

The Golden Dance

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Dream Weaving: Wend Your Way Through Without Getting Warped

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Weaving is an essential skill, not just for solo/ensemble ringing, but for all bell ringers, but it is a bit complicated to explain with text, so if this is your first time trying to weave, be sure to take each step slowly and methodically until you become comfortable. *Remember: there is no substitute for slow and steady practice!*

They are “hand” bells, but we use our feet, too!

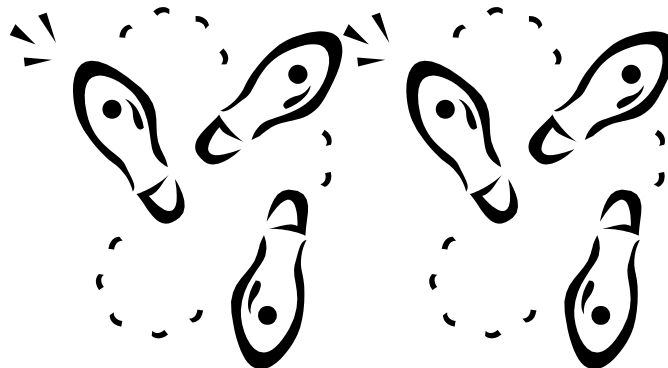
The key to weaving is in the shifting of your body weight from one foot to the other. The book *Healthy Ringing* by Susan Berry (ISBN 0-9678707-0-4) gives the following exercises for weight shifting (pg. 61):

Step 1: With your feet shoulder-width apart, shift your entire weight onto your left foot, then onto your right foot. Remain light on your feet and keep your knees unlocked. Repeat this exercise several times until it feels comfortable.

Step 2: Next, shift your weight to your left foot, and without moving it, bring your right foot next to your left (the weight is still on your left foot). Reverse, shifting your weight to your right foot and bringing your left foot next to your right (the weight is on your right foot). Repeat this exercise several times. (This exercise is a basic dance step: *Step touch, step touch.*)

Practice this exercise in time to music; the weight shift should occur on the beat!

Variation on Step 2: continue several steps to the left, then several steps to the right.



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Learning to Let Go! (1-2-3-2-1)

One of the most important component skills in weaving is learning to table damp and release the bells. We will learn to do this one hand at a time.

Begin with 3 bells on the table in front of you. (For the purposes of this exercise, we shall number the bells 1, 2, & 3 from left to right.) Stand directly behind the middle bell, your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight evenly balanced between both feet. *Note: your feet will remain (mostly) stationary for this exercise.*

Step 1: Pick up Bell #1 in your left hand, shifting your weight to your left foot. Ring the bell directly over its home position. As you lower the bell to damp it on the table, pick up Bell #2 in your right hand and begin shifting your weight to your right foot.

Step 2: As you ring Bell #2, complete the weight shift to your right foot, table damp Bell #1 in its home position & release it. *Note: Bell #2 should be rung a little to the right of Bell #3's home position.*

Step 3: Pick up Bell #3 with your left hand and ring it directly over its home position, simultaneously shoulder damping Bell #2. As you lower Bell #3 to damp it on the table, prepare to ring Bell #2.

Step 4: As you ring Bell #2, table damp Bell #3 in its home position & release it. *Note: Bell #2 should be rung a little to the right of Bell #3's home position.* Begin shifting your weight to your left foot.

Step 5: Pick up Bell #1 with your left hand and ring it directly over its home position, simultaneously shoulder damping Bell #2.

Repeat this exercise until all motions are comfortable and fluid. Remember that the weight shift, table damping, and ringing should all occur simultaneously!

Repeat this exercise with the opposite hands, beginning with Bell #3 in the right hand and Bell #2 in the left. (3-2-1-2-3)

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Now we are ready for the Weave! (1-2-3-1-2-3)

Again lay out 3 bells in front of you. (For the purposes of this exercise, we shall number the bells 1, 2, & 3 from left to right.) Stand directly behind the middle bell, your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight evenly balanced between both feet. *Note: your feet will remain (mostly) stationary for this exercise.*

Step 1: Pick up Bell #1 in your left hand, shifting your weight to your left foot. Ring the bell directly over its home position. As you lower the bell to damp it on the table, pick up Bell #2 in your right hand and begin shifting your weight to your right foot.

Step 2: As you ring Bell #2, complete the weight shift to your right foot, table damp Bell #1 in its home position & release it. *Note: Bell #2 should be rung a little to the right of Bell #3's home position.*

Note: up to this point, the Steps are identical to the “Learning to Let Go” exercise.

Step 3: Pick up Bell #3 with your left hand. As you ring it, shift your weight back to your left foot, table damp Bell #2 in its home position & release it. *Note: Bell #3 should be rung a little to the left of Bell #1's home position.*

Step 4: Pick up Bell #1 in your right hand. Shift your weight back to your right foot, table damp Bell #3 & release it in its home position at the same time you ring Bell #1 (which should be rung slightly to the right of Bell #3's home position).

Step 5: Pick up Bell #2 in your left hand. As you ring it, shift your weight back to your left foot, table damp Bell #1 & release it in its home position.

Step 6: Pick up Bell #3 in your right hand, shift your weight to your right foot and ring it at the same time you table damp Bell #2 in its home position. Table damp Bell #3.

Again, repeat this exercise until all motions are comfortable and fluid. Remember that the weight shift, table damping, and ringing should all occur simultaneously!

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Weaving up the Table (1-2-3-4-...?)

The same principle can be applied to 4 or more bells. As you shift your weight, your feet will move in the “step touch, step touch” pattern mentioned earlier resulting in a dance-like motion up or down the table. Remember to stay light on your feet and practice slowly and at a steady tempo until you can weave smoothly and with a legato sound.

Remember: There's no substitute for slow and steady practice!

Don't get discouraged if you don't “get it” right away. If you don't have access to bells, practice using objects such as bottles or spoons until the movements become second nature to you. Video-record yourself to get an objective view and ensure you are doing the motions correctly and playing musically.

Above all *have fun!!*

