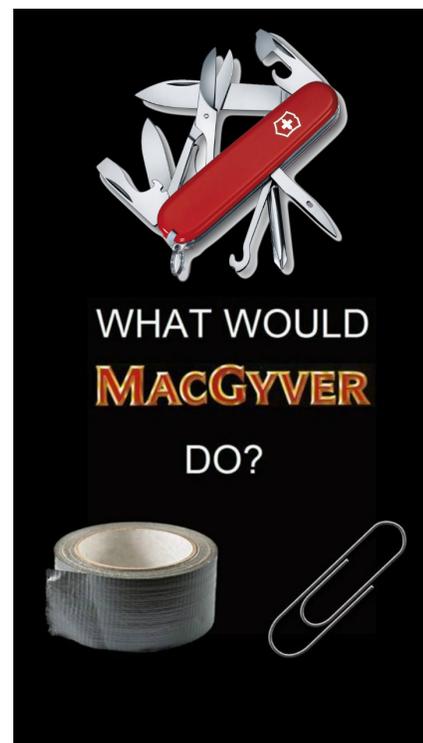


image by numisiro, downloaded from Zedge.net

Rev-20250127

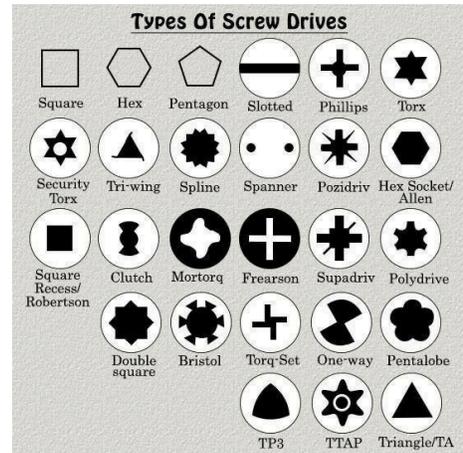
I'm a big fan of having multiple "tools" in my toolkit, because I firmly believe that the more tools I have available to me, the more problems I can solve.

"If all you have is a hammer, every problem is a nail."
OK, so get a screwdriver, right? Well, what *kind* of screwdriver? Slot? Phillips? Hex? Robertson?
(I mean, just look at that picture—have you ever even heard of some of these?!)

My point is this: if you're faced with a problem and don't have the right tool, you can't solve it.

Likewise, if you're faced with a handbell logistical problem and don't know the right techniques, you can't recover from it.

So let's load up our toolkits and learn how to solve a bunch of problems!



Graphic from: Kuestenmacher, Simon, Types of Screw Drives, Twitter, 9/6/18, 10:55AM, <https://twitter.com/simongerman600/status/10577560721682four7296/photo/1>.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

A Friendly Warning

People have described this class as "like drinking from a firehose".

It's true; there is a *lot* of information here. Be patient with yourself. Don't expect to master this material by the end of this class session.

You can't.

No one can!

Instead, use this as a starting point to practice & improve your own treble skills.

Remember: there is no substitute for slow and steady practice!



Video from: Yuriy64, "And Learned and Washed," 2/16/19, 5:40 PM, https://www.reddit.com/r/gifs/comments/ar8v58/and_learned_and_washed/. Accessed 12 Oct. 2022.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

Starting Point

- Treble = CD6–B6C7, plus octaves (Pos. 8–Pos. 11).
- 4iH (Four-in-Hand) = *any* method with two bells in one hand.
- This class assumes you know how to weave and have at least a passing familiarity with 4iH.
- For more instruction, visit HMA’s Virtual Bell Academy:
<http://handbellmusicians.org/events/virtualbellacademy/>
The VBA has webinars on a variety of topics, including Four-in-Hand, Six-in-Hand, and 4iH Dexterity Drills.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

5

Terminology - 1

Let’s make sure we’re all on the same page with regard to terminology and notation.

Which bell is which?

- ***Primary:** The bell positioned between the thumb and index finger.
- ***Secondary:** The other bell, no matter where it is positioned.
- **Tertiary:** The third bell when using Six-in-hand. (The “middle” bell is then the secondary.)

*These terms have been accepted as standard by the Guild in the publication
Handbell Notation, Difficulty Level System, Solo and Ensemble Notation.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

6

Terminology - 2

How are they put together?

- **Stacked:** primary bell lying on top of secondary.
- **Reverse Stacked:** secondary bell lying on top of primary.
- **Interlocked:** the handle of one bell is inside the handle of another.
- **1-1-3:** Thumb and index finger each by themselves, the rest of your fingers (middle, ring, and pinky) grouped together.
- **1-2-2:** Thumb by itself, index and middle fingers together, ring and pinky fingers together. (“Live long and prosper.”)

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

7

Terminology - 3

Six types of stroke used in 4iH:

- **Ring:** The regular ringing stroke.
- **Push:** Palms facing forward, like pushing a door open.
- **Combo:** Between Ring and Push.
- **Thumb Knock:** The bell closest to the thumb rotates around the axis of the other bell.
- **Pinky Knock:** The bell closest to the pinky rotates around the axis of the other bell.
- **Piston:** The ringing bell moves in a straight line along the axis of the non-ringing bell.

NOTE: all of these strokes use the complete preparation, strike, and follow-through, with the exception of the piston.

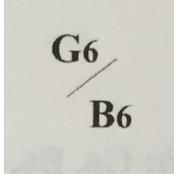
©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

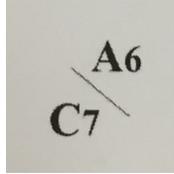
8

Four-in-Hand Notation

Left Hand



Right Hand

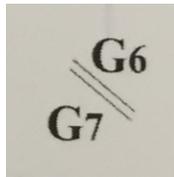
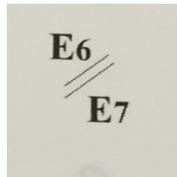


The note name of the primary bell is ABOVE the slash.

The note name of the secondary bell is BELOW the slash.

The number of slashes corresponds to the number of clappers moving in the same direction.

(Perpendicular methods use one slash; parallel methods use two.)



Graphic from: *Handbell and Handchime Notation; Handbell and Handchime Difficulty Level System; Solo and Ensemble Notation.* Dayton, OH: AGEHR, 2010.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

9

Foreign Hand?

Sure feels like it sometimes, doesn't it?

Did you know there are 11 ways to do 4iH?

- Each method has its pros and cons.
- Some are more suited to a particular musical or logistical issue than others.
- In my own playing, I regularly use six different methods.
 - There are two methods I use a LOT.
 - There are four other methods I use fairly often, for specific purposes.
 - I have used each of the other five methods only very occasionally, but boy howdy, was I glad I knew how to ring them when I needed to!
- Sometimes I use different methods in each hand at the same time!

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

10

A Quick Overview of the 11 Methods

- Each row is a different clapper configuration.
- Each column is a different handle configuration.

11 Kinds of Four-in-Hand

	Stacked	Reverse Stacked	Interlocked
Parallel Push	Y	Y	Y
Parallel Ring	Y	Y	N
Ring & Push	Y	Y	Y
British/Japanese	Y	Y	Y

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

11

Most Familiar Methods

Parallel Push AKA “Shelley”

- Really good for ringing both bells at same time.
- A little bit awkward to ring each bell separately.

Ring and Push (PKA Ring and Knock—terminology changed for ergonomic reasons.)

- Really good for ringing each bell separately.
- Also good for ringing both bells at the same time.
- Really *great* when you need different dynamics for each bell!

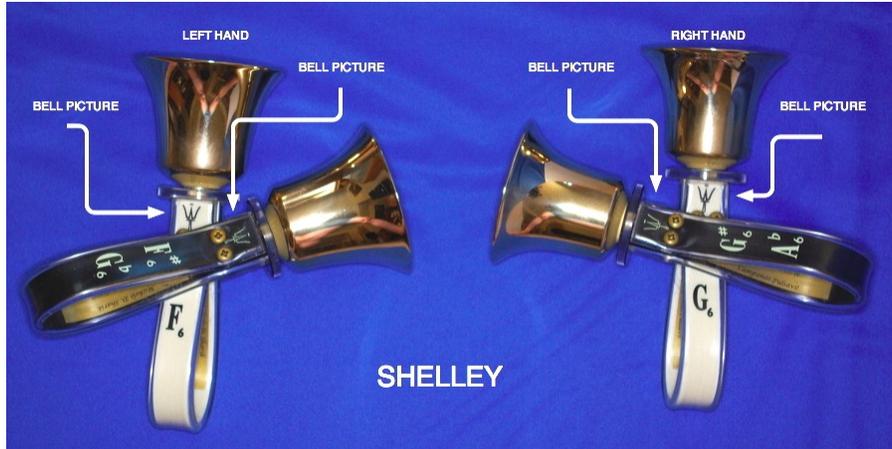
©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

12

Parallel Push (AKA “Shelley”)



©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

Ring and Push



©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

Less Familiar Methods

Parallel Ring AKA “Wendy”

- Really good for ringing both bells at same time.
- Really quite awkward to ring each bell separately.

British/Japanese

- Really good for ringing each bell separately.
- Also good for ringing both bells at the same time.
- Really *great* when you need different dynamics for each bell!
- **Stacked vs Interlocked:** Stacked seen more often in Great Britain, Japan, and New England (US); Interlocked seen more often on the US West Coast.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

15

Parallel Ring (AKA “Wendy”)

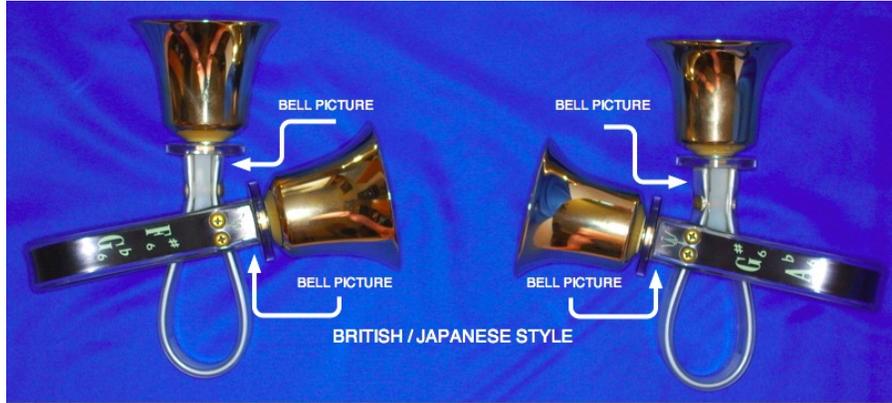


©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

16

Stacked British/Japanese

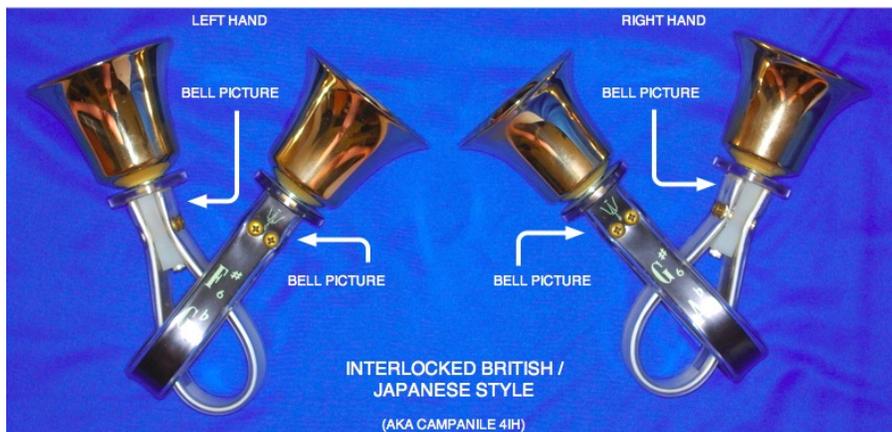


©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

17

Interlocked British/Japanese (AKA “Campanile”)



©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

18

Other Really Useful Methods

You'll probably only use them occasionally,
but when you need them, they're awesome!

Any of the “Reverse Stacked” methods

- Reverse Stacked Shelley.
- Reverse Stacked Wendy.
- Reverse Stacked British/Japanese.
- Reverse Stacked Ring and Push.

“Reverse Stacked” = The primary bell is on the **BOTTOM** of the stack.

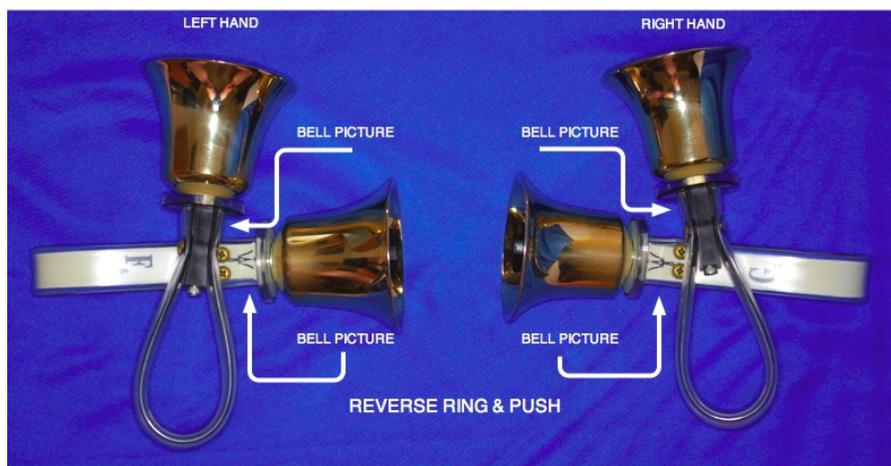
©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

19

Example: Reverse Stacked British/Japanese



©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

20

OK, I hear you out there saying,
“Michèle, it’s *awesome* that there are
11 different kinds of 4iH, but ...
Why should I care? Why would I ever use these?
What are they good for?”



Original Gif from: *Megamind*, “Good, I’m Glad You Asked That One.”
<https://getyarn.io/yarn-clip/5465974b-f966-4c0c-85ad-abb5bbe052fe>.
Accessed 12 Oct. 2022.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

21

Articulation: Thumb Damp

Primary bell only

- Any interlocked or stacked method works. (Reverse stacked methods don’t work well because of how the primary bell is held with the fingertips.)

Secondary bell only

- Can be done with any method, but some are awkward and hard to get into and out of.
- Best method to use is Campanile.

Both bells

- Can be done with any method, but some are awkward and hard to get into and out of.
- Best method to use is Campanile.

Switching between Ring and TD

- *Definitely* use Campanile!

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

22

Articulation: Pluck

Primary bell only

- Shelley or British/Japanese (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked).

Secondary bell only

- Shelley or Ring and Push (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked).
- British/Japanese (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked), *but only if held in-hand!*

Both bells

- *Definitely* use Shelley (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked).

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

23

Articulation: Mart or Mart Lift

Primary bell only

- Shelley or British/Japanese (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked).

Secondary bell only

- Shelley or Ring and Push (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked).
- British/Japanese (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked), *but only if held in-hand!*

Both bells

- *Definitely* use Shelley (Stacked, Interlocked, or Reverse Stacked).

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

24

Articulation: Shake

Primary bell only

- Ring and Push or British/Japanese. (Shelley possible, but awkward.)

Secondary bell only

- Ring and Push or British/Japanese. (Shelley possible, but awkward.)

Both bells

- Either Wendy or Interlocked British/Japanese or Interlocked Ring and Push. (Wendy works *really* well on chimes—especially if one of the chimes is reversed!)

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

25

Articulation: Suspended Mallets

Primary bell only, secondary bell only, both bells, or even three bells

- Any method is fine.

Four bells

- For the in-hand bells, any method will work.
- For the hanging bells, use an interlocked method, **especially** if you need to grab and ring those bells quickly!

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

26

Situation: Shared Bells

This is where the Reverse Stacked methods really shine!

Fun Fact: Ring and Push and British/Japanese are opposites of each other!

- If your neighbor uses Stacked Ring and Push, you can play it as Reverse Stacked British/Japanese. (Note: The secondary bell will be “backward”.)
- If your neighbor uses Stacked British/Japanese, you can play it as Reverse Stacked Ring and Push. (Note: The primary bell will be “backward”.)

If your neighbor uses Shelley or Wendy, it’s the same for you, but Reverse Stacked.
(Note: Both bells will be “backward” in the Wendy.)

The above also applies to sharing between your own RH and LH.

==> The key here is to still use fingers in 1-1-3 position! <==
(or 1-2-2 for interlocked methods)

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

27

Situation: Rolling Bells

This is where it really pays off to know ALL the methods!

If you need to pick up a secondary bell that has rolled when the primary bell is already in-hand:

For stacked methods:

- Either spin the primary in your hand so you can pick up the secondary in the opposite method, or
- Use Wendy (for R/P) or Shelley (for B/J).

For interlocked methods:

- Use the opposite method

==> The key here is *Don't Panic!* <==
(This is easier said than done, I know.)

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

28

So, how *do* we make ourselves “not panic”?!

Practice, practice, practice!

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

29

4iH Dexterity Drills

There is an entire webinar dedicated to these in the HMA Virtual Bell Academy, but here are some examples:

With one bell in-hand:

- Pass the primary hand-to-hand.
- Pass the secondary hand-to-hand.
- Spin the primary bell in-hand.
- Spin the secondary bell in-hand.
- Pass the primary to secondary position in the same hand.
- Pass the secondary to the primary position in the same hand.

Do these for all of the methods.

For an added challenge, do them in both hands at the same time.

(For even more challenge: do different methods in each hand!)

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

30

4iH Dexterity Drills (cont.)

With two bells in one hand:

- Pass the primary hand-to-hand.
- Pass the secondary hand-to-hand.
- Pass the lh primary to the rh secondary position (and back again).
- Pass the lh secondary to the rh primary position (and back again).
- Spin the primary bell.
- Spin the secondary bell.

Do these using all methods.

For an added challenge, do them with two bells in one hand and one bell in the other.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

31

4iH Dexterity Drills (cont.)

There are also some Table Drills available here:

<https://www.TheGoldenDance.com/4iH.html>

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

32

What about 6iH?

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

33

6iH: Bell Hog Heaven!

Some groups have sixth octave bells (C#8–C9) and assign them to their treble ringers.

My recommendation is: ****DO NOT**** assign them this way!

Instead, give them to the battery ringers, like this:

DE8 => DE5; FG8 => FG5; AB8 => AB5; C9 => CD6 D7

This way, nobody has more than four notes, and that's not only safer, but builds reading and 4iH skills in your battery ringers (and learning to use 4iH in their regular assignments will help them, too—but that's a topic for another class).

But if you absolutely *must* play them 6iH in the treble, keep reading:

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

34

6iH: If you absolutely must

There are several configurations of “The Claw,” which vary in how ergonomically sound they are.

With these two common variations of “The Claw” (usually held 1-1-2-1), it’s generally OK to pick up the tertiary bell “one and done,” then put it back down, but I don’t recommend that you hold them in your hand for any length of time.

Why not?

Active pinky—the pinky is not strong enough to hold on to a bell for very long and so the potential for injury is fairly high. This is true even if the tertiary bell is as small as C₉!



©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

35

6iH: If you absolutely must (cont.)

Another variation, not seen very often:



This particular variation (held 1-1-2-1) has less potential for injury than the one on the previous slide because the handles of the secondary and tertiary bells are interlocked.

However, notice that the secondary’s handle is inside the tertiary’s handle. This reduces (but still does not eliminate) the “active-ness” of the pinky, and so the potential for injury is not quite as high as with those on the previous slide. (It can be hard to assemble quickly, though.)

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

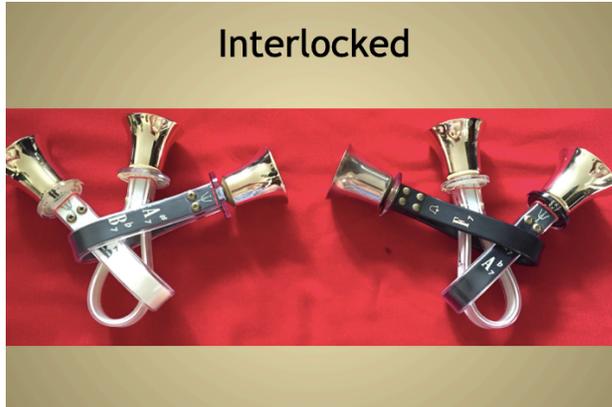
All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

36

6iH: Safely!

Interlocked (held 1-1-2-1) is ergonomically sound, but you need plenty of time to put it together and take it apart—a luxury you may not have!



Interlocked

How do you even ring this?

Primary: Thumb Knock

Secondary (Middle): Ring

Tertiary: Pinky Knock

One disadvantage:

Both the primary and tertiary bells ring on the same plane, so ringing them individually takes practice.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

37

6iH: Safely! (cont.)

This semi-interlocked style* is ergonomically sound *if* held 1-1-1-2, PLUS getting into and out of it is relatively easy (with practice), AND it can be pre-set.**

It's a form of "Traveling 6iH."

*Used by Nikki Evans

** 1-1-2-1 = active pinky



Secondary & Tertiary are in interlocked British/Japanese.
Primary is stacked on top in Ring position.
(Also possible to stack Primary in Push position!)

How do you even ring this?

VERY similarly to XYZ (next slide), but the motions are at a slightly different angle.

Primary: Thumb Knock OUT
(or ballet hand position one)

Secondary (Middle): Push
(or "fall in with flying elbow")

Tertiary: Ring
(like the secondary in Campanile)

One disadvantage:

Both the primary and tertiary bells ring on the same plane, so ringing them individually may take practice.

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

38

6iH: Safely! (cont.)

XYZ* is ergonomically sound when held 1-1-1-2,
PLUS getting into and out of it is relatively easy (with practice),
AND each bell rings on a different plane.**

*Developed by Mary Liao

**1 hold it 1-1-1-2, Mary prefers 1-1-0-3,
both are fine.

It's also a form of "Traveling 6iH."

1-1-2-1 is *not* safe because of active pinky.



©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

39

How do you even ring this?

VERY similarly to the semi-interlocked on the previous slide, but the motions are at a slightly different angle.

Primary: Thumb Knock OUT

(or in ballet hand position one)

Secondary (Middle): Push

(or "fall in with flying elbow")

Tertiary: Ring

(like the secondary in Campanile)

One disadvantage:

It's difficult (almost impossible) to "pre-set" this configuration; it's much easier to pick it up "on the fly."

Rev-20230127

6iH: Safely! (cont.)

You can watch a demonstration of XYZ Traveling 6iH here:

<https://www.TheGoldenDance.com/6iH.html>

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20230127

40

THANK YOU!

Remember,

**if you have any questions about any of this material,
you can email me at:**

Michele@TheGoldenDance.com

or

Michele.Sharik@Gmail.com

©2020 Michèle Sharik, All Rights Reserved

All photos © Brianne Pituley, unless otherwise indicated.

Rev-20250127

41

Michèle Sharik rings professionally with Sonos Handbell Ensemble, is the founding Artistic Director of Timbré, and is an internationally-renowned handbell soloist, conductor, and teacher. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Visual and Performing Arts in 2012 from Cal State San Marcos and a Graduate Certificate in Performing Arts Medicine in 2017 from Shenandoah University, and updated her certification in 2019 from the Performing Arts Medicine Association. Michèle is Master Teacher of Handbell Techniques for the Certification program of the Handbell Musicians of America, and is a former Chair of Area 12.

42

www.TheGoldenDance.com

