

# Treble Techniques

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## Class Description

This class will focus on healthy ringing practices for basic techniques such as ringing, damping, and shaking, as well as stopped-sound techniques such as malleting, marting, and thumb-damping. Treble bells can function as a melody line, supporting harmony, secondary voicing line, and aural color and texture. Learn how to ring treble bells appropriately for each function, and learn how to ring uniformly as a section. Learn how to transition, when to reassign or share bells, and how to use basic score study and marking to assist with effective ringing.

## Part I: Techniques

### Sustained Sound

#### Techniques

1. Ring
2. Shake
3. Mart Lift
4. Suspended Mallet
5. Mallet Lift
6. Four-in-Hand & Shelly
7. Other

### Stopped Sound

#### Techniques

- 1 Mart
- 2 Thumb Damp
- 3 Ring Touch
- 4 Thumb Damp
- 5 Mallet
- 6 Pluck
- 7 Other

### Techniques for color

1. Echo
2. Gyro
3. Swing
4. Vibrato
5. Brush Damp
6. Other

## Keep in Mind:

- Focus on healthy ringing.
- A loose grip and longer reach will give the ringer more control over the sound.
- Some muscle-building exercises may be necessary to sustain good technique throughout a rehearsal.
- Know how to identify each technique in a written score.
- Practice transitioning from one technique to another.
- Know when to damp and when to LV.
- If a section or transition is challenging, practice making it look easy. A ringer's air of frustration or unhappiness will detract from the music and its intent.
- Be humble enough to know that everyone needs guidance as a ringer. Be willing to try something new when asked, and be willing to change a technique from time to time. Watch videos of ringers on You Tube and pay attention to the treble ringers. Many very good ensembles have videos available on the Internet.
- Encourage your fellow ringers whenever possible, and be willing to give and accept a compliment.

## **Part II: Score Study and Marking Scores**

Handbell difficulty level increases because the music is more complex, which gives rise to more transitions. Levels 1, 2, and 3 call for adequate preparation for bell/chime changes, while Levels 4 and above do not. Before ringing, take a few minutes to look at your music. Learn as much as possible about the music before you begin to ring in order to anticipate transitions and shifts with your assigned bells. If your director does not endorse a uniform marking system, devise a consistent system that is concise, simple, and easy to follow. As you conduct your score study and begin to mark your music, be aware of the following.

### **Overall structure of the piece**

- Structure (ABA, through-composed, strophic, rondo, etc.)
- Variations and how they are handled: modulation, harmonics and/or modes, articulations, melodic shift to a new octave or octaves, dynamics, tempo
- Function of treble bells in relation to the rest of the ensemble: primary melody, secondary melody, harmonic support, color

### **Possible transitions**

- Tempo
- Dynamics
- Key Signature
- Harmonics and modes
- Techniques
- Other

## Part III: Treble Bell Functions

### Musical Functions of Treble Bells

1. Primary melody voicing line
2. Secondary voicing line
3. Supporting Harmony:
  - Chords
  - Arpeggios/Running notes
  - Textural techniques such as marts, mallets, gyros, echos, and swings
4. Other

### Keep in Mind:

- Learn how to identify and ring each function appropriately.
- Be aware of what is going with the rest of the sections further down the table.
- A quick perusal of the score will help the ringer become familiar with the music.
- Ring as an ensemble, and not as individual ringers.
- Listen to each other.
- Match ringing style of ensemble members as much as possible.
- Anticipate the strike to get a smooth melody line. In many cases, rhythm issues can be greatly improved when ringing techniques are learned and used correctly.
- Be willing to help neighboring ringers through a tough spot. Conversely, be willing to ask for help when needed!
- Unite with fellow musicians through a musical art. Make music with friends!

## Bibliography

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