

MUSIC THEORY.aargh©

Reading Music with Chord Symbols

A New Project for your Ringers (Session 5)

By Dr. Ona Pinsonneault

On occasion it may be necessary for your handbell ringers to read a piece of music not written for handbells. It may be a vocal score with chord symbols, a piano score with chord symbols, or some other type of notated music having chord symbols.

There is a concern that some handbell sets available in churches are not being used during religious ceremonies. (See Rima Greer's article in the July/August 2011 issue of *Overtones* page 10. Also noted is the session presented by Kevin McChesney at the national convention this past summer in Minneapolis titled, "Use them or Lose them—Handbells in Contemporary Worship.")

To get started we need some information about Reading Music with Chord Symbols and a few guides about putting the information to use.

Chord symbols appear above the melody, above the treble clef sign. They may be alphabetical letters with or without a guitar chart. The chord is played until a new chord symbol is given above the melody. At that time the new chord is played.

Lord, I lift your name on high by Rick Founds:

In this piece the chord symbols used so far are: G, C, D, C, G, and C. Each chord lasts for two quarter note beats. Ringers will find their pitches in the following chart:

Rick Founds <i>Lord, I Lift Your Name on High</i>		Bells used :D5--G6 Key is G Major				
Bells	→	D5 E5	G5 A5	B5 C6	D6 E6	F#6 G6
Chord	↓	1st ringer	2nd ringer	3rd ringer	4th ringer	5th ringer
G		D	G	B	D	G
C or C/G		E	G	C	E	G
D		D	A	{C}	D	F#
Dsus		D	A	{C}	D	G
Em7		E	G	B	D	G
Am7		E	A	C	E	G

{Pitches in the parentheses for the 3rd ringer add a chord tone to the given chord. The director may select to not have the ringer sound these pitches.}

This chart calls for five ringers each with two bells. Ringers find the bells to use for each chord by reading down the chart. The chord symbols are highlighted at the left. Ringers may mark their score indicating the bells to use for each chord. (Or mark which hand will play.) The bells may be held without using a table. Ringers would need music stands with a copy of the music. It has been suggested that this would be a relatively easy level of playing perhaps for first time ringers.

As the music continues the rest of the chords in the chart will be used. The conductor may choose a rhythm pattern and a dynamic level for the ringers to use. Depending on the number of repetitions of the music, and with the direction of the conductor, these may change. It is assumed that a leader or the congregation would be singing the melody. You may also want to engage a bass player to play with the ringers. The bells may play throughout or alternate with other instrumentalists. This needs to be worked out ahead of time.

If this information is of interest to you, let me know how I can be of assistance.

Until next time,
Dr. P

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(Further discussions and questions may be directed to the editor of *Clapper Chatter*, at editor@area7.handbellmusicians.org.)